

# Carbon County Partners for Progress

2008

Carbon County Needs Survey

Final Report  
May, 2009

Prepared in partnership with



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

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To better understand community needs, the Carbon County Partners for Progress (CCPP) initiated a countywide survey in May 2008. The survey had four objectives:

- Appraise the success CCPP has had in meeting community needs and identify new opportunities;
- Identify underserved groups within Carbon County;
- Develop a baseline measure of need in Carbon County; and
- Gather information to be used for a new strategic plan.

### Methods

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The committees within the Carbon County Partners for Progress (CCPP) developed the four-page questionnaire. In May 2008, the questionnaire was mailed to 2,000 randomly selected households throughout Carbon County. By the beginning of June, 517 surveys were returned, for a response rate 26 percent. The confidence interval, or margin of error, was plus or minus 4.26. There are a number of data limitations that could affect interpretation of the survey results. These include: lower than expected responses from renters, young adults, and low-income households. In addition, the survey was over-represented by senior citizens.

### Health & Human Services

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The survey indicated that there are residents in Carbon County with specific health and human services needs. In addition, the data show that these needs are pervasive throughout the county, and not clustered to a specific income group, age cohort, or other socio-economic group. Some examples of these needs include:

- 14 percent of households had one or more persons without health insurance.
- 44 percent agreed it was difficult to access public transportation in Carbon County.
- 72 percent of parents with children in day care had difficulty finding a quality care provider; 74 percent had difficulty finding affordable day care.
- 57 percent knew someone in their community who cannot afford prescription medicines.
- 46 percent knew someone in their community who had a problem with drug or alcohol abuse.
- 16 percent had problems getting health or dental care in the last 12 months.
- 26 percent said it was not easy to get mental health and counseling services.
- 56 percent agreed that, for minor illness or medical problems, they felt comfortable seeing a nurse practitioner or physician assistant.

### Education

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According to the survey, the majority of parents are satisfied with their children's school and the educational services their child is receiving. In addition, the survey found that there is a need for increased worker training. Among the specific findings were:

- 91 percent of parents expect their son or daughter to attend college or technical school.
- 87 percent of parents said their child feels safe at school.
- 79 percent of parents believe their child's school is meeting state standards.
- 50 percent of parents with school age children said their child attended preschool programs. Among these parents, 77 percent said that the program was good.
- 62 percent believed that increasing the technical skills of workers should be a high economic priority.

## Economic Development

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The survey results suggest that Carbon County residents are concerned about economic conditions. They generally see only limited economic opportunities in Carbon County and most believe that economic development efforts must improve.

- Of those persons employed, 51 percent work in Carbon County, 44 percent commute to work in an adjacent county, and 5 percent work outside the region.
- The average commute time to work is 29 minutes; however, for 40 percent of workers, the commute is less than 15 minutes; 33 percent of workers have a 15-to-44 minute commute; and 27 percent have a 45-minute or longer commute.
- The time to work and number of years living in Carbon County are negatively correlated. This means that newcomers to the county are more likely to have longer commutes than long-term residents.
- 75 percent did not believe that there were plenty of good Carbon County for anyone who wanted to work.
- 75 percent said the economic development efforts in their community were fair to poor
- As an economic development strategy, 69 percent supported the promotion of new businesses.

## Leadership

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The survey results suggest that Carbon County residents are unhappy with their local governments. This dissatisfaction does not differ according to age, income, employment status, or educational attainment.

- 60 percent said their local government's attention to citizen concerns were fair to poor.
- 73 percent rate their local government's communication of decisions to its citizens as fair to poor.
- 57 percent said zoning enforcement in their community was fair to poor.
- 23 percent agreed that their borough or township pays attention to citizen concerns.

## Quality of Life

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The survey results suggest that Carbon County residents have mixed opinions about the quality of life in the county. While residents enjoy their parks and are generally happy with the response time of their emergency responders and police, they are concerned about illegal drugs and the lack of public transportation. Among the specific responses:

- 34 percent said Carbon County was a very desirable place to live; 10 percent said it was a very undesirable place to live.
- Over the next five years; 54 percent believe Carbon County will stay about the same; 23 percent believe it will become more desirable; and 23 percent believe it will become less desirable.
- 79 percent said Carbon County was a good place to raise children

## Carbon County Partners for Progress

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The survey results suggest that the majority of Carbon County residents are not aware of CCPP and Leadership Carbon. This lack of awareness cuts across income, employment, and gender lines.

- 68 percent of residents have never heard of CCPP or Leadership Carbon; 11 percent have only heard of CCPP; 4 percent have heard only of Leadership Carbon, and 17 percent have heard of both.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Carbon County Partners for Progress (CCPP) exists to identify strengths and weaknesses within the county; further, the organization has a stated mission to develop a comprehensive strategy to unite county communities and improve the quality of life for county residents.

To this end, and in order to better understand community needs, the partners conducted an in-depth survey. Two thousand copies of the survey—sembled and mailed by commissioner's office using labels provided by the county's Information Technology staff—went out to a cross-section of residents in May of 2008. Five hundred seventeen surveys were completed and tallied, for a response rate of 26%.

The survey's specific purpose was to assess current conditions in a number of critical areas: health & human services, education, economic development, leadership, and quality of life. Finally, the survey asked a few questions designed to gauge awareness of the Partners for Progress organization itself. The responses will be used to determine the effectiveness of the partners' strategic plan and to make improvements as needed.

To a first order, the survey results represent the range of opinions one would expect from a respondent group comprising differing age, education, and socioeconomic backgrounds. A few of the noteworthy conclusions are as follows:

- Most respondents expressed concern regarding limited economic opportunities within the county.
- A significant number of families in Carbon County felt less economically secure at the time of the survey.
- Most parents of school-age children, however, are actively involved in their childrens' lives and express satisfaction with the services provided by their schools.
- 30% of those surveyed are aware of the Partners for Progress.

The survey would not have been possible without assistance from several county- and state organizations. These include (in no particular order): the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, Representative Keith McCall, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the Carbon County Commissioner's office and Commissioner Wayne Nothstein.

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## METHODS

### Purpose

In May 2008, the Carbon County Partners for Progress (CCPP) conducted a county-wide community needs assessment. CCPP was created in 1998 to develop a comprehensive strategy to unite the communities of the county in a common mission to improve the overall quality of life.

With many of the tasks identified 10 years ago either completed or underway, CCPP is looking forward to the next 10 years to identify new tasks to be completed. The first step in this process is to gather information on the needs of the county. To this end, CCPP authorized a county-wide needs survey. This household mail survey had four specific objectives:

1. Appraise the success CCPP has had in meeting community needs and identify new opportunities;
2. Identify underserved groups within Carbon County;
3. Develop a baseline measure of need in Carbon County; and
4. Gather information to be used for a new strategic plan.

### Questionnaire Development

The survey was developed through a series of CCPP Committee meetings in the winter and spring of 2008, where members of the four committees (Health & Human Services, Education, Leadership, and Economic & Heritage Development) determined the questions they wanted to ask Carbon County residents. A copy of the questions and responses begins on page 29.

### Survey Mailing

The Carbon County Assessor's Office provided a random sample of 2,000 names and addresses of Carbon County residents who were 18 years old and older. A private firm printed and mailed the survey the second week in May 2008.

### Survey Results

Of the 2,000 surveys mailed, 48 were returned because of incorrect mailing addresses. By June 16, 2008, 517 usable surveys were returned, making the response rate 26.1 percent. The confidence interval, or margin of error, was plus or minus 4.26. This means there can be 95 percent confidence that the results are within 4.26 percentage points of what all Carbon County adults would have answered.

In addition to answering each question, respondents were encouraged to provide written comments. Two hundred forty-four respondents (47 percent) provided written comments.

## Data Limitations

Below are factors that can affect the validity and reliability of the survey results:

- Lower than Expected Response from Renters: Seven percent of the respondents rented their home. According to the most current U.S. Census data, in 2000, approximately 23 percent of Carbon County households were renters. The survey results are therefore skewed toward the views of homeowners.
- Lower than Expected Response from Young Adults and Higher than Expected Response from Senior Citizens: In 2006, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 20 percent of Carbon County residents were 18 to 29 years old and 23 percent were 65 years old and older. Six percent of the survey respondents were 18 to 29 years old and 26 percent were 65 years old and older. The survey results are more representative of the view of middle aged and older adults.
- Lower than Expected Response from Low-Income Households: Of the survey respondents, 20 percent of the households have incomes of less than \$25,000. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 33 percent of households in Carbon County had incomes less of than \$25,000. As a result, the survey responses are more representative of middle- and upper-income household's views.
- Low Response from Minority Households: Sixteen respondents, (3 percent) were non-white and/or Hispanic or Latino. This is slightly higher than the U.S. Census Bureau's 2006 estimated of 2 percent minority households in Carbon County. However, 16 responses are considered too few to be statistically reliable. As a result, there was no separate analysis of responses by minority status.
- Uneven Response by School District: Respondents were asked to identify the school district in which they lived. The responses, however, were disproportionate to the number of households within each school district. As a result, there was no separate analysis of responses by school district.

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## HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

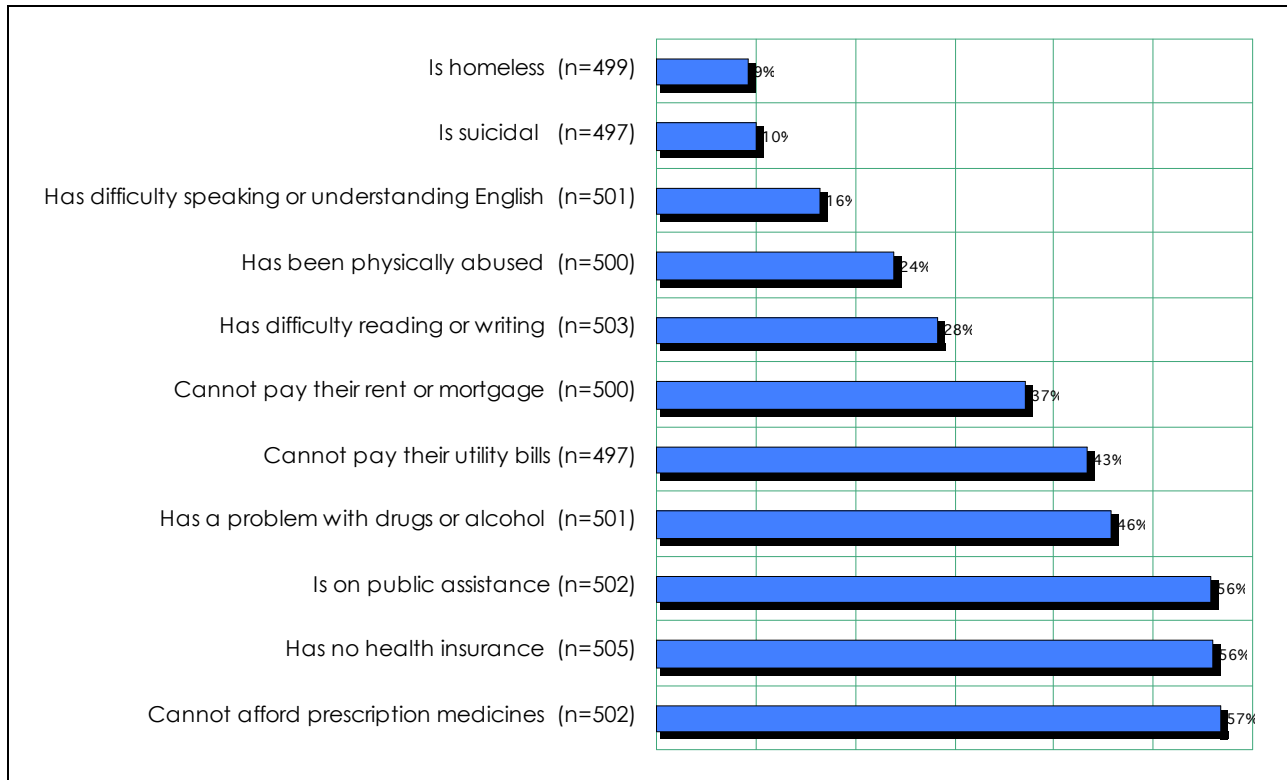
### Findings

The survey results suggest that health and human service issues are a concern for many Carbon County residents. For example:

- 14 percent of households had one or more persons without health insurance.
- 44 percent agreed that it was difficult to access public transportation in Carbon County.
- 72 percent of parents with children in day care had difficulty finding a quality day care provider; 74 percent had difficulty finding an affordable day care provider.
- 46 percent agreed that it was easy to purchase illegal drugs in their community.

When asked about people in their community, many respondents said they knew of someone in need. Figure 1 shows that over one-half of the respondents knew someone in their community who: has no health insurance (56 percent); is on public assistance (56 percent); or cannot afford to purchase prescription medication (57 percent).

**FIGURE 1: Percent of Respondents Who Knew Someone In Their Community with Different Needs**



Data source: Carbon County Needs Assessment Survey, May 2008

The variables in Figure 2 were combined into an awareness score. The higher the score, the more persons the respondent knew who were in need. Out of a potential maximum awareness score of four, the average score was 2.4, showing moderate levels of awareness of people in the community with such needs. This awareness score was then statistically compared to demographic and other variables to better understand the prevalence of need in Carbon County.

In general, there was a statistically significant relationship between knowing someone in need and the following variables.

- Age: The younger the respondent, the more likely he or she knows someone in need.
- Number of Persons in Households: The more persons in the household, the more they know of someone in need.
- Community Service Satisfaction: The less satisfied a person is with services in their community, the more he or she knows of someone in need.

- Local Government Satisfaction: The more satisfied a person is with their local government, the less likely they are to know of someone in need.
- Change in Family Financial Situation: Persons who said that their family's financial situation is better this year than last year are less likely to know of someone in need.
- Unemployment: Respondents who are unemployed are more likely to know of someone in need as compared to those who are working.

Factors that had no statistically significant relationship between knowing someone in need included: educational attainment, income, commuting, gender, and number of years living in Carbon County.

For some respondents, the awareness of need included themselves. For example, a middle aged Leighton area resident wrote that there is "need for dental health services in Carbon County... funding is poor and inadequate." Another Leighton area resident wrote that: "I (have) been looking for health care for myself for the last two years and can't find any in this area." A Palmerton area resident wrote that there is a need for "senior citizen transportation (for those) who live outside of town." However, some respondents believed that too much attention is paid to persons in need. For example, a Leighton area resident under 40 years old wrote "I believe Carbon County caters too much to the unemployed, uneducated, and low income population...more emphasis needs to gravitate toward the hard-working, home-owning, tax-paying (residents) of this county."

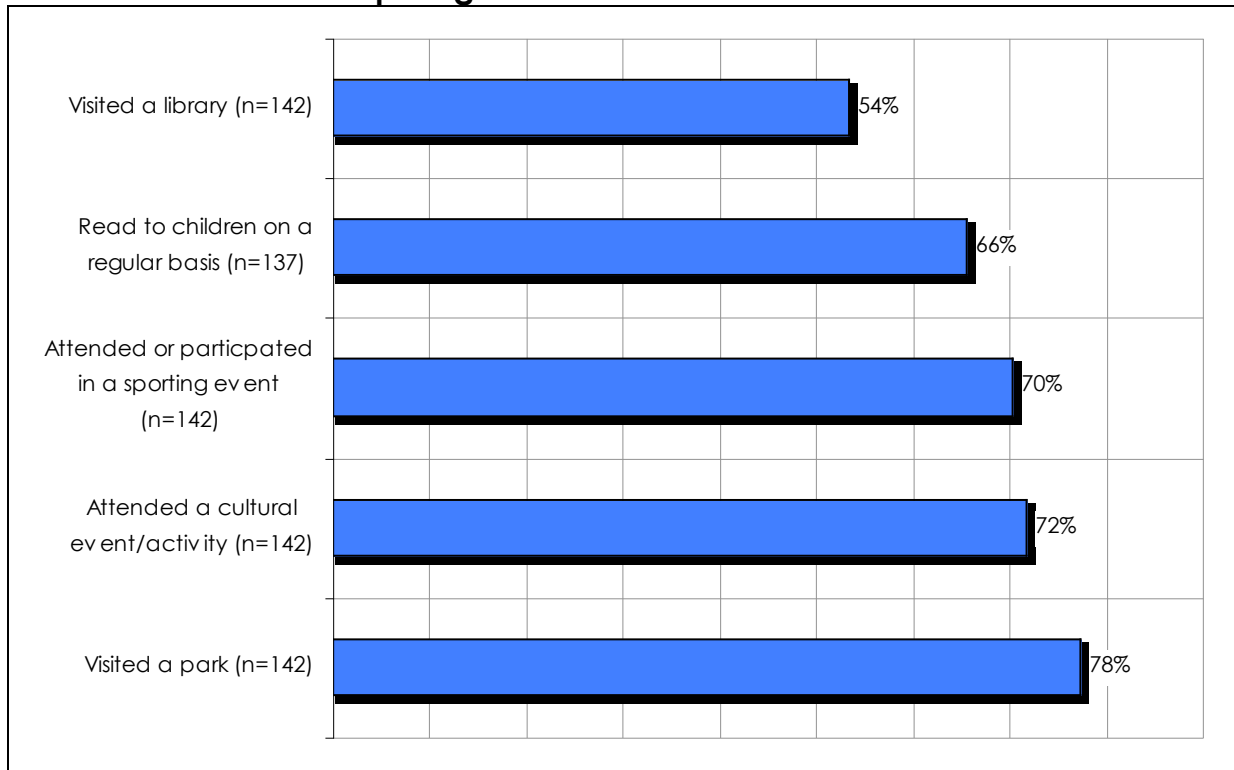
The survey also examined the issue of access to health care. According to the results:

- 16 percent had problems getting health or dental care in the last 12 months.
- 26 percent said it was not easy to get mental health and counseling services.
- 56 percent agreed, that for minor illnesses or medical problems, they felt comfortable seeing a nurse practitioner or a physicians assistant.

The committee on health and human services also wanted to gather information on parent involvement with their children. Figure 2 shows that, over the last three months, the majority (more than 54 percent) of parents participated in various activities with their children. Additional analysis shows

that 71 percent of the parents participated in three or more of the activities that are listed in Figure 2.

**FIGURE 2: Parents Participating in Activities with Their Children**



Data source: Carbon County Needs Assessment Survey, May 2008

There was no statistically significant difference between the number of activities parents participate in with their children and income, commuting time, parent's educational attainment, or employment status. This could suggest that parents of all incomes, education levels, and employment are involved with their children. Not surprising, the number of meals the family ate together was correlated with parent involvement—the more meals the family ate together, the higher the level of involvement.

#### Health and Human Service Needs

The survey verifies that there are residents in Carbon County with specific health and human service needs. In addition, the data shows, that such needs are pervasive throughout the county, and not clustered in a specific income group, age cohort, or other socio-economic group.

Based on the analysis of the data, the following needs were identified:

- Affordable prescription medications.
- Improved access to health and dental care services
- Improved access and availability of mental health and counseling services
- Substance abuse prevention.
- Improved access to public transportation.
- Affordable quality day care for children and adults.

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## EDUCATION

### Findings

The survey asked parents for their opinions about their children's education. Approximately 28 percent of survey respondents had children (persons under 18 years old) living in their home. Of these households, 47 percent had only one child; 31 percent had two children; and 22 percent had three or more children living at home.

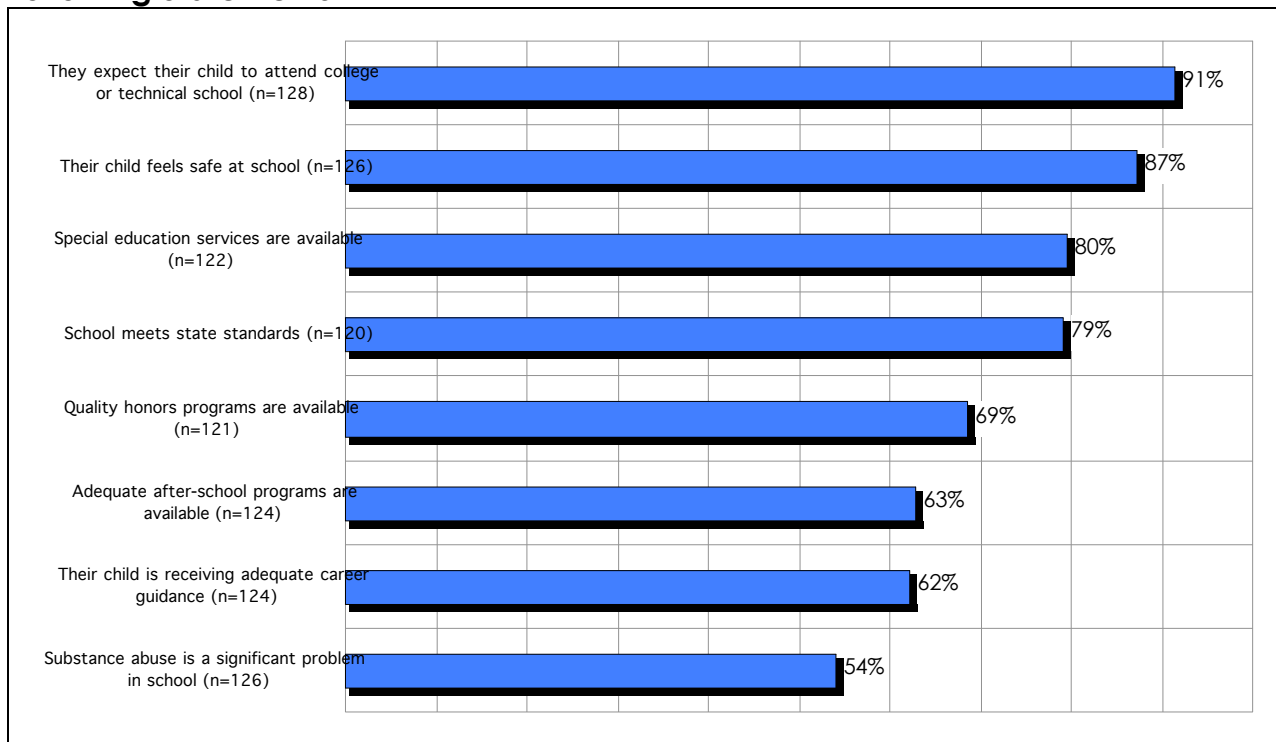
Among households with children, 80 percent had school-age children and 20 percent did not. Among householders under 55 years old, there was no statistically significant difference between those with and without school-age children in the number of years living in Carbon County. This finding could suggest that there is no difference in the number of children between newcomers and long-term residents.

Figure 3 shows that the majority of parents with school-age children agree with different statements related to education. More than 60 percent of the parents have a generally positive perspective about their school. For example, 79 percent believe their child's school is meeting state standards; 87 percent believe that their child feels safe at school; and more than 60 percent believe that their child has adequate access to special education services, honors programs, and career guidance.

The only negative aspect is substance abuse. Fifty-four percent of the parents said they believe drugs, alcohol, and tobacco abuse is a significant problem in their child's school.

There was no statistically significant difference in parents' attitudes toward their child's school and the following variables: gender, income, number of years living in Carbon County, and educational attainment.

**FIGURE 3: Percent of Parents With School Age Children Who Agree with the Following Statements**



Data source: Carbon County Needs Assessment Survey, May 2008

Respondents' comments on education varied. One middle-aged Palmerton area resident noted that there is "nothing for our young adults to work (at) without a degree." Other respondents were concerned about school taxes. For example, a Leighton area senior citizen wrote: "Lower school taxes. Most seniors have paid their dues and are now responsible to pay for children of which they have no real responsibility."

Related to education is whether or not parents believe Carbon County is a good place to raise children. According to the survey, 79 percent of parents agreed that Carbon County was a good place to raise children; 15 percent of parents gave a neutral response on this question; and 6 percent did not believe the county was a good place to raise children. Statistically, there was no significant difference in the attitudes of parents and non-parents on the belief that Carbon County was a good place to raise children.

Among parents with school-age children, 50 percent said their child participated in a preschool program. Statistically, there was no significant difference between households whose children participated in preschool and households whose children did not participate. Both types of households had similar income ranges and similar levels of educational attainment. In a follow-up question, parents whose children participated in preschool were asked to

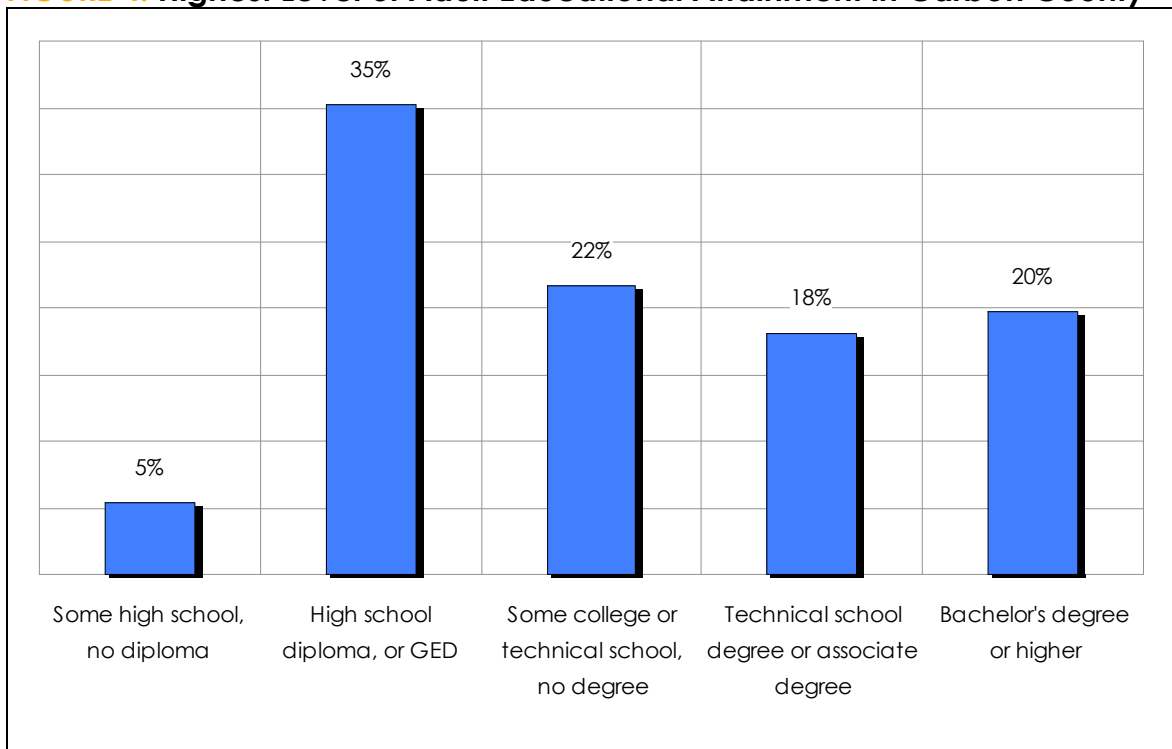
rate the preschool program: 77 percent said good; 20 percent said fair; and 3 percent said poor.

Another aspect of education is worker training. Sixty-two percent of respondents said increasing the technical skills of workers should be given a high priority; 30 percent believe it should be given medium priority; 6 percent said it should be given low priority; and 3 percent did not know.

Figure 4 shows the level of adult educational attainment in Carbon County. Thirty-eight percent of the adults have earned a technical, associate's, or bachelor's degree, while 40 percent have a high school diploma or less. Twenty-two percent have some college or technical school training, but no degree.

Statistically, only household income was significantly affected by different levels of educational attainment. For example, 78 percent of the persons with a bachelor's degree or higher have household incomes of \$50,000 or greater. In contrast, 23 percent of persons with a high school diploma or less have household incomes of \$50,000 or greater.

**FIGURE 4: Highest Level of Adult Educational Attainment in Carbon County**



Data source: Carbon County Needs Assessment Survey, May 2008

### Education Needs

The survey results suggest that most parents are satisfied with their children's school. In addition, the survey found that there is a need for increased worker training and that income is closely linked with educational attainment.

Based on the data analysis, the following needs were identified:

- Postsecondary information to students and parents.
- Increase technical skills of workers.
- Illegal drugs in schools.

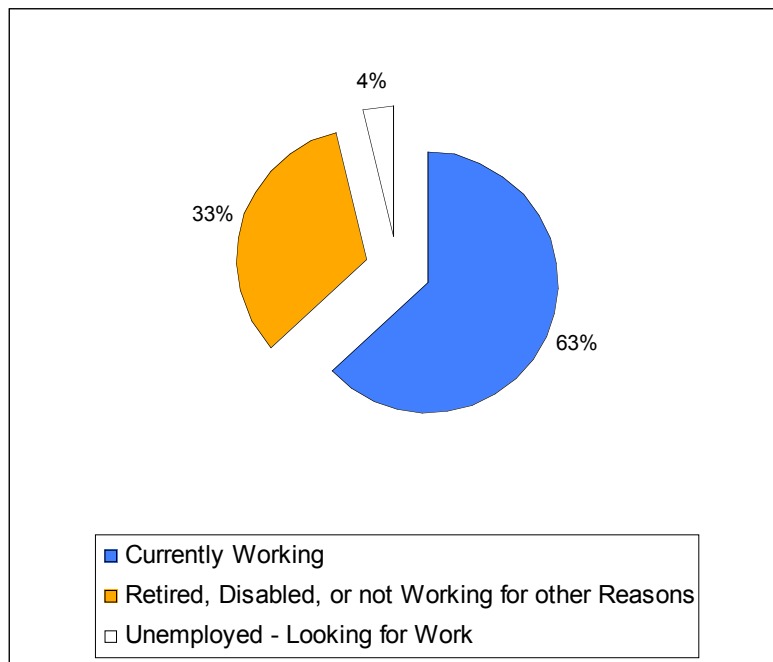
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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Findings

Figure 5 shows that 63 percent of the survey respondents were employed, 4 percent were unemployed, and 33 percent were not in the labor force because they were retired, disabled or not working for some other reason. Again, all respondents are 18 years old and older.

**FIGURE 5: Distribution of Persons Who Are: Employed, Unemployed, and Not in Labor Force in Carbon County**



Data source: Carbon County Needs Assessment Survey, May 2008

Among employed persons, 51 percent work in Carbon County, 44 percent commute to work in an adjacent county, and 5 percent work outside the region. The average commute time to work is 29 minutes. However, for 40 percent of workers, their commute is less than 15 minutes; 33 percent of the workers have a 15-to-44 minute commute; and 27 percent have a 45-minute or longer commute.

The time to work and number of years living in Carbon County are negatively correlated. This means that newcomers to the county are more likely to have longer commutes than long-term residents.

Table 6 compares those who are employed with those who are not employed. One of the more telling results include in this Table are the differences in demographic characteristics and the similarities in attitudes. Both employed and not-employed persons had negative view on economic conditions in Carbon County.

**FIGURE 6: Selected Characteristics and Opinions of Employed- and Not-Employed Persons**

	Employed Persons (n=318)	Not-Employed Persons (n=193)
Average Age*	48.1	66.4
Average # years living in Carbon County*	31.2	41.5
% Without health insurance	14%	16%
% Households with incomes greater than \$50,000*	55%	22%
% With bachelor's degree or higher*	25%	12%
Average # family meals eaten together in the previous week	5.3	7
% That agree that their financial situation is better than last year	31%	28%
% That agree that there are plenty of good jobs in Carbon County	8%	10%
% That agree that it is difficult to access public transportation in Carbon County	45%	42%

*\*Statistically significant difference*

*Data source: Carbon County Needs Assessment Survey, May 2008*

Economic development was an important concern for the majority of survey respondents. For example, 75 percent of respondents did not believe that there were plenty of good jobs in Carbon County for anyone who wanted to work. The same percentage also said the economic development efforts in their community were fair to poor.

The analysis of those respondents who said that economic development efforts in their community were fair to poor that they are:

- Critical of the conditions of area roads and highways (78 percent) and critical of zoning enforcement (69 percent).
- Less likely to believe that their township or borough pays attention to citizen concerns (43 percent).
- More likely to say that their family financial situation is not better than it was a year ago (53 percent).

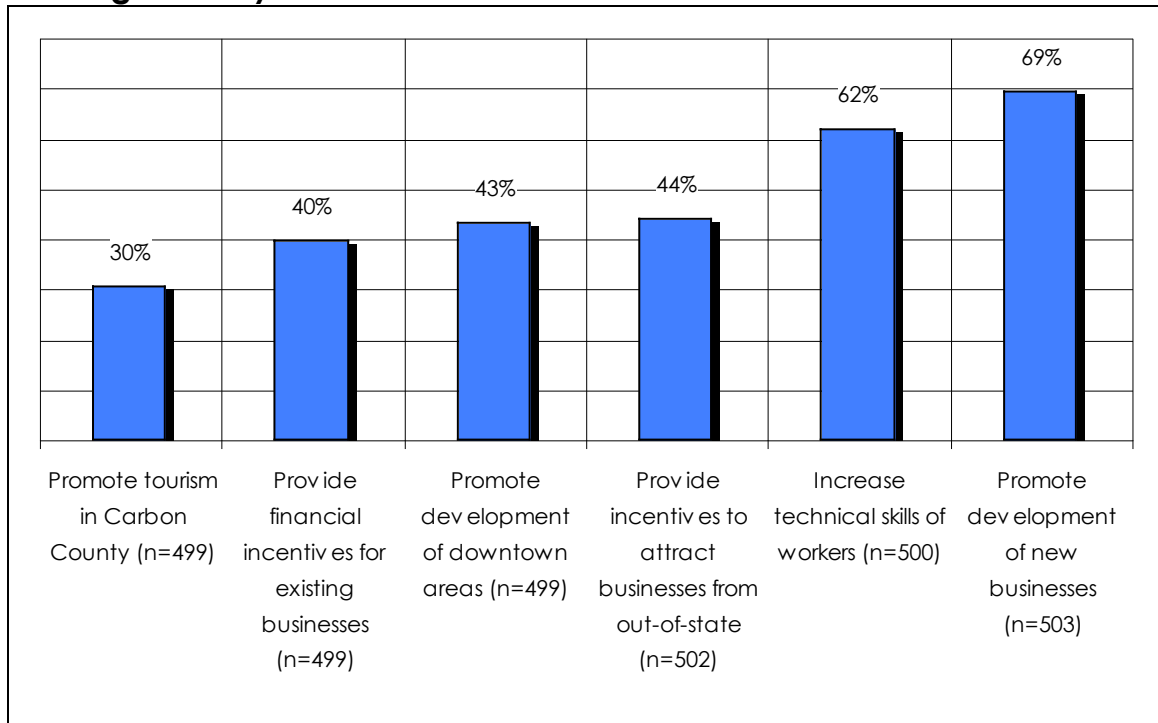
Even among the small percentage (25 percent) that said economic efforts were good to excellent, the majority (57 percent) believed there were not enough good paying jobs in Carbon County.

Concerns about economic development were universal, and did not vary by respondent's age, income, educational attainment, employment status or commuting time.

There were a number of written comments about economic development in Carbon County. For example, a middle-aged Palmerton area resident expressed the opinions of many when he wrote: "need more good paying jobs." Others were more prescriptive, such as a middle-aged Jim Thorpe area resident who wrote "Carbon County needs more quality jobs not service type minimum wage jobs...people shouldn't have to travel to the Lehigh Valley to earn (a) decent wage."

Figure 7 lists different economic development strategies and the percent of respondents who rated each strategy as a high priority. The strategy that was identified as having the highest priority was promoting the development of new businesses (69 percent). Cross-tabulating this response with the other strategies shows lukewarm support for providing incentives to attract new businesses from out-of-state (42 percent) and in promoting downtown areas (36 percent). Similarly, these same respondents were tepid in their support for promoting tourism (25 percent) and providing financial incentives for existing businesses (33 percent). Nearly one-half of the respondents, however, did see a link between increasing the technical skills of workers and promoting new businesses (49 percent).

**FIGURE 7: Percent of Respondents that Rated Economic Development Strategies as a High Priority**



Data source: Carbon County Needs Assessment Survey, May 2008

### Economic Development Needs

The survey results suggest that Carbon County residents are very concerned about economic conditions. They generally see only limited economic opportunities in Carbon County and most believe that economic development activities need to be improved. This dissatisfaction does not differ according to income, employment status, or educational attainment.

Based on the data analysis, the following needs were identified:

- More jobs that pay a living wage.
- Review of economic development strategies and expectations.
- Balance tourism development and downtown revitalization with other types of economic development efforts.
- Entrepreneur education in schools.
- Lack of information on economic development activities.

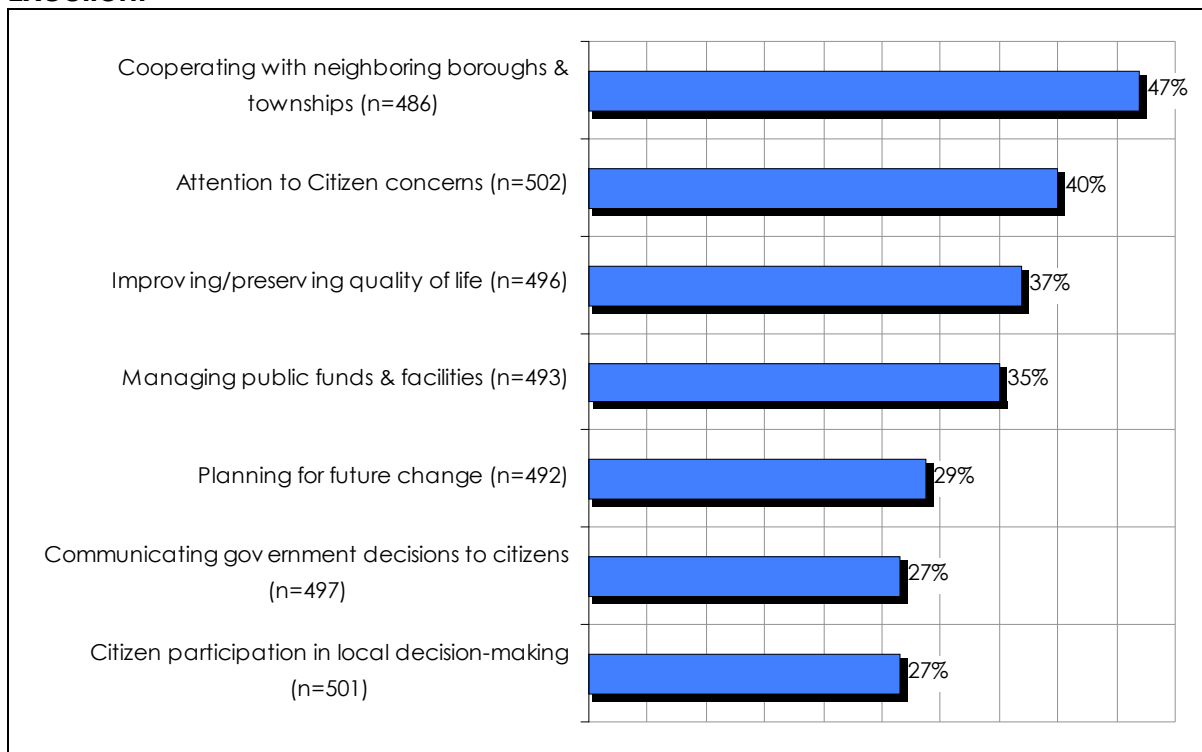
## LEADERSHIP\*

### Findings

One of the more striking findings from the survey was respondent dissatisfaction with local government. Figure 8 shows seven local government indicators. For each of these indicators, less than 50 percent of the respondents believed that their local government was doing a good-to-excellent job.

Opinions about local governments did not vary according to income, educational attainment, age, gender, or number of years living in Carbon County. In other words, the dissatisfaction with local government appears to be universal.

**FIGURE 8: Percent of Respondents that Rated Their Local Government as Good to Excellent**



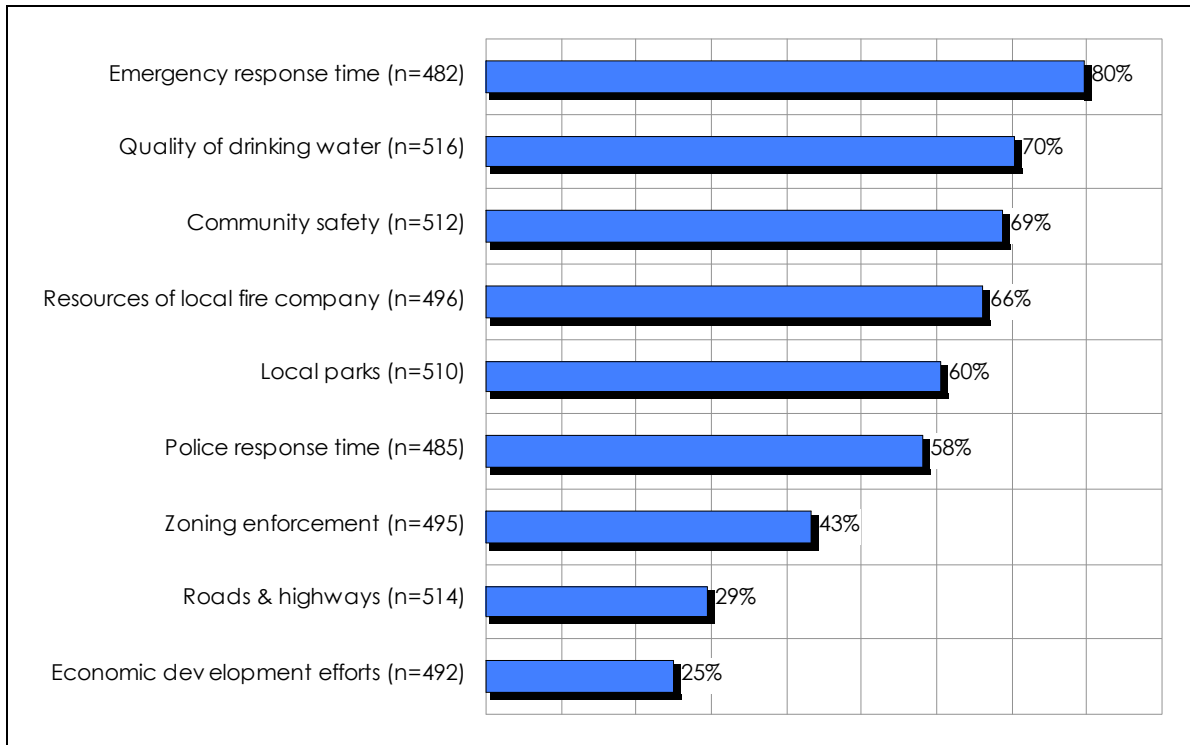
Data source: Carbon County Needs Assessment Survey, May 2008

Attitudes about community services were slightly more positive. Figure 9 shows that the majority of respondents rated their emergency and public safety services as good-to-excellent. It also shows that the majority of respondents gave high marks for their local parks and drinking water quality. Among the community services that were seen as lacking were: zoning enforcement, roads and highways, and economic development.

\* In this section, leadership was defined as opinions about local government and community services.

Like opinions on local government, community services responses did not vary according to income, educational attainment, age, gender, or number of years living in Carbon County.

**FIGURE 9: Percent of Respondents that Rated Community Services as Good to Excellent**



Data source: Carbon County Needs Assessment Survey, May 2008

The questions on local government were recoded and averaged into a four point score with one being the most negative score and four the most positive. The same process was done for community services questions.

For the local government questions, the average combined score was 1.5 out of a possible 4.0 points. For the community service questions, the average combined score was slightly higher at 1.7 out of a possible 4.0 points. Statistically, the two scores are significantly correlated. This means that, if a respondent has a positive perspective about local government, they also had a positive perspective about community services. Because both scores are relatively low, this could suggest that there is considerable dissatisfaction about both local government and community services.

Another aspect of leadership/local government is land use. According to the survey results, 53 percent of respondents said they were concerned with suburban sprawl. There was no statistical difference between those who were

concerned and those who were not concerned when it came to age, gender, income, commuting time, and the number of years living in Carbon County.

In the open comment section, a number of respondents expressed concern about land use issues. For example, a middle-aged Jim Thorpe area resident wrote “the loss of wooded and open land and farms is very undesirable.” Another Jim Thorpe area resident went further to linking land use issues and economic issues by saying: “stop the urban sprawl or it will end tourism.”

### Leadership Needs

The survey results suggest that Carbon County residents are dissatisfied with their local governments. This dissatisfaction does not differ according to age, income, employment status, or educational attainment.

Based on the data analysis, the following needs were identified:

- Limited communications between local government and citizens.
- Limited attention by local governments on citizens concerns.
- Limited citizen participations in local decision-making.
- Poor roads and highways and zoning enforcement.
- Unplanned growth and development (suburban sprawl).

## QUALITY OF LIFE

### Findings

Figure 10 shows that 34 percent of respondents see Carbon County as a very desirable place to live; 10 percent see the county as very undesirable place to live. Statistically, there was little difference between those who said the county was desirable and those who said it was undesirable. Both groups had similar educational attainment, income, and commuting times. In addition, both groups were similar in the number of years that they lived in Carbon County and in age.

In addition, Figure 10 shows that the majority of respondents (54 percent) believe that the desirability of Carbon County will stay the same over the next five years; 23 percent believe it will become more desirable; and another 23 percent believe it will become less desirable.

**FIGURE 10: Desirability of Living in Carbon County and Change in Desirability Over the Next Five Years**

	How do you feel about Carbon County as a place to live? (n=510)
Very Desirable	34%
Somewhat Desirable	46%
Somewhat Undesirable	9%
Very Undesirable	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>
	Looking ahead to the next five years, do you expect Carbon County will: (n=504)
Become more desirable	23%
Stay about the same	54%
Become less desirable	23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Data source: Carbon County Needs Assessment Survey, May 2008*

A cross-tabulation of the responses to the two questions in Figure 10 indicates that among those who view Carbon County as a very desirable and somewhat desirable place to live: 57 percent believe the County will stay about the same over the next five years; 22 percent believe the County will become more desirable; and 21 percent believe the County will become less desirable.

Among those who said Carbon County was a somewhat or very undesirable place to live: 42 percent believe the County will stay the same over the next five

years; 27 percent believe the County will become more desirable; and 31 percent believe the County will become less desirable.

Other indicators of quality of life show that respondents had a positive view about living in Carbon County. For example:

- 61 percent disagreed there was more crime and violence in Carbon County than elsewhere.
- 70 percent said local parks in their community were good to excellent.
- 80 percent said the response time by emergency responders was good to excellent.
- 58 percent said police response time was good to excellent.
- 69 percent said safety in their community was good to excellent.

There were, however, some issues that respondents had a negative view about in Carbon County. For example:

- 44 percent believed it was difficult to access public transportation in Carbon County.
- 46 percent said it was easy to buy illegal drugs in their community.
- 26 percent said it was difficult to get mental health and counseling services.

In the written comments section, some respondents were deeply concerned about the availability of illegal drugs. For example, a middle-aged Leighton area resident wrote that “drugs continue to be a rising problem.”

### Quality of Life Needs

The survey results suggest that Carbon County residents have mixed opinions about the quality of life in Carbon County. Residents enjoy their parks and are generally happy with the response time of their emergency responders and police.

Based on the data analysis, the following needs were identified:

- Limited access to public transportation.
- Illegal drugs and substances abuse.

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## AWARENESS OF CARBON COUNTY PARTNERS FOR PROGRESS

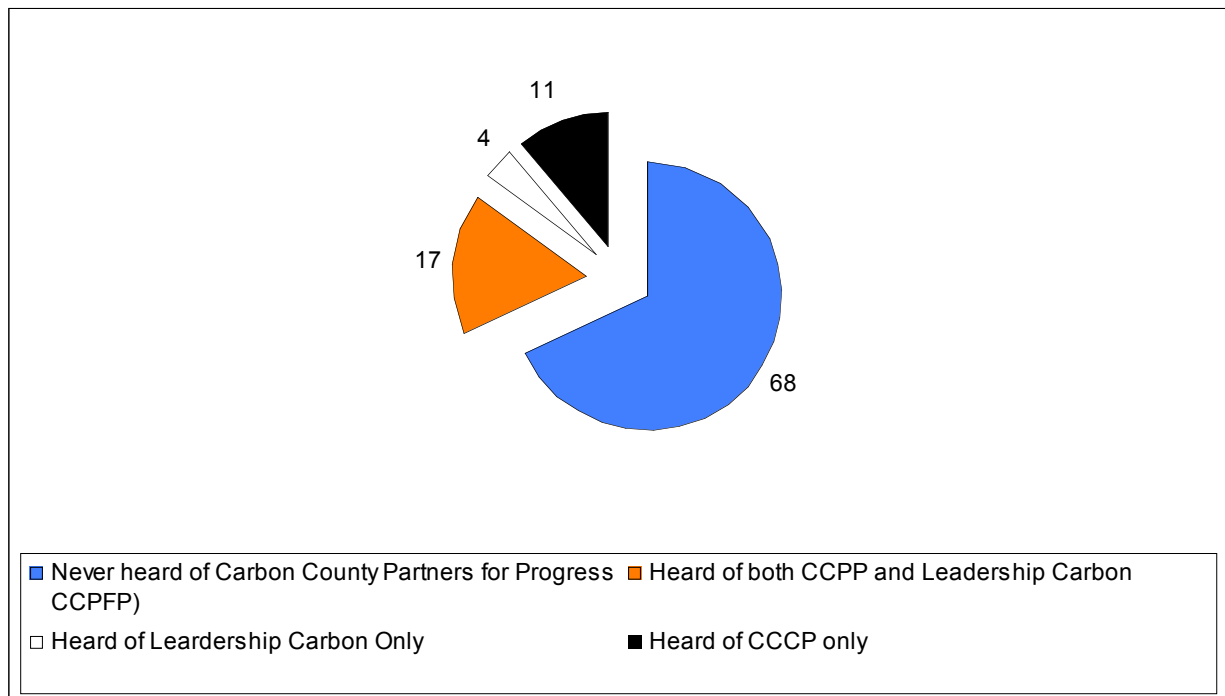
### Findings

Figure 11 shows that 68 percent of the respondents have never heard of CCPP or Leadership Carbon. Among those who have heard of it: 11 percent have only heard of CCPP; 4 percent have heard only of Leadership Carbon; and 17 percent have heard of both.

Among the factors that were correlated with awareness were educational attainment (the better educated respondents had the more likely they were to have heard of the two programs); and commuting. Those who work in Carbon County were more likely to be aware of CCPP and Leadership Carbon than those who commute outside the county.

Factors that were not correlated with awareness were age, income, gender, employment status, and number of years living in Carbon County. Other factors not related to awareness were opinions about the quality of life in Carbon County, and opinions about local government.

**FIGURE 11: Awareness of Carbon County Partners for Progress and Leadership Carbon County**



Data source: Carbon County Needs Assessment Survey, May 2008

Awareness about Carbon County Partners for Progress and Leadership Carbon Needs

The survey results suggest that the majority of Carbon County residents is not aware of CCPP and Leadership Carbon. This lack of awareness cuts across income, employment, and gender.

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## CONCLUSIONS

The survey results show that Carbon County residents have a diversity of opinions and attitudes that cut across demographic and economic groups. For example, newcomers to the county are just as likely to have the same opinions as those who have lived in the county all their lives. The same is true for those with different levels of income and educational attainment.

This diversity suggests that Carbon County is not split into different factions or groups, but that similar opinions are shared equally among all residents. From an outreach perspective, this means that broad-based messages can be effective in reaching all residents.

Other conclusions from the survey include:

- Most parents of school-age children are pleased with the services provided by their school.
- The majority of parents are involved in their children's lives.
- There is general dissatisfaction with local government.
- Most respondents see only limited economic opportunities in Carbon County.
- The majority of respondents believe economic development activities need improvement. Public safety issues are not a significant concern for the majority of residents
- Younger and less affluent residents are more likely to know someone with medical or human service needs than older and more affluent residents
- Many families are feeling less economically secure.
- There is a low level of awareness of Carbon County Partners for Progress and Leadership Carbon.

## SURVEY RESULTS

(1) How do you feel about Carbon County as a place to live? Do you consider it: (check one) (n=510)

Very undesirable .....	10.4%
Somewhat undesirable .....	9.0%
Somewhat desirable .....	46.5%
Very desirable .....	34.1%

(2) Looking ahead to the next five years, do you expect Carbon County will: (check one) (n=504)

Becoming more desirable .....	23.2%
Stay about the same .....	54.0%
Becoming less desirable .....	22.8%

(3) On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being excellent and 4 being poor, please rate the following. Please circle the appropriate number:

Quality of drinking water in my home is: (n=516)

Excellent .....	29.5%
Good .....	40.9%
Fair .....	20.2%
Poor .....	9.5%

Local parks in my community are: (n=510)

Excellent .....	14.7%
Good .....	45.7%
Fair .....	29.6%
Poor .....	10.0%

Roads and highways in my community are: (n=514)

Excellent .....	2.7%
Good .....	26.7%
Fair .....	43.2%
Poor .....	27.4%

Response time by police (local or state) is: (n=485)

Excellent .....	12.6%
Good .....	45.6%
Fair .....	33.0%
Poor .....	8.9%

Response time by emergency responders (fire, ambulance) is: (n=482)

Excellent .....	25.7%
Good .....	53.9%
Fair .....	17.4%
Poor .....	2.9%

Zoning enforcement in my community is: (n=495)

Excellent.....	5.3%
Good .....	38.2%
Fair.....	38.8%
Poor.....	17.8%

Economic development efforts in my community are: (n=492)

Excellent.....	3.3%
Good .....	21.7%
Fair.....	42.5%
Poor.....	32.5%

The resources of my local volunteer fire company are: (n=496)

Excellent.....	15.5%
Good .....	50.6%
Fair.....	30.2%
Poor.....	3.6%

Safety in my community is: (n=512)

Excellent.....	13.7%
Good .....	55.1%
Fair.....	26.0%
Poor.....	5.3%

(4) Have you hear about Carbon County Partners for Progress? (n=516)

Yes.....	28.1%
No.....	71.9%

(5) Have you hear about Leadership Carbon program? (n=513)

Yes.....	20.9%
No.....	79.1%

(6) Last week did your family sit down for a meal together? (n=503)

No.....	15.1%
Yes.....	84.9%

Number of Meals: (n=395)

Less than 3 meals.....	13.7%
3 to 5 meals .....	41.5%
6 to 9 meals .....	34.9%
10 to 14 meals .....	5.8%
15+ meals .....	4.1%

Average number of meals .....5.9 meals

(7) Thinking only about the borough or township where you live, please rate each of the following statements by circling the appropriate number with 1 being excellent and 4 being poor.

Attention to citizen concerns is (n=502)

Excellent.....	2.6%
Good .....	37.5%
Fair.....	40.4%
Poor.....	19.5%

Citizen participation in local decision-making is (n=501)

Excellent.....	2.4%
Good .....	24.2%
Fair.....	47.5%
Poor.....	25.9%

Communicating government decisions to citizens is (n=497)

Excellent.....	2.0%
Good .....	24.5%
Fair.....	48.1%
Poor.....	25.4%

Improving/preserving quality of life is (n=496)

Excellent.....	2.8%
Good .....	34.1%
Fair.....	45.4%
Poor.....	17.7%

Managing public funds and facilities is (n=493)

Excellent.....	3.7%
Good .....	31.4%
Fair.....	43.0%
Poor.....	21.9%

Planning for future change is (n=492)

Excellent.....	2.0%
Good .....	26.6%
Fair.....	44.1%
Poor.....	27.2%

Cooperating with neighboring boroughs & townships is (n=486)

Excellent.....	4.5%
Good .....	42.4%
Fair.....	39.9%
Poor.....	13.2%

(8) There are many ways to create jobs and develop Carbon County's economy. Indicate which of the following you believe should be given High Priority, Medium Priority, or Low Priority:

Promote development of new businesses (n=503)

High priority.....	69.4%
Medium priority.....	21.1%
Low priority .....	6.6%
Do not know.....	3.0%

Provide financial incentives for existing businesses (n=499)

High priority.....	39.7%
Medium priority.....	39.1%
Low priority .....	16.0%
Do not know.....	5.2%

Provide incentives to attract new businesses from out-of-state (n=502)

High priority.....	44.0%
Medium priority.....	26.5%
Low priority .....	23.9%
Do not know.....	5.6%

Promote tourism in Carbon County (n=499)

High priority.....	30.3%
Medium priority.....	39.3%
Low priority .....	27.3%
Do not know.....	3.2%

Increase technical skills of workers (n=500)

High priority.....	61.6%
Medium priority.....	29.8%
Low priority .....	5.6%
Do not know.....	3.0%

Promote development of downtown areas (n=499)

High priority.....	43.1%
Medium priority.....	38.1%
Low priority .....	16.0%
Do not know.....	2.8%

- (9) Do you have school age children living in your home? (n=507)
- |                               |       |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| No (please skip to #12) ..... | 76.5% |
| Yes .....                     | 23.5% |
- (if yes, please answer the flowing questions by circling the appropriate answer)
- (A) Do you expect your child(ren) to attend college or technical school? (n=128)
- |           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| Yes ..... | 91.4% |
| No .....  | 8.6%  |
- (B) Do you believe your child(ren) are receiving adequate career guidance?  
(n=122)
- |           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| Yes ..... | 62.3% |
| No .....  | 37.7% |
- (C) Do you believe your child(ren) feel safe at school? (n=126)
- |           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| Yes ..... | 87.3% |
| No .....  | 12.7% |
- (D) Are there adequate after-school programs for your child(ren)? (n=124)
- |           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| Yes ..... | 62.9% |
| No .....  | 37.1% |
- (E) Do you believe substance abuse (drugs/alcohol/tobacco) is a significant problem in your child(ren)'s school? (n=126)
- |           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| Yes ..... | 54.0% |
| No .....  | 46.0% |
- (F) If needed, do you believe your child(ren) have access to quality special education services? (n=122)
- |           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| Yes ..... | 79.5% |
| No .....  | 20.5% |
- (G) If needed, do you believe quality Honors or Advanced Placement programs are available for your child(ren)? (n=121)
- |           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| Yes ..... | 68.6% |
| No .....  | 31.4% |
- (H) Do you believe your schools are meeting state standards? (n=120)
- |           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| Yes ..... | 79.2% |
| No .....  | 20.8% |
- (10) Did your child participate in a preschool program? (n=153)
- |           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| No .....  | 49.7% |
| Yes ..... | 50.3% |
- How would you rate the program (check one) (n=79)
- |            |       |
|------------|-------|
| Good ..... | 77.2% |
| Fair ..... | 20.3% |
| Poor ..... | 2.5%  |

(11) With your child(ren), have you done any of the following activities within the last three months? Please circle the appropriate answer.

(A) Visited a park (n=142)

Yes .....77.5%  
No .....22.5%

(B) Attended a cultural event/activity (play, movie, concert, museum, etc.)  
(n=142)

Yes .....71.8%  
No .....28.2%

(C) Attended or participated in a sporting event (n=142)

Yes .....70.4%  
No .....29.6%

(D) Visited a library (n=142)

Yes .....53.5%  
No .....46.5%

(E) Read to your children on a regular basis (n=137)

Yes .....65.7%  
No .....34.3%

(12) Is someone paid to watch your children or elderly family members more than three days a week? (n=474)

No (please skip to 13) .....89.3%  
Yes .....10.7%

(if yes, please answer the following questions by circling the appropriate answer)

Care for Children

Finding a quality care provider was difficult (n=39)

Yes .....71.8%  
No .....28.2%

Finding an affordable care provider was difficult (n=38)

Yes .....73.7%  
No .....26.3%

I receive government help in paying for care (n=39)

Yes .....10.3%  
No .....89.7%

Care for Other Family Members (elderly, special needs, etc.)

Finding a quality care provider was difficult (n=25)	
Yes .....	56.0%
No .....	44.0%
Finding an affordable care provider was difficult (n=23)	
Yes .....	65.2%
No .....	34.8%
I receive government help in paying for care (n=22)	
Yes .....	18.2%
No .....	81.8%

(13) Among the people you know in your community, please answer the following by circling the appropriate response. Remember, all answers are confidential.

I know someone in my community who currently:

(A) Has no medical health insurance (n=505)	
Yes .....	56.0%
No .....	44.0%
(B) Cannot afford to purchase prescription medicines (n=502)	
Yes .....	56.8%
No .....	43.2%
(C) Is on public assistance (Cash Assistance, Food Stamps, Medicaid) (n=502)	
Yes .....	55.8%
No .....	44.2%
(D) Has a problem with drugs (illegal or prescription) or alcohol (n=501)	
Yes .....	45.7%
No .....	54.3%
(E) Been physically abused by a spouse, partner or family member (n=500)	
Yes .....	23.8%
No .....	76.2%
(F) Has difficulty reading or writing (n=503)	
Yes .....	28.2%
No .....	71.8%
(G) Has difficulty speaking or understanding English (n=501)	
Yes .....	16.4%
No .....	83.6%
(H) Cannot pay their utility bills (electric, gas, water, etc.) (n=497)	
Yes .....	43.3%
No .....	56.7%

(I) Is suicidal (n=497)	
Yes .....	10.1%
No .....	89.9%
(J) Is homeless (n=499)	
Yes .....	9.2%
No .....	90.8%
(K) Cannot pay their rent or mortgage (n=500)	
Yes .....	37.2%
No .....	62.8%

(14) On a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers and all answers are confidential.

Carbon County is a good place to raise children. (n=507)	
Strongly Agree .....	35.3%
Agree .....	34.7%
Neutral .....	24.5%
Disagree .....	4.1%
Strongly Disagree .....	1.4%

Today, my family financial situation is <u>better</u> than it was last year. (n=510)	
Strongly Agree .....	13.3%
Agree .....	16.7%
Neutral .....	20.6%
Disagree .....	21.6%
Strongly Disagree .....	27.8%

There is <u>more</u> crime and violence in Carbon County than elsewhere. (n=504)	
Strongly Agree .....	3.2%
Agree .....	6.5%
Neutral .....	29.0%
Disagree .....	32.9%
Strongly Disagree .....	28.4%

I am concerned about suburban sprawl in Carbon County. (n=498)	
Strongly Agree .....	34.9%
Agree .....	17.9%
Neutral .....	27.1%
Disagree .....	12.2%
Strongly Disagree .....	7.8%

It is easy to buy illegal drugs in my community. (n=473)	
Strongly Agree .....	26.8%
Agree .....	19.7%
Neutral .....	31.3%
Disagree .....	11.2%
Strongly Disagree .....	11.0%

In the last 12 months, I had problems getting health care/dental care. (n=496)

Strongly Agree .....	9.3%
Agree.....	6.3%
Neutral.....	12.7%
Disagree .....	17.3%
Strongly Disagree .....	54.4%

In Carbon County it is easy to get mental health and counseling services. (n=451)

Strongly Agree .....	11.1%
Agree.....	17.1%
Neutral.....	45.7%
Disagree .....	14.6%
Strongly Disagree .....	11.5%

My borough or township pays attention to citizen concerns. (n=496)

Strongly Agree .....	7.3%
Agree.....	15.3%
Neutral.....	41.1%
Disagree .....	18.1%
Strongly Disagree .....	18.1%

There are plenty of good paying jobs in Carbon County for anyone who wants to work. (n=503)

Strongly Agree .....	3.2%
Agree.....	5.6%
Neutral.....	16.5%
Disagree .....	27.4%
Strongly Disagree .....	47.3%

In Carbon County it is difficult to access public transportation. (n=498)

Strongly Agree .....	26.7%
Agree.....	17.5%
Neutral.....	31.3%
Disagree .....	13.9%
Strongly Disagree .....	10.6%

For minor illnesses or medical problems, I feel comfortable seeing a nurse practitioner or physician assistant. (n=507)

Strongly Agree .....	32.3%
Agree.....	24.1%
Neutral.....	18.7%
Disagree .....	9.9%
Strongly Disagree .....	15.0%

(15) What School District Do You Live In? (n=494)

Jim Thorpe .....	26.1%
Lehighton.....	27.7%
Palmerton .....	24.3%
Panther Valley .....	14.0%
Wealtherly.....	7.9%

- (16) What year were you born? (n=504)
- |                                          |       |
|------------------------------------------|-------|
| After 1978 (Under 30 years old) .....    | 6.5%  |
| 1969 to 1978 (30 to 39 years old) .....  | 9.9%  |
| 1959 to 1968 (40 to 49 years old) .....  | 19.6% |
| 1949 to 1958 (50 to 59 years old) .....  | 25.0% |
| 1939 to 1948 (60 to 69 years old) .....  | 21.0% |
| 1929 to 1938 (70 to 79 years old) .....  | 10.1% |
| Before 1928 (80 years old & older) ..... | 7.1%  |
- Average year of birth..... 1953 (55.0 year old)
- (17) How many years have you lived in Carbon County? (n=505)
- |                         |       |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Less than 5 years ..... | 9.3%  |
| 5 to 9 years .....      | 7.9%  |
| 10 to 14 years .....    | 6.5%  |
| 15 to 19 years .....    | 6.9%  |
| 20 to 24 years .....    | 8.7%  |
| 25 to 49 years .....    | 29.3% |
| 50+ years.....          | 31.3% |
- Average number of years ..... 35.2 years
- (18) Counting yourself- how many people are currently living in your household? (n=508)
- |                             |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| One person .....            | 12.8% |
| Two persons .....           | 43.1% |
| Three to four persons ..... | 34.4% |
| Five or more persons.....   | 9.6%  |
- Average number of persons..... 2.7 persons
- (19) Of the people currently living in your household, how many are under 18 years old? (n=506)
- |                                  |       |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| No child(ren) in household ..... | 71.9% |
| Child(ren) in household .....    | 28.1% |
- |                                           |       |
|-------------------------------------------|-------|
| One child in household.....               | 47.2% |
| Two children in household.....            | 31.0% |
| Three to four children in household ..... | 19.0% |
| Five or more children in household .....  | 2.8%  |
- Average number of children in household..... 1.8 children
- (20) Your gender is (n=511)
- |              |       |
|--------------|-------|
| Male .....   | 50.1% |
| Female ..... | 49.9% |

- (21) What is your race? (Check all that apply) (n=503)
- |                                |       |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| White.....                     | 96.9% |
| Black .....                    | 0.4%  |
| Asian .....                    | 0.2%  |
| Native American .....          | 0.0%  |
| Latino/Hispanic.....           | 0.4%  |
| Other.....                     | 0.4%  |
| Multiple Races/Ethnicity ..... | 1.8%  |
- (22) Does everyone currently living in your household have health insurance? (n=511)
- |          |       |
|----------|-------|
| Yes..... | 85.7% |
| No.....  | 14.3% |
- How many people DO NOT have health insurance (n=67)
- |                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| One person.....            | 64.2% |
| Two persons .....          | 22.4% |
| Three persons .....        | 10.4% |
| Four or more persons ..... | 3.0%  |
- Average number of persons .....1.5 persons
- (23) Do you rent or own your home? (n=508)
- |           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| Rent..... | 7.5%  |
| Own ..... | 92.5% |
- (24) What is your highest level of educational attainment? (check only one) (n=511)
- |                                                   |       |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Some high school, no diploma .....                | 5.3%  |
| High school diploma or GED.....                   | 35.2% |
| Some college or technical school, no degree ..... | 21.7% |
| Technical school degree.....                      | 7.2%  |
| Associate degree.....                             | 10.8% |
| Bachelor's degree .....                           | 12.1% |
| Graduate or professional degree.....              | 7.6%  |
- (27) Last year, what was your household income? (n=491)
- |                                     |       |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Less than \$25,000 per year .....   | 20.0% |
| \$25,000 to \$49,999 per year ..... | 37.1% |
| \$50,000 or more per year.....      | 43.0% |

- (25) With respects to employment, you are: (check one) (n=508)
- Currently working (see below) ..... 62.6%
  - Currently NOT working, but looking for work ..... 4.1%
  - Retired or disabled, not working or looking for work ..... 29.1%
  - Other (homemaker, student, etc.) not working or looking for work ..... 4.1%

Approximately how many minutes does it take to get to work? (n=208)

- Less than 15 minutes .....40.1%
- 15 to 29 minutes .....14.6%
- 30 to 44 minutes .....17.8%
- 45+ minutes.....27.5%

Average number of minutes ..... 28.9 minutes

What county and state do you work in? (n=301)

- Carbon County, PA.....51.2%
- Lehigh County, PA.....17.3%
- Northampton County, PA .....11.0%
- Schuylkill County, PA.....1.7%
- Luzerne County, PA.....6.3%
- Monroe County, PA .....8.0%
- Other Pennsylvania County .....3.0%
- Outside Pennsylvania .....1.7%