

*COMMUNITY SURVEY
2007*

Prepared for:



December 2007

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As required by the Code of Ethics of the National Council on Public Polls and the United States Privacy Act of 1974, The Center for Research and Public Policy maintains the anonymity of respondents to surveys the firm conducts. No information will be released that might, in any way, reveal the identity of the respondent.

Moreover, no information regarding these findings will be released without the written consent of an authorized representative of the Town of East Lyme.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Center for Research & Public Policy (CRPP) is pleased to present the results of a Community Survey conducted among residents of the Town of East Lyme in December 2007.

The survey was designed to provide resident input on quality of life, natural resources, open space, community character, smart growth, residential and economic development, roads and facilities.

The research study included a comprehensive telephone survey. Interviews were conducted among residents of the Town of East Lyme by phone. CRPP, working together with Town of East Lyme officials, designed the survey instrument to be used when calling Town of East Lyme residents.

This report summarizes information collected from telephone surveys conducted December 4 – 11, 2007.

The survey instrument employed in the Community Survey included the following areas for investigation:

- Overall quality of life;
- Community issues of concern;
- Suggestions on improving quality of life;
- Community's best attributes;
- Views on natural resources and open space;
- Opinions on growth;
- Residential development needs;
- Views on economic development;
- The market potential for a Shoreline East train stop;
- Prioritization of community facility needs; and
- Demographics.

Section II of this report discusses the Methodology used in the study, while Section III includes Highlights derived from an analysis of the quantitative research. Section IV is a Summary of Findings for the residential telephone surveys - a narrative account of the data.

Section V is an Appendix to the report containing a crosstabulation table, a copy of the survey instruments, and the composite aggregate data.

METHODOLOGY

Using a quantitative research design, CRPP completed 400 interviews among residents of the Town of East Lyme.

All telephone interviews were conducted between December 4 – 11, 2007. Residents were contacted between 5:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. weekdays and 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on the weekend.

Survey input was provided by Town of East Lyme officials.

Survey design at CRPP is a careful, deliberative process to ensure fair, objective and balanced surveys. Staff members, with years of survey design experience, edit out any bias. Further, all scales used by CRPP (either numeric, such as one through ten, or wording such as strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree) are balanced evenly. And, placement of questions is carefully accomplished so that order has minimal impact.

All population-based surveys conducted by CRPP are proportional to population contributions within States, towns, and known census tract, group blocks and blocks. This distribution ensures truly representative results without significant under or over representation of various geographic or demographic groups within a sampling frame.

CRPP utilized a “super random digit” sampling procedure, which derives a working telephone sample of both listed and unlisted telephone numbers. This method of sample selection eliminates any bias toward only listed telephone numbers. Additionally, this process allows randomization of numbers, which equalizes the probability of qualified respondents being included in the sampling frame.

Respondents qualified for the survey if they confirmed they were heads of households, at least eighteen years of age, and were current residents of the Town of East Lyme.

Training of telephone researchers and pre-test of the survey instrument occurred on December 4, 2007.

All facets of the study were completed by CRPP’s senior staff and researchers. These aspects include: survey design, pre-test, computer programming, fielding, coding, editing, data entry, verification, validation and logic checks, computer analysis, analysis, and report writing.

Completion rates are a critical aspect of any telephone survey research. Because one group of people might be easier to reach than another group, it is important that concentrated efforts are made to reach all groups to an equal degree. A high completion rate means that a high percentage of the respondents within the original sample were actually contacted, and the resulting sample is not biased toward one potential audience. CRPP maintained a 77% completion rate on all calls made during this 2007 Community Survey. And, a high completion rate, many times indicates an interest in the topic.

Statistically, a sample of 400 surveys represents a margin for error of +/-5.0% at a 95% confidence level.

In theory, a sample of Town of East Lyme residents will differ no more than +/-5.0% than if all East Lyme residents were contacted and included in the survey. That is, if random probability sampling procedures were reiterated over and over again, sample results may be expected to approximate the large population values within plus or minus 5.0% -- 95 out of 100 times.

Readers of this report should note that any survey is analogous to a snapshot in time and results are only reflective of the time period in which the survey was undertaken. Should concerted public relations or information campaigns be undertaken during or shortly after the fielding of the survey, the results contained herein may be expected to change and should be, therefore, carefully interpreted and extrapolated.

Furthermore, it is important to note that all surveys contain some component of “sampling error”. Error that is attributable to systematic bias has been significantly reduced by utilizing strict random probability procedures. This sample was strictly random in that selection of each potential respondent was an independent event, based on known probabilities.

Each qualified household within the Town of East Lyme had an equal chance for participating in the study. Statistical random error, however, can never be eliminated but may be significantly reduced by increasing sample size.

HIGHLIGHTS

On Quality of Life...

- Impressively, 92.0% of all residents surveyed viewed their overall quality of life in East Lyme as excellent or good. Another 7.8% indicated their quality of life was fair or poor.
- Over half of all residents, 51.8%, cited “high taxes” when asked about issues or concerns they have living in East Lyme. This was followed, distantly, by other concerns including: over expansion (23.5%), need for better education (16.3%), traffic congestion (13.5%), over population (9.5%), road safety (6.8%), poor housing market (6.5%), preserving open space (4.8%), more police protection needed (4.5%), and poor water quality (4.3%).
- In another open end format question, respondents offered suggestions on ways to improve their quality of life in East Lyme. The most frequently cited suggestions included: stop overtaxing (26.3%), stop over expansion (10.8%), more shopping plazas (10.3%), keep education a priority (6.5%), improve downtown appearance (5.8%), keep politics out of decisions (5.8%), and better traffic management (4.5%).
- Things liked best about living in East Lyme included: friendly environment, good school system, beaches, small size, close to larger towns, Long Island Sound, and the quiet village.

On Natural Resources and Open Space...

- Just over half of all residents surveyed, 52.5%, indicated they would be willing to pay \$100.00 more each year in taxes to secure more open space. When “don’t know” respondents are removed from the data, the percent moves to 56.8%.
- One quarter, 25.8%, of those surveyed believed the town has enough open space currently.
- Large majorities, in the nineties, considered it very or somewhat important to preserve and protect such resources as drinking water, lakes and rivers, geological features, historic and cultural areas, views and vistas, agricultural lands and forest areas.

On Community Character and Smart Growth...

- More than three quarters of respondents surveyed, 78.5%, indicated they support ordinances to protect designated scenic roads characterized by stone walls, mature trees and pastoral views. Another 11.5% were opposed and 10.0% were unsure.
- Favorite spots in town included: McCook's Point, Board Walk, the beaches, Rocky Neck Park, Niantic Bay, Black Point Road, Upper Pattagansett, and Long Island Sound.
- More respondents (48.3%) believe that growth in East Lyme over the last five to seven years has not enhanced the community than those (39.8%) believing the growth has enhanced the community.
- Large majorities agreed that commercial buildings should be designed to maintain the character of small town New England (90.8%) as well as efforts should be made to improve the walk-ability within commercial areas (89.5%).
- Three quarters of respondents agreed with limiting growth in the northern areas of town (76.5%) and upgrading sign standards to improve appearances of the town (78.2%). And, two thirds (65.8%), agreed new development should occur in vacant and underutilized areas centered around the villages.

On Residential Development...

- One third of respondents, 34.3%, saw too few rental apartments in town while one quarter, 25.0%, saw too few senior housing opportunities. Some saw too few single family homes (11.3%) and condominiums (8.8%).
- On affordable housing, just under one half (48.0%) of all respondents favored allowing two-family homes in all districts if designed to look like single family homes. Over one half, favored creating affordable housing districts and allowing accessory apartments – 52.3% and 53.5% respectively. And, nearly two thirds (64.8%) favored requiring a percentage of all new housing to meet affordability criteria.

On Economic Development...

- Three quarters of all respondents, 76.0%, agreed that the town should make the approval process more user friendly for new business.
- Two thirds of respondents agreed the town should take advantage of its waterfront to attract boaters and other tourists to town and invest in downtown Niantic parking – 63.3% and 60.8% respectively.
- And, just over one half, 55.8%, agreed that the Gateway District should be developed as a mix of housing, office and retail.

On Community Roads and Transportation...

- One third of survey respondents, 34.8%, agreed with a narrowing of subdivision roads from 28' to 24' to save associated costs. Others, however, agreed with reducing the number of individual driveways to businesses on Flanders Road, that they would use Shoreline East if a train stopped in Niantic, and the construction of bike lanes along such routes as 1, 156, and 161 – 66.0%, 66.8%, and 72.8% respectively.
- Major traffic related trouble spots are seen as: Route 161, Flanders Road, I-95 Exit 75, I-95, north Exit 74, and I-95 near 395.

On Community Facilities...

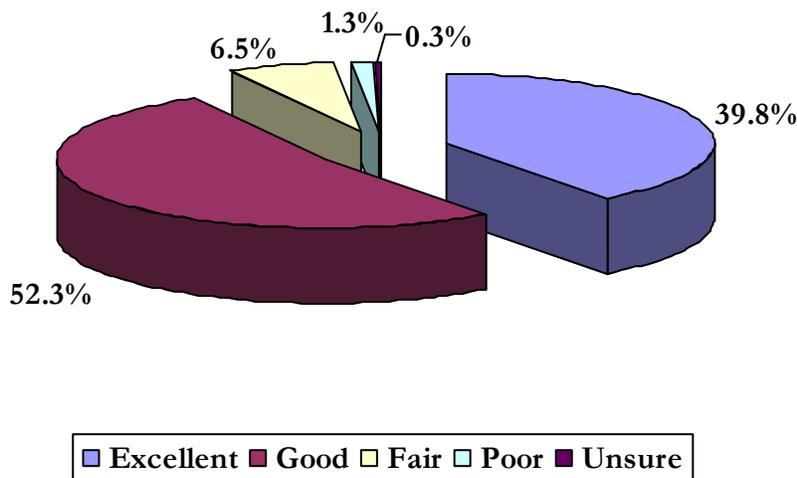
- Researchers asked respondents to place a high, moderate, or low priority rating on a number of planned or conceptual community projects.
- Those projects perceived as highest priority included: continuation of sidewalks along Route 161, downtown Niantic streetscape enhancement, new bathrooms at McCooks and Cini Park, library expansion and boardwalk underpass.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Readers are reminded that the following section summarizes statistics collected from surveys among 400 residents of the Town of East Lyme.

QUALITY OF LIFE

All respondents were asked if their overall quality of life in East Lyme was excellent, good, fair or poor. A large majority, 92.0%, reported their quality of life as excellent (39.8%) or good (52.3%). Another 7.8% indicated their quality of life was fair (6.5%) or poor (1.3%). Some were unsure (0.3%).



In an open end format question, all respondents were asked to name issues or concerns they have living in East Lyme.

The following table presents the most frequently named issues or concerns.

Issues or Concerns in East Lyme	Percent
High taxes	51.8
Over expansion	23.5
Need better education	16.3
Traffic congestion	13.5
Over population	9.5
Road safety	6.8
Poor housing market	6.5
Preserving open space	4.8
More police protection needed	4.5
Improve water quality	4.3

Other issues or concerns named less frequently included: too many accidents on I-95, more restaurants needed, zoning requirements, future storage of water, services being duplicated, Downtown Niantic needs improvement, town dumps not open at convenient hours, Darrow

Pond development, safe environment, nuclear plant, fix up boardwalk, better public transportation needed, more convenient stores, cost of living, increased retirement communities, I-95, Millstone, town budget is out of control, improve beaches, high insurance costs, poor garbage pick up, proximity to jail, emergency situations, and drug trafficking.

In a second open end question opportunity, resident respondents were asked for their suggestions to improve quality of life in East Lyme.

The following table depicts the responses most frequently named.

Suggestions for Improved Quality of Life	Percent
Stop overtaxing	26.3
Stop over expansion	10.8
More shopping plazas	10.3
Keep education priority	6.5
Improve downtown appearance	5.8
Keep politics out of decisions	5.8
Better traffic management	4.5

Other suggestions made less frequently included:

More family oriented places, more sidewalks needed, better health insurance for town employees, more bike paths, police department needs improvement, bring Niantic a McDonalds, keep high school swimming pool open more, care for the environment, more parking at beaches, clean parks in town, more recycling, keep library open later, maintain better water, lower teacher salaries, more senior activities, monitor chlorine in tap water, get rid of casinos, better street cleaning, moratorium on building, 2 acre zoning, better snow removal, controlled population growth, more adult learning classes, fix Grassy Hill Road, more public gyms, and better town zoning.

All survey respondents were asked to report one or two things they like best about living in East Lyme. The following table presents the most frequently named “likes.”

Things Liked Best About East Lyme	Percent
Friendly environment	33.0
Good school system	25.3
Beaches	16.5
Small size	16.0

Close to larger towns	14.8
Long Island Sound	12.5
Quiet village	11.5

Others things residents like about East Lyme named with less frequency included: the walkability of the Town, cost to the woods, Niantic Village, good government, shoreline area, scenic roads, quality of life, safe place to live, downtown area, churches, good parks, boardwalk, recreation facilities, riding bikes, Christmas lighting, seaside location, community in Chapman Woods, senior center activities, convenience to hospital, culture, country feel, climate, family environment, library, lots of beautiful homes, beautiful lakes, good shopping, farm areas and the weather.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE

Researchers read four statements regarding the protection of natural resources and open space in East Lyme. Respondents were asked if they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with each. The cumulative totals for those strongly and somewhat agreeing are presented within the following table.

The final column of the table presents results when “don’t know” respondents are removed from the data.

Statements	Strongly and Somewhat Agree	Strongly and Somewhat Agree (without DK's)
A network of footpaths throughout town connecting open spaces is desirable	86.5	90.1
The town should continue to acquire land in Oswegatchie Hills and other areas of town for open space purposes	85.3	90.7
I would pay \$100 more per year in taxes to have the town acquire more open space	52.5	56.8
The town has enough open space	25.8	29.3

Survey respondents were asked if each of seven different preservation or protection actions were very important, somewhat important, somewhat unimportant or not at all important.

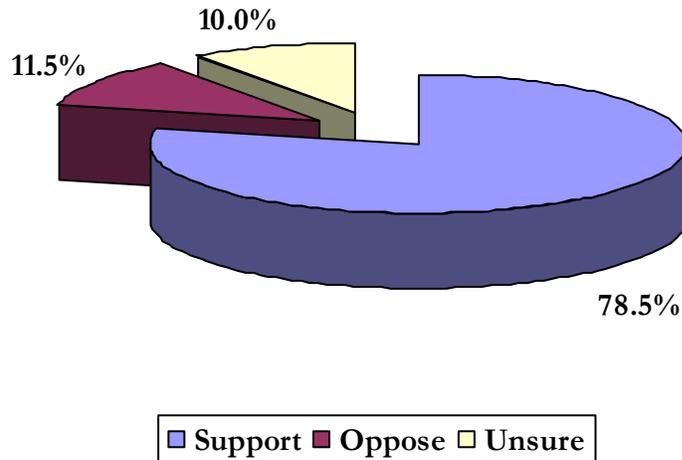
The following table presents the cumulative totals for those reporting very and somewhat important. Results with and without “don’t know” respondents are presented.

Protections or Preservation Actions	Very and Somewhat Important	Very and Somewhat Important (without DK's)
Protection of Lakes, Rivers, Streams, LI Sound	98.5	98.7
Protection of Drinking Water Resources	97.3	98.5
Preservation of Historic and Cultural Resources	96.0	96.7
<i>Protection of Scenic Views and Vistas</i>	94.0	95.7
Protection of Large Un-fragmented Forests	93.8	96.6
Preservation of Agricultural Lands	93.0	94.2
Protection of Unique Geologic Features	91.3	95.8

COMMUNITY CHARACTER / SMART GROWTH

Over three quarters of all respondents, 78.5%, suggested they support ordinances to protected designated scenic roads characterized by stone walls, mature trees, and pastoral views.

Another 11.5% were opposed and 10.0% were unsure.



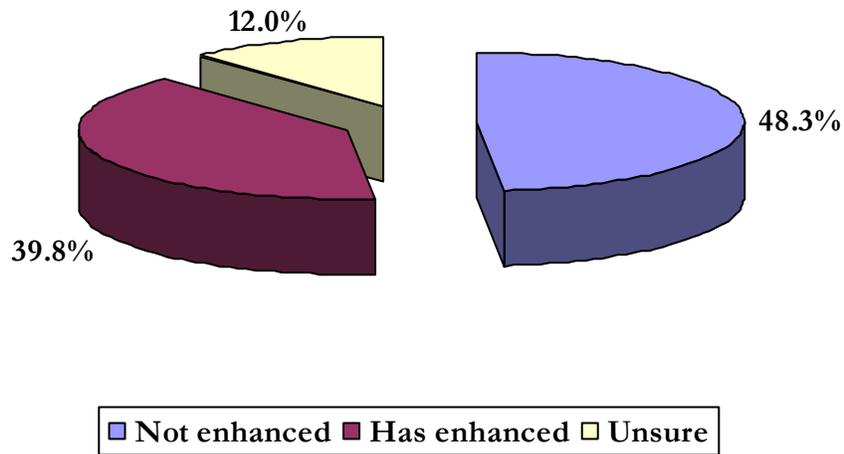
In another open end opportunity, researchers asked respondents to name some of their favorite views or places within Town. Multiple responses were accepted.

The following table presents the most favored locations.

Favorite Spots in Town	Percent
McCook's Point	39.0
Board Walk	33.8
Beaches	23.3
Rocky Neck Park	21.3
Niantic Bay	20.0
Black Point Road	6.3
Upper Pattagansett	5.0
Long Island Sound	5.0

Other favorite spots named with less frequency included: Perry Park, The Woods, Boston Post Road, Niantic, View on Roxbury Road, Powers Lake, Giants Neck Beach, Scott Road, Grassy Hill Road, Bride Brook Road, Gorton Pond, Stones Ranch, Hole in the Wall Beach, Latimers Brook, downtown shopping, Walnut Hill area, Flanders area, state forest, Lover's Lane, The River, view of the shoreline, the movie house, Four Mile River Road, high school playing field, Smith-Harris House, senior center, Route 11 area, yacht club, the library, Main Street, Hartman Park, Thomas Lee House, boat launch area, Laurel Hill Road, historic homes, horse farms, the bridges, Pell Pond, country roads, small town atmosphere, Whistletown Road, and the ball fields.

Nearly half of all respondents, 48.3%, suggested that growth in East Lyme over the last five to seven years has not enhanced the community while 39.8% believed it did and 12.0% were unsure.



A number of statements were presented to survey respondents related to growth and development. Each respondent was asked if they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with each statement.

The following table presents the cumulative totals for those strongly and somewhat agreeing with each statement. The final column holds results with “don’t know” respondents removed.

Statements	Strongly and Somewhat Agreeing	Strongly and Somewhat Agreeing (without DK's)
Commercial/retail buildings should be designed and scaled to maintain small town New England	90.8	93.1
Efforts should be made to improve walk-ability within commercial districts.	89.5	92.3
Sign standards should be upgraded to improve the appearance of commercial areas.	78.2	86.4
I support limiting growth in the northern area of town along Whistletown Road, Walnut Hill Road and along and to the north of Grassy Hill Road to preserve rural character and avoid sprawl.	76.5	82.9
New development should occur in vacant and underutilized areas centered around the villages of Niantic and Flanders where there is adequate infrastructure to support.	65.8	71.5

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Researchers asked respondents if they felt there were too many, too few, or about the right amount of several different housing types in East Lyme today. The results are presented within the following table. The “too few” column is considered community need.

Housing Types	Too Many	Too Few	Right Amount	Don't Know
Rental apartments	7.5	34.3	33.0	25.3
Senior housing	20.5	25.0	43.5	11.0
Single family homes	16.3	11.3	65.8	6.8
Condominiums	22.0	8.8	58.8	10.5

The following was read to all respondents: “The amount of affordable housing in East Lyme falls below the state mandate of 10%. This allows developers to supercede current zoning requirements. Please indicate whether you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose each of the following methods to increase affordable housing in town.”

The following table presents the cumulative totals for those strongly and somewhat agreeing with each statement. Results including and excluding “don’t know” respondents are presented.

Statements	Strongly and Somewhat Favor	Strongly and Somewhat Favor (without DK's)
Require a percentage of all new housing to meet affordability criteria	64.8	70.2
Allow accessory apartments in single-family homes	53.5	59.6
Create designated affordable housing districts in selected areas	52.3	56.6
Allow two-family homes in all districts if designed to look like single-family homes	48.0	52.6

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Several statements, related to community economic development, were presented by researchers to survey respondents. Each was asked if strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with each statement.

The following table presents the cumulative totals for those strongly and somewhat agreeing. The final column holds data with “don’t know” respondents removed.

Statements	Strongly and Somewhat Agree	Strongly and Somewhat Agree (without DK's)
The town should make the approval process more user friendly for new businesses.	76.0	84.7
The town should take advantage of its waterfront location and proximity to casinos by making improvements that attract boaters and other tourists into town.	63.3	65.2
The Town should invest in parking infrastructure in downtown Niantic to allow maximum use of commercial buildings.	60.8	64.6
The Gateway District located at exit 74 comprised of 200+ acres including the driving range, should be developed as a mix of housing, office and retail to maximize potential tax revenue.	55.8	62.6

COMMUNITY ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION

Four statements related to community roadways, trains and bike lanes were presented. Each respondent was asked if they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with each statement.

The following table presents the cumulative totals for those suggesting they strongly or somewhat agreed with each statement. The final column in the table holds results without “don’t know” respondents.

Statements	Strongly and Somewhat Agree	Strongly and Somewhat Agree (without DK's)
Bike lanes should be built along Routes such as 1, 156 and 161.	72.8	75.4
I would use Shoreline East if a train stop was added in Niantic.	66.8	72.6
The number of individual driveways to businesses on Flanders Rd. (Rte. 161) needs to be reduced by requiring shared driveway connections between businesses.	66.0	75.2
The width of roads for new subdivisions should be narrowed from 28' to 24' to minimize pavement and reduce maintenance costs.	34.8	43.8

And, in an open end format question, researchers asked respondents to identify any particular roadway trouble spot that comes to mind.

The following table depicts the most frequently named trouble spots.

Trouble Spots	Percent
Route 161	22.0
Flanders Road	19.3
I 95 Exit 75 should be closed	11.8
I 95	11.0
North Exit 74	7.3
I 95 near 395	6.8

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

In a final survey section, prior to demographics, researchers read a list of a number of potential or pending community projects.

Respondents were asked if they considered each project a high, moderate or low priority.

The following table presents the total suggesting each was a high priority as well as a final table column which presents the cumulative totals for those suggesting a high or moderate priority.

Facilities	High	High and Moderate
<i>Continuation of Sidewalks along Rte. 161</i>	41.9	79.7
Downtown Niantic Streetscape Enhancement	32.5	73.8
New Bathrooms at McCooks and Cini Park	31.3	73.3
Expansion of Library	22.6	62.2
Boardwalk Underpass	22.5	54.3
New Public Safety Complex	19.0	56.3
Fishing Pier	16.3	47.5
Additional Athletic Fields and/or Facilities	11.3	39.8
Transient Boating Facilities	8.8	38.3
Skateboard Park	8.0	30.5
New Town Hall	4.0	29.8

DEMOGRAPHICS

Zip code	<u>2007</u>
06333	37.5%
06357	62.5

Years lived in East Lyme	<u>2007</u>
Less than 10 years	21.8%
10 or more years	76.4
Refused	1.8

Age	<u>2007</u>
Less than 35	9.3%
35 to less than 65	68.7
65 and older	22.0

Number of children	<u>2007</u>
None	76.0%
One	8.5
Two	7.5
Three	2.0
Four	1.3
Five	0.3
Six	0.3
Ten	0.3
Refused	4.0

Education	<u>2007</u>
Some high school	1.8%
High school graduate	21.8
Tech school graduate	1.5
Some college	14.0
College graduate	35.5
Post graduated	22.5
Refused	3.0

Gender	<u>2007</u>
Male	41.4%
Female	58.6

5

APPENDIX

INTERPRETATION OF AGGREGATE RESULTS

The computer processed data for this survey is presented in the following frequency distributions. It is important to note that the wordings of the variable labels and value labels in the computer-processed data are largely abbreviated descriptions of the Questionnaire items and available response categories.

The frequency distributions include the category or response for the question items. Responses deemed not appropriate for classification have been grouped together under the “Other” code.

The “NA” category label refers to “No Answer” or “Not Applicable”. This code is also used to classify ambiguous responses. In addition, the “DK/RF” category includes those respondents who did not know their answer to a question or declined to answer it. In many of the tables, a group of responses may be tagged as “Missing” – occasionally, certain individual’s responses may not be required to specific questions and thus are excluded. Although when this category of response is used, the computations of percentages are presented in two (2) ways in the frequency distributions: 1) with their inclusion (as a proportion of the total sample), and 2) their exclusion (as a proportion of a sample subgroup).

Each frequency distribution includes the absolute observed occurrence of each response (i.e. the total number of cases in each category). Immediately adjacent to the right of the column of absolute frequencies is the column of relative frequencies. These are the percentages of cases falling in each category response, including those cases designated as missing data. To the right of the relative frequency column is the adjusted frequency distribution column that contains the relative frequencies based on the legitimate (i.e. non-missing) cases. That is, the total base for the adjusted frequency distribution excludes the missing data. For many Questionnaire items, the relative frequencies and the adjusted frequencies will be nearly the same. However, some items that elicit a sizable number of missing data will produce quite substantial percentage differences between the two columns of frequencies. The careful analyst will cautiously consider both distributions.

The last column of data within the frequency distribution is the cumulative frequency distribution (Cum Freq.). This column is simply an adjusted frequency distribution of the sum of all previous categories of response and the current category of response. Its primary usefulness is to gauge some ordered or ranked meaning.