

Assessing The Needs of Our Community

A Comprehensive County-wide Needs Assessment

County of Berks – 2007/ 2008

Board of Commissioners - 2007

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Assessing The Needs of Our Community

A Comprehensive County-wide Needs Assessment

The Mission

It is the mission of the human services of the County of Berks is to provide comprehensive and coordinated services in the following areas: Adult Services, Aging, Children & Youth, Drug & Alcohol, Homeless Assistance and Community Mental Health/ Mental Retardation Programs.

To improve the quality and efficiency of public services and supports for individuals with mental illness and mental retardation so that they can increase their opportunities and abilities to lead lives of dignity and independence

To develop, administer and coordinate a community-based network of services for older Berks Countians.

To protect our children and assure their physical and emotional well-being as provided by law, as well as to preserve, strengthen, and empower their families.

To plan, implement, and monitor alcohol and other drug prevention, intervention and treatment services for all county residents.

Goals

Our goal is:

- To promote excellence, coordinated quality service, compassion, creativity, fiscal responsibility while avoiding duplication of services.
- To continuously improve both the level and scope of service to assist in maintaining the highest level of independence.
- To identify the community's needs and assist in the awareness of those needs.
- Encourage agencies to work together and track program outcomes
- Work to identify and obtain funding to support human service needs

Overview of the County of Berks

The County of Berks is situated in southeaster Pennsylvania. It is strategically located at the intersection of a dynamic market of economic, trade and industrial activities in the New York-Washington, DC corridor. This market includes Philadelphia, 56 miles to the southeast; Baltimore, 97 miles south; and New York, 125 miles northeast. Roughly diamond shaped, the County covers an 864 square mile area.

Originally settled 250 years ago, the County has shifted from mining and forging, to manufacturing, and most recently to service-related business. The trend away from manufacturing is expected to continue into the next decade. The service industry, in particular retail, health, business and social services, is projected to grow the most over the next ten years.

The County consists of 73 boroughs, townships and the City of Reading, and has been exhibiting an upward trend for the last decade. Each is responsible for establishing and administering municipal financial budgets and tax rates, and providing general services and road maintenance. Municipalities are responsible for land use controls, such as zoning and subdivision regulations and building permits. Berks County is a Third Class County administered by three county commissioners each elected for four-year terms. Public schools are overseen by elected school boards.

The County's current (2006 estimate) population is 401,149. This is an increase of 27,511 individuals over the 2000 census estimate of 373,638. According to the 2000 census, the majority of the population continues to be comprised of white persons, 329,460 persons or 88% of the population. This is a slight increase of 14,960 persons. The County's minority populations have continued to grow significantly over past 20 years. The 2000 census reflects an increase of 44,178 minority persons. The most significant increase was to the County's Hispanic* population which more than doubled from approximately 17,000 to 36,357 or an increase of 115% in 2000. The Hispanic population in the City of Reading increased 110% and 125% in the townships and boroughs. Person of Hispanic origin comprise approximately 12% of the County's total population or an increase of 7% from the 1990 census.

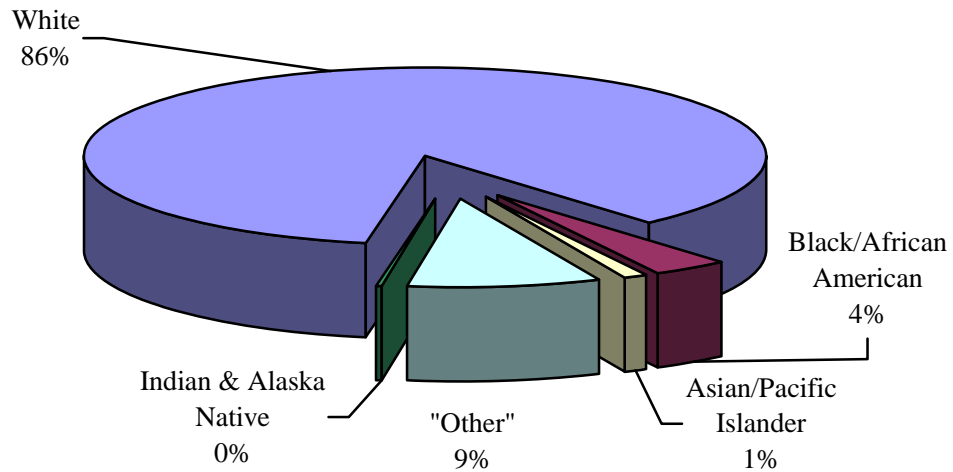
The Black/African American population has also increased over the last ten years. The 2000 census indicated an increase of 3,775 persons or 37% over the 1990 census. The City of Reading's Black/African American population increased by 30% going from 7,607 to 9,947 persons between 1990 and 2000 while the townships and boroughs seen an increase of 60% of this population. This Black/African American population comprise approximately 3.7% of the County's total population or an increase of .7% from the 1990 census.

*Note: the term "Hispanic" is an ethnic and not a racial designation. Person of Hispanic origin can be of any race (white Hispanic, black Hispanic, etc.)

The Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Native Alaska and Hawaiian population increased from 3,079 to 4,473 between 1990 and 2000. Persons of "other" racial groups increased by 128%, going from 8,900 to 20,317 between the 1990 and 2000 census.

The trend in distribution of the population is projected to continue through the year 2010. The City of Reading will continue to see an increase in the minority populations, while experiencing a decrease of the white population. The decrease of the City's white population was 8% between 1980 and 1990 and 22% between 1990 and 2000, from 66,840 persons in 1980 to 48,059 in 2000. The projection for Berks County as a whole is expected to increase 6.5% by 2010 and 13% by 2020 and the City of Reading's projection is 6% by 2010 and 12.5% by 2020.

Berks County Population by Race



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

BACKGROUND

Needs Assessment Overview

The County of Berks Human Service Needs Assessment project began in January 2007 to identify critical areas where the assistance of the County's human services departments and agencies would be most beneficial for individuals, families and the community as a whole. Previously, funding decisions were made primarily based on outdated statistics and manners. Reliance on the perceptions of a few regarding where state and federal human service funding could best be used was not the best way to distribute funding in the community. As more of the state and federal funding systems are shifting to performance-based monitoring and outcome-based measurements, the County began to reevaluate the way services are provided to the most vulnerable populations within the County. Determining what the highest priorities are became the major goal of the assessment.

It is the desire of the County Board of Commissioners to provide services that meet the needs of County individuals and families in the most practical and cost-effective manner.

Funding and in-kind support for the Needs Assessment was made possible through the Department of Public Welfare's Human Services Development Fund, the Office of Aging, the Office of Community Development, Berks Community Action Program of Berks County, Community Prevention Partnership, Berks County Senior Citizens Council and the County of Berks.

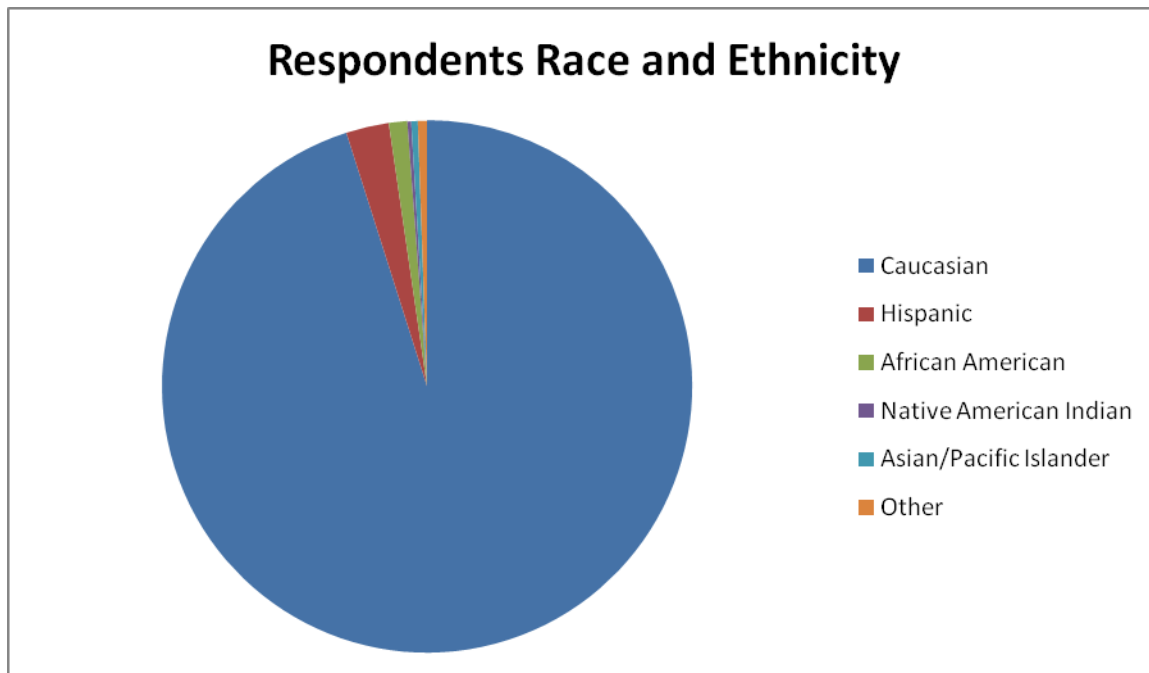
How The Needs Assessment Was Conducted

Approximately 60,000 residential surveys were mailed to randomly selected households in Berks County. Of that number, 8,500 were households in the City of Reading and about 51,000 households were outside the City; 11,000 were to rental properties and 49,000 to owner-occupied residents. Approximately 2,000 surveys were distributed by County social service agencies and the surveys were available on the County's website. Surveys were returned by approximately 18,000 residents for a response rate of approximately 30%.

Berks County Needs Assessment

Introduction

The Berks County Office of Human Services conducted a county-wide needs assessment to help determine how to best serve the residents of the county. Three separate surveys were disseminated to 3 very specific groups of individuals: community residents, service providers and business people. All three surveys were mailed out in mass mailings with postage paid return envelopes and the surveys were available on-line for those who have access to the internet and preferred to respond electronically. The response rate was exceptional, resulting in a broad representation of the community residents, service providers and business people. A total of 14,520 community residents, 124 service providers and 67 business people responded. Results are presented broken down into specific groups for those respondents with complete data for the various topics.



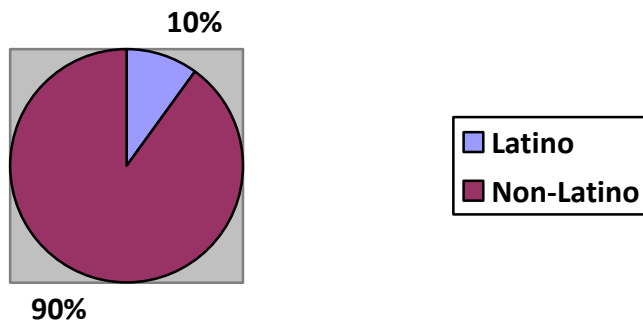
To best understand and interpret the survey results, it is important to have a clear picture of Berks County and to look at what services were utilized during the last calendar year (2007). This, in combination with the survey results, will best guide any decisions made pertaining to planning for current and future services.

Statistical Data for the Geographic Area

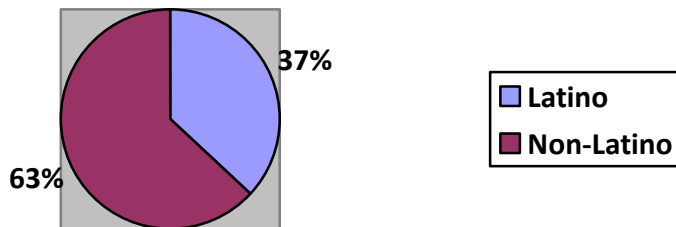
Berks County PA, in southeastern Pennsylvania is located 60 miles northwest of Philadelphia. According to the 2000 Census, Berks County had a population of 373,638 persons and Reading, the county seat, had a population of 81,207 persons (22% of the population of Berks County). The remaining residents of Berks County are characterized as 36% living in suburbs and 42% in the rural areas devoted to agriculture that represents almost half of the geographic area of the county. From 2000 to 2006, the total population of Berks County increased from 373,638 to 401,149, an increase of 27,511 people, or

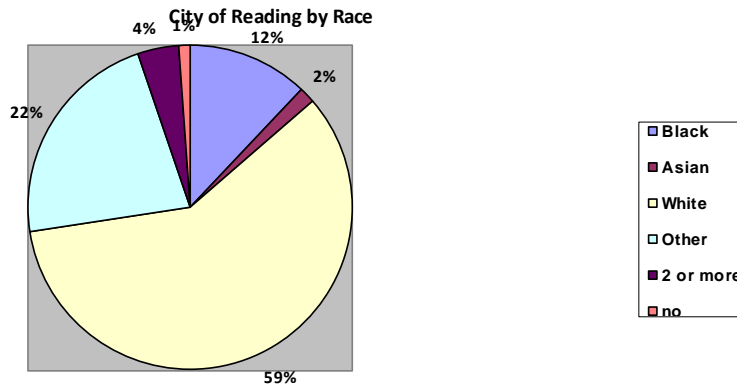
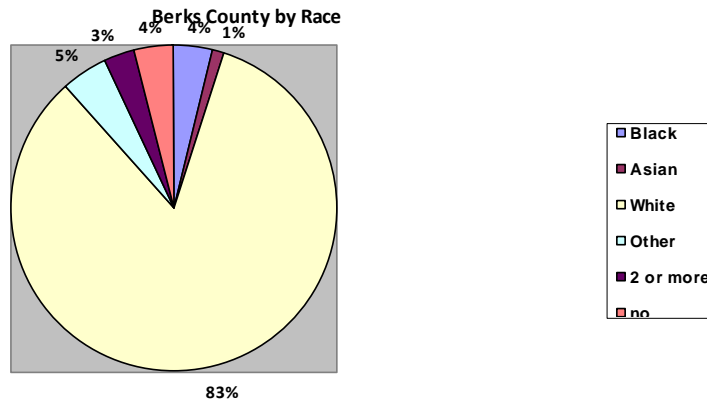
7%. A unique characteristic of the City of Reading is the significant increase in its Hispanic/Latino population in the last 10 years. From a predominantly white Pennsylvania Dutch population, the City of Reading now has a highly concentrated Hispanic/Latino population. The Latino population represents a mixture of 21 Spanish speaking cultures including Puerto Rican, Mexican, Dominican, Cuban, and Central American. In 2006, the total minority population in Berks County was 75,922 or 19% of the total population. In the City of Reading (2000), Hispanics comprise 37.3% of the population, or 30,290 of a total population of 81,207. Currently 73% of the approximately 15,000 students in the Reading School District are identified as Latino. According to the 2000 Census, 37% of Reading Residents have identified themselves as Latino; 12% as Black; 1.6% as Asian; 59% as white; 22% of some other race; 4.2% of two or more races. In contrast, for Berks County as a whole, only 9.7% of residents have identified themselves as Latino; 3.7% as Black; 1% as Asian; 84.5% as White; 5.4% of some other race; and 1.5% of two or more races.

Berks County by Ethnicity



City of Reading by Ethnicity





From 2000 to 2006, the total population of Berks County increased from 373,638 to 401,149, an increase of 27,511 people, or 7%. In 2006 Berks County reported 5,164 births and 3,475 deaths. There are 93,869 children under age 18 living in Berks County and 15.4%, or 14,456 of them are living in poverty, with children under age 5 being at increased risk of living below poverty level. For 2005, the Infant Death rate for Berks County was 6.2 (or 29 incidents); the Low-Birth Weight rate for the same year was 7.9 or 401 infants born at less than 5.5 lbs. Berks County has a significantly higher incidence of pregnant women not receiving any prenatal care in their first trimester than either the State or the Nation. For 2005, one thousand one hundred nineteen women, or 24.7%, did not receive prenatal care in the first trimester. Only Philadelphia has a higher rate than Berks County in the State of PA. Also, 181 births (or 3.6%) were to teen mothers. This is also higher than the State average.

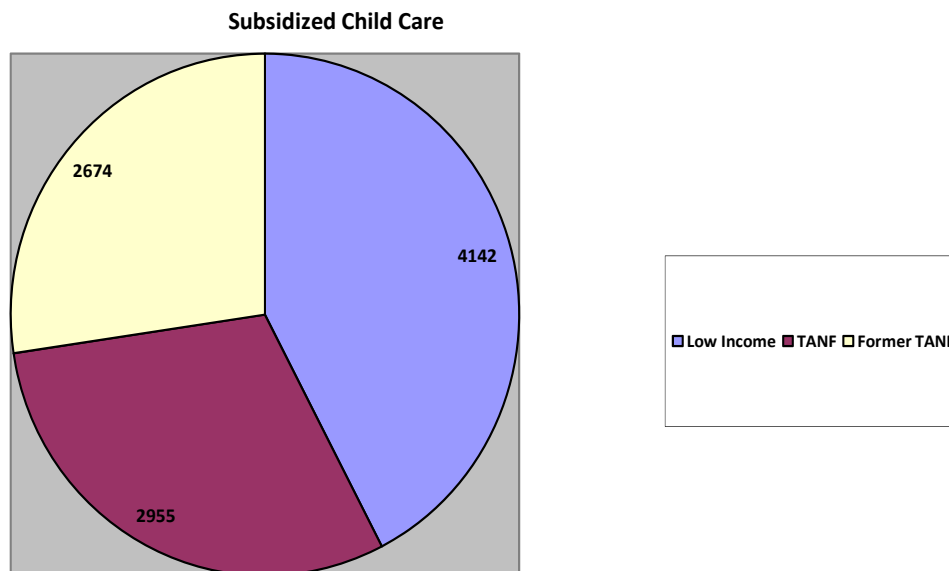
During that same period from 2000 to 2006, the number of people age sixty and older increased from 71,053 to 75,159. People aged sixty and older represent 19% of the county's total population. Nationally, this group makes up about 16% of the total population. The growth rate of those ages 85 and over increased from 7,260 to 9,137 or 25.9% between 2000 and 2006. Additionally, as of 2006, there are 25,485 individuals between the ages 55 and 59. This is a 38.6% growth rate in this age group since 2000. These numbers figure significantly in the planning of senior services in Berks County for the immediate future.

2007 Service Data

Many services are offered and used in Berks County each year. Below is a listing of those services for which the residents of Berks County accessed and made use of during the year 2007(unless otherwise noted).

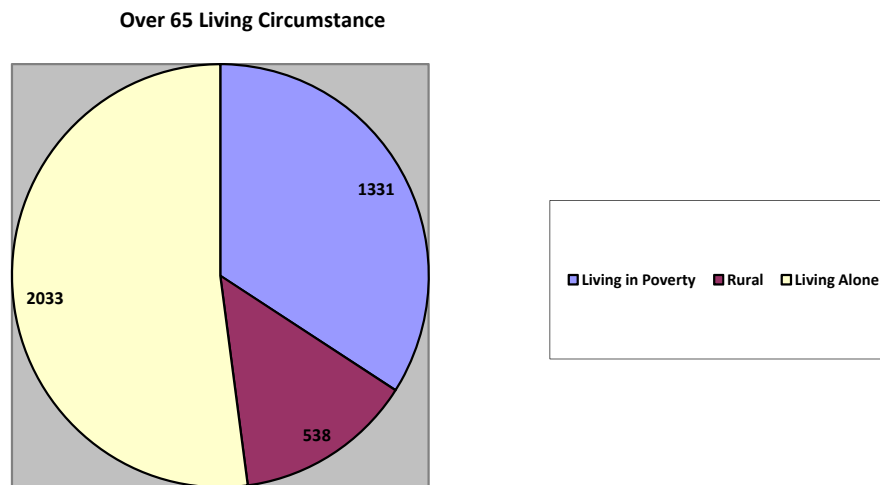
Subsidized Child Care:

- A total of 9,771 children received funding for subsidized child care in 2007.
- 4,142 of those children were "low-income" which means that they are subject to the waiting list;
- 2,674 were former TANF and not subject to the waiting list;
- 2,955 were TANF and therefore not subject to the waiting list.



Office of the Aging:

- A total of 5,876 persons age 60 and older were served (all programs)
- 5,426 persons age 65 and older were served
- 4,007 persons age 75 and older were served
- 1,883 persons age 85 and older were served
- 1,331 persons age 65 and older living in poverty were served
- 538 persons age 65 and older living in rural Berks County were served
- 2,033 persons age 65 and older and living alone were served
- 195 persons age 60 and older who were African American were served
- 709 persons age 60 and older who were Hispanic were served
- 14 persons age 60 and older who were Asian were served



Office of Children and Youth Services (2006 data):

- 758 reported cases of child abuse
- 171 substantiated reports

Juvenile Probation:

- 1,291 youth under JPO supervision

Adult Probation:

- 7,046 adults under APO supervision

Health Choices:

- 55,633 people eligible for behavioral health services

Council on Chemical Abuse:

- 1,915 people received treatment through Council funding
- 3,982 people requested some type of service

Homeless (point in time data):

- 436 persons in Emergency Shelter
- 245 persons in Transitional Housing
- 58 persons unsheltered

Berks Women in Crisis:

- 8,334 Shelter nights (number of nights per victim totaled)
- 1,751 Hotline calls
- 439 Rapid Response calls (dispatched to Courthouse for assistance with EPFA)
- 118 Medical Advocacy calls (dispatched to Emergency Room)
- 681 clients receiving Legal Representation
- 6,997 victims, children and family members received counseling services
- 17,993 children taught through Peace Works presentations

Berks County Family Law:

- 1,044 Complaints and Petitions to Modify filed for Custody
- 1,249 Complaints filed for Divorce
- 2,279 Marriage Licenses issued
- 1,475 Protection From Abuse (PFA) Petitions completed
 - 1,161 female
 - 314 male
 - 827 Caucasian
 - 512 Hispanic
 - 134 African American
 - 2 Asian
- 1,421 Temporary PFA Orders entered
- An average of 63 Emergency PFA orders per month
- \$58,129,466 in Support was collected
 - 4,874 Support Conferences held (80% agreement rate)
 - 1,568 Support Hearings held
 - 10,848 Enforcement Conferences held
 - 1,017 Enforcement Hearings held
 - 1,354 Bench Warrants cleared

Community Resident Survey Results

Surveys were sent to residents from all areas of Berks County. Residents could respond to the survey on-line, or fill out the paper survey that came in the mail and send it back. Many citizens of Berks County took the opportunity to respond. Data reflect approximately 13,815 completed surveys. Because it is anticipated that there might be different views of the state of the county for those who live within the city limits of Reading as compared to those who live outside of the city, an additional compilation of the responses for those whose zip codes indicate that they are residents of the city of Reading will also be provided. To ensure that an adequate representation is made for those residents who are more likely to need and use the various social services available in Berks County, the survey results will be presented separately for those reporting to be younger than age 60, over age 60, over age 75, and for respondents indicating that they have needed/accessed services in the last 2 years.

Who completed the survey?

Thirteen thousand eight hundred fifteen (13,815) surveys that were returned are included in the results reported here. Almost 57% of respondents are female. Ninety-six percent of respondents chose Caucasian as the race they most closely identify with and just shy of 2% reported that they are Hispanic/Latino; 70% are currently married, 90% live in a home that they own. Almost 47% of respondents are aged 60 years and older, 28% are between the ages of 56-59 years, and 25% are 45 years and under.

Only 29% of respondents reported having at least one child under the age of 18 living at home; and of those just fewer than 94% report that their children have health insurance. Only 12% of that insurance comes from public assistance (Medicaid, CHIP, etc.) and 78% of respondents to this item report that their (or their spouse's) employer pays for at least some of the coverage.

In terms of education, only 7% reported not having a high school diploma or GED, whereas 51% held a high school diploma, 20% had a college degree, and 16% had a graduate level degree. Income of respondents is fairly evenly distributed across a wide range of income brackets. Only 12% of respondents reported an annual household income of less than \$20,000; similarly, 14% reported an annual income of greater than \$100,000. Approximately one third of respondents are retired, almost half of respondents report working full-time with another 12% reporting that they work part-time.

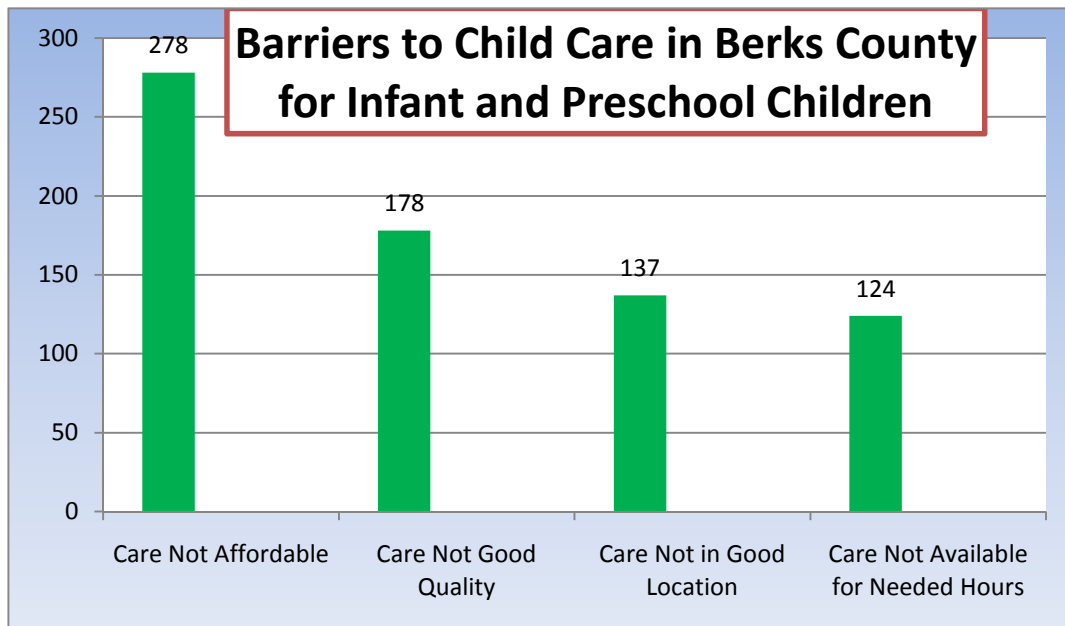
Just over half of respondents report being active members of a faith organization (church, synagogue, temple, etc.) and almost one fifth of respondents claim membership to a community or service organization (Grange, Lions, Masons, Rotary, etc.). In terms of participating in community efforts, more than half of respondents (51%) report that they volunteer at least sometimes and one third of these respondents claim that they volunteer "often or always."

Respondents appear to do fairly well in terms of access to health care. Over 96% of respondents report having health insurance with 69% reporting that it is at least partially paid for by their or their spouse's employer. Just fewer than 50% report that they pay for at least some of the cost of health insurance. In contrast, only 30% report that their health insurance comes from Medicaid, Medicare, or Adult Basic. A

total of 410 respondents (3.6%) report having no health insurance. For the 2,811 (20%) respondents with children under age 18 living at home, 62 (2%) reported that their children were not covered by health insurance.

What are the Child Care needs of the survey respondents in Berks County?

For the 2,811 respondents who live in Berks County and report having at least one child under the age of 18 living at home, 84% have not had any trouble finding child care for their infant or preschool children. Of the 414 respondents who did have trouble finding child care, 67% reported that the main barrier was that they could not afford the care that was available. In addition to that nearly 43% of these respondents indicated that they could not find a good child care provided. One third of respondents could not find care in a good location and 30% could not find care for the hours that they needed it. Transportation was not a significant barrier to child care for infants and preschoolers; only 23 respondents indicated that they did not have transportation.



One thousand two hundred and three respondents answered the question pertaining to child care for older children before or after school. For these respondents, 23% reported that they did have trouble finding before or after school care for their children. Again, the most commonly reported barrier was that they could not afford the care that was available. Other frequently cited reasons were not being able to find a good provider, children are too old, or care was not available for the hours that it was needed. Again, transportation was not a significant barrier to child care for school age children.

Respondents who are parents were asked several questions about spending time with their children. Just over 62% of respondents report that they spend enough time with their children. For those parents who feel they do not spend enough time with their children, the primary reasons are that they work too many hours or that they work evenings and weekends. Over 78% of parents report reading with their

children; and for the parents who report that they rarely or never read to their children, most of them say that they have children who are “too old” to be read to by their parents.

Eighty-six percent of parent respondents report talking with their children about problems related to alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse. Over half of the parents report helping their school-age children with homework. Nearly all parents (97%) reported participating in their children’s activities. And nearly 64% report that their community provides enough activities for parents to do together with their children.

What are the Elder Care needs of the survey respondents in Berks County?

Five thousand four hundred ninety-three respondents from Berks County reported that they are age 60 or older. Their responses have been tabulated to help determine what the specific needs are for Berks County’s Senior citizens. Overall, the respondents to the survey appear to be getting along fairly well. There do not appear to be any significantly unmet needs for seniors, based on these survey responses.

Only 24% report that they feel lonely at least sometimes. Health Problems and Family/Friends Living Outside the Area were the most frequently reported causes of loneliness. Less frequent, but still common reasons for loneliness are Not Knowing Where to Go and Transportation Problems.

Over 91% of senior respondents indicate that they do not need any assistance with their daily chores. And 88% of seniors feel that they have enough opportunities to socialize with others.

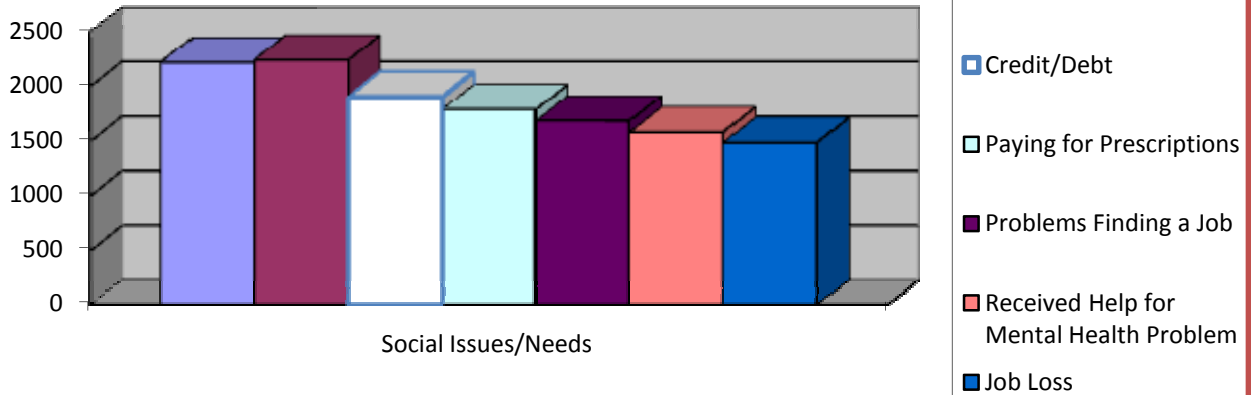
What other social issues are taking place for the survey respondents in Berks County?

The overwhelming majority of Berks County residents report experiencing relatively few difficult personal/social issues for themselves or someone in their family within the last 2 years. For those issues that families did experience, the ones that were reported by at least 10% of respondents were (from highest to lowest):

1. Suffered from severe stress (2,214 persons)
2. Had a mental health or emotional problem (2,237 persons)
3. Had a problem with credit or debt (1,903 persons)
4. Had problems paying for prescription medicines (1,787 persons)
5. Had problems finding a job (1,683 persons)
6. Received help for a mental health or emotional problem (1,580 persons)
7. Had a job loss (1,488 persons)

None of the above issues were reported by more than 21% of respondents. Issues such as teen pregnancy or fatherhood, sexual assault and gambling were reported as problems for less than 1% of respondents.

Social Issues Experienced by Residents



What is the state of Berks County according to its Residents?

Overall, the residents of Berks County who took the time to respond to the Needs Assessment Survey have a positive view of their county. Respondents rated a variety of issues relating the perceived strengths and challenges existing for Berks County. Overall, the community residents of Berks County are most impressed by the geographical location of the county. Following in a close second was “good caring hardworking people.” By far, residents rated “high crime” and “lack of good paying jobs” as the two biggest challenges for Berks County.

Strengths of Berks County ranked from greatest to least by community residents:

1. Good location
2. Good caring hardworking people
3. Low cost of living/housing
4. People work well together
5. Diversity of people
6. Safe/low crime

Challenges of Berks County ranked from greatest to least by community residents:

1. High crime
2. Lack of good paying jobs
3. Infrastructure (water, roads, sewage, etc.)
4. Public transportation
5. Lack of affordable housing
6. Lack of recreational opportunities

When asked the extent to which respondents agreed that the following 28 “problems” were problems for Berks County, community residents ranked them (from greatest to least) in the following order:

- 1. Crime**
- 2. Drug or alcohol abuse**
- 3. Lack of jobs with good pay**
- 4. Lack of affordable health insurance**
- 5. Lack of exercise**
- 6. Cost of maintaining a home**
- 7. Unhealthy eating**
- 8. Lack of affordable medications**
- 9. Poor parenting**
- 10. Smoking in public places**
- 11. Cost of buying a home**
- 12. Child abuse/neglect/maltreatment**
- 13. Poverty**
- 14. Spouse or partner abuse/domestic violence**
- 15. Children dropping out of school/truancy**
16. Poor education
17. Lack of public transportation
18. Illiteracy
19. Homelessness
20. Lack of job training opportunities
21. Lack of recreational opportunities
22. Teen pregnancy
23. High rental housing costs
24. Mental Health problems
25. Abuse of the elderly
26. Lack of day care for children
27. Lack of day care for the elderly
28. Excessive gambling

Those items that are ranked 1-15 are predominantly viewed as being problems and those rated 16-28 are not considered to be problems by the majority of respondents. When asked what they would most like to see in Berks County’s future 55% responded that “Good paying jobs” is what they would like. In terms of what would best describe how organizations can work together to improve the well-being of Berks County and its residents, responses were evenly split between “Share resources” and “Improved communications,” followed closely by “Learn from others outside the area.” Twenty-seven percent of respondents have used human services in Berks County and 73% have not. For those not using human services, over 90% reported it was because they did not need them. Of the less than 10% who did need them but did not access them, the most common reason was that they did not believe the services would be helpful to them. In terms of where folks turn to for information regarding services in Berks

County there did not appear to be one dominant source. Respondents indicated multiple sources of information.

A ranking of responses concerning the involvement of drugs and alcohol for six social ills shows that Berks County residents report believing that the abuse of drugs or alcohol are primarily responsible for:

1. Crime
2. Violence
3. Unemployment
4. Dropping out of school
5. Poverty
6. Homelessness

All six of the above issues were indicated by at least 66% of respondents as being significantly caused by abuse of drugs and alcohol. Not surprisingly, over 95% of respondents feel that the prevention and treatment of drug and alcohol abuse is an important part of reducing problems in the community.

Nearly half of respondents say they have been concerned that an elderly person that they know is not taking their prescribed medicine.

City of Reading Residents who responded to the survey:

Seven hundred eighty respondents indicated that their zip code was in the City of Reading. Almost 56% of respondents are female. Ninety-four percent of respondents chose Caucasian as the race they most closely identify with and just over 3% reported that they are Hispanic/Latino; 66% are currently married, and over 92% live in a home that they own. Almost 46% of respondents are aged 60 years and older, 30% are between the ages of 56-59 years, and 24% are 45 years and under.

Only 27% of respondents reported having at least one child under the age of 18 living at home; and of those just fewer than 89% report that their children have health insurance. Only 15% of that insurance comes from public assistance (Medicaid, CHIP, etc.) and 76% of respondents to this item report that their (or their spouse's) employer pays for at least some of the coverage.

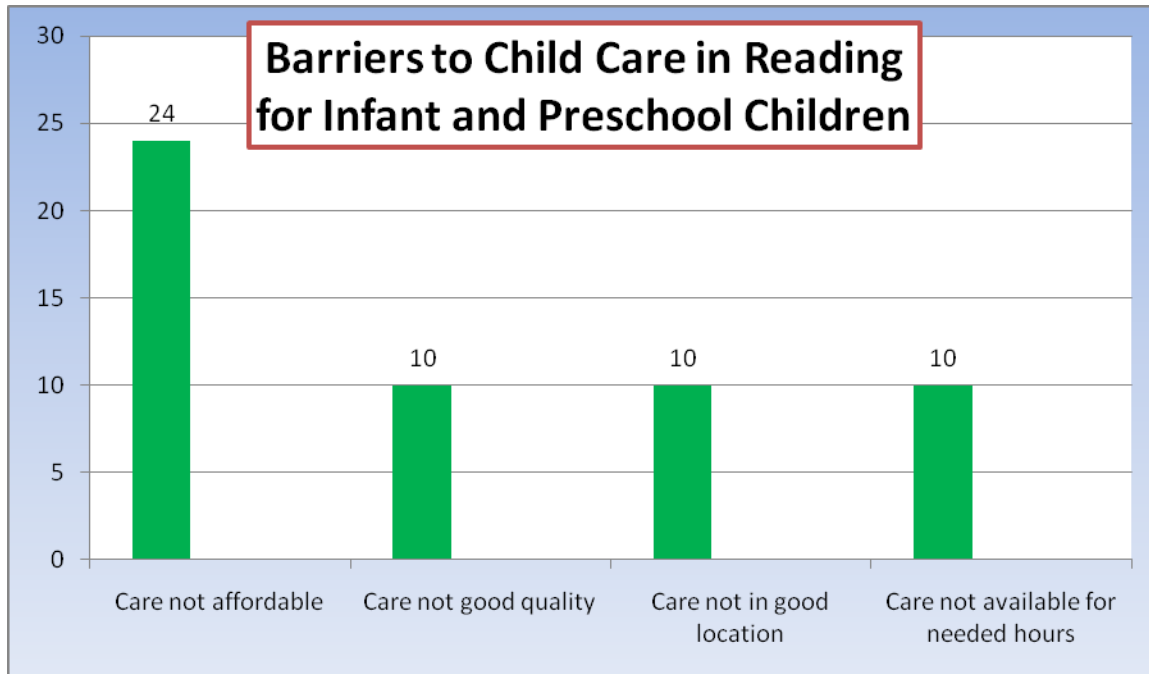
In terms of education, just fewer than 6% reported not having a high school diploma or GED, whereas 33% held a high school diploma, 33% had a trade school certificate/associate degree or some college, 10% had a college degree, and 16% had a graduate level degree. Income of respondents is fairly evenly distributed across a wide range of income brackets. Only 10% of respondents reported an annual household income of less than \$20,000; similarly, 11% reported an annual income of greater than \$100,000. Approximately one third of respondents are retired, just over half of respondents report working full-time with another 13% reporting that they work part-time.

Just over half of respondents report being active members of a faith organization (church, synagogue, temple, etc.) and almost one fifth of respondents claim membership to a community or service organization (Grange, Lions, Masons, Rotary, etc.). In terms of participating in community efforts, more than half of respondents (52%) report that they volunteer at least sometimes and one third of these respondents claim that they volunteer "often or always."

Respondents appear to do fairly well in terms of access to health care. Over 97% of respondents report having health insurance with 77% reporting that it is at least partially paid for by their or their spouse's employer. Just fewer than 50% report that they pay for at least some of the cost of health insurance. In contrast, only 29% report that their health insurance comes from Medicaid, Medicare, or Adult Basic.

What are the Child Care needs of the survey respondents in the City of Reading?

For the 165 respondents who live in the City of Reading and report having at least one child under the age of 18 living at home, 84% have not had any trouble finding child care for their infant or preschool children. Of the 28 respondents who did have trouble finding child care, 80% reported that the main barrier was that they could not afford the care that was available. In addition to that nearly one third of these respondents indicated that they could not find a good child care provided and/or they could not find care in a good location and/or they could not find care for the hours that they needed it. Transportation was not a significant barrier to child care for infants and preschoolers.



Eighty-four respondents answered the question pertaining to child care for older children before or after school. For these respondents, 26% reported that they did have trouble finding before or after school care for their children. Again, the most commonly reported barrier was that they could not afford the care that was available. Other frequently cited reasons were not being able to find a good provider, children are too old, or care was not available for the hours that it was needed. Again, transportation was not a significant barrier to child care for school age children.

Respondents who are parents were asked several questions about spending time with their children. Just over 58% of respondents report that they spend enough time with their children. For those parents who feel they do not spend enough time with their children, the primary reasons are that they work too many hours or that they work evenings and weekends. Over 77% of parents report reading with their children; and for the parents who report that they rarely or never read to their children, most of them say that they have children who are “too old” to be read to by their parents. Eighty-seven percent of parent respondents report talking with their children about problems related to alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse. Over half of the parents report helping their school-age children with homework. Nearly all parents (97%) reported participating in their children’s activities. And nearly 60% report that their community provides enough activities for parents to do together with their children.

What are the Elder Care needs of the survey respondents in the City of Reading?

Two hundred seventy-four respondents from the City of Reading reported that they are age 60 or older. Their responses have been tabulated to help determine what the specific needs are for Reading’s Senior citizens. Overall, the respondents to the survey appear to be getting along fairly well. There do not appear to be any significantly unmet needs for seniors, based on these survey responses.

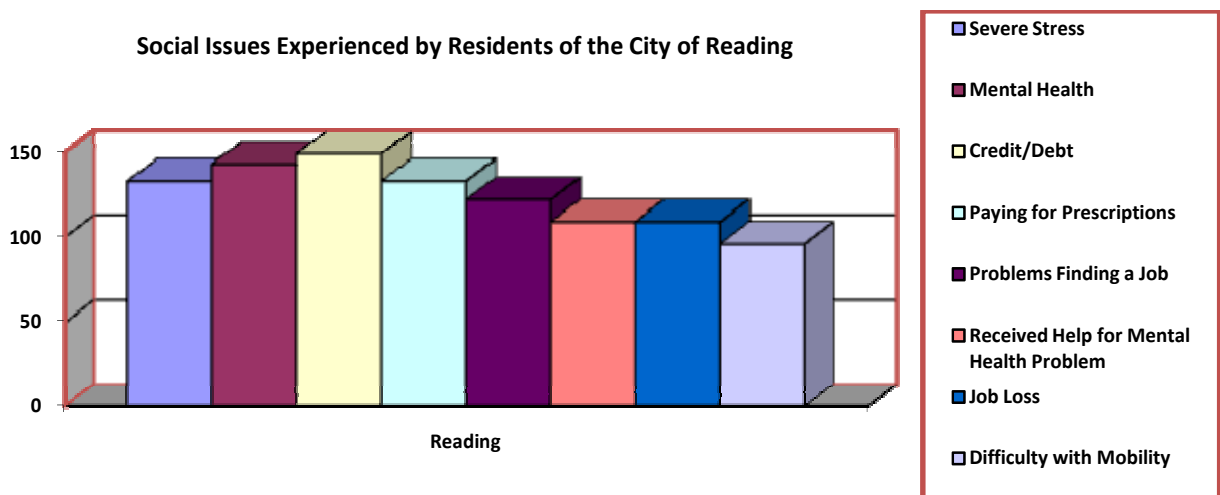
Only 22% report that they feel lonely at least sometimes. Health problems and family/friends living outside the area were the most frequently reported causes of loneliness. Less frequent, but still common reasons for loneliness are not knowing where to go and transportation problems.

Over 93% of senior respondents indicate that they do not need any assistance with their daily chores. And 89% of seniors feel that they have enough opportunities to socialize with others.

What other social issues are taking place for the survey respondents in the City of Reading?

The overwhelming majority of Reading residents report experiencing relatively few difficult personal/social issues for themselves or someone in their family within the last 2 years. For those issues that families did experience, the ones that were reported by at least 10% of respondents were (from highest to lowest):

1. Had a problem with credit or debt (149 persons)
2. Had a mental health or emotional problem (143 persons)
3. Suffered from severe stress (133 persons)
4. Had problems paying for prescription medicines (133 persons)
5. Had problems finding a job (122 persons)
6. Received help for a mental health or emotional problem (109 persons)
7. Had a job loss (109 persons)
8. Had difficulty with mobility or getting around (96 persons)



None of the above issues were reported by more than 21% of respondents. Issues such as teen pregnancy or fatherhood, sexual assault and gambling were reported as problems for less than 1.5% of respondents.

A ranking of responses concerning the involvement of drugs and alcohol for six social ills shows that Reading residents report believing that the abuse of drugs or alcohol is primarily responsible for:

1. Crime
2. Violence
3. Unemployment
4. Dropping out of school
5. Poverty
6. Homelessness

All six of the above issues were indicated by at least 67% of respondents as being significantly caused by abuse of drugs and alcohol. Not surprisingly, over 95% of respondents feel that the prevention and treatment of drug and alcohol abuse is an important part of reducing problems in the community.

Nearly half of respondents say they have been concerned that an elderly person that they know is not taking their prescribed medicine.

What is the state of Berks County according to its City of Reading Residents?

Overall, the residents of the City of Reading who took the time to respond to the Needs Assessment Survey have a positive view of their county. Respondents rated a variety of issues relating the perceived strengths and challenges existing for Berks County. Overall, the community residents of Berks County are most impressed by the geographical location of the county. Following in a close second was “good caring hardworking people.” By far, residents rated “high crime” and “lack of good paying jobs” as the two biggest challenges for Berks County.

Strengths of Berks County ranked from greatest to least by City of Reading residents:

1. Good location, close to the interstates
2. Good, caring, hardworking people
3. Diversity of people
4. Low cost of living/housing
5. People work well together
6. Safe/low crime

Challenges of Berks County ranked from greatest to least by City of Reading residents:

1. High crime
2. Lack of good paying jobs
3. Infrastructure (water, roads, sewage, etc.)
4. Public transportation

5. Lack of affordable housing
6. Lack of recreational opportunities

When asked the extent to which respondents agreed that the following 28 “problems” were problems for Berks County, City of Reading residents ranked them (from greatest to least) in the following order:

- 1. Crime**
- 2. Drug or alcohol abuse**
- 3. Lack of jobs with good pay**
- 4. Lack of affordable health insurance**
- 5. Poor parenting**
- 6. Lack of exercise**
- 7. Lack of affordable medications**
- 8. Unhealthy eating**
- 9. Cost of maintaining a home**
- 10. Smoking in public places**
- 11. Children dropping out of school/truancy**
- 12. Child abuse/neglect/maltreatment**
- 13. Spouse or partner abuse/domestic violence**
- 14. Poverty**
- 15. Cost of buying a home**
16. Illiteracy
17. Poor education
18. Homelessness
19. Teen pregnancy
20. Lack of job training opportunities
21. Lack of public transportation
22. Lack of recreational opportunities
23. Mental Health problems
24. Abuse of the elderly
25. High rental housing costs
26. Lack of day care for children
27. Lack of day care for the elderly
28. Excessive gambling

Those items that are ranked 1-15 are predominantly viewed as being problems and those rated 16-28 are not considered to be problems by the majority of respondents. When asked what they would most like to see in Berks County’s future 58% responded that “Good paying jobs” is what they would like. In terms of what would best describe how organizations can work together to improve the well-being of Berks County and its residents, responses were closely split between “Improved communications” which got 30% of the responses and “Share resources” which received 26% of the responses, followed closely by “Learn from others outside the area” which received 24% of the responses. One third of respondents from the City of Reading have used human services in Berks County and two thirds have

not. For those not using human services, 92% reported it was because they did not need them. Of the less than 10% who did need them but did not access them, the most common reason was that they did not believe the services would be helpful to them. In terms of where folks turn to for information regarding services in Berks County there did not appear to be one dominant source. Respondents indicated multiple sources of information.

Berks County Residents Under Age 60

Who completed the survey?

Two thousand eight hundred fifty-one (2,851) surveys that were returned are included in the results reported here. Almost 68% of respondents are female. Ninety-four percent of respondents chose Caucasian as the race they most closely identify with and just shy of 4% reported that they are Hispanic/Latino; 76% are currently married, 88% live in a home that they own.

Sixty-seven and a half percent of respondents reported having at least one child under the age of 18 living at home; and of those just fewer than 97% report that their children have health insurance. Only 12% of that insurance comes from public assistance (Medicaid, CHIP, or HIPP) and 80% of respondents to this item report that their (or their spouse's) employer pays for at least some of the coverage.

In terms of education, only 6% reported not having a high school diploma or GED, whereas 57% held a high school diploma, 20% had a college degree, and 17% had a graduate level degree. Income of respondents is fairly evenly distributed across a wide range of income brackets. Only 11% of respondents reported an annual household income of less than \$20,000; similarly, 15% reported an annual income of greater than \$100,000. Approximately one third of respondents are retired, just over half of respondents report working full-time with another 13% reporting that they work part-time.

One half of respondents report being active members of a faith organization (church, synagogue, temple, etc.) and almost one fifth of respondents claim membership to a community or service organization (Grange, Lions, Masons, Rotary, etc.). In terms of participating in community efforts, more than half of respondents (52%) report that they volunteer at least sometimes and one third of these respondents claim that they volunteer "often or always."

Respondents appear to do fairly well in terms of access to health care. Almost 95% of respondents report having health insurance with 92% reporting that it is at least partially paid for by their or their spouse's employer. 42% report that they pay for at least some of the cost of health insurance. In contrast, only 5.5% report that their health insurance comes from Medicaid, Medicare, or Adult Basic.

What are the Child Care needs of the (under age 60) survey respondents in Berks County?

For the 1,889 respondents under age 60 who live in Berks County and report having at least one child under the age of 18 living at home, 82% have not had any trouble finding child care for their infant or preschool children. Of the 337 respondents who did have trouble finding child care, 68% reported that the main barrier was that they could not afford the care that was available. In addition to that 43% of these respondents indicated that they could not find a good child care provided. One third of respondents could not find care in a good location and 31% could not find care for the hours that they needed it. Transportation was not a significant barrier to child care for infants and preschoolers

Eight hundred eighty-three respondents answered the question pertaining to child care for older children before or after school. For these respondents, 23% reported that they did have trouble finding before or after school care for their children. Again, the most commonly reported barrier was that they

could not afford the care that was available. Other frequently cited reasons were not being able to find a good provider, children are too old, or care was not available for the hours that it was needed. Transportation was reported to be a barrier to child care for school age children for 10% of these respondents.

Respondents who are parents were asked several questions about spending time with their children. Just over 62% of respondents report that they spend enough time with their children. For those parents who feel they do not spend enough time with their children, the primary reasons are that they work too many hours or that they work evenings and weekends. Over 78% of parents report reading with their children; and for the parents who report that they rarely or never read to their children, most of them say that they have children who are “too old” to be read to by their parents.

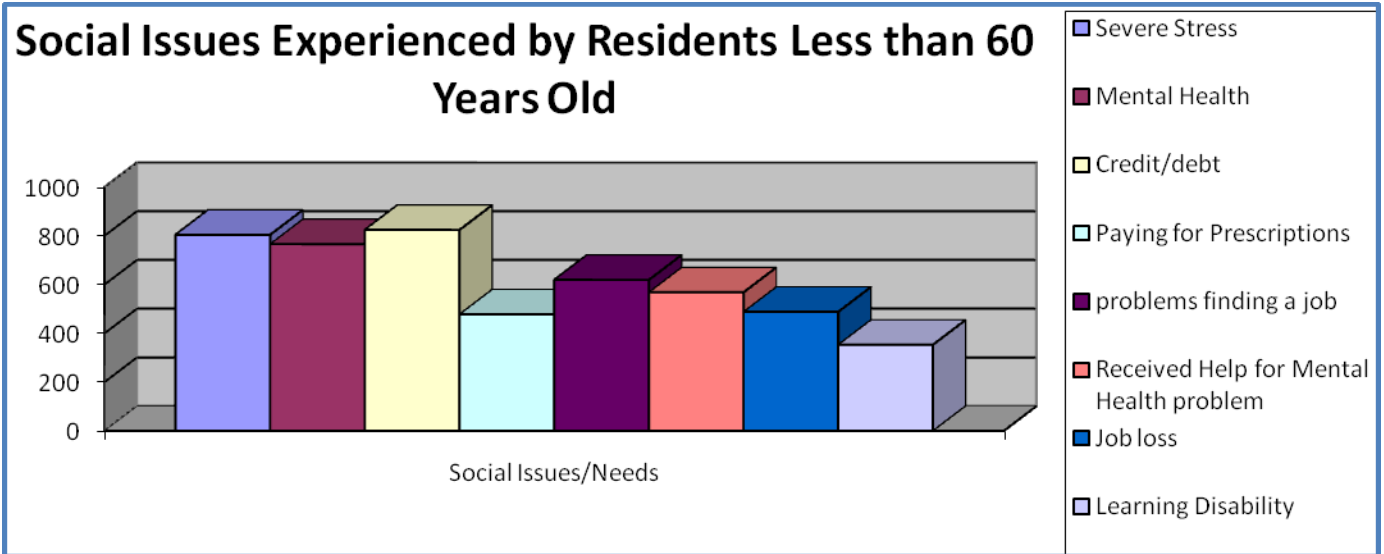
Eighty-two percent of parent respondents report talking with their children about problems related to alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse. Over 84% of the parents report helping their school-age children with homework. Nearly all parents (97%) reported participating in their children’s activities. And nearly 64% report that their community provides enough activities for parents to do together with their children.

What other social issues are taking place for the survey respondents in Berks County?

The overwhelming majority of Berks County residents report experiencing relatively few difficult personal/social issues for themselves or someone in their family within the last 2 years. For those issues that families did experience, the ones that were reported by at least 10% of respondents were (from highest to lowest):

1. Had a problem with credit or debt (824 persons)
2. Suffered from severe stress (804 persons)
3. Had a mental health or emotional problem (766 persons)
4. Had problems finding a job (619 persons)
5. Received help for a mental health or emotional problem (568 persons)
6. Had a job loss (488 persons)
7. Had problems paying for prescription medicines (478 persons)
8. Had a learning disability (353 persons)

None of the above issues were reported by more than 29% of respondents. Issues such as teen pregnancy or fatherhood, sexual assault and gambling were reported as problems for less than 1% of respondents.



What is the state of Berks County according to its Residents who are less than 60 years old?

Overall, the residents of Berks County who took the time to respond to the Needs Assessment Survey have a positive view of their county. Respondents rated a variety of issues relating the perceived strengths and challenges existing for Berks County. Overall, the community residents of Berks County are most impressed by the geographical location of the county. Following in a close second was “good caring hardworking people.” By far, residents rated “high crime” and “lack of good paying jobs” as the two biggest challenges for Berks County.

Strengths of Berks County ranked from greatest to least by community residents less than 60 years of age:

1. Good location
2. Good caring hardworking people
3. Low cost of living/housing
4. Diversity of people
5. People work well together
6. Safe/low crime

Challenges of Berks County ranked from greatest to least by community residents under age 60:

1. High crime
2. Lack of good paying jobs
3. Infrastructure (water, roads, sewage, etc.)
4. Public transportation
5. Lack of affordable housing
6. Lack of recreational opportunities

When asked the extent to which respondents agreed that the following 28 “problems” were problems for Berks County, community residents ranked them (from greatest to least) in the following order:

- 1. Crime**
- 2. Drug or alcohol abuse**
- 3. Lack of jobs with good pay**
- 4. Unhealthy eating**
- 5. Lack of exercise**
- 6. Lack of affordable health insurance**
- 7. Cost of maintaining a home**
- 8. Poor parenting**
- 9. Smoking in public places**
- 10. Cost of buying a home**
- 11. Lack of affordable medications**
- 12. Poverty**
- 13. Child abuse/neglect/maltreatment**
- 14. Lack of recreational opportunities**
- 15. Poor education**
16. Children dropping out of school/truancy
17. Lack of job training opportunities
18. Teen pregnancy
19. Spouse or partner abuse/domestic violence
20. Illiteracy
21. Homelessness
22. Lack of public transportation
23. Lack of day care for children
24. High rental housing costs
25. Mental Health problems
26. Abuse of the elderly
27. Lack of day care for the elderly
28. Excessive gambling

Those items that are ranked 1-15 are predominantly viewed as being problems and those rated 16-28 are not considered to be problems by the majority of respondents. When asked what they would most like to see in Berks County’s future 55% responded that “Good paying jobs” is what they would like. In terms of what would best describe how organizations can work together to improve the well-being of Berks County and its residents, responses were evenly split between “Share resources,” “Improved communications” and “Learn from others outside the area.” Twenty-eight percent of respondents have used human services in Berks County and 72% have not. For those not using human services, over 90%

reported it was because they did not need them. Of the less than 10% who did need them but did not access them, the most common reason was that they did not believe the services would be helpful to them. In terms of where folks turn to for information regarding services in Berks County the under 60 population most frequently uses the internet (51.4%) followed by phone book blue pages (45.8%) and the newspaper (34.7%) and family/friends (34.6%).

A ranking of responses concerning the involvement of drugs and alcohol for 6 social ills shows that Berks County residents report believing that the abuse of drugs or alcohol are primarily responsible for:

1. Crime
2. Violence
3. Unemployment
4. Dropping out of school
5. Poverty
6. Homelessness

All six of the above issues were indicated by at least 66% of respondents as being significantly caused by abuse of drugs and alcohol. Not surprisingly, over 95% of respondents feel that the prevention and treatment of drug and alcohol abuse is an important part of reducing problems in the community.

Nearly half of respondents say they have been concerned that an elderly person that they know is not taking their prescribed medicine.

Berks County Residents Over Age 60

Who completed the survey?

Five thousand four hundred ninety-three (5,493) surveys that were returned are included in the results reported here. Almost 68% of respondents are female. Ninety-seven percent of respondents chose Caucasian as the race they most closely identify with and just over of 1% reported that they are Hispanic/Latino; 62% are currently married, 93% live in a home that they own.

One hundred and sixty-six respondents (3%) reported having at least one child under the age of 18 living at home; and of those just fewer than 66% report that these children have health insurance. Only 28% of that insurance comes from public assistance (Medicaid, CHIP, or HIPP) and 55% of respondents to this item report that their (or their spouse's) employer pays for at least some of the coverage.

In terms of education, only 12% reported not having a high school diploma or GED, whereas 39% held a high school diploma, 12% had a college degree, and 15% had a graduate level degree. Income of respondents is fairly evenly distributed across a wide range of income brackets. Twenty percent of respondents reported an annual household income of less than \$20,000; only 6% reported an annual income of greater than \$100,000. Just over 71% of respondents are retired, sixteen percent of respondents report working full-time with another 11% reporting that they work part-time.

Nearly two thirds of respondents (3,277) report being active members of a faith organization (church, synagogue, temple, etc.) and just over one fifth of respondents claim membership to a community or service organization (Grange, Lions, Masons, Rotary, etc.). In terms of participating in community efforts, Nearly half of respondents (48%) report that they volunteer at least sometimes and one third of these respondents claim that they volunteer "often or always."

Respondents appear to do fairly well in terms of access to health care. Almost 95% of respondents report having health insurance with 92% reporting that it is at least partially paid for by their or their spouse's employer. 42% report that they pay for at least some of the cost of health insurance. In contrast, only 5.5% report that their health insurance comes from Medicaid, Medicare, or Adult Basic.

What are the Child Care needs of the (over age 60) survey respondents in Berks County?

For the 166 respondents over age 60 who live in Berks County and report having at least one child under the age of 18 living at home, 95% have not had any trouble finding child care for their infant or preschool children. Of the 10 respondents who did have trouble finding child care, all reported that the main barrier was that they could not find a good childcare provider. In addition to that, these respondents indicated that they could not find child care that was affordable; respondents could not find care in a good location and they could not find care for the hours that they needed it. Transportation was somewhat of a barrier to child care for infants and preschoolers in the care of those aged 60 and older.

Fifty-seven respondents answered the question pertaining to child care for older children before or after school. For these respondents, 19% reported that they did have trouble finding before or after school

care for their children. Again, the most commonly reported barrier was that they could not afford the care that was available. Other frequently cited reasons were not being able to find a good provider, children are too old, or care was not available for the hours that it was needed. Transportation was reported to be a barrier to child care for school age children for 11% of these respondents.

Respondents who are parents were asked several questions about spending time with their children. Just over 73% of respondents report that they spend enough time with their children. For those parents who feel they do not spend enough time with their children, the primary reasons are that they work too many hours or that they work evenings and weekends. Over 74% of parents report reading with their children; and for the parents who report that they rarely or never read to their children, most of them say that they have children who are “too old” to be read to by their parents.

Ninety-one percent of parent respondents report talking with their children about problems related to alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse. Over 47% of the parents report helping their school-age children with homework. Nearly all 121 parents (97%) reported participating in their children’s activities. And nearly 63% report that their community provides enough activities for parents to do together with their children.

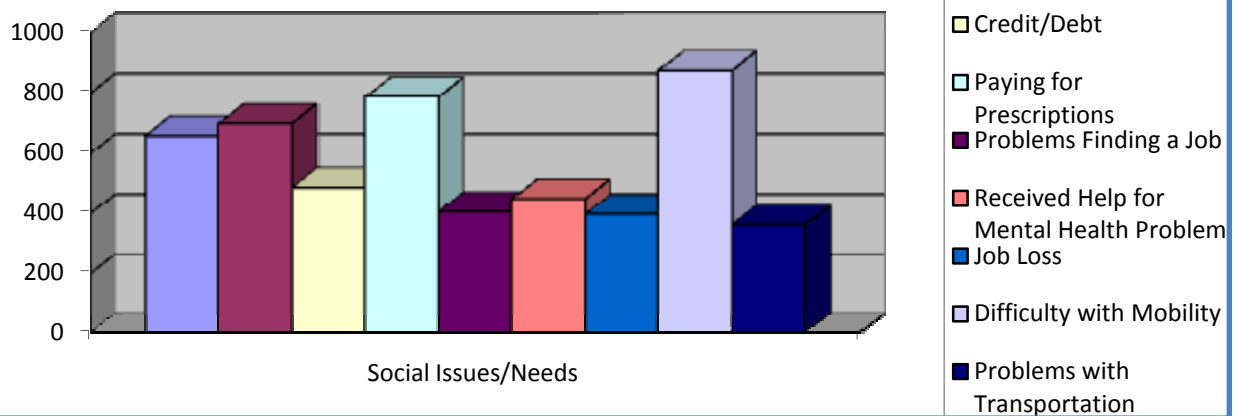
What other social issues are taking place for the survey respondents Over Age 60 in Berks County?

The overwhelming majority of Berks County residents report experiencing relatively few difficult personal/social issues for themselves or someone in their family within the last 2 years. For those issues that families did experience, the ones that were reported by at least 10% of respondents were (from highest to lowest):

1. Had difficulty with mobility or getting around (873 persons)
2. Had problems paying for prescription medicines (787 persons)
3. Had a mental health or emotional problem (698 persons)
4. Suffered from severe stress (657 persons)
5. Had a problem with credit or debt (486 persons)
6. Received help for a mental health or emotional problem (449 persons)
7. Had problems finding a job (406 persons)
8. Had a job loss (397 persons)
9. Had problems with transportation (362 persons)

None of the above issues were reported by more than 17% of respondents. Issues such as teen pregnancy or fatherhood, sexual assault and gambling were reported as problems for less than 1% of respondents.

Social Issues Experienced by Residents Over Age 60



What is the state of Berks County according to its Residents who are over 60 years old?

Overall, the “Over age 60” residents of Berks County who took the time to respond to the Needs Assessment Survey have a positive view of their county. Respondents rated a variety of issues relating the perceived strengths and challenges existing for Berks County. Overall, the community residents of Berks County are most impressed by the geographical location of the county. Following in a close second was “good caring hardworking people.” By far, residents rated “high crime” and “lack of good paying jobs” as the two biggest challenges for Berks County.

Strengths of Berks County ranked from greatest to least by community residents more than 60 years of age:

1. Good location
2. Good caring hardworking people
3. Low cost of living/housing
4. Diversity of people
5. People work well together
6. Safe/low crime

Challenges of Berks County ranked from greatest to least by community residents over age 60:

1. High crime
2. Lack of good paying jobs
3. Infrastructure (water, roads, sewage, etc.)
4. Public transportation
5. Lack of affordable housing
6. Lack of recreational opportunities

When asked the extent to which respondents agreed that the following 28 “problems” were problems for Berks County, community residents ranked them (from greatest to least) in the following order:

1. **Crime**
2. **Drug or alcohol abuse**
3. **Lack of affordable health insurance**
4. **Lack of jobs with good pay**
5. **Cost of maintaining a home**
6. **Lack of affordable medications**
7. **Lack of exercise**
8. **Unhealthy eating**
9. **Smoking in public places**
10. **Poor parenting**
11. **Children dropping out of school/truancy**
12. **Cost of buying a home**
13. **Child abuse/neglect/maltreatment**
14. **Lack of public transportation**
15. **Spouse or partner abuse/domestic violence**
16. Poor education
17. Poverty
18. Homelessness
19. Illiteracy
20. Lack of job training opportunities
21. Lack of recreational opportunities
22. Teen pregnancy
23. High rental housing costs
24. Abuse of the elderly
25. Lack of day care for the elderly
26. Mental Health problems
27. Lack of day care for children
28. Excessive gambling

Those items that are ranked 1-15 are predominantly viewed as being problems and those rated 16-28 are not considered to be problems by the majority of respondents. When asked what they would most like to see in Berks County’s future 55% responded that “Good paying jobs” is what they would like. In terms of what would best describe how organizations can work together to improve the well-being of Berks County and its residents, responses were evenly split between “Share resources,” “Improved communications” and “Learn from others outside the area.” Twenty-four percent of respondents have used human services in Berks County and 76% have not. For those not using human services, over 90% reported it was because they did not need them. Of the less than 10% who did need them but did not access them, the most common reason was that they did not believe the services would be helpful to them. In terms of where folks turn to for information regarding services in Berks County the over 60

population most frequently uses the newspaper (58%) followed by phone book blue pages (45%) and a Doctor of medical professional (38%) and family/friends (36%).

A ranking of responses concerning the involvement of drugs and alcohol for six social ills shows that Berks County residents report believing that the abuse of drugs or alcohol are primarily responsible for:

1. Crime
2. Violence
3. Unemployment
4. Poverty
5. Dropping out of school
6. Homelessness

All six of the above issues were indicated by at least 66% of respondents as being significantly caused by abuse of drugs and alcohol. Not surprisingly, over 95% of respondents feel that the prevention and treatment of drug and alcohol abuse is an important part of reducing problems in the community.

Nearly half of respondents say they have been concerned that an elderly person that they know is not taking their prescribed medicine.

Berks County Residents Over Age 75

Who completed the survey?

One thousand eight hundred five (1,805) surveys that were returned are included in the results reported here. Fifty-five of respondents are female. Ninety-seven percent of respondents chose Caucasian as the race they most closely identify with and less than 1% reported that they are Hispanic/Latino; 46% are currently married, 88% live in a home that they own.

In terms of education, twenty percent reported not having a high school diploma or GED, whereas 42% held a high school diploma, 7% had a college degree and 13% had a graduate level degree. Income of respondents is low compared to that of the general population responding to the survey. Over 35% of respondents reported an annual household income of less than \$20,000 and an additional 42% report an income between \$20,000 and \$39,999; in contrast, 2% reported an annual income of greater than \$100,000. Nearly 90% of respondents over age 75 are retired; only 6% report being employed either full or part-time.

Two thirds of respondents report being active members of a faith organization (church, synagogue, temple, etc.) and almost one fourth of respondents claim membership to a community or service organization (Grange, Lions, Masons, Rotary, etc.). In terms of participating in community efforts, more than 42% report that they volunteer at least sometimes and one third of these respondents claim that they volunteer “often or always.”

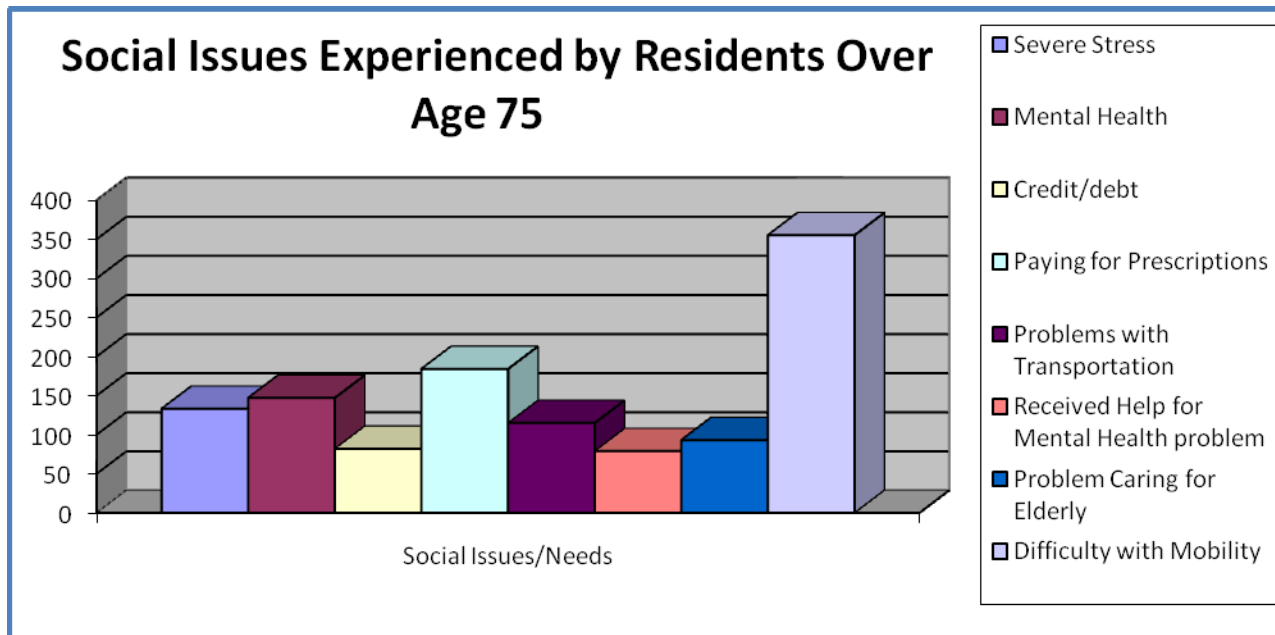
Respondents over age 75 appear to do fairly well in terms of access to health care. Over 98% of respondents report having health insurance. Not surprisingly, nearly 65% receive their health insurance through the Medicare. Fifty-five percent report that they pay for at least some of the cost of health insurance.

What other social issues are taking place for the over age 75 survey respondents in Berks County?

The overwhelming majority of Berks County residents report experiencing relatively few difficult personal/social issues for themselves or someone in their family within the last 2 years. For those issues that families did experience, the ones that were reported by at least 5% of respondents were (from highest to lowest):

1. Had difficulty with mobility or getting around (355 persons)
2. Had problems paying for prescription medicines (184 persons)
3. Had a mental health or emotional problem (147 persons)
4. Suffered from severe stress (133 persons)
5. Had problems with transportation (115 persons)
6. Had a problem caring for an elderly person in the home (93 persons)
7. Had a problem with credit or debt (82 persons)
8. Received help for a mental health or emotional problem (79 persons)

None of the above issues were reported by more than 22% of respondents.



What is the state of Berks County according to its Residents who are over 75 years old?

Overall, the residents of Berks County who took the time to respond to the Needs Assessment Survey have a positive view of their county. Respondents rated a variety of issues relating the perceived strengths and challenges existing for Berks County. Overall, the community residents of Berks County are most impressed by the geographical location of the county. Following in a close second was “good caring hardworking people.” By far, residents rated “high crime” and “lack of good paying jobs” as the two biggest challenges for Berks County.

Strengths of Berks County ranked from greatest to least by community residents over 75 years of age:

1. Good caring hardworking people
2. Good location
3. People work well together
4. Diversity of people
5. Low cost of living/housing
6. Safe/low crime

Challenges of Berks County ranked from greatest to least by community residents over age 75:

1. High Crime
2. Lack of good paying jobs
3. Infrastructure (water, roads, sewage, etc.)
4. Public Transportation
5. Lack of affordable housing
6. Lack of recreational opportunities

When asked the extent to which respondents agreed that the following 28 “problems” were problems for Berks County, community residents ranked them (from greatest to least) in the following order:

- 1. Crime**
- 2. Drug or alcohol abuse**
- 3. Lack of affordable health insurance**
- 4. Lack of jobs with good pay**
- 5. Cost of maintaining a home**
- 6. Lack of exercise**
- 7. Smoking in public places**
- 8. Lack of affordable medications**
- 9. Unhealthy eating**
- 10. Poor parenting**
- 11. Children dropping out of school/truancy**
- 12. Lack of public transportation**
- 13. Cost of buying a home**
- 14. Poor education**
- 15. Child abuse/neglect/maltreatment**
16. Poverty
17. Homelessness
18. Illiteracy
19. Spouse or partner abuse/domestic violence
20. High rental housing costs
21. Lack of job training opportunities
22. Lack of recreational opportunities
23. Teen pregnancy
24. Abuse of the elderly
25. Lack of day care for the elderly
26. Mental Health problems
27. Excessive gambling
28. Lack of day care for children

Those items that are ranked 1-15 are predominantly viewed as being problems and those rated 16-28 are not considered to be problems by the majority of respondents. When asked what they would most

like to see in Berks County's future 51% responded that "Good paying jobs" is what they would like. In terms of what would best describe how organizations can work together to improve the well-being of Berks County and its residents, one third of respondents chose "Improved communications." Eighteen percent of respondents over age 75 have used human services in Berks County and 82% have not. For those not using human services, over 90% reported it was because they did not need them. Of the less than 10% who did need them but did not access them, the most common reason was that they did not believe the services would be helpful to them. In terms of where folks turn to for information regarding services in Berks County the over 75 population most frequently uses the newspaper (64.7%) followed by Doctor or medical professional (37.8%) and family/friends (34.9%) and phone book blue pages (34.4%).

A ranking of responses concerning the involvement of drugs and alcohol for six social ills shows that Berks County residents report believing that the abuse of drugs or alcohol are primarily responsible for:

1. Crime
2. Violence
3. Unemployment
4. Dropping out of school
5. Poverty
6. Homelessness

All six of the above issues were indicated by at least 66% of respondents as being significantly caused by abuse of drugs and alcohol. Not surprisingly, over 95% of respondents feel that the prevention and treatment of drug and alcohol abuse is an important part of reducing problems in the community.

One third of respondents over the age of 75 report feeling lonely or isolated at least sometimes. Of those respondents, over half of them (278) cite health problems as being the main cause of their isolation. One third of these respondents say they have been concerned that an elderly person that they know is not taking their prescribed medicine.

Berks County Residents Who Responded “YES” to Having Used Services

Who completed the survey?

Two thousand seven hundred twenty (2,720) surveys that were returned are included in the results reported here. Sixty-four percent of respondents are female. Ninety-five percent of respondents chose Caucasian as the race they most closely identify with and 2.5% reported that they are Hispanic/Latino; 65.5% are currently married; 88% live in a home that they own.

One third of respondents who report using services (842) reported having at least one child under the age of 18 living at home; and of those 842, just fewer than 94% report that their children have health insurance. Eighteen percent of that insurance comes from Medicaid and an additional 8% comes from CHIP, or HIPP; seventy percent of respondents to this item report that their (or their spouse’s) employer pays for at least some of the coverage.

In terms of education, only 6% reported not having a high school diploma or GED. Twenty-eight percent held a high school diploma, 26% had a college degree (associates or bachelors), and nearly 15% had a graduate level degree. Income of respondents is fairly evenly distributed across a wide range of income brackets. Only 14% of respondents reported an annual household income of less than \$20,000; similarly, 11% reported an annual income of greater than \$100,000. Approximately one fourth of respondents are retired, just over half of respondents report working full-time with another 14% reporting that they work part-time.

One half of respondents report being active members of a faith organization (church, synagogue, temple, etc.) and almost one fifth of respondents claim membership to a community or service organization (Grange, Lions, Masons, Rotary, etc.). In terms of participating in community efforts, more than half of respondents (55%) report that they volunteer at least sometimes and one fourth of these respondents claim that they volunteer “often or always.”

Respondents appear to do fairly well in terms of access to health care. Almost 95% of respondents report having health insurance with 51% reporting that it is at least partially paid for by their or their spouse’s employer. Fifty percent report that they pay for at least some of the cost of health insurance. For this subset of respondents, there is a higher use of health insurance that is provided by Medicaid (7%), Medicare (20%), or Adult Basic (1.4%).

What are the Child Care needs of the (service users) survey respondents in Berks County?

Of the 2,720 respondents, who reported using services in Berks County, eight hundred forty-two report that they have at least one child under the age of 18 living at home. Eighty percent of these respondents have not had any trouble finding child care for their infant or preschool children, but 20% have. Of the 168 respondents who did have trouble finding child care, 75% reported that the main barrier was that they could not afford the care that was available. In addition to that 37% of these respondents indicated that they could not find a good child care provided. One third of respondents

could not find care in a good location and 32% could not find care for the hours that they needed it. Transportation was not a significant barrier to child care for infants and preschoolers

Four hundred five respondents answered the question pertaining to child care for older children before or after school. For these respondents, 25% or 100 respondents reported that they did have trouble finding before or after school care for their children. Again, the most commonly reported barrier was that they could not afford the care that was available (60%). Other frequently cited reasons were not being able to find a good provider(36%), care was not available for the hours that it was needed (33%), children are too old (18%), or child has special needs (15%). Transportation was reported to be a barrier to child care for school age children for 12% of these respondents.

Respondents who are parents were asked several questions about spending time with their children. Approximately 60% of the 825 respondents report that they spend enough time with their children. For those parents who feel they do not spend enough time with their children, the primary reasons are that they work too many hours or that they work evenings and weekends. Over 80% of parents report reading with their children; and for the parents who report that they rarely or never read to their children, most of them say that they have children who are “too old” to be read to by their parents.

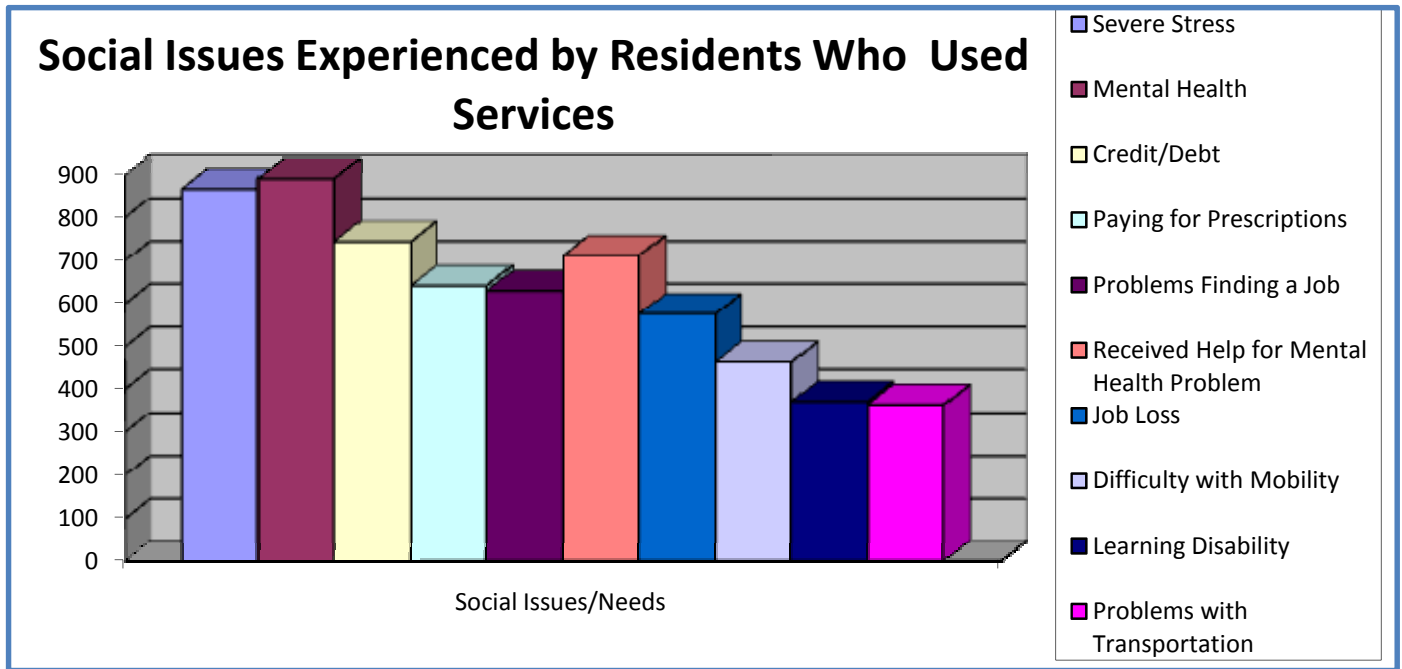
Eighty-seven percent of parent respondents report talking with their children about problems related to alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse. Over 86% of the parents report helping their school-age children with homework. Nearly all parents (97%) reported participating in their children’s activities. Over half of these respondents (56.2%) report that their community provides enough activities for parents to do together with their children.

What other social issues are taking place for the service users survey respondents in Berks County?

The overwhelming majority of Berks County residents report experiencing relatively few difficult personal/social issues for themselves or someone in their family within the last 2 years. For those issues that families did experience, the ones that were reported by at least 10% of respondents were (from highest to lowest):

1. Had a mental health or emotional problem (891 persons)
2. Suffered from severe stress (867 persons)
3. Had a problem with credit or debt (745 persons)
4. Received help for a mental health or emotional problem (712 persons)
5. Had problems paying for prescription medicines (642 persons)
6. Had problems finding a job (630 persons)
7. Had a job loss (576 persons)
8. Had difficulty with mobility or getting around (466 persons)
9. Had a learning disability (372 persons)
10. Had problems with transportation (365 persons)

None of the above issues were reported by more than 35% of respondents. Issues such as teen pregnancy or fatherhood, sexual assault and gambling were reported as problems for less than 1% of respondents.



What is the state of Berks County according to its Residents who are using services?

Overall, the residents of Berks County who took the time to respond to the Needs Assessment Survey have a positive view of their county. Respondents rated a variety of issues relating the perceived strengths and challenges existing for Berks County. Overall, the community residents of Berks County are most impressed by the geographical location of the county. Following in a close second was “good caring hardworking people.” By far, residents rated “high crime” and “lack of good paying jobs” as the two biggest challenges for Berks County.

Strengths of Berks County ranked from greatest to least by community residents using services:

1. Good location
2. Good caring hardworking people
3. Diversity of people
4. Low cost of living/housing
5. People work well together
6. Safe/low crime

Challenges of Berks County ranked from greatest to least by community residents using services:

1. High Crime
2. Lack of good paying jobs
3. Infrastructure (water, roads, sewage, etc.)
4. Public Transportation
5. Lack of affordable housing
6. Lack of recreational opportunities

When asked the extent to which respondents agreed that the following 28 “problems” were problems for Berks County, community residents ranked them (from greatest to least) in the following order:

- 1. Crime**
- 2. Drug or alcohol abuse**
- 3. Lack of jobs with good pay**
- 4. Lack of affordable health insurance**
- 5. Lack of exercise**
- 6. Unhealthy eating**
- 7. Lack of affordable medications**
- 8. Cost of maintaining a home**
- 9. Poor parenting**
- 10. Poverty**
- 11. Smoking in public places**
- 12. Child abuse/neglect/maltreatment**
- 13. Cost of buying a home**
- 14. Spouse or partner abuse/domestic violence**
- 15. Children dropping out of school/truancy**
16. Illiteracy
17. Homelessness
18. Lack of public transportation
19. Poor education
20. Lack of job training opportunities
21. Teen pregnancy
22. Lack of recreational opportunities
23. Mental Health problems
24. High rental housing costs
25. Abuse of the elderly
26. Lack of day care for children
27. Lack of day care for the elderly
28. Excessive gambling

Those items that are ranked 1-15 are predominantly viewed as being problems and those rated 16-28 are not considered to be problems by the majority of respondents. When asked what they would most

like to see in Berks County's future 59% responded that "Good paying jobs" is what they would like. In terms of what would best describe how organizations can work together to improve the well-being of Berks County and its residents, responses were evenly split between "Share resources," "Improved communications" and "Learn from others outside the area." In terms of where folks turn to for information regarding services in Berks County the "used human services" population most frequently uses family/friends (52.3%) followed by Doctor or medical professional (49.8%), phone book blue pages (43.2%) and the newspaper (32.5%) and the internet (29.4%).

A ranking of responses concerning the involvement of drugs and alcohol for six social ills shows that Berks County residents report believing that the abuse of drugs or alcohol are primarily responsible for:

1. Crime
2. Violence
3. Unemployment
4. Dropping out of school
5. Poverty
6. Homelessness

All six of the above issues were indicated by at least 68% of respondents as being significantly caused by abuse of drugs and alcohol. Not surprisingly, over 95% of respondents feel that the prevention and treatment of drug and alcohol abuse is an important part of reducing problems in the community.

Service Providers Survey Results

Surveys were disseminated to as many service provider offices as possible and service providers were encouraged to complete the surveys and return them to the County. In this way, those individuals who spend their working hours addressing the county residents' needs could weigh in on the state of the County's needs and how they are to be addressed.

Who responded?

124 individuals responded to the Berks County Needs Assessment Service Providers Survey. Of these respondents, 119 completed the survey. 59 of the respondents were from Public agencies and 60 were from Private agencies. Most respondents reported having worked in their current agency for 10 or more years and having worked in the human service field for 20 or more years. More than 2/3 of the service providers responding to this survey had an undergraduate degree or higher; over half of these providers had a graduate degree.

In general, service providers rate their own and their colleagues' knowledge of available services fairly high, while they rate clients' knowledge of services lower and the general public's knowledge lower still.

What are the barriers to receiving services?

The biggest barrier to clients accessing services is "Lack of Transportation." This was rated as *very much a barrier* by 65% of respondents. All other suggested barriers were considered to be *somewhat of a barrier* to clients receiving services. Within the list of choices, "Waiting List for Services" was the second highest rated barrier to residents receiving services, followed by "Hours of service providers" was rated as the least likely to be a barrier to services.

Following are the service providers' list of clients' barriers to service from greatest to least:

1. Lack of transportation
2. Waiting list for services
3. Inability to pay for services
4. Lack of basic life skills
5. Denial that they need help
6. Language barrier
7. Stigma associated with receiving services
8. Lack of child care
9. Hours of service providers

What are the Strengths and Challenges of Berks County?

"Good, caring, hardworking people" is rated as the greatest strength of Berks County, followed closely by Diversity of people. Safe, low crime was not considered to be a strength for Berks County by respondents of the Service Providers survey. In fact, High Crime was considered to be the greatest

challenge facing Berks County. “Lack of good paying jobs was rated as the second biggest challenge for the county.

Following are the County’s “strengths” as rated by service providers from greatest to least:

1. Good caring hardworking people
2. Diversity of people
3. Good location, close to interstates
4. Low cost of living/housing
5. People work well together
6. Safe/low crime

Following are the County’s “challenges” as rated by service providers from greatest to least:

1. High crime
2. Lack of good paying jobs
3. Lack of affordable housing
4. Public transportation
5. Infrastructure (roads, water, sewage, etc.)
6. Lack of recreational opportunities

Service providers ranked 28 “problems” from greatest to least for Berks County:

1. Crime (with 75.4% strongly agreeing that this is a problem)
2. Drug or Alcohol abuse (66.7% strongly agree)
3. Lack of jobs with good pay
4. Lack of affordable health insurance
5. Mental health problems
6. Poverty
7. Poor parenting
8. Unhealthy eating
9. Lack of affordable medications
10. Children dropping out of school/truancy
11. Spouse or partner abuse/domestic abuse
12. Lack of exercise
13. Homelessness
14. Child abuse/neglect/maltreatment
15. Teen pregnancy
16. Cost of maintaining a home
17. Illiteracy
18. Poor education
19. Lack of public transportation
20. Cost of buying a home
21. Lack of recreation opportunities
22. Smoking in public places
23. High rental housing costs

24. Lack of job training opportunities
25. Lack of day care for children
26. Abuse of the elderly
27. Lack of day care for the elderly
28. Excessive gambling

From the standpoint of service providers, the County needs to focus efforts on reducing crime. Following that effort, service providers themselves can focus their efforts on issues pertaining to drug and alcohol use/abuse, job training and job readiness, and addressing the service gaps that are in play for health insurance and health care access, as well as mental health services.

Perhaps more could be done to educate service recipients and the general public about the available services and how to access them.

Business Survey Results

A survey that specifically targeted the business community was sent out to local business owners in Berks County. This survey allows for the specific focus of the views of those in the business community. Respondents to this survey provide insight regarding needed improvements that would be of particular interest to those who have established businesses and want to see their opportunities improve in Berks County.

Who responded to the survey?

Sixty-seven business people responded to the business survey. Over half (53%) of the businesses have been in operation for over 20 years. The business establishments ranged from employing only a handful of individuals to employing over 100 individuals. Most businesses provided employee benefits packages as a means of attracting and retaining good quality employees. 78.5 % of businesses reported providing health insurance benefits to full-time employees. And most employees at these businesses are residents of Berks County. About half of the responding businesses do provide internship experiences for students to help them complete their course requirements. Eighty-nine percent of business respondents report a yearly employee turnover rate of 25% or less.

Less than 60% of the respondents feel that Berks County provides their business with an adequately trained workforce. Fourteen percent of business respondents admit that their employees have difficulty finding childcare. And over 58% report that they do nothing to assist employees with childcare issues. Less than 4% of respondents have childcare available on-site for employees. However, 37% do provide flextime to employees so that they can deal with childcare needs. Two thirds of employees report knowing where to find information for their employees who need human services; and only 10% report that employees have issues with elder care. Providing flextime to employees was the biggest form of employer assistance to employees who have eldercare issues; 74% report providing no assistance to employees with eldercare issues.

Following are the County's "strengths" as rated by business people from greatest to least:

1. Good caring hardworking people
2. Good location, close to interstates
3. People work well together
4. Low cost of living/housing
5. Diversity of people
6. Safe/low crime

Following are the County's "challenges" as rated by the business community from greatest to least:

1. High crime
2. Infrastructure (roads, water, sewage, etc.)
3. Lack of good paying jobs
4. Public transportation

5. Lack of affordable housing
6. Lack of recreational opportunities

The Business community ranked 28 “problems” from greatest to least for Berks County:

1. Crime (with 75.4% strongly agreeing that this is a problem)
2. Drug or Alcohol abuse (66.7% strongly agree)
3. Lack of jobs with good pay
4. Lack of affordable health insurance
5. Mental health problems
6. Poverty
7. Poor parenting
8. Unhealthy eating
9. Lack of affordable medications
10. Children dropping out of school/truancy
11. Spouse or partner abuse/domestic abuse
12. Lack of exercise
13. Homelessness
14. Child abuse/neglect/maltreatment
15. Teen pregnancy
16. Cost of maintaining a home
17. Illiteracy
18. Poor education
19. Lack of public transportation
20. Cost of buying a home
21. Lack of recreation opportunities
22. Smoking in public places
23. High rental housing costs
24. Lack of job training opportunities
25. Lack of day care for children
26. Abuse of the elderly
27. Lack of day care for the elderly
28. Excessive gambling

From the standpoint of Businesses, the County needs to focus efforts on reducing crime. Following that, efforts need to be focused on issues pertaining to drug and alcohol use/abuse, job training and job readiness, and addressing the service gaps that are in play for health insurance and health care access, as well as mental health services.

Conclusions

Berks County is, overall, a positive place to live and raise a family. Most agree that the location of Berks County is a positive feature of living in this area. On the one hand, there is much rural and farm land that is also prime for recreation and makes Berks County an attractive place to live and play. Major highways are easily accessed. It is not too far to make a trip to Philadelphia, New York City, the Poconos or the seashore. Still, survey respondents also seem equally in agreement that Berks County has to do something about the high crime rate and the rampant use/abuse of drugs and alcohol. A lack of good paying jobs is thought to be one possible cause of the social unrest. This might be addressed with improved job training opportunities, an increase in wages, and easier access to education for low-income workers.

Survey respondents reported that stress and mental health were the most common issues that they had to deal with. Over 2,200 people reported that they or someone in their household suffered from severe stress and/or mental illness during the last 2 years. Only 1,580 people reported that they (or a household member) received help for a mental health or emotional problem. Berks Countians do have access to assistance with mental health issues. The county needs to make sure that residents are aware of how to access these services and make sure that enough service providers exist to meet the needs of residents suffering from stress and mental illness.

Credit and debt issues were the next most frequently cited issue faced by the survey respondents. One thousand nine hundred and three respondents listed credit/debt problems as an issue that had an impact on them or a household member. As the economy continues to worsen, these problems will undoubtedly increase. More assistance needs to be available for people to learn how to manage their money, budget and improve or maintain their credit standing.

Closely related to credit and debt issues is that of finding and/or keeping a job. Almost 1,700 respondents reported that they had trouble finding a job and nearly 1,500 respondents reported household problems relating to job loss. Again, the economic structure of the county is changing as it is in much of the United States, with many manufacturing jobs moving elsewhere leaving a wake of unemployment and, for those fortunate enough to find something else, underemployment.

Childcare is clearly a needed commodity in Berks County, as evidenced by the numbers of recipients of subsidized child care during the year 2007.

Within the elderly (over age 60 and over age 75) subsets of respondents, additional issues emerge as being problematic for Berks County residents. Here we see that mobility issues and paying for prescription medications become more difficult. With Berks County's growing elderly population, it will be important to maintain the current level of available services and to plan on needing to increase the availability of those services in the very near future.