

3

Social and Economic Needs at the Neighborhood Level

Responses to the Household Survey and Focus Groups

This chapter reports on the perceptions of current social and economic problems and needs expressed by adults living in Delaware households. More specifically, 1200 adults (age 18 or older) identified problems that needed attention in their neighborhoods. The analysis of the household survey responses begins with descriptive statistics, such as frequency distribution, that summarize opinions about 1) the presence of problems(s), 2) the number of problems, and 3) the relative prominence of various problems in Delaware neighborhoods and homes. The findings are presented for the four geographic areas (suburban New Castle County, City of Wilmington, Kent County, Sussex County), at the statewide level, and for subgroups within a demographic variable who differ significantly from one another. These response patterns are further examined through cross-tabulations and calculation of the chi-square statistic. The results of four focus groups which were conducted statewide are also included in this chapter.

Knowing how Delawareans perceive current social and economic problems is one component of successful strategic planning to meet community needs. Perceptions of problems help define the initiatives to pursue by indicating where public opinion stands, and by inference, the support such initiatives will receive. As this chapter demonstrates, perceptions about problems in Delaware are not uniform across subgroups of the population, such as households of different races or income levels, or households residing in different geographic areas. The two primary data collection techniques, the household survey and focus groups, also elicited somewhat different responses. Underlying demographic and economic trends, as discussed in Chapter 2, and perceptions of capabilities of the service delivery system, documented in Chapter 5, also play key roles in informing strategic planning for community needs. In addition, there are often data and information about the incidence and prevalence of social and economic problems that corroborate or challenge the public's perceptions of problems. Finally, it should be noted that since both the household survey and focus groups were undertaken at a specific time, there are inevitable shortcomings in the perceptions of problems captured, because perceptions shift over time.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents to the Household Survey

Respondent characteristics in each of the four geographic areas (suburban New Castle County, City of Wilmington, Kent County, Sussex County) are largely similar to each other, although there are more respondents aged 60 and over in Sussex County (32.7%), fewer female respondents in suburban New Castle County (58.9%), more African American respondents in Wilmington (47.9%), more respondents with annual incomes \$75,000 and over in suburban New Castle County (24.8%), and fewer respondents with four year college degrees in Kent County (15.5%). Respondents in the four geographic areas are also similar to the statewide weighted sample. Table 3-1 shows the demographic characteristics of respondents in the four geographic areas.

Table 3-1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents in the Four Geographic Areas

Characteristic	Suburban New Castle County	City of Wilmington	Kent County	Sussex County
Age	18-59: 75.8% 60+: 24.2%	18-59: 73.1% 60+: 26.9%	18-59: 72.9% 60+: 27.1%	18-59: 67.3% 60+: 32.7%
Gender	Female: 58.9% Male: 41.1%	Female: 69.3% Male: 30.7%	Female: 62.7% Male: 37.3%	Female: 64.3% Male: 35.7%
Income	Under \$34,999: 29.4% \$35,000-\$74,999: 45.7% \$75,000+: 24.8%	Under \$34,999: 47.5% \$35,000-\$74,999: 39.7% \$75,000+: 12.8%	Under \$34,999: 45.7% \$35,000-\$74,999: 45.6% \$75,000+: 8.8%	Under \$34,999: 43.8% \$35,000-\$74,999: 50.3% \$75,000+: 5.9%
Race/Ethnicity	White: 86.7% African American: 11.6% Hispanic: 2.6% Asian: 1.7%	White: 51.7% African American: 47.9% Hispanic: 3.4% Native American: 0.3%	White: 77.1% African American: 20.9% Asian: 1.3% Native American: 1.0%	White: 87.3% African American: 11.3% Hispanic: 3.3% Asian: 1.3% Native American: 0.7%
Education	LT High School: 3.6% High School Grad.: 28.1% Some College: 14.5% Assoc./Tech: 12.5% 4 Year College: 28.7% Advanced Degree: 12.5%	LT High School: 13.5% High School Grad.: 29.1% Some College: 14.5% Assoc./Tech: 12.1% 4 Year College: 21.3% Advanced Degree: 9.5%	LT High School: 8.1% High School Grad.: 34.5% Some College: 17.9% Assoc./Tech: 12.9% 4 Year College: 15.5% Advanced Degree: 8.4%	LT High School: 3.6% High School Grad.: 28.1% Some College: 14.5% Assoc./Tech: 8.6% 4 Year College: 28.7% Advanced Degree: 12.5%

Source: 1999 Community Needs Assessment Household Survey.

At the statewide level, about three-quarters (72.7%) of the respondents in the weighted sample are between the ages of 18 and 59, nearly two-thirds (61.7%) are

female, about one-in-five (16.6%) are African American, close to half (45.5%) have annual incomes between \$35,000 and \$74,999, and a quarter (24.6%) are college graduates. The demographic characteristics of the weighted sample are generally similar to the population of the state, although the weighted sample is older, more female, more affluent, and better educated. Table 3-2 shows the demographic characteristics of respondents in the statewide weighted sample and the general population of the state.

Table 3-2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents in the Statewide Weighted Sample and Population of Delaware

Characteristic	Statewide Weighted Sample	State of Delaware
Age	18-59: 72.7% 60+: 27.3%	18-59: 83.4% 60+: 16.6%
Gender	Female: 61.7% Male: 38.3%	Female: 51.5% Male: 48.5%
Income	Under \$34,999: 35.9% \$35,000-\$74,999: 45.5% \$75,000+: 18.5%	Under \$34,999: 50.2% \$35,000-\$74,999: 38.9% \$75,000+: 11.0%
Race/Ethnicity	White: 81.9% African American: 16.6% Hispanic: 2.4% Asian: 1.5% Native American: 0.7%	White: 80.4% African American: 16.8% Hispanic: 2.3% Asian: 1.3% Native American: 0.3%
Education	LT High School: 8.1% High School Grad.: 30.4% Some College: 15.7% Assoc./Tech: 11% 4 Year College: 24.6% Advanced Degree: 10.3%	LT High School: 22% High School Grad.: 33.1% Some College: 19.4% Assoc./Tech: 6.1% 4 Year College: 12.8% Advanced Degree: 6.6%

Source: 1999 Community Needs Assessment Household Survey and 1990 Census of Population and Housing

Characteristics of Focus Group Participants

Focus group participants were recruited using the CCDFP's data base of community-based organizations, state agencies, the philanthropic community, and elected officials. A total of 54 persons participated in the four focus groups. Fifteen persons participated in the first New Castle County focus group. The majority of the participants were representatives of nonprofit agencies. One person was a representative from the City of Wilmington and two were community relations officers with area banks. About half of the nonprofit representatives targeted their services for City of Wilmington residents, about one-third provided services statewide, and the others provided services in the city and county. This focus group will be referred to as the Wilmington focus group.

The second New Castle County focus group included 16 persons representing nonprofit and state agencies. There were two representatives each from arts organizations, senior centers, and the Delaware Helpline. Other participants included the head of a major charitable foundation and a county council person. Several participants identified their service area as statewide, while a few described service areas that included areas outside Delaware, such as adjacent counties in Pennsylvania and Maryland. A few others identified suburban New Castle County as their service area. This focus group will be referred to as the suburban New Castle County focus group.

The Kent County focus group was composed of 17 persons, the majority of whom were representatives of nonprofit agencies. Two persons were representatives of state agencies and one person worked in a private company which provides welfare services. Two participants were from the Wilmington area. The majority of participants identified their service areas as Kent and Sussex Counties and statewide.

The Sussex County focus group was the largest and included 26 persons, with the majority being representatives from nonprofit organizations and the Strong Communities Initiative. All but three persons represented Sussex County agencies or lived in the county. The majority of the community-based agencies identified Sussex County as their service area, while a few provided services in both Kent and Sussex Counties.

Comparison with Other Studies

The results of the 1999 survey are compared with two earlier statewide needs assessment studies, Insight Delaware, conducted by the United Way of Delaware in 1990, and Community Needs Assessment, undertaken by the Center for Community Development in 1994, and other more targeted studies, as appropriate.¹ The Insight Delaware household survey was mailed to 10,000 randomly selected households in the state, with 2,138 respondents, for a response rate of 21.4 percent. Insight Delaware divided the state into five geographic areas: Kent County, Sussex County, and three subareas in New Castle County composed of zip codes grouped by median household income levels. Insight Delaware also surveyed community leaders through a mailed survey, with 428 respondents, for a response rate of 31 percent. In 1994, the Center for Community Development conducted a telephone survey of 1,207 randomly selected low-and moderate-income households statewide in four geographic areas (suburban New Castle County, the City of Wilmington, Kent County, and Sussex County) as part of the Community Needs Assessment (CNA 94) survey. In addition, 133 low- and

¹ The 1994 Community Needs Assessment will be referred to as CNA 94 to avoid confusion with 1999 Community Needs Assessment findings.

moderate-income households without telephones in the four geographic areas were interviewed in a field survey. Comparisons to other targeted needs assessment studies are also made, as appropriate. As noted earlier, CCDFP staff and graduate students analyzed existing needs assessment reports and secondary data to determine what is known about the social and economic needs of Delawareans. A summary table listing each report and its area(s) of study is provided in Appendix C.

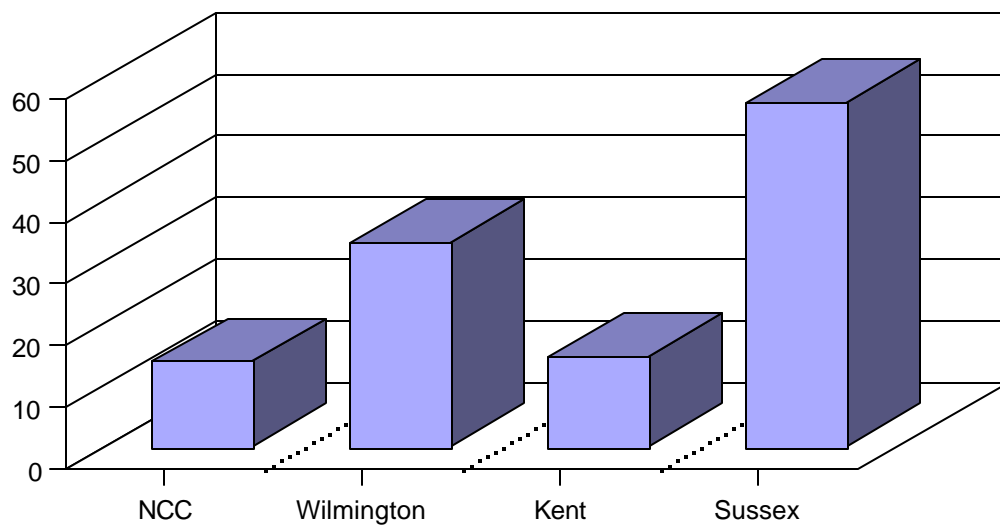
Neighborhood Level Findings: Household Survey

The 1999 Household Survey included 20 questions about social and economic problems in the area where the respondent lives. Respondents were first asked whether there were social and economic problems that needed to be addressed in their neighborhood.

Prevalence of Neighborhood Problems

There is significant variation among respondents in the four geographic areas. As shown in Figure 3-1, suburban New Castle County and Kent County respondents reported the lowest levels of neighborhood problems, 13.8 percent and 14.7 percent respectively. About one third (33.2%) of Wilmington respondents see problems in their neighborhood, while more than one-half (56%) of the Sussex County respondents perceive neighborhood problems. These geographic differences are statistically significant at the .000 level.

Figure 3-1: Neighborhood Problems by Geographic Area



Statewide, close to one-quarter (24.3%) of the survey respondents in the weighted sample stated that there are social and economic problems in the area where they live. Female respondents are slightly more likely to report neighborhood problems than male respondents, 25.1 percent versus 23.2 percent respectively. Hispanic respondents (46.2%) are more likely to report neighborhood problems than either African American (34.8%) or white respondents (22.5%). Respondents with annual incomes of \$50,000 to \$74,999 and \$75,000 and over are less likely to report neighborhood problems than respondents with lower incomes, with only 14.3 percent and 15.4 percent identifying neighborhood problems in these two income groups. The differences among income groups are statistically significant at the .013 and .047 level respectively. Households headed by someone age 18-59 (78.2%) are much more likely to report neighborhood problems than those headed by a person over age 60 (21.8%). Respondents who are separated from their spouse are most likely to report neighborhood problems (50%), while those who are widowed are least likely to report neighborhood problems (19.4%). Among occupational groups, homemakers are least likely to report neighborhood problems (13.9%), while farmers (33.3%) and respondents who are unemployed (33.3%) are most likely to report neighborhood problems. Respondents who have completed some high school (37.1%) are most likely to report neighborhood problems, while those with four year college degrees are least likely to report neighborhood problems (18.8%).

Prevalence of Specific Neighborhood Problems

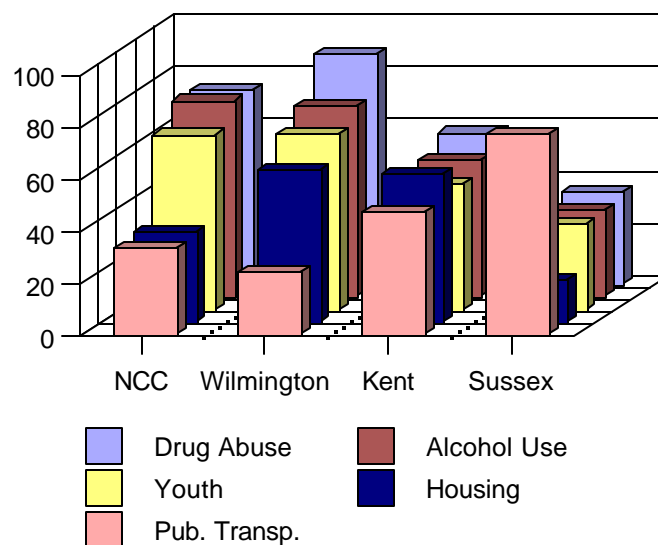
If the 1999 household survey respondents answered yes to the initial question about problems in the area where they live, they were asked if there was a problem in their neighborhood in any of the following areas:

- housing (poor condition, crowded, too expensive),
- basic needs (families that need help with food, clothing, furniture, utility bills),
- not being able to read or write,
- English language difficulties,
- health care problems (health insurance, finding a doctor),
- mental illness or emotional problems,
- alcohol problems,
- drug abuse,
- public health problems (communicable diseases like TB, AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases),
- teenage pregnancy,
- problems facing older people (housekeeping, home health care, transportation, adult day care),

- problems facing people with disabilities (housekeeping, home health care, transportation, adult day care),
- child care when parents go to work or school,
- problems with youth (acting out, running away, leaving school),
- not enough programs or places for recreation or cultural activities,
- unemployment,
- family abuse or violence,
- help with legal problems,
- crime/victim's services,
- poor public transportation.

As shown in Figure 3-2, there is significant variation among respondents on the types of neighborhood problems reported in the four geographic areas. Respondents from suburban New Castle County and the City of Wilmington are similar in their identification of drug abuse, problems with alcohol use, and problems with youth as neighborhood problems. More than one-half of Wilmington and Kent County respondents classify housing as a neighborhood problem. Sussex County respondents differ from those in the three other areas in their focus on poor public transportation as a neighborhood problem. Table 3-3 shows the responses to questions about specific problems in their neighborhood by geographic area. Percentages are bolded when the chi-square value is .05 or less (a confidence interval of 95 percent).

Figure 3-2: Specific Neighborhood Problems Identified by Geographic Area



The majority of suburban New Castle County respondents who recognize neighborhood problems (82.5%) point to lack of recreation and cultural activities as a problem. About three-quarters of the suburban New Castle County respondents who see problems in their neighborhood refer to problems with alcohol use (75%), and drug abuse (74.4%) as neighborhood problems, while about two-thirds recognize problems with youth (66.7%) and child care for working parents (63.9%) as neighborhood problems.

In Wilmington, a majority of the respondents identifying neighborhood problems (88.2%) see drug abuse as a problem in the area, while nearly three-quarters identify problems with alcohol use (73.3%) or crime/victim's services (71.2%) as problems. More than two-thirds of the Wilmington respondents who identified neighborhood problems see lack of recreation and cultural activities (69.8%) and health care (67.5%) as problems in their area.

More than two-thirds (69.8%) of Kent County respondents who said there are neighborhood problems in the area where they live identify lack of recreation and cultural activities as a problem. More than one-half of Kent County respondents who identify neighborhood problems describe drug abuse (58.1%), housing (56.8%), problems with alcohol use (52.3%), and unemployment (51.2%) as neighborhood problems.

Poor public transportation is identified as a neighborhood problem by more than three-quarters (76.4%) of the Sussex County respondents who said there were problems in the area where they live. About one-third of Sussex County respondents with neighborhood problems see drug abuse (35.6%), child care for working parents (34.3%), and problems with alcohol use (33.5%) as problems in the area where they live.

Statewide, a majority of respondents (74.1%) who perceive neighborhoods problems identify lack of recreation and cultural activities as a problem in their neighborhood (see Table 3-4). About half of those who said there are problems in their neighborhood identify drug abuse (56.7%), problems with alcohol use (53.3%), poor public transportation (52.8%), problems with youth (49.6%), problems facing older people (49.0%), and child care for working parents (49.0%) as problems in the area where they live. Households headed by a respondent age 18-59 are more likely to identify teen pregnancy (88.7%), child care for working parents (91.4%), and crime/victim's services (87%) as neighborhood problems. These relationships between age groups are statistically significant at the .026, .008 and .051 level respectively. As shown in Figure 3-3, African American respondents are more likely to identify basic needs (60.7%), health care problems (64.3%), problems with alcohol use (75.9%), drug abuse

Table 3-3: Specific Neighborhood Problems Identified by Geographic Area

	Suburban New Castle County	City of Wilmington	Kent County	Sussex County
Housing	34.1	57.9	56.8	15.6
Basic Needs	57.9	58.0	47.7	12.7
Not able to read or write	36.8	51.2	27.9	10.8
Difficulties with English	22.0	45.7	16.3	16.8
Health Care	61.5	67.5	46.3	20.1
Mental illness	40.5	48.5	30.8	5.4
Alcohol Use	75.0	73.3	52.3	33.5
Drug Abuse	74.4	88.2	58.1	35.6
Public Health	28.1	52.9	18.6	6.1
Teen Pregnancy	55.3	61.1	27.9	32.9
Problems facing elderly	53.7	65.5	48.8	4.9
Problems facing disabled	42.5	55.8	48.8	12.7
Child Care	63.9	58.0	55.8	34.3
Problems with Youth	66.7	67.4	47.7	32.5
Recreation or Culture	82.5	69.8	69.8	7.7
Unemployment	30.6	67.0	51.2	25.0
Family abuse	44.7	46.2	26.8	10.0
Legal problems	42.1	57.5	42.5	8.7
Crime/victim's services	46.2	71.4	33.3	32.3
Public Transportation	32.5	23.4	46.5	76.4

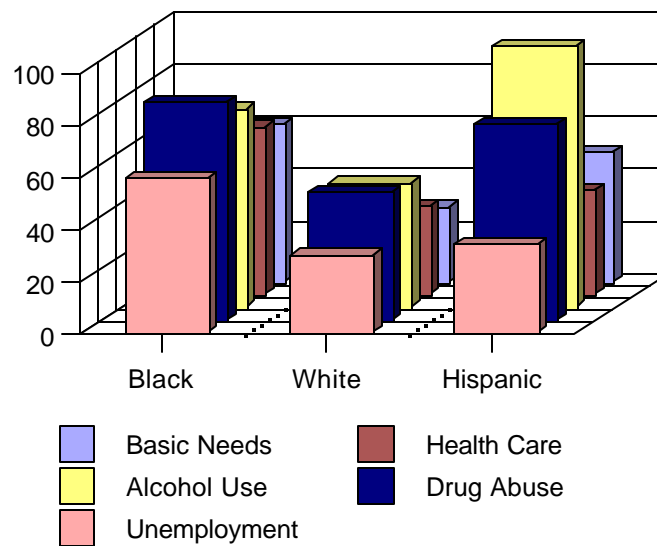
Source: 1999 Community Needs Assessment Household Survey. Percentages are bolded when the chi-square value is 0.05 or less (a confidence interval of 95 percent).

(83.3%), and unemployment (58.6%) as neighborhood problems. These relationships among racial groups are statistically significant at the .003, .005, .006, .001, and .007 level respectively. There are no statistically significant differences in likelihood of reporting particular neighborhood problems among male and female respondents or those with different marital status, annual incomes, occupations, or levels of educational achievement.

Table 3-4: Specific Neighborhood Problems Identified by Statewide Respondents (Weighted Sample)

Neighborhood Problem	Percentage of Statewide Respondents Identifying
Recreation/culture	74.1
Drug Abuse	56.7
Alcohol Use	53.3
Public Transportation	52.8
Problems with Youth	49.6
Problems facing Elderly	49.0
Child Care	49.0
Teen Pregnancy	43.2
Crime/Victim's services	41.9
Unemployment	35.2
Problems facing Disabled	31.3
Housing	31.0
Family Abuse or Violence	26.7

Source: 1999 Community Needs Assessment, Household Survey

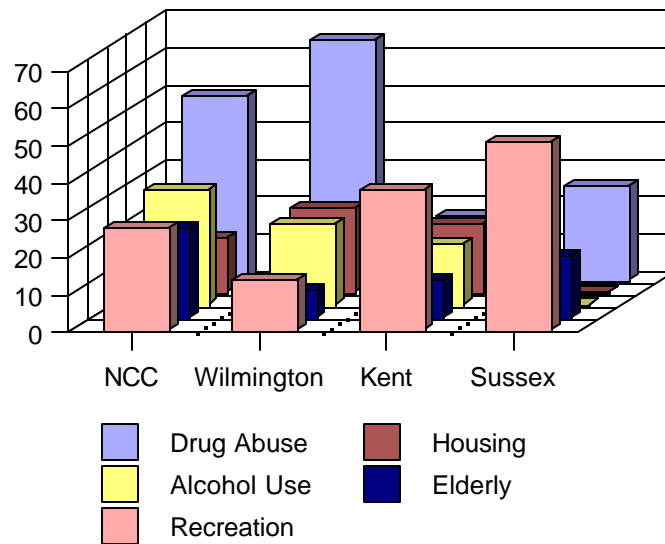


**Figure 3-3:
Specific
Neighborhood
Problems Identified
by Race/Ethnicity**

Prevalence of Most Important Neighborhood Problems

As shown in Figure 3-4, rating neighborhood problems varies substantially across geographic areas. In common with the unranked listing of neighborhood problems, respondents from suburban New Castle County and the City of Wilmington are similar in their identification of problems with alcohol use, drug abuse, and housing as the most important neighborhood problems. Many Kent County respondents also identify housing and problems with alcohol use as the most important neighborhood problems. Unlike their counterparts, more Sussex County respondents identify problems facing older people and lack of recreation and culture as the most important neighborhood problems.

Figure 3-4: Three Most Important Neighborhood Problems by Geographic Area



About a quarter of the suburban New Castle County respondents (22%) list problems with alcohol use as the most important problem in their area, while others choose drug abuse (17.1%) or housing (14.6%). Drug abuse is also the second most important neighborhood problem reported by about one-quarter (23.5%) of the suburban New Castle County respondents, while smaller proportions list problems facing the elderly (14.7%) or problems with alcohol use (8.8%). Lack of recreation and culture is seen as the third most important neighborhood problem by more than a quarter (27.3%) of the suburban New Castle County respondents, followed by crime/victim's services (9.1%), and problems with youth (9.1%).

In Wilmington, nearly one-in-three of the respondents (29.2%) select drug abuse as the most important neighborhood problem, while smaller groups list housing (22.9%) or problems with alcohol use (21.9%). Drug abuse is also the second most important neighborhood problem identified by more than one-third (35.5%) of the Wilmington respondents. Many fewer respondents in Wilmington choose lack of recreation and culture (9.7%), or teen pregnancy (7.5%) as the second most important problem. Crime/victim's services is the third most important neighborhood problem chosen by a relatively small group (9.1%) of the Wilmington respondents, followed by problems with youth (4.1%), and lack of recreation and culture (3.4%).

About one in five Kent County respondents (18.6%) select housing as the most important neighborhood problem, while others choose problems with alcohol use (16.3%) or basic needs (16.3%). Drug abuse is the second most important neighborhood problem identified by 17.5 percent of Kent County respondents, while fewer of them choose child care for working parents (12.5%), lack of recreation and culture (10%), or problems facing older people (10%). Nearly one in three (27.3%) of Kent County respondents identify lack of recreation and culture as the third most important problem in their neighborhood, followed by poor public transportation (18.2%), and unemployment (12.1%).

About one in five Sussex County respondents (18%) see drug abuse as the most important neighborhood problem, while slightly fewer list problems with alcohol use (15.9%) or housing (13.6%). Close to a quarter of Sussex County respondents (21.6%) report that drug abuse is the second most important neighborhood problem, while others report lack of recreation and culture (16.7%) or problems facing older people (9.2%). A quarter of Sussex County respondents (25.7%) identify poor public transportation as the third most important neighborhood problem, followed by crime/victim's services (17.6%), and lack of recreation and culture (14.9%). Table 3-5 shows the responses to questions about the three most important neighborhood problems in the four geographic areas.

Geographic variability in the importance of neighborhood problems can also be seen if points are assigned to first (five points), second (four points) and third (three points) choices for most important neighborhood problem. Table 3-6 shows geographic differences in the points received by different neighborhood problems. Drug abuse receives the highest number of points in the City of Wilmington, suburban New Castle County, and Kent County, while poor public transportation

receives the highest point count in Sussex County. Problems with alcohol use receives the second highest number of points in the City of Wilmington, suburban New Castle County, and Kent County, while lack of recreation and culture receives the second highest point count in Sussex County. Housing receives the third highest number of points in the City of Wilmington, lack of recreation and culture is third in suburban New Castle County, basic needs is third in Kent County, and problems facing older people is third in Sussex County. Crime/victim's services receives the fourth highest point count in the City of Wilmington, lack of recreation and culture is fourth in Kent County, problems facing older people is fourth in suburban New Castle County, and drug abuse is fourth in Sussex County. Lack of recreation and culture receives the fifth highest point count in the city of Wilmington, housing is fifth in Kent County and suburban New Castle County, while crime/victim's services is fifth in Sussex County.

Table 3-5: Three Most Important Neighborhood Problems by Geographic Area

Three Most Important Problems	Suburban New Castle County	City of Wilmington	Kent County	Sussex County
1. Drug abuse	17.1%	29.2%		12.7%
Housing	14.6%	22.9%	18.6%	
Alcohol Use	22.0%	21.9%	16.3%	
Basic Needs			16.3%	
Elderly				16.4%
Recreation				13.9%
2. Drug abuse	23.5%	35.5%	17.5%	12.9%
Recreation		9.7%	10.0%	25.9%
Teen Pregnancy		7.5%		
Elderly	14.7%	7.5%	10.0%	
Youth		7.5%		
Alcohol Use	8.8%			
Child Care			12.5%	
Public Transportation				15.8%
3. Crime/Victim's Services	9.1%	9.1%		13.3%
Youth	9.1%	4.1%		
Recreation	27.3%	3.4%	27.3%	10.5%
Public Transportation	9.1%		18.2%	51.4%
Drug Abuse	9.1%			
Elderly	9.1%			
Unemployment			12.1%	

Source: 1999 Community Needs Assessment Household Survey

Table 3-6: Geographic Differences in Ranking of Most Important Neighborhood Problems

Rank	Suburban New Castle County	City of Wilmington	Kent County	Sussex County
1	Drug Abuse (76)	Drug Abuse (290)	Drug Abuse (67)	Pub Transportation (335)
2	Alcohol Use (57)	Alcohol Use (117)	Alcohol Use (57)	Recreation (292)
3	Recreation (55)	Housing (110)	Basic Needs (43)	Elderly (192)
4	Elderly (39)	Crime/Victim (94)	Recreation (43)	Drug Abuse (186)
5	Housing (30)	Recreation (66)	Housing (40)	Crime/Victim (110)
6	Health Care (24)	Youth (64)	Child Care (39)	Alcohol Use (98)
7	Teen Pregnancy (19)	Basic Needs (52)	Health Care (32)	Child Care (86)
8	Mental Illness (18)	Unemployment (44)	Pub Transportation (26)	Teen Pregnancy (61)
9	Child Care (17)	Teen Pregnancy (43)	Youth (23)	Housing (55)
10	Disabled (15)	Child Care (36)	Disabled (20)	Health Care (53)
11	Crime/Victim (14)	Health Care (35)	Unemployment (12)	Unemployment (50)
12	Pub Transportation (14)	English (23)	Mental Illness (10)	English (38)
13	Basic Needs (10)	Reading/Writing (18)	Public Health (9)	Disabled (19)
14	Public Health (9)	Family Violence (17)	Family Violence (8)	Mental Illness (19)
15	Unemployment (7)	Pub Transportation (17)	Crime/Victim (6)	Reading/Writing (15)
16	Family Violence (6)	Disabled (13)	Teen Pregnancy (4)	Family Violence (10)
17	English (5)	Mental Illness (13)	Legal Services (3)	Basic Needs (5)
18	Legal Services (4)	Public Health (12)	Reading/Writing (3)	Legal Services (0)
19	Reading/Writing (0)	Legal Services (3)	English (0)	Public Health (0)
	Total: 440	Total: 1,122	Total: 474	Total: 1,696

Source: 1999 Community Needs Assessment Household Survey. First Choice=5 points, second choice=4 points, third choice=3 points.

When asked which of the neighborhood problems were most important, statewide, the largest percentage of the respondents select drug abuse (16.5%) as the most important problem, while others see problems with alcohol use (16.4%), and housing (12.5%) as the most important neighborhood problem. One in five

statewide respondents (20.0%) chose drug abuse as the second most important problem, while a smaller proportion chose lack of recreation and culture (15.8%), and problems facing older people (10.4%). One-quarter of the respondents (25.7%) across the state see poor public transportation as the third most important problem, while others chose lack of recreation and culture (17.9%), and crime/victim's services (14.1%). The majority of respondents with incomes between \$15,000 and \$20,000 (72.9%) report that lack of recreation and culture is the most important neighborhood problem. This relationship is significant at the .000 level. There are no statistically significant differences in reporting most serious neighborhood problems by race, age, gender, marital status, occupation, or educational level.

Neighborhood Level Findings: Focus Groups

The 1999 Community Needs Assessment Focus Group Question Guide included the following questions:

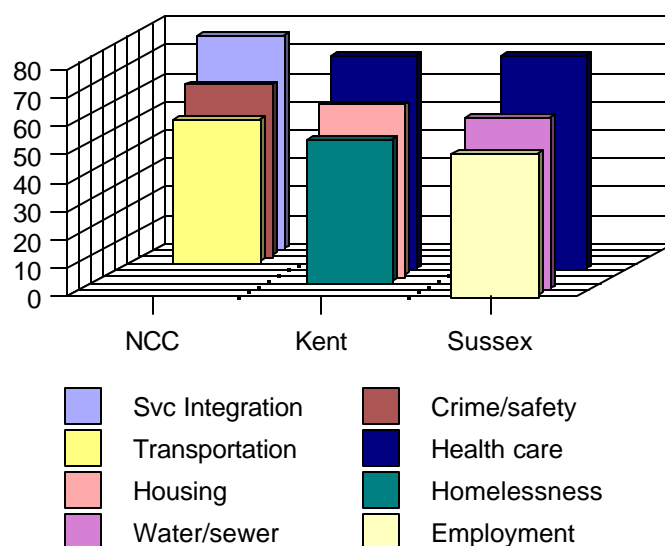
- 1) What is it about your community (the community of the people that you serve) that makes life good?
- 2) In your opinion, how has the quality of life changed in the last five years?,
- 3) What is it about your community (the community of the people that you serve) that makes life hard?,
- 4) Does your community (the community of the people that you serve) have health or social problems that need to be addressed?, and
- 5) For the problems we just talked about, what are the three most serious problems in the community?

As shown in Figure 3-5, there is variation in the responses of focus group participants in New Castle, Kent and Sussex Counties. There are also important differences between the household survey and focus group responses. Views shared by members of all four focus groups include concerns about 1) the high cost and low availability of health care, housing, and public transportation, 2) the change in focus of the criminal justice system (from rehabilitation to punishment), 3) the increasing number of working poor families, and 4) a need for information on the effects of welfare reform. Focus group participants from Kent and Sussex Counties see health and access to medical care as key issues, while those in Wilmington and New Castle County focus on services integration and coordination. Infrastructure concerns (transportation, water and sewer) are also rated among the three most important problems by focus group participants in Wilmington, New Castle County and Sussex County.

Focus group participants are much more likely to identify problems of working poor families and welfare to work participants than respondents to the household telephone survey. This may be due to the predominance of service agency

representatives among focus group participants. The lack of access to recreation and cultural activities (particularly for youth), which is among the top five problems for household survey respondents in all four geographic areas, was not mentioned at all by focus group participants. Drug abuse and alcohol use are also among the top five neighborhood problems for household survey respondents, but are mentioned much less frequently by focus group participants. Crime and public safety are priority issues for household survey respondents from Wilmington and Sussex County, while focus group participants in Wilmington and New Castle County rated crime and public safety as their number one concern. Transportation is a critical issue for household survey respondents in Sussex County and focus group respondents in Wilmington, New Castle County and Sussex County.

Figure 3-5: Three Most Important Community Problems Identified by Focus Groups by Geographic Area



New Castle County and City of Wilmington focus group participants are similar in their responses. They feel that the strength of the economy and the smallness of the state contribute to the quality of life for the people they serve, although some believed that recent economic growth has not benefitted residents of city neighborhoods. They stated that welfare reform has had a large impact on the community and on the people served by their agencies. Participants feel that not enough information is available about how the welfare-to-work population is faring under the new policies and programs. They report that the size of the population needing services has grown, particularly the increasing numbers of

working poor families. Participants mentioned that access to affordable food was already a problem before welfare reform was initiated. AIDS, teen pregnancy and use of heroin are identified as issues related to young people. Lack of education is identified as a growing problem. The growth of the prison system and problems getting ex-offenders back into the community were discussed. Participants state that people seem to be under more pressure today and that may be affecting many parts of their lives. They feel that a lack of transportation to work and affordable housing for the poor help make life hard for people in the communities they serve. They identified low-paying service sector jobs and part-time jobs without benefits as community issues. The top three problems/needs identified by the Wilmington and New Castle County focus groups were 1) services integration and coordination, 2) violence, domestic abuse, crime and public safety, and 3) transportation. Participants spoke of the growing number of nonprofit organizations and their lack of working together strategically or collaboratively. Inadequate health care and the capping of fees paid through health maintenance organizations (HMOs) are seen as major issues affecting the general population, but particularly critical for the working poor. The quality of senior housing high rises, lack of long term care facilities and availability of affordable prescription drugs are also seen as problems. Insufficient treatment is available for drug abusers. The mentally ill need residential treatment and care options. Health education is needed for the general population on AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and mental health. For teens, in particular, more education is needed on drug abuse prevention, sex education, and pregnancy prevention.

Kent County focus group participants see important benefits in getting away from the big city, housing opportunities, and lower cost of living as contributing to the quality of life in their communities. However, they also stated that poor land use planning has increased the number of roads, reduced open space and affected security. They reported that welfare reform has a negative impact on the community. Participants viewed welfare reform requirements as unrealistic and inflexible. Job search requirements are difficult to achieve because of lack of transportation and child day care. Employment opportunities are inadequate to meet the needs of families. Gambling is an issue identified as a rising trend in Kent County. Participants feel that the juvenile justice system had shifted from a focus on rehabilitation to a focus on punishment and suggested that the religious community needs to be involved in the prison system. The top three problems/needs identified by the Kent County focus group are 1) health access and mental health treatment, 2) affordable housing, and 3) homelessness. The cost of prescription drugs is high and health maintenance organizations (HMOs) are capping fees. Although health insurance is newly available for poor children [through the Children's Health Initiative Program or CHIP], their parents are unable to afford health insurance and the children cannot get care because providers are

not available. Focus group participants reported that working people are unable to afford housing and that public transportation is not available to help people get to work.

Sussex County focus group participants feel that the small communities, sense of neighborhood, and representative government are key to the quality of life in their communities. They reported that the biggest change in their communities is the growth of the Strong Communities Initiative which has had significant impact on water and sewage conditions and been responsible for zoning changes. The Strong Communities Initiative has helped small communities come together to improve communication and take action to solve community problems. Another major change is the growing Hispanic population and their social and health needs. The Hispanic population is multi-cultural and not enough translators are available. Hispanics do not have ready access to health care or education due to language and cultural barriers. Participants stated that the lack of public transportation severely limits the ability to get to work and welfare recipients' ability to meet job search requirements. The eastern part of the county has limited public transportation while the western part of the county is not served. No bus service is available between Sussex County and Kent County. The top three problems/needs identified by Sussex County focus group participants are 1) medical care including dental, vision, and mental health, 2) water and sewer problems, and 3) employment opportunities. Participants believe that the strong health provider community and the poultry industry are barriers to health care access. Preventive health care needs to be provided. High rates of cancer need to be addressed. Many communities in Sussex County have extremely poor housing conditions with related health issues. Homes lack indoor plumbing and have contaminated water and sewer systems. Water is polluted in many areas from sewage conditions, but also from the poultry industry. Temporary hiring practices are common, providing limited employment opportunities without benefits. Training is needed for higher paying, permanent jobs with benefits.

Neighborhood Level Findings: Summary and Comparison With Other Studies

Responding to a similar, but not an identical list of potential neighborhood problems, almost twice as many (46%) of the Insight Delaware respondents as 1999 CNA Survey respondents (24.3%) indicated that one or more health and human service problems needed to be corrected in the area where they lived.² A list of the most important problems was identified by Insight Delaware respondents includes drug abuse (26.3%), poor public transportation (10.5%), housing (5.3%),

² The *Insight Delaware* questionnaire was mailed to 10,000 randomly selected households, of which 2,138 were completed and returned. Differences in methodology may account for some of the differences between the *Insight Delaware* and the 1999 CNA Survey.

crime (5.3%), alcohol problems (4.8%), problems facing the elderly (4.4%), and lack of recreation and culture (3.5%).³ This list closely resembles the list of three most important neighborhood problems identified by 1999 CNA respondents. Also similar to the CNA 1999 findings, responses to the Insight Delaware household survey showed a pattern of race, age, and geographic location being associated with the likelihood of reporting one or more neighborhood problems. For example, Insight Delaware households headed by African Americans (58%) were more likely to identify one or more problems in their area than households headed by whites (46%). Households headed by someone age 25 to 44 (37%) were more likely to identify one or more problems in their area than those over age 65 (32%). Insight Delaware respondents in suburban New Castle County were considerably less likely (36%) to identify problems in their neighborhoods than those in Wilmington, Kent or Sussex counties. The Sussex County rate was over one-third greater than that of suburban New Castle County (50% vs. 36%, respectively). These differences are similar to the CNA 1999 findings, although Hispanics (46.2%) are now more likely to identify neighborhood problems than African Americans (34.8%) or whites (22.5%) and there is a 75 percent difference between respondents identifying neighborhood problems in Sussex County (56%) and suburban New Castle County (13.6%). In both studies, respondents with higher incomes and higher education levels were less likely to report neighborhood problems. A 1992 study by the Center for Community Development also documented this trend. This research found that 58 percent of those earning less than \$3,000 were concerned about violent criminal behavior as compared to only 9 percent of those earning more than \$50,000. Similarly, 75 percent of those earning \$3,000 or less stated that the use of sale of illegal drugs was a neighborhood problem, while only 7 percent of those earning \$50,000 or more expressed this concern.

Drug abuse was the most frequently cited, and rated the most important, area problem by household respondents in both studies and by community leaders surveyed by the United Way for Insight Delaware. In contrast, 1999 CNA Focus Group participants rated health care, housing, and public transportation as the most important area problems. Pollution was the second most frequently cited problem by Insight Delaware respondents, while 1999 CNA respondents chose alcohol use or lack of recreation and cultural activities.⁴ In both studies, the other most frequently

³ *Insight Delaware* respondents were asked to identify only one most important neighborhood problem, in contrast to 1999 CNA respondents who were asked to identify the three most important neighborhood problems.

⁴ 1999 CNA household survey respondents were not asked whether pollution was a problem in their neighborhood. 1999 focus group participants discussed water pollution which they saw resulting from both water and sewer inadequacies and poultry industry practices.

cited neighborhood problems by household respondents were: poor public transportation, alcohol use, lack of recreation and cultural activities, crime, and problems facing the elderly. Insight Delaware community leaders listed alcohol problems, crime, problems facing youth, public health, and family violence as very serious community problems. 1999 CNA Focus Group participants are concerned about the change in focus of the criminal justice system (from rehabilitation to punishment), the increasing number of poor working families, and expressed a need for information on the effects of welfare reform.⁵

⁵ The 1994 Community Needs Assessment survey did not ask about neighborhood problems.