

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The data collection undertaken in this report is part of a larger community improvement process called Compass. Compass is a multistage process where data are collected from multiple sources that can help communities identify their strengths and needs. Once those strengths and needs are identified, citizens can join together to effect positive change in their community. Survey results contained in this report include information from key informants (n= 63), household respondents (n=370), and focus group participants (n=32) about their perceptions of community strengths and challenges, and household economic and social concerns. The full report contains both secondary data from the US Census and other non-profits and survey results. However, the executive summary described below contains only the results from the survey.

Study Results Summary

Community and Neighborhood Strengths

Key informants were split almost equally among those that agreed and disagreed with the following statements about their community:

- “Actively promotes positive relations among people from all races, genders, ages, and cultures”
- “Is one where people and organizations from all geographic regions get together to address mutual concerns”
- “Is one where all religious groups come together to address pressing social concerns”
- “Is one where associations in neighborhoods from various parts of the community share strategies and work together”
- “Is one in which there exists a great deal of mutual respect among all leaders from all sectors of the community”
- “Is one where leaders from all sectors of the community share vision for the community”

The greatest agreement among key informants on community strengths were in two areas:

- “Your community is one where leaders from business, labor, government, education, religious, neighborhoods, nonprofit and all other sectors come together and work productively to address critical issues”
- “Your community is one that actively supports and strengthens connections between families, neighborhoods, and the whole community”

Household respondents reported a positive sense of community and neighborhood with regard to:

- “People who are different from one another participate together in *community* activities, come together to work on common goals, and gather together formally and informally”
- “People in your *neighborhood* trust each other and consider the same things important”

Over half of the respondents said they had little or no opportunity to affect how things happen in their neighborhood and community.

Economic Issues

Community Economic Concerns

- Almost 75% of key informants and 44% of household respondents indicated that unemployment or underemployment and lack of jobs were serious community issues.
- 26% of household respondents indicated that lack of jobs was a major issue for their community.
- Other community economic issues mentioned by respondents were lack of educational skills training, no job opportunities for people over 50, and low wages.

Household Economic Concerns

- 64.2% of household respondents indicated that inadequate wages were an issue, of those, 24% indicated that it was a major issue for them or someone in their household.
- 53.8% of individuals with less than a high school degree reported that inadequate wages was a major problem.
- 53% of respondents with some college, 51% of respondents with an associates degree, and 48.4% of high school graduates reported that inadequate wages were a moderate or major problem.
- More than 40% of respondents with an education level of some college or less reported that having enough money to buy household items or paying bills for basic items was a moderate or major problem.
- Not having enough money to buy household items was a moderate or major problem for approximately one-third of all age groups with the exception of those aged 55-64 (20%).
- Over half of respondents said that not having enough money to buy household items was an issue.
- Not being able to find work and inadequate household transportation was a moderate or major problem for 76% and 61.6%, respectively, for respondents with less than high school education.
- 33.4% indicated that being able to find work was a moderate or major issue.

- Non-whites¹ were two times more likely than whites to report that all five economic concerns were a major issue for themselves or someone in their household.

Educational Issues

Community Educational Concerns

- 48.4% of key informants and 43.7% household respondents believed that overcrowded classrooms were either a moderate or major community issue.
- 40.3% of key informants and 38.7% of household respondents believed the lack of equipment was a moderate or major issue.
- 28% of whites and 49.3% of non-whites believed that an unsafe school environment was either a moderate or major issue.
- 66% of those living in Evans, 44% of those respondents living in south-central Weld, and 43% living in south-west Weld believed that an unsafe school environment was either a moderate or major issue.
- Overcrowded classrooms was seen as a moderate or major problem for communities in south-central Weld (57.7%), south-west Weld (67.5%), west-central Weld (50.1%), east-central Weld (50.0%), Greeley (55.4%), and Evans (84.2%).

Household Educational Concerns

- Inadequate educational opportunities, children unsafe at school, and discrimination in school were seen as issues for 36.6%, 40.7% and 43.8% of households, respectively.
- Focus group respondents identified language barriers and safety, including bullying, as two key educational issues in rural and urban Weld County.
- Other comments about educational concerns included lack of educational opportunities for children with special needs, discrimination, the need for preschools, lack of music and art education, and underpaid teachers.
- Inadequate educational opportunity was seen as a major household issue for individuals living in rural Weld compared to those living in the Greeley/Evans area (11.2% vs. 5.3%).
- Respondents who were non-white were more likely to report that inadequate educational opportunities were either a moderate or major issues for their household than white respondents (32.1% vs. 12.2%).
- 36% of non-white respondents said children being unsafe at school was a moderate or major issue for their household compared to 14.1% of white respondents.

¹ Throughout this report non-whites were respondents who indicated they were either American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, or Hispanic and were grouped together for additional analyses (n=88).

Environmental Issues

Community Environmental Concerns

- Air pollution was the biggest environmental concern as 37.1% of household respondents and 34.9% of key informants believed this was a moderate or major community issue.
- 57.2% of the respondents in living in south east Weld, 39.1% of respondents living in west-central Weld and 33.4% of respondents living in Evans report that water pollution was a moderate or major problem.
- The concern over air pollution was greatest among residents in south-west Weld (50.0%), Evans (50.0%), west-central Weld (45.5%), central-south Weld (44.8%), and Greeley (39.4%).
- Those reporting too much light or noise were more likely to live in east-central Weld (42%), central-south Weld (41.3%), west-central Weld (40.9%), Evans (39.1%), and Greeley (36.8%).
- Other community environmental concerns mentioned by respondents were threats of West Nile Virus, trash in neighborhoods, traffic pollution, habitat destruction, stench from processing plants, and the need for more recycling programs.

Household Environmental Concerns

- Over half of respondents indicated that air pollution was either a minor, moderate or major household issue.
- Too much noise or light was seen as a moderate or major household issue by 17.9% of respondents.
- Drinking water was the primary environmental issue raised by focus group participants.

Health Issues

Community Health Concerns

- Over half of the respondents indicated that lack of affordable medical care was an issue and 34.1% of those respondents reported that the lack of affordable medical care was a major community concern.
- More than half of key informants indicated that the following issues were a moderate or major concern – mental illness or emotional issues (51.6%), alcohol abuse (65.1%), drug abuse (71.4%), and lack of affordable health care (72.6%).
- Focus group participants indicated that substance abuse, alcohol abuse and other drug abuse, was a community problem in the urban setting.
- Concern about the lack health care was a moderate or major concern for residents in communities located in central-south Weld (81.5%), west-central Weld (75.0%), east-Weld (70%), south-west Weld (67.6%), Evans (65.0%), south east Weld (57.2%), and Greeley (53.8%).
- Other community health concerns mentioned by respondents included access to mental health services, medical care for low income families, increase in the number of uninsured, lack of prenatal care, high cost of insurance, and care for older adults.

Household Health Concerns

- 45% of respondents said that having a lot of anxiety or stress and 38.9% said not having enough money to pay the doctor, or buy prescriptions or get medical insurance were a moderate or major household issues.
- Not having a primary doctor or care provider was a moderate or major household issue for 19% of the respondents.
- 69.2% for those with incomes <\$14,999 and 60.9% for those with incomes between \$15,000 - \$34,999 were more likely to report that not having enough money to pay for medical needs was a moderate or major household issue.
- Not having enough money for medical needs was also seen as a moderate or major household issue by more non-white respondents than white respondents (56.7% and 31.0%, respectively).
- Focus group participants in Greeley reported dissatisfaction and problems with access to, quality of and affordability of health care and dental services.
- Stress or anxiety was a moderate or major household issue for those with low incomes, non-whites and those under age 34 and between ages 35-54.
- Although a small percentage of people reporting that alcohol or drug abuse was a household issue, those with incomes between \$15,000-\$34,999 and \$50,000-74,999 were more likely to say that these were a moderate or major issue than those in other income brackets.
- Non-whites were more likely than whites to report that alcohol and drug abuse were moderate or major issues for them or someone in their household (15%, and 5.5%, respectively for alcohol abuse, and 13.5% and 4.1%, respectively for drug abuse).
- Non-whites were more likely than whites to report not having a primary doctor or care provider was a moderate or major issue (27.5% vs. 16.2%, respectively).
- 43% of those with incomes below \$14,999 said not having a doctor or care providers was a moderate or major household issue.

Housing Issues

Community Housing Concerns

- Of the housing issues listed, the highest percent (40.6%) of household respondents felt that the shortage of affordable housing was either a moderate or a major community issue.
- A higher percentage of key informants indicated that the following was a moderate or a major community issue - shortage of affordable housing (73%), substandard housing (44.5%), and homelessness (41.3%).
- Other comments about community housing included the need of low-income housing and affordable housing, and the need for housing for chronically and mentally ill individuals, housing for older adults, and more Medicaid beds and assisted living housing.
- Individuals living in east Greeley were more likely to respond that affordable housing was a major community problem (22.5%) compared to those respondents who lived in west Greeley (7.9%).

- In every area in Weld County except in the Windsor area, over 40% of the respondents thought that a shortage of affordable housing was a moderate or major community issue.

Household Housing Concerns

- 35.5% of respondents indicated that not having enough money to pay for rent or mortgage and 33.6% indicated that not having enough money to pay for utilities were an issue for their household.
- Focus groups expressed the following difficulties with regard to housing - availability and affordability, language barriers and documentation needed to rent, acceptable housing, landlord exploitation, and community growth.
- Not having enough room in their house for all the people who live there was a moderate or major issue for non-whites and those residents with lower incomes.
- Living in substandard housing that needs repairs was an issue of concern for individuals with lower incomes, non-whites, those living east of 35th Avenue in Greeley, and residents in north Weld, central-south Weld, and south-east Weld.
- 34% of individuals with incomes below <\$14,999 and 23% of those with incomes between \$15-34,999 reported that not having enough money to pay for housing rent or mortgage was a moderate or major household issue.
- 30.2% of respondents living east of 35th Avenue were more likely to report not having enough money to pay for housing rent or mortgage was a moderate or major issue.
- 40% of individuals with incomes below <\$14,999 and 27.7% of those with incomes between \$15-34,999 reported not having enough money to pay for utilities was a moderate or major household issue.
- Non-whites compared to whites were more likely to report that not having enough money to pay for utilities was a moderate or major household issue (31.7% and 15.8%, respectively).
- 26% of non-whites compared to 8.6% of whites reported that people living with them who can't afford their own housing was a moderate or major household issue.

Leisure Activities

Community Leisure Concerns

- 35.4% of key informants thought that the lack of cultural activities was a moderate or major community concern.
- 40.9% of household respondents indicated that lack of cultural activities was either a moderate or major community issue, 39.1% thought that a shortage of community recreational facilities was an issue of concern.
- Other comments about community leisure needs included the lack of leisure opportunities in rural areas, lack of recreational opportunities for groups such as teenagers, "latch key" children, older adults and persons with disabilities, the need for dog parks, more neighborhood activities, and the desire to have UNC reinstate outdoor concerts.

- 71.5% of those living in east-central Weld, 64% of those in north Weld, 54% of those in east Weld and 52% of those in Evans reported the lack of recreational facilities as a moderate or major community issue.
- Respondents in rural Weld felt that a lack of outdoor recreational activities was also a moderate or major community issue compared to Greeley/Evans residents (41% vs. 30.9%, respectively).
- Residents in rural communities were more likely to report that a lack of cultural activities was a moderate or major community issue than did respondents living in the combined Greeley/Evans area (50.4% vs. 35.1%).

Household Leisure Concerns

- Not being able to afford cultural or entertainment activities was reported as a moderate or major household issue by 27.2% of respondents, followed by not being able to afford recreational activities (26.6%) and lack of access to outdoor recreation opportunities (19%).
- 69% of respondents under age 34 and 52.7% of respondents between the ages of 35-54 reported that not being able to afford recreational activities was a household issue.

Safety Issues

Community Safety Concerns

- Most key informants thought that crime (63.5%) and gangs (65.1%) were moderate and major issues in their communities.
- Of the safety issues listed, the highest percent of household respondents (44.6%) felt that crime was a moderate or major issue.
- Focus group participants expressed concerns about gangs in Greeley and neighborhood disparity in police protection.
- Other comments about community safety concerns included crime and burglaries, speeding traffic, and increase in traffic fatalities.

Household Safety Concerns

- 12% of household respondents indicated that experiencing crime was a moderate or major household issue and 9.3% indicated that household threats from gangs was moderate or major issue.
- 48% of respondents living east of 35th Avenue reported that crime was either a minor, moderate or major household issue, with 11.4% indicating crime as a major issue.
- Over 85% of respondents in all county areas, with the exception of central-south Weld, Evans, and Greeley, reported that household threats from gangs was not an issue.

Social Issues

Community Social Concerns

- The majority of the key informants viewed teen pregnancy (65.1%), racial or ethnic discrimination (53.9%), family violence, abuse of children or adults

- (74.6%), illiteracy (60.3%) and lack of affordable child care (68.2%) as moderate or major issues for people in their communities.
- Approximately one-third of the household respondents felt that teen pregnancy, racial or ethnic discrimination, family violence and illiteracy were moderate or major community concerns.
 - Lack of affordable child care was seen as the issue of greatest community concern to household respondents as 27.5% indicated that this was a major community issue.
 - Other community social concerns mentioned by respondents included bilingual education, social changes brought on by community growth, and lack of services for elders and persons with disabilities, drug abusers, and those needing pre-natal care. There were numerous comments reflecting community racial tensions.
 - Teen pregnancy was perceived to be a moderate or major community issue by residents in west-central Weld (81.3%), Evans (68.6%), and central-south Weld (60.0%).
 - Greeley respondents had the highest percentage of all other Weld community respondents who reported that racial or ethnic discrimination was a major problem (23.8%).
 - Respondents living in Evans (78.6%), south east Weld (67.2%), west central Weld (58.8%) and central south Weld (53.8%) had concerns about illiteracy.
 - With the exception of north central Weld and east Weld communities, over 50% of respondents in all other Weld communities indicated that lack of affordable child care was either a moderate or major issue.

Household Social Concerns

- Three social issues were identified as household issues by over one-quarter of the respondents – not able to afford legal help (38.2%), not being able to find or afford child care (25%), and not being able to get care for an elder or adult with a disability or serious illness (23.5%).
- 20% of non-whites indicated that not being able to afford legal help was a major issue compared to 8.6% of whites.
- Almost 30% of respondents with incomes below \$15,000 reported that not being able to afford legal help was a major issue.
- 35% of households with incomes between \$15,000 - \$34,999 and 34% of households with incomes below \$15,000 indicated that not being able to get care for an elder or an adult with a disability or serious illness was an issue.
- 16% of respondents with incomes below \$15,000 and 40.2% of non-whites indicated that not being able to get care for an elder or an adult with a disability or serious illness was a major issue.
- Almost 50% of individuals living in central south Weld, 29.2% of residents in west central Weld, 28.6% of residents living in south east Weld, and 22% of residents living in Greeley reported getting care for an elder or disabled adult was an issue.
- Not being able to find or afford child care was an issue among non-white respondents (48.1%) compared to white respondents (16.5%).

Transportation Issues

Community Transportation Concerns

- The majority of the key informants and the household respondents indicated that inadequate public transportation (60.6% and 41.7%, respectively) and poor or unsafe traffic conditions (hazards or speeding) or congestion were moderate to major issues for the people in their communities (56.7% and 52.9%, respectively).
- Other community transportation concerns mentioned by respondents included the need for transportation for persons with disabilities and elders, after school transportation for children, the lack of regional transportation service, deteriorating roads, and speeding through neighborhoods and on rural roads
- Inadequate community transportation was a moderate or major concern for over 30% of the respondents in all Weld communities.
- Poor bike or pedestrian safety was also reported as a moderate or major community concern for respondents in Evans (45%), north Weld (47.1%), south west Weld (56.9%), central south Weld (60.7%), and west central Weld (67.2%).
- Poor and unsafe traffic was viewed as a moderate or major issue by more than 50% of respondents Greeley (51%), south east Weld (57%), Evans (66.7%), and west central Weld (77.2%).

Household Transportation Concerns

- Not being able to afford or access public transportation was reported as a household issue for 28.4% of respondents, 10.4% of whom indicated that it was a major issue.
- 26% of respondents indicated that not being able to afford reliable transportation was a household issue.
- Not being able to get transportation for a person with a disability or elder was an issue for 18.2% of the households.
- Difficulty with affording and accessing public transportation was reported by 41.5% of non-white respondents, 48.1% of respondents with incomes below \$14,999, and 40.8% of respondents with incomes between \$15,000 - \$34,999.
- Not being able to get transportation for a person with a disability or an elder was a household issue among those with incomes below \$14,999 (30.2%) and 31% of non-whites.