

MIDDLESEX COUNTY RESIDENT LIFE SURVEY™

Middlesex County Report

May 2017



This report was written and prepared by Steven Pearce with assistance from Cara Finn, Middlesex County Director of Economic Development; Eaton Asher; Alexandra Ryken; and Janice Lam.

This report was only made possible through the collaboration and support of the Department of Economic Development, Middlesex County; Western University (including the Student Success Center and Community Engaged Learning program); and classmates in PSYCH 3840F: Research in Test Construction and Survey Methods.

On behalf of everyone involved, we would like to express our gratitude to all organizations and individuals who assisted with this project. Special thanks go to Middlesex County residents for their invaluable participation and Dr. Donald Saklofske for his guidance at the beginning.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

I. The Middlesex County Resident Life Survey	4
--	---

PART 1 - SURVEY DESIGN



I. Primary Objective	5
II. Overview of Questions	5
III. Distribution Methods	5
IV. Municipal Groupings	5
V. Response Rate	6
VI. Limitations	6

PART 2 - RESULTS



I. Demographics	7
II. Attraction Factors	12
III. Satisfaction Factors	13
IV. Deterring Factors	17
V. Additional Feedback	21

PART 3 - CONCLUSION



I. Concluding Remarks	27
II. Main Findings	27

PART 4 - SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION



I. References	29
II. Appendix A: Survey	30
III. Appendix B: Facebook	36

Introduction

Middlesex County is located in Southwestern Ontario and consists of eight lower-tier municipalities that are predominantly rural. The County experienced a collective growth in population of 1.1% from 2011 to 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2016). The population totaled 71,551 in 2016. Future developments within Middlesex County must attract and accommodate an increasing population while taking into account the needs and beliefs of current residents.

THE MIDDLESEX COUNTY RESIDENT LIFE SURVEY

The Middlesex County Resident Life Survey (Resident Life Survey) was designed specifically to learn more about Middlesex County residents and included a questionnaire. The survey was created in partnership between the Department of Economic Development for Middlesex County, and survey design students under the direction of their psychology professor at Western University.

This research examines the factors that attracted residents to live in Middlesex County, aspects of life contributing to the retention of residents, and the factors that may cause residents to relocate outside of the County. The goal being that the results of the Resident Life Survey can provide a foundation that the County and individual municipalities can build upon for future development strategies.

Because the voice of the people is important

This report presents the distinct needs and beliefs of residents within Middlesex County. To assist in informing decisions pertinent to residents, this report incorporates comparisons between three distinct municipal groupings. These groups include the County of Middlesex as a whole, and two subsets of those municipalities based on their proximity to the City of London.



Deleted: <object>

“Great survey, should be done more often, and hoping to see results and what others in my community have to say!”

-- Strathroy-Caradoc Resident

“This was a great chance to put in info for the future of our community.”

-- Thames Centre Resident

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Resident Life Survey was to answer three key questions.

1. What attracted residents to live in Middlesex County? (Attraction factors)
2. Why do residents continue to live in Middlesex County? (Satisfaction factors)
3. What would cause current residents to relocate outside of Middlesex County? (Deterrence factors)

OVERVIEW OF SURVEY QUESTIONS

All survey questions were formulated to achieve the primary objective of answering the three key questions noted in this report.

The reliability of the survey was maximized using numerous methods proven to be effective in academic research on survey design (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014a). The Resident Life Survey contained 18 questions (see Appendix A) targeting demographics, attraction factors, satisfaction factors, deterring factors, and additional feedback from local residents.

DISTRIBUTION METHODS

The survey was distributed primarily online, and residents were provided a link to complete the questionnaire on their own accord. Survey responses were kept anonymous to increase the response rate and to encourage residents to answer honestly. The survey software, Qualtrics, prevented residents from completing the survey more than once.

In cases where the initial response rate was below the required 1% in certain municipalities, residents were invited to participate in-person using a paper version of the survey. Prior to commencing the survey, all residents were informed of the purpose of the research and the value of their participation.

County and local representatives circulated the survey through their municipal email lists, the email lists of community organizations, social media platforms, municipal websites, Facebook advertisements (see Appendix B), and in-person.

MUNICIPAL GROUPINGS

The results of this report investigate the similarities and differences in resident attitudes between three municipal groupings: the County as a whole and those Middlesex County municipalities with the closest and furthest proximity to the City of London. These groups were defined after consulting with municipal executives.

Those municipalities deemed to be in closest proximity (Proximal Group) to the City of London include Middlesex Centre, Thames Centre, Strathroy-Caradoc, and Lucan Biddulph. Those municipalities deemed to be the furthest away (Peripheral Group) comprise Adelaide-Metcalf, Newbury, North Middlesex, and Southwest Middlesex.

RESPONSE RATE

After piloting and testing the survey, the Resident Life Survey was released on November 17, 2016, and closed on January 31, 2017. Completed survey responses across Middlesex County totalled 1,148, resulting in a local response rate of 1.6%. Responses totalled 885 from the Proximal Group of municipalities and 263 from the Peripheral Group.

LIMITATIONS

While interpreting the survey results, two limitations should be considered.

1. The representativeness of the survey respondents.
2. The overall confidence level and margin of error.

With the chosen survey distribution methods, certain types of residents are usually more likely to participate in the survey than others. This means that the generalizability of the results to the entire population may be reduced. The methods chosen have, however, demonstrated success in multiple disciplines including market research (Dillman, Smyth, Christian, 2014b). Therefore, there is confidence that the results of this report can be extended to all residents of each group of municipalities.

The overall confidence level and margin of error serve as a guide for extending the results as they only consider the error associated with the response rate. Given the number of responses from each group, the results can approximately be extended to the populations with a low margin of error of 2.4% for Middlesex County, 2.7% for the Proximal Group of municipalities, and 5.0% for the Peripheral Group. These margins of error are each at a confidence level of 90%.

For example, when asked “Which of following attracted you to living in your municipality?” 31% of residents indicated that they were in part attracted to Middlesex County by its clean environment. This result means that there is a 90% likelihood¹ that the actual percentage of all Middlesex County residents is approximately between 28.6 and 33.4%.



¹ This is a practical interpretation of the confidence level. It is different than the technical interpretation in statistics but broadly has the same meaning.

Part 2 - Results



DEMOGRAPHICS

Residents from Middlesex County who participated in the Resident Life Survey were asked demographic questions to measure their characteristics and the generalizability of the results. The characteristics of residents who participated were compared to the characteristics of the whole population of Middlesex County (Statistics Canada, 2011)².

Gender

From Statistics Canada, the gender distribution of Middlesex County was 50% female and 50% male in 2011. The distribution of the respondents to the survey from the County was 69% female and 30% male, with 1% of residents preferring not to specify their gender.

Compared to the whole population of Middlesex County, a higher percentage of respondents to the Resident Life Survey from the municipality were female. This difference suggests that the results of the survey are representative of both genders, although slightly more representative of female than male residents.

Age

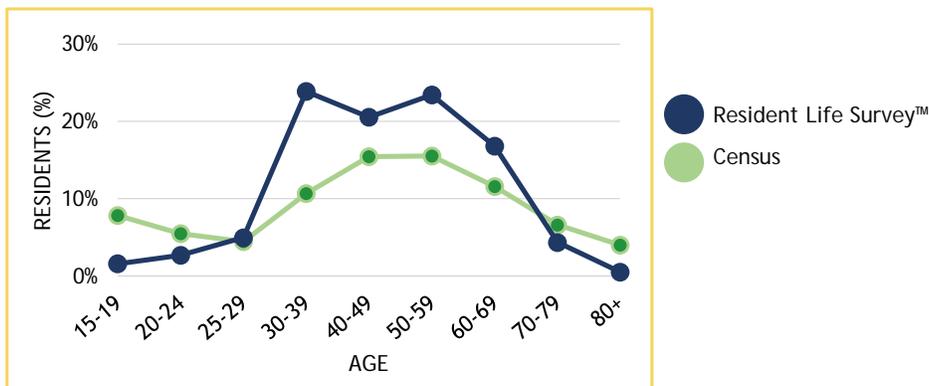


Figure presents the age distributions of the whole population of Middlesex County and respondents to the Resident Life Survey from the County

Respondents to the survey were of all ages. The age distribution of the known population and survey respondents match closely and indicate that the survey's results are representative of all age groups.

² Statistics Canada data on gender, age, and type of residence was not available for 2016

Income

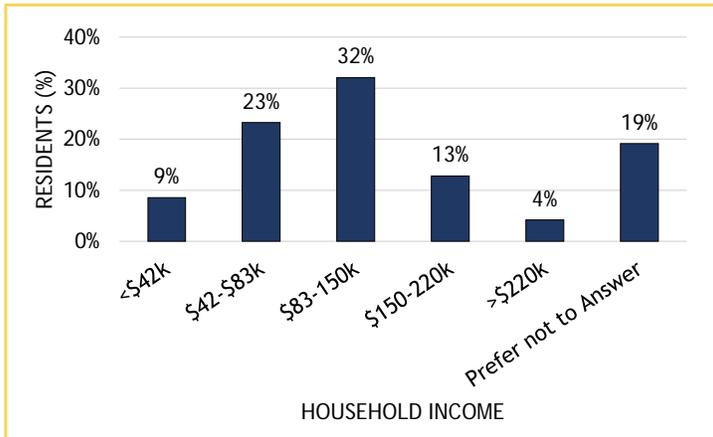


Figure displays the total household income as estimated by respondents to the Resident Life Survey from Middlesex County, and the Proximal and Peripheral Groups of municipalities

In terms of their total household income, a wide range of residents from the County of Middlesex responded to the survey (from less than \$42,000 to over \$220,000). This inclusive income distribution of respondents is also evidence that the results are representative of the population as a whole.

Type of Residence

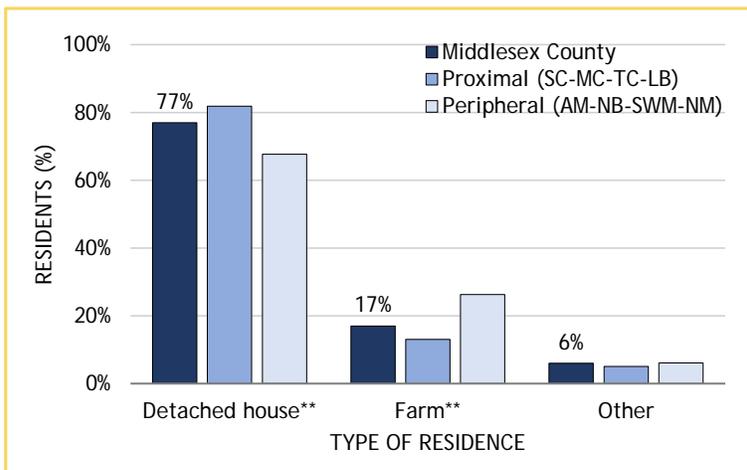


Figure shows the types of residences of respondents to the Resident Life Survey from Middlesex County, and the Proximal and Peripheral Groups of municipalities. Types of residences labelled with asterisks indicate a significant difference between groups

County-wide Results. A considerable number of Middlesex County residents that responded to the survey defined their type of home as a detached house (77% of respondents) and farm (17%).

Proximal and Peripheral Group Results. There were two conclusive (significant) differences³ between the group of municipalities close to the City of London, and the group of municipalities further away from the City. A larger percentage of residents from the Proximal Group reported living in a detached home (82%) compared to residents in the Peripheral Group (67%). A smaller percentage of residents located close to London labelled their residence as a farm (13%) relative to residents from the Peripheral Group (26%). These results are indicative of the small urban versus rural composition of the respective municipal groups.

Length of Time

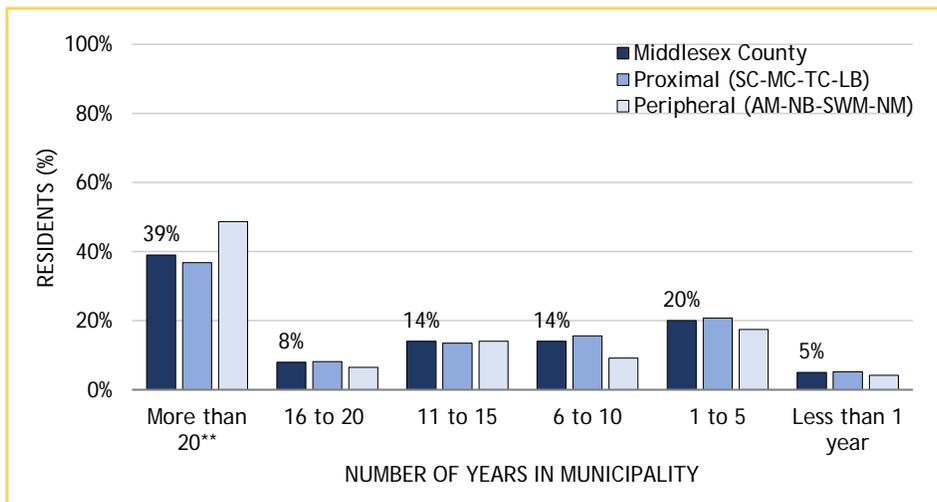


Figure presents the number of years residents of Middlesex County, and the Proximal and Peripheral Groups of municipalities, have lived in their current municipality. The years labelled with asterisks indicate a significant difference between groups

County-wide Results. Across Middlesex County, 61% of residents indicated that they have been living in their municipality for at least 11 years. A quarter of the total population has been living in their current municipality for less than six years.

³ Conclusive or significant differences in this report are defined as large differences that are also statistically significant at a confidence or accuracy level of 90%. All large significant differences between the Proximal and Peripheral Groups of municipalities will be noted in this report. Smaller differences between the groups will not be mentioned as they do not represent genuine statistical differences.

Proximal and Peripheral Group Results. Respondents from Middlesex County revealed that a significantly larger proportion of Peripheral Group residents have lived in their municipality for over twenty years (49% of residents), compared with the Proximal Group (37%). In the same manner, a significantly larger proportion of residents from the Proximal Group (36%), relative to the Peripheral Group (27%), have lived in their current municipality for one to ten years. These group discrepancies may, in part, be related to the distinct changes in population the groups of municipalities have experienced.



From 2011 to 2016, the Peripheral Group of municipalities experienced a collective decrease in population of 2.9% from 15,993 to 15,531 residents (Statistics Canada, 2016). Over the same period, the Proximal Group of municipalities close to London recorded a collective increase in population of 2.2% from 54,803 to 56,020.

Previous Location of Residence

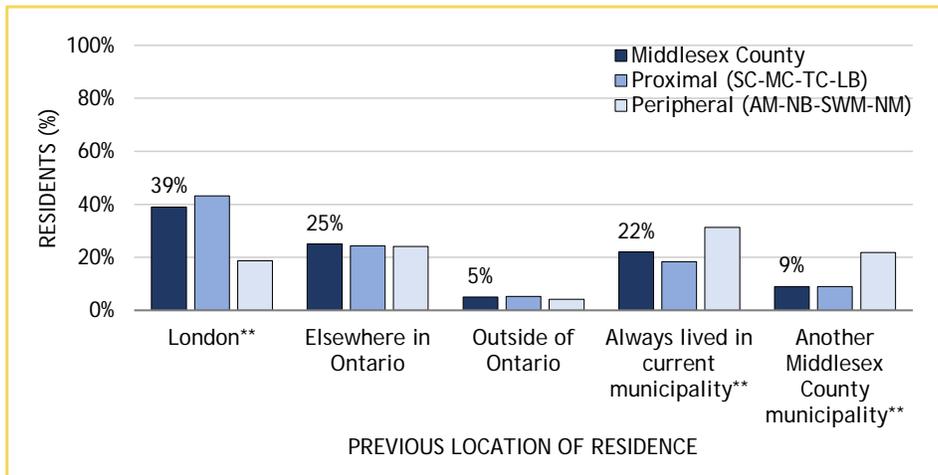


Figure displays the previous location where residents of Middlesex County, and the Proximal and Peripheral Groups of municipalities, lived before moving to their current municipality. Locations labelled with asterisks indicate a significant difference between groups

County-wide Results. Residents reported that before moving to Middlesex County 39% lived in London, Ontario. Of the 9% of residents who previously lived in another Middlesex County municipality, most of them moved from Strathroy-Caradoc (2.7%) or Middlesex Centre (1.9%).

Proximal and Peripheral Group Results. It is conclusively evident from these resident reports that the defined municipal groups attracted most of their residents from different sources.

A noteworthy percentage of residents from the Proximal Group (43%) lived in the City of London prior to moving to Middlesex County, whereas only 19% of the Peripheral Group of residents originated from London. A greater percentage of residents from the Peripheral Group, compared to the Proximal Group, indicated that they had either originated from another Middlesex County municipality (31 and 18%, respectively) or they had always lived in their municipality (22 and 9%, respectively). These discrepancies denote potentially advantageous municipal strategies.

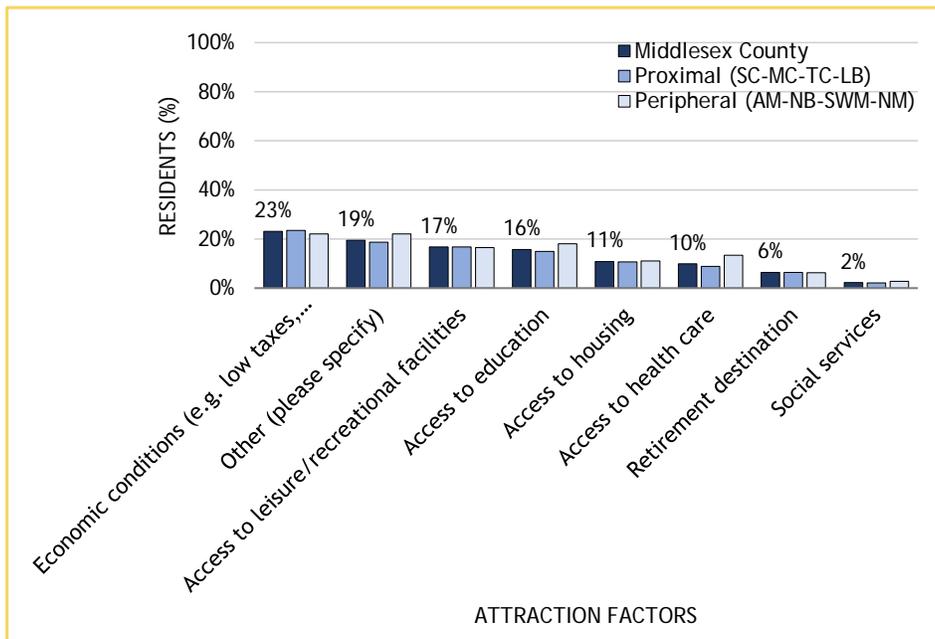
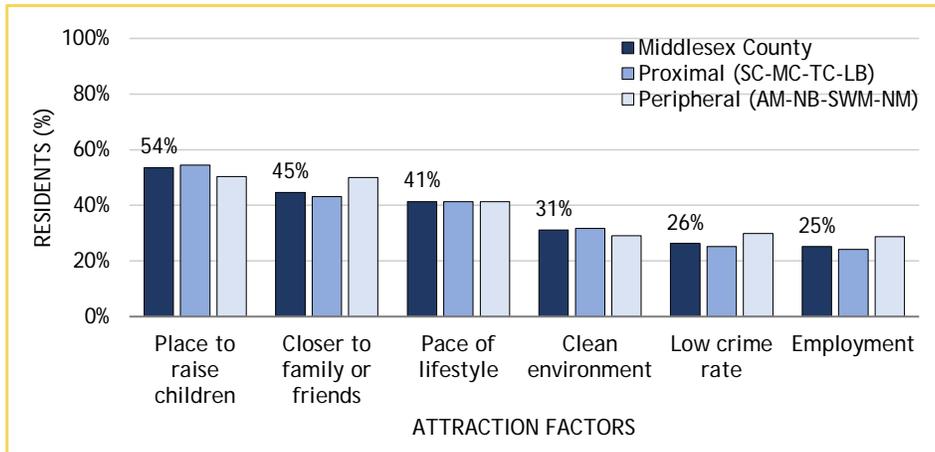


The resident attraction campaigns of the Proximal Group of municipalities may be optimized by primarily targeting residents of the City of London, given the high percentage of residents from the Group who had lived there previously. A secondary focus on individuals residing elsewhere in Ontario is also recommended for the Proximal Group.

Based on the results that a substantial number of residents from the Peripheral Group came from multiple locations, it is apparent that this group may need to direct its attraction campaigns towards a broader audience that may include residents within Middlesex County, the City of London, and elsewhere in Ontario.

ATTRACTION FACTORS

“Which of the following attracted you to living in your municipality? Please select all that apply.”



Figures show the percentage of residents of Middlesex County, and the Proximal and Peripheral Groups of municipalities, who selected each attraction factor. The first graph represents the top six attractive factors, while the second displays the lowest eight factors

County-wide Results. According to respondents, the most attractive feature of Middlesex County is that it is viewed as a great place to raise children (54% of residents). The proximity to family and friends (45%) and pace of lifestyle (41%) are also reported as being largely attractive to residents. It is recommended that those features identified with the highest attractiveness be the ones emphasized in any planned resident attraction campaigns.

Residents indicated that many other features of the municipality, including the economic conditions and access to leisure facilities, are partly attractive (23% and 17%, respectively).

Proximal and Peripheral Group Results. There were no conclusive differences for any attraction factor between the group of municipalities closest to and furthest away from the City of London. The lack of any discrepancies suggests that what attracted residents to their respective municipality was similar across all of Middlesex County.

SATISFACTION FACTORS

Top Satisfaction Factors

“In your municipality, how would you describe your satisfaction with the following?”

Scale:

1 = “Very unsatisfied”; 3 = “Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied”; 5 = “Very satisfied”

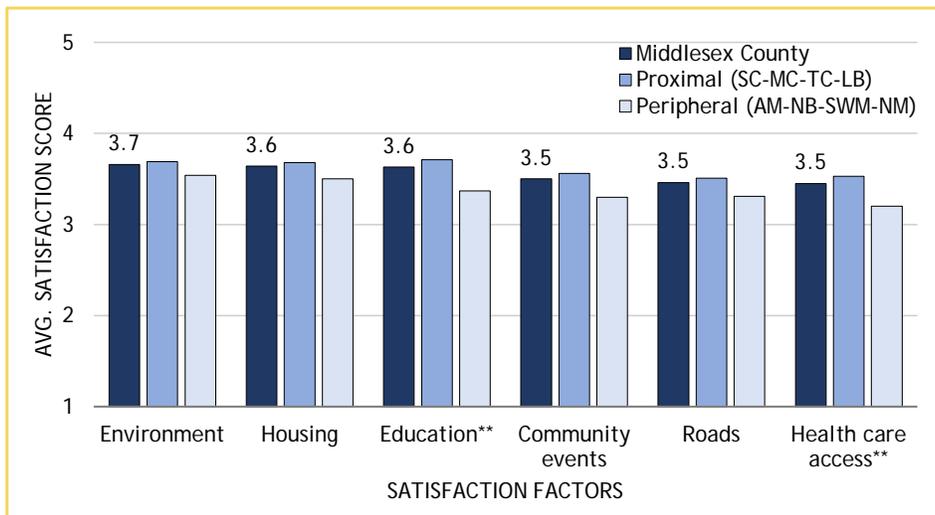


Figure presents the six highest average scores of satisfaction of residents from Middlesex County, and the Proximal and Peripheral Groups of municipalities, from 1, “Very unsatisfied,” to 5, “Very satisfied.” Factors labelled with asterisks indicate a significant difference between groups

Lowest Satisfaction Factors

1 = "Very unsatisfied"; 3 = "Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied"; 5 = "Very satisfied"

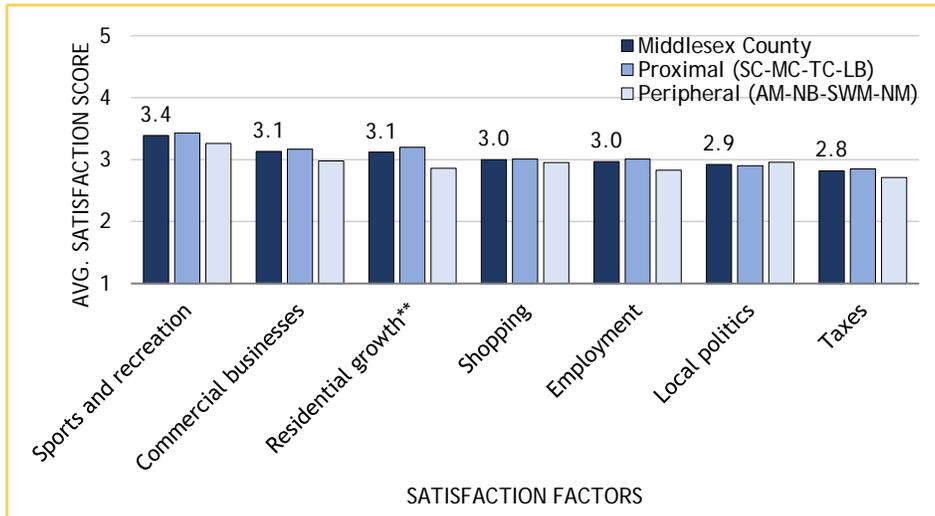


Figure displays the seven lowest average scores of satisfaction of residents from Middlesex County, and the Proximal and Peripheral Groups of municipalities, from 1, "Very unsatisfied," to 5, "Very satisfied." Factors labelled with asterisks indicate a significant difference between groups

County-wide Results. On the whole, residents responded that they are satisfied with most aspects of life in Middlesex County; in particular, the environment (3.7 of 5.0) and housing (3.6). In a similar way, they described that they are generally satisfied with education (3.6), community events (3.5), roads (3.5), health care access (3.5), and sports and recreation (3.4).

Overall, Middlesex County residents responded that they are neither satisfied nor unsatisfied with commercial businesses (3.1), residential growth (3.1), shopping (3.0), employment (3.0), and local politics (2.9). Taxes (2.8) received the lowest satisfaction rating. While not an immediate indication of concern, areas identified with lower levels of satisfaction may offer an opportunity for improvement. Focusing development efforts on increasing satisfaction in these areas may lead to opportunities for resident retention and attraction.

Proximal and Peripheral Group Results. Considering the county-wide results, there were three conclusive differences between the Proximal and Peripheral Groups of municipalities.

Residents from the Peripheral Group of municipalities reported that they were less satisfied, compared to residents from the Proximal Group, with the education (3.4 and 3.7, respectively), health care access (3.2 and 3.5, respectively), and residential growth (2.9 and 3.2, respectively) in their communities. These three factors are the only known dissimilarities in satisfaction between the groups. It is probable that these variations at least partially explain why the Proximal Group grew in population when the Peripheral Group's population decreased. It is recommended that the Peripheral Group of municipalities give special consideration to efforts that may reduce these three gaps in satisfaction.

“For which of the following reasons do you travel outside of your municipality? Please select all that apply.”

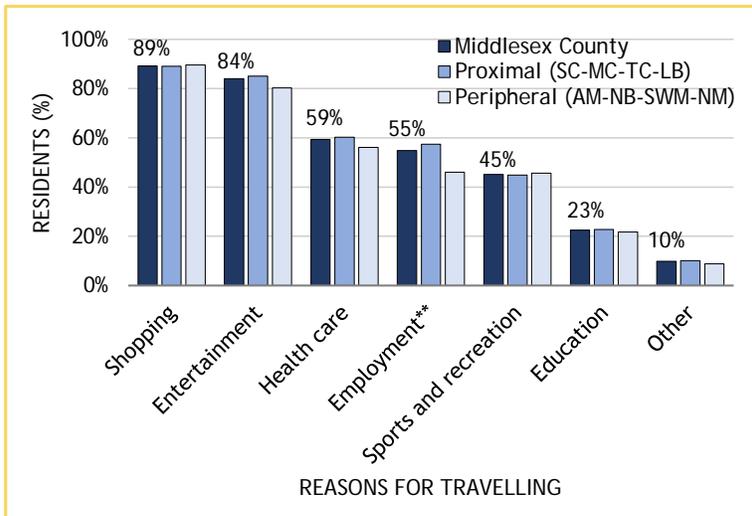


Figure shows the percentage of residents from Middlesex County, and the Proximal and Peripheral Groups of municipalities, who selected each reason for travelling. Reasons labelled with asterisks indicate a significant difference between groups

County-wide Results. A very high percentage of residents across Middlesex County reported that they leave their respective municipalities for shopping (89% of residents) and entertainment (84%). The percentages of residents who travel outside for health care (59%), employment (55%), and sports and recreation (45%) are also quite high.

These responses highlight potentially worthwhile areas for economic development within Middlesex County. In addition to improving the municipality's economy, development in these areas would likely provide closer, more convenient options for residents.

A small number of residents reported travelling outside Middlesex County for education (23%) and “other” reasons (10%). These areas are not seen as significant areas for economic development focus at this time.

Proximal and Peripheral Group Results. Residents from the Proximal Group of municipalities reported travelling significantly more out of their municipalities for employment opportunities (57%) than did residents from the Peripheral Group (46%). This most likely reflects residents close to the urban centre travelling to work there on account of the shortness of the commute and more convenient access to modes of transportation.

“In your municipality, how actively engaged are you in the following?”

Scale:

1 = “Not at all engaged”; 3 = “Somewhat engaged”; 5 = “Very engaged”

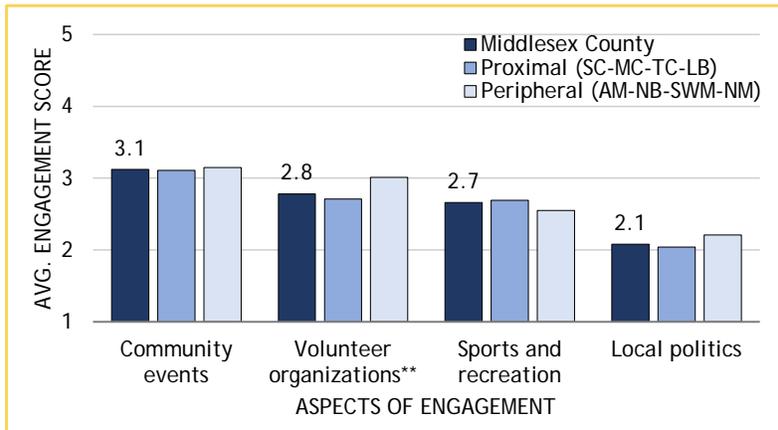


Figure presents the average scores of engagement for residents of Middlesex County, and the Proximal and Peripheral Groups of municipalities, from 1, “Not at all engaged,” to 5, “Very Engaged.” Aspects labelled with asterisks indicate a significant difference between groups

County-wide Results. Residents showed they are somewhat engaged in community events (3.1 of 5.0), volunteer organizations (2.8), and sports and recreation (2.7) in Middlesex County. Their engagement in local politics was self-reported as being low (2.1).

Interestingly, resident levels of engagement across Middlesex County were found to be related to their levels of satisfaction. Higher satisfaction levels were linked to higher engagement levels for each aspect. It is unclear if increasing either satisfaction or engagement levels would increase the levels of the other, however, these results indicate that it is plausible.

It is recommended to offer and promote local engagement opportunities when attempting to increase satisfaction levels among residents.

For instance, resident satisfaction with sports and recreation in their communities may be augmented by devising volunteer positions to help and promote activities at local facilities. Moreover, resident engagement may be intensified through surveying volunteers afterwards about their experience and any suggestions they have for improving satisfaction.

With regards to Middlesex County residents reporting a low level of engagement and satisfaction with local politics, to effectively enhance those levels it is recommended that multiple actions be implemented. Possible actions include public input sessions, encouraging public engagement in local organizing committees, and holding educational sessions for those interested in the local municipal election process.

Proximal and Peripheral Group Results. Engagement levels were similar throughout Middlesex County except for volunteer organizations. Residents located further away from the City of London reported, on average, a conclusively greater level of engagement with volunteer groups (3.0) than residents with close proximity to London (2.7). While the margin of error will narrow the gap, it can be noted that there was a slightly higher engagement in local politics, and a slightly lower engagement in sports and recreation, reported by the Peripheral Group of municipalities, in comparison to those in the Proximal Group.

DETERRING FACTORS

"In the next five years, would you like there to be more or less of the following in your municipality?"

Scale: 1 = "A lot less"; 3 = "Neither more nor less"; 5 = "A lot more"

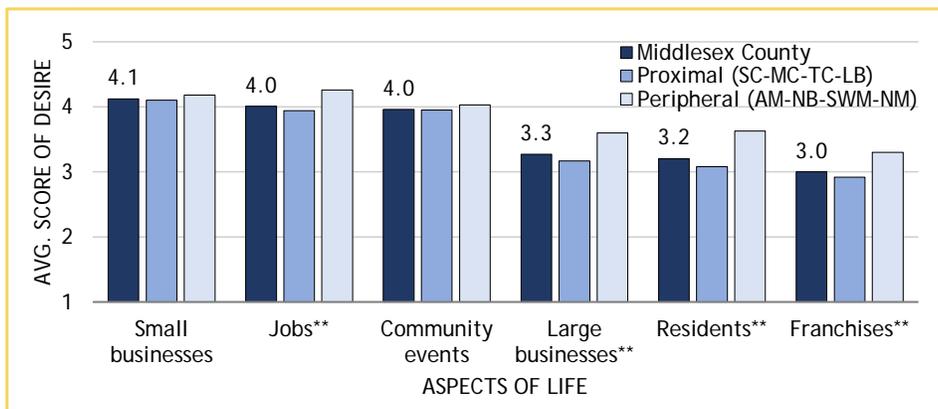


Figure displays the average scores of desire for residents from Middlesex County, and the Proximal and Peripheral Group of municipalities, from 1, "A lot less," to 5, "A lot more." Aspects labelled with asterisks indicate a significant difference between groups

Deleted: ¶

Formatted: Normal,Single Space

Deleted: ¶

County-wide Results. Residents throughout Middlesex County reported that they want more small businesses (4.1 of 5.0), jobs (4.0) and community events (4.0) in their municipalities over the next five years. Whereas the Peripheral Group of residents expressed a moderate desire to see more large businesses (3.6), residents (3.6), and franchises (3.3), the Proximal Group reported a preference for the quantity of those aspects to remain relatively the same (3.2, 3.1, and 2.9, respectively).

Deleted: ¶

This information represents the development residents would like to see for Middlesex County. It suggests that future resident satisfaction and possibly retention levels depend on how the municipality changes or stays the same relative to their preferences.

Based on Middlesex County residents revealing that they want to see more local community events, satisfaction and possibly retention levels may increase if more are offered in the County over the next five years. Satisfaction and engagement levels with shopping, entertainment, sports, and other aspects in the municipality may also rise if they are integrated with community events.



The desire communicated by residents to see more small businesses and jobs suggests that smaller-scale commercial development should be prioritized in the County over the next five years.

Proximal and Peripheral Group Results. The distinct preferences of residents that live further away from the City of London suggest a supplementary focus would be welcomed that encourages the retention and attraction of larger businesses and franchises in those municipalities. It is noted, however, that such development would prove challenging given population counts, land servicing limitations, and transportation infrastructure considerations affecting the Peripheral Group of municipalities.

Considering respondents in the Peripheral Group of municipalities conveyed a desire for an increased population, and a low level of satisfaction with residential growth, a focus

on residential development is warranted over the next five years. This focus may ultimately help improve resident satisfaction and curb further population loss in those municipalities.

“Which of the following would make you consider leaving your municipality? Please select all that apply.”

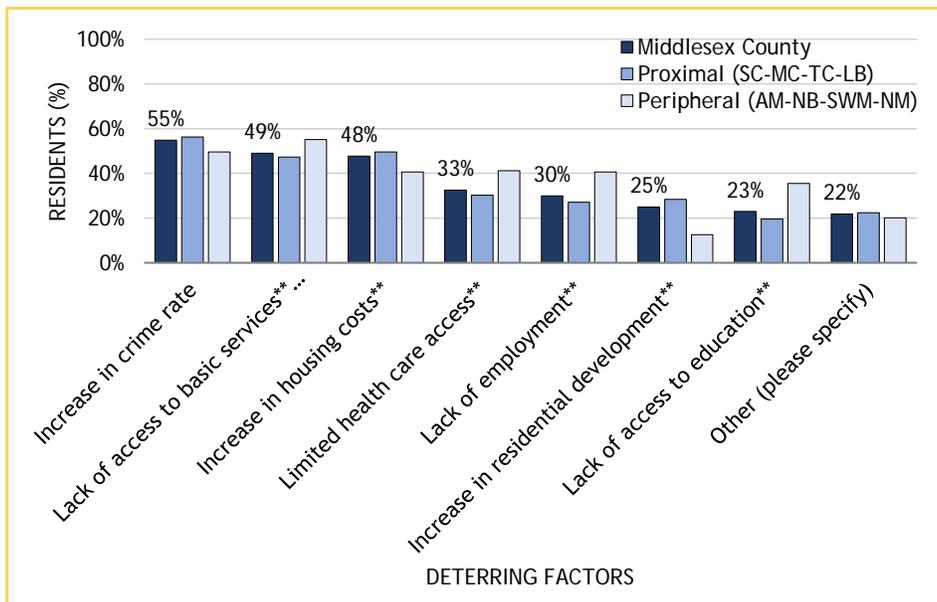


Figure shows the percentage of residents from Middlesex County, and the Proximal and Peripheral Group of municipalities, who selected each deterring factor. Aspects labelled with asterisks indicate a significant difference between groups

County-wide Results. A notable number of residents are likely to consider relocating out of Middlesex County if the crime rate increases (55% of residents); if there is a lack of access to basic services (49%), such as to banking services, the internet, and grocery stores; or if there is an increase in housing costs (48%). These deterring factors are consistent throughout Middlesex County, are directly related to resident retention and likely reveal the most important areas to focus on in order to retain residents. While aspects with fewer responses, such as health care access (33%), would also cause some residents to consider relocating, these aspects are not seen to be an immediate cause for concern.

Given the views of residents on access to basic services, it is recommended that an updated inventory be kept of the basic services available in each municipality, and to consider municipal development initiatives that encourage the retention and growth of businesses that cater to these basic needs. This inventory could help predict the number

of residents that will consider relocation, and growing access to those local services could help retain more residents. Additionally, with the reported views of Middlesex County residents from all municipalities on crime rates, strategies and partnerships with local policing and community groups that could minimize the incidence of crime in the area and educate the public in this regard may also help minimize the number of residents that will consider relocation.

Proximal and Peripheral Group Results. Of the seven deterring factors explored in this survey, all but one exhibited significant discrepancies between the reported shared attitudes of residents located near and far from the City of London. The Peripheral Group of residents signified a greater concern, relative to the attitudes of the Proximal Group, with access to basic services (55 and 47%, respectively), health care access (41 and 30%, respectively), employment (41 and 27%, respectively), and education (36 and 20%, respectively). The Peripheral Group further disclosed a smaller concern, compared to the Proximal Group, with increases in housing costs (41 and 50%, respectively) and increased residential development (13 and 28%, respectively).

It is evident from these results that the differences between the County and either of the two groups of municipalities are smaller than those between the two groups of municipalities. Consequently, it is recommended to consider the needs and attitudes of residents on a sub-county and local municipal basis prior to designing or implementing any development initiative. This will assist in maximizing the benefits of municipal and county endeavours.



ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

“Please use three words to describe your municipality.”



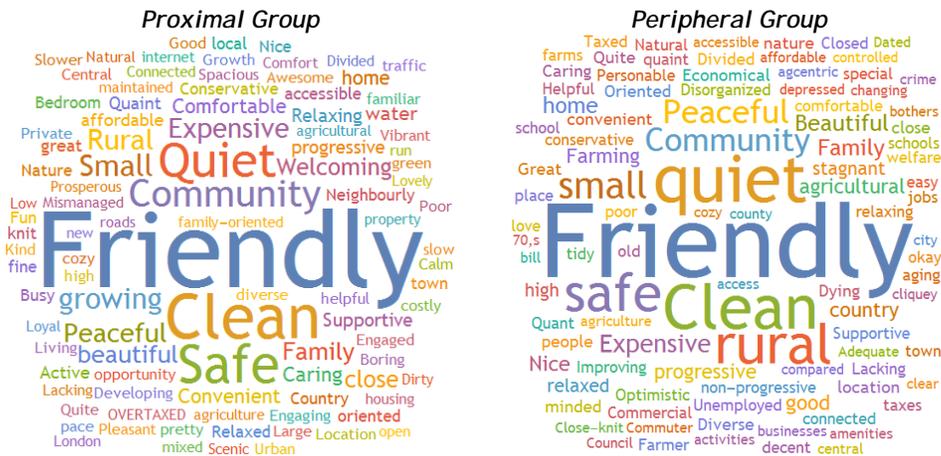
Graphic presents the frequency each word was used by Middlesex County residents to describe their municipality. The font size of the words illustrates how frequently they were used

County-wide Results. Over 800 residents across Middlesex County provided three words that they considered to best describe their municipality. The most common words, ranked from highest to lowest frequency, were “friendly,” “clean,” “safe,” “quiet,” “community,” “rural,” and “small.” These strong associations help illustrate the culture and identity of the County of Middlesex.

Unless there is a desire to change this identity, it is recommended that these associations be incorporated and accentuated in any resident attraction campaign.

Proximal and Peripheral Group Results. A large number of the County’s residents close to the urban centre (660 residents) and further from it (195) contributed their view of their municipalities. The top seven words for the Proximal Group, in a descending order of frequency, were “friendly,” “clean,” “safe,” “quiet,” “community,” “small,” and “growing.” The top words for the Peripheral Group of municipalities, also in a descending order, were “friendly,” “quiet,” “clean,” “rural,” “safe,” “small,” and “peaceful.”

Contrasted on the next page are the word clouds for both groups of municipalities.



Graphic presents the frequency each word was used by the Proximal and Peripheral Groups of residents to describe their municipality. The font size of the words illustrates how frequently they were used

Residents in the Peripheral Group more strongly associated their municipalities with the concepts “quiet,” “rural,” and “peaceful” compared to the Proximal Group. At the same time, residents within the Proximal Group reported a greater association with their municipalities and the words “clean,” “safe,” “community,” and “growing.”

“Do you have any additional comments about living in your municipality?”

County-wide Results. In total, 414 residents of Middlesex County had additional comments about life in the County, representing over 22,000 words. After thoroughly reviewing the comments, central themes emerged for seven of the eight municipalities surveyed. All comments were then manually sorted by the theme that was most applicable. The Municipality of Newbury did not receive additional comments.

Twelve themes were discovered from all the municipalities, including access to services; residential, business, and other new developments; recreation; being happy in their community; the cost of living; local politics; education; community atmosphere; jobs; and the farming community. The three most commonly occurring themes for the County were development, recreation, and being happy in their community.

Proximal and Peripheral Group Results. The three most frequently appearing themes for the Proximal and Peripheral Groups of municipalities were all dissimilar. The Proximal Group’s themes were new development, being happy in the municipality, and recreation, and the Peripheral Group’s themes were education, access to services, and local politics.

Presented here are typical comments for the prevailing themes. Grammatical errors were not corrected.

Please note that the results from this question should not be interpreted in the same way as all of the other results. Given the qualitative nature of this question, there will be additional sources of error, including the subjective sorting of responses. Accordingly, the results for this question are less likely to be representative of all Middlesex County residents.

Theme 1: NEW DEVELOPMENT

This theme represents comments from residents on various areas of development. They usually referenced new business possibilities and residential growth. Residents from Middlesex County reported interest in seeing more businesses. This agrees with findings presented earlier in this report on the desire of residents for more businesses over the next five years.

“Small businesses need incentives to stay in our Municipality, continue to operate and be competitive with larger city based businesses; whether it come in the form of a rent reduction for store front businesses; government funding; free advertising, etc.”

-- Southwest Middlesex Resident

“Would like to see more businesses open and increase local employment, more people are coming to live here, and it would be great to see further developments along these lines.”

-- Lucan Biddulph Resident

“Seems to be getting better; immigrants are coming in and adding new businesses to the life of the community. I'm seeing the community support this, which is a nice change. Would like to see more of that in the future.”

-- Strathroy-Caradoc Resident

Theme 2: RECREATION

This theme covered comments from Middlesex County residents that ordinarily expressed a desire for more recreational opportunities. These comments provide a context for residents specifying earlier in this report that they are marginally engaged in local sports and recreation.

“While there are fitness services and many walking trails available, a proper community center with indoor pool would meet the needs of all age groups as well as creating jobs and tax revenue.”

-- Thames Centre Resident



“There are not a lot of fitness programs available for kids outside of hockey, swimming in summer, skating, soccer. It would be nice to have programs available such as dance, year round swimming, Zumba etc.”

-- Lucan Biddulph Resident

"Strathroy Caradoc spent time and money making an amazing outdoor pool . We are only able to use it 3 months out of the year. I would love to see an indoor pool for families to go to, in the winter and colder months."

-- Strathroy-Caradoc Resident

Theme 3: LOCAL POLITICS

The additional feedback expressed by residents of Middlesex County on local politics was predominantly negative. This is convergent with earlier results that suggested residents were borderline dissatisfied with local politics.

"Increasingly concerned that more decisions are being made at the County level of government, thereby diminishing the relevance of the lower-tier. Provincial transfers to the municipality are decreasing, and so our fiscal position is threatened. Policing costs are escalating far in excess of our capacity to finance. The people here are fantastic, and we need more respect from people who don't live here but make decisions for us."

-- Adelaide Metcalfe Resident

"I want to see our communities grow and prosper however we need local leadership who can respect the values already established and balance for the future."

-- Middlesex Centre Resident

"Municipality does not do enough to encourage development, there are too many road blocks and red tape which frustrates the people MORE needs to be done to ASSIST not HINDER the building applications. Staff has TOO much say and the council is been lead not leading"

-- North Middlesex Resident

Deleted:

Theme 4: ACCESS TO SERVICES

The additional feedback expressed by residents of Middlesex County on access to services predominately mentioned a lack of access. This is convergent with earlier results that suggested one of the top concerns of residents was their access to basic services.

"It is a shame that rural areas are being left behind from having affordable, high speed internet in this day and age. It makes it very difficult to function in this environment, especially for students and the self-employed or remote workers."

-- North Middlesex Resident

"We like it here but the lack of social services support and the resulting issues concern us. People live here without adequate help and that impacts the entire community."

-- Southwest Middlesex Resident

"I wish we had access to some kind of bakery, butcher or cafe in Dorchester. I prefer to support local but these options just aren't here. Otherwise the community is great!"

-- Thames Centre Resident

Theme 5: EDUCATION

This theme represents comments from residents in North Middlesex and Southwest Middlesex on education. They usually conveyed some concern with the quality of education.

These comments provide a context for earlier in the report where residents from the Peripheral Group of municipalities demonstrated a significantly lower satisfaction level for education compared to the County average. Although, the overall satisfaction rating given by the Peripheral Group of municipalities was still marginally positive.

“Education needs are very important to a rural community. An important need to ensure the rural students are given equal opportunity to urban students. If the rural schools leave, the young people leave and the cycle of dwindling communities continues as other services will no longer be viable.”

-- North Middlesex Resident

“We need to keep our local schools and offer the same curriculum, funding, academics as the bigger cities. Students grow to become adults no matter where they live and we are doing students an injustice sending them into the workforce or higher educational institutions ill prepared and less informed.”

-- Southwest Middlesex Resident

“We need the support of all Municipalities and the County to protect our schools and other services.”

-- North Middlesex Resident

Theme 6: BEING HAPPY WITH THE COUNTY

Consistent with earlier findings, the comments for this theme underline the satisfaction that residents of Middlesex County have with several aspects of life in their municipality.



“Love living in Delaware, its a small family community. We feel safe and welcomed at all times.”

-- Middlesex Centre Resident

“Great place to live. About 99% of what I need is in my municipality. Do not have to go to London very often.”

-- Strathroy-Caradoc Resident

“I enjoy the quiet peacefulness, privacy,

growing my own food on .2 acres land, great neighbours, all Main Street services only 3 blocks away, fast personal service in small stores, no traffic, free and close parking, no waiting in line for anything, and nature (wooded rural countryside) just a 5-minute walk away.”

-- North Middlesex Resident

Deleted: ¶

Formatted: Justified

Deleted: ¶

Please note:

The full set of anonymous comments are not included in this report for the sake of brevity but are obtainable by request from the Department of Economic Development of Middlesex County.

“Do you have any comments about the survey (e.g., quality of the questions, the layout of the survey)?”

Residents were also asked for feedback on the survey itself. Those specific responses are not reported here, but overall the survey was viewed favourably and easy to complete by residents.

Part 3 – Conclusion



CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research represents a starting point for development strategies in Middlesex County and the groups of municipalities which are closest and furthest away from the City of London.

These results provide a glimpse into the needs and beliefs of municipal residents. They help fulfill the objectives of the survey by answering the key questions about what attracted residents to Middlesex County, what makes them want to stay, and what could make them consider relocating outside the area. Fifteen main findings can assist in answering these questions.

MAIN FINDINGS

1. The results of this report are derived from a representative and demographically assorted group of residents across Middlesex County. This enables the results to be extended to the populations of the County with a low margin of error of 2.4% at a 90% confidence level.
2. Relative to the Proximal Group of municipalities, a significantly higher percentage of residents from the Peripheral Group reported living on a farm, living in their municipality for more than twenty years, always having lived in their municipality, and moving to their municipality from another one in Middlesex County.
3. Compared with the Peripheral Group of municipalities, a conclusively greater proportion of residents from the Proximal Group reported living in a detached house, living in their municipality for one to ten years, and having moved to their municipality from the City of London.
4. Residents are attracted to a variety of Middlesex County's features. They are most attracted to the County because they view it as a positive place to raise children, and it is close to their family and friends.
5. The aspects which attracted residents to Middlesex County are fairly consistent across all municipalities in the County.
6. Residents are generally satisfied with various aspects of Middlesex County, although some aspects, such as employment opportunities, may be improved. The group of residents located further away from London reported lower levels of satisfaction for education, health care access, and residential growth.

7. Many residents travel outside of their municipality for multiple reasons, especially for shopping and entertainment. Aside from one disparity, the travel habits of residents are comparable throughout the County.
8. Development efforts of the County may try to address the travel habits of residents as a means to expanding the local economy and providing residents more convenience.
9. Resident engagement levels are higher for community events than for volunteer organizations, and sports and recreation. The Peripheral Group of residents reported greater involvement in local volunteering than those residents located closer to the City of London.
10. Satisfaction levels for any aspect may be improved through efforts to increase the engagement level among local residents for the aspect being reviewed.
11. Residents made it clear that they want to see more jobs, small businesses, and community events across Middlesex County. While the Proximal Group of residents showed a preference for having the total number of residents and large businesses remain relatively the same, the Peripheral Group wishes to see more of both.
12. Municipal resident retention efforts should likely be focused on the retention and growth of basic services, and ensuring the crime rate or any other compelling deterrence factor does not rise exponentially. Relative to the Proximal municipalities, residents from the Peripheral Group of municipalities conveyed significantly greater concerns with access to basic services, health care access, employment, and education.
13. The significant discrepancies between the Proximal and Peripheral Groups of municipalities help clarify the benefits of guiding development strategies geared to resident attitudes and needs. Initiatives can be enhanced by reviewing and applying this knowledge on a sub-county and local municipal level.
14. Residents of Middlesex County and the Proximal Group most strongly associate the culture and identity of their municipalities with the words "friendly," "clean," and "safe." Conversely, residents from the Peripheral Group of municipalities considered that the words "friendly," "quiet," and "clean" best describe their municipalities.
15. Additional feedback from residents of multiple municipalities in the Peripheral Group converged on education, access to services, and local politics, while comments the Proximal Group centered on new development, being happy in their municipality, and recreation. The supplemental feedback from residents across Middlesex County provided context and support for a variety of results presented in this report.

Part 4 – Supporting Documentation



REFERENCES

- Statistics Canada. (2016). Census Profile. Retrieved from: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=3539033&Geo2=CD&Code2=3539&Data=Count&SearchText=middlesex&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TABID=1> (March 2017)
- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J.D., & Christian, L.M. (2014a). *Internet, phone, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method*. (4th ed.) Canada: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Dillman, D.A., Smyth, J.D., & Christian, L.M. (2014b). Responding to societal change and preparing for what lies ahead.. In D.A. Dillman, J.D. Smyth, & L.M. Christian (2014), *Internet, phone, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method*. (4th ed.) (pp.450-468). Canada: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Statistics Canada. (2011). Census Profile. Retrieved from: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=3539&Geo2=CSD&Code2=3539015&Data=Count&SearchText=strathroy&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=&TABID=1> (March 2017)

APPENDIX A: SURVEY

Welcome to the first Middlesex County Resident Life Survey!

The purpose of this survey is to learn more about current residents of Middlesex County. This will enable community groups, such as volunteer organizations and municipal government, to better assist you with their policy and resources. There will be questions about your reasons for living here, what makes this location special to you, and the ways in which you are engaging with your community.

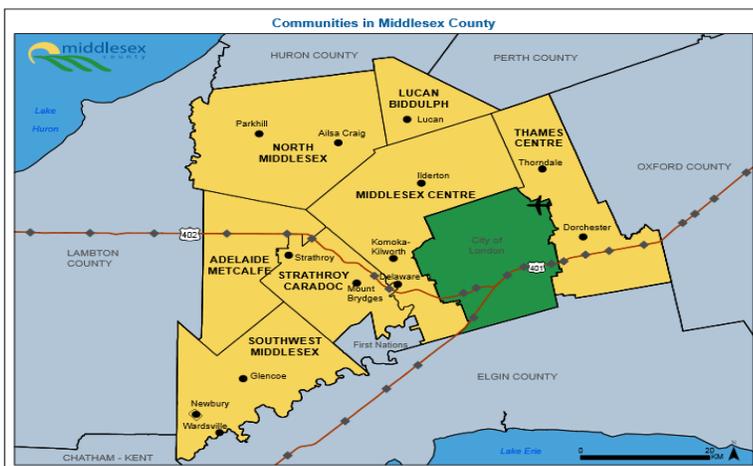
This short survey has been prepared by Middlesex County and should only take around ten minutes to complete. This survey is anonymous; none of your personally identifiable information will be collected. Thank you for your participation and valuable contribution.

NOTE: This survey is best completed on a computer or tablet.

In which Middlesex County based municipality do you currently reside in? Please refer to the map below.

- Adelaide Metcalfe
- Lucan, Biddulph
- Middlesex Centre
- Newbury Village
- North Middlesex
- Southwest Middlesex
- Strathroy-Caradoc
- Thames Centre
- I live outside of Middlesex County (e.g. City of London or elsewhere)

Deleted: -



What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to Answer

What is your age?

- 14 and under
- 15 to 19
- 20 to 24
- 25 to 29
- 30 to 39
- 40 to 49
- 50 to 59
- 60 to 69
- 70 to 79
- 80 and over
- Prefer not to answer

In which type of home do you currently reside in?

- Farm
- Detached house
- Semi-detached house/Duplex
- Townhouse
- Apartment (4 or less stories)
- Apartment (5 or more stories)

How long have you been living in your current municipality?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- 11 to 15 years
- 16 to 20 years
- More than 20 years

Where did you live before moving to your current municipality?

- I have always lived in the same municipality
- Another Middlesex County municipality (please specify) _____
- London, Ontario
- Elsewhere in Ontario (outside Middlesex and London)
- Outside of Ontario

How many children (under the age of 18), currently live in your household?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

How many people, including yourself and any children, currently live in your household?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

What is the estimated income for all individuals in your home?

- Less than \$42,000
- \$42,000 to \$83,000
- \$83,000 to \$150,000
- \$150,000 to \$220,000
- Greater than \$220,000
- Prefer not to answer

Which of the following attracted you to living in your municipality? Please select all that apply.

- Closer to family or friends
- Place to raise children
- Low crime rate
- Access to housing
- Economic conditions (e.g. low taxes, cost of living)
- Access to education
- Employment
- Clean environment
- Access to leisure/recreational facilities
- Pace of lifestyle
- Retirement destination
- Social services
- Access to health care
- Other (please specify) _____

In your municipality, how would you describe your satisfaction with the following?

	1 - Very unsatisfied	2	3 - Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	4	5 - Very satisfied
Taxes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shopping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health care access	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local politics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Roads	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Commercial businesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sports and recreation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Residential growth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please use three words to describe your municipality:

Word 1

Word 2

Word 3

For which of the following reasons do you travel outside your municipality? Please select all that apply.

Sports and recreation

Education

Health care

Employment

Shopping

Entertainment

Other _____

In the next five years, would you like there to be more or less of the following in your municipality?

	1 - A lot less	2	3 - Neither less nor more	4	5 - A lot more
Residents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jobs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Large businesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Small businesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Franchises	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In your municipality, how actively engaged are you in the following?

	1 - Not at all engaged	2	3 - Somewhat engaged	4	5 - Very engaged
Volunteer organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local politics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sports and recreation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Which of the following would make you consider leaving your municipality? Please select all that apply.

- Increase in housing costs
- Increase in residential development
- Limited health care access
- Lack of employment
- Increase in crime rate
- Lack of access to education
- Lack of access to basic services (e.g. banking, grocery)
- Other (please specify) _____

Do you have any additional comments about living in your municipality? All comments will remain anonymous.

Do you have any comments about the survey (e.g. quality of the questions, layout of the survey)? Any feedback is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We will use your responses to help form future policies to improve your communities.

If you have any questions regard the survey, please contact Cara A. Finn, Director of Economic Development, Middlesex County.

519-434-7321 ext. 2347 | cfinn@middlesex.ca

APPENDIX B: FACEBOOK

**Invest in Middlesex**
Sponsored ·  

Take our short survey and tell us about your reasons for living in Middlesex, what makes this location special to you, and the ways in which you are engaging with your community



Your voice will help make our community even better [Learn More](#)

uwo.eu.qualtrics.com

 Like |  Comment |  Share