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Special Capital Region Survey of Social Needs

Majority in Capital Region “Overall Quality of Life Worse for Most People”

Only 17% Satisfied with Own Contribution; 89% Agree Community Needs Everyone’s Help

Top Problems: Utilities, Jobs, Health Care, Housing, Groceries, Substance Abuse

Over 50% Call for More Programs for Jobs, Food, Shelter, Temporary Assistance

Loudonville, NY – Fifty-one percent of Capital Region residents think that the overall quality of life has gotten worse for most people in the area over the last year according to a new survey released today by the Siena (College) Research Institute. Conducted in partnership with the United Way of the Greater Capital Region, the survey finds that while 54 percent say it is very important that they and their household contribute to addressing the needs of people in the area, only 17 percent are completely satisfied with their personal contribution. Over 40 percent believe most people are troubled by the cost of home utilities, and over 30 percent think most people are having problems with employment, access to health care, affordable housing and paying for food. Nearly two-thirds advocate for more job training and placement programs, over 50 percent support adding more emergency food facilities, shelters and temporary financial assistance programs, and over 40 percent call for numerous mental health, violence prevention, transportation and financial support programs.

“Across every demographic and in every county, large numbers of area residents donate to organizations and charities, and overall just over half have volunteered during the past twelve months,” according to Dr. Don Levy, SRI’s Director. “Not only did a majority of area residents tell us that times have gotten tougher for most people, but they overwhelmingly agreed that social needs are getting greater and greater, and that everyone must do as much as they can or our community will deteriorate.”

“Overall, this survey is filled with opportunity,” said Katherine Pelham, Chief Executive Officer of the United Way of the Greater Capital Region. “No one is pulling blinders over their eyes when it comes to problems we face nor are area residents turning away from neighbors struggling to make ends meet. Our job at the United Way is to bring people and resources together, so individuals and families increase their capacity to overcome barriers and create the life they choose. The survey shows that more than half of us want to be more for each other and our region. To me this is uplifting news.”

“Lower income area adults see far more need than others, but between fifty and eighty percent of all residents believe that some or most people are experiencing difficulty paying for heat, housing, and food, getting a job, accessing health care or legal assistance, feeling safe, finding transportation or are impacted by substance or alcohol abuse,” according to Levy.

Approximately 30 percent of respondents, when asked about children under 18, believe that the lack of low cost child care, the lack of adult supervision, obesity and the impact of drug and alcohol abuse are very widespread. Poverty, and youth on youth violence were seen as less widespread but still by about 60 percent as at least somewhat widespread. Gang activity, sexual abuse and problems with literacy are, according to nearly 40 percent of Capital Region adults, somewhat or very widespread.

Seniors, according to respondents, have the greatest need for access to health care (46% very significant, 29% somewhat), medical transportation (43% very, 30% somewhat), support services including help with household chores (39% very, 39% somewhat) and rental assistance (38% very, 33% somewhat).

“In a nutshell, the people in the Capital Region think there ought to be more programs to help families with financial, emotional and everyday issues,” according to Dr. Levy. “More than any other intervention, two out of every three people we spoke with said we need to do more to help people find work. Help with food and shelter comes next. But, in addition, over forty percent call for more programs to assist families with those pressure cooker issues that accompany a recession like anger management, domestic violence, mental health, substance abuse and family counseling.”

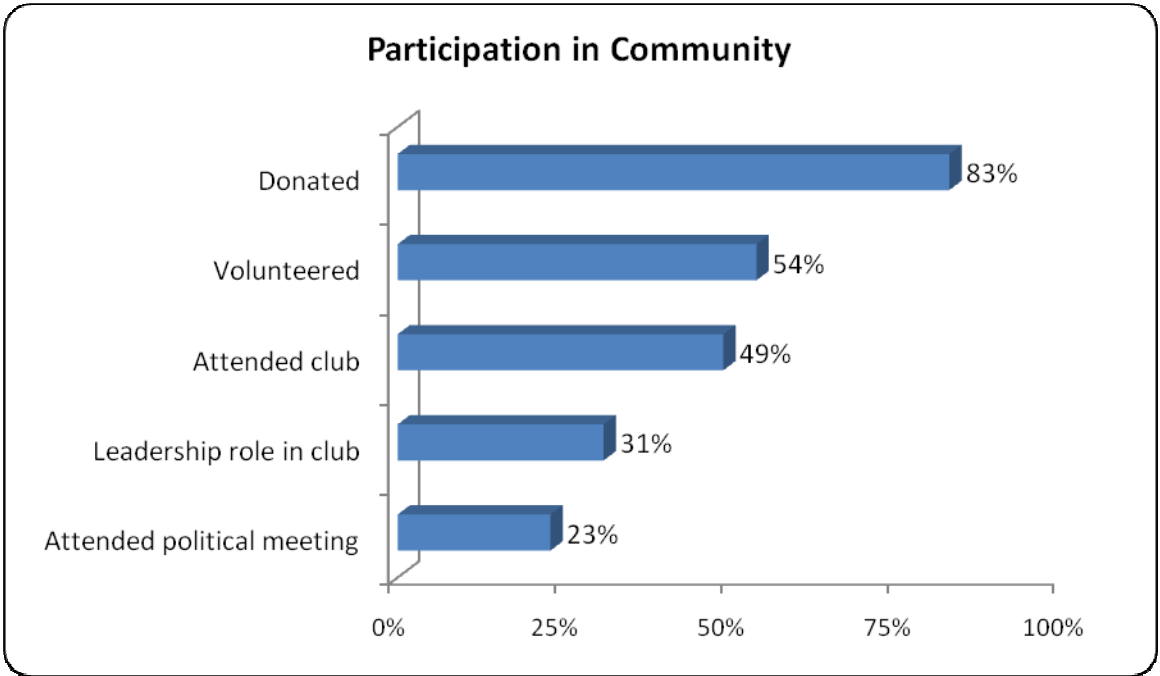
At this point, only 25 percent of area residents have heard of the United Way 2-1-1 telephone help line. Awareness of 2-1-1, the information and referral service for essential needs, is higher among seniors (29%), the young (28%) and low income (30%).

Over the past year, 83 percent of Capital Region adults donated to an organization or charity. Fifty-four percent volunteered. Just under half attended any club or organization meeting and 31 percent assumed a leadership role in an organization. Seventy-eight percent of area residents agree (43% strongly) that you judge a community by how well the people that have resources do in helping those that do not have resources.

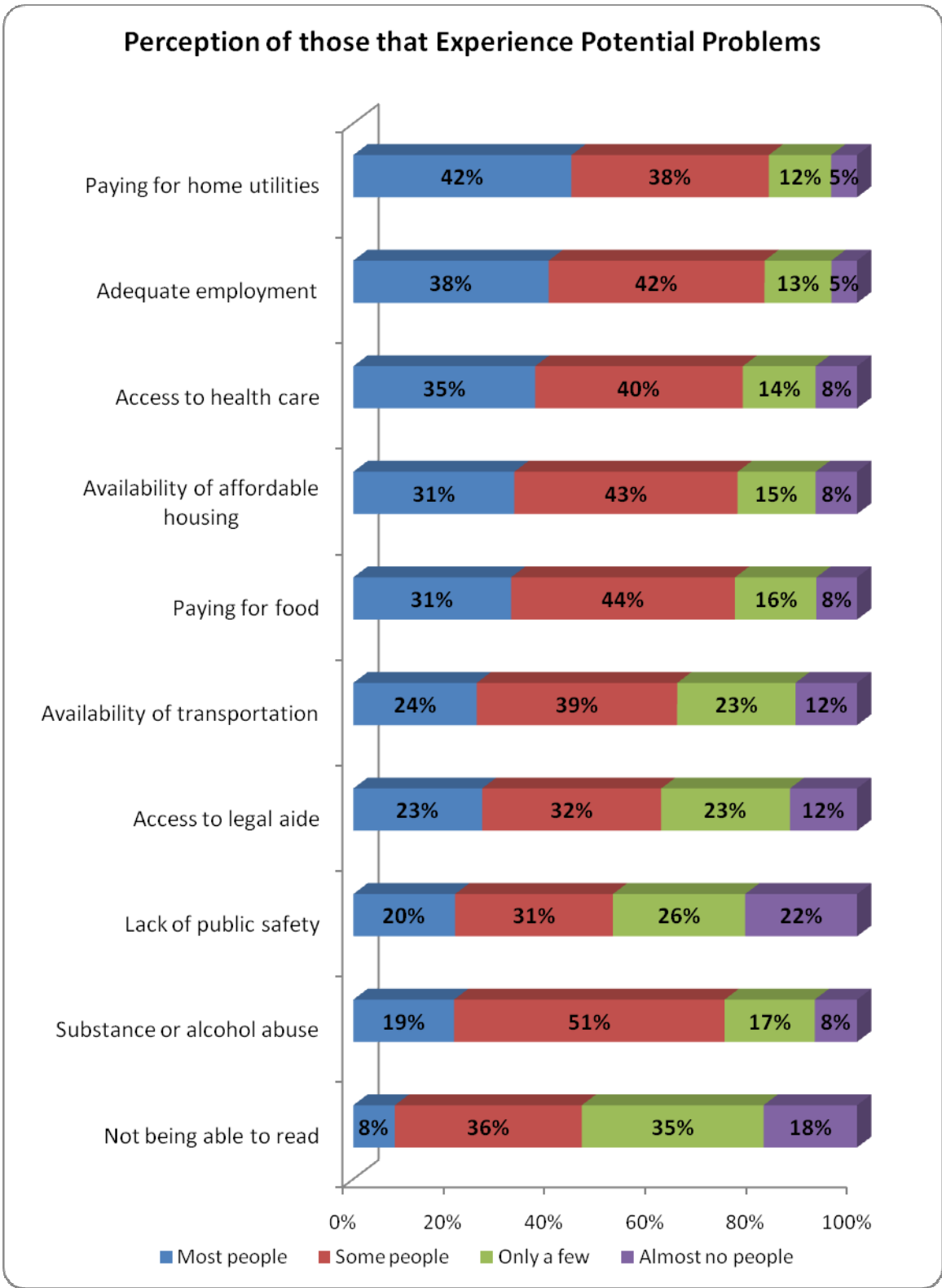
“Siena College’s involvement here is in line with our Franciscan mission, valuing service that benefits those most in need. We are always looking for ways to serve as a community resource and we hope that this survey is a positive step in making a difference,” said Father Kevin Mullen, O.F.M., Ph.D., President of Siena College.

The SRI survey of Social Needs was conducted November 12-19 by random telephone calls to 1007 residents of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, and Schoharie Counties over the age of 18. Data was statistically adjusted by age, county and gender to ensure representativeness. SRI reports this data at a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of ± 3.1 points. For more information or comments, please call Dr. Don Levy, Director Siena College Research Institute, at 518-783-2901. Survey cross-tabulations and frequencies can be found at www.siena.edu/sri/resesearch

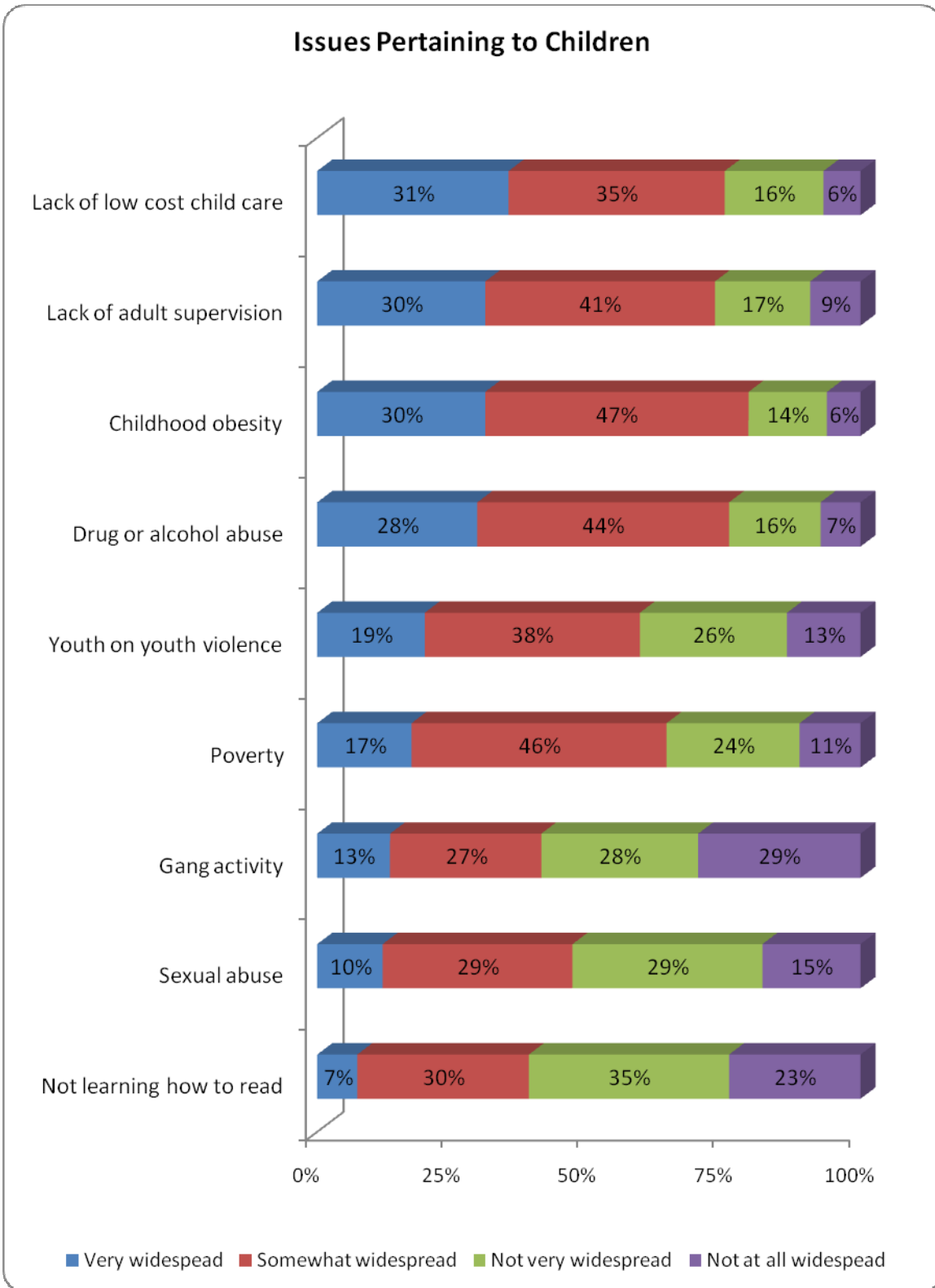
Question wording: I'm going to ask you to think about a series of activities that some people do in their community. For each, consider the last twelve months and let me know whether you have or have not participated?



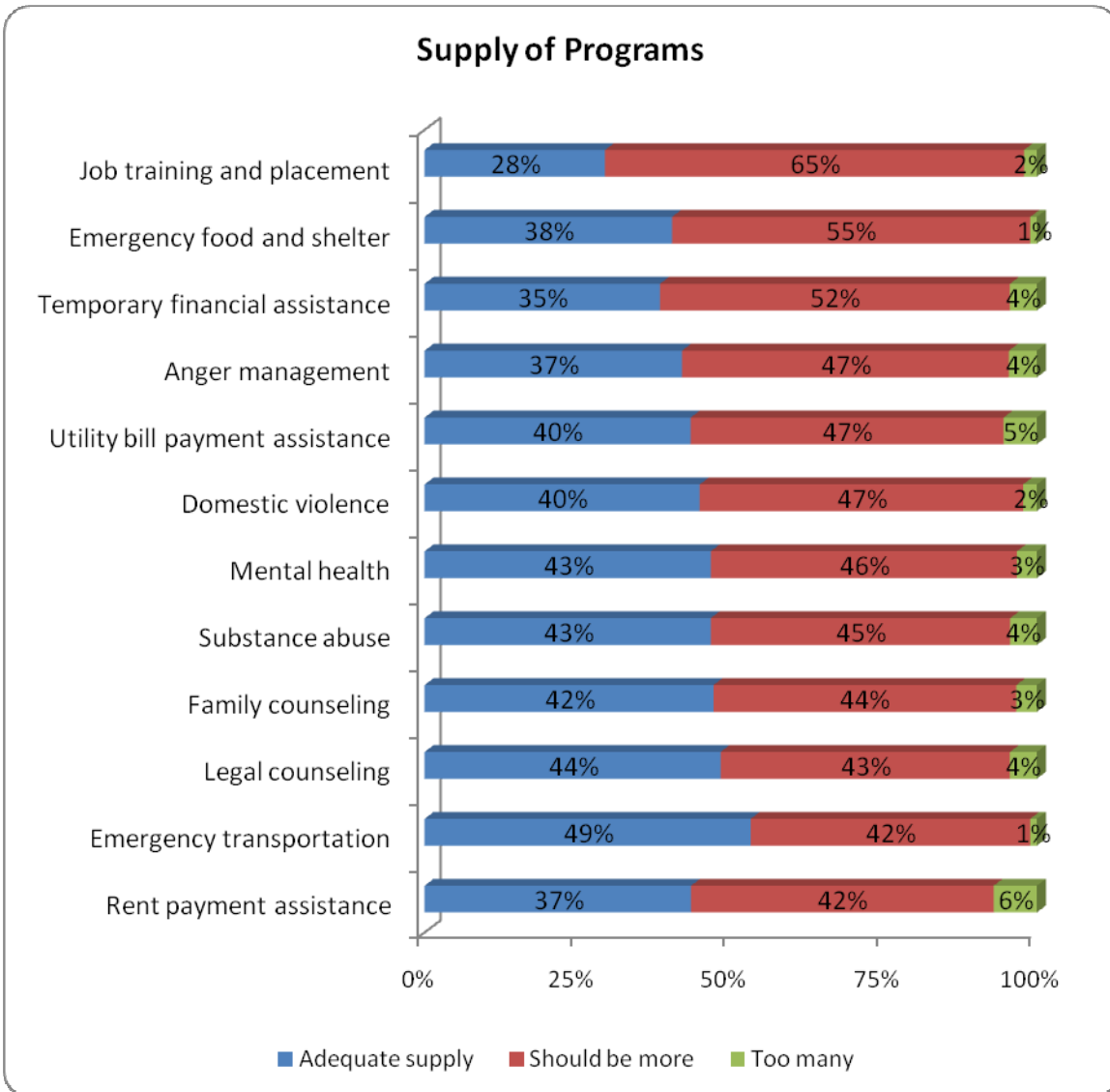
Question wording: Thinking about all the people in your community, I'm going to read you a list of potential problems that may impact people in your area, for each tell me whether you believe most people experience this problem, some people, only a few or almost no people are affected by it?



Question wording: Now thinking specifically about children under the age of 18 in your area, for each of the following, tell me whether you believe each of these issues is very widespread, somewhat widespread, not very widespread or not at all widespread in your community?



Question wording: And thinking about families that may need support, for each of the following, tell me whether you believe there is an adequate supply of programs to help people with this need, or whether you think there should be more programs or if you think there are already too many programs in place?



Question wording: And focusing on seniors, tell me how great a need you believe is present in your community for each of the following, would you say it is a very significant need, somewhat significant need, not a very significant need or not at all a significant need?

