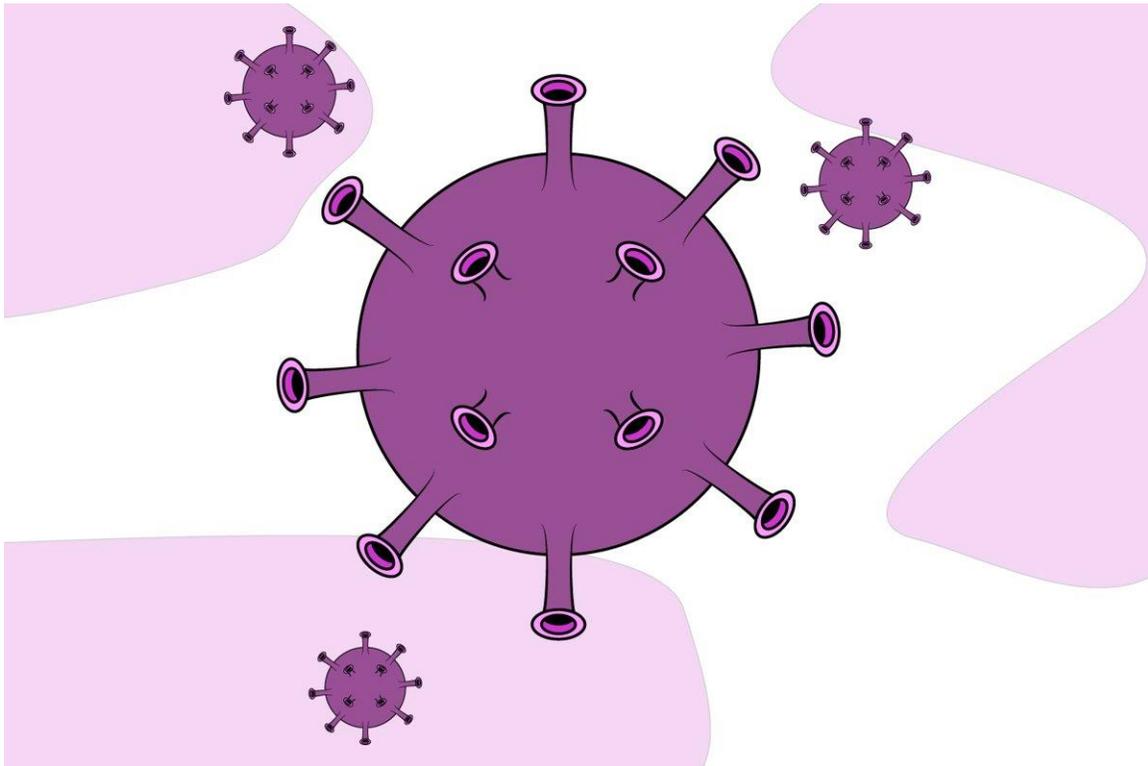




**STRATHCONA
COUNTY**

2020 May SCOOP Mixed Topic Survey: COVID-19 Experiences



Research Results

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Communications

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I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In May 2020, Strathcona County conducted an online survey as part of its Strathcona County Online Opinion Panel (SCOOP) initiative. This project, entitled *the Mixed Topic Survey*, consisted of different survey areas whereby only a limited number of questions were asked within one or more topic areas and was exclusive to residents who signed up to be part of SCOOP. The May 2020 mix topic survey consisted of questions pertaining to accessibility assessments within Strathcona County and a series of questions pertaining to how residents are coping with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Obtaining primary data from residents directly will provide Strathcona County departments with information and enable County officials to make decisions that accurately reflect the perspectives and attitudes of residents. This report will provide a comprehensive review of all steps undertaken in the development and implementation of the survey, as well as a detailed summary of the results. The results from this study were prepared by Phil Kreisel, Ph.D. (Communications) in July 2020; SPSS was used for the data analysis.

This report covers questions pertaining to Strathcona County's in-person public engagement events. A review of the methodology associated in the development and implementation all aspects of the survey can be found in the next section of this report.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was new, using questions that were submitted by department representatives from Family and Community Services and the Council accessibility committee. Using these questions, the survey was created, reviewed and modified where necessary by members of Survey Central for wording, question ordering and general understanding. This included a final check of the content by FOIP¹ prior to the release of the survey to the public.

B. Sampling Design and Data Collection Procedure

The sample frame used in this study consisted of 429 people who had previously signed up to be part of SCOOP, Strathcona County's online opinion panel. Overall, 72.7% of the participants lived in the urban area, 24.5% came from rural parts of Strathcona County, and the remaining 2.8% worked in Strathcona County but did not live there.

The sample frame provided overall results² accurate to within $\pm 4.7\%$, 19 times out of 20. The data was gathered via the online SCOOP platform in May 2020 during restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

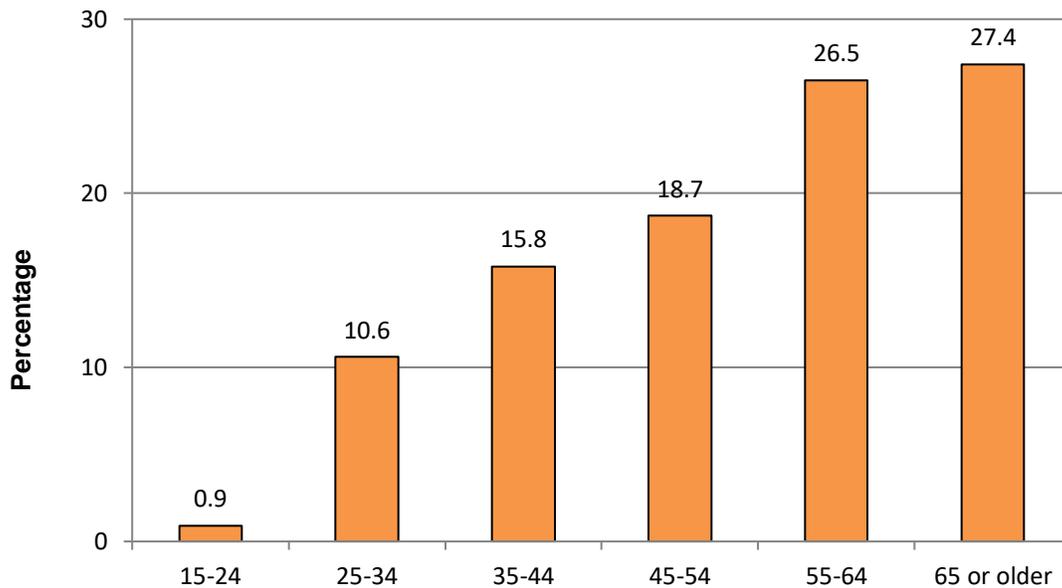
During the fielding of the survey, respondents had the option to skip a section if they felt that the topic had no relevance to them.

¹ FOIP stands for Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy and was reviewed by selected members from Strathcona County's Legislation and Legal Department (LLS).

² The $\pm 4.7\%$ is the *margin of error* associated with this study and refers to the potential percentage spread that exists within answers to particular questions. This means that an answer could be up to 4.7% higher or lower than what is reported. Please note, however, that the data was gathered through an online survey and no controls were undertaken to make this a random sample.

As seen in Figure 1, the majority of respondents who participated in the survey are over the age of 44, with 26.4% of the participants between the age of 25 and 44. Only a very small percentage of participants were under 25. Overall, 60.6% of participants were female while 39.4% were male.

FIGURE 1
Age of Respondents



III. SURVEY RESULTS: COVID-19 EXPERIENCES

Respondents were asked if they would like to answer a series of questions about accessibility in Strathcona County. Overall, 90.6% of the participants opted to answer questions on this topic.

Initially, people were asked to indicate if they knew that Family and Community Services is available by phone and virtually 7 days a week to support residents and provide resources. Overall, 69.2% knew about this.

People were then asked to indicate what ways (if any) that their household had been negatively impacted by COVID-19. Overall, most of the respondents were impacted in some way, with only 6.5% indicating that they (or other members of their household) were not experiencing any impacts. Of the remaining residents who were experiencing some sort of COVID-19 impact:

- 72.9% were feeling disconnected from friends or family;
- 53.9% worried about how physical distancing would impact someone they cared about;
- 47.9% worried about someone they loved;
- 35.2% were worried about employment or income;
- 29.4% felt increased pressure on their family relationships;
- 20.1% were experiencing challenges helping school-aged children manage online learning;
- 18.2% had increased stress about parenting;
- 15.4% were experiencing physical health challenges;
- 11.7% had felt stress about paying rent or their mortgage;
- 11.2% had concerns about managing their debt;
- 10.9% had felt stress about affording groceries;
- 10.4% had concerns about managing their debt load;
- 9.6% were experiencing challenges managing young children while working from home;
- 4.7% were feeling unsafe, scared or threatened because of someone close to them;

- 4.2% were experiencing challenges finding childcare while they worked; and
- 16.4% experienced other issues, including general anxiety, concerns about shopping (especially for groceries or pharmaceutical items), loss of fitness facilities due to closures, general loneliness and loss of freedom to go places or see people as they please.

Respondents were also asked to indicate if they experienced any positive ways that COVID-19 impacted the household. Overall, 91.9% could see one or more benefits that resulted from the presence of COVID-19. More specifically, these were:

- 48.4% indicated that they had more time to spend with family;
- 15.4% had an increased sense of connection to the community;
- 19.0% took up a new skill or hobby;
- 35.2% had more time to reflect and focus on their well-being;
- 11.5% took action to support others in their community;
- 54.9% indicated that life has slowed down in a good way;
- 29.4% have strengthened relationships with people close to them;
- 15.9% indicated other positive impacts, including being able to catch up on one's household maintenance projects, more home cooking and baking, using technology to connect with others, and being able to work from home and avoiding commute time and other related issues.

With respect to the last set of questions in this survey, respondents were asked to indicate if they experienced any new social connections as a result of COVID-19. Overall, 22.6% said they did, while the majority (65.6%) did not. An additional 11.8% were not sure.

Those who said "yes" were asked to elaborate on the new social connections that they made. The connections were clearly divided between making contact (or more contact) with one's immediate neighbours, or connecting remotely with friends, co-workers and/or family via online video apps (such as ZOOM or Facetime). With respect to any physical contact,

people were quick to point out that they were very conscious of maintaining social distancing.