



2020 December SCOOP Mixed Topic Survey: Communications with the Public

Research Results

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I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In December 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 December 2020 mix topic survey consisted of questions on the upcoming 2021 municipal election, Emergency Services, how Strathcona County communicates with the public, services offered by Economic Development and Tourism, living in one's neighbourhood, volunteering and shopping locally.

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); SPSS was used for the data analysis.

This report covers questions associated with communications. 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 Legislative and Legal Services (LLS), Family and Community Services (FCS), Emergency Services, Communications and Economic Development and Tourism (EDT). The survey was then 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 631 people who had previously signed up to be part of SCOOP, Strathcona County's online opinion panel. Overall, 68.7% of the participants lived in the urban area, 29.8% came from rural parts of Strathcona County, and the remaining 1.4% worked in Strathcona County but did not live there.

Although poll-based data is derived from people who decide to participate, were not randomly selected and have access to the online poll, the margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of the same size is $\pm 3.9\%$, 19 times out of 20.² The data was gathered via the online SCOOP platform in November 2020.

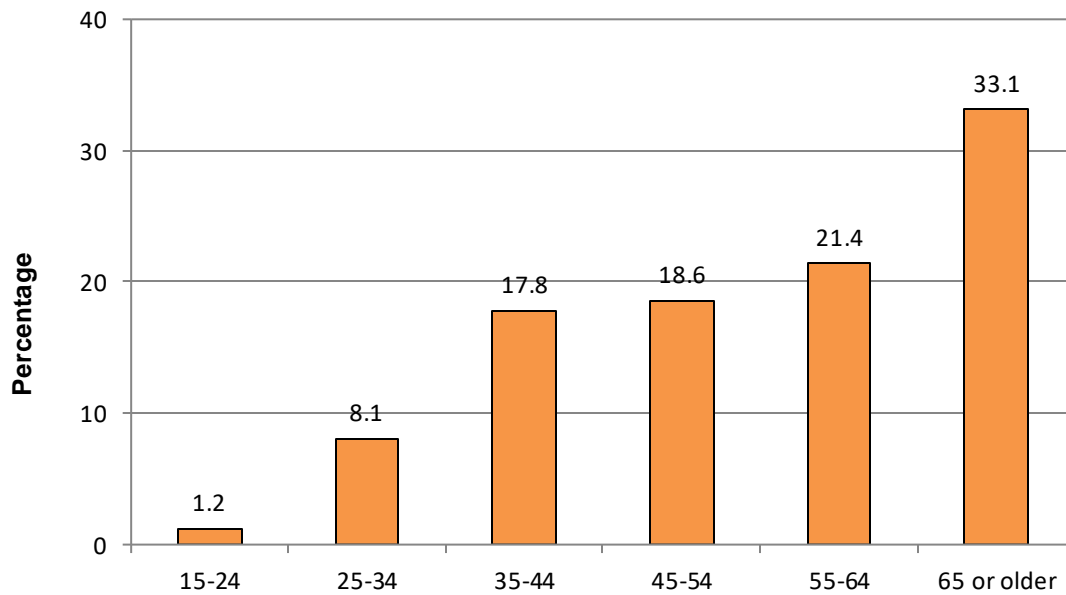
During the fielding of the survey, respondents had the option to skip a section if they felt that the topic had no relevance to them.

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 $\pm 3.9\%$ is the *margin of error* associated with this study and refers to the potential percentage spread that exists within answers to questions. This means that an answer could be up to 3.9% 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, most of the respondents who participated in the survey are over the age of 44, with 25.9% of the participants between the age of 25 and 44. Only a very small percentage of participants were under 25. Overall, 57.7% of participants were female while 42.3% were male.

FIGURE 1
Age of Respondents



III. SURVEY RESULTS

Respondents were asked if they would like to answer a series of questions about ways that Strathcona County communicates with the public. Many of these questions were asked in satisfaction surveys conducted in 2019 and earlier. Overall, 96.8% of the participants opted to answer questions on this topic.

Residents were asked to rank the different ways that the County provides information to its residents. Table 1 presents the ratings for each type of media source, based on how each source was ranked by respondents from one to nine. As such, every source would be a “first choice” for somebody. Percentages for each type of information source add up to 100% by row.

Table 1
Ranking of how Strathcona County provides information

	Ranking Choices								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Social media	25.5%	15.4%	5.9%	8.9%	4.8%	6.4%	8.9%	8.0%	16.1%
Strathcona County website	20.1%	21.5%	19.2%	11.2%	10.7%	8.0%	5.8%	2.3%	1.2%
News stories in The Sherwood Park News	21.7%	15.3%	13.5%	10.7%	11.0%	8.2%	7.6%	8.0%	4.1%
E- newsletters	14.3%	11.9%	13.7%	12.5%	11.2%	11.4%	10.5%	9.4%	5.1%
Digital signs (in County facilities)	10.9%	11.1%	15.5%	14.9%	13.1%	11.1%	10.9%	6.8%	5.7%
Utility bill inserts	5.7%	9.0%	13.2%	13.0%	9.7%	9.9%	9.5%	15.2%	15.0%
The Sherwood Park News (County advertisements)	4.4%	17.8%	12.9%	11.8%	13.4%	9.6%	10.9%	12.9%	6.4%
Brochures or marketing materials	2.7%	2.5%	5.7%	10.6%	15.9%	21.4%	18.0%	13.8%	9.5%
Open houses / public meetings	1.3%	1.5%	5.2%	7.4%	8.8%	12.4%	13.9%	18.7%	30.7%

For example, 20.1% of respondents picked the Strathcona County website as their first choice, while 1.2% picked it as their ninth (or last choice). A strong percentage also picked the County website as their second

or third choice. For brochures or marketing materials, the majority of residents picked this as either their fifth, sixth or seventh choice.

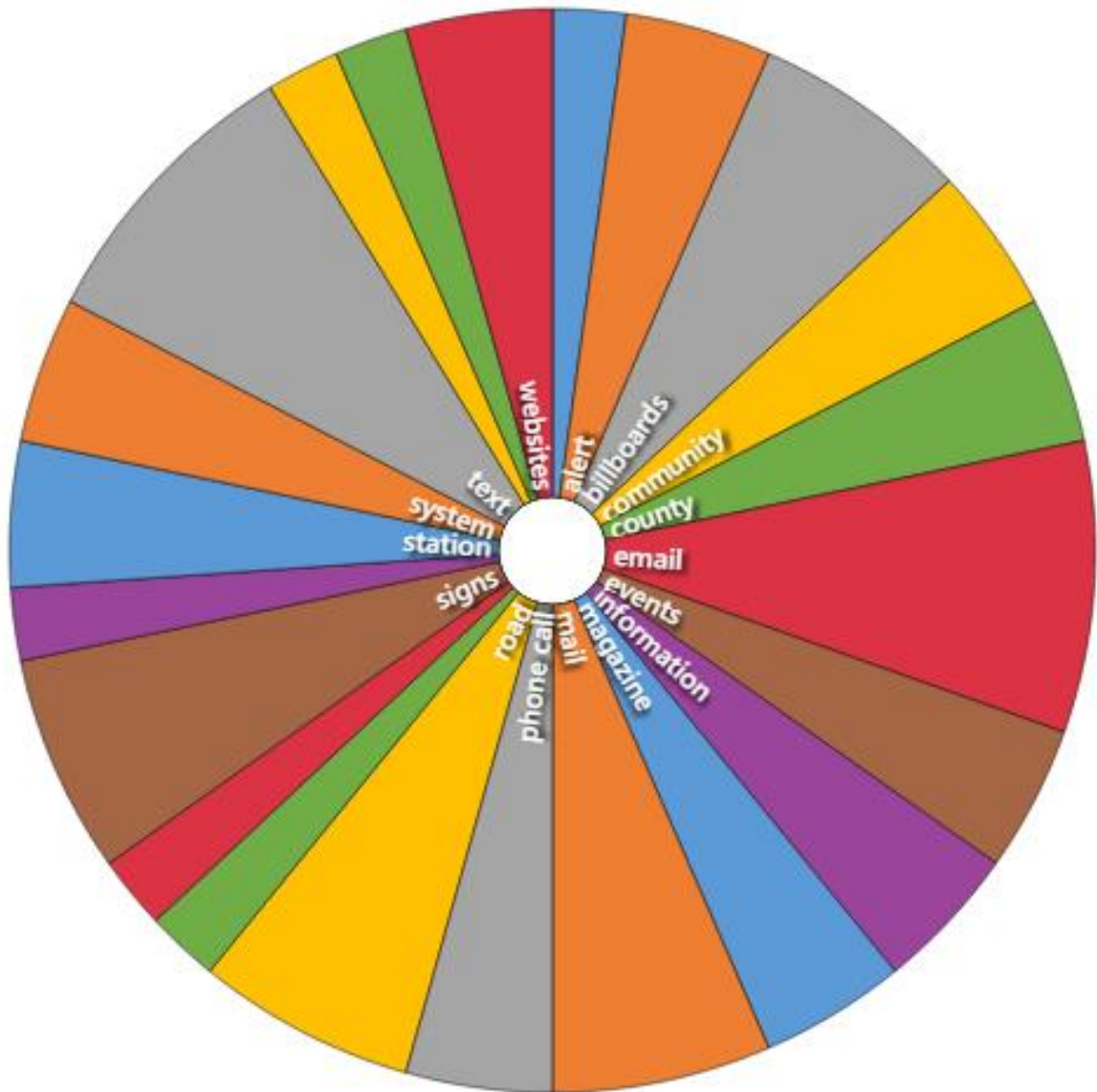
Compared to 2019's study, Social Media (which was second overall last year) is now first overall in 2020 and the Strathcona County website is now the second choice overall (last year it was number 1). Although respondents have different preferences as to where they will turn for information, it can be gleaned from Table 1 that the most popular sources were as follows:

- *Social media* was an option that was popular among residents as a first (25.5%) or second choice (15.4%). There was also a sizable percentage (16.1%) who chose it as their last choice (16.1%). Those who picked it as their last choice were likely not fans of social media.
- The *Strathcona County website* was an option that was popular among residents as a first (20.1%), second (21.5%), or third choice (19.2%).
- *News stories from the Sherwood Park News* was the first, second or third choice for the majority of respondents, while *The Sherwood Park News (County advertisements)* was identified as a second choice.
- *Digital signs at County facilities* were the definitive third or fourth choice that rose from the various sources of information. Other possible fourth choice options were *E-newsletters* and *utility bill inserts*.
- *Brochures* were a possible fifth, sixth or seventh choice among residents. This has been the case for some years now.
- *Open houses/public meetings* were something that most people would turn to after the other options had been exhausted, and as such were seen as an eighth or ninth choice. This pattern has also been seen for a few years now.

Respondents were also asked to suggest additional ways other than the nine options provided that Strathcona County might use to

share information about County programs and services. 106 people provided ideas. These were summarized into 16 themes, which included both the method of communications as well as the most common subject areas associated with communication methods. This is shown in Figure 2.

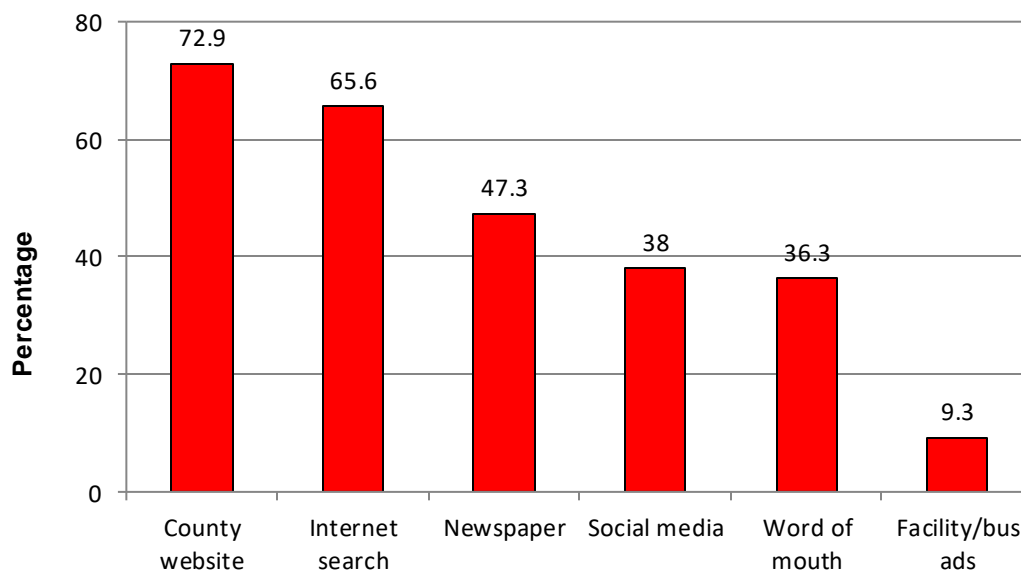
Figure 2
Classification of Other Communication methods



- As seen in Figure 2, other ways that written communication could occur include information on different websites, text and/or email messages and magazines.
- The County could also consider using billboards, ads posted in the mall and signs to deliver visual messages.
- Alerts and phone calls could also be considered.

Respondents were also asked how they find information on Strathcona County programs or services (e.g., recreation programs, counselling, business supports, etc.), from a list of potential options. The results are shown in Figure 3. The use of the County website and a general internet search were the most popular options, followed by the newspaper.

FIGURE 3
How do people find information on County programs or services?



The final question asked in the survey was whether the County should advertise more about its programs in general. The results were mixed, as 35.6% thought it should, 30.4% thought it should not, and the remaining 33.9% were not sure.