# The researchers

Network Impact supports individuals and institutions with research and tools to build networks for social impact.

Over the last decade, Network Impact has contributed to the design and evaluation of a wide range of network initiatives in the U.S., including network organizing to support policies that benefit rural people and places, regional collaborations to end homelessness, and place-based efforts to increase civic engagement.

The Center for Survey Research (CSR) is a full-scale academic survey research center that conducts basic and applied research contributing to knowledge and understanding of important social issues.

CSR maintains a professional interviewing staff, computer assisted telephone facilities and survey sampling capacity, as well as the ability to conduct mail- and web-based surveys. Since 1971, CSR has provided methodological expertise to a range of university scholars and public and private agencies.

# Purpose

## In 2012...

Incourage partnered with Edge Research to conduct its first Community Survey. The survey gathered information about residents' hopes and concerns and their priorities for the south Wood County community.

## In November 2017...

Incourage conducted a follow-up survey to understand how residents' goals and perspectives have changed.

**Questions on the surveys explore...**

- **Residents' overall satisfaction with south Wood County area**
- **Strengths of the community as well as most important problems facing the community**
- **Key words or phrases that residents use to describe their community**
- **How well different organizations are doing in addressing community challenges**
- **Residents' priorities for the future**
- **Resident participation in civic activities**
- **Respondent demographic characteristics – age, education, zip code, time living in area, income**

**This presentation offers a summary of 2017 survey results while also comparing 2017 and 2012 results, where applicable.**
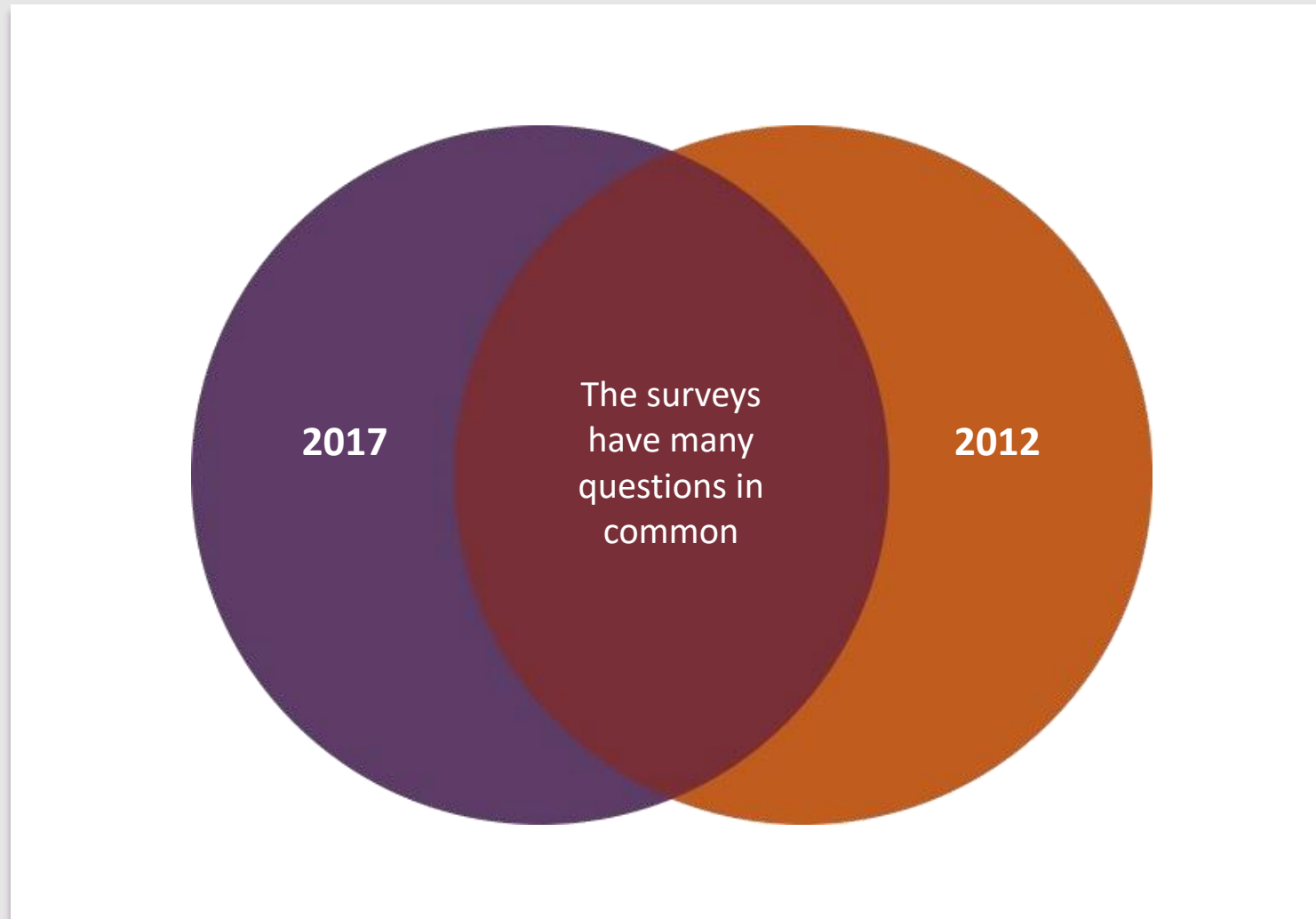


**Note:** Throughout the presentation **orange depicts 2012 survey results** and **purple depicts 2017 CSR results**

# 2017 Survey Process

## FALL 2017

- Incourage engaged Network Impact to conduct the 2017 follow-up community survey
- Network Impact partnered with the Center for Survey Research (CSR) at the University of Massachusetts to administer the survey to south Wood County residents in selected zip codes

## NOV – DEC 2017

- CSR mailed a 4-page survey to a random sample of 2,500 households requesting youngest adult (18+) in household to respond
  - 491 eligible responses received
  - Response rate = 20.3%

## DEC 2017 – JAN 2018

- Incourage conducted outreach to gather additional responses to the community survey. Available in English, Spanish and Hmong
- Simultaneously, Incourage volunteers led community conversations with residents

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# Target zip codes for both 2012 and 2017 surveys



Southern Wood County Area

Rudolph
Vesper
Pittsville
Wisconsin Rapids
Port Edwards
Nekoosa
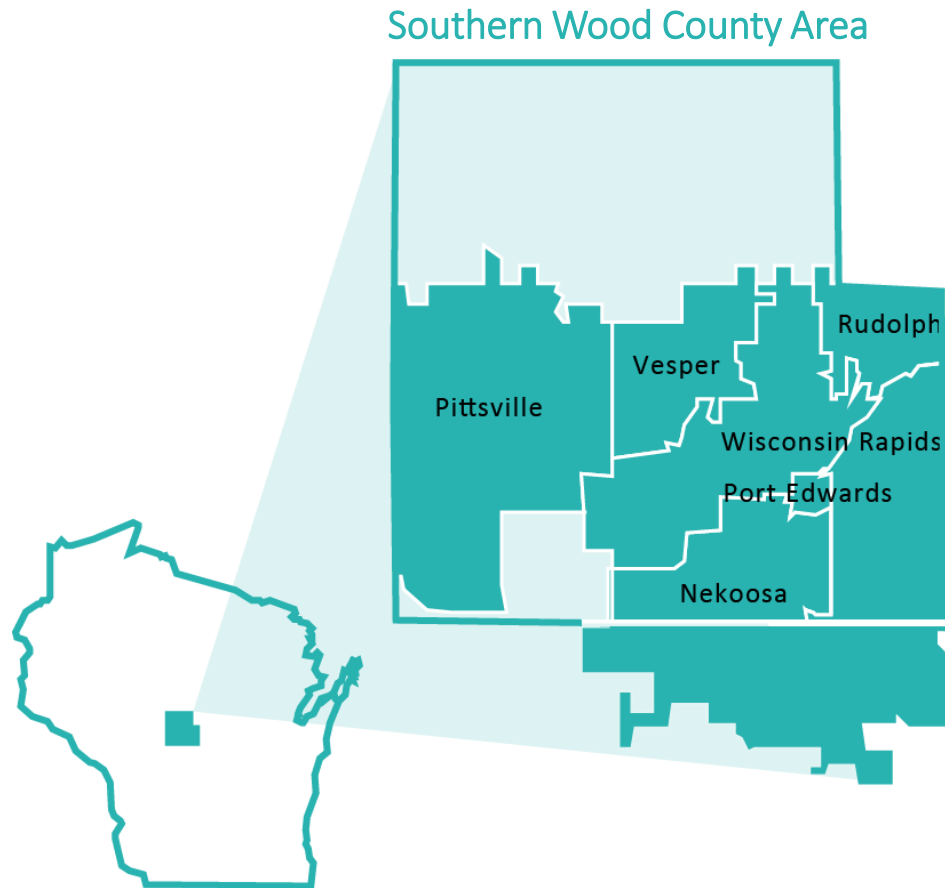
| ZIPCODES: | |
|---|---|
| 54457 | Nekoosa |
| 54466 | Pittsville |
| 54469 | Port Edwards |
| 54475 | Rudolph |
| 54489 | Vesper |
| 54494 | Wisconsin Rapids |
| 54495 | Wisconsin Rapids |

# Demographic characteristics of survey respondents

After weighting the sample to ensure that key demographic variables were consistent with 2010 Census data,*
the CSR-led survey sample closely matches the population of south Wood County

| | 2017 Survey | From 2010 Census | 2012 Survey |
|---|---|---|---|
| **GENDER** | | | |
| Female | 51% | 51% | 50% |
| Male | 49% | 49% | 50% |
| **AGE** | | | |
| 18-29 | 16% | 15% | 9% |
| 30-44 | 23% | 22% | 31% |
| 45-64 | 37% | 39% | 35% |
| 65+ | 24% | 24% | 25% |
| **EDUCATION** | | | |
| HS or less | 57% | 57% | 37% |
| Some College | 28% | 28% | 18% |
| College + | 15% | 15% | 45% |

* Weighting is frequently used in survey research to ensure that key demographic groups are represented proportionally

# How residents describe their community

Here is a list of words and phrases that could describe the south Wood County area. How well do you think each word or phrase describes our community?

# 2012 and 2017: How residents describe their community

- Residents continue to describe their community as **hardworking** and **caring**

- Large shares of residents in both 2012 and 2017 say that while **uncertain of the future**, they are **ready for change**. Larger shares of respondents to the 2017 survey say this describes their community perfectly

- Smaller shares of residents in both 2012 and 2017 describe their community as **innovative**.

  - Compared to other residents in 2017, younger residents and residents over 65 are more likely to say that **innovative** describes their community perfectly

**% saying "Innovative" describes the community *"perfectly"* by AGE**

65+, 36%

18-29, 32%

30-44, 7%

45-64, 25%

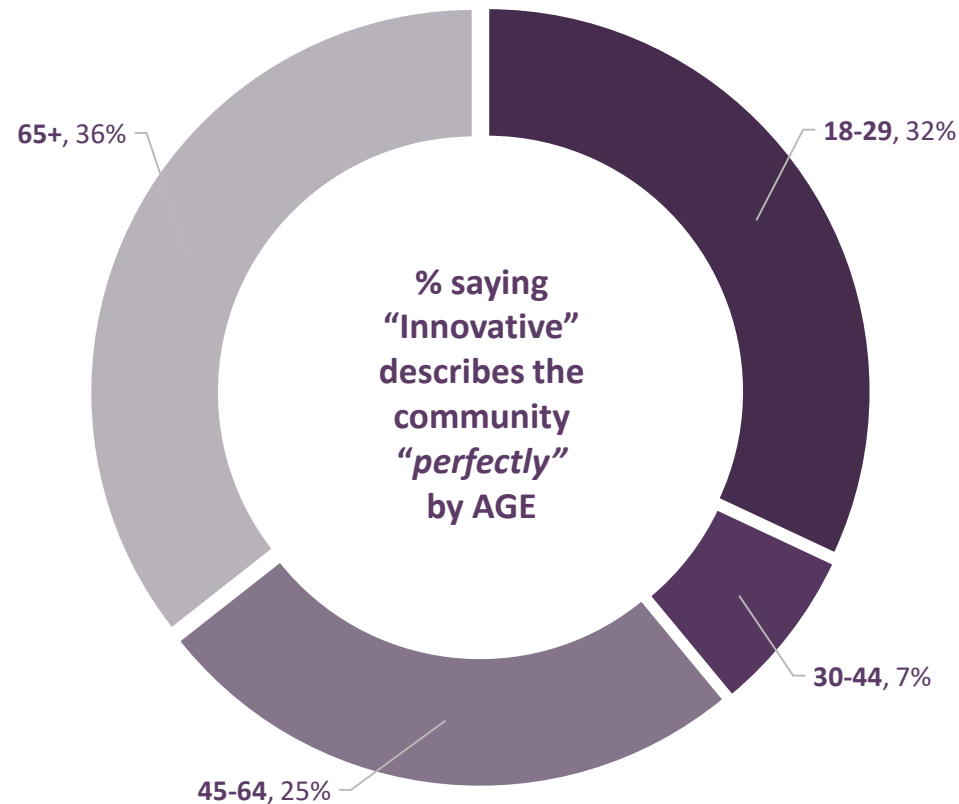*Q4: Here is a list of words and phrases that could describe the south Wood County area. How well do you think each word or phrase describes our community?*

**Five Years Later: 2017 Community Survey** 9

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# 2012 and 2017: How residents describe their community

**% saying describes the community "perfectly / somewhat"**

**2017:** Describes perfectly  Somewhat  |  **2012:** Describes perfectly  Somewhat



| | Caring | Hard-working | Unsure of the future | Stuck in the past | Ready for change | Depressed | Striking the right balance between change and preserving what we value | Innovative |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2017 total | 83% | 84% | 82% | 75% | 73% | 70% | 59% | 53% |
| 2017 somewhat | 60% | 47% | 41% | 44% | 30% | 46% | 48% | 42% |
| 2017 perfectly | 23% | 37% | 41% | 31% | 43% | 24% | 11% | 11% |
| 2012 total | 89% | 91% | 84% | 66% | 76% | 66% | 70% | 61% |
| 2012 somewhat | 53% | 43% | 56% | 49% | 55% | 50% | 58% | 55% |
| 2012 perfectly | 36% | 48% | 28% | 17% | 21% | 16% | 12% | 6% |
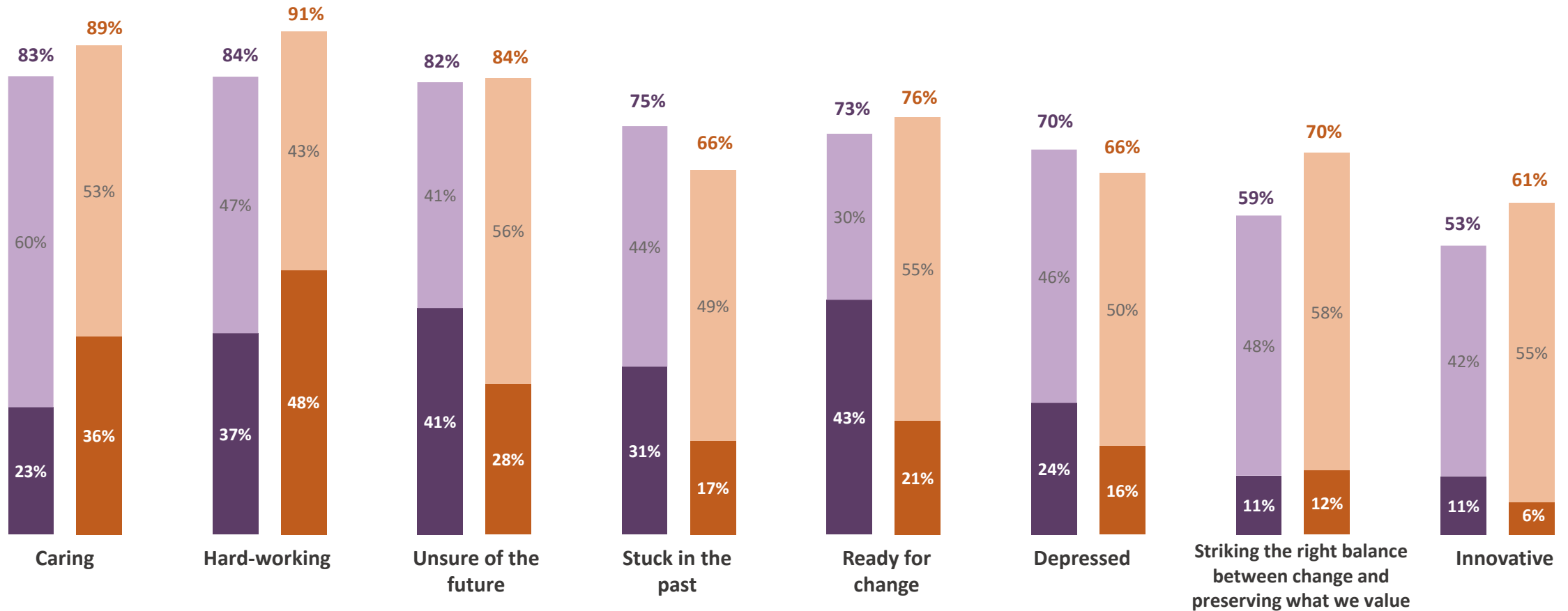
# A community that is ready for change across all major demographic groups

**Readiness for change is an essential condition for resident-led action on community priorities**

**% saying *"Ready for Change"* describes the community "perfectly / somewhat"**



| GENDER | | AGE | | | | EDUCATION | | | TIME IN AREA | | | INCOME | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female | Male | 18-29 | 30-44 | 45-64 | 65+ | HS or less | Some college | College grad + | < 10 years | 11-20 years | 20+ years | < $50K | $50K + |
| 79% | 74% | 75% | 79% | 78% | 79% | 77% | 78% | 75% | 84% | 65% | 79% | 78% | 74% |

*Q4: Here is a list of words and phrases that could describe the south Wood County area. How well do you think each word or phrase describes our community?*

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**Community challenges and concerns**

Overall, what do you see as the most important problem facing the south Wood County area?
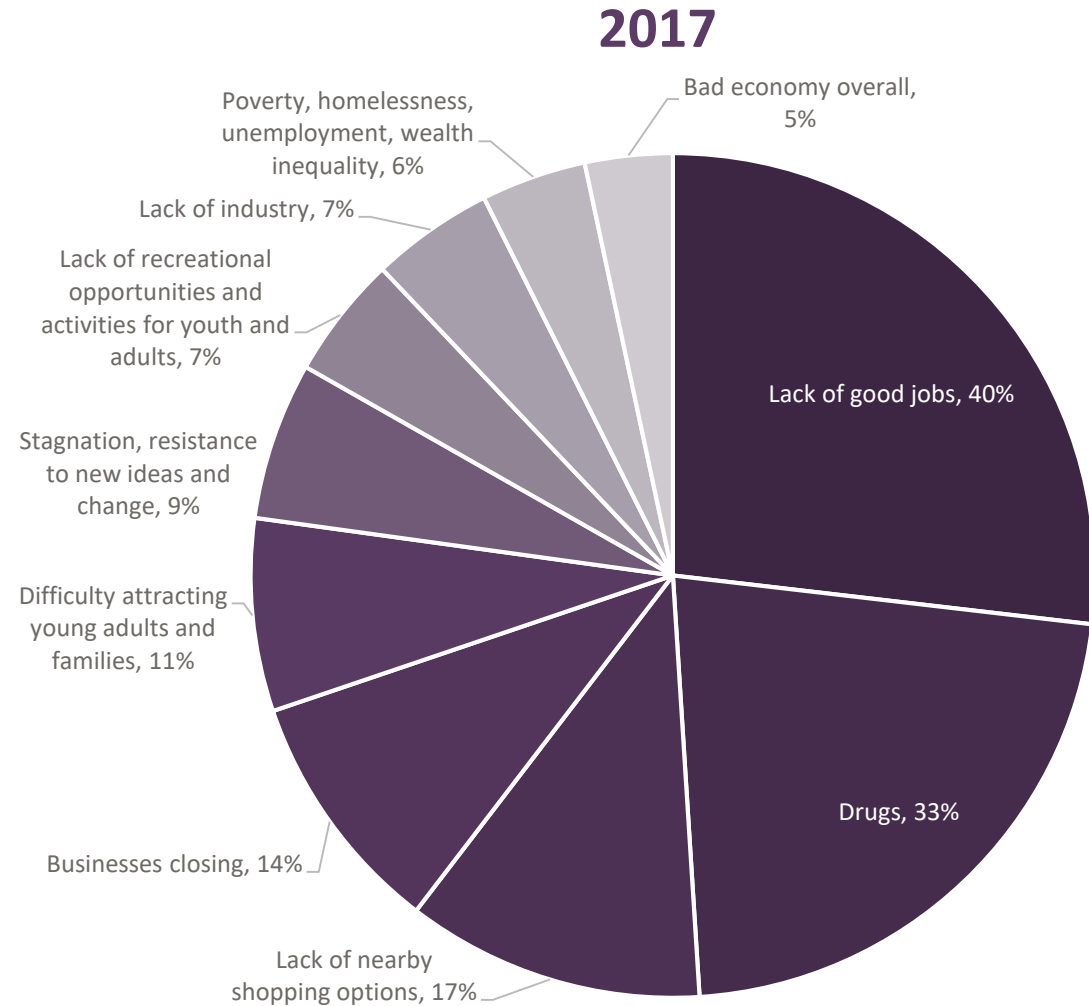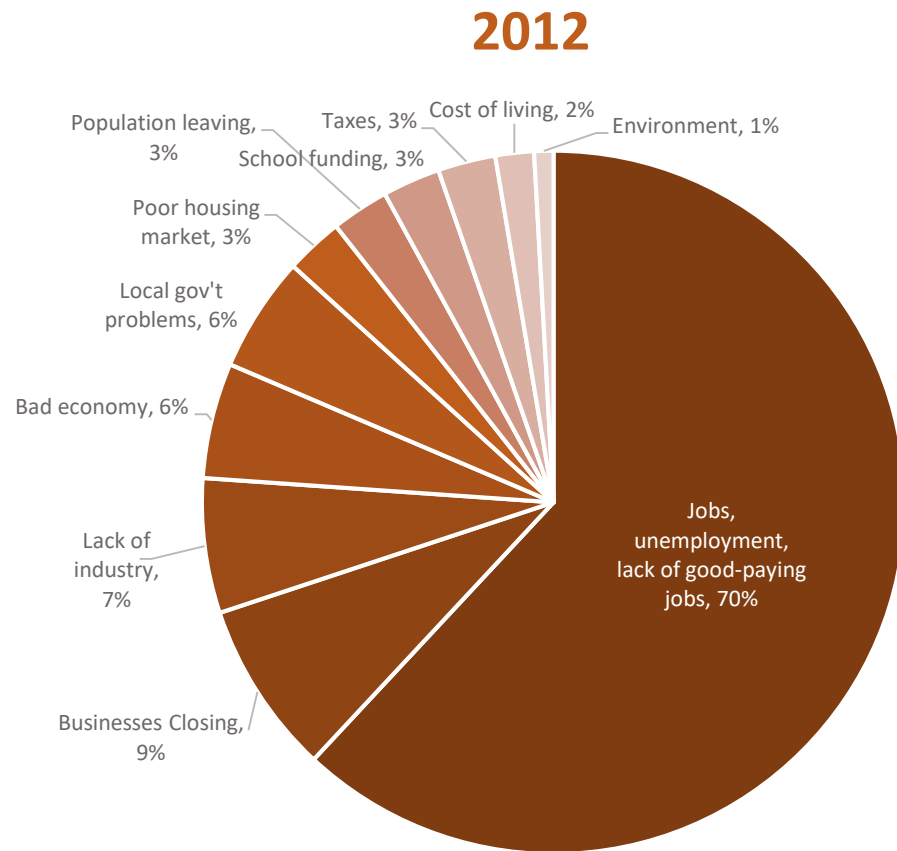
# 2017 Concerns: lack of good jobs, drug use and limited local amenities

**Difficulty attracting and retaining young adults and families persists as a challenge in 2017**



**2012**

- Population leaving, 3%
- Taxes, 3%
- School funding, 3%
- Cost of living, 2%
- Environment, 1%
- Poor housing market, 3%
- Local gov't problems, 6%
- Bad economy, 6%
- Lack of industry, 7%
- Businesses Closing, 9%
- Jobs, unemployment, lack of good-paying jobs, 70%

**2017**

- Poverty, homelessness, unemployment, wealth inequality, 6%
- Bad economy overall, 5%
- Lack of industry, 7%
- Lack of recreational opportunities and activities for youth and adults, 7%
- Stagnation, resistance to new ideas and change, 9%
- Difficulty attracting young adults and families, 11%
- Businesses closing, 14%
- Lack of nearby shopping options, 17%
- Lack of good jobs, 40%
- Drugs, 33%

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# Community challenges and concerns
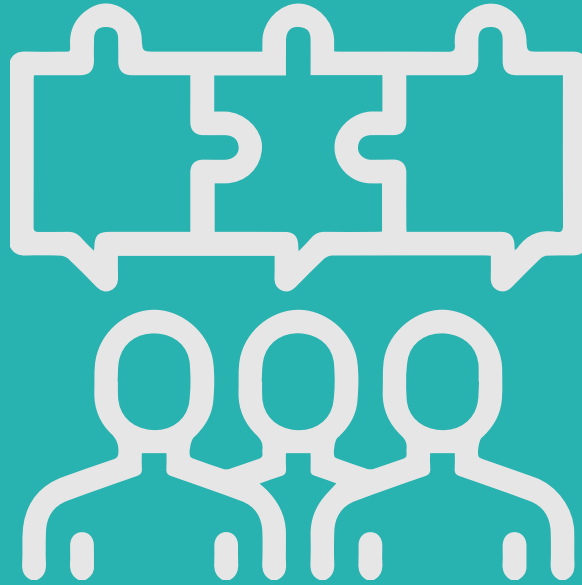
*"We never used to have to lock our doors but we do now."*

*"Younger population has nothing to do. We want a vibrant downtown like Point."*

*"City council people need to stop turning away businesses… because we can't just rely on being a mill town."*

*"I can't afford a YMCA membership, so the new Y won't work for me. Needs to be options we can all afford."*
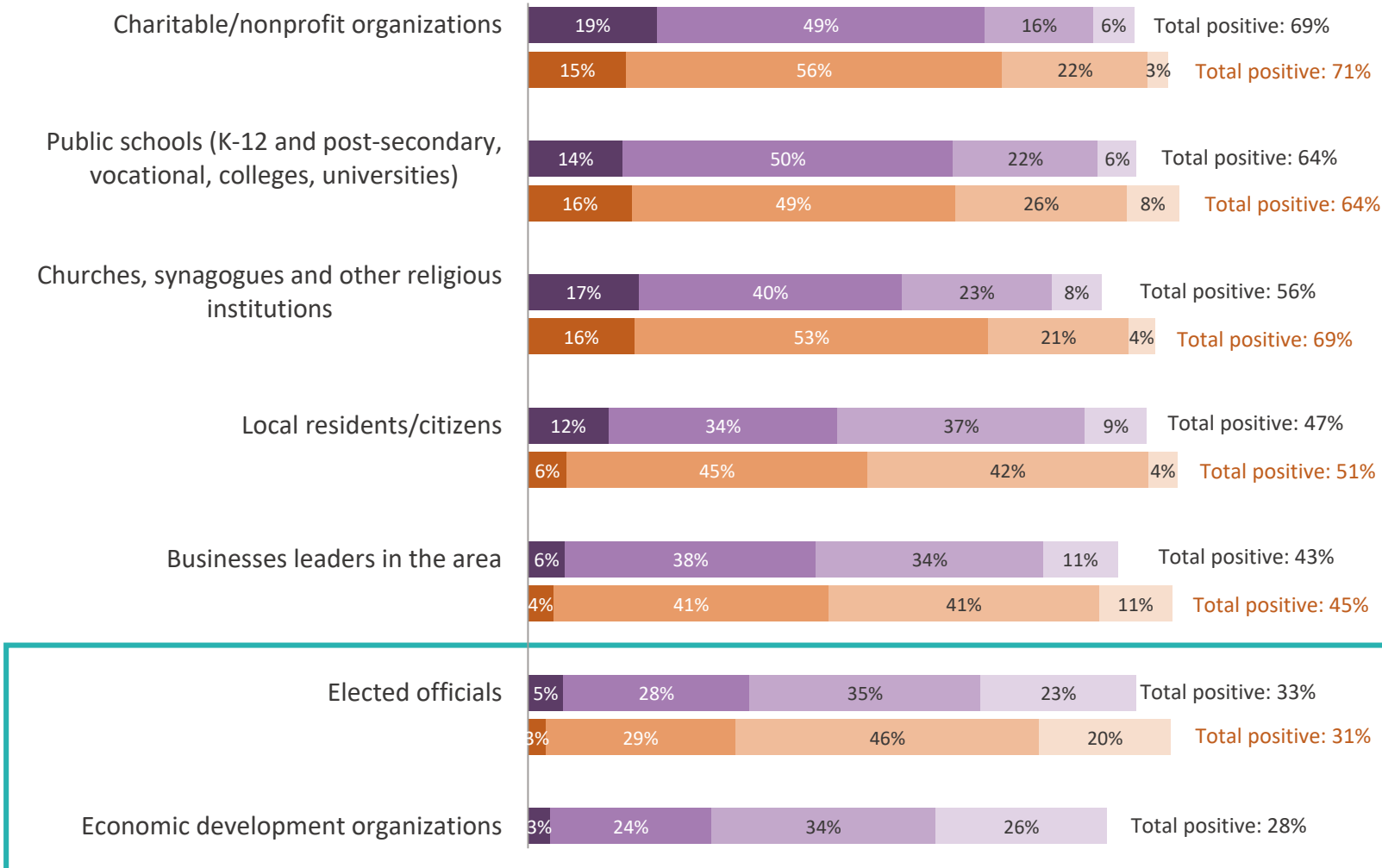
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# Who is meeting the challenges

How well are each of the following people or organizations doing in addressing challenges that the south Wood County area faces?

# Who is meeting the challenges?

*Positive*

**2017:** Excellent  Good  Fair  Poor
**2012:** Excellent  Good  Fair  Poor

**Charitable/nonprofit organizations**
- 2017: 19% | 49% | 16% | 6% — Total positive: 69%
- 2012: 15% | 56% | 22% | 3% — Total positive: 71%

**Public schools (K-12 and post-secondary, vocational, colleges, universities)**
- 2017: 14% | 50% | 22% | 6% — Total positive: 64%
- 2012: 16% | 49% | 26% | 8% — Total positive: 64%

**Churches, synagogues and other religious institutions**
- 2017: 17% | 40% | 23% | 8% — Total positive: 56%
- 2012: 16% | 53% | 21% | 4% — Total positive: 69%

**Local residents/citizens**
- 2017: 12% | 34% | 37% | 9% — Total positive: 47%
- 2012: 6% | 45% | 42% | 4% — Total positive: 51%

**Businesses leaders in the area**
- 2017: 6% | 38% | 34% | 11% — Total positive: 43%
- 2012: 4% | 41% | 41% | 11% — Total positive: 45%

**Elected officials**
- 2017: 5% | 28% | 35% | 23% — Total positive: 33%
- 2012: 3% | 29% | 46% | 20% — Total positive: 31%

**Economic development organizations**
- 2017: 3% | 24% | 34% | 26% — Total positive: 28%

**1/3 or less say positive**

## Top takeaways

- In 2017, survey respondents gave charitable / nonprofit organizations and public schools their highest rating.

- In 2012 and 2017, elected officials are among the lowest performing

*Q5: How well are each of the following people or organizations doing in addressing challenges that the south Wood County area faces?*
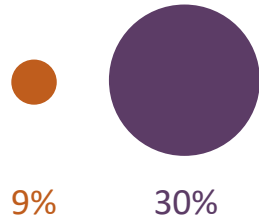
NETWORK IMPACT

# Community assets

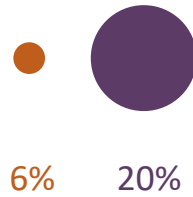Overall, what do you see as strengths or positives of the south Wood County area?

# Community assets

2012 and 2017 *Circle size corresponds to share of residents listing as a community asset*

### Natural environment
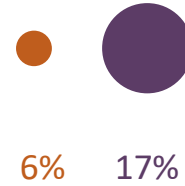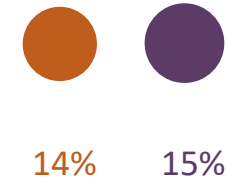
9%      30%

### Recreation
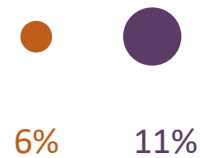
6%      20%

### Small town feel

6%      17%

### Good school system

14%      15%

### Good people

15%

### Honest / Safe

6%      11%

### Sense of community

26%      9%
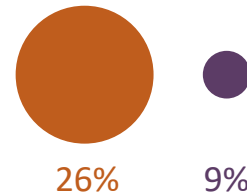
### Community and sporting events

9%

# Community assets

"This is a friendly place. It is a safe community with lots of good people."

"The local School District works with outlying districts in different areas of leadership development and new teacher orientation."

"Lots of seniors and that is nice for me because my friends are all still here."

"It's easier to get involved in this community than in the big cities."

"There are efforts happening to develop it for young families. The splash pad on the west side was a fantastic addition, and the addition of small businesses add something to do (wine and beer shop, clothing shops, home décor shops). I am excited about the YMCA/ Boys and Girls Club."

"The area offers many themed events celebrating our natural resources: cranberry fest, sand hill cranes, monarch butterflies."

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**Your thoughts?**

What are your reactions? Does anything surprise you?

## Looking to the future

Next is a series of statements that could describe the south Wood County area in the future. For each statement, indicate how important you think it is to achieve this (not at all important, somewhat important, very important).

# 2017: What is important for the future? Top 10

**% saying *"Very important"* for south Wood County to achieve in the future**

| Good quality jobs are accessible to all | Quality education for children and adults | Attracting and retaining young adults and families | Support for local entrepreneurs and business owners | A highly trained and competitive workforce |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 89% | 82% | 78% | 78% | 78% |

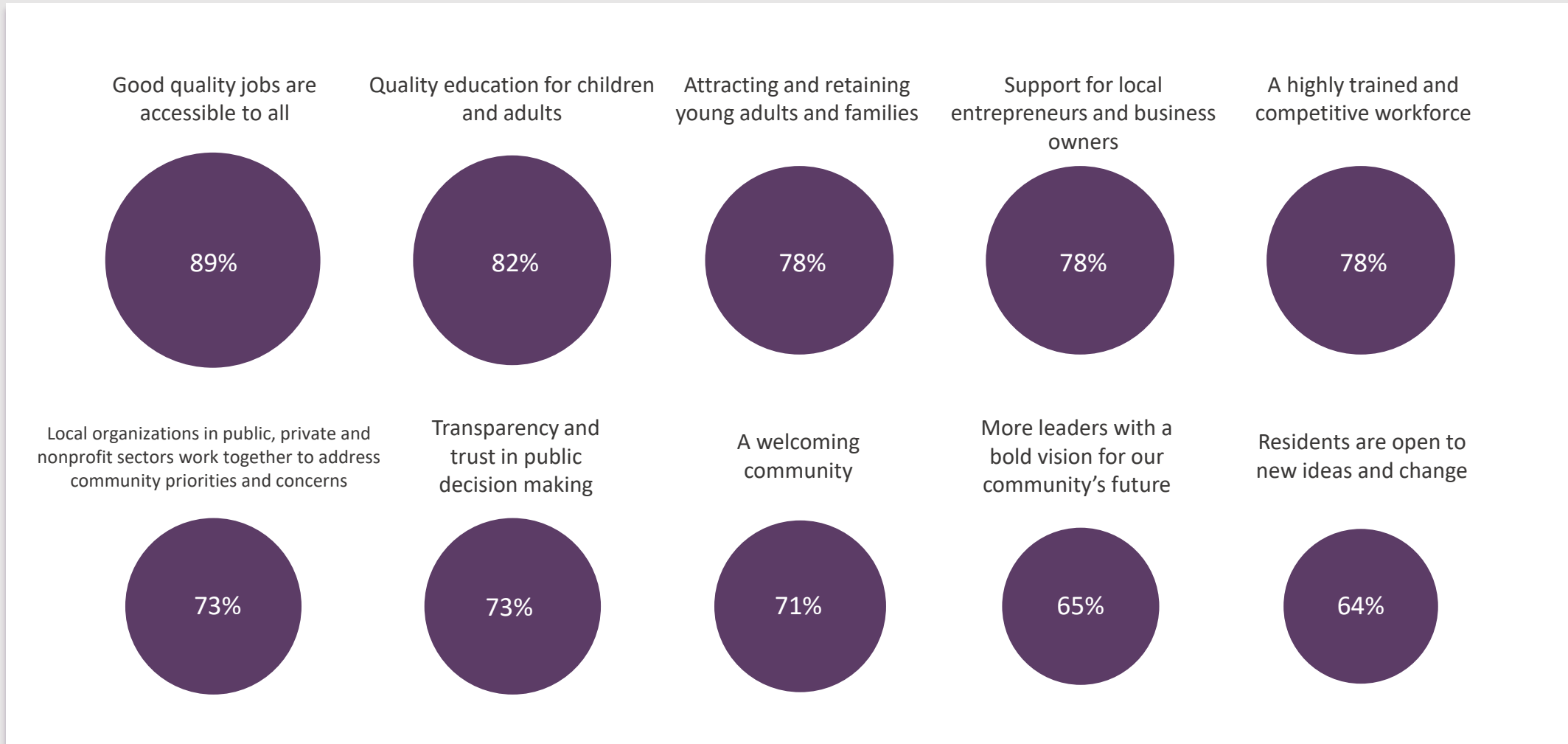| Local organizations in public, private and nonprofit sectors work together to address community priorities and concerns | Transparency and trust in public decision making | A welcoming community | More leaders with a bold vision for our community's future | Residents are open to new ideas and change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 73% | 73% | 71% | 65% | 64% |

*Q6: Next is a series of statements that could describe the south Wood County area in the future. For each statement, indicate whether you think it is not at all important to achieve this, not too important, somewhat important, or very important. If you are not sure, please indicate that.*

# Residents envision a community whose members are collaborating and reaching forward

**% saying *"very important"* for south Wood County to achieve in the future**

**73%**
Local orgs in all sectors work together to address community priorities and concerns

**58%**
Strong cooperation across local municipalities

**A CONNECTED COMMUNITY**

**85%**
Many residents active in civic life

**64%**
Residents are open to new ideas and change

**A COMMUNITY FOR THE FUTURE**

**65%**
More leaders with a bold vision for our community's future

**59%**
Support for innovation and creativity
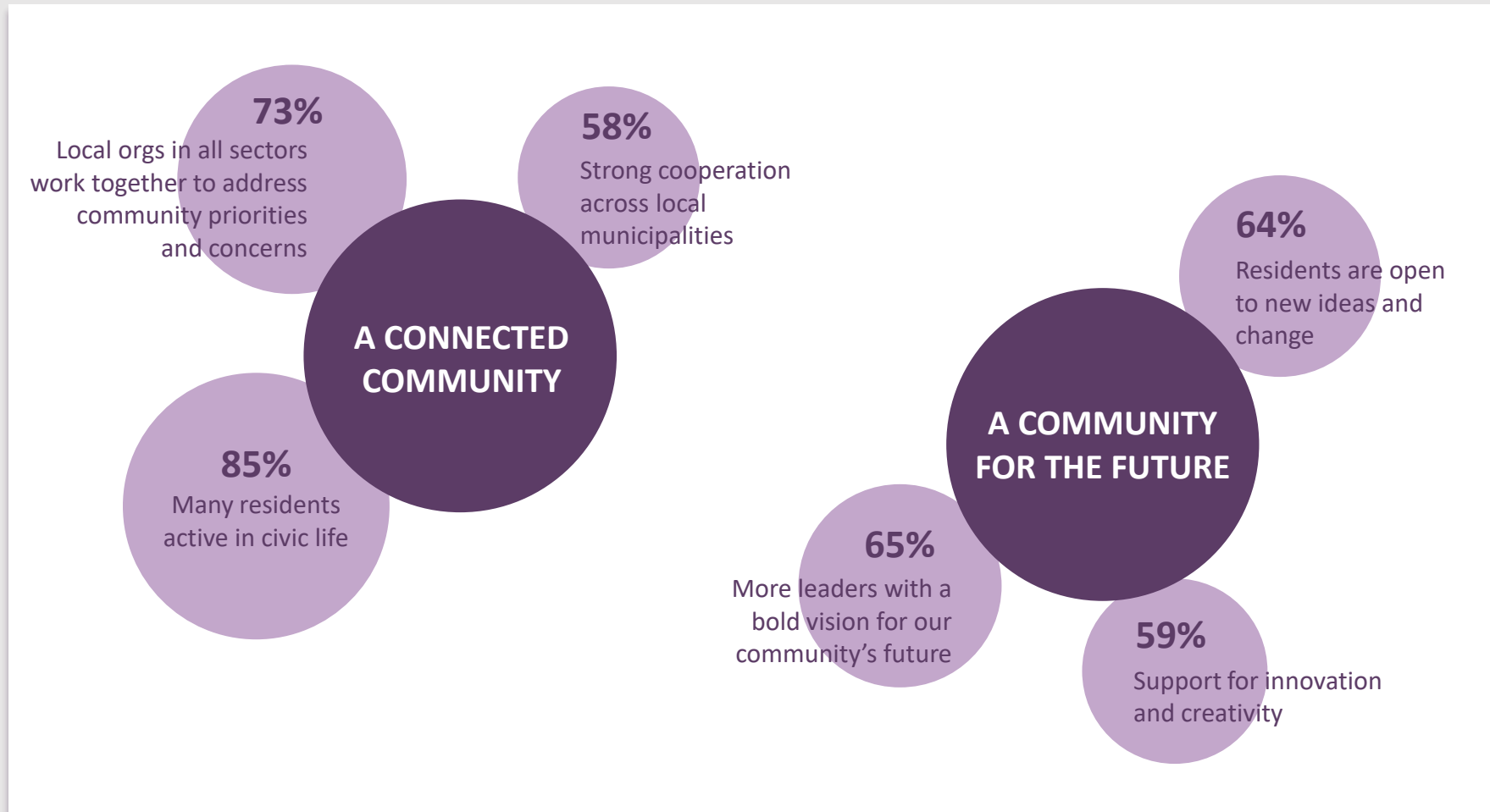
**2012 results are similar on comparable measures:**

- Many citizens active in civic life 41% (2017 = 38%)
- Strong cooperation across local townships 61% (2017 = 58%)
- Visionary local leaders 65% (2017 = 65%)

*Q6: Next is a series of statements that could describe the south Wood County area in the future. For each statement, indicate whether you think it is not at all important to achieve this, not too important, somewhat important, or very important. If you are not sure, please indicate that.*

**Five Years Later: 2017 Community Survey**    23

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# Areas of agreement and disagreement across generations

**All residents** agree on the following priorities for the future of the community, **independent of age**
   *Over 50%* say that these are important to achieve.

- A highly trained and competitive workforce
- Our community supports local entrepreneurs and business owners

  Economic priorities

- Our natural resources are being preserved
- Our community is attracting and retaining young adults and families
- Increased access to quality housing
- Increased access to affordable housing

  Housing priorities

- Reduced rates of poverty and homelessness
- Leaders with a bold vision for our community's future

*Q6: Next is a series of statements that could describe the south Wood County area in the future. For each statement, indicate whether you think it is not at all important to achieve this, not too important, somewhat important, or very important. If you are not sure, please indicate that.*

**Five Years Later: 2017 Community Survey**   24

# Areas of agreement and disagreement across generations

- Large shares of residents say that having *good quality jobs that are accessible to all* is very important. Residents 30-44 lead the way

- Over half of young people 18-29 say having *many residents who are active in civic life* is a priority for them

- Residents 45-64 express more concern about *transparency and trust in public decision making*

- Older residents are also more likely to say that *a community that supports innovation and creativity* is very important and that *high quality, comprehensive local news coverage* is a priority

**% saying "very important"**

| | 18-29 | 30-44 | 45-64 | 65+ | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Good quality jobs are accessible to all | 82% | 98% ⬆ | 92% | 84% | 90% |
| Many residents are active in civic life | 53% ⬆ | 29% ⬇ | 45% | 43% | 42% |
| There is transparency and trust in public decision making | 50% | 77% | 87% ⬆ | 83% | 77% |
| Our community supports innovation and creativity | 55% ⬇ | 50% | 64% ⬆ | 65% ⬆ | 59% |
| High quality, comprehensive local news coverage | 28% | 23% ⬇ | 44% | 67% ⬆ | 42% |

⬆⬇ *For this statement, statistically significant differences exist between age groups. Arrows indicate highest and lowest %.*

*Q6: Next is a series of statements that could describe the south Wood County area in the future. For each statement, indicate whether you think it is not at all important to achieve this, not too important, somewhat important, or very important. If you are not sure, please indicate that.*

**Five Years Later: 2017 Community Survey** 25

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# Demographic clustering

**Compared to people who have lived in south Wood County for 10 years or less, people who have lived in the area for 11+ years are more likely to:**

- Be employed full time

- Earn more income

- Have higher levels of educational attainment

**The reverse is also true. Compared to people who have lived in south Wood County for 11+ years, people who have lived in the area for 10 years or less are more likely to:**

- Be employed part time or are looking for work

-  Earn less income

- Have lower levels of educational attainment

# Toward an informed and engaged community

1. How informed do you feel about these things in your community?
2. Many obstacles keep people from becoming as engaged in their community as they would like. How much of an obstacle is each of the following for you?
3. Next is a series of statements that could describe the south Wood County area in the future. For each statement, indicate how important you think it is to achieve this.
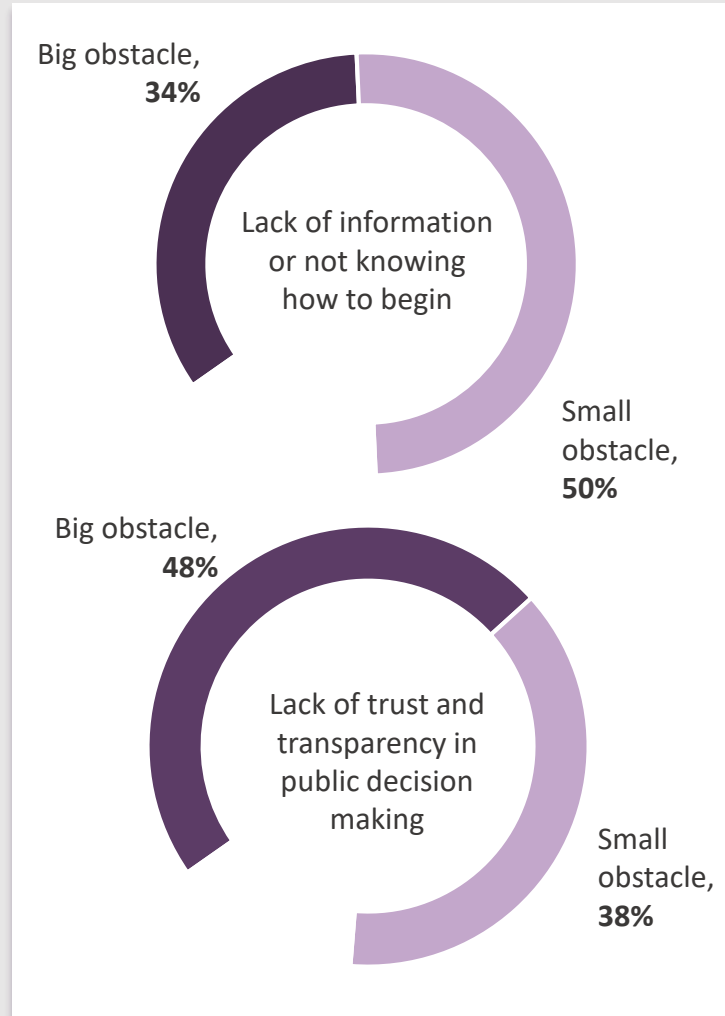
# Toward an informed and engaged community

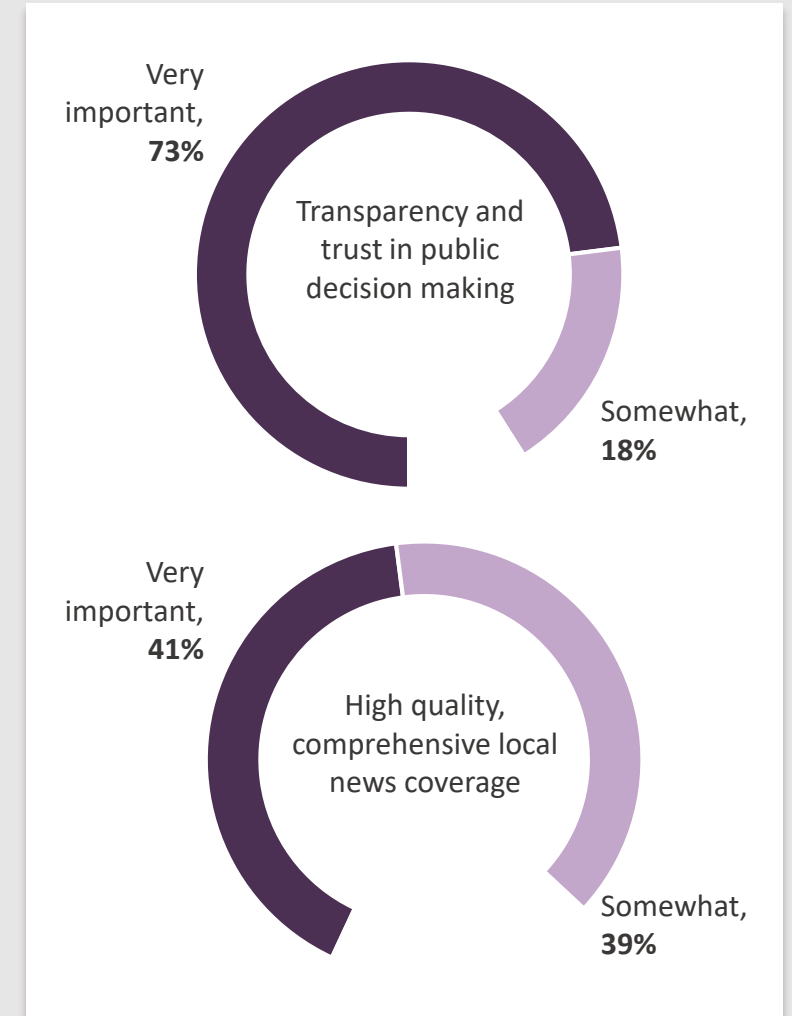## HOW INFORMED
**% saying "Not very or somewhat" informed**

Not very informed, **15%**

Issues that affect your community

Not very informed, **34%**

Somewhat, **61%**

Your neighbors' perspectives on local issues

Somewhat, **46%**

Somewhat, **54%**

Not very informed, **29%**

How decisions are made that affect the community

## OBSTACLES
**% saying this is a "Big or small obstacle" to engagement**

Big obstacle, **34%**

Lack of information or not knowing how to begin

Small obstacle, **50%**

Big obstacle, **48%**

Lack of trust and transparency in public decision making

Small obstacle, **38%**

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE
**% saying "Very important" for south Wood County to achieve in the future**

Very important, **73%**

Transparency and trust in public decision making

Somewhat, **18%**

Very important, **41%**

High quality, comprehensive local news coverage

Somewhat, **39%**

*Q6: Next is a series of statements that could describe the south Wood County area in the future. For each statement, indicate whether you think it is not at all important to achieve this, not too important, somewhat important, or very important. If you are not sure, please indicate that.*
*Q7: How informed do you feel about these things in your community?*
*Q8: Many obstacles keep people from becoming as engaged in their community as they would like. How much of an obstacle is each of the following for you?*
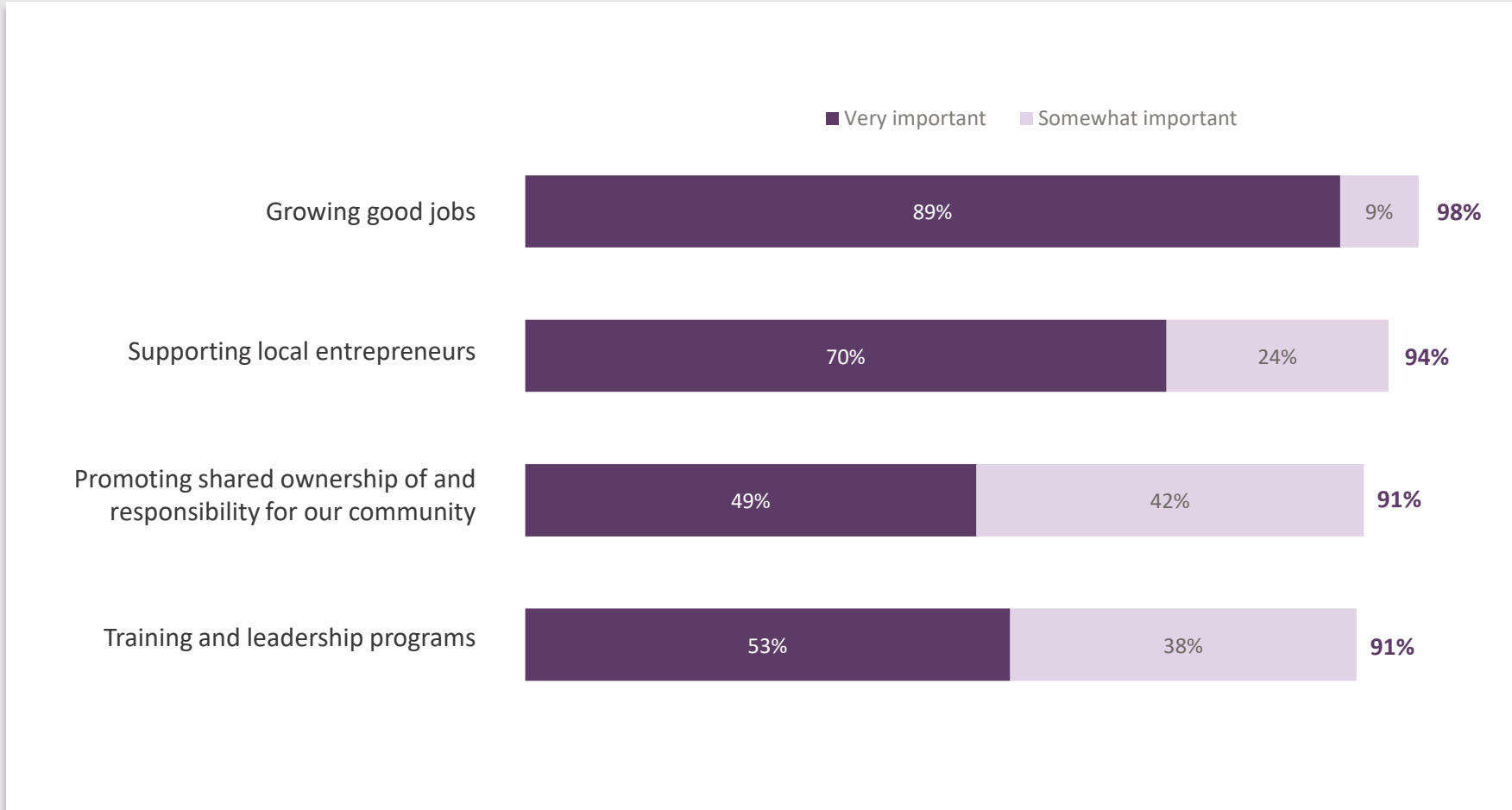
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Residents' perspectives on Incourage priorities

Incourage focuses on long-term community development. In your opinion, how important are the following Incourage priorities and programs to the future of our community?

# Residents' perspectives on Incourage priorities

**Growing good jobs and supporting local entrepreneurs head the list**



■ Very important   ■ Somewhat important

| | Very important | Somewhat important | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Growing good jobs | 89% | 9% | **98%** |
| Supporting local entrepreneurs | 70% | 24% | **94%** |
| Promoting shared ownership of and responsibility for our community | 49% | 42% | **91%** |
| Training and leadership programs | 53% | 38% | **91%** |

*Q10: Incourage focuses on long-term community development. In your opinion, how important are the following Incourage priorities and programs to the future of our community?*

# Questions

# Thank you!

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