

# Community Relations - Social Development Commission: Door-to-Door Survey of Milwaukee County Residents

## Executive Summary

This executive summary provides information in brief about the findings from a door-to-door in-person survey of 514 neighborhood residents located within the city of Milwaukee about poverty and associated needs. The survey was commissioned by the Community Relations - Social Development Commission (CR-SDC) and conducted by the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in the fall of 2009. This survey is one of six research components of a comprehensive needs assessment for the CR-SDC. The needs assessment has four goals:

- (1) Identify and quantify the incidence or prevalence of individual need;
- (2) Identify gaps in human service provision;
- (3) Identify barriers to self-sufficiency; and
- (4) Identify strategies for overcoming barriers to self-sufficiency.

The results discussed below highlight the findings pertinent to each of these goals.

### *Thoughts about Poverty and Quality of Life in Milwaukee County*

Almost all respondents (93%) think poverty is a serious problem in Milwaukee County. Also, less than one in five respondents (17%) reported that their lives have gotten better; 47% reported that their quality of life was about the same; and 34% indicated that it had gotten worse in the last three years.

### *Community Needs*

In the main body of the survey, respondents were asked a series of questions within eight core “needs” areas: employment, education, family and relationships, food and nutrition, transportation, housing, health and healthcare, and income. For almost every area, a majority of central city residents are experiencing more than the average number of problems. For example, 79% indicated that they are experiencing more than the average number of family- and relationship-related problems. Similarly, 71% reported that they have more than the average number of food and nutrition problems.

### *Barriers that Keep People in Poverty*

Respondents were asked what they think keeps people in poverty. The top three barriers included lack of jobs/employment (mentioned by 60% of respondents), education-related barriers (23%), and personal issues (14%), including laziness, apathy, and criminal records.

### *Solutions/Strategies for Reducing Poverty*

Respondents provided their opinions about what they see as the most important thing that could be done to reduce poverty in Milwaukee County. The most common response was related to employment and jobs; almost two-thirds of all respondents (64%) saw this category as the most important in reducing poverty. The most frequent responses included “more jobs” and “better pay.” The second and third-most popular strategies to reducing poverty were education and community improvement, respectively. Among the education-related strategies, the most common response was “more” or “additional” education or educational opportunities. Among the community improvement-related strategies, reducing crime and discrimination were the most common.

The information above will be used to advise and guide the CR-SDC as it plans programming for low-income individuals in 2010 and beyond. These results will also be used to inform and educate community leaders on issues related to poverty in Milwaukee. As reports become available, they will be posted at [www.cr-sdc.org](http://www.cr-sdc.org).