



2010 Summary  
**Community Themes and  
Strengths Assessment**

Knox County, Tennessee

## Acknowledgments

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## Introduction

In 1998, the Institute of Medicine defined public health as “what we as a society do collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy.”

Improving health is a shared responsibility of health care providers and public health officials, as well as a variety of organizations and individuals who contribute to the well-being of our community. No single entity can make a community healthy. So much more can be accomplished by working together with a common vision to improve health.

Together! Healthy Knox provides a framework for bringing together the individuals, groups and organizations that make up our local public health system, and guides our community to identify and take action on priority health issues. The approach used by Together! Healthy Knox is a paradigm shift from operational to strategic thinking, from a needs-based to an asset-based emphasis and from an agency focus to a broad community focus — a new way of doing business.

From	To
Operational planning	Strategic planning
Focus on the agency	Focus on community & entire public health system
Needs assessment	Emphasis on assets and resources
Medically oriented model	Broad definition of health
Agency knows all	Everyone knows something

Together! Healthy Knox uses the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) model for community health planning, developed through a cooperative agreement between the National Association of County and City Health Officials and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (see figure at right).

In support of Together! Healthy Knox, the Knox County Health Department is pleased to present this summary report of the *2010 Community Themes and Strengths Assessment: Knox County, Tennessee*. The purpose of the assessment is to gain a better understanding of community perceptions about health and quality of life; to provide useful information for local programmatic and fiscal decision-making; and to inform the development of a strategic community health improvement plan.



This assessment corresponds to the Community Themes and Strengths Assessment of the MAPP model. Surveys, focus groups and key informant interviews were used to gather insight into issues of concern, as well as local assets and resources related to health and quality of life. The report begins with an overall description of community members who participated in the assessment. A summary table of the identified themes is followed by sections highlighting the most frequent themes.

Complete assessment reports are available at [www.healthyknox.org/assessments](http://www.healthyknox.org/assessments)

## Community Themes and Strengths Assessment: Participants

Adults ages 18 years and older who live, work, learn, play, or worship in Knox County

### Survey

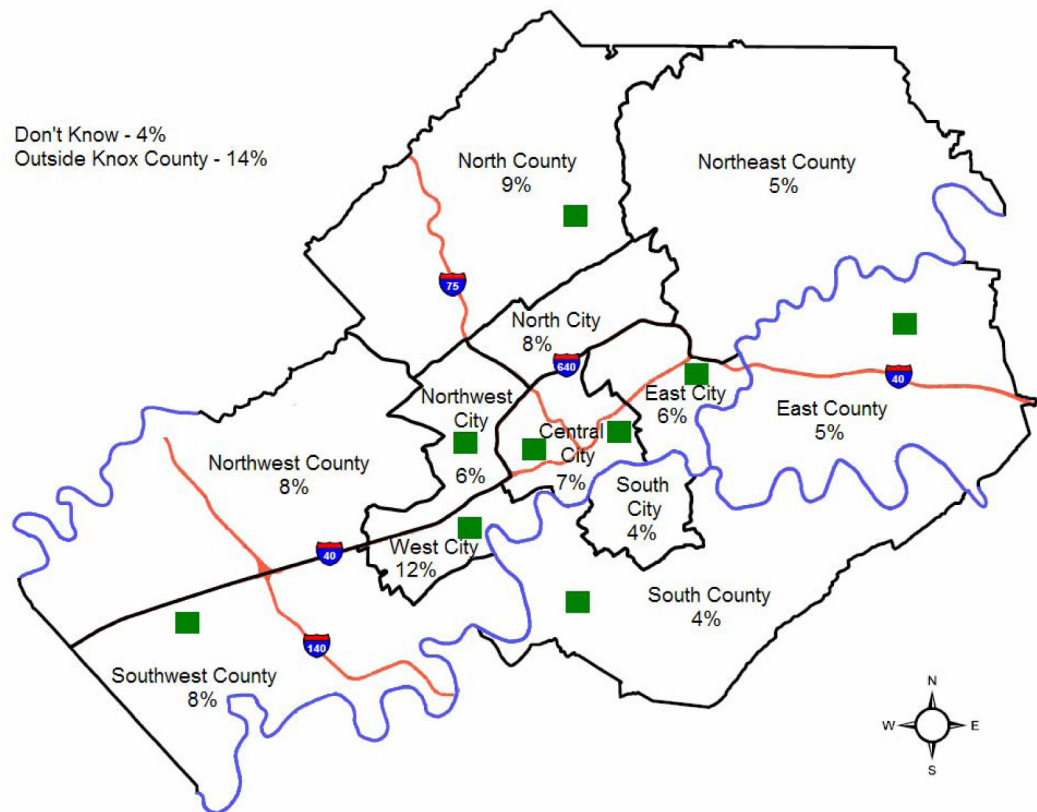
- 3,098 participants (27% males and 73% females)

### Focus Groups

- 9 focus groups
- 52 participants (31% males and 69% females)

### Key Informant Interviews

- 27 interviews (56% males and 44% females)
- Stakeholders from business, community, education, faith, government, medical, and social services



■ = Focus group location  
Percent = percent survey respondents from each sector

Summary of Community Themes and Strengths Assessment			
	Survey	Focus Groups	Key Informant Interviews
<b>QUALITY OF LIFE and HEALTH THEMES</b>			
Access*	✓	✓	✓
Affordable Housing	✓	✓	✓
Communication and Information		✓	✓
Community Attitudes/Values		✓	✓
Community Involvement	✓	✓	✓
Economy/Jobs	✓	✓	
Environment	✓	✓	✓
Government Services		✓	✓
Health Education/Promotion	✓	✓	✓
Safety/Low Crime	✓	✓	✓
Schools/Education	✓	✓	✓
<b>STRENGTHS and RESOURCES</b>			
Access*		✓	
Affordable Housing			✓
An Improving & Good Quality of Life	✓		
Communication and Information		✓	
Community Attitudes/Values	✓	✓	✓
Community Involvement		✓	✓
Environment	✓	✓	✓
Good Place to Raise Children	✓		
Government Services		✓	✓
Health Care Organizations/Programs	✓	✓	
Political Will/Motivation			✓
Public Health Policies			✓
Schools/Education		✓	✓
<b>CONCERNS and CHALLENGES</b>			
Cancer	✓	✓	
Communication/Information			✓
Community Attitudes/Values	✓	✓	
Cost of Health Care	✓	✓	
Diabetes	✓		✓
Disparities			✓
Drug/Substance Abuse	✓	✓	✓
Heart Disease/Stroke/Hypertension	✓	✓	
Lack of Access*		✓	✓
Lack of Physical Activity	✓		
Mental Health/Homelessness	✓	✓	✓
Obesity	✓	✓	✓
Prescription Drug Use	✓		✓
Respiratory/Lung Disease/Asthma	✓		
Smoking/Tobacco Use	✓	✓	✓

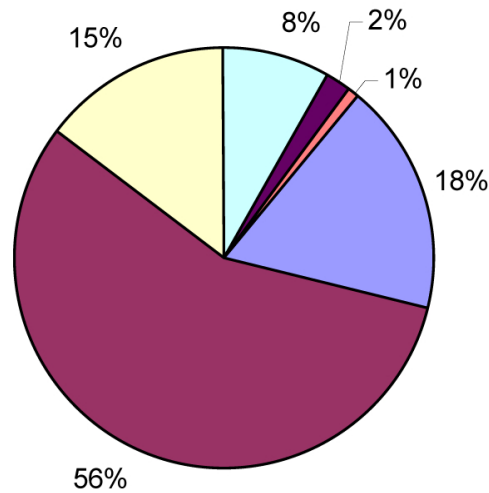
\*Access to affordable food, affordable housing, health education and information, health insurance, jobs, physical activity, mental health services, and to social and government services for children and seniors.

## Quality of Life

The Community Themes and Strengths Assessment revealed a positive regard for the quality of life in Knox County. While high satisfaction and positive ratings for various attributes were expressed, participants also identified issues of concern and areas for improvement.

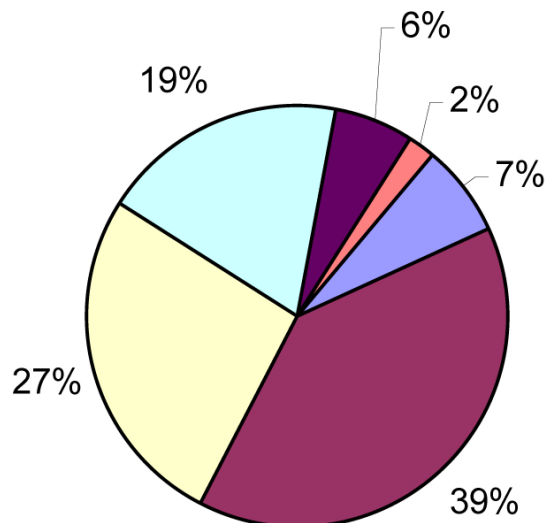
Satisfaction with quality of life in Knox County,  
Health and Quality of Life Survey, 2009

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know



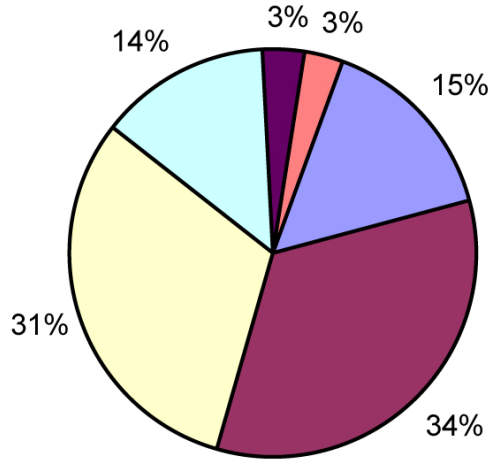
Satisfaction with economic opportunity in Knox County,  
Health and Quality of Life Survey, 2009

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know



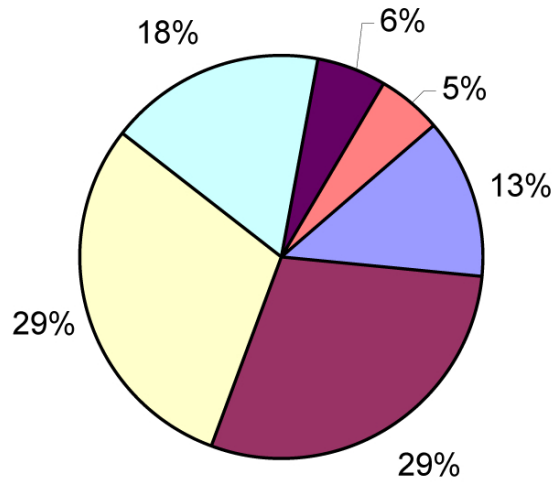
Knox County as a place to raise a family,  
Health and Quality of Life Survey, 2009

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Don't Know

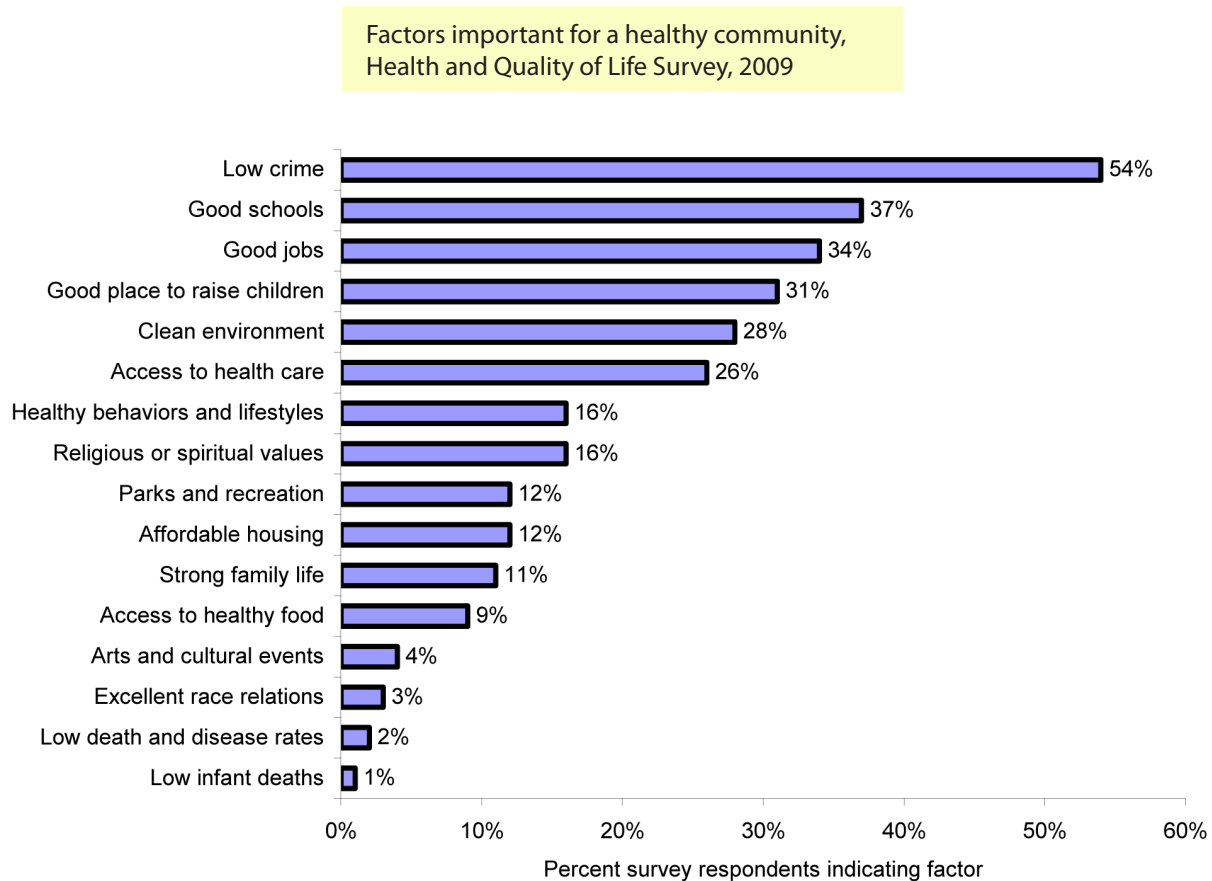


Knox County as a place to grow old,  
Health and Quality of Life Survey, 2009

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Don't Know



## Factors for a Healthy Community



Many of the factors important for a healthy community identified through the Health and Quality of Life Survey were also emphasized in the focus groups and key informant interviews.

*“You know heart disease is not the number one killer in America. Cancer is not the number one or number two. The biggest killer in the United States and in the world is poverty. And where does that poverty come from? Well it comes from social injustice. It comes from social discrimination. It comes from health policy and economic policy that benefits one group over another. That’s what I’m talking about. That’s the real problem” (Key informant).*

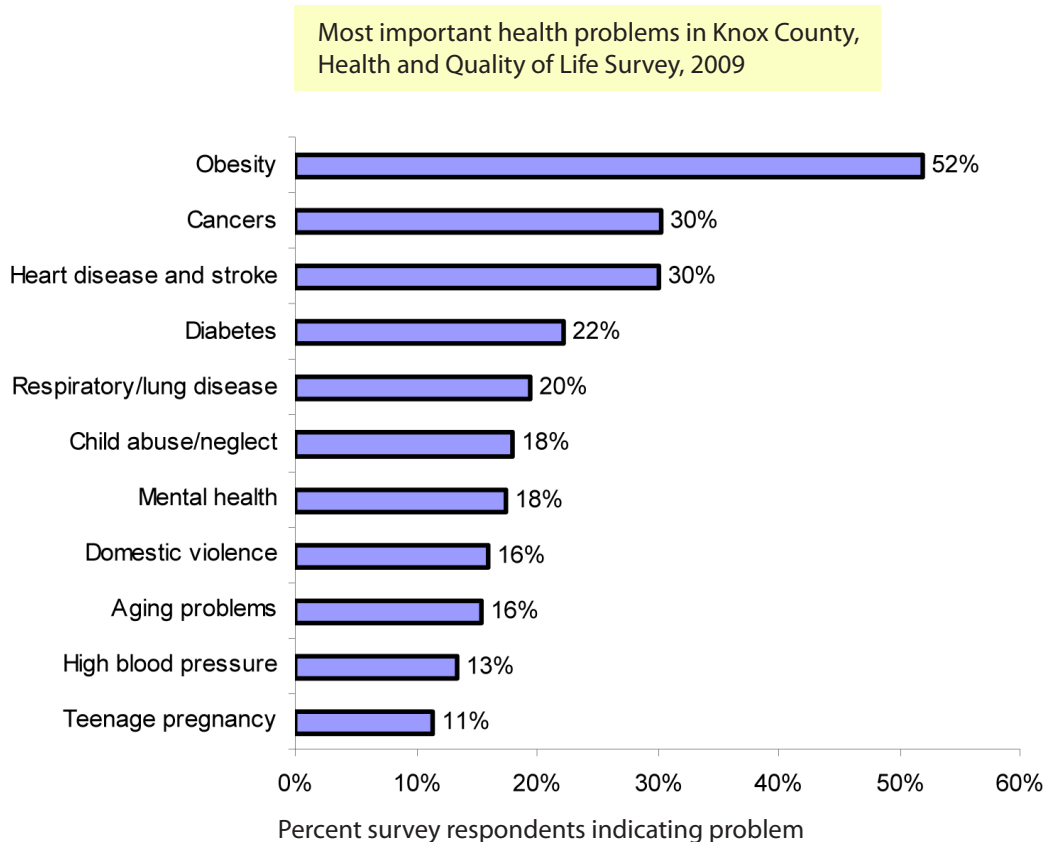
*“We very rarely think about our own ability to make the choices that are healthy for us” (Focus group participant).*

*“If you’re worried about where the next meal is coming from, you’re not necessarily worried about the quality of the meal” (Key informant).*



## Health Concerns and Challenges

The Community Themes and Strengths Assessment also provided opportunity for identifying the *most important health problems* in Knox County. Each of the following was identified by at least 10% of the survey participants.



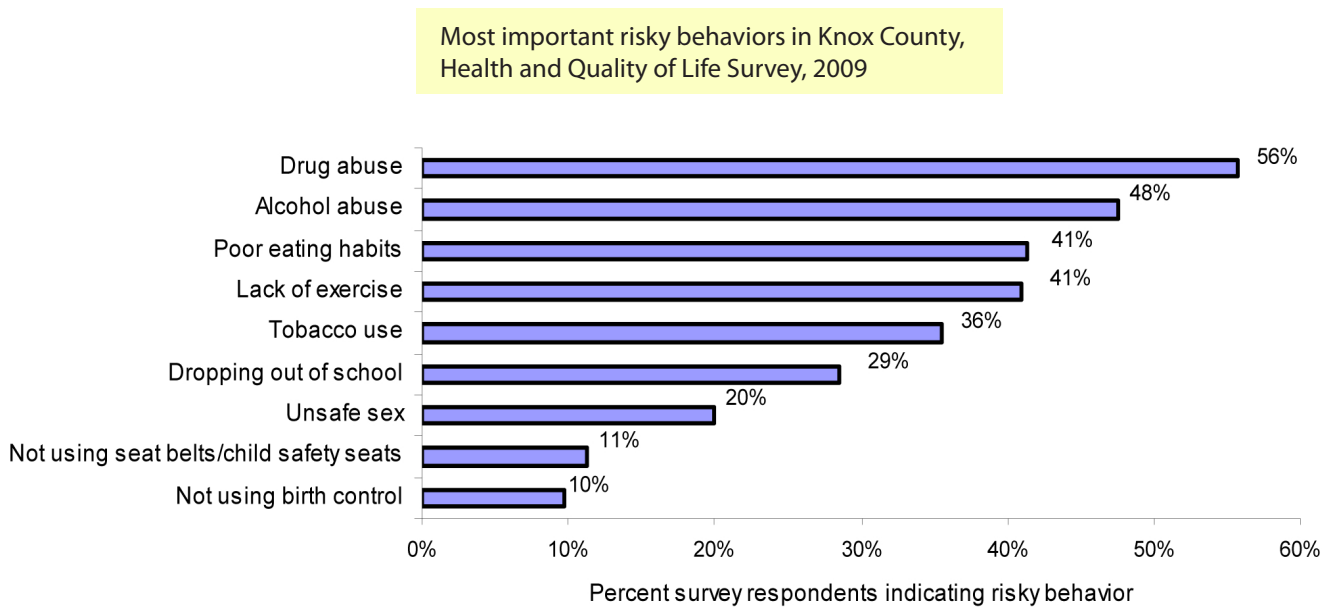
*"I still don't think we're taking care of our mentally ill. I think a lot of people who have problems that could probably be dealt with if they had proper care and treatment and medications that they wouldn't be ending up in the jails. They wouldn't be walking the streets"* (Focus group participant).

*"My fear is the perception that everybody is obese and there's nothing we can do about it"*  
(Key informant).

*"I think the weight is an issue, lack of exercise is an issue, and access to health care is an issue. Not everybody can afford to be healthy"* (Key informant).

## Risky Behaviors

Risky behaviors have an impact on the overall health of a community. Survey participants identified those they felt to be the most important in Knox County.



*“We are the grand central station for narcotic drug abuse” (Key informant interview).*

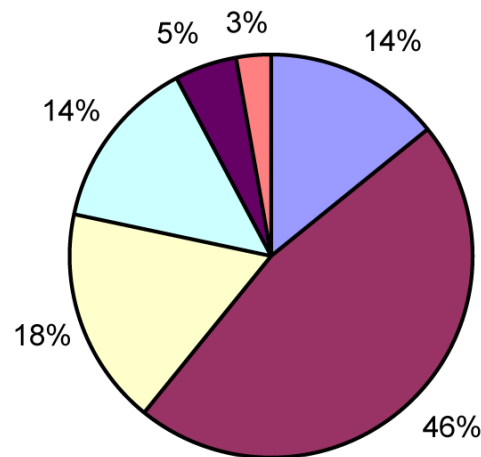
*“We have done nothing to enable people to make exercise a daily part of their life ... I mean I like to exercise, but I have to get in my car and drive somewhere to exercise” (Key informant interview).*

## Access

Throughout the Community Themes and Strengths Assessment, access, particularly access to health care, was a predominant theme. Survey participants expressed a high level of satisfaction with health care resources in Knox County ...

Satisfaction with health care resources in Knox County,  
Health and Quality of Life Survey, 2009

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know



... however, challenges and concerns emerged through focus groups and key informant interviews.

*"Health care systems have to learn to make money on prevention"* (Key informant).

*"In my community it's lack of health care. Where I live in my neighborhood it's mostly working families, blue collar, day labor and they just don't have health insurance"* (Focus group participant).

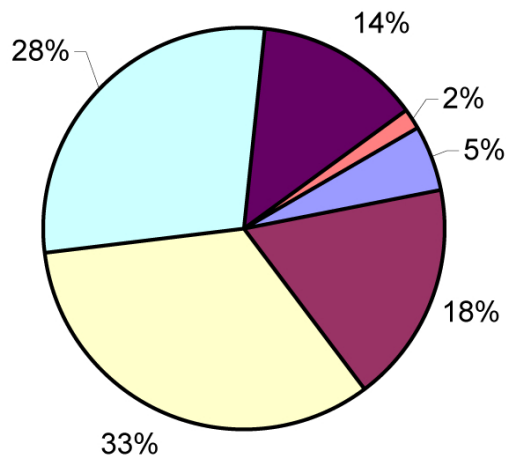
*"A lot of insurance doesn't cover any mental health at all, not just [for] homeless, but [for] anyone"* (Focus group participant).

## Environment and Safety

A majority of survey respondents indicated satisfaction with the quality of the environment in Knox County ...

Quality of the environment in Knox County,  
Health and Quality of Life Survey, 2009

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Don't Know



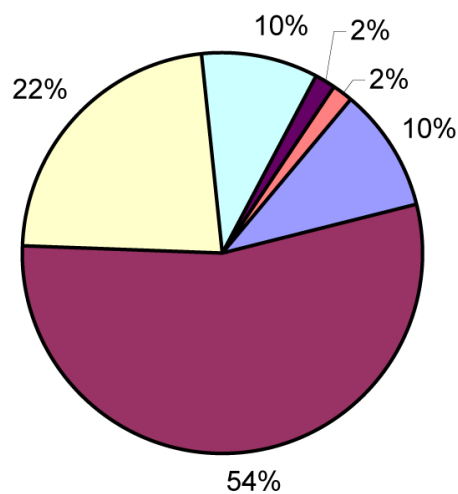
*"We have beautiful green, leafy trees and grass ... it's a gorgeous thing to walk outside and see birds and flowers"*

(Focus group participant).

... but also indicated a desire for a more walkable and bikeable community.

Knox County as a safe place to live,  
Health and Quality of Life Survey, 2009

- Very Safe
- Safe
- Neither
- Unsafe
- Very Unsafe
- Don't Know



*"I think cities have to take the lead locally and put bike paths up on streets where people can get from Point A to Point B"*

(Focus group participant).

*"The current lack of sidewalks makes it unsafe to walk or bike in many areas of the community"*

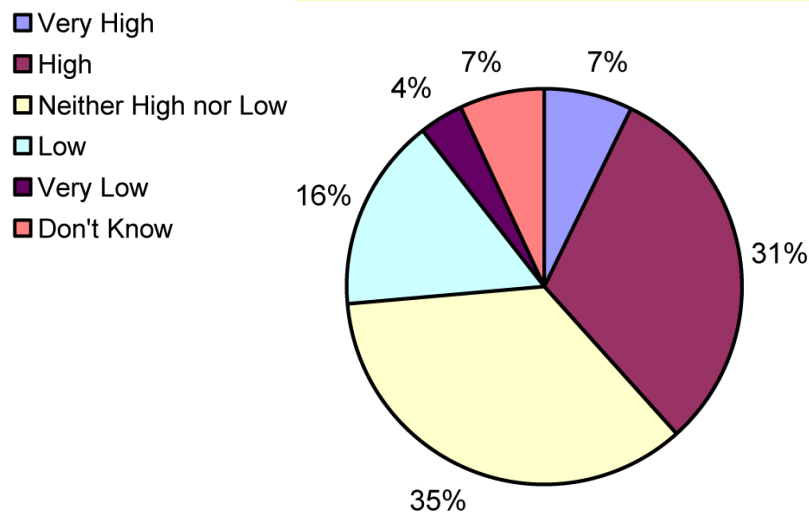
(Focus group participant).

*"Revision of building codes within the county to assist in improving safety and walkability in neighborhoods"* (Key informant).

## Civic Engagement and Community Support

Of note were the frequent reflections on civic engagement and community connections in Knox County.

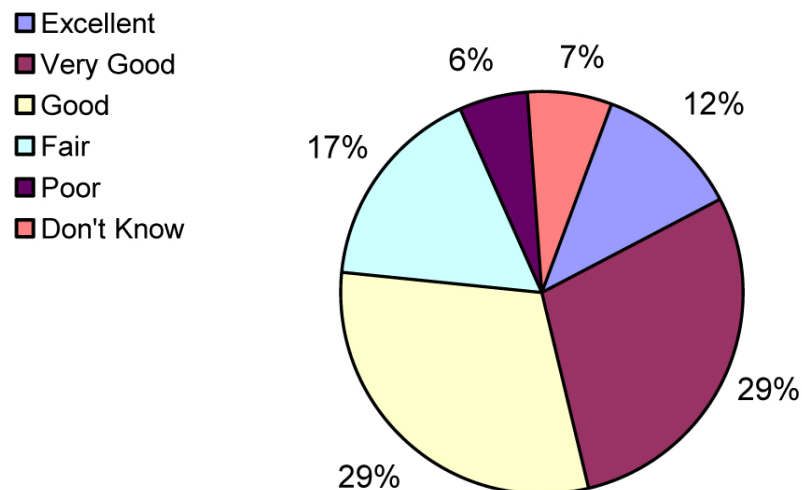
Level of civic engagement in Knox County, Health and Quality of Life Survey, 2009



*"The people with no money don't have a voice"* (Key informant interview).

*"Too many stakeholders have a 'what's in it for me' attitude and planners need to consider how to align 'self-interests' with community benefits"* (Key informant interview).

Community support during times of stress and need, Health and Quality of Life Survey, 2009



*"People in this area are basically very generous, very compassionate. When people perceive a real need, they really do work together and go after meeting that need"* (Focus group participant).

*"We have the faith community that's been enormously busy working hard to address a lot of these issues ... it's more coordinated than it used to be and so I think with the tools we have, we can just use them more effectively"* (Focus group participant).

## Conclusion

While the Community Themes and Strengths Assessment revealed that the overall quality of life in Knox County is perceived to be good, there are many areas identified for improvement. One such area is the importance of enhancing health prevention strategies through more effective collaboration and information dissemination. In addition, risky health behaviors such as overeating, alcohol use, and smoking are perceived to be prevalent in the community and thought to contribute to negative health outcomes, especially in underserved and minority populations.

A call to action was heard during most of the focus groups and key informant interviews. It was also reflected in the survey around civic engagement. Participants agree that Knox County is currently facing a number of health and quality of life challenges that need to be addressed. Disparities are well-known, yet more action is needed to improve and eliminate these inequalities. Community resources exist and should serve as the foundation for planning and implementing initiatives to improve health. While most admit to the enormity of the challenges that lie ahead, community members also confidently predict that positive change can and will take place. Overall, the health and wellness of all who live, work, worship, play or learn in Knox County can be improved.



2010 Summary  
Community Themes and  
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Knox County, Tennessee

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