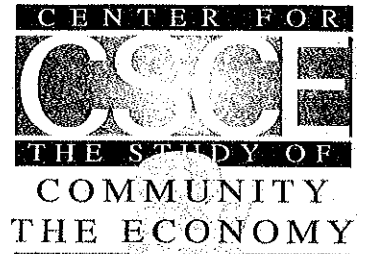




Lycoming County  
United Way



**Community Needs Assessment:**  
*Continuity and Change in the Needs of Lycoming County*

**Final Report**

Fall 2009

Research conducted by  
The Center for the Study of Community and the Economy at Lycoming College  
Jonathan Williamson, Ph.D., Director



# Table of Contents

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
Executive Summary	2
Important Issues	5
Families or Individuals in Crisis	8
Children and Youth	11
Jobs	13
Healthcare	15
Affordable Housing	16
Senior Support Services	17
Services for the Disabled	19
Diversity	21
Safe Communities	22
Transportation	23
Demographics	24
Methodology	26
Appendices: Survey Instruments	27

# *Continuity and Change in the Needs of Lycoming County*

## **Executive Summary**

The Center for the Study of Community and the Economy at Lycoming College Polling with Jonathan Williamson as lead investigator, on behalf of the Lycoming County United Way conducted a community needs assessment for Lycoming County during the fall of 2009, following up on a similar study conducted during the fall of 2005. The 2009 project consisted of a telephone survey of a random sample of registered voters in the county and a paper survey of county social service agencies.

The primary theme emerging from the results of these two surveys are that the needs those living in Lycoming County today are very similar to the needs of four years ago, albeit with a few notable changes apparently the result of recent changes in local and national circumstances. The primary changes were a reflection of the changes in the national economy felt locally. Not only does it appear employment is scarcer than in 2005 and that a significant minority of households are having difficulty meeting their basic needs, but these changes are also having an indirect effect on problems faced by children, family and individuals in the county. For example, perceptions of child and domestic abuse and teenage pregnancy have deteriorated slightly to go along with the more straightforward measure of economic struggles. In other areas, such as the needs of senior citizens and the disabled, the results indicate relatively stable perceptions of needs, albeit with some areas of small improvement and other areas of slightly increased need.

### **Important Issues**

- In response to an open ended question, 2009 telephone respondents were most likely to identify the economy or jobs as the most important problem than the 2005 respondents, reflecting the deteriorated economic condition of the national and local economies.
- 2009 respondents were somewhat more concerned with crime than respondents in 2005, reflecting its increased prominence in local news.

Taxes appeared less as the primary concern in the 2009 survey than they did in 2005.

- Outside the areas mentioned, the 2009 telephone respondents provided a similar range of responses to the most important problem question as the 2005 respondents.
- Representatives from social service agencies provided similar response in 2009 to those they provided in 2005 with a few exceptions. Issues receiving significantly more prominence in 2009 included unemployment, underemployment, homelessness, hunger, affordable housing, access to dental care, violence in schools, services for seniors and elder abuse and neglect. Areas receiving relatively lower rankings of importance included ethnic or racial discrimination, access to mental health services, illiteracy, adult job training, availability of after school activities, and availability of affordable after school care.
- Asked which of the problems were seen as not receiving adequate attention, agency respondents saw the most improvement since 2005 in the areas of services for the needs of seniors, occupational training for the disabled, the availability of counseling services and the availability of affordable housing for seniors. Since 2005, agency respondents saw a significant deterioration in the attention paid to illiteracy, domestic abuse, drug and alcohol use by youth, drug and alcohol abuse by adults, homelessness and hunger.

### **Families or Individuals in Crisis**

- As basic measures of the difficulty the current economy is causing families in Lycoming County, over a third (36.5 percent) of telephone respondents indicated they had a hard time making ends meet and nearly a fifth (19 percent) indicated they have had a hard time paying their mortgage or rent in the last year.

- A measure of greater desperation, 12.5 percent of respondents who know someone who has gone hungry in the last year, up from 8.3 percent in 2005, and 19.9 of respondents know someone you has had no place to live in the last year, also up from 12.1 percent in 2005.
- 41 percent of telephone respondent indicated that domestic violence is a big problem in their community, up from 32 percent in 2005. Where perceptions of domestic violence as a problem have increased, the percentage of respondents personally aware of victims of physical abuse has remained largely unchanged. (11.8 percent in 2009 compared to 12.7 percent in 2005)
- A majority (54.7 percent) of respondents know someone with a problem with drug or alcohol abuse in their community.
- Access to affordable counseling services appears flat over the last four years. In 2005, 61.7 percent indicated they had access; in 2009 that number was 59.2 percent.
- Similarly, respondents continue to believe that parents need access to classes to help better raise their children. (2005: 54.5, 2009: 55.5)

## **Children and Youth**

- There was a slight increase since 2005 in the number of respondents knowing a victim of child abuse or neglect in their community, from 17.6 to 21.9 percent.
- Similarly, there was an uptick in the number of respondents seeing teenage pregnancy as a big problem, from 29.1 percent in 2005 to 47.8 percent in 2009.
- Parents continue to feel that their children have things to do after school. Only 17.7 percent felt they did not, essentially unchanged from the 17.2 percent of likeminded respondents in 2005.
- There was a small improvement in the number of parents who indicated they had access to affordable childcare. In 2005, the percentage with affordable childcare was 43.0 percent; in 2009, 56.6 percent indicated there was childcare available they could afford.

## **Jobs**

- The weak economy has had a clear effect on the job situation in Lycoming County. The percentage of unemployed among respondents is up to 9.3 percent from 4.2 percent in 2005.
- Among the employed, the percentage employed full-time is down to 71.8 percent from 83 percent in 2005.
- Among the unemployed, the percentage seeking employment (and therefore not voluntarily unemployed) is up to 60.0 percent from 48.8 percent.
- Another way to look as the economic effect of unemployment is through lay-offs. In 2005, only 8.6 percent of respondents had had someone in their household laid off in the last year; in 2009, that number was up to 20.6 percent, or roughly one in five households.
- Among those with household lay-offs, the length of unemployment has increased as well. 45.0 of those laid off are still seeking work, compared to 24.4 percent in 2005.
- The percentage of telephone respondents indicating they had access to affordable job training services if needed has been largely unchanged in 2005. The number then was 48.3 percent; today it is 51.0 percent.

## **Healthcare**

- 24.1 percent of telephone respondents indicated that they had avoided medical treatment due to cost, essentially unchanged from the 23.0 percent in 2005.

## **Affordable Housing**

- Access to affordable housing has been largely unchanged since 2005. 12.7 percent indicated they or people like them did not have access to affordable housing, down a hair from 2005 when 16 percent so indicated.

## Senior Support Services

- Perceptions of services available to seniors have been largely unchanged. 48.3 percent of the 2009 respondents felt seniors in their community received adequate services to meet their needs, compared to 50.4 percent in 2005. 20.3 and 17.1 percent of the two years' respective respondents did not.
- Respondents who did not feel there were adequate services for seniors were asked which services are lacking. Comparing the two surveys, there was improved perceptions of services for elder abuse and scam prevention, but slight deterioration in perceptions of meal services, in-home nursing care and health care.
- One measure of the effects of an aging population is the percentage of Lycoming County residents caring for an elderly relative in the county. That number was up to 24.8 percent in 2009, compared to 22.7 percent in 2005.

## Services for the Disabled

- There was a slight improvement in perceptions that there are adequate services to meet the needs of the disabled in Lycoming County. In 2005, 45.3 percent of respondents agreed that adequate services were available for the disabled in their community. In 2009, that number was up to 51.4, indicating some combination of improved services or better knowledge of existing services.
- Those respondents who indicated they did not feel adequate services were available to meet the needs of the disabled were asked which services they saw as lacking. Compared to 2005, rehabilitation, in-home nursing care and health care services were seen as more lacking today. Perceptions of transportation and housing services have improved.
- The number of respondents with a disabled member of the household is relatively stable at 18.7 percent, compared to 16.2 percent in 2005. The disabled members of respondents' households ranged in age from 3 to 85, with 13.6 percent under the age of 18, 69.7 falling between the ages of 18 and 64 and 16.7 percent aged 65 or older. Three fourths (74.7 percent) of the disabled household members had physical disabilities, 15 percent had mental disabilities and 10.2 percent had a combination of disabilities.

## Diversity

- 12.8 percent of respondents indicated they had been the victim of discrimination in the last year because of their gender, age, race or ethnicity, essentially unchanged from 10.9 percent in 2005.

## Safe Communities

- The vast majority of respondents (76.6 percent) indicated their neighborhood was very safe or nearly so. That number is largely unchanged from 2005 when the number was 75.9 percent.

## Transportation

- Most respondents indicated they and their family had access to adequate transportation in both surveys. (64.3 in 2009 and 69.9 in 2005)

In the final analysis, the results of the 2009 needs assessment indicate that the problems faced by those living in Lycoming County continue largely as they had four years ago. Because of a worsened economic environment, the severity of these problems has increased for those most sensitive to economic circumstances, namely families, and especially the children within them. It would be reasonable to conclude that United Way's funding strategy remain as it has over the last four years. If any area should receive extra attention, however, it should be those that prevent difficult economic circumstances from being made worse. Preventative efforts to strengthen families and provide structured opportunities and supportive environments for children seem an obvious choice.

## IMPORTANT ISSUES

What do you feel is the most important problem facing Lycoming County today? (Telephone Survey)

	<b>2009 (Percentage)</b>	<b>2005 (Percentage)</b>
Economy/Jobs	42.2	23.8
Crime	20.2	14.1
Drugs	13.3	11.0
Taxes	3.2	14.3
Roads	1.2	3.0
Health Care	1.3	0.3
Education	1.1	1.5
Local Race Issues	0.9	3.4
Gangs	0.4	2.9
Moral or Ethical Issues	0.3	1.7
Various Other	15.9	23.9

**What are the most important issues facing Lycoming County?** Note: The table is sorted based on the ranking the issues in 2009 survey.

	2009 Agency Survey		2005 Agency Survey	
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Consumption of alcohol and/or drugs by youth	1	4.62	2	4.38
Unemployment	2	4.52	T6	4.13
Access to affordable health insurance	3	4.46	1	4.54
Abuse of alcohol and/or drugs by adults	4	4.41	T6	4.13
Child abuse and neglect	5	4.37	3	4.24
Access to health care	6	4.33	8	4.08
Underemployment	7	4.31	T10	4.03
Domestic abuse	8	4.3	T4	4.18
Access to Affordable Prescription Medications	T9	4.28		***
Homelessness	T9	4.28	22	3.73
Hunger	11	4.25	19	3.76
Access to Substance Abuse Services	T12	4.23		***
Affordable housing	T12	4.23	15	3.93
Access to Dental Care	14	4.22	24	3.71
Health care for senior citizens	15	4.21	17	3.87
Violence in schools	16	4.17	29	3.51
Availability of affordable child care	17	4.14	9	4.05
Services for the needs of senior citizens	18	4.09	23	3.72
Availability of counseling services	19	4.08	T12	3.97
Affordable housing for seniors	20	4.05	21	3.74
Elder abuse or neglect	21	4	31	3.47
Availability of after school activities	T22	3.99	T10	4.03
Juvenile delinquency	T22	3.99	16	3.92
Adult job training	T24	3.96	14	3.95
Services for disabled children	T24	3.96	18	3.81
Teenage pregnancy	26	3.93	20	3.75
Illiteracy	27	3.92	T12	3.97
AIDS/HIV	28	3.87	30	3.5
Access to mental health services	29	3.84	T4	4.18
Transportation for the elderly	30	3.73	28	3.54
Occupational training for the disabled	31	3.69	32	3.45
Access to transportation for the disabled	32	3.67	27	3.58
Building access for the disabled	33	3.66	26	3.66
Ethnic/racial discrimination	34	3.65	25	3.67
Gender discrimination	35	3.2	34	3.31
Age discrimination	36	3.16	33	3.32

\*\*\* Not asked in survey

**Is the issue receiving adequate attention by community groups?**

	<b>2009 Agency Survey</b>	<b>2005 Agency Survey</b>
	<b>% Responding "No"</b>	<b>% Responding "No"</b>
Consumption of alcohol and/or drugs by youth	72%	54%
Unemployment	73%	65%
Access to affordable health insurance	79%	100%
Abuse of alcohol and/or drugs by adults	58%	40%
Child abuse and neglect	72%	71%
Access to health care	61%	68%
Underemployment	80%	90%
Domestic abuse	63%	44%
Access to Affordable Prescription Medications	60%	***
Homelessness	62%	47%
Hunger	48%	33%
Access to Substance Abuse Services	43%	***
Affordable housing	67%	75%
Access to Dental Care	76%	65%
Health care for senior citizens	64%	67%
Violence in schools	74%	69%
Availability of affordable child care	68%	63%
Services for the needs of senior citizens	28%	59%
Availability of counseling services	42%	64%
Affordable housing for seniors	40%	61%
Elder abuse or neglect	46%	60%
Availability of after school activities	64%	65%
Juvenile delinquency	56%	72%
Adult job training	41%	33%
Services for disabled children	36%	46%
Teenage pregnancy	71%	64%
Illiteracy	41%	17%
AIDS/HIV	30%	27%
Access to mental health services	63%	72%
Transportation for the elderly	32%	20%
Occupational training for the disabled	20%	42%
Access to transportation for the disabled	13%	31%
Building access for the disabled	23%	35%
Ethnic/racial discrimination	64%	53%
Gender discrimination	48%	56%
Age discrimination	55%	70%

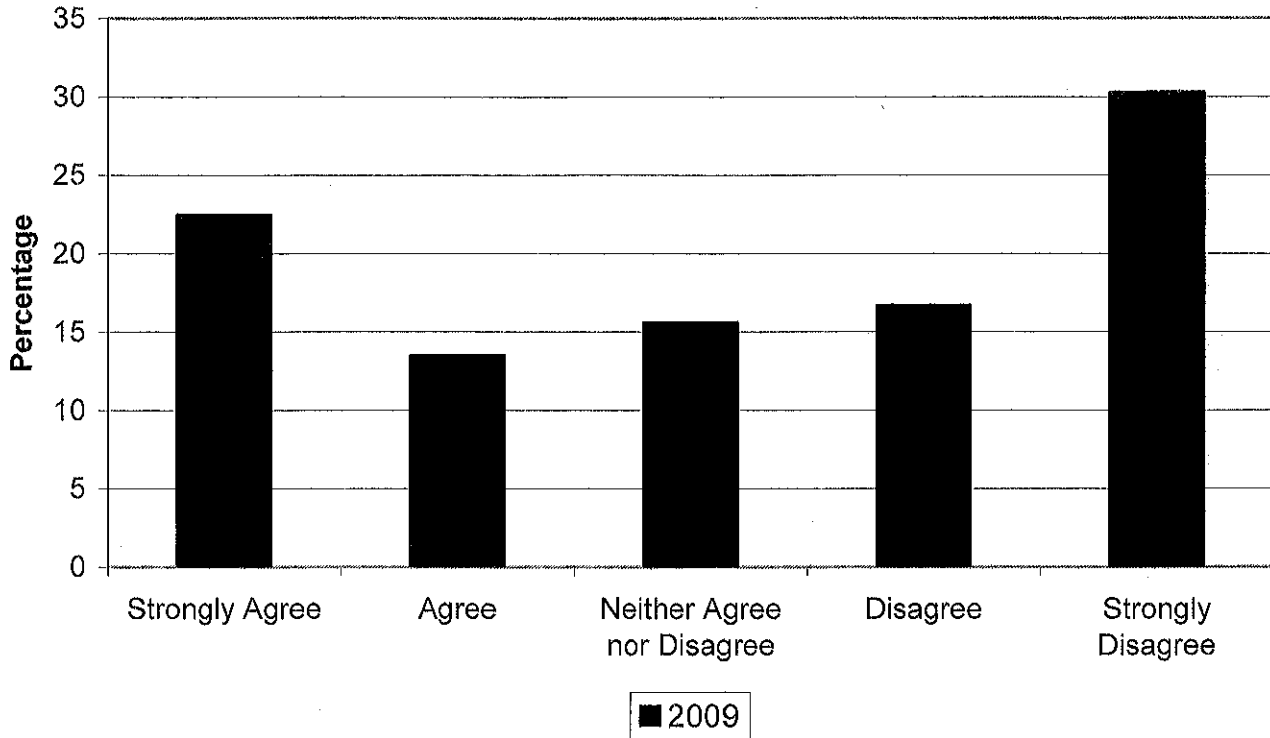
Notes:

- 1) The table only includes the responses for people who rated the level of importance for a particular issue as high or nearly high (4 or 5). A relatively high number indicates respondents who felt that issue was important also felt that not enough attention was being paid to that issue by community groups.
- 2) The number provided is the percentage of respondents who indicated something other than "Don't Know" than answered "No." The exclusion of "Don't Know" responses from this report is significant. Further study of the pattern of Don't Know responses would be warranted if resources were to be allocated to educate the community on the availability of particular services
- 3) The order in this table matches that in the previous table for ease of comparison.



**FAMILIES OR INDIVIDUALS IN CRISIS**

**I have a hard time making ends meet.**



**Have you or your family had difficulty finding the money to pay your mortgage or rent at any time in the last year?**

	2009 (Percentage)
Yes	19.0
No	80.1
Don't Know	1.0

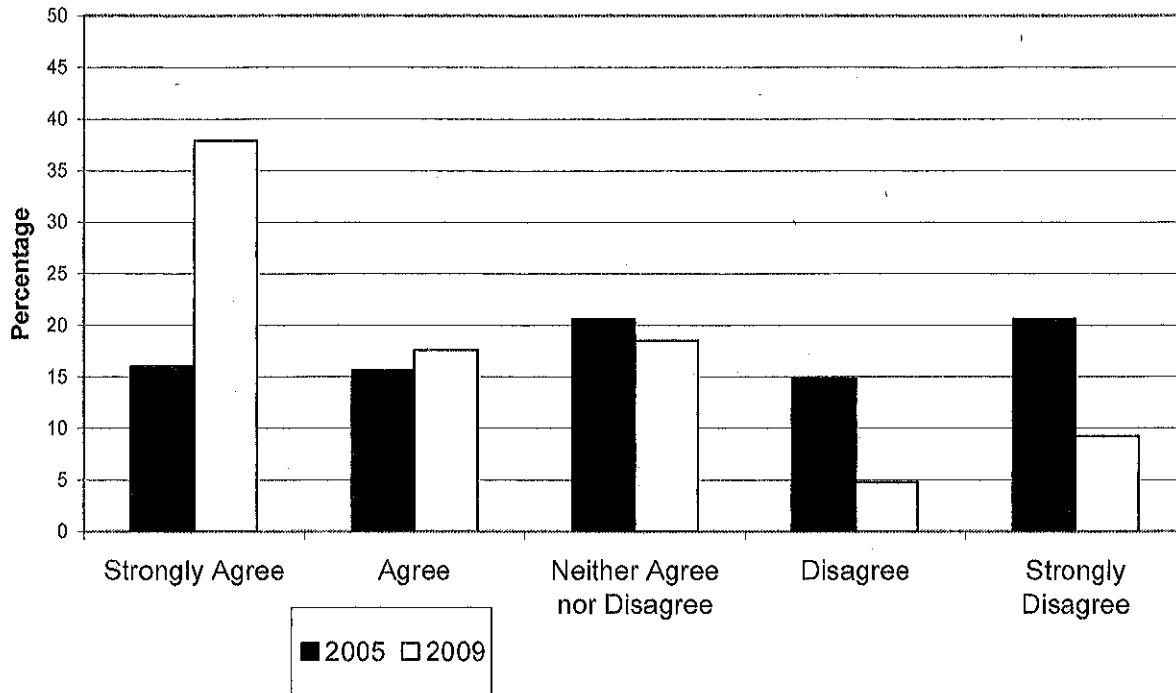
**Have you or someone you know in your community gone without food for more than a day in the last year because they could not afford it?**

	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
Yes	8.3	12.5
No	86.7	80.2
Don't Know	5.0	7.3

**Have you or someone you know in your community had no place to live at sometime in the last year?**

	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
Yes	12.1	19.9
No	84.9	75.9
Refused	.2	0.0
Don't Know	2.7	4.2

**Domestic violence is a big problem in my community**



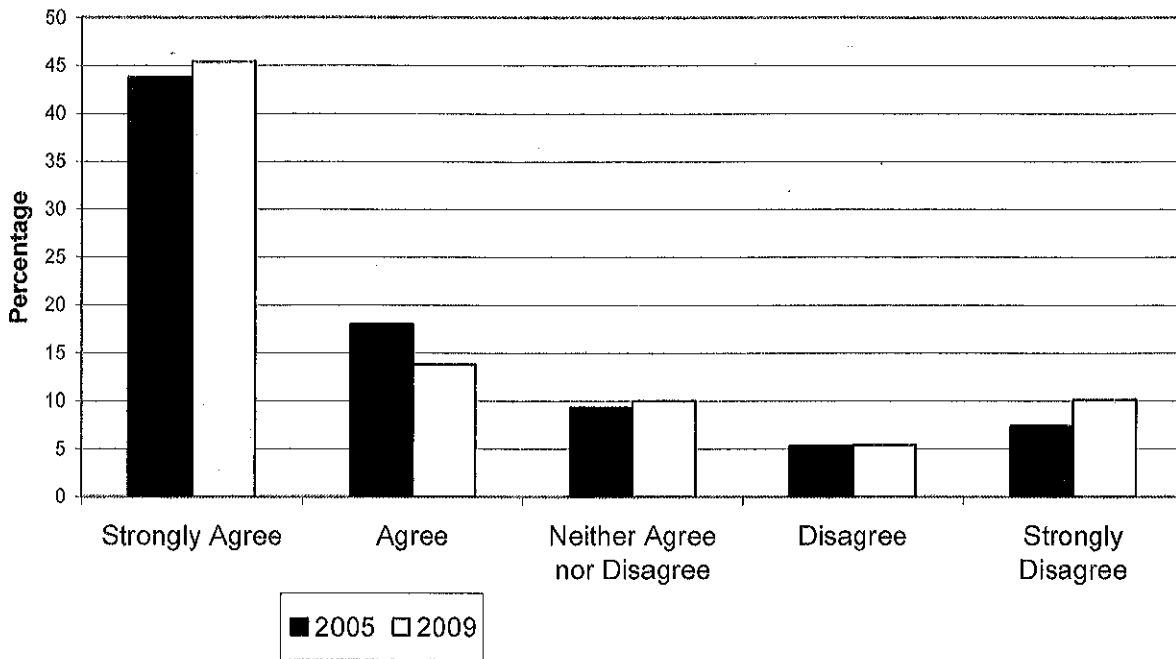
**Have you or someone you know in your community been the victim of physical abuse by a family member in the last year?**

	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
Yes	12.7	11.8
No	85.8	86.8
Don't Know	1.5	1.3

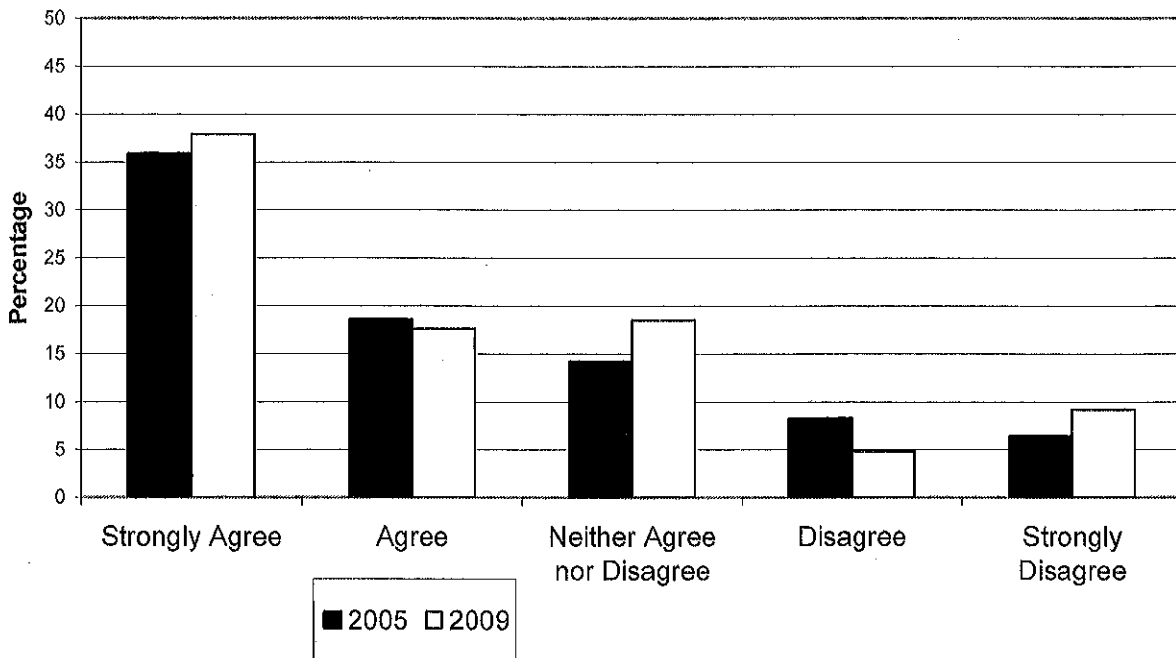
**Are you aware of anyone in your community who has a problem with drug or alcohol abuse?**

	2009 (Percentage)
Yes	54.7
No	43.3
Don't Know	2.0

**I have access to affordable individual and family counseling services if I were to need them**



**Parents need better access to classes that can help them learn to better raise their children**

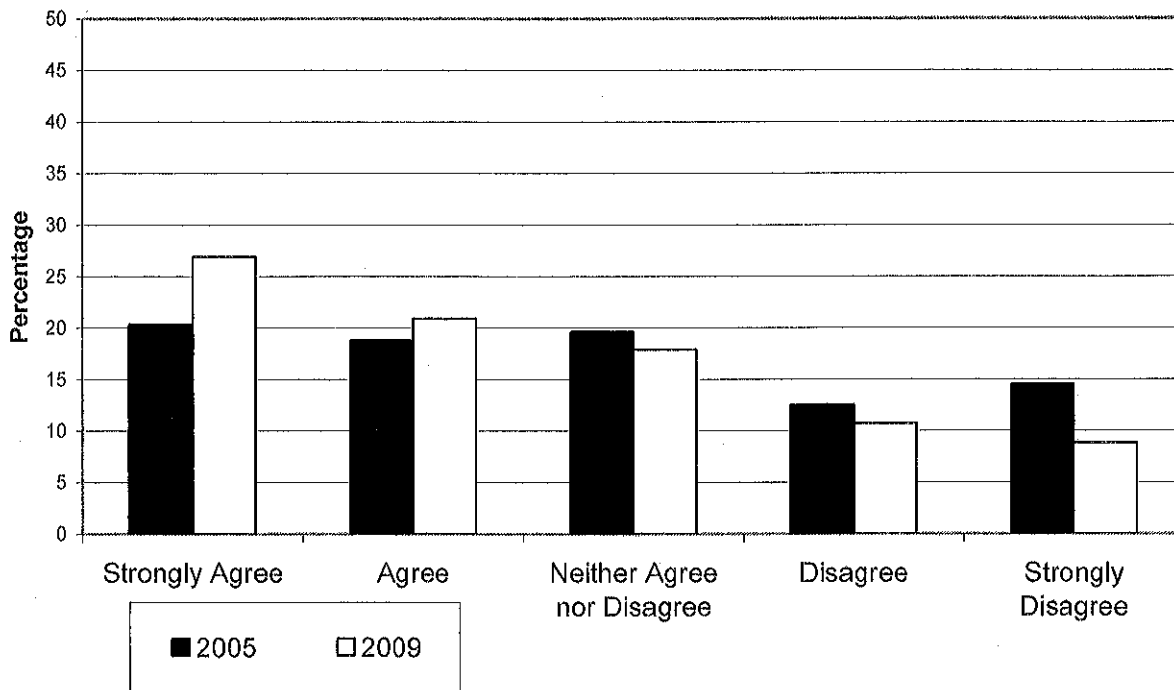


**CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

**Are you aware of anyone in your community who has been the victim of child abuse or neglect in the last year?**

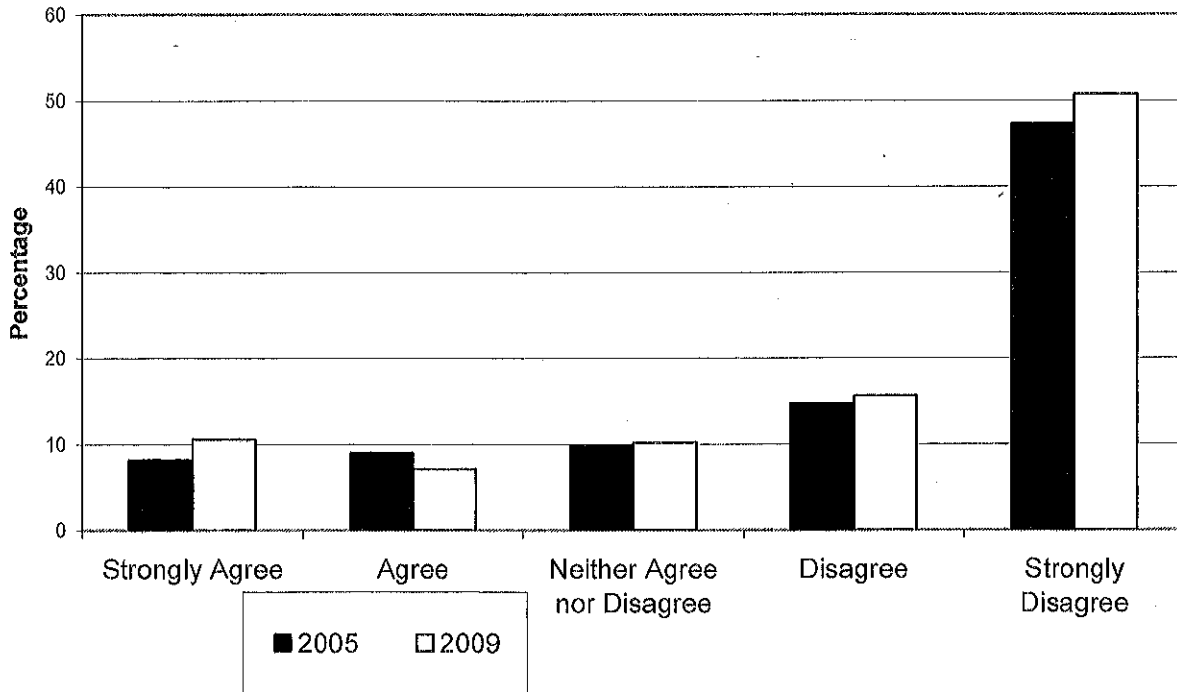
	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
Yes	17.6	21.9
No	81.3	76.7
Refused	.2	0.0
Don't Know	.8	1.4

**Teenage pregnancy is a big problem in my community**



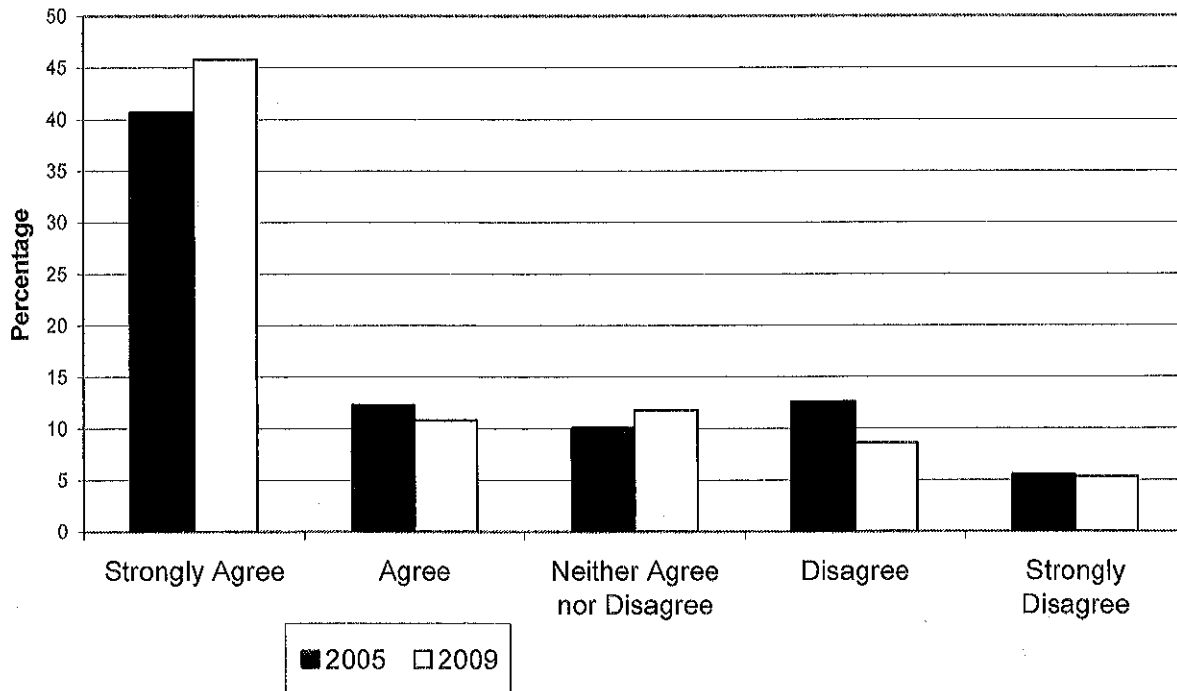
Those with children at home were also asked to respond to the following statement:

**My children have nothing to do after school**



Those with children at home were also asked to respond to the following statement:

**I have access to adequate childcare that I can afford**



## **JOBS**

**Which of the following best describes your employment status? Are you self-employed, employed by someone else, unemployed, retired, or are you a homemaker?**

	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
Self Employed	10.0	10.8
Employed by someone else	45.9	48.7
Unemployed	4.2	9.3
Retired	33.3	23.0
Homemaker	6.2	6.9
Refused	.2	.5
Don't Know	.1	.8

Those who were employed by someone else were also asked:  
**Is that employment full time or part time?**

	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
Full time	83.0	71.8
Part time	17.0	28.2

Those who were unemployed are also asked:  
**Are you currently seeking work?**

	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
Yes	48.8	60.0
No	51.2	40.0

**Has anyone in your household been laid off from a job at any time in the past year?**

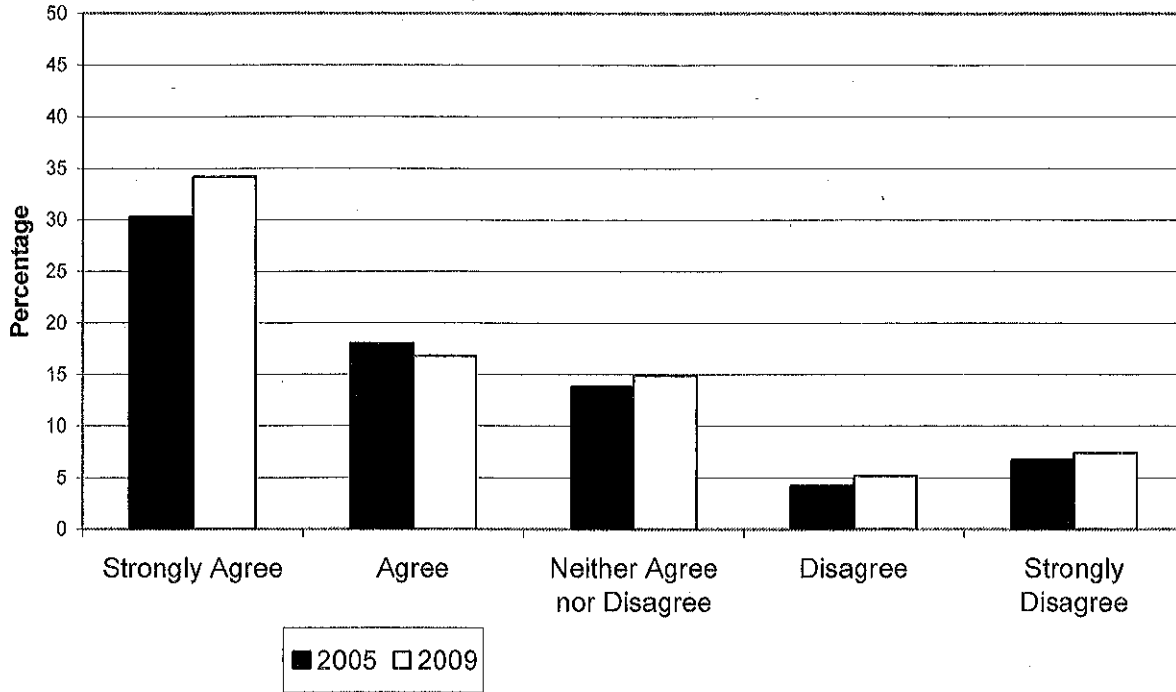
	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
Yes	8.6	20.6
No	90.7	78.9
Refused	.6	0.0
Don't Know	.1	0.4

Those who had been laid off were also asked:

**How long did it take that person to find another job – Less than three months, three to six months, more than six months, or is that person still unemployed?**

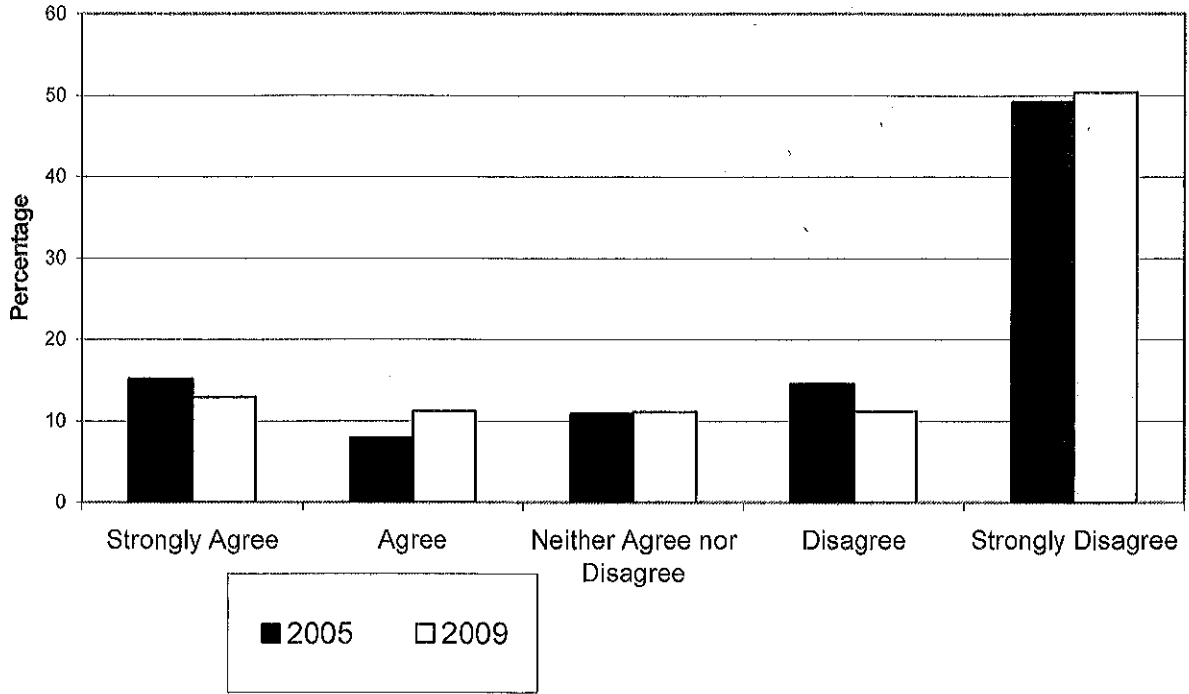
	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
0-3 months	27.8	14.2
3-6 months	39.3	37.6
More than 6 months	8.5	3.2
Still unemployed	24.4	45.0

**I have access to affordable job training services if I were to need them**



**HEALTHCARE**

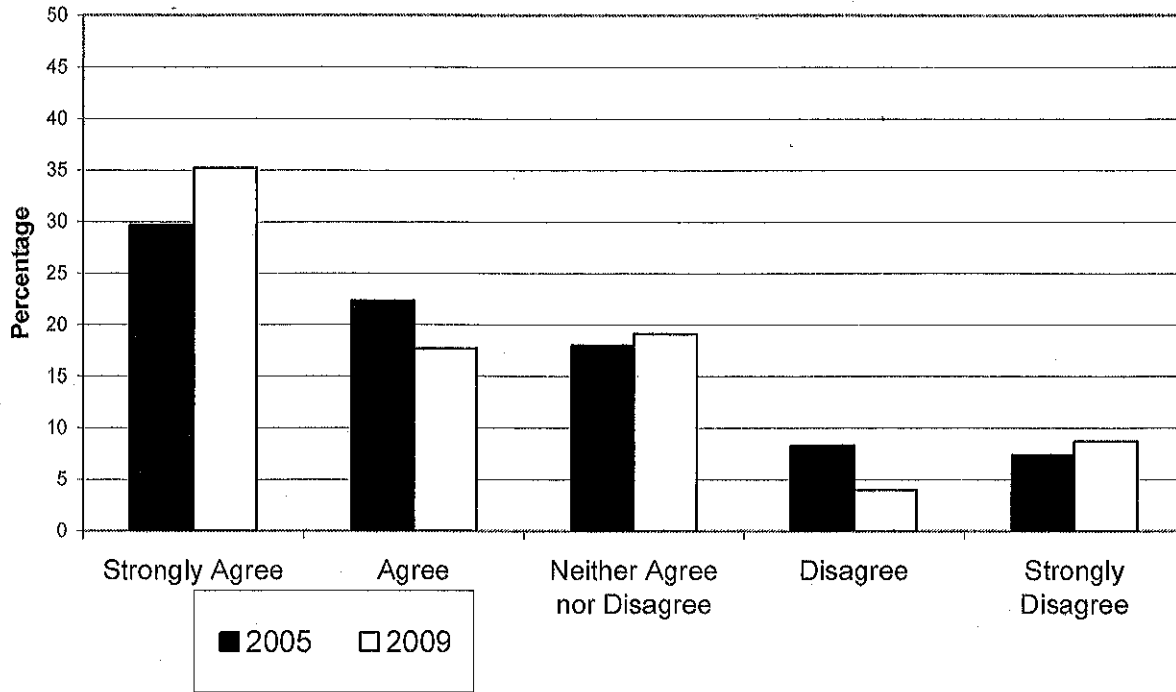
**I have avoided medical treatment because it was too costly**





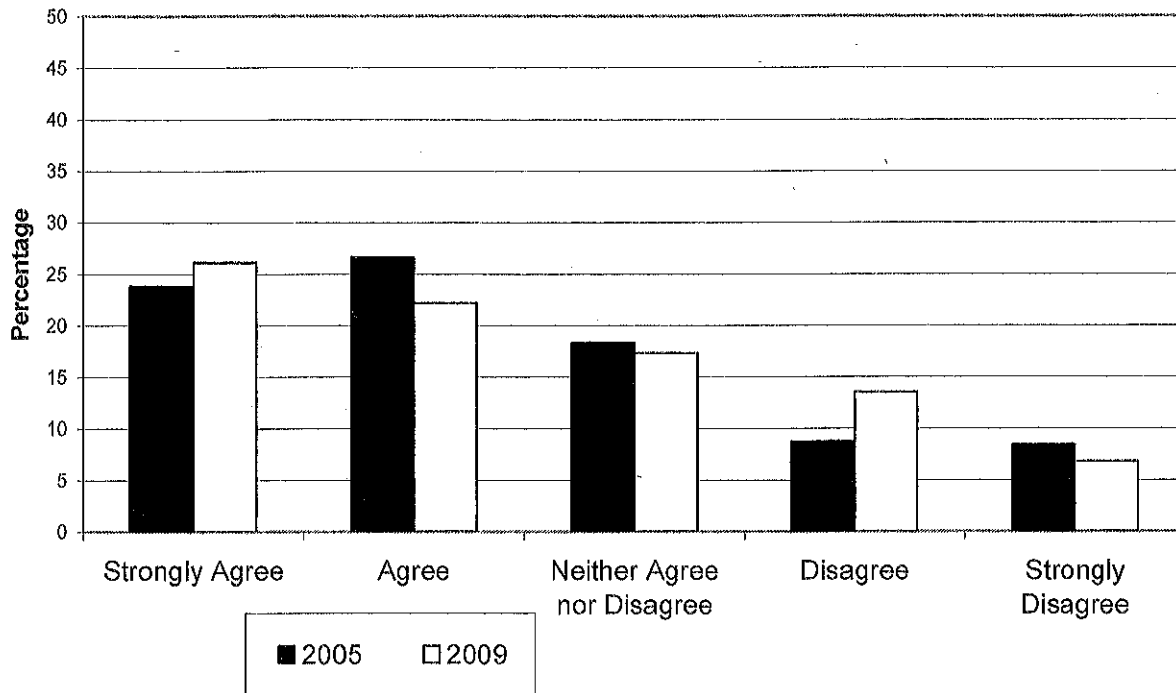
**AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

**There is affordable housing available for me and others like me**



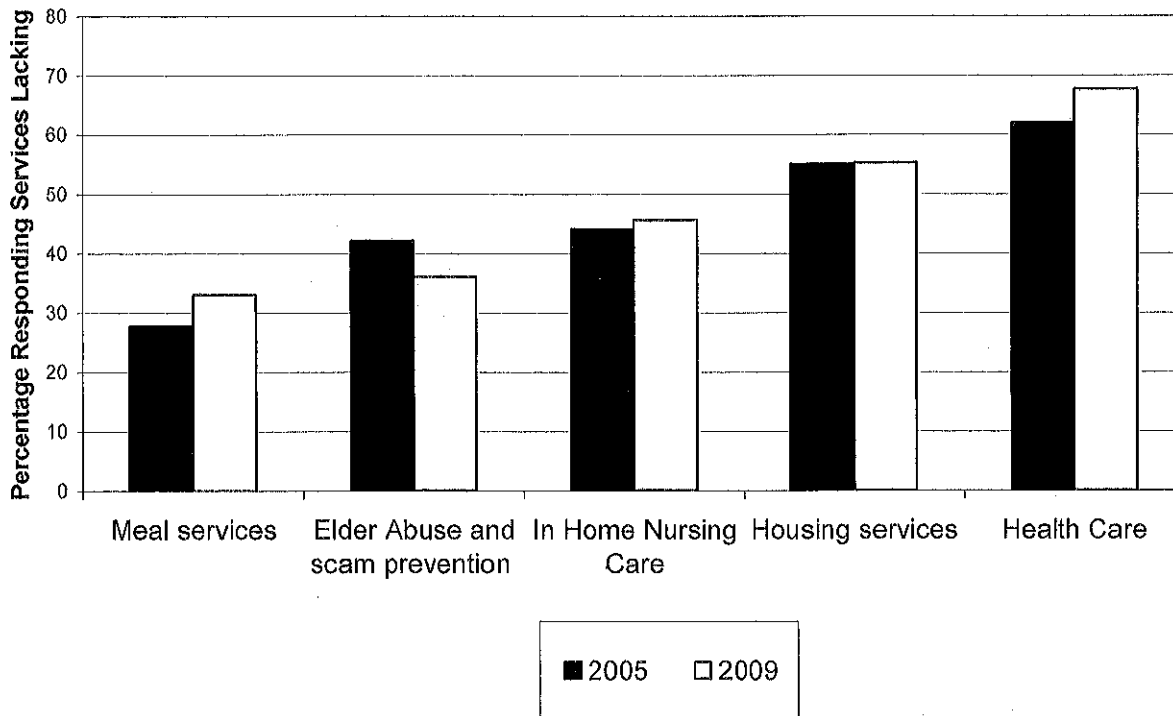
**SENIOR SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Seniors in my community receive adequate services to meet their needs**



Those who expressed dissatisfaction with the services for seniors were also asked:  
**Please indicate in each of the following areas whether services for seniors are lacking.**

Figures indicate percentage responding that services are lacking

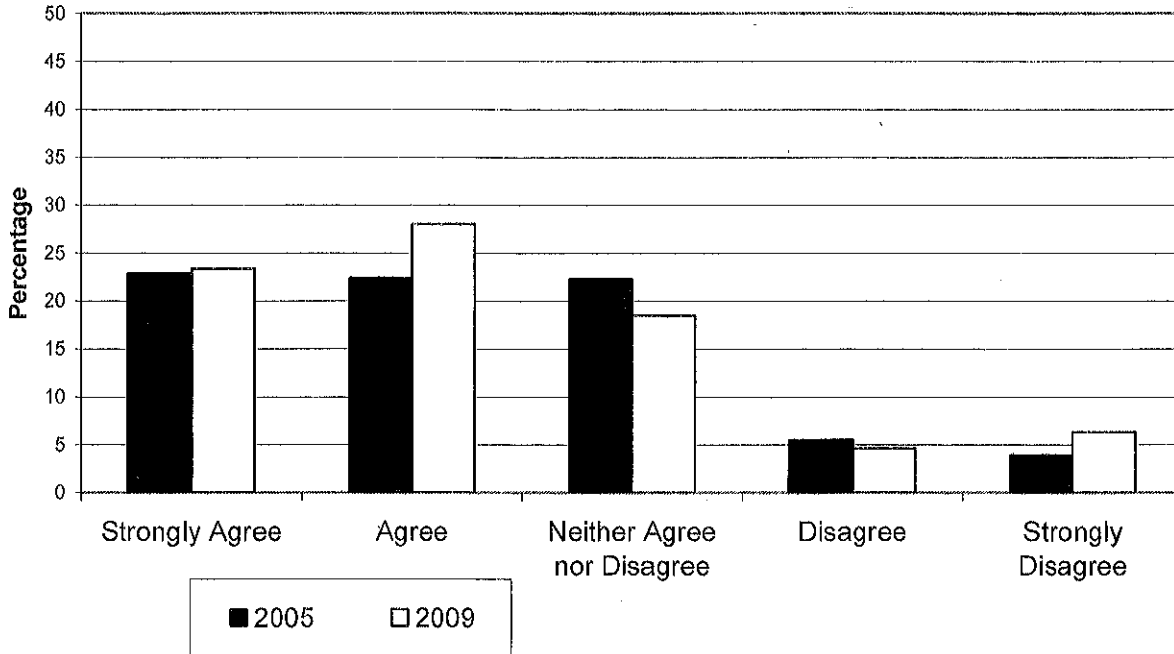


**Do you provide any assistance for an elderly relative in Lycoming County?**

	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
Yes	22.7	24.8
No	77.0	74.8
Refused	.1	0.0
Don't Know	.1	0.3

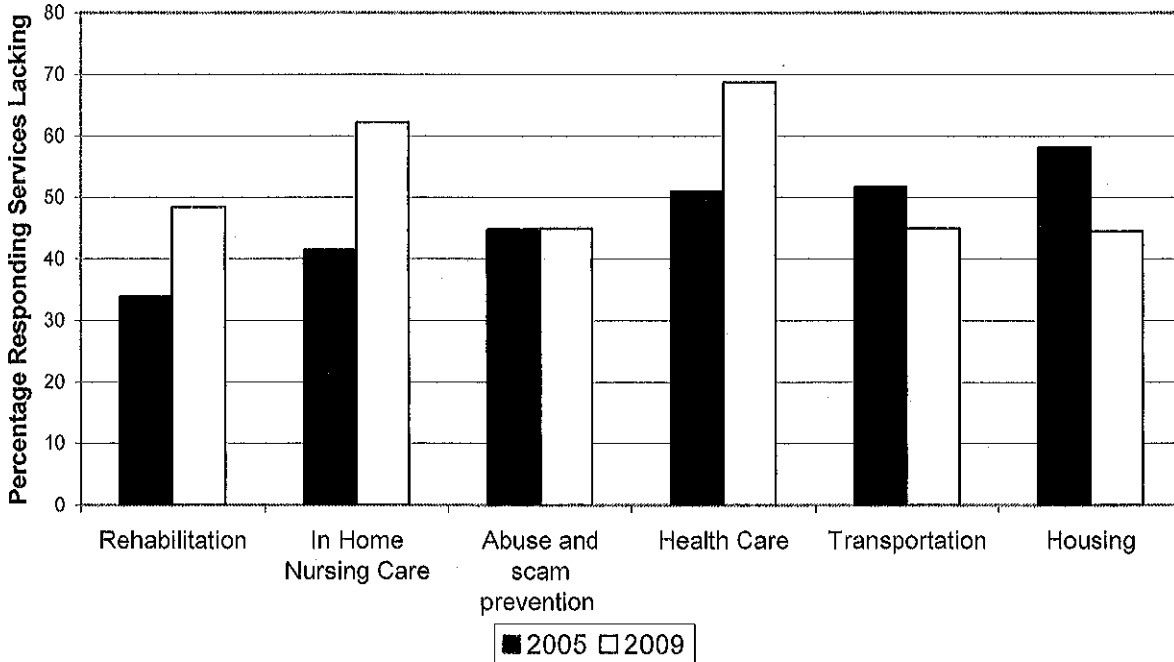
**SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED**

The disabled in my community receive adequate services to meet their needs



Those who expressed dissatisfaction with the services for the disabled were also asked: Please indicate in each of the following areas whether services for the disabled are lacking or not lacking.

Figures indicate percentage responding that services are lacking



**Are you or anyone in your household disabled?**

	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
Yes	16.2	18.7
No	83.5	80.9
Refused	.3	0.0
Don't Know	0.0	0.4

Those who indicated there was someone with a disability in their household were also asked:

**What is the approximate age of that individual?**

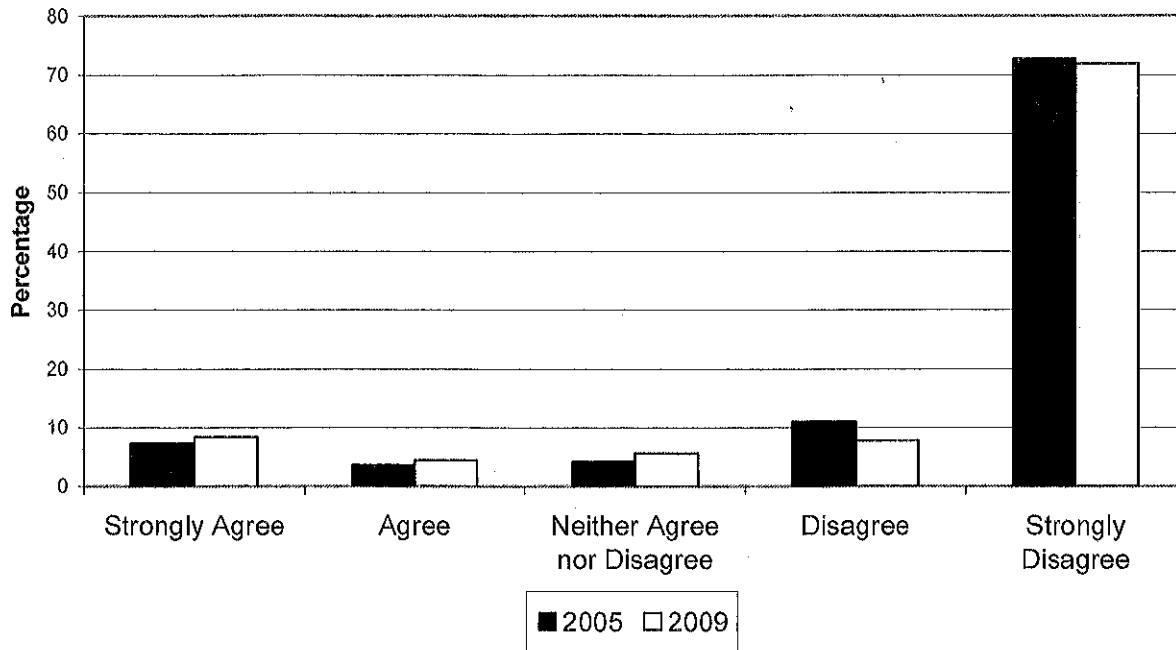
	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
Under 18	3.5	13.6
18-64	56.0	69.7
65+	40.5	16.7

**Is that person's primary disability physical or mental?**

	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
Physical	84.5	74.7
Mental	15.5	15.1
Both	Option not offered	10.2

**DIVERSITY**

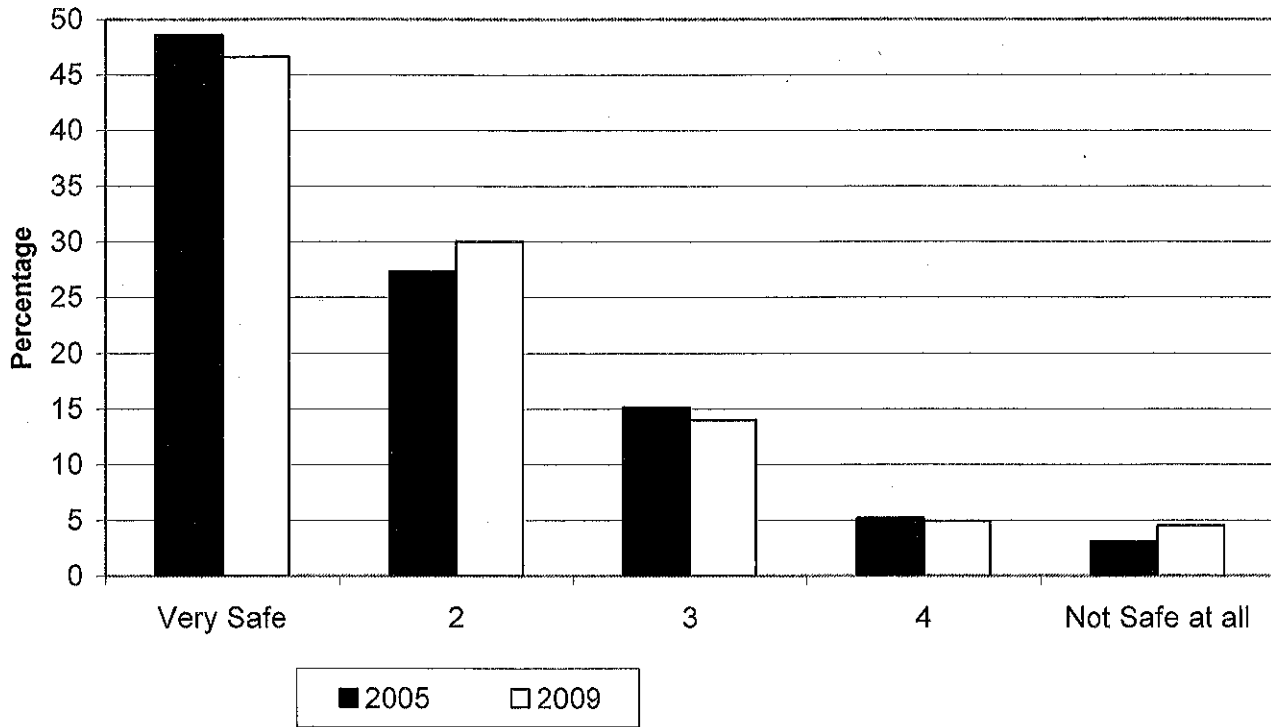
**I have been the victim of discrimination in the last year because of my gender, age, race or ethnicity**



**SAFE COMMUNITIES**

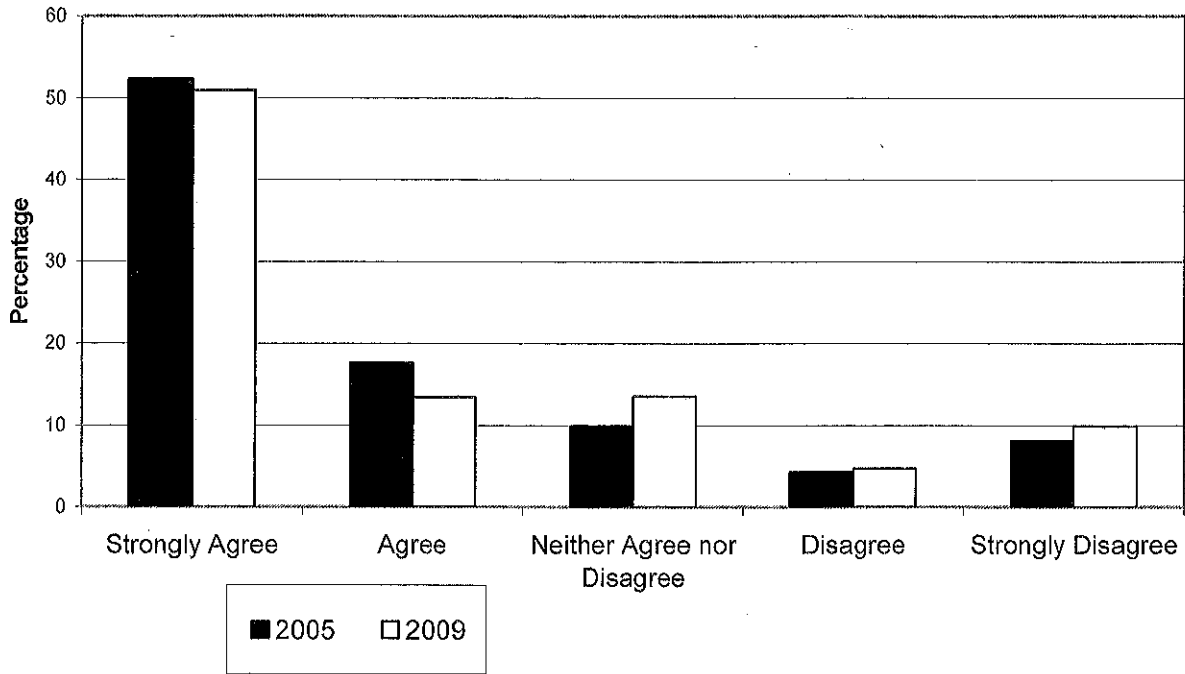
On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very safe and 5 is not safe at all, how safe is your neighborhood.

How safe is your neighborhood?



**TRANSPORTATION**

**Adequate access to transportation is available to me and my family**



**Do you own or someone in your household a car?**

	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
Yes	94.5	96.5
No	5.4	3.5
Refused	.1	0.0



## DEMOGRAPHICS

### What is your highest level of education?

	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
Less than HS diploma	5.8	4.7
HS diploma	35.7	38.3
Some college or 2 year degree	27.7	25.5
4 Year College Degree	21.7	20.9
Advanced Degree	8.9	10.7
Refused	.1	0.0

### Age of Respondents

	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
18-24	3.7	9.2
25-34	8.9	13.4
35-44	15.3	14.7
45-59	33.0	30.2
60+	39.2	32.5

### What was the total income of all persons in your household over the past year for all household members?

	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
\$15,000 or less	9.7	8.4
\$15-30,000	21.1	16.4
\$30-50,000	22.5	22.1
\$50-75,000	24.0	16.1
Greater than \$75,000	16.9	17.6
Refused	5.2	14.2
Don't Know	.7	5.3

### Gender of Respondents

	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
Female	57.8	59.5
Male	42.2	40.5

### Lycoming County United Way Contributor (Self-Reported)

	2009 (Percentage)
Yes	48.9
No	46.1
Don't Know	5.0

### Township of Respondents in Phone Survey

	2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)		2005 (Percentage)	2009 (Percentage)
ANTHONY	.4	1.1	SOUTH WILLIAMSPORT	6.4	6.5
ARMSTRONG	.5	0	SUSQUEHANNA	.7	.9
BASTRESS	.2	0	UPPER FAIRFIELD	1.7	1.6
BRADY	.4	.4	WASHINGTON	1.3	1.6
BROWN	.1	0	WATSON	.5	.5
CASCADE	.1	.5	WILLIAMSPORT	24.0	22.9
CLINTON	1.7	1.5	WOLF	2.6	2.6
COGAN HOUSE	.7	1.0	WOODWARD	1.9	2.0
CUMMINGS	.2	.3			
DUBOISTOWN	1.0	1.6			
ELDRED	1.9	0			
FAIRFIELD	2.8	2.9			
FRANKLIN	.8	.7			
GAMBLE	.9	.7			
HEPBURN	2.6	2.7			
HUGHESVILLE	2.0	2.3			
JACKSON	0	.3			
JERSEY SHORE	3.1	3.4			
JORDAN	.4	.9			
LEWIS	.8	.9			
LIMESTONE	1.7	1.8			
LOYALSOCK	12.2	10.1			
LYCOMING	1.6	1.4			
MCHENRY	0	.1			
MCINTYRE	.2	1.3			
MCNETT	.1	.1			
MIFFLIN	.7	.9			
MILL CREEK	.3	.9			
MONTGOMERY	1.1	1.2			
MONTOURSVILLE	5.0	4.0			
MORELAND	.9	.8			
MUNCY BORO	2.2	3.0			
MUNCY CREEK	2.6	3.1			
MUNCY TWP	1.1	.8			
NIPPENOSE	.2	.5			
OLD LYCOMING	5.6	5.3			
PENN	.7	1.1			
PIATT	1.0	.8			
PICTURE ROCKS	.5	.9			
PINE	.1	.2			
PLUNKETTS CREEK	.7	.6			
PORTER	1.3	1.3			
SALLADASBURG	.1	.2			
SHREWSBURY	.2	0			

## **Methodology**

The telephone survey included 498 respondents randomly selected from registered voters in Lycoming County. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 4.4%. It should be noted that the margin of error for subgroups can be significantly larger depending on each group's share of the total population. The methodology used here largely replicates that used in the 2005 survey also referenced here.

Registered voters were selected to provide a broad cross-section of residents in the county and because the accompanying data that comes with a registration-based sample provided useful information for reporting purposes. The primary drawback of using a registration-based sample is that those residents who are not registered are likely to be different and hold different opinions than those who are registered. That the unregistered are likely to be among those more likely to need and use the services that the United Way funds should be taken into account when interpreting the results. Registered voters are older, more financially secure, less mobile and better educated on average than their unregistered counterparts.

In addition when comparing our sample to the universe of registered voters, we found that respondents were older than the population of registered voters and some townships in the county were overrepresented, while others were underrepresented. Therefore, the data was statistically weighted so that the results reflect the universe of registered voters on those two factors.

The agency mail surveys were sent to approximately 150 social service agencies in Lycoming County. 84 surveys were returned for a response rate of approximately 56 percent. The relatively high response rate is reflective of the incentives such agencies face when interacting with funding sources such as the sponsors. The agencies have a vested interest in sharing their concerns to maximize funding opportunities. While there is no reason to believe the responding agencies expressed substantially different views than nonresponding agencies, the possibility can not be discounted.