

# Warren County Citizen Survey

## SURVEY RESULTS

WARREN COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

September 12, 2018

# Warren County Citizen Survey Summary

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## Background

In the Summer of 2018, Warren County conducted a survey to obtain citizen input for updating the County's Comprehensive Plan. The current Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2013. The purpose of the Plan is to guide future commercial, industrial and residential development, and to provide for various community services that are needed to keep pace with population growth. The survey provides a snapshot of community sentiment regarding various growth issues included in the survey.

County staff did an extensive outreach effort to encourage citizen participation in the survey. Through press releases, social media publication and announcements at meetings, citizens were asked to fill out the survey through the website, <http://www.warrencountyfuture.com/>. Citizens without access to the internet were encouraged to call the Planning Department and paper surveys were available by mail or could be picked up at the Government Center. The survey was completed by citizens both electronically and by a hard copy, with the majority of responses being submitted over the website. A total of 1,100 surveys were submitted.

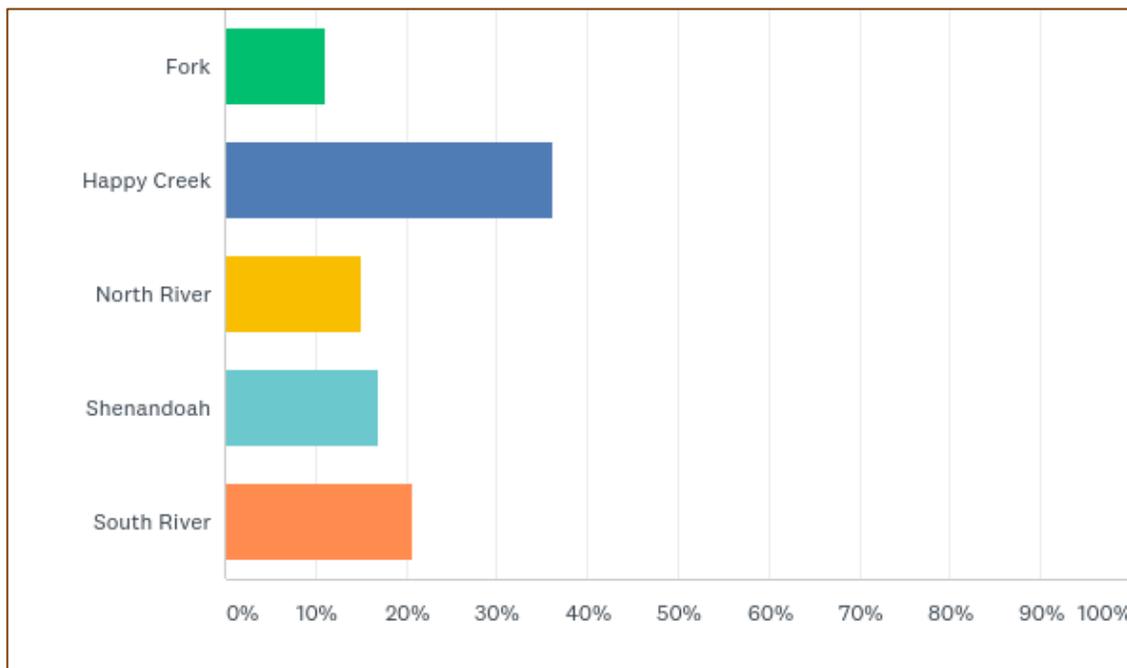
## Key Changes from the 2009 Survey Results

- Responses were up 39% from the 2009 survey.
- There were significant declines in people reporting that the rural setting, quiet and peaceful nature, and quality of life are the best things about the County. This is not strictly negative though because many other good things had slight increases.
  - Rural setting: 76% to 58%
  - Quiet & peaceful: 63% to 42%
  - Quality of life: 51% to 26%
- Most respondents continue to feel that the County is on the right track overall (80% in 2009, 82% in 2018)
- More people report wanting about the same amount of development and open space (59% in 2009, 78% in 2018). However, people still want more retail (37% in 2009, 50% in 2018)
- 85% of respondents think that keeping quality teachers is among the biggest challenges facing the school district.
- The percent of people that feel "all housing needs are being met" declined from 36% to 15%.
- People are overall satisfied with all County services. However, education and housing had the highest percent of people reporting they are not satisfied (both over 30%)
- Strong satisfaction was reported with parks and recreation, and the County's investment in tourism promotion.

- There is growing interest in prioritizing improvements to Route 55 (47% in 2009, 70% in 2018)
- The percent of people that feel the County is on the right track for growth and development is unchanged from 2009 (around 67%).

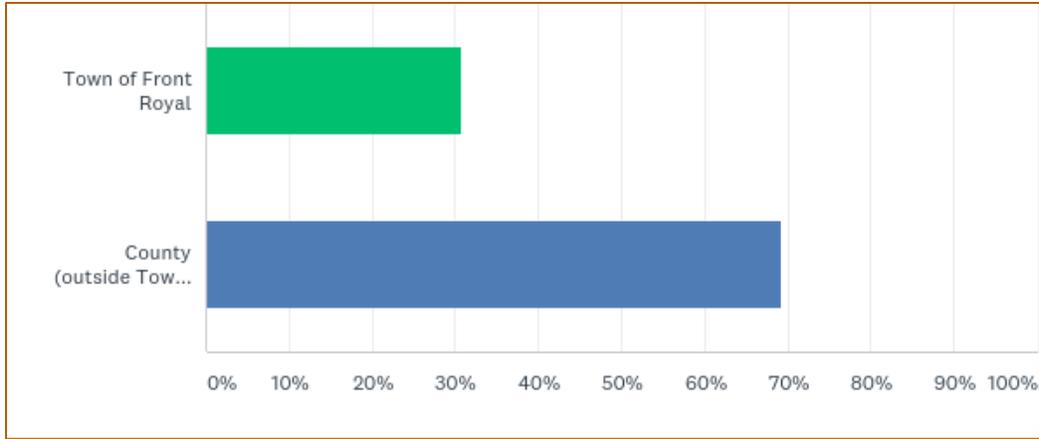
## Characteristics of the Respondents

The survey was completed by residents from all areas of the County. Of the election districts, residents from Happy Creek returned the most surveys, comprising 36% of the responses. Happy Creek residents also returned the greatest number of surveys in the 2009 survey.

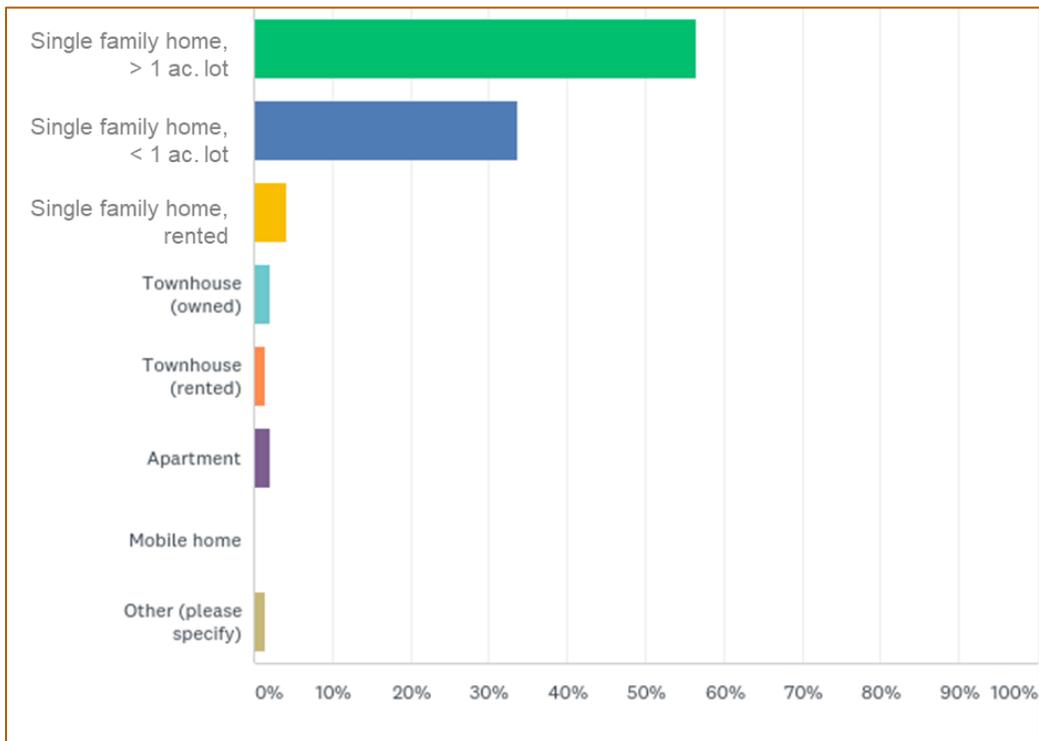


**Figure 1. Election Districts of respondents**

- Most respondents (93%) were year-round residents of the County, and 68% lived in the County outside of Town limits.
- The majority of respondents (46%) have lived in the County for more than 20 years.
- The majority of respondent households were between 25 to 44 years of age. Around half of the respondent households included children.
- The overwhelming majority of respondents live in single family dwellings.
- 94% of respondents have broadband internet access, which Comcast providing service to 61% of respondent households, and Century Link providing service to 30% of respondent households.



**Figure 2. Location of property owned by respondents**



**Figure 3. Type of residence of respondents**

## Thoughts about Warren County

In question 9, citizens were asked what they thought are the three best things about Warren County. The natural amenities, rural character, and tranquility were the most commonly chosen things, while job opportunities and the quality of education were the least chosen things.

In question 10, respondents were asked to name their favorite place in Warren County. The Shenandoah River, the Shenandoah National Park, and Skyline Drive were the most commonly mentioned places.

In question 11, respondents were asked what they thought are the three biggest challenges facing the County. The lack of job opportunities, the quality of the education system, and healthcare options were

chosen the most times. The level of concern over the lack of job opportunities has decreased from 73% to 46% since the 2009 survey, but it remains the highest concern. The concern about rapid development in 2009 has been displaced by concerns over the quality of the education system, healthcare options, and a lack of retail options/stores.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Rural setting	57.71%	629
Low taxes	16.61%	181
Convenient access to work	18.07%	197
Quality schools	6.33%	69
Quiet and peaceful	42.48%	463
Housing	2.29%	25
Cost of living	21.56%	235
Recreational activities	13.94%	152
Natural amenities (river, mountains, etc)	70.73%	771
Job opportunities	1.38%	15
Quality of life	25.96%	283
Total Respondents: 1,090		

**Figure 4. Responses to the best things about Warren County**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Quality of housing	18.90%	183
Lack of senior housing	13.12%	127
Lack of retail options/stores	30.89%	299
Healthcare options	32.75%	317
Quality of school facilities	15.08%	146
Limited job opportunities	47.31%	458
Lack of recreational activities	10.64%	103
Quality educational system	33.37%	323
Taxes	22.42%	217
Public transportation options	13.84%	134
Childcare options	5.99%	58
Lack of recreational facilities	17.46%	169
Total Respondents: 968		

**Figure 5. Responses to the biggest challenges facing Warren County**

Question 12 asked how the county has changed, in terms of a place to live, in the past ten years. The majority of respondents (52%) asserted that the County has changed for the better, while 29% chose

stayed the same, and 17% selected changed for the worse. This breakdown is very similar to the 2009 survey where the results were 50% for the better, 30% stayed the same, and 20% for the worse.

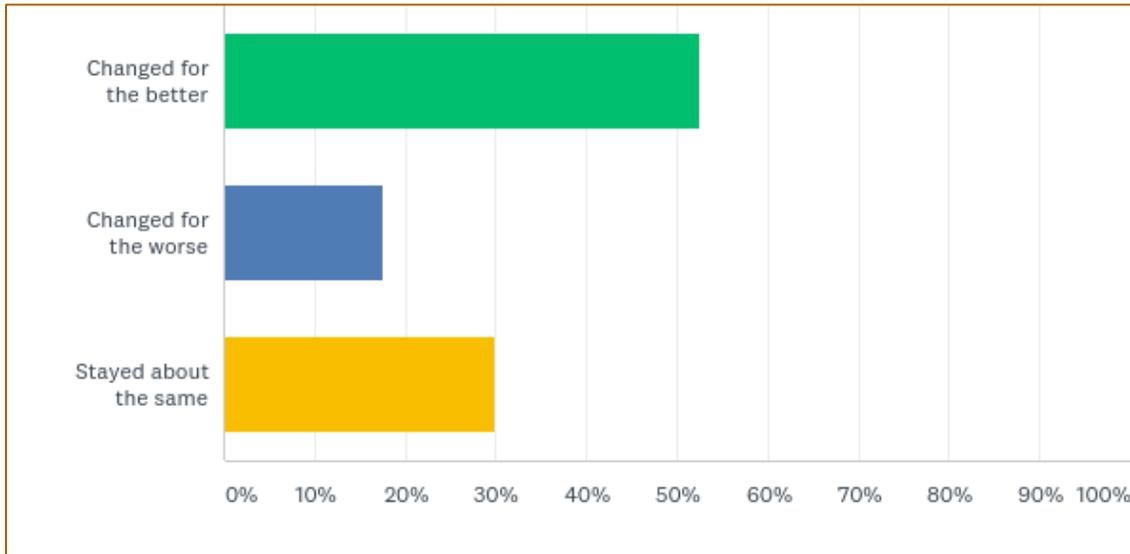


Figure 6. Responses to how the County has changed as a place to live in the past 10 years

## Land Development

In question 13, respondents were asked how they would like Warren County to look in twenty years. An overwhelming majority of respondents (77%) hoped that the County would have about the same amount of development and open space. In the 2009 survey, 59% of respondents desired mostly open land with some development, and 34% wanted a mix of open and developed land with more development than today. This suggests that a level of satisfaction regarding the balance of development and open space has been reached today.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
About the same about of development and open space	77.78%	784
More development and less open space	11.21%	113
Maximum development enabled by zoning and infrastructure	11.01%	111
Total Respondents: 1,008		

Figure 7. Responses to how Warren County should look in 20 years

When asked where commercial growth should occur in the next ten years, respondents most commonly (56%) suggested further roadside development along the Route 340/522 North Corridor Winchester Road. 47% of respondents named Downtown Front Royal as the area where commercial growth should occur.

When respondents were asked how they felt about retail development in the County, 49% said that residents could benefit from additional retail development, while 39% said that the amount of retail development has been about right. When asked to name what types of commercial businesses respondents would like to see, they mentioned, in descending order, restaurants, clothing stores, retail stores, Chick-fil A and grocery stores.

Question 18 asked respondents about their concerns in development. The most cited concern was traffic congestion (56%). Traffic congestion was also the biggest concern in the 2009 survey results, being selected by 61% of respondents.

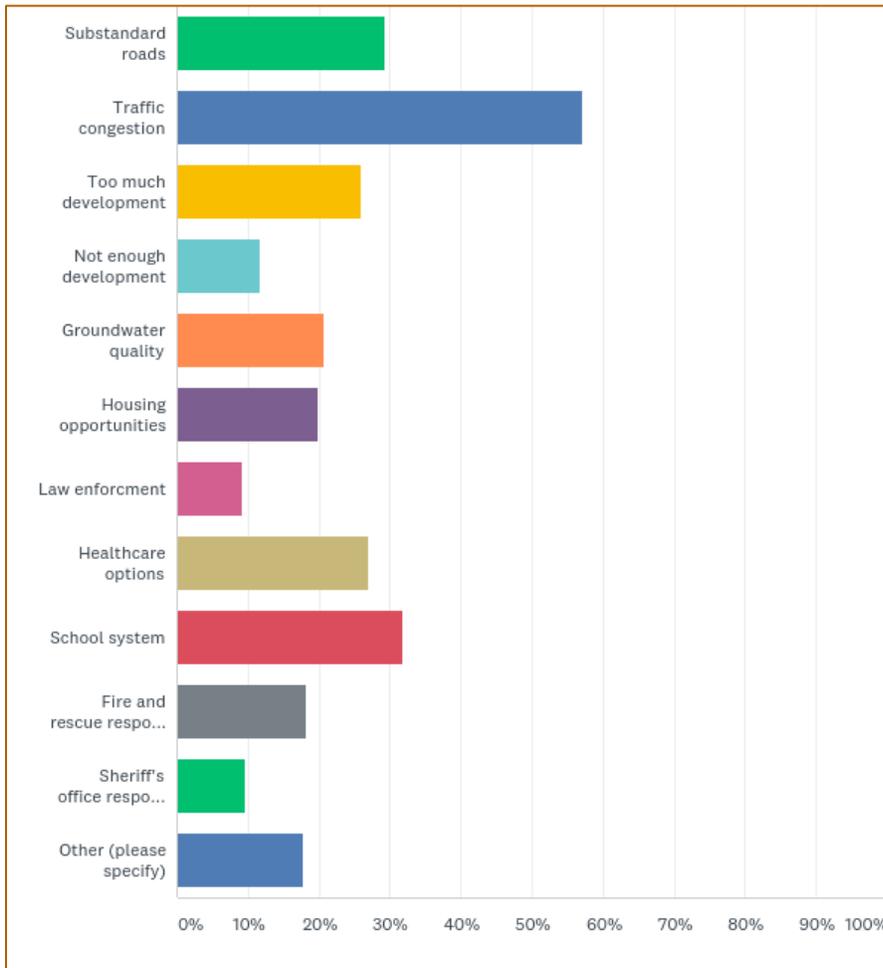


Figure 8. Concerns regarding development

Question 41 asked respondents if they believed that the County was on the right track in terms of growth and development. 67% answered yes, while 32% answered no.

In Question 26, respondents were given a list of issues and asked how important they thought each would be over the next 10 years. Among the issues that were ranked “very important” were: to maintain rural character, to control rate of development, to protect farmland/open land, to attract quality job opportunities, to improve education, fire and rescue services, and sheriff/police services. Among the issues that were ranked “important” were: to attract new shopping facilities, to develop affordable housing, to improve transportation network, public transportation, to protect historic structures, the cost of services, to develop recreational facilities, to create more recreational programs, to provide public water service and to provide public sewer service. None of the services ranked the highest in the “not important” category.

In Question 27, respondents were given a list of issues and asked how important they thought each will be over the next 10 years. All life elements were ranked “satisfied” except healthcare options, which was ranked, “not satisfied”.

## Parks and Recreation

Most respondents satisfied with the quality of the Parks and Recreation facilities. When asked to rate the quality either excellent, good, fair, poor, or not sure, the most common selection (51%) was good. Excellent and fair received 18% and 17% respectively. When asked to choose three types of recreational facilities they would like to see, respondents most commonly chose multi-use trails (49%), an indoor pool (46%), nature parks (39%).

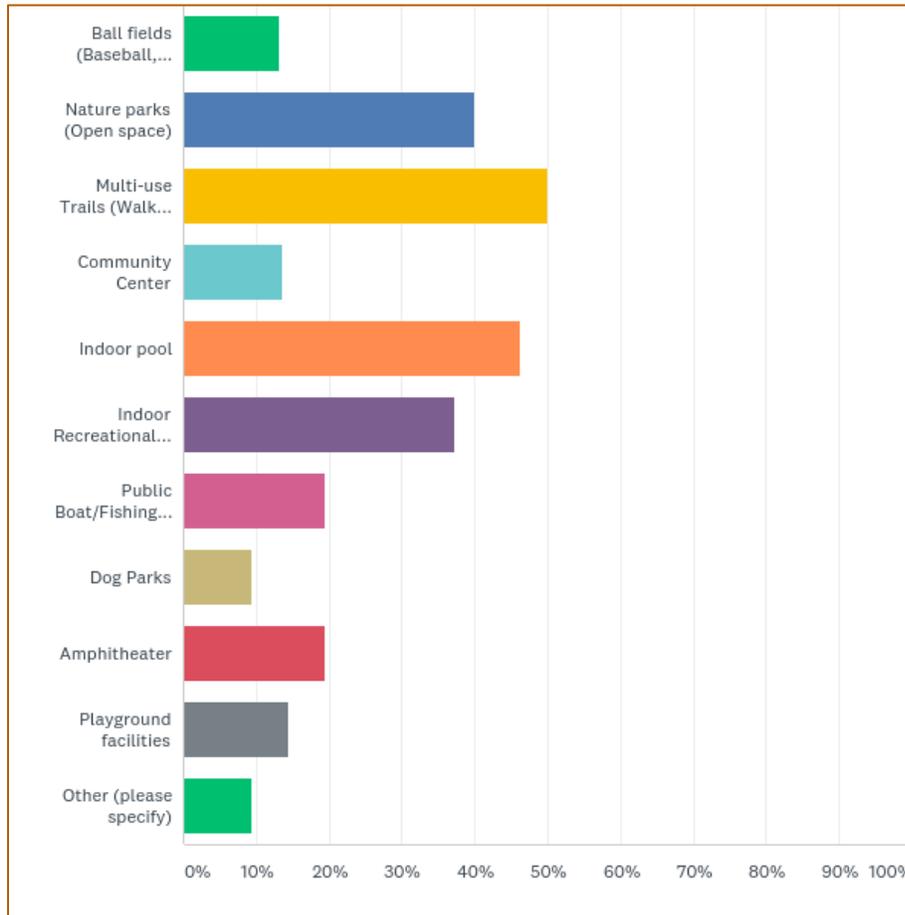


Figure 9. Responses to what types of recreational facilities you would like to see

## Housing

When asked what housing needs respondents felt were not currently being met in the County, respondents chose quality of rental units (48%) and lack of affordable family housing (43%) most often.

When asked what type of home they would like to live in, single family homes on lots of 2-5 acres was the most common choice (27%). The same category of housing was chosen in the 2009 survey, although the popularity has decreased from 47% in 2009. The preference for single family homes on lots larger than 10 acres has decreased from the 2009 survey result of 24% to 11% today. The preference for townhouses, apartments and active adult community housing have all increased by around 0.75%.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Lack of active adult housing	21.12%	178
Lack of rental units	27.52%	232
Lack of affordable family housing	43.65%	368
Quality of rental units	48.52%	409
Housing location is not convenient	3.91%	33
All housing needs are being met	15.42%	130
Workforce Housing	10.32%	87
Total Respondents: 843		

**Figure 10. Responses to housing needs not being met**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Single family homes on small lots with amenities within walking distance	15.90%	156
Single family homes on lots of less than 2 acres	19.67%	193
Single family homes on lots of 2-5 acres	27.12%	266
Single family homes on lots of 5-10 acres	11.82%	116
Single family homes on lots of 10 acres or more	11.93%	117
Townhouse/Duplex	1.22%	12
Apartment complex	1.53%	15
Active Adult Community (For ages 55 or older only)	6.83%	67
Other (please specify)	3.98%	39
Total Respondents: 981		

**Figure 11. Response to housing type you would like to live in**

## Historical Preservation

Question 24 asked respondents if there are any buildings or grounds of historical interest that they feel the County should preserve. The majority of respondents said yes (49%). When asked to identify specific properties for preservation, the most commonly mentioned locations were the Afton Inn and Civil War sites.

## Education

Question 19 asked respondents to rate the quality of the current Warren County public school facilities. The most common answer was good 35%.

When respondents were asked to cite the three biggest challenge they feel are facing Warren County Public Schools, the majority of respondents mentioned keeping quality teachers (84%). When asked to specify, a common concern was that relatively low pay for teachers in Warren County is incentivizing higher quality teachers to move to schools in surrounding counties.

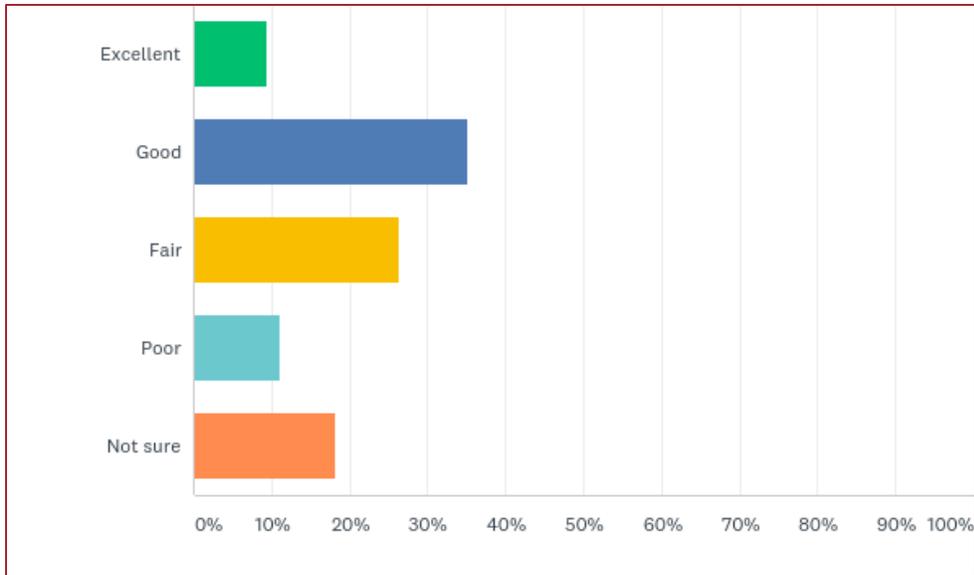


Figure 12. Responses to rating the quality of Warren County public schools

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Quality of facilities	15.43% 144
Keeping quality teachers	84.57% 789
Lack of extracurricular activities /sports	8.79% 82
Technical Education/Tradesman classes	33.76% 315
Focus on STEAM curriculum (Science, technology, engineering, art, mathematics)	29.47% 275
Quality of student education	48.98% 457
School schedule	12.43% 116
Overcrowding	12.54% 117
Total Respondents: 933	

Figure 13. Responses to the biggest challenges facing Warren County public schools.

## Roads

Question 34 asked respondents to list any roads or intersections in the County that they thought need improvement, and why. The most commonly mentioned roads were Route 340, Route 55 East, Happy Creek Rd, High Knob Rd, and South Royal Ave. Route 55 East, High Knob Rd, and Happy Creek Rd were all listed as concerns in the 2009 survey.

Question 35 asked respondents to choose the three most important transportation needs in the county. Expanding and/or safety improvements to Route 55 East (John Marshall Highway) (70%), Safety improvements to Route 340 South near Skyline Caverns (45%), and Safety improvements to the intersection of Route 55 East (John Marshall Highway) and Route 638 (Freezeland Road) (40%) were the three topics most commonly selected.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Expanding and/or safety improvements to Route 55 East (John Marshall Highway)	70.71% 630
Expanding Route 340/522 North (Winchester Road) to six lanes	19.30% 172
Safety improvements to the intersection of Route 55 East (John Marshall Highway) and Route 638 (Freezeland Road)	41.19% 367
Additional commuter spaces at park-and-ride lots	22.00% 196
Safety improvements to Route 340 South near Skyline Caverns	45.90% 409
Interchange at Interstate 66 and Route 606 (Shenandoah Shores Road)	38.05% 339
Western bypass to connect 340 South (Stonewall Jackson Highway) and 55 West (Strasburg Road)	25.14% 224
Railroad Overpass on Route 658 (Rockland Road)	18.41% 164
Railroad Overpass on Route 606 (Shenandoah Shores Road)	19.30% 172
Total Respondents: 891	

Figure 14. Responses to the most important interstate and primary highway needs in the County

## Taxes

Question 36 asked respondents to rate the value of Warren County services provided, in relation to the taxes paid. The majority of respondents rated services good (42%).

Question 37 asked respondents if they felt that taxes were too high, about right, or too low with regard to the current level of County services offered. 61% of respondents judged the taxes to be about right.

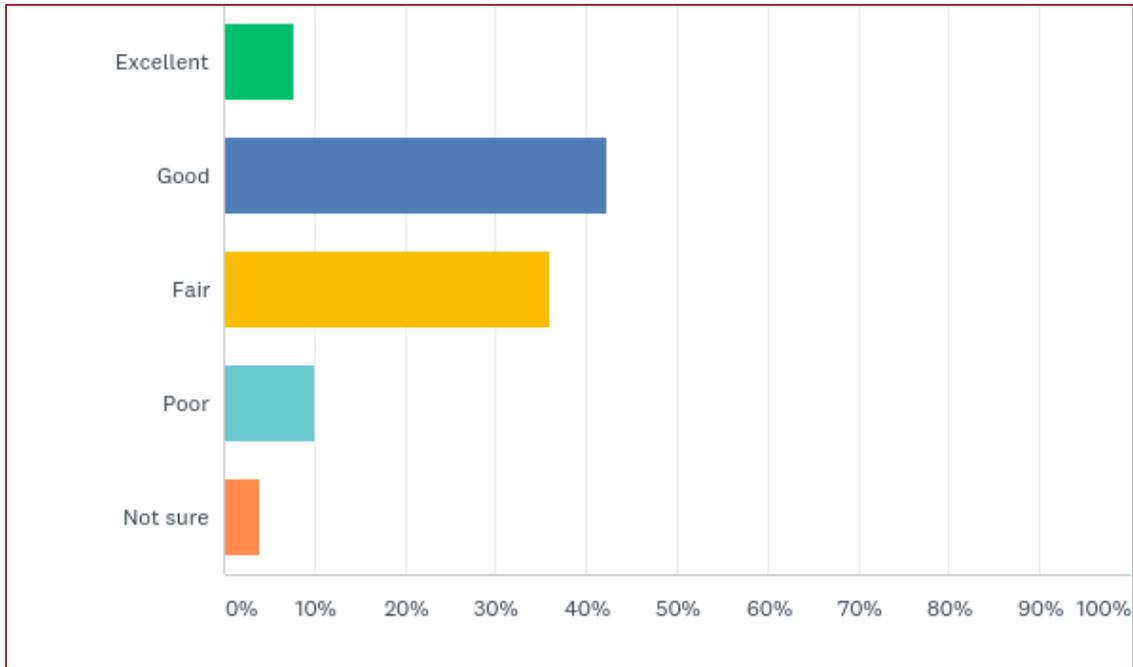


Figure 15. Responses to the value of Warren County services provided in relation to taxes paid

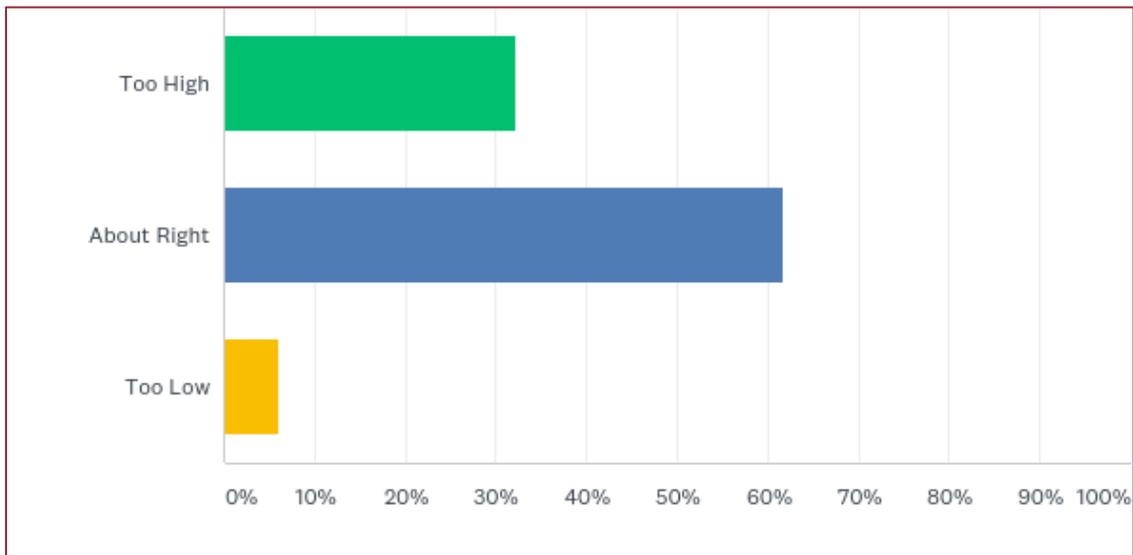


Figure 16. Response to the level of taxes paid with regard to the current level of County services provided