

Fregonese
Calthorpe
ASSOCIATES
Urban & Regional Planning

Memorandum

TO: Envision Central Texas
FROM: John Fregonese & Scott Fregonese
SUBJECT: Survey Results
DATE: December 5, 2003

Attached are the results of the survey distributed to Central Texas residents this fall. As shown in the graphs below, over 12,000 surveys were returned—half through the Internet and half by mail. Residents of all five counties responded to the survey in proportion to the actual population distribution in the region. As we have found in other surveys of this type, the respondents were generally older and less ethnic than the population as a whole, similar to the pattern of voter participation. At the end of the memo you can see the results of weighting some questions to correct for representation, as well as the distribution of the results by ZIP code.

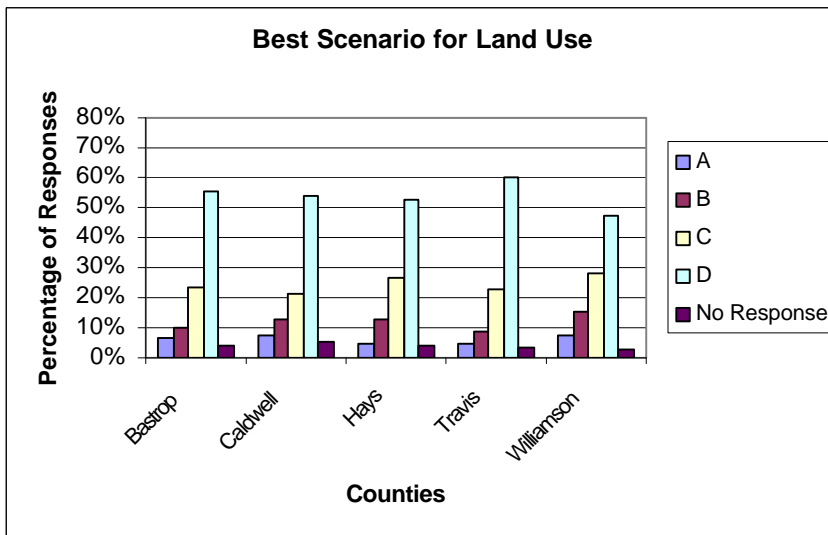
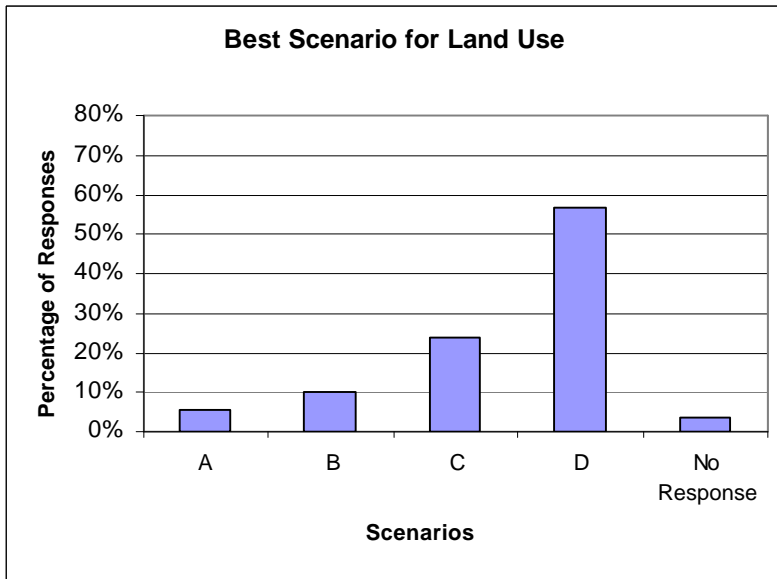
It is important when reporting the results of this survey to point out that it is not a random sample. The people who participated were self-selected and represent those who were sufficiently motivated to participate. On the other hand, this survey represents a very large proportion of the population – about one out of 100 residents, 40 times more than would be counted in a random sample scientific survey. While scientific surveys are a very useful tool, they cannot reveal any depth to the results. In the case of this survey, 12,000 people have engaged in a conversation – listening and digesting the material ECT presented and responding thoughtfully. This therefore should be reported as the largest public conversation ever conducted in this region and indeed in Texas. The material was complex, the questions thoughtful, and the responses well considered. While the respondent group is self-selected, it consists of citizens from throughout the region, and it represents people of all races and ages.

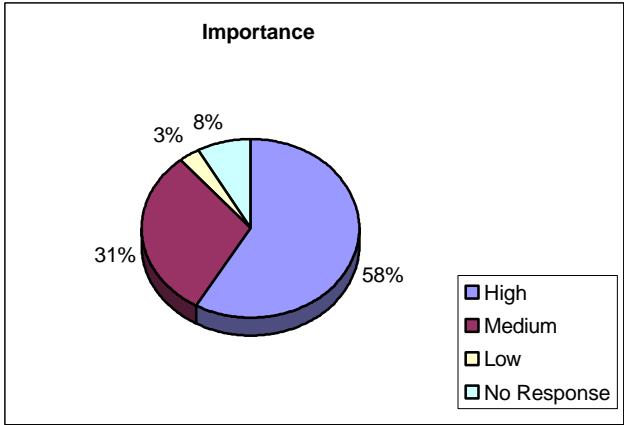
I believe the people who take the time to respond are the natural opinion leaders of their communities, and therefore these surveys really are more useful than scientific polls because the communication is two way. ECT has communicated to this large group, and they have responded to you.

What the Respondents Said

The following are the results of the survey questions with some commentary.

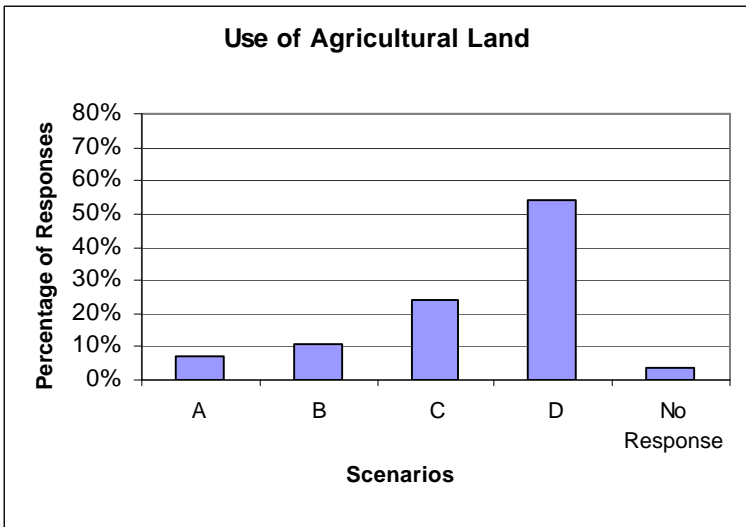
1. Which scenario do you think would provide the best potential use of land for Central Texas' future?

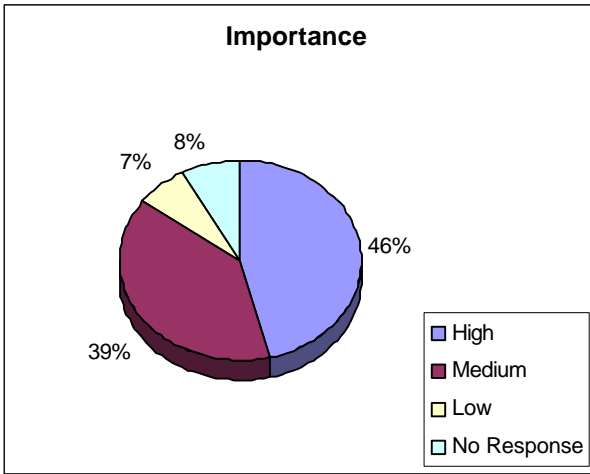
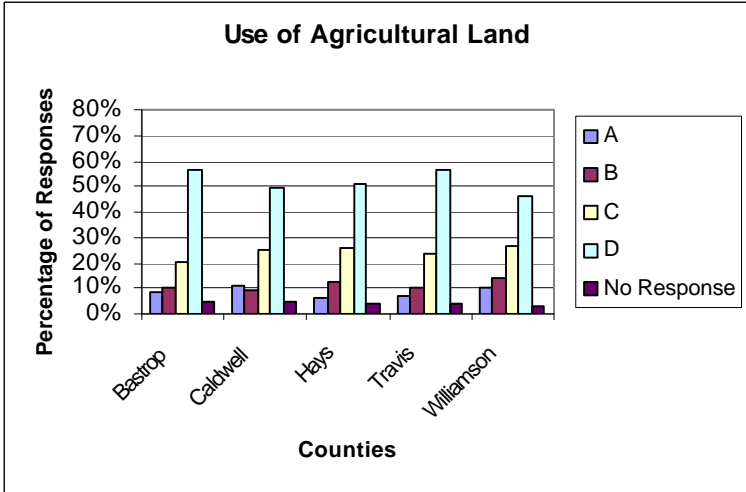




Comments: Clearly most respondents preferred Scenario D, which received a large positive vote across the region. Scenario C was second, however the difference between Scenario C and D was less in Williamson County and Hays County than the rest of the region. This issue was of fairly high importance to the respondents.

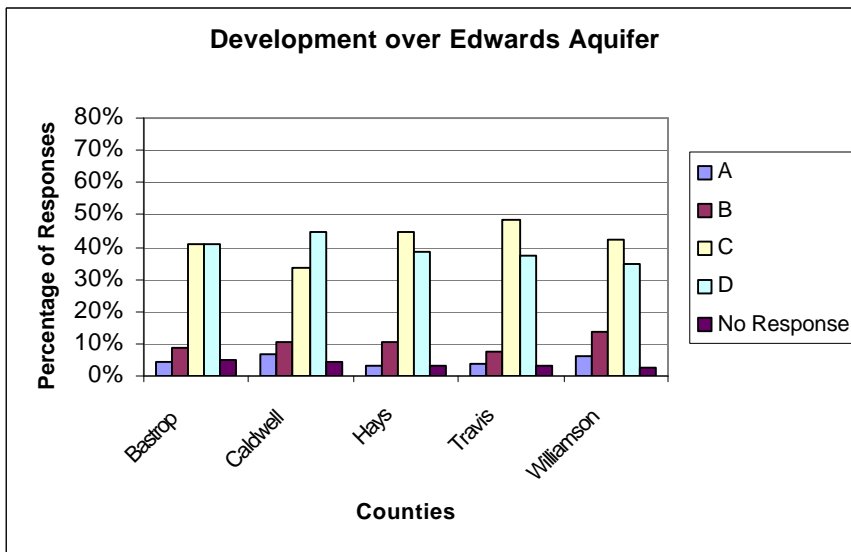
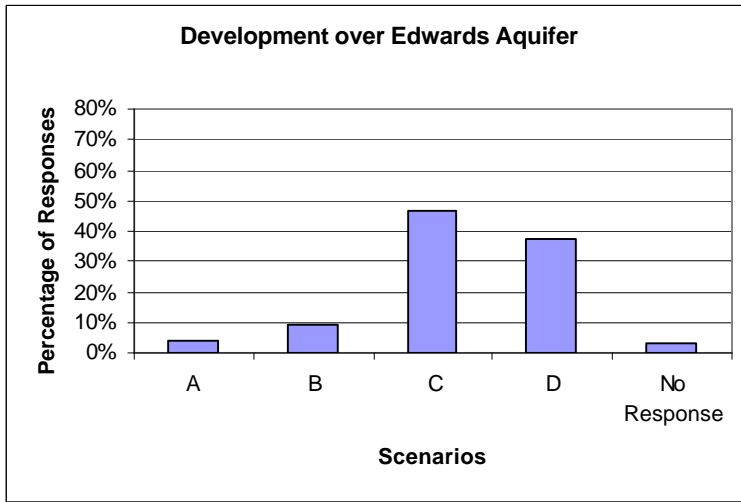
2. Which scenario do you like best regarding the future use of agricultural and range land?

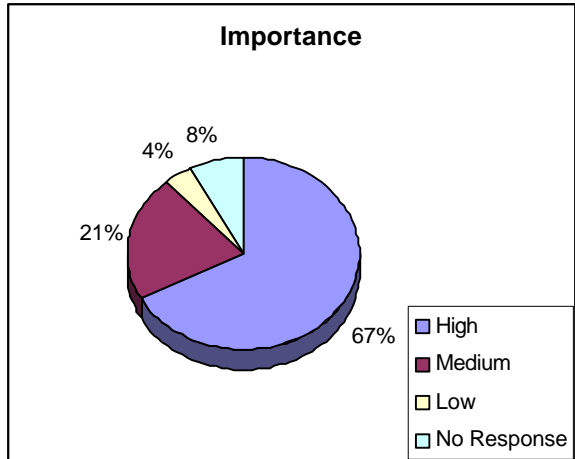




Comments: The results of this question are very similar to question 1, and show the same pattern in the region, with Scenario D showing a strong preference, followed by Scenario C. Again, Scenario C was slightly more popular in Williamson and Hays counties. This issue was of secondary importance overall, compared with other issues.

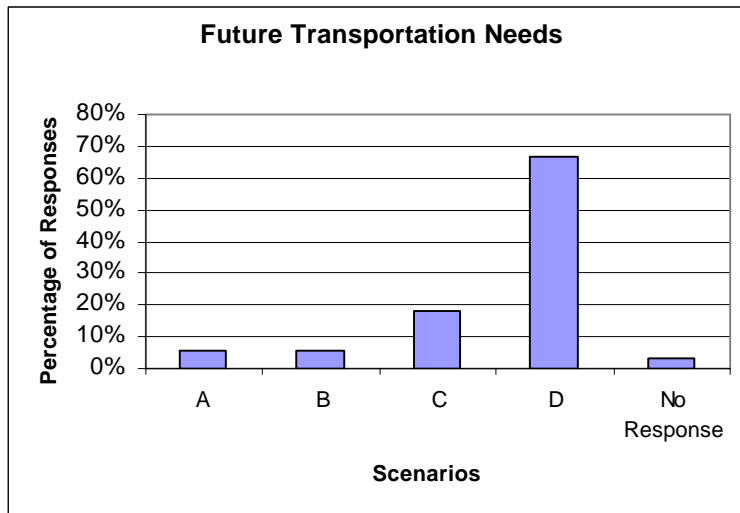
3. Which scenario do you like best regarding future development over the Edwards Aquifer?

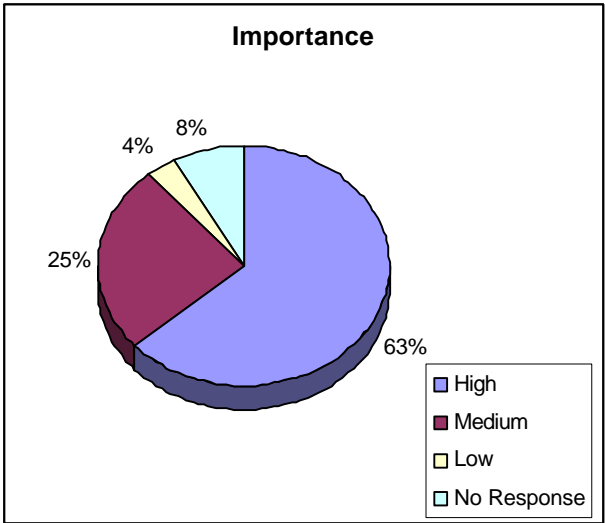
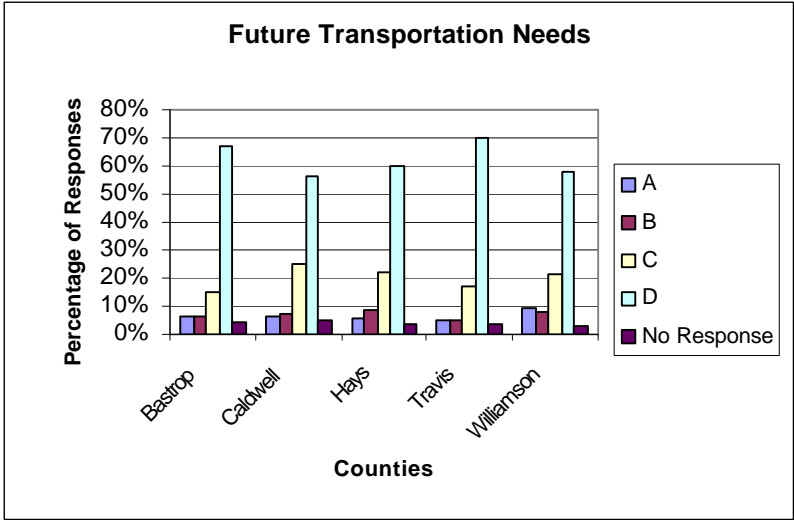




Comments: A decidedly different pattern emerges in the preferences between Scenario C and D, with Scenario C receiving the greater preference. This shows a significant sympathy for a scenario with the most reduction in development on the Edwards aquifer – after all, Scenario D also had significant protection. This distinction is interesting because it indicates the respondents had to have read the survey and understood a fairly complex issue, comprehending the details of the scenarios. While there was some advocacy on this issue during the feedback period, note that the scenario preferences were widespread across the region and also are evident in other questions. This issue was of fairly high importance to the respondents.

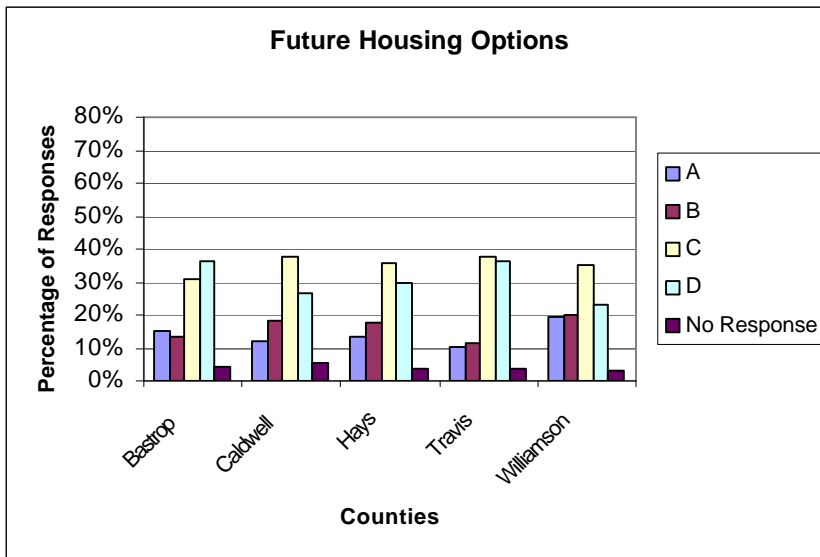
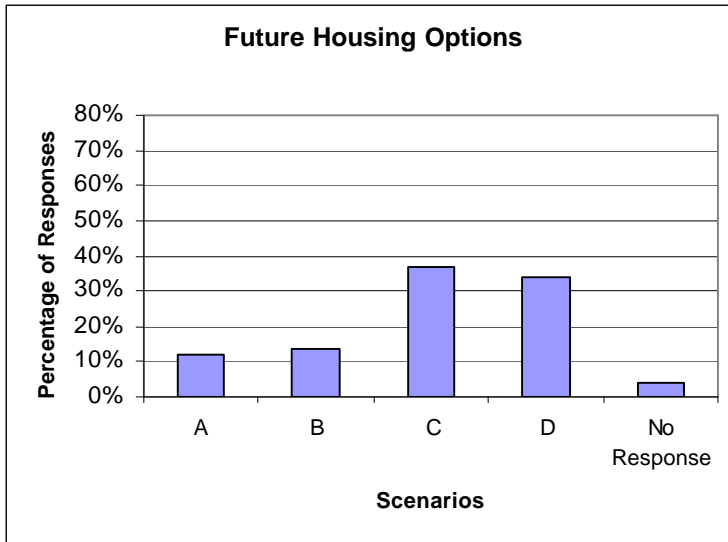
4. Which scenario do you think would best serve our future transportation needs?

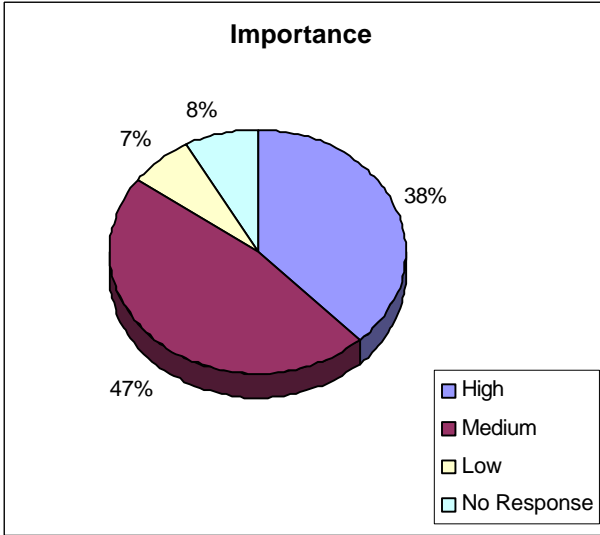




Comments: This response shows a strong preference for Scenario D, with all counties recording at or near a 60 percent response. Scenario C as a distant second, at about 20 percent. This issue was of fairly high importance to the respondents.

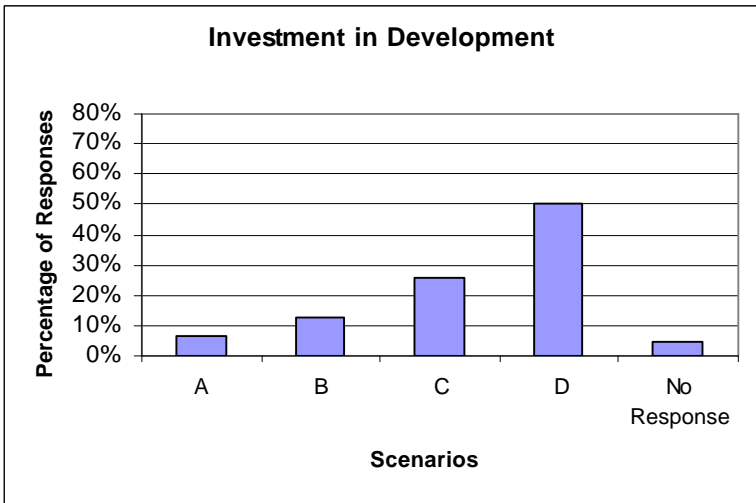
5. Which scenario do you think would provide the best future housing options?

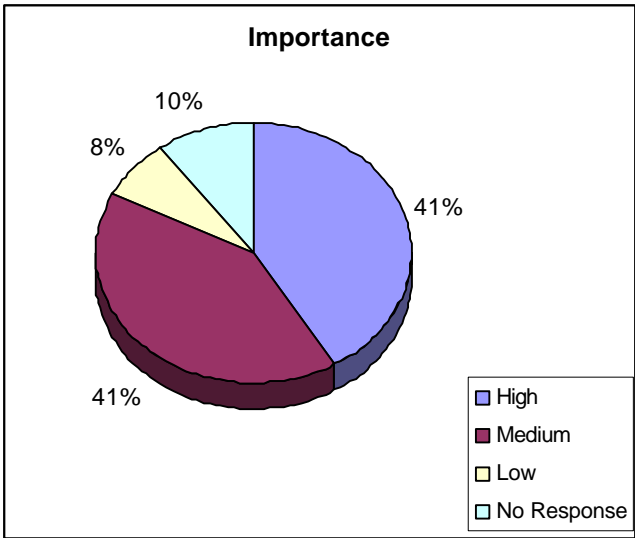
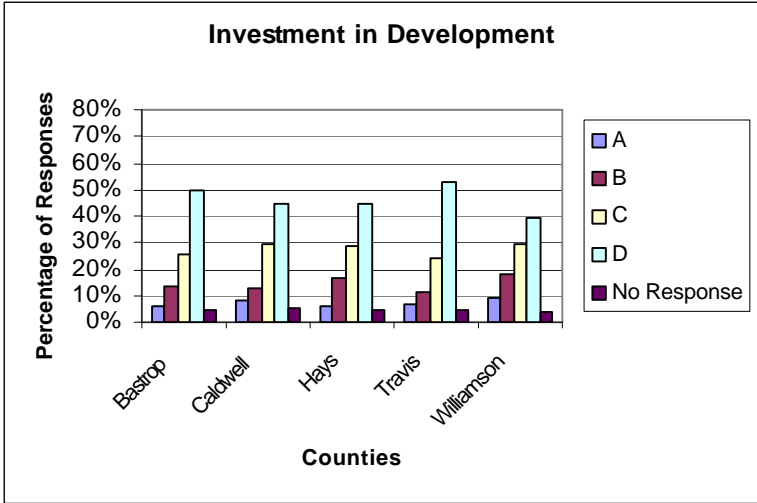




Comments: This again indicates the respondents took the time to read and understand the survey, as this is a fairly nuanced response. This shows a clear preference for the housing style of Scenario C with the land-use pattern of Scenario D. The preference for Scenario C was the strongest in Williamson and Caldwell and weakest in Travis, however in all counties Scenarios C and D were preferred. Williamson County residents were the most equal in their selection of scenarios when it came to housing. It is interesting to note that Scenario A received 20 percent of the vote in Williamson County, which was its strongest showing in any question. Compared to the other questions, this was of secondary importance.

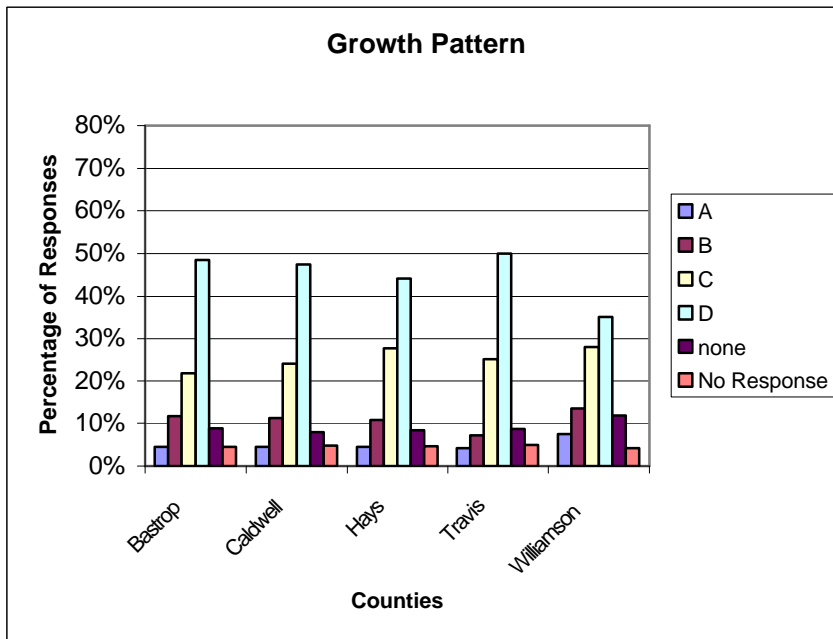
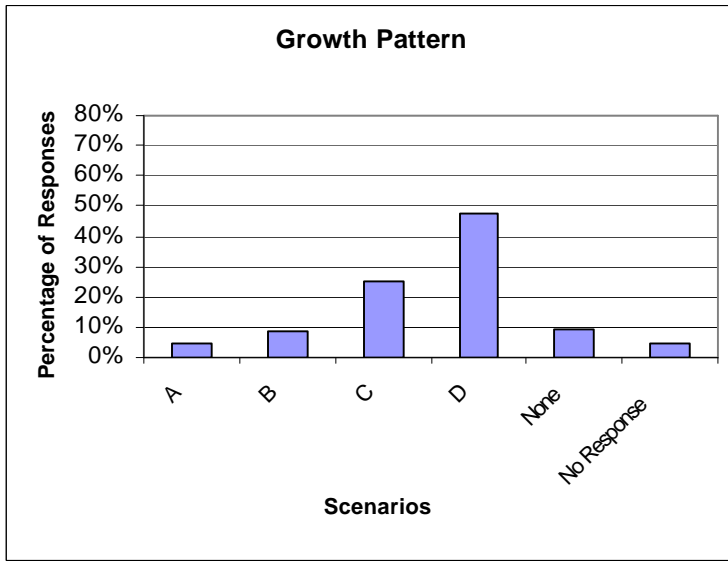
6. What level of investment would you prefer for new development?





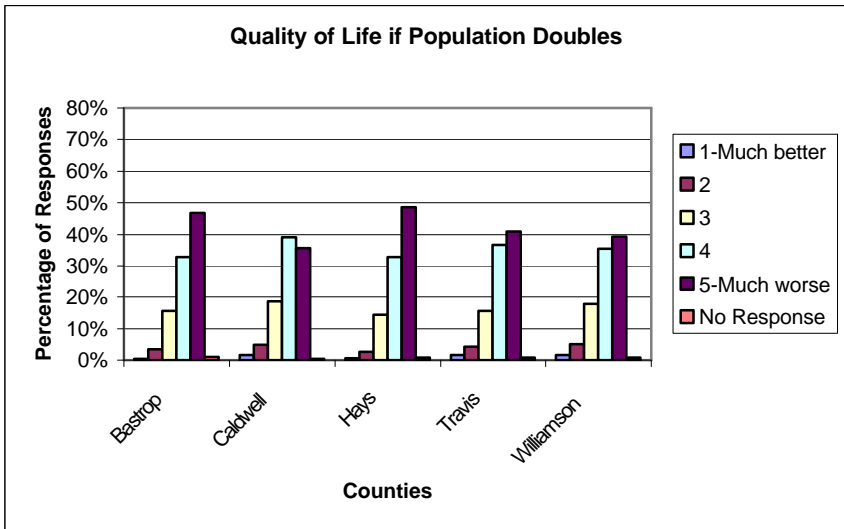
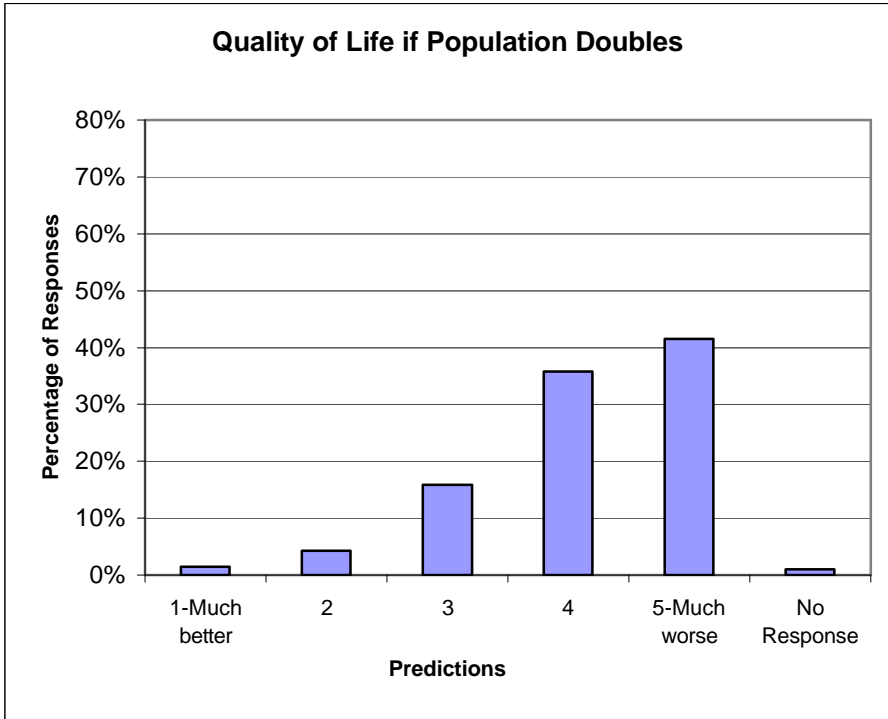
Comments: Scenario D was the preferred scenario regionally and in each county. Scenario C was a close second in Caldwell and Williamson counties. Again, this issues was of secondary importance – people will probably pay a little more to protect key values.

7. Which scenario do you think would provide the best overall quality of life for Central Texas' future?



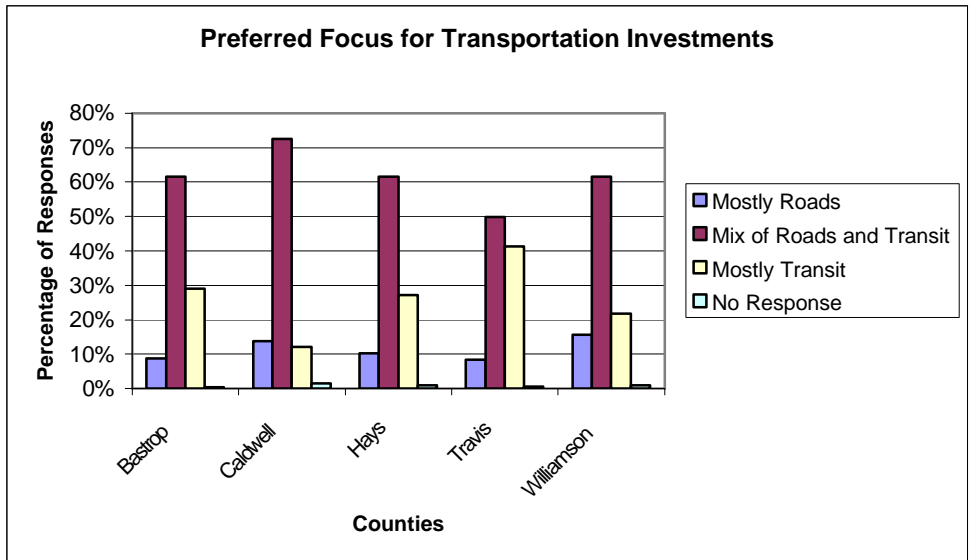
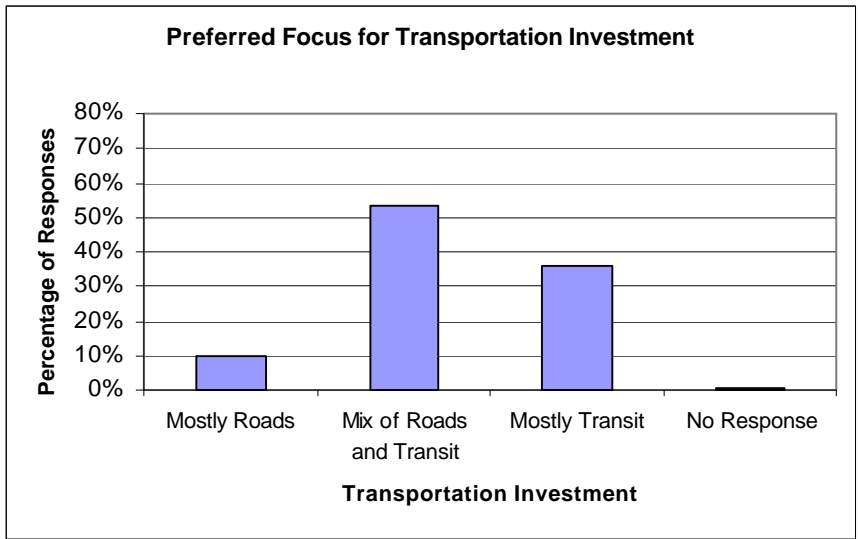
Comments: Scenario D was again the strong preference, except in Williamson County where the preference was not as strong. Scenario C was second regionally and in each county on this issue. It is interesting to note that "none" was preferred by more people than Scenario A or B.

8. How do you think the quality of life in Central Texas would be affected if the population doubles to 2.5 million people during the next 20 to 40 years?



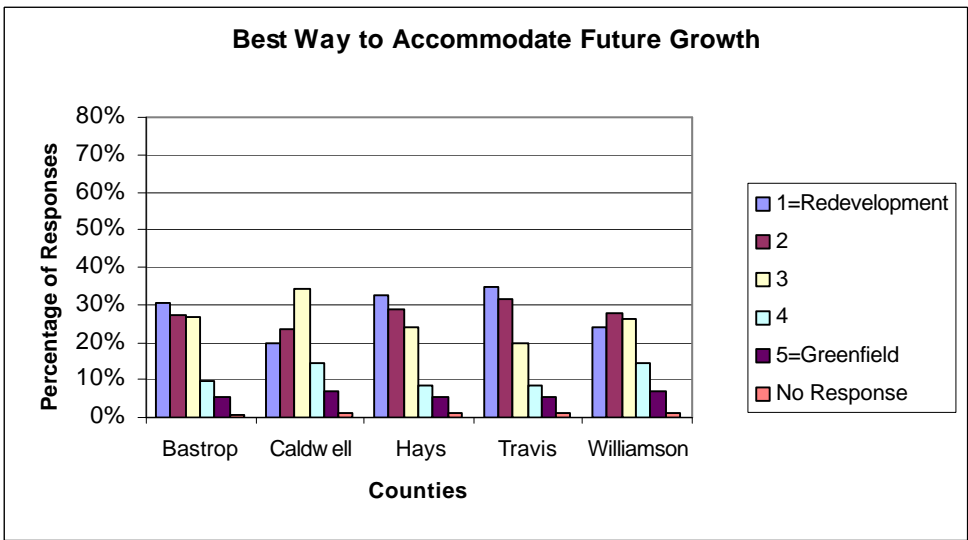
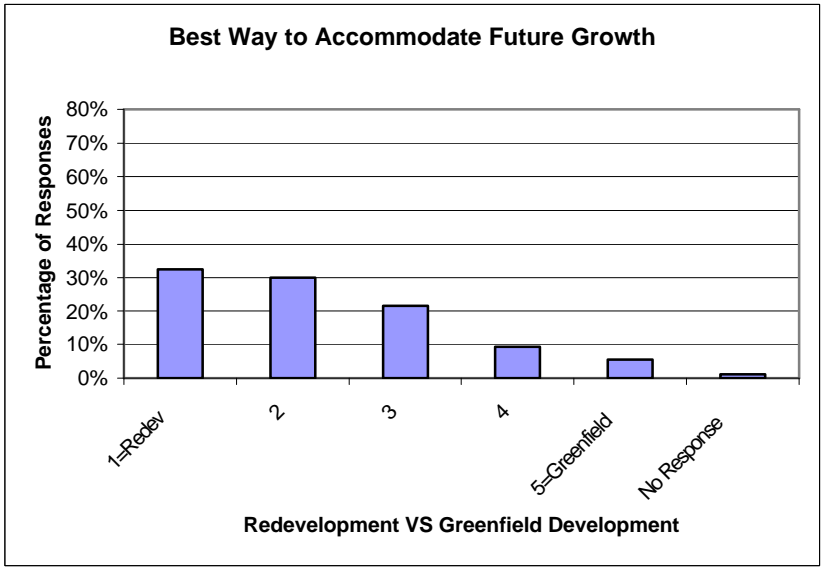
Comments: The respondents show a strong level of concern and a somewhat pessimistic view if the population doubles. Concern over this rate of growth was least in Caldwell County, although concern was strong there as well.

9. What do you think should be the focus of future transportation investment?



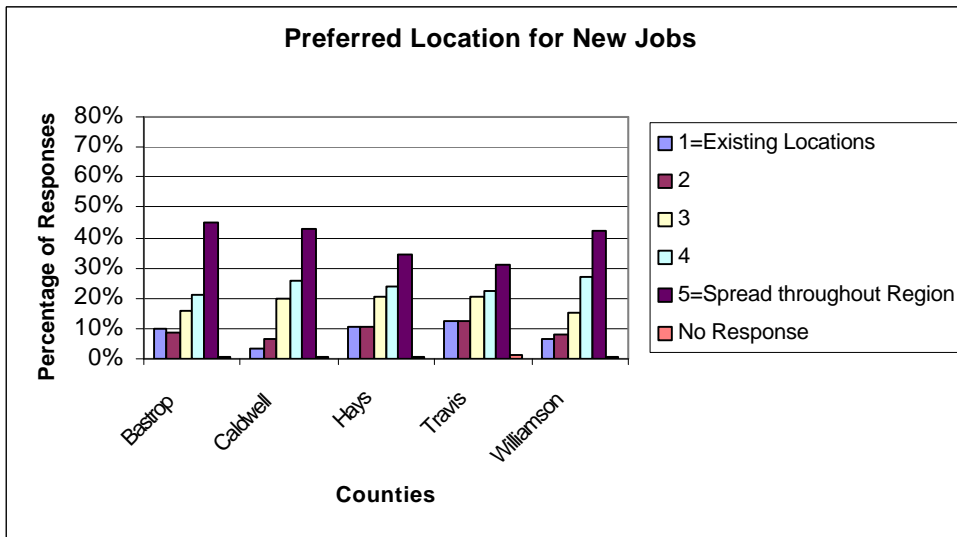
Comments: Respondents show a clear preference for a mix of roads and transit throughout the region, with an emphasis on transit only being the second most popular choice.

10. What would be the best way to fit 1.25 million more people in Central Texas?



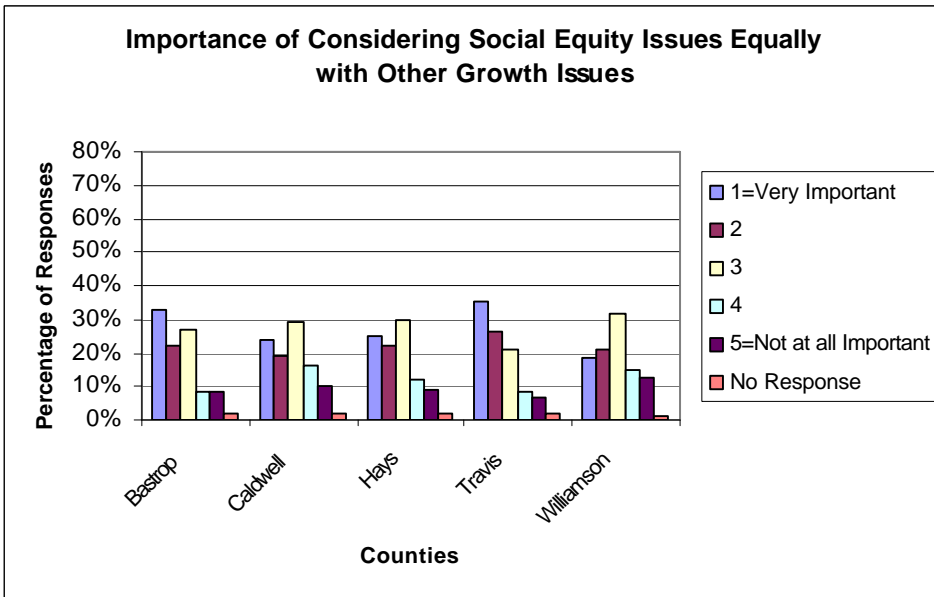
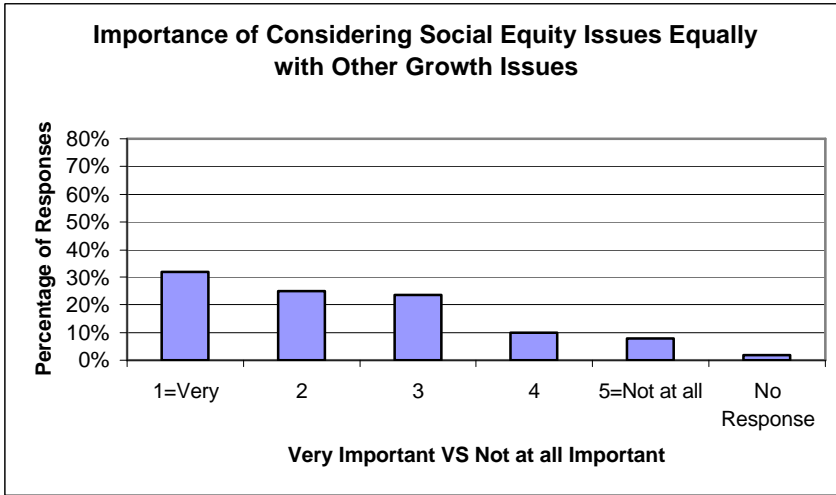
Comments: This indicates a preference for infill development to accommodate a substantial amount of growth. It was strongest in Travis County and weakest in Caldwell County.

11. In what areas do you think new jobs should be located in the future?



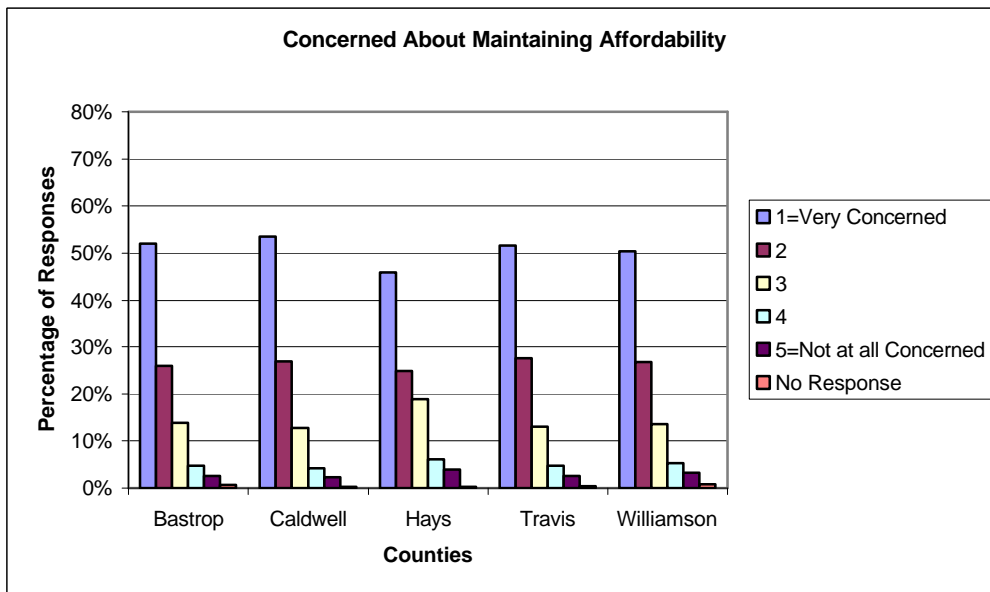
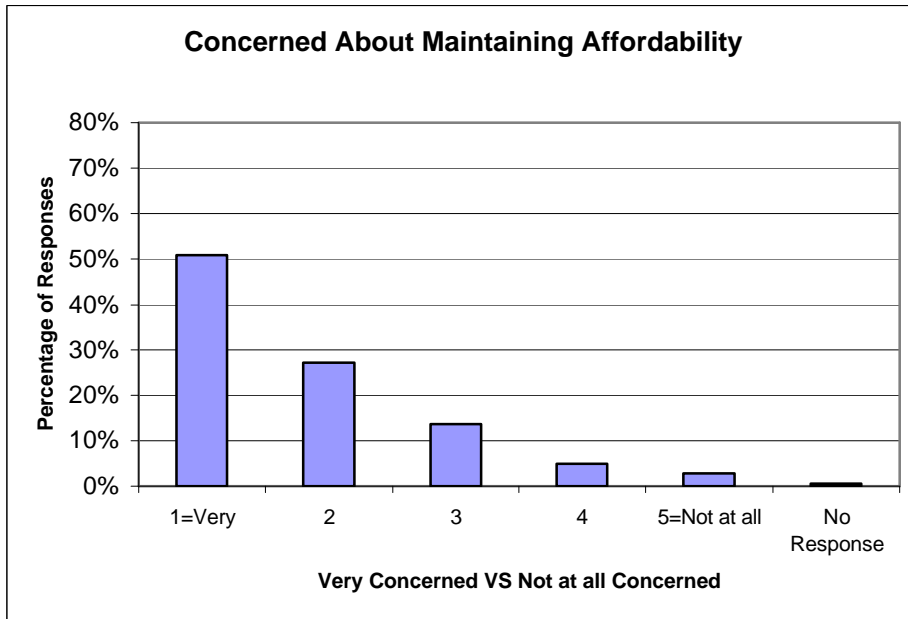
Comments: This response shows a strong preference for jobs-housing balance, most strongly in Bastrop, Caldwell and Williamson counties.

12. How important is it to consider social equity issues on an equal basis with other growth issues when planning for Central Texas' future?



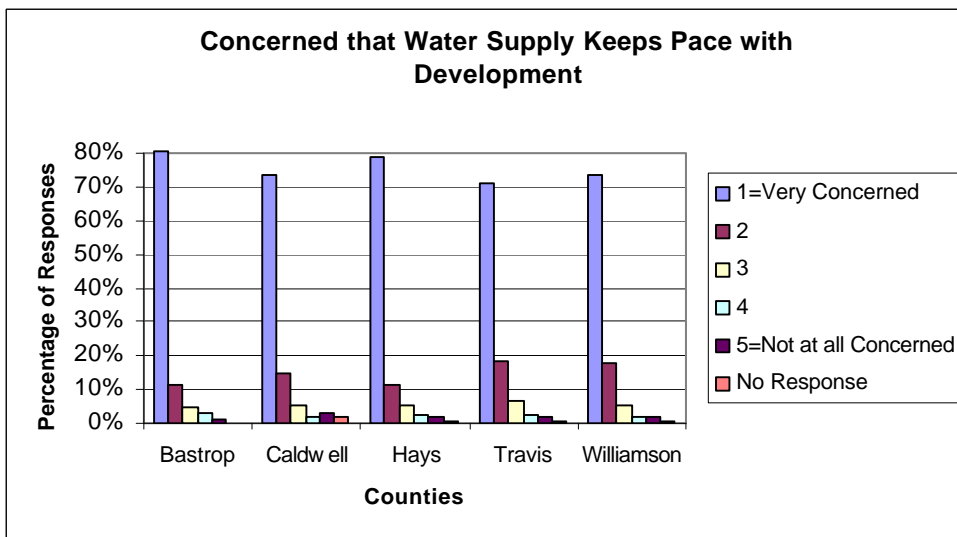
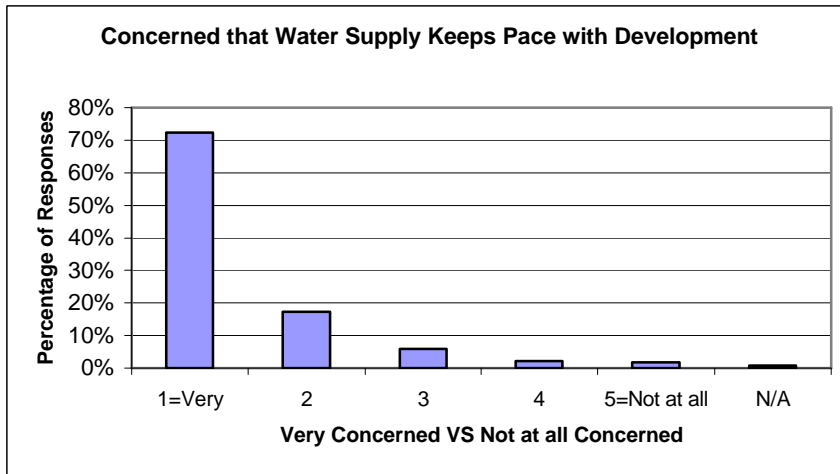
Comments: This response shows a substantial difference across the counties. While in no county did a majority reply that Social Equity was not important, it was ranked very important Bastrop and Travis, and less so in Williamson, with Caldwell and Hays in between.

13. How concerned are you with maintaining affordability in Central Texas?



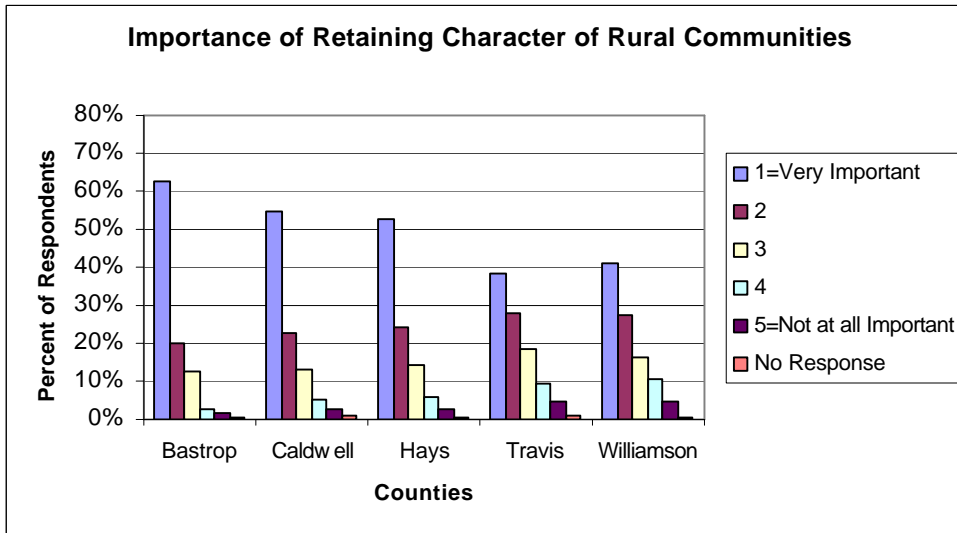
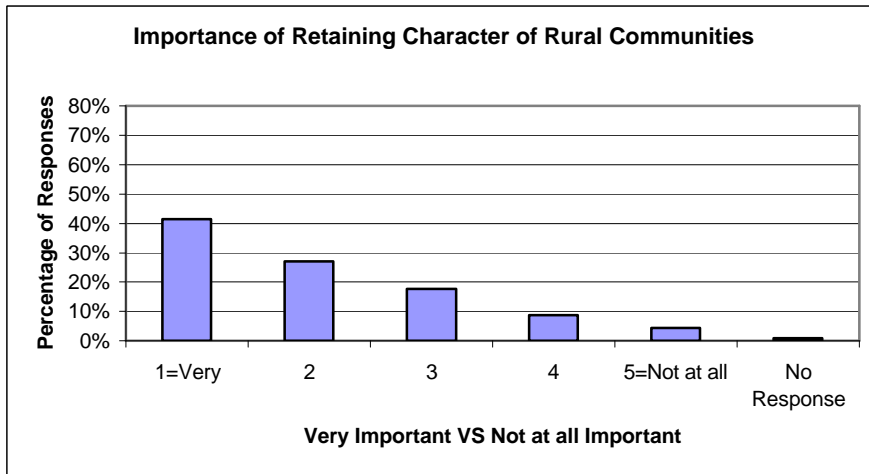
Comments: This issue seems to resonate across the counties, with all showing strong concern and little difference between counties on the level of concern.

14. How concerned are you that the water supply keeps pace with development in Central Texas?



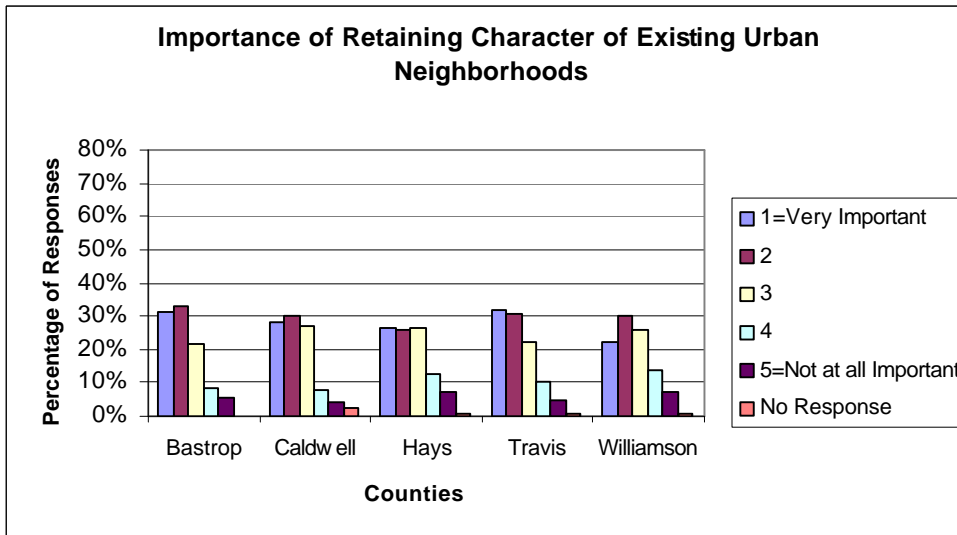
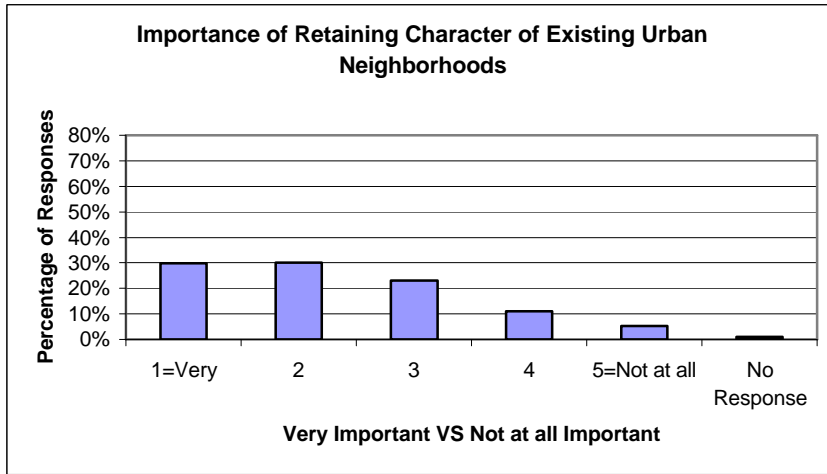
Comments: This issue was the strongest concern response and again shows little difference between counties. There appears to be a large amount of anxiety on this issue.

15. How important is retaining the character of rural communities in Central Texas?



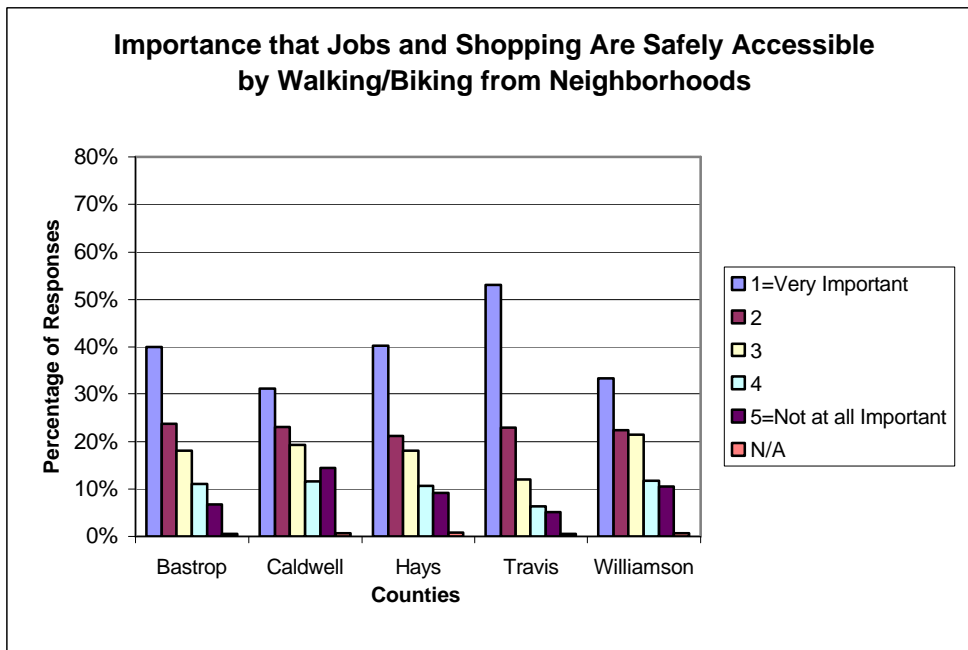
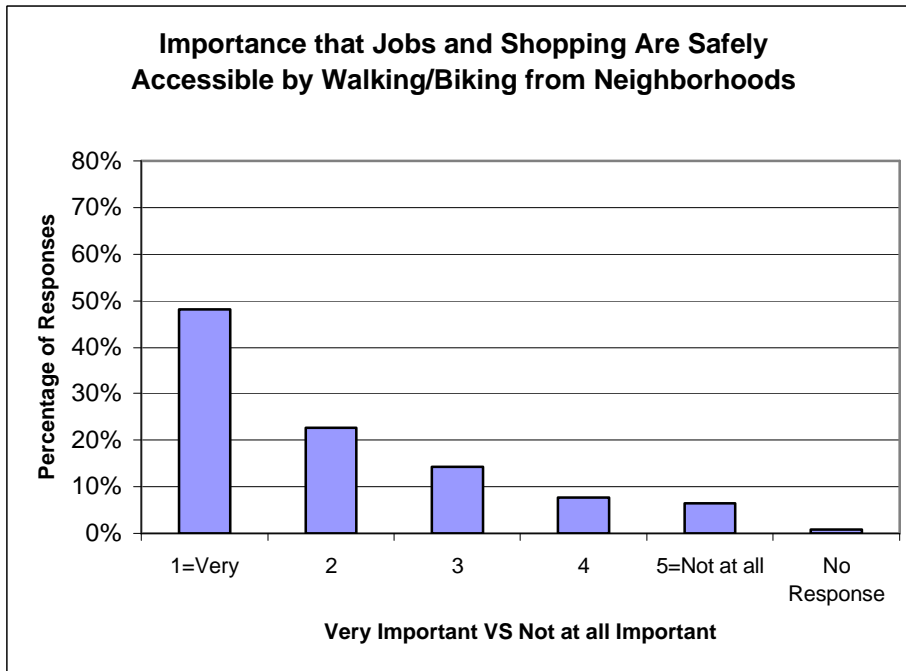
Comments: This was a fairly strong response of concern, with the strongest response from the more rural counties of Bastrop, Caldwell and Hays and the least from the more developed Travis and Williamson counties.

16. How important is retaining the character of existing urban neighborhoods?



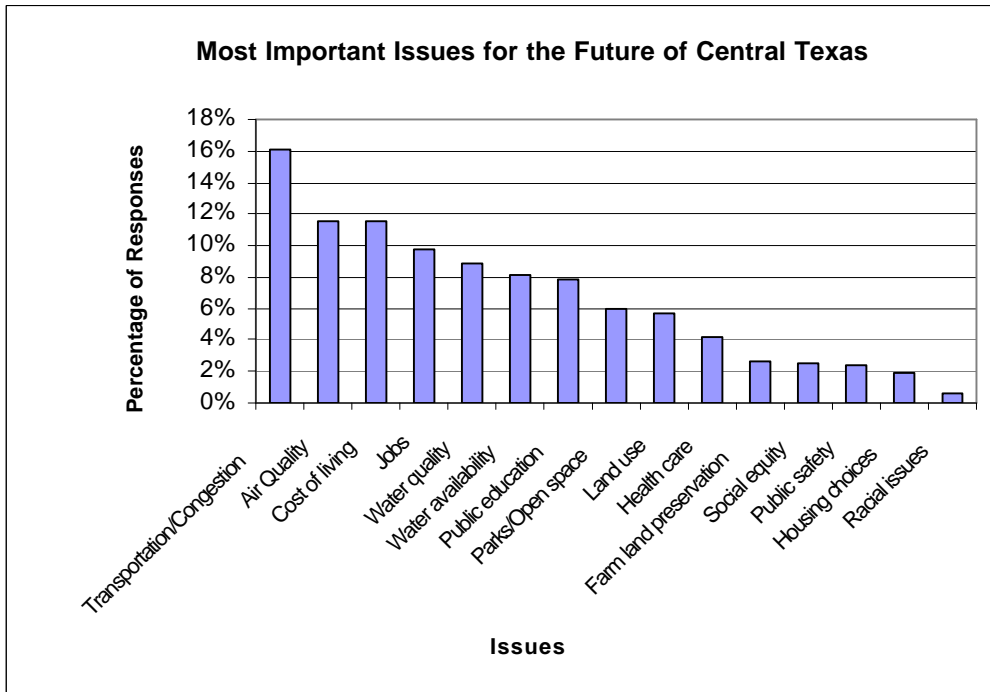
Comments: This was somewhat surprising, in that while this is a concern, it is not as high a concern as other issues such as affordability, water and rural character. The concern was strongest in Bastrop and Travis and weakest in Hays.

17. How important is it that jobs and shopping are safely accessible by walking/biking from neighborhoods?

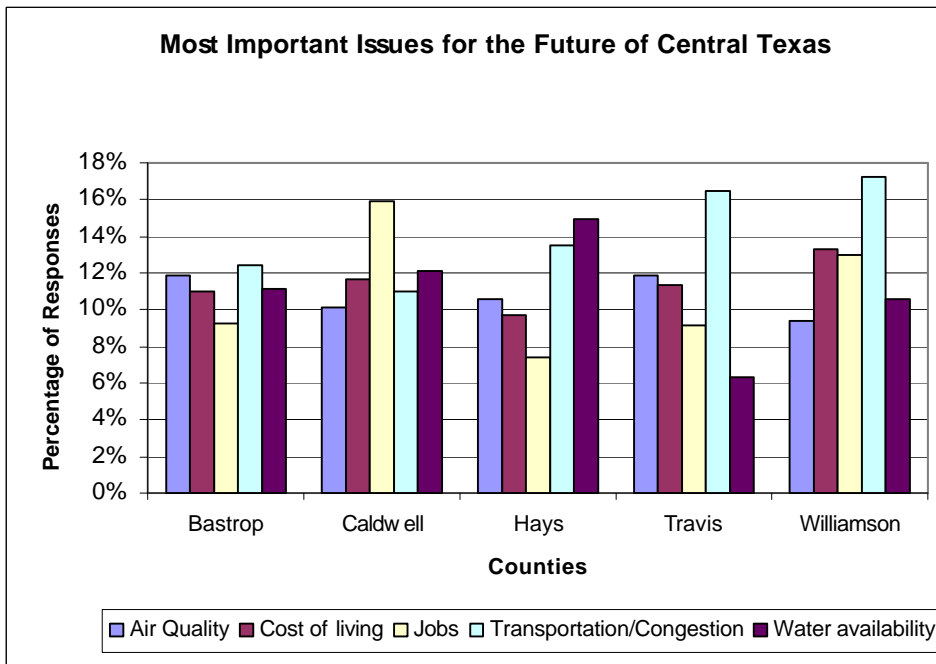


Comments: A concern exists for this across the region, but it is particularly strong in Travis County and less of a concern in Caldwell and Williamson.

18. What are the most important issues for the future of Central Texas?



Comments: The top five concerns relate to transportation, the economy and the environment. Water availability and public education were high as well.

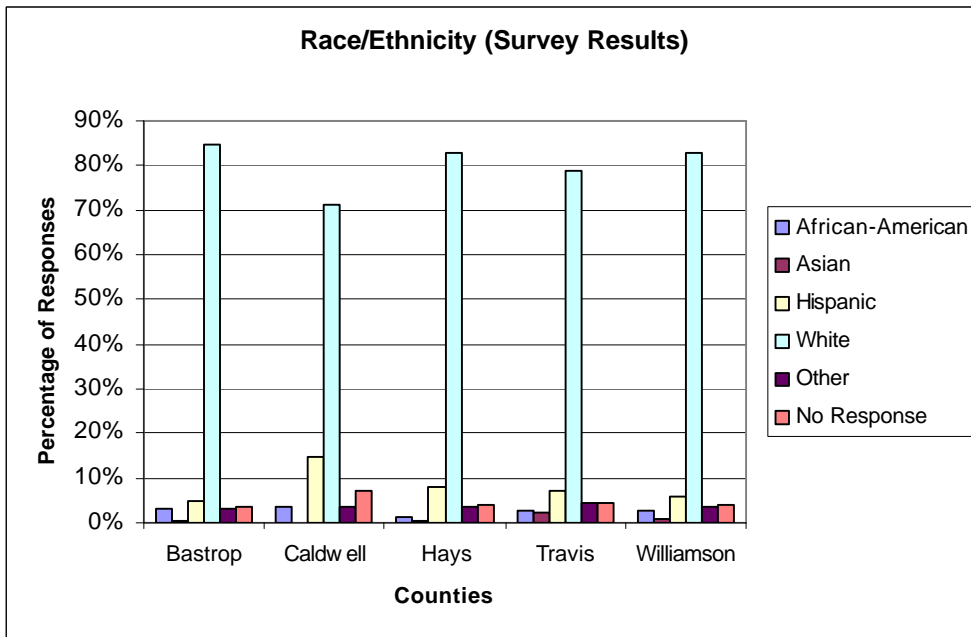
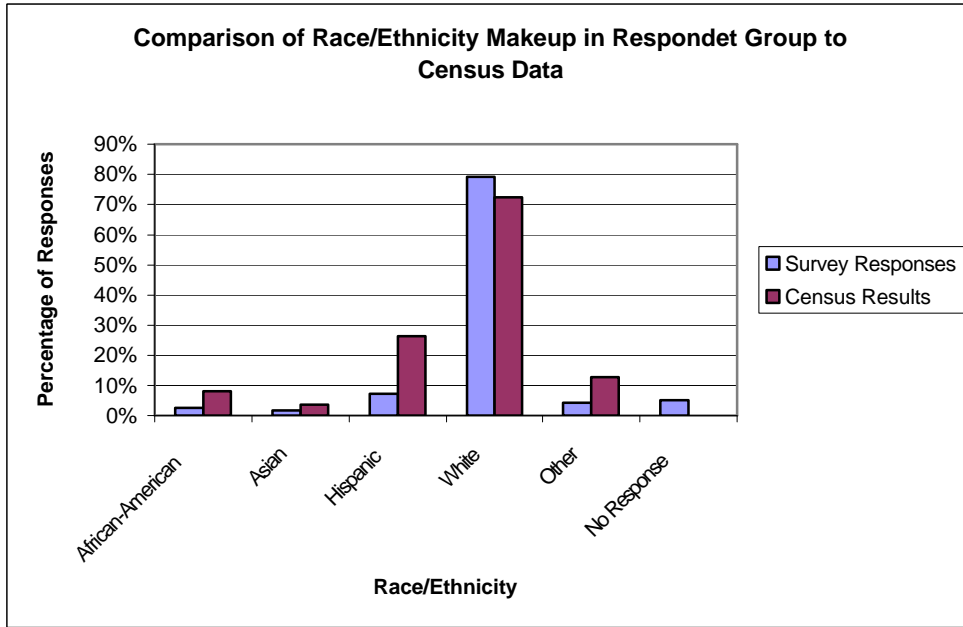


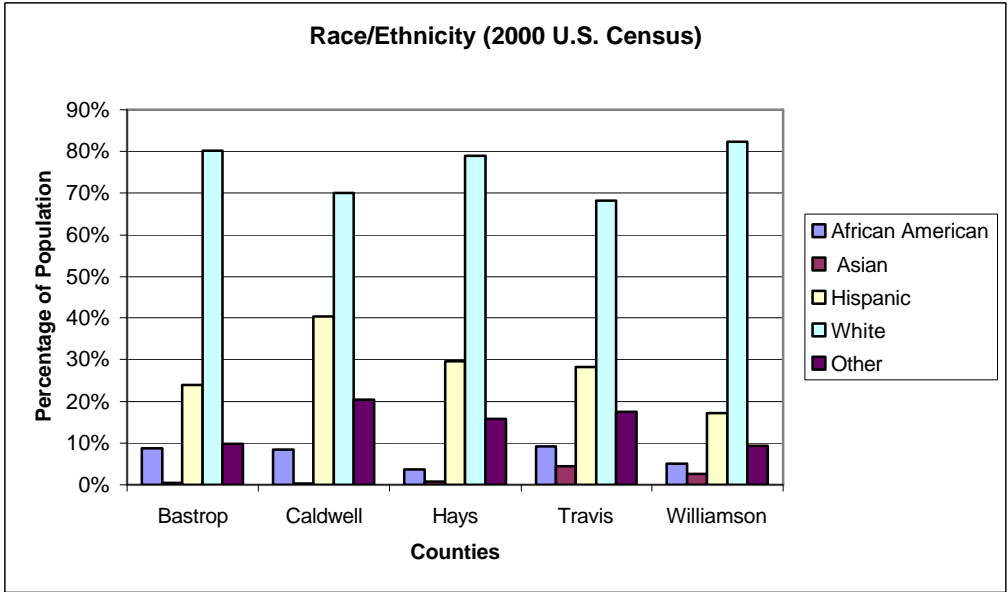
Comments: The top five concerns ranked differently in the counties, with Bastrop consistent across all of the top five, Caldwell most concerned with jobs, Hays with water availability and transportation and Travis and Williamson with transportation.

Survey Demographics

The following graphs illustrate the demographics of the survey respondents compared with the population in the 2000 Census.

Race/Ethnicity

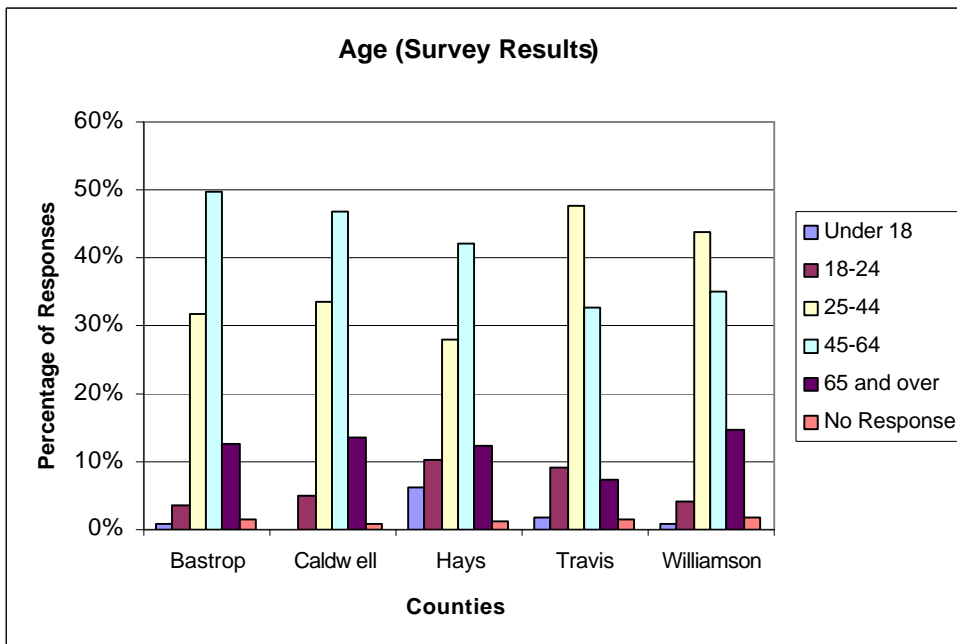
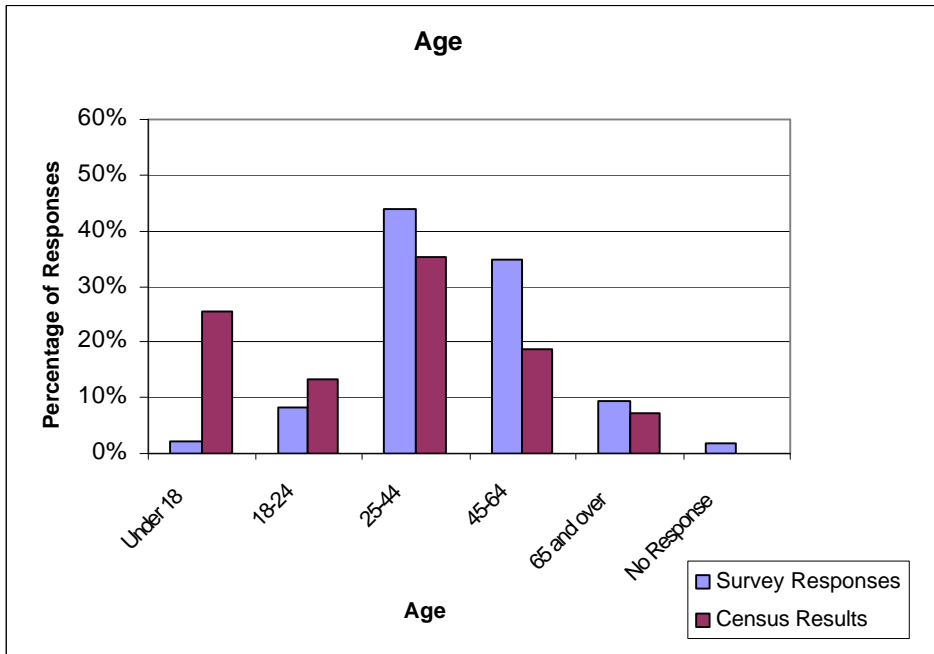


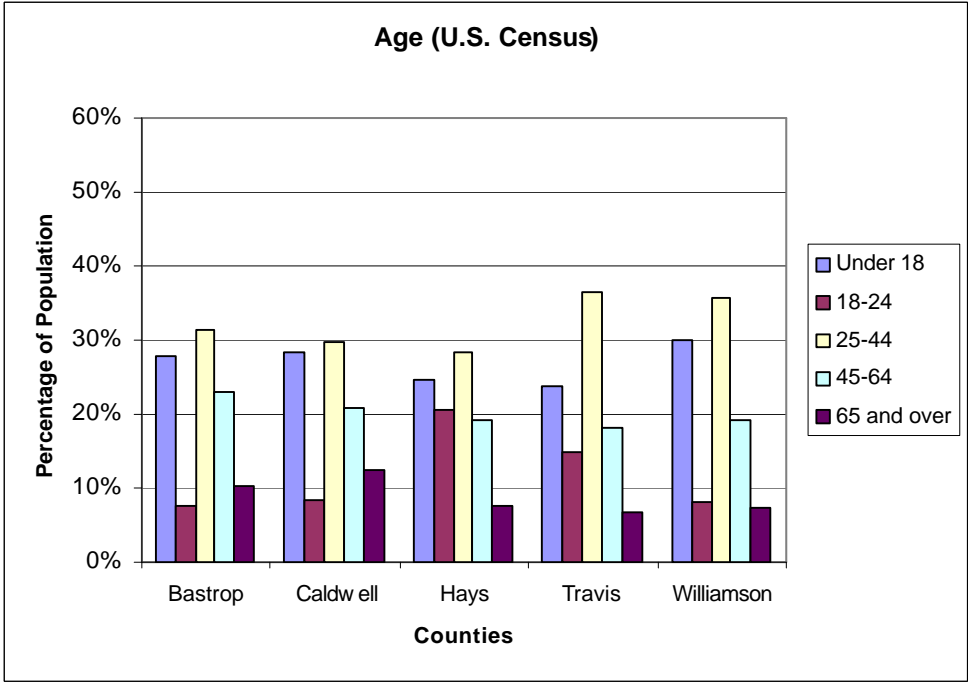


Comments: The respondent group is clearly less ethnic than the general population, but it is similar to the voter profile for the region. Note the large Hispanic return for Caldwell County matches well with the overall population of Hispanics in the county.

The effect of the Hispanic question is different in the survey than in the Census, making the responses not directly comparable. In the US Census, a person may select Hispanic, and White. Many Hispanics select this option. In our survey, a person had to pick Hispanic or white. This accounts for much of the disparity between the census Hispanic population and the survey Hispanic population. There is no significant difference between the weighted and unweighted results at any rate.

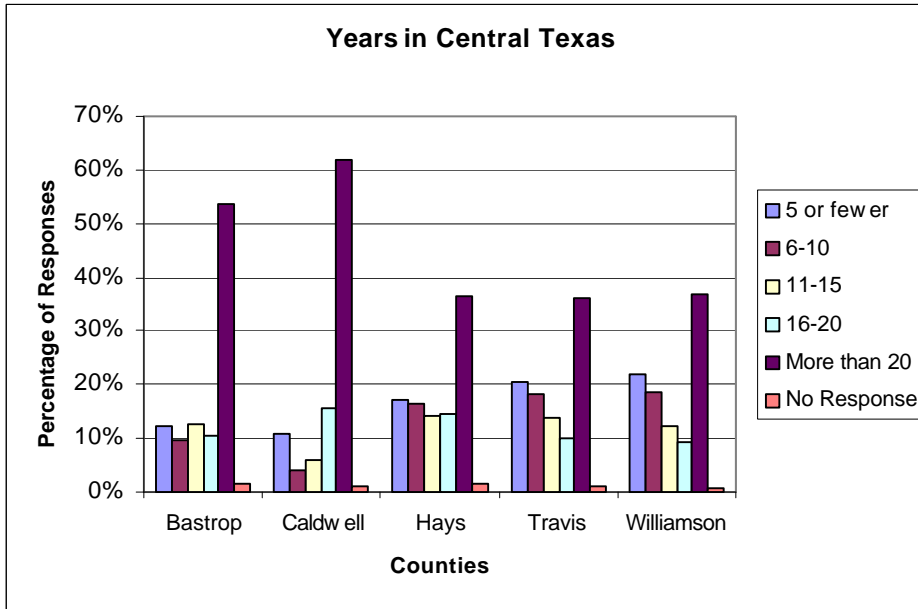
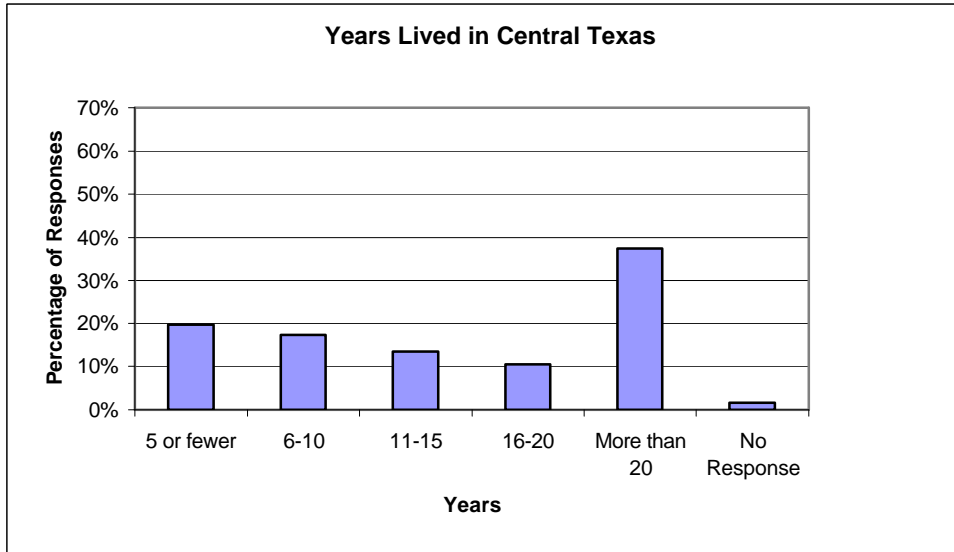
Age





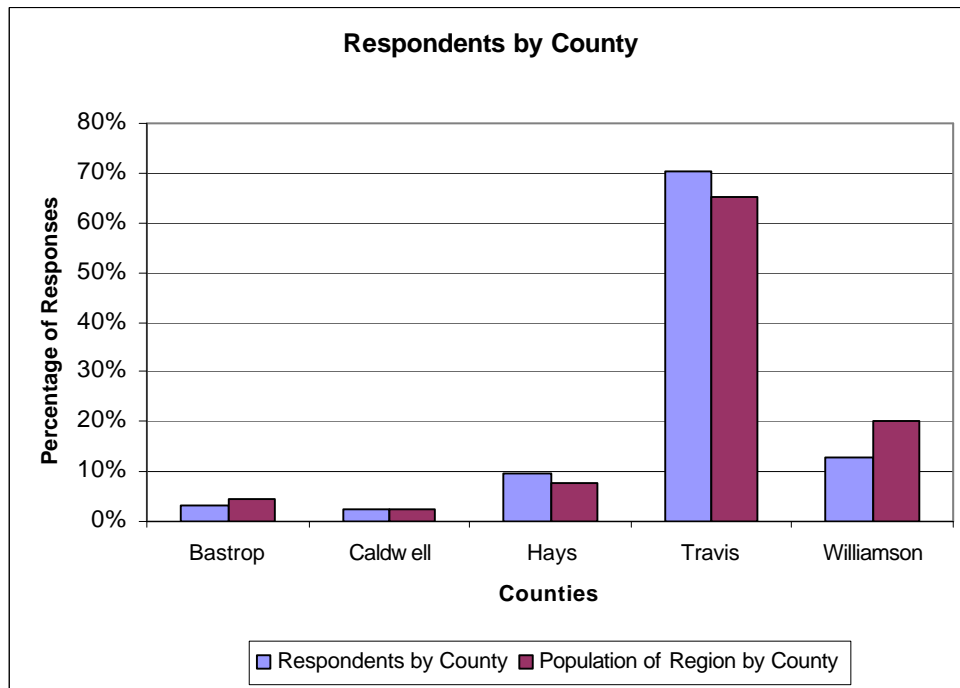
Comments: The respondent group is clearly older than the general population, but it is interesting to note the fairly high response rate from the young adult group (25 to 44) and middle age group (45 to 64) and an under representation of the seniors (over 65). Note the large return in young adults in Travis and Williamson counties and the large response from people under 18 in Hays County.

Years Lived in Central Texas



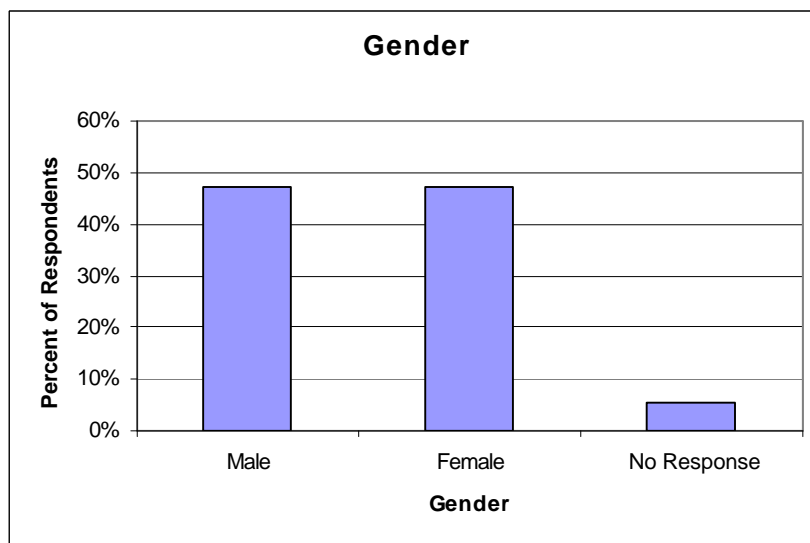
Comments: Most respondents have lived here for more than 20 years, although Caldwell and Bastrop counties had the largest percentage of longtime residents and Travis and Williamson the least.

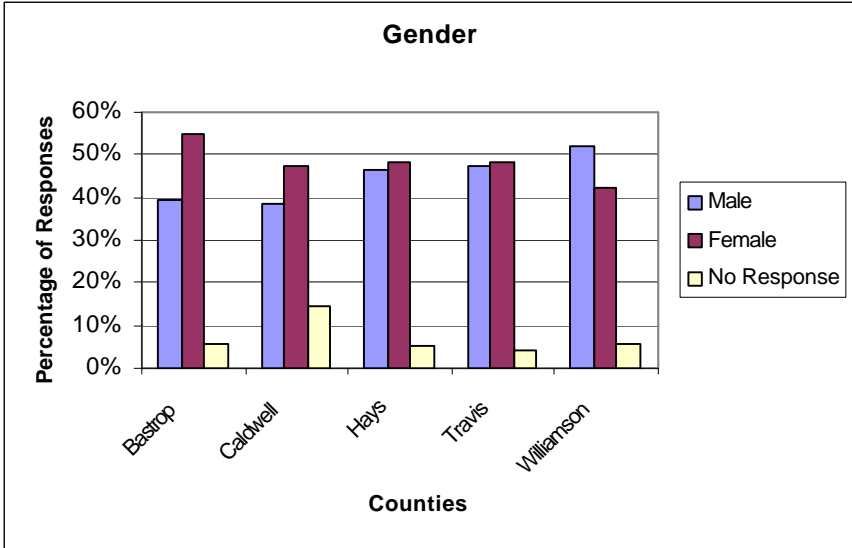
County of Residence



Comments: Hays and Travis County responded at a slightly higher rate than their population, and Williamson responded at a slightly lower rate.

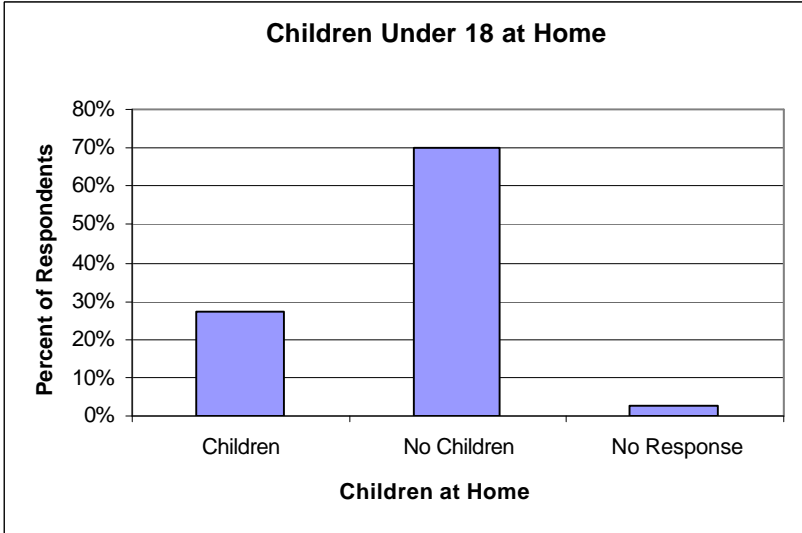
Gender

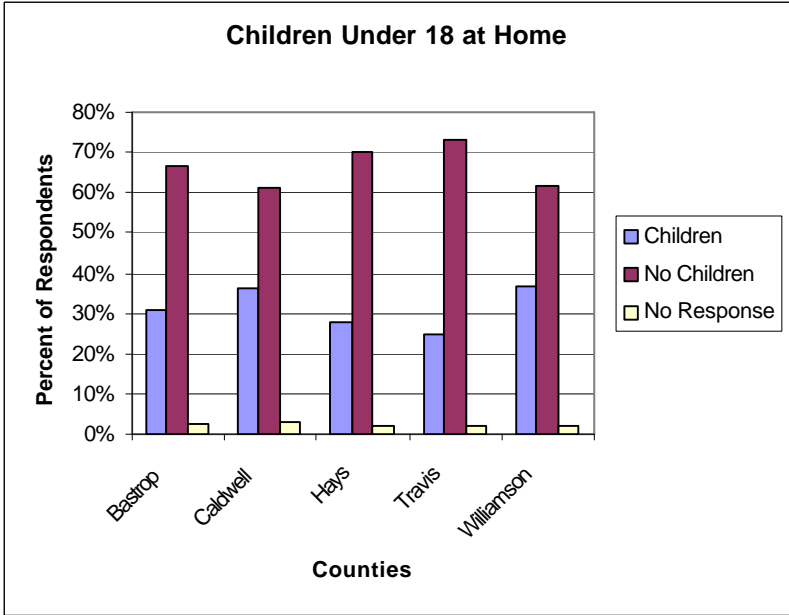




Comments: This appears to be well distributed by gender, except for a preponderance of female responses in Bastrop, Male responses in Williamson, and a peculiarly large number of no response in Caldwell County. We don't think this is significant.

Children Under 18 at Home





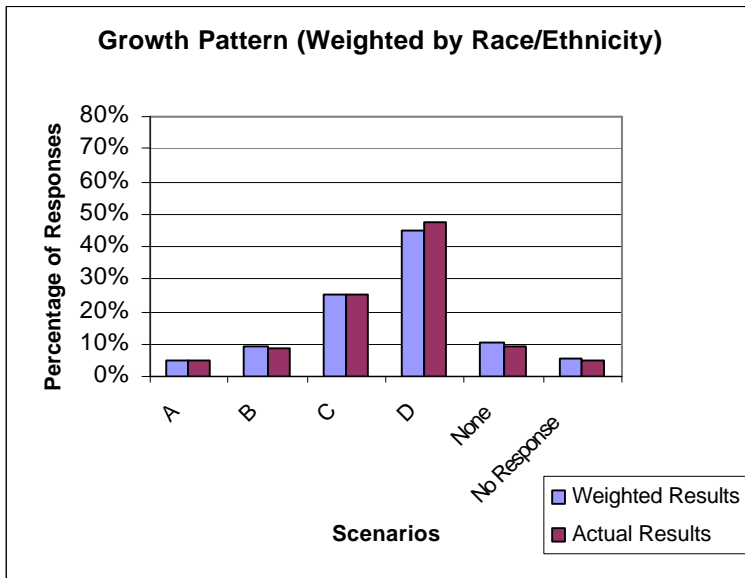
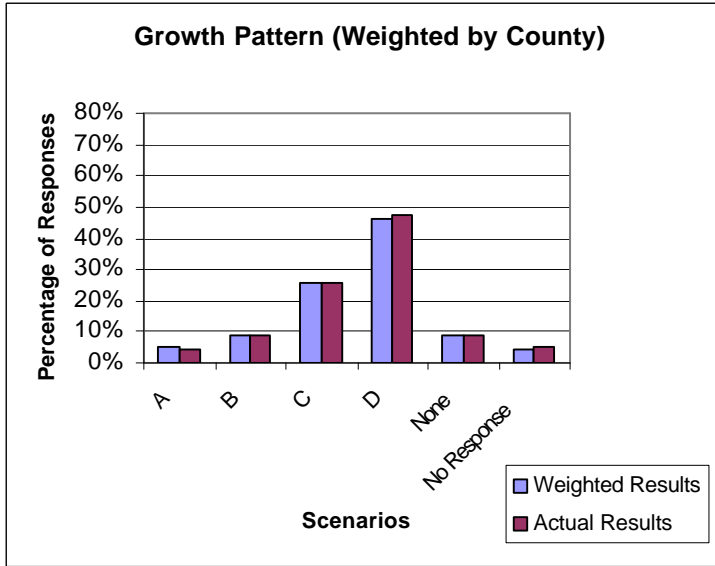
Comments: The actual regional numbers for households with children under 18 has not been calculated.

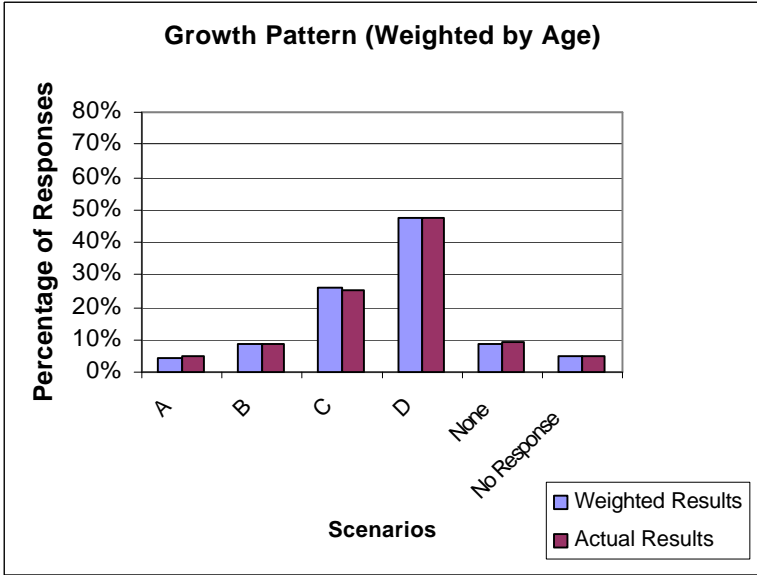
Weighted Results

The following charts show results for questions 7, 10 and 12, weighted to account for the difference in representation between the number of survey respondents by county, race/ethnicity and age, and data from the 2000 U.S. Census. Groups underrepresented in the survey were given a greater weight to match Census data. Likewise, overrepresented groups were given a lower weight.

Since weighing the age group of respondents younger than 18 years of age would have resulted in a very large weight assigned to it, and thereby skewing the results, they were instead removed from the data set for the purposes of weighting (they were included in the unweighted results).

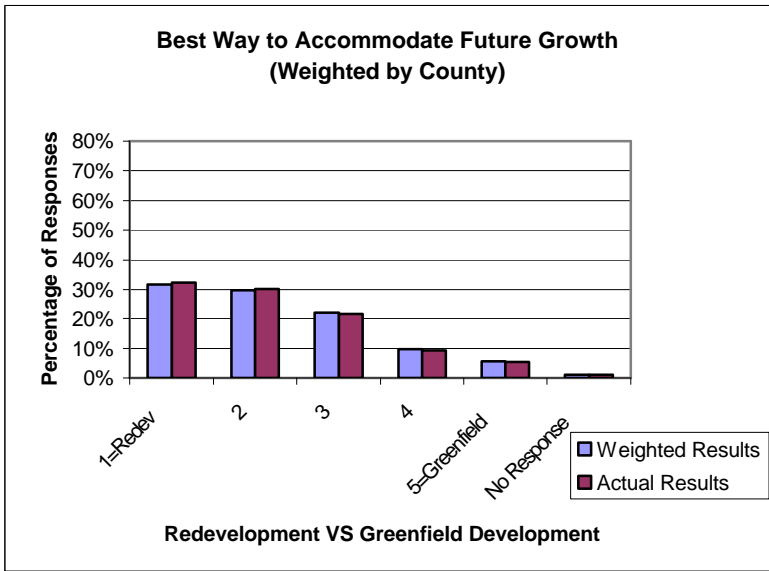
7. Which scenario do you think would provide the best overall quality of life for Central Texas' future?

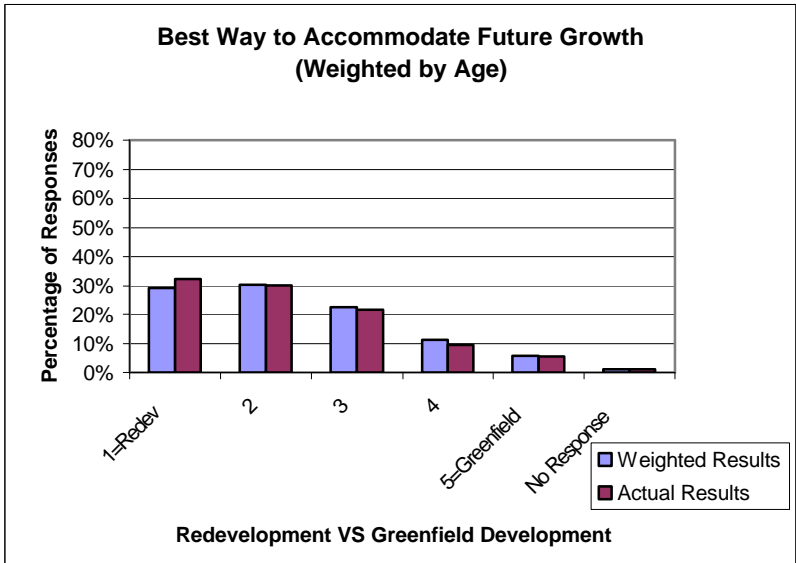
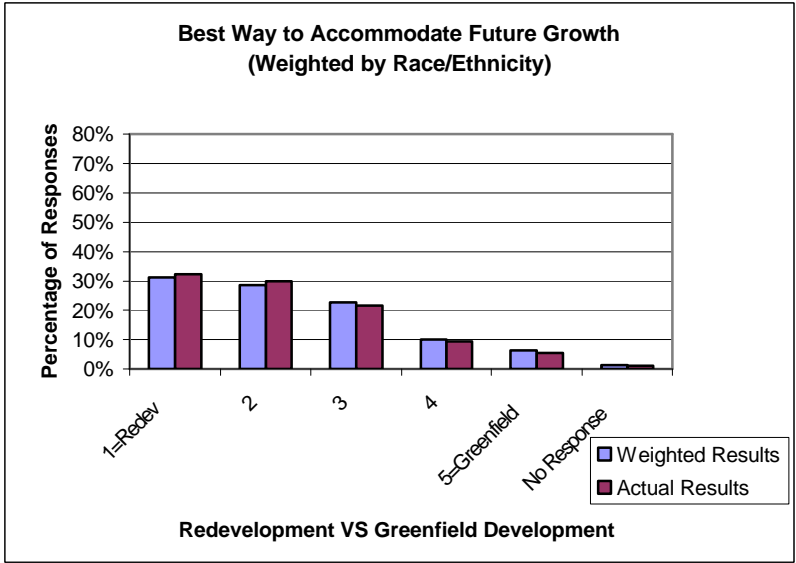




Comments: Practically no difference exists between the results for this question when weighted by these factors.

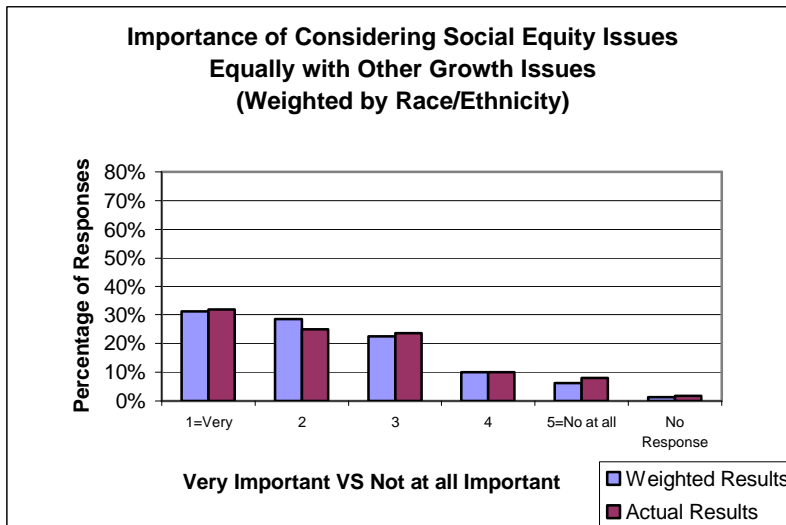
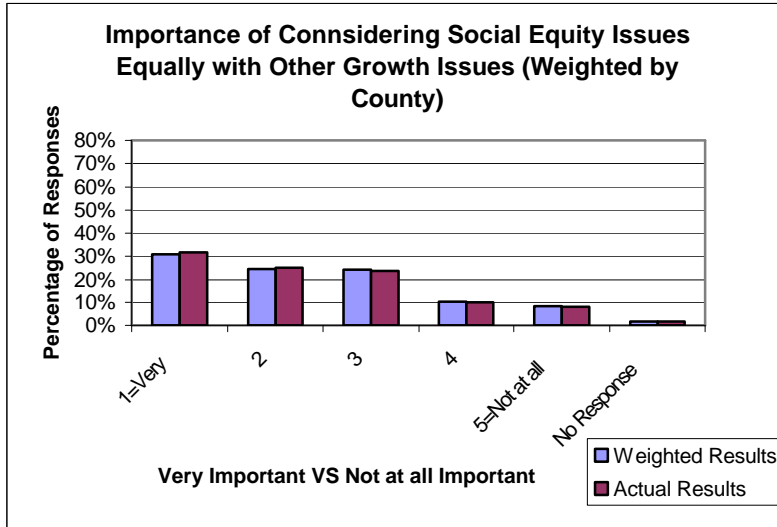
10. What would be the best way to fit 1.25 million more people in Central Texas?

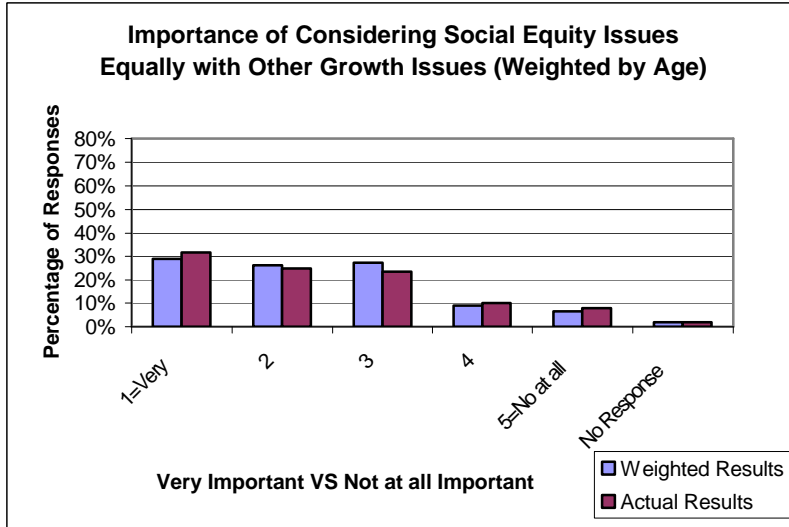




Comments: The weighted results varied only slightly from the actual survey results. All groups show a strong preference for infill development, but the intensity is slightly less pronounced than in the actual results.

12. How important is it to consider social equity issues on an equal basis with other growth issues when planning for Central Texas' future?



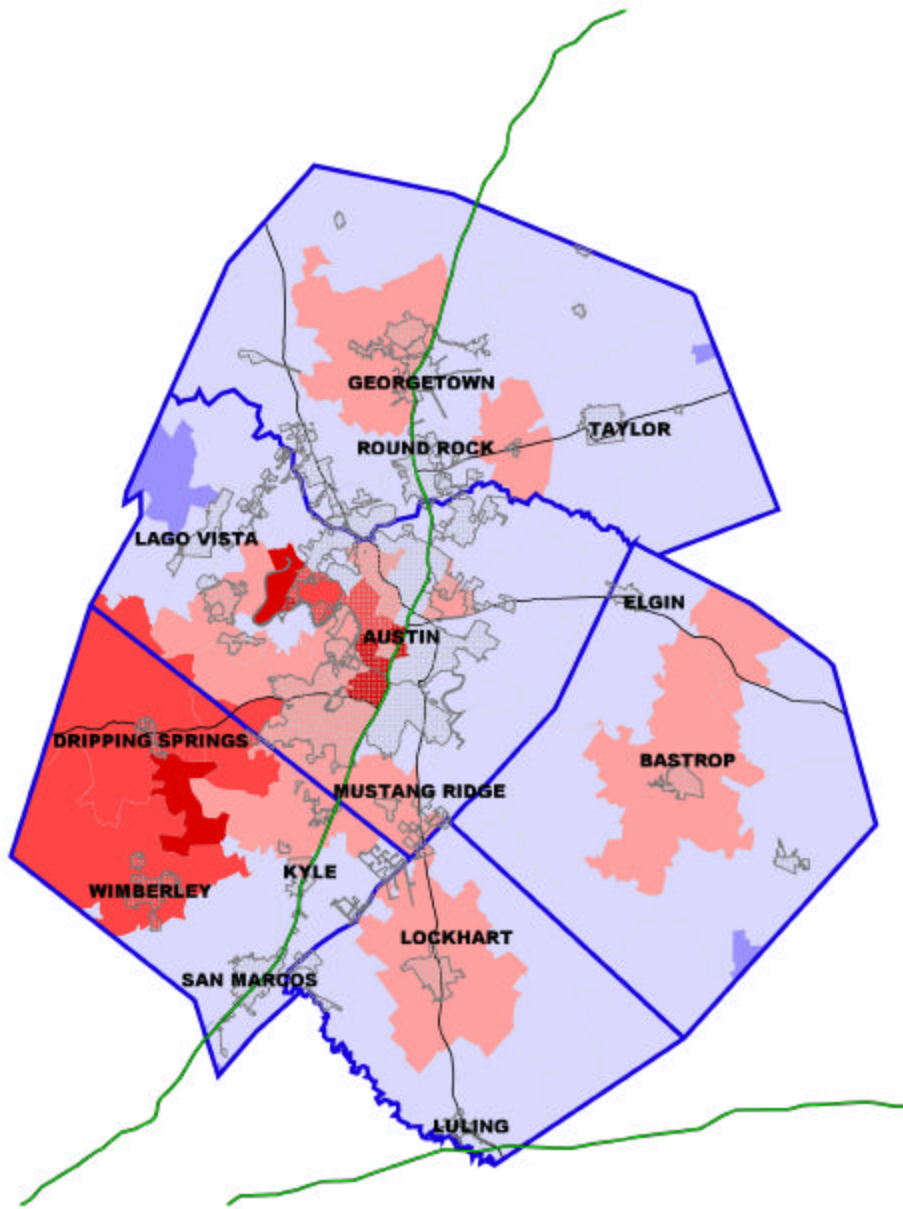


Comments: The weighted results follow very closely the actual survey results. When adjusting for race/ethnicity, social issues are seen as more important than shown in the actual results. When the results are weighted for the different age groups, the importance of social issues is weaker than expressed in the actual survey.

Response by ZIP code

The following map shows the over or under response by ZIP code – the warm tones are overrepresented; the cool tones are underrepresented. The mapping is by standard deviation. Percentage of people responding in the region was around 1 percent of the respondents. In the ZIP codes, the responses ranged from .01 percent to 3.5 percent of the population. In some cases, ZIP codes with very small populations can be influenced by a small number or responses – the dark red ZIP code in Hays County represents 35 responses from a ZIP code that has only 1,000 people in it. Note the ZIP codes at the edges of the counties do not correspond to the county boundaries, making the response data for these ZIP codes less useful.

Generally, the responses were higher than average from the urban centers of the counties, with notably high responses from some Austin neighborhoods and parts of Hays County. We could weight the responses to correct for this but we do not anticipate any significant changes to the results from this exercise.



Conclusions: The respondents appear to have some clear preferences and common concerns. We believe this can lead to a compelling vision and set of strategies to help forge a consensus on growth related issues across the region. While this is not a scientific survey, it is a very large response – 12,000 people is a high level of participation in regional planning issues. And while the differences among the counties are important, they are more in emphasis than substance.

We look forward to assisting ECT in articulating a vision and strategy that will capture the vision of the thousands who have participated in the Envision Central Texas process.