

# Craftsbury 2015 Community Survey



Craftsbury Planning Commission

October 2015

## Executive Summary

Craftsbury's Town Plan will expire in 2016. Town planning empowers communities to respond to change in ways that reflect their own goals, needs, priorities and values. Planning can allow communities to designate key growth and rural areas to attract new business or to preserve rural character. Perhaps the greatest advantage of planning is creating a common vision of the future through a democratic and inclusive process.

It has been more than a decade since the Craftsbury Planning Commission has engaged with the public in a comprehensive community survey. In May 2015, the Commission mailed postcards with a link to the online survey to every name on the Grand List and the Voter Checklist, representing a total of 580 names. About 200 paper copies were made available in public places around town, including the Craftsbury General Store and the Town Clerk's Office. The survey was also publicized through letters to the editor of the Hardwick Gazette, Front Porch Forum, and Facebook. We received 233 responses<sup>1</sup>, which represents a response rate of about 40% -- impressive! And you all had much to say. What follows here is our best attempt to capture the most salient findings from the survey. For more detailed information, please contact Craftsbury Planning Commission Chair **Farley Brown** at [fbrown@sterlingcollege.edu](mailto:fbrown@sterlingcollege.edu)



Thank you for participating. Your responses and insights are greatly appreciated.

The Craftsbury Planning Commission

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<sup>1</sup> Not all 233 respondents answered every question.

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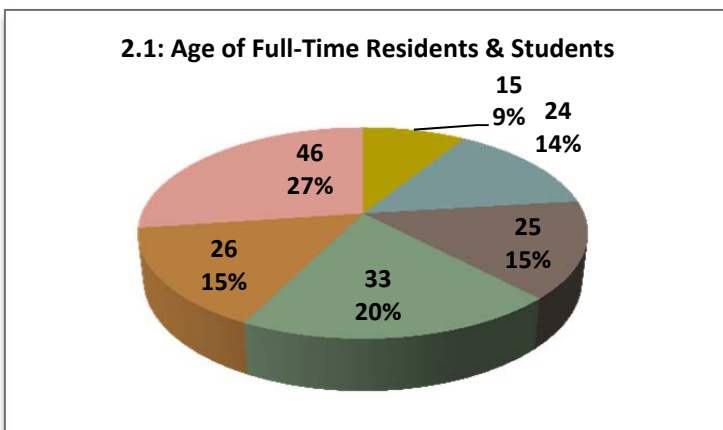
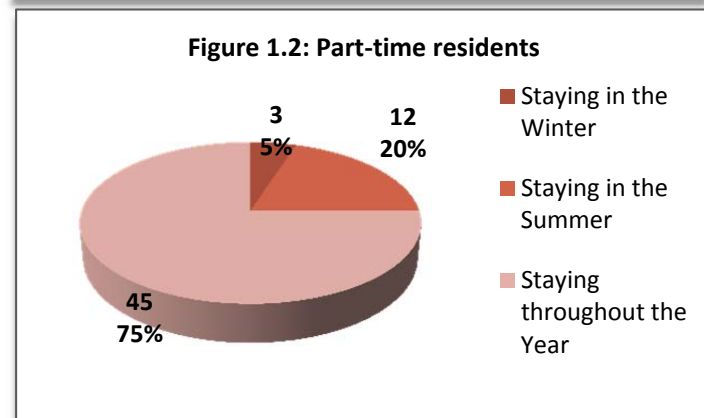
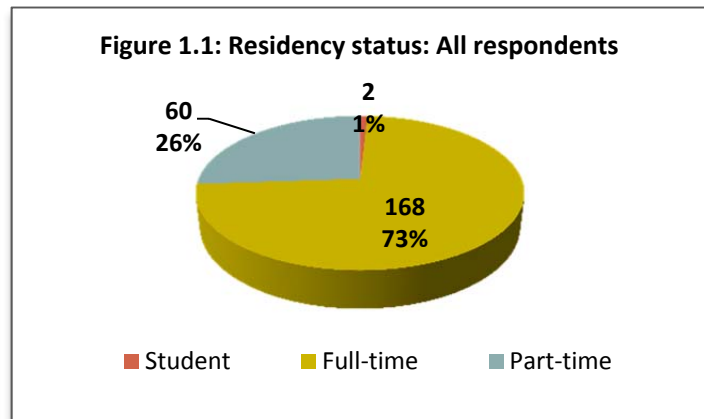
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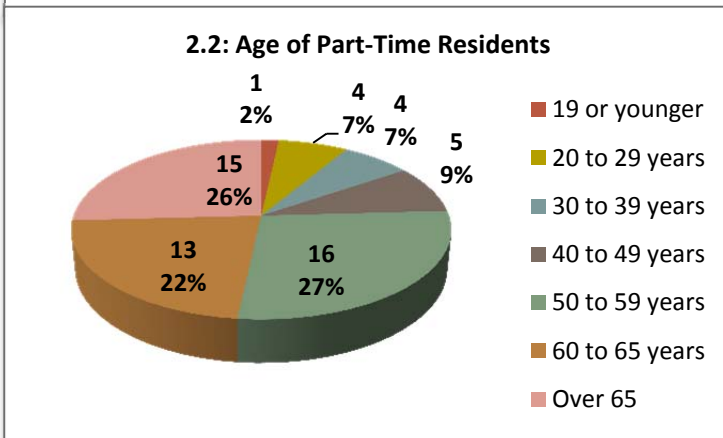
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## About the Respondents

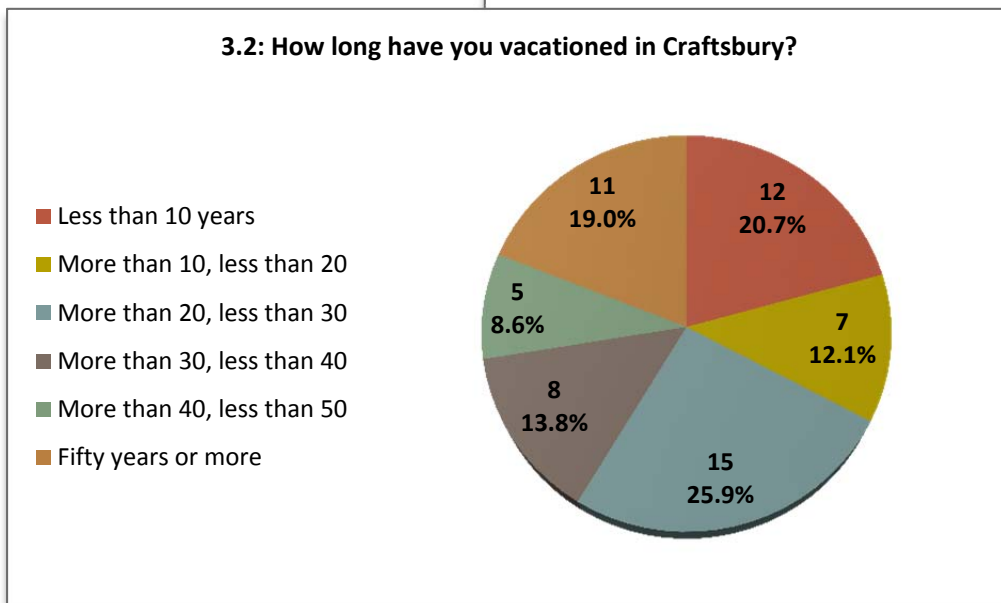
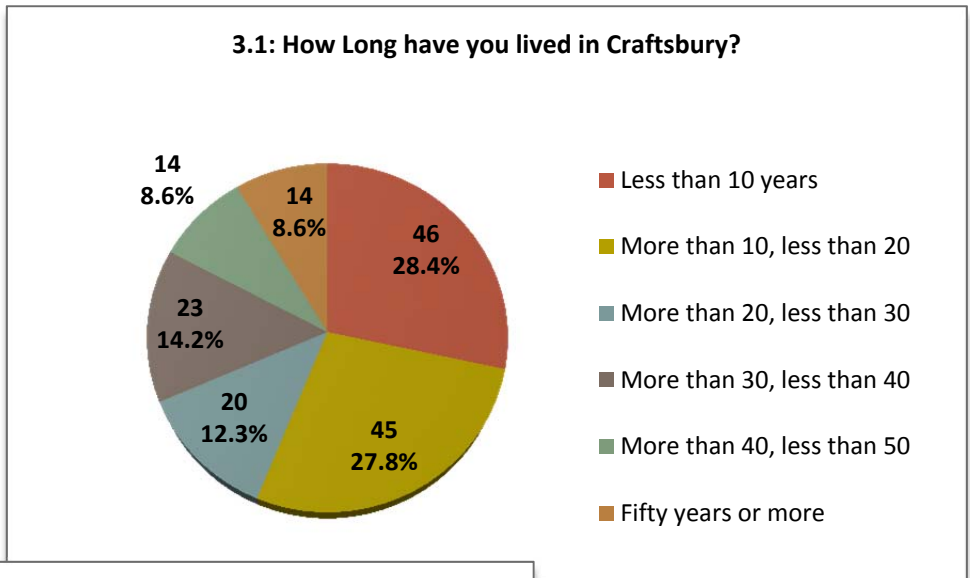
**1. Residency status (230 responses):** 73% of survey respondents were full-time residents of Craftsbury; 26% were part-time residents; and only 1% were students. Of the part-time residents, most visited Craftsbury throughout the year. (Figure 1.1-1.2)



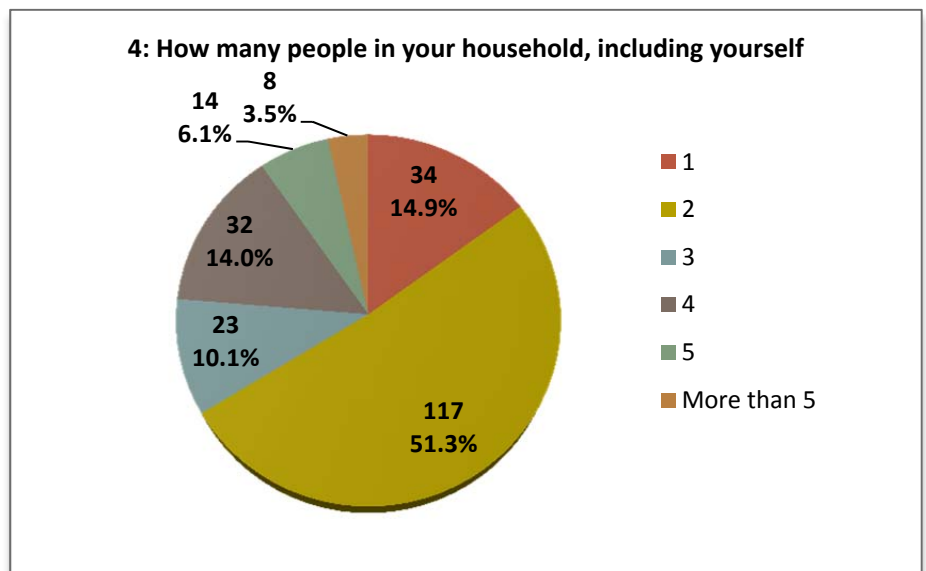
**2. Age of respondents (229 responses):** The age of full-time residents (and students) tends to be a slightly younger population than the part-time population. (Figures 2.1-2.2).



**3. Tenure (224 responses):** The average tenure of a full-time Craftsbury resident is 29 years, and 44% have lived here for more than 20 years. Average tenure for part-time residents is 28 years, and 67% have vacationed here for more than 20 years. (Figures 3.1 and 3.2)



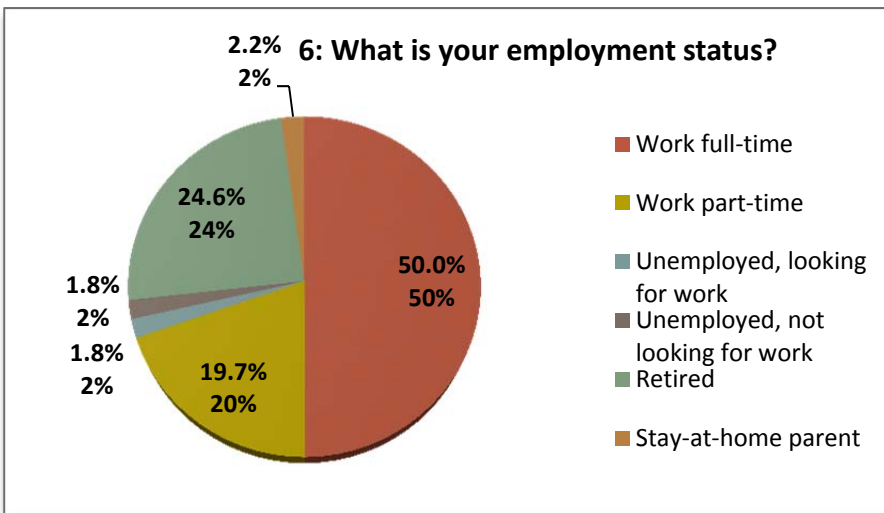
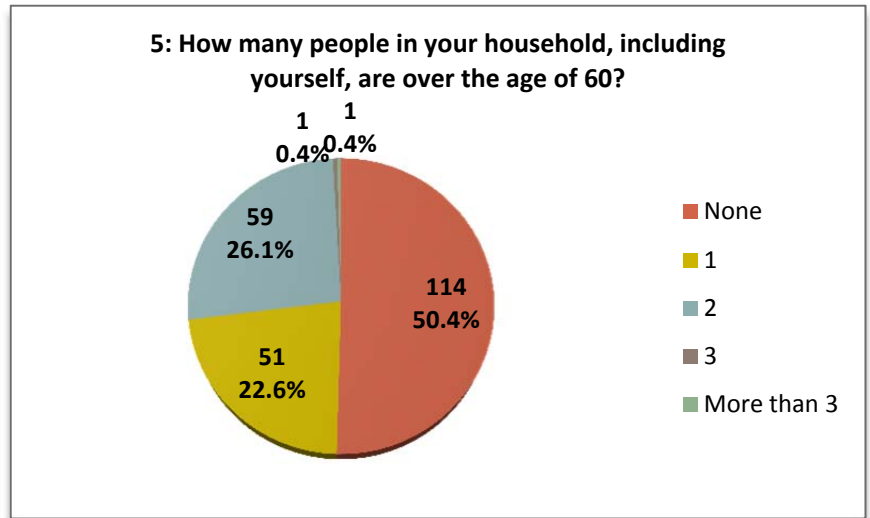
**4. Household Size (228 Respondents):** More than two-thirds of the respondents represent one- or two-person households. The average household size of survey respondents is 2.6.



**5. Age: (226 Respondents):** 49% of all respondents have one or two individuals in the household over the age of 60. Only one household had more than three individuals over 60, and that was the Craftsbury Community Care Center.

**Employment and the Economy**

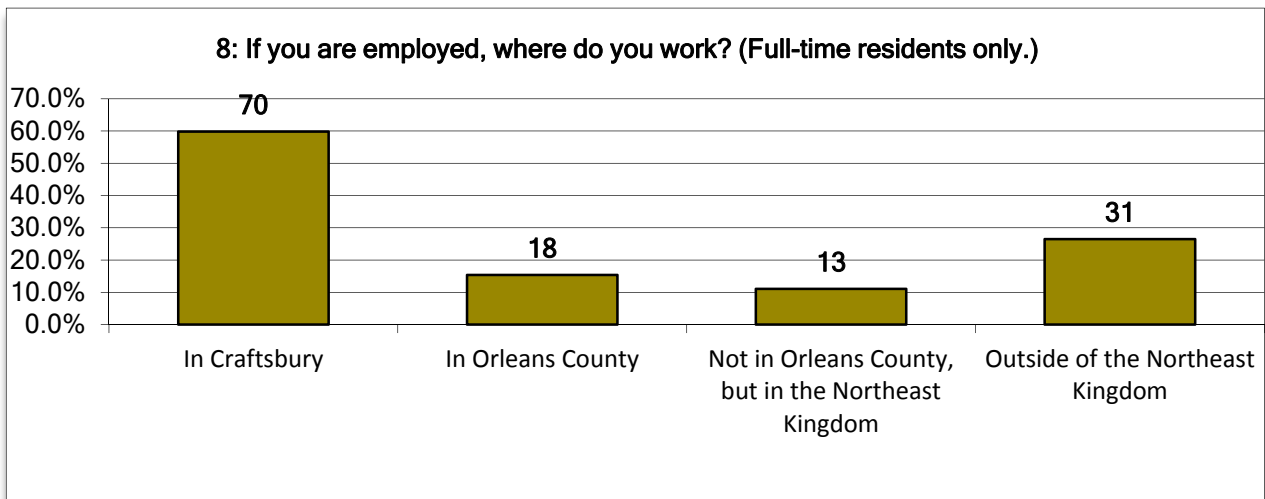
**6-. Employment Status (228 respondents):** The majority of Craftsbury residents are employed either full- or part-time, and just under a quarter are retired. The employment status



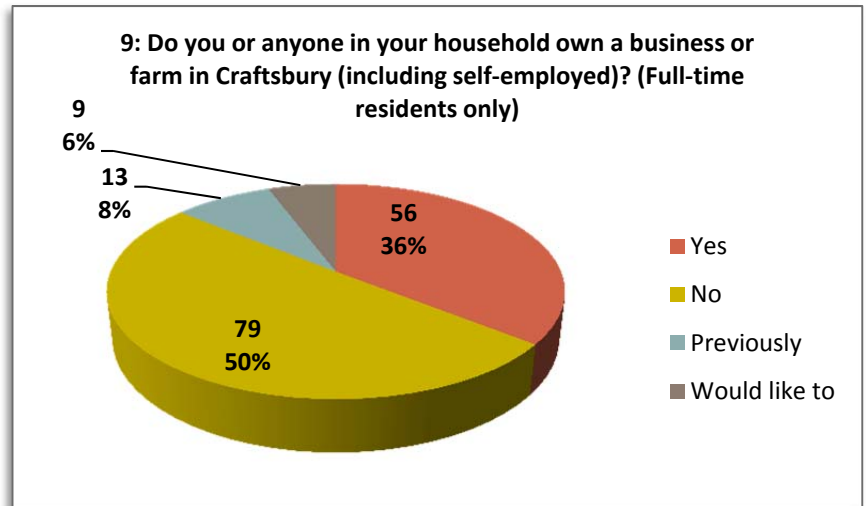
among full-time residents does not vary that much from part-time residents. 49% of full-time residents work full-time, and 22% work part-time, compared to 55% of part-time residents who work full-time and 14% part-time. Retirement status among full- and part-time residents are roughly the same.

**7. Holding Multiple Jobs (222 respondents):** Full-time residents are more likely to hold multiple jobs. 26% of full-time indicated that they held multiple jobs, compared to only 3% of part-time residents.

**8. Place of work (117 respondents, some selecting multiple responses):** Northeast Kingdom residents typically travel far and wide to employment opportunities, but this was not necessarily the case for full-time Craftsbury resident survey respondents. Nearly 60% worked in Craftsbury. Even those who worked outside of the region were relatively close: 10 worked in and around Morrisville, 5 in the Montpelier area, and 5 in and around Stowe. Only 5 worked in the Burlington area.



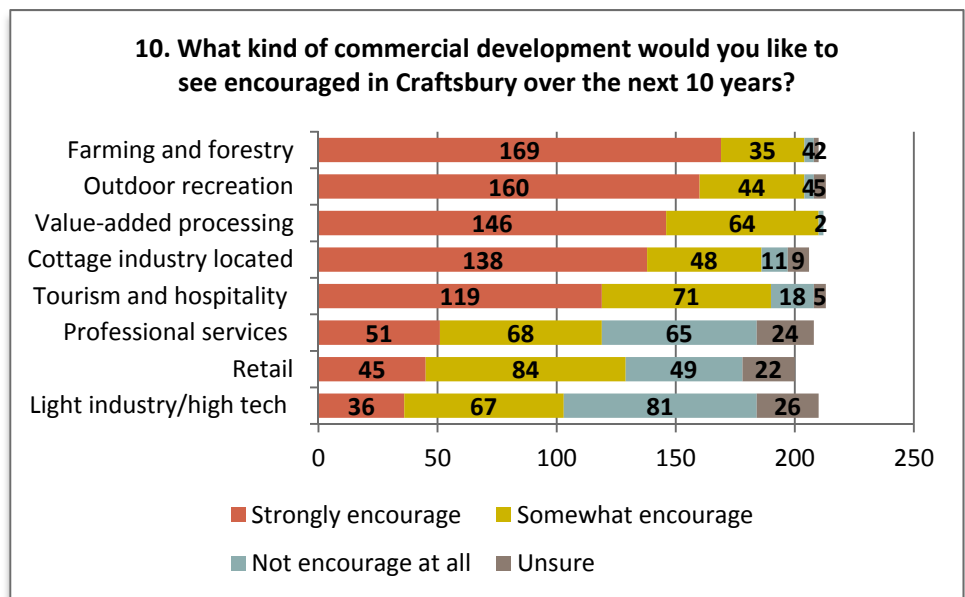
**9: Own business (157 responses):** 44% of full-time resident respondents indicated that they currently have or had operated a business in Craftsbury. Eight of those respondents indicated that their business was in forestry, agricultural, or value-added production. Two respondents specified hospitality and tourism.



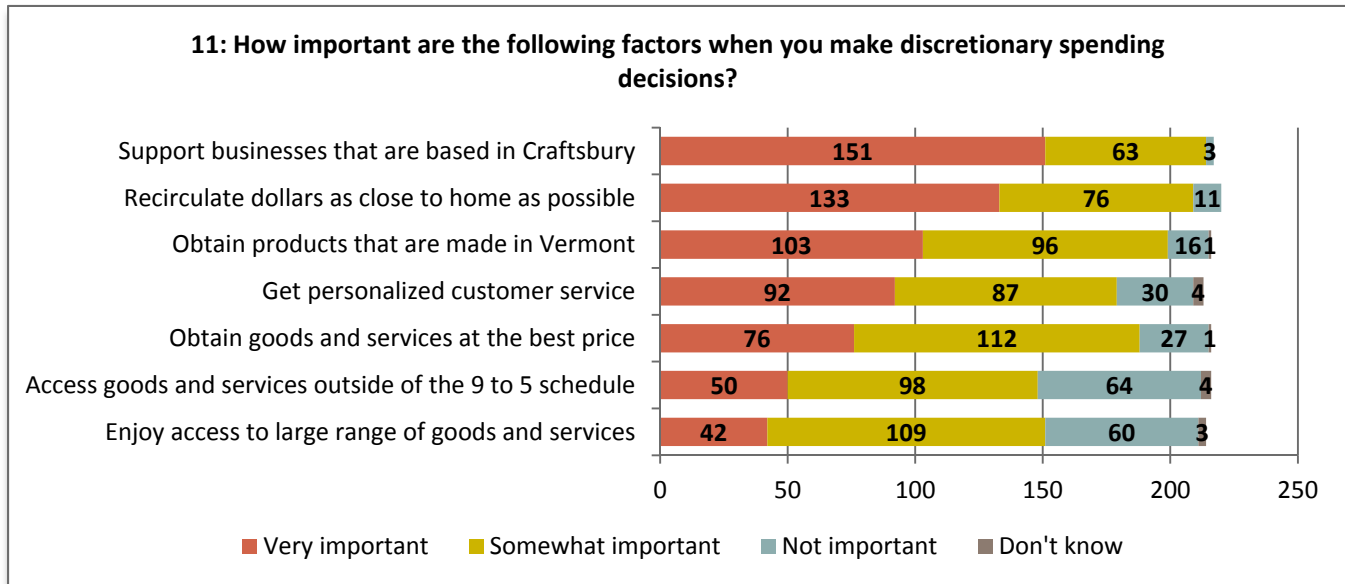
**10. Desired commercial development (220 responses):**

Survey respondents indicated a strong preference for development that promoted the land-based economy. Nine respondents voiced concerns about scale and potential impacts on the rural character when elaborating on their choices in open-ended comment. “Let’s create small ag/ forestry business opportunities and encourage local cottage industry before we set ourselves up for losing our Vermont ingenuity to service jobs,” wrote one respondent. “I wouldn’t want the character of the town to change,” stated another. “I don’t want us to become industrialized.”

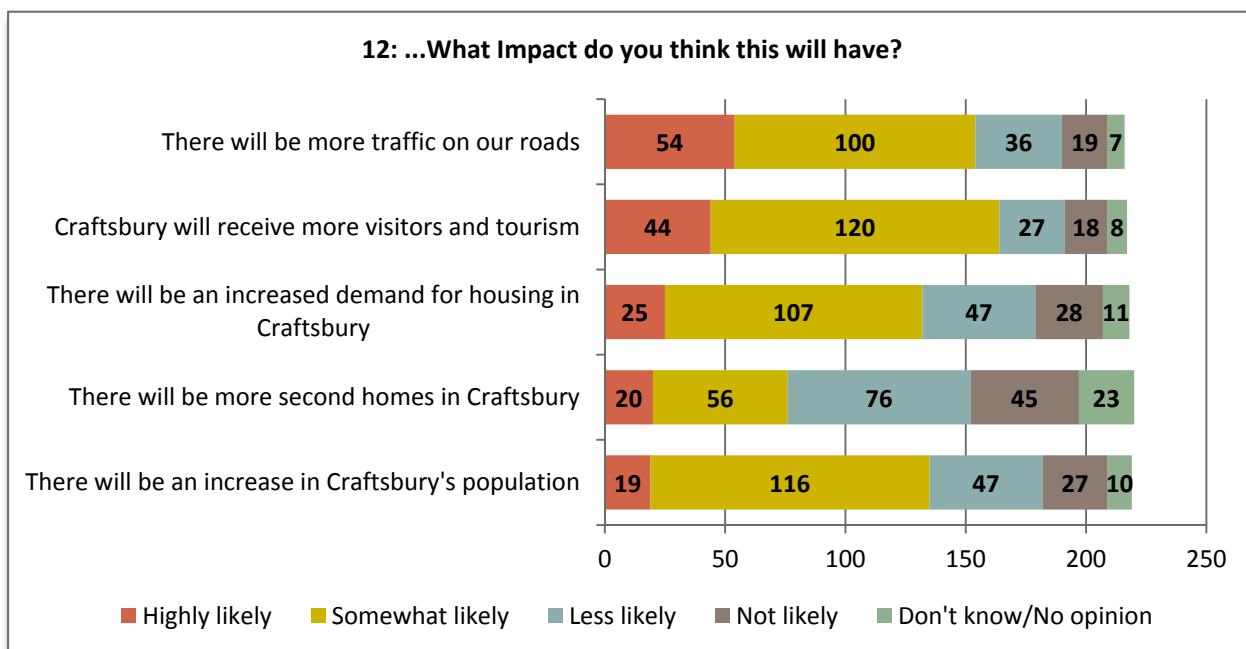
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**11. Discretionary spending: (221 responses):** Supporting local businesses and spending close to home were the strongest motivating factors for discretionary purchasing. While price, convenience, and range of goods and services were less important, however, respondent comments suggest that staying local is a deliberate choice that poses some challenges. “I do like the convenience of store hours outside of the 9-5 range, but discourage business hours that take away the value of living in a small rural village,” wrote one respondent. “Sometimes local goods are just too expensive...difficult for locals to support local businesses,” wrote another.

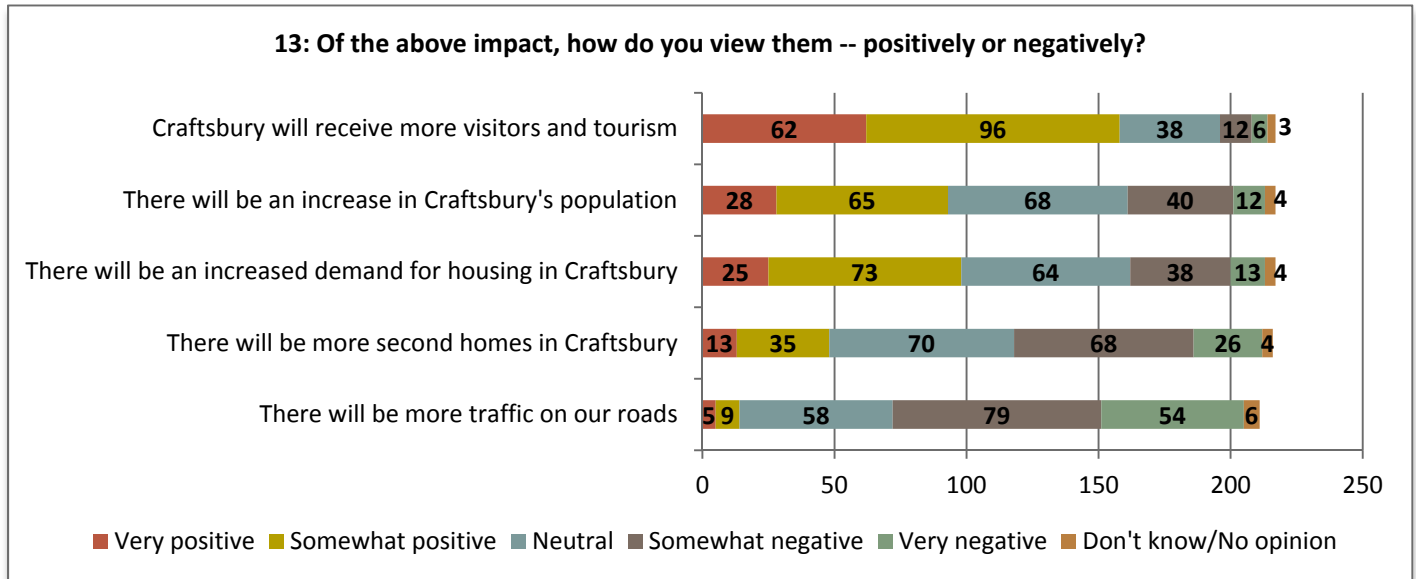


**12. Potential impacts of EB-5 development (220 responses):** When asked to identify the likely impacts of the proposed EB-5 developments in the Newport-Jay area (including a biotech and an aircraft manufacturing facility), respondents did not seem to feel that any impacts were highly likely. If anything, impacts were most likely to be more visitors and more traffic. Eleven respondents expressed doubts or even outright skepticism that there would be any impact at all. “It's questionable that development will occur at the scale the developers are proposing,” wrote one respondent. “Sterling college has more impact on these issues than Newport,” wrote another.



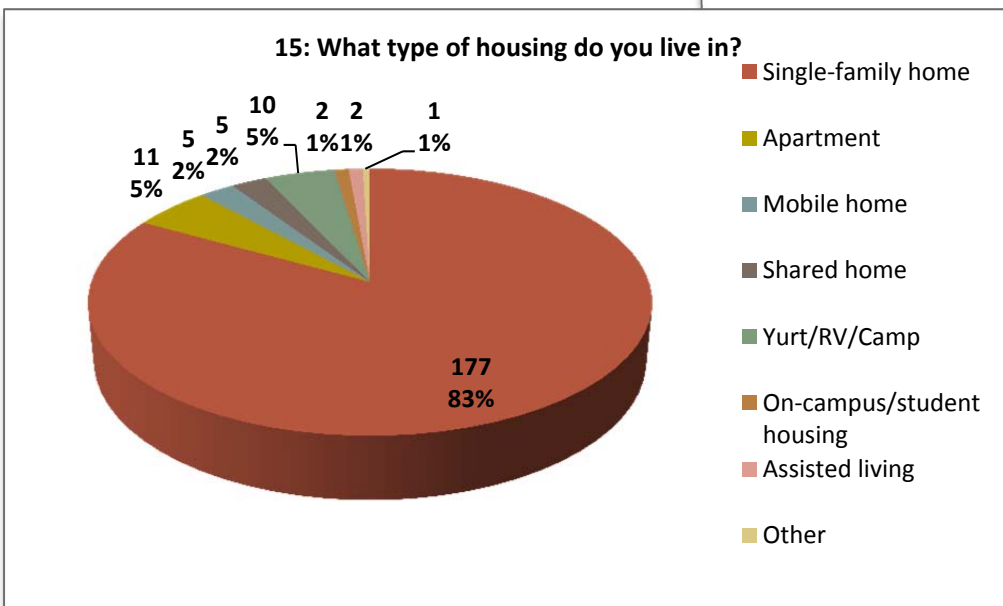
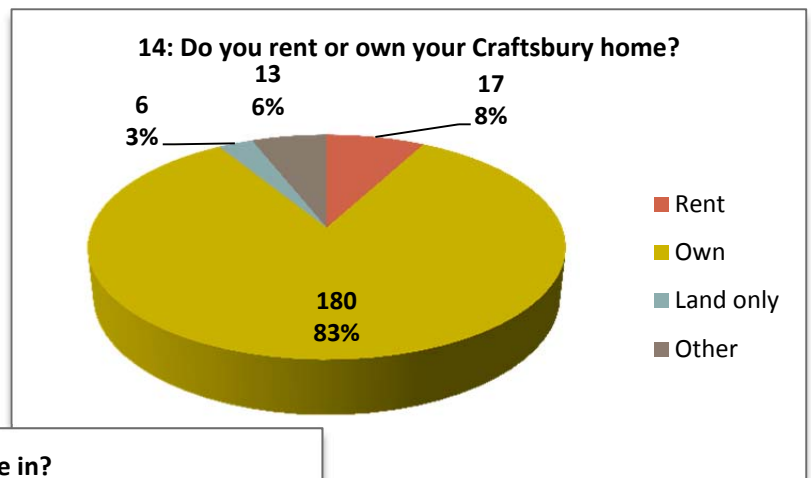


**13. How respondents view those impacts (218 respondents):** When asked to rate these impacts as positive or negative, survey respondents were generally neutral. Responses may have been tempered by the skepticism voiced earlier, although there some respondents hope that more young families will bring positive change. “If young families increase the population—that is positive. If people without children buy property and live in Craftsbury but work elsewhere and do not engage or invest time and money into our community then that type of population increase is negative.”



### Housing

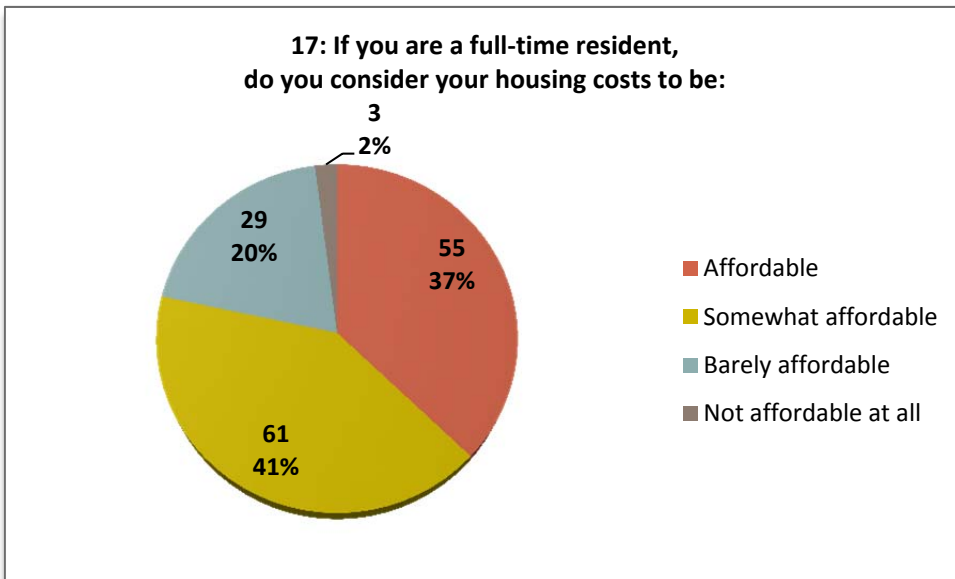
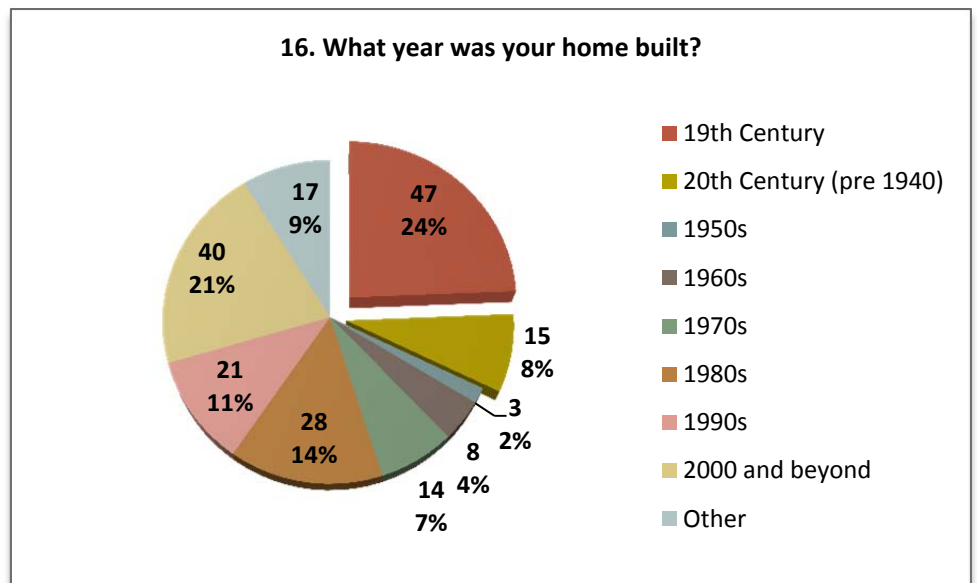
**14: Rent or Own (216 responses):** The overwhelming majority of respondents own their Craftsbury homes. “Other” respondents included owning AND renting; employer-provided housing; lifetime lease; living with family members, renting on owned land; or parking an RV on land.



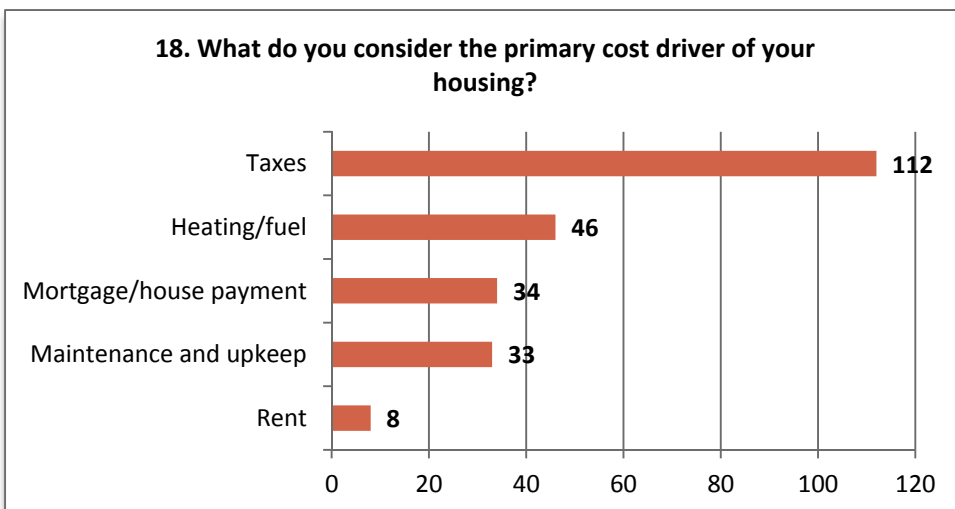
**15: Housing Type (214 responses):** Single-family homes were the predominant form of housing among full- and part-time Craftsbury residents.

**16. Age of Housing Stock (193**

**respondents):** About a third of housing stock was built before 1940. “Other” includes works-in-progress and structures built over multiple decades, as well as a very few homes from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly, most recent Census data (American Community Survey 5-Year estimates) indicate that pre-1940 housing stock in Craftsbury may actually be around 40%, and about 10% higher than the county-wide figure.)



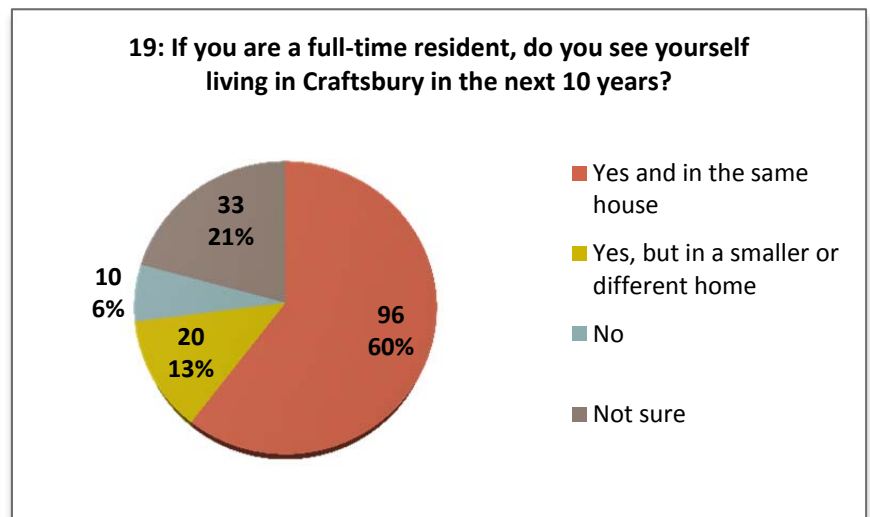
**17: Affordability of Housing (Full-time residents only, 161 responses):** While 74% of all survey respondents found their housing costs to be either “affordable” or “somewhat affordable,” those figures change when considering the 13 respondents who rent their housing in Craftsbury: five considered their housing costs to be “barely affordable.”



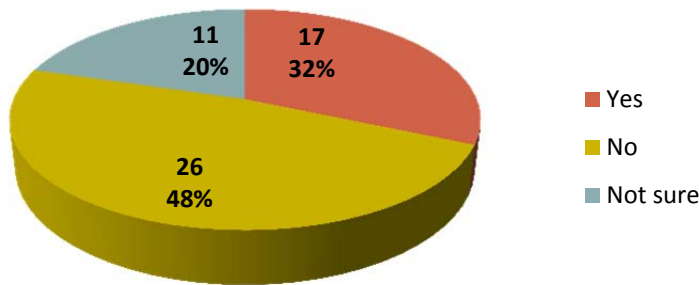
**18. Housing cost drivers (Full-time residents only, 161 responses):** Taxes are the primary cost driver. However, eight of the 13 renter respondents indicated that rent was the primary cost driver.

**19. Long-range plans (Full-time residents only**

**159 responses):** Most full-time Craftsbury residents are planning to live in Craftsbury in the same house in 10 years. No particular age group dominated any response category, which suggests that most Craftsbury residents intend to age in place.



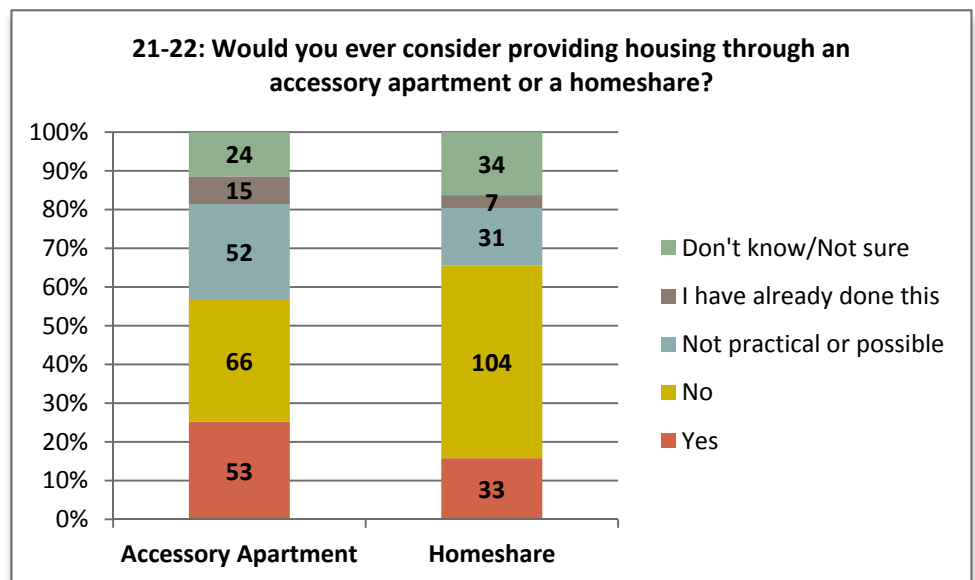
**20: ...are you considering a permanent move to Craftsbury in the next 10 years?**



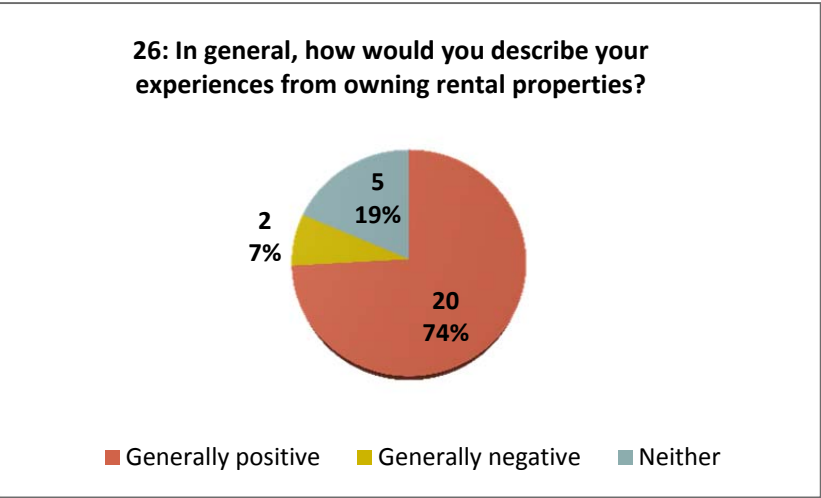
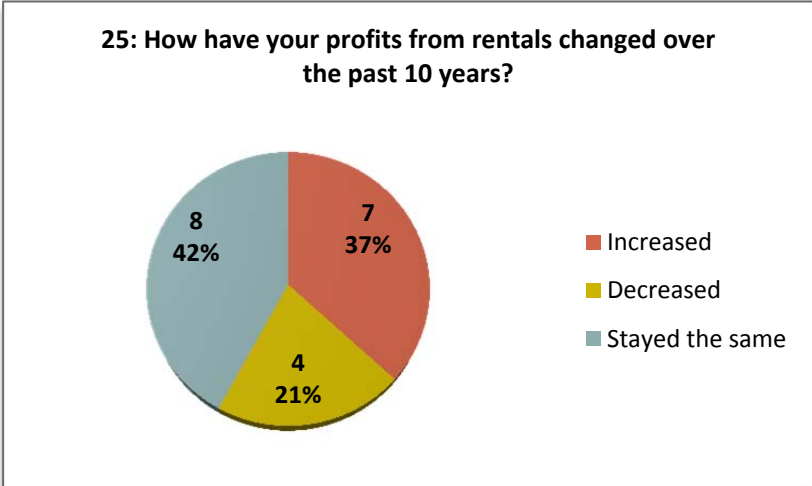
**20. Long-range plans (Part-time residents only) 54**

**responses):** Nearly a third of part-time resident respondents are considering making Craftsbury their permanent home in the next decade.

**21-22: Accessory apartments and homeshare (210 respondents, 208 respondents, respectively):** An *accessory apartment* is a separate living unit created within or adjacent to a single-family home and can be occupied by a family member or non-family tenant. A *homeshare arrangement* is low-cost or free accommodation in exchange for support services. When asked if they would ever consider providing housing through either arrangement, only 25% said yes to accessory apartments, and 16% to homesharing. Only 7% of respondents have already established an accessory apartment and 3% a homesharing arrangement.



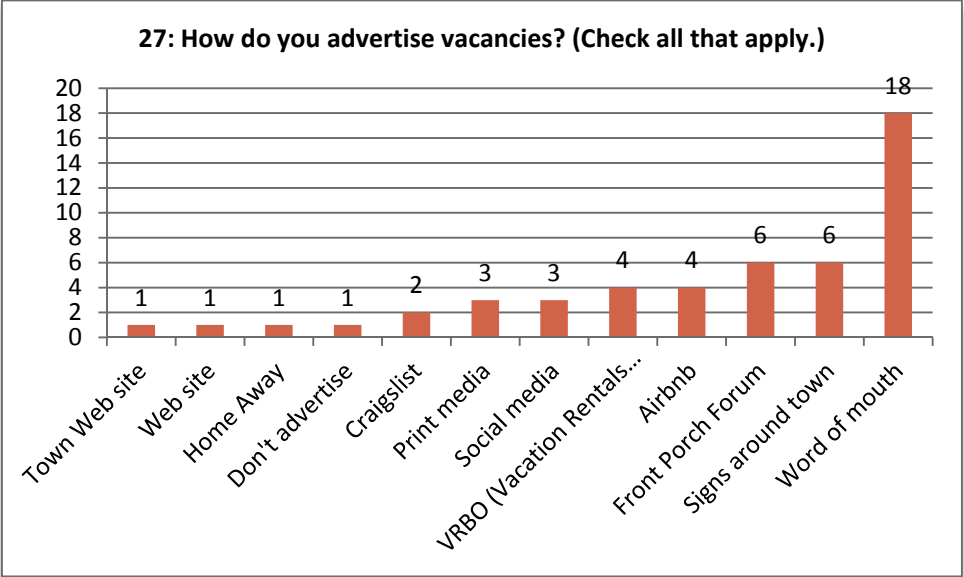
**23-27: Rental properties:** Only 25 respondents indicated that they owned rental properties in Craftsbury. Among part-time residents, three owned short-term rentals, and four owned long-term. Ten full-time residents indicated that they owned short-term rentals and ten indicated long-term. (Two of these respondents owned both short- and long-term properties.) Two respondents indicated that the “rentals” were apartments in their homes. Some respondents indicated that rates were negotiable, or they did not know what they would charge in the future. In general, long-term rents were lower: Monthly: ranging from as low as \$400 to \$1,700. Average monthly rate was \$743 and median was



\$650. Weekly: ranging from \$700 to \$1,500. Average \$970, median \$950; Nightly: ranging from \$50 to \$145. Average was \$111, median was \$125. When asked how profits had changed in the past decade, more than half indicated that they had either stayed the same or decreased. (Figure 25). Some respondents indicated that fuel or utilities were a cost factor. Three respondents indicated that there was little to no profit. Two indicated that they had not been operating rentals long enough to know.

Nevertheless, the majority of respondents who either currently operate rentals or did so in the past have had a positive experience. Only two respondents – one with long-term and one with short-term indicated otherwise. (Figure 26).

The majority of respondents indicated that they advertise their rentals by word of mouth. (Figure 27).

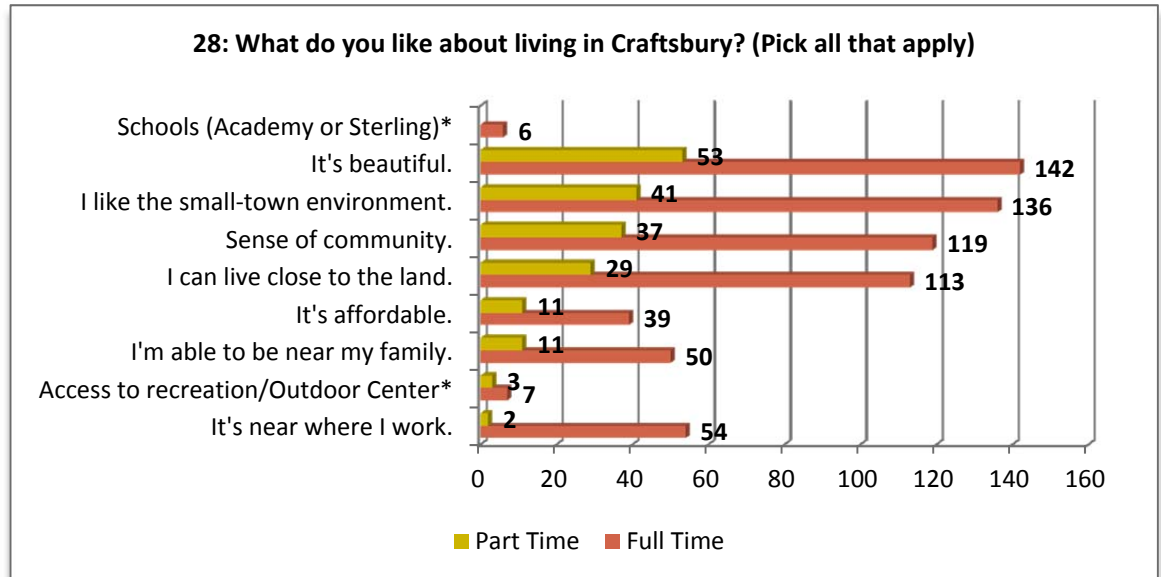


## Land Use and Community

**28. Living in Craftsbury – the positives (155 full-time respondents, 54 part-time respondents):** In general, both full- and part-time respondents appreciate the beauty of the community and small-town environment the most. Ten open-ended responses (marked with an asterisk) identified access to outdoor recreation and/or the Craftsbury Outdoor Center.

Three open-ended responses identified the schools in the community. “Strong public schools and Sterling College,” wrote one respondent.

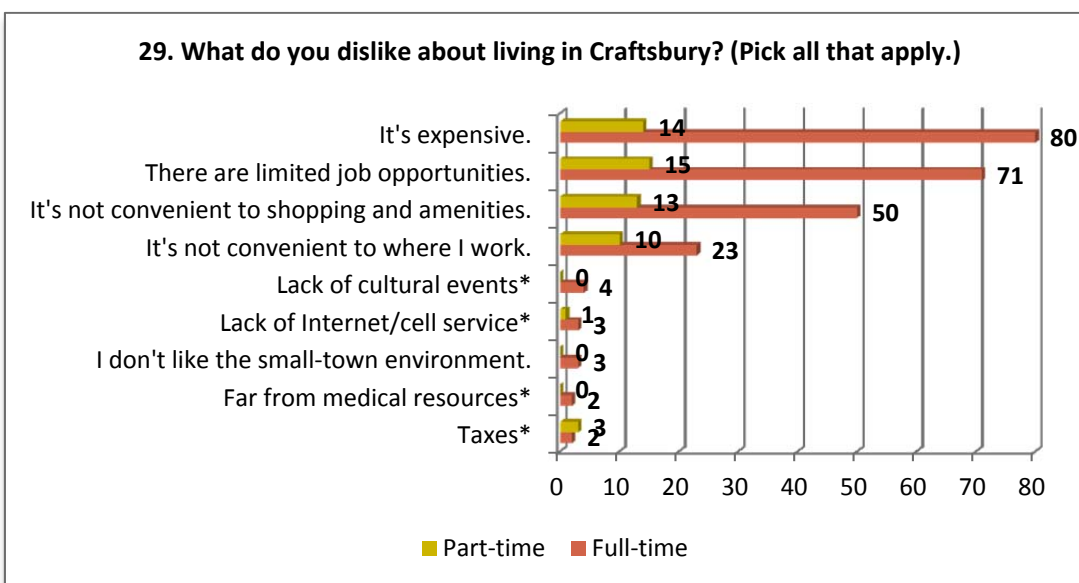
“I feel so comfortable having the kids get on the bus in the morning to the elementary school, and love that I can trust they are in good hands with the teachers. They are served decent food, and appreciate the sense of community they are learning,” wrote another.



### 29. Living in

**Craftsbury – negatives (136 full-time responses; 30 part-time responses):** The cost of living in Craftsbury, followed by limited job opportunities, were the two things respondents disliked the most about living in Craftsbury. Nevertheless, respondents were also likely to view these challenges as just part of living in a small rural community. “The positives outweigh these negatives,” wrote one respondent. “Local foods are expensive,” wrote one respondent. “Driving to far away places to get cheap food is expensive. I understand this is a way of life in rural Vermont. I am fortunate to have a job now. But there are not many other local opportunities for myself and others. On the other hand, this is what makes living here nice. It is small and quiet, without much commercial build up, and I value that.” Open-ended responses included lack of cultural events, lack of Internet or cell coverage, and taxes. Part-time resident respondents were proportionately more likely to take issue with the latter. “...too expensive in property taxes, especially for 2nd home

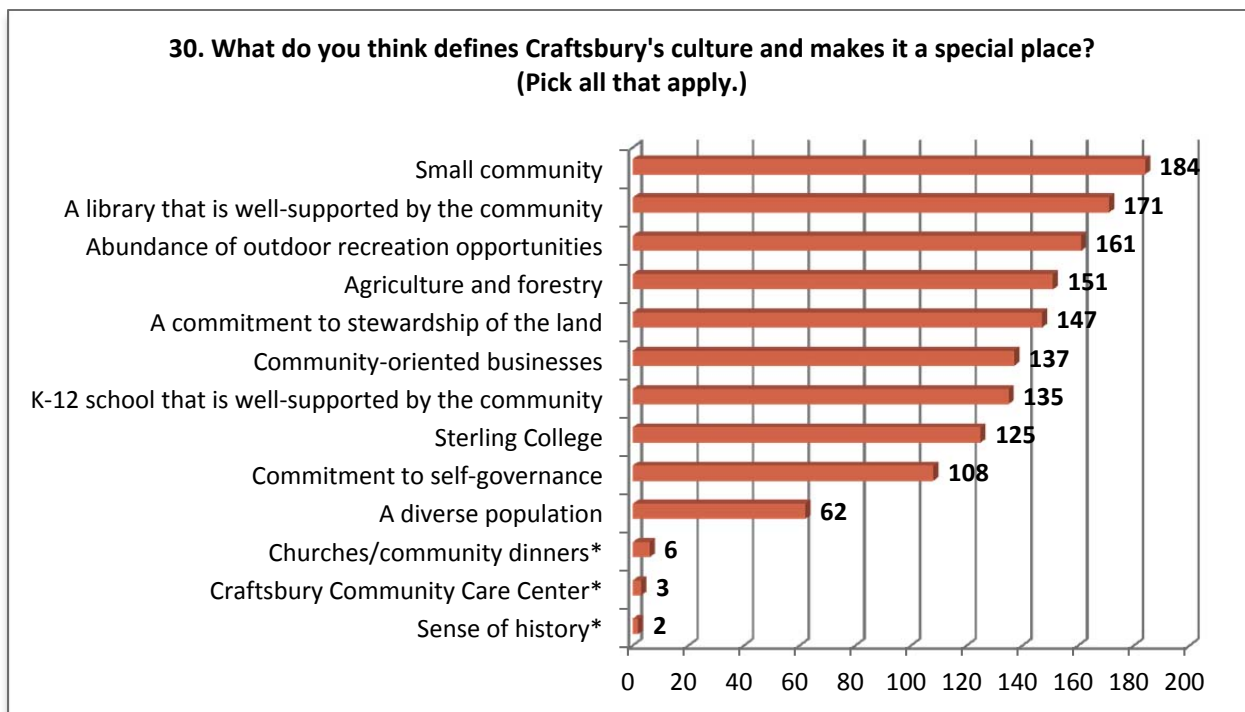
owners,” wrote one respondent. “This does not seem legal or ethical to charge more in property taxes because we are there for more than 6 months.”



**The Outdoor Center:** Although open-ended respondent comments were generally positive about the Outdoor Center and the access to recreation it provides, seven discrete respondents

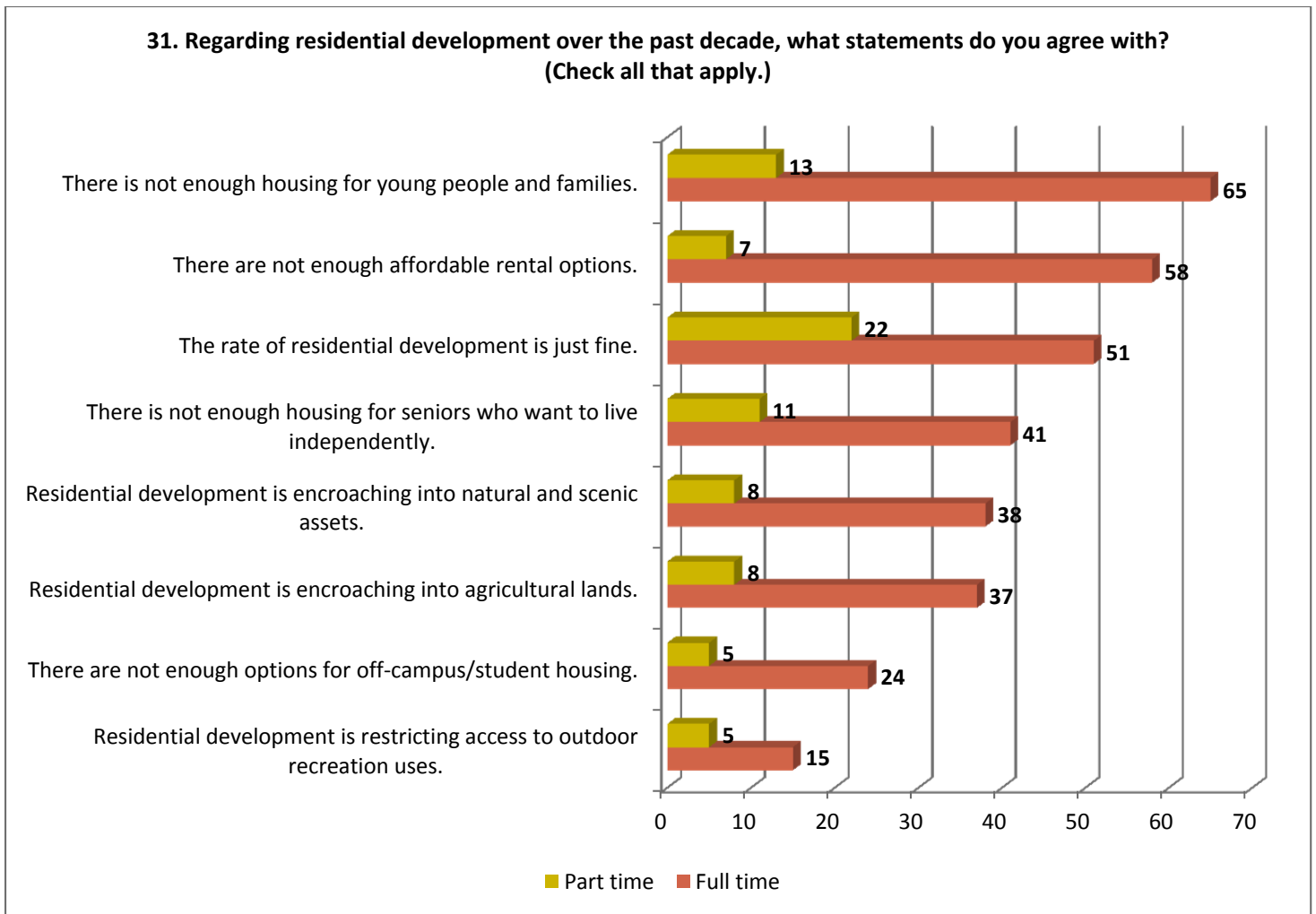
(three full-time residents and four part-time) voiced concerns about the Outdoor Center in open-ended comment in various points of the survey, including this question. Concerns were largely focused on the use of Big Hosmer, business ethos of the organization, and conduct of some visitors. “The support for businesses to monopolize property ownership and use of public waters” was something that one respondent disliked. “It is my understanding that the new ownership of the Craftsbury Outdoor Center have not been, in my opinion, respectful of the ethos of either Craftsbury or of my sense of how people typically treat each other in the Northeast Kingdom. There does not seem to be the necessary conversation, cooperation, contribution, or community hiring that I would expect of Craftsbury businesses. They are using a major community resource, Big Hosmer, to the significant exclusion of local residents. Sure, there is outreach, but it feels more like a business gesture than a cooperative community activity.” “...the Outdoor Center attracts a lot of very entitled people that are often rude at best,” noted another. **Sterling College:** While respondents were generally positive about Sterling College, five discrete respondents (three full-time and two part-time) were critical of Sterling College. Similar to the Outdoor Center, there were concerns about the impact on the tax base. “Mortgage is paid off, so property tax is biggest expense,” wrote one respondent. “What's going to happen when these few places -- Sterling College and Craftsbury Outdoor Center keep buying up property and turning it into non-profit status? I know my taxes will rise to humbly service these non-profits. There is much concern but those not willing to speak outright about how it feels like Sterling is taking over the Common and the Outdoor Center the lands. If this town becomes ‘owned’ by non-profit organizations who is going to pay all the taxes?” This same respondent particularly disliked “...the sense of entitlement that Sterling College and the Outdoor Center have and I find especially repugnant the manner in which Sterling College treats its neighbors.” Criticism was also focused on the solar installation: “Once these 22' x 20' panels are installed, I believe it will change the nature of this village, and I know it will ruin my sense of home. There's ample room on acreage Sterling owns near their other facilities to locate these panels.” Another respondent voiced concern about balancing the needs of the college with that of the Common: “Careful consideration should be made for student housing that encroaches on the village/common - esp. if it is easily seen from the non-college properties.”

**30. Defining Craftsbury’s culture (213 responses):** The small community, the library, and access to outdoor recreation were the top three defining aspects of Craftsbury’s culture. (\*Aspects identified in open comment)

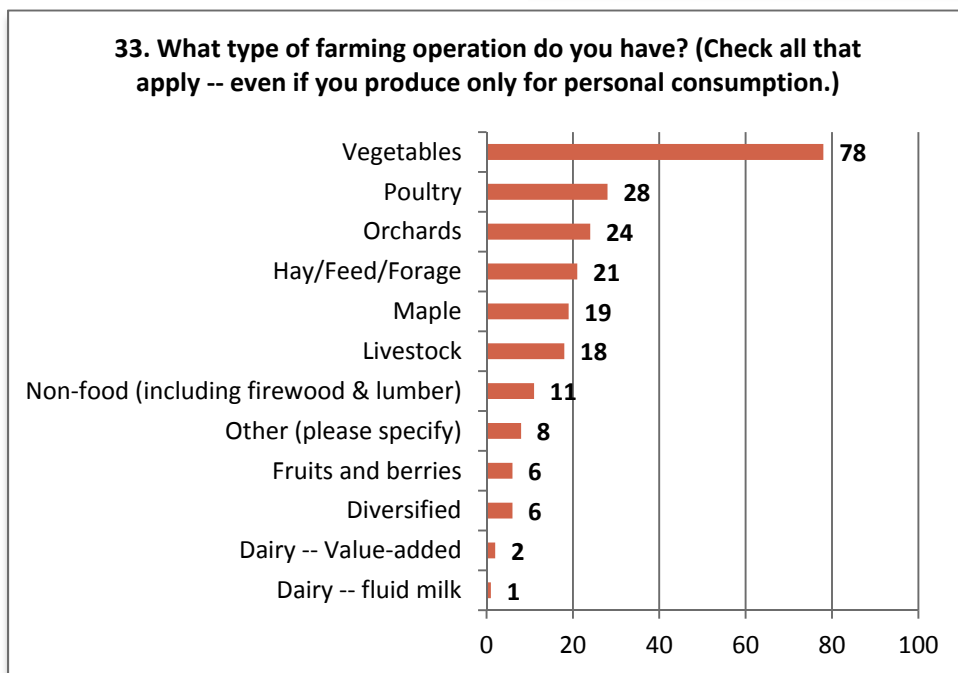
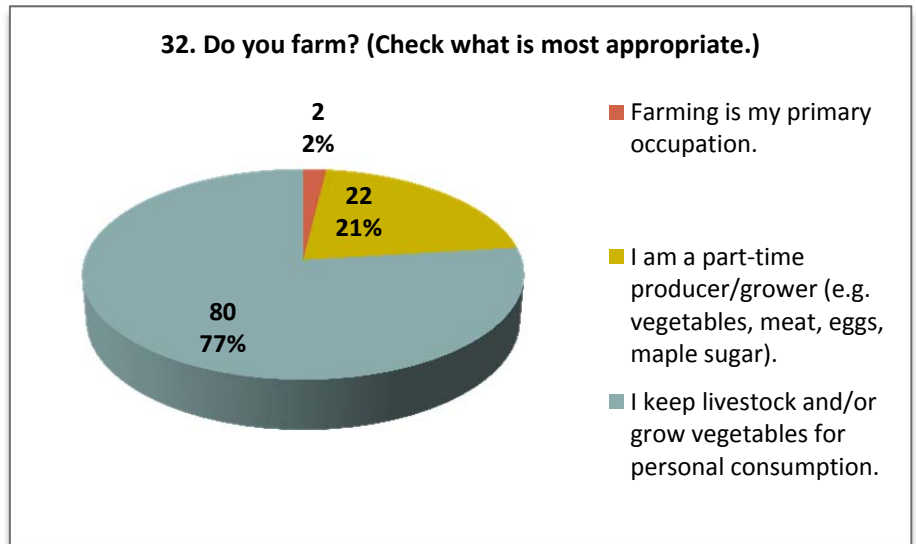


**31. Opinions regarding residential development (136 full-time resident responses; 41 part-time resident responses):**

Finding housing for these young families was a concern among respondents to the Craftsbury Community Survey. While 40% of all respondents were satisfied with the rate of residential development, 44% were concerned about finding housing options for young people and families. (There is some overlap – 20 of the respondents who were satisfied with the rate of residential development also expressed concern about housing for young people and families.) “The young and their children are the future,” wrote one survey respondent. “Craftsbury needs them and [we] must make it possible for them to live here. “Lack of available/affordable rental and saleable property is a big problem. Young families cannot find rental property or afford to buy into Craftsbury and young families provide the children for our great school,” wrote another respondent.



**32-33. Farming:** Of the 104 who responded in the affirmative, more than three-quarters do so for personal consumption. More than one-fifth are part-time producers or growers. Most produce vegetables. “Other category” includes honey, eggs, Christmas trees and flowers.

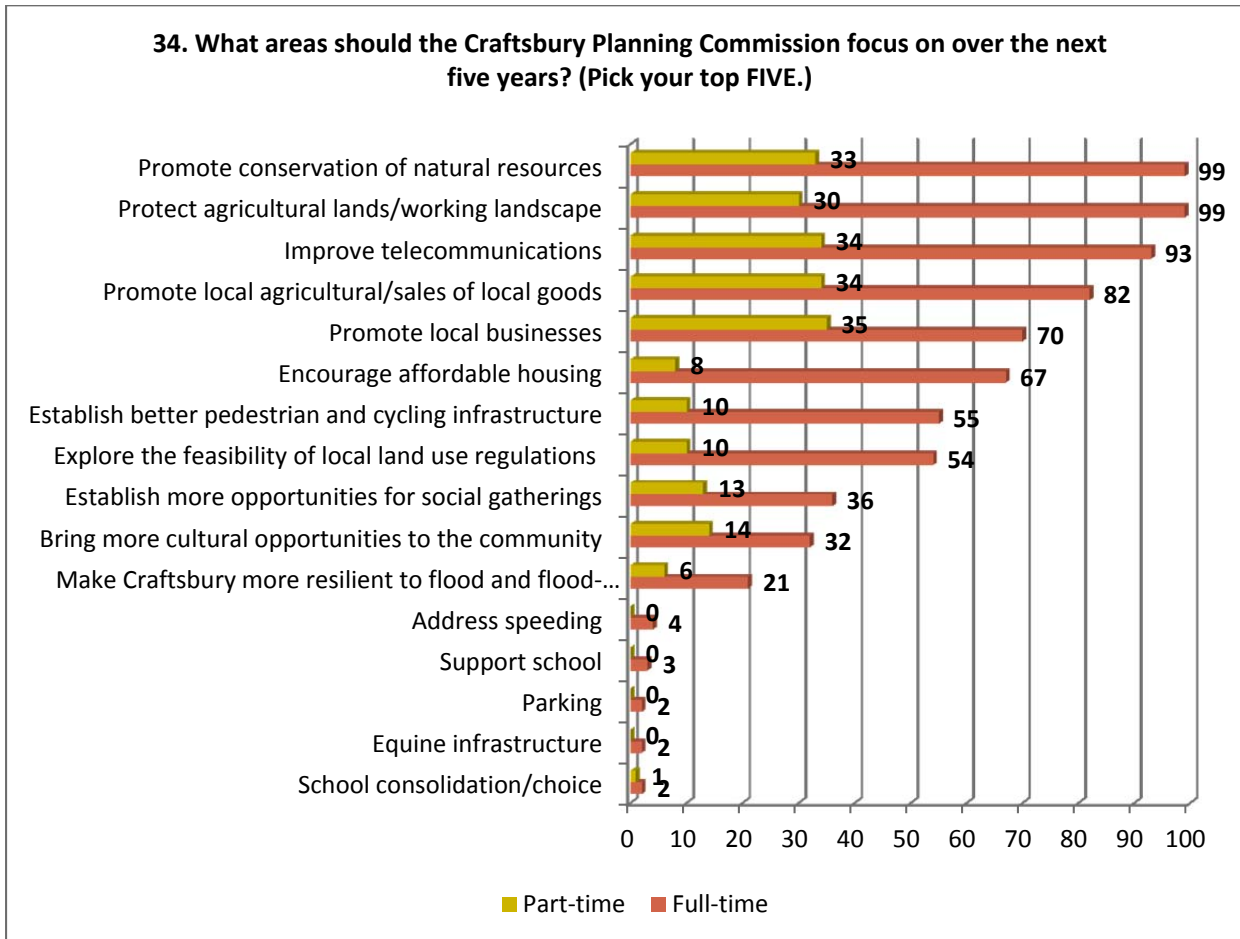


**34. Priorities for Planning Commission (153 full-time respondents; 54 part-time respondents):** In explaining their choices, respondents were emphatic about the need for better telecommunications. “PLEASE improve telecommunications.. please.. I can't move my business to Craftsbury if I don't have it,” wrote one respondent. “Improved telecommunications are essential to local business opportunities,” stated another. Zoning and land use regulation has traditionally been a controversial topic in Craftsbury, and the survey results reflected this. “I fear we need zoning - even though not popular - it comes with more population,” wrote one of the 12 respondents who elaborated on their support for zoning in open-ended comment. “There needs to be zoning. If there are areas we want to protect, they should be zoned. For instance there is nothing, other than good will, stopping anyone from building anything they want on Little Hosmer. I'm surprised someone hasn't bought land to build 'Stowe-like' condo developments or sub-divisions.” Forest and farmland fragmentation was also cited as a concern. “Create a strong town plan that preserves natural resources and contiguous habitats and protects against sprawl and large-scale development. Educate the residents about the importance of zoning for protection of land and land values. Create financial resources for farmers to place conservation easements on their land.” One respondent who favored zoning voiced support for excluding or limited

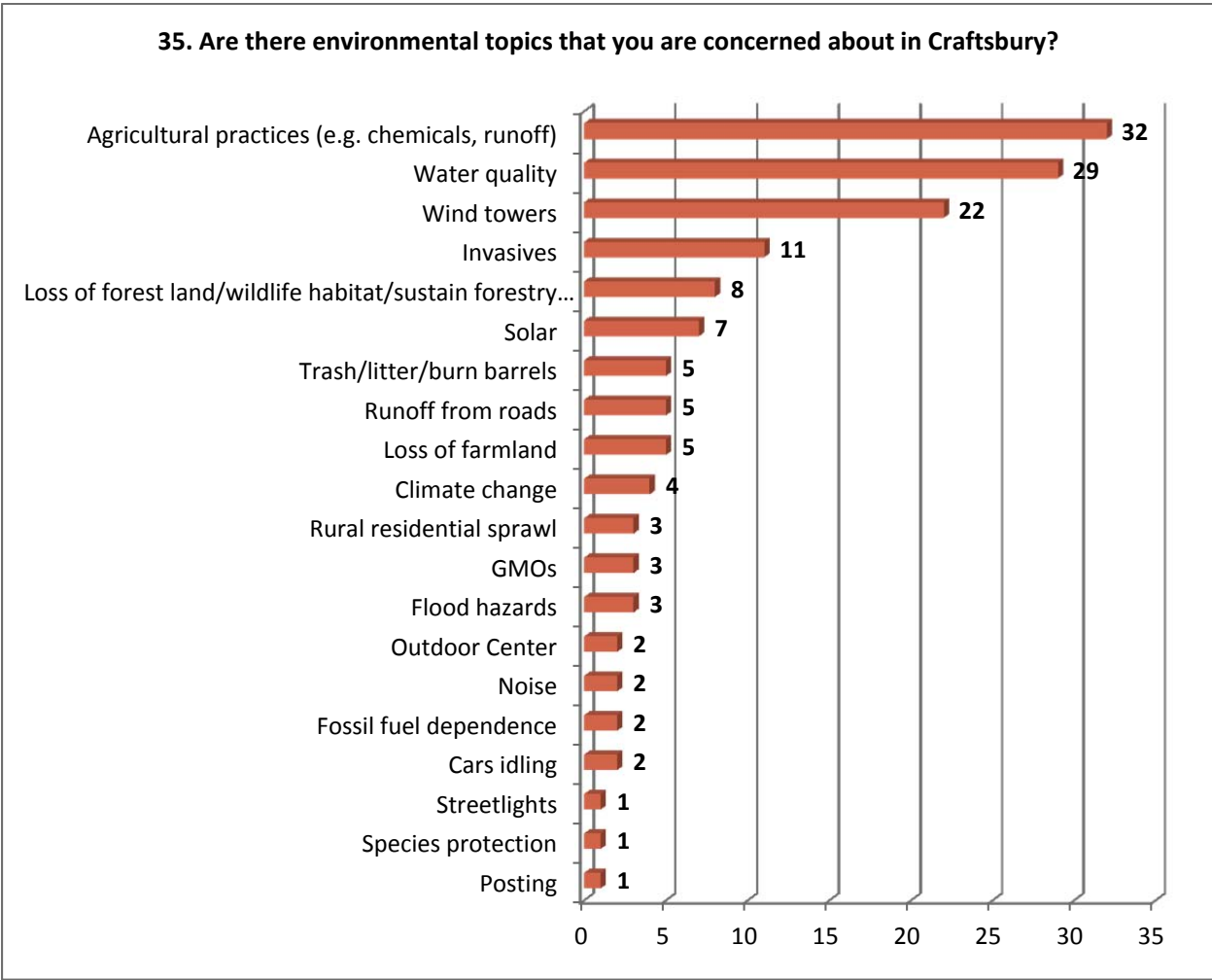




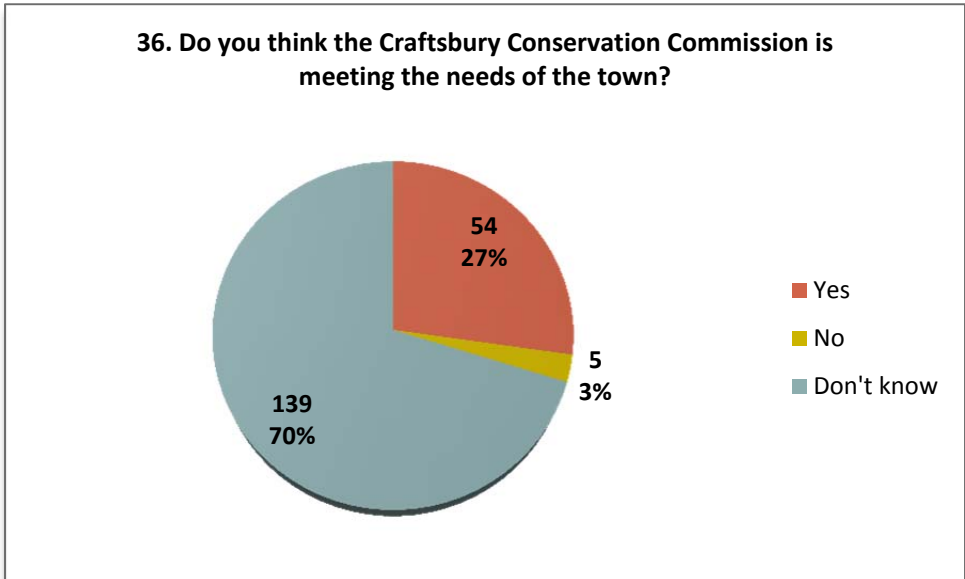
large-scale renewables – activities that are largely exempt from zoning because they are subject to review by the Public Service Board. “Land use regulations and protections must include zoning for NO WIND Towers and Serious consideration for zoning limiting the number and size of solar fields.” Opponents of zoning were no less passionate in their comments. Five discrete respondents stated how they viewed zoning as an infringement of their rights. “No residential zoning. My property is mine. As long as what I do there doesn't hurt anyone leave me alone. I already pay too much for the privilege of owning land I've already payed for. I am not interested in giving away my right to do what I wish there.” “I do not want zoning. I do not want someone on a committee to be able to stop me if I want to put livestock or if I want to put up a business or a rental unit. The taxes in this town are high and as long as I am the one paying, I'll do what I want. That means how I heat my home or how I get electricity.” “Please do as much as possible to respect the landowners’ right to do with their property what they wish,” wrote another respondent.



**35. Environmental topics of interest (178 responses):** 106 respondents (60%) indicated that they had environmental topics of interest. Of those who indicated an interest, 100 respondents defined them in open-ended comment. Concerns fell in into the following categories.



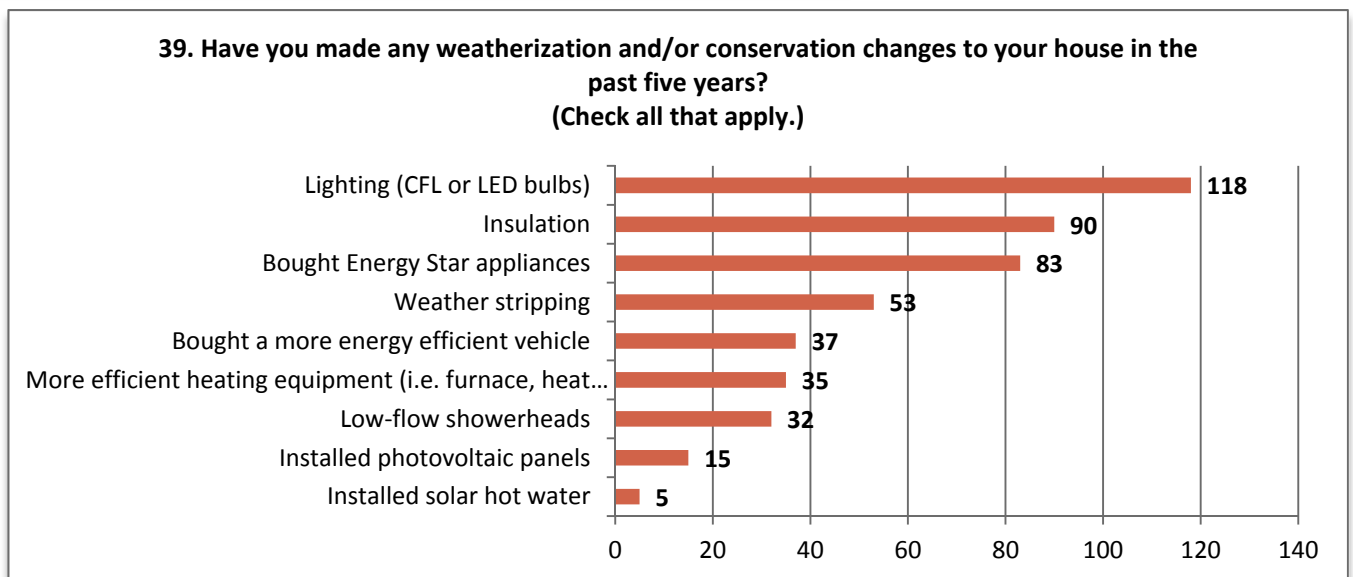
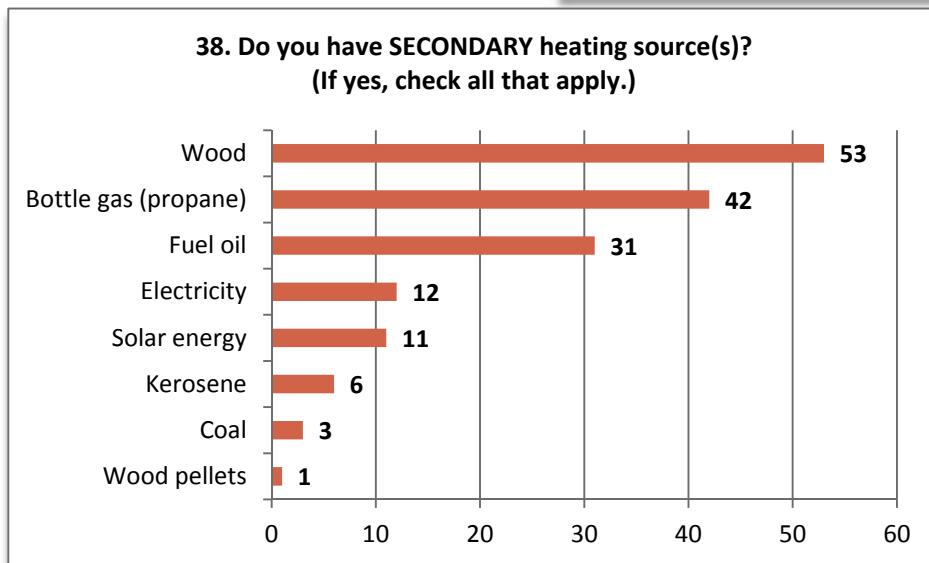
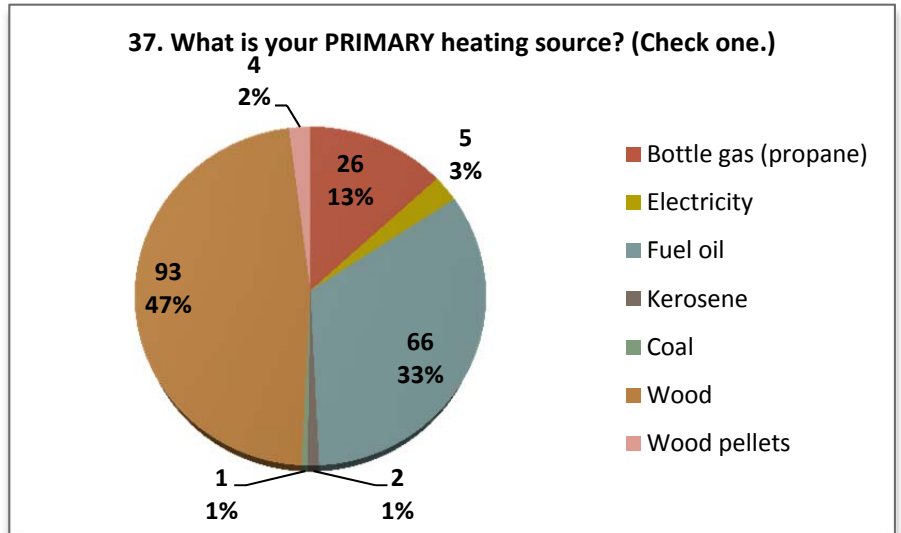
**36. Evaluating the Conservation Commission (198 responses):** The vast majority of respondents were not familiar enough with the Craftsbury Conservation Commission to form an opinion.



## Energy/Utilities

### 37-39. Primary and Secondary Heating Sources (205 responses/145 responses, respectively)/Weatherization (178 responses):

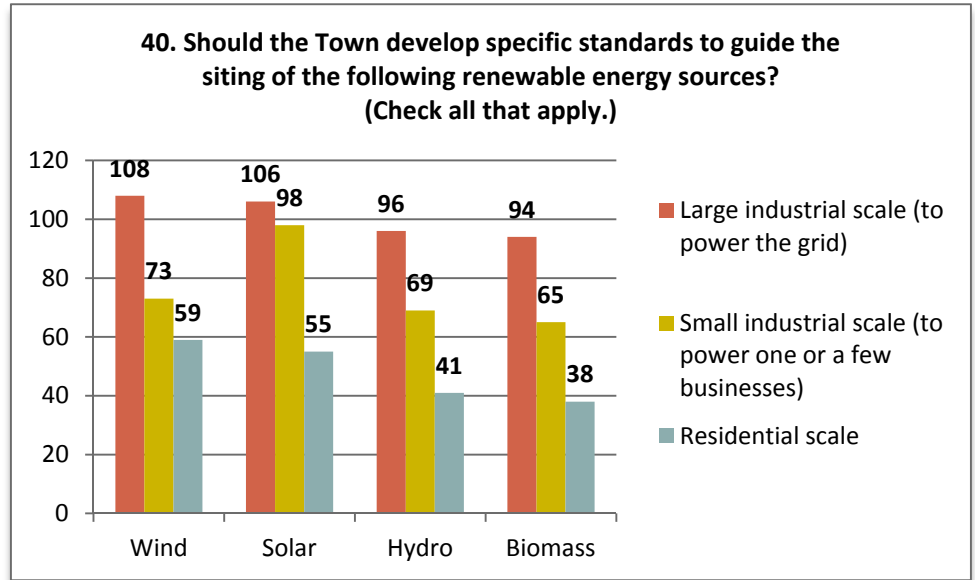
Survey respondents' dependence on wood is largely in line with most current Census estimates (45.7%), but they are less dependent on fuel oil than Census estimates (42.6%)



**40-41. Renewable energy standards (167 responses/107 responses**

**respectively):** Respondents felt most strongly about setting guidelines for industrial scale. When asked about guidelines, responses were open-ended, but touched on similar themes regarding visual impacts, environmental impacts, and limitations of scale. 10 respondents wanted to limit the size and scope.

No industrial anything: 7; No large scale wind: 6; No large wind or solar: 6; No large solar: 1; No biomass: 1; No wind at all: 1; None of the above: 1.



When developing siting guidelines, respondents called for the following to be taken into consideration: Visual/Aesthetic impacts (23), environmental (20), neighboring properties (13), noise (9), historic preservation (2), and property values (2). Seven respondents called for more public input or a better review process that allowed for such.

**42. Water supply (194 responses):** Most respondents have drilled wells. “Other” category includes water from brooks and ponds (to camps).

