Centre for Community
Learning & Development
Strong Communities Together

CCL&D
TORONTO

WESTMINSTER – BRANSON Neighborhood Wellbeing Survey 2014-2015 Report

Immigrant Women Integration Program

Adele Ibragimova

Toronto 2014-2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Neighbourhood Well-Being Survey (NWBS) which called "Understanding Our Neighbourhood" is the most important part of the Immigrant Women Integration Program (IWIP) of the Toronto Centre for Community Learning and Development (TCCL&D). The purpose of this Canadian Index of Well-Being (CIWB) that includes: demographic information, economic and social living standards, physical and mental health, civic and community engagement, safety, physical environmental and infrastructure.

The survey was conducted from October to November 2014 in the Westminster-Branson community of Toronto.

Respondents could participate by filling out an online version, or a hard copy form, in order to identify the gaps within the community's ability to access different accessible services, and it was distributed among residents and some organizations.

First and foremost NWBS helped to identify different factors that residents encountering in the neighbourhood.

Out of the total 56 respondents, 35% are male and 65% female; only 44% of them are Canadian citizen, 30 % have permanent status, 13% are international students, 8,5% are refuge claimants and 4% are foreign temporary workers .

The most respondents are 20-50 years old at 69% of participants in the survey, and 20% are seniors. More than 57% married and have a school age children. 24 % have a single marital status, 13% and 6% of residents are widowed or divorced.

The majority of the respondents – 61% are from Europe, more specifically from Formal Soviet Union, Israel and Italy, 13 % from South Asia more specifically from Philippines and 14% from Southeast Asia. In connection to that large part about 95% of residents use English as a second language. The

most frequently speaking language at home are Russian, Hebrew, Italian, Tagalog. According survey results, only 18% speaking English fluently, equal parts - 33-35% advanced and intermediate and more then 13% only basic level of language. It is very clear from these observations that language barer one of the most difficulties.

High percentages 45% of respondents live in a rented house and not longer than 5 years, only 20 % more than 10 years.

What is more, 30% of participants spend 51-60% of their income on housing, 19% spend 41-50% and 19% spend 31-40% of their income for pay rent. Obviously, a lot of residents of our community also have financial difficulties.

Probably it is depending of fact that more 43 % live in Canada no longer than 5 years, there are new immigrants in this country and faced the many problems.

The majority of the respondents (25%) mentioned their household income is above than $55,000-$65,000, 22% mentioned as $45,000-$55,000 per year, but 15% mentioned as $5,000-$10,000 per year which is also very alarming.

Only 67% respondents are working, 44% of them on full-time job and 23% are part-time employee. Those who are working, 18 % have more than one job, and sometimes it is survival job for them.

35% mentioned that the required qualification to perform their job is college degree or 17% - trade certificates, only 9 % marked university degree for that job. И это тнесмотря на то most part are highly educated: 41% graduates of some colleges and above 25% have university degree.

The majority of the respondents doesn't have any civic and community engagement in the society, more than 60% of them think they can have small impact in making your neighbourhood a better place to live, 57% never participate in any neighbourhood groups or organizations, 65 % never met

with, called or sent a letter to any local politician and more than 75% do not have any volunteering experience. There are also very alarming.

About 85% of respondents feel positive or very positive about their health, 87% do not smoke cigarettes or any tobacco products at all and 33% have at least 30 minutes of physical exercise more than twice a week. But 41% have any physical exercise less than once a week, and approximately 26% only once or twice a week.

Most respondents above 75% would say they are happy, have good health condition, feel safe, satisfied with personal relationships in their lives. About 60% of the people feel satisfied with their standard of living.

83% of respondents are satisfied with the community. Moreover 96% would recommend our neighbourhood as a good place to live.

Over 50% of respondents confident to get financial support from family, friends, government, bank.

High percentage of respondents satisfied with the public transportation, groceries stores, most of them able to buy meats, fruits and vegetables in our neighbourhoods.

2. INTRODUCTION

The NWBS 2014-2015 was done by Immigrant Women Integration Program trainees from communities across Toronto. The survey was done in Toronto's priority neighbourhoods in order to understand how community services and life conditions impact residents.

The participants of IWIP conducted a survey by using the Community Index of Well-Being and out of all neighbourhoods; the participants of the IWIP program represent eight:

Regent Park

Crescent Town

South Riverdale

Dunforth East York

Cabbagetown-South St.James Town

Willowdale East

Hillcrest Village

and Westminster-Branson.

In the middle of October the team of program participants with the help of the TCCLD staff designed a NWBS questionnaire to be used as a basis for this survey. The data and information gathering was done during the 4 weeks of October 2014.

The purpose of conducting the NWBS in the each neighbourhood was to understand the specific needs of the community, how community services, social and economic aspects, environmental, infrastructure and life conditions impact the residents. The well-being needs of any community measure various aspects of life by collecting detailed information on specific indicators.

This survey focused on selected indicators: demographics, economic and social living standards, health, community engagement, safety and physical environment and infrastructure. This concept was taken from the research affiliated with "Canadian Index of Well-being (CIW)", a new approach of measuring well-being in society. CIW provides detailed insights into the quality of life of Canadians, and concentrates on specific socioeconomic challenges.

(https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/)

3. METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted using the following methods:

• Questionnaire based on Canadian Index of Well-Being (hardcopies and softcopies)

• Personal observations and discussions

The 50 copies of printed version of questionnaire was distributed among the residents of Westminster-Branson and also residents of neighbourhoods were asked to fill out an on-line version by providing 50 copies of bookmarks with the survey's website address.

Bookmarks and printed questionnaires were distributed to the participants of different community places, programs and events. Parents at school yard and playgrounds, people at the public library and community centres, seniors walking at the park, local residents such as neighbours in my apartment building – all of these people took active part in this survey. This questionnaire was distributed only to the residents within the community's geographical area to identify and have a deep knowledge of community issues.
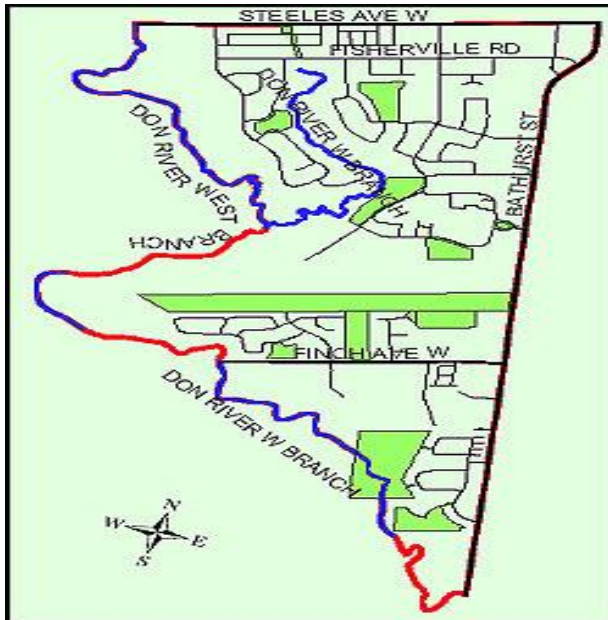
4. NEIGHBOURHOOD HISTORY

Figure 4-1. City of Toronto, 2011, Westminster-Branson neighbourhood map. Retrieved from http://www.torontoneighbourhoods.net/neighbourhoods/

Bathurst-Finch (also known by civic name Westminster-Branson) is one of Toronto's northernmost neighbourhoods. Located at the far north of Toronto, **Westminster-Branson** is bounded by Steeles in the north, with a western border that follows the meandering course of the West Don River down to where it connects with Bathurst Street, the neighbourhood's eastern boundary.

There is little information available about Westminster-Branson's history, but references to previous name as well as its site on the banks of the West Don both point to a past as a farming village like many others in the Toronto area. Today, of course, the neighbourhood is better documented, and very distinctive.

One of the safest of the city of Toronto's 'priority neighbourhoods', it is nonetheless an extraordinarily complex community with several unique characteristics. Unlike the primarily English-speaking Jewish communities to the south, Westminster-Branson has an incredible large population of Russian speakers 30%. They are predominantly Jewish immigrants from the former USSR, sometimes arriving via Israel. The neighbourhood also has a large community of Tagalog speakers and notable populations of Korean, Spanish, Farsi and Romanian speakers too. There are 9.5% less children when compared to city of Toronto age groups, but staggering 28.5% more seniors.

According to the 2011 Canada Census, Westminster-Branson has a very large immigrant population with over 70% residents being foreign-born. More

than 33% of those immigrants arrived in Canada between 2001 and 2006. 31% of residents identify themselves as being of Jewish ethnic origin, and 23%, of Russian origin.

Other ethnic groups include Filipino (9%), Ukrainian (8%), and Polish (6%). The top native languages besides English are Russian (32%), Tagalog (6%), Korean (4%), Hebrew (3%), and Persian (2%). The largest visible minority group is Bathurst-Finch is Filipino.

In 2004, the United Way, in a joint initiative with the City of Toronto, formed the Strong Neighbourhood Task Force, with the goal of building an action plan for revitalizing Toronto neighbourhoods. In 2005, the task force released a report, *Strong Neighbourhoods: A Call to Action,* analyzing Toronto's 140 neighbourhoods. The objective was to identify those neighbourhoods where public investment in local services has not kept pace with demographic shifts, population increases, and growing social needs.
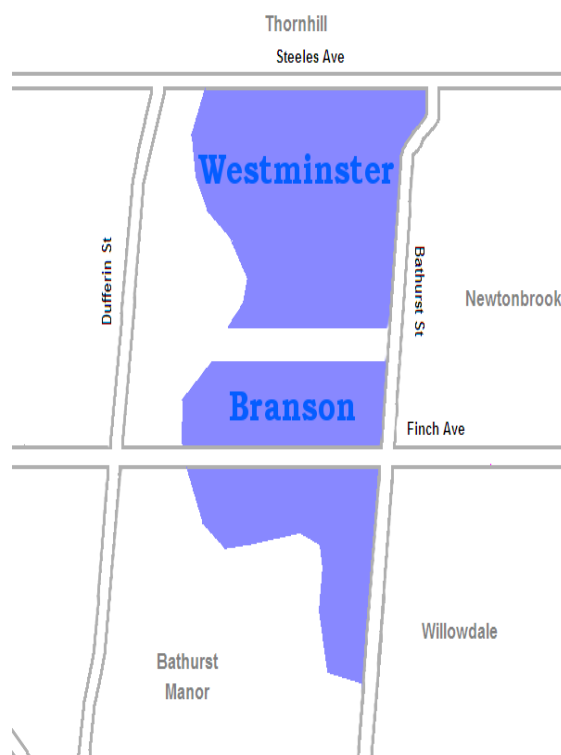

Figure 4-2. City of Toronto, 2011, Westminster-Branson neighbourhood old map. Retrieved from http://www.torontoneighbourhoods.net/ neighbourhoods/

The analysis measured services, facilities, challenges, and the vitality of each neighbourhood.

Through the task force analysis, Bathurst-Heights was identified as a priority neighbourhood with poor access to services, facing significant challenges, and in need of social and physical infrastructure investment. The Local Immigration Partnership seeks to participate in that investment process.

Figure 4-3. Antibes Community Centre. Retrieved from:

http://www.google.ca/mytowncrier.antibes-named-a-priority-centre.html

Figure 4-5. HUB. Bathurst-Finch. Retrieved from:

http://www.google.ca/kcccms-at-bathurst-and-finch-hub-now-open

It would be a staggering understatement to say that high rise units predominate in Westminster-Branson. There are some 7,765 families living in high rises, while there are only 865 single detached homes.

Figure 4-6. Antibes street.
Retrieved from: Google Images

Figure 4- 7. Fishersville street
Retrieved from: Google Images

Most of these are bungalows but there are a healthy number of two-storey and split level homes as well. The houses in the neighbourhood are of varied construction, reflecting a staggered development process. It can be hard to get a good look at the homes from road due to the tall, lush deciduous trees that line the avenues. The roads are narrow and comparatively straight, with sidewalks mostly concentrated in the higher density areas.

There are not a whole ton of restaurants in this mostly residential neighbourhood, but there is definitely a bagel shop and bakery up on Steeles, next to a Szechuan grill. There are plenty of restaurants in nearby Thornhill, as well as every kind of shopping imaginable.

For parks, the neighbourhood is in much better shape, since the neighbourhood is right next to the enormous G. Lord Ross Park, as well as the broader sprawl of Parkland on both sides of the West Don River.

Figure 4- 8. G. Ross Lord Park.
Retrieved from: http://www.google.ca/mytowncrier.grosslordpark.html

Important experience can be found at the Holocaust Museum on Bathurst. The Bathurst-Finch Community Hub offers community programs, a community garden and even health services. For drivers, there are also plenty of shopping opportunities around North York, downtown and throughout the GTA. Major roads in the area include Allen Road, the DVP and the 401, all in easy driving distance. With buses on Finch and Bathurst connecting to subway, bus and streetcar routes, the city is open to everyone.

 The local public school is Charles Best Middle School in next door Bathurst Manor, with Northview Heights serving as the local public high school. There are several private schools as well, including Torah High, Dr. Abraham Shore She'Arim Hebrew Day School and Crawford Adventist Academy. There are also a handful of local places of worship: the Jewish Russian Community Centre, Congregation Bnai Torah, Pride of Israel Synagogue, Immanuel Seventh Day Adventist Church and the Church of Truth in Toronto. There are, of course, many more synagogues and general places of worship in the surrounding neighbourhoods – indeed, Westminster-Branson is

so close to Vaughan that is it like living just outside downtown, while retaining all the comforts of the suburbs.

Westminster-Branson is listed as a 'priority neighbourhood' by the city of Toronto. While promising for current residents, it reflects a view on the part of the city that the area is underserviced. Considering the reputation of other priority neighbourhoods such as Jane-Finch, residents may feel apprehension at the mere mention of the phrase. In the short term, they may be reassured to know that crime rates in Westminster-Branson are low across the board. In the longer term, the city is re-evaluating which neighbourhoods receive the 'priority' designation, so it may not stick to Westminster-Branson for much longer.

Other potential issues with the neighbourhood include its extreme distance from downtown, the lack of a nearby subway station and limited availability of bus routes. Still, for a priority neighbourhood, it is very attractive, and plenty of immigrants will be interested in moving in.

5. SURVEY FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

In the community of Westminster-Branson the Neighbourhood Well-being survey which is called "Understanding Our Neighbourhood" was completed by 56 respondents and their age distributions are shown in the following table.
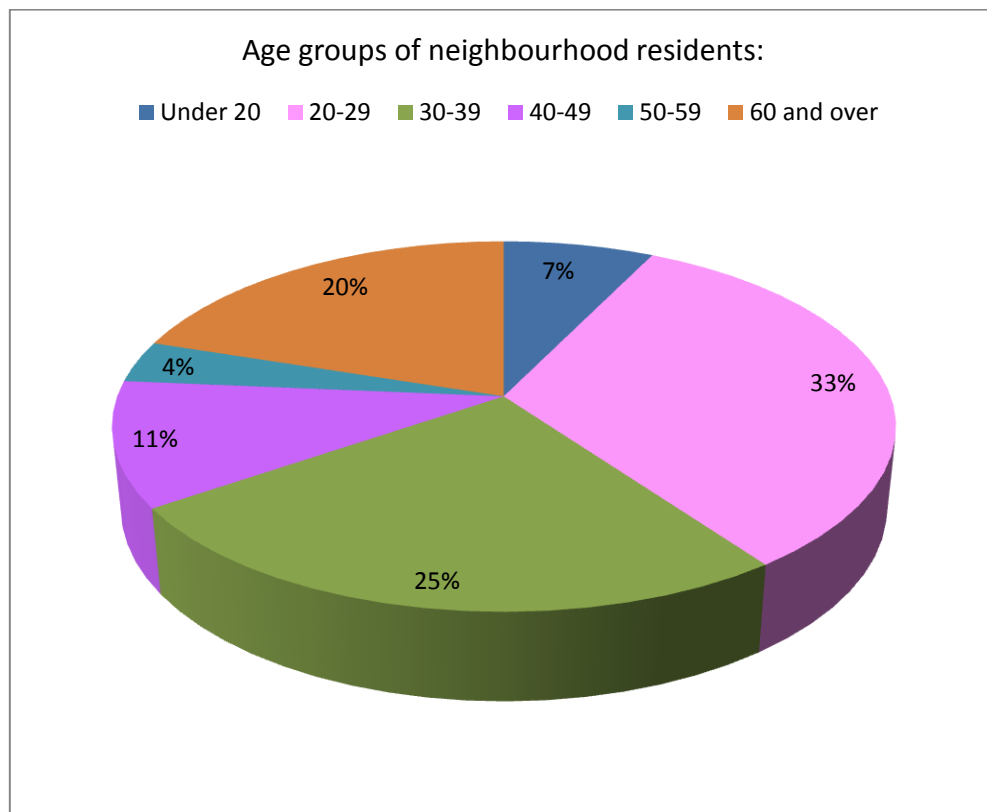
5.1. Demographics.

Figure 5.1-1.

The majority of respondents were from the age group of 20-29 (33%) and 30-39 (25%) and the second largest group was age 60 and over (20%) (Figure5.1-1).

Following the data from the city of Toronto, Westminster Branson profile is very close.

Socio-demographic Characteristic:

	Ward 10	Toronto
Low income* (%)	26.0	24.5
Median household income	$47,028	$52,833
Unemployment rate (%)	7.5	7.6
Less than high school education* (%)	16.4	20.4
Recent immigrants (5 years or less) (%)	**17.5 (H)**	10.8
Total immigrants (%)	59.4	50.0
Racialized* (%)	**27.3 (L)**	46.9

Top 5 ethnic origins :

Ward 10	Toronto
1. Jewish	1. Chinese
2. Filipino	2. East Indian
3. Russian	3. Italian
4. Italian	4. Canadian
5. Chinese	5. Filipino

Top 5 home languages

(other than English)

Ward 10	Toronto
1. Russian	1. Chinese n.o.s.
2. Tagalog	2. Cantonese
3. Italian	3. Tamil
4. Korean	4. Italian
5. Spanish	5. Spanish

https://www1.toronto.ca

There are over 72 % working age between, 7% under 20 young people and above 20% seniors 60 years old and over participated on this survey. 64% were female and only 36% male, about 57% of them married and have children (Figures 5.1-2 – 5.1-4).
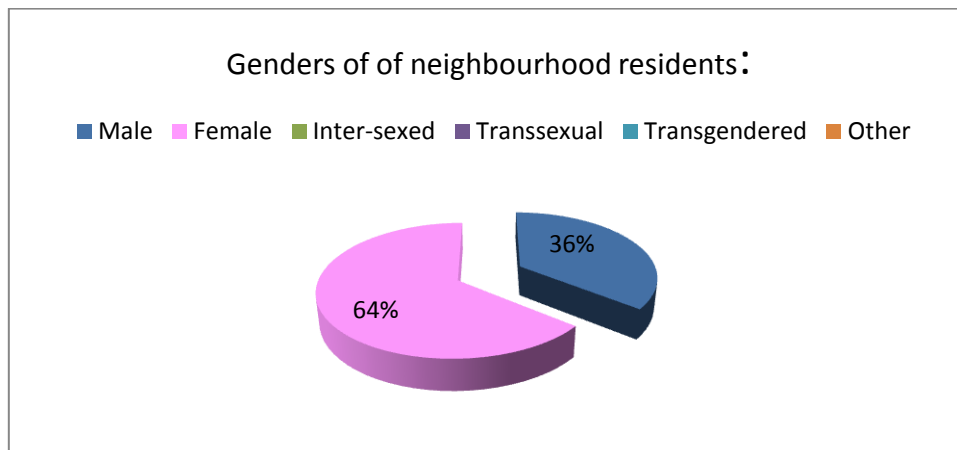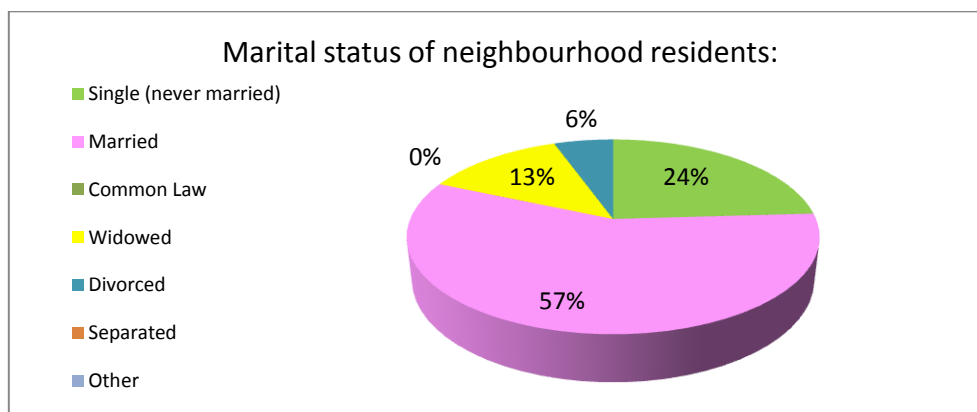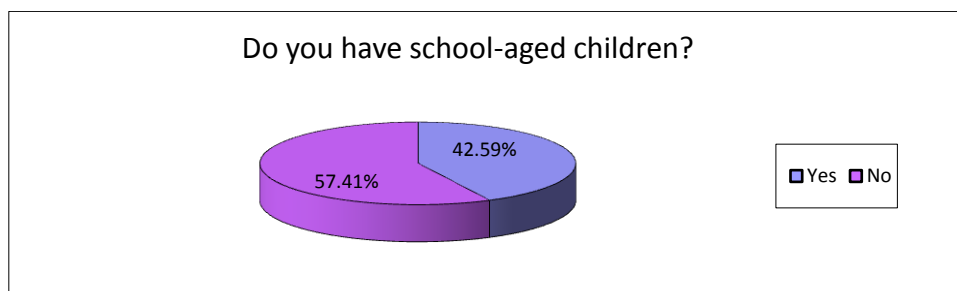
The majority of the respondents – 61% are from Europe, more specifically from Formal Soviet Union, Israel and Italy, next largest group 13 % from South Asia more specifically from Philippines and 14% from Southeast Asia. 44% of them are citizens of Canada, 30% permanent residents, 13% international students, about 9% refugees and 4% temporary foreign workers (Figures 5.1-5 - 5.1-6)
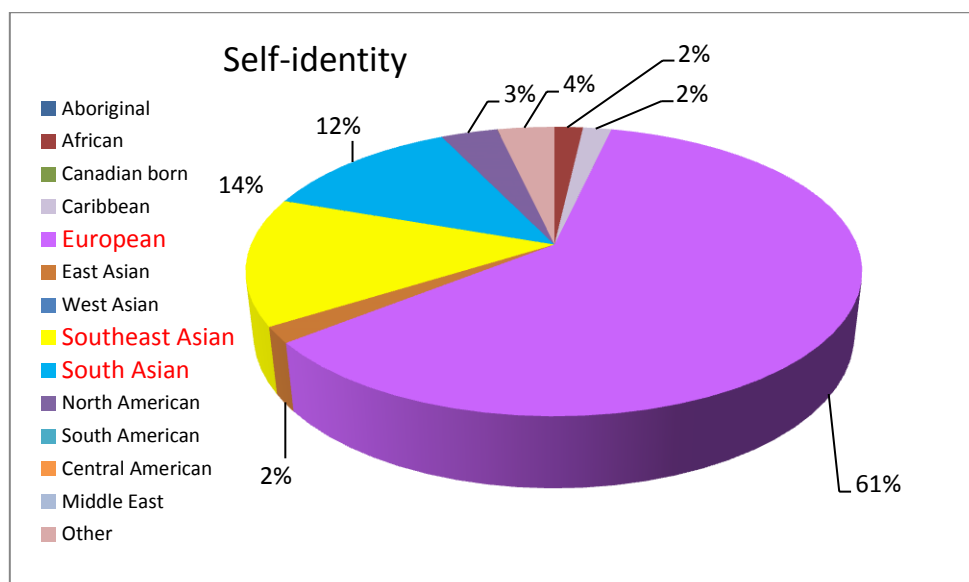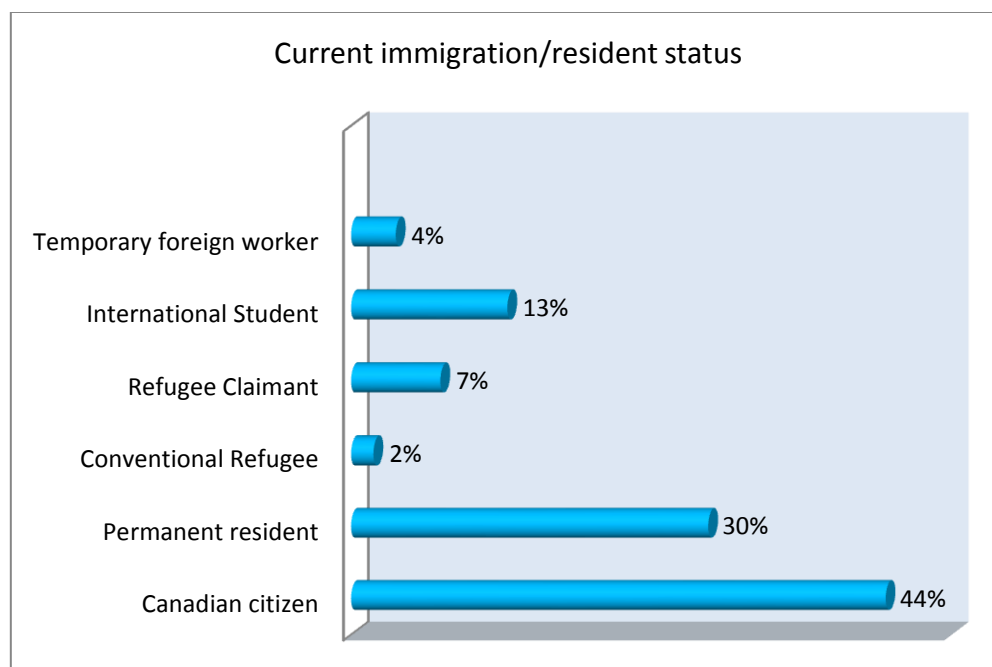

Figure 5.1-5.

Figure 5.1-6.

Largest part of all respondents which is 56% live in Canada not longer than 5 years, and 94% all survey participants speaking English as second language. Alarming the fact that only 18% speak English fluently, about 35% advanced, 33% have Intermediate level, but 18% able to use only basic level (Figures 5.1-7 – 5.1-9).
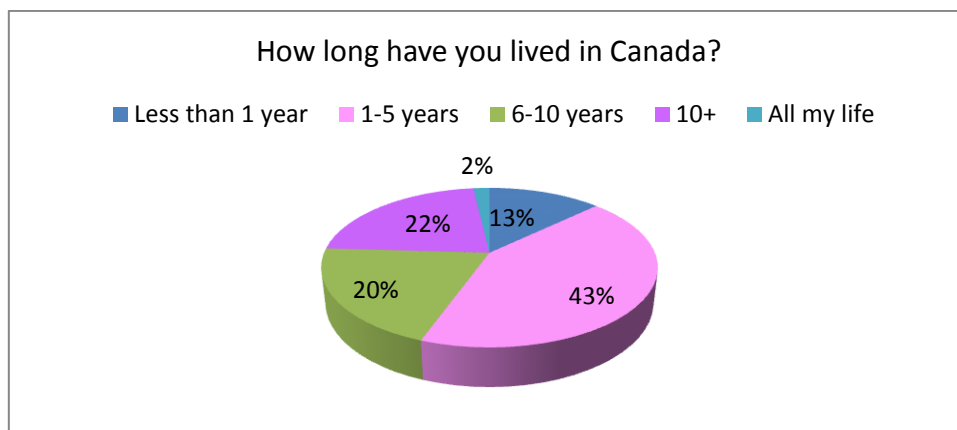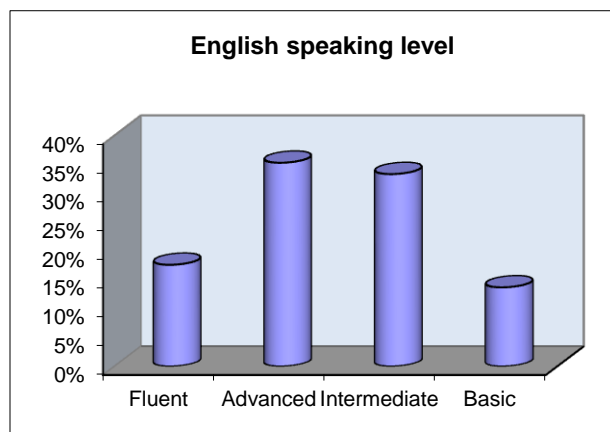

Figure 5.1-7.

Figure 5.1-8-5.1-9.

5.2. Economic and social Wellbeing.

Based on answers of respondents the household income of 24% are $55,000-$65,000, 22% have $45,000-$55,000 income. And about 25% are surviving with the minimum income, because their household income not more than $10,000. That particular part of residents needs support from government, community and social services.
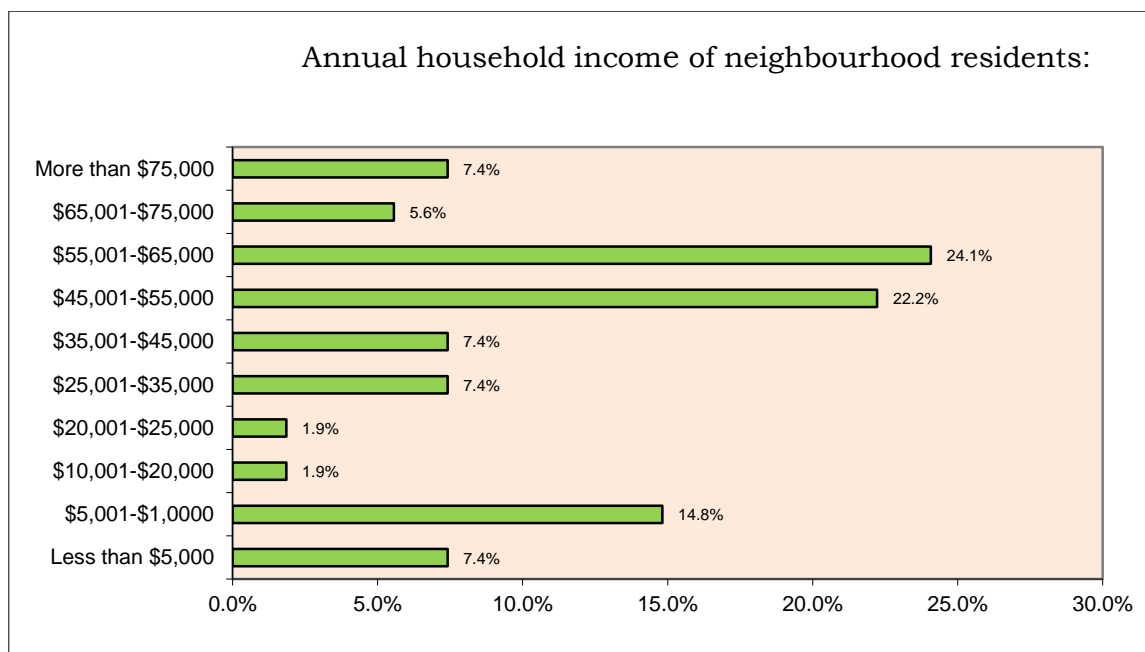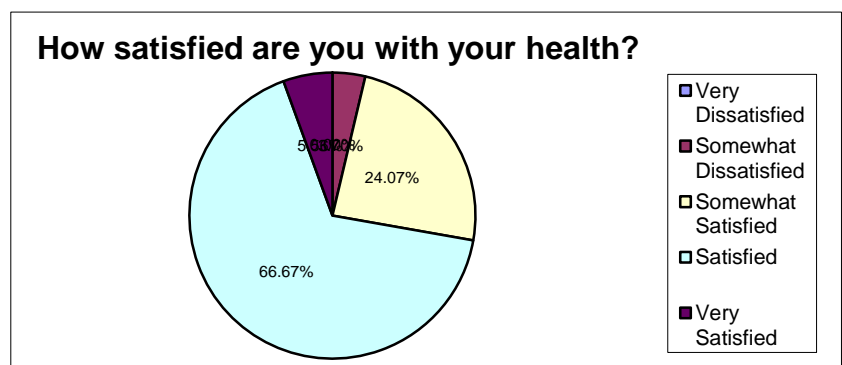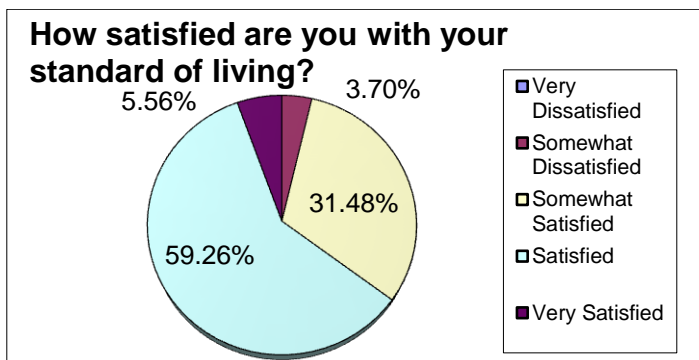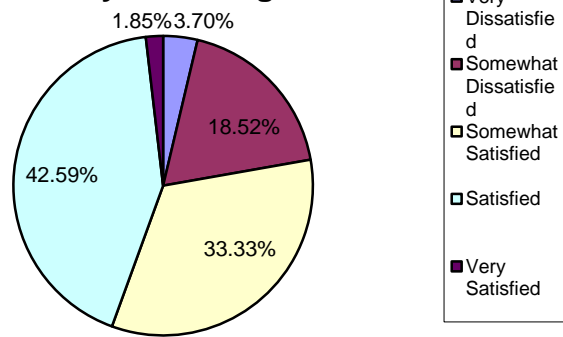
Annual household income of neighbourhood residents:

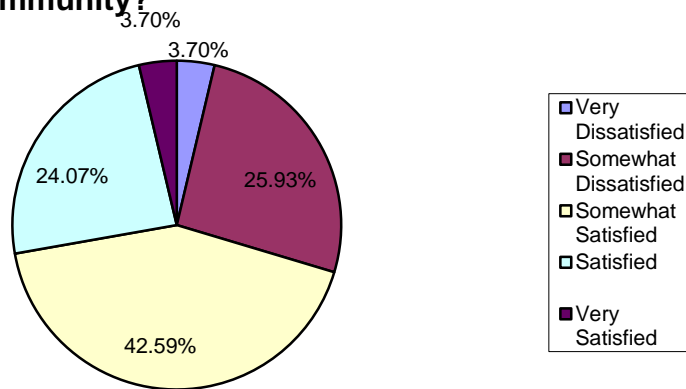| Income	Percentage
More than $75,000	7.4%
$65,001-$75,000	5.6%
$55,001-$65,000	24.1%
$45,001-$55,000	22.2%
$35,001-$45,000	7.4%
$25,001-$35,000	7.4%
$20,001-$25,000	1.9%
$10,001-$20,000	1.9%
$5,001-$1,0000	14.8%
Less than $5,000	7.4%

Figure 5.2-1.

However, most respondents - 55% and more say they are healthy, feel safe, satisfied with personal relationships, currently achieving in life and financial situation. About 60% of the people feel satisfied with their standard of living and about 70% convinced of happiness in their lives (Figures 5.2-2 – 5.2-9).

How satisfied are you with your standard of living?
- Very Dissatisfied
- Somewhat Dissatisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied: 31.48%
- Satisfied: 59.26%
- Very Satisfied
- 5.56%
- 3.70%

How satisfied are you with your health?
- Very Dissatisfied
- Somewhat Dissatisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied: 24.07%
- Satisfied: 66.67%
- Very Satisfied

How satisfied are you with the what you are currently achieving in life?

1.85% 3.70%

18.52%

33.33%

42.59%

Legend:
- Very Dissatisfied
- Somewhat Dissatisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

How satisfied are you with feeling part of your community?

3.70%
3.70%

25.93%

24.07%

42.59%

Legend:
- Very Dissatisfied
- Somewhat Dissatisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?

3.70%

12.96% 9.26%

74.07%

Legend:
- Very Dissatisfied
- Somewhat Dissatisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied
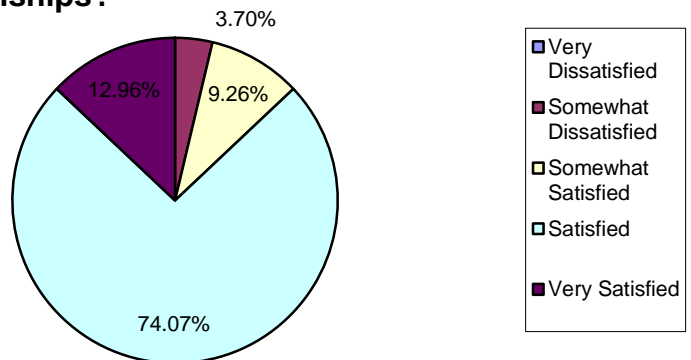
How satisfied are you with how safe you feel?

2%
4%

20%

74%

Legend:
- Very Dissatisfied
- Somewhat Dissatisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied
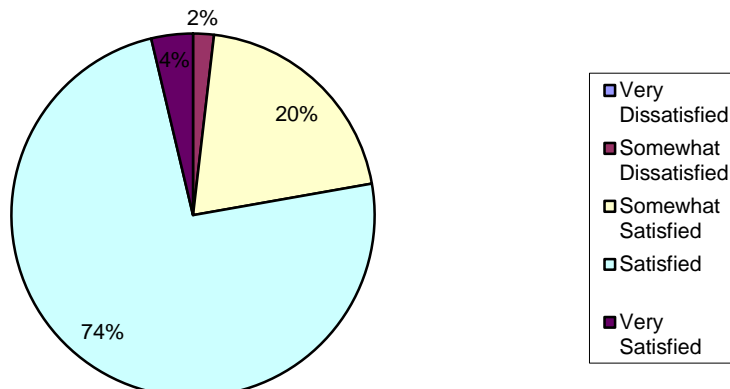
Figures 5.2-2 – 5.2.7.

Taking all things together, would you say you are:

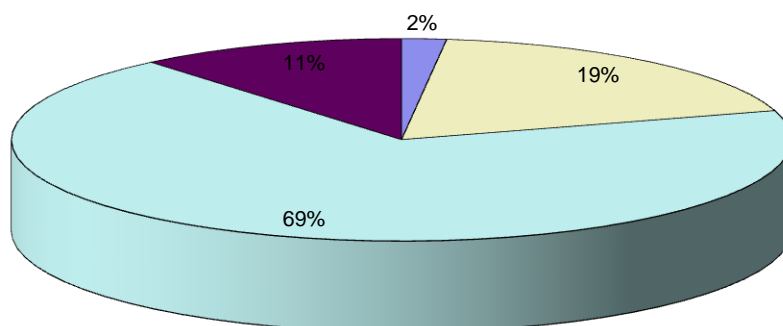Very unhappy ■   Unhappy ■   Neither unhappy nor happy □   Happy □   Very happy ■

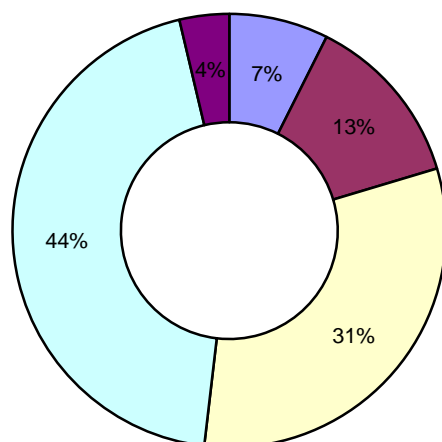2%

11%

19%

69%

Figure 5.2-8.

How satisfied are you with the financial situation in your household?

4%

7%

13%

44%

31%

■ Very Dissatisfied

■ Somewhat Dissatisfied

□ Somewhat Satisfied

□ Satisfied

■ Very Satisfied

Figure 5.2-9.

Most of respondents answer that there are confident to get any social or financial support from family members, relatives, friends or neighbours, government, bank, programmes, groups associations.
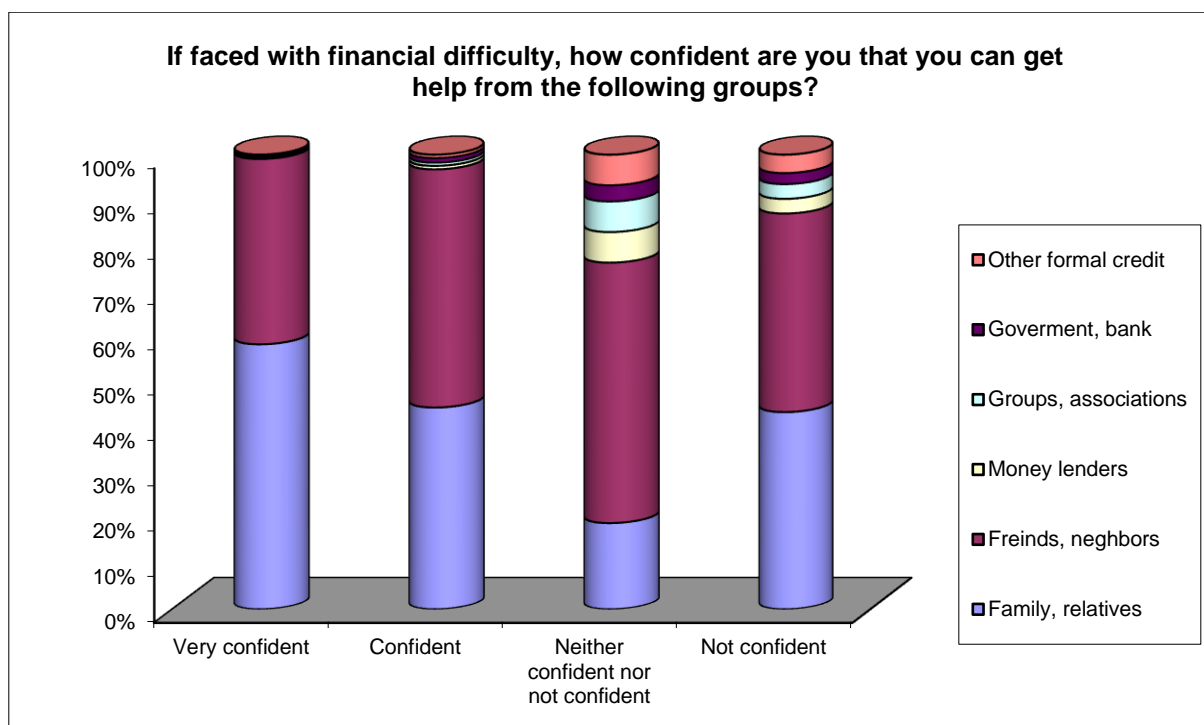

If faced with financial difficulty, how confident are you that you can get help from the following groups?

Legend:
- Other formal credit
- Goverment, bank
- Groups, associations
- Money lenders
- Freinds, neghbors
- Family, relatives

X-axis: Very confident, Confident, Neither confident nor not confident, Not confident

Y-axis: 0% to 100%

Figure 5.2-10.

About 46% of respondents live in rental apartments, only 35 % home owners. And majority part that is above 60% is spending about 50% of their household income on housing. This fact demonstrate how high rate of rent disproportional an average household income (Figures 5.2-11 – 5.2-12).
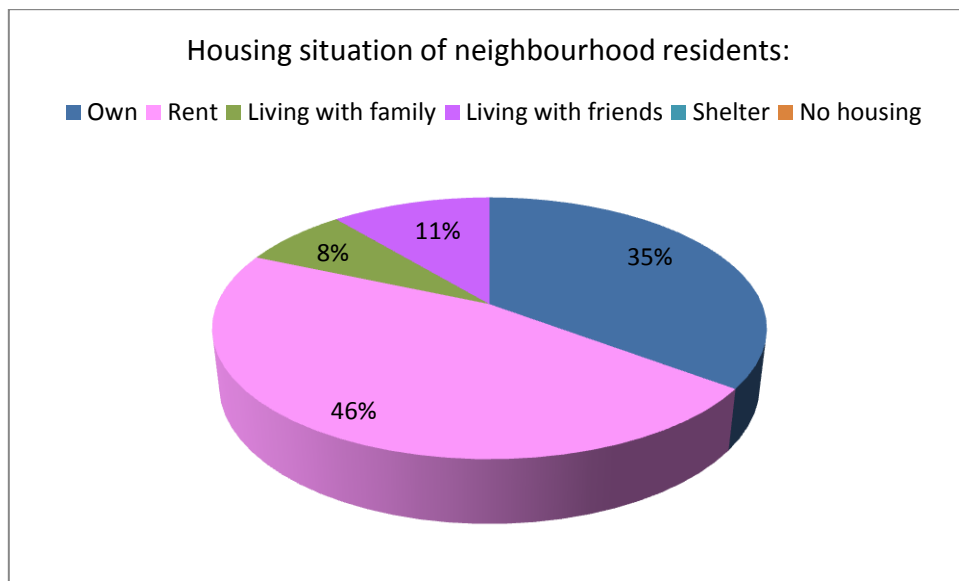
Housing situation of neighbourhood residents:

Own   Rent   Living with family   Living with friends   Shelter   No housing

Figure 5.2-11.

Percentage of your household income spent on housing

Less than 10%
11-20%
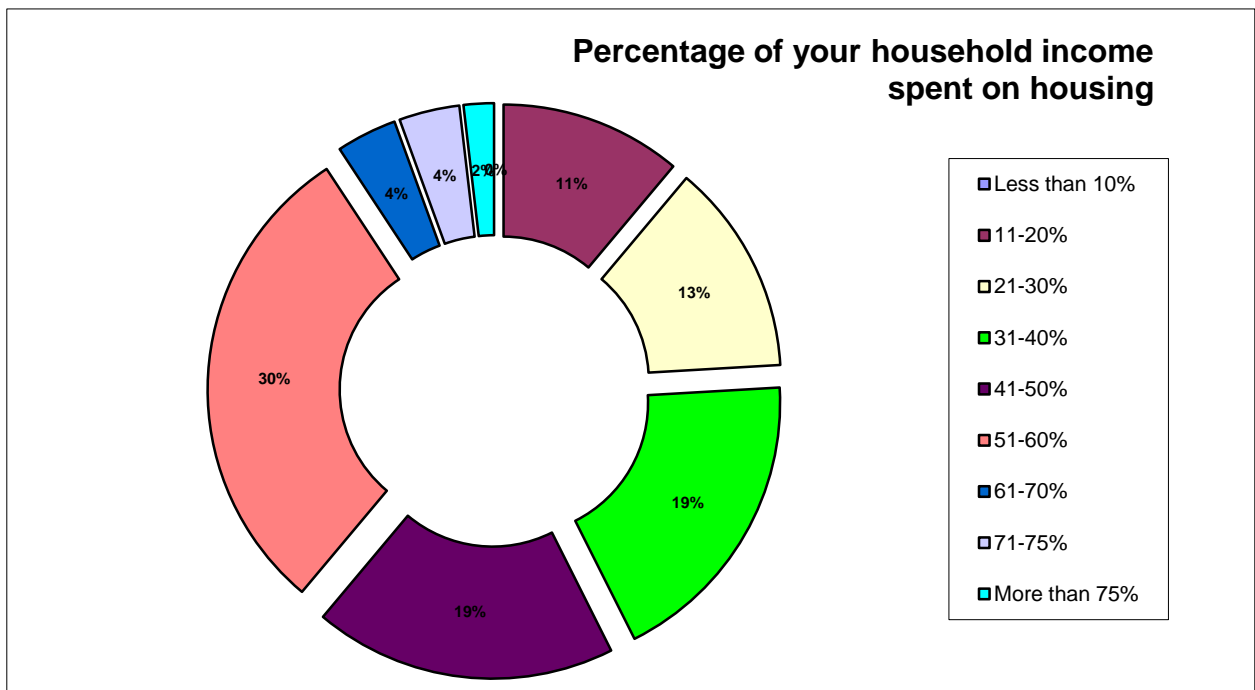21-30%
31-40%
41-50%
51-60%
61-70%
71-75%
More than 75%

Figure 5.2-12.

Analysing daily activities, Figure 5.2-13 demonstrated us that only 47% of neighborhood residents are employed, из которых 9% are business owners, 27% attending school or in training programmes. About 20% looking for work, but reality shows as that many people have low paid jobs, or work on more

than one job, ispite of their job do not correspond with their level of education and skills.
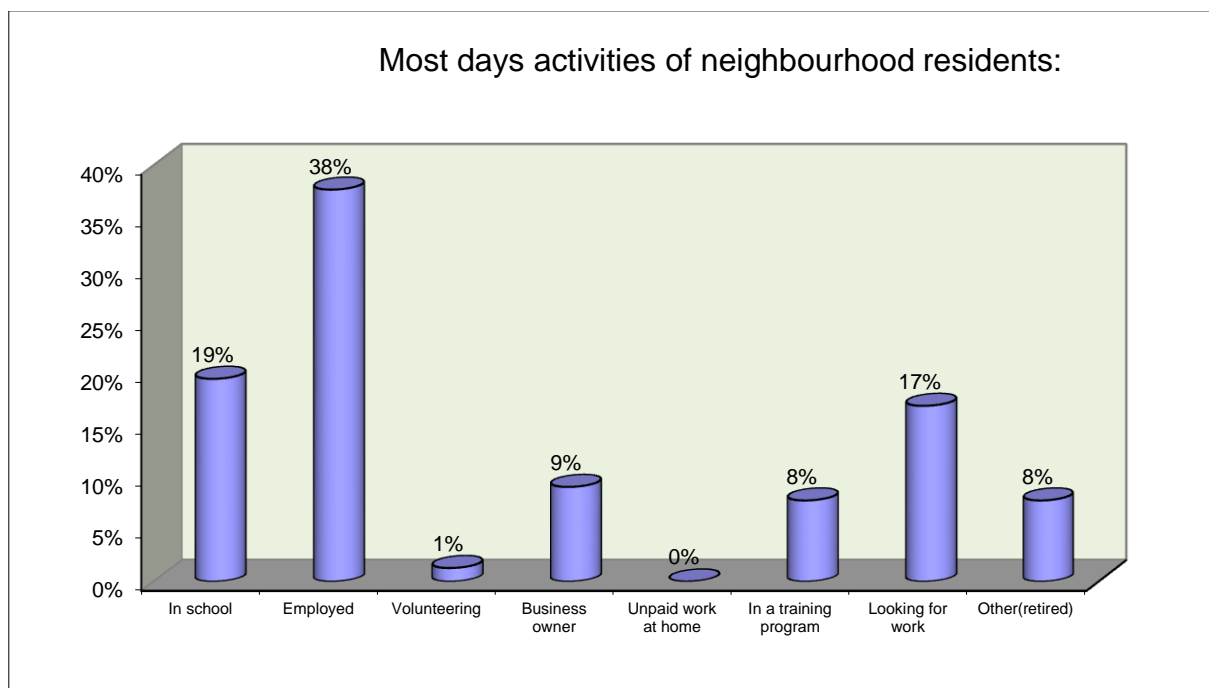
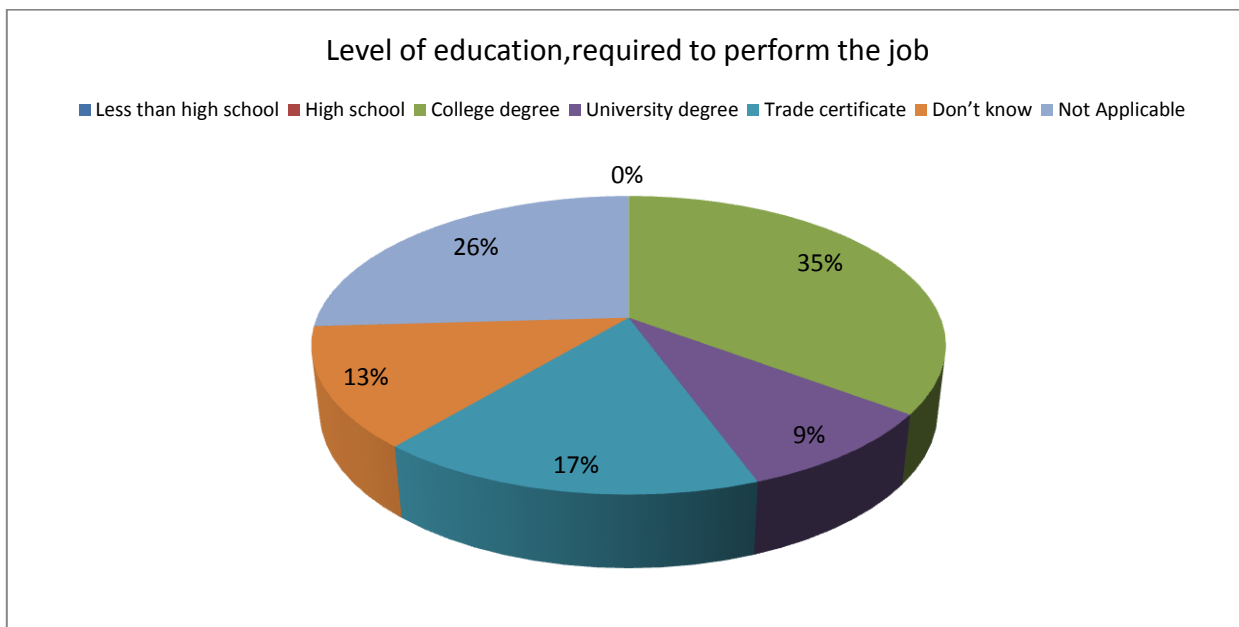## Most days activities of neighbourhood residents:

Figure 5.2-13.

Level of education, required to perform the job

Less than high school ■ High school ■ College degree ■ University degree ■ Trade certificate ■ Don't know ■ Not Applicable

Figure 5.2-14.

If employed, is it...

- Full-time — 44.19%
- Part-time — 23.26%
- More than one job — 18.60%
- Temporary work — 0.00%
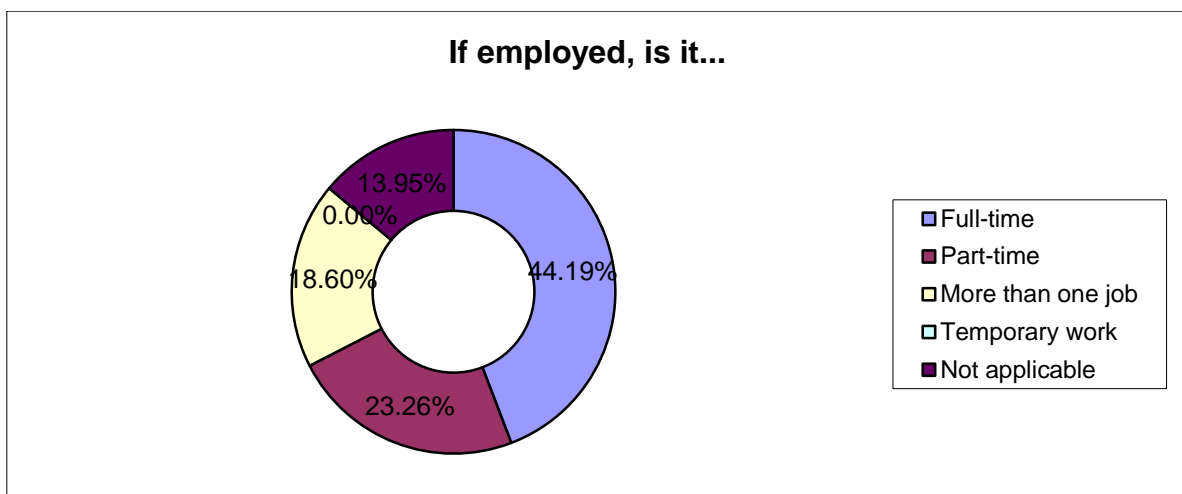- Not applicable — 13.95%

Figure 5.2-15.

Through the survey Figure 5.2-14 indicated that highest level of schooling of Westminster-Branson residents has some University degree (22% respondents) and also college degree (responded 41%), and High School Diploma (17% respondents). But in spite of this fact about 55% are unemployed or underemployed. This numbers give the index that neighbourhood have lot of educated people, at the same time they need more professional job and most of them able to make a great difference for advancement of the community.
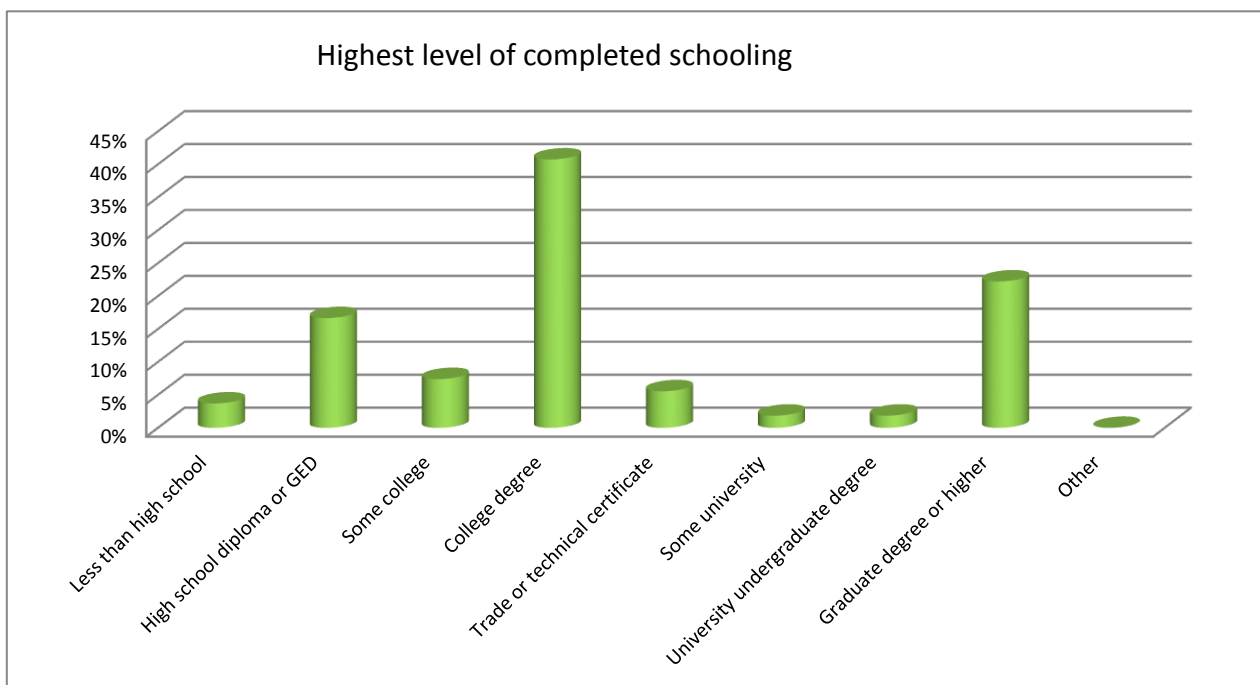

Highest level of completed schooling

Figure 5.2-16.

5.3. Physical and mental health.

About 85% of respondents satisfied their health, 87% do not smoke cigarettes or any tobacco products at all and 33% have at least 30 minutes of physical exercise more than twice a week. But at the same time big part of respondents such as 41% have any physical exercise less than once a week, and approximately 26% only once or twice a week (Figures 5.3-1 – 5.3-3).
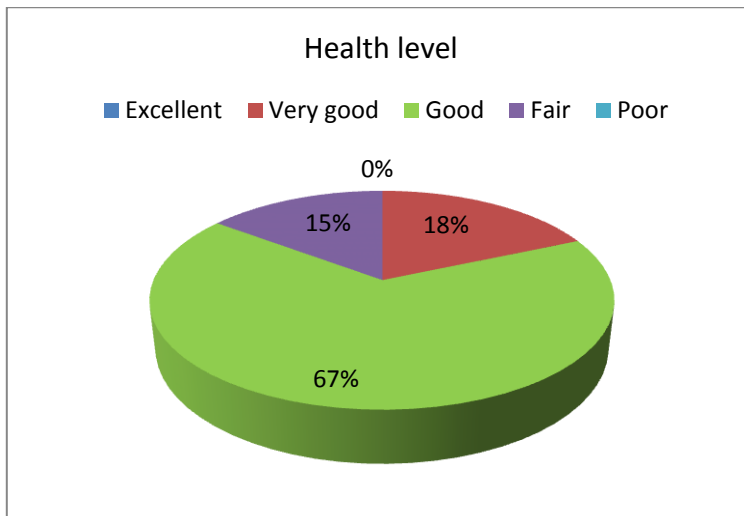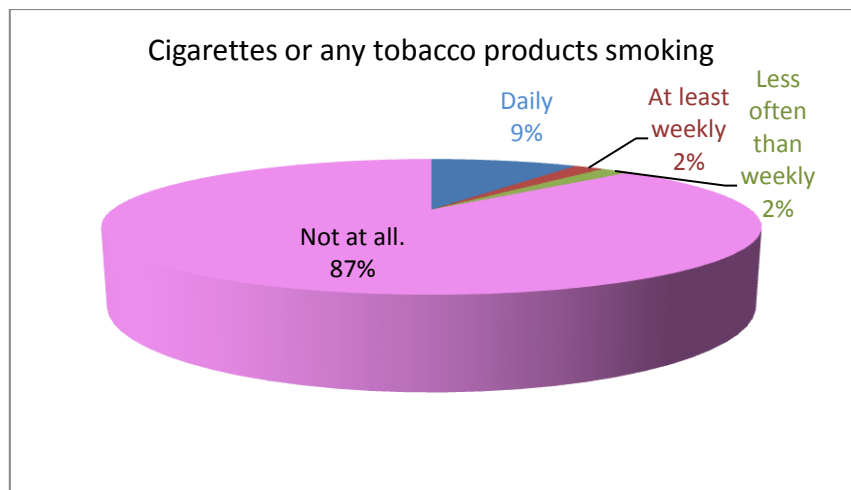

Figure 5.3-1.

Figure 5.3-2.

Physical exercise activity

- Once a week: 7%
- Twice a week: 19%
- More than twice a week: 33%
- Less than once a week: 41%
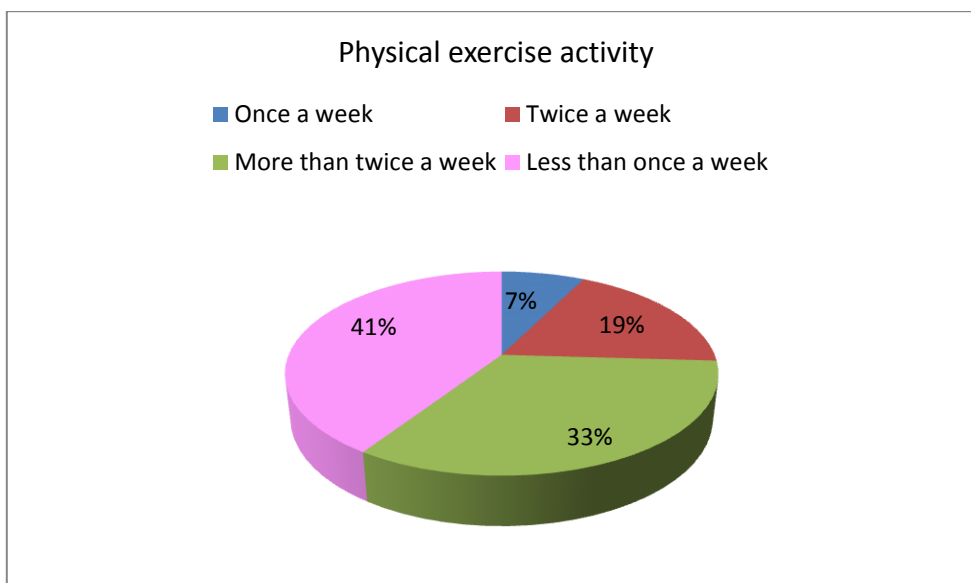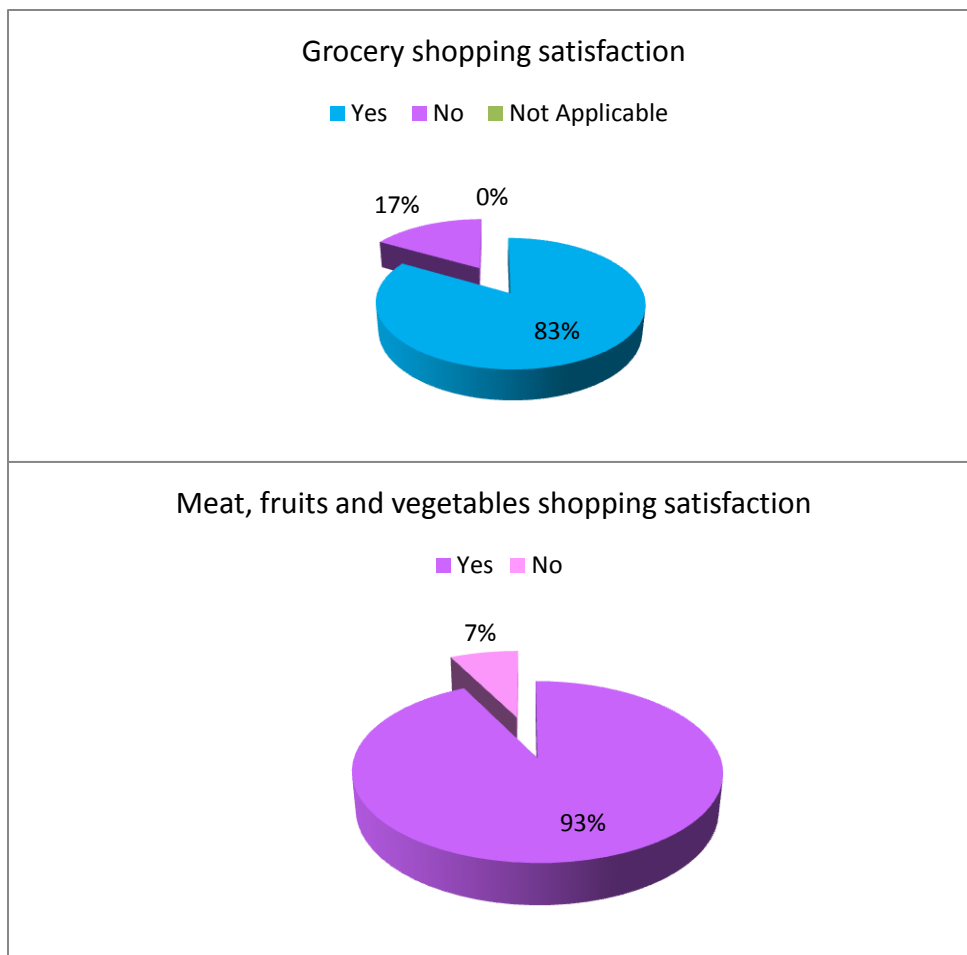
Based on survey data the large part of respondents satisfied with the groceries in neighbourhood and note that they are able to buy meats, fruits and vegetables.

Grocery shopping satisfaction

- Yes: 83%
- No: 17%
- Not Applicable: 0%

Meat, fruits and vegetables shopping satisfaction

- Yes: 93%
- No: 7%

5.4. Civic and community engagement.

Analyse of collected data about civic and community engagement very alarming. The majority of the respondents doesn't have any civic and community engagement in the society, more than 60% of them think they can have small impact in making your neighbourhood a better place to live, 57% never participate in any neighbourhood groups or organizations, 65 % never met with, called or sent a letter to any local politician and more than 75% do not have any volunteering experience. At least 20% of residents are not familiar with the name of neighbourhood where they living.

Only 60% communicate with more than 1-3 neighbours average day and above 8% speak only with family members. Probably it is depend on insufficient knowledge of English, differences of culture and traditions.

One should, nevertheless, consider this problem from another angle, for the great majority of people our neighbourhood satisfied for living. Moreover, about 95% recommended this community as a good place for live (Figures 5.4-1-5.4-5).
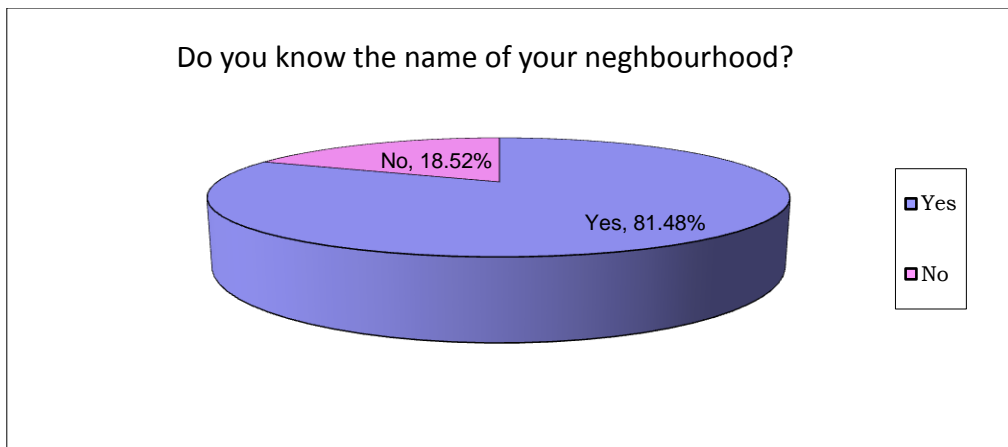
Do you know the name of your neghbourhood?

No, 18.52%

Yes, 81.48%

☐ Yes

☐ No

Figure 5.4 -1.

In an average day, with how many people do you speak in your neighbourhood?

■ 0 ■ 1-3 ■ 4-6 ■ 7-10 ■ 11+

0%

11% 8%

22%

59%

Figure 5.4-2.

How much impact do you think you can have in making your neighborhood a better place to live?

60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

Big impact   Moderate   Small impact   No impact

Figure 5.4-3.

Do you currently participate in any neighbourhood groups or organizations?

- 42.59% Yes
- 57.41% No

Figure 5.4-4.

In the last 12 months have you done any of the following?:

	Yes	No
Voluntereed	13	41
Petitions	10	43
Demonstrations	3	48
Local politician	19	35
Community meeting	36	18

Figure 5.4-5.

How satisfied are you with your neighbourhood?

- Very Unsatisfied
- Unsatisfied
- Not Sure
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

6%

11%

83%

Figure 5.4-6.

Would you recommend your neighbourhood as a good place to live?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know
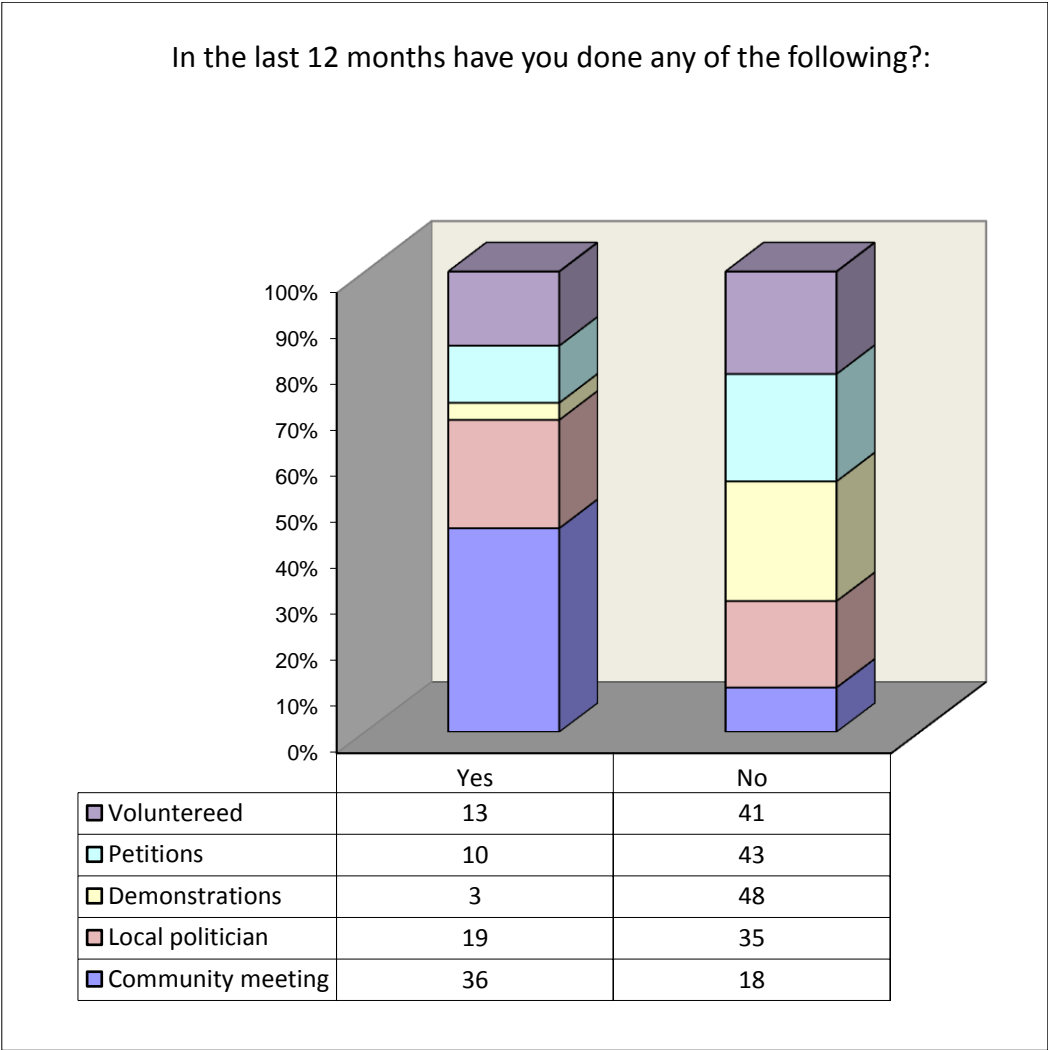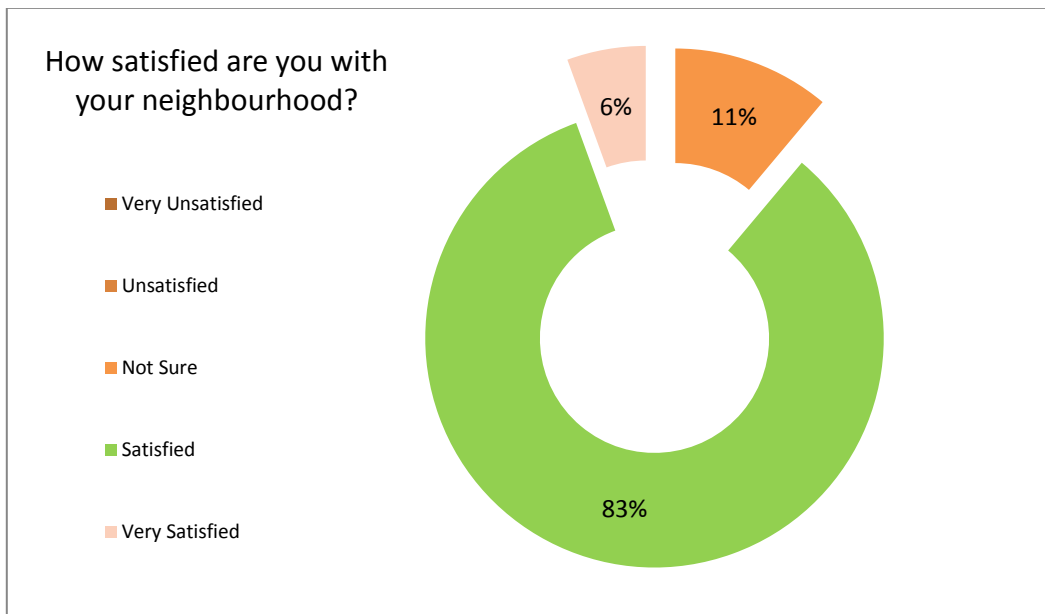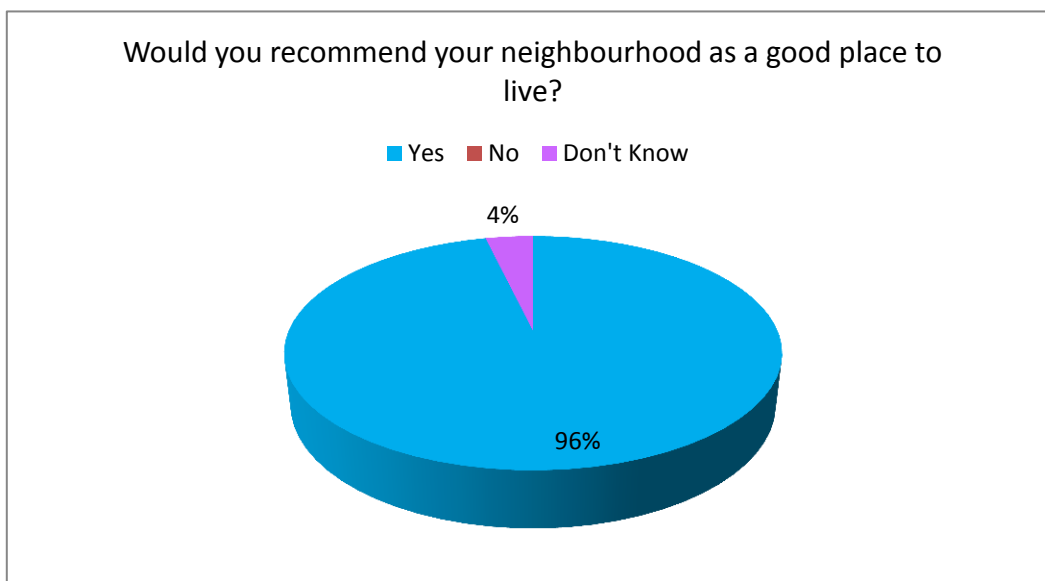
4%

96%

Figure 5.4-7.

5.5.Safety

High percentages of respondents answered that they are very safe or safe walking our neighbourhood during the day and after dark, or at home with their family.

The majority part responded that Westminster-Branson compared to other neighbourhood safer.

How safe or unsafe do you feel when you are in the following situations?

	Very safe	Safe	Neither safe nor unsafe	Unsafe	Very unsafe
Walking after dark	5	39	10	0	0
Walking during the day	7	46	1	0	0
At home by yourself	16	36	2	0	0
In your home with family	21	32	1	0	0

Figure 5.5-1.

Compared to other neighbourhoods, do you think yours is More Safe, Less Safe or About the Same?
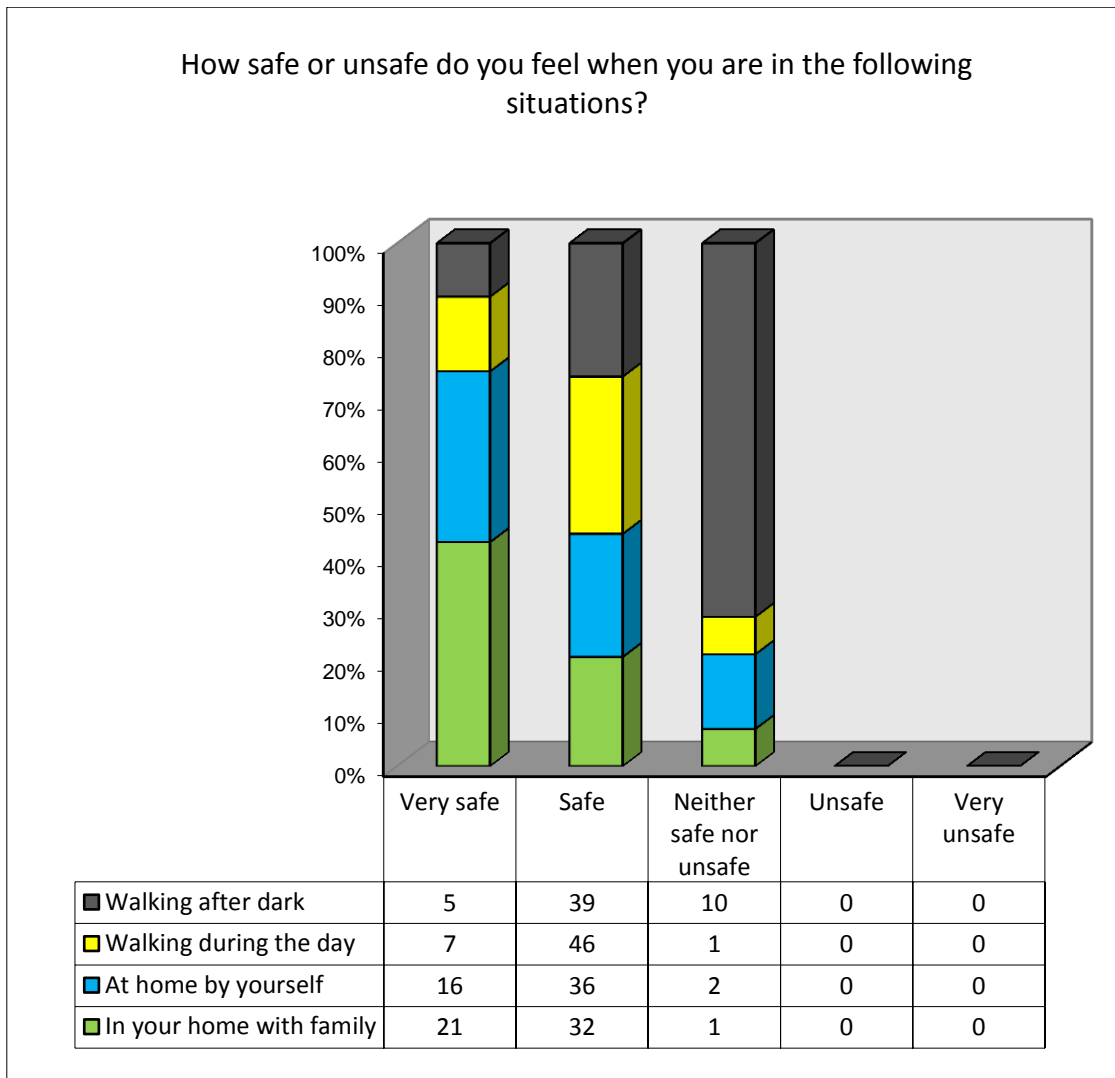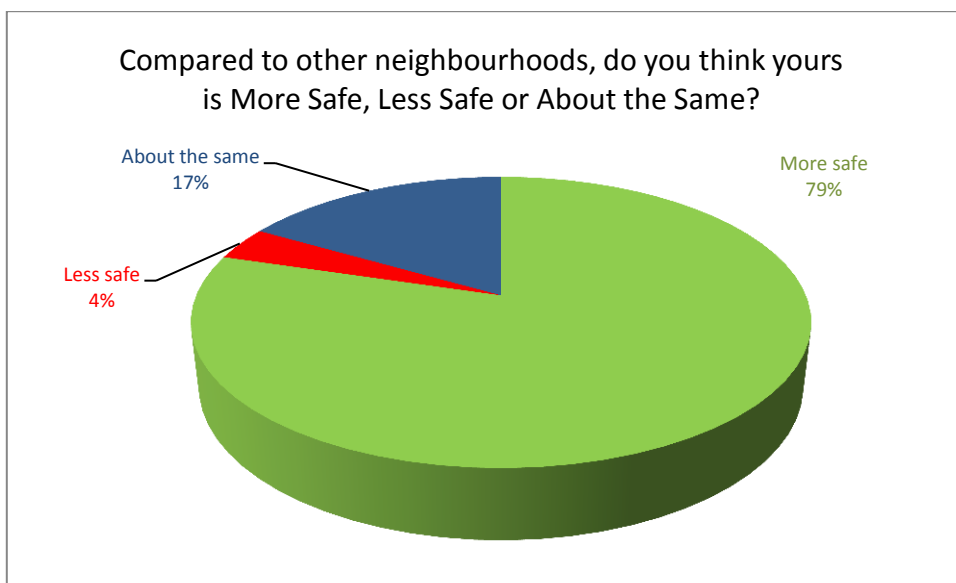
About the same 17%

Less safe 4%

More safe 79%

Figure 5.5-2.

6. Personal observations and recommendations.

This survey can help us understand how people feel about quality of their life in Canada, and what their daily activities are as well, how they are involved in community life.

Through completing this survey I understand that Westminster-Branson represents a mix of middle-income and low-income families, with a high numbers of immigrants. It is a multicultural and diverse neighbourhood.

Firstly, I found out that the most of the residents are highly educated and skilled but they are do jobs that are not matching with their qualifications and previous experience. In regards of this I would recommend for local community centers to focus their activities on organisation of a speciality oriented workshops, integration in to Canadian society and learning Canadian culture and more importantly - personal professional mentorship. It helps people with the skills to implement their knowledge and experience to the Canadian life.

Secondly, insufficient level of language negatively impacts on social, political and community aspects of life. I see several interconnected problems. In a process of survey I found out that the large numbers of women with small children have below average level of English. They don't have opportunities to learn English because most of them face major challenge. There are not enough childcare facilities in the neighbourhood. For example, local public schools have limited seats in classes, public kindergarten accept kids only from 4 years old. Some of the centers teaching English have options to provide childcare to students, but number of seats also limited and not able to meet demands. Private childcare facilities are very expensive and not everybody can afford it. As a result a woman faces certain difficulties. I recommend increasing number of child care facilities, number of seats in classes and utilisation of appropriate community services.

Also, a considerable number of respondents are physically inactive, what may cause a possible harm to their health in future. Regularly involving

activities are very important for our life. It makes respondents' lives more dynamic, health, and more satisfaction in our society. To address this problem I would recommend increasing exiting and creating new programs such as fitness, Pilates, yoga, walking tours. In addition I believe that conducting competitions between residents of neighbourhood based on ages, sport interests may become popular and very useful for wellbeing.

7. Bibliography/Reference List

http://www.toronto.ca/

http://www.torontoneighbourhoods.net/neighbourhoods/

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster-Branson

http://www.torontostar.ca

http://www.the-toronto-realestate.com/blog/p/westminster-branson-neighbourhood-north-york

8. Abbreviations List

TCCLD - Toronto Centre for Community Learning and Development

IWIP - Immigrant Women Integration Program

CIWBS- Canadian Index of Well-Being Survey

NWBS - Neighbourhood Well-Being Survey