



REGENT PARK NEIGHBOURHOOD
NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT COMMUNITY WELL BEING
2012

TORONTO CENTER FOR COMMUNITY
LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT
IMMIGRANT WOMEN INTEGRATION PROGRAM
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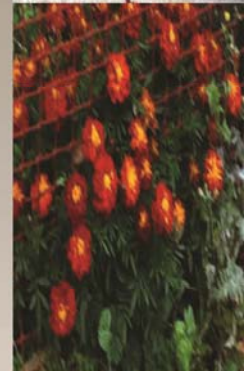


Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Methodology	1
Regent Park Location.....	2
History of Regent Park.....	3
Revitalization	4
Population of Regent Park.....	5
Age Range.....	8
Education.....	9
Income.....	11
Nutrition: Fresh Fruits.....	14
Health Informants.....	15
Needs of Youth	19
Key Information.....	20
Theory of Change.....	23
Conclusion.....	25

Executive Summary

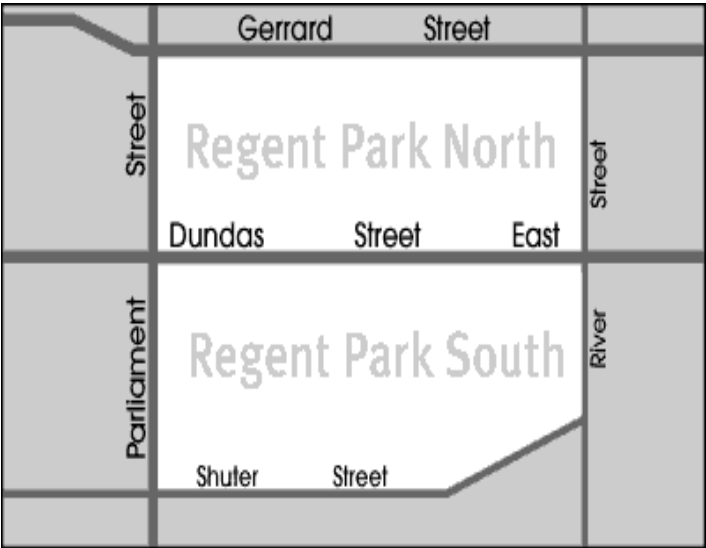
Based on Community Index of Well-being survey, this report addresses the community needs of Regent Park. The issue I will be covering in this report are resident's education level, income, health and youth development programs. Further in this report, I will discuss about the findings of Regent Park needs, and create possible solutions for the residents. In order to build a healthy community, we need to have programs that are catered to youth and adults. The majority of the population in Regent Park are immigrants. The average income of the residents in Regent Park is considered low. Regent Park was built in order to be the habitation of low-income families. Due to low income, it is hard for the residents to buy nutritious food that are affordable. By addressing the social problem in Regent Park, we can develop programs that can enhance the wellbeing of individuals in the community.

Methodology

Under the supervision of the Centre for Community Learning and Development (CCL&D) staffs, seven trainees in the Immigrant Women Integration Program (IWIP) distributed the survey questionnaires. Surveys were distributed to the randomly chosen population of five priority neighbourhoods of the GTA. Regent Park community needs assessment was conducted from 24th November, 2011 to 20th January, 2012 by three IWIP trainees of the CCL&D. The questionnaires were available both online and on hard copies. Copies of the survey were distributed to the residents of Regent Park in different places such as the community centre, door-to-door visit to the resident's home, Facebook, by sending an E-mail to friends', face to face interviewing people, distributed in different programs that has focus groups and by going to grocery stores. The survey was completed by 67 residents and plus three key informants from Regent Park. The data was gathered and analyzed in to many categories however; I will focus on population, education, income, health and creation of programs for the needs of the youth and adults.

Regent Park Location

Regent Park is a neighbourhood located in East Downtown Toronto, Ontario, Canada. It was formed in Gerrard Street East to the North, River Street to the East, Shuter Street to the South, and it ends in the Parliament Street to the West. Regent Park is served by the Toronto Transit Commission’s streetcar routes such as 505, 506, and the route: "65 Parliament" bus. The streetcars provide quick access to the Young subway line. The Don Valley Parkway is a major highway that runs on east of the Regent Park neighbourhood. The DVP is accessible from on ramps at both Queen Street and Dundas Street and an exit ramp from River Street.



History of Regent Park

In the early 1820's Regent Park was well known as South Cabbagetown and during the 1930's, Cabbagetown was known as one of Toronto's worst slums area. After that Toronto city planners targeted south Cabbagetown to be revitalized for a grand urban renewal scheme called Regent Park. Since 1940's Regent Park was well known for one of the old and large social housing area, and it was designed to accommodate low-income population. Since then Regent Park has become one of the priority neighbourhoods.

After 50 years, the city recognized that Regent Park community housing need costly repairs, in order to connect Regent Park with the surrounding communities and build a friendly and safe neighbourhood for the community. Since 2005 Regent Park has been undergoing extreme make over for combination of housing such as condominium apartments, rental apartment and social housing areas.



REGENT PARK NORTH



REGENT PARK SOUTH



Revitalization

QUICK FACTS

- Regent Park revitalization is divided into six-phases, approximately to be finished within 15-years and planned to comprise \$1-billion strategy, which will transform Canada's largest publicly funded community into a healthier mixed residential community. There will be 5,115 units and 12,500 people are planned to live in it. The first Regent Park tenants moved into their new homes in May 2009.
- Phase one of the revitalization will include approximately 640 market condominiums and 340 mixed social housing units in the area bordered by Parliament, Oak, Sackville and Dundas Streets.
- Toronto City Council approved the revitalization of Regent Park in July 2003 and directed the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division work with community stakeholders and Toronto Community Housing (TCH) on a Social Development Plan. This direction recognizes that revitalization is about more than planning for the physical environment, it is about planning for people as Regent Park undergoes significant demographic and social changes.

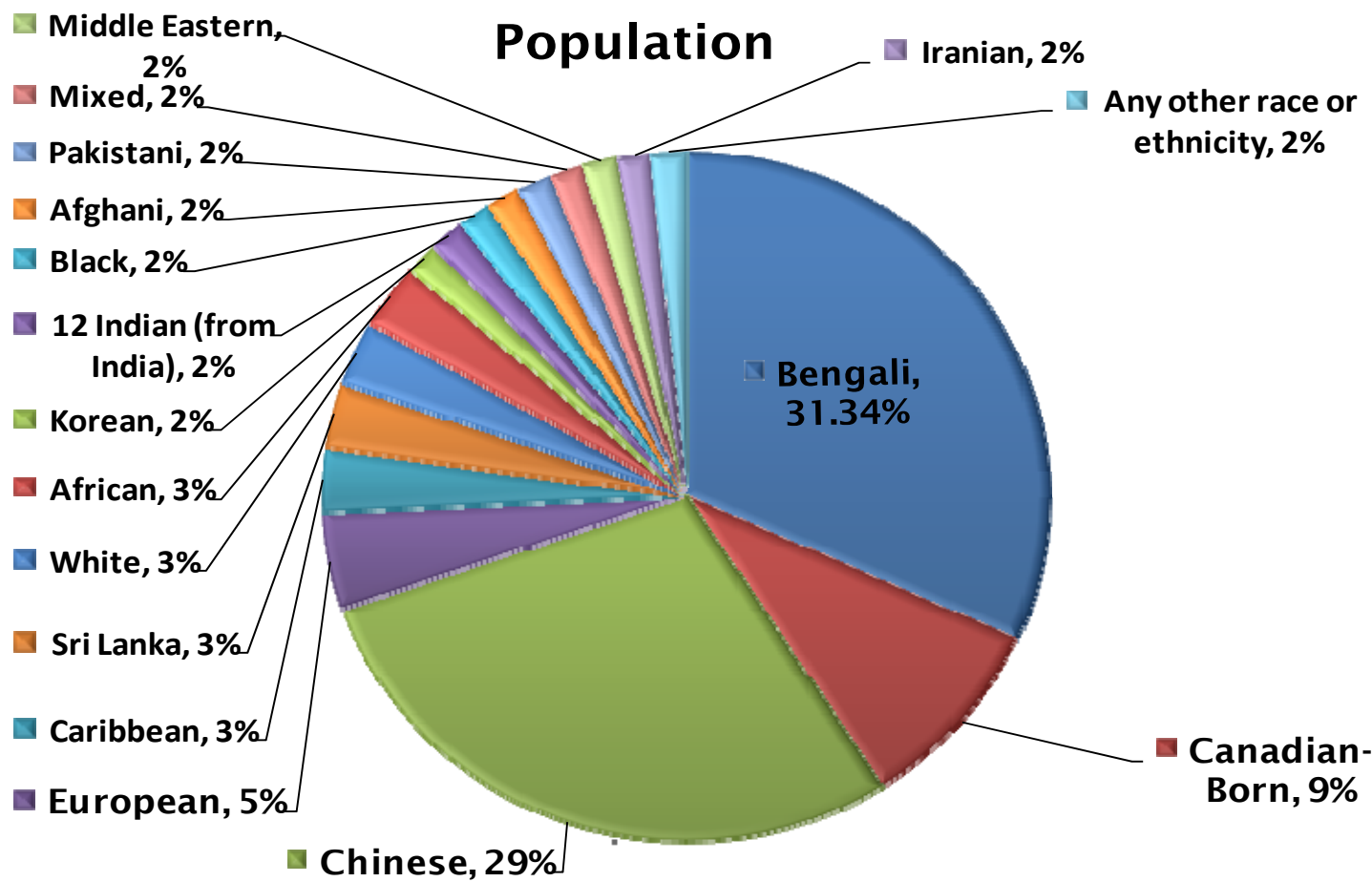
Toronto City Council approved the Regent Park Social Development Plan in October 2007. This is the first locality or "place-based" Social Development Plan for the City of Toronto and provides a framework for building a solid and broad community.



- According to this survey, the majority of residents living in Regent Park are satisfied with the subsidised housing, because of revitalization.

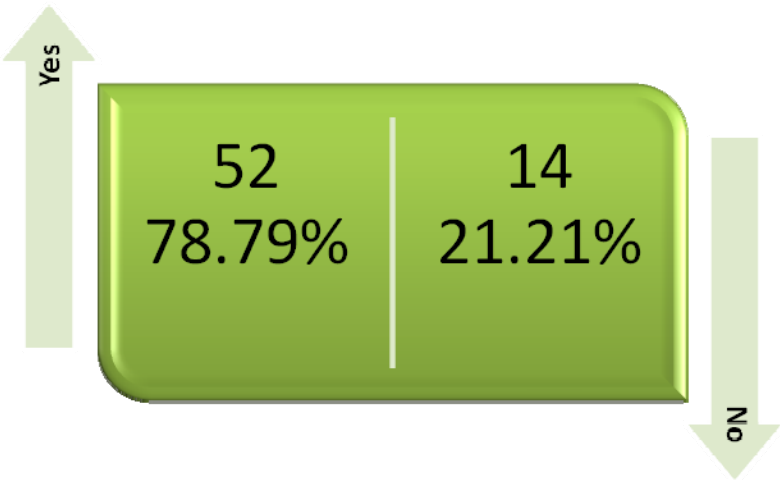
Population of Regent Park

At some point in the 1980's and 1990's, Regent Park underwent a dramatic shift in population. Today, Regent Park is a home to the people speaking more than 70 languages. According to the survey report, the majority of the population that lives in Regent Park are immigrants.



- The majority of immigrants that live in Regent Park are from Bangladesh and China.

The figure below explains the time span of the residents that lives in Regent Park.



11.94%	→	Less than 2 year.
23.88%	→	3 to 5 years.
22.39%	→	6 to 9 years.
28.36%	→	More the 10 year.
13.43%	→	All their life.

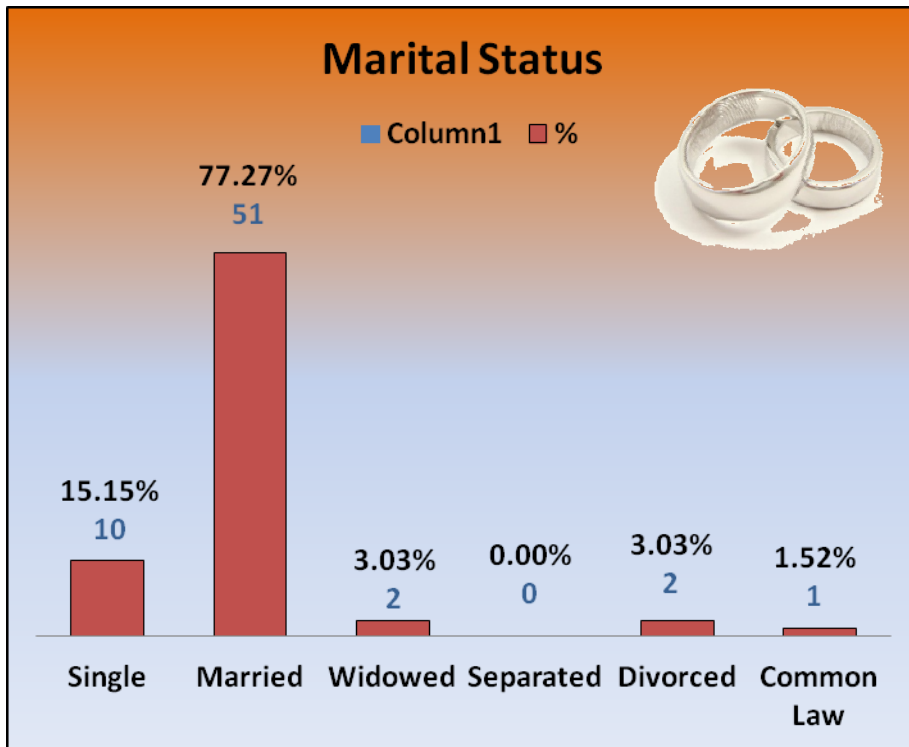
Immigration/Resident Status



The majority of the residents that lives in Regent Park are Canadian Citizens. And the second most that lives in Regent Park are Permanent Residents.

- Canadian Citizens are 66%
- Permanent Residents are 33%
- Visitors are 1%

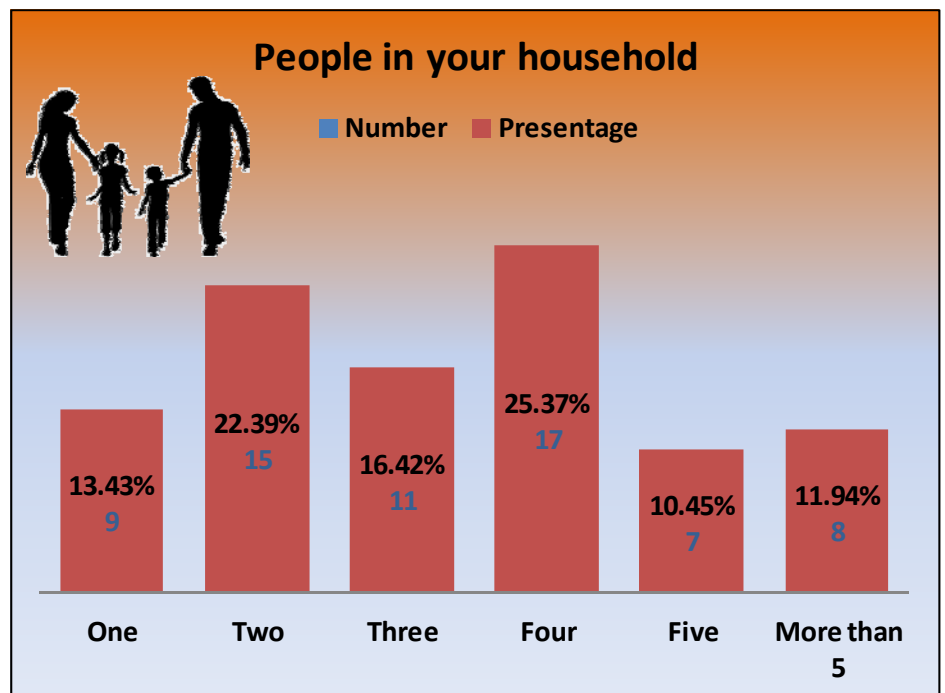
Marital Status



Most of the people that live in Regent Park are married and the second most are singles

The majority of members that lives in the household in the Regent Park are of the family of 2 to 4 people in the house.

People in your household



Age Range

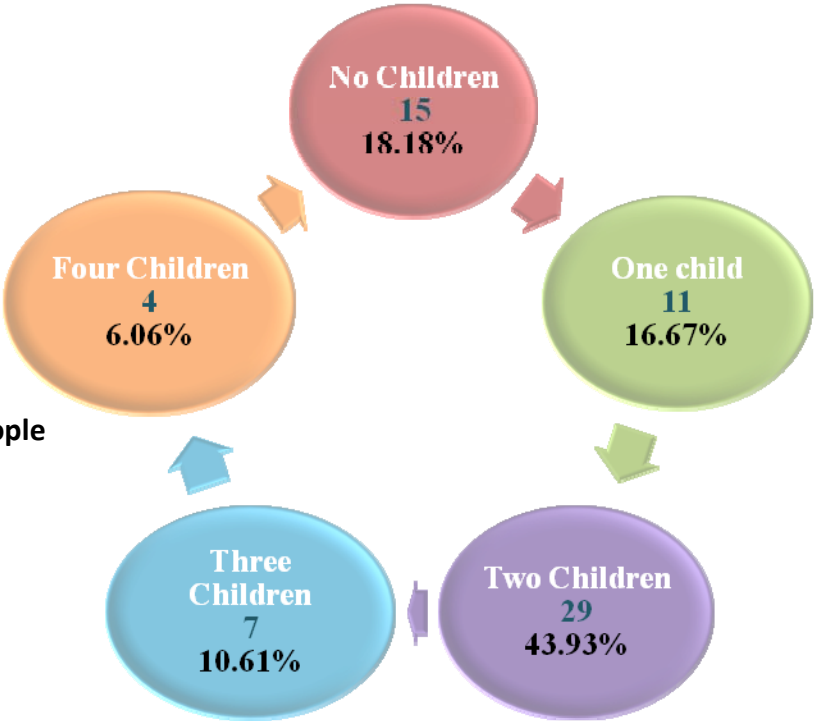
35.80% of the population living in Regent Park are adults and 23.89% are seniors.

Value	Description	Number	%
1	17 or Under	0	0.00%
2	18-25	6	8.96%
3	26-35	24	35.80 %
4	36-45	14	20.90 %
5	46-55	7	10.45 %
6	56-64	2	2.99%
7	65 or older	14	20.90 %

Children Living at Home

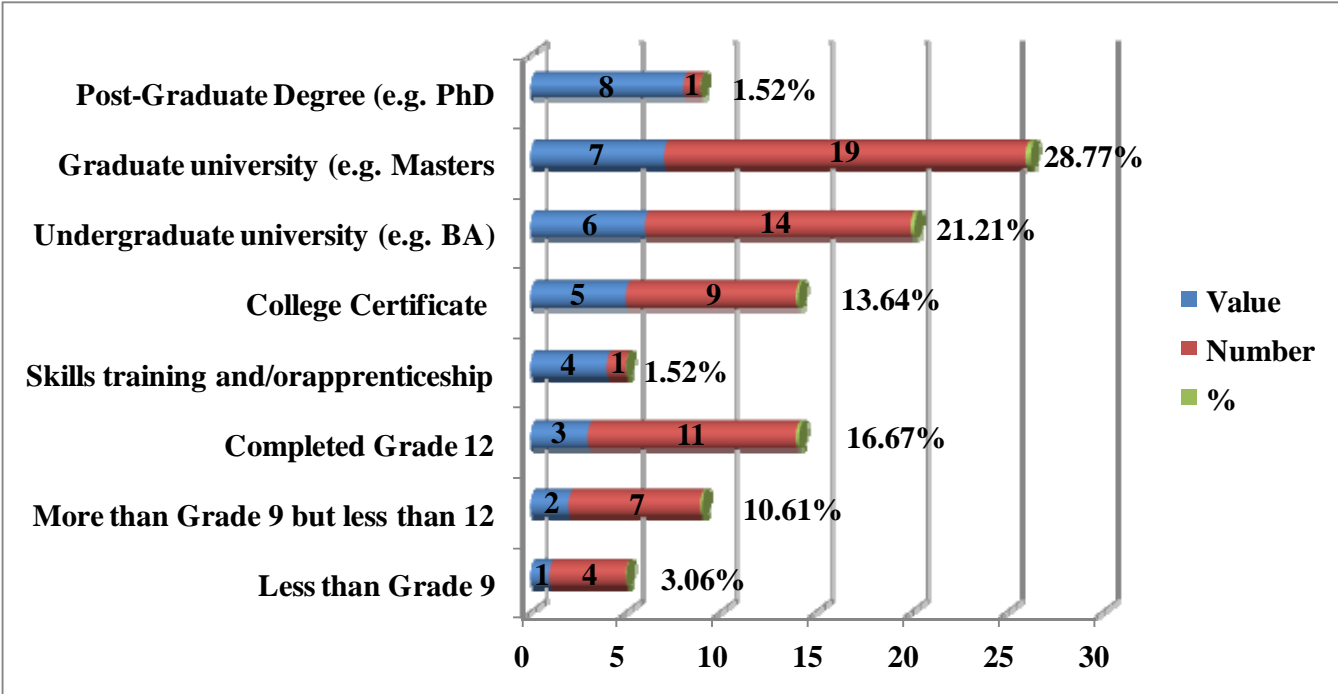
This survey shows that families in Regent Park have at least two children in the family

- Number of People
- Percentages

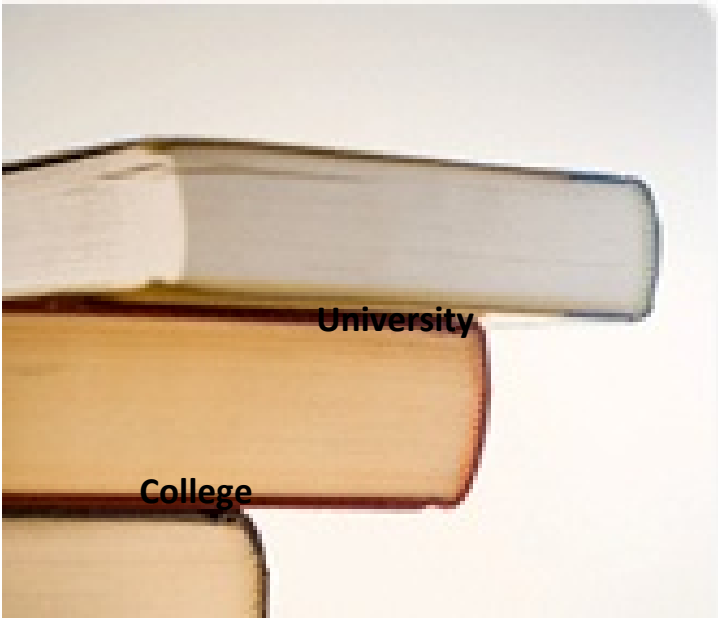


Education

The chart below shows that Regent Park consists of a very educated group of people. 28.77% of the residents have master’s degree. Many portray Regent Park as a ghetto or a bad neighbourhood. For example: there are negative stereotypes on the media and people perceptions. Due to the reputation of Regent Park, the people who are living in this neighborhood (the majority of which are immigrants) are seen as uneducated and people that are just trying to survive. However, the people in Regent Park have a lot of knowledge. Our society tends to forget the structural and systemic barriers that the people in Regent Park (mostly immigrants) are facing. It is evident that immigrants and minorities face discrimination based on race/ethnicity, immigration status, gender, class, age, etc. It is also evident that Canada put Canadian experience as a plat

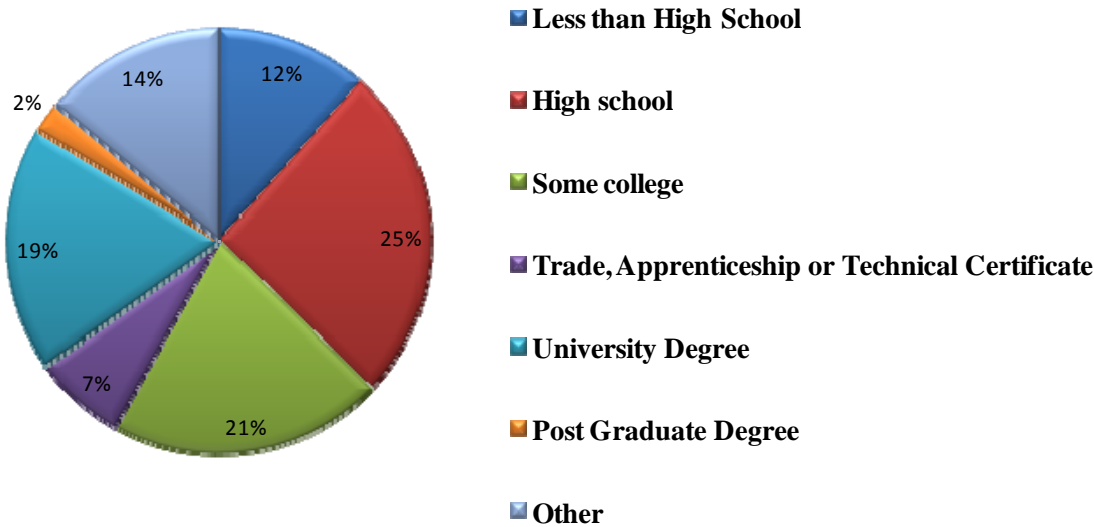


form to determine who is or who is not to be hired. There is a lack of recognition of foreign credentials in Canada. All of these factors prevent them from becoming successful.



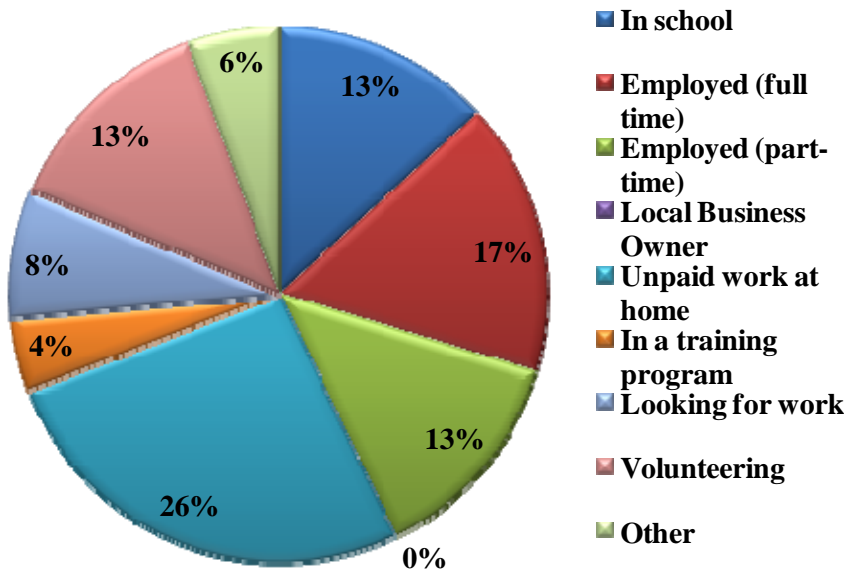
High School

Schooling Required For Job



The Highest level of education required for a jobs is High school diploma, according to the this survey

Day-to-day Involvement

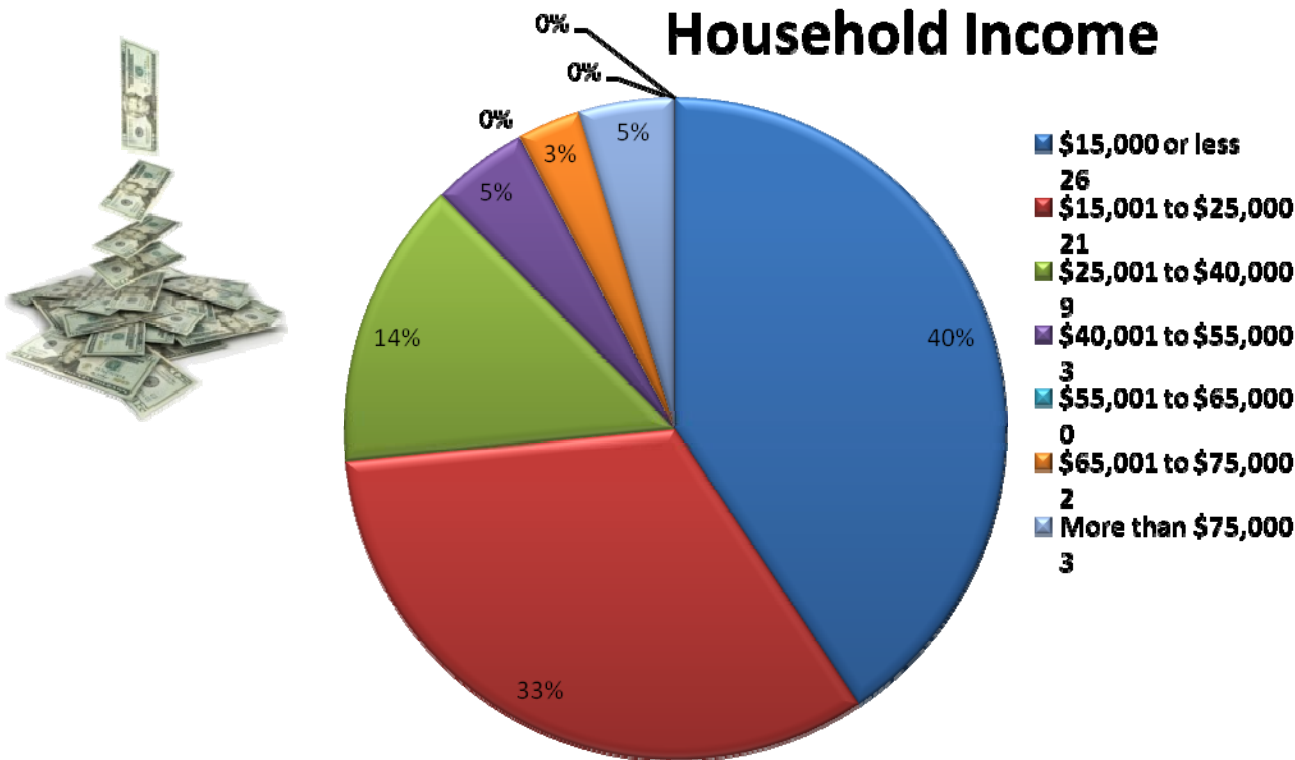


Day to day Involvement

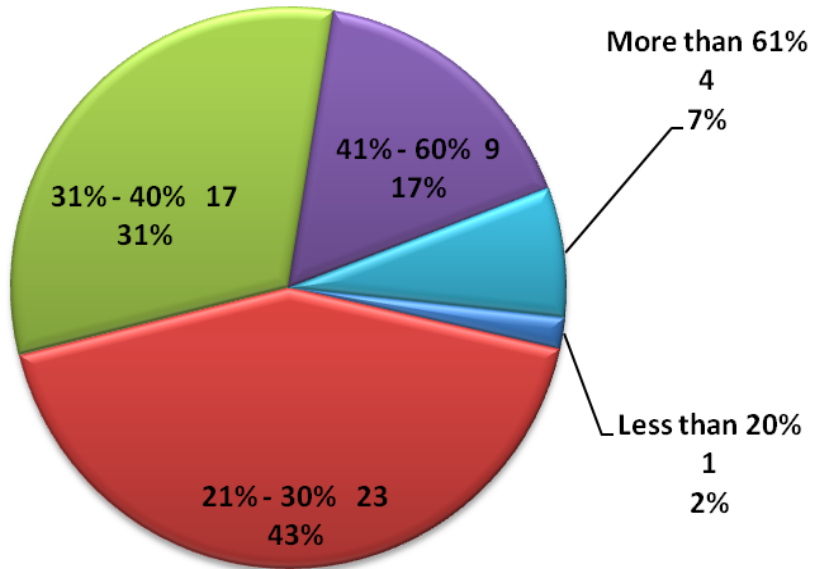
- The largest percentages of unpaid workers are women.

Income

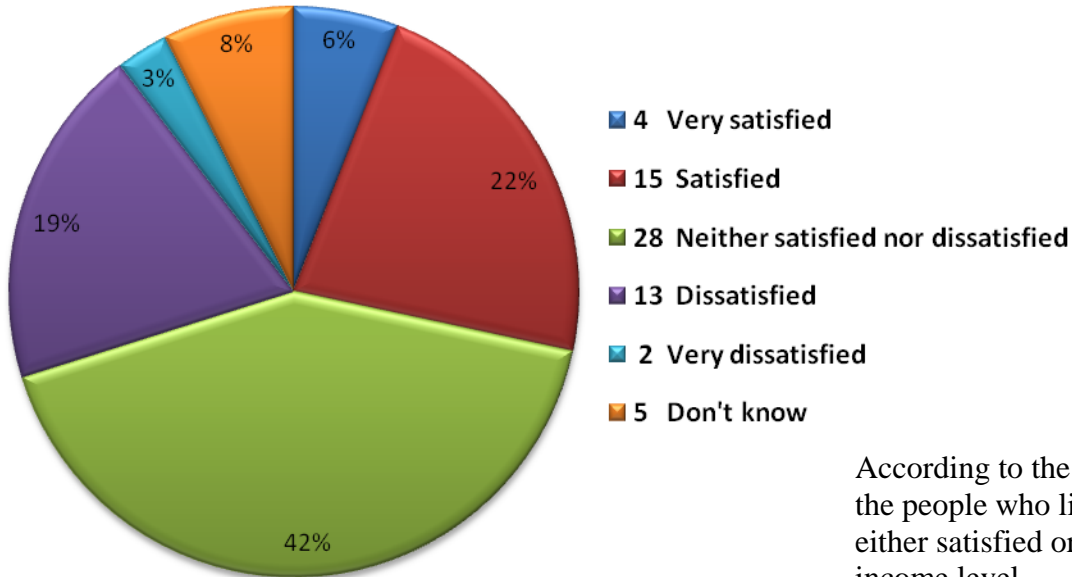
The average income for Regent Park residents is approximately half the average for other Torontonians. According to Statistics Canada, Regent Park is one of the poorest neighbourhoods. Also the survey result shows 40.62% of respondents yearly income is below \$15,000.



Amount you Spend on Housing

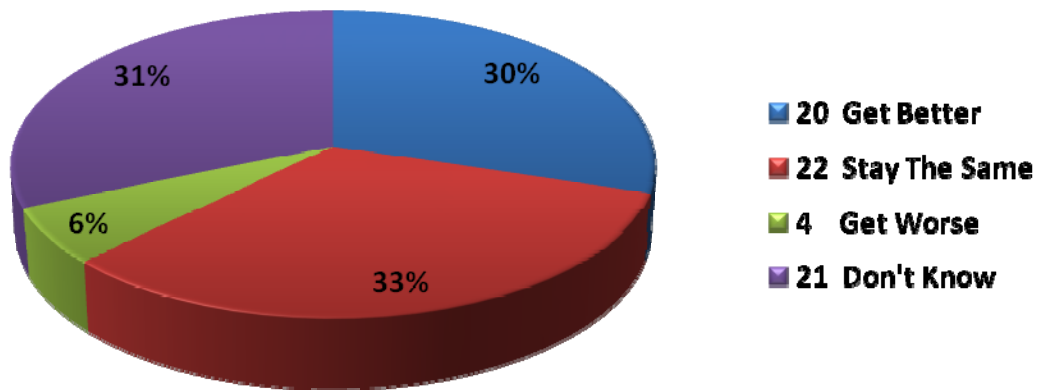


People Satisfied With Income Level



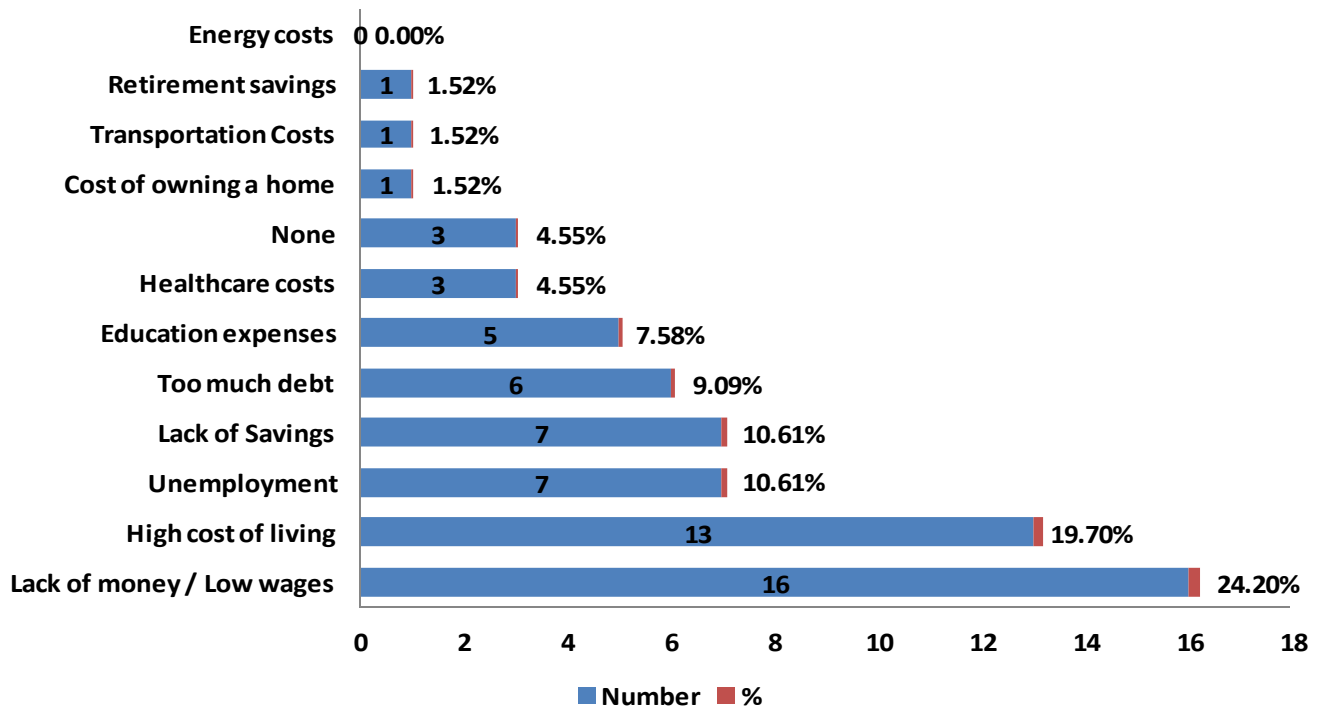
According to the survey the majority of the people who live in Regent Park are either satisfied or dissatisfied over their income level.

Income Level For Next Year



According the Residence of Regent Park the income level for next year will stay the same.

Most Important Financial Problem



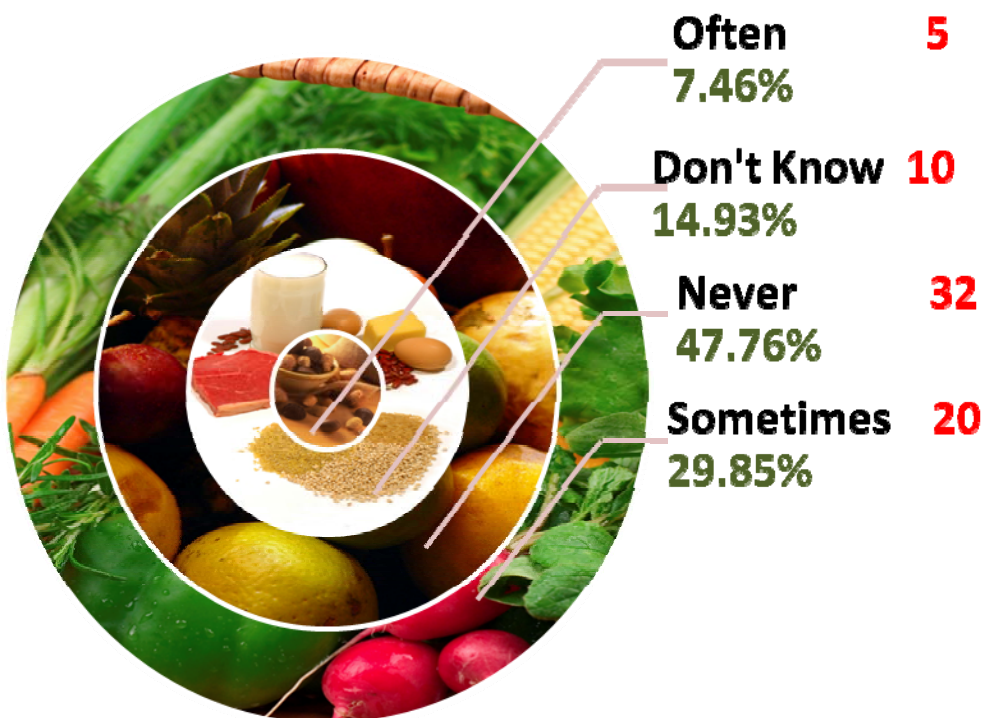
it

According to the survey response, the residents in Regent Park are low-income families. Most of the money they earn goes towards the basic needs such as: house rent, transportation, groceries, clothing, bills, etc.

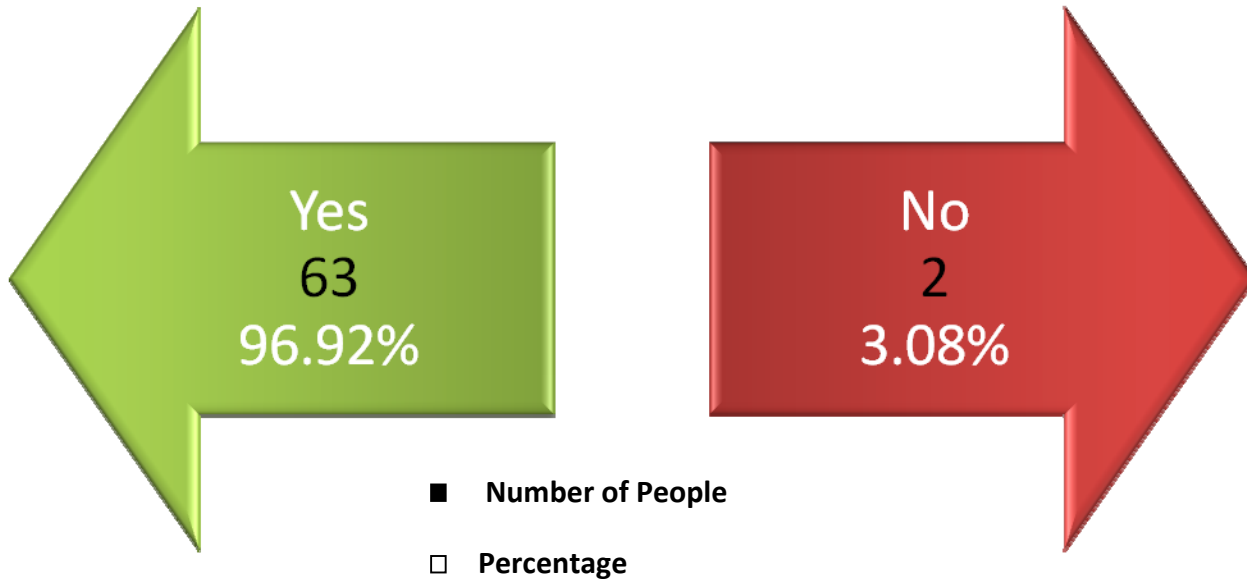




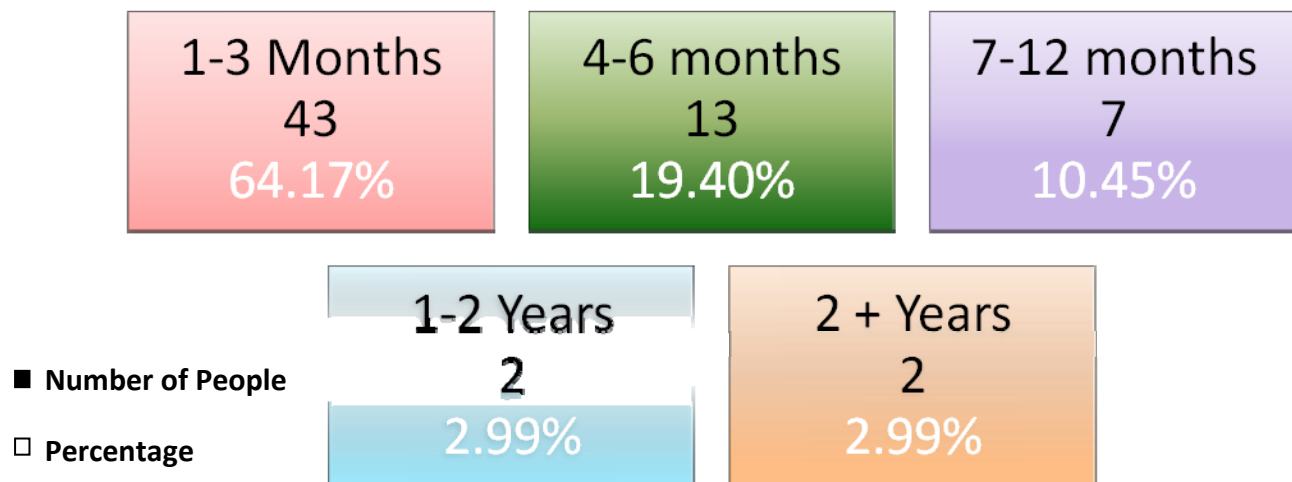
88% of respondents said that fresh fruits and vegetables are available while 12% of the respondents mentioned not available. Due to the lack of adequate income, the residents of Regent Park are not able to afford nutrition food.



Family Doctors

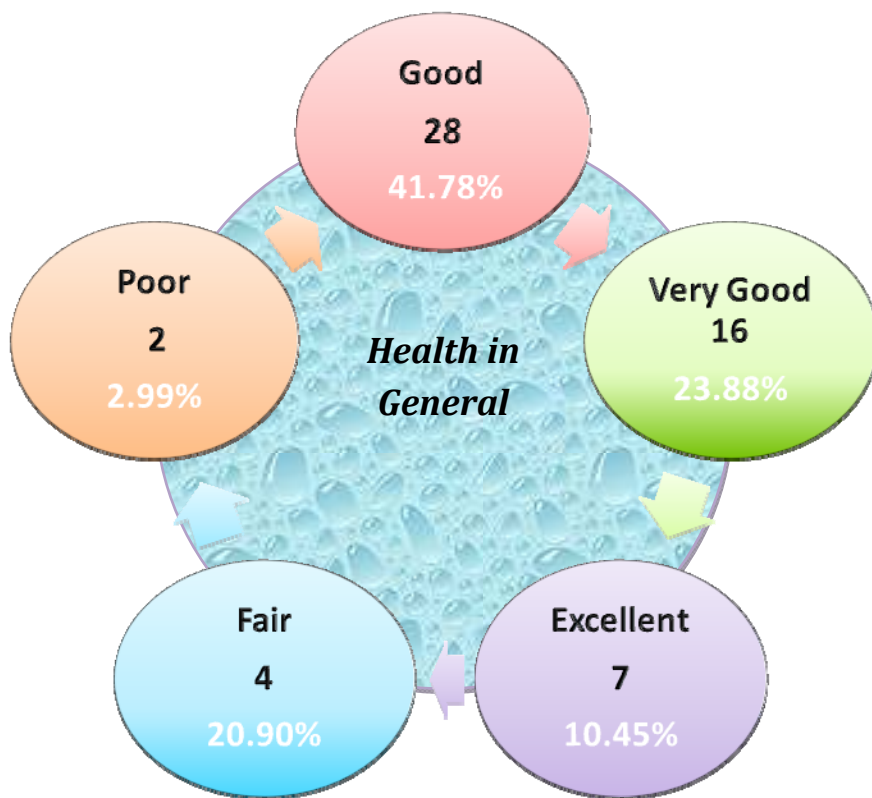


Visit to the Doctor

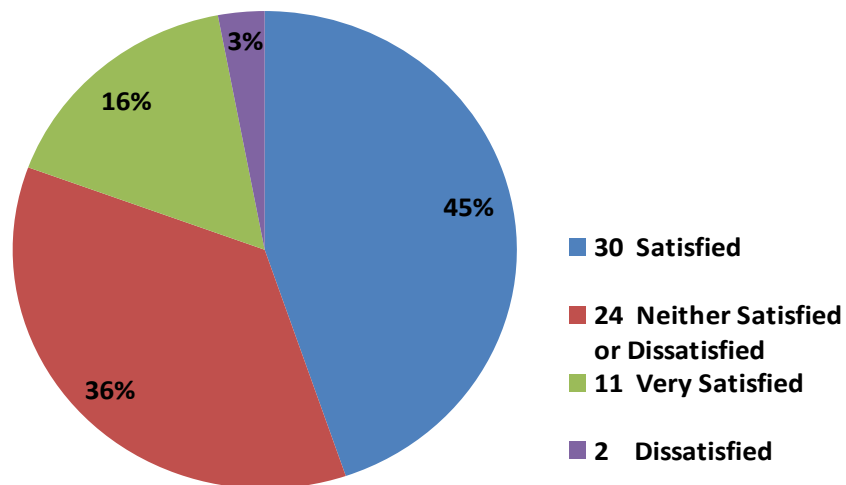


In general the majority of the participants in this survey were from the age range of 26-35, due to this survey outcome had a bias result.

■ Number of People
□ Percentage

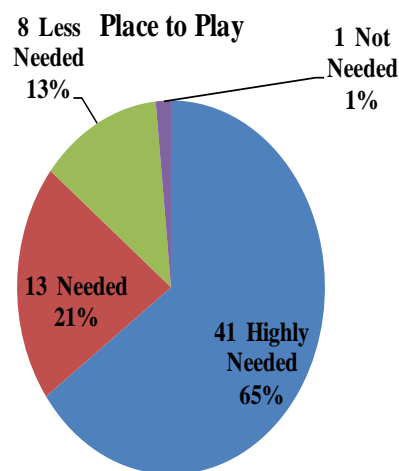
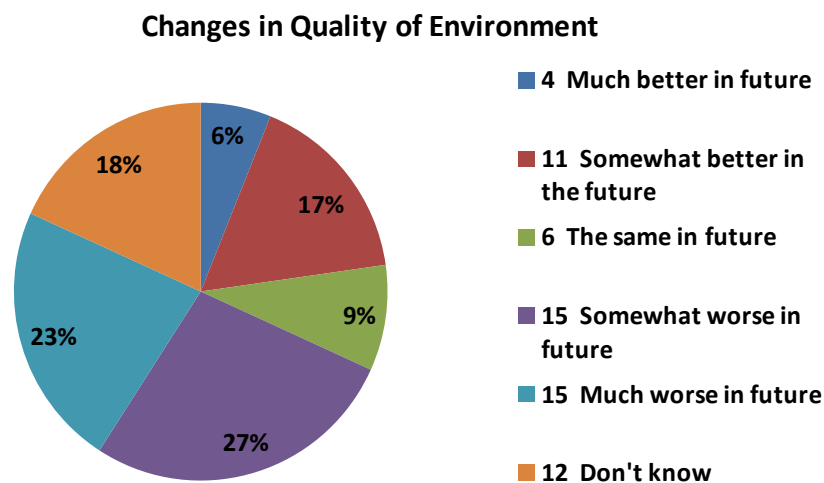
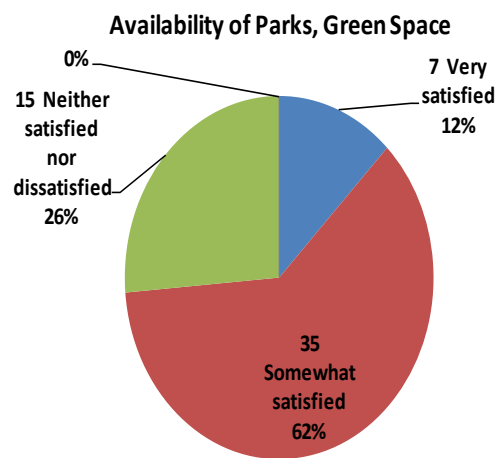


Satisfaction with health



Currently participants of this survey said they're satisfied with their health.

Community Needs



According to the statics, the community of Regent Park is in need of more green space area and parks so the children and the adults can enjoy a clean and safe environment.

Social Problems in the Community

- The chart below explains the major problems that are faced by the youth in the community

Chart1 <div><div></div>Number of People</div> <div><div></div>Percentage</div>					
Community Concerns	Very big problem	Fairly big problem	Not a very big problem	Not a problem	Happens, but not a problem
Teenagers hanging around on the street and misbehaving?	12 18.75%	21 32.81%	14 21.88%	5 7.81%	12 18.75%
People using or dealing drugs?	37 56.91%	15 23.08%	9 13.85%	1 1.54%	
Vandalism, property damage	17 26.15%	9 13.85%	21 32.30%	16 24.62%	2 3.08%
Garbage or litter lying around?	24 36.91%	21 32.31%	15 23.08%	2 3.08%	
Drunk and Rowdy	13 20.00%	16 24.62%	20 30.76%	8 12.31%	8 12.31%

Community Programs

Chart1

Number of People Percentage

Needs for Youth	Highly Needed	Needed	Less Needed	Not Needed
<i>Mentoring Programs and opportunities</i>	26 40.63%	20 31.25%	17 26.56%	1 1.56%
Youth Participation	31 47.69%	24 36.92%	9 13.85%	1 1.54%
Social Activities	32 49.23%	27 41.54%	5 7.69%	1 1.54%
Job Development	42 64.61%	13 20.00%	9 13.85%	1 1.54%
<i>After school recreation programs</i>	34 52.31%	18 27.69%	12 18.46%	1 1.54%
Counseling Services	30 46.15%	25 38.46%	8 12.31%	2 3.08%
<i>Tutoring programs for youth</i>	39 60.00%	13 20.00%	10 15.38%	3 4.62%
Digital Storytelling	28 44.45%	22 34.92%	11 17.46%	2 3.17%
Skills Building	28 43.08%	24 36.92%	10 15.38%	3 4.62%
<i>Opportunities to practise leadership skills</i>	24 36.92%	24 36.92%	15 23.08%	2 3.08%
<i>Leadership training programs</i>	29 45.31%	20 31.25%	13 20.31%	

The chart above shows programs and activities that are highly needed in the community. Currently, many of these programs and activities are only open to certain age groups or genders. Some of the programs require entrance or monthly fee. So this makes it harder for everyone in the community to access some of the facilities. Due to less opportunity of these programs and activities, youth will be misguided and might spend their time elsewhere. Sometimes this is not the case. There might be many recourses out there in the community that are available and can be accessed by everyone in the community. However, youth or adults might not be aware of the resources in their community. For this reason, we must encourage a better outreach.

During the process of needs assessment, I interviewed three key informants regarding the concern on community well-being in Regent Park community. Here are the questions and their responses:

Key Informants

1. If a family you knew wanted to move into this neighbourhood, what advice would you give them?
 - Letting them know that there are new buildings being built such as social housing, rental units, condo apartments and CRCA Building.
 - Explain how Regent Park has new community programs such as art and culture centre, Daniels Centre of Learning Regent Park and many religious palaces for worshipping (e.g masjids, churches, Hindu temple, etc).
 - They also mentioned how Regent Park location is very convenient for transportation, groceries, bank, coffee shops, fast foods and cultural stores.
2. What would you say are the strongest and best qualities of this community? What are some of the good things about living in this community for you? (You may want to consider social, spiritual, political, economic or other aspects of life here).
 - Everyone in the community is united together regardless of their differences in their religions and cultural backgrounds.
 - There is diversity in Regent Park. People in Regent Park are from different cultural backgrounds.
 - Everyone in Regent Park feels that they have a sense of belonging in their community.
 - Everyone in Regent Park is ready to help and support one another in times of difficulty and crises.
 - Everyone respect other religions and enjoy being part of different cultural celebrations.
 - Regent Park has a good networking team.
3. Think about the problems you see in the community. If you had the power to solve three (3) problems in this community in a short time what problems would you address?
 - One of the biggest problems includes language barriers for this reason community can create an opportunity in offering communicating skills.
 - Youth violence is also one of the problems so creating programs that are catered for youth e.g. skills and educational development.
 - Ensuring safety on the streets of Regent Park, e.g speed limit, more pedestrian crossing sign, etc.
 - Proper maintenance in the housing, e.g pest control, clean environment, secured apartment doors, more security involvement in the community.
 - Larger units for larger families.
 - Need to improve living conditions, e.g. encouraging community gardening for good health and nutritious food for children and adults.
 - Creating and encouraging volunteerism inside and outside the community for the people to understand Canadian work culture that will eventually lead them to more job opportunity.
 - Creation of more programs for the seniors to engage them with the community.

4. What do you think are the three (3) most serious needs of this community? What would you say are the main barriers (3 or 4) to dealing with these needs and issues?
- One of the biggest problems includes language barriers for this reason community can create an opportunity in offering communicating skills.
 - Some of the programs are accessed by only women or by only men groups and some are by youth or adults or seniors. This can create misconception between different generation such as between gender and different age groups. We need to create some united programs in order to have a better understanding of one another, e.g understanding different generations. So youth can understand adults or vice versa in order to connect and build strong relationships.
 - Safety on the streets of Regent Park, e.g. Youth violence. So we must encourage youth to be involved in programs that can enhance their leadership skills.
 - Youth and children do not have enough space for activities. So we can create more green spaces, parks and play area.
 - Since there is a lack of inspection in houses that needs maintenances perhaps we can encourage the property management for proper maintenance in the housing, e.g pest control, clean environment, secured apartment doors, more security involvement in the community.
 - Low income affects the way of living in Regent Park. So creating more volunteer programs that can eventually lead them to job opportunities.
5. If you were advising a group interested in improving the health and well-being of this community, what are the three (3) things you would recommend they focus on?
- Healthy eating and fit lifestyles.
 - Recreational activities for youth and children.
 - Free facilities for everyone to get an access.
 - Health promotions: since there is an increase of population in Regent Park, we need more health centers and private doctors. We also need employment opportunities within the community.
 - More programs for youth and children, which will help them with their homework and support them to be the best student in their schools.
6. If you were returning to this community after 15 years in another country, what would you like to see changed, and what would you like to see the same? (This could be a fun question).

They mentioned: they want to see finished and well-constructed Regent Park

- Improved living standards
- More city programs and spaces for the community residents
- More spaces for the youth and Children.
- Better constructed Streets of Regent Park
- More active community members
- No violence in the community
- They want see Regent Park having a good reputation

Theory of Change

Problem Statements:

- Regent Park have lots of educated adults that have low paying jobs
- Youth are in need of extracurricular activities to get them out of the streets and become active leaders.

Strategic Focus:

- Create a program where adults get paid with a fair income to mentor and tutor youth & children.
- Youth will have opportunities to build useful skills for their future needs.

Resources:

- Find Donor
- Find a Facility
- Hire trainers/volunteers

Activities:

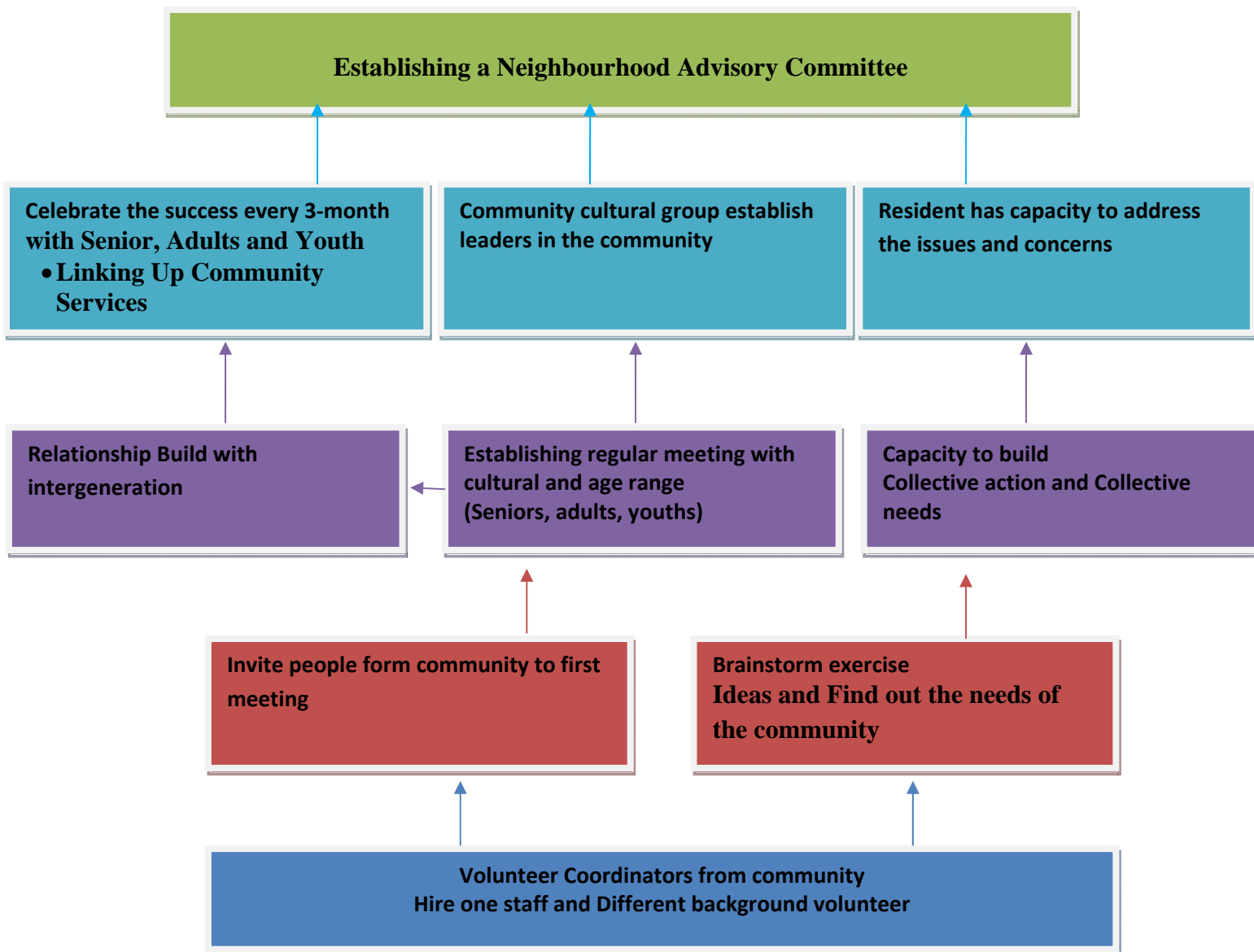
- Provide training for the adults so they can teach youth the skills they need
- Make sure the youth come to scheduled tutoring and mentoring sessions
- Have monthly meetings to discuss the positives and negatives of this program both with adults and youth. Incorporate both their inputs in the discussion.

Short Term Outcomes:

- Adults will have Canadian work experience
- A place for learning and building skills will be established
- The rate of violence in the streets of regent park caused by youth will decrease

Long term:

- Adults will have a better chance of finding jobs that are suitable and that fit their education level.
- We will now have youth leaders that will have the ability and skills to find their dream jobs
- Younger generation will now have role models from previous youth in the program that they can follow
- This will also create more jobs for adults as long as this program runs.



Conclusion

When doing this community needs assessment report, I realized that Regent Park has been through great changes from 1820's to 2012. However, there are still many needs not being met in the community. In order to have a better community, action must be taken for community development.

- It is important to create and encourage volunteerism inside and outside the community for the people to understand Canadian work culture that will eventually lead them to more job opportunity.
- We also need to make sure our youth are developing in the right way. Most of the respondents mentioned, more services for youth are highly needed, and if these services are available and accessible for youth, there will be less violence in the community. For this reason, community centres must improve their outreach for youth programs.
- We also need to encourage community gardening for good health and nutritious food for children and adults. Even though most residents cannot afford nutritious food, the survey findings indicated that the general health of residents in Regent Park was good. It is important to create green spaces or community gardening for nutritious food. Creating this will also help our environment. So it is important for us to maintain this in the future.

References

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