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2015 FCSS Needs Assessment Research  
Executive Summary Report

June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015

**Banister**  
Research & Consulting Inc.

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## **1.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND**

The City of Leduc's Strategic Plan recognizes Social Wellness as a goal. A strong focus is placed on encouraging well being and promoting active, healthy lifestyles while providing the appropriate level of support to address social needs in the community. With this in mind, the City has committed to conducting a social needs assessment every five years in order to measure citizen perceptions and satisfaction with Leduc Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) as well as other human services offered in the City of Leduc. The following were conducted by Banister Research in 2015 in support of this objective:

- General Population Telephone Survey (n=400);
- Three (3) focus groups, one each with youth, young families, and ESL newcomers (n=31); and
- Interagency Web-Based Survey (n=42).

The findings from these components provide City of Leduc FCSS with insight into the perceptions and opinions of residents and agencies across a number of issues, including:

- Sense of belonging in the City of Leduc;
- Awareness and access of human services;
- Perceived need for human services in the next five (5) years;
- Awareness and perceptions of FCSS; and
- Volunteerism.

This report summarizes the overall findings from the 2015 City of Leduc FCSS Needs Assessment.

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

Questionnaires and moderators' guides for each research component were designed by Banister Research in consultation with the Client. For comparability, the research instruments were largely based on those used in 2010.

### **2.1 General Population Telephone Survey**

A total of 400 telephone interviews were conducted with Leduc residents, aged 18 or older, from February 23<sup>rd</sup> to February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Results provide a margin of error no greater than +4.9% at the 95% confidence level, or 19 times out of 20.<sup>1</sup>

The following table presents the results of the final call attempts. Using the call summary standard established by the Market Research and Intelligence Association, there was a 9% response rate and a 63% refusal rate. It is important to note that the calculation used for both response and refusal rates is a conservative estimate and does not necessarily measure respondent interest in the subject area.

<b>Summary of Final Call Attempts</b>	
<b>Call Classification:</b>	<b>Number of Calls:</b>
Completed Interviews by Telephone	400
Busy/No answer/Answering machine/Respondents unavailable	2,402
Refusals/Disqualified	698
Fax/Modem/Business	24
Not-In-Service	140
Language barrier/Communication problem	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,675</b>

<sup>1</sup> Based on a total population of 28,583 residents, as per the 2014 Municipal Census.

## **2.2 Interagency Web-Based Survey**

A total of 67 agencies and organizations were invited to participate in the interagency survey, conducted from March 17<sup>th</sup> to April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Banister Research hosted the web-based survey on its internal server, and distributed e-mail invitations reminders to respondents over the course of data collection. A total of 42 surveys were completed with respondents who had worked or volunteered for their agency, organization, or group for at least 6 months. The sample population was provided by the Client.

## **2.3 Focus Groups**

Participants for the Youth focus group session (n=10, plus n=4 in an additional session facilitated by the City of Leduc) were recruited by City of Leduc staff, while participants for the Young Families (n=7) session were recruited by Banister Research, based on research participation lists gathered during the General Population Telephone Survey. These groups were conducted on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015, at the Leduc Recreation Centre. The ESL Newcomers focus group (n=14, plus n=3 assistant staff) took place during the regular June 2<sup>nd</sup> ESL meeting at the Leduc Public Library.

The focus groups lasted for approximately one and a half (1.5) hours each and were facilitated by Tracy With, Vice President of Banister Research. One (1) additional Youth focus group was facilitated by City of Leduc staff.

# **3.0 POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRENDS**

As part of the 2015 City of Leduc FCSS Needs Assessment Research, Banister Research also reviewed publicly available research data from a number of sources to determine the current Population Demographics and Socio-Economic Trends in the City of Leduc.

## **3.1 Leduc's Population is Trending Younger**

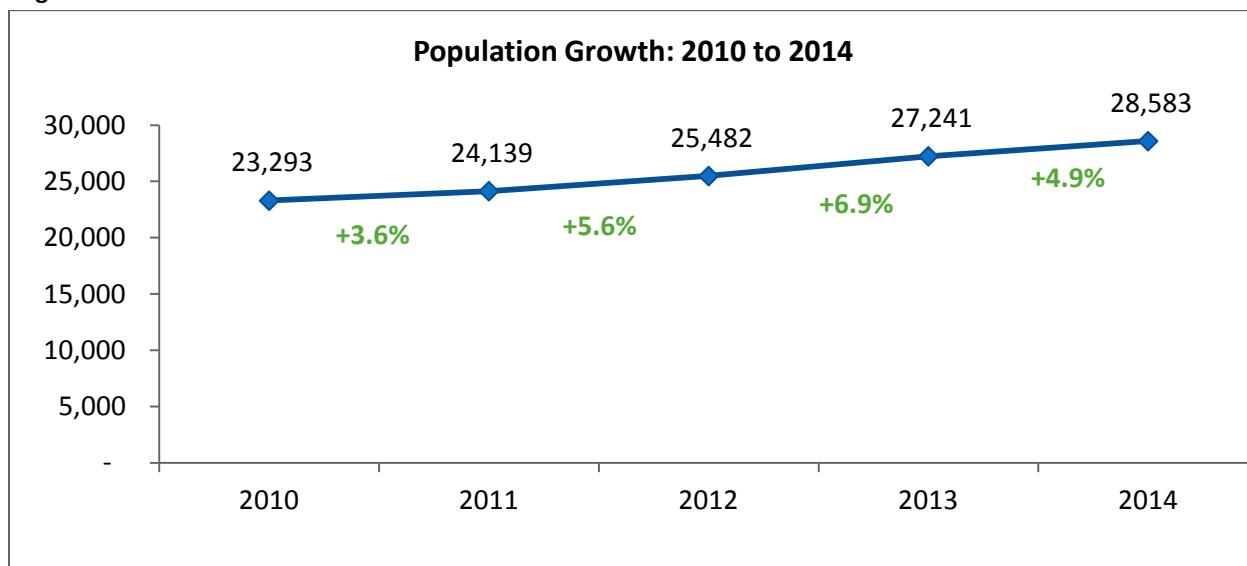
Since 2010, the population of the City of Leduc has grown 23%, from 23,293 in 2010 to 28,583 in 2014. Between 2013 and 2014, the population grew by 4.9% (an additional 1,342 residents), which was somewhat lower than the 5-year average annual growth rate of 5.8% (see Figure 1).<sup>2</sup>

Age groups that reflect increases, in terms of the proportion of all residents in Leduc, included those aged 0 to 4 years (31.1% increase), 5 to 9 years (25.4%), 25 to 34 years (32.6%) 35 to 44 years (6.3%) and 65 to 74 years (5.2%) (see Figure 2).

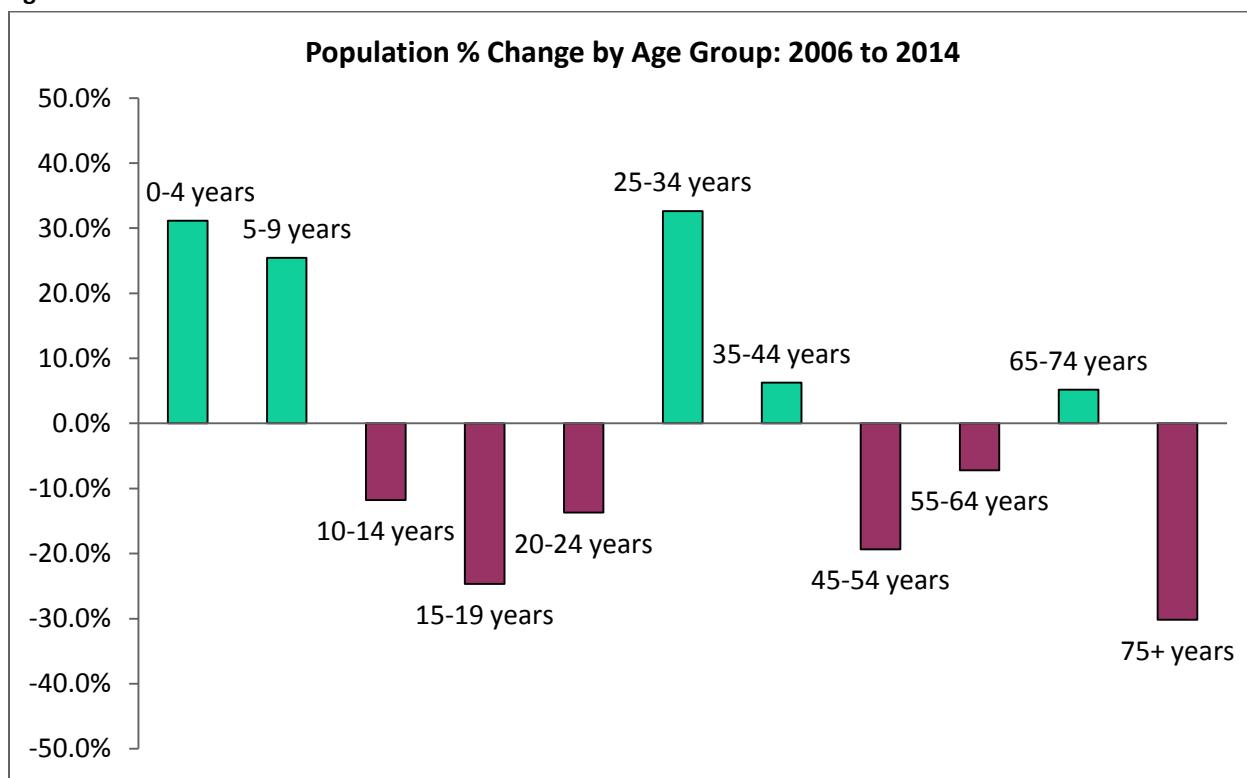
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<sup>2</sup> City of Leduc 2014 Municipal Census

**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**



Further evidencing a shift to a younger population, the median age in 2014 was 34.0 years, down from 36.8 years, as reported in 2006. Younger residents (ages 20 to 39) made up 33% of the total population.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> City of Leduc 2014 Municipal Census

### **3.2 Seniors are Getting Older**

Despite the shift towards a younger population, the number of Albertans over the age of 65 has nearly tripled since 1974, from 130,045 to 385,241 in 2009.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the older age brackets (e.g., 80 years and older) are showing more rapid growth than those in younger categories (e.g., 65 to 79 years). Those aged 80 and older are expected to more than double in the next 20 years, placing a bigger burden on agencies that are already operating at capacity and expanding their services to reach more of the local population.

### **3.3 Issues Facing Youth Include Anxiety, Bullying**

Anxiety levels amongst school-aged youth peak in Grade 7 (29% of students surveyed reported moderate or high levels of anxiety), though they eventually decline to around the provincial and national norms in Grade 12 (17%).<sup>5</sup> Alcohol use sharply increases between Grade 8 (12%) and Grade 9 (24%), and again in Grade 10 (39%), where it continues to increase until more than half of students are consuming alcohol in Grade 12 (51%).

Twenty-two percent (22%) of the students surveyed were bullying victims in Grade 6 (similar to 19% and 21%, reported for Grades 4 and 5, respectively), though that increases to 29% in Grade 7 as students enter junior high. Bullying peaks in Grade 9 with a 30% victim incidence rate, which then steadily declines until 17% in Grade 12, the lowest incidence rate reported since Grade 4. Junior high bullying rates were higher in Leduc than in other parts of Canada, while high school bullying rates were more on par with the provincial and national averages.

Students in Grade 11 appear to be more troubled than those in other grades, demonstrating:

- Less ambition to attend post-secondary education (46%, versus 54% to 67% in Grades 7 to 10, and 49% in Grade 12);
- Higher levels of depression (29%, versus 23% to 26% in Grades 7 to 10, and 16% in Grade 12);
- Less participation in sports (31%, versus 37% to 56% in Grades 7 to 10, and 35% in Grade 12);
- Less positive homework behaviour (40%, versus 43% to 58% in Grades 7 to 10, and 45% in Grade 12);
- Fewer positive relationships (72%, versus 74% to 80% in Grades 7 to 10, and 76% in Grade 12);
- Lower sense of belonging (51%, versus 60% to 66% in Grades 7 to 10, and 67% in Grade 12);
- Higher levels of truancy (28%, versus 7% to 22% in Grades 7 to 10, and 27% in Grade 12); and
- Less value placed on schooling outcomes (48%, versus 61% to 81% in Grades 7 to 10, and 50% in Grade 12).

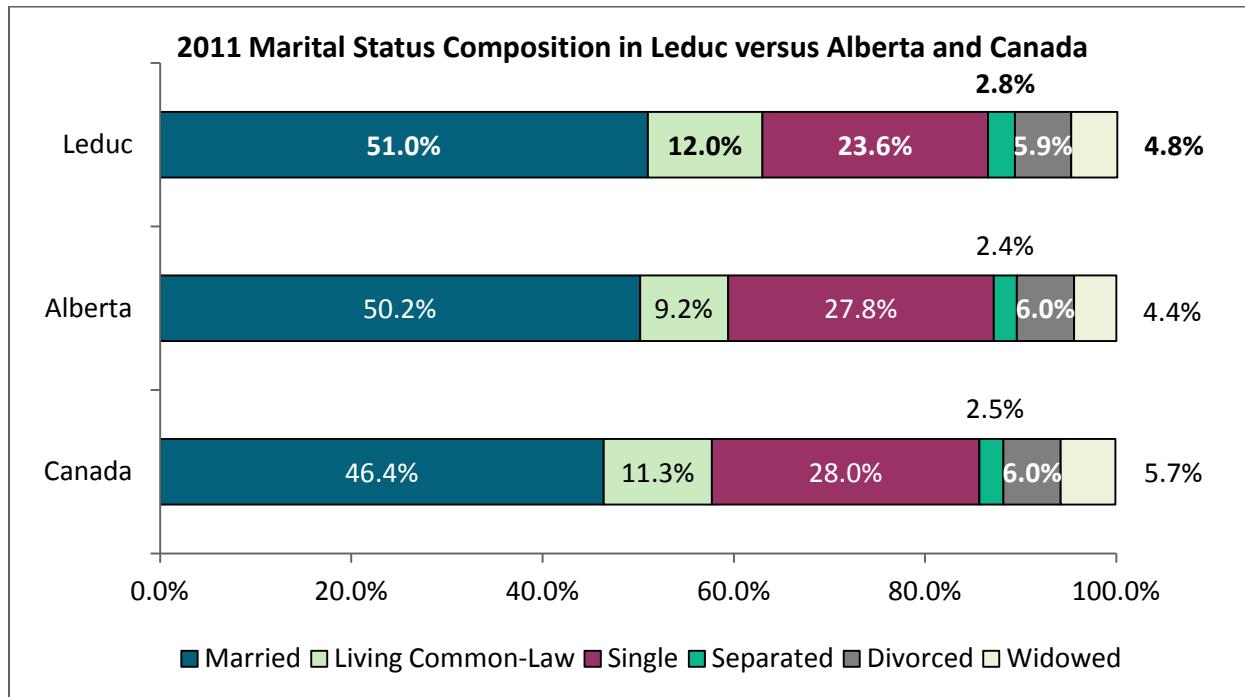
<sup>4</sup> Government of Alberta – A Profile of Alberta Seniors (2010).

<sup>5</sup> Black Gold Regional Division Tell Them From Me 2014/2015 Elementary & Secondary School Surveys

### 3.4 More Couple-Families in Leduc

The marital status composition of residents in the City of Leduc was virtually the same in 2011 as in 2006. In comparing Leduc to Alberta and Canada, overall, Leduc has fewer single (never married) residents, and slightly more living in common-law relationships (see Figure 3).<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 3**



Similarly, the City of Leduc had more couple-families (with or without children) than in Alberta or Canada, overall, and fewer one-person households (graph not shown).

#### ***Widowed Seniors at Higher Risk for Social Isolation***

In 2006, 72.9% of Alberta males aged 65 and older were married while 11.8% were widowed. Conversely, 44.7% of female seniors in Alberta were married, while 41.5% were widowed. The likelihood of being widowed increased steadily with age, which peaked after 80 years of age, at which point the majority of senior women were widowed. This may lead to social isolation amongst older females, in particular, especially in consideration of the fact that the vast majority of women aged 75 and older (78.8%) lived alone.<sup>7</sup> This can be particularly dangerous for those who have limited social or medical support, especially in consideration of at-home injuries (e.g., seniors who fall may not be able to reach the phone to dial 911) or the potential for higher rates of loneliness, anxiety, or depression.

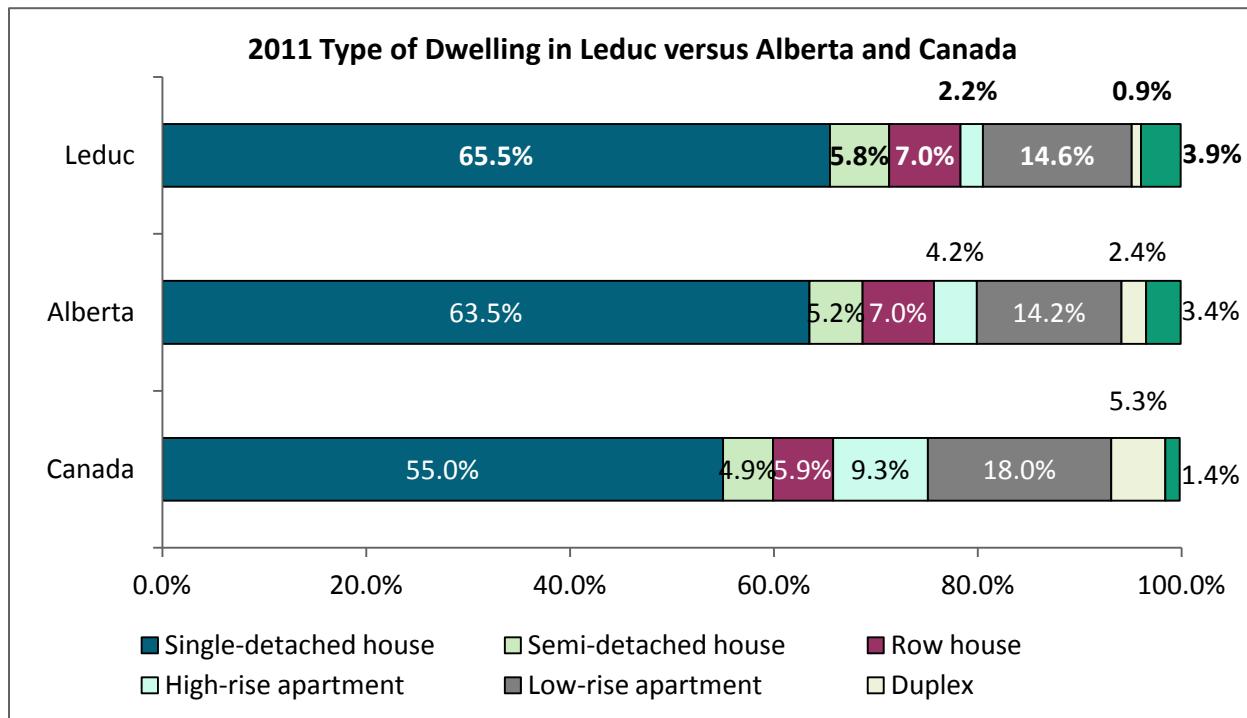
<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada 2011 Federal Census

<sup>7</sup> Government of Alberta – A Profile of Alberta Seniors (2010).

### **3.5 Strong Housing Preference for Single-Detached Homes**

Nearly two-thirds of the residents in Leduc live in single-detached house (65.5%) – significantly higher than the Canadian average (see Figure 4). Conversely, there is a much smaller proportion of high-rise rise apartment buildings and duplexes, while low-rise apartment buildings are on par with Alberta, overall.

**Figure 4**



Home ownership decreased slightly in Leduc from 2006 to 2011, with 73.8% of residents owning their households in 2011, down from 76.2% in 2006. While the proportion of owner households is on par with Alberta (73.6% in 2011), it is higher than the proportion in Canada, overall (69.0%).

### **3.6 Growing Visible Minority and Immigrant Populations**

Leduc's visible minority population was 6.0% in 2011, an increase from 2.2% in 2006. Conversely, the visible minority population was 22.4% in Edmonton's CMA, and 19.1% in Canada. The top visible minorities in Leduc in 2011 were Filipino (38.8% of the visible minority population), Black (19.2%), and South Asian (18.2%).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada 2011 Federal Census

In terms of immigrants, 7.7% of Leduc's population were immigrants in 2011, a slight increase from 7.1% in 2006. Just over one-fifth (20.6%) of Canada's population were immigrants in 2011. Top countries of origin for immigrants in Leduc included: the United Kingdom (24.4% of immigrant population), the Philippines (12.5%), and the United States (8.9%).

In 2006, seniors in Alberta were more likely than Alberta's population, overall, to have been born outside of Canada (28.2% of Alberta seniors were born outside of Canada, versus 16.0% of the total population).<sup>9</sup>

### **3.7 Individual and Household Incomes are Increasing**

The median household income in Leduc in 2010 was \$89,173 (an increase from \$66,963 in 2005); average household income in 2010 was \$100,265. There was a significant increase in individual income as well, with a median individual income in 2010 of \$40,327, an increase from \$29,516 in 2005; average individual income in 2010 was \$50,480.<sup>10</sup>

More than 1 in 10 residents aged 17 or younger (14.3%) or 65 years and older (12.4%) were categorized as low-income individuals in 2010, while 7.1% of those aged 18 to 64 were classified as low income.<sup>11</sup>

### **3.8 High Demand for Affordable Housing**

Despite growing incomes, there is a strong demand for affordable housing across all ages groups. The majority of households in need are non-seniors (77%), including single-person and lone-parent households.<sup>12</sup> Rent for an average 2-bedroom apartment rose 17% in 2014 to \$1,224 per month in 2014, which comprises 69% of the gross income of someone working full-time at minimum wage. However, this may not be unique to the City of Leduc: the overall proportion of owner and tenant households spending 30% or more of their total household income on shelter in 2011 was 23.8%, which was on par with 23.7% in Alberta and slightly lower than 25.2% in Canada in 2011.<sup>13</sup>

#### ***Significant Increase in Residential Building Permits***

Building permits reached a total of more than \$324 million in 2014, up from more than \$277 million in 2013 – an increase of approximately 17%. There was an increase of approximately 15% in terms of the number of residential permits granted. Following a steady decline in recent years, housing starts in Leduc increased 57.2% between 2013 and 2014 (see Figure 5).

<sup>9</sup> Government of Alberta – A Profile of Alberta Seniors (2010).

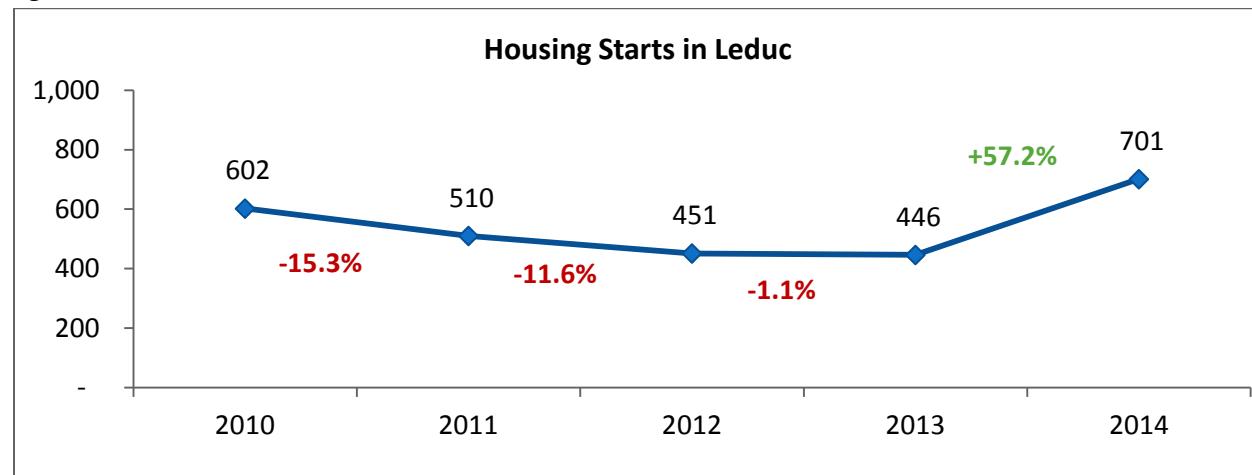
<sup>10</sup> Statistics Canada 2006, 2011 Federal Census

<sup>11</sup> Based on the After-Tax Low-Income Measure (LIM-AT)

<sup>12</sup> Leduc Foundation 2015 to 2017 Strategic Business Plan

<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada 2006, 2011 Federal Census

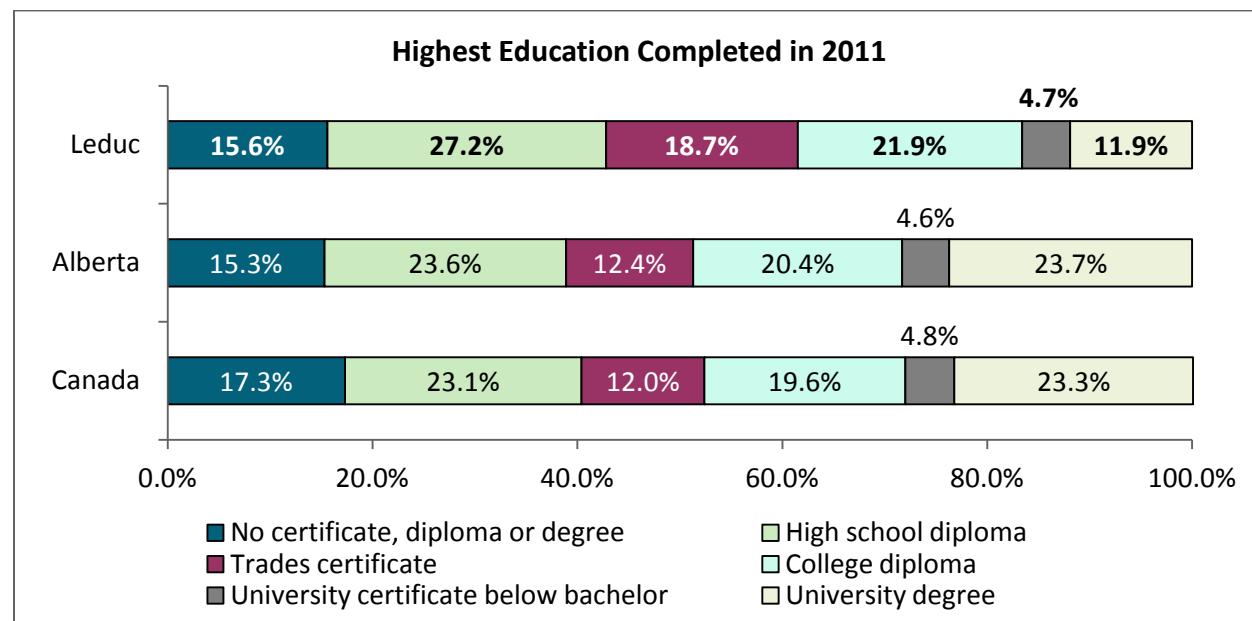
**Figure 5**



### 3.9 Fewer University Degrees in Leduc

The proportion of residents who have university degrees in Leduc (11.9%) is virtually half that of Alberta, in general, and Canada, overall (see Figure 6). Conversely, more residents in Leduc hold trades certificates and college diplomas. While it may seem disconcerting that there are fewer university degrees in Leduc than elsewhere, the overall proportion of those without any certificate, degree, or diploma (15.6%) is on par with Alberta (15.3%) and lower than Canada, overall (17.3%). Without additional economic analysis, then, it cannot necessarily be concluded that fewer university degrees is indicative of any economic downturn.

**Figure 6**



## 4.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: SURVEYS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Although a number of topics were investigated through the various components of the FCSS Needs Assessment, the following sections provide a summary of the key themes and issues identified throughout each component. Detailed, comprehensive reports for each component are available under a separate cover.

### 4.1 Life in the City of Leduc

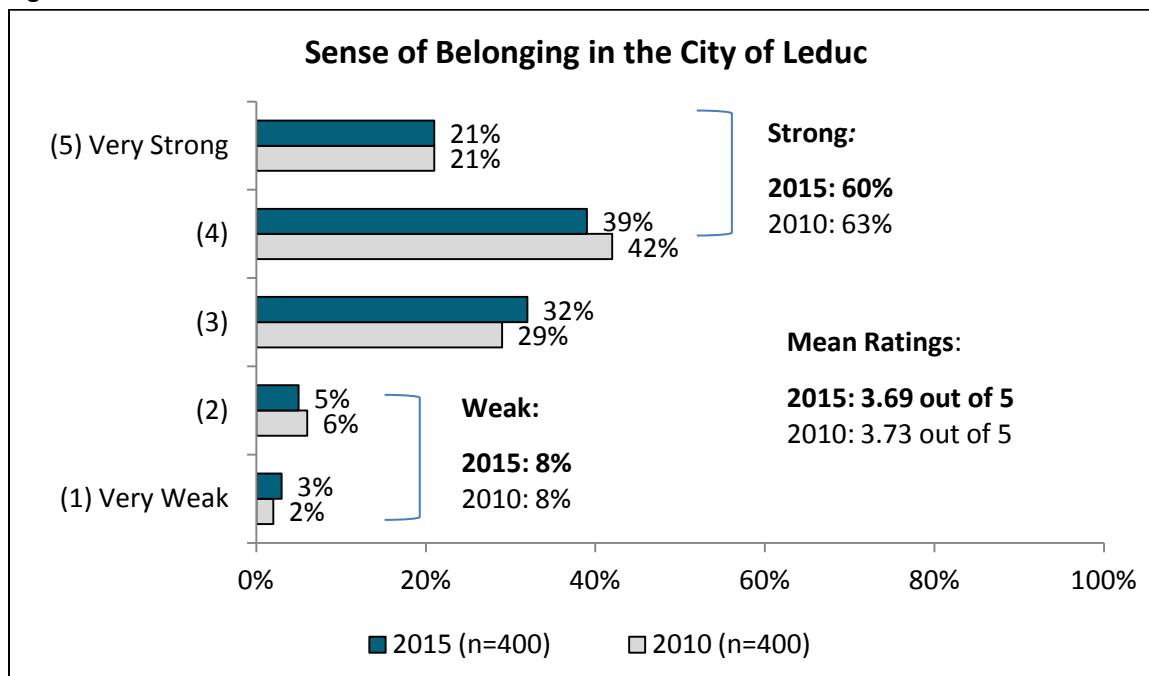
#### *Residents Feel Safe and Welcome in Their Communities*

Residents see Leduc as a place of opportunity for jobs and raising a family. The vast majority of those surveyed in the General Population Telephone Survey (93%) expect to continue living in Leduc for at least the next three (3) years, citing the “small city atmosphere” and proximity to Edmonton as some of the benefits of living in Leduc. More than 9 out of 10 respondents felt that Leduc is overall, a safe place to live (96%) and a good place to raise a family (94%), while more than 8 out of 10 respondents felt that Leduc residents are willing to help out their neighbours (88%) and have people they can count on and confide in during a crisis (87%).

#### *Community Involvement Fosters Sense of Belonging*

Sense of belonging amongst residents has remained consistent over the past five (5) years with 60% of the respondents reporting a “strong” sense of belonging in the City of Leduc (see Figure 7).

Figure 7



A focus group with young families allowed for speculation of what, in particular, strengthens this sense of belonging in residents; many of the parents felt that a strong sense of belonging is achieved by “community involvement” and actively seeking out opportunities for social engagement. It is not surprising, then, that 87% of the survey respondents who have a high sense of belonging indicated that they leave their home to visit with friends or family at least once per week, versus 67% of those with a weak or neutral sense of belonging. While causation between more frequent visitation with friends/family and increased sense of belonging cannot be determined by these results, there would still appear to be some degree of correlation.

Social groups that face unique challenges, such as newcomers, youth, and low-income individuals were more hesitant to affirm a strong sense of belonging, than the middle- and upper-class parents spoken with. For the newcomers and low-income focus group participants, this was, in part, attributed to a lack of reliable public transportation. In particular, issues with a seeming lack of scheduling during off-peak times made it difficult for shift workers getting to and from work, or those accessing services on evenings or weekends. Those better off financially (i.e., middle- and upper-class parents) acknowledged the luxury afforded to them with vehicle ownership, and admitted that it would be difficult for “anyone who doesn’t drive to have a sense of belonging.”

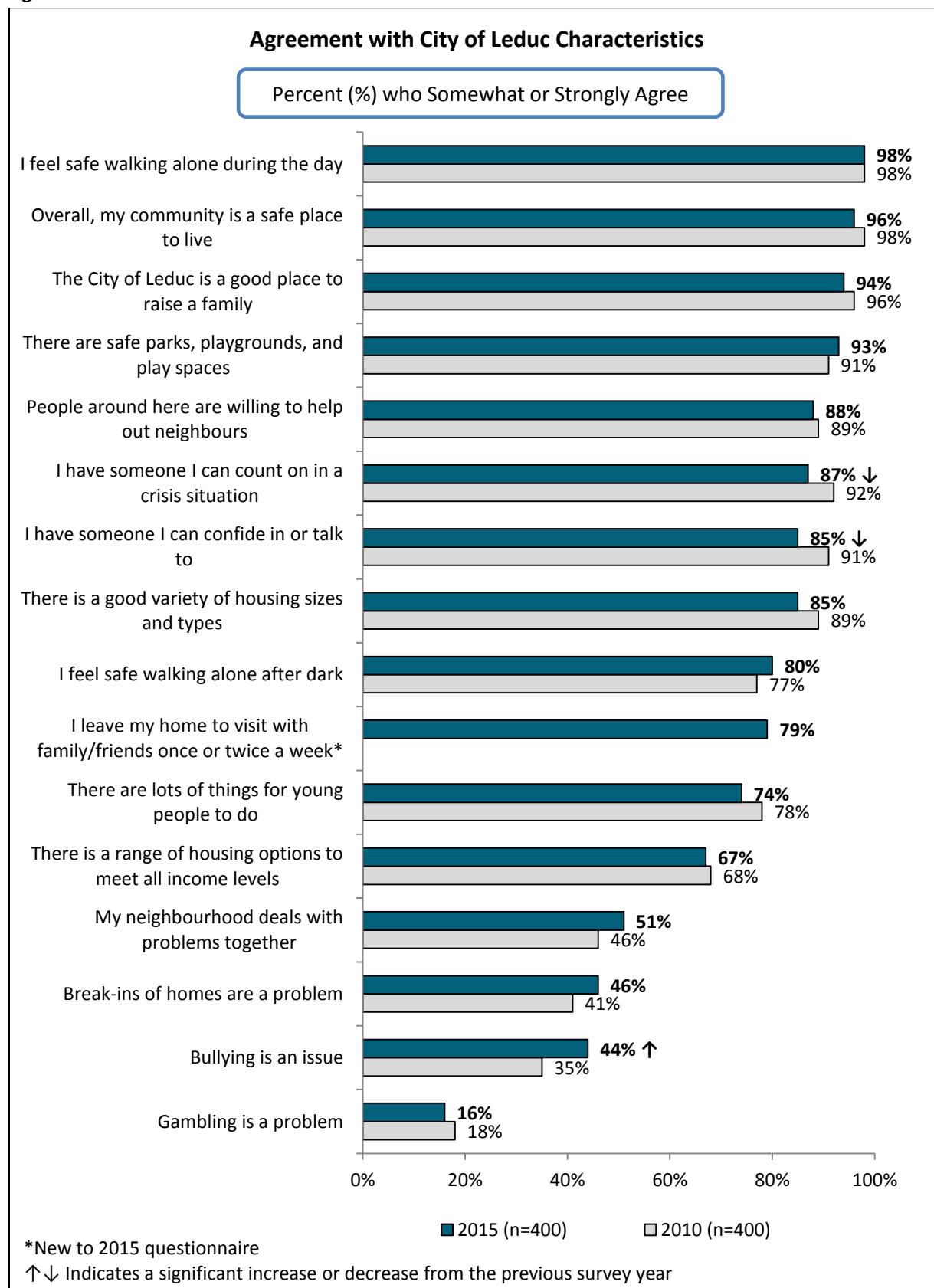
The youth suggested that the phrase “sense of belonging” meant “that you belong, feel at home, and feel wanted.” Unlike the newcomers or low-income individuals, youth struggled less with transportation issues and more with feeling accepted by their peers and valued by adults in the community.

#### ***Growing Concerns Include Bullying and Break-Ins***

There was a significant increase in the proportion of survey respondents who felt that bullying is an issue in Leduc (44% in 2015 versus 25% in 2010; see Figure 8). This sentiment was echoed by youth in a focus group discussion, who felt that that bullying is not uncommon amongst teenagers, although it tends to afflict those in junior high more so than those in high school. While it was acknowledged that bullying is likely no more an issue in Leduc than in other large urban centres, that unfortunately does not lessen the impact on those who experience it locally. Additionally, as the reach of bullying extends online and into social media (i.e., cyberbullying), the stress of being bullied can be exacerbated and difficult to avoid for youth who are always “connected.”

Another growing concern in Leduc is that of break-ins; although it was not a significant increase, 46% of survey respondents agreed that it was an issue in 2015, versus 41% in 2010. Again, this was provided additional context in the youth focus group setting, where it was explained that, often out of “boredom,” youth are partaking in the breaking-and-entering (“carhopping”) and theft of and from vehicles.

**Figure 8**



## **4.2 Issues Facing Unique Populations**

As part of the Needs Assessment Research, Banister Research conducted three (3) focus groups with City of Leduc youth, ESL newcomers, and young families. While the perceptions and opinions of the young families generally supported the findings obtained in the General Population Telephone Survey, the youth and newcomers offered unique insights as to the issues facing people like them, in particular.

### ***Issues Facing Youth Include Anxiety and Depression***

Overall, the youth spoken with indicated that the biggest mental and social issues facing youth in the City of Leduc include school-related stress, general anxiety, and depression. It was felt by some participants that Leduc is “anti-social” and that trustworthy friends can be hard to come by. They also reported that they do not feel respected or taken seriously by adults or other figures of authority, and that they are more likely to internalize any mental health issues than they are to talk to someone about their problems.

### ***Youth Crave “Big-City” Recreational Activity***

Overall, the youth tended to be unaware of what types of recreational opportunities are provided by the City of Leduc, excluding sports and fitness, which they often partake in at the Leduc Recreation Centre. The youth focus group participants suggested that a lack of activity in Leduc would contribute to their overall quality of life. Suggestions included both indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities, such as paintball, laser tag, dirt-biking, rock climbing, an arcade, or a carnival/amusement park with rides. The youth reported often traveling to Edmonton on the weekends to participate in such activities.

The youth were also keen on the idea of a Youth Centre, a place to relax with friends after school or on weekends, that would offer amenities like video games, computers, a TV, table tennis, and pool. Additionally, the youth suggested that the Centre could have volunteers or staff that could offer employment assistance, as it was discussed that youth in Leduc often experience difficulty finding jobs; an additional factor that may be contributing to an overall lack of community engagement.

### ***Newcomers Struggle with Language Barriers, Social Isolation, and Adjusting to the Educational System***

One of the largest issues faced by newcomers in the City of Leduc includes communication and language barriers. This can sometimes limit their ability to access services, particularly when they do not have any English-speaking friends or family to help the transition. In particular, communicating with doctors, banks, and immigration services can be a slow and frustrating process. Those who have few friends or family or other nearby support may also experience social isolation, as neighbours tend to keep to themselves.

Limited public transportation can also be a barrier for newcomers in terms of accessing needed services, or getting to and from work during off-peak times. While many of the focus group participants reported attending community activities, such as the Canada Day parade or BBQ events, limited public transportation schedules can also make community involvement difficult when one does not have a vehicle.

Parents, in particular, also reported that the general approach to education here is quite different than in some other areas (e.g., China and Korea). It was commented that, in North America, children have much more freedom in terms of how they dress and what they eat at school (e.g., parent- versus school-provided lunches). While it was acknowledged that this is not necessarily a bad thing, a couple of the parents felt that this causes conflict in schools, as children and parents are both quick to judge one another for what clothes students wear to school or what types of lunches children are given. Furthermore, it was felt that this causes students to become distracted from their studies and fail to prioritize education over other facets of their life.

### **4.3 Current Human Services**

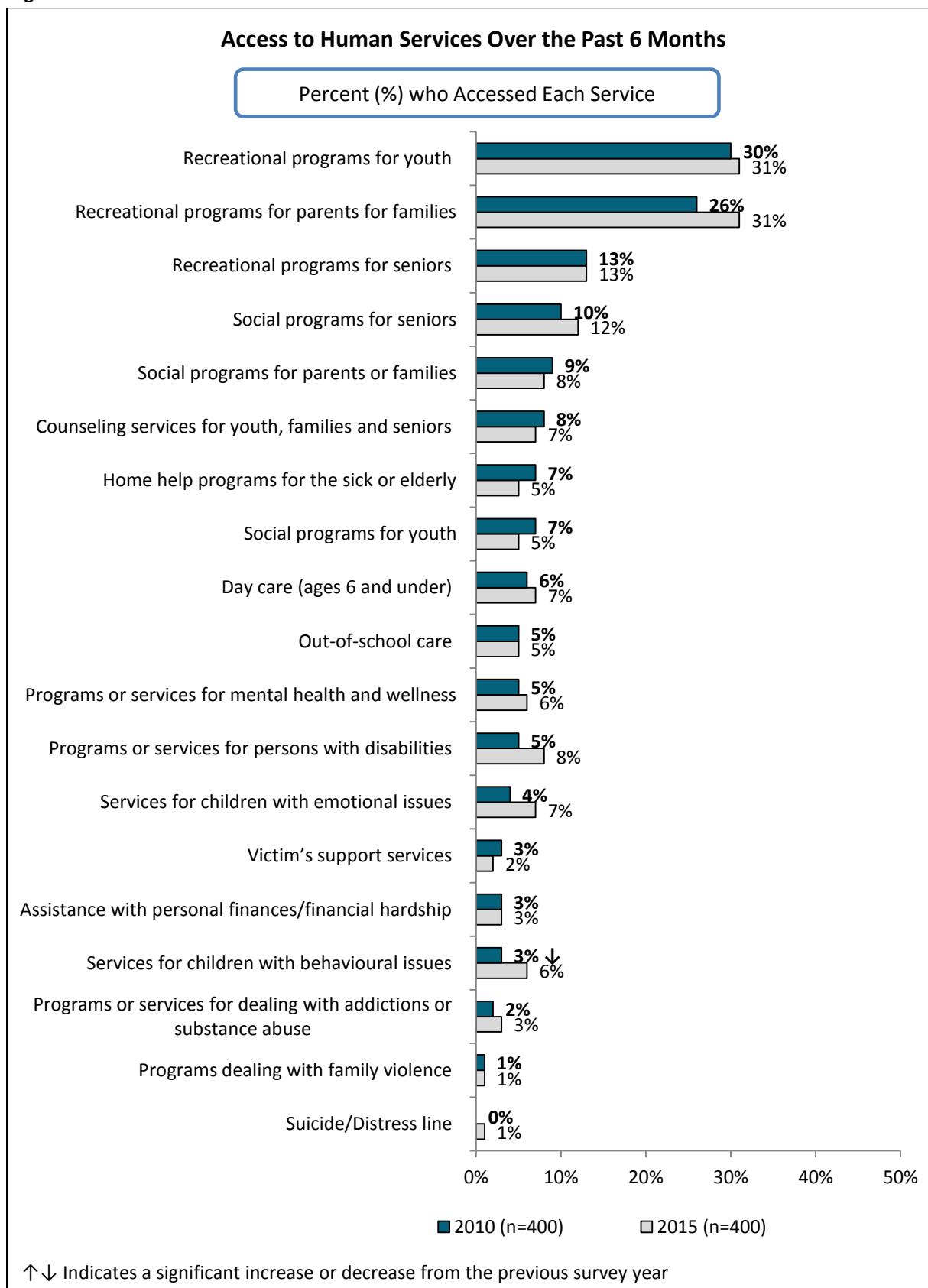
#### ***Residents are Most Frequently Accessing Social and Recreational Programs***

Types of human services most frequently accessed by households in the City of Leduc in 2015 included recreational programs for all age groups, including youth (30%), parents and families (26%), and seniors (13%) (see Figure 9). The services most frequently accessed were similar to those reported by households in 2015.

At least 8 out of 10 respondents reported that, for each service they or their household had accessed, the service had been accessed in the City of Leduc (the single exception being programs or services for dealing with addictions or substance abuse, of which 78% of users accessed in Leduc). Additionally, 6 out of 10 respondents felt that accessing human services in Leduc is “easy” or “very easy,” while 3 out of 10 were unsure (1 out of 10 respondents reported that accessing human services is “difficult” or “very difficult”).

While more than 8 in 10 agency survey respondents indicated that they refer individuals to services and/or programs outside the City of Leduc, the majority of those who make referrals do so 20% of the time or less, reinforcing the idea that the needs of users are largely met by the services and programs offered in the City of Leduc. Services that were accessed elsewhere by at least 10% of users (City residents) included: addictions and substance abuse help; assistance with personal finances and/or financial hardship; services for children with behavioural issues; victim’s support services; counseling services; and social programs for seniors.

**Figure 9**



### ***Social Stigma May Prevent Residents from Accessing Certain Services***

Services for children with emotional and behavioural issues, assistance with personal finances, victim's support services, programs for addictions or substance abuse, programs dealing with family violence, and suicide-distress lines continue to be accessed the least by respondents. This may be due, in part, to the perceived social stigma of accessing services related to mental health. Young families who participated in the focus groups also reported that talking about mental health is "taboo," and is still an uncomfortable topic for many.

Additional barriers to accessing human services included lack of awareness (i.e., resident did not know where to go) and limited availability (e.g., difficulty getting an appointment, limited hours of service; service not provided in Leduc).

## **4.4 Underserved Populations and Future Need for Services**

### ***Service Providers are Operating at Capacity***

Agencies and residents are both concerned with the City's ability to continue to provide human services as the population continues to grow. Ninety percent (90%) of the agencies surveyed reported that the number of individuals they serve has increased over the past five (5) years, and more organizations have a wait list in 2015 (33%) than they did in 2010 (26%). Additionally, the majority of organizations with waiting lists reported that the number of individuals on their waiting lists have increased since 2014. In consideration of the fact that agencies are also continuing to serve a broader age range of residents, including children, adults, *and* seniors, organizations are increasingly spreading themselves thin in terms of what they provide and who they are able to provide it to.

Agencies and service providers are also concerned with their ability to continue to provide services, having expressed concerns about the economy (e.g., recruitment and retention of volunteers) and sustainable funding.

### ***Seniors, Youth, and the Disadvantaged will Need Increased Support***

Nearly 6 in 10 residents surveyed in 2015 (58%, a significant increase from 49% in 2010) reported that the City of Leduc will need new or different human services in the next three (3) years, most often citing support for an aging population (e.g., senior services; housing), expanding social services to reflect the population's growth (in general), and youth support. Help for the homeless was mentioned by significantly more respondents in 2015 than in 2010.

## 4.5 Family and Community Support Services

### *Resident Knowledge of FCSS is Low*

Resident knowledge of Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) in the City of Leduc is low, with fewer than 4 in 10 respondents indicating that their knowledge of FCSS is “excellent” or “good” (see Figure 10). Approximately 1 out of every 2 survey respondents felt that they need more information about the services and programs provided by Leduc FCSS, which was consistent with 2010 survey results.

Focus group participants (young families and newcomer) were also unaware of FCSS and admitted to knowing little about what human services the City provides. For crisis issues, young family respondents reported traveling to Edmonton. Increasing awareness amongst residents will be key, for ensuring needs are met locally where services are already available.

It is worth noting, however, that agency awareness of FCSS has increased significantly since 2010 (see Figure 11). Despite having a generally good sense of the programs and services offered by Leduc FCSS, half of the agency survey respondents (similar to the residents) still felt that they need more information about their services.

**Figure 10**

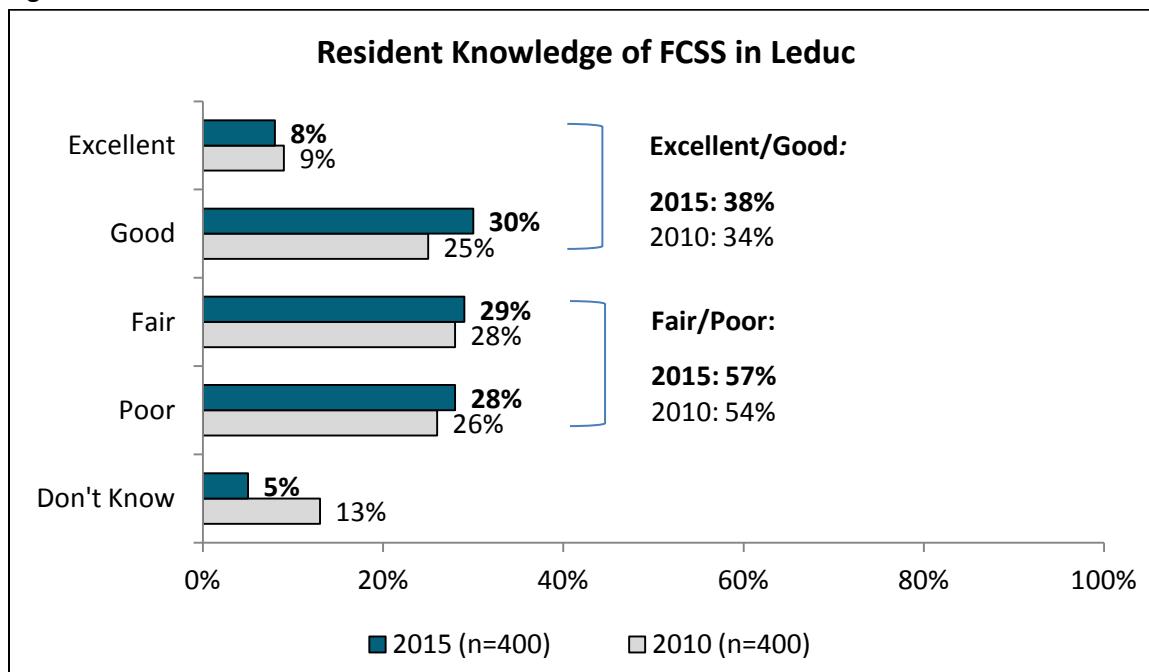
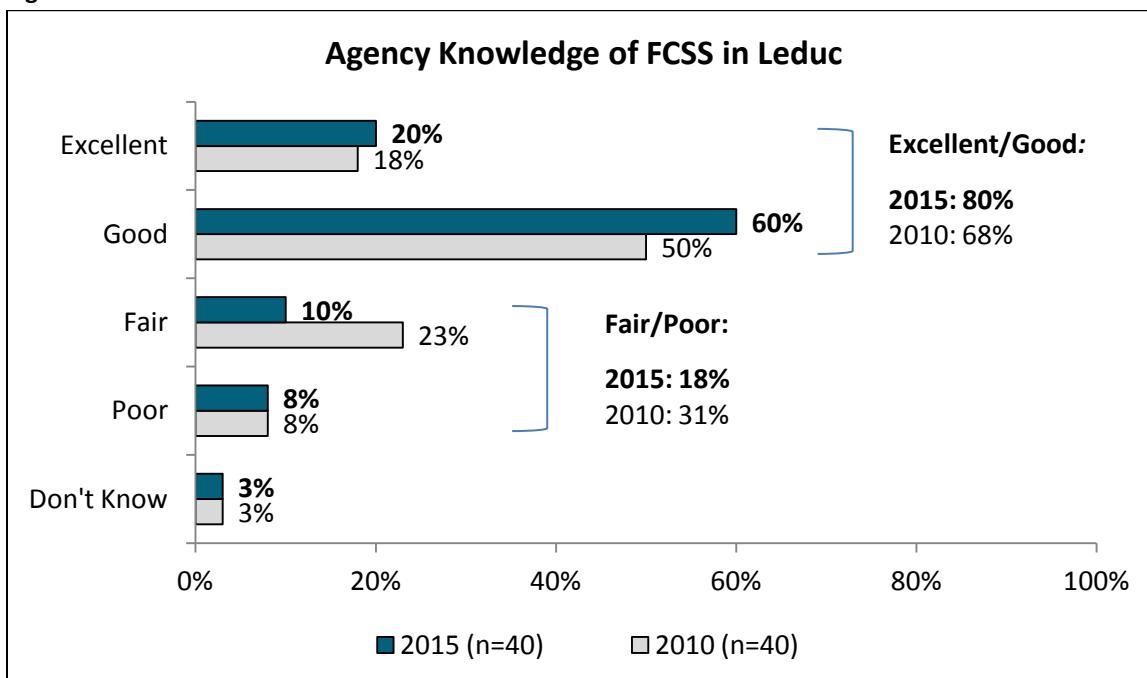


Figure 11



## 4.6 Volunteerism

### ***Agencies are Concerned About Volunteer Recruitment and Retention***

As previously noted, agencies are increasingly concerned about their ability to provide services as they struggle with volunteer recruitment and retention. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of the agency survey respondents indicated that their organization uses volunteers to support the programs and services provided by their agency, an increase by nearly 20% since 2010. However, agencies most often reported having 10 or fewer active volunteers, contributing to fewer than 50 hours per month to the organization. More than one-third of the survey respondents (36%) reported having issues with volunteer recruitment and retention, and expect this to continue to be a problem.

Additionally, significantly fewer residents are volunteering in Leduc (24% of survey respondents in 2015 versus 37% in 2010). Those who do volunteer are spending less time doing so – most often donating up to 10 hours of their time in the last six (6) months. Residents who do volunteer most often reported helping out by attending social functions (e.g., bingo; car wash), serving as a member of a board or committee, and assistance seniors of people with disabilities. Interestingly, those positions were highlighted by agencies in which help was needed the most.

Although more than one-third of the volunteers (residents) surveyed indicated they could give extra time, if asked, it seems there may be a gap in terms of connecting potential volunteers with opportunities. Going forward, agencies should ensure they are effectively communicating with residents, many of whom are able and willing to help, if asked.

## **4.7 Recommendations for the City of Leduc**

Going forward, increasing overall resident awareness of Family and Community Support Services in the City of Leduc will be key to ensuring the social and human needs of the population are met. Although residents have a vague sense of the types of services and programming available, they are unfamiliar with FCSS as a centralized source of support services.

Certain sub-populations within the City of Leduc are more at risk for social isolation (e.g., newcomers, seniors) and mental illness (e.g., youth); expanding and improving services in the following areas, then, will be beneficial for meeting human needs and increasing sense of belonging and engagement within groups that face unique challenges:

### ***Improve Transportation Services***

Expanding coverage of transportation services and extending bus schedules within Leduc, and to/from Edmonton will enable those without personal vehicles (e.g., newcomers, seniors, shift workers) to become self-sufficient and have easier access to hard-to-reach services. Those who work during non-peak hours (e.g., evening and weekends) will have better opportunities to connect with service providers.

### ***Expand Housing and Social Services for Seniors***

Although the proportion of seniors in Leduc is diminishing in favour of younger residents, overall population growth and the aging of seniors will continue to be an issue. The City of Leduc has also seen a disproportionate shift in the proportions of older versus younger seniors; as the proportion of those aged 80+ continues to grow faster than those aged 65 to 79, there will be an increasing burden on the Leduc Foundation and other service providers to help those who are no longer self-reliant.

### ***Create More Social Engagement Opportunities for Youth***

Youth in the City of Leduc are struggling with anxiety, depression, and “boredom.” They tend to feel that they are not valued by adults or authority figures in the community, and that their needs go largely unnoticed or ignored. Although this is anticipated to be on par with younger populations in other municipalities, those in Leduc feel that there is a lack of weekend and evening activity that contributes to their perceived lower quality of life in Leduc. A Youth Centre, or more opportunity for indoor/outdoor

recreational activities (e.g., paintball, laser tag), will provide youth the opportunities they feel are lacking in Leduc that are available in other municipalities. Popular social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, Instagram) are the most effective methods for promoting services and activities, and could additionally be used to connect youth with employment and volunteer opportunities.

#### ***Connect Newcomers with Immigration and ESL Support Services***

For many newcomers, language and communication barriers can make it difficult to access services. Some of the biggest issues newcomers are currently facing include issues with immigration and affordable housing, especially for those who have hopes of reuniting with family in Canada and/or are supporting their families financially. Newcomers should be connected with early to ensure they have adequate support, since those who are more prone to social isolation (e.g., non-English speakers; those without reliable transportation) may go unnoticed. For parents with younger children, the City of Leduc might also consider providing assistance to help them acclimate to the local educational system, as those from countries such as China and Korea have noted major philosophical differences in local approaches to schooling (e.g., parent, child, and society perspectives).

#### ***Improve Availability of Affordable and Low-Income Housing***

Aging seniors in Leduc require varying levels of housing according to their level of need and personal budget. Newcomers, in particular, are also struggling to find affordable rental properties or landlords who are willing to rent to recent immigrants or ESL speakers. Properties that are available are often in need of repairs and/or require more than half of one's income. Going forward, the City of Leduc will need to ensure there is adequate housing available both for a variety of income levels and levels of care for seniors and others who may face mobility or other related challenges.

#### ***Increase Resident Volunteerism***

As service providers continue to stretch themselves beyond capacity by expanding their services and aiming to serve a wider variety of residents, there is a higher-than-ever need for volunteers. Although residents are volunteering less than they did 5 years ago, those who do volunteer are willing to commit more hours than they were in the past, suggesting a higher level of commitment amongst volunteers. Using preferred and popular sources of information for residents, such as newspapers, pamphlets, and bulletins at the Leduc Recreation Centre may be helpful for communicating with residents who are already active, or who would like to be more engaged with their community. Interestingly, the positions that are most needed by agencies (board members and event volunteers) were the most-often reported positions by current volunteers. Agencies and service providers, then, need to ensure that they are effectively connecting residents who are able and willing with volunteer opportunities.