

## **Somerset County Community Panel**

**Survey, July 1, 2009**

### ***Process:***

Part A of the survey was open-ended and asked for the five most pressing community issues in the county. This was to allow the group to suggest their own issues without pre-setting their responses to ones suggested by the survey itself.

Part B of the survey grouped and compiled the Part A responses for the second survey which allowed the respondents to rank and prioritize their responses.

### **Date conducted:**

Part A was open in March-April and Part B was open from May to June.

### **Information summary:**

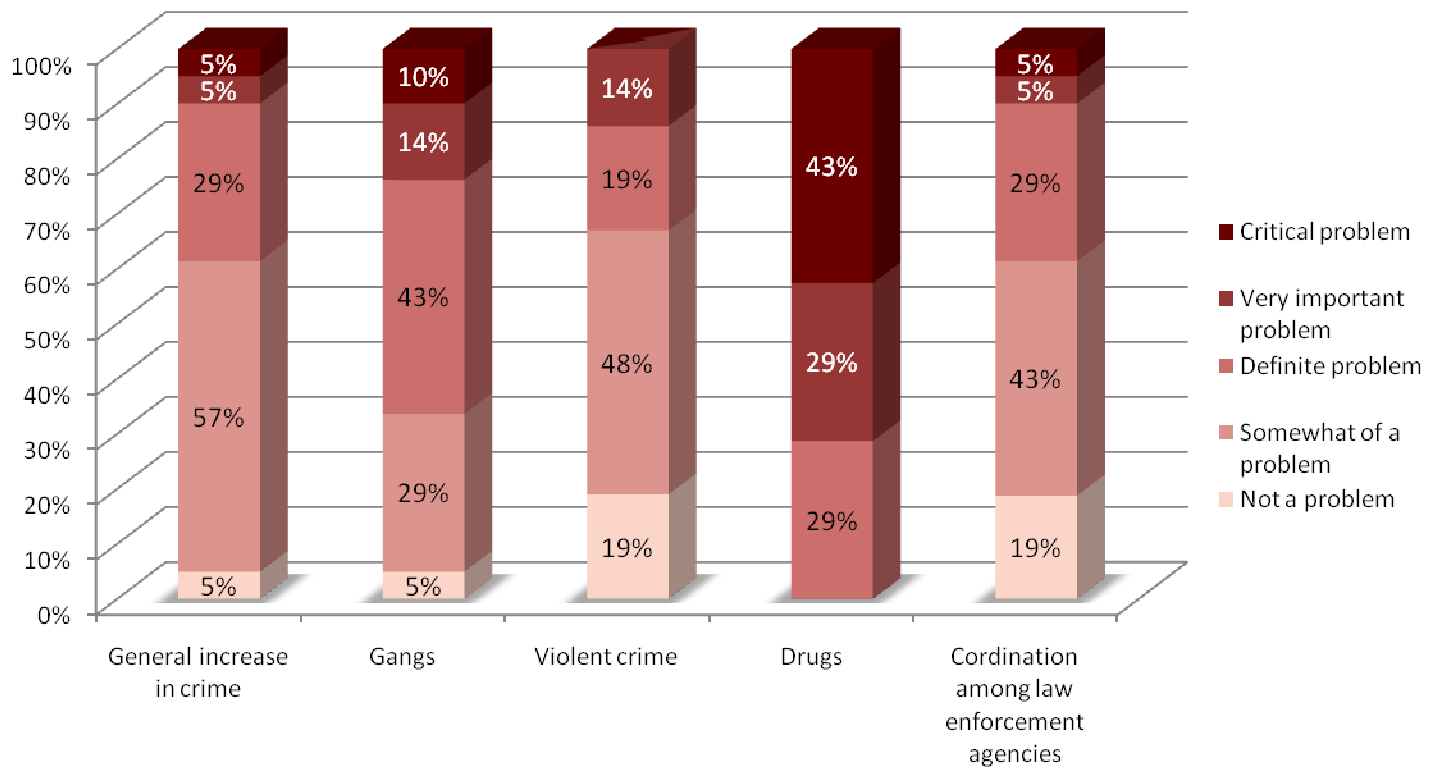
**A. General issues.** The rank order (from the most concerned) of totals of critical problem and very important problems for the general concerns of the county are:

- a. Consolidation of water and septic systems (53%)
- b. Senior needs (48%)
- c. Lack of arts and entertainment (47%)
- d. Tax differential between cities and county/Lack of consolidation of many government agencies (40% each)
- e. Lack of recreation (39%)
- f. Decaying infrastructure (38%)
- g. Housing blight/Lack of transportation for people without vehicles (33% each)
- h. Illegal immigration (30%)
- i. Lack of adequate public health care (28%)
- j. Changing culture of county (20%)
- k. Environmental concerns (15%)
- l. Crowded roads (10%)

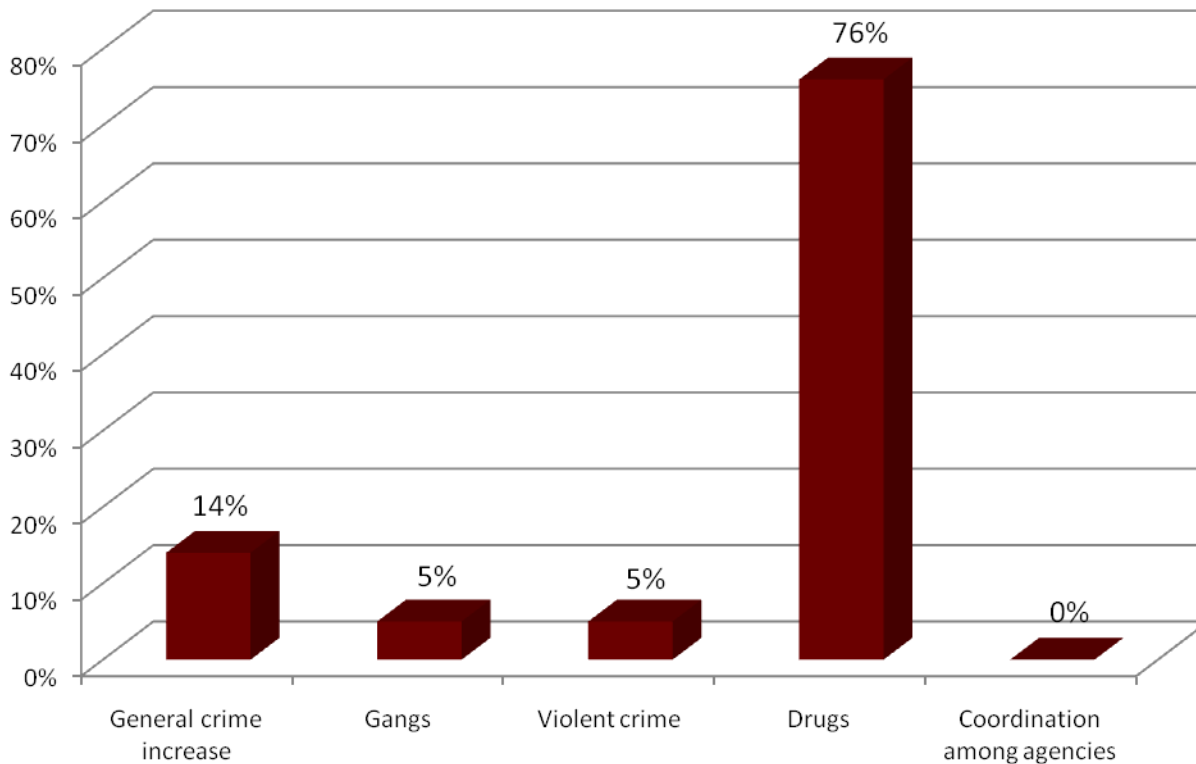
**B. Crime.** The overwhelming major crime issue according to the panel is drugs with 76 percent citing it as the most critical. Gangs and violent crime were noted by five percent each.

- C. Education.** Operational school funding was mentioned by 43 percent as the most critical in the education area. Student discipline was second at 29 percent.
- D. Growth.** The lack of economic growth was cited as the most critical of the problems in this area by 81 percent of the panel. A distant second issue was poor planning for growth noted by 19 percent.
- E. Financial and Economic.** Unemployment is the overwhelming most critical of the economic problems by 71 percent of the respondents, followed by the need to reduce taxes by 14 percent, and a declining tax base by 10 percent.
- F. Political Leadership.** Attracting quality elected officials is the most important problem in political leadership according to 38 percent of the panel. That is followed by division and hostility by 24 percent, lack of visionary leadership by 19 percent, and leaders not focusing on the common good by 14 percent.
- G. Business conditions.** The panel was somewhat pessimistic over the business conditions in the county for the third and fourth quarter of this year with 55 percent expecting somewhat or much worse and only 10 percent looking for somewhat better conditions later this year. The remaining 35 percent expected about the same conditions.
- H. Employment.** No one expected any improvement in employment levels for the rest of the year with 43 percent expecting about the same and 57 percent expecting employment to be somewhat or much worse.
- I. Residential Real Estate.** More than half (57%) expected about the same conditions in the residential real estate sector with 33 percent expecting it to be somewhat or much worse. Just 10 percent expected an improvement.

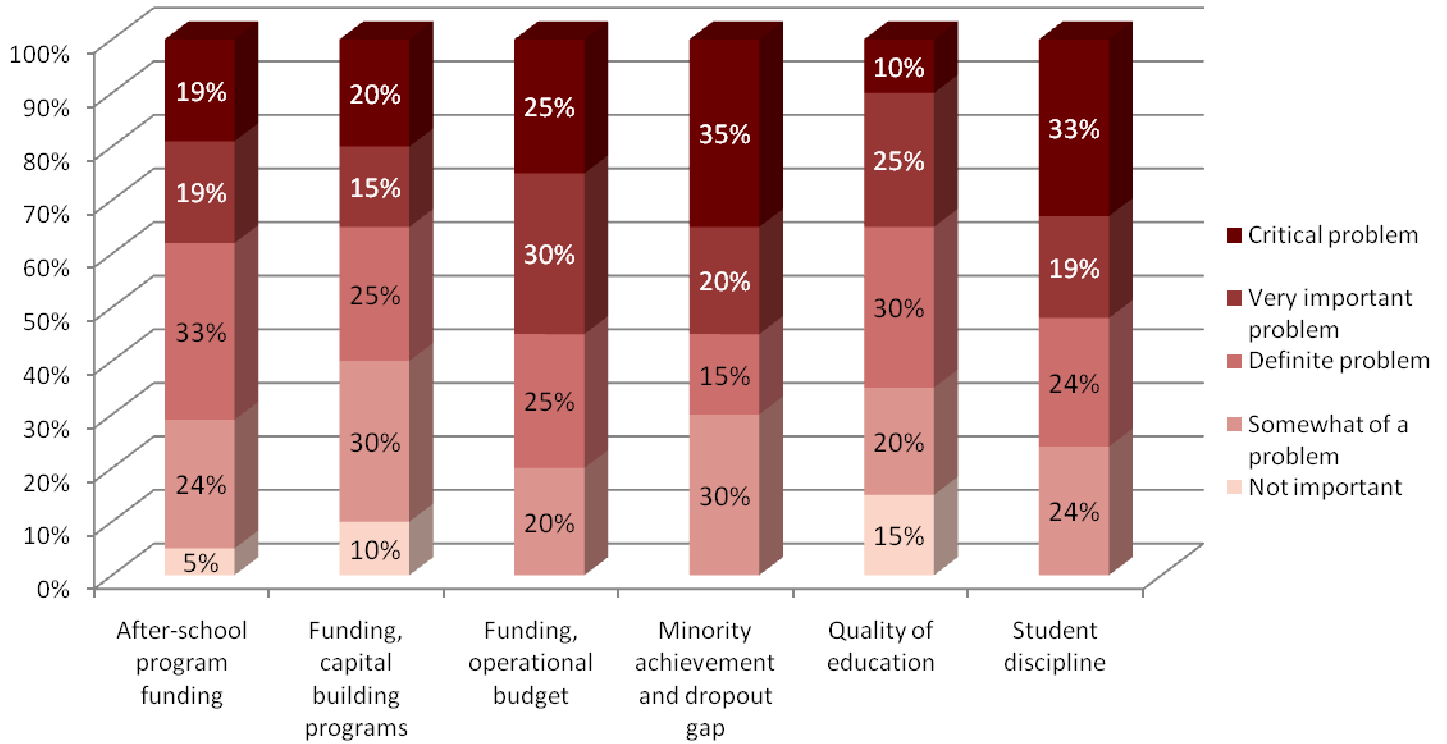
**For the following CRIME issues, how much of a problem do you believe that each issue is today in Somerset County?**



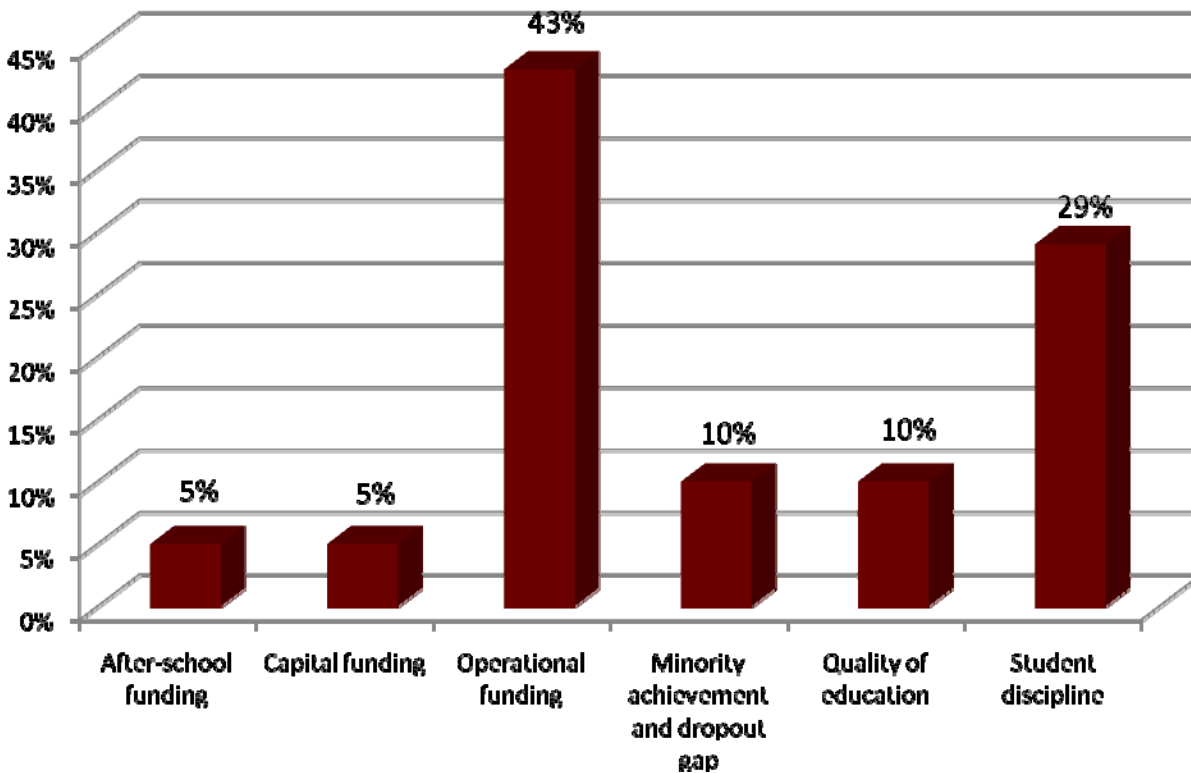
**Which is the most important CRIME issue facing citizens in Somerset County today?**



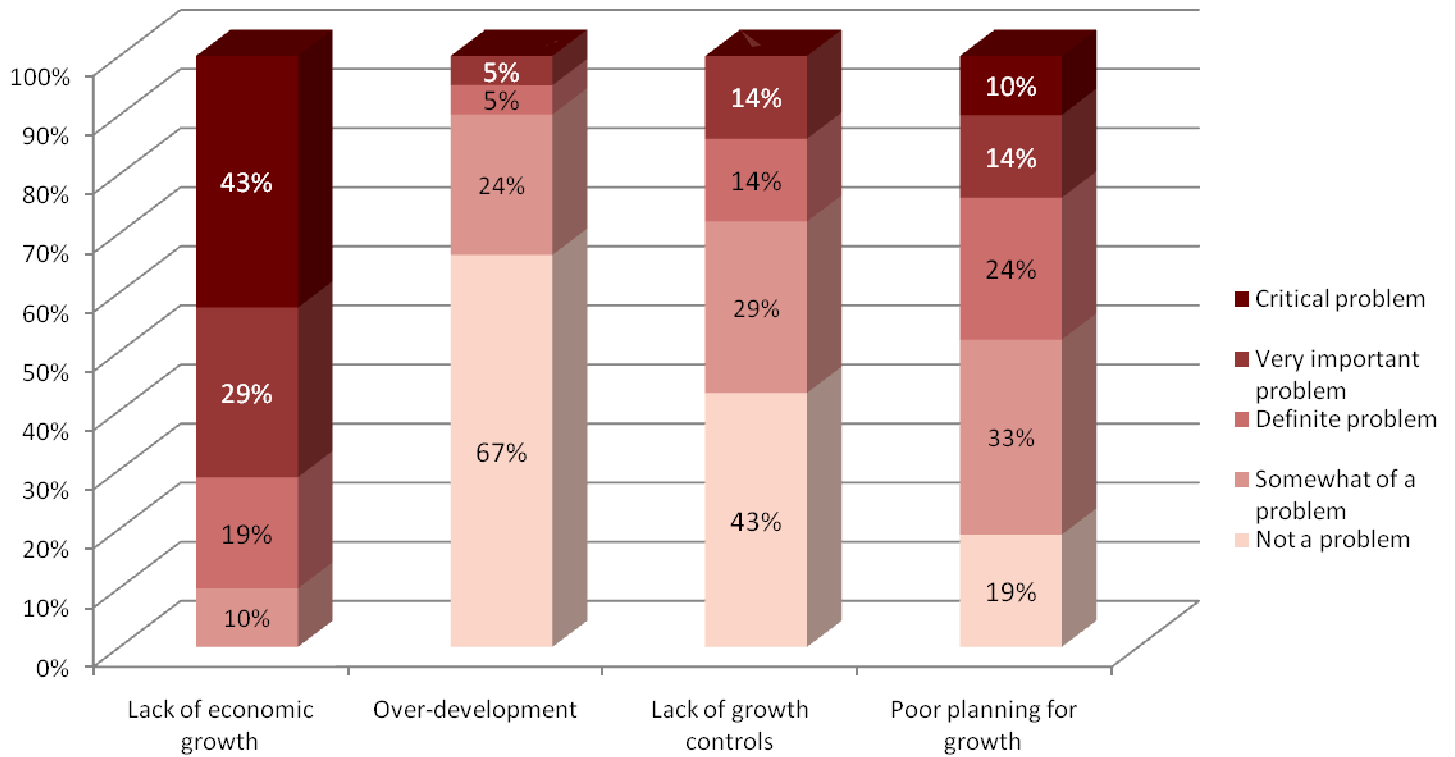
**For the following K-12 EDUCATION issues, how much of a problem do you believe that each issue is today in Somerset County?**



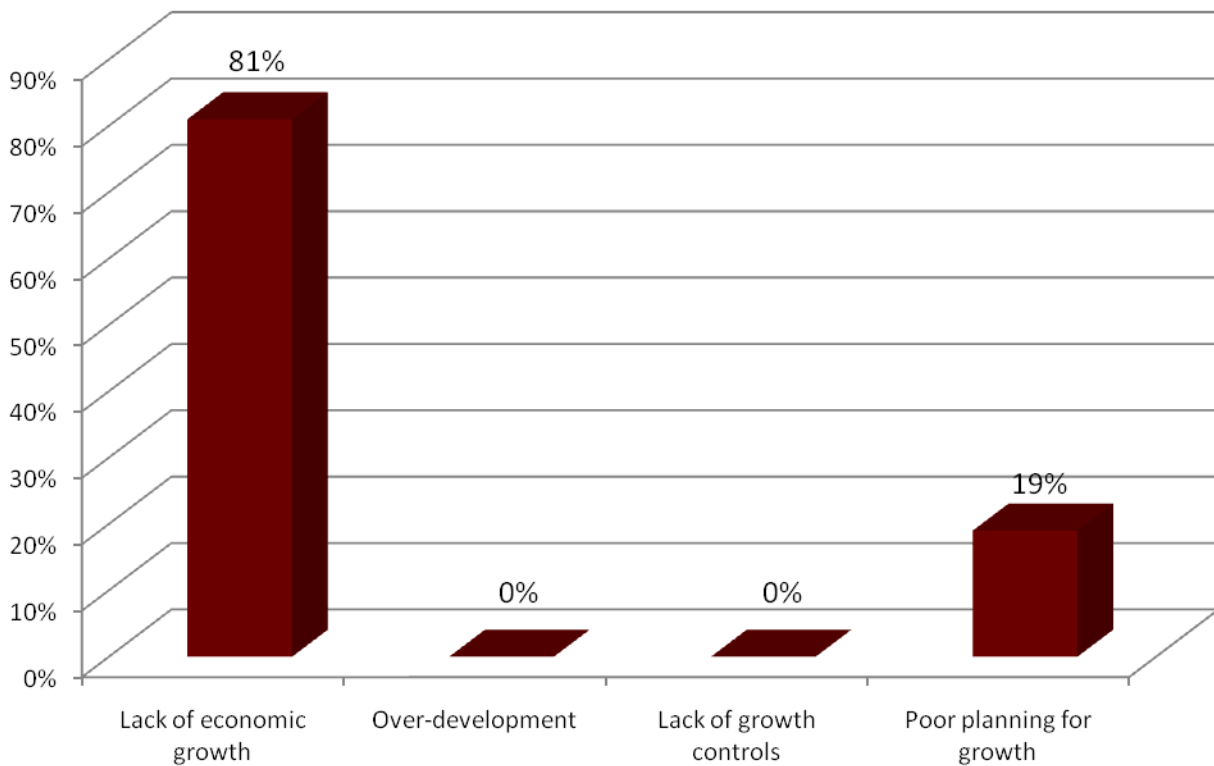
**What is the most important K-12 EDUCATION issue facing citizens in Somerset County today?**



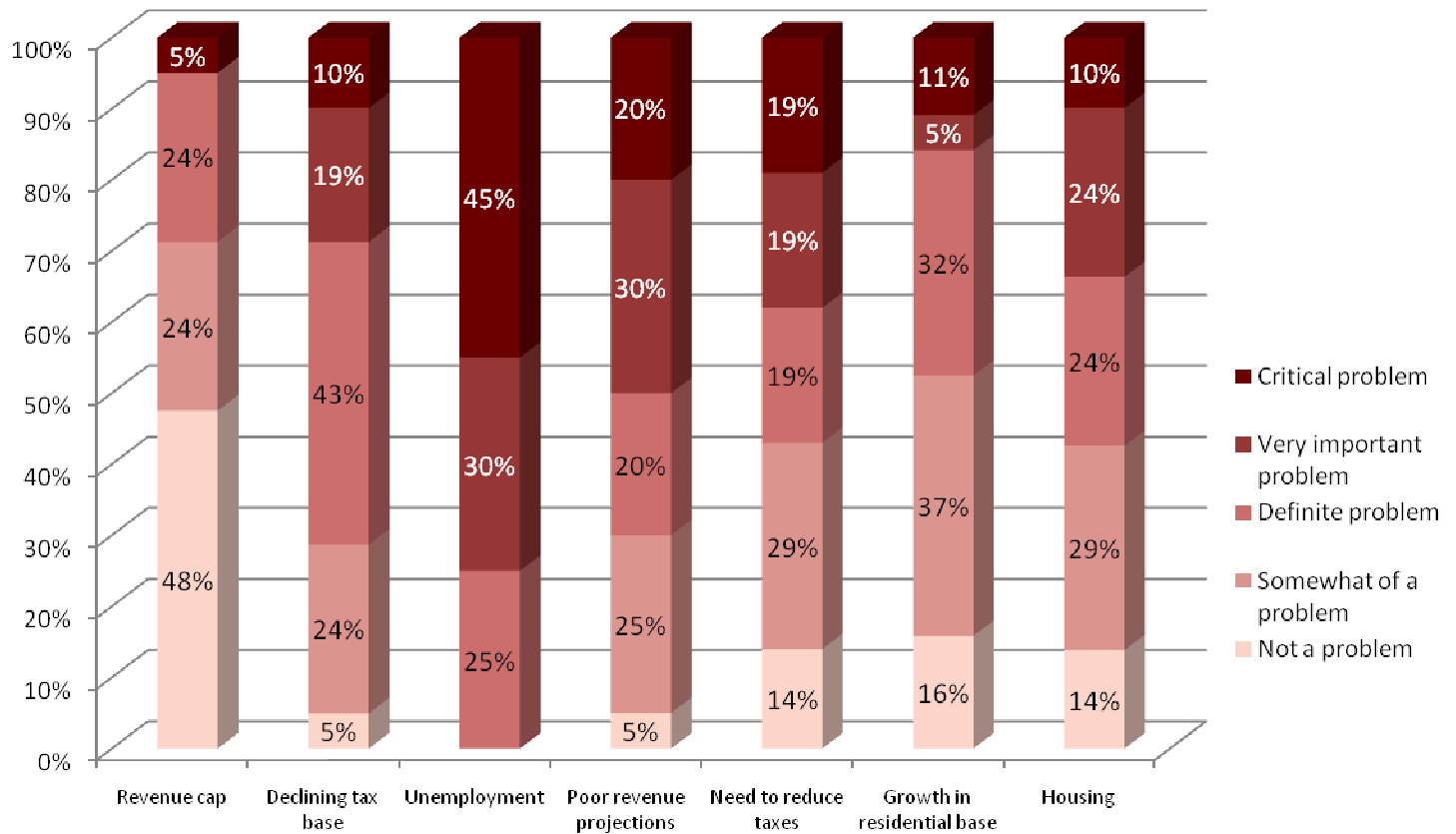
**For the following GROWTH issues, how much of a problem do you believe that each issue is today in Somerset County?**



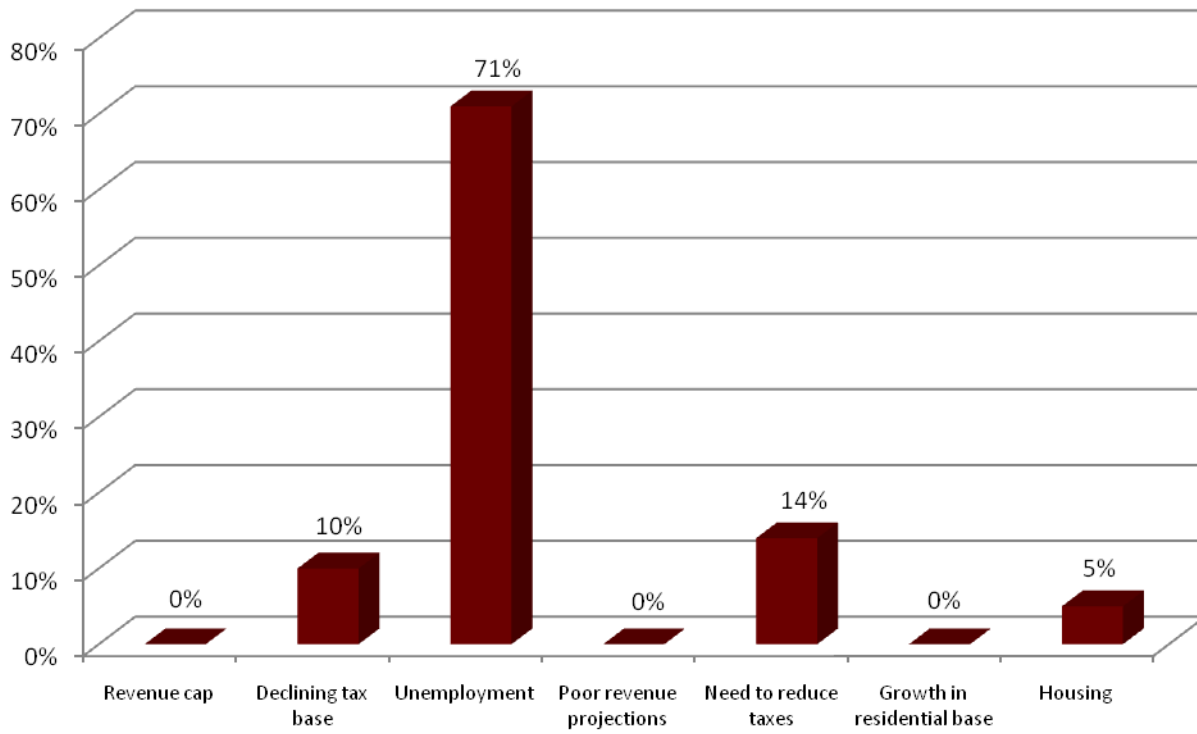
**Which is the most important GROWTH issue facing Somerset County today?**



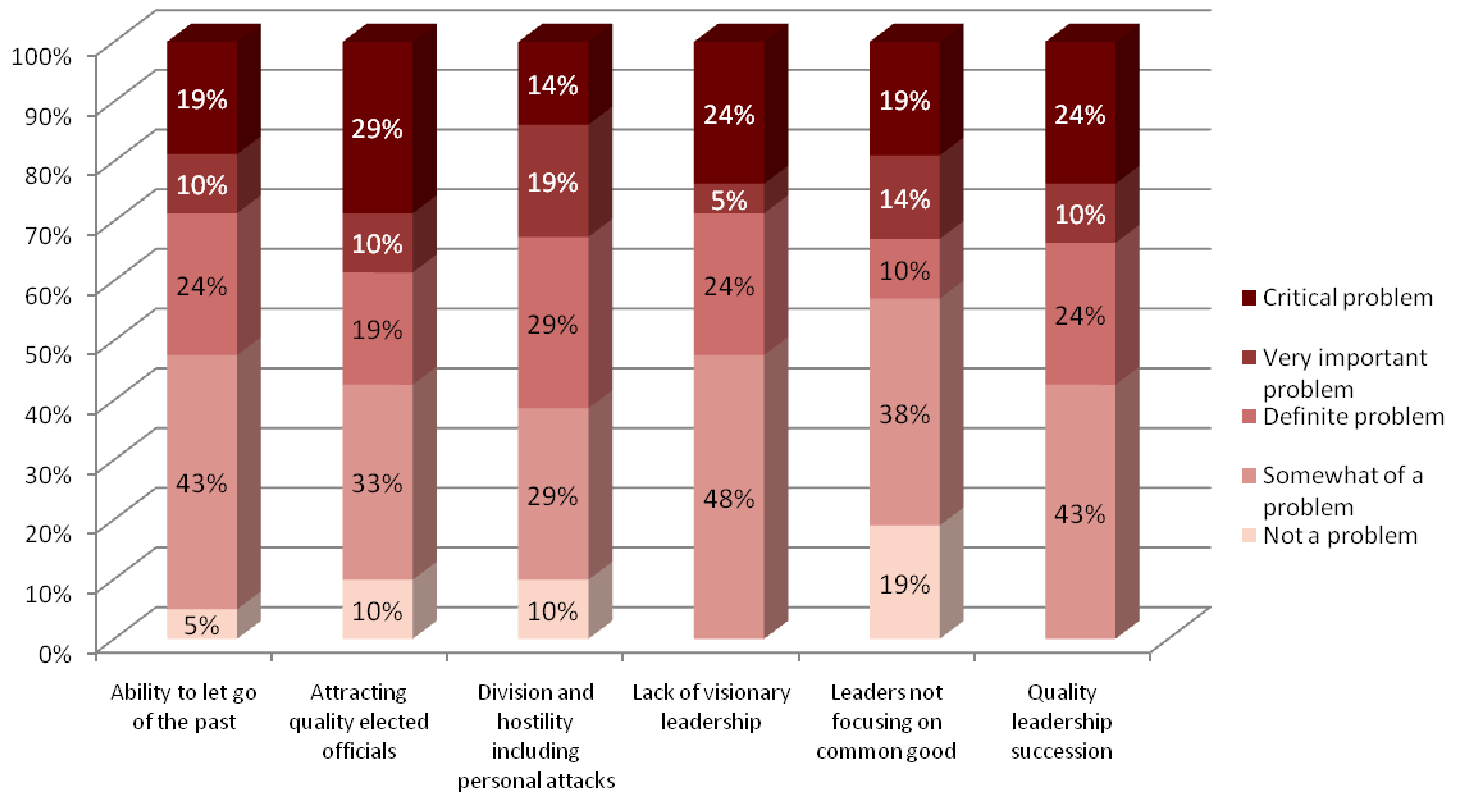
**For the following FINANCIAL and ECONOMIC issues, how much of a problem do you believe that each issue is for citizens today in Somerset County?**



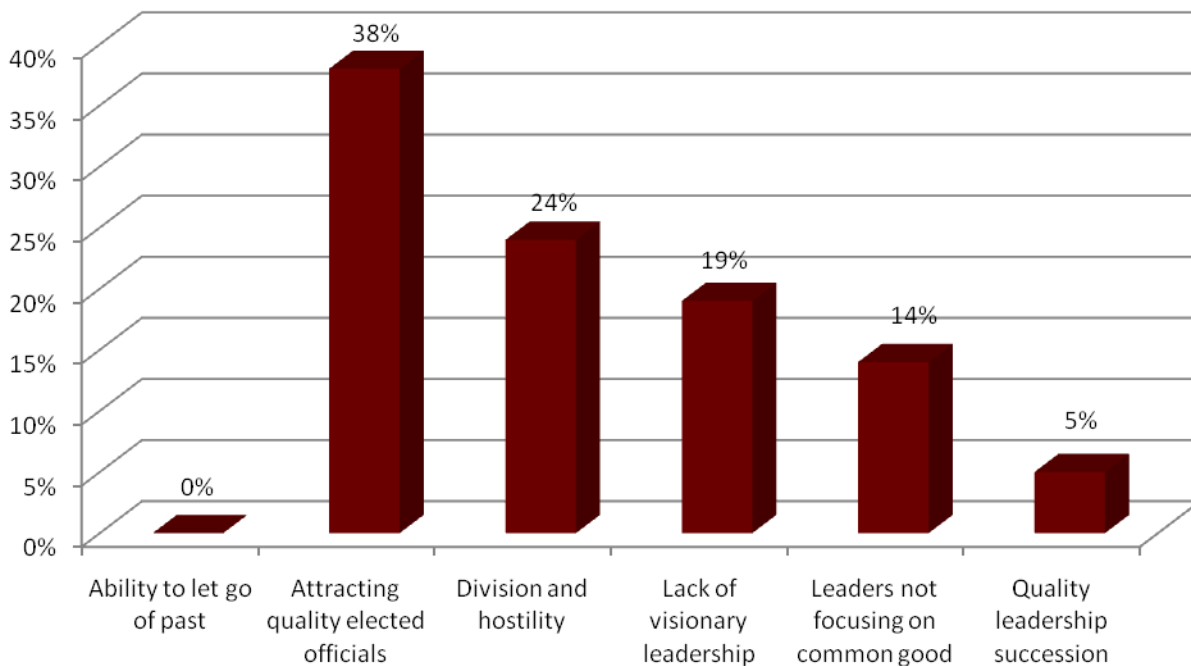
### Which is the most important FINANCIAL/ECONOMIC issue facing citizens in Somerset County today?



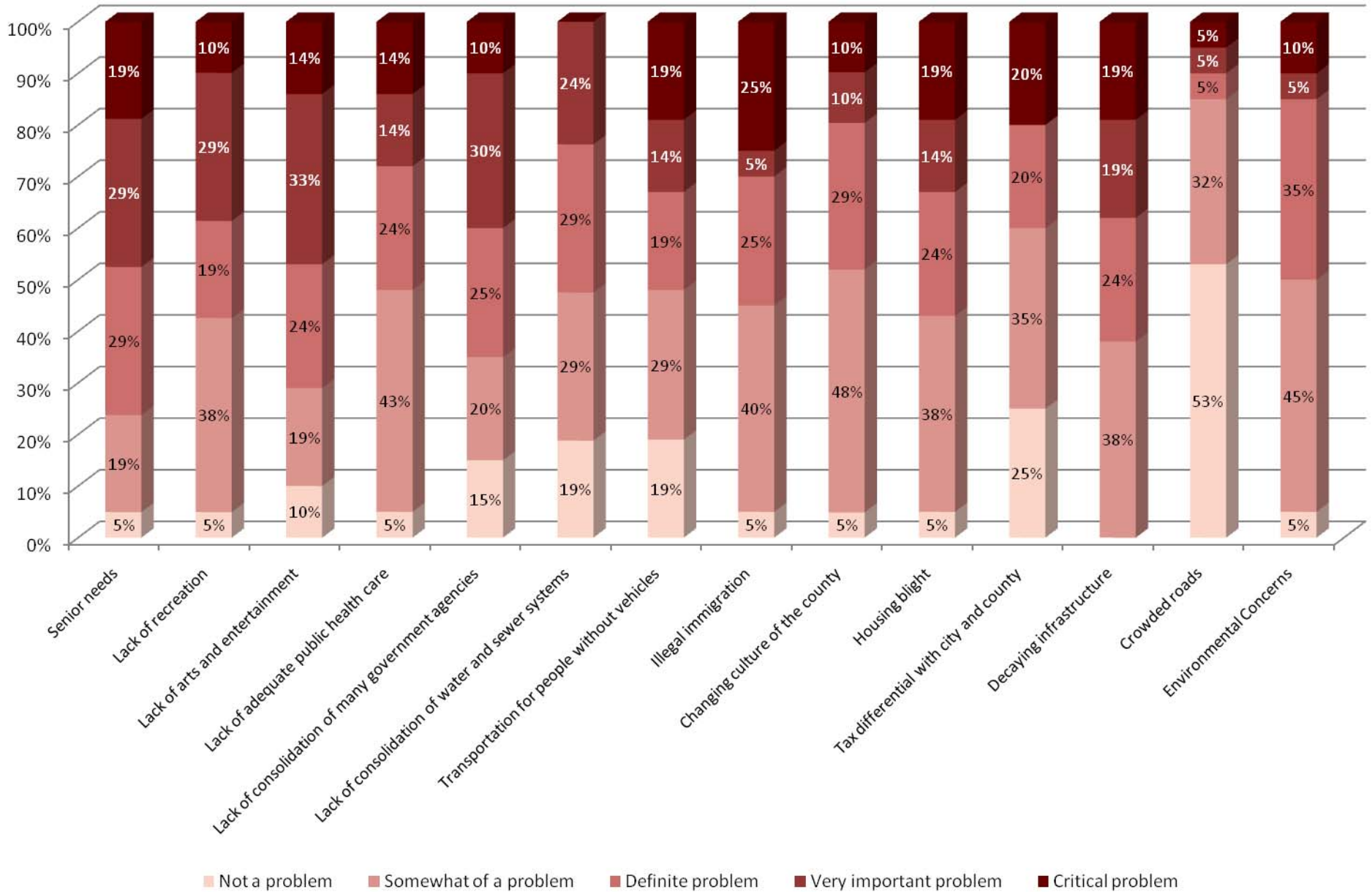
**For the following POLITICAL LEADERSHIP issues, how much of a problem do you believe that each issue is for citizens today in Somerset County?**



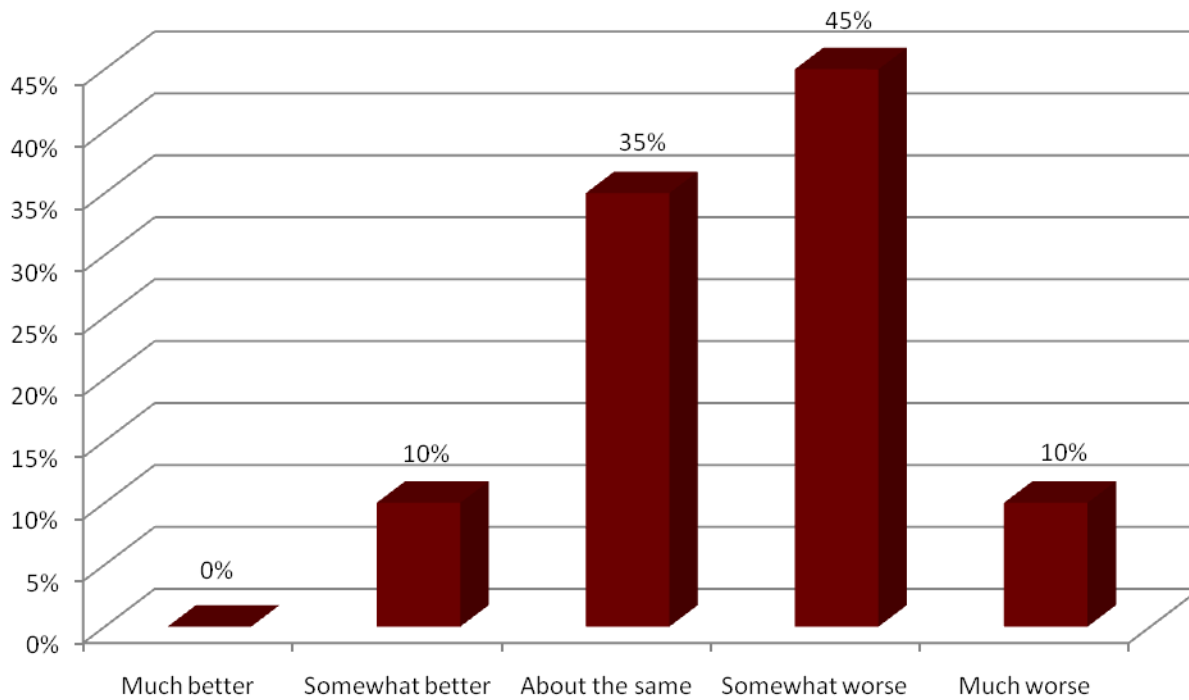
**What is the most important POLITICAL LEADERSHIP issue facing citizens in Somerset County today?**



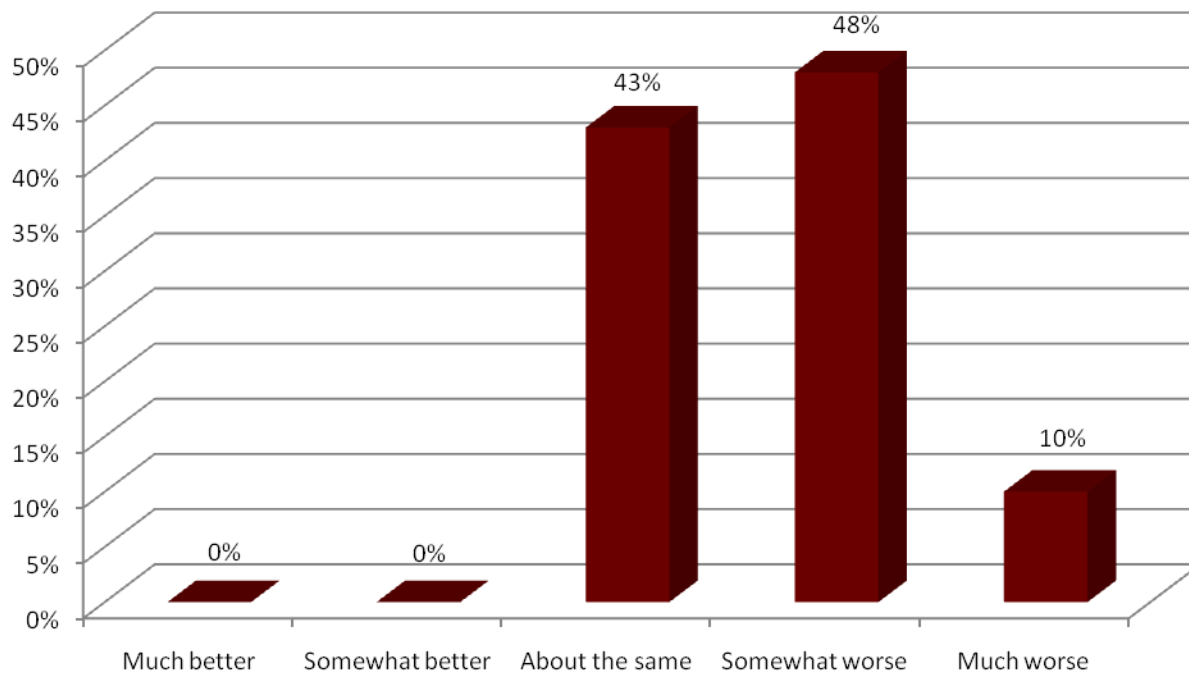
**For the following GENERAL issues, how much of a problem do you believe that each issue is for citizens today in Somerset County?**



**I predict that, compared to the third and fourth quarters of 2008, BUSINESS CONDITIONS in Somerset County in the third and fourth quarter of 2009 will be:**



**I predict that, compared to calendar year the third and fourth quarters of 2008, EMPLOYMENT LEVELS in Somerset County in the third and fourth quarters of 2009 will be:**



**I predict that, compared to the third and fourth quaters of 2008, BUSINESS CONDITIONS in Somerset County in the RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE SECTOR in the third and fourth quaters of 2009 will be:**

