

# Community Vitality

## MEASURING TOOL



## KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION

JULY 2023

This document is part of the [Toolbox for Carrying Out a Food Access Diagnostic and Evaluating the Effects of a Food Cooperative](#), developed as part of the EffICAS study conducted by the Institut national de santé publique du Québec. One of the main goals of this toolkit is to help stakeholders draw up a diagnostic portrait—a snapshot at a given point in time—of people’s food access and to assess the effects of a food cooperative on individuals and communities.

More specifically, this community vitality measuring tool looks at various social and economic aspects of a community to establish an overall vitality score. Some food cooperative projects are developed with the aim of contributing to the revitalization and social life of the community. It is therefore interesting to measure citizens’ perceptions of the vitality of their community before and after the opening of the cooperative.

## DEFINITION AND SOURCE

In this tool, community vitality refers to the social and economic aspects of a community, such as the ability to buy a home, the involvement of citizens in community life, the desire to live there, the integration of sustainable development, and social life.

Questions from two community vitality measurement tools (Baldwin *et al.*, 2020; Stolte & Metcalfe, 2009) were combined to form the community vitality measure used in the EffICAS study.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire used in EffICAS to measure community vitality is as follows:

- An introduction;
- General guidelines;
- A series of fourteen (14) questions accompanied by a Likert-type response scale.

**Introduction:** The next questions concern living conditions and community life in [*Name of community*].

**Guidelines:** Reflecting on your experiences in your community, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

**Questions<sup>1</sup>:**

1. A Local middle-income earners can afford to buy a house in [*Name of community*].
2. Young adults aged 25 to 34 consider [*Name of community*] a desirable place to live.
3. You see many active, healthy-looking, seniors in [*Name of community*].
4. For newcomers to [*Name of community*] and those who wish to, there are meaningful opportunities to get involved and make a difference.
5. On divisive community issues, there is civilized debate, a good flow of information, and inclusive, respectful consultation in [*Name of community*].
6. [*Name of community*] considers environmental sustainability in its community planning. ].
7. Residents are proud of [*Name of community*]. They are always promoting it to outsiders.
8. There is a vibrant town centre or community core in [*Name of community*].
9. Those with skills and education can find well-paid work job in the community [*Name of community*] or nearby.
10. People living in [*Name of community*] are likely volunteer for a local cause.
11. I can influence decisions affecting [*Name of community*].
12. [*Name of community*] would take a long time to get back to normal if something went wrong that affected everybody, (e.g. stormy weather, a terrorist attack, a violent crime).
13. The people of [*Name of community*] have an impact when they work together to help their neighbourhood.
14. When [*Name of community*] faces a challenge, our community spirit is strengthened.

**Answer choice and associated values:**

- |                                |                           |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 5 – Strongly agree             | 99 – Don't know           |
| 4 – Somewhat agree             | 98 – Prefer not to answer |
| 3 – Neither agree nor disagree |                           |
| 2 – Somewhat disagree          |                           |
| 1 – Strongly disagree          |                           |

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<sup>1</sup> Questions 1 to 9 and 10 to 14 are respectively taken from the work of Stolte *et al.* and Baldwin *et al.* (Baldwin *et al.*, 2020; Stolte & Metcalfe, 2009).

## PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

The scientific articles consulted did not explain how to use the items proposed by Baldwin *et al.* and Stolte & Metcalfe to form a measure of community vitality. Also, as the EffICAS team combines them, the choice to use an average of the 14 items making up the questionnaire to measure the vitality of the community was made. To ensure the validity of the EffICAS research team's choice, a reliability analysis was carried out. With a Cronbach's alpha of 0.850 for a sample of 163 respondents, it was deemed sufficient to proceed with the chosen method.

Before calculating the average, some of the answers obtained need to be modified. This is the case for the answer choices "Don't know" and "Prefer not to answer," and for the answer to question 12.

### Reporting missing values

As the answer choices "Don't know" and "Prefer not to answer" in no way indicate the degree of agreement with the questions asked, their values must be reported as missing. As such, they will not be taken into account when calculating the average.

### Recodification of question 12

The answer to question 12 can be interpreted in the opposite way to the other thirteen items on the questionnaire: the more you agree that the community would take a long time to return to normal if something serious were to happen, the more this reflects a negative view. Thus, in order to be able to consider the response in the same direction as the other items, the values associated with the response choices must be recoded as follows:

- Value 5 associated with the answer choice "Strongly agree" should be replaced by value 1;
- Value 4 associated with the answer choice "Somewhat agree" should be replaced by value 2;
- Value 3 associated with the answer choice "Neither agree nor disagree" remains the same;
- Value 2 associated with the answer choice "Somewhat disagree" should be replaced by value 4;
- Value 1 associated with the answer choice "Strongly disagree" should be replaced by value 5;

### Calculating the average

The average of the 14 valid answers to the community vitality questions constitutes a score. It will therefore vary between values 1 and 5.

## INTERPRETATION

The higher the score, the higher the citizens' perception of their community's vitality.

This score does not have a threshold to support its interpretation, so it is preferable to allow at least two collection times (before and after the intervention) to interpret the evolution of the score over time. It may also be possible to compare the scores of two different communities.

## REFERENCES

Baldwin, C., Vincent, P., Anderson, J., & Rawstorne, P. (2020). Measuring well-being: trial of the neighbourhood thriving scale for social well-being among pro-social individuals<sup>2</sup>. *International journal of community well-being*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42413-020-00067-6>

Stolte, M., & Metcalfe, B. (2009). *Beyond economic survival: 97 ways small communities can thrive. a guide to community vitality*. [https://ccednet-rcdec.ca/sites/ccednet-rcdec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/beyond\\_economic\\_survival-97\\_ways\\_small\\_communities\\_can\\_thrive.pdf](https://ccednet-rcdec.ca/sites/ccednet-rcdec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/beyond_economic_survival-97_ways_small_communities_can_thrive.pdf)

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# Community Vitality Measuring Tool

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