

**Botetourt County Citizen Satisfaction Survey**  
**May, 2008**

**Conducted by**  
**The Center for Community Research**  
**Roanoke College**  
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## **Introduction**

This is the third county-wide survey of residents undertaken by Botetourt County. The purposes are to ascertain the opinion of residents regarding various issues within the County, to assess citizens' satisfaction with governmental and other services and to make comparisons with the 2003 and 2005 surveys. The questions were written by Dr. Harry Wilson of *The Center for Community Research at Roanoke College* with input received from several County employees and offices. The final questionnaire was approved by Dr. Wilson and by County officials. All of the questions from 2003 and 2005 were asked and several questions were added, primarily in the areas of online services and sewer and water. In addition, the answers and the order of some questions were rotated to prevent the establishment of any pattern of responses. A full explanation of the methodology employed may be found at the conclusion of the report, prior to the Appendix.

This report is divided into the following sections: this Introduction; Overall View of Botetourt County, which also serves as an Executive Summary; Better or Worse?, which lists the reasons that residents provided why the County has improved or declined in the past five years; Newcomers' Views; Perceptions of Botetourt County; Priorities in Botetourt County; Satisfaction with Services; Sources of Information about Botetourt County; Summary, and an Appendix, which includes the questionnaire and responses to each question.

## **Overall View of Botetourt County**

Several questions were asked throughout the survey that requested an overall assessment of Botetourt County from the respondents. Some of these questions will be discussed in other sections, but they are included here to help provide an overall snapshot of the County. (See Table 1)

First, the respondents overwhelmingly are positive toward the quality of life in Botetourt. Over 90 percent of those surveyed rated the overall quality of life as excellent (44%) or good (49%). Only seven percent rated the quality of life as either fair (6%) or poor (1%).

For those who have lived in other jurisdictions, we asked them to compare Botetourt with their former residence(s). More than half (52%) said that Botetourt is a better place to live, while only 4% said it is a worse place to live. About two in five (37%) said they were about the same. Respondents were more than twice as likely to say that Botetourt County has become a better place to live in the past five years (32%) than to say that it is now a worse place to live (15%), while the plurality (48%) rated it about the same.

A majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with both the quality of services provided by the County in return for taxes paid (27% very satisfied, 55% somewhat satisfied) and the number and range of services provided (26% very satisfied, 56%

somewhat satisfied). About one-fifth of the respondents were less pleased with services and taxes (quality—11% not very satisfied, 8% not at all satisfied; quantity—10% not very satisfied, 8% not at all satisfied).

An overwhelming majority of respondents also expressed satisfaction with the services provided by Botetourt County, not considering taxes paid (44% very satisfied, 49% somewhat satisfied), and even more were satisfied with the service provided by County employees (73% very satisfied, 20% somewhat satisfied).

We also asked about the perception of the pace of population growth in the County in the past decade. More than six in ten (61%) described the growth as too fast, while 34% said it was about right, and just 2% said the pace was too slow.

While residents are concerned with the rate of growth, they are generally happy with the appearance of new development in the County (33% very satisfied, 48% somewhat satisfied). And, despite concerns with transportation, they are generally pleased with travel within the County (34% very satisfied, 50% somewhat satisfied). That said, there was a decrease of 13% of respondents who said they were very satisfied from 2005 to 2008. Most of those (9%) moved to the somewhat satisfied category, but there was also a slight increase in both the percentage saying they weren't very satisfied (2%), or not at all satisfied (3%). While this does suggest increasing dissatisfaction with transportation, it should be noted that 84% of respondents expressed some satisfaction in 2008 compared with 88% in 2005.

Respondents were also positive regarding their level of knowledge of County events and issues with 25% saying they are very well informed and 60% claiming to be somewhat well informed. (This is not too surprising because those who feel they aren't well informed are more likely to decline to participate in surveys.) Two-thirds (66%) also felt that they have an adequate opportunity to express their views before decisions are made within Botetourt County.

Most of the figures represent slight increases from the 2005 results, but none of them are significant, except for transportation. Many of the percentages are identical or represent a difference of only one or two percent. Most of the departures in results, both in these and other questions, are in a more positive direction, but, again, they are not significant.

**Table 1**  
***Overall View of Botetourt County***

Item	Percent		Number	
Quality of Life Excellent/Good	44%	49%	184	206
Better/Worse in Last 5 Years	32%	15%	135	63
Quality of Life Compared to Other Residences Better/Worse	52%	4%	185	16
Quality of services for taxes paid Very/Very + Somewhat satisfied	27%	82%	105	317
Quantity of services for taxes paid Very/Very + Somewhat satisfied	26%	82%	102	321
Satisfied with County Services Very/Very + Somewhat satisfied	44%	94%	178	379
Satisfied with County Employees Very/Very + Somewhat satisfied	73%	93%	119	152
Population Growth in Last 10 Years Too fast/too slow	61%	2%	245	7
Appearance of development Very/Very + Somewhat satisfied	33%	81%	134	325
Ease of travel w/i County Very/Very + Somewhat satisfied	34%	84%	137	338
Information level of Respondent Very/Very + Somewhat informed	25%	85%	99	341
Adequate Opportunity to Express Views Yes/No	66%	20%	264	79

Respondents were more likely to rate the overall management of the County as either excellent (10%) or good (63%) than as fair (21%) or poor (4%). (See Table 2) These results are very similar to those from 2005. The excellent and poor responses are identical, while there was a shift of 6% from the fair to good responses. While those differences are not significant, they obviously are moving in the preferred direction.

**Table 2**  
***Overall Management of Botetourt County***

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number</b>
Excellent	10%	39
Good	63%	255
Fair	21%	86
Poor	4%	16
Unsure/NA	2%	7

Respondents were also asked to identify what they thought would be the most important issue facing Botetourt County in the next five years (Table 3). Those mentioned by more than 5% of the respondents were population growth (46%), transportation/roads (11%), schools/education (10%), economic development (9%), taxes/budget (7%), growth management/zoning (6%), and water/sewer (6%). Concern with growth decreased slightly from 2005 while transportation, taxes, and water/sewer were up somewhat, though again these are not statistically significant shifts in opinion.

**Table 3**  
***Most Important Issue Facing County in Next Five Years***

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number</b>
Population Growth	46%	183
Transportation/Roads	11%	43
School/Education	10%	38
Attract/Retain Businesses/Jobs	9%	35
Taxes/Budget	7%	28
Growth Management/Zoning	6%	23
Water/Sewer	6%	23
Crime/drugs	1%	5
Economy	1%	4
Other	1%	3
Don't know/No answer	4%	14

## **Better or Worse?**

Those residents who thought that the quality of life in Botetourt County had gotten better or worse in the past five years were asked to provide reasons for their opinion. The following is a summary of their comments.

While County residents are much more likely to say that Botetourt is a better place to live than it was five years ago than to say it is worse (32%-15%), nearly half of the respondents (48%) think things are about the same. Not surprisingly, growth is the reason for both the pleasure and the dismay. Growth dominated the comments among those who felt things have gotten worse, and it was also the most common factor for those with a more positive view. These figures remain largely unchanged from 2003 and 2005.

While 47 respondents mentioned growth and the influx of new residents to the County as a positive change, there were 39 respondents who felt this was a negative change. Increased shopping and dining was the second most frequent response among those who thought life was better (34). Less common responses were school improvements (13), improving traffic/congestion (9), and maintaining a rural atmosphere (8). Traffic (12) was the second most common concern among those who felt the quality of life had gotten worse followed by concern with taxes (7). No other issues on either side were raised by more than five respondents.

There was little change in these responses from 2005. Not surprisingly, growth was the issue most on the minds of residents. Given its dominant position as the issue of greatest importance in the next five years, it would be a shock if it weren't mentioned as the reason for improvement or decline. And it will be news to no one in Botetourt County that growth is a double-edged sword.

## **Newcomers' Views**

Those respondents who have lived in the County for 10 years or less (16%, N=53; less than half the percentage of newcomers from 2005) were asked where they had moved from and the primary reason for moving to Botetourt. Nearly two-thirds had relocated from within the Commonwealth, and a little less than half moved from within the region. Most of those who relocated within the region came from Roanoke City (26%) or Roanoke County (9%). Only 4% had moved from Franklin County, another 4% relocated from the Alleghany Highlands, and another 21% moved from somewhere else in Virginia.

The most frequent reasons chosen for moving to Botetourt was a preference for a more rural atmosphere (31%) and due to a job (22%). Another 11% said they had family in Botetourt, and the same number cited the beauty of the area as their primary reason for moving. A shorter commute to work was named by 8%, and 6% of respondents cited

property values. Due to the small number of respondents, comparison to 2005 should not be made.

The larger number of newcomers in previous surveys permitted more meaningful comparisons with those who had lived in the County for a longer period of time. In the 2008 survey differences between these groups were quite small. Regarding whether the County was a better or worse place to live in the past five years and rating management of the County those differences were negligible.

The newcomers, that is those who have lived in the County for 10 years or less, are *slightly* more likely to say the County is a good place to live, while those who have lived here longer are *slightly* more likely to say it is excellent or fair. The newcomers are again *slightly* more likely to say they do not have sufficient input into County decisions, while the longer-term residents are *slightly* more likely to say their opportunities are mixed. The two groups are tied in the “yes” responses to that question. Not surprisingly, the more established residents are *slightly* more likely to say that the growth rate has been too fast.

These differences are smaller than those found in previous years. The exact percentages are not reported here intentionally because they are *not significant* and it would be *misleading* to use them to point out differences in the two groups. To be sure, this is an important comparison, and as a resident of Botetourt County who has recently moved from one category to the other, the author is aware of the occasional tensions between the two groups. That said, both the small number of newcomers in this survey and the similarity of the responses of the two groups make any differences extremely minor. The more meaningful differences found in 2003 and 2005 were noted in those reports.

## **Perceptions of Botetourt County**

Respondents were asked to rate Botetourt County with regard to several different qualities or attributes on a 1-10 scale. The results can be seen in Table 4.

Clearly respondents view Botetourt County as very “family-friendly.” Nearly nine out of ten (86%) gave the County a rating of 8 or higher as a place to raise children. The only other attribute to score 50% or higher was quality of housing (59%). However, one should not be misled into thinking that perceptions of many of the other qualities were negative—they weren’t. The mean, or average, score should also be examined to put this table into perspective.

There were some rises and falls from 2005, although none of them were dramatic. Improvements in scores were seen in place to raise children, housing quality, preservation of natural resources, growth management, and availability of recreational activities, and cultural amenities. Decreases were seen in preservation of historic sites, cost of living, and cost of housing. Most of the changes were in the .2-.3 range, though a few were higher. Still, there was nothing in the shifts to cause either alarm or rejoicing.

**Table 4**  
**Ratings of Botetourt County**  
**Responses 8-10 on 1-10 scale (10=best)**

Attribute/Quality	Percent	Number	Mean
Place to raise children	86%	350	8.77
Quality of housing	59%	238	7.49
Cost of living	43%	178	6.78
Maintenance of historic resources	35%	142	6.35
Preservation of natural resources	43%	175	6.72
Cost of housing	30%	121	5.88
Management of growth	34%	138	6.28
Availability of recreational activities	29%	119	6.21
Cultural amenities	18%	73	5.53

### **Priorities in Botetourt County**

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of various priorities for the County, and then they were asked to identify the most important priorities. Respondents are asked to identify the top priorities because of the tendency of some to say that everything is important.

The County's public schools were named by 69% of the respondents as one of the three top priorities. Although education was the only priority mentioned by a majority, growth management (48%), public safety (41%), improved transportation (41%), job creation (39%), and job training (29%) were also named by at least one-fourth of the respondents. Transportation moved up in the rankings from 2005, increasing its percentage by some 15%. While economic development increased its percentage by 9%, its ranking remained the same. The other rankings can be found in Table 5.



**Table 5**  
***Most Important Priority***  
***(Identify up to three priorities)***

Priority	Percent of cases	Number
Improve public schools	69%	278
Ensure growth is managed	48%	194
Improve public safety	41%	167
Improve transportation w/i County	41%	165
Improve job creation	39%	157
Improve job training	26%	105
Expand recreational opportunities	19%	76
Expand cultural opportunities	9%	36

A slightly different set of priorities emerges when we look at the percentage of respondents who gave a particular priority a ranking of 8 or higher on a 1-10 scale. This list is topped by managing growth (77%) and public schools (72%). Other priorities ranked 8 or higher by more than half the respondents are public safety (65%), job creation (59%), transportation (51%), and job training (50%). The ratings of other priorities can be found in Table 6. As in Table 4, the mean score for each priority is provided and helps provide some perspective. The percentages are remarkably similar to 2005, except that transportation rose by 4% and two spots in the rankings. The means all decreased slightly except job creation which remained the same and transportation, which rose slightly.

**Table 6**  
***Importance of Priorities in Botetourt County***  
***Responses 8-10 on 1-10 scale (10=extremely important)***

Priority	Percent	Number	Mean
Ensure growth is managed	77%	318	8.35
Improve public schools	72%	293	8.07
Improve public safety	65%	269	7.90
Improve job creation	59%	244	7.54
Improve transportation w/i County	51%	209	6.96
Improve job training	50%	204	6.98
Expand recreational opportunities	46%	188	6.87
Expand cultural opportunities	36%	149	6.47

Seeing education at the top of these lists is not surprising. It is listed as a top priority in most surveys at the national, state and local levels. We would expect to see this because it is nearly impossible to argue against the importance of education. Similarly, public safety is usually seen as an important issue. In both cases, the fact that these issues are seen as important is *not* an indication that performance is lacking. Jobs are also seen as important in most surveys. This is even more true when the economy is not strong. The emphasis on growth management was noted in the 2003 and 2005 reports, and its importance in the public's mind has stayed fairly steady since that time. The blip on the screen, so to speak, in this survey, is the increased importance being placed on transportation. Having noted this, it is, of course, quite possible, that the transportation concerns of the public are not within the purviews of the county. The public rarely makes the distinction on its own between federal, state, and county highways, and those distinctions were not noted in this survey. Nonetheless, this does indicate increased awareness of the issue by the County's residents.

## **Satisfaction with Services**

Citizens were asked to state their level of satisfaction with a variety of services provided by Botetourt County. (Respondents were given the option to say that they weren't familiar with a particular service. They were excluded from this analysis, but they are included in the results reported in the Appendix.) At the end of the list of services, respondents were asked for an overall assessment of their satisfaction. Four in ten (44%) said they were very satisfied, and 94% reported being at least somewhat satisfied. The results can be seen in Table 7. When compared with 2005 and 2003, the results suggest a continuing trend in the positive direction that is not statistically significant.

Some of the services changed rankings slightly, with some increasing and others decreasing, but the only significant change was that satisfaction with the landfill slid from 90% in 2005 to 78% in 2008. It seems relatively simple to conclude that is due to the impending closure of the landfill. The category of online services was added this year. Overall, satisfaction with services remains high.

**Table 7**  
***Level of Satisfaction with County Services***  
***Very satisfied; very satisfied + somewhat satisfied responses***

Service	Very Satisfied		Very + Somewhat Satisfied	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
County services in general	44%	178	94%	379
Clerk of the Court's Office	67%	205	99%	302
Treasurer's Office	57%	223	99%	378
Voter Registration	70%	266	98%	375
County Libraries	70%	242	97%	338
Commonwealth Attorney's Office	57%	132	97%	226
Law Enforcement/Sheriff's Office	64%	231	95%	339
Public Education	52%	175	93%	313
Comm. of the Revenue's Office	49%	185	90%	337
Recreational Programs	39%	119	89%	275
Website	45%	81	89%	162
Animal Control	54%	189	88%	307
Building Inspections	34%	90	88%	231
Recreational Facilities	31%	115	84%	313
Attract/Retain Businesses/Jobs	24%	88	81%	301
Online Services	38%	100	80%	209
County Landfill	40%	128	78%	251
Planning and Zoning Services	24%	77	74%	241
Managing Growth	19%	73	70%	270
Recycling	25%	90	62%	222

Respondents were asked to assess the importance of various Botetourt County services. The results in Table 8 are similar to several above with regard to the percentage of respondents who assigned a score of 8 or higher to a particular service and the overall average score for that service. The ranking of services is very similar in both measures. Law enforcement and education top the list, both in the 8-10 response category and the overall mean. This is what we would expect to see, and the rankings are exactly as they were in the 2005 survey. That said, the perceived importance of most services declined from 2005, with the steepest decline in managing growth, which dropped from 73% in 2005 to 60% in 2008. Online services was added this year.

**Table 8**  
***Importance of County Services***  
***Responses 8-10 on 1-10 scale (10=extremely important)***

Service	Percent	Number	Mean
Law Enforcement	87%	347	8.95
Public Education	78%	310	8.48
County Libraries	73%	288	8.15
Utilities	67%	270	7.83
Managing Growth	60%	239	7.60
Land Usage Planning	59%	234	7.44
Recycling	57%	226	7.57
Attract/Retain Businesses/Jobs	57%	226	7.45
Animal Control	57%	223	7.47
Recreational Programs	52%	208	7.24
Recreational Facilities	52%	201	7.27
Online Services	36%	140	6.10

Respondents were also asked their satisfaction with several services that are *not* provided by Botetourt County. These results can be seen in Table 9 (Those who weren't familiar with the service were excluded here, but not in the Appendix.). Again, there is a range in the responses, with the fire departments and rescue squads being ranked at the top and road maintenance at the bottom. Still, three-fourths (75%) of the respondents reported being at least somewhat satisfied with road maintenance. These results are almost identical to 2003 and 2005.

**Table 9**  
***Level of Satisfaction with Non-County Services***  
***Very satisfied; very satisfied + somewhat satisfied responses***

Service	Very Satisfied		Very + Somewhat Satisfied	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Local Fire Department	80%	288	98%	355
Rescue Squad	79%	291	96%	354
Public Health Services	49%	104	93%	199
Social Services	40%	72	88%	157
Adult Education/Job Training	31%	64	87%	178
Trash Collection	55%	195	86%	301
Road Maintenance	25%	100	75%	300

Finally, those respondents who reported having contact with a Botetourt County employee in the past year (39%; N=160) were asked to rate the employee(s) with whom they had interacted. County employees scored very high on all attributes (See Table 10). The differences in this table are within the margin of error for a sample of 160, so we would say there is no statistical difference between the various attributes. Overall, more nearly three-fourths of those who had contact with a County employee were very satisfied, and 93% were at least somewhat satisfied. Even with the smaller sample, these results are very positive and very impressive. All these results are very similar to 2005 and 2003.

**Table 10**  
***Level of Satisfaction with County Employees***  
***(Asked of those who had contact in the past year, N=160)***

Attribute/Quality	Very Satisfied		Very + Somewhat Satisfied	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Overall Quality of Service	73%	119	93%	152
Courtesy	80%	132	94%	155
Accessibility	71%	117	93%	154
Timeliness of Response	73%	121	91%	150
Knowledge of Problem	73%	120	90%	149
Professionalism	76%	126	90%	149

## **Taxes and Services**

Every governmental unit (national, state, and local) must make tradeoffs between taxes collected and services provided. Many surveys ask if citizens would like to have a particular service provided by the government, but the results can be misleading if that question is not accompanied by some mention of taxes. Similarly, it is a red herring to ask if citizens would like their tax burden reduced without mentioning that this might impact services.

The level of satisfaction with both the quality and number of services provided by Botetourt County was reported in Table 1 (about one-fourth were very satisfied with the quality and range of services provided in relation to taxes paid; about four-fifths were at least somewhat satisfied). We also asked if respondents would be willing to pay higher taxes in exchange for increased County spending on particular services. The results can be found in Table 11.

A majority of respondents expressed a willingness to pay higher taxes for increased spending on fire and rescue services (72%), public education (66%), and law enforcement (65%). (National results vary over time, but both education and law enforcement usually rank at the top of any list of services for which citizens are willing to pay additional taxes. It is not surprising that fire and rescue services also rank quite high.) These figures are largely unchanged from those found in 2005 and 2003. That said, there was a slight uptick in willingness to increase support for economic development, and a slight downtick in the willingness to pay for any other service not specified. Water and sewer was an addition for this year's survey.

**Table 11**  
***Willing to Pay Higher Taxes for Specific Services***

Service	Percent	Number
Fire and Rescue Services	72%	286
Public Education	66%	261
Law Enforcement	65%	258
Attract/Retain Businesses/Jobs	47%	188
Water and Sewer	38%	152
Recreational Opportunities	36%	144
Other (Independently mentioned)	10%	39

## Sources of Information about Botetourt County

Respondents were asked to identify any source(s) they use to obtain information regarding issues and events in Botetourt County, and they were then asked to name their most important source (See Table 12). While Television news was the most commonly used source (87%) and *The Fincastle Herald* was the most important source (50%), several other sources were also important. Use of local television news increased as did the percentage of respondents for whom TV news is their primary information source. *The Roanoke Times* declined as a primary source. Use of the County's web site was up slightly, but as a primary source its use was statistically unchanged.

**Table 12**  
*Sources of Information about County*

Source	Used		Most Important Source	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Fincastle Herald	81%	326	50%	200
Local TV Stations	87%	350	17%	69
Roanoke Times	78%	315	12%	48
County Web Site	33%	129	7%	29
Friends/Neighbors	80%	319	7%	28
County Employees	42%	167	2%	8
County Mailings	62%	249	1%	5
Public Meetings	21%	84	1%	4
Local Radio Stations	62%	247	1%	4

## Conclusion

The results of this survey provide Botetourt County with a current overview of the opinions of County residents and a point of comparison with the 2003 and 2005 citizens' satisfaction surveys.

Overall, the results remain quite positive, similar to the findings in the previous years. Residents have very positive feelings regarding the quality of life in the County (over 90% rate it as excellent or good); they are twice as likely to feel that the quality of life is improving than to feel it is declining; and they are more than 10 times as likely to prefer life in Botetourt compared to other places they have lived. While it is true that most individuals have a bias in favor of where they currently live, these results clearly indicate that most of Botetourt's residents are quite happy with the County.

Residents are also generally satisfied with the quality and variety of services provided by the County, and most are satisfied with the services they receive for the taxes they pay. Nearly three-fourths of the residents rated the overall management of the County as excellent or good, and almost two-thirds feel that they have adequate opportunity to provide input into important decisions within the County. Higher percentages of respondents were pleased with the services provided by the local fire departments and rescue squads.

The results also showed a very high level of satisfaction with County employees, with over 90 percent of respondents saying they were satisfied overall as well as in each of the five subcategories. Residents expressed a sense that Botetourt County is a very good place to raise a family, and they were also quite pleased with the quality of housing in the County.

As in the previous surveys, there was a consensus regarding the most important priorities of today and the issues likely to be most important in five years—education and growth management and growth, respectively. Growth was identified as the most important concern by almost half of those surveyed, and no other issue was mentioned by as many as 10 percent of the respondents. This represents a slight decrease from 2005. While public safety is seen as one of the County's top priorities, it is not perceived to be an "issue" in five years. It can be inferred, then, that residents do not anticipate any problems with public safety. Education is viewed as a top priority in most surveys such as this, and, given the County's recent history, it would be expected that growth would be seen as an important topic.

Two issues are gaining in importance in the County--transportation and water/sewer. This should not be surprising to anyone reading this report who is familiar with Botetourt County. And those issues do not come close to rivaling education or growth in terms of importance, but their percentage of both closed-ended and open-ended responses increased from previous surveys.



The issue of growth in Botetourt County continues to be viewed as both a positive and negative attribute. Consequences of growth dominate the open-ended responses to why things have gotten better or worse in the County in recent years. As in the past, residents are far more likely to think that the rate of growth in the past decade has been too fast (61%) rather than too slow (2%). There is no doubt that residents see growth (population and business) as an enduring issue of importance. What is somewhat less clear is what they would like to see in the future.

As mentioned above, residents are generally pleased with the quality of housing in Botetourt and a majority is satisfied with the County's efforts in the areas of attracting and retaining businesses, managing growth, and planning and zoning. They also are quite happy with the general appearance of new construction and development in the County. Still, the level of satisfaction with managing growth and zoning is lower, not surprisingly, than many other services.

Even more illuminating may be the open-ended responses offered when respondents were asked why they felt that Botetourt County has become a better or worse place to live in the past five years. It is important to remember that the positive responses outnumbered the negative by a significant margin. The most common reasons offered both for improvement and decline were related to growth, population and/or business. Clearly, the County's growth is a source of pride for many residents, but there is also a group of residents who are concerned with the loss of the rural atmosphere in the County.

Overall, the results of this survey are consistent with those of the past two surveys. Some items have increased in importance or satisfaction while others have decreased, but all of those changes, with the exception of transportation and water/sewer, are not significant, either in statistical terms or in substantive terms.

## **Methodology**

Interviewing was conducted by The Center for Community Research at Roanoke College between March 9 and March 30, 2008. The sample consisted of 421 randomly selected residents of Botetourt County. The sample of phone numbers was created so that all residential phone telephone numbers, including unlisted numbers, had a known chance of inclusion.

Questions answered by the entire sample of 421 residents are subject to a sampling error of plus or minus approximately 5 percent at the 95 percent level of confidence. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples like the one used here, the results obtained should be no more than 5 percentage points above or below the figure that would be obtained by interviewing all Botetourt County residents who have a telephone. Where the results of subgroups are reported, the sampling error is higher.

This report was written by Dr. Harry Wilson, director of the Center for Community Research. He also wrote the questions and analyzed the data.

In the case of open-ended questions, all responses were typed verbatim by the interviewers and coded by Dr. Wilson. Because not all responses are easily categorized, there is an additional error associated with these questions, but that error should be relatively small. Other coders might use slightly different criteria and obtain slightly different results.

## Appendix

Hi, I'm calling on behalf of Botetourt County. The County is conducting a survey of residents to help determine citizen views of the County and the quality of life here. Your household was randomly selected to participate, and your opinions are important to us. May I please speak to someone 18 or older?

1. First, is your residence located in Botetourt County?		
Yes .....	100%	421
No [TERMINATE]		
2. Are you or is anyone in your household employed by Botetourt County?		
Yes [TERMINATE]		
No.....	100%	421
3. What is your zip code?		
24012.....	4%	18
24019.....	13%	55
24064.....	12%	51
24066.....	18%	76
24077.....	4%	15
24083.....	6%	25
24085.....	6%	25
24090.....	10%	40
24127.....	1%	2
24130.....	0%	0
24175.....	27%	113
24422.....	0%	1
24578.....	0%	0
4. How long have you lived in Botetourt County?		
Less than one year.....	1%	4
1-2 years.....	5%	19
3-5 years.....	8%	30
6-10 years.....	12%	47
11-20 years.....	20%	79
21 or more years.....	38%	149
All my life .....	17%	69

4 (a) **[If answer to 4 is 10 years or less]** Where did you live prior to moving to Botetourt County **[READ CHOICES]**

Roanoke City .....	15%	26
Roanoke County.....	24%	42
Salem.....	5%	8
Franklin County .....	3%	5
Alleghany Highlands .....	2%	4
Someplace else in Virginia .....	17%	29
Some other state.....	26%	46
Other .....	9%	15

4 (b) **[If answer to 4 is 10 years or less]** Which of the following best describes why you moved to Botetourt County?

My job was transferred to the area.....	22%	39
The property values were more favorable in Botetourt .....	6%	10
It is more convenient to commute to work .....	8%	13
The area is generally more beautiful than where I lived before .....	11%	19
I wanted to move to a more rural atmosphere.....	31%	53
Family in area .....	11%	19
Other .....	12%	21

5. Now I'd like to get your overall impression of Botetourt County. How would you rate the overall quality of life in Botetourt? Would you say it is excellent, good, fair or poor?

Excellent .....	44%	184
Good.....	49%	206
Fair .....	6%	23
Poor.....	1%	4

6. **[SKIP IF ANSWER TO Q.4 IS LIVED IN COUNTY ALL MY LIFE]** How would you rate the quality of life in comparison with other places you have lived? Would you say that Botetourt is better, worse or about the same as other places you have lived?

Better.....	52%	185
Worse .....	4%	16
About the same .....	37%	132
Better than some; worse than others .....	6%	23

7. In the past five years, do you think that Botetourt has become a better place to live, worse, or is it about the same?

Better.....	32%	135
Worse .....	15%	63
About the same .....	48%	201
Unsure/No answer/Not lived here that long.....	5%	22

8. Why do you feel Botetourt has changed that way in the past five years?

Changed for better

More shopping/restaurants.....	34
More people/population growth.....	47
Better schools.....	13
Better roads/transportation.....	9
Retained rural atmosphere .....	8
Better law enforcement.....	5
Better government.....	4
More recreational facilities .....	3
Quality of life.....	2
Buchanan Theater .....	1
Paid rescue squad.....	1
More progressive .....	1

Changed for worse

Too many people/population growth.....	39
Traffic/roads.....	12
Taxes too high.....	7
Loss of rural atmosphere.....	3
Not enough services.....	2
Too much bureaucracy/unleash business/sign ordinance .....	2
Water/sewer .....	2
Schools.....	1
Crime.....	1
Not enough shopping .....	1
Recreation .....	1
More expensive to live.....	1
Trash collection.....	1
Government too big .....	1
Note enough attention to middle class .....	1
Greenfield sports complex .....	1

9. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is not important at all and 10 is extremely important, please tell me how important you think each of the following priorities is in Botetourt County. **MEAN SCORE REPORTED**

Improve the quality of our public schools .....	8.07
Improve job training and adults' job skills .....	6.98
Improve job creation and business investment in the County .....	7.54
Improve public safety and security .....	7.90
Ensure that growth and development are carefully managed .....	8.35
Expand and improve public recreational opportunities .....	6.87
Expand and improve cultural opportunities .....	6.47
Improve the ease of transportation in the County .....	6.96

10. Which three of those priorities do you think are the most important? **[READ CHOICES IF NECESSARY]**

Improve the quality of our public schools .....	69%	278
Improve job training and adults' job skills .....	26%	105
Improve job creation and business investment in the County ...	39%	157
Improve public safety and security .....	41%	167
Ensure that growth and development are carefully managed ....	48%	194
Expand and improve public recreational opportunities .....	19%	76
Expand and improve cultural opportunities .....	9%	36
Improve the ease of transportation in the County .....	41%	165

11. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is the worst and 10 is the best, please rate Botetourt County on each of the following: **MEAN SCORE REPORTED**

As a place to raise children .....	8.77
Overall cost of living .....	6.78
Quality of housing.....	7.49
Cost of housing .....	5.88
Preservation and protection of natural resources and the environment.....	6.72
Management of growth .....	6.28
Development, promotion and maintenance of historic resources, such as historical sites and museums .....	6.35
Availability of recreational activities.....	6.21
Cultural amenities .....	5.53
Public Safety .....	7.79

12. Please tell me your level of satisfaction with the following services provided by Botetourt County. Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied? If you aren't familiar with or haven't used the service, please tell me.

Law enforcement/Sheriff's Office		
Very satisfied .....	56%	231
Somewhat satisfied .....	26%	108
Not very satisfied .....	3%	11
Not at all satisfied .....	2%	6
Not familiar/used .....	14%	56
Voter registration and information		
Very satisfied .....	65%	266
Somewhat satisfied .....	27%	109
Not very satisfied .....	0%	1
Not at all satisfied .....	1%	5
Not familiar/used .....	7%	30
Animal control		
Very satisfied .....	46%	189
Somewhat satisfied .....	29%	118
Not very satisfied .....	8%	32
Not at all satisfied .....	2%	9
Not familiar/used .....	15%	61
Public education		
Very satisfied .....	43%	175
Somewhat satisfied .....	34%	138
Not very satisfied .....	5%	21
Not at all satisfied .....	1%	4
Not familiar/used .....	17%	69
Attracting and retaining businesses and jobs		
Very satisfied .....	22%	88
Somewhat satisfied .....	52%	213
Not very satisfied .....	13%	55
Not at all satisfied .....	3%	14
Not familiar/used .....	10%	39
Planning and zoning services		
Very satisfied .....	19%	77
Somewhat satisfied .....	41%	164
Not very satisfied .....	12%	46
Not at all satisfied .....	10%	40
Not familiar/used .....	18%	73
Online services		
Very satisfied .....	25%	100
Somewhat satisfied .....	27%	109
Not very satisfied .....	7%	29
Not at all satisfied .....	6%	23
Not familiar/used .....	36%	146

Recycling		
Very satisfied .....	22%	90
Somewhat satisfied .....	32%	132
Not very satisfied .....	18%	75
Not at all satisfied .....	15%	62
Not familiar/used .....	12%	49
Managing growth		
Very satisfied .....	18%	73
Somewhat satisfied .....	48%	197
Not very satisfied .....	18%	73
Not at all satisfied .....	10%	40
Not familiar/used .....	6%	24
Treasurer's Office/Tax collection		
Very satisfied .....	55%	223
Somewhat satisfied .....	38%	155
Not very satisfied .....	2%	10
Not at all satisfied .....	1%	5
Not familiar/used .....	4%	16
Commissioner of the Revenue's office, which administers local tax assessments		
Very satisfied .....	46%	185
Somewhat satisfied .....	38%	152
Not very satisfied .....	7%	26
Not at all satisfied .....	3%	12
Not familiar/used .....	7%	28
Clerk of the Court's office, which deals with public records such as wills, land record documents, and circuit court case files		
Very satisfied .....	50%	205
Somewhat satisfied .....	24%	97
Not very satisfied .....	1%	3
Not at all satisfied .....	0%	1
Not familiar/used .....	25%	101
Commonwealth Attorney's office		
Very satisfied .....	32%	132
Somewhat satisfied .....	23%	94
Not very satisfied .....	1%	5
Not at all satisfied .....	1%	2
Not familiar/used .....	43%	175
The County landfill		
Very satisfied .....	32%	128
Somewhat satisfied .....	31%	123
Not very satisfied .....	11%	43
Not at all satisfied .....	7%	27
Not familiar/used .....	20%	82
The County libraries		
Very satisfied .....	59%	242
Somewhat satisfied .....	23%	96



Not very satisfied .....	2%	8
Not at all satisfied .....	0%	1
Not familiar/used .....	15%	63
<b>Building inspections</b>		
Very satisfied .....	22%	90
Somewhat satisfied .....	35%	141
Not very satisfied .....	5%	20
Not at all satisfied .....	3%	11
Not familiar/used .....	35%	143
<b>Recreational facilities</b>		
Very satisfied .....	28%	115
Somewhat satisfied .....	48%	198
Not very satisfied .....	11%	45
Not at all satisfied .....	3%	13
Not familiar/used .....	9%	38
<b>Recreational programs, including youth sports leagues</b>		
Very satisfied .....	29%	119
Somewhat satisfied .....	38%	156
Not very satisfied .....	6%	26
Not at all satisfied .....	2%	8
Not familiar/used .....	24%	97
<b>Website</b>		
Very satisfied .....	20%	81
Somewhat satisfied .....	20%	81
Not very satisfied .....	4%	14
Not at all satisfied .....	2%	6
Not familiar/used .....	55%	222
<b>County services in general</b>		
Very satisfied .....	44%	178
Somewhat satisfied .....	50%	201
Not very satisfied .....	3%	12
Not at all satisfied .....	2%	7
Not familiar/used .....	2%	8

13. Using the same scale, how satisfied are you with the following services that are not directly provided by the County?

<b>Trash collection</b>		
Very satisfied .....	48%	195
Somewhat satisfied .....	26%	106
Not very satisfied .....	5%	19
Not at all satisfied .....	8%	32
Not familiar/used .....	13%	51
<b>Your local fire department</b>		
Very satisfied .....	71%	288
Somewhat satisfied .....	17%	67
Not very satisfied .....	1%	4

Not at all satisfied .....	1%	3
Not familiar/used .....	11%	45
Rescue squad		
Very satisfied .....	72%	291
Somewhat satisfied .....	16%	63
Not very satisfied .....	2%	8
Not at all satisfied .....	2%	6
Not familiar/used .....	9%	38
Adult education and job training		
Very satisfied .....	16%	64
Somewhat satisfied .....	29%	114
Not very satisfied .....	4%	17
Not at all satisfied .....	3%	10
Not familiar/used .....	49%	195
Public health services		
Very satisfied .....	26%	104
Somewhat satisfied .....	24%	95
Not very satisfied .....	3%	10
Not at all satisfied .....	1%	5
Not familiar/used .....	47%	186
Local social services		
Very satisfied .....	18%	72
Somewhat satisfied .....	22%	87
Not very satisfied .....	3%	12
Not at all satisfied .....	2%	8
Not familiar/used .....	55%	222
Road maintenance		
Very satisfied .....	25%	100
Somewhat satisfied .....	49%	200
Not very satisfied .....	16%	64
Not at all satisfied .....	8%	34
Not familiar/used .....	2%	7

14. In the past year have you had reason to personally interact with County employees in the performance of their job?

Yes .....	39%	160
No.....	61%	247

**[IF YES TO 14]** Thinking about your experiences with County employees, please tell me how satisfied you were with their performance in the following areas. Were you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied?

Their knowledge of the topic or issue		
Very satisfied .....	73%	120
Somewhat satisfied .....	18%	29
Not very satisfied .....	5%	8
Not at all satisfied .....	4%	7
Their timeliness in responding to you		
Very satisfied .....	73%	121
Somewhat satisfied .....	18%	29
Not very satisfied .....	2%	4
Not at all satisfied .....	7%	12
Courtesy		
Very satisfied .....	80%	132
Somewhat satisfied .....	14%	23
Not very satisfied .....	2%	3
Not at all satisfied .....	5%	8
Professionalism		
Very satisfied .....	76%	126
Somewhat satisfied .....	14%	23
Not very satisfied .....	4%	7
Not at all satisfied .....	6%	10
Accessibility		
Very satisfied .....	71%	117
Somewhat satisfied .....	22%	37
Not very satisfied .....	4%	6
Not at all satisfied .....	4%	6
Overall quality of services provided by Botetourt County employees		
Very satisfied .....	73%	119
Somewhat satisfied .....	20%	33
Not very satisfied .....	4%	6
Not at all satisfied .....	4%	6

15. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is not important at all and 10 is extremely important, please rate the importance of the following County services **MEAN SCORE**

**REPORTED**

Law enforcement .....	8.95
Recreational programs for adults and youth .....	7.24
Utility services .....	7.83
Libraries .....	8.46
Public education.....	8.48
Online services.....	6.10
Growth management.....	7.60
Land usage planning .....	7.44
Attracting and retaining businesses and jobs .....	7.45
Animal control .....	7.47
Recycling .....	7.57

Now I'd like to ask a few questions about taxes and services in Botetourt County.

16. Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of services provided by Botetourt County in return for the taxes you pay to the County? Would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied?

Very satisfied .....	27%	105
Somewhat satisfied .....	55%	212
Not very satisfied .....	11%	41
Not at all satisfied .....	8%	30

17. How satisfied are you with the number and range of services provided by Botetourt County in return for the taxes you pay to the County? Would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied?

Very satisfied .....	26%	102
Somewhat satisfied .....	56%	219
Not very satisfied .....	10%	38
Not at all satisfied .....	8%	31

18. Would you be willing to pay higher taxes to increase County spending in the following areas...

Public education		
Yes .....	66%	261
No.....	31%	122
Unsure/No answer.....	4%	15
Law enforcement		
Yes .....	65%	258
No.....	30%	119
Unsure/No answer.....	5%	18

Fire and Rescue Services		
Yes .....	72%	286
No.....	23%	91
Unsure/No answer.....	5%	18
Recreational opportunities		
Yes .....	36%	144
No.....	59%	236
Unsure/No answer.....	4%	17
Attracting and retaining businesses and jobs		
Yes .....	47%	188
No.....	48%	189
Unsure/No answer.....	5%	21
Water and sewer		
Yes .....	38%	152
No.....	57%	225
Unsure/No answer.....	5%	20

19. Are there any other services for which you would be willing to pay higher taxes?

No.....	86%	361
Road Maintenance .....	2%	8
Trash collection.....	2%	7
Recycling .....	2%	6
Utilities.....	1%	3
Health care .....	1%	2
Job training.....	1%	2
Cable TV .....	1%	2

20. Do you think that population growth in the County in the past 10 years has been too slow, about right or too fast?

Too slow.....	2%	7
About right.....	34%	136
Too fast .....	61%	245
Unsure/No answer.....	4%	15

21. How satisfied are you with the visual appearance of new construction and development in the County? Would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very satisfied, or not satisfied at all?

Very satisfied .....	33%	134
Somewhat satisfied .....	48%	191
Not very satisfied .....	11%	46
Not at all satisfied .....	5%	19
Unsure/No answer.....	3%	12

22. How satisfied are you with the ease of travel and getting around in the County?  
 Would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very satisfied, or not satisfied at all?

Very satisfied .....	34%	137
Somewhat satisfied .....	50%	201
Not very satisfied .....	11%	43
Not at all satisfied .....	5%	18
Unsure/No answer.....	0%	2

23. Now I am going to list several sources of information. For each please tell me if you have used any of the following in the last year to receive information about County government.

The Fincastle Herald.....	81%	326
The Roanoke Times .....	78%	315
Local television stations.....	87%	350
Local radio stations.....	62%	247
County employees.....	42%	167
The County web site on the Internet.....	33%	129
Mailings from the County.....	62%	249
Public meetings.....	21%	84
Friends and neighbors.....	80%	319

24. Which of the above is the most important source of information about County government for you?

The Fincastle Herald.....	50%	200
The Roanoke Times .....	12%	48
Local television stations.....	17%	69
Local radio stations.....	1%	4
County employees.....	2%	8
The County web site on the Internet.....	7%	29
Mailings from the County.....	1%	5
Public meetings.....	1%	4
Friends and neighbors.....	7%	28
Other .....	2%	7

25. Now, let me ask you to grade yourself. Regarding events and issues in Botetourt County, how well informed do you think you are? Are you very well informed, somewhat informed, not very well informed, or not informed at all?

Very well informed.....	25%	99
Somewhat informed.....	60%	242
Not very well informed.....	14%	57
Not informed at all.....	1%	3

26. I have just a few more questions. Overall, how would you rate the management of Botetourt County? Would you say it is excellent, good, fair or poor?

Excellent .....	10%	39
Good.....	63%	255
Fair .....	21%	86
Poor .....	4%	16
Unsure/No answer.....	2%	7

27. When decisions are made in Botetourt County, do you think that you have adequate opportunity to express your views?

Yes .....	66%	264
No.....	20%	79
Mixed .....	11%	45
Unsure/No answer.....	4%	15

28. What do you think will be the most important issue facing Botetourt County in next five years? [CATEGORIES NOT READ]

Growth .....	46%	183
Transportation/new roads.....	11%	43
Schools/education .....	10%	38
Attract and retain businesses and jobs/economic development...	9%	35
Taxes/budget .....	7%	28
Zoning/land usage.....	6%	23
Water/sewer .....	6%	23
Don't know/No answer .....	4%	14
Crime/drugs.....	1%	5
Economy .....	1%	4
Other .....	1%	3

29. That is all the questions I have. Do you have any additional comments?

*See next page for complete list.*

On behalf of Botetourt County, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Have a nice day/evening.

Additional responses for specific questions

4. b.

Better schools	2
Assisted living	1
Environment	1
Progressive	1

19.

Social services	1
Senior housing	1
Phone reception	1
Online services	1
Driver's ed	1

28.

Public health	1
Disaster planning	1
Environment	1



29.	
Exit 150/roads	14
Taxes too high	6
Trash collection	
County job	5
Take leaves	2
Take appliances	1
Transfer station problem	1
Rural area problems	1
Free landfill trip 1/month	1
Trash bins on roads	1
Taxes misallocated	3
Growth too concentrated	3
Water/sewer problems	3
Zoning problems	3
Need new schools	2
Opposition to sheriff	2
Enforce leash laws	2
Tax breaks/program for seniors	2
Improve rescue squads	2
Buchanan ignored	1
Drugs	1
Fincastle festival	1
Water quality	1
Cell phones and driving	1
Will pay extra taxes for...	
Schools	1
Environment	1
Day care	1
Hospital in Eagle Rock	1
Adult education	1
Low income housing	1
Service sector jobs	1
Less law enforcement personnel	1
Pay teachers more	1
LB crowded	1
Beautiful area	1
Greenfield sports mgmt. problems	1
Board of Supervisors problems	1
Not enough services	1
More attention to environment	1
More recreation	1
Handicapped athletics	1