

The Phoenix Area Social Survey: Community and Environment in a Desert Metropolis

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The Study

The Phoenix Area Social Survey (PASS) is an interdisciplinary research collaboration among faculty and staff of Arizona State University. PASS began in 2000, at the close of a decade of rapid population growth, urban development, and economic change in the Phoenix metropolitan area. Its intellectual goals, explicitly shaped by these dynamics, are as follows:

- Examine how communities form and how they work in a rapidly growing, low-density urban setting characterized by high rates of in- and out-migration and frequent residential mobility within the metropolis.
- Study the interaction between rapidly growing human communities and the natural environment.

The PASS Neighborhoods

The PASS pilot study interviewed 217 residents of the city of Phoenix, nearly equally distributed among six neighborhoods.

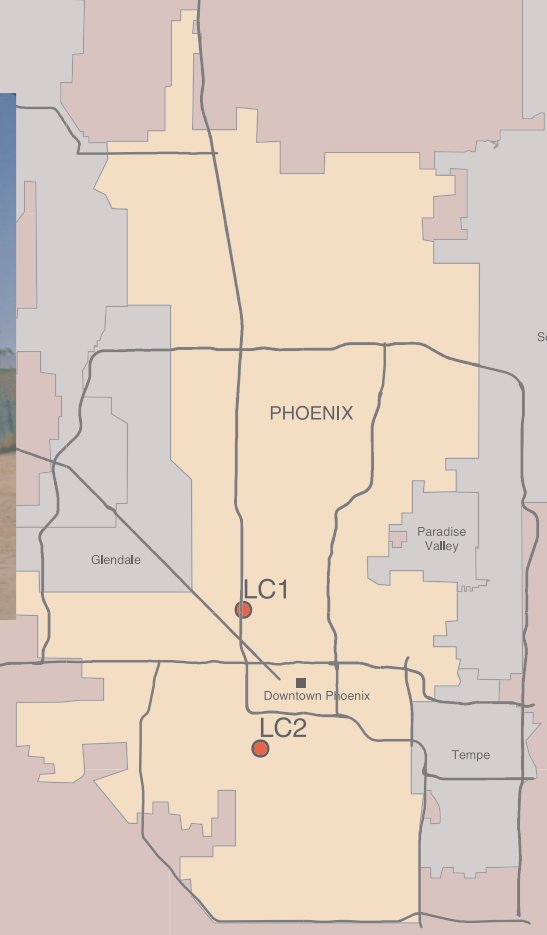
1. Each neighborhood encompasses a CAP LTER Survey 200 monitoring site.
2. Census block groups define neighborhood boundaries.
3. All neighborhoods are located in the city of Phoenix.
4. Neighborhoods represent different types of urban communities:
 - Two newer Higher-income neighborhoods at the Fringe of the urban area (labeled as HF1 and HF2)
 - Two older Middle-income Suburban neighborhoods located between the core and the fringe (labeled MS1 and MS2)
 - Two older Lower-income Core neighborhoods less than five miles from the city center at Central Avenue and Washington Street (labeled LC1 and LC2).

Lower Income Core

Neighborhood LC1 (LTER Survey Point T15)



PASS Survey Results
 Median Age of Respondents: 32
 Non-Hispanic White: 10%
 Hispanic: 87%
 Educational Attainment (most common response): 47% < High School
 Homeownership: 10%
 Mean Number of Persons per Household: 4.6
 Median Household Income: \$20,000



Neighborhood LC2 (LTER Survey Point U18)



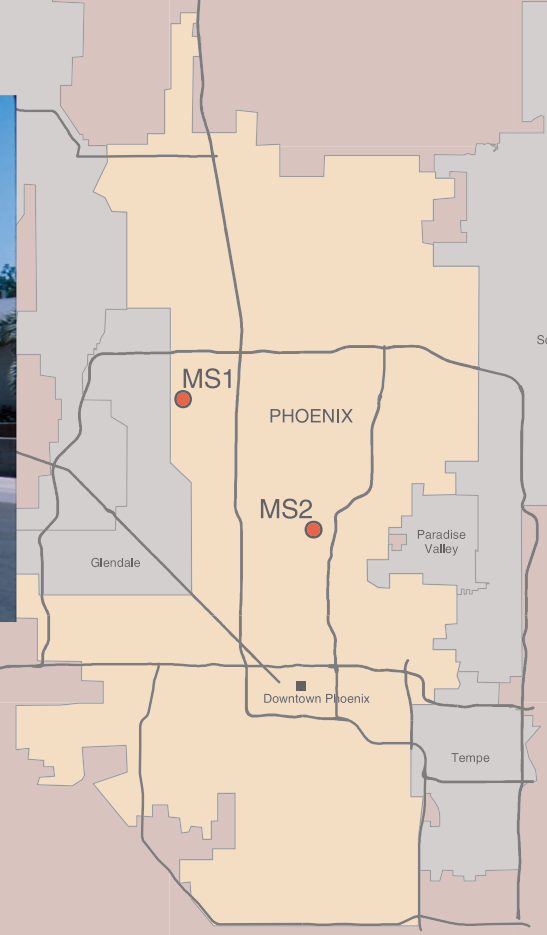
PASS Survey Results
 Median Age of Respondents: 36
 Non-Hispanic White: 11%
 Hispanic: 84%
 Educational Attainment (most common response): 37% < High School
 Homeownership: 82%
 Mean Number of Persons per Household: 5.1
 Median Household Income: \$30,000

Middle Income Suburban

Neighborhood MS1 (LTER Survey Point S11)



PASS Survey Results
 Median Age of Respondents: 42
 Non-Hispanic White: 75%
 Hispanic: 19%
 Educational Attainment (most common response): 36% Some College
 Homeownership: 65%
 Mean Number of Persons per Household: 2.6
 Median Household Income: \$40,000



Neighborhood MS2 (LTER Survey Point V14)



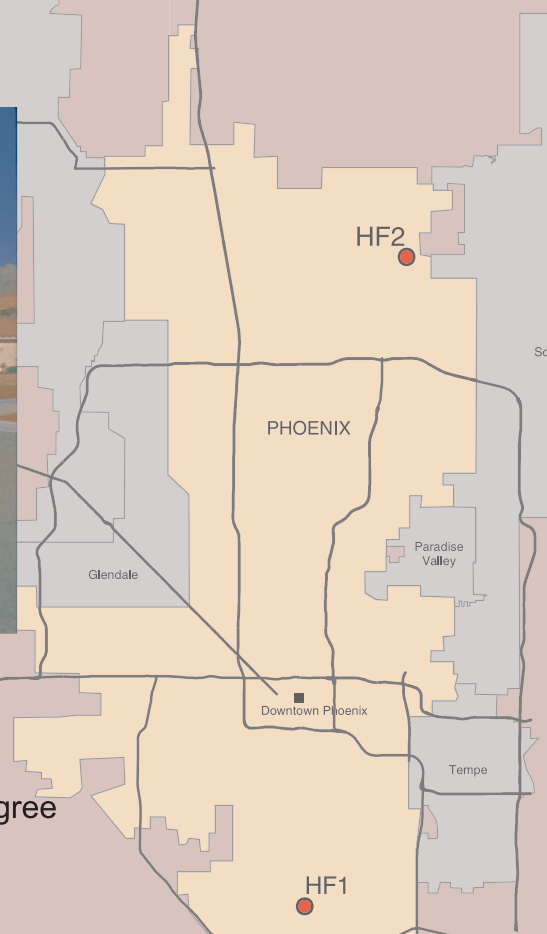
PASS Survey Results
 Median Age of Respondents: 40
 Non-Hispanic White: 69%
 Hispanic: 22%
 Educational Attainment (most common response): 46% Some College
 Homeownership: 89%
 Mean Number of Persons per Household: 3.8
 Median Household Income: \$40,000

Higher Income Fringe

Neighborhood HF1 (LTER Survey Point U21)



PASS Survey Results
 Median Age of Respondents: 47
 Non-Hispanic White: 84%
 Hispanic: 3%
 Educational Attainment (most common response): 35% Bachelor's Degree
 Homeownership: 97%
 Mean Number of Persons per Household: 3.6
 Median Household Income: \$118,000



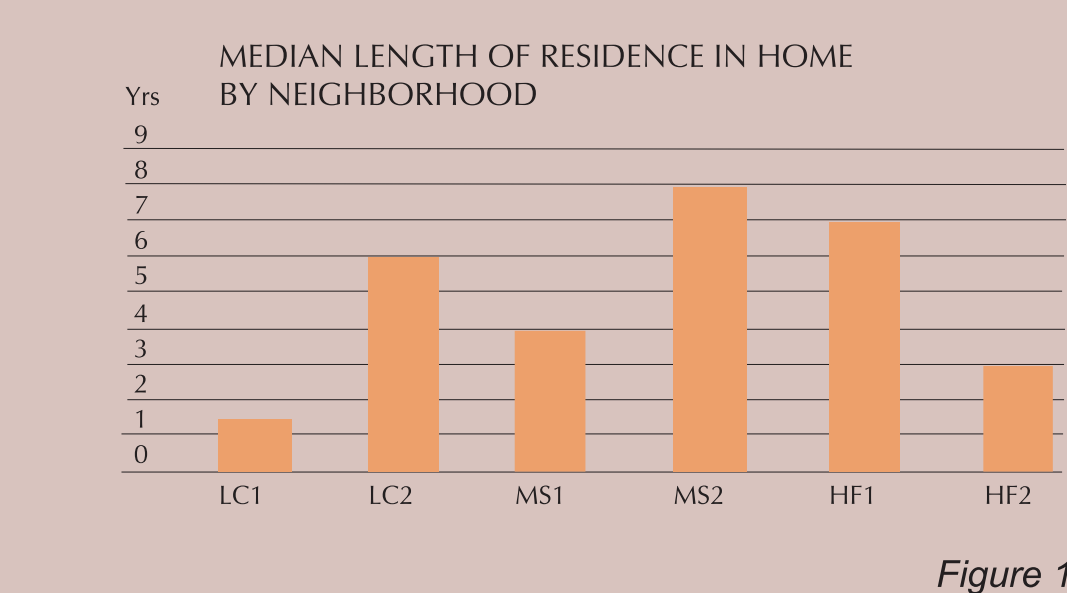
Neighborhood HF2 (LTER Survey Point W9)



PASS Survey Results
 Median Age of Respondents: 42
 Non-Hispanic White: 97%
 Hispanic: 0%
 Educational Attainment (most common response): 24% Bachelor's Degree
 Homeownership: 100%
 Mean Number of Persons per Household: 3.6
 Median Household Income: \$120,000

How do communities form and how do they work in a rapidly growing, low-density urban setting?

Mobility Profile

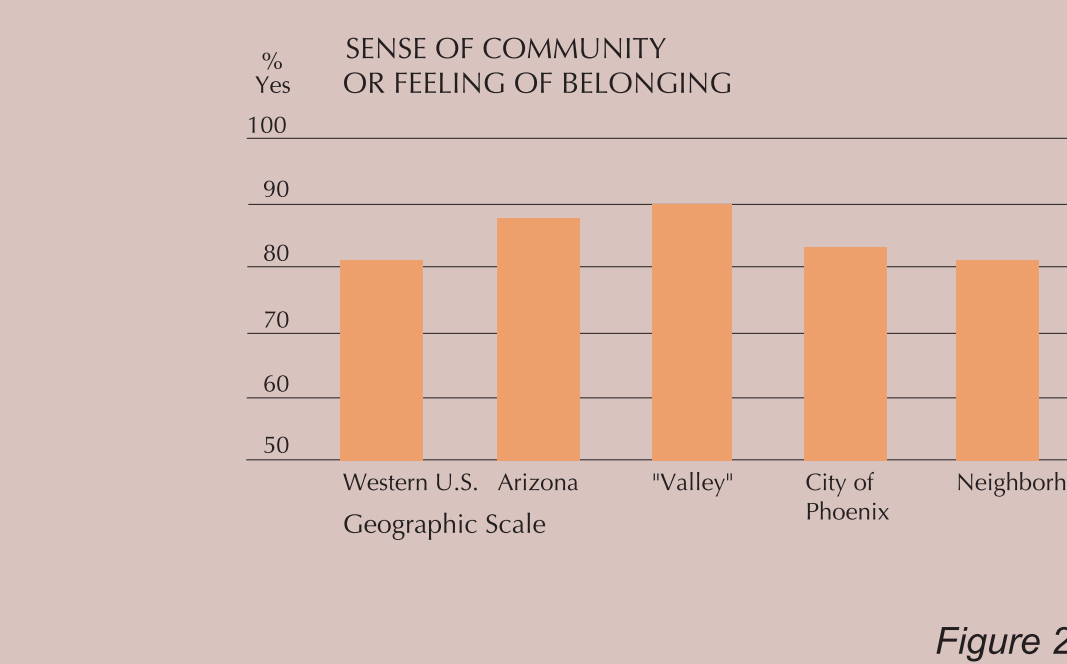


• Although the majority of PASS respondents have lived here 10 years or more, one of five respondents did not live in Greater Phoenix five years ago.

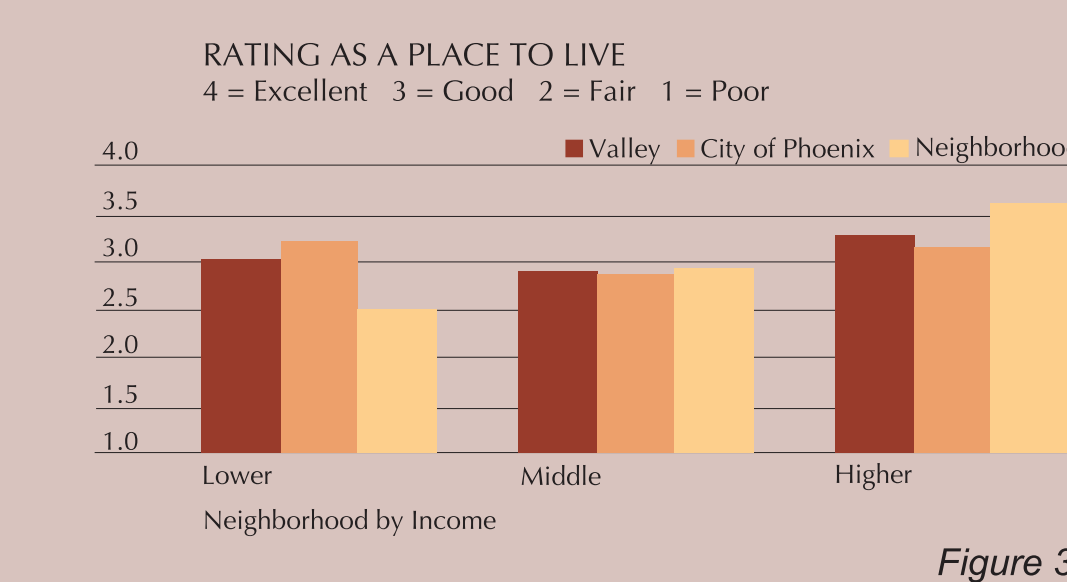
• Two-thirds of the PASS sample have lived in their present homes less than five years. Most people have had the comparative experience of living in two or more neighborhoods in the Phoenix area. [Figure 1]

• In spite of many new arrivals and short average residential tenure, almost everyone says they plan to stay in Greater Phoenix, unless a job opportunity tempts them to leave.

Community Sentiment



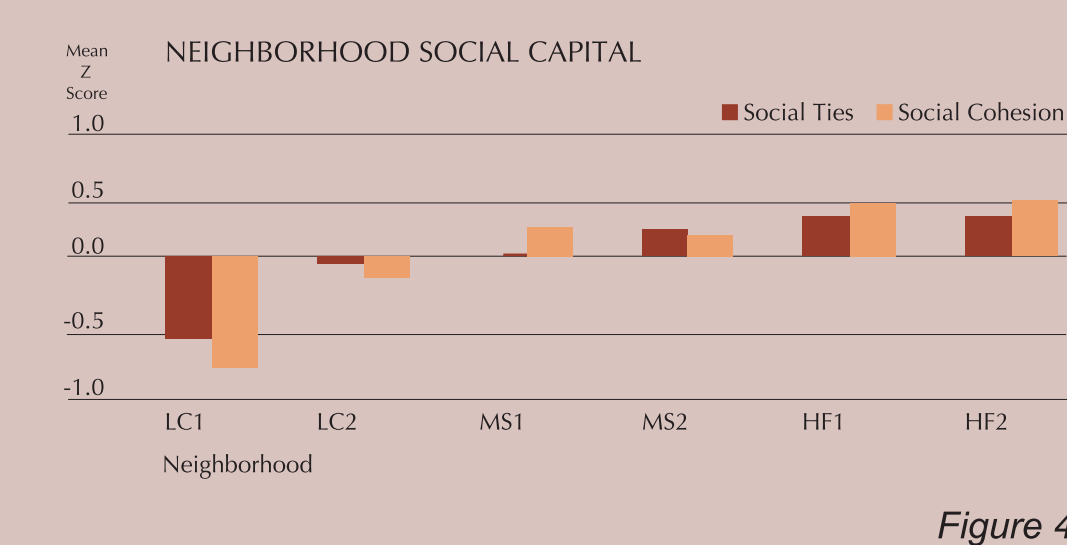
• A large majority of PASS respondents, even relative newcomers, enjoy a sense of community that is rooted in geographic places such as the state, city, Valley and neighborhood. More people feel a sense of belonging in the Valley than in their neighborhoods. [Figure 2]



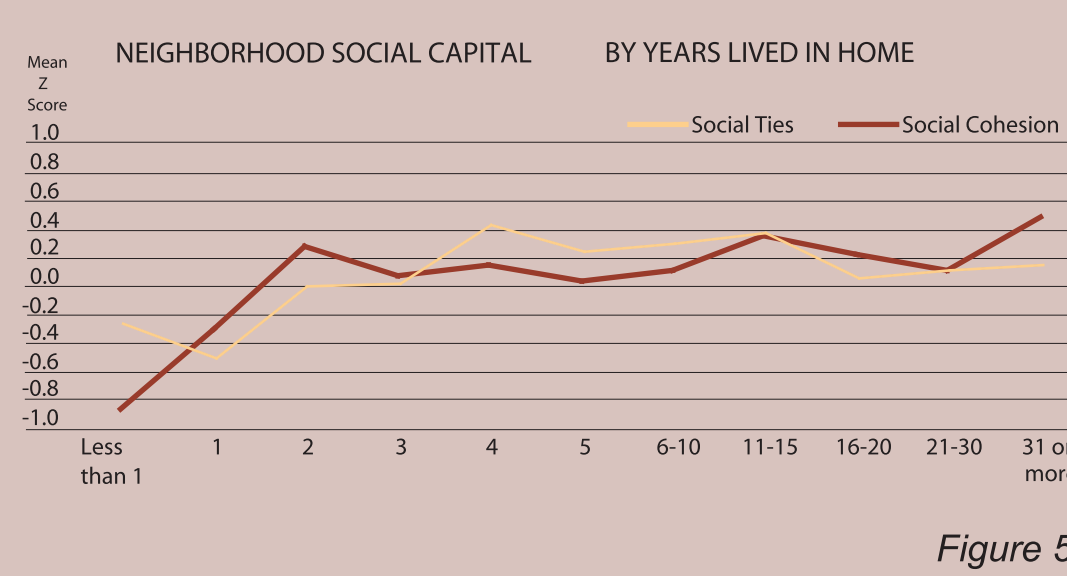
• Respondents in lower-income core neighborhoods, who are mostly Latino, display the highest rates of community sentiment. But even in affluent white neighborhoods on the urban fringe, a majority express community sentiment across a variety of geographic scales.

• The rich perceive that where they live is better than other places and the poor know their neighborhoods are worse. People who rate their neighborhood as an "excellent" place to live feel a stronger emotional attachment to it. [Figure 3]

Neighborhood Social Capital



• Social ties and social cohesion among neighbors, also known as social capital, are highly correlated with type of neighborhood: upper-income neighborhoods report having the most social capital, whereas the poorest neighborhood has almost none. [Figure 4]

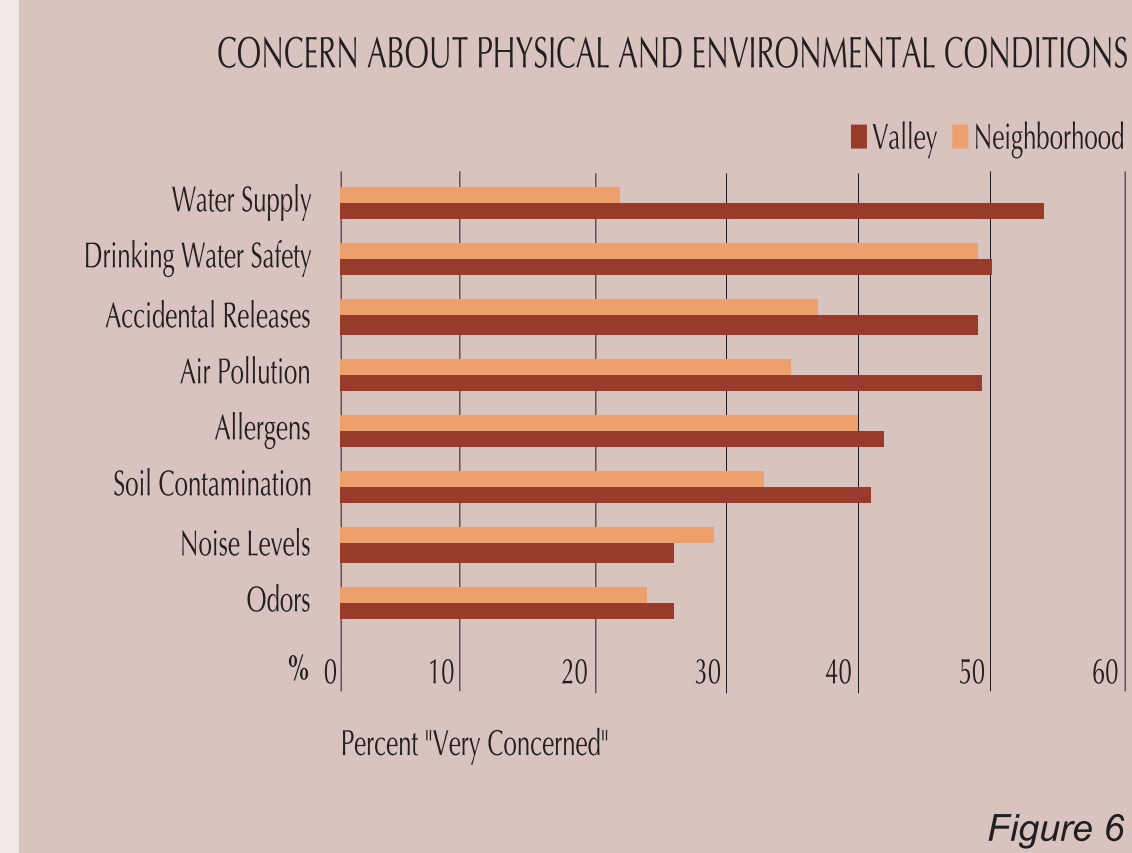


• In most PASS neighborhoods, social capital among residents forms rather quickly. Within two years of moving into a neighborhood, the average social cohesion score has peaked, and within four years new residents have social ties as strong as the longest-term residents. [Figure 5]

Results

How do residents of the Phoenix metropolitan area perceive and act upon their natural environment?

Local Environmental Concerns

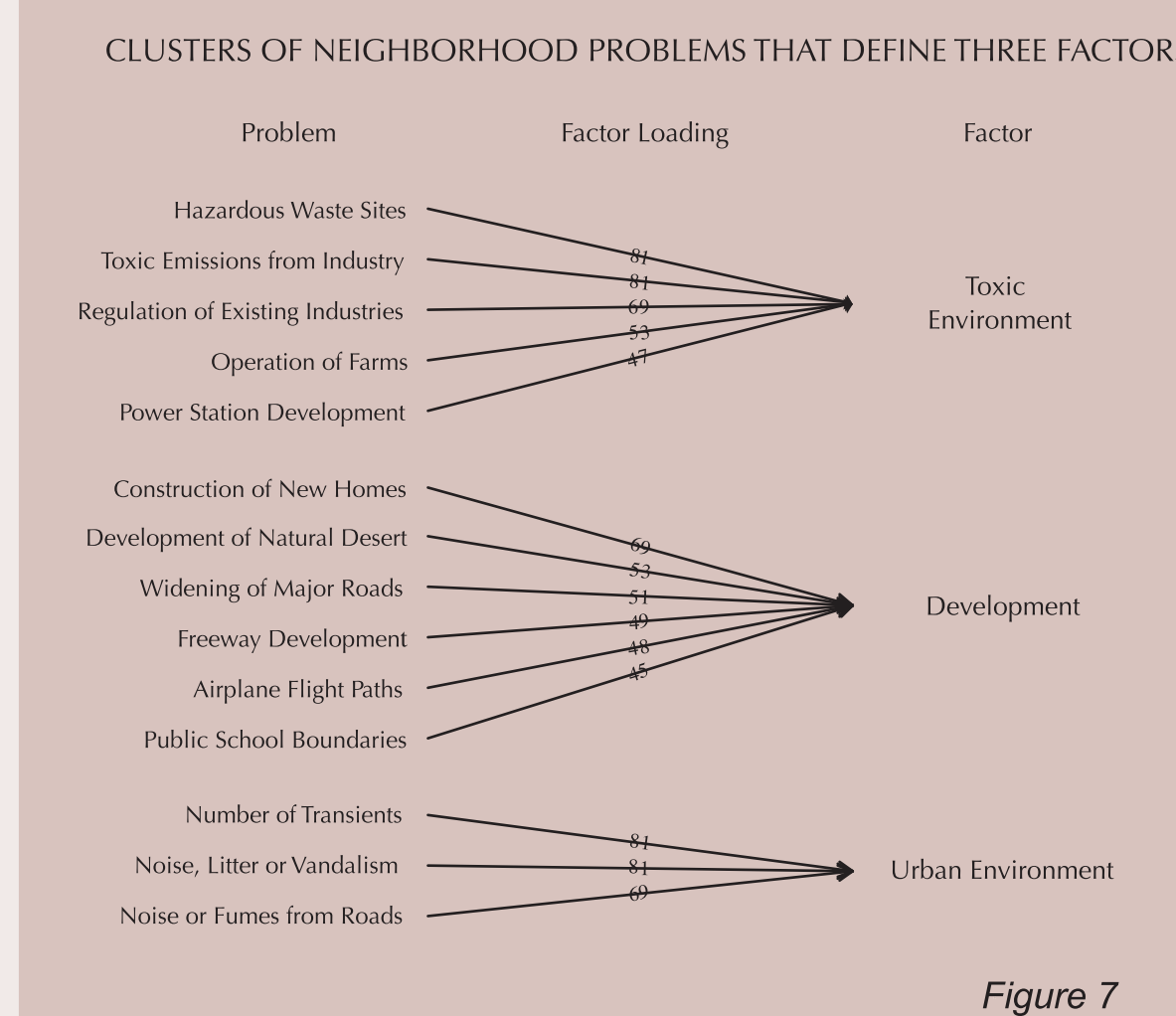


• More than 40 percent of the respondents are very concerned about the future water supply, drinking water safety, accidental releases of industrial chemicals, air pollution, allergens, and soil and groundwater contamination in the Valley. [Figure 6]

• The greatest environmental concern is the future water supply for the Valley, yet few respondents are concerned about the amount of water consumed in their neighborhood.

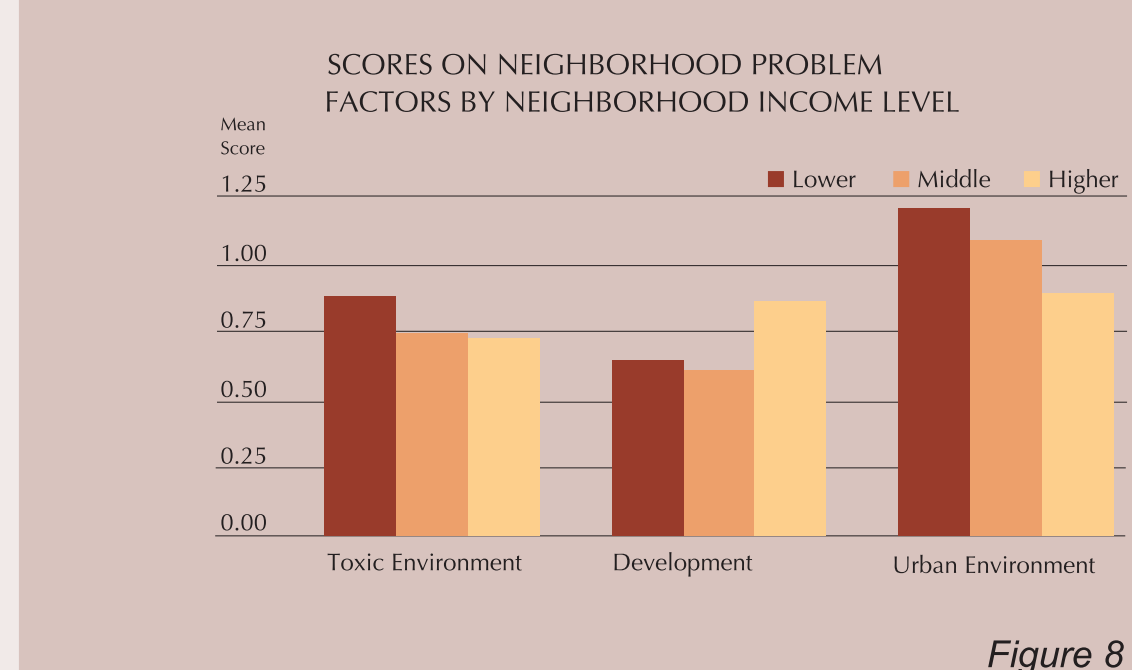
• Affluent respondents think they are environmentally privileged: they believe their neighborhood's air is cleaner, their groundwater is less contaminated, and their water supply is less threatened than the rest of the Valley.

Neighborhood Environmental Problems



• Factor analysis was used in order to organize respondents' answers to 16 "big" and "little" neighborhood problems into three types: 1) the Toxic Environment Factor (e.g., hazardous waste sites and industrial emissions); the Development Factor (e.g., land use and construction); 3) the Urban Environment Factor (e.g., noise, vandalism and transients). [Figure 7]

• Lower-income neighborhoods near the central city have a statistically significant higher mean score on Toxic Environment. Higher-income neighborhoods face significantly more problems stemming from Development. Middle- and lower-income neighborhoods have significantly higher mean scores on Urban Environment. [Figure 8]



Social Capital and Environmental Problem-Solving



• The median income of neighborhoods, the amount of social capital, and neighborhood problem-solving actions are all associated with each other. Respondents in higher-income fringe neighborhoods are more likely to say the neighbors have "a lot" of control over what happens (35 percent) than residents in middle-income suburban (26 percent) and lower-income core (23 percent) neighborhoods. Similar percentages for higher-, middle- and lower-income neighborhoods pertain to residents who answered "yes" to taking action on a neighborhood environmental problem. [Figure 9]

This poster summarizes some results of the pilot study. The full report is available at: <http://www.asu.edu/cas/sociology/pass.html>

Poster created by Nancy Jones, Center for Environmental Studies