

2022
PERFORMANCE
ASSESSMENT
October 2022



INTRODUCTION

The State of Minnesota Regional Development Act of 1969 states that regional development commissions are to “work with and on behalf of local units of government to develop plans or implement programs to address economic, social, physical, and governmental concerns of each region of the state. The commission may assist with, develop, or implement plans or programs for individual local units of government.”

The Act further mandates that every five years each Commission review its activities and issue a report that addresses the ways it is fulfilling its purpose and working in the best interests of the public it serves.

The Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) is one of nine regional development commissions established by the State of Minnesota, serving Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake and St. Louis counties in northeast Minnesota for over 50 years. ARDC is also a partner in transportation planning services in Douglas County, Wisconsin.

Working in conjunction with Swim Creative of Duluth, ARDC and Swim Creative selected Zenith Research Group, Inc., of Duluth to conduct survey research to fulfill the ARDC’s mandate required by the State of Minnesota.

Zenith Research was established in 1984 and has conducted hundreds of research studies for local, state and federal governments and departments as well as hundreds of businesses, organizations and agencies serving a broad spectrum of clients with a variety of services and specialties.

The following pages include results of a research study conducted among stakeholders identified as regional leaders, ARDC partners and/or customers, ARDC Board, Commission and advisory committee members, tribal representatives and recipients of services. Results were generated through an online survey instrument using the SurveyMonkey® platform with all data analyzed using SPSS analytical software.

SWIM

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METHODOLOGY

All response data within this research study was generated using the SurveyMonkey® online platform, agreed upon by ARDC and Swim Creative. This online service was also utilized during ARDC's 2016 Performance Assessment.

The survey design was generated by Zenith Research and approved by representatives of each of the contracting groups.

Prior to beginning the survey research, ARDC provided Zenith Research with an email database of 463 potential respondents.

The initial email invitation to potential respondents was sent on August 27, 2022. A reminder message was sent on August 30 to those individuals who had not yet participated or had only partially completed the survey. A final reminder was sent on September 6 to non respondents and those partially completing the survey. Throughout the process, those completing the survey were sent an automated "Thank You" message.

Survey Metrics

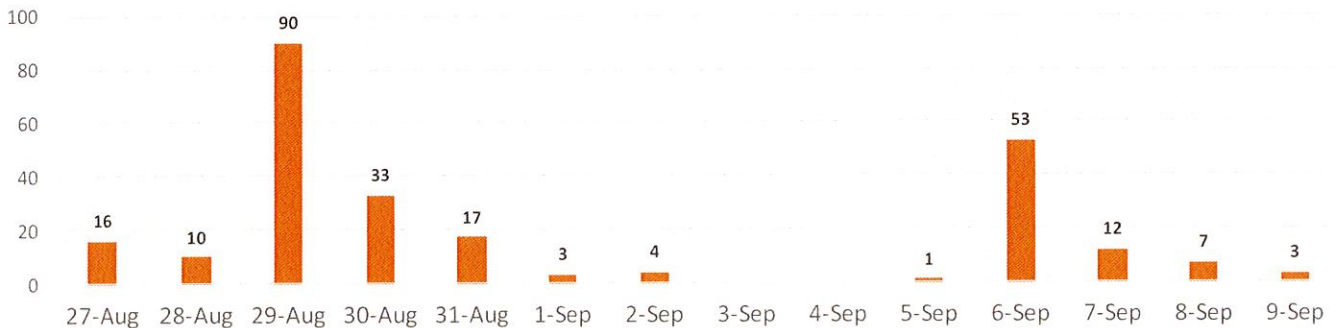
- 463 invitations
- 300 opened emails (65%)
- 127 unopened emails (27%)
- 33 bounced emails (7%)
- 217 clicked through (47%)
- 3 opted out (1%)

Responses

- 249 total responses
- 78 percent completion rate
- Typical survey time: 9:49

Within the survey research report, respondent levels will be noted by N = (x). Based on the response, the Margin of Error within the study will vary from +/- 4.23% to +/- 5 %, each at the 95 percent confidence level. All percentages have been rounded for presentation.

Daily Responses



DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondent County of Residence

N = 247

117 (47%) of the survey respondents listed St. Louis County as their residence.

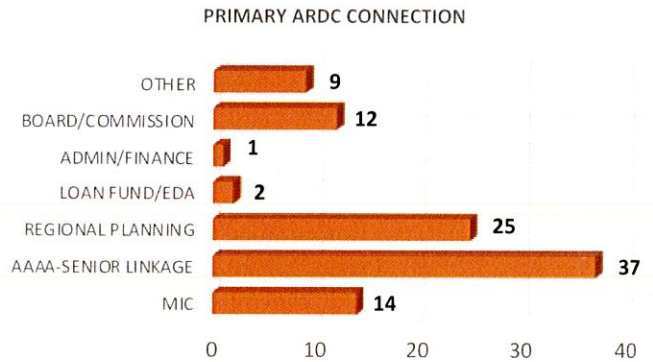
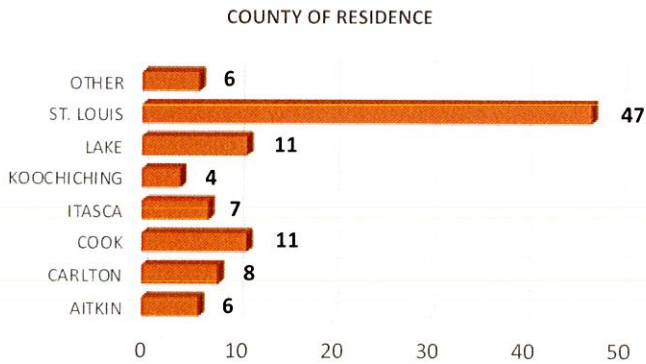
Primary ARDC Connection

N = 242

37 percent of respondents were associated with the Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging/Senior LinkAge Line®.

Other Chart Labels:

- ARDC Board/Commission
- ARDC Administration/Finance
- ARDC Revolving Loan Fund/Economic Development Administration
- ARDC Regional Planning
- Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging/Senior LinkAge Line®
- MIC = Metropolitan Interstate Council
- "Other" identifiers are listed in the Verbatim Response document available upon request.



DEMOGRAPHICS

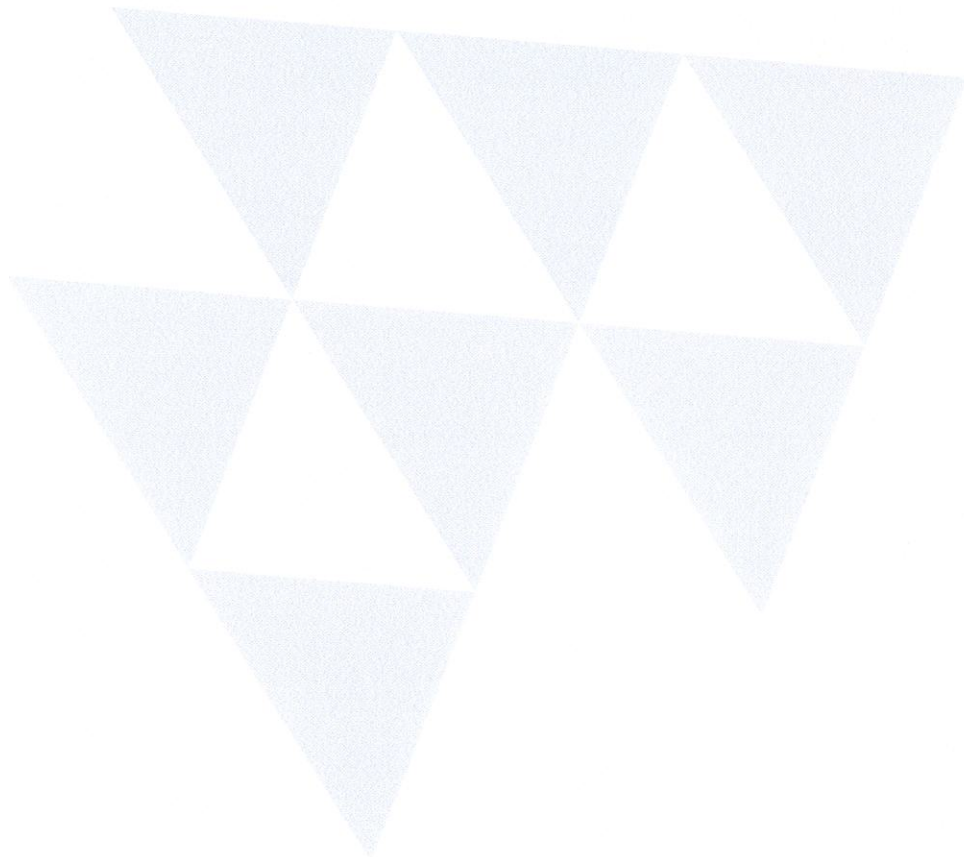
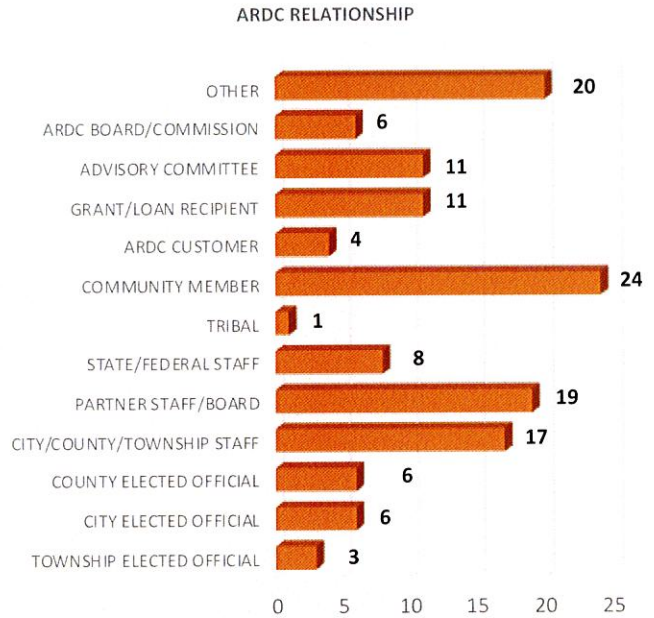
ARDC Relationship

N = 242

59 (24%) of the respondents identified themselves as a community member.

Overall, a combined 15 percent were elected officials. A combined 44 percent of respondents were either staff or a board member of partner organizations, local governments, or state and federal agencies.

A review of "Other" responses are in the Verbatim Response document available upon request.



KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

Overall, how familiar are you with the programs and services of the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission?

N = 239

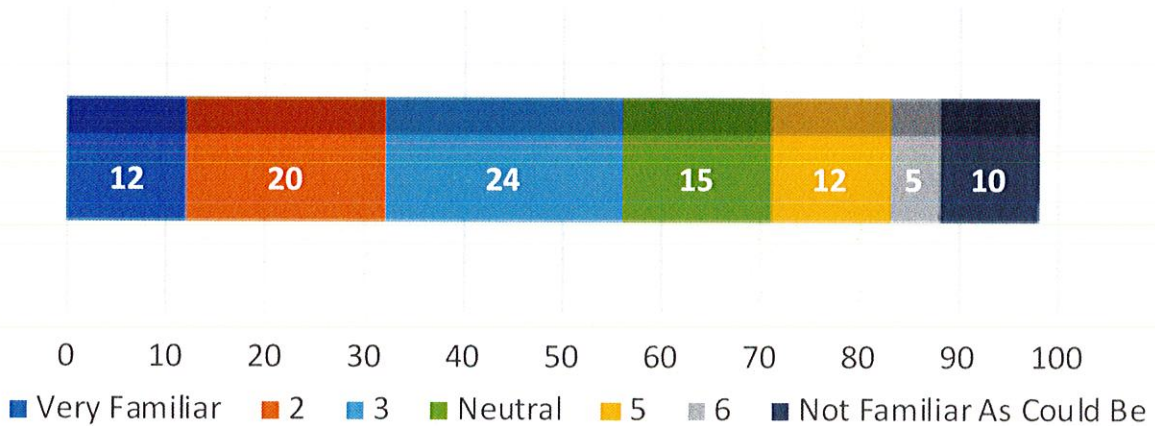
Mean = 3.51

(The Mean or arithmetic average is the central tendency computed by dividing the sum of values by the number of values.)

Overall, 56 percent of respondents expressed some degree of positive familiarity with ARDC when responses were grouped using a 7-point Likert scale. In most cases, a variance of (.)20 percent is considered statistically significant.

FAMILIARITY WITH ARDC PROGRAMS/SERVICES

Mean = 3.51



KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

Which of the following do you believe are ARDC's most defining services?

(Check as many as you believe apply)

N = 233

53 percent of respondents indicated Community Development Planning was the most defining service offered by ARDC.

Other notables included:

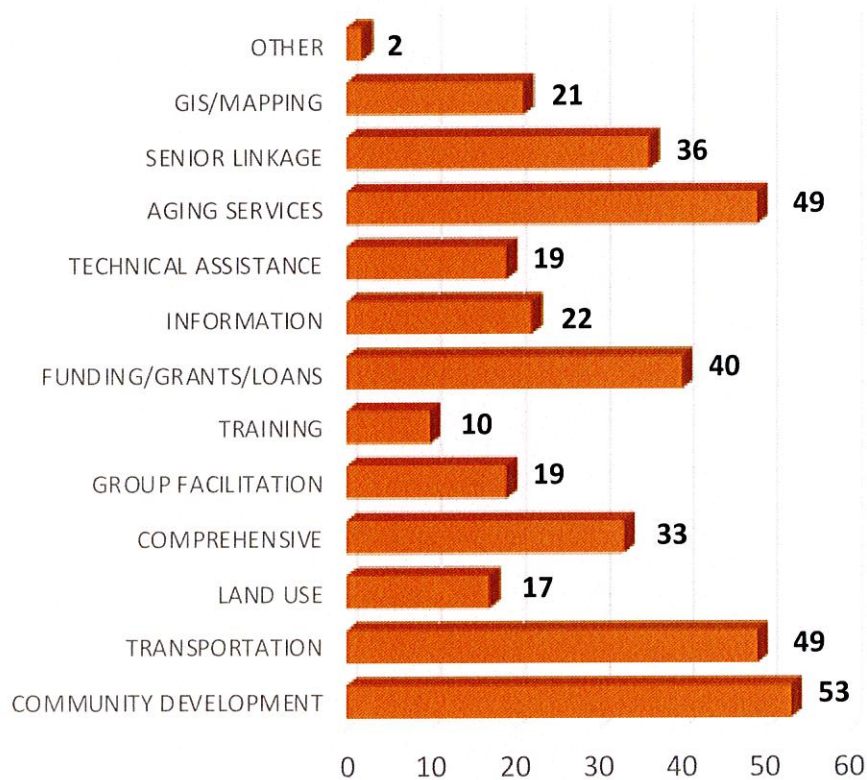
- Transportation Planning
- Aging Services

- Funding/Grants/Loans Assistance
- Each of these services recorded response levels at 40 percent of higher.

Information and assistance from the Senior LinkAge Line® was noted by 36 percent of the respondents.

“Other” responses are included in the Verbatim Response document available upon request.

ARDC DEFINING SERVICES



KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

Which of the following services have you received from – or had interactions with – ARDC staff?

(Check all that apply)
N = 234

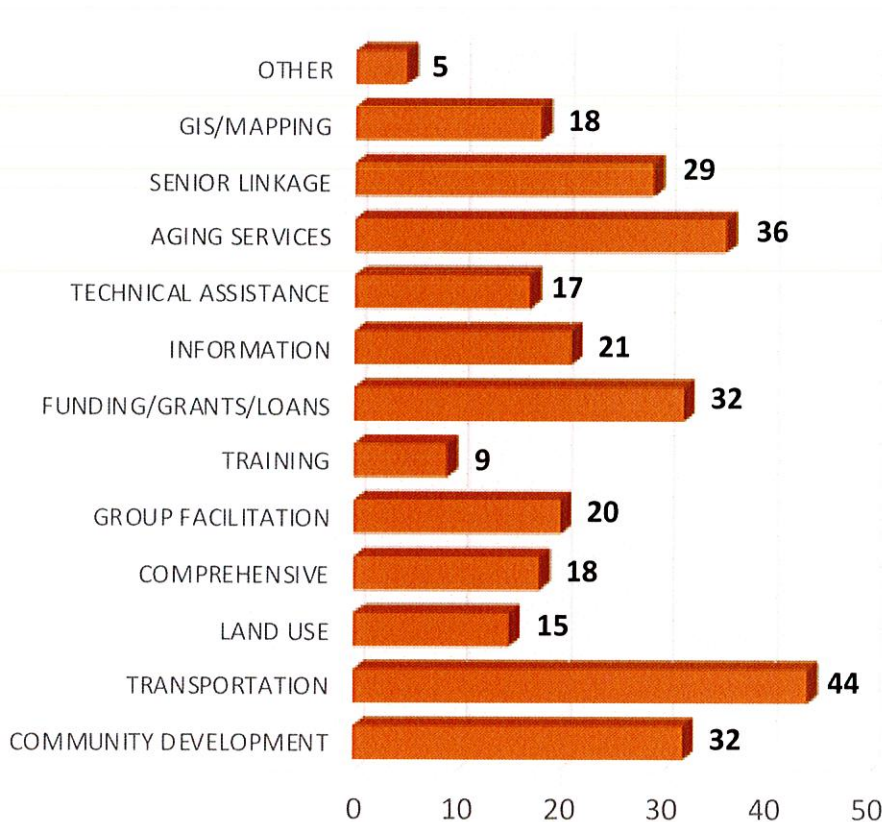
The largest percentage of respondents – 44 percent – indicated they had either received or had interaction with ARDC staff regarding transportation issues.

Other notable interactions included:

- Aging Services
- Community Development Planning
- Funding/Grants/Loans Assistance
- Each of these services had response levels above 30 percent.

“Other” responses are included in the Verbatim Response document available upon request.

ARDC STAFF INTERACTIONS



KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the services you've received from – or interactions you've had with – ARDC?

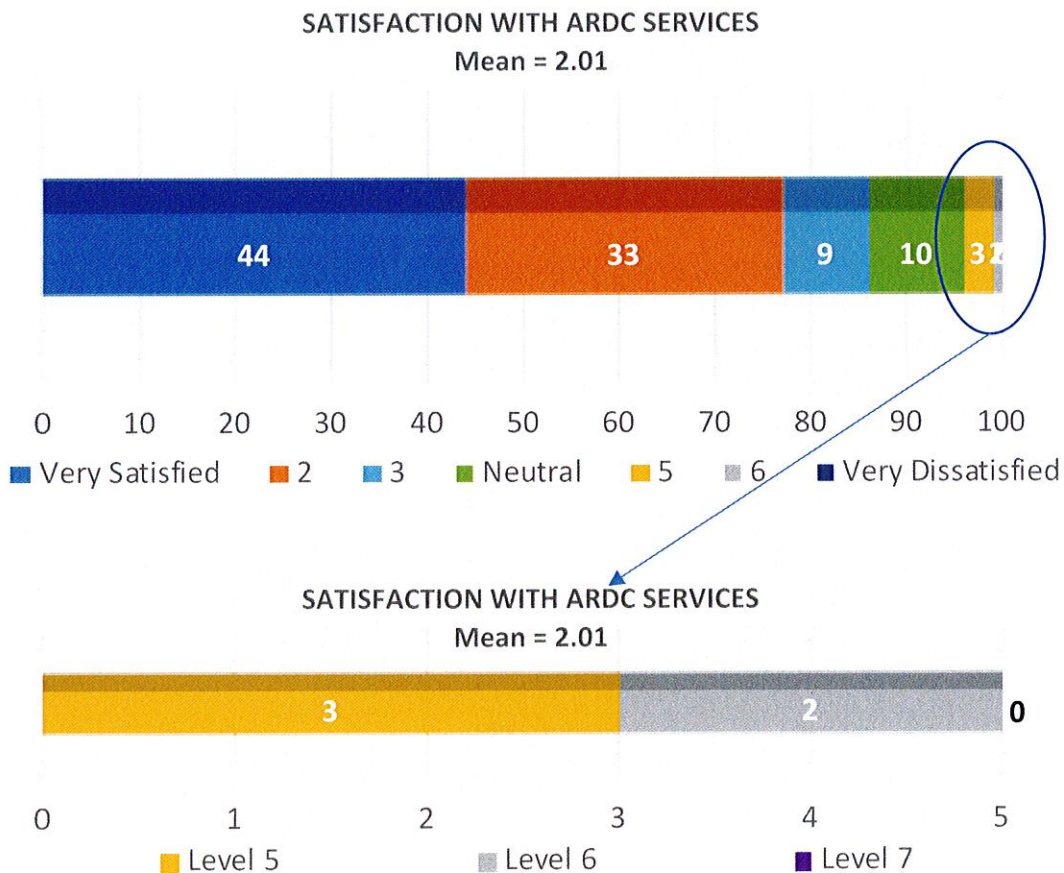
N = 236
Mean = 2.01

Overall, 86 percent of respondents reported positive satisfaction levels with the services or interactions they've had with ARDC.

As noted in the lower graph, just 5 percent of respondents reported negative rating levels.

Although relatively few in numbers (11 individuals), those registering a negative rating of 5 – 7 were asked a follow up question inquiring about the reasoning behind the negative response. Those responses are reported in the Verbatim Response section of this report.

Some of the individuals reporting negative ratings agreed to a further interview. Those interviews are being scheduled at the time of this writing and a report will be submitted for review upon completion of the interview process.



KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

To help ARDC improve its performance, it's important we better understand your experience working with our staff. For each of the following statements, please identify your level of agreement or disagreement that we ... (Statement)

In each case, respondents were asked to respond using a 7-point Likert scale where:

- 1 = Strongly Agree**
- 7 = Strongly Disagree**

Each of the statements is ranked by Mean; those statements with a lower Mean indicated higher levels of agreement.

According to the respondents, the highest level of agreement came from those who agreed ARDC is responsive to their needs and/or concerns.

The greatest level of disagreement came among respondents who indicated the organization does not sufficiently communicate about available services.

- 2.00** Are responsive to your needs and/or concerns

- 2.09** Effectively build partnerships and work collaboratively across service sectors and/or jurisdictions

- 2.13** Act as a natural third party; provide technical expertise and best practice information and facilitate discussion

- 2.14** Effectively interact with clients/customers

- 2.14** Provide leadership on topics related to regional needs and interests

- 2.16** Are responsive to changing regional needs/events

- 2.19** Are adept at bringing the right people to the table to address issues

- 2.22** Are willing to look at new approaches to solving problems

- 2.26** Are effective at gaining meaningful input from public and stakeholders

- 2.29** Are creative and innovative in finding resources for projects in the region

- 2.38** Are instrumental in building local and regional leadership capacity

- 2.43** Sufficiently communicate services available from ARDC

KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

What do you believe the residents of the arrowhead region think of ARDC? What is our public image?

N = 212

Mean = 2.78

Overall, 63 percent of the stakeholders believed the public image of ARDC was generally positive.

Just 9 of the stakeholders offered negative ratings on the 7-point scale. Unlike a previous question, these individuals were not asked to explain their reasoning for the negative rating.

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement: ARDC does enough to let the residents of the arrowhead region know exactly what it is we do and the level of engagement in communities throughout the region.

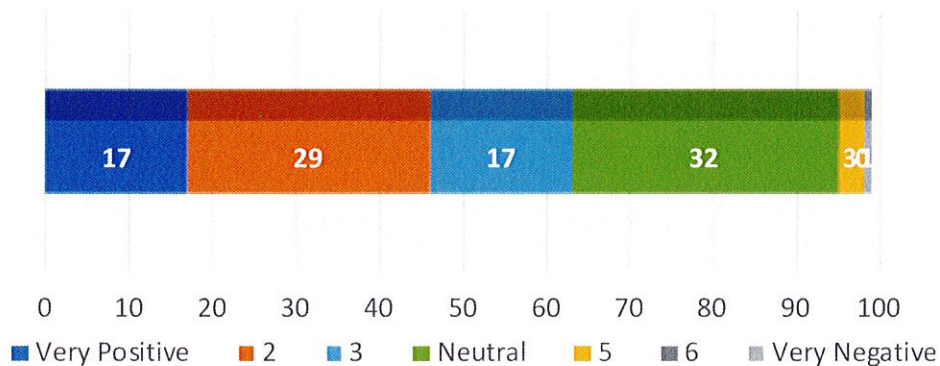
N = 213

Mean = 3.75

A significant percentage of stakeholders (32 percent) do not believe the organization does enough to inform residents of the region about the activities and level of engagement within the region.

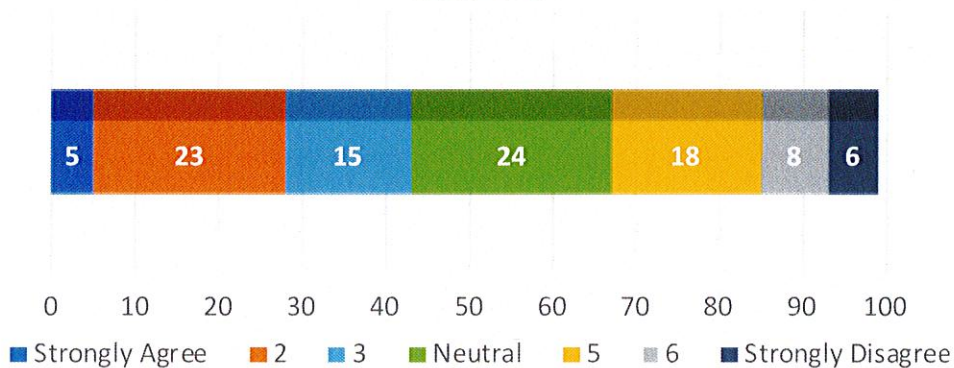
ARDC PUBLIC IMAGE

Mean = 2.78



ARDC PUBLIC EXPOSURE

Mean = 3.75



KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

How often do you log on to the ARDC website?

N = 214

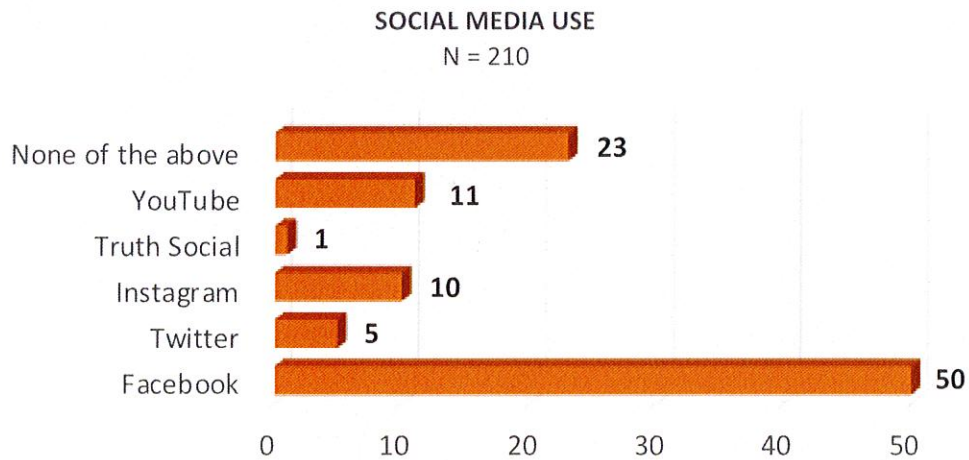
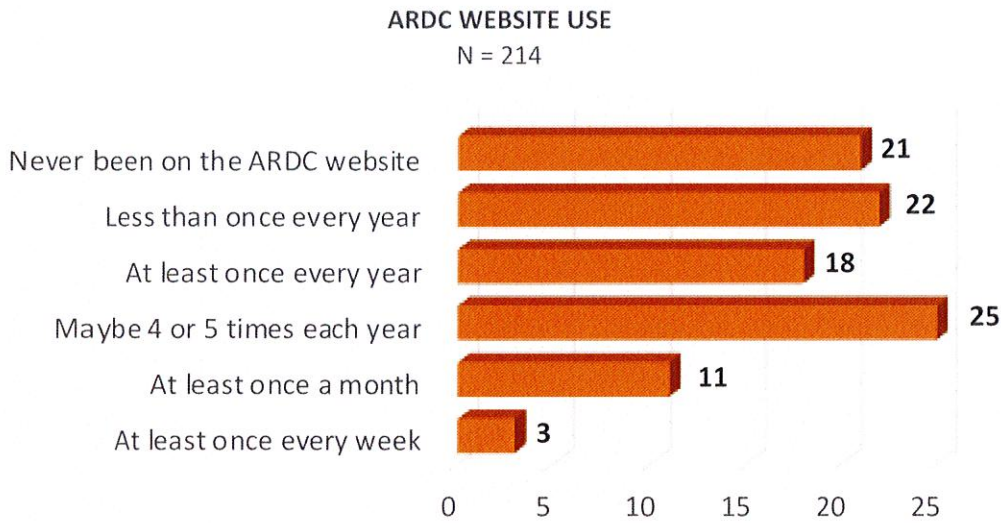
1 in 5 of the stakeholders surveyed indicated they had never been on the ARDC website; a similar percentage indicated their usage has been less than once every year.

Which of the following social media options do you frequently use?

N = 210

Half of all stakeholders surveyed indicated they frequently use Facebook.

More than 1 in 5 indicated they did not use any of the social media channels listed.

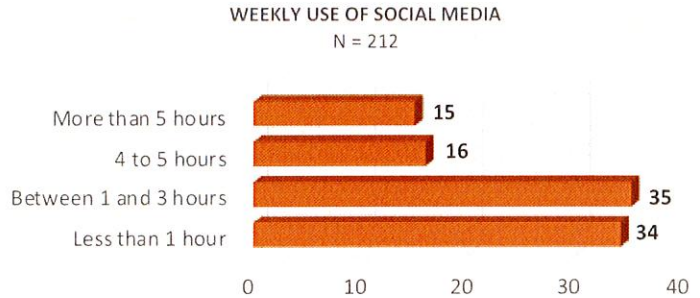


KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

Approximately how many hours would you spend on social media pages in an average week?

N = 212

Just under one third of the stakeholders indicated they are likely to spend more than 4 hours each week on social media.



Which of the following media sources do you most often read or watch?

(Check all that apply)

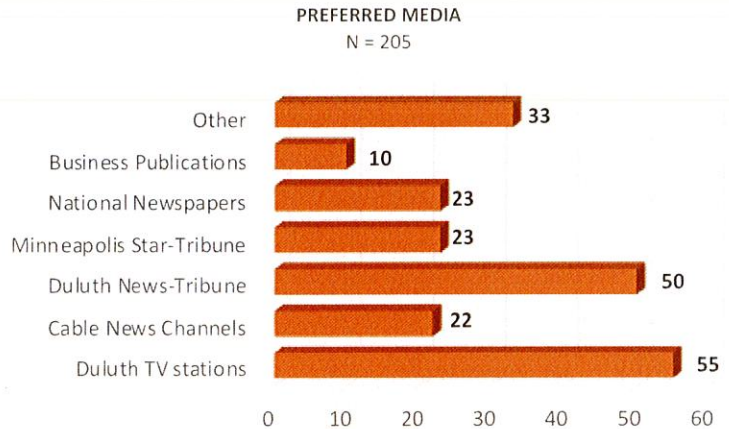
N = 205

Duluth television stations and the Duluth News-Tribune were the most widely used media.

National newspapers listed for consideration included the New York Times, Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal.

Business publications listed for consideration included Business North and Minneapolis-St. Paul Business Journal.

A review of "Other" responses is contained in the Verbatim Response document available upon request.



KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

For each of the following, please rate how effective you believe each of these communication tools would be in keeping our stakeholders and the public updated on the work of ARDC and the jurisdictions we serve.

In each case, respondents were asked to respond using a 7-point Likert scale where:

1 = Very Effective

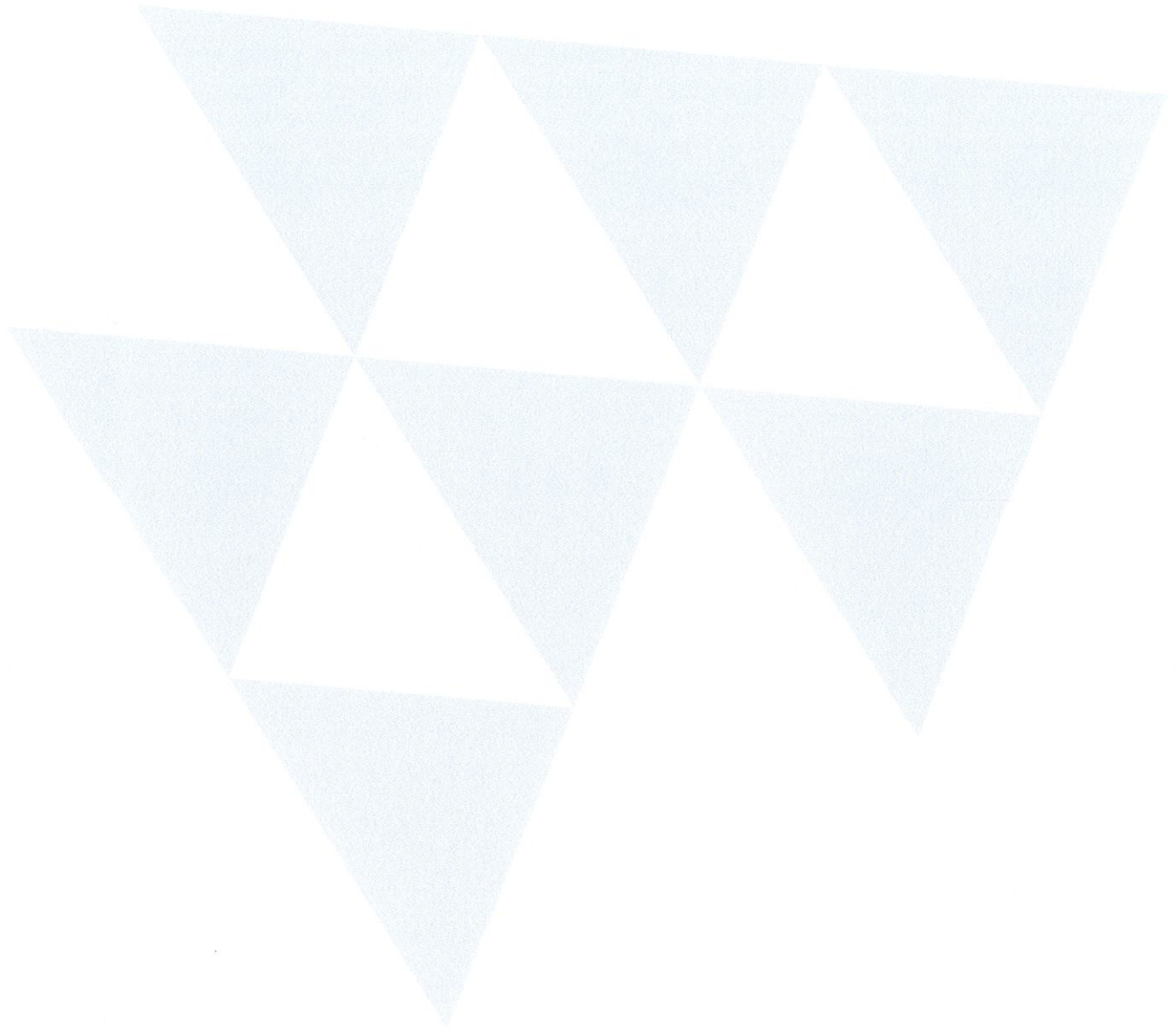
7 = Not At All Effective

Those statements with a lower Mean indicated higher levels of effectiveness.

Stakeholders believed newspaper stories and narrated video news releases (possibly posted on social media, the ARDC website and distributed to the news media) would be the most effective means of public communication.

There were “Other” comments made and those appear in the Verbatim Response document available upon request.

COMMUNICATION TOOL	N =	MEAN
Newspaper stories	200	2.52
Narrated video news releases about ARDC engagement/studies, etc.	203	2.52
Television news stories	199	2.55
Social media engagement (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	204	2.56
Radio news stories – interviews with ARDC staff	202	2.61
Written news releases on new ARDC engagements/studies, etc.	205	2.71
Quarterly newsletters	199	2.77
Monthly newsletters	199	3.03
Increased ARDC website postings	203	3.22
Billboard advertising	198	3.69
Bi-weekly newsletters	191	3.75



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