

According to the map, a family with an income of \$80,000 before taxes could not afford to buy the typical home in 76 per cent of the region's

by's budget.

According to the map, a family would have to make about \$110,000 a year before half of Metro Vancouver's

the University of B.C.'s Centre for Urban Economics and Real Estate, said the map illustrates what many middle-class families have already realized: That

said, a lot of the region's jobs are out in the Valley, too.

"Most people are not commuting from Surrey to downtown Vancouver," he said.

Grumpy about house prices?

You're not alone. Livability poll finds we love Vancouver, but can't afford it

LORI CULBERT
VANCOUVER SUN

Only three per cent of people who live in the city of Vancouver think they are paying a reasonable amount for their mortgages or rent, according to a new poll funded by Vancity.

And across the Lower

Mainland — known for its sky-high real estate prices — just one-quarter of residents think they are getting good value for money when it comes to housing or rental prices.

The poll results, released to The Vancouver Sun less than a month before the Nov. 15 municipal election, delved into the topic that

Vancouverites love to debate — housing affordability.

"Whether you grew up in this region, moved here 20 years or two months ago, housing costs are increasingly becoming part of how we define our relationship to Metro Vancouver," said Shachi Kurl, senior vice-president of Angus Reid Global, which conducted the poll.

"It's not a new conversation. We've been talking about these issues over coffee, in line at the grocery store, on date night or at family dinner for a generation. But as time goes by, housing costs appear to take on a more significant and prominent role in our lives."

The city of Vancouver had by far the lowest percentage

of fiscally happy homeowners — only three per cent thought they were getting good value from their mortgages or rental payments.

CONTINUED ON A11



FROM PAGE A1

Grumpy about house prices? You're not alone

The next most disgruntled lived on the North Shore (17 per cent) and Burnaby (10 per cent).

In no community was there a majority of residents who were happy with housing bills, although it came closest in Pitt Meadows/Maple Ridge (49 per cent) and New Westminster (45 per cent).

Nearly 1,100 Metro Vancouver residents were asked to rate their cities on "livability" factors, including green space, ethnic diversity, transit, family issues, safety, and the economy. Vancity used the results to produce a "Livable City Study."

Very few residents in Vancouver, the North Shore or Burnaby thought there were any affordable homes left, the poll found, while a majority of respondents in Pitt Meadows/Maple Ridge and the Fraser Valley thought well-valued homes could still be found with some diligent searching.

The poll also showed, though, that just because housing was expensive, it didn't mean people were unhappy. When asked whether "it is worth every penny to live where I live," nearly three-quarters of respondents said yes in the Fraser Valley, the North Shore and Richmond/Delta — often commenting about the region's beauty and mild weather.

That happiness was lowest — dropping to just over half of respondents — in Surrey, the Tri-Cities and Vancouver.

Courtney Komonasky, 42, is happy living in Vancouver, where she has been for 20 years, but cannot afford to buy a home. She has rented the same apartment for 11 years, so her rent has stayed reasonable, but she has watched similar units go up and up in price.

"I have a good job and I get paid a good wage, and I really don't know how people do it getting paid just minimum wage jobs," said Komonasky, a registered massage therapist.

Komonasky answered the Vancity poll and, like many others who completed the survey, believes escalating real estate prices are partly due to foreign buyers who invest in local houses and condos but leave them sitting empty.

This situation has been debated by candidates in Vancouver's mayor race, sparked by COPE's Meena Wong who suggested investors should pay a fee if they don't live in the properties they own. That's an issue Komonasky will follow during the election.

"There should be some kind of tax on the people who don't live here," she said. "Empty houses" makes the cost of things less affordable. They are not here to eat in restaurants or shop in the stores."

Komonasky will monitor candidates for affordable housing solutions, saying she hasn't witnessed cheaper rental units available in the city despite all the political talk in recent years.

All of Vancouver's main political parties have included affordable housing in their platforms, but they range significantly in details and depth.

Perhaps the catch-22 of living in expensive Vancouver is that residents often can't afford to take advantage of local playgrounds — sailing on the ocean or skiing in the mountains — because they are house poor.

"I don't know the time necessarily take advantage of the things that people talk about, like the skiing. I used to snowboard but that is expensive," Komonasky said.

Indeed, more than two thirds of poll respondents from Vancouver (67 per cent) said they have "given up a lot" to be able to afford to live in the city, followed by 59 per cent on the North Shore and 52 per cent in Burnaby. That concern was lowest among residents in the Fraser Valley (36 per cent) and Surrey (30 per cent).

The survey results showed people had made sacrifices to save money, regardless of where they lived in Metro Vancouver, including: living in a smaller space (Burnaby), getting an extra job (Vancouver), quitting golf and skiing (North Shore), reducing bills such as eliminating TV cable (New Westminster), and taking transit instead of driving (Surrey).

Nearly all respondents on the North Shore (91 per cent) and in Vancouver (89 per cent) agreed that people born in those cities cannot afford to buy real estate there. That sentiment existed across Metro, but dropped to two-thirds of people in the Fraser Valley and Pitt Meadows/Maple Ridge.

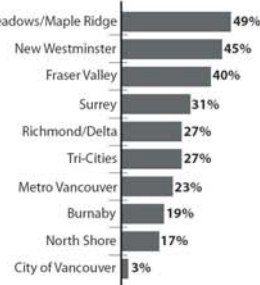
In Komonasky's case, most of her friends moved to the suburbs after having children, searching for cheaper housing.

Survey respondent Frank Wirrell dismissed as "propaganda" that Vancouver is considered one of the most livable cities in the world, promoting instead his hometown of Abbotsford. "Living in the Fraser Valley is more affordable and is excellent for retired persons," he said.

Deanna Overland of Burnaby

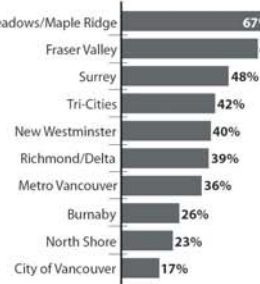
How Metro Vancouver residents rate livability factors

Value for money when it comes to housing/rental prices



How Metro Vancouver residents think about affordability

Where I live, there are affordable homes for sale if you look hard enough



Source: Vision Critical poll commissioned by Vancity

“There should be some kind of tax on the people who don't live here. ... (Empty houses) makes the cost of things less affordable. They are not here to eat in restaurants or shop.

MEENA WONG
COPE CANDIDATE

appeared to suggest that livability and affordability can be polar extremes in the region. "Vancouver is beautiful and has a lot to offer however the cost of housing makes it unlivable for the average person," she said.

These issues will undoubtedly be weighing on voters' minds when they cast their ballots Nov. 15.

Tomorrow in The Sun: Can the policies of municipal politicians impact sky-high prices in Metro Vancouver's hot housing market?

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HOUSING DEBATE

Vancouver residents concerned about affordable housing can attend an election debate

on Oct. 23 from 7 to 9 p.m. at UBC Robson Square, entitled "Affordable Vancouver?"

The debate, organized by The Vancouver Sun and the University of B.C., will feature a council candidate from each major party: Geoff Meggs (Vision), Ian Robertson (NPA), Adriane Carr (Green), Lisa Barrett (COPE), and Glen Chernen (Cedar Party).

The debate will be live-streamed on vancouver.sun.com.

WALMART CORRECTION NOTICE

Flyer ending October 22nd, 2014.

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The Infant Girls' \$5 Fleece Top shown in our current flyer will not be available.

We apologize for any inconvenience.

every day online

In Print Friday

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