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The City of Ann Arbor, Michigan

Summary Report 2007



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SURVEY BACKGROUND

About The National Citizen Survey™

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA).

Understanding the Results

Survey Administration

Following the mailing of a pre-survey notification postcard to a random sample of 3,000 households, surveys were mailed to the same residences approximately one week later. A reminder letter and a new survey were sent to the same households after two weeks. Of the mailed postcards, 10 were undeliverable due to vacant or “not found” addresses. Completed surveys were received from 1,137 residents, for a response rate of 38%. Typically, the response rates obtained on citizen surveys range from 25% to 40%.

It is customary to describe the precision of estimates made from surveys by a “level of confidence” (or margin of error). The 95 percent confidence level for this survey of 3,000 residents is generally no greater than plus or minus 3 percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample.

The results were weighted to reflect the demographic profile of all residents in the City of Ann Arbor. (For more information on the survey methodology, see Appendix B in the Report of Results. A copy of the survey materials can be found in Appendix C of the Report of Results.)

Use of the “Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor” Response Scale

The scale on which respondents are asked to record their opinions about service and community quality is “excellent,” “good,” “fair” or “poor” (EGFP). While symmetrical scales often are the right choice in other measurement tasks, we have found that ratings of almost every local government service in almost every jurisdiction tend, on average, to be positive (that is, above the scale midpoint). Therefore, to permit finer distinctions among positively rated services, EGFP offers three options across which to spread those ratings. EGFP is more neutral because it requires no positive statement of service quality to judge (as agree-disagree scales require) and, finally, EGFP intends to measure absolute quality of service delivery or community quality (unlike satisfaction scales which ignore residents’ perceptions of quality in favor of their report on the acceptability of the level of service offered).

Putting Evaluations onto a 100-Point Scale

Although responses to many of the evaluative questions were made on a 4 point scale with 4 representing the best rating and 1 the worst, many of the results in this summary are reported on a common scale where 0 is the worst possible rating and 100 is the best possible rating. If everyone reported “excellent,” then the result would be 100 on the 100-point scale. Likewise, if all respondents gave a “poor” rating, the result would be 0 on the 100-point scale. If the average rating for quality of life was “good,” then the result would be 67 on a 100-point scale; “fair” would be 33 on the 100-point scale. The 95 percent confidence interval around an average score on the 100-point scale is no greater than plus or minus 3 points based on all respondents.

PROFILE OF ANN ARBOR

As assessed by the survey, about 27% of Ann Arbor residents have lived in the community for more than 20 years and 46% are over age 34. Another 8% are over age 64. Seventy-five percent are currently employed; 55% rent; 45% own and 42% live in detached single family homes. Over 95% of Ann Arbor residents have at least some college and 48% have annual household incomes above \$50,000. Three percent of Ann Arbor residents reported that they are Spanish, Hispanic or Latino and 81% said they are White or Caucasian.

COMMUNITY LIFE

The National Citizen Survey™ contained many questions related to the life of residents in the community. Survey participants were asked to rate their overall quality of life, as well as other aspects of quality of life in Ann Arbor. They also evaluated characteristics of the community, and gave their perceptions of safety in the City of Ann Arbor. The questionnaire assessed use of the amenities of the community and involvement by respondents in the civic and economic life of Ann Arbor.

Quality of Life

When asked to rate the overall quality of life in Ann Arbor, 36% of respondents thought it was “excellent.” Zero percent rated overall quality of life as “poor.” Ann Arbor as a place to raise children received an average rating of 78 on a 100-point scale.

Ratings of Community Characteristics

The highest rated characteristics of Ann Arbor were educational opportunities, opportunities to attend cultural activities, and overall image/reputation. When asked about potential problems in Ann Arbor, the three concerns rated by the highest proportion of respondents as a “major problem” were taxes, traffic congestion, and homelessness. The rate of population growth in Ann Arbor was viewed as “too fast” by 39% of respondents, while 4% thought it was “too slow.”

Perceptions of Safety

When evaluating safety in the community, 79% of respondents felt “somewhat” or “very safe” from violent crimes in Ann Arbor. In their neighborhood after dark, 80% of survey participants felt “somewhat” or “very safe.”

As assessed by the survey, 9% of households reported that at least one member had been the victim of one or more crimes in the past year. Of those who had been the victim of a crime, 71% had reported it to police.

Community Participation

Participation in the civic, social and economic life of Ann Arbor during the past year was assessed on the survey. Among those completing the questionnaire, 94% reported visiting a park in Ann Arbor in the past year and 21% had attended a meeting of elected officials or other local public meeting.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Several aspects of the government of the City of Ann Arbor were evaluated by residents completing The National Citizen Survey™. They were asked how much trust they placed in their local government, and what they felt about the services they receive from the City of Ann Arbor. Those who had any contact with a City of Ann Arbor employee in the past year gave their impressions of the most recent encounter.

Public Trust

When asked to evaluate whether they felt they received good value for taxes they pay, residents gave an average rating of 60 on a 100-point scale.

Service Provided by Ann Arbor

The overall quality of services provided by the City of Ann Arbor was rated as 66 on a 100-point scale.

The City of Ann Arbor Employees

Impressions of the City of Ann Arbor employees were assessed on the questionnaire. Those who had been in contact with a City of Ann Arbor employee in the past year (47%) rated their overall impression as 63 on a 100-point scale.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Three additional questions were asked by the City of Ann Arbor as listed below. The results for these questions are also available in the Report of Results. Open-ended results can be found under a separate cover.

Policy Question #1

How important, if at all, do you think each of the following investments is for the City of Ann Arbor?	Policy Question #1				Total
	Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	
Open space	33%	36%	26%	6%	100%
Youth programs (ages 13-17)	28%	47%	22%	3%	100%
Programs for children (ages 12 and under)	26%	47%	24%	3%	100%
Public safety areas like law enforcement and fire protection	45%	38%	15%	2%	100%
City road system, including new and improved transportation and roads	37%	42%	20%	2%	100%
Recycling	40%	37%	20%	3%	100%
Maintenance of public buildings and facilities	23%	48%	27%	1%	100%
Computing technology	24%	39%	32%	5%	100%

Note: "don't know" responses have been removed.

Policy Question #2

Which resources do you rely on to get news about the City of Ann Arbor? Please check all that apply:	Percent of Respondents
Newspapers	79%
Ann Arbor radio stations	46%
City of Ann Arbor Web site	29%
Community Television Network (CTN) Government Coverage	16%
City Council member	2%
None of the above	7%
Other	12%

Note: Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one category.

Policy Question #3

How important, if at all, are each of the following in relation to your quality of life in Ann Arbor?	Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Total
Bike paths	22%	23%	28%	26%	100%
Availability of alternate transportation	28%	29%	27%	15%	100%
Recycling programs	37%	33%	24%	6%	100%
Increased traffic patrols to monitor speeding	7%	18%	35%	39%	100%
Increased police presence	9%	22%	41%	28%	100%
Strict code enforcement	7%	21%	44%	28%	100%
Well-equipped/maintained neighborhood parks	24%	46%	26%	4%	100%
Preservation of historic districts	19%	32%	37%	12%	100%

Note: "don't know" responses have been removed.