

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

On September 21, 2005, an eight-page survey was mailed to 1,400 randomly selected City of Victoria (“City”) citizens. The purpose of the 2005 Citizen Survey was to investigate what the City’s citizens thought about their quality of life in their communities and in the downtown area, local government’s delivery of services and facilities, and the value they receive for their money.

By the October 14, 2005 response deadline, 557 completed surveys were received, giving a high response rate of 41% and low sampling error of $\pm 4\%$, 19 times out of 20. Typically, response rates for citizen surveys of this kind are between 25% and 40%. The low sampling error of $\pm 4\%$ means that with this sample size, we can be 95% confident that the results will fall within $\pm 4\%$ points of what they would be if the total population within the boundaries of the City of Victoria was surveyed.

KEY FINDINGS

The key findings of the City of Victoria’s 2005 Citizen Survey are summarized below.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Place to Live

- The majority of citizens consider Victoria to be a great place to live. Citizens find the City’s overall quality of life to be very good (with an average score of 87 out of 100). Citizens also view Victoria as a good place to retire (89) and to raise children (82).

Likes and Dislikes

- Citizens like Victoria for its climate and geography (45%), its atmosphere and lifestyle (19%) and its flora, greenspace and parks (9%).
- Citizens dislike Victoria for its street population (18%), its affordability and cost of living (14%), and the costs and inconvenience of its transportation systems (8%).

Safety and Security

- Citizens feel a higher sense of safety in their neighbourhoods during the *day* (91%), than they do at *night* (49%).
- Citizens feel a higher sense of safety in the downtown area during the *day* (79%), than they do at *night* (26%).
- Fifty-eight percent of citizens feel that their home is safe from burglary.
- Citizens perceive a lack of safety and security in the downtown area and in their neighbourhoods largely because of the street population (43%) and the perceived levels of crime and unlawful activity (31%).

DOWNTOWN: ACTIVITIES, LIKES AND DISLIKES

Downtown Activities

- The most popular downtown activities that citizens participate in several times a year include partaking in leisure activities (with an average score of 63 out of 100), shopping (63), and conducting business (51).

Likes and Dislikes

- Citizens like the downtown area for its selection of amenities and services (22%), its accessibility, convenience and mobility (19%) and its architecture, buildings and streetscapes (17%).
- Citizens dislike the downtown area because of the street population (48%), the parking (16%) and the atmosphere and lifestyle (11%).

CITY SERVICES

Usage of City Services

- City facilities most regularly visited by citizens are Beacon Hill Park (with an average score of 45 out of 100), and other City parks (36).
- Attendance at public meetings about City matters was the least used service (with an average score of 6 out of 100).

Satisfaction/Importance of City Services

- Citizens expressed a significant difference between the importance of many city services and their satisfaction with how they are being delivered (please see full report for detailed results of all 68 City services).

CITY BUDGET PRIORITIES

Taxes

- Forty-seven percent of respondents prefer to pay the same amount of taxes as they do now, with the same or reduced level of City services.
- Forty-three percent of respondents believe they receive good value for the City taxes they pay.

Capital Projects

- Citizens feel that the most important capital project areas that the City should focus on are:
 - affordable housing;
 - sewer, drainage and water systems;
 - environmental protection and enhancement; and
 - road/traffic calming, and streets.

CITIZEN-CITY COMMUNICATION AND INVOLVEMENT

Learning About City Issues

- Citizens learn about City government issues through their local newspapers (79%), as well as through various TV (53%) and radio (40%) stations.

Citizen Involvement

- Thirty-nine percent of citizens feel that the City welcomes citizen involvement, while 28% feel that the City listens to them.
- Citizens want to be involved in the City's information sharing, planning and decision-making processes through public opinion surveys (with a score of 66 out of 100), community meetings/open houses (62) and public meetings/hearings (61).

Customer Service

- The most widely used methods of contacting City staff members include the Public Service Centre (19%), the telephone (17%), and the Permits/Inspections/Engineering counter (10%).
- Citizens indicate that staff are generally easy to reach, easy to understand, knowledgeable, polite and courteous, and make referrals to the right person(s) in the organization. Citizens rate the overall level of service provided by City staff as high, with 11 of the 14 contact methods receiving an average score of 77 (out of 100) or higher.

Neighbour Community Associations

- Thirty-one percent of citizens are satisfied with their neighbourhood community association bringing their issues to the City, while 47% are not familiar with their association's activities.

Electronic Communication

- Forty-percent of citizens have visited the City's website in the last 12 months, and the same percentage (40%) is interested in an email service that provides information about City matters.
- The website service that citizens are most satisfied with (73%), and attribute high importance (84%) to is the online bill payment system. Website services that citizens are not satisfied with, but attribute high importance to include the following: service requests (45% satisfaction), accuracy of the "search" tool (56%), website navigation (62%), recreation program registration (63%), and website content (67%).
- The things that citizens would like to see on the City's website includes public information (15%), City facilities, programs and service information (12%), and arts, cultural and community events/activities (11%).
- Seventy-seven percent of citizens use the Internet.

CITY GOVERNANCE

Perception of City Governance

- Forty-three percent of citizens are pleased with the overall direction that the City is taking.

KEY ISSUES

Survey results indicate that there are some things that citizens are very satisfied with, and some key areas that citizens would like the City to address, including the following:

Areas of highest concern:

- Street Population (including the presence and number of street people, particularly in the downtown area)
- Affordable Housing (such as the lack and availability of affordable housing)
- Affordability and Cost of Living (such as high prices, including the cost of real estate, transit, and the cost of getting off and on the island)
- Crime and Unlawful Activities (such as the levels of drug and alcohol use, and various acts of violence)
- City Sewer, Drainage and Water Systems

Areas of highest satisfaction:

- Quality of life
- Amenities and services
- Climate, geography, atmosphere and lifestyle
- Value for taxes
- Customer service

CONCLUSION

The results of the 2005 Citizen Survey will serve as a useful governing tool for the Mayor, Council and staff, as they set budget priorities, evaluate programs and services and make strategic decisions to shape the future of the City of Victoria. While there is room for improvement in some key areas of the city, the results indicate that overall, citizens are pleased with many aspects of life within the City of Victoria.