

Resident perceptions about Quality of Life and City Services in San José

RESIDENT SURVEY

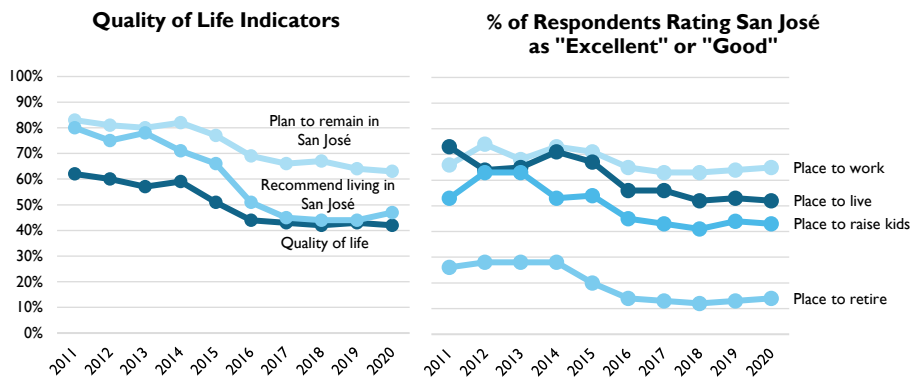
2020 marked San José's 10th year of participation in The National Community Survey™ (referred to throughout this report as the resident survey). The National Community Survey™ is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The survey was developed by NRC to provide a statistically valid sampling of resident opinions about their community and services provided by local government. Survey results in this chapter and in the following chapters provide the opinions of 3,750 residents of the city who responded to either a mail or online survey.

We should note that the survey period occurred six months into the COVID-19 pandemic. Although we cannot correlate all changes to the impact of the pandemic, ratings of some services and community characteristics may have been affected by the changes in service delivery and the County's shelter in place order. Furthermore, the challenges and stress of living in a pandemic may have affected perceptions and ratings more generally. Complete survey results are posted online at sanjoseca.gov/servicesreport. The end of this chapter provides more specific information about the survey methodology.

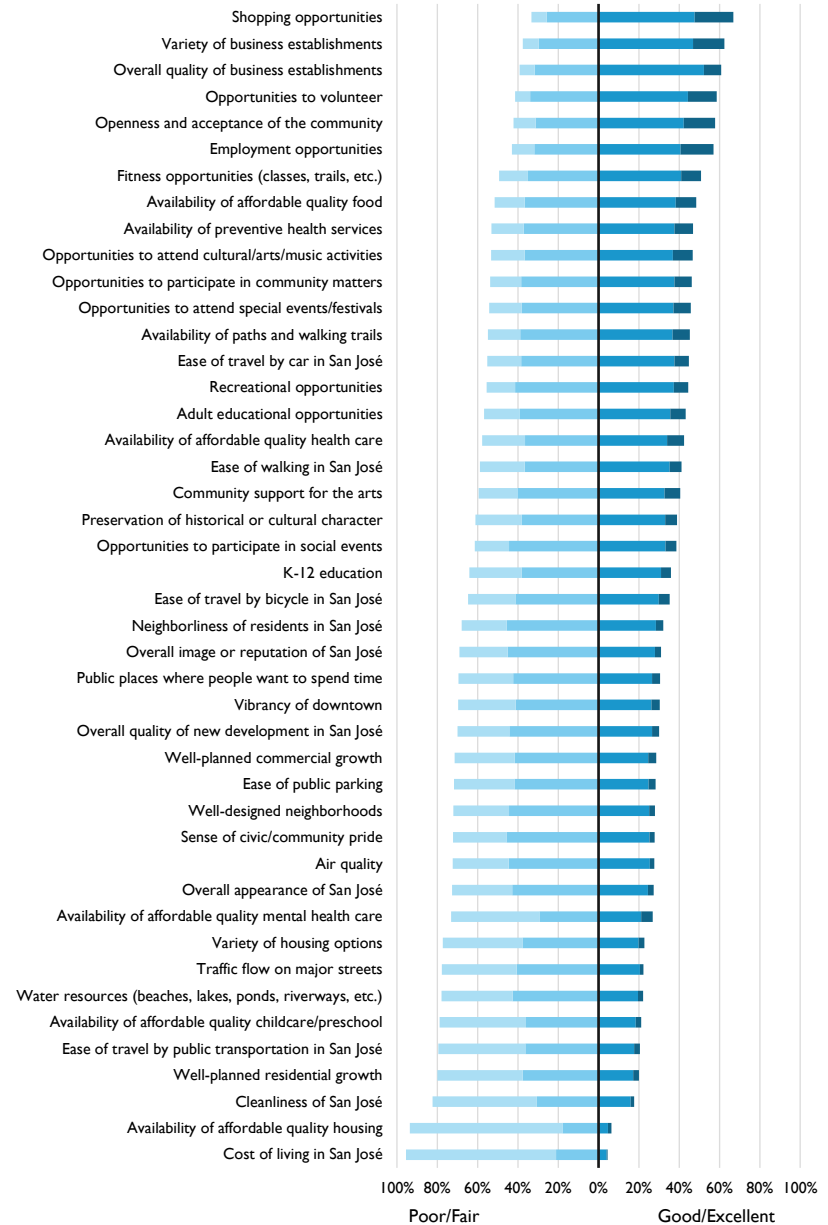
QUALITY OF LIFE IN SAN JOSÉ

How residents rate their overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. This can include opinions about a community's natural and built environments; the availability of services and amenities; overall feelings about safety or the economic health of the community; and other aspects of life.

Most ratings from 2020 are similar compared to those from 2019. Cost of living and availability of affordable quality housing remain the lowest rated community characteristics. Shopping opportunities rated the highest among community characteristics, though its rating dropped from last year.



Ratings of Community Characteristics

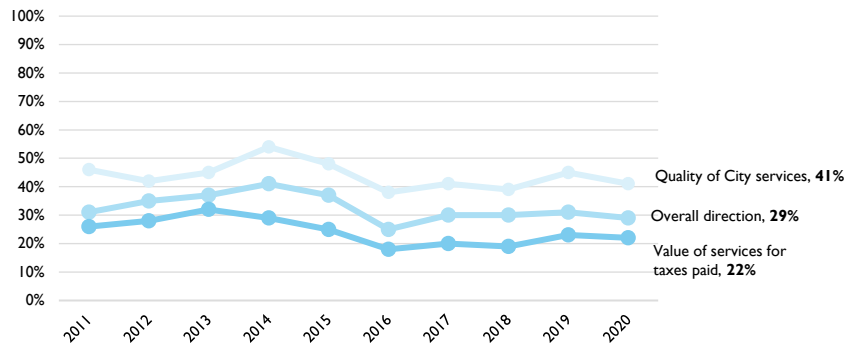


CITYWIDE QUALITY OF SERVICES

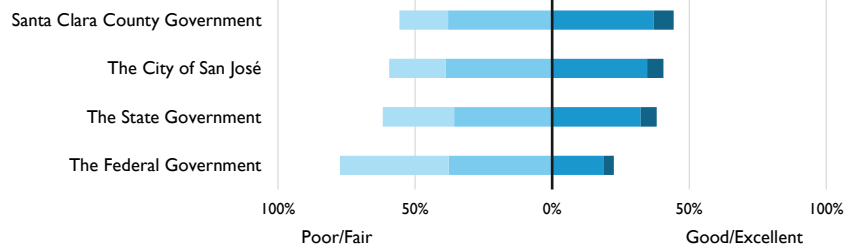
In the resident survey, the percentage of surveyed residents that rated the overall quality of City services "excellent" or "good" is about the same as it was last year.

Satisfaction with specific government services ranged from a high of 80 percent of residents rating fire services as "excellent" or "good" to a low of 13 percent for code enforcement. Other highly rated government services include public libraries; the ease of using the the Mineta San José International Airport (SJC); and garbage collection. More information on survey results related to specific services can be found in individual department pages later in this report.

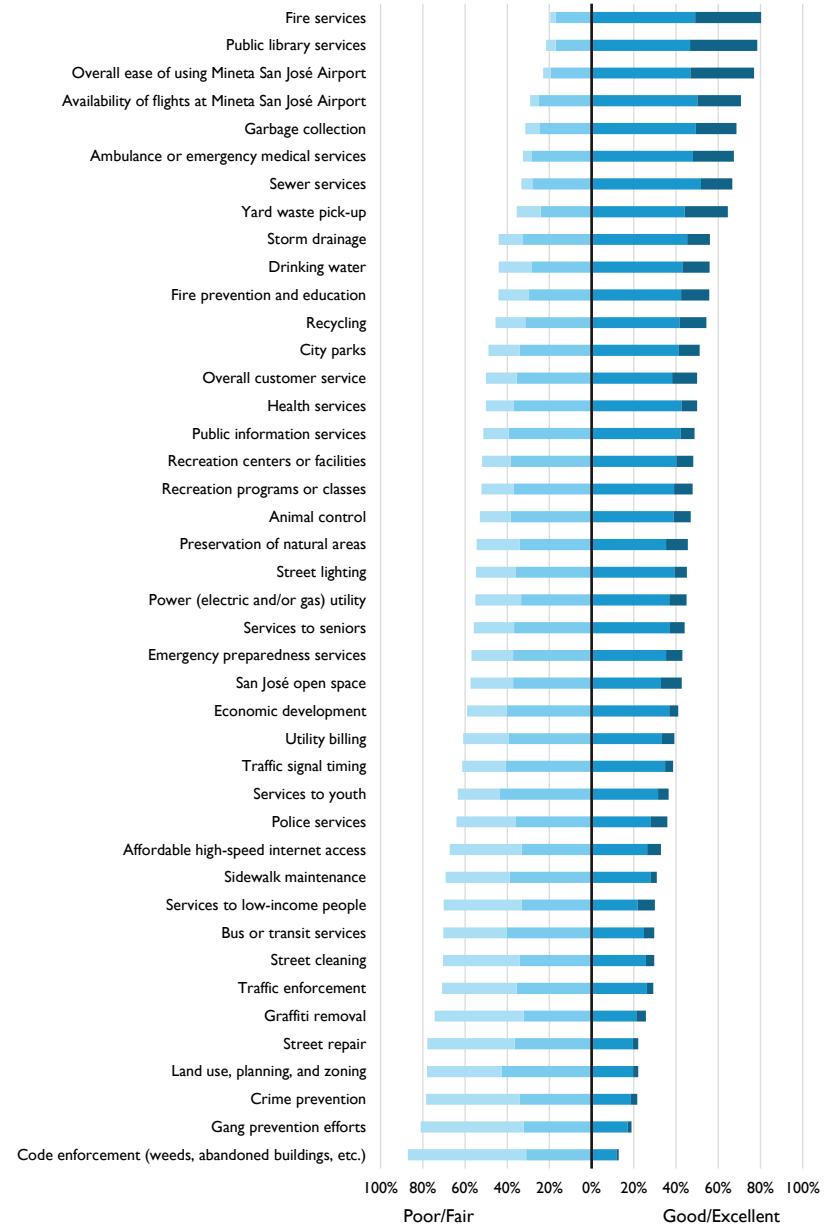
% of Respondents Rating San José Services as "Excellent" or "Good"



Perception of Governance



Quality of Government Services



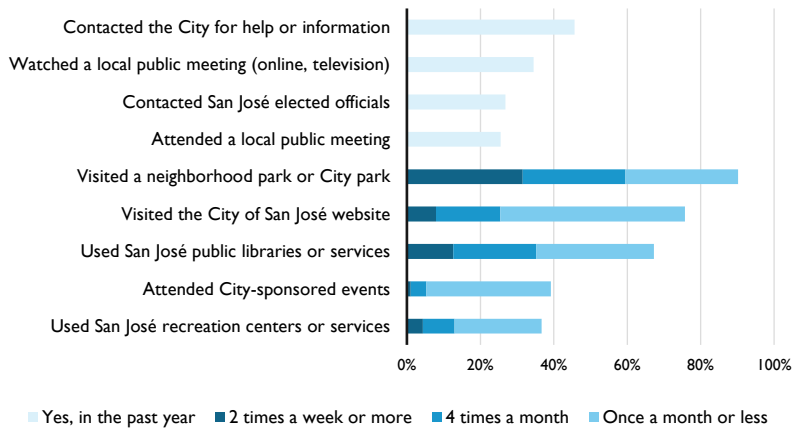
RESIDENT SURVEY

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION & CITYWIDE PUBLIC TRUST

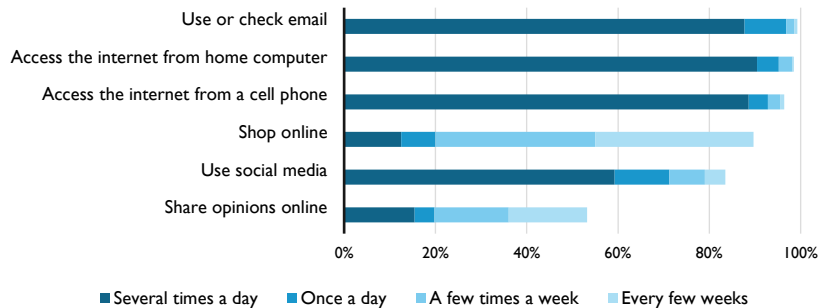
The resident survey also asked residents a variety of questions about their participation in the community, contact with City government, and confidence in San José's governance. About two in three respondents said that they think it is essential or very important for San José to focus on sense of community in the next two years, a decrease from last year.

For the first time in 2020, the survey asked residents about their use of the internet. More than nine in ten accessed the internet from home at least once a day. Three in four respondents visited the City of San José website (at www.sanjoseca.gov). More residents reported watching a public meeting online or on television than in person in 2020.

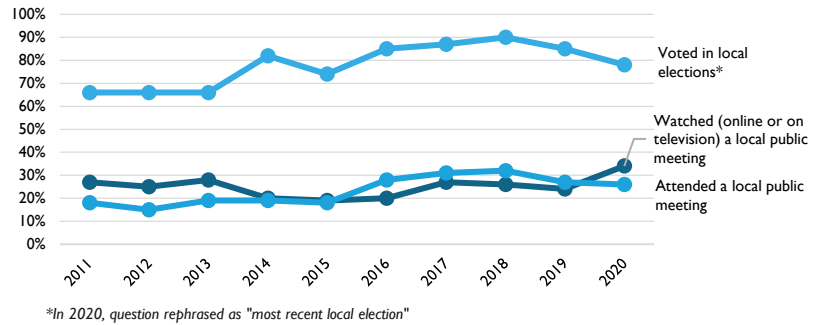
Contact with City Government



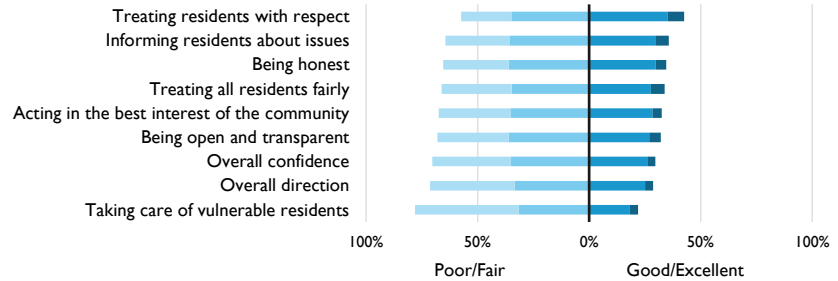
Residents' Use of the Internet



Public Participation in San José



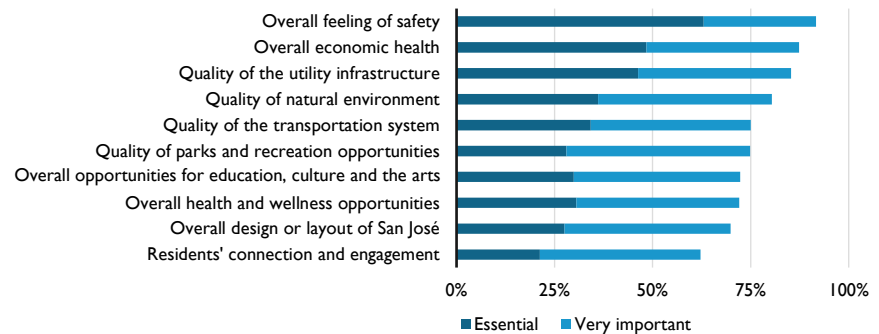
Public Trust and Confidence in City Government



PRIORITY ISSUES FOR RESIDENTS

Residents were asked to assess priorities for the San José community to focus on in the coming two years. Nine in ten respondents felt that it was essential or very important to focus on the overall feeling of safety in San José and nearly as many residents felt it was essential or very important to focus on economic health.

Resident Priorities in San José

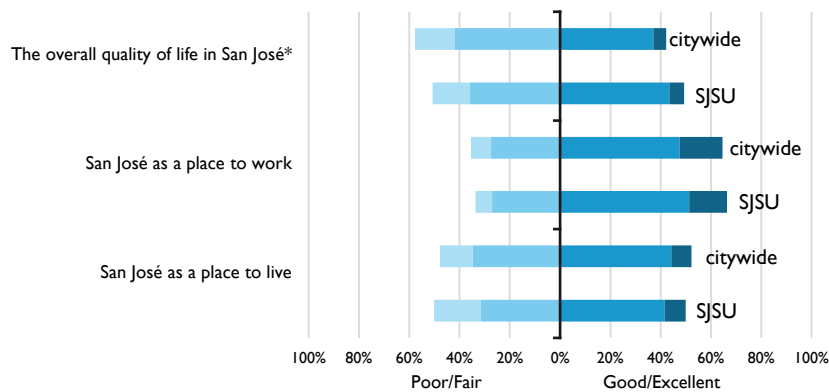


SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

2020 marked the second year that San José State University (SJSU) participated in the resident survey. The university sent a shortened version of the resident survey to students, faculty, and staff to complete online. (See survey methodology section for more details.) The SJSU survey was administered by NRC, same as the citywide survey. Over 900 students, faculty, and staff responded to the survey. Around three-quarters of respondents live in San José.

Over half of SJSU students and faculty said that they would likely recommend living in San José to someone who asks, a significant increase from last year (42 percent). SJSU respondents rated many social, cultural, and artistic opportunities in San José more highly than did residents citywide, though the number of respondents that reported attending a City-sponsored event in the last year dropped from the year prior, 50 percent to 41 percent.

Quality of Life Comparison

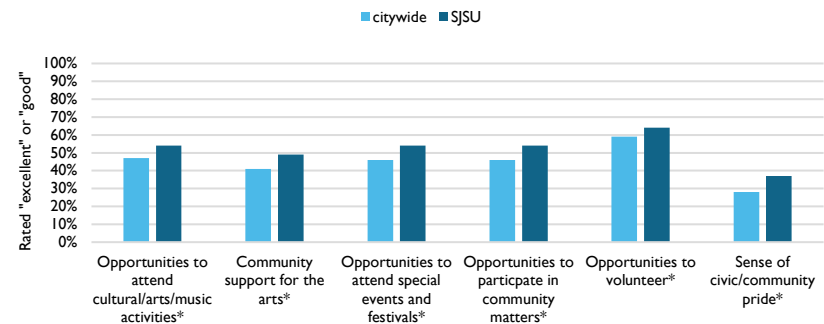


* Statistically significant differences are indicated with an asterisk.

On many measures, SJSU responses and citywide responses were similar. As shown above, SJSU respondents and citywide respondents similarly rated the city as a place to work and live. SJSU respondents gave the city higher ratings for overall quality of life (a change from last year). Seventy-five percent of SJSU respondents said that they were likely to recommend studying in San José to someone who asks.

Additional characteristics were rated similarly across the survey groups. For example, ratings for cleanliness, the quality of new development, well-planned commercial and residential growth, and cost of living were similar. In some other cases, responses varied significantly. Citywide respondents rated shopping opportunities and overall feeling of safety higher than SJSU respondents. SJSU respondents rated vibrancy of downtown, and other measures of community involvement, more highly than citywide respondents.

Social and Cultural Activities

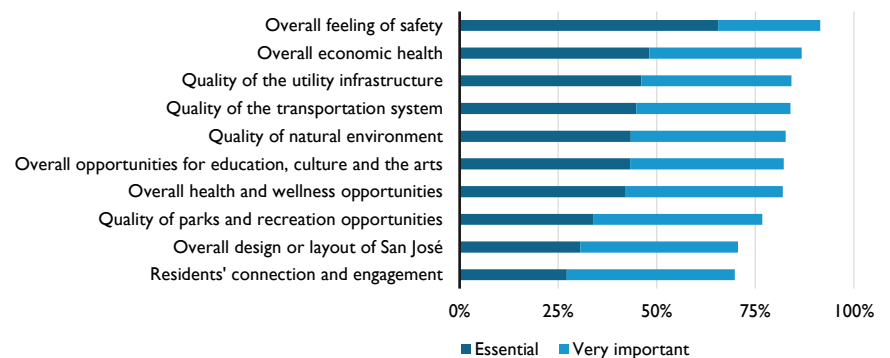


* Statistically significant differences are indicated with an asterisk.

SHARED PRIORITIES FOR THE CITY

Respondents in both surveys rated the overall feeling of safety, economic health, and utility infrastructure as three top priorities that were "essential" or "very important" to focus on in the coming two years.

SJSU Priorities in San José



RESIDENT SURVEY

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey data presented in this report was collected and analyzed by the [National Research Center, Inc.](#) on behalf of the City Auditor's Office.

The survey consultant mailed surveys to a statistically valid sample of 3,000 San José households starting in August 2020. They also sent postcards to an additional 1,000 random households inviting residents to complete the survey online. Seventy-seven, or about 2 percent, of mailings were returned to sender. Completed surveys were received from 584 residents, for a response rate of 15 percent.

The consultant selected survey respondents at random and tracked survey responses by each quadrant of the City (Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, Southwest). Participation was encouraged with multiple mailings; self-addressed, postage-paid envelopes; and four language choices—English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese. Of the 584 completed surveys, 570 were completed in English, two in Spanish, two in Vietnamese, and ten in Chinese. The survey consultant statistically re-weighted results, as necessary, to reflect the actual demographic composition of the entire community.

An additional 3,166 residents completed an online “opt-in” survey, which was publicized through a press release, public service announcement, social media, and email notifications, all of which were translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese. A link to the survey was also posted on the City's website and multilingual flyers were distributed to community groups. The survey consultant has protocols to review the integrity of “opt-in” survey responses, such as checking for repeat IP addresses.

Upon completion of data collection of both the mail and “opt-in” surveys, the survey consultant compared data from the two samples to determine whether it was appropriate to combine, or blend, both samples together. Based on the similarity of the mail and “opt-in” sample characteristics, the survey consultant determined that the two samples could be blended.

To blend the data, the consultant weighted “opt-in” survey data using a calibration technique that takes into consideration behavioral characteristics of the sample, as well as demographic data. This calibration technique reduces the differences that may occur between the mail and “opt-in” samples by using the mail results to inform the weighting scheme of the “opt-in” sample.

To do this, the survey consultant calculated an index score based on respondents' levels of engagement in the community (e.g., contact with City employees, recreation center use, frequency of volunteering). They then categorized index scores into four equal groups and used the “norms” for the categorized index scores from the random mail sample as part of the weighting scheme for the “opt-in” sample.

The precision of estimates made from surveys are usually described by a “level of confidence” and accompanying “confidence interval” (or margin of error). A traditional level of confidence, and the one used here, is 95 percent. The margin of error around results for this survey is plus or minus two percentage points. With this margin of error, one may conclude that when 60 percent of survey respondents report that a particular service is “excellent” or “good,” somewhere between 58 to 62 percent of all residents are likely to feel that way. Differences between 2019 and 2020 results can be considered statistically significant if they are plus or minus six percentage points.

NRC periodically revises its standard survey instrument. Some survey questions were rephrased or reordered in 2020. For example, prior to 2020, “overall quality of the transportation system” was rated as “overall ease of getting to the places you usually have to visit.” Differences in ratings may be at least partially attributable to changes in question wording and should be interpreted cautiously.

For complete methodology, see Appendix C of the Technical Appendices, posted online at sanjoseca.gov/servicesreport.

In addition, for the second time this year, the City Auditor's Office worked with the Knight Foundation and San José State University to implement a parallel survey of university students and faculty. This survey used a slightly abbreviated version of the City's survey and substituted “campus” for “neighborhood” where appropriate (e.g., “rate how safe you feel on campus during the day”). The university encouraged participation with a message from the president. Responses were submitted online by 970 students, faculty, and staff. The consultant used statistical tests to determine whether responses from SJSU varied significantly from citywide responses within a 95 percent confidence level.