

Survey Background

Survey Purpose

The City of Minneapolis contracted with National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) to conduct a citywide resident survey. The Minneapolis Resident Survey serves as a consumer report card for Minneapolis by providing residents the opportunity to rate the quality of life in the city, as well as the community's amenities, service delivery and their satisfaction with local government. The survey also permits residents to provide feedback to government on what is working well and what is not, and to communicate their priorities for community planning and resource allocation.

The focus on the quality of service delivery and the importance of services helps council, staff and the public to set priorities for decisions and lays the groundwork for tracking community opinions about the core responsibilities of Minneapolis City government, helping to assure maximum service quality over time.

This type of survey gets at the key services that local government controls to create a quality community. It is akin to private sector customer surveys that are used regularly by many corporations to monitor where there are weaknesses in product or service delivery before customers defect to competition or before other problems from dissatisfied customers arise.

This is the fifth iteration of the Minneapolis Resident Survey since the baseline study conducted in 2001. This is the third iteration conducted by NRC.

Methods

A random digit dial sample (RDD) of Minneapolis residents was purchased for this project, where part of the sample was geocoded using reverse directory look-up to help determine in which Community Planning District potential respondents lived. Phone numbers of Minneapolis residents were randomly selected for interviewing. Phone calls were made from February 1, 2011 to March 10, 2011. A majority of the interviews was completed during the evening hours, although calls were made on the weekend and during weekdays also. All phone numbers were dialed at least eight times before replacing with another number, with at least one of the attempts on either a weekend or weekday evening.

Once interviews were completed using the RDD list, respondent address information was geocoded to determine in which of 11 community planning districts a respondent resided. Community planning districts were chosen as the geographic unit of analysis below the City level. The districts were the same geographic units selected for prior surveys. Datasets are available for a wide variety of demographics based upon the community planning districts. To complete the minimum number of responses determined for each community (95), a set of numbers was pre-coded for location and called to fill the quota for each community planning district. An additional quota system based on racial groups was used to ensure that a representative number of these populations participated in the survey. Another quota of cell phone users was implemented for this iteration and residents using Text Telephone (TTY) (use of telephones for the hearing impaired) also were dialed.

Interviewers who spoke Spanish, Vietnamese, Somali, Hmong, Lao and Oromo were available for this survey; 12 surveys were conducted in Spanish, one in Hmong, one in Vietnamese, one in Oromo and four in Somali. While interviewers were available to conduct the survey in Lao, no interviews were completed in this language. About a quarter of completed interviews were conducted with residents of color and about a quarter were completed with cell phone users. Also, while TTY capabilities were offered this year, no surveys were completed with TTY users. The overall response rate was 23%.

Understanding the Results

“Don’t Know” Responses and Rounding

On the questions in the survey, respondents could answer “don’t know.” The proportion of respondents giving this reply is shown in the full set of responses included in *Appendix III: Complete Set of Frequencies*. However, the “don’t know” responses have been removed from the analyses presented in the body of the report. In other words, the tables and graphs in the report body display the responses from respondents who had an opinion about a specific item. This approach to presenting data is used in order to allow the fairest comparisons across items.

Though a somewhat small percentage of respondents offer “don’t know” for most items, inevitably some items have a larger “don’t know” percentage. Comparing responses to a set of items on the same scale can be misleading when the “don’t know” responses have been left in. If two items have disparate “don’t know” percentages (2% vs. 15%, for example), any apparent similarities or differences across the remaining response options may disappear once the “don’t know” responses are removed.

Resident survey reports prior to 2005 for the City of Minneapolis have included “don’t know” responses in the report bodies. In this report, comparisons to previous data omit the “don’t know” responses.

For some questions, respondents were permitted to select multiple responses. When the total exceeds 100% in a table for a multiple response question, it is because the answers from some respondents are counted in multiple categories. When a table for a question that only permitted a single response does not total to exactly 100%, it is due to the customary practice of rounding percentages to the nearest whole number.

“Resident” and “Respondent”

As the results of the survey are intended to reflect the City of Minneapolis population as a whole, the terms “resident” and “respondent” are used interchangeably throughout this report.

Confidence Intervals

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 the survey is generally no greater than plus or minus three percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample (1,172 completed interviews). For each community planning district from the survey, the margin of error rises to as much as plus or minus 10% for a sample size of 95 (in the smallest district response) to plus or minus 9% for 129 completed surveys (in the largest district response). Where estimates are given for subgroups, they may be less precise. Generally the 95% confidence interval is plus or minus five percentage points for samples of about 400 to 10 percentage points for samples as small as 100. (For comparisons made across community planning districts, the margin of error is equivalent to that for the smallest group.)

Comparing Survey Results

Certain kinds of services tend to be thought better of by residents in many communities across the country. For example, public safety services tend to be received better than transportation services by residents of most American communities. Where possible, the better comparison is not from one service to another in Minneapolis, but from Minneapolis services to services like them provided by other jurisdictions. This way we can better understand if “good” is good enough for Minneapolis service evaluations.

Comparison of Results Over Time and by Subgroup

Because this survey was the fifth iteration of the resident survey, the current results are presented along with past ratings when available. For comparisons by survey year, the margin of error is plus or minus four

percentage points around any given percentage point, which means that differences from 2008 to 2011 must be five percentage points or higher before they should be considered real changes in population sentiment.

Finally, selected results for all Minneapolis residents were compared to results from subgroups of the population (community planning district and sociodemographics) in Minneapolis and are presented *Appendix II: Crosstabulations of Select Survey Questions*.

Normative Database

National comparisons and comparisons to select cities⁶ also have been included in the report when available (jurisdictions to which Minneapolis was compared can be found in *Appendix V: Jurisdictions Included in the Database*). NRC has been leading the strategic use of surveys for local governments since 1991, when the principals of the company wrote the first edition of what became the classic text on resident surveying. In *Resident surveys: how to do them, how to use them, what they mean*, published by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), we not only articulated the principles for quality survey methods, we pioneered both the idea of benchmark data for citizen opinion and the method for gathering benchmark data. We called it, “In Search of Standards,” and argued for norms. “What has been missing from a local government’s analysis of its survey results is the context that school administrators can supply when they tell parents how an 80 percent score on the social studies test compares to test results from other school systems...”

NRC’s database of comparative resident opinion is comprised of resident perspectives gathered in resident surveys from approximately 500 jurisdictions whose residents evaluated local government services. Conducted with typically no fewer than 400 residents in each jurisdiction, opinions are intended to represent over 30 million Americans. NRC has innovated a method for quantitatively integrating the results of surveys that we have conducted with those that others have conducted. We have described our integration methods thoroughly in *Public Administration Review*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* and in our first book on conducting and using resident surveys. Scholars who specialize in the analysis of resident surveys regularly have relied on our work (e.g., Kelly, J. & Swindell, D. (2002). Service quality variation across urban space: First steps towards a model of citizen satisfaction, *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 24, 271-288.; Van Ryzin, G., Muzzio, D., Immerwahr, S., Gulick, L. & Martinez, E. (2004). Drivers and consequences of citizen satisfaction: An application of the American Customer Satisfaction Index Model to New York City, *Public Administration Review*, 64, 331-341). The method described in those publications is refined regularly and statistically tested on a growing number of resident surveys in our proprietary databases.

NRC’s work on calculating national norms for resident opinions about service delivery and quality of life won the Samuel C. May award for research excellence from the Western Governmental Research Association.

The Role of Comparisons

Normative comparisons are used for benchmarking. Jurisdictions use the comparative information to help interpret their own resident survey results, to create or revise community plans, to evaluate the success of policy or budget decisions, to measure local government performance. We don’t know what is small or large without comparing. Taking the pulse of the community has little meaning without knowing what pulse rate is too high and what is too low. When surveys of service satisfaction turn up “good” citizen evaluations, we need to know how others rate their services to understand if “good” is good enough. Furthermore, in the absence of national or peer community comparisons, a jurisdiction is left with comparing its fire protection

⁶ Ann Arbor, MI; Austin, TX; Boulder, CO; Charlotte, NC; Denver, CO (City and County); Durham, NC; Oklahoma City, OK; Phoenix, AZ; Portland, OR; San Francisco, CA;

rating to its street maintenance rating. That comparison is unfair. Streets always lose to fire. We need to ask more important and harder questions. We need to know how residents' ratings of fire service compare to opinions about fire service in other communities.

Jurisdictions in the normative database are distributed geographically across the country and range from small to large in population size. Comparisons may be made to subsets of jurisdictions (within a given region or population category such as jurisdictions in the Minnesota region). Most commonly comparisons are made to all jurisdictions. In this report, comparisons were made to all jurisdictions in the database. Despite the differences in jurisdiction characteristics, all are in the business of providing local government services to residents. Though individual jurisdiction circumstances, resources and practices vary, the objective in every community is to provide services that are so timely, tailored and effective that residents conclude the services are of the highest quality. High ratings in any jurisdiction, like SAT scores in any teen household, bring pride and a sense of accomplishment.

Comparison of Minneapolis to the Normative Database

In this report, comparisons are made both to the entire database ("National Database") and a portion of the database ("Select Cities")⁷, featuring communities identified by Minneapolis, when available. Normative comparisons have been provided when similar questions on the Minneapolis survey are included in NRC's database and there are at least five jurisdictions in which the question was asked, though most questions are compared to more than five other jurisdictions across the country.

Where comparisons for quality ratings were available, the City of Minneapolis's results were generally noted as being "above" the benchmark, "below" the benchmark or "similar" to the benchmark. For some questions – those related to resident behavior, circumstance or to a local problem – the comparison to the benchmark is designated as "more," "similar" or "less" (for example, residents contacting the City in the last 12 months). In instances where ratings are considerably higher or lower than the benchmark, these ratings have been further demarcated by the attribute of "much," (for example, "much less" or "much above"). These labels come from a statistical comparison of Minneapolis's rating to the benchmark where a rating is considered "similar" if it is within the margin of error; "above," "below," "more," or "less" if the difference between Minneapolis's rating and the benchmark is greater than the margin of error; and "much above," "much below," "much more" or "much less" if the difference between Minneapolis's rating and the benchmark is more than twice the margin of error.

⁷ Ann Arbor, MI; Austin, TX; Boulder, CO; Charlotte, NC; Denver, CO (City and County); Durham, NC; Oklahoma City, OK; Phoenix, AZ; Portland, OR; San Francisco, CA.