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The City of Ankeny, Iowa
Summary Report
2008



The National Citizen Survey™

National Research Center, Inc.

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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 1,200 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, 47 were undeliverable due to vacant or “not found” addresses. Completed surveys were received from 465 residents, for a response rate of 40%. 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 465 residents is generally no greater than plus or minus 5 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 Ankeny. (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 1 representing the best rating and 4 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 ANKENY

As assessed by the survey, about 17% of Ankeny residents have lived in the community for more than 20 years and 61% are over age 34. Another 13% are over age 64. Eighty-one percent are currently employed; 28% rent; 72% own and 54% live in detached single family homes. Over 89% of Ankeny residents have at least some college and 63% have annual household incomes above \$50,000. Three percent of Ankeny residents reported that they are Spanish, Hispanic or Latino and 97% 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 Ankeny. They also evaluated characteristics of the community, and gave their perceptions of safety in the City of Ankeny. The questionnaire assessed use of the amenities of the community and involvement by respondents in the civic and economic life of Ankeny.

Quality of Life

When asked to rate the overall quality of life in Ankeny, 34% of respondents thought it was “excellent.” Zero percent rated overall quality of life as “poor.” Ankeny as a place to raise children received an average rating of 79 on a 100-point scale.

Ratings of Community Characteristics

The highest rated characteristics of Ankeny were overall image/reputation, educational opportunities, and overall appearance. When asked about potential problems in Ankeny, the three concerns rated by the highest proportion of respondents as a “major problem” were taxes, drugs, and traffic congestion. The rate of population growth in Ankeny was viewed as “too fast” by 68% of respondents, while 1% thought it was “too slow.”

Perceptions of Safety

When evaluating safety in the community, 94% of respondents felt “somewhat” or “very safe” from violent crimes in Ankeny. In their neighborhood after dark, 92% of survey participants felt “somewhat” or “very safe.”

As assessed by the survey, 5% 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, 58% had reported it to police.

Community Participation

Participation in the civic, social and economic life of Ankeny during the past year was assessed on the survey. Among those completing the questionnaire, 38% reported volunteering in the past year.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Several aspects of the government of the City of Ankeny 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 Ankeny. Those who had any contact with a City of Ankeny employee in the past year gave their impressions of the most recent encounter.

Public Trust

When asked to evaluate whether they were pleased with the overall direction taken by the City of Ankeny, residents gave an average rating of 70 on a 100-point scale.

Service Provided by Ankeny

The overall quality of services provided by the City of Ankeny was rated as 71 on a 100-point scale.

The City of Ankeny Employees

Impressions of the City of Ankeny employees were assessed on the questionnaire. Those who had been in contact with a City of Ankeny employee in the past year (53%) rated their overall impression as 73 on a 100-point scale.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Eleven additional questions were asked by the City of Ankeny as listed below. The results for these questions are also available in the Report of Results.

Policy Question 1

The city is mandated by state and federal guidelines to establish stormwater management programs to improve water quality and quantity. In order to pay for these programs, should the costs to maintain them be supported by (select one):

User fee	28%
Property taxes	11%
Need more information/Don't know	60%
Total	100%

Policy Question 2

Which of the following do you currently have access to in your home? (Check all that apply)	Percent of Respondents
Internet	75%
Cable	46%
Satellite dish	32%
None of these	9%

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

Policy Question 3

The City would like your input about the types of services/amenities desired in Prairie Trail. How

important, if at all, would each of the following potential services and amenities be to you?

	Trail hub	Aquatic center	Civic building	Regional retail	Parks and open spaces	Entertainment venues	Transit station
Essential	20%	20%	8%	17%	37%	21%	9%
Very important	32%	23%	23%	36%	41%	42%	25%
Somewhat important	27%	33%	48%	32%	17%	28%	39%
Not at all important	21%	24%	21%	15%	5%	9%	27%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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

Policy Question 4

How important, if at all, is a public library for the residents of Ankeny?

Essential	59%
Very important	27%
Somewhat important	12%
Not at all important	3%
Total	100%

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

Policy Question 5

How frequently do you or other household members visit the Kirkendall Public Library in Ankeny?

Once a week or more	14%
Once a month or more	32%
Once every six months or more	25%
Once a year or less frequently	15%
Never	15%
Total	100%

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

Policy Question 6

The main reason that my household uses the library is to:

Check out materials (print/audiovisual)	54%
Seek information/read	21%
Use internet PC's	6%
Attend a children's program	6%
Attend a meeting	5%
Attend an adult program	2%
Another reason	7%
Total	100%

Policy Question 7

How important, if at all, is it for the main library to be centrally located within the community?

Essential	24%
Very important	33%
Somewhat important	28%
Not at all important	15%
Total	100%

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

Policy Question 8

How important, if at all, is it to have a branch library near your neighborhood?

Essential	8%
Very important	14%
Somewhat important	38%
Not at all important	39%
Total	100%

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

Policy Question 9

Which of the following services should be expanded at your local library?	Percent of Respondents
Books	53%
Children's programs	34%
Adults' programs (example - guest authors)	33%
Internet computers	28%
Meeting room spaces	18%
None of these	22%

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

Policy Question 10

How important, if at all, are each of the following potential new library services?	Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Total
Download audio books/music	12%	26%	36%	25%	100%
Podcasting	7%	15%	37%	41%	100%
Self check-out	11%	24%	40%	25%	100%
Quiet rooms	21%	36%	31%	12%	100%
Tutor rooms	15%	33%	36%	16%	100%
Meeting spaces	14%	33%	39%	14%	100%
Educational game room	9%	21%	42%	28%	100%
Wi-Fi	24%	29%	26%	21%	100%
Access to a coffee bar	8%	15%	32%	44%	100%

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

Policy Question 11**Which best describes the location of your home?**

Northwest Ankeny	33%
Southwest Ankeny	21%
Northeast Ankeny	23%
Southeast Ankeny	23%
Not in Ankeny	0%
Total	100%