

2007 Survey of Little Rock Citizens' Opinions of City Services

February 2007

by

**Survey Research Center
Institute of Government
University of Arkansas at Little Rock
2801 South University Avenue
Little Rock, Arkansas 72204
501.569.8561**

OVERVIEW

Introduction

The UALR Institute of Government Survey Research Center (SRC) conducted a telephone survey at the request of the City of Little Rock. The purpose of the survey was to measure Little Rock residents' use of city services as well as attitudes and opinions about city services. The survey also asked respondents to report what they perceived to be the main problem facing Little Rock today.

Methodology

Data was collected from 473 randomly selected Little Rock household residents. The sample was drawn from the population of Little Rock household residents age 18 and older. Respondents were individually screened to assure that they were 18 or older and residents of the city of Little Rock at the time of survey participation. Data collection began on January 4, 2007 and ended on January 25, 2007. Random digit dialing (RDD) was employed for sampling city residents, and participants were selected randomly from within each household.

Data was weighted in order to bring the sample representations in line with the actual population proportions in Little Rock. Data was weighted for age, gender, and race. The 2000 Census Summary File 1 provided the sample estimates that formed the basis for weighting.

A sample size of 473 provides a potential for sampling error of ± 5 percent at the conventional 95 percent confidence level. In theory, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results of surveying a sample differ no more than 5 percent in either direction from the results that would have been obtained by interviewing all adult Little Rock residents. For example, 66% of respondents report that they had come into personal contact with an individual who appeared to be homeless in the last 12 months. Because of the sampling error, one can be 95 percent confident that between 61% and 71% of the population had come into personal contact with an individual who appeared to be homeless in the last 12 months.

Findings

Overall, the City of Little Rock scored well on a variety of services and conditions included in the survey. Residents of 473 randomly selected Little Rock households gave city government high marks on such physical infrastructure provision and maintenance as traffic signs and street lighting. Similarly, respondents rated the City highly on services such as garbage collection, parks and recreational facilities, and the zoo. Not so highly rated were several structures and services such as the provision of sidewalks and code enforcement services.

What the City does well

The push made by the City in response to recommendations contained in FUTURE Little Rock and Vision Little Rock to improve traffic signage, street lighting, and downtown parking has paid dividends in the perception of Little Rock residents. Ninety (90) percent of respondents said that traffic signs are clear and easy to see (page 5). Sixty-one percent said that street lighting is adequate as compared to 37 percent who said more was needed (page 6). A similar percentage (60 percent) agreed that downtown parking had improved (page 9).

Respondents rated garbage collection highly, as 78 percent were very or somewhat satisfied and only 15 percent were dissatisfied (pages 13-15). Three-fourths (75 percent) indicated that they are very or somewhat satisfied with the city's parks and recreational facilities (page 17), although just over half (51 percent) were satisfied with programs and services provided at the parks and recreational facilities.

Fire and police services scored well in the survey. When asked to rate the fire department's response speed, 50 percent said excellent and 13 percent said good (page 24). A combined 62 percent rated the quality of services provided as excellent or good (page 24, 25). Slightly lower scores characterized respondents' rating of police services. Fifty-seven percent said excellent or good on police response speed (page 34) and on the quality of police services (page 36). An impressive 64 percent rated Little Rock police excellent or good on courtesy (page 35).

Two other service areas scored well. Animal services received a high rating on response speed (67 percent rated it excellent or good) and on the quality of its services (62 percent) (pages 31, 32). Most respondents contact Animal Services regarding loose, stray, or injured animals, while a much smaller number use it for pet adoption (page 30). Finally, 67 percent of respondents rated the Little Rock's zoo as excellent or good (page 38).

What the City could do better

In the opinion of those responding to this telephone survey, four areas of concern exist. They are the absence of sidewalks, code enforcement, homelessness, and communication with city hall.

Under half of the respondents (48 percent) thought that there are enough sidewalks in their part of town. Thirty-nine (39) percent disagreed. A slightly stronger number (51 percent) said that sidewalks where they live are in good condition. Twenty-nine (29) percent disagreed.

Regarding code enforcement, half (50 percent) characterized response rate as excellent or good; an equal number said fair or poor. These data reflect just seven percent (32 households) of the total sample.

The issue of homelessness was approached in the survey in terms of contact and severity as a social problem. While responses did not directly critique the City's forays into this issue, respondents signaled concern about the problem. For example, two-thirds (66 percent) indicated that they had come in contact with an individual who appeared to be homeless (page 10). By any measure, that is a significant majority. A smaller majority (51 percent) considers homelessness to be a major problem (page 11). Of particular concern, 28 percent felt that the homeless problem in Little Rock is worse than one year ago as compared to five percent who thought it is better (page 12). Fifty-seven (57) percent said it is the same.

Concerning communication with city hall, respondents had two interesting reactions. First, although a majority (55 percent) strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement "citizens are kept well-informed about city issues and services," a noticeable minority (37 percent) strongly or somewhat disagreed (page 2). Taking another tact, respondents were asked if they had had concerns they would have reported to city officials but didn't (page 20). One-third (34 percent) answered "yes." As a follow up, they were asked why they hadn't contacted city officials (page 21). Thirty (30) percent said they didn't think it would do any good, 12 percent admitted they didn't know who to contact, and nine percent felt that there are barriers in reporting problems. On the other hand, 14 percent said that they were too busy, 12 percent admitted that they were too lazy or they forgot.

Note: Concerning the very first question asked in the survey (page 1), "What would you say is the main problem facing Little Rock today?" there is no doubt that crime is the number one issue (51 percent). But, because of the way the question was asked, forcing the respondent to name just one problem (as opposed to ranking three or five top problems, for example), other significant problems rated lower than they might have in an alternative rating scheme.

List Of Questions

Main Problem Facing Little Rock Today	Sheet 1	Rating of Fire Department Response Speed	Sheet 24
Perception of Information About City Issues and Services	Sheet 2	Quality of Fire Department Services	Sheet 25
Street Conditions	Sheet 3	Times Used LR Code Enforcement	Sheet 26
Amount of Street Repair Needed	Sheet 4	Rating of Code Enforcement Response Speed	Sheet 27
Visibility and Clarity of Traffic Signs	Sheet 5	Quality of Code Enforcement Services	Sheet 28
Street Lighting	Sheet 6	Times Used LR Animal Services	Sheet 29
Number of Sidewalks	Sheet 7	Reason for Using Animal Services	Sheet 30
Condition of Sidewalks	Sheet 8	Rating of Animal Services Response Speed	Sheet 31
Downtown LR Parking	Sheet 9	Quality of Animal Services	Sheet 32
Contact with Homeless	Sheet 10	Times Used LR Police	Sheet 33
Perception of Homelessness in LR	Sheet 11	Rating of Police Response Speed	Sheet 34
Homelessness: Better or Worse than 1 Year Ago	Sheet 12	Rating of Police on Courtesy	Sheet 35
Garbage Collection	Sheet 13	Quality of Police Services	Sheet 36
Missed Garbage Pick-Up	Sheet 14	Times Visited LR Zoo	Sheet 37
Number of Times Missed Pick-Up	Sheet 15	Quality of the Zoo	Sheet 38
Visits to a Park or Recreational Facility	Sheet 16	Age	Sheet 39
Quality of Parks and/or Recreational Facilities	Sheet 17	Highest Education Completed	Sheet 40
Opinion of Parks and/or Recreational Facilities	Sheet 19	Hispanic or Latino	Sheet 41
Household Contacted City Services	Sheet 19	Race (multiple)	Sheet 42
Unreported Concerns	Sheet 20	Race (singular)	Sheet 43
Reasons Concern(s) Went Unreported	Sheet 21	Marital Status	Sheet 44
Times Used LR Fire Department	Sheet 22	Gender	Sheet 45
Reason for Using Fire Department	Sheet 23	Annual Household Income	Sheet 46

Main Problem Facing Little Rock Today

What would you say is the MAIN problem facing Little Rock today?

	Count	Percent
Crime/Too few police	240	51%
Education	44	9%
Need higher paying jobs/more economic opportunity	29	6%
Drugs/Gangs	15	3%
Traffic Problems	13	3%
City government credibility and trust problems/mismanagement/poor organization and planning	13	3%
Streets/Street lighting	11	2%
Leadership problems. Need more good leadership.	9	2%
Public transportation	7	1%
Lack of adequate entertainment options, especially for families	6	1%
Too much growth	6	1%
Taxes too high/Too many taxes/Improper use of taxes	6	1%
No Problems	6	1%
Poor city services/Poor implementation of services	5	1%
Poverty/Lack of funds/Standard of Living	5	1%
Homelessness	4	1%
Too little growth	3	1%
Other	17	4%
Don't know	31	7%
Refused	3	1%
Total	473	100%