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The Town of Ocean City, Maryland

Summary Report

2007



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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 3,000 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, 702 were undeliverable due to vacant or “not found” addresses. Completed surveys were received from 893 residents, for a response rate of 39%. 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 893 residents is generally no greater than plus or minus 3 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 Town of Ocean City. (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 2 points based on all respondents.

PROFILE OF OCEAN CITY

As assessed by the survey, about 26% of Ocean City residents have lived in the community for more than 20 years and 96% are over age 34. Another 39% are over age 64. Forty-eight percent are currently employed; 7% rent; 93% own and 21% live in detached single family homes. Over 82% of Ocean City residents have at least some college and 77% have annual household incomes above \$50,000. One percent of Ocean City 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 Ocean City. They also evaluated characteristics of the community, and gave their perceptions of safety in the Town of Ocean City. The questionnaire assessed use of the amenities of the community and involvement by respondents in the civic and economic life of Ocean City.

Quality of Life

When asked to rate the overall quality of life in Ocean City, 18% of respondents thought it was “excellent.” Only 1% rated overall quality of life as “poor.” Ocean City as a place to raise children received an average rating of 50 on a 100-point scale.

Ratings of Community Characteristics

The highest rated characteristics of Ocean City were recreational opportunities, air quality, and overall appearance. When asked about potential problems in Ocean City, the three concerns rated by the highest proportion of respondents as a “major problem” were too much growth, taxes, and traffic congestion. The rate of population growth in Ocean City was viewed as “too fast” by 65% of respondents, while 3% thought it was “too slow.”

Perceptions of Safety

When evaluating safety in the community, 81% of respondents felt “somewhat” or “very safe” from violent crimes in Ocean City. In their neighborhood after dark, 89% of survey participants felt “somewhat” or “very safe.”

As assessed by the survey, 7% 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, 71% had reported it to police.

Community Participation

Participation in the civic, social and economic life of Ocean City during the past year was assessed on the survey. Among those completing the questionnaire, 23% reported volunteering in the past year.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Several aspects of the government of the Town of Ocean City 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 Town of Ocean City. Those who had any contact with a Town of Ocean City 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 Town of Ocean City, residents gave an average rating of 45 on a 100-point scale.

Service Provided by Ocean City

The overall quality of services provided by the Town of Ocean City was rated as 66 on a 100-point scale.

The Town of Ocean City Employees

Impressions of the Town of Ocean City employees were assessed on the questionnaire. Those who had been in contact with a Town of Ocean City employee in the past year (53%) rated their overall impression as 74 on a 100-point scale.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Four additional questions were asked by the Town of Ocean City as listed below. The results for these questions are also available in the Report of Results. Open-ended results can be found under a separate cover.

Policy Question #1

The Ocean City Code allows buildings taller than 5 stories in certain areas in exchange for neighborhood protections such as shadow controls, greater setbacks from property lines, wider sidewalks and more landscaping. To what degree do you support or oppose this practice?

Strongly support	18%
Somewhat support	28%
Somewhat oppose	20%
Strongly oppose	34%
Total	100%

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

Policy Question #2

Due to changes in public transportation and an interest in creating more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly transit some cities are adopting policies to reduce the amount of right-of-way dedicated to vehicle movement in favor of wider sidewalks, bike lanes and dedicated lanes for mass transit. To what degree do you support or oppose reducing the amount of street width dedicated for vehicles to provide additional space for alternative forms of mass transportation, bicycles and pedestrians?

Strongly support	22%
Somewhat support	31%
Somewhat oppose	21%
Strongly oppose	26%
Total	100%

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

Policy Question #3

To what degree do you support or oppose the Mayor and City Council's continued support of Ocean City's Tourism industry?

Strongly support	48%
Somewhat support	37%
Somewhat oppose	10%
Strongly oppose	5%
Total	100%

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

Policy Question #4

Please indicate the geographic area that best describes where you live:

North of 62nd Street or the Route 90 Bridge (uptown)	75%
South of 62nd Street or the Route 90 Bridge (downtown)	25%
Total	100%
