

CITY OF GRANTS PASS SURVEY

Summary of Survey Methodology and Results

by Stephen M. Johnson

NOVEMBER 1999



OREGON SURVEY RESEARCH LABORATORY

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

EUGENE OR 97403-5245

541-346-0824

fax: 541-346-5026

Internet: OSRL@OREGON.UOREGON.EDU

World Wide Web: <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~osrl>

Introduction

The city of Grants Pass provides a wide variety of services to its citizens. As part of Grants Pass's efforts to evaluate the quality of its services, Grants Pass contracted with the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory (OSRL) to conduct a second annual survey on how residents assess the quality of city services, feel about the quality of life in their community, and their opinions about specific transportation issues. Working closely the Grants Pass Assistant City Manager, Laurel Samson, OSRL planned, pre-tested and implemented a telephone survey of 386 Grants Pass residents. This report summarizes the survey methodology and results.

Survey Methodology

Survey Instrument

The broad goals of the survey were to obtain valid and reliable information from residents on the quality of services provided to them by the city of Grants Pass; their views around quality of life issues in Grants Pass; and their opinions on specific transportation issues.

In designing the survey instrument, OSRL used a multi-path approach which included: reviewing last years' Grants Pass survey; drawing from OSRL's survey archives and professional networks for questions related to Grants Pass's needs; creating original survey questions with the assistance of Grants Pass's staff; and pre-testing individual questions and the entire survey instrument with members of the survey population, and potential users of the data from Grants Pass. Most of the survey questions are identical to those from previous Grants Pass surveys, but some are OSRL/Grants Pass originals.

The survey instrument was programmed into OSRL's computer-aided telephone interviewing (CATI) system and further pretested. A facsimile of the survey instrument is provided in Section 2 of this documentation. All interviews were completely confidential, and human subjects approval was obtained.

Sample and Data Collection

Interviewer training was conducted on October 22, 1999; see Section 3 for interviewer instructions. Interviewing was conducted from 9:00 AM until 9:00 PM, Monday through Sunday, until the target sample sizes of 383 was exceeded. Altogether, OSRL interviewers made 8,000 random-digit-dialed telephone calls to complete 386 interviews between October 23 – November 4, 1999. Up to 21 calls were made to each valid telephone number. All Grants Pass residents had an equal chance of being selected. The net response rate was 61% and the refusal rate was 10%; see Section 5 for the sample and response rate report. The average length of the interviews was 14 minutes.

Survey sampling errors are calculated to assist data users in assessing how much confidence to place in a particular survey result. Large random samples, as in this study, reduce sampling error. Results for survey questions in which there is low variability also have less sampling error; for example, a variable with a 50/50 proportional split has wider confidence intervals than a variable with a 5/95 proportional split. For this study of 386, the sampling error, when the entire population of registered voters is used, is ± 5.0 percentage points on a variable with a 50/50 proportional split (at the 95% confidence level). For a variable with a 5/95 proportional split, the sampling error, for the entire registered voter population is ± 2.0 percentage points.

Survey Results

The presentation of the survey results is organized around the subject areas identified on page 1. Readers of this report may refer to the 63 banner-style tables in Section 6 for more detail. In the banner tables, the contents are cross-tabulated by a wide range of demographic information. The banner data include counts and percentages for each question overall, and counts and percentages for each row and column of the cross-tabulation. See Section 5 for instructions on how to read banner tables.

Profile of Survey Respondents

Before turning to the results of the survey, we provide a profile of respondents in the survey's sample, which will serve to contextualize their answers to the survey questions.

Sixty four percent of the respondents to the survey were female and 36% male. The respondents represent a slightly older than average American population, with 22% of respondents 65 or older and 25% under age 35, although it is important to remember that the survey was a survey of adults, 18 and older, and did not include children. Respondents tended to be long-time residents, with 39% of respondents having lived in Grants Pass for more than 20 years, while only 24% had lived in Grants Pass for 5 years or less. Most respondents are also registered voters (79%). Finally, most of the respondents (72%) own their own home.

General Impressions about living in Grants Pass

In general registered voters think Grants Pass is a nice place to live. When asked to rate living in Grants Pass on a 5 point scale, where one is "poor" and 5 is "excellent", 81% of respondents give Grants Pass a rating of four or five. This is a 20-percentage point improvement over last years' already relatively high score of 61%. Only 5% of respondents gave Grants Pass a rating of one or two.

This pattern of generally favorable response is repeated when respondents were asked to rate how safe they felt living in Grants Pass. On a five point scale, where one was "not safe" and five was "very safe", 75% of respondents gave a rating of four or five and only 4% gave a rating of one or two. Both of these scores are improvements over last year's scores. This feeling of safety was true regardless of age or gender. This feeling of safety was further reinforced by responses to a follow up question where respondents were asked to compare the safety of their neighborhood to other neighborhoods in Grants Pass. On this question 59% of respondents felt that their neighborhood was safer than other neighborhoods. Here there was minor variation between respondents who own their own home and those who rent, with renters less likely to feel that their neighborhood is safe when compared to other neighborhoods.

Respondents were also asked their general impression on whether or not Grants Pass was growing "too fast", "about the right pace", or "too slowly." Respondents were almost evenly split on the issue of growth, with 40% thinking that Grants Pass is growing too fast and 51% thinking it is growing at about the right pace. On this issue there was some difference of opinion between men and women, with 44% of women thinking Grants Pass is growing too fast, while only 35% of men hold that opinion. A split on an issue as important as growth may have serious policy implications.

Grants Pass City Services

Respondents were asked two sets of questions about city services. In the first set they were asked if they had ever used or contacted a specific service, and if so how satisfied they were with the quality of customer service provided. Respondents were asked about nine separate services (see banner tables 1 – 18). In every case, except receiving a traffic ticket, a majority of respondents rated the quality of service as either a four or a five, on a five-point scale where one indicated poor service and five indicated excellent service. In fact, for most services a very large majority of respondents gave a rating of four or five. Out of the nine services rated, six received a four or a five score by more than 70% of respondents, and in the case of fire fighting 96% of respondents who had ever used the service gave these high ratings. Even the service of receiving a traffic ticket was rated as excellent, or close to excellent, by 38% of people who had received tickets. The only of city services that any substantial number of respondents felt gave poor service were both related to contact with the police, either through receiving a traffic ticket or through other contact. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: City Service Ratings

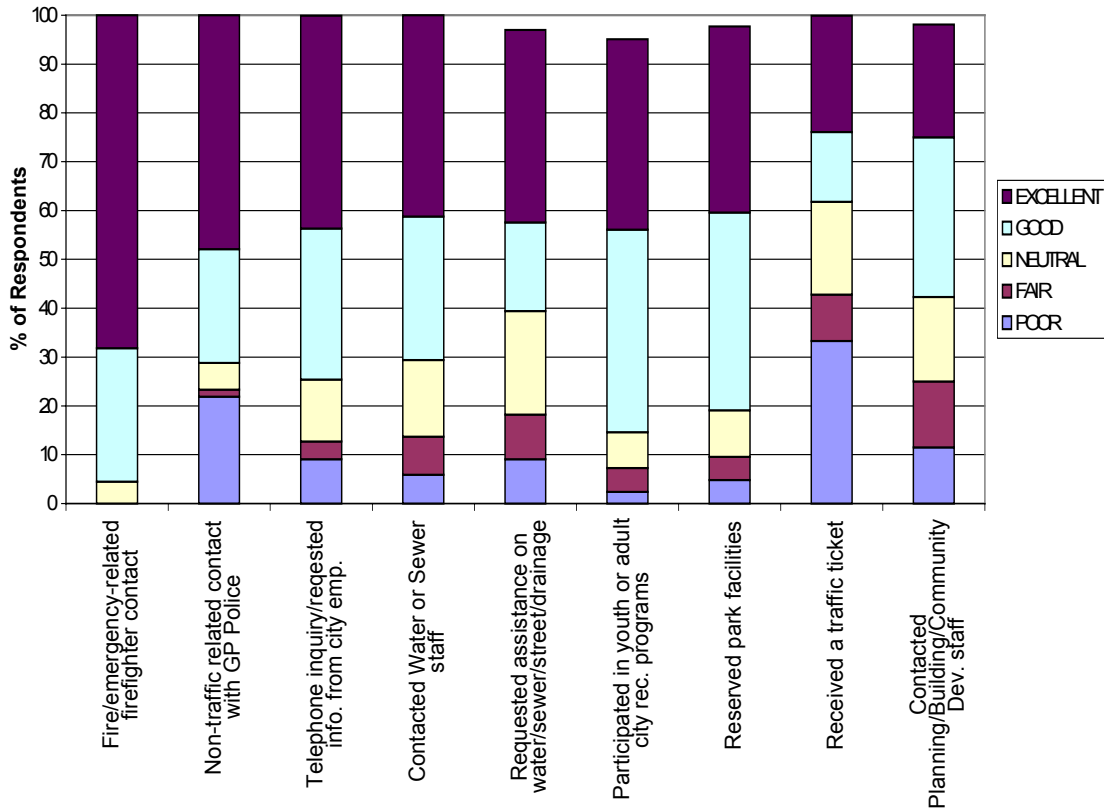
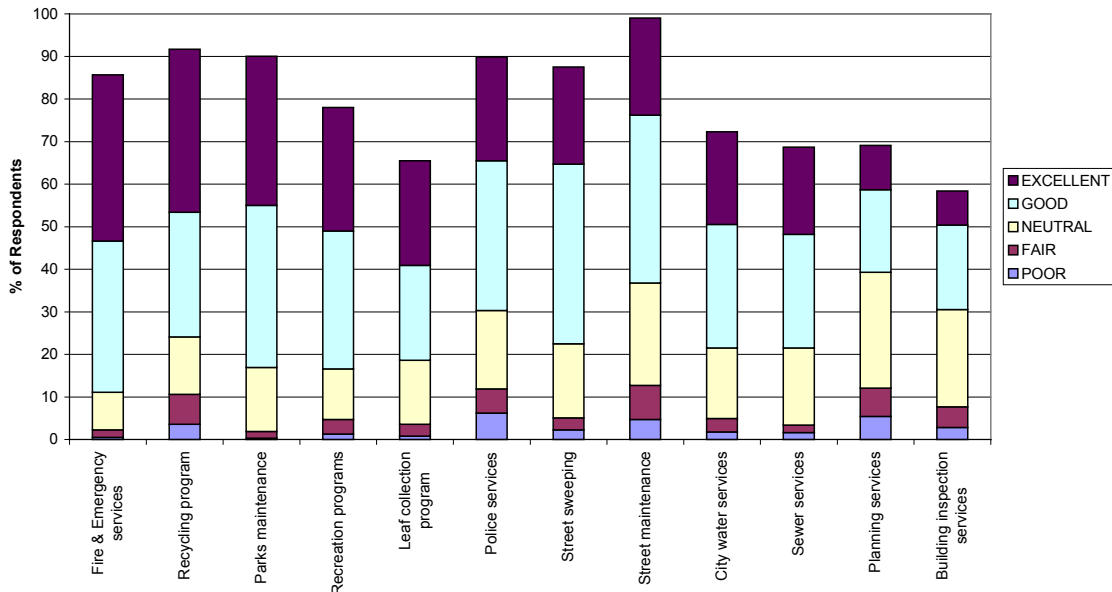


Figure 2: City Department Ratings



In addition to the nine services mentioned above, all respondents were asked about 12 city services that people could reasonably be expected to have opinions about, even if they had not contacted the service providers directly. Here again Grants Pass residents feel that these services generally provide excellent, or close to excellent, service (see banner tables 19 – 30). Of the 12 services respondents were asked about, 8 were rated a four or a five, using the same scale as before, by over 50% of respondents. The two services that did not get high ratings were planning, where only 30% gave one of the two high rating scores, and building inspection, where only 28% gave these scores. However, these two services were also services where large numbers of respondents reported that they did not know how to rate the services (presumably because they had no experience with the service). In the case of planning, 29% of respondents were unable to provide a rating, and in the case of building inspections a very large 38% of respondents felt unable to provide a rating. The two remain services, leaf collection and sewer services both received a rating of four or five by 47% of respondents, but also had a large number of respondents who could not give a rating, 30% and 28% respectively.

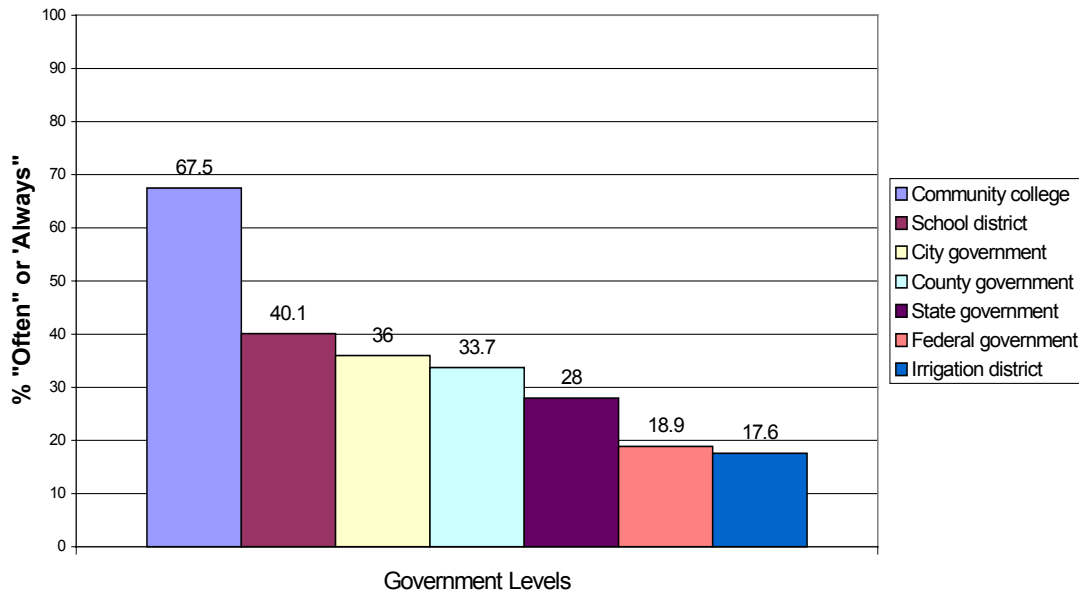
Of the 12 services that respondents were asked to rate, police services received the greatest number of “poor” scores and even there the service was only rated “poor” by 6% of respondents.

For some of the 12 services there were significant differences in how they were rated based on the gender or age of the respondent. Police service, street maintenance, water service, street sweeping, and recycling were all rated as excellent by a much higher percentage of women than men. In addition, Police service, and street maintenance were not rated as highly by respondents under 45 years of age as they were by older respondents. See Figure 2.

Attitudes toward the value of Government

Respondents were asked about their attitudes toward the value of four levels of government: Federal; State; County; and City. In addition, they were also asked about the value of the school district, the local community college, and the local irrigation district. For each of these institutions, respondents were asked how often they felt they were getting their money's worth, using the response scale: "never; rarely; sometimes; often; or always". Respondents' belief that they get their "money's worth" from government increased as the unit of government got smaller (see banner tables 31 – 37). The least support for the idea of their money's worth was with the Federal government, where only 19% of respondents felt that they always or often got their money's worth, and the greatest support for this idea was with Grants Pass city government, where 36% of respondents felt that they always or often got their money's worth. In all four cases, the percentage of respondents who felt they got their monies worth declined from last year.

Figure 3: Getting Money's Worth From Government



For the other three governmental institutions, respondents held widely different views about their value. At the high end, 68% or respondents felt that they always or often got their money's worth from the community college, while at the other extreme only 18% of respondents felt they always or often got their money's worth from the irrigation district. In fact, for the irrigation district just as more people felt that they never got their money's worth (26%). The school district received a higher value rating then any general form of government, with 44% of respondents feeling that they got their money's worth. See Figure 3.

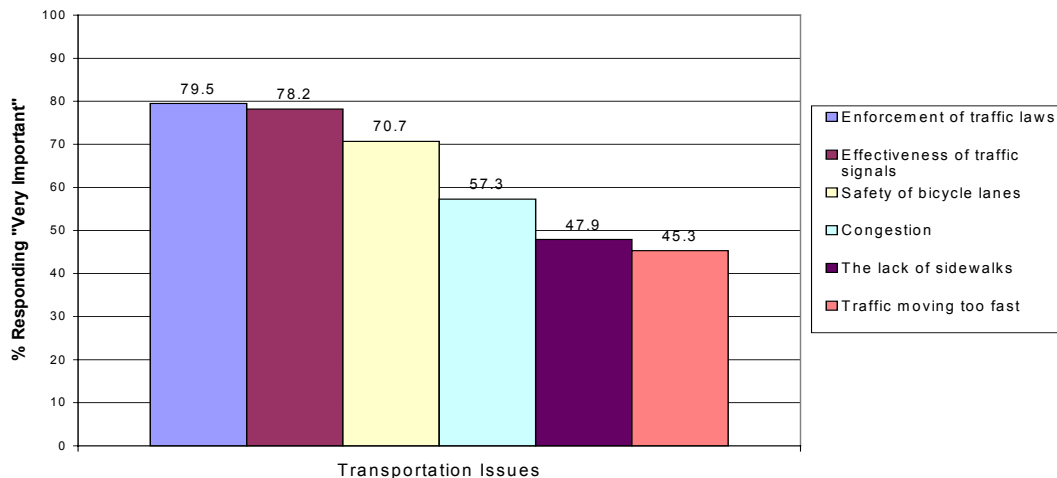
Participation in City Government

Registered voters in Grants Pass were asked a series of questions about public involvement and public information (see banner tables 38 – 43). Most respondents (58%) feel that the City of Grants Pass provides adequate opportunities for participation and influence in city decisions. Interestingly enough this belief exists even though only 13% have attended some form of local government or public meeting on city issues during the past 12 months.

Even though public meetings may not be popular, a relatively large number of respondents (29%) have volunteered their time on projects or activities that they feel were designed to make Grants Pass a better place to live. The only demographic variations in this activity level were due to age. Fifty one percent of respondents ages 35-44 volunteer their time, compared to those over 55, where only 22% reported volunteering.

Most respondents (52%) feel that the city does an excellent or good job of informing them about city issues and 70% answer affirmatively that the city meets their information needs. The most useful source of city information was reported to be newspaper articles by 40% of respondents, followed by the city newsletter for 21% of respondents. Interestingly, public meetings were thought to be of very low value for informing citizens, with only 2% of respondents listing such meetings as the most useful way to keep up with city issues and activities.

Figure 4: Transportation Issues Very Important in GP



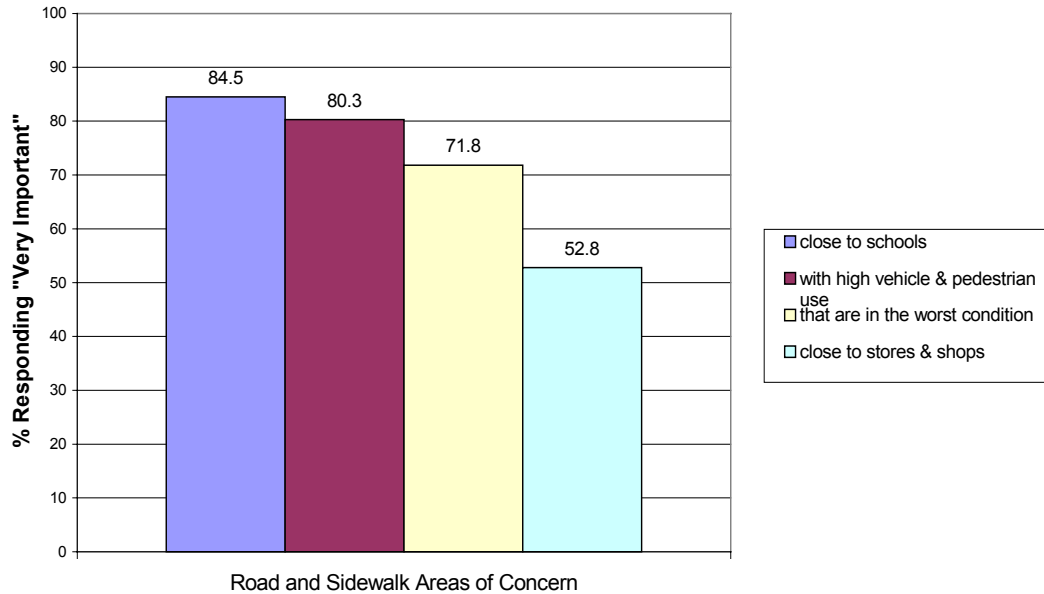
Grants Pass Transportation Issues

Finally, respondents were asked a variety of local transportation issues, beginning with importance of six potential traffic problems (see banner tables 44 – 49). The issue that the highest percentage of respondents felt to be very important was "enforcement of traffic laws" (80%), followed by the "effectiveness of traffic signals" (78%) and "safety of bike lanes" (71%). The issue for which the smallest percentage of respondents replied that it

was very important was “traffic moving too fast” (45%). In fact 14% of respondents that that “traffic moving too fast” was “not a problem at all.” See Figure 4.

However, on the issue of “traffic moving too fast,” there was a significant difference between the importance placed on this issue, with only 36% of men thinking it was very important, compared to 51% of women.

Figure 5: Repairs and Improvements Very Important in GP



Next respondents were asked to judge the importance of repairs and improvements on roads and sidewalks for four different types of areas (see banner tables 50 – 53). Eighty five percent of respondents felt that it was very important to make such repairs in areas close to schools, 80% felt it was very important to make such repairs in areas with high vehicle and pedestrian use, 72% felt this way about the roads that are in the worst condition and 53% thought it very important to repairs such areas close to stores. See Figure 5.

However on the question of the importance of repairing roads close to stores, support varied substantially by the age of the respondent. Forty four percent of younger respondents, under age 45, thought it was very important to repair these streets, compared to 63% of respondents over age 65.

Finally, residents were asked about their preferred source for funding for a fourth bridge across the Rogue River (see banner table 54). However, the single largest show of support came not for any funding option, but for not building the bridge at all (32%). Of those who choose a funding option, the most popular, by far, was a countywide tax (23%) and the least popular was a city tax on automobile accessories (5%).

Conclusions

The results show registered voters in Grants Pass generally think highly of their community and of local government. They feel that local government does a good job of providing services and feel that they are able to participate with that government. They feel safe in their neighborhoods and like their community. On transportation issues, they see many issues as important, but have clear priorities on what repairs and improvements should be made first. Finally, they are split on whether or not their community is growing at about the right rate.

This report has just scratched the surface of an exceptionally rich source of current information on the perceptions and beliefs of Grants Pass voters. The results reported here raises many questions, some of which could be answered by an in-depth analysis of the data. These data also can serve as part of Grants Pass's continual efforts to measure the effects of changes in service policy or funding over the next several years.