

# 2021 Civic Services Survey Results

## ISSUE

The City of Saskatoon (City) conducts two civic surveys: (1) Civic Satisfaction & Performance Survey and (2) Civic Services Survey: Performance, Priorities & Preferences. They occur every other year and measure residents' perspective on quality of life in Saskatoon, satisfaction with civic services, areas for improvement, and future priorities. The surveys were scheduled to be conducted in 2020, but because of the COVID-19 pandemic, they were postponed until 2021.

## BACKGROUND

City Council, at its meeting held on July 29, 2019, approved the [City's Public Engagement Policy \(C02-046\)](#). The policy adopted key foundational principles that underlie the City's approach to public engagement, which are: Inclusivity; Early Involvement; Decision-Making; Transparency and Accountability; Open and Timely Communication; Relationship Building; and Evaluation. All public engagement activities are to be guided by these foundational principles.

City Council, at its meeting held on April 27, 2020, received the [2020 Civic Service Surveys](#) report outlining the plan to postpone the two civic surveys because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The report stated that the surveys would be conducted once City services returned to more normalized operations and/or many of the pandemic restrictions were relaxed, estimated to be Spring 2021.

## CURRENT STATUS

In 2021, two surveys were conducted by Forum Research Inc in April and July. Survey #1, the Civic Satisfaction & Performance Survey, was completed April 19 – May 23, 2021. The telephone (501), online panel (821) and self-selected (1,229) survey respondents gathered insights on the City's performance and residents' experience/impressions related to quality of life, satisfaction, important issues, and the value of programs and services provided.

Survey #2, the Civic Service Survey: Performance, Priorities and Preferences, was completed July 23 – August 2, 2021. The telephone (500), online panel (801) and self-selected (442) survey respondents gathered insights on residents' experience/impressions related to the quality of services and preferences on service levels.

In 2021, additional questions were included in both surveys on the COVID-19 pandemic. These additional questions were aimed at evaluating the City's response to the pandemic and to measure the pandemic's potential impact on survey results.

Due to the random sampling efforts for the telephone and online surveys, the sample is reflective of Saskatoon's population and therefore the data is reliable and representative of Saskatoon. When compared to the 2016 Canadian Census, this sample is reflective

of the Saskatoon population based on age and gender. The methodology and consistency of many questions in the surveys help for trend and comparative analysis relative to previous years.

The self-selected survey results for both surveys are reliable, but they are not representative of the population due to the non-randomness of the sample. On average, self-selected respondents tend to offer lower ratings on scale questions.

### **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

The purpose of the civic services surveys is to develop baseline performance data and identify trends, opportunities, and issues of importance. The City aims to use the results to inform decisions related to strategic priorities, budgeting, and service delivery, as well as to highlight opportunities for continuous improvement.

The Appendices provide the main highlights from both surveys specific to telephone (T) and online panel (OP) respondents:

- Appendix 1 provides an additional overview of the results for telephone, online and self-selected respondents for Survey #1 the 2021 Civic Satisfaction & Performance Survey.
- Appendix 2 provides detailed results for the Civic Satisfaction & Performance Survey #1 for each question, along with a detailed description of the data collection methodology for both the telephone, online panel and online self-selected.
- Appendix 3 provides an additional overview of the results for telephone, online and self-selected respondents for Survey #2 the 2021 Civic Services Performance, Priorities and Preferences Survey.
- Appendix 4 provides detailed results for the Civic Services Performance, Priorities and Preferences Survey #2 for each question, along with a detailed description of the data collection methodology for both the telephone, online panel and online self-selected.

### Survey #1 - 2021 Civic Satisfaction & Performance Survey Results

#### *Quality of Life & Satisfaction*

- A large majority of respondents (T: 89%, OP: 85%) indicated that they are satisfied with living in Saskatoon, consistent with the 2018 results.
- A large majority of respondents (T: 82%, OP: 80%) indicated the quality of life in Saskatoon is good or very good, comparable to the 2018 results.
- A large majority of respondents (T: 77%, OP: 80%) indicated that the quality of life has either improved or stayed the same over the past three years. The telephone results are similar to 2018, while the online panel results increased by 14% from 2018.
- COVID-19 is impacting the quality of life for respondents who reported that their quality of life has gotten worse as a result of the pandemic (T: 51%, OP: 44%).

### *Most Important Issues*

When asked the question, what is the single most important issue facing the City, the most common responses were:

- COVID-19/pandemic (T: 14%, OP: 16%)
- Public safety/crime/policing (T: 10%, OP: 10%)
- Road maintenance (T Only: 6%)
- Taxes (OP Only: 9%)

### *Quality & Value of Services*

- A large majority of respondents (T: 88%, OP: 87%) indicated that they are satisfied with the quality of services provided by the City. Telephone results are consistent with 2018, while online results increased by 10%.
- Respondents indicated that COVID-19 has impacted their satisfaction level with the quality of services provided by the City (T: 45%, OP: 54%). Despite these results, overall satisfaction with services has remained consistent with 2018 results for telephone respondents and improved amongst online panel respondents.
- A large majority of residents (T: 88%, OP: 84%) rate the value they receive from services provided by the City as very good value or good value. This is consistent with 2018 for telephone respondents while there was a significant increase of 10% for online panel respondents.

### *Balancing the Budget*

- 1 in 3 respondents prefer a combination of both property tax and user fee increases to balance the budget (T: 36%, OP: 32%), similar to 2018.
- 18% of telephone and 14% of online panel respondents prefer to increase existing user fees, a slight increase from 2018.

### *Handling of the COVID-19 Pandemic*

- The majority agree (T: 85%, OP: 71%) that the City has provided helpful and timely information on impacts to civic services during the pandemic.
- Over 7 in 10 agree that the City has provided a safe environment to access City Hall, a Civic Leisure facility, use Transit, or participate in other City programs and facilities (T: 78%, OP: 73%).
- About 7 in 10 agree that the City has provided sufficient online opportunities to conduct my business during the pandemic. (T: 72%, OP: 70%).

### Survey #2 - 2021 Civic Services Survey: Performance, Priorities and Preferences Results

#### *Satisfaction with City Services (Performance)*

- Overall satisfaction remains the same or higher since 2018 for many of the 29 civic services included in Survey #2.
- Reliability of electrical services, quality of drinking water, and speed of water main break repairs remain the top transportation and utility services where residents are most satisfied.
- Fire protection, maintenance of city parks, and police services are the top community and public services residents are most satisfied with.
- Residents remain satisfied with garbage collection, recycling collection and landfill services. All waste management services saw an increase in satisfaction compared to 2018.
- Indoor leisure centres, outdoor sports fields, paddling pools and spray parks, and recreation programs and services are the top recreation and culture services where residents are the most satisfied.
- In 2021, residents were asked to share how the COVID-19 closure of recreation and culture services impacted their rating of how well the City is doing in these services. This was a new question to help measure the impact of COVID-19. Overall, respondents reported that COVID-19 had influenced their rating, with 55% of telephone and 64% of online panel respondents indicating it had some level of influence.

#### *Civic Services (Preferences)*

- The majority of respondents indicated they would like the City to provide more service for:
  - Affordable Housing (T: 62%, OP: 61%)
  - Road Maintenance (T: 54%, OP: 56%)
  - Snow & Ice Management (T: 44%, OP: 51%)
- Respondents indicated they would like the service to stay about the same for most other services.

#### *Service Priorities*

- Priorities for service improvement include snow & ice road maintenance, maintenance of major roadways and freeways, traffic management, street maintenance in your neighbourhood (T only), accessibility of infrastructure for people with disabilities, and planning for growth and development.
- Priorities for maintaining service include quality of drinking water, reliability of electrical services, fire protection, police services (T only), garbage collection, speed of water main breaks repairs (OP only), recycling, and maintenance of city parks.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The 2021 operating budget includes a budget to be used towards the costs associated with the two civic services surveys. The cost of each survey in 2021 is approximately \$28,650 plus applicable taxes.

### **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no privacy, legal, social or environment implications identified.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The City will use the results to inform decisions related to strategic priorities, budgeting, and service delivery, as well as to highlight opportunities for continuous improvement.

To avoid unexpected disruptions to future surveys, Administration will move from conducting both surveys every two years to rotating the surveys yearly. In 2022, the Civic Satisfaction & Performance survey will be conducted. In 2023, the Civic Services Service: Performance, Priorities and Preferences will be conducted.

### **APPENDICES**

1. Backgrounder Survey 1 - 2021 Citizen Satisfaction and Performance Survey, Telephone and Online
2. Civic Satisfaction and Performance Survey 2021 - Telephone and Online Panel
3. Backgrounder Survey 2 - 2021 Civic Services Performance, Priorities and Preferences Survey, Telephone and Online
4. Civic Services Survey - Performance, Priorities and Preferences 2021, Telephone and Online Panel

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