

Civic Survey – Reflecting the Views of Saskatoon’s Diverse Community and Providing Ward Reports

ISSUE

Administration is preparing to conduct the 2025 Civic Services Surveys in May and June. The results of the surveys help to inform the 2026-2027 multi-year budget, to be deliberated by City Council in late November 2025. What, if any, improvements could be made to Civic Services Survey’s to potentially capture a broader cross-section of perceptions of Saskatoon’s diverse community? Moreover, how can survey results incorporate a ward-based analysis?

BACKGROUND

2.1 History

At its meeting on January 21, 2025, Governance and Priorities Committee received the 2024 Civic Services Survey results and resolved:

“That Administration report back before the next multi-year budget on options to enhance the Civic Satisfaction Survey to ensure the views of our diverse community are heard and broken out in the report, along with ward by ward statistical information.”

2.2 Current Status

The City of Saskatoon conducts two annual online surveys:

- The Civic Satisfaction & Performance Survey – the primary objectives of this survey is to gauge perceptions of quality of life, the direction the City is heading, perceptions of satisfaction, most important issues facing the City, perceived value of civic services, preferences for balancing the budget, satisfaction and preference for receiving City information and communications, impression of public engagement, impressions of customer service and performance indicators related to the City’s strategic goals.
- The Civic Services Survey: Performance, Priorities and Preferences – the primary objectives of this survey are to gauge perceptions of quality of services provided by the City (Transportation & Utilities services, Community & Public services, Waste Management, and Recreation & Culture services), identify priorities of services and preferences on level of civic services for 12 categories.

Each survey includes a sample size of 800+ online panelists with an estimated margin of error of +/- 3.43 percentage points. Panelists are selected at random using a professional online panel. All panelists are residents of Saskatoon and are aged 18 and older.

The online random sampling is designed to be representative of Saskatoon’s population based on age and gender. The Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) results are statistically weighted by age and gender, so the sample reflects the target population according to 2021 Census data. All other demographic variables collected do not have quotas and are not statistically weighted to reflect the target population according to Census data. As a result, the City of Saskatoon Civic Services Surveys over and/or under sample some demographics in each category collected, except for age and gender. Most notable is the under sampling for the following demographics:

- Indigenous or Person of Colour
- Persons who identify as having a disability
- Household Income of \$40,000 or less

While both quotas and weighting aim to improve the representativeness of survey data, they are distinct processes. Quotas influence who is surveyed, whereas weighting adjusts the collected data to better reflect the population.

Quotas involve setting predetermined targets for specific demographic groups (e.g., 50% men, 50% women) before data collection begins. The survey process is then managed to ensure these targets are met. This technique guarantees that certain groups are included in the sample, regardless of their natural distribution in the population.

Setting quotas helps ensure representation across key demographic groups. However, the margin of error for each group depends on factors such as sample size, weighting, and response variability within that group (stratum). If the goal is to minimize differences in margins of error across all groups, increasing the sample size for each group is necessary.

Weighting is applied after data collection to adjust the survey results to align with the demographic composition of the population (e.g., based on Census data). For instance, if a survey overrepresents younger respondents (e.g., 30% under 25 instead of the actual 20%), weighting assigns a lower value to those responses to bring them in line with the true population distribution. This technique corrects for over- or under-representation of groups in the sample and is particularly useful when the raw sample does not perfectly match population proportions but remains otherwise valid.

Survey analysis is provided in two reports. They include detailed findings for each survey along with an Appendix that provides a demographic analysis for each question based on age, household income, gender and east or west side of the city. Analysis is not provided for the following

demographics:

- Identifies as a Person with a Disability
- Indigenous or Person of Colour
- Housing Tenure (Renter or Owner)
- Country Born
- Years Lived in Canada
- Neighbourhood or Ward

2.3 Approaches in Other Jurisdictions

Appendix 1 provides some research about how six Canadian jurisdictions analyze their survey results using demographic and geographical stratum. The results show

- Two cities set quotas on one or three demographic variables.
- All cities use weighted data on two to three demographic variables. The most common include age and gender.
- Only one city produces ward reports.

OPTIONS

After reviewing the various demographic information collected as part of the two annual surveys, there is an under-sampling for the following demographics relative to Saskatoon’s Census of the Population (2021) demographic distributions:

- a) Individuals who identify as a person with a disability (an estimated 6-9 percentage point gap or approximately 50-75 respondents)
- b) Individuals who identify as Indigenous or Person of Colour (18 percentage point gap or approximately 150 respondents)
- c) Individuals who have a household income less than \$40,000 (17 percentage point gap or approximately 150 respondents)

In preparing this report, the Administration did explore the option to oversample the underrepresented individuals in the three demographic groups identified above. Oversampling requires setting quotas and potentially screening out willing participants who do not meet the criteria. Given that achieving a sample size of 800 is already challenging, restricting the sample further could lessen the pool of willing participants and may result in not achieving the sample size of n=800. Furthermore, oversampling would cost significantly more and requires additional time. As a result, Administration identified more viable options for consideration.

Option 1: Enhanced Demographic Reporting

After reviewing 2024 Civic Satisfaction Surveys from seven other cities, many use the same technique used by the City of Saskatoon which includes establishing quotas or statistically weighting both age and gender according to the most recent Census data.

Thus, option 1 maintains the status quo where quotas will continue for both age and gender aligned to the most recent Census data. However, the appendices for both Civic Services Surveys will be expanded to report on all demographic variables for each question beyond age, household income, gender, and side of the river.

Advantages of this option include:

- The survey sample reflects age and gender demographics relative to the Saskatoon Census data.
- With enhanced demographic reporting, an analysis for each question in both surveys will be provided for all demographic variables beyond age, household income, gender, and side of the river. This provides some improvement in reflecting the views of our diverse community in the report but are not necessarily representative of the entire group.
- There is no impact to the timelines to complete the 2025 surveys and provide results prior to the next multi-year budget.
- The city-wide results remain statistically reliable.
- The ability to trend results from previous surveys remains intact.
- The methodology is consistent with other Canadian cities.
- There is no budget implication.

Disadvantages of this option include:

- Satisfaction and performance results will not be reported by ward with a comparison to the city-wide results.
- This option will not representatively capture the perceptions of the diverse community due to the under sampling of various demographics.

Implications:

- There are no apparent implications to implementing this option.

Option 2: Enhanced Demographic Reporting and Ward Reporting

This option provides the same enhanced demographic reporting used in option 1 but adds expanded reporting for all 10 wards. More specifically, this option:

- Expands appendices to report on all demographic variables for each question beyond age, household income, gender, and side of the river.
- Provides a summary of results by each of the 10 wards in Saskatoon with a comparison to the city-wide result for each question. Quotas or weighting will not be set for each ward
- Includes a high-level demographic breakdown for each ward relative to the city-wide result. Individual questions will not be broken down to include results by each relevant demographic category as the sample sizes would not be sufficient for an analysis for an individual ward.

Advantages of this option include:

- Satisfaction and performance results by ward will be provided and will include a comparison to the city-wide results.
- The survey sample reflects age and gender demographics relative to the Saskatoon census data.
- With enhanced demographic reporting, an analysis for each question in both surveys will be provided for all demographic variables beyond age, household income, gender, and side of the river. This provides some improvement in reflecting the views of our diverse community in the report but are not necessarily representative of the entire group.
- The city-wide results remain statistically reliable.
- The ability to trend results from previous surveys remains intact.

Disadvantages of this option include:

- This option does not ensure the views of our diverse community are heard due to the under sampling for various demographics
- Requires an additional four weeks to deliver the results limiting the time before the next multi-year budget.
- The estimated margin of error for ward reports will be higher than the overall City-wide results. There is no guarantee of a maximum margin of error per ward. For example, if all wards were evenly distributed, that would be a sample size of $n=80$ per ward and a margin of error (MOE) of $\pm 11\%$. However, it is possible some wards may be severely underrepresented (e.g., $n=10$ /MOE 31%). It is recommended the reports are interpreted more as qualitative findings than quantitative findings.
- Based on the six cities explored, only one completes ward reports.
- Estimated costs exceed approved budget.

Implications:

- Increased Cost Estimate:
Survey #1 - \$1,000 per ward report x 10 wards = \$10,000
Survey #2 - \$1,000 per ward report x 10 wards = \$10,000
Administration can cover approximately \$8,000 of the anticipated cost through existing budgets but a funding source would be required for the additional \$12,000 - \$20,000.
- Timelines will require an additional 4 weeks (2 weeks per survey) to report on all demographic breakdowns and include 10 additional ward reports.
- Administration has awarded the 2025 Civic Services Surveys to Forum Research. It will not be possible to issue a new RFP and complete the 2025 surveys in time for the next multi-year budget which will be tabled in late 2025. A final quote will be required along with a change order to modify the contract's value.

Option 3: Enhanced Demographic Reporting, Ward Reporting, Extend Weighting, and Modify Income Categories

This option includes the enhanced demographic reporting and expands reporting for all 10 wards outlined in option 2. In addition, this option includes a requirement to extend weighting on more demographic categories beyond age and gender. The sample size would remain at n=800. Based on a review of six other cities, the maximum number of weighted demographics is three and generally include age and gender while varying on the third variable (i.e. neighbourhood distribution, quadrant, or income).

It is also recommended that the household income categories are modified as shown in the table below. With this small adjustment, the survey results would be a better representation of the income quintiles which are also used by Statistics Canada and Statistics Canada's Survey of Household Spending (SHS).¹

Current	Proposed
< \$20,000	Quintile 1 – Under \$30,000
\$20,0001 to \$40,000	Quintile 2 - \$30,000 - \$49,999
\$40,001 to \$60,000	Quintile 3 - \$50,000 - \$69,999
\$60,001 to \$80,000	Quintile 4 - \$70,000 - \$99,999
\$80,001 to \$100,000	Quintile 5 - \$100,000 and over
>\$100,000	

Advantages of this option include:

- Satisfaction and performance results by ward will be provided and will include a comparison to the city-wide results.
- The survey sample reflects age and gender demographics relative to the Saskatoon Census data. Furthermore, adjusting income categories will be a better representation of the lower income quintiles which are also used by Statistics Canada and SHS. And, weighting of the remaining two additional under-representative demographic variables will align the results with the demographic proportions of the population (e.g., Census data).
- With enhanced demographic reporting, an analysis for each question in both surveys will be provided for all demographic variables beyond age, household income, gender, and side of the river. This provides some improvement in reflecting the views of our diverse community in the report.
- The city-wide results remain statistically reliable.
- This methodology is used by other Canadian cities but with a maximum of 3 demographic variables (age, gender and one additional).

¹ For this purpose, income quintile divides the population into five groups based on income; Quintile 1 represents the bottom 20%, while quintile 5 represents the top 20%. Quintiles 2-4 represent the middle 60%.

Disadvantages of this option include:

- Changes to the income categories and introducing weighting to any additional demographic variable will impact the ability to trend results. More specifically, introducing new weighting can cause shifts in results that are due to the new weighting rather than real changes in public opinion. This means that comparisons from previous years’ data will not provide an accurate representation.
- Requires an additional four weeks to deliver the results limiting the time before the next multi-year budget.
- The estimated margin of error for ward reports will be higher than the overall city-wide results. There is no guarantee of a maximum margin of error per ward. For example, if all wards were evenly distributed, that would be a sample size of 80 per ward and an MOE of +/-11%. However, it is possible some wards may be severely underrepresented (e.g., n=10/MOE 31%). It is recommended the reports are interpreted more as qualitative findings than quantitative findings.
- Introducing weighting of more than three demographic variables is not a common approach used by other cities.
- Estimated costs exceed approved budget.

Implications:

- Increased Cost Estimate:
Survey #1 - \$1,000 per ward report x 10 wards = \$10,000
Survey #2 - \$1,000 per ward report x 10 wards = \$10,000
Administration can cover approximately \$8,000 of the anticipated cost through existing budgets but a funding source would be required for the additional \$12,000 - \$20,000.
- Timelines will require an additional four weeks (two weeks per survey) to report on all demographic breakdowns and include 10 additional ward reports.
- Administration has awarded the 2025 Civic Services Surveys to Forum Research. It will not be possible to issue a new RFP and complete the 2025 surveys in time for the next multi-year budget which will be tabled in late 2025. A final quote will be required along with a change order to modify the contract's value.

Option 4: Enhanced Demographic Reporting and Collect Complementary Data for Hard to Reach

Option 4 includes everything identified in option 1 (maintain the status quo with enhanced demographic report) but adds an additional step to gather complementary data. This option recognizes that common “hard-to-reach” demographic groups include ethnic minorities, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and low-income households. This is likely reflective of the lower participation rates by these groups in the annual City of Saskatoon Civic Services Surveys.

Rather than trying to increase sample sizes or weighting new demographic variables that impact trend analysis, a different approach is to customize the engagement for each audience in a way that addresses the unique barriers to participation.

More specifically, a series of focus groups, in-depth interviews, talking circles or other unique techniques will be designed and hosted using an external professional facilitator. The technique and format will be designed to address the unique barriers of each demographic group. Worth noting, traditionally focus groups include approximately 10 people.

The goal is to review the responses to each question in the two civic surveys to identify areas that significantly vary from the overall response. This may result in different questions of interest for each hard-to-reach demographic group. Further, this approach will allow for conversation around whether participants believe this is where their community is at for relevant questions, to explore inferences as to why or what is contributing to the scores, and what should be the priority of the City from their perspective.

This approach will provide complementary data to the annual survey and will be reported separately.

Advantages of this option include:

- The survey sample reflects age and gender demographics relative to the Saskatoon census data.
- With enhanced demographic reporting, an analysis for each question in both surveys will be provided for all demographic variables beyond age, household income, gender, and side of the river. This provides some improvement in reflecting the views of our diverse community in the report but are not necessarily representative of the entire group.
- The design for collecting feedback is tailored more appropriately for the hard-to-reach demographics rather than relying on a traditional survey. This may build trust and credibility with the hard-to-reach community.
- Will not impact the timelines for completing the annual Civic Services Surveys.
- The city-wide results remain statistically reliable.
- The ability to trend results from previous surveys remains intact.

Disadvantages of this option include:

- Satisfaction and performance results will not be reported by ward with a comparison to the city-wide results
- More time will be needed to conduct the focus groups, in-depth discussions and/or talking circles and report back to City Council before November 2025 budget deliberations.
- Focus groups, in-depth discussions and/or talking circles are not considered statistically reliable.

- Estimated costs exceed approved budget.

Implications:

- This will require issuing an RFP or RFQ to finalize the additional cost. However, a high-level estimate will be approximately \$5,000 to \$7,000 per hard-to-reach group (ethnic minorities/person of colour, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and low-income households). The total estimated cost before taxes may range from \$20,000 to \$28,000. Administration can cover approximately \$8,000 of the anticipated cost through existing budgets but a funding source would be required for the additional \$12,000 - \$20,000.
- Timelines to the annual Civic Services Surveys will not be impacted but this will require an additional 4-6 weeks to conduct the research and an additional 2-4 weeks to report back to City Council.

Option 5: Enhanced Demographic Reporting, Ward Reporting, and Collect Complementary Data for Hard to Reach

Advantages of this option include:

- Satisfaction and performance results by ward will be provided and will include a comparison to the city-wide results.
- The survey sample reflects age and gender demographics relative to the Saskatoon Census data.
- With enhanced demographic reporting, an analysis for each question in both surveys will be provided for all demographic variables beyond age, household income, gender, and side of the river. This provides some improvement in reflecting the views of our diverse community in the report but are not necessarily representative of the entire group.
- The design for collecting feedback is tailored more appropriately for the hard-to-reach demographics rather than relying on a traditional survey. This may build trust and credibility with the hard-to-reach community.
- The city-wide results remain statistically reliable.
- The ability to trend results from previous surveys remains intact.

Disadvantages of this option include:

- Requires an additional 10-12 weeks to deliver the results, limiting the time before the next multi-year budget. This may even require moving up the May/June start date of the annual survey to accommodate for the additional time required.
- The estimated margin of error for ward reports will be higher than the overall city-wide results. There is no guarantee of a maximum margin of error per ward. For example, if all wards were evenly distributed, that would be a sample size of 80 per ward and an MOE of +/-11%. However, it is possible some wards may be severely underrepresented (e.g., n=10/MOE 31%). It is recommended the

reports are interpreted more as qualitative findings than quantitative findings.

- Estimated costs exceed approved budget.

Implications:

- Increased Cost Estimate:
Survey #1 - \$1,000 per ward report x 10 wards = \$10,000
Survey #2 - \$1,000 per ward report x 10 wards = \$10,000
Administration can cover approximately \$8,000 of the anticipated cost through existing budgets but a funding source would be required for the additional \$32,000 - \$40,000.
- Collecting the complementary data will require issuing an RFP or RFQ to finalize the additional cost. However, a high-level estimate will be approximately \$5,000 to \$7,000 per hard-to-reach group (ethnic minorities/person of colour, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and low-income households). The total estimated cost before taxes may range from \$20,000 to \$28,000.
- Timelines will require an additional 4 weeks (2 weeks per survey) to report on all demographic breakdowns and include 10 additional ward reports. An additional 4-6 weeks to conduct the complementary research will be required along with an additional 2-4 weeks to report back to City Council.
- Administration has awarded the 2025 Civic Services Surveys to Forum Research. It will not be possible to issue a new RFP and complete the 2025 surveys in time for the next multi-year budget which will be tabled in late 2025. A final quote will be required along with a change order to modify the contract's value.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend to City Council that Option 1- Enhance Demographic Reporting be approved for future annual Civic Services Surveys.

RATIONALE

The recommended option maintains the integrity of the annual Civic Services Survey by continuing to have random sample representative of Saskatoon’s population based on age and gender. Some improvements can be made with enhanced demographic reporting and analysis for each question in both surveys beyond age, household income, gender, and side of the river. This provides some improvement in reflecting the views of our diverse community in the report by breaking out response to all questions.

The city-wide results remain statistically reliable and the ability to trend results and compare to baseline performance remains in place.

This option is consistent with approaches used in other Canadian cities and it has no budgetary implications, or impact to the timelines to complete the 2025 surveys. This

provides confidence in staying within the approved budget and receiving the results prior to the next multi-year budget.

The annual Civic Services Survey is intended to be one of several inputs to inform decisions about strategic priorities, budgeting, and service delivery. The work completed by various departments ranging from Indigenous Initiatives, Community Development, and Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion provide additional sources of information more specific and relevant to underrepresented demographic groups identified in the Civic Services Surveys (Indigenous or person of colour, persons who identify as having a disability and lower income households).

Regarding individual ward reports, the Administration can further explore the option to breakdown a limited number of questions of interest by ward. This approach may provide the necessary information for ward councillors while managing the impact to timelines and budget.

APPENDICES

1. Municipal Review of Civic Services Survey Methodologies and Reporting
2. Options Evaluation Criteria Matrix

Report Approval

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