

## Survey Background

### Survey Purpose

The City of Minneapolis contracted with National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) to conduct a community-wide resident survey. The Minneapolis Resident Survey serves as a consumer report card for Minneapolis by providing residents the opportunity to rate the quality of life in the City, as well as the community's amenities, service delivery and their satisfaction with local government. The survey also permits residents to provide feedback to government on what is working well and what is not, and to communicate their priorities for community planning and resource allocation.

The focus on the quality of service delivery and the importance of services helps council, staff and the public to set priorities for decisions and lays the groundwork for tracking community opinions about the core responsibilities of Minneapolis City government, helping to assure maximum service quality over time.

This type of survey gets at the key services that local government controls to create a quality community. It is akin to private sector customer surveys that are used regularly by many corporations to monitor where there are weaknesses in product or service delivery before customers defect to competition or before other problems from dissatisfied customers arise.

This is the third iteration of the Minneapolis Resident Survey since the baseline study conducted in 2001.

### Methods

Interviewing Service of America, a company specializing in phone survey services which conducted the interviewing under direction of NRC staff, purchased a random digit dial sample (RDD) where part of the sample was geocoded up-front using reverse directory look-up. Phone numbers of Minneapolis residents were randomly selected for interviewing. Phone calls were made from November 11, 2005 to January 25, 2006. A majority of the interviews was completed during the evening hours, although calls were made on the weekend and during weekdays also. All phone numbers were dialed at least six times before replacing with another number, with at least one of the attempts on either a weekend or weekday.

Once interviews were completed using the RDD list, respondent address information were geocoded to determine in which of 11 community planning districts a respondent resided. Community planning districts were chosen as the geographic unit of analysis below the City level. The districts were the geographic unit selected for prior surveys. Datasets are available for a wide variety of demographics based upon the community planning districts. To complete the minimum number of responses for each community (105), a set of numbers was pre-coded for location and called to fill the quota for each community planning district. Telephone numbers associated with cellular phone lines were not included in the sample.

An overall quota of at least 105 completed interviews was set for each of the eight community planning districts within the City of Minneapolis. An additional quota system based on racial groups was used to ensure that a representative number of these populations participated in the survey.

Interviewers who spoke Spanish, Vietnamese, Somali, Hmong, Laotian and Oromo were available for this survey; 29 surveys were conducted in Spanish, four in Hmong, five in Vietnamese, one in Laotian and one in Oromo. The overall response rate was 25%.

## Understanding the Results

### “Don’t Know” Responses

On many of the questions in the survey, respondents could answer “don’t know.” The proportion of respondents giving this reply is shown in the full set of responses included in Appendix III: Complete Set of Frequencies. However, these responses have been removed from the analyses presented in the body of the report. In other words, the tables and graphs display the responses from respondents who had an opinion about a specific item. This approach to presenting data is used in order to allow the most “fair” comparison across items.

Though a somewhat small percentage of respondents offer “don’t know” for most items, inevitably some items have a larger “don’t know” percentage. Comparing responses to a set of items on the same scale can be misleading when the “don’t know” responses have been left in. If two items have disparate “don’t know” percentages (2% vs. 15%, for example), any apparent similarities or differences across the remaining response options may disappear once the “don’t know” responses are removed.

Previous resident survey reports for the City of Minneapolis have included “don’t know” responses in the report bodies. In this report, comparisons to previous data omit the “don’t know” responses.

### “Resident” and “Respondent”

As the results of the survey are intended to reflect the City of Minneapolis population as a whole, the terms “resident” and “respondent” are used interchangeably throughout this report.

### Confidence Intervals

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 the survey is generally no greater than plus or minus three percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample (1,277 completed interviews). For each community planning district from the survey, the margin of error rises to as much as plus or minus 9.6% for a sample size of 105 (in smallest) to plus or minus 8.4% for 137 completed surveys (in largest). (For comparisons made across community planning districts, the margin of error is equivalent to that for the smallest group.) Where estimates are given for sub-groups, they are less precise. Generally the 95% confidence interval is plus or minus five percentage points for samples of about 400 to ten percentage points for samples as small as 100.

### Putting Evaluations onto a 100-Point Scale

Although responses to many of the evaluative or frequency questions were made on four or five - point scales with one representing the best rating, the scales had different labels (e.g., “very satisfied,” “very good,” “extremely important”). To make comparisons easier, many of the results in this summary are reported on a common scale where zero is the worst possible rating and 100 is the best possible rating. If everyone reported “very good,” then the result would be 100 on the 0-100 scale. The new scale can be thought of like the thermometer used to represent total giving to United Way. The higher the thermometer reading, the closer to the goal of 100 – in this case, the most

positive response possible.<sup>1</sup> The .95 confidence interval around a score on the 0-100 scale based on all respondents typically will be no greater than plus or minus two points on a 100-point scale. For each community planning district, the ratings have a confidence interval of plus or minus six points on a 100-point scale.

### Comparing Survey Results

An average rating of 70 for service quality is at the “good” mark on a 100-point scale that goes from “very good” to “poor.” Few services actually receive ratings as high as 70 on the scale, in part, because certain kinds of services tend to be thought less well of by residents in many communities across the country. Police protection tends to be better received than pothole repair by residents of most American cities. Where possible, the better comparison is not from one service to another in Minneapolis, but from Minneapolis services to services like them provided by other jurisdictions. This way we can better understand if “good” is good enough for Minneapolis service evaluations.

Because this survey was the third in a series of resident surveys, the results will be presented along with earlier evaluations where possible. Survey results from past surveys and surveys conducted in other cities, in most cases, have been converted to a 100-point scale to allow for easier and fairer comparisons. For comparison by year, results are statistically significant if there is a difference of plus or minus four percentage points and plus or minus three points around average ratings on a 100-point scale.

### National Database

NRC’s database includes the results from citizen surveys conducted in hundreds of jurisdictions across the United States. These are public opinion polls answered by hundreds of thousands of residents around the country. We have recorded, analyzed and stored responses to thousands of survey questions dealing with resident perceptions about the quality of community life and public trust and residents’ report of their use of public facilities. Respondents to these surveys are intended to represent over 50 million Americans.

Jurisdictions use the comparisons to the national database to help interpret their own citizen survey results, to create or revise community plans, to evaluate the success of policy or budget decisions, to measure local government performance.

<sup>1</sup>Note that the 100-point scale is not a percent. It is a conversion of responses to an average rating. Each response option is assigned a value that is used in calculating the average score. For example, “excellent”=100, “good”=67, “fair”=33 and “poor”=0. If everyone reported “excellent,” then the average rating would be 100 on the 100-point scale. Likewise, if all respondents gave a “poor,” the result would be 0 on the 100-point scale. If half the respondents gave a score of “excellent” and half gave a score of “poor,” the average would be in the middle of the scale (like the center post of a teeter totter) between “fair” and “good.”

#### Example of Converting Responses to the 100-point Scale

How do you rate the City as a place to live?

Response option	Total with “don’t know”	Step 1: Remove the percent of “don’t know” responses	Total without “don’t know”	Step 2: Assign scale values	Step 3: Multiply the percent by the scale value	Step 4: Sum to calculate the average rating
Excellent	36%	=36÷(100-5)=	38%	100	=38% x 100 =	38
Good	42%	=42÷(100-5)=	44%	67	=44% x 67 =	30
Only Fair	12%	=12÷(100-5)=	13%	33	=13% x 33 =	4
Poor	5%	=5÷(100-5)=	5%	0	=5% x 0 =	0
Don’t know	5%		--			
Total	100%		100%			72

It is true that you cannot simply take a given result from one survey and compare it to the result from a different survey. NRC principals have pioneered and reported their methods for converting all survey responses to the same scale. Because scales responses will differ among types of survey questions, NRC statisticians have developed statistical algorithms, which adjust question results based on many characteristics of the question, its scale and the survey methods. All results are then converted to a common scale with a minimum score of 0 (equaling the lowest possible rating) to a maximum score of 100 (equaling the highest possible rating). We then can provide a comparison that not only controls for question differences, but also controls for differences in types of survey methods.

In this report, comparisons are made both to the entire database (“National Database”) and a portion of the database (“Select Cities”), featuring communities identified by Minneapolis<sup>2</sup>, when available.

The aforementioned comparisons are provided when similar questions are included in NRC’s database and there are at least five other jurisdictions in which the question was asked. (For a list of jurisdictions in the National Database, see Appendix V: Jurisdictions Included in the National Database.) Where comparisons are available, three numbers are provided in the table. The first is the rank assigned to Minneapolis’s rating among jurisdictions where a similar question was asked. The second is the number of jurisdictions that asked a similar question. Third, the rank is expressed as a percentile to indicate its distance from the top score. This rank (5th highest out of 25 jurisdictions’ results, for example) translates to a percentile (the 80th percentile in this example). A percentile indicates the percent of jurisdictions with identical or lower ratings. Therefore, a rating at the 80th percentile would mean that Minneapolis’s rating is equal to or better than 80% of the ratings from other jurisdictions. Conversely, 20% of the jurisdictions where a similar question was asked had higher ratings.

Alongside the rank and percentile appears a comparison: “above the average,” “below the average” or “similar to the average.” This evaluation of “above,” “below” or “similar to” comes from a statistical comparison of Minneapolis’s rating to the average rating from all the comparison jurisdictions where a similar question was asked. Differences of three or more points on a 100-point scale between Minneapolis’s ratings and the average based on the appropriate comparisons from the database are considered “statistically significant,” and thus are marked as “above” or “below” the average. When differences between Minneapolis’s ratings and the national average or select cities average are less than two points, they are marked as “similar to” the average. Please note that percentage points in tables and charts may not always add to 100% due to rounding or the respondents having the option to select more than one answer.

<sup>2</sup>The cities used for comparison in the custom norm are as follows: Portland, Austin, Boston, Ann Arbor, Seattle, St. Paul, Charlotte, Denver, Cincinnati, Boulder, Detroit, San Francisco, Durham/Raleigh, Madison, Oklahoma City and Phoenix.

### **Summary of Comparison Terms**

The national database includes the results from citizen surveys conducted in hundreds of jurisdictions across the United States. The results have been converted to a common scale, controlling for question differences and differences in types of survey methods.

**-Rank:** Minneapolis’s order among jurisdictions where a similar question was asked.

**-Number of jurisdictions:** Jurisdictions that asked a similar question.

**-Percentile:** Similar to rank, the percentile indicates the distance of the Minneapolis rating from the top rating. A percentile indicates the percent of jurisdictions with identical or lower ratings.

**-Comparison:** This evaluation of “above,” “below” or “similar to” comes from a statistical comparison of Minneapolis’s rating to the average rating from all the comparison jurisdictions where a similar question was asked. For ratings that are above or below this average, the approximate point difference is indicated as well.