



Results of the 2006

Citizen Survey

**DISTRICT OF
SAANICH**

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May 2006



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Executive Summary

On February 28, 2006, an 8 page survey was mailed to 1200 randomly selected Saanich residents, asking them to share their ideas and opinions about Saanich as a community, and the District of Saanich as their municipal government. By the March 15, 2006 response deadline, we had received 382 completed surveys, giving us a good response rate of 33%, and low sampling error of $\pm 5\%$, 19 times out of 20.

The main body of this report contains a brief narrative analysis of each significant section of the survey, followed by selected figures and tables showing the most relevant or interesting segments of the available data. For all sections of the survey, more complete figures, including results broken down into demographic sub-groups such as age or area, are available in Appendix III. The actual wording and presentation of questions used in the original survey can be found in Appendix V.

The most significant results from each section of this report are briefly summarized here:

Quality of Life

- ✓ Residents give very high ratings to quality of life measures, such as the rating of Saanich as a place to live, as a place to raise children, as a place to retire or as a place to work. Over 93% rated quality of life as good or very good, up from 87% in 2003.
- ✓ Over 84% of residents generally feel safe or very safe and secure in their neighbourhoods.
- ✓ When asked to list things they like about Saanich, residents most frequently identify its central location, its quiet, friendly, safe neighbourhoods, its great parks and trails network.
- ✓ When asked to list things they dislike about Saanich, residents most frequently identify transportation issues such as congestion.

Service Delivery

- ✓ Of the 58 different local government services that residents were asked to rate, 50 of them, or 86% percent, met or exceeded citizen expectations.
- ✓ Residents give an overall score of 66 out of 100 to municipal government services.
- ✓ Residents give particularly high praise to Saanich's fire fighting, parks, trails, recreation facilities and programs, and landscaping of public property.
- ✓ Conversely, services that residents are the least satisfied with and most concerned about include, ease of travel by bicycle, sidewalk repair, building inspection / permits and by-law enforcement. These themes are consistent with those reported in 2003.
- ✓ Over 84% of residents use a Saanich municipal park or trail several times per year or more. Contacting Saanich Fire, attending a public meeting and the municipal golf course are used the least frequently of services listed.

Local Government

- ✓ Residents continue to strongly prefer lower property taxes and limited or no increase in services, preferring instead that a greater percentage of revenue be raised through user fees.
- ✓ When asked to allot an imaginary \$100 to a selection of 10 capital projects, residents choose to allot the largest portion, \$13.02, to roads and traffic control, followed closely by parks and trails at \$11.15, the municipal water system at \$10.81 and the sewer and drains system at \$10.53.
- ✓ Saanich residents clearly value their community newspaper and their local daily newspaper as the two most important ways they access, and engage in, municipal decision making processes.
- ✓ When asked to give overall ratings of the performance and direction of the District of Saanich, residents gave high marks of over 70%, with less than 2% to 6% giving negative responses.

Introduction: Background, Objectives & Methodology

Near the end of 2002, the District of Saanich embarked on a process to renew its strategic direction. The Mayor, Council and staff recognized the importance of citizen and business input to this process. At the same time, they were also very interested in increasing the amount and diversity of feedback received from residents on the quality and importance of services provided and on budget planning – information that is used to improve services and provide input to the budget process. The first survey was completed in 2003.

This second citizen's survey follows the same methodology as the 2003 survey. Readers are encouraged to read both surveys for their own interest; however **caution should be exercised when comparing the results of the 2003 Citizen Survey with the current survey results. The differences between these two studies have not been statistically tested to determine whether they are significant.** Also, trends cannot be established with only two years of data. Comparative analysis is planned for the next citizen survey.

Survey Objectives

1. Obtain a statistical assessment of citizen perceptions of service delivery availability and quality.
2. Provide citizen input to municipal financial planning.
3. Gather citizen feedback on municipal public involvement processes.
4. Provide citizen input to the municipality's annual strategic planning process.

Methodology

The 2006 Citizen Survey was mailed to 1200 randomly selected Saanich residences on February 28, 2006. Of those surveys mailed out, 10 were returned by recipients who did not live within the boundaries of Saanich, 12 were returned as undeliverable, and a further 14 were not able to respond, giving us a total of 1164 valid survey recipients. Responses were due by March 15, at which time 382 completed surveys had been returned, translating to a 32.8% response rate. Response rates of this kind are typically between 25% and 40%.

Based on a sample size of 382, our sampling error (also called "margin of error") is plus or minus 5%, 19 times out of 20, which means that 95% of the time, our survey results will vary $\pm 5\%$ from the results obtained if every individual in the District of Saanich were surveyed. Subgroups like age groups, place of residence or gender can be analyzed, although because they contain fewer respondents than the total, the size of the sampling error may increase.

Although responses to many of the evaluative questions were made on a 5 point scale with 5 representing the best rating and 1 the worst, most 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.

No statistical reweighing of results was done to precisely match the demographic characteristics of survey respondents with those of the population. Demographic differences between the sample and the population were judged to be not significant enough to warrant the additional time and expense required for statistical reweighing. In almost all questions, results are provided for each demographic group, allowing survey readers to make their own judgements on the differences present between sub-groups.

The sample is underrepresented by respondents under the age of 44, and by respondents who are renters. Please see Appendix I for demographic data.

Presentation of Results

The main body of this report contains a brief narrative analysis of each section of the survey, followed by selected figures and tables showing the most relevant or interesting segments of the available data. For all sections of the survey, more complete figures, including results broken down by demographic data, are available in Appendix III. The actual wording and presentation of questions used in the original survey can be found in Appendix V.

Acknowledgements

The 2006 Citizen Survey would not have been successfully completed without the special efforts and gratefully received assistance from:

- District of Saanich staff, especially members of the Strategic Planning Team, Finance Staff, Wayne Regan in the Print Shop, Noella May, Rebecca Pimental-Furtado, Marnie Ferguson and Kathy Orr during data entry and report production, Brian Vatne during database design
- Dr. Brent Mainprize from the Faculty of Management at Royal Roads University
- and most importantly, those citizens who took the time to carefully complete and return their surveys.

SURVEY RESULTS

Survey results are presented within the following sections:

Quality of Life

Service Delivery

Local Government

Quality of Life

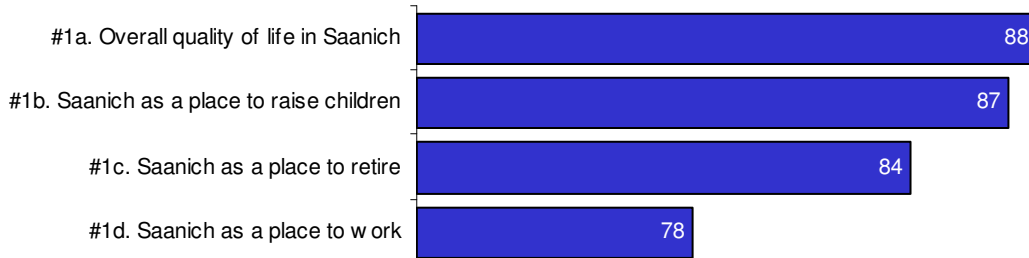
Measuring quality of life is complex, and involves many different indicators. The three groupings of results presented below – “a place to live”, “safety and security” and “likes and dislikes” – provide a reasonable indication of the perceived quality of life in Saanich.

The responses to these three groupings of questions suggest a very positive perception of quality of life in Saanich. Residents are happy living here, generally feel safe, appreciate the amenities, environment and location, and plan to stay. When asked what they dislike most about Saanich, a significant percentage of residents cite traffic and transportation – a theme that runs throughout the survey. Clearly this issue is one which residents feel strongly about as a problem and its impact on quality of life.

A Place to Live (Question #1)

When asked their perceptions of quality of life in Saanich, survey respondents were very positive about Saanich as a community in which to live. These questions received some of the most positive ratings in the survey (see App. III for all data). Over 93% describe the quality of life in Saanich as good to very good, up from 87% in 2003.

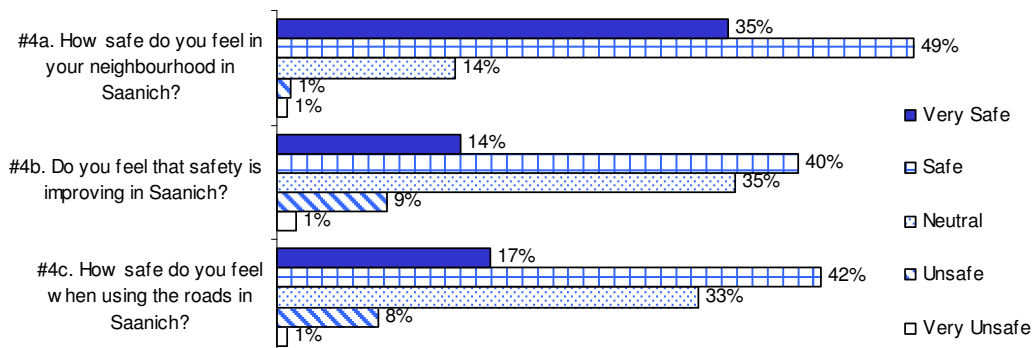
Figure 1: Quality of Life Ratings (average score - out of 100)



Safety & Security (Question #4)

Perceptions of safety and security scored lower on average than the other quality of life measures. Although safety in Saanich neighbourhoods received a high score (average: 79), safety when using Saanich roadways, and the perception that safety is improving were somewhat lower (but with still over 50% of respondents feeling “safe” or higher), with average scores of 64 and 66 respectively.

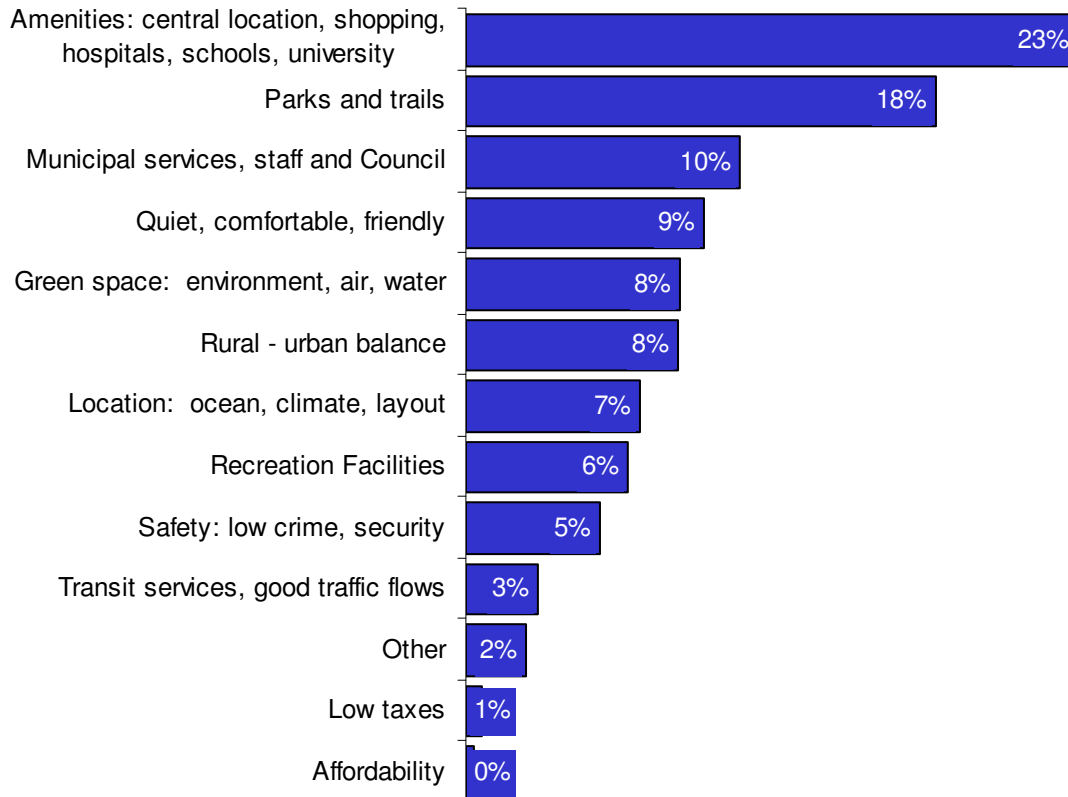
Figure 2: Perception of Safety (% of respondents)



Likes & Dislikes (Question #2 & #3)

Survey respondents were asked to list up to three things that they liked most about Saanich, and three things they dislike the most. Their responses were categorized into similar groupings or themes and are reported in aggregate form. Verbatim responses are available in Appendix IV.

Figure 3: Like Most About Saanich (% of respondents)

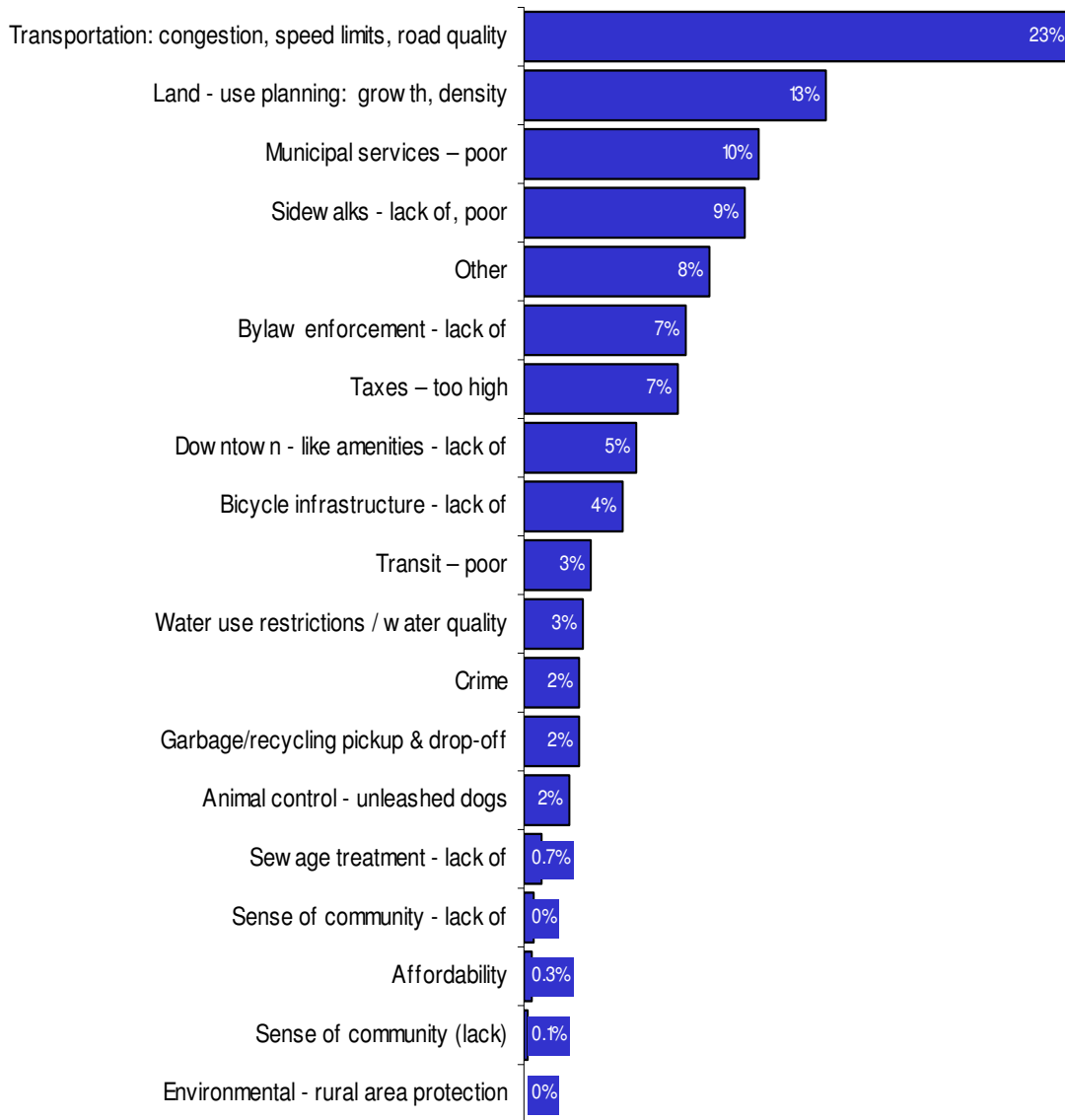


The survey results indicate that residents continue to place a high value on the municipality's central location, excellent amenities (shopping, hospitals, schools, etc.) and small-town feel with quiet, friendly neighbourhoods and close proximity to rural areas. The natural environment and recreation also figure prominently in the list of things citizens like most about Saanich.

Likes & Dislikes (Question #2 & #3 - Continued)

When asked to name the two or three things they dislike most about Saanich, the largest proportion mention traffic congestion. Two other prominent issues mentioned that are particularly likely to impact on quality of life are growth pressures and the lack of sidewalks.

Figure 4: Dislike Most about Saanich (% of respondents)



Service Delivery

Several components are used to evaluate local government services: an assessment of the perceived quality and importance of a particular service; the citizen usage rate of a service; and finally a more general assessment of the customer service provided by Saanich employees. Results are generally very positive, although certainly exhibit a wide range, in all three components. Saanich residents value excellent local government services, and appear generally satisfied with the selection and quality of these services.

Quality vs. Importance of Local Government Services (Question #5)

The survey results provide a detailed assessment of 58 local government services. Traditionally, citizen surveys will ask respondents to rank either their level of satisfaction with a particular service, or less commonly, their rating of the importance of a service. Each question provides slightly different information, one on service quality, and the other on service availability and appropriate resource allocation. The 2006 Citizen Survey asked respondents to rate each local government service by both satisfaction and importance. These two ratings can then be plotted onto a graph which shows four quadrants:

Quadrant #1 (lower left): Low Satisfaction – Low Importance: Services in this quadrant may suffer from low awareness of their availability or benefits by the general population, or may offer the opportunity for resource reallocation.

Quadrant #2 (lower right): High Satisfaction – Low Importance: These services may require little attention or may even offer an opportunity for resource reallocation.

Quadrant #3 (upper left): Low Satisfaction – High Importance: These services may require more municipal resources, better management of existing resources or a new approach to service delivery.

Quadrant #4 (upper right): High Satisfaction – High Importance: Services in this quadrant largely meet current taxpayer expectations, both in terms of quality and resource allocation.

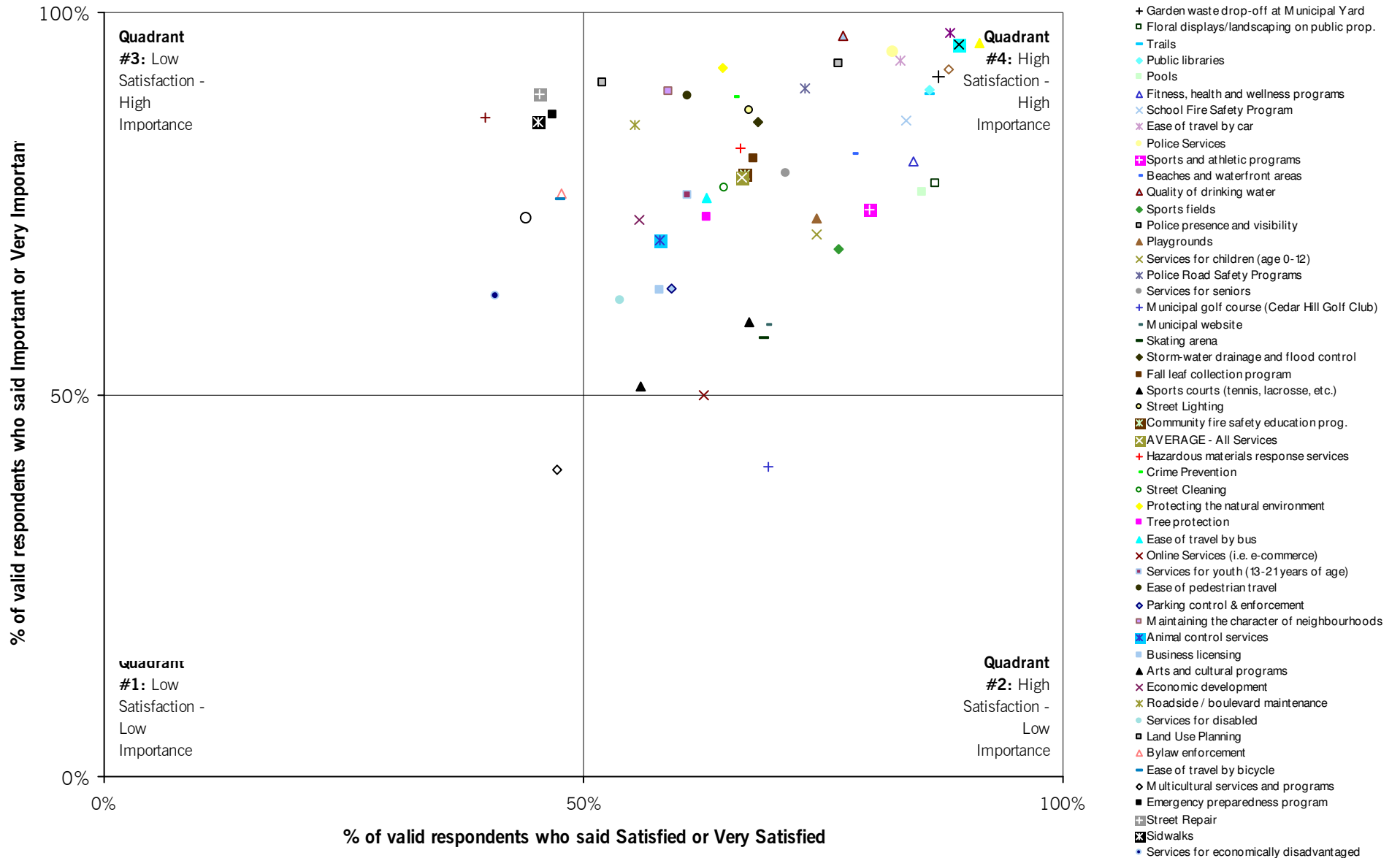
Plotting the satisfaction and importance rating results as has been done in Figure 5 on the next page, shows that 50 of the 58 (86%) listed services are in quadrants 1, 2 or 4. **Therefore the majority of local government services are meeting or exceeding taxpayer expectations.**

There are 8 services in quadrant 3 (low satisfaction/high importance) that are most in need of individual examination to determine:

- how to improve their quality, or,
- whether to provide them at all, or whether to continue providing them at their existing service levels, or
- whether other factors (such as a low awareness of the nature or benefits of a service) are influencing citizen perceptions.

These services are: Sidewalks, street repair, primary sewage treatment and ocean outfall, bylaw enforcement, building inspection / permits, emergency preparedness program, ease of travel by bicycle and services for the economically disadvantaged.

Figure 5: Satisfaction vs. Importance of Local Government Services



Citizen Usage Rates of Selected Services (Question #6)

Use of services by citizens varies tremendously. Not surprisingly, leisure-type activities are used at a significantly higher frequency than other services (the exception being the golf course). Over 60% of the population uses Saanich's recreation centres, libraries, parks and trails several times per year or more – an extremely high rate of use from such a large proportion of the population.

| Selected Services | Average Score | Never | Once or twice a year | Three to four times per year | Once every 1 to 2 months | More than once a month |
|---|----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| f. Visited a Saanich municipal park or nature trail | 75% | 5% | 11% | 18% | 13% | 53% |
| c. Used a Saanich recreation centre | 58% | 17% | 21% | 14% | 10% | 37% |
| a. Visited a public library | 56% | 19% | 18% | 13% | 19% | 31% |
| h. Used another Saanich trail | 55% | 20% | 20% | 14% | 11% | 34% |
| g. Used the Galloping Goose or Lochside Trail | 52% | 28% | 14% | 12% | 12% | 33% |
| k. Dropped off garden waste at the Saanich Municipal Yard | 45% | 33% | 12% | 16% | 21% | 19% |
| d. Used a recreation centre in a neighbouring municipality | 35% | 41% | 23% | 10% | 8% | 18% |
| b. Attended an arts or cultural event | 32% | 35% | 30% | 15% | 12% | 7% |
| j. Visited the Municipal Hall | 23% | 36% | 44% | 15% | 5% | 1% |
| n. Visited the Municipal website | 17% | 60% | 22% | 9% | 6% | 3% |
| m. Contacted the Saanich Police Department | 11% | 64% | 28% | 7% | 1% | 0% |
| e. Played golf at the Cedar Hill Golf Club | 10% | 80% | 9% | 6% | 2% | 3% |
| i. Attended a public meeting about municipal matters | 9% | 72% | 21% | 4% | 2% | 1% |
| l. Contacted the Saanich Fire Department | 4% | 88% | 11% | 1% | 1% | 0% |

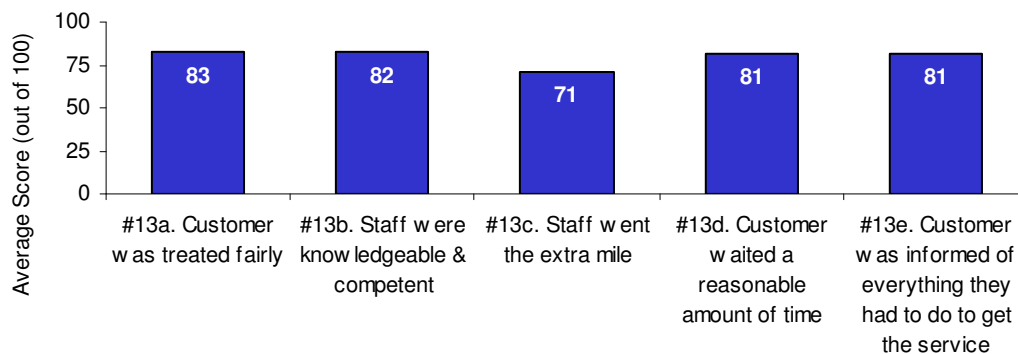
Customer service (Question #11-14)

Over 60% of survey respondents report having had a personal contact with a Saanich employee in the past 12 months. The two most common ways to interact with Saanich employees are: by telephone (73% of all reporting interactions), and in person at the Municipal Hall (56%).

Those respondents who have had a personal contact with an employee were then asked to rate the customer service provided by that employee in five standard customer service evaluation criteria: were they treated fairly, were staff knowledgeable and competent, whether staff went the extra mile to make sure they got what they needed, did they wait a reasonable amount of time and where they informed of everything they had to do to get the service.

Survey respondents report high levels of satisfaction with the customer service provided by Saanich employees. Average scores of 71 to 83 are some of the highest in the survey. Of greater relevance to customer service evaluation are the percentage of respondents giving negative (“poor” or “very poor”) scores – the results are also positive, with generally fewer than 12% of respondents giving negative rankings to customer service by Saanich employees. It is in those areas that our improvement of services will be targeted.

Figure 7: Customer impression of municipal employees



Local Government

Taxes & Spending (Question #7-8)

Results show that a majority of taxpayers are satisfied with the current level of services and appear unwilling to trade a tax increase for increased services. A plurality suggests that they are willing to support increased user fees. A large majority supports the same or decreased reliance on borrowing.

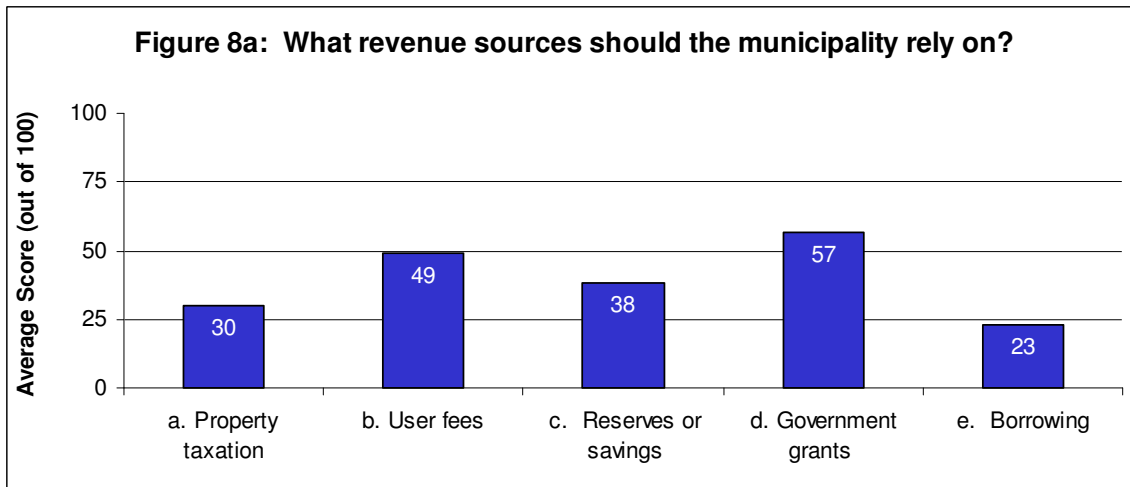
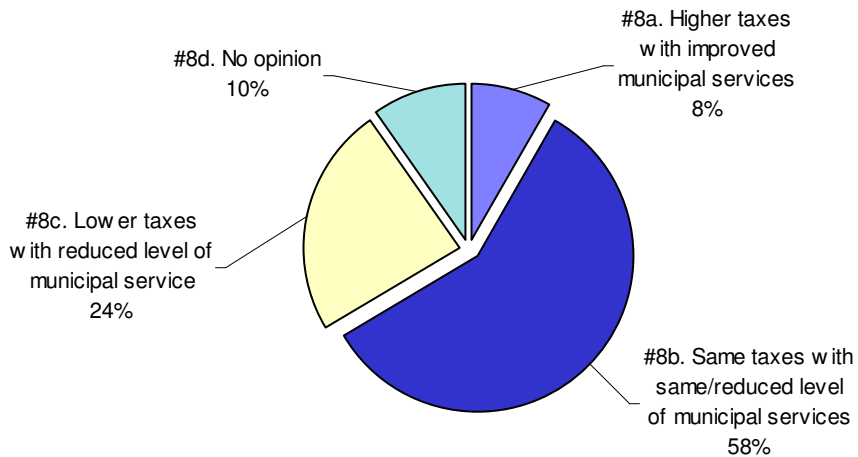


Figure 8b: If faced with the following choices, which would you prefer?

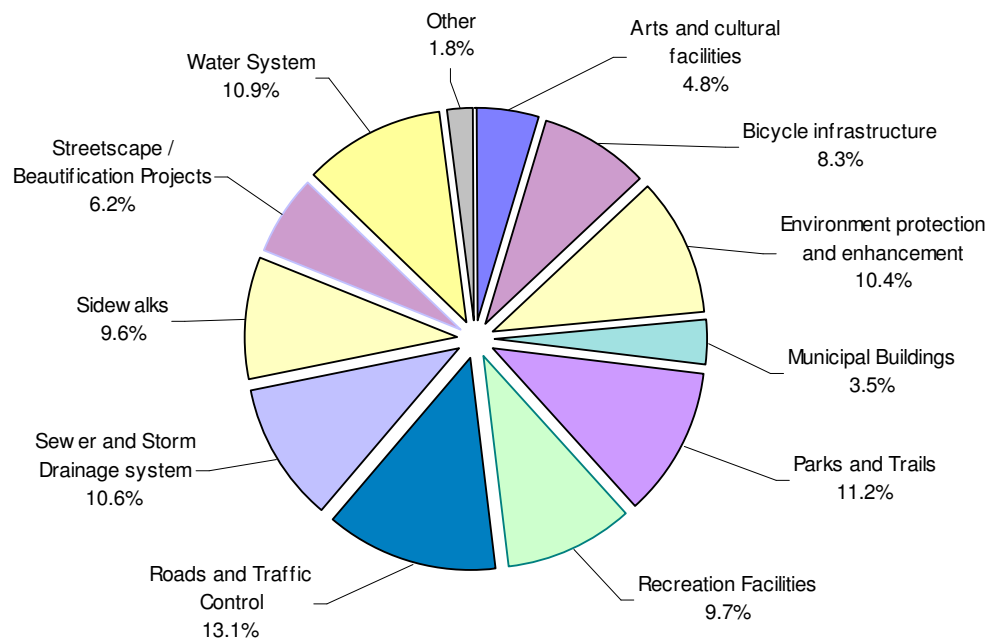


Capital Projects (Question #9)

When asked how they would spend \$100 on a list of capital projects, survey respondents say that they would spend the most on transportation infrastructure, mirroring concerns raised in earlier sections. Followed closely behind transportation are parks and trails and the water and sewer systems, and then more distantly, environmental protection and recreation facilities.

“Soft” recreation infrastructure such as parks and trails appears to be more favoured than “hard” recreation infrastructure such as recreation or arts/cultural centres, again mirroring a previous question showing that citizens use parks and trails more often than other forms of municipally supplied leisure infrastructure.

Figure 9: Capital Projects (% of a "\$100 pie" of available resources)



Citizen engagement (Question #15-16)

The survey asked respondents about their existing and preferred methods of access to municipal information, how they would like to be involved in the decision making process, and finally how they perceive the District of Saanich to be receptive and responsive to citizen engagement.

Respondents identified the Saanich News (22% of respondents) and the Victoria Times-Colonist (19%) as the two most important ways they wish to access information about municipal issues. Word of mouth, TV and radio are the next most important, but lag the top two mediums significantly. Municipal publications (such as brochures) and the Saanich website are favoured by only 5% of respondents. See Appendix III for complete list of responses.

Finally, respondents were asked to rank the citizen engagement practices of the District of Saanich – how well does Saanich welcome and listen to citizen involvement. These rankings, shown below, are somewhat lower than most other sections of the survey. These results also show an unusually high percentage of “No opinion” responses, perhaps reflecting a limited understanding of the nature of citizen engagement.

| Ranking of citizen engagement practices in Saanich | Avg. Score (out of 100) | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | No opinion |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|------------|
| #10b. The District of Saanich welcomes citizen involvement | 68% | 2% | 6% | 21% | 40% | 15% | 16% |
| #10c. The District of Saanich listens to citizens | 61% | 3% | 9% | 29% | 31% | 10% | 17% |

E-Government and E-Commerce (Question #5, #6, #15 and #16)

Citizen use, satisfaction with and perceived importance of the existing municipal website show an increasing trend when compared to the 2003 survey. The addition of on-line services such as recreation class registrations and online payments for municipal services have been very well received according to our actual web site visitation statistics. Survey data may not truly reflect the actual experience in this area because the sample is underrepresented by respondents under the age of 44 – thought to be the most frequent users of website services. See Appendix III for a complete summary of results to these questions.

Overall value (Question #10)

Respondents were asked three questions related to overall value and satisfaction with the governance of Saanich. The results are generally positive.

| | Avg. Score | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | No opinion |
|--|------------|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|------------|
| #10a. I receive good value for the municipal taxes I pay | 65% | 4% | 7% | 28% | 43% | 14% | 4% |
| #10d. I am pleased with the overall direction that the District of Saanich is taking | 67% | 2% | 6% | 27% | 47% | 14% | 5% |
| #10e. In general, I believe the District of Saanich government is doing a good job | 71% | 2% | 5% | 21% | 51% | 19% | 2% |