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The City of Lynchburg, Virginia

Summary Report 2006



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SURVEY BACKGROUND

About The National Citizen Survey™

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA).

Understanding the Results

Survey Administration

Following the mailing of a pre-survey notification postcard to a random sample of 1,200 households, surveys were mailed to the same residences approximately one week later. A reminder letter and a new survey were sent to the same households after two weeks. Of the mailed postcards, 59 were undeliverable due to vacant or “not found” addresses. Completed surveys were received from 411 residents, for a response rate of 36%. Typically, the response rates obtained on citizen surveys range from 25% to 40%.

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 this survey of 1,200 residents is generally no greater than plus or minus 5 percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample.

The results were weighted to reflect the demographic profile of all residents in the City of Lynchburg. (For more information on the survey methodology, see Appendix B in the Report of Results. A copy of the survey materials can be found in Appendix C of the Report of Results.)

Use of the “Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor” Response Scale

The scale on which respondents are asked to record their opinions about service and community quality is “excellent,” “good,” “fair” or “poor” (EGFP). While symmetrical scales often are the right choice in other measurement tasks, we have found that ratings of almost every local government service in almost every jurisdiction tend, on average, to be positive (that is, above the scale midpoint). Therefore, to permit finer distinctions among positively rated services, EGFP offers three options across which to spread those ratings. EGFP is more neutral because it requires no positive statement of service quality to judge (as agree-disagree scales require) and, finally, EGFP intends to measure absolute quality of service delivery or community quality (unlike satisfaction scales which ignore residents’ perceptions of quality in favor of their report on the acceptability of the level of service offered).

Putting Evaluations onto a 100-Point Scale

Although responses to many of the evaluative questions were made on a 4 point scale with 4 representing the best rating and 1 the worst, many 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. If everyone reported “excellent,” then the result would be 100 on the 100-point scale. Likewise, if all respondents gave a “poor” rating, the result would be 0 on the 100-point scale. If the average rating for quality of life was “good,” then the result would be 67 on a 100-point scale; “fair” would be 33 on the 100-point scale. The 95 percent confidence interval around an average score on the 100-point scale is no greater than plus or minus 5 points based on all respondents.

PROFILE OF LYNCHBURG

As assessed by the survey, about 45% of Lynchburg residents have lived in the community for more than 20 years and 65% are over age 34. Another 21% are over age 64. Sixty-nine percent are currently employed; 41% rent; 59% own and 59% live in detached single family homes. Over 73% of Lynchburg residents have at least some college and 38% have annual household incomes above \$50,000. Two percent of Lynchburg residents reported that they are Spanish, Hispanic or Latino and 76% said they are White or Caucasian.

COMMUNITY LIFE

The National Citizen Survey™ contained many questions related to the life of residents in the community. Survey participants were asked to rate their overall quality of life, as well as other aspects of quality of life in Lynchburg. They also evaluated characteristics of the community, and gave their perceptions of safety in the City of Lynchburg. The questionnaire assessed use of the amenities of the community and involvement by respondents in the civic and economic life of Lynchburg.

Quality of Life

When asked to rate the overall quality of life in Lynchburg, 12% of respondents thought it was “excellent.” Only 4% rated overall quality of life as “poor.” The average rating of overall quality of life on a 100-point scale was 61 in 2004. In 2006, the rating was 61. Lynchburg as a place to raise children received an average rating of 67 on a 100-point scale in 2004, compared to 66 in 2006.

Ratings of Community Characteristics

In 2006, the highest rated characteristics of Lynchburg were educational opportunities, air quality, and overall appearance of Lynchburg. The average rating on a 100-point scale given to overall appearance of Lynchburg in 2006 was 57 compared to 55 in 2004.

Perceptions of Safety

When evaluating safety in the community, 59% of respondents felt “somewhat” or “very safe” from violent crimes in Lynchburg in 2006, compared to 61% in 2004. In their neighborhood after dark, 78% of survey participants felt “somewhat” or “very safe” in 2006, compared to 76% in 2004.

In 2006, as assessed by the survey, 12% of households reported that at least one member had been the victim of one or more crimes in the past year. In 2004, 13% of households had reported that at least one member had been a crime victim. Of those who had been the victim of a crime in 2006, 67% had reported it to police.

Community Participation

Participation in the civic, social and economic life of Lynchburg during the past year was assessed on the survey. Among those completing the questionnaire in 2006, 55% reported volunteering in the past year compared to 53% in 2004.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Several aspects of the government of the City of Lynchburg were evaluated by residents completing The National Citizen Survey™. They were asked how much trust they placed in their local government, and what they felt about the services they receive from the City of Lynchburg. Those who had any contact with a City of Lynchburg employee in the past year gave their impressions of the most recent encounter.

Public Trust

When asked to evaluate whether they were pleased with the overall direction taken by the City of Lynchburg, residents gave an average rating of 56 on a 100-point scale in 2006, compared to a rating of 57 in 2004.

Service Provided by Lynchburg

The overall quality of services provided by the City of Lynchburg was rated as 55 on a 100-point scale in 2006, compared to 54 in 2004. On average, residents of Lynchburg gave the highest evaluations to their own local government and the lowest average rating to the federal government.

The City of Lynchburg Employees

Impressions of the City of Lynchburg employees were assessed on the questionnaire. In 2006, those who had been in contact with a City of Lynchburg employee in the past year (63%) rated their overall impression as 64 on a 100-point scale, compared to an average rating of 66 received in 2004.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Four additional questions were asked by the City of Lynchburg as listed below. The results for these questions are also available in the Report of Results.

Policy Question #1	
	Citizens now have the opportunity to conduct business over the Internet with the City. Such business includes applying for jobs with the City, paying utility bills, paying parking tickets and requesting services. Please indicate how likely or unlikely you are to conduct this kind of business with the City over the Internet:
Very likely	24%
Somewhat likely	28%
Somewhat unlikely	13%
Very unlikely	34%
Total	100%
Note: "don't know" responses have been removed.	

Policy Question #2	
	To what degree do you support or oppose using public funds to provide incentives to businesses to boost economic development?
Strongly support	17%
Somewhat support	51%
Somewhat oppose	16%
Very oppose	16%
Total	100%
Note: "don't know" responses have been removed.	

Policy Question #3	
	To what degree would you support or oppose the City in providing wireless Internet services for a fee to businesses or residents?
Strongly support	37%
Somewhat support	37%
Somewhat oppose	14%
Very oppose	12%
Total	100%
Note: "don't know" responses have been removed.	

Policy Question #4

From the following list please indicate ALL the ways in which you learn about City government affairs. Check all that apply.	Percent of Respondents
Newspaper	82%
Television News	80%
Cable Channel 7 (Public Access)	41%
Utility Bill Inserts	38%
Televised City Council Meetings	34%
Internet	30%
Talk Radio	27%
The City Source Newsletter	16%
Other	16%
Online forums (blogs)	3%
Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one category.	