

NYC Feedback

Citywide Customer Survey

Report of Survey Results
December 2008

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

Survey Background

The City of New York provides an expansive scope of services to its residents and businesses, and is committed to continuously improving service delivery by measuring agency performance. Two important tools the City uses to measure performance are the Mayor's Management Report (MMR), a biannual public report card on City services, and the Citywide Performance Reporting tool (CPR), an interactive collection of performance indicators accessible online. These tools increase the transparency of government operations, provide accountability to customers, and equip City managers to improve service delivery.

While the MMR and CPR provide detailed data on all government services, they do not provide information about how the public views and experiences City services. The *NYC Feedback Citywide Customer Survey* (the *Survey*) provides the public's perspective and is an additional tool for the City to measure its performance using data gathered directly from NYC residents.

In partnership with the Office of the Public Advocate, the Mayor's Office designed the *Survey* to gauge public perceptions of the overall quality of life in the City and the quality of local government service delivery. The *Survey* included 34 questions, covering issues related to overall quality of life; customer service and access to government; public safety; health and human services; public education; community conditions, such as the cleanliness of streets and sidewalks; transportation, including mass transit; and recreation and culture.

The City views all residents as customers, whether directly (visiting a public library) or indirectly (walking down the sidewalk). In general, most survey questions addressed issues and experiences with which all City residents would be familiar. However, not all respondents had direct experience with all City services, therefore the *Survey* also included questions that asked only users of a particular service to evaluate their experience with that service. This allowed comparison of responses of the entire population to those of users of a particular service and also allowed an evaluation of those services which only a small portion of the population may have accessed.

While individual agencies have periodically administered public surveys to document specific aspects of their performance, the *Survey* is the first citywide survey of its scale – more than 130,000 households were randomly selected from all five boroughs and each of the 59 Community Boards, and completed surveys were received from 24,339 residents. Due to the scale and design of the *Survey*, the City is now able to provide an unparalleled level of detail about the differences in public perception across Community Boards.

At the end of the main report, these details are documented in a two-page summary of results for each Community Board. In addition, supplemental appendices are available online, providing breakdowns of all results by respondent characteristics, such as age, gender, race and ethnicity, and by every borough.

Summary of Survey Results

The *Survey* included several different types of questions. The most common question type was a straight-forward evaluative question in which respondents rated services on a scale of excellent to poor. Less common were the “use” questions, inquiring about the extent to which respondents used a particular service. Throughout the *Survey*, respondents were also asked to reflect on their impression of services provided in their neighborhood versus the City as a whole. There was also one open-ended question which asked respondents to provide up to three examples of the most important issues facing the City.

The ratings to most evaluative questions are reported as the percent of respondents who rated each service or condition as “excellent,” “good,” or “fair.” Responses to several groups of questions were combined into 12 “indices” in order to simplify comparisons and highlight important results from the *Survey*. An index score combines ratings from a group of survey questions which relate to a common area of services. Each index score represents the average percent of respondents reporting “excellent,” “good,” or “fair” for each of the questions summarized in the index. A given index may be comprised of as few as two or as many as seven questions. More information about the survey methodology can be found in the section III. Survey Methodology starting on page 11 and online (at www.nyc.gov/operations) in Appendix A: Survey and Reporting Methodology.

The scale of the *Survey* permits detailed analysis of responses, by location and by demographics. While the main report includes the highlights of this detailed analysis, there are two-page summary reports for each Community Board included at the end of the main report. Supplemental appendices are also available online (at www.nyc.gov/operations) which provide breakdowns of all results by respondent characteristics, such as age, gender, race and ethnicity, and by every borough.

The responses from the *Survey* provide both qualitative and quantitative data about public perceptions and areas of improvement for the City. The main findings are divided into seven key topic areas:

- overall quality of life and government services
- customer service and access to government
- public safety
- health and human services
- public education and after-school programs
- community conditions and transportation
- recreation and culture

Overall quality of life and government services

The *Survey* included several evaluative questions about residents’ overall quality of life, their perceptions of the overall quality of services provided by the City and their intentions to stay in New York City.

Most *Survey* respondents (88%) rated the overall quality of life in New York City and their neighborhood as a place to live as “excellent,” “good,” or “fair.” A majority (59%) also reported that they intended to stay in New York City for at least the next five years.

When asked to name the most important issues facing New York City, the five most frequently mentioned issues were housing (including affordability and availability), education (including

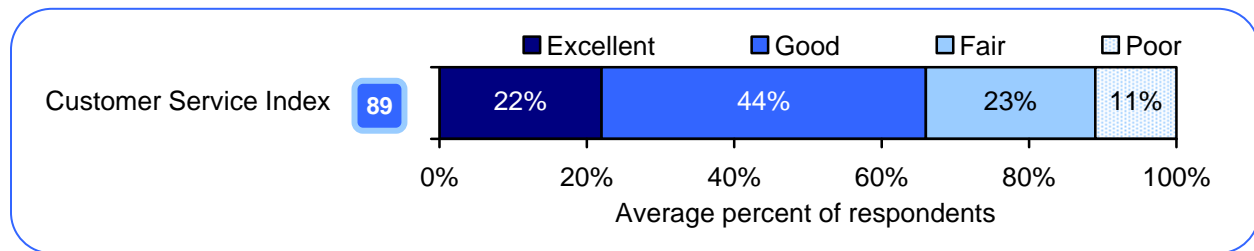
quality, availability, and condition of schools), mass transit (including affordability, modernization and availability), crime (including drugs, gangs, and other concerns), and the cost of living.

Residents also gave high ratings to the overall quality of services provided by New York City government (85% rated overall quality of services as “excellent,” “good,” or “fair”), as well as to how the City works to promote economic growth (81%). Slightly lower ratings were given to how the City spends tax dollars (59%).

Customer service and access to government

The public’s first impression of City government is often shaped by their interactions with City employees. These employees provide the public with a wide variety of essential services, ranging from emergency response to providing public housing. The *Survey* asked respondents who had been in direct contact with the City to evaluate their “customer service” experience. The score for the Customer Service Index, summarizing respondents’ customer service ratings, was an 89.

Figure INTRO-1: Customer Service Index Score and Rating



More than a third (38%) of respondents had been in direct contact with a City office or agency either in person or over the phone in the 12 months prior to the survey. Most rated overall customer service (80%), employee’s courtesy (85%), employee’s willingness to help or understand (79%), timeliness of response (76%), and overall satisfaction with the response to their inquiry (70%) as “excellent,” “good,” or “fair.”

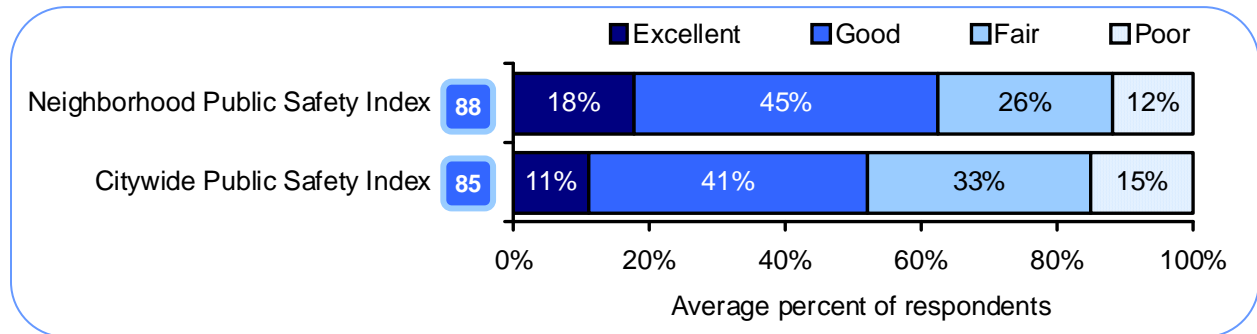
In addition to in-person contact, residents can access City services online and by telephone. Specifically, the City’s official website, NYC.gov, is a central online access point to City services; and the 3-1-1 Customer Service Center provides the public with information and services via telephone. These information services portals are provided to enhance the customer service experience of New Yorkers, and are accessed by a large number of residents. Approximately two-thirds of those completing the *Survey* said they had called 3-1-1 at least once in the last 12 months, and the same proportion had visited the NYC.gov website. The City’s website NYC.gov and the 3-1-1 information telephone line were each rated as “excellent” or “good” by more than seven in 10 respondents who had used these services in the last 12 months.

Public safety

Public opinions about public safety tend to be a strong overall predictor of how well residents think their cities are managed. Concern about crime-related matters (including drugs, gangs, and other concerns) was listed by respondents as one of the top five important issues facing the City. The *Survey* included several questions about respondents’ perceptions of safety – both in their neighborhoods and citywide. These questions were combined into the Neighborhood Public Safety Index and the Citywide Public Safety Index (the average percent of respondents

reporting “excellent,” “good,” or “fair”). The Neighborhood Public Safety Index score was 88 and included ratings of police-community relations, crime control, emergency medical services, and fire protection services at the neighborhood level. The Citywide Public Safety Index score was 85. In general, survey results revealed that respondents rated services in their own neighborhood more positively than services citywide.

Figure INTRO-2: Neighborhood and Citywide Public Safety Index Scores and Ratings



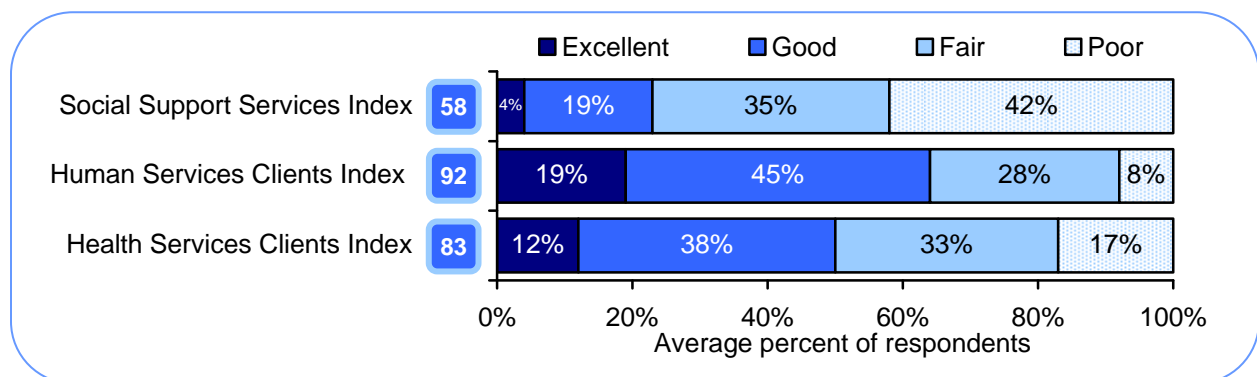
Health and human services

The City provides a variety of services that foster community health, promote self-sufficiency, protect children, and support families. The Social Support Services Index score was 58, the lowest score for the 12 indices. This index included questions about services aimed at supporting low-income and at-risk populations: preventing homelessness, providing youth employment and public housing, protecting children at risk of abuse and neglect, and public assistance (such as Medicaid, food stamps, etc.). All survey respondents were invited to give their evaluations of these services, whether or not they accessed them.

By contrast, the Human Services Clients Index only included responses from respondents who used the following services: senior centers, other senior services, community centers, and Medicaid. This index received the highest score, 92, of all the indices.

The Health Services Clients Index included responses from respondents who had used the following City services: public hospitals, public health clinics, public mental health services, and providing public substance abuse services. While the score for this index, 83, was relatively high, only a small percentage of respondents indicated that they actually had used these services within the last 12 months, ranging from 2% for public substance abuse services to 41% for public hospital services. Eighty-eight percent of survey respondents considered the availability of health care services in their neighborhood to be “excellent,” “good,” or “fair.”

Figure INTRO-3: Health and Human Services Index Scores and Ratings

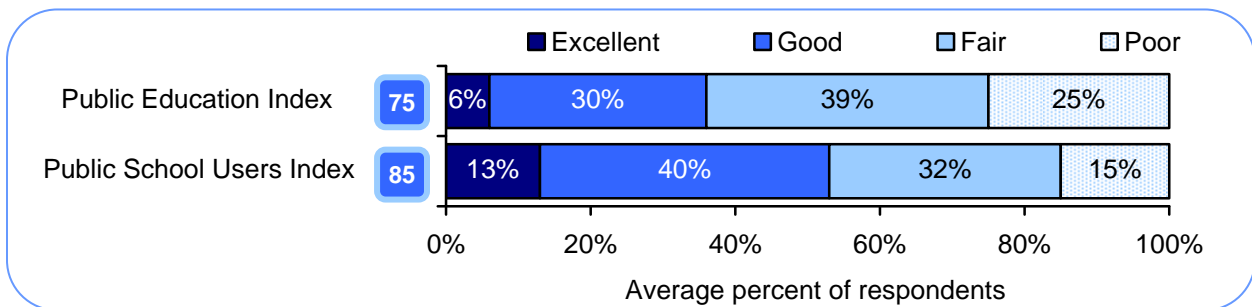


Public education and after-school programs

Public education emerged as one of the top concerns of survey respondents. The Public Education Index score of 75 included ratings of public education for kindergarten through 12th grade as well as public after-school programs. While the score shows that 75% of respondents rated public education and public after-school programs as at least “fair,” only approximately a third of respondents felt, on average, that public education in New York City was “excellent” or “good.”

As seen with health and human services ratings, respondents actually using services gave more positive ratings. Respondents with children enrolled in a public school or public after-school program gave more positive ratings compared to all respondents. The Public School Users Index, summarizing responses of those with children in a K-12 public school in New York City or in a public after-school program, was 85. More than half of those who had a child enrolled in a public school rated schools as “excellent” or “good.”

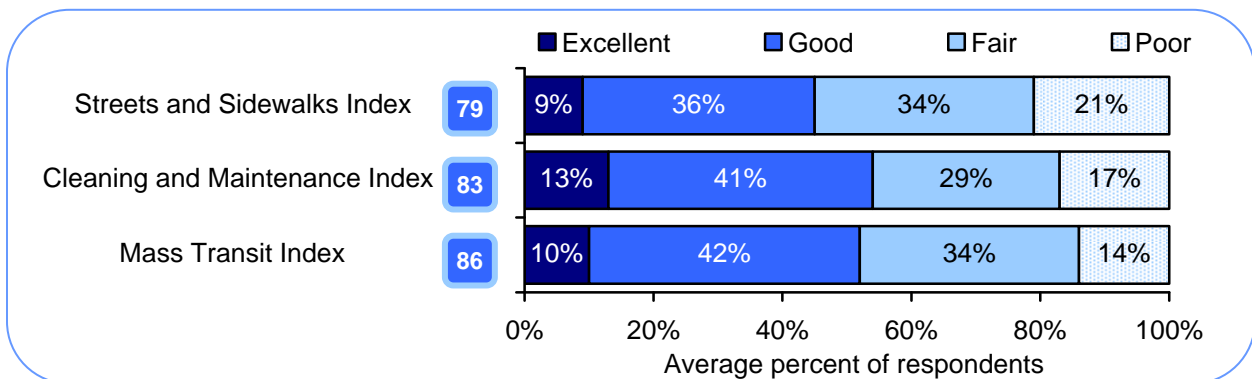
Figure INTRO-4: Public Education and Public School Users Index Scores and Ratings



Community conditions and transportation

A wide array of services are referred to in community conditions and transportation, including street cleanliness, mass transit, ease of travel throughout the City, and stormwater control. These services were summarized with three indices: the Streets and Sidewalks Index, the Cleaning and Maintenance Index, and the Mass Transit Index. All three received relatively high index scores ranging from 79 to 86.

Figure INTRO-5: Community Conditions and Transportation Index Scores and Ratings

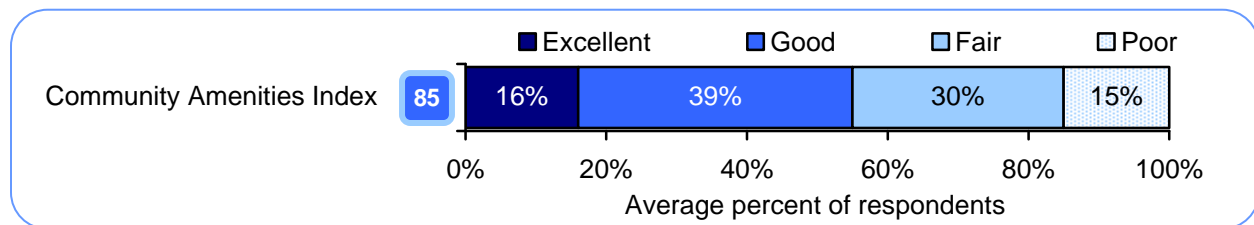


As noted above, mass transit was listed as one of survey respondents’ top five concerns; however respondents also gave high ratings to bus and subway services, as reflected in the relatively high Mass Transit Index score of 86. In addition, respondents gave higher ratings to services with which they were familiar – they tended to view bus services and subway services slightly more positively in their neighborhood than in the City overall.

Recreation and culture

Open space, recreational areas, and cultural resources provide critical community amenities and help shape the community’s character. Community amenities, as described in this report, include parks, playgrounds, libraries, and cultural resources. Respondents provided favorable ratings of these amenities, as reflected by the Community Amenities Index score of 85. More than 75% of respondents reported having used a park, playground, or library at least once in the past year.

Figure INTRO-6: Community Amenities Index Score and Rating



Differences in Respondent Ratings

New York City, with more than 8 million residents in five boroughs, is so diverse that it is essential to evaluate service ratings for each borough and Community Board. The differences and similarities identified in this report provide critical information about how residents perceive City services.

Overall quality of life in the City was rated highest by respondents who lived in Manhattan, while respondents from Staten Island gave the highest ratings for their neighborhood as a place to live. Ratings of citywide and neighborhood services were rated highest by respondents from both Manhattan and Staten Island. Most services were rated lower by Bronx residents.

Survey participants who lived in Manhattan Community Board #8 (the Upper East Side) gave the most positive ratings for their neighborhood as a place to live and for the overall quality of services provided by the City. In fact, across most services, respondents in Manhattan Community Board #8 gave the highest ratings. However, Queens respondents from Community Board #11 (Bayside) provided the highest ratings for recreation and culture and public education services.

Respondents who lived in Bronx Community Board #3 (Morrisania) gave the lowest ratings to their neighborhood as a place to live. Respondents from Bronx Community Board #6 (East Tremont) gave the least positive ratings to the overall quality of life in the City compared to respondents in other Community Boards. In general, the most negative ratings were given by those residing in Bronx Community Boards #1 (Melrose) and #3 (Morrisania), and Brooklyn Community Board #16 (Ocean Hill/Brownsville).

The survey results were also analyzed to see if respondents with differing demographic characteristics provided differing responses. A few trends emerged:

- In general, Non-Hispanic respondents gave more positive ratings than did Hispanic respondents.
- Often, White respondents and Asian/Pacific Islander respondents gave somewhat more positive ratings than did Black/African American respondents or respondents of other races.
- Overall, there was a correlation between annual household income and service evaluations; higher annual household income was often associated with more positive ratings.

More details on differences in survey results by respondent subgroups can be found in appendices H through Q (see the Table of Appendices following the Table of Contents for the complete list of appendices).