

Summary

From August 1 to September 30 of 2007, Citizens Committee for New York City surveyed New York City residents about their impressions of and experience with quality of life issues in their neighborhoods. The survey was available for completion both in printed form and online. A total of 2,895 surveys were completed.

The survey was first conducted in 2001 and was implemented this year by the staff of Citizens Committee for New York City, with support and advice from Dr. Gregg Van Ryzin, Associate Professor at Baruch College.

The primary goal of the survey was to get a picture of New Yorkers' overall satisfaction level with the quality of neighborhood life as well as specific features of their own neighborhoods.

This survey identifies four things:

1. What New Yorkers think is important in a neighborhood,
2. What they think the quality of their neighborhood is on those same issues,
3. Which quality of life issues presented a problem in their neighborhoods, and
4. What they are willing to do to improve them.

The survey results indicate, across categories, that the most pressing concerns of New York City residents are:

- Clean Air
- Traffic and Transit Related Concerns
- Clean Streets, Sidewalks, and Open Space
- Decent Housing at a Reasonable Cost
- Responsiveness of Public Officials to Neighborhood Concerns
- Safety from Crime

Additional key findings from the survey:

- Overall, residents are satisfied with the quality of life in their neighborhood. Over 75% of respondents rate overall quality of life as being between *good* and *excellent*.
- Residents of The Bronx rate their quality of life as much lower when compared to other boroughs.
- In addition to *safe from crime*, also selected as important quality of life features were *clean streets*, *access to open public space* and *safe conditions for walking and bicycling*.
- While most residents believe their neighborhood to be safer from crime than average, the degree to which residents feel they have access to a clean environment, open public space and safe conditions for walking and bicycling varies by borough.
- *Proximity to public transportation, shopping and restaurants* rate highly when residents were asked to identify positive attributes to their neighborhood.

- *Lack of programs for youth* and *availability of affordable housing* are areas where residents find their neighborhood to be most lacking.
- A third of residents report getting personally involved in solving neighborhood problems. Most residents report *lack of time* and *lack of knowledge* about existing opportunities as the biggest barrier for their involvement.
- Most residents express a willingness to share information and resources with neighbors and help neighbors (particularly the elderly) with special needs.

Survey Design

The survey instrument was divided into five major sections through which it addressed a full range of quality of life issues in New York City. Respondents were asked to rate the importance and quality of neighborhood characteristics and to assess the ways in which they were currently involved in addressing them as well as what ways they might be willing to address them in the future. They also were asked to rate how much certain quality of life issues were a problem in their own neighborhoods. Additionally, respondents were asked to provide basic demographic data about themselves. Results from each section of the survey are included in this report. The distinct sections of the survey are detailed below.

Sections I and II: Importance and Quality of Neighborhood Characteristics

This first portion of the survey presented twenty-one different neighborhood characteristics and asked respondents to rate each on their importance in determining neighborhood quality. Respondents were then asked to assess how well those same characteristics performed in their own neighborhoods. Questions covered subjects including cost-of-living, cleanliness, ease of mobility and access to cultural activities and public spaces.

The data collected from this portion of the survey enabled Citizens Committee for New York City to conduct an importance-performance analysis that identified the issues of greatest importance that were lacking in quality. The results of the analysis citywide and by borough are discussed and displayed in this report.

Section III: Neighborhood Problems

Another portion of the survey asked respondents to rate the degree to which thirty-four different quality of life issues presented a problem in their neighborhoods. **The problems identified as most pressing citywide and by borough are listed in their respective sections.**

Section IV: Resident Involvement

In this portion of the survey, residents were asked to report the frequency with which they engaged in activities to improve their neighborhoods. They were then asked to identify, from the same list of activities, ways that they would be willing to do so. They were also

asked to choose which barriers, from a list of thirteen, limited or prohibited their involvement in neighborhood improvement activities.

Section V: Demographic Data

In order to ascertain the success with which Citizens Committee for New York City had reached a sample that represented the diverse population of New York City, the survey included a section in which respondents categorized themselves based on race/ ethnicity, sex, age, income, home ownership, and borough of residence. Demographic results citywide and by borough are detailed in their respective sections of this report.

Survey Methodology

Results were gathered in the following way:

- Citizens Committee coordinated a series of tabling events at libraries, farmers' markets, street festivals, and community events to administer the survey to neighborhood residents;
- Neighborhood groups surveyed their members, canvassed their neighborhoods and held special events where they encouraged residents to take the survey;
- Citizens Committee sent a mailing to its 7,000 member database and encouraged members to take the survey on-line;
- Community Board leaders collected surveys from monthly meeting attendees.

The survey was extensive and took an average of 15 minutes to complete. Written surveys were conducted in English, Spanish and Chinese.

Citizens Committee tabling events were conducted in:

- **Staten Island:** Park Hill, Stapleton;
- **The Bronx:** Melrose, Kingsbridge, Concourse Village, Mott Haven, Parkchester;
- **Brooklyn:** Bedford-Stuyvesant, Bushwick, Crown Heights, Flatbush, East New York, Park Slope, Fort Greene;
- **Queens:** Jackson Heights, Elmhurst, Long Island City, South Jamaica;
- **Manhattan:** East Harlem, Washington Heights, Harlem, Union Square, City Hall, and Chinatown.

Volunteer groups collected additional surveys in the following neighborhoods:

- **Queens:** Cambria Heights, Flushing, East Elmhurst, Kew Gardens, Jackson Heights, Ozone Park, Jamaica, The Rockaways, Queens Village, Little Neck, Broad Channel;
- **The Bronx:** Morrisania, Mott Haven, Fordham, Soundview;
- **Manhattan:** Chinatown, Central Harlem, Upper East Side;
- **Brooklyn:** East New York, Boerum Hill, Crown Heights.