

The National
CITIZEN SURVEY™

2005

**Summary Report for the
City of El Cerrito, California**



Submitted by:

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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, 45 were undeliverable due to vacant or “not found” addresses. Completed surveys were received from 487 residents, for a response rate of 42%. 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 El Cerrito. (For more information on the survey methodology, see Appendix II in the Report of Results. A copy of the survey materials can be found in Appendix III 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).

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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.

C 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 El Cerrito. They also evaluated characteristics of the community, and gave their perceptions of safety in the City of El Cerrito. The questionnaire assessed use of the amenities of the community and involvement by respondents in the civic and economic life of El Cerrito.

- **QUALITY OF LIFE**

When asked to rate the overall quality of life in El Cerrito, 16% of respondents thought it was “excellent.” Only 2% rated overall quality of life as “poor.” El Cerrito as a place to raise children received an average rating of 56 on a 100-point scale.

- **RATINGS OF COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS IN EL CERRITO**

In 2005, the highest rated characteristics of El Cerrito were ease of walking, ease of car travel in El Cerrito, and shopping opportunities. The average rating on a 100-point scale given to ease of walking in 2005 was 58 compared to 59 in 2004. When asked about potential problems in El Cerrito, the three concerns rated by the highest proportion of respondents as a “major problem” in 2005 were taxes, traffic congestion, unsupervised youth and crime. In 2005 12% rated traffic congestion as a “major problem” compared to 13% in 2004.

- **PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY**

When evaluating safety in the community, 66% of respondents felt “somewhat” or “very safe” from violent crimes in El Cerrito in 2005, compared to 66% in 2004. In their neighborhood after dark, 66% of survey participants felt “somewhat” or “very safe” in 2005, compared to 64% in 2004.

In 2005, as assessed by the survey, 24% of households reported that at least one member had been the victim of one or more crimes in the past year. In 2004, 20% 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 2005, 82% had reported it to police.

- **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

Participation in the civic, social and economic life of El Cerrito during the past year was assessed on the survey. Among those completing the questionnaire in 2005, 55% reported using El Cerrito recreation centers compared to 46% in 2004.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Several aspects of the government of the City of El Cerrito were evaluated by residents completing The National Citizen Survey.TM 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 El Cerrito. Those who had any contact with a City of El Cerrito employee in the past year gave their impressions of the most recent encounter.

- **PUBLIC TRUST**

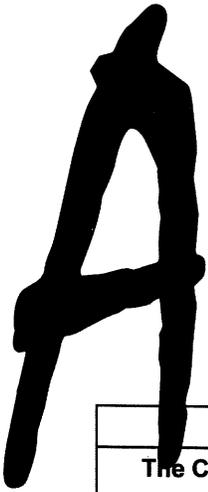
When asked to evaluate whether they were pleased with the overall direction taken by the City of El Cerrito, residents gave an average rating of 61 on a 100-point scale.

- **SERVICES PROVIDED BY EL CERRITO**

The overall quality of services provided by the City of El Cerrito was rated as 58 on a 100-point scale in 2005, compared to 59 in 2004.

- **THE CITY OF EL CERRITO EMPLOYEES**

Impressions of the City of El Cerrito employees were assessed on the questionnaire. In 2005, those who had been in contact with a City of El Cerrito employee in the past year (37%) rated their overall impression as 67 on a 100-point scale, compared to an average rating of 66 received in 2004.



ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

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

Policy Question #1				
The City is evaluating its need for improved facilities. Please rate how important you feel it is to improve each of the following facilities to better serve the community:				
	essential to improve	very important to improve	somewhat important to improve	not all important to improve
Library	31%	36%	27%	6%
Senior Center	14%	36%	37%	13%
City Hall	15%	20%	37%	28%
Public safety buildings	15%	35%	34%	16%

Note: "Don't Know" responses are removed

Policy Question #2	
Would you be willing to pay more to improve or replace City facilities?	
Percent of Respondents	
no	38%
yes	62%

Note: "Don't Know" responses are removed

Figure 28: Policy Question #3	
Please select the amount of additional funding you would be willing to pay each year to improve or build new City facilities:	
Percent of Respondents	
less than \$25	22%
\$25 to \$50	32%
\$50 to \$75	24%
more than \$75	22%

Note: "Don't Know" responses are removed