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The City of El Cerrito, California Summary Report 2007



The National Citizen Survey™ by National Research Center, Inc.

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SURVEY BACKGROUND

About The National Citizen SurveyTM

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, 26 were undeliverable due to vacant or "not found" addresses. Completed surveys were received from 419 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 419 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 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 1 representing the best rating and 4 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 3 points based on all respondents.

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PROFILE OF EL CERRITO

As assessed by the survey, about 30% of El Cerrito residents have lived in the community for more than 20 years and 74% are over age 34. Another 24% are over age 64. Seventy-one percent are currently employed; 31% rent; 69% own and 75% live in detached single family homes. Over 95% of El Cerrito residents have at least some college and 76% have annual household incomes above \$50,000. Six percent of El Cerrito residents reported that they are Spanish, Hispanic or Latino and 63% 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 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, 13% of respondents thought it was "excellent." Only 3% 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

The highest rated characteristics of El Cerrito were ease of rail/subway travel, openness and acceptance, and ease of bicycle travel. When asked about potential problems in El Cerrito, the three concerns rated by the highest proportion of respondents as a "major problem" were crime, noise, and taxes. The rate of population growth in El Cerrito was viewed as "too fast" by 22% of respondents, while 3% thought it was "too slow."

Perceptions of Safety

When evaluating safety in the community, 59% of respondents felt "somewhat" or "very safe" from violent crimes in El Cerrito. In their neighborhood after dark, 63% of survey participants felt "somewhat" or "very safe."

As assessed by the survey, 17% of households reported that at least one member had been the victim of one or more crimes in the past year. Of those who had been the victim of a crime, 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, 30% reported volunteering in the past year.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Several aspects of the government of the City of El Cerrito were evaluated by residents completing The National Citizen Survey $^{\text{\tiny TM}}$. 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.

Service Provided by El Cerrito

The overall quality of services provided by the City of El Cerrito was rated as 55 on a 100-point scale.

The City of El Cerrito Employees

Impressions of the City of El Cerrito employees were assessed on the questionnaire. Those who had been in contact with a City of El Cerrito employee in the past year (52%) rated their overall impression as 61 on a 100-point scale.

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ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Four 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. Results for the open-ended question can be found under separate cover.

Question 16a: Policy Question 1

Please rate how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the City's efforts to share information about City issues, programs and services with the public by using each of the

programs and services with the public by using each of the following ways:	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Total
City's Web site (www.el-cerrito.org)	21%	64%	10%	5%	100%
Quarterly newsletter	26%	64%	7%	3%	100%
Media outreach/coverage	11%	53%	27%	10%	100%
City events or programs	19%	60%	16%	5%	100%
Recreation brochure	31%	56%	9%	4%	100%
City meetings	17%	42%	24%	17%	100%
Public/legal notices	10%	60%	18%	12%	100%
Recycling Center mailings	38%	50%	10%	3%	100%
Senior Center mailings	31%	46%	16%	6%	100%
Other mailings	14%	64%	18%	4%	100%

Note: "don't know" responses have been removed.

	Policy Question #2		
	The Ohlone Greenway (also called the BART path) is a trail (used for walking, biking, running, etc.) which runs the length of El Cerrito. How often do you or other members of your household use the Ohlone Greenway?		
Often (one or more times per week)	29%		
Semi-regularly (1-2 times per month)	18%		

Semi-regularly (1-2 times per month)	18%
Sometimes (3-6 times per year)	17%
Rarely	18%
Never	17%
Total	100%

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Question 16c: Policy Question 3					
The City is considering ways to improve the Ohlone Greenway. How important, if at all, are each of the following potential improvements to the Greenway?	Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Total
Exercise equipment	5%	18%	34%	43%	100%
Soft running trail	10%	30%	37%	23%	100%
Children's play equipment	11%	30%	34%	26%	100%
Benches	14%	38%	34%	13%	100%
Art and interpretive displays	5%	19%	37%	38%	100%
Water fountains	17%	28%	35%	20%	100%
Bathrooms	14%	26%	31%	29%	100%
Improved lighting	49%	38%	11%	3%	100%
Emergency call boxes	44%	33%	17%	6%	100%
Greater police presence	45%	31%	19%	5%	100%
Dog run/dog park	12%	24%	32%	32%	100%
Note: "don't know" responses have been	en removed.				