



New England States Performance Measurement Project

Measure, Share, Improve

NESPMP Citizen Satisfaction Survey: Cross Comparison Results Summary

NESPMP: 03

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The Research Bureau



INTRODUCTION

Five cities and towns in the New England States Performance Measurement Project (NESPMP) participated in their first online citizen satisfaction survey in the fall of 2009. The purpose of the survey was to determine what residents think of the services provided by their municipal government and how they view the quality of life in their town or city. The leadership of these participating towns believes that obtaining residents' views is critical to their ability to provide the best level of services while utilizing tax dollars most effectively and efficiently. The areas surveyed included public works, parks and recreation, police, fire, emergency services/rescue, public education, permitting and code enforcement, town management, and administrative leadership.

Across all five communities, 1,281 residents participated in the online survey. Each community was responsible for sending postcards to a subset of its population to inform them of the survey and how to access it. The number of participants and response rates for each community are as follows: Freeport, ME, 88 participants for a response rate of 14.6%; Lewiston, ME, 377 participants for a response rate of 10.3%; Holden, MA, 163 participants for a response rate of 32.4%; Newport, RI, 369 participants for a response rate of 12.7%; and South Portland, ME, 284 participants, for a response rate of 12.3%. The goal was to have a response rate of at least 10% for each community in order to have significant results, which was achieved.

The analysis below compares these five communities' results for a variety of questions including quality of life, condition of streets, snow removal, and fire, ambulance, and 911 services.¹ The average reported is weighted, and accounts for larger amounts of participants in some of the communities. Also to note, respondents who answered each of these questions with either "No Opinion," "Don't Know," or similar were excluded from analysis. This was done so that the results reflect participants who had an opinion or related experience to the particular question.

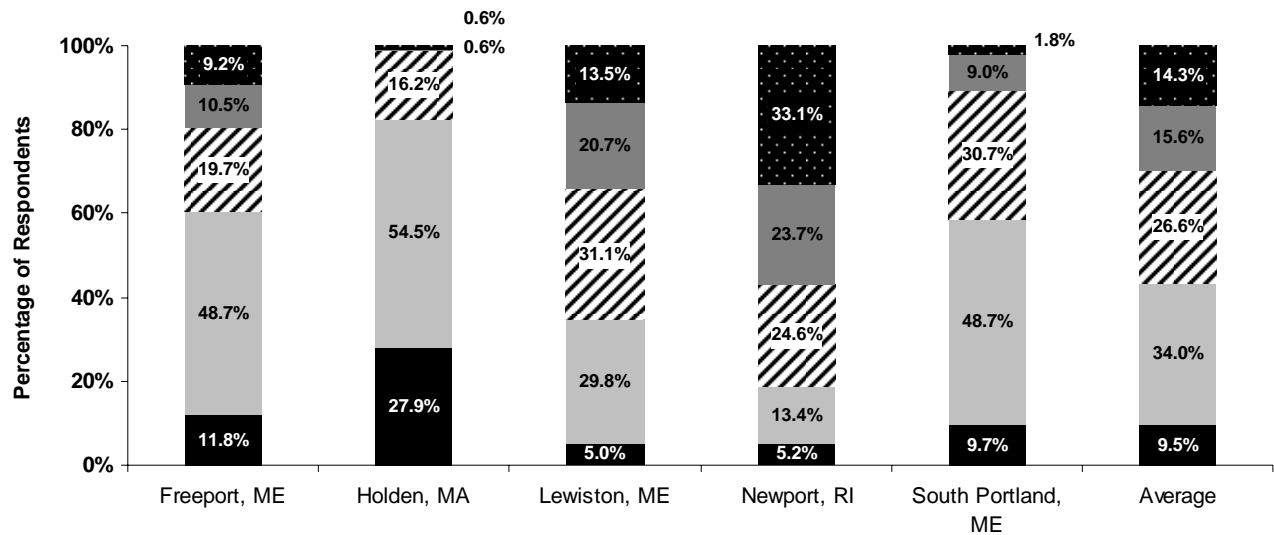
¹ Please see Appendix A for results of select additional survey questions not included in this analysis.

ANALYSIS

On average, about 90% of all respondents were “very satisfied (39.3%)” or “satisfied (50.2%)” with the overall quality of life in their city or town. A few communities had more than half of respondents answering “very satisfied” to this question: South Portland, 59%; Freeport, 55%; and Holden, 52.2%. Respondents in Lewiston were the most dissatisfied in this category; a total of 18.3% were “dissatisfied (15.6%)” or “very dissatisfied (2.7%).”

Participants were also asked to rate the condition of street and road surfaces in their community based on their experiences or observations over the past 12 months (see **Chart 1**). On average, less than half (43.5%) of respondents rated streets as “excellent (9.5%)” or “good (34%).” Another 27% rated streets as “fair,” while 15.6% said “poor” and 14.3% said “very poor.” The town of Holden reported the most satisfaction with the condition of its streets; 82.4% rated them as “excellent (28%)” or “good (54.5%).” The city of Newport reported the most dissatisfaction with the condition of streets; more than half (56.8%) of respondents rated them as “poor (23.7%)” or “very poor (33.1%).”

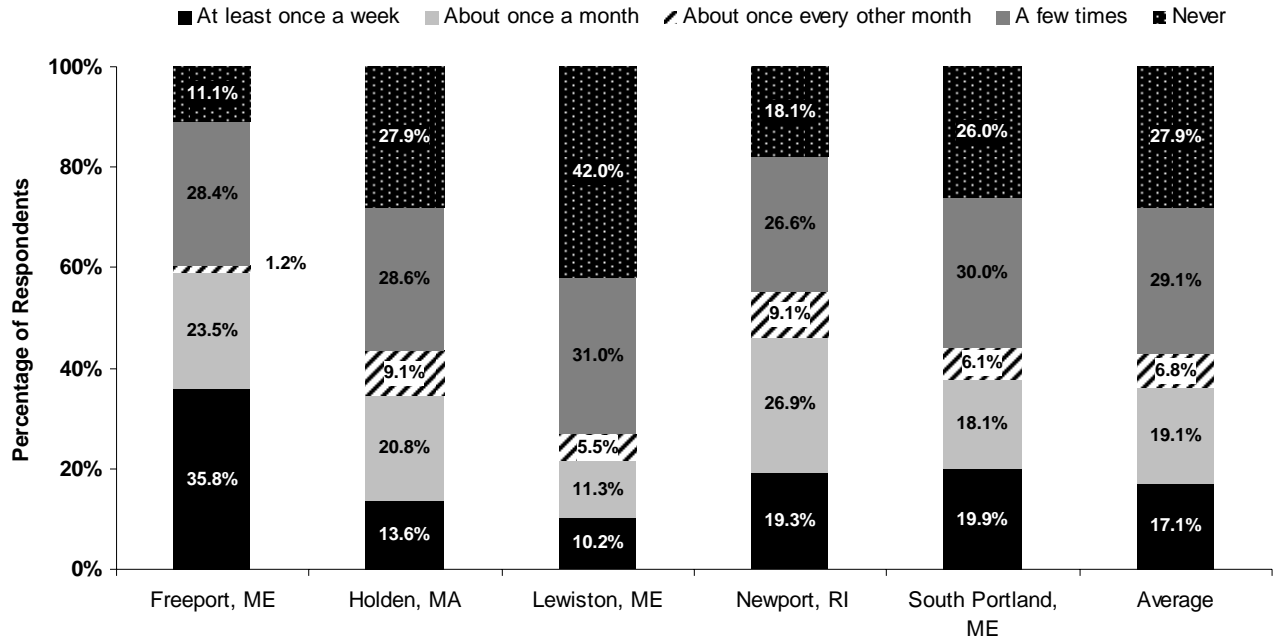
Chart 1: Rate the Condition of Street/Road Surfaces ■ Excellent ■ Good ▨ Fair ■ Poor ■ Very Poor



Respondents were asked two questions about snow and ice removal on either major roads or residential streets. More than 80% of respondents on average either agreed or strongly agreed that both of these types of streets were passable either during or shortly after (main roads), or the day after (residential streets) a snow or ice event. Respondents across the five communities were slightly more likely to agree that major roads were passable (88.1%) than residential streets (81.1%).

Respondents were also asked a series of questions about their local library services, including how often their household uses such services. As shown in **Chart 2**, on average, 28% of respondents never used public library facilities or online services within the past year. Respondents from Lewiston were the least likely to use local library services (42% of respondents never used its library) while residents from Freeport were the most likely to use the library (11% had never used the services, while about 36% used library services at least once a week).

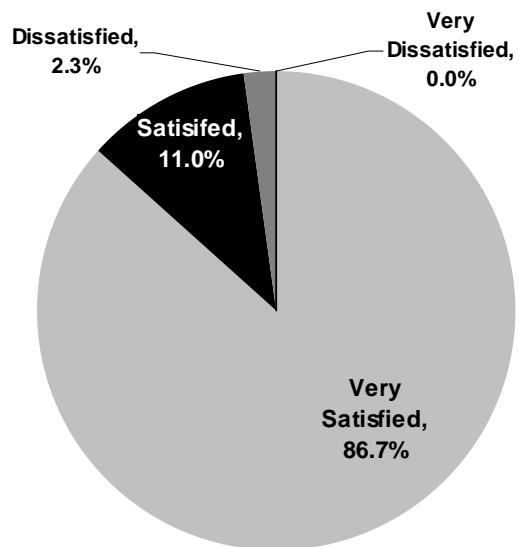
Chart 2: Use of Library over the Past 12 Months



There were several questions that dealt with emergency services including Fire, Ambulance, and 911 services. On average, 15% of respondents had received assistance from the Fire Department over the past 12 months. More than half (54.3%) received Emergency Medical Services from their local Fire Department, while about 21% received fire suppression services. Possibly due to the small number of respondents using these services, the services received reported by respondents for each town varied widely. For example, in Newport, about 72% of respondents received Emergency Medical Services, while only 8.3% in Lewiston reported the same (83.3% of respondents in Lewiston reported they received “other” services from the Fire Department). As shown in **Chart 3**, an overwhelming majority was very satisfied with the response time of the Fire Department, 86.7% on average (no respondents in any community were very dissatisfied). Holden had the most respondents reporting that they were very satisfied with the response time of the Fire Department (94.7%).

About 13% of respondents on average had received assistance from Ambulance or Advanced Life Support services over the past 12 months. Almost 93% of respondents across the five communities were “very satisfied” with the response time of the ambulance service or paramedic. Again, no respondents in any community were very dissatisfied. Respondents in Newport were the most satisfied with ambulance response time; 94.7% reported that they were very

Chart 3: Satisfaction with Fire Department Response Time, Average



satisfied. On average, 16.6% of respondents had called 911 in the past 12 months to request emergency services. When asked how satisfied they were with the assistance they received from the call taker, 63.5% were “very satisfied” while 32.8% were “satisfied.” Less than 4% of respondents were dissatisfied with the experience. Respondents from Freeport were the most satisfied, with about 78% answering “very satisfied” and 22% answering “satisfied.”

Participants were also asked about their satisfaction with the leadership of their city or town, with both elected and appointed officials. On average, respondents were more satisfied with the leadership of appointed officials in their community. About 62% reported being “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the leadership of appointed officials, while less than half (46%) said the same for the leadership of elected officials. More than one in five respondents (20.8%) were “very dissatisfied” with the leadership of elected officials in their community.

We hope the results of the survey will be analyzed and used to set priorities since the data indicate where there is need to improve the delivery of services and where the town is performing well.

APPENDIX A – ADDITIONAL SELECT SURVEY QUESTIONS

I. Please rate your level of satisfaction with: the value of services received for your town tax dollars						
	Freeport, ME	Holden, MA	Lewiston, ME	Newport, RI	South Portland, ME	Average
Very Satisfied	23.4%	14.2%	14.0%	20.4%	21.2%	18.0%
Satisfied	48.1%	56.1%	43.0%	33.0%	53.3%	44.7%
Dissatisfied	22.1%	26.5%	30.7%	28.1%	20.4%	26.5%
Very Dissatisfied	6.5%	3.2%	12.3%	18.5%	5.1%	10.8%

II. Please rate each of the following based on your experiences or observations during the past 12 months: Condition of sidewalks in your neighborhood						
	Freeport, ME	Holden, MA	Lewiston, ME	Newport, RI	South Portland, ME	Average
Excellent	19.2%	20.2%	2.7%	6.5%	10.9%	8.5%
Good	46.2%	46.2%	31.3%	16.9%	37.5%	30.3%
Fair	23.1%	22.1%	36.7%	23.4%	32.4%	29.3%
Poor	7.7%	10.6%	18.4%	29.5%	12.1%	19.2%
Very Poor	3.8%	1.0%	10.9%	23.7%	7.0%	12.7%

III. Please rate each of the following based on your experiences or observations during the past 12 months: Residential trash collection and recycling services						
	Freeport, ME	Holden, MA	Lewiston, ME	Newport, RI	South Portland, ME	Average
Excellent	28.3%	60.0%	45.7%	45.7%	63.7%	50.8%
Good	39.6%	30.7%	39.2%	41.0%	27.4%	36.0%
Fair	17.0%	7.1%	10.9%	9.6%	6.2%	9.3%
Poor	7.5%	0.0%	2.2%	1.9%	1.2%	1.9%
Very Poor	7.5%	2.1%	2.0%	1.9%	1.5%	2.1%

**IV. Please rate each of the following based on your experiences or observations during the past 12 months:
Upkeep & appearance of town parks and active recreation areas**

	Freeport, ME	Holden, MA	Lewiston, ME	Newport, RI	South Portland, ME	Average
Excellent	49.4%	34.9%	18.8%	28.6%	39.9%	30.7%
Good	44.2%	58.2%	57.3%	49.2%	52.4%	53.1%
Fair	3.9%	6.2%	18.8%	17.8%	5.5%	12.8%
Poor	1.3%	0.7%	3.9%	3.7%	2.2%	2.9%
Very Poor	1.3%	0.0%	1.2%	0.6%	0.0%	0.6%

V. In the past 12 months, have you or a member of your household received assistance from the Police Department?

	Freeport, ME	Holden, MA	Lewiston, ME	Newport, RI	South Portland, ME	Average
Yes	32.1%	20.3%	23.2%	42.6%	24.5%	29.0%
No	67.9%	79.7%	76.8%	57.4%	75.5%	71.0%

VI. How satisfied were you with the Police Department's: Response time

	Freeport, ME	Holden, MA	Lewiston, ME	Newport, RI	South Portland, ME	Average
Very Satisfied	81.8%	78.6%	42.9%	46.3%	61.3%	53.5%
Satisfied	18.2%	21.4%	42.9%	35.3%	25.8%	32.9%
Dissatisfied	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	11.8%	11.3%	9.2%
Very Dissatisfied	0.0%	0.0%	5.2%	6.6%	1.6%	4.3%

VII. How satisfied are/were you with the Public Schools: Administration (school level)						
	Freeport, ME	Holden, MA	Lewiston, ME	Newport, RI	South Portland, ME	Average
Very Satisfied	28.3%	45.1%	23.5%	23.1%	29.3%	28.5%
Satisfied	45.7%	42.2%	64.0%	44.9%	52.7%	52.2%
Dissatisfied	19.6%	10.8%	9.5%	21.1%	11.3%	13.5%
Very Dissatisfied	6.5%	2.0%	3.0%	10.9%	6.7%	5.7%

VIII. How satisfied are/were you with the Public Schools: Administration (district level)						
	Freeport, ME	Holden, MA	Lewiston, ME	Newport, RI	South Portland, ME	Average
Very Satisfied	23.1%	29.0%	20.1%	15.9%	16.8%	20.0%
Satisfied	48.7%	50.5%	66.3%	38.6%	62.6%	55.4%
Dissatisfied	17.9%	15.1%	12.0%	26.5%	10.7%	15.9%
Very Dissatisfied	10.3%	5.4%	1.6%	18.9%	9.9%	8.6%

IX. How satisfied are/were you with the Public Schools: Quality of curriculum						
	Freeport, ME	Holden, MA	Lewiston, ME	Newport, RI	South Portland, ME	Average
Very Satisfied	29.8%	46.1%	20.2%	12.0%	26.7%	24.6%
Satisfied	55.3%	51.0%	68.7%	45.3%	56.7%	56.7%
Dissatisfied	14.9%	2.0%	8.6%	30.7%	12.0%	13.9%
Very Dissatisfied	0.0%	1.0%	2.5%	12.0%	4.7%	4.8%

X. How satisfied are/were you with the Public Schools: Qualifications and performance of the teachers						
	Freeport, ME	Holden, MA	Lewiston, ME	Newport, RI	South Portland, ME	Average
Very Satisfied	38.3%	46.1%	26.3%	21.3%	30.0%	30.0%
Satisfied	46.8%	45.1%	61.1%	48.0%	56.0%	53.3%
Dissatisfied	14.9%	4.9%	11.6%	20.7%	12.0%	13.0%
Very Dissatisfied	0.0%	3.9%	1.0%	10.0%	2.0%	3.7%

XI. How satisfied are you with the mix of residential, commercial, retail, and industrial land areas in the town?						
	Freeport, ME	Holden, MA	Lewiston, ME	Newport, RI	South Portland, ME	Average
Very Satisfied	17.8%	7.9%	4.5%	6.9%	10.9%	8.0%
Satisfied	63.0%	69.3%	71.5%	72.6%	77.4%	72.4%
Dissatisfied	15.1%	19.3%	20.2%	15.8%	10.1%	16.1%
Very Dissatisfied	4.1%	3.6%	3.8%	4.6%	1.6%	3.5%

XII. Have you applied for a building permit or been a part of the permit process during the past 12 months in the town of _____?						
	Freeport, ME	Holden, MA	Lewiston, ME	Newport, RI	South Portland, ME	Average
Yes	18.8%	9.3%	11.2%	21.0%	8.8%	13.6%
No	81.3%	90.7%	88.8%	79.0%	91.2%	86.4%

XIII. How satisfied are you with the ease of obtaining information and materials during the permit process?						
	Freeport, ME	Holden, MA	Lewiston, ME	Newport, RI	South Portland, ME	Average
Very Satisfied	40.0%	54.5%	46.2%	22.4%	21.7%	32.3%
Satisfied	46.7%	27.3%	48.7%	53.7%	60.9%	51.0%
Dissatisfied	13.3%	18.2%	5.1%	14.9%	8.7%	11.6%
Very Dissatisfied	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.0%	8.7%	5.2%