

CITY OF GRANTS PASS SURVEY

Summary of Survey Methodology and Results

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Introduction

The city of Grants Pass provides a wide variety of services to its citizens. As part of Grants Pass's efforts to evaluate the quality of its services, Grants Pass contracted with the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory (OSRL) to conduct research on how registered voters assess the quality of city services, feel about the quality of life in their community, and their opinions about specific transportation issues. Working closely the Grants Pass Assistant City Manager, Laurel Samson, OSRL planned, pre-tested and implemented a telephone survey of 399 registered voters. This report summarizes the survey methodology and results.

Survey Methodology

Survey Instrument

The broad goals of the survey were to obtain valid and reliable information from registered voters on the quality of services provided to them by the city of Grants Pass; their views around quality of life issues in Grants Pass; and their opinions on specific transportation issues.

In designing the survey instrument, OSRL used a multi-path approach which included: reviewing previous city of Grants Pass surveys; drawing from OSRL's survey archives and professional networks for questions related to Grants Pass's needs; creating original survey questions with the assistance of Grants Pass's staff; and extensively pre-testing individual questions and the entire survey instrument with members of the survey population, professionals, survey experts, and potential users of the data from Grants Pass. Most of the

survey questions are direct parallels to those from previous Grants Pass surveys, but some are OSRL/Grants Pass originals.

The survey instrument was programmed into OSRL's computer-aided telephone interviewing (CATI) system and further pretested. A facsimile of the survey instrument is provided in Section 2 of this documentation. All interviews were completely confidential, and human subjects approval was obtained.

Sample and Data Collection

Interviewer training was conducted on September 17, 1998; see Section 3 for interviewer instructions. Interviewing was conducted from 9:00 AM until 9:00 PM, Monday through Sunday, until the target sample sizes of 383 was exceeded. Altogether, OSRL interviewers made 4,943 random-digit-dialed telephone calls to complete 399 interviews between September 29 – October 19, 1998. Up to 20 calls were made to each valid telephone number. All registered voters, whose phone numbers could be located, had an equal chance of being selected. The net response rate was 63% and the refusal rate was 21%; see Section 5 for the sample and response rate report. The average length of the interviews was 11 minutes.

Survey sampling errors are calculated to assist data users in assessing how much confidence to place in a particular survey result. Large random samples, as in this study, reduce sampling error. Results for survey questions in which there is low variability also have less sampling error; for example, a variable with a 50/50 proportional split has wider confidence intervals than a variable with a 5/95 proportional split. For this study of 399, the sampling error, when the entire population of registered voters is used, is ± 5.0 percentage points on a variable with a 50/50 proportional split (at the 95% confidence level). For a variable with a 5/95 proportional split, the sampling error, for the entire registered voter population is ± 2.0 percentage points.

Survey Results

The presentation of the survey results is organized around the subject areas identified on pages 1 - 3. Readers of this report may refer to the 57 banner-style tables in Section 6 for more detail. In the banner tables, the content are cross-tabulated by a wide range of demographic information. The banner data include counts and percentages for each question overall, and counts and percentages for each row and column of the cross-tabulation. See Section 5 for instructions on how to read banner tables.

Profile of Survey Respondents

Before turning to the results of the survey, we provide a profile of respondents in the survey's sample, which will serve to contextualize their answers to the survey questions.

Sixty three percent of the respondents to the survey were female and 37% male. The respondents represent an older than average American population, with 33% of respondents 65 or older and only 17% under age 35, although it is important to remember that the survey was a survey of adults, 18 and older, and did not include children. Respondents tended to be long-time residents, with 39% of respondents having lived in Grants Pass for more than 20 years, while only 21% had lived in Grants Pass for 5 years or less. Finally, most of the respondents (64%) own their own home.

General Impressions about living in Grants Pass

In general registered voters think Grants Pass is a nice place to live. When asked to rate living in Grants Pass on a 10 point scale, where one is "poor" and ten is "excellent", 61% of respondents give Grants Pass a rating of eight, nine or ten and only 2% give a rating of one, two or three.

This pattern of generally favorable response is repeated when respondents were asked to rate how safe they felt living in Grants Pass. On a five point scale, where one was "not safe" and five was "very safe", 68% of respondents gave a rating of four or five and only 7% gave a rating of one or two. This feeling of safety was true regardless of age or gender, but did show a slight neighborhood bias, with more people feeling safe in the southeast. This feeling of safety was further reinforced by responses to a follow up question where respondents were asked to compare the safety of their neighborhood to other neighborhoods in Grants Pass. On this question 51% of respondents felt that their neighborhood was safer than other neighborhoods. Here again there was minor variation among neighborhoods and between respondents who own their own home and those who rent, with renters less likely to feel that their neighborhood is safe when compared to other neighborhoods.

Respondents were also asked their general impression on whether or not Grants Pass was growing "too fast", "about the right pace", or "too slowly." Respondents were almost evenly split on the issue of growth, with 43% thinking that Grants Pass is growing too fast and 49% thinking it is growing at about the right pace. Here too there was a minor difference between homeowners and renters, with renters more likely to think the city is growing too fast.

Grants Pass City Services

Respondents were asked two sets of questions about city services. In the first set they were asked if they had ever used or contacted a specific service, and if so how satisfied

they were with the quality of customer service provided. Respondents were asked about nine separate services (see banner tables 2 – 19). In every case a majority of respondents rated the quality of service as either a four or a five, on a five point scale where one indicated poor service and five indicated excellent service. In fact, for most services a very large majority of respondents gave a rating of four or five. Out of the nine services rated, six received a four or a five score by more than 70% of respondents, and in the case of fire fighting 100% of respondents who had ever used the service gave these high ratings. Even the service of receiving a traffic ticket was rated as excellent, or close to excellent, by 52% of people who had received tickets. The only one of these nine city services that any substantial number of respondents felt gave poor service was city staff, where 15% rated the service as “poor”.

In addition to the nine services mentioned above, all respondents were asked about 12 city services that people could reasonably be expected to have opinions about, even if they had not contacted the service providers directly. Here again Grants Pass voters feel that these services generally provide excellent, or close to excellent, service (see banner tables 20 – 31). Of the 12 services respondents were asked about, 10 were rated a four or a five, using the same scale as before, by over 50% of respondents. The two services that did not get high ratings were planning, where only 26% gave one of the two high rating scores, and building inspection, where only 24% gave these scores. However, these two services were also the two services where the largest number of respondents reported that they did not know how to rate the services (presumably because they had no experience with the service). In the case of planning, 32% of respondents were unable to provide a rating, and in the case of building inspections a very large 49% of respondents felt unable to provide a rating. Of the 10 services that most respondents were able to give ratings on, the street maintenance service received the greatest number of “poor” scores and even there the service was only rated “poor” by 6% of respondents.

Attitudes toward the value of Government

Respondents were asked about their attitudes toward the value of four levels of government: Federal; State; County; and City. In addition, they were also asked about the value of the school district, the local community college, and the local irrigation district. For each of these institutions, respondents were asked how often they felt they were getting their money’s worth, using the response scale: “never; rarely; sometimes; often; or always”. Respondents’ belief that they get their “money’s worth” from government increased as the unit of government got smaller (see banner tables 32 – 38). The least support for the idea of their money’s worth was with the Federal government, where only 26% of respondents felt that they always or often got their money’s worth, and the greatest support for this idea was with Grants Pass city government, where 44% of respondents felt that they always or often got their money’s worth.

For the other three governmental institutions, respondents held widely different views about their value. At the high end, 53% or respondents felt that they always or often got

their money's worth from the community college, while at the other extreme only 19% of respondents felt they always or often got their money's worth from the irrigation district. In fact, for the irrigation district just as many people felt that they never got their money's worth (19%). The school district received the same value rating as county government, with 34% of respondents feeling that they got their money's worth.

Participation in City Government and Local Events

Registered voters in Grants Pass were asked a series of questions about public involvement and public information (see banner tables 39 – 46). Most respondents (69%) feel that the City of Grants Pass provides adequate opportunities for participation and influence in city decisions. In fact, 18% have attended some form of local government or public meeting on city issues. In addition, an even larger number of respondents (39%) have volunteered their time on projects or activities that they feel were designed to make Grants Pass a better place to live. The only demographic variations in this activity level were due to age. Fifty six percent of respondents ages 35-44 volunteer their time, compared to those over 65, where only 30% reported volunteering.

Most respondents (63%) feel that the city does an excellent or close to excellent job about informing them about city issues and answer affirmatively (78%) that the city meets their information needs. The most useful source of city information was reported to be newspaper articles by 41% of respondents, followed by the city newsletter for 27% of respondents. Interestingly, public meetings were thought to be of very low value for informing citizens, with only 1% of respondents listing such meetings as the most useful way to keep up with city issues and activities.

Registered voters are also active in service clubs, with 40% claiming membership in at least one such organization. Additionally, the respondents are highly likely to attend local school events, with 61% responding that they have attended at least one such event in the past 12 months. The only demographic group that doesn't attend school events at this high level is senior citizens over the age of 65, where attendance at school events drops to 37%.

Grants Pass Transportation Issues

Finally, respondents were asked a variety of local transportation issues, beginning with a series of questions about whether or not all city residents should pay a portion of the cost of specific improvements. For most of the transportation projects proposed, a majority of respondents felt that all residents should pay a portion of the costs (see banner tables 47-52). This majority was as low as 52% for widening roads, and as high as 75% for sidewalks around parks and elementary schools. However on this latter question the support levels varied substantially by the age of the respondent. Younger respondents, under age 45, had an average support level of 87% for the idea of all citizens paying a portion of the costs, while only 63% of those over 65 supported this concept. One likely

explanation for this 24% difference is that respondents under the age of 45 are much more likely to have children in public school and using parks than are respondents over 65.

The only transportation project for which a majority of respondents did not support the concept of all residents paying a portion of costs was on the question of building a fourth bridge across the Rogue River. For this project respondents were evenly split, with 46% opposing the idea of all residents paying a portion of the costs and 46% supporting this concept.

Respondents were also asked about the fairest method of collecting the additional revenue necessary to fund roadway improvements. Three methods were proposed: a \$2 dollar fee per month per home; a \$25 dollar addition to yearly property taxes; a local gas tax of one cent per gallon; or some unspecified combination of these three methods. Of the three specified methods, respondents preferred the gas tax over the fee or the property tax by a three to one margin, with 32% of respondents preferring the gas tax and only 11 % preferring the fee or the property tax. However, the unspecified combination was just as popular, with 33% of respondents choosing that method of payment. The popularity of the unspecified method is probably due to the very fact that it is not specified. Any specified method would probably gather less than 33% support.

In addition to the general questions about roadway improvements, respondents were asked specifically whether or not they thought that the two sections of Northwest Beacon Avenue should be connected (see banner tables 53, 54). Forty six percent of respondents felt that these two sections of road should be connected, 30% did not feel they should be, and 22% had no opinion on the issue. For those who were opposed to the idea, or had no opinion, they were then asked whether or not they thought the two road sections should be connected if the sections were also widened. With this provision added to the project an additional 10% of respondents felt that the two sections should be widened. The total support for connecting the widened road would thus be approximately 56%.

Conclusions

The results show registered voters in Grants Pass generally think highly of their community and of local government. They feel that local government does a good job of providing services and feel that they are able to participate with that government. They feel safe in their neighborhoods and like their community. On transportation issues, they

generally feel that all residents bear at least partial responsibility for funding improvements. Finally, they are split on whether or not their community is growing at about the right rate.

This report has just scratched the surface of an exceptionally rich source of current information on the perceptions and beliefs of Grants Pass voters. The results reported here raises many questions, some of which could be answered by an in-depth analysis of the data. These data also can serve as part of Grants Pass's continual efforts measure the effects of changes in service policy or funding over the next several years.