

Liveable City Survey Results

Top Five Priorities for a Liveable City

The survey shows that Austinites have a strong consensus on which top five priorities make a city most liveable. While various demographic groups differed slightly on the exact rankings, almost every group listed the following as the top 5 priorities among the 17 cards: (1) Safe Community 55.4%, (2) Clean Environment 51.6%, (3) Quality Public Schools 50.7%, (4) Housing You Can Afford 48.8%, and (5) Strong Economy 40.7%. The extent of consensus around what makes a city most liveable is one of the most compelling aspects of this poll.

Satisfaction With Quality of Life

When asked about satisfaction with their quality of life, almost 80% of the respondents said they were satisfied, though nearly 49% percent also believe that Austin's quality of life is getting worse. While African-American and Hispanic respondents were twice as likely as whites to be dissatisfied with their current quality of life, they were also more optimistic about the future.

Top Five Threats to a Liveable Austin

A high degree of consensus also exists regarding the key problems in Austin today. Almost 75% of survey respondents ranked housing they could afford as a top threat to the Austin community. The following were ranked most frequently as the top five problems in Austin today: (1) Housing You Can Afford 74.5%, (2) Easy to Get Around 64.7%, (3) Quality Public Schools 48.1%, (4) Low Taxes 48.1%, and (5) Affordable Healthcare 41.4%.

A few clear differences existed between groups. Easy to Get Around (transportation) was ranked highest among white respondents, respondents with higher income and those with college degrees. African-Americans ranked Housing You Can Afford, Quality Public Schools, and Affordable Health Care higher than transportation. Hispanic respondents also ranked Housing You Can Afford and Quality Public Schools over transportation. For African-American respondents, Economic Opportunity joined the top five concerns, while Safe Community was among the top five for Hispanics.

Only Affordable Housing and Quality Public Schools ranked in the top five as both a priority for livability city and a current threat to a liveable Austin.

Attitudes about Austin's Future

Respondents were also asked to name the most important thing that could be done to make life in Austin better five years from now. Their answers mirrored their main concerns: Transportation, Economic Opportunity, and Housing. However, with the open-ended question, two additional issues emerged: the need for planning and growth management, and government reform.

Survey Methodology

The survey consisted of 428 door-to-door interviews, and was conducted between June 3 and June 13, 2002. All respondents were shown a deck of 17 cards, each representing a quality of life issue. They were then asked to choose their five top priorities and five top problems from the deck. The deck included a card marked "Other" for respondents who wanted to name an issue of their own. The cards helped respondents make choices among competing values and problems.

Interviews were conducted by canvassers hired and trained by Liveable City and Clean Water Action. Jeff Smith of Opinion Analysts of Austin provided sample design and analytical support.

Survey respondents closely mirror U.S. Census data from 2000 and represent the entire City of Austin. For no demographic group was the difference between the sample and Census estimates greater than 10%. More than 80 clusters randomly selected from throughout the city were targeted for data collection. The margin of error is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

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