

September 2019

City of Salem

Community Satisfaction Survey



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Introduction & Methodology

1

From September 4 to 9, 2019, DHM Research conducted a survey of Salem residents. The purposes of the survey were to assess residents' satisfaction with City services and communications; to gauge emergency preparedness; and to weigh opinions related to funding and the City's budget. To track changes in opinion, the survey benchmarked several questions from previous surveys.

Research Methodology: The survey consisted of 459 Salem residents and took approximately 20 minutes to complete. This is a sufficient sample size to assess resident opinions generally and to review findings by multiple subgroups, including age, gender, area of the city, education, homeownership status, and party affiliation.

Survey respondents were contacted from a voter list and the survey was administered in both English and Spanish. A hybrid approach was used, in which respondents had opportunities to complete the survey by phone and online. Landline respondents were contacted by a live interviewer. Cellphone respondents, who are typically harder to reach, were contacted either by a live interviewer or via text with a link to complete the survey online.

In gathering responses, a variety of quality control measures were employed, including questionnaire pre-testing and validation. Quotas were set by age, gender, area of the city, education, homeownership status, and party affiliation to ensure a representative sample. In the annotated questionnaire, results may add up to 99% or 101% due to rounding.

Statement of Limitations: Any sampling of opinions or attitudes is subject to a margin of error. The margin of error is a standard statistical calculation that represents differences between the sample and total population at a confidence interval, or probability, calculated to be 95%. This means that there is a 95% probability that the sample taken for this study would fall within the stated margin of error if compared with the results achieved from surveying the entire population. For a sample of 459, the margin of error is $\pm 4.6\%$.

DHM Research: DHM Research has been providing opinion research and consultation throughout the Pacific Northwest and other regions of the United States for over three decades. The firm is nonpartisan and independent and specializes in research projects to support public policy making.

Summary & Observations

2

Salem residents are less optimistic about the City's direction.

About four in ten residents believe the City is moving in the right direction, a significant drop from last year. This change is related to homelessness and housing issues, and it also likely that trends outside the City's control—such as state and national politics and the economy—are contributing to the downturn.

Residents also have a cloudier outlook about their own quality of life. More residents believe it is difficult to complete a range of ordinary tasks in the city, such as driving during rush hour, getting a permit or paying a bill, and finding space for community events.

Despite the downturn in mood, Salem residents are still very satisfied with many of the services they receive from the City.

Opinion of City services in general remains overwhelmingly positive, with nine in ten residents say they are satisfied. Many specific services also continue to receive high ratings—especially the basic services residents have personal experience with, such as emergency services, parks, water and wastewater, and street lighting. While positivity about even the most popular aspects of Salem's government has wobbled slightly, residents remain overwhelmingly satisfied with most of the ways they interact with the City on a day-to-day basis.

Homelessness and housing affordability continue to dominate residents' concerns.

Concern about homelessness has been increasing steadily, from 7% saying it was their top concern in 2016 to 41% today. Levels of concern are high across demographic groups, and focus group research from earlier this year suggests that residents connect the homelessness they see on a daily basis to their feelings about the City's direction.

At the same time, satisfaction with the City's approach to the crisis has fallen. Residents may base their evaluations of the City's response on the conditions they see on the street, even if they have limited awareness of the details.

Traffic, transportation infrastructure, and the local economy are also on residents' minds.

Many residents continue to see transportation as a serious daily concern. Significant minorities see road maintenance, traffic, and the need for an additional bridge as problems that need solving.

Residents have generally been satisfied with how the City has grown jobs over the past two years, but there was an increase in negative views this year. This new concern may be linked to recent news reports about the looming possibility of an economic downturn in the US economy.

Salem residents are mixed about whether they are willing to pay more in taxes for the services they receive, and support for any proposal would probably depend on the specifics.

A slim majority of residents are willing to pay more in order to see improvement in the service they believe needs it most. They are less likely to say that the City should raise taxes when the question is framed in terms of a general budget shortfall, rather than specific valued services.

Compared to 2018, slightly fewer residents are willing to pay more to address their priority service. Focus group results suggest that their level of trust that the City will invest effectively may be an obstacle to gaining support for additional revenue, even when it is linked to high-priority issues such as homelessness.

There is evidence of growing concern about inequity in the city.

Residents are less likely to believe that services are distributed fairly throughout Salem. People in West Salem are more skeptical of the equitable distribution of services in the city; they have more negative opinions about living in Salem on a number of fronts, including how safe it is to walk and bike in the city.

Some demographic disparities became more pronounced in this year's survey. While nearly every demographic group saw a decrease in optimism, the gaps are largest among people of color and renters. People with a high school education or less continue to have lower levels of satisfaction than their peers.

Many residents are prepared for a natural disaster, though some may be overestimating their preparedness.

About six in ten residents say they are "very" or "somewhat" prepared for a natural disaster. At the same time, about four in ten say they have already put together an emergency kit. Residents younger than 35, lower-income people, people of color, and renters are less likely to be prepared, indicating that resource issues may be a barrier to preparedness.

Residents see room for improvement in how the City communicates with them.

About a quarter of residents say they get "enough" information from the City. The majority say they rarely receive information from the City, and most indicate that they learn about what is happening from the news or from social media, rather than directly from the City.

Residents appear to be feeling less connected to their City government, despite submitting comments and attending meetings and open houses in similar numbers. The proportion of residents who say it is easy to make their concerns heard decreased from 2018, and four in ten say it is "very difficult." This feeling of disconnect may be contributing to a lack of awareness and trust.

Key Findings

The following report describes the results of a survey of Salem residents conducted in September 2019. Residents were asked about their general mood, their opinions about City services, and their feelings about funding for services, among other topics. Where possible, results are benchmarked to prior surveys of Salem residents conducted by DHM. Full question wording can be found in the appendix.

3.1 General mood

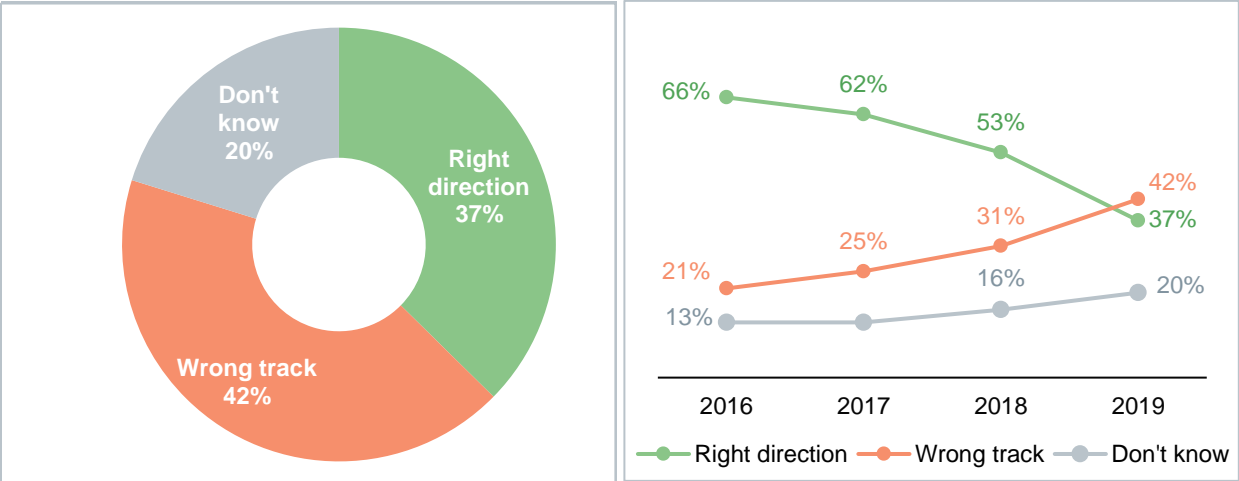
Salem residents have become less optimistic about the direction of their city.

About four in ten residents (37%) believe things in Salem are headed in the right direction. Slightly more (42%) believe Salem is off on the wrong track.

These results represent the first time since 2016 that “wrong track” responses outnumber “right direction” responses and is a continuation of a downward trend in Salem residents’ general mood. A slim majority had a positive view of Salem’s direction last year, and six in ten were positive in 2017 and 2016.

More residents now feel that the City is off on the wrong track compared to previous years, but there has also been an increase in “don’t know” responses.¹

Chart 1
City of Salem Direction



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

People who identify as Democrats are most likely to be optimistic about the City’s direction (53% right direction), while Republicans are least likely (24%). Those who do not identify with a major party (NAV/other) are also slightly more optimistic than average (42%).

¹ Recent “right direction” percentages in Oregon: Tualatin (74%), Beaverton (71%), Tigard (68%), Bend (59%), Jackson County (57%), Eugene (54%), statewide (50%), Portland metro region (44%)

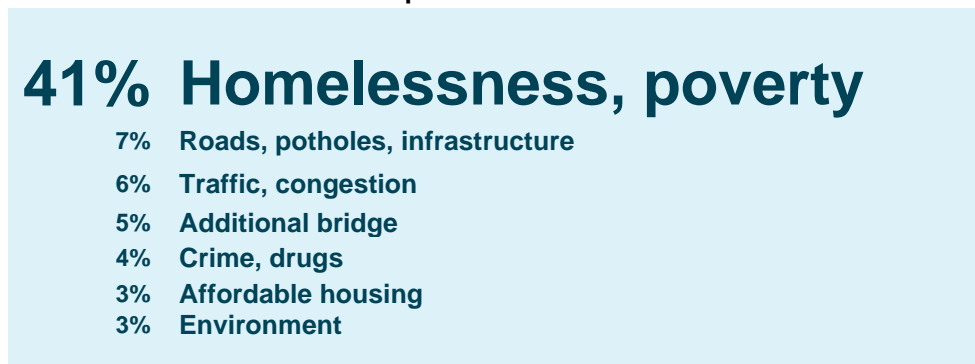
People with high school diplomas or less education are less positive about the City’s direction (22% right direction, vs. 46% of those with at least some college), as are people of color (27%).

Renters and people of color saw the largest decreases in satisfaction of any major demographic groups: in 2018, they were approximately as optimistic as the average (56%, 53% right direction), but now are significantly less optimistic (28%, 27%). These results should be interpreted with caution due to relatively small sample sizes.

Homelessness is at the top of residents’ minds.

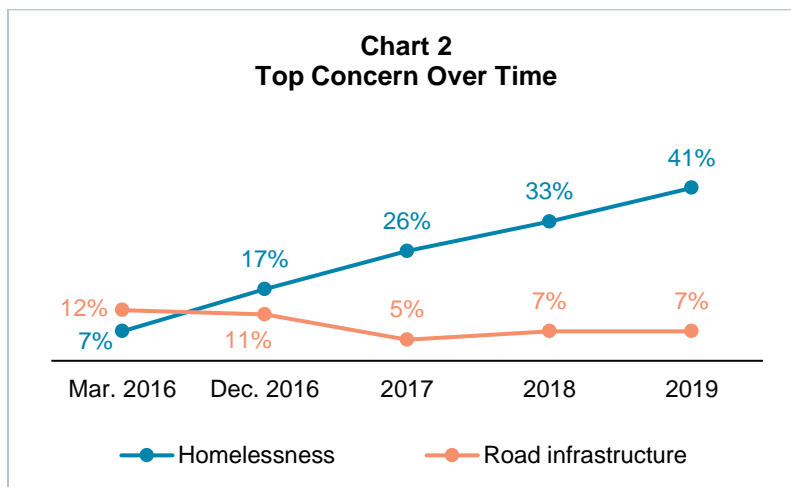
Asked in an open-ended question what issue they would like City officials to do something about, four in ten residents mention homelessness. The second most common concern—roads maintenance and infrastructure—makes up 7% of mentions.

Table 1
Most Important Issue in Salem



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

Concern about homelessness has grown steadily year by year. Some 17% of residents mentioned it as a major concern in 2016, similar to the proportion who were worried about transportation infrastructure and education funding, but it now predominates as an issue of concern.



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

Homelessness is the top concern for every demographic group. The groups most concerned about homelessness include women (50% named as top issue) and people of color (58%). Residents ages 35–54 are more concerned about traffic (11%) than younger and older people, and residents in West Salem are more concerned about building an additional bridge (19%) than people in the rest of the city.

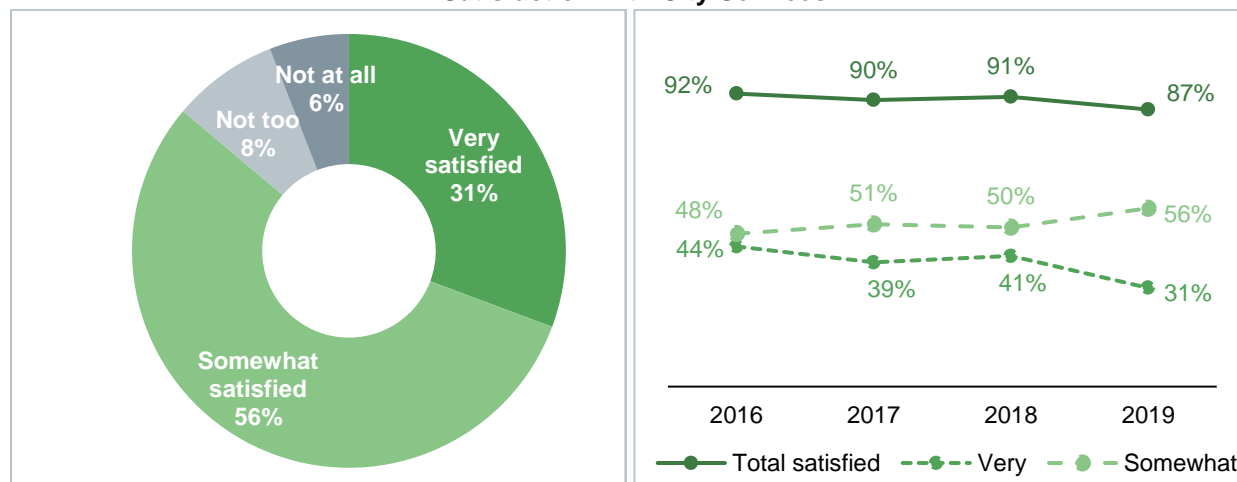
Earlier this year, DHM conducted two focus groups with Salem voters that addressed issues surrounding Salem’s structural budget deficit.² Participants in those focus groups also discussed homelessness as a major concern, and identified issues surrounding homelessness as a reason they are less satisfied with the way things are going in Salem. While some focused on the services needed to address and prevent homelessness (“*make more low-income-based housing available for those in need*”), most participants were simply upset by the signs of the homelessness crisis they see on a daily basis (“*homeless people camping everywhere*”).

3.2 Service satisfaction

Overall satisfaction with City services remains high.

Nearly nine in ten Salem residents is satisfied with the services provided by the City. About a third are “very” satisfied. There are no significant demographic differences in overall satisfaction.

Chart 3
Satisfaction with City Services



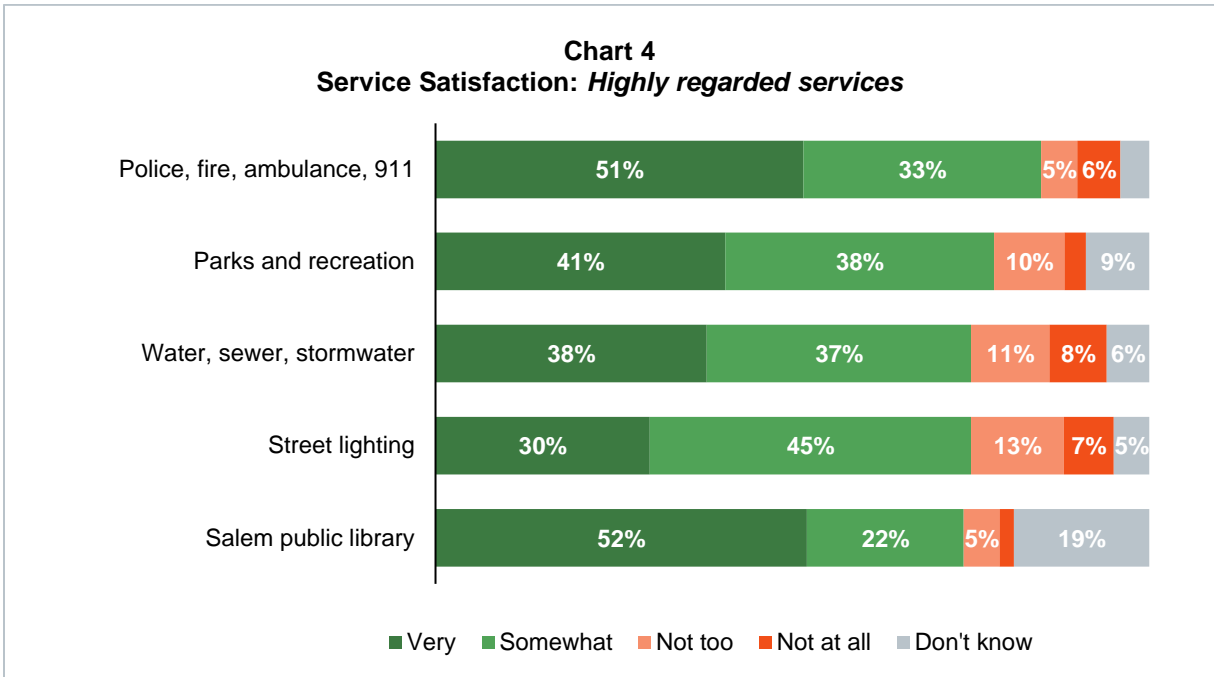
Source: DHM Research, September 2019

City services in the abstract have remained highly popular over the years, despite changes in general mood. However, fewer residents this year are “very” satisfied, while more are “somewhat” satisfied, representing a slight softening in satisfaction.

² The focus groups were conducted on July 14, 2019, in Salem. A total of 23 people participated in the groups, recruited from a list of registered Salem voters.

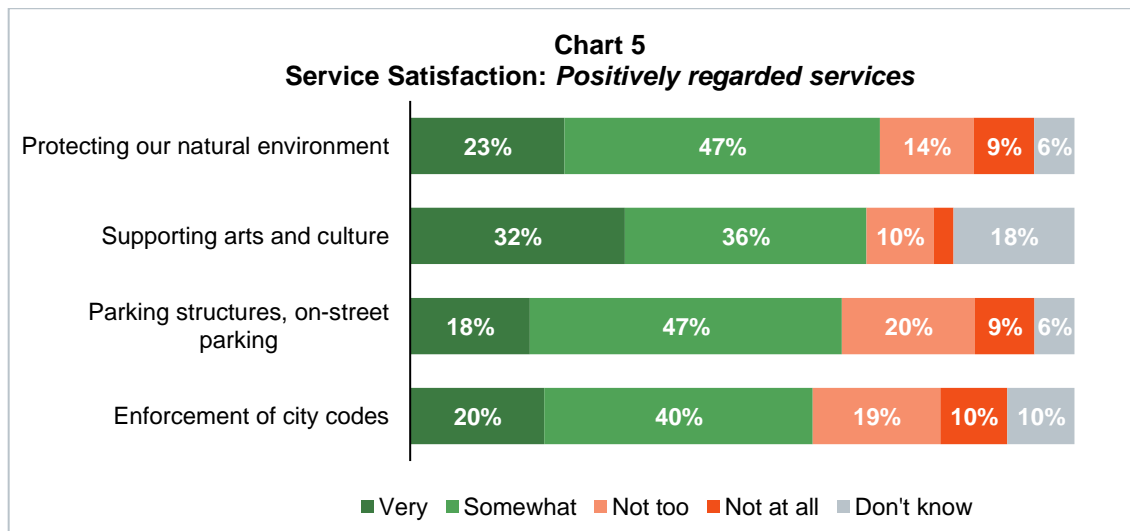
Residents are generally satisfied with many basic City services.

Strong majorities have positive perceptions of many of the basic services they are likely to have personal experience with. Three-quarters or more are “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with Salem’s *police, fire, ambulance, and 911 services* (84%); *parks and recreation* (79%); *water, sewer, and stormwater services* (75%); *street lighting* (75%); and the *Salem public library* (74%).



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

Strong majorities are also satisfied with the job Salem is doing *protecting the natural environment* (70%); *supporting arts and culture* (69%); *parking structures and on-street parking* (65%); and *enforcing city codes* (61%). Lower “very” satisfied ratings for these services indicate that residents are less familiar with these services or feel slightly cooler towards them.



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

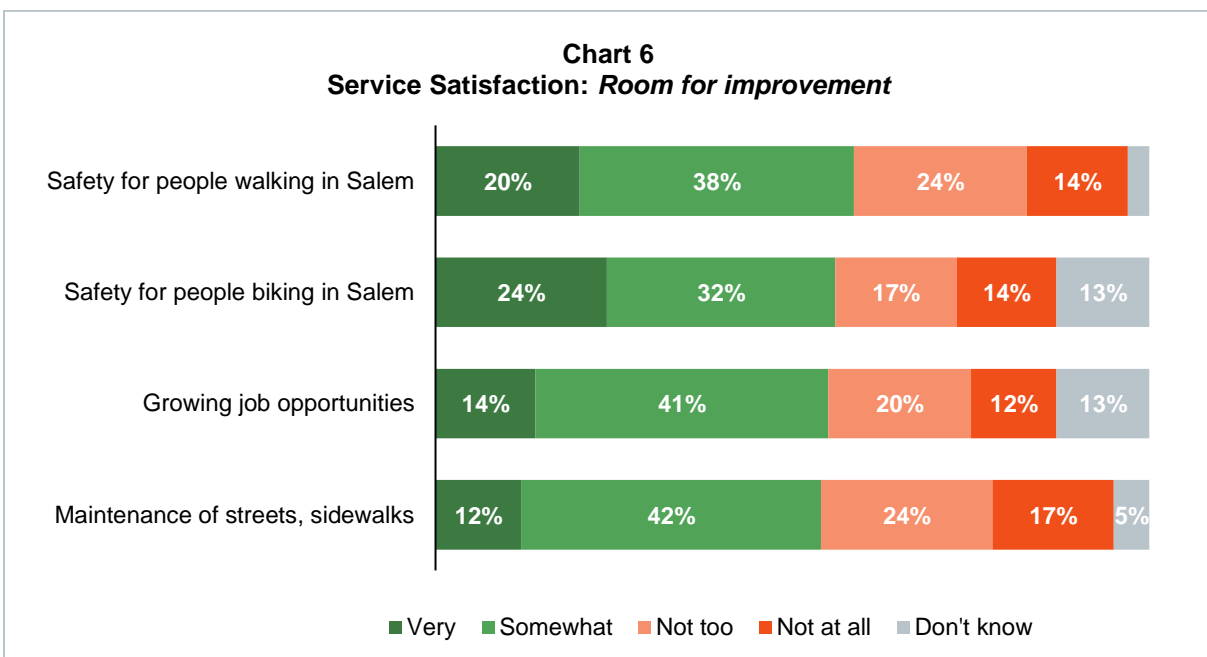
These top nine services are well-regarded among most demographic groups. Democrats tend to be more positive about each service than Republicans, with NAV residents typically in the middle; for instance, 86% of Democrats, 70% of Republicans, and 76% of NAV/other residents are satisfied with water, sewer, and stormwater services in Salem.

There are also differences according to education: people with a high school education or less give lower ratings than those with at least some college. For example, 51% of those with a high school education or less are satisfied with the parking situation in Salem, as opposed to 78% of people with some college or a two-year degree and 66% of people with a four-year degree or more. Residents with four-year college degrees are especially favorable towards the library (80% satisfied) and parks (87%).

Salem residents see room for improvement in walking and biking safety, as well as well as job creation and street maintenance.

Just over half of residents approve of how Salem is providing *safety for people walking* (58% satisfied) and *biking* (56%), as well as how the City is *growing job opportunities in the local economy* (55%) and *maintaining city streets, sidewalks, and bridges* (54%).

Street and sidewalk maintenance has been a long-standing issue for some Salem residents, and it typically has among the highest negative ratings compared to other services. Job creation, on the other hand, has been rated highly in the past several surveys but saw an increase in negative views this year. This new concern may be linked to recent news reports about the looming possibility of an economic downturn in the US economy. Concerns about job creation are higher among college graduates (46% satisfied) and women (47%).

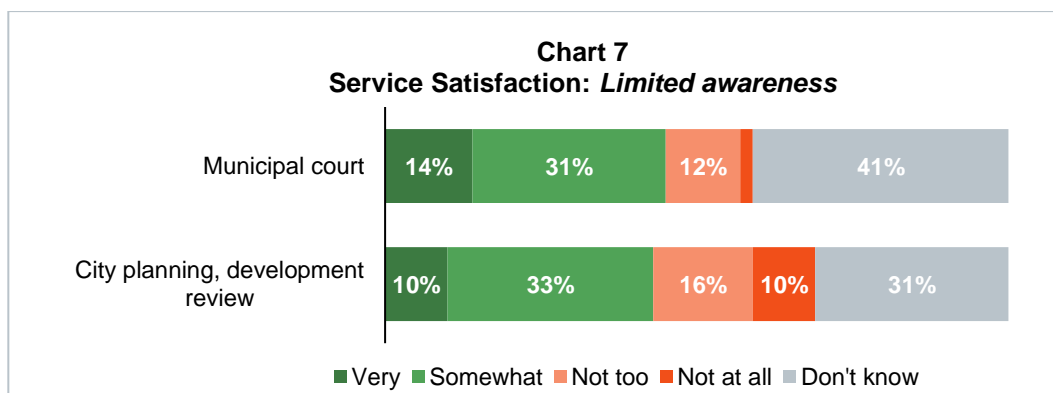


Source: DHM Research, September 2019

This year's survey marks the first time residents were asked about safety for people walking and biking in Salem. A majority of residents are satisfied with the job the City is doing in these areas. However, walking safety has a level of negative opinion similar to that of street maintenance.

As with other service areas, residents with a high school education are less satisfied with walking and biking safety compared to people with some college or more. Feelings about safety also vary by neighborhood: West Salem residents are less satisfied on average (43% biking, 39% walking) than people in other parts of town.

As in past surveys, many residents do not know enough about the *municipal court* (45%) or *City planning and development review* (31%) to say whether they are satisfied.

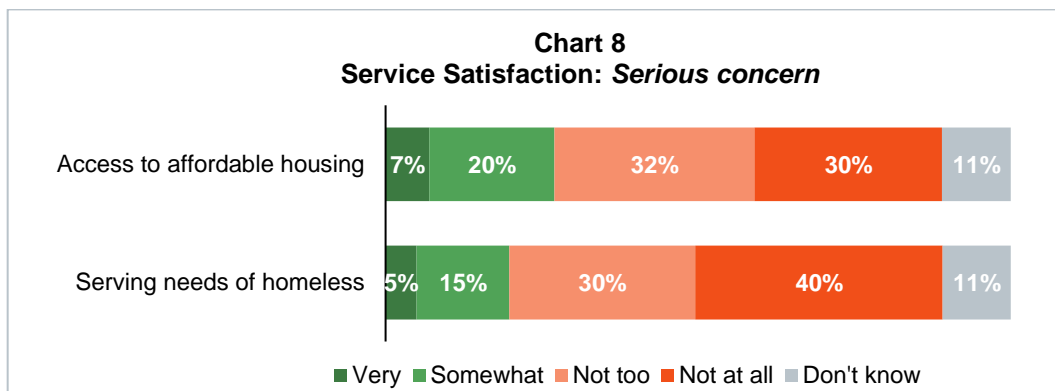


Source: DHM Research, September 2019

Both of these services consistently have few negative ratings, but the proportion of residents who responded “don’t know” increased eight points and five points, respectively. West Salem residents are less satisfied with city planning and development review (25% satisfied) than their counterparts in North/Northeast Salem and South Salem.

Affordable housing and homelessness are increasingly urgent concerns.

Less than a third of residents are satisfied with how well the City has ensured that *all residents have access to affordable housing* (27%), and one in five are satisfied with how it has *coordinated social services to serve the needs of homeless in our community* (20%).



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

Views of the City’s response to the housing crisis are similar across demographic groups. People younger than 35 are especially unlikely to be satisfied with how the City is serving homeless people (6%).

The focus groups conducted earlier this year discussed homelessness and housing at length. Participants described Salem’s housing and homelessness crisis as increasingly visible and distressing, leading many to conclude that the City’s approach is not working. That said, few had specific policy prescriptions to address the issue.

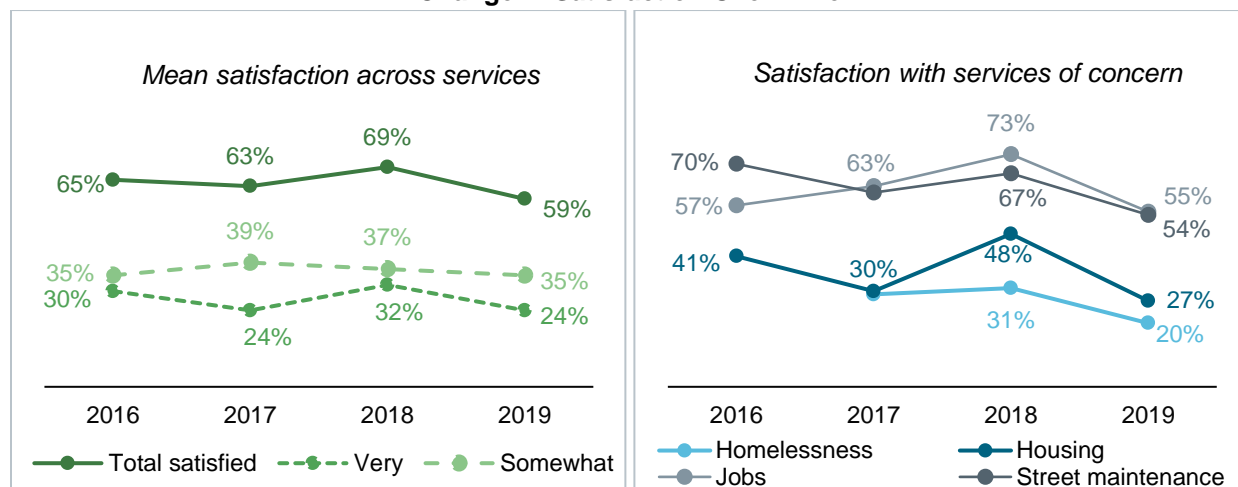
“We seem to be having a lot of issues with homelessness, don’t think it’s been addressed enough by the City.” —Group 1

Elevated concerns about job creation, street maintenance, housing, and homelessness lead a dip in satisfaction across the board.

Perceptions of the City’s response to the housing crisis are down in 2019. Satisfaction with access to affordable housing fell 21 percentage points after an increase in 2018, and satisfaction with how the City is addressing homelessness fell 11 points.

There have also been notable drops in satisfaction with street and sidewalk maintenance (13-point decrease) and growing jobs (18-point decrease). As noted above, the lower satisfaction with job growth comes after a sustained increase in satisfaction in that area and may be linked to national trends.

Chart 9
Change in Satisfaction Over Time*



*Safety for people walking in Salem and Safety for people biking in Salem were new questions in 2019 and have been excluded from analysis. Homelessness services was a new question in 2017.

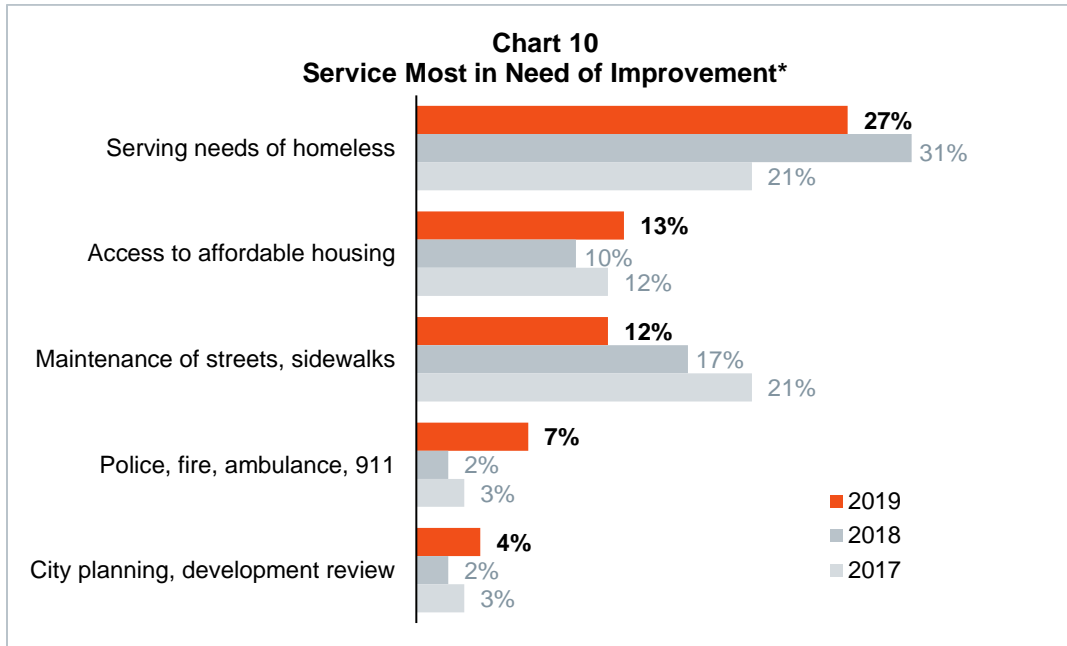
Source: DHM Research, September 2019

While specific services are driving average ratings down, there has also been a small dip in in satisfaction across the board, even among top-rated services. Among the nine most popular services, the proportion of residents who are “very” or “somewhat” satisfied has decreased an average of six points, and dissatisfaction has increased an average of four points.

Given the historically positive results in 2018, some of this change may be a simple reversion to the mean, with many ratings now looking closer to where they were in 2016 and 2017. However, it is also likely that negative views of the City’s direction are contributing to feelings about City services.

Salem residents want to see improvements in the services that address their biggest concerns.

Asked to choose the service they would most like to see improved, a plurality choose homelessness services (27%), followed by affordable housing (13%) and street maintenance (12%). While street maintenance continues to be a major concern, it is trending down compared to past years.



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

*All other services <4%

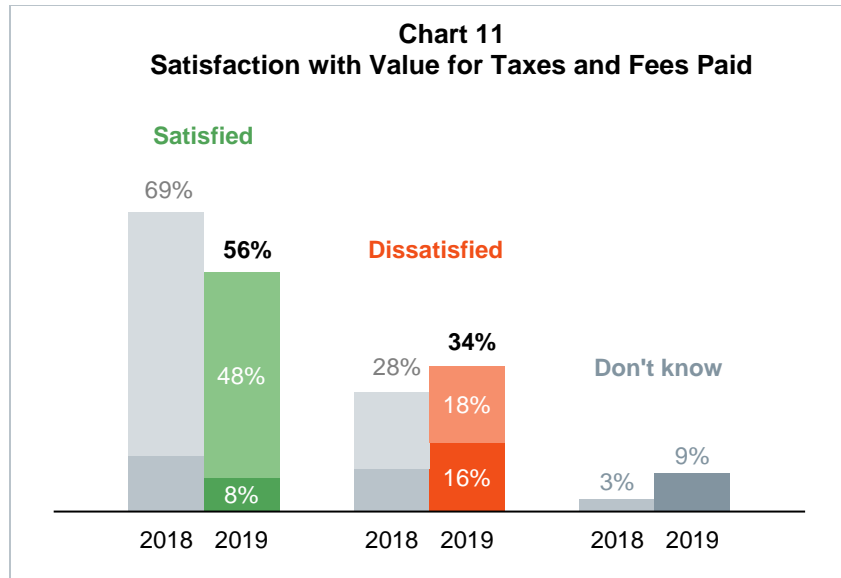
Homelessness is the top service in need of improvement across every major demographic group. Republicans are slightly less likely to choose homelessness services as their top service area (16% vs. 31% of Democrats and NAV/others), but it is still the largest share.

3.3 Resources for City services

Residents report being less satisfied with the value they receive for the taxes they pay compared to past years, though a majority continue to be satisfied.

Nearly six in ten residents (57%) are satisfied with the value they receive for the taxes and fees they pay, with most saying they are “somewhat” satisfied (48%).

There has been a decrease in satisfaction from 2018, when nearly seven in ten residents were satisfied with the value they receive. Dissatisfaction increased six points, and “don’t know” responses also increased six points.



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

As with most questions about taxes, there are partisan differences, with Democrats and NAV/other residents more likely to be satisfied. Nevertheless, about half of Republicans are satisfied with the value they receive (49%). South Salem residents (61%) are more satisfied than people in other areas of the city.

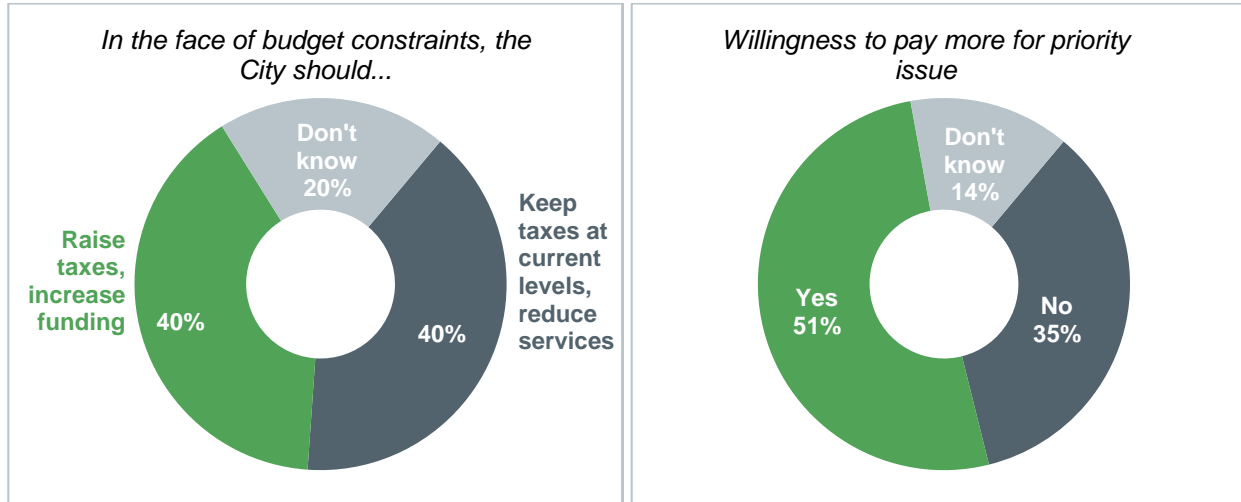
Salem residents younger than 35 and people of color are among the groups least satisfied with the value they receive. Both these groups were among the most satisfied in 2018 (74%, 72%) but saw decreases from last year of 32 points and 31 points. Renters and West Salem residents also saw larger decreases in satisfaction (30 points, 21 points), and Democrats also saw a fairly large decrease (20 points) though they remain more satisfied than average this year (64% satisfied).

Residents are split on whether they are willing to pay more for City services.

Asked to react to the information that “the City may no longer be able to provide the same level of service without more revenue,” residents are split down the middle. Forty percent would prefer that the City raise taxes and increase funding, and the same proportion would prefer that the City keep taxes at the current levels and make cuts.

Residents are more willing to pay more in taxes and fees when the question is framed as solving a problem. After indicating the service they believe to be most in need of improvement in question 21, residents were asked whether they would be willing to pay more to improve that service. A slim majority (51%) say they would be willing to pay more, while about a third would not. The services residents had in mind while answering this question were largely homelessness, affordable housing, and street maintenance (see Section 3.2).

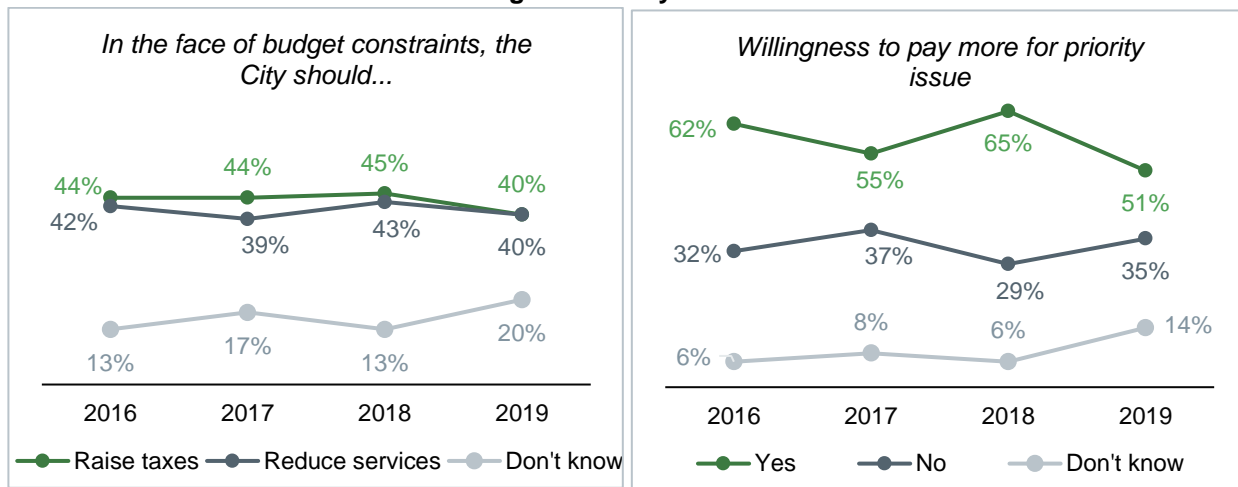
Chart 12
Willingness to Pay



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

Residents' opinions about raising revenue varies by political party. About two-thirds of Democrats believe Salem should raise taxes in order to preserve City services (64%), compared to 16% of Republicans and 46% of NAV/other voters. When it comes to paying more in order to improve a priority issue, the gap is smaller, though still hefty: 71% of Democrats are willing to pay more if their priority is improved, as opposed to 31% of Republicans and 52% of NAV/other voters.

Chart 13
Willingness to Pay Over Time



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

There has been very little movement in residents' beliefs about whether the City should raise taxes or reduce services in the face of budget constraints. Since 2016, the difference between the two sides has generally been within the margin of error. Past DHM research in Salem suggests that most residents have limited awareness of the City's budget situation. The question of whether it is better to raise taxes or cut services in the abstract likely appeals to residents' ideological beliefs and may not move very much, even as residents' feelings about the City change over time.

At the same time, however, there was a change in residents' willingness to pay more to improve their priority issue compared to prior years. Fewer are willing to pay more (down 14 points), while more say they are not willing to pay more (6-point increase) or don't know (8-point increase). Willingness to pay was relatively high in 2018 compared to historical trends.

Renters again saw a change in opinion from 2018, from being more willing to pay than homeowners (71% vs. 61%) to less willing to pay in 2019 (55% vs. 44%). Residents in West Salem also saw a large change, though these results should be interpreted with caution given their relatively small sample sizes.

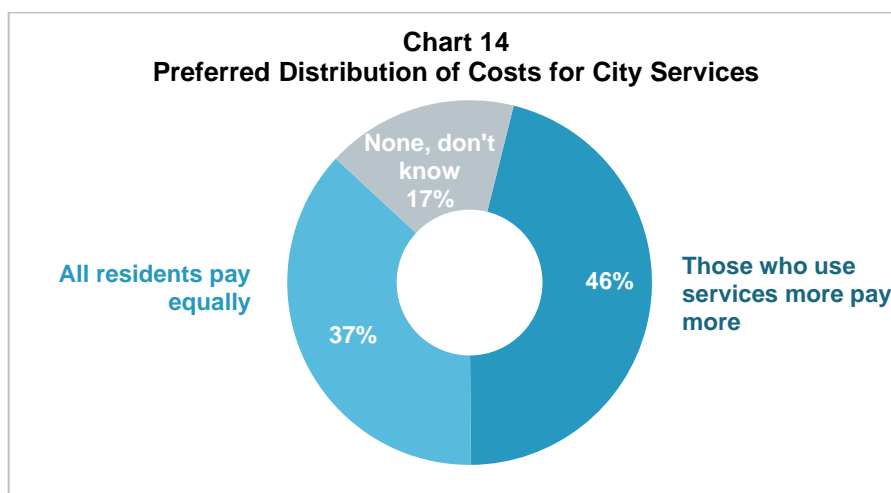
The focus groups earlier this year included an extended discussion of Salem's need for more revenue. Participants who supported paying more were motivated by preventing cuts to popular services, such as police and fire, or improving the response to the issues the city is facing, such as homelessness. However, trust in the City also played a role. Participants acknowledging the need for more funding did not necessarily translate to more support for revenue, as many expressed skepticism that the City is using existing revenue to address the problems Salem faces.

3.4 Equity

Residents have differing definitions of equity, but a plurality believe that those who use more services should pay more for them.

Asked how they would prefer costs for City services be distributed, a plurality of residents would prefer that *those who use services more pay more* (46%), while fewer would prefer to see *all residents pay equally* (37%).

Republicans are slightly more likely than Democrats or NAV/other residents to prefer that residents who use more services pay more (58%), though the difference falls short of statistical significance.



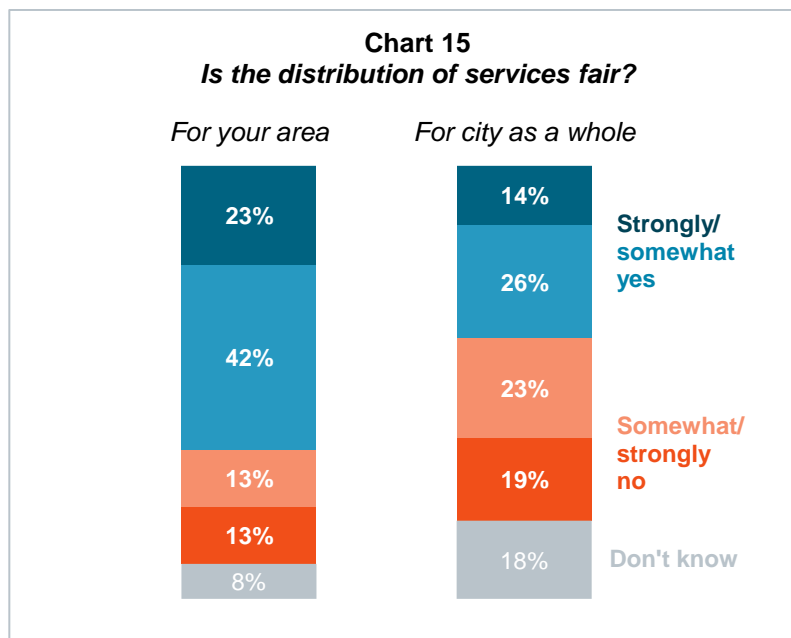
Source: DHM Research, September 2019

These results are fairly consistent with past surveys. Since 2016, between 46% and 49% have responded that they would rather see those who use more services pay more. The proportion of those who want all residents to pay equally has fluctuated over time (2016: 43%; 2017: 37%; 2018: 46%), as have “don’t know” responses.

In focus groups conducted earlier this year, DHM tested similar messaging in the context of a new City tax or fee. Results suggested that residents want to ensure that the tax system is fair, but that their definitions of fairness differ. There was strong support from some participants for the “use more, pay more” model of cost distribution. However, others were more concerned with the potential burden on lower-income residents and felt that an equitable approach would take ability to pay into account. Further quantitative research can test whether Salem residents value taking socioeconomic factors into account when paying for services.

Most Salem residents believe their neighborhood gets its fair share of City resources, but there is more uncertainty about the system as a whole.

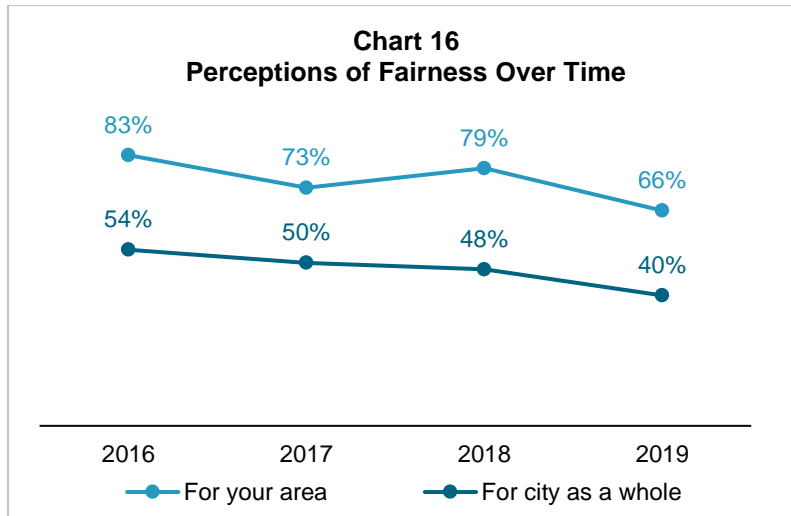
A majority of residents (66%) believe their area receives its fair share of City services. Fewer (40%) believe City services are distributed fairly throughout the city as a whole.



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

There are large differences in perception according to where residents live in the city. People in South Salem are most confident that their neighborhood receives its fair share of services (76%), as opposed to 60% of people in North/Northeast Salem and 49% of those in West Salem. South Salem residents are also most confident in the distribution of services throughout the city, with 45% believing distribution is fair overall. Less than a third (30%) of residents in West Salem agree distribution of services is fair overall, and 36% strongly disagree.

Perceptions of fairness also vary according to residents’ racial identity, income, and whether they rent or own their home. People younger than 35 are also more skeptical of whether the distribution of services is fair.



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

Residents are feeling less positive about fairness compared to past surveys. After increasing in 2018, the proportion of residents who feel that their neighborhood gets its fair share has decreased by 14 percentage points.

3.5 Living in Salem³

In Salem, many everyday activities are seen as easy to do.

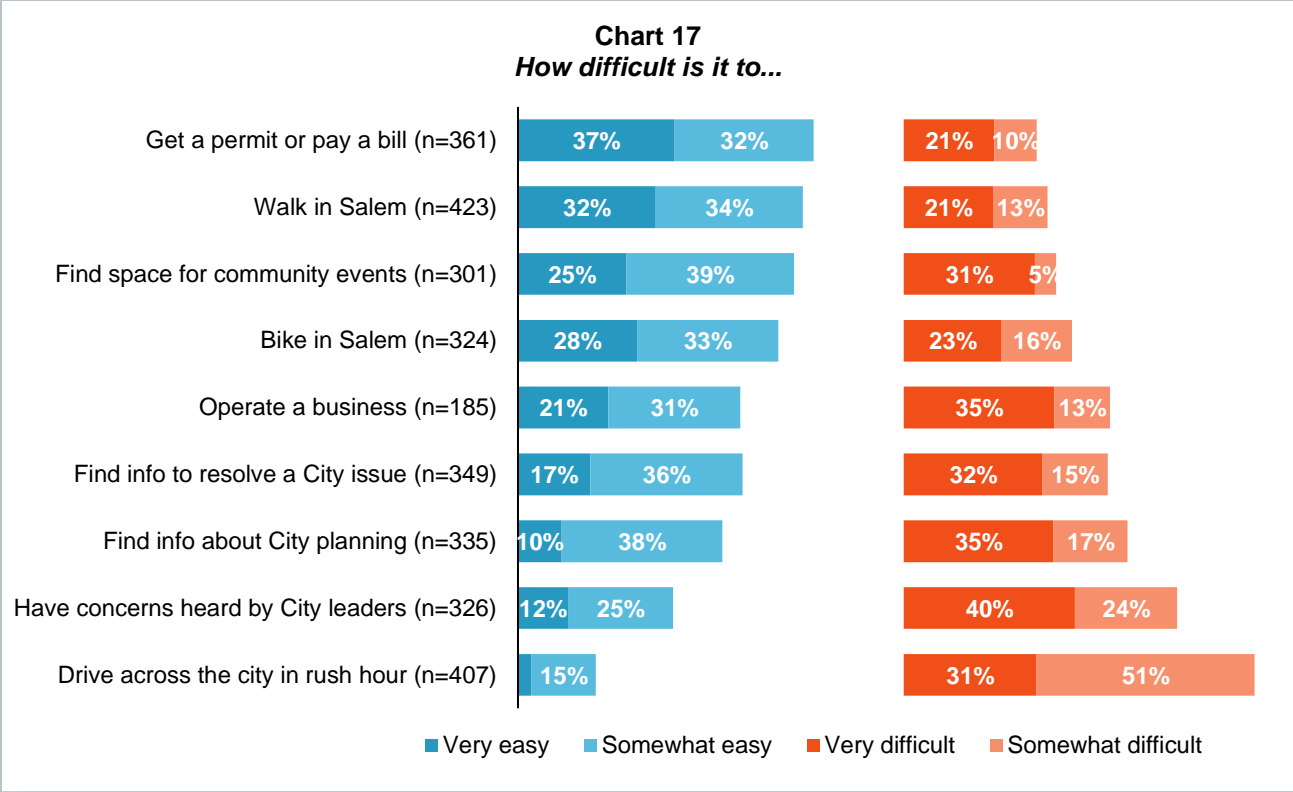
Strong majorities of residents say they have an easy time completing many basic tasks in the city, including *getting a permit or paying a bill* (69% of residents who provided a response), *walking* (66%), *finding space for community events* (64%), and *biking* (61%).

Walking in Salem is viewed as more difficult by women, lower-income people, and people of color. Lower-income people and renters find it more difficult to find space for community events, as do people younger than 35 and people 55 and over.

Approximately half of residents find it easy to *operate a business* (52%), *find information to resolve a city issue* (52%), or *find information about city planning* (48%). While residents are split on whether these tasks are “easy” or “difficult,” they are more likely to consider them “very difficult” (32–35%) than “very easy” (10–21%).

Republicans report having a harder time finding information from the City than Democrats or NAV/other residents. Residents who have lived in Salem five years or less also report finding information as more difficult.

³ Throughout this section, the reported numbers exclude the “don’t know” and “not applicable” responses so that results are more directly comparable across questions.



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

Residents struggle with rush hour traffic, and many are not sure how to make their voice heard.

A strong majority of residents say it is difficult to *drive across the City in rush hour* (82% difficult). While not as dominant as housing and homelessness, Salem residents do see traffic as a serious issue. Many consider either traffic (6%) or the need for an additional bridge across the Willamette (5%) the top issue they would like to see the City address.

Making one’s *concerns heard by City leaders* is also seen as difficult by a majority of residents (64% difficult). Four in ten say it is “very difficult,” the highest proportion among this series of questions. As with finding information at the City, there are large differences between Democrats (54% difficult) and Republicans (74%). However, while NAV/other often have opinions close to Democrats’, in this case they are least likely to feel heard in City government (78% difficult).

Many aspects of living in Salem seem more difficult compared to past years.

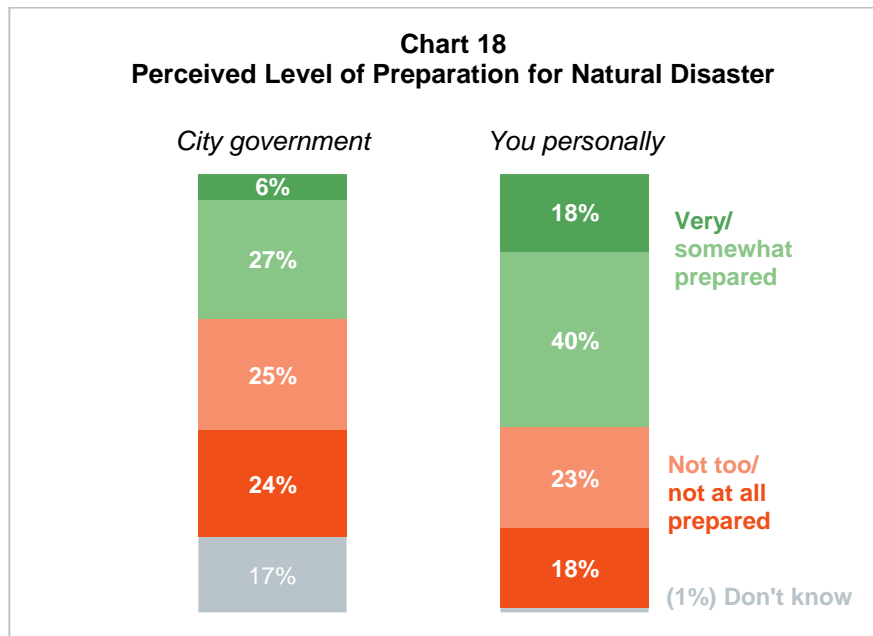
Positivity each of the activities tested in this section fell from 2018. “Easy” ratings have decreased an average of 15 percentage points, with the largest changes in how easy it is to *have one’s concerns heard* (21-point decrease), *finding information about city planning* (18-point decrease), and *finding space for community events* (17-point decrease).

3.6 Emergency preparedness

About six in ten Salem residents consider themselves prepared for a natural disaster, but many are less sure of the City’s level of preparation.

About a third believe the City government is prepared for a natural disaster, while half believe it is not prepared and about one in five are not sure. Residents’ uncertainty is likely linked to a lack of information about what the City is doing to prepare for natural disaster, combined with news stories about the Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake.

Residents are more confident in their own level of preparation. About six in ten (58%) believe they are prepared,⁴ and about two in ten feel they are “very” prepared (18%). Women, people younger than 35, lower-income people, people of color, and renters are less likely to consider themselves prepared. Past DHM research on resilience suggests that preparedness is more difficult for people with fewer economic resources and less stable housing.



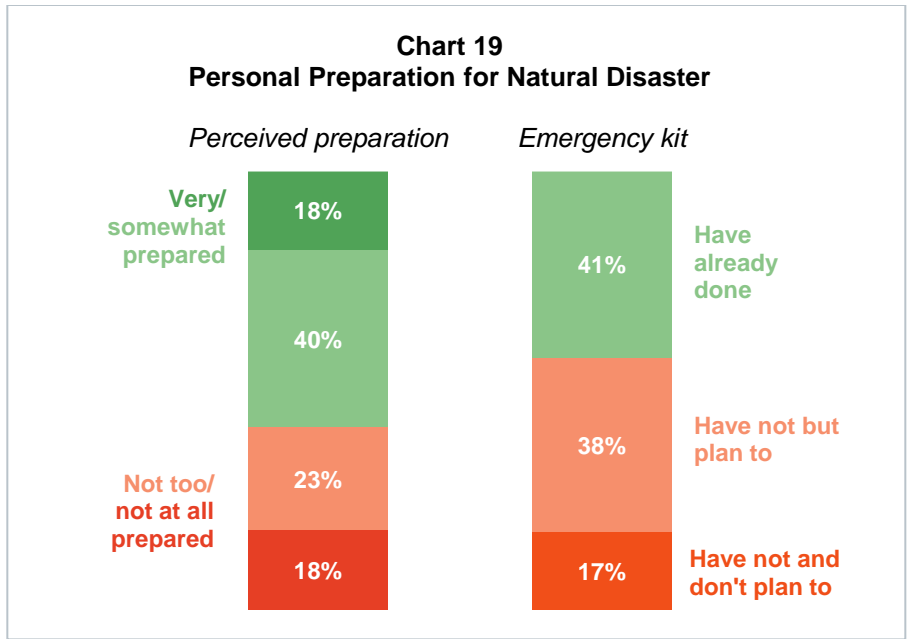
Source: DHM Research, September 2019

Most residents have not prepared an emergency kit for their household.

Four in ten residents have already made an emergency kit with basic items like food, water, and first aid supplies. Another four in ten say they plan to make a kit but haven’t done so yet.

⁴ For comparison, in 2015 DHM Research asked Oregon residents if their community was prepared or not for a major earthquake. At the time, 43% said their community was very (5%) or somewhat (38%) prepared. The same survey asked if they were personally prepared for a major earthquake. 63% said that they were very (12%) or somewhat prepared (51%).

In a 2017 survey of Portland residents, 52% said that they were very (14%) or somewhat (38%) prepared for natural disaster or emergency that left their household without electricity for two weeks.



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

Women (32%), young people (25%), people of color (26%), and renters (25%) are least likely to have already put together an emergency kit for their household. Residents with a high school degree or less are most likely to say they have not made a kit and do not plan to.⁵

3.7 Communication

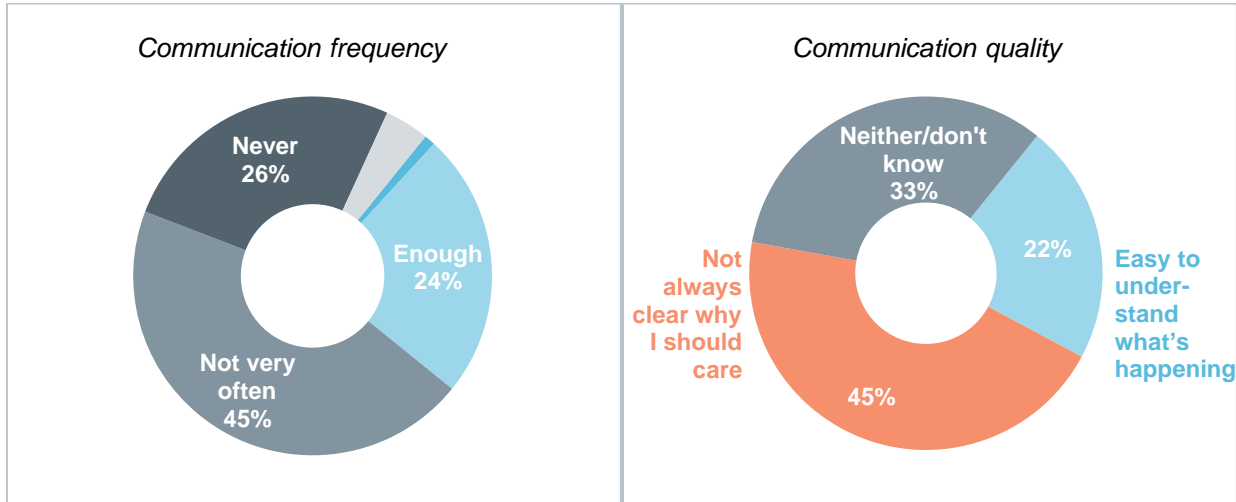
Many residents do not hear directly from the City very often.

About a quarter of residents say they hear from the City “enough so that I know what I need to know.” About seven in ten say the City communicates with them “not very often” (45%) or “never” (26%).

Asked about their opinion of the information they get from the City, about two in ten say the information makes it “easy to understand what’s happening,” while a plurality say it is “not always clear why I should care about the topic”.

⁵ A similar question asked in a 2016 survey of Portland residents that found 52% had made an emergency kit, 22% did not but planned to put one together, and 25% had no kit and no plan.

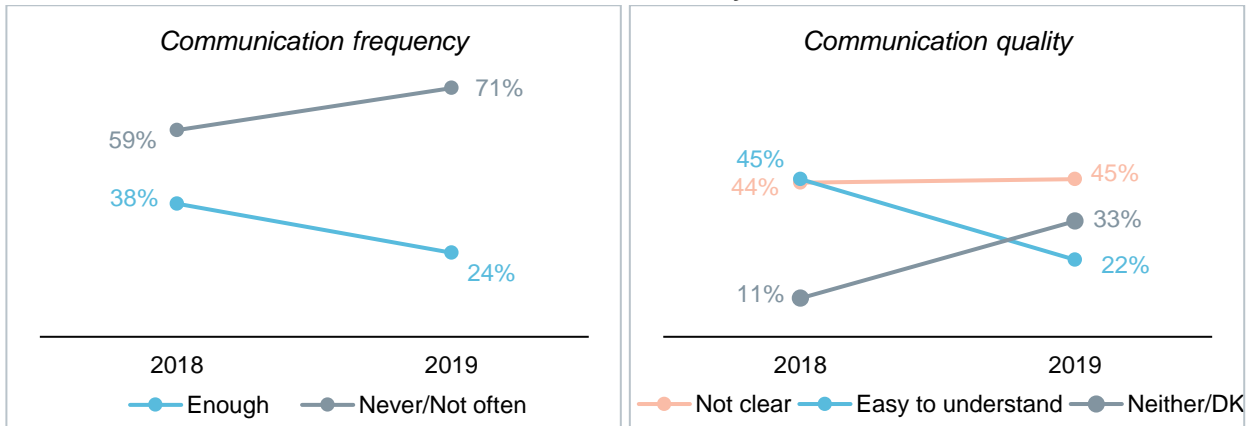
Chart 20
Communications from the City



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

These questions were first asked in 2018. Compared to last year, more residents say they “never” hear from the City (15-point increase). At the same time, fewer feel the information they get from the city is easy to understand, and more don’t know what they think about the quality of information they receive.

Chart 21
Communications from the City Over Time



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

NAV/other residents are satisfied with how much they hear enough from the City (15%) compared to both Democrats (32%) and Republicans (22%). People younger than 35 and renters report hearing from the City less and are also less satisfied with the information they receive.

Residents report learning about *city events, projects, and news* mainly from media sources (39%), social media (23%), or the Internet (14%). Fewer mention hearing directly from the City, with 5% mentioning mailers and 2% saying the City website is a source of information.

Table 2
How have you learned about city events, projects, and news?



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

Compared to 2018, residents are more likely to learn about what is happening in the city from social media (13-point increase) and media sources (13-point increase). Older people more often get information from news sources, while younger people are more likely to rely on social media and the Internet.

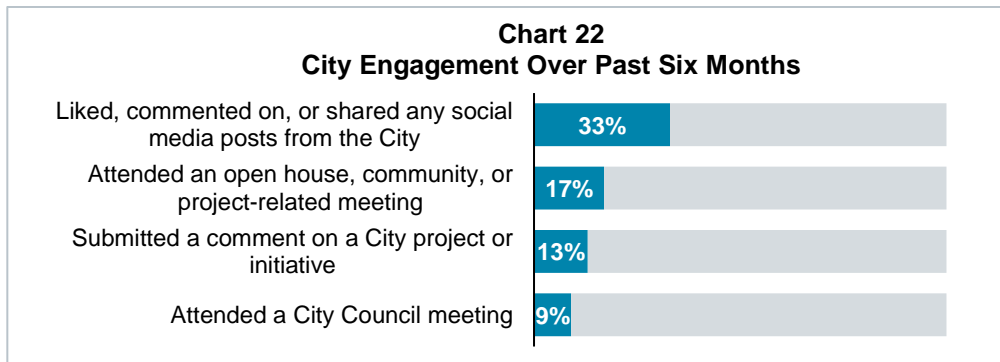
Lack of information was a major theme in the focus groups conducted earlier this year. Participants had limited awareness of issues such as the City’s budget, and many said that they don’t follow the news closely enough to be informed. Some requested that the City be more proactive in informing residents of what is happening.

“I think people need to be better educated what the needs are, where money goes, what services are covered.” —Focus group participant, July 2019

Most residents are not engaged in how the City is run.

About a third of Salem residents report having interacted with *social media posts from the City* (33%) in the last six months. People younger than 35 are most likely to have done so (48%).

Fewer than one in five residents (17%) report having *attended an open house, community, or project-related meeting* (17%) or *submitted a comment on a City project or initiative* (13%). About one in ten (9%) say they have *attended a City Council meeting*. People with higher incomes and higher levels of education more often attend open houses and meetings.



Source: DHM Research, September 2019

Democrats are again most engaged with City government, while NAV/other residents are least likely to have participated. For instance, 21% of Democrats have submitted a comment on a City project, while 8% of NAV/other residents and 12% of Republicans have done so. NAV/other residents are least likely to have engaged with the City on social media, despite being disproportionately young compared to either major party.

These measures saw no major changes from 2018.

**City of Salem Community Satisfaction Survey
Salem Residents
September 4–9, 2019**

**N=459; margin of error ±4.6%
20 minutes
DHM Research
Project #00881**

Hello, my name is _____ from [name of fielding house]. I have some questions about your community (specify if possible).

As needed:

- We are not trying to sell you anything.
- The survey should only take a few minutes and I think you will find the questions interesting.
- Your answers are strictly confidential.

WARM UP & GENERAL MOOD

1. All in all, would you say things in Salem are headed in the right direction, or are things off on the wrong track?

Response category	2019 n=459	2018 n=450	2017 n=457	2016 n=450
Right direction	37%	53%	62%	66%
Wrong track	42%	31%	25%	21%
[Don't read] Don't know	20%	16%	13%	13%

2. What is the most important issue that you would like City of Salem elected officials to do something about? **[Open]**

Response category	2019	2018	2017	Dec. 2016	Mar. 2016
Homelessness, poverty	41%	33%	26%	17%	7%
Roads, potholes, infrastructure	7%	7%	5%	11%	12%
Traffic, congestion	6%	3%	8%	4%	7%
Additional bridge	5%	4%	5%	3%	3%
Crime, drugs	4%	4%	1%	5%	5%
Affordable housing	3%	2%	7%	4%	1%
Environment	3%	2%	1%	2%	2%
Immigration, refugees	3%	2%	--	1%	1%
Education, funding, class sizes	3%	4%	5%	10%	5%
Police enforcement, traffic violations	2%	1%	2%	3%	5%
High taxes, property taxes	2%	2%	5%	1%	4%
Promote businesses, downtown development	2%	<1%	1%	3%	3%

Response category	2019	2018	2017	Dec. 2016	Mar. 2016
Budget, spending	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%
None, nothing	2%	6%	4%	7%	9%
All other responses	1% or less	2% or less	4% or less	5% or less	7% or less
Don't know	4%	6%	5%	6%	1%

SATISFACTION WITH EXISTING SERVICES

3. The City of Salem provides many services and facilities: police and fire protection, ambulance services, street maintenance, parks and recreation, water and sewer and more. In general, how satisfied are you with the services provided by the City of Salem: very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not too satisfied, or not at all satisfied?

Response category	2019	2018	2017	2016
Very satisfied	31%	41%	39%	44%
Somewhat satisfied	56%	50%	51%	48%
Not too satisfied	8%	4%	9%	5%
Not at all satisfied	6%	4%	1%	3%
[Don't read] Don't know	<1%	1%	0%	1%

Now, I will read to you a list of community services in Salem. For each, please tell me if you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not too satisfied, or not at all satisfied. **[Rotate Q4–Q20]**

Response Category		Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not too satisfied	Not at all satisfied	Don't know
4. Police, fire, ambulance, and 911 service						
	2019	51%	33%	5%	6%	4%
	2018	65%	26%	3%	1%	5%
	2017	49%	39%	7%	1%	3%
	2016	58%	30%	4%	4%	5%
5. Maintenance of city streets, sidewalks and bridges						
	2019	12%	42%	24%	17%	5%
	2018	21%	46%	18%	14%	1%
	2017	16%	45%	29%	9%	1%
	2016	23%	47%	18%	11%	1%
6. Salem public library						
	2019	52%	22%	5%	2%	19%
	2018	55%	23%	3%	1%	16%
	2017	40%	36%	3%	2%	18%
	2016	54%	31%	4%	2%	9%
7. Parks and recreation						
	2019	41%	38%	10%	3%	9%
	2018	49%	37%	7%	3%	4%
	2017	38%	43%	7%	5%	7%
	2016	48%	37%	8%	4%	3%

Response Category	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not too satisfied	Not at all satisfied	Don't know
8. Water, sewer and stormwater services					
2019	38%	37%	11%	8%	6%
2018	32%	45%	13%	7%	3%
2017	39%	40%	13%	5%	3%
2016	38%	41%	10%	7%	4%
9. Ensuring that residents of all income levels have access to affordable housing					
2019	7%	20%	32%	30%	11%
2018	14%	34%	25%	15%	12%
2017	6%	23%	36%	18%	16%
2016	14%	27%	24%	16%	18%
10. Municipal court					
2019	14%	31%	12%	2%	41%
2018	26%	31%	4%	4%	36%
2017	15%	38%	6%	3%	38%
2016	24%	30%	5%	3%	37%
11. City planning and development review					
2019	10%	33%	16%	10%	31%
2018	21%	32%	18%	6%	23%
2017	11%	37%	18%	8%	25%
2016	14%	35%	16%	9%	26%
12. Parking structures and on-street parking near local business					
2019	18%	47%	20%	9%	6%
2018	25%	39%	23%	8%	5%
2017	20%	47%	17%	9%	7%
2016	24%	48%	17%	8%	2%
13. Enforcement of city codes for issues such as noise, yard upkeep, and other nuisances					
2019	20%	40%	19%	10%	10%
2018	30%	40%	15%	9%	6%
2017	23%	44%	17%	6%	9%
2016	32%	38%	11%	8%	11%
14. Street lighting					
2019	30%	45%	13%	7%	5%
2018	41%	44%	9%	4%	3%
2017	35%	43%	15%	4%	2%
2016	36%	41%	12%	8%	2%
15. Growing job opportunities in the local economy					
2019	14%	41%	20%	12%	13%
2018	28%	45%	10%	3%	14%
2017	14%	48%	16%	9%	13%
2016	16%	41%	20%	8%	14%
16. Protecting our natural environment					
2019	23%	47%	14%	9%	6%
2018	26%	51%	9%	5%	10%
2017	28%	52%	7%	3%	10%
2016	35%	42%	13%	4%	7%

Response Category		Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not too satisfied	Not at all satisfied	Don't know
17. Supporting arts and culture						
	2019	32%	36%	10%	3%	18%
	2018	38%	43%	5%	4%	11%
	2017	30%	47%	6%	3%	14%
	2016	34%	39%	10%	2%	15%
18. ***Coordinating social services to serve needs of homeless in our community						
	2019	5%	15%	30%	40%	11%
	2018	7%	24%	35%	25%	9%
	2017	4%	24%	31%	23%	17%
19. Safety for people walking in Salem						
	2019	20%	38%	24%	14%	3%
20. Safety for people biking in Salem						
	2019	24%	32%	17%	14%	13%

21. I just read a list of services to you. What one service would you say is most in need of improvement?

[Open]

Response category	2019	2018	2017	2016
Homelessness	27%	31%	21%	2%*
Ensuring residents have access to affordable housing	13%	10%	12%	14%
Maintenance of streets, sidewalks, and bridges	12%	17%	21%	28%
Police, fire, ambulance, and 911 service	7%	2%	3%	7%
City planning and development review	4%	2%	3%	4%
Parking structures and on-street parking	3%	2%	4%	5%
Safety for people walking in Salem	3%	--	--	--
Safety for people biking in Salem	3%	--	--	--
Budget, spending	3%	--	--	--
Enforcement of city code for nuisances	2%	2%	<1%	2%
Social services, general	2%	--	2%	--
Street lighting	2%	4%	2%	5%
All of them	2%	1%	--	--
Water, sewer, stormwater	2%	7%	4%	5%
None, nothing	2%	1%	3%	4%
All other responses	2% or less	4% or less	6% or less	5 or less
Don't know, no answer	6%	9%	7%	6%

*Homelessness was not included in the 2016 survey

22. Would you be willing to pay more in local taxes or fees if you knew that service was certain to improve?

Response category	n=459	2018	2017	2016
Yes	51%	65%	55%	62%
No	35%	29%	37%	32%
[Don't read] Don't know	14%	6%	8%	6%

Thank you. Now, please tell me if doing the following activities in Salem is very easy, somewhat easy, somewhat difficult, or very difficult. If an activity doesn't apply to you, just let me know. **[Randomize Q23–Q31]**

Response Category	Very easy	Somewhat easy	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Doesn't apply
23. Driving from one side of the city to the other during peak traffic hours					
2019	3%	13%	28%	45%	11%
2018	5%	21%	34%	36%	5%
2017	3%	14%	45%	33%	5%
2016	7%	16%	31%	40%	6%
24. Walking in Salem					
2019	30%	32%	19%	12%	8%
25. Biking in Salem					
2019	20%	23%	16%	11%	29%
Walking or biking in Salem					
2018	48%	26%	12%	3%	11%
2017	31%	40%	15%	5%	9%
2016	40%	33%	13%	6%	9%
26. Doing business with the City, such as getting a permit or paying a bill					
2019	29%	26%	17%	8%	21%
2018	40%	30%	9%	7%	14%
2017	30%	36%	12%	3%	18%
2016	31%	32%	12%	5%	19%
27. Finding space for community events					
2019	17%	26%	20%	3%	35%
2018	20%	31%	10%	2%	38%
2017	20%	30%	15%	1%	35%
2016	24%	33%	9%	5%	30%
28. Finding information about city planning and how decisions are made					
2019	7%	27%	25%	13%	27%
2018	21%	28%	19%	7%	26%
2017	14%	26%	21%	6%	33%
2016	14%	25%	20%	8%	33%
29. Having your concerns heard by city leaders					
2019	8%	18%	28%	17%	29%
2018	12%	23%	14%	11%	40%
2017	14%	22%	24%	10%	29%
2016	15%	25%	17%	10%	34%
30. Finding the information you need to resolve a city issue					
2019	13%	27%	25%	12%	24%
2018	17%	33%	20%	7%	22%
2017	14%	30%	26%	7%	24%
2016	18%	31%	17%	9%	25%

Response Category	Very easy	Somewhat easy	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Doesn't apply
31. Operating a business					
2019	8%	12%	14%	5%	60%
2018	9%	21%	8%	7%	55%
2017	6%	16%	14%	4%	61%
2016	7%	16%	13%	5%	59%

RESOURCES FOR CITY SERVICES

32. The City of Salem funds basic services with taxpayer dollars and fees for services. In general, how satisfied are you with the value received for your taxes and fees paid? Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not too satisfied, or not at all satisfied?

Response category	2019	2018	2017	2016
Very satisfied	8%	13%	12%	17%
Somewhat satisfied	48%	57%	56%	54%
Not too satisfied	18%	18%	22%	17%
Not at all satisfied	16%	10%	8%	7%
[Don't read] Don't know	9%	3%	2%	5%

33. Due to budget constraints, the City of Salem may no longer be able to provide the same level of service without more revenue. Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion? **[Rotate statements A and B]**

Response category	2019	2018	2017	2016
A. The City of Salem should raise taxes or fees and increase funding for city programs and services.	40%	45%	44%	44%
B. The City of Salem should keep tax rates or fees at their current levels and reduce programs and services.	40%	43%	39%	42%
[Don't read] Don't know	20%	13%	17%	13%

34. To pay for city services, would you prefer that: **[Rotate statements A and B]**

Response category	2019	2018	2017	2016
A. All residents pay equally	37%	46%	37%	43%
B. Those who use services more pay more	46%	48%	49%	46%
[Don't read] None of these	7%	2%	8%	6%
[Don't read] Don't know	10%	5%	7%	5%

EQUITY ISSUES

35. Thinking about the part of Salem where you live, do you feel your area receives its fair share of city services? **[Yes/No; wait, ask strongly/somewhat]**

Response category	2019	2018	2017	2016
Yes, strongly	23%	42%	30%	46%
Yes, somewhat	42%	38%	43%	37%
No, somewhat	13%	9%	15%	7%
No, strongly	13%	10%	7%	8%
[Don't read] Don't know	8%	2%	5%	2%

36. Thinking about the City of Salem as a whole, do you think city services are distributed fairly? **[Yes/No; wait, ask strongly/somewhat]**

Response category	2019	2018	2017	2016
Yes, strongly	14%	15%	14%	27%
Yes, somewhat	26%	34%	36%	28%
No, somewhat	23%	17%	22%	15%
No, strongly	19%	20%	14%	17%
[Don't read] Don't know	18%	15%	14%	14%

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The next few questions are about preparing for a natural disaster.

37. If there were a major natural disaster in Salem today, would you say that the City government is very prepared, somewhat prepared, not too prepared, or not at all prepared?

Response category	2019
Very prepared	6%
Somewhat prepared	27%
Not too prepared	25%
Not at all prepared	24%
[Don't read] Don't know	17%

38. If there were a major natural disaster in the Salem area today, would you say that you personally are very prepared, somewhat prepared, not too prepared, not at all prepared?

Response category	2019
Very prepared	18%
Somewhat prepared	40%
Not too prepared	23%
Not at all prepared	18%
[Don't read] Don't know	1%

39. Let me know whether you have already done, haven't done yet but have plans to do, or have not done and do not have plans to make an emergency kit for your household with basic items like food, water, a battery-powered radio, a flashlight and first-aid kit.

Response category	2019
Have already done	41%
Have not done yet but have plans to	38%
Have not done and do not plan to	17%
[Don't read] Don't know	4%

COMMUNICATION

These next questions are about how the City of Salem communicates with residents of the community.

40. How frequently does the City of Salem communicate with you? Would you say:

Response category	2019	2018
Too frequently	1%	1%
Enough so that I know what I need to know	24%	38%
Not very often	45%	48%
Never	26%	11%
[Don't read] Don't know	4%	3%

41. In the past six months, how have you learned about city events, projects and news? **[Open] [Provide pre-coded list]**

Response category	2019	2018
In the newspaper or media*	39%	39%
Social media, Facebook, Twitter, Etc.	23%	18%
Internet, online	14%	17%
Word of mouth	8%	9%
Mail (general)	--	8%
Flyers, mailers	5%	2%
Email, general mention	2%	--
City website	2%	6%
None, nothing	16%	3%
All other response	1% or less	13% or less
Don't know	1%	13%

*2018 combines "in the newspaper or media" with "television/news broadcast"

In the past six months which of the following have you done? **[Randomize]**

Response category	Yes	No	Don't know	
42. Submitted a comment on a City project or initiative				
	2019	13%	82%	5%
	2018	16%	84%	<1%
43. Liked, commented on, or shared any social media posts from the City				
	2019	33%	60%	6%
	2018	30%	69%	<1%
44. Attended a City Council meeting				
	2019	9%	86%	5%
	2018	9%	91%	--

Response category	Yes	No	Don't know	
45. Attended an open house, community, or project-related meeting				
	2019	17%	80%	3%
	2018	18%	81%	1%

46. Which of the following is closer to your opinion about the quality of information you receive from the City? **[Rotate statements]**

Response category	2019	2018
A. It's easy to understand what's happening and what I can do about it.	22%	45%
B. It's not always clear why I should care about the topic.	45%	44%
[Don't read] Neither	22%	7%
[Don't read] Don't know	11%	4%

DEMOGRAPHICS

47. Do you describe your gender as:

Response category	2019
Male	50%
Female	49%
Non-binary or gender non-conforming	--
[Don't read] Don't know	--
[Don't read] Refused/Missing	1%

Observed gender [If Q47=3, 98, 99 THEN interviewer code by observation] Observe and record as separate A/B variable for Male or Female. Include as part of overall Male/Female quotas.

Response category	2019
Male	50%
Female	50%

48. What is your age?

Response category	2019
18–24	10%
25–34	24%
35–54	33%
55–64	10%
65+	23%
[Don't read] Refused	1%

49. Area of the city **[From sample]**

Response category	2019
West	18%
North/northeast	35%
South	47%
[Don't read] Refused	--

50. In what area of the city do you live? **[Read list]**

Response category	2019
North	25%
South	41%
East	7%
West	20%
[Don't read] Refused	6%

51. What is your political party?

Response category	2019
Democrat	31%
Republican	22%
Independent	15%
Other	4%
Non-affiliated	8%
I am not registered to vote	3%
[Don't read] Refused	17%

52. How many years have you lived in Salem?

Response category	2019
0–5 years	16%
6–10 years	12%
More than 10 years	71%
[Don't read] Refused	2%

53. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

Response category	2019
Less than high school	4%
High school diploma/GED	35%
Some college	36%
College degree	16%
Graduate/professional school	9%
[Don't read] Refused	1%

54. Which category best describes your 2018 gross household income, before taxes? Remember to include everyone living in your household. Your best estimate will do.

Response category	2019
Less than \$25,000	9%
\$25,000 to less than \$50,000	23%
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	17%
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	14%
\$100,000 to less than \$150,000	11%
\$150,000 or more	5%
[Don't read] Refused	21%

55. Which of the following best describes your race or ethnicity? **[Allow for multiple responses]**

Response category	2019
African American/Black	2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%
Hispanic/Latino	10%
Native American/American Indian	5%
White/Caucasian	79%
Other	3%
[Don't read] Refused	7%

56. Do you rent or own your home?

Response category	2019
Rent	34%
Own	58%
Something else	5%
[Don't read] Refused	3%

57. Survey language

Response category	2019
English	99%
Spanish	1%