

August 2021

City of Salem

Community Satisfaction Survey



Prepared by **DHM Research**

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Introduction & Methodology

1

From August 12 to 16, 2021, DHM Research conducted a survey of Salem residents. The purpose of the survey was to assess residents' satisfaction with City services and communications; to gauge emergency preparedness; and to weigh opinions related to fairness in the City of Salem. To track changes in opinion, the survey benchmarked many questions from previous surveys.

Research Methodology: The survey consisted of 400 Salem residents and took approximately 16 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 list¹ 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 match the population demographics of the city's adult population.

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. The margin of error for this survey is $\pm 4.9\%$.

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.

¹ 94% of eligible residents were registered to vote in the Oregon 2020 general election.

Summary & Observations

2

Optimism about the direction of the City of Salem continues to decline.

Except in 2020, when public sentiment appeared to have stabilized, there has been a steady decline in optimism in the City, from 66% of residents who said Salem was headed in the right direction in 2016, to 37% in 2019, to 23% in 2021. As a corollary, those who say Salem is off on the wrong track has increased from 21% in 2016, to 42% in 2019, to 65% in 2021.

A majority (57%) say the current state of affairs can be attributed to a combination of both City actions and circumstances beyond the City's control, with much of the remainder (34%) pointing to actions taken by the City.

Salem is not alone in the decline in community sentiment. For example, in DHM Research statewide surveys the percentage of Oregonians saying the state is heading in the right direction has fallen about 20-points in the last five years.

Homelessness is the most important issue that residents want the City of Salem to address.

The percentage of residents who identify homelessness as the most important issue has climbed steadily: from just 7% in 2016, to 33% in 2018, to 49% in 2020, to 58% in 2021. A majority of residents now see it as the most important issue the City should do something about. Homelessness overshadows all other concerns, with COVID-19 (8%) and general concerns about government and politics (4%) receiving the next biggest mentions.

Salem is not the only community facing these challenges. Homelessness had been a top concern in local and state surveys conducted by DHM Research during the last several years, with concerns about homelessness high in the city of Portland and the broader Portland metro region, the I-5 Corridor to Eugene, and along the coast.

Despite a drop of overall positive sentiment, residents say they continue to be satisfied with City services overall, including many essential services such as public safety, water, and parks.

Opinion of City services in general remains positive, with seven in ten residents (70%) saying they are satisfied. While this represents a decline from 2020—when 86% of residents reported overall satisfaction with City services—a strong majority remain satisfied. Many specific services also continue to receive positive ratings, especially core services such as fire and emergency services, police, parks, and water and stormwater.

Satisfaction with other services residents receive from the City has decreased significantly, with positive perceptions of road maintenance and library services experiencing the greatest decline.

The most precipitous declines in satisfaction are in maintenance of city streets, sidewalks, and bridges; and the Salem public library. Between 2019 and 2020, maintenance enjoyed a big boost in satisfaction (from 54% to 68%), but satisfaction declined to 48% in 2021. Satisfaction with the Salem public library experienced a decline during the same period, from 74% in 2019, to 69% in 2020, to 51% in 2021. While

declining satisfaction with the library is likely attributed to COVID-19 restrictions, decreased satisfaction with maintenance of roads is harder to explain.

Service areas with the lowest levels of satisfaction—consistent with previous surveys—include the provision of affordable housing (26%) and the coordination of social services to serve the needs of homeless residents (16%).

Residents have an easy time performing activities such as walking and biking and conducting City business like getting a permit or paying a bill, but majorities say they are having an increasing difficult time conducting other tasks.

Majorities continue to say they have an easy time completing basic tasks in the City, such as walking and biking, or conducting business with the City such as obtaining a permit or paying a bill. But when it comes to other activities—finding information to resolve City issues, finding information about City planning, operating a business, having concerns heard by City leaders, and driving across the City in rush hour—a growing majority say they are having a difficult time doing so.

Since 2019, those who say it is difficult to operate a business increased from 48% to 69%, likely an indication of the challenges faced by most businesses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the same time, the percentage of those who say it is difficult drive from one side of the City to the other during peak traffic hours decreased from 82% to 77%, but the challenges of navigating through the City remain high.

For the first time, a majority is unsatisfied with the value received for taxes and fees paid.

Nearly six in ten residents (56%) are unsatisfied with the value they receive for the taxes and fees they pay. Dissatisfaction rose significantly, with 38% reporting dissatisfaction in 2020 and 56% reporting dissatisfaction in 2021. Levels of satisfaction appear to be shaped by political differences and age, with Democrats (57%) more satisfied with the value they receive for taxes and fees than non-affiliated voters (34%) and Republicans (25%). Older residents age 65+ (52%) are more satisfied than younger residents ages 19–64 (34%–39%).

Geographic inequities continue to diminish, but only one in two say residents of all identities and backgrounds are being treated fairly and with respect.

Perceptions of fairness about how resources are distributed across the City as a whole and across particular areas have decreased since 2016, but the trend appears to have leveled off since 2019. In contrast to previous years, when residents in West Salem were more skeptical of the equitable distribution of services across the City as a whole, there are now no significant differences among residents regarding how services are distributed across the City.

Only one in two residents (50%) believe Salem residents of all identities and backgrounds are treated fairly and with respect—a drop of 5 percentage points since 2020. Fewer residents of color—about four in ten (43%)—believe everyone is treated fairly and respectfully. Most residents (83%) believe it is the responsibility of all residents to ensure that the community is welcoming to everyone.

A majority of residents say they are prepared for a natural disaster.

Salem residents appear to be aiming for greater household resilience in the face of emergencies. The percentage of residents who say they are prepared for a natural disaster has increased from 58% in 2019, to 66% in 2020, to 69% in 2021—an increase of 11 percentage points. The percentage of residents who report they have prepared an emergency kit has increased from 41% in 2019, to 54% in 2020, to 61% in 2021—an increase of 20 percentage points.

While those with incomes above \$150k (77%) are most likely to say they have prepared an emergency kit, there is evidence to suggest that traditionally more vulnerable groups are growing increasingly prepared as well. Between 2019 and 2020 there have been increases in reported levels of emergency kit preparedness among women, young people ages 18–29, people of color, residents with incomes under \$50k, and renters.

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

Only one in four (24%) residents feel the information they get from the City is easy to understand and relevant. This perception has remained roughly consistent since 2019, when 22% of residents shared the same view, suggesting there is plenty of room for improvement.

Other findings suggest greater challenges when it comes to engaging with the City. 64% of residents now say it is “difficult” to find the information they need to resolve a city issue, compared to 39% last year. Residents also appear increasingly disconnected from their City government, with 75% of residents saying it is difficult to have their concerns heard by City leaders, compared to 59% last year. Again, the challenges of COVID-19 are likely contributing to this decline.

Key Findings

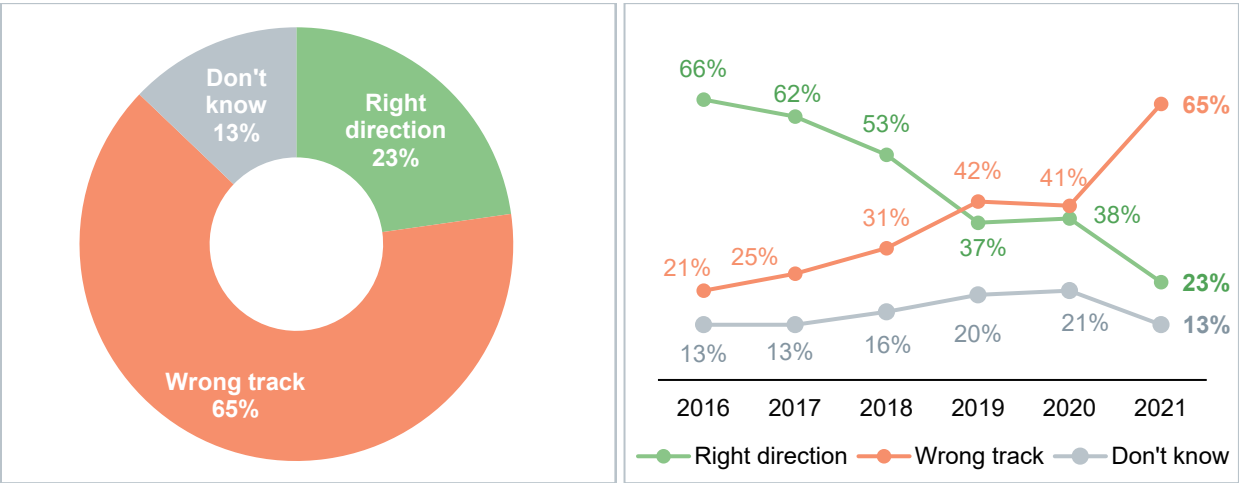
The following report describes the results of a survey of Salem residents conducted in August 2021. Residents were asked about their general mood, satisfaction with City services, equity issues, emergency preparedness, and communications. Where possible, results are benchmarked to prior surveys of Salem residents conducted by DHM Research. Full question wording can be found in the Appendix.

3.1 General mood

Salem residents are feeling pessimistic about the City.

Two in three Salem residents now say the City is off on the wrong track (65%). Between 2016 and 2019 there had been a steady downward trend in general mood among Salem residents. In 2020 the downward trend appeared to have stabilized, with residents split between saying Salem is headed in the right direction (38%) or that things are off on the wrong track (41%). But in 2021 the downward trend in public sentiment intensified, with only one in four residents saying the City is headed in the right direction (23%).

Chart 1
City of Salem Direction



Source: DHM Research, August 2021

Democrats (36%) and those who do not identify with a major party (21%) are more likely to say the City is headed in the right direction, while Republicans are less likely (8%).

Older residents age 65+ (35%) are also relatively more positive than younger residents ages 18–64 (19–21%), a somewhat surprising finding given broader patterns in state and national public opinion showing that younger people tend to be more neutral or positive toward government.

Residents point to a combination of City actions and outside circumstances as responsible for the direction of the City but lean toward emphasizing actions the City has taken.

Asked if the direction of the City is due to actions the City has taken, circumstances outside the City's control, or some combination of both, a majority (57%) say some combination of both, with much of the remainder (34%) pointing to actions that the City has taken. Few residents (6%) point simply to circumstances beyond the City's control.

Among those who say the City is on the right track, two thirds (66%) say this is both on account of actions that the City has taken as well as circumstances outside the City's control. Among the remainder, more residents credit actions that the City has taken (15%) than outside circumstances (10%).

And of those who say Salem is headed in the wrong direction, about half (53%) say this is also due to both City actions and outside circumstances. Among the remainder, more residents blame City actions (40%) than external circumstances (5%).

Homelessness remains at the top of residents' minds and its importance as an issue continues to grow.

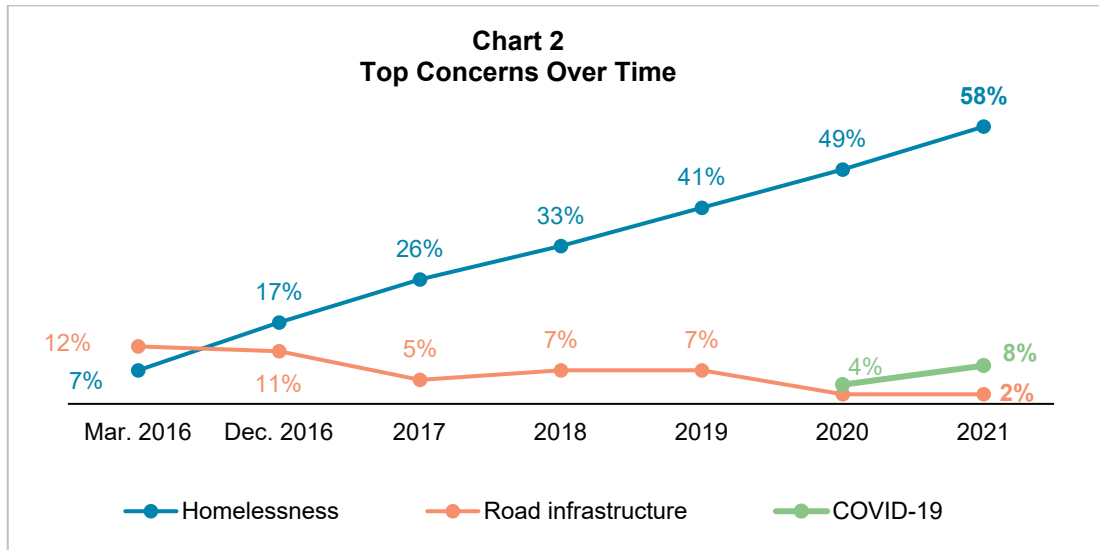
Asked in an open-ended question what issue they would like City officials to do something about, more than half of Salem's residents (58%) mentioned homelessness. For perspective, the second most common concern—COVID-19—makes up only 8% of mentions.

Table 1
Most Important Issue in Salem



Source: DHM Research, August 2021

Concern about homelessness has climbed steadily. It has gone from just 7% in 2016, to 33% in 2018, to 49% in 2020, to 58% in 2021. While 7% of residents mentioned it as a major concern in 2016—similar to the proportion who were worried about transportation infrastructure and education funding at the time—homelessness now casts a much larger and growing shadow over any other concern.



Source: DHM Research, August 2021

Homelessness remains the top concern for every demographic group. The groups most concerned about homelessness include residents in households earning more than \$150,000 (69% named as top issue), Republicans (65%), residents of West Salem (63%), and younger residents ages 18–29 (62%).

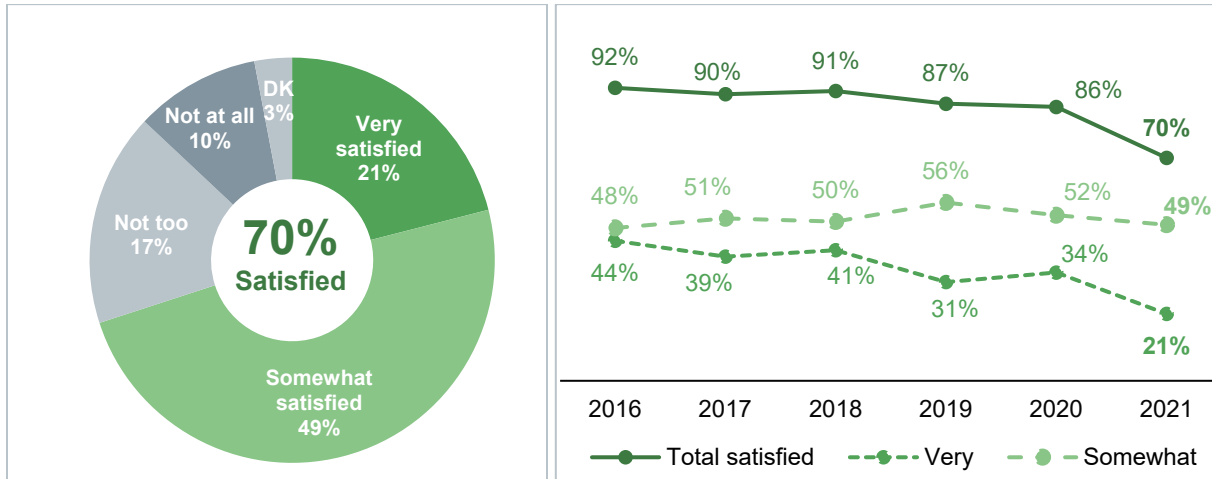
Homelessness also appears to be a reason that residents feel the City is on the wrong track. Among those who feel negative about the City, 56% cite homelessness as the top issue.

The issue of COVID-19, including mask mandates and vaccinations, is mentioned more frequently by residents with incomes below \$50k (14%), Republicans (11%), and residents who think the City is on the wrong track (11%).

Despite the decline in public mood, most residents are satisfied with City services overall.

When Salem residents are asked how satisfied they are with City services overall, seven in ten (70%) say they are satisfied, including about two in ten (21%) who say they are “very” satisfied. While this represents a decline in overall satisfaction from 2020, when nearly nine in ten (86%) were satisfied—including three in ten (34%) were “very satisfied”—general satisfaction remains high.

Chart 3
Satisfaction with City Services

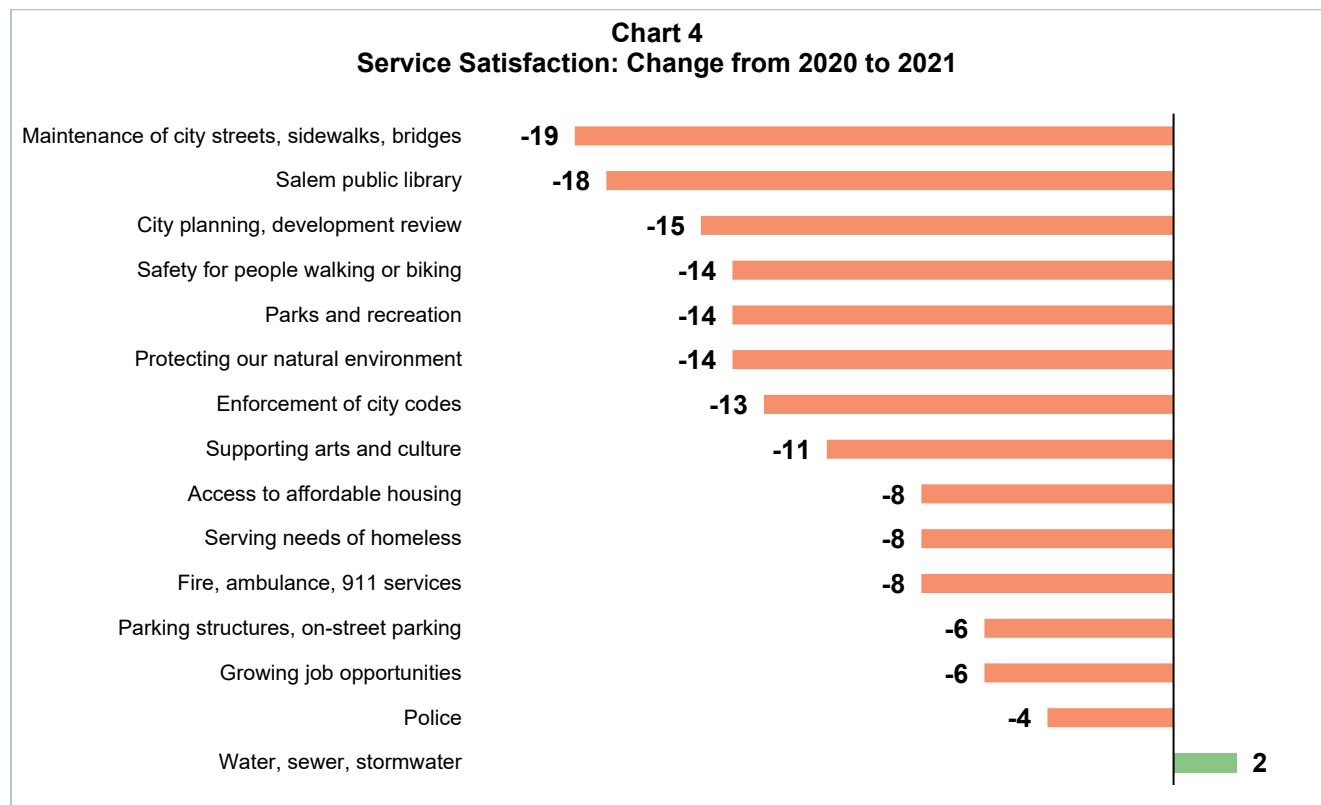


Source: DHM Research, August 2021

Majorities of every demographic group are satisfied with the overall provision of services, with the highest satisfaction among residents age 65+ (81%) and Democrats (80%).

There has been a general decline in satisfaction with nearly every specific City service.

The 16-point drop in overall satisfaction with City services between 2020 and 2021 (from 86% to 70%) is roughly consistent with the drop in satisfaction with each specific City service.



Source: DHM Research, August 2021

The biggest drops in satisfaction between 2020 and 2021 are with *maintenance of City streets, sidewalks, and bridges* (19 points) and the *Salem public library* (18 points).

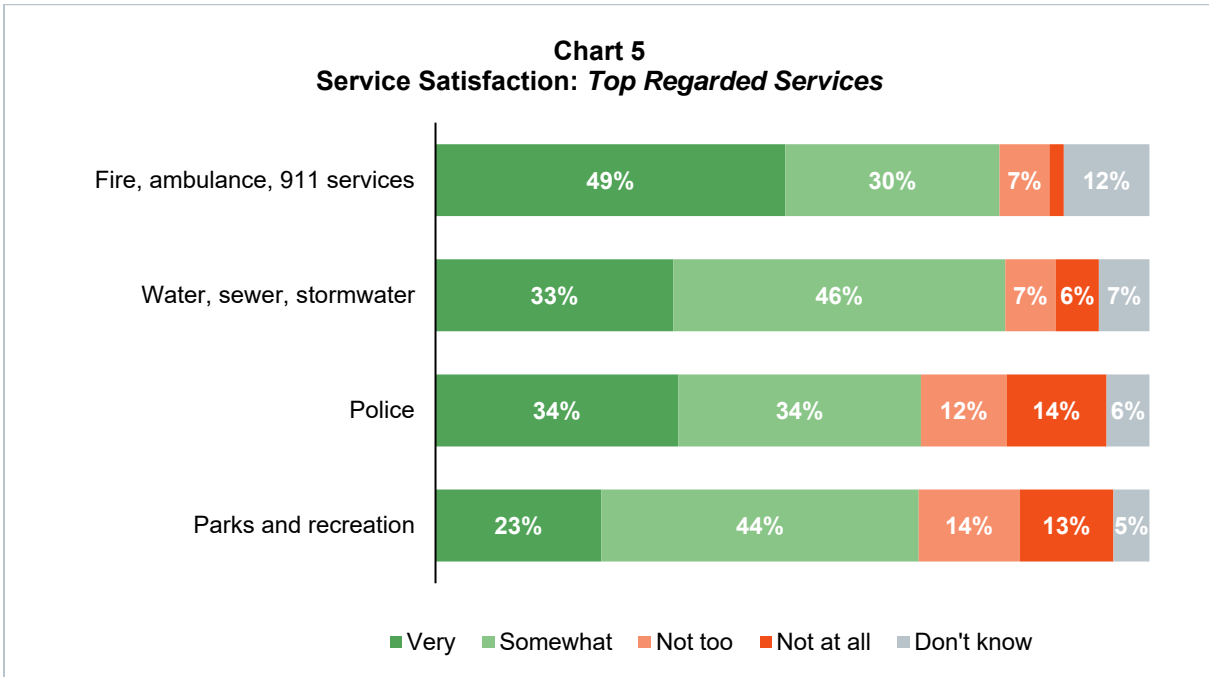
Lesser, though significant declines in satisfaction during this period are with *City planning and development review* (15 points), *safety for people walking and biking* (14 points), *parks and recreation* (14 points), *protecting the natural environment* (14 points), *enforcement of City codes* (13 points), and *supporting arts and culture* (11 points).

More modest declines in satisfaction over the same period occurred in *access to affordable housing* (8 points), *serving needs of homeless* (8 points), *fire, ambulance, 911 services* (8 points), *parking structures, on street parking* (6 points), *growing job opportunities* (6 points), and *police* (4 points).

The only area where satisfaction increased was with *water, sewer, stormwater services* (2 points).

Despite an overall drop in satisfaction with specific City services, essential services—including public safety—remain well regarded by Salem residents.

Strong majorities have positive perceptions of many of the essential services with which they are familiar. Nearly nine in ten residents are “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with Salem’s *fire, ambulance, and 911 services* (79%). Residents also have positive impressions of *water, sewer, and stormwater services* (79%); *police* (68%), and *parks and recreation* (67%).



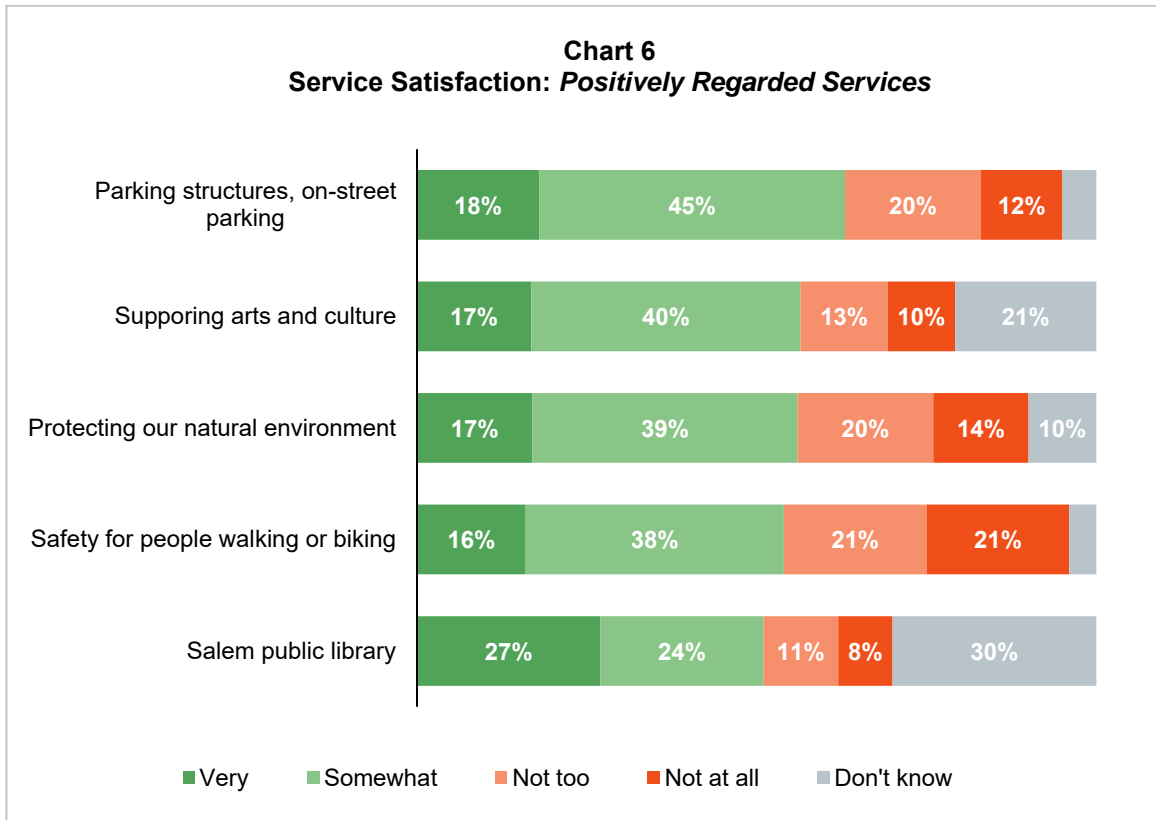
Source: DHM Research, August 2021

While a majority of all demographic and area groups are satisfied with police services, there are significant differences in levels of satisfaction among such groups. Older residents ages 65+ (79%) and younger residents ages 18–29 (73%) are more satisfied than residents ages 30–44 (58%) and ages 45–64 (68%). Democrats (74%) and Republicans (70%) are both more satisfied than non-affiliated voters (62%).

In contrast to 2020, when white residents (77%) were more satisfied than people of color (54%), in 2021 there is no longer a statistically significant difference in satisfaction with police among whites (72%) and people of color (65%). Or put another way, satisfaction with the police increased this year among people of color.

While still positively regarded, resident satisfaction is softer for a suite of other core City services.

A majority of Salem residents are also satisfied with the following: *parking structures and on-street parking* (63%); *supporting arts and culture* (57%); *protecting the natural environment* (56%); *safety for people walking and biking* (54%); and the *Salem public library* (51%).

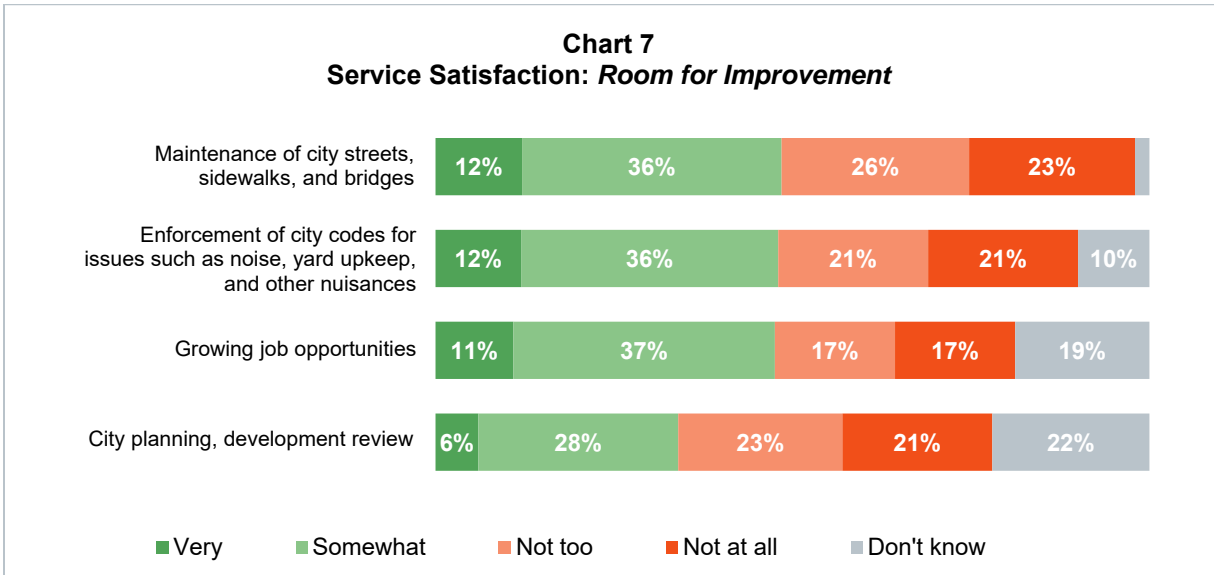


Between 2019 and 2021 satisfaction with parking structures and on-street parking near local businesses rose from 65% in 2019, to 69% in 2020, and then leveled off at 63% in 2021. Notably, however, residents who say they are “very satisfied” declined from 27% in 2020 to 18% in 2021.

Between 2019 and 2021, satisfaction with the Salem public library declined from 74% in 2019, to 69% in 2020, to 51% in 2021 a drop possibly attributed to reduced library services stemming from COVID-19 restrictions. While still positively regarded, the public library was more highly regarded prior to the pandemic restrictions.

Less than half of Salem residents are satisfied when it comes to street maintenance, code enforcement, job creation, and city planning.

Fewer than half of residents approve of Salem’s job performance in the area of *maintenance of city streets, sidewalks, and bridges* (48%), enforcement of city codes for issues such as noise, yard upkeep, and other nuisances (48%), and *growing job opportunities in the local economy* (48%). One in three are satisfied with *city planning and development review* (33%).



Between 2019 and 2021 satisfaction with maintenance of city streets, sidewalks, and bridges rose from 54% in 2019, to 68% in 2020, and then declined to 48% in 2021. 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. COVID-19 also likely affected opinions due to the decline in commuting in 2020 and the return to near pre-pandemic levels in 2021.

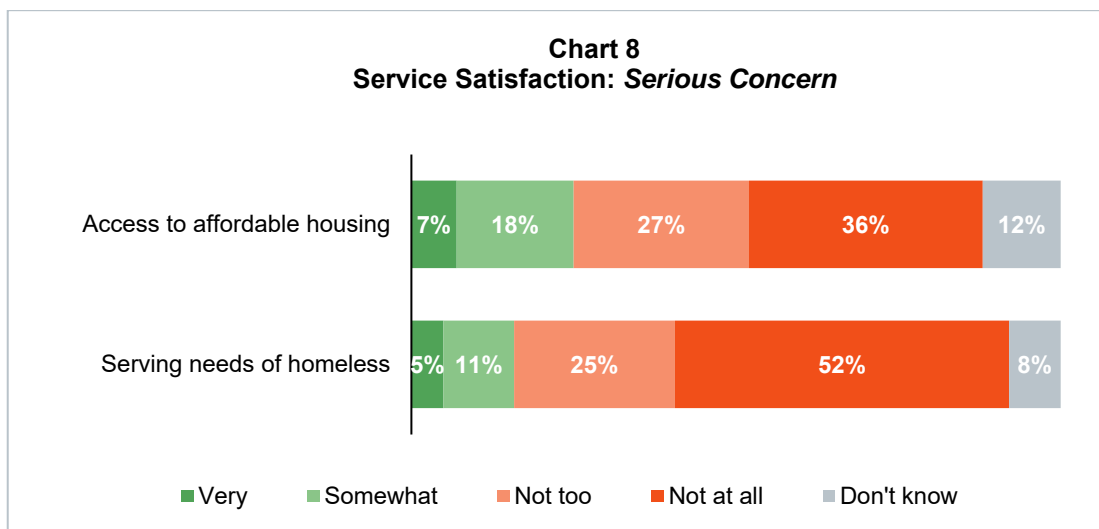
Satisfaction with job creation was high in 2017 (62%) and spiked in 2018 (73%) but fell in 2019 (55%). While it remained consistent in 2020 (54%), it fell again in 2021 (48%). The negative economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic likely helps explain more recent lower satisfaction in this area.

Satisfaction with City development review is impacted by roughly two in ten residents (22%) saying they don't know how to rate the City when it comes to this service.

Satisfaction with services to address housing affordability and homelessness remain low and have decreased in the last year.

Only one in four residents are satisfied with how well the City has ensured that *all residents have access to affordable housing* (26%), and less than one in five are satisfied with how it has *coordinated social services to serve the needs of homeless in our community* (16%).

In both areas, satisfaction increased between 2019 and 2020, but then decreased again in 2021. When it comes to affordable housing, satisfaction increased from 27% in 2019, to 34% in 2020, but then declined to 26% in 2021. When it comes to coordination of services for the homeless, satisfaction increased from 20% in 2019, to 25% in 2020, but then declined to 16% in 2021.



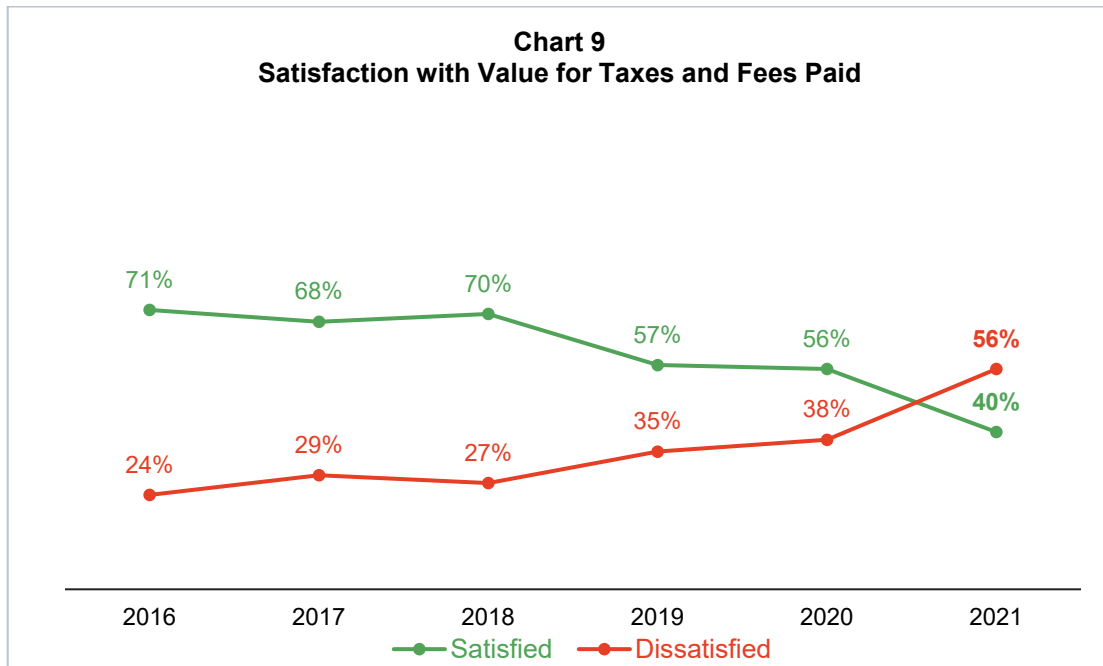
Views of the City’s response to the affordable housing and homelessness crisis are similar across demographic groups, though non-affiliated voters (20%) are especially unlikely to be satisfied with the City’s ability to ensure that residents of all incomes have access to affordable housing. Residents of West Salem (10%) are especially unlikely to be satisfied with how the City coordinates social service to serve the needs of the homeless.

In both cases, there is a strong correlation between levels of satisfaction with these services and perceptions of whether the City is headed in the right direction or off on the wrong track. Among those who view the City headed on the wrong track, 66% are dissatisfied with the City’s ability to provide affordable housing, while 84% are dissatisfied with the response of the City to the homeless crisis.

3.2 Resources for City services

For the first time, a majority of residents are dissatisfied with the value they receive for the taxes and fees they pay for basic services.

Dissatisfaction among residents for the value they receive for the taxes and fees they pay has increased from 24% in 2016, to 38% in 2020, to 56% in 2021.



Source: DHM Research, August 2021

Continuing an ongoing pattern from earlier years, there are partisan differences when it comes to satisfaction with the value residents believe they receive for taxes and fees paid. Democrats (57%) are more satisfied than NAV/other voters (34%) and Republicans (25%).

Older residents age 65+ (52%) are also more satisfied with the value they receive for taxes and fees than younger residents ages 19–64 (34%–39%).

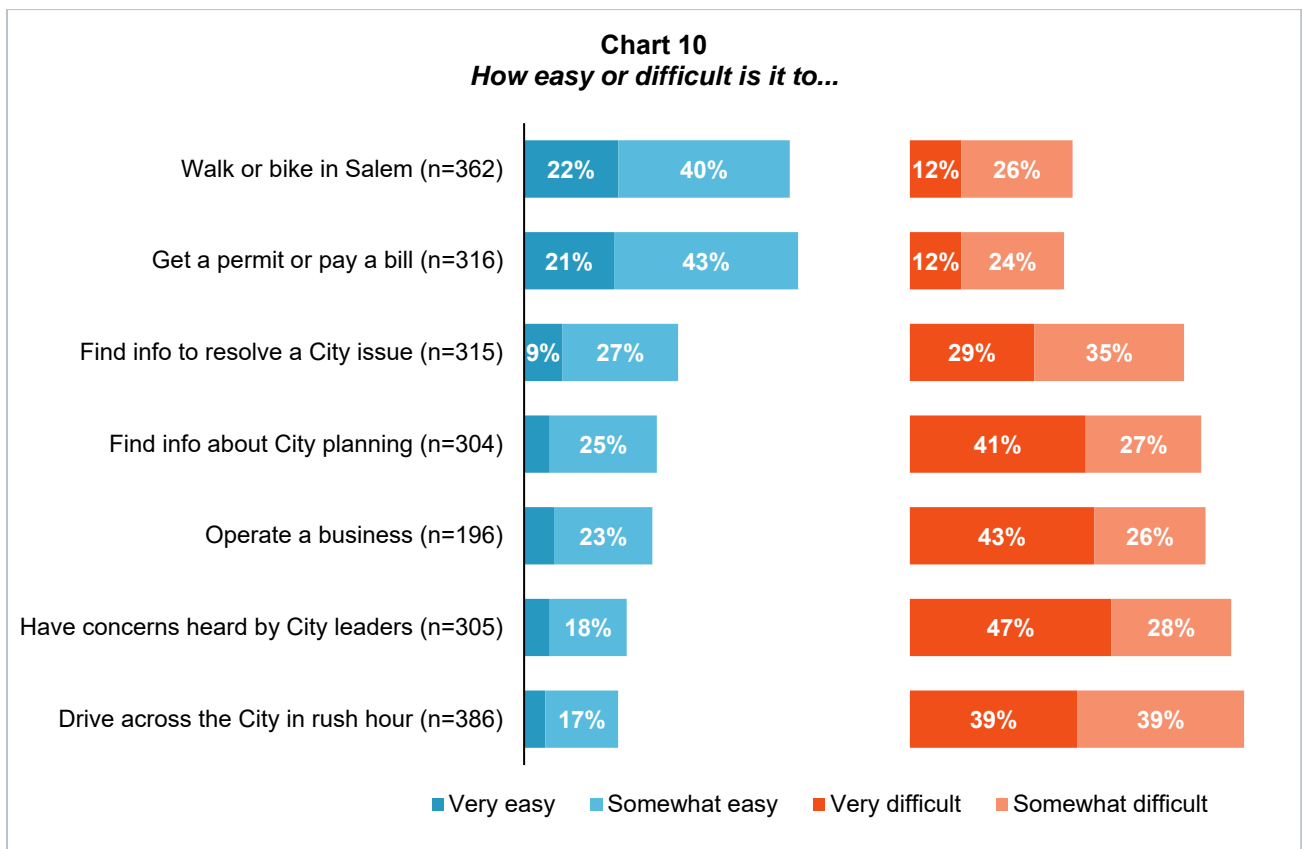
3.3 Living in Salem²

Although Salem residents are having a harder time performing many everyday activities, a majority still find it easy to walk and bike and to conduct City business like getting a permit or paying a bill.

A majority of residents say they have an easy time completing only two basic tasks about which they were asked: *walking or biking* (62% of residents who provided a response) and *getting a permit or paying a bill* (64%).

Despite reporting having an easy time doing such activities, the percentage of residents who find it easy to walk or bike in Salem declined from 76% in 2020 to 62% in 2021; and the percentage of residents who find it easy to pay a bill declined from 72% in 2020 to 64% in 2021.

There are no significant differences among demographic groups when it comes finding it easy to walk and bike, except that renters (71%) find it easier than homeowners (58%). Democrats (73%) and NAV/other (61%) say they find it easier to get a permit or pay a bill than Republicans (57%).



Source: DHM Research, August 2021

² Throughout this section, the reported numbers exclude the “don’t know” and “not applicable” responses so that results are more directly comparable across questions.

A majority of residents say they have a difficult time performing other activities, including obtaining information about City planning or resolving issues, operating a business, and making their voice heard.

Finding the information you need to resolve a city issue (64%), finding information about city planning and how decisions are made (69%), operating a business (69%), and having one's concerns heard by City leaders (75%) are seen as difficult by a majority of residents.

Operating a business in 2021 appears to be more difficult than in 2019, when fewer than half (48%) found it difficult to operate a business. This growing sense of difficulty is likely an expression of the challenges faced by businesses as they struggle with the economic impact of COVID-19. Republicans (79%) and non-affiliated voters (73%) are more likely than Democrats (55%) to say it is difficult to operate a business.

A majority of residents continue to find it difficult to have their voices heard by City leaders. In 2019 nearly two in three residents (64%) found it difficult, compared to 59% in 2020, and 75% in 2021. Consistent with findings in other areas, Republicans (80%) and non-affiliated voters (79%) are more likely to report difficulties than Democrats (66%).

Driving across the City in rush hour remains the hardest thing to do.

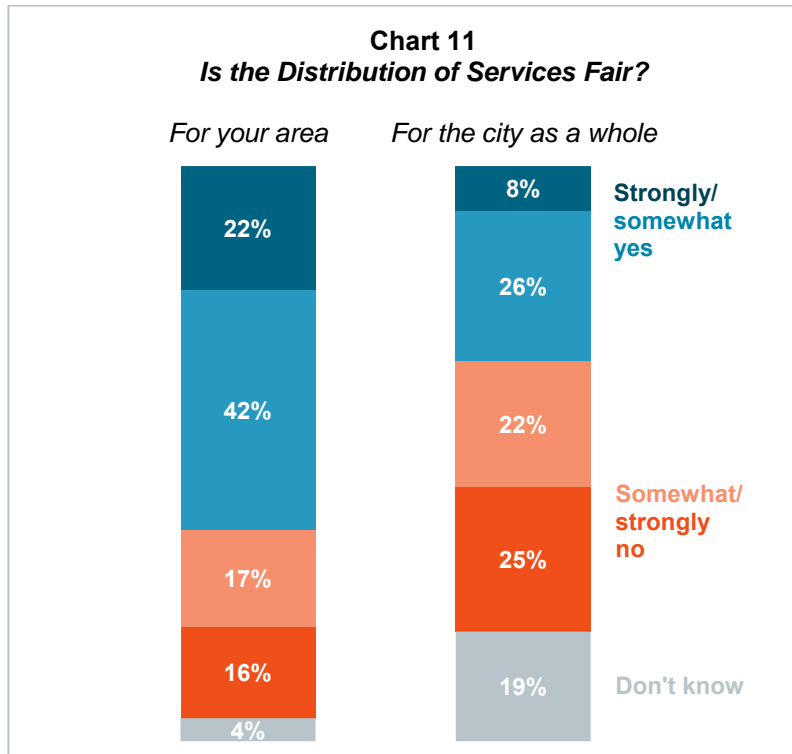
A strong majority of residents say it is difficult to *drive across the City in rush hour* (77% difficult). This represents an improvement compared to 2019, when 82% considered the activity difficult. Nevertheless, driving across the City in rush hour remains the most challenging activity for Salem residents.

Groups reporting the highest difficulty include residents of West Salem (86%) and South Salem (80%), residents ages 18–29 (81%) and ages 45–64 (83%), and residents living in Salem 11+ years (80%), and higher-income residents in households earning \$150k+ (84%).

3.4 Equity

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

A majority of residents (63%) believe their area receives its fair share of City services, but fewer (35%) believe City services are distributed fairly throughout the city as a whole. While the percentage of residents believing their area gets its fair share of services has remained relatively stable over the past year (from 68% in 2020 to 63% in 2021), those who say that services are fairly distributed throughout the City as a whole has declined (from 48% in 2020 to 35% in 2021). The gap between these two competing perceptions has increased from 20% in 2020 to 28% in 2021.

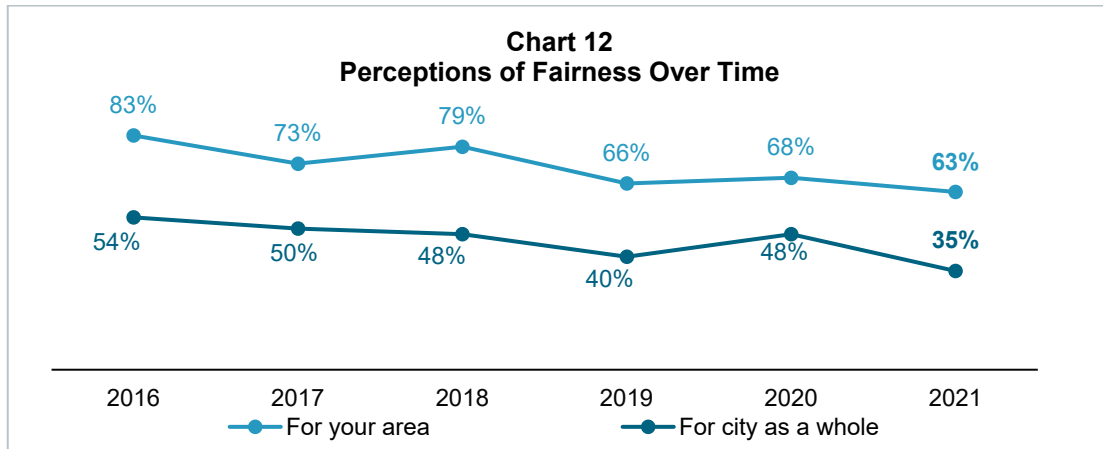


Source: DHM Research, September 2020

There are no significant differences in perception according to where residents live in the city. West Salem (66%), South Salem (66%), and North/Northeast Salem (59%) residents say their areas get their fair share of services. And West (38%), South (33%), and North/Northeast (35%) residents say the distribution of services across the city is fair overall.

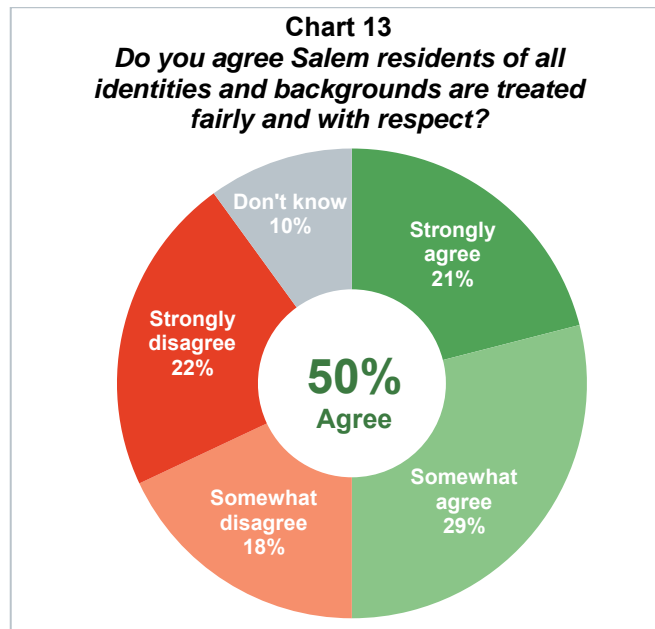
The largest gaps in perception regarding the distribution of services across the City as a whole are by age, with older residents ages 65+ (26%) much less likely to report an unfair distribution than residents ages 18–64 (46–53%).

Only one in two say residents of all backgrounds and identities are treated fairly and with respect.



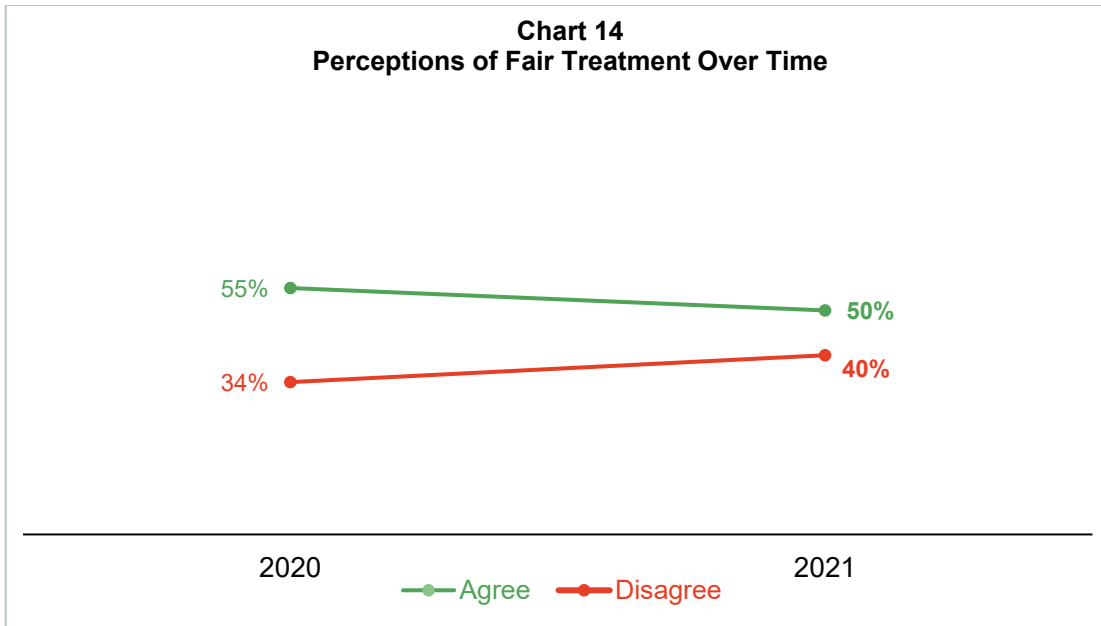
Source: DHM Research, August 2021

This year’s survey marks the second year that residents were asked their perceptions of equity and inclusion for Salem residents of all backgrounds and identities. Only one in two residents (50%) responded affirmatively in 2021, a decline of 5 points from last year. Fully a third (34%) disagreed that residents of all backgrounds and identities are treated fairly and with respect in 2020, with one in four (40%) disagreeing in 2021, an increase of 6 points.



Source: DHM Research, August 2021

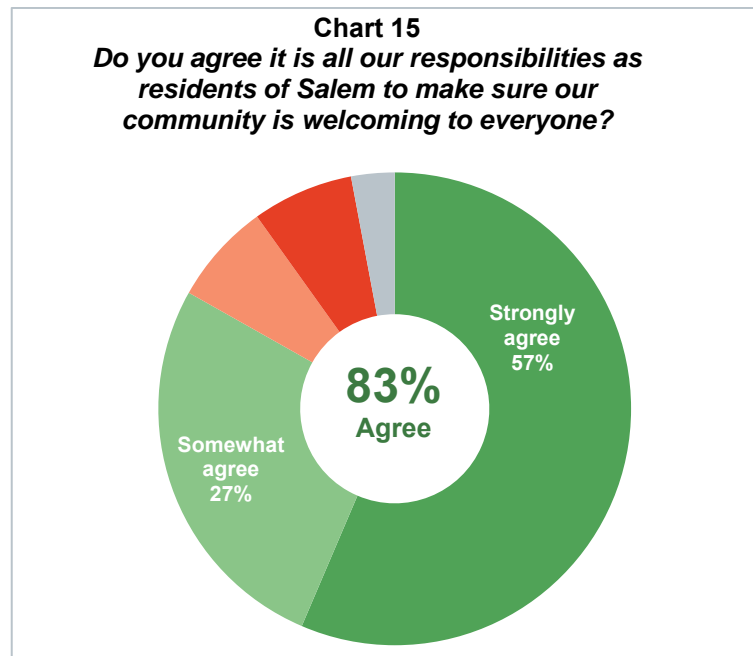
Groups most likely to agree that all are treated fairly include residents age 65+ (64%) and Republicans (63%). By contrast, those most likely to disagree that all are treated fairly include residents of color (49%), college graduates (49%), renters (48%), Democrats (47%), and residents ages 18–64 (43–44%).



Source: DHM Research, August 2021

Most residents believe it is everyone’s responsibility to make sure Salem is welcoming to everyone.

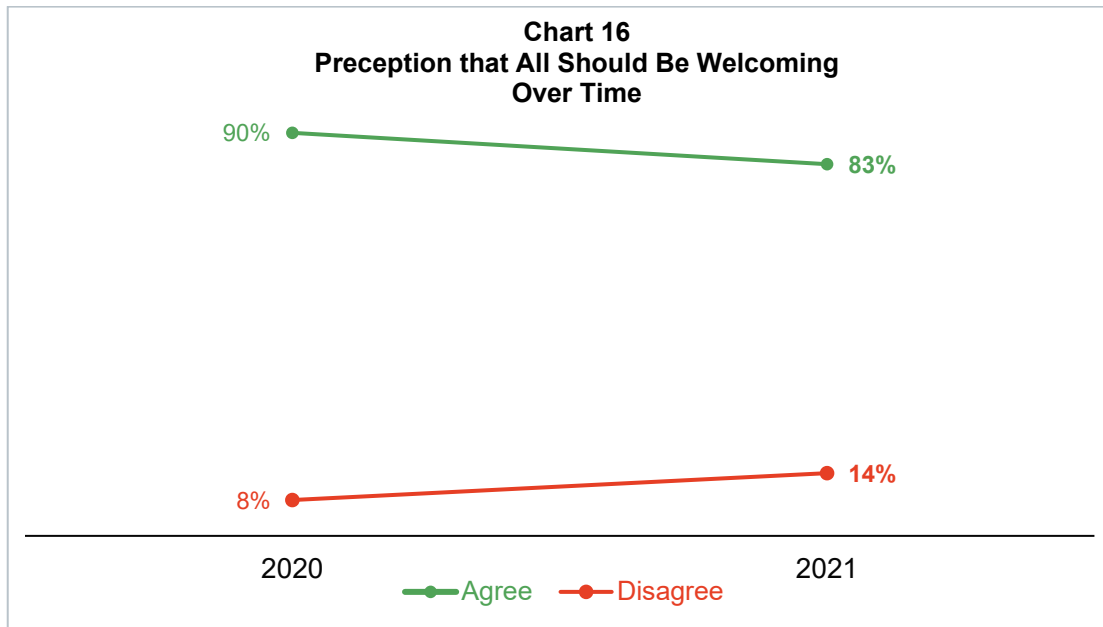
While four in ten (40%) Salem residents—and half of Salem’s residents of color (49%)—say all groups are not treated equally and with respect, most residents (83%) believe it is the responsibility of all residents to ensure that the community is welcoming to everyone. This latter belief, if acted upon, may serve to increase the sense of fairness and equal treatment among all residents.



Source: DHM Research, August 2021

College graduates (89%) are most likely to agree it is everyone’s responsibility to make sure the community is welcoming.

Residents who believe that Salem is off on the wrong track are less likely to share this belief. 78% of such residents believe it is everyone’s responsibility to make sure the community is welcoming, as compared to 95% of residents who believe Salem is moving in the right direction.



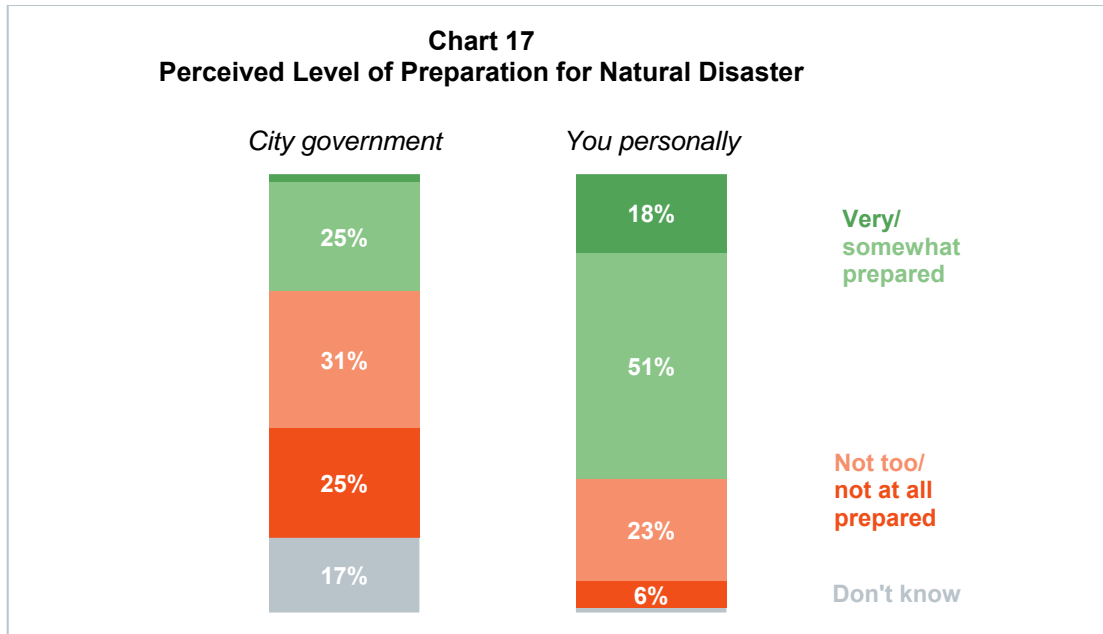
Source: DHM Research, August 2021

There has been a slight decrease in the belief that it is the responsibility of all residents to make sure Salem is welcoming to everyone. The idea that all should be welcoming, while embraced by most residents, was shared by 90% of residents in 2020 and 83% of residents in 2021. The percentage of residents who say they “strongly agree” has decreased from 66% in 2020 to 57% in 2021.

3.5 Emergency preparedness

Approximately two-thirds of Salem residents consider themselves prepared for a natural disaster, an increase from 2019, but many remain less sure of the City’s level of preparation.

About one in four (27%) Salem residents believe City government is prepared for a natural disaster, while more than half (56%) believe it is not prepared and about one in five (17%) are unsure. These perceptions have remained stable since 2019, when residents were first asked the question. By contrast, nearly seven in ten residents (69%) say they are personally prepared, an increase of 11% since 2019.³

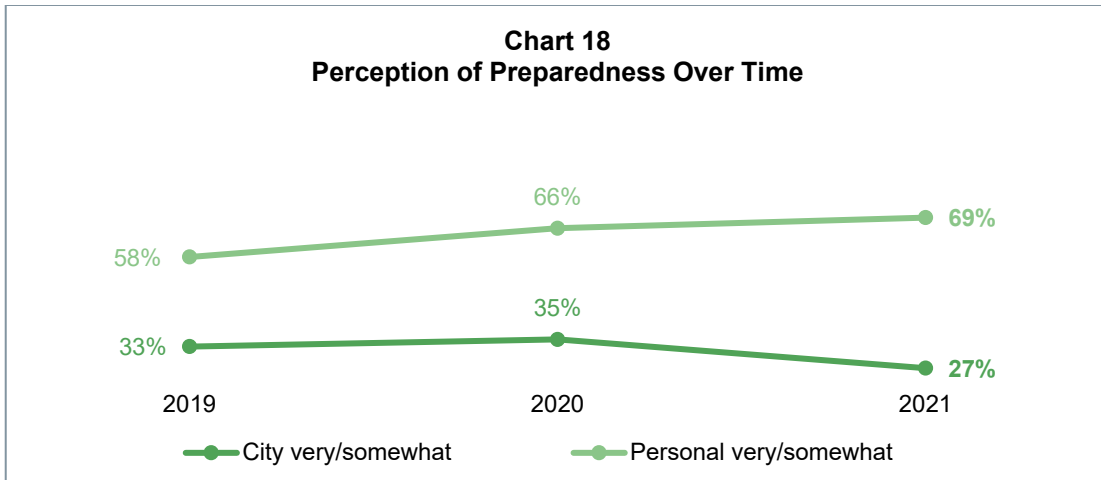


Source: DHM Research, August 2021

Lower-income residents, and renters say they 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.

³ 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%).

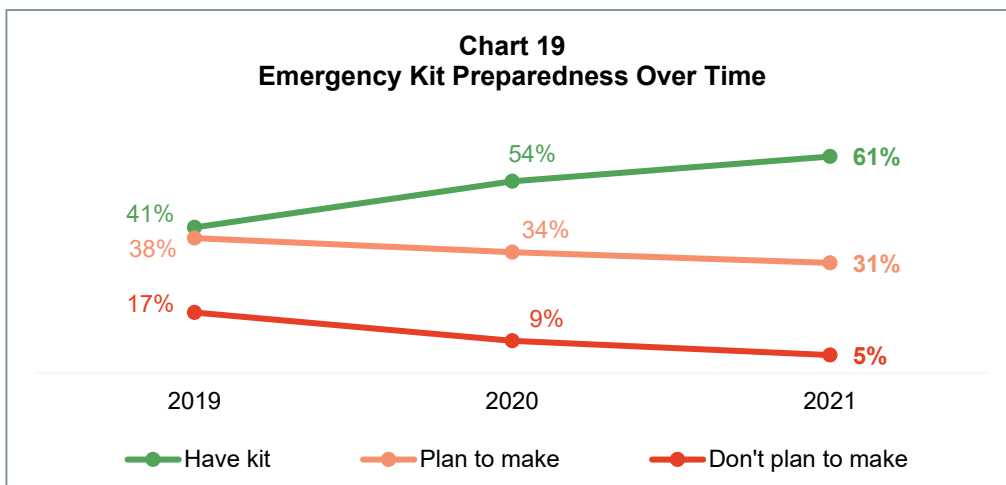
In a 2017 survey of Portland residents, 52% said that they were very (14%) or somewhat (38%) prepared for natural disaster or emergency that left their household without electricity for two weeks.



Source: DHM Research, August 2021

The percentage of Salem residents who say they have prepared an emergency kit has increased steadily since 2019.

Six in ten Salem residents (61%) have already made an emergency kit with basic items like food, water, and first aid supplies. This represents a significant increase compared to 2019, when only 41% said they possessed a kit, and to 2020, when 51% said they possessed a kit. Another one in three (31%) say they plan to make a kit but have not yet done so.



Source: DHM Research, August 2021

Behind this general increase in preparedness among Salem residents, results indicate a growing level of preparedness among traditionally more vulnerable populations. Between 2019 and 2021 there have been significant increases in reported levels of emergency kit preparedness among the following groups: women (from 32% to 60%), young people ages 18–29 (from 25% to 60%), people of color (from 26% to 64%), people with incomes under \$50k (from 32% to 55%), and renters (from 25% to 58%).

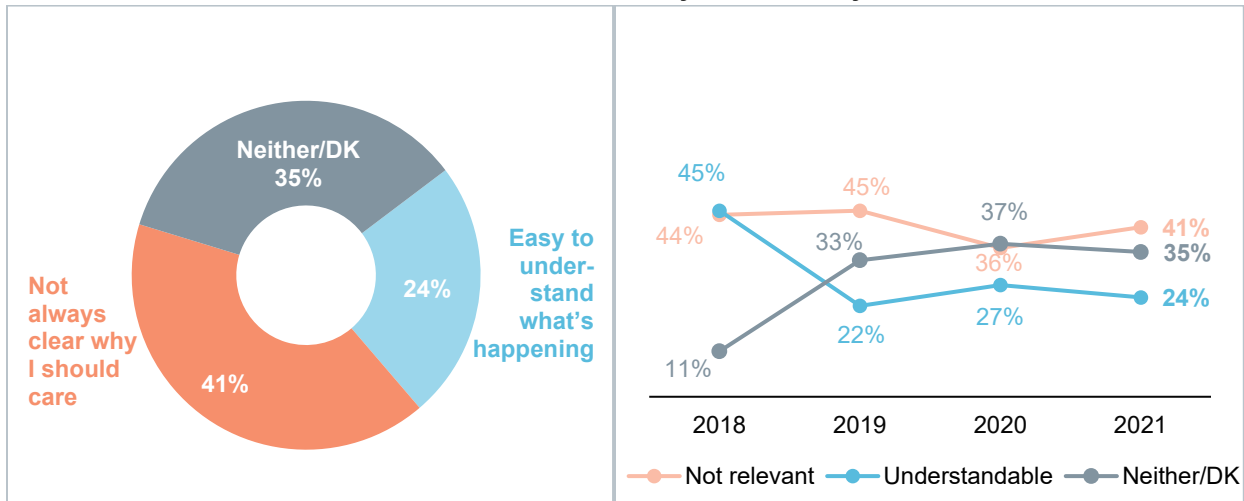
It is likely that the combination of wildfires, ice storms and COVID-19 have shaped these opinions and actions. Living through these emergencies may have diminished residents' confidence in the government to respond to natural disasters while making preparation for themselves a priority.

3.6 Communication

Only one in four residents feel the information they get from the City is easy to understand and relevant.

Asked about their opinion of the information they get from the City, only one in four (24%) say it is “easy to understand what’s happening and what I can do about it,” with four in ten (41%) saying it is “not always clear why I should care about the topic.” About one in three (35%) say neither or they don’t know. These opinions have not changed significantly since 2019.

Chart 20
Communication Quality from the City



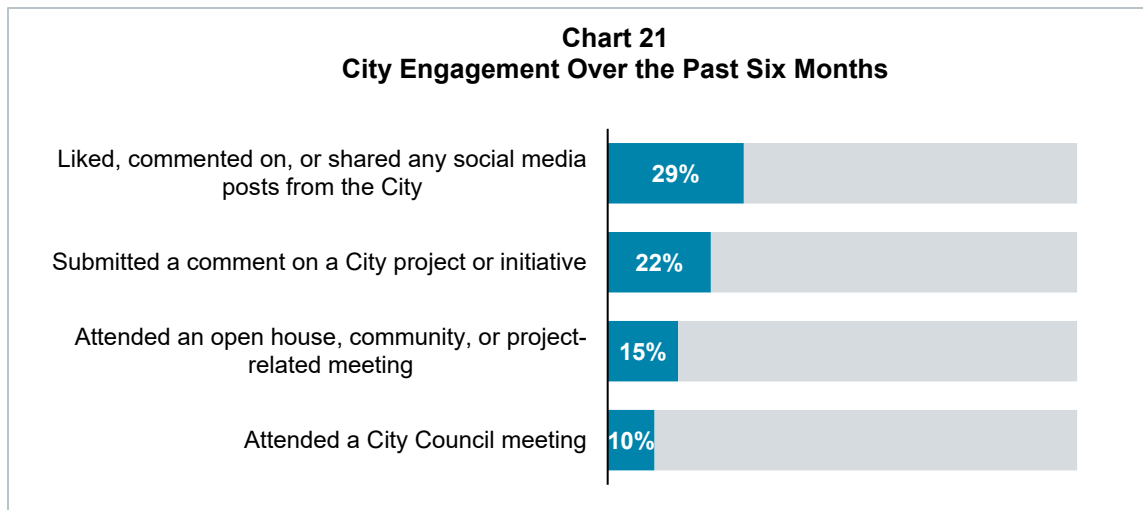
Source: DHM Research, August 2021

Democrats are more likely (33%) to find communications relevant than Republicans (18%) and non-affiliated voters (19%), as are those who believe the City is heading in the right direction (45%) as opposed to those who believe the City is on the wrong track (15%).

Few residents are engaged with the City, though social media engagement is most common.

About one in four Salem residents report having interacted with *social media posts from the City* (29%) in the last six months. Residents ages 30–64 are more likely to have done so (34%) than residents 65+ (19%).

About two in ten residents report having *submitted a comment on a City project or initiative* (22%), having *attended an open house, community, or project-related meeting* (15%), or having *attended a City Council meeting* (10%). Those with some college (26%) and residents of color (36%) are more likely to submit comments.



Source: DHM Research, August 2021

The overall level of engagement with these activities has not changed significantly since 2018.

In contrast to previous years, when Democrats were most engaged with City government, since 2020 there appears to be no partisan difference when it comes to levels of engagement.

**City of Salem
2021 Community Satisfaction Survey**

**Salem Residents
N=400; margin of error ±4.9
August 12–16, 2021
16 minutes**

**DHM Research
Project #01047**

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	2021 n=400	2020 n=400	2019 n=459	2018 n=450	2017 n=457	2016 n=450
Right direction	23%	38%	37%	53%	62%	66%
Wrong track	65%	41%	42%	31%	25%	21%
Don't know	13%	21%	20%	16%	13%	13%

2. Would you say that Salem is **[restore response: headed in the right direction, off on the wrong track]** because of actions the City has taken, circumstances outside of the City's control, or some combination of both?

Right direction/wrong track combined

Response category	2021 n=349	2020 n=316
Mainly because of actions the City has taken	34%	22%
Mainly because of circumstances outside the City's control	6%	7%
Some combination of both	57%	68%
Don't know	3%	3%

2021 right direction vs. wrong track

Response category	2021 Right dir. n=91	2021 Wrong trk. n=259
Mainly because of actions the City has taken	15%	40%
Mainly because of circumstances outside the City's control	10%	5%
Some combination of both	66%	53%
Don't know	9%	1%

3. What is the most important issue that you would like the City of Salem to do something about?

[Open]

Response category	2021 n=400	2020 n=400	2019 n=459	2018 n=450	2017 n=457	Dec. 2016 n=450	Mar. 2016 n=508
Homelessness, poverty	58%	49%	41%	33%	26%	17%	7%
COVID	8%	4%	--	--	--	--	--
Politics/government	4%	3%	--	--	--	--	--
Crime, drugs	3%	6%	4%	4%	1%	5%	5%
Police enforcement, traffic violations	3%	n=1	2%	1%	2%	3%	5%
Promote businesses, downtown development	2%	5%	2%	<1%	1%	3%	3%
Education, funding, class sizes	2%	4%	3%	4%	5%	10%	5%
Affordable housing	2%	3%	3%	2%	7%	4%	1%
Roads, potholes, infrastructure	2%	2%	7%	7%	5%	11%	12%
Traffic, congestion	2%	2%	6%	3%	8%	4%	7%
Racial equality	2%	--	--	--	--	--	--
Growth/development	2%	--	--	--	--	--	--
Additional bridge	1%	4%	5%	4%	5%	3%	3%
Environment	1%	2%	3%	2%	1%	2%	2%
High taxes, property taxes	1%	1%	2%	2%	5%	1%	4%
Budget, spending	<1%	1%	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%
Immigration, refugees	<1%	--	3%	2%	--	1%	1%
Police reform	--	3%	--	--	--	--	--
None, nothing	1%	2%	2%	6%	4%	7%	9%
All other responses	1% or less	3%	1% or less	2% or less	4% or less	5% or less	7% or less
Don't know	2%	4%	4%	6%	5%	6%	1%

SATISFACTION WITH EXISTING SERVICES

4. 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	2021 n=400	2020 n=400	2019 n=459	2018 n=450	2017 n=457	2016 n=450
Very satisfied	21%	34%	31%	41%	39%	44%
Somewhat satisfied	49%	52%	56%	50%	51%	48%
Not too satisfied	17%	9%	8%	4%	9%	5%
Not at all satisfied	10%	4%	6%	4%	1%	3%
Don't know	3%	1%	<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 Q5–Q19]**

Response category	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not too satisfied	Not at all satisfied	Don't know
5. Police (benchmark results for "Police, fire, ambulance, and 911 service")					
2021 (n=400)	34%	34%	12%	14%	6%
2020 (n=400)	40%	32%	14%	8%	6%
2019 (n=459)	51%	33%	5%	6%	4%
2018 (n=450)	65%	26%	3%	1%	5%
2017 (n=457)	49%	39%	7%	1%	3%
2016 (n=450)	58%	30%	4%	4%	5%
6. Fire, ambulance, and 911 service (benchmark results for "Police, fire, ambulance, and 911 service")					
2021 (n=400)	49%	30%	7%	2%	12%
2020 (n=400)	58%	29%	3%	2%	7%
2019 (n=459)	51%	33%	5%	6%	4%
2018 (n=450)	65%	26%	3%	1%	5%
2017 (n=457)	49%	39%	7%	1%	3%
2016 (n=450)	58%	30%	4%	4%	5%
7. Maintenance of city streets, sidewalks, and bridges					
2021 (n=400)	12%	36%	26%	23%	2%
2020 (n=400)	21%	47%	20%	10%	2%
2019 (n=459)	12%	42%	24%	17%	5%
2018 (n=450)	21%	46%	18%	14%	1%
2017 (n=457)	16%	45%	29%	9%	1%
2016 (n=450)	23%	47%	18%	11%	1%
8. Salem public library					
2021 (n=400)	27%	24%	11%	8%	30%
2020 (n=400)	39%	30%	7%	4%	21%
2019 (n=459)	52%	22%	5%	2%	19%
2018 (n=450)	55%	23%	3%	1%	16%
2017 (n=457)	40%	36%	3%	2%	18%
2016 (n=450)	54%	31%	4%	2%	9%
9. Parks and recreation					
2021 (n=400)	23%	44%	14%	13%	5%
2020 (n=400)	38%	42%	14%	3%	3%
2019 (n=459)	41%	38%	10%	3%	9%
2018 (n=450)	49%	37%	7%	3%	4%
2017 (n=457)	38%	43%	7%	5%	7%
2016 (n=450)	48%	37%	8%	4%	3%
10. Water, sewer, and stormwater services					
2021 (n=400)	33%	46%	7%	6%	7%
2020 (n=400)	40%	37%	14%	3%	6%
2019 (n=459)	38%	37%	11%	8%	6%
2018 (n=450)	32%	45%	13%	7%	3%
2017 (n=457)	39%	40%	13%	5%	3%
2016 (n=450)	38%	41%	10%	7%	4%

Response category	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not too satisfied	Not at all satisfied	Don't know
11. Ensuring that residents of all income levels have access to affordable housing					
2021 (n=400)	7%	18%	27%	36%	12%
2020 (n=400)	10%	24%	29%	26%	11%
2019 (n=459)	7%	20%	32%	30%	11%
2018 (n=450)	14%	34%	25%	15%	12%
2017 (n=457)	6%	23%	36%	18%	16%
2016 (n=450)	14%	27%	24%	16%	18%
12. City planning and development review					
2021 (n=400)	6%	28%	23%	21%	22%
2020 (n=400)	15%	33%	21%	10%	22%
2019 (n=459)	10%	33%	16%	10%	31%
2018 (n=450)	21%	32%	18%	6%	23%
2017 (n=457)	11%	37%	18%	8%	25%
2016 (n=450)	14%	35%	16%	9%	26%
13. Parking structures and on-street parking near local business					
2021 (n=400)	18%	45%	20%	12%	5%
2020 (n=400)	27%	43%	19%	8%	4%
2019 (n=459)	18%	47%	20%	9%	6%
2018 (n=450)	25%	39%	23%	8%	5%
2017 (n=457)	20%	47%	17%	9%	7%
2016 (n=450)	24%	48%	17%	8%	2%
14. Enforcement of city codes for issues such as noise, yard upkeep, and other nuisances					
2021 (n=400)	12%	36%	21%	21%	10%
2020 (n=400)	21%	40%	18%	11%	10%
2019 (n=459)	20%	40%	19%	10%	10%
2018 (n=450)	30%	40%	15%	9%	6%
2017 (n=457)	23%	44%	17%	6%	9%
2016 (n=450)	32%	38%	11%	8%	11%
15. Growing job opportunities in the local economy					
2021 (n=400)	11%	37%	17%	17%	19%
2020 (n=400)	18%	36%	23%	8%	15%
2019 (n=459)	14%	41%	20%	12%	13%
2018 (n=450)	28%	45%	10%	3%	14%
2017 (n=457)	14%	48%	16%	9%	13%
2016 (n=450)	16%	41%	20%	8%	14%
16. Protecting our natural environment					
2021 (n=400)	17%	39%	20%	14%	10%
2020 (n=400)	27%	42%	18%	6%	6%
2019 (n=459)	23%	47%	14%	9%	6%
2018 (n=450)	26%	51%	9%	5%	10%
2017 (n=457)	28%	52%	7%	3%	10%
2016 (n=450)	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					
2021 (n=400)	17%	40%	13%	10%	21%
2020 (n=400)	25%	44%	11%	5%	16%
2019 (n=459)	32%	36%	10%	3%	18%
2018 (n=450)	38%	43%	5%	4%	11%
2017 (n=457)	30%	47%	6%	3%	14%
2016 (n=450)	34%	39%	10%	2%	15%
18. Coordinating social services to serve needs of homeless in our community					
2021 (n=400)	5%	11%	25%	52%	8%
2020 (n=400)	8%	17%	31%	36%	9%
2019 (n=459)	5%	15%	30%	40%	11%
2018 (n=450)	7%	24%	35%	25%	9%
2017 (n=457)	4%	24%	31%	23%	17%
19. Safety for people walking or biking in Salem (benchmark results for two separate questions in 2019)					
2021 (n=400)	16%	38%	21%	21%	4%
2020 (n=400)	26%	43%	20%	8%	3%
2019 Walking (n=459)	20%	38%	24%	14%	3%
2019 Biking (n=459)	24%	32%	17%	14%	13%

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 Q20–Q26]**

Response category	Very easy	Somewhat easy	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Doesn't apply
20. Driving from one side of the city to the other during peak traffic hours					
2021 (n=400)	5%	17%	37%	37%	3%
2020 (n=400)	4%	20%	42%	27%	6%
2019 (n=459)	3%	13%	28%	45%	11%
2018 (n=450)	5%	21%	34%	36%	5%
2017 (n=457)	3%	14%	45%	33%	5%
2016 (n=450)	7%	16%	31%	40%	6%
21. Walking or biking in Salem (benchmark results for two separate questions in 2019)					
2021 (n=400)	20%	36%	24%	11%	9%
2020 (n=400)	34%	35%	16%	6%	9%
2019 Walking (n=459)	30%	32%	19%	12%	8%
2019 Biking (n=459)	20%	23%	16%	11%	29%
2018 (n=450)	48%	26%	12%	3%	11%
2017 (n=457)	31%	40%	15%	5%	9%
2016 (n=450)	40%	33%	13%	6%	9%

Response category	Very easy	Somewhat easy	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Doesn't apply
22. Doing business with the City, such as getting a permit or paying a bill					
2021 (n=400)	17%	34%	19%	9%	21%
2020 (n=400)	25%	33%	18%	4%	19%
2019 (n=459)	29%	26%	17%	8%	21%
2018 (n=450)	40%	30%	9%	7%	14%
2017 (n=457)	30%	36%	12%	3%	18%
2016 (n=450)	31%	32%	12%	5%	19%
23. Finding information about city planning and how decisions are made					
2021 (n=400)	5%	19%	31%	21%	24%
2020 (n=400)	9%	24%	27%	12%	28%
2019 (n=459)	7%	27%	25%	13%	27%
2018 (n=450)	21%	28%	19%	7%	26%
2017 (n=457)	14%	26%	21%	6%	33%
2016 (n=450)	14%	25%	20%	8%	33%
24. Having your concerns heard by city leaders					
2021 (n=400)	5%	14%	22%	36%	24%
2020 (n=400)	8%	20%	22%	19%	31%
2019 (n=459)	8%	18%	28%	17%	29%
2018 (n=450)	12%	23%	14%	11%	40%
2017 (n=457)	14%	22%	24%	10%	29%
2016 (n=450)	15%	25%	17%	10%	34%
25. Finding the information you need to resolve a city issue					
2021 (n=400)	7%	22%	28%	22%	21%
2020 (n=400)	14%	33%	20%	9%	23%
2019 (n=459)	13%	27%	25%	12%	24%
2018 (n=450)	17%	33%	20%	7%	22%
2017 (n=457)	14%	30%	26%	7%	24%
2016 (n=450)	18%	31%	17%	9%	25%
26. Operating a business					
2021 (n=400)	4%	12%	13%	21%	51%
2020 (n=400)	7%	13%	16%	8%	56%
2019 (n=459)	8%	12%	14%	5%	60%
2018 (n=450)	9%	21%	8%	7%	55%
2017 (n=457)	6%	16%	14%	4%	61%
2016 (n=450)	7%	16%	13%	5%	59%

RESOURCES FOR CITY SERVICES

27. 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	2021 n=400	2020 n=400	2019 n=459	2018 n=450	2017 n=457	2016 n=450
Very satisfied	6%	13%	8%	13%	12%	17%
Somewhat satisfied	34%	44%	48%	57%	56%	54%
Not too satisfied	26%	28%	18%	18%	22%	17%
Not at all satisfied	30%	10%	16%	10%	8%	7%
Don't know	4%	6%	9%	3%	2%	5%

EQUITY ISSUES

28. Thinking about the part of Salem where you live, do you feel your area receives its fair share of city services?

Response category	2021 n=400	2020 n=400	2019 n=459	2018 n=450	2017 n=457	2016 n=450
Yes, strongly	22%	28%	23%	42%	30%	46%
Yes, somewhat	42%	40%	42%	38%	43%	37%
No, somewhat	17%	15%	13%	9%	15%	7%
No, strongly	16%	11%	13%	10%	7%	8%
Don't know	4%	6%	8%	2%	5%	2%

29. Thinking about the City of Salem as a whole, do you think city services are distributed fairly?

Response category	2021 n=400	2020 n=400	2019 n=459	2018 n=450	2017 n=457	2016 n=450
Yes, strongly	8%	15%	14%	15%	14%	27%
Yes, somewhat	26%	33%	26%	34%	36%	28%
No, somewhat	22%	21%	23%	17%	22%	15%
No, strongly	25%	17%	19%	20%	14%	17%
Don't know	19%	15%	18%	15%	14%	14%

Indicate if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

30. Salem residents of all identities and backgrounds are treated fairly and with respect.

Response category	2021 n=400	2020 n=400
Strongly agree	21%	20%
Somewhat agree	29%	36%
Somewhat disagree	18%	20%
Strongly disagree	22%	14%
Don't know	10%	11%

31. It is all of our responsibilities as residents of Salem to make sure our community is welcoming to everyone.

Response category	2021 n=400	2020 n=400
Strongly agree	57%	66%
Somewhat agree	27%	23%
Somewhat disagree	7%	4%
Strongly disagree	7%	3%
Don't know	3%	3%

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

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

32. 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	2021 n=400	2020 n=400	2019 n=459
Very prepared	2%	6%	6%
Somewhat prepared	25%	29%	27%
Not too prepared	31%	26%	25%
Not at all prepared	25%	22%	24%
Don't know	17%	16%	17%

33. 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	2021 n=400	2020 n=400	2019 n=459
Very prepared	18%	17%	18%
Somewhat prepared	51%	49%	40%
Not too prepared	23%	23%	23%
Not at all prepared	6%	10%	18%
Don't know	1%	2%	1%

34. Indicate you have already done, haven't done yet but have plans to do, or have not done and do not have plans for the follow: 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	2021 n=400	2020 n=400	2019 n=459
Have already done	61%	54%	41%
Have not done yet but have plans to	31%	34%	38%
Have not done and do not plan to	5%	9%	17%
Don't know	2%	3%	4%

COMMUNICATIONS

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

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

Response category	Yes	No	Don't know
35. Submitted a comment on a City project or initiative			
2021 (n=400)	22%	77%	1%
2020 (n=400)	14%	80%	6%
2019 (n=459)	13%	82%	5%
2018 (n=450)	16%	84%	<1%
36. Liked, commented on, or shared any social media posts from the City			
2021 (n=400)	29%	67%	4%
2020 (n=400)	37%	59%	4%
2019 (n=459)	33%	60%	6%
2018 (n=450)	30%	69%	<1%
37. Attended a City Council meeting			
2021 (n=400)	10%	89%	<1%
2020 (n=400)	7%	90%	4%
2019 (n=459)	9%	86%	5%
2018 (n=450)	9%	91%	--
38. Attended an open house, community, or project-related meeting			
2021 (n=400)	15%	84%	1%
2020 (n=400)	12%	85%	4%
2019 (n=459)	17%	80%	3%
2018 (n=450)	18%	81%	1%

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

Response category	2021 n=400	2020 n=400	2019 n=459	2018 n=450
It's easy to understand what's happening and what I can do about it.	24%	27%	22%	45%
It's not always clear why I should care about the topic.	41%	36%	45%	44%
Neither	22%	17%	22%	7%
Don't know	13%	20%	11%	4%

DEMOGRAPHICS

40. Do you describe your gender as:

Response category	n=400
Male	49%
Female	51%
Non-binary or gender non-conforming	1%
Don't know	--
Refused/Missing	--

41. What is your age?

Response category	n=400
18-24	14%
25-34	15%
35-54	36%
55-64	17%
65+	18%

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

Response category	n=400
West	18%
North/Northeast	35%
South	47%

43. What is your political party? **[From sample]**

Response category	n=400
Democrat	35%
Republican	25%
NAV/other	40%

44. How many years have you lived in Salem?

Response category	n=400
0–5 years	14%
6–10 years	10%
More than 10 years	75%
Refused	1%

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

Response category	n=400
Less than high school	6%
High school diploma/GED	29%
Some college	38%
College degree	16%
Graduate/professional school	10%
Refused	1%

46. Which category best describes your 2020 gross household income, before taxes? Remember to include everyone living in your household. Your best estimate will do.

Response category	n=400
Less than \$25,000	7%
\$25,000 to less than \$50,000	12%
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	18%
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	19%
\$100,000 to less than \$150,000	14%
\$150,000 or more	14%
Refused	15%

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

Response category	n=400
African American/Black	3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3%
Hispanic/Latino	10%
Native American/American Indian	3%
White/Caucasian	77%
Other	3%
Refused	8%

48. Do you rent or own your home?

Response category	n=400
Rent	32%
Own	58%
Something else	6%
Refused	4%

49. Survey language

Response category	n=400
English	95%
Spanish	5%