

# Information Report

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Service Area	Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
Date	Friday, June 17, 2022
Subject	<b>City of Guelph Satisfaction Survey 2022 Results</b>

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## Executive Summary

### Purpose of Report

To present the findings and insights of the 2022 City of Guelph Satisfaction Survey and highlight how this data will be used to inform corporate initiatives and processes to improve the community experiences, interactions, and perceptions of the City and its service delivery.

### Key Findings

The 2022 City of Guelph Satisfaction Survey (CoGSS) was conducted between March 29 and April 16, 2022, to gather feedback from residents. The information collected allows the City to understand the community's experiences, interactions, and perceptions of the City and its service delivery. Collecting this information also offers staff the ability to integrate the findings into corporate and departmental priorities and decision making. This provides an opportunity to address current gaps and identify the needs and priorities of the community. The objective of the survey was to assess the perceptions of:

- The community's quality of life
- Resident contact with the City of Guelph
- Property taxes
- Decision-making and priority-setting within the City
- Equity in service delivery
- Communication and engagement
- The City's ability to implement strategic plan

The CoGSS was originally planned to be administered in 2021. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was deferred to 2022. The rationale was that 2022 would provide more stability and consistency in the data given the uncertainty in early 2021. As in 2017 and 2019, the City commissioned Ipsos to conduct the survey. A total of 600 interviews were completed by phone providing a representative sample of the city. City staff also provided an opportunity for the public to participate through an online survey which received an additional 287 responses between March 28 and April 19, 2022.

To provide context and identify trends in the survey data, the 2022 information was compared to past City of Guelph satisfaction surveys, as well as to Ipsos' database of municipal data wherever possible. The survey sample size (n=600) produces results which can be considered accurate within  $\pm 4.0$  percentage points, 19 times

out of 20. This means that any variation less than 4% cannot be considered a true change.

It is important to recognize that the 2022 CoGSS was conducted in the context of Canada having just passed the two-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation rates being at 30-year highs, increasing housing affordability issues, substantial supply chain constraints, and global political unrest. Each of these external factors impact the overall observed results. Considering these significant challenges, the survey continues to find positive assessments of life in Guelph.

78% of respondents remain satisfied with the value they receive for their tax dollars and expressed a preference for increasing user fees (35%) or increasing taxes (32%) to support City services as opposed to decreasing service levels.

The 2022 results continue to be consistent compared to previous years. The full range of questions and findings can be found in Attachment-1: City of Guelph 2022 Satisfaction Survey. The results will continue to support and inform several corporate initiatives and processes including the multi-year budget and upcoming strategic plan. The City of Guelph will continue to conduct the survey every two years, with the next one planned for 2024.

## **Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

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## **Report**

### **Background**

The 2022 CoGSS was conducted using the methodology from the 2017 and 2019 satisfaction surveys. The City commissioned Ipsos to conduct the survey, collecting information directly related to residents' experiences, communication with the City, and overall perceptions of service delivery. The City can use this information to identify areas of improvement and continuously improve its ability to work as an effective, responsible, and trusted local government. The findings of the CoGSS will inform many corporate initiatives including the multi-year budget and strategic planning efforts. This ensures the City can develop strategies and actions that are relevant and address community priorities. This report highlights a sample of the results and provides insights from the data. Attachment-1: City of Guelph 2022 Satisfaction Survey provides detailed results from each question in the survey.

### **Purpose and Methodology**

Municipal satisfaction surveys are used as a reflection of public perception. It is important to analyze this information alongside supporting research and data to ensure the City can make informed decisions to support service development and improvement. Where possible, the results from this survey were compared to 2017 and 2019 survey data, and Ipsos' database of comparative municipal norms. The objective of the survey was to assess the perceptions of:

- The community's quality of life
- Resident contact with the City of Guelph

- Property taxes
- Decision-making and priority-setting within the City
- Equity in service delivery
- Communication and engagement
- The City's ability to implement strategic plan

The CoGSS was conducted using a random sampling method. City of Guelph adult residents were randomly selected and contacted by mobile phone and landline telephone using random digit dialing. This produced a total of 600 interviews of residents 18 years of age and older, including 300 interviews conducted via landline and 300 interviews conducted by cellphone. The overall survey results have been weighted by age and gender according to the latest census data (2016) to reflect the population of the City of Guelph. The survey sample size (n=600) produces results which can be considered accurate within  $\pm 4.0$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20. This means that any variation less than 4% cannot be considered a true change. Throughout Attachment-1, result totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding or because the question is a multi-select question where respondents were permitted to choose more than one response.

### **Supplemental Online Survey**

The Ipsos survey was accompanied by an additional online survey to provide an opportunity for those residents who were not selected for the telephone survey to participate. The questionnaire was based on the Ipsos survey and was completed by 289 individuals which is approximately a 200% increase over the response rate in 2019 (96 responses). While this approach offers additional opportunities for participation and engagement, it cannot be directly compared to the Ipsos survey. These results are not generalizable due to the sample size and self-selection bias.

Compared with the statistically valid random sample survey, the self-selected method will typically report lower satisfaction rates. Additionally, the respondents to the online survey are more likely to have reported interacting with the City than those on the phone survey. The 2022 results of the online survey are typical and consistent with this expectation, finding lower levels of satisfaction than were reported in the statistically valid Ipsos survey.

### **2022 Satisfaction Survey Results**

The survey continues to find positive assessments of respondent's experiences and life in Guelph, with some notable shifts over the course of the past three years. Overall, the quality of life in the City of Guelph remains unchanged in 2022 (96%) as compared to 2017 (97%) and 2019 (95%) results. This is comparable with the National Norm. Considering some of the recent challenges and pressures facing the Guelph community, the consistency with previous results is a success and reflects the ability of the Guelph community to overcome adversity.

The top drivers contributing to positive scores include:

- New and/or improved developments (businesses, housing, parks, etc.) (10%)
- Good services and/or programs (7%)
- Increased or similar quality of life (5%)

The top drivers contributing to negative scores include:

- Cost of living, taxes, and housing increases (13%)
- COVID-19 related impacts (11%)
- Increase in crime, drugs, and homelessness (10%)

The majority of respondents also report having very positive perceptions of Guelph as a community. This is aligned with the quality of life results.

- A majority agree that they are proud to say they are from Guelph (95%) and that Guelph is a welcoming community (94%)
- A large majority also agree that Guelph is an environmentally responsible City (90%) which is similar to the 2019 results (88%)

An area that saw the greatest improvement was the proportion of respondents who perceive Guelph as a great place to own a business. A total of 78% of respondents either agree or strongly agree which is up 22 points from 2019 (56%). While this increase is a positive upwards trend, the information was gathered through a random sampling of residents, rather than a focus on those who specifically own businesses in Guelph. An additional employment survey is being conducted to better understand Guelph's local economic profile which can better inform targeted surveys in the future.

An area that has been identified for improvement is the proportion of respondents reporting that they felt a sense of belonging in the City of Guelph (63%). This is a reduction from previous reporting periods (2019 - 86% and 2017 - 88%). This data also informs a strategic plan KPI in the Building our Future priority area and will continue to be reported in the Strategic Plan Progress Report. The decrease in 2022 can be attributed to a revised methodology from previous surveys including the way the question was asked and the set of accompanying statements in the question which can impact the results. These changes helped to create alignment with the Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership (GWLIP) Discrimination Survey. The GWLIP survey also asks this question and will be conducted every alternate year to the satisfaction survey. By changing the methodology of this question for this and future surveys, the City can receive ongoing, timely data on an annual basis regarding perception of sense of belonging of Guelph residents.

Regarding taxes and user fees or rates and services delivered, residents continue to believe that they are receiving good value for their tax dollars and user fees or rates but are divided in their preference for the City to pay for services.

- Eight in ten (78%) residents continue to believe that they receive good value for their tax dollars and user fees or rates.
- The proportion who think they get very good value is more than three times greater than the number who think it is very poor (22% vs. 6%).
- The perceived value for tax dollars and user fees or rates continues to be comparable with the National Norm, including the proportion who say it is very good (22% vs. 20%, respectively).

There is a slight preference to increase user fees for programs used by residents (35%, up by 9 points from 2019), closely followed by the preference to increase

taxes to both enhance or expand services, and modernize and maintain services (32%, down 3 points from 2019). This information provides important context for the upcoming multi-year budget and planning for future service delivery.

The inclusion of more specific service-related questions in past satisfaction surveys created challenges in understanding the context and drivers contributing to the results, and as such they were removed from this year's survey. The 2022 CoGSS included high-level questions, and those regarding customer satisfaction based on who had contact with the City in the past 12 months. While the overall results from interactions with the City is very positive, residents were also asked if they knew how or where to report the level of satisfaction with their service experience. Of those who responded:

- 62% did not know how to report their satisfaction experience
- 59% did not know where to report their satisfaction experience

There are key differences in the responses received from the population subgroups of Millennials, Gen Xers and Boomers. Ipsos defines the age ranges for Millennials as those that fall within the age range of 18-34, Gen Xers as ages 35-54, and Boomers as ages 55+.

The belief that one can influence municipal decisions was:

- Highest for Millennials (15%)
- Followed by Boomers (8%) and
- Gen Xers (6%)

In terms of how respondents prefer to get information about the city, there are some clear differences in the subpopulation groups:

- Millennials and Gen Xers are more likely to use digital methods such as social media
- Boomers are more likely to prefer print sources such as the Guelph Mercury Tribune

There were also differences in those that think Guelph is achieving its goal to be a Future Ready City with:

- Millennials reporting the highest optimism and agreement (71%)
- Followed by Boomers (61%) and
- Gen Xers (56%)

As we move towards achieving the goals set out in the strategic plan, it is important to engage the community regarding our vision of being a Future Ready City. These strategic outcomes will benefit both our current state and improve the city and community for the next generation. Based on these results, Millennials are slightly more engaged and optimistic about the future of Guelph, and their role in it, when compared to Gen Xers and Boomers.

### **How will we use these findings?**

The CoGSS is an important way for the City to understand the community's experiences, and the results of this survey will be used to inform different priorities, initiatives and processes within the City including:

- Informing the upcoming strategic planning process (2024-2028)
- Informing budget planning by identifying gaps, maximizing efficiencies in aligning resources and investment decisions
- Being transparent by sharing performance data on residents' experiences
- Influencing various departmental objectives and KPIs
- Informing customer satisfaction measurement
- Aligning demographic questions throughout all community engagement surveys
- Aligning sense of belonging questions to the Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership discrimination survey
- Supporting the working together for our future strategic priority by collecting, sharing and using data to directly improve service delivery
- Using residents' experience to ensure the City of Guelph continues to be a transparent and open local government

### **Future Methodology**

The next Satisfaction Survey is scheduled to take place in 2024 and will follow a similar methodology. This allows for the comparison of results to previous years to show annual trends in the data. Through the analysis of the current results, additional areas for improvement to the methodology were noted. Where multiple choice answers were required, the use of the category 'other' was provided. If large numbers of respondents selected this option, a review will be conducted to improve representation in the options. Additionally, efforts will be made to remain consistent in the wording and approach to the questions wherever possible. Changes in approach can influence responses and increase opportunities for variances, making year to year comparisons difficult.

It is important to recognize that the Satisfaction Survey collects data on topics that are sometimes beyond the sole responsibility of Guelph's municipal government. As reflected in the survey findings, some of the issues facing Guelph today, such as COVID-19, inflation and housing affordability require a concerted community-wide response and are not the sole responsibility of one organization or level of government. Aspects of this required community collaboration is happening through the Community Plan work. By using this data to inform the work with community members and partners, the City is able to better identify areas where it can collaborate and align efforts to make improvements.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

### **Consultations**

The following departments were engaged with during the development and design of the 2022 Satisfaction Survey:

- Strategy, Innovation and Intergovernmental Services
- City Clerk's Office
- Strategic Communication and Community Engagement
- Finance Department
- Economic Development and Tourism

- Culture and Recreation

### **Strategic Plan Alignment**

Findings from the 2022 CoGSS directly support the “Working Together for our Future” strategic priority. They can also function as inputs to the development of all five strategic priorities. The City can effectively work on improving resident experience, interactions and perceptions by collecting this information. This helps to reinforce the City of Guelph as an effective, responsible and trusted local government. The CoGSS findings can directly inform budget and strategic planning, ensuring the City is able to prioritize actions that are both relevant and achievable.

### **Attachments**

Attachment-1: City of Guelph 2022 Satisfaction Survey

### **Departmental Approval**

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