



# City of Dallas

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## The City of Dallas, Texas

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### Report of Normative Comparisons Jurisdictions with Populations over 250,000 2007



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# SURVEY BACKGROUND

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## About The National Citizen Survey™

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The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA).

The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality survey methods and comparable results across The National Citizen Survey™ jurisdictions. Participating households are selected at random and the household member who responds is selected without bias. Multiple mailings give each household more than one chance to participate with self-addressed and postage paid envelopes. Results are statistically weighted to reflect the proper demographic composition of the entire community.

The National Citizen Survey™ customized for this jurisdiction was developed in close cooperation with local jurisdiction staff. The City of Dallas staff selected items from a menu of questions about services and community problems; they defined the jurisdiction boundaries NRC used for sampling; and they provided the appropriate letterhead and signatures for mailings. City of Dallas staff also determined local interest in a variety of add-on options to The National Citizen Survey™ Basic Service.

# UNDERSTANDING THE NORMATIVE COMPARISONS

## Comparison Data

National Research Center, Inc. has collected citizen surveys conducted in over 500 jurisdictions in the United States. Responses to thousands of survey questions dealing with resident perceptions about the quality of community life and services provided by local government were recorded, analyzed and stored in an electronic database.

The jurisdictions in the database represent a wide geographic and population range as shown in the table below.

Jurisdiction Characteristic	Percent of Jurisdictions
<b>Region</b>	
West Coast <sup>1</sup>	16%
West <sup>2</sup>	21%
North Central West <sup>3</sup>	12%
North Central East <sup>4</sup>	12%
South Central <sup>5</sup>	9%
South <sup>6</sup>	25%
Northeast West <sup>7</sup>	3%
Northeast East <sup>8</sup>	2%
<b>Population</b>	
Less than 40,000	38%
40,000 to 74,999	21%
75,000 to 149,000	17%
150,000 or more	24%

<sup>1</sup> Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii

<sup>2</sup> Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico

<sup>3</sup> North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Minnesota

<sup>4</sup> Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin

<sup>5</sup> Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas

<sup>6</sup> West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Maryland, Delaware, Washington DC

<sup>7</sup> New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey

<sup>8</sup> Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine

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## Use of the “Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor” Response Scale

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The scale on which respondents are asked to record their opinions about service and community quality is “excellent,” “good,” “fair” or “poor” (EGFP). This scale has important advantages over other scale possibilities (very good to very bad; very satisfied to very dissatisfied; strongly agree to strongly disagree, as examples). EGFP is used by the plurality of jurisdictions conducting citizen surveys across the U.S. The advantage of familiarity is one we did not want to dismiss because elected officials, staff and residents already are acquainted with opinion surveys measured this way. EGFP also has the advantage of offering three positive options, rather than only two, over which a resident can offer an opinion. While symmetrical scales often are the right choice in other measurement tasks, we have found that ratings of almost every local government service in almost every jurisdiction tend, on average, to be positive (that is, above the scale midpoint). Therefore, to permit finer distinctions among positively rated services, EGFP offers three options across which to spread those ratings. EGFP is more neutral because it requires no positive statement of service quality to judge (as agree-disagree scales require) and, finally, EGFP intends to measure absolute quality of service delivery or community quality (unlike satisfaction scales which ignore residents’ perceptions of quality in favor of their report on the acceptability of the level of service offered).

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## Putting Evaluations onto a 100-Point Scale

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Although responses to many of the evaluative questions were made on a 4 point scale with 1 representing the best rating and 4 the worst, many of the results in this summary are reported on a common scale where 0 is the worst possible rating and 100 is the best possible rating. If everyone reported “excellent,” then the result would be 100 on the 100-point scale. Likewise, if all respondents gave a “poor” rating, the result would be 0 on the 100-point scale. If the average rating for quality of life was “good,” then the result would be 67 on a 100-point scale; “fair” would be 33 on the 100-point scale. The 95 percent confidence interval around an average score on the 100-point scale is no greater than plus or minus 2 points based on all respondents.

## Interpreting the Results

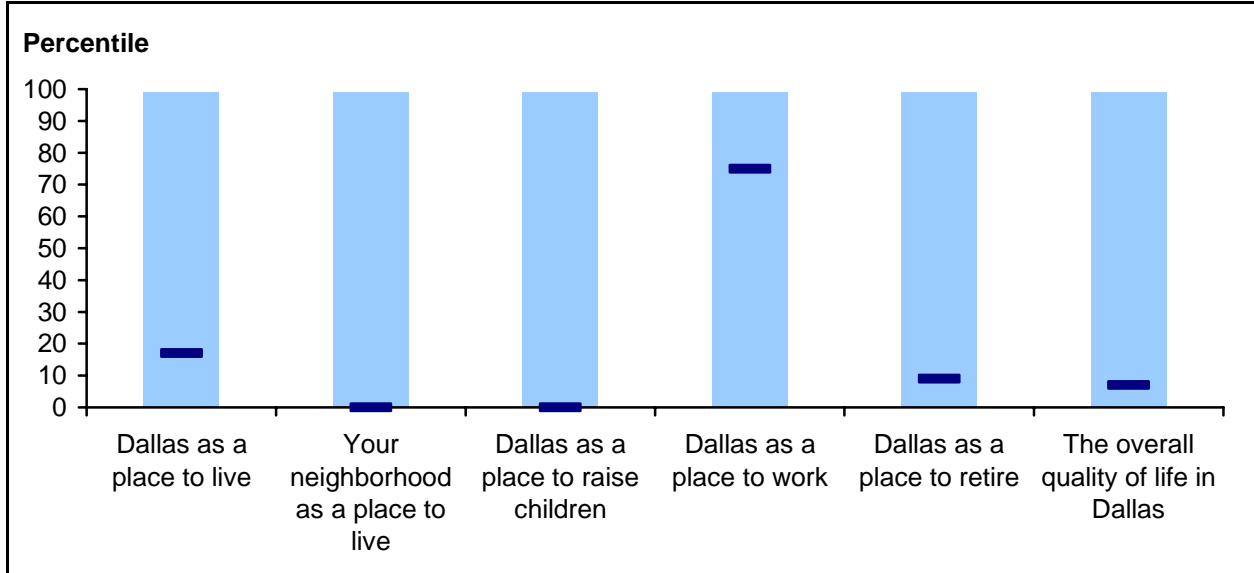
Comparisons are provided when similar questions are included in our database, and there are at least five other jurisdictions in which the question was asked. Where comparisons are available, three numbers are provided in the table. The first column is your jurisdiction's rating on the 100-point scale. The second column is the rank assigned to your jurisdiction's rating among jurisdictions where a similar question was asked. The third column is the number of jurisdictions that asked a similar question. Fourth, the rank is expressed as a percentile to indicate its distance from the top score. This rank (5th highest out of 25 jurisdictions' results, for example) translates to a percentile (the 80th percentile in this example). A percentile indicates the percent of jurisdictions with identical or lower ratings. Therefore, a rating at the 80th percentile would mean that your jurisdiction's rating is equal to or better than 80 percent of the ratings from other jurisdictions. Conversely, 20 percent of the jurisdictions where a similar question was asked had higher ratings.

Alongside the rank and percentile appears a comparison: "above the norm," "below the norm" or "similar to the norm." This evaluation of "above," "below" or "similar to" comes from a statistical comparison of your jurisdiction's rating to the norm (the average rating from all the comparison jurisdictions where a similar question was asked). Differences of no more than 2 points on the 100-point scale between your jurisdiction's ratings and the average based on the appropriate comparisons from the database are considered "statistically significant," and thus are marked as "above" or "below" the norm. When differences between your jurisdiction's ratings and the national norms are less than 2 points, they are marked as "similar to" the norm.

The data are represented visually in a chart that accompanies each table. Your jurisdiction's percentile for each compared item is marked with a black line on the chart. The data in this report are exclusively from jurisdictions with populations of 250,000 or over.

# COMPARISONS

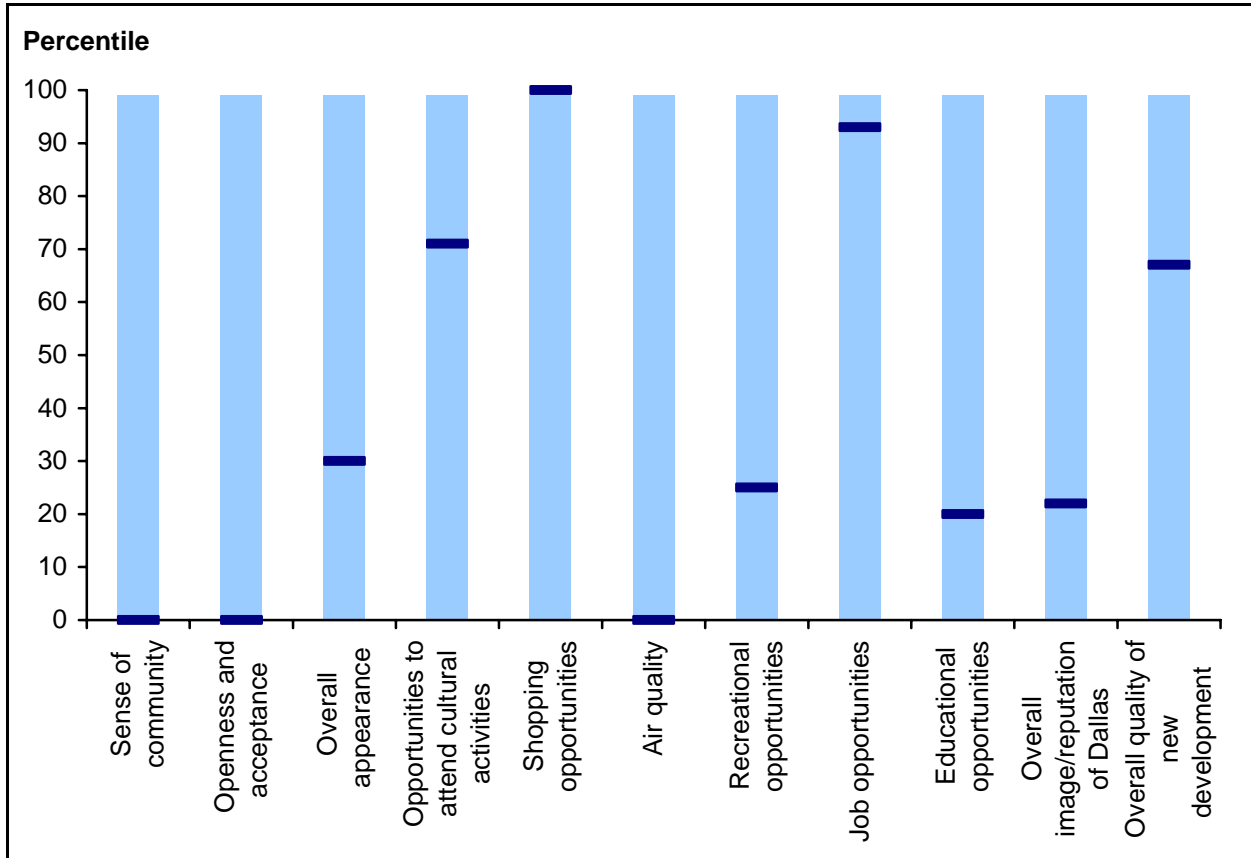
Figure 1: Quality of Life Ratings (Populations Over 250,000)



Quality of Life Ratings (Populations Over 250,000)

	City of Dallas Rating	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	City of Dallas Percentile	Comparison of Dallas Rating to Norm
How do you rate Dallas as a place to live?	57	21	25	17%ile	Below the norm
How do you rate your neighborhood as a place to live?	48	12	12	0%ile	Below the norm
How do you rate Dallas as a place to raise children?	43	15	15	0%ile	Below the norm
How do you rate Dallas as a place to work?	58	3	9	75%ile	Above the norm
How do you rate Dallas as a place to retire?	40	11	12	9%ile	Below the norm
How do you rate the overall quality of life in Dallas?	51	15	16	7%ile	Below the norm

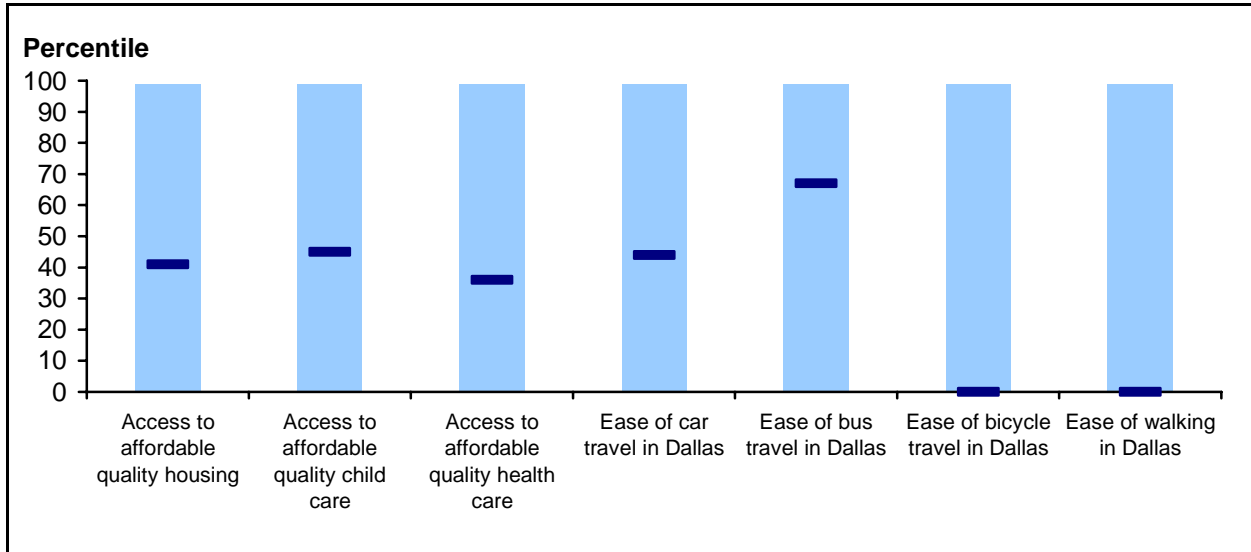
Figure 2: Characteristics of the Community: General and Opportunities (Populations Over 250,000)





<b>Characteristics of the Community: General and Opportunities (Populations Over 250,000)</b>					
	<b>City of Dallas Rating</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison</b>	<b>City of Dallas Percentile</b>	<b>Comparison of Dallas Rating to Norm</b>
Sense of community	40	10	10	0%ile	Below the norm
Openness and acceptance of the community towards people of diverse backgrounds	42	7	7	0%ile	Below the norm
Overall appearance of Dallas	49	8	11	30%ile	Below the norm
Opportunities to attend cultural activities	60	3	8	71%ile	Above the norm
Shopping opportunities	74	1	5	100%ile	Above the norm
Air quality	36	9	9	0%ile	Below the norm
Recreational opportunities	52	7	9	25%ile	Below the norm
Job opportunities	52	2	16	93%ile	Above the norm
Educational opportunities	56	5	6	20%ile	Below the norm
Overall image/reputation of Dallas	47	8	10	22%ile	Below the norm
Overall quality of new development in Dallas	54	3	7	67%ile	Similar to the norm

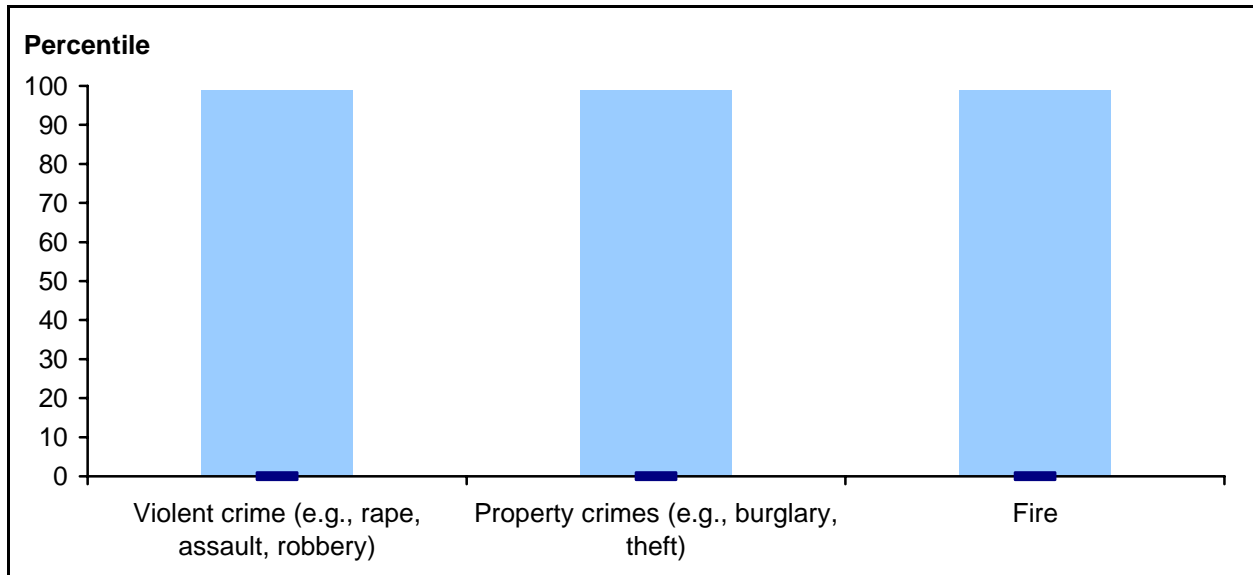
**Figure 3: Characteristics of the Community: Access and Mobility (Populations Over 250,000)**



**Characteristics of the Community: Access and Mobility (Populations Over 250,000)**

	City of Dallas Rating	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	City of Dallas Percentile	Comparison of Dallas Rating to Norm
Access to affordable quality housing	42	14	23	41%ile	Below the norm
Access to affordable quality child care	38	7	12	45%ile	Below the norm
Access to affordable quality health care	41	8	12	36%ile	Below the norm
Ease of car travel in Dallas	43	6	10	44%ile	Similar to the norm
Ease of bus travel in Dallas	48	4	10	67%ile	Above the norm
Ease of bicycle travel in Dallas	33	8	8	0%ile	Below the norm
Ease of walking in Dallas	35	9	9	0%ile	Below the norm
Ease of rail/subway travel in Dallas	49				Comparison data not available
Access to affordable quality food	57				Comparison data not available

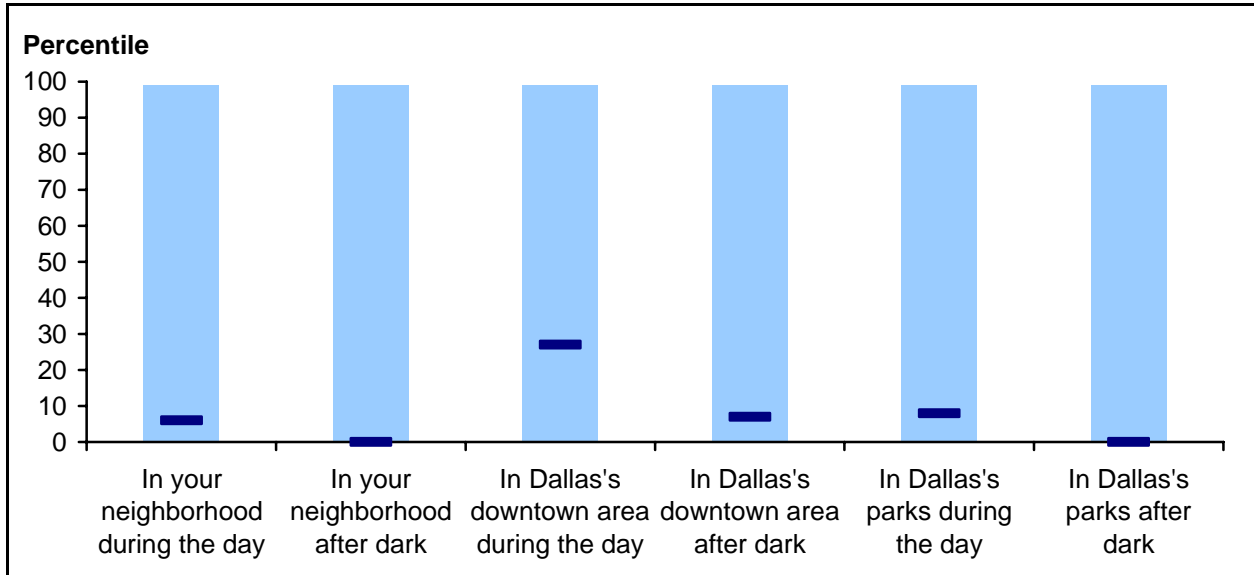
**Figure 4: Ratings of Safety from Various Problems (Populations Over 250,000)**



**Ratings of Safety From Various Problems (Populations Over 250,000)**

	City of Dallas Rating	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	City of Dallas Percentile	Comparison of Dallas Rating to Norm
Violent crime (e.g., rape, assault, robbery)	34	11	11	0%ile	Below the norm
Property crimes (e.g., burglary, theft)	28	11	11	0%ile	Below the norm
Fire	57	11	11	0%ile	Below the norm

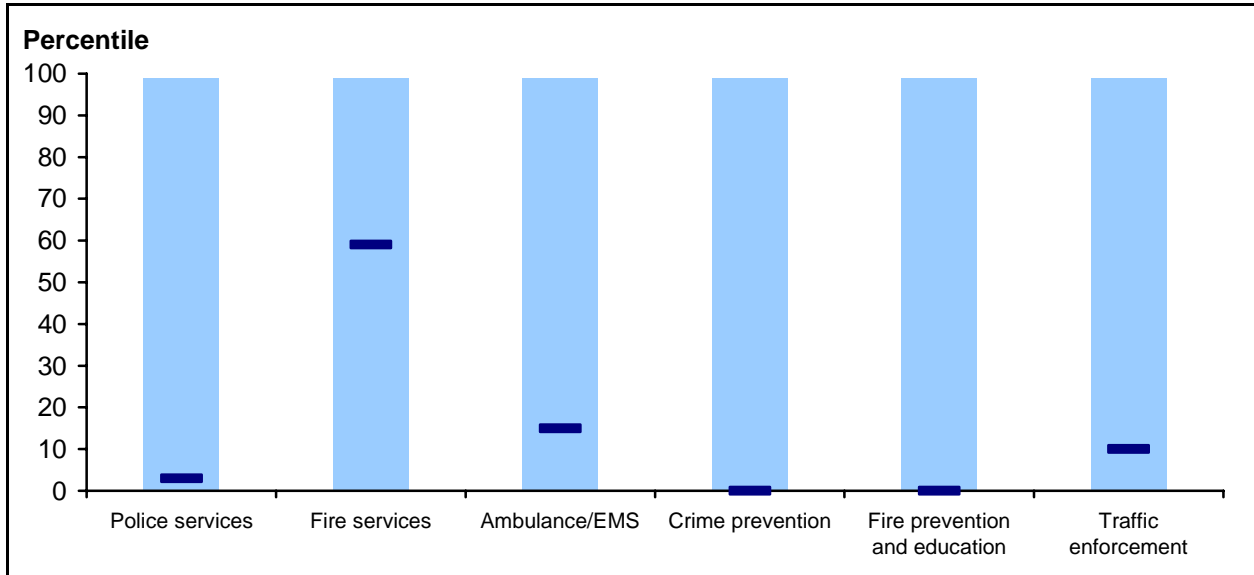
Figure 5: Ratings of Safety in Various Areas (Populations Over 250,000)



Ratings of Safety in Various Areas (Populations Over 250,000)

	City of Dallas Rating	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	City of Dallas Percentile	Comparison of Dallas Rating to Norm
In your neighborhood during the day	69	18	19	6%ile	Below the norm
In your neighborhood after dark	45	20	20	0%ile	Below the norm
In Dallas's downtown area during the day	66	9	12	27%ile	Below the norm
In Dallas's downtown area after dark	28	14	15	7%ile	Below the norm
In Dallas's parks during the day	64	12	13	8%ile	Below the norm
In Dallas's parks after dark	21	13	13	0%ile	Below the norm

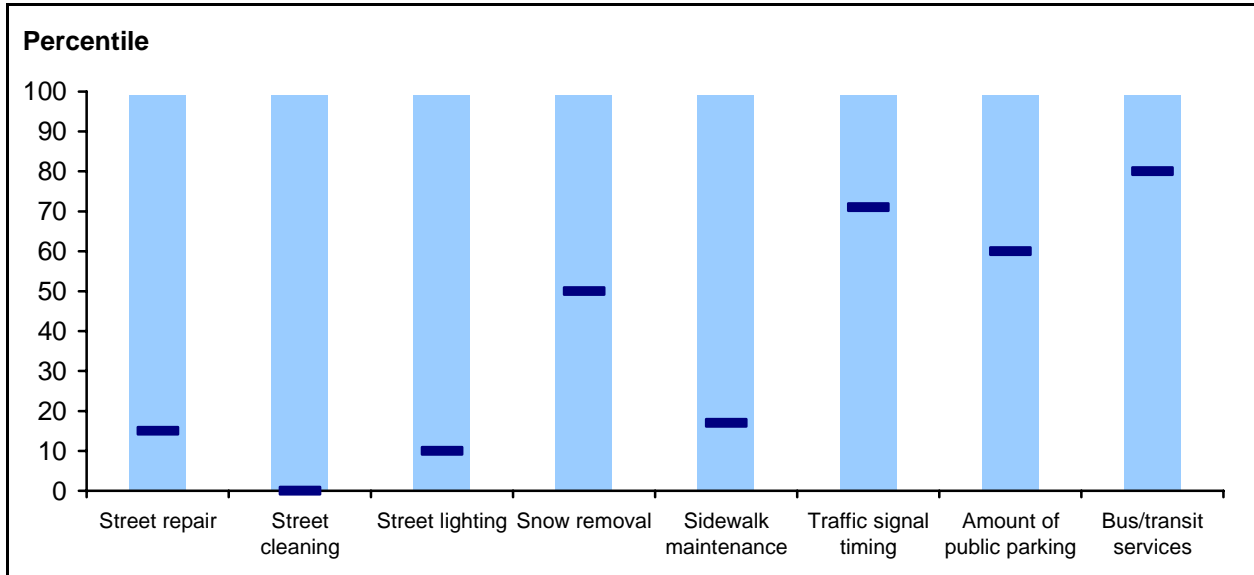
**Figure 6: Quality of Public Safety Services (Populations Over 250,000)**



**Quality of Public Safety Services (Populations Over 250,000)**

	City of Dallas Rating	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	City of Dallas Percentile	Comparison of Dallas Rating to Norm
Police services	46	31	32	3%ile	Below the norm
Fire services	69	10	23	59%ile	Similar to the norm
Ambulance/emergency medical services	66	12	14	15%ile	Below the norm
Crime prevention	32	14	14	0%ile	Below the norm
Fire prevention and education	51	7	7	0%ile	Below the norm
Traffic enforcement	42	10	11	10%ile	Below the norm

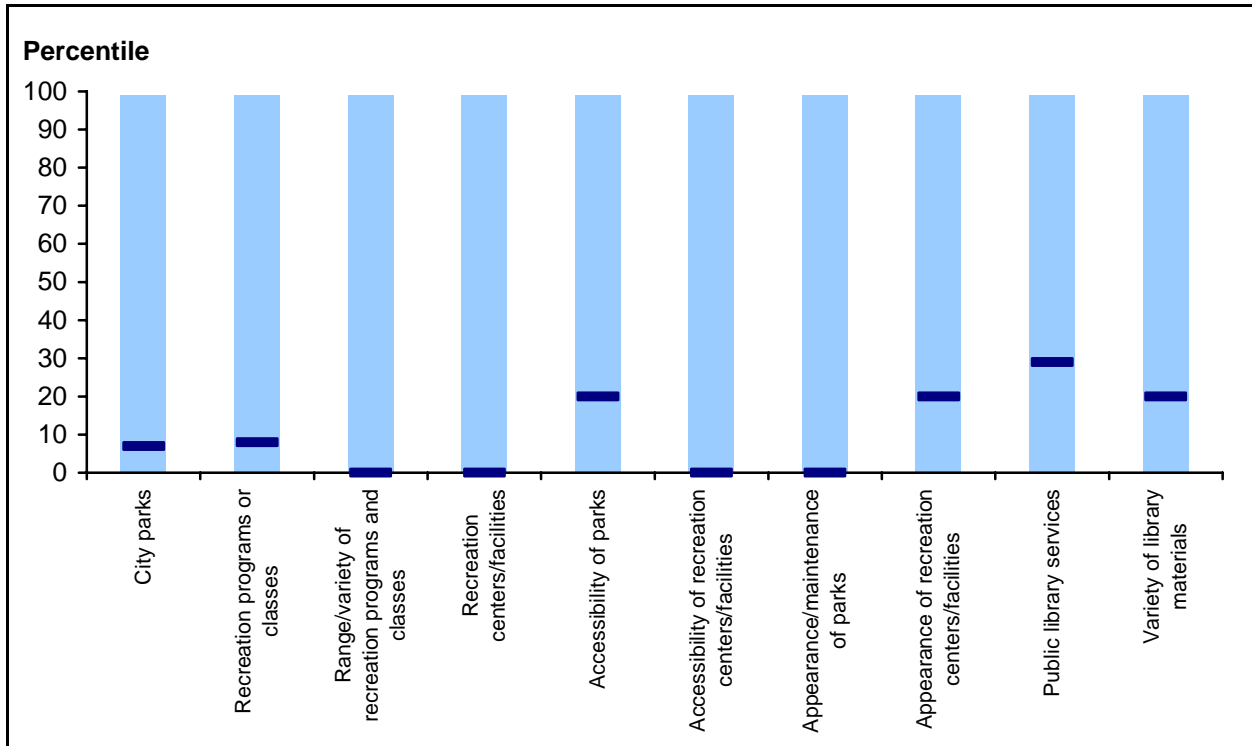
Figure 7: Quality of Transportation Services (Populations Over 250,000)



Quality of Transportation Services (Populations Over 250,000)

	City of Dallas Rating	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	City of Dallas Percentile	Comparison of Dallas Rating to Norm
Street repair	25	18	21	15%ile	Below the norm
Street cleaning	34	8	8	0%ile	Below the norm
Street lighting	36	10	11	10%ile	Below the norm
Snow removal	49	6	11	50%ile	Above the norm
Sidewalk maintenance	31	6	7	17%ile	Below the norm
Traffic signal timing	41	3	8	71%ile	Similar to the norm
Amount of public parking	39	3	6	60%ile	Above the norm
Bus/transit services	54	3	11	80%ile	Above the norm

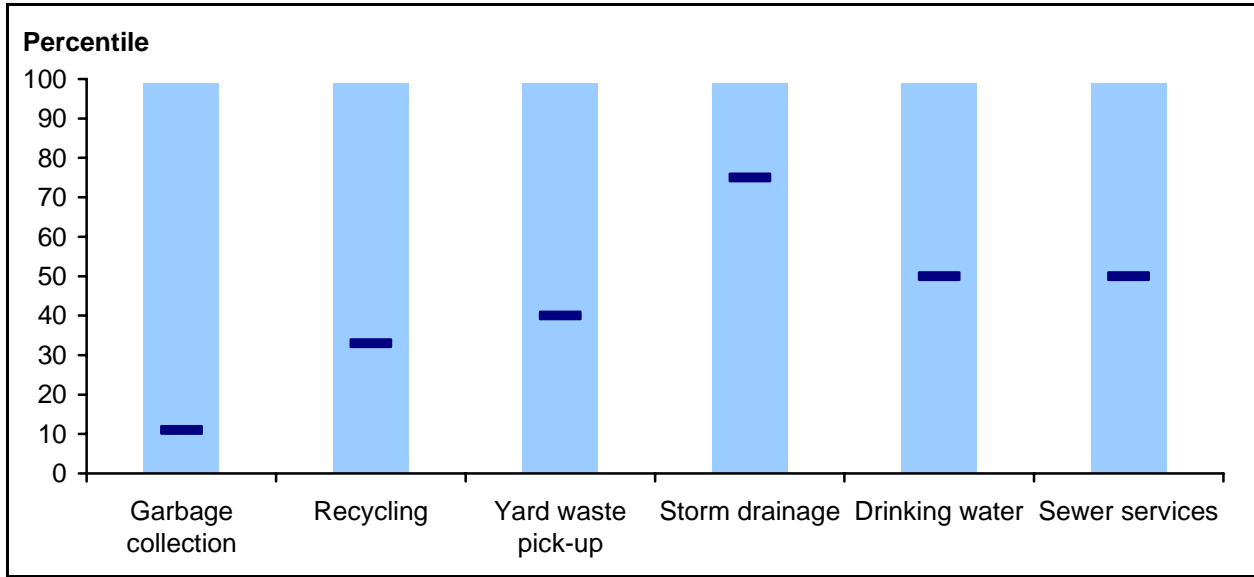
Figure 8: Quality of Leisure Services (Populations Over 250,000)



Quality of Leisure Services (Populations Over 250,000)

	City of Dallas Rating	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	City of Dallas Percentile	Comparison of Dallas Rating to Norm
City parks	52	14	15	7%ile	Below the norm
Recreation programs or classes	50	13	14	8%ile	Below the norm
Range/variety of recreation programs and classes	47	6	6	0%ile	Below the norm
Recreation centers/facilities	49	6	6	0%ile	Below the norm
Accessibility of parks	55	5	6	20%ile	Below the norm
Accessibility of recreation centers/facilities	52	5	5	0%ile	Below the norm
Appearance/maintenance of parks	49	8	8	0%ile	Below the norm
Appearance of recreation centers/facilities	50	5	6	20%ile	Below the norm
Public library services	62	16	22	29%ile	Below the norm
Variety of library materials	59	5	6	20%ile	Below the norm

**Figure 9: Quality of Utility Services (Populations Over 250,000)**

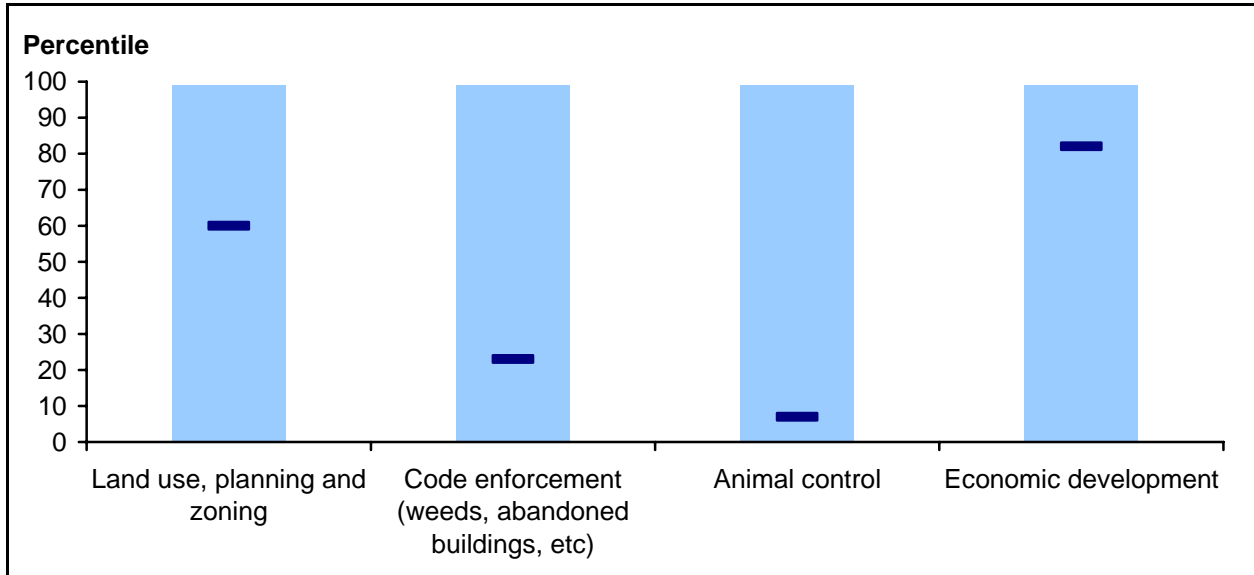


**Quality of Utility Services (Populations Over 250,000)**

	City of Dallas Rating	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	City of Dallas Percentile	Comparison of Dallas Rating to Norm
Garbage collection	58	9	10	11%ile	Below the norm
Recycling	48	7	10	33%ile	Below the norm
Yard waste pick-up	52	4	6	40%ile	Below the norm
Storm drainage	44	4	13	75%ile	Above the norm
Drinking water	49	5	9	50%ile	Similar to the norm
Sewer services	52	3	5	50%ile	Similar to the norm



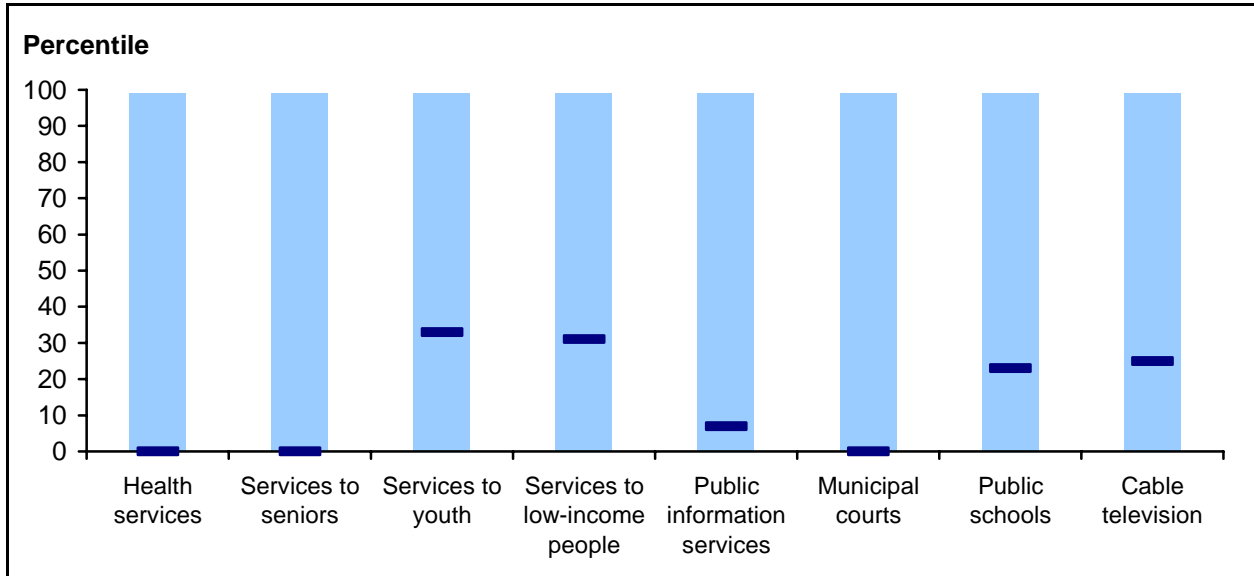
**Figure 10: Quality of Planning and Code Enforcement Services (Populations Over 250,000)**



**Quality of Planning and Code Enforcement Services (Populations Over 250,000)**

	City of Dallas Rating	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	City of Dallas Percentile	Comparison of Dallas Rating to Norm
Land use, planning and zoning	39	7	16	60%ile	Above the norm
Code enforcement (weeds, abandoned buildings, etc)	33	11	14	23%ile	Below the norm
Animal control	36	14	15	7%ile	Below the norm
Economic development	46	3	12	82%ile	Above the norm

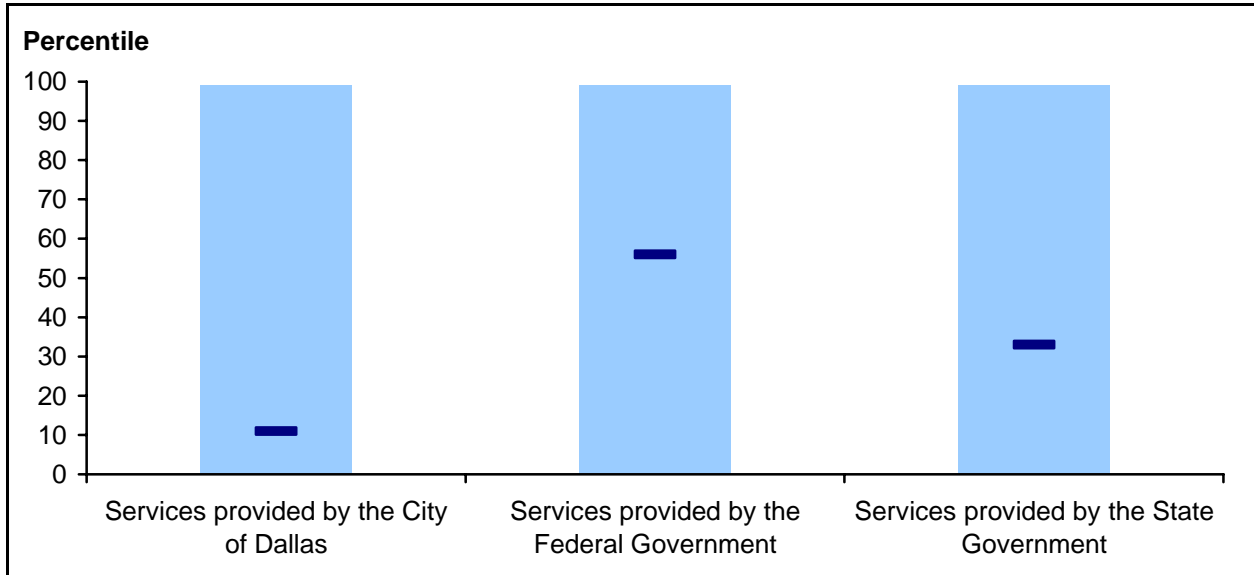
**Figure 11: Quality of Services to Special Populations and Other Services (Populations Over 250,000)**



**Quality of Services to Special Populations and Other Services (Populations Over 250,000)**

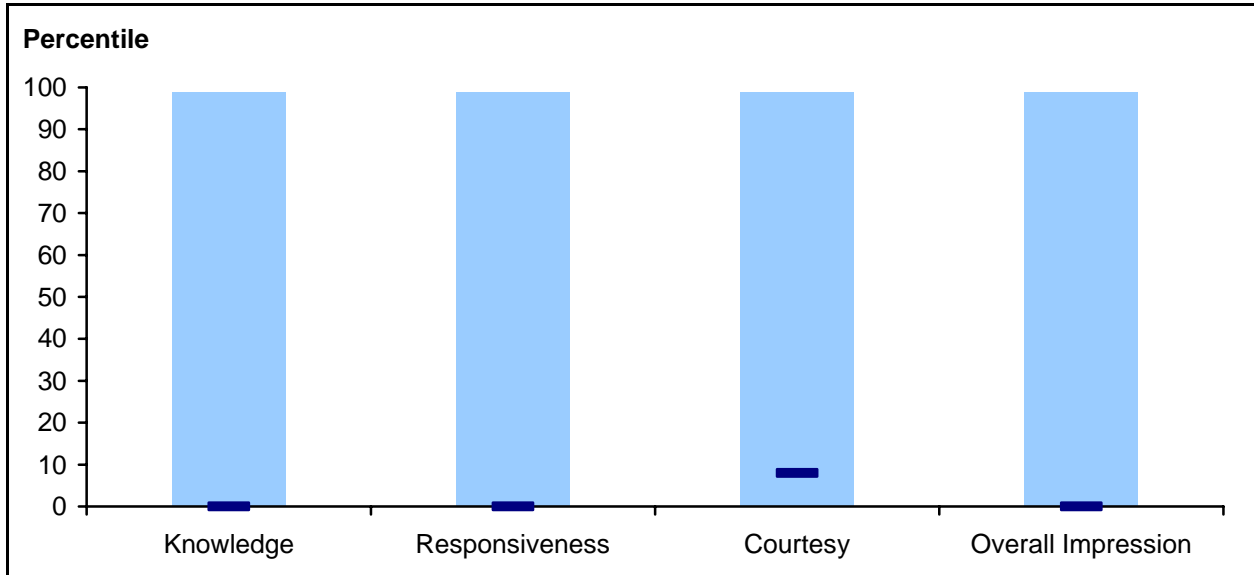
	City of Dallas Rating	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	City of Dallas Percentile	Comparison of Dallas Rating to Norm
Health services	46	10	10	0%ile	Below the norm
Services to seniors	41	15	15	0%ile	Below the norm
Services to youth	37	5	7	33%ile	Below the norm
Services to low-income people	34	10	14	31%ile	Similar to the norm
Public information services	49	14	15	7%ile	Below the norm
Municipal courts	44	7	7	0%ile	Below the norm
Public schools	39	11	14	23%ile	Below the norm
Cable television	43	4	5	25%ile	Below the norm

Figure 12: Overall Quality of Services (Populations Over 250,000)



Overall Quality of Services (Populations Over 250,000)					
	City of Dallas Rating	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	City of Dallas Percentile	Comparison of Dallas Rating to Norm
Services provided by the City of Dallas	47	17	19	11%ile	Below the norm
Services provided by the Federal Government	41	5	10	56%ile	Similar to the norm
Services provided by the State Government	42	7	10	33%ile	Similar to the norm

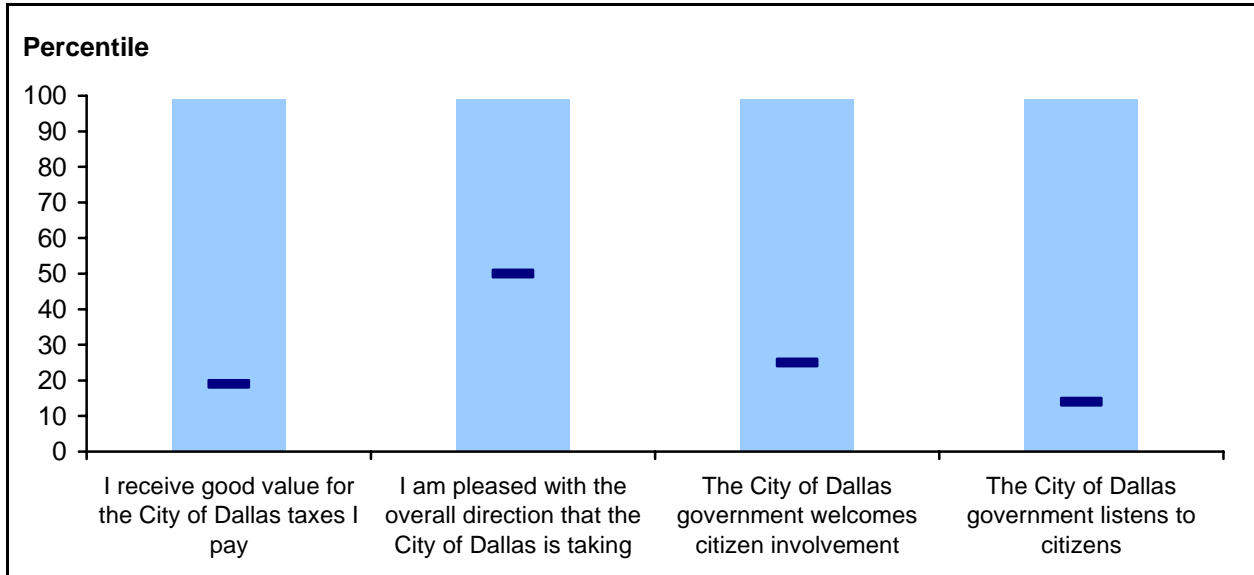
Figure 13: Ratings of Contact with City Employees (Populations Over 250,000)



Ratings of Contact with the City Employees (Populations Over 250,000)

	City of Dallas Rating	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	City of Dallas Percentile	Comparison of Dallas Rating to Norm
Knowledge	53	16	16	0%ile	Below the norm
Responsiveness	46	15	15	0%ile	Below the norm
Courtesy	52	12	13	8%ile	Below the norm
Overall Impression	49	17	17	0%ile	Below the norm

Figure 14: Ratings of Public Trust (Populations Over 250,000)



Ratings of Public Trust (Populations Over 250,000)

	City of Dallas Rating	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	City of Dallas Percentile	Comparison of Dallas Rating to Norm
I receive good value for the City of Dallas taxes I pay	50	14	17	19%ile	Below the norm
I am pleased with the overall direction that the City of Dallas is taking	51	7	13	50%ile	Below the norm
The City of Dallas government welcomes citizen involvement	53	10	13	25%ile	Below the norm
The City of Dallas government listens to citizens	46	13	15	14%ile	Below the norm

## APPENDIX A: LIST OF JURISDICTIONS INCLUDED IN NORMATIVE COMPARISONS (JURISDICTIONS WITH POPULATIONS OVER 250,000)

Jurisdiction Name	State	2000 Population
Tucson	AZ	486,699
Long Beach	CA	461,522
Riverside	CA	255,166
San Bernardino County	CA	1,709,434
San Francisco	CA	776,733
San Jose	CA	894,943
Santa Barbara County	CA	399,347
Boulder County	CO	291,288
Denver (City and County)	CO	554,636
Jefferson County	CO	527,056
Larimer County	CO	251,494
Brevard County	FL	476,230
Broward County	FL	1,623,018
Duval County	FL	778,879
Miami-Dade County	FL	2,253,362
Palm Beach County	FL	1,131,184
Pinellas County	FL	921,482
Volusia County	FL	443,343
Honolulu	HI	876,156
Polk County	IA	374,601
Wichita	KS	344,284
Lexington	KY	260,512
Jefferson Parish	LA	455,466
Orleans Parish	LA	484,674
Detroit	MI	951,270
Dakota County	MN	355,904
Minneapolis	MN	382,618

## The City of Dallas Citizen Survey

### Jurisdictions in Comparisons

<b>Jurisdiction Name</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>2000 Population</b>
St. Paul	MN	287,151
Kansas City	MO	441,545
Charlotte	NC	540,828
Albuquerque	NM	448,607
Washoe County	NV	339,486
Columbus	OH	711,470
Oklahoma City	OK	506,132
Portland	OR	529,121
Philadelphia	PA	1,517,550
Arlington	TX	332,969
Austin	TX	656,562
Corpus Christi	TX	277,454
El Paso	TX	563,662
Fort Worth	TX	534,694
Chesterfield County	VA	259,903
Prince William County	VA	280,813
King County	WA	1,737,034

# APPENDIX B: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CITIZEN SURVEY DATABASE

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## **What is in the citizen survey database?**

NRC's database includes the results from citizen surveys conducted in over 500 jurisdictions in the United States. These are public opinion polls answered by hundreds of thousands of residents around the country. We have recorded, analyzed and stored responses to thousands of survey questions dealing with resident perceptions about the quality of community life and public trust and residents' report of their use of public facilities. Respondents to these surveys are intended to represent over 50 million Americans.

## **What kinds of questions are included?**

Residents' ratings of the quality of virtually every kind of local government service are included – from police, fire and trash haul to animal control, planning and cemeteries. Many dimensions of quality of life are included such as feeling of safety and opportunities for dining, recreation and shopping as well as ratings of the overall quality of community life and community as a place to raise children and retire.

## **What is so unique about National Research Center's Citizen Survey database?**

It is the only database of its size that contains the people's perceptions about government service delivery and quality of life. For example, others use government statistics about crime to deduce the quality of police services or speed of pot hole repair to draw conclusions about the quality of street maintenance. Only National Research Center's database adds the opinion of service recipients themselves to the service quality equation. We believe that conclusions about service or community quality are made prematurely if opinions of the community's residents themselves are missing.

## **What is the database used for?**

Benchmarking. Our clients use the comparative information in the database to help interpret their own citizen survey results, to create or revise community plans, to evaluate the success of policy or budget decisions, to measure local government performance. We don't know what is small or tall without comparing. Taking the pulse of the community has little meaning without knowing what pulse rate is too high and what is too low. So many surveys of service satisfaction turn up at least "good" citizen evaluations that we need to know how others rate their services to understand if "good" is good enough. Furthermore, in the absence of national or peer community comparisons, a jurisdiction is left with comparing its fire protection rating to its street maintenance rating. That comparison is unfair. Streets always lose to fire. We need to



ask more important and harder questions. We need to know how our residents' ratings of fire service compare to opinions about fire service in other communities.

### **So what if we find that our public opinions are better or – for that matter – worse than opinions in other communities? What does it mean?**

A police department that provides the fastest and most efficient service—one that closes most of its cases, solves most of its crimes and keeps the crime rate low—still has a problem to fix if its clients believe services are not very good compared to ratings received by objectively “worse” departments.

National Research Center's database can help that police department – or any city department – to understand how well citizens think it is doing. Without the comparative data from National Research Center's database, it would be like bowling in a tournament without knowing what the other teams are scoring. We recommend that citizen opinion be used in conjunction with other sources of data to help managers know how to respond to comparative results.

### **Aren't comparisons of questions from different surveys like comparing apples and oranges?**

It is true that you can't simply take a given result from one survey and compare it to the result from a different survey. National Research Center, Inc. principals have pioneered and reported their methods for converting all survey responses to the same scale. Because scales responses will differ among types of survey questions, National Research Center, Inc. statisticians have developed statistical algorithms, which adjust question results based on many characteristics of the question, its scale and the survey methods. All results are then converted to the PTM (percent to maximum) scale with a minimum score of 0 (equaling the lowest possible rating) to a maximum score of 100 (equaling the highest possible rating). We then can provide a norm that not only controls for question differences, but also controls for differences in types of survey methods. This way we put all questions on the same scale and a norm can be offered for communities of given sizes or in various regions.

### **How can managers trust the comparability of results?**

Principals of National Research Center, Inc. have submitted their work to peer reviewed scholarly journals where its publication fully describes the rigor of our methods and the quality of our findings. We have published articles in *Public Administration Review*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* and *Governing*, and we wrote a book, *Citizen Surveys: How to do them, how to use them, what they mean*, that describes in detail how survey responses can be adjusted to provide fair comparisons for ratings among many jurisdictions. Our work on calculating national norms for resident opinions about service delivery and quality of life won the Samuel C. May award for research excellence from the Western Governmental Research Association.