

2021



Citizen Survey Report

Prepared By:

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
Department of Public Administration

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
Center for Customized Research

Introduction

Since 2009, the City of Oshkosh has partnered with the Department of Public Administration at the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh (UWO) to conduct the Oshkosh Citizen Survey. Residents are asked questions pertaining to their overall quality of life, feelings of safety, and city services. This report offers a detailed analysis of the results of the 2021 survey, which was conducted between February and April. These results are meant to provide insight into issues that are of importance to Oshkosh residents. This report is organized into the following sections.

First, the methodology section provides an overview of how the survey data was collected. Next, participant demographic characteristics are presented, including a breakdown of the proportion of participants by: sex, age, race, ethnicity, and annual household income. Lastly, a short conclusion summarizes the results.

Finally, responses to questions about services provided by the City of Oshkosh are presented. The section begins by presenting results concerning quality of life indicators. That is followed by an examination of how safe residents feel in their homes, neighborhoods, and business/commercial areas during the day and after dark. City service results are highlighted according to how residents rank their *quality* and how *important* they feel services are to the community overall. Twenty-eight services are grouped by department and presented under the subheadings of: public safety, public works, community services, economic development, parks, and transportation.

Methodology

The survey was distributed through Polco, an online polling company designed to connect local governments with their communities. The City advertised the survey on their website and via social media. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, additional outreach into the community was not possible for the current iteration of the survey. This limitation should be taken into account when comparing 2021 results with prior year responses.

A total of 204 residents participated in the survey. Of those, 148 (72.5%) were registered voters according to Polco. The other 56 (27.5%) were not registered voters.

Participant Demographic Overview

Polco provides demographic data related to sex and age based on its access to voter registration records. The first two charts are calculated based on those participants that are registered to vote.

Chart 1 includes the breakdown of respondents by sex. There were 84 respondents (41.2%) that identified as female and a lower number, 63 respondents (30.8%), that were identified as male. The remaining 57 respondents (27.9%) could not be identified by sex based on Polco records.

1. Participants by Sex

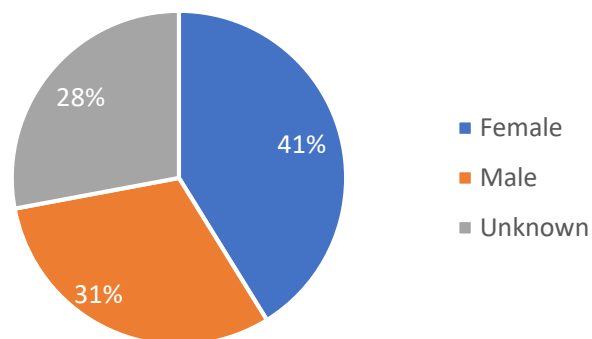
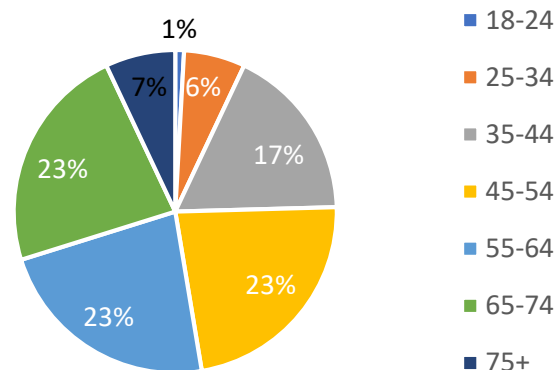


Chart 2 includes the proportion of participants by age range based on voter registration records. The majority of survey respondents (68.4%) were between the ages of 34 and 74. (Note: Polco records did not provide age data for 90 (44.1%) of participants, hence those participants are not included in this figure.)

2. Participants by Age



All participants were asked to identify the race that they identify with. As shown in Table 1, 187 (91.7%) of participants were White/Caucasian, .49% were Black or African American, .98% were American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut, 1.5% were Asian or Pacific Islander, 1.5% were Two or More Races, and 3.9% identified as Other. Therefore, a total of 8.3% participants were persons of color. Furthermore, Table 2 illustrates that .98% of participants were of Hispanic or Latino Origin.

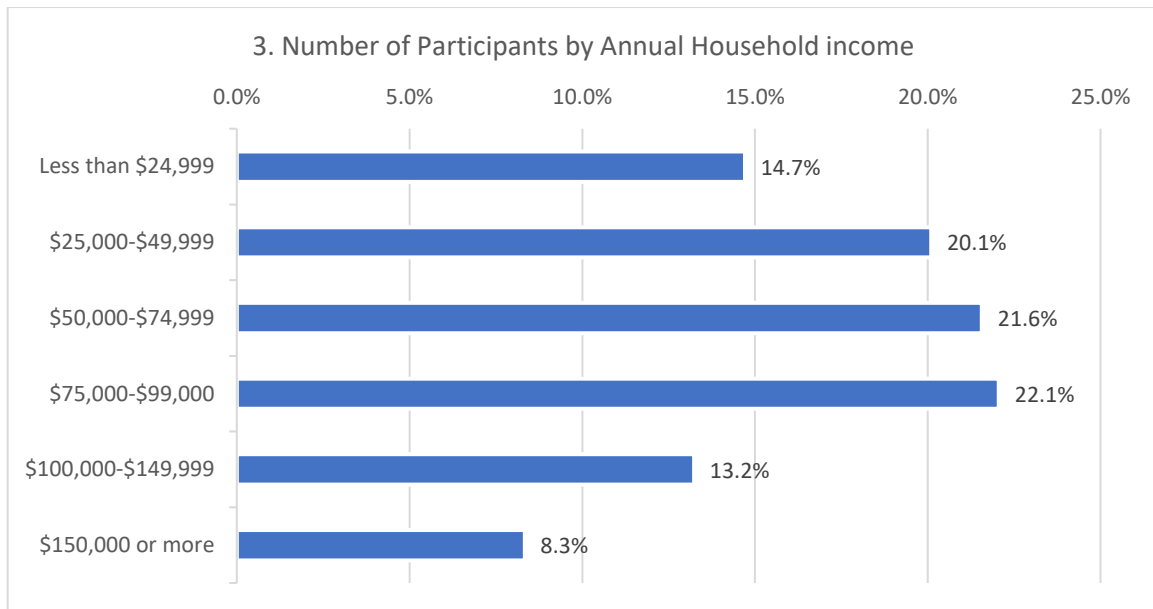
Table 1. Participants by Race

Race	Total Participants	%
White/Caucasian	187	91.7%
Black or African American	1	.49%
American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut	2	.98%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3	1.5%
Two or More Races	3	1.5%
Other	8	3.9%
TOTAL	204	100%

Table 2. Participants by Hispanic or Latino Origin

Hispanic or Latino Origin	Total Participants	%
Yes	2	.98%
No	202	99%
TOTAL	204	100%

Participants were also asked to identify their annual household income. According to the 2010 Census, 28% of Oshkosh households earned less than \$25,000 annually. The median household income in Oshkosh (in 2019 dollars) between 2015-2019 was \$50,892. Responses from all 204 participants are included, and the total number of participants is reported for each income category in Chart 3. Those in households that made \$24,999 or less made up 14.7% of the participants, 20.1% earned \$25,000-\$49,999, and 21.6% made between \$50,000-\$74,999 annually. Furthermore, 22.1% made between \$75,000-\$99,000, 13.2% made \$100,000-\$149,999, and the smallest group or respondents, 8.3%, made \$150,000 or more.



Finally, Chart 4 illustrates the percentage of participants that identify as People of Color, Hispanic or Latino, and those that live in households that earn less than \$25,000 annually. Actual proportions are provided for the participants from the 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 surveys. Efforts have been made to expand diversity of participants with some success. The difference from 2017 to 2020 illustrates an increase in participation from all demographic groups. These can also be compared against the last available 2010 Census demographic information to determine how much more participation is needed to achieve survey representation equivalent to the Oshkosh population as a whole.

Table 3. Participant Demographics Over Time

Demographic Group	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2010 Census	% Change 2017-2021	% Needed for Representativeness
People of Color	.8%	5.9%	5.4%	7.4%	8.3%	8.9%	+7.5%	.57%
Hispanic or Latino	0%	3.6%	2.9%	1.4%	.98%	2.7%	+98%	1.7%
Income < \$25k	0%	15.8%	16.0%	18.0%	14.7%	28.0%	+14.7%	13.3%

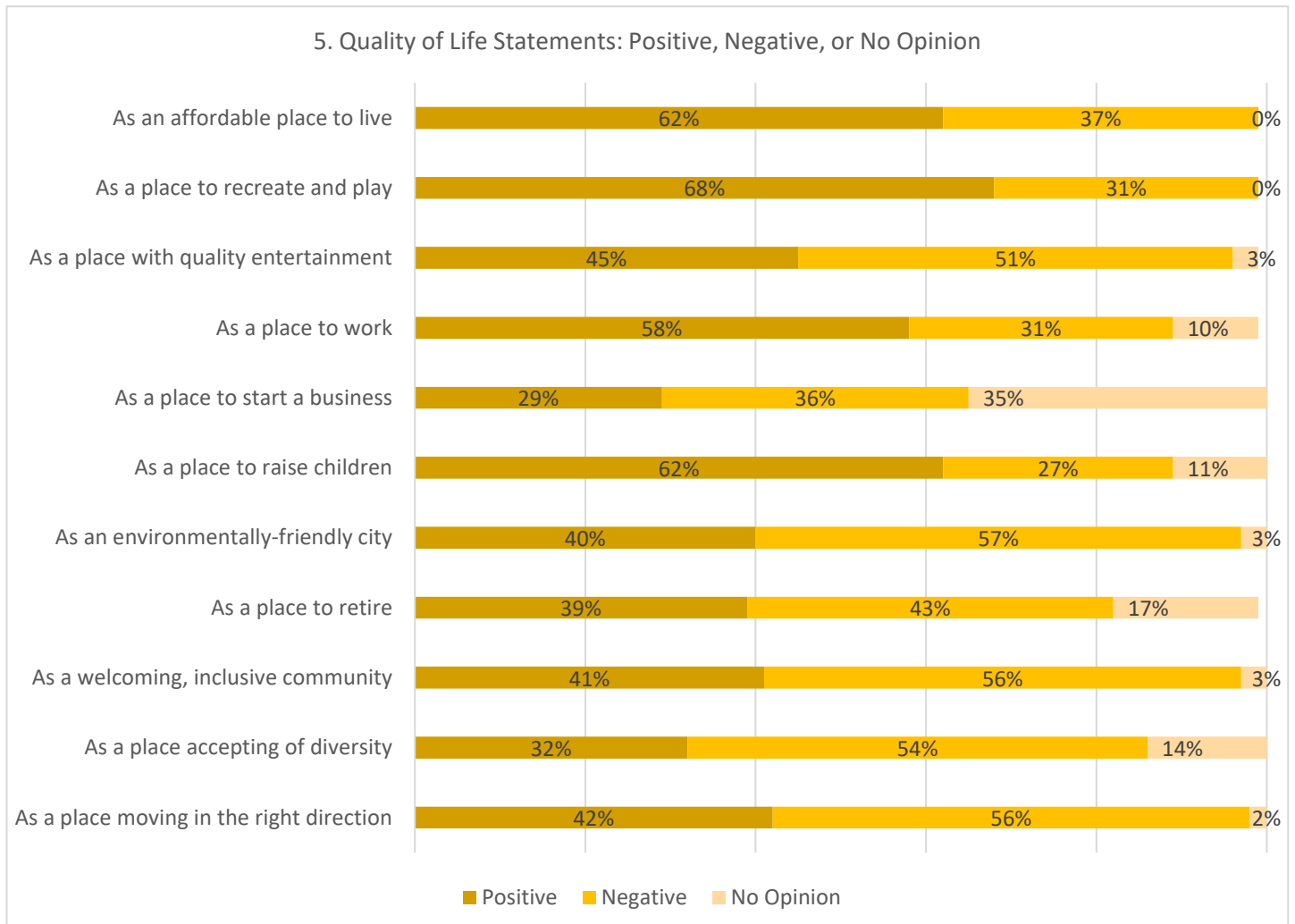
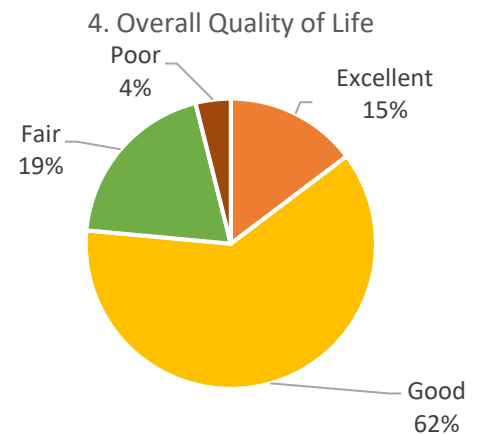
Quality of Life

Overall, residents responded positively to the Overall Quality of Life question as shown in Chart 5. When asked to rate their overall quality of life, approximately 77% reported a positive quality of life, with 15% answering *Excellent* and 62% answering *Good*. Comparatively, 19% reported their quality of life as fair, and just 4% reported it as poor.

Chart 6 shows responses when participants were asked to rate Oshkosh on 11 different quality of life statements. The chart represents the data grouped into one of three categories: Positive (if participants responded *Excellent* or *Good*), Negative (if they responded *Fair* or *Poor*), and No Opinion.

Results shows that respondents expressed a positive feeling for 4 out of 11 questions, which received a majority positive response rate (50% or greater). The top three positive statements related to Oshkosh as a place to recreate and play (68%), as an affordable place to live (62%), and as a place to raise children (62%).

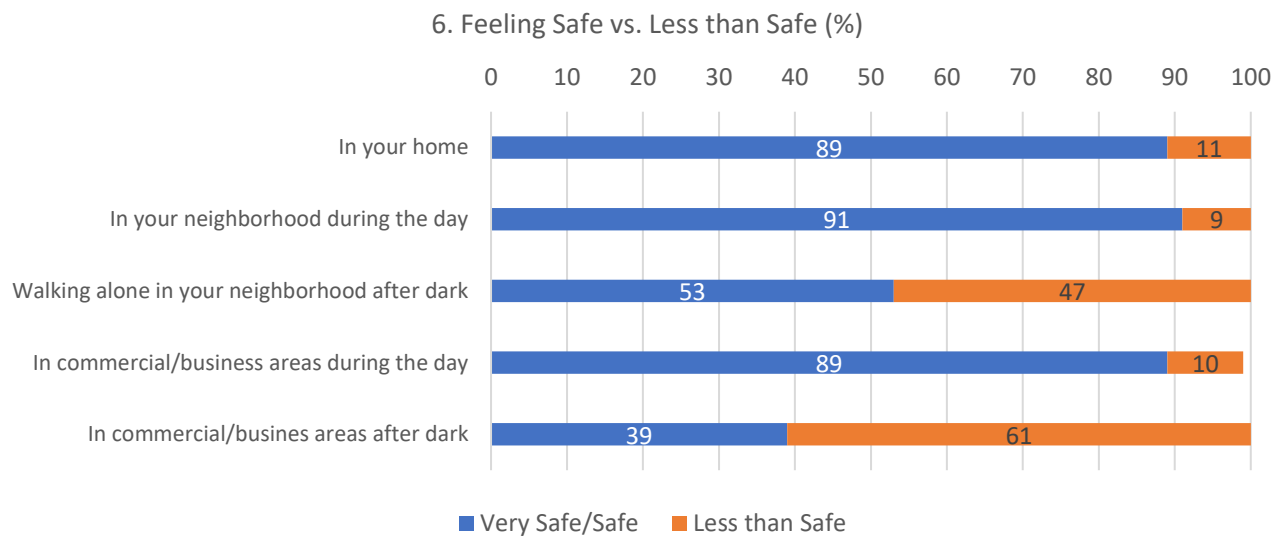
Conversely, a majority of respondents expressed a *negative* feeling for five statements: 57% as an environmentally-friendly city, 56% as a welcoming, inclusive community, 56% as a place moving in the right direction, 54% as a place accepting of diversity, and 51% as a place with quality entertainment.



Feelings of Safety

Next, participants were asked: “Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel” in five categories listed in Chart 7. If they responded *Very Safe* or *Safe*, answers are documented in Chart 7 in blue. Any response other than *Very Safe* or *Safe* was included as a *Less than Safe* response, represented by orange.

Overall, the majority responded that they felt safe in Oshkosh. Approximately 89% felt safe in their home, 91% felt safe in their neighborhood during the day, and 89% felt safe in commercial/business areas during the day. On the other hand, only 53% felt safe walking alone in their neighborhood after dark, and the lowest proportion of 39% felt safe in commercial/business areas after dark.



Quality of City Services

The next set of questions focused on resident perceptions of the quality of city services. Questions relating to quality asks respondents to identify whether the service is *Excellent*, *Good*, *Fair*, *Poor*, or *No Opinion*. Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 4. Quality of City Services

Area	Service	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Public Safety	Police	28%	36%	16%	12%	8%
	Fire Department	41%	31%	4%	2%	22%
	Ambulance	28%	26%	4%	2%	39%
Public Works	Leaf and Brush Pick-up	26%	45%	14%	5%	10%
	Recycling Services	29%	47%	17%	3%	5%
	Trash Collection Services	39%	47%	9%	2%	3%
	Sidewalk System	14%	44%	30%	10%	2%
	Ice and Snow Removal	15%	43%	23%	18%	1%
	Traffic Signs and Signals	23%	52%	19%	5%	0%
	Street Lights/Maintenance	17%	54%	17%	9%	4%
Storm Water Management	13%	48%	19%	12%	8%	
Community Services	Neighborhood Revitalization	6%	26%	34%	18%	16%
	Oshkosh Public Museum	34%	40%	11%	1%	14%
	Oshkosh Media	16%	28%	18%	3%	34%
	Oshkosh Public Library	49%	36%	7%	3%	5%
	Senior Services	18%	26%	9%	4%	42%
Economic Development	Assistance to Businesses	5%	19%	11%	9%	56%
	Quality of Housing	2%	35%	39%	18%	5%
	Permits and Inspections	2%	19%	21%	23%	35%
	Property Maintenance	3%	35%	30%	16%	16%
	Planning and Zoning	3%	20%	26%	16%	35%
Parks	Children's Amusement Area	24%	32%	15%	5%	24%
	Leach Amphitheater	31%	36%	11%	3%	19%
	Menominee Park Zoo	29%	42%	15%	5%	9%
	Pollock Water Park	16%	33%	9%	2%	40%
Transportation	Biking & Pedestrian Trails	19%	43%	25%	7%	6%
	City Parking Facilities	8%	43%	24%	13%	12%
	Go Transit System	8%	23%	17%	6%	47%

Based on the results in Table 3, the top five highest quality ratings of *Excellent* are presented in Chart 8.

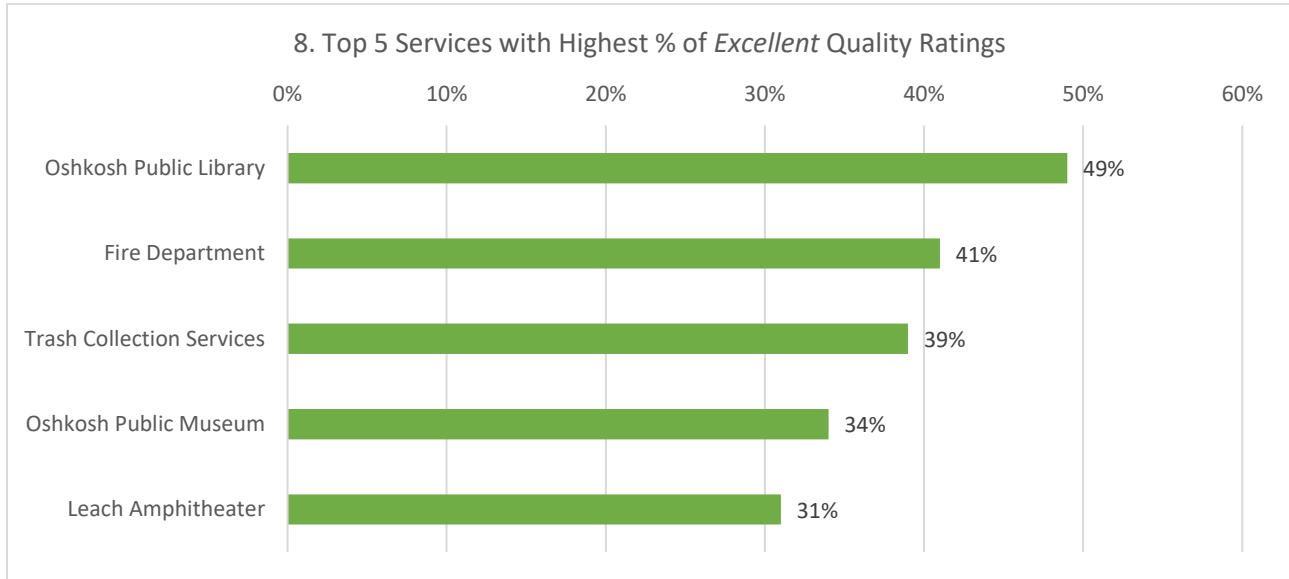
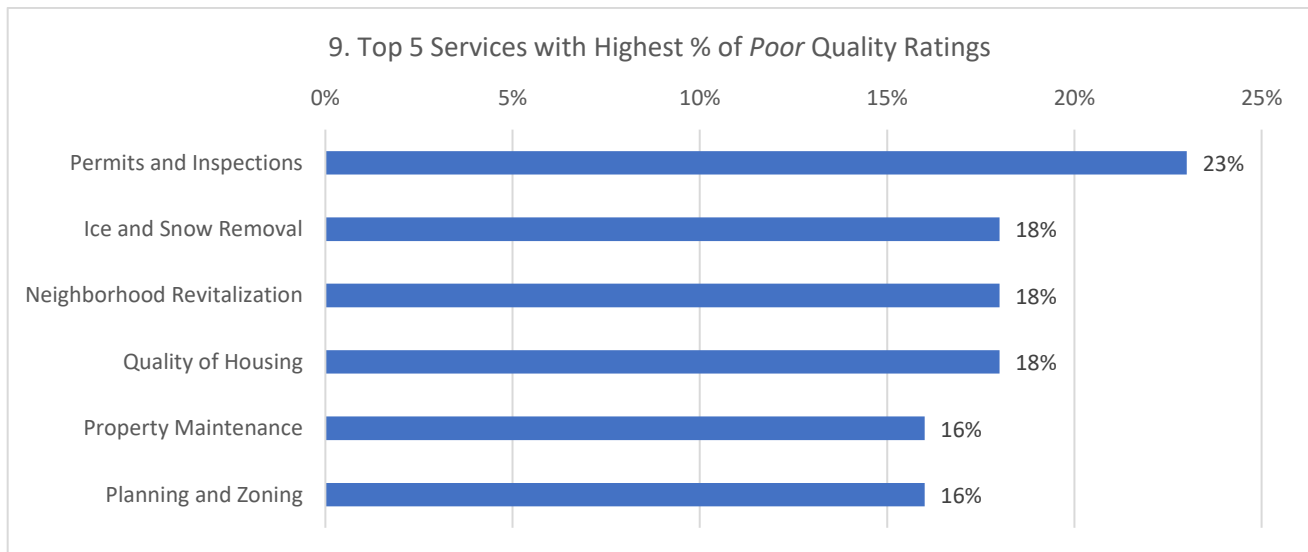


Chart 9 presents the services with the lowest quality rating of *Poor*. However, six services are included because Property Maintenance and Planning and Zoning received the same proportion of participants (16%) that rated them as *Poor*.



Importance of City Services

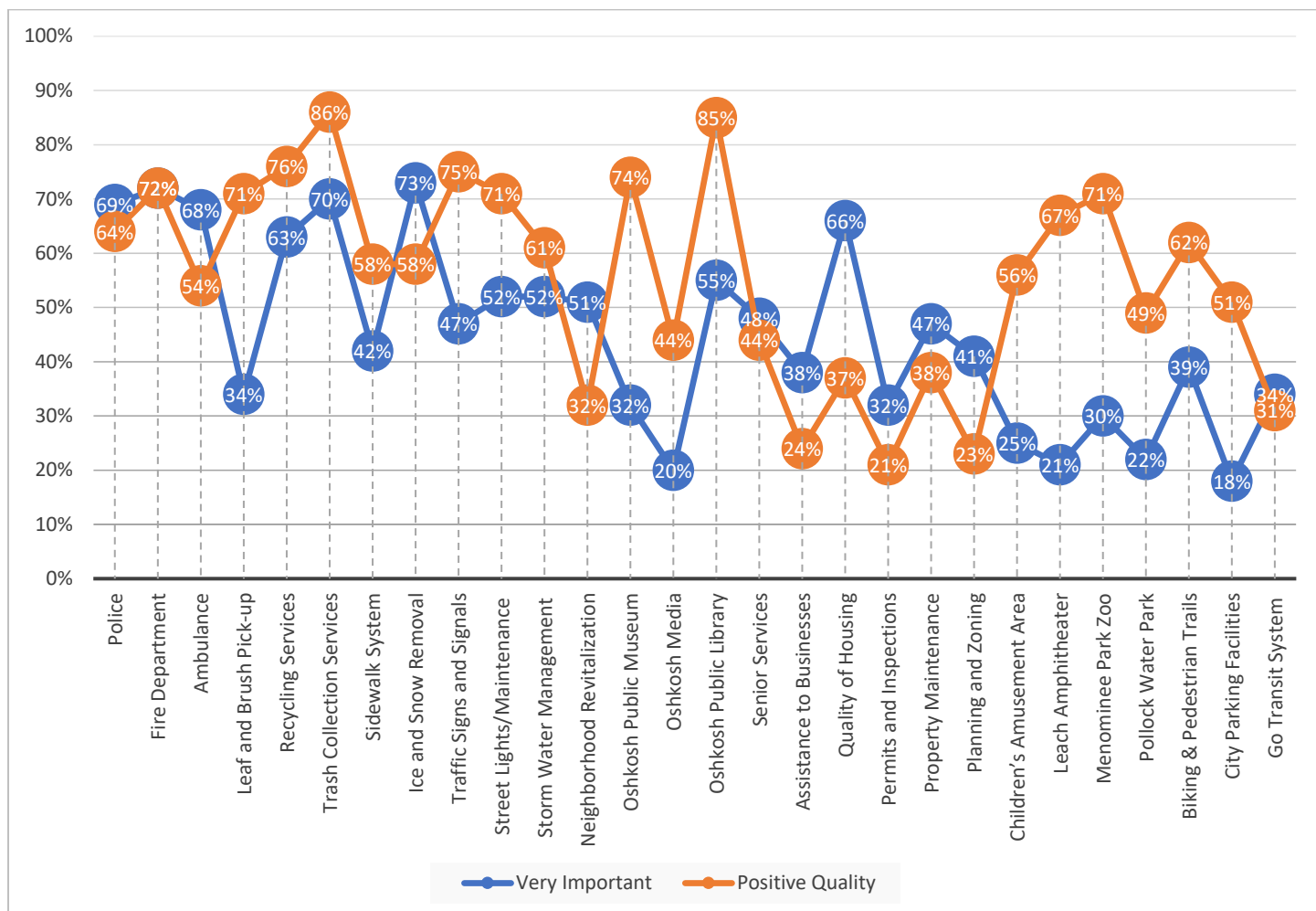
Finally, respondents were asked to rank how important city services are to them. The survey question asks respondents to identify whether the service is *Very Important*, *Somewhat Important*, *Somewhat Unimportant*, *Not Important*, or *No Opinion*. Results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Importance of City Services

Area	Service	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Unimportant	Unimportant	No Opinion
Public Safety	Police	69%	15%	5%	9%	1%
	Fire Department	72%	19%	3%	3%	3%
	Ambulance	68%	22%	4%	2%	4%
Public Works	Leaf and Brush Pick-up	34%	44%	9%	6%	6%
	Recycling Services	63%	27%	4%	2%	3%
	Trash Collection Services	70%	23%	4%	1%	3%
	Sidewalk System	42%	44%	11%	3%	0%
	Ice and Snow Removal	73%	25%	2%	0%	0%
	Traffic Signs and Signals	47%	40%	9%	4%	0%
	Street Lights/Maintenance	52%	37%	7%	4%	0%
	Storm Water Management	52%	38%	5%	1%	4%
Community Services	Neighborhood Revitalization	51%	36%	5%	3%	5%
	Oshkosh Public Museum	32%	42%	14%	6%	6%
	Oshkosh Media	20%	34%	16%	11%	19%
	Oshkosh Public Library	55%	36%	3%	3%	2%
	Senior Services	48%	36%	3%	3%	10%
Economic Development	Assistance to Businesses	38%	28%	9%	6%	18%
	Quality of Housing	66%	28%	1%	2%	2%
	Permits and Inspections	32%	37%	10%	6%	15%
	Property Maintenance	47%	37%	4%	4%	9%
	Planning and Zoning	41%	34%	7%	3%	15%
Parks	Children's Amusement Area	25%	42%	17%	6%	9%
	Leach Amphitheater	21%	42%	17%	10%	10%
	Menominee Park Zoo	30%	46%	14%	5%	6%
	Pollock Water Park	22%	40%	18%	7%	13%
Transportation	Biking & Pedestrian Trails	39%	41%	12%	7%	0%
	City Parking Facilities	18%	48%	18%	9%	6%
	Go Transit System	34%	38%	6%	8%	14%

Chart 10 shows how services were ranked by quality and importance. The graph illustrates if services had “Positive Quality” (rated *Excellent* or *Good*) compared to the percentage rated *Very Important*. By graphing these ratings, this chart shows the gap between what Oshkosh residents expects to have (i.e. *Importance*) versus what they believe exists (i.e. *Quality*).

10. Importance vs. Quality: All City Services



Although the perceived quality for 17 of 28 city services exceeded their perceived importance, based on this gap analysis, 11 out of the 28 city services illustrated lower perceived quality than their perceived importance. Those services are included in Table 6 in order from the largest to smallest gap. City administrators can use this information to determine whether and to what extent benefits of the services are being effectively delivered to the public and decide whether program design changes will improve the quality of services provided. The information can also serve as the basis for reprioritization of services and commitment of public funding to strengthen programming, creating greater public impact.

Table 5. Gaps in *Importance* versus *Quality* of Services

Service	Very Important	Positive Quality	Difference
Quality of Housing	66%	37%	29%
Neighborhood Revitalization	51%	32%	19%
Planning and Zoning	41%	23%	18%
Ice and Snow Removal	73%	58%	15%
Ambulance	68%	54%	14%
Assistance to Business	38%	24%	14%
Permits and Inspections	32%	21%	11%
Property Maintenance	47%	38%	9%
Police	69%	64%	5%
Senior Services	48%	44%	4%
Go Transit System	34%	31%	3%

Conclusion

Overall Oshkosh residents who responded to the survey in 2021 had a more negative view of Oshkosh and its government than in previous years. This result is likely related to national trends of growing distrust in government, as well as the significant disruptions in business and recreation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It also possible that the lower response rate and inability to conduct enhanced outreach in 2021 resulted in a bias towards negative responses. Regardless, interpretation of results should keep the unique nature of 2021 in mind. The results do point to several priority areas in which the city of Oshkosh should focus moving forward:

- Increasing safety in commercial and residential areas at night;
- Making Oshkosh a welcoming community for residents and business;
- Making Oshkosh an environmentally friendly city; and
- Continuing to improve citizen-government interactions.

It also imperative that the City continues to succeed in areas in which it receives high marks, including:

- Daytime safety;
- Keeping Oshkosh a great place to raise a family;
- Keeping Oshkosh a great place to work; and
- Keeping Oshkosh a place that offers a high quality of life.

Notes

The information included in this report was extracted from the Oshkosh Citizen Survey Results collected by Polco. Any additional questions can be directed to Jeffrey Sache at: sachsej@uwosh.edu.

