

Oxford Police Department – 2001 Citizen Survey

Executive Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

The Oxford Police Department (OPD) 2001 Citizen Survey was conducted to evaluate Oxford residents' perceptions regarding the services furnished by the OPD. A mail survey, sent to approximately 2000 residents distributed equally across five city regions plus the main Miami University campus at Oxford, was used to explore issues ranging from attitudes on home and road safety to problems with parking situations and substance abuse. Multiple choice and open ended (comment) questions gave respondents the opportunity to identify issues of importance to differences of opinion across the diverse spectrum of Oxford's population.

Key Findings

- Oxford residents were relatively quick to complete the survey and were particularly generous in offering their verbatim comments to clarify answers or otherwise add value to the survey results. The survey response rate of 28% is very good for a mail survey conducted without additional follow up reminders.
- The top five issues of concern to Oxford residents are home protection, burglaries, alcohol/drunken driving, vandalism and assault. Residents give the OPD high marks for the effort placed against key issues of concern, but they would also like to see additional attention paid to, in order, vandalism, burglaries, assault, litter and drugs in the Oxford community.
- Oxford residents expect the OPD to be observant for situations that may be abusive to the elderly members of the community but also expect officers to seek assistance from social service agencies when necessary. Some residents expressed surprise that they could turn to the OPD for help with crimes directed specifically at the elderly.
- Parking remains a tough issue to resolve in Oxford. Most residents and University students would like to see strict enforcement but only if adequate parking facilities are provided for their use. Overzealous enforcement for seemingly trivial infractions causes hard feelings throughout all Oxford neighborhoods.
- The OPD receives relatively high marks for its efforts to combat underage drinking and the use of illegal drugs in Oxford. By approximately a 3:1 ratio, residents indicate that they have little to no concern regarding underage drinking parties within their own neighborhoods and largely attribute this situation to OPD diligence. While suggestions were made to improve policing efforts against alcohol and drugs, many residents were content to offer a strong Thank You! For the Department's current work on this issue.
- Oxford's Police Department is generally viewed as being both professional and courteous. Officers receive very high marks for responding rapidly to emergencies and also receive much praise for their community service work. Community policing activities draw huge crowds in Oxford with nearly 50% of respondents indicating that they participate.

- Residents were quick to relate numerous positive interactions with OPD officers. Many have come to know officers over the years and rely on them frequently. Negative experiences exist as well, but seem relatively isolated as opposed to forming a significant trend.
- Oxford residents exhibit a very high level of Internet usage – nearly 80% are connected to the Internet. Despite this high percentage, few indicated having knowledge of the OPD Web page. A significant opportunity exists to deliver added value to citizens through an expanded Web site presence.
- Significant differences of opinion were noted between residents of different geographic regions of Oxford and between city residents and Miami University campus residents – although these differences of opinion did not permeate all issues on the survey. Differences were observed mainly on the philosophy of handling minor drinking, parking and traffic safety issues rather than on more serious issues of vandalism, assault, drug abuse, etc. Students living off-campus showed no consistent trends in their responses. Geographic regions with high concentrations of student residents often exhibited responses more like campus residents but this was not necessarily the case in all situations. The lack of definitive trends across the majority of questions indicates that it is very difficult to pin down the exact character of any Oxford neighborhood.
- Additional specific details may be found throughout the full survey report.

Recommendations

- The Oxford Police Department should consider a plan to increase visible police presence in the late evening hours – particularly in the Uptown area.
- The OPD should consider greater use of alternative patrol methods such as foot, bicycle and mounted patrols, which have proven very popular with residents.
- The OPD should revitalize (not eliminate) the practice of parking unmanned squad cars in neighborhoods to deter crime.
- The Oxford Police Department has an excellent customer service reputation but could benefit from periodic retraining of officers to catch minor problems in dealing with the public before they become severe.
- Miami University students seem highly receptive to working with the OPD. Joint projects to improve conditions in Oxford could bear considerable fruit.
- There is a strong perception that OPD officers are great in an emergency but sometimes have difficulty solving crimes after the fact. Addressing this situation should increase overall confidence in the Department.
- Attention to seemingly insignificant details, such as small tasks or programs to enhance the quality of life in Oxford, may help further develop the reputation of an excellent Department.

Survey Logistics

The current survey was mailed to approximately 500 randomly selected residents in each of five city regions plus the MU campus. Once completed, respondents mailed the fifty-nine question questionnaires to Miami University Middletown (MUM) where the data

were coded and analyzed by Professor Susan Baim of the Business Technology Department and six teams of marketing students from her BTE 105 Introduction to Marketing classes. The overall data analysis was performed using SumQuest Survey Software. Regional breakouts, graphics and the final survey report were prepared using standard Microsoft Office products.

Information prepared by Professor Susan Baim, BTE Program, Miami University Middletown for the Oxford Police Department.