



The Corporation of the District of Saanich

Report

To: Mayor and Council

From: Sheila Allen, Director of Corporate Services

Date: April 30, 2025

Subject: 2024 Saanich Resident Pulse Check Survey Results

File:

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council receive the Saanich Resident Pulse Check Survey report for information.

PURPOSE

To discuss the results of the 2024 Saanich Resident Pulse Survey conducted by BC Stats between December 2, 2024, and January 26, 2025.

BACKGROUND

Saanich conducts resident and business surveys every four years at the start of a new council term. Results from the surveys are used by Council in their strategic planning deliberations to inform key initiatives to be undertaken during their term and annually during budget deliberations. Data collected from the statistically significant surveys is the basis for many of the indicators reported in the Annual Report.

In 2018, Council requested that surveys be completed on a more frequent basis and allocated funding for an online citizen survey to occur annually or bi-annually. The online 2021 Resident Pulse Check Survey was the first of these more frequent online surveys supplementing the larger surveys every four years. The next larger resident and business survey will be conducted in 2026.

Additionally, in 2022, Council also directed staff to explore ways to reach a broader set of residents, both in number and diversity.

DISCUSSION

Staff worked with BC Stats to engage with residents to gauge their satisfaction through an online survey. The survey questions are categorized into five topic areas:

- Communications and engagement with Saanich residents
- Saanich's services
- Emergency services, safety and security

- Quality of life in Saanich
- Saanich Council and strategic themes

Along with the continuing topics included in previous surveys, questions were added this cycle to capture opinions on Saanich's Climate Action Plan and Indigenous relations.

A random sample of 4,052 civic property addresses within Saanich was selected, with the distribution by local area closely matching the proportions found in the total population. Postcard invitations were sent to these addresses including a secure link to the survey.

Residents were also invited to sign up to participate in the survey on saanich.ca and received a secure link by email upon registration. An option to complete the survey anonymously through an open link was made available and assistance was provided to residents who wished to complete the survey over the phone. Paper questionnaires were also made available at Municipal Hall.

29% of residents who were sent the survey responded, resulting in 1,980 completed surveys. Of these, 320 resulted from the postcard invitations, 1,471 through online signups (including 2 by phone) and 189 were from anonymous open surveys. A minimum of 400 completed surveys were required to ensure the results were statistically significant.

In order to address Council's goal of increasing the number and diversity of survey respondents, a comprehensive communications plan was developed. Through promotional efforts, staff aimed to increase awareness of the statistically valid surveys and encourage residents to participate in the online survey. A variety of methods were used, including:

- Community outreach (post-secondary institutions, multicultural groups, accessibility groups)
- Newspaper advertising
- Social media
- HelloSaanich (Saanich's online engagement platform)
- Website updates
- Signage
- Newsletters

These promotional efforts resulted in an increase in respondents of 527% since the 2022 Resident and Business Survey. However, despite the efforts outlined above, the increase in diversity was modest.

**See attachment 1: 2024 Resident Pulse Survey – Overall Report, page 13, for Respondent Characteristic Details.*

ANALYSIS

In their analysis of the results, BC Stats utilized mean scores or ratings in the overall report, as opposed to the percent positives (those who agree or strongly agree) or percent negatives (those who disagree or strongly disagree). There are two reasons for this:

- 1) **Mean scores incorporate all responses, not just the positive (or negative), into a single measurement.** This provides a clear overview of overall satisfaction with a specific

area. Percent positives and negatives do provide additional context, but for the summary report, mean scores convey the results in a simpler format.

- 2) **Mean scores provide straightforward comparisons across cycles.** Mean scores are easier to understand when comparing year-over-year results. A higher mean score equals more positive feelings; a lower mean score equals fewer positive feelings.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Communication and Engagement:

When asked what type of information residents would like Saanich to communicate to them, residents expressed an interest in a variety of topics. The most common type of information residents wanted communication on was related to *garbage, organics, and recycling schedules* (92%), followed by *updates on strategic projects or initiative* (90%) and *the current municipal budget and taxation* (86%).

The most popular methods residents want to receive information were by *email* (76%) and the *Saanich website* (74%).

More than two-thirds (68%) of residents had personally contacted or dealt with Saanich or one of its employees within the last 12 months. This is an increase from just over half (53%) of residents in 2021. When asked to rate their interactions with Saanich staff, most residents rated their experiences with staff positively.

Saanich Services

Saanich provides a variety of services ranging from infrastructure to recreation programs. Residents were asked to rate the quality of the specific Saanich services that they utilized within the last 12 months.

The service areas with the highest mean scores are Saanich garbage and organics collection 79, Saanich Parks and Trails (75), Saanich recreation and outdoor facilities (74), and Saanich water, sewer and drainage systems (73).

**See attachment 1: 2024 Resident Pulse Survey – Overall Report, figure 6, page 20.*

Emergency Services Safety and Security

When asked to rate their agreement with statements related to emergency, safety and security services in Saanich, residents gave higher scores to the following:

- “I feel safe when using recreational trails in Saanich” (71) and
- “I feel safe to take public transit in Saanich if I need to” (70).

Conversely, residents were less likely to agree that “Saanich sidewalks are safe for people with mobility challenges”.

Quality of Life

When asked about the quality of life in Saanich, residents highly rated the statements “I am generally happy living in Saanich” (73) and “I would recommend Saanich as a good place to live” (71).

When asked about affordability, residents were less positive. The statements “I receive good value for the municipal taxes I pay” (46) and “When compared to nearby municipalities, Saanich has relatively good access to affordable housing options” (39) were the lowest rated.

Saanich Council and Strategic Initiatives

Residents were asked to rate their agreement with a number of statements related to Saanich Council. The highest mean score was “Saanich maintains respectful relationships with Indigenous Peoples, both in the community and in neighbouring communities” (64).

Saanich residents under 45 years of age were more likely to agree “Saanich Council welcomes citizen involvement” and the same can be said of those living in Saanich Core.

Residents were also asked to rate the importance of the **theme areas in Saanich’s Strategic Plan**. Mean scores are as below:

- Community wellbeing 78
- Transportation 76
- Housing 69
- Economic Development 65
- Climate action and environmental leadership 61
- Organizational excellence 61

Residents were asked to rate statements **regarding taxation and services**.

The only option with a mean score greater than 50 was maintain the same level of municipal services with a managed tax increase” (53). The ratings for the other choices ranged from 31 (“improve municipal services with higher taxes”) to 39 (“introduce new user fees for some municipal services that are currently funded through taxes”).

Residents 65 years or older were more likely to agree with the choice to “*maintain the same level of municipal services with a managed tax increase*” and more likely to disagree with the “*increase user fees for municipal services that currently have user fees*” option.

**See attachment 1: 2024 Resident Pulse Survey – Overall Report for complete details.*

COMMENTS

When asked what the one issue respondents felt should receive the most attention from Saanich Council, 1,529 (85%) respondents left a comment. These comments were categorized into different themes, with some comments taking on multiple themes.

Out of those who left comments, over 4 in 10 (44%) identified *infrastructure, traffic and roads* as an issue requiring Saanich Council’s attention. This included comments on *cycling infrastructure* both negative (14%) and positive (1%), *traffic control and congestion* (12%) and 5 other subcategories.

Nearly 2 in 10 (17%) commenters wrote about *community development and growth*, while 14% had comments on *Saanich Council*.

Over 1 in 10 (13%) commenters mentioned topics related to *crime, safety and policing*, with a similar number commenting on *taxes, budget and spending* (13%).

Other categories respondents commented on included *housing* (11%), *environmental and climate issues* (11%), and *recreation and outdoors* (8%).”

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

This project is in support of the 2023-2027 Council Strategic Plan goal related to organizational excellence, specifically *Objective 6.1 We balance efficiency, transparency, and engagement*. The results of the Resident Pulse Check Survey provide insight into residents’ opinion of the strategic priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to receiving this report for information. Budget items associated with the maintenance of services as well as advancement of strategic initiatives come forward to council as part of the annual budget process.

Prepared by: Kelsie McLeod, Senior Manager of Communications and Strategic Initiatives

Reviewed by: Sheila Allen, Director of Corporate Services

Approved by: Sheila Allen, Director of Corporate Services

Attachments:

1. 2024 Resident Pulse Check Survey – Overall Report

ADMINISTRATOR’S COMMENTS:

I endorse the recommendation from the Director of Corporate Services.

Brent Reems, Chief Administrative Officer