



University of
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Lowell

Center for Public Opinion

Acton Town Survey 2013: Final Report

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Introduction

The 2013 Acton Citizens Survey is a joint venture between the Town of Acton and the University of Massachusetts Lowell. The survey analysis was completed in the fall of 2014 by UMass Lowell undergraduate students under the supervision of Professor Jenifer Whitten-Woodring in partnership with Professors Joshua J. Dyck and Frank Talty, Co-Directors of the Center for Public Opinion at the University of Massachusetts Lowell.

The survey covers several topics about Community Life and ratings of Local Government, including batteries of questions on the following issues:

- 1) Quality of Life
- 2) Community Characteristics
- 3) Problems
- 4) Reasons to Live in Acton
- 5) Property Use, Mix and Zoning
- 6) Civic Participation
- 7) Town Service Performance Assessments
- 8) Town Board and Official Performance Assessments
- 9) Media Usage

Each point listed above has a corresponding section in the report that follows. In each section, we proceed with a basic analysis of frequency distribution of the responses, which we denote as "Summary." We present the data both with and without those who were unsure or did not answer the question, as often non-response can mask interesting trends. We follow the frequency analysis by examining meaningful variations in which citizens answered questions in a section called "Interesting Relationships;" these are statistically significant cross-tabulations.

Methodology

Survey Collection

During the summer of 2013, a pre-survey notification was sent to 1,200 randomly selected households in the town of Acton. The same residences were sent a copy of the survey during the first week of September.

Response Rate

In total 476 responses were collected, for a response rate of 39.67%. Response rates for surveys like this have tended to be 25-40%. In comparison, response rates for telephone surveys are commonly as low as 10-15%.

Margin of Error

The survey carries a margin of error of +/- 5%, with 95% confidence. This means that assuming that the survey is a random collection of responses from Acton Town citizens, the reported frequencies are expected to be within 5% of the true population average 95% of the time. There is always the 5% chance that our survey ended up outside the margin of error.

Weighting

It is common for surveys to contain some level of imbalance given that collection methods are imperfect. The laws of probability assume that we collected a simple random sample. However, for a survey of this type, where respondents opt whether or not to respond, there is the possibility for self-selection bias. In general, we found that respondents were older and more educated than the median citizen of the town of Acton. The table below compares raw percentages for Age, Sex, Education and Household Type from the 2013 Acton Town Survey with the 2010 Census counts for the same categories.

This issue is common and easily addressed by constructing a survey weight to correct the data to known population counts. After weighting, the data conforms much closer to the known census population counts.

Age	Census	Raw Data	Weighted Data
18-34	27%	4%	20%
35-44	15%	15%	17%
45-54	19%	26%	21%
55-64	15%	26%	17%
65 and up	23%	29%	26%
Sex			
Male	45%	41%	45%
Female	55%	59%	55%
Education			
High School and Below	24%	5%	22%
Some College	14%	9%	15%
Associate's Degree	8%	5%	8%
Bachelor's Degree	26%	32%	27%
Graduate/Professional Training	28%	49%	28%
Household Type			
Households with Children (17 and under)	31%	36%	31%
Households without Children	69%	64%	69%

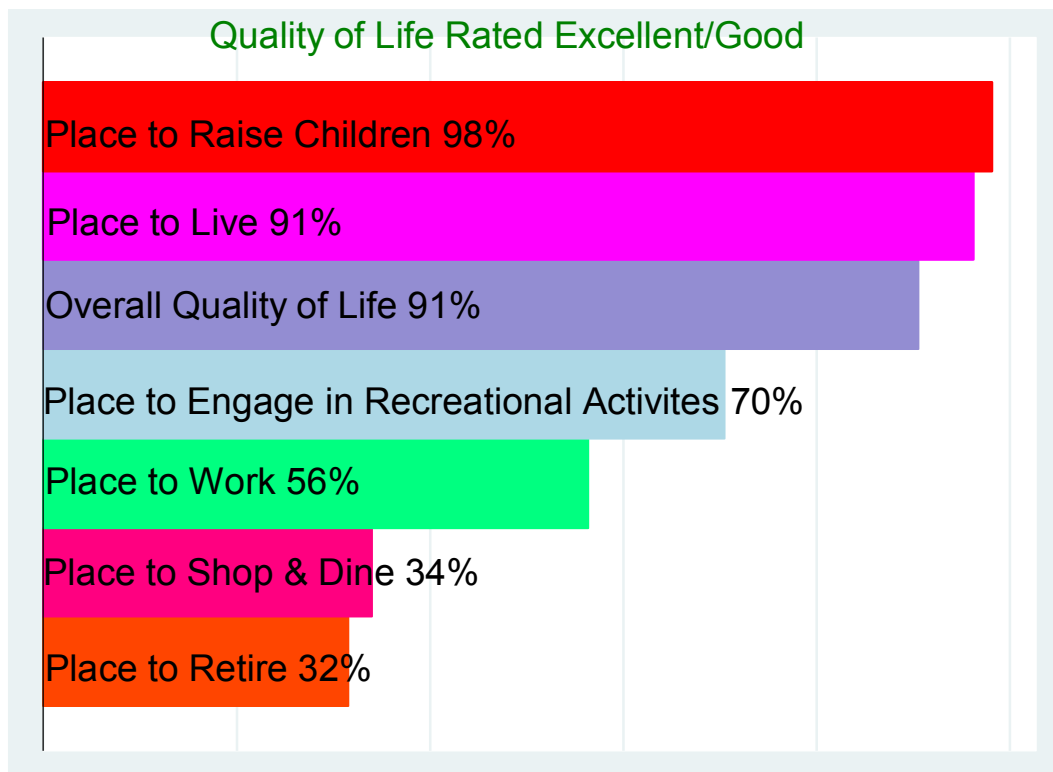
Notes: Weight was constructed using the iterative proportional fitting algorithm or "raking" as specified by Deming and Stephan (1940). The weight was constructed with STATA v11.0 using the ipfweight command by Bergmann.

1a. Quality of Life - Summary

The first section examines answers by citizens of the Town of Acton to a question that asks them to rate the quality of life for various aspects of the town on a 5-point scale. The results are summarized below:

Please rate the quality of life in Acton on each of the following categories:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Sure
Acton as a place to live...	45%	51%	4%	.28%	0%
Acton as a place to raise children...	62%	30%	3%	.4%	5%
Acton as a place to work...	11%	23%	18%	9%	39%
Acton as a place to shop and dine...	7%	29%	45%	18%	.4%
Acton as a place to engage in recreational activities...	16%	48%	29%	5%	3%
Acton as a place to retire...	10%	14%	27%	27%	22%
Overall quality of life in Acton...	26%	64%	9%	1%	.2%

Overall, we see the ratings of town life as being quite high on every dimension. As several of the ratings contain some uncertainty, we present all of the measures below, excluding those who say “not sure.”



The picture that emerges is one where we can see that Acton citizens rate the town as a very desirable place to live, to raise children, as a generally excellent place to live and engage in recreational activities. The town gets lower ratings as a place to shop and dine and as a place to retire (more on both of those points in the sections to follow).

1b. Quality of Life – Interesting Relationships

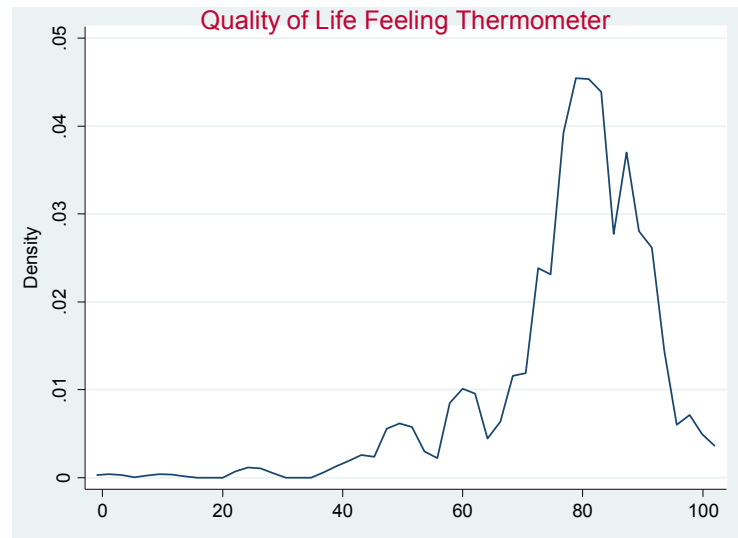
When it came to rating the quality of life in Acton, for the most part there were no statistically significant differences between men and women, those with and those without 4-year college degrees, and those from households with and without children. In fact the only difference was that those who were over 65 were slightly more likely to rate Acton as a good or excellent place to work than those who were 65 and under, but this was weak relationship.

	Under 65	65 and Over	Total
Rated Acton Fair/Poor as a place to work	48%	23%	43%
Rated Acton Good/Excellent as a place to work	52%	77%	57%

Pearson Chi-Square (1) 9.55 (Pr=. 007)

1c. Quality of Life Feeling Thermometer

We wanted to get a sense of how people in Acton feel about the quality of Life in Acton. We used something called a feeling thermometer, which ranges from 0 degrees to 100 degrees. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that people feel favorable and warm toward the quality of life in Acton and ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that they do not feel favorable toward the quality of life in Acton. Overall, we got an average of 77.83, which means that people in Acton feel favorable and warm toward the quality of life in the town. The figure on the right is a kernel density plot, which depicts the frequencies of how respondents placed themselves on this feeling thermometer. We can see that very few people placed themselves below 50 degrees, meaning that most people felt favorable about the quality of life in Acton.

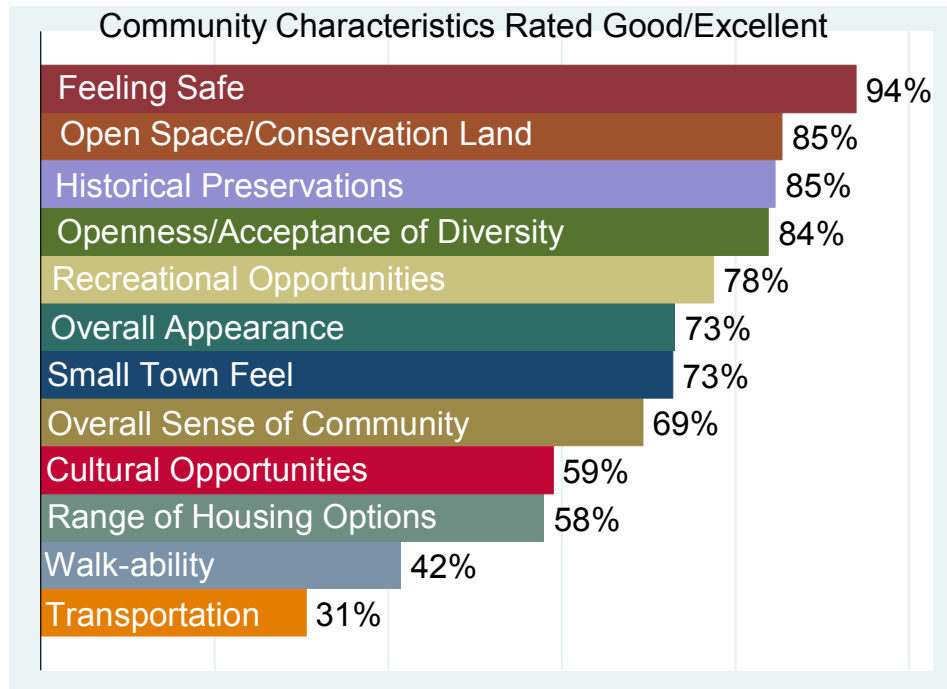


2a. Community Characteristics - Summary

Survey recipients were asked to rate an array of community characteristics ranging from small town feel to the overall sense of community. The frequencies of each characteristic are indicated below.

Please rate each of the following community characteristics in Acton:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Sure
Small town feel...	25%	49%	20%	6%	0%
Feeling safe...	56%	39%	5%	0%	0%
Openness/acceptance of diversity...	34%	47%	12%	3%	4%
Public transportation options...	4%	21%	33%	35%	7%
Cultural opportunities...	9%	42%	37%	7%	5%
Range of housing options...	10%	43%	33%	7%	8%
Historical preservation...	23%	56%	16%	1%	5%
Recreational opportunities...	18%	50%	25%	3%	3%
Open space/conservation of land...	32%	51%	13%	2%	2%
Walk-ability...	8%	32%	39%	20%	1%
Overall appearance...	20%	56%	21%	2%	1%
Overall sense of community...	17%	53%	23%	4%	2%

In the figure below we exclude those who were unsure of how they felt about the various community characteristics and focus on the percentage who rated the characteristics as good or excellent.



According to the survey’s results, Acton provides a safe and open environment where history is preserved. Cultural opportunities, housing options and walk-ability were rated lower amongst the community characteristics. Public transportation options were rated the lowest, indicating that citizens feel that Acton can improve its ability to accommodate their overall transportation needs.

2b. Community Characteristics – Interesting Relationships

When rating the community characteristics of Acton respondents were influenced by the presence of children in their household, their college degree and age. Statistically significant relationships were identified between households with or without children in regards to feeling safe, acceptance of diversity, housing options and walk-ability. Households with children were more likely to feel safe in Acton than households without children. Households without children were more likely to rate safety as fair or poor. Acton households with children rated acceptance of diversity and the range of housing options higher. Walk-ability was more likely to be rated excellent by households without children. Acton residents with a four-year degree were more likely to rate the acceptance of diversity as good or excellent. College graduates were also more likely to rate the range of housing options as excellent. Individuals over the age sixty-five rated walk-ability higher than those under the age of sixty-five.

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Rated feeling safe as Fair/Poor	10%	3%	6%
Rated feeling safe as Good/Excellent	90%	97%	94%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 9.18 (Pr=.0277)

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Rated openness/acceptance of diversity as Fair/Poor	22%	12%	16%
Rated openness/acceptance diversity as Good/Excellent	78%	88%	84%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 7.99 (Pr=.0493)

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Rated range of housing options as Fair/Poor	53%	35%	43%
Rated range of housing options as Good/Excellent	47%	65%	57%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 13.0 (Pr=.0105)

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Rated walk-ability as Fair/Poor	50%	64%	58%
Rated walk-ability as Good/Excellent	50%	36%	42%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 8.73 (Pr=.0396)

	No 4-year College Degree	4-year College Degree	Total
Rated openness/acceptance of diversity as Fair/Poor	29%	11%	16%
Rated openness/acceptance of diversity as Good/Excellent	71%	89%	84%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 22.91 (Pr=.0008)

	No 4-year College Degree	4-year College Degree	Total
Rated range of housing options as Fair/Poor	67%	36%	42%
Rated range of housing options as Good/Excellent	43%	64%	58%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 15.95 (Pr=.0066)

	65 and under	Over 65	Total
Rated walk-ability as Fair/Poor	61%	42%	58%
Rated walk-ability as Good/Excellent	39%	58%	42%

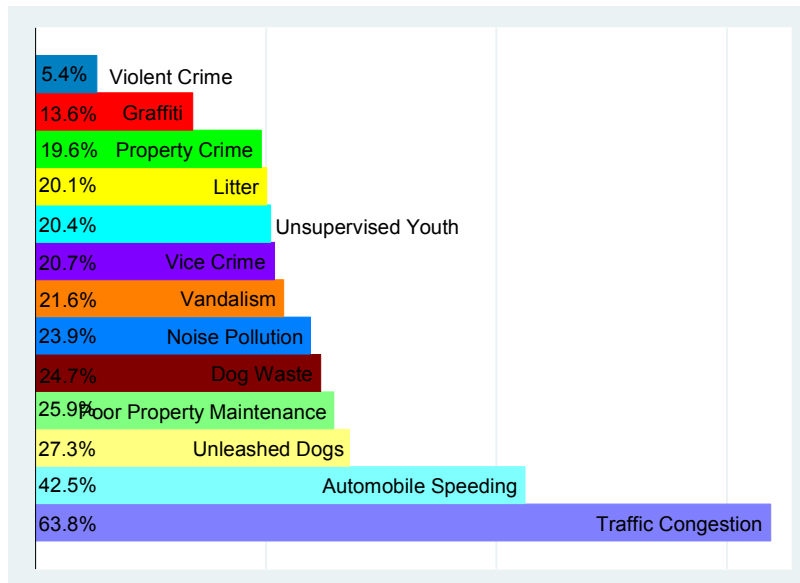
Pearson Chi-Square(1) 10.12 (Pr=.0074)

3a. Problems in Acton – Summary

The third part of the questionnaire asked citizens to rank the severity of possible problems in Acton on everything from violent crime to noise pollution and speeding. The full frequency distributions are presented below.

To what degree do you feel the following things are problems in Acton:	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Violent crime	0.46%	3.89%	15.33%	80.32%
Property crime	1.42%	15.17%	38.15%	45.26%
Vice crime (drugs, prostitution, etc.)	4.38%	14.43%	25.77%	55.41%
Vandalism	1.42%	19.43%	36.49%	42.65%
Graffiti	1.60%	11.90%	29.98%	56.52%
Litter	1.78%	17.82%	37.19%	43.21%
Unleashed dogs	6.25%	14.39%	30.39%	48.96%
Dog waste on sidewalks	3.50%	19.16%	29.44%	47.90%
Poorly maintained property	3.18%	17.73%	40.23%	38.86%
Noise pollution	3.55%	18.18%	37.25%	41.02%
Automobile speeding	11.40%	29.17%	38.16%	21.27%
Unsupervised youth	2.68%	15.33%	41.61%	40.39%
Traffic Congestion	23.59%	41.77%	22.29%	12.34%

In the figure below, respondents who were uncertain about the various problems were omitted and the percentages of those who either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed were calculated.



Overall, we can see that Acton is viewed as a safe place to live largely because of the lack of any serious crime. The largest problems appear to be automobile speeding (42.5% Strongly or Somewhat Agree that it is a problem) and traffic congestion (63.8% Strongly or Somewhat Agree that it is a problem). The only other problems that cross the 25% threshold are unleashed dogs and property maintenance.

3b. Problems in Acton – Interesting Relationships

Age, education and children did make a difference when it came to identifying some problems in Acton, but only a small difference. Gender, in Acton, seems to hold no statistical significance in influencing responses to these questions. People from households without children were more likely to agree that unsupervised youth are a problem in Acton than people from households with children. People without a four-year college degree were more likely to agree that violent crime, property crime, and vice crime all are problems in Acton than were residents with a four-year college degree. Similarly, the same people were more likely to agree that vandalism, unleashed dogs, and speeding are problems in Acton than their counterparts. Looking at age, respondents sixty-five years and older were more likely to agree that vice crime, vandalism, speeding, and unsupervised youth are problems in Acton.

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Disagree that unsupervised youth are a problem in Acton	73%	85%	80%
Agree that unsupervised youth are a problem in Acton	27%	15%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 8.45 (Pr=.046)

	Without a 4-Year College Degree	With a 4-Year College Degree	Total
Disagree that violent crime is a problem in Acton	89%	97%	95%
Agree that violent crime is a problem in Acton	11%	3%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 9.92 (Pr=.035)

	Without a 4-Year College Degree	With a 4-Year College Degree	Total
Disagree that property crime is a problem in Acton	70%	86%	81%
Agree that property crime is a problem in Acton	30%	14%	19%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 13.08 (Pr=.014)

	Without a 4-Year College Degree	With a 4-Year College Degree	Total
Disagree that vice crime is a problem in Acton	66%	85%	80%
Agree that vice crime is a problem in Acton	34%	15%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 16.17 (Pr=.005)

	Without a 4-Year College Degree	With a 4-Year College Degree	Total
Disagree that vandalism is a problem in Acton	69%	83%	79%
Agree that vandalism is a problem in Acton	31%	17%	21%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 10.64 (Pr=.023)

	Without a 4-Year College Degree	With a 4-Year College Degree	Total
Disagree that unleashed dogs are a problem in Acton	60%	77%	73%
Agree that unleashed dogs are a problem in Acton	40%	23%	27%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 13.02 (Pr=.018)

	Without a 4-Year College Degree	With a 4-Year College Degree	Total
Disagree that speeding is a problem in Acton	39%	65%	57%
Agree that speeding is a problem in Acton	61%	35%	43%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 24.84 (Pr=.000)

	Without a 4-Year College Degree	With a 4-Year College Degree	Total
Disagree that unsupervised youth are a problem in Acton	65%	85%	80%
Agree that unsupervised youth are a problem in Acton	35%	15%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 21.18 (Pr=.001)

	Under 65 Years Old	65 Years or Older	Total
Disagree that vice crime is a problem in Acton	81%	63%	79%
Agree that vice crime is a problem in Acton	19%	37%	21%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 9.62 (Pr=.010)

	Under 65 Years Old	65 Years or Older	Total
Disagree that vandalism is a problem in Acton	81%	67%	79%
Agree that vandalism is a problem in Acton	19%	33%	21%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 6.77 (Pr=.036)

	Under 65 Years Old	65 Years or Older	Total
Disagree that speeding is a problem in Acton	61%	38%	58%
Agree that speeding is a problem in Acton	39%	62%	42%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 13.96 (Pr=.000)

	Under 65 Years Old	65 Years or Older	Total
Disagree that unsupervised youth are a problem in Acton	82%	64%	80%
Agree that unsupervised youth are a problem in Acton	18%	36%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%

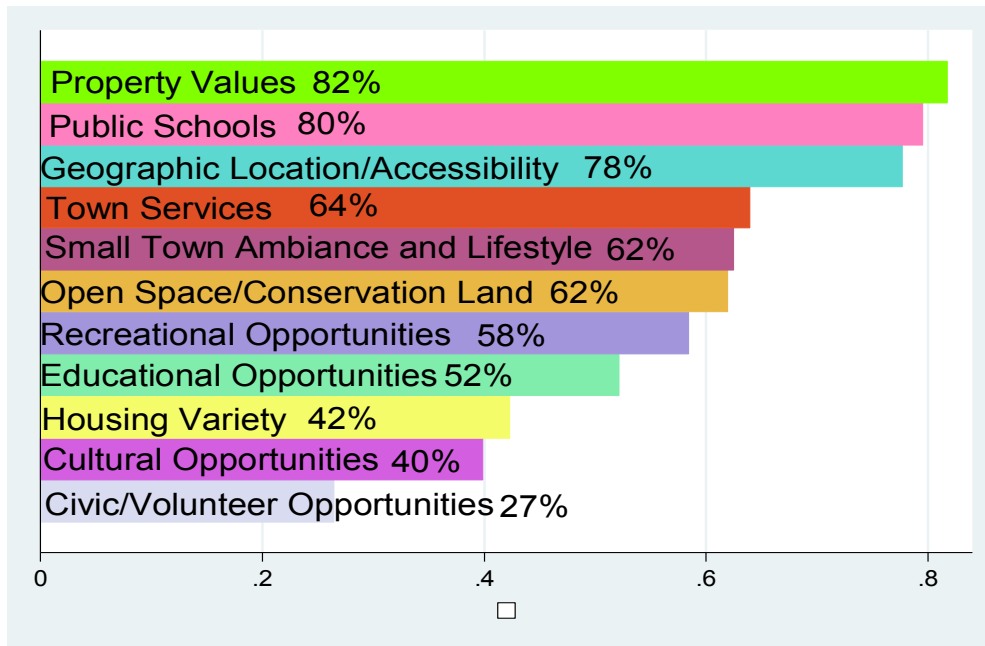
Pearson Chi-Square(1) 10.13 (Pr=.012)

4a. Reasons to Live in Acton – Summary

This section asks Acton citizens to rate the importance of a variety of reasons that an individual or family might choose to move to and/or remain in Acton. The results are summarized below.

Please rate the level of importance of the following items in relation to their influence on your decisions to move to and/or remain in Acton:	Essential	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all Important	Not Sure
Public schools...	55%	22%	8%	12%	3%
Other educational opportunities...	19%	30%	27%	19%	5%
Town services...	15%	47%	31%	5%	2%
Civic/volunteer opportunities...	5%	21%	48%	23%	3%
Geographic location/accessibility...	30%	47%	18%	4%	1%
Variety of housing choices...	13%	29%	36%	21%	2%
Open space/conservation land...	13%	49%	30%	8%	
Small town ambiance and lifestyle...	21%	41%	32%	6%	1%
Recreational opportunities	11%	46%	33%	7%	2%
Cultural opportunities...	9%	30%	44%	15%	3%
Property values/investment...	36%	44%	12%	6%	2%

In the figure below, respondents who were not sure were omitted and the percentage who responded that the various items were essential or very important was calculated.



The most important draw for the town of Acton is its public school system, with 55% of respondents saying that this was and is essential to moving to and staying in the town, followed by property values at 36%, geographic location at 30%, and small town ambiance at 21% saying these were essential to them moving to or remaining in Acton.

4b. Reasons to Move to Acton – Interesting Relationships

When it came to rating the importance of different features that influenced survey participants' decisions to move to and/or remain in Acton, children, age, education and gender did matter. People from households with children were much more likely to rate public schools and recreational opportunities as essential or very important than those from households without children, whereas people from households without children were more likely to rate a variety of housing choices and property as essential or very important. With age, we see those aged 65 and under rated were much more likely to rate public school as essential or very important than those aged over 65. Those without a four-year college degree were more likely to rate variety of housing choices as essential or very important than those with a four-year degree, who were more likely to rate public school, recreational opportunity, and property value as essential or very important. Compared to men, women were more likely to rate other educational opportunities and small town ambiance and lifestyle as essential or very important.

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Public Schools only somewhat or not important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	40%	6%	20%
Public Schools essential or very important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	60%	94%	80%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 80.03 (Pr=.000)

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Other Educational Opportunities only somewhat or not important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	56%	40%	47%
Other Educational Opportunities essential or very important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	44%	60%	53%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 10.1 (Pr=.020)

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Civic/volunteer opportunities only somewhat or not important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	64%	80%	73%
Civic/volunteer opportunities essential or very important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	36%	20%	27%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 14.25 (Pr=.008)

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Variety of housing choices only somewhat or not important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	44%	67%	58%
Variety of housing choices essential or very important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	56%	33%	42%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 24.6 (Pr=.000)

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Recreational opportunities somewhat or not important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	57%	32%	42%
Recreational opportunities essential or very important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	43%	68%	58%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 28.54 (Pr=.000)

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Property value somewhat or not important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	24%	13%	18%
Property value essential or very important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	76%	87%	82%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 9.22 (Pr=.041)

	65 and under	Over 65	Total
Public schools only somewhat or not important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	17%	33%	20%
Public schools essential or very important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	83%	67%	80%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 10.22 (Pr=.008)

	65 and under	Over 65	Total
Civic/volunteer opportunities only somewhat or not important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	77%	54%	73%
Civic/volunteer opportunities essential or very important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	23%	46%	27%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 17.01 (Pr=.001)

	No 4-year College Degree	4-year College Degree	Total
Public schools somewhat or not important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	39%	12%	20%
Public schools essential or very important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	61%	88%	80%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 41.06 (Pr=.000)

	No 4-year College Degree	4-year College Degree	Total
Variety of housing choices somewhat or not important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	43%	63%	57%
Variety of housing choices essential or very important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	57%	37%	43%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 15.63 (Pr=.008)

	No 4-year College Degree	4-year College Degree	Total
Recreational opportunities somewhat or not important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	54%	37%	42%
Recreational opportunities essential or very important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	46%	63%	58%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 11.07 (Pr=.025)

	No 4-year College Degree	4-year College Degree	Total
Property value somewhat or not important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	28%	14%	18%
Property value essential or very important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	72%	86%	82%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 13.53 (Pr=.013)

	Male	Female	Total
Other Educational Opportunities only somewhat or not important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	54%	39%	46%
Other Educational Opportunities essential or very important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	46%	61%	54%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 9.88 (Pr=.034)

	Male	Female	Total
Small town ambiance and lifestyle somewhat or not important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	47%	29%	37%
Small town ambiance and lifestyle essential or very important to decision to move to or remain in Acton	53%	71%	63%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 14.02 (Pr=.011)

5a. Property Use – Summary

Acton residents were asked their opinions on the current mix of property uses in the town. The results are summarized below.

What is your opinion of Acton's current mix of property uses:	Not Enough	Just About Right	Too Much	Not Sure
Single-family houses...	7%	72%	12%	8%
Residential subdivisions...	6%	56%	25%	12%
Multi-family housing...	8%	40%	34%	17%
Rental housing...	11%	37%	30%	22%
Office buildings...	17%	62%	9%	11%
Large retail stores...	37%	52%	8%	4%
Small shops and businesses...	46%	48%	3%	3%
Open space/farmland...	33%	58%	7%	1%

While there is some degree of uncertainty in the responses here (not sure ranges from 1% to 22% across all questions), the modal and majority response for each category is “just about right,” indicating broad majority support for current property use. There are three places, however, where sizable minorities expressed a desire for more:

- Open spaces and farmland
- Large retail shops
- Small shops and businesses

5b. Property Use – Interesting Relationships

When it came to rating the mixes of property use in Acton, children, education and gender did matter. More people from households without children rated multi-family housing use as just right as compared to people from households with children. Age had no statistical significance. Those without a four-year college degree were also most likely to rate multi-family housing use as just right, while those with four-year degrees were more likely to rate rental housing as just right. Compared to men, women were slightly more likely to rate the use of small shops and businesses in the town of Acton as just right.

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Multi-family houses-not enough	11%	8%	9%
Multi-family houses-just right	61%	43%	50%
Multi-family houses-too much	29%	49%	41%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 14.9 (Pr=.022)

	No 4-year degree	4- year degree	Total
Multi-family houses-not enough	16%	6%	9%
Multi-family houses-just right	56%	48%	50%
Multi-family houses-too much	28%	46%	41%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 14.27 (Pr=.033)

	No 4-year degree	4-year degree	Total
Rental housing-not enough	31%	9%	15%
Rental housing-just right	44%	49%	47%
Rental housing-too much	25%	43%	37%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 28.6 (Pr=.001)

	Male	Female	Total
Small shops and businesses-not enough	46%	48%	47%
Small shops and businesses -just right	48%	51%	50%
Small shops and businesses -too much	6%	1%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 10.49 (Pr=.045)

6a. Civic Participation – Summary

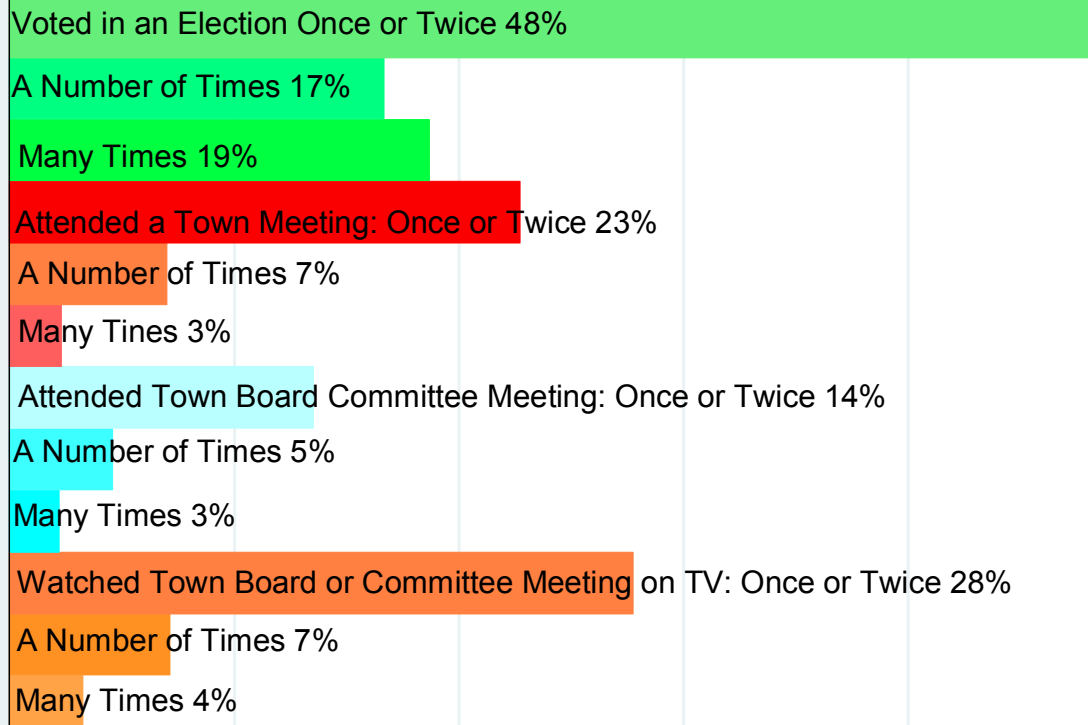
This battery of questions asked citizens about their involvement in the town community, including their propensity to vote, attend town meetings, volunteer and shop locally. The results are summarized below

In the last 12 months, about how many times have you participated in the following civic/community activities in Acton?	None	Once or Twice	A Number of Times	Many Times
Voted in an election...	17%	48%	17%	19%
Attended Town Meeting...	68%	23%	7%	2%
Attended a meeting of a Town board or committee...	80%	14%	5%	2%
Watched a Town board or committee meeting on television...	62%	28%	7%	3%
Attended a Town event (e.g. July 4 th , Acton Days, etc.)...	31%	47%	19%	3%
Attended a school/local sporting event...	41%	13%	22%	24%
Volunteered at a local non-profit or civic group...	58%	20%	12%	10%
Donated money to a local non-profit or civic group...	25%	37%	25%	14%
Shopped in the West Acton Business District...	10%	24%	33%	33%
Shopped in 2A Business District...	2%	8%	30%	60%
Shopped in Route. 111 and 27 Area (Kelley's Corner)...	7%	11%	24%	57%

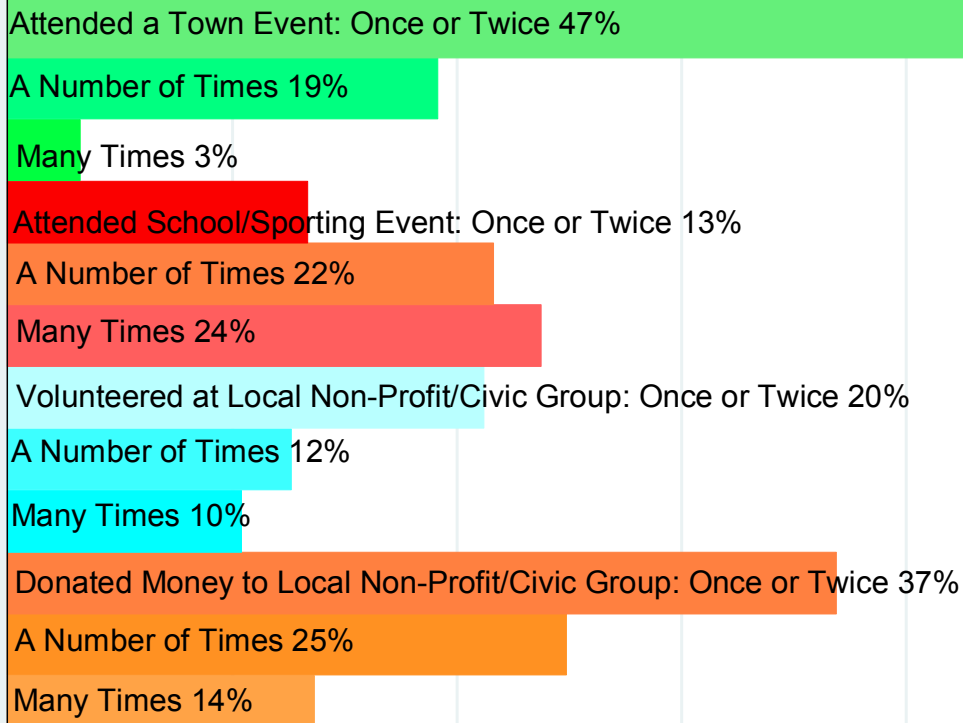
Voting in Acton appears to be quite high, with only 17% claiming to have not voted in any elections over the last 12 months. And while majorities have not attended town meetings, 28% have watched a town meeting at least once on television, 47% of respondents have attended a town event, and 60%, 57% and 33% have shopped in the West Acton Business District, 2A Business District and Kelley's Corner respectively.

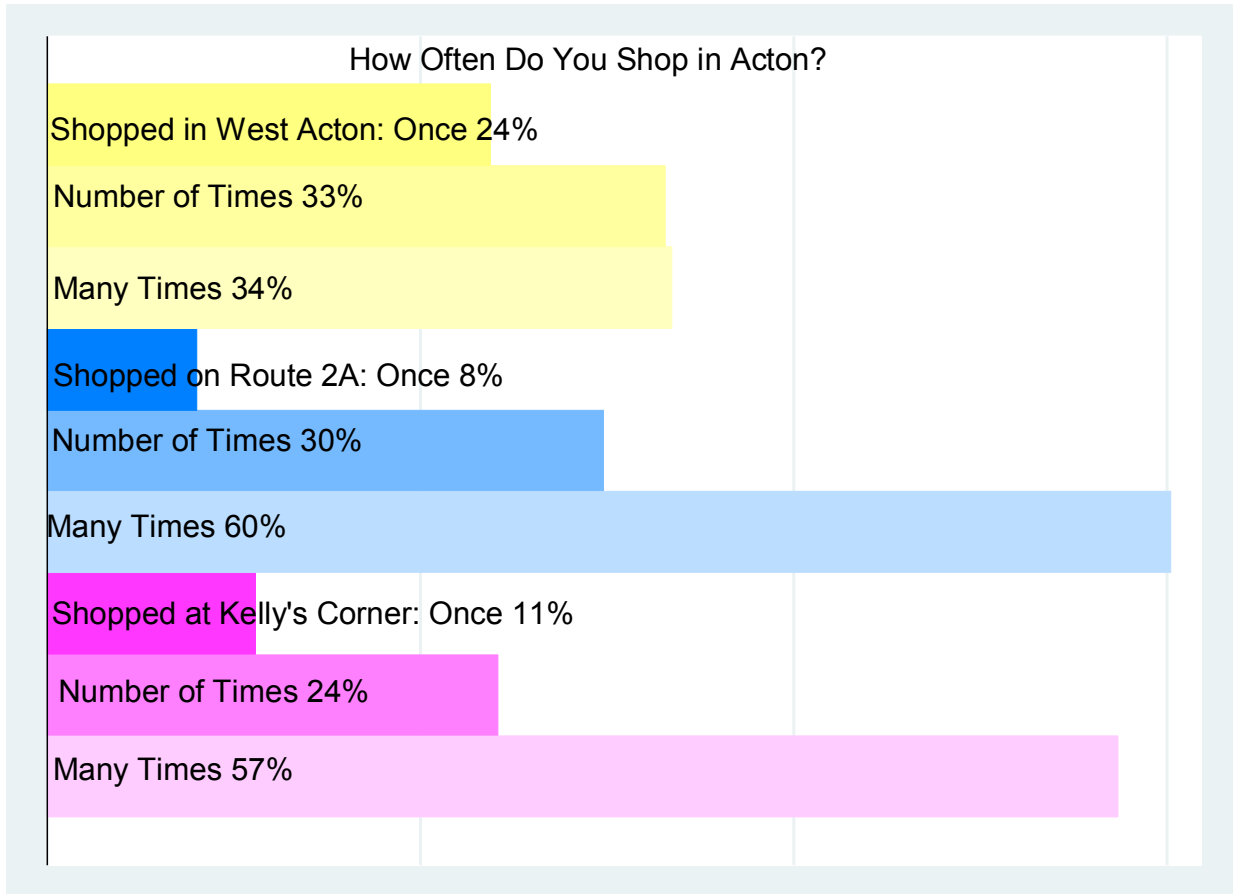
As commentators often lament the lack of civic engagement, these responses indicate that social capital appears to be quite high in Acton.

Civic/ Community Participation in the Last 12 Months



Civic/ Community Participation in the Last 12 Months





6b. Civic Participation – Interesting Relationships

There were some differences in reported participation in civic and community activities between people from households without children and those from households with children, between those 65 and under and those over 65, between those with and without a four-year college degree and between men and women. Compared to people from households without children, people from households with children were more likely to volunteer at a local non-profit or civic group, to attend a town event and a school or a local sporting event, but they were less likely to vote in an election. The pattern was similar for age: compared to those over 65, those 65 and under were more likely attend a town event and school or local sporting event, but less likely to vote. Compared to people 65 and under, people over 65 were more likely to vote and to attend a town meeting, but slightly less likely to shop in the Downtown Business District. People without a four-year college degree were more likely to watch a town board or committee meeting on television; those with a four-year college degree were more likely to volunteer at a local non-profit or civic group and shop in the Downtown Business District. Finally, women were more likely to volunteer than men.

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Did not vote in an election	11%	21%	16%
Voted in an election at least once	89%	79%	84%

Pearson Chi-Square (1) 8.60 (P=. 051)

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Did not attend a Town event	52%	15%	31%
Attended a Town event at least once	48%	85%	69%

Pearson Chi-Square (1) 72.26 (P=. 000)

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Did not attend a school/local sporting event	69%	21%	42%
Attended a school/local sporting event at least once	31%	79%	58%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 108.54 (P=.000)

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Did not volunteer at a local non-profit or civic group	65%	54%	59%
Volunteered at a local non-profit or civic group at least once	35%	46%	41%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 5.60 (P=.088)

	Under 65	65 and Over	Total
Did not vote in an election	18%	14%	17%
Voted in an election at least once	82%	86%	83%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) .875 (P=.596)

	Under 65	65 and Over	Total
Did not attend a Town event	27%	49%	30%
Attended a Town event at least once	73%	51%	70%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 15.32 (P=.001)

	Under 65	65 and Over	Total
Did not attend a school/local sporting event	37%	60%	41%
Attended a school/local sporting event at least once	63%	40%	59%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 14.07 (P=.002)

	Under 65	65 and Over	Total
Did not attend a Town meeting	67%	70%	68%
Attended a Town meeting at least once	33%	30%	32%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) .934 (P=.511)

	Under 65	65 and Over	Total
Did not shop in the West Acton Business District	9%	13%	10%
Shopped in the West Acton Business District at least once	91%	87%	90%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) .705 (P=.578)

	Under 65	65 and Over	Total
Did not shop in the 2A Business District	1%	6%	2%
Shopped in the 2A Business District at least once	99%	94%	98%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 7.24 (P=.011)

	Under 65	65 and Over	Total
Did not shop at Kelley's Corner	6%	10%	7%
Shopped at Kelley's Corner at least once	94%	90%	93%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 1.51 (P=.408)

	No 4-year College Degree	4-year College Degree	Total
Did not watch a Town board or committee meeting on television	68%	62%	64%
Watched a Town board or committee meeting on television at least once	32%	38%	36%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 1.57 (P=.3889)

	No 4-year College Degree	4-year College Degree	Total
Did not volunteer at a local non-profit or civic group	69%	53%	58%
Volunteered at a local non-profit or civic group at least once	31%	46%	42%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 9.46 (P=.041)

	No 4-year College Degree	4-year College Degree	Total
Did not shop in the West Acton Business District	16%	7%	10%
Shopped in the West Acton Business District at least once	84%	93%	90%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 8.02 (P=.029)

	No 4-year College Degree	4-year College Degree	Total
Did not shop in the 2A Business District	3%	1%	2%
Shopped in the 2A Business District at least once	97%	99%	98%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 2.34 (Pr=.133)

	No 4-year College Degree	4-year College Degree	Total
Did not shop at Kelley's Corner	9%	6%	7%
Shopped at Kelley's Corner	91%	94%	93%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 1.17 (P=.466)

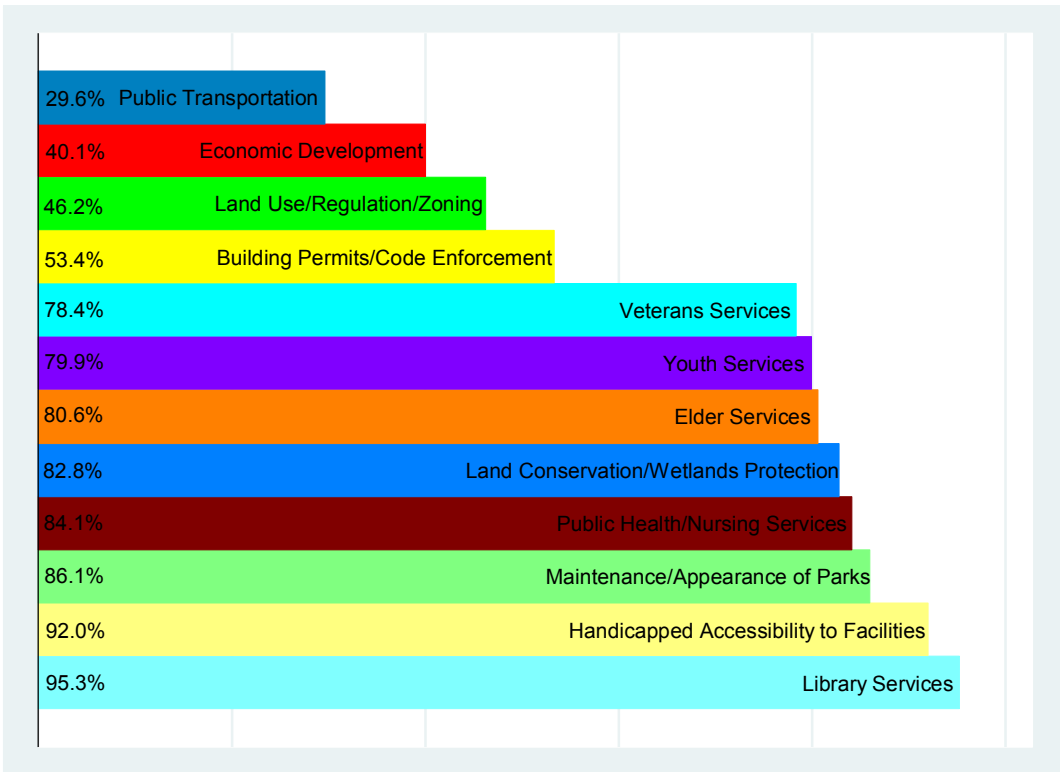
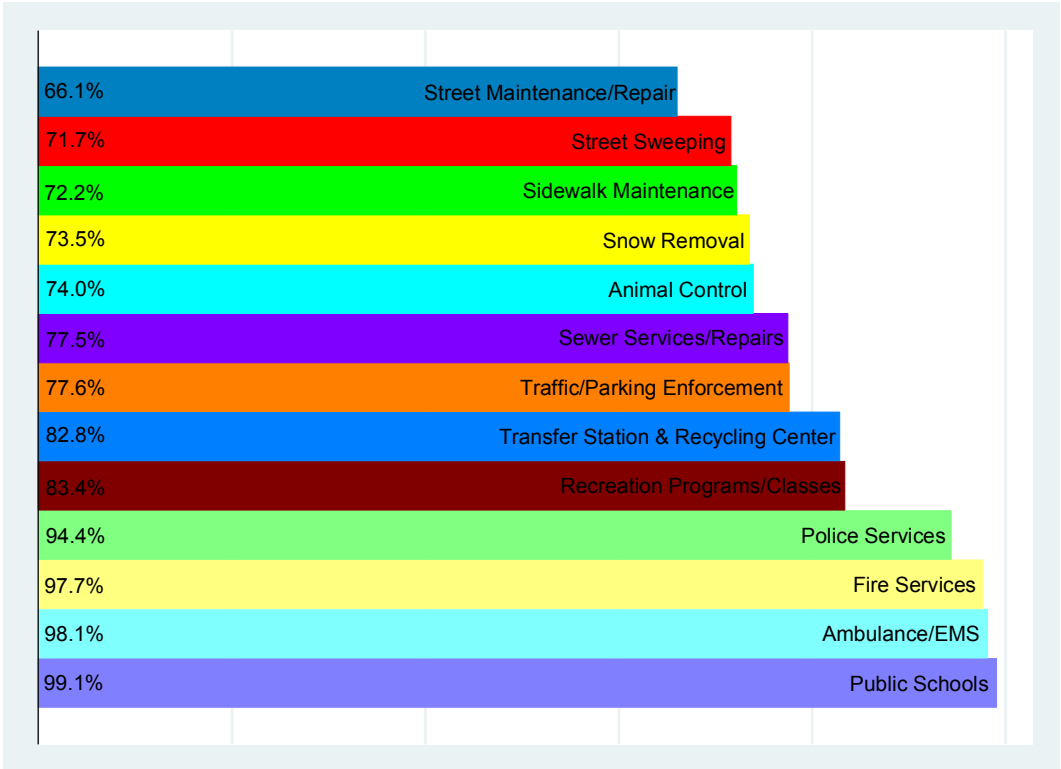
	Male	Female	Total
Did not volunteer at a local non-profit or civic group	63%	56%	59%
Volunteered at a local non-profit or civic group at least once	37%	44%	41%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 2.26 (P=.306)

7a. Town Services – Summary

Town services make up a large part of local governments, and as we learned from Section 4, the quality of services are one of the top three reasons that citizens report moving to/deciding to remain in Acton. The ratings of 21 different Town Services are presented below.

How do you rate the quality and performance of each of the following Town of Acton services and programs:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Public schools	75.87%	21.58%	1.16%	1.39%
Fire services	66.04%	31.55%	2.14%	0.27%
Ambulance/EMS	67.27%	30.03%	2.40%	0.30%
Police services	57.84%	37.79%	3.60%	0.77%
Animal control	36.29%	43.63%	13.90%	6.18%
Traffic/parking enforcement	24.12%	52.06%	19.41%	4.41%
Street maintenance/repair	16.11%	51.23%	27.07%	5.59%
Street sweeping	18.10%	56.19%	19.76%	5.95%
Snow removal	28.23%	49.35%	18.53%	3.88%
Sidewalk maintenance	13.90%	57.32%	21.46%	7.32%
Transfer Station & Recycling Center	41.67%	45.83%	10.71%	1.79%
Sewer Services/Repairs	24.16%	52.25%	15.17%	8.43%
Recreation Programs/Classes	26.48%	56.34%	16.06%	1.13%
Elder Services	23.62%	53.27%	21.11%	2.01%
Youth Services	26.32%	50.44%	19.74%	3.51%
Veterans Services	23.58%	49.06%	18.87%	8.49%
Library Services	50.48%	43.78%	5.02%	0.72%
Handicapped Accessibility of Facilities	22.05%	65.75%	10.63%	1.18%
Maintenance/Appearance of Parks	26.70%	59.72%	11.24%	2.34%
Economic Development	5.14%	37.33%	40.41%	17.12%
Public Transportation	4.07%	23.04%	34.15%	38.75%
Building Permits and Code Enforcement	11.79%	42.56%	29.74%	15.90%
Public Health Services/Nursing Service	35.08%	50.79%	12.57%	1.57%
Land Conservation & Wetlands Protection	21.91%	62.64%	12.08%	3.37%
Land Use Planning, Regulation and Zoning	8.33%	41.35%	32.05%	18.27%



Overall, most town services receive ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good’ Ratings. Standouts include Ambulance/EMS services, Library Services, Fire services, Police, and Public Schools. The lowest marks are given for public transportation options; economic development; and land use, regulation, and zoning services. These three marks are notable as the only three town services not rated positively by a majority of Acton residents.

7b. Town Services – Interesting Relationships

Children, age, education and gender made some differences in how people rated the quality and performance of some Town of Acton services. Compared to those from households with children, people from households without children were more likely to give a rating of good or excellent to snow removal services, sewer services, and economic development; households with children were more likely to give better ratings to public schools. Those over 65 were also more likely to rate as fair or poor fire services, as well as the transfer station and recycling services. Compared to people without a four year college degree, those with such a degree were more likely to rate police services as good or excellent. Compared to men, women were more likely to give good or excellent marks to veterans services, and more likely to give fair or poor marks to library services and handicapped accessibility.

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Rated public schools Fair/Poor	3%	1%	2%
Rated public schools Good/Excellent	97%	99%	98%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 3.18 (Pr=.027)

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Rated snow removal services Fair/Poor	18%	34%	27%
Rated snow removal services Good/Excellent	82%	66%	73%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 13.71 (Pr=.008)

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Rated sewer services Fair/Poor	13%	30%	23%
Rated sewer services Good/Excellent	87%	70%	77%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 7.53 (Pr=.022)

	Household without Children	Household with Children	Total
Rated economic development Fair/Poor	49%	66%	60%
Rated economic development Good/Excellent	51%	34%	40%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 8.64 (Pr=.031)

	Without a 4-Year College Degree	With a 4-Year College Degree	Total
Rated police services Fair/Poor	9%	1%	4%
Rated police services Good/Excellent	91%	99%	96%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 15.30 (Pr=.000)

	Under 65 Years Old	65 Years and Older	Total
Rated fire services Fair/Poor	1%	5%	1%
Rated fire services Good/Excellent	99%	95%	99%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 9.29 (Pr=.008)

	Under 65 Years Old	65 Years and Older	Total
Rated transfer station/recycling services Fair/Poor	21%	22%	17%
Rated transfer station/recycling services Good/Excellent	79%	78%	83%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 12.11 (Pr=.000)

	Male	Female	Total
Rated veterans services Fair/Poor	38%	6%	22%
Rated veterans services Good/Excellent	62%	94%	78%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 15.54 (Pr=.001)

	Male	Female	Total
Rated library services Fair/Poor	2%	7%	5%
Rated library services Good/Excellent	98%	93%	95%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 6.00 (Pr=.008)

	Male	Female	Total
Rated handicapped access Fair/Poor	6%	17%	11%
Rated handicapped accessibility Good/Excellent	94%	83%	89%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 7.94 (Pr=.042)

8a. Impressions and Ratings of Town Employees/Officials – Summary

Survey respondents were asked to rate their interactions with town employees or officials.

What was your impressions of the Town employee or official you had contact with:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Sure
Courtesy/politeness	63%	30%	6%	1%	1%
Knowledge/understanding	58%	32%	8%	2%	1%
Responsiveness/resolution	55%	29%	8%	6%	2%
Overall experience	56%	30%	9%	3%	1%

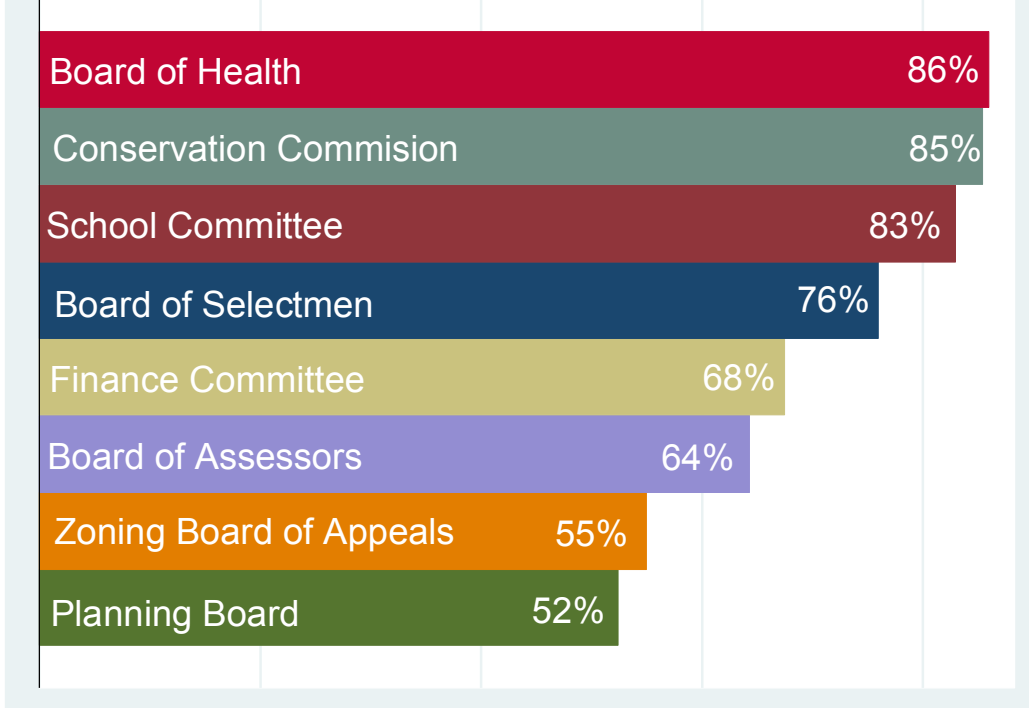


Respondents were satisfied with their contact with the town’s employees. Courtesy and the overall experience were rated excellent or good by more than 90% of the respondents. Knowledge or understanding as well as responsiveness or resolution were rated excellent at least 85% of the respondents.

Survey recipients were also asked to evaluate the performance of individual town boards or committees, ranging from the Board of Selectmen to the Finance Committee.

How would you rate the performance and actions of the following Town boards and committees:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Sure
Board of Selectmen...	11%	33%	10%	3%	43%
School Committee...	13%	37%	9%	2%	39%
Planning Board...	6%	22%	15%	7%	51%
Zoning Board of Appeals...	4%	16%	9%	5%	66%
Conservation Commission...	8%	27%	10%	1%	54%
Board of Health...	8%	24%	6%	1%	61%
Board of Assessors...	6%	19%	11%	2%	62%
Finance Committee...	8%	24%	10%	4%	55%

Performance of Town Board Committees Rated Excellent/Good



The Board of Health, Conservation Commission, and School Committee had the highest ratings. The Board of Selectmen was rated excellent or good by 70% of the respondents. The Zoning Board of Appeals and the Planning Board were excellent or good by few than 60% of the respondents.

8b. Impressions and Ratings of Town Employees/Officials – Interesting Relationships

Children, education, gender nor age made a difference in how respondents rated the town committees. The approval of the Board of Health and the Conservation Committee can be contributed to the satisfaction with the community’s safety and conservation of open space land, as both were rated the highly amongst their respective categories.

Age was relevant in the perception of town employees’ courtesy and knowledge as well as the respondent’s satisfaction with any resolution and the overall experience. Residents over the age of sixty-five were more likely to rate all four categories as good or excellent.

	65 and under	Over 65	Total
Rated courtesy as Fair/Poor	11%	2%	91%
Rated courtesy as Good/Excellent	89%	98%	9%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 3.96 (Pr=.0061)

	65 and under	Over 65	Total
Rated knowledge/understanding as Fair/Poor	13%	17%	11%
Rated knowledge/understanding as Good/Excellent	87%	98%	89%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 5.31 (Pr=.0014)

	65 and under	Over 65	Total
Rated responsiveness/resolution as Fair/Poor	17%	4%	15%
Rated responsiveness/resolution as Good/Excellent	83%	96%	85%

Pearson Chi-Square(2) 5.84 (Pr=.0008)

	65 and under	Over 65	Total
Rated overall experience as Fair/Poor	12%	3%	11%
Rated overall experience as Good/Excellent	88%	97%	89%

Pearson Chi-Square(2) 3.59 (Pr=.0078)

9a. Media Usage – Summary

This question asked respondents to state their reliance on a variety of different media sources in obtaining information about the Town of Acton. The results are summarized below.

How often do you rely on the following media sources to obtain Town of Acton related news and information:	Daily	Weekly	Occasionally	Seldom	Never
Acton Patch...	10%	8%	22%	19%	42%
Beacon (Wicked Local.com/Acton...	2%	37%	27%	15%	19%
Boston Globe or Boston Herald...	18%	16%	23%	17%	26%
Newspaper websites...	8%	11%	30%	19%	32%
Town of Acton website...	< 1%	6%	56%	18%	20%
Other websites or social media...	9%	8%	28%	22%	32%
Local access television...	1%	4%	23%	27%	44%
Word of mouth...	12%	24%	49%	6%	9%
E-mail notices or newsletters...	11%	15%	39%	12%	23%
Direct contact...	5%	6%	32%	27%	30%

Many residents (22%) report reading the Acton Patch for news occasionally, and 8% read it weekly. However, these local publications are outpace the Boston Globe or the Boston Herald as places where residents turn for information about the town with 16% of survey respondents responding that they read them weekly. A considerable number of citizens also report hearing obtaining town information by word of mouth (24% hear something weekly) and via the Beacon (37% use it weekly).

9b. Media Usage – Interesting Relationships

Children, age, and education all had statistically significant relationships with the media sources respondents reported using for Town of Acton related news and information. Compared to people from households without children, those from households with children were more likely to rely daily or weekly on word of mouth, email notices or notifications, and direct contact for their news. Compared to those 65 and under, those over 65 were more likely to rely on the Town of Acton website while those 65 and under were more likely to rely on the Beacon and word of mouth. Compared to those with a four-year college degree, those without a degree were more likely to rely on world of mouth and email notices for information about the town.

	Households without Children	Households with Children	Total
Relied on word of mouth for town news & information occasionally, seldom or never	74%	56%	64%
Relied on word of mouth for town news & information daily or weekly	26%	44%	36%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 15.77 (Pr=.004)

	Households without Children	Households with Children	Total
Relied on email notices/newsletters for town news & information occasionally, seldom or never	84%	67%	74%
Relied on email notices/newsletters for town news & information daily or weekly	17%	33%	26%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 15.34 (Pr=.002)

	Households without Children	Households with Children	Total
Relied on direct contact for town news & information occasionally, seldom or never	94%	85%	89%
Relied on direct contact for town news & information daily or weekly	6%	15%	11%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 8.57 (Pr=.008)

	65 and under	Over 65	Total
Relied on the Beacon for town news & information occasionally, seldom or never	64%	48%	61%
Relied on the Beacon for town news & information daily or weekly	36%	52%	39%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 6.78 (Pr=.034)

	65 and under	Over 65	Total
Relied on the Town of Acton website for town news & information occasionally, seldom or never	93%	98%	94%
Relied on the Town of Acton website for town news & information daily or weekly	7%	2%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 2.55 (Pr=.048)

	65 and under	Over 65	Total
Relied on word of mouth for town news & information occasionally, seldom or never	60%	80%	64%
Relied on word of mouth for town news & information daily or weekly	40%	20%	36%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 10.57 (Pr=.003)

	No 4-year college degree	4-year college degree	Total
Relied on word of mouth for town news & information occasionally, seldom or never	78%	59%	65%
Relied on word of mouth for town news & information daily or weekly	22%	41%	35%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 13.29 (Pr=.016)

	No 4-year college degree	4-year college degree	Total
Relied on email notices/newsletters for town news & information occasionally, seldom or never	84%	70%	74%
Relied on email notices/newsletters for town news & information daily or weekly	16%	30%	26%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Pearson Chi-Square(1) 10.45 (Pr=.033)