

CITY OF SAN RAFAEL: 2009 CITY SATISFACTION SURVEY
Topline Report
February 2009

The City of San Rafael commissioned Godbe Research to conduct a survey of voters to assess overall perceptions of living in the City and to gauge satisfaction with the City's performance in providing services and programs. The survey also gathered resident feedback on the condition of City facilities, and surveyed potential voter support for a revenue measure to repair or replace these facilities.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Overall, 500 voters in the City of San Rafael completed the survey, representing a total universe of approximately 26,409 registered voters. The sample included a subset of 350 likely November 2009 voters, representing a smaller universe of approximately 13,918 registered voters. The study parameters resulted in a margin of error of plus or minus 4.3 percent for the overall sample of 500 voters, and plus or minus 5.2 percent for the subset of 350 likely November 2009 voters. Interviews were conducted from February 5 through February 10, 2009, and the average interview time was approximately 20 minutes.

Once collected, the sample of voters was compared with the registered voter population in the City of San Rafael to examine possible differences between the demographics of the sample of respondents and the actual universe. The data were weighted to correct any differences, and the results presented are representative of the voter characteristics of the City in terms of gender, age, and political party type.

QUESTIONNAIRE METHODOLOGY

To avoid the problem of systematic position bias, where the order in which a series of questions is asked systematically influences the answers, several questions in the survey were randomized such that the respondents were not consistently asked the questions in the same order. The series of items in questions 5, 13, 14, and 16 were randomized to avoid such position bias.

Question 17 allowed the voters surveyed to mention multiple responses. For this reason, the response percentages sum to more than 100, and these represent the percent of the voters who mentioned a particular response, rather than the percent of total responses.

MEAN SCORES AND ROUNDING

In addition to the percentage breakdown of responses to each question, results for the questions relating to satisfaction with City services (Q5), condition of City facilities (Q14), and features of a revenue measure (Q16) include a mean score. For example, to derive the overall influence of a measure feature on potential voter support (Q16), a number value was assigned to each response category as follows: "Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, "No Effect" = 0, "Somewhat Less Likely" = -1, and "Much Less Likely" = -2. The individual answer of each respondent was then assigned the corresponding number, from +2 to -2 in this example. Finally, all respondents' answers were averaged to produce a final score that reflects the overall influence of a measure feature. The resulting mean score makes the interpretation of the data considerably easier. Responses of "Don't Know" (DK/NA) were not included in the calculations of the means for any questions.

Conventional rounding rules apply to the percentages shown in this report, .5 or above is rounded up to the next number, and .4 or below is rounded down to the previous number. As a result, the percentages may not add up to 100 percent.

1. Generally speaking, do you think things in San Rafael are going in the right direction or do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?

Right direction	69%
Wrong track	19%
DK/NA	12%

2. In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the overall quality of life in the City of San Rafael? [GET ANSWER, THEN ASK:] Is that very (satisfied/dissatisfied) or somewhat (satisfied/dissatisfied)?

Very satisfied	59%
Somewhat satisfied	32%
Somewhat dissatisfied	6%
Very dissatisfied	4%
DK/NA	<1%

3. In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the job the City of San Rafael is doing to provide City services? [GET ANSWER, THEN ASK:] Would that be very (satisfied/dissatisfied) or somewhat (satisfied/dissatisfied)?

Very satisfied	43%
Somewhat satisfied	41%
Somewhat dissatisfied	7%
Very dissatisfied	5%
DK/NA	3%

4. Generally speaking, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with how the San Rafael City Council are performing their job? [GET ANSWER, THEN ASK:] Would that be very (satisfied/dissatisfied) or somewhat (satisfied/dissatisfied)?

Very satisfied	24%
Somewhat satisfied	31%
Somewhat dissatisfied	9%
Very dissatisfied	6%
DK/NA	30%

5. Moving on, I'd like to read you a list of services provided by the City of San Rafael. For each, please tell me whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with the job the City of San Rafael is doing to provide the service.

Here's the (first/next): _____. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the City's performance in this area? [GET ANSWER, THEN ASK:] Would that be very (satisfied/dissatisfied) or somewhat (satisfied/dissatisfied)?

	Mean Score	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	DK/NA
5A. Providing programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions	0.6	17%	21%	10%	5%	46%
5B. Providing police protection	1.5	63%	27%	5%	3%	4%
5C. Keeping taxes at affordable levels	0.3	23%	34%	17%	16%	10%
5D. Managing growth and development	0.6	26%	35%	14%	11%	14%
5E. Preserving open space	1.3	52%	28%	9%	3%	8%
5F. Managing traffic on city streets	0.5	31%	36%	18%	14%	1%
5G. Maintaining city streets and roads	0.6	34%	35%	18%	11%	1%
5H. Providing public library services	1.4	53%	28%	6%	3%	10%
5I. Providing fire and paramedic services	1.7	70%	21%	2%	<1%	7%
5J. Providing affordable housing	0.0	14%	24%	17%	16%	30%
5K. Maintaining storm drains	1.2	46%	31%	8%	5%	10%
5L. Maintaining sidewalks	0.9	39%	35%	13%	9%	3%
5M. Providing bike and pedestrian friendly routes	0.9	37%	33%	12%	7%	10%
5N. Trimming trees along city streets	1.2	50%	33%	7%	6%	4%
5O. Maintaining and weeding median strips along city streets	1.0	39%	38%	9%	6%	9%
5P. Cleaning and sweeping city streets	1.2	54%	31%	8%	5%	1%
5Q. Providing sufficient parking downtown	0.6	31%	35%	17%	14%	3%
5R. Providing senior citizen services	1.2	28%	20%	4%	3%	45%
5S. Providing youth and teen services	0.9	20%	22%	6%	5%	47%
5T. Providing community events	1.3	49%	30%	7%	2%	12%
5U. Providing adequate parks and recreation facilities	1.3	51%	37%	5%	3%	4%
5V. Maintaining parks	1.3	51%	36%	5%	2%	6%
5W. Providing recreational and cultural arts programs	1.3	45%	32%	5%	3%	15%
5X. Providing child care services	1.1	16%	13%	3%	2%	66%
5Y. Meeting the needs of ethnic minorities	0.7	20%	25%	8%	7%	40%
5Z. Providing garbage collection and recycling services	1.5	69%	22%	4%	2%	2%

Computation of Mean Scores: "Very Satisfied" = +2, "Somewhat Satisfied" = +1, "Somewhat Dissatisfied" = -1, and "Very Dissatisfied" = -2.

6. Moving on to other topics. In your opinion, _____ [DO NOT RANDOMIZE; REPEAT IN SEQUENCE UNTIL ALL ITEMS ARE READ]

	Yes	No	DK/NA
6A. Do you generally feel safe from crime in San Rafael?	88%	11%	1%
6B. Do you feel as safe today as you did five years ago when you walk city streets?	70%	23%	7%
6C. Has the revitalization effort in the downtown area been a good thing for San Rafael?	83%	10%	7%
6D. Do you have confidence in City leaders to solve the difficult problems as they arise?	60%	22%	18%
6E. Is San Rafael successfully maintaining its unique character and hometown atmosphere?	75%	20%	5%

7. Next, has traffic in your local neighborhood improved, worsened, or stayed about the same in the last two years?

Improved	9%
Worsened	41%
Stayed about the same	49%
DK/NA	2%

8. What is the single, largest problem facing the City of San Rafael today? [DON'T READ CHOICES; RECORD SINGLE RESPONSE]

Traffic congestion	20%
Cost of living or housing	12%
Poor financial situation/condition	11%
Illegal immigrants or day laborers	9%
Growth and/or overcrowding	8%
Public safety (includes "crime")	6%
Quality of education	5%
Availability of jobs	5%
Homelessness	5%
Environmental issues	2%
Economy	2%
Public transportation	1%
Condition or safety of streets	1%
Condition or safety of sidewalks/pathways	1%
Condition or safety of buildings	1%
Other	5%
DK/NA	5%

9. In your opinion, would you say the City's financial situation is excellent, good, fair, or poor?

Excellent	4%
Good	24%
Fair	34%
Poor	12%
DK/NA	26%

10. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the job the City of San Rafael is doing in spending taxpayers' money?

Satisfied	45%
Dissatisfied	25%
Mixed	13%
No opinion	15%
Not applicable	2%

11. Do you feel local taxes in San Rafael are too high, too low, or just about right?

Too high	38%
Too low	2%
Just about right	51%
DK/NA	9%

12. Do you pay a great deal, some, or very little attention to San Rafael city government business?

Great deal	16%
Some	37%
Very little	45%
DK/NA	1%

ASSESSMENT OF CITY FACILITIES (n = 500)

13. Next, I'm going to read you a list of City buildings and facilities. For each one, please tell me whether you have visited or used the facility within the past two years.

Here's the (first/next): _____, have you visited or used this facility within the past two years?

	Yes	No	DK/NA
13A. San Rafael Public Library	78%	22%	<1%
13B. City parks	85%	15%	<1%
13C. The Falkirk Cultural Center	42%	57%	1%
13D. Police station	29%	71%	<1%
13E. Fire stations	30%	69%	1%
13F. Terra Linda Community Center	32%	67%	1%
13G. San Rafael Community Center	52%	47%	2%

14. Next, I'm going to read you the same list of City buildings and facilities. This time, please tell me if you would say the condition of that facility is excellent, good, fair, or poor.

Here's the (first/next): _____, would you say the condition of this facility is excellent, good, fair, or poor?

	Mean Score	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	DK/NA
14A. San Rafael Public Library	1.8	16%	43%	20%	8%	13%
14B. City parks	2.0	23%	50%	17%	2%	8%
14C. The Falkirk Cultural Center	2.0	15%	34%	10%	1%	40%
14D. Police station	1.9	11%	31%	10%	3%	46%
14E. Fire stations	1.9	14%	34%	11%	3%	39%
14F. Terra Linda Community Center	1.9	10%	25%	12%	1%	52%
14G. San Rafael Community Center	1.9	12%	35%	16%	2%	35%

Computation of Mean Scores: "Excellent" = +3, "Good" = +2, "Fair" = +1, and "Poor" = 0.

15. In the coming months, voters in the City of San Rafael may be asked to vote on a number of various local measures. Let me read you the description of one potential measure:

In order to repair or replace deteriorated facilities that are critical to City services, such as:

- Repair or replace outdated police and fire stations to remain operational in an earthquake and maintain rapid emergency response times;
- Expand or replace the library to provide space for larger collections, children’s programs, full access for disabled persons, and upgrade library technology; and
- Modernize community centers to offer emergency shelters

Shall the City of San Rafael be authorized to issue \$150 million dollars in general obligation bonds with citizen’s oversight?

If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure? [GET ANSWER, THEN ASK:] Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?

	Likely Nov. 2009 voter	Nov. 2008 voter
Sample size	350	500
Margin of error	5.2%	4.3%
Definitely Yes	24%	24%
Probably Yes	27%	30%
Probably No	12%	13%
Definitely No	26%	22%
DK/NA	11%	11%

16. Now, let's talk about the types of projects that might be funded by the proposed ballot measure. As I read each project, please tell me if it would make you more or less likely to vote for the measure.

If you heard the money could be used to _____, would you be more or less likely to vote for the ballot measure? [GET ANSWER, THEN ASK:] Is that much (more/less) likely or somewhat (more/less) likely?

Likely November 2009 voter (n = 350)

	Mean Score	Much More Likely	Somewhat More Likely	No Effect	Somewhat Less Likely	Much Less Likely	DK/NA
16F. Upgrade all fire stations to accommodate modern fire-fighting equipment	1.0	43%	26%	19%	4%	7%	3%
16E. Make all fire stations earthquake safe	0.9	41%	26%	17%	4%	9%	2%
16I. Repair or replace police and fire stations to maintain rapid emergency response times	0.9	38%	28%	19%	4%	8%	3%
16H. Repair or replace police and fire stations to ensure that these facilities remain functional in the event of an earthquake or other disaster	0.8	38%	28%	16%	4%	9%	4%
16M. Modernize the library to provide full access for disabled persons	0.8	41%	24%	18%	7%	9%	2%
16A. Replace the deteriorated and inadequate downtown fire station, police station, and emergency dispatch center with a modern, combined public safety facility	0.8	38%	26%	15%	6%	9%	5%
16B. Provide a state-of-the-art emergency dispatch center to coordinate police responses	0.8	38%	25%	19%	5%	9%	4%
16D. Make the police station earthquake safe	0.8	38%	27%	18%	5%	11%	2%
16N. Upgrade library technology, computers, and other equipment to ensure that they are flexible enough to change with the times	0.7	36%	26%	19%	7%	10%	1%
16G. Provide adequate facilities to attract and retain quality fire-fighters	0.7	32%	29%	19%	6%	9%	4%
16C. Provide adequate facilities to attract and retain quality police officers	0.7	32%	28%	21%	7%	8%	5%

Computation of Mean Scores:

"Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, "No Effect" = 0, "Somewhat Less Likely" = -1, and "Much Less Likely" = -2.

	Mean Score	Much More Likely	Somewhat More Likely	No Effect	Somewhat Less Likely	Much Less Likely	DK/NA
16O. Improve the energy efficiency and energy conservation of City buildings	0.6	33%	26%	18%	7%	13%	3%
16L. Expand the library to provide space for larger collections, children's programs, and programs for residents of all ages	0.6	33%	24%	18%	11%	11%	3%
16J. Repair and modernize the San Rafael Community Center to provide emergency shelter in the event of an earthquake or other disaster	0.6	30%	25%	22%	8%	11%	4%
16K. Replace the Terra Linda Community Center to provide emergency shelter in the event of an earthquake or other disaster	0.3	25%	19%	22%	11%	15%	7%

Computation of Mean Scores:

"Much More Likely" = +2, "Somewhat More Likely" = +1, "No Effect" = 0, "Somewhat Less Likely" = -1, and "Much Less Likely" = -2.

17. Before taking this survey, had you seen, heard, or read any information on the condition of city facilities, such as the police or fire stations, the library, or community centers? [IF YES:] Where did you see, hear, or read the information? [DON'T READ CHOICES; RECORD MULTIPLE RESPONSES]

	Likely Nov. 2009 voter	Nov. 2008 voter
Sample size	350	500
Margin of error	5.2%	4.3%
Newspaper article	30%	24%
Word of mouth, friends, or family	9%	8%
City mailer or newsletter	9%	7%
Television	2%	3%
Website	1%	1%
Radio	1%	<1%
Other	3%	2%
No, had not heard	56%	63%
DK/NA	1%	1%

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS (n = 500):

A. To begin, how many years have you lived in San Rafael? [DON'T READ CHOICES]

Less than five years	19%
Five years to less than ten years	15%
Ten years to less than twenty years	26%
Twenty years or more	41%

B. What ethnic group do you consider yourself a part of or feel closest to? [IF RESPONDENT HESITATES, READ LIST]

Caucasian/White	87%
Latino(a)/Hispanic	3%
Asian	3%
African-American/Black	2%
Native American	<1%
Pacific Islander	<1%
Two or more races	2%
Some other race	1%
DK/NA	2%

C. Do you have any children 18 years or younger living in your household?

Yes	25%
No	75%

D. Including yourself, if applicable, how many adults ages 65 and over live in your household?

None	65%
One	19%
Two	14%
Three or more	1%
DK/NA	1%

E. Which of the following best describes your working status?

Full-time	37%
Part-time	11%
Self-employed	11%
Unemployed	4%
Homemaker	5%
Retired	29%
Student	2%
DK/NA	1%

F. Again, for statistical purposes only, what was the approximate total income of your household last year? Was it.....

Less than \$20,000	6%
\$20,000 to less than \$40,000	10%
\$40,000 to less than \$75,000	22%
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	16%
\$100,000 to less than \$125,000	8%
\$125,000 to less than \$150,000	4%
\$150,000 or more	9%
DK/NA	26%

G. Respondent's Gender [DON'T ASK]:

Male	45%
Female	55%

INFORMATION FROM VOTER FILE (n = 500):**H. Voting History:**

	No	Poll	Mail
A. Voted Recall 10/03	32%	43%	25%
B. Voted 6/04	42%	35%	22%
C. Voted 11/04	22%	40%	38%
D. Voted 11/05	33%	33%	34%
E. Voted 6/06	47%	24%	29%
F. Voted 11/06	26%	32%	41%
G. Voted 2/08	51%	18%	31%
H. Voted 6/08	47%	18%	35%
I. Voted 11/08	1%	39%	60%

I. Times Voted in Last Nine Elections:

1 of 9	13%
2 of 9	6%
3 of 9	7%
4 of 9	5%
5 of 9	7%
6 of 9	11%
7 of 9	11%
8 of 9	9%
9 of 9	31%

J. Absentee Voter:

Never Voted Absentee	34%
1 of 9	13%
2 of 9	7%
3 of 9	5%
4 of 9	8%
5 of 9	5%
6 of 9	7%
7 of 9	5%
8 of 9	5%
9 of 9	12%

K. Party:

Democrat	58%
Republican	20%
Other	4%
DTS	19%

L. Age:

18 to 29 years	8%
30 to 39 years	10%
40 to 49 years	18%
50 to 64 years	34%
65 years and over	30%

M. Household Party Type:

Democrat (1)	33%
Democrat (2+)	17%
Republican (1)	7%
Republican (2+)	7%
Other (1)	13%
Other (2+)	3%
Democrat & Republican	6%
Democrat & Other	8%
Republican & Other	3%
Democrat, Republican, & Other	1%

N. Homeownership Status:

Renter	36%
Owner	64%