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# The Town of Coventry, Connecticut

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## Summary Report 2008



**The National Citizen Survey™**

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# SURVEY BACKGROUND

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## About The National Citizen Survey™

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The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA).

## Understanding the Results

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### Survey Administration

Following the mailing of a pre-survey notification postcard to a random sample of 1,200 households, surveys were mailed to the same residences approximately one week later. A reminder letter and a new survey were sent to the same households after two weeks. Of the mailed postcards, 29 were undeliverable due to vacant or “not found” addresses. Completed surveys were received from 495 residents, for a response rate of 42%. Typically, the response rates obtained on citizen surveys range from 25% to 40%.

It is customary to describe the precision of estimates made from surveys by a “level of confidence” (or margin of error). The 95 percent confidence level for this survey of 495 residents is generally no greater than plus or minus 4 percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample.

The results were weighted to reflect the demographic profile of all residents in the Town of Coventry. (For more information on the survey methodology, see Appendix B in the Report of Results. A copy of the survey materials can be found in Appendix C of the Report of Results.)

### Use of the “Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor” Response Scale

The scale on which respondents are asked to record their opinions about service and community quality is “excellent,” “good,” “fair” or “poor” (EGFP). While symmetrical scales often are the right choice in other measurement tasks, we have found that ratings of almost every local government service in almost every jurisdiction tend, on average, to be positive (that is, above the scale midpoint). Therefore, to permit finer distinctions among positively rated services, EGFP offers three options across which to spread those ratings. EGFP is more neutral because it requires no positive statement of service quality to judge (as agree-disagree scales require) and, finally, EGFP intends to measure absolute quality of service delivery or community quality (unlike satisfaction scales which ignore residents’ perceptions of quality in favor of their report on the acceptability of the level of service offered).

## Putting Evaluations onto a 100-Point Scale

Although responses to many of the evaluative questions were made on a 4 point scale with 1 representing the best rating and 4 the worst, many of the results in this summary are reported on a common scale where 0 is the worst possible rating and 100 is the best possible rating. If everyone reported “excellent,” then the result would be 100 on the 100-point scale. Likewise, if all respondents gave a “poor” rating, the result would be 0 on the 100-point scale. If the average rating for quality of life was “good,” then the result would be 67 on a 100-point scale; “fair” would be 33 on the 100-point scale. The 95 percent confidence interval around an average score on the 100-point scale is no greater than plus or minus 3 points based on all respondents.

## PROFILE OF COVENTRY

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As assessed by the survey, about 33% of Coventry residents have lived in the community for more than 20 years and 72% are over age 34. Another 13% are over age 64. Eighty-one percent are currently employed; 15% rent; 85% own and 87% live in detached single family homes. Over 79% of Coventry residents have at least some college and 77% have annual household incomes above \$50,000. Three percent of Coventry residents reported that they are Spanish, Hispanic or Latino and 96% said they are White or Caucasian.

## COMMUNITY LIFE

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The National Citizen Survey™ contained many questions related to the life of residents in the community. Survey participants were asked to rate their overall quality of life, as well as other aspects of quality of life in Coventry. They also evaluated characteristics of the community, and gave their perceptions of safety in the Town of Coventry. The questionnaire assessed use of the amenities of the community and involvement by respondents in the civic and economic life of Coventry.

### Quality of Life

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When asked to rate the overall quality of life in Coventry, 12% of respondents thought it was “excellent.” Only 1% rated overall quality of life as “poor.” Coventry as a place to raise children received an average rating of 63 on a 100-point scale.

### Ratings of Community Characteristics

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The highest rated characteristics of Coventry were ease of car travel, overall appearance, and sense of community. When asked about potential problems in Coventry, the three concerns rated by the highest proportion of respondents as a “major problem” were taxes, too much growth, and run down buildings, weed lots, or junk vehicles. The rate of population growth in Coventry was viewed as “too fast” by 51% of respondents, while 5% thought it was “too slow.”

### Perceptions of Safety

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When evaluating safety in the community, 85% of respondents felt “somewhat” or “very safe” from violent crimes in Coventry. In their neighborhood after dark, 87% of survey participants felt “somewhat” or “very safe.”

As assessed by the survey, 9% of households reported that at least one member had been the victim of one or more crimes in the past year. Of those who had been the victim of a crime, 84% had reported it to police.

### Community Participation

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Participation in the civic, social and economic life of Coventry during the past year was assessed on the survey. Among those completing the questionnaire, 39% reported volunteering in the past year.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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Several aspects of the government of the Town of Coventry were evaluated by residents completing The National Citizen Survey™. They were asked how much trust they placed in their local government, and what they felt about the services they receive from the Town of Coventry. Those who had any contact with a Town of Coventry employee in the past year gave their impressions of the most recent encounter.

### Public Trust

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When asked to evaluate whether they were pleased with the overall direction taken by the Town of Coventry, residents gave an average rating of 52 on a 100-point scale.

### Service Provided by Coventry

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The overall quality of services provided by the Town of Coventry was rated as 57 on a 100-point scale.

### The Town of Coventry Employees

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Impressions of the Town of Coventry employees were assessed on the questionnaire. Those who had been in contact with a Town of Coventry employee in the past year (79%) rated their overall impression as 72 on a 100-point scale.

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Five additional questions were asked by the Town of Coventry as listed below. The results for these questions are also available in the Report of Results.

### Policy Question #1

To what extent do you support or oppose funding the current level of services for each of the following?	Public safety	Road and bridge improvements	Economic development	More recreation facilities	Preservation of open space	Education
Strongly support	52%	38%	34%	19%	52%	64%
Somewhat support	40%	56%	51%	48%	32%	23%
Somewhat oppose	6%	5%	12%	26%	11%	7%
Strongly oppose	2%	1%	4%	8%	5%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: "don't know" responses have been removed.

### Policy Question #2

If the Town were to have to reduce services, in which services are you willing to make changes? Please check all that apply:	Percent of Respondents
Reduce Town Hall operating hours and services	28%
Increased response time for the Town to answer citizen complaints on building, fire, health and zoning enforcement	22%
Reduce educational expenditures	19%
Reduce recreation programs or park maintenance	17%
Reduce the level of public works services	14%
Eliminate lake patrol and crime prevention programs	14%
None of these	38%
Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one category.	

**Policy Question #3**

<b>Please rate how important, if at all, you think each of the following investments is for the Town of Coventry:</b>	<b>Open space (e.g. land purchases)</b>	<b>Programs for senior citizens (e.g. Dial a Ride)</b>	<b>Public safety: Police and Fire (e.g. North Coventry Fire Station expansion)</b>	<b>Public infrastructure (e.g. new public works facility, streets, bridges)</b>	<b>Develop parks and ball fields (e.g. soccer fields)</b>	<b>Programs for children (e.g. Pre-school Center)</b>
Essential	36%	17%	39%	15%	11%	22%
Very important	27%	38%	30%	33%	18%	28%
Somewhat important	25%	38%	22%	43%	48%	34%
Not at all important	12%	7%	10%	10%	23%	16%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: "don't know" responses have been removed.

**Policy Question #4**

**If the Town was to consider a plan to acquire open space, development rights or conservation easements, assuming that every \$1 million dollars borrowed would increase the taxes of the average household by \$15.00 per year, please indicate to what degree you would support or oppose a bond issue for this purpose:**

Strongly support	30%
Somewhat support	36%
Somewhat oppose	15%
Strongly oppose	18%
Total	100%

Note: "don't know" responses have been removed.

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**Policy Question #5**

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<b>Please rate the quality of service by the Coventry Police Department in the following areas:</b>	<b>Overall agency performance</b>	<b>Overall competence of agency employees</b>	<b>Officers' attitude and behavior toward citizens</b>
Excellent	29%	28%	34%
Good	54%	50%	41%
Fair	13%	17%	16%
Poor	4%	4%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Note: "don't know" responses have been removed.

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