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The City of Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Report of Results

2007

The National Citizen Survey™

National Research Center, Inc.
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Understanding the Results

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, 44 were undeliverable due to vacant or "not found" addresses. Completed surveys were received from 542 residents, for a response rate of 47%. 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 542 residents is generally no greater than plus or minus 5 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 City of Eau Claire. (For more information on the survey methodology, see Appendix B. A copy of the survey materials can be found in Appendix C.)

Survey Validity

The question of survey validity has two parts: 1) how can we be confident that the results from our sample are representative of the results we would have gotten had we administered the survey to the entire population? and 2) how closely do the perspectives recorded on the survey reflect what residents really believe or do?

To answer the first question, we use the best survey research practices for the resources spent to assure that the results from the sample reflect the opinions of residents in the entire jurisdiction. These practices include:

1. Using a mail-out/mail-back methodology, which typically gets a higher response rate than phone for the same dollars spent.
2. Selecting households at random within the jurisdiction.
3. Over-sampling attached units to improve response from hard-to-reach, lower income, or younger apartment dwellers.

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4. Selecting the respondent within the household using an unbiased sampling procedure[1].

5. Contacting potential respondents three times to encourage response from people who may have different opinions or habits than those who would respond with only a single prompt.

6. Soliciting response on jurisdiction letterhead signed by the highest ranking elected official or staff member.

7. Providing a self-addressed, postage-paid return envelope.

8. Offering the survey in Spanish when appropriate and requested by City officials.

9. Using the most recent available information about the characteristics of jurisdiction residents to weight the data to reflect the demographics of the population.

The answer to the second question about how closely the perspectives recorded on the survey reflect what residents really believe or do is more complex. Resident responses to surveys are influenced by a variety of factors. For questions about service quality, residents' expectations for service quality play a role as well as the "objective" quality of the service provided, the way the resident perceives the entire community (that is, the context in which the service is provided), the scale on which the resident is asked to record her opinion and, of course, the opinion, itself, that a resident holds about the service. Similarly a resident's report of certain behaviors is colored by what he or she believes is the socially desirable response (e.g. reporting tolerant behaviors toward "oppressed groups," likelihood of voting a tax increase for services to poor people, use of alternative modes of travel to work besides the single occupancy vehicle), her memory of the actual behavior (if it is not a question speculating about future actions, like a vote), her confidence that she can be honest without suffering any negative consequences (thus the need for anonymity) as well as the actual behavior itself.

How closely survey results come to recording the way a person really feels or behaves often is measured by the coincidence of reported behavior with observed current behavior (e.g. driving habits), reported intentions to behave with observed future behavior (e.g. voting choices) or reported opinions about current community quality with objective characteristics of the community (e.g. feelings of safety correlated with rates of crime). There is a body of scientific literature that has investigated the relationship between reported behaviors and actual behaviors. Well-conducted surveys, by and large, do capture true respondent behaviors or intentions to act with great accuracy. Predictions of voting outcomes tend to be quite accurate using survey research, as do reported behaviors that are not about highly sensitive issues (e.g. family abuse or other

[1] The birthday method requests that the respondent in the household be the adult (18 years old or older) who most recently had a birthday, irrespective of year of birth.

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illegal or morally sanctioned activities). For self-reports about highly sensitive issues, statistical adjustments can be made to correct for the respondents' tendency to report what they think the "correct" response should be.

Research on the correlation of resident opinion about service quality and "objective" ratings of service quality tend to be ambiguous, some showing stronger relationships than others. NRC's own research has demonstrated that residents who report the lowest ratings of street repair live in communities with objectively worse street conditions than those who report high ratings of street repair (based on road quality, delay in street repair, number of road repair employees). Similarly, the lowest rated fire services appear to be "objectively" worse than the highest rated fire services (expenditures per capita, response time, "professional" status of fire fighters, breadth of services and training provided). Whether some research confirms or disconfirms that relationship between what residents think about a community and what can be seen "objectively" in a community, we have argued that resident opinion is a perspective that cannot be ignored by government administrators. Elsewhere we have written, "If you collect trash three times a day but residents think that your trash haul is lousy, you still have a problem."

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). This scale has important advantages over other scale possibilities (very good to very bad; very satisfied to very dissatisfied; strongly agree to strongly disagree, as examples). EGFP is used by the plurality of jurisdictions conducting citizen surveys across the U.S. The advantage of familiarity is one we did not want to dismiss because elected officials, staff and residents already are acquainted with opinion surveys measured this way. EGFP also has the advantage of offering three positive options, rather than only two, over which a resident can offer an opinion. 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).

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"Don't Know" Responses

On many of the questions in the survey respondents may answer "don't know." The proportion of respondents giving this reply is shown in the full set of responses included in Appendix A. However, these responses have been removed from the analyses presented in the body of the report. In other words, the tables and graphs display the responses from respondents who had an opinion about a specific item.

For two of the items related to crime victimization and crime reporting, "don't know" responses were not removed. These questions were not evaluative; rather, respondents were asked if they or any member of their household had been a victim of a crime within the last year. If they were, they were then asked whether the crime had been reported to police.

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.

Interpreting Comparisons to Previous Years

This report contains comparisons with prior years' results. In this report, we are comparing 2007 data with 2003 data in the graphs. In the graphs, there are two separate representations labeled by year. The table following a graph contains 2007 data only, and is labeled accordingly. Differences between years can be considered "statistically significant" if they are greater than 5 percentage points or 3 points on a 100 point scale.

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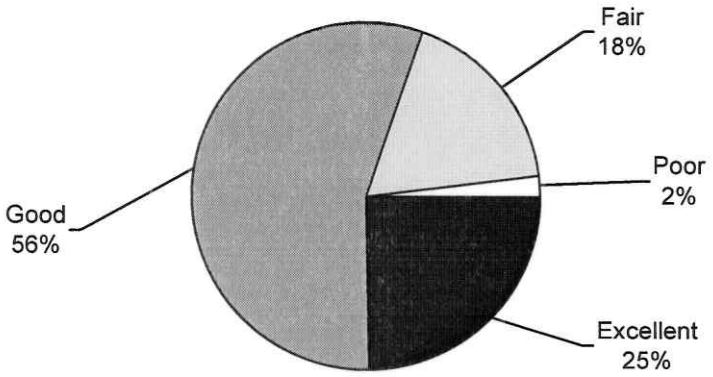
Community Life

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 Eau Claire. They also evaluated characteristics of the community, and gave their perceptions of safety in the City of Eau Claire. The questionnaire assessed use of the amenities of the community and involvement by respondents in the civic and economic life of Eau Claire.

Quality of Life

When asked to rate the overall quality of life in Eau Claire, 25% of respondents thought it was "excellent." Only 2% rated overall quality of life as "poor."

Figure 1: Overall Quality of Life in Eau Claire



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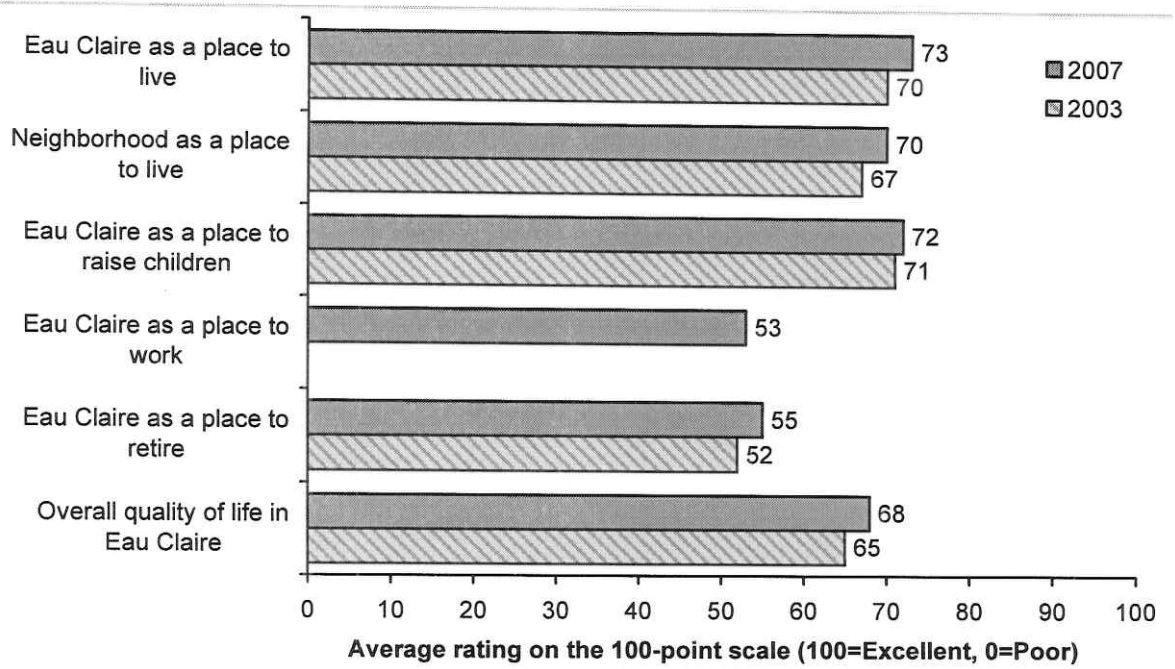
The average rating of overall quality of life on a 100-point scale was 65 in 2003. In 2007, the rating was 68. Eau Claire as a place to raise children received an average rating of 71 on a 100-point scale in 2003, compared to 72 in 2007. Other ratings can be seen in the charts below.

Figure 2: Quality of Life Ratings



2007 Quality of Life Ratings

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating on a 100-point scale (100=Excellent, 0=Poor)
How do you rate Eau Claire as a place to live?	32%	56%	10%	1%	100%	73
How do you rate your neighborhood as a place to live?	34%	48%	14%	5%	100%	70
How do you rate Eau Claire as a place to raise children?	34%	50%	15%	1%	100%	72
How do you rate Eau Claire as a place to work?	15%	43%	28%	14%	100%	53
How do you rate Eau Claire as a place to retire?	16%	43%	30%	11%	100%	55
How do you rate the overall quality of life in Eau Claire?	25%	56%	18%	2%	100%	68

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

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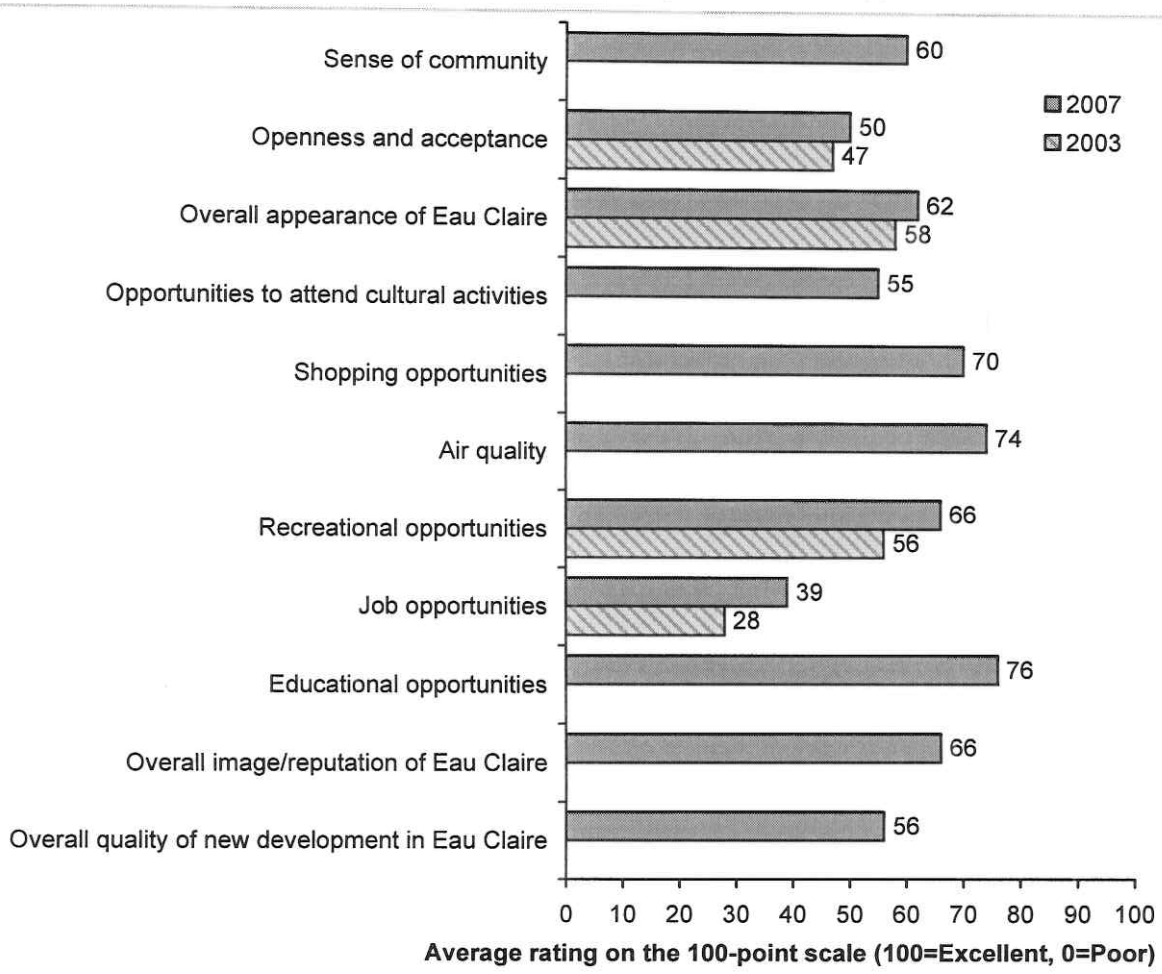
Ratings of Community Characteristics in Eau Claire

In 2007, the highest rated characteristics of Eau Claire were educational opportunities, air quality, and shopping opportunities. Average ratings given to all the characteristics are shown in Figures 3, 4 and 5.

Figure 3: Characteristics of the Community: General and Opportunities



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2007 Characteristics of the Community: General and Opportunities						
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Eau Claire as a whole:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating on a 100-point scale (100=Excellent, 0=Poor)
Sense of community	14%	55%	26%	4%	100%	60
Openness and acceptance of the community towards people of diverse backgrounds	9%	43%	37%	11%	100%	50
Overall appearance of Eau Claire	15%	60%	22%	3%	100%	62
Opportunities to attend cultural activities	15%	43%	33%	9%	100%	55
Shopping opportunities	30%	50%	17%	3%	100%	70
Air quality	33%	55%	11%	1%	100%	74
Recreational opportunities	24%	54%	18%	4%	100%	66
Job opportunities	7%	26%	44%	23%	100%	39
Educational opportunities	38%	53%	8%	1%	100%	76
Overall image/reputation of Eau Claire	20%	62%	15%	3%	100%	66
Overall quality of new development in Eau Claire	13%	51%	26%	10%	100%	56
Note: "don't know" responses have been removed.						

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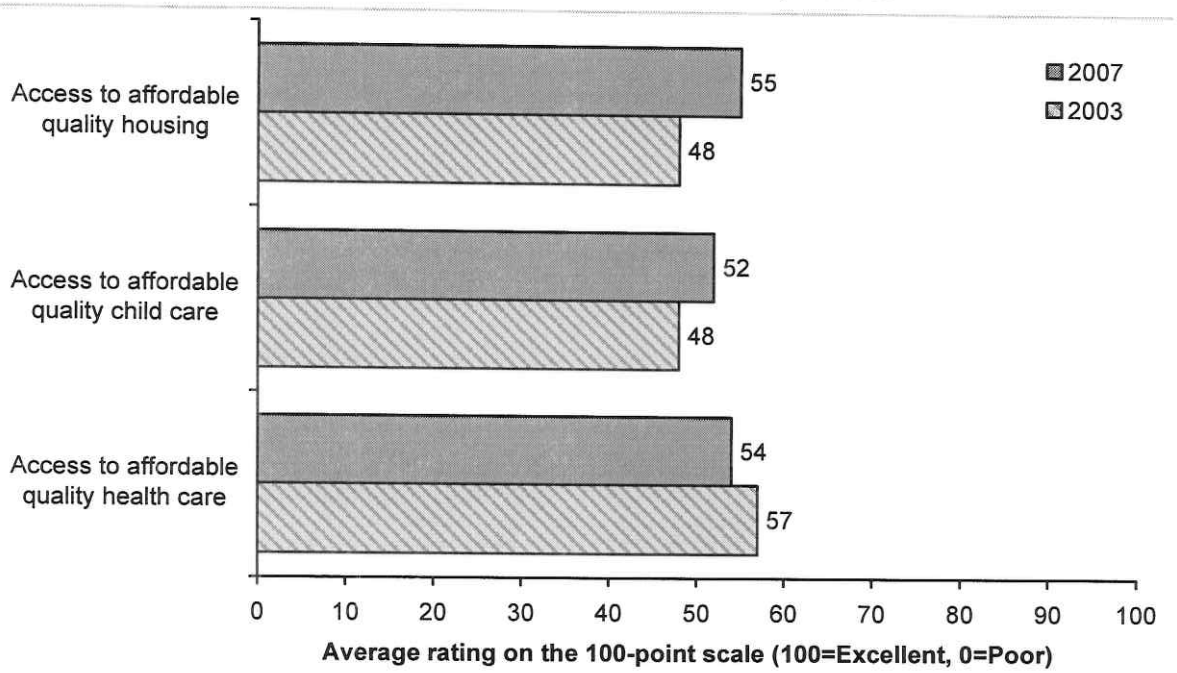
Figure 4: Characteristics of the Community: Access



2007 Characteristics of the Community: Access

Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Eau Claire as a whole:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating on a 100-point scale (100=Excellent, 0=Poor)
Access to affordable quality housing	13%	46%	34%	7%	100%	55
Access to affordable quality child care	9%	45%	39%	7%	100%	52
Access to affordable quality health care	22%	35%	26%	17%	100%	54

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

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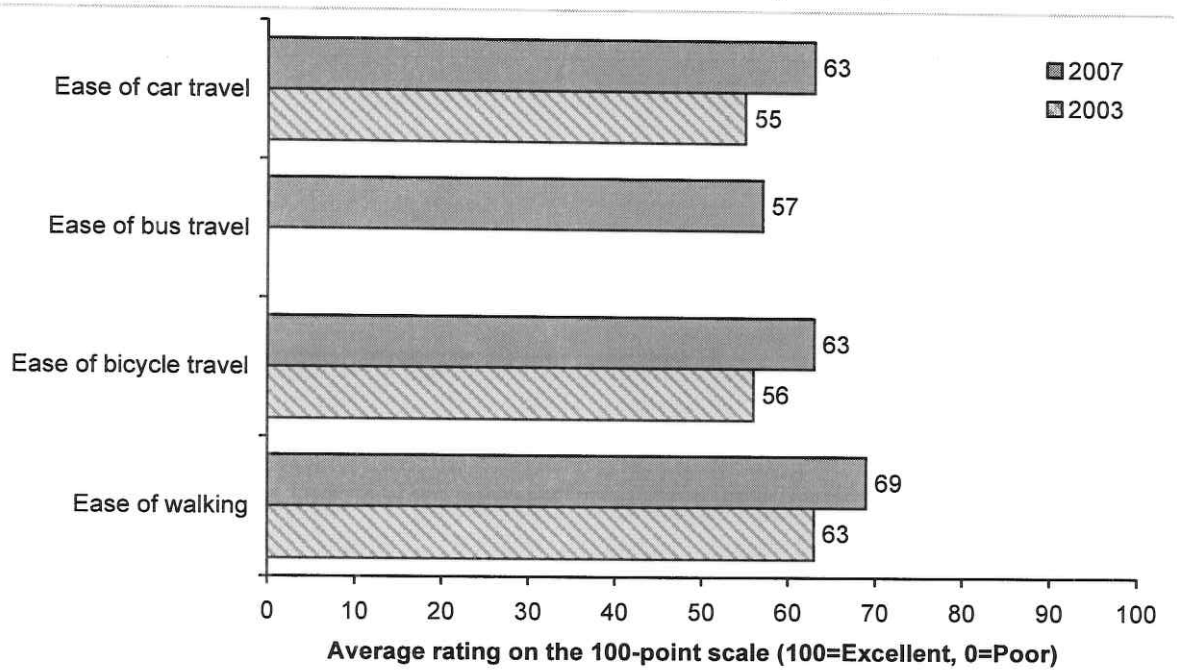
Figure 5: Characteristics of the Community: Mobility



2007 Characteristics of the Community: Mobility						
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Eau Claire as a whole:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating on a 100-point scale (100=Excellent, 0=Poor)
Ease of car travel in Eau Claire	20%	54%	21%	5%	100%	63
Ease of bus travel in Eau Claire	16%	50%	26%	9%	100%	57
Ease of bicycle travel in Eau Claire	18%	55%	23%	4%	100%	63
Ease of walking in Eau Claire	27%	56%	13%	3%	100%	69
Note: "don't know" responses have been removed.						

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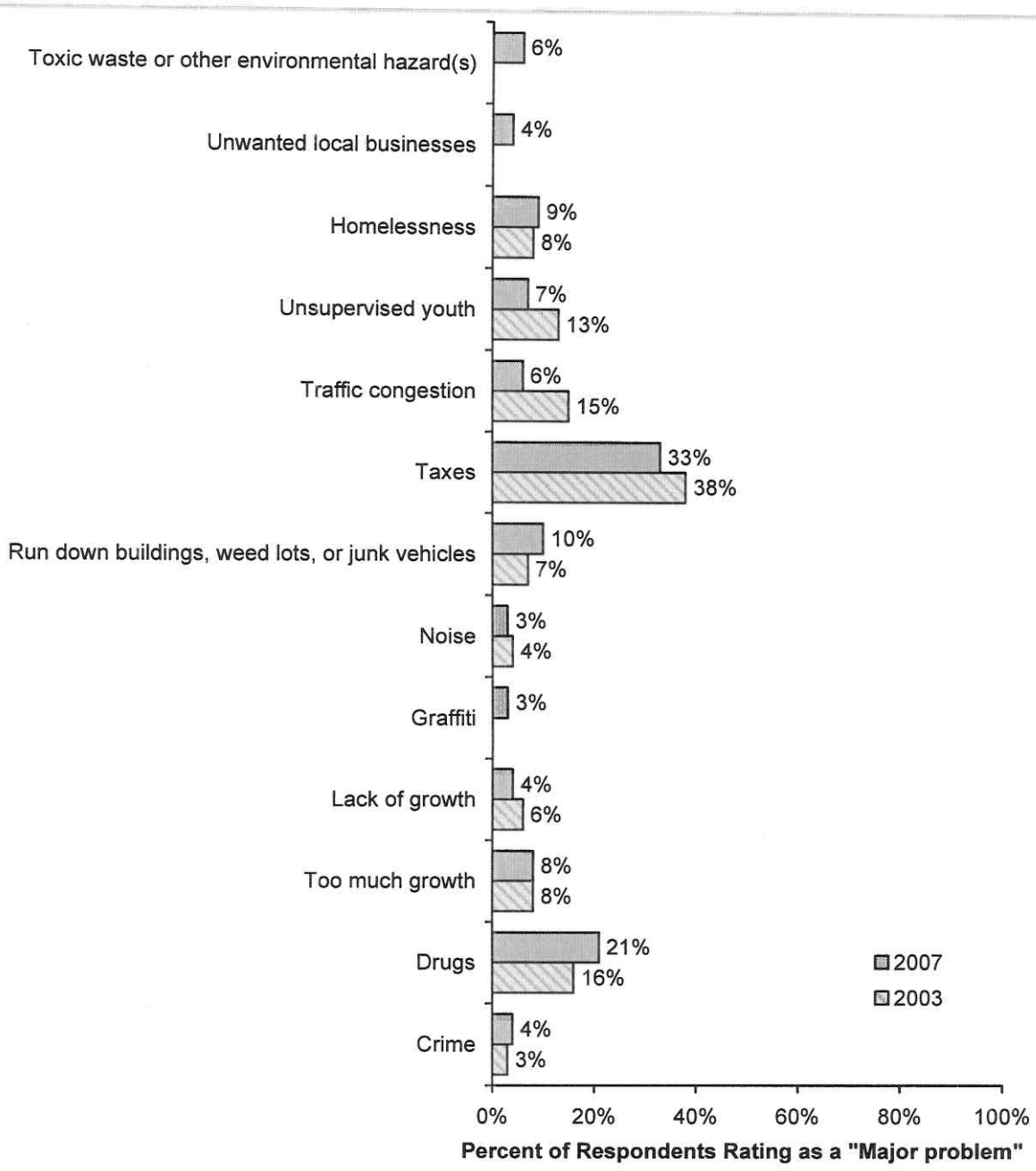
When asked about potential problems in Eau Claire, the three concerns rated by the highest proportion of respondents as a "major problem" in 2007 were taxes, drugs, and run down buildings, weed lots, or junk vehicles. In 2007 33% rated taxes as a "major problem" compared to 38% in 2003.

Figure 6: Ratings of Potential Problems in Eau Claire



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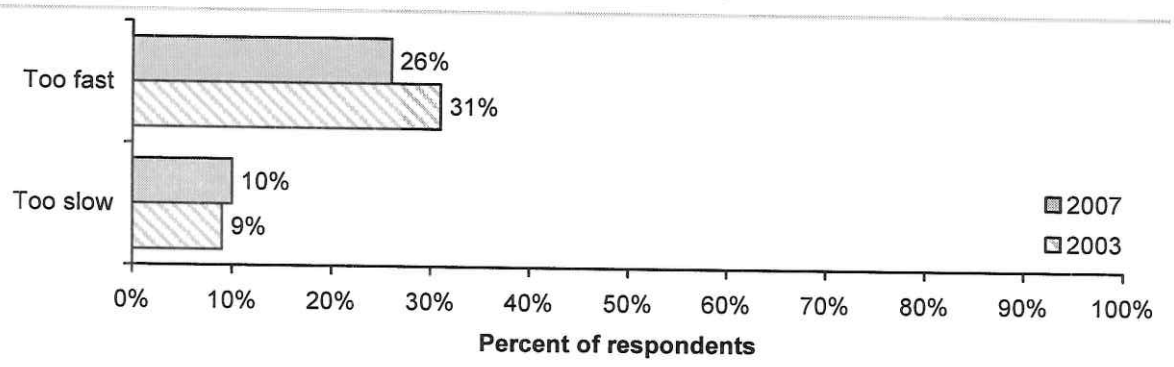
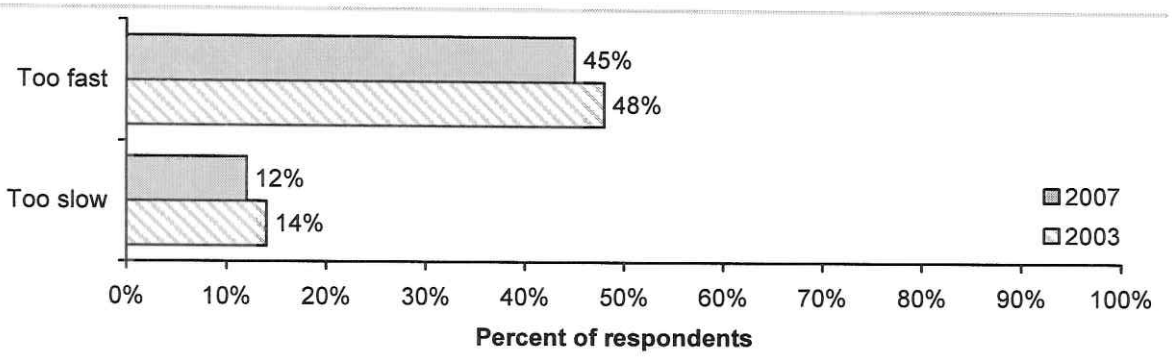
In 2007, the rate of population growth in Eau Claire was viewed as "too fast" by 26% of respondents, while 10% thought it was "too slow."

Figure 7a: Ratings of Population Growth by Year in Eau Claire



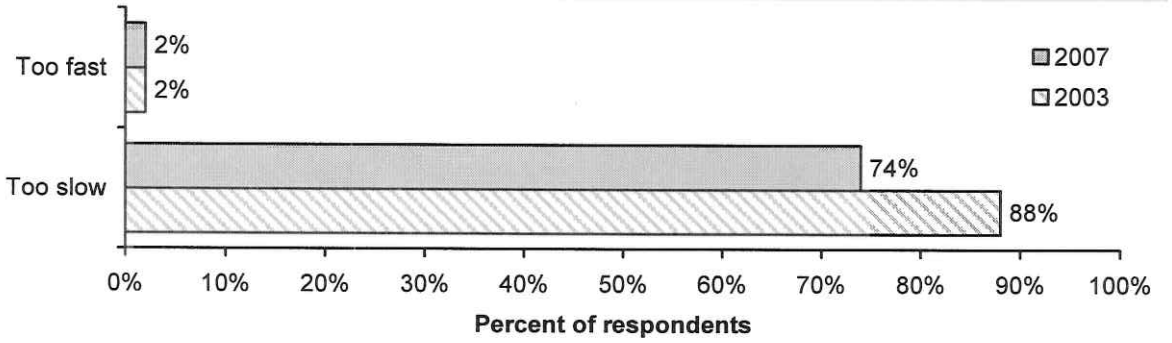
Note: Responses of "about right" were omitted.

Figure 7b: Ratings of Retail Growth by Year in Eau Claire



Note: Responses of "about right" were omitted.

Figure 7c: Ratings of Jobs Growth by Year in Eau Claire



Note: Responses of "about right" were omitted.

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In 2007, 19% of respondents felt the impact of the economy would be positive on their family income in the next 12 months, while 43% felt it would be negative. In 2003, 9% of respondents felt the impact of the economy would be positive.

Figure 8a: 2007 Perceptions of Economy

What impact, if any, do you think the economy will have on your family income in the next 6 months? Do you think the impact will be...

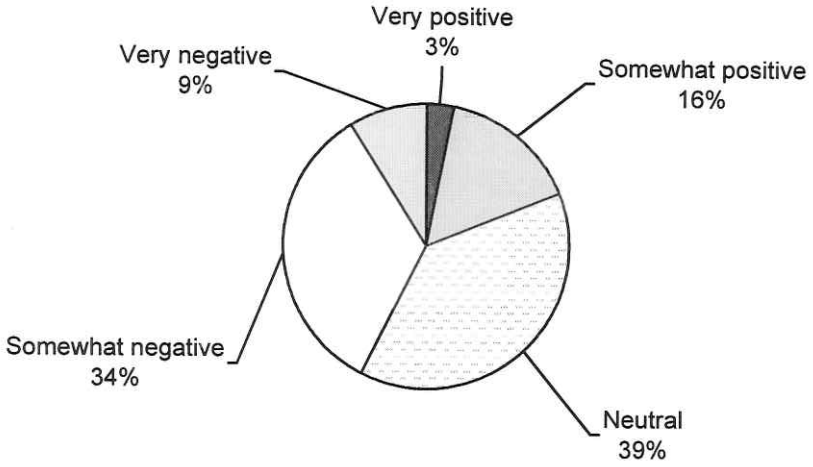
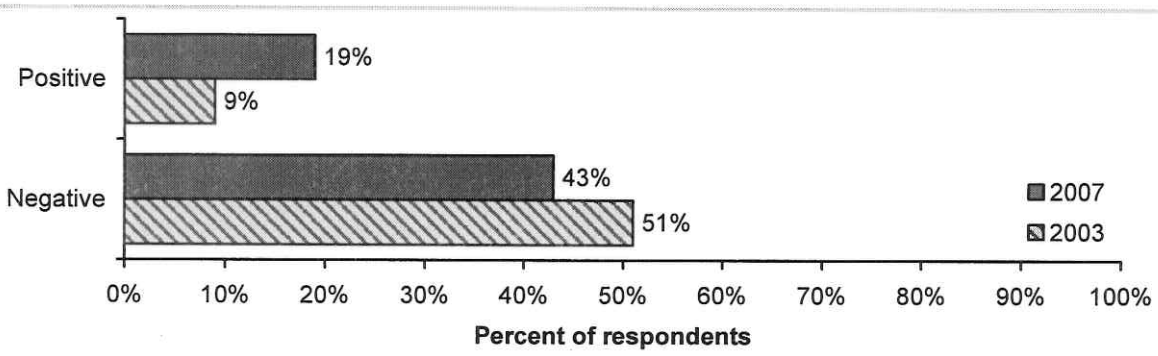


Figure 8b: Comparisons of Perceptions of Economy by Year



Note: Responses of "neutral" were omitted.

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Perceptions of Safety

When evaluating safety in the community, 75% of respondents felt "somewhat" or "very safe" from violent crimes in Eau Claire in 2007, compared to 77% in 2003. In their neighborhood after dark, 80% of survey participants felt "somewhat" or "very safe" in 2007, compared to 80% in 2003.

In 2007, as assessed by the survey, 13% of households reported that at least one member had been the victim of one or more crimes in the past year. In 2003, 19% of households had reported that at least one member had been a crime victim. Of those who had been the victim of a crime in 2007, 68% had reported it to police.

Figure 9: Ratings of Safety from Various Problems in Eau Claire by Year

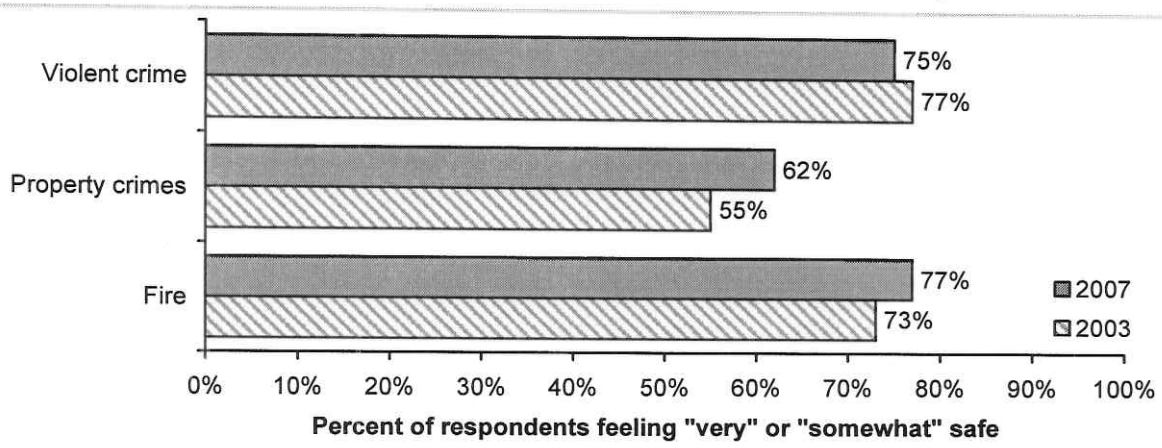

Figure 10: Ratings of Safety in Various Areas in Eau Claire by Year

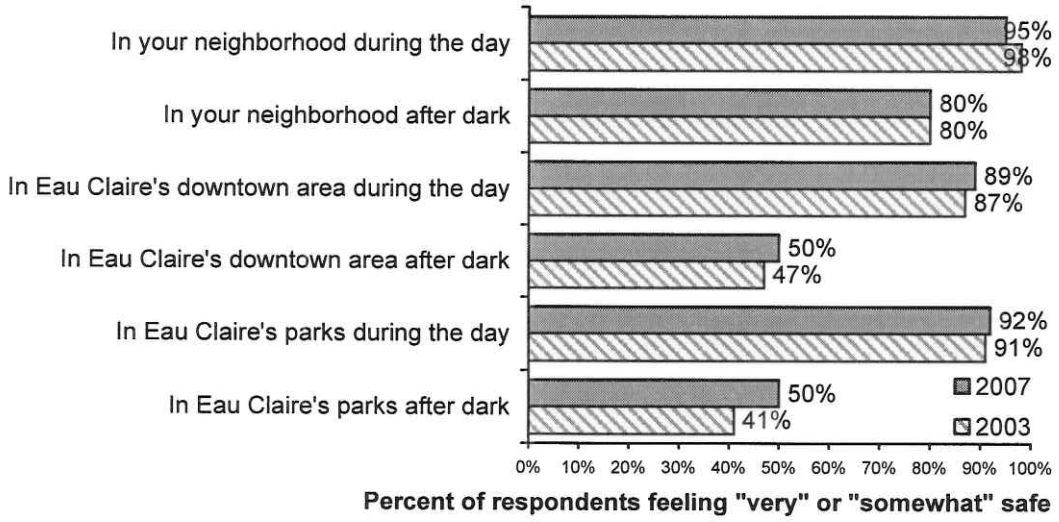

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Figure 11: Percent of Respondents' Households That Were Victim of a Crime in the Last 12 Months by Year

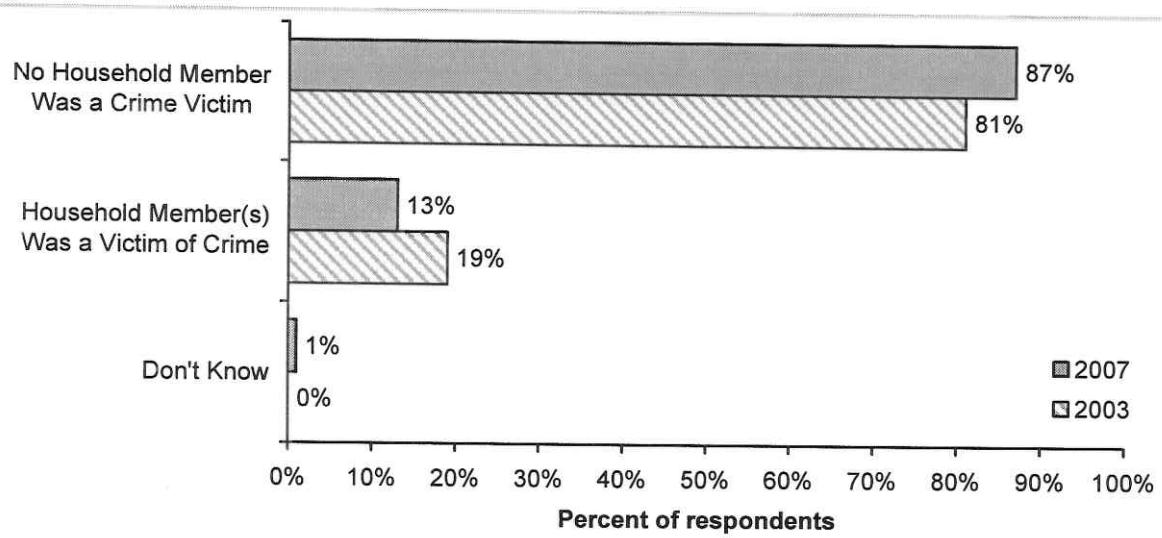
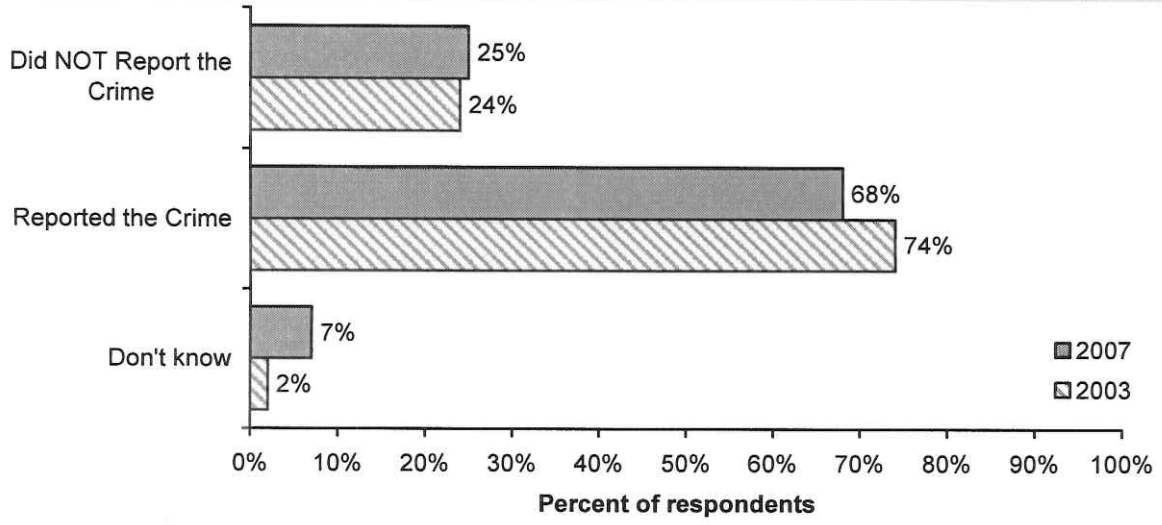


Figure 12: Percent of Respondents' Households That Were Victim of a Crime Who Reported the Crime by Year



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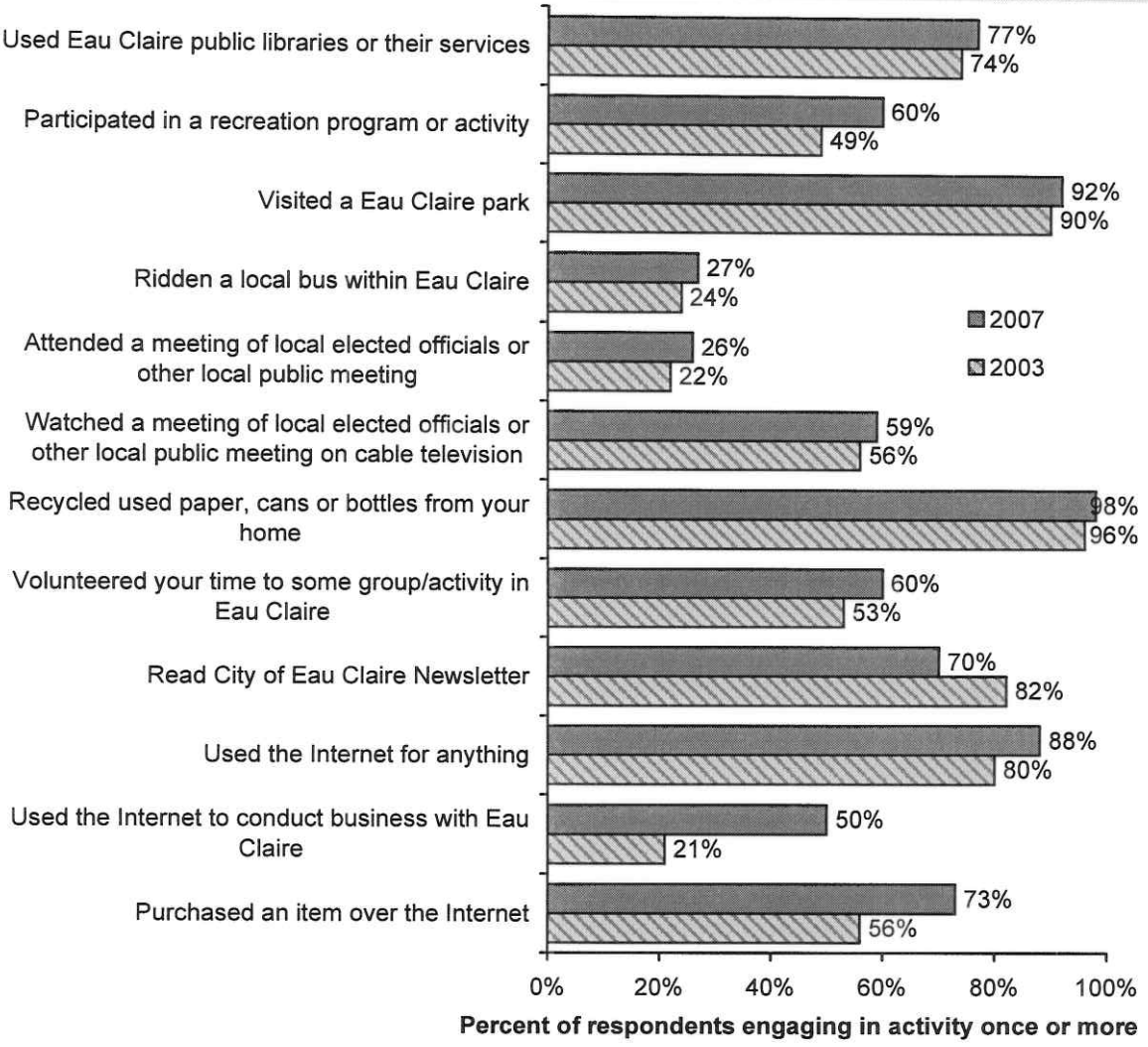
Community Participation

Participation in the civic, social and economic life of Eau Claire during the past year was assessed on the survey. The proportion of respondents engaging in various activities is shown in the chart below, with comparisons made between 2007 and 2003. Among those completing the questionnaire in 2007, 60% reported volunteering in the past year compared to 53% in 2003. Voter status was also estimated, and is shown on page 18.[2]

Figure 13: Percent of Respondents Engaging in Various Activities in Eau Claire in the Last 12 Months by Year



[2] In general on a survey, a greater proportion of people will report having voted, than actual voting records verify.

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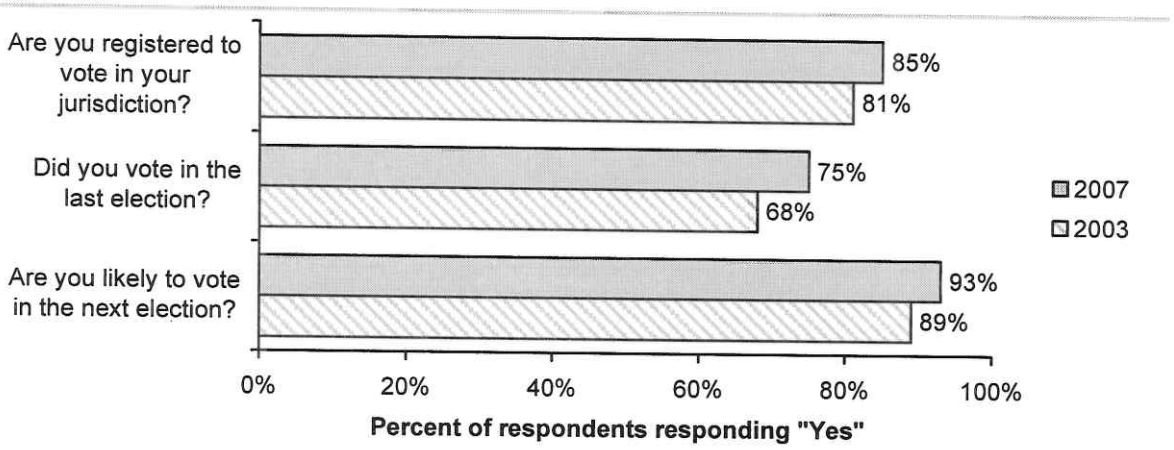
Figure 14: Voter Status and Activity by Year



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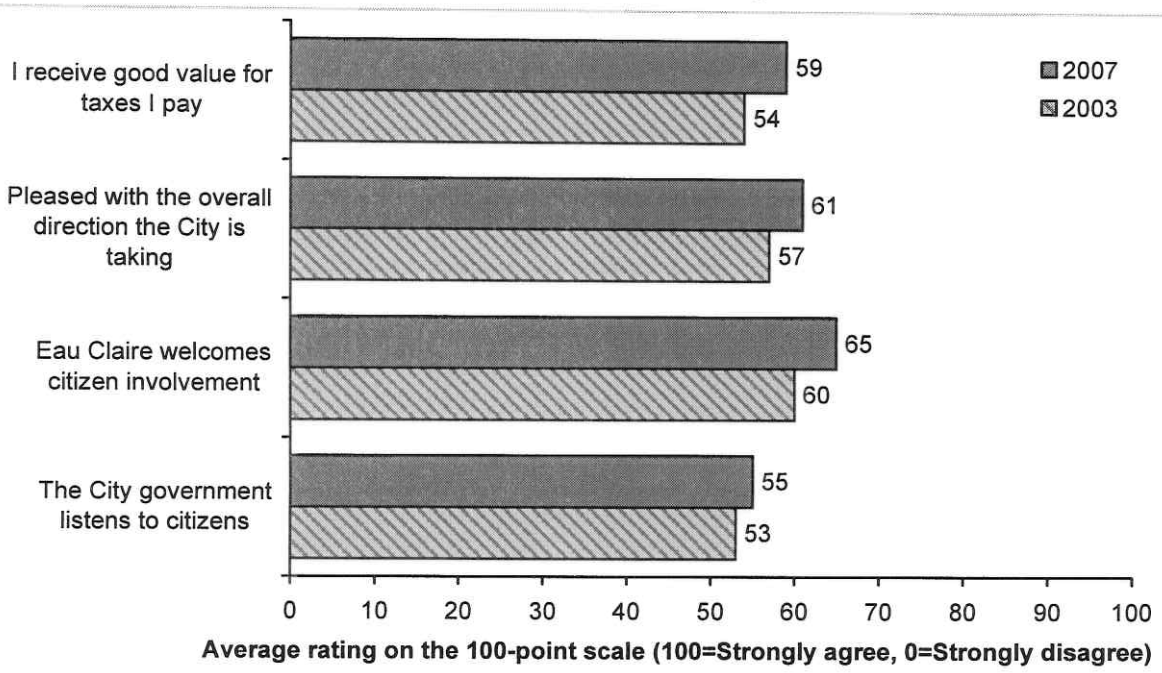
Local Government

Several aspects of the government of the City of Eau Claire 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 City of Eau Claire. Those who had any contact with a City of Eau Claire employee in the past year gave their impressions of the most recent encounter.

Public Trust

When asked to evaluate whether they were pleased with the overall direction taken by the City of Eau Claire, residents gave an average rating of 61 on a 100-point scale in 2007, compared to a rating of 57 in 2003.

Figure 15: Ratings of Public Trust by Year



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2007 Public Trust Ratings							
Please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Average rating on a 100-point scale (100=Strongly agree, 0=Strongly disagree)
I receive good value for the City of Eau Claire taxes I pay	14%	40%	21%	18%	7%	100%	59
I am pleased with the overall direction that the City of Eau Claire is taking	12%	47%	22%	14%	6%	100%	61
The City of Eau Claire government welcomes citizen involvement	18%	39%	29%	11%	3%	100%	65
The City of Eau Claire government listens to citizens	11%	32%	33%	16%	8%	100%	55

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

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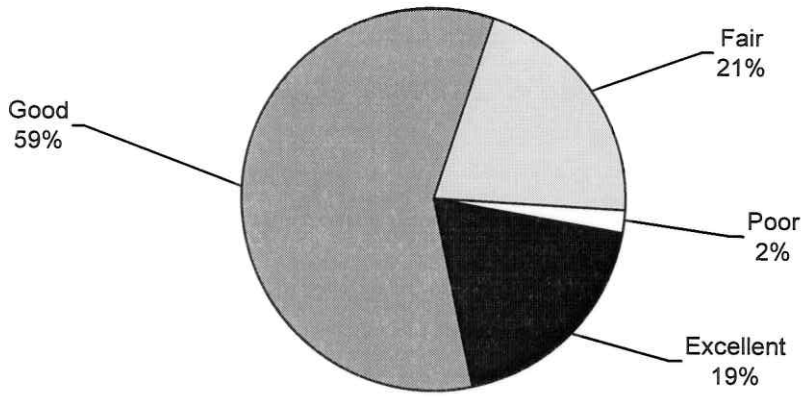
Service Provided by Eau Claire

The overall quality of services provided by the City of Eau Claire was rated as 65 on a 100-point scale in 2007, compared to 61 in 2003. Ratings given to specific services are shown on the following pages.

Figure 16: Overall Quality of Services Provided by the City of Eau Claire



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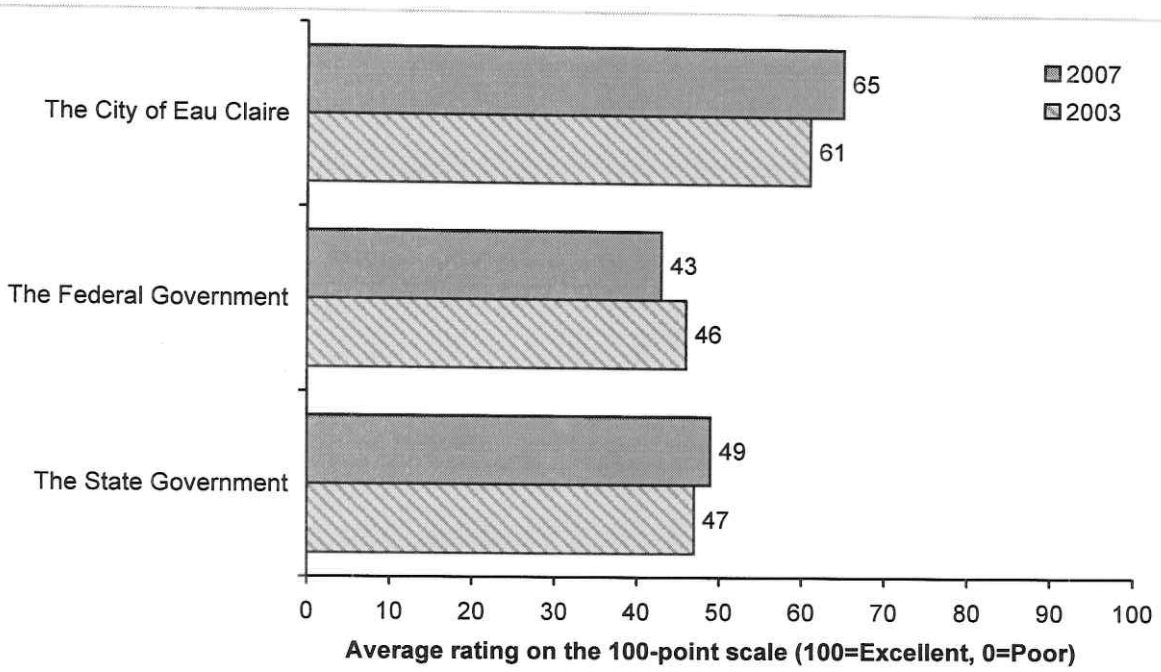
On average, residents of Eau Claire gave the highest evaluations to their own local government and the lowest average rating to the federal government.

Figure 17: Rating of Overall Quality of Services Provided by Various Levels of Government by Year



2007 Overall Quality of Services: City of Eau Claire, Federal Government and State Government

Overall, how would you rate the quality of services provided by...	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating on a 100-point scale (100=Excellent, 0=Poor)
The City of Eau Claire	19%	59%	21%	2%	100%	65
The Federal Government	6%	35%	42%	17%	100%	43
The State Government	7%	42%	41%	9%	100%	49

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

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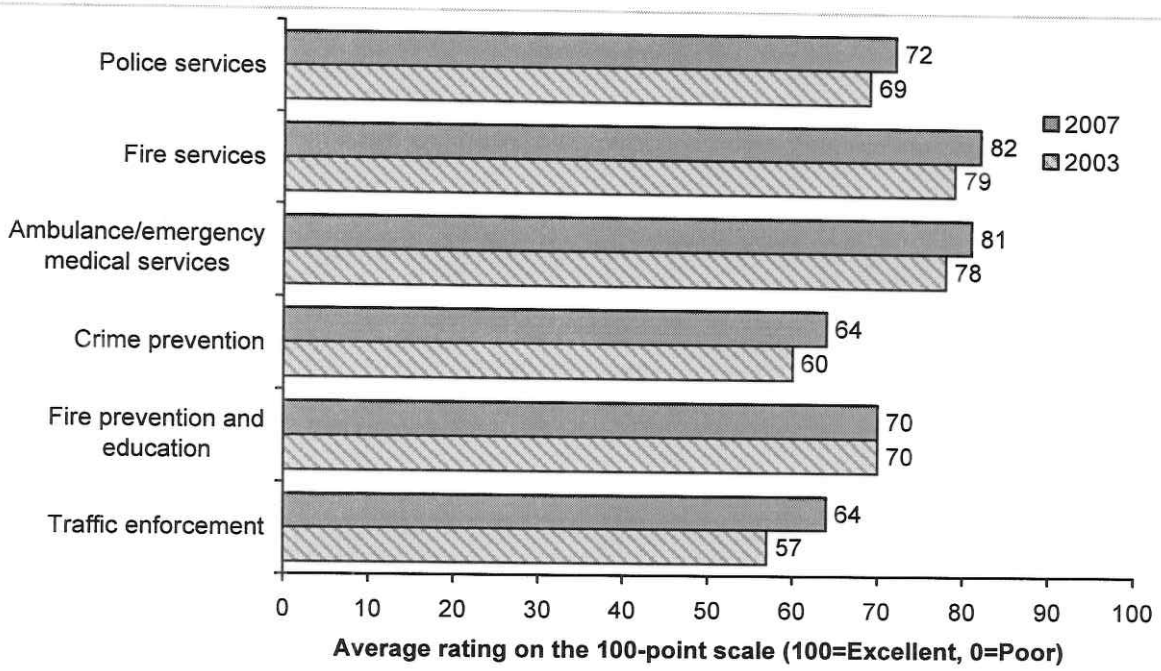
Figure 18: Quality of Public Safety Services by Year



2007 Quality of Public Safety Services

How do you rate the quality of each of the following services?	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating on a 100-point scale (100=Excellent, 0=Poor)
Police services	33%	52%	13%	3%	100%	72
Fire services	50%	46%	5%	0%	100%	82
Ambulance/emergency medical services	48%	46%	5%	1%	100%	81
Crime prevention	18%	60%	19%	4%	100%	64
Fire prevention and education	28%	56%	15%	1%	100%	70
Traffic enforcement	20%	55%	20%	5%	100%	64

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

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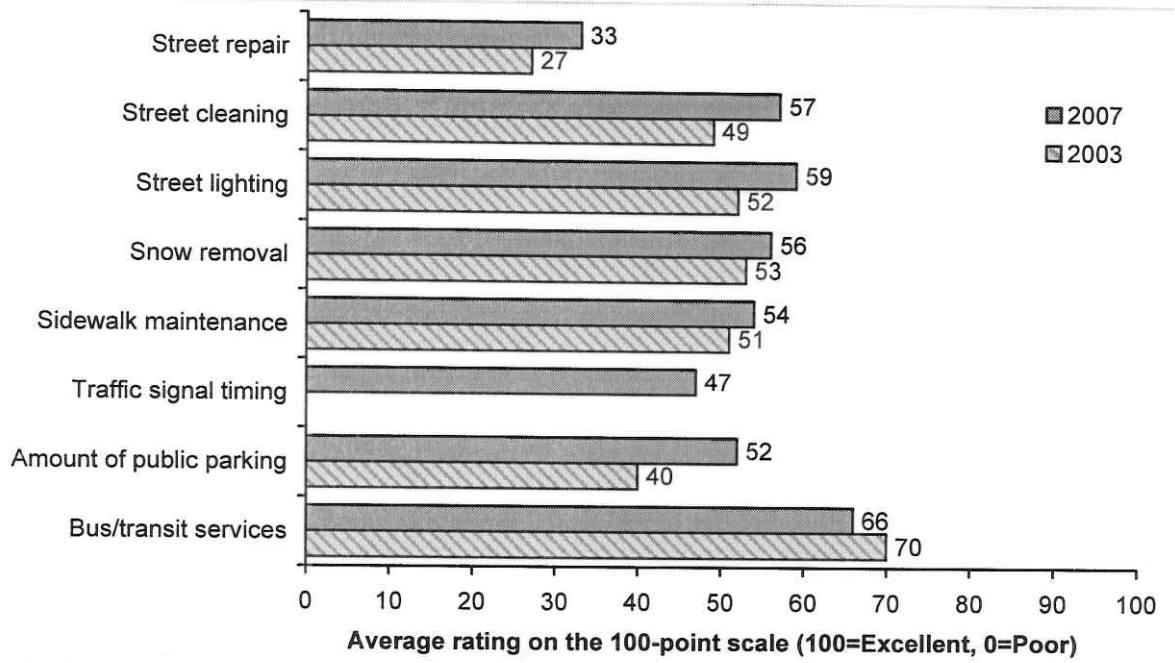
Figure 19: Quality of Transportation Services by Year



2007 Quality of Transportation Services

How do you rate the quality of each of the following services?	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating on a 100-point scale (100=Excellent, 0=Poor)
Street repair	5%	22%	39%	34%	100%	33
Street cleaning	13%	49%	31%	6%	100%	57
Street lighting	16%	52%	26%	7%	100%	59
Snow removal	19%	43%	26%	13%	100%	56
Sidewalk maintenance	11%	50%	31%	9%	100%	54
Traffic signal timing	9%	39%	35%	17%	100%	47
Amount of public parking	9%	49%	29%	13%	100%	52
Bus/transit services	24%	55%	17%	4%	100%	66

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

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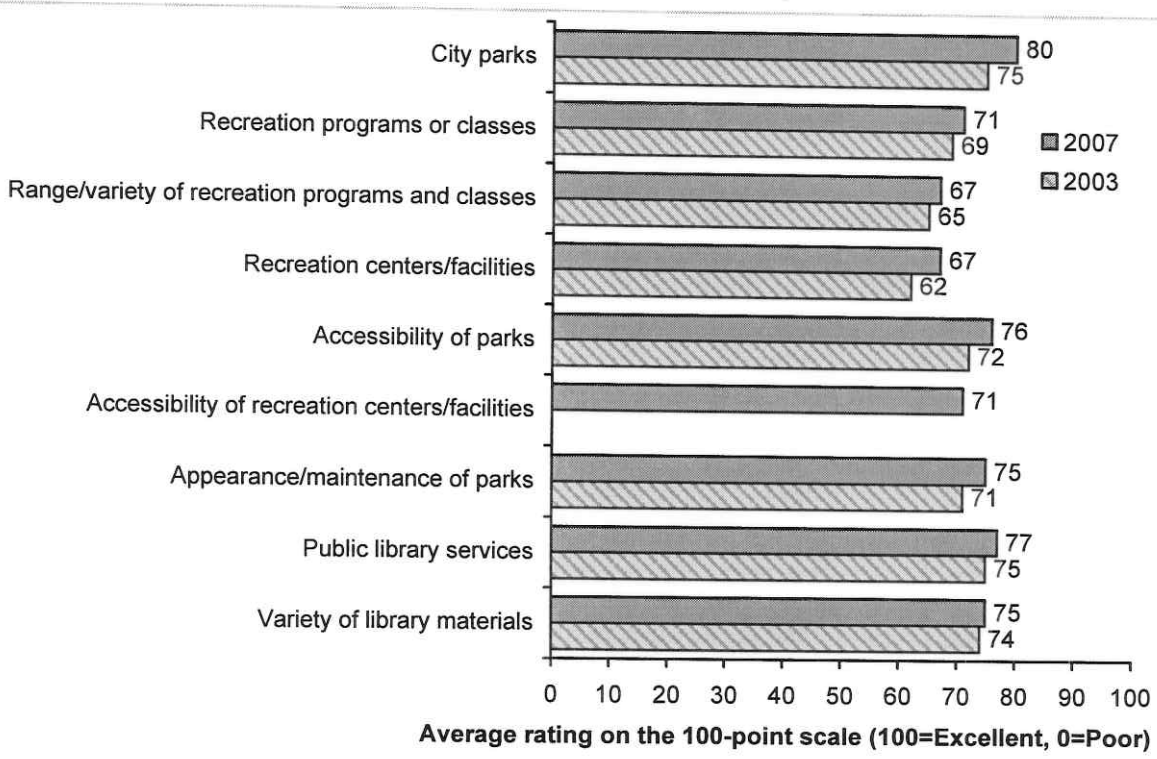
Figure 20: Quality of Leisure Services by Year



2007 Quality of Leisure Services

How do you rate the quality of each of the following services?	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating on a 100-point scale (100=Excellent, 0=Poor)
City parks	46%	48%	6%	0%	100%	80
Recreation programs or classes	29%	55%	14%	1%	100%	71
Range/variety of recreation programs and classes	26%	52%	18%	3%	100%	67
Recreation centers/facilities	22%	57%	19%	2%	100%	67
Accessibility of parks	37%	53%	10%	0%	100%	76
Accessibility of recreation centers/facilities	28%	57%	15%	1%	100%	71
Appearance/maintenance of parks	35%	55%	9%	0%	100%	75
Public library services	39%	53%	7%	1%	100%	77
Variety of library materials	37%	54%	8%	1%	100%	75

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

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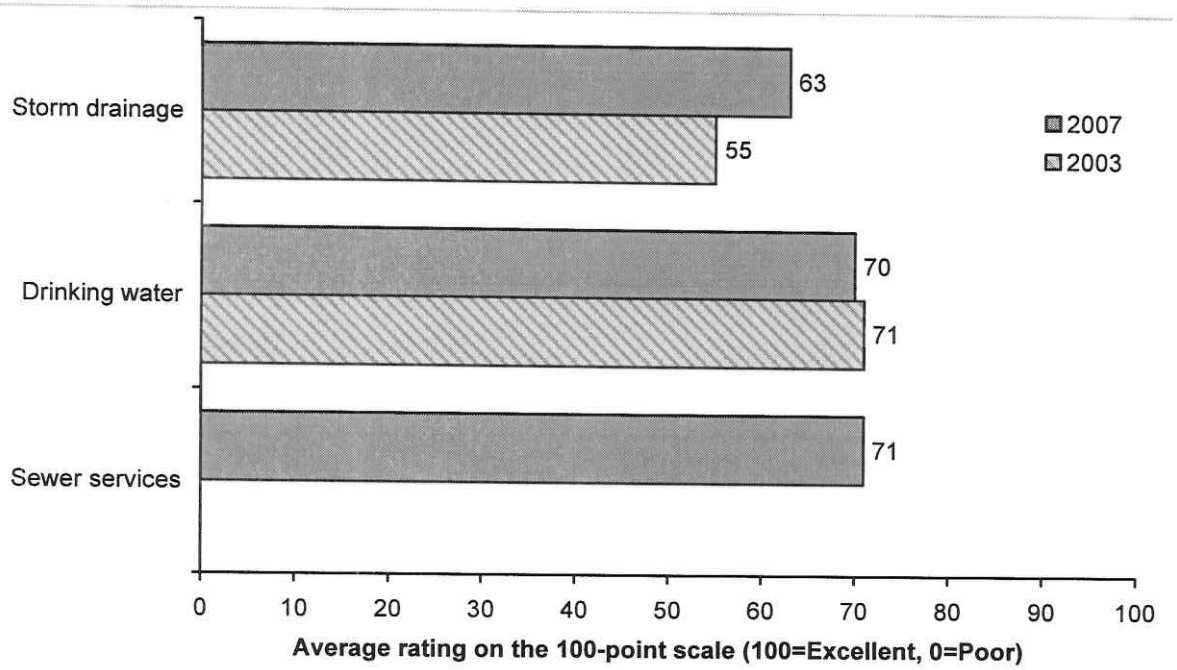
Figure 21: Quality of Utility Services by Year



2007 Quality of Utility Services						
How do you rate the quality of each of the following services?	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating on a 100-point scale (100=Excellent, 0=Poor)
Storm drainage	17%	58%	23%	3%	100%	63
Drinking water	33%	49%	14%	4%	100%	70
Sewer services	25%	62%	12%	0%	100%	71

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

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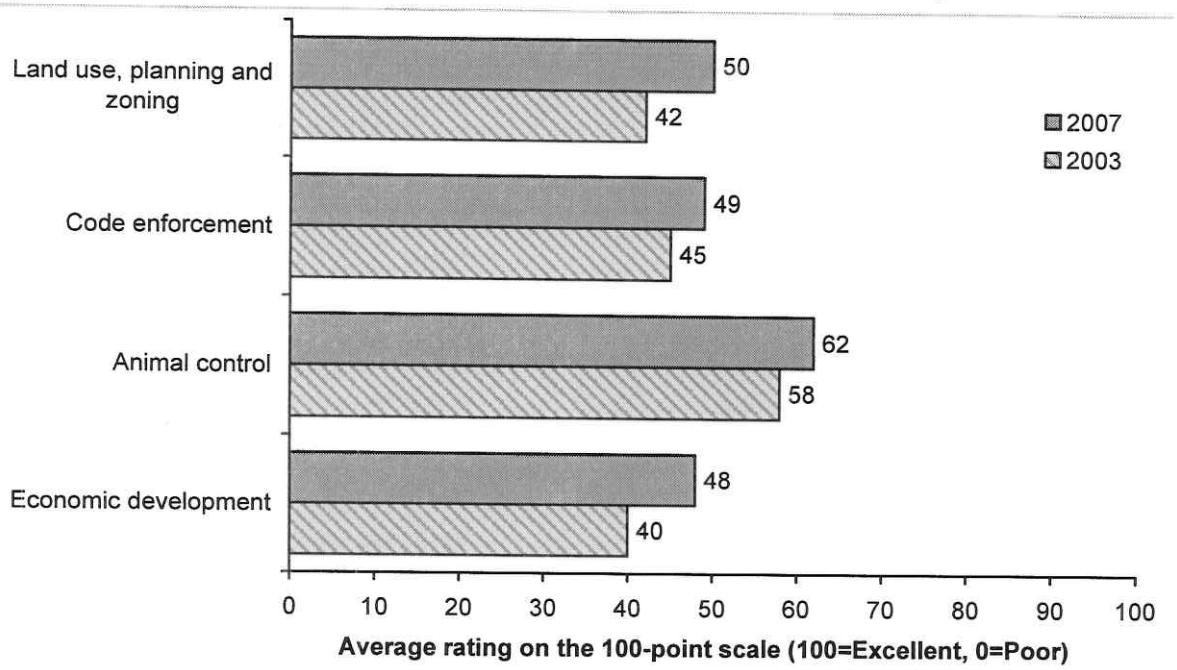
Figure 22: Quality of Planning and Code Enforcement Services by Year



2007 Quality of Planning and Code Enforcement Services						
How do you rate the quality of each of the following services?	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating on a 100-point scale (100=Excellent, 0=Poor)
Land use, planning and zoning	10%	43%	35%	12%	100%	50
Code enforcement (weeds, abandoned buildings, etc)	10%	42%	32%	16%	100%	49
Animal control	19%	52%	24%	5%	100%	62
Economic development	9%	42%	32%	16%	100%	48

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

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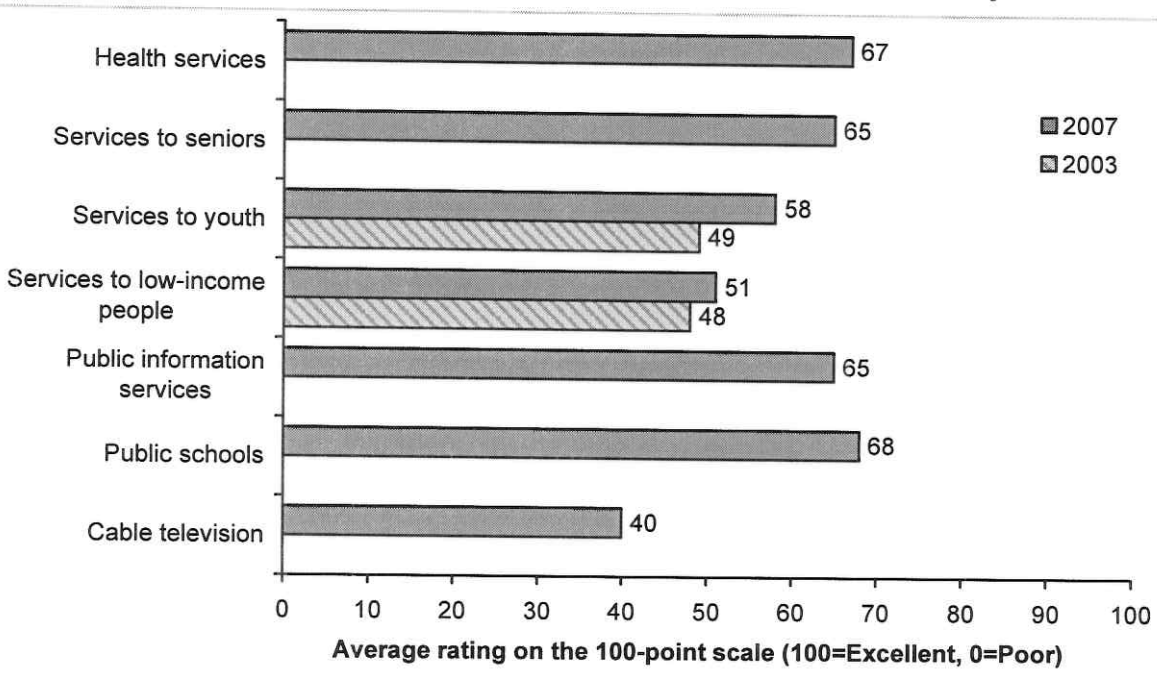
Figure 23: Quality of Services to Special Populations and Other Services by Year



2007 Quality of Services to Special Populations and Other Services

How do you rate the quality of each of the following services?	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating on a 100-point scale (100=Excellent, 0=Poor)
Health services	28%	50%	15%	7%	100%	67
Services to seniors	23%	54%	17%	6%	100%	65
Services to youth	15%	52%	24%	9%	100%	58
Services to low-income people	14%	39%	32%	15%	100%	51
Public information services	22%	54%	21%	3%	100%	65
Public schools	26%	55%	16%	4%	100%	68
Cable television	9%	31%	30%	29%	100%	40

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

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The City of Eau Claire Employees

Impressions of the City of Eau Claire employees were assessed on the questionnaire. In 2007, those who had been in contact with a City of Eau Claire employee in the past year (59%) rated their overall impression as 68 on a 100-point scale, compared to an average rating of 66 received in 2003.

Figure 24: Percent of Respondents Who Had Contact with a City of Eau Claire Employee in 2007

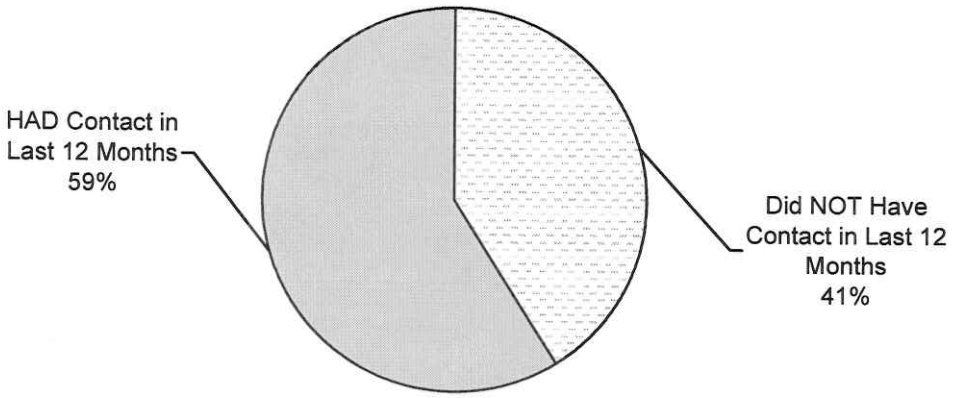

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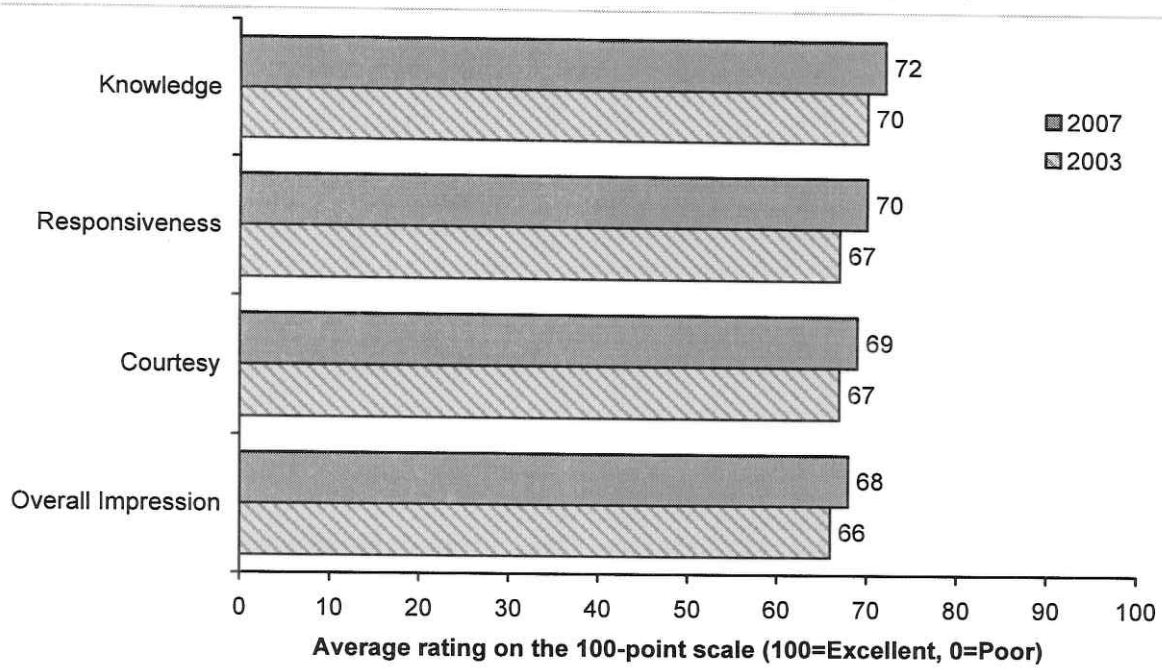
Figure 25: Ratings of Contact with the City of Eau Claire Employees by Year



2007 Ratings of Contact with City of Eau Claire Employees

What was your impression of employees of the City of Eau Claire in your most recent contact?	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	Average rating on a 100-point scale (100=Excellent, 0=Poor)
Knowledge	35%	46%	16%	2%	100%	72
Responsiveness	36%	46%	13%	6%	100%	70
Courtesy	39%	36%	18%	8%	100%	69
Overall Impression	35%	41%	17%	6%	100%	68

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

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Additional Questions

Three additional questions were asked by the City of Eau Claire. The results for these questions are displayed below.

Policy Question #1	
	To what extent do you support or oppose the City of Eau Claire increasing user fees to fund City services rather than increasing the general property tax?
Strongly support	31%
Somewhat support	47%
Somewhat oppose	14%
Strongly oppose	7%
Total	100%

Policy Question #2	
	As you may know, Eau Claire County is considering options for the expansion of the County Courthouse that would locate new jail and courts facilities in the blocks between First and Second Avenues. To what extent do you support or oppose the closing of Second Avenue from Lake Street to Grand Avenue in conjunction with the County Courthouse expansion plans?
Strongly support	13%
Somewhat support	38%
Somewhat oppose	25%
Strongly oppose	24%
Total	100%

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Policy Question #3	
	To what extent do you support or oppose the City of Eau Claire providing a City Web site that allows citizens to pay for city permits and applications online?
Strongly support	61%
Somewhat support	31%
Somewhat oppose	5%
Strongly oppose	3%
Total	100%

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