

Fort Walton Beach Quality of Life Survey 2020

Conducted by Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy

QOL DATA ~ SUCCESS TIPS and BEST PRACTICES

Don't:

- Deny the Data
- Play the Blame Game
- Rationalize

Do:

- Remember this is the Baseline
- Celebrate and Prioritize the Positives

Background & Research Objectives

- This survey was commissioned by the **City of Fort Walton Beach, Florida**, in support of its ongoing efforts for sustainable economic and community development and to help strengthen essential public and private institutions that impact citizens' quality of life.
- Among other things, this project seeks to create a dialogue and conduct outreach and information-sharing with voters, the public at large, community leaders, businesses, and public policy makers.
- Essentially, the objective of this survey is an understanding of the voting public's awareness of and attitudes toward these issues and challenges.
- The City of Fort Walton Beach should be commended for taking this step to benchmark the quality of life. Not many cities do this. What gets measured gets improved.
- That is the context in which the survey of Fort Walton Beach voters was conducted. These objectives are accomplished by the survey and are detailed in this report.

Methodology

- This poll was conducted by Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy of Washington, D.C., from Feb 24-28, 2020. A total of **625 voters registered to vote in the City of Fort Walton Beach** were interviewed by telephone (mobile and landline).
- Those interviewed were selected randomly from a commercially available Florida state voter registration file. The resulting sample **fairly reflects the demographic profile of registered voters in the City of Fort Walton Beach**.
- The margin for error, according to standards customarily used by statisticians, is no more than plus or minus 4 percentage points. This means that there is a **95 percent probability that the "true" figure would fall within that range if the entire population were sampled**. The margin for error is higher for any subgroup, such as gender, income, or race.

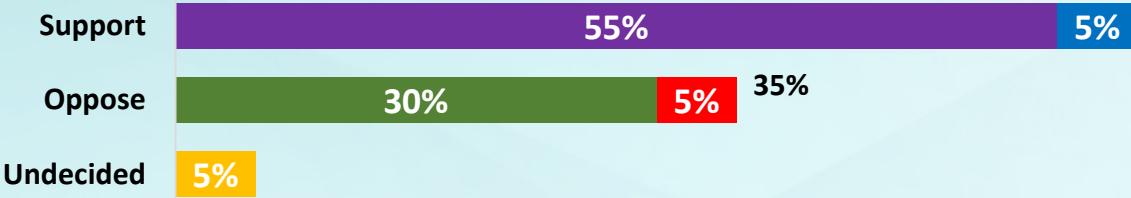
Fort Walton Beach – QOL Survey Demographics

(Sample was designed to be, and resulted in, a fair representation of the demographic profile of the population of those registered to vote in the City of Fort Walton Beach.)

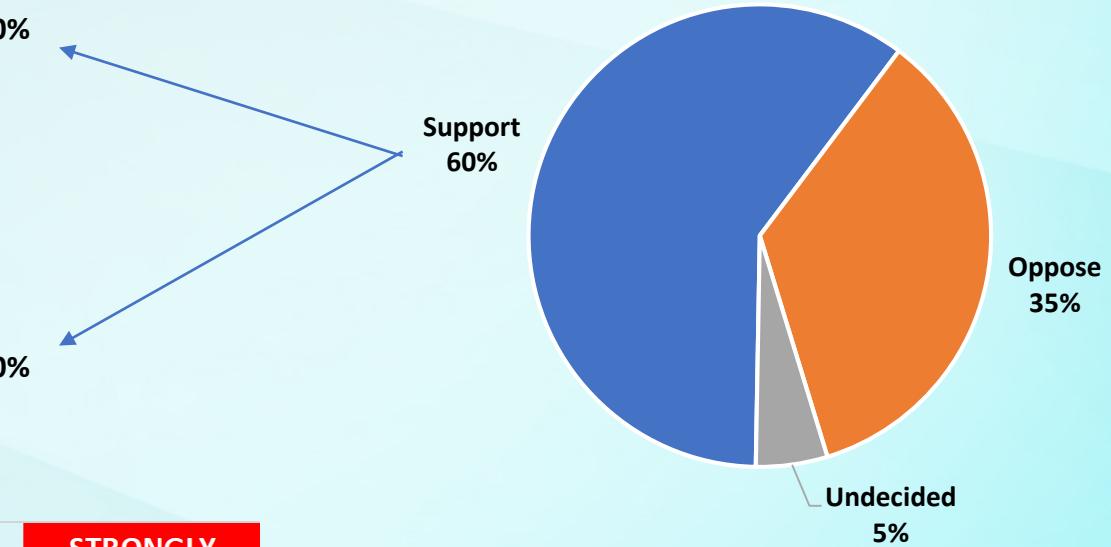
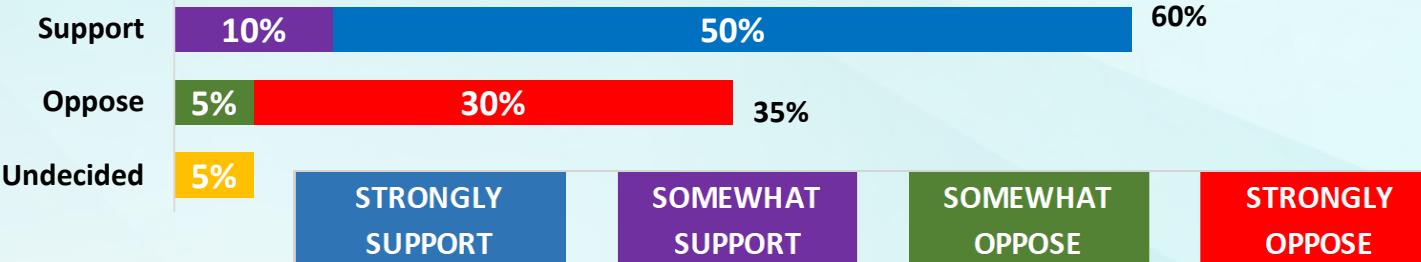
EDUCATION		RACE/ETHNICITY	
HIGH SCHOOL	19%	WHITE	77%
SOME COLLEGE	39%	BLACK	15%
COLLEGE GRAD	29%	HISPANIC	6%
GRAD DEGREE	13%	OTHER	1%
REFUSED	0%	REFUSED	0%
AGE		INCOME	
18-34	21%	<\$25,000	5%
35-49	34%	\$25,000-\$49,999	27%
50-64	27%	\$50,000-\$74,999	22%
65+	18%	\$75,000-\$99,999	15%
REFUSED	0%	\$100,000+	13%
		REFUSED	17%
SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN		PARTY IDENTIFICATION	
YES	30%	DEMOCRAT	24%
NO	70%	REPUBLICAN	50%
		INDEPENDENT	26%
EMPLOYMENT		SEX	
FULL-TIME	57%	MALE	46%
PART-TIME	7%	FEMALE	54%
RETIRED	18%		
HOMEMAKER	10%		
STUDENT	4%		
UNEMPLOYED	4%		

A Note of Explanation on Likert Scale & Charts

Do you support or oppose City proposal “A”?



Do you support or oppose City proposal “B”?



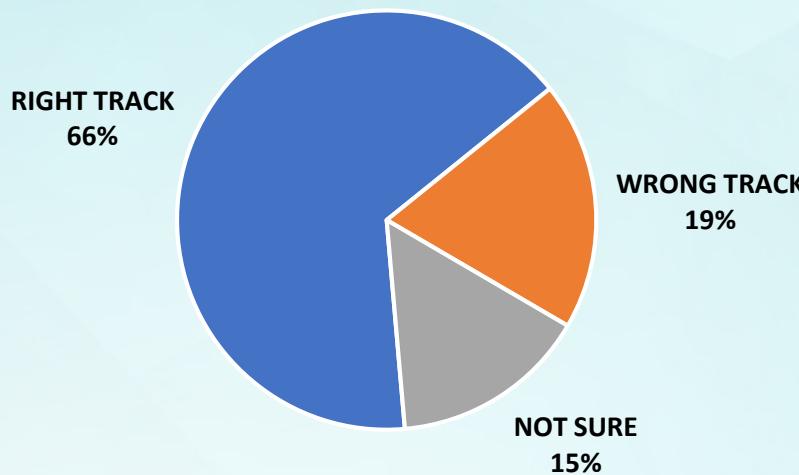
Simple “support/oppose”, “yes/no”, “satisfied/unsatisfied” are bi-polar questions. Likert Scales make it possible to observe and document the degree of “satisfaction” with, “importance” of, “confidence” in services, policies, and public investments. In the example above, both proposals A & B are supported by 60% of voters and opposed by 35%, as illustrated in the pie chart. However, the Likert Scale question qualify response by asking if they “strongly or somewhat” “support or oppose”. Here we get a much better and nuanced understanding of how voter feel.

*Please note that percentages not totaling 100% are due to rounding.

**“Undecided” percentages are generally not reported in charts for sake of visual clarity.

Fort Walton Beach: Right Track/Wrong Track

Q: Do you think the **City of Fort Walton Beach** is heading in the right direction, or are things on the wrong track?



Two-thirds (66%) of all city voters think the city is headed on the **right track**, with just 19% saying wrong track. Not surprising, given the state of the national and state economies at the time the survey was taken.

However, there were big differences among several of the demographic subgroups.

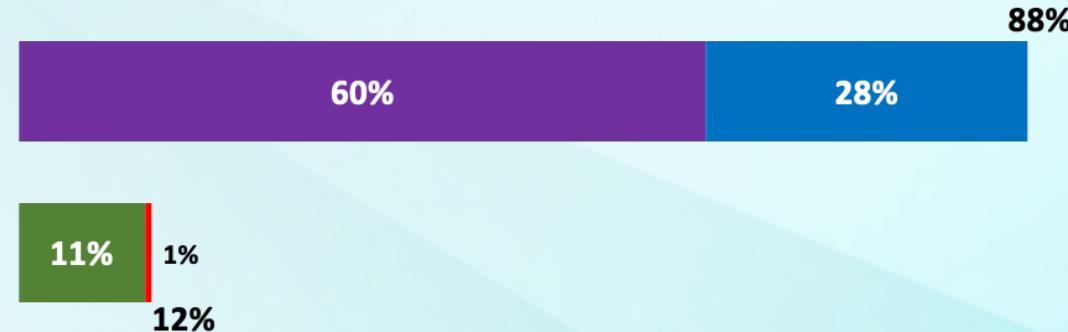
Women were more than twice as likely to say that things are on the wrong track compared with men—as were lower-income and lower-educated voters as compared to their demographic cohorts.

FWB should be mindful of, focus on, and implement best practices for leadership training, workforce upskilling, and job development for these affected demographic groups.

THINGS IN FORT WALTON BEACH		RIGHT TRACK	WRONG TRACK	NOT SURE
RESULTS		=====	=====	=====
CITY		65.6	19.2	15.2
SEX	MALE	76.8	10	13
	FEMALE	56.2	26.8	17.1
INCOME	<\$50,000	54.5	27	18.5
	\$50,000+	69.4	15.9	14.7
AGE	<50	59.9	20.1	20.1
	50+	72.5	18	9.5
EDUCATION				
	NO COLLEGE DEG	62.4	22.5	15.1
	COLLEGE GRAD	70	14.6	15.4

Economic Conditions and Concern about the Future

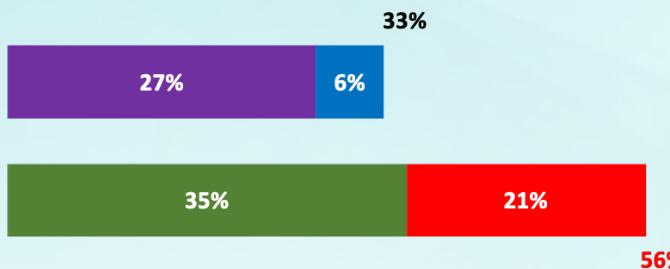
Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree that without leadership and a clear, shared vision, there is little chance for coordinated, successful efforts to attract economic opportunity, jobs, and to improve the overall quality of life in Okaloosa County and the City of Fort Walton Beach?



Nine of ten voters (88%) agree that “leadership and a clear, shared vision” are required to improve the economy and quality of life in the city and county.

Economic Conditions and Concern about the Future

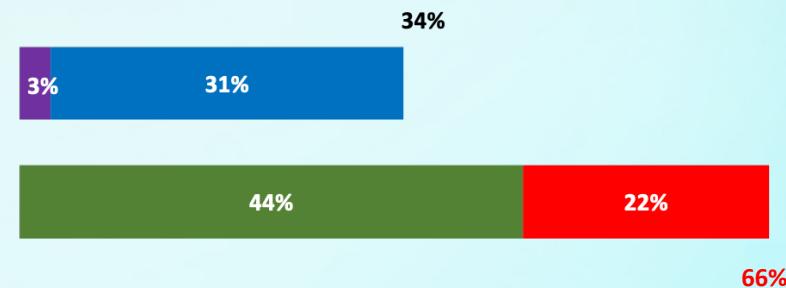
How would you rate your state legislative delegation's effectiveness in assisting the City of Fort Walton Beach in addressing economic, educational, and other important needs?



A third of voters (33%) give positive ratings for state legislative delegation's effectiveness in assisting the City of Fort Walton Beach, indicating a desire for more effort and help from the delegation.

(NOTE: Not shown 11% Don't Know)

How would you rate the City of Fort Walton Beach's success in addressing new challenges, and in attracting economic opportunity and job growth?



A third of voters (34%) give positive ratings for the current state of success the City of Fort Walton Beach has had in growing jobs, showing the desire for more focus on this.

Most Important Issue Facing the City of Fort Walton Beach

TRAFFIC/ROADS	25.4%
CRIME	12.6%
TAXES/GOV'T SPNDG	10.9%
GROWTH/SPRAWL	10.6%
ECONOMY	7.4%
EDUCATION	5.6%
DOWNTOWN	4.8%
DRUGS/OPIOIDS	4.8%
POOR LEADERSHIP	3.5%
LACK OF CULTURE	1.9%
JOBS	1.8%
POVERTY	1.4%
QUALITY OF LIFE	1.1%
ENVIRONMENT	0.8%
OTHER	2.9%
NOT SURE	4.5%

The sum and total of voter concerns documented at the time the survey was administered reflect the concerns of a community dealing with the by-products of fast-paced commercial and residential growth and development.

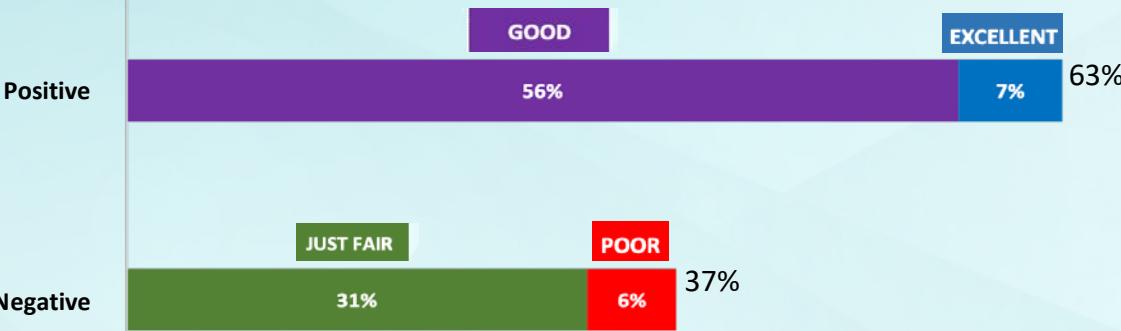
Top issues identified (each by-products of fast-paced development):

- Traffic (25%)
- Taxes/government spending (11%)
- Growth and sprawl (11%)
- Crime (13%)

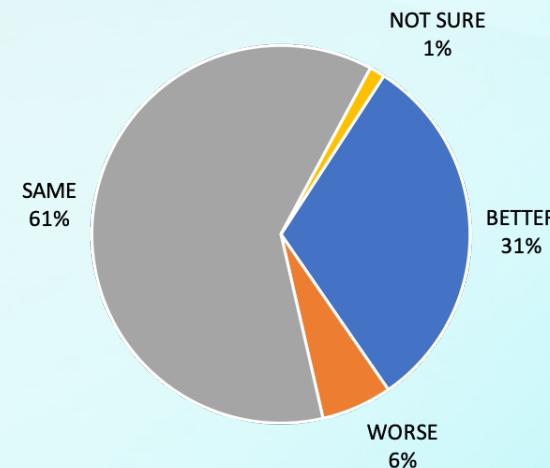
This translates to 60% of voters stating that the current pace and policies governing development are their primary cause of concern and are issues needing resolution and attention by local and regional governments, elected and civil leadership.

Rating Economic Conditions

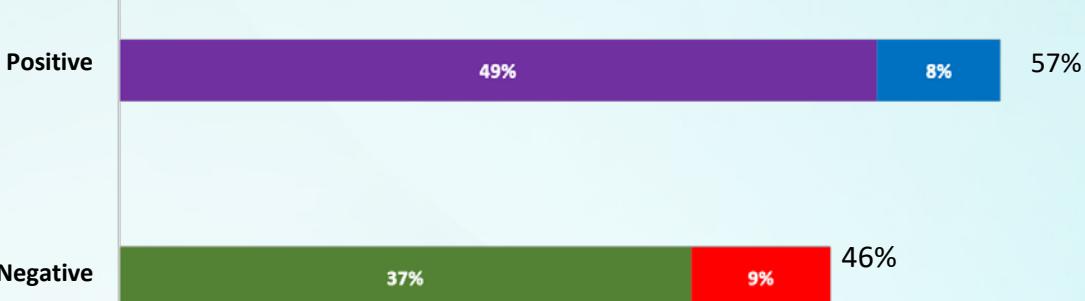
How would you rate economic conditions in Okaloosa County?



Five years from now, do you think the economy in the City of Fort Walton Beach will be better off, worse off, or about the same as it is today?



How would you rate economic conditions in the City of Fort Walton Beach?



- A majority of voters give positive ratings to both Okaloosa County (63%) and Fort Walton Beach's (57%) economic conditions.
- However, as the table on the following slide illustrates, these high ratings and sense of economic security are not felt nor enjoyed equally among the demographic subgroups.

Rating Economic Conditions

Demographic Breakdown

How would you rate economic conditions in the City of Fort Walton Beach?

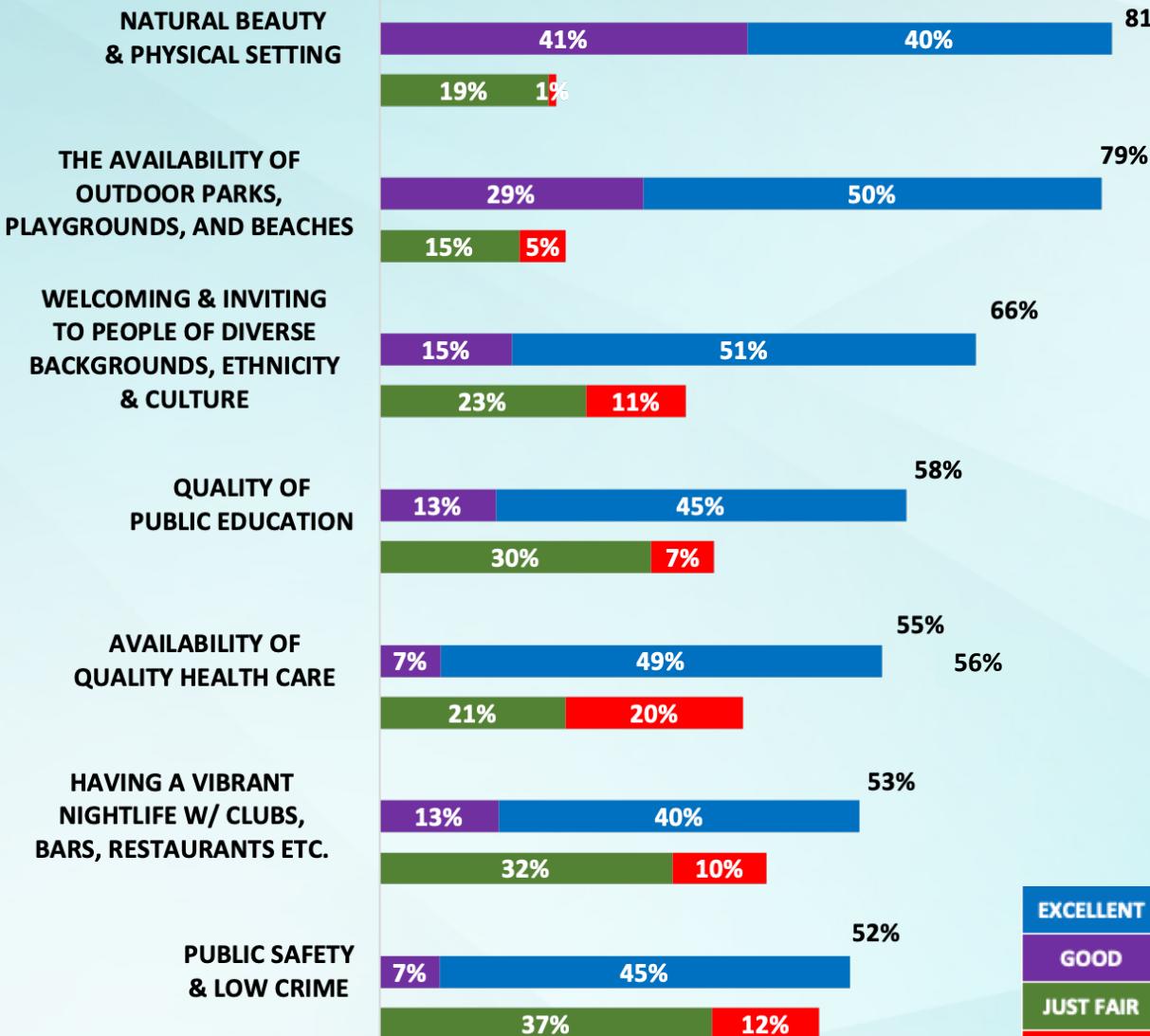
- Here, the survey documents substantial percentage differences in opinion between men and women, and ages groups.
- Fully half (50%) of women rate the economic conditions in FWB as negative (39% “just fair”/11% “poor”).
- A similar divide can be seen in the age subgroup. Just 35% of older voters rated the economy in FWB as negative, compared to 50% of younger voters.

		EXCELLENT	GOOD	Total Positive Rating	JUST FAIR	POOR	Total Negative Rating	DK
CITY		7.5	49	56	34	9.3	43	0.8
SEX								
	MALE	8.8	55	64	28	7	35	0.7
	FEMALE	6.5	43	49	39	11	50	0.9
PARTY ID								
	DEMOCRAT	12.1	38	50	43	7.4	50	0
	REPUBLICAN	5.7	53.5	59	27.4	12.1	39.5	1.3
	INDEPENDENT	6.8	49	56	38	5.6	44	0.6
INCOME								
	<\$50,000	10	45	55	32	13	45	0.5
	\$50,000+	7.5	49	56	34	9.1	43	0.6
EDUCATION								
	NO COLLEGE DEG	8	49	57	34	8.5	43	0.3
	COLLEGE GRAD	6.9	47	54	34	10	44	1.5
AGE								
	<50	3.5	46	49	39	12	50	0.6
	50+	12.3	52	64	28	6.7	35	1.1

Rating Quality of Life Factors

“I’m going to read a list of qualities and characteristics that contribute to the quality of life in a community. Please tell me how you rate each in the City of Fort Walton Beach: excellent, good, only fair, or poor.”

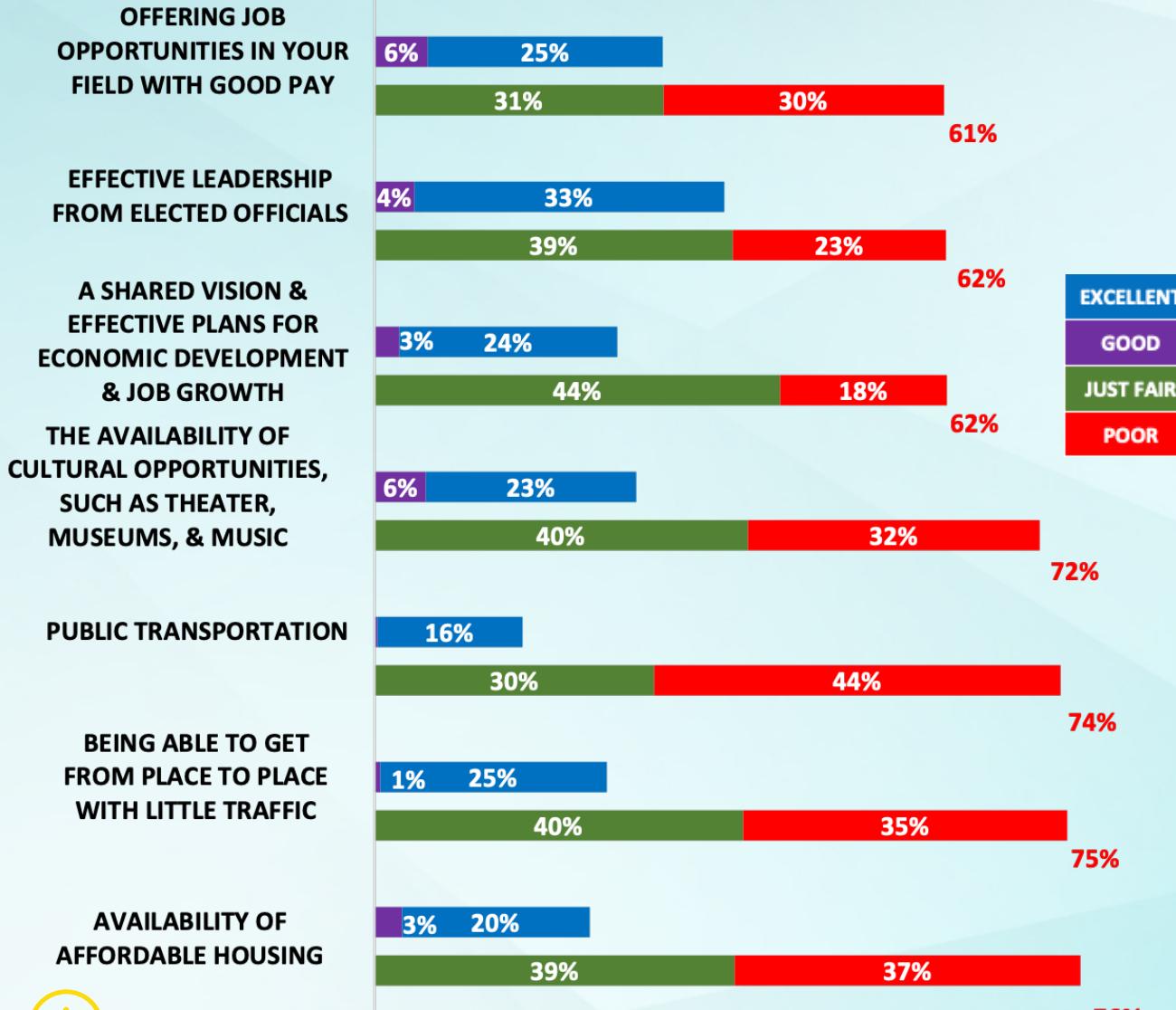
Quality of Life Factors: Net Positive Ratings



- Of the 14 quality of life factors tested, 7 were rated net positive, and 7 were rated net negative.
- The chart to the left illustrates the 7 quality of life factors that rated net positive.
- Not surprisingly, the area's natural beauty and out-of-doors/parks/beaches rated the highest among voters, with 8 in 10 rating them excellent or good.
- Public education and public safety are quality of life factors managed by, and the responsibility of, local governments. Each rated positively at 58% and 52%, respectively.



Quality of Life Factors: Net Negative Ratings



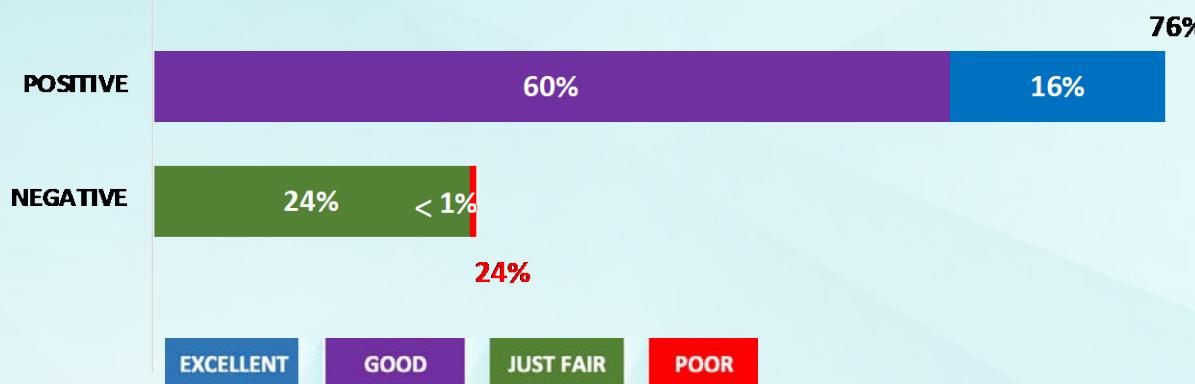
- Seven of the 14 quality of life factors were rated net negative by voters.
- Of these 7, 5 are the sole or shared responsibility of local government; 1. Effective Elected Leadership, 2. Economic Development & Job Growth, 3. Public Transportation, 4. Traffic, and 5. Affordable Housing.

Each rated large net negative ratings with a good degree of negative intensity (those rating the factor as poor) as the chart illustrates.

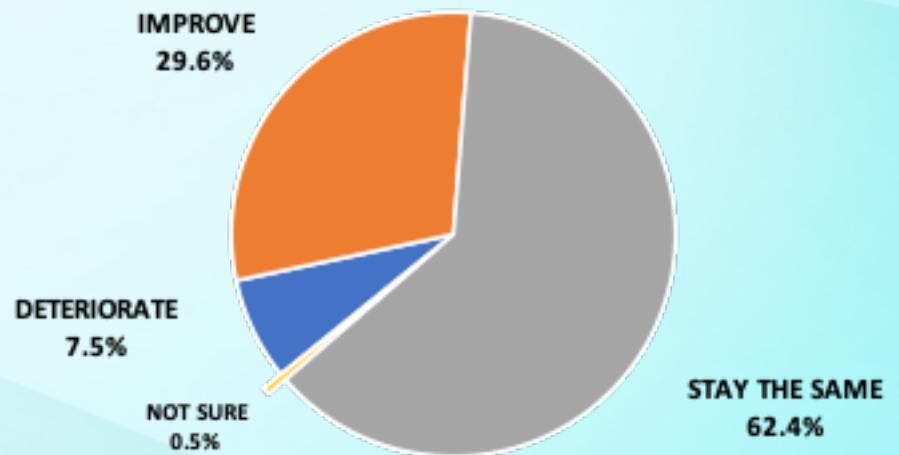
- Readers are encouraged to review the cross tabulations of each of the quality of life factors to better understand how the very real and meaningful disparities and gaps in the quality of life are playing out in your community.
- You must first be aware...then care enough to plan and execute for improvement of your community.

Rating the Overall Quality of Life

How would you rate the overall quality of life in the City of Fort Walton Beach?



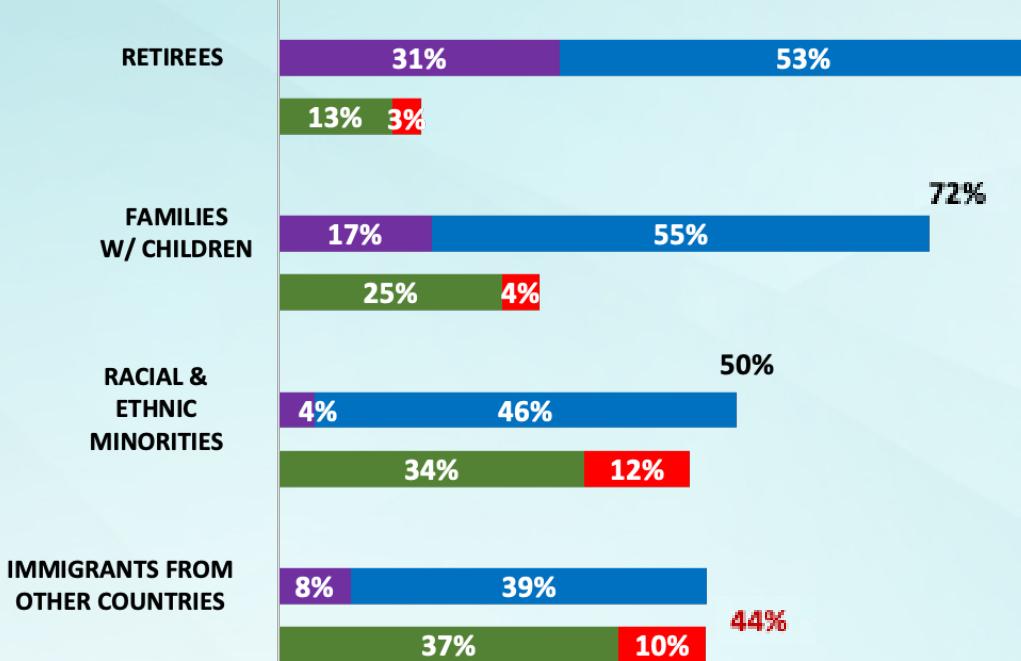
Over the next 5 years, do you think that the quality of life in the City of Fort Walton Beach will improve, deteriorate, or stay about the same?



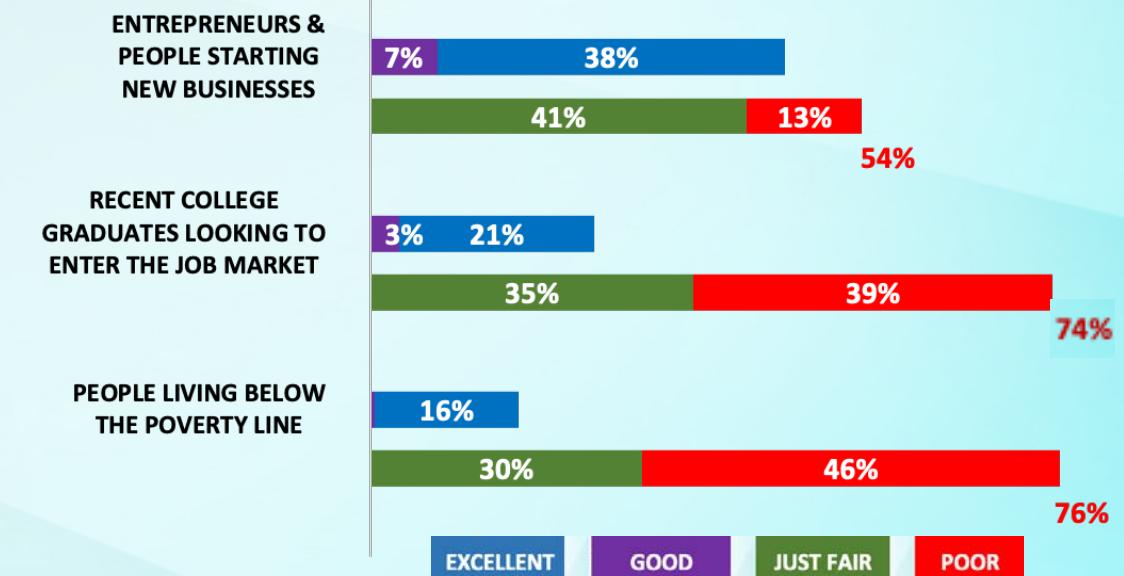
A healthy majority of voters (76%) rated the overall quality of life in Fort Walton Beach positive (60% "good," 16% "excellent"). Notwithstanding the 14 quality of life factors rated were split 7 net-positive and 7 net-negative, when asked about the next 5 years, 30% stated that they thought the quality of life would improve, only 7% said deteriorate, and 62% stated that it would stay the same.

“Now please rate the City of Fort Walton Beach as a place to live for the following types of people.”

POSITIVE RATINGS



NEGATIVE RATINGS



- Like much of Florida, FWB is a haven providing a high quality of life and low cost of living for many retirees. Nearly 9 in 10 (84%) of FWB voters gave a positive rating for the city as a place for retirees to live. These high ratings for retirees were unanimous among all demographic subgroups.
- FWB was also rated positively as a place to live for families with children. Of concern, however, is the finding that 36% of women and 35% of younger voters (49 and younger) say FWB is not a good place to raise a family.
- The balance of the other 5 “types of people” living in the City of Fort Walton Beach did not fare as well, as the chart above illustrates. A review of the demographic subgroups brings additional information and concern to the findings.



STUDER
COMMUNITY INSTITUTE

VIBRANT
COMMUNITY PARTNERS

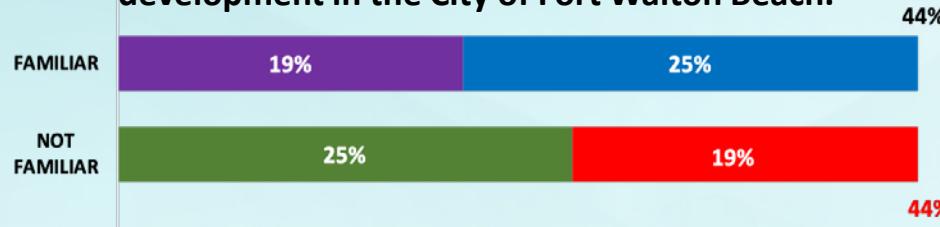
Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy

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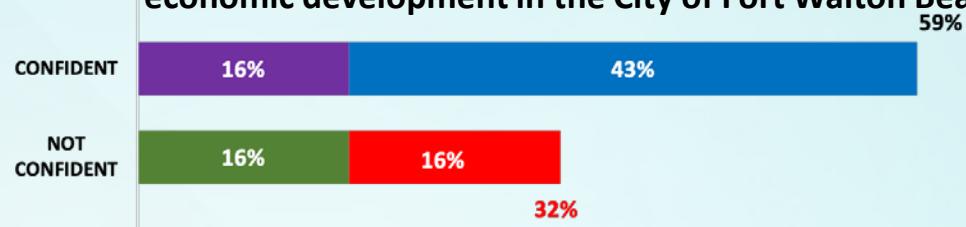
Familiarity & Confidence in Fort Walton Beach's Vision, Plans, and Leadership for Economic Development & Importance of Revitalization of Downtown

I am familiar with the vision and plans for economic development in the City of Fort Walton Beach.



- Less than half (44%) report being familiar with FWB's "vision and plans for economic development," with an equal percentage (44%) stating they weren't familiar.

I am confident in the vision, plans, and leadership for economic development in the City of Fort Walton Beach.



- Yet, a good majority (59%) of respondents expressed confidence in the "vision, plans, and leadership for economic development." This suggests that while voters have not drilled down into the details of the Master Plan for Downtown, they do have confidence in it getting done. This is a credit to the city leadership, staff, activists, and private sector in both its creation and buy-in by stakeholders.

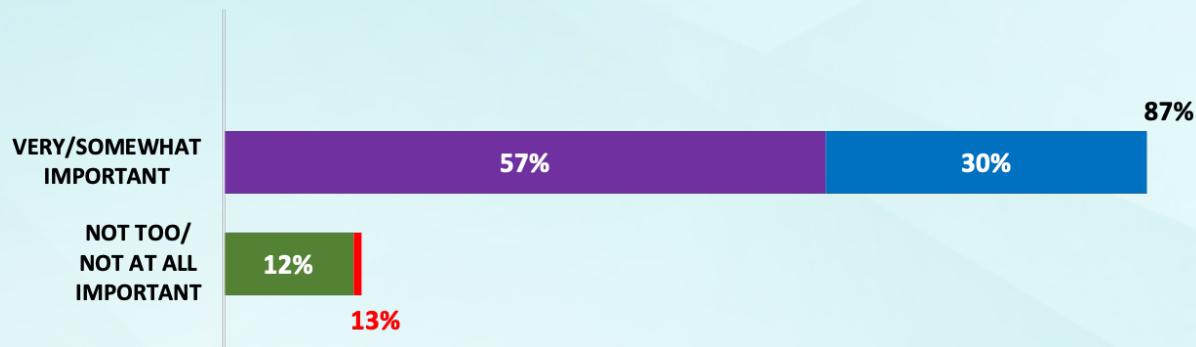
How important is the revitalization of downtown Fort Walton Beach to the city's economic future?



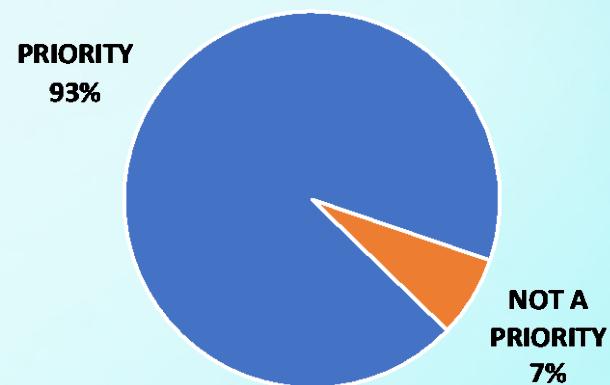
- It is abundantly clear that an overwhelming majority (87%) of voters in Fort Walton Beach understand the importance of the revitalization of downtown.

The Importance of Revitalization of Downtown & Priority Design Elements

How important is the revitalization of downtown Fort Walton Beach to the city's economic future?



Planning and building walkable communities and pedestrian-friendly streets should be a priority element in the redevelopment of Fort Walton Beach.



- In addition to having confidence in the future of downtown, an **overwhelming majority (87%) of voters** understand the importance of the revitalization of downtown to the economic future of the entire city.

- Over 9 in 10 voters support making walkable and pedestrian-friendly streets a priority element in the redevelopment of FWB. These urban and architectural design elements reflect present and future market forces and lifestyle changes occurring nationwide and intergenerationally, including less demand for car-dependent living and greater choice and opportunity outside the suburbs.

A Few Timely Topics of Concern

There are a set of standardized topics, themes, and questions used in a quality of life survey. However, coincidental to surveying quality of life issues, it is important to take the opportunity to address specific and timely issues facing a jurisdiction and its stakeholders.

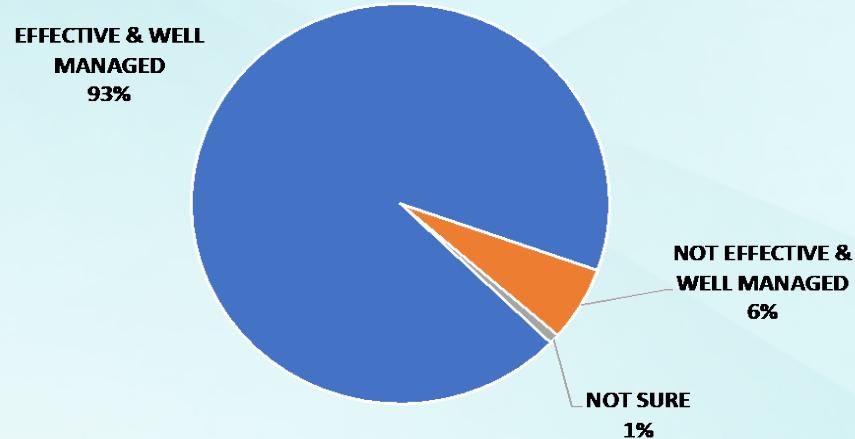
In this survey, several were addressed:

- Voter desires concerning the aforementioned “walkable/pedestrian-friendly” design for the revitalization of downtown FWB (slide 18)
- Voter opinion on the services and management of the city’s first responders’ recent fire services assessment (slide 20)
- Voter opinion on the disposition and plans for the city’s parks and recreation funding, services, and assets (slide 22)
- The degree to which voters think abandoned buildings and eyesores threaten public health and property values in FWB (slide 22)

Timely Topics

Agree or Disagree: “The City of Fort Walton Beach has an effective and well-managed fire department.”

CITY OF FORT WALTON BEACH FIRE DEPARTMENT



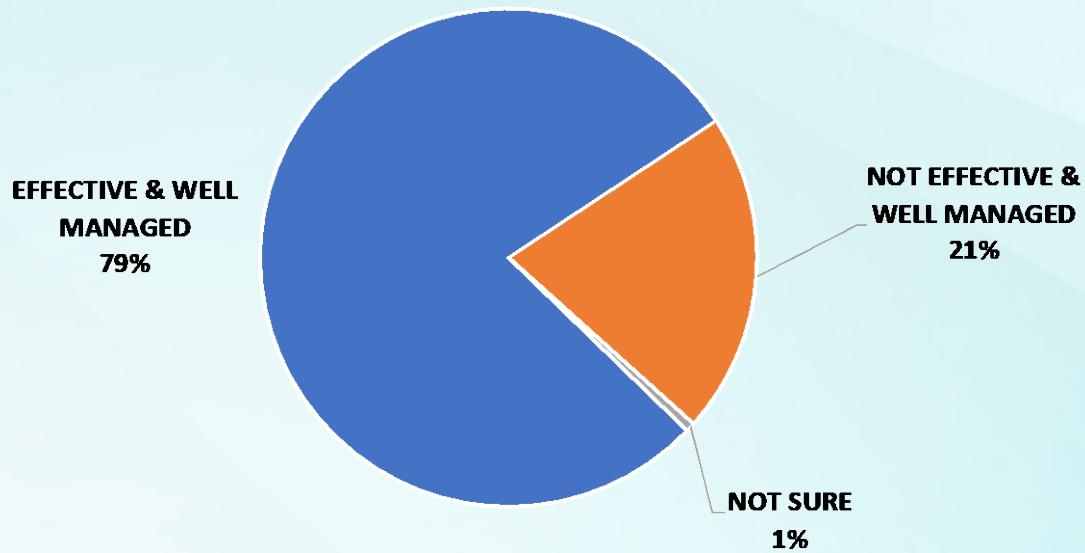
- Recently, the City of Fort Walton Beach Fire Department instituted a services assessment to help fund essential fire department services. The assessment will also free up general fund dollars to assist with additional public safety enhancements in the police department.
- When being asked for increased resources, voters want to have confidence in both the services being provided and that taxpayer dollars are being effectively managed. The findings clearly document that FWB voters have confidence in the people, programs, and management of their first responders—both fire & police (see next slide). Huge support in each demographic subgroup.

EFFECTIVE FIRE & RESCUE DEPT		STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT SURE
RESULTS						
CITY	62	31	93	5.8	0.5	6
SEX						
MALE	68	26	93	5.3	0.7	6
FEMALE	58	35	93	6.2	0.3	7
PARTY ID						
DEMOCRAT	62	27	89	9.4	0.7	10
REPUBLICAN	64	32	96	3.2	0.3	4
INDEPENDENT	60	31	91	7.4	0.6	8
INCOME						
<\$50,000	60	33	92	7.0	0.5	8
\$50,000+	62	30	92	5.9	0.6	7
EDUCATION						
NO COLLEGE DEG	57	35	92	6.9	0.5	7
COLLEGE GRAD	70	24	94	4.2	0.4	5
AGE						
<50	58	34	92	7.4	0.3	8
50+	68	27	95	3.9	0.7	5

Timely Topics

Agree or Disagree: “The City of Fort Walton Beach has an effective and well-managed police department.”

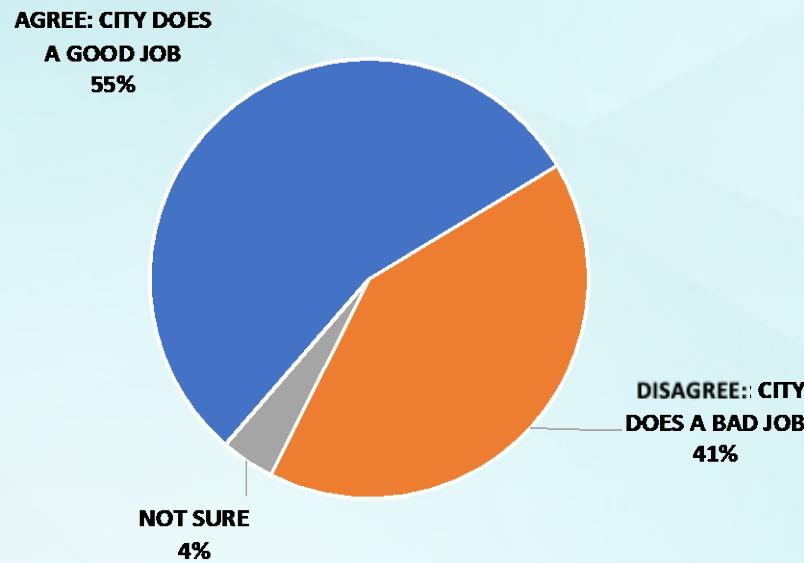
CITY OF FORT WALTON BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT



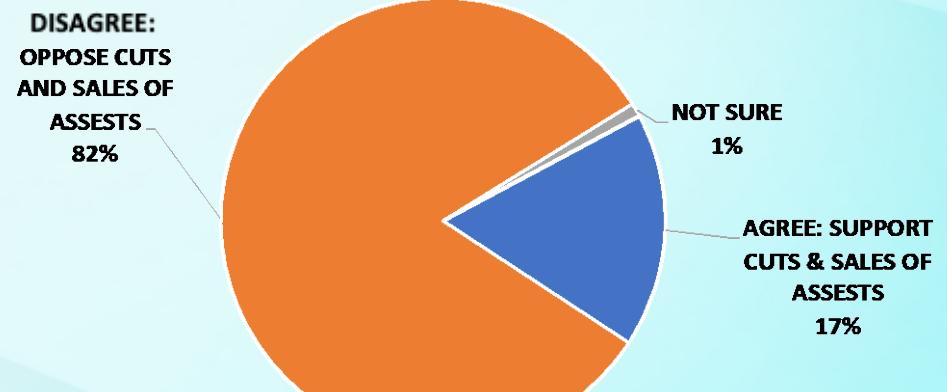
EFFECTIVE POLICE DEPT	—		—		—		—		—	
	STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE		STRONGLY DISAGREE		NOT SURE			
			—	—	—	—				
RESULTS										
CITY	40	38	79	11	10	21	0.6			
SEX										
MALE	42	39	81	11	8.4	19	0.4			
FEMALE	39	38	77	12	11	22	0.9			
PARTY ID										
DEMOCRAT	38	39	77	8.1	14	22	1.3			
REPUBLICAN	38	40	78	15	6.7	22	0.6			
INDEPENDENT	46	36	82	6.8	11	18	0.0			
INCOME										
<\$50,000	40	37	77	13	11	24	0.0			
\$50,000+	37	40	78	10	11	21	1.3			
EDUCATION										
NO COLLEGE DEG	39	42	80	12	8.0	20	0.3			
COLLEGE GRAD	43	34	77	10	12	22	1.2			
AGE										
<50	34	44	78	11	10	22	0.3			
50+	48	31	79	11	8.8	20	1.1			

Timely Topics

The City of Fort Walton Beach does a good job enforcing building codes and preventing abandoned buildings and eyesores that threaten public health and depress property values.



The city spends too much on parks & recreation. I would support reductions in the city's parks & recreation department and the sale of some of its properties and assets.



- While a majority of voters (55%) agreed that the city did a good job with abandoned buildings and eyesores, 4 in 10 voters disagreed. The city should inventory the stock of such dwellings to get an accurate picture—plan, execute, and measure progress year over year.

- In public policy, this is called a “slam dunk.” Fort Walton Beach likes their parks and recs!

Quick Case Study of Comparison of Younger Voter vs. Older Voter Attitudes

- The following two slides are demographic cross-tabulations by age.
- They are offered to illustrate the differences among demographic subgroups in this type of research and the need to better understand and act upon such information.
- Drilling down into the data provides leaders in government, non-profits, business, communities, and individual voters and residents with data that can help inform the development of needs and priorities for the entire community.
- If you just looked at the top line numbers, you might miss the gaps in the quality of life between one community or type of person and the next. You might also miss the opportunity to keep the talented young entrepreneurs essential to the long-term growth and stability of FWB.

Quick Case Study of Comparison of Younger Voter vs. Older Voter Attitudes

THINGS IN FORT WALTON BEACH

	RIGHT TRACK	WRONG TRACK	NOT SURE
CITY	65.6	19.2	15.2
49 & Younger	59.9	20.1	20.1
50 & Older	72.5	18	9.5

OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE IN FORT WALTON

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	TOTAL POSITIVE	JUST		
				FAIR	POOR	TOTAL NEGATIVE
CITY	16	60	76	24	0.5	24
49 & Younger	15	53	68	32	0.3	32
50 & Older	18	67	85	14	0.7	15

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OKALOOSA COUNTY

					NEGATIVE	
CITY	7.0	56	63	31	6.2	37
49 & Younger	6.0	46	52	40	8.0	48
50 & Older	8.0	67	75	20	4.2	24

HOW WOULD YOU RATE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE CITY OF FORT WALTON BEACH?

CITY	7.5	49	56	33.9	9.3	43
49 & Younger	3.5	46	49	48	12	50
50 & Older	12	52	64	24	6.7	35

- There are clear and significant statistical (double-digit percentage) differences between younger and older respondents' opinions. By nearly every measure, older voters give higher ratings for the economy and the various quality of life factors. There are macro structural issues, like tax policies, and major economic shifts, like the "gig" economy, student loan burden, and other systemic issues, that put younger people at economic disadvantages.
- Don't shrug these off as issues out of your local control. Re-double your efforts in these to improve the opportunities and outcomes for the younger members of your workforce. Otherwise, the 40 or so percent of younger voters who stated they were likely to leave FWB within five years will be voting with their feet.

FWB OFFER ADVANTAGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO ATTRACT AND KEEP YOUNG PEOPLE AND TALENTED PEOPLE?

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
CITY	33.8	60.8	5.4
49 & Younger	28.3	67.6	4.1
50 & Older	40.1	52.8	7

LIKELY TO LEAVE WITHIN 5 YRS?

	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	TOO LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY	NOT SURE
CITY	15	17	32	18	51
49 & Younger	19	20	39	19	42
50 & Older	10	13	23	17	61

QOL FACTORS

QUALITY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

	EXCELLENT		GOOD		TOTAL		JUST		FAIR		POOR		TOTAL		NEGATIVE		DK	
					POSITIVE													
CITY	13	45			58		30	6.9			37	5.3						
49 & Younger	5.3	43			48		35	12			47	4.7						
50 & Older	22	48			69		24	1.1			25	6.0						

AVAILABILITY OF CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

CITY	5.6	23			28		40	32			72	0.0						
49 & Younger	3.8	13			17		39	44			83	0.0						
50 & Older	7.7	34			41		42	17			59	0.0						

JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN YOUR FIELD

CITY	5.8	25			31		31	30			61	7.5						
49 & Younger	6.5	21			27		30	37			67	5.9						
50 & Older	4.9	31			36		32	23			55	9.5						

VIBRANT NIGHTLIFE W/RESTAURANTS, CLUBS

CITY	13	40			53		32	10			43	4.6						
49 & Younger	12	40			52		34	13			48	0.9						
50 & Older	15	39			54		30	7.0			37	9.2						

AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

CITY	3.0	20			23		39	37			76	0.6						
49 & Younger	3.8	21			25		33	42			75	0.3						
50 & Older	1.8	19			21		47	32			78	1.1						

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

CITY	0.3	16			16		30	44			74	9.9						
49 & Younger	0.3	13			14		32	48			80	6.8						
50 & Older	0.4	19			19		28	39			68	13						

Comparison of Younger Voter vs. Older Voter Attitudes

PUBLIC SAFETY & FIGHTING CRIME

	EXCELLENT		GOOD		TOTAL		JUST		FAIR		POOR		TOTAL		DK		
					POSITIVE												
CITY	6.6		45		52		37	12			48	0.0					
49 & Younger	6.8		33		40		46	15			60	0.0					
50 & Older	6.3		60		66		26	8.1			34	0.0					

GETTING FROM PLACE TO PLACE IN

CITY	0.6		25		25		40	35			75	0.2					
49 & Younger	0.0		23		23		44	34			77	0.0					
50 & Older	1.4		27		28		35	36			72	0.4					

AVAILABILITY OF QUALITY HEALTHCARE

CITY	6.7		49		55		21	20			40	4.8					
49 & Younger	4.1		40		44		20	30			50	6.2					
50 & Older	10		59		68		21	7.4			29	3.2					

WELCOMING TO PEOPLE OF DIVERSE ETHNICITY

CITY	15		51		66		23	11			34	0.6					
49 & Younger	14		40		54		31	14			46	0.3					
50 & Older	15		64		79		13	7.4			20	1.1					

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP: ELECTED OFFICIALS

CITY	4.3		33		38		39	23			62	0.6					
49 & Younger	3.8		31		35		37	28			65	0.0					
50 & Older	4.9		37		42		41	17			57	1.1					

SHARED VISION FOR JOB GROWTH

CITY	2.7		24		26		44	18			62	12					
49 & Younger	1.5		16		17		47	23			69	14					
50 & Older	4.2		33		37		41	12			53	9.9					



IMPORTANT REMEMBER THESE SUCCESS TIPS and BEST PRACTICES

Don't:

- Deny the Data
- Play the Blame Game
- Rationalize

Do:

- Remember this is the Baseline
- Celebrate and Prioritize the Positives

Fort Walton Beach Quality of Life Survey 2020

THANK YOU

Presented by Studer Community Institute and Vibrant Community Partners

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