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## Louisville generally satisfied with merger, metro survey says

Written by

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9:15 PM, Aug. 10, 2011|

Metro Louisville residents love their fire protection and are pleased with their garbage service, but they're far less satisfied with their public transportation and the quality of their roads.

And black residents are much more likely than whites to be dissatisfied with the police work in their area.

Those are just a few of the results of a \$30,000 survey the Louisville Metro Government commissioned in mid-July, which polled 1,092 households.

The survey, which has a 3-percent margin of error, was done in conjunction with Fischer's Merger 2.0 task force that is gauging the effectiveness of the 2003 merger that combined the Louisville and Jefferson County governments. The task force is looking at potential changes to the merger law.

Fischer's office paid one-third of the survey's cost out of his discretionary funds;

TARC and the Louisville [Water Co.](#) also helped fund the project. Greater Louisville, Inc., the city's chamber of commerce, raised funds from the business community.

Fischer said in an interview Wednesday that there was no "lightning bolt" revealed in the responses, saying it showed that "people generally feel safe and are satisfied with the services we provide."

He said the city must continually strive to improve, although he said it's unclear exactly how the data will be used to accomplish that.

The problems identified in the survey varied depending on who was asked.

For example, police services received an overall positive response from residents, with 71 percent strongly agreeing with the statements: "I and all my [family](#) members feel safe in my neighborhood;" and "I am very satisfied with the work of police in my area."

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However, African Americans' responses were 9 percentage points lower than whites in their satisfaction level with police.

Shawn Herbig, president of IQS Research, which conducted the survey, said just as important is that one out of four African Americans have a strong level of dissatisfaction with the police, compared with only 10 percent of whites.

"That's statistically significant," Herbig said, who added that comments from black residents leaned heavily on the need for a larger police presence in their neighborhoods.

Police Chief Robert White said he doesn't know if that is perception or reality, and it doesn't matter.

"That's disheartening to me, because we do a lot of work in our minority communities," he said. "Those are numbers we really have to close because if people are not feeling good about what we're doing, they won't be willing to work with us.

"And we've got to have them work with us to have long-term success."

Residents gave generally high marks to Emergency Medical Services, with 83 percent for confidence and 85 percent for satisfaction.

But of those who have used EMS service in the past year, 11 percent said they don't feel that they are "confident that EMS

personnel and equipment would arrive to offer help in a timely manner," compared with 5 percent of respondents who have not used the service.

Twenty-three percent of residents who have been assisted by EMS said they wanted quicker response times and 7 percent said they wanted better "treatment of citizens."

"When a person is in distress and they call EMS, they need to be more empathetic and not make them feel like they won't get proper service if they don't go along with what they say," said one respondent from the survey who was not identified. All respondents were asked open-ended questions about how services could be improved during the poll.

Another unidentified respondent said that EMS personnel at the end of their shift acted "as if they didn't want to do their job."

Fischer said he hopes additional training

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will resolve some of those problems. The mayor's budget this year included money to start an EMS academy that will train the paramedics locally.

"The type of training required in terms of helping folks in hyper-sensitive situations has to be foremost," Fischer said. "That's a different type of training than delivering medical service. It's bedside manner. But it's very important and fairly low cost."

Income drove differences of opinion on public transportation issues.

Two out of three people making less than \$20,000 a year said they strongly agree that they are "very satisfied with public transportation in Louisville," compared with one out of three people making \$100,000, or more.

African Americans also are generally more satisfied with public transportation than whites — by 18 percentage points among those who earn \$20,000 a year or less.

Herbig said the other difference is in suggested improvements in public transportation, where more affluent people talked about building light rail, while less affluent wanted more busses, routes and bus stops.

"Nobody making \$40,000 a year said word one about light rail," Herbig said Wednesday during a presentation to a subcommittee of the Merger 2.0 task force. "No one making \$100,000 a year or more said anything about having better bus

stops."

"Welcome to my world," interjected Barry Barker, executive director of the Transit Authority of River City, who was sitting in the back of the room.

Overall, only 51 percent of people surveyed said they were satisfied with the TARC.

In an interview Wednesday, Barker said he would have been surprised if the satisfaction level was higher, considering recent service cuts.

"Frankly, I'm not satisfied with the level of service we have out on the streets," Barker said.

The survey also asked people about other transportation issues.

About 68 percent of those surveyed believe they can get from one side of town to the other in a "reasonable" amount of time. The survey did not define what is

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reasonable. Only 48 percent believe that the city is accessible for pedestrians and cyclists.

There is considerable difference of opinion on accessibility according to race, with 45 percent of white respondents thinking the city is accessible for pedestrians and cyclists, compared with 63 percent of African Americans surveyed.

Only 37 percent of respondents believe the condition of Louisville's roads are good.

And while 78 percent of overall respondents said they were satisfied with their garbage collection, the survey revealed an apparent misunderstanding about those services after merger.

People who live outside of the old city limits, called the Urban Services District, must pay for their own trash collection because they are taxed at a lower rate. They reported being satisfied with their garbage collection at a rate 8-percentage points lower than people living in the old city limits.

Herbig said the comments in the survey back that up.

“The strong sentiment popping up ... (was) ‘Some people in the city are getting free garbage pickup and I'm not,’” Herbig said. “You can imagine the frustration that causes. They feel they're getting slighted.”

Fischer said the survey will help the city “come up with good solutions so we're not

just throwing darts at the wall.”

The mayor also said he's not surprised that a slim majority — 56 percent — expressed overall satisfaction with the level of services provided by the city.

“It's hard for people to get excited and jump up and down about government,” Fischer said. “Most of the people are in the middle and acknowledge they government exists, like air and water.”

Reporter Dan Klepal can be reached at (502) 582-4475.

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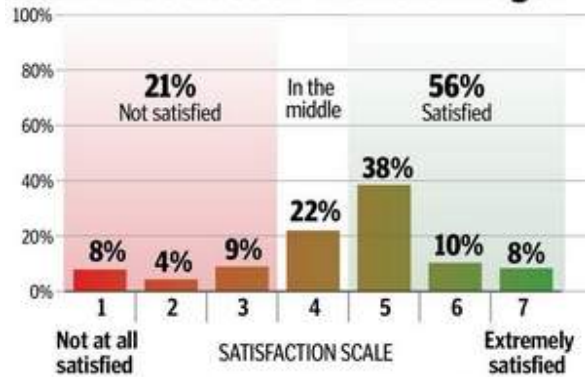
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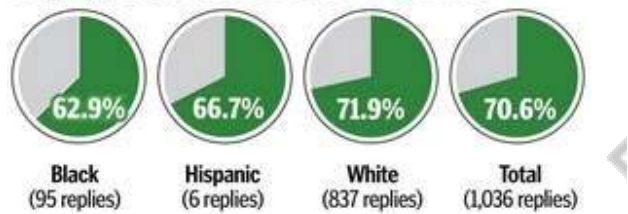
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## Overall satisfaction with the merger



Source: Louisville Metro Merger 2.0 Redacted Study By Steve Reed, The Courier-Journal

## Highly satisfied with the police



Source: Louisville Metro Merger 2.0 Redacted Study By Steve Reed, The Courier-Journal

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Less

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### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

55 percent — Satisfaction rating of people who have ridden a TARC bus in the past six months. That rating slipped to 51 percent for those who haven't ridden TARC in that time.

### GARBAGE COLLECTION

78 percent — Residents who are happy with the garbage service. Less-satisfied residents were clustered in ZIP codes 40272, 40211 and 40219.

### FIRE SERVICE

89 percent of residents have confidence in their fire service, and 91 percent were highly satisfied.

### POLICE SERVICE

Police satisfaction differs greatly between black and white residents, with only 10.5 percent of whites saying they were highly dissatisfied with police work in their area, compared with 23 percent of African Americans.

### CITY-COUNTY MERGER

56 percent of residents are satisfied with how metro **Louisville** is serving their needs.

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