Ottawa County Citizen Survey
May 2016

Presented by:

EPIC ▪ MRA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY and DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

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METHODOLOGY

EPIC ▪ MRA administered interviews with 400 registered voters residing in Ottawa County, Michigan, from May 9th through May 13th, 2016. Respondents were selected utilizing an interval method of randomly selecting records of published residential telephone numbers. In addition, a commercially available list of cell phones designated as in the possession of Ottawa County residents was obtained; Thirty percent of the sample, or 120 interviews, were completed via cell phone contact. The sample was stratified so that every area of the county is represented in the sample according to its contribution to a general election turnout. Interviews were terminated if the respondent indicated that he or she had not voted in at least one of the two most recent November general elections, and if the respondent was unlikely to vote in the upcoming August primary election.

In interpreting survey results, all surveys are subject to error; that is, the results of the survey may differ from those that would have been obtained if the entire populations were interviewed. This "margin of error" quantifies the degree to which random sampling will differ from a survey of the entire population, taking into account, among other things, the disposition of individuals who do not complete the interview. Put another way, the opinions of those who are not randomly selected or who decline to be interviewed, are no more or less likely to be different – within the margin of error – than the opinions of those who complete an interview and are included in the sample. The size of sampling error depends on the total number of respondents to the particular question.

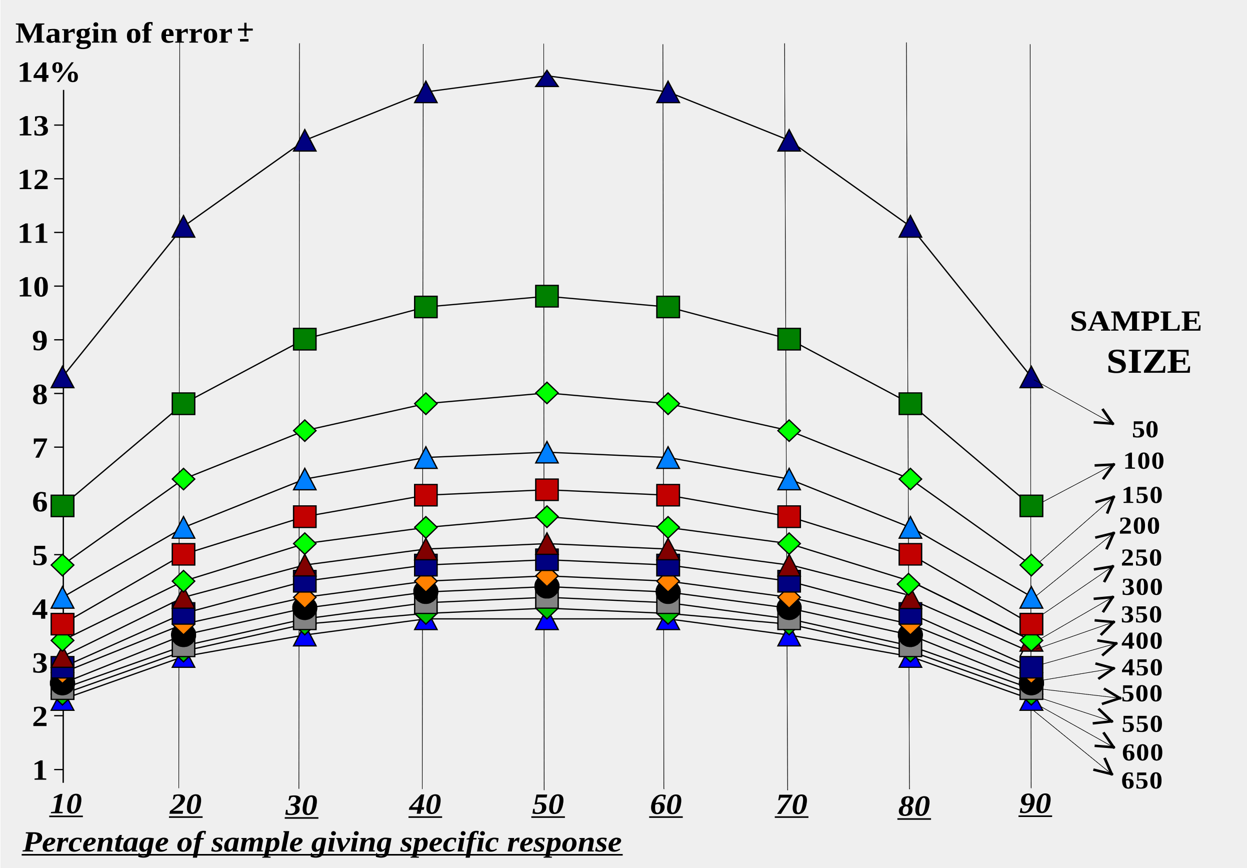
For example, 51 percent of all 400 respondents reported their feeling that Michigan is headed in, *"The right direction"*, as opposed to being on the "Wrong track" (Question 04). As indicated in the chart below, this percentage would have a sampling error of plus or minus 4.9 percent. This means that with repeated sampling, it is very likely (95 times out of every 100), the percentage for the entire population would fall between 55.9 percent and 46.1 percent, hence 50 percent ±4.9 percent.

For analysis purposes, the county geography was broken down into five regions. Where variations in responses are found among or between regions, it is noted in the textual report. A chart illustrating the jurisdictional components of each of the regions can be found in the appendix.

EPIC ▪ MRA SAMPLING ERROR BY PERCENTAGE (AT 95 IN 100 CONFIDENCE LEVEL)

Percentage of sample giving specific response

SAMPLE SIZE:	***10***	***20***	***30***	***40***	***50***	***60***	***70***	***80***	***90***
					% margin of error ±				
650	2.3	3.1	3.5	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.5	3.1	2.3
600	2.4	3.2	3.7	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.2	2.4
550	2.5	3.3	3.8	4.1	4.2	4.1	3.8	3.3	2.5
500	2.6	3.5	4.0	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.0	3.5	2.6
450	2.8	3.7	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.2	3.7	2.8
400	2.9	3.9	4.5	4.8	4.9	4.8	4.5	3.9	2.9
350	3.1	4.2	4.8	5.1	5.2	5.1	4.8	4.2	3.1
300	3.4	4.5	5.2	5.5	5.7	5.5	5.2	4.5	3.4
250	3.7	5.0	5.7	6.1	6.2	6.1	5.7	5.0	3.7
200	4.2	5.5	6.4	6.8	6.9	6.8	6.4	5.5	4.2
150	4.8	6.4	7.3	7.8	8.0	7.8	7.3	6.4	4.8
100	5.9	7.8	9.0	9.6	9.8	9.6	9.0	7.8	5.9
50	8.3	11.1	12.7	13.6	13.9	13.6	12.7	11.1	8.3



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EPIC ▪ MRA was commissioned in 2016 by the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners to measure public opinion about county government operations in a "customer satisfaction" survey in what is the sixth in a series of biennial studies begun in 2006. In addition to time series questions posed in each of the prior tests, there were questions unique to and timely for, the calendar year in which the survey was conducted. For instance, surveys in prior years included questions concerning replacement of lost state revenue sharing dollars, farmland preservation issues and where responsibility for county roads should rest, among others. In the 2016 study, respondents were asked how they would vote, on a scheduled renewal of an existing 1/3 mill levy dedicated to the county parks, in the upcoming August primary election.

As noted, similar studies were conducted on behalf of the county in 2014, 2012, 2010, 2008, and in 2006, with most of the questions replicated in the 2016 survey. Throughout the following analysis, differences in outcomes between the 2016 results and prior studies – particularly the most recently preceding 2014 survey – are discussed where appropriate.

-- Questionnaire Frame

An obvious starting point for gauging "customer satisfaction" is to inquire about attitudes toward county services in general and to determine if voters perceive, in a broad sense, whether or not things are going well in the county. In addition, measurements of what respondents believe is the biggest problem facing county government and questions about the perceptions of specific county agencies, departments, and programs are instructive. In order to accurately assess public opinion regarding possible tax options, it is necessary to probe attitudes regarding relative tax burden, and to investigate top-of-mind responses to general likes, dislikes, and preferences.

-- General Observations

The rebound in optimistic outlook first detected in 2012, remains steady/grows

Citizen anxiety over economic conditions was amply evident from the results of the surveys conducted in 2008 and 2010, and this angst served to color attitudes toward about a wide spectrum of county government activities. In short, deep concern about respondents' personal financial well-being led to an unusually pessimistic view of all levels of government. Predictably, the dissatisfaction was expressed most acutely in relation to the national government, but the heightened negative outlook toward county and local governments was still palpable. The 2012 study yielded data that indicated the impact of the Great Recession of ’08 was beginning to subside (or for many, just becoming the new “normal”) with responses to questions about whether or not a named jurisdiction (i.e. state, county, township/city) was headed in the “right direction” vs. being on the “wrong track” suggesting much greater optimism – particularly in regard to county and local governments. Data from the 2016 survey clearly indicates that the less hostile sentiment toward governmental entities first seen in 2012 was not an aberration but rather, has solidified.

In addition to the right direction/wrong track tests, responses to the 2016 survey questions asking respondents to identify the biggest issue to be addressed by their county and local government, and to select the most pressing issue from a roster of possible issues of concern shows that worry over the economy has greatly abated. In 2012, “Jobs and the economy” was – by far – the most mentioned/selected issue area of concern in both the open-ended and closed end questions on the topic. The 2014 survey saw “economy and jobs” recede somewhat in importance but still remain in at least the top two categories. In 2016, “economy and jobs is eclipsed by “Roads” as the top issue concern cited in both the open-ended top of mind question and the closed end roster of nine possible issue areas from which to select, with “economy and jobs” dropping significantly in importance.

Questions and responses that fall under the general rubric of “the economy” run throughout the survey and are detailed in the later section offering a question-by-question illustration of outcomes. Three of these questions, however, are important to highlight in this summary in order to substantiate the assertion that the reduced anxiety residents expressed about both public and personal fiscal matters first exhibited in 2012 has, indeed, carried over through the intervening four years.

--Provision of services takes on greater importance

Higher importance placed on government services

One bellwether question asks respondents which of two statements comes closer to their view: A statement saying that:

> *". . . it is important to maintain current county service levels even if it means higher taxes";*

Or, a statement expressing the view that:

> *". . . taxes and fees should be kept as low as possible, even if it means a reduction in services".*

In 2008 and 2010, solid majorities of respondents opted for the "keep taxes low" statement as being closer to their view and even in the pre-recession year of 2006, only a plurality of respondents – 49 percent – opted for the "maintain services" statement. The 2012 survey was the first time a majority of respondents (51 percent) opted for the "maintain services" statement. The 2014 survey saw a slight increase in majority support, moving up two points to 53 percent of all respondents. In 2016, a very strong 61 percent majority opted for the "maintain services" statement versus the 30 percent who selected "keep taxes low" as the statement better expressing their view. The latter figure of 30 percent "keep taxes low" represents a 13 percentage point drop since 2012.

Sensitivity to existing tax burden remains unremarkable

A standard question used by EPIC ▪ MRA for any survey of constituents of a governmental entity seeks to measure respondents' attitude toward the taxes they pay in return for the services that are delivered. This question asks respondents to report whether they believe their taxes are "Too high", "Too low" or, "About right", in return for what they receive in the way of county services. For those responding "Too high", a follow up question is posed, asking if that would be, "Much" or, "Somewhat", too high. A level in the high 20 percent-to-low-30 percent range is the typical result in other recent surveys conducted in other jurisdictions for the overall "Too high" response rate, with fewer than half that total being of the "Much" too high variety.

At 26 percent "Too high" (8 percent "Much" too high), the 2016 measurement on this question straddles the, *within-the-margin-of-error*, results recorded in 2012 and 2014 and serves to substantiate the assertion that economic concerns have to a large degree, ebbed.

Reduced emphasis on economic development programs

Each of the citizen satisfaction surveys has included a battery of questions which presents the respondents with a roster of county services and asks whether Ottawa County government should be doing "More", if it's already doing "Too much" or, if "Enough" is being done in the service area described in that particular question. Included in the roster of eleven activities and services is, *"Providing effective economic development programs"* and in the 2012 survey, 41 percent of respondents reported their belief that county government should be doing "More" (14 percent "Much" more), placing this activity as the one receiving the highest proportion of "More" responses. In 2014, this number one ranking dropped to number four, with 21 percent of respondents reporting "More" (4 percent "Much" more) should be done in this area.

In the 2016 survey, the ranking for, *"Providing effective economic development programs"*, drops two slots to sixth out of eleven on the should-be-doing-more scale, with 17 percent of all respondents expressing the belief that "More" (3 percent "Much" more) should be done by county government in this venue. Jumping to the top spot on the 2016 survey's, "More" ranking scale is, *"Providing mental health services"* – with 40 percent of all respondents reporting "More" (22 percent "Much" more) should be done by county government in this area.

-- "Vote" on Parks & Recreation millage renewal

Overwhelming support recorded

In the 2014 survey, respondents were presented with a hypothetical ballot question asking if they vote Yes to support or No to oppose the renewal of a 1/3 mil property tax assessment dedicated to Parks and Recreation which was first approved by voters in 2006. In response to that hypothetical question, a total of 72 percent of all respondents indicated they would vote yes, representing 67 percent who unequivocally responded yes, together with five percent who, after expressing initial indecision, said they would "lean" toward yes. The 2016 test of the issue finds this support increasing significantly.

For 2016, instead of being presented with a hypothetical ballot question, respondents were told that the 1/3 Parks and Recreation millage renewal proposal is scheduled for the August election. Again, respondents were informed of the amount of money the 1/3 mill levy represents for a homeowner of property with $100,000 market value and then asked: *"if the election were held today . . ."* would they vote Yes or No to extend the assessment for an additional 10 years.

In this latest presentation, an overwhelming total majority of 85 percent reported they would vote Yes, with 79 percent unequivocally saying so with an added six percent leaning toward yes. Just as important, the overall No response was cut in half from 22 percent in 2014 to just 11 percent in 2016.

It is interesting to note that EPIC ▪ MRA was commissioned in 2015 by the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission to conduct a citizen satisfaction survey and part of that study included a similar question concerning the renewal of the 1/3 assessment. The "vote" results from that survey fall squarely between the 2014 and 2016 measurements taken on the same issue in the EPIC ▪ MRA study conducted on behalf of the county commission.

-- Upshot of the 2016 findings

Ottawa County residents remain highly satisfied with the performance of their county government, and to the extent some residents are dissatisfied, it is very diffuse with no consensus – apart from "roads" – about a particular source of their dissatisfaction. This circumstance is a continuation of a trend first hinted at in 2012 and provides an atmosphere highly conducive to presenting a millage renewal request – particularly one involving the County Parks and Recreation services.

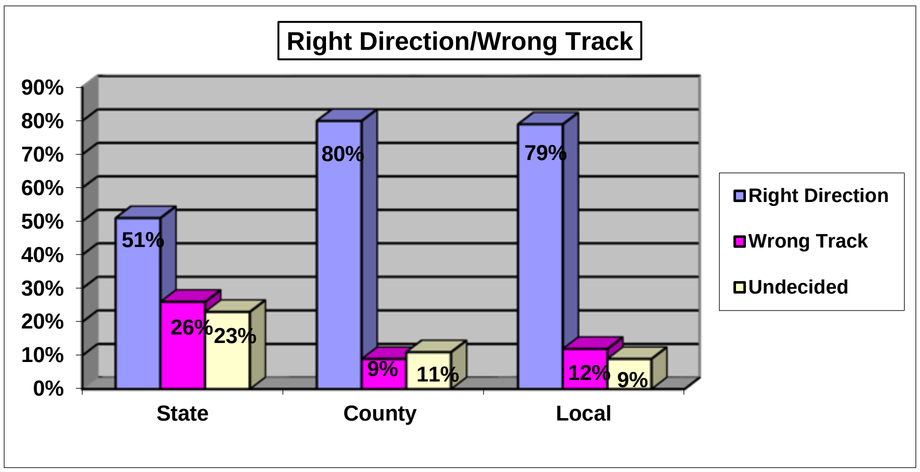
A hypothetical test of a parks renewal was tested in 2014, a test was taken on behalf of the Parks and Recreation Commission in 2015 and the fact of the ballot measure was presented in this 2016 study. The two earlier tests showed very strong support for the notion of renewal the parks millage and the more concrete presentation of – "How will you vote in August" – in 2016 shows overwhelming support. Absent some unforeseen set of events to affect this sentiment recorded in the survey, the parks millage renewal should pass handily.

As noted above, "roads" is prominent in the electorate's consciousness and it would seem the county, as a county entity, has its work cut out for it to address this concern. That is, the county passed a dedicated millage for roads and the governor and legislature ostensibly addressed the issue with legislation passed in the wake of Proposal 1's drubbing in May of 2015. However, as is certainly not lost on county officials, the finer points of who's responsible for what when it comes to funding road repair and maintenance is not well-defined in the minds of most voters. Accordingly, county government, having just received approval for a road millage, is put in the unenviable position of trying to explain in a succinct and understandable way, that the new millage revenue has limited applications and that the indispensible piece of the picture – adequate state revenue – will not be fully forthcoming for several years.

QUESTION-BY-QUESTION RESULTS

-- Right Direction or Wrong Track? – (Q's 4-6.)

A standard question on many surveys designed to measure citizen satisfaction, the "right direction/wrong track" battery remained a fixture on the 2016 Ottawa County. The question reads: *"Overall, do you think that [jurisdiction name] is headed in the right direction, or, do you think that things are pretty seriously off on the wrong track?"* Respondents are asked to answer this question as it applies to the state, county, and their local governments. The chart below illustrates the results for the 2016 survey:



In the 2010 survey, the state posted a dismal 12 percent "right direction" rating, but saw a dramatic turnaround in 2012 to 51 percent – the level at which it is recorded in the current study. While not as quite as dramatic as the movement in the state numbers between 2010 and 2014, the level of "right direction" responses for the county and the local unit also improved, from the 2010 levels by 21 points for the county and 10 points for the local unit. As can be seen, the county "right direction" figures continue to climb – to 80 percent from 73 percent in 2014 – as do the local government numbers, although to a much smaller extent with local moving from 77 percent "right direction" in 2014 to its 2016 level of 79 percent.

Subgroups reporting "wrong track" for the county in proportions greater than the norm of 9% included:

38%	*Rating of Local Services – Negative*
34%	*Rating of County Services – Negative*
33%	*City/Twp. direction – Wrong track*
	Rate County Financial Mgt. – Negative
28%	*Michigan direction – Wrong track*
19%	*Region 4 voters*
18%	*Taxes – Too high*
17%	*Millage renewal vote – No*
	Internet use – Seldom/Never
14%	*Vote in Local Elections – All the time*

14% Ottawa compared to others – About the same
Education – H.S. or less
13% Voting Aug. Primary? – Likely
Top issue – Crime
Age 18-34

-- County Compared to Regional Neighbors – (Q 7.)

Another measurement of how respondents view their status as Ottawa County residents is found in a question introduced in 2014 and repeated in 2016 which asks them to report of they believe Ottawa County is "Better", "Worse" or, "About the same" as other western Michigan counties. Three-quarters of respondents (75 percent) reported their belief that Ottawa County was better than neighboring counties as a place to, "live, work and raise a family". Twenty percent viewed the County as "About the same" with four percent undecided. Only one percent reported a belief that Ottawa County was, "Worse". With such lopsided results, subset analysis would not be instructive.

-- County's Strategic Goals – (Q's 8-11.)

The battery of questions about strategic goals was first posed in 2008 and in each survey year thereafter. Respondents are informed that the Board of Commissioners has a strategic plan that includes four major goals, which are then recited in random order. After hearing each of them, respondents are asked to indicate if they believe the individual goal should be a "Top priority", "Important but not a top priority", "Slightly important" or, "Not important at all".

As evidenced by the relative positioning of the several goals in the table below, each goal is viewed by county residents as being at least "Important" by very high proportions. Also evident is the fact that maintenance of fiscal and economic health consistently tops the list and it is also noted that improving county services and enhancing communications are almost exclusively the only goals that consistently register double digits for being "slightly" important – at least relative to the other two goals.

Another interesting observation is that despite other ample evidence in the survey that the public is no longer pre-occupied with "the economy and jobs" as they once were, maintenance of the county's economic health and strong financial position continue to be viewed by county residents as being of highest importance.

The table below shows the results for 2016, 2014 and 2012 on these stated goals:

Ranked by 2016 "TOTAL IMPORTANT"*		Top Prior	**TOT Impor**	Slight Impor	Not Impor	DK/ Undec
__10.	To contribute to the long-term, economic, social and environmental health of the County*	51%	***90%***	8%	2%	1%
	Ranking in 2014 - 2	34%	**88%**	8%	2%	2%
	Ranking in 2012 - 2	39%	***86%***	11%	2%	1%
__08.	To maintain and improve the strong financial position of the county	38%	***90%***	6%	2%	2%
	Ranking in 2014 - 1	26%	**89%**	9%	1%	1%
	Ranking in 2012 - 1	45%	***90%***	7%	2%	1%
__09.	To maintain and enhance communication with citizens, employees, and other stakeholders	36%	**86%**	10%	3%	1%
	Ranking in 2014 - 4	23%	**77%**	19%	3%	1%
	Ranking in 2012 - 3	31%	***81%***	16%	3%	---
__11.	To continually improve the county's organization and services	37%	***85%***	11%	3%	1%
	Ranking in 2014 - 3	22%	**80%**	15%	3%	2%
	Ranking in 2012 - 4	33%	***76%***	18%	4%	2%

*** Question 9 wording was changed in 2014 from: "To contribute to a healthy physical, economic, and community environment"**

-- Biggest Problem, "Top of Mind" & Prompted – (Q's 12, 13.)

Among the many indicators in the 2016 survey pointing to the fact that transportation infrastructure has supplanted the economy and jobs as the issue of greatest importance in the minds of the public, perhaps the best evidence lies in the data emerging from the "biggest problem" questions. In the first of these, respondents are asked to name, ". . . the single most important problem or issue facing the residents of your community that . . . [local] government must address?" Nearly one-in-five (19 percent) cited "Poor roads" as the single most important issue that first came to mind – a proportion identical to the 2014 measurement. "Unemployment/No jobs" maintained its number two position from 2014 but the proportion of respondents mentioning this as a top-of-mind concern dropped seven points from 11 percent to four percent – tied with "No Problems" and "Wasteful Spending". Compare these findings with those of previous years when "Unemployment/ Jobs" topped the list of issues that were most urgent in 2008 at 27 percent, 2010 at 32 percent, 2012 at 21 percent and even the pre-recession year of 2006 at 13 percent and it is clear that concerns about personal economic insecurity while still important, no longer totally dominate the public discourse.

Subgroups reporting "Poor roads" in proportions greater than the norm of 19% included:

36%	*Region 4 voters*
32%	*Biggest problem (closed) – Roads*
30%	*Internet use – Weekly*
	Children at home – 1
29%	*County residence – Lifelong*
28%	*Women 50+*
27%	*County financial management – Negative*
26%	*Info source – TV*
	$50K - $75K hh income
25%	*Vote in local elections – Most of the time*
	Age 50-64
24%	*County direction – wrong track*
	Use social media – Weekly/Monthly
23%	*Region 1 voters*
	Biggest problem (closed) – Taxes

Subgroups reporting "Jobs/Unemployment" in proportions greater than the norm of 4% included:

13%	*Biggest problem (closed) – Jobs*
8%	*Taxes – Too high*
	Men 50+
	College men
7%	*Rate County – Negative*

Following the top-of-mind question, respondents are presented with a list of nine issues – identified as areas many residents of Ottawa County say they are concerned about – and are then asked to select which one problem they are most concerned about. The results from this question see an echoing of the previous top-of-mind results with "Maintaining and improving area roads" capturing a 26 percent plurality of responses, with "Providing economic development and jobs" holding the second position with 15 percent of responses. The year-by-year comparison of responses shown below demonstrates the changes in relative rankings over time:

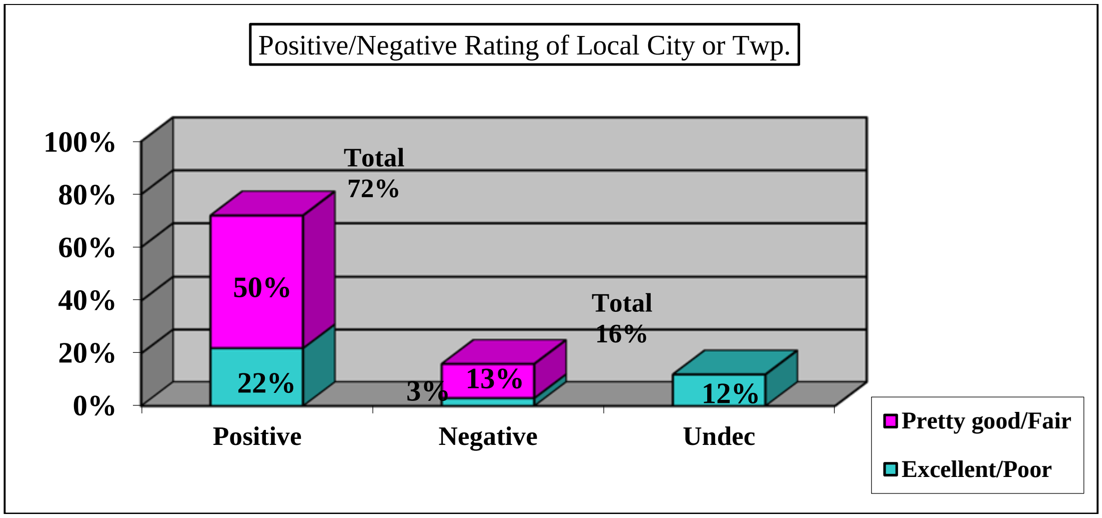
2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	**2016**	**ISSUE OF GREATEST PERSONAL CONCERN**
5%	7%	8%	11%	18%	**24%**	Maintaining and improving area roads
32%	37%	45%	35%	26%	**15%**	Providing economic development and jobs
5%	14%	6%	13%	16%	**14%**	Protecting the public from crime and drugs
10%	9%	12%	12%	16%	**12%**	Keeping local taxes and fees low
10%	6%	13%	16%	13%	**11%**	Improving the quality of area schools
3%	6%	3%	5%	4%	**8%**	Protecting the environment in the area
---	---	---	---	---	**6%**	Availability of affordable housing
1%	3%	3%	4%	3%	**4%**	Providing quality basic city, township or county services
12%	3%	1%	2%	3%	**3%**	Controlling traffic congestion
---	3%	---	---	---	**---**	More than one [**ASK**: "But which problem concerns you most?" **AND CODE BEST RESPONSE]**
3%	3%	1%	2%	1%	**4%**	Undecided/Refused
11%	5%	5%	---	---	---	*Controlling unplanned development and sprawl*
8%	4%	3%	---	---	---	*Preserving prime farmland and open space*

Subgroups reporting "Roads" in proportions greater than the norm of 24% included:

36%	*Vote in Aug. Prim? – Likely*
32%	*Region 4 voters*
31%	*$75K - $100K hh income*
	No college men
29%	*Region 2 voters*
	Rate County Services – Negative
	Info source – TV
	County residence – Lifelong
	$25K - $50K hh income
28%	*Rate County Financial Mgt. – Negative*
	Vote on renewal – No
	County activities – Unaware
	Use Internet – Seldom/Never
	Age 65+
	H.S. or less
	Men
27%	*Vote in Aug. Prim? – Somewhat Certain*
	Vote in local elections – Most of the time
	County direction – Wrong track

-- Rate your Local (City/Township/Village) Government - (Q 14.)

2014 saw 79 percent or respondents issue a "Positive" rating for the job their local city, township or village was doing in providing basic services. A seven point drop to 72 percent is measured in the 2016 survey, although the more intense "Excellent" (as opposed to "pretty good") portion of the Positive rating increased by three points to 22 percent, representing a considerably higher proportion of the overall total than it did in 2014. Just as important, the "Negative" rating remained steady at 16 percent.



Subgroups reporting "negative" in proportions greater than the norm of 16% included:

66%	*County direction – Wrong track*
53%	*Local direction – Wrong track*
51%	*Rate County services – Negative*
50%	*County financial mgt. – Negative*
30%	*Michigan direction – Wrong track*
27%	*Vote in local elections – Seldom/Never*
26%	*Taxes – Too high*
25%	*Millage renewal vote – No*
24%	*Internet use – Seldom/Never*
22%	*H.S. or less*
23%	*Under $25K hh income*
20%	*Vote in Aug. Primary? – Likely*
	Vote in local elections – All the time
	Ottawa comparison – About the same
	No college women

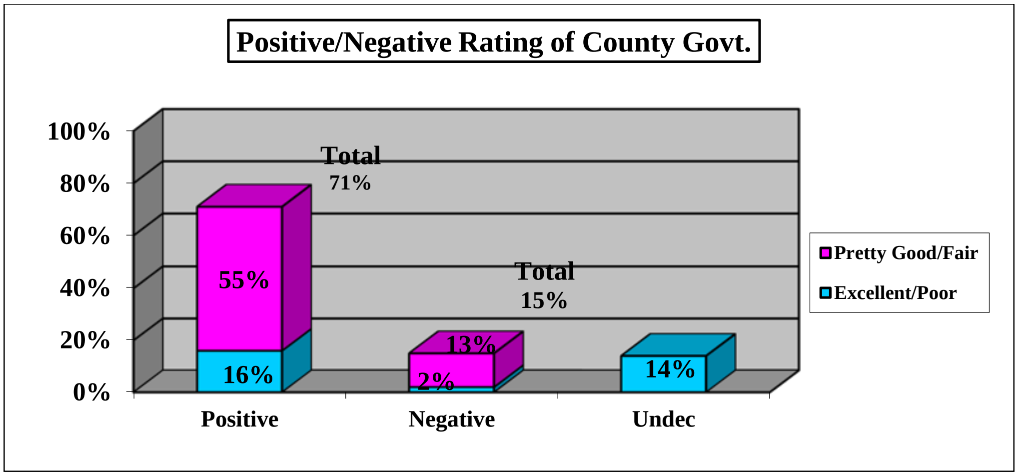
-- Reasons for the rating - (Q's 15, 16.)

As a follow up to the Positive/Negative rating question, respondents were asked to give their reason for issuing the rating that they did. *"None-No problems"* (17 percent); *"Good overall"* (14 percent); and, *"Undecided"* (19 percent), formed 50 percent of the reasons cited by respondents for their positive rating. The balance of the responses as reasons for a positive rating occupied more than 19 other separate categories at proportions no higher than six percent.

As for the responses of those who issued a negative rating, it is important to remember that at 16 percent "negative", the responses for the reasons for that rating came from a total of just 63 individuals. For most of them, *"Communication"* (19 percent); *"Roads"* (16 percent); and, *"Wasteful spending"* (15 percent) were the reasons behind issuing a negative rating.

-- Rate your County Government - (Q 17.)

At 71 percent total “Positive” the 2016 rating for the county slipped by five points from the 76 percent levels measured in 2012 and again in the 2014 survey. It is noteworthy, however, that the five points is not made up in the “Negative” column but rather, is found in a five point increase in “Undecided”. The graph below illustrates the results for 2016:



Subgroups reporting “negative” in proportions greater than the norm of 15% included:

57%	*County direction – Wrong track*
50%	*Rate local govt. – Negative*
45%	*County financial mgt. – Negative*
31%	*Taxes – Too high*
29%	*Local direction – Wrong track*
26%	*Vote in local elections – Seldom/Never*
25%	*State direction – Wrong track*
23%	*Info source – TV*
22%	*Ottawa comparison – About the same*
21%	*Millage renewal – No*
20%	*Region 3 voters*
	Region 4 voters
	Children at home – None
	No college men

-- Reasons for the County Rating - (Q’s 18, 19.)

Again, as a follow up to the Positive/Negative rating of how well the county is doing in providing basic services, respondents were asked to give their reason for issuing the rating that they did. The reader is also reminded again that at 15 percent total “Negative” rating, the responses for the reasons for that rating came from a total of 62 individuals. The following illustrates the top several reasons why respondents offered the respective ratings:

Reasons for “Positive” rating for county government delivery of services

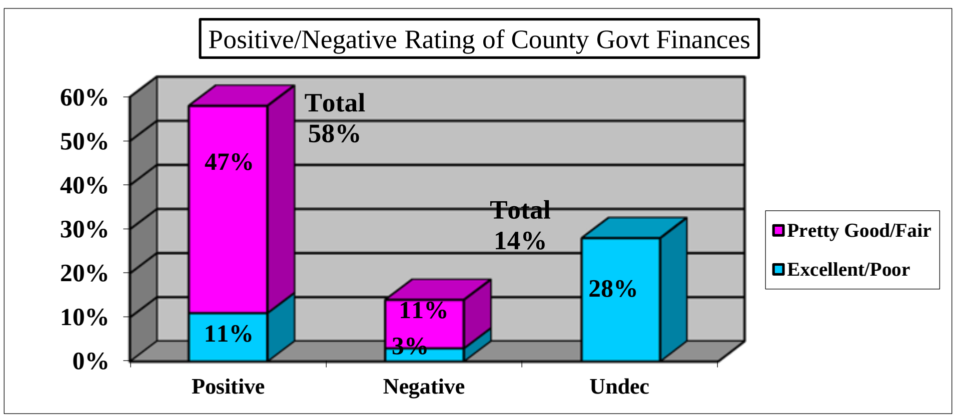
- *15% - No complaints/problems*
- *13% - Good job overall*
- *5% - Service variety*

2016 Reasons for "Negative" rating for county government delivery of services

- *20% - Poor roads*
- *13% - Service cuts*
- *11% - Communication*
- *10% - Could improve in general*

-- Rate the County's Handling of Finances - (Q 20.)

In an effort to probe a little more specifically about perceptions concerning county government, respondents were also asked to offer a "Positive" or "Negative" rating for the job Ottawa County does in managing county finances. Over the course of the six survey years, the "Positive" rating has ranged from a low of 53 percent (2008) to a high of 62 percent (2012) and the "Negative" rating has ranged from 20 percent (2010) to 15 percent (2006 & 2012). As can be seen from the graph below, the 2016 "Positive" results fall squarely in the middle of the historical range. As for the Negative measurement, the 2016 result of 14 percent sets a new benchmark for the low end of the historical range.

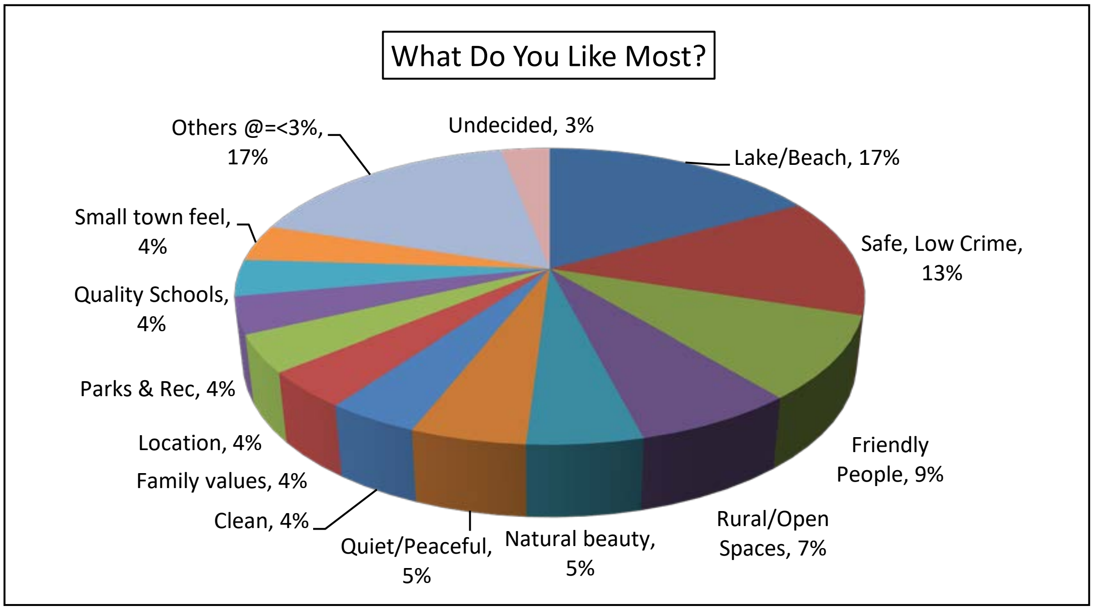


Subgroups reporting "negative" in proportions greater than the norm of 14% included:

49%	*County direction – Wrong track*
43%	*Local services – Negative*
39%	*County services – Negative*
33%	*Local direction – Wrong track*
29%	*Taxes – Too high*
28%	*State direction – Wrong track*
26%	*Internet use – Seldom/Never*
23%	*Vote in local elections – Seldom/Never*
21%	*H.S. or less*
20%	*Region 4 voters*
	Millage renewal – No
18%	*No college men*

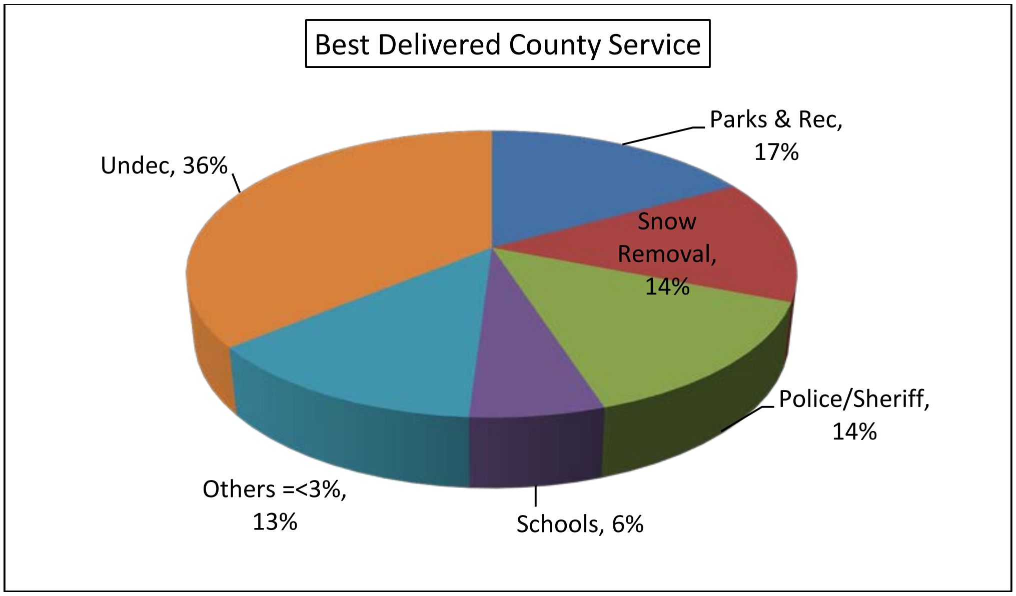
-- What is liked the most about living in Ottawa County - (Q 21.)

Since 2006, the predominant answer to this open-ended question has centered on the county's proximity to Lake Michigan and its natural beauty. Coming in close behind are comments about personal security (e.g. "safe", "friendly") and other quality of life attributes. Also striking over the years is the consistently small percentage filling the "Undecided" slot. The following pie-chart illustrates the distribution of responses for 2016.



-- Ottawa County does the best job at providing . . . ? - (Q 22.)

"Law enforcement"; *"Snow removal"*; and, *"Parks and Recreation"* have traditionally occupied the top spots for the services named by respondents as being the best delivered by the County and the 2016 survey continues that tradition. Those three service areas account for over two-in-five (42 percent) of the responses. Also, as with past surveys, the precise functions and responsibilities of county government are sometimes not well defined in the minds of some respondents, so there is usually some attribution given to county government (both good and bad) that is more properly assigned elsewhere. Be that as it may, the chart on the following page shows the major categories mentioned for this question.



-- What County Service Needs the Most Improvement? - (Q 23.)

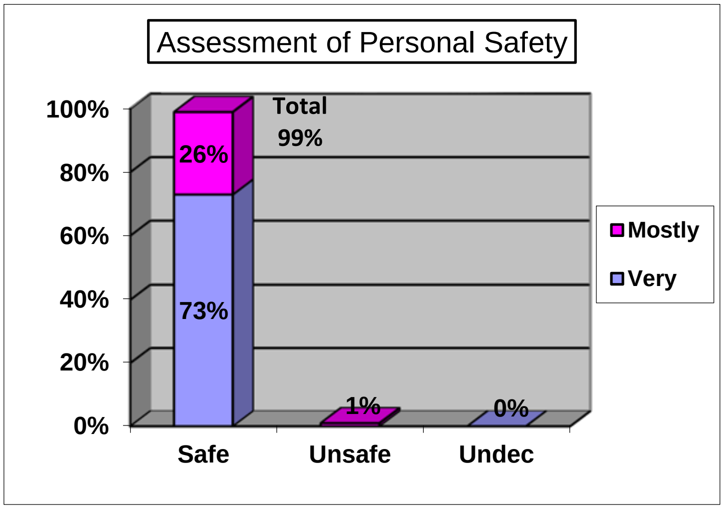
Despite last year's legislative action to address transportation infrastructure needs *"Roads"* is the most-mentioned top-of-mind response when respondents are asked to name what specific county service needs the most improvement. Thirty-two percent of respondents answered "roads" in 2016, approximately the same proportion naming this government responsibility in the past five surveys dating back to 2006. Perhaps just as noteworthy is the very high proportion of respondents who are "Undecided" (36 percent) about which of the myriad of county services is in most need of improvement. Indeed, the undecided category has consistently surpassed or closely approximated the proportion naming roads in all six surveys.

Subgroups reporting "Roads" in proportions greater than the norm of 32% included:

45%	*Children at home – 1*
41%	*County services – Negative*
	County financial mgt. – Negative
40%	*Vote in local elections – Most of the time*
37%	*Region 2 voters*
	Taxes – Too high
	Years of residence – 1-15
36%	*Region 1 voters*
	Info source – TV
	Internet use – Seldom/Never
	Age 65+

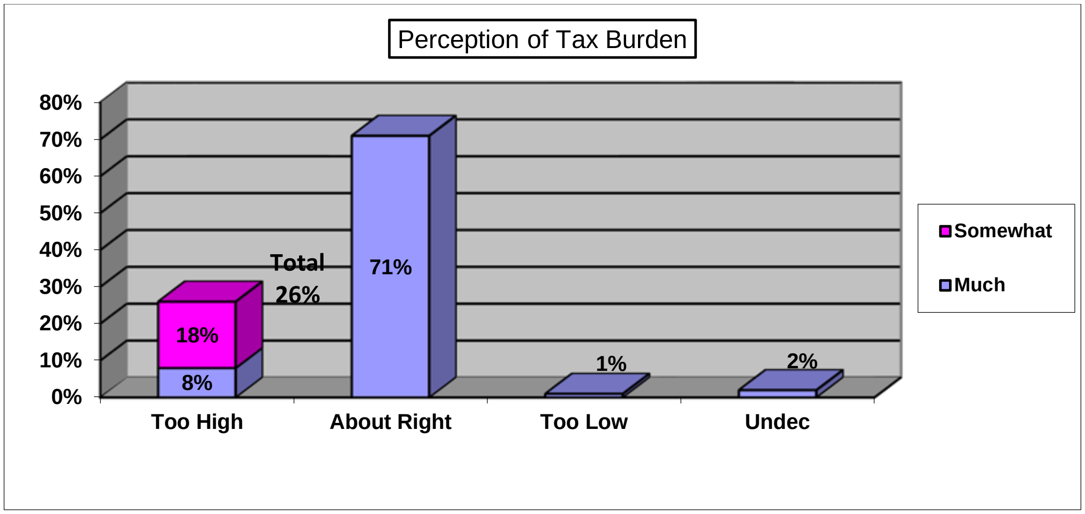
-- Perception of Personal Safety - (Q 24.)

First introduced in the 2008 survey and repeated in each of the subsequent polls, respondents were asked, *"How safe do you feel in your neighborhood?"* Mirroring results from the prior four studies, virtually all 2016 respondents reported that they felt safe where they lived. It is noted that a top-of-mind response of, "safe", "safety" and "friendly people" are all mentioned specifically in response to Q 21 which asks respondents to identify what it is they most like about living in Ottawa County. The chart below illustrates the 2016 results:



-- Perception of tax burden - (Q 25.)

Respondents' perception of value received in exchange for taxes paid is not only a key indicator about attitudes toward a governmental entity generally, but it is also a fairly good harbinger of the chances for passing a ballot proposal regarding changes to the tax assessment status quo. In a question included in nearly all surveys of this type conducted by EPIC ▪ MRA, respondents are asked if county property taxes and other fees were *"Too high"*, *"Too low"*, or *"About right"*, given the amount and quality of county government services they receive in return. If respondents said "Too high", a follow-up question asked them if the taxes are *"Much"* or *"Somewhat"* too high. The results were as follows:



At 26 percent, the total "too high" figure for 2016 is three points higher than was recorded in 2012 but two points lower than the 2014 mark – a minor fluctuation that is to be expected. Also well within the range of recent measurements is the "much" too high portion of the total which, at less than a third of the total can also be considered normal. More to the original point, the figures in this measurement are consistent with the high marks the county receives in other measurements for assessment of performance as well as signaling a favorable climate for presentation of a ballot question involving a tax issue.

Subgroups reporting "Too high" in proportions greater than the norm of 28% included:

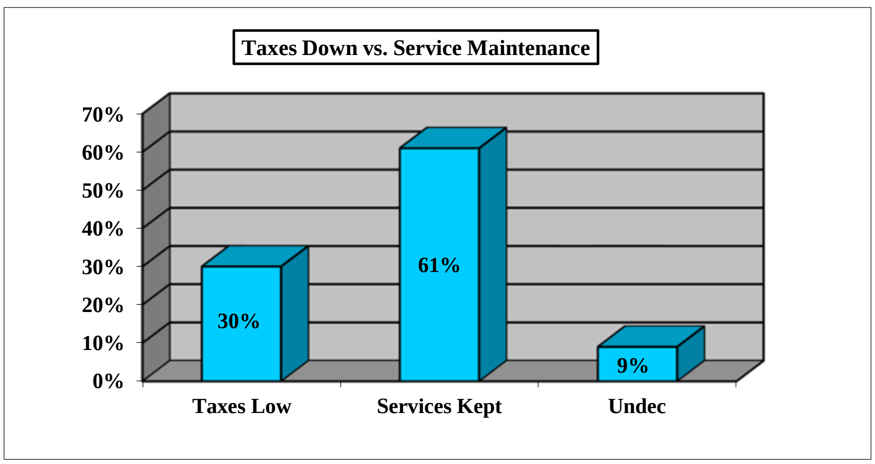
56% County financial mgt. – Negative
52% County rating – Negative
Renewal vote – No
51% County direction – Wrong track
Top issue concern – Taxes
46% Local direction – Wrong track
45% Internet use – Seldom/Never
42% Local rating – Negative
36% County activities – Unaware
34% H.S. or less
No college men
32% State direction – Wrong track
31% Under $25K hh income
30% Region 4 voters
Vote in local elections – All of the time
Info source – Mail
Men 50+

-- Taxes vs. Service Levels - (Q 26.)

Another question designed to provide insight to elected officials and other policymakers asks respondents to select between the options of maintaining the current level of services even if that means a tax increase or, keep taxes low, even if that means a cut in services. This question has been posed in every survey since 2006 when a bare plurality of respondents opted of the "maintain services" statement. In 2008 and 2010, clear-to-strong majorities opted for the, "keep taxes low" statement. The survey of 2012 was the first time a majority of respondents selected the "maintain services" option over the "keep taxes low" alternative, with a two point increase in this majority (to 53 percent) being recorded in 2014.

In 2016, the majority response opting for the "maintain services" statement is unequivocal, with 61 percent of respondents reporting a preference to, maintain services even if it means a tax increase over the, keep-taxes-low-even-if-that-means-a-cut-in-services, option. The language of the options available to respondents (the presentation of which were rotated throughout the sample to eliminate potential bias) as a reaction they would prefer county government to take in the event of a budget shortfall reads:

- *"Keep taxes and fees as low as possible – even if this means a cut in services"; or,*
- *"Maintain existing services – even if this means a tax increase."*



Subgroups selecting "Keep taxes low" in proportions greater than the norm of 30% included:

59%	*Top issue – Taxes*
	Renewal vote – No
58%	*Internet use – Seldom/Never*
53%	*Under $25K hh income*
52%	*Taxes – Too high*
46%	*County financial mgt. – Negative*
44%	*Local direction – Wrong track*
	Local services – Negative
43%	*Region 5 voters*
	County direction – Wrong track
	County residence – 16-25 years
40%	*County services – Negative*
	H.S. or less
	Men 18-49

38%	*Ottawa comparison – About the same*
	Top issue – Crime
	Men
36%	*Region 2 voters*
	Vote in local elections – All the time
	Use social media – Seldom/Never
	Men 50+
35%	*Voting in Aug. primary? – Likely*
	Top issue – Roads
	County activities – Unaware
34%	*Voting in Aug. primary? – Somewhat certain*
	State direction – Right direction

Subgroups selecting "Maintain services" in proportions greater than the norm of 61% included:

79%	*College women*
78%	*Top issue – Schools*
	Info source – e-mail
77%	*Pay on-line fee? – Yes*
75%	*Co. website visitation – A lot/Some*
	$75K - $100K hh income
71%	*Vote history – 1 of 2 last generals*
	State direction – Wrong track
70%	*Children at home – 2*
	Women 18-49
69%	*Vote in local elections – Seldom/Never*
	Taxes – About right
	Use social media – Daily
68%	*Info source – County website*
	College education
67%	*Region 1 voters*
	Renewal vote – Yes
	Children at home – 3
	Age 18-34
	Women
66%	*Use social media – Weekly/Monthly*
	County residence – 1-15 years
65%	*Region 3 voters*
	Vote in local elections – Most of the time
	Local services – Positive
	Internet use – Daily
	Age 50-64
	Over $100K hh income

-- Contact with a County Department - (Q's 27-29.)

Another original question from 2006 asks respondents if they or anyone else in their household has contacted a county office or department, *". . . in the past year"*. The first year this question was asked saw the highest proportion of responses at thirty-seven percent. In subsequent tests, the response rate had remained consistently at or around thirty-percent. The measurement in 2016 of 26 percent reveals a notable decline in the proportion of residents reporting they or a member of their household had recently contacted an Ottawa County office or department. The following chart illustrates the results over time:

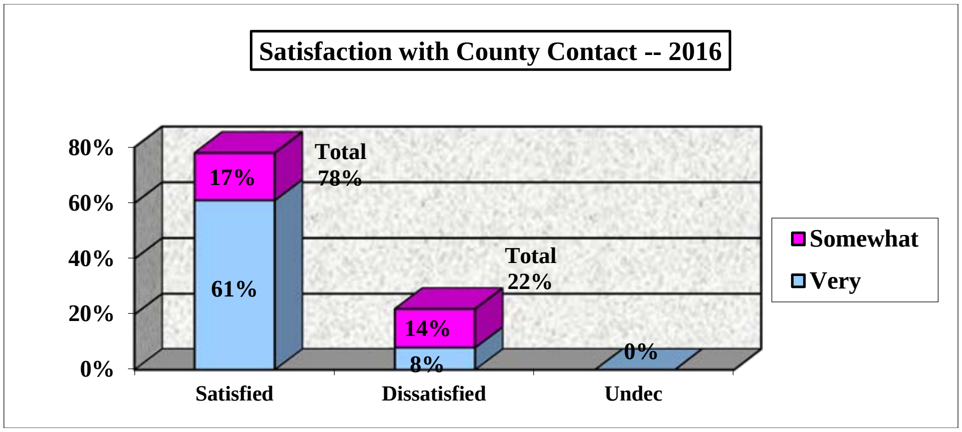
2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	
28%	21%	20%	23%	26%	19%	Yes, respondent
7%	8%	3%	4%	2%	3%	Yes, someone else
2%	3%	7%	2%	3%	4%	Yes, more than one
37%	***32%***	***30%***	***29%***	***31%***	***26%***	***TOTAL CONTACTED***
61%	63%	69%	71%	68%	73%	No one contacted an office or department of Ottawa County
6%	5%	1%	---	1%	1%	Undecided/Refused

Typical of the results from 2008 through the current survey year, the department receiving the most reported contacts has been the Sheriff's Department if combined with other replies involving law enforcement or emergency responders. Reasserting itself in 2016 as it did in 2012, "Road Commission" as an entity unto itself, received the highest proportion of responses. The balance of the 17 specifically named departments received responses only in the single digits, the highest of this subset being the Health Department at six percent.

Nearly all of these respondents reported they either called the named department on the phone (68 percent), or paid a personal visit (23 percent). There is no perceptible increase over time in the proportion of respondents reporting the use of web-based means of contacting a county office.

-- Satisfaction with Job Performance - (Q 30.)

Just as there was a slight reduction in the total number of respondents reporting contact with a county agency, the overall satisfaction with the experience from those who had contacted a county office saw a slight decline. To be sure, over three-quarters of qualified respondents reported being satisfied (78 percent), with an increase in the proportion "Very" satisfied, but the overall total is six points lower than the levels recorded in both 2012 and 2014. The chart below illustrates the findings for 2016.



Sufficiently sizeable Subgroups reporting "Dissatisfied" in proportions greater than the norm of 22% included:

38%	*Age 18-34*
32%	*Info source – Newspaper*
27%	*Use social media – Daily*
	Citizens' Academy – No interest
26%	*Info source – Mail*
	Website visitation – Little/Not
	Residence – Lifelong
	Children at home – None

-- More, Enough, or Too Much? - (Q's 31-41.)

A battery of questions many policy-making bodies have found to be helpful recites a list of county services and activities. Respondents are asked after hearing of each individual service or activity to give their opinion as to whether or not the county is currently doing – "Enough", "Too Much", or if "More" needs to be done. To measure the intensity of opinion that more needs to be done, respondents answering "More" are asked if they believe that "Much More" or "Somewhat More" is necessary to address their concern.

Continuing the shift from prior studies that was first detected in 2014, there is – for most of the categories tested – a uniform lack of intensity of feeling among those respondents reporting the county ought to be doing "More" for a given area. This is particularly true in the case of *"Working with local governments to best plan commercial and residential development . . ."* and in keeping with the overall premise of this analysis, *"Providing effective economic development programs"*. Indeed, "Providing effective economic development programs" relinquished its usual 1st or 2nd "Total More" ranking in 2016, falling to the seventh of eleven slots on the "Total more" scale.

Taking over the top, "Total More" spot for 2016 was the statement: *"Providing mental health services"*, which received a 40 percent "Total More" score, over half of which (22 percent) was "Much more". The number one position in 2016 for mental health services is the culmination of a gradual upward movement for this service area from its low-end to middling spots in the 2006 through 2010 surveys, to its fifth position in 2012 and its second place position in 2014. Perhaps most striking about the current measurement is the intensity of expression by respondents. That is, the 22 percent "Much" more proportion is the highest recorded for any service area in the ten years of conducting this survey, with its closest rival being 19 percent "Much" more recorded in 2010 for county economic development efforts.

Although not as dramatic as the movement of the mental health services area, similar upward movement on the scale for, *"Providing substance abuse prevention and treatment services"* and, *"Providing public health services, such as immunizations and restaurant inspections"* service areas is also observed in the 2016 study. In the 2012 and 2014 studies, substance abuse services had leveled off at a number six ranking from its former eleventh place spot in 2008. In this year's survey, substance abuse services rises to third place on the "Total More" scale, with just under one-quarter of respondents (24 percent) of the opinion that the county could do more in this area. Public health services ranked in the lower third of the "Total More" scale in the 2006 through 2012 survey years, assuming a seventh place ranking in 2014. In this year's survey, public health moved up one position in the rankings to a number six spot, with 18 percent of respondents reporting a belief that more could be done.

Of particular interest for this year's survey is the ranking held by, *"Maintaining county parks and recreational facilities"*, which placed 10th out of the 11 county activities and initiatives tested, with just five percent of the sample reporting the sentiment that "more" needed to be done. Residence near the bottom of the "Total More" scale is familiar territory for parks and recreation, however, and the current study's results should not be a cause for concern about the prospects of a millage renewal vote to be held in August. The relatively low "Total More" measurements traditionally posted by parks and recreation have never been juxtaposed with more than five percent of respondents reporting a belief that "Too Much" was being done in this realm. Moreover, with only two percent of respondents reporting being "Undecided" on the question (in contrast to the 35 percent in the question concerning placement of juvenile offenders), there is little doubt in voters' minds about the appropriate station for parks and recreation to occupy in the pantheon of county services.

Presented below is a comparison of the findings over the six surveys conducted to date:

	2016 SORTED MOST TO LEAST TOTAL "MORE NEEDED"	**Much More**	**TOTAL More**	**Enough**	**Too Much**	**Undec/ DK**
_36. #1	Providing mental health services	22%	***40%***	38%	2%	20%
	Ranking in 2014 -2	10%	***23%***	37%	3%	37%
	Ranking in 2012 - 5	7%	***20%***	50%	---	30%
	Ranking in 2010 - 8	7%	***22%***	50%	2%	26%
	Ranking in 2008 - 12	6%	***21%***	49%	2%	28%
	Ranking in 2006 - 8	7%	***21%***	41%	1%	37%
_40. #2	Keeping county residents informed about county programs and services	11%	***39%***	56%	1%	4%
	Ranking in 2014 - 1	10%	***40%***	54%	1%	5%
	Ranking in 2012 - 2	14%	***27%***	55%	2%	3%
	Ranking in 2010 - 2	12%	***41%***	54%	1%	4%
	Ranking in 2008 - 1	15%	***42%***	49%	---	9%
	Ranking in 2006 - 4	16%	***42%***	52%	---	6%
_35. #3	Providing substance abuse prevention and treatment services	7%	***24%***	44%	1%	31%
	Ranking in 2014 - 6	4%	***18%***	37%	4%	41%
	Ranking in 2012 - 6	5%	***19%***	49%	2%	30%
	Ranking in 2010 - 9	5%	***19%***	46%	5%	30%
	Ranking in 2008 - 11	6%	***22%***	46%	4%	28%
	[Not posed in 2006]					
_37. #4	Providing programs for juvenile offenders separate from adult prison programs	6%	***24%***	39%	2%	35%
	Ranking in 2014 - 3	5%	***21%***	31%	1%	47%
	Ranking in 2012 - 8	5%	***17%***	47%	1%	35%
	Ranking in 2010 - 7	5%	***23%***	41%	1%	35%
	Ranking in 2008 - 10	6%	***22%***	45%	2%	31%
	Ranking in 2006 - 7	8%	***22%***	37%	1%	40%

	2016 SORTED MOST TO LEAST TOTAL "MORE NEEDED" (cont.)	Much More	**TOTAL More**	Enough	Too Much	Undec/ DK
_39. #5	Working with local governments to best plan commercial and residential development so excessive growth and sprawl can be avoided	4%	***20%***	55%	2%	23%
	Ranking in 2014 - 5	4%	***20%***	55%	2%	23%
	Ranking in 2012 - 4	10%	***26%***	54%	3%	17%
	Ranking in 2010 - 5	5%	***29%***	49%	5%	17%
	Ranking in 2008 - 3	9%	***32%***	47%	3%	18%
	Ranking in 2006 - 3	18%	***42%***	39%	2%	16%
_33. #6	Providing public health services, such as immunizations and restaurant inspections	4%	***18%***	69%	2%	11%
	Ranking in 2014 - 7	3%	***13%***	70%	3%	14%
	Ranking in 2012 - 9	4%	***13%***	74%	1%	12%
	Ranking in 2010 - 10	4%	***16%***	67%	6%	11%
	Ranking in 2008 - 14	6%	***16%***	65%	2%	17%
	Ranking in 2006 - 13	4%	***15%***	70%	1%	14%
_34. #7	Providing effective economic development programs	3%	***17%***	56%	4%	23%
	Ranking in 2014 - 4	3%	***21%***	48%	3%	28%
	Ranking in 2012 - 1	14%	***41%***	46%	2%	11%
	Ranking in 2010 - 1	19%	***50%***	35%	3%	12%
	Ranking in 2008 - 2	14%	***42%***	35%	2%	21%
	Ranking in 2006 - 2	18%	***51%***	31%	2%	16%
_31. #8	Providing effective law enforcement services by the Sheriff's Department	1%	***10%***	85%	3%	2%
	Ranking in 2014 - 8	1%	***12%***	82%	4%	2%
	Ranking in 2012 - 10	3%	***13%***	83%	2%	2%
	Ranking in 2010 - 11	3%	***14%***	80%	3%	3%
	Ranking in 2008 - 6	8%	***25%***	66%	2%	7%
	Ranking in 2006 - 9	4%	***18%***	73%	3%	6%

	2016 SORTED MOST TO LEAST TOTAL "MORE NEEDED" (cont.)	Much More	**TOTAL More**	Enough	Too Much	Undec/ DK
_37. #9	Providing a quick emergency response to accidents	1%	***7%***	85%	1%	7%
	Ranking in 2014 - 11	---	***5%***	88%	---	7%
	Ranking in 2012 - 12	2%	***9%***	85%	1%	5%
	Ranking in 2010 - 14	2%	***9%***	85%	---	6%
	Ranking in 2008 - 9	7%	***22%***	64%	1%	13%
	Ranking in 2006 - 15	3%	***11%***	80%	---	9%
_41. #10	Maintaining County parks and recreational facilities	1%	***5%***	91%	2%	2%
	Ranking in 2014 - 9	1%	***8%***	87%	4%	1%
	Ranking in 2012 - 14	1%	***5%***	90%	4%	1%
	Ranking in 2010 - 13	2%	***11%***	83%	5%	1%
	Ranking in 2008 - 13	4%	***18%***	72%	4%	6%
	Ranking in 2006 - 10	4%	***18%***	76%	2%	4%
_32. #11	Safely operating the county jail, protecting the public, and avoiding prison overcrowding	1%	***5%***	69%	2%	24%
	Ranking in 2014 - 10	1%	***7%***	63%	3%	27%
	Ranking in 2012 - 13	3%	***7%***	70%	1%	22%
	Ranking in 2010 - 15	1%	***9%***	67%	3%	21%
	Ranking in 2008 - 15	4%	***16%***	61%	2%	21%
	Ranking in 2006 - 14	4%	***12%***	65%	2%	12%

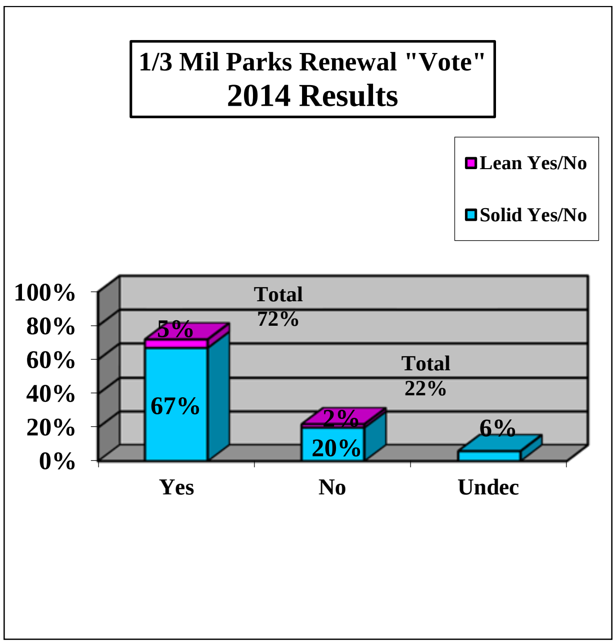
-- Support/Opposition to 1/3 mill Parks and Recreation renewal - (Q 42.)

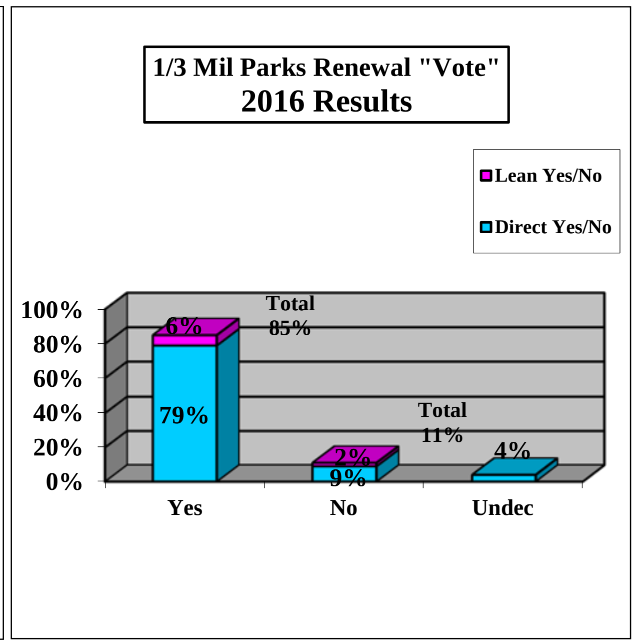
In the 2014 survey, a question was posed to respondents in the form of a hypothetical ballot question to renew an existing 1/3 mill assessment dedicated to Parks and Recreation. That hypothetical millage renewal question met with 72 percent total Yes "vote" – 67 percent of which was an immediate yes response and an added five percent who reported they would "lean" toward voting yes after initially offering an "undecided/don't know" response.

For 2016, respondents were informed that the Board of Commissioners has placed a proposal on the August 2016 ballot which will ask voters to decide on a 1/3 mill renewal of a dedicated millage for Parks and Recreation services that was first passed in 2006. They were informed that the levy costs $16 annually for owners of homestead property with a market value of $100,000 and, with that background knowledge, were asked if that ballot question were in front of them "today", would they vote yes to support the millage or no to oppose it. The results of this test show an overwhelming 85 percent majority Total Yes "vote" comprised of 79 percent "solid" yes and six percent "lean" yes.

It is noted that EPIC ▪ MRA was commissioned in 2015 by the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission to conduct a citizen satisfaction survey and part of that study included a similar question concerning the renewal of the 1/3 assessment. The "vote" results from that survey fall squarely between the 2014 and 2016 measurements taken on the same issue in the EPIC ▪ MRA studies conducted on behalf of the county commission.

The graphs below illustrate the outcomes of the respective parks and recreation millage renewal "votes" recorded in 2014 and 2016:





Subgroups "voting" No in opposition to the road millage in proportions greater than the norm of 11% included: ***Note: N=42***

23%	*Internet use – Seldom/Never*
22%	*Ottawa direction -- Undecided*
21%	*Region 5 voters*
	Local direction – Wrong track
	Taxes – Too high
19%	*Ottawa direction – Wrong track*
	Tope issue – Taxes
	H.S. or less
18%	*Top issue – Crime*
17%	*Local services – Negative*
16%	*Compare Ottawa – About the same*
	Ottawa financial mgt. – Negative
	Social media use – Seldom/Never
15%	*Region 4 voters*

-- Reasons for No "Vote" - (Q 43.)

As a follow-up to the "vote" on the parks millage renewal, respondents answering "NO" were asked why they responded as they did. For the 42 individuals qualified to have the question posed, *"Taxes too high"* (31 percent) and *"Have enough parks"* (15 percent) formed the plurality of responses with eight other reasons cited to make up the balance.

-- Where to Cut if Needed? - (Q 44.)

Following the ballot issue "vote", respondents were given the opportunity to name up to three areas or programs to cut if the Commission were faced with such a decision in order to balance the budget. In keeping with the results of the prior five surveys, "Parks and Recreation" topped the list but unlike every other survey through 2012, it was cited by fewer than ten percent of all responses offered in 2016 (7 percent) and 2014 (8 percent). The 2016 level of seven percent is in stark contrast to citation of this county program in many prior surveys which saw "Parks and Recreation" named by high as 49 percent in 2006. As noted, this seven percent level is the highest of the 30-some specific program/service areas respondents reported they would cut, if necessary, so obviously, no area received a consensus of opinion in double digits. Indeed, the highest percent – 63 percent – is found among "Undecided" respondents; matching the historically high figure recorded in 2014.

The long and the short of questions involving Parks and Recreation is that Ottawa County residents place a high value on the natural beauty of the area and they see the county parks system as being an integral part of being able to fully appreciate that asset. By the same token, as important as the parks are to them, voters recognize there are other critical services delivered by county government that necessarily compete with finite revenue and – in the grand scheme of things – believe the county is currently doing enough in the area of Parks and Recreation. In keeping with these sentiments, they are more than willing to sustain the current parks system by renewing a small millage assessment dedicated to that purpose.

-- Awareness of County Activities in general - (Q 45.)

In a question asked first posed in 2008 and repeated thereafter, respondents were asked to assess how aware they felt they were about county activities. With the 2008 results as a benchmark, the level of "Aware" jumps 12 point in the 2010 study and exhibits minor fluctuations through 2014. The latest 2016 results signal another spike in awareness of county activities with 69 percent reporting being at least somewhat aware of them; an increase of eight percentage points over the 2014 measurement. The following chart illustrates the progression over time:

2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	
6%	9%	9%	8%	7%	Very aware
48%	57%	54%	53%	62%	Somewhat aware
54%	***66%***	***63%***	***61%***	***69%***	***TOTAL AWARE***
42%	***34%***	***36%***	***38%***	***30%***	***TOTAL UNAWARE***
24%	25%	24%	24%	21%	Somewhat unaware
18%	9%	12%	14%	9%	Very unaware
6%	---	1%	1%	1%	Undecided/Refused

Subgroups reporting "Unaware" in proportions greater than the norm of 30% included:

*48%	Region 4 voters*
*45%	County services – Undecided*
County financial mgt. – Undecided
*44%	Vote in local elections – Seldom/Never*
*43%	Local direction – Wrong track*
Residence – 16-25 yrs.
Children at home – 3 or more
*42%	Taxes – Too high*
*41%	No college women*
*40%	County direction – Wrong track*
Post H.S.
*37%	Region 5 voters*
Top issue – Taxes
Top issue – Roads
Info source – E-mail
*36%	Vote in Aug.? – Somewhat certain*
Residence – 1-15 yrs.
Age 18-34
*35%	Under $25K hh income*

-- Information Sources - (Q 46-47.)

In the six surveys conducted 2006 through 2016, a question had been posed to respondents asking them to identify the sources whence they got most of their information about county government. Through the 2014 study, the results fairly consistently found a large plurality of respondents relied on print media as a source of information on county government, with electronic media and government sources accounting for the next largest slice and other miscellaneous sources along with social networks accounting for the balance of responses. In 2016, however, the results show far less mention of newspapers with notable increases in government sponsored mailings and the county website. The comparative chart below demonstrates the point:

__47A-C. Where would you say you get the <u>most</u> information about Ottawa County services, activities, and opportunities? ***[READ 1 TO 12 BELOW -- ROTATE 1 TO 11 --PROBE FOR UP TO <u>3</u> RESPONSES WITH*** *'Are there any others?'* ***UNTIL <u>3</u> RESPONSES OBTAINED OR UNPRODUCTIVE]***

2012	2014	2016	
47%	45%	25%	Newspapers
15%	16%	17%	Television news
9%	9%	12%	Mailed information-Newsletters
7%	5%	11%	The Ottawa County Website: www.miOttawa.org
5%	2%	8%	Radio news
0%	14%	8%	Word of Mouth
0%	2%	5%	Social networks (such as Facebook or Twitter)
0%	0%	4%	Brochures found in County Offices
0%	1%	4%	Emailed information

A likely explanation for the differences highlighted above is the 2016 survey introduced a new way to gather data about how residents obtain information about county government. In this revised approach, eleven different modes of communication are mentioned and respondents are asked if they had received information about Ottawa County services and activities via that particular means. This new "yes/no" question relating to eleven different communication methods appeared immediately before the *". . . where do you get the most information . . ."* question, and undoubtedly colored the responses illustrated in the 2016 column in the chart above..

By posing separate yes/no questions for each of the eleven types of communication modes, a somewhat different picture emerges. The chart below illustrates that over six-in-ten respondents report obtaining information about the county from newspapers as well as from mailed material, with three-in-ten obtaining such information from brochures found in county offices.

2016 ONLY:
Now I would like to describe to you some of the ways Ottawa County communicates with its citizens. For each, please tell me if you have received information about Ottawa County services, activities, and opportunities from each of the following sources within the past year?

Sorted by most to least cited communication form received		*Yes*	*No*	*Und/Ref*
_46H.	*Television news*	*64%*	*36%*	*0%*
_46B.	*Mailed information*	*63%*	*36%*	*1%*
_46F.	*Newspapers*	*62%*	*37%*	*1%*
_46G.	*Radio news*	*41%*	*58%*	*1%*
_46C.	*The Ottawa County Website: www.miOttawa.org*	*35%*	*65%*	*0%*
_46J.	*Brochures found in County Offices*	*31%*	*69%*	*0%*
_46I.	*Community Presentations*	*23%*	*76%*	*1%*
_46A.	*Emailed information*	*18%*	*82%*	*0%*
_46D.	*Social networks (such as Facebook or Twitter)*	*16%*	*84%*	*0%*
_46K.	*Board and Committee meetings*	*14%*	*86%*	*0%*
_46E.	*Text messages*	*5%*	*95%*	*0%*

46L. Somewhere else (please specify):

99%	*Nowhere else*
1%	*Word of Mouth*
0%	*Library*

"0%" = mentioned, but by less than 0.5%

Clearly, printed material remains an important medium for dissemination of information about the county. However, the chart also shows the highest percentage of respondents reporting having received information from TV news, with another significant percentage affirming that they had received information from radio news. These 2016 results regarding electronic media as a source of information are much more muted in prior surveys when the aggregate of all sources are compiled and then sorted into a frequency of responses. Thus, the addition of the yes/no battery undoubtedly accounts for the 2016 differences in the subsequent multiple response question about the source of "most" information displayed in the chart on the preceding page.

Also of note is the 35 percent of respondents indicating they had obtained information from the website maintained by the county. If mentioned as a source in the question allowing multiple answers, the relative paucity of it being mentioned resulted in "website" comprising only five percent of the aggregate of all responses in 2014 and 11 percent in 2016. Similarly, social media and email post higher response rates in the methodology introduced in 2016 than in the question in which multiple responses are recorded, but the relative position of these media continues to lag considerably behind more traditional modes of communication.

-- Preferences for receiving information - (Q 48.)

Having just been asked the means by which they receive information concerning county government, the respondents are asked to name up to three sources through which they would prefer to receive such information. This question was first posed in 2010 and almost without exception, there has been a consistent and significant decline in a reported preference for newspapers with a concomitant increase in the proportions reported for E-mail, Website and, curiously, information via traditional mail. Preference for social network sites has not seen an increase from the 2014 (7 percent) results which were more than double the 2012 measurement (3 percent) but still in single digits.

-- Use of social media sites – Facebook continues to dominate - (Q's 49, 50.)

The 2010 survey saw the introduction of a question asking respondents how often they visit social media websites. The question seeks to measure frequency of use of this communication medium with six separate levels of frequency of use – ranging from *"Every day"* to, *"Never"* – offered as possible responses. As a testament to the increased incorporation of this form of communication in the everyday lives of county residents, attention is drawn to the frequency of the *"Seldom/Never"* responses over time. As can be seen from the chart below, 2016 marks the first time fewer than 50 percent of respondents reported "seldom" or "never" using social media:

FREQUENCY OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE				
2010	2012	2014	2016	
18%	29%	35%	36%	Every day
6%	6%	5%	7%	Most days
6%	11%	7%	9%	A few times a week
1%	4%	3%	4%	Several times a month
8%	4%	7%	5%	Seldom
61%	46%	43%	39%	Or Never
---	---	---	---	Undecided/Refused

Subgroups reporting "Seldom/Never" in proportions greater than the norm of 44% included:

69% Age 65+
66% Renewal vote – No
63% Rate local services – Undecided

56%	*Men 50+*
53%	*Region 4 voters*
	Residency – 25+ yrs.
52%	*Vote in Aug.? – Somewhat certain*
	Top issue – Crime
	Children at home – None
49%	*Region 1 voters*
	Rate Co. services – Undecided
	Taxes – Too high
	Internet use – Few times month/year
	H.S. or less
	Women 50+
	No college men
48%	*Top issue – Taxes*
	Residency – Lifetime
	Under $25K hh income
47%	*Compare Ottawa – About the same*
	Info source – TV
	Citizens' Academy – No interest
	$50K - $75K hh income
	Men
46%	*Vote in local elections – Most of the time*
	Info source – Newspaper
45%	*Contact with Co. – No*
	County activities – Aware
	Info source – Mail

As a side note, Facebook remains the overwhelmingly dominant site reported as being used, although there is observed a slight increase in the use of Twitter and other social media platforms in the 2016 study.

-- Interest in attending a citizens academy – (Q 54.)

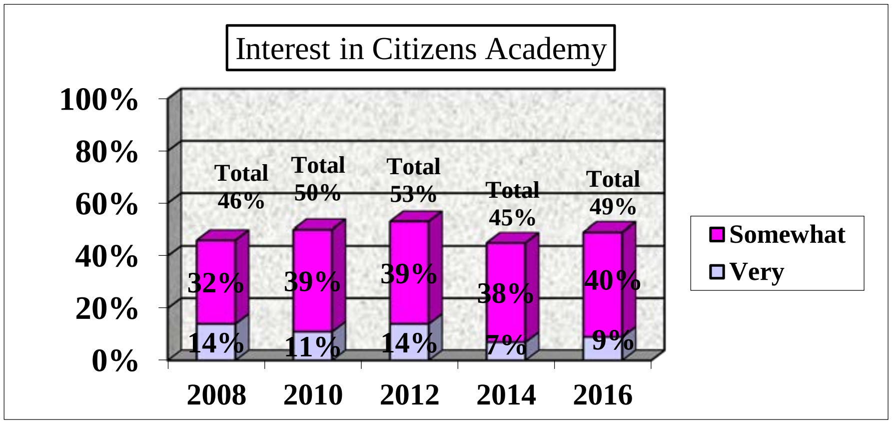
Beginning with the 2008 study, respondents were told that:

> *"Ottawa County is considering different ways to help inform citizens about its operations and activities. One way would be to hold a citizens academy, offering sessions that provide information about a specific area of county government, like property taxes and budgeting, the Sheriff's Department, and the court system."*

They were then asked:

> *"How interested would you be in learning about Ottawa County's government by attending these types of sessions?"*

From 2008 through 2012, interest held steadily from a bare plurality of 46 percent to 45 percent "Interested" vs. "Uninterested", to the 2012 results showing a stronger 53 percent level of interest. The 2014 results showed an eight point decrease in interest overall, with the "Very Interested" portion of the total dropping by half. The 2016 results do not reveal a significant change from prior years, showing only a mild four point uptick overall from 2014, half of which coming from the "very" interested portion of the overall "interested" measurement. The graph below illustrates the movement in overall interest in the academy over time, as well as in the intensity of such interest.



Subgroups reporting interest in the Citizens Academy in proportions greater than the norm of 49% included:

65%	*Website visitation – A lot*
62%	*County financial mgt. – Negative*
61%	*Local services – Negative*
	County services – Negative
60%	*Local direction – Wrong track*
59%	*Top issue – Taxes*
58%	*County direction – Wrong track*
	Use Co. website -- Yes
57%	*Contacted Co. – Yes*
56%	*Vote in Aug? – Somewhat certain*
55%	*Top issue – Roads*
	Use social media – Weely/Monthly
	Info source – Mail
	Info source – Website
54%	*Vote in local elections – All the time*
	Michigan direction – Wrong track
	Renewal vote – No

-- Frequency of Internet connection - (Q 52.)

For reasons not evident to the researcher, reported frequency of Internet use splits between 2010 and earlier and 2012 and later, with the former time period exhibiting a slightly higher percentage of respondents reporting they "seldom" or "never" log onto the Internet than respondents in the latter time frame. Obviously, there is a complimentary reverse exhibition of proportions reporting "Every day" or "Few times a week" use for the respective time periods. What has remained relatively constant over all surveys irrespective of year or set of years, is the subsets of respondents who report being less likely to log on to the Internet. The chart below illustrates the responses over time followed by a recitation of subsets less likely than the norm to report use of the Internet.

FREQUENCY OF INTERNET ACCESS						
2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	**2016**	
67%	70%	75%	81%	84%	80%	Every day
9%	9%	5%	5%	4%	6%	A few times a week
4%	3%	2%	3%	1%	3%	Once or twice a week
1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	A few times a month
---	---	---	---	---	%	A few times a year
1%	1%	---	1%	1%	1%	Seldom
14%	11%	14%	5%	7%	9%	Never
4%	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%	Doesn't have a computer *(volunteered)*
---	3%	1%	---	---	---	Undecided/Refused

Subgroups reporting "Seldom/Never" in proportions greater than the norm of 10% included:

31%	*Under $25K hh income*
27%	*Local services – Negative*
24%	*County direction – Wrong track*
	Age 65+
21%	*Renewal vote – No*
20%	*County services – Undecided*
18%	*H.S. or less*
	Women 50+
17%	*Local direction – Undecided*
	County financial mgt. – Negative
16%	*Local direction – Wrong track*
	Ottawa comparison – About the same
	Taxes – Too high
15%	*Info source – TV*

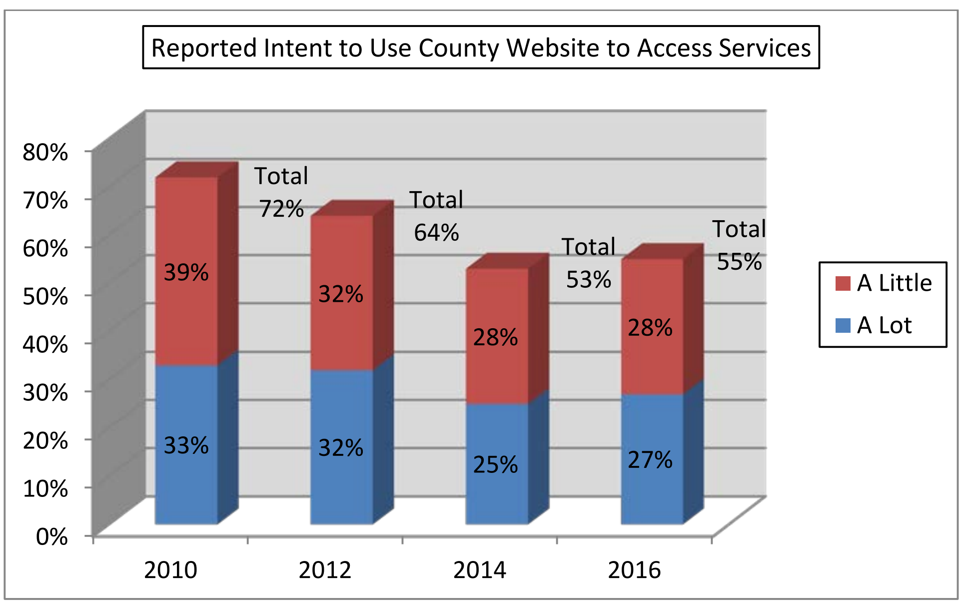
-- Ottawa County website visitors and assessment of site quality - (Q's 53, 54.)

Respondents who reported they connect to the Internet at all (N=361) were asked how often they visit the Ottawa County website. The percentage of those responding "Not at all" has remained almost identical over the past three studies. Among the usage options of, *"A lot"*, *"Some"* and *"Only a little"*, there is exhibited a similar nearly identical proportional result. For those who reported having visited the county website (N=165), their assessment of its quality dropped eight points from its 2012 record high of 83 percent to 75 percent in 2014, with the 2016 level landing in between at 78 percent Total Positive rating. Notably, the "excellent" portion of the total positive rating reached a new high of 21 percent – 13 points higher than its 2014 measurement.

-- Interest in accessing county services via the web - (Q 55.)

Respondents were asked if they would use the Ottawa County website more often if they could access county services by way of the Internet instead of making a trip to the county office complex. This question was first asked in 2010 and in that test only 18 percent of respondents offered an outright rejection of the notion. The 2012 survey saw a significant increase in the number rejecting the option of accessing county services via the county website – up to 31 percent, but the percentage reporting they would use the web site *"a lot more often"* if they could access county service remained virtually even with the 2010 figure, coming in at thirty-two percent. Perhaps reflective of increased media attention concerning identity theft through major retail outlets and the resulting caution instilled in people about on-line transactions, the 2014 results showed a fairly precipitous decline of 11 points in the proportion of respondents indicating any willingness to conduct county business via the Internet.

Apparently two intervening years has not served to greatly allay reticence to log on to the County website to conduct business, since the 2016 results show a only a statistically insignificant increase in an expressed willingness to do so – nowhere near the same level of pre-2014 exuberance. The graph below illustrates the results of this question over time:



-- Willingness to pay a fee for Internet access to county services – (Q 56.)

Well more than half of the 2014 respondents who reported they might be willing to transact county business via the Internet would be unwilling to pay a fee for such a service. At 57 percent in 2014, this majority is similar to that reported in 2012 who would be unwilling to pay a fee (55 percent), but still well below the 65 percent of 2008 respondents who expressed disinterest in such a fee. The 2016 survey finds a continuation of the trend toward disinterest in paying for the convenience, with 63 percent reporting "No" they would not be willing to pay a small fee to conduct county business on-line instead of driving to the administrative complex.

SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS

An 81 percent majority of survey respondents said they have called Ottawa County their home for more than 15 years or, *"All my life"* (up from 80 percent in 2014, and 75 percent in 2012.008, with 19 percent reporting a residency tenure of 15 years or fewer. As is typical of most areas in the state, just over two-thirds of respondents (67 percent) report having no school age children in their home.

The racial make-up of the respondent pool remains 94 percent Caucasian as it was in 2014, with one percent each reporting their race as African American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American and two percent not offering a response. As in the past, respondents report a fairly high level of formal education, with 32 percent attaining a bachelor's degree, 15 percent with a post-graduate degree and 21 percent with some form of post-high school education short of a four year diploma. The proportions are somewhat lower than reported in 2014, but well within the margin of error and in keeping with the same proportions reported in pre-2012 studies.

More than nine-in-ten respondents (92 percent) report being homeowners, with the balance reporting either leasing, renting or refusing to offer a response. Forty-five percent report a household income of $75,000 or less – including 8 percent at $25,000 or less. Although within the margin of error, respondents reporting a household income over $150,000 has been creeping up slowly, moving from five percent in 2012 to six percent in 2014 and logging at eight percent in the 2016 survey

As in all of its surveys of this nature, EPIC ▪ MRA attempts to stratify the male/female ratio in a manner that reflects conventional voter turnout based on gender. This produced a female/male ratio of 53-to-47percent.

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APPENDIX

REGION 1	REGION 2	REGION 3	REGION 4	REGION 5
Holland City	Georgetown Twp.	Ferrysburg City	Allendale Twp.	Chester Twp.
Holland Twp.	Hudsonville City	Grand Haven City	Blendon Twp.	Coopersville City
Park Twp.	Jamestown Twp.	Grand Haven Twp.	Olive Twp.	Crockery Twp.
Zeeland City		Spring Lake Twp.		Polkton Twp.
Zeeland Twp.				Tallmadge Twp.
				Wright Twp.