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# Special Report #7

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## Neighborhood Problems and Quality of Life Spring 2005

A survey conducted in collaboration with



**June 2005**

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## Introduction and Background

This Special Report discusses findings of an eTownPanel online survey -- conducted in collaboration with Citizens for NYC -- about neighborhood problems and quality of neighborhood life. Citizens for NYC is a nonprofit organization that stimulates and supports self-help and civic action to improve the quality of life in New York City neighborhoods. This survey replicates two previous surveys completed in 2004 (see eTownPanel Special Report #1 and Special Report #4). As before, the survey focuses on identifying the most important problems facing people in their neighborhoods, and the findings are used by Citizens for NYC to fund neighborhood groups in the city to address these problems.

**Methodological Note.** The survey was conducted in April and May 2005, and included responses from 610 New York City residents and neighborhood leaders. The results are based on an online panel of volunteers, combined with Citizens for NYC members, and not a random sample. Strictly speaking, therefore, the results are not statistically projectable to a larger population. However, the results are weighted by gender, race, and age (using US Census information) to better reflect the population of New York City. More detailed information on methodology is presented at the end of this report.

## Findings

This section presents rankings of various neighborhood problems, trends in key problems over time, and perceived change in neighborhood problems. It also includes results from a new question that asked people what they like about their neighborhoods.

### Neighborhood problems

As **Figure 1** shows, the top neighborhood problems for respondents citywide are potholes, litter or garbage, street noise, dangerous intersections, traffic congestion, drugs or drug dealing, and vandalism or graffiti. The means on a 7-point scale (from 1=no problem to 7=very big problem) are at most just above 4.0, the midpoint of the scale.

The top problems vary by borough. In the Bronx, drugs or drug dealing, vandalism, and environmental health problems top the list of most important problems. In Brooklyn, the top problems are litter or garbage, potholes, and drugs or drug dealing. In Manhattan, street noise, litter or garbage, and soot or air pollution top the list. In Queens, the top problems are potholes, too much growth or overbuilding, and illegal conversions or lack of code enforcement. And in Staten Island, potholes, traffic congestion, and dangerous intersections top the list.

## Neighborhood problem trends over time

Results from previous surveys enable us to examine the shifting trends of neighborhood problems over time. **Figure 2** shows, the change in the severity of neighborhood problems in New York City beginning with spring 2004 results, proceeding through fall 2004, and concluding with spring 2005 results. These results show the problems of litter and drugs are declining, while the problem of potholes appears to be increasing over time.

## Are problems getting better or worse?

The survey asked respondents if the neighborhood problems listed above were, in general, getting better or worse over the last few years. As **Figure 3** shows, New York City residents and neighborhood leaders see neighborhood problems as staying the same or getting better, rather than getting worse.

## What people like about their neighborhoods

The survey asked a new question about what features people like about their neighborhoods. As **Figure 4** shows, New York City residents and neighborhood leaders are mostly likely to mention proximity of public transportation as a well-liked feature of their neighborhood, followed by shopping convenience and, interestingly, the diversity of the neighborhood's population.

## Methodology

The survey was conducted from April 5 through May 30, 2005, and included responses from 610 New York City residents and neighborhood leaders. Many of the respondents are part of the eTownPanel project and were recruited using the Internet and other sources to participate in online research, including web directory listings, Google ads, Craigslist postings, and announcements sent via email to membership lists of various nonprofit organizations in New York City that have partnered with eTownPanel over the years. Citizens for NYC also sent a special survey invitation to their membership list of local neighborhood leaders. It is important to point out that the respondents are not a random sample, and thus the results are not scientifically projectable to the larger population. However, results are weighted by gender, race, and age to more closely reflect the general demographic profile of New York City. The weights were constructed using simple post-stratification methods.<sup>1</sup>

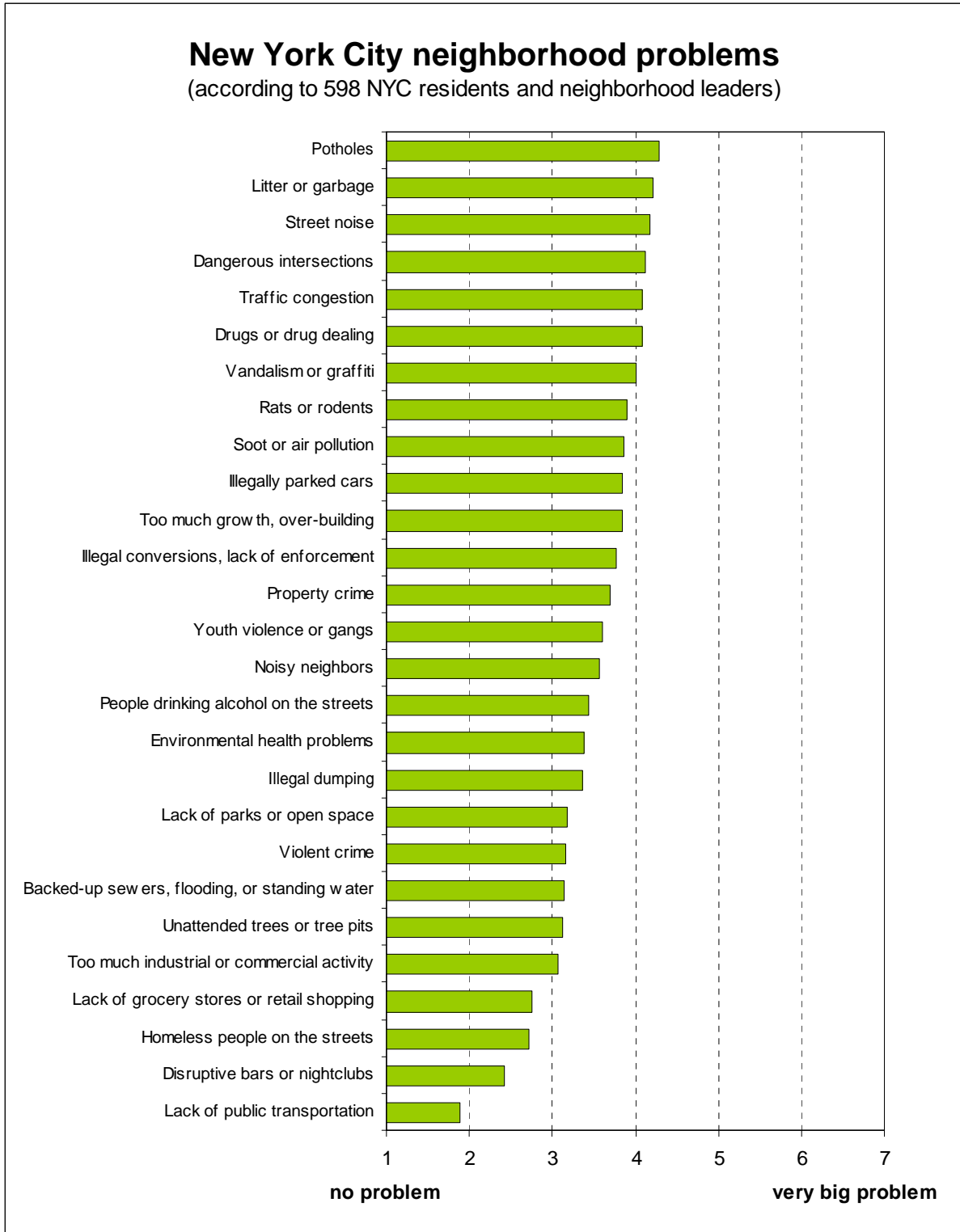
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<sup>1</sup> The weighting procedure involved two steps. First, weights were constructed to bring the sample into geographic balance based on the population of Census regions. This geographic weight was then applied to the data, and new weights were calculated to align the sample to the Census in terms of gender, race, and age. Income was not used as a weighting variable because of missing data and because of the difficulties comparing income across surveys.

**About eTownPanel.** eTownPanel is a university-based, nonprofit project that aims to expand the potential of the Internet as a tool for measuring the quality of life in communities across the US and for providing citizen-driven feedback on the performance of local governments. eTownPanel also serves as a cost-effective research tool for local nonprofit organizations and government agencies that seek to understand what citizens think about important local issues. The project currently focuses on New York City but will soon include additional cities and towns from across the US.

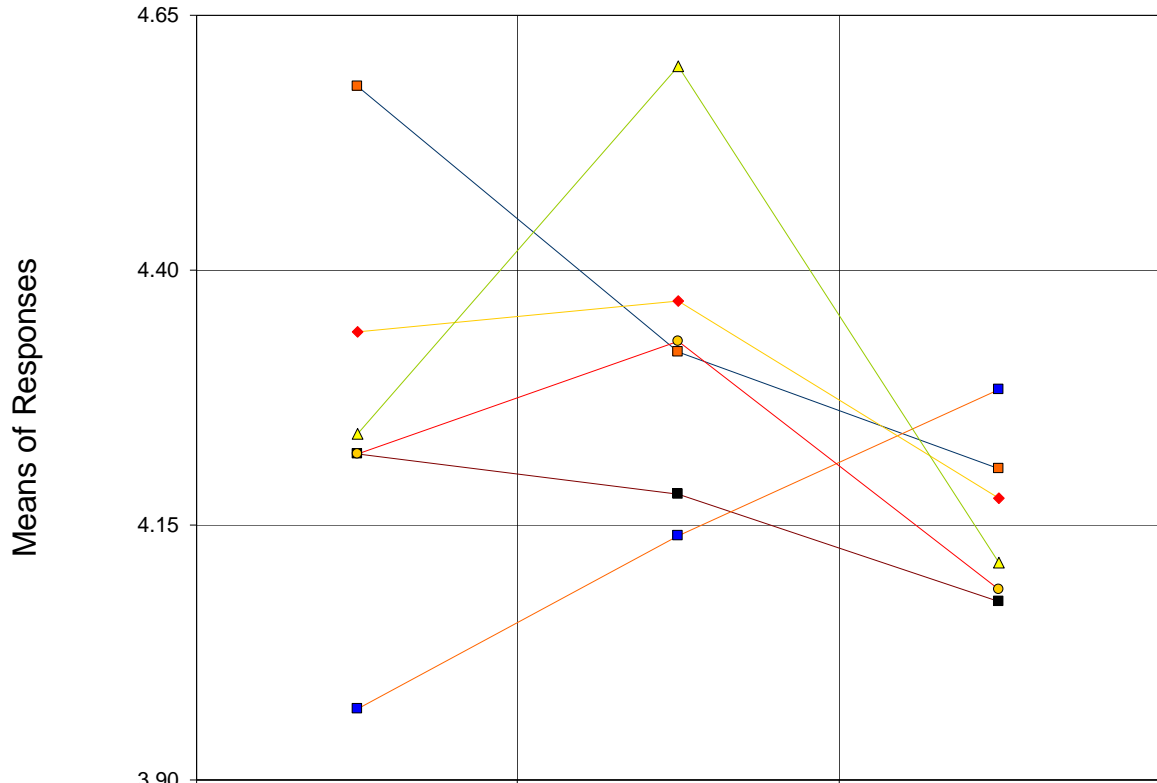
For more information visit [www.ETownPanel.com](http://www.ETownPanel.com) or email [info@ETownPanel.com](mailto:info@ETownPanel.com)

**FIGURE 1**



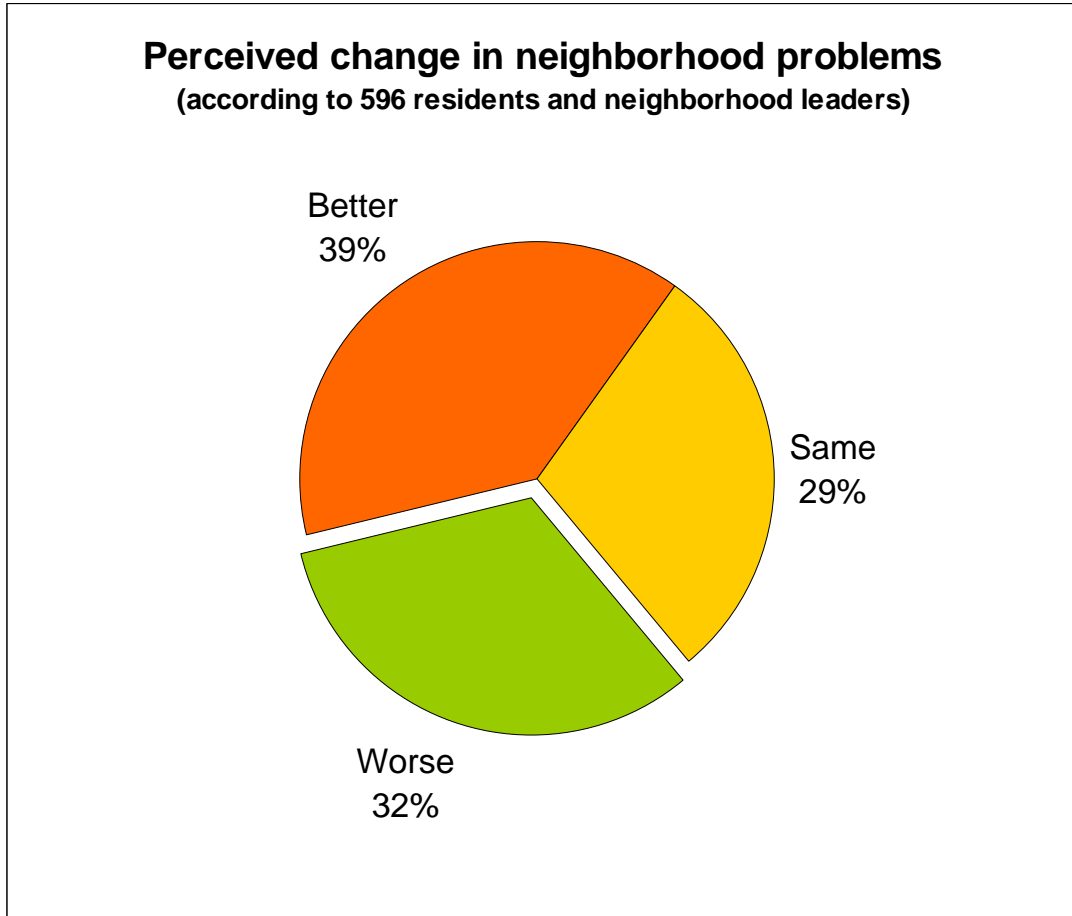
**FIGURE 2**

**Trends in key neighborhood problem ratings**



	Spring 04	Fall 04	Spring 05
■ Drugs or drug dealing	4.22	4.18	4.07
■ Litter or garbage	4.58	4.32	4.20
■ Potholes	3.97	4.14	4.28
◆ Street noise	4.34	4.37	4.18
○ Traffic congestion	4.22	4.33	4.09
△ Dangerous intersections	4.24	4.60	4.11

**FIGURE 3**



**FIGURE 4**

