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Special Report # 11

Neighborhood Problems and Quality of Life Spring 2006

A survey conducted in collaboration with



June 2006

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. This survey replicates three previous surveys completed in 2004 and 2005 (see eTownPanel Special Report #1, Special Report #4 and Special Report #7).¹

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.

Methodological Note. The survey was conducted in May and June 2006, and included responses from 612 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 question that asked people what they like about their neighborhoods.

Neighborhood problems

As **Figure 1** shows, the top neighborhood problems for respondents are street noise, litter or garbage, lack of organized activities for youth, lack of parking, soot or air pollution, potholes, traffic congestion, rats or rodents and drugs and drug dealing. 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.

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, spring 2005 and concluding with spring 2006 results. These results show the problems of dangerous intersections and potholes are declining, while street noise, litter or garbage, traffic congestion and drug dealing, which were declining in previous years, now appear to be increasing over time.

¹ Available at www.ETownPanel.com/SpecialReports.htm

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, this year 47% of our respondents reported that they perceived change in neighborhood problems to be getting “better”. This is a notable increase from last year when only 39% of respondents reported that neighborhood problems were getting better. Similar to last years results, **Figure 3** also shows that 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 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 to public transportation as a well-liked feature of their neighborhood. (This is also the top answer given in the spring 2005 survey.) That is followed by the diversity of the neighborhood’s population, close proximity to parks or playgrounds, and convenience for shopping.

We plan to conduct this survey again in 2007.

Methodology

The survey was conducted from May 15 through June 16, 2006, and included responses from 612 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.²

² 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 United States 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 across the US.

For more information visit www.ETownPanel.com or email info@ETownPanel.com

FIGURE 1

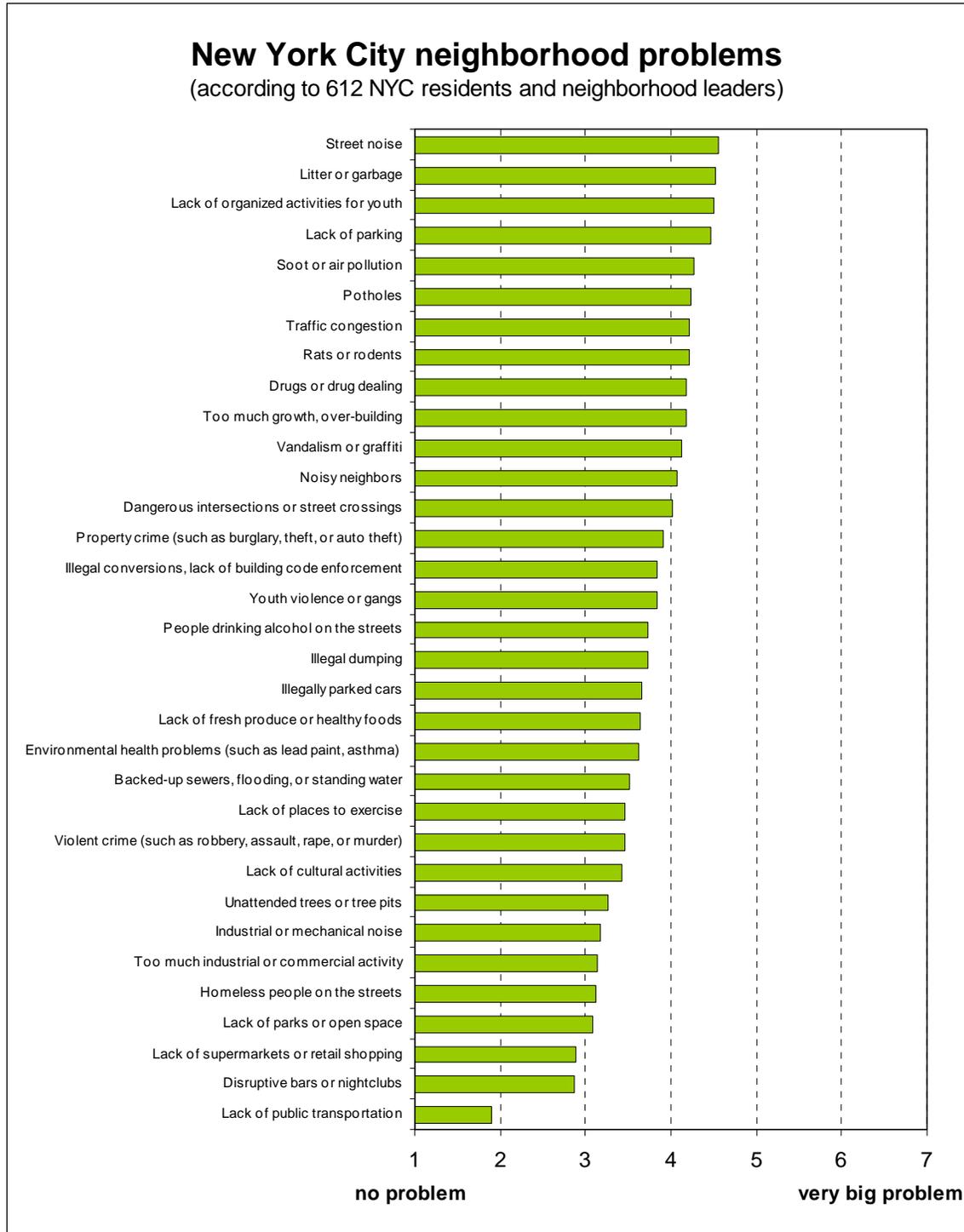


FIGURE 2

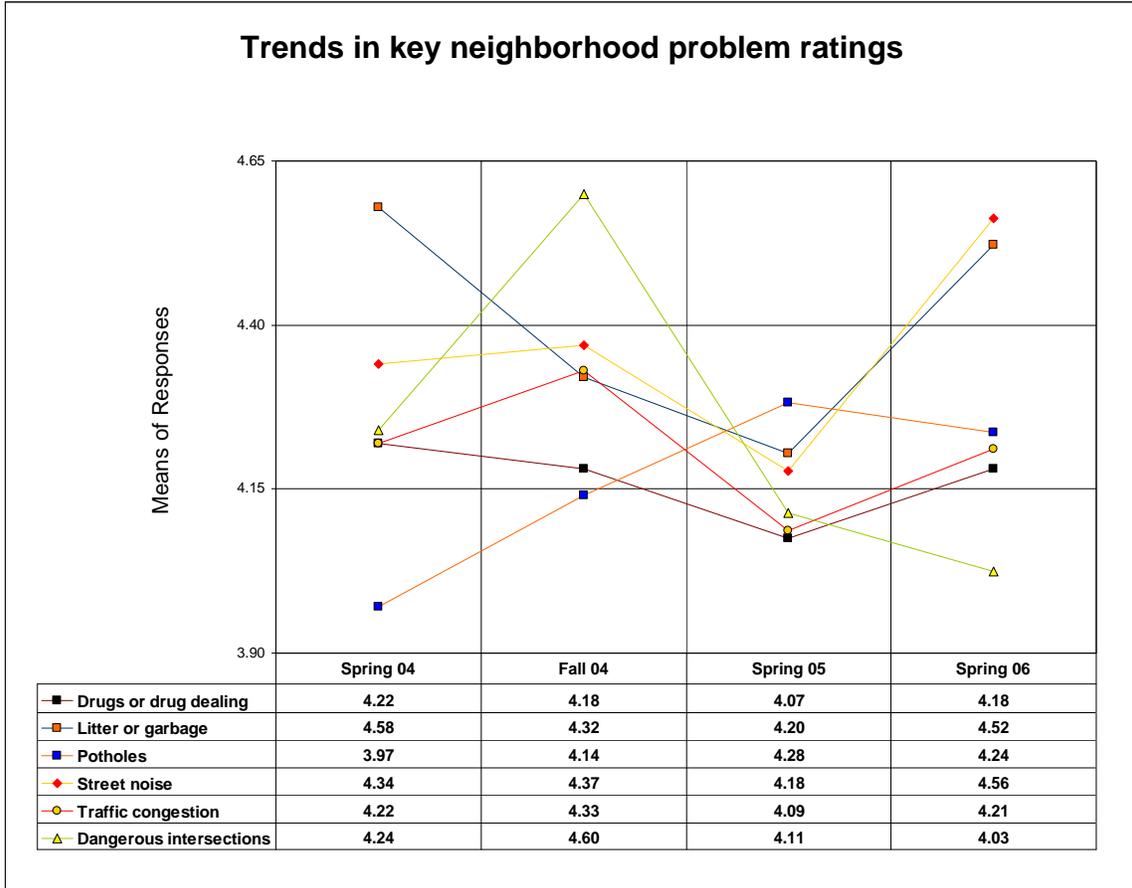


FIGURE 3

Perceived change in neighborhood problems
(according to 598 residents and neighborhood leaders)

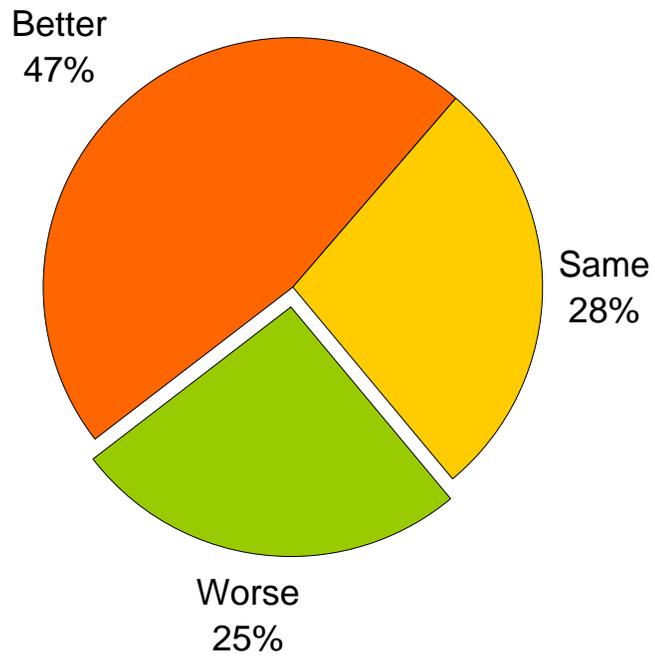
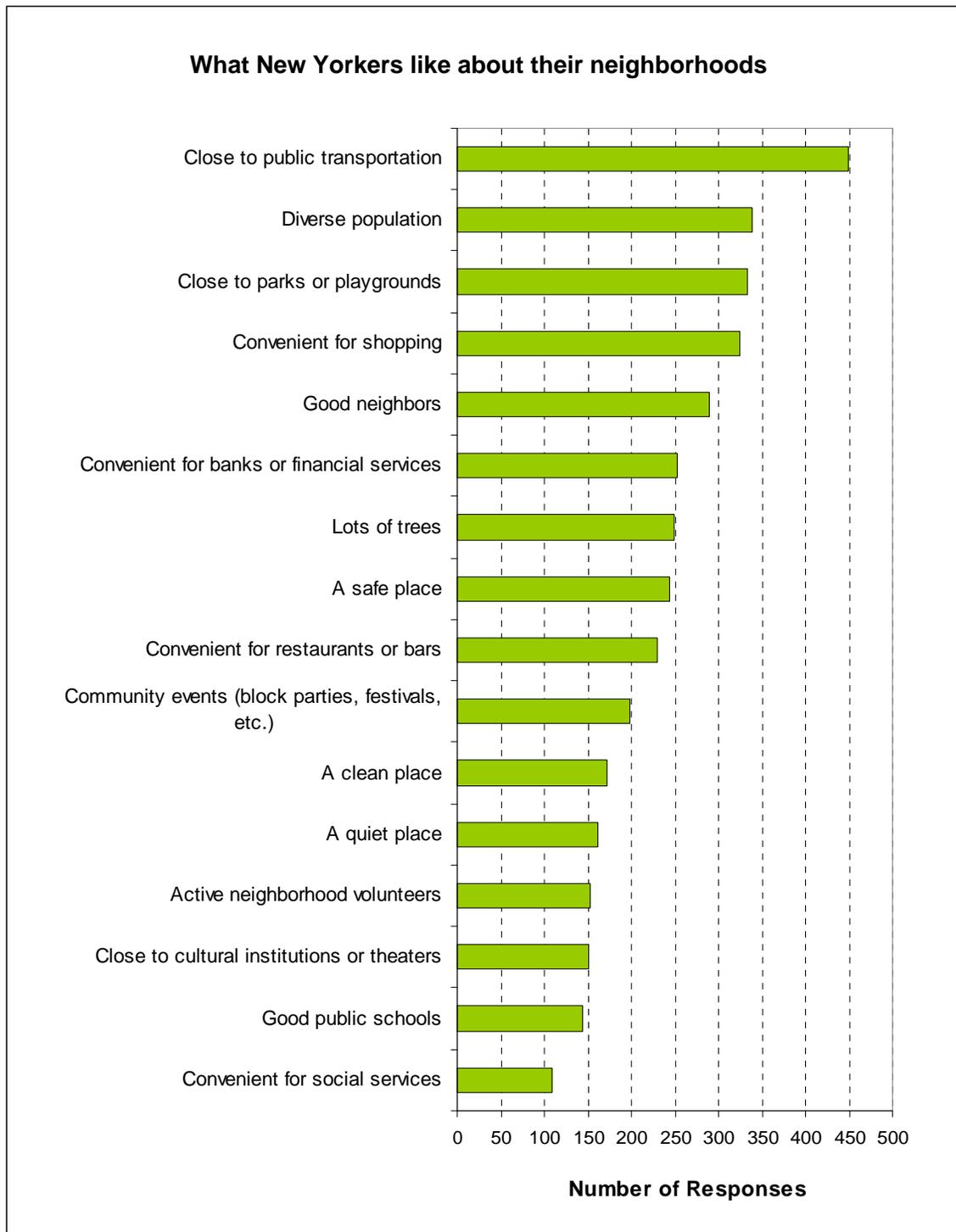


FIGURE 4





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