

# **2018 Town Government Survey Report**

December 10, 2018

Jon Harris  
Budget and Purchasing Director  
Concord Finance Department  
[jharris@concordma.gov](mailto:jharris@concordma.gov)  
978-318-3039

# Table of Contents

## Sections

Methodology .....	2
Town Services .....	4
Household Finances .....	5
Communication .....	6
Priority Issues .....	8
Beede Center .....	9
Environmental / Conservation Issues .....	12
Minuteman Media Network.....	14
Finance Department .....	16
Department of Planning and Land Management .....	18
Department of Public Works .....	20
Water Division .....	22
Sewer Division .....	23
Solid Waste Division .....	24
Light Plant (including Telecommunications) .....	25
Police Department .....	26
Fire Department .....	26
Library .....,.,,.....	27
Senior Services (Council on Aging) .....	29
Recreation Department .....	30

# 2018 Town Government Survey

## Report

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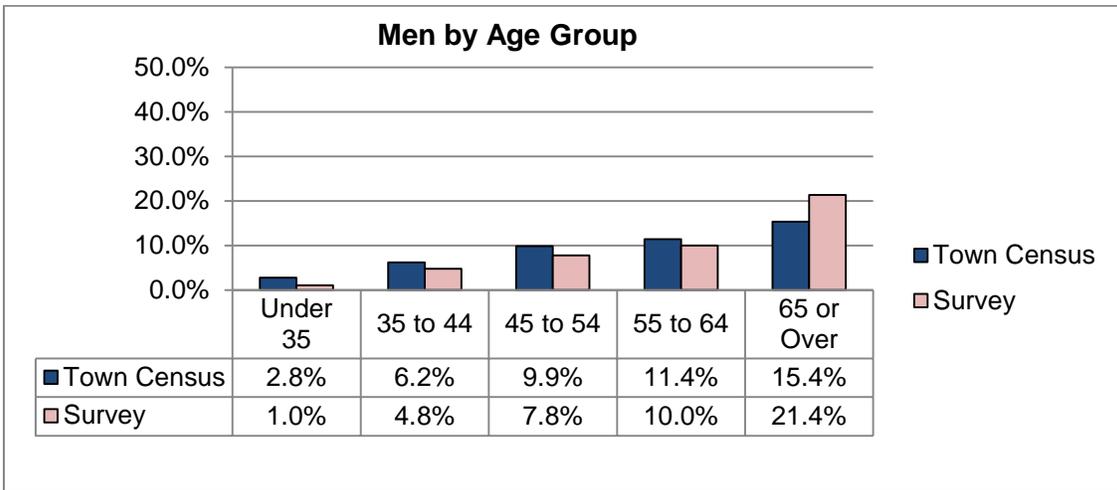
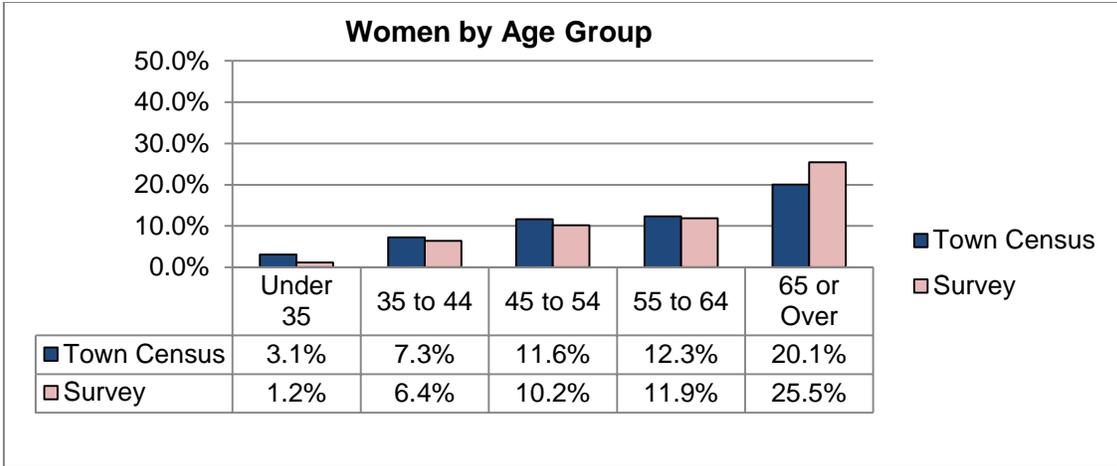
During the period from September 20, 2018 to October 12, 2018, the Town with the assistance from Pacific Market Research conducted a survey of Concord residents. For the surveys in years 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2012, the method used for sampling residents' opinions was a telephone poll: randomly selected Concord residents were called on their land-line telephones and guided through the process over the phone. Depending on the year, the total sample size was between 300 and 375 residents. Since residents were selected randomly, this sample could be generalized to the population as a whole within a certain margin of error. However, with the rapid increase of the use of cellular phones as the main household phone, this method no longer accurately captures the opinions of all Concord residents in a statistically meaningful way.

Accordingly, as was done in 2014 and 2016, the Town has changed its method of sampling residents' opinions. With the new methodology, the Town mailed out a paper questionnaire to all 7,066 residences in Concord and requested that one respondent per residence complete the survey in one of three ways:

1. By visiting a website and taking the survey online,
2. By completing the paper questionnaire and delivering it to the Town House, or
3. By calling a toll-free number and taking the survey over the phone.

Of the 7,066 mailed out, a total of 1,254 completed surveys were received. That is, over 17% of Concord households took the time to answer the 43-question survey. The majority of residents (76.1% or 954 responses) used the online method of response. Other residents (22.8% or 286 responses) filled out the paper questionnaire and delivered it to the Town House. A much smaller group (1.1% or 14 responses) phoned the call center.

The demographic distribution of the survey sample differs slightly from that of the true Concord population. On the graphs on the next page are the percentages of cohorts grouped by gender and age as measured by the 2018 Town Census and as self-identified in this survey. As a note, in the Town Census, the cohort identified as Under 35 represents the number of residents between the ages of 27 and 34 in order to exclude dependents from this category.



There may be several reasons for the differences in percentages between the true population and the survey sample. Younger residents with families may not have the discretionary time to take a 43-question survey. In a household, older family members may be more inclined to take the survey than the younger ones. In addition, older residents may have lived in Concord for a longer time, may be more invested in how the Town government functions, and may be more willing to take the time to complete the survey.

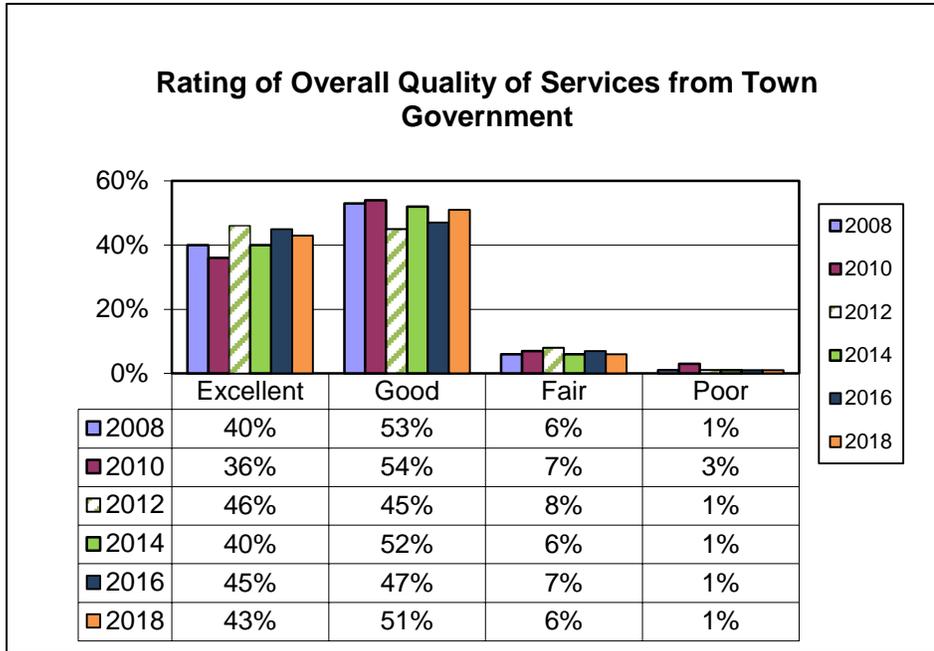
The method used to equalize these demographic groups is to weight the responses of each cohort by a specific factor. For example, the cohort of women between the ages of 45 and 54 represents 11.6% of the population but is 10.2% in the survey sample. Accordingly, a response from a woman between ages 45 and 54 would be increased by a factor of 1.14. The analysis below represents the weighted results.

With this methodology, the overall 2018 survey results of a sample of 1,254 completed questionnaires are accurate 95% of the time within a confidence interval of +/- 2.767%. The margin of error is larger for sub-groups within the sample.

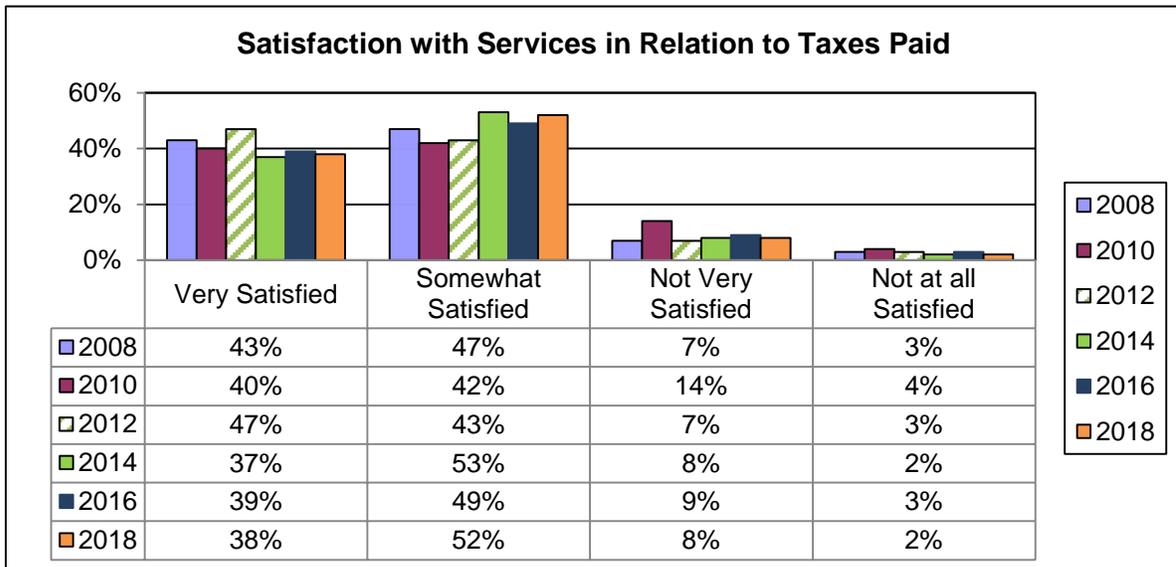
**Town Services**

The baseline question that was asked in the 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018 surveys is: “How would you rate the overall quality of services provided by the Concord Town Government?”

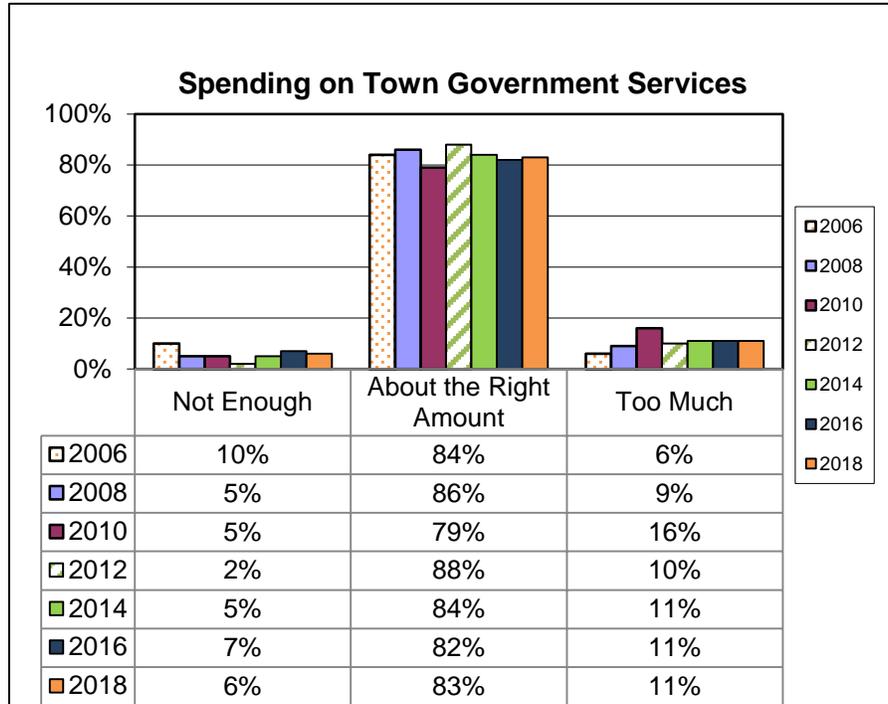
There is a slight trend in responses from those residents who feel that Town services are “good” as opposed to “excellent”, while the “fair” and “poor” response has remained constant. With the 2018 survey, 94% of respondents think that Town services are “excellent” or “good”.



When asked: “In relation to the property taxes you pay, how satisfied are you with the overall quality of Town Services?”, 90% of respondents feel “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied”.



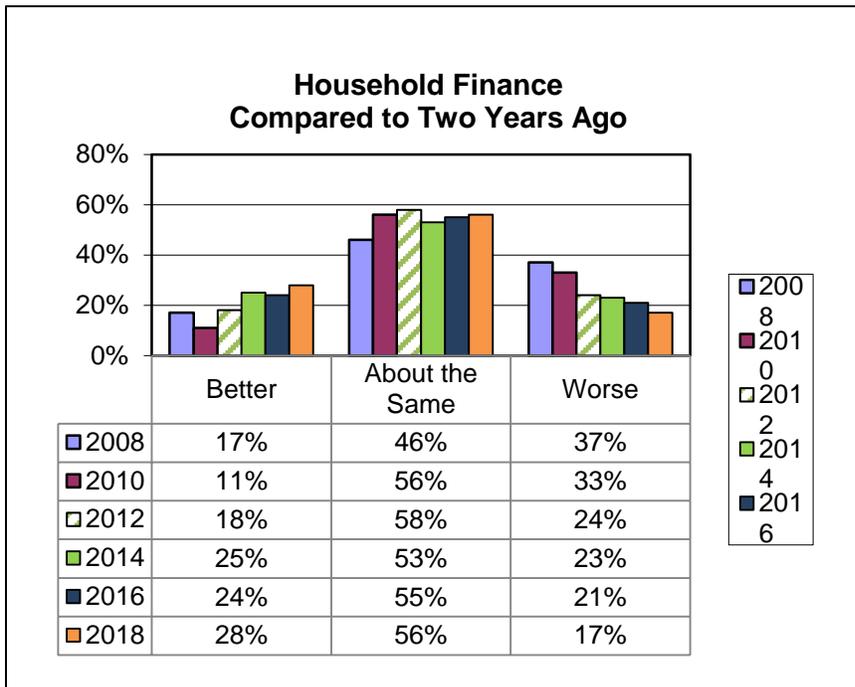
There continues to be a general consensus that the Town spends about the right amount of money on Town government services. For the last seven surveys, the “about the right amount” response has tracked between 79% and 88%. The low point was in 2010 as the effects of the recession were being felt by Concord residents. In 2018, 83% of respondents feel that the Town spends about the right amount on Town governmental services.



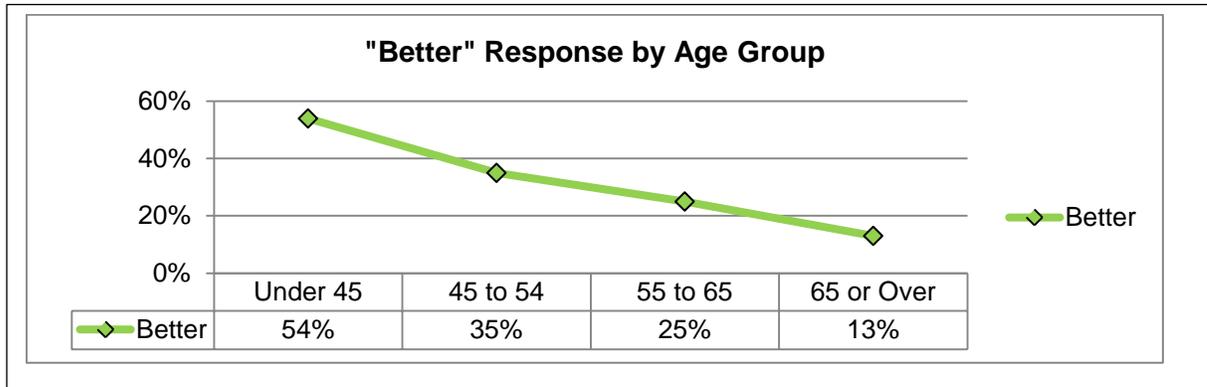
**Household Finances**

It is useful for the Town to have a fuller understanding of how Concord residents are faring economically, so as to better know how to provide Town services.

As for their own economic situation, more residents are feeling better about their personal finances. With the beginning of the recession in the fall of 2008 and continuing through the fall of 2010, Concord residents have been greatly affected by the national economy. The attitude associated with the improvement in the economy is reflected in the response to the question: “In terms of your household finances, would you say that you are doing better than you were two years ago, worse, or about the same.” In 2018, 28% of respondents feel that they are doing “better” financially.

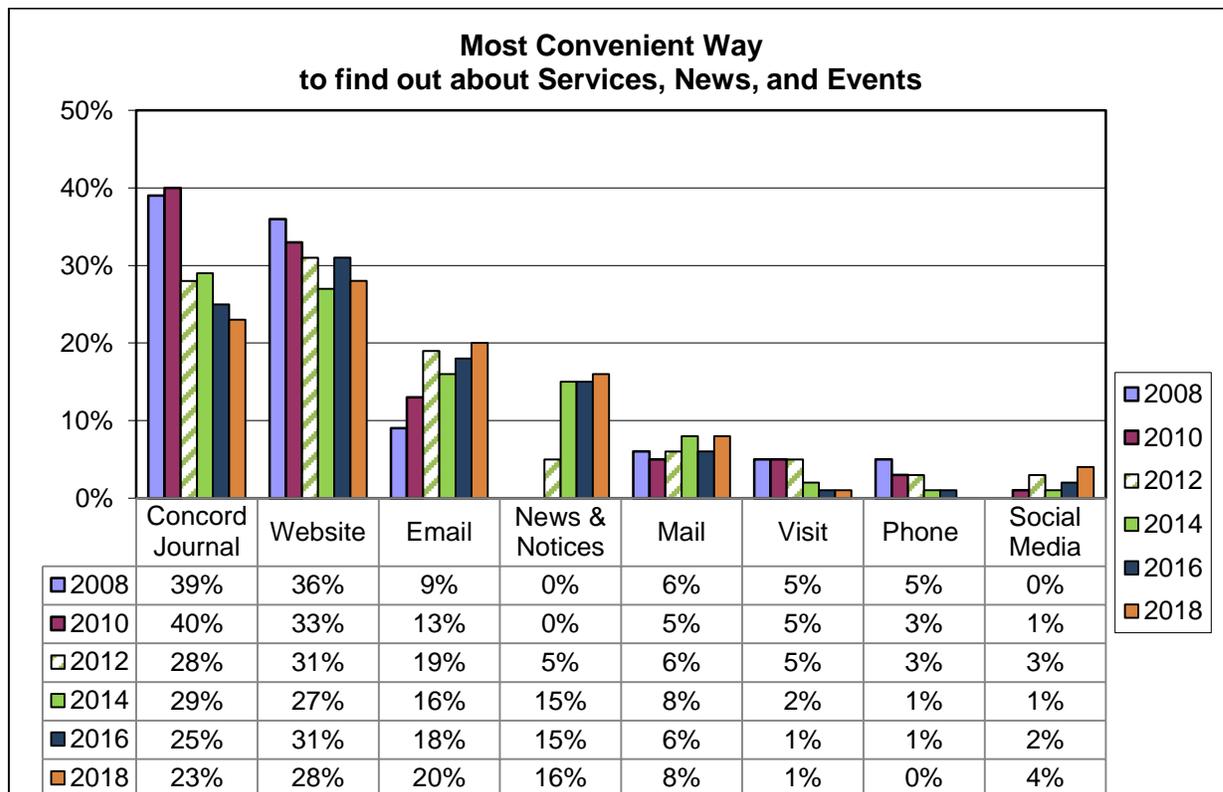


The 2018 survey results also show that there is a trend in terms of age group as to whether respondents feel like they are doing “better” than they were two years ago. Younger respondents are more likely to feel “better” about how they are doing.

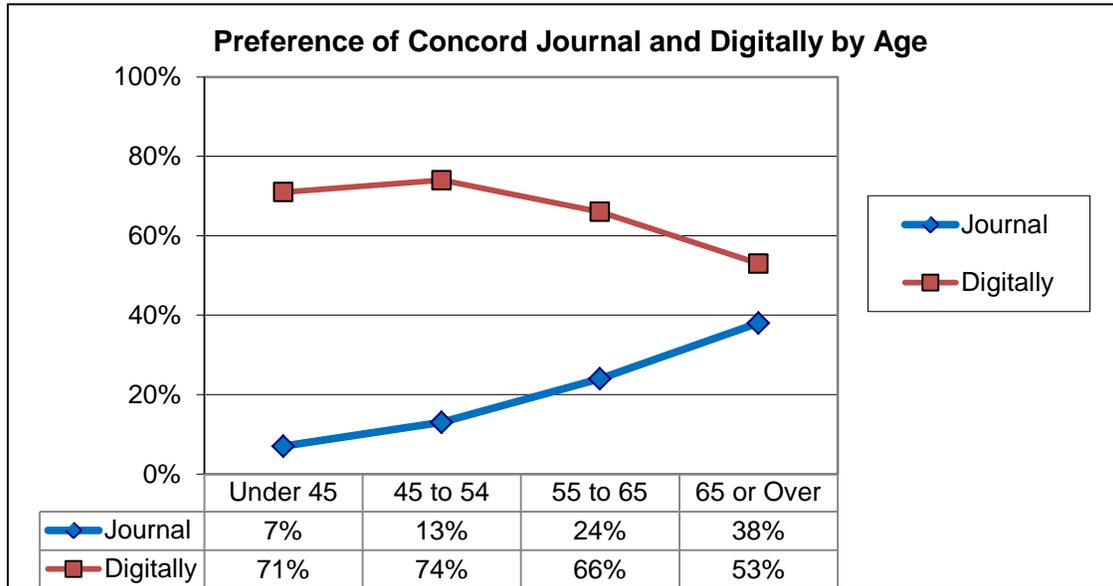


**Communication**

The survey asked Concord residents their opinion on a variety of issues. Since communication with the public is very important for the Town, the following question was asked: “What would be the most convenient way for you to find out about Town services, news, and events?” Most respondents look to the “Concord Journal” or “Town website”.

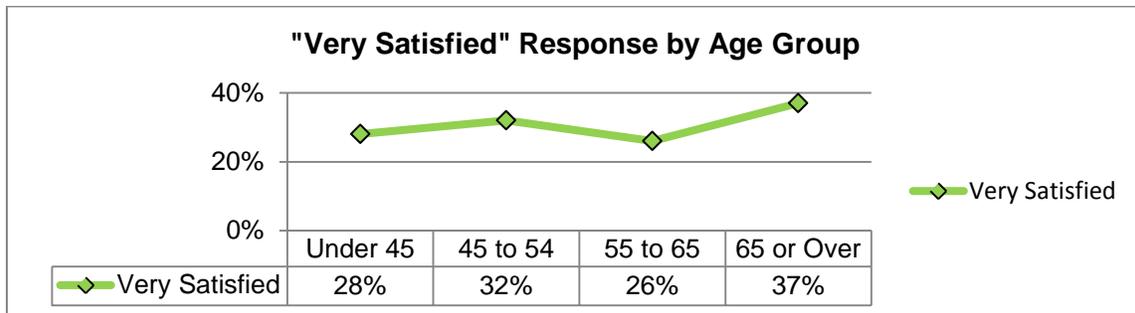


As could be expected, there is movement toward purely digital media as a means of receiving information from and about the Town, although it should be noted that the Concord Journal does have an online presence. In 2018, if the categories of Town website, email, and emailed News & Notices are combined, a total of 64% of respondents prefer to receive their information through the use of a computer, tablet or smart phone directly from the Town.



In the graph above, the trend in preference for receiving Town information is correlated by age. The two lines show this preference as determined by a resident's age as to whether he/she prefers finding out about Town news from the Concord Journal or by digital means.

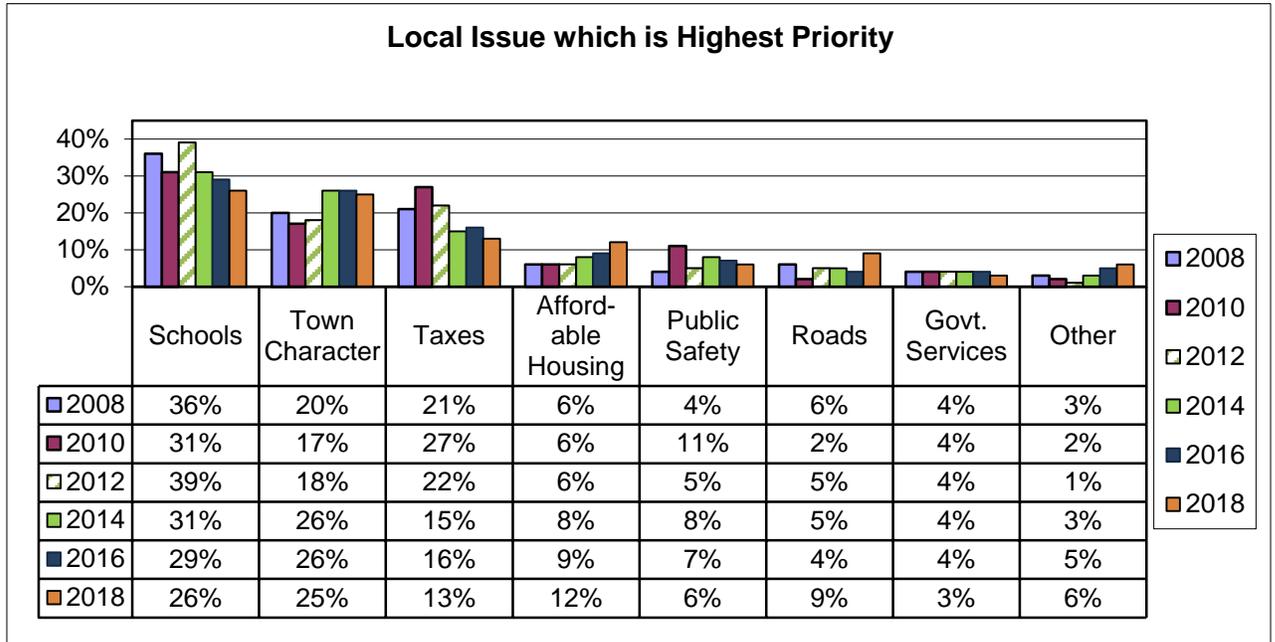
In terms of satisfaction with the way residents receive information from the Town, respondents are generally satisfied: 32% are "very satisfied", 56% "somewhat satisfied", 12% "not very satisfied", and 10% "not at all satisfied". When broken down by age, respondents in the category age 65 or over are more satisfied with the way they receive information from the Town than those in the younger age categories.



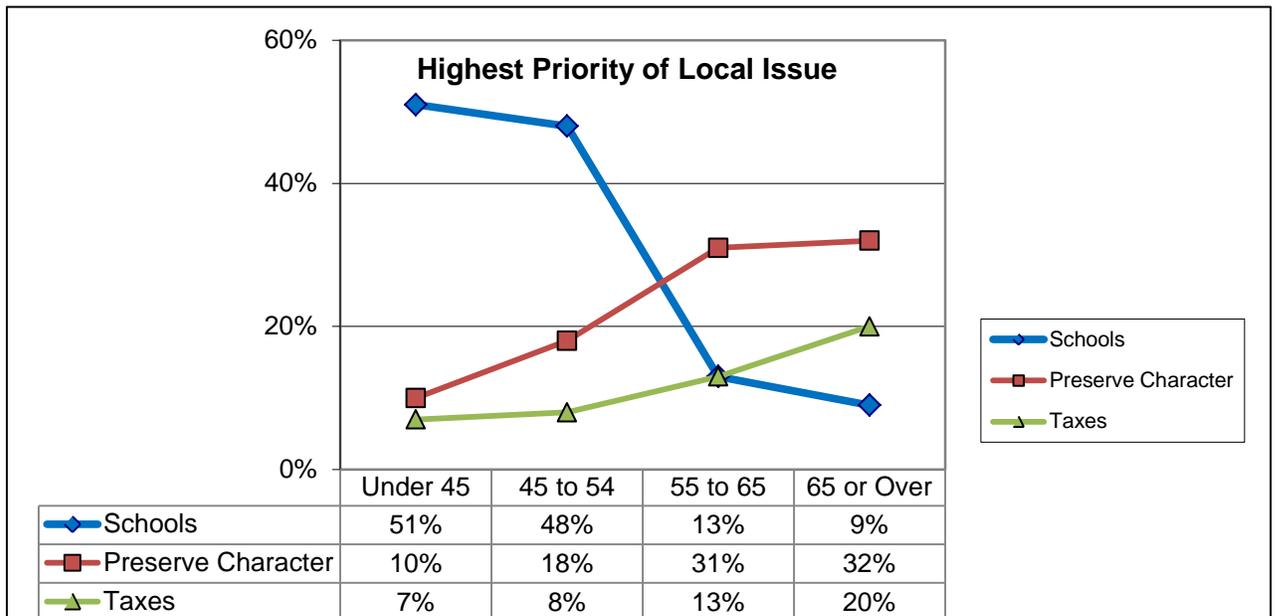
It should be noted that 16% of those respondents under age 45 are "not at all satisfied" with the way Town information is received and 9% of this age group is now using social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, to get their information.

**Priority Issues**

Concord residents continue to place the schools as their highest priority local issue. When asked “What local issue would you say is the highest priority for you?”, 26% of residents said “schools”, 25% “town character”, and 13% “taxes”. Since the 2012 survey, there has been an uptick by respondents identifying “town character” as their highest priority. Three percent or respondents wrote in “environment/conservation issues”.

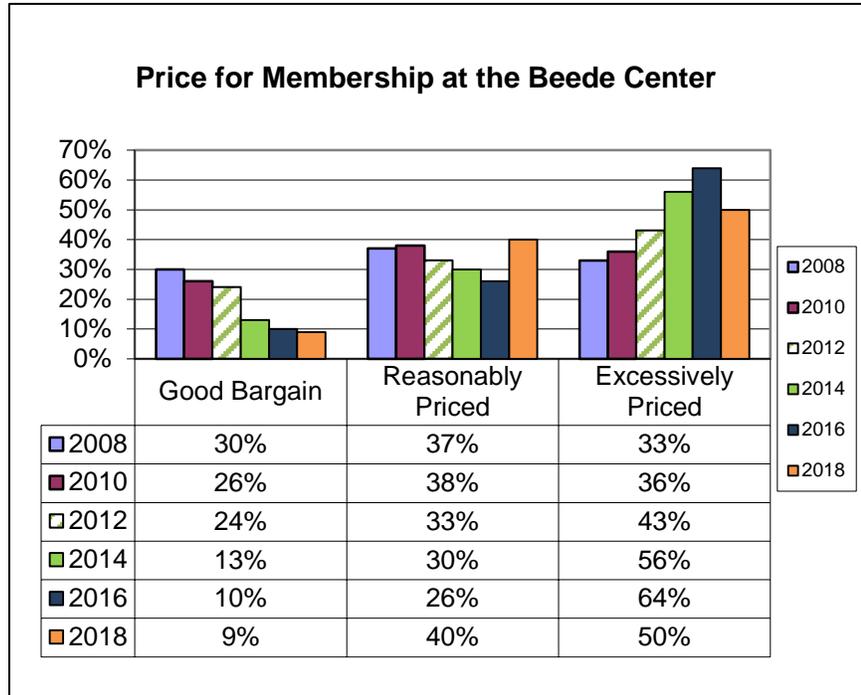


As could be expected, younger respondents place “schools” as a priority. With older respondents, “preservation of Town’s character” and “taxes” are more important.



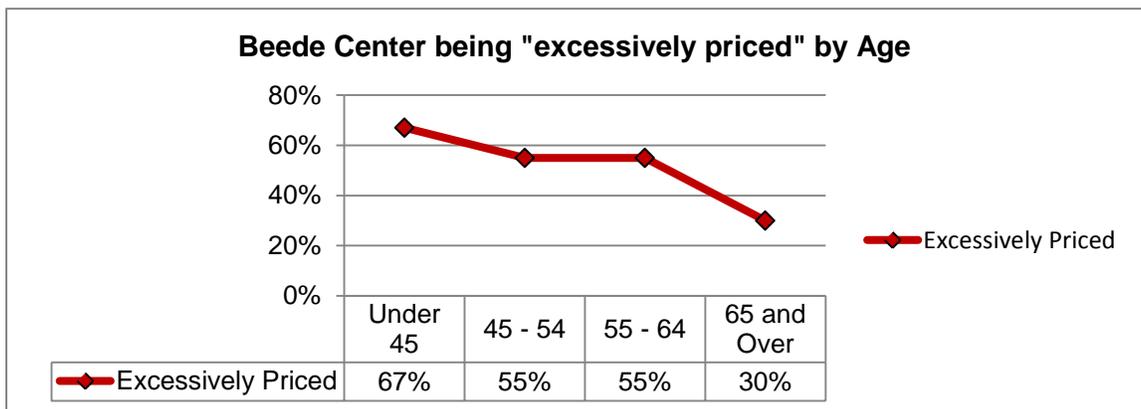
**Beede Center**

In this year’s survey, there are three questions about the Beede Swim and Fitness Center. The first question is related membership pricing: “Please tell me whether you consider the price to be a Good Bargain, Reasonably Priced, or Excessively Priced?” In 2018, there is a reversal in the trend that the Beede Center had been perceived to be increasingly more “excessively priced” from survey to survey.



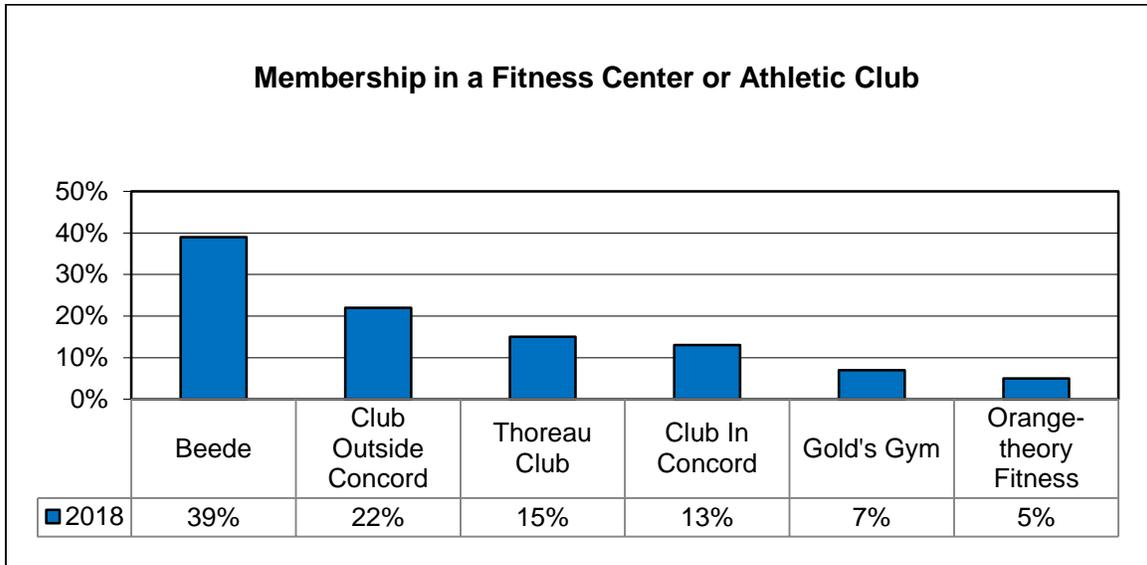
The moderation is shown in a comparison for 2016 and 2018 results. When the question was asked to just families with children, 72% selected “excessively priced” in 2016 as compared to 59% in 2018. Similarly, 55% of those with no children in the household chose “excessively priced” in 2016 as compared to 43% in 2018.

In the 2018 survey, there are fewer older respondents who feel that the Beede Center is “excessively priced”.

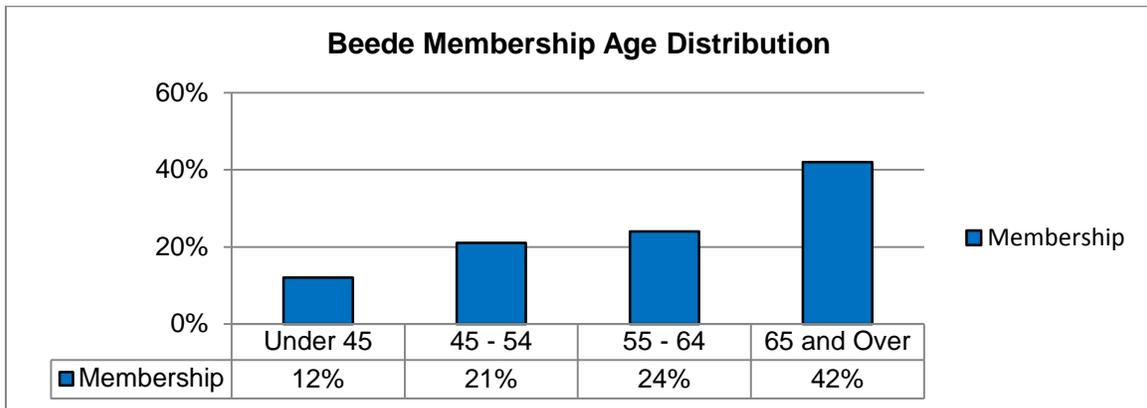


Out of 1,254 residents polled, 529 said they did not use Beede and another 100 did not express an opinion about the pricing for membership at the Beede Center. A total of 625 respondents expressed an opinion.

A new question that was asked is “If you go to a fitness center or athletic club, please tell us which one?” The total sample size of respondents identifying that they belong to a fitness center or athletic club is 699.

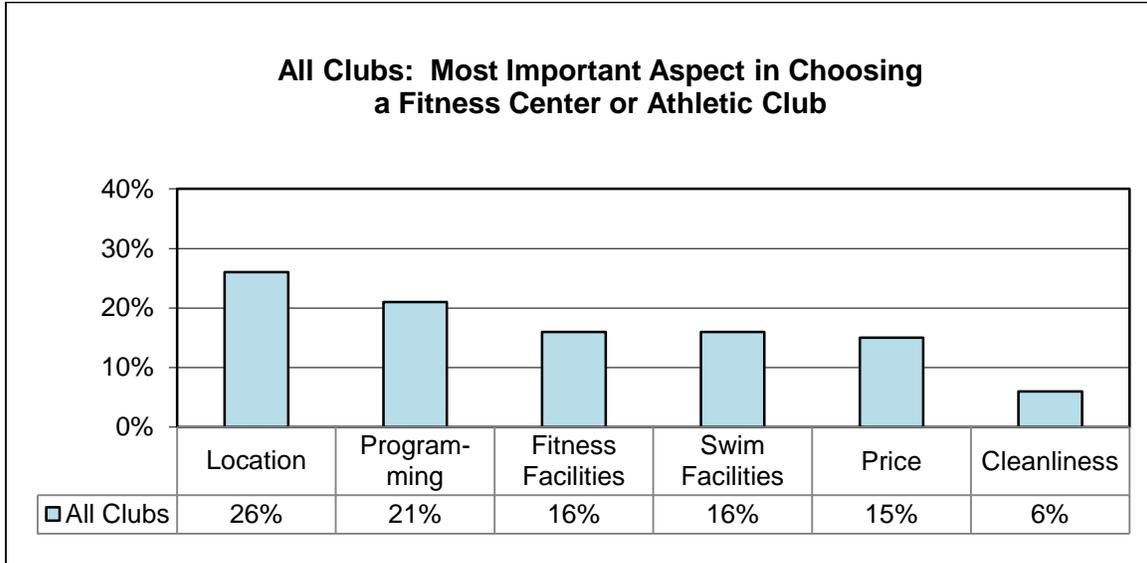


For the 269 respondents who said they are members at the Beede Center, here is the age distribution.

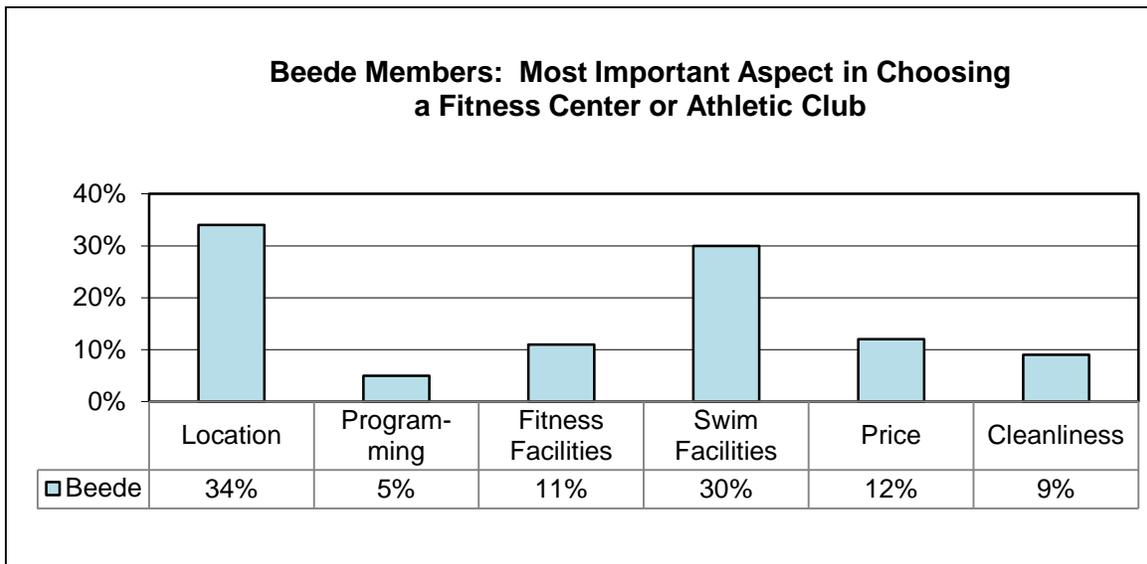


It should be noted that number of memberships is different from number of members. The Beede Center offers individual, couples, or family memberships. Accordingly, there would be more members in a family membership than in an individual or in a couples membership. As a result, the percent membership by age will be lower than percent of members by age, especially for younger age groups.

The third question that was asked as filtered to those respondents who identify as belonging to a fitness center or athletic club, “What is the most important aspect for you in choosing a fitness center or athletic club?” The total sample for this filtered question is 699.



This question is further refined to just the respondents who identify as Beede members. The number of respondents who are Beede members is 269.



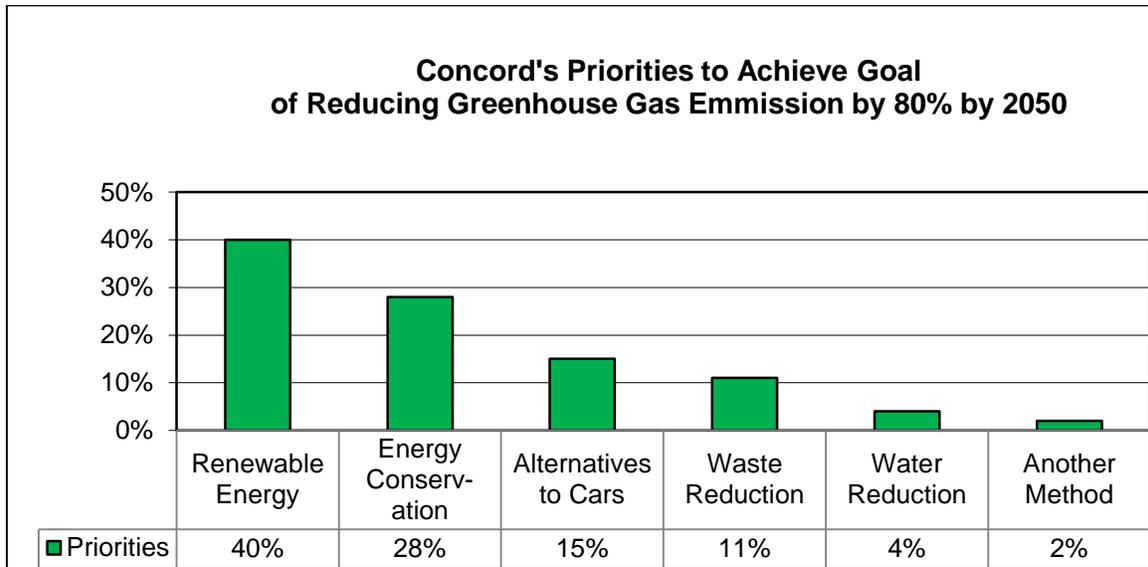
**Environmental / Conservation Issues**

Several questions were asked related to environmental and conservation issues. One question was: “The Town has a goal of reducing community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 to mitigate the effects of climate change. How do you think Concord should best prioritize the effort to achieve this goal?”

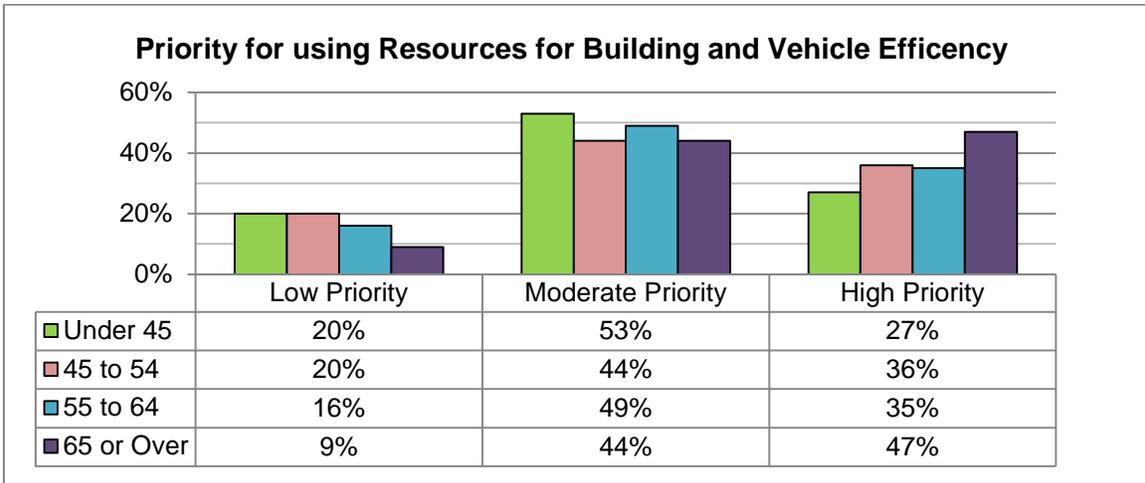
Possible responses are:

- a. Promote renewable energy initiatives, such as the use of solar power, by both the Light Plant and residences / businesses,
- b. Promote energy conservation measures by encouraging efforts such as upgrading insulation and installing energy-efficient lighting in buildings and purchasing electric and fuel-efficient vehicles,
- c. Promote alternatives to the use of gasoline-powered cars through efforts such as designating bike lanes on Town roads, providing electric vehicle charging stations, and encouraging public transportation,
- d. Promote waste reduction through recycling, reuse, and composting of goods,
- e. Promote the reduction of indoor and outdoor water consumption to alleviate pressure on the water supply and reduce energy needs for pumping and treatment, and
- f. Promote another method of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The results of the question are show below.

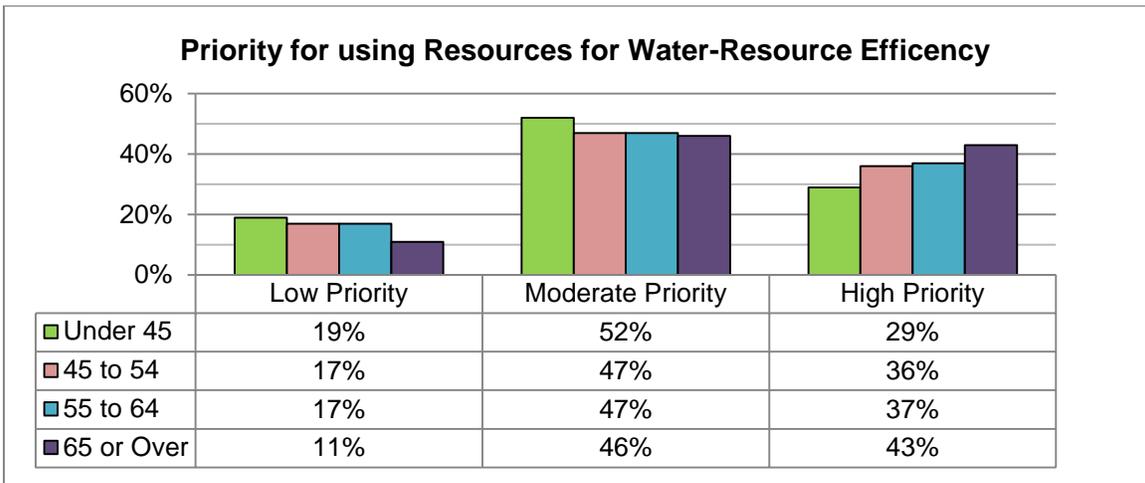


Another conservation question that was asked is, “For the Town Government, how much of a priority for you is it that the Town uses its financial resources to make its buildings and vehicles more energy efficient?”



In aggregate, 38% of respondents feel that it is a high priority, 47% a moderate priority, and 15% a low priority.

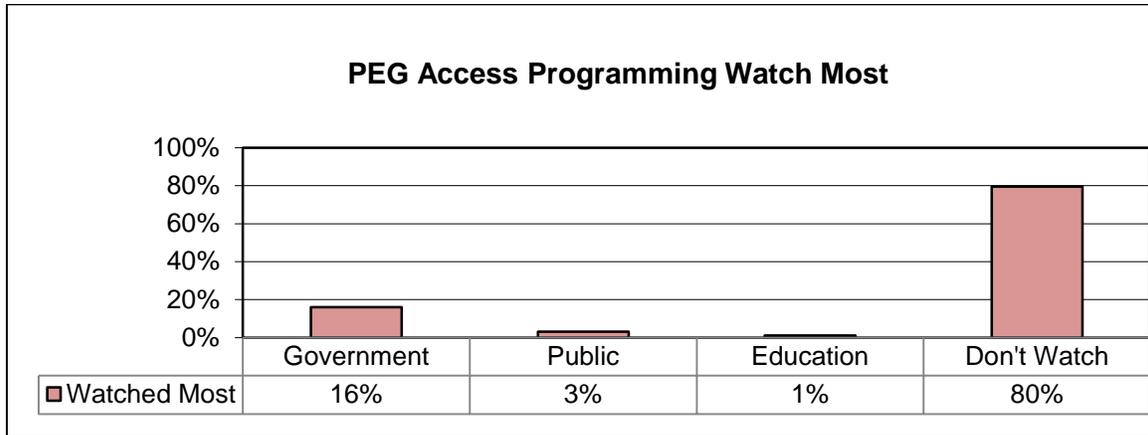
A similar question was asked about water-resource efficiency: “For the Town Government, how much of a priority for you is it that the Town uses its financial resources to make its buildings and landscapes more water-resource efficient?”



In aggregate, 37% of respondents feel that it is a high priority, 47% a moderate priority, and 16% a low priority.

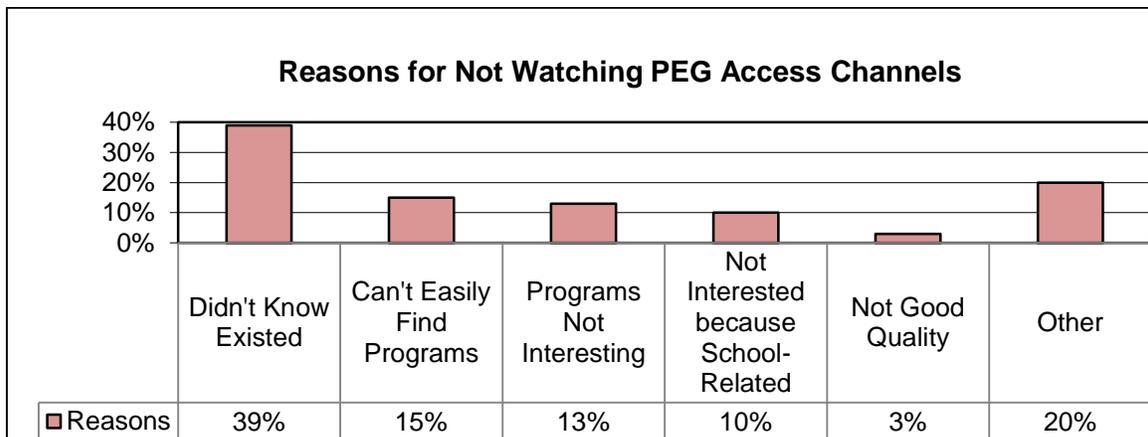
**Minuteman Media Network**

The Town has recently assumed responsibility for the operations of the PEG Access Channels, formerly known as Concord-Carlisle Television (CCTV) and now known as Minuteman Media Network (MMN). MMN broadcasts on three channels with the following categories of programming: government, public, and education. In the 2018 survey, two questions were asked about MMN. The first question is “If you watch PEG Access channels, which PEG programming do you watch most?”

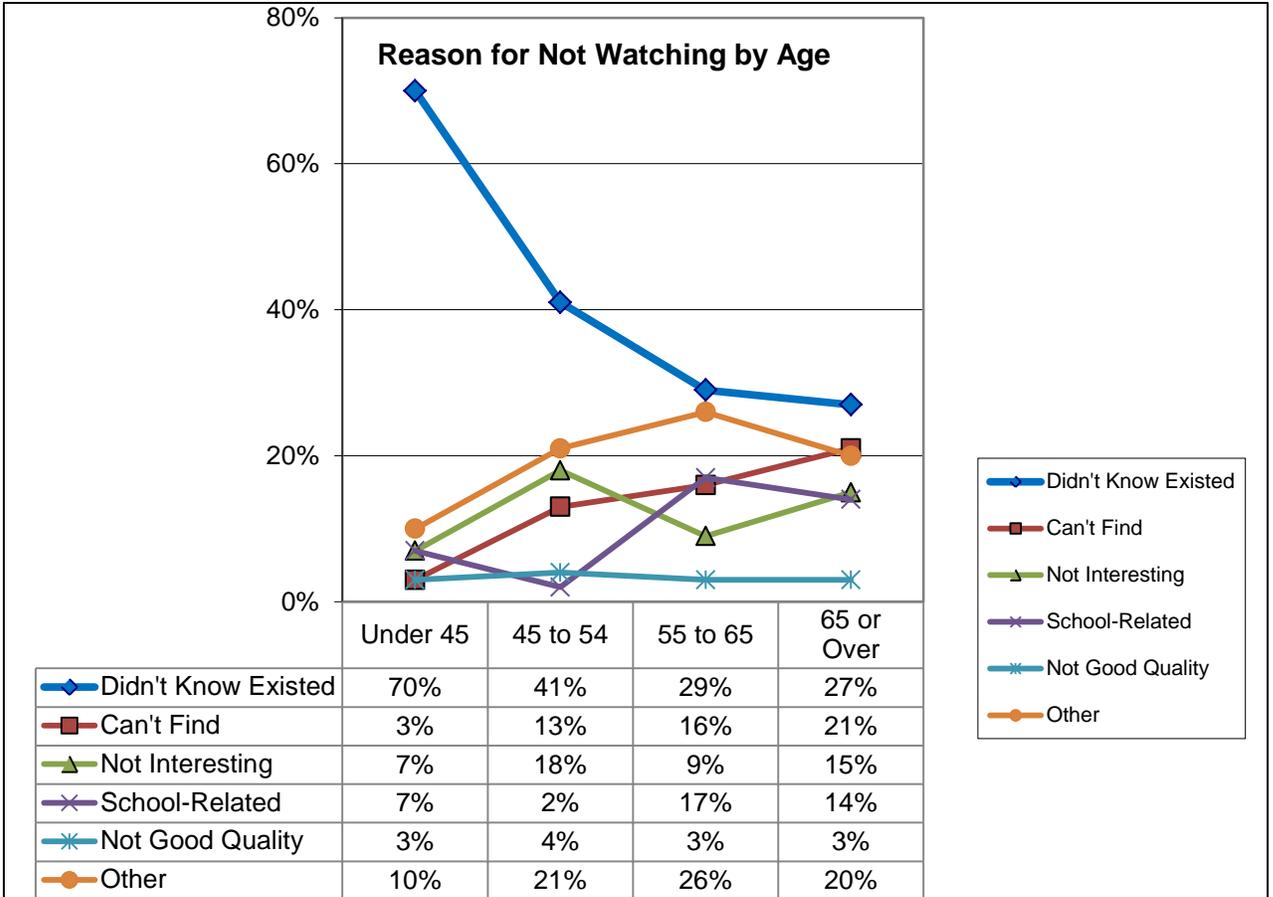


It should be noted that within the category of respondents with children in the household only 16% say they watch the “education” channel and 79% say they watch the “government” channel for those responding that they watch PEG Access Channels.

To determine the reason why potential viewers are not watching PEG Access Channels, the following question was asked: “If you don’t watch PEG Access channels, why not?” The possible responses are “Didn’t know that PEG Access Channels existed”, “Can’t easily find out what programs are being broadcast”, “Don’t find that the programs are interesting”, “Have no interest since many of the programs are school-related”, “Don’t find that the programs are of good quality”, and “Other”.

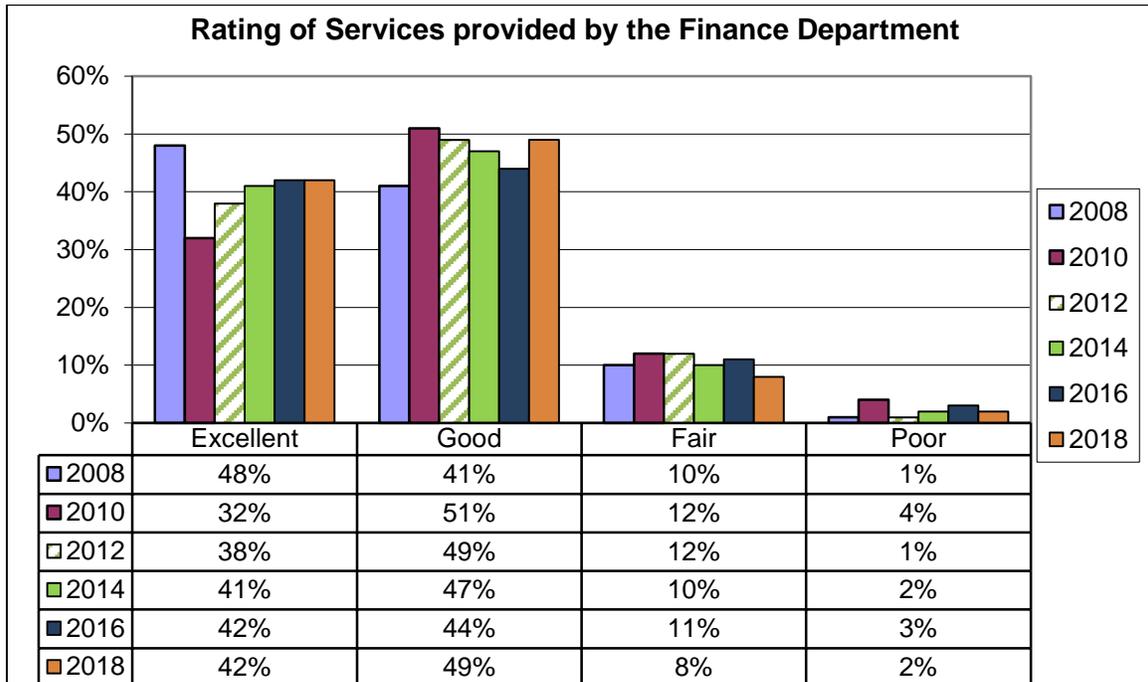


Although the graph below is complicated, there are two trends worth noting. Younger respondents are not aware that PEG Access Channels exist. Older respondents seem more likely not to be able to find what program are being broadcasts.

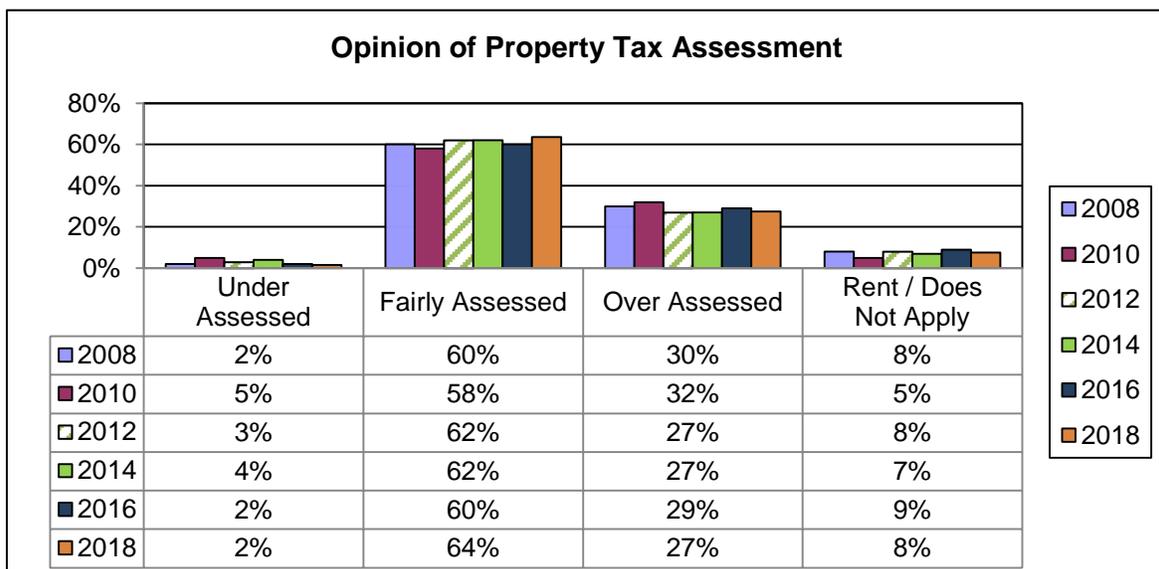


## Finance Department

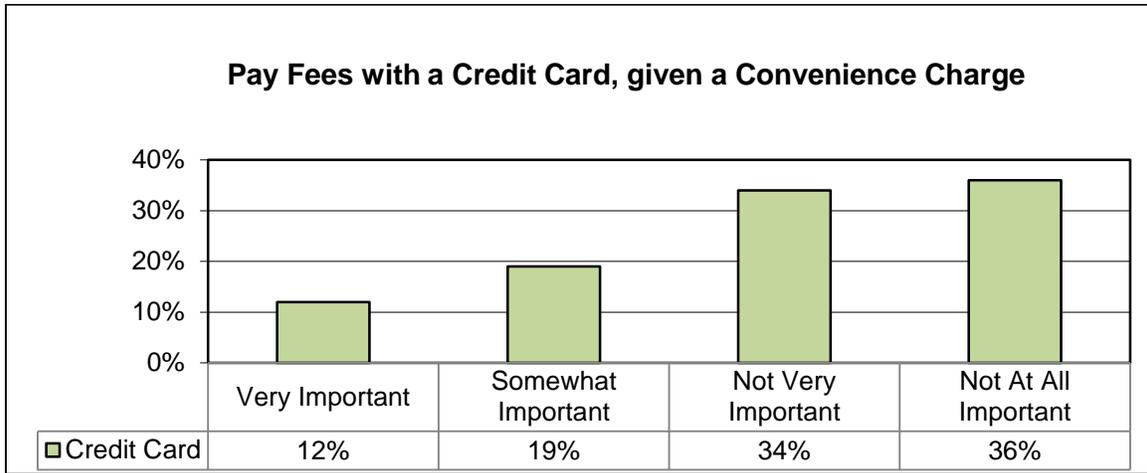
Three specific questions were asked about issues related to the Finance Department. For the last six polls, the following question has been asked: “How would you rate the overall quality of services provided by the Finance Department, which includes services of the Town Clerk, Town Collector, and Town Assessor?”



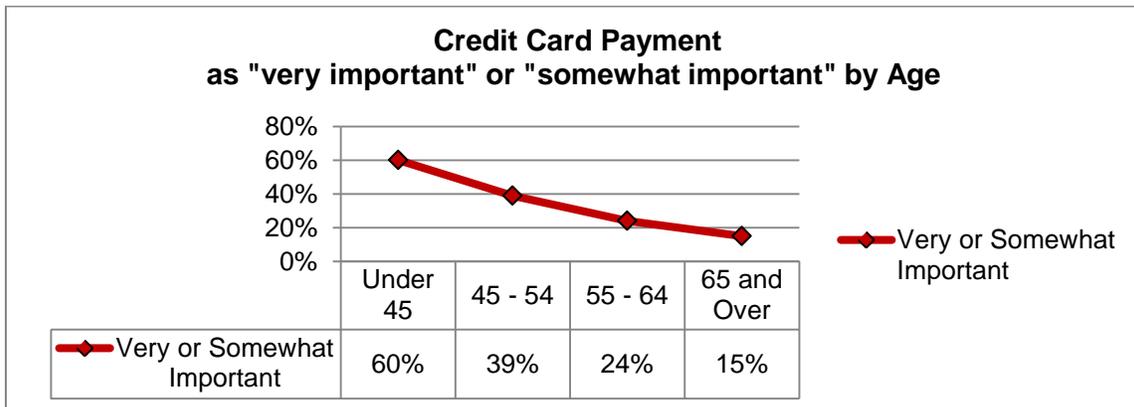
In addition, the following tax assessment question was asked: “In terms of the assessment of your property, do you believe that your property is over-assessed, under-assessed, or fairly assessed relative to others in Town?”



Respondents were also asked, "How important is it for you to be able to pay bills and fees at Town departments with a credit card, given that there would be a convenience fee?"

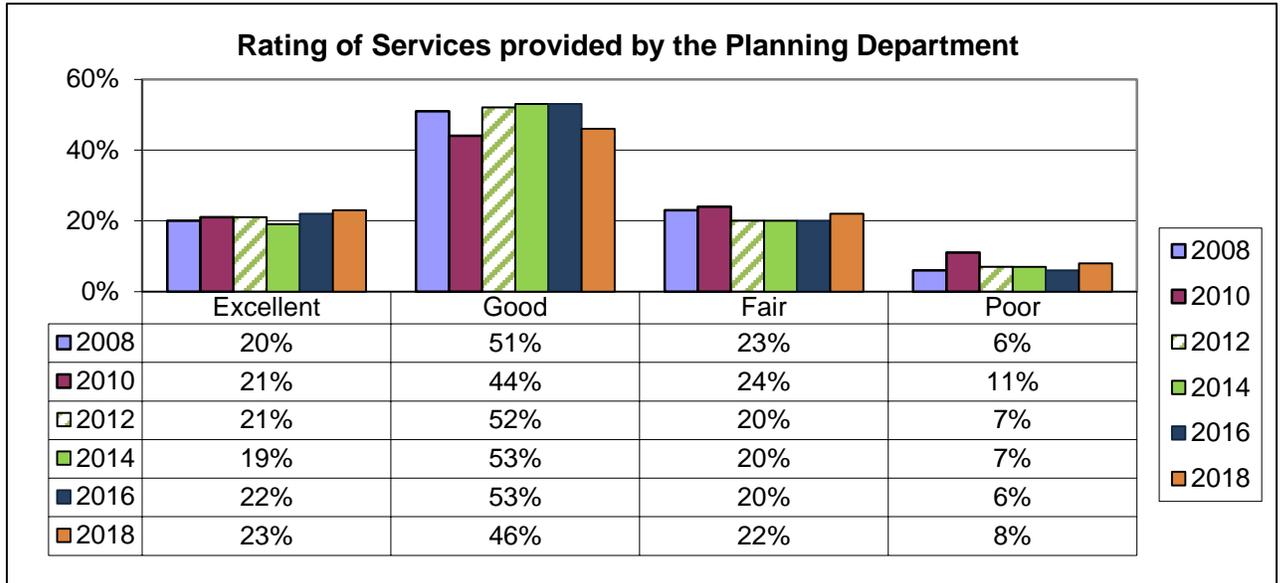


As could be expected, there is a generational preference in the survey in which the younger residents place a greater importance on paying bills with a credit card than older residents.

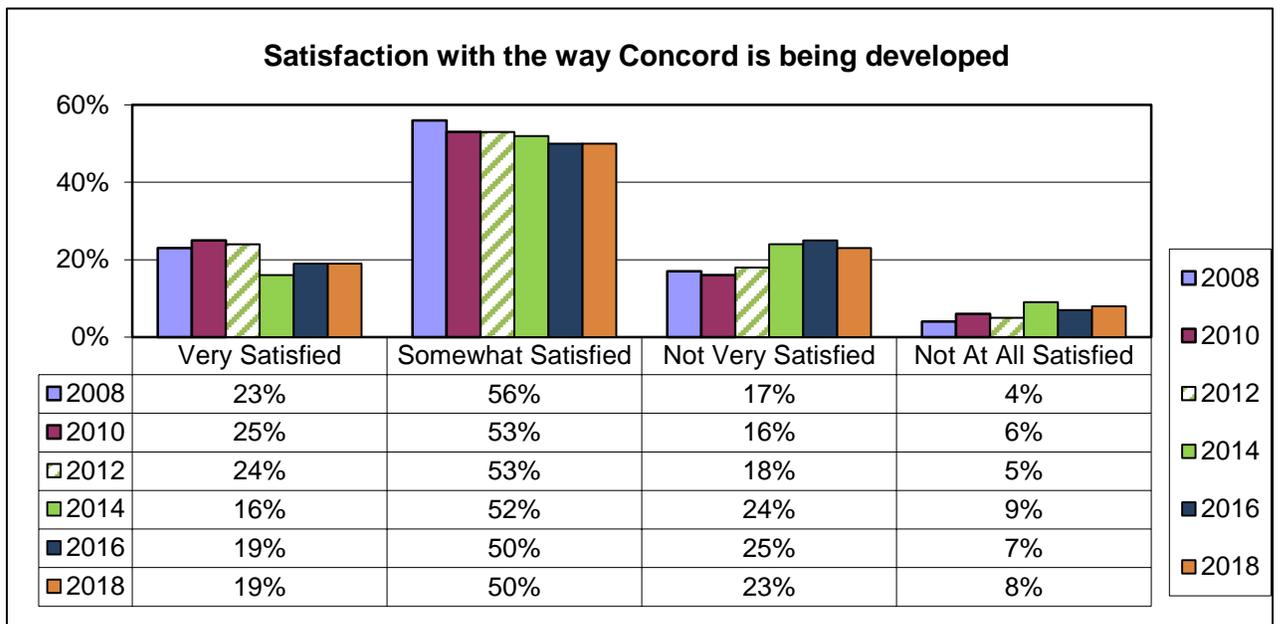


**Department of Planning and Land Management**

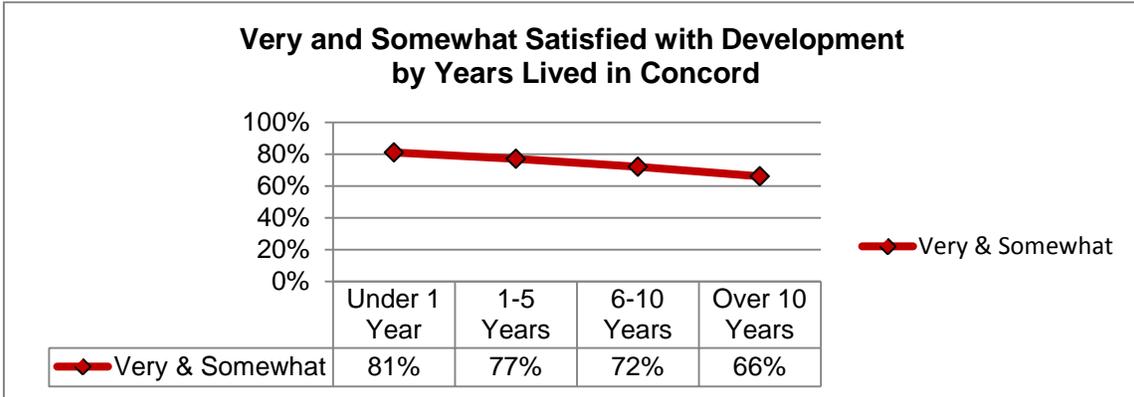
In the last six surveys, the question was asked: “How would you rate the overall quality of services that you receive from the Department Planning and Land Management, which regulates matters related to buildings, zoning, health, natural resource protection, and historic preservation.”



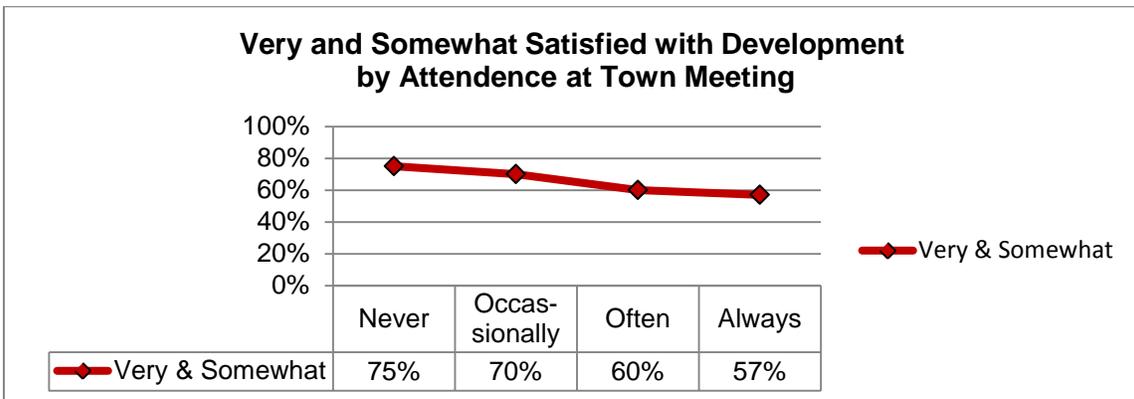
Satisfaction with the way Concord is developed is very important for the Town. Accordingly, the question was asked: “In terms of land-use and development, how would you rate your satisfaction with the way that Concord is being developed?”



There are slight differences in satisfaction level from respondents who live in general neighborhoods as determined by polling place. The percentage of respondents who are “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” by location are as follows: Harvey Wheeler Community Center (67%), Ripley Gym (69%), Hunt Gym (70%), and 141 Keyes Road (71%). In addition, residents who have lived in Concord longer seem to be a little less satisfied.

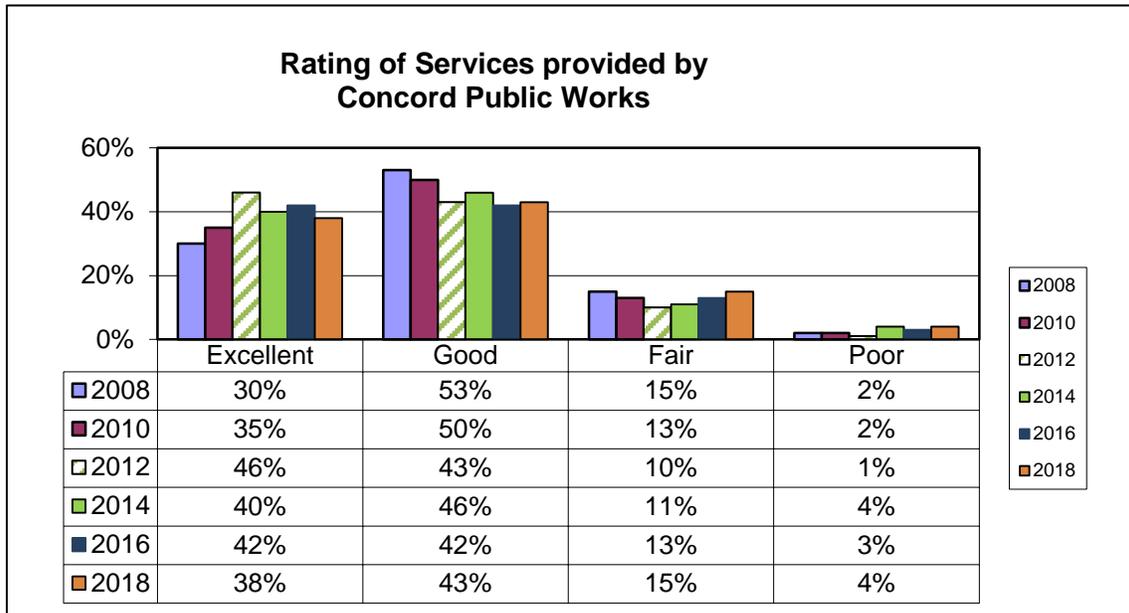


As a proxy for political involvement in the Town, the survey asked respondents: “How often do you attend Town Meeting?” When this question is cross-tabulated with the question on satisfaction with development, the results seem to show that the more one is politically involved, the less satisfied that person is. However, there is a correlation of those living in Concord longer and those attending Town Meeting more often, and this correlation could explain the similarities in the graphs.

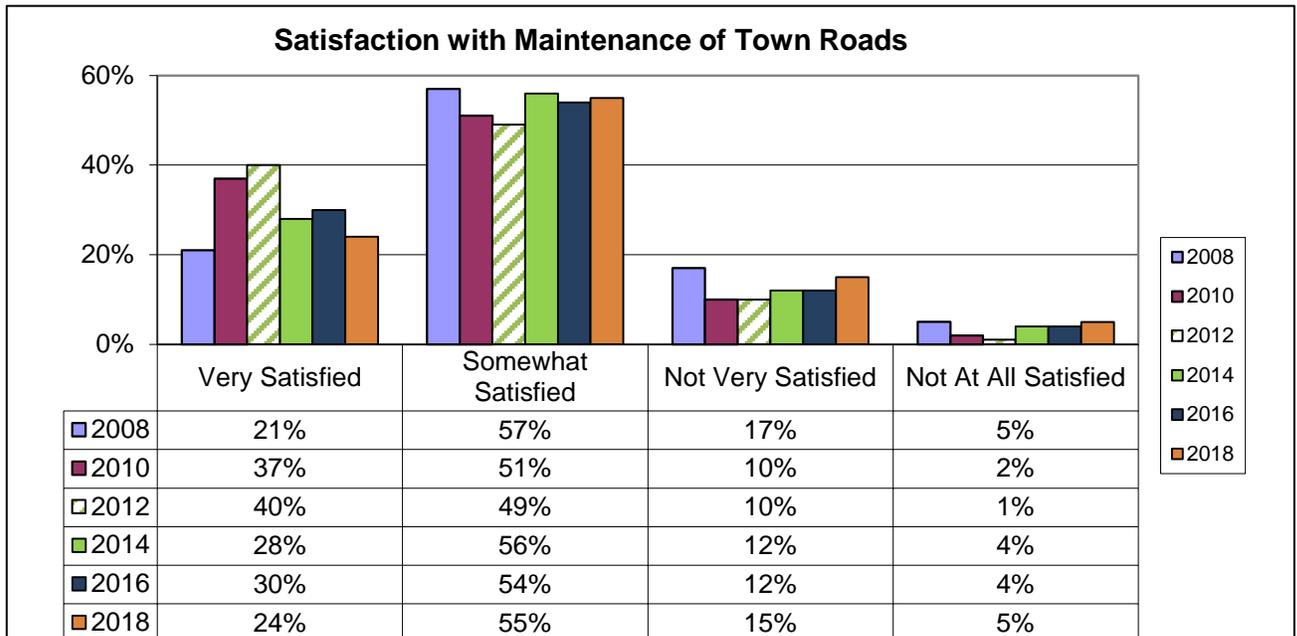


## Public Works

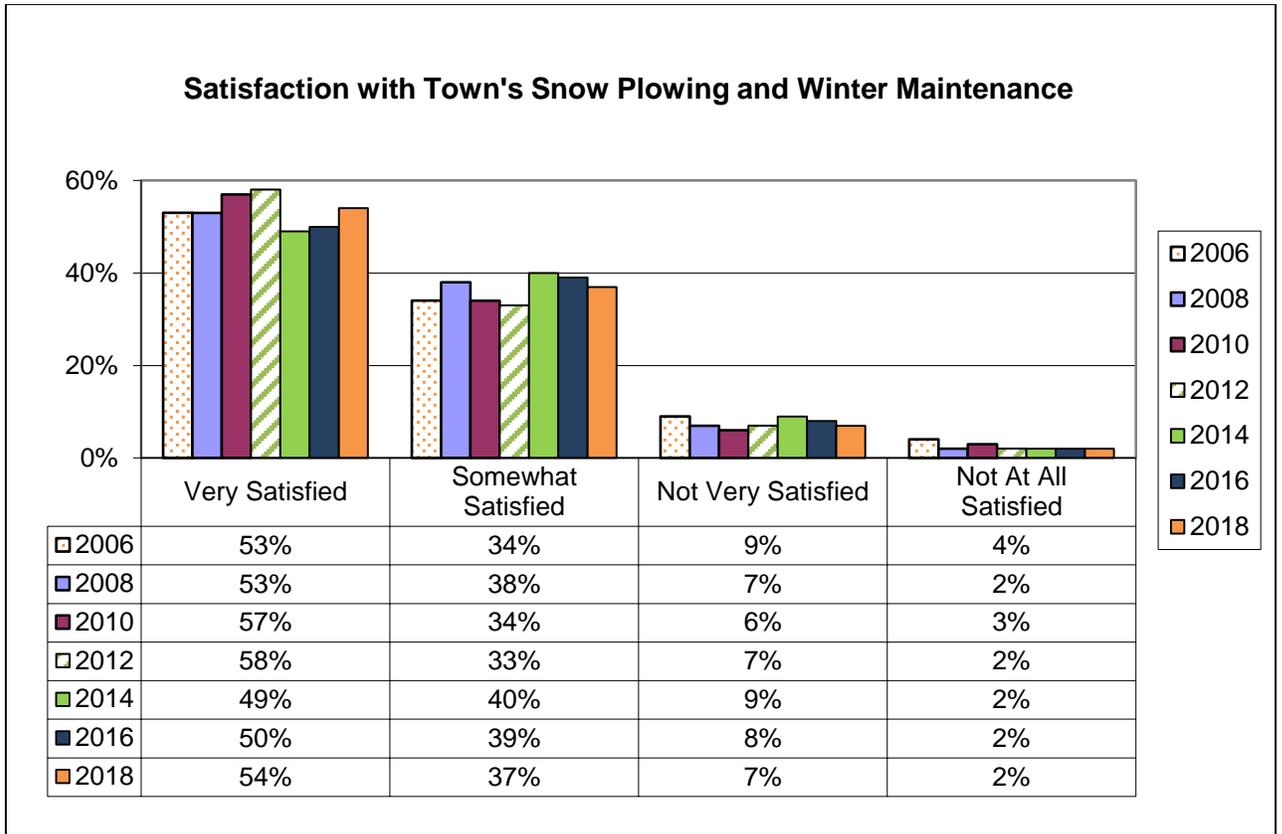
With the surveys conducted in the last decade, the question was asked: “How would you rate the overall quality of services provided by Concord Public Works?”



Approximately 9% of respondents in 2018 stated that “roads” are their highest priority, up from 4% in 2016.

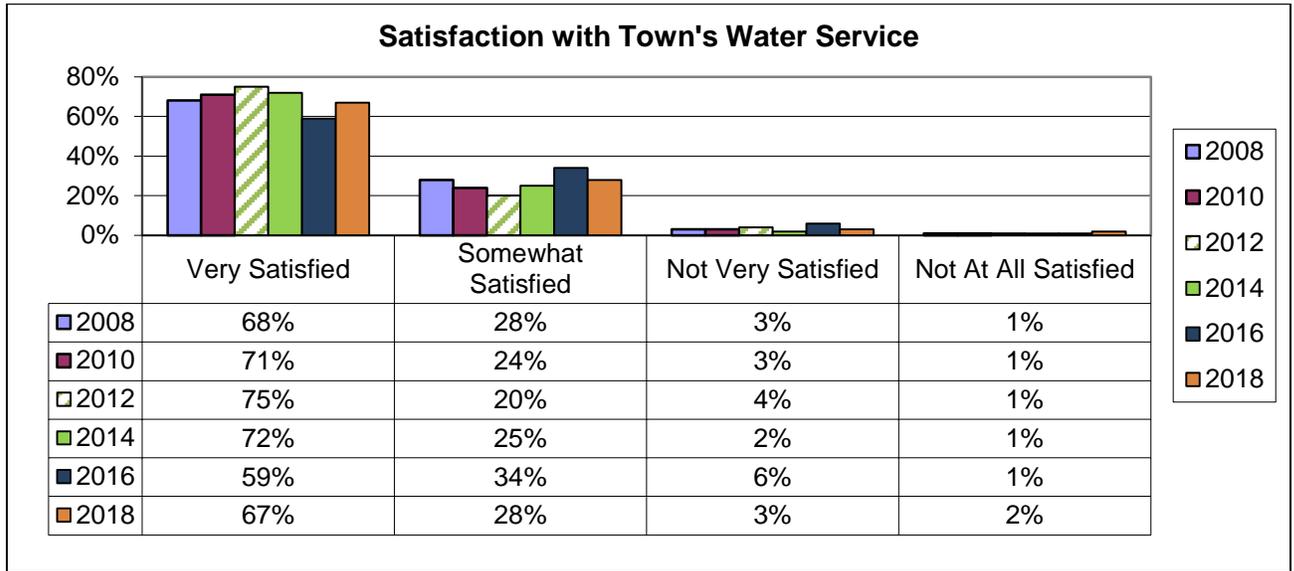


For the last seven surveys, the following question has been asked: “How would you rate your satisfaction with the Town’s snow plowing and winter maintenance?”

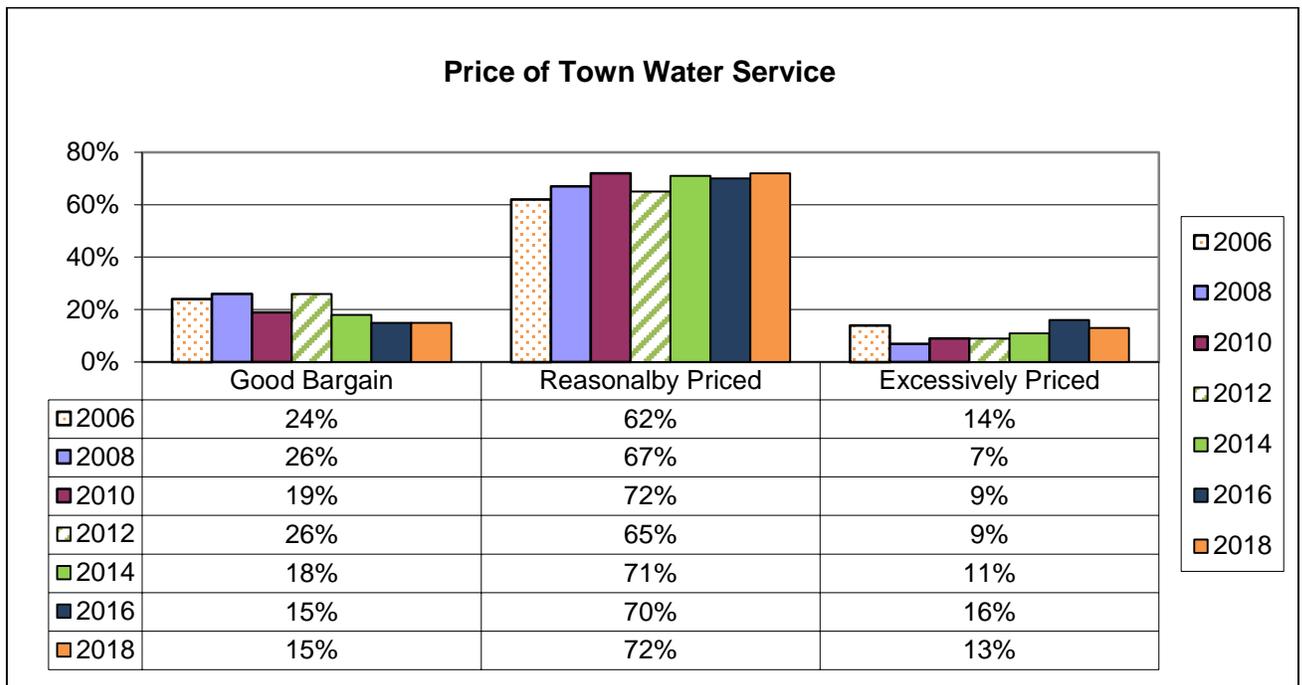


**Water Division**

When the question, “How would you rate your satisfaction with the Town’s water service?”, was asked, satisfaction with the Town’s water service is shown to be more favorable in 2018 than in 2016. The “very satisfied” response improved from 59% to 67%.

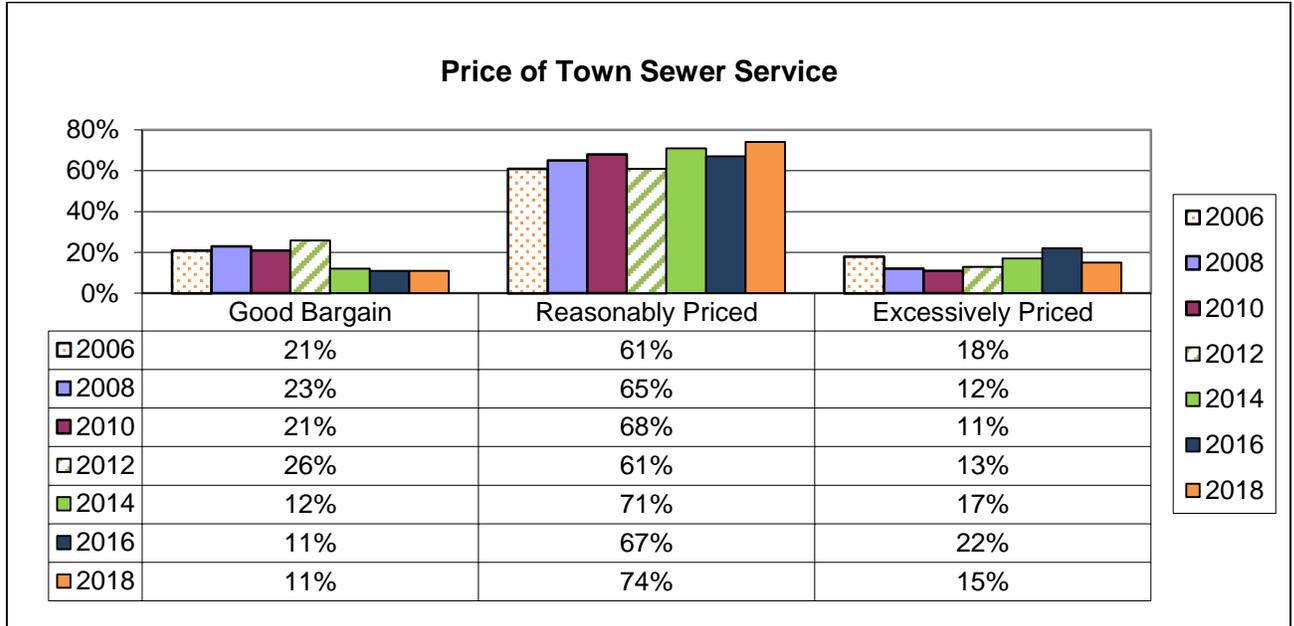


In addition, the seven surveys included the question “With Town water service, please tell me whether you consider the price to be a Good Bargain, Reasonably Priced, or Excessively Priced?”



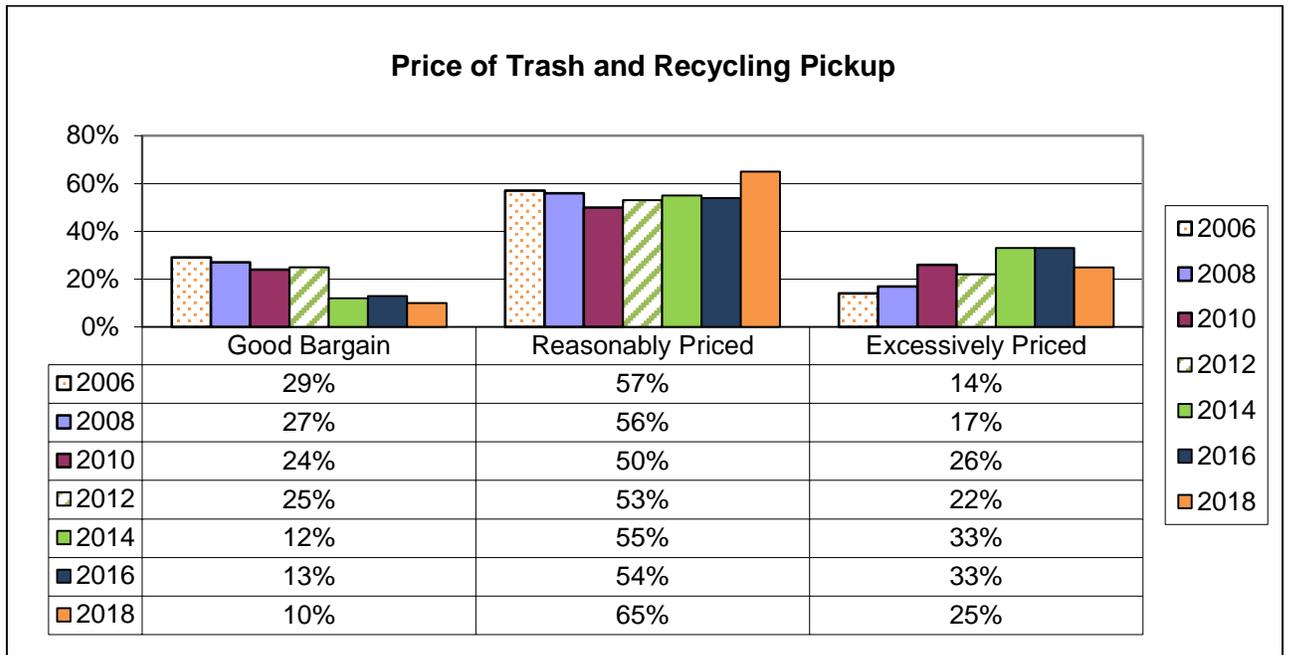
**Sewer Division**

Of a total of 1,254 in the sample, 482 respondents said they use the Town sewer service and expressed an opinion. Eighty-five percent think that the price is a “good bargain” or “reasonably priced”.

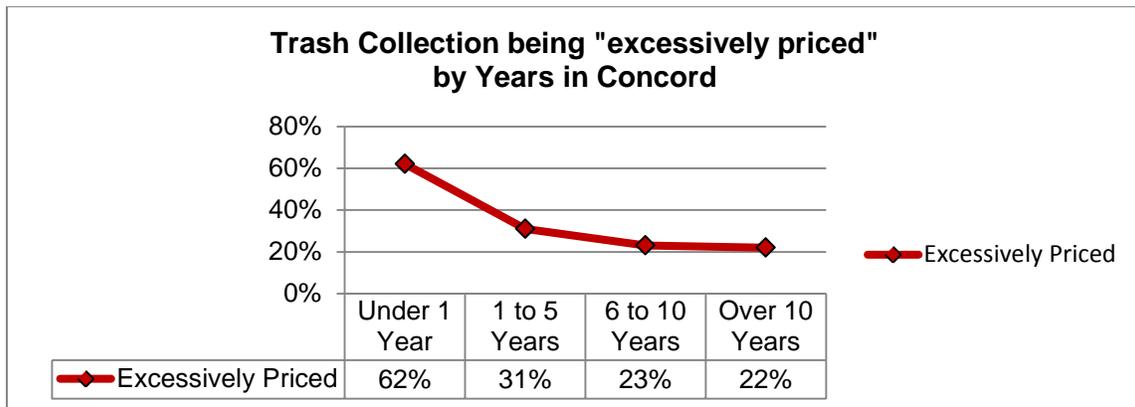


**Solid Waste Division**

The 2018 survey amended this question about the price of trash and recycling collection to include the phase “provided by the Town”. Previous surveys did not have this language and the question may have been confusing with respondents who have collection services from outside haulers possibly responding. With the new wording, seventy-five percent of respondents chose “good bargain” or “reasonably priced”.

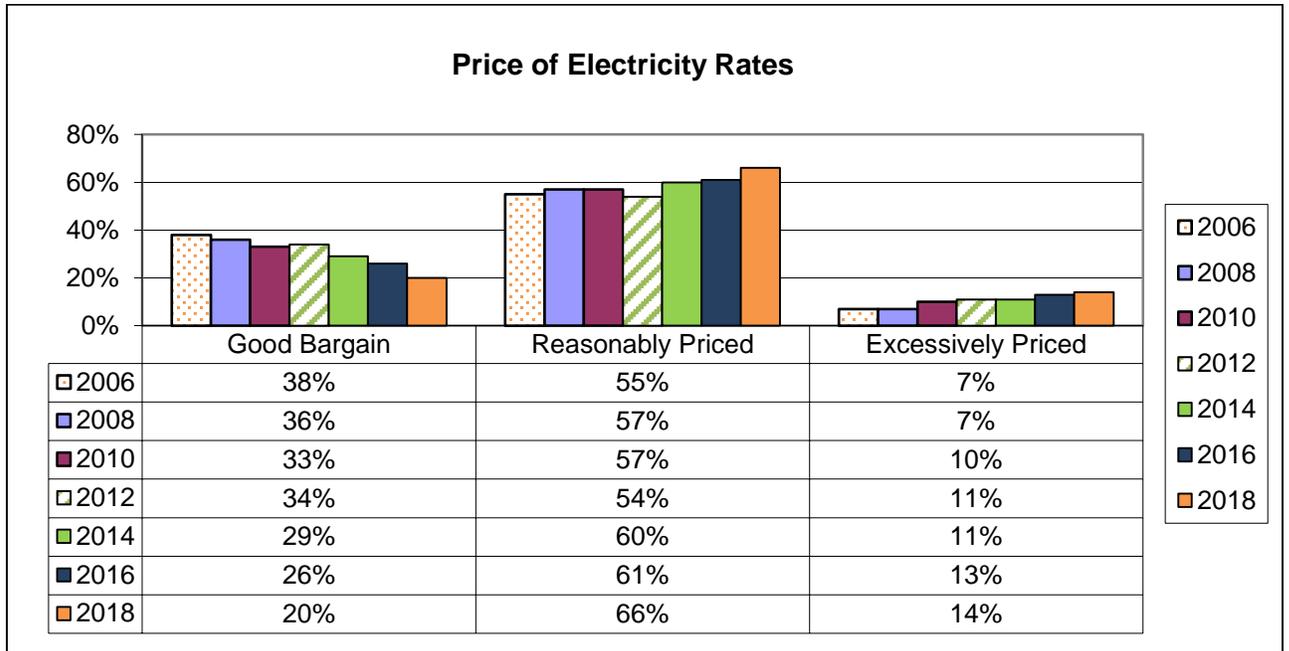


The graph below suggests that respondents who have recently moved from another community are more likely to feel that the trash collection fee is “excessively priced”.

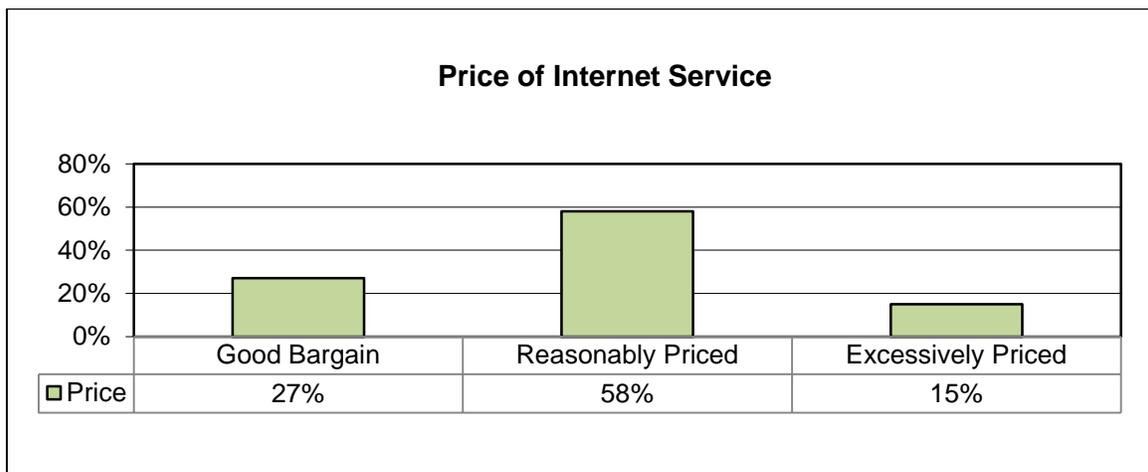


**Light Plant**

For the last seven surveys, the question was asked about the price of electricity rates by the Light Plant.

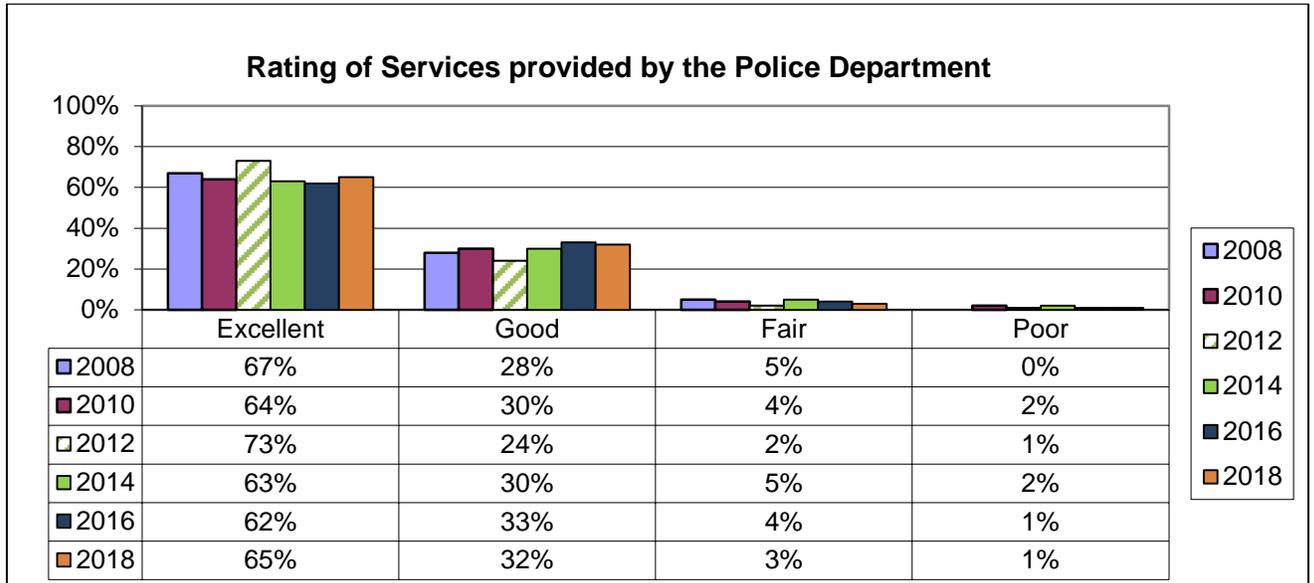


With the initiation of the Town providing telecommunication services to residents, a question was asked in 2018 about the fees for internet service provided by the Town through the Light Plant. Of the 1,254 respondents, 643 responded that they did not use the services and another 125 answered with the response “don’t know / no answer” for a total of 486 providing an opinion.



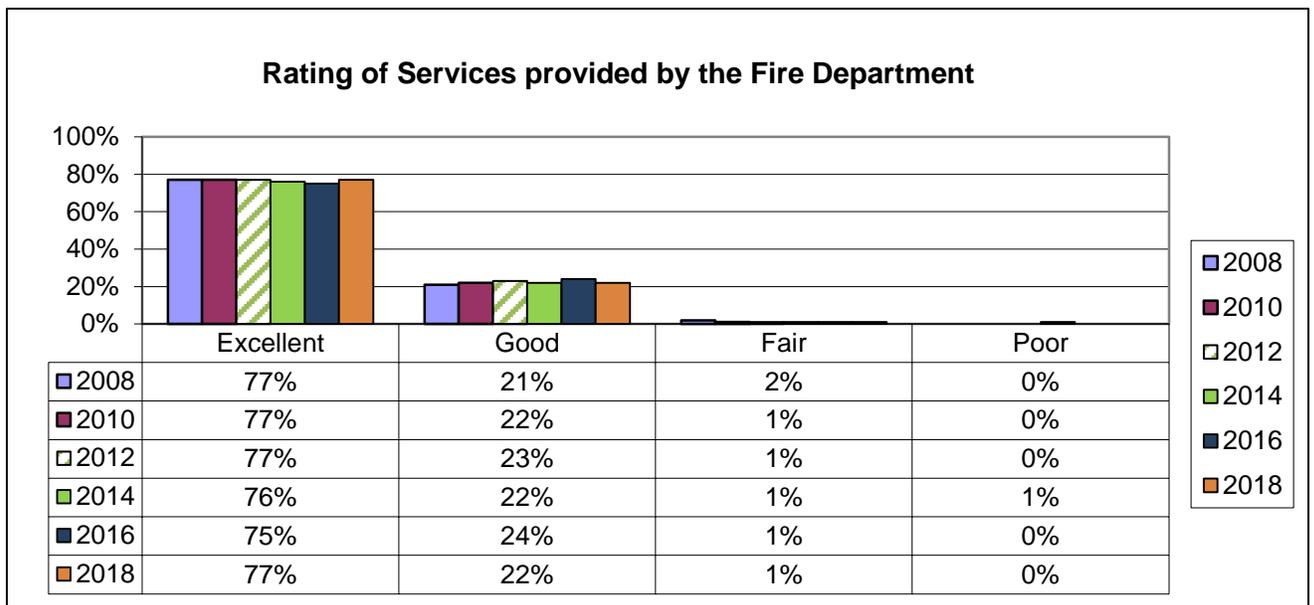
**Police Department**

For the Police Department, the question was asked: “How would you rate the overall quality of services provided by the Concord Police Department, which provides Police services, as well as Community Policing programs, School Resource Officer initiatives, and 911 Dispatching?”



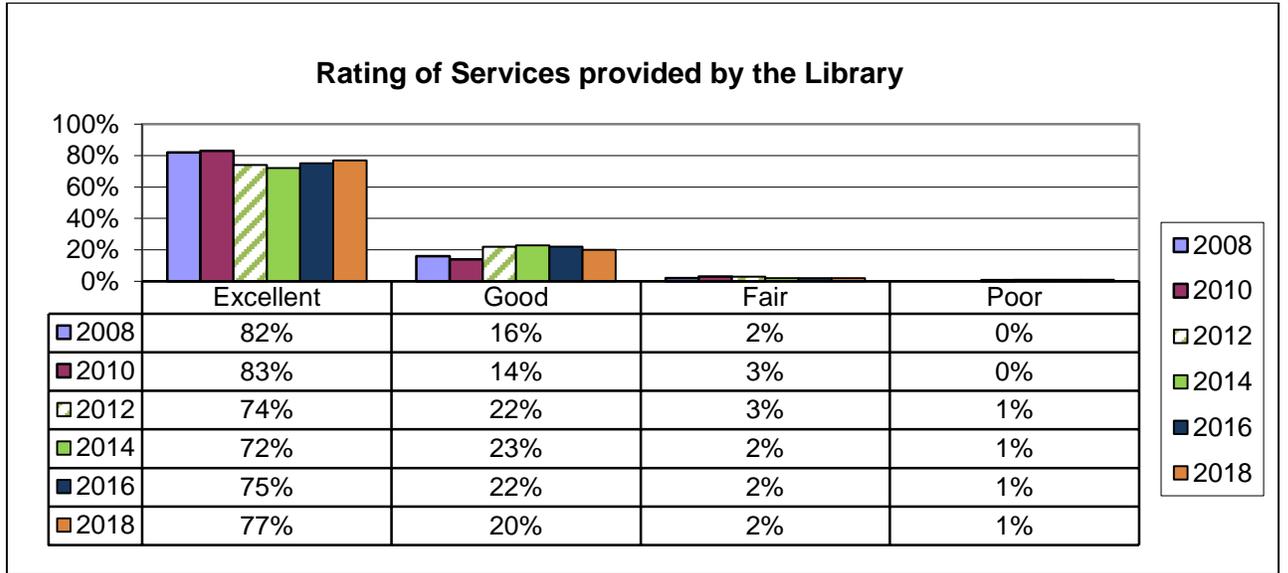
**Fire Department**

For the Fire Department, the question was asked: “How would you rate the overall quality of services provided by the Concord Fire Department, which provides Fire as well as Emergency Ambulance Service?”

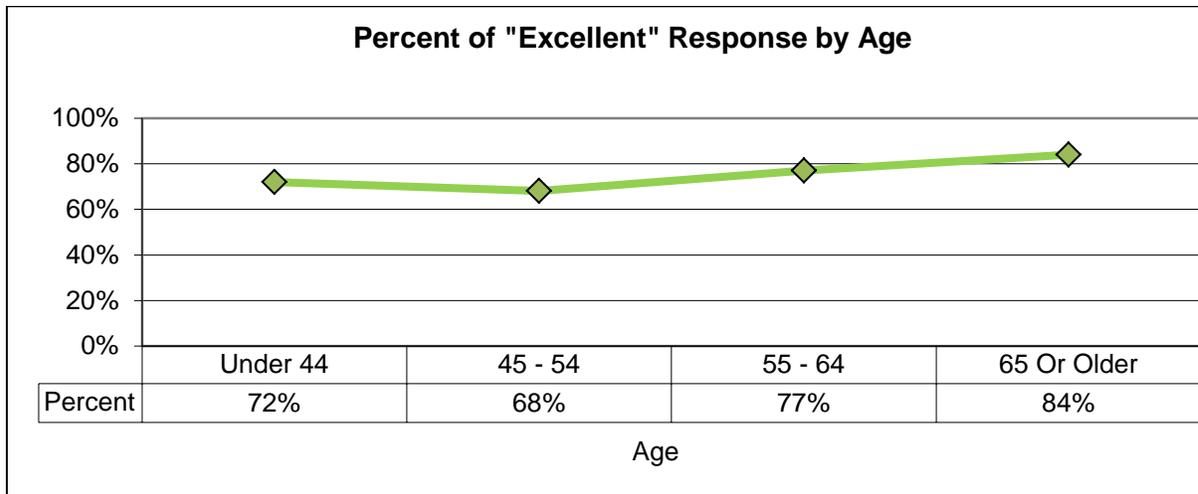


**Library**

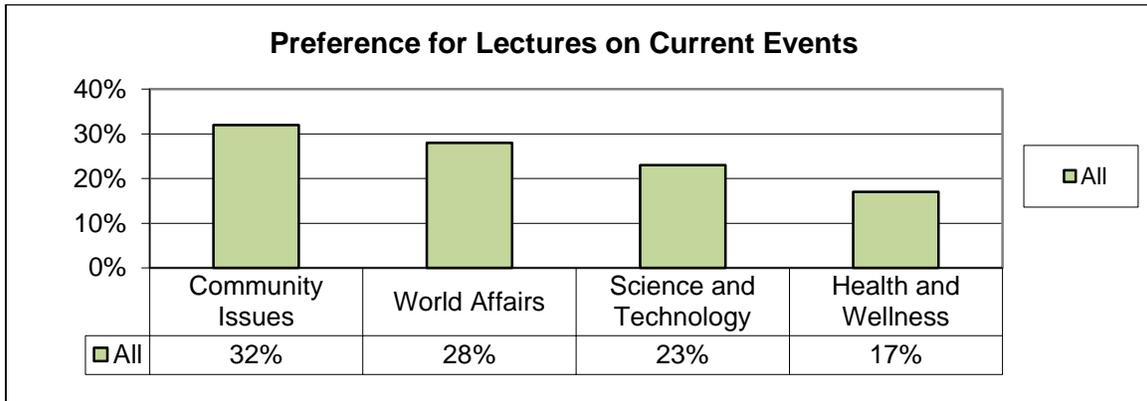
For the last six surveys, the following question has been asked: “How would you rate the overall quality of services provided by Concord Public Libraries?” In all surveys, there is a strong opinion that the quality is “excellent” or “good”.



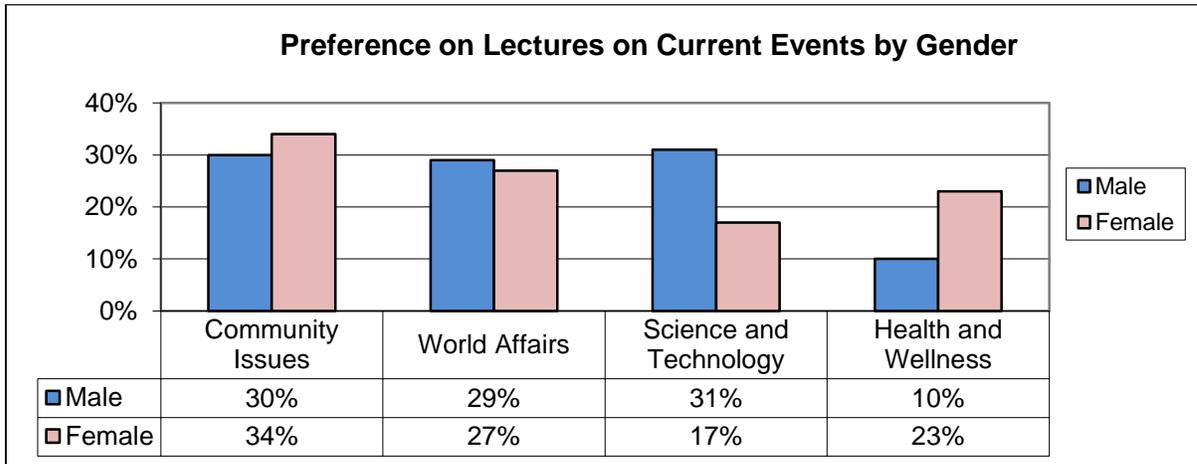
The graph below presents information on the percentage of each age group that responded “excellent” to the quality question in the 2018 survey. There is a slight trend which suggests that older residents perceive the Library services to be of better quality.



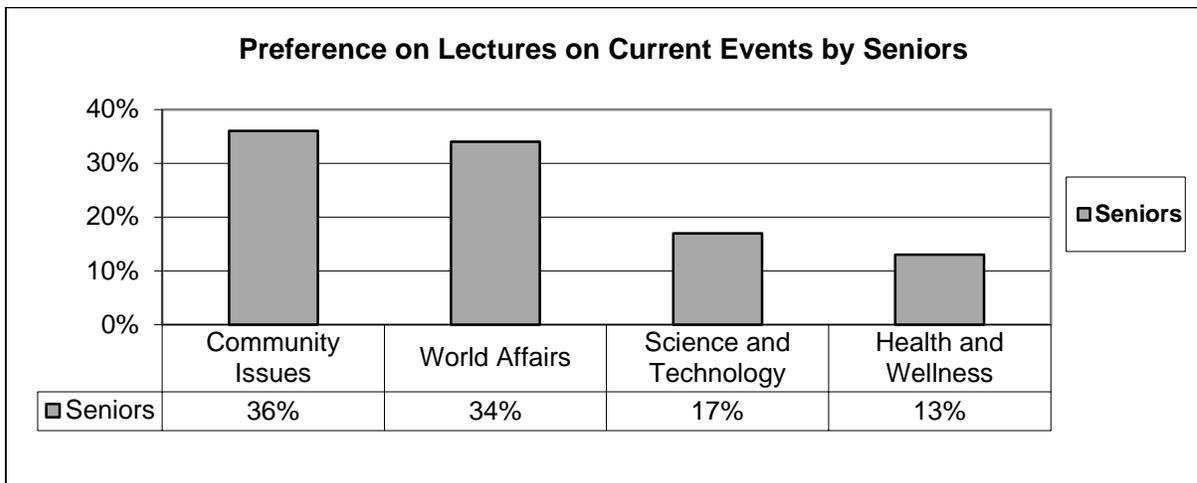
The question was asked: “What types of lectures on current events would you like to attend, if they were offered by the library?” Below is the results of 4 lecture types.



Men would like “Science and Technology” to be offered while women would like “community issues” and “health and wellness”.

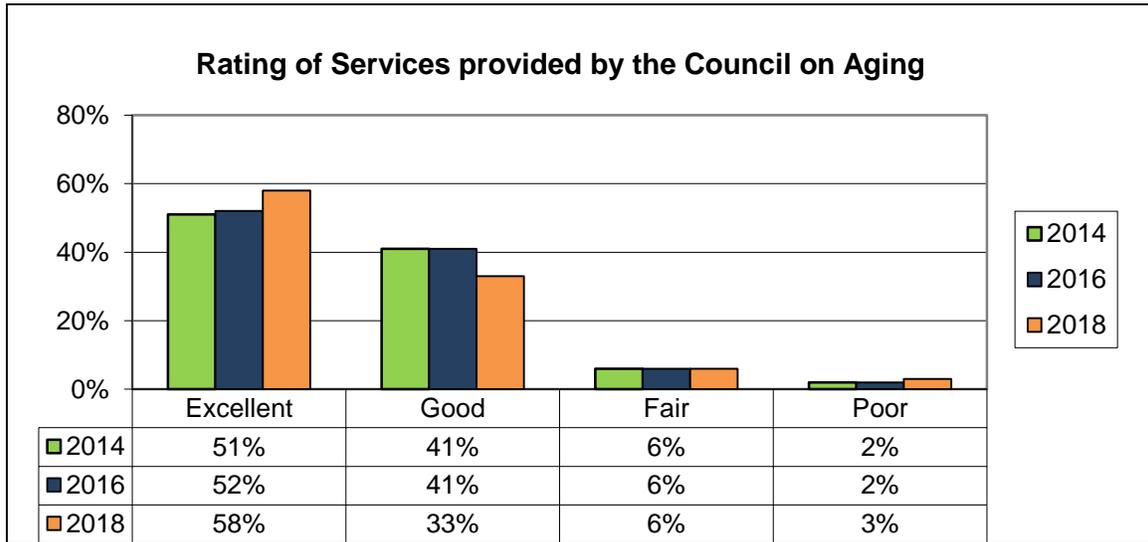


Seniors are interested in “community issues” and “world affairs”.

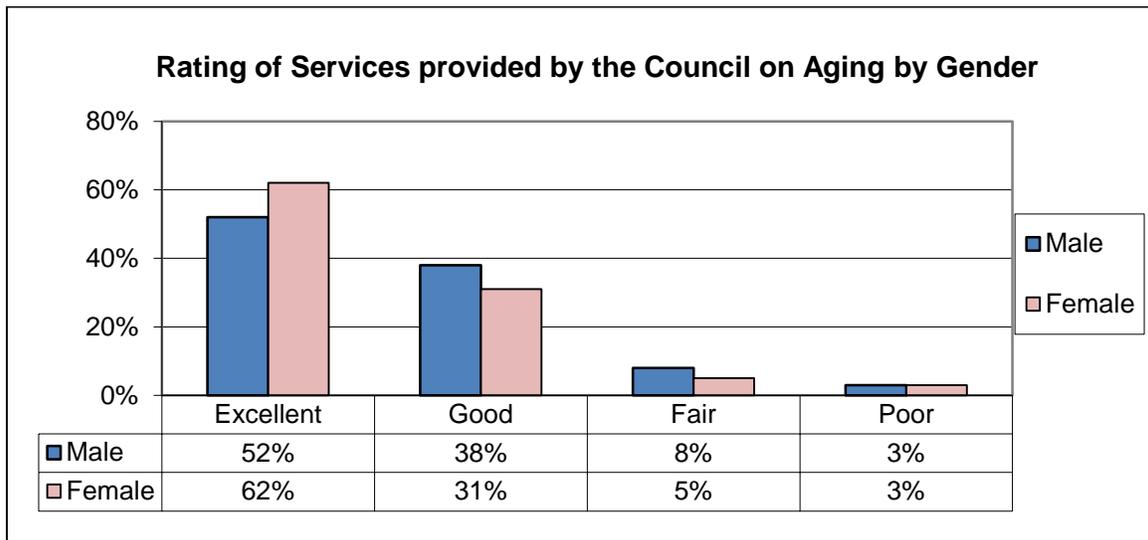


**Council on Aging (Senior Services)**

In the 2018 survey, the question was asked: “How would you rate the overall quality of services provided by the Senior Service Division / Council on Aging, which includes social / recreational programming, nursing services, transportation services and clinical social work?” With this survey, the following response was added: “don’t use service”.



The results below are the satisfaction percentages in the 2018 survey shown by gender.



**Recreation Programs**

Of the 486 respondents (out of 1,254 surveyed) who expressed an opinion on the question regarding the price of Recreation Programs (such as after school programs and summer camp), 85% think these programs are a “good bargain” or “reasonably priced”.

