

HAPPINESS SURVEY 2023



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SOMERSTAT

KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

What we're doing today



Introduction

Why does the City run the Somerville Happiness Survey?



2023 Details

Distribution of the most recent survey



2023 Results

Exploration of findings




Next Steps

Planning improvements for 2025

Overview & Purpose

- The Happiness Survey measures residents' overall happiness and satisfaction with various aspects of life in Somerville and informs City decisions that support and enhance residents' happiness.
- SomerStat has conducted the survey every **two years** since 2011.
- Previous analyses have resulted in expanded access to recycling services, greater investment in trees, and increased funding for open space and recreational land.



THE 2023
SOMERVILLE
HAPPINESS SURVEY

FOR PRINTER
USE ONLY

INSTRUCTIONS

- To take this survey online, visit <https://tinyurl.com/wwwwwww> or scan the QR code.
- Your participation is voluntary, and the results will be anonymous. Do not write your name or contact information on this sheet.
- Fill the circle of your choice completely. Mark checkboxes with or .
- This survey should be filled out by one person and will take approximately 10 minutes.
- Submit your survey by **June 30, 2023**, either online or using the enclosed envelope.

HAPPINESS

How happy do you feel right now? Very Unhappy Very Happy

How satisfied are you with the following?	Very Unhappy	Neutral	Very Satisfied	Not Sure
Your life in general	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your neighborhood	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Somerville as a place to live	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

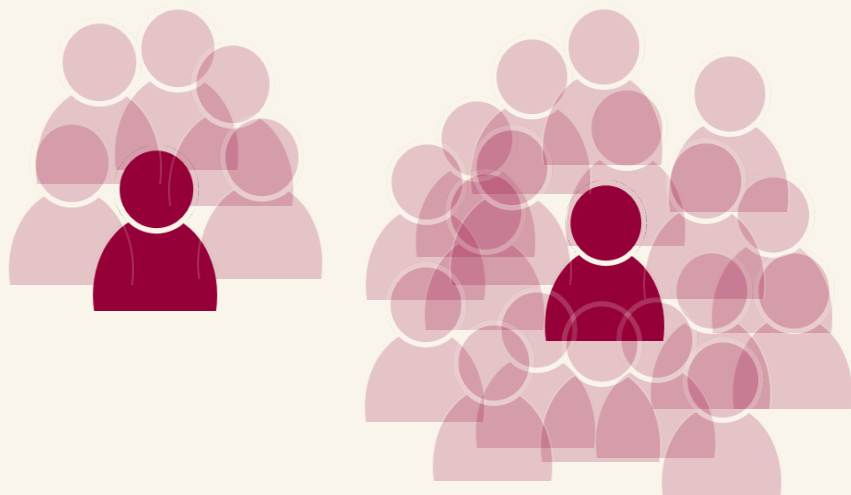
YOUR LIFE IN SOMERVILLE

How satisfied are you with the following?	Very Unhappy	Neutral	Very Satisfied	Not Sure
The beauty or physical setting of your neighborhood	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The cleanliness and upkeep of your neighborhood	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your proximity to parks and open spaces	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your proximity to grocery stores and other amenities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The quality of city services you receive (e.g., trash pickup, parking permits)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

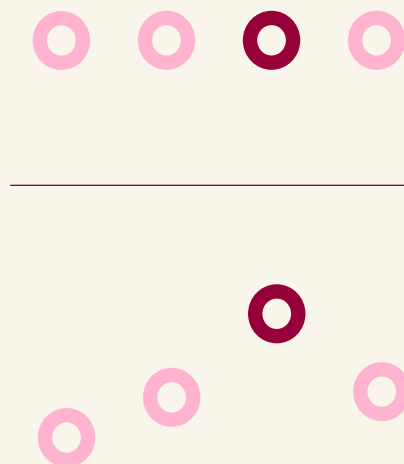
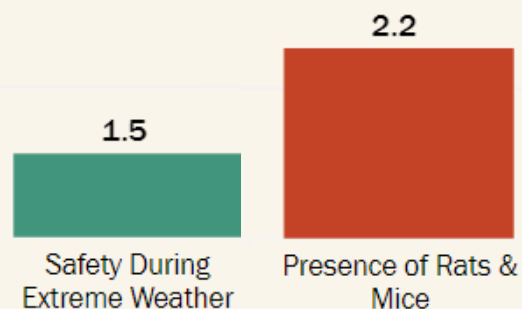
➔

Why run the Happiness Survey?

- Surveying a random, representative sample of **5,000 residents + targeted outreach to special populations** provides insight into a broad cross-section of opinions that aren't always heard in public meetings and online comments.
- Asking about a lot of topics forces respondents to consider them relative to each other.
- Biennial survey allows for longitudinal analysis.



How concerned are you about the following?



2023 Survey Distribution

- The 2023 survey was sent to 5,000 randomly-selected households in Somerville in June 2023
 - Paper surveys in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole
 - Online option in above languages + Nepali, Traditional Chinese, and Simplified Chinese
 - Reminder postcard sent to all a few weeks after the paper survey
- We received 1,006 responses (~20% response rate)
- Our sample overrepresents women, white people, homeowners, and high-income households, but almost all demographic groups have enough respondents to analyze
- Keep in mind that results reflect sentiment in summer 2023!

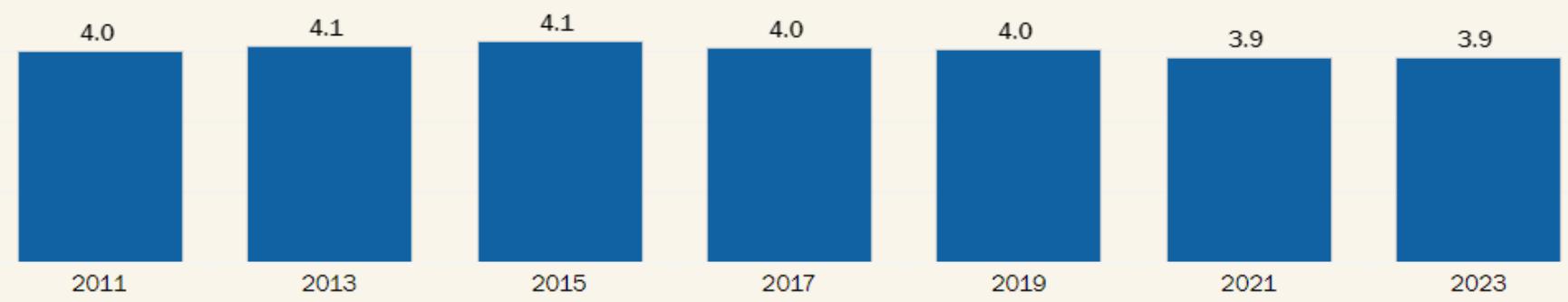


Overall, Somerville residents are happy!

And they've
been happy for
as long as
we've been
measuring it.

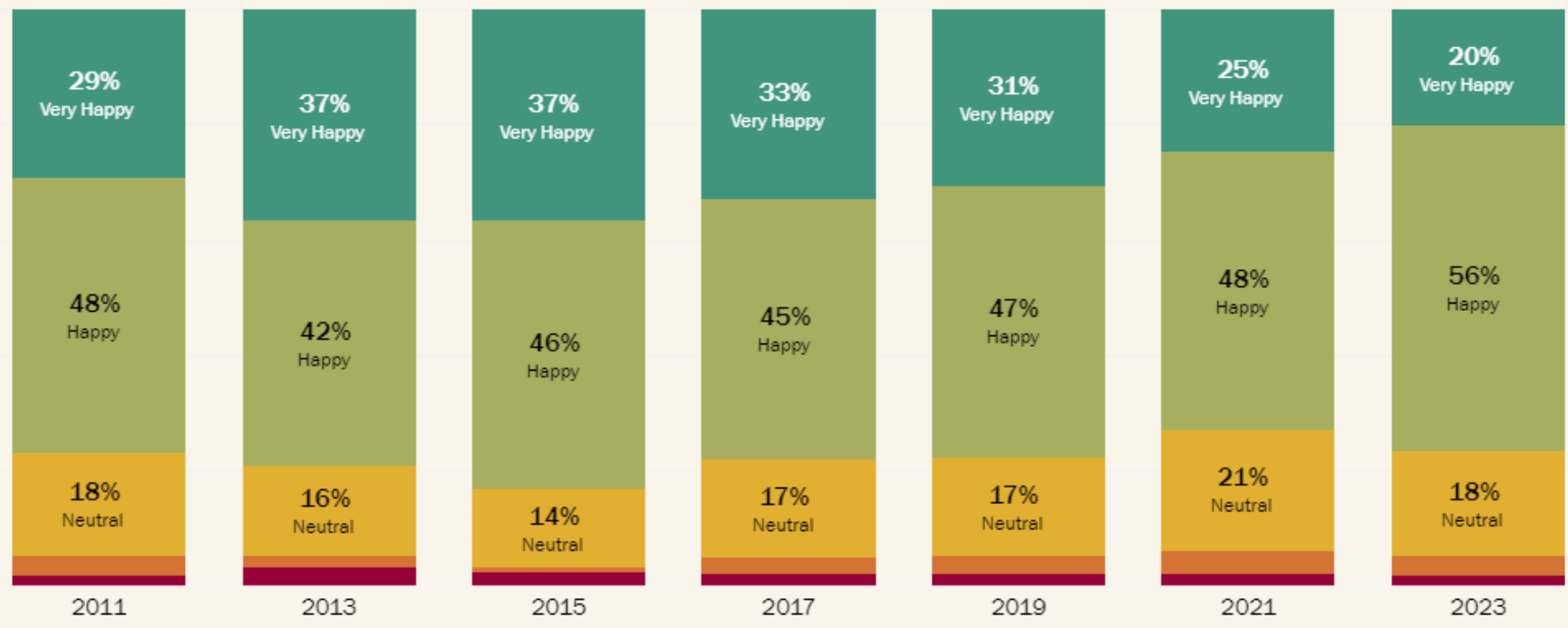
How happy do you feel right now?

Average score on a scale from 1 to 5



How happy do you feel right now?

Percent of responses by answer choice



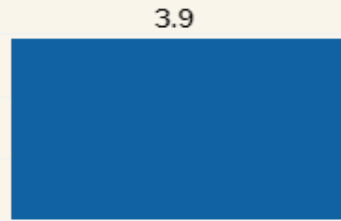
And they're happy no matter the scale at which we ask the question.

People are satisfied with their lives in general, their neighborhoods, and Somerville as a place to live.

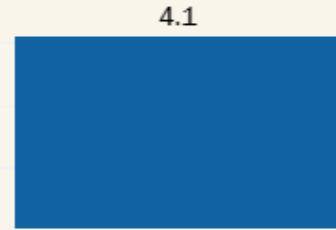
Average score (2023)

On a scale from 1 to 5

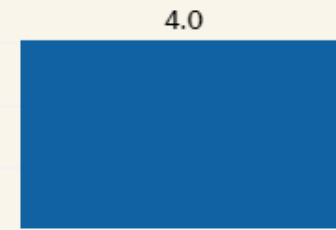
How happy do you feel right now?



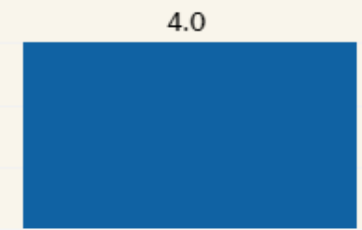
How satisfied are you with your life in general?



How satisfied are you with your neighborhood?



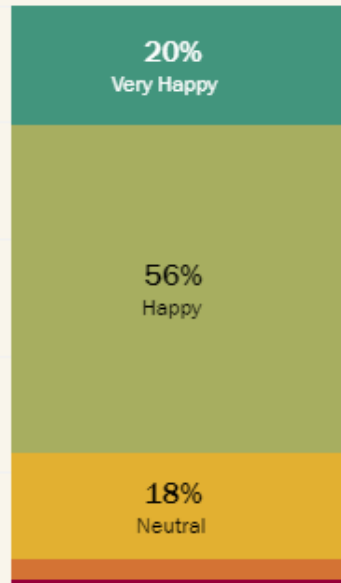
How satisfied are you with Somerville as a place to live?



Percent of responses (2023)

By answer choice

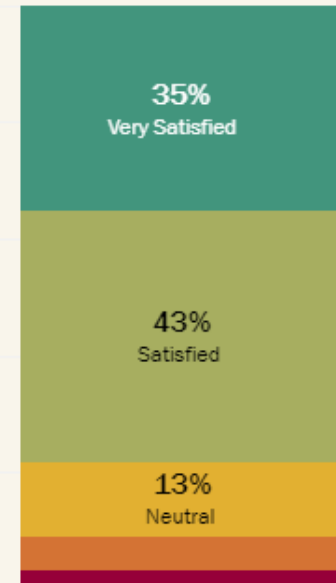
How happy do you feel right now?



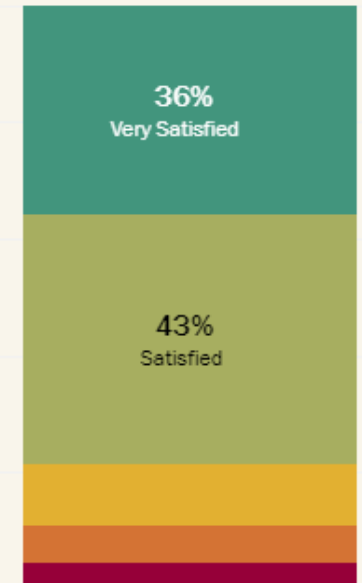
How satisfied are you with your life in general?



How satisfied are you with your neighborhood?



How satisfied are you with Somerville as a place to live?

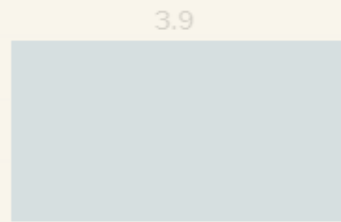


The City can most affect residents' satisfaction with Somerville as a place to live.

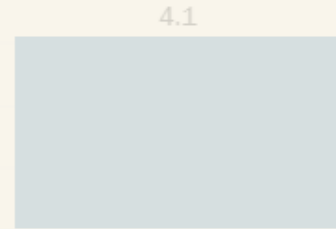
Statistics can tell us which aspects of life in Somerville have the greatest effect on this measure for residents.

Average score (2023)
On a scale from 1 to 5

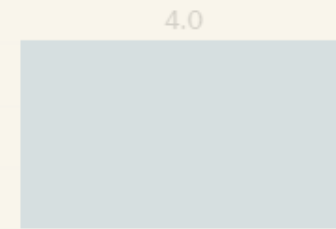
How happy do you feel right now?



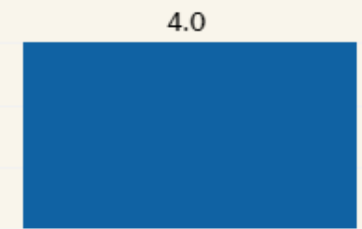
How satisfied are you with your life in general?



How satisfied are you with your neighborhood?

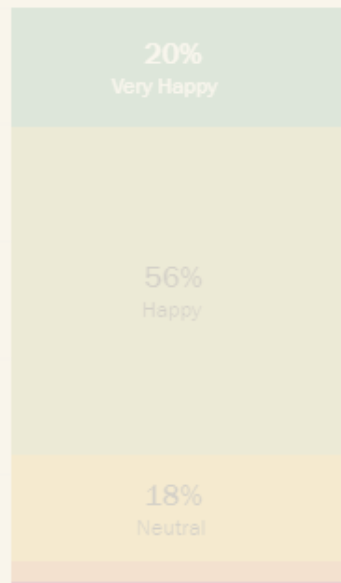


How satisfied are you with Somerville as a place to live?

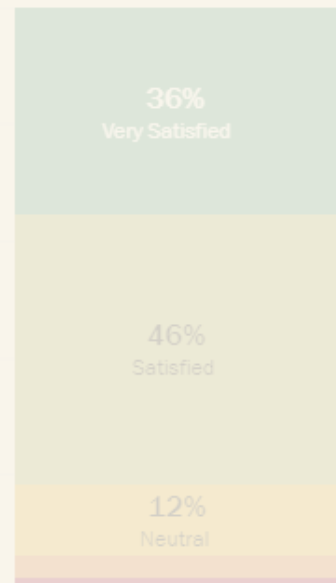


Percent of responses (2023)
By answer choice

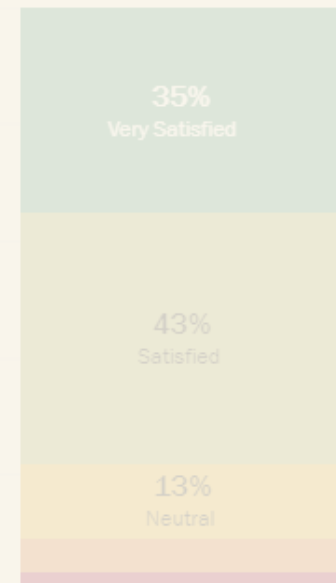
How happy do you feel right now?



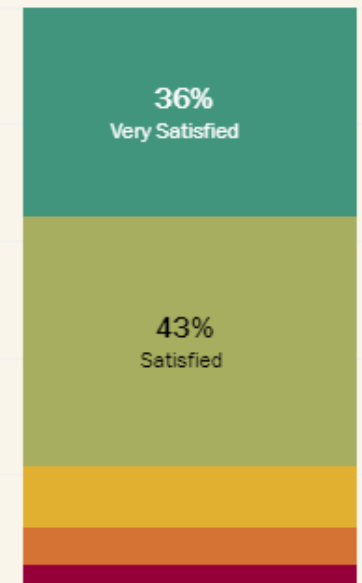
How satisfied are you with your life in general?



How satisfied are you with your neighborhood?



How satisfied are you with Somerville as a place to live?



To make residents even more satisfied with Somerville...

The factors that may “move the needle” most are:



The beauty and physical setting of your neighborhood (max effect = 1.1)



The convenience of getting where you want to go (max effect = 1.0)



Social community events (max effect = 0.8)



The availability of information about city services (max effect = 0.6)



Concern about encountering crime and violence (max effect = -0.3)

As of June 2023, we are generally doing well on all of these!

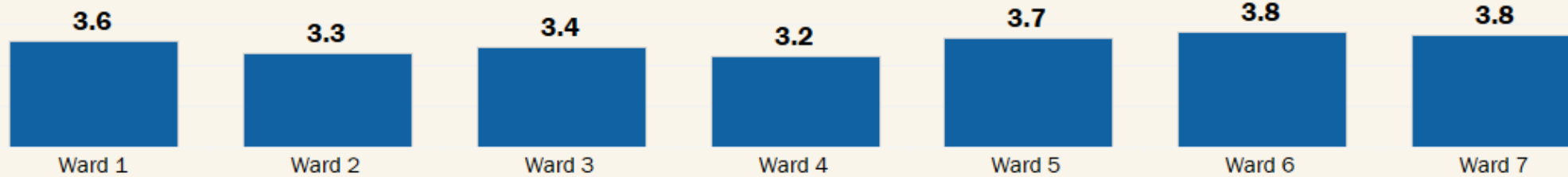


Respondents are mostly satisfied with neighborhood beauty

Wards 2, 3, and 4 are somewhat less satisfied

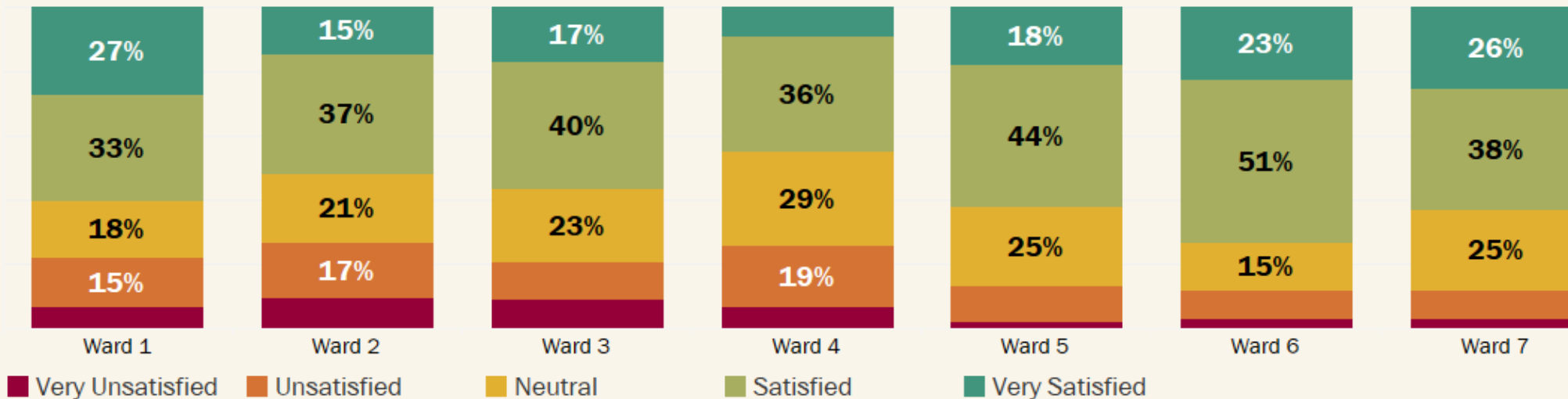
How satisfied are you with the beauty or physical setting of your neighborhood? by Ward (2023)

Average score on a scale from 1 to 5 (higher is more satisfied)



How satisfied are you with the beauty or physical setting of your neighborhood? by Ward (2023)

Percent of responses by answer choice



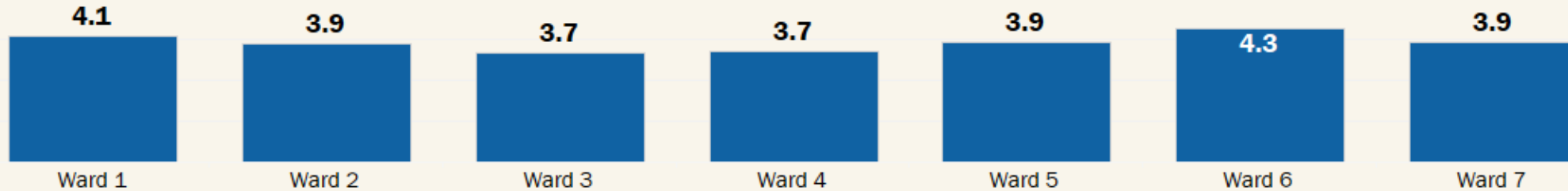


Respondents are satisfied with convenience of getting around

Especially in wards 1 and 6

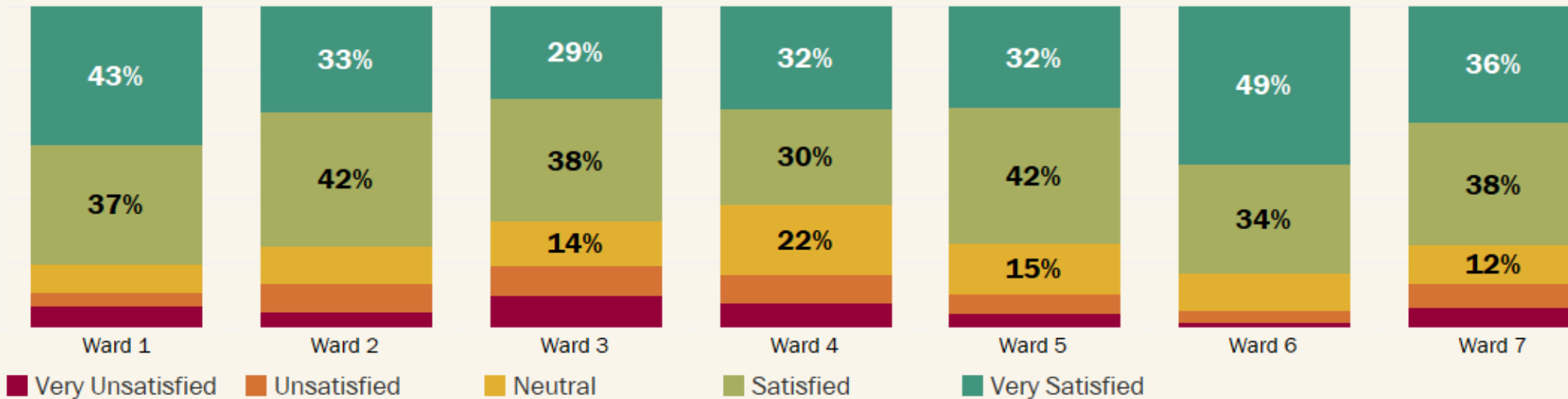
How satisfied are you with the convenience of getting where you want to go? by Ward (2023)

Average score on a scale from 1 to 5 (higher is more satisfied)



How satisfied are you with the convenience of getting where you want to go? by Ward (2023)

Percent of responses by answer choice



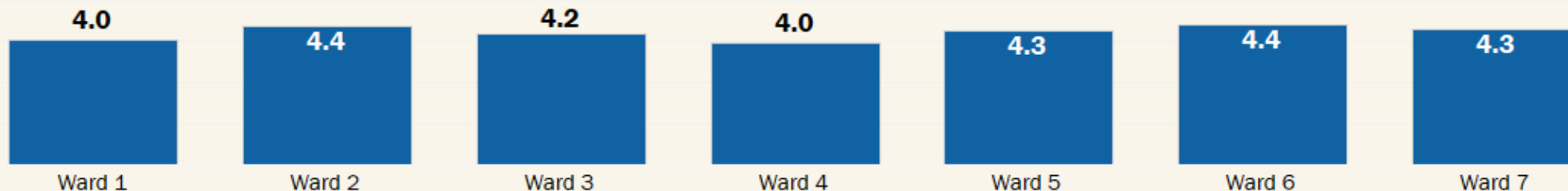


Respondents are very satisfied with social community events

And satisfaction has rebounded from 2021

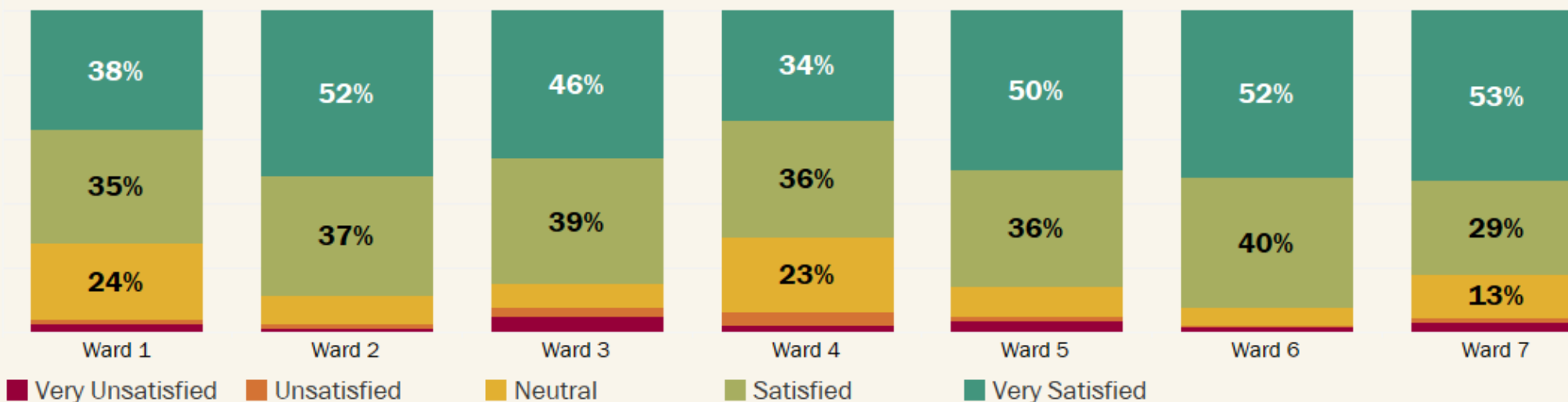
How satisfied are you with social community events? by Ward (2023)

Average score on a scale from 1 to 5 (higher is more satisfied)



How satisfied are you with social community events? by Ward (2023)

Percent of responses by answer choice

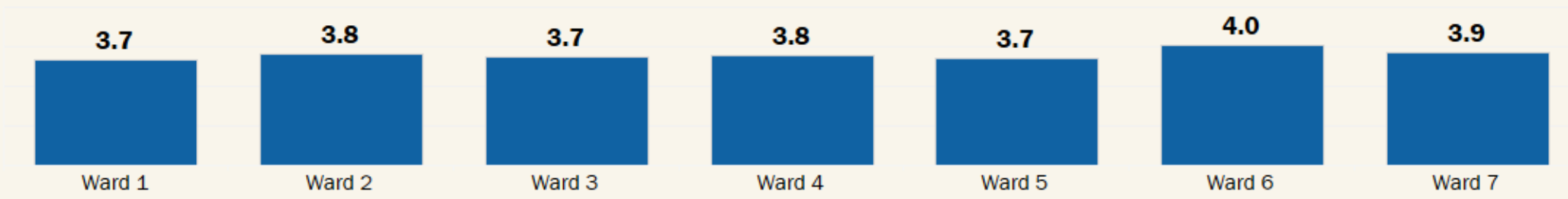




Respondents are satisfied with the availability of information about city services across wards

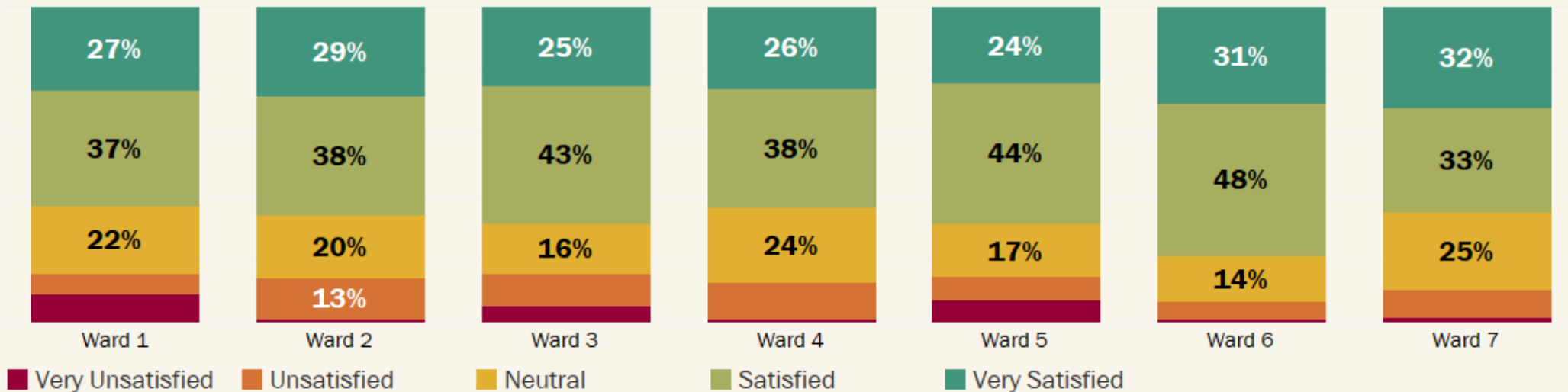
How satisfied are you with the availability of information about city services? by Ward (2023)

Average score on a scale from 1 to 5 (higher is more satisfied)



How satisfied are you with the availability of information about city services? by Ward (2023)

Percent of responses by answer choice

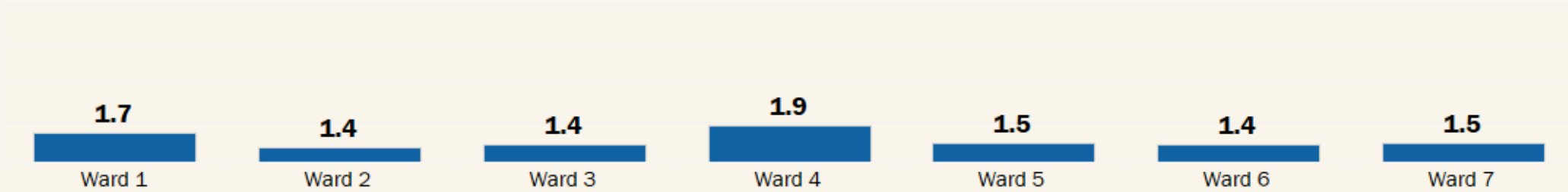


Respondents are not very concerned about crime and violence

Wards 1 and 4 are somewhat more concerned (as of June 2023)

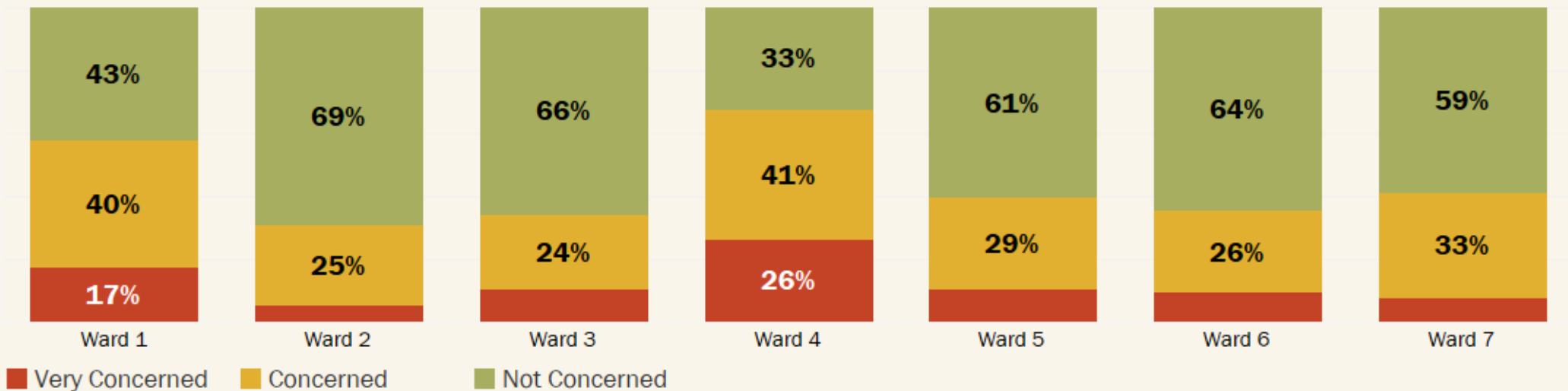
How concerned are you about encountering crime and violence? by Ward (2023)

Average score on a scale from 1 to 3 (higher is more concerned)



How concerned are you about encountering crime and violence? by Ward (2023)

Percent of responses by answer choice



Keep in mind...

The most influential factors can vary by demographic group

These are more influential for **homeowners**



The convenience of getting where you want to go (max effect = 0.9 owners, 0.5 renters)



The availability of information about city services (max effect = 0.9 owners, n.s. renters)



Concern about encountering crime and violence (max effect = -0.4 owners, -0.2 renters)



Social community events (max effect = 0.7 owners, 1.2 renters)



The beauty and physical setting of your neighborhood (max effect = 1.1 owners, 1.0 renters)

while this is more influential for **renters**

and this is influential for both groups.

In general, respondents are most satisfied with **social community events** (which has rebounded since 2021), the **Green Line Extension** (which had recently opened), and their **proximity to grocery stores & other amenities**.

Average score (2023)

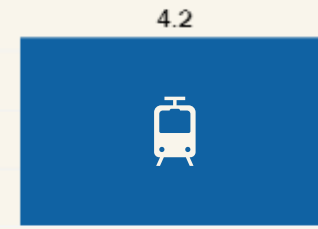
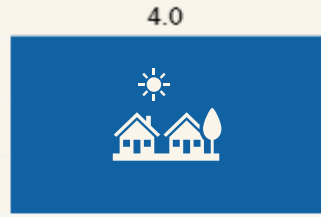
On a scale from 1 to 5 (higher is more positive)

How satisfied are you with your neighborhood?

How satisfied are you with social community events?

How satisfied are you with the Green Line Extension?

How satisfied are you with your proximity to grocery stores and other amenities?



Percent of responses (2023)

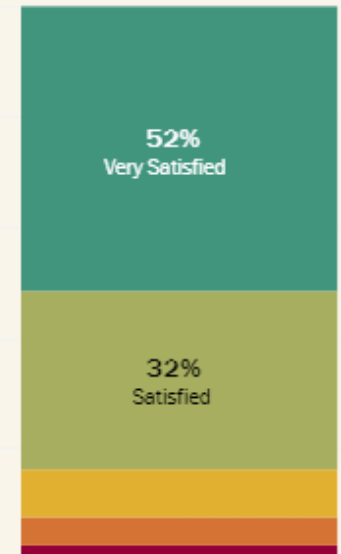
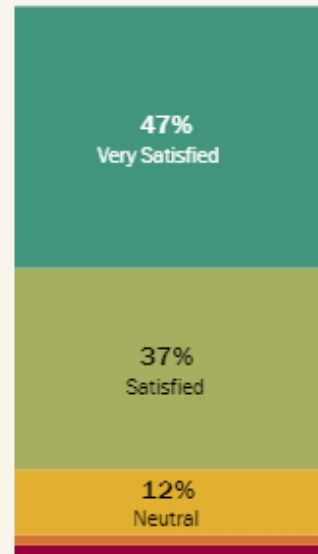
By answer choice

How satisfied are you with your neighborhood?

How satisfied are you with social community events?

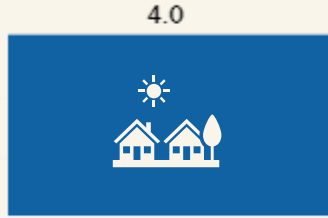
How satisfied are you with the Green Line Extension?

How satisfied are you with your proximity to grocery stores and other amenities?



Respondents are least satisfied with the **cost of housing**, the **maintenance of streets and sidewalks** (especially wards 3 and 4), and the **availability of childcare & out-of-school care** (which has a large segment of non-parent “neutrals”).

How satisfied are you with your neighborhood?

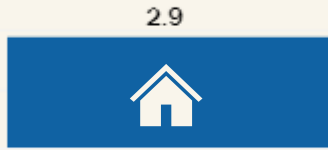


Percent of responses (2023)
By answer choice

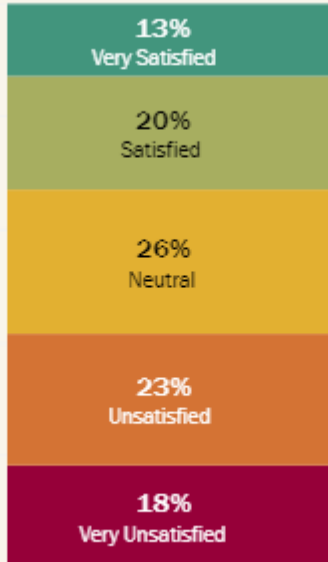
How satisfied are you with your neighborhood?



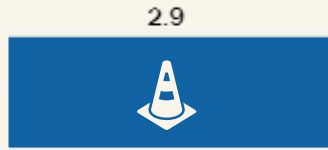
How satisfied are you with the cost of your housing?



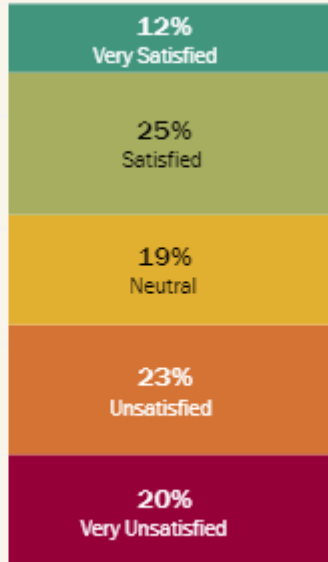
How satisfied are you with the cost of your housing?



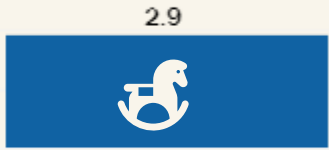
How satisfied are you with the maintenance of streets and sidewalks?



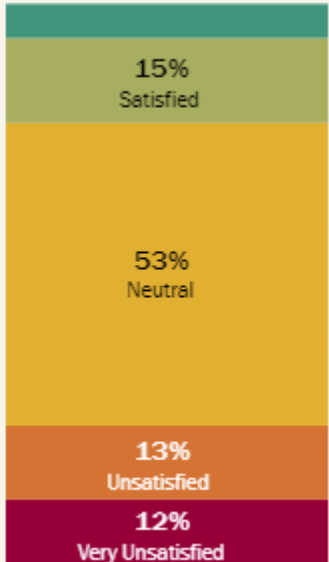
How satisfied are you with the maintenance of streets and sidewalks?



How satisfied are you with the availability of childcare or out-of-school care?



How satisfied are you with the availability of childcare or out-of-school care?



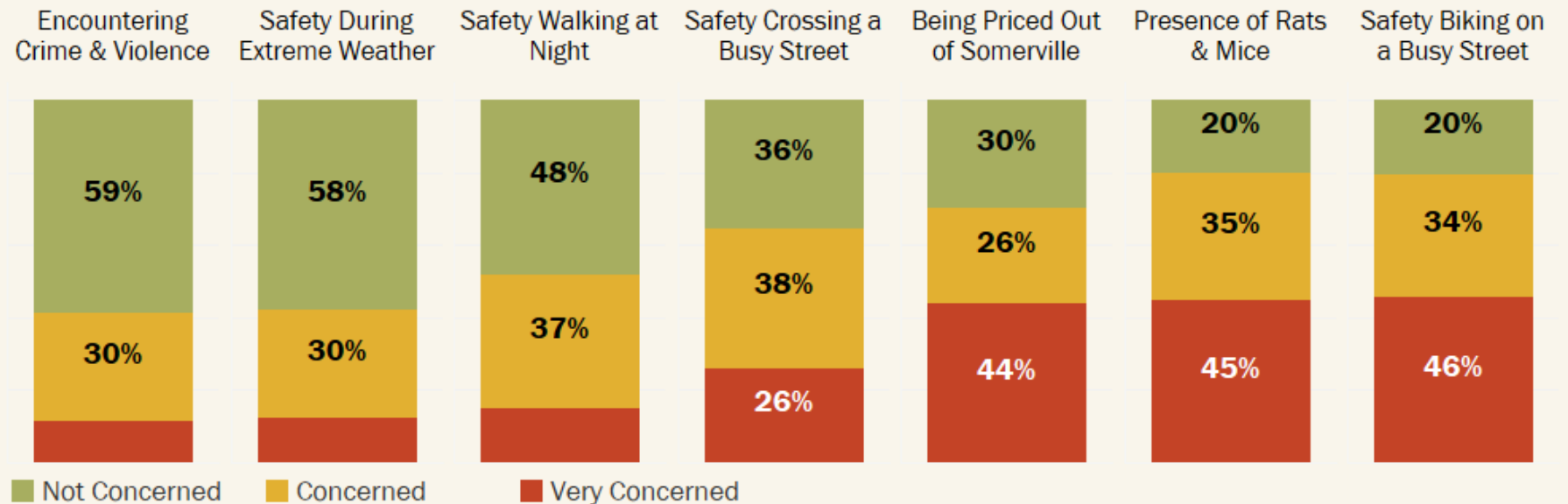
Respondents are most concerned with their **safety biking on a busy street**, the **presence of rats and mice** (especially homeowners), and **being priced out of Somerville** (especially renters).

How concerned are you about the following? (2023)

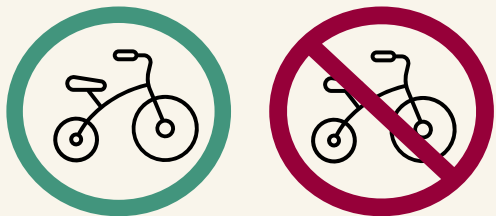
Average concern score on a scale from 1 to 3 (higher is more concerned)



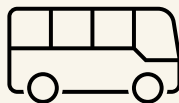
Percent of responses by answer choice



In open text questions, respondents suggested:



Both **more** and **less** cycling and cycling infrastructure.



More frequent public transit and better paved roads.



Rent control & more affordability, as well as improved tenant rights.

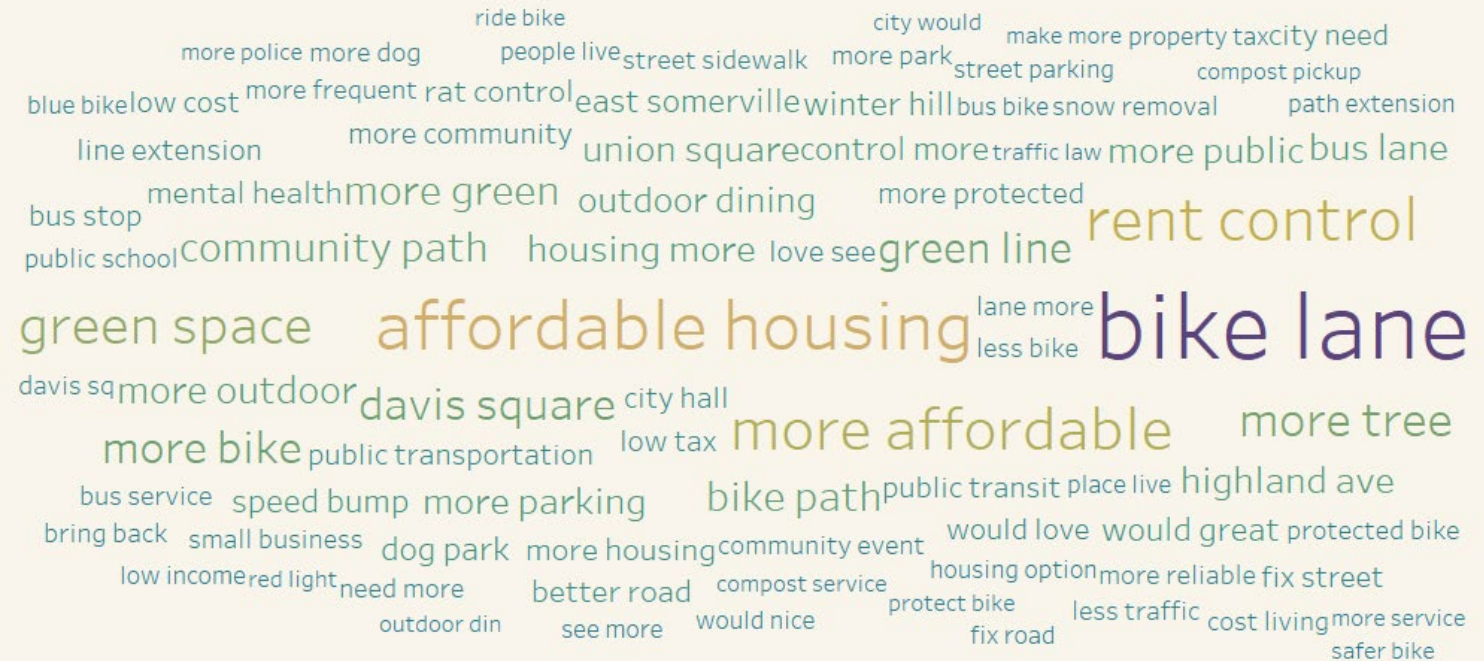
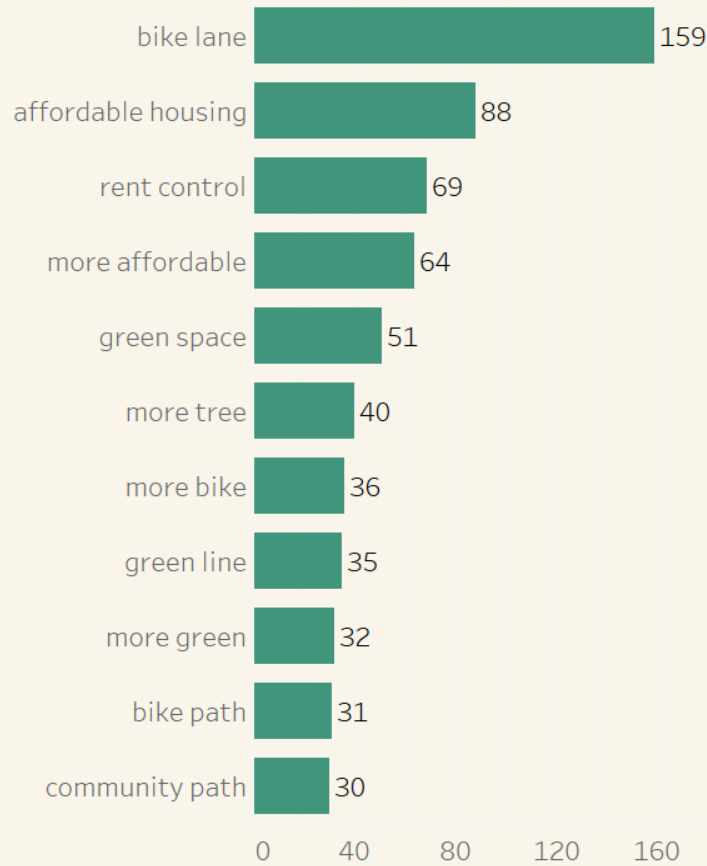


More green spaces and composting.



An extensive hatred for rats.

Most frequent phrases include “bike lane,” “affordable housing,” “green space,” and related terms



Currently available products:

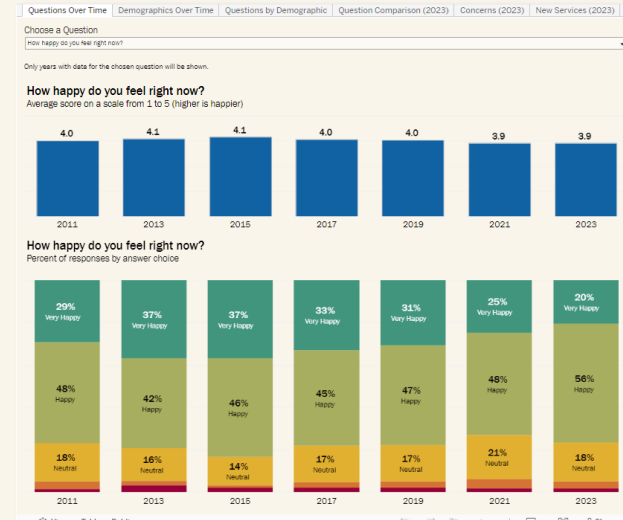
- Open Data (2011-2023)

- [Dataset](#)
- [Data dictionary](#)
- [Data visualization](#)

- “One-page” [Reports](#) (2023)

- Analysis is infinite. Currently available topics include explorations of demographic patterns, rates of reported discrimination, housing affordability, transportation options, and others

- Please reach out to data@somervillema.gov with questions or requests for more topics for reports.



Seniors
Seniors are consistently more satisfied with life in Somerville, but more concerned with safety and crime.

Discrimination
Black and African American respondents and respondents with disabilities report the highest rates of discrimination.

Transportation
Respondents are generally satisfied with transportation options, but there is room to grow, especially with bike and bus lanes.

2025 Survey Planning

Topics/Questions

- Soliciting survey topics/questions for 2025
- Balancing longitudinal data collection with new information

Distribution

- Improved address list
- Improved sampling methods (hoping for block group representativeness)
- Increased outreach to underrepresented groups
- Postcards-first plan to increase response size

QUESTIONS?



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SOMERSTAT

KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR