

## About the Community Survey Methodology

The City of Tempe contracts with [ETC Institute](#) to conduct an unbiased, objective annual community survey to help determine priorities for the community as part of the City's on-going strategic planning process.

### Transparency

ETC Institute creates an online, interactive dashboard for the public to access the survey data. The link to the survey dashboard and associated reports are available at [tempe.gov/surveys](https://tempe.gov/surveys) and detailed data is shared at [open.tempe.gov](https://open.tempe.gov).

### Stratified Random Sampling

The sample for the survey is an address-based stratified random sample. This methodology involves selecting a random sample of 750 households from each of the City's eight-character areas. The survey is mailed to each of the 6,000 households that were randomly selected for the survey.

After the surveys are mailed, ETC Institute sends emails and text messages to the households that received the survey to encourage participation.

The City of Tempe includes survey information in City utility bills, emails to resident distribution lists, and posted information on social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn). The emails and texts contained a link to the online survey ([tempe.gov/surveys](https://tempe.gov/surveys)) to make it easy for residents to complete the survey.

### Controlled Responses

To ensure that the survey is completed by Tempe residents and not by non-residents, everyone who completes the survey online is required to enter their home address prior to submitting the survey. ETC Institute then matches the addresses that were entered by survey respondents with the addresses that were originally selected for the random sample. If the address from a survey respondent does not match one of the addresses selected for the sample, the survey is not counted. If multiple responses are obtained from the same address, only the first response is counted.

### Confidence Level and Interval

The results have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least  $\pm 3.0\%$ . A 95 percent confidence level means that if the poll or survey were repeated, the results would match the results from the actual population 95 percent of the time. The confidence interval ( $\pm 3.0\%$ ) is a range that describes the variation surrounding the survey results.

## Location of Respondents

ETC Institute geocodes the home addresses of respondents to better understand how they rate various City services. The dots on the map included in the results report and on the interactive dashboard show the distribution of survey respondents based on the locations of their home addresses.

## Response Rates

The national average for survey response rates in most communities in the United States is less than 10%. The current and historical response rates for Tempe's community survey are exceptionally good when compared to national norms. Since the response rate for Tempe's annual community survey is comparatively high, ETC Institute can include more questions in the survey because residents of Tempe are more likely to respond to the survey than residents in other communities where ETC Institute conducts similar surveys. The survey is long, but the length of the survey has not diminished the response rate of the survey significantly. In 2017, the response rate for the City's annual community survey was 21.4% compared to 17.2% in 2023.

## Weighting

**ETC Institute weights the sample for the City of Tempe's Community Surveys using the same methods that have been applied by ETC Institute for the City's annual survey for more than a decade.** Since the sample is stratified by Character Area, ETC Institute weights the survey data each year to ensure the geographic distribution of the sample is comparable to the actual distribution of the City's population.

## Population Representation

ETC Institute monitors the distribution of the sample during the administration of the survey to ensure that the composition of the sample is similar with key Census demographics including gender, race, Hispanic ancestry, and income. This is done each year to ensure the sample is representative of the City's population and that each year's sample is comparable to the samples from previous years.

One of the main considerations in the design of the sampling plan for the City's annual community survey is that the survey is longitudinal in nature. Although a new sample is selected each year, the survey is used to study trends, patterns, and developments in the City over time, which requires a much more comprehensive level of sample management than a one-time survey. In contrast, a one-time survey is often used to gather information about a specific event, situation, or opinion at a particular moment. If the City's sample for the annual community survey were not managed well, changes in the survey results from one year to the next could simply be caused by changes in the composition of the sample rather than changes in the attitudes/priorities of residents.

Managing the sampling of residents based on the age of respondents has been a point of discussion since ETC Institute first began conducting surveys for the City of Tempe in 1997.

Given the City's large student population, the Census estimates that more than 50% of the City's population is between 18-34 years of age. For this reason, there has historically been a concern that the needs of older, permanent residents would be under-represented if the sample were weighted to the Census. To address this issue and ensure the results would not radically change based on the number of student residents living in the City at the time the survey is administered, the sampling plan for the survey is designed to ensure that approximately 20% of the final weighted sample for each year's survey is represented by each of the following five age groups: 18-34 years, 34-44 years, 45-54 years, 55-64 years, and 65+ years.

Although age and some demographic variables like home ownership, which are correlated with age, do not match the Census estimates for the reasons described above, the survey is representative of most demographic groups in the community. To ensure Hispanics are well-represented, ETC Institute conducts the survey in both English and Spanish, alongside targeted postcards, and social media ads for Spanish speaking residents.

### **Don't Know Responses**

Since the number of "don't know" responses often reflect the utilization and awareness of City services, the percentage of "don't know" responses are included with the tabular data section of the report. When the "don't know" responses are excluded, the text of the report indicates that the responses are excluded with the phrase "who had an opinion."

### **Question Design**

The questions are designed to be used longitudinally to objectively assess the implementation of the City's Strategic Plan. By asking questions the same way each year, ETC Institute can provide an objective assessment of resident attitudes. Unlike push polls, which are generally conducted over short periods of time to lead respondents toward a predetermined viewpoint about a one-time issue or event, the longitudinal nature of the city's annual community survey provides an objective platform for consistently and objectively measuring resident attitudes about a wide range of community issues over time.

### **Reports**

ETC Institute provides reports containing:

- Summary of the methodology for administering the survey
- Major findings
- Charts for the overall results for most questions on the survey
- Demographic information of survey respondents
- Trend charts with comparisons of the most recent results to the previous year and 2007 (the first year the survey was administered) results, where available
- Benchmarking analysis for how Tempe's results compare with other communities
- Importance-Satisfaction analysis identifying priorities
- Tabular data showing the overall results for all questions on the survey
- Survey instrument
- Open-ended comments with personally identifiable information redacted