Zencity-City of Akron Community Survey
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is Zencity?
Zencity is a community input and insights platform that local governments use to make data-backed decisions based on feedback from more residents. By utilizing technology to lower barriers to participation, Zencity gathers input from more resident voices, delivering the data leaders need to identify priorities, improve services, and increase resident satisfaction.

Q: What is the Zencity Community Survey? How does it work?
Zencity's Community Survey is intended to measure resident satisfaction levels on issues relating to the quality of life and community services and deliver representative, ongoing results. The survey uses digital ads to reach residents on a variety of platforms through the devices they're already using, such as smartphones and tablets. Through these targeted ads, Zencity is able to assemble a representative sample of the community and ensure that voices that might not be included in traditional survey formats are heard. The resulting survey data is then weighted based on the unique demographics of your community according to U.S. census data to enable local government leaders to be more responsive to the concerns, attitudes, and priorities of the entire community.

Q: How will this data be used?
The City of Akron will be using survey data from the community to better understand and respond to community priorities and local concerns that are impacting or important to residents. The data will enable City leaders to identify specific issues that matter to residents. And because the survey is ongoing, the data also gives leaders the opportunity to see how resident satisfaction is changing over time.

Q: Why is it necessary?
It is vital that local governments be more responsive and inclusive, lowering the barriers for their constituents to have their voices heard. Community meetings and other engagement channels remain an integral part of local government but present a higher burden of participation. Augmenting these approaches through digital means enables us to reach residents more easily, instead of making them come to us. Additionally, because you can only improve what is measured, Zencity aims to provide better data and information to government leaders to help them understand the impact they're making.

Q: How do residents participate?
When a resident visits a website or opens a mobile app, they may see an ad inviting them to answer a short survey about their city, in the places on the screen where they are already accustomed to receiving ads. Once a resident clicks on the invitation, they are quickly redirected to the short questionnaire. Consisting of approximately 35 questions, residents can generally complete it in just a few minutes. There is no need to download an app or create an account on another site, minimizing a common barrier to participation.

Q: Will the responses submitted via digital ads and submitted directly via the link provided by the City be equally counted in the results?
In order to ensure the survey results offer a representative view of the community sentiment, based on demographics established by the U.S. Census Bureau only those responses fielded via digital ads are incorporated into the satisfaction scores for local services. Non-official scores using all the data will also be shared with the City of Akron. However, all responses to the opened-ended questions are included in the results.

Q: So then why do you even collect responses directly and not from the digital ads if those are not included in the satisfaction scores.
For two reasons. First, to allow anyone who wishes to participate to have their voice heard by the City of Akron, who will still receive the feedback even though it will not be included in the official satisfaction scores which must be derived from a representative sample. Second, in smaller municipalities in order to ensure a representative of sometimes very small demographic groups in a particular community, occasionally some non-ad-fielded responses are incorporated in the final scores to augment ad-fielded responses.

Q: So why not just use this same method for all clients and incorporate all responses into the scores?
In order to ensure methodology rigor and representativeness, it is better to minimize proactive responses in the calculator of the official satisfaction scores as definitionally proactive responses are not from a representative group (those seeking to participate in the survey).

Q: Why do you distribute the survey with digital ads?
According to a 2021 study by the Pew Research Center, 93% of adults in the United States use the internet, positioning it as a modern "public square" for reaching and hearing from a wide variety of voices; the same research shows just how widespread Internet adoption is across characteristics like race, gender, and community type, as well as hard to reach groups, like younger people. In other words, digital ads give us the best ability to collect feedback from a large and diverse sample of respondents and to hear from more voices in the community.

Q: But don't the people who choose to click on the ad and the survey similarly skew the results?
Non-response is an issue across all types of survey research, and Zencity takes a strategic approach to recruiting respondents in order to minimize potential bias. First, Zencity targets as wide a range of potential respondents as possible across a variety of different platforms, to reach as diverse an audience as possible. Second, Zencity deliberately designs its recruitment content to appeal to a wide range of residents, not just those with a particular interest or point of view. And finally, Zencity continually monitors the characteristics of respondents across all of its recruitment channels, to make sure that they are continually recruiting diverse and representative samples.

Q: How do you verify people live in the community?

Zencity uses existing digital advertising networks to target digital advertisements, localized to reach each community. Those who see the ad and choose to take the surveys voluntarily provide their ZIP code. The combination of where the ads are targeted combined with the respondent's self-reported ZIP code enables the assignment of a response to a community. This enables local government leaders to better serve their constituents by knowing local concerns, attitudes, and issues.

It is important to note that survey responses are only assigned to a community based on an anonymous, voluntary sharing of generalized location information. It is not possible to assign a response to a specific location or an individual.

Q. What questions will be asked?
The survey tool will measure resident satisfaction regarding local services and quality of life in the community, while also identifying key concerns residents want the local government to address. Topics include affordable housing, health care, economy and jobs, transportation, public safety, and education.

Q: Can residents see the data and survey results?
Zencity works with the City of Akron to publish Community Surveys results on a semi-annual basis. Reports will be generated in July and January.

Q: How many residents will be surveyed?
Sampling requirements are calculated to exceed industry standards for methodological rigor and depend on the size and demographic makeup of the community. Typically this means hundreds or thousands of responses will be collected.

Q: How do you ensure the accuracy and inclusiveness of the data?
Zencity collects a representative sample of opinions from the population in any geographic area surveyed while minimizing potential sources of statistical bias. Zencity uses proprietary technology to track the demographic representativeness of its samples in real-time and make corresponding adjustments to ad targeting to maximize representativeness. In communities where many residents are not native English speakers, questionnaires are available in multiple languages and reach out to potential respondents in their native languages.

Zencity uses the annually-updated U.S. Census American Community Survey data to set response targets for each geographic area based on different variables including race, age, and sex. Based on self-reported demographic data collected in the survey, they track the demographic representativeness of the respondents in real-time and make adjustments to obtain a closely-representative sample.

Q: Are there any restrictions on how the data can be used?
It is prohibited to use Zencity for electoral campaign purposes, for tracking specific individuals or groups, or any other purpose prohibited by law or Terms of Service of Zencity or any of its data partners.

Q: How do you maintain an individual's anonymity?
Zencity takes protecting privacy and ensuring respondent anonymity seriously. All survey responses are completely confidential and they do not collect any personal information that could identify a specific respondent (except, where applicable, an email address, for those that opt-in to participate in similar surveys in the future). Zencity only collects the survey question responses that are provided, along with anonymous metadata, which is used to improve the quality of the advertisements. There is no way that Zencity can identify an individual from the survey responses provided. For respondents who opt-in to future research, email addresses are not used to link the address to specific survey responses.

Further, Zencity does not share individual-level responses to the surveys with customers, only aggregated numbers, summaries, or disaggregated and anonymized open-ended responses. Zencity removes any information that could potentially be used to de-anonymize comments provided. Finally, all survey responses are stored in secure, encrypted databases, using industry best practices

Zencity's policies and practices are in accordance with the leading data privacy regulations such as, where applicable, the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) and EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The full privacy policy can be found at zencity.io/privacy-policy