

# City of Bellingham

## Service Priorities and Customer Satisfaction Survey

*Survey Key Findings*

Conducted by:



June 2006

## **Survey Purpose**

- ◆ Provide information to help city officials make budget decisions;
- ◆ Identify satisfaction with city service delivery;
- ◆ Determine levels of support and priority for various services;
- ◆ One of many ways to involve the public in decision making;
- ◆ Help determine if vocal individuals and groups represent broad-based opinions and perceptions
- ◆ Establish benchmarking data and identify trends over time.

***Complete survey results available at [www.cob.org](http://www.cob.org)***

## Methodology

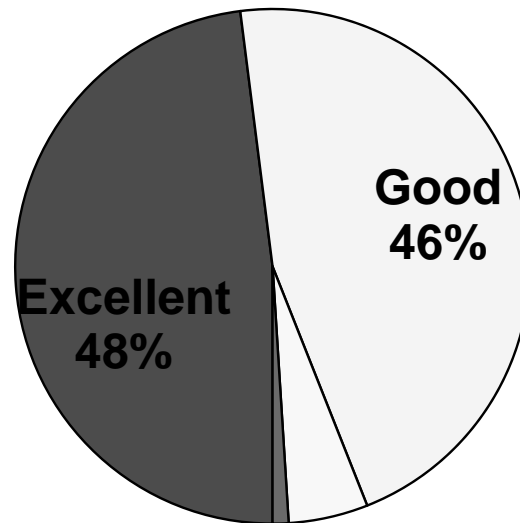
- ◆ These findings are drawn from a telephone survey of 510 registered voters in the City of Bellingham.
- ◆ The overall margin of error for this survey is  $\pm 4.4$  percentage points.
- ◆ Interviews were conducted from June 8 through June 12, 2006.
- ◆ Where relevant, 2006 data is compared with the baseline survey, in which 513 interviews were conducted from June 17 through June 23, 2004.

# General Issue Environment

## Quality of Life (Q4)

Overall, would you rate the quality of life in Bellingham as excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

Chart Title



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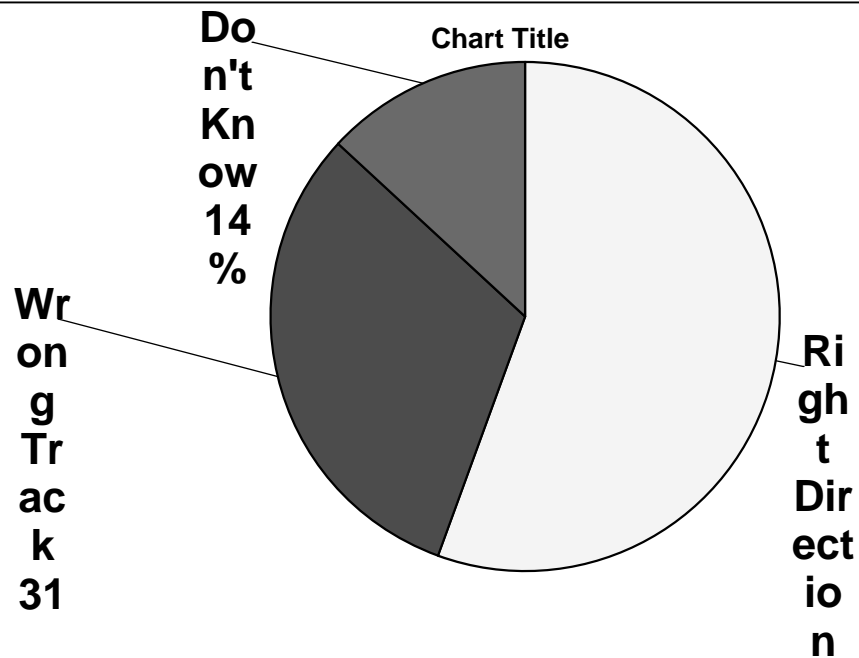
## **General Issue Environment**

### **Quality of Life (Q4) continued**

- ◆ Nearly all (94%) respondents rate the quality of life in Bellingham as either “excellent” (48%) or “good” (46%).
- ◆ This is statistically identical to the benchmark measure established in June 2004 (49% Excellent, 43% Good, 7% Only Fair, 1% Poor).

## General Issue Environment Direction (Q5)

Do you feel Bellingham is generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things have gotten seriously off on the wrong track?



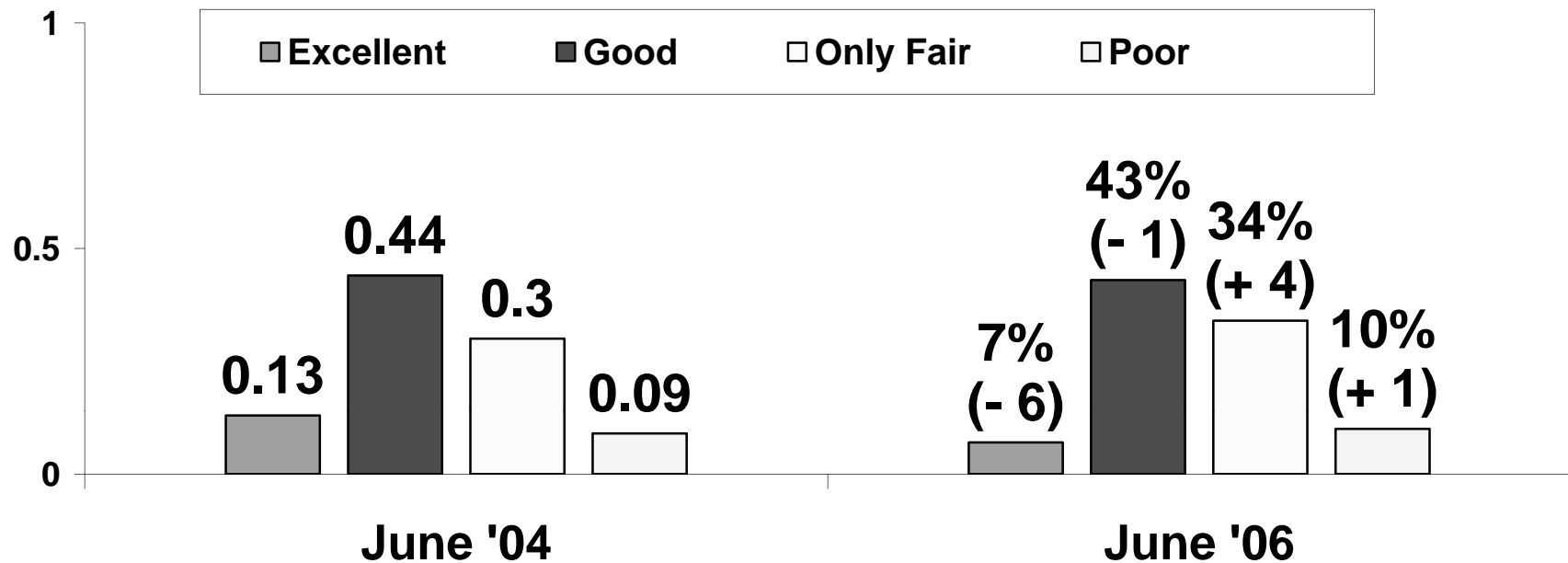
- ◆ A majority (55%) remain (57% in 2004) optimistic about the overall direction Bellingham is heading.

# General Issue Environment

## Job Rating: City of Bellingham (Q24)

Using a scale of excellent, good, fair, or poor, how would you rate the job the City of Bellingham is doing meeting community needs?

### Meeting the Community's Needs



## **General Issue Environment**

### **Job Rating: City of Bellingham (Q24) continued**

- ◆ Half (50%) say that the city of Bellingham is doing either an “Excellent” (7%) or “Good” (43%) job meeting community needs. This is a slight decrease of 7 points (57% in 2004) since the benchmark measurement in 2004.

## **General Issue Environment Most Important Problem? (Q6)**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Top Responses</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>
1	Growth/Development	31%	38%
2	Traffic/Congestion	10%	10%
3	Unemployment/Need More Jobs/Better Paying Jobs	7%	5%
4	Affordable Housing	3%	5%
5	Water Quality/Lake Whatcom	8%	4%
6	City Spending/Money Issues	9%	3%
7	Water front Issues	2%	3%
8	Taxes	2%	3%
9	Crime/Need Bigger Jail/More Police	3%	2%
10	Need a Better Business Climate	2%	2%

## **General Issue Environment**

### **Most Important Problem? (Q6) continued**

- ◆ **When asked open-ended, “Growth/Development (38%)” remains the most important problem facing Bellingham today that city leaders can do something about. This is a 7% increase from the benchmark measure established in 2004. Comprising the 38% who mention growth, 9% say “controlling or managing growth”, 8% say “better planning for growth”, and 21% give a general mention.**
- ◆ **In other cities of similar scope in the region “growth,” as well as growth related issues (i.e. traffic/congestion), rank at the top of the “Most important problem” list.**

# General Issue Environment

## Favorable Ratings (Q7-17)

Official/Organization	2004	2006
	%Fav/%Unfav	%Fav/%Unfav
Bellingham Parks and Recreation	92/6	91/7
Bellingham Public Library	90/6	91/3
The Bellingham Fire Department	93/1	90/3
The Bellingham Police Department	88/8	89/7
Mount Baker Theatre	88/6	88/5
Whatcom Museum of History and Art	81/4	80/4
Whatcom Medic One	74/3	77/3
Children's Museum	73/3	74/3
The Bellingham City Council	55/29	59/28
The Mayor of Bellingham	54/35	55/33
Bellingham Planning & Community Development	NA	43/34

## **General Issue Environment Favorable Ratings (Q7-17)**

The only statistically significant change in favorable ratings since 2004 was with the Fire Department. Although the total % favorable saw little change, the % “strongly favorable” dropped 10 points from 74% to 64% in 2006 (not shown in chart).

# General Issue Environment

## Job Ratings (Q18-26)

Official/Organization	2004	2006
	%Pos./%Neg.	%Pos./%Neg.
The job the Bellingham Fire Department is doing serving and protecting the community	95 / 4	90 / 6
The job the Bellingham Police Department is doing serving and protecting the community	83 / 16	81 / 16
The job Whatcom Medic One is doing providing emergency medical services	82 / 5	76 / 8
The job the City of Bellingham is doing meeting community needs	57 / 39	50 / 44
The job the city is doing protecting the livability of neighborhoods	NA	49 / 46
The overall financial health of the City of Bellingham	50 / 30	48 / 35
The job the mayor of Bellingham is doing	47 / 48	42 / 49
The job the Bellingham City Council is doing	46 / 46	41 / 52
The job the city is doing planning for growth	NA	30 / 66

## **General Issue Environment**

### **Job Ratings (Q18-26)**

- ◆ **Similar to the favorable rating, the Fire Department experienced a significant shift in the intensity of their job rating. The number of respondents who give the Fire Department an “Excellent” rating dropped 12 points from 61% in 2004 to 49% in 2006.**
- ◆ **Medic One experienced a similar shift in intensity, with the number of respondents saying “Excellent” dropping 9 points from 45% in 2004 to 36% in 2006.**

# Services and Priorities

## Priorities Ranked (Q27-40)

Services Ranked by Mean Priority (highest possible mean: 7.00)	2004	2006
Providing fire protection services	6.40	6.30
Preventing crime and protecting the community	6.20	6.10
Providing medic one emergency medical services	6.22	6.08
Maintaining library services for the community	5.86	5.84
Guiding development to protect the environment and promote healthy neighborhoods.	NA	5.66
Involving the public in making decisions that affect the community	NA	5.61
Maintaining parks and trails	5.52	5.59
Improving roads, such as fixing potholes, signage, and traffic lights	5.40	5.41
Communicating with citizens about city issues, decisions, services	NA	5.29
Providing recreational programs for youth and adults	5.36	5.25
Providing educational/cultural opportunities through the children's museum	5.30	5.13
Encouraging economic development and business growth in B'ham	5.27	5.13
Maintaining the historic and arts collection museum	4.86	5.10
Supporting the Mount Baker Theatre	4.66	4.75

## **Services and Priorities**

### **Priorities Ranked (Q27-40)**

- ◆ **Fire, police, and EMS services continue to receive the highest priority from respondents. These findings are consistent with other cities of similar scope in the Puget Sound region.**

# Services and Priorities

## Job Rating of Services (Q41-54)

Services Ranked by Job Rating	2004 % Positive	2006 % Positive
Providing fire protection services	92	90
Maintaining library services for the community	79	82
Maintaining parks and trails	86	81
Providing medic one emergency medical services	78	80
Preventing crime and protecting the community	74	76
Providing recreational programs for youth and adults	74	72
Supporting the Mount Baker Theatre	71	70
Maintaining the historic and arts collection museum	71	67
Providing educational/cultural opportunities through children's museum	64	62
Improving roads, such as fixing potholes, signage, and traffic lights	56	52
Guiding development to protect the environment and promote healthy neighborhoods	NA	47
Encouraging economic development & business growth in B'ham	50	44
Communicating with citizens about city issues, decisions, services	NA	42
Involving the public in making decisions that affect the community	NA	38

## **Services and Priorities**

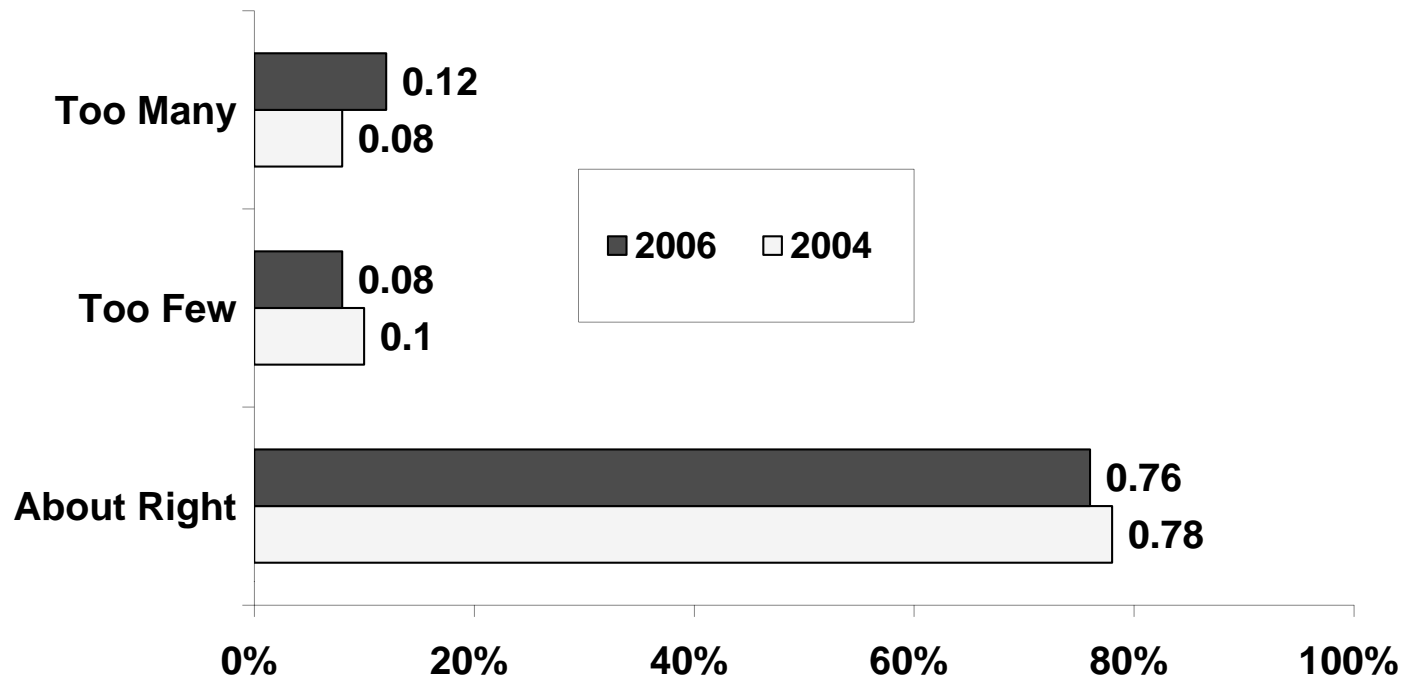
### **Job Rating of Services (Q41-54)**

**The most significant shift from the 2004 benchmark was the rating respondents gave the city for “encouraging economic development/business growth.” The % positive rating dropped 6 points from 50% in 2004 to 44% in 2006.**

# Taxation and Level of Service

## Number of Services Provided (Q55)

In terms of public services provided by the City of Bellingham, do you think that overall, the city provides too many services, too few services, or about the right amount of services?



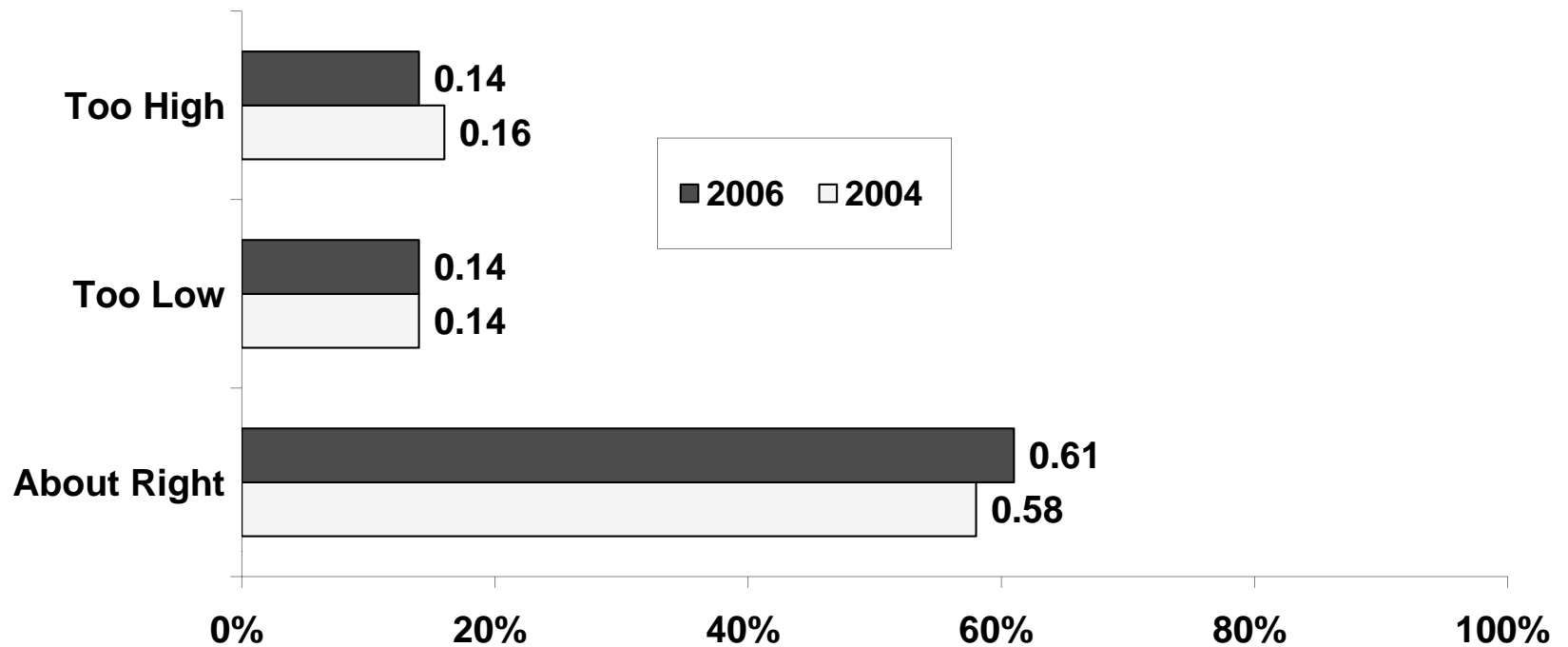
## **Taxation and Level of Service Number of Services Provided (Q55)**

- ◆ **Most (76%) feel that the City of Bellingham provides about the right amount of services. This is statistically identical to the benchmark measure established in 2004.**
- ◆ **The distribution of responses in this item are nearly identical to other cities in the Puget Sound region of similar size and growth rate.**

## Taxation and Level of Service

### Share of Property Taxes (Q56)

As you may know, twenty-two percent (25% in 2004 survey) of your property taxes go to the City of Bellingham. Would you say that amount is too high, too low, or about the right amount?



## **Taxation and Level of Service**

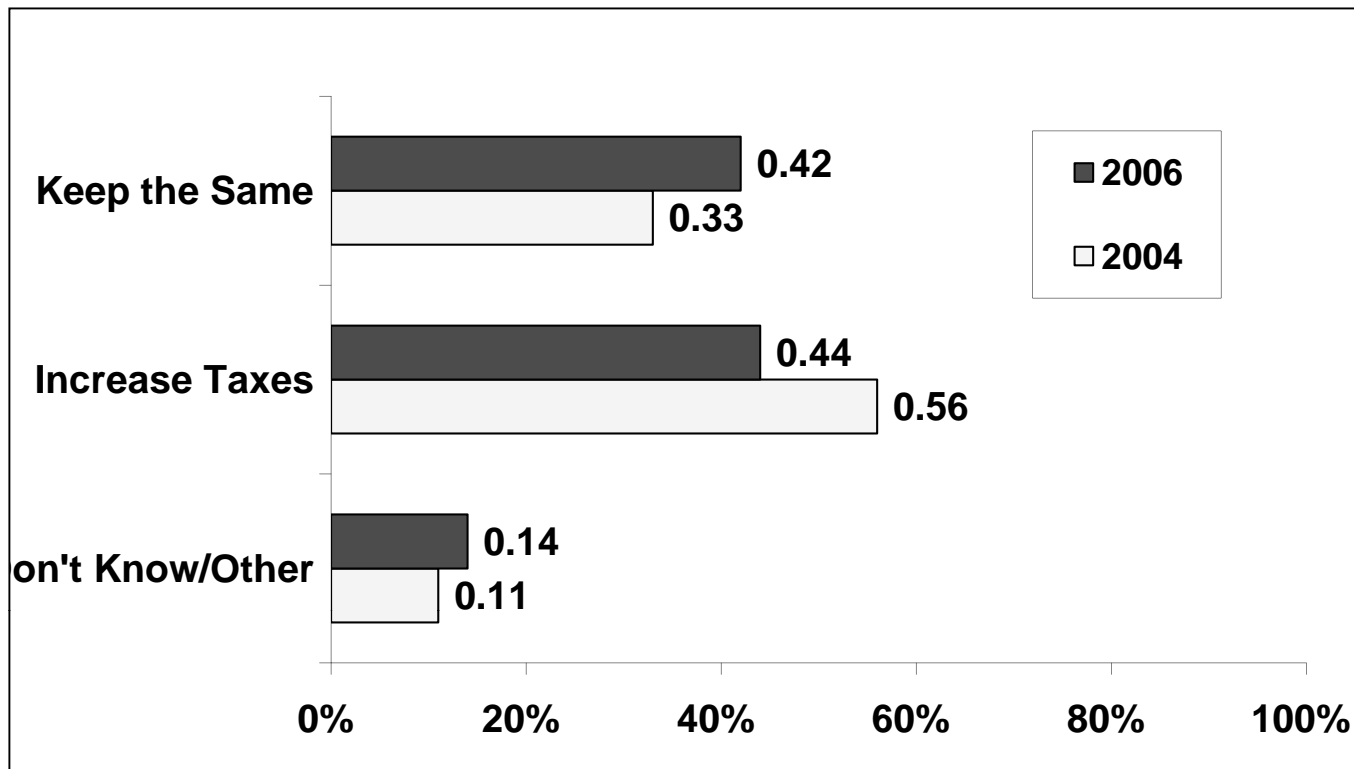
### **Share of Property Taxes (Q56)**

- ◆ Lowering the % of property taxes that go to the City of Bellingham to 22% in the 2006 survey (25% in 2004) did not yield any significant differences.
- ◆ A strong majority (61%) say that twenty-two percent is “about the right amount.”

# Taxation and Level of Service

## Increase Taxes v. Keep the Same and Cut Services (Q57)

If you had to choose only one, which of the following would you choose for the City of Bellingham? Would you choose to increase taxes to maintain city services at current levels to keep up with inflation and citizens' demand for services or keep taxes the same and cut existing services?



## **Taxation and Level of Service**

### **Increase Taxes v. Keep the Same and Cut Services (Q57)**

- ◆ **In the 2006 survey 42% (33% in 2004, increase of 9%) of respondents would choose to “keep taxes the same and cut existing services” and 44% (56% in 2004, decrease of 12%) would choose to “increase taxes to maintain city services at current levels to keep up with inflation and citizens’ demand for services.” This is a 21% net shift toward “keep taxes the same”, a significant shift since the 2004 benchmark survey.**

# **Taxation and Level of Service**

## **Increase Taxes v. Keep the Same and Cut Services (Q58)**

**If the City of Bellingham was to cut city services, what services do you think the City of Bellingham should cut when inflation and citizens' demand for services outpace revenues?**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Top Responses</b>	<b>2004**</b>	<b>2006</b>
1	Parks and recreation	11%	12%
2	Cut government salaries/Jobs/Benefits	5%	8%
3	Museums (general)	6%	7%
4	Economic development/Money to business	3%	5%
5	Mt. Baker Theatre	6%	4%
6	Children's museum/Items for children	3%	4%
7	Road Maintenance	-	3%
8	Arts	2%	3%
9	Cultural events/services (general)	7%	2%
10	Fire Departments	-	2%

## **Taxation and Level of Service**

### **Increase Taxes v. Keep the Same and Cut Services (Q58)**

- ◆ **Parks and recreation (12%) remain the top choice of services to cut “when inflation and citizens’ demand for services outpace revenues.”**
- ◆ **\*\*An important note is that in the 2004 survey only those respondents who chose “keep taxes the same and cut services” (33%; n=179) in Q57 were asked this question. In the 2006 survey, all respondents (n=510) were asked this question.**

## **Taxation and Level of Service**

### **Few Services v. Broad Balance (Q59)**

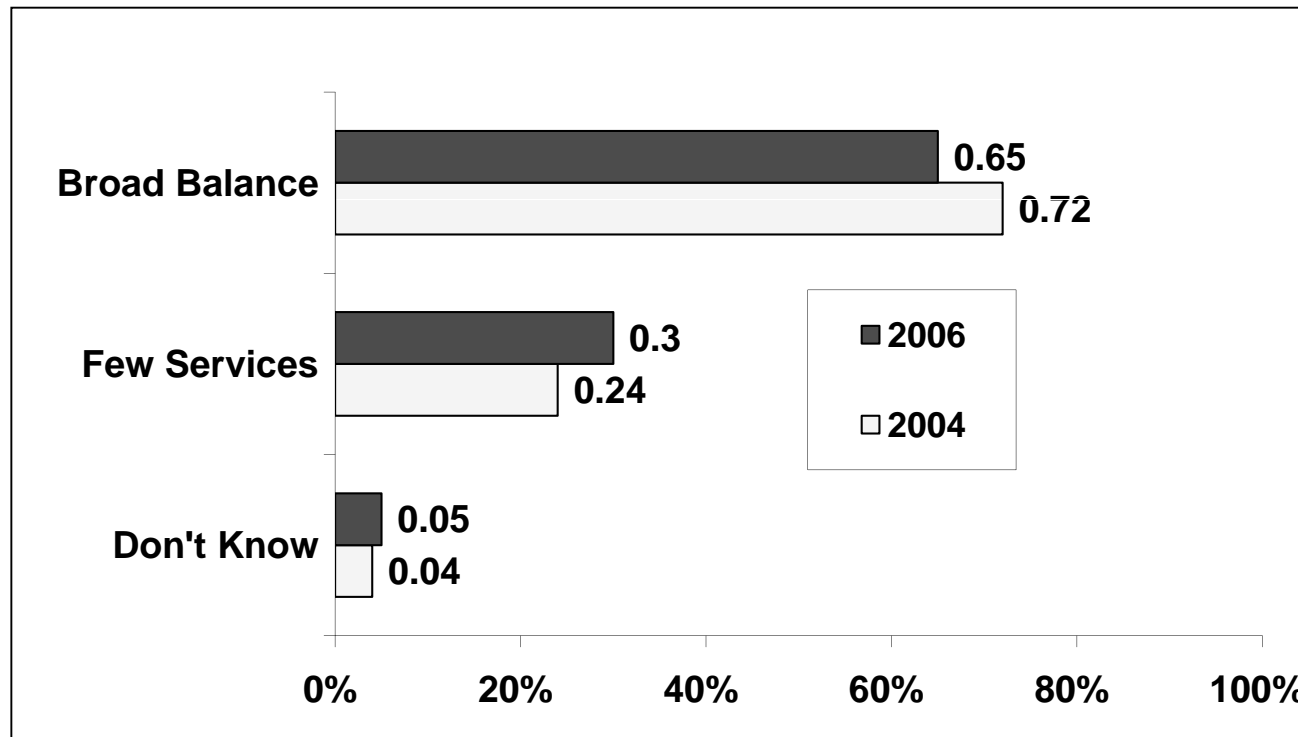
**Now I'm going to read you a couple of statements about city government:**

**Some people say the city should only provide a few services. These services include general public safety measures such as police and fire departments, courts, and road and sidewalk maintenance including crosswalks, fixing potholes, and placing street signs.**

**Others say the city should provide a broader balance of services such as public safety, parks and trails, recreation programs, arts and cultural activities such as the Whatcom Museum of History and Art, libraries and other educational activities for community members. Which of the two comes closest to your view on what services city government should provide?**

## Taxation and Level of Service

### Few Services v. Broad Balance (Q59)



- ◆ Since the 2004 survey, there has been a significant overall net shift of 13 points toward the “few services” ideology. “Broad balance” decreased from 72% in 2004 to 65% in 2006, and “few services” increased from 24% in 2004 to 30% in 2006.

# General Opinions

## Growth, Involvement, and Access to Information (Q61-64)

I'm going to read you a couple of statements about the City of Bellingham. For each, you can say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.

**% Strongly agree / % Somewhat agree**

<b>Bellingham is growing too fast and is losing its character</b>	40 / 31 (71% total agree)
<b>The City of Bellingham does a good job making sure citizens have access to information on issues the City is deciding</b>	15 / 52 (67% total agree)
<b>I am able to get involved when the City of Bellingham is making a decision that impacts me</b>	24 / 45 (69% total agree)
<b>The City of Bellingham listens to neighborhood concerns</b>	18 / 50 (68% total agree)

## **General Opinions**

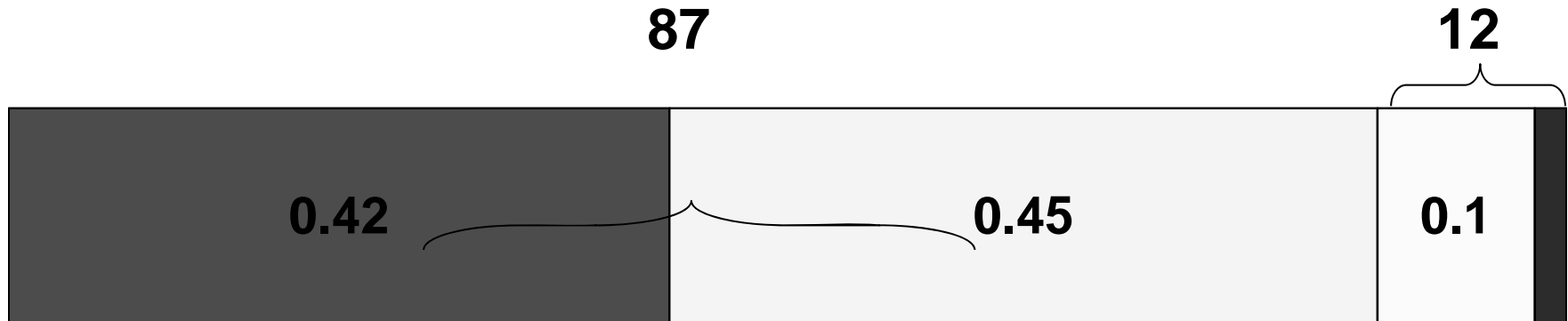
### **Growth, Involvement, and Access to Information (Q61-64)**

- ◆ **Two-thirds (67%) agree that “the City of Bellingham does a good job making sure citizens have access to information on issues the City is deciding.”**
- ◆ **More than 7 out of 10 (71%) agree that “Bellingham is growing too fast and is losing its character.” A significant number, 40%, “strongly agree” with this statement.**
  - **Those age 60 and older are most likely to “strongly agree” with this statement (46% strongly agree), and those between the ages of 25-34 are least likely to “strongly agree” (27%).**

# Staying Informed

## How Interested? (Q60)

In general, how interested would you say you are in staying informed on the issues Bellingham City government is working with, and the decisions it makes on these issues? Would you say you are extremely interested, somewhat interested, mildly interested, or not interested?



■ Extremely interested    □ Somewhat interested    □ Mildly interested    ■ Not interested

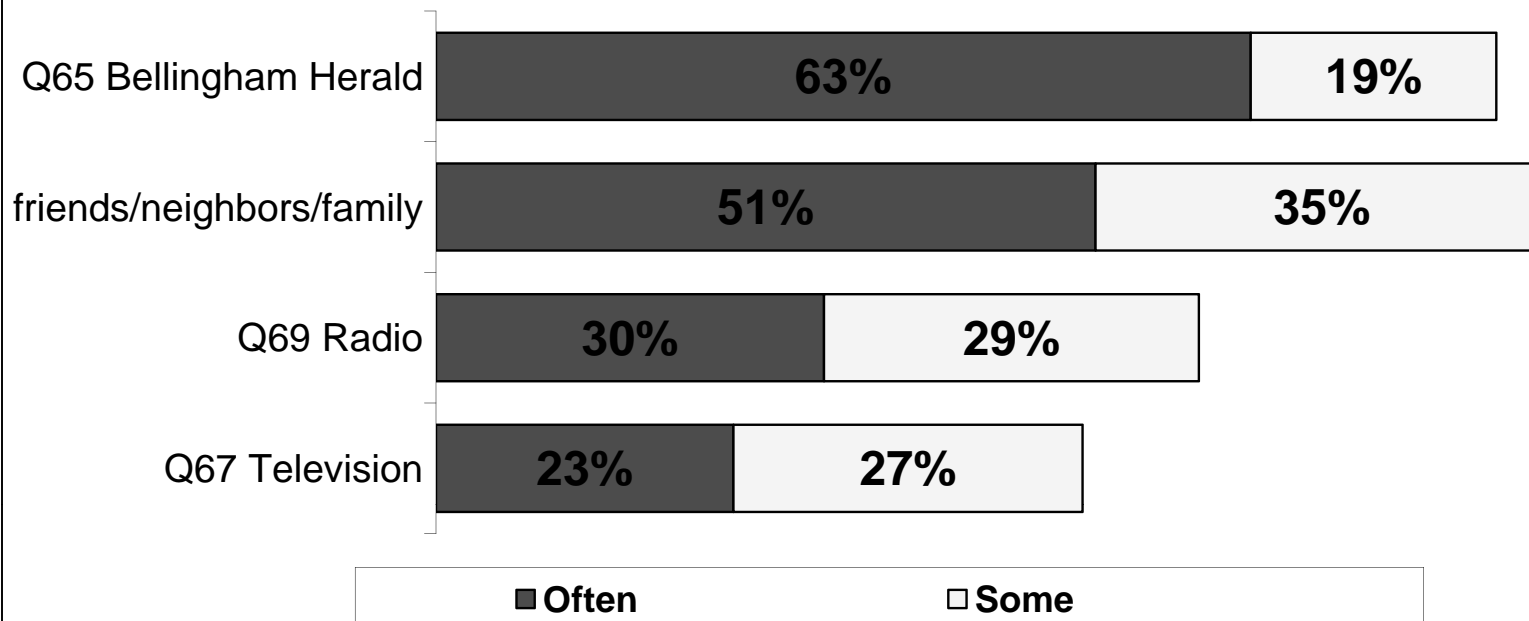
- ◆ Just over 4 out of 10 (42%) say they are “extremely interested” staying informed on the issues Bellingham City government is working with, and the decisions it makes on such issues.
- ◆ An additional 45% say they are “somewhat interested.”

# Staying Informed

## Diverse Sources of Media (Q65-72)

I'm going to read you some places you might get information about the City of Bellingham. For each, please tell me if you use that source to get information about City of Bellingham issues and services. You can say often, sometimes, rarely, or never.

### Top Responses



## **Staying Informed**

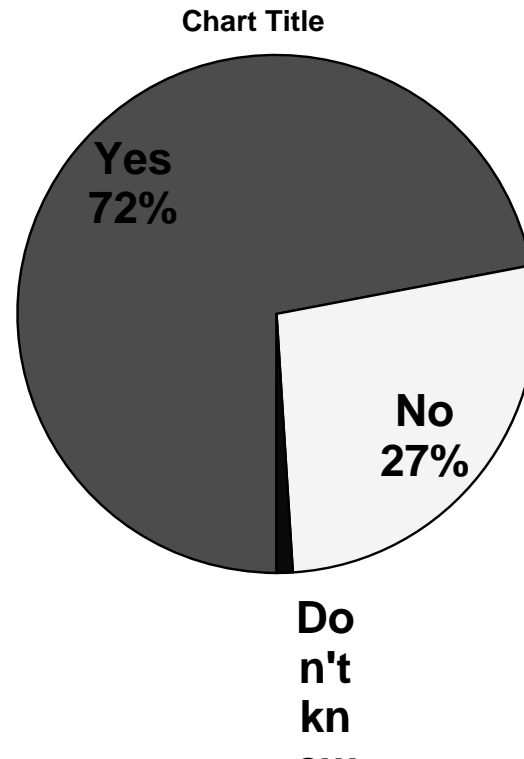
### **Diverse Sources of Media (Q65-72)**

- ◆ **A majority say they use the Bellingham Herald (63%) and word of mouth from friends, family, and neighbors (51%) “often” to get information about City issues and services.**
- ◆ **Among those who say they watch television “often” (23%) or “some” (27%) to get information (50% total), 25% say they watch channel 10/BTV, and an additional 16% say they watch channel 12/KVOS.**

# Staying Informed

## BTV-10 (Q75-76)

Have you heard of Bellingham's City television channel, known as BTV-ten?

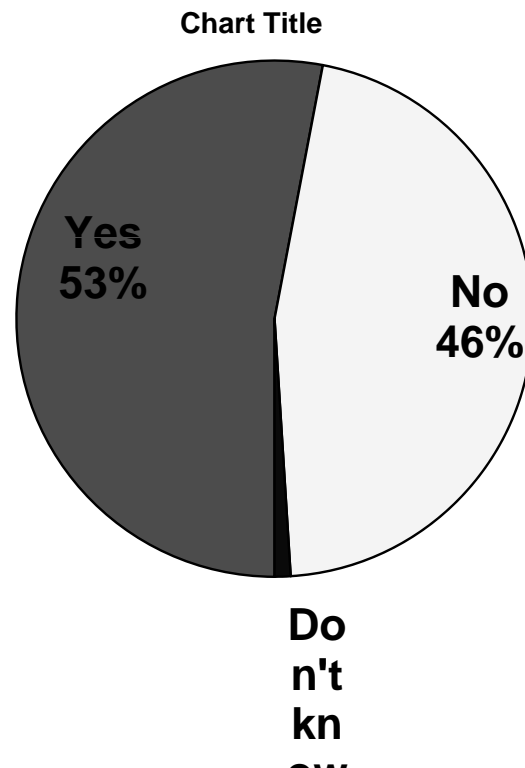


- ◆ Among the 72% (n=367) who have heard of BTV-10, 35% watch at least on a weekly basis (3% watch daily, 7% watch many times per week, and 25% watch weekly).
  - This means that overall, 25% of those surveyed watch BTV-10 on AT LEAST a weekly basis.

# Staying Informed

## COB.ORG (Q78-79)

Have you heard of Bellingham's City website at c o b dot org?



- ◆ Among the 53% (n=270) who have heard of cob.org, 18% visit the site at least on a weekly basis (2% visit daily, 5% visit many times per week, and 11% visit weekly).
  - This means that overall, 10% of those surveyed visit cob.org on **AT LEAST** a weekly basis.

# Summary

COB.ORG

The majority of respondents said:

- ◆ **Quality of life in Bellingham is good;**
- ◆ **They are optimistic and believe Bellingham is headed in the right direction;**
- ◆ **Their major concern is growth and its effects;**
- ◆ **City government is doing a good job meeting community needs, and provides about the right amount of service;**
- ◆ **They want to be informed and involved, and they receive information about city government from many different places.**