

Public Attitudes Toward Municipal Services in Hartford

A Public Opinion Survey Conducted for the
City of Hartford

by

JEF Associates

In accordance with Public Bid # 4198

Methodology

- Poll was conducted between 3/10/08 and 3/16/08
- 600 residents of Hartford (margin of error 4.0%)
- Sample demographics (gender, age, education, neighborhood, racial & ethnic identity, homeownership, children per household) agree with the most recent census data.

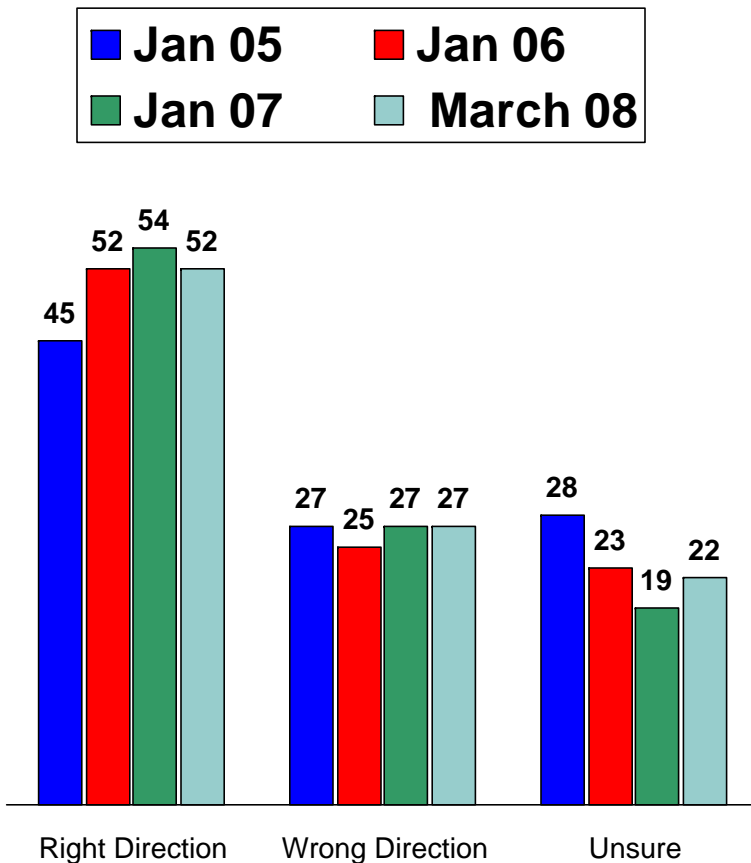
Summary Findings

- The public's perception is that Hartford is still moving in the right direction.
- We found most of the departments and programs tested showed a slight downward trend reversing the positive trend of last year. However, public safety and the quality of life both increased significantly.

Summary Findings

- As with last year, general perceptions of the direction of the City as a whole were more positive than the results of testing specific issues or services. Reality needs to catch up with perception. (Specific service grades versus overall.)
- To close that gap, you need to affect people on a personal level – on what matters to them. Communication is also a major factor. Results show this area improving and that must continue.

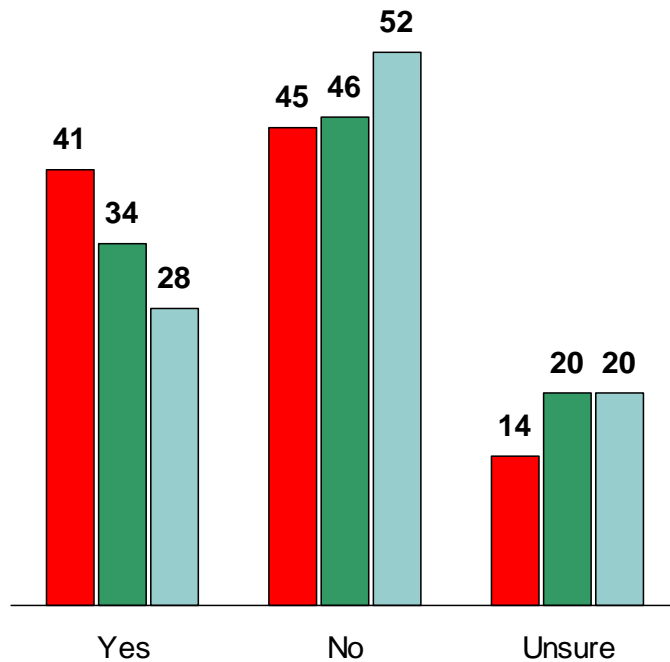
In your opinion, is the City of Hartford going in the right direction or the wrong direction?



- The number of people who think Hartford is going in the right direction continues to exceed 50%.

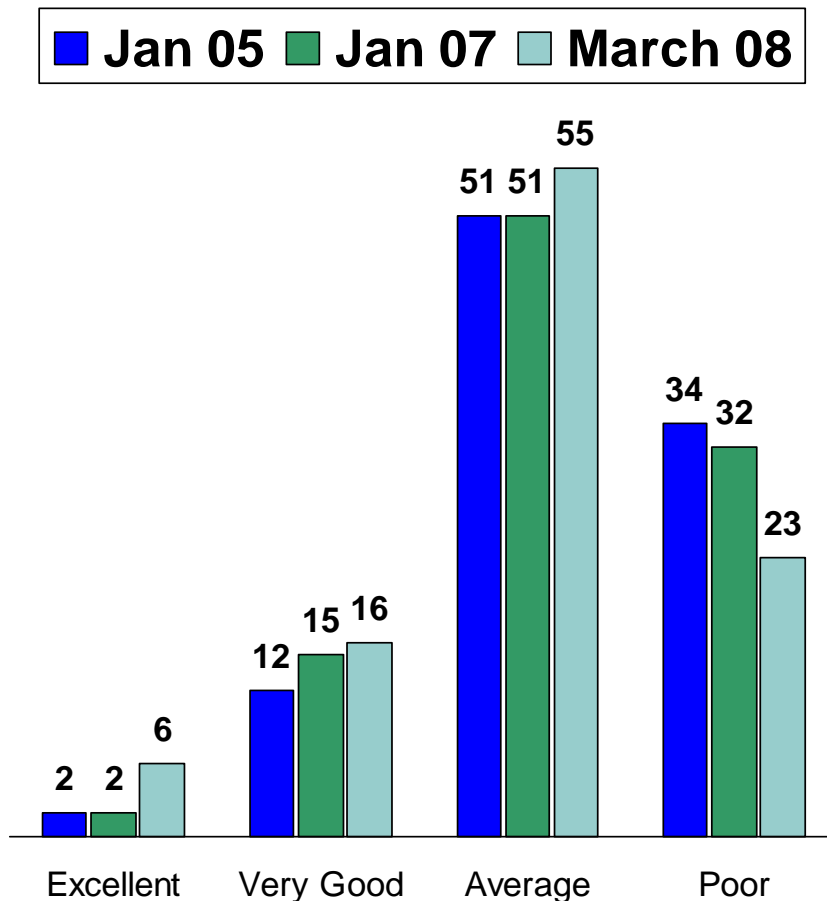
Do you believe there is adequate affordable housing in Hartford?

■ Jan 06 ■ Jan 07 ■ March 08



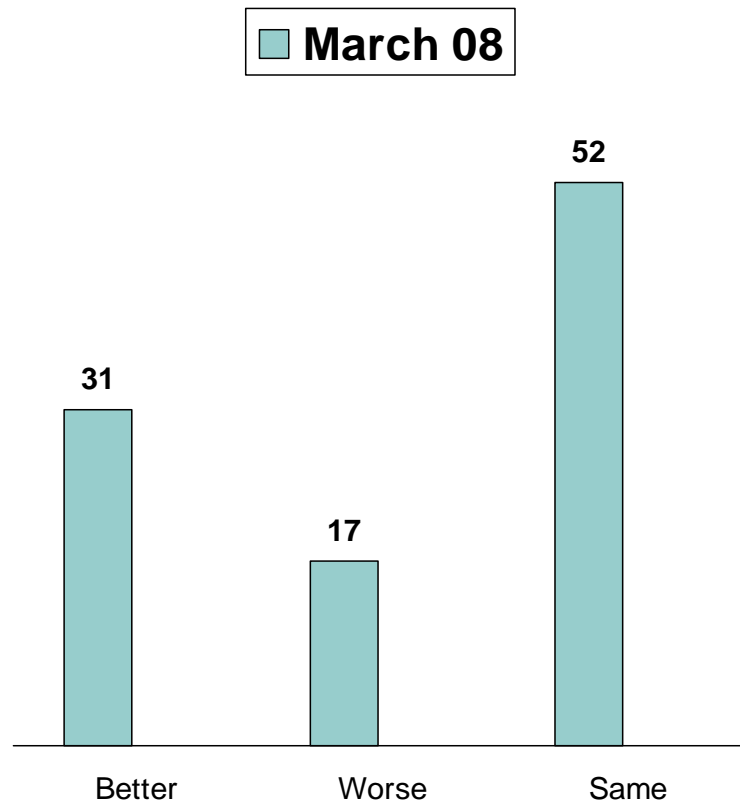
- There are a significant number of people who believe that there is not enough affordable housing in Hartford.

How would you rate public safety in Hartford?



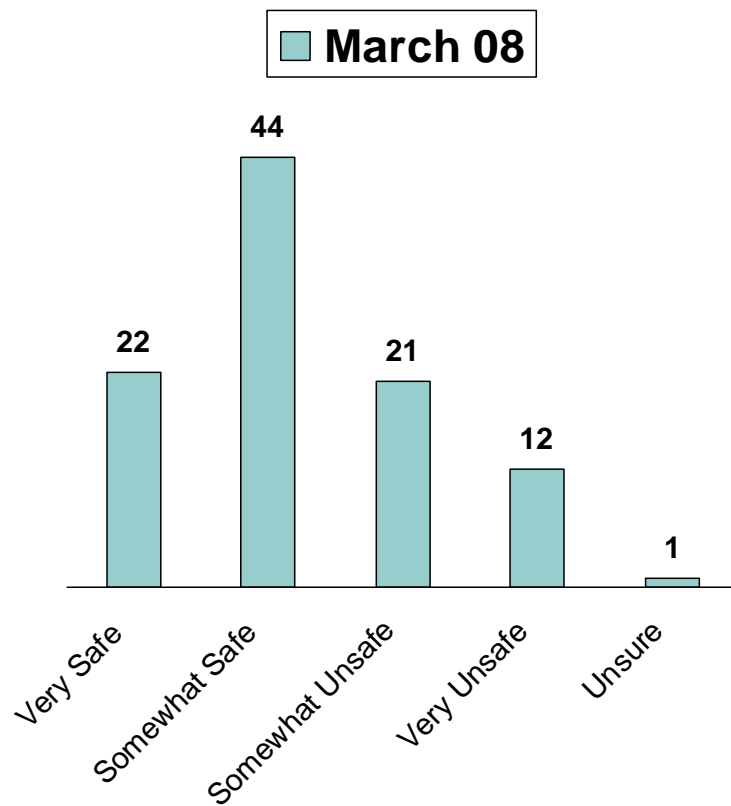
- There has been improvement in this area in the last year.
- Not only is there an increase in people stating that public safety is either excellent or very good, but there is a significant drop in the number of people stating public safety is poor.

Do you believe public safety in the city of Hartford is getting better, worse or staying about the same?



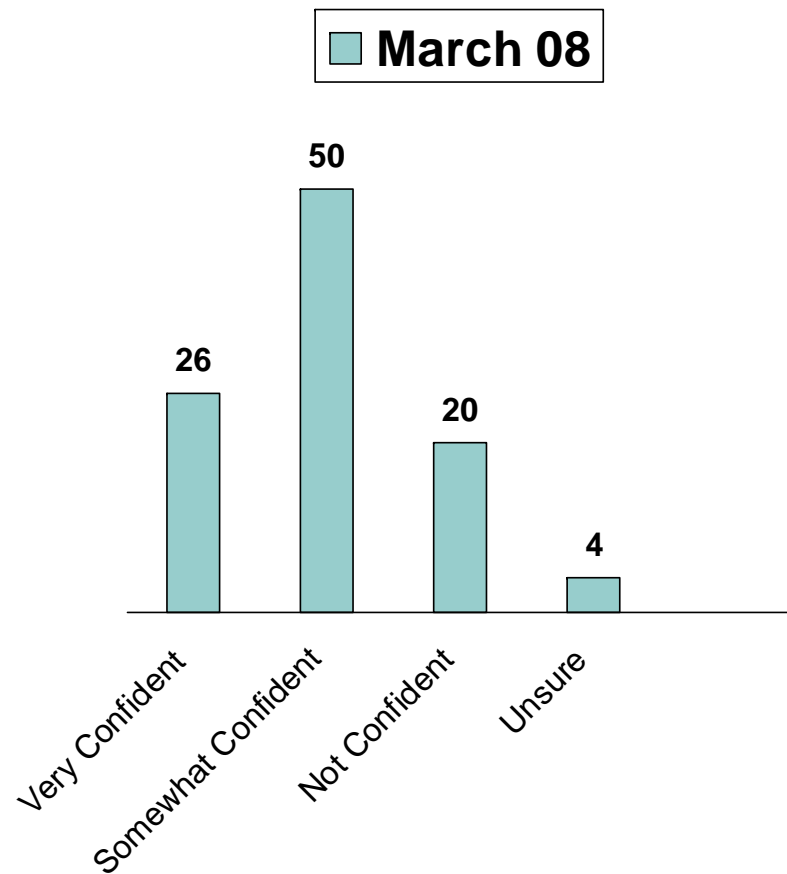
- This is the first year we asked this question, but was interesting to note that almost 1/3 of residents believe that public safety is getting better.

How safe do you feel from crime in your neighborhood?



- 66% of the people in Hartford feel safe in their neighborhoods.
- This is a higher rating than safety throughout the city. We will see how these results compare to next year.
- There is a possibility that people feel safe in their home, but feel the rest of the City is less safe. This could be a reality or a perception based on news reports.

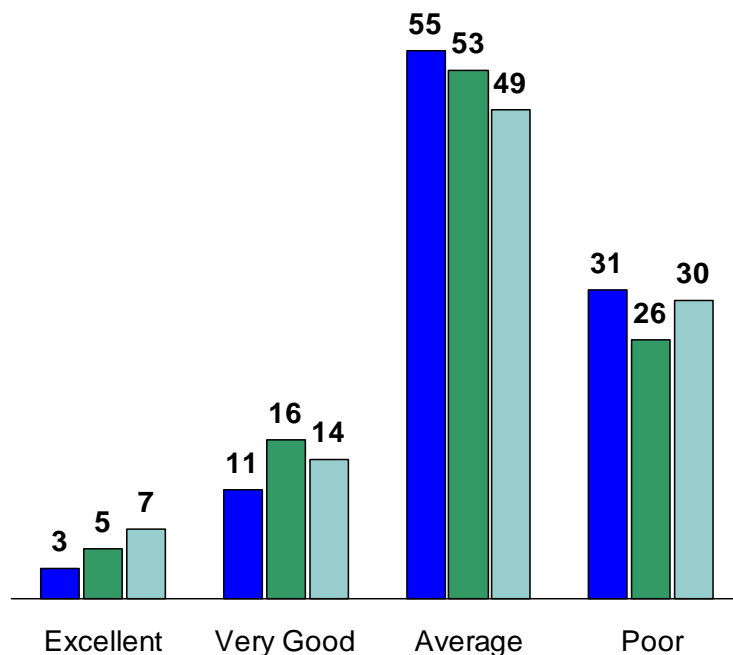
How would describe your confidence in the Hartford Police Department?



- A great majority of people expressed confidence in the police department.
- This bodes well for the near future. This trend could continue if the public perceives safety as achieving results.

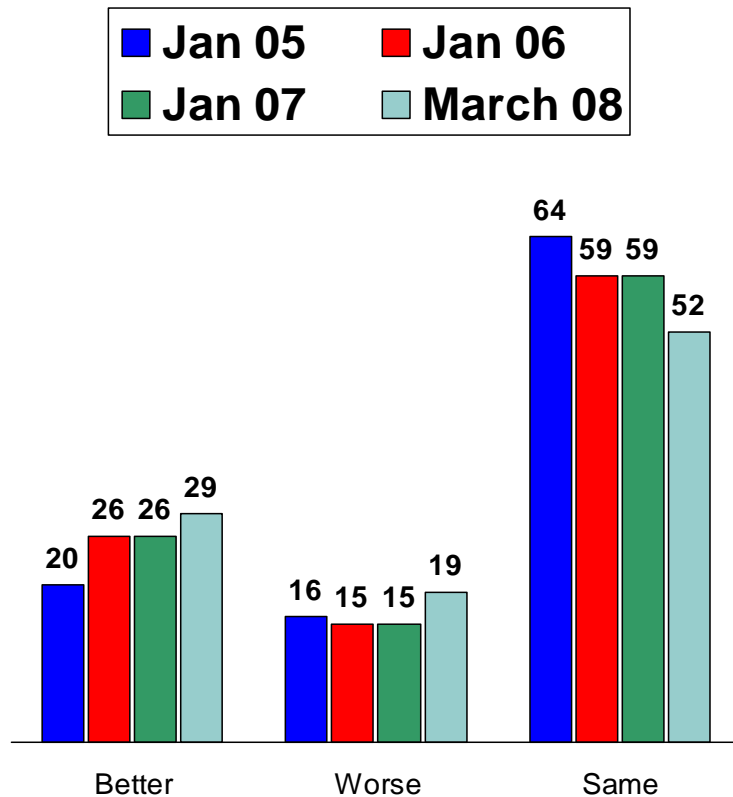
How would you rate education in Hartford?

■ Jan 05 ■ Jan 07 ■ March 08



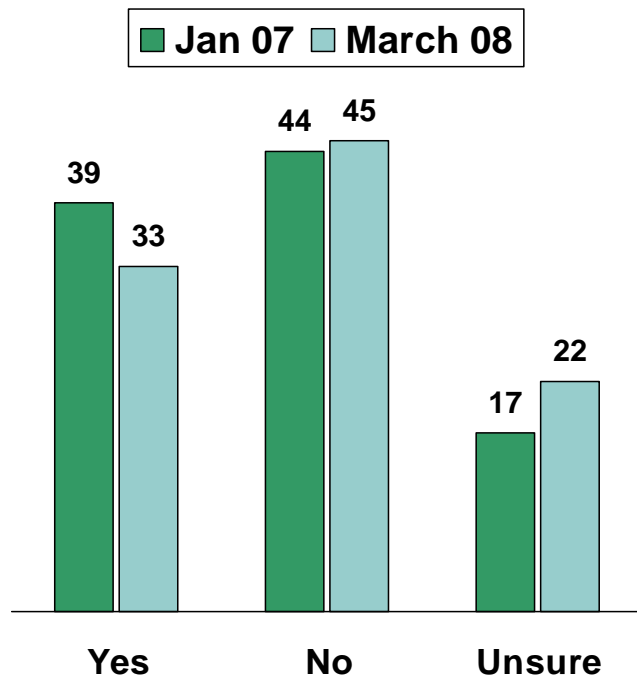
- There was a slight decrease in the overall perception of education in Hartford.
- Most of this is within the margin of error, but interesting to note that both excellent and poor rose.

Do you believe public education in the city of Hartford is getting better, worse or staying about the same?



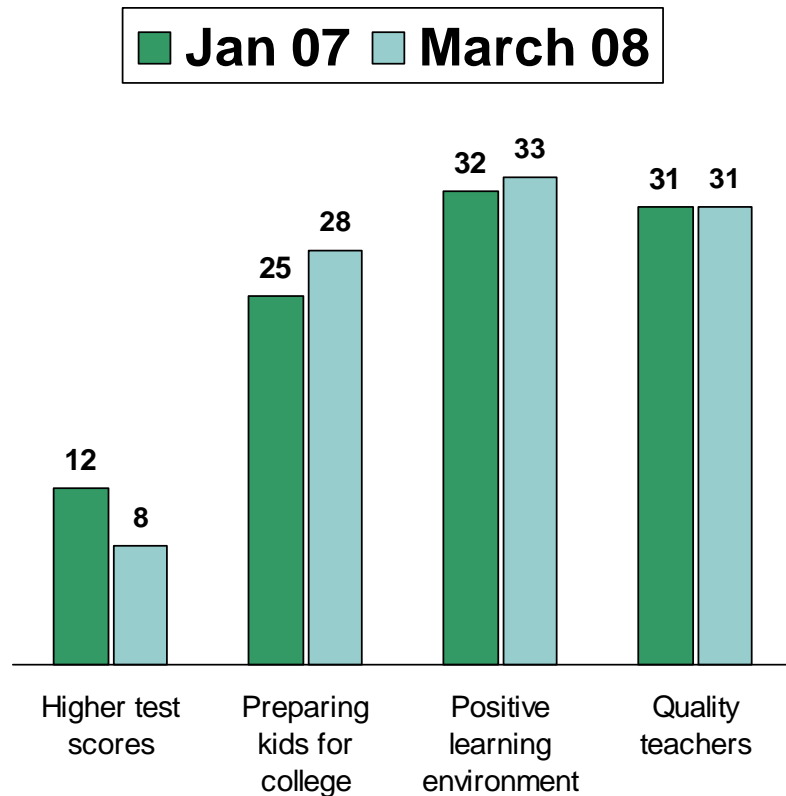
- There was very little change noted in the direction of education.
- As in the previous question the slight movement was toward each extreme.
- Families with school aged children were more likely to believe that education is getting better.

Do you feel the city is spending enough money on the public school system?



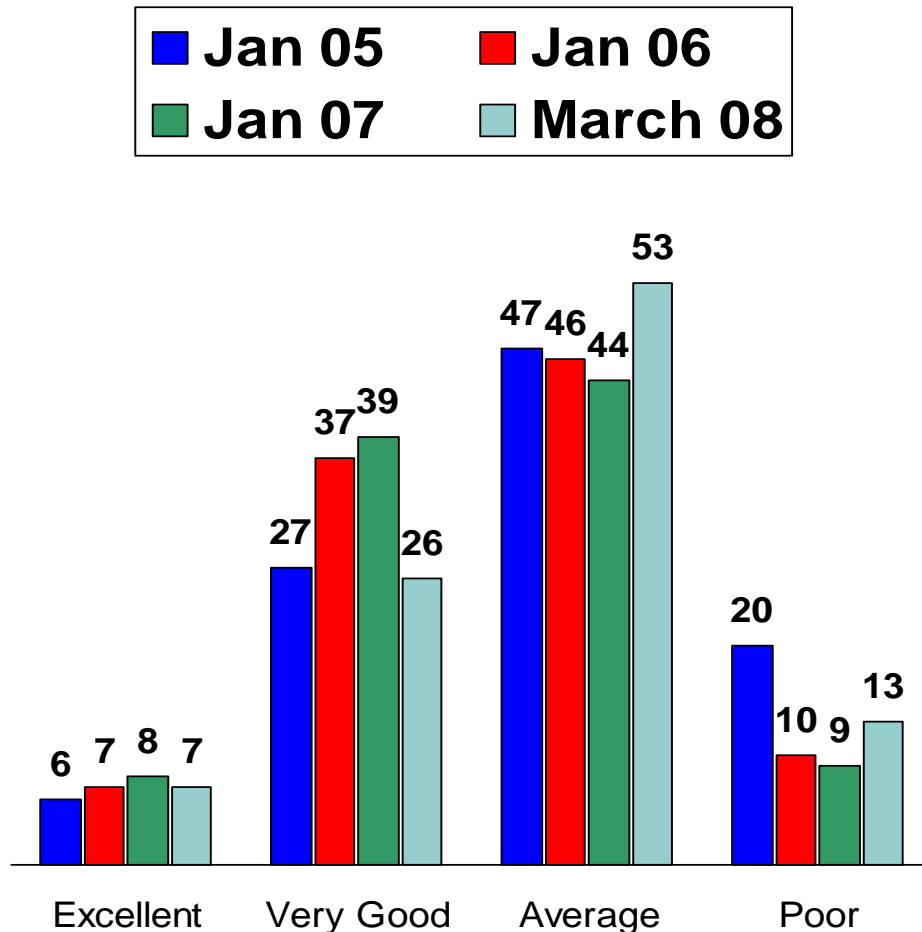
- There was a slight dip, outside the margin, in the number of people who feel Hartford is spending enough on education.
- It was interesting to note that people who believe that education is getting better, still believe we need to spend more on it.

Which one of these education initiatives is most important to you?



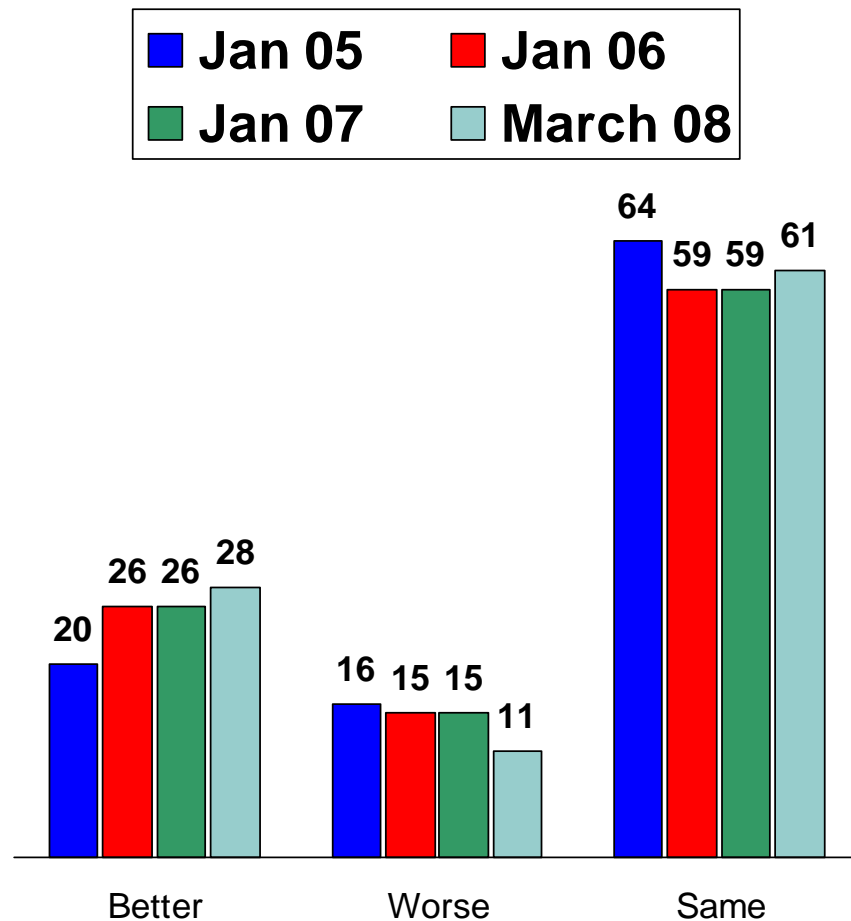
- There was very little change in the priorities people have concerning education.
- Test scores are considerably less important than any other area considered.

How would you rate the city services in Hartford?



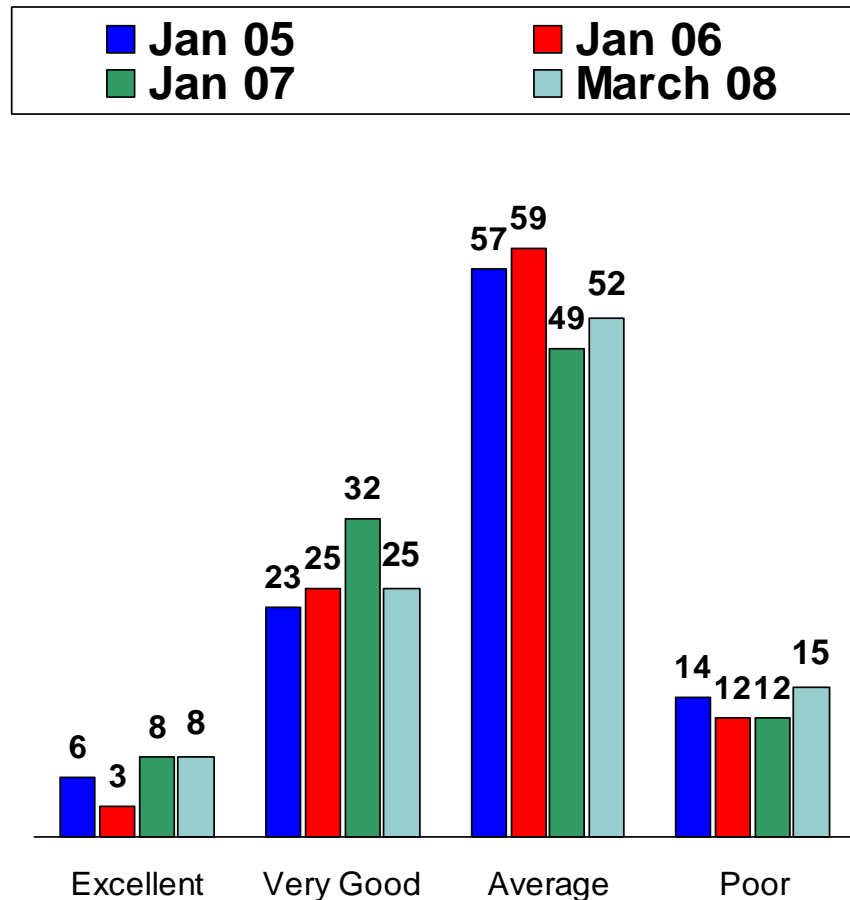
- Outside of the margin of error, we saw people's opinion of overall city services moving from Very Good to Average.

Do you believe City services in Hartford are getting better, worse or staying about the same?



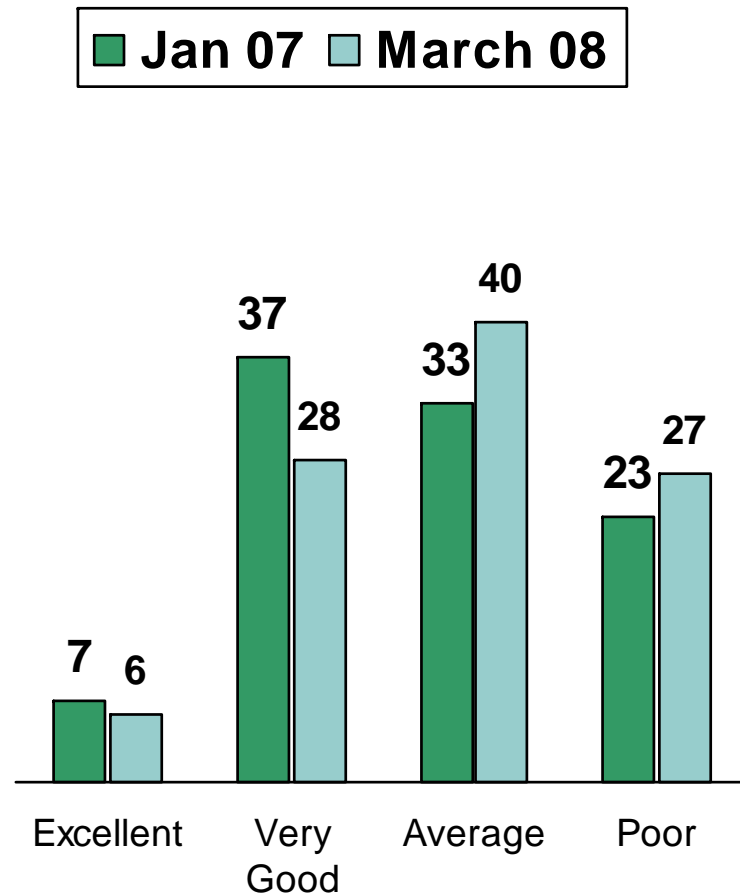
- Conversely the number of people who believe services are better increased slightly and the number stating services are worse decreased.
- It leads us to believe that people think the City is making some progress, but not enough to get the highest marks.

Parks and Pools



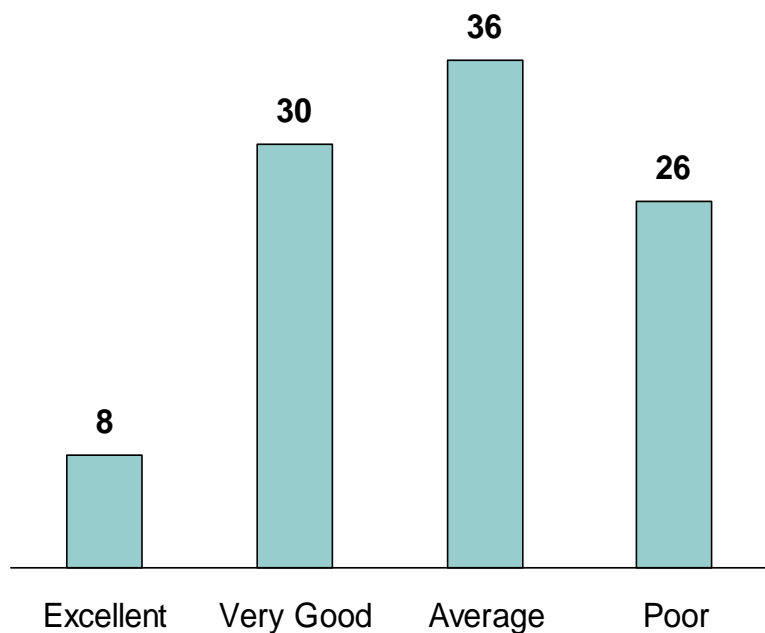
- Parks and pools showed a small decline from 2007, but mostly within the margin of error.
- The results are similar to the first survey in 2005. In comparison to many services these results are better than average.
- Seniors still tend to like the parks more than other age groups.

Litter Cleanup



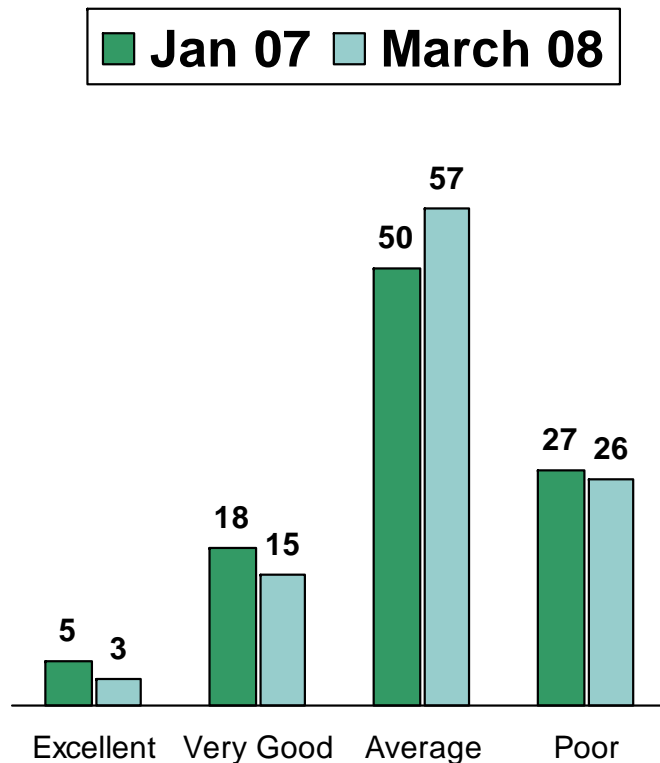
- Litter cleanup results were lower than in 2007.
- These results are outside the margin of error and cut across all demographic groups.
- The differential between excellent and poor is substantial but different when we looked at specific areas of the City in later questions.

Snow Removal



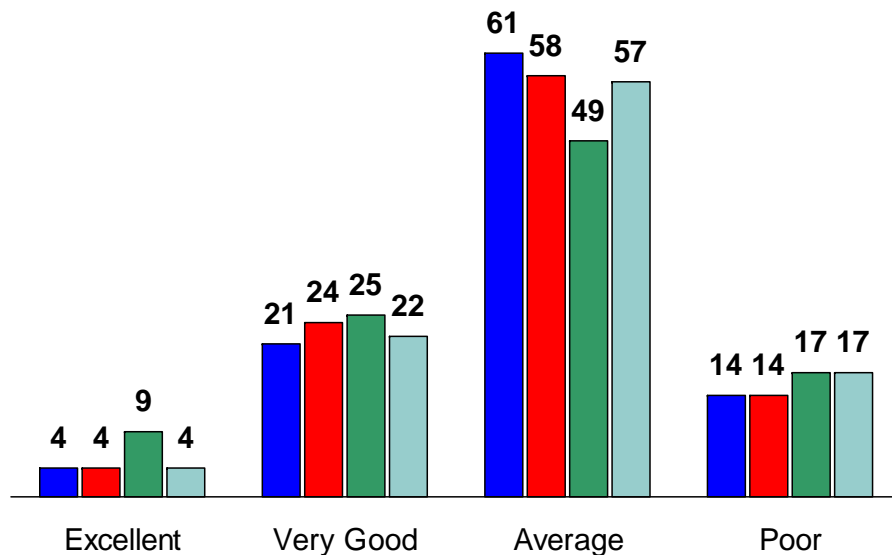
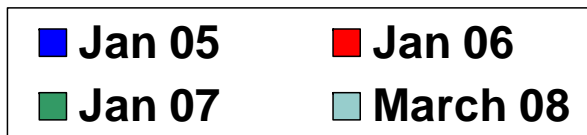
- This year was the first time we looked at snow removal.
- While there is room for improvement, it should be noted that 74% rated snow removal average or better.

Youth Services



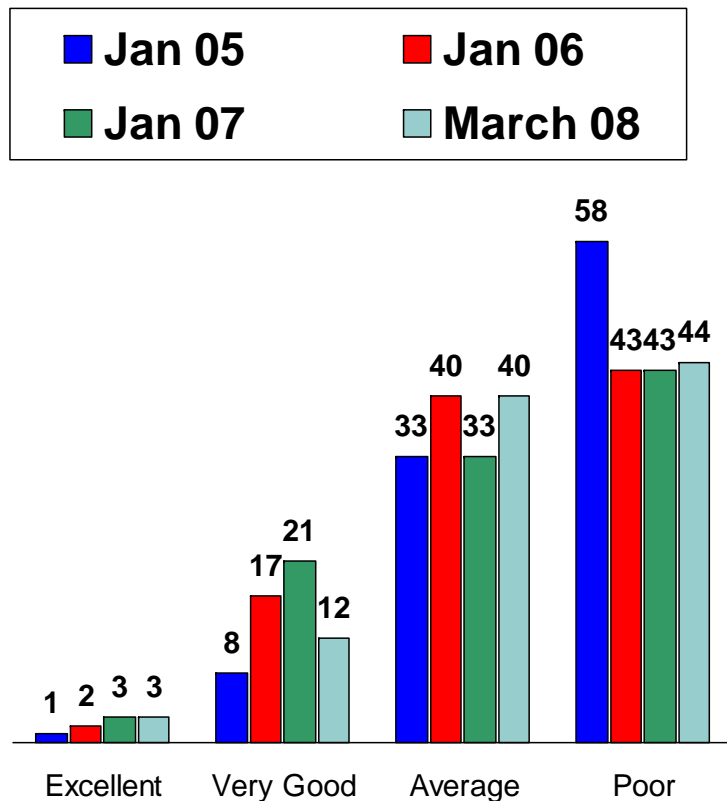
- Youth services moved slightly lower, but mostly within the margin or error.
- We will discover later in the survey a significant number of people tend to be concerned with youth issues.

Senior Services



- Senior services showed a slight decrease in performance compared to last year.
- The results may have been a larger issue of concern if the “poor” response had increased.
- The results are similar to those from 2005.

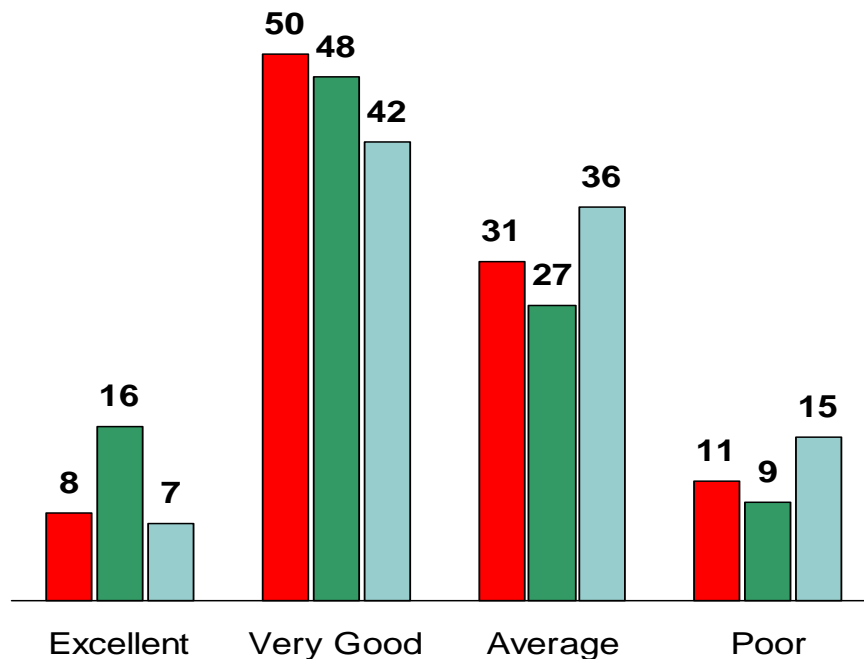
Condition of Roads and Sidewalks



- The conditions of the roads and sidewalks have diminished in the opinion of the respondents.
- After 3 years of mixed to improving results the trend is clearly moving in a different direction.
- As in previous slides the decreases is less severe because the “poor” response remained the same.

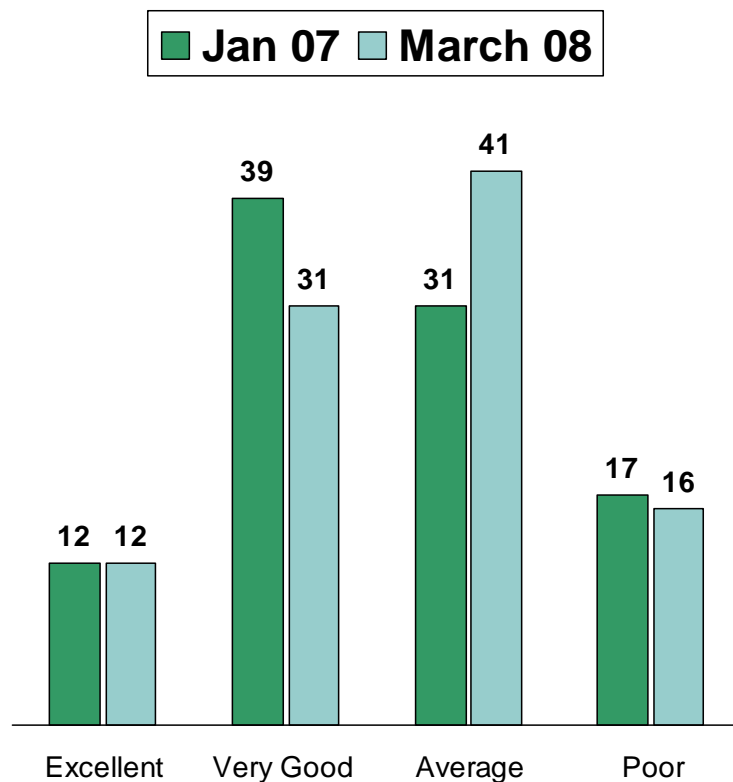
Trash Collection

■ Jan 06 ■ Jan 07 ■ March 08



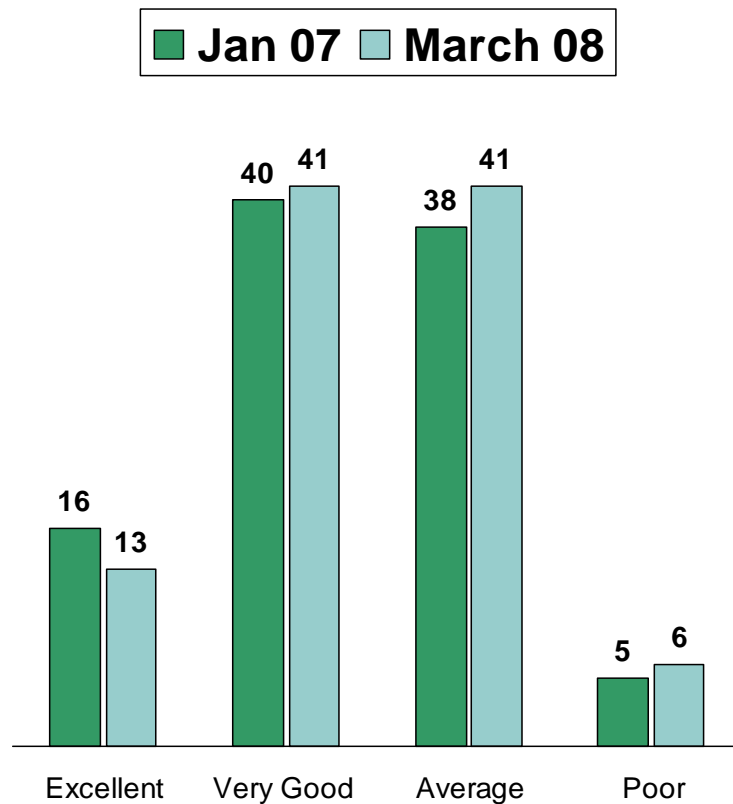
- Trash collection saw the largest decrease of all the City services.
- In 2007 the combined positive responses totaled 64%. In 2008 they totaled 49%.
- While these numbers started higher than many departments, a 15% decrease is a concern.

Thinking about cleanliness in general, how would you rate the following in terms of litter: your neighborhood



- In a previous slide we noted the total positive response for litter clean up was 34%.
- The positive response in the neighborhoods was 43%.
- There are many possible factors that could contribute to this, including the wording of the question, the position of the question and the fact that their neighborhood may be cleaner than what they perceive in the rest of the City.

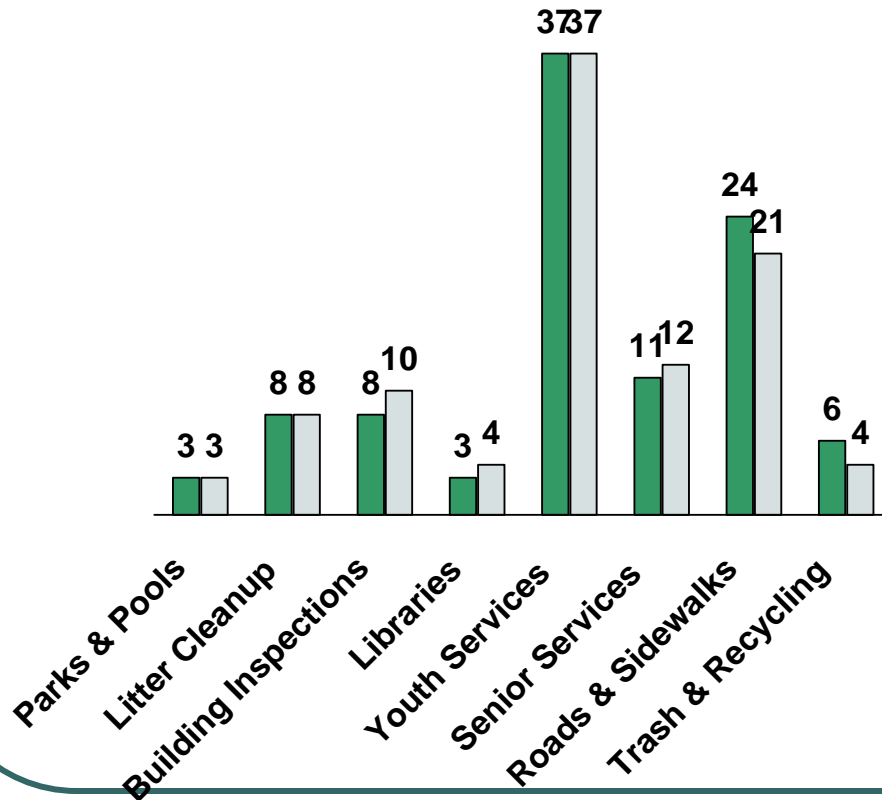
Thinking about cleanliness in general, how would you rate the following in terms of litter: downtown



- As in previous surveys we noted that downtown was considered cleaner than the neighborhood.
- This continues to be the case.
- We also noted the potential reasons for the discrepancies between these questions and a previous slide.

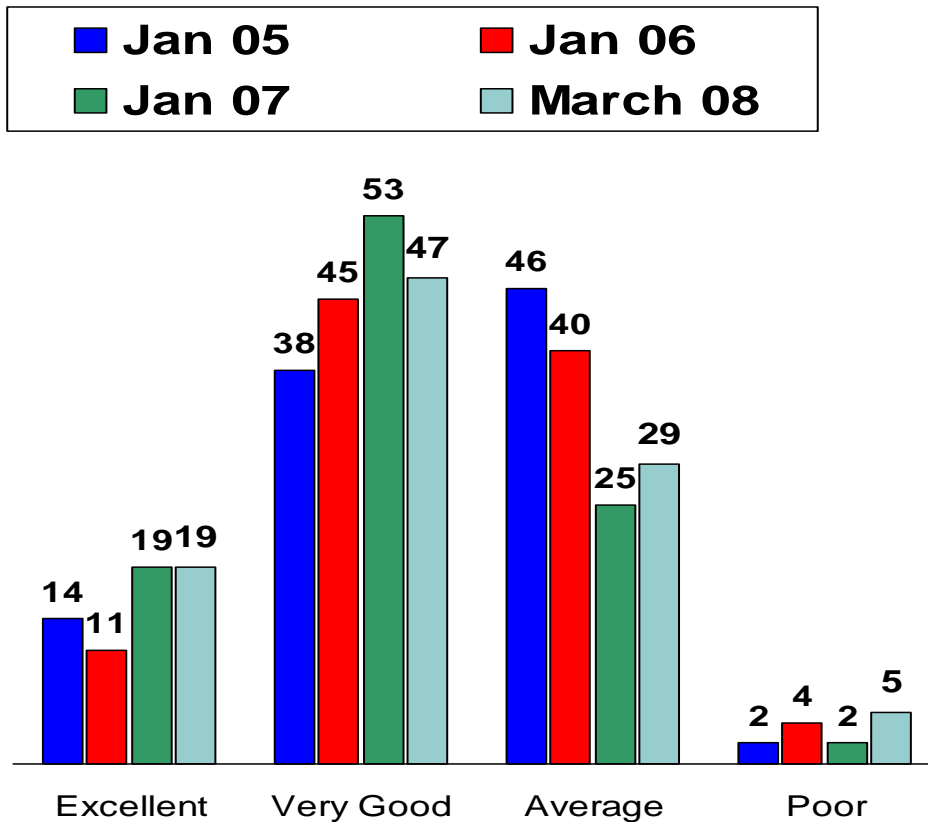
Other than education and public safety, which of the following areas or city services should receive most of your tax dollars?

■ Jan 07 □ March 08



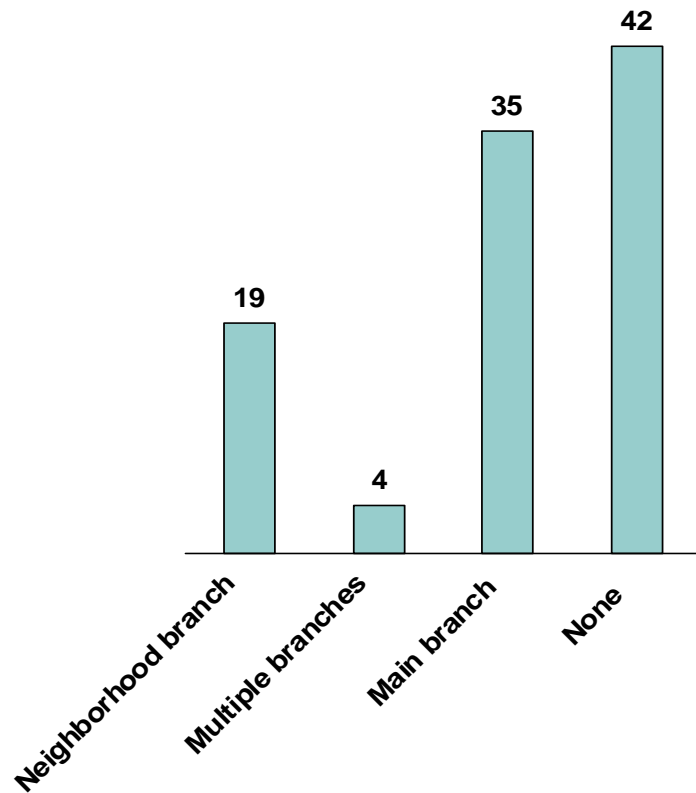
- The results were similar to those in 2007.
- Youth services and roads/sidewalks were believed to be the areas with most need.
- As you look back on the city service ratings you find that many people are dissatisfied with a variety of service, yet paradoxically would like to see resources go to other areas.

Libraries



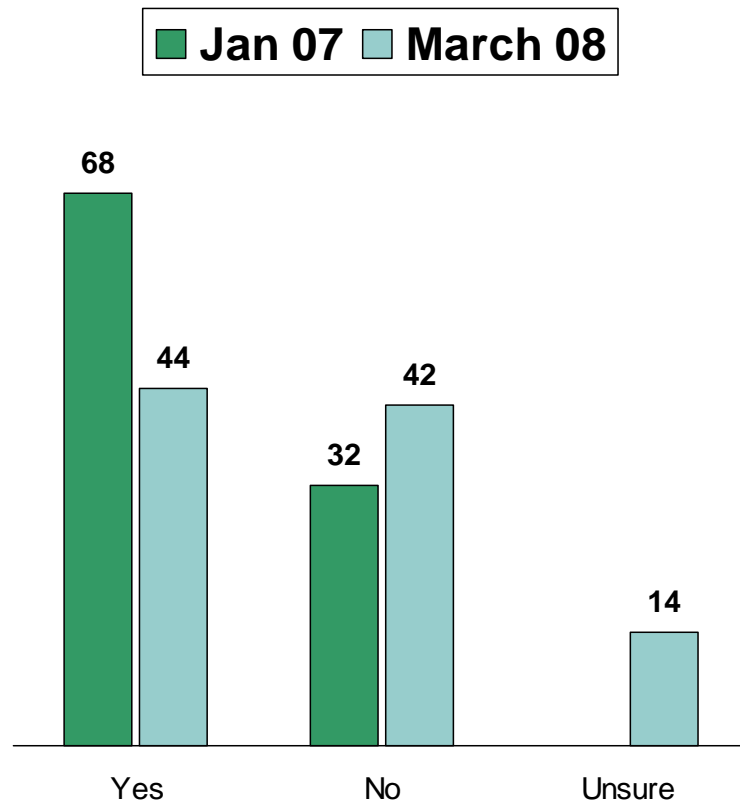
- Libraries have been and still are the area with the strongest results.
- There was a slight dip in some areas, but still a strong result.

Which of the public libraries have you visited in the last 6 months?



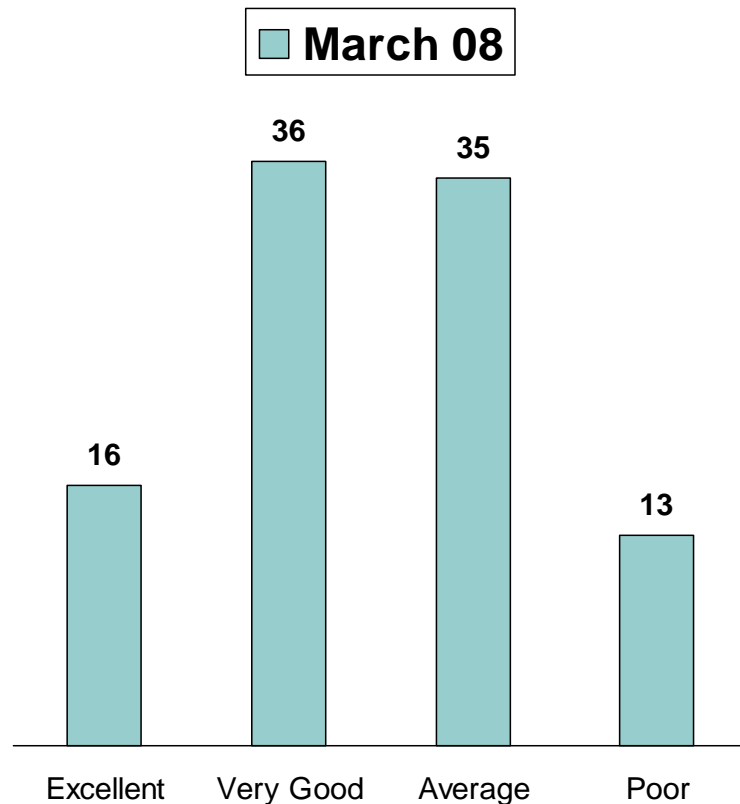
- It was interesting to note that 58% of the people in Hartford say they visited a library.
- Far more people use the main library than neighborhood branches.
- Few people went to multiple branches.

If a tax increase were necessary to maintain current levels of city services, would you support that increase?



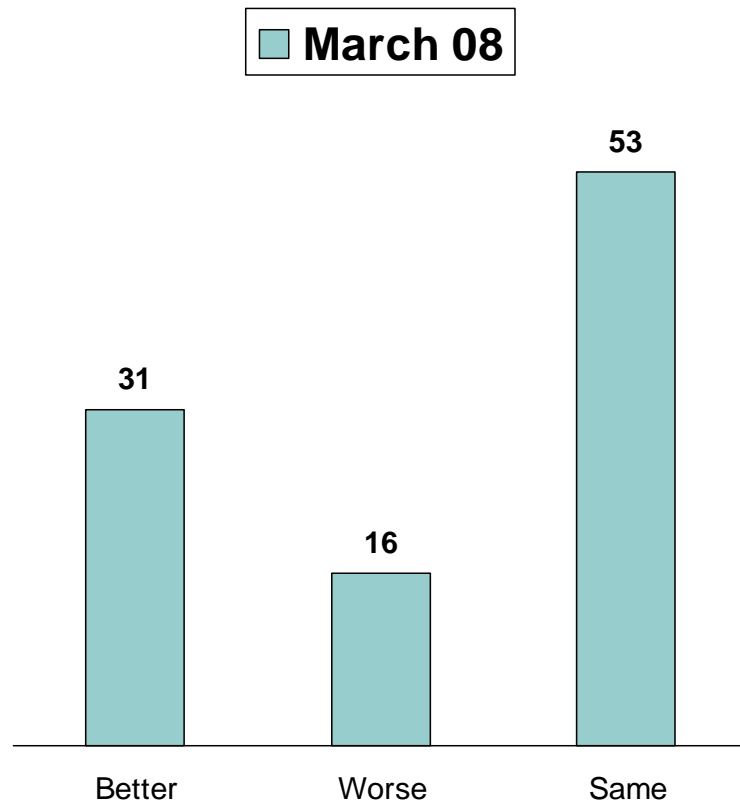
- Given the national decline in the economy, it is understandable that people are less likely to support a tax increase.
- It is interesting to note that more people moved from supporting a tax increase to unsure than to definitely not supporting one.

How would you rate the Quality of life in Hartford?



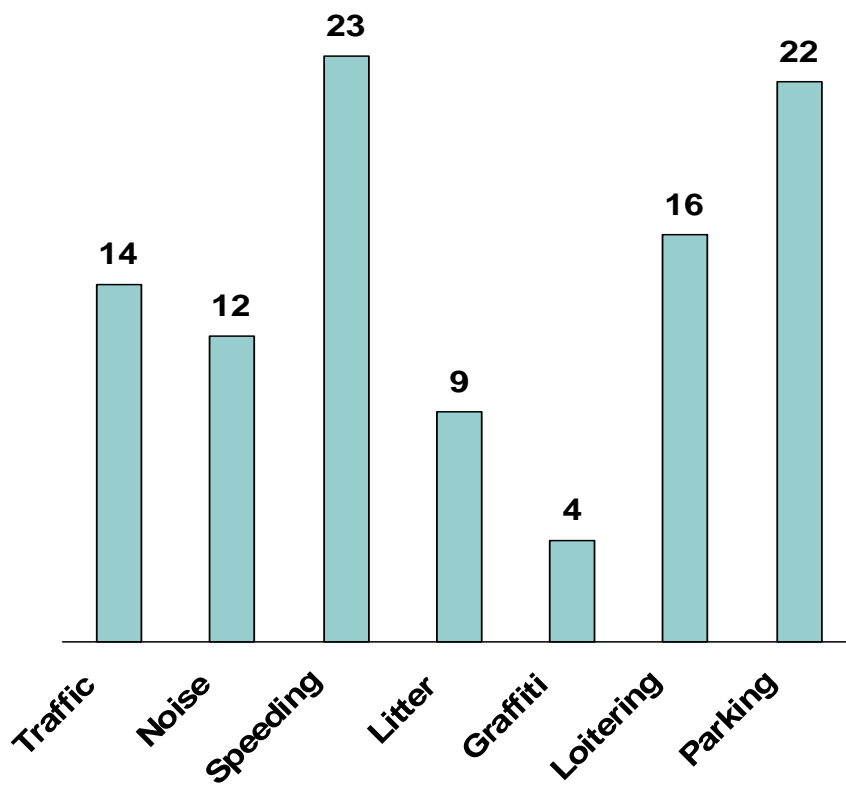
- Considering how people perceive the city services it was encouraging to note that a majority of residents rate the quality of life as either excellent or very good.

Do you believe the quality of life in Hartford is getting better, worse or staying about the same?



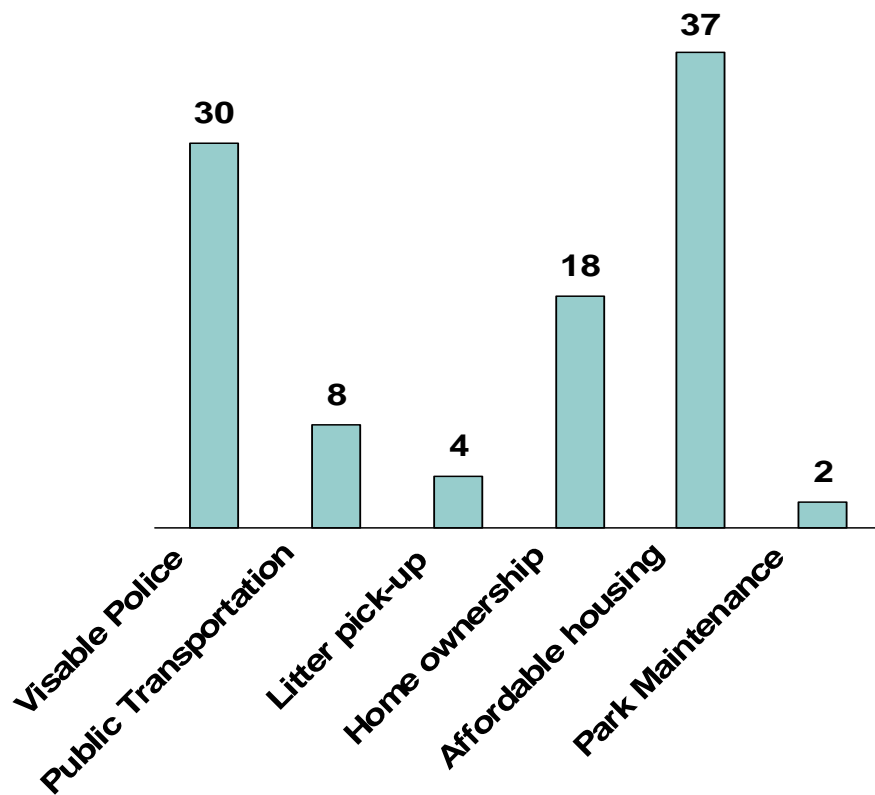
- While the majority of people believe the quality of life is staying the same, almost 2 times as many people believe that the quality of life in Hartford is getting better than is getting worse.

Which of the following areas do you feel needs the most attention?



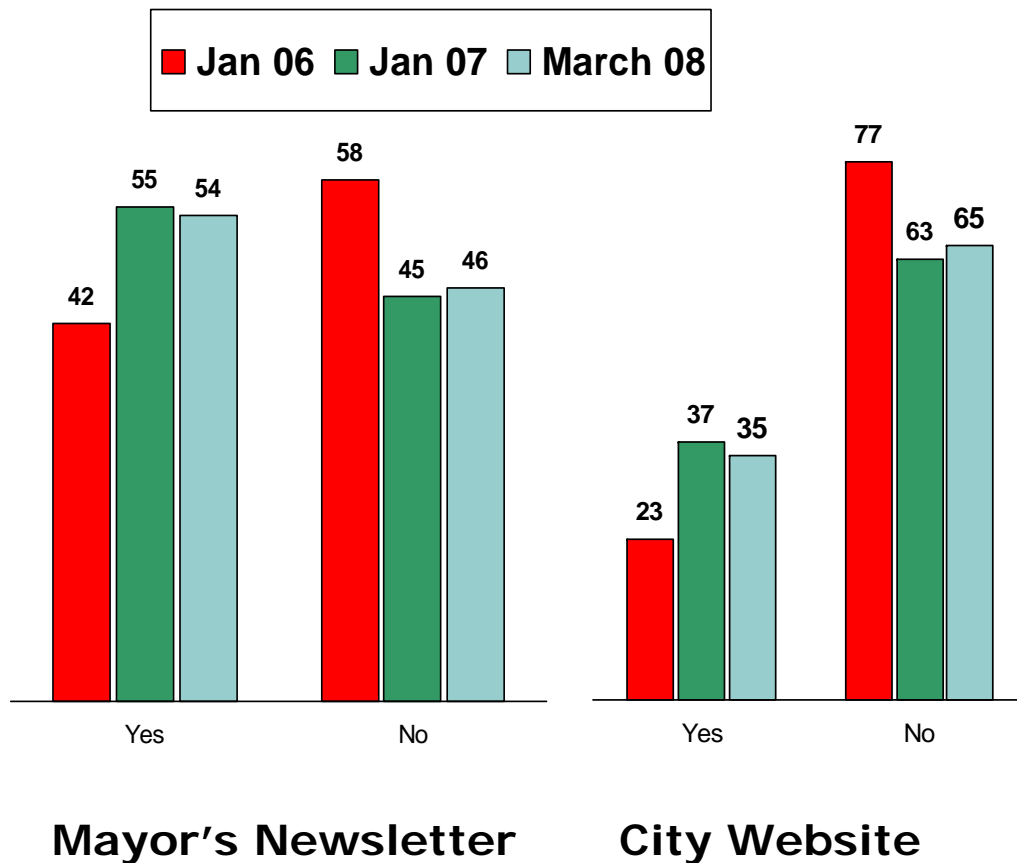
- There is no clear cut area of improvement that people believe needs to be addressed.
- However, the motor vehicle responses performed higher than most other areas.

What do you think would most improve the quality of life in Hartford?



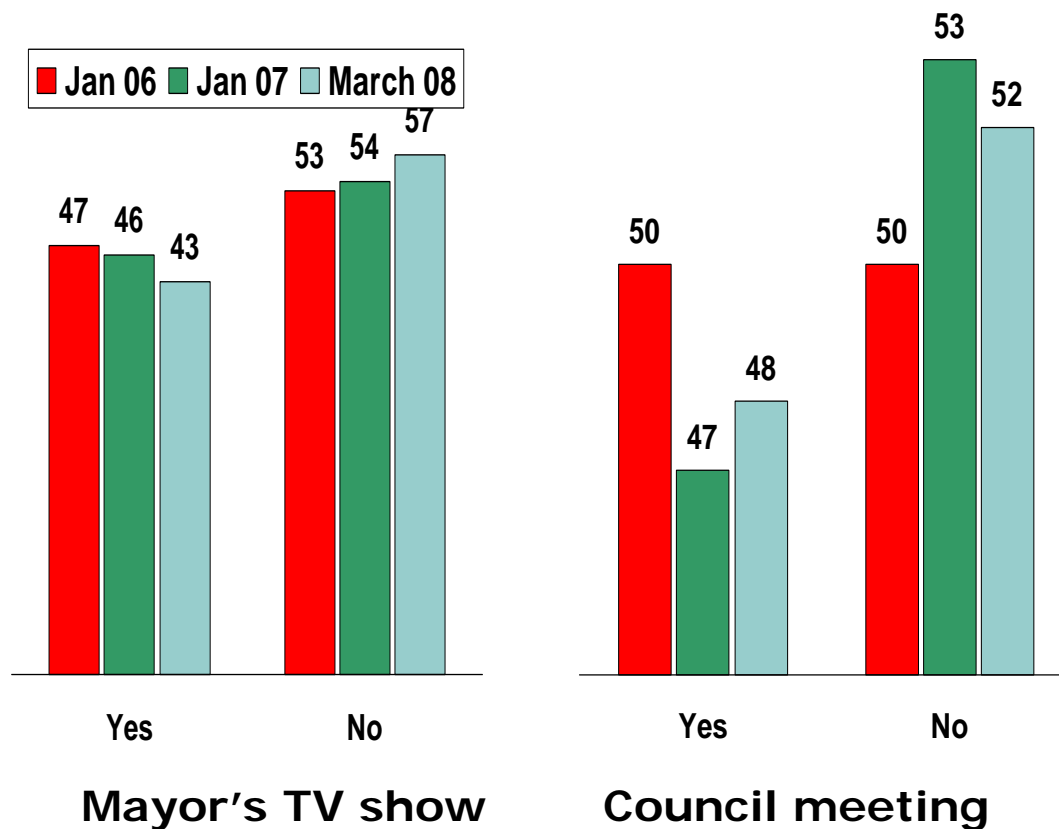
- In contrast to the previous slide people believe that increasing the police presence and increasing affordable housing are clear ways to improve the quality of life.
- It was interesting to note the strong response we found in earlier slides about litter clean up and how they compare with other issues of concern.

The City of Hartford uses several methods of communicating. Please tell me whether you have seen or heard of any of the following:



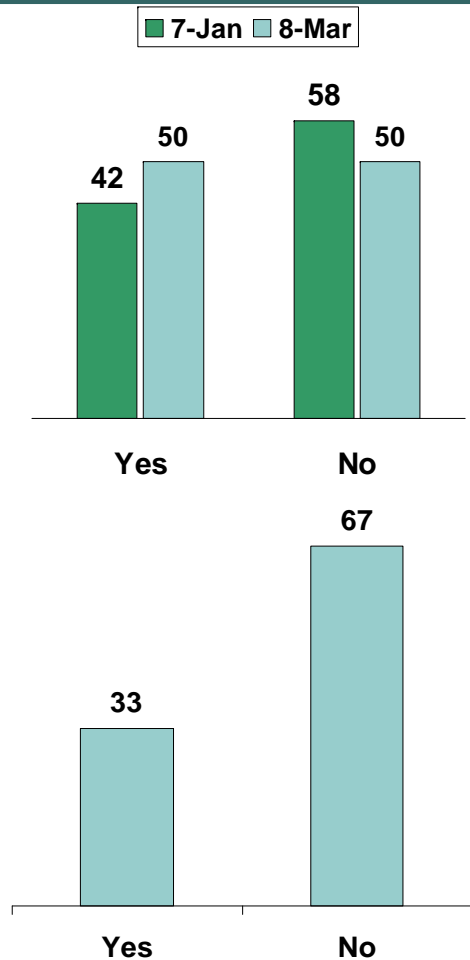
- The Mayor's newsletter and City website remained very similar to 2007.
- However, these results show a population who is getting information from a variety of sources.
- These areas should continue to be used to get positive information out to the people.

The City of Hartford uses several methods of communicating. Please tell me whether you have seen or heard of any of the following:



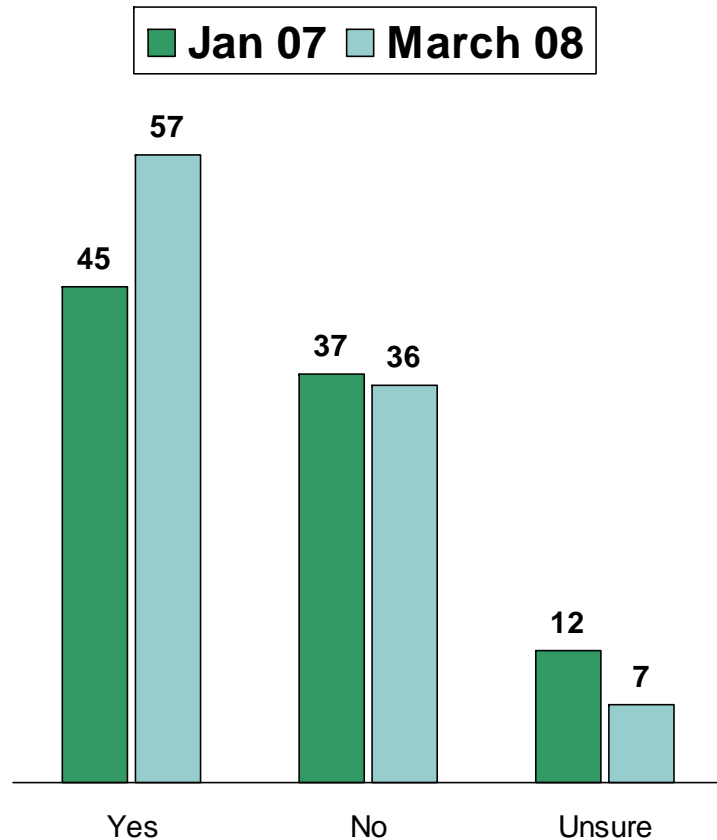
- **Cable Access TV Shows:** The viewing of the cable access television show remained steady.
- It will take an aggressive approach to increase these numbers in more than a minor way.

Have you heard about the city's new 311 service? Have you used the 311 service?



- There was a slight increase in the number of people who heard of the 311 service.
- There were 33% who had heard of the system and have used it.
- The potential for success is directly determined by the number of people aware of it.

Were you satisfied with the 311 results?



- Of the people who used it 57% stated that they were satisfied with the results.
- This was also an increase over last year.