

Open Government Survey for residents of the City of Toronto, 2015

The City of Toronto's Open Government Committee and senior staff promote an organizational culture of greater collaboration and openness. In 2015, the committee engaged with Ipsos Reid to conduct a survey to learn more about the views City of Toronto residents have on Open Government.

1,549 residents participated in the survey. These residents were selected from Ipsos Reid's online panel.

The respondents were asked about their familiarity with open government. 78 percent replied that this was their first time learning of the concept. 20 percent said they were somewhat familiar with the concept. 2 percent said that they know a lot about the concept.

Next, they were asked what open government means to them. 29 percent replied that it means transparent, honest government. 25 percent said that it means access to information, documents, and records of proceedings. 32 percent replied that they don't know what it means.

On the question of whether Toronto is an open government, 49 percent replied no.

Next question was, is it easy to access services? 69 percent said yes. Is it easy to access information? 52 percent said yes. Is it easy to access input or feedback? 39 percent said yes. Comments included that the City should provide easier access to services and information.

Next question was, how does open government benefit you as a resident? 23 percent said that it allows them to voice opinions and have a say on policies and decisions being made. 14 percent said that it provides them access to City information, public documents, and records of proceedings. 10 percent said it provides transparency. Comments included that residents would know better how the agencies operate, and how efficient they are.

Next question was to identify challenges they have encountered. The top challenges were (1) it is difficult to find information; (2) residents are unaware of input options, i.e. civic engagement; (3) it is difficult to find services; (4) staff are hard to reach; (5) information is unavailable; and (6) staff are unresponsive.

The residents were asked if they have had opportunities to participate and engage with the City on topics that interest them. 27 percent said yes. 43 percent said no. 29 percent

said they didn't know. They were asked if they had ever participated by (1) online surveys; 32 percent said yes; (2) talking to a councillor or City staff; 20 percent said yes; (3) using email or a feedback form; 20 percent said yes; (4) using social media; 15 percent said yes; (5) attending a public meeting; 14 percent said yes; (6) an online discussion; 9 percent said yes. 42 percent of residents replied that they had not had an opportunity to participate and engage with the City on topics that interest them.

The final question was, how can the City of Toronto be a more open government? The top answers were (1) better access to information, open Council meetings, and voting records; (2) better engagement with the public in decision-making; and (3) greater accountability and transparency. Suggestions included an email service where residents can choose which topics they are interested in and notifications are sent when something relevant to those topics is happening.

For more information on Open Government at Toronto, go to:
<http://www.toronto.ca/opengovernment>