

# THE CITY OF CINCINNATI AND HUMAN SERVICES FUNDING

An examination of citizen attitudes  
Based on a survey by the University of Cincinnati  
Institute for Policy Research

Prepared by  
Applied Information Resources  
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## INTRODUCTION

Cincinnati residents overwhelmingly approve of the City of Cincinnati's policy of funding human services. This public perspective represents one of the key findings of a telephone survey of Cincinnati residents conducted by the University of Cincinnati's Institute for Public Policy Research.

Five-hundred and sixty-four (564) randomly selected Cincinnati residents were asked five questions about human services and the funding of these services by the City of Cincinnati. These questions were part of the Institute of Policy Research's Greater Cincinnati Survey that was conducted in late June and early July.

A rigorous set of procedures insured a scientifically selected, statistically random sample of area residents. University researchers cite a reliability [possible error] factor of +/- 4.4%.

The survey included more topics than the five questions reviewed here. People were asked about bus transportation, affordable housing, and the University of Cincinnati. The 564 respondents who answered the Human service questions were all City residents. Other parts of the survey included residents from the entire region.

The city residents who answered the survey were also asked to tell a little about themselves. Hence we have the following demographic profile:

- *54.9% were female*
- *59.8% were white*
- *25.7% were age 18-29; 36.3% -30-45; 21.2% -46-64; 16.8% - over 65*
- *86.2 % offered political identification. Of those who did, 55.3% Democrat; 22.0% Republican; 18.5% Independent*
- *76.1% were registered voters*

Representatives from local social service agencies and from Applied Information Resources assisted Institute personnel in drafting the five human services questions, and after the completion of the telephone survey, Institute staff presented the results. Applied Information Resources has prepared this summary of the survey findings.

BACKGROUND - Cincinnati has a tradition of caring about and providing support for a diverse network of human services. Individual donors, the United Way/Community Chest, and governments have served as the funding base for these services. For the purpose of formalizing its commitment as a partner in

funding needed human services, Cincinnati City Council unanimously voted in 1981 to allocate 1.3% of its general budget to human services, and that same year it established the Human Services Division to recommend and to monitor allocations to service agencies. Over the years, City Hall's annual allocation to human services increased to 1.5% of the general revenue operating budget.

The Survey questions were designed to gauge whether citizens support City Government's longstanding policy of funding human services, and whether residents approve that a portion of the City budget is allocated to pay for these services. These questions were deemed to be particularly timely since the City has cutback its 1.5% allocation since 2005, and several public officials have questioned the current relevance of funding human services.

### ANALYZING THE SURVEY QUESTIONS –

QUESTION 1 - As stated in the introduction, Cincinnati residents overwhelmingly approve of the City of Cincinnati's policy of funding human services. One of the survey questions was framed to measure the public's support for this policy. *"How important is it to you that the City of Cincinnati provides funding for human services?"* The options for the respondents were "very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important."

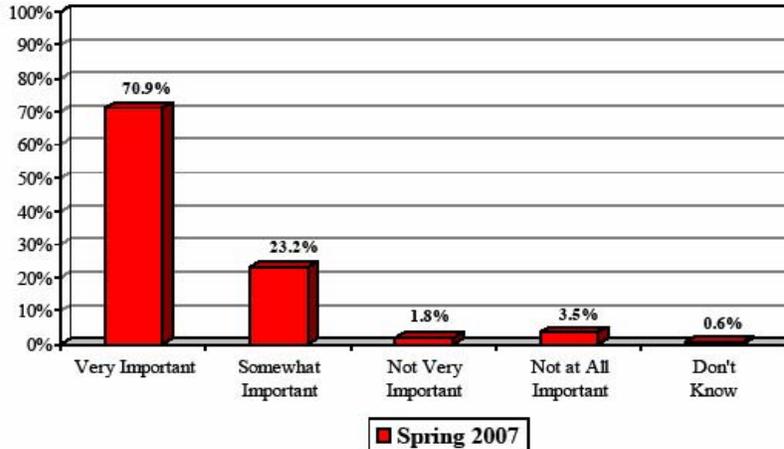
Ninety-four percent of the residents surveyed said that human service funding by the City is "very important" or "somewhat important." This positive endorsement is shown to be even stronger by the fact that 70.9% of all respondents declared it "very important" Selecting the "somewhat important" option were 23.2% of the interviewees.

Thus, only 5.3% of the Cincinnati residents surveyed expressed the opinion that the City's funding of human services is "not very important" or "not at all important." Meanwhile, 0.6% of the respondents said that they "don't know."

**Question 1**

**Chart 3**

“How important is it to you that the City of Cincinnati provide funding for human services. . .very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important to you?”  
[CITY OF CINCINNATI RESIDENTS ONLY]



The Greater Cincinnati Survey  
Spring 2007  
Institute for Policy Research  
University of Cincinnati



When the 564 Cincinnati residents who were surveyed are broken down into a variety of diverse categories (age, sex, race, income, education, marital status, religion, household size, etc.), they show the same strong support for the City providing funding for human services. For instance, home owners and renters selected “very important” by percentages of 67.3% and 75.3% respectively. In fact in every category, more people chose “very important” than any other answer.

QUESTION 2 - A related but more specific question was posed to the telephone interviewees. “Do you favor or oppose the practice of spending a portion of the City of Cincinnati’s general revenue on funding human services?”

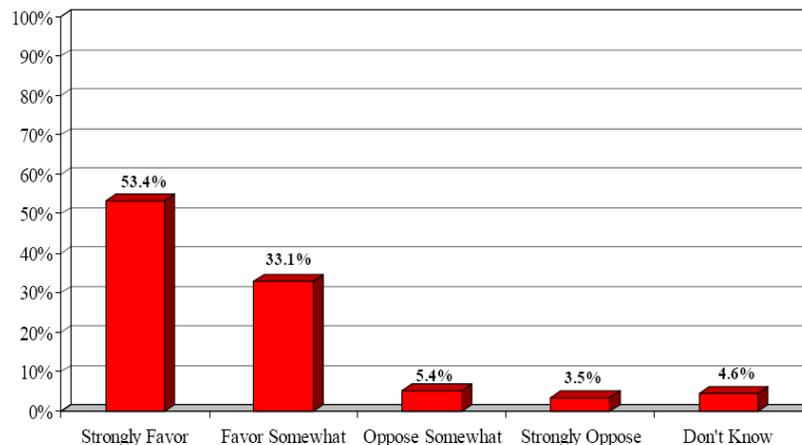
To a slightly lesser degree than the answers to the more generic previous question, the responses show a large majority of interviewees favor the City of Cincinnati allocating a portion of its general revenue for human services. 86.5% of the city residents surveyed selected the “strongly favor” or “favor somewhat” options. The “strongly favor” percentage is 53.4%, fifty percent higher than the “favor somewhat” percentage, which is 33.1%.

Those declaring that they “oppose somewhat” or “strongly oppose” grew to 8.9% (3.5% strongly opposing). The “don’t know” respondents also accumulated to 4.6%.

## Question 2

**Chart 4**

“Do you favor or oppose the practice of spending a portion of the City of Cincinnati’s general revenue on funding human services?” [CITY OF CINCINNATI RESIDENTS ONLY]



Among the various classifications, most of them mirror the overall survey population plus or minus a few percentage points. Two groups that emerged with the highest percentages of “strongly favor” were residents earning more than \$60,000 a year and respondents who knew “a great deal” about recent City of Cincinnati cuts in its human services’ allocations. Those who “knew a great deal” recorded 61.6% in the “strongly favor” category, and the \$60,000 and up income group’s percentage was 63.6%.

QUESTION 2 - The public answers the question: *What do you think of when you hear the term ‘Human Services?’*

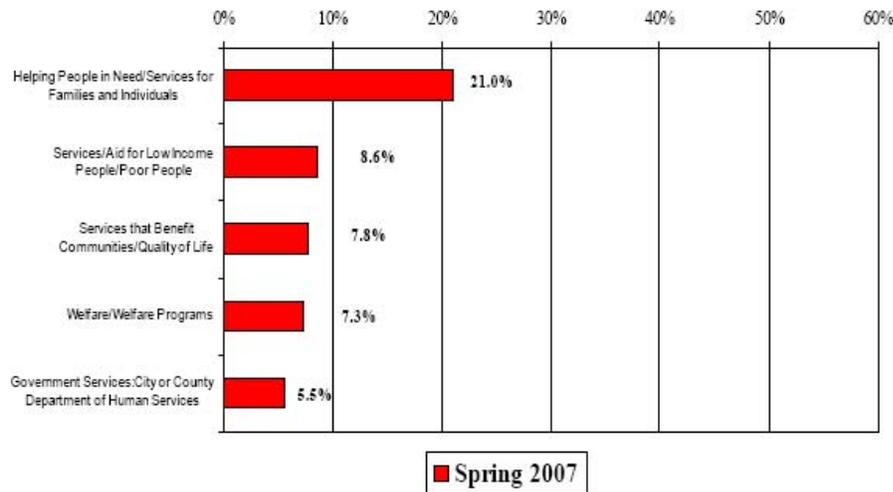
While the main point of the survey was to gauge citizen’s views on Cincinnati’s commitment to the funding of human services, one of the concerns in designing the questions was, “What did the respondents mean when they talked about human services?”

The decision was made to go with an open-ended question, which generates a wider range of answers, but can offer a clearer picture of people’s views. This proved successful as respondents showed considerable consistency and focus.

### Question 3

**Chart 1**

“Generally speaking, what do you think of when you hear the term 'human services'?”  
[CITY OF CINCINNATI RESIDENTS ONLY] (TOP 5 RESPONSES ONLY)



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The results indicate a very knowledgeable citizenry. The top five descriptions were:

1. Helping people in need through services for families and individuals
2. Services and aid for low income and poor people
3. Services that benefit the community and the quality of life
4. Welfare and associated programs
5. Government services

These answers represent just over 50% of the respondents. While other answers moved generally into more detail, most fit into the top three responses. Answers such as services targeted to the elderly, children and the disabled, along with food, education and housing as well as health services were in this group. 'Welfare' and other 'government programs' were made more specific with the identification of Transportation programs, including ACCESS, which serves the disabled. Also economic areas such as unemployment services including job placement are generally seen as government programs.

Interestingly enough only about 10% of those surveyed didn't have an answer, and less than 3% took the opportunity to say negative things about human services, as they saw them.

The City's funding of local non-profit services has been remarkably consistent with the public's perception of what constitutes Human Services. For instance, in 2007 funding has been provided for services that offer food and emergency shelter to low income individuals, families and the elderly. Services, usually neighborhood based that provide programming and counseling for children have been funded as well. Health programs for the poor are supported as are a wide range of services to individual who suffer from mental illness, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS. Victims of rape, abuser, and other forms of violence receive counseling and support services from funded organizations.

One consistent element to City funding is that it goes to organizations, that seek and receive other financial support as well. It is reported that every City dollar works in concert with four dollars of funding raised elsewhere. This multiplier ratio is strong testimony to the importance of the City's commitment.

#### QUESTIONS 4 and 5 - What does the public know about this ?

Although the survey showed that residents supported the City's funding of human services, the responses to two questions indicate that residents are not aware of the funding process or the recent reduction in the allocation to human services. While some residents have heard that the City of Cincinnati has contracted with agencies to provide human services, many more have not.

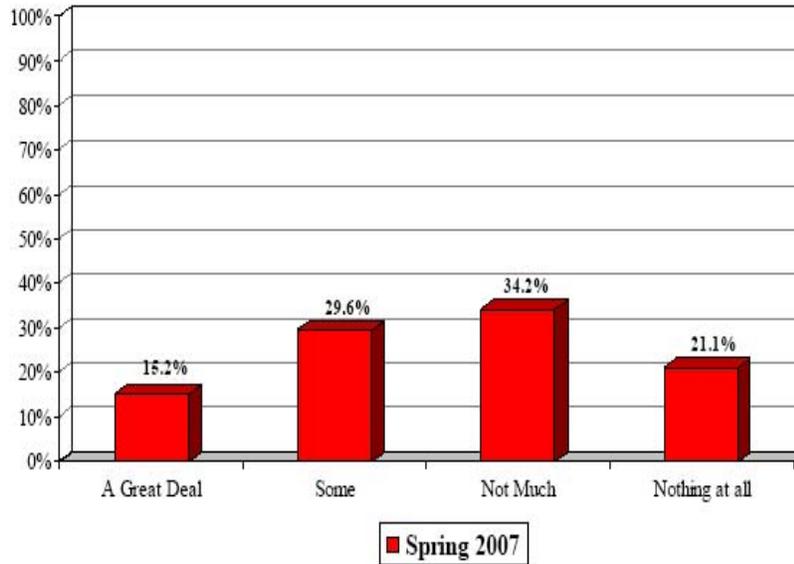
City of Cincinnati residents were asked, "*How much have you heard about the City of Cincinnati contracting with agencies to provide human services ?* .a great deal, some, not much, or nothing at all" Forty-five percent of City residents say they have heard either "a great deal" or "some" about the City contracting with agencies to provide human services. However, 55% of City residents say they have heard "not much" or "nothing at all".

- Newcomers, those who have lived here less than 10 years were less likely to know about the City's process.
- Married respondents (52.8%) and female resident are more likely (49%) than other residents to have heard either "a great deal" or "some".

**Question 4**

**Chart 2**

“How much have you heard about the City of Cincinnati contracting with agencies to provide human services ... a great deal, some, not much, or nothing at all?”  
[CITY OF CINCINNATI RESIDENTS ONLY]



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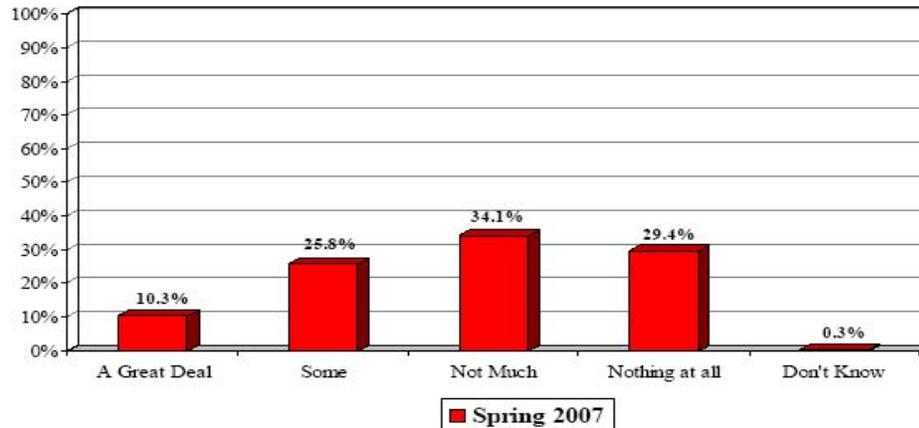


Furthermore, many residents of Cincinnati have not heard that the City of Cincinnati has reduced funding for human services. Residents were asked the question: “*In recent years, the City of Cincinnati has reduced funding for human services....how much have you heard about this?...a great deal, some, not much, or nothing at all.*” 36% percent of residents say they have heard either “a great deal” or “some”. On the other hand, 63% say they have heard “not much” or “nothing at all”. These percentages indicate that a majority of residents possess scant to no information about the City’s shift in policy.

## Question 5

**Chart 5**

“In recent years, the City of Cincinnati has reduced funding for human services...how much have you heard about this...a great deal, some, not much, or nothing at all?”  
[CITY OF CINCINNATI RESIDENTS ONLY]



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The pattern of knowing even less about the reduction than was known about the city policy itself was fairly consistent throughout the various demographic categories.

- Only married residents (42.7%) and persons living here more than 20 years [40.5%] had above a 40% positive response when combining 'great deal' and 'some' knowledge of the reduced funding.
- In stark contrast, 57.8% of those who have been here less than 3 years knew "nothing at all" about this change in policy.