

CITY OF SALEM COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SURVEY

January 28, 2025

OVERVIEW

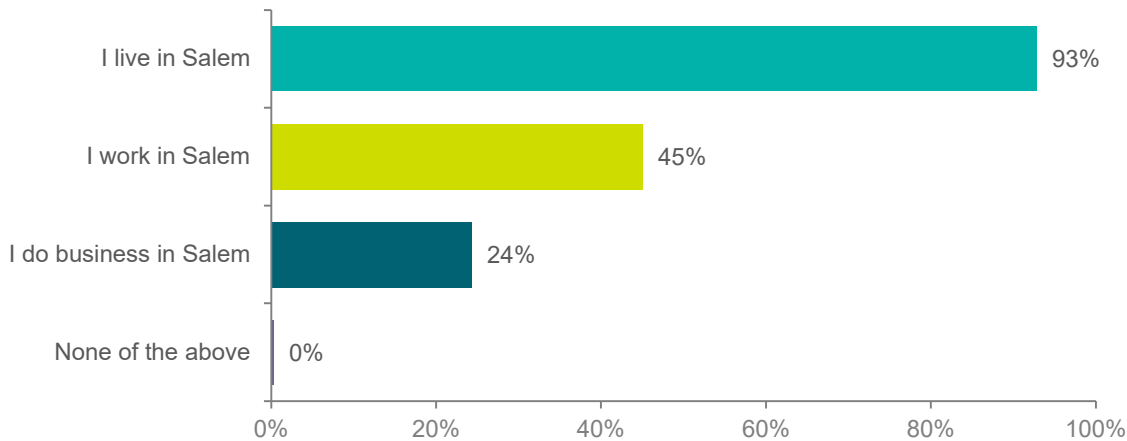
Turell Group oversaw a survey which provided a way for Salem residents, workers and business owners to provide feedback to the City of Salem. The survey was open from October 2024 through January 2025 and was available online in English and Spanish. Through the English-language survey, 362 respondents submitted their feedback. No one submitted a response through the Spanish-language survey. Just over half of respondents (206, 57%) submitted their responses through the website [<https://www.cityofsalem.net/servingsalem>], and 155 respondents (43%) submitted their responses through a link provided in a press release. Only one person submitted a response distributed to the public on a printed handout.

KEY FINDINGS

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Nearly all respondents live in Salem (93%), while nearly half (45%) work in Salem, and a quarter do business in Salem (24%).

Q1: Which of these describe you? (Select all that apply.)



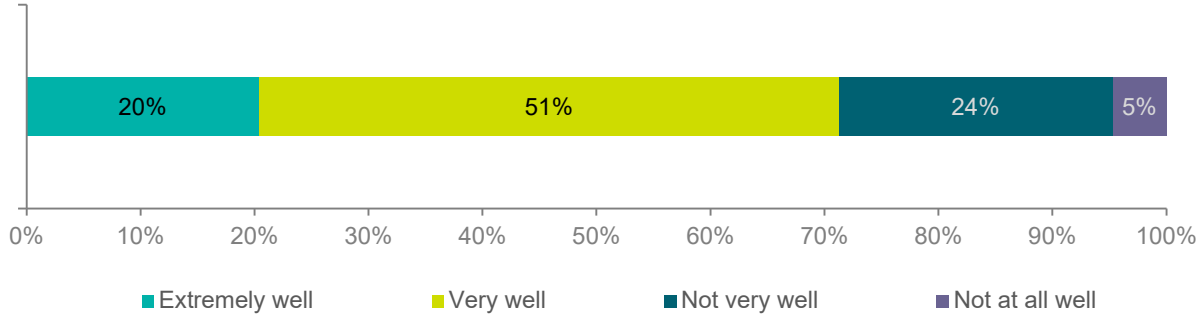
Individuals found the survey through a variety of ways, primarily:

- From a friend or family member (29%)
- Social media (20%)
- News outlet (TV, paper, etc.) (19%)
- Email from the city (14%)
- Neighborhood association (12%)

ASSESSMENT OF INFORMATION

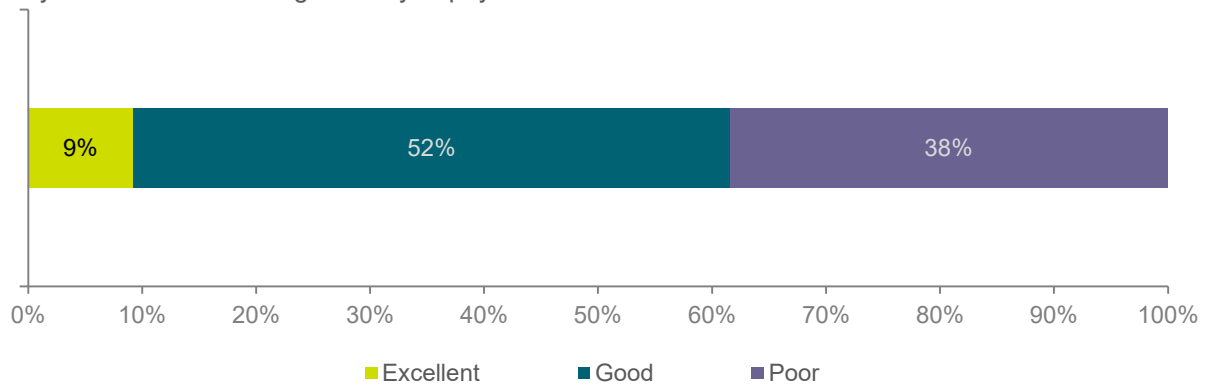
Most respondents (71%) are confident about their understanding of Salem’s funding challenges.

Q3: How well do you feel you understand Salem’s challenge of not having enough money to pay for current services?



Of those who had seen the information Salem has made available to explain the financial situation (83%), most people felt the information is good (52%).

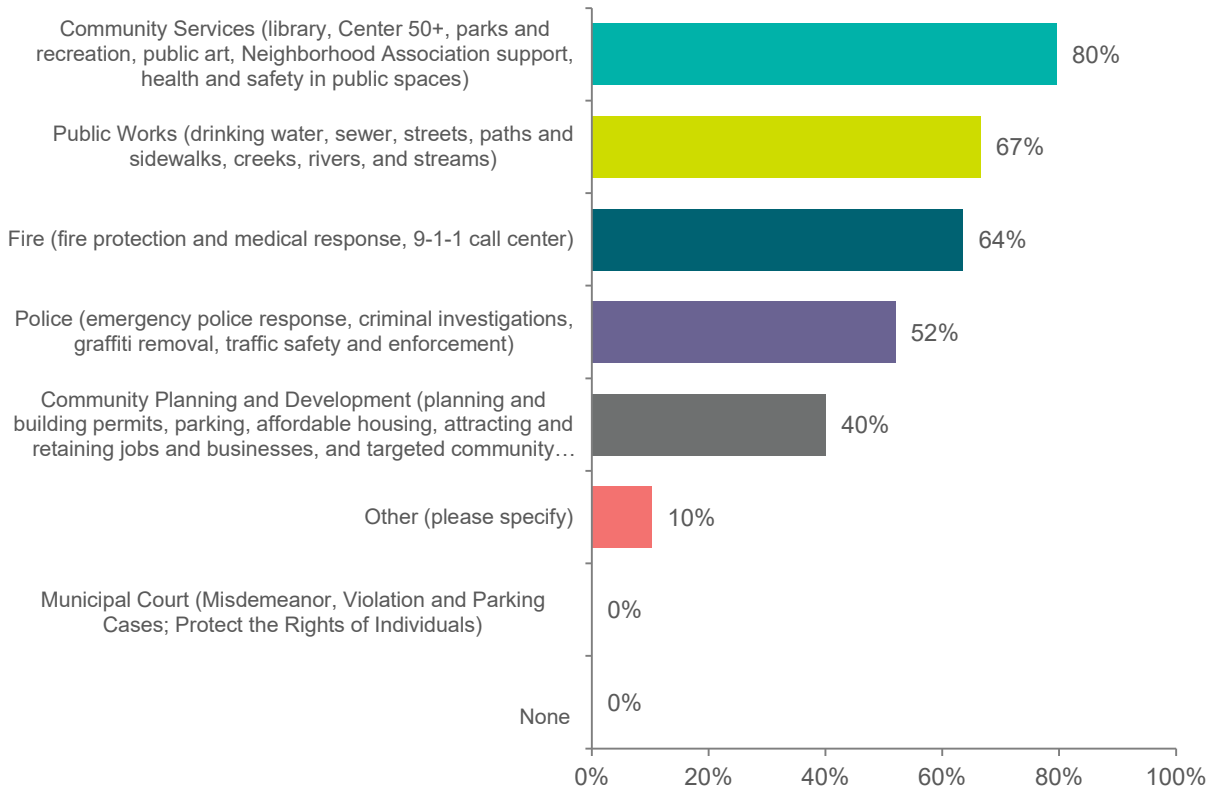
Q4: How would you rate the information that the City of Salem has made available to explain why the City does not have enough money to pay for current services?



SERVICE PRIORITIES

For most respondents, community services like the library are overwhelmingly important (80%) while none indicated that the municipal court is important. This may reflect that while many respondents have used the library and other community services, few respondents have needed to use the court.

Q5: What City services are most important to you and your family? (Select all that apply.)



CUTTING COSTS

The 209 suggestions for cost savings ranged from reducing specific services to restructuring departments and changing financial practices. Respondents proposed cutting or reducing police funding, while others suggested volunteer programs, reducing administrative costs, and prioritizing essential services. Some recommend increasing transparency in budget allocation and spending.

The three most common themes are:

1. Reduce police funding and reallocate police budget (14 suggestions).
2. Increase transparency and clarity on how funds are spent and increase public involvement in budgeting (8 suggestions).
3. Reduce administrative costs, including management positions and bureaucracy, and streamline efficiency in City operations (7 suggestions).

FUNDING SERVICES

Respondents suggested through 254 comments their ideas for funding community services, with many focused particularly on the public library. Suggestions included new taxes or levies, charging fees for services, seeking alternative funding sources, cutting expenses or reallocating funds, and taxing state-owned property.

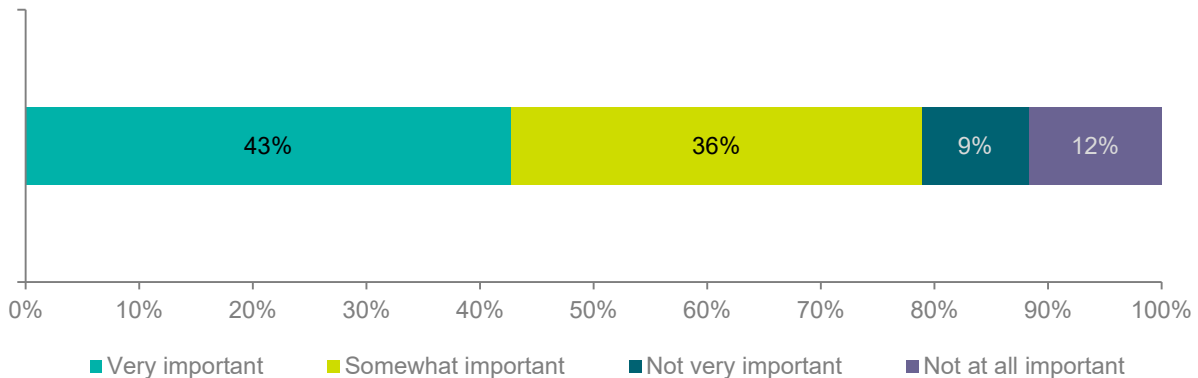
The three most common themes are:

1. Implement new taxes or levies, including a livability levy, library levy, sales taxes, or income tax on high earners (28 suggestions).
2. Charge fees for services, including parking fees, business license fees, and charge for using parks or libraries (15 suggestions).
3. Identify alternative funding sources, such as grants, public-private partnerships, and a library district (14 suggestions).

SLIDING SCALE

Most respondents (79%) feel that offering a sliding scale or tiers for services is important so that people with lower incomes pay less.

Q8: How important is it to create a sliding scale or tiers for services with fees (i.e., should people with lower incomes pay less)?



COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Respondents submitted numerous comments about Salem's budget situation and proposed solutions. All the responses are shared with Salem leadership in a separate spreadsheet.

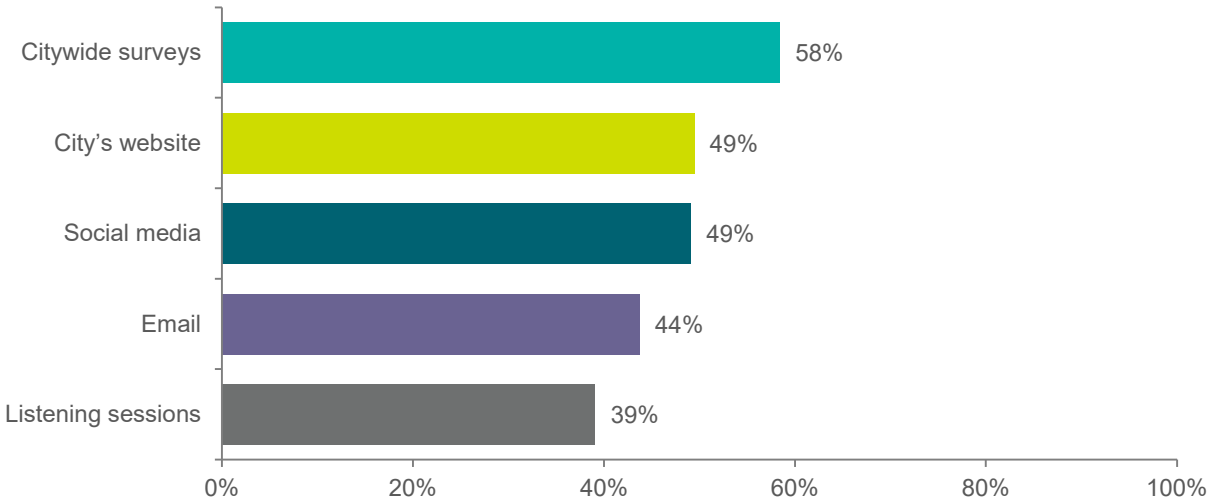
The three most common themes are:

1. The library is a vital community resource that should remain open and maintain its funding (14 comments).
2. Respondents question spending priorities and express concern about the city's financial management. Some suggest cutting staffing and changing tax structures.
3. Comments were split between those willing to pay higher taxes to maintain services and those opposed to any tax increases. Some suggested alternative revenue sources or changes to tax structures.

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

Community members responded that their most preferred way of communicating with Salem leadership about issues is through citywide surveys (58%). Their least preferred method is listening sessions (39%). Those who indicated they wanted to receive emails from the city were invited to share their email address to opt in to further communications. All those addresses were provided to the City of Salem in a separate spreadsheet.

Q10: How can we continue the conversation about City issues with you?



TURELL GROUP

Turell Group is a full-service marketing and communications agency in Eugene, Oregon, that offers independent research as a service. The agency staff have been providing unbiased services for more than two decades. The agency is non-partisan, independent, and specializes in supporting organizations located within Oregon.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SURVEY RESULTS

Salem Feedback Questionnaire October 2024 - January 2025

Q1. Which of these describe you? (Select all that apply.)

Answer Choices	Responses	
I live in Salem	93%	336
I work in Salem	45%	163
I do business in Salem	24%	88
None of the above	0%	1
	Answered	362
	Skipped	0

Q2. How did you hear about this feedback questionnaire? (Select all that apply.)

Answer Choices	Responses	
From a friend or family member	29%	105
News outlet (TV, paper, etc.)	19%	69
Social media	19%	69
Email from the city	14%	52
Neighborhood association	12%	44
City website	6%	20
At work	4%	15
Attended a City listening session	1%	2
Saw a recorded City listening session	1%	2
Reddit	0%	1
Radio	0%	0
I don't remember	2%	6
Other (please specify)	9%	32
Common write-in responses included: Library (8), Salem Reporter (4), League of Women Voters (3), City Councilor (2)		
	Answered	359
	Skipped	3

Q3. How well do you feel you understand Salem's challenge of not having enough money to pay for current services?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely well	20%	74
Very well	51%	184
Not very well	24%	87
Not at all well	5%	17
	Answered	362
	Skipped	0

Q4. How would you rate the information that the City of Salem has made available to explain why the City does not have enough money to pay for current services?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Excellent	8%	28
Good	44%	158
Poor	32%	116
I have not seen the information	17%	60
	Answered	362
	Skipped	0

Q5. What City services are most important to you and your family? (Select all that apply.)

Answer Choices	Responses	
Community Services (library, Center 50+, parks and recreation, public art, Neighborhood Association support, health and safety in public spaces)	80%	288
Public Works (drinking water, sewer, streets, paths and sidewalks, creeks, rivers, and streams)	67%	241
Fire (fire protection and medical response, 9-1-1 call center)	64%	230
Police (emergency police response, criminal investigations, graffiti removal, traffic safety and enforcement)	52%	188
Community Planning and Development (planning and building permits, parking, affordable housing, attracting and retaining jobs and businesses, and targeted community redevelopment)	40%	145
Municipal Court (Misdemeanor, Violation and Parking Cases; Protect the Rights of Individuals)	0%	0
None	0%	0
Other (please specify)	10%	37
Common write-in response themes included: library support (15), climate action (2), emergency services (2), issues of housing and unhoused (2)		
	Answered	362
	Skipped	0

Q6. Do you have any suggestions for ways the City could cut costs or services?

Answered 209
Skipped 153

Q7. Do you have any suggestions for new ways the City could fund the services it provides?

Answered 254
Skipped 108

Q8. How important is it to create a sliding scale or tiers for services with fees (i.e., should people with lower incomes pay less)?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Very important	43%	150
Somewhat important	36%	127
Not very important	9%	33
Not at all important	12%	41
	Answered	351
	Skipped	11

Q9. Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding the City’s direction or its budget?

Answered 176
Skipped 186

Q10. How can we continue the conversation about City issues with you?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Citywide surveys	58%	195
Social media	49%	166
City’s website	47%	159
Email (Please provide your email address and we will add you to our email list)	45%	151
Listening sessions	39%	131
	Answered	337
	Skipped	25

