INDIANAPOLIS-MARION COUNTY CITY-COUNTY COUNCIL
A Study of Council Effectiveness
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AUTHORS

Cullen C. Merritt, Ph.D. & Amanda Rutherford, Ph.D.

O'NEILL

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

CONTENTS

ADDITIONAL CONTENT

PART I:
OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to measure and assess the effectiveness of the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council. Given that effectiveness may be defined in a number of ways, the research conducted includes many types of information that can provide a well-rounded assessment of the council.

The co-principal investigators (co-PIs), Cullen C. Merritt of IUPUI and Amanda Rutherford of Indiana University Bloomington, are faculty members in the Paul H. O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. They have focused on providing an objective assessment of the council that is separate from elections or political parties. The co-PIs have used their expertise in governance to provide recommendations to the council that might help to position the council and its leadership to introduce and augment structural and procedural changes to foster strong performance in some areas and navigate barriers to effectiveness in others.

The co-PIs would like to thank a group of students for their work in implementing this project. These individuals include Ashabul Alam, Joseph Chheng, Amber Greaney, Jared McDonald, and Hampton Shields from IUPUI and Victoria Anderson, Tianyu Chen, and Michelle Long from IU Bloomington.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS OF THE INDIANAPOLIS-MARION COUNTY CITY-COUNTY COUNCIL

In 1970, the city of Indianapolis and Marion County joined under a unified structure of government, known as Unigov. This consolidated government includes 10 towns outside Indianapolis city limits, but excludes four towns even though residents in these areas vote for the mayor of Indianapolis and are represented on the City-County Council. Under Unigov, the City-County Council initially included 29 members. Of those 29 seats, 25 represented local districts while four were at-large seats determined by all Marion County residents. In 2013, the state legislature approved a bill eliminating the four at-large seats. The council has been comprised of 25 district seats since this change. Within the council, a president and vice president are elected during the first meeting of each calendar year. The majority and minority parties each determine caucus leaders.

Following the November 5, 2019, election, the City-County Council consists of a 20-5 majority Democratic split, with the majority party gaining six additional seats. The turnout rate for the election was 24 percent, meaning nearly 1 out of every 4 eligible voters completed a ballot.

COUNCIL BUDGET

The City-County Council, as the legislative and fiscal body of Indianapolis and Marion County, oversees a budget of $1.2 billion. Both total revenue and total expenditures have marginally increased over the past five years with the exception of fiscal year 2016. Across expenditure categories, there have not been significant shifts toward or away from any single service. Perhaps the largest recent shift is reflected in appropriations for public safety. Already the largest portion of the budget, this category increased from 36 percent to 38 percent of appropriations between 2014 and 2019. Taxes account for more than 60 percent of all revenue.

FIGURE 1. Share of revenue by source

Taxes · Interfund transfers · Other receipts · Fines and forfitures · Charges for services · Inter-governmental · Licenses and permits
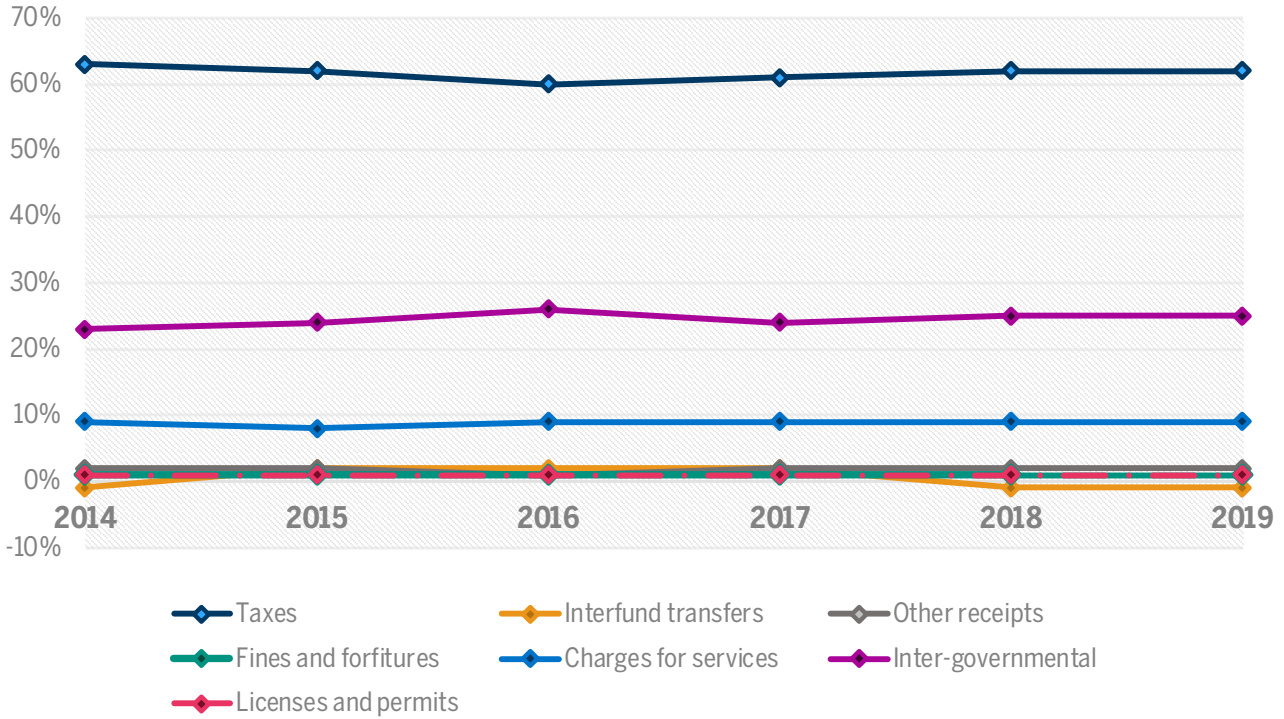
Note: Budget information was obtained through indy.gov.

FIGURE 2. Share of appropriations by source

Criminal justice services · Department of public safety · Executive legislative and administrative services · Debt service and pension obligations · Other public services
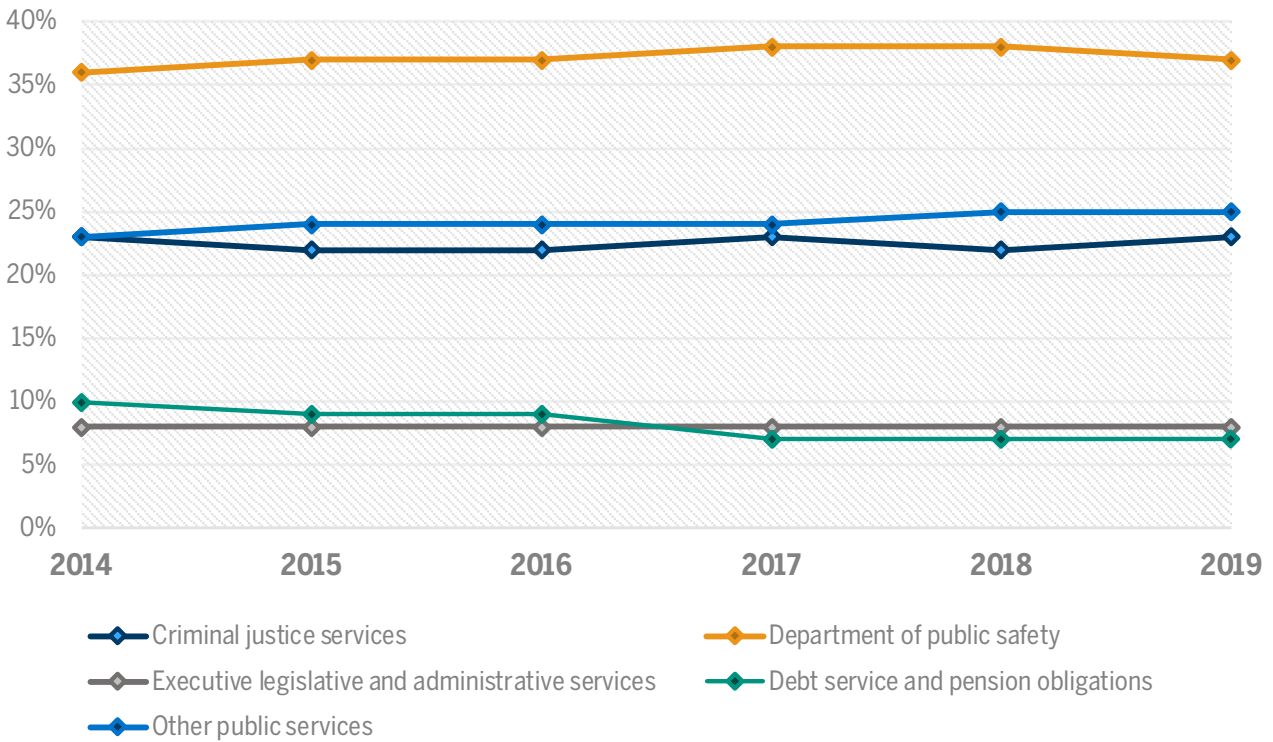
COMPARISON TO PEER CONSOLIDATED COUNCILS

Consolidated councils that can be considered similar to the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council include the Metropolitan Council of Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee; the Metro Council of Louisville and Jefferson County, Kentucky; and the consolidated City Council of Jacksonville and Duval County, Florida. Consolidations in Nashville and Jacksonville occurred prior to the consolidation in Indianapolis (1958 and 1967, respectively) while the consolidation of Louisville and Jefferson County occurred much later (2003). Information regarding each council is reported in the columns below.

TABLE 1. Peer consolidated council comparison

	INDIANAPOLIS-MARION COUNTY	JACKSONVILLE-DUVAL COUNTY	NASHVILLE-DAVIDSON COUNTY	LOUISVILLE-JEFFERSON COUNTY
Metro population	954,670	950,181	692,587	770,517
Area - square miles	403	918	524	398
Median income	$46,692.00	$52,062.00	$54,310.00	$49,439.00
Race/ethnicity				
White	54.8%	52.6%	56.2%	67.0%
Black or African American	28.9%	30.6%	27.7%	22.2%
Hispanic or Latino	10.6%	10.1%	10.4%	5.7%
Asian	3.6%	5.1%	3.9%	3.1%
American Indian	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.2%
Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Two or more races	2.9%	3.0%	2.5%	2.5%
Gender				
Male	48.1%	48.6%	48.1%	48.3%
Female	51.9%	51.4%	51.9%	51.7%
2019 council characteristics				
Total council seats	25	19	40	26
At-large seats	0 (0.0%)	5 (26.3%)	5 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Democratic-controlled seats	14 (56.0%)	6 (31.6%)	N/A	19 (73.1%)
Republican-controlled seats	11 (44.0%)	13 (68.4%)	N/A	7 (26.9%)
Non-white seats	7 (28.0%)	7 (36.8%)	12 (30.0%)	6 (23.1%)
Female seats	7 (28.0%)	5 (26.3%)	17 (42.5%)	10 (38.5%)
Councilor salaries	$11,400 part time	$49,974 part time	$23,100 part time	$48,790 part time
2018 Budget	$1.1 billion	$1.2 billion	$2.2 billion	$700 million
2018 Budget vote	21-2	3-14	36-1	24-0
Non-elected staff	9	45	10	38*

Louisville reported one aide per council seat as well as 12 part-time staff members

The Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council has the most densely populated metropolitan area of the four councils, and the demographics of the population are largely similar across all four jurisdictions. In terms of council structure, the council is most similar to Louisville in terms of total size and allocation of at-large seats. While minority representation on the council is fairly average compared to peers, female representation is somewhat low. Specifically, none of the councils have female representation that reflect their relative metro population and only Jacksonville approaches reflecting the overall majority-minority breakdown of seats for the white and nonwhite populations.

Councilors in Indianapolis-Marion County are paid less than this set of peers. The council also has a smaller staff than many of its peers. For example, the Indianapolis-Marion County council currently employs nine staff members: clerk of the council, assistant clerk of the council, assistant clerk of personnel and finance, general counsel, chief financial officer, policy director, and three administrative assistants. Nashville, where the Metro Council includes 40 part-time council members, employs 10 staff members, the closest to Indianapolis-Marion County. Nashville's staff is made up of a director/lead attorney, staff attorney, legislative liaison, financial analyst, assistant to the financial analyst, chief of staff, and four administrative assistants.

METHODOLOGY

Information for this study was collected in three forms—an online survey of city and county residents, interviews with city and county leaders, and small focus groups with citizens. All data sources were gathered between June and October 2019.

SURVEY

The online survey consisted of 105 questions designed by the principal investigators of the study. Sections of the survey included a residency verification, awareness of current council members, opinions regarding councilor salary, general trust in government, levels of public engagement and representation by the council, issues facing Indianapolis and Marion County, and respondent demographics. The survey opened to the public on June 5, 2019, and closed on June 28, 2019. Marketing of the survey was the responsibility of the council. The survey was generally distributed through social media as well as an article on WFYI, a local PBS and NPR member news station. A total of 571 respondents partially or fully completed the survey during this time period.

Importantly, there are an insufficient number of survey respondents to be considered representative of the full Indianapolis or Marion County population. In terms of race and ethnicity, more than 80 percent of the survey respondents are white/Caucasians compared to 55 percent of residents in Marion County who identify in this way according to U.S. Census Bureau data. Slightly less than 7 percent of survey respondents are black/African Americans compared to 29 percent reported by the census. Similarly, just under 3 percent of survey respondents identified as Hispanic—considerably lower that then census estimate of less than 11 percent of Marion County residents.

The gender composition of respondents is much more representative of the local population. Compared with census data, the share of respondents who are male is approximately 3 percentage points lower than that of the overall population of Marion County. The percentage of respondents who identify as female is approximately 2 percentage points lower. These differences may be explained, in large part, by those respondents who were not willing to reveal their gender identity.

Several other demographic factors are provided in the figures below. Education levels between the survey respondent group and general population are vastly different such that respondents are much more likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher than the average resident of Indianapolis or Marion County. On the other hand, the employment level is very similar with approximately 67 percent of both the survey respondents and the general population holding a full-time position. Two other differences emerged: household income and voting behavior. While the estimated median household income for the county is just under $45,000, the average household income reported in the survey was $110,000. Further, while 40 percent of Marion County residents participated in the 2018 election, nearly all respondents reported voting in local, state, and federal elections.

Overall, this means that those who took the survey are likely more educated, wealthier, and more politically active than the average Indianapolis or Marion County resident. This should be kept in mind when interpreting the results provided below.

FIGURE 3. Race/ethnicity of survey respondents vs. census estimates

Black or African American: 28.9% / 6.4%
Latinx or Hispanic: 10.6% / 2.6%
Native American or Alaska native: 0.5% / 0.3%
Asian: 3.6% / 0.3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific islander: 0.1% / 0.3%
White or Caucasian: 55.4% / 80.2%
Biracial or multiracial: 2.9% / 1.0%

■ Census 2018 estimates ■ All respondents
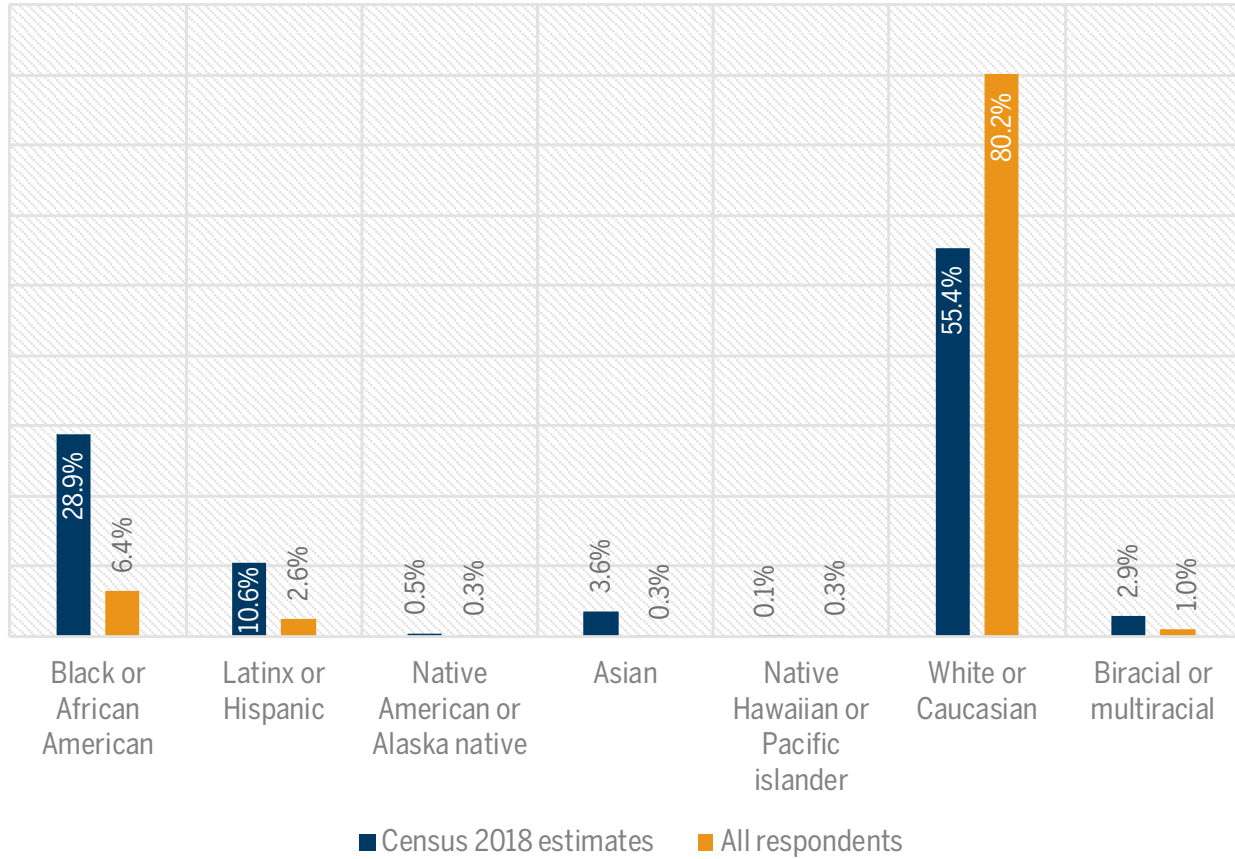
FIGURE 4. Gender of survey respondents vs. census estimates

Male: 48.2% / 45.1%
Female: 51.8% / 50.1%

■ Census 2018 estimates ■ All respondents
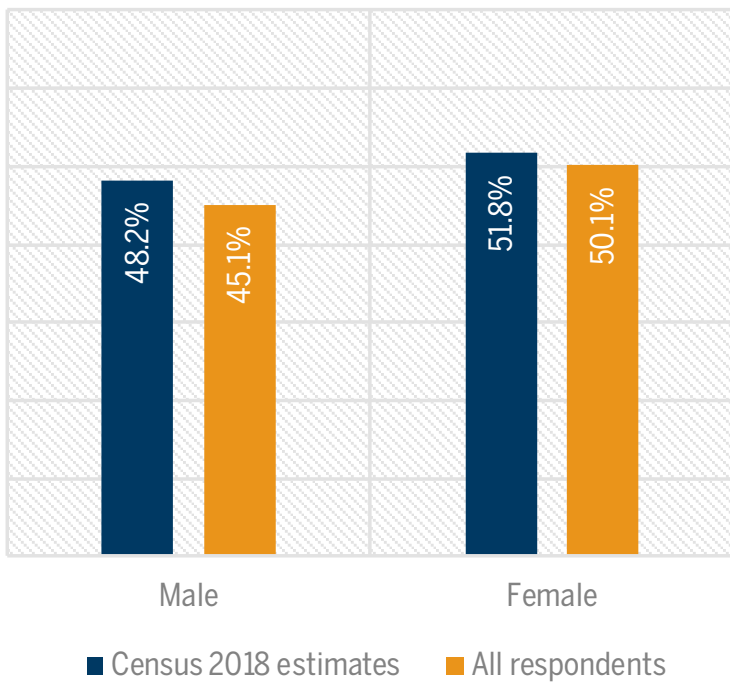
FIGURE 5. Education of survey respondents vs. census estimates

29.7% / 80.5%

Populaton with bachelor's degree and higher

■ Census 2018 estimates
■ All respondents
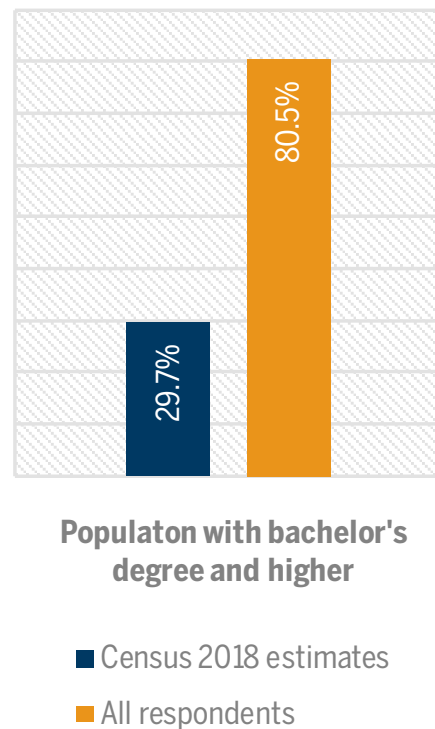
FIGURE 6. Employment of survey respondents vs. census estimates

Employment rate

■ Census 2018 estimates ■ All respondents

67.1%
66.7%

FIGURE 7. Household income of survey respondents vs. census estimates

Median annual household income

■ Census 2018 estimates ■ All respondents

$110,000
$44,869
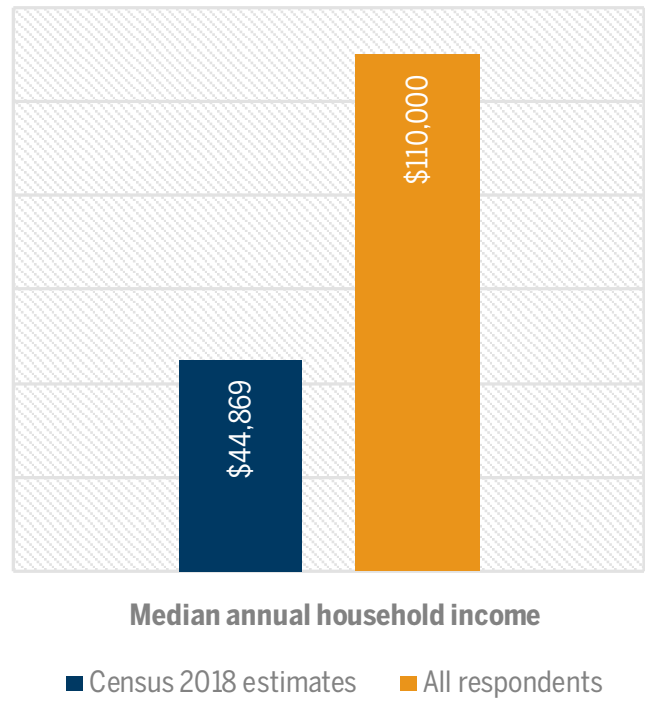
FIGURE 8. 2016 local election voter turnout vs. reported turnout of ever voting in local elections among survey respondents

40.0%

99.5%

2016 local election voter turnout

Reported turnout of ever voting in local elections among survey respondents
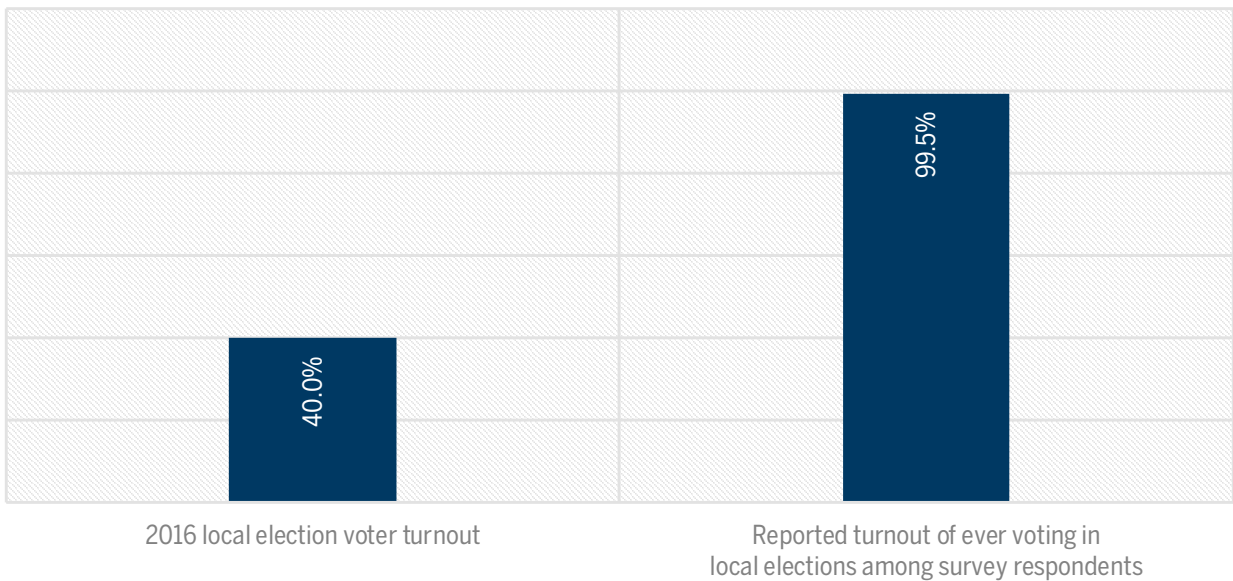
FIGURE 9. 2016 state election voter turnout vs. reported turnout of ever voting in state elections among survey respondents

2016 state election voter turnout — 40.0%

Reported turnout of ever voting in state elections among survey respondents — 99.0%
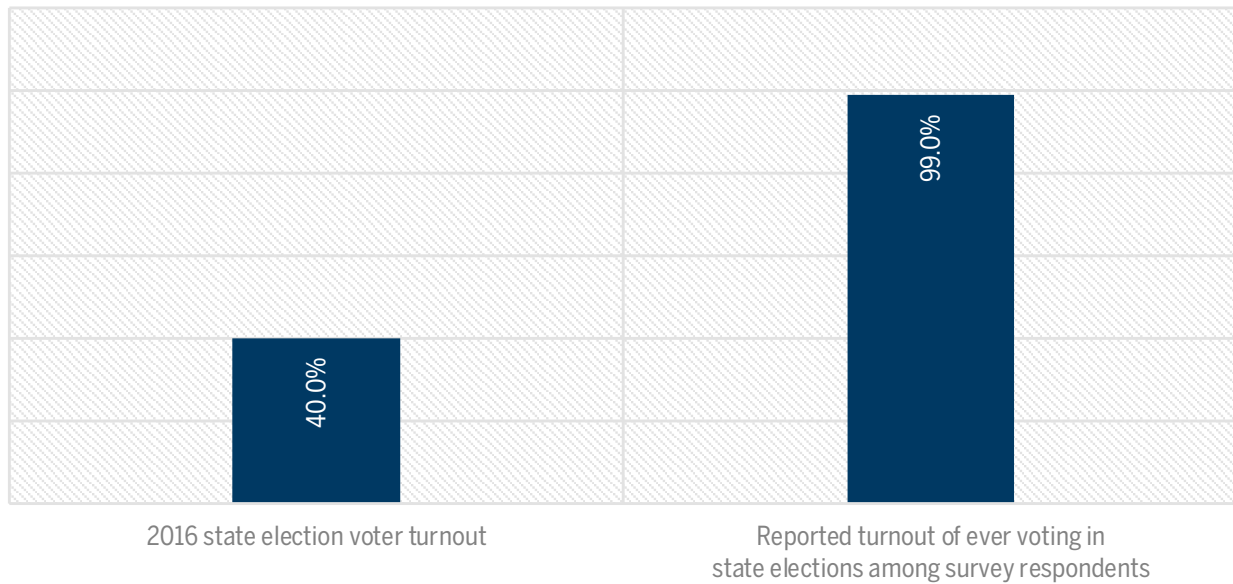
FIGURE 10. 2016 federal election voter turnout vs. reported turnout among survey respondents

2016 federal election voter turnout — 40.0%

Reported turnout of ever voting in state elections among survey respondents — 99.2%
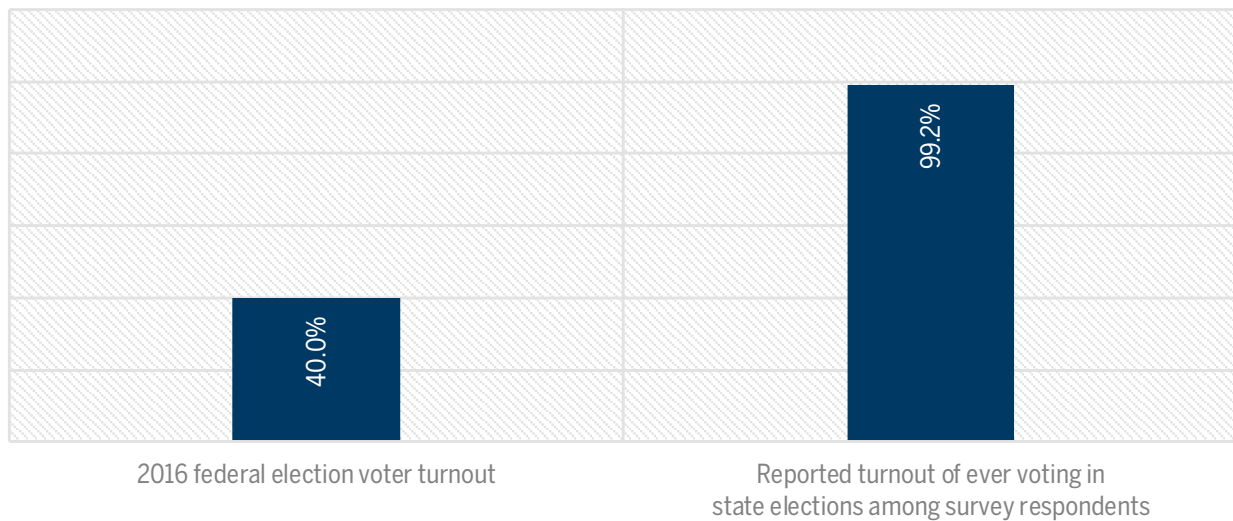
INTERVIEWS

A total of 29 interviews with city and county leaders were conducted between August 1–30, 2019. Interviewees included several councilors as well as representatives from the executive and judicial branches of government, the private sector, and the nonprofit sector. All interviews were open-ended, semi-structured, and included approximately 20 questions. Interview questions were designed to elicit information about council structure and effectiveness, public engagement with the council, and council representation. Interviews were conducted either in-person or over-the-phone and lasted an average of one hour in length.

FOCUS GROUPS

Five focus groups were offered between September 11, 2019, and October 9, 2019. Focus groups varied in size, ranging from three to 10 participants. In total, 28 Indianapolis and Marion County residents participated in the focus groups. Participants varied across a range of demographic categories, such as political ideology, gender identity, racial/ethnic identity, and age. Detailed demographic information for focus group participants is included below.

Each focus group was hosted at a different branch of the Indianapolis Public Library. Information regarding the focus groups was circulated to a range of community groups via email and posted on social media platforms. Individuals on site at the time of a focus group were also invited to participate. The co-PIs engaged participants in a discussion covering 16 questions during the span of approximately 90 minutes. Discussion questions addressed topics including council responsibilities and effectiveness, local policy issues, characteristics of a councilor that are essential to advancing the mission of the council, council representation, and council outreach and communication.

FIGURE 11. Overview of focus group participants (28 total participants)

Gender

Female 57.1%

Male 42.9%

Age

42.9%

28.6%

14.3%

7.1%

7.1%

- Over 55 years old
- 45–54 years old
- 35–44 years old
- 25–34 years old
- 18–24 years old

Race/Ethnicity

57.1%

32.1%

7.1%

3.6%

- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American
- Biracial or multiracial
- Asian
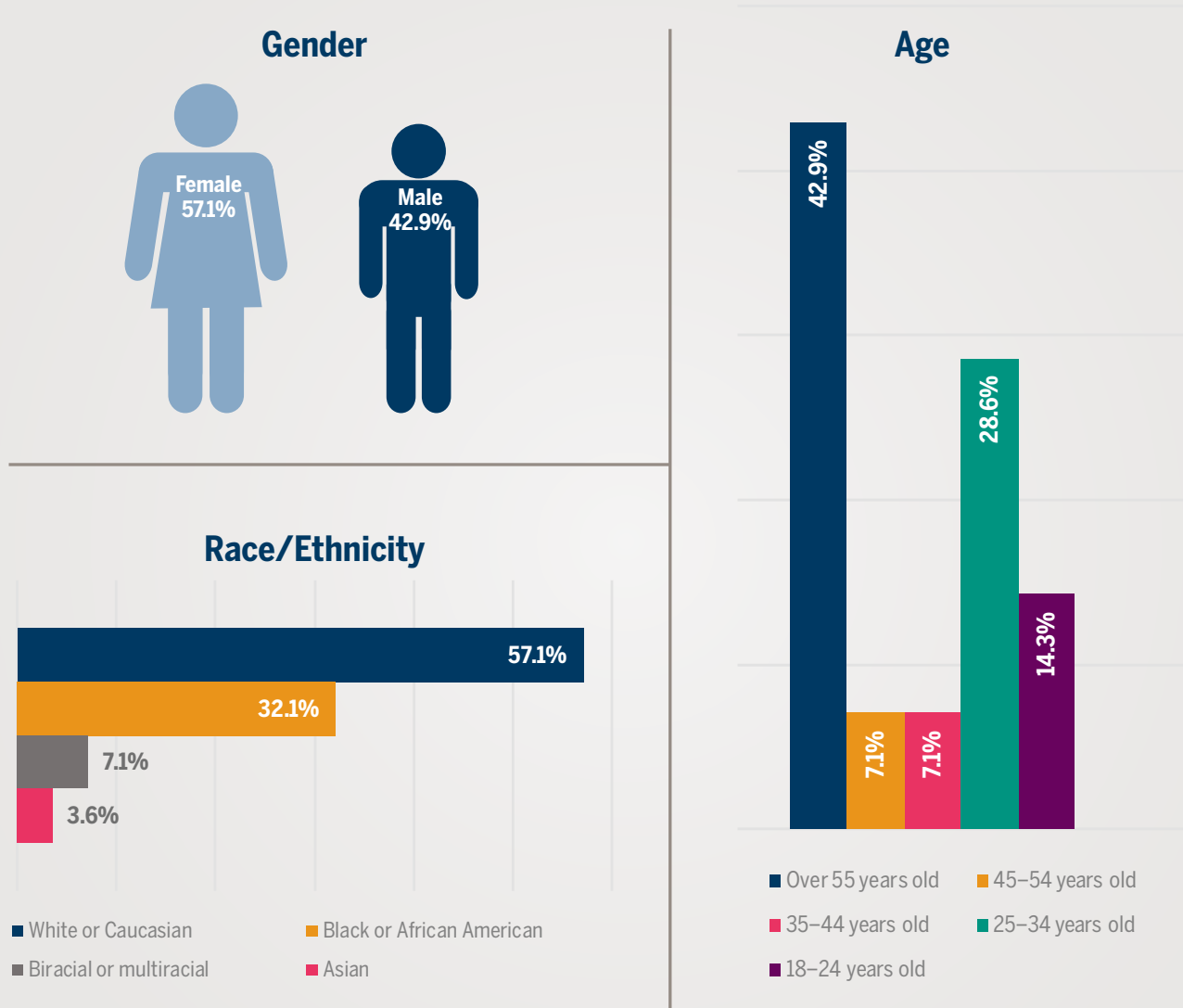
FIGURE 11. Continued...

Highest education

- 3.6% High school diploma or equivalent
- 10.7% Some college
- 53.6% Bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S.) or equivalent
- 32.1% Master's degree (M.A., M.S., M.Ed.)

Current employment status

Employed part time (less than 40 hours/week)	3.6%
Employed full time (40+ hours per week)	42.9%
Student	7.1%
Retired	35.7%
Self-employed	7.1%
Employed full time and student	3.6%
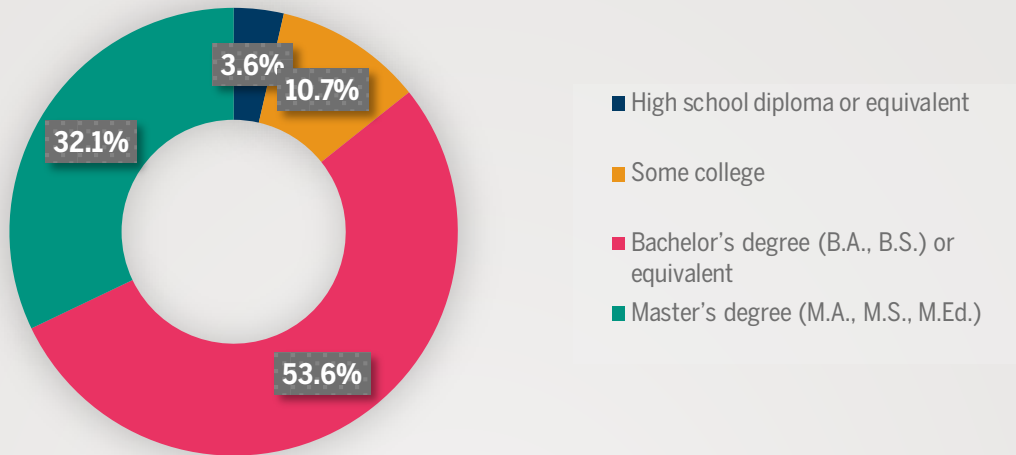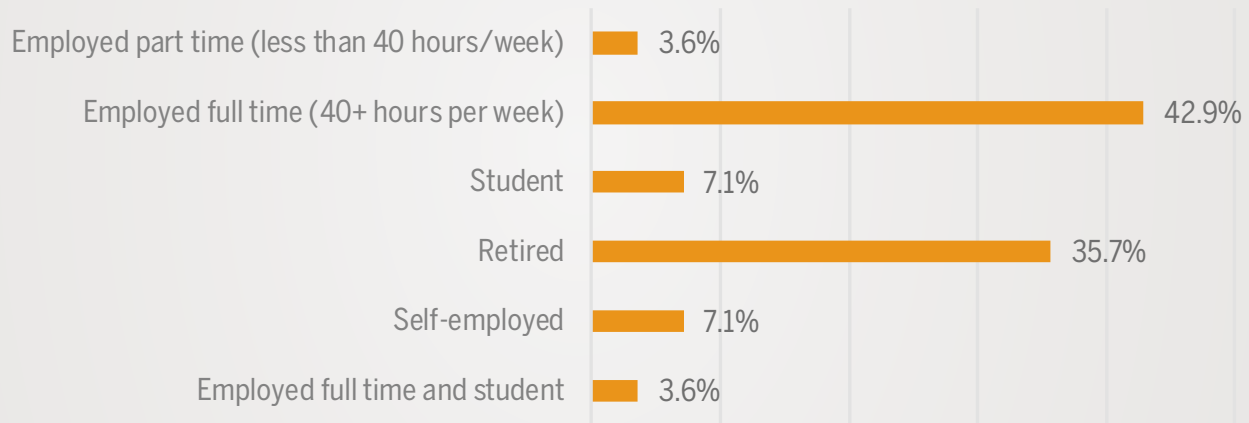
Sector of employment, if employed

- 25.0% Public/government
- 17.9% Private
- 14.3% Nonprofit
- 3.6% Private and nonprofit
- 39.3% Not applicable

OVERVIEW

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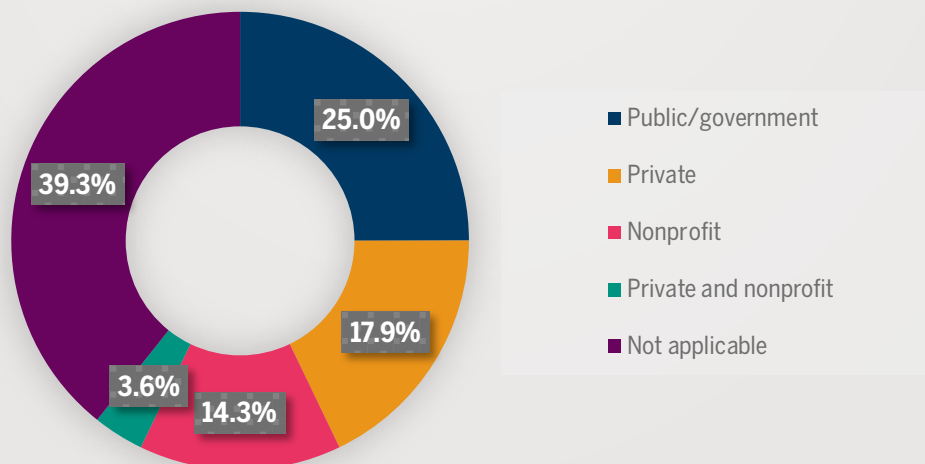
FIGURE 11. Continued...

Average annual household income

Income	Percentage
Less than $20,000	10.7%
$20,000 - $40,000	7.1%
$40,000 - $70,000	21.4%
$70,000 - $100,000	21.4%
$100,000 - $150,000	14.3%
Greater than $150,000	3.6%
Prefer not to answer	21.4%
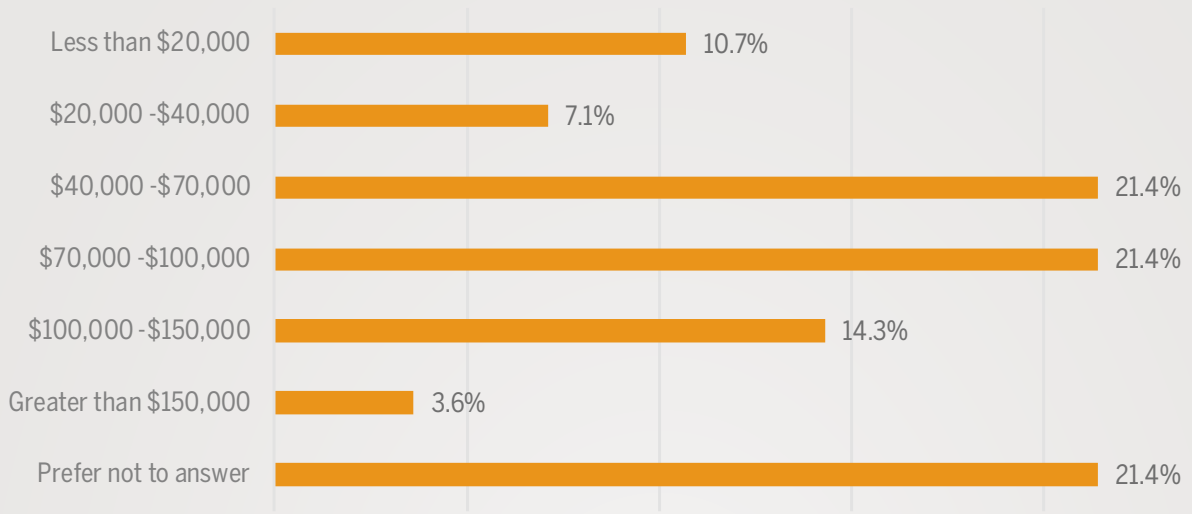
Ever/currently hold and elected position

7.1%

3.6%

89.3%

- Yes
- No
- Did not answer
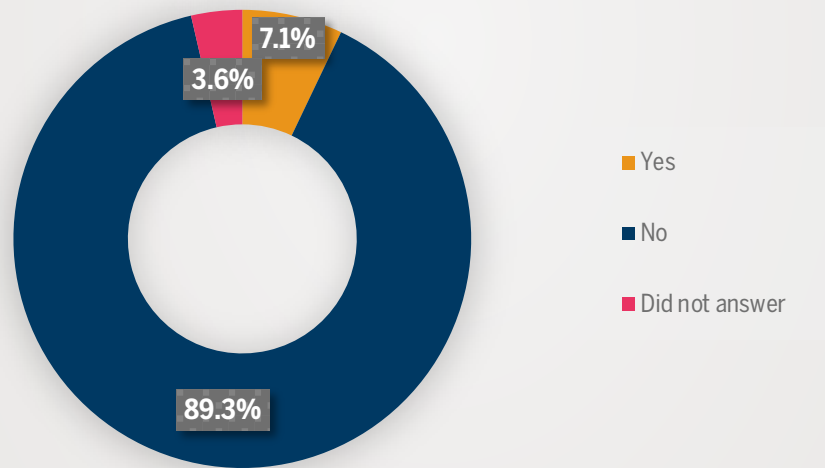
PART II:
RESULTS

AWARENESS OF THE COUNCIL

Among all survey respondents, 97 percent had heard of the council. Additionally, 80 percent are familiar with one or more of the individuals sitting on the council, and nearly 75 percent reported being aware of who their representative is. When asked to recall the size of the council, 3 out of 4 responded correctly. However, 15 percent of respondents provided a low number and nearly 8 percent reported a high number.

Survey respondents were asked, "How would you rate the overall ideology of the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council?" The majority of respondents identified the council's ideology being neutral. Among subgroups in the survey, the largest exception came from individuals who identified as being somewhat (12 percent of respondents) or very (3 percent) conservative; the majority of this subgroup viewed the council as being somewhat or very liberal in nature.

FIGURE 12. Perceived council ideology

	Very conservative	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Very liberal
Nonprofit sector	6.5%	12.9%	59.7%	17.7%	3.2%
Private sector	1.0%	11.5%	47.9%	29.2%	10.4%
Public sector	3.3%	18.5%	51.1%	26.1%	1.1%
Liberal	4.1%	15.3%	60.6%	18.2%	1.8%
Conservative	3.9%	13.7%	13.7%	43.1%	25.3%
45 and older	3.5%	17.6%	49.3%	22.1%	7.5%
Below 45	3.3%	15.1%	53.3%	23.7%	4.6%
Nonwhite	8.7%	8.7%	60.9%	13.0%	8.7%
White	2.7%	17.8%	50.9%	23.6%	5.1%
Women	4.4%	19.1%	53.6%	20.8%	2.2%
Men	1.8%	13.5%	48.2%	25.9%	10.6%
All respondents	3.3%	16.5%	49.8%	23.8%	6.6%

Legend: ■ Very conservative ■ Conservative ■ Moderate ■ Liberal ■ Very liberal

In general, respondents largely estimated that the council consisted of 20–40 percent women. The accurate percentage at the time of the survey was 28 percent. Notably, individuals working in the private sector and men were least likely to estimate a share of 0–20 percent women on the council. Nonwhite and female respondents were most likely to estimate a share of 0–20 percent women on the council.

FIGURE 13. Perceived share of women on the city-county council

	0–20%	20–40%	40–60%	60–80%
Nonprofit sector	36.1%	57.4%	6.6%	
Private sector	25.5%	66.3%	8.2%	
Public sector	38.3%	55.3%	6.4%	
Liberal	35.3%	58.8%	5.3%	0.6%
Conservative	28.9%	63.5%	7.7%	
45 and older	41.1%	52.0%	6.9%	
Below 45	30.1%	63.4%	6.5%	
Nonwhite	42.0%	46.0%	12.0%	
White	36.1%	58.5%	5.1%	0.3%
Women	44.6%	49.5%	5.4%	0.5%
Men	27.8%	64.7%	7.5%	
All respondents	36.9%	55.6%	7.3%	0.2%

■ 0–20%   ■ 20–40%   ■ 40–60%   ■ 60–80%   ■ 80–100%
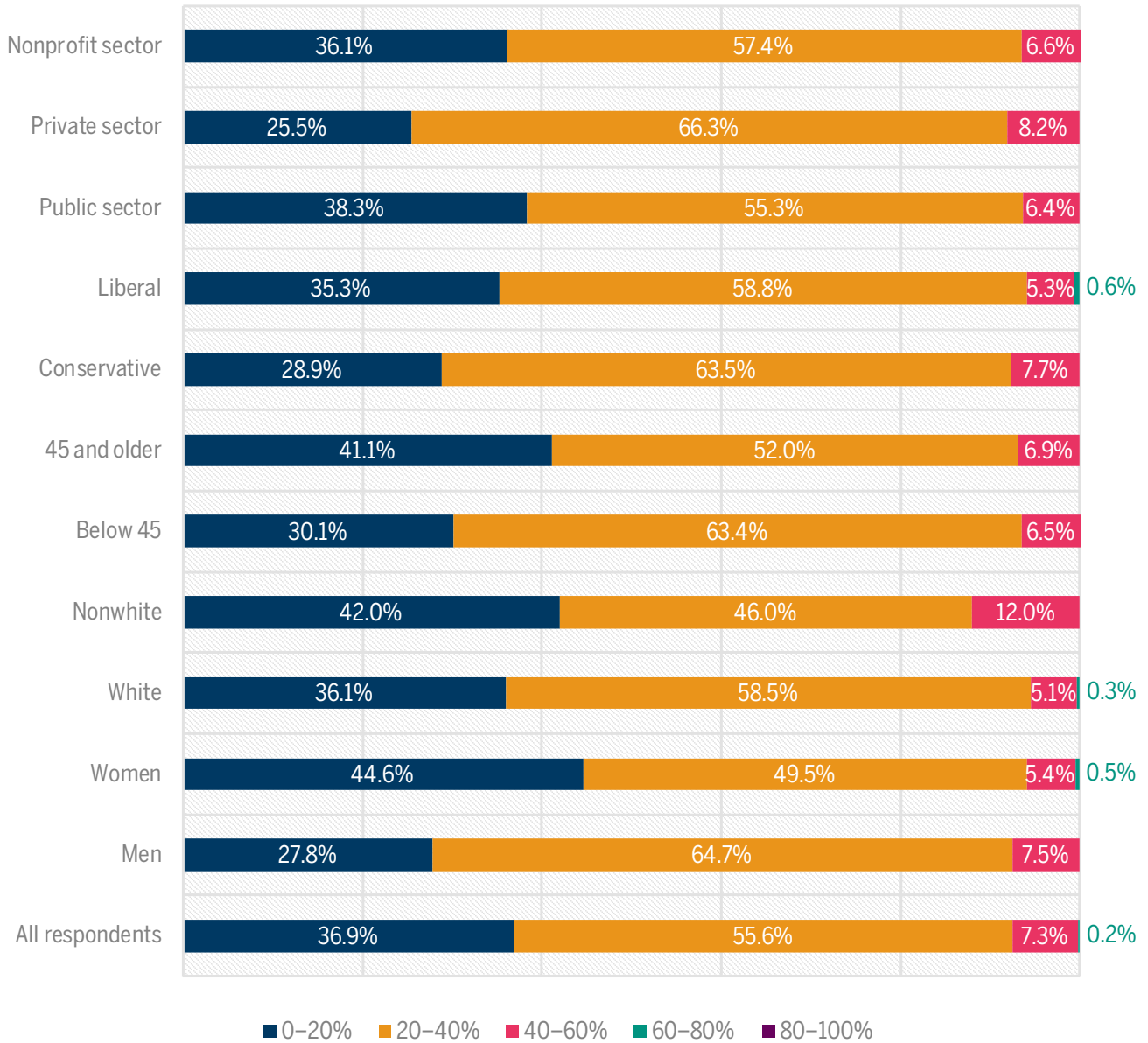
PURPOSE OF THE COUNCIL: CITY-COUNTY LEADER VERSUS CITIZEN PERSPECTIVES

The co-PIs for this study also asked city-county leaders and residents to provide their perspectives on the purpose of the council in interviews and focus groups.

According to city-county leaders, the purpose of the council encompassed three themes. The first and most common response centered on the council's responsibility to vet and approve the budget proposed by the mayor. Second was creating and enacting ordinances that align with resident interests while understanding the potential consequences of policy decisions for the public. As one interviewee explained, the council's purpose is to make "policy decisions that profoundly impact the quality of life that we enjoy in the city of Indianapolis." According to another participant, the council must "make sure that the policies [produced] by the council [reflect] the interest and the will of the constituency." City-county leaders viewed this theme as inextricably linked to the council's budget responsibility. Third, city-county leaders viewed being a liaison between citizens and city-county government as among the council's most important responsibility. One individual remarked that the council's purpose is to be "representative of our constituents in various areas or districts in our town. I see them as advocates and the go-between [for] citizens and city-county government." City-county leaders believed that listening to constituents, being present in the community (e.g., attending community meetings, responding to citizen communications), and related forms of public engagement would facilitate the council's role as a liaison.

Among focus group participants, general themes included that the council should serve as a responsible governing body, the central hub for local budgetary decisions, and a voice for constituents and liaison between government and residents. While residents perceive the mayor as responsible for creating a vision and setting an agenda, they view the budgetary process as a shared responsibility that requires collaboration between the mayor and the council. One focus group participant stated that while, "the budget is brought to [the council] by the mayor, they approve the budget or they don't approve the budget." Additionally, residents place more emphasis on the need of council members to collect information from the community so that important information can be circulated back to both the mayor's office and the council. The council "should be the voice of the community. I feel like they should hear the community, and then speak for it," one participant remarked.

Focus group members were also asked to identify key indicators of council effectiveness. Most commonly, respondents cited the ability to see improvements to the city; others mentioned the ability of the council to address the needs of citizens. "You see they've done something that you've been complaining about," stated one participant. Another suggested, "The council shows success when it does what the community wants."

Overall, both city-county leaders and citizens highlighted that the purpose of the council is to act as both a fiscal and substantive legislative body while also working as representatives for citizens and/or

liaisons between citizens and city-county government. When further probed about factors that enable the council to advance its missions, community leaders highlighted the positive effects of:

- Forming consensus
- Talking directly to constituents
- Working with the local executive branch
- Having meaningful committee structures and meetings

However, these individuals also highlighted the harmful effects of:

- Politics and partisanship
- The low pay and part-time status of councilor positions
- Low access for the public, whether in terms of information or location of meetings

PRIOR INTERACTIONS WITH THE COUNCIL

Nearly half (43 percent) of the survey respondents confirmed that they have attended a council meeting in the past. Of those who have attended a meeting, most either attended a meeting once or attend meetings a few times per year. Further, half of those who have attended a meeting report interacting with a council member while two-thirds report interacting with other citizens before, during, or after the council meeting.

When asked about the strengths and weaknesses of council meetings, respondents listed strengths that often centered around the following themes:

- The ability to learn and gain information
- The organizations and structure of the meeting
- The opportunity for citizens to voice opinions and provide public input
- An appreciation for meeting accessibility, openness, and transparency

However, respondents also highlighted key weaknesses of council meetings. These included:

- The length of meetings
- The time spent on recognitions and symbolic resolutions
- The impression that decisions are finalized prior to meetings and open discussion
- The potential to be overly partisan and/or disrespect from council members or other citizens

Outside of attending council meetings, more than half (56 percent) reported they have sent an email or letter to a councilor. Among those who have communicated with a councilor, 16 percent reported that their employment responsibilities require these types of interactions. Further, 70 percent of those who sent an email or letter reported receiving some type of response from the councilor. When asked for additional information about communication with councilors, respondents appreciated receiving any response.

Further, some respondents said they valued that:
- Contact information is generally easy to find
- Many council members responded in a timely manner
- Some council members provided a personalized (rather than canned) response

However, other respondents also reported concerns regarding:
- A lack of responsiveness
- Perceptions of dismissiveness and lack of respect in responses
- Receiving a canned response

Beyond these interactions reported in the general survey, focus group participants were asked to report what characteristics of a councilor are essential for achieving the mission of the council. The majority of responses referenced the need for councilors to be engaged with the surrounding community. Additional themes highlighted good listening skills, knowledge and expertise of a variety of issues, and accessibility.

COUNCILOR SALARY

The online survey included questions related to the salaries of council members. The questions were randomized such that respondents were exposed to one of three different types of information:
- That council members work part time and receive an annual salary of $11,400
- That council members work part time and receive an annual salary of $11,400, and that council members in Nashville, Tennessee, work part time with an annual salary ranging from $15,000–$23,100
- That council members work part time and receive an annual salary of $11,400, and that council members in Louisville, Kentucky, work part or full time with an annual salary of $47,830

The purpose of the experiment was to determine if receiving different types of comparisons and information would strongly alter opinions related to council salaries. After receiving information about the council and councilor pay, all respondents were asked to report how well they think council members are compensated. As displayed in the figures below, a majority of each of the three groups felt council members were largely or slightly underpaid; this feedback was smallest in the group that received no comparison information about another city-county council. Across all groups, 63 percent felt councilors were largely or slightly underpaid. No more than 10 percent of any group felt council members were slightly or largely overpaid.

Councilor salaries were also discussed in each of the focus groups. Before the co-PIs informed focus group participants of the structure of councilor positions (part time with an annual salary of $11,400), participants generally maintained that councilors should operate as if their elected positions were full-time jobs and work somewhere between 30–50 hours per week. "I think ideally if you're someone doing this work, well, it's [a] 40-plus-hour work week," one participant commented. According to another participant, "I'm gonna say 50, it should be a full-time job, and it needs to interfere with their personal life."

When focus group participants were informed of the structure of councilor positions, most reported some level of surprise. While most initially reported that the councilors' time commitments should be more than part time, information about the structure and pay shifted some opinions of work requirements to be lower while still maintaining a high level of commitment. Other views aligned with the sentiments expressed by one participant who stated, "I'm just going to say they're not compensated enough. Their time [commitment] doesn't need to drop, their compensation needs to raise." Further, respondents were fairly split on the structure of the council, with some calling for more councilors to represent the city and county while others did not see a need for change. Some, but not all, also expressed regret in the elimination of the at-large seats.

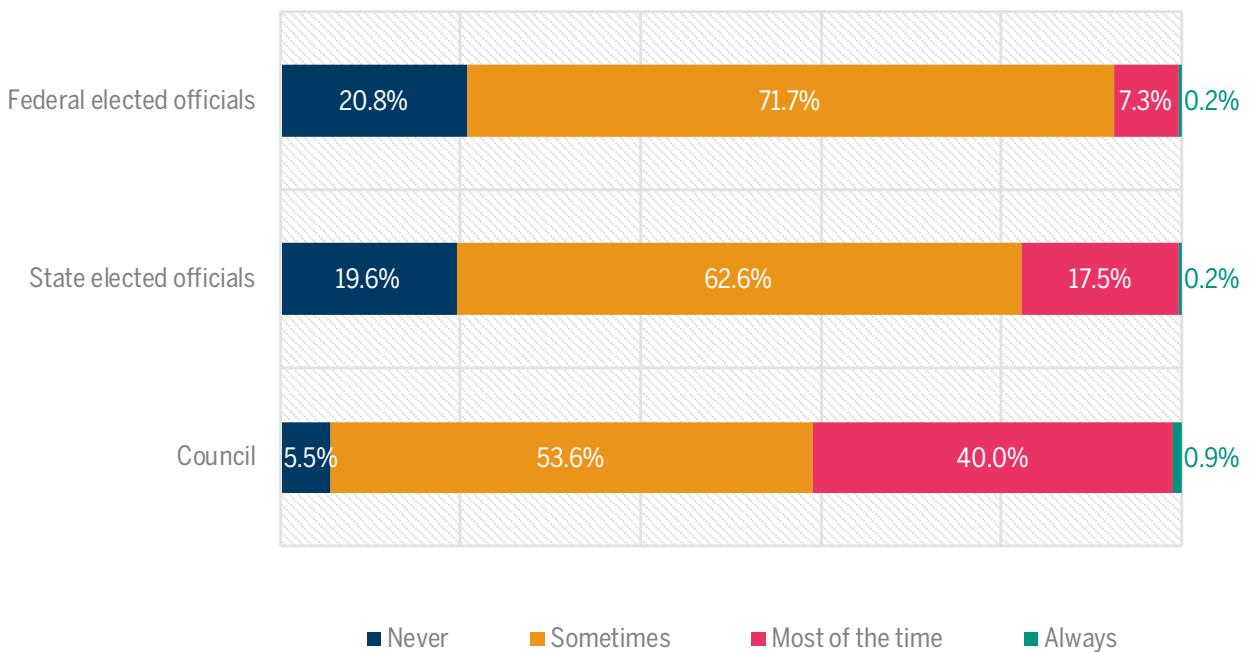**FIGURE 14.** Perceptions of councilor compensation by experimental group
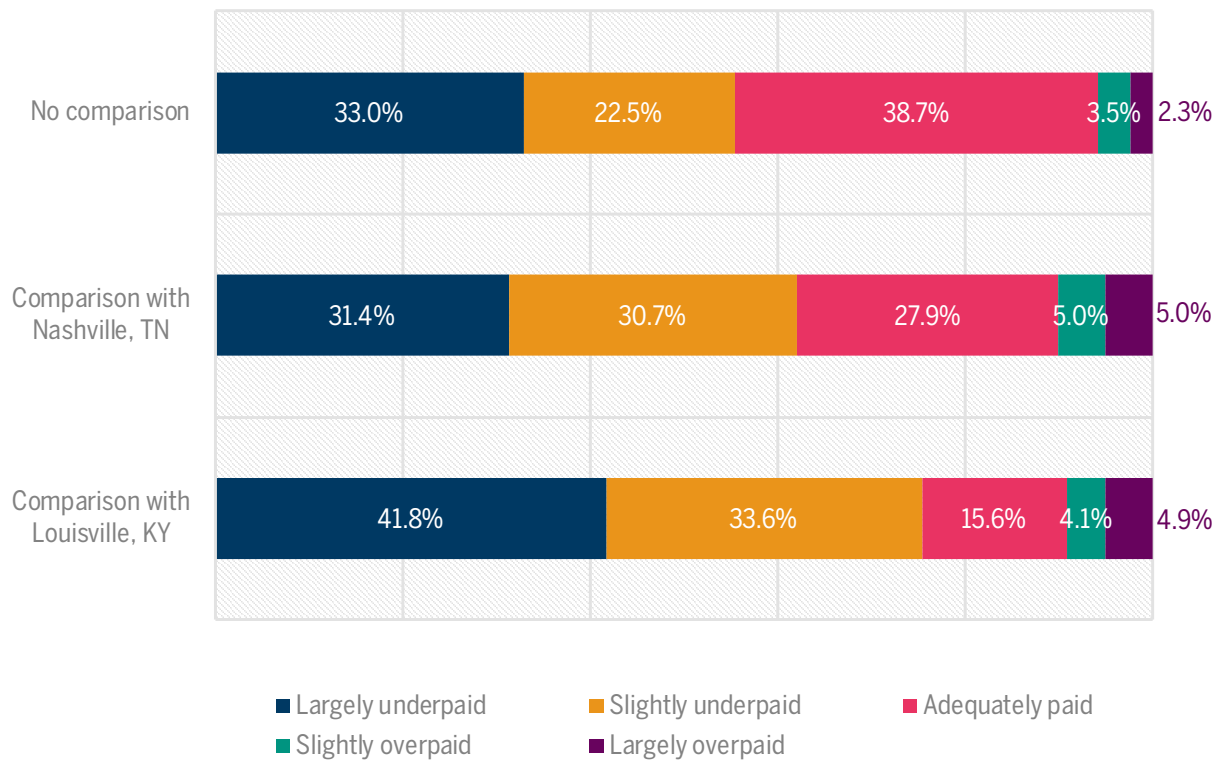
TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

Respondents displayed different levels of trust in local, state, and federal government. Across three types of trust—to do what is right, to do what is best, and to make decisions in a fair way—respondents reported higher levels of trust for the council as compared to state and federal elected officials. This mirrors nationwide surveys that also suggest that individual citizens place higher levels of trust in locally elected bodies that are closer in proximity to citizens.[1] For example, 40 percent of survey respondents trust local elected officials to do what is right most of time, which is higher than that of both federal and state elected officials combined. It is also the case that there are some differences across subgroups of respondents, with the largest gaps in trust for the council existing across conservative and liberal respondents. Respondents were asked to rate their ideology along a five-point scale.

When asked about how the council might be able to increase perceived trust and legitimacy among residents, focus group respondents mentioned observable actions that illustrate follow-through, consistent transparency, and accessibility. Speaking specifically about transparency, one focus group participant commented that "having residents know what [councilors] are doing is very helpful and builds trust." Referring to the importance of accessibility and follow-through, one participant stated councilors should "actually do what they say they're gonna do and make sure that they're accessible to the people that they represent...If something is a legitimate problem in the community, [do] not just ignore it but actually try to take action on something and get people who are knowledgeable and doing the work already in the community, and talk to them and say 'Hey, you think this is a problem, I want to work with you. Let's figure out a solution together.'"

FIGURE 15. Trust in elected officials to do what is right

	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Federal elected officials	20.8%	71.7%	7.3%	0.2%
State elected officials	19.6%	62.6%	17.5%	0.2%
Council	5.5%	53.6%	40.0%	0.9%

■ Never ■ Sometimes ■ Most of the time ■ Always

1 See, for example, McCarthy, Justin. 2018. "Americans Still More Trusting of Local Than State Government." Gallup. Available at https://news.gallup.com/poll/243563

FIGURE 16. Trust in elected officials to do what is best

	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Federal elected officials	21.1%	72.3%	6.6%	0.0%
State elected officials	19.9%	61.9%	17.4%	0.9%
Council	6.0%	52.5%	40.3%	1.2%

■ Never   ■ Sometimes   ■ Most of the time   ■ Always
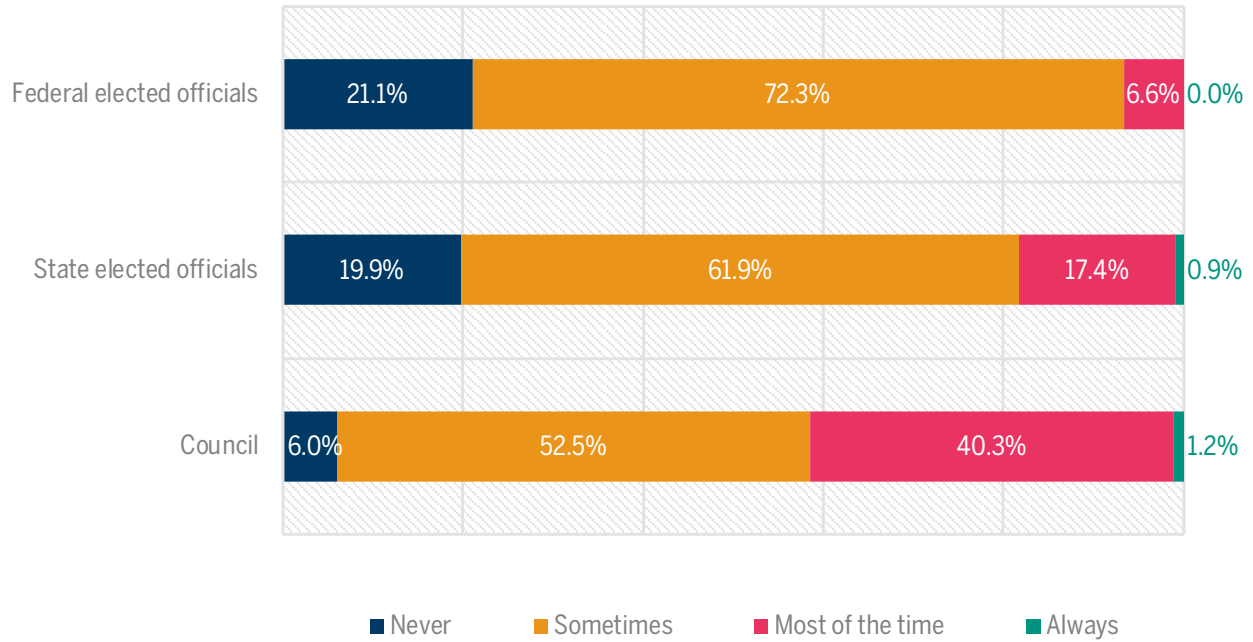
FIGURE 17. Trust in elected officials to make decisions in a fair way

	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Federal elected officials	23.7%	68.5%	7.8%	0.0%
State elected officials	23.7%	59.6%	16.4%	0.2%
Council	7.4%	52.2%	39.3%	1.2%

■ Never   ■ Sometimes   ■ Most of the time   ■ Always

RESULTS
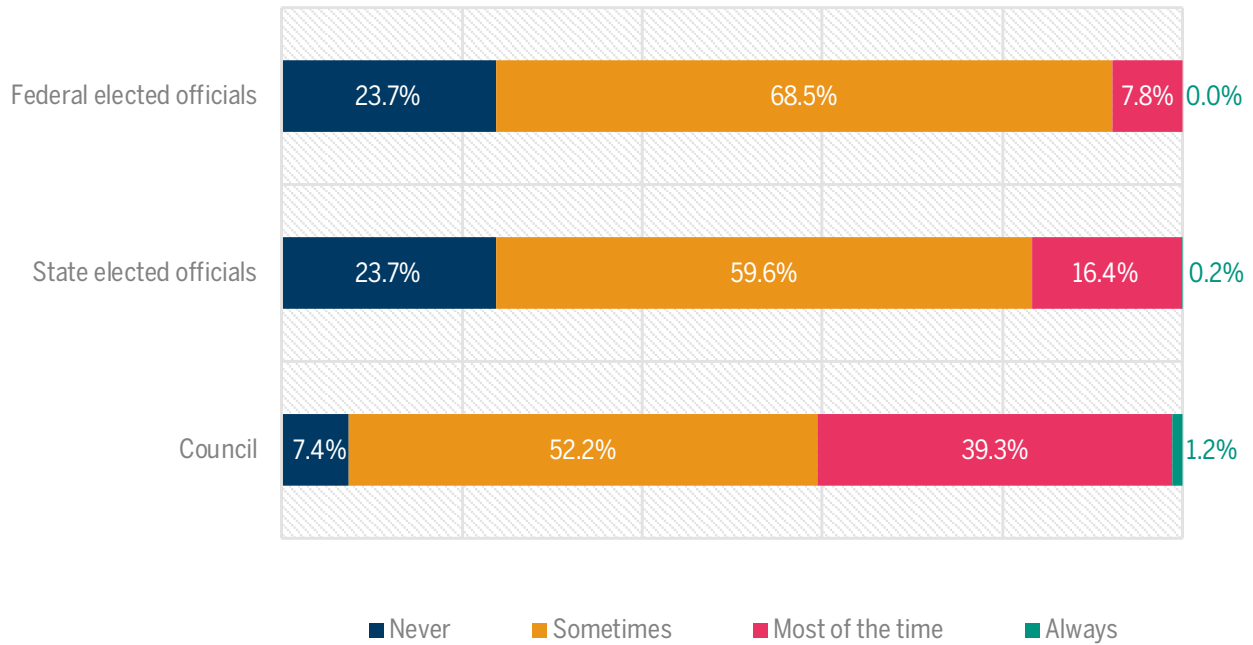
COUNCIL REPRESENTATION

Survey respondents were asked to rate both the overall council and their specific councilor for their representation of four categories: racial/ethnic composition, gender composition, socioeconomic status, and values and beliefs. Overall, the racial/ethnic composition of the council was rated as most representative while the socioeconomic status of the council was perceived as least representative. The same trends were observed for perceptions of respondents regarding their individual councilors.

FIGURE 18. Perceptions regarding City-County Council representation
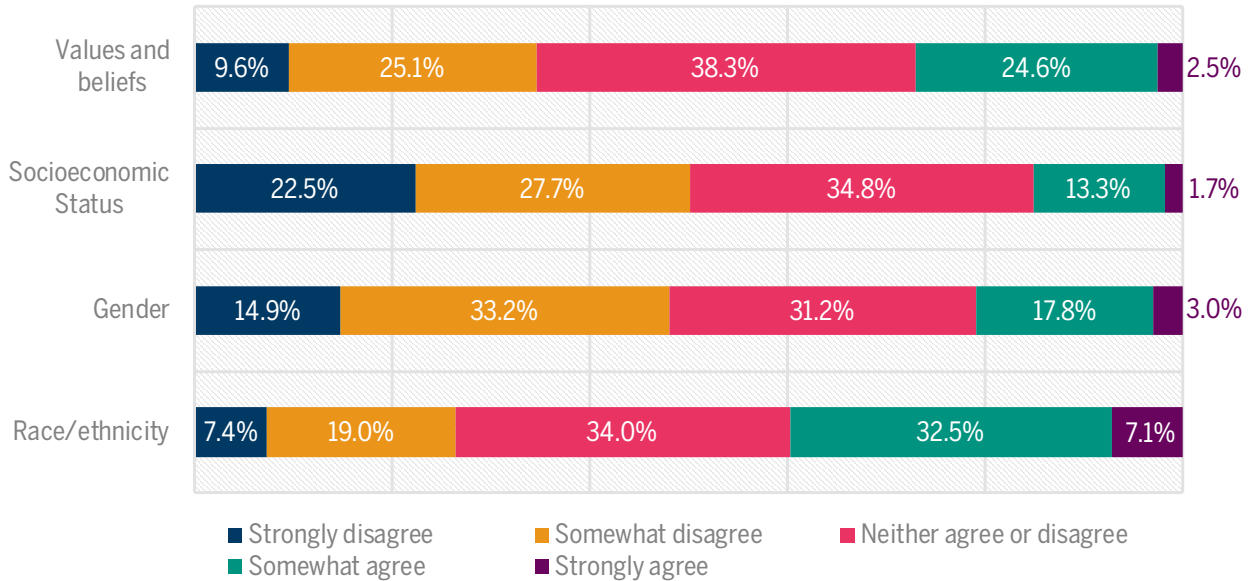
FIGURE 19. Perceptions regarding individual councilor representation
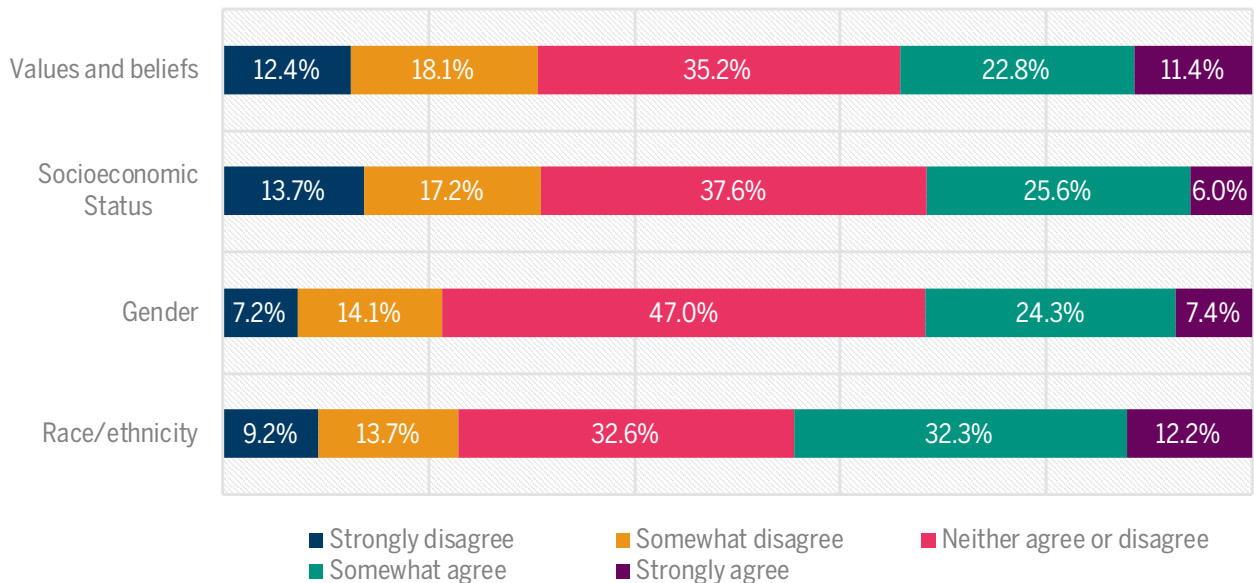
FIGURE 20. Perceptions regarding the City-County Council's racial/ethnic representation by respondent group

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Nonwhite	6.1%	28.6%	22.5%	28.6%	14.3%
White	7.3%	20.1%	33.0%	33.0%	6.6%

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree
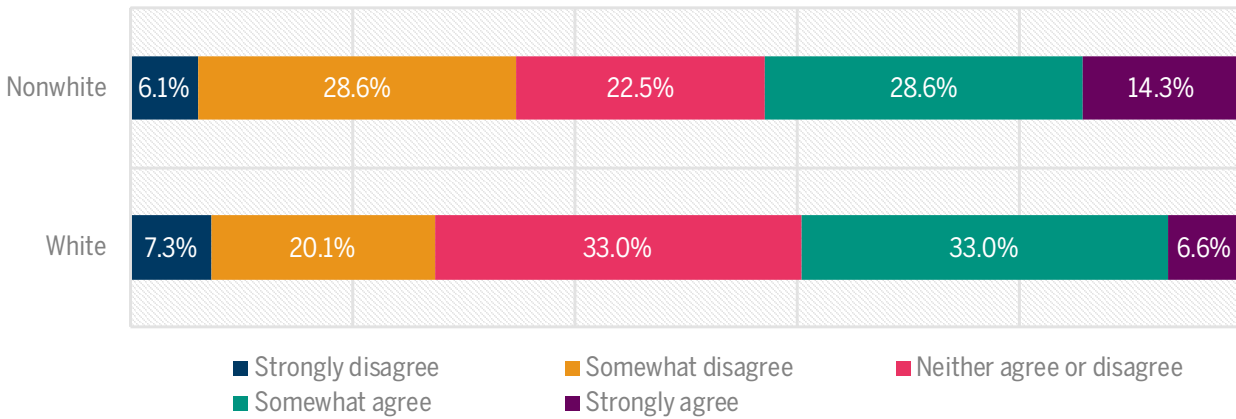
FIGURE 21. Perceptions regarding the City-County Council's gender representation by respondent group

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Women	20.1%	36.0%	28.6%	12.7%	2.7%
Men	8.5%	32.4%	33.5%	21.6%	4.0%

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree
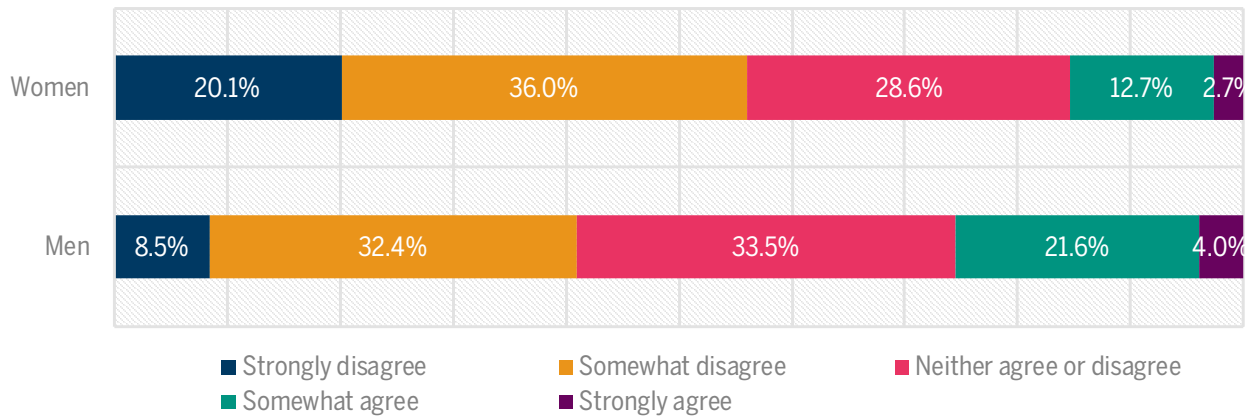
FIGURE 22. Perceptions regarding the City-County Council's socioeconomic status representation by respondent group

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Greater than $70,000	10.3%	33.2%	40.4%	14.8%	1.4%
Less than or equal to $70,000	26.6%	24.5%	31.5%	14.7%	2.8%

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree
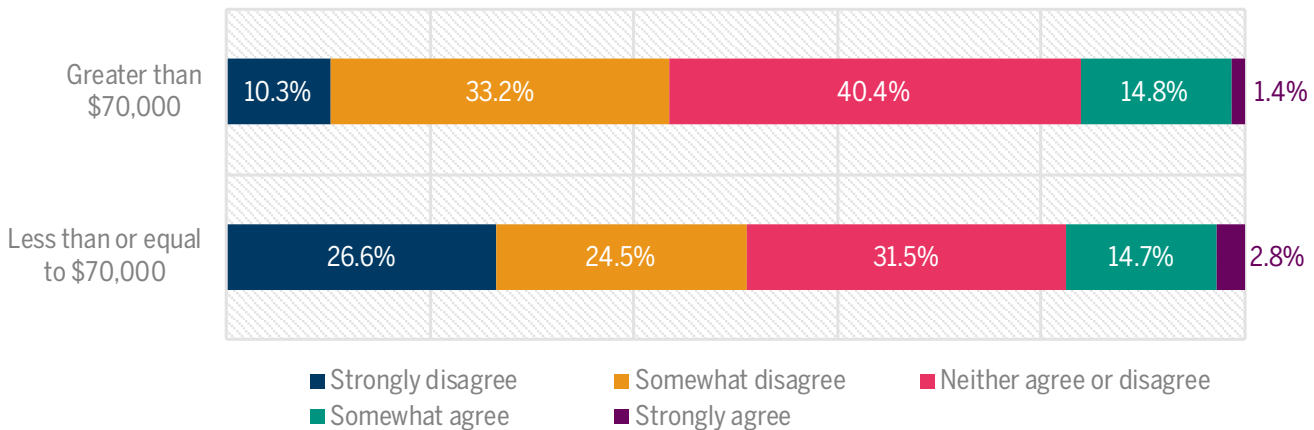
FIGURE 23. Perceptions regarding the City-County Council's values representation by respondent group

Liberal	5.9%	17.8%	40.8%	33.7%	1.8%
Conservative	10.9%	40.0%	36.4%	10.9%	1.8%

■ Strongly disagree   ■ Somewhat disagree   ■ Neither agree or disagree
■ Somewhat agree   ■ Strongly agree
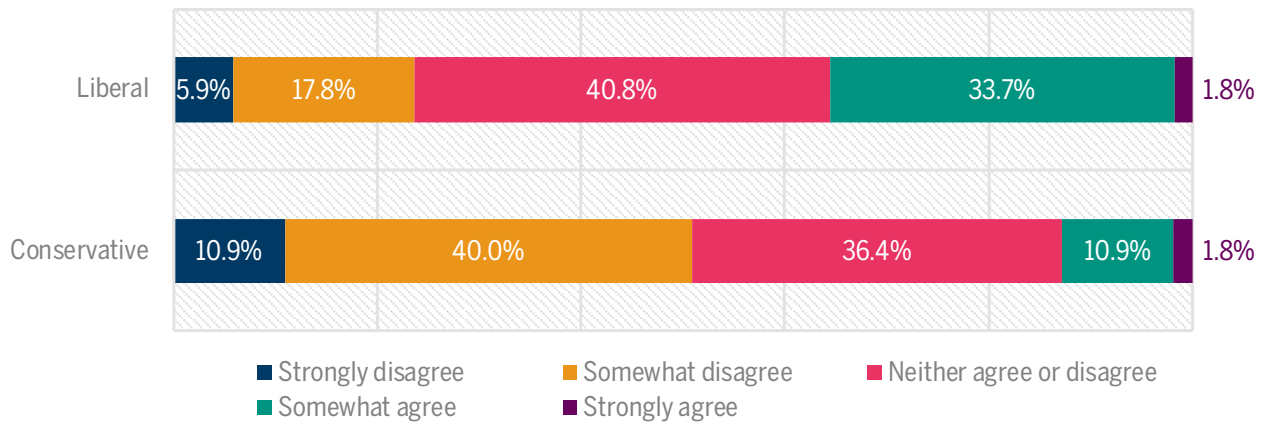
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In rating the council's outreach efforts, slightly more than 40 percent of all respondents somewhat or strongly agree that the council and council members try to interact with the public to understand current issues. Further, 38 percent and 35 percent of all respondents somewhat or strongly agree, respectively, that the council or their specific representative attempt to receive feedback from the public on policy changes or policy proposals.

In rating the outreach effort of the council along four types of platforms, a minority of survey respondents assigned above average or excellent ratings to the council for outreach via news, the website, email/ mail, or social media.

Interestingly, focus group sessions indicated that constituents were interested in news about the council. Most focus group participants reported that they were just as likely or more likely to pay attention to local government news as compared to news about the state legislature or Congress. One participant remarked, "I would say I prefer to read about the city." Another participant added that, "the last few years I've tried to follow more local sources." They reported getting information about the council through social media, local news sources (e.g., RTV6, Indy Star), or word of mouth. Many focus group participants expressed an interest in the creation of a council newsletter that would be disseminated periodically as well as cleaning up the council website. Additional discussion related to increasing communication and interaction between the council and the local community often led to recommendations that council members host or attend meetings in individual districts. One participant commented that the council, "could hold meetings out in the districts, all 25 of them … You know, take the show on the road. Not a lot of people want to drive downtown to the City-County Building."

FIGURE 24. Level of agreement—council and councilor tries to interact with the public to understand issues

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Councilor	20.2%	18.5%	16.1%	24.0%	21.1%
Council	14.2%	22.7%	20.5%	36.9%	5.6%

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree
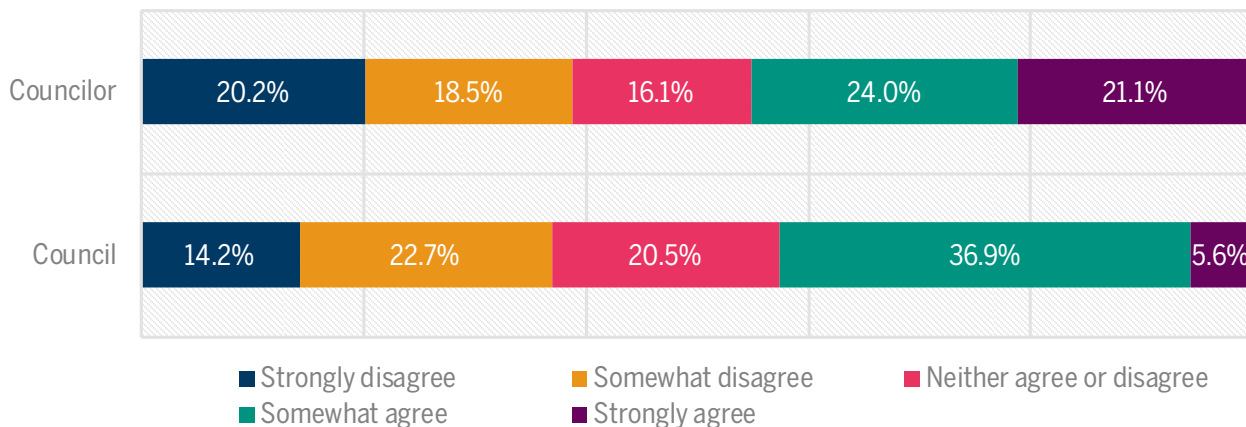
FIGURE 25. Level of agreement—council and councilor attempts to receive feedback from the public on policy changes or policy proposals

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Councilor	22.1%	19.2%	20.9%	22.6%	15.3%
Council	15.8%	25.5%	23.5%	31.3%	3.9%

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree
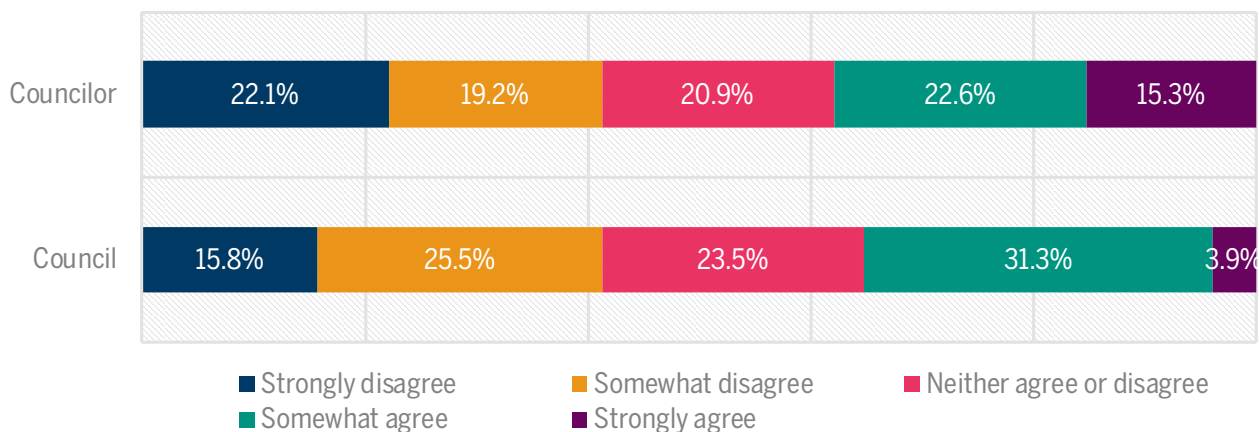
FIGURE 26. Respondent ratings of council outreach

	Poor	Below average	Average	Above average	Excellent	I don't know
Email/mail	27.1%	27.7%	29.7%	11.1%	4.1%	0.3%
Council website	24.8%	22.4%	41.3%	7.7%	2.8%	1.1%
Local news	20.8%	29.8%	37.2%	8.3%	2.4%	1.5%

- Poor
- Below average
- Average
- Above average
- Excellent
- I don't know
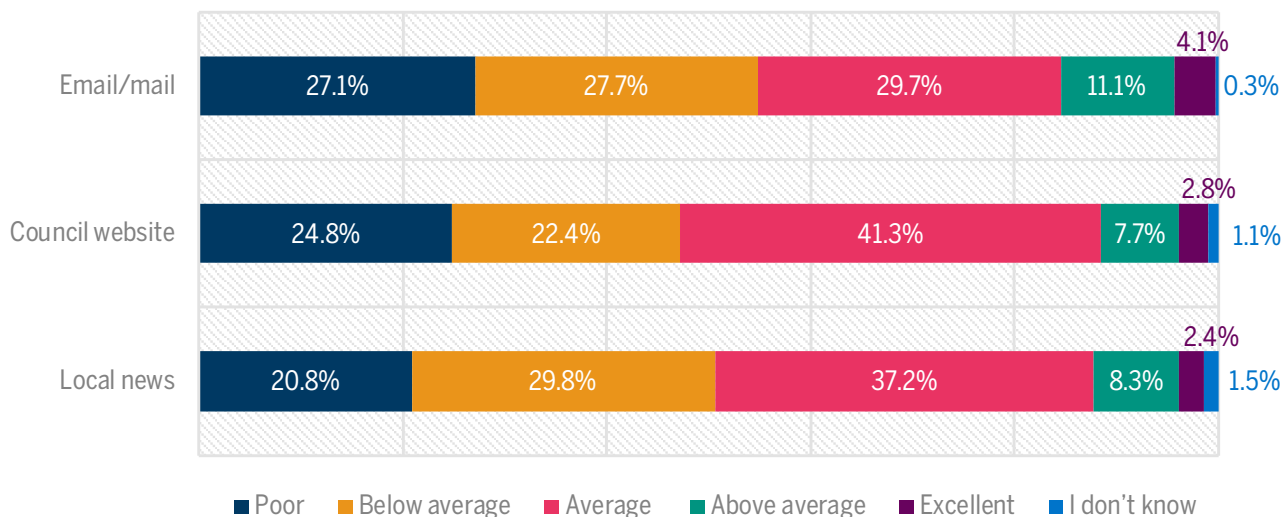
ISSUES FACING INDIANAPOLIS/MARION COUNTY & THE COUNCIL

Survey respondents were asked to rank 12 issues in order of importance, with 1 being the most important and 12 the least important. The issues provided correspond generally to council committees. A total of 387 respondents provided rankings as seen in the table below. Public works, public safety, and education ranked highest in varying orders by all respondent subgroups (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, ideology) with economic development trailing closely behind. Additional issues mentioned in the Other category included those of social justice and homelessness.

TABLE 2. Ranking most important issues

RANK	ISSUE	OVERALL AVERAGE
1	Public works	3.74
2	Public safety	3.96
3	Education	4.43
4	Economic development	4.80
5	Health and welfare	5.28
6	Redevelopment and housing	6.47
7	Trustworthy politicians	7.20
8	Parks and recreation	7.25
9	Climate change	7.45
10	Taxes	7.78
11	Immigration	8.79
12	Other	10.85

TABLE 3. Ranking issues as adequately addressed

RANK	ISSUE	OVERALL AVERAGE
1	Economic development	3.18
2	Public safety	2.91
3	Redevelopment and housing	2.77
4	Parks and recreation	2.76
5	Taxes	2.74
6	Health and welfare	2.59
7	Immigration	2.54
8	Trustworthy politicians	2.53
9	Public works	2.46
10	Education	2.37
11	Climate change	2.23
12	Other	2.10

Focus group members were also asked to discuss what issues the council should prioritize. Without prompts or a list of issues from which to choose, respondents most often referenced infrastructure, affordable housing, and public safety. Select respondents also referred to mental health as an important priority. When informed that survey respondents rated public works and public safety as issues the council was most adequately addressing, focus group members only partially agreed, generally stating that these areas are developing but still have room for improvement. One participant observed, "I think it's a work in progress. I wouldn't say that they're addressing them well. There's room for improvement in both areas."

Community leaders were asked to identify what issues the council tackles best and worst in their one-on-one interviews. Those issues identified were much broader in nature than those reported by citizens. Community leaders thought the council handled the budgeting process well, and many others reported that much of the success in any area would be determined by the make-up of the council and the mayor's office. Many community leaders highlighted cross-agency or cross-sector collaboration as an area that requires improvement. One community leader recommended that the council, "tak[e] the time to get a real[ly] good understanding of the roles of the other agencies and what they think they can accomplish through those agencies." Another community leader responded, "intergovernmental coordination continues to [be] lack[ing]."

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council. While the information reported here is not representative of residents of the city or county (for example, respondents tended to be more educated and have higher incomes), some important themes emerge.

Awareness of the council is not high, but respondents tend to place more trust in local elected officials compared to state or federal policymakers. The council has some ability to use this trust to cultivate meaningful relationships with residents. Respondents appreciate the ability to gain information and to voice their opinions but are not always sure of the proper channels through which to provide input or whether the council uses their input in a meaningful way. The council is viewed as more representative along lines of personal values and race/ethnicity but less so for socioeconomic status and gender. The council might consider how to better include the latter groups in the policy process in order to avoid overlooking important community needs. Respondents perceive that the council is most effective in the areas of economic development, though they had mixed opinions about the outreach of the council. Strategies aimed to increase outreach may have both direct and indirect effects on the overall effectiveness of the council.

As the council seeks to improve its effectiveness, it should be encouraged to collect and publish data and related information, such as this report, on a regular basis. This approach can allow the council to both track how stakeholders respond to outreach efforts as well as whether various effectiveness indicators shift over time. Tracking data through a transparent mechanism, such as an online dashboard, can be particularly important given that the largest data collection effort in this survey captured responses from fewer than 600 residents in a metropolitan area that includes almost 1 million people.

PART III:
RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Better utilize technology to connect with constituents

The council has established a presence online as well as on select social media outlets, but the use of technology has not been maximized to ensure the council can communicate and interact with a variety of stakeholder groups. The council should consider allocating staff resources accordingly to initiate a review of the council website. In addition, residents might benefit from a council website that not only comprehensively provides information related to the council's work—as it currently does— but also relays this information in easily navigable ways. For example, many residents were concerned about the use and ordering of links on the council's homepage, the degree of scrolling required while using smartphones, and clarity of information in helping constituents locate desired information. Furthermore, the council should consider innovatively utilizing—and enhancing access to—technology to connect with residents who infrequently or are unable to access online platforms used by the council. Multiple focus group participants referenced the Mayor's Action Center—which "provides people of Indianapolis and Marion County one place to request services, get information, or give feedback"—as a highly navigable and accessible online platform (with offline alternatives, e.g., telephone) that could be replicated by the council.

2. Increase strategic outreach and communication to the public

More importantly, while information is often available on the council's website, constituents are often unaware of what the council is doing or how to access council members. One focus group participant stated, "[indy.gov] is not intuitive. Whoever's doing that thing doesn't understand their audience. You should be able to find anything in there within three clicks…" The council should be encouraged to engage in outreach efforts to facilitate interactions with constituents. This may happen in a variety of ways, including but not limited to working with media outlets, sending newsletters via email, or offering regular substantive updates and reminders through multiple social media outlets. One focus group respondent complimented a councilor in stating, "There is a councilor [who] sends out a weekly newsletter describing the meeting and the agenda for the upcoming meeting as well as a survey of the issues that will be before them in the upcoming weeks. I think that is extremely informative and helpful." Another resident stated, "the council [should] interact more with their constituents, like [through] social media. I don't get any newsletters from my city-county councilor. I don't get any emails. I am on his Facebook, but he's not very active on Facebook." Importantly, research finds that many local government entities push information on social media platforms but do not provide ways for the public to respond or engage with local officials through these platforms.[2] Such issues might be alleviated through polls or responding to comments or tags.

The council should also consider whether to and how they interact with the public during committee and council meetings. While voting technology may not always allow for meetings to move locations, the council might consider publicizing how to access coverage of the meeting through media (e.g., Channel 16), whether occasional meetings are conducive to shifts in time, and how to collect feedback from those residents who are not able to attend meetings. Further, for those present at council meetings, agendas and supporting documents should be provided or otherwise advertised, as some residents may have low awareness of how to locate these documents online during meetings.

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2 Mossberger, Karen, Caroline T. Tolbert, and Ramona S. McNeal. 2007. *Digital Citizenship: The Internet, society, and participation.* MIT Press.

3. Consider internal compensation levels and staffing needs to maximize the operating efficiency of the council

Compared to peer consolidated councils, councilors in Indianapolis-Marion County receive the lowest level of compensation. While altering compensation packages may require the use of political capital and an educational campaign, current salary levels are problematic. For example, the low level of compensation means that many individuals who are otherwise eligible and interested in running for office may need to focus their efforts on other sources of compensation. Further, given that these part-time positions are often perceived to require more than part-time work, increased compensation may allow those who are elected to devote additional time and effort to serving constituents. Still, strategies to alter current compensation levels should be well-timed, well-communicated to the public, and ideally discussed with bipartisan support.

The research summarized above indicates that, when individuals are aware of current compensation levels and how they compare to similar councils, most support some type of increase in salaries. For example, one resident stated, "I think increased compensation [would enable them to] be more active and available and open the door for more folks to consider running as an option." Similarly, a city-county leader stated, "[Compensation] could potentially keep some people off the council, right? Because they all have full-time jobs, and you know what they're paid to be on the council is not necessarily reflective of the hours they put into that job."

Beyond compensation for council members, staff capacity should also be reviewed. Compared to staff positions reported by similar councils in other cities, Indianapolis-Marion County has the lowest level of paid staff members. This may also limit how much the council can achieve in a given year, whether in substantive policymaking, outreach to the public, or budget considerations. While staff may not always be explicitly salient to the public, one city-county leader stated, "They don't have constituent support; they don't have anyone who works for them who can actually respond to constituent complaints because there's only, like, six or seven staff members of the council office." To make appropriate changes to staffing levels as resources are available, the council can consider staffing structures in other councils or areas where additional recommendations have been made (e.g., outreach).

4. Review strategies to engage and collaborate with city-county agencies and local business and nonprofit organizations

The council might benefit from identifying and implementing strategies to coordinate or collaborate with city-county agencies and local business and nonprofit organizations. Interviews with city-county agency leaders demonstrated a desire to both learn from councilors and to educate councilors on the range of issues specific to their agencies. One city-county leader commented that the work of the council might benefit from "being a little more intentional about understanding existing agencies." Multiple councilors similarly expressed a desire to gain additional insight into the work of city-county agencies. To this end, the council should consider meeting more frequently with city-county agency representatives through recurring meetings and increasing the interactions new councilors have with city-county agency heads during their orientation to the council. Likewise, the council should consider adopting strategies to engage with local business and nonprofit organizations. Potential strategies emerged from an interview with a city-county leader who commented, "Invite us to share our information with [the council] once a year...or have a series to invite organization[s] to share their stories."

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I
Council Effectiveness Survey

SURVEY OPENING

The O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University invites your participation in a survey of Indianapolis and Marion County residents. The purpose of this study is to provide an objective evaluation of the effectiveness of the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council. This research will allow us to understand a variety of perspectives of the work of the City-County Council, including current strengths and areas for improvement.

Your help is important to the success of this study but is entirely voluntary. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in the study. The online survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. Please note that you may complete the survey in one sitting or return to complete the survey later.

Minimal risk is associated with this study. Your responses are strictly confidential, and nothing you disclose will be attributed directly to you for reporting purposes. You are welcome to skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

Please contact Cullen Merritt (merritt1@iupui.edu, 317-278-0200) or Amanda Rutherford (aruther@indiana.edu, 812-856-0828) with questions or concerns about this survey.

In consideration of all of the above, I give my consent to participate in this study.
        Checking this box indicates your consent. It is required to continue with the survey.

RESIDENCY VERIFICATION

Q1. Are you a current resident of Indianapolis and/or Marion County, Indiana? (resident)
        Yes (5)
        No (6)

AWARENESS OF CURRENT COUNCIL MEMBERS

Q2. Have you heard of the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council? (heardofcouncil)
        Yes (1)
        No (2)

Q3. Are you familiar with any individuals who currently sit on the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council? (knowindvcouncil)
        Yes (1)
        No (2)
        I'm not sure (3)

Q4. Are you aware of who your representative on the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council is? If yes, please provide their name. (aware_rep)

       Yes (1) _____ (name_rep)

       No (2)

Q5. Are you aware of how many council members sit on the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council? If yes, please provide the number. (aware_num)

       Yes (1) _____ (recall_num)

       No (2)

Q6. How would you rate the overall ideology of the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council? (rate_ideology)

       Very conservative (1)

       Conservative (2)

       Moderate (3)

       Liberal (4)

       Very Liberal (5)

Q7. What is your perception of the share of women currently serving on the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council? (share_women)

       0-20 percent of the council are women (1)

       20-40 percent of the council are women (2)

       40-60 percent of the council are women (3)

       60-80 percent of the council are women (4)

       80-100 percent of the council are women (5)

Q8. Have you ever attended an Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council meeting? (ever_attended)

       Yes (1)

       No (2)

Q9. How often have you attended meetings? (often_attend)

       Once (1)

       A few times a year (2)

       Once a month (3)

       Multiple times per month (4)

Q10. How do you receive information about meeting times/locations? (info_meetings)

       Council website (1)

       Email/Mail (2)

       In person

       Social media

       Other: _____ (info_meetings_other)

Q11. Do you attempt to interact with council members before, during, or after meetings? (mtgs_interact_council)

       Yes (1)

       No (2)

Q12. Do you attempt to interact with other citizens before, during, or after meetings? (mtgs_interact_citizens)

       Yes (1)

       No (2)

Q13. What do you like most about the council meeting(s) you have attended? (like_councilmtgs)

       _____

Q14. What do you like least about the council meeting(s) you have attended? (dislike_councilmtgs)

       _____

Q15. Have you ever sent an email or letter to a member of the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council? (ever_write_council)

       Yes (1)

       No (2)

Q16. How often do you send communication to a council member? (often_write_council)

       Once (1)

       A few times a year (2)

       Once a month (3)

       Multiple times per month (4)

Q17. About what issue did you email or write? (issue_write)

       _____

Q18. Did you receive a response from a council member? (response_write)

       Yes (1)

       No (2)

Q19. What did you like most about your communication with the council? (like_write)

       _____

Q20. What did you like least about your communication with the council? (dislike_write)

       _____

Q21. Have you ever used the Mayor's Action Center (https://www.indy.gov/activity/mayors-action-center-service, to report issues, request services, or provide other feedback? (ever_MAC)

       Yes (1)

       No (2)

       I'm not sure (3)

Q22. How often do you submit information through the Mayor's Action Center? (often_MAC)
    Once (1)
    A few times a year (2)
    Once a month (3)
    Multiple times per month (4)

Q23. About what issue or service did you contact the Mayor's Action Center? (issue_MAC)
    _____

Q24. Did you receive a response? If so, from whom? (response_MAC)
    _____

Q25. Have you ever interacted with an Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council member through the Mayor's Action Center? (council_MAC)
    Yes (1)
    No (2)
    I'm not sure (3)

Q26. Do your work responsibilities require you to interact with council members on a regular basis? (work_req_council)
    Yes (1)
    No (2)
    I'm not sure (3)

SALARY RANDOMIZATION A

Q27. The City-County Council is the legislative branch of your local government. In addition to adopting budgets, levying taxes, and authorizing financial appropriations to fund city and county operations, the council is responsible for enacting, repealing, and amending local laws. The council appoints members to boards and commissions that serve the community, and all meetings are open to the public. Each of the 25 members of the City-County Council works part-time and receives an annual salary of $11,400.

How well do you think the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council members are compensated? (compensationA)
    Council members are largely underpaid (1)
    Council members are slightly underpaid (2)
    Council members are adequately paid (3)
    Council members are slightly overpaid (4)
    Council members are largely overpaid (5)

Q28. What level of annual compensation do you feel each council member should receive? Please write your answer in the box below. (name_comp_A)
    _____

SALARY RANDOMIZATION B

Q29. The City-County Council is the legislative branch of your local government. In addition to adopting budgets, levying taxes, and authorizing financial appropriations to fund city and county operations, the council is responsible for enacting, repealing, and amending local laws. The council appoints members to boards and commissions that serve the community, and all meetings are open to the public.

Each of the 25 members of the City-County Council works part-time and receives an annual salary of $11,400. For comparison with a peer city, each of the 26 members of the Louisville, Kentucky Metro Council works part- or full-time and receives an annual salary of $47,830.

How well do you think the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council members are compensated? (compensation_B)

 Council members are largely underpaid (1)
 Council members are slightly underpaid (2)
 Council members are adequately paid (3)
 Council members are slightly overpaid (4)
 Council members are largely overpaid (5)

Q30. What level of annual compensation do you feel each council member should receive? Please write your answer in the box below. (name_compB)

_____

SALARY RANDOMIZATION C

Q31. The City-County Council is the legislative branch of your local government. In addition to adopting budgets, levying taxes, and authorizing financial appropriations to fund city and county operations, the council is responsible for enacting, repealing, and amending local laws. The council appoints members to boards and commissions that serve the community, and all meetings are open to the public.

Each of the 25 members of the City-County Council works part-time and receives an annual salary of $11,400. For comparison with a peer city, each of the 40 members of the Nashville, TN Metro Council works part-time and receives an annual salary ranging from $15,000-$23,100.

How well do you think the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council members are compensated? (compensation_C)

 Council members are largely underpaid (1)
 Council members are slightly underpaid (2)
 Council members are adequately paid (3)
 Council members are slightly overpaid (4)
 Council members are largely overpaid (5)

Q32. What level of annual compensation do you feel each council member should receive? Please write your answer in the box below. (name_compC)

_____

TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

Q33. How often do you think you can trust the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council to do what is right? (trust_council_right)

>Never (1)
>Sometimes (2)
>Most of the time (3)
>Always (4)

Q34. How often do you think you can trust the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council to make decisions in a fair way? (trust_council_fair)

>Never (1)
>Sometimes (2)
>Most of the time (3)
>Always (4)

Q35. How often do you think you can trust the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council to do what is best for Indianapolis/Marion County? (trust_council_best)

>Never (1)
>Sometimes (2)
>Most of the time (3)
>Always (4)

Q36. How often do you think you can trust state elected officials to do what is right? (trust_state_right)

>Never (1)
>Sometimes (2)
>Most of the time (3)
>Always (4)

Q37. How often do you think you can trust state elected officials to make decisions in a fair way? (trust_state_fair)

>Never (1)
>Sometimes (2)
>Most of the time (3)
>Always (4)

Q38. How often do you think you can trust state elected officials to do what is best for the state? (trust_state_best)

>Never (1)
>Sometimes (2)
>Most of the time (3)
>Always (4)

Q39. How often do you think you can trust federal elected officials to do what is right? (trust_fed_right)

>Never (1)
>Sometimes (2)
>Most of the time (3)
>Always (4)

Q40. How often do you think you can trust federal elected officials to make decisions in a fair way? (trust_fed_fair)

      Never (1)

      Sometimes (2)

      Most of the time (3)

      Always (4)

Q41. How often do you think you can trust federal elected officials to do what is best for the country? (trust_fed_best)

      Never (1)

      Sometimes (2)

      Most of the time (3)

      Always (4)

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND ICCC REPRESENTATION

Rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Q42. The Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council is representative of Indianapolis/Marion County residents in regards to the following categories:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	*Somewhat Disagree (2)*	*Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)*	*Somewhat Agree (4)*	*Strongly Agree (5)*
Racial/ethnic composition (council_represent_race_eth)					
Gender composition (council_represent_gender)					
Socioeconomic composition (council_represent_ses)					
Values and Beliefs (council_ represent_values)					

Q43. My Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council member is representative of my neighborhood in regards to the following categories:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	*Somewhat Disagree (2)*	*Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)*	*Somewhat Agree (4)*	*Strongly Agree (5)*
Racial/ethnic composition (council_represent_race_eth)					
Gender composition (council_represent_gender)					
Socioeconomic composition (council_represent_ses)					
Values and Beliefs (council_ represent_values)					

Q44. On average, the members of the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council try to interact with the public to understand current issues. (council_interact_public)

    Strongly Disagree (1)
    Somewhat Disagree (2)
    Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
    Somewhat Agree (4)
    Strongly Agree (5)

Q45. My representative on the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council tries to interact with the public to understand current issues. (member_interact_public)

    Strongly Disagree (1)
    Somewhat Disagree (2)
    Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
    Somewhat Agree (4)
    Strongly Agree (5)

Q46. On average, members of the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council attempt to receive feedback from the public on policy changes or policy proposals. (council_feedback)

    Strongly Disagree (1)
    Somewhat Disagree (2)
    Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
    Somewhat Agree (4)
    Strongly Agree (5)

Q47. My representative on the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council attempts to receive feedback from the public on policy changes or policy proposals. (member_feedback)

    Strongly Disagree (1)
    Somewhat Disagree (2)
    Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
    Somewhat Agree (4)
    Strongly Agree (5)

Q48. Rate the outreach of the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council to constituents in Indianapolis and Marion County on the following:

	Poor (1)	Below Average (2)	Average (3)	Above Average (4)	Excellent (5)
News (TV, radio, newspaper) (council_outreach_news)					
Website (council_outreach_web)					
Email/Mail (council_outreach_e_mail)					
Social media (council_outreach_socialmedia)					

ISSUES FACING INDIANAPOLIS AND THE ICCC

Q49. Please rank the following issues in order from most concerning (1) to least concerning (12) regarding Indianapolis and Marion County. Click and drag each option to rank in order.

Climate change (rank_climatechange)
Economic Development (rank_econdev)
Education (rank_edu)
Health and welfare (rank_helwel)
Immigration (rank_imm)
Parks and Recreation (rank_parks)
Public Safety (policing, fire, etc.) (rank_psafety)
Public Works (infrastructure, construction, etc.) (rank_pworks)
Redevelopment and Housing (ranl_devhous)
Taxes (rank_taxes)
Trustworthy Politicians (rank_trust)
Other: _____ (rank_text_other)

Rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Q50. The Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council is adequately addressing the following issue:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Somewhat Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Climate Change (adequate_climate)					
Economic Development (adequate_econdev)					
Education (adequate_edu)					
Health and welfare (adequate_helwel)					
Immigration (adequate_imm)					
Parks and Recreation (adequate_parks)					
Public Safety (policing, fire, etc.) (adequate_psafety)					
Public Works (infrastructure, construction, etc.) (adequate_pworks)					
Redevelopment and Housing (adequate_devhouse)					
Taxes (adequate_taxes)					
Trustworthy Politicians (adequate_trust)					
Other: _____ (adequate_other), (adequate_text_other)					

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Q51. How would you describe your political ideology? (resp_ideology)

 Very conservative (1)

 Conservative (2)

 Moderate (3)

 Liberal (4)

 Very liberal (5)

 Prefer not to answer (6)

Q52. What is your gender identity? (resp_gender)

 Male (1)

 Female (2)

 Other (3)

 Prefer not to answer (4)

Q53. What is your racial/ethnic identity? Check all that apply. (resp_race_eth)

 Black or African American (1)

 Latinx or Hispanic (2)

 Native American or Alaska Native (3)

 Asian (4)

 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)

 White or Caucasian (6)

 Biracial or Multiracial (7)

 Other (8)

 Prefer not to answer (9)

Q54. What is your age? (resp_age)

 Under 18 (1)

 18-24 years old (2)

 25-34 years old (3)

 35-44 years old (4)

 45-54 years old (5)

 Over 55 years old (6)

 Prefer not to answer (7)

Q55. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (resp_edu)

 Less than a high school diploma (1)

 High school diploma or equivalent (2)

 Some college (3)

 Bachelor's degree (BA, BS) or equivalent (4)

 Master's degree (MA, MS, MEd) (5)

 Doctorate (PhD) (6)

 Prefer not to answer (7)

Q56. What is your current employment status? (resp_employ)

    Employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week) (1)
    Employed full-time (40+ hours per week) (2)
    Unemployed, currently looking for work (3)
    Unemployed, not currently looking for work (4)
    Student (5)
    Retired (6)
    Self-employed (7)
    Unable to work (8)
    Prefer not to answer (9)

Q57. What is the zip code for your place of residence? (resp_zip)

    _____

Q58. What is your average annual household income? (resp_housincome)

    Less than $20,000 (1)
    $20,000 - $40,000 (2)
    $40,000 - $70,000 (3)
    $70,000 - $100,000 (4)
    $100,000 - $150,000 (5)
    Greater than $150,000 (6)
    Prefer not to answer (7)

Q59. In which sector are you employed? (resp_sector)

    Public (1)
    Private (2)
    Nonprofit (3)

Q60. Have you ever held or do you currently hold an elected position? (resp_everelected)

    Yes (1)
    No (2)

GENERAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Q61. Do you vote in most national elections? (resp_nationalvote)

    Never (1)
    Sometimes (2)
    Most of the time (3)
    Always (4)

Q62. Do you vote in most state elections? (resp_statevote)

    Never (1)
    Sometimes (2)
    Most of the time (3)
    Always (4)

Q63. Do you vote in most local elections (resp_localvote)
Never (1)

      Never (1)
      Sometimes (2)
      Most of the time (3)
      Always (4)

Q64. Have you participated in community service/volunteer activities in the last year? (resp_volunteer)
      Yes (1)
      No (2)

Q65. Have you written or signed a petition in the last year? (resp_petition)
      Yes (1)
      No (2)

Q66. Have you refused to buy a product from a company in the last year due to the company's conduct? (resp_productref)
      Yes (1)
      No (2)

Q67. Did you wear a campaign button, place a campaign sticker on your car, or place a campaign sign in your yard in the last year? (resp_campbutton)
      Yes (1)
      No (2)

Q68. Have you participated in a protest, march, or demonstration in the last year? (resp_protest)
      Yes (1)
      No (2)

Q69. Have you donated money to a political campaign in the last year? (resp_donation)
      Yes (1)
      No (2)

Q70. Have you worked with a political group or volunteered for a political campaign in the last year? (resp_campaign)
      Yes (1)
      No (2)

Q71. If you wish to be contacted to talk about the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council further, please provide your name and contact information below.
    Name: _____ (resp_followupname)
    Phone number: _____ (resp_followupnum)
    Email: _____ (resp_followupemail)

THANK YOU AND NEXT STEPS

Thank you for your time and willingness to provide feedback that can be used to improve the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council!

APPENDIX II
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol
for City-County Councilors

Question is specific to this participant category

The Indianapolis and Marion County City-County Council recently created a partnership with the Public Policy Institute at Indiana University to conduct innovative research on the Council. This research will allow us to understand the work of the City-County Council, including current strengths and areas for improvement.

I have a series of short questions for you, to which there are no right or wrong answers. The interview should last no longer than 1 hour and your participation is voluntary. Your identity will not be disclosed. However, may I please use a recording device and identify you for my personal transcript? [Begin recording here if the participant agrees]

OPENING

1. To start, could you tell me how long you have lived in Indianapolis?

2. Can you tell me about your job and professional employment responsibilities outside of the work you do with the City-County Council?

3. What encouraged you to pursue a seat on the City-County Council and how long have you served as a councilor?*

4. What do you like most and least about your job as a councilor?*

COUNCIL STRUCTURE AND EFFECTIVENESS

5. What do you consider as the mission of the Indianapolis City-County Council?
   a. What are the primary factors that enable the Council to advance this mission?
   b. What are the primary barriers that prevent the Council from fulfilling this mission?

6. What issues does the Council tackle "best" and which issues does it handle worst?

7. What is the role of a city-county councilor?

8. What individual characteristics of a councilor are essential to advancing the mission of the Council?

9. In considering any local governing body—and not the Indianapolis City-County Council specifically— how would you define "council effectiveness"?

10. Based on your definition of council effectiveness, how do you know when the Indianapolis City-County Council has been effective? (In other words, what are the key indicators of effectiveness?)

11. Are there specific governing procedures and rules that enhance the effectiveness of the Indianapolis City-County Council?*

12. Are there specific governing procedures and rules that limit the effectiveness of the Indianapolis City-County Council?*

13. What issues do you consider "local" issues, and what issues do you consider state or federal issues?
    a. Should the Indianapolis City-County Council focus on local issues or should the Council seek to address issues that you consider responsibilities of states and the federal government? Explain.

14. The City-County Council consists of 25 seats. What are the pros and cons associated with this number of seats?
    a. Given the pros and cons you have identified, what number of seats do you think would best enable the Council to fulfill its mission and perform effectively? Explain.

15. City-County Councilors serve 4-year terms; there are no term limits. What are the advantages and disadvantages of no term limits?
    a. Would imposing term limits change how the Council works to fulfill its mission? Explain.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND COUNCIL REPRESENTATION

16. How often and through what means does the Council engage with the community?*

17. Do you feel the Council has been successful in making sure the community is aware of what is happening on the Council?

18. What are the advantages and disadvantages to Council and committee meetings being open to the public?

19. What can the Indianapolis City-County Council do to increase the local community's awareness of the Council?

20. What can the Indianapolis City-County Council do to increase the local community's communication with the Council?

21. What can the Indianapolis City-County Council do to better represent the values and beliefs of its constituents?

22. What can the City-County Council do to more effectively engage or collaborate with City-County agencies?*

23. What can the City-County Council do to more effectively engage or collaborate with local business and nonprofit organizations?*

CLOSING

24. As a final question, is there anything else you would like to share that you think we should keep in mind as we conduct this study?

APPENDIX III
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol
for Community Leaders

*Question is specific to this participant category

The Indianapolis and Marion County City-County Council recently created a partnership with the Public Policy Institute at Indiana University to conduct innovative research on the Council. This research will allow us to understand the work of the City-County Council, including current strengths and areas for improvement.

I have a series of short questions for you, to which there are no right or wrong answers. The interview should last no longer than 1 hour and your participation is voluntary. Your identity will not be disclosed. However, may I please use a recording device and identify you for my personal transcript? [Begin recording here if the participant agrees]

OPENING

1. To start, could you tell me how long you have lived in Indianapolis?

2. Can you tell me about your job and professional employment responsibilities?

3. Please describe the nature of your interactions, or your organization's interactions, with the Indianapolis City-County Council?*

COUNCIL STRUCTURE AND EFFECTIVENESS

4. What do you consider as the mission of the Indianapolis City-County Council?
    a. What are the primary factors that enable the Council to advance this mission?
    b. What are the primary barriers that prevent the Council from fulfilling this mission?

5. What issues does the Council tackle "best" and which issues does it handle worst?

6. What is the role of a city-county councilor?

7. What individual characteristics of a councilor are essential to advancing the mission of the Council?

8. In considering any local governing body—and not the Indianapolis City-County Council specifically—how would you define "council effectiveness"?

9. Based on your definition of council effectiveness, how do you know when the Indianapolis City-County Council has been effective? (In other words, what are the key indicators of effectiveness?)

10. What issues do you consider "local" issues, and what issues do you consider state or federal issues?
    a. Should the Indianapolis City-County Council focus on local issues or should the Council seek to address issues that you consider responsibilities of states and the federal government? Explain.

11. The City-County Council consists of 25 seats. What are the pros and cons associated with this number of seats?
    a. Given the pros and cons you have identified, what number of seats do you think would best enable the Council to fulfill its mission and perform effectively? Explain.

12. City-County Councilors serve 4-year terms; there are no term limits. What are the advantages and disadvantages of no term limits?
    a. Would imposing term limits change how the Council works to fulfill its mission? Explain.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND COUNCIL REPRESENTATION

13. Do you feel the Council has been successful in making sure the community is aware of what is happening on the Council?

14. What are the advantages and disadvantages to Council and committee meetings being open to the public?

15. What can the Indianapolis City-County Council do to increase the local community's awareness of the Council?

16. What can the Indianapolis City-County Council do to increase the local community's communication with the Council?

17. What can the Indianapolis City-County Council do to better represent the values and beliefs of its constituents?

18. What can the City-County Council do to more effectively engage or collaborate with your agency/organization?*

CLOSING

19. As a final question, is there anything else you would like to share that you think we should keep in mind as we conduct this study?

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
PAUL H. O'NEILL SCHOOL OF PUBLIC
AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Focus Group Consent Form

The O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University invites your participation in a study of Indianapolis and Marion County residents. This consent form provides information about the study to help you decide whether you want to participate. Your help is important to the success of this study but is entirely voluntary. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to provide an objective evaluation of the effectiveness of the Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council.

Procedure
As part of this study, you will be placed in a group of no more than 12 individuals. A moderator will ask you several questions while facilitating a group discussion. As approved through the Indiana University Institutional Review Board, this focus group will be audio-recorded and note-takers will be present. However, your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in the final report.

Please note that there are no right or wrong answers to focus group questions. The researchers want to hear the many varying viewpoints and would like for everyone to contribute their thoughts. Out of respect, please refrain from interrupting others. However, feel free to be honest even when your responses counter those of other group members.

You can choose whether or not to participate in the focus group, and you may stop at any time during the course of the study.

Benefits and Risks
This focus group will last approximately 1.5 hours. Your participation may benefit you and other residents of Indianapolis and Marion County. Specifically, data collected from focus groups will offer insight into the City-County Council and the ways the Council can improve the service it provides to local residents. No risks are anticipated beyond those experienced during an average conversation.

Confidentiality
Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to respect the privacy of other focus group members by not disclosing any content discussed during the study. Indiana University researchers will analyze the data. As stated above, your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in any reports.

Contact
Please contact Cullen Merritt (merritt1@iupui.edu, 317-278-0200) or Amanda Rutherford (aruther@indiana.edu, 812-856-0828) with questions or concerns about this focus group.

I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions stated above.

Sign name: _____ Date: _____

Print name: _____

APPENDIX V

Focus Group Participant Survey

Please complete the following focus group participant survey questions. Do not include your name on this document.

1. Are you a current resident of Indianapolis and/or Marion County, Indiana?

      Yes (If yes, how many years have you resided in Indianapolis and/or Marion County? _____)

      No

2. How would you describe your political ideology?

      Very conservative

      Conservative

      Moderate

      Liberal

      Very liberal

      Prefer not to answer

3. What is your gender identity?

      Male

      Female

      Other

      Prefer not to answer

4. What is your racial/ethnic identity? Check all that apply.

      Black or African American

      Latinx or Hispanic

      Native American or Alaska Native

      Asian

      Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

      White or Caucasian

      Biracial or Multiracial

      Other

      Prefer not to answer

5. What is your age?

      Under 18

      18-24 years old

      25-34 years old

      35-44 years old

      45-54 years old

      Over 55 years old

      Prefer not to answer

6. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?
  Less than a high school diploma
  High school diploma or equivalent
  Some college
  Bachelor's degree (BA, BS) or equivalent
  Master's degree (MA, MS, MEd)
  Doctorate (PhD)
  Prefer not to answer

7. What is your current employment status?
  Employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week)
  Employed full-time (40+ hours per week)
  Unemployed, currently looking for work
  Unemployed, not currently looking for work
  Student
  Retired
  Self-employed
  Unable to work
  Prefer not to answer

8. If you are employed, in which sector are you employed?
  Public/Government
  Private
  Nonprofit
  Not applicable

9. What is the zip code for your place of residence? _____

10. What is your average annual household income?
  Less than $20,000
  $20,000 -$40,000
  $40,000 -$70,000
  $70,000 -$100,000
  $100,000 -$150,000
  Greater than $150,000
  Prefer not to answer

11. Have you ever held or do you currently hold an elected position?
  Yes
  No

APPENDIX VI

Focus Group Protocol

The Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council recently created a partnership with the Public Policy Institute at Indiana University to conduct innovative research on the Council. This research will allow us to understand the work of the City-County Council, including current strengths and areas for improvement.

I have a series of short questions for the group. Our goal is to have a conversation that engages all participants. Please respect other focus group participants and keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers. The focus group will conclude by 7pm and your participation is voluntary. As a reminder, your identity will not be disclosed. [Begin recording here and inform participants when the recording begins.]

1. How did you learn about this focus group? Why did you decide to participate?

Participant Quotes	*Key/Primary Takeaways*

2. What, in your opinion, is the purpose of the City-County Council? In other words, what do you feel are the primary duties of the Council?

Participant Quotes	*Key/Primary Takeaways*

3. In your opinion, how do the responsibilities of the Council differ from those of the mayor?

Participant Quotes	*Key/Primary Takeaways*

4. What issues should the Council prioritize?

Participant Quotes	*Key/Primary Takeaways*

5. In a survey that was provided to city and county residents earlier this year, the two issues residents believed the Council was most adequately addressing were public works and public safety. Do you

Participant Quotes	*Key/Primary Takeaways*

6. In the same survey that was provided to city and county residents earlier this year, the one issue residents believed the Council was least adequately addressing was immigration. Do you share this opinion? Why or why not?

Participant Quotes	*Key/Primary Takeaways*

7. How do you know when the Indianapolis City-County Council has been effective? (In other words, what are the key indicators of effectiveness?)

Participant Quotes	*Key/Primary Takeaways*

8. Given what you have discussed so far, what individual characteristics of a councilor are essential to advancing the mission of the Council?

Participant Quotes	*Key/Primary Takeaways*

9. How many hours per week should a councilor spend on his or her work with the Council?

Participant Quotes	*Key/Primary Takeaways*

10. Councilor positions are part-time, and each councilor receives an annual salary of $11,400. Does your opinion of how many hours per week each councilor should work change or remain the same given this information?

Participant Quotes	*Key/Primary Takeaways*

11. The Council consists of 25 members who each represent a portion (or a district) of the City and/ or County. Do you think this is an appropriate size for the Council? (Remember that adding more members may mean more time to reach an agreement while fewer members means that each councilor represents more people).

Participant Quotes	Key/Primary Takeaways

12. Are you more likely to pay attention to news about the City-County Council, the state legislature, or Congress? Why?

Participant Quotes	Key/Primary Takeaways

13. Where do you get information, if any, about the City-County Council?

Participant Quotes	Key/Primary Takeaways

14. What can the Indianapolis City-County Council do to increase the local community's communication or interaction with the Council? Will constituents be responsive to outreach from the Council?

Participant Quotes	Key/Primary Takeaways

15. In what ways might the Council be able to increase trust and legitimacy with residents of Indianapolis and Marion County?

Participant Quotes	Key/Primary Takeaways

16. As a final question, is there anything else you would like to share that you think we should keep in mind as we conduct this study?

Participant Quotes	Key/Primary Takeaways

Principal investigator biographies

Cullen C. Merritt, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at IUPUI. His research aims to improve governance and empower managers to address public problems through innovative organizational design.

Amanda Rutherford, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University Bloomington. Her research focuses on organizational performance and accountability, equity and representation, and executive careers and decision-making processes.

O'NEILL
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

The Paul H. O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University is a professional school with 140 full-time faculty serving more than 4,000 students on two campuses: Bloomington and Indianapolis. Founded in 1972, the school was the first of its kind to combine public policy, management and administration with environmental studies. The O'Neill School provides international scope, influential research and focused opportunities for students to pair a comprehensive foundation of knowledge with hands-on experience in the field. Its more than 34,000 alumni work in the public, private and nonprofit sectors around the world.

Learn more at **oneill.indiana.edu** and **oneill.iupui.edu**.