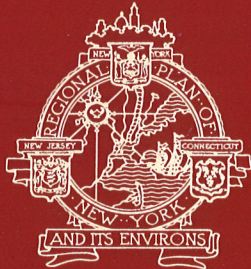


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What the People Think
of Their City
An Appraisal of Public Opinion



Number 61

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Bulletin

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Number 61 May 20, 1943

**Bureau of Urban Research
Publication Contains
National Findings**

Results of the national survey, of which this Bulletin presents the main findings for New York City, were published recently under the title:

"Urban Planning and Public Opinion—National Survey: Research Investigation."

It is available for \$1.00 from the Bureau of Urban Research at Princeton, New Jersey.

Those desiring full details of the procedure used, results, and conclusions of the national survey are referred to this publication, which contains tabulations of 2,490 interviews in 165 cities by region, city-size groups, economic and educational status, age, sex, religion, and persons with and without children.

What the People Think of Their City

The Regional Plan Association Presents the Results for New York City of a National Public Opinion Survey on City Life and Problems

Through the courtesy of The Bureau of Urban Research of Princeton University, the Regional Plan Association presents in this Bulletin the main findings for New York City, as compared with other American cities, of the national survey conducted by The Bureau of what city people think about their homes, their neighborhoods, and certain municipal problems.

The National Survey . . .

. . . was conducted in the latter months of 1942 under Melville C. Branch, Jr., Director of The Bureau of Urban Research, with the assistance of the Office of Public Opinion Research of Princeton University. The interviews were conducted by the organization regularly utilized by the American Institute of Public Opinion.

It is felt that this research has been successful in its main objective: to explore the general shape of public opinion on the issues covered, and to prove the potential value of the opinion-survey method in guiding the policies of local planning and government.

To Municipal Officials and Planning Agencies . . .

. . . a pondering of this survey is respectfully recommended, both for its many valuable specific findings, and as a demonstration of a technique for reliable determination of public policy. Existing procedures require in many cases that public opinion be gauged haphazardly and by guesswork where it is consulted at all.

Planning boards in particular may find indications in the survey results that their work of the past has neglected many aspects of urban improvement which are most important in the opinion of the general public, and that the slow progress of effective city planning has been due, not so much to opposition to the idea of planning, as to the failure to consult public opinion, to tackle the problems which are thus found to most concern the public, and to enlist public understanding and support.

The Association knows of no planning agency which has completely filled this order, and there has been a conspicuous failure to do so on the part of many boards which have confined their

activity to zoning ordinances and approval of subdivision plans.

Is Opinion Enough?

The survey findings indicate *public opinion*, not necessarily an infallible guide to *desirable goals* for urban improvement, since in many cases people are not aware of the actual possibilities in better living conditions.

The survey does show those elements of city improvement for which there is already substantial public demand, and those city problems on which public education is required.

Undoubtedly, further study of the desires of the people surveyed would show underlying reasons of greater value for planning. For example, many of the people expressing a desire for home ownership really seek certain living qualities which they associate with the single-family house, and might be equally satisfied with rental residential areas so planned as to possess and retain these qualities.

Statistically Speaking . . .

The number of New York City ballots in a nation-wide sample was necessarily a very small fraction of the city's population. Therefore, certain limitations, which are described in the statistical note on page 12, must be observed in drawing positive conclusions from the data presented in this Bulletin. In general, certain cross-checks on the results indicate that in all *probability* they are representative in a much more accurate degree than can be claimed for them with statistical *certainty*.

Since the experienced interviewing facilities available to the Bureau did not include Negro interviewers in all cities, the national survey was confined to adult white population. For purposes of this Bulletin the Association made arrangements to include a sample of Negro opinion for New York City.

A Summary of New Yorkers' Opinion

... *It is as Unique as the City Itself*

The collective opinion of New York City people about their surroundings is at the extreme of the range of national opinion on almost every point, according to The Bureau of Urban Research survey results. Apparently, this is *not* because New Yorkers arbitrarily adopt extreme opinions, but because New York is the nation's biggest city, with all the extremes that go with bigness. The national survey indicates that big city conditions generally throughout the country present greater problems of housing and neighborhood satisfaction. New Yorkers show the highest degree of dissatisfaction concerning many aspects of their urban environment, and the greatest will for change of all American city dwellers.

This is no reflection on recent city administration. It reflects the heritage of a long course of rapid growth and gradual obsolescence, taking place side by side for more than one hundred and twenty-five years, which now presents the city with a vast problem of renewal and modernization.

New York's extreme conditions are perhaps not solely responsible for its strong opinions: an intangible which cannot be measured but which must be credited is the *demand for change* which has been created by the various dramatic improvements executed here in the last decade.

Whatever the exact balance of causes may be, the salient survey finding is this: New Yorkers are strongly conscious of many negative aspects of life in New York. In few, if any, other American cities is there less acceptance of things-as-they-are. A large proportion of the population want change or improvement in their way of living and their neighborhoods; there is strong support for bold corrective projects, as, for instance, slum clearance by the city government. If the will of the people is the most powerful force for change, then New York City may look forward to very great changes indeed.

A Regional Survey Needed

The number of interviews in the metropolitan area outside of New York City was not sufficient for a comparative analysis of public opinion in the central cities, suburbs, and rural portions in the New York Metropolitan Region. In the absence of such an analysis the nation-wide data for the various city sizes presented in the tables indicate some of the characteristic differences which would probably occur in smaller cities of this Region also.

A further survey is needed for the entire New York Metropolitan Region, of a similar character but on a larger scale, to measure those features of city and suburban living which the people of the Region enjoy and those with which they are dissatisfied, for use as a yardstick in future city and community planning.

Highlights

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Most Important City Problems 4

... of New York are jobs, housing and slum clearance, its people said in 1942.

Desire for Neighborhood Improvement 5

Only 28% of New Yorkers (as compared with 41% for the nation) are satisfied with their neighborhood "as is."

The Urge to Move 6

... one-half of New Yorkers have it.

Neighbors 7

... most people like theirs. But the fraction of New Yorkers who don't is higher than elsewhere.

Sunlight, Fresh Air, and Quiet 8

... are "free goods" in classical economic theory, but there is a big unsatisfied market for them in New York City.

From Home to Work 9

... is a subway trip for most New Yorkers, which makes them a race apart from other Americans. The typical New Yorker indicates little desire to move nearer his job.

Home Ownership or Rental 10

New York's proportion of renters and of those who prefer renting, is much higher than elsewhere, but many who now rent would like to become home owners.

Public Replacement of Poorest Housing 11

City dwellers throughout the country are in favor, and New York City turns in the most thumping majority.

If the City Were Bombed, Who Should Control Rebuilding? 12

... the city government, or catch-as-catch-can among property owners? American city folk in general and New York City folk in particular would favor planned public control.

Most Important City Problems

Immediate Needs of War Contracts and Defense, and the Continuing Needs of Employment and Slum Clearance, Most Concern New Yorkers

Lack of adequate employment opportunities, dislocation of business because of the war and similar economic questions rated highest in the minds of New Yorkers when questioned as to the city's most important problem. They placed the peacetime problems of housing and slum-clearance as next in importance, along with the wartime problem of air-raid protection. The prominent rating of economic and safety factors resulting in part or in whole from the war is understandable, particularly in view of the city's location and importance. However, the high interest in housing even in the midst of very critical war problems is significant.

New York opinion shows interesting differences from the national total: twice as many New Yorkers, proportionately, cited lack of employment opportunities as the leading problem; more than twice as many cited city defense; on the other hand, there were

relatively far fewer in New York who criticized local officials, and fewer who emphasized traffic congestion. This last may be due to war conditions which have eased New York's traffic problems but have intensified the difficulties of many other cities.

MOST IMPORTANT CITY PROBLEMS

	New York City	National Average
Lack of employment and wage opportunity	14%	7%
General or nation-wide war problems affecting the community (priorities, dislocation of business, etc.)	7	5
Need of new industries, industrial dislocation, partial production or partial conversion	1	5
	22%	17%
Housing—not enough good, adequate, reasonably or low-priced houses	12	16
Slum clearance, poor housing and sanitary conditions, housing rehabilitation or housing projects	5	2
	17%	18%
City defense (protection against air raids, air raid warden difficulties, etc.) or local problems resulting directly from the war effort (entertainment of soldiers, social conditions resulting from military services, local morale, cooperation, etc.)	16	7
Transportation, traffic congestion or insufficient parking space	5	8
High prices	4	1
High taxes	2	3
Vice, crime and delinquency	2	2
Inadequate schools or school facilities	2	1
Care of needy, old and sick	2	1
Inadequate, poor or dishonest government or high government officials	1	6
No outstanding or important problem	1	3
Repair, improvement or provision of new streets, street lights, sidewalks or other street facilities	1	3
Improvement of city departmental services (police, fire, health, etc.)	1	1
Inadequate utilities or utility service (water supply, sewage disposal, electricity, etc.)	—	2
Municipal uncleanness (poor garbage or trash collection, or street cleaning)	—	2
Segregation or control of special racial group	—	2
City debt and municipal financial condition	—	2
Migration of people from city	—	1
Shortage of workers	—	1
City-wide dirt and smoke	—	1
Post-war problems	—	1
Miscellaneous problems	12	10
Don't know	24	20
No answer	1	3

Selected New York Comments

"Well — unemployment — I mean I know a whole lot of guys that were thrown out of work because of the war. They got to get in something else." (27 year old grocery clerk, married, one child)

»«

"I think the whole city itself is being overcrowded. It's very overcrowded." (30 year old policeman, married)

»«

"Housing — we need newer buildings." (22 year old housewife, 2 children)

»«

"There is too much traffic — how many kids get run over and the cars don't even stop." (26-year old housewife — 4 children)

»«

"The most important problem facing colored people (in the city) is low wages. A man making \$15. a week can't live decently and raise kids. Colored people are paying too much rent." (52 year old Negro building superintendent — 4 children)

»«

"Housing conditions for our people are fearful. Working conditions are awful for Negroes. Food is poorest and costs most in Harlem." (42 year old Negro elevator operator, married)

»«

"There are so many problems facing the city and all are relatively important. I would think the main problem now is getting the city on a full wartime footing." (52 year old housewife)

National Survey Findings

Wartime migration and expansion of housing demand appear to be stronger elements of the concern with housing problems nationally than in New York City. In the nation, the 18% who rated housing the most important problem, included 16% who stressed scarcity, high price, and inadequacy, the typical problems of wartime housing pressure, and only 2% who specified slum problems and the need for rehabilitation. In contrast, the 17% in New York City who named housing the leading problem included 12% who stressed scarcity and related factors and 5% who stressed slum factors. This would appear to be a significant difference, even though the two factors are not distinctly separable.

Desire for Neighborhood Improvement

... Is High Among New Yorkers, with Emphasis on Housing and Recreation

A smaller percentage of New Yorkers (28%) voiced satisfaction with existing conditions in their neighborhoods than did city dwellers elsewhere throughout the country (41%). Only 23% of New York City Negroes interviewed indicated they were content with their neighborhood conditions.

An overwhelming majority of New York City residents have general or specific suggestions for the betterment of their immediate environment. The survey reveals a greater inclination on the part of New Yorkers to suggest bold "projects" for extensive rebuilding and improvements in their locality. Suggestions offered by Negroes were more sharply concentrated on improved housing conditions and cleaner yards and streets.

The closer people live to the congested centers of cities, the more apt they are to be dissatisfied with their immediate environment. This explains, in part, the greater desire for neighborhood improvement in New York City, the nation's largest and most congested city.

Another factor may well be a greater awareness on the part of New Yorkers of the possibilities for betterment, because they have seen extensive improvements realized in various parts of the city. For example, leading items of the list of specific improvements in which New Yorkers are interested are housing improvement and recreational facilities, two fields of urban improvement in which New York City has been a national leader.

Most New Yorkers Suggested Neighborhood Improvements

Some typical statements:

"There's not enough space for the children to play in. The streets should be made wider, and it is too noisy." (40 year old worker, married, two children)

"There's too many people — too dirty — too many cockroaches — no parks. I live in the back and can't see anything." (38 year old housewife, three children)

»«

"Tear it down completely and rebuild it." (40 year old woman worker, married, one child)

»«

"There's this elevated — that's very annoying — the noise. Perhaps they could make it a subway. Otherwise the surroundings are nice." (48 year old clerk, married, one child)

»«

"Nothing is right about this neighborhood. They should tear the place down." (40 year old shoemaker, married, three children)

»«

"There's so many things to be done, it's hard to say. It costs so much to live, and we have to take anything." (42 year old colored worker, married, no children)

»«

"When we bought our house this section was completely residential. I would like to see it look as it did then." (50 year old professional woman, married, one child)

A Minority Are Content . . .

(Principally those living in new or well-maintained neighborhoods)

"So far everything is all right. There's nothing to kick about." (46 year old clerk, married, two children)

»«

"I'm never around here much. I'm working in New York City (Manhattan) all the time. I come home to sleep, that's all. The way I see it, it's a pretty nice neighborhood. It could be better — it could be worse." (51 year old clerk, married, no children)

. . . and a Few Are Hopeless

"I don't think you can do anything with it. A town is what it is — what can you do with it? I never gave it any thought." (37 year old housewife, two children)

QUESTION: "Is there anything you would like to see done to this neighborhood to make it a better place to live in?"

DESIRE FOR NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT

	National Total	Cities of 5,000-25,000	Cities of 25,000-100,000	Cities of 100,000-500,000	Cities of 500,000 and over	New York City
Yes	59%	57%	54%	64%	61%	71%
No	39	41	44	35	37	28
No answer	2	2	2	1	2	1

WHAT IMPROVEMENT?

	New York City 26%	National Total 19%
Housing:		
Repair, better maintenance or modernization of homes or buildings	9	7
Remove or rebuild dilapidated or empty buildings, those housing undesirable vacant lot uses	7	6
General dissatisfaction with neighborhood, many improvements needed or tear down all buildings and rebuild	7	4
Build new houses or buildings, including housing projects	3	2
Provide new or improved recreational facilities	19	6
Clean up:	11	12
Clean up lots or unused vacant open spaces	2	2
Cleaner neighborhood generally, including better kept and more attractive yards	5	7
Cleaner alleys or streets	4	3
Less noise	6	3
Improve traffic conditions	5	3
Repair, improve or provide new streets, alleys, street lights, sidewalks, etc.	3	12
Evacuate, segregate or control foreigners, special religious groups or colored people	3	3
Provide new public buildings, school, community house, church, etc.	3	1
Provide better sanitary facilities or utilities, public or private	1	3
Provide more desirable social composition in neighborhood	1	1
No improvements	28	39
Miscellaneous	21	16
No answer	5 ¹	5

¹ Includes those who "were not in a position to know" (confined by illness, just moved to the locality, etc.) and those who were not interested or "tend to their own business."

The Urge to Move

If wishes were houses (the hypothesis should not be dismissed too lightly) the residential population pattern of New York City would be drastically altered

QUESTION: "If you were entirely free to choose and there was no tire (or gas) rationing, would you want to continue living in this neighborhood, move somewhere else in or near this city, or move to another city?"

DESIRE FOR MIGRATION

	National Total	Cities of 5,000-25,000	Cities of 25,000-100,000	Cities of 100,000-500,000	Cities of 500,000 and over	New York City
Stay in this neighborhood	61%	65%	62%	59%	56%	44%
Move somewhere else in or near city	26	16	26	32	30	36
Move to another city	8	10	6	6	9	13
No opinion	2	3	2	2	2	2
No answer	3	6	4	1	3	5

"If you desire to 'stay in this neighborhood,' but were obliged to move would you want to move to —"

	61%	60%	62%	57%	63%	66%
Another place near here						
Somewhere else in the city	11	13	11	13	9	15
To the suburbs	17	14	18	20	18	15
Another city	3	5	1	3	2	1
No opinion	3	3	4	4	2	3
To the country or farm	1	1	1	1	1	---
No answer	4	4	3	2	5	---

"If you desire to 'move somewhere else in or near this city' would you want to move to —"

	8%	12%	5%	8%	8%	6%
Another place near here						
Somewhere else in the city	41	56	45	35	39	40
To the suburbs	45	26	42	52	49	51
Another city	1	1	1	---	1	---
No opinion	1	1	---	2	---	---
To the country or farm	3	1	5	3	3	3
No answer	1	3	2	---	---	---

ACTUAL MIGRATION

	National Total	Cities of 5,000-25,000	Cities of 25,000-100,000	Cities of 100,000-500,000	Cities of 500,000 and over	New York City
<i>Intra-city migration during past 5 years</i>						
Moved 1 or more times	47%	44%	45%	49%	48%	50%
Have not moved	53	56	55	51	52	50
<i>Inter-city migration during past 5 years</i>						
Moved 1 time	13%	20%	19%	21%	9%	6%
Have not moved	83	80	81	79	91	94

REASONS GIVEN FOR MIGRATION

	New York City	National Average		New York City	National Average
<i>Intra-City</i>			<i>Inter-City</i>		
Better quarters or quarters or location	21%	18%	Employment reasons — to seek or change work, business transfer, etc.	---	56%
Cheaper or smaller quarters	20	12	To be closer to place of work	---	8
More space required	17	13	For health or climate	*	7
Marriage	8	5	For better or cheaper house	*	3
Closer to work	6	10	Seasonal or migrant work	*	3
House unfit, burned or torn down	6	3	Miscellaneous reasons	*	25
To build or purchase home	2	16	No answer	*	3
House sold, repaired or occupied by owner	2	10			
Miscellaneous reasons	35	30			
No answer	1	3			

* The small number of responses was considered insufficient to be typical for New York City and for that reason percentages are not shown.

Almost half of all New Yorkers interviewed, if free to choose, would leave their present neighborhood — a higher proportion than in any other class of city. The 44% who prefer their present neighborhood include an important fraction who would leave the area if obliged to move from their present dwelling. Thus less than a third of all New Yorkers would stay in the same neighborhood, even if obliged to give up their present quarters.

The suburbs hold the greatest appeal to those wanting to move, while the number who would choose another neighborhood within the city is almost as great. Thirteen per cent of all New Yorkers want to move to another city — a higher proportion than was found in any other class of city.

A much larger proportion (17%) of the population of other cities had moved to those cities in the preceding five years, than was the case in New York City (6%).

New Yorkers move somewhat more frequently within the city than do city-dwellers elsewhere. Their statements on this point reflect the relative scarcity and high price of *lebensraum* in New York City, where too-high rents or inadequate space are cited as reasons for moving more often than in other cities. New York Negroes in particular said they feel the pressure of high rents, and frequency of movement among them is relatively high. The desire to move closer to the location where employed is not as important a reason for moving among New Yorkers as elsewhere.

National Survey Findings

People in the smaller cities have a greater desire to "stay put" than those in the larger cities.

»»«
The search for better housing or better neighborhoods is the leading motive of Americans as a whole in moving within their city as is the case in New York.

»»«
People in the upper-income brackets naturally have a greater satisfaction with their relatively better neighborhoods (78% want to stay in the neighborhood), whereas only half (52%) of those in the lower economic groups want to stay in their neighborhoods which they recognize as relatively less desirable.

Neighbors: Likes and Dislikes

The overloaded melting pot is not yet a perfect blend: one-third of all New Yorkers would like a change of social scenery

If "entirely free to choose," most people interviewed throughout the land would want to live among the same kind of people now residing in their neighborhood. In New York City, except among the Negro people, there are relatively more who would prefer to live among a different group of people (one third in New York City, one quarter elsewhere in the country). New York City figures on this point furnish the most pronounced instance of the national finding that there is substantially greater neighborhood social dissatisfaction in the big cities than in the smaller communities of from 5,000 to 25,000.

The reasons of New Yorkers who like their neighbors do not differ substantially from those expressed by other city dwellers. On the negative side, "noisy neighbors" is a complaint made by proportionately many more in New York than elsewhere.

Selected New York Comments

Reasons for liking to live among people in present neighborhood:

"Well, they're peaceful people. We don't bother with the neighbors, so I like them because they don't bother me. They're nice people—the ones I know." (46 year old housewife, one child)

»«

"Well, they are all my kind of people. The same religion and the same interests." (30 year old housewife, 2 children)

»«

"They're people of my own race and that's a privilege I didn't have in the early part of my life, when we lived among white people." (54 year old Negro woman)

»«

Reasons for preferring to live among a different type of neighbors:

"I have nothing in common with these people. In this block they are from the very poor to the moderately rich. There is no neighborliness." (29 year old professional man, unmarried)

»«

"Well, I guess I'm just small town and I like people who make themselves congenial and neighborly. . . . You try to be neighborly in a place like this, but they look through you and think you're a busybody." (Is satisfied with physical aspects of neighborhood. Has lived there 16 years. Was born in a big city.) (37 year old housewife, 2 children)

No opinion:

»«

"I don't think that's a fair question, because I don't know my neighbors. How can I know them well enough to say. They let me alone and I let them alone." (35 year old professional woman, unmarried)

»«

Findings from National Survey

People in the upper and middle economic groups are more content with the type of people in their present neighborhoods than are those in the lower economic groups.

People with less money more frequently express dissatisfaction with neighbors who are noisy, foreign-born, unclean or who do not "mind their own business."

QUESTION: "If you were entirely free to choose, would you want to live among the same kind of people that are in your neighborhood now, or would you prefer to live among a different group of people?"

Choice of Neighbors	National Total	Cities of 5,000-25,000	Cities of 25,000-100,000	Cities of 100,000-500,000	Cities of 500,000 and over	New York City
Same	69%	76%	69%	64%	65%	56%
Different	24	18	23	29	27	32
No opinion	6	6	7	6	7	11
No answer	1	—	1	1	1	1

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AFFECTING NEIGHBORHOOD CONTENTMENT

If Same—"Could you tell what it is about the people in your neighborhood which causes you to like to live among them?"

	New York City	National Average
Friends, friendly, kind or neighborly	43%	46%
Tend to their own business	16	21
Nice, pleasant or "all right"	16	15
My kind—same standards, interests or financial status	13	11
Quiet	10	6
Americans or good class of people—native born or substantial citizens	7	7
Good, moral, honest or religious	6	6
Cleanly	5	4
Home owners or stable people	2	3
Miscellaneous	19	16
No answer	6	7
Multiple total	145	142

If Different—"Could you tell what it is about the people in your neighborhood which causes you to want to live among a different group of people?"

	New York City	National Average
Noisier	25%	15%
Low or uneducated class, or desire better or different class	24	25
Foreigners	14	11
Color or special racial and religious characteristics	12	11
Dissatisfactions resulting from children in neighborhoods	11	6
Don't mind their own business or are gossipy	11	6
Unclean or not tidy	6	6
Not friendly	4	9
Inconsiderate or selfish	2	3
Transients or renters	—	5
Miscellaneous	23	21
No answer	29	8
Multiple total	161	126

Sunlight, Fresh Air and Quiet...

... clean streets and yards, play space, parking space, distance to schools: New York replies give relatively lower satisfaction scores on all these points

QUESTION: "What is your opinion concerning the following things about this neighborhood?"

SPECIFIC SATISFACTIONS

	National Total	Cities of 5,000-25,000	Cities of 25,000-100,000	Cities of 100,000-500,000	Cities of 500,000 and over	New York City
<i>Are the yards and streets as clean as you would like?¹</i>						
Yes	64%	62%	66%	65%	64%	60%
No	35	37	34	34	35	38
No Answer	1	1	---	1	1	2
<i>Is there enough sunlight and fresh air between and in buildings?</i>						
Yes	89%	94%	93%	89%	81%	72%
No	11	5	7	11	19	27
No Answer	---	1	---	---	---	1
<i>Is the neighborhood as quiet as you would like?</i>						
Yes	72%	78%	72%	73%	65%	59%
No	28	21	27	27	34	40
No Answer	---	1	1	---	1	1
<i>Is there enough park and playground space nearby?</i>						
Yes	64%	67%	62%	67%	60%	60%
No	34	32	35	31	36	38
No Answer	2	1	3	2	4	2
<i>Are there enough places for parking cars?²</i>						
Yes	80%	84%	86%	80%	70%	65%
No	18	15	13	18	25	24
No Answer	2	1	1	2	5	11
<i>Is the local elementary school within reasonable distance?</i>						
Yes	90%	91%	89%	90%	88%	84%
No	5	6	5	5	6	9
No answer	5	3	6	5	6	7
<i>Is the local high school within reasonable distance?</i>						
Yes	72%	81%	70%	69%	69%	62%
No	20	15	21	23	21	24
No answer	8	4	9	8	10	14
<i>Does the amount of traffic on the streets bother you?</i>						
Yes	19%	17%	19%	21%	20%	23%
No	80	82	80	77	79	76
No answer	1	1	1	2	1	1

¹ These percentages are based on those answers which indicate that both yards and streets were as clean as the respondent liked. A few persons stated that the yards were clean but not the streets.

² Note that this question does not cover parking in central business area.

While the majority of people are satisfied with all the aspects of neighborhood living listed in the accompanying table, a substantial minority desires more park and playground space, cleaner streets and yards, and more quiet.

Proportionately more New Yorkers feel that their neighborhoods do not afford adequate sunlight and fresh air, quiet, and available car parking space — amenities which are most adversely affected by congested city development. New York City Negroes registered more dissatisfaction than the rest of the city concerning cleanliness of yards and streets, lack of sunlight and fresh air, and distance to their local high school.

National Survey Findings

The residents of small cities of the country (5,000 to 25,000 population) indicate the highest degree of satisfaction on these specific questions. The "big city" dwellers are less content.

»«

Since increased income gives increased power to obtain satisfactory living conditions, the survey naturally found more dissatisfaction with specific neighborhood qualities in each income group than in the one above it. The most pronounced drop in satisfaction occurs between middle and lower income groups.

Neighborhoods: The Composite Reaction

The replies of New Yorkers to the four questions aimed at people's reactions to their immediate surroundings, when taken together, add up to a decided verdict of "unsatisfactory." While a majority are satisfied with present neighbors and with each specific aspect of the neighborhood covered by the questions above, the satisfied majority is not made up of the same people in each case. Many of those satisfied on some points are among the dissatisfied on other points. As a result most New Yorkers are dissatisfied with certain characteristics of their neighborhood in such degree that their general judgment on it is unfavorable.

The preponderance of dissatisfaction in New Yorkers' overall attitude about their neighborhood shows up in the

replies to the two questions of general character, those covering the desire for neighborhood improvement and the desire to move away. A strong majority feel that their neighborhood needs some improvement; and half the people have an active desire to move away from their present neighborhood.

Congestion and bad housing appear to be the arch-villains of the piece, and their effect has been to block or destroy those amenities which most New Yorkers want in their home and neighborhood life. The desire for more attractive, less crowded housing conditions, for quieter, better-designed neighborhoods with more space for recreation, and for a better environment for family life, are reflected in the replies to all four questions dealing

with neighborhood judgments.

All in all, these reactions of the New York public constitute a warning and a mandate — a warning that most of the residential real estate of the city rests on an unstable foundation of demand, motivated by sufferance rather than preference; and a mandate for redevelopment which will bring forth more livable neighborhoods.

The survey results furnish strong justification for more stringent and realistic zoning; analysis of the replies indicates that neighborhood dissatisfaction is markedly high in those areas where industrial, commercial, and multi-family and small dwelling structures are interspersed, but is comparatively low in neighborhoods devoted exclusively to one type of residential structure.

From Home to Work

New York is unique as a subway city. It foregoes the private car, which is the favorite method of daily travel elsewhere.

New York is *the* rapid transit city of the nation. Elsewhere, there are subways or elevated lines only in a few of the largest cities, and even these cities place main reliance on other methods for travel from home to work. In New York City 56% of the people use the subway or elevated to get to work; their daily journey is an experience — or ordeal — almost unique in American life, for they comprise the great majority of U. S. rapid transit riders. Adding those who use buses, street cars, or trains, 83% of New Yorkers use some form of mass-transportation to get to work; the corresponding national figure is 34%.*

The speed of rapid transit apparently counterbalances the size and spread of New York City in determining the length of time spent by

the average resident in travelling from home to work. The typical (median) New Yorker takes 27 minutes for this trip, only slightly more than the big-city average of 24 minutes. The national average for all cities is 16 minutes.

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In the smallest cities, 39% walk to work, but there is surprisingly little difference among the larger city-size groups in this respect. Almost as many walk to work in New York City, for instance, as in cities of 25,000 to 100,000 in population.

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Few American city-dwellers want to live closer to their work than they now do, even if they could have a dwelling comparable to their present one. And New Yorkers are no exception to this rule (12% "yes," 57% "no," nationally; and 12% "yes," 56% "no" in New York City). It seems clear that most people feel that the advantages of living in residential communities away from business and industrial areas offset any disadvantages of commutation.

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It is likely that many New Yorkers would actually prefer to spend less time in daily travel, but cannot visualize satisfactory living conditions in areas close to business centers because of the present run-down or crowded conditions in these areas. Attractive redevelopment of areas close to the centers of work would probably effect a significant change of opinion on this point.

National Survey Findings

The transit strains created by rubber and gas shortage in other cities probably cannot be appreciated by New Yorkers, where only 10% of those surveyed customarily travelled to work by private auto. In cities of 25,000 to 100,000 in population, 49% customarily used private autos to get to work, and the auto was only a little less important in most other cities. These figures suggest the degree in which the auto, in a relatively short space of time, revolutionized American habits and the residential patterns of American cities.

* These figures are valid for approximate comparisons, as used here, but not as absolute percentages, since many persons use two or more means of travel in combination, and the total of means used is thus in excess of 100%.

**QUESTIONS: "How far is it from where you live to where you work? _____ miles"
"How did you get to work before tire (and gas) rationing?"
"How long did it take you to get to work, before tire (and gas) rationing?"
"If there was no tire (and gas) rationing and you could live in a house like you have now, would you have any particular desire to live closer to where you work?"**

TRANSPORTATION

	National Total	Cities of 5,000-25,000	Cities of 25,000-100,000	Cities of 100,000-500,000	Cities of 500,000† and over	New York City
Distance to Work						
0 miles to 1/2 mile	---	28%	16%	16%	14%	14%
1/2 to 1 mile	---	16	14	9	4	6
1 to 2 miles	---	11	16	16	5	4
2 to 3 miles	---	3	11	12	5	5
3 to 5 miles	---	3	7	11	12	9
5 to 10 miles	---	5	5	12	23	16
10 to 20 miles	---	2	5	5	11	13
Over 20 miles	---	4	4	2	3	4
Does not work any one place	---	15	11	6	10	10
No answer, does not work or retired	---	13	11	11	13	19
Means of Transit						
Automobile	41%	44%	49%	43%	31%	10%
Street Car	10	---	6	9	22	6
Bus	15	7	20	21	13	17
Subway or Elevated	7	1	---	---	22	56
Bicycle	1	1	1	1	---	---
Train	2	1	2	---	4	4
Walk	26	39	26	22	18	20
Other	4	3	4	5	3	2
Works at home	1	2	1	---	1	3
No answer	11	11	11	11	8	11
	118	112	120	112	122	129
Time						
1 to 10 minutes	34%	57%	44%	29%	16%	12%
10 to 20 minutes	28	25	27	37	23	13
20 to 30 minutes	19	8	16	17	29	21
30 to 60 minutes	16	6	12	15	26	27
60 to 90 minutes	3	4	1	2	6	5
Desire to Live Closer to Work						
Yes	12%	11%	14%	13%	11%	12%
No	57	54	54	61	58	56
No opinion	4	3	3	4	4	8
No answer	27	32	29	22	27	24

† Includes New York City replies. The figures for other large cities would contrast even more sharply in this respect if the New York City figures were eliminated from this column.

Control in City Rebuilding

"There has to be a central scheme" expresses the majority view favoring city planning and control.

In an endeavor to secure a cross-section of public opinion on the question of city planning, the national survey posed the question "If this city were heavily bombed, do you think the city government should have complete control over the arrangement of all buildings and streets in rebuilding it, or should this be left up to what individual owners decide to do with their properties?" Approximately two out of every three persons interviewed having opinions on the question believed that such control should be exercised by the local municipal government.

In New York City, there was a greater support (three out of four) for such control by the city government among those having definite opinions. The other one-fourth felt this should be left up to individual property owners. This proportion was generally true in the largest-sized cities. In even the smallest-sized cities, however, more than a majority were in favor of comprehensive planning by the city government.

Approximately one-fifth of urban people are undecided on this question and another one-sixth did not answer the question or their replies were eliminated because of a possible misinterpretation of the question. In New York City more than half the respondents did not give a definite opinion; 17% were undecided, and 38% of the answers were eliminated to avoid the inclusion of any replies which might have been based on a misinterpretation of the question.

A high proportion of all New Yorkers had definite opinions on the issue of public slum clearance and rehousing in contrast to the low proportion who had definite opinions on the issue of city planning control.

The same thing is true in an important degree throughout the country, for only 19% had no opinion on the housing issue, compared with 35% having no opinion on the planning issue, in the national total. The contrast emphasizes the importance of energetic publicity and educational work, of tackling the issues which most concern people, and above all, of concrete positive accomplishments, in the development of public support for progressive urban policies.

Selected New York Comments

In favor of city planning:

"Well, because they are a government body and if left to individuals it will be a kaleidoscopic mess — should be a plan of unity of opinion — if developed properly government can do better planning." (35 year old clerk)

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"Should have planned city." (50 year old housewife)

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"The property owners been planning it until we got what we got." (72 year old unemployed watchman)

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"The city would have a master plan and could do a better and more intelli-

gent job. They could plan smaller houses, wider streets, etc." (38 year old merchant)

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"There has to be a central scheme." (40 year old lawyer)

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"I think if we are bombed it would be better to build better places with sunshine and fresh air." (56 year old housewife)

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In favor of individual planning:

"Well they know what they want to do. They might not like the arrangement the city has in mind. The city might have very fancy ideas and they may have very plain ideas." (26 year old elevator operator)

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"Well it's their own property they should have the right. This is a free country and the people should have the right to do whatever they want with their own property." (30 year old special policeman)

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In favor of cooperative effort:

"It would be best for the government to advise what they are to do but the property owners should, in the name of democracy, do what they want to do with their property." (23 year old stenographer)

STATISTICAL NOTE

In the results of the survey which refer to New York City, the range of statistical error is at most 7.5% in 99% of the cases. In the case of the national survey results, this range is less than 3%. When comparing different-size cities, and New York City with the nation at large, a difference of 8% is necessary for statistical significance at the 99% level. These statements are based on results where there exists a 50%-50% split of opinion. If a more uneven split is obtained, the possible range of error decreases. However, the conservative criterion presented above can be used as a ready measure in evaluating the percentages in this Bulletin.

CONTROL OVER CITY REBUILDING IF BOMBED?

	National Total	Cities of 5,000-25,000	Cities of 25,000-100,000	Cities of 100,000-500,000	Cities of 500,000 and over	New York City
Government	40%	33%	38%	44%	44%	33%
Owner	23	28	25	25	16	11
Cooperation	2	2	2	2	3	1
Undecided	19	23	17	14	21	17
Did not understand or no answer	16	14	18	15	16	38