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# ***DirectionFinder*<sup>®</sup> Survey**

## **Executive Summary Report**

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### **Overview**

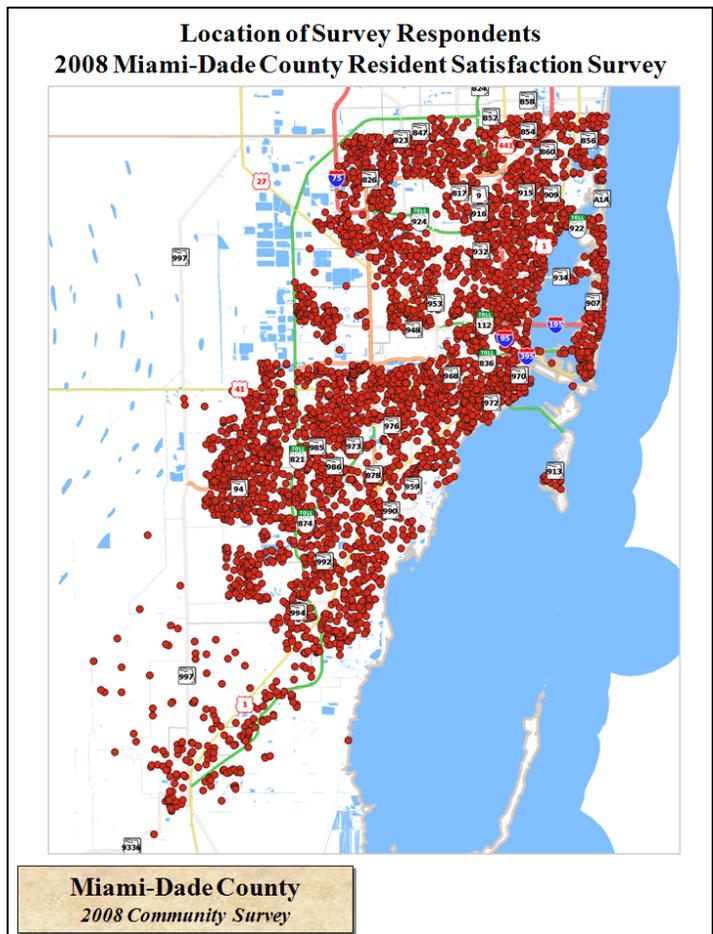
**Purpose.** During the fall of 2008, ETC Institute administered a Resident Satisfaction Survey for Miami-Dade County to assess resident satisfaction with the delivery of major county services and to help determine priorities for the community as part of the County's ongoing planning process.

**Survey Description and Methodology.** Two versions of the survey were developed. Both versions were four-pages in length and took the typical respondent about 10-12 minutes to complete. In October, each version of the survey was mailed to a random sample of 10,000 households in Miami-Dade County. Approximately seven days after the surveys were mailed, residents who received the survey were contacted by phone. Those who indicated that they had not returned the survey were given the option of completing it by phone. Of the 20,000 households that received a survey, 2,788 completed Version 1 and 2,734 completed Version 2 for a total of 5,522 completed surveys (a 27% response rate). The survey was administered in English, Spanish, and Creole.

The sample was stratified to ensure the completion of at least 400 surveys (200 of each version) in each of the County's thirteen commission districts. The overall results of each version of the survey have a precision of at least +/-2% at the 95% level of confidence. The results for each commission district have a precision of at least +/-6.5% at the 95% level of confidence. There were no statistically significant differences in the results of the survey based on the method of administration (phone vs. mail).

**Geocoding.** Since Miami-Dade County does not provide all services to the entire county, ETC Institute geocoded the home address of respondents to the survey. The geocoding process allowed the results of the survey to be analyzed for specific areas, including the following:

- **Unincorporated Municipal Service Area (UMSA).** Services that are only provided to the unincorporated areas of the county were assessed based on the Unincorporated Municipal Service Area (UMSA).
- **Police Service Area.** Police and public safety ratings were assessed based on the areas where the County is responsible for providing police services.
- **Fire Response Service Area.** Questions related to the perceived quality of fire services were assessed based on the areas where the County is responsible for providing fire services.
- **Waste Collection Service Areas.** Questions related to the perceived quality of garbage, recycling, and other waste collection services were assessed based on the specific areas where the County is responsible for providing these services.
- **Water Service Area.** Questions related to the perceived quality of water service were assessed based on the areas where the County is responsible for providing water services.
- **Sewer Service Area.** Questions related to the perceived quality of sewer services were assessed based on the areas where the County is responsible for providing sewer services.



**Don't Know Responses.** The percentage of “don't know” responses has been excluded from many of the graphs shown in this report to facilitate valid comparisons of the results from Miami-Dade County with the results from 2005 and other communities in ETC Institute's *DirectionFinder*® database. Since the number of “don't know” responses often reflects the utilization and awareness of county services, the percentage of “don't know” responses has been provided in Appendix A to this report, which contains the frequency distributions for all questions on both versions of the survey.

This report contains:

- an executive summary of the methodology and major findings
- charts depicting the overall results for most questions on each version of the survey (Section 1)
- tables that show the total positive ratings (ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale, where 5 is best) for 106 items that were assessed on the survey along with the change in the rating for each item from 2005 to 2008 (Section 2)
- a copy of both versions of the survey instruments (Section 3)

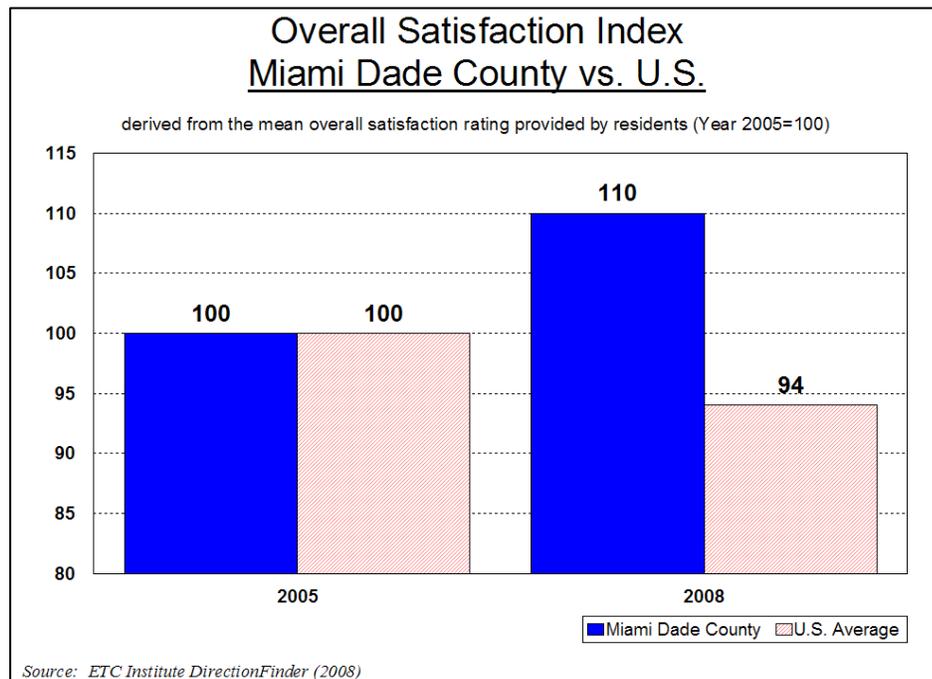
## Major Findings

- **Perceptions of the Quality of Life in Miami-Dade County Have Declined.** Overall ratings of Miami-Dade County as a place to live, work, and raise children declined from 2005 to 2008. The percentage of residents who rated Miami-Dade County as an “excellent” or “good” **place to live** declined from 67% in 2005 to 61% in 2008. The percentage of residents who rated Miami-Dade County as an “excellent” or “good” **place to work** declined from 52% in 2005 to 47% in 2008. The percentage of residents who rated Miami-Dade County as an “excellent” or “good” **place to raise children** declined from 43% in 2005 to 39% in 2008. The lower quality of life ratings are probably related to the downturn in the economy.
- **Overall Satisfaction with County Services Increased Significantly Despite Lower Quality of Life Ratings.** Although most U.S. communities have experienced lower levels of satisfaction with governmental services during the past year as a result of the nation’s struggling economy, Miami-Dade County experienced significant improvements in almost every area that was assessed on the survey. Among 106 items that were rated in both 2005 and 2008, overall satisfaction improved in 93 areas; satisfaction levels remained the same in 7 areas, and declined in just 6 areas. There were no significant decreases in any of the county services that were rated. The areas that improved most between 2005 and 2008 are listed below:
  - Most Improved Areas from 2005 to 2008
  - Tree canopy along major streets (+19%)
  - Curbside bulky waste collection (+17%)
  - Landscaping along streets/in medians (+16%)
  - Tree canopy along side streets (+15%)
  - Overall cleanliness of major streets (+13%)
  - Quality of road signs on side streets (+13%)
  - Quality of road signs on major streets (+12%)

Most Improved Areas from 2005 to 2008 (continued)

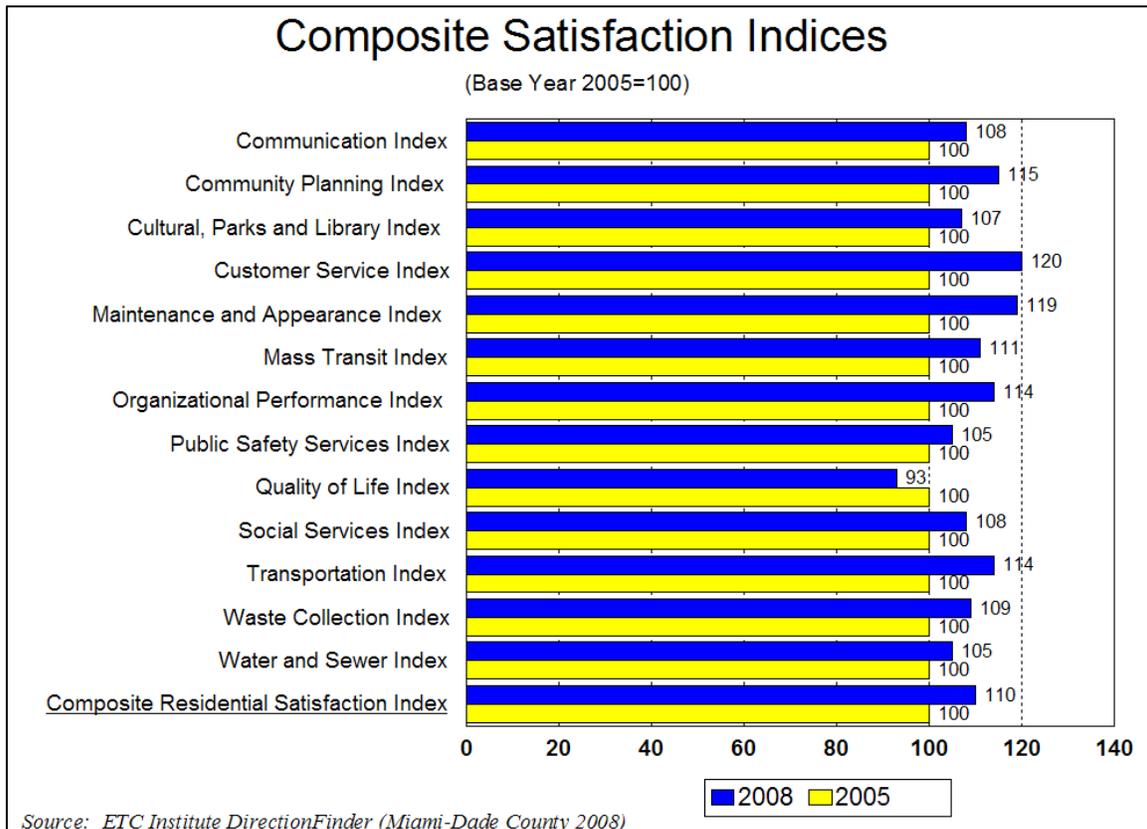
- Overall cleanliness of side streets (+12%)
- Cleanliness of waterways in residential areas (+11%)
- Perception that Miami-Dade County employees are “courteous and professional” (+10%)
- Traffic signal coordination during peak congestion (+10%)
- Perception that Miami-Dade County employees “go the extra mile” (+10%)
- Prevention of street flooding on major streets (+10%)
- Perception that Miami-Dade County “delivers excellent public services” (+10%)

- **Overall Satisfaction Index.** The Overall Satisfaction Index shows the aggregate change in all county services that were assessed on the survey. The index was calculated by dividing the mean rating for all services that were assessed in 2008 by the mean rating for the same set of services that were assessed in 2005, which was the first year Miami-Dade County conducted ETC Institute’s DirectionFinder® Survey. The result was then multiplied by 100. An index value of 100 indicates that overall satisfaction has stayed the same. An index value of more than 100 indicates that overall satisfaction has improved. An index value of less than 100 indicates that overall satisfaction has declined. As the chart below shows, the Overall Satisfaction Index for Miami-Dade County increased from 100 in 2005 to 110 in 2008. During the same period of time, the Overall Satisfaction Index for the United States, which is maintained by ETC Institute’s DirectionFinder® database, declined from 100 to 94.

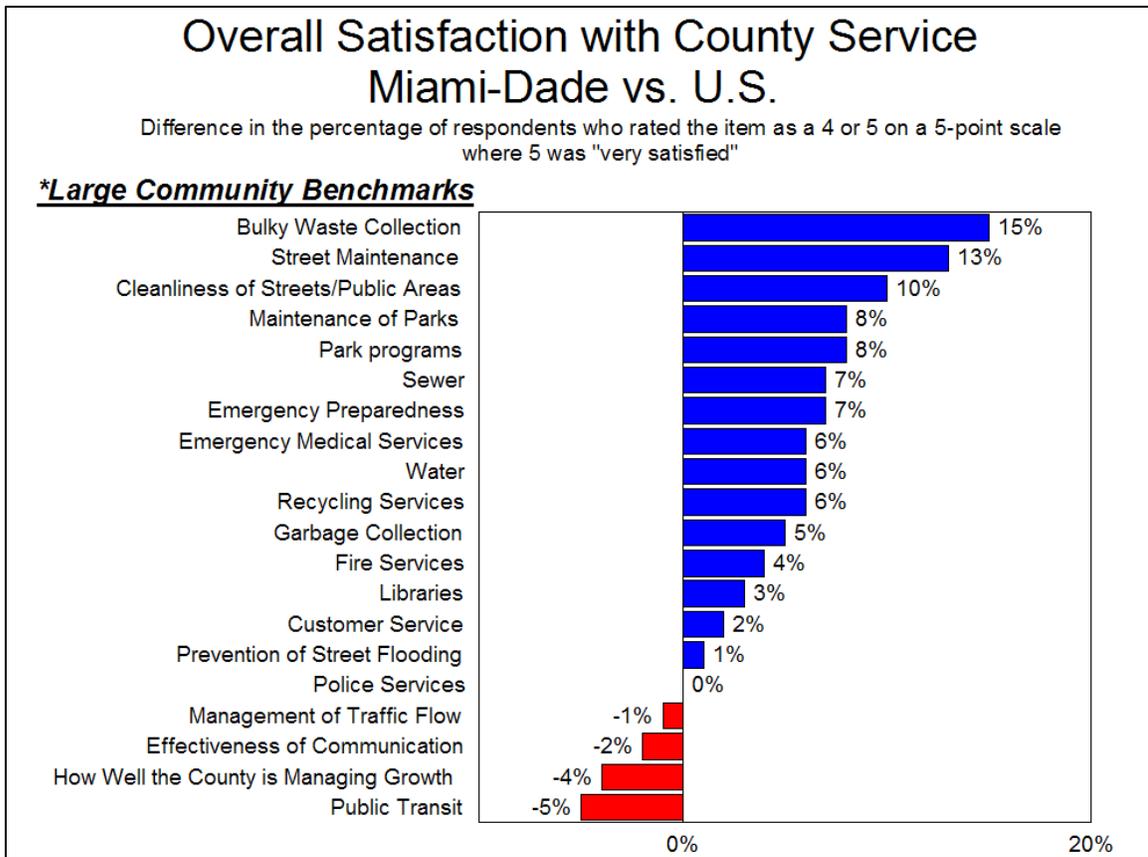


In addition to the Overall Satisfaction Index that is shown on the previous page, ETC Institute also prepared an index for each of the 13 major areas of performance that were assessed on the survey. There were significant improvements in 12 of the 13 areas that were assessed. The Quality of Life Index was the only major area that declined, but the lower level of satisfaction with the quality of life in Miami-Dade County is probably related to factors that are not related to the quality of county services, such as the economy. The three major areas of performance that improved the most from 2005 to 2008 were:

- the **customer service index**, which reflects the quality of service residents think they receive from county employees
- the **maintenance and appearance index**, which reflects how well the county is maintaining streets, sidewalks, and other infrastructure
- the **community planning index**, which reflects how well the county is managing growth and development in the community.



- How Miami-Dade Compares to Other Large Communities.** Overall Satisfaction with local governmental services in Miami Dade County is generally higher than other large communities in the United States. The chart below shows how the results for Miami Dade County compare to the U.S. average maintained by ETC Institute’s DirectionFinder® database for communities with more than 350,000 residents. Satisfaction levels in Miami Dade County were better than the national average in 15 of the 20 survey items that were assessed.



## Other Findings

- Public Safety.** The highest levels of satisfaction with public safety services in the County’s police and fire service areas based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents *who had an opinion* were: the quality of fire services (84%), the quality of local emergency/ambulance services (82%) and the County’s emergency preparedness services (69%). Residents were least satisfied with the enforcement of local traffic laws (46%).

- **County Transportation.** The highest levels of satisfaction with county transportation services, based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents *who had an opinion* were: Miami Seaport Services (55%), availability of sidewalks for pedestrians (54%), the maintenance of County streets (53%) and the Miami International Airport (51%). Residents were least satisfied with the quality of Miami-Dade County’s public transit system (34%) and the management of traffic flow on County streets (34%).
- **Mass Transit.** The highest levels of satisfaction with mass transit services in Miami-Dade County based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents *who had an opinion* were: the reliability of train services (63%), the frequency of train service (61%), the ease of access to trains (52%) the courtesy of bus drivers (51%) and the cleanliness of train stops (49%). Residents were least satisfied with the frequency of bus services (32%).
- **Social Services.** The highest levels of satisfaction with social services in the County based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents *who had an opinion* were: the availability of services for the disabled (45%), the availability of services to seniors (44%), and the availability of services to children (43%). Residents were least satisfied with the availability of services for people on a low or fixed income (33%).
- **Water and Sewer Services.** The level of satisfaction with water and sewer services was relatively high in all areas that were rated. Based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents *who had an opinion* 77% of those surveyed were satisfied with the overall quality of drinking water and 75% were satisfied with the quality of sewer (wastewater treatment) services.
- **County Communication.** The highest levels of satisfaction with county communication based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents *who had an opinion*, were with the County’s Answer Center/311 (61%) and the County’s website (60%). Residents were least satisfied with the level of public involvement in Miami-Dade County government (31%).
- **Maintenance of Streets.** The highest levels of satisfaction with the maintenance of streets among residents who had an opinion and lived within one-mile of a county street about **major streets** were: the quality of road signs (69%), and landscaping along streets and in medians (64%). Residents were least satisfied with the prevention of street flooding on major streets (49%). The highest levels of satisfaction among residents with **side streets** were: the quality of road signs (67%), and overall cleanliness (61%) Residents were least satisfied with the prevention of flooding on side streets (48%).

- **Community Appearance.** The highest levels of satisfaction with the appearance of Miami-Dade County based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents in the UMSA *who had an opinion* were: the appearance of resident neighborhoods (68%), the maintenance of residential property in resident areas (66%), and the maintenance of business property in resident areas (62%). Residents were least satisfied with the overall appearance of Miami-Dade County (56%).
- **Community Planning/Development.** The highest levels of satisfaction with Community Planning Development in Miami-Dade County based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents in the UMSA *who had an opinion* were: the development and land use within resident neighborhoods (40%) and the tax collector’s office (37%). Residents were least satisfied with opportunities for involvement in economic development efforts (24%), the County’s process for getting permits for construction/renovation (24%) and the effectiveness of County efforts to revitalize low income areas (24%).
- **Parks and Park Programs.** The highest levels of satisfaction with parks and park programs in Miami-Dade County based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents in the UMSA *who had an opinion* were: the quality of park ground maintenance (67%), the quality of the County’s park system (64%), and the quality of park facilities and maintenance (62%). Residents were least satisfied with the availability of park programs (47%).
- **Library Services.** The level of satisfaction with library services among residents in the County’s library service area was relatively high in all areas that were rated. Based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among respondents *who had an opinion* were: 75% were satisfied with the quality of the County’s library system, 75% were satisfied with the quality of the library facilities and maintenance, 70% were satisfied with the hours that libraries are open and 69% were satisfied with the availability of materials.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall satisfaction with the quality of service provided by Miami-Dade County increased significantly from 2005 to 2008 despite the struggling economy. Some of the most significant improvements were in the areas of public works, customer service, community planning, and transportation. The results of the 2008 survey suggest that the County is definitely moving in the right direction with regard to the way services are delivered to residents.

Although the County's ratings improved in many areas, the County should use the results of this survey to help prioritize investments. Based on the overall priorities that residents place on services and the County's performance compared to other large communities, the following four areas should continue to be priorities for the county:

- Public safety
- Transportation/public transit
- Maintenance of infrastructure and the prevention of flooding
- Access to government and communication

Miami-Dade County should also take action where appropriate to minimize dissatisfaction in areas that have a very high percentage of negative responses. Some of the areas with the most dissatisfaction on the survey included:

- The management of development and land use in the County
- The management of traffic flow on County streets
- The quality of Miami-Dade County's public transit system
- The quality of social services for people on a low/fixed income
- How safe residents feel safe when walking alone in the evening