



Tips on Surveying Your Main Street Businesses

1. **Know your goal(s) in why you are conducting the survey.** How will the results be used? Having a compelling reason helps you design the best survey and can help solicit more participation and responses.
2. **Distribute your survey in multiple ways.** Don't just focus on an online survey form; go door to door with the survey. Some communities find that they got better response rates with hardcopies versus digital. Consider mailing surveys as well.
3. **Make a dedicated campaign to solicit more responses.** Survey data is important, but it can be very hard to collect. Do not just post it up on a website or Facebook page and call it a day. Develop a marketing campaign with the support of key stakeholders to increase the campaign's efficacy. If you know you regularly want to survey your business owners, keeping a consistent schedule can also increase participation because people will be expecting it.

Possible Questions

Below are potential questions to consider based on the goals of your survey. The questions fall into the categories: customer service, business performance, business support, staffing and employees, and business basics. This is not an exhaustive list.

Customer Service

1) Please rank your level of agreement with each statement.

Statements:

- It feels like the Town is my partner and wants to see me succeed.
- The Town's policies and regulations are easy to find and follow.
- If I have an issue, I know who to contact at the Town to help me resolve it.
- I love being in business in the Town.
- I love the direction the Town is moving in.

Choices:

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree



Business Performance

2) How would you describe the stage of business?

Asking this question can ground the responses you receive. You may notice that businesses have different struggles depending on their stage of development. These stages are adapted from Harvard Business Review "[The Give Stages of Small-Business Growth](#)."

- Start-up
- Survival
- Growth
- Mature
- Expansion
- Decline

3) Thinking about the next six months, how serious are each of these concerns for your business?

Question from [Main Street America Winter 2022 Small Business Survey](#)

Topics:

- Shrinking margins
- Challenges with inflation
- Challenges hiring and filling open positioning with qualified applicants
- Cost of rent
- Supply chain issues
- Challenges keeping your business fully staffed
- Cost of building maintenance
- Concern with my business's location
- Attracting new customers or clients
- Challenges leveraging e-commerce platforms
- Retaining existing customers or clients
- Recession
- Parking

Choices:

- Not concerned
- A little concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Very concerned
- Extremely concerned



- 4) How concerned are you with the overall health and financial viability of your business?
- Not concerned
 - A little concerned
 - Somewhat concerned
 - Very concerned
 - Extremely concerned
- 5) Do you have a business plan?
- Yes, and we follow it
 - Yes, but we don't follow it
 - No, but working on one
 - No, don't have a plan
- 6) Do you have a monthly marketing and advertising budget?
- Yes
 - No
 - Other

Business Support

- 7) What types of support would you like to see offered that would help your business thrive?
Question from [Main Street America Winter 2022 Small Business Survey](#)

Topics:

- Incentives and financial support for small businesses
- Increased district-wide marketing and promotion
- Stronger organization of businesses in the area
- Improvements to the physical design of the area (e.g. accessibility, lighting, wayfinding, streetscape)
- Incentives, support, or technical assistance for storefront/façade renovations or energy efficiency
- Trainings with pro-bono legal services on supporting local entrepreneurs
- Incentives or resources for physical accessibility upgrades
- Trainings on the city or local municipality's permitting processes for small businesses
- Other
- None of the above



8) Which of the following topics or tools are you most interested in developing or strengthening for your business?

Question from [Main Street America Winter 2022 Small Business Survey](#)

Topics:

- Marketing your business online/ on social media
- Partnerships with other local businesses and business groups
- Leveraging data to improve marketing and inventory
- Strengthening my business's relationship with the local and state government
- E-commerce
- Expansion to new markets or locations
- Shifting business model

Choices:

- No interest
- A low level of interest
- A moderate level of interest
- A high or very high level of interest

Staffing and Employees

9) What factors concern you that could impact locating, recruiting, and retaining qualified staff?

Question from [Main Street America 2023 Small Business Survey](#)

Topics:

- Ability to pay competitive wages
- Cost of healthcare
- Housing affordability
- Lack of childcare options
- Housing availability
- Quality of Local schools

Choices:

- Not concerned
- A little concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Very concerned
- Extremely concerned



10) How many employees do you have (not including the owner)?

- Full time (more than 32 hours a week)
- Part time (less than 31 hours a week)

11) Do you have any job openings?

- Full time (more than 32 hours a week)
- Part time (less than 31 hours a week)

12) What is your hourly wage?

- Average hourly wage
- Lowest hourly wage
- Highest hourly wage

13) Typically, what level of education do your employees need?

- Current high school student
- High school degree/GED
- Some college
- Associate degree
- Specialized certificate/training
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate Degree

Business Basics

14) Type of Business

For this question you may want to get very specific in the types of businesses to analyze the mix of businesses you have. For example, for restaurants tracking types of cuisine.

- Restaurant and Food Service
 - Food Truck
 - Takeaway
 - Sit-down
- Automotive, Repair, and Maintenance (including gas stations)
- Hospitality (Hotels and Motels)
- Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores
- Professional Services (e.g. accountant, insurance, real estate, etc.)
- Retail
 - Gift
 - Clothing, Shoes, Accessories
 - Pet



- Office, Stationary
- Books, Music
- Consignment, Thrift, Antique
- Convenience store
- Grocery
- Neighborhood Services (e.g. dry cleaner, laundromat, pet groomer, etc.)
- Arts and Culture (including “sip and paints”, escape rooms, arcades, etc.)
- Artisan, Craftsmen, Maker, Small Manufacturer
- Brewery or other craft beverage manufacturer
- Religious
- Nonprofit
- Warehouse or storage
- Gym, fitness related
- Other

15) Business Owner Demographics

- Gender
 - i. Female
 - ii. Male
 - iii. Non-binary
 - iv. Transgender
 - v. Intersex
 - vi. Choose not to respond
- Race
 - i. Alaska Native
 - ii. Asian
 - iii. Black or African American
 - iv. Multiracial
 - v. Native American
 - vi. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - vii. White/Caucasian
 - viii. Choose not to respond
- Hispanic Origin
 - i. Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
 - ii. Not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
 - iii. Choose not to respond
- Veteran Status
 - i. Non-Veteran
 - ii. Service-Disabled Veteran
 - iii. Veteran
 - iv. Choose not to respond



- Do you consider yourself a person with a disability?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Choose not to respond