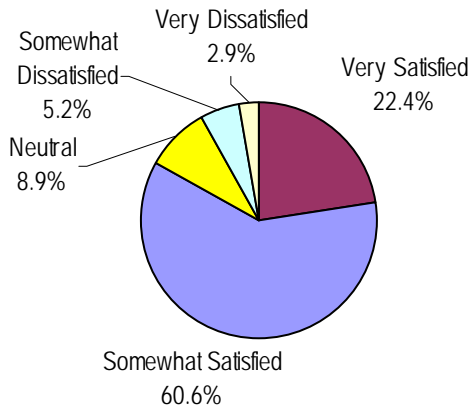


CHAPTER 6: General View of Government, Taxes, and Schools

Overall, Spotsylvania County citizens are satisfied with the efficiency and effectiveness of the services provided by the County, with 83 percent indicating they are satisfied and 22.4 percent reporting being very satisfied (see Figure 6.1). It is also notable that satisfaction is high across all demographic subgroups, with no significant differences of opinion.

Figure 6.1: Satisfaction with Efficiency and Effectiveness of Services

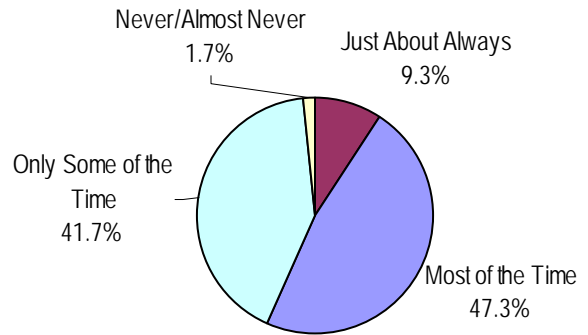


Of the 175 respondents who said they were very satisfied with County services, 100 were asked to specify what they thought the County was doing well. Emergency services, especially the police/sheriff, and public schools were the most frequently mentioned services that residents feel the County is doing an excellent job at providing. Other frequently mentioned services included road maintenance, snow removal, and library services.

Only 8.1 percent (99 respondents) said they are dissatisfied with the efficiency and effectiveness of services provided by the County. When asked what the County could do better, it is clear that issues related to growth are a top concern. Residents would like to see the County do a better job of planning for growth including limiting growth, keeping services up with the level of growth, and eliciting more input from citizens on growth planning. Others would like the County to improve its efforts to disseminate information to residents and address road and traffic conditions they view as being poor.

Not only do residents of Spotsylvania feel that the County government is doing a good job providing services, they generally trust the government officials to ‘do what is right’. Almost 10 percent (9.3%) said they almost always have full trust in the County Government to make good decisions and almost half (47.3%) say they trust the government most of the time. Figure 6.2 illustrates these findings.

Figure 6.2: Trust in the Government



Taxes

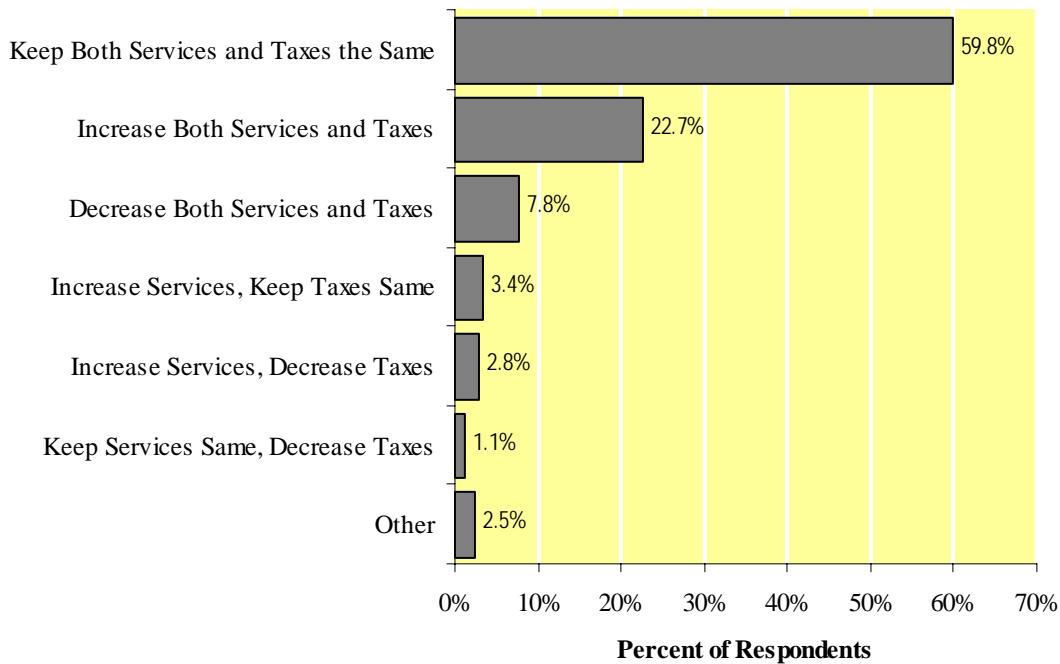
In order to assess citizens’ views of the relationship between services and taxes within Spotsylvania County, respondents were also asked:

“Considering all of the County Government’s services on the one hand and taxes on the other, which of the following statements comes closest to your view:

- *The County should decrease services and taxes;*
- *The County should keep taxes and services about where they are; or*
- *The County should increase services and taxes?”*

Citizens overwhelmingly support the status quo on this issue. Almost 60 percent (59.8%) favored the second alternative, keeping taxes and services about where they are. Of those who favored change, far more citizens support increasing taxes and services (22.7%) than decreasing them (7.8%). As we might expect, some citizens volunteered other alternatives: increasing services but keeping taxes where they are (3.4%), increasing services while decreasing taxes (2.8%), and keeping services where they are but decreasing taxes (1.1%). Refer to Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3: View of County Spending



Opinions about taxes varied significantly across several demographic subgroups. More than 20 percent of those who have lived in the area all of their life feel that both taxes and services should be decreased whereas, on average, only 7 percent of those who have not lived in Spotsylvania all of their life felt this way. Homeowners tend to be more in favor of increasing both taxes and services compared to renters. As income levels increased, so did support for higher taxes and more services. Middle aged residents (age 38 to 64) are also more likely to support an increase in taxes and services, whereas those in other age groups tend to prefer no change. Finally, only 11.5 percent of those with a high school education or less would like to see higher taxes and services whereas over 30 percent of those with a college degree and 40 percent of those with some graduate education support an increase.

County Public Schools

Approximately sixty percent (60.5%) of respondents have some experience with the County public school system, either from attending a public school themselves or from someone in their household currently attending or having attended a Spotsylvania County school in the past (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1: Spotsylvania County School Attendance

Attendance	Percent of Respondents
Respondent attended	15.3
Household member attended	20.7
Household member currently attends	24.5
Neither respondent nor household member attended/attends	39.5

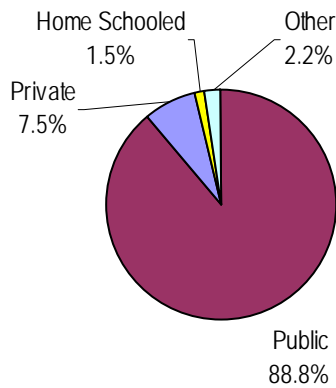
Across voting districts, respondents in our sample residing in the Livingston (27.9%) and Courtland (23.3%) districts are more likely to have attended a public school themselves, compared to less than 10 percent of those in the districts of Lee Hill and Battlefield. Approximately 16 percent of those in the Salem, Berkeley and Chancellor districts indicated they had attended a Spotsylvania County school. Currently, the voting district with the highest percentage of households with children in public schools is Chancellor with over 30 percent, followed by Lee Hill (27%). Only twenty percent of the households in Battlefield, Berkeley, Courtland, and Livingston report having children in the public school system.

Those respondents with school-aged children were asked what type of school their children attend. The vast majority of Spotsylvania children (88.8%) attend public school, whereas 7.5 percent

go to a private school, 1.5 percent are home schooled and 2.2 percent are in some other schooling situation (Figure 6.4).

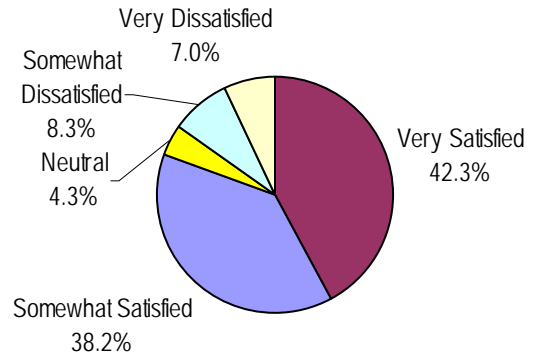
There were some demographic differences in the type of school that children attend. In general, those respondents who have lived in Spotsylvania County for more than 10 years are more likely to send their children to public schools than those who have lived in Spotsylvania for 10 years or less. Likewise, nearly all African-American parents (98.0%) send their children to Spotsylvania public schools, whereas 86.9 percent of Caucasian parents do. Finally, almost all of the respondents sending their children to private school live in single-family homes, as compared to those living in other types of dwellings.

Figure 6.4: Type of School Children Currently Attend



Satisfaction with Spotsylvania public schools is substantial, with 42.3 percent of those in our sample saying they are very satisfied and 38.2 percent being somewhat satisfied with the schools' effectiveness and efficiency (see Figure 6.5), for a total satisfaction level of 80.5 percent.

Figure 6.5 Satisfaction with Public School Services



There were several significant differences in level of satisfaction with the Spotsylvania public school system between demographic subgroups. Not surprisingly, those with children currently attending public school are significantly more satisfied with the school system than those with children in private school (85.9% vs. 46.2%, respectively). Interestingly, males, those currently employed or who are looking for work, and renters were significantly more likely to indicate they are satisfied with the public schools compared to homemakers, students, and homeowners, respectively. African-Americans also express higher levels of satisfaction than do Caucasians and those of other races or ethnic backgrounds.

Summary

In summary, Spotsylvania citizens believe in their government and are satisfied with the services provided. Residents are also satisfied with the amount of services they are receiving for the taxes they pay. In addition, the majority of children in Spotsylvania County attend public school and their parents generally feel that the County's public school system is doing a satisfactory job educating them.