

Berkeley Heights "Be Heard" 2017 Communications Survey



Summary of Results

Overview

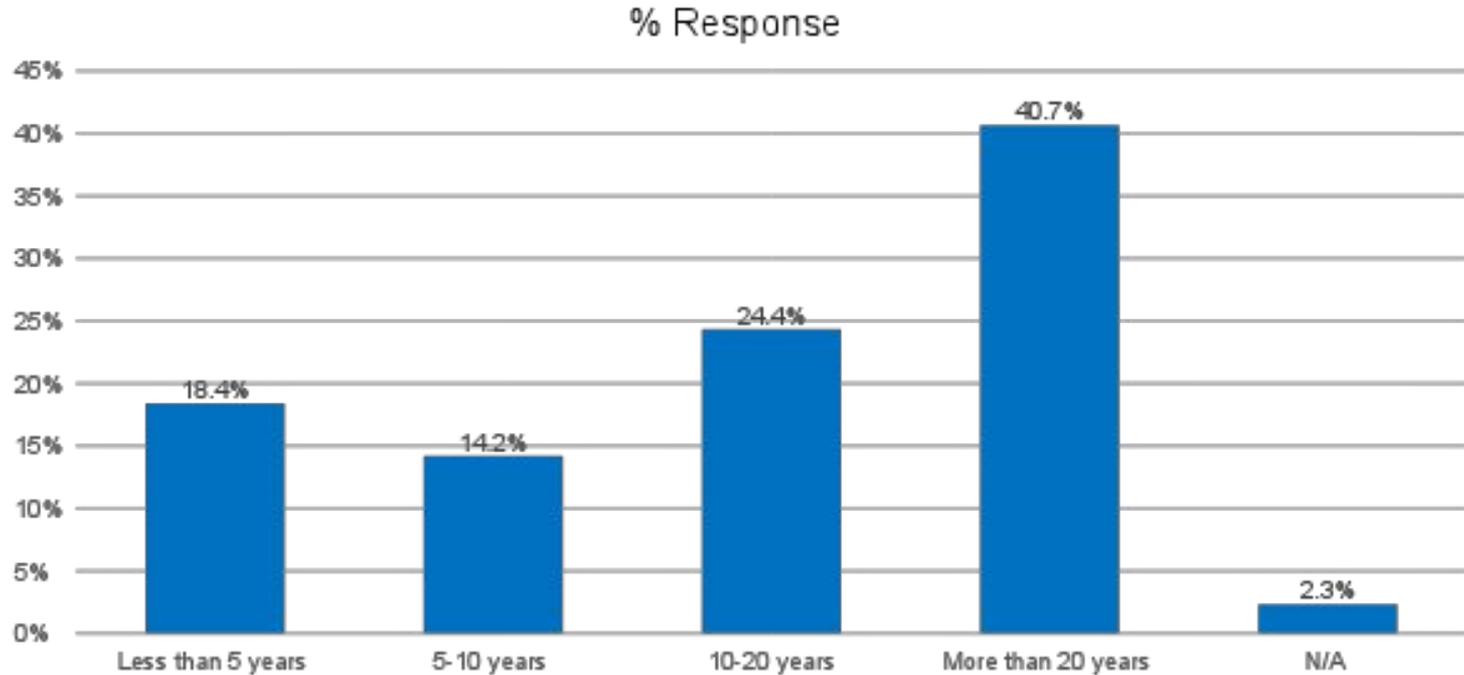
The 2017 Communications Survey was conducted by the Berkeley Heights Communications Committee (BHCC) in an effort to improve Township communications. The BHCC is an all-volunteer committee focused on maximizing the transparency of Township activities as well as promoting public and private sector initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of life for local community members.

Survey Snapshot:

- 472 total surveys
- 382 online surveys (80.9%): Posted to Township website from 9/7/2017 - 11/1/2017
- 90 in-person surveys (19.1%): Survey sites included the Berkeley Heights Street Fair and Summer Concert Series
- Survey promotion: TAP, Renna Media and Facebook
- Average duration: Approximately 3 minutes

Q1: How long have you lived/worked in Berkeley Heights Township?

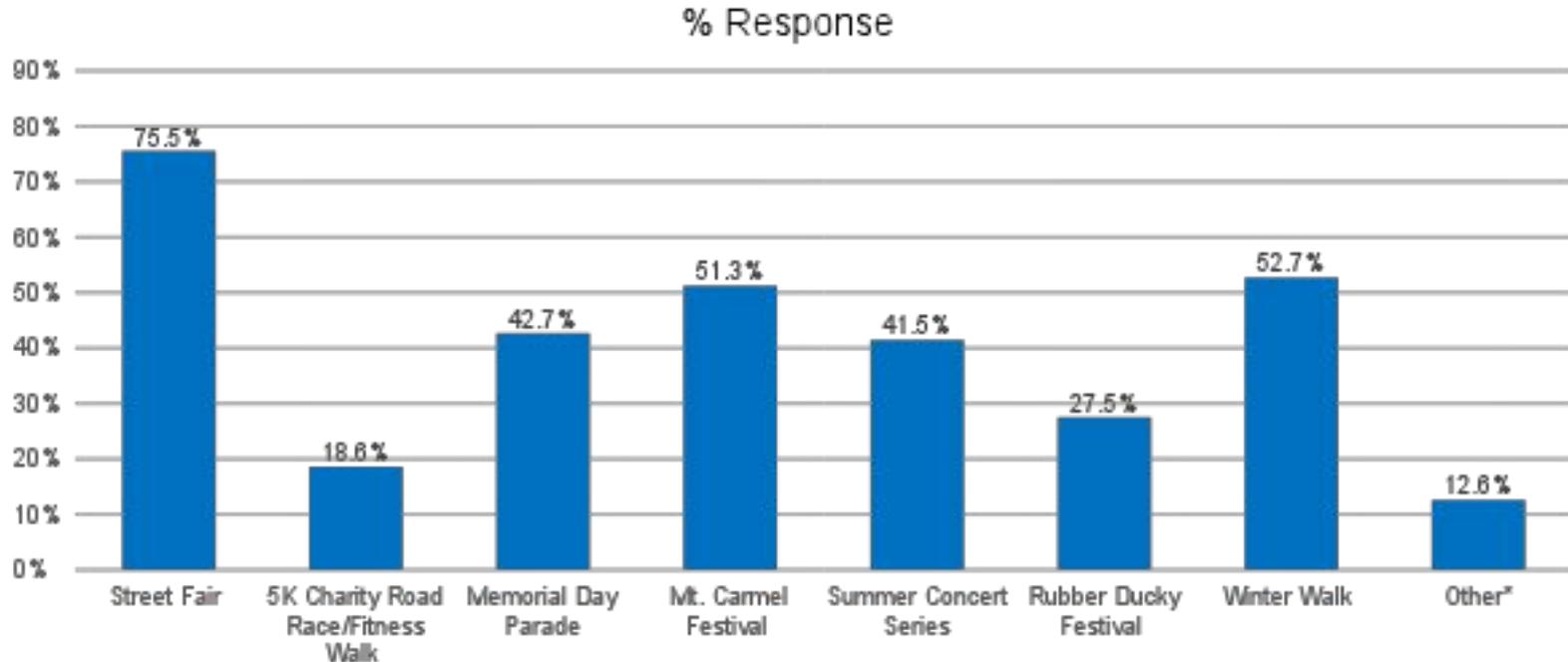
Answered: 472 Skipped: 0



Number of Responses	87	67	115	192	11
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Q2: Which event or events have you attended over the past two years?

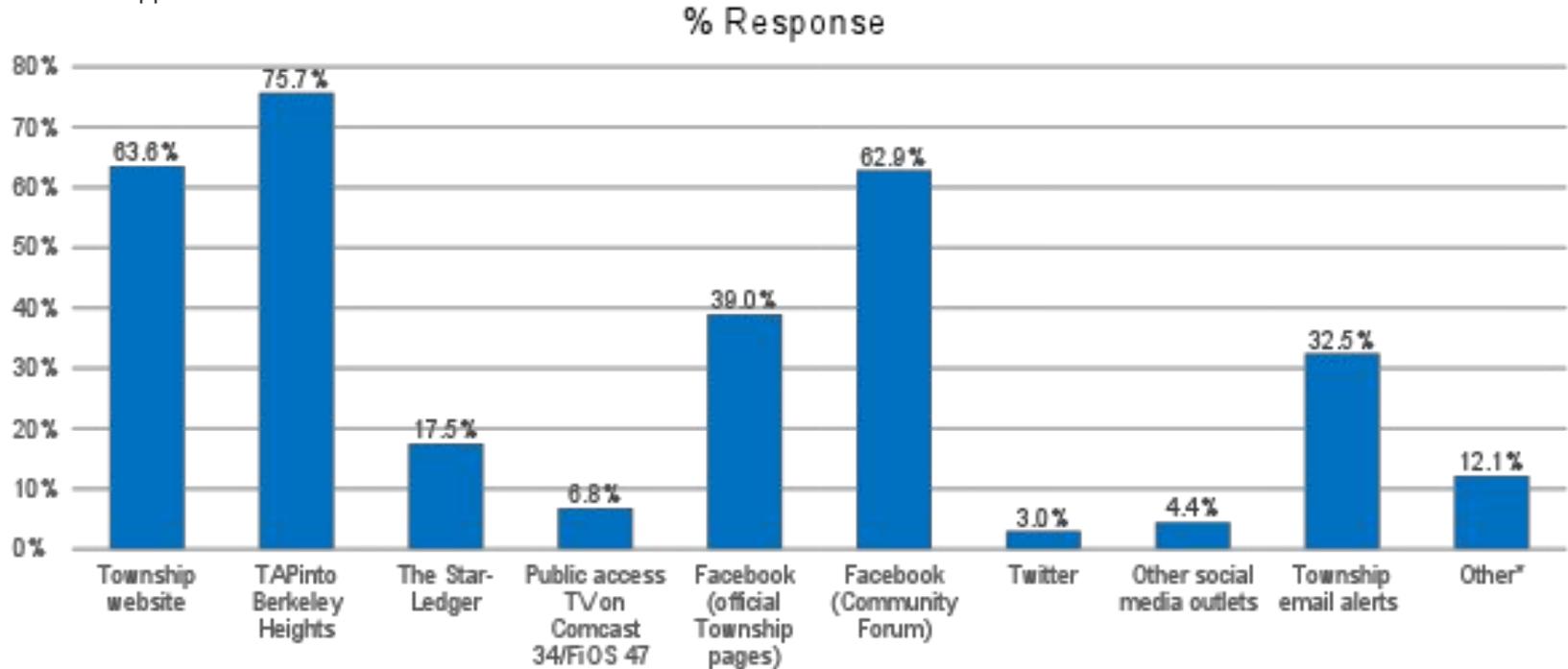
Answered: 429 Skipped: 43



Number of Responses	324	80	183	220	178	118	226	54

Q3: What resource(s) do you use for Township information?

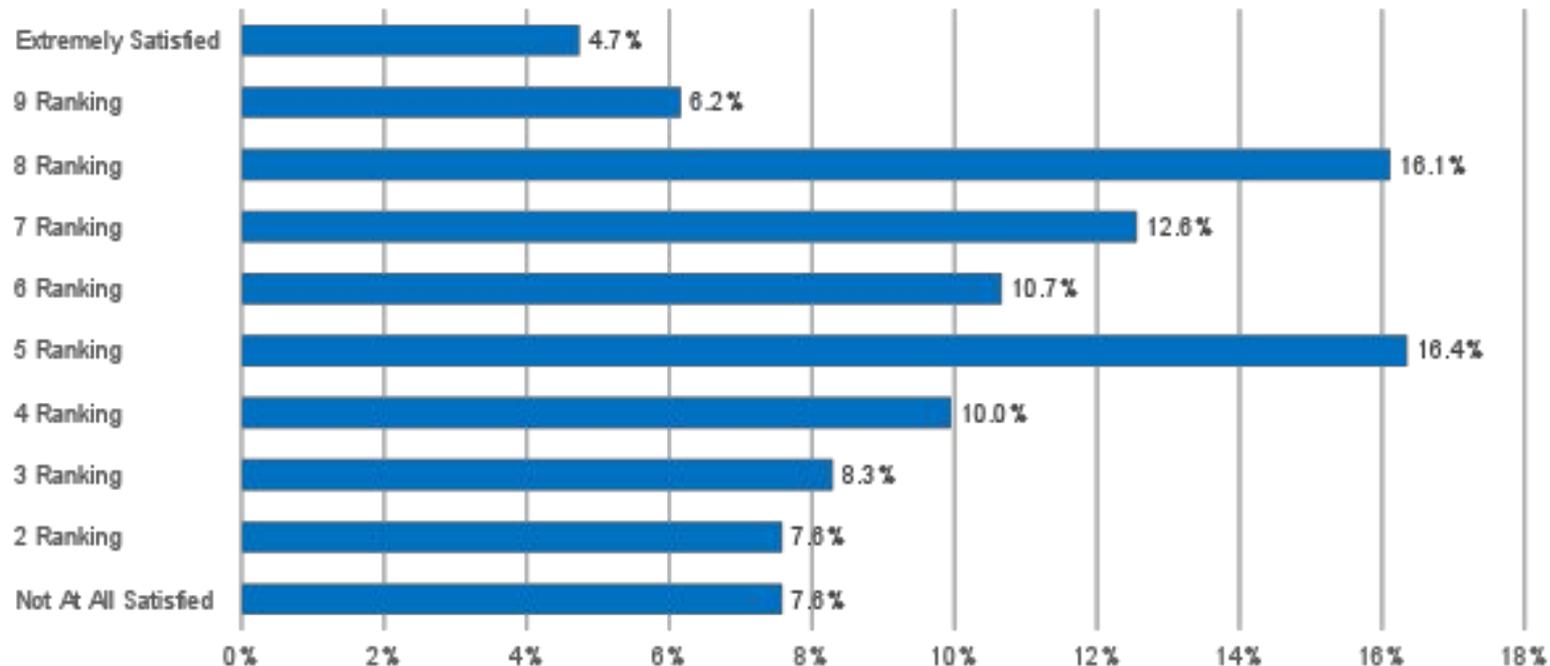
Answered: 428 Skipped: 44



Number of Responses	272	324	75	29	167	269	13	19	139	52
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Q4: On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest), rate the Township's overall ability to communicate with local community members.

Answered: 422 Skipped: 50

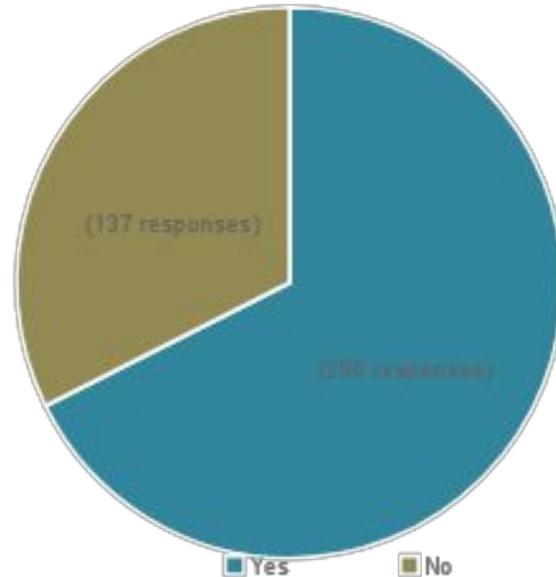


Weighted Average Ranking: 5.53

Q5: Were you aware of the Township website redesign in October 2016?

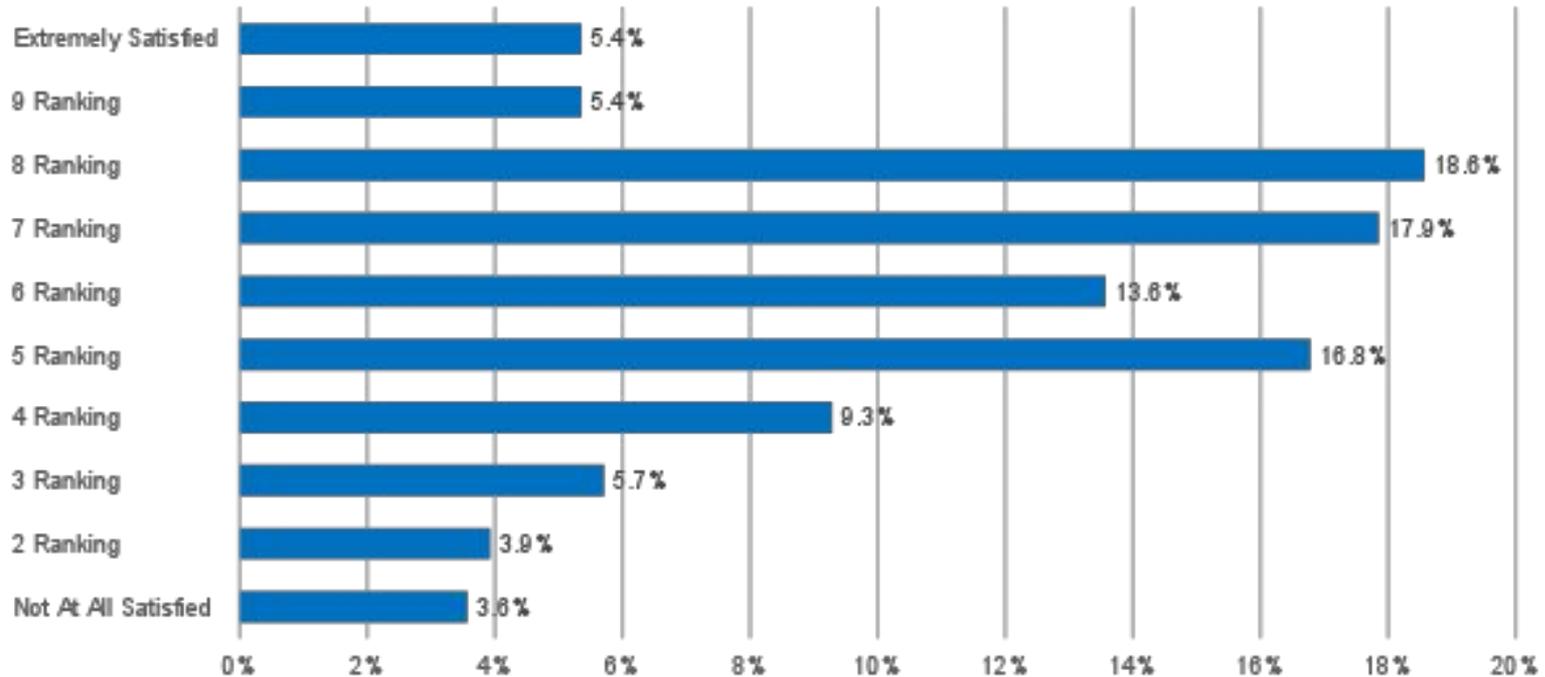
Answered: 423 Skipped: 49

% Response



Q6: On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest), rate the redesign of the Township's website launched in October 2016.

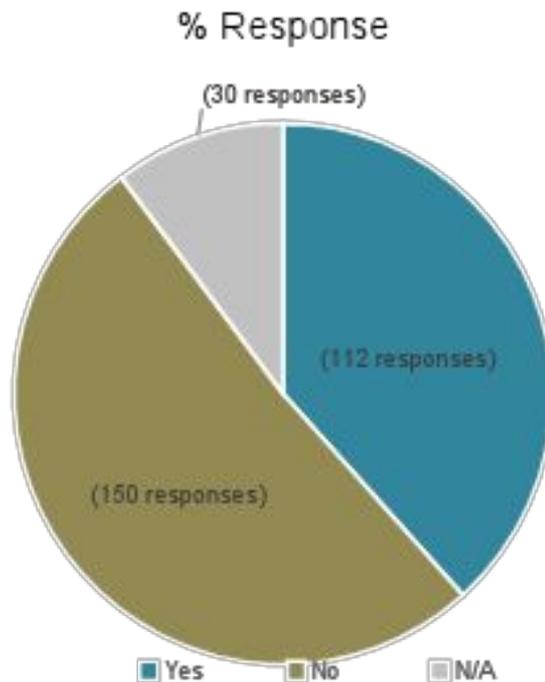
Answered: 280 Skipped: 192



Weighted Average Ranking: 6.06

Q7: Is there anything missing from the Township website that you would like to see added?

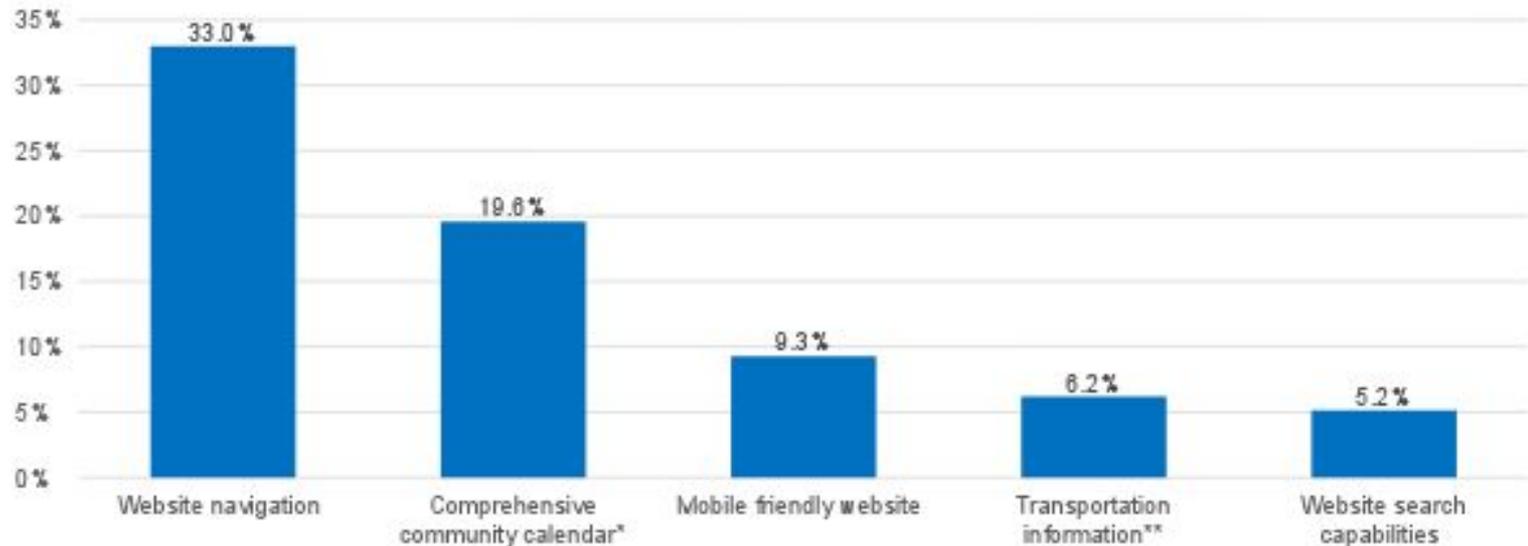
Answered: 292 Skipped: 180



Q7: Is there anything missing from the Township website that you would like to see added? (continued)

Answered: 292 Skipped: 180

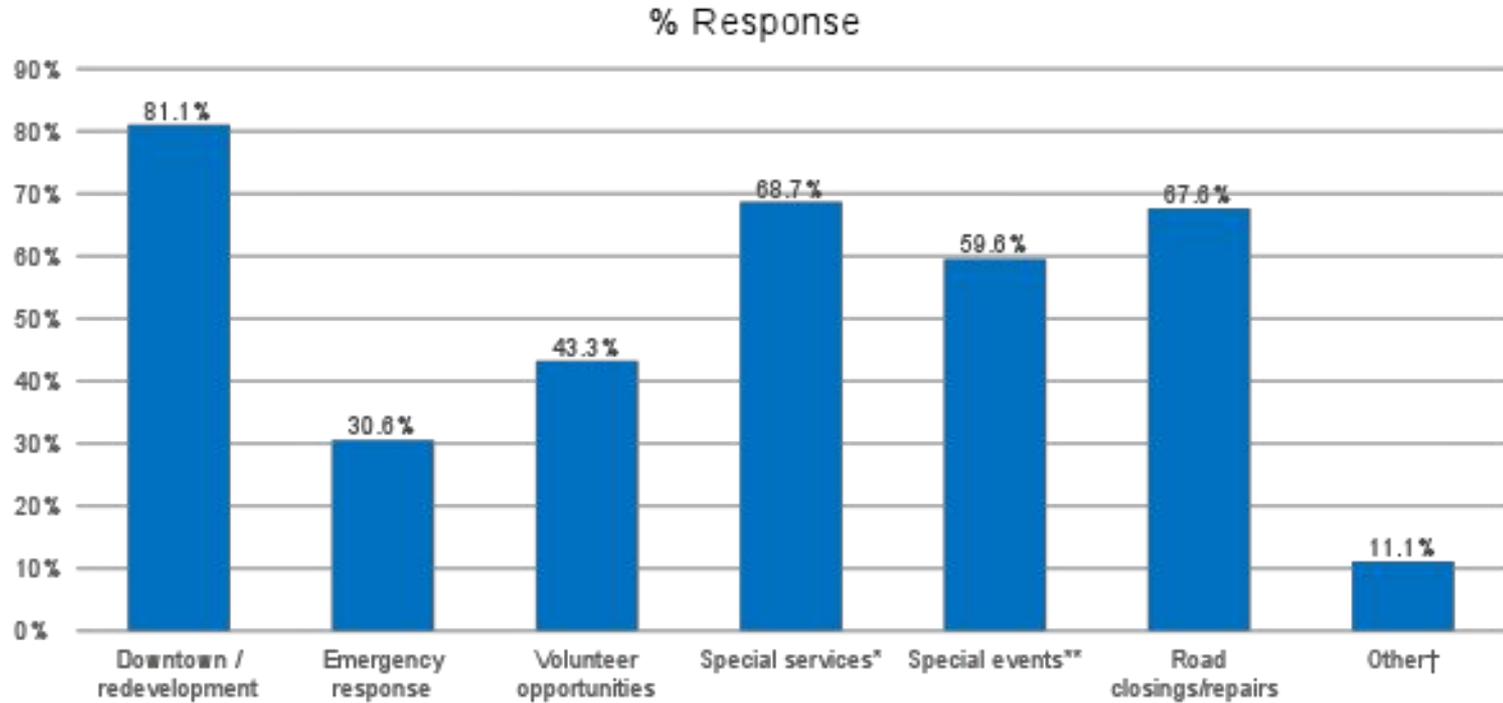
Comments (97 in total) suggesting an addition or enhancement to the Township website:



Number of Responses	32	19	9	6	5
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Q8: Which of the following topic(s) would you like more information on?

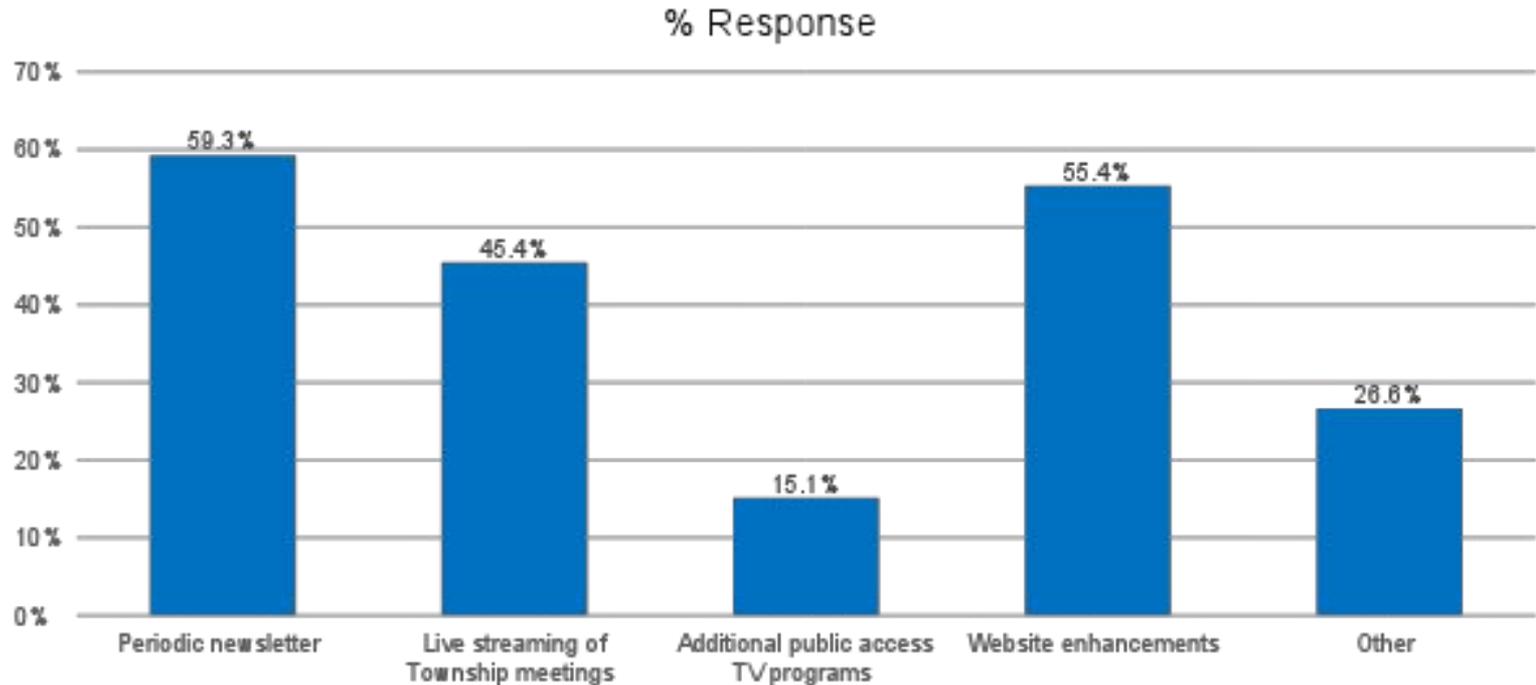
Answered: 386 Skipped: 86



Number of Responses	313	118	167	265	230	261	43

Q9: How can the Township better communicate with community members?

Answered: 383 Skipped: 89

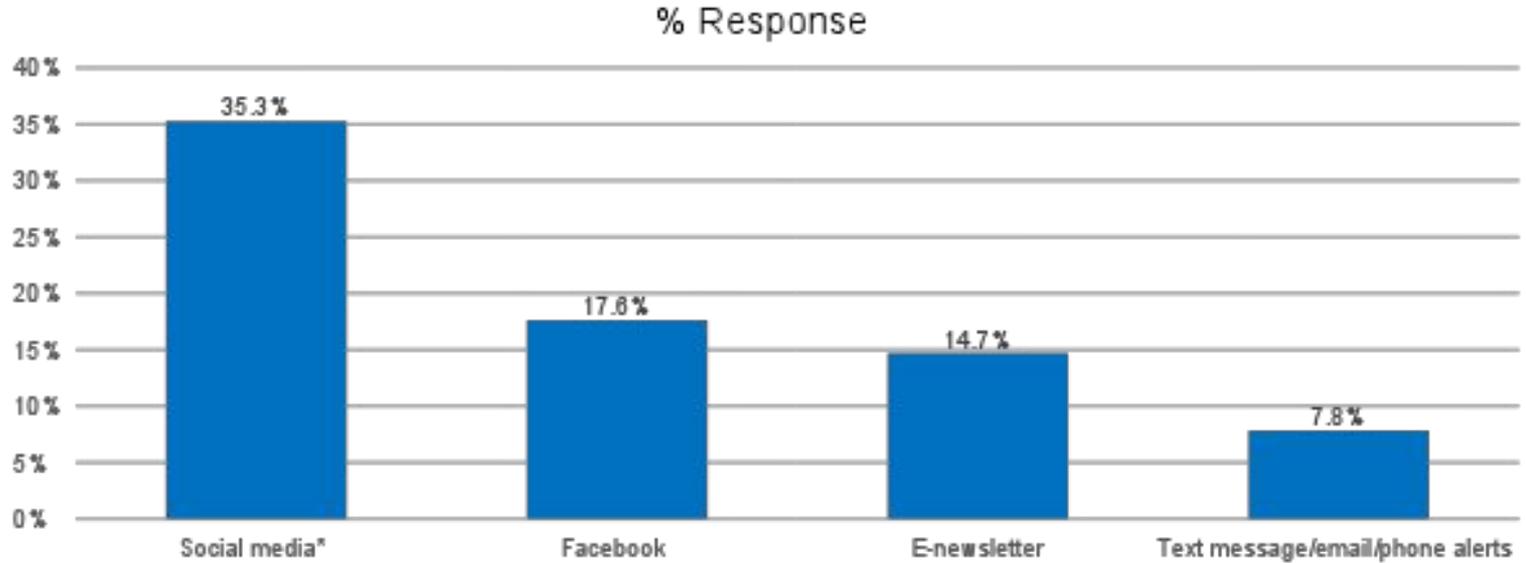


Number of Responses	227	174	58	212	102

Q9: How can the Township better communicate with community members? (continued)

Answered: 383 Skipped: 89

Comments (102 in total) noting other methods to enhance Township communications:



Number of Responses	36	18	15	8
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Q10: Please provide any other comments/suggestions.

Answered: 146 Skipped: 326 (Sample commentary included below)

Website:

- The website needs to be greatly overhauled. Please hire a professional company to do this. Look at other township and country websites across the country and not just in NJ for ideas.
- The Website is really ugly and old-looking. Looks like it was designed in 1999.
- Have an actively monitored help/question email.
- Easier to navigate website that is more user friendly.
- A website that DOESN'T look like it's from 1998, and is also responsive (mobile site design vs desktop site) also getting back to people who email or call and leave messages, particularly in a timely manner
- A news update on the website would be nice
- The website needs a mobile version
- need a cleaner web site
- The website is clumsy and not very friendly on the phone
- With regard to the redesigned website, I think it provides a lot of valuable information however the redesign is not very easy to navigate and does look as nice as the previous website's design.
- I feel as though the website needs a more modern and updated look.
- Kindly update all stale information in the township website.
- If website is easy to use easy to find info, than that can be the central source of info

Alerts:

- Opt in texting like Union County
- optional text message alert for in-town road closing/detours, pinch points on a daily basis. This would make the morning routine less stressful in getting to the train station, school, meetings or work.
- Use Nixel alerts for road closures, etc
- When 7-11 was robbed, why didn't a robocall go out to alert people to lock doors and put on outside lights?
- More timely phone communications via phone alert announcements

Q10: Please provide any other comments/suggestions. (continued)

Answered: 146 Skipped: 326 (Sample commentary included below)

Social media:

- Someone should be regularly updating (daily) the FB page and consider a twitter fees
- FB is a great way to communicate with residents. As we have seen, you have to provide the accurate information or all hell will break loose. The more people that have FB and like township page the better!
- More information posted on social media
- For better or worse, I get a lot of my town info from the various Facebook community forums. It is convenient. However, it is also really sad to see how petty and divisive parts of the community can be. It would be nice if the official town Facebook page could be an informative, nonpartisan alternative. But this means someone would have to push out info more than once in a blue moon.
- Facebook is not an official means for communications but should be used periodically as people use it as a news source. New Providence & Summit are starting to do this well, would be a good model to use.
- Facebook could be used much better. Post highlights of townhall meetings
- Send more tweets

General positive feedback:

- Happy with most everything.
- I have no problems at all with township communication.
- It's a hard job! You are doing well.
- Keep doing what you are doing...getting info out before detractors can make things up will be the best way to combat those select few who seem not to understand BH's traditional values
- Keep up the good efforts
- Thanks for your efforts!
- Thank you for your time dedicated to this project. Improved communications is a big undertaking during such a busy time in town. Not sure if the permit dept is under your umbrella of influence at all but since becoming a resident that has continued to be my biggest issue. Best of luck and thank you.

Q10: Please provide any other comments/suggestions. (continued)

Answered: 146 Skipped: 326 (Sample commentary included below)

General Township-related communications, engagement, responsiveness:

- Most residents (including business owners) do not even know the names of the Mayor, Council or administrative officials, let alone have heard from them. Much more needs to be done to engage the community in a proactive, open-ended fashion, not just on "big" issues like redevelopment. Otherwise the vacuum of information will continue to be filled by inaccurate or, even worse, deliberately false and malicious stories and statements. Only the Township has the ability to do this.
- I have never seen or met a township committee person in 20 years. As a township committee member and mayor of another NJ township several years ago I made it a practice to try to visit with many many people in the township
- I have tried to contact township employees, especially the DPW, and found they don't answer the phone and their phone mailboxes are always full. This to is communications
- Have the employees actually read their emails and listen to their phone messages. Too many times I've tried to contact people, especially in the DWP, who don't answer their phones and I can't leave a message because they're in boxes are full. This is a major problem with the DWP staff!
- Improving but could be better Especially from public works department that seems to be isolated from public and public opinion
- I don't feel as though the town communicates well at all. From my perspective, the town puts forth a "we know what's best for you" attitude, and if you don't like it, leave. Very disheartening.
- Already stated above. Tired of finding out information after it has been in the works for months! Town needs to be more transparent! No matter how much they say they are trying- another change is coming and has been planned and decided before towns people are even aware!
- Its one thing to communicate, its another thing to listen to what we are saying. We don't hear about a lot of things until after the fact. Perhaps a Town schedule of projects should be posted.
- Would like to hear about events prior to them happening. Not on Facebook
- In Sea Girt NJ where I am a seasonal resident, the Township Administrator sends out a monthly newsletter which highlights all pertinent information in a timely manner. The email system is also used to alert residents to road closings, events etc. Emergency information is delivered via text and or phone. I have emailed the mayor and other members of the Town council and have never gotten a response. That shows a total disregard for the residents of this town. Since I have lived here for 30 years, I can honestly say that previous town leaders were much more responsive.
- Town officials should not engage with the trolls online, which only gives these people a platform and brings our community negative press. The trolls can show up at town hall. Personally, townspeople should also be responsible for looking for info. It seems that many people want info served on a platter.
- I think some of the town transactions need to be better spelled out for residents.
- there are a lot of rumors that go around this town about what is happening and why, and if there was more direct communication about what is actually happening and the context for the various decisions being made, it might cut down on the random speculation of some residents.
- See previous comments but i think Berkeley heights needs to change its communication to a push vs pull system. The town should be "pushing" communication out versus the residents having to "pull" it from somewhere

Q10: Please provide any other comments/suggestions. (continued)

Answered: 146 Skipped: 326 (Sample commentary included below)

Town council:

- TC updates on the township website as well as detailed updates of what's being discussed in the TC meetings and the twshp plans for the town. This can be done by weekly updates on the twshp website or posting those updates on the local Facebook forums.
- I think it is very important to livestream the TC meetings and be able to watch them after the fact.
- Tell the story and vision of the town from the TC perspective. Clarity in vision will minimize disruptions in meetings.
- Agenda for meetings to be shared in detail
- Ability for residents to comment on township council vote issues ahead of time- via web link, push email with a link and a set forum (coffee at meeting hall - every other sat am) with a council member.
- It's nice to get meeting minutes but there is little detail. Video of meetings should be on town website. Most imp't is minutes should be released from executive meetings where the council makes rulings/decisions that impact the residents they serve.
- The counsel needs to communicate their agenda in a broader scope so that residents who don't go to town meetings can be informed. There are a lot of residents who actually don't know the current events of the township or agendas, whether it be ignorance of the resources or just a lack of interest. These residents still complain of certain things that the counsel has decided on even though they are not completely informed. I suggest that the township do a mass mailing to all residents and businesses so that they can be informed on certain things like road closures and construction.

Redevelopment:

- More info on new businesses and plans for downtown
- Where are the town meeting minutes posted or available to the public after the meeting is over so those of us who miss because of work or other can brief ourselves. Another thing, why are we allowing all of these condos and other development into this town? For decades, yes, decades, the town fathers kept this a nice quiet location by restricting development of all of these townhouses and such. You are allowing this rural town to morph into a Millburn or something worse.
- There certainly is some kind of communication bubble- the "insiders" might support decisions but a lot of "outsiders" don't even know about those decisions. I had family that was going to move into the town but they found the possible Debt the town may carry later on and turned away. If this, for instance, was a worthy solution why didn't the town find the means to communicate the reasoning behind it, risks involved and if the benefit outweighs it? Those details would be nice.
- Life long resident since 1929. Current Council is great. M. Bussiculo is good administrator and comes to senior meetings. Happy to see the new municipal complex is oving ahead. As a lifelong resident, my concern is the lack of care given to the buildings over the years. I hope a plan is in place to care and clean complex using DPW staff. While no one likes to see more condos, etcl, pleased to see Twp. is working to make sure builder stay with Twp. design. Mr. Faecher gives a great report and I am happy he is involved.

Q10: Please provide any other comments/suggestions. (continued)

Answered: 146 Skipped: 326 (Sample commentary included below)

Multi-related comments/suggestions:

- Need more advance notice of council agenda and minutes Road closures
- Easier Access to town hall recordings/live streams. More Facebook interaction.
- I do not think the TC has polled the public enough regarding the new municipal complex. Increasing the taxes in this town will not help with home sales/pricing. BH has not rebounded in home prices like the surrounding communities. We need to fix the broken downtown and lack of parking for commuters. We have a wonderful safe community with awesome schools we should be attracting home buyers not pushing them away based on the cost to live here.
- instead of trying to find it in minutes the website and periodical can be more current about what is planned for the town and keep us updated Signage issue (what is going on with that paper sign of all the establishments in front of Berkeley Shopping Center, new municipal complex status and updates on how plans are coming along
- Participate in conversations on social media to provide accurate information to residents, remove the 3 minute timer during council meetings (it is rude and ineffective when residents cannot express their concerns/questions in the allotted time), and stop spending taxpayer dollars to find ways to bypass the public voice!
- I'm most concerned with the fact that so many businesses and new building programs are approved without enough parking. I also do not like the new buildings and businesses on Springfield Ave. that are built right on the sidewalk. I feel that the town should take an interest in a small town newspaper for those of us who do not have a computer. We are in the dark about a lot of things.

Other:

- People are busy and preoccupied. Website has great info but not sure enough people know enough about it. Any way to inform people and have them sign up for e-news would probably get more in the loop. Facebook is great too for getting info in front of people - but not everyone is on Facebook.
- Bring in a Farmers market to downtown
- We need to remember that many citizens who are 50+ do not use a computer for news
- Already stated thoughts on improving communications. Also, when will the electronic bulletin board be functional? Seems its taking longer than necessary.
- do not spending money on videos: such as mayor's roundtable, or filming winter walk or filming 5k races.
- Additional volunteer opportunities for our High School students
- Remember: Even if there were 100 viable town "channels/mediums" of communication, some people will still have no idea what is going on and point blame.
- More timely information: weather, roads, crime?
- A digital newsletter would be helpful.

Survey Results – Actions to Consider

Over the following months, the BHCC will work with the Township Council and Township Administrator to evaluate, prioritize, and determine next steps based on the valuable feedback collected from the survey. Initial takeaways include the following:

1. Enhance website to create a more user-friendly experience while serving as a comprehensive “go to” source for information.
 - Areas in need of improvement include website navigation, search capabilities, mobile readiness, the inclusion of streaming videos and more timely content with frequent updates, particularly related to special events/services.
 - Modifying the website and taking steps to drive more traffic may require the assistance of a higher level third-party professional services firm.
2. Ensure a balance in the different channels used to communicate as one size does not fit all.
 - Although there is demand for greater use of digital communications, a segment of the population continues to rely on more traditional outlets such as print communications.
 - The creation of a potential e-newsletter, for example, would likely need to be complemented by the availability/distribution of a hard copy edition.
3. Increase overall focus on “push” communication strategies as opposed to “pull” strategies.
 - Townships alerts, for example, via email, text, and telephone are both timely and convenient.
 - Registration for all of the various alerts should be streamlined on the Township website.
4. Expand social media presence.
 - Improve Township Facebook pages to help draw more interest/traffic and consider launching an official Berkeley Heights account on Twitter.
 - Greater utilization of social media would require the development of policies to instill best practices and ensure regulatory compliance.
 - Social media can also be used holistically to leverage other communication platforms, including the Township website.
5. Promote the benefits/rationale for each of the various redevelopment initiatives in a more clear and concise manner.
 - Confusion remains over the details for each initiative and related need/requirement, historical timeline of events and next steps, and the financial/economic impact on the Township, etc.
6. Provide additional resources to meet the demand for more timely and effective communications across multiple channels.
 - Given the inherent limitations of an all-volunteer committee, the Township should explore the possibility of sharing with a nearby town a communications professional to manage all Township-related communication activities.
7. Employ measures to ensure timely responses to all incoming inquiries and remain engaged with local community members.
 - Be sure to address all incoming calls/emails, for example, as part of the Township’s commitment to responsive communications.

Berkeley Heights "Be Heard" 2017 Communications Survey



Summary of Results