

## **Confidence in the San Antonio, Texas City Council**

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### **Issue**

The issue of how much confidence citizens have in the San Antonio City Council has been brought to the forefront of the news recently with arrest of two City Council members for bribery. If a large percentage of the citizenry lacks confidence in the city council, it is likely that voters would oppose any referendums put forth by the council members. Therefore, it is important to attempt to understand any changes in the confidence levels held by San Antonians.

### **Sample Information**

Comparative data on confidence in the city council are from annual telephone surveys of Bexar County residents. The questions about confidence in the city council were included in the surveys completed during Fall semesters of 1996, 1997, 1998, 2001 and 2002. The primary analyses focus on the most recent data collected October 5-14, 2002. The population sample for this survey comprised 457 people in the Bexar County area. The standard error of the entire sample is +/- 4.6 percent with a 95 percent confidence level. Survey results were weighted by sex and race/ethnicity according to 2000 Census data for Bexar County. The annual San Antonio Survey is a probability study conducted by telephone to a stratified random sample of adults with telephones. Questions are designed to measure San Antonians' attitudes about and perceptions regarding a variety of contemporary issues. Survey data were collected through UTSA's Hispanic Research Center/Metropolitan Research and Policy Institute and the Research Lab.

## Analysis

Respondents were asked to consider several governmental institutions, including the city council, then they were asked, "As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a "great deal of confidence," "only some confidence," or "hardly any confidence at all in them?"

**Table 1: Confidence in City Council Over Time**

	1996	1997	1998	2001		2002
<b>GREAT DEAL</b>	14.3	14.2	21	23.5		<b>13.9</b>
<b>SOME</b>	51.9	48.9	59.3	51.6		<b>47.6</b>
<b>HARDLY ANY</b>	26.7	25.9	14	16.8		<b>29.7</b>
<b>DK/NA</b>	7.1	11.1	5.7	8.2		<b>8.8</b>
<b>N=</b>	651	746	749	500		<b>457</b>

Survey data indicate that "confidence towards city council" has varied over time (see Table 1). Over the five years of survey data, a "great deal" of confidence in the city council steadily increased from one in seven in 1996 to nearly one in four in 2001, then dropped back to one in seven in 2002. During this period of time, a majority of San Antonians consistently expressed only "some" confidence in the city council (53.1% based on weighted average), while one in five (21% based on weighted average) expressed "hardly any" confidence. In 2002, for the first time, those stating they had "some confidence in the city council" dropped below 50% (47.6%) and those stating they had "hardly any confidence" reached an all time high of (29.7%).<sup>1</sup>

It is highly likely that the arrests of two city council members for bribery impacted the findings in 2002. Because we gathered some of the survey data prior to the arrests and the rest after the arrests, we are able to assess the probable impact of the arrests on responses. Table 2 indicates a large increase in the proportion of

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<sup>1</sup> Including the 2002 data changes the weighted averages from above slightly. A majority of all time periods still express "some confidence" (52.3% based on weighted average), while the percent expressing "hardly any confidence" increases slightly (22.3% based on weighted average).

individuals indicating they had “hardly any confidence” from 15% before the arrests to 38.4% after the arrests. Similarly the proportion saying they had “some confidence” dropped from 68% before the arrests to 47.1% after the arrests. The relationship is strong (Cramer’s  $V=.216$ ;  $\text{Gamma}=.361$ ) and statistically significant.

	<b>Before Arrests</b>	<b>After Arrests</b>
<b>Great deal</b>	16.9%	14.4%
<b>Some</b>	68.0%	47.1%
<b>Hardly any</b>	15.0%	38.4%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%
N	98	308
p=.000	V=.216; gamma=.361	Chi sq = 18.945; df=2

Examining “confidence in city council” over time revealed no statistically significant difference among the three principal ethnic groups in surveys conducted in 1996, 1998 or 2001. Only in the 1997<sup>3</sup> and again in the 2002 surveys were significant but weak differences found based on ethnicity.<sup>4</sup>

We also examined the impact of the arrests on the confidence levels of different race/ethnic groups, age groups and income groups. The results for confidence in institutions by race and ethnicity shifted from a weak (Cramer’s  $V = .103$ ), nonsignificant one to a moderate (Cramer’s  $V = .173$ ) and statistically significant relationship after the arrests. As shown in Tables 3 and 4, the impact of the arrests was

<sup>2</sup> Because the percent in the don’t know categories were fairly consistent , they were removed from the analysis to allow the use of a higher order correlation coefficient.

<sup>3</sup> In 1997, though weakly associated (Cramer’s  $V=.125$ ), over one-third (35%) of the Anglo respondents expressed “*hardly any*” confidence in the city council, while slightly over one in five (21%) of the Mexican American and over one in four (26%) of the African American respondents expressed similar lack of confidence levels.

<sup>4</sup> In 2002, again results show a low association (Cramer’s  $V = .132$ ), with 41.2% of Anglo respondents, 29.2% of Mexican Americans and 14.2% of African Americans stating they had “hardly any confidence in the city council.”

strongest for Anglos with an increase from 15.5% reporting “hardly any confidence” prior to the arrests to 49.6% after the arrests. Among Mexican American respondents the increase was from 14.3% before the arrests to 34.9% reporting “hardly any confidence” after the arrests. While the percentage of those stating “hardly any confidence” among African Americans decreased from 26.1% before the arrests to 11.3% after the arrests, there were very few (6) respondents surveyed prior to the arrests. Therefore the percentages for this group should be used with caution.

<b>Before the Arrests of Two Council Members</b>			
	<b>White/Anglo</b>	<b>Mex. Am./Hispanic</b>	<b>Black/Af. Am.</b>
<b>Great deal</b>	14.50%	20.40%	0.00%
<b>Some</b>	70.00%	65.30%	73.90%
<b>Hardly any</b>	15.50%	14.30%	26.10%
<b>Total</b>	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
<b>N</b>	38	52	6
<b>p=.722</b>	<b>V=.104</b>	<b>Chi sq. = 2.073, df=4</b>	

<b>After the Arrests of Two Council Members</b>			
	<b>White/Anglo</b>	<b>Mex. Am./Hispanic</b>	<b>Black/Af. Am.</b>
<b>Great deal</b>	7.9%	17.6%	26.8%
<b>Some</b>	42.5%	47.6%	61.9%
<b>Hardly any</b>	49.6%	34.9%	11.3%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>N</b>	117	153	25
<b>p=.001</b>	<b>V=.173</b>	<b>Chi sq.=17.706, df=4</b>	

We found similar increases in those stating they had “hardly any confidence in the city council” among all age groups and income groups (see Tables 5 and 6). Individuals in the two middle age groups (30-44 and 45-64 years old) in particular showed a substantial increase in the percentage reporting hardly any confidence. For those 33-44 years old, the percent increased from 6% to 40.3% and for those aged 45-64 the percent increased from 19.6% to 49%. Among the youngest group (18-29) the increase was from 7.4% stating “hardly any confidence” before the arrests to 23.5% after the arrests. Among those 65 and older the increase in those expressing “hardly any confidence” was from 24.4% before the arrests to 36.5% afterwards. We found

<b>Table 5: Confidence in City Council by Age Groups</b>				
<b>Before the Arrests of Two Council Members</b>				
	<b>18-29</b>	<b>30-44</b>	<b>45-64</b>	<b>65+</b>
<b>Great deal</b>	7.4%	21.0%	18.0%	17.5%
<b>Some</b>	85.1%	73.0%	62.4%	58.1%
<b>Hardly any</b>	7.4%	6.0%	19.6%	24.4%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>N</b>	16	27	30	25
<b>P=.381</b>	V=.180; Gamma = .225 Chi sq = 6.387; df = 6			

<b>Table 6: Confidence in City Council by Age Groups</b>				
<b>After the Arrests of Two Council Members</b>				
	<b>18-29</b>	<b>30-44</b>	<b>45-64</b>	<b>65+</b>
<b>Great deal</b>	13.0%	15.4%	15.2%	12.0%
<b>Some</b>	63.5%	44.3%	35.8%	51.5%
<b>Hardly any</b>	23.5%	40.3%	49.0%	36.5%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>N</b>	58	93	88	61
<b>p=.051</b>	V=.145; Gamma = .115 Chi sq = 12.531; df=6			

<b>Table 7: Confidence in City Council by Income Groups</b>				
<b>Before the Arrests of Two Council Members</b>				
	<b>\$0-25K</b>	<b>\$26-40k</b>	<b>\$41-65k</b>	<b>\$66 +</b>
<b>Great deal</b>	20.4%	18.3%	28.0%	15.4%
<b>Some</b>	73.0%	64.8%	61.1%	68.2%
<b>Hardly any</b>	6.5%	16.9%	10.9%	16.4%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>N</b>	19	22	15	17
<b>P=.921</b>	V=.116; Gamma = -.076 Chi sq=1.983; df=6			

<b>Table 8: Confidence in City Council by Income Groups</b>				
<b>After the Arrests of Two Council Members</b>				
	<b>\$0-25K</b>	<b>\$26-40k</b>	<b>\$41-65k</b>	<b>\$66 +</b>
<b>Great deal</b>	26.7%	12.9%	12.3%	3.0%
<b>Some</b>	39.2%	56.2%	46.6%	40.1%
<b>Hardly any</b>	34.1%	30.9%	41.2%	56.8%
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>N</b>	65	60	59	55
<b>p=.002</b>	V=.206; Gamma = .160 Chi sq=20.283; df=6			

similar increases among all income groups.

The patterns persist across different geographic areas of the city (see Tables 9 and 10). For example, 16.7% of individuals residing inside Loop 410 stated they had hardly any confidence prior to the arrests, while 37.5% reported hardly any confidence after the arrests. For respondents living outside Loop 410 those reporting hardly any confidence jumped from 11.8% before the arrests to 41.3% after the arrests. Before the arrests, those residing on the Northside were slightly more likely to say they had some confidence in the council (69.8%) compared to those living on the Southside (66.7%). Those living on the Southside were less likely to say they had hardly any confidence (7.4%) compared to those living on the Northside (19%). After the arrests, the percent of respondents saying they had hardly any confidence jumped considerably to 33.3%. For those living on the Northside, the percent stating hardly any confidence

jumped to 39.7%. The relationship based on geography was strong (although not statistically significant) before the arrests with Southsiders stating stronger support for the council. After the arrests the relationship is much less strong (and statistically significant) indicating that confidence in the city council had eroded among both Northsiders and Southsiders.

<i>Before Arrests</i>	Northside	Southside	<i>After Arrests</i>	Northside	Southside
<b>Great deal</b>	11.1%	25.9%	<b>Great deal</b>	8.1%	28.8%
<b>Some</b>	69.8%	66.7%	<b>Some</b>	52.2%	37.9%
<b>Hardly any</b>	19.0%	7.4%	<b>Hardly any</b>	39.7%	33.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	Total	100.0%	100.0%
N	63	27	N	209	66
P=.114	Chi sq = 4.341; df=2	Cramer's V=.220; Gamma =-.455	p=.000	Chi sq = 18.977 df=2	Cramer's V=.263 Gamma =-.283

As shown in Table 10, results were similar when comparing different geographic quadrants of the city. In all areas – the South West, North West, South East and North East areas of San Antonio we see dramatic decreases in those saying they have “some confidence in the city council” and dramatic increases in those saying they have “hardly any confidence.

<i>Before Arrests</i>	South West	South East	North West	North East	<i>After Arrests</i>	South West	South East	North West	North East
<b>Great deal</b>	31.3%	18.2%	8.8%	13.8%	<b>Great deal</b>	27.5%	30.8%	8.8%	7.4%
<b>Some</b>	68.8%	63.6%	73.5%	65.5%	<b>Some</b>	40.0%	34.6%	56.1%	47.4%
<b>Hardly any</b>	0.0%	18.2%	17.6%	20.7%	<b>Hardly any</b>	32.5%	34.6%	35.1%	45.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N	16	11	34	29	N	40	26	114	95
p=.325	Chi sq=6.524; df=6	Cramer's V=.197			p=.001	Chi sq= 21.52; df=6	Cramer's V=.198		

## **Conclusion**

Our results indicate that the arrests had a substantial impact on the confidence level various constituencies have in the city council. Among Anglos, Mexican Americans all age groups and all income groups we saw substantial increases in the percentages reporting “hardly any confidence” in the city council after the arrests of the two council members. These findings were also consistent across political party and education levels as well as across different geographic areas of the city. In as much as the level of confidence may affect voters’ perspectives on referendums brought to the table by the city council, issues considered important by community leaders may find little support among voters in the next election.