



factsheet

No 11

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

As part of its Sea-Tac/Communities Plan, the Port of Seattle and King County commissioned a survey conducted by Battelle Memorial Institute in the summer of 1973 to assess the social impact of the airport on the surrounding community. This random sample survey was based on face-to-face, half-hour interviews with 302 residents of the Highline area in which Sea-Tac is located, and 98 residents in Shoreline, which is outside the Sea-Tac noise zone. In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with 316 residents throughout King County. The Highline sample was further divided into residents of a High Noise Zone (HNZ) with Noise Exposure Forecast levels of 35 or more, a Medium Noise Zone (MNZ) with 25-35 Noise Exposure Forecast levels, and a Low Noise Zone (LNZ) with Noise Exposure Forecast levels of 24 or less. These areas were determined by the 1973 Noise Exposure Forecast (NEF) curves as presented in the 6-month noise report.

Major Findings

1. Community Problems. A portion of the respondents in Highline (22.7 percent) considered airplane noise as the most disliked feature of their community, and a partly overlapping 19.7 percent considered it the community's single most serious problem. (This compares with 1.1 percent in Shoreline and 2.9 percent in the King County sample.) The noise problem within Highline is, however, relatively localized. It was considered the most serious problem by 43.1 percent in the HNZ, by 22.6 percent in the MNZ, and by only 7.8 percent in the LNZ, within the Highline area.
2. Desirability of living near Sea-Tac. A greater percentage of Highline residents (60.9 percent, as compared with 47.7 percent in Shoreline and 51.4 percent County-wide) would move out of their present neighborhood if they could find equivalent housing elsewhere. This is also highly related to noise level in the Highline area: 74.0 percent in the HNZ stated that they would want to move, 67.0 percent in the MNZ, and 51.2 percent in LNZ stated that they would want to move.
3. Effects of Noise. In Highline, 49.4 percent of the residents in our sample, 68.4 percent of those in Shoreline, and 62.9 percent in the King County sample said that they were not

bothered by noise, nor that they considered it a serious problem. Airplanes are considered the major noise source in the Highline area (79.1 percent), while only one person mentioned airplanes and two mentioned helicopters as the major noise source in Shoreline.

It is of interest to note, however, that those who state that noise affects their health, sleep, or psychological well-being report similar effects regardless of their area's actual noise level. Thus, harmful physical or mental consequences are ascribed to noise by 49.7 percent of Highline respondents, 51.7 percent in Shoreline, and 57.6 percent in the County sample. In other words, a larger proportion of residents in noise impacted areas complain about noise. However, the effects on those who do complain about noise appear, at least at the level of the survey responses, to be unrelated to whether the resident lives in an area highly impacted by noise, or in an area like Shoreline in which the noise level is comparatively low.

Observational data collected in Highline and Shoreline suggest, in fact, that the use of backyards and outdoor activities do not differ markedly in these two areas.

These findings suggest that Highline residents are more aware of a noise problem but that many do not allow it to interfere with their daily lives.

4. Attitudes toward the Environment. While Highline residents attribute somewhat less importance to the need for low taxes in dealing with environmental problems than do Shoreline residents, the differences between the three samples on questions concerned with environmental problems were slight.
5. Public Image of the Port of Seattle. The majority of the Highline residents (77.2 percent) felt that the Port fulfilled its functions very well or moderately well; 8.4 percent thought it did not well or poorly. This compares with 76.8 percent of Shoreline and 71.3 percent of the County-wide sample who felt the Port fulfilled its functions very well or moderately well, and 3.0 percent and 3.2 percent respectively who considered the Port as doing a poor or moderately poor job. In the HNZ, 66.0 percent gave the Port high marks (vs. 75.2 percent in the MNZ and 83.1 percent in the LNZ), while 12.0 percent in HNZ, and 7.7 percent in the MNZ, and 6.7 percent in the LNZ believed that the Port fulfills its functions poorly or not well.
6. County Services. In all three samples, respondents seem unaware of many King County services. However, where these were recognized, they were rated highly. A comparison with findings from a 1970 survey in White Center and Burien suggests a marked increase in the concern of the community with airplane noise and traffic, as a moderate but general rise of confidence in County government and other local agencies.