



**MESA OPINION SURVEY: SATISFACTION WITH LIFE IN MESA  
AND PERCEPTIONS OF DISCRIMINATION AND INTOLERANCE**

**APRIL 2014**

# Mesa Opinion Survey

How do Mesa's residents view their city? Is it a pleasant, welcoming place to live? Is it pleasant and welcoming for *everyone*? Are residents generally treated in an unbiased manner by their fellow citizens and local institutions? Which if any subpopulations experience discrimination and at what frequency?

The research underlying this report finds that, for the most part, Mesa receives positive reviews from its residents. While complaints certainly exist, they do not appear to indicate a pattern of bias or discrimination in Mesa. For nearly every concept related to bias and discrimination measured in this research, most local residents give Mesa high marks. This is not of course to deny that some residents have experienced legitimate problems. Reducing incidents of bias and discrimination always remains a work in progress. A minority of some subgroups living in the city – the physically and mentally handicapped, ethnic minorities and members of the LGBT community<sup>1</sup> – report experiencing incidents of bias and discrimination within the past two years. However, these experiences do not appear to have significantly lowered their opinions of Mesa.

Six hundred Mesa adults were interviewed to determine their opinions about their city, its institutions and their experiences relative to discrimination, bias and intolerance. Interviewees were selected randomly – to ensure that the sample was representative of the entire adult population of Mesa – and interviewed by telephone for an average of nine minute, including 30% of respondents who were interviewed on cell phones. The 600 interviewees comprise a microcosm of Mesa's adult population. That is, the proportion of men (52%) and women (48%), the proportion by age category (26% 18 to 34 years of age; 33% 35-54; and 32% 55 and older) and the proportion by ethnicity (59% Caucasian; 34% Hispanic; and 5% "other") match those proportions within the Mesa adult population. As a result, the attitudes and opinions of the entire adult population of Mesa can be projected through these 600 interviews within a margin of +/-4.1 percentage points.

This report does not include responses from every subgroup within the population, but only those groups that answered a question significantly differently than the total population (the 600 sample) or that are directly affected by the concept tested in the question. **While data from all subgroups are available, only the pertinent findings appear in this report.**

## Rating Mesa as "a place to live"

How do Mesa residents feel about their city? Asked to rate Mesa as a place to live – on a scale of "excellent," "good," "fair," or "poor" – one-third (33%) rated it as "excellent" and slightly more than one-half (51%), as "good." Only 2% rated Mesa a "poor" place to live and the remaining 14% rated it "fair." On balance, these findings are quite positive: 84% of residents rating the city as either an "excellent" or "good" place to live. In an ideal world, 100% of residents would be fully satisfied with

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<sup>1</sup> The sample size of the LGBT group was too small to draw statistically stable conclusions.

their city. In the real world, Mesa – with only 2% giving the city a “poor” rating and 14% rating it “fair” – can be proud of its report card.

### How Mesa Residents Rate Mesa as a Place to Live

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
	%	%	%	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Ethnicity:</b>				
Hispanic	36	46	16	1
Caucasian	32	54	12	3
<b>Physical Disability</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Mental Disability</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Age:</b>				
18-34	34	43	19	4
35-54	30	53	15	1
55 +	36	52	10	1
<b>Sex:</b>				
Male	33	52	13	3
Female	33	49	16	2
<b>Religiously affiliated</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>

### Treatment within the City of Mesa

Interviewees were asked to what degree they agree or disagree with a list of statements intended to elicit how well they believe they are treated by others in Mesa.

The following pages will show the statement tested and the average score given by each group listed. For example, when asked to respond to the statement, “I feel valued and respected in my Mesa community,” 303 of the 600 respondents (51%) ranked their level of agreement with the statement a 5, indicating they agree completely with the statement, 157 (26%) ranked it a 4, 78 (13%) a 3, 34 (6%) a 2 and 19 respondents (3%) ranked their level of agreement as 1, indicating they disagreed completely with

the statement – i.e., they do not feel valued and respected in Mesa. The remaining 10 respondents, 2%, either said they “did not know” or failed to answer the question. The average score for those who answered the question is 4.17, as shown in the table below. The findings for these statement-based questions are reported by the average score based on the above described 1 to 5 scale.

The following is the wording used by the interviewers leading into the statements:

“For my next series of questions, I’m going to focus on Mesa’s diverse population and ask your thoughts. As I read the following statements, please rate your own level of agreement with each, using a five-point scale, where five means you agree completely with the statement and one means you disagree completely with it.”

**Statement: I feel valued and respected in my Mesa community.**

	<u>Rating</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.17</b>
<b>Hispanics</b>	<b>4.10</b>
<b>Physical Disability</b>	<b>3.98</b>
<b>Mental Disability</b>	<b>3.86</b>
<b>55 +</b>	<b>4.28</b>

As the above table indicates, the average score among those who responded to this question is 4.17 – a high rate of agreement with the statement. Even among those populations likely to experience discrimination, the average rating is around a 4.00 – 4.10 among Hispanics, 3.98 among those with physical disabilities and 3.86 among those with mental disabilities.

**Statement: I feel Mesa is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion.**

	<u>Rating</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.85</b>
<b>Hispanics</b>	<b>3.82</b>
<b>Physical Disability</b>	<b>3.82</b>
<b>Mental Disability</b>	<b>3.51</b>
<b>55 +</b>	<b>3.90</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>3.83</b>

While the 3.85 average rating among all respondents is acceptable, the lower scores among some of the sub-groups are worth noting. Most notably, the 3.51 average score among those with mental disabilities, or living in a household with someone who has a mental disability, deserves attention. While 3.51 is not a startlingly low rating, it is clearly lower than ratings among the total population (3.85) and low compared with responses to most other statements tested.

**Statement: I feel that, in general, people in Mesa are well-educated in the cultures of different groups here in the city.**

	<u>Rating</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.52</b>
<b>Hispanics</b>	<b>3.62</b>
<b>Physical Disability</b>	<b>3.45</b>
<b>Mental Disability</b>	<b>3.14</b>
<b>55 +</b>	<b>3.67</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>3.56</b>

Of all the statements tested, this ranked lowest in overall agreement. And while a 3.52 average ranking does not indicate a glaring problem, it does suggest that Mesa consider launching an effort to educate residents about the diverse population living in their city.

**Statement: I enjoy living in a multi-cultural community like Mesa.**

	<u>Rating</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.33</b>
<b>Hispanics</b>	<b>4.33</b>
<b>Physical Disability</b>	<b>4.24</b>
<b>Mental Disability</b>	<b>4.20</b>
<b>55 +</b>	<b>4.32</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>4.36</b>

Clearly, most Mesa residents enjoy living in a multi-cultural community. Regardless of which sub-group is analyzed, nearly everyone purports to enjoy living among a diverse population.

**Statement: I feel I can express and practice my religious beliefs or non-beliefs without worrying about how others in the community will react.**

	<u>Rating</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.20</b>
<b>Hispanics</b>	<b>4.11</b>
<b>Physical Disability</b>	<b>4.06</b>
<b>Mental Disability</b>	<b>3.91</b>
<b>55 +</b>	<b>4.36</b>
<b>Religiously Affiliated</b>	<b>4.30</b>

As with most issues addressed in this study, Mesa residents feel positively in terms of their comfort level with their surroundings. In fact, those who participate in a religious or spiritual community rank Mesa as a tolerant religious community in larger numbers than those who are not religiously affiliated.

**Statement: I feel I am accepted in the community.**

	<u>Rating</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.31</b>
<b>Hispanics</b>	<b>4.22</b>
<b>Physical Disability</b>	<b>4.23</b>
<b>Mental Disability</b>	<b>4.09</b>
<b>55 +</b>	<b>4.38</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>4.35</b>

Again, as in most tests of Mesa's level of tolerance for differences among its residents, all subgroups analyzed felt strongly that Mesa accepts them "as they are."

**Statement: I feel welcome to participate in the local activities of my neighborhood if I wish.**

	<u>Rating</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.30</b>
<b>Hispanics</b>	<b>4.18</b>
<b>Physical Disability</b>	<b>4.14</b>
<b>Mental Disability</b>	<b>4.21</b>
<b>55 +</b>	<b>4.39</b>

The vast majority of Mesa residents feel welcome to participate in local activities in their neighborhoods. On the five-point scale the average score is 4.30, a high rating and a positive reflection on Mesa’s neighborhoods. Even among groups more likely to encounter discrimination, scores are high.

**Statement: I feel welcome to participate in events held in Mesa if I wish.**

	<u>Rating</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.37</b>
<b>Hispanics</b>	<b>4.13</b>
<b>Physical Disability</b>	<b>4.31</b>
<b>Mental Disability</b>	<b>4.25</b>
<b>55 +</b>	<b>4.46</b>

Of all the statements tested in this research, this one received the most positive review from respondents, averaging 4.37. Again, while a handful of residents apparently do not feel welcome to attend Mesa events – and this should not be dismissed as inconsequential – the vast majority give Mesa a positive review: 82% of those who responded to the statement gave it 4 (21%) or 5 (61%) and only 6% ranked it a 1 (2%) or 2 (4%).

## **Residents’ Experience with Discrimination**

What is the incidence of discriminatory events in Mesa? How often does someone encounter bias or discrimination? How often do they observe discriminatory behavior directed toward others?

For this research, discrimination was separated into eight discrete categories – racial/ethnicity, religion, gender, age, physical disability, mental disability, social/political beliefs, sexual orientation and socio-economic status. Respondents were asked, first, whether they had personally experienced discrimination in each of these eight categories. They were then asked whether they had personally observed discrimination toward anyone else in each of the eight categories. So, for example, 19% of all

Mesa adults reported experiencing some form of racial or ethnic discrimination in Mesa within the past two years, and 23% had observed some form of racial or ethnic discrimination toward someone else.

**Question: In the past two years or so, have you or anyone in your immediate household ever experienced racial or ethnic discrimination, exclusion or bias against, in Mesa, whether intentional or unintentional?**

**And in the same vein, in the past two years or so, have you observed someone else, whether you know them personally or not, who has experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa because of racial or ethnic discrimination?**

	<u>Personal</u>	<u>Observed</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Caucasian</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>19%</b>

Racial/ethnic discrimination is the most common form of bias in Mesa, at least among those categories tested. Nearly one in five Mesa residents (19%) experienced racial/ethnic bias in Mesa at least once in the past two years. More telling, nearly two in five Hispanic residents (38%) experienced racial or ethnic discrimination in Mesa at least once during this period. In contrast only 8% of Caucasians experienced discrimination because of race or ethnicity. Further, nearly one in four (23%), observed racial or ethnic bias. Are these high levels? Without comparable national data it is impossible to peg these percentages as above or below average. On the other hand, however, the incidence of bias against Hispanics appears to be, if not common, at least a more than occasional occurrence.

Following racial/ethnic discrimination, social/political beliefs and religious bias are the two most frequent bases for discrimination in Mesa. For each, 12% of Mesa residents said that, in the past two years, they have encountered this type of discrimination at least once. Further, religious discrimination toward others had been observed by 17% of Mesa residents.

**Question: In the past two years or so, have you or anyone in your immediate household ever experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against because of religious affiliation or belief, or non-belief, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa?**

**And in the same vein, in the past two years or so, have you observed someone else, whether you know them personally or not, who has experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa because of religious affiliation or belief, or non-belief?**

	<u>Personal</u>	<u>Observed</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Religious</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>17%</b>



Among all Mesa adults, slightly more than one in ten (12%) has experienced religion-based discriminatory behavior. Among those living in a household that participates in a religious or spiritual community (60% of all Mesa residents), 14% have experienced religious bias at least once in the past two years. Further, 17% of all adults have witnessed religious discrimination toward someone else at least once in the past two years. Without having national data against which to compare these findings, it is impossible to determine if this is a particularly high incidence. On the surface, the percentages appear to be somewhat high though not alarming.

**Question: In the past two years or so, have you or anyone in your immediate household ever experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against, because of gender, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa?**

**And in the same vein, in the past two years or so, have you observed someone else, whether you know them personally or not, who has experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa because of gender, in Mesa?**

	<u>Personal</u>	<u>Observed</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>8%</b>

Gender bias appears to be rare. Only 6% of Mesa adults have encountered gender bias, 5% of men and 7% of women. Again, while any level of bias or discrimination is deplorable, these percentages indicate this is a minor issue in Mesa.

**Question: In the past two years or so, have you or anyone in your immediate household ever experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against, because of age, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa?**

**And in the same vein, in the past two years or so, have you observed someone else, whether you know them personally or not, who has experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa because of age?**

	<u>Personal</u>	<u>Observed</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>18 – 34</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>35 – 54</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>55 +</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>7%</b>

Like gender bias, age bias in Mesa is infrequent.

**Question: In the past two years or so, have you or anyone in your immediate household ever experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against because of physical limitations or disability, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa?**

**And in the same vein, in the past two years or so, have you observed someone else, whether you know them personally or not, who has experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa because of physical limitations or disability?**

	<u>Personal</u>	<u>Observed</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Physical Disability</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>19%</b>

Approximately one in five (21%) of those with a physical disability, or living in a home with someone who has a disability, experienced discrimination in Mesa based on that physical disability within the past two years. Further, 10% of all Mesa residents have observed this type of discrimination. Again, while we have no existing data to measure against these findings, it is clear that some level of discrimination toward those with physical disabilities exists.

**Question: In the past two years or so, have you or anyone in your immediate household ever experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against, because of a mental disability or limitation, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa?**

**And in the same vein, in the past two years or so, have you observed someone else, whether you know them personally or not, who has experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa because of a mental disability or limitation?**

	<u>Personal</u>	<u>Observed</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Mental Disability</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>35%</b>

Within the past two years, one-quarter of those with a mental disability – or living in a home with someone with a mental disability – experienced bias in Mesa because of that disability. Of note, slightly more than one-third (35%) of those with a mental disability observed this type of bias shown toward

others with a mental disability. These findings do indicate that this population encounters some degree of bias in the community although, on balance, most are still satisfied with their life in Mesa.

**Question: In the past two years or so, have you or anyone in your immediate household ever experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against because of social or political beliefs, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa?**

**And in the same vein, in the past two years or so, have you observed someone else, whether you know them personally or not, who has experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa because of social or political beliefs?**

	<u>Personal</u>	<u>Observed</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>

Thirteen percent of Mesa residents report discrimination toward them because of their social or political beliefs. In a politically polarized state in a highly polarized country, these percentages are no surprise.

**Question: In the past two years or so, have you or anyone in your immediate household ever experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against because of sexual orientation, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa?**

**And in the same vein, in the past two years or so, have you observed someone else, whether you know them personally or not, who has experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa because of sexual orientation?**

	<u>Personal</u>	<u>Observed</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>LGBT</b>	<b>34%*</b>	<b>48%</b>

**\*Sample size (29) too small for statistical significance**

One-third of those identifying themselves as LGBT (34%) report encountering bias in Mesa because of their sexual orientation at least once in the past two years, and nearly half, 48%, observed this type of discrimination toward others. **It is important to note that the sample size (29) for this group is too small to draw broad conclusions.** However, the data do hint that it would perhaps be useful to pursue this issue via focus groups and/or one-on-one interviews. If time and resources permit, a survey of this group could help determine whether these indications do, in fact, reflect an undesirable trend.

**Question: In the past two years or so, have you or anyone in your immediate household ever experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against because of socio-economic status, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa?**

**And in the same vein, in the past two years or so, have you observed someone else, whether you know them personally or not, who has experienced discrimination, exclusion or bias against, whether intentional or unintentional, in Mesa because of socio-economic status?**

	<u>Personal</u>	<u>Observed</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Hispanics</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>5 + household</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>19%</b>

Slightly more than one in ten households in Mesa has experienced discrimination based on their socio-economic status – slightly more Hispanics than non-Hispanics, with the highest incidence among those living in households with 5 or more members.

### **Where Discrimination Occurs**

If discrimination does exist in Mesa, where does occur? Is there a strong pattern of discrimination within particular institutions or locales around the city? In short, the answer from this research is “no.”

Everyone who in the past two years had experienced any of the eight types of discrimination tested was asked to indicate where that discriminatory behavior occurred.

**Questions: You mentioned that you or someone else in your household has experienced discrimination or bias. As specifically as possible, where did that discrimination occur?**

**You mentioned that you observed someone who has experienced discrimination or bias in Mesa. As specifically as possible, where did that discrimination occur?**

	<u>Personal</u>	<u>Observed</u>
<b>Work</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Store/mall</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>School</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>In public (general)</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Public transportation</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Restaurant/hotel</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>At home</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Police</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>

As the above table shows, discrimination happens everywhere – at work, in public shopping areas, at school, and in public venues. There is no discernible pattern in the location of discriminatory behavior.

**Question: Who should be responsible for promoting greater awareness of diversity, inclusion and tolerance in Mesa?**

<b>Parents</b>	<b>92%</b>
<b>Schools</b>	<b>84%</b>
<b>The City</b>	<b>79%</b>
<b>Churches</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>The Media</b>	<b>69%</b>

Mesa residents agree that promoting tolerance – or rejecting intolerance— is everyone’s responsibility.

## Conclusions

- On the whole, Mesa residents believe Mesa is a good place to live and do not view the city as a bastion of discrimination. That said, like everywhere else in the United States, some degree of bias and discrimination exist among Mesa residents.
- Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with their lives and experiences in Mesa and, secondly, whether they had experienced or witnessed discrimination or bias in the city. For most measures and among the subgroups analyzed, satisfaction with life in Mesa was relatively high even though there are reported instances of discrimination and bias.
- More than one-third of Hispanic adults living in Mesa, 38%, reported being the subject of some type of ethnic discrimination at least once during the past two years. Even so, Hispanics rated Mesa as a good place to live – 82% ranked it “excellent” or “good,” compared to 86% among Mesa’s Caucasian residents. And Hispanics reported that they feel accepted in the community. For example, when asked the degree to which they agree with the statement, “I feel valued and respected in the community,” on a five-point scale with 5 indicating they agree completely with the statement and 1 indicating they disagree completely, the mean score among Hispanics was 4.10, compared to 4.17 among all Mesa residents.
- Residents with physical or mental disabilities feel, for the most part, accepted in the community and in their neighborhoods. Asked to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement, “I feel I am accepted in the community,” those with physical (4.23) or mental (4.09) disabilities reported general agreement with the statement. Further, when asked to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement, “I feel welcome to participate in the local activities of my neighborhood if I wish,” those with physical (4.14) or mental (4.21) disabilities reported feeling welcome in their neighborhoods.
- The vast majority of residents enjoy living in a city with a diverse population. Asked to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement, “I enjoy living in a multi-cultural community like Mesa,” the average level of agreement was 4.33 (a high overall level of agreement) with little variation among subgroups such as Hispanics (4.33), those with physical (4.24) or mental (4.20) disabilities, those 55 and older (4.32) and women (4.36).
- There was little significant variation among subgroups in their level satisfaction with the city.
- Despite these overall positive findings, there remains a need to for Mesa to continue combating discrimination and bias. Asked to what degree they agree or disagree with the statement, “I feel Mesa is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion,” the overall agreement score was 3.85,

indicating some level of doubt as to Mesa's commitment. This should not be read as an overly negative score from residents, but it is lower than their satisfaction with the city and their treatment within the city – all of which had scores exceeding 4.00.

- The lowest score – the lowest level of agreement among respondents – is for the statement, “I feel that, in general, people in Mesa are well-educated in the cultures of different groups here in the city.” Residents gave the statement an average score of 3.52, the lowest score of any concept tested in the study. While not alarming, the score points to a need for residents to better understand one another and better understand one another's culture and/or unique circumstances.