

**THE NCS**<sup>TM</sup>  
The National Citizen Survey<sup>TM</sup>

## Ann Arbor, MI

Community Livability Report  
2015



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# Contents

About..... 1

Quality of Life in Ann Arbor ..... 2

Community Characteristics ..... 3

Governance ..... 5

Participation ..... 7

Special Topics..... 9

Conclusions ..... 10

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# About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Ann Arbor. The phrase “livable community” is used here to evoke a place that is not simply habitable, but that is desirable. It is not only where people do live, but where they want to live.

Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central facets of community (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement).

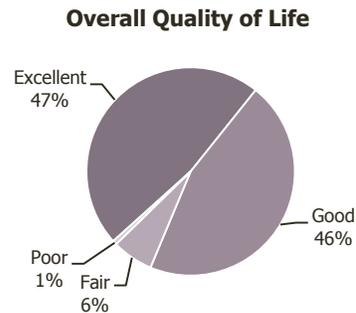
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 785 residents of the City of Ann Arbor. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



# Quality of Life in Ann Arbor

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Ann Arbor as excellent or good. This rating was higher than the national benchmark and university community comparison communities (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

Shown below are the eight facets of community. The color of each community facet summarizes how residents rated it across the three sections of the survey that represent the pillars of a community – Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation. When most ratings across the three pillars were higher than the benchmark, the color for that facet is the darkest shade; when most ratings were lower than the benchmark, the color is the lightest shade. A mix of ratings (higher and lower than the benchmark) results in a color between the extremes.



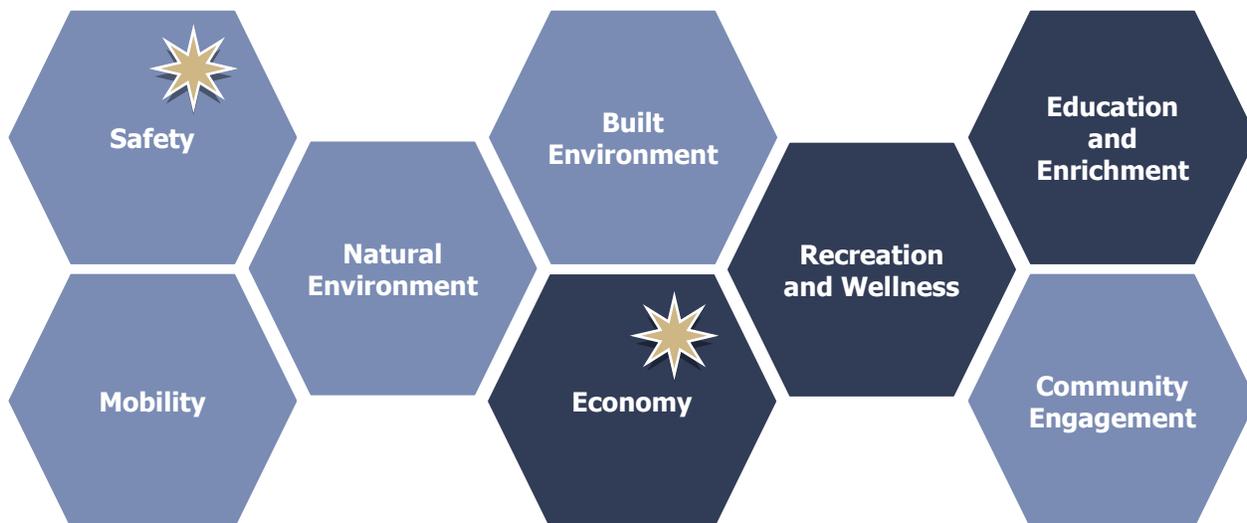
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Ann Arbor community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Ann Arbor residents gave strong ratings to Economy as well as to Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment. Ratings for Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment and Community Engagement were positive and similar to other communities. This overview of the key aspects of community quality provides a quick summary of where residents see exceptionally strong performance and where performance offers the greatest opportunity for improvement. Linking quality to importance offers community members and leaders a view into the characteristics of the community that matter most and that seem to be working best.

Details that support these findings are contained in the remainder of this Livability Report, starting with the ratings for Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation and ending with results for Ann Arbor’s unique questions.

## Legend

- Higher than national benchmark
- Similar to national benchmark
- Lower than national benchmark

★ Most important



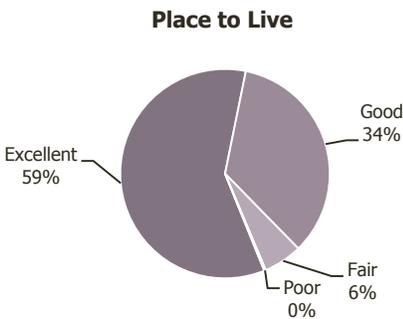
# Community Characteristics

*What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?*

Overall quality of community life represents the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. How residents rate their overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. In the case of Ann Arbor, 94% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Ann Arbor as a place to live were higher than ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the City as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Ann Arbor as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Ann Arbor and its overall appearance. About 9 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to Ann Arbor as a place to raise children, the City's overall image and to their neighborhoods. Ratings for Ann Arbor's overall image and as a place to raise children were higher than ratings in comparison communities. A majority rated Ann Arbor as a place to retire and the overall appearance as excellent or good. These ratings were similar to ratings given in other communities across the nation and tended to be higher than those in other university communities.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. At least 9 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the overall feeling of Safety in Ann Arbor, as well as to feelings of safety in their neighborhoods and in the City's downtown/commercial area; ratings that were similar to ratings given in other communities across the nation. The facets of Natural Environment, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement were rated exceptionally well, with at least two-thirds of residents giving excellent or good ratings to each aspect. These ratings tended to be higher than the national benchmarks. All aspects of Economy were also rated very highly by a majority of participants and tended to be above the national and custom comparison communities with the exception of cost of living, which was rated positively by about one-quarter of residents and was lower than the benchmarks. Most aspects of Mobility and Built Environment received positive ratings from a majority of respondents and were similar to or higher than the benchmarks. However, ratings for public parking and the availability of affordable quality housing were lower than those in comparison communities.



Compared to 2013, ratings for preventative health services were higher in 2015, while all other ratings remained stable over time (see the *Trends over Time* report provided under a separate cover for more detail).

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)



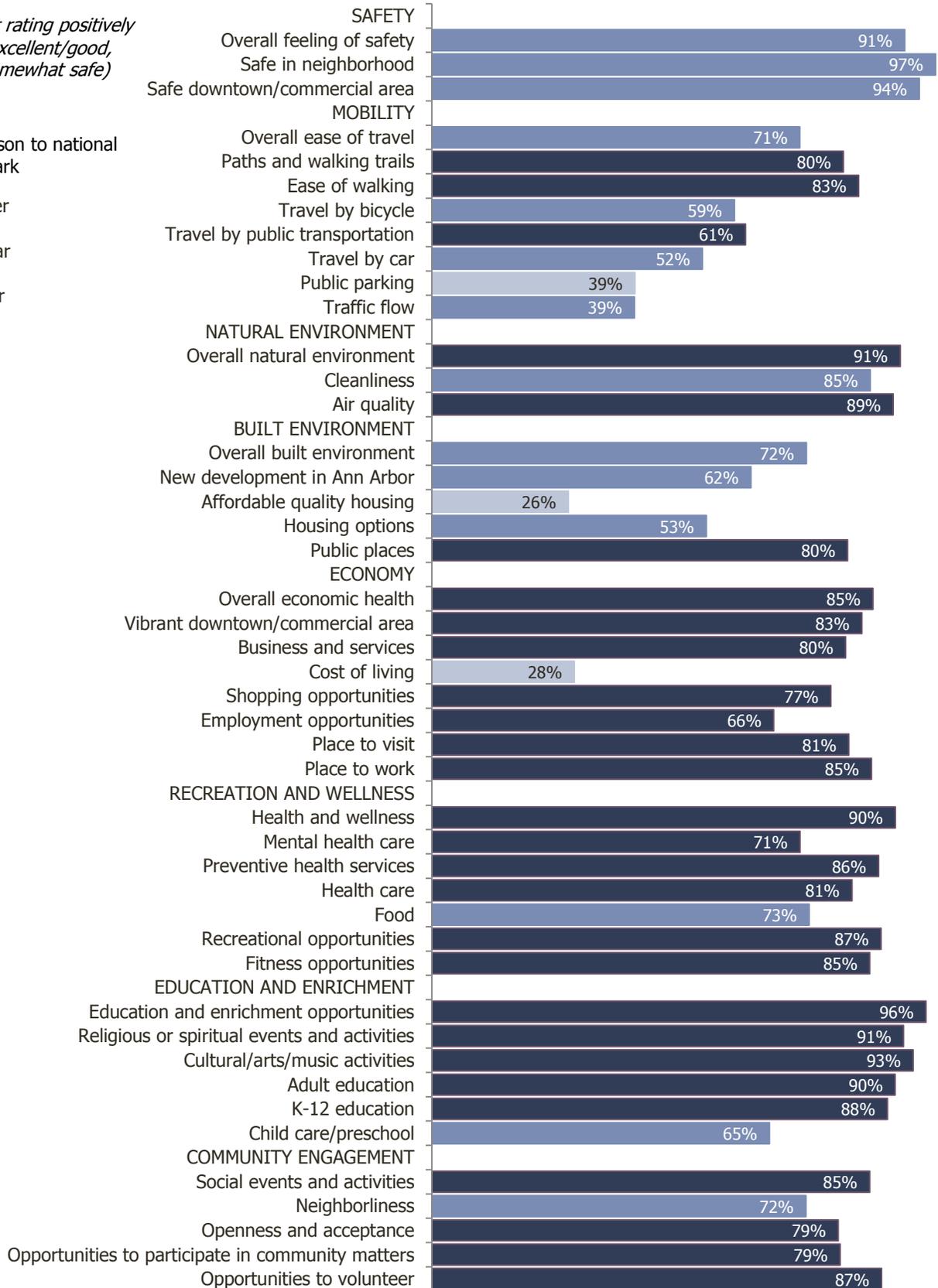
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

*Percent rating positively  
(e.g., excellent/good,  
very/somewhat safe)*

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

## How well does the government of Ann Arbor meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

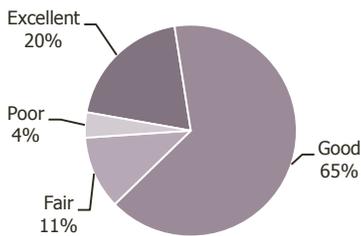
The overall quality of the services provided by Ann Arbor as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 4 in 5 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the City of Ann Arbor, a rating that was similar to the national benchmark. About half of participants gave favorable ratings to the services provided by the Federal Government, which was similar to the benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Ann Arbor’s leadership and governance. Close to 6 in 10 respondents rated the overall direction of the City, the job it does at welcoming citizen involvement, acting in the best interest of Ann Arbor, value of services for taxes paid, the overall confidence in City government, being honest and treating all residents fairly as excellent or good. Over three-quarters of citizens gave high marks to the customer service provided by City employees. All of these ratings were similar to other communities across the nation and remained stable from 2013 to 2015.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Ann Arbor. All aspects of Safety, Built Environment and Community Engagement were rated positively by a majority of residents and were similar to ratings seen elsewhere in the nation. Survey participants were especially pleased with drinking water, natural areas preservation, City parks, recreation programs, health services and public library; all of these services were rated higher than the national benchmarks. Other ratings within the facets of Natural Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment were awarded high marks by at least 7 in 10 participants. Measures for Mobility tended to be mixed; bus and transit services were rated excellent or good by nearly three-quarters of residents and were rated higher than comparison communities, but ratings for street repair were only rated positively by 2 in 10 respondents. All other aspects of Mobility were given favorable marks by at least half of residents. The facet of Economy was also highly rated; 7 in 10 citizens rated economic development services as excellent or good, and this rating was higher than national and custom benchmarks.

When comparing 2015 results to 2013, ratings for fire prevention, emergency preparedness and traffic signal timing increased over time.

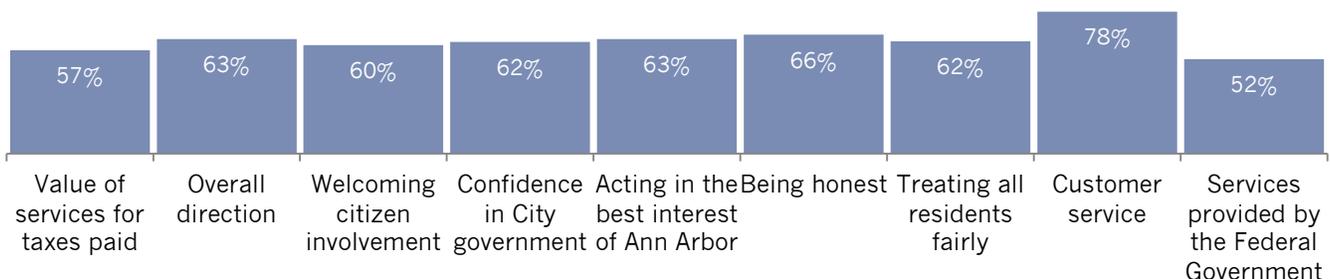
**Overall Quality of City Services**



Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



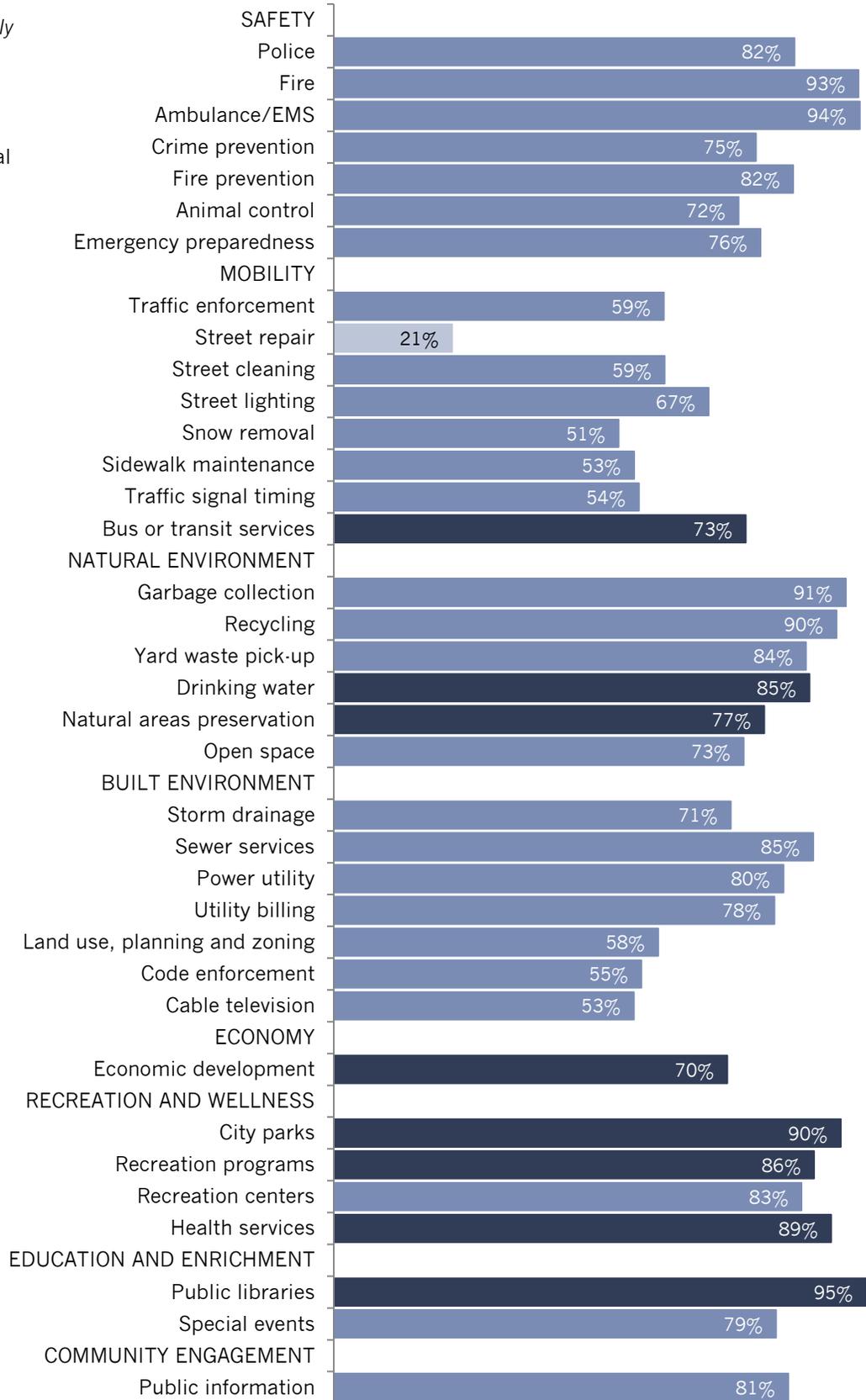
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

Percent rating positively  
(e.g., excellent/good)

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Participation

## *Are the residents of Ann Arbor connected to the community and each other?*

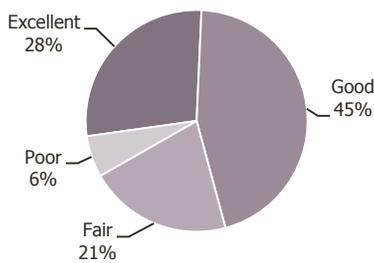
An engaged community harnesses its most valuable resource, its residents. The connections and trust among residents, government, businesses and other organizations help to create a sense of community; a shared sense of membership, belonging and history. The overall sense of community in Ann Arbor received positive ratings from 73% of residents, a rating that was similar to other communities in the U.S., but higher than other university communities.

Nearly all residents were likely to recommend living in Ann Arbor and over three-quarters planned to remain in the City for the next five years; these ratings were similar to other communities across the nation. About 4 in 10 citizens reported they had contacted a City employee, a level similar to levels reported in other communities.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Levels of participation tended to be mixed across the different facets. Within the facet of Safety, about 9 in 10 residents had not been the victim of a crime and about 8 in 10 had not reported a crime, and about one-quarter had stocked supplies for an emergency (a level lower than the national benchmark). Within Mobility, over 8 in 10 of survey participants had walked or biked instead of driving and about half indicated they had used public transportation instead of driving; these rates were higher than in other communities. Nearly all residents reported that they recycled at home (97%), a level that was higher than comparison communities, and about three-quarters of participants had conserved water and made their homes more energy efficient. More residents in Ann Arbor reported that they worked in the City, used Ann Arbor's recreation centers, attended a City-sponsored event, volunteered or participated in a club in the last 12 months than residents from comparison communities. Fewer residents reported observing a code violation than in other communities.

Fewer Ann Arbor residents reported that they had used public transportation instead of driving or participated in a religious or spiritual events or activities in 2015 than in 2013. However, more respondents reported that they had used Ann Arbor recreation centers or voted in local elections in 2015.

**Sense of Community**



*Percent rating positively (e.g., very/somewhat likely, yes)*

*Comparison to national benchmark*

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



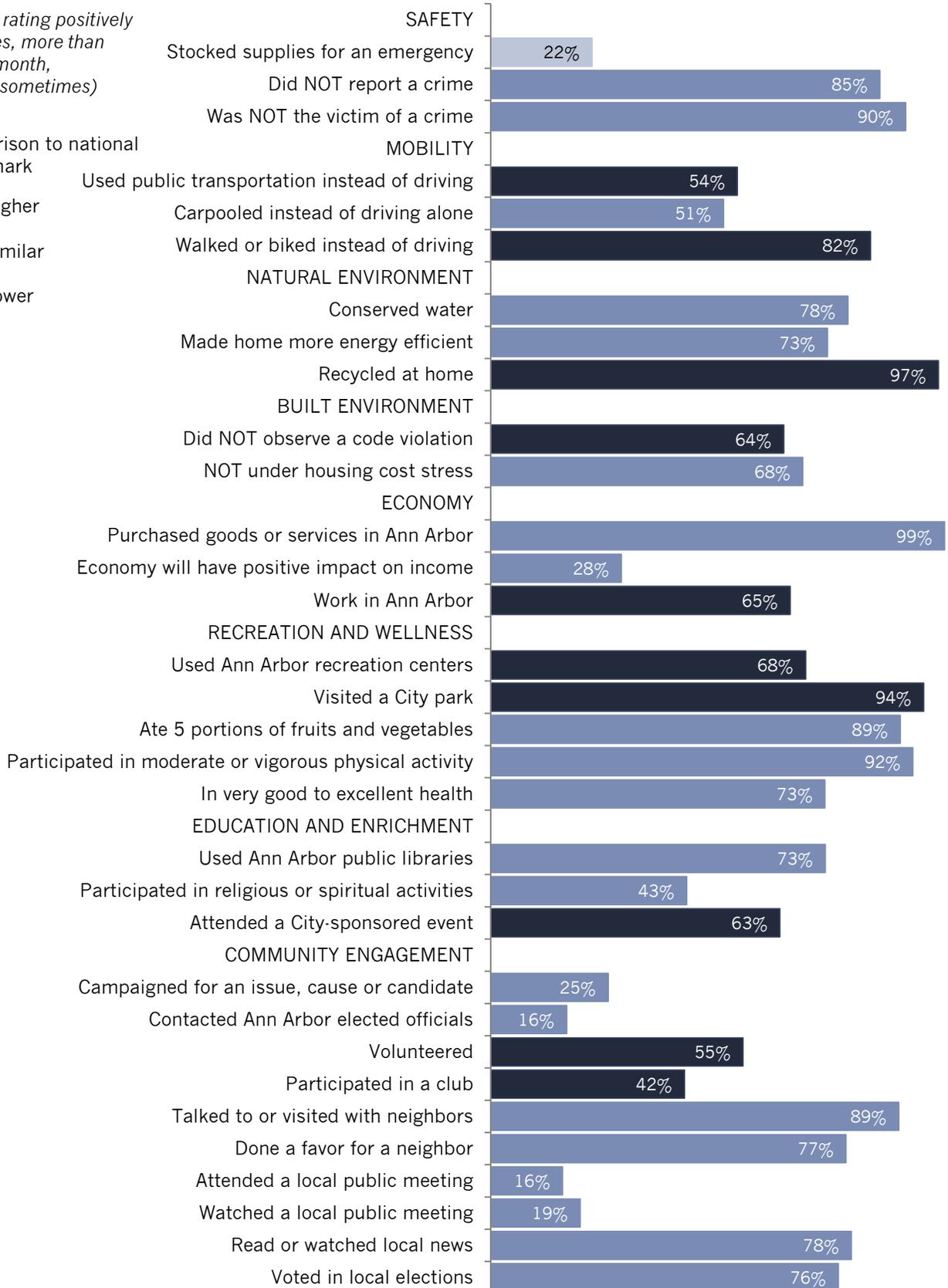
## The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

Percent rating positively  
(e.g., yes, more than  
once a month,  
always/sometimes)

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

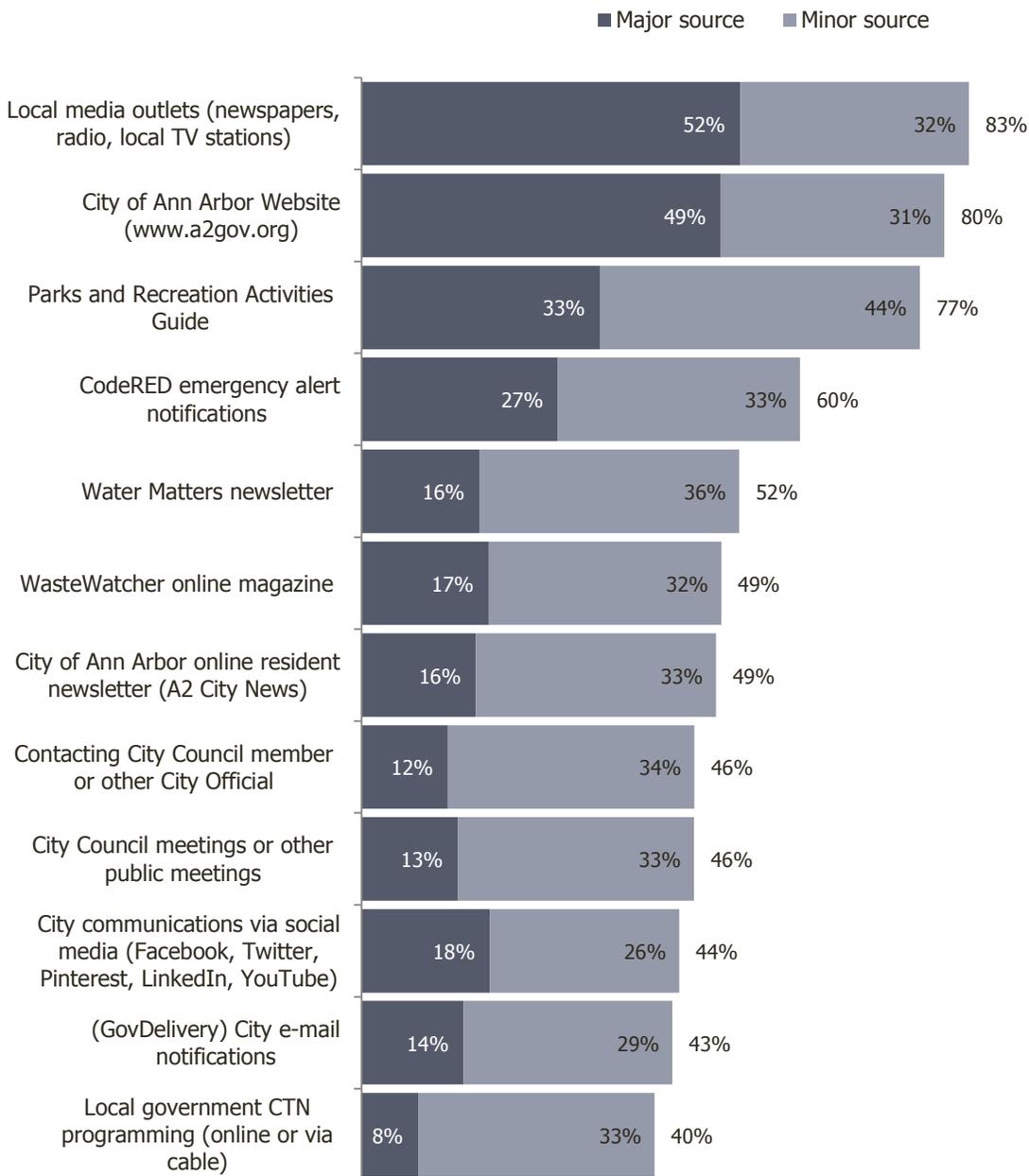


# Special Topics

The City of Ann Arbor included a question of special interest on The NCS. The question asked residents how much of a source, if at all, they considered specific sources to be for obtaining information about the City. About 8 in 10 residents considered local media outlets and the City website to be a major or minor source of information, followed by the Parks and Recreation Activities Guide (77%). A majority of residents also indicated that they considered the CodeRED emergency alert notifications and Water Matters newsletter at least a minor source. Fewer than half of respondents indicated that local government CTN programming, City e-mail notifications, City communications via social media, City Council or other public meetings were sources of information.

Figure 4: Sources of Information

Please indicate how much of a source, if at all, you consider each of the following to be for obtaining information about the City of Ann Arbor government and its activities, events and services:



# Conclusions

## **Ann Arbor is a great place to live.**

Almost all survey respondents rated the overall quality of life in Ann Arbor and the City as a place to live as excellent or good; these ratings remained stable over time and were higher than the benchmarks. Over 9 in 10 would recommend Ann Arbor as a place to live and about three-quarters of participants planned to remain in the community. Ratings for features that enhance quality of life, such as Ann Arbor as a place to raise children, the overall image of the City, overall appearance and their neighborhoods as places to live were given positive ratings by at least 4 in 5 respondents. Additionally, about 7 in 10 rated Ann Arbor's sense of community as excellent or good, a rating that was higher than ratings in other university communities.

## **Economy and Safety are the main focus areas for the community.**

Residents indicated that Economy and Safety are important areas for the Ann Arbor community to focus on in the next two years. Ratings for aspects of Economy tended to be rated more positively than ratings in comparison communities. Cost of living was an exception, with about one-quarter rating this measure favorably, which was lower than ratings in comparison communities.

Most Safety ratings were similar to ratings seen elsewhere. Nearly all residents felt safe in their neighborhoods and in Ann Arbor's downtown/commercial area. Further, 9 in 10 gave excellent or good ratings to the overall feeling of safety in Ann Arbor. These high safety ratings remained stable from 2013 to 2015. Residents also valued safety services provided by the City of Ann Arbor. Ratings for fire, police, ambulance/EMS and fire prevention (a rating that increased from 2013 to 2015) were rated positively by at least 4 in 5 citizens. Respondents also gave high marks to emergency preparedness, a rating that also increased since the last iteration of the survey.

## **Education and Enrichment is a positive feature of Ann Arbor.**

Ratings for measures related to Education and Enrichment tended to be rated positively by at least two-thirds of residents; nearly all measures were higher than levels seen in communities across the nation and in university communities. At least 9 in 10 respondents gave excellent or good ratings to education and enrichment opportunities, opportunities to attend religious or spiritual events or cultural/arts/music activities, adult education opportunities and public libraries.

## **Residents enjoy Ann Arbor's Recreation and Wellness opportunities.**

Most survey respondents rated Ann Arbor's Recreation and Wellness measures as excellent or good, as at least 7 in 10 gave positive marks to every aspect. Almost all residents reported that they had visited a City park (a level higher than levels reported elsewhere) and participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity. Ratings for health and wellness, mental health care, preventative health services, health care, City parks, recreation programs and health services were higher than the national benchmarks. Additionally, more residents reported using Ann Arbor's recreation centers in 2015, compared to 2013.