

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Williamsburg, VA
Community Livability Report

2016



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The NCS™ is presented by NRC in collaboration with ICMA.

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About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Williamsburg. 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).

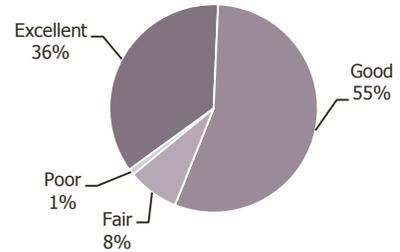
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 449 residents of the City of Williamsburg. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Williamsburg

Most residents rated the quality of life in Williamsburg as excellent or good. These ratings were similar to the national benchmark (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

Overall Quality of Life



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.

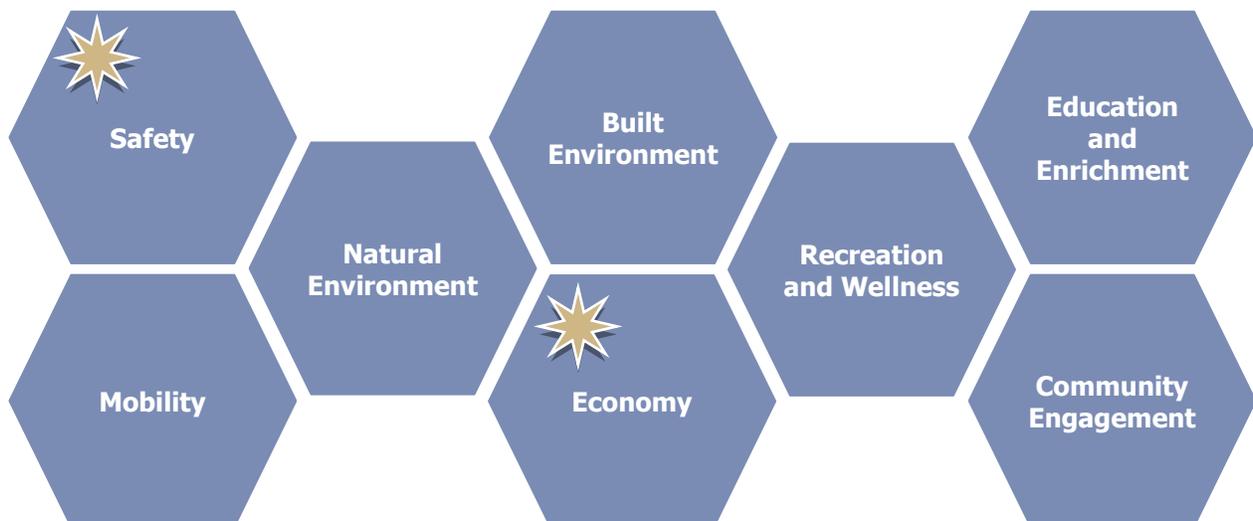
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Williamsburg community in the coming two years. Williamsburg residents gave favorable ratings to both of these facets of community. Ratings for all other facets were also 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 Williamsburg’s unique questions.

Legend

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

- Most important



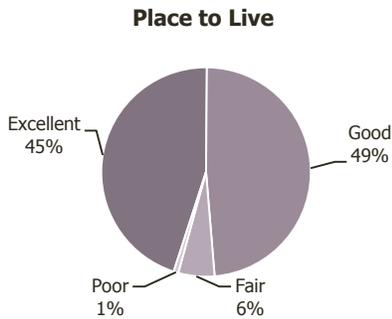
Community Characteristics

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 Williamsburg, 94% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Williamsburg as a place to live were similar to 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 Williamsburg as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Williamsburg and its overall appearance. Almost 9 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall image of Williamsburg, Williamsburg as a place to retire and the overall appearance of Williamsburg. These ratings were higher than ratings in comparison communities. At least 4 in 5 respondents gave positive ratings to their neighborhoods and Williamsburg as a place to raise children; these ratings were similar to those in other communities across the nation.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, most ratings were similar to other communities and were given positive ratings by a majority of respondents. Around 9 in 10 residents gave favorable ratings to all aspects of Safety. While ratings for Mobility varied, all aspects were rated similarly compared other communities, with the exception of traffic flow which received ratings higher than the benchmark. At least 8 in 10 residents were pleased with all aspects of Natural Environment. The cleanliness of Williamsburg was rated higher than the national benchmark. Ratings for Built Environment varied with positive ratings ranging from 36% for affordable quality housing to 82% for public places where people want to spend time; the rating for public places was higher than seen elsewhere. Aspects of Economy were also rated favorably and two aspects, shopping opportunities and Williamsburg as a place to visit were rated higher than other communities across the nation. All aspects of Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement were rated positively by a majority of respondents and were similar to the national benchmark. Ratings for Education and Enrichment were particularly strong; around 8 in 10 residents positively rated the overall education and enrichment opportunities in Williamsburg, religious or spiritual events and activities, adult education and K-12 education. Additionally, 3 of the 6 aspects of Education and Enrichment received higher ratings than ratings in comparison communities.

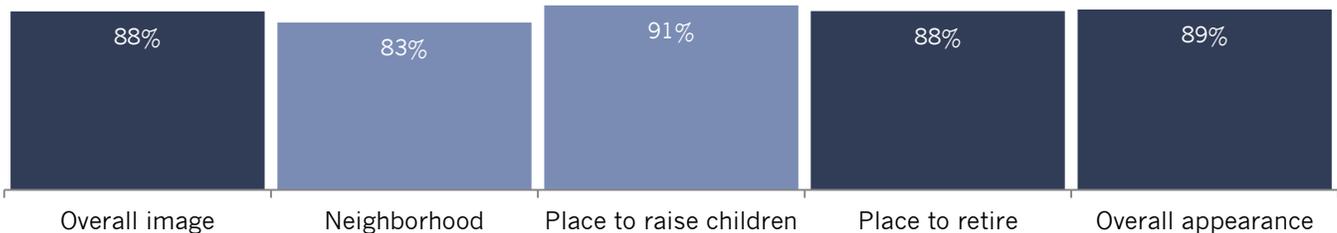


When comparing 2016 results to 2014, ratings for the overall ease of travel, adult education opportunities and education and enrichment opportunities increased (see the *Trends over Time* report provided under separate cover).

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



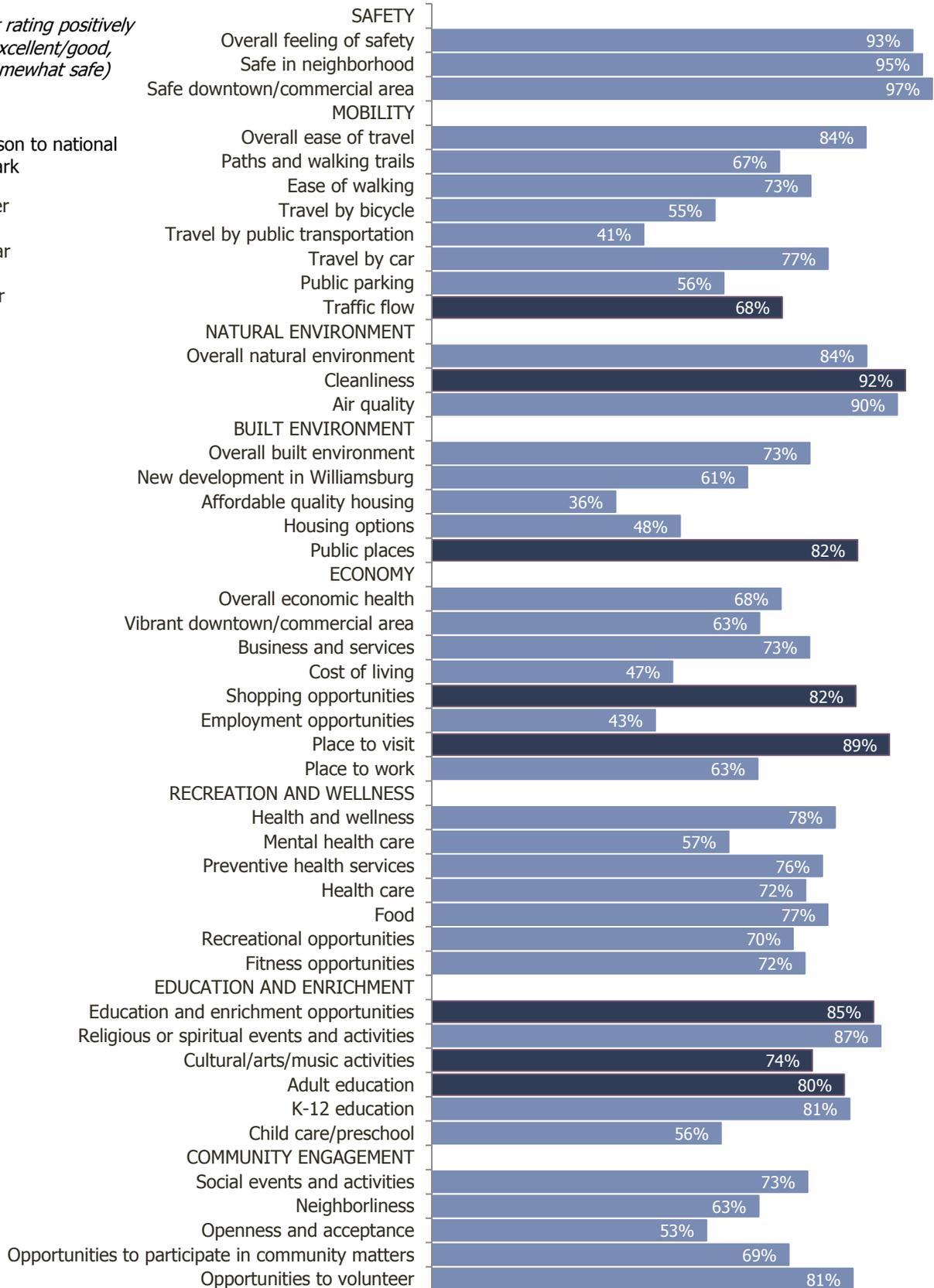
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

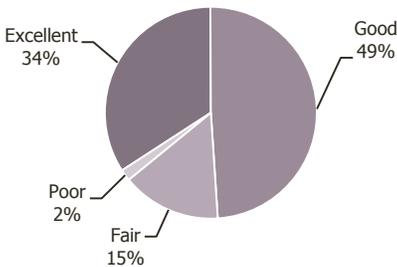
How well does the government of Williamsburg meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Williamsburg as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. In Williamsburg, 83% of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of city services and about 4 in 10 gave positive ratings to the services provided by the Federal Government. Both of these ratings were similar to ratings given in other communities.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Williamsburg’s leadership and governance. About 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the overall customer service by Williamsburg employees and about 7 in 10 favorably rated the value of services for taxes paid. A majority of respondents were pleased with the overall direction the City was taking, welcoming citizen involvement, confidence in City government, City government acting in the best interest of Williamsburg, government being honest and treating residents fairly. Ratings for value of services for taxes paid and confidence in City government were higher than ratings found in communities across the nation.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Williamsburg. Almost all services and amenities were rated positively by at least half of respondents and were similar to or higher than ratings in comparison communities. Respondents rated Williamsburg’s crime prevention efforts higher than the national benchmark within the facet of Safety, and the remaining six Safety services were similar to the national benchmark and rated positively by at least 7 in 10 residents. Within Mobility, street repair and street cleaning received higher ratings than in comparison communities. All aspects of Natural Environment and Built Environment received ratings that were favorable and similar to the national benchmark with the exception of cable television, which received ratings lower than the national benchmark. The facet of Recreation and Wellness was also highly rated; more than 4 in 5 survey participants rated City parks as excellent or good. Within the aspect of Education and Enrichment, almost all residents were pleased with public library services, a higher rating than ratings given in other communities across the nation.

Overall Quality of City Services

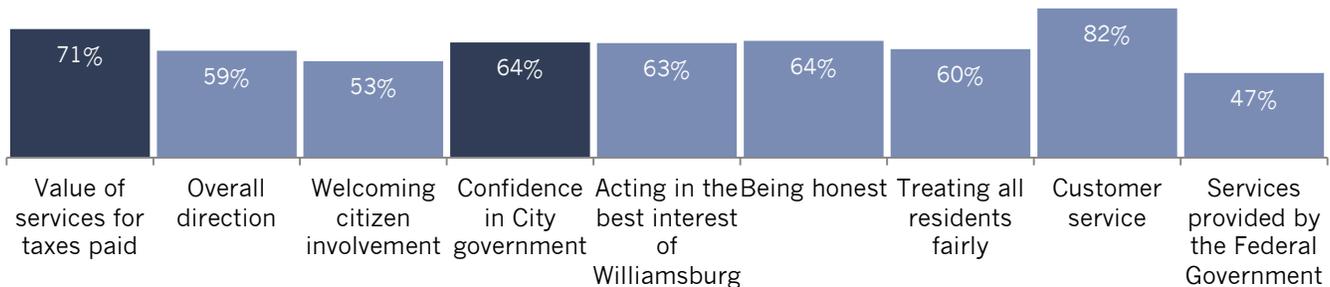


Since the last survey iteration in 2014, ratings decreased for snow removal, land use, planning and zoning, cable television, economic development, recreation centers, recreation programs, health services and the overall direction that Williamsburg is taking. However, ratings increased for street repair and street cleaning in 2016 compared to 2014.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



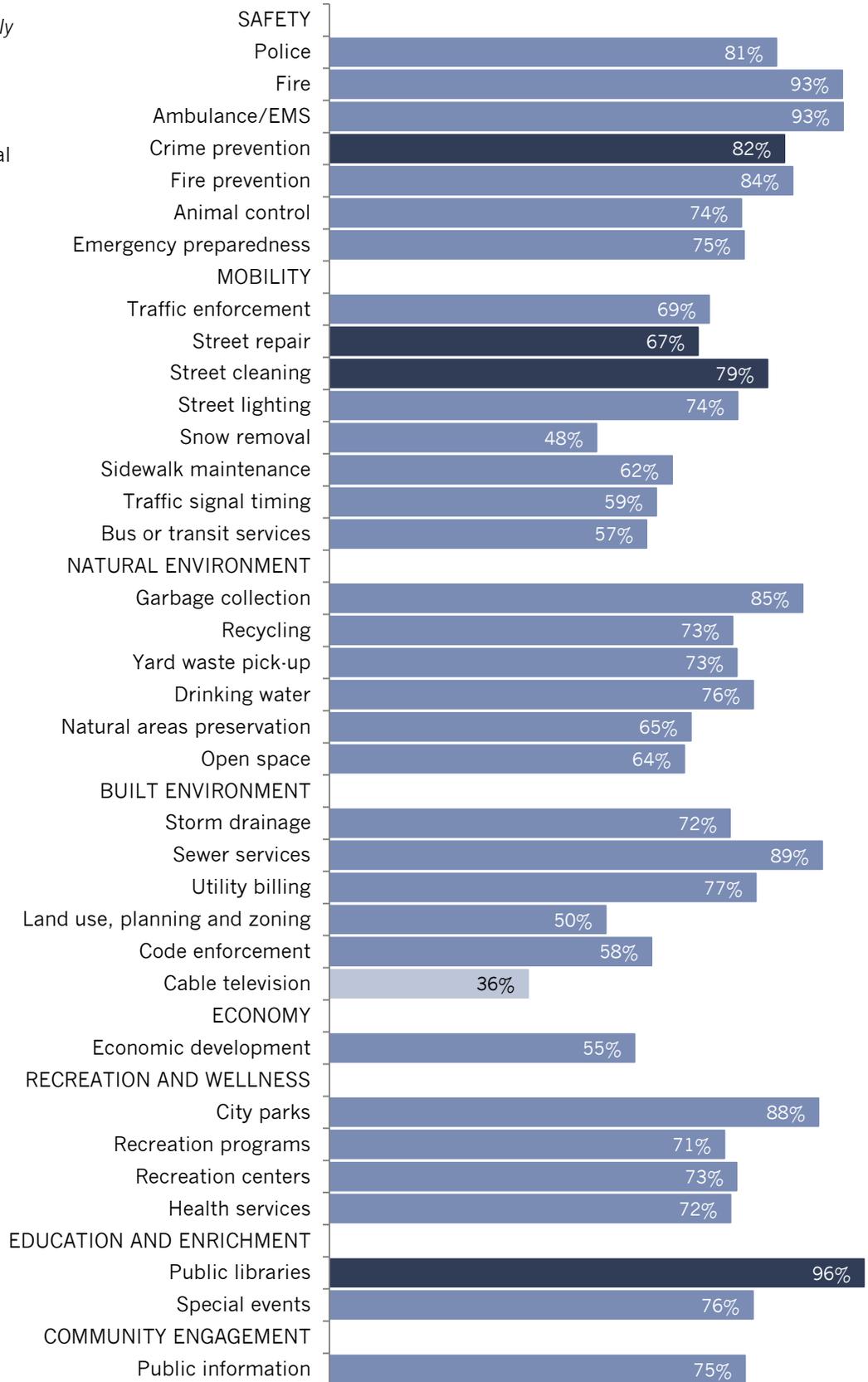
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

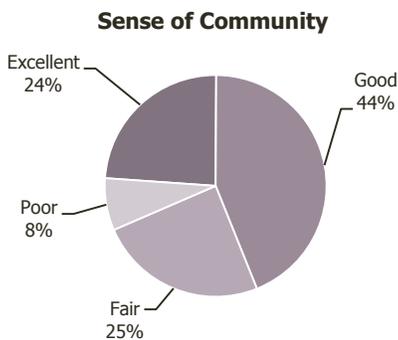


Participation

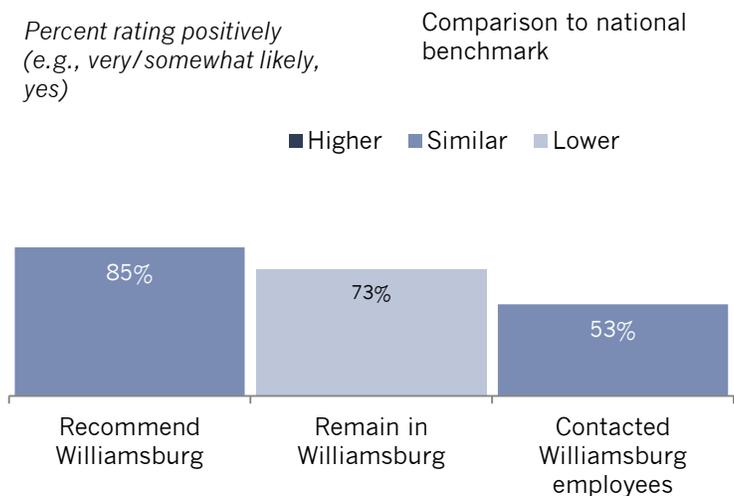
Are the residents of Williamsburg connected to the community and each other?

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. In Williamsburg, 68% of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the sense of community, similar to ratings in other communities across the nation. About 4 in 5 residents would recommend living in Williamsburg. About 7 in 10 residents reported they were likely to remain in the City for the next five years, a rating lower than in other communities in the U.S.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Participation tended to be mixed across the facets, but overall reported rates of Participation were similar to those in comparison communities. Within the facet of Safety, about 82% of residents indicated they had NOT reported a crime, and 92% had NOT been the victim of crime; levels similar to those in comparison communities. Within Mobility, about 70% of residents reported that they had walked or biked instead of driving, a rate higher than the national benchmark. More than two-thirds of residents reported that they had NOT observed a code violation in the past 12 months; a level that was higher than in other communities. Reported rates of participation varied within Economy, almost all residents reported purchasing goods or services in Williamsburg, while about one-third felt that the economy would have a positive impact on their income. A majority of residents reported that they worked in Williamsburg, a higher level than reported elsewhere in the nation. Rates of participation within the facets of Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement varied, but all were similar to levels of participation in other communities across the nation.



In 2016 fewer Williamsburg residents reported that they had stocked supplies for an emergency, voted in local elections, campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate or read or watched local news than in 2014. However, more residents reported that they had attended a City-sponsored event in 2016.



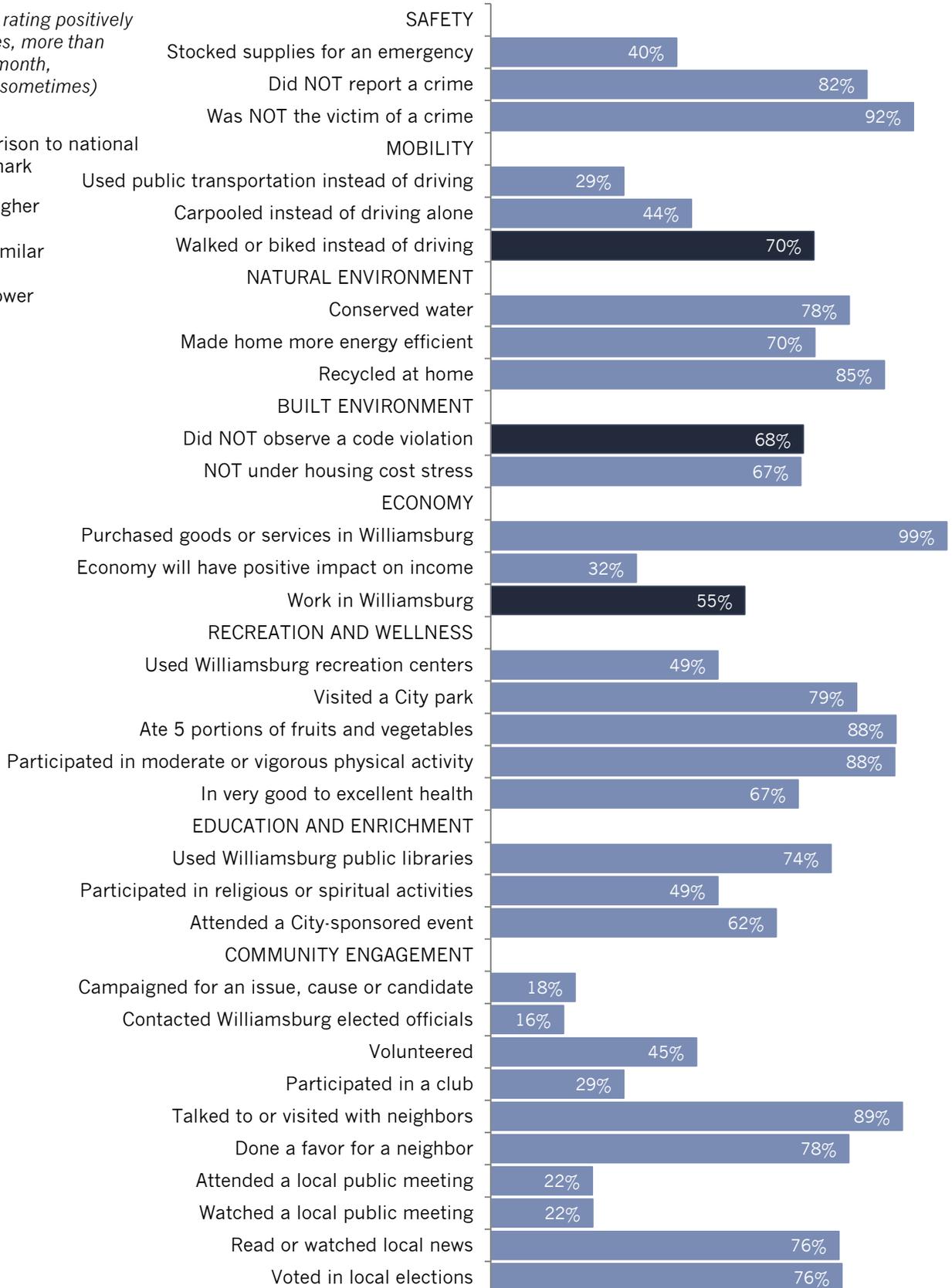
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

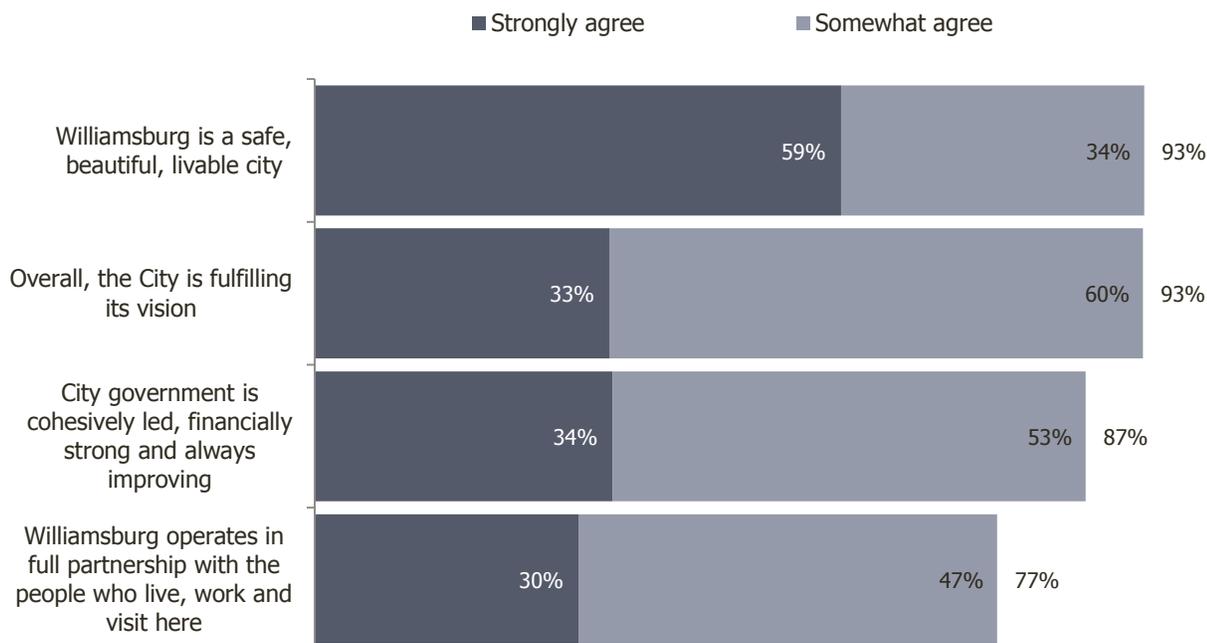


Special Topics

The City of Williamsburg included one special interest question on The NCS that asked residents to evaluate how well the City was fulfilling its vision statement. A vast majority of residents agreed that the City was meeting each of the four aspects of the City’s vision. Nearly all residents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that Williamsburg is a safe, beautiful, livable city and that overall, the City is fulfilling its vision. Of the four statements, fewer residents agreed that Williamsburg operates in full partnership with the people who live, work and visit there.

Figure 4: Fulfilling Williamsburg’s Vision Statement

The City’s vision statement is: “Williamsburg will become an evermore safe, beautiful, livable city of historic and academic renown, served by a city government — cohesively led, financially strong, always improving — in full partnership with the people who live, work and visit here.” Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that the City is fulfilling the following aspects of its vision statement



Conclusions

Williamsburg residents continue to enjoy a high quality of life.

Most residents gave positive ratings for the overall quality of life and Williamsburg as a place to live. Almost 9 in 10 residents rated the City's overall appearance, Williamsburg as a place to raise children, as a place to retire and the overall image or reputation positively. At least 4 in 5 residents reported they would recommend living in Williamsburg to someone who asked. These ratings are similar to the ratings from the City's last iteration of the survey, with the exception of the rating for overall quality of life in Williamsburg which increased since 2014.

Residents identified Economy and Safety as main focus areas.

Survey participants indicated that Economy and Safety were important areas for the Williamsburg community to focus on over the next two years. Many of the Economy ratings tended to be similar to or higher than ratings seen elsewhere. Shopping opportunities and Williamsburg as a place to visit were higher than the national benchmarks and more residents reported that they worked in Williamsburg compared to other communities.

Most residents indicated that maintaining a safe community was a priority in the future. Ratings for Safety across all three pillars were positive and similar to the national benchmark. Nearly all residents felt safe in their neighborhoods and in Williamsburg's downtown/commercial area. These safety ratings remained stable from 2014 to 2016. Residents also valued safety services provided by the City of Williamsburg. Ratings for police, fire, ambulance/EMS, crime prevention and fire prevention were rated positively by at least 4 in 5 citizens. Ratings for crime prevention were higher than seen elsewhere.

Education and Enrichment is a positive feature of Williamsburg.

Ratings for measures related to Education and Enrichment tended to be rated positively by at least half of residents; several measures were higher than levels seen in communities across the nation. At least 8 in 10 respondents gave excellent or good ratings to education and enrichment opportunities, religious or spiritual events and activities, adult education, K-12 education and public libraries. Education and enrichment opportunities, cultural/arts/music activities, adult education and public libraries were higher than ratings given in comparison communities. Since the 2014 survey, ratings increased for adult education opportunities and overall education and enrichment opportunities. Additionally, more residents reported that they had attended a City-sponsored event.