

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Williamsburg, VA
Community Livability Report

2018



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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).

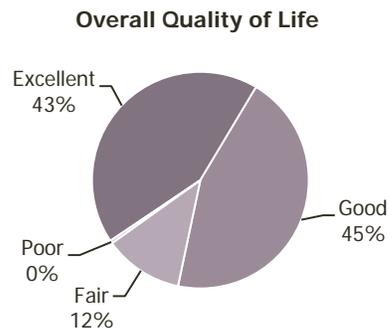
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 379 residents of the City of Williamsburg. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% for all respondents. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Williamsburg

Nearly 9 in 10 residents rated the quality of life in Williamsburg as excellent or good. This evaluation was similar to the national benchmark (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.



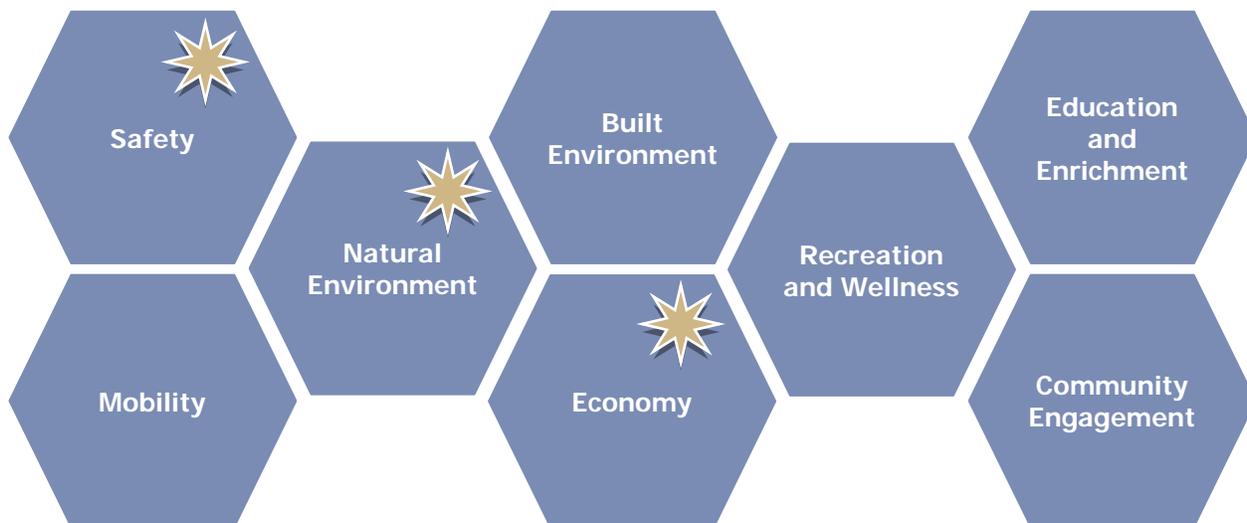
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. As in 2016, residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Williamsburg community in the coming two years. New in 2018 respondents also identified the facet of Natural Environment as a priority in the future. Ratings for all facets were positive and similar to comparison 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?

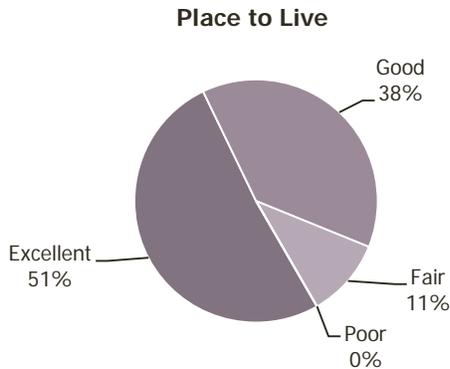
Overall quality of community life represents the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. How residents rate their overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. In the case of Williamsburg, nearly 9 in 10 respondents rated the city as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Williamsburg as a place to live were similar to ratings in other municipalities nationwide.

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. Overall, at least 8 in 10 residents awarded high marks to these aspects of community, yielding ratings that were either similar to or higher than national benchmarks.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, at least half of respondents positively scored most aspects of Community Characteristics and ratings tended to be similar to the national benchmark.

About 9 in 10 residents gave favorable evaluations of Safety, yielding comparisons that were similar to national comparisons. Respondents also awarded strong ratings for aspects of Natural Environment with at least 8 in 10 giving excellent or good marks to each; scores for cleanliness were higher than the national average.

Measures of Economy and Education and Enrichment were also lauded by residents. While most aspects were scored highly by at least 6 in 10 residents and on par with ratings nationwide, respondents applauded shopping opportunities, the community as a destination to visit, education and enrichment opportunities and opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities; each of these characteristics were assessed at levels higher than the benchmarks.



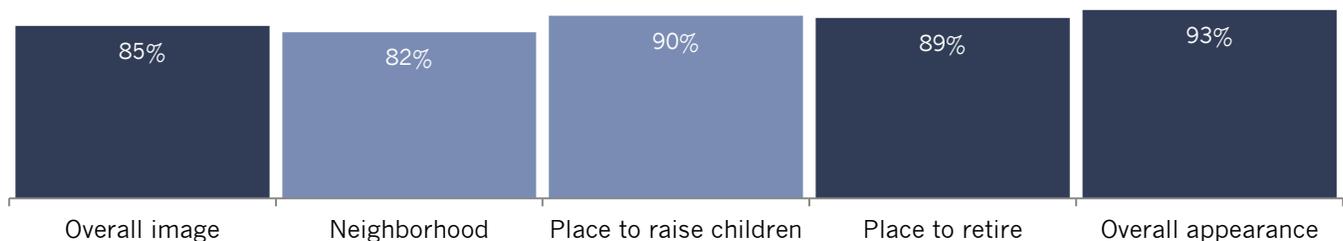
Other notable aspects of Williamsburg included public places where people want to spend time (83% excellent or good) and traffic flow (68%), as residents evaluated both of these items more favorably than others across the country.

In 2018, Williamsburg residents were more pleased with the ease of travel by public transportation than in 2016, but were more critical of the availability of affordable quality food, health and wellness opportunities and adult education (see *Trends over Time* under a separate cover for more information).

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



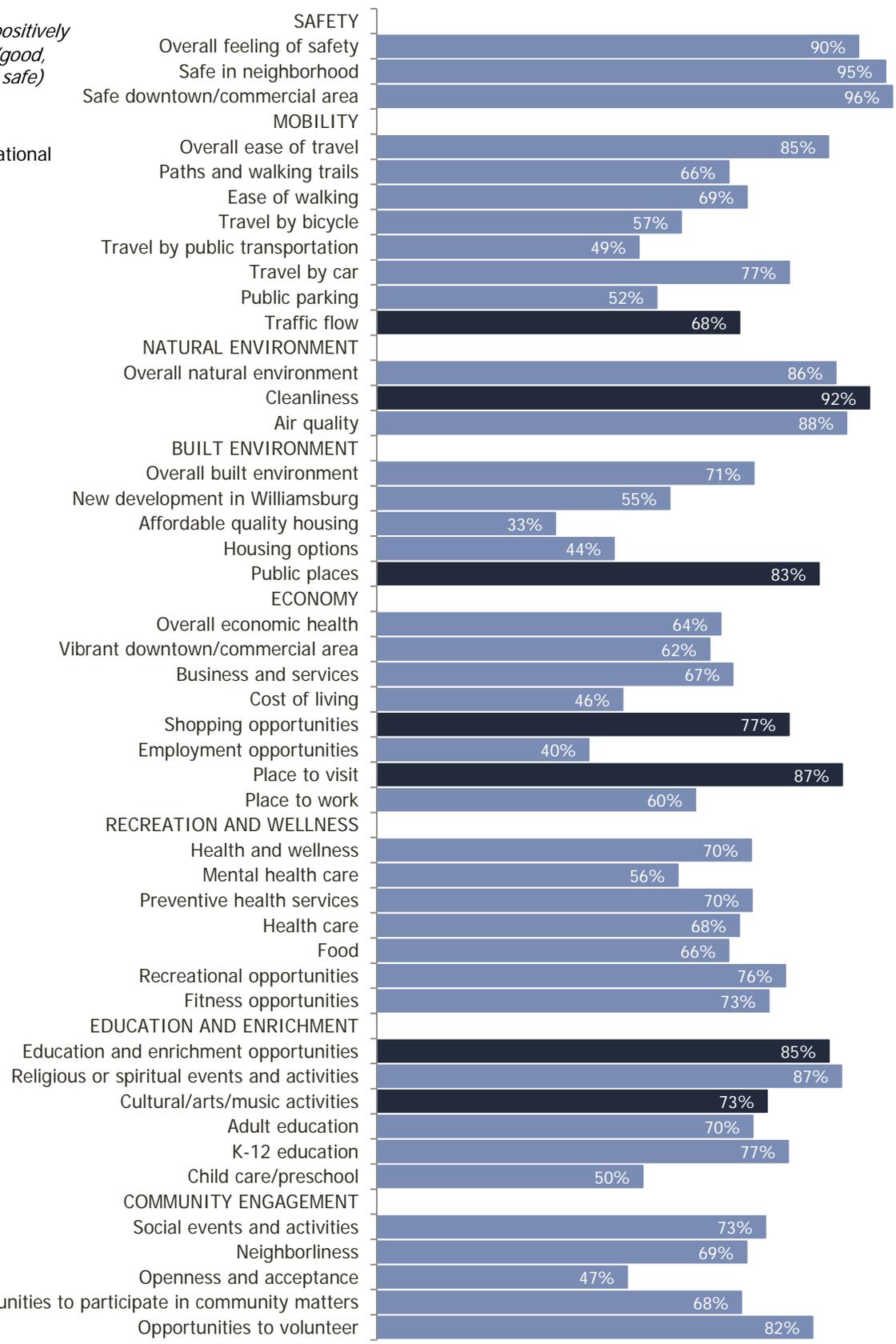
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

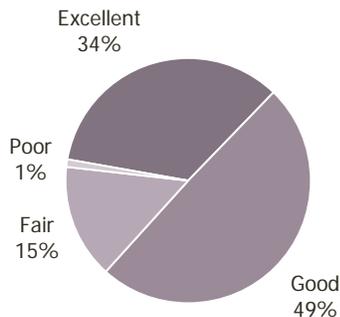
How well does the government of Williamsburg meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Williamsburg as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 8 in 10 residents rated the overall quality of services provided by the City of Williamsburg as excellent or good, which was higher than the national benchmark. About half of respondents were pleased with services provided by the Federal Government, which was similar to levels seen elsewhere in the U.S.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Williamsburg's leadership and governance. Most evaluations of Williamsburg government were similar to municipalities across the nation and rated favorably by at least half of residents. About two-thirds of respondents awarded high marks to the value of services for taxes paid, which was higher than national levels. Compared to 2016, residents felt less positively about the City treating all residents fairly.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Williamsburg. Broadly, at least 6 in 10 rated most services and amenities as excellent or good and nearly all were similar to comparison communities. Among the highest evaluations were safety-related services (i.e., fire, fire prevention, ambulance/EMS), garbage collection, Recreation and Wellness aspects (i.e., City parks, recreation programs and centers) and public libraries, with at least 8 in 10 respondents awarding high marks to each. Most of these top-rated services were on par with ratings given by residents in other communities across the nation, though scores for public libraries outshined national comparisons. Further, survey participants gave more positive assessments to fire prevention, cable television, recreation centers and recreation programs in 2018 compared to 2016.

Overall Quality of City Services

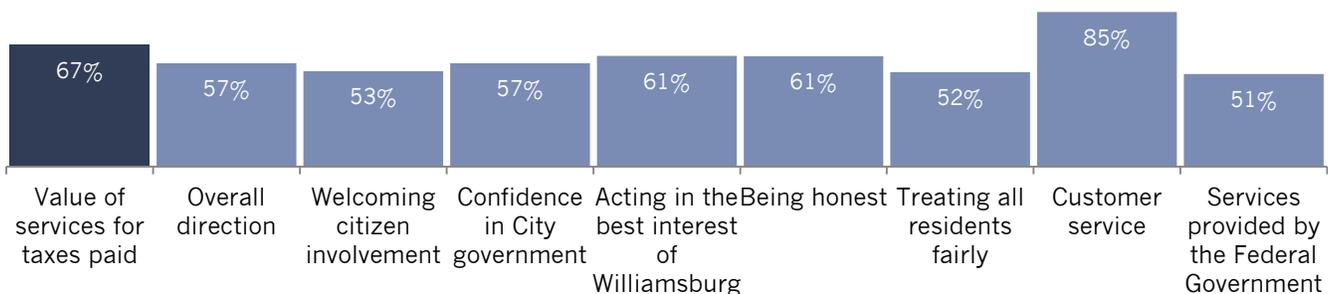


Residents gave most services within other facets ratings that were similar to the benchmark. However, respondents' evaluations of street-related services (i.e., repair, cleaning and lighting) were lower than in 2016 and snow removal was rated lower compared to other U.S. communities.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



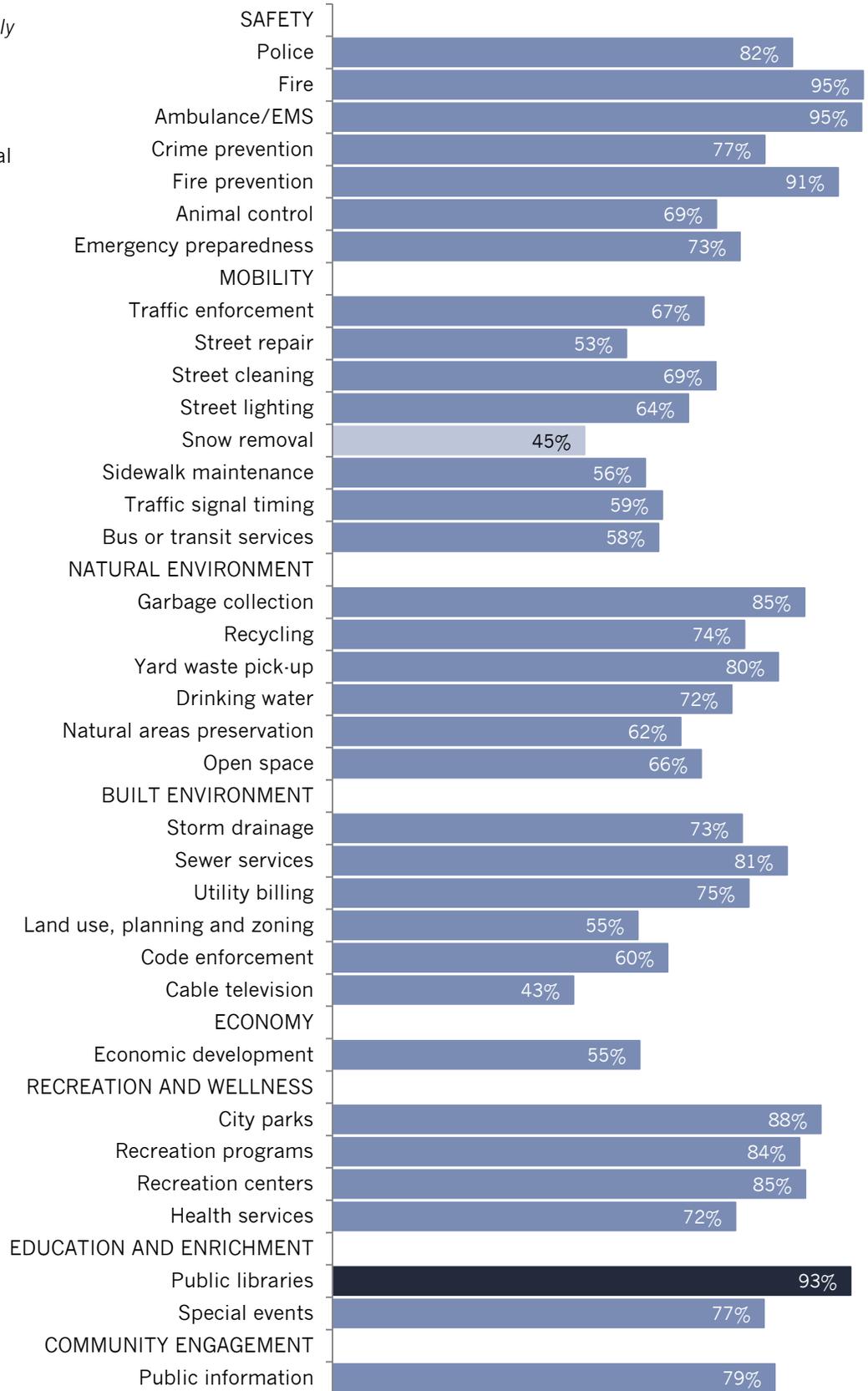
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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?

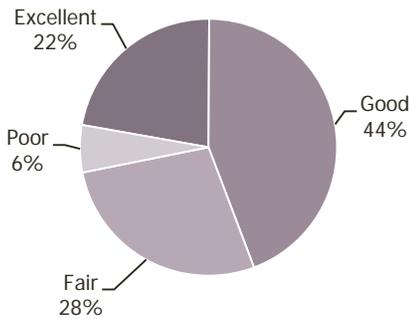
An engaged community harnesses its most valuable resource, its residents. The connections and trust among residents, government, businesses and other organizations help to create a sense of community, a shared sense of membership, belonging and history. Higher than other communities in the U.S., about two-thirds of respondents gave excellent or good scores to the sense of community in Williamsburg.

About three-quarters of survey respondents indicated they planned to remain in the community for the next five years and around 8 in 10 would recommend living in Williamsburg to someone who asked; these levels were similar to those found across the nation. About half of residents reported they had contacted City employees, which was similar to levels reported elsewhere.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Participation rates within Williamsburg tended to be commensurate with peer municipalities. Over 8 in 10 respondents reported they had conserved water, recycled at home, purchased goods or services in the community, participated in healthy diet and exercise behaviors, talked to or visited with their neighbors and voted in local elections. While fewer residents indicated they had used public transportation in 2018 than in 2016, more residents reported stocking supplies for an emergency, volunteering, participating in a club and campaigning for the same period. Levels of participation for all of these activities were also higher than national rates of participation.

Williamsburg participants also indicated higher levels of walking or biking instead of driving, using public libraries and working within the community than peer communities.

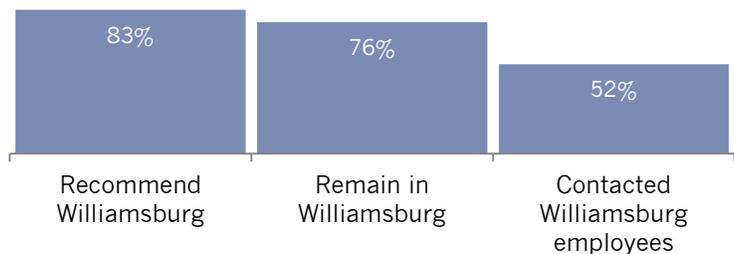
Sense of Community



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

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



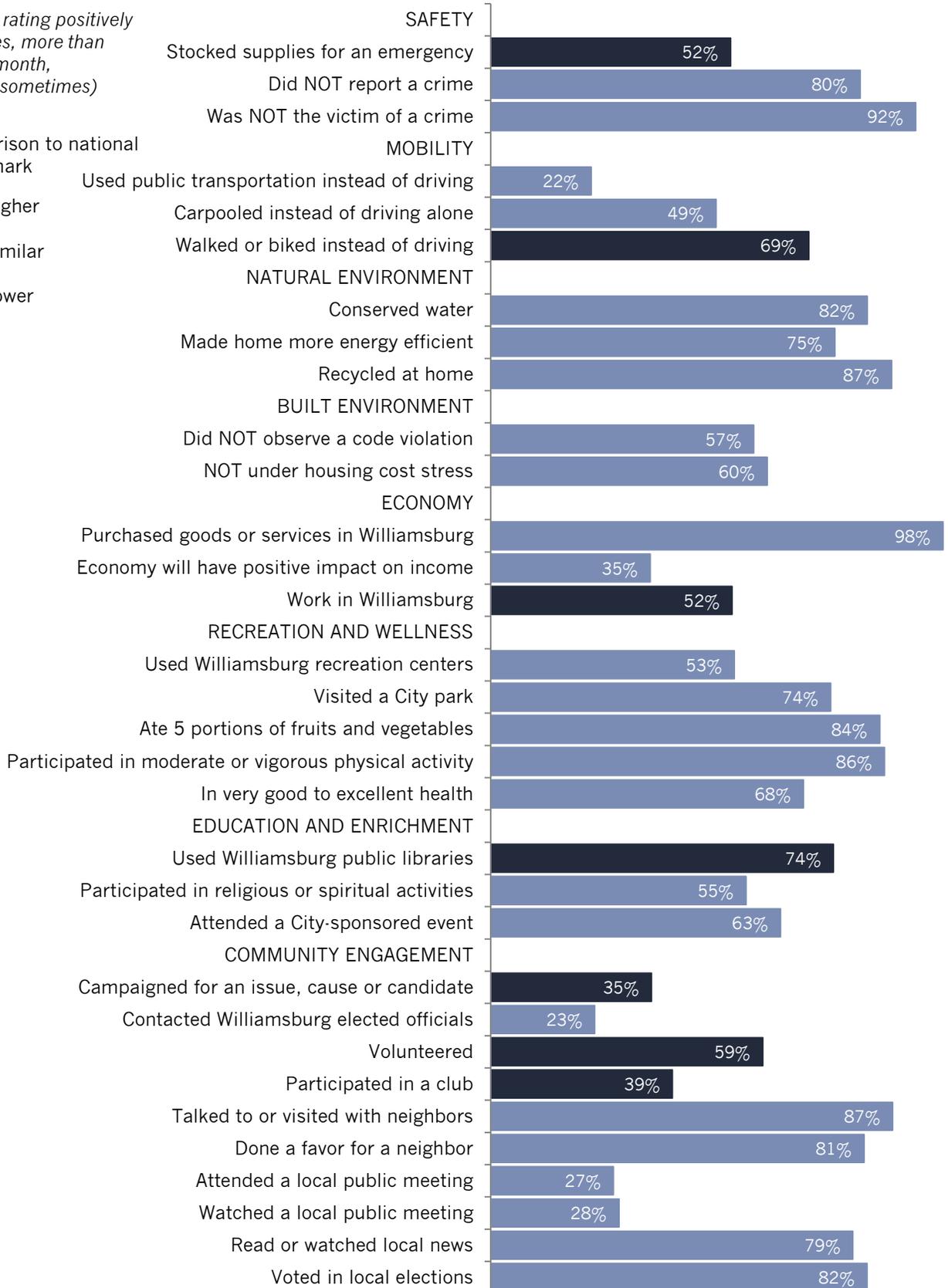
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

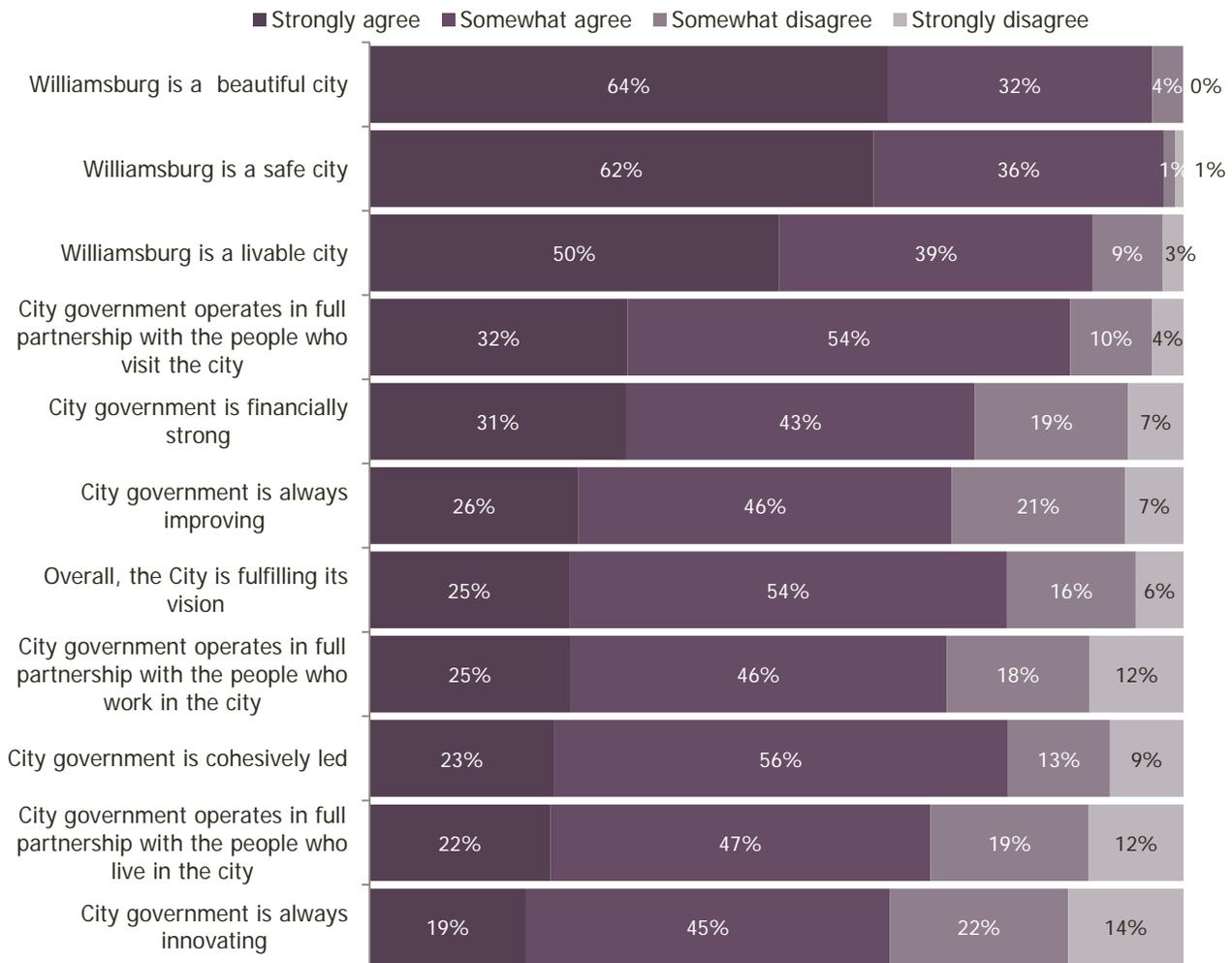


Special Topics

The City of Williamsburg included one question of special interest on The NCS. City leadership sought feedback regarding their efforts to fulfil the vision statement of Williamsburg. A majority of residents agreed that the City was fulfilling each aspect of the vision for the community. At least half of respondents strongly agreed that Williamsburg is a beautiful, safe and livable city while about one-third felt strongly that the government operates in full partnership with the people who visit the city and the City is financially strong.

Figure 4: Agreement with City Achieving Goals

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 and innovating — 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 is a great place to live and residents feel safe.

Nearly 9 in 10 residents rated their overall quality of life as excellent or good in Williamsburg and three-quarters reported they are likely to remain in the community for the next five years. Additionally, about 9 in 10 of respondents awarded high marks to the City as a place to live, and 8 in 10 would be likely to recommend the community to others. At least 8 in 10 survey participants rated Williamsburg as an excellent or good place to retire and awarded high marks to the overall image and appearance of the City, all of which outshined peer communities.

Residents feel safe in general, as well as in their neighborhoods and in downtown area. Safety service ratings were positive and at least 8 in 10 residents indicated they had not reported a crime or been the victim of a crime. Further, about half of respondents reported they had stocked supplies in case of emergency, which was higher than comparison communities and increased since 2016. Almost all residents agreed that the City is achieving their goal for Williamsburg as a safe city.

While ease of travel in Williamsburg is viewed favorably, residents have concerns about the condition of city streets.

Aspects of Mobility received ratings on both ends of the spectrum. Overall ease of travel was positively assessed by over 8 in 10 residents and at least two-thirds awarded high marks to the availability of paths and walking trails, ease of walking, ease of travel by car and traffic flow. Ratings for traffic flow were higher than the national average. Moreover, about two-thirds of survey participants reported walking or biking instead of driving, which was higher than levels in communities nationwide. On the other hand, only about 4 in 10 participants viewed snow removal positively, which lagged behind compared to other municipalities and assessments of street services (repair, cleaning and lighting) declined since 2016. Participation in public transportation as an alternative to driving also declined since the last survey iteration.

Williamsburg's Natural Environment is an asset that residents want to protect.

In 2018, residents felt the Natural Environment was an important City priority, and ratings within this facet were positive and similar to comparisons nationwide. More than 8 in 10 gave positive evaluations to the overall natural environment, cleanliness and air quality; ratings for cleanliness were higher than those observed in peer communities. Reviews for services related to Natural Environment were on par with communities elsewhere and at least three-quarters of respondents reported they had participated in green behaviors, such as conserving water and recycling. Nearly all residents strongly or somewhat agreed that the City was fulfilling its vision to make Williamsburg a beautiful city and over 8 in 10 would like the City to prioritize this area for the next two years.

The City's Economy is a priority for residents.

As in 2016, survey participants prioritized the facet of Economy for Williamsburg to focus on in the coming years. A majority of residents rated the city's overall economic health as excellent or good and at least three-quarters of respondents identified Williamsburg as an excellent or good place to visit and applauded shopping opportunities, both higher ratings than elsewhere in the country. Similar to the benchmarks, most respondents had purchased goods or services in Williamsburg and about one-third of respondents believed the economy would have a positive impact on their income. A higher proportion of residents than average work in Williamsburg.

Residents are more engaged in their community.

Survey respondents were pleased with opportunities to volunteer, attend social events and activities and participate in community matters as well as the overall direction of the City and the government welcoming citizen involvement. Williamsburg respondents felt more connected to their community and reported higher rates of volunteerism, participation in clubs and campaigning in 2018, all of which outpaced levels in comparison communities, in 2018. Additionally, about 7 in 10 of residents agreed that the City operates in full partnership with the people who live and who work in Williamsburg.