

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Bloomington, MN

Community Livability Report

2015



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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 Bloomington. 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).

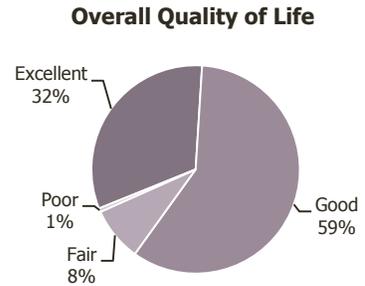
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 1,027 residents of the City of Bloomington. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 3% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Bloomington

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Bloomington as excellent or good. This rating was similar to ratings in communities across the nation (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.



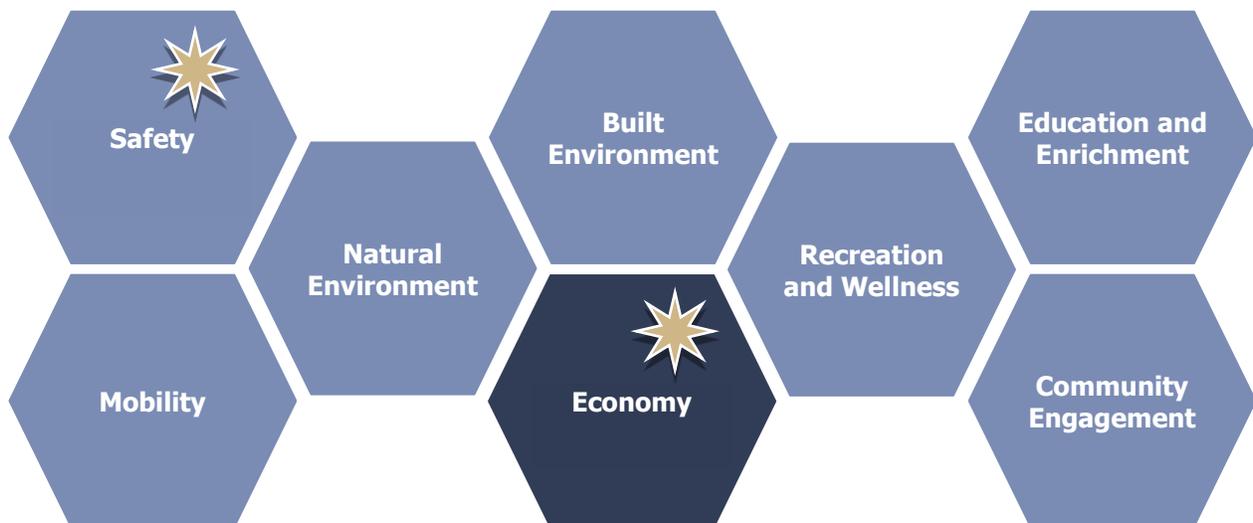
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Bloomington community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Bloomington residents gave high ratings to aspects of Economy, and these ratings tended to be higher than ratings in comparison communities. Ratings for Safety and all other facets of community livability 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 Bloomington’s unique questions.

Legend

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

- * Most important



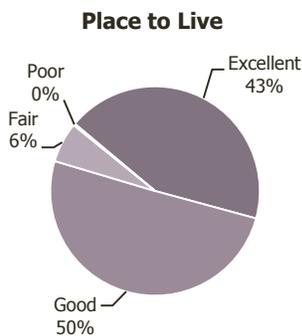
Community Characteristics

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 Bloomington, 94% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Bloomington 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 Bloomington as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Bloomington and its overall appearance. At least 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to Bloomington as a place to raise children, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image and overall appearance of Bloomington. About three-quarters of survey participants were pleased with Bloomington as a place to retire; all of these ratings were similar to ratings in other communities.

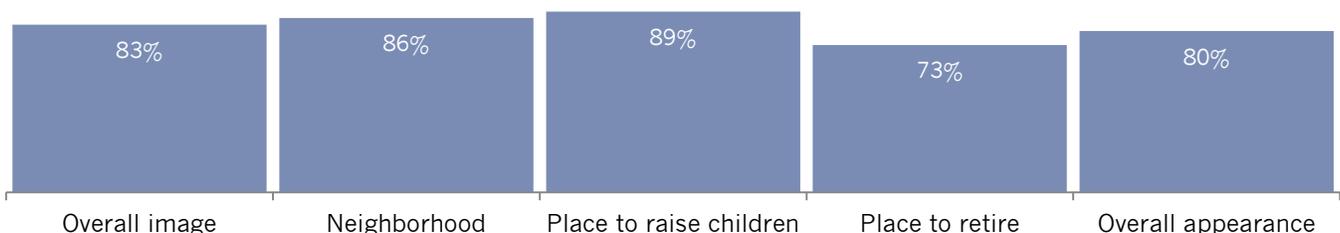
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Almost all aspects of Community Characteristics were rated positively by a majority of respondents and all aspects were at least similar to the national benchmarks. Approximately 9 in 10 residents gave favorable ratings to all aspects of Safety, and around 8 in 10 or more residents were pleased with all aspects of Natural Environment. At least 6 in 10 residents rated all aspects of Community Engagement positively. While ratings for Mobility varied, all aspects were rated similar to ratings given in other communities. Within the facets of Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment, all aspects were rated positively by at least 6 in 10 respondents and were similar to the benchmark with the exception of the availability of preventive health services, affordable quality health care and affordable quality child care/preschool, which were rated higher than the benchmark. Aspects of Built Environment were also rated favorably by at least 6 in 10 residents and two aspects, the availability of affordable quality housing and the variety of housing options, received ratings higher than ratings given in other communities. Ratings for Economy were particularly strong: at least 8 in 10 residents positively rated the overall economic health in Bloomington, the overall quality of businesses and services, shopping opportunities and Bloomington as a place to work and to visit. Additionally, 6 of the 8 aspects of Economy received ratings higher than ratings given in other communities across the nation.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



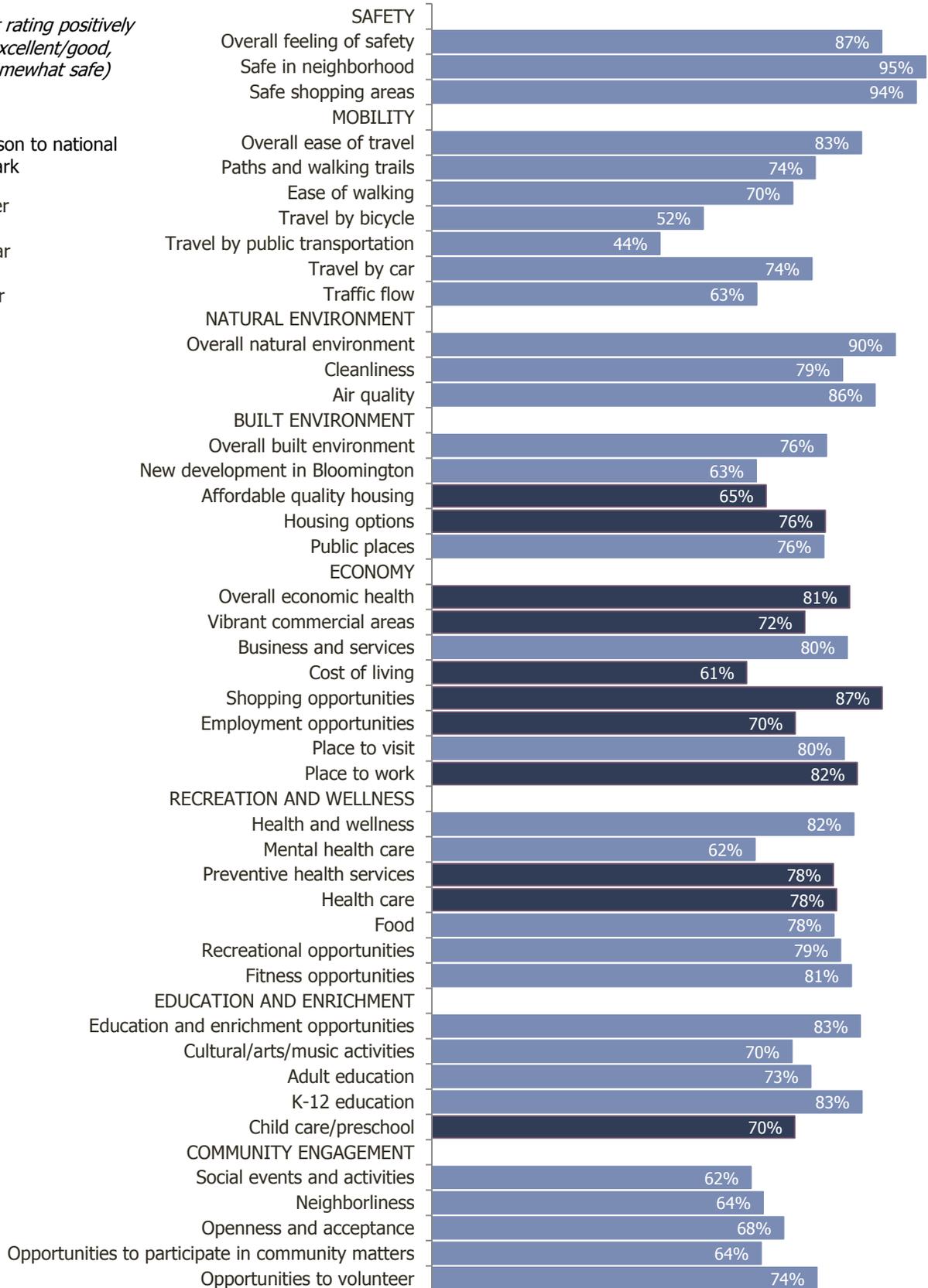
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

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

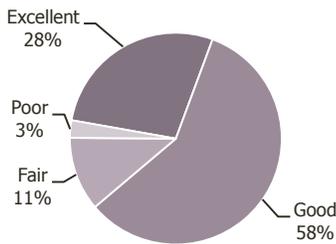
The overall quality of the services provided by Bloomington as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. In Bloomington, 86% of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of city services and about half gave positive ratings to the services provided by the Federal Government, both of which were similar to ratings given in other communities.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Bloomington’s leadership and governance. About 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the overall customer service by Bloomington employees and about 7 in 10 favorably rated the overall direction that Bloomington is taking. Around two-thirds of respondents were pleased with the value of services for taxes paid, overall confidence in City government, City government generally acting in the best interest of Bloomington, government being honest and treating all residents fairly, and a majority of residents gave positive ratings to the job Bloomington government does at welcoming citizen involvement. All of these aspects were rated similar to the benchmark.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Bloomington. A majority of respondents gave positive ratings to all aspects of Governance. More than 7 in 10 residents were pleased with the facets of Safety, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement and all aspects within these facets received ratings similar to ratings given in other communities. Within Mobility, Natural

Environment and Built Environment, all ratings were positive and similar to the benchmark with the exception of snow removal, drinking water, natural areas preservation and storm drainage, which were rated higher than the benchmark. Economic development within the facet of Economy was rated favorably by about three-quarters of respondents and was also rated higher than ratings given in other communities across the nation.

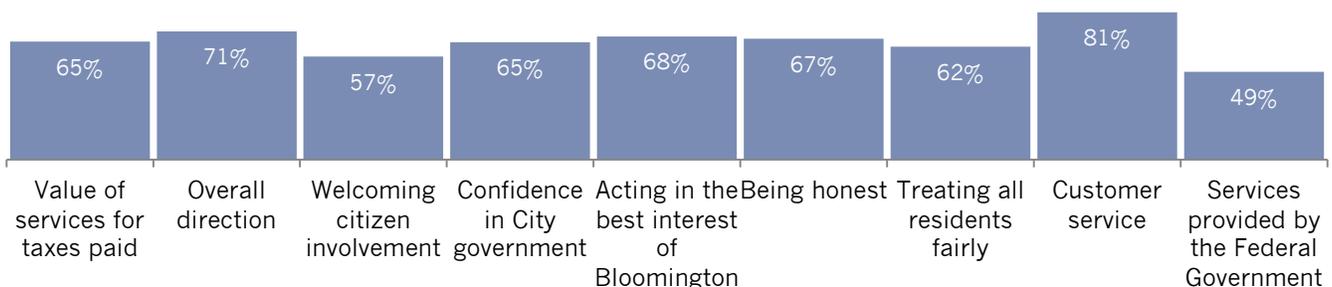
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



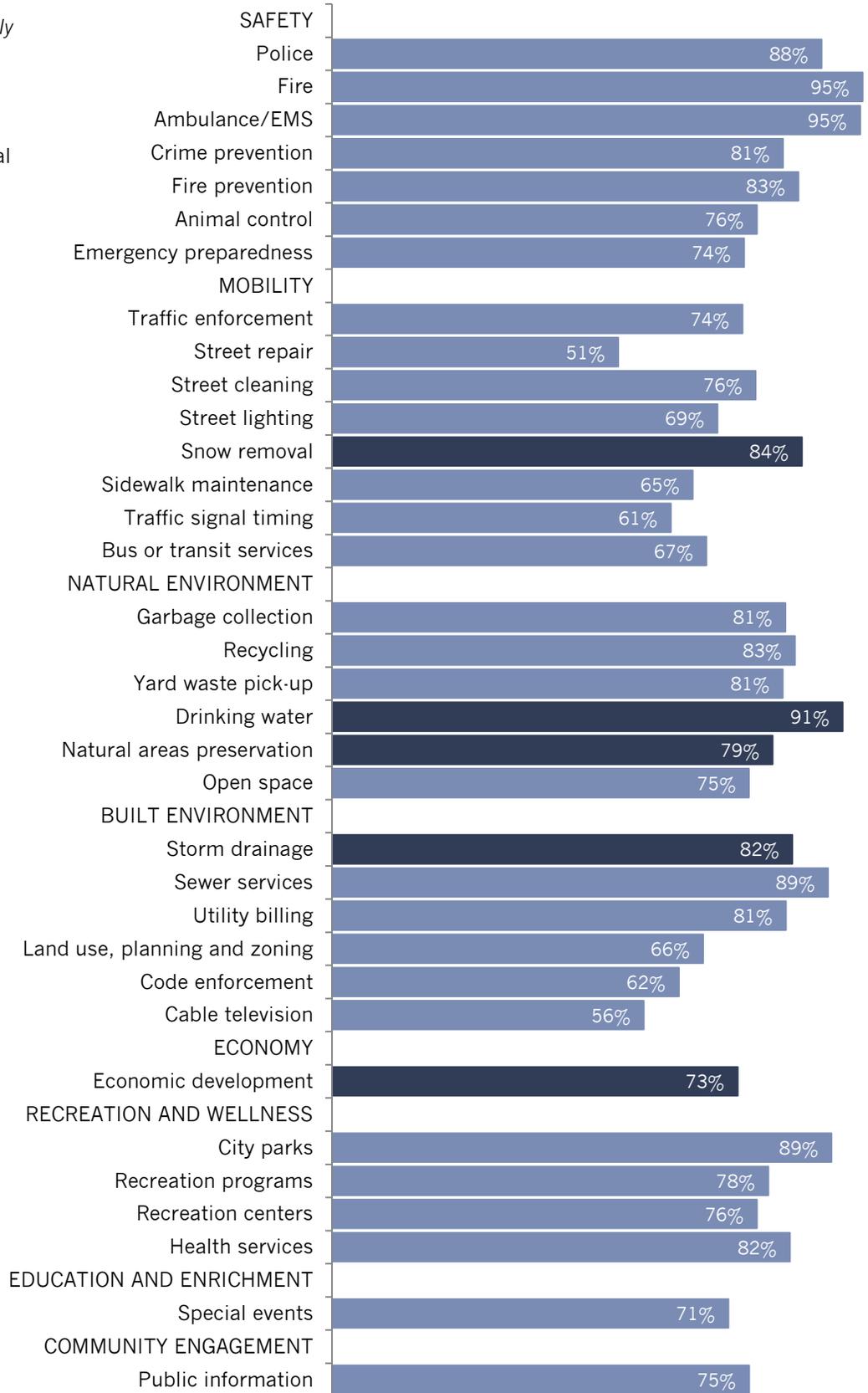
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



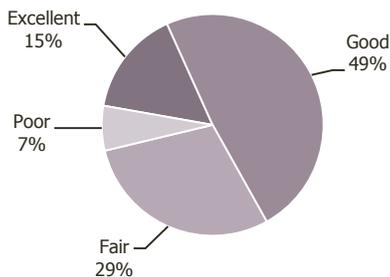
Participation

Are the residents of Bloomington 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 Bloomington, 64% of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the sense of community, and this rating was similar to ratings in other communities across the nation. About 9 in 10 residents would recommend living in Bloomington to others and plan to remain in Bloomington for the next five years, and fewer than half had contacted Bloomington employees in the 12 months prior to the survey. These ratings were all similar to ratings given 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. Generally, ratings across the different facets of Participation varied. Within the facet of Safety, while at least four in five residents did not report a crime and were not the victim of a crime, only 17% had stocked supplies for an emergency, a rate lower than seen in other communities. In Natural Environment, virtually all residents recycled at home (a rate higher than the benchmark) and about three-quarters had conserved water (a rate lower than the benchmark). Ratings within the facets of Built Environment and Economy were generally similar to ratings given in other communities with the exception of not observing a code violation and believing that the economy would have a positive impact on the respondent's income, both of which had higher reported rates than seen in other communities. In Education and Enrichment, about 4 in 10 residents had attended a City-sponsored event, which was a rate lower than the benchmark. Ratings for aspects within the facets of Mobility, Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement varied, but all were similar to rates of participation in other communities across the nation.

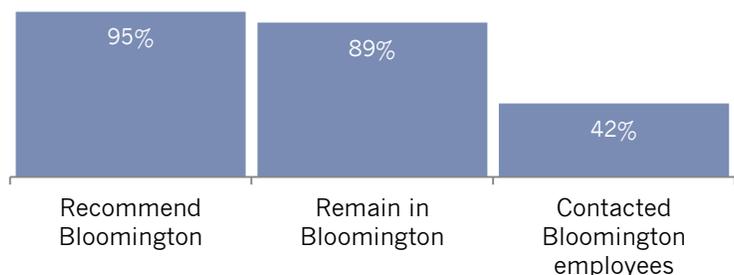
Sense of Community



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

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



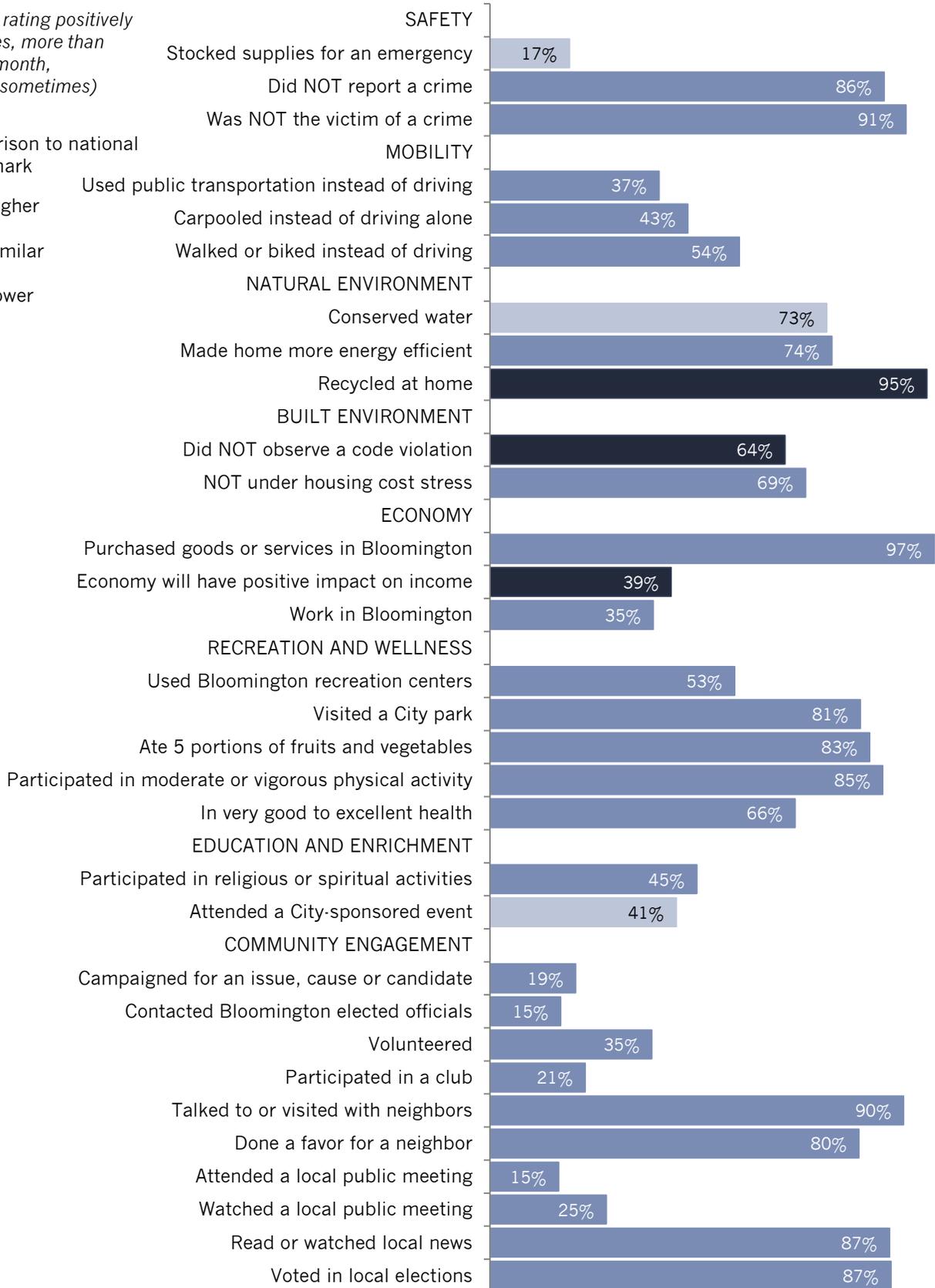
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

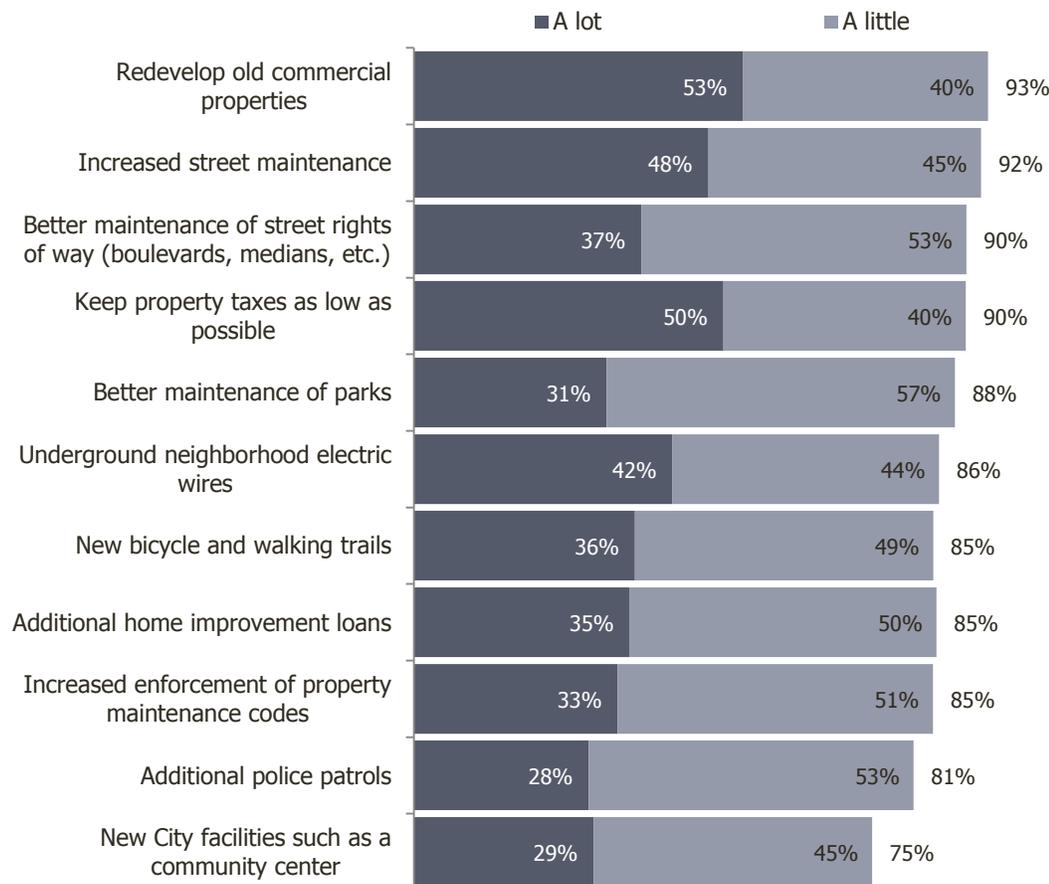


Special Topics

The City of Bloomington included two questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked respondents to what extent certain City actions would increase property values in Bloomington. At least three-quarters of residents thought that all actions listed would increase property values by at least a little bit. However, at least 9 in 10 residents believed that redeveloping old commercial properties, increasing street maintenance, providing better maintenance of street rights of way and keeping property taxes as low as possible would increase property values.

Figure 4: Potential Actions to Increase Property Values

To what extent, if at all, would each of the following City actions increase property values in Bloomington?

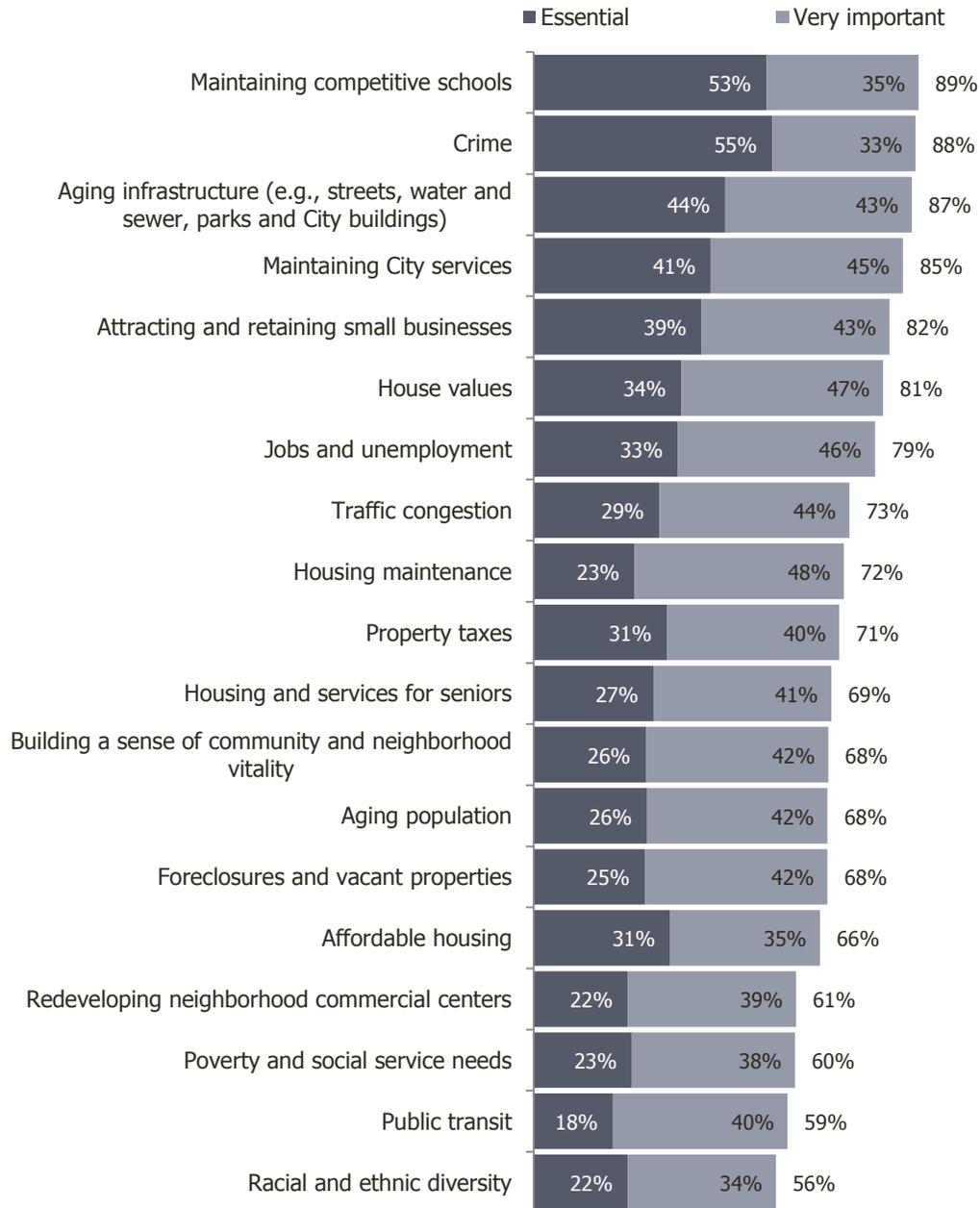


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The second special-interest question asked respondents how important certain issues were for the City to address in the next five years. About 9 in 10 residents thought that maintaining competitive schools was the most important issue to address, and a similar number thought that crime, aging infrastructure and maintaining City services were also important to address. About 8 in 10 respondents thought that attracting and retaining small businesses, house values, and jobs and employment were important. Fewer than 60% of residents thought that public transit and racial and ethnic diversity were important issues to address in the coming five years.

Figure 5: Importance of Potential Issues

How important, if at all, is it for Bloomington to address each of the following issues over the next five years?



Conclusions

Bloomington residents continue to enjoy a high quality of life.

Most residents rated their quality of life positively and think that Bloomington is an excellent or good place to live. About 9 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to Bloomington as a place to raise children and 8 in 10 or more residents gave positive ratings for the overall appearance and overall image of Bloomington and their neighborhood as a place to live. Most residents would recommend Bloomington to others and plan on remaining in Bloomington for the next five years. These ratings remained stable from 2014 to 2015 (for more information on trends, see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover).

Economy is important to residents and is highly rated in Bloomington.

Economy was identified as an important area of focus in the coming years and most aspects of Economy were rated positively by a majority of residents. Across the three pillars of community livability, 8 of the 12 aspects of Economy received ratings higher than ratings given in other communities across the nation, including the overall economic health of Bloomington, vibrant commercial areas, cost of living, shopping and employment opportunities, Bloomington as a place to work, economic development and believing that the economy will have a positive impact on income. Further, ratings for employment opportunities increased from 2014 to 2015 and more residents reported a positive economic outlook in 2015. Other Economy ratings remained stable over time.

Residents are pleased with City services, and maintaining them is a priority.

Many City services were positively rated by at least 8 in 10 residents, including police, fire, crime and fire prevention and the overall quality of customer service by the City. Additionally, four services (snow removal, drinking water, natural areas preservation and storm drainage) received ratings higher than ratings given in other communities. However, when asked about important issues for the City to address in the next five years, 85% of respondents thought that maintaining City services was important. Also, when asked about actions that would increase property values, about 9 in 10 residents believed that increased street maintenance, better maintenance of street rights of way and better maintenance of parks would increase property values by at least a little bit. Ratings for street repair, street cleaning, snow removal and bus or transit services increased from 2014 to 2015 while ratings for fire prevention, recreation centers, recreation programs and special events decreased.