

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Denver, CO

Community Livability Report
2018



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

NRC is a charter member of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative, providing clear disclosure of our sound and ethical survey research practices.

About

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

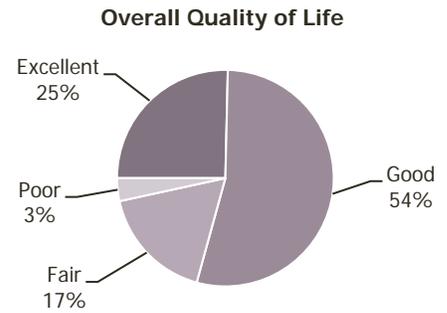
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 1,202 residents of the City of Denver. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 3% 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 Denver

About 8 in 10 residents rated the quality of life in Denver as excellent or good. This rating was similar to the benchmark for communities with populations over 300,000 (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.

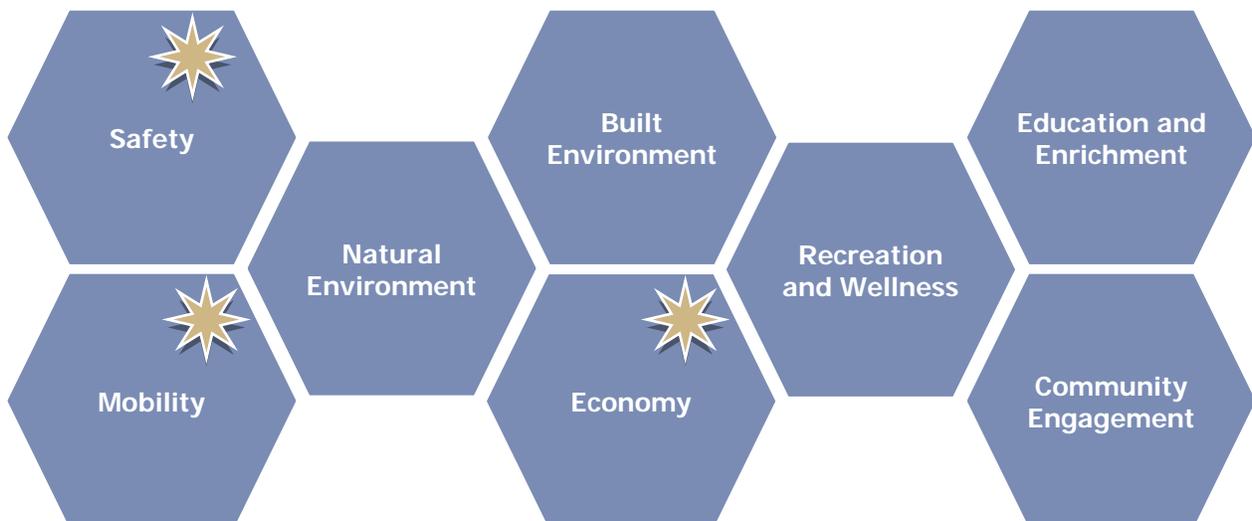
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety, Economy and Mobility as priorities for the Denver community in the coming two years. Aggregate ratings for all facets were similar to the scores found in other large communities across the nation. 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 Denver’s unique questions.

Legend

- Higher than custom benchmark
- Similar to custom benchmark
- Lower than custom 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 Denver, about 9 in 10 rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Denver as a place to live were similar to ratings in other large communities across the America.

In addition to rating the City as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Denver as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Denver and its overall appearance. About three-fourths of residents rated Denver's image as excellent or good, a rating higher than the custom benchmark. About 7 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to their neighborhoods and to Denver's overall appearance. About half of those surveyed rated Denver as an excellent or good place to retire, a rating similar on par with other communities with populations over 300,000.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated almost 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Of the 39 aspects assessed, 8 scored higher than the benchmark, 6 scored lower and 25 were rated similar to ratings given in other large communities. Community Characteristics receiving above par ratings fell into the area of Economy: Denver as a place to visit, Denver as a place to work, employment opportunities and its overall economic health. Ratings of recreation opportunities, fitness opportunities and cultural/arts/music activities also received ratings higher than the other large jurisdictions across the U.S. Residents appreciated the ease of walking in Denver more so than their counterparts.

Community aspects receiving ratings lower than the benchmark related to auto traffic (travel by car, public parking and traffic flow), housing (affordable quality housing and housing options) and cost of living. All of these aspects were rated positively by fewer than 30% of residents.



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

Comparison to custom benchmark
 ■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



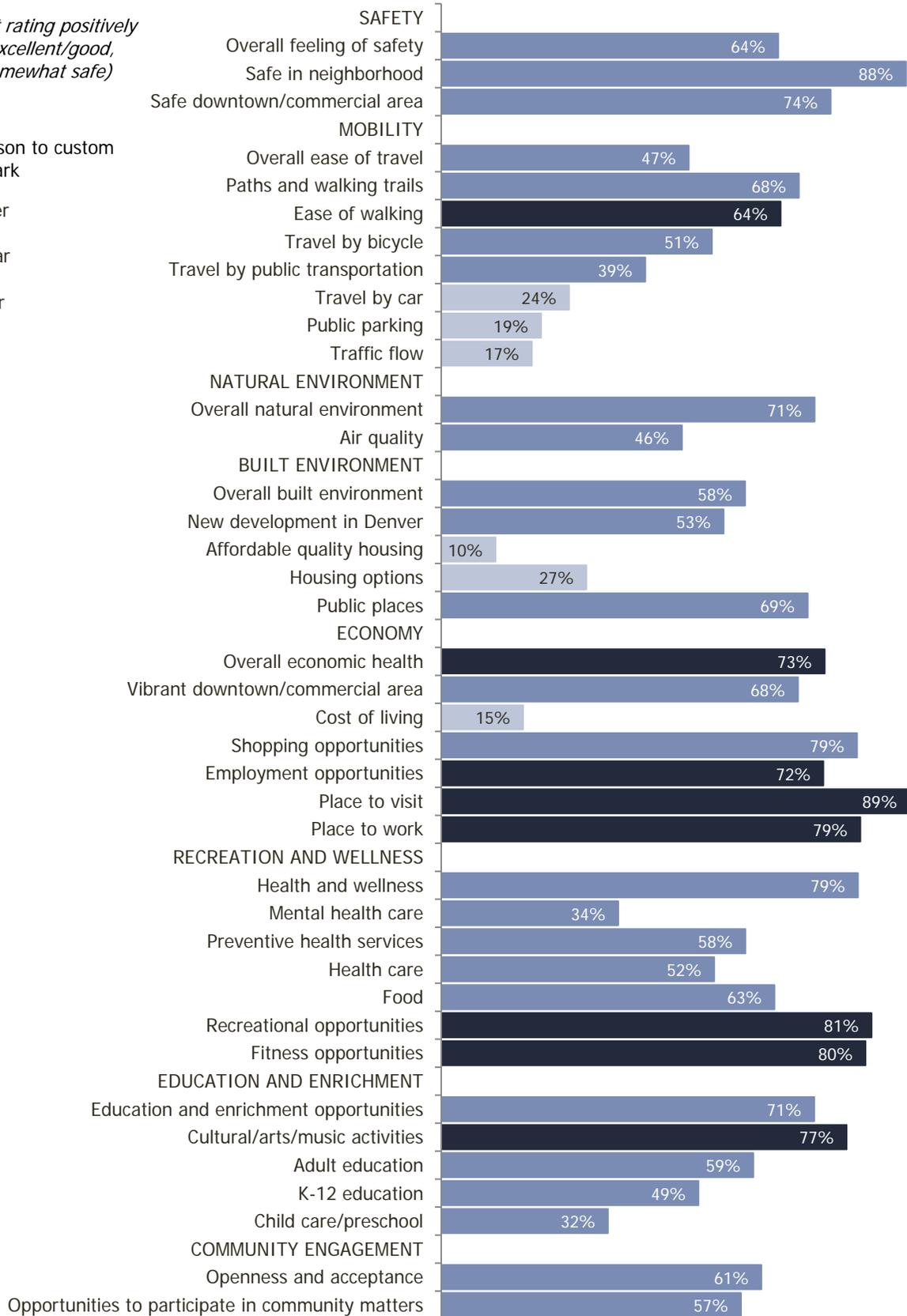
The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to custom
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

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

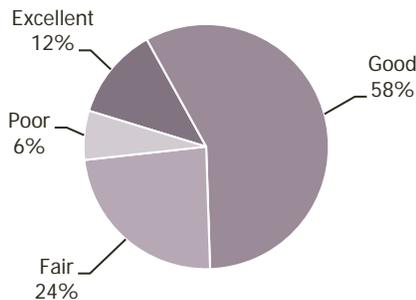
The overall quality of the services provided by Denver as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 7 in 10 residents rated the overall quality of City services excellent or good, a favorability rating twice as high as given to the Federal government. Both ratings of governance were similar to the benchmarks and had significantly increased from 2017 (see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover).

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Denver’s leadership and governance. Ratings of public trust hovered around 50% excellent or good, on par with the benchmark averages.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Denver. Fire, ambulance/EMS, garbage, parks and libraries received the highest ratings with more than 8 in 10 residents providing assessments of excellent or good. Most services rated received marks similar to the benchmarks. Street cleaning and open space scored above other large communities in the comparison. No service was related below the custom benchmark.

Residents rated seven services more positively in 2018 than in 2017. These services included emergency preparedness, animal control, snow removal, open space, natural area preservation, storm drainage and land use/planning/zoning. No services received significantly lower scores in 2018.

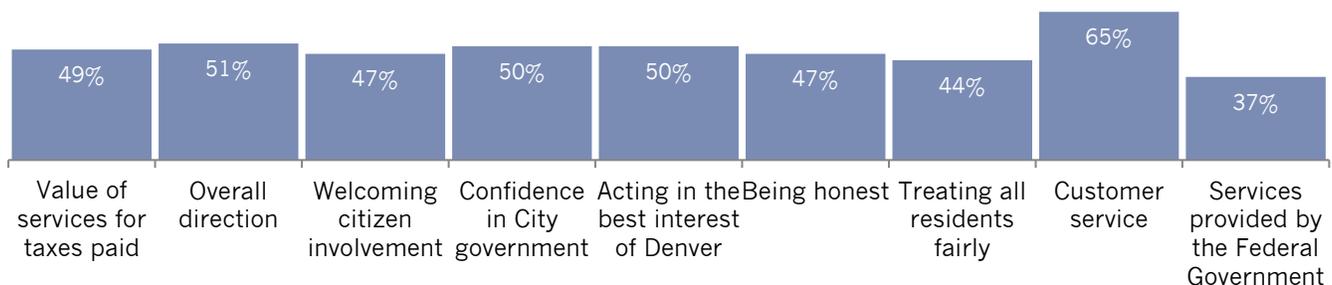
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to custom benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



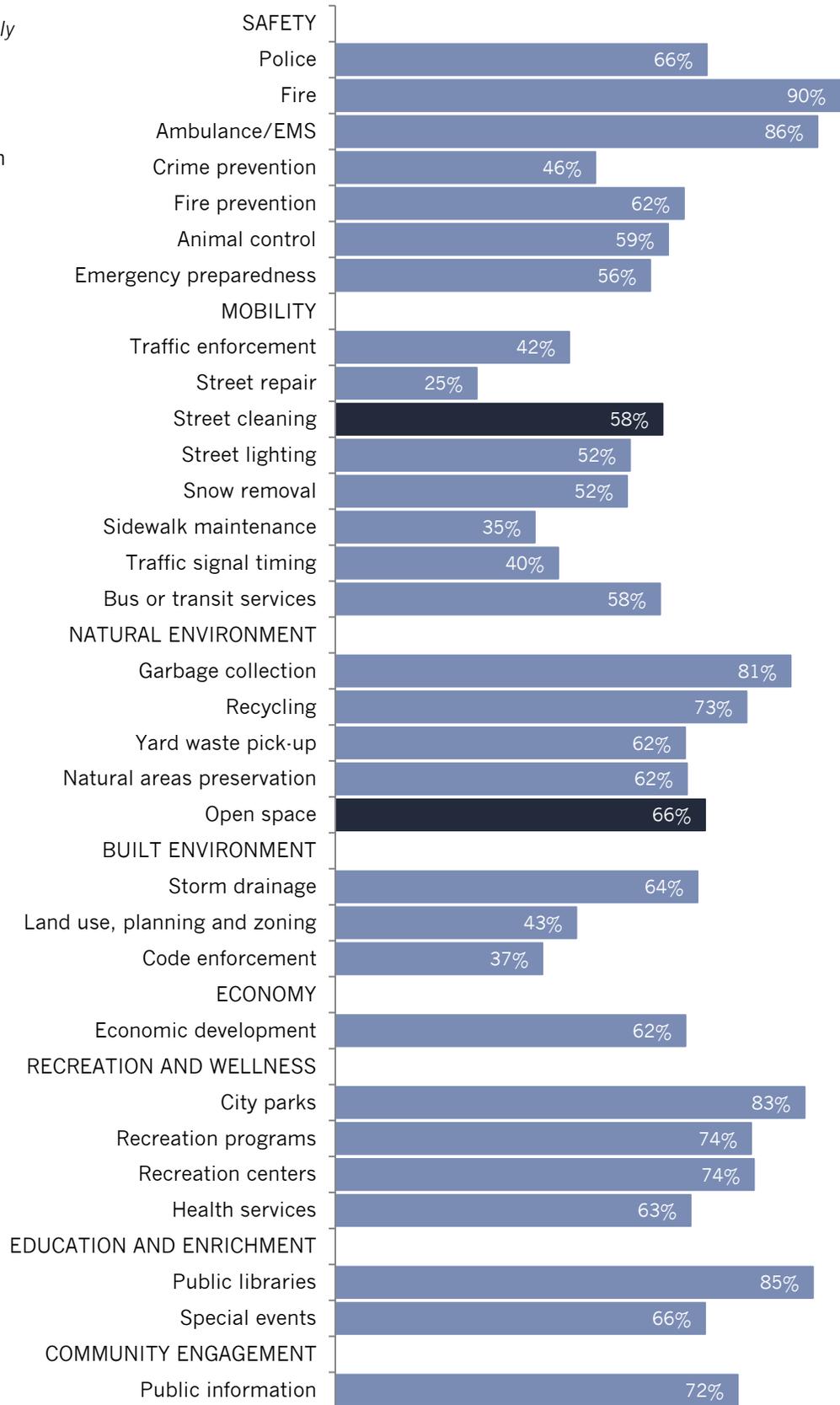
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to custom
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

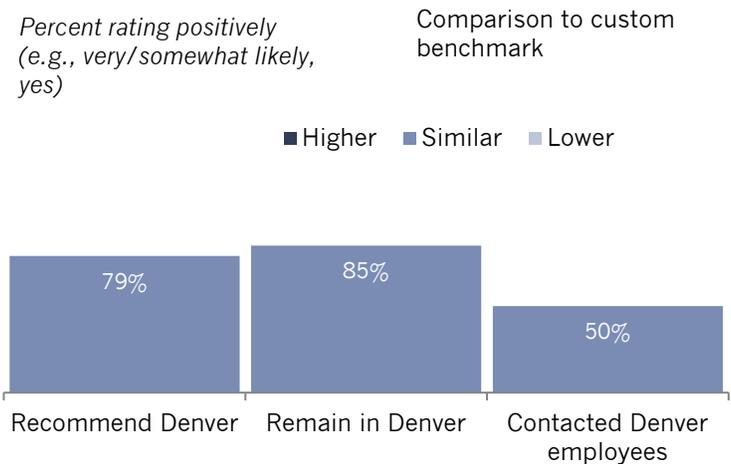
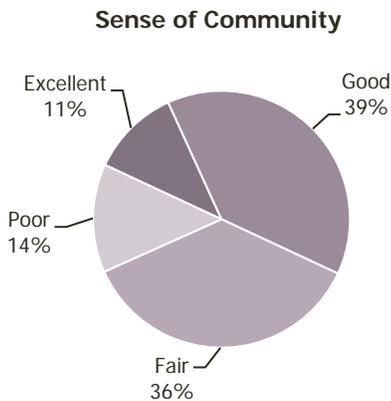


Participation

Are the residents of Denver 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. About half of residents rated Denver’s sense of community as excellent or good, a rating similar to the benchmark. About 8 in 10 respondents were likely to recommend living in Denver and planned to remain in Denver; these ratings were also on par with ratings in other communities with populations over 300,000.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Rates of Participation were highest for purchasing locally, park visitation, recycling, and voting. Denver residents reported significantly more walking, biking and transit use than their counterparts in comparison communities. They also reported more frequent visitation of City parks and City-sponsored events than other big city dwellers.



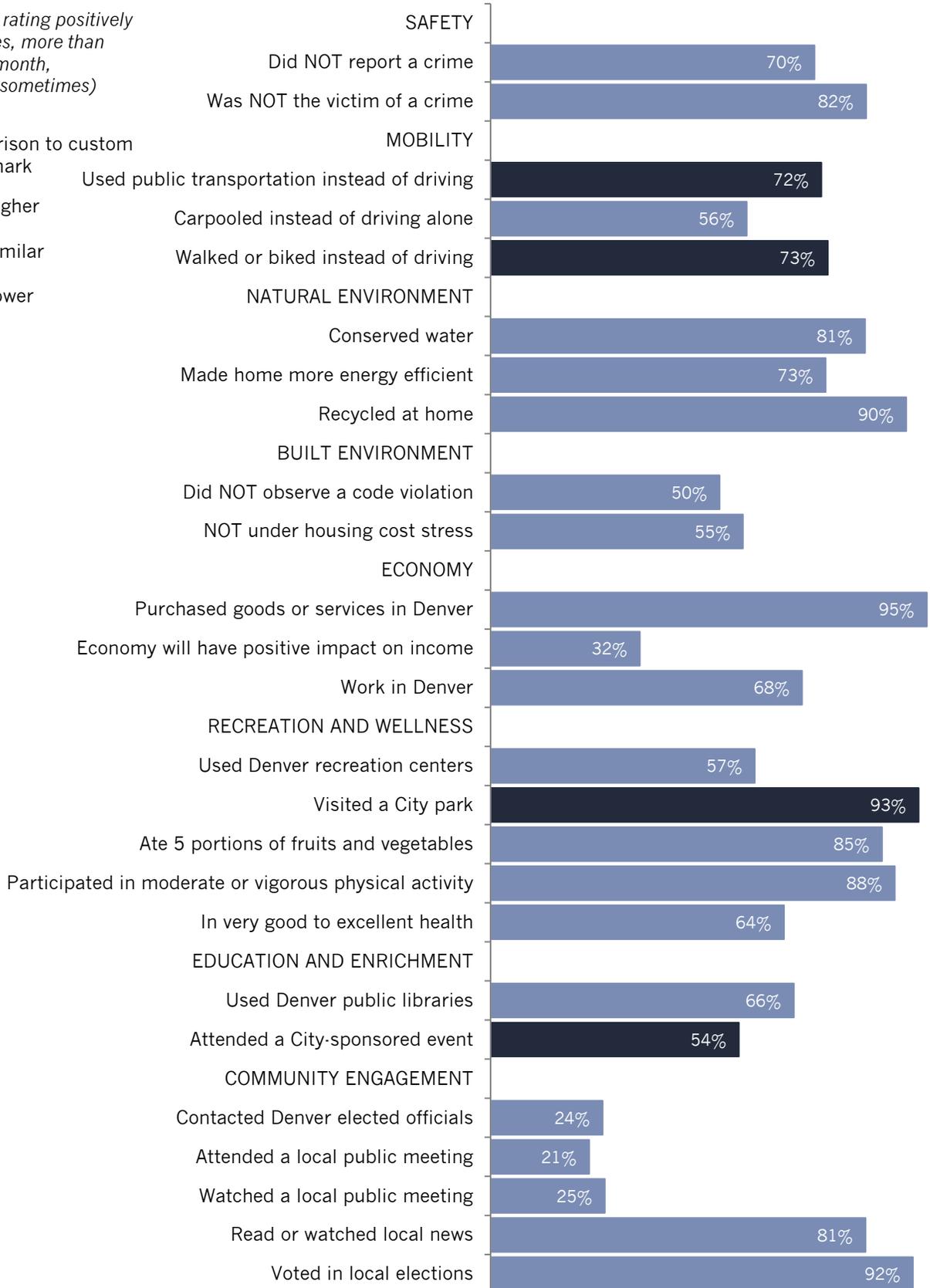
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to custom
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Special Topics

The City of Denver included six questions of special interest on The NCS. Topics included customer service, police officer conduct and reduction of landfill waste.

When asked about in-person, phone or email contact with City employees, about half of residents reported some form of contact in the 12 months prior to the survey. Respondents who reported contact gave favorable ratings to City employees, with at least 7 in 10 residents giving a rating of excellent or good to various aspects of customer service. Employee courtesy scored the highest.

Figure 4: Contact with City of Denver Employees

Have you had any in-person, phone or email contact with an employee of the City of Denver within the last 12 months (including police, receptionists, planners or any others)?

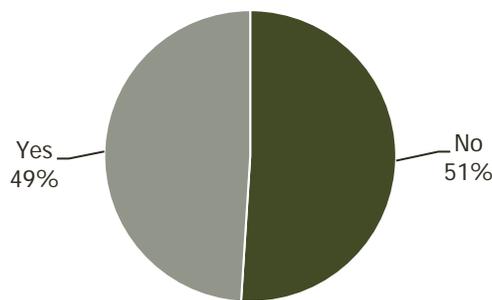
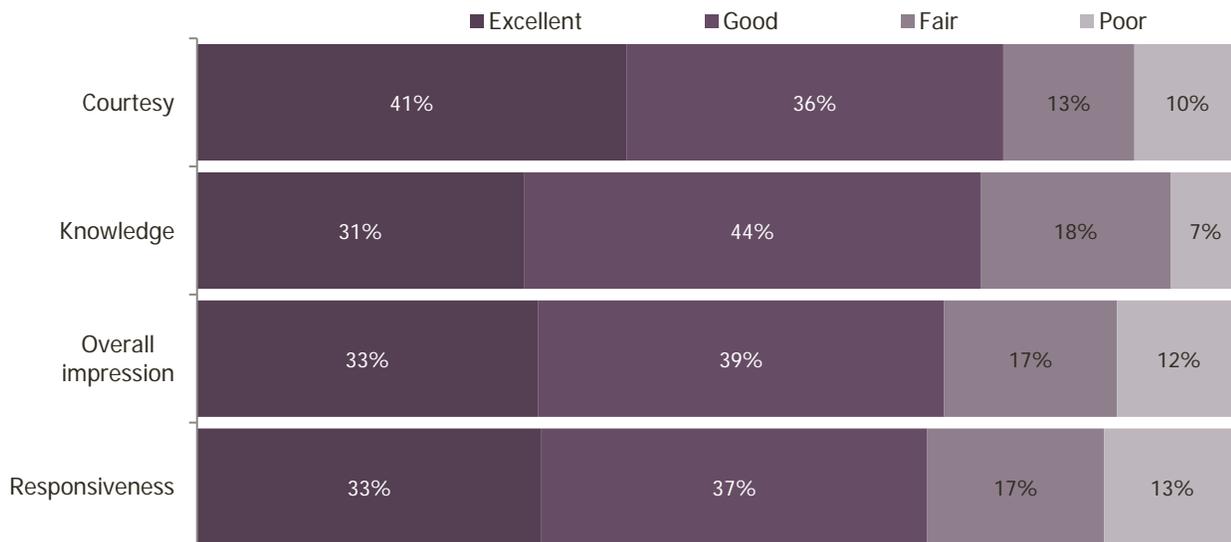


Figure 5: Impression of Contact with City of Denver Employees

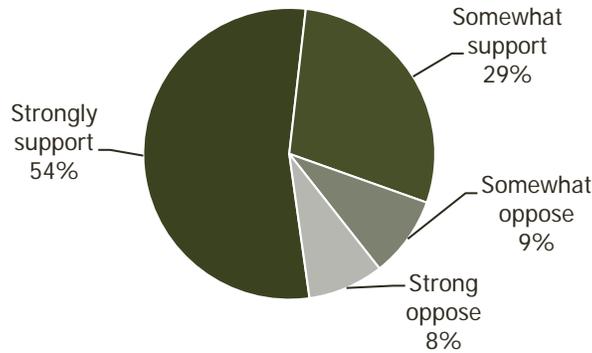
What was your impression of the employee(s) of the City of Denver in your most recent contact? (Rate each characteristic below.)



Residents were asked their support for the City of Denver to provide free composting and recycling while charging for only landfill. Landfill charges would be based on the volume of waste generated from household. More than half of those surveyed expressed strong support for the initiative, while another 30% said they would at least somewhat support the initiative. About 17% opposed the program.

Figure 6: Reducing Landfill Waste

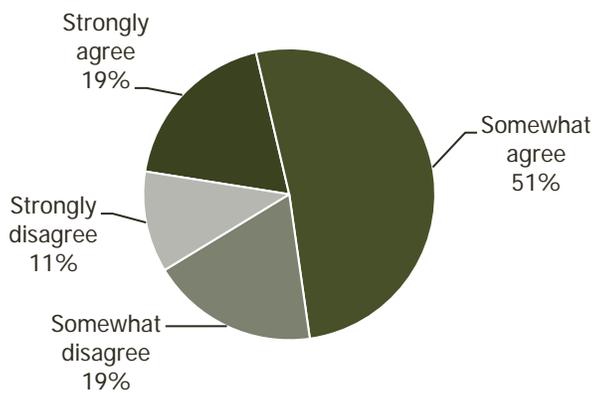
To encourage composting and recycling, some cities provide free composting and recycling and charge for landfill waste, with fees based on how much or how little waste a household sends to the landfill. To what extent would you support or oppose the City adopting a similar program with the goal of reducing the amount of waste that is being delivered to landfills?



Survey respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement: **The City of Denver government does a good job of managing police officer conduct.** About 7 in 10 residents either strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement; 3 in 10 disagreed.

Figure 7: Government Management of Police Officer Conduct

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The City of Denver government does a good job of managing police officer conduct"?



About one in three residents reported that they had contacted 311 in the 12 months prior to the survey. Respondents who had used the services rated the staff favorably with about 8 in 10 providing excellent or good assessments to employees in terms of courtesy, knowledge and responsiveness. A similar number of residents gave positive ratings to their overall impression of the agents.

Figure 8: Contact with 311

In the past 12 months have you or anyone in your household contacted 311?

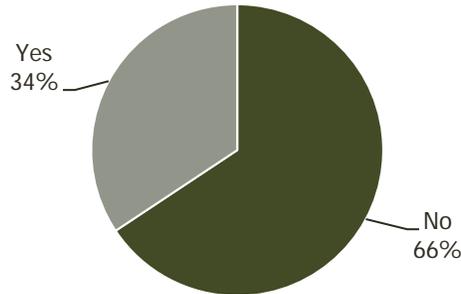
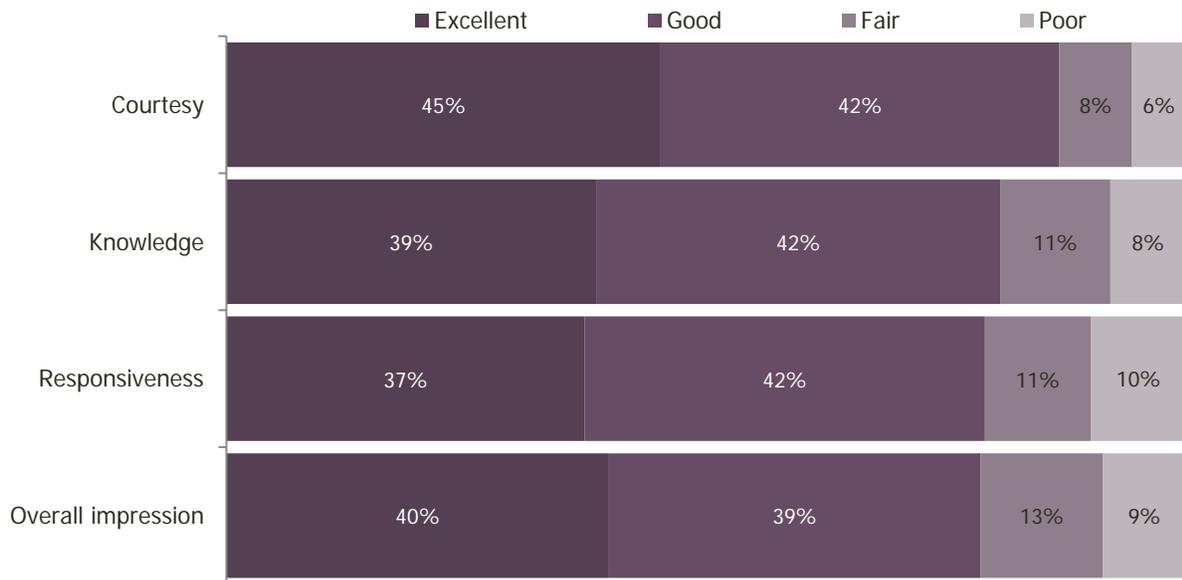


Figure 9: Impression of Contact with 311 Agent

What was your impression of the 311 agent in your most recent contact? (Rate each characteristic below.)



Conclusions

Denver's Economy is strong

As in 2017, residents identified Economy as a key priority for the Denver in the upcoming years. Fortunately, residents gave Denver very positive marks for most aspects of the economy including Denver as a place to visit, Denver as a place to work, employment opportunities and its overall economic health. All of these aspects received ratings of excellent or good by at least 7 in 10 residents and were significantly higher than scores received by other large communities across the nation. Denver's vibrant downtown and shopping opportunities also were appreciated by close to 70% of the residents surveyed.

An attractive City with a healthy economy is not without challenge, however. While Denver scored lower than the benchmark averages on only a handful of Community Characteristics, a number of these sub-par ratings clustered in the area of community affordability and housing (affordability and options). Although the ratings for the cost of living and affordable housing held constant from 2017, these issues have been a struggle for Denver for many years and will likely continue to be an issue as long as the state continues to grow and residents' quality of life remains high.

While automobile traffic continues to be a challenge, alternate mode use is thriving

Mobility also was identified as a priority for Denver in the next two years. However, less than one quarter of Denver residents rated travel by car, public parking or traffic flow positively in the city. These ratings fell below the custom benchmarks.

On the positive side, residents gave significantly higher ratings to alternate mode travel than auto travel. About 7 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to paths and walking trails and two-thirds rated the ease of walking as excellent or good (higher than the average in communities with populations over 300,000). Further, Denver residents reported significantly more walking, biking and transit use than their counterparts in other large communities across the nation.

Denver is a great place to be healthy

The city of Denver is a great place to stay fit and active. About 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the health and wellness opportunities in Denver. A similar number rated the recreation opportunities and fitness opportunities positively, scores higher than seen in other large jurisdictions across the nation. More than 85% of survey respondents reporting exercising regularly and consuming 5 or more serving of fruit and vegetables a day. Denver residents also reported more frequent visitation of City parks than their counterparts. Relatedly, open space and natural area preservation received a boost in ratings since 2017.

Residents also valued other leisure time amenities in Denver, cultural, arts and music activities received strong positive ratings that were higher than in comparison communities. Residents reported higher frequency of participation in City-sponsored events compared to other big city inhabitants.