Denver, CO
Community Livability Report
2014
Contents

About .................................................................................................................. 1
Quality of Life in Denver ......................................................................................... 2
Community Characteristics ..................................................................................... 3
Governance ............................................................................................................. 5
Participation ........................................................................................................... 7
Special Topics ......................................................................................................... 9
Conclusions ........................................................................................................... 13
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 828 residents of the City of Denver. 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 Denver

A majority of residents rated the quality of life in Denver as excellent or good. Residents rated overall quality of life similarly 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. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Denver community in the coming two years. Ratings for almost all were positive and similar to other communities. Ratings for Economy were higher than in 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 Denver’s unique questions.

Legend

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

🌟 Most important
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, 90% 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 communities across the nation.

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. All of these aspects were rated as excellent or good by a majority of residents and were similar to comparison communities.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Most aspects were rated positively and were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation. Ratings of aspects of Economy were particularly strong; of the seven aspects rated, five of these aspects were rated higher than in comparison communities. Other aspects that received higher ratings than in comparison communities included recreational opportunities, fitness opportunities and cultural/arts/music activities. The lowest rated Community Characteristic aspect was affordable quality housing; only 27% rated it as excellent or good and it was lower than ratings in comparison communities.
Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

- **SAFETY**
  - Overall feeling of safety: 73%
  - Safe in neighborhood: 90%
  - Safe downtown/commercial area: 79%

- **MOBILITY**
  - Overall ease of travel: 60%
  - Paths and walking trails: 75%
  - Ease of walking: 71%
  - Travel by bicycle: 50%
  - Travel by car: 45%
  - Public parking: 33%

- **NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**
  - Overall natural environment: 79%
  - Air quality: 56%

- **BUILT ENVIRONMENT**
  - Overall built environment: 72%
  - New development in Denver: 69%
  - Affordable quality housing: 27%
  - Housing options: 47%
  - Public places: 79%

- **ECONOMY**
  - Overall economic health: 76%
  - Vibrant downtown/commercial area: 75%
  - Cost of living: 35%
  - Shopping opportunities: 82%
  - Employment opportunities: 60%
  - Place to visit: 90%
  - Place to work: 82%

- **RECREATION AND WELLNESS**
  - Health and wellness: 82%
  - Mental health care: 46%
  - Preventive health services: 66%
  - Health care: 61%
  - Food: 72%
  - Recreational opportunities: 85%
  - Fitness opportunities: 82%

- **EDUCATION AND ENRICHMENT**
  - Education and enrichment opportunities: 74%
  - Cultural/arts/music activities: 82%
  - Adult education: 65%
  - K-12 education: 49%
  - Child care/preschool: 43%
  - Openness and acceptance: 60%
  - Opportunities to participate in community matters: 60%

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

*Comparison to national benchmark*
- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

*Comparison to national benchmark percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)*
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 are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 68% gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the City of Denver, while 42% gave excellent or good ratings to the services provided by the Federal Government. Both of these ratings were similar to ratings in comparison communities.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Denver’s leadership and governance. Most of these aspects were rated positively by a majority of respondents and they tended to be similar to the national benchmark. About 57% gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of customer service; however this rating was lower than ratings across the nation.

Respondents evaluated about 30 individual services and amenities available in Denver. Most of these aspects of Governance were rated positively by a majority of respondents and were similar to the benchmark comparisons. Services within the facets of Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment, Community Engagement and Natural Environment received some of the highest ratings while services within the Mobility and Built Environment facets were slightly lower in general. Ratings in Safety were mixed and ranged from 47% to 90% excellent or good, with crime prevention receiving the lowest ratings. Ratings for crime prevention, fire prevention and police services were lower than the national benchmarks.

![Graph of Overall Quality of City Services]

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

- Value of services for taxes paid: 54%
- Overall direction: 67%
- Welcoming citizen involvement: 53%
- Confidence in City government: 55%
- Acting in the best interest of Denver: 54%
- Being honest: 51%
- Treating all residents fairly: 45%
- Customer service: 57%
- Services provided by the Federal Government: 42%

**Comparison to national benchmark**

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

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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. A majority gave positive ratings to the sense of community in Denver; this rating was similar to the national benchmark. Most residents were likely to recommend living in Denver and planned to remain in Denver. About half of the survey respondents reported that they had contacted the City in the last 12 months.

The survey included about 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Participation in Economy-related activities was mixed; nearly all respondents had purchased goods or services in Denver while about 40% believed the economy would have a positive impact on their income. Denver residents reported higher rates of Participation in Mobility than residents in comparison communities. A majority reported that they had carpooled, used public transportation or walked or biked instead of driving. Most Denver residents showed strong rates of Participation in the facet of Natural Environment; 7 in 10 or more had made their homes more energy efficient, recycled at home or conserved water.
Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

**SAFETY**
- Did NOT report a crime: 69%
- Was NOT the victim of a crime: 82%

**MOBILITY**
- Used public transportation instead of driving: 67%
- Carpoled instead of driving alone: 55%
- Walked or biked instead of driving: 79%

**NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**
- Conserved water: 87%
- Made home more energy efficient: 72%
- Recycled at home: 85%

**ECONOMY**
- Purchased goods or services in Denver: 98%
- Economy will have positive impact on income: 41%
- Work in Denver: 63%

**RECREATION AND WELLNESS**
- Used Denver recreation centers: 55%
- Visited a City park: 95%
- Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables: 86%
- Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity: 90%
- In very good to excellent health: 64%

**EDUCATION AND ENRICHMENT**
- Used Denver public libraries: 67%
- Attended a City-sponsored event: 59%

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**
- Contacted Denver elected officials: 18%
- Attended a local public meeting: 20%
- Watched a local public meeting: 24%
- Read or watched local news: 85%
- Voted in local elections: 87%

**Comparison to national benchmark**
- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

Higher

Similar

Lower

Percent rating positively (e.g., yes, more than once a month, always/sometimes)
The City of Denver included several questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked residents how likely they would be to use different forms of payment to conduct financial transactions with the City. About half were likely to use check and about half were likely to use cash; almost all were likely to use a credit card/debit card. The second question asked residents about their likelihood of using different avenues to conduct financial transactions with the City. While a majority were likely to use each of the avenues listed, web and phone were the most popular choices.

**Figure 4: Methods of Payment**
How likely, if at all, would you be to use each of the following methods of payment to conduct financial transactions with the City?

- Credit card/debit card: 75% very likely, 19% somewhat likely, 93% total
- Check: 23% very likely, 31% somewhat likely, 54% total
- Cash: 26% very likely, 25% somewhat likely, 51% total

**Figure 5: Avenue of Payment**
How likely, if at all, would you be to use each of the following methods to conduct financial transactions with the City?

- Web: 66% very likely, 15% somewhat likely, 81% total
- Phone: 29% very likely, 41% somewhat likely, 70% total
- Email: 32% very likely, 32% somewhat likely, 64% total
- In-person: 28% very likely, 35% somewhat likely, 64% total
- Mobile application: 24% very likely, 30% somewhat likely, 55% total
The third question asked respondents if they or anyone in their household had been in contact with 311 in the past 12 months. About one-third of respondents indicated that they had been in contact with 311. Those who had been in contact were then asked to rate their impression of the 311 agent; at least three-quarters of respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the 311 agent they had been in contact with.

Figure 6: Contacted 311
*In the past 12 months have you or anyone in your household contacted 311?*

![Pie chart showing 34% yes and 66% no for contacting 311 in the past 12 months.]

Figure 7: Impression of 311 Agent
*What was your impression of the 311 agent in your most recent contact?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courtesy</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall impression</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the fifth custom question, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with a statement about the job the City of Denver does at managing police officer conduct. About 57% agreed that the City does a good job.

The next questions had to do with City of Denver employees. About half of the survey respondents reported being in contact with a City employee in the last 12 months. Those who had been in contact were then asked to rate that contact; at least two-thirds of respondents gave excellent or good ratings to City employees.

**Figure 8: Managing 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?*

The chart shows the percentage of respondents agreeing with the statement:
- Strongly agree: 14%
- Somewhat agree: 43%
- Strongly disagree: 18%
- Somewhat disagree: 25%

**Figure 9: Contact with City of Denver Employee**

*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)?*

The chart shows the percentage of respondents:
- Yes: 56%
- No: 44%

**Figure 10: Impression of City of Denver Employee Contacted**

*What was your impression of the employee(s) of the City of Denver in your most recent contact?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtesy</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
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<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall impression</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall:
- Excellent: 67%
- Good: 67%
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The final custom question asked respondents to rate the importance of several potential improvements to customer service provided by the City. At least two-thirds rated each item as essential or very important. Ease in getting questions answered was rated as the most important, followed by clearer information on the City website and faster processing times for transactions and paperwork.

Figure 11: Improvements to Customer Service
As the City considers ways to improve its customer service, how important, if at all, should the following be?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Improvement</th>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ease in getting my questions answered</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearer information on the City website</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faster processing times for transactions and paperwork</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More polite/courteous interactions with City employee</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorter wait times for lines</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business hours that sync with my schedule</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased access to City services in my neighborhood</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

Denver residents continue to enjoy a high quality of life.

At least 85% of residents rated their overall quality of life and Denver as a place to live as excellent or good. About 9 in 10 would be likely to recommend Denver as a place to live to someone who asks and planned to remain in Denver for the next five years. Denver’s overall appearance and overall image along with neighborhoods as a place to live received high ratings by about 4 in 5 residents. Most of the aspects that aid in community livability were rated positively and remained stable from 2013 to 2014 (see the Trends over Time report under separate cover).

Denver’s Economy is improving.

Ratings of Economy across the three pillars of Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation were rated positively and were similar to or higher than comparison communities. At least four in five respondents gave high ratings to shopping opportunities, Denver as a place to visit and Denver as a place to work. Most respondents worked in Denver and almost all purchased goods or services in Denver. There were several increases in ratings within the facet of Economy (see Trends over Time report under separate cover). Ratings that increased from 2013 to 2014 included Denver’s overall economic health, employment opportunities, and Denver’s vibrant downtown/commercial area. Further, the percent of residents with a positive personal economic outlook increased from 2013 to 2014 and has been increasing annually since 2012.

Safety is a top priority to Denver residents.

Safety was identified as one of facets most important to residents’ quality of life, and, overall, Denver performed solidly within this facet. At least three-quarters of respondents felt safe in their neighborhoods and downtown. Most Safety services, including police, fire, ambulance and emergency preparedness were rated positively by a majority of respondents. Most respondent had neither been the victim of a crime nor needed to report a crime. Safety ratings remained stable from 2013 to 2014 (see Trends over Time report under separate cover).