

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Corvallis, OR
Community Livability Report

2015



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About

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

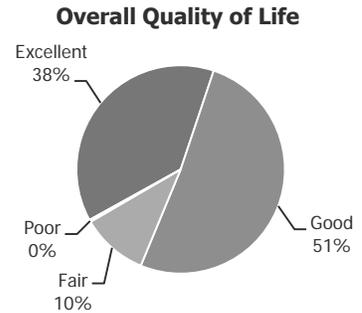
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 310 residents of the City of Corvallis. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 6% 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 Corvallis

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Corvallis as excellent or good. Residents rated overall quality of life 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.

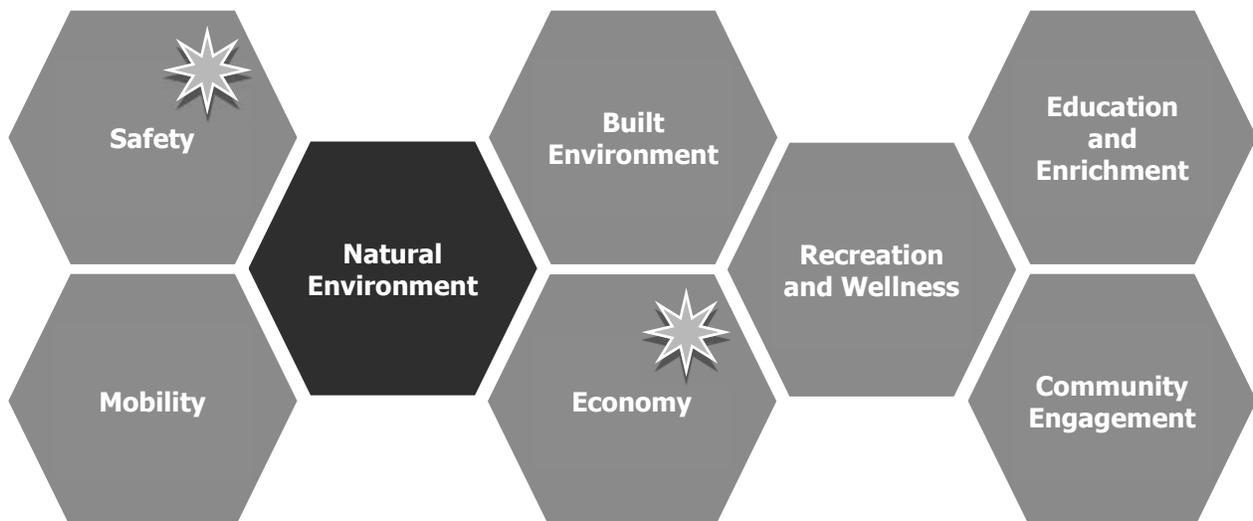
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Corvallis community in the coming two years. Ratings for Safety, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement were positive and similar to other communities. Ratings for Natural Environment were stronger than ratings in other jurisdictions 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 Corvallis' 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 Corvallis, 95% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Corvallis as a place to live were higher than 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 Corvallis as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Corvallis and its overall appearance. A majority of residents rated Corvallis' overall image and overall appearance as excellent or good and these ratings were higher than the national benchmarks. Also rated higher than the national benchmark were ratings for Corvallis as a place to retire. Over 80% of respondents rated their neighborhood and Corvallis as a place to raise children as excellent or good (similar to the national benchmark).

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Ratings within the facet of Safety were generally high; almost all residents gave positive ratings to the overall feeling of safety, safety in their neighborhood and safety in the downtown area. Ratings within Mobility were varied but generally favorable; over 60% of residents rated four out of eight characteristics (paths and walking trails, ease of walking, travel by bicycle and travel by public transportation) higher than the national benchmark. Within Natural Environment, almost all residents rated the



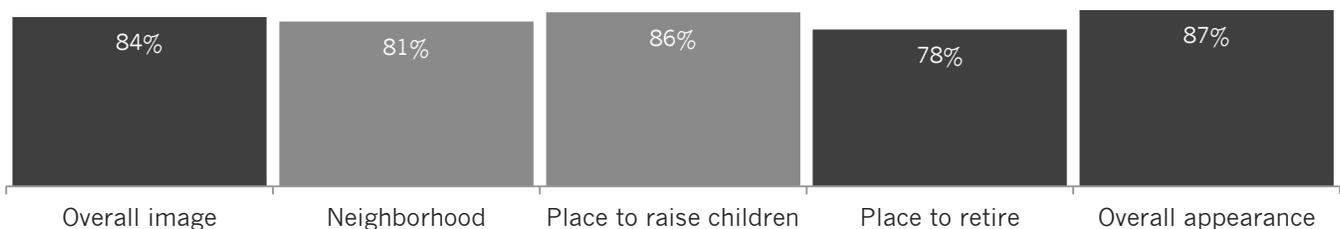
overall natural environment and air quality as excellent or good, ratings that are higher than the national benchmark. More than 70% of residents rated Corvallis' overall built environment and public places as excellent or good. Affordable quality housing and housing options were rated below the national benchmarks with 20% and 42% of residents rating those characteristics as excellent or good, respectively. More than 6 in 10 participants positively rated Corvallis' overall economic health, vibrant downtown/commercial area, business and services, Corvallis as a place to visit and as a place to work (ratings that were similar to the national benchmark). Residents rated four aspects of Recreation and Wellness higher than the national benchmark including health and wellness opportunities, health care, recreational

opportunities and fitness opportunities. Also rated higher than the national benchmark were education and enrichment opportunities, cultural/art/music activities and adult education opportunities under the facet of Education and Enrichment. Residents' ratings for aspects of Community Engagement were all similar to the national benchmark.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



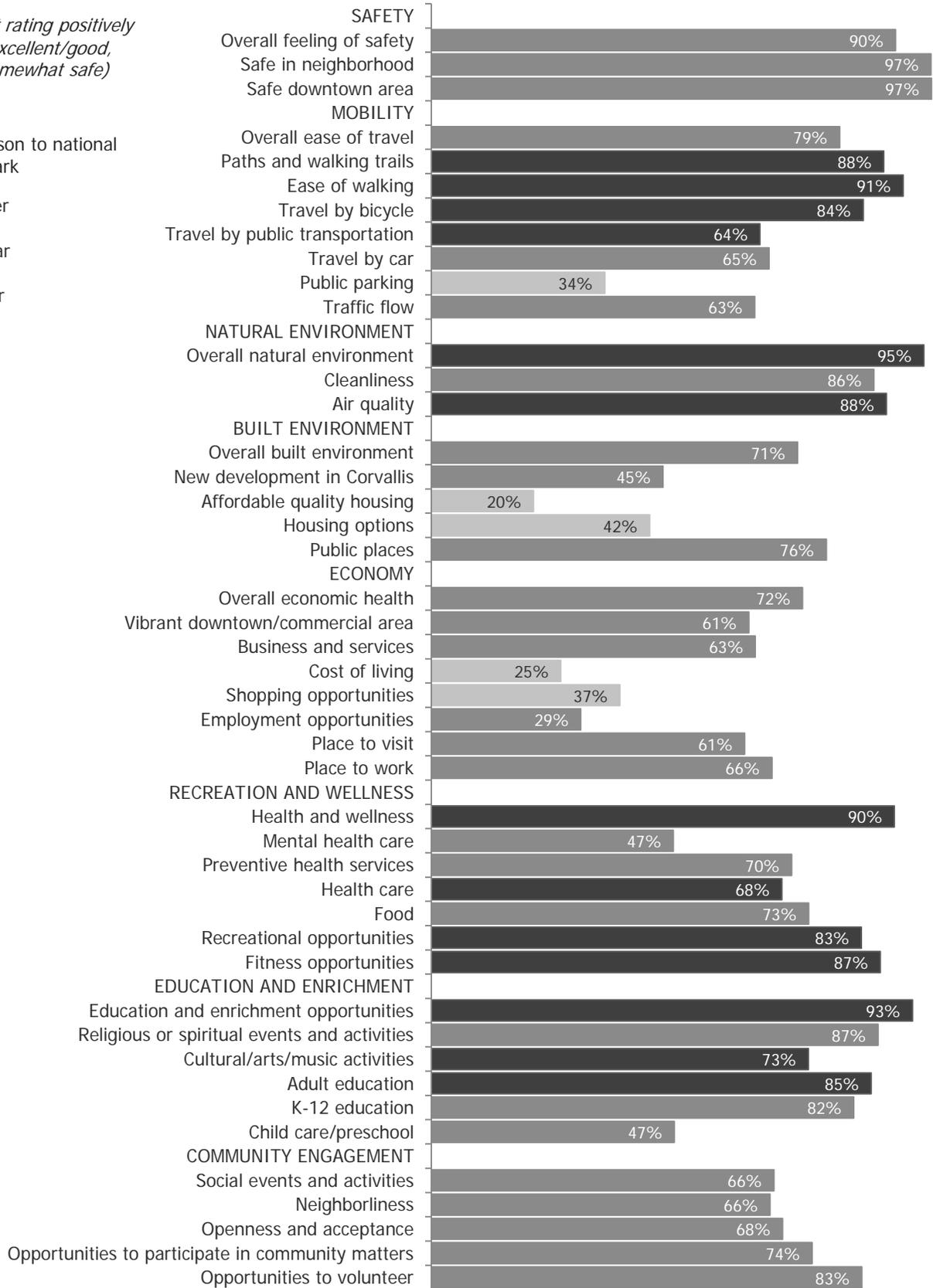
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

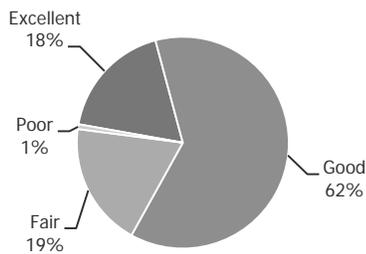
How well does the government of Corvallis meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Corvallis as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Around 80% of respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the City of Corvallis while 47% gave excellent or good ratings to the services provided by the Federal Government. Both ratings were similar to the national benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Corvallis' leadership and governance. Most of these aspects were rated positively by more than half of respondents and were similar to ratings across the nation.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Corvallis. Ratings for all aspects within the facet of Safety were similar to the national benchmark with almost all residents rating Corvallis' fire and ambulance/EMS services as excellent or good. About three-fourths of respondents positively rated bus or transit services, and this rating was higher than the national benchmark. The remaining Mobility services, with the exception of snow removal, were rated similarly to the national benchmark. Within Natural Environment, ratings were generally higher than the benchmark. More than 7 in 10 of respondents rated recycling, yard waste pick-up, drinking water and natural area preservation as excellent or good. Ratings for sewer services were above the national benchmark and ratings for storm drainage, power utility and utility billing were rated similarly in comparison communities. Close to half of survey respondents rated economic development in Corvallis as excellent or good, a rating comparable to other communities. Ratings were generally high for Recreation and Wellness services such as City parks, recreation programs, recreation centers and health services. Almost all respondents gave excellent or good ratings to public libraries and this rating was higher than the national benchmark. Close to three-quarters of participants rated Corvallis' public information as excellent or good.

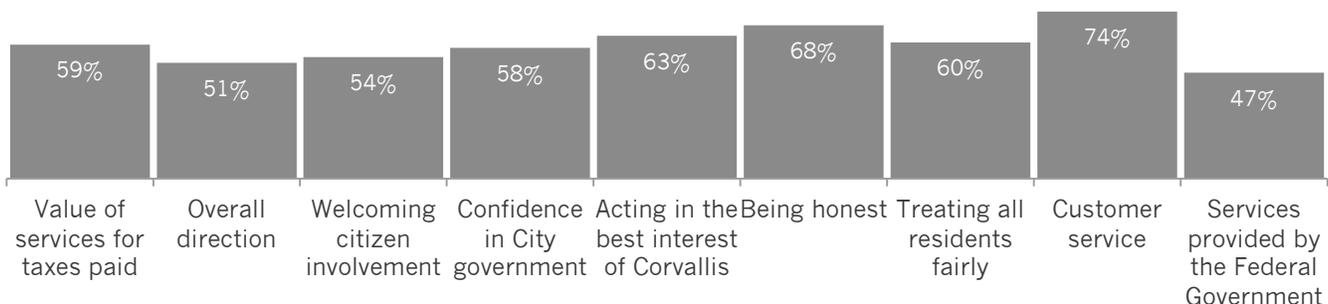
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



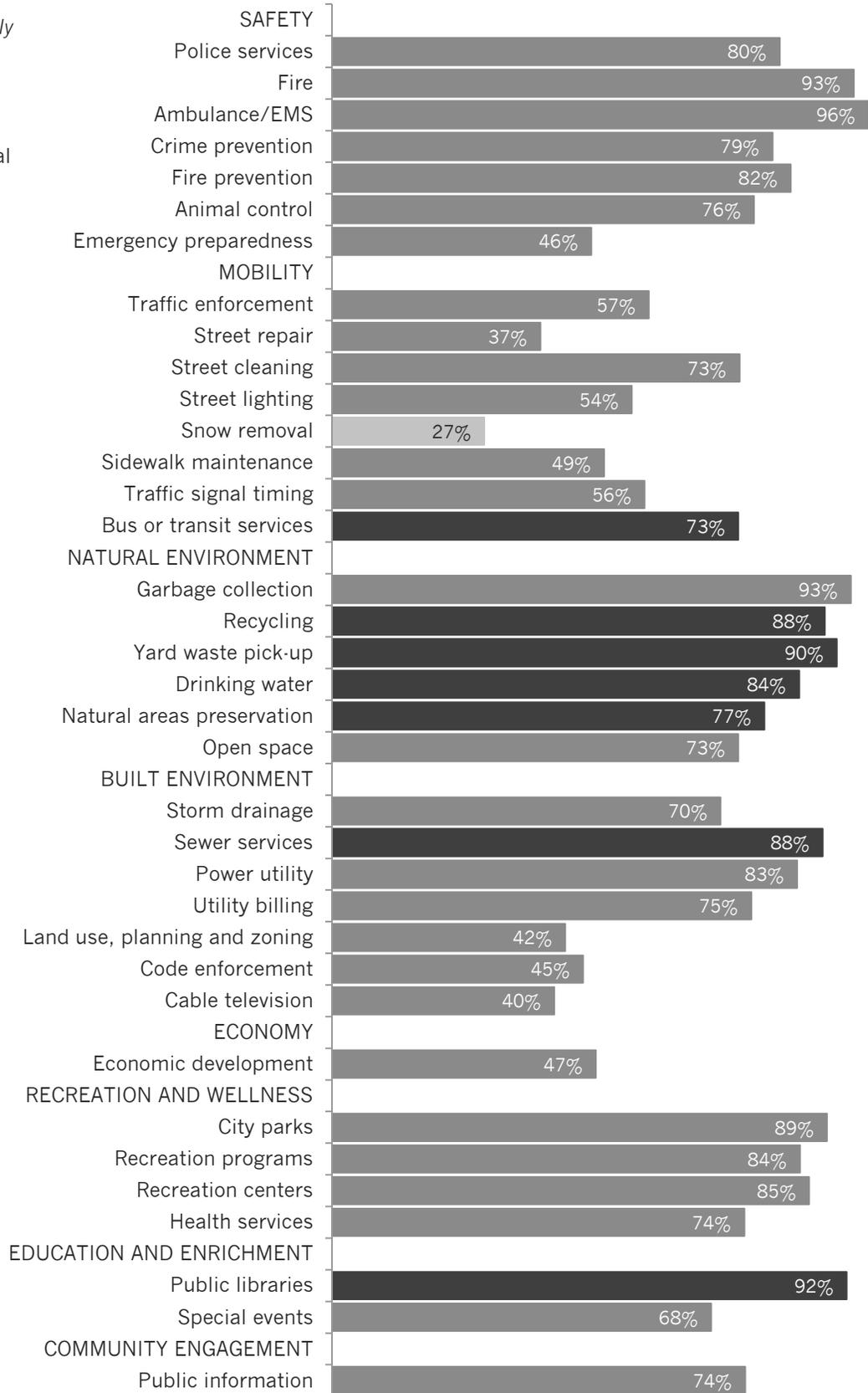
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

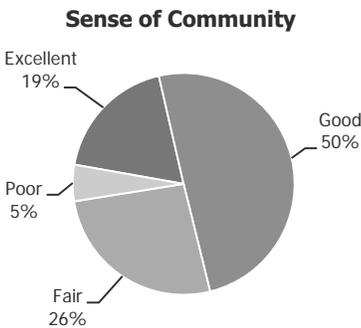


Participation

Are the residents of Corvallis 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. Close to 70% of residents rated the sense of community in Corvallis as excellent or good which is similar to the national benchmark. A majority of residents reported they would recommend living in Corvallis and were likely to remain in Corvallis. Less than one-third of respondents reported they had contacted Corvallis employees.

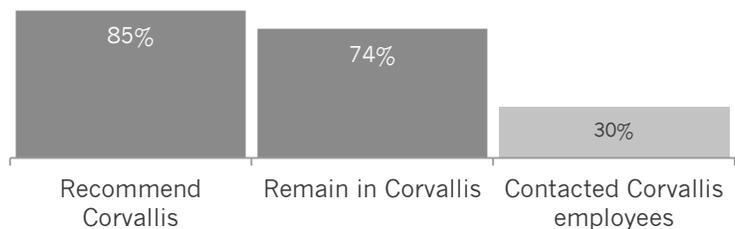
The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Within the facet of Safety, a majority of residents did NOT report a crime and were NOT the victim of a crime. Resident rates of participation in all three aspects of Mobility (used public transportation instead of driving, carpooled instead of driving alone and walked or biked instead of driving) were higher than in comparison communities. Almost all residents reported recycling at home (higher than the national benchmark) and more than 6 in 10 respondents conserved water and made efforts to make their home more energy efficient. Over 50% of residents in Corvallis did NOT observe a code violation and were NOT under housing cost stress, ratings which were both similar to the national benchmark. Within the facet of Economy, almost all residents purchased goods or services in Corvallis. More than half of residents reported working in Corvallis, higher than in comparable communities across the nation. Nearly all residents visited a City park (higher than the national benchmark) and more than 60% reported using Corvallis recreation centers (similar to the national benchmark). Within Education and Enrichment, more than half of residents reported using Corvallis public libraries and attending a City-sponsored event. A majority of residents (88%) voted in local elections, a participation rating that is higher than ratings in other communities across the nation. Other aspects of Community Engagement such as volunteering, participating in a club and doing a favor for a neighbor were similar to the national benchmark. Ratings for watching a local public meeting (11%) or reading or watching local news (74%) were lower than the national benchmark.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



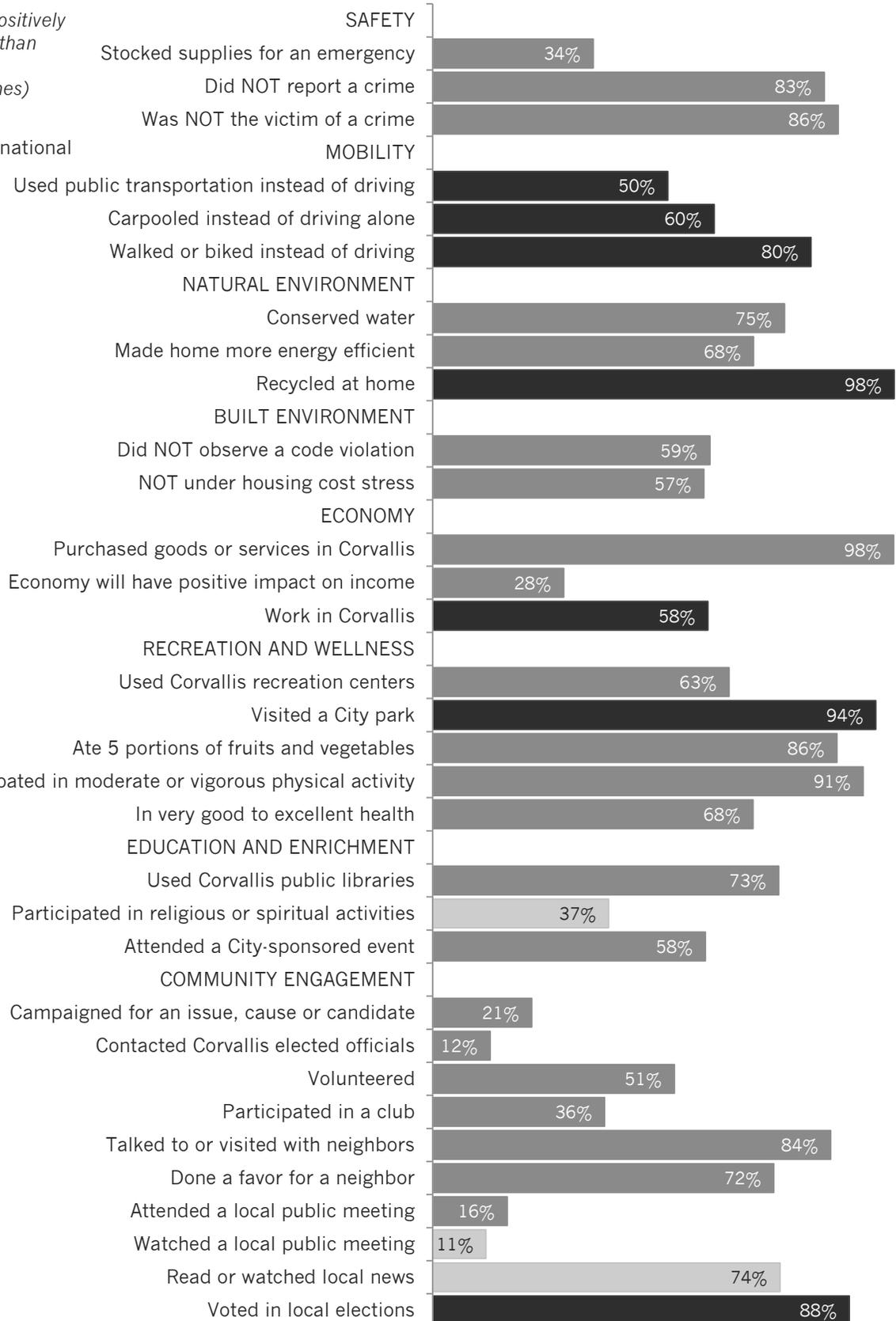
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

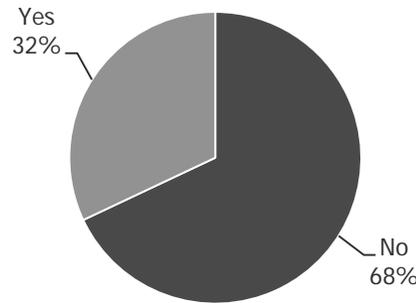


Special Topics

The City of Corvallis included three questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked residents if they had had any in-person or phone contact with a City of Corvallis Police Department employee within the last 12 months, more than 6 in 10 of residents reported they had not.

Figure 4: Contact with Corvallis Police Department

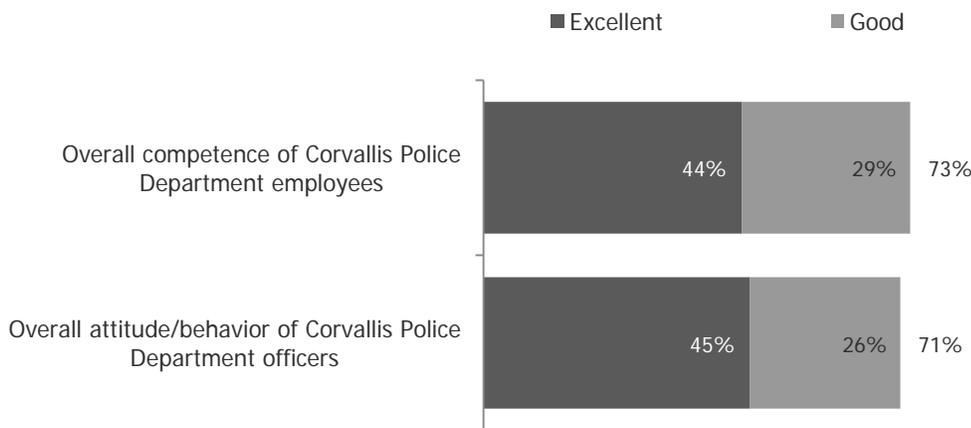
Have you had any in-person or phone contact with a City of Corvallis Police Department employee within the last 12 months?



The second question asked those who had had contact to rate that contact. Of the residents who did have contact with a City of Corvallis Police Department employee, more than 7 in 10 rated the overall attitude/behavior of Corvallis Police Department officers and the overall competence of department employees as excellent or good.

Figure 5: Quality of Contact with Police Department

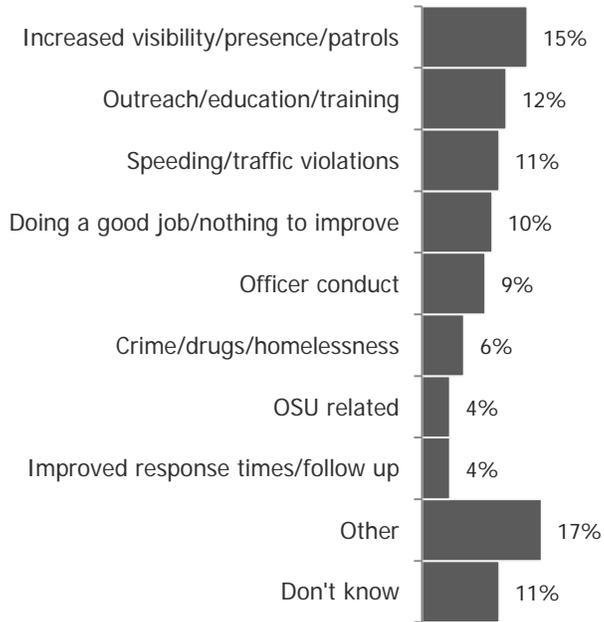
Please rate the quality of each of the following during your most recent contact with the Corvallis Police Department:



The final question was an open-ended question (see *The Open End Report* under separate cover for the full responses to this question). When asked what the single most important thing the City of Corvallis could do to improve police services, around 15% of respondents said to increase visibility/presence/patrols and more than 11% said outreach/education/training and focus on speeding/traffic violations. Around 1 in 10 residents responded that the police department was doing a good job and did not have any suggestions for improvement.

Figure 6: Open-ended Question

What do you think is the single most important thing the City of Corvallis could do to improve police services to its residents?



Conclusions

Corvallis' economy is improving.

Residents identified the Economy as one of the most important aspects for the community to focus on in the next two years. Ratings for economic development services and for shopping opportunities increased from 2011 to 2015 (see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover). More residents in 2015 thought the economy would have a positive impact on their income than in 2011 and over half of residents reported working in Corvallis which is higher than in comparable communities across the nation.

Safety is a priority to residents.

Safety was also identified as one of the most important facets for the community to focus on in the next two years. Almost all residents felt safe in their neighborhood and safe in the downtown area and almost all residents reported an excellent or good overall feeling of safety. Residents were pleased with the quality of safety services provided by Corvallis with more than 90% of residents rating the City's fire and ambulance services as excellent or good. Those residents who had had contact with Corvallis' police department gave high ratings to the competence and overall attitude and behavior of police officers. Residents were asked what they thought was the single most important thing the City could do to improve police services; around 14% of respondents thought increasing police visibility and presence was the most important thing.

Residents care about Natural Environment.

Over 8 in 10 residents rated Corvallis' natural environment and air quality as excellent or good. More than three-fourths of residents rated Corvallis' recycling services, yard waste pick-up, drinking water and natural areas preservation as excellent or good, ratings that were higher than the national benchmark. Almost all residents reported recycling at home and more than two-thirds of residents conserved water and made their home more energy efficient.

It's easy to travel in Corvallis.

Almost all residents rated the ease of walking in Corvallis as excellent or good and more than 8 in 10 rated paths and walking trails and travel by bicycle as excellent or good. A majority also gave positive ratings to travel by public transportation in Corvallis. All of these aspects of Mobility were higher than in comparison communities. High ratings for travel in Corvallis were also evidenced by more than 70% of respondents rating bus or transit services as excellent or good. Residents of Corvallis were more likely to use public transportation instead of driving, carpool instead of driving alone and walk or bike instead of driving than other residents across the nation.