

The National Citizen Survey™

Urbandale, IA

Community Livability Report

2013

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The National Citizen Survey™
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National Research Center, Inc.
2955 Valmont Road, Suite 300
Boulder, CO 80301
www.n-r-c.com • 303-444-7863

International City/County Management Association
777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002
www.icma.org • 202-289-ICMA

About

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

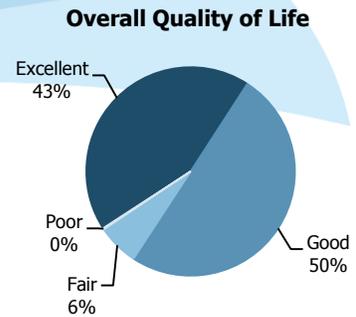
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample selected from 1,200 residents of the City of Urbandale. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% for the entire sample (360 completed surveys). The methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Urbandale

Almost all residents rate the quality of life in Urbandale as excellent or good. This rating was higher than the ratings in other communities, and had remained stable over time (see *Trends over Time* 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 shaded dark; 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.



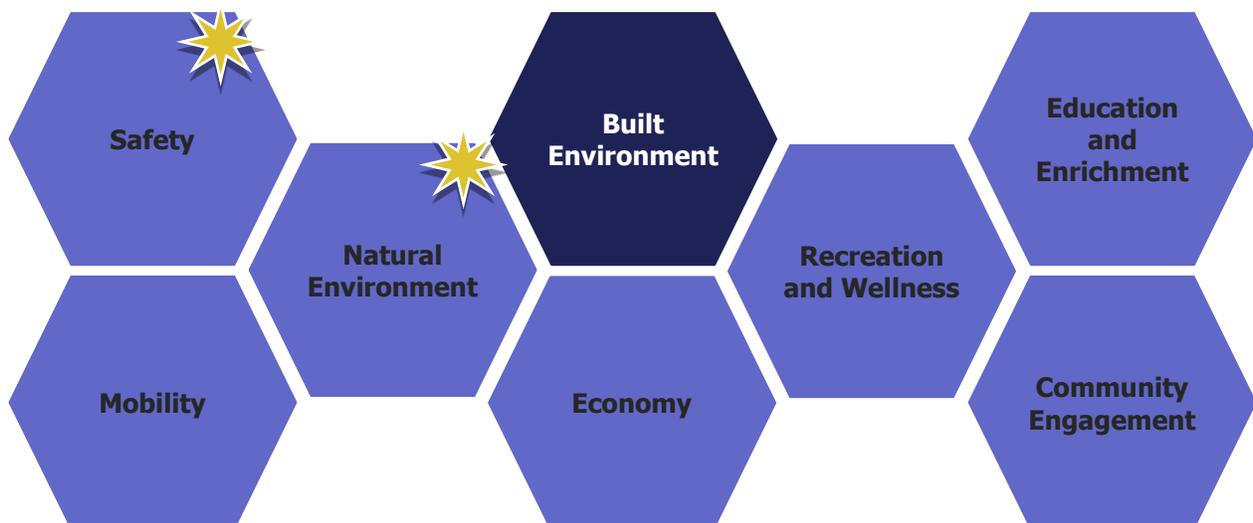
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important to residents' overall quality of life. Residents identified these facets of community life (Safety and Natural Environment) as the most central to what makes Urbandale their home. It is noteworthy that Urbandale residents gave favorable ratings to both of these facets of community as well as to the other facets of community life. Ratings for Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement 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 Urbandale's unique questions.

Legend

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

★ Most important to quality of life



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 Urbandale, 98% of respondents rate it as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Urbandale as a place to live were higher than ratings in other communities across the nation (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

In addition to rating the City as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Urbandale as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation and its overall appearance. At least 9 in 10 respondents rated the overall image, their neighborhood, Urbandale as a place to raise children and the overall appearance as excellent or good. About 8 in 10 respondents rated Urbandale as a place to retire as excellent or good. All of these ratings were higher than the benchmark and similar to ratings in 2011.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight dimensions of Community Livability. Ratings in Urbandale tended to be higher than or similar to ratings in other communities across the nation. Respondents tended to give the highest ratings to Safety and Natural Environment, with at least 90% of respondents giving ratings of excellent or good to most aspects. Mobility was generally rated favorably by a majority of residents with benchmark comparisons higher than national averages; public transportation, however, was viewed less favorably. Economy received a mix of ratings, with overall economic health and Urbandale as a place to work being among the highest rated aspects of

Economy. Overall, Community Engagement saw lower ratings than other facets, but still had excellent or good ratings from a majority of respondents.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower □ Not available

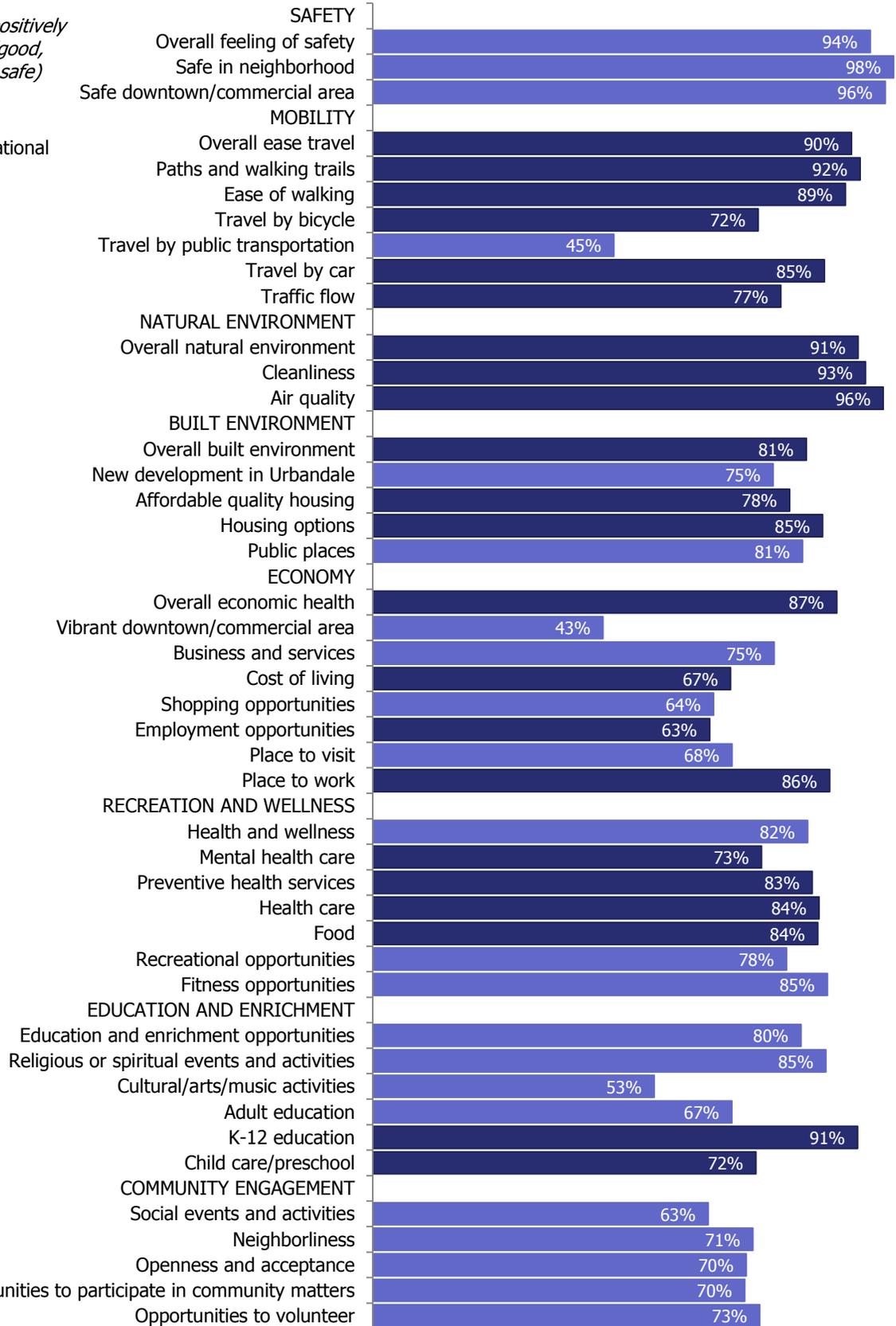


Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available



Governance

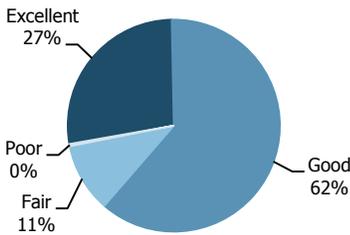
How well does the government of Urbandale meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Urbandale as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 89% of residents rated the overall quality of services provided by the City of Urbandale as excellent or good; this rating was similar to the benchmark comparison and similar to ratings in 2011. When asked to rate the overall quality of services provided by the Federal Government, only 32% of respondents gave ratings of excellent or good. The rating for the Federal Government declined from 2011 to 2013.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Urbandale’s leadership and governance. Ratings for the various aspects of Urbandale’s governance were positive; all were rated as excellent or good by a strong majority of respondents and ratings tended to be higher than the benchmark comparison.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Urbandale. Overall, ratings were similar to or higher than national benchmark comparisons and most were rated positively by at least three-quarters of respondents. Services within Safety and Natural Environment received some of the highest ratings; roughly 9 in 10 respondents provided positive assessments of many aspects. Services within Mobility were somewhat lower compared to the other services, but still rated positively by at least three in five respondents.

Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower □ Not available

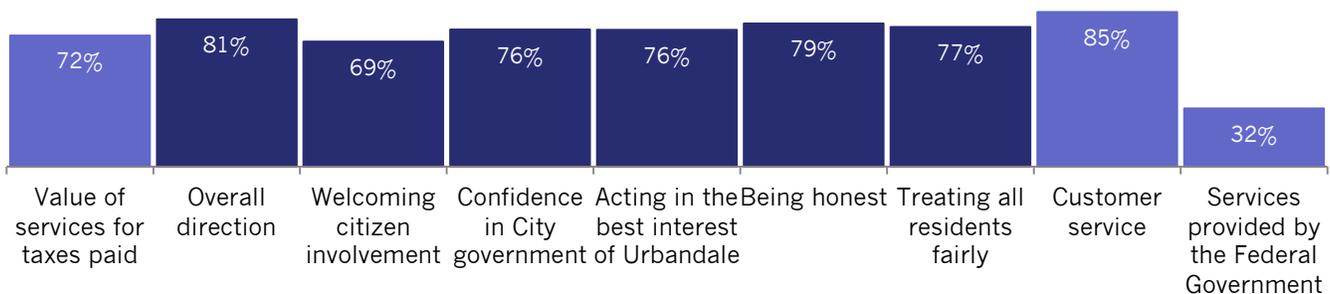


Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

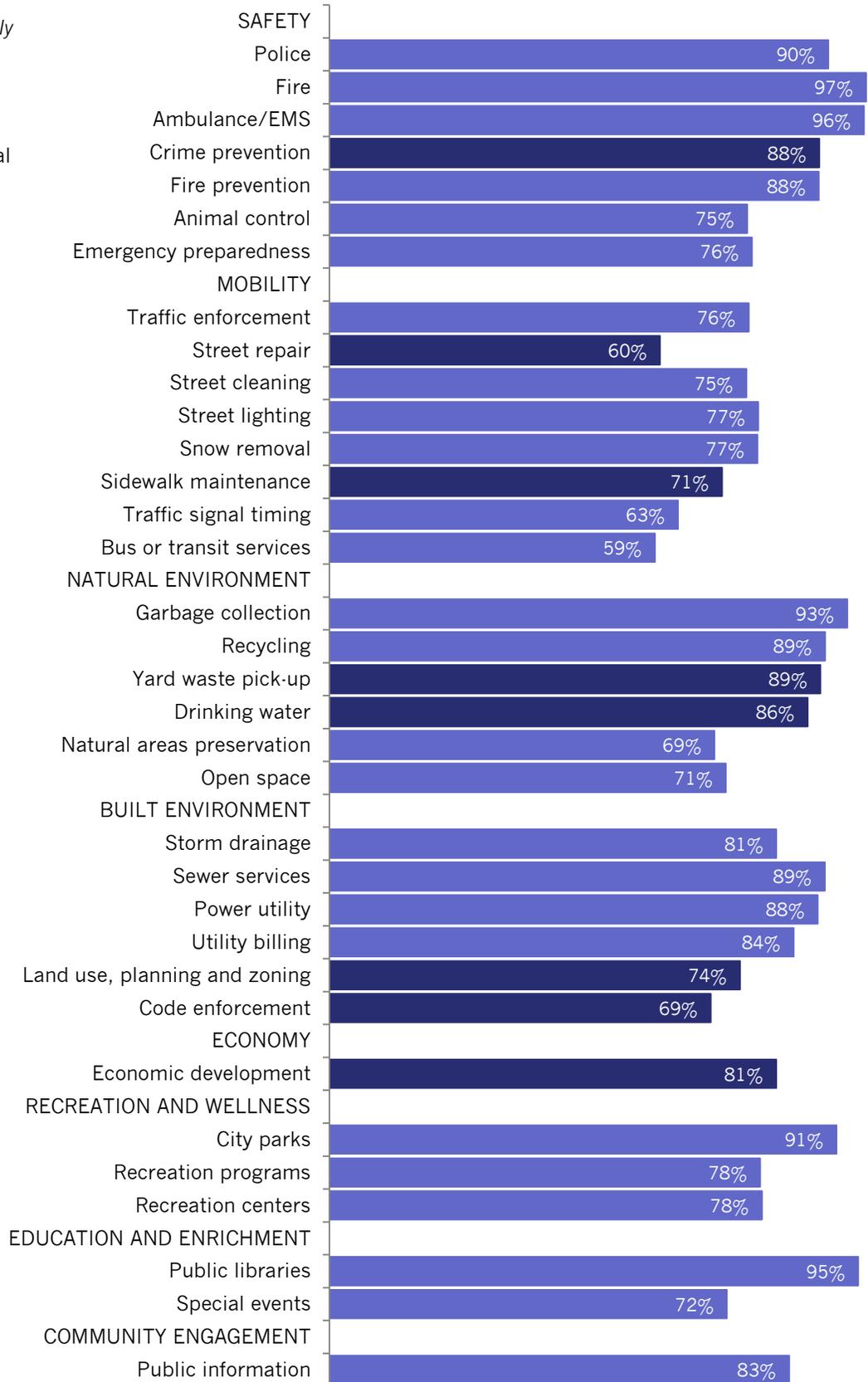
Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher

■ Similar

■ Lower

□ Not available



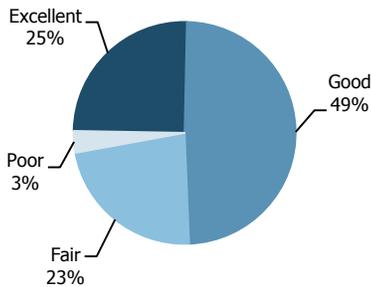
Participation

Are the residents of Urbandale connected to the community and each other?

An engaged community is a livable community. 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 three quarters of respondents rated the overall sense of community as excellent or good; a rating similar to other communities in the U.S. and similar to Urbandale’s past ratings. Almost all residents would recommend living in Urbandale and planned to remain in in the community.

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 in Natural Environment, Built Environment and Recreation and Wellness were similar to or higher than the benchmark. Safety, Mobility, Economy, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement saw mixed results. Within these facets, most respondents had not stocked supplies for an emergency, used public transportation or carpooled, worked in Urbandale, participated in a religious or spiritual activity, volunteered, participated in a club or watched or attended a local public meeting.

Sense of Community



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

Comparison to national benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available

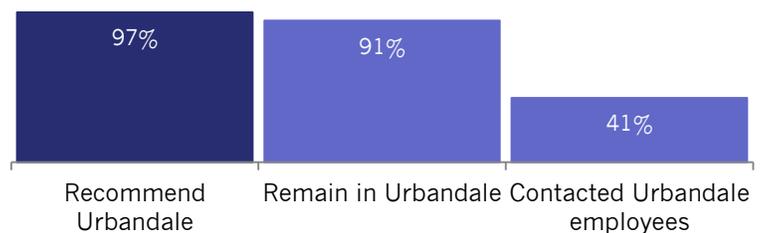
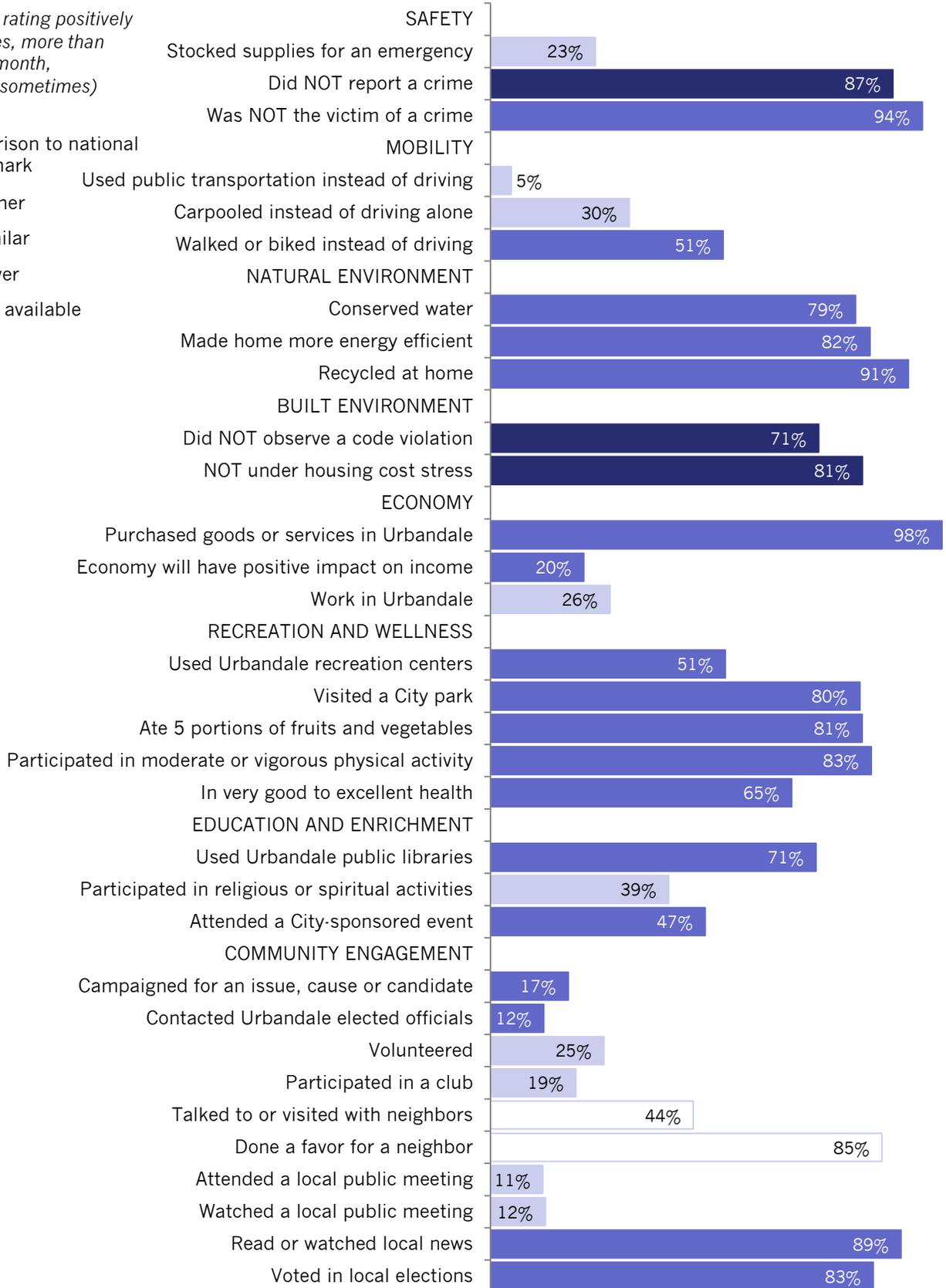


Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available



Special Topics

The City of Urbandale included two questions of special interest on The NCS. These two questions aimed to gauge resident support for the construction of a new fire station and facilities to include in the regional park. About 80% of respondents would support a tax increase of \$11.56 per year to build a new fire station; higher rates of tax increases showed significantly less support. Most residents supported many new types of facilities in the Walnut Creek Regional Park. The facilities receiving the most support were a community recreation center and nature center; about four in five respondents somewhat or strongly supported the inclusion of these facilities.

Figure 4: Question 13

Urbandale strives to provide fire and EMS service within five miles of a fire station across the City. Recent growth in Urbandale has resulted in some homes being further than five miles from one of the two fire stations (7100 Douglas Ave. and 3927 121st Street). To what extent would you support or oppose each of the following possible increases in property taxes for 15 years (calculated for the median house value of about \$185,000) to build a new fire station in the northwest area of the City of Urbandale?

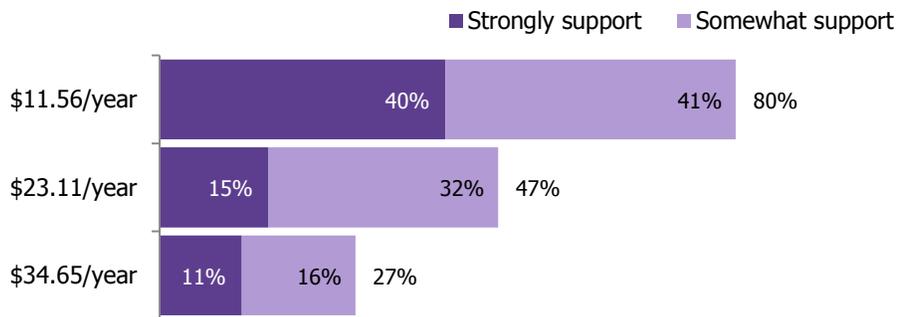
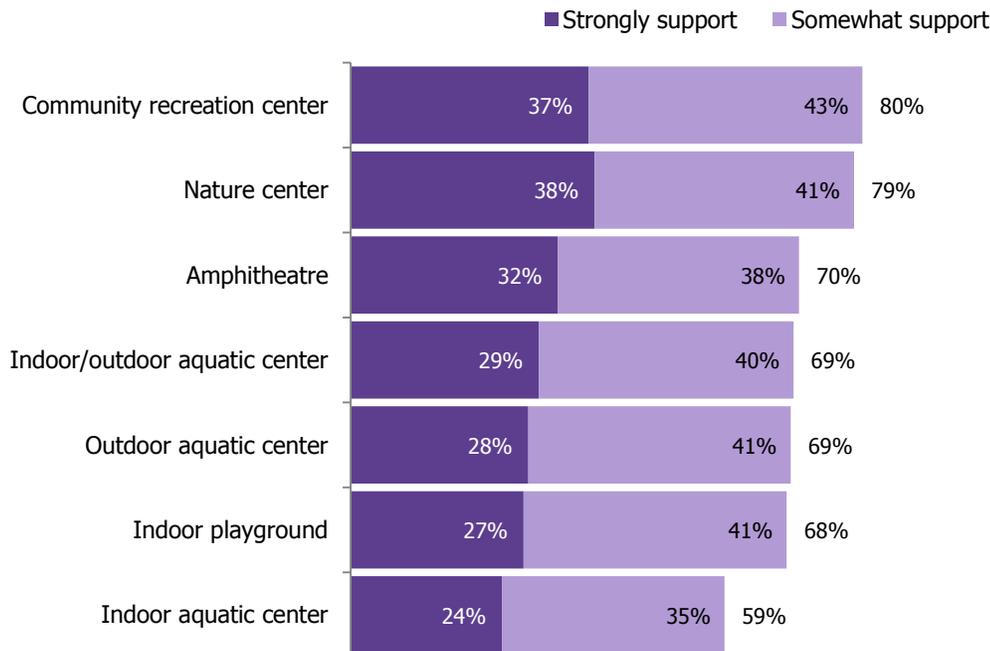


Figure 5: Question 14

As the City of Urbandale continues to develop the Walnut Creek Regional Park (a 200+ acre park in western Urbandale), to what extent would you support or oppose the following facilities being built in the park?



Conclusions

Urbandale Remains a Great Place to Live

Almost all respondents felt positively about living in the city and their neighborhoods. The vast majority of respondents also felt favorably about the overall image of Urbandale, its appearance and the city as a place to raise children. All of these ratings in 2013 were similar to ratings in 2011 and higher than other communities in the U.S. Further, all ratings of Community Characteristics were rated positively by a majority of respondents and were at least similar to if not higher than the national benchmark ratings.

High Ratings of Public Trust Linked to High Ratings of Government Services

A majority of respondents demonstrated a high level of trust in Urbandale's staff and elected officials. Further, a majority rated all aspects of Governance positively, including overall confidence, overall direction and acting in the best interest of the city. Urbandale's ratings were similar to or higher than the rating in other communities, and all remained stable over time.

Safety and Natural Environment Key Factors in Quality of Life

Safety and Natural Environment were key factors in how residents felt about their overall quality of life. In general, ratings for Safety across all three pillars tended to be similar to the benchmark, while ratings of the Natural Environment were higher in Community Characteristics and similar for Governance and Participation. Overall, ratings for individual aspects of Safety and Natural Environment tended to be rated favorably by the majority of residents and stable between 2013 and 2011.

Most Residents Support a Minimal Property Tax Increase to Construct a New Fire Station

When asked to rate their levels of support or opposition for a property tax increase to construct a new fire station, about 8 in 10 respondents supported an average property tax increase of \$11.56 per year. Higher property tax increases received less support, and were opposed by a majority of respondents.