

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Urbandale, IA
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 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).

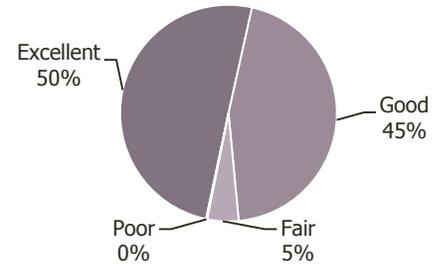
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 525 residents of the City of Urbandale. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% for all respondents. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Urbandale

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Urbandale as excellent or good. This was similar to ratings given in other communities across the nation (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

Overall Quality of Life



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.

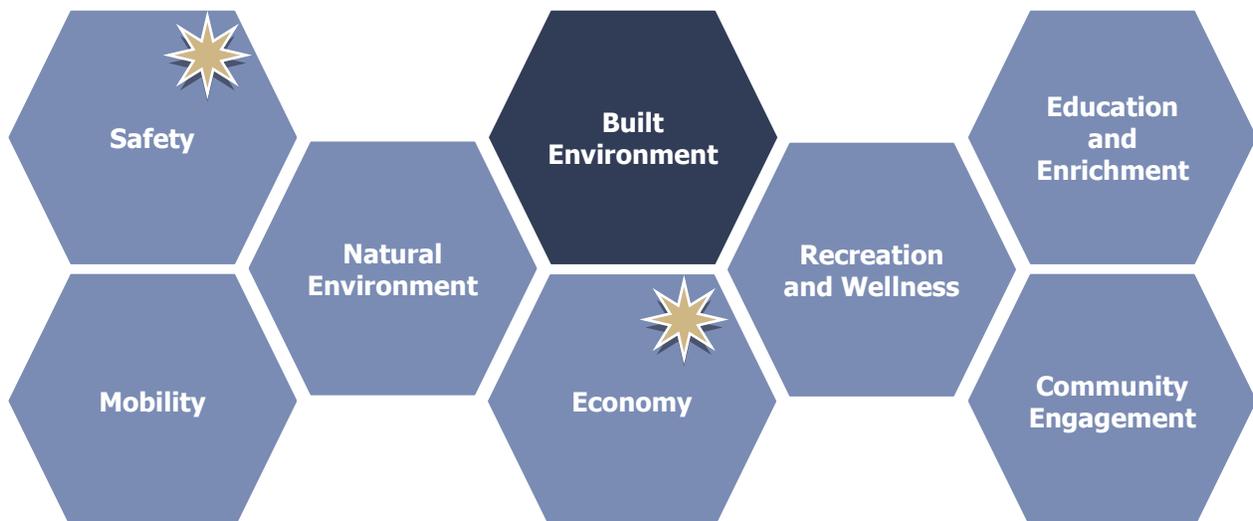
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Urbandale community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Urbandale residents gave the most favorable ratings to Built Environment while all remaining facets were rated positively and similarly to 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 Urbandale’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 Urbandale, 97% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Urbandale 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 Urbandale as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Urbandale and its overall appearance. At least 4 in 5 residents gave positive ratings to each of the aspects listed with nearly all residents offering positive marks to Urbandale as a place to raise children. Ratings tended to be similar to or higher than the national comparisons.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. A majority of Community Characteristics were rated similarly to the national comparison and were clustered within the facets of Safety, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement. The facets of Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment and Economy housed a mix of ratings that were similar to or higher than the national averages. Most characteristics received positive ratings from at least 8 in 10 residents and only five characteristics received a positive rating from fewer than 7 in 10 residents (travel by public transportation, vibrant downtown/commercial area, shopping opportunities, cultural/arts/music activities and mental healthcare).



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



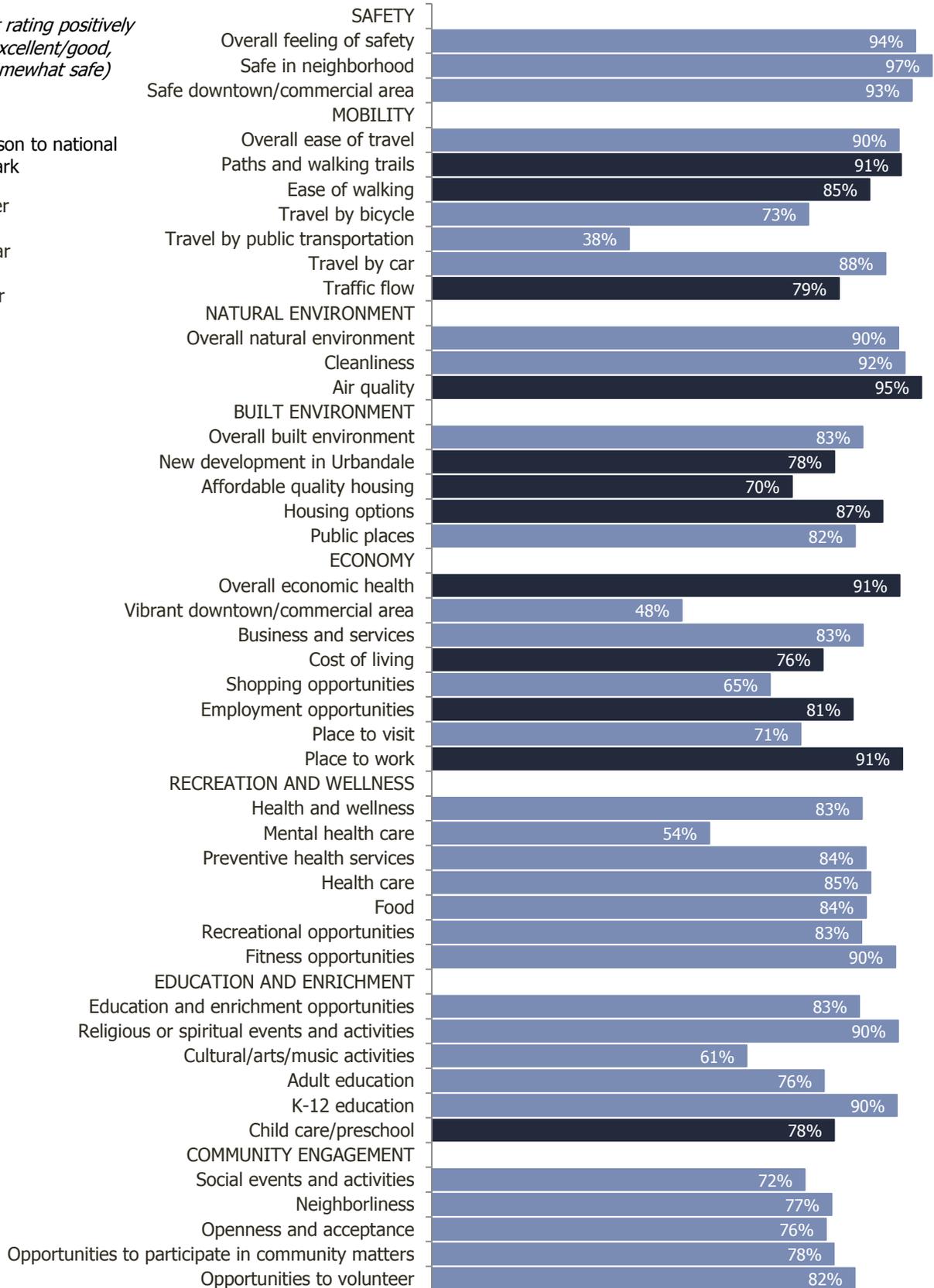
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

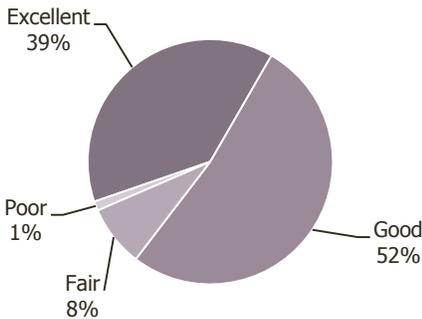
How well does the government of Urbandale meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Urbandale as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 9 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of City services, while about 5 in 10 gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the Federal Government. Ratings for both City services and services provided by the Federal Government were similar to the national averages.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Urbandale’s leadership and governance. Ratings were similar to the national comparisons with between 7 in 10 and 9 in 10 residents offering positive ratings to each aspect of leadership and governance listed.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Urbandale. While most Governance ratings tended to be similar to the national comparisons, residents praised a variety of services (crime prevention, yard waste pick-up, land use planning and zoning, economic development and public libraries). Safety services were strong with at least 8 in 10 offering positive ratings to each service listed and nearly all residents offering positive ratings to fire and ambulance/EMS services. Services given the lowest ratings were within the facet of Mobility (bus or transit services and street repair); however, more than half of residents still offered positive ratings to these services. Services within Built Environment were given a wide range of ratings with about two-thirds offering positive ratings to code enforcement and 9 in 10 offering positive ratings to sewer services and power utility. Each service related to Recreation and Wellness received positive ratings from 8 in 10 or more respondents; however, the ratings for recreation centers and programs declined in 2018 compared to ratings given in 2016 (please see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover).

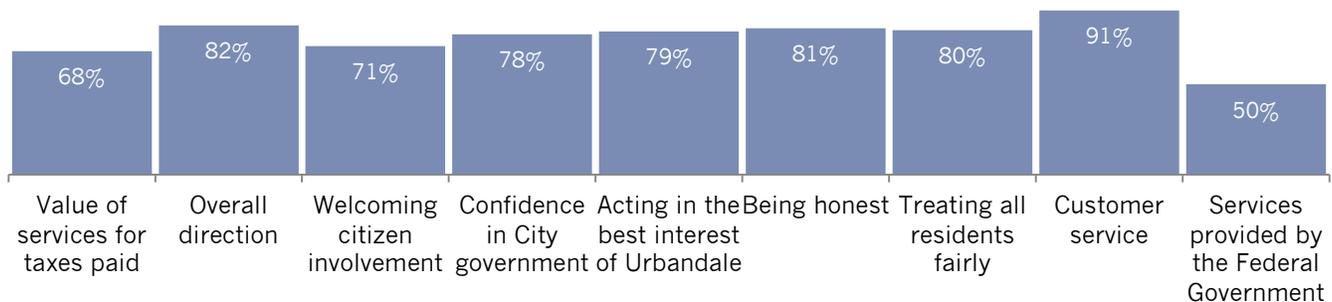
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



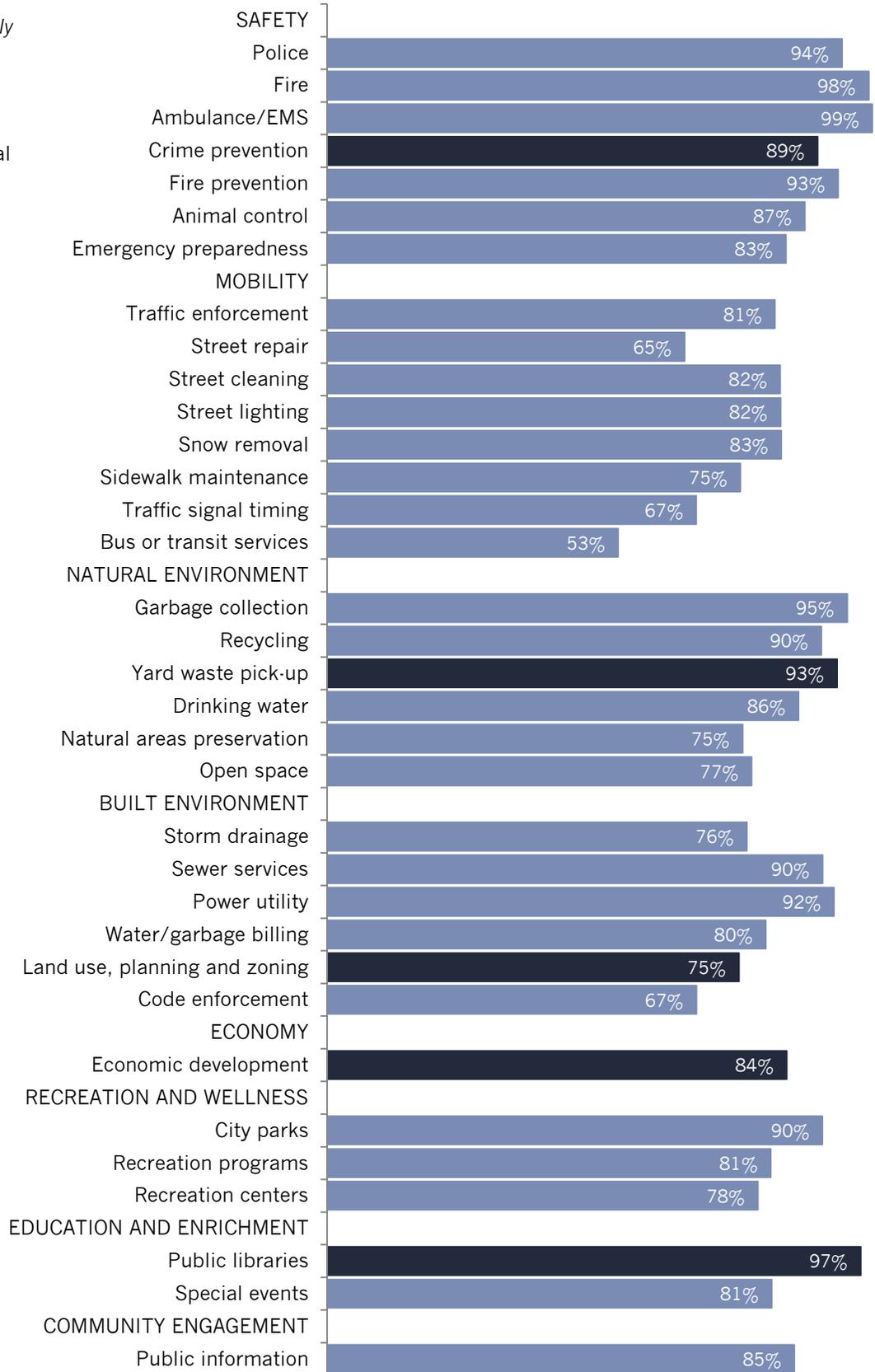
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

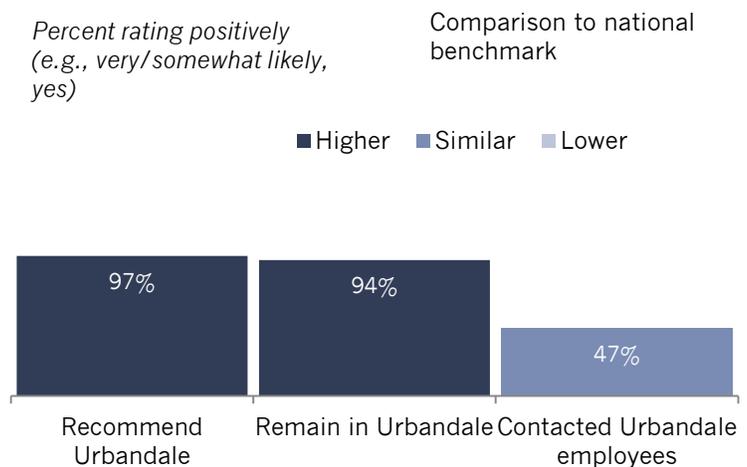
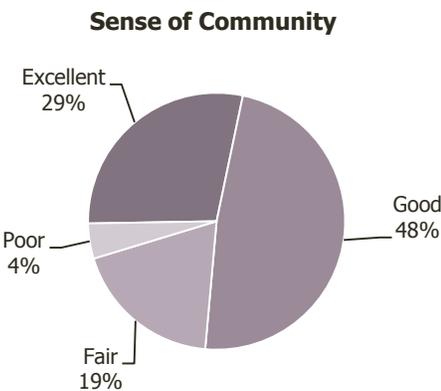


Participation

Are the residents of Urbandale 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 three-quarters of respondents gave high marks to the sense of community in Urbandale; a rating that was similar to the national average. At least 9 in 10 respondents were likely to remain in the community and recommend living in the community to someone who asks. These rates were higher than rates observed in comparison communities.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Levels of Participation varied widely across the different facets, making the comparison to the benchmarks useful for understanding the results. Generally, rates of Participation among Urbandale residents were on par with rates reported in other communities across the county, with some exceptions. Residents in Urbandale were more likely to report that they were NOT under housing cost stress or had NOT observed a code violation when compared to their national peers. Urbandale residents reported lower levels of stocking supplies for an emergency, using public transportation, carpooling, conserving water, using City recreation centers, volunteering and watching local public meetings.



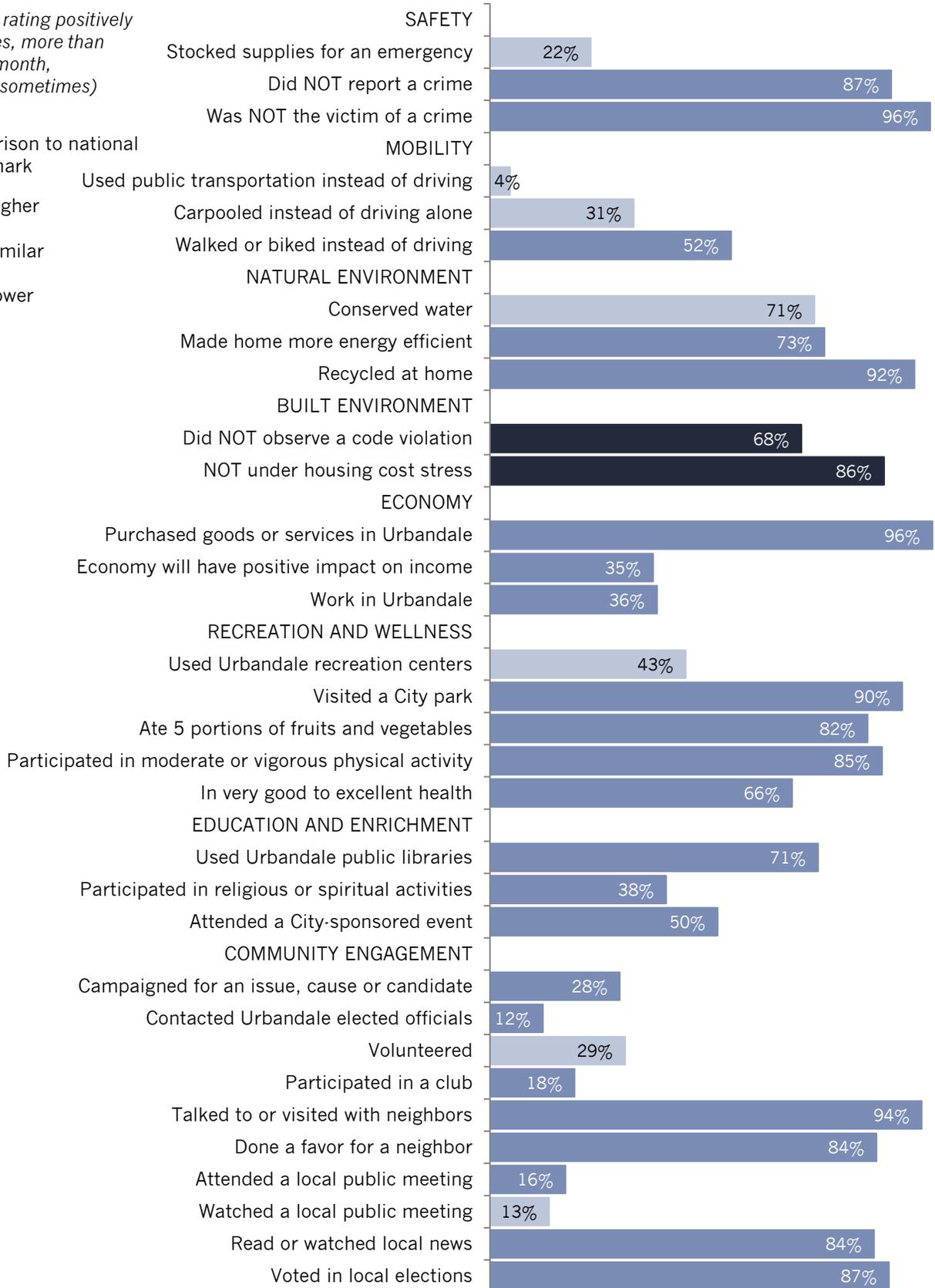
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



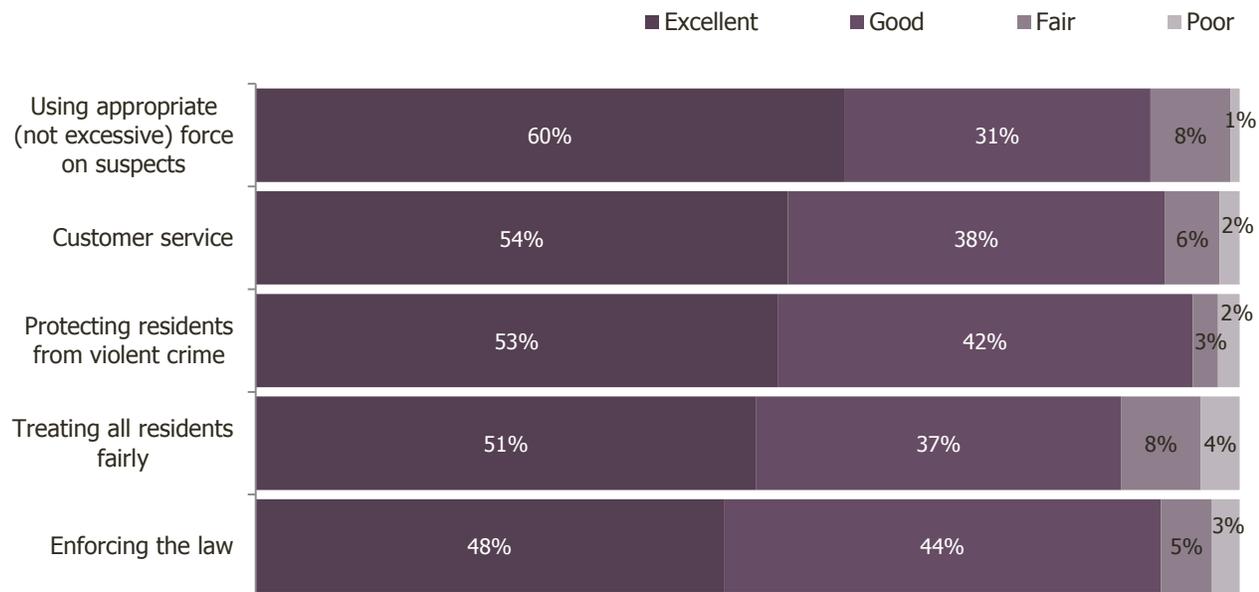
Special Topics

The City of Urbandale included three questions of special interest on The NCS including an assessment of the job done by the Police Department, the amount of information needed about City programs and projects and factors influencing decisions to live in Urbandale.

The Police Department received glowing ratings by survey respondents with about 9 in 10 or more offering excellent or good ratings to each item listed. About 6 in 10 offered excellent ratings to the department using appropriate force on suspects while about half of respondents offered excellent ratings to customer service, the department enforcing the law and treating all residents fairly.

Figure 4: Urbandale Police Department Ratings

Please rate the job the Urbandale Police Department does at each of the following:

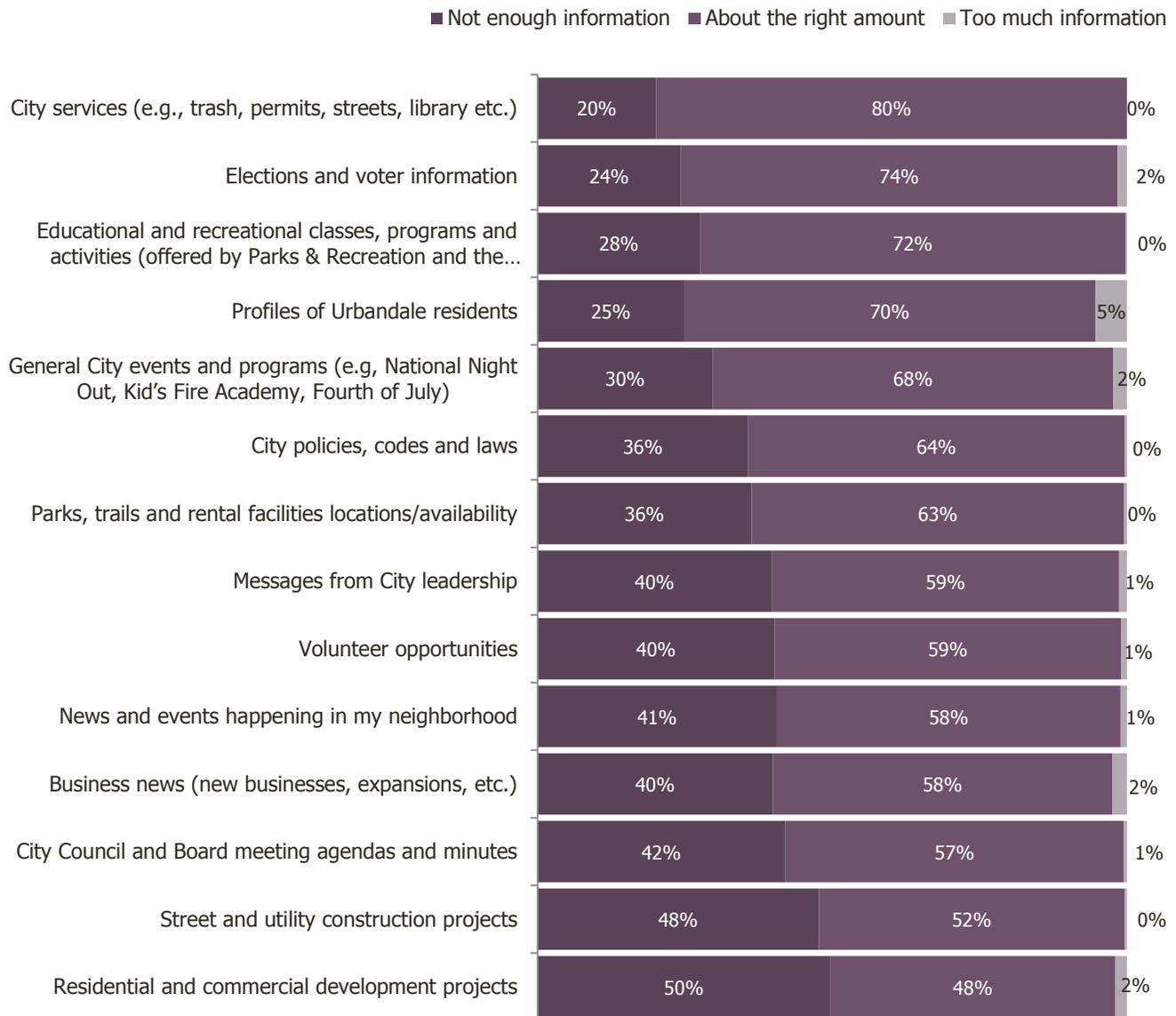


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When asked about the level of information received about various programs, services and projects in the city, no more than five percent felt they received too much information about any of the items listed and 48% to 80% of residents felt they received about the right amount for each item listed. About half felt they did not receive enough information about street and utility construction projects and residential and commercial development projects.

Figure 5: Information Received from the City of Urbandale

Please indicate whether you think you receive enough information about each of the following from the City of Urbandale:

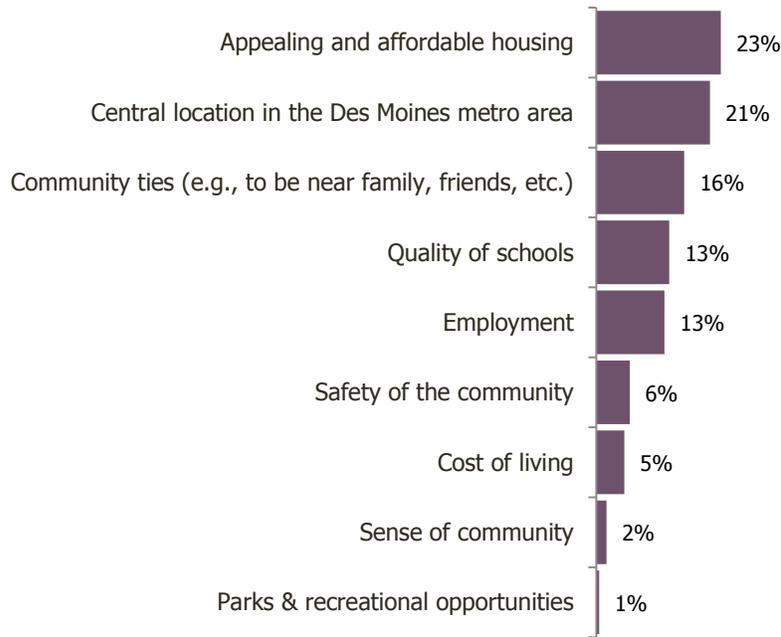


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The two listed items that topped the list when asked about the important factors in residents' decision to move to Urbandale were the appealing and affordable housing and the central location in the Des Moines metro area. At the bottom of the list with five percent or fewer respondents selecting each item were cost of living, sense of community and parks and recreational opportunities.

Figure 6: Most Important Factors in Decision to Move to Urbandale

What was the most important factor in your decision to move to Urbandale? (Please select only one.)



Conclusions

Residents continue to enjoy a high quality of life and strong sense of safety.

As in past years, most residents rated their overall quality of life as excellent or good and would be likely to recommend living in Urbandale and plan to remain in Urbandale for the next five years. At least 8 in 10 residents rated Urbandale as a place to retire and their neighborhood as a place to live positively while nearly all residents offered positive marks to Urbandale as a place to raise children (a rating higher than the national average).

Survey participants not only prioritized the facet of Safety for Urbandale to focus on in the coming years, but also rated aspects of this facet positively and in general, similar to the national averages and ratings given in 2016. Residents feel safe in general, as well as in their neighborhood and in the downtown/commercial area. Safety service ratings were strong and similar to the national averages and about 9 in 10 or more residents indicated they had NOT reported a crime or been the victim of a crime.

Recreation and Wellness may be an area of opportunity.

Across ratings of Community Characteristics and Governance as well as rates of Participation, items related to Recreation and Wellness were generally strong and similar to national averages; however, differences emerged when comparing 2018 ratings compared to 2016. About 8 in 10 or more respondents offered positive ratings to recreation centers and programs in 2018, both ratings which were lower than those reported in 2016 and fewer reported using recreation centers (the only Recreation and Wellness item on the survey to be rated lower than the national average).

Residents appreciate Urbandale's Built Environment.

Ratings of Built Environment were generally similar to or higher than national averages with higher than average ratings given to new development in the community, affordable quality housing and housing options (a rating that increased in 2018 compared to 2016) as well as land use planning and zoning services. Further, residents in Urbandale were more likely to report that they were NOT under housing cost stress or had NOT observed a code violation when compared to their national peers. When asked a special interest question about the important factors in residents' decision to move to Urbandale, the community's appealing and affordable housing topped the list with 23% of respondents selecting this option.