

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Denton, TX
Community Livability Report

2015



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

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About

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

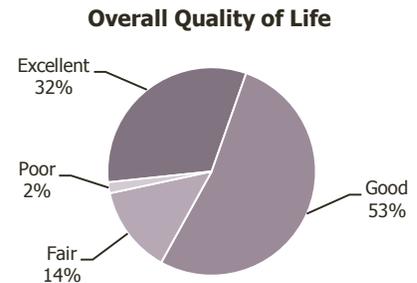
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 276 residents of the City of Denton. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 6% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Denton

Most residents rated the quality of life in Denton as excellent or good. This was similar to ratings in other communities across the nation (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.



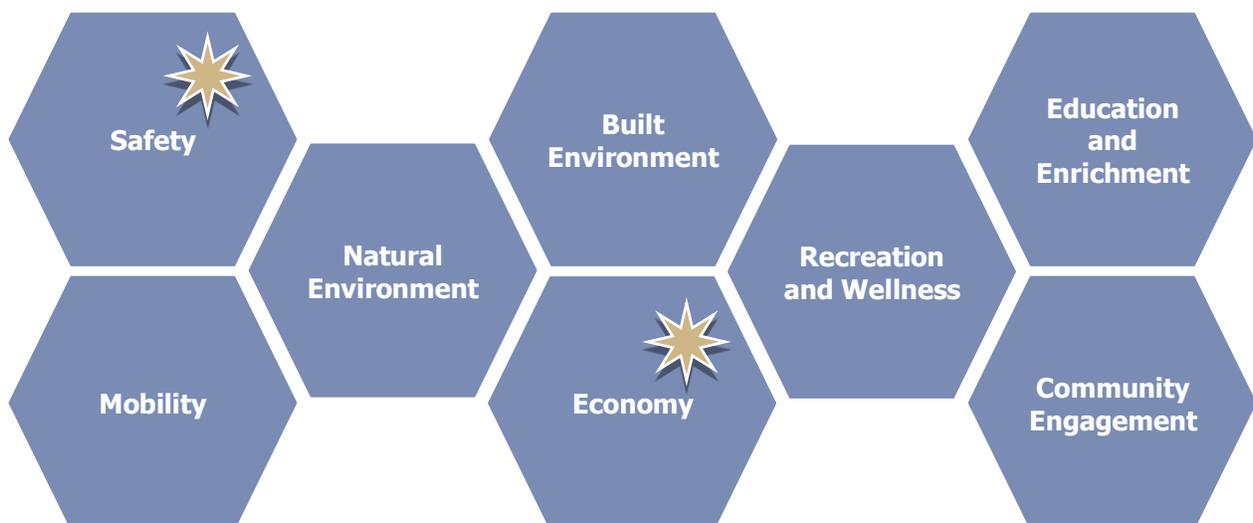
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Denton community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Denton residents gave strong ratings to both of these facets of community. Additionally, ratings for all facets of community 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 Denton’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 Denton, 89% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Denton 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 Denton as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Denton and its overall appearance. Eight in 10 residents gave high ratings to Denton as a place to raise children. About three-quarters of residents gave positive ratings to Denton's overall image and their neighborhood as a place to live while more than two-thirds of respondents gave favorable ratings for Denton as a place to retire and the overall appearance of Denton.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. All aspects within the facets of Safety, Natural Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement were rated positively by at least a majority of respondents. Within Economy, seven of the eight aspects were given ratings that were similar to the benchmark comparison, while the rating for Denton's vibrant downtown/commercial area was given a higher rating than the benchmark

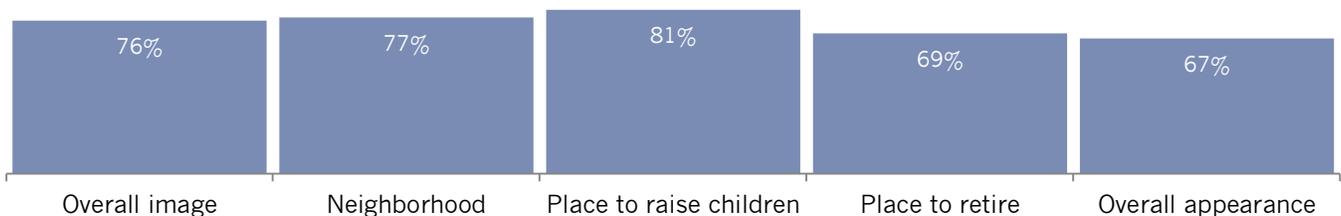
comparison with nearly 8 in 10 residents giving a positive rating. Within Education and Enrichment, most residents gave positive ratings to education and enrichment opportunities, cultural/arts/music activities and adult education, all of which were higher than ratings given in other communities. Ratings were lowest in the aspect of Mobility. About half of residents were pleased with paths and walking trails and ease of walking, while about 4 in 10 residents rated travel by bicycle and travel by public transportation positively; these aspects were rated similar to the benchmark. Ratings for overall ease of travel, travel by car public parking and traffic flow were lower than ratings given in other communities across the nation.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



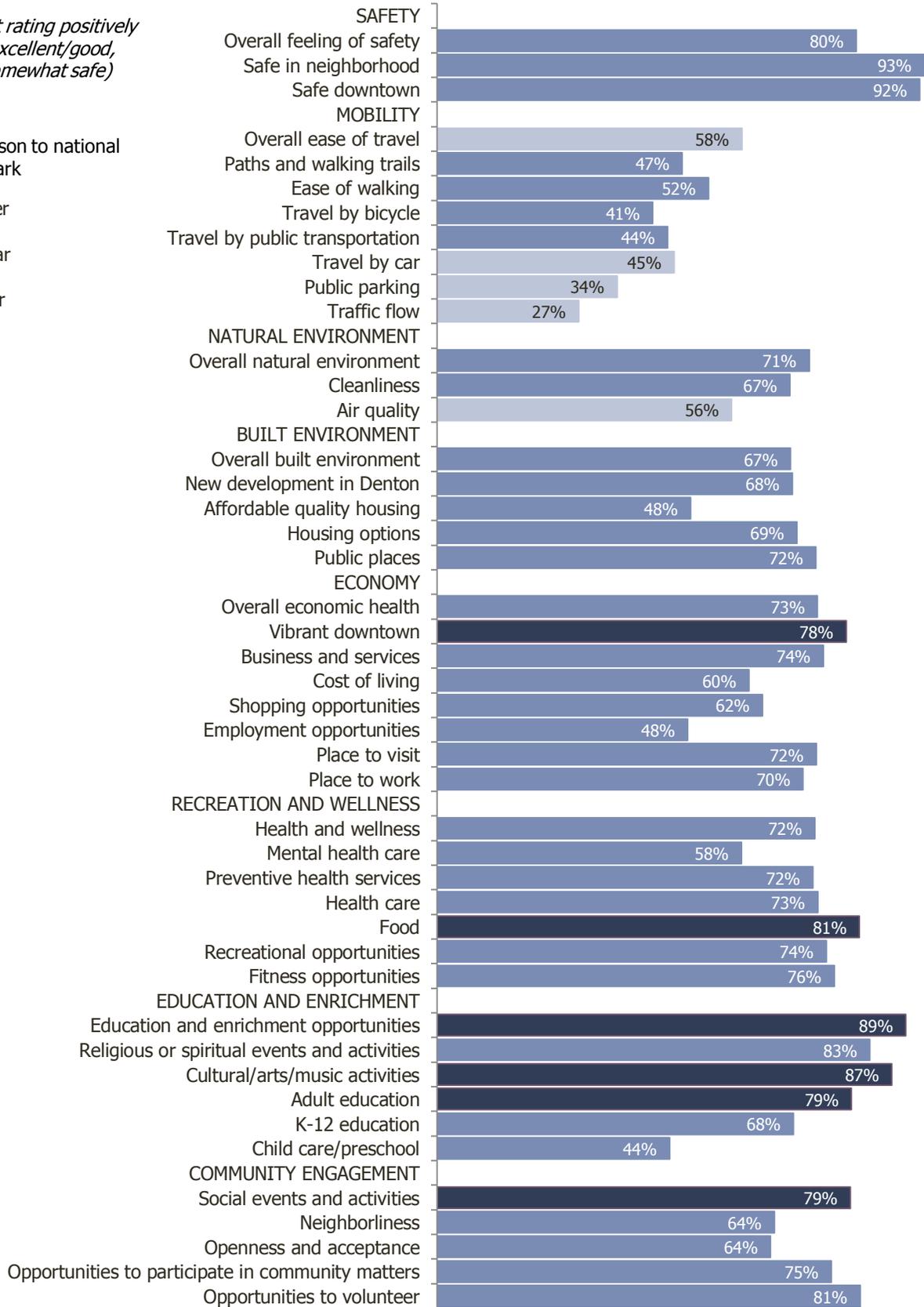
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

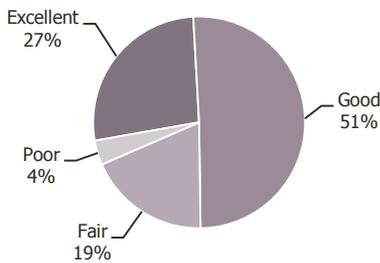
How well does the government of Denton meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Denton as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Nearly 8 in 10 residents were pleased with the overall quality of Denton services, and about one-third gave positive ratings to the services provided by the Federal Government. Both of these ratings were similar to ratings given in other communities across the nation.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Denton’s leadership and governance. About 7 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to overall customer service by Denton employees and the overall direction that Denton is taking. About two-thirds of residents were pleased with Denton government generally acting in the best interest of the community, and about 6 in 10 gave positive ratings to welcoming citizen involvement, confidence in City government, and being honest. About half of respondents favorably rated the value of services for taxes paid and treating all residents fairly; these ratings were all similar to ratings given in other communities.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Denton. A majority or more of residents gave positive ratings to all aspects of Safety, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement and all aspects within these facets were rated similar to the benchmark with the exception of special events, which was rated higher than the benchmark. Ratings for Mobility were more varied: about 7 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to bus or transit services and about half rated traffic enforcement, street cleaning and street lighting positively. Sidewalk maintenance, traffic signal timing and snow removal were rated favorably by about 4 in 10 residents, while only 2 in 10 were pleased with street repair. All aspects of Mobility were rated similar to ratings given in other communities except snow removal and street lighting, which were rated lower.

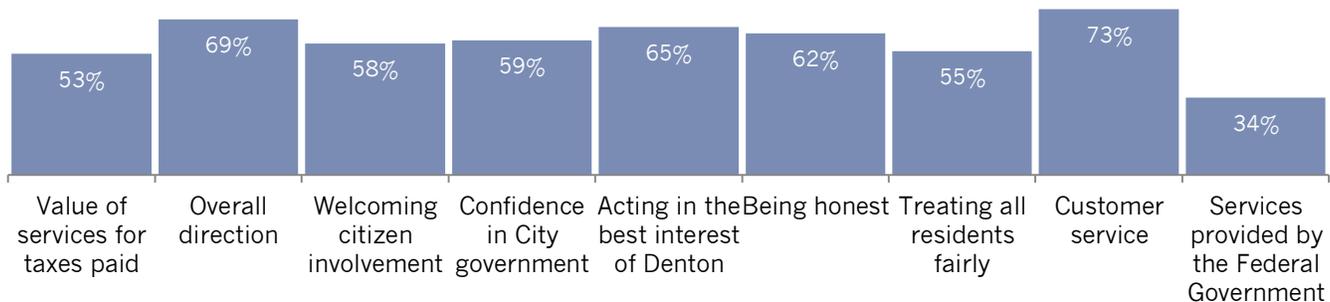
Overall Quality of Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



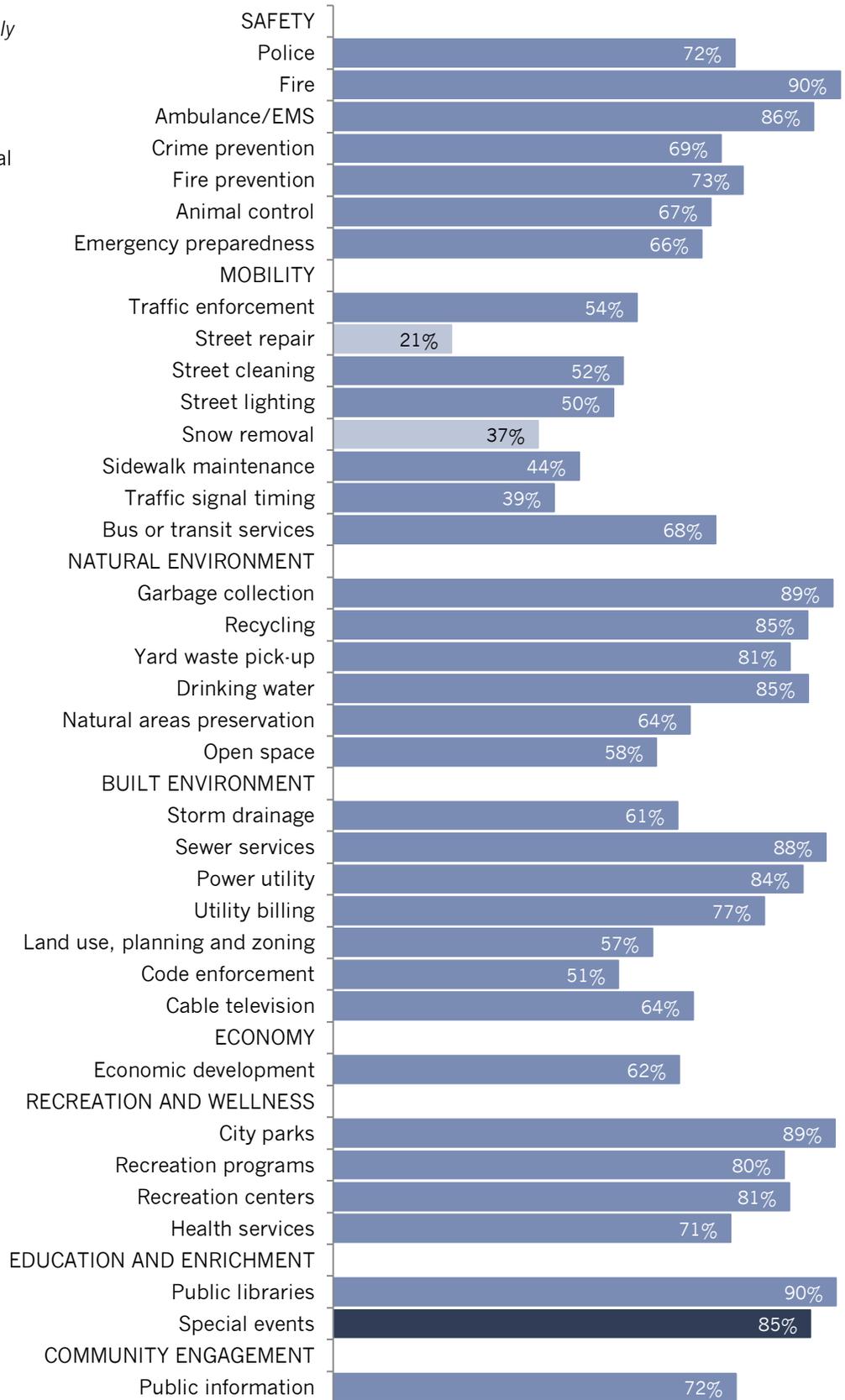
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



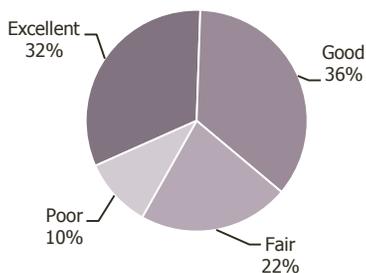
Participation

Are the residents of Denton 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 7 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the sense of community in Denton, which was similar to ratings given in other communities. Almost 9 in 10 respondents would recommend Denton to others and more than 8 in 10 plan to remain in Denton for the next five years; about half of residents had contacted Denton employees in the past year. These rates of participation were similar to the benchmark.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Ratings for Participation varied across facets. A majority or more of residents participated in all aspects of Natural Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment, rates which were similar to those in other communities. Rates of participation varied most widely in the facet of Community Engagement: about 9 in 10 residents had talked or visited with neighbors and about 8 in 10 read or watched local news at least once in the past year, while about 2 in 10 had contacted Denton elected officials, attended or watched a local public meeting. Rates of participation within Economy were also varied with nearly all residents reporting they had purchased goods or services in Denton while only one-third indicated they felt the economy will have a positive impact on their income. All rates of Participation across each facet were similar to rates given in other communities across the country, with the exception of the rate of residents who work in Denton within the facet of Economy, which was higher than the rate given in other communities.

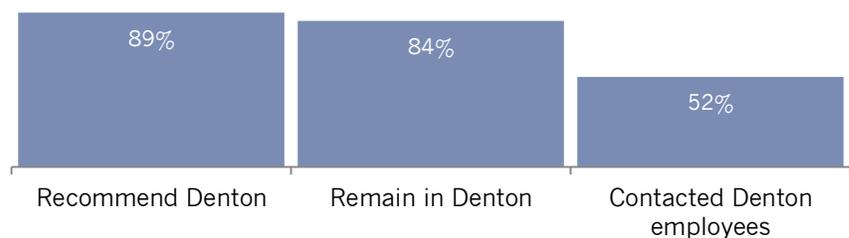
Sense of Community



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



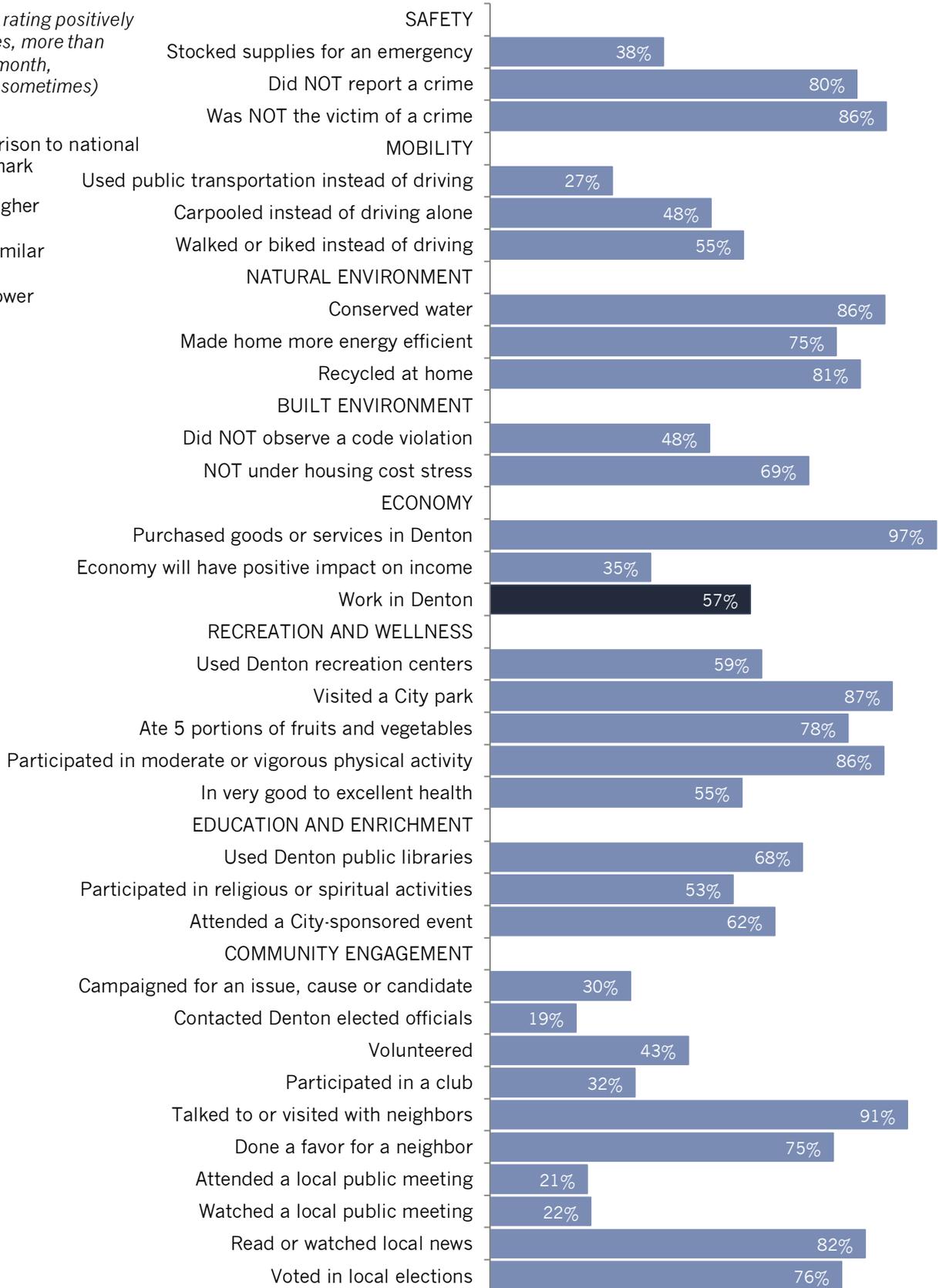
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

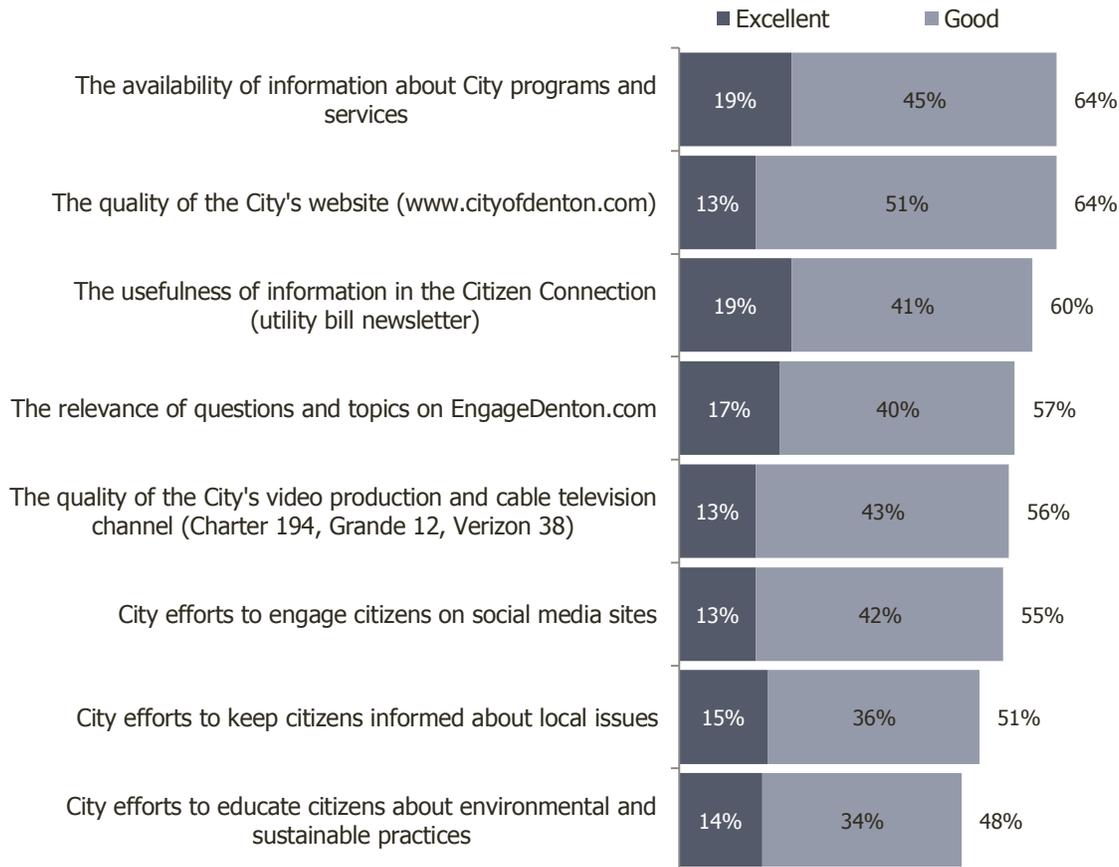
- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Special Topics

The City of Denton included four questions of special interest on The NCS. The first special-interest question asked residents to rate the quality of different aspects of City communications. About two-thirds of residents positively rated the availability of information about City programs and services and the quality of the City’s website, while about 6 in 10 gave favorable ratings to the usefulness of information in the Citizen Connection and the relevance of questions and topics on EngageDenton.com. About half of respondents gave positive ratings to the quality of the City’s video production and cable television and to City efforts to engage citizens on social media sites, to keep citizens informed about local issues and to educate citizens about environmental and sustainable practices.

Figure 4: Quality of City Communications
 Please rate the following aspects of the City of Denton’s communications:

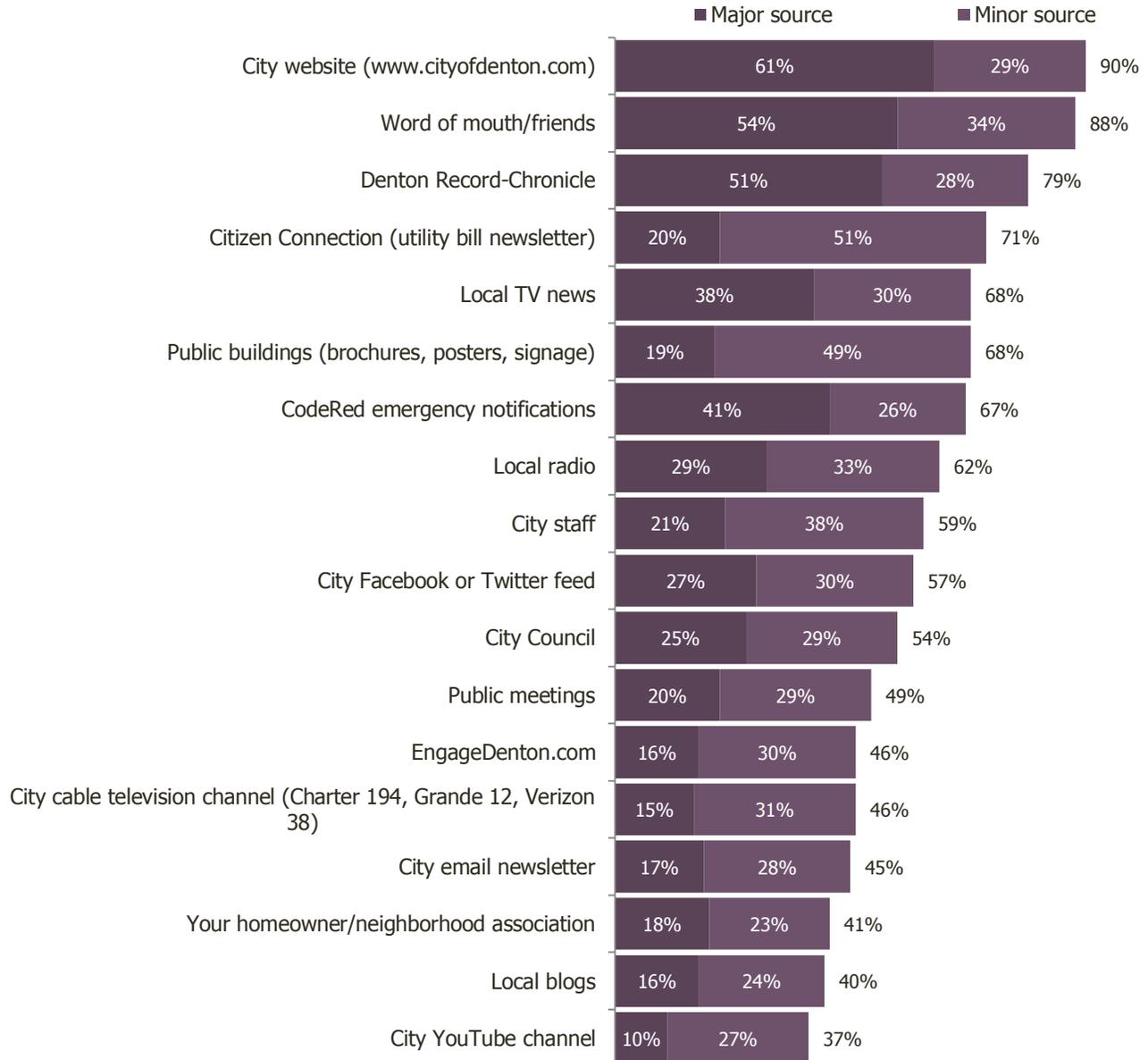


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The second special-interest question on the survey asked residents to indicate how much of a source they considered different means of communication to be for obtaining information about the City government. About 9 in 10 respondents indicated that they found the City website and word-of-mouth or friends to be at least a minor source of information, while about 8 in 10 indicated the *Denton Record-Chronicle* as at least a minor source. At least two-thirds of survey participants indicated the Citizen Connection, local TV news, public buildings, and CodeRed emergency notifications as a source. Four in 10 or fewer residents indicated their homeowner/neighborhood association, local blogs or the City YouTube channel as sources of information.

Figure 5: Sources of Information

Please indicate how much of a source, if at all, you consider each of the following to be for obtaining information about the City government and its activities, events and services:

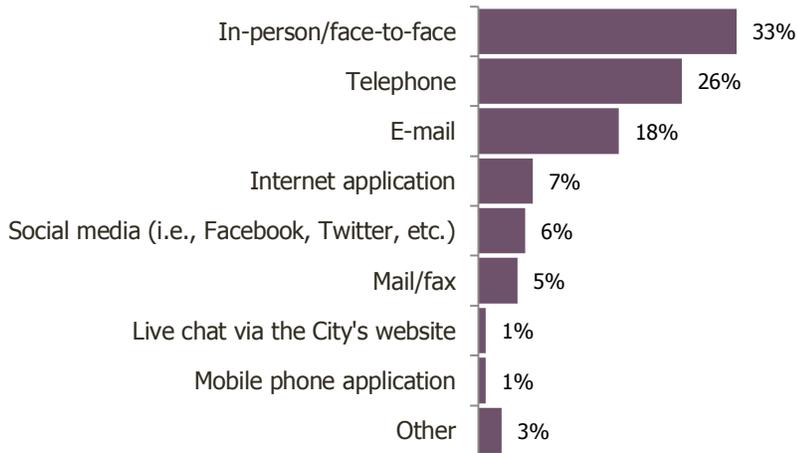


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A third special-interest question asked residents to indicate their preferred method of customer service interaction with City of Denton employees. In-person or face-to-face contact was the most preferred method of interaction, with about one-third of respondents favoring this method; one-quarter of respondents favored telephone interaction and about 2 in 10 favored email. Fewer than 1 in 10 respondents preferred interaction via internet application, social media, mail/fax, live chat, mobile phone application or other methods.

Figure 6: Customer Service Interaction Method

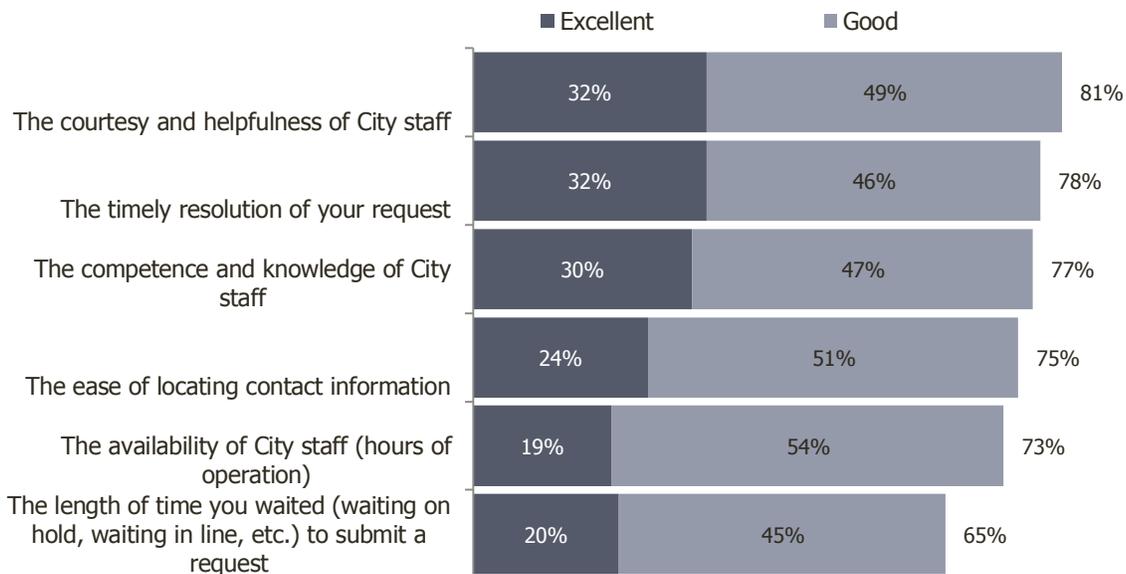
Please indicate which of the following is your preferred method of customer service interaction with the City of Denton Employees:



The fourth and final special-interest question asked survey participants to rate the quality of their most recent customer service experience with the City of Denton. All categories of customer service were rated positively by at least 6 in 10 respondents. About 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the courtesy and helpfulness of city staff and the timely resolution of their request, and about three-quarters positively rated the competence and knowledge of City staff, the ease of locating contact information and the availability of City staff.

Figure 7: Customer Service Impressions

Thinking about your most recent experience with the City of Denton, please rate your impression of the following categories of customer service performance:



Conclusions

Denton residents enjoy a high quality of life.

Most residents rated their quality of life positively and think that Denton is an excellent or good place to live. More than 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings for Denton as a place to live and raise children and about three-quarters favorably rated the overall image of Denton and their neighborhood as a place to live. Most residents would recommend Denton to others and plan on remaining in Denton for the next five years.

Economy is important to residents and is highly rated in Denton.

Economy was identified as an important area of focus in the coming years, and many aspects of Economy were rated positively by a majority of residents, including overall economic health, shopping opportunities, Denton as a place to work and to visit, cost of living in Denton, vibrant downtown/commercial area, business and services and economic development. Virtually all residents had purchased goods or services in Denton in the past year and nearly 6 in 10 residents work in Denton. Ratings for Denton's downtown/commercial area and the number of residents who work in Denton were higher than ratings given in other communities across the nation.

Mobility ratings may be a possible area of focus for the City in the future.

Ratings for Mobility varied across the different pillars of community livability. A majority of respondents gave positive ratings for ease of walking, traffic enforcement, street cleaning, street lighting, and bus or transit services and gave ratings similar to those given in other communities. Fewer residents gave positive ratings for traffic flow, travel by car, public parking, street repair and snow removal, all which received ratings lower than the benchmark. Overall ease of travel was rated positively by 58% of respondents, a lower rating than was seen in other communities. Less than half of residents had carpooled instead of driving alone and about one-quarter had used public transportation instead of driving.

Residents are pleased with Denton communications and with customer service by the City.

In a series of special-interest questions on the survey, residents were asked to indicate their most commonly-used sources of information about the city and to rate the quality of City communications, as well as indicate their preferred method of customer service interaction with the City and to rate customer service quality. Almost all residents indicated the City website as a major or minor source of information about the City and about two-thirds of residents rated the quality of the City website as excellent or good. Nearly three-quarters of residents utilized the Citizen Connection newsletter as at least a minor source of information and 60% of residents positively rated the usefulness of the newsletter. When asked to indicate their preferred method of customer service interaction with the City, one-third of residents indicated their preference for in-person or face-to-face contact and another 26% preferred telephone communication. All categories of customer service performance were rated favorably by about two-thirds or more of survey respondents, with the courtesy and helpfulness of City staff being the most highly rated.