

**THE NCS**<sup>TM</sup>  
The National Citizen Survey<sup>TM</sup>

**Denton, TX**  
Community Livability Report

2018



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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.

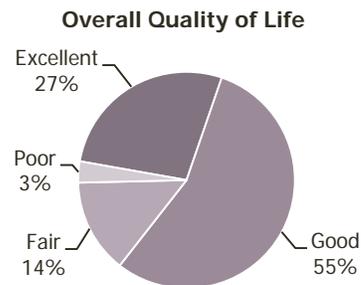
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 216 residents of the City of Denton. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 7% 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 Denton

About 8 in 10 residents rated the quality of life in Denton 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).



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.

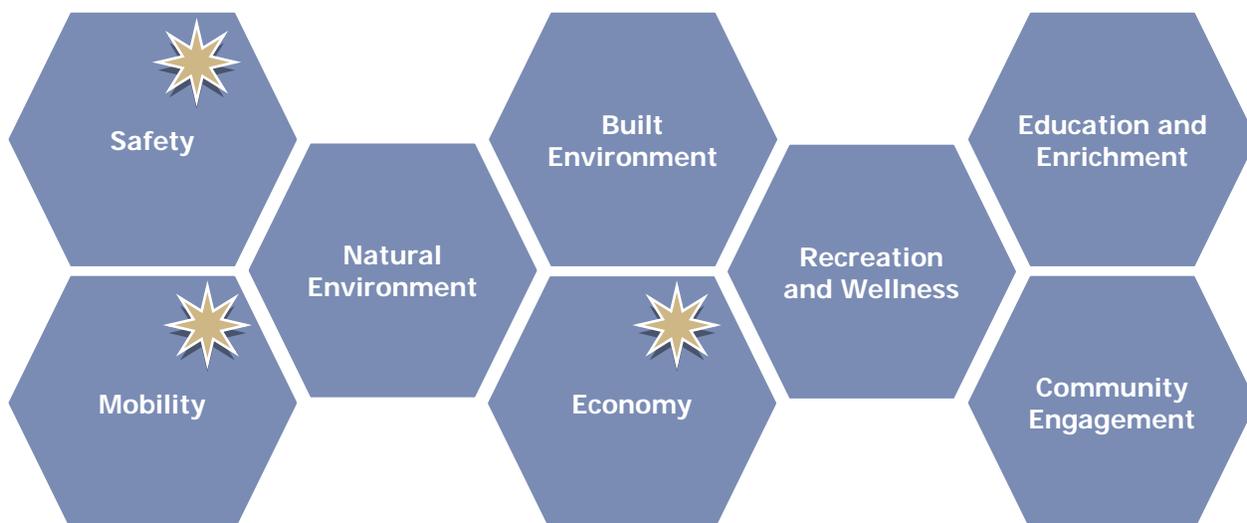
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety, Mobility and Economy as priorities for the Denton community in the coming two years. These facets, as well as all other facets of community livability, received ratings that were positive and similar to the national benchmarks. 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, 86% 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. At least 7 in 10 residents gave positive reviews to the overall image and overall appearance of the city, their neighborhood as a place to live and Denton as a place to raise children, while 6 in 10 were pleased with the city as a place to retire. All of these ratings were similar to the national benchmarks.

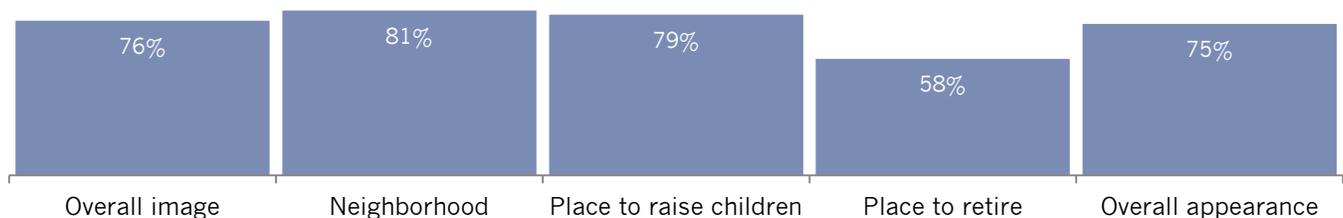
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Generally, most items were given positive ratings by a majority of respondents and these ratings were similar to or higher than those seen elsewhere. Resident evaluations of aspects of Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement were particularly strong; nearly all of these items received above-average ratings. Respondents were also pleased with aspects of Built Environment, Economy and Recreation and Wellness, and ratings for overall quality of new development, vibrant downtown/commercial area, overall quality of business and service establishments and availability of affordable quality mental health care and food were higher than those given in other communities across the nation.

Ratings within the facet of Mobility were more mixed. About half of residents or more gave positive scores to the overall ease of travel, availability of paths and walking trails, ease of walking and ease of travel by bicycle (which were similar to the national benchmarks) and ease of travel by public transportation (which was higher). However, about 4 in 10 residents or less gave favorable marks to ease of travel by car, public parking and traffic flow and these ratings were lower than those awarded in other communities across the nation. It is noteworthy that ratings for several Mobility-related items, including traffic flow, ease of walking and ease of public transportation) increased over time. (Due to differences in methodology, trends should be interpreted cautiously; for more information see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover.)



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

Comparison to national benchmark  
 ■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



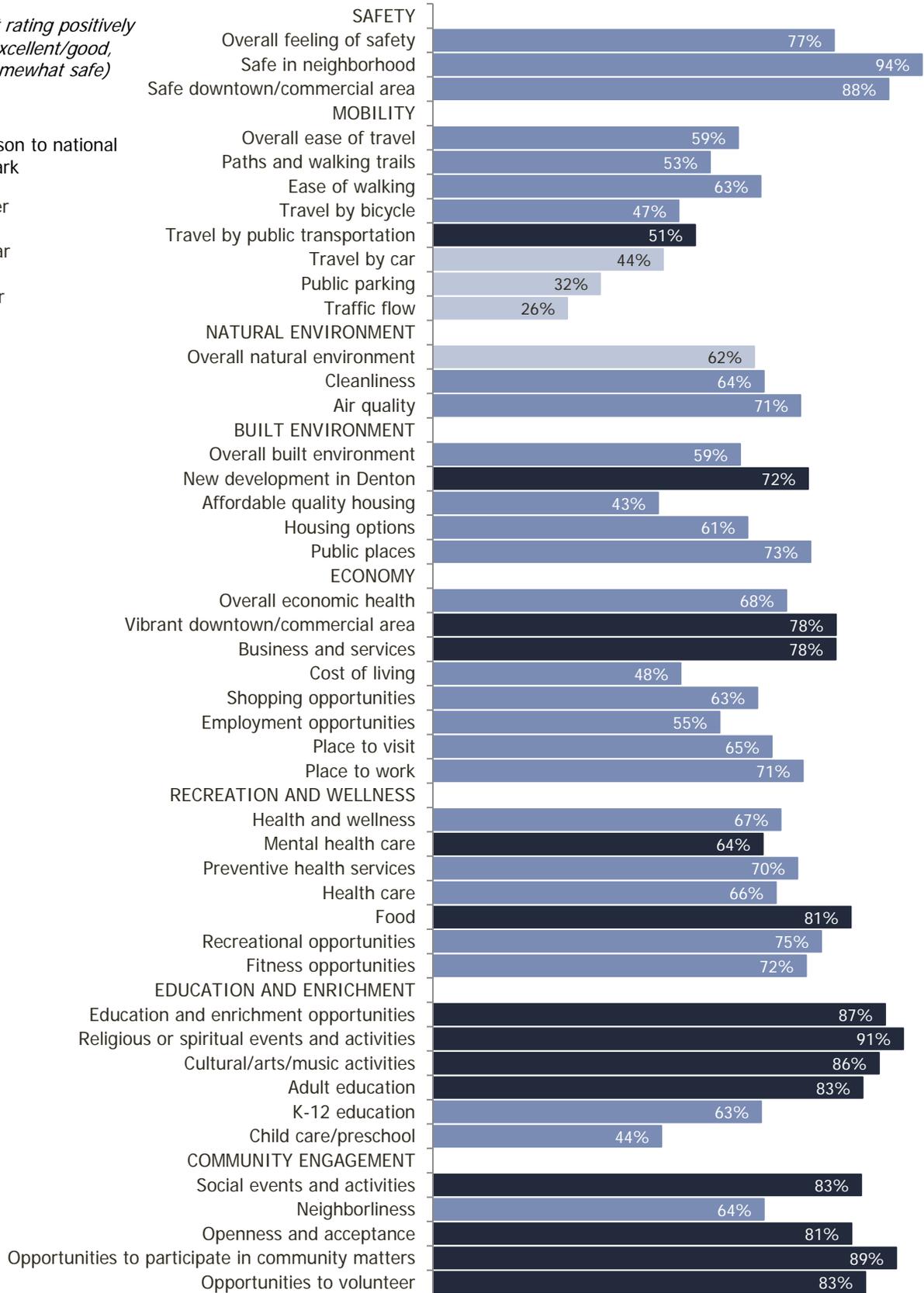
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

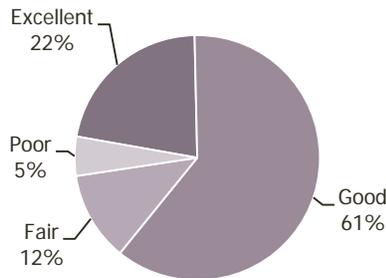
*How well does the government of Denton meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Denton as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. In Denton, about 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the overall quality of City services and 4 in 10 were pleased with the services provided by the Federal Government; both of these ratings were similar to those given elsewhere.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Denton’s leadership and governance. At least half of residents gave favorable marks to all aspects of government performance and all were similar to the national benchmarks except for the job Denton government does at welcoming citizen involvement, which was above average and improved over time. Further, ratings for several other aspects improved since 2017, including the overall direction of the City, overall confidence in City government, government acting in the best interest of Denton, being honest and treating all residents fairly.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Denton. Ratings for almost all items were positive and similar to the national benchmarks, with the exception of Mobility-related services: while the rating for bus or transit services was above average and improved since 2017, evaluations for street repair, snow removal and traffic signal timing were lower than the national benchmarks. Ratings improved over time for several other City services, including sidewalk maintenance; land use, planning and zoning; economic development; and health services.

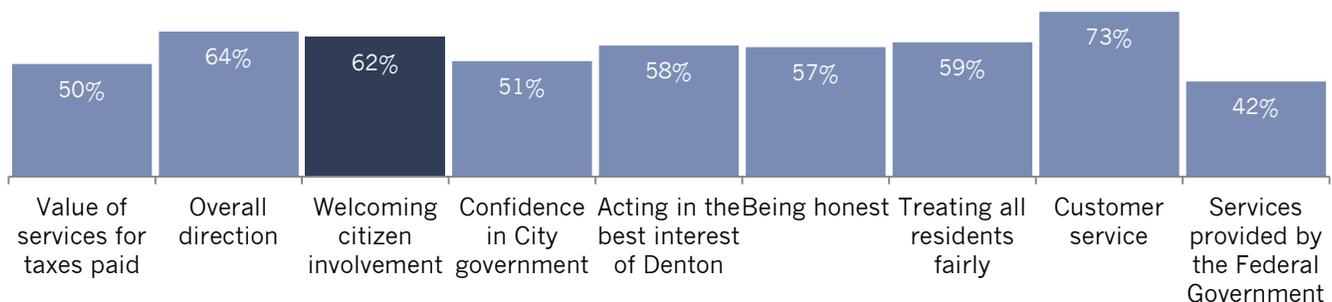
**Overall Quality of City Services**



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



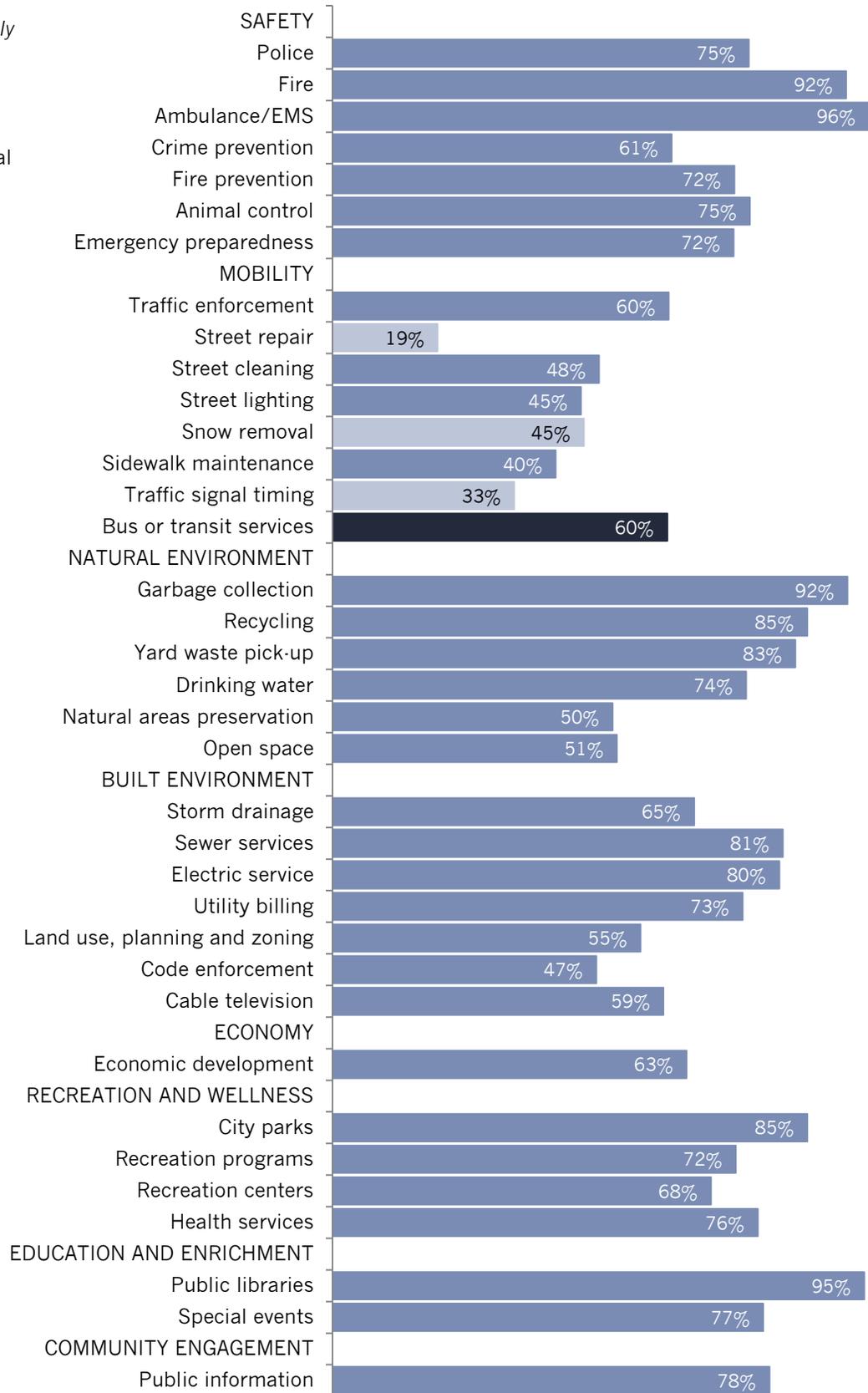
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



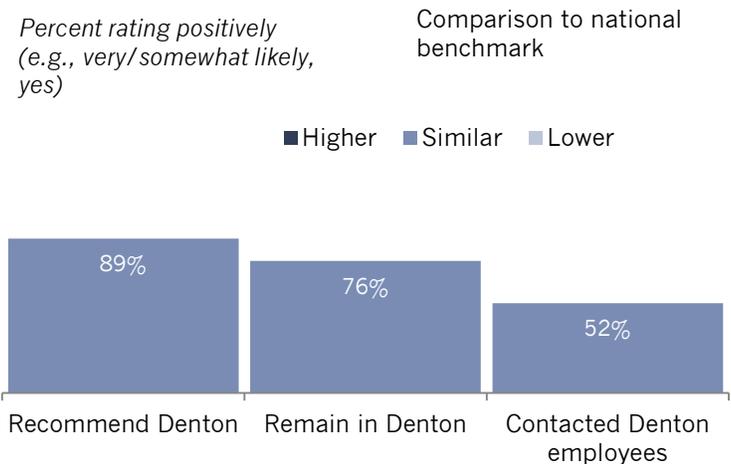
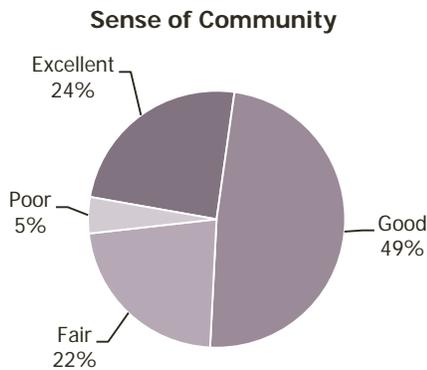
# Participation

*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 three-quarters of Denton residents gave excellent or good ratings to the sense of community in the city and planned to remain in Denton for the next five years, while 9 in 10 would recommend living in the city to someone who asked. These ratings were similar to those given in other communities across the nation.

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 tended to vary widely across the different facets, making the benchmark comparisons useful for interpreting the results. Generally, participation rates tended to be similar to those observed in other communities. Denton residents were more likely than those who lived elsewhere to work in the city, but less likely to have stocked supplies for an emergency, not observed a code violation, used Denton recreation centers or public libraries, exhibited healthy behaviors, read or watched local news or voted in local elections.

Compared to prior years, many rates of Participation declined in 2018, particularly within the facets of Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement. However, it is important to note that the changes in these ratings over time may be attributable to a change in survey methodology from 2017 to 2018 (see the *Trends over Time* report for more information).



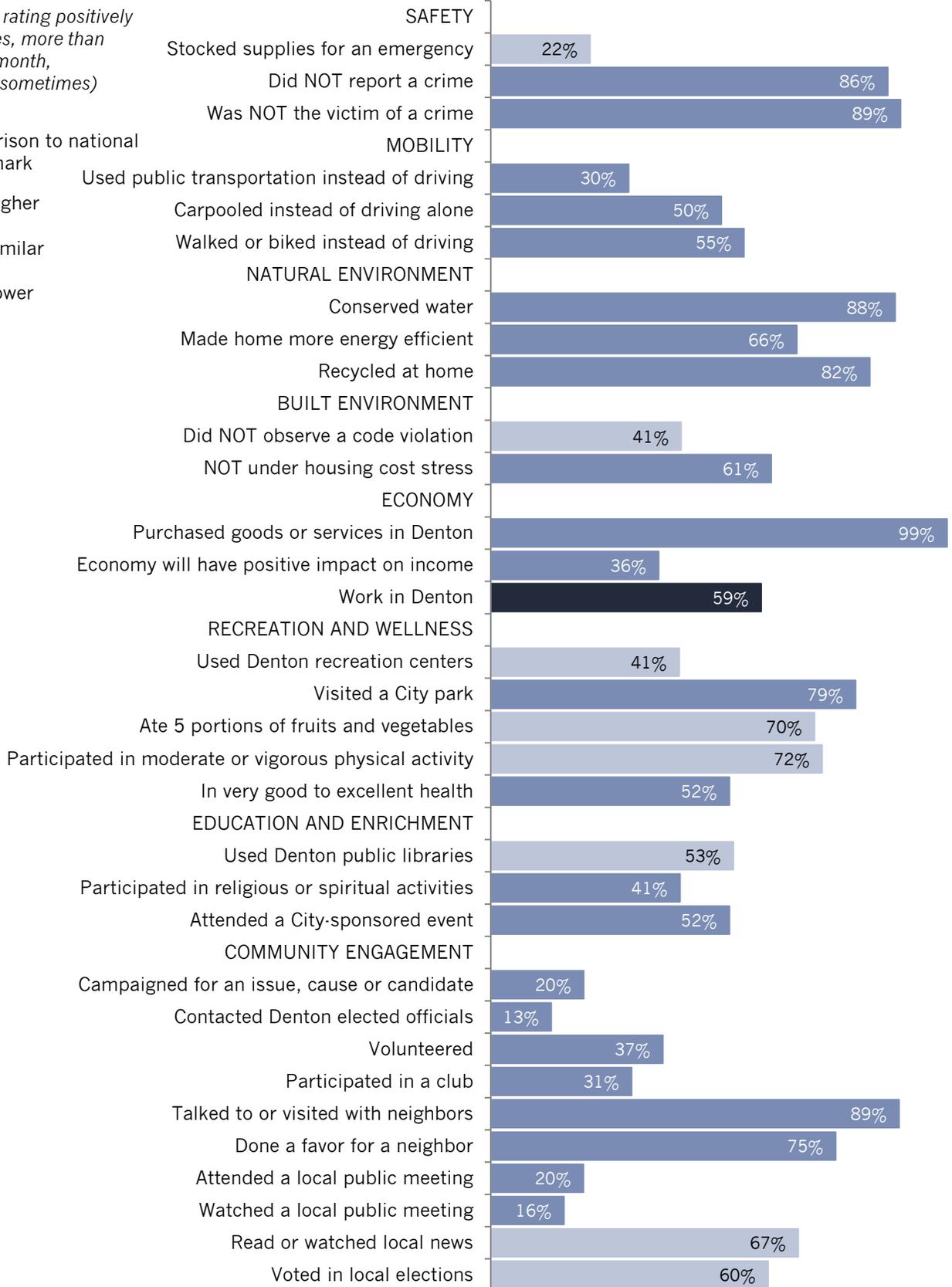
# The National Citizen Survey™

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

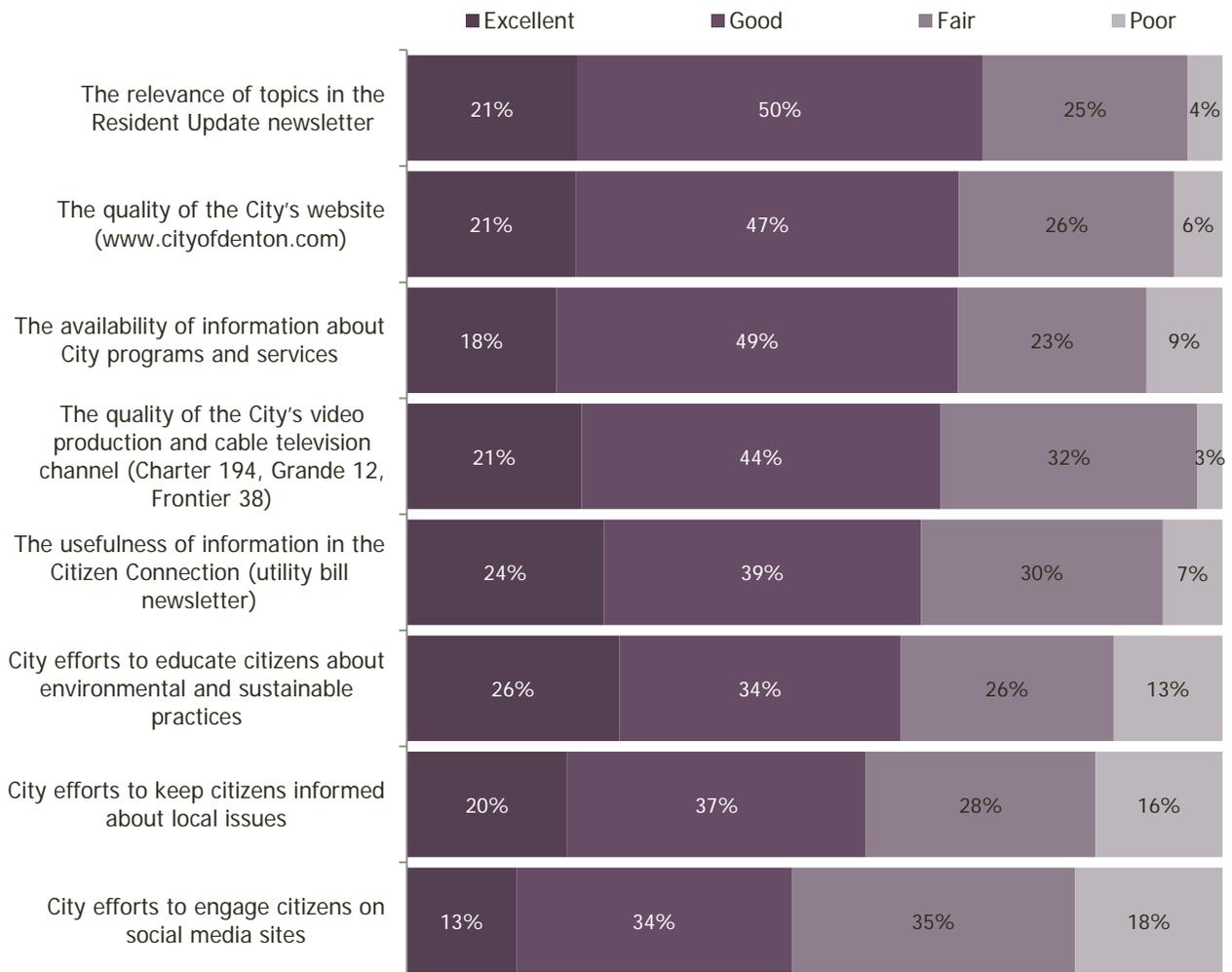


# Special Topics

The City of Denton included four questions of special interest on The NCS. Topic areas included City information sources, customer service provided by the City and voter participation.

Residents were asked to rate various aspects of City information sources. About two-thirds of residents or more gave favorable marks to the relevance of topics in the *Resident Update* newsletter, the quality of the City website, the availability of City information and the quality of the City’s video production and cable TV channel. Residents were least likely to positively rate City efforts to engage residents on social media sites; about half gave this an excellent or good rating.

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

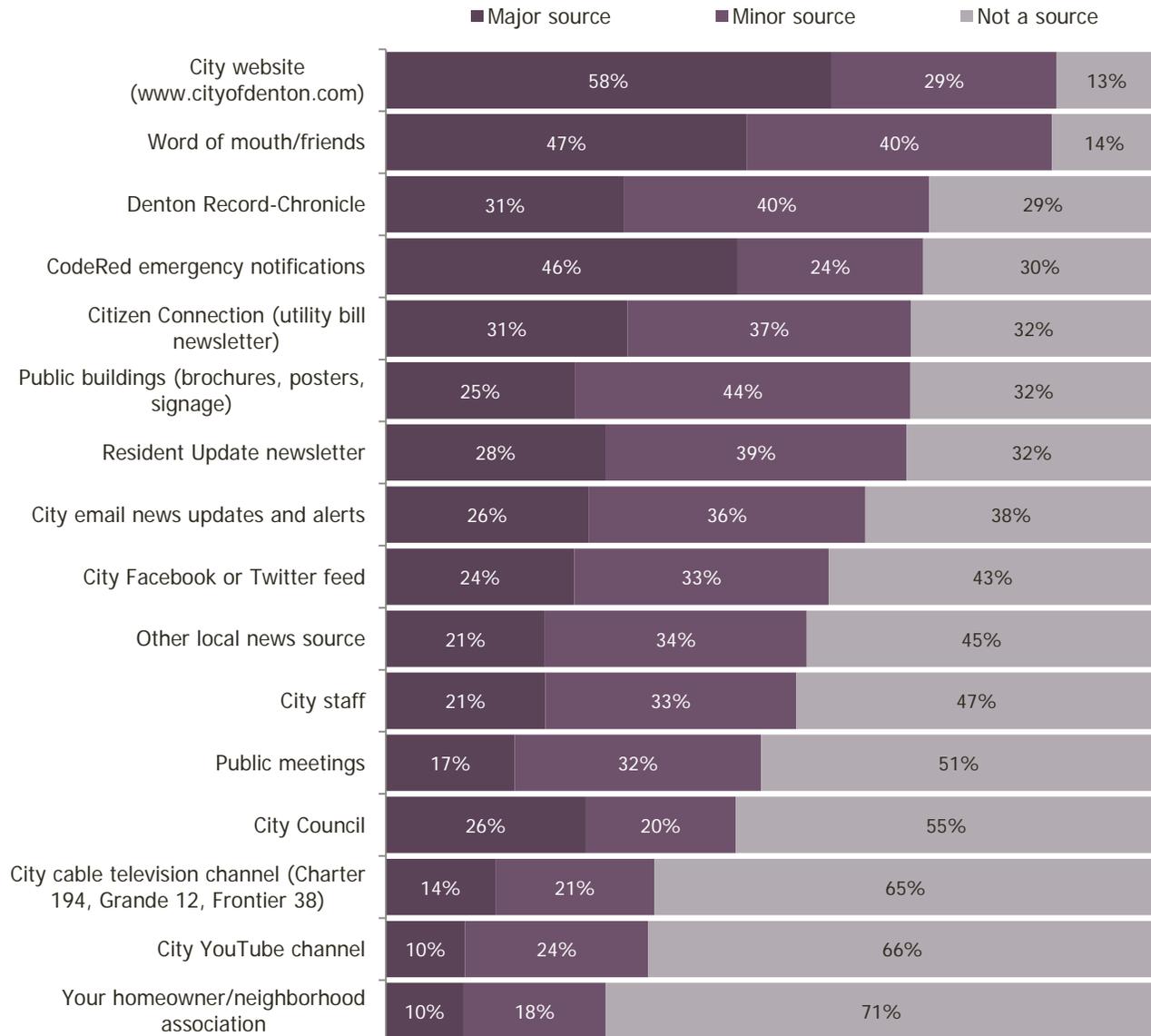


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Thinking about sources of information about the City, more than 8 in 10 residents indicated that they used the City website and word of mouth/friends as major or minor sources of information, while about 7 in 10 considered the *Denton Record-Chronicle*, CodeRed emergency notifications, the *Citizen Connection*, public buildings and the *Resident Update* newsletter to be information sources. Residents were least likely to utilize a City cable television channel, the City YouTube channel or their homeowner/neighborhood association as sources of City information.

Figure 5: Sources of City 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:

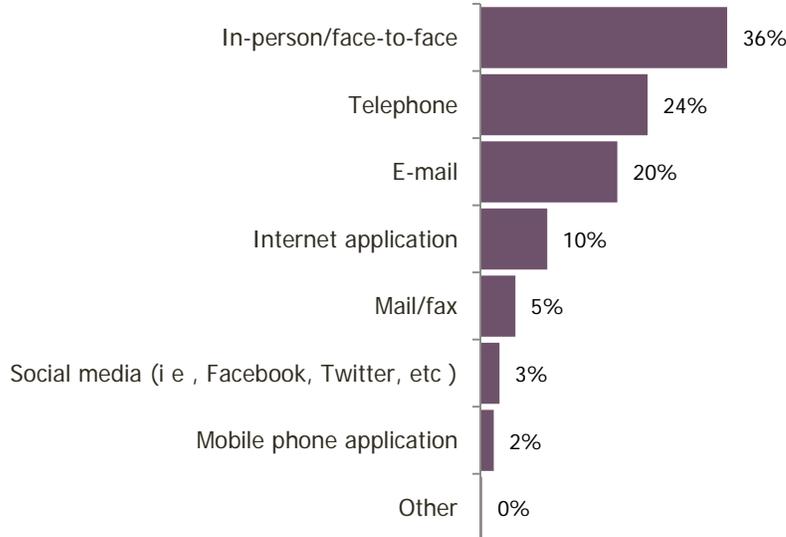


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About one-third of residents indicated that their most preferred method of customer service interaction with the City was in-person or face-to-face and 2 in 10 preferred telephone or email interaction. One in ten or fewer preferred an internet app, mail/fax, social media or a mobile phone app for City customer service interaction.

Figure 6: Preferred Customer Service Interaction

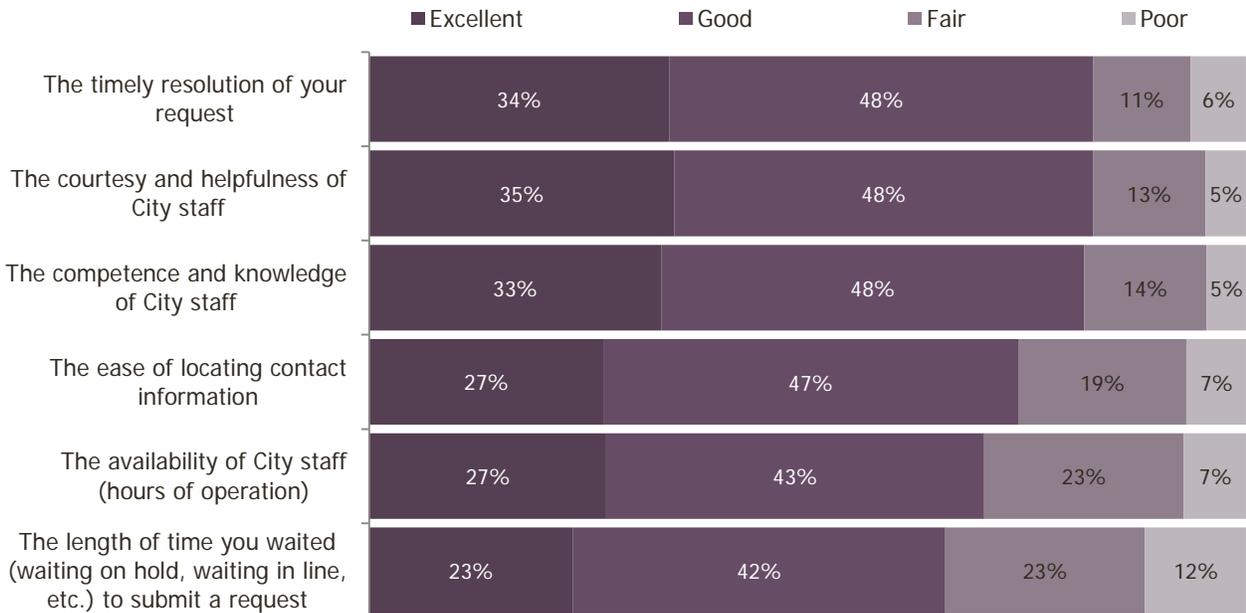
Please indicate which of the following is your preferred method of customer service interaction with the City of Denton Employees: (Please select only one.)



When asked to rate their impression of their most recent customer service interaction with a Denton employee, residents were most likely to give positive ratings to the timely resolution of their request, the courtesy and helpfulness of City staff and the competence and knowledge of staff (8 in 10 excellent or good).

Figure 7: Customer Service Performance

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



Thinking about their participation in the previous election, about 7 in 10 residents indicated that they had not voted, while 3 in 10 had. Of those who had not voted, about one-third of residents indicated that they had not been aware of the election and 1 in 10 were not registered to vote. Very few residents had not voted because the voting location was inconvenient. About 6 in 10 residents had not voted for some other reason.

Figure 8: Voter Participation  
*Did you vote in the previous municipal election in Denton?*

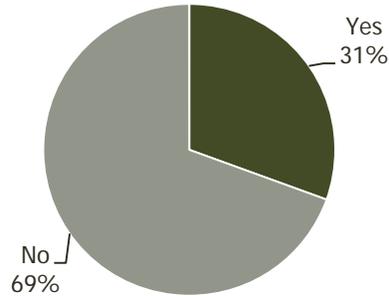
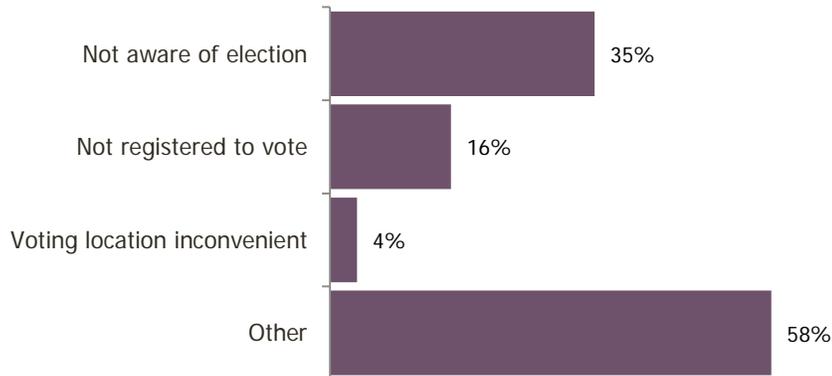


Figure 9: Reasons for Not Voting  
*Did you vote in the previous municipal election in Denton? Why not? (Mark all that apply.)*



Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

# Conclusions

## Denton residents continue to enjoy a high quality of life.

About 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the overall quality of life in Denton and the city as a place to live. At least three-quarters of residents also were pleased with the overall image and overall appearance of the city, their neighborhood as a place to live and the city as a place to raise children, and 6 in 10 felt Denton as a place to retire was excellent or good. While most of these evaluations were stable from 2017 to 2018, the rating for overall appearance increased. Residents remain loyal to the community, with more than 7 in 10 residents planning to remain in Denton for the next five years and 9 in 10 recommending living in Denton to someone who asked. These ratings all were similar to those given in other communities across the nation.

## Safety ratings are strong and Safety is a priority for the community.

Denton residents indicated that Safety was an important focus area for the City and ratings within this facet tended to be positive. Nine in 10 residents reported feeling safe in their neighborhood and in Denton's downtown and gave excellent or good ratings to fire and ambulance/EMS services. At least 7 in 10 residents gave favorable marks to police services, fire prevention, animal control and emergency preparedness; these ratings were all similar to the national average. However, only 22% of respondents had stocked supplies for an emergency, a level which decreased from 2015 to 2018 and was lower than levels reported in other communities.

## Economy is an important area of focus for the City.

Residents indicated that Economy would be an important area for the City to focus on in the next two years and ratings within this facet tended to be positive. Nearly 8 in 10 residents were pleased with Denton's vibrant downtown/commercial area and the overall quality of business and service establishments (both of which were higher than the benchmark), and other Economy-related items such as the overall economic health of the city, shopping and employment opportunities and Denton as a place to visit and to work received ratings similar to those given in other communities across the nation. Denton residents were more likely to work within the city than those who lived elsewhere.

## Mobility is also a resident priority.

Residents also indicated that they would like to see the City address aspects of Mobility in the coming years. When evaluating ratings within this facet, there were some bright spots: at least half of residents gave positive marks to the overall ease of travel, paths and walking trails, ease of walking and ease of travel by public transportation (which was higher than the national benchmark and an improvement since the previous survey iteration). Further, the ratings for bus or transit services was higher than average, and resident sentiment toward traffic flow, ease of travel by bicycle and by walking, and paths and walking trails improved from 2017 to 2018. However, ratings for the ease of travel by car, public parking, traffic flow, street repair, snow removal and traffic signal timing were lower than the national benchmark comparisons.