

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Issaquah, WA
Community Livability Report

2017



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About

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

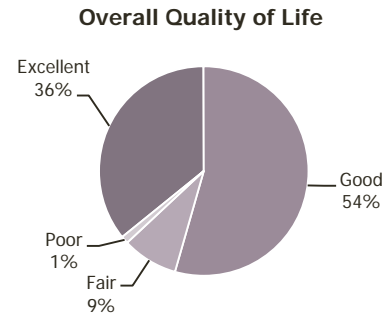
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 740 residents of the City of Issaquah. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% 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 Issaquah

Most residents rated the quality of life in Issaquah as excellent or good. This rating was similar to those observed elsewhere 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.

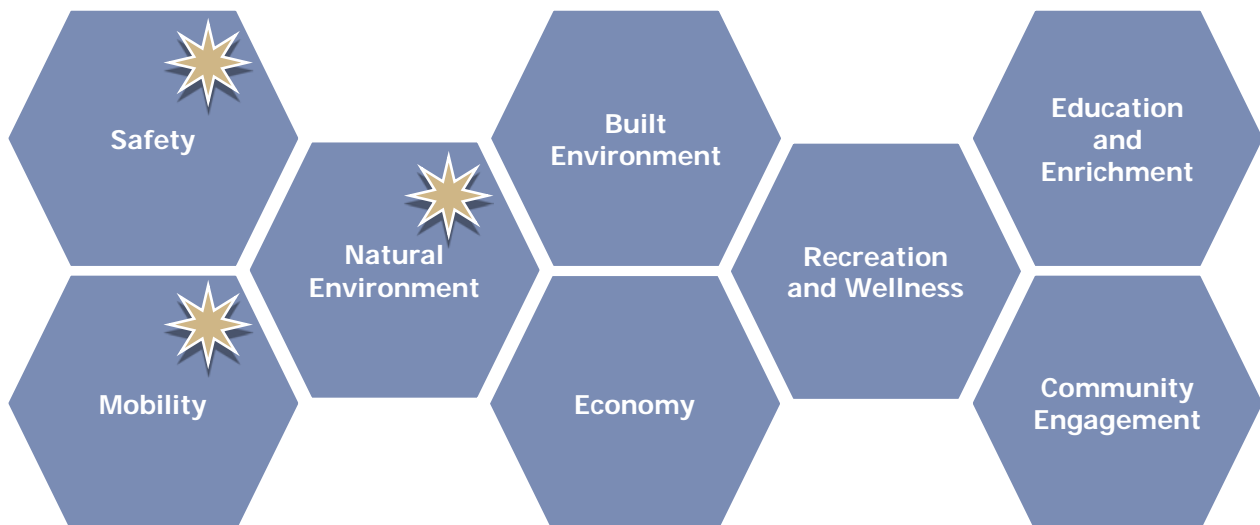
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety, Mobility and Natural Environment as priorities for the Issaquah community in the coming two years. Issaquah residents gave ratings that were positive and similar to other communities to each of these facets as well as to all other facets of community livability. 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 Issaquah’s unique questions.

Legend

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

- Most important



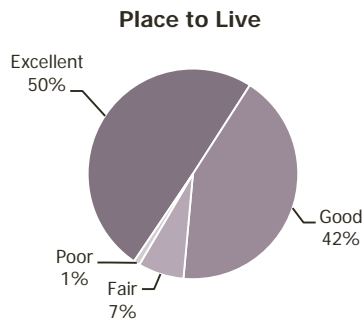
Community Characteristics

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 Issaquah, 92% of residents rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Issaquah 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 Issaquah as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Issaquah and its overall appearance. Ratings for Issaquah as a place to raise children and for the overall appearance of the City were particularly strong and higher than the benchmark comparison. Most residents were pleased with the overall image of Issaquah, with their neighborhood as a place to live and the City as a place to retire.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Generally, aspects of Safety, Natural Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, and Education and Enrichment all received ratings similar to or higher than the benchmark. Mobility evaluations revealed Issaquah strengths in paths and walking trails, as well as alternative modes, but some challenges around traditional modes of transportation. Aspects related to affordability in Issaquah, such as cost of living and the availability of affordable quality housing, received lower ratings than those observed elsewhere across the county.

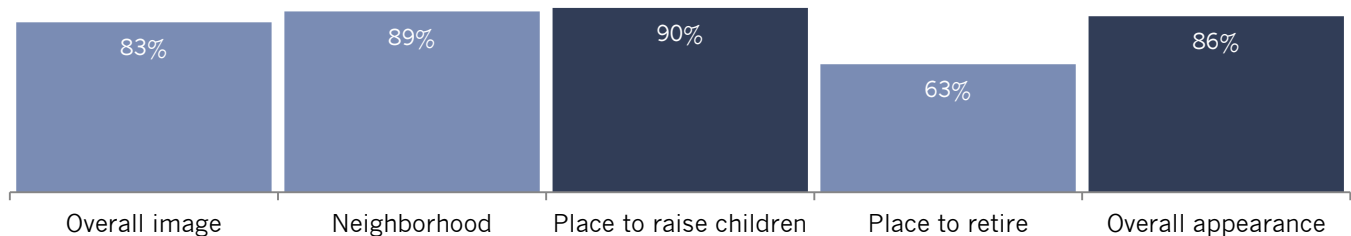


Ratings declined since 2014 for travel by car and by public transportation; as well as for four out of five Built Environment items (all except public places) and for the cost of living and Issaquah as a place to work. Ratings for mental health care and quality child care/preschool declined as well since 2014. Residents felt more positively about health and wellness opportunities in 2017 compared to 2014.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



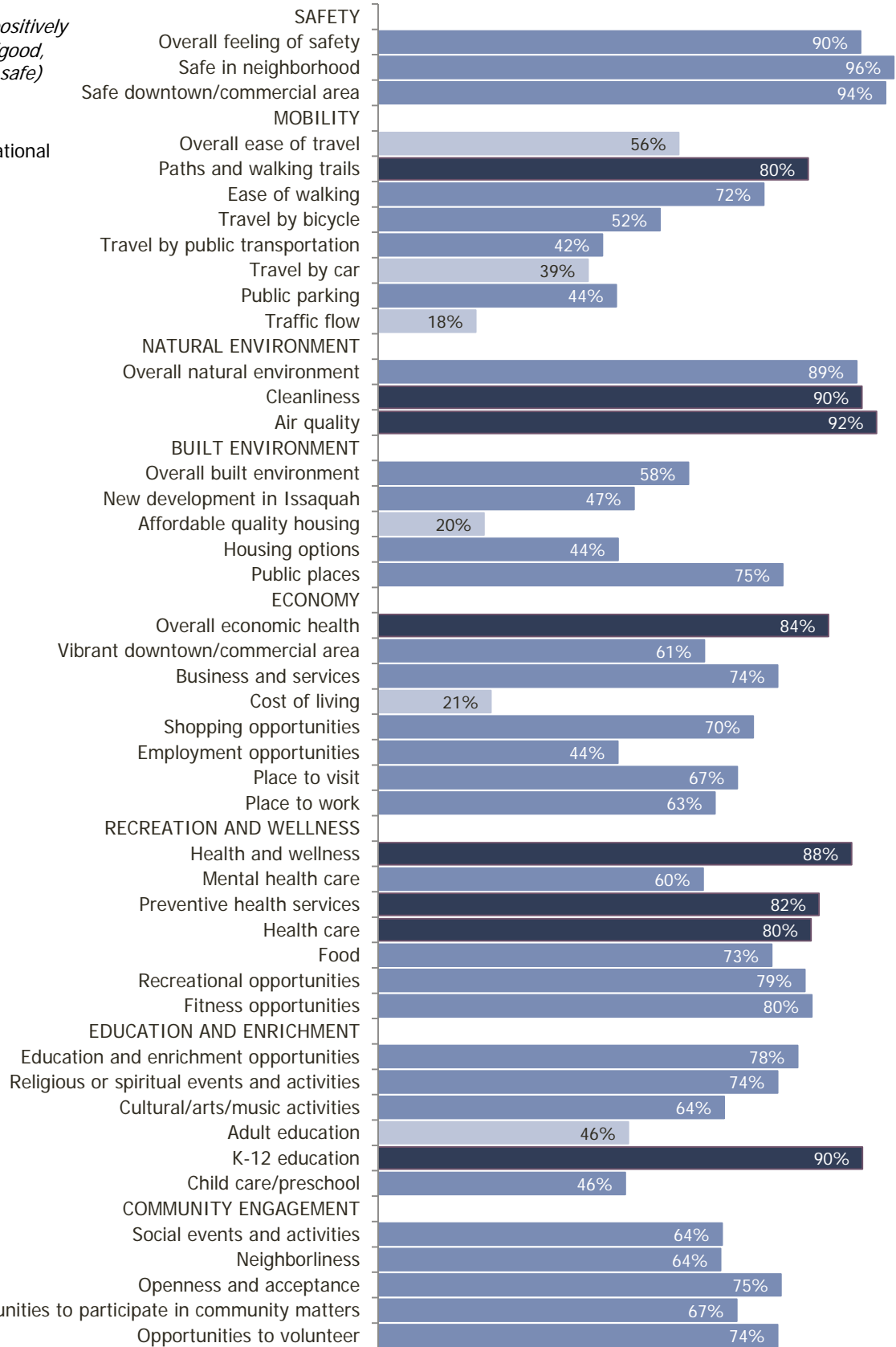
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

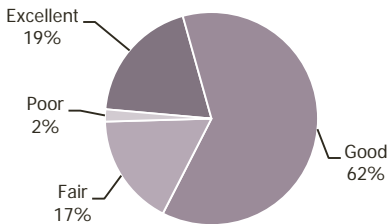
How well does the government of Issaquah meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Issaquah as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 8 in 10 residents positively rated the overall quality of City services and about one-third approved of the services provided by the Federal Government; both of these ratings were similar to those observed elsewhere.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Issaquah’s leadership and governance. Most residents were pleased with the customer service provided by the City and about two-thirds felt that the City treated all residents fairly. Roughly half of residents gave excellent or good marks to the remaining aspects of government performance and all were similar to the national comparison.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Issaquah. Almost all aspects of Governance received positive ratings from at least half of residents and all were rated similar to or higher than the benchmark. About 9 in 10 residents were pleased with police, fire and ambulance/EMS services, garbage collection, recycling, yard waste pick-up, sewer services, City parks and library services. When compared to the benchmark, all aspects of Governance were similar except for four services that stood out above national averages: bus or transit services, yard waste pick-up, storm drainage and health services.

Overall Quality of City Services

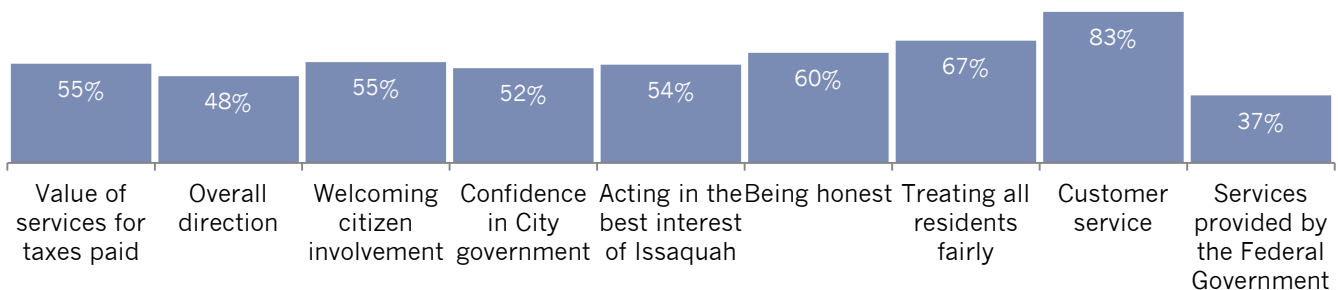


When compared to 2014, ratings in 2017 declined for 12 aspects of Government. Five of these were in the category of government performance, demonstrating lower confidence in those dimensions of leadership. Residents also viewed ease of travel by car, travel by public transportation, open space, land use, planning and zoning, economic development and special events less positively than in 2014.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



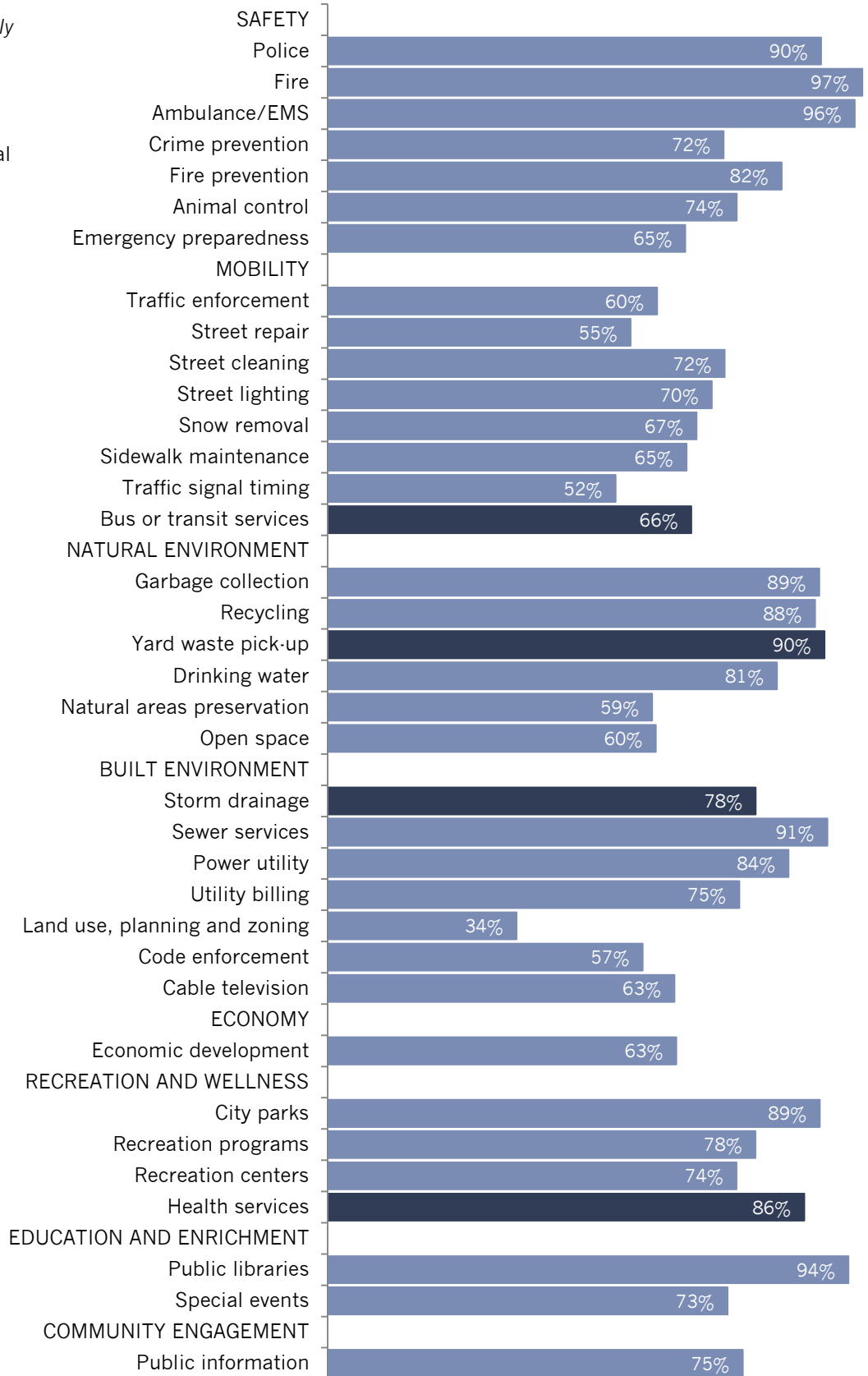
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

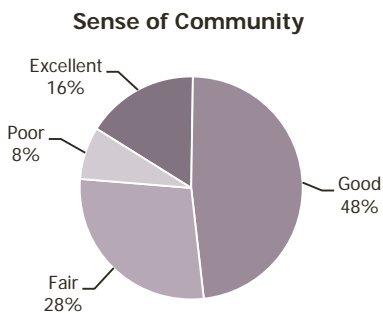


Participation

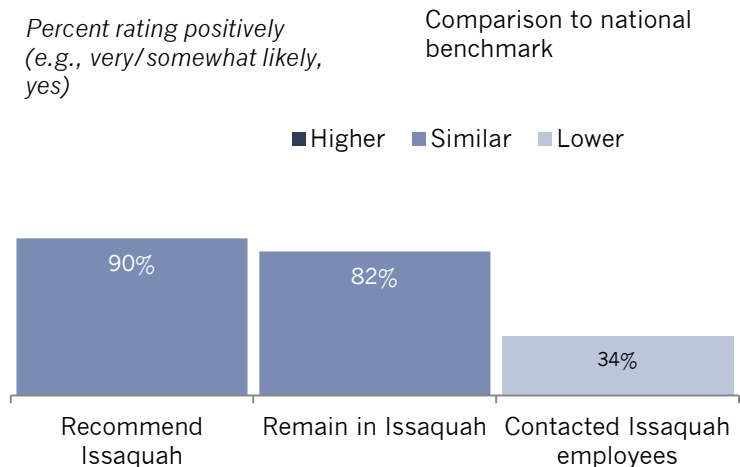
Are the residents of Issaquah connected to the community and each other?

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 two-thirds of Issaquah residents felt the sense of community in the City was excellent or good; further, about 9 in 10 would recommend living in Issaquah to someone who asked and about 8 in 10 planned to remain in the City for the next five years. These ratings were similar to the benchmark, though the proportion of residents who planned to remain in Issaquah decreased since 2014. About one-third of residents had contacted Issaquah in the 12 months prior to the survey and this rate was lower than typically seen in other communities.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Participation rates varied widely across the different facets, making the benchmark comparison (and comparison to Issaquah over time) helpful for understanding the results. Most participation levels were similar to the national benchmark. About 8 in 10 or more residents had not reported a crime or been the victim of a crime in the 12 months prior to the survey, on par with the rest of the country. While only about half of respondents had stocked supplies for an emergency, this was a stronger showing than in other communities. Alternate mode use, in the form of public transportation and carpooling, exceed national averages. Issaquah residents demonstrated a commitment to recycling at rate higher than the national benchmark, and water conservation and energy-efficiency efforts were similar to other communities. Fewer residents in Issaquah reported witnessing a code violation than in the rest of the country. The level of housing cost stress was higher than the benchmark, while participation in aspects of the Economy was similar to national averages. Recreation, education and general engagement topics all were similar to the benchmark, with the exception of religious/spiritual activities, which was below the benchmark.



More residents in 2017 than in 2014 were experiencing housing cost stress and fewer reported expecting to stay in Issaquah. Increased participation levels in 2017 included watching or attending a local public meeting; campaigning for an issue; cause or candidate or doing a favor for a neighbor.



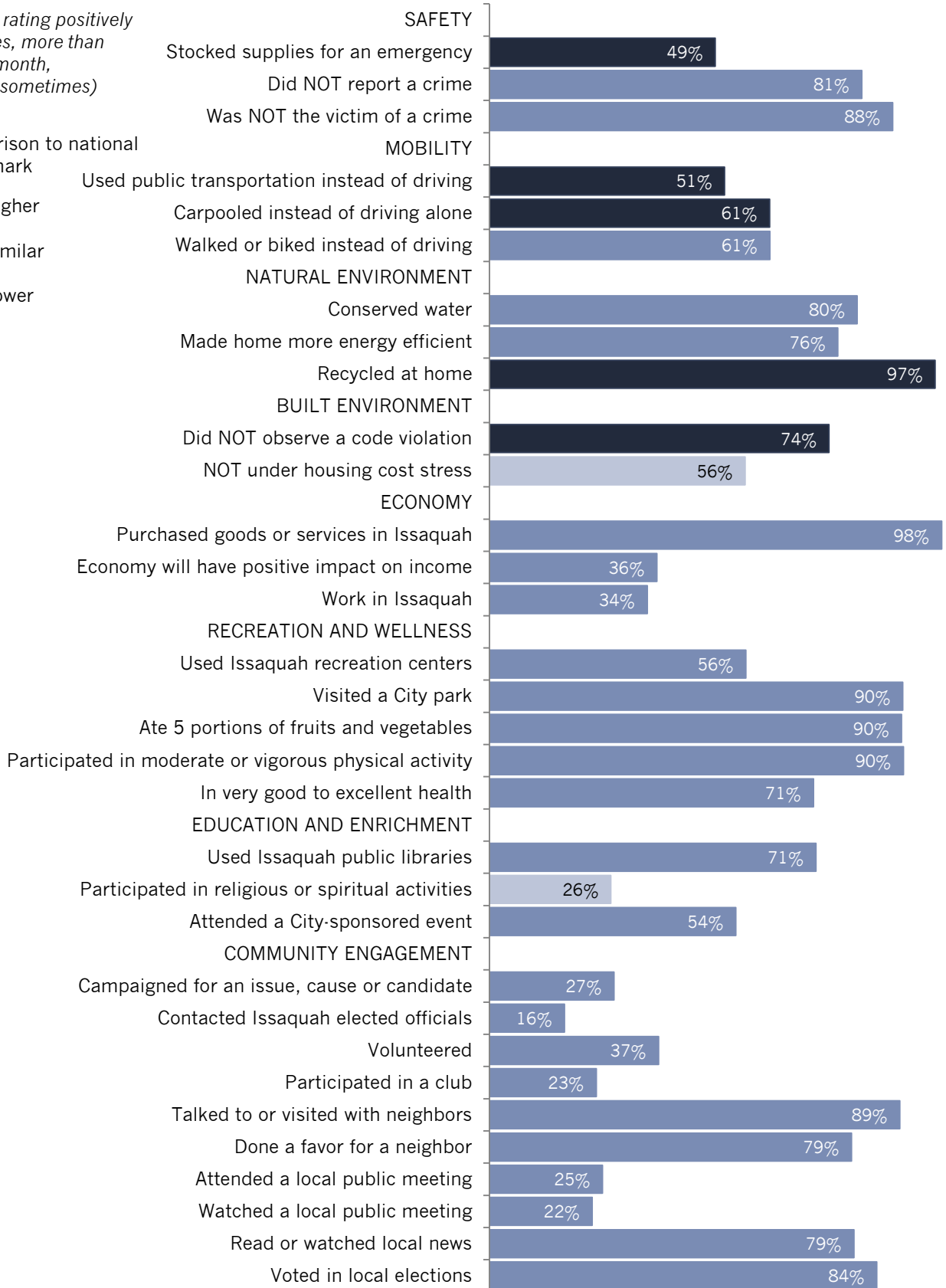
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



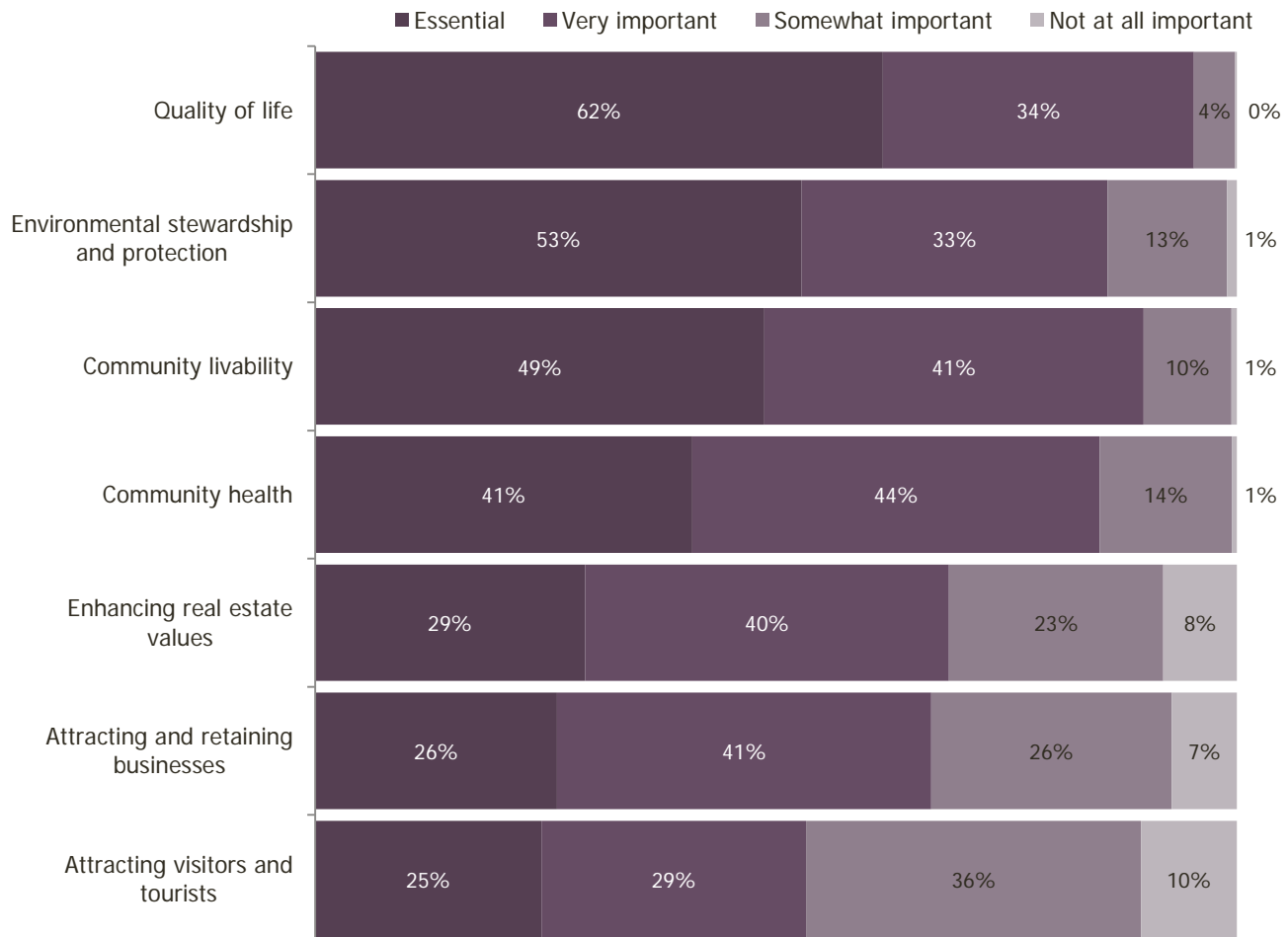
Special Topics

The City of Issaquah included three questions of special interest on The NCS. The topics included parks, trails and open space priorities, neighborhood characteristics and information sources.

The first question asked residents to consider the relationship between Issaquah parks, trails and open space to the City’s priority values. Residents saw parks, trails and open space as being most essential to the overall quality of life in Issaquah (62% of respondents), the City’s environmental stewardship and protection (53%), community livability (49%) and community health (41%). About one-quarter of survey respondents felt that parks, trails and open space areas were essential to enhancing real estate values (29%), attracting and retaining businesses (26%) and attracting visitors and tourists (25%). Nearly all residents felt that parks, trails and open space were at least somewhat important for the top four values, while up to 1 in 10 saw no importance to the bottom three.

Figure 4: Importance of Issaquah Parks to City Priorities

Please rate how important, if at all, Issaquah parks, trails and open space are when considering the following priorities for the City:

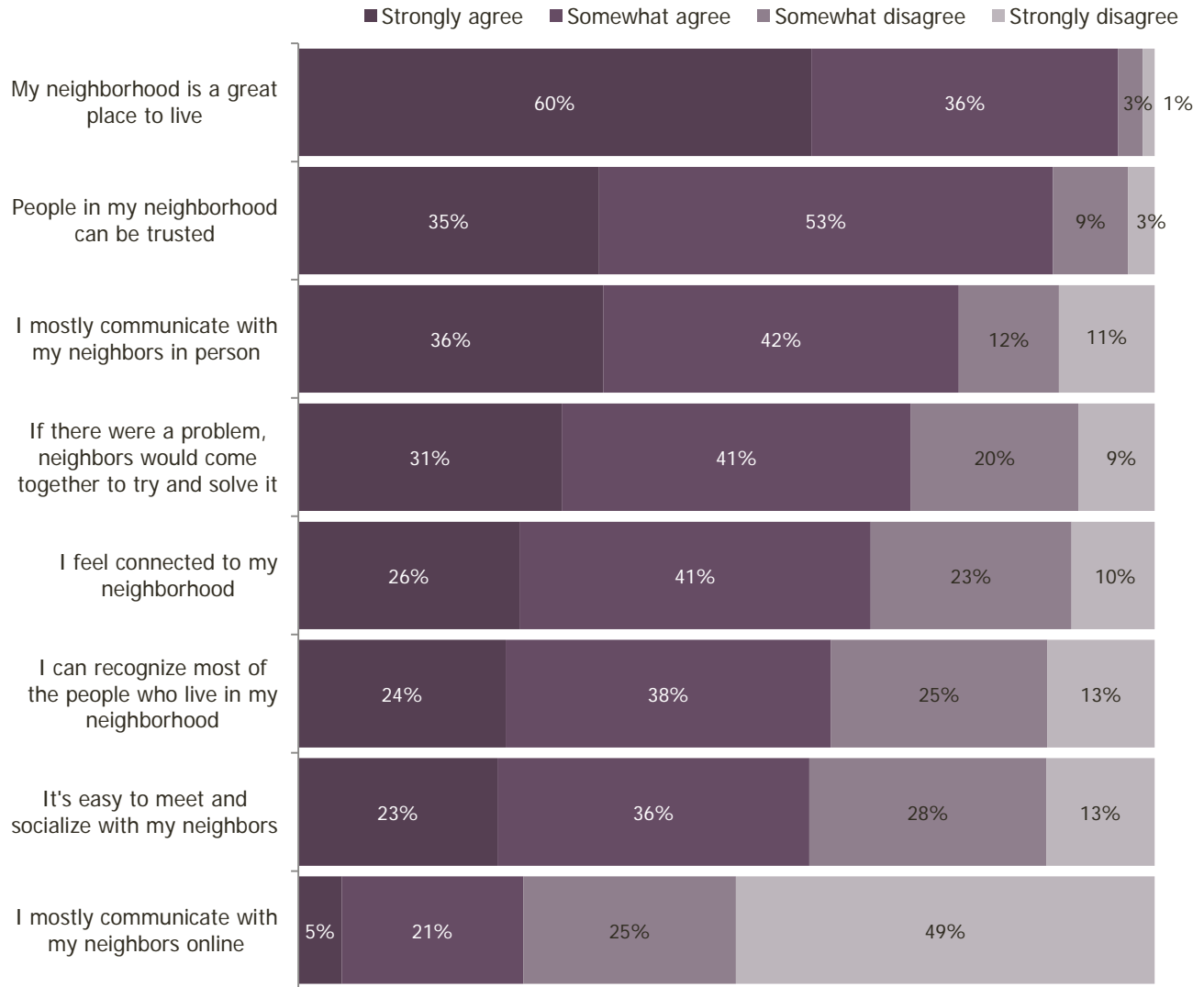


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The next question asked residents about their feelings of connectedness to their neighbors. Most residents agreed with each statement except about primarily communicating with neighbors online (just 26% in agreement). Positive overall sentiment about neighborhoods was high; 96% at least somewhat agreed that their neighborhood was a great place to live.

Figure 5: Neighborhood Characteristics

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding your neighborhood:

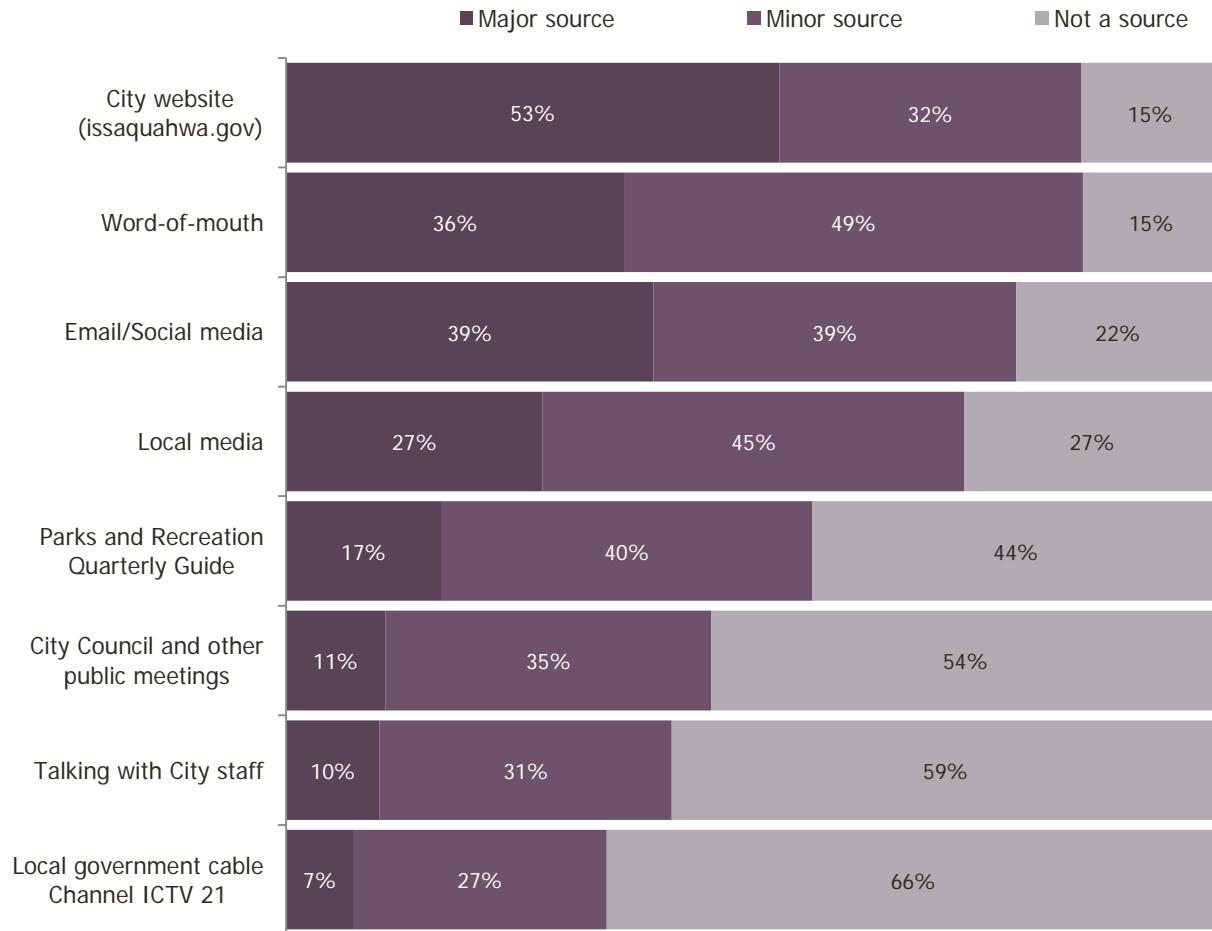


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Residents rated their reliance on sources of City information by indicating how much of a source they considered each item in a list. About 8 in 10 residents used the City website or word-of-mouth as at least a minor source of information about the City’s activities, events and services. Email/social media and local media were the next most commonly relied upon. While just 17% said that the parks and recreation guide was a major source, it was used as at least a minor source by about half of respondents. Less than half used City Council or other public meetings, talking with City staff or the local government cable channel as sources of City information.

Figure 6: Sources of Information

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



Conclusions

Issaquah continues to be a great place to live.

Most residents rated their quality of life positively in Issaquah and think the City is an excellent or good place to live. About 9 in 10 participants gave positive ratings for their neighborhoods and for Issaquah as a place to raise children. Most residents rated the overall appearance and overall image of Issaquah favorably, and about 8 in 10 plan on remaining in Issaquah and would recommend Issaquah to others. Many residents also felt positive about their neighbors and neighborhoods: most agreed that their neighborhood was a great place to live and that people in their neighborhood could be trusted, and about three-quarters of residents agreed that they mostly communicated with their neighbors in person and that their neighbors would come together to solve a problem. About two-thirds reported feeling connected to their neighborhood.

Residents feel safe and place a priority on Safety.

Residents identified Safety as an important aspect of community livability to their quality of life. At least 9 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the overall feeling of safety in Issaquah, to feelings of safety in their neighborhoods and in the City's downtown/commercial area, and to police, fire and ambulance/EMS services. Most residents had not reported a crime or been the victim of a crime. All safety ratings were on par with national averages, though the proportion of residents who had stocked supplies for an emergency was higher than observed elsewhere.

Mobility may be becoming harder to navigate and residents feel that pinch.

Mobility also was identified by residents as an important area of focus in the coming years. The availability of paths and walking trails and bus or transit services were rated higher than the benchmark. Issaquah residents use alternative modes of transportation; rates of using public transportation and carpooling were higher than seen in other communities. However, fewer residents gave positive ratings to the overall ease of travel, ease of travel by car and traffic flow than elsewhere. Further, ratings for the ease of travel by car, travel by public transportation, traffic enforcement and street repair were lower in 2017 than in 2014.

Issaquah residents appreciate the Natural Environment – and environmentalism.

Residents see the Natural Environment as an important aspect of their quality of life. About 9 in 10 residents gave favorable ratings to the overall natural environment in Issaquah, cleanliness, air quality, garbage collection, recycling and yard waste pick-up. Further, nearly all residents recycled at home, which was a higher rate than observed in other communities. While the rating for Issaquah open space declined over time, 6 in 10 residents still rated it as excellent or good. Finally, when asked to consider the relative importance of Issaquah parks, trails and open space to a list of City priorities, at least half of residents rated all of the listed items as essential or very important.