

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Surprise, AZ
Community Livability Report

2015



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The National Citizen Survey™
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About

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

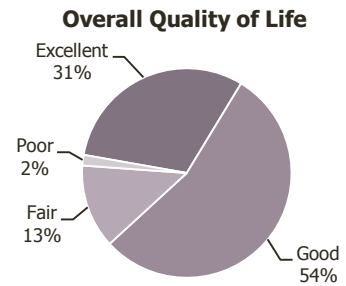
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 322 residents of the City of Surprise. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% 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 Surprise

Most residents rated the quality of life in Surprise as excellent or good. This rating 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.

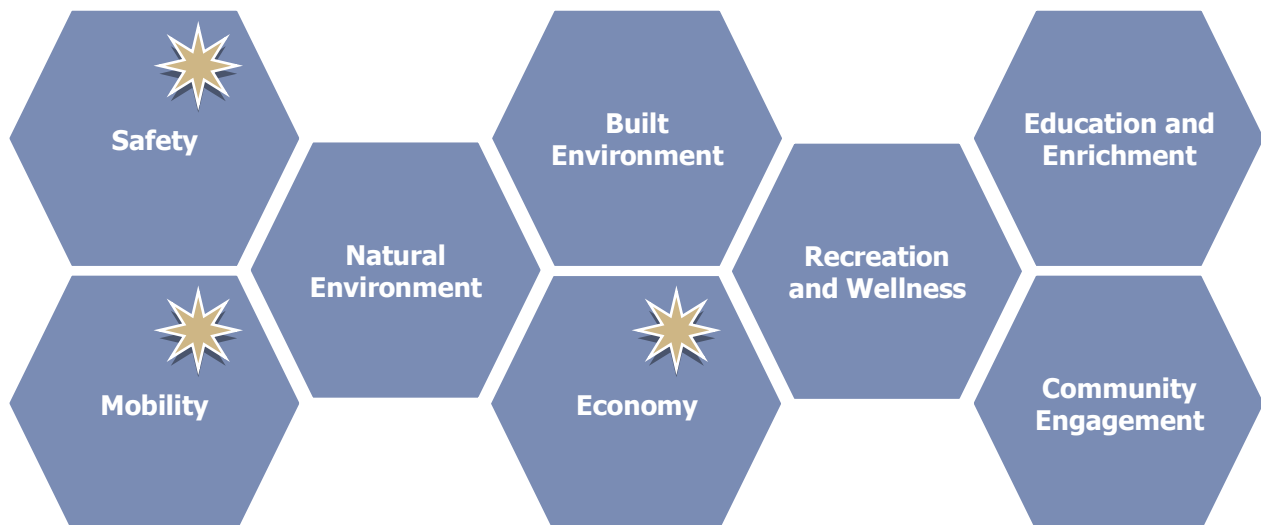
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety, Mobility and Economy as priorities for the Surprise community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Surprise residents gave favorable ratings to each of these facets of community as well as to all other facets; ratings for all facets were similar to those given in other communities across the nation. 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 Surprise’s unique questions.

Legend

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

★ Most important



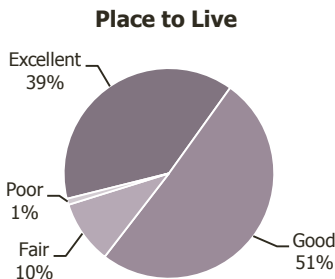
Community Characteristics

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 Surprise, 89% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Surprise 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 Surprise as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Surprise and its overall appearance. More than 4 in 5 residents gave positive ratings for Surprise as a place to retire and the overall appearance of Surprise and both of these ratings were higher than the national benchmark. At least three-quarters of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall image of Surprise, their neighborhood as a place to live and Surprise as a place to raise children and these aspects were rated similar to the benchmark.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Generally, most aspects of Community Characteristics were rated positively by at least a majority of respondents. About 9 in 10 residents gave favorable ratings to all aspects of Safety; ratings for aspects of Natural Environment, Built Environment and Economy were also strong. Ratings for the cleanliness of Surprise (88% excellent or good), the overall built environment of Surprise (81%), availability of affordable quality housing (76%), variety of housing options (78%) and cost of living (69%) were all higher than ratings given in other communities nationwide. Within the facet of Mobility, about three-quarters of residents gave positive ratings to public parking and this rating was higher than the benchmark, but only one-quarter gave favorable ratings to the ease of travel by public transportation, which was lower than the benchmark. Within the facet of Education and Enrichment, about 4 in 5 respondents were pleased with opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events and activities and about 3 in 5 gave favorable ratings to education and enrichment opportunities, the availability of affordable quality child care/preschool and K-12 education, but the latter received ratings lower than elsewhere.

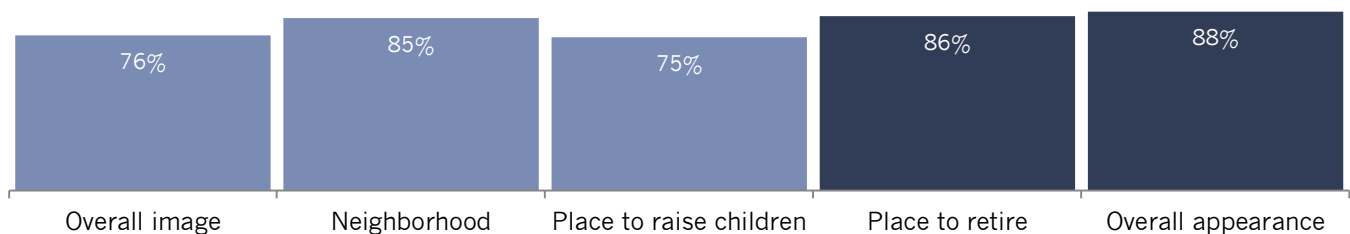


When comparing Surprise's 2015 to their previous survey results in 2012, ratings for nine aspects of Community Characteristics increased, including ratings for traffic flow, ease of travel by car, quality of overall natural environment and shopping opportunities, among others (for more information on trends see the *Trends Over Time* report provided under separate cover).

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



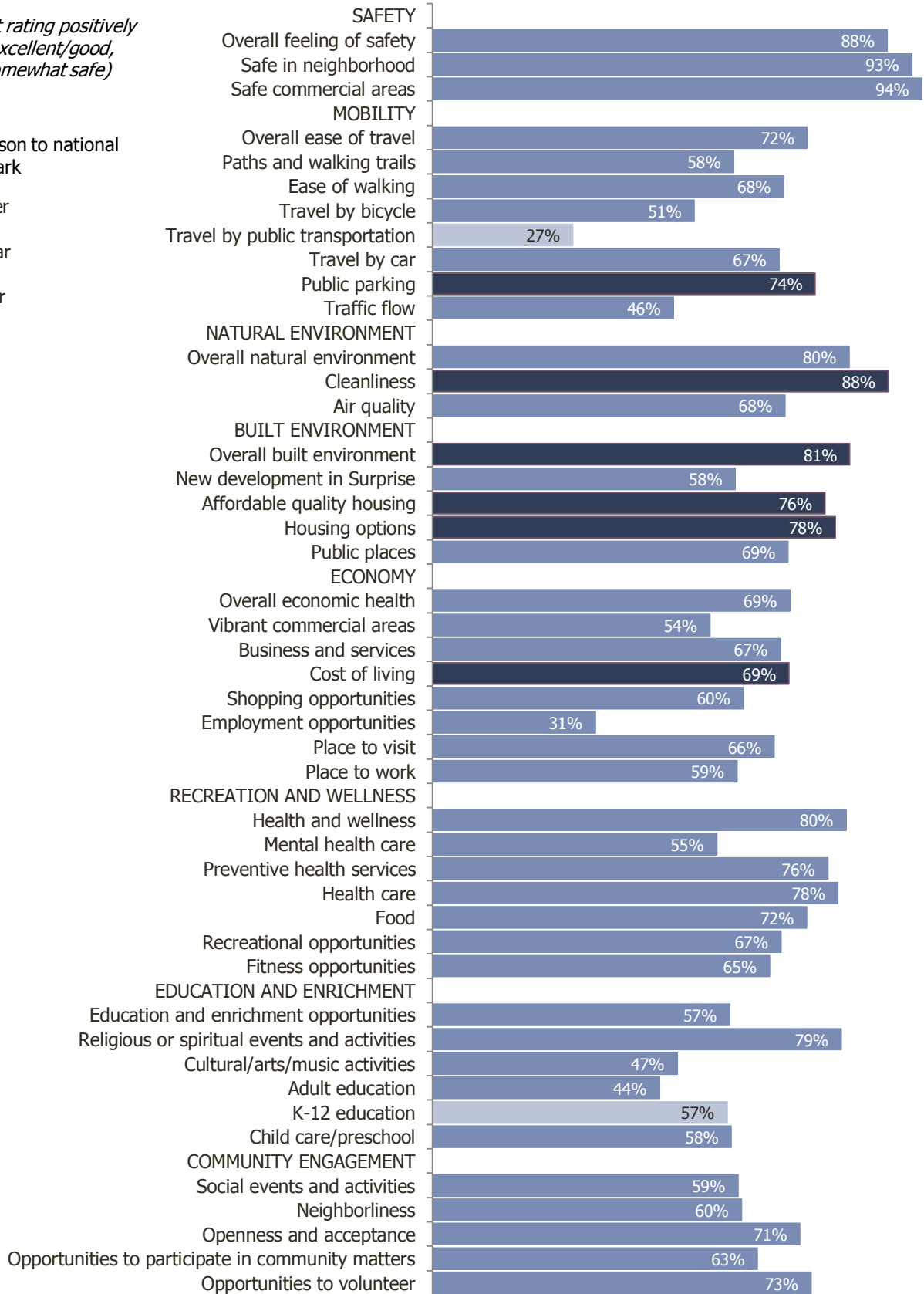
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

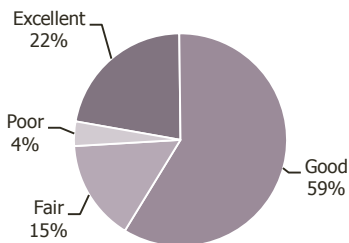
How well does the government of Surprise meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Surprise as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. In Surprise, about 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the overall quality of City services and about one-third favorably rated the services provided by the Federal Government; both of these ratings were similar to the national benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Surprise’s leadership and governance. About 4 in 5 residents gave excellent or good ratings to overall customer service by Surprise employees and about three-quarters were pleased with the overall direction that Surprise is taking. Roughly two-thirds of survey participants gave favorable ratings to the value of services for taxes paid, overall confidence in Surprise government, government acting in the best interest of the community, being honest and treating all residents fairly. All of these aspects received ratings similar to those given in other communities.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Surprise. All aspects of Safety, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement received positive ratings from at least a majority of respondents and were similar to ratings given elsewhere. Within the facet of Mobility, about 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to street cleaning, street lighting and sidewalk maintenance and about two-thirds gave favorable ratings to street repair; these aspects were all rated higher than the national benchmark. At least 3 in 5 survey participants positively rated traffic enforcement and traffic signal timing, but only one-third were pleased with bus or transit services, a rating which was lower than what is seen in other communities.

Overall Quality of City Services

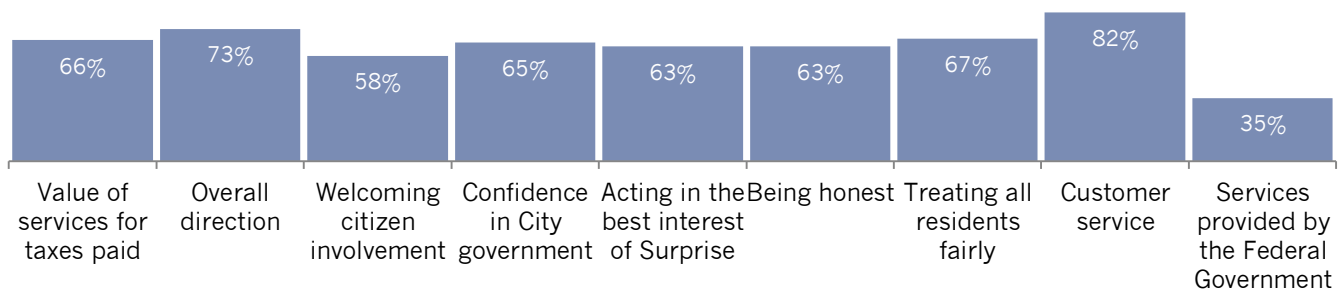


When comparing 2015 survey results to those in 2012, many aspects of Governance saw an increase in ratings over time. These aspects included crime prevention, fire services, fire prevention, drinking water, natural areas preservation and code enforcement, among others.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



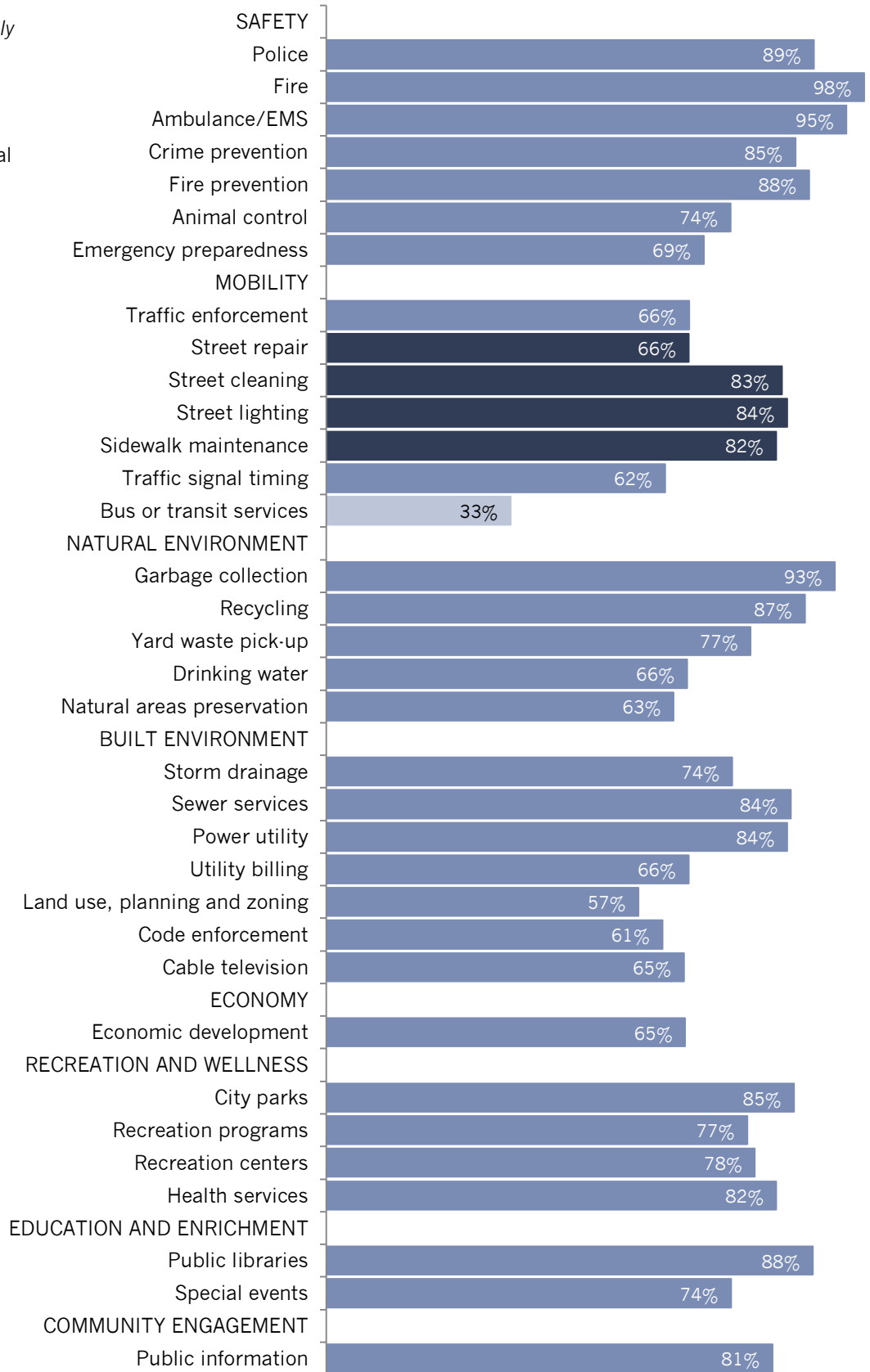
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Participation

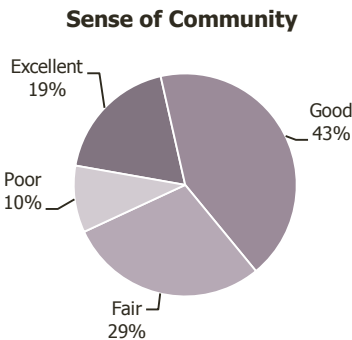
Are the residents of Surprise connected to the community and each other?

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 3 in 5 residents rated the sense of community in Surprise as excellent or good, a rating similar to the national benchmark. Furthermore, nearly 9 in 10 residents indicated that they would recommend living in Surprise to someone who asked and planned to remain in Surprise for the next five years, and about half had contacted City employees in the 12 months prior to the survey. These rates of participation were also similar to those seen elsewhere.

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 across the different facets tended to vary. In Safety, while roughly 9 in 10 residents had not reported a crime and had not been the victim of a crime, only one-quarter had stocked supplies for an emergency, which was lower than what is seen in other communities. Within Mobility, about 4 in 10 respondents had carpooled instead of driving alone (a rate similar to the benchmark), but only 7% had used public transportation instead of driving and 4 in 10 had walked or biked instead of driving (both of which were lower than the benchmark). At least a majority of residents had participated in nearly all aspects of Natural Environment, Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment, all of which were similar rates to those observed in other communities. Rates varied most widely in the facet of Community Engagement: about 9 in 10 residents had talked to or visited with neighbors or read or watched local news, and about 8 in 10 had done a favor for a neighbor or voted in local elections.

However, about one-quarter or less of respondents had campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate, contacted Surprise elected officials, volunteered, participated in a club, or attended or watched a local public meeting. The proportion of respondents who volunteered was lower than what is seen in communities elsewhere.

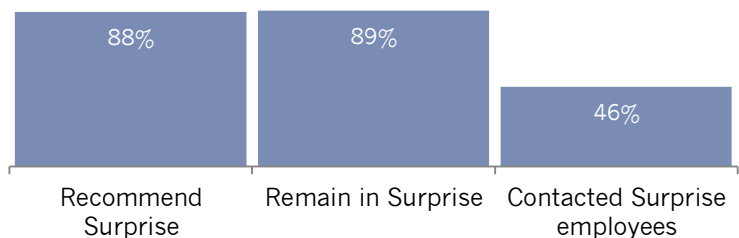
When comparing trends over time, those who reported visiting a City park, watching a local public meeting and volunteering decreased over time, as did the rating for the sense of community in Surprise.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



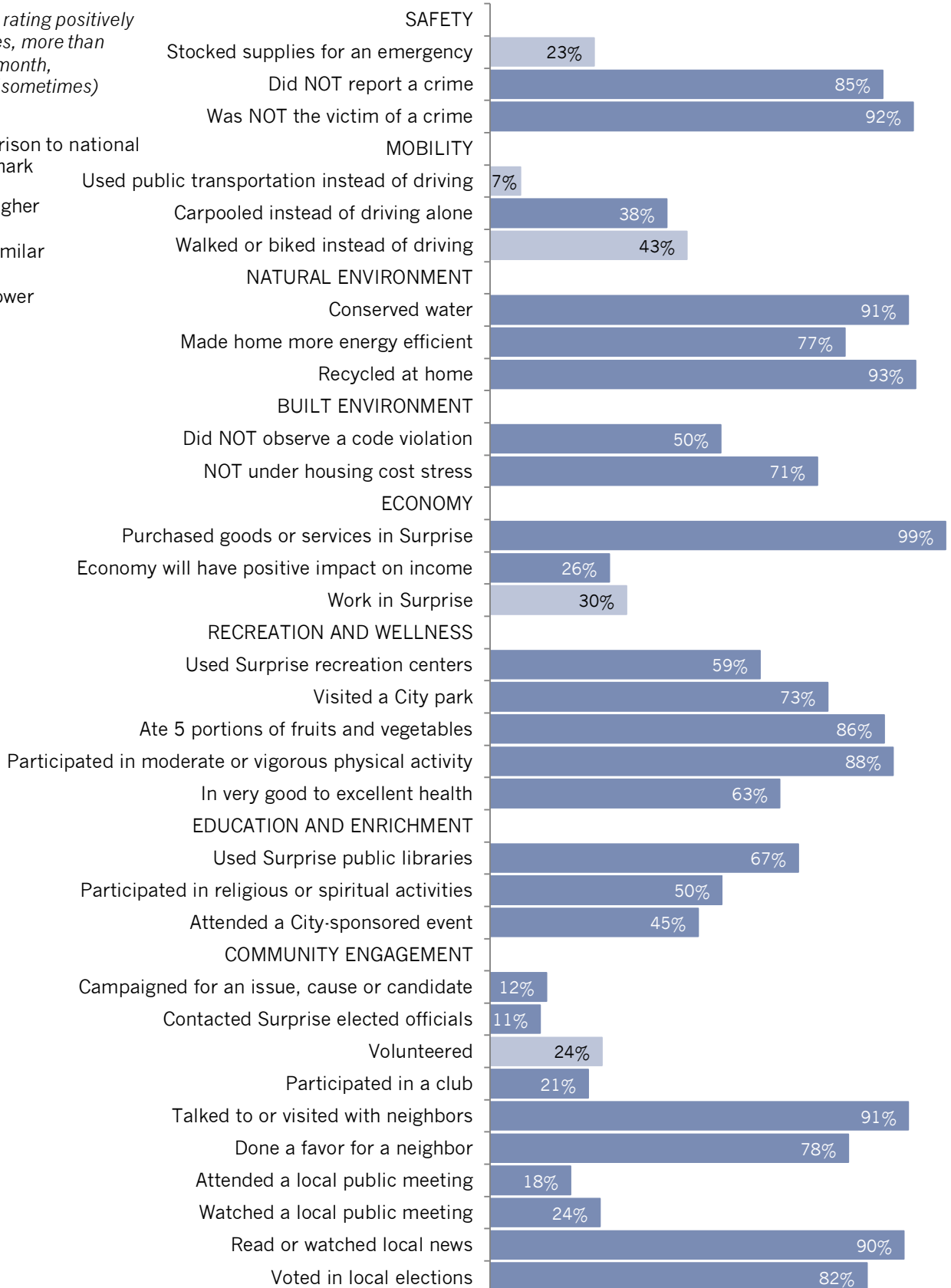
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

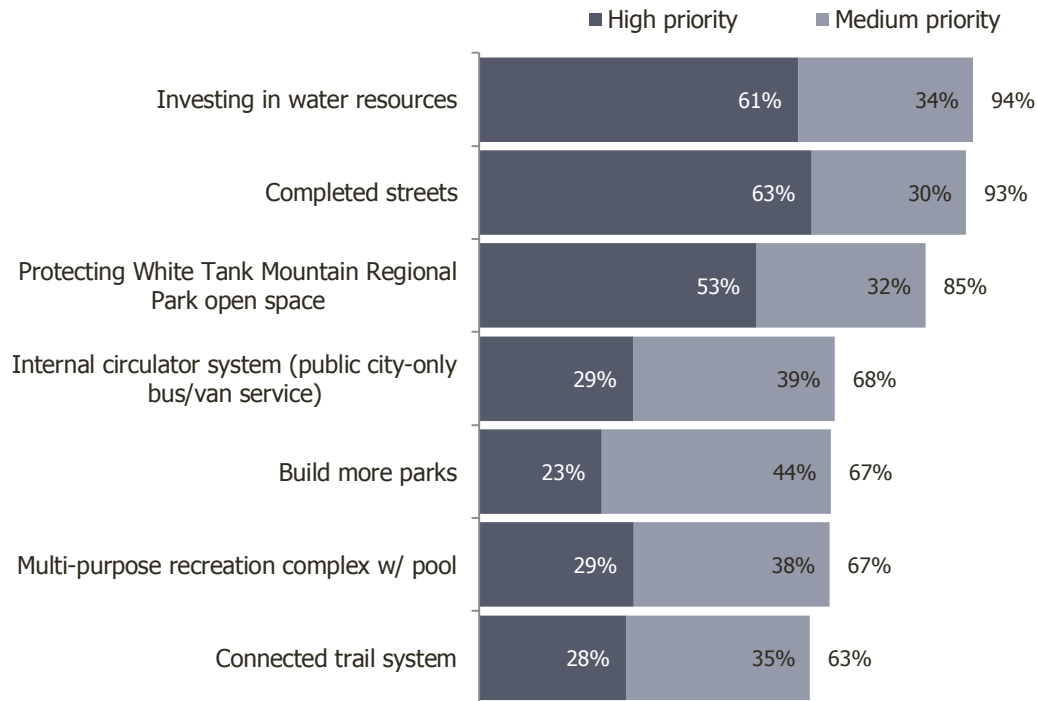


Special Topics

The City of Surprise included four questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked residents to indicate the level of priority they would assign to certain City projects in the next three years. More than 9 in 10 residents felt that investing in water resources and completed streets should be a high or medium priority and more than 8 in 10 felt that protecting White Tank Mountain Regional Park open space should be a priority. At least 6 in 10 residents felt that the other listed City projects should be at least a medium priority.

Figure 4: Priority of City Projects

How much of a priority, if any, should the following projects be for the city to address in the next 3 years?

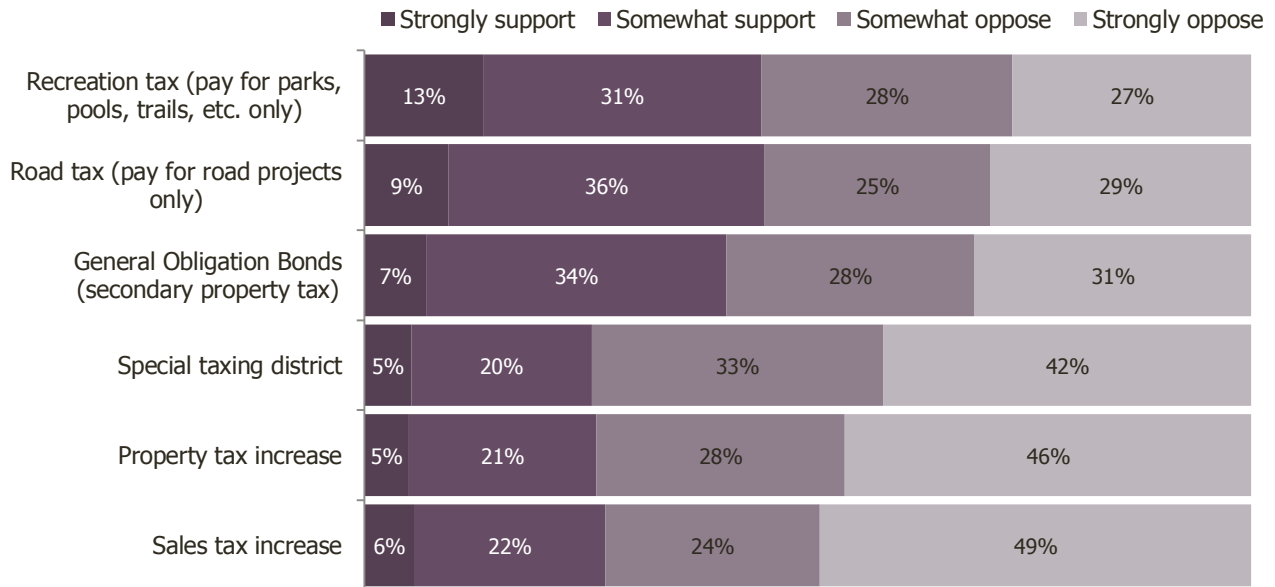


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The next special-interest question asked residents to indicate their level of support for different types of funding sources for capital improvement projects. While none of the potential funding sources were supported by a majority of residents, the sources with the highest levels of support were a recreation tax (44% strongly or somewhat support), a road tax (45%) and General Obligation Bonds (41%). Survey respondents most strongly opposed increases in sales or property taxes.

Figure 5: Funding Sources for Capital Improvement Projects

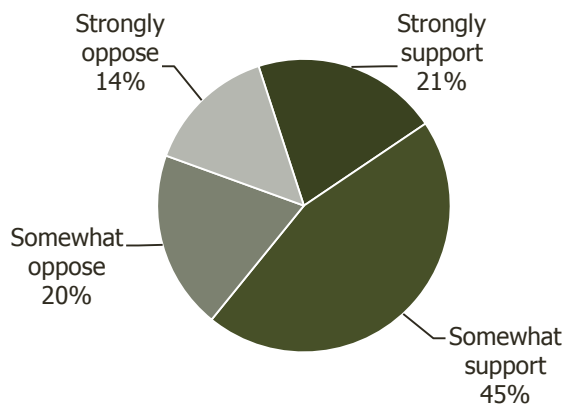
With limited dollars in the General Fund (the city's checking account), to what degree would you support the following funding sources for capital improvement projects, such as street improvements, new parks, fire stations, recreation facilities and more?



The third special-interest question asked residents whether they would support or oppose a public safety tax to pay for Police and Fire-Medical personnel. About two-thirds of survey respondents indicated that they strongly or somewhat support the tax, while only about 1 in 10 strongly opposed it.

Figure 6: Support for Public Safety Tax

Currently, Public Safety Personnel are paid using General Fund dollars; the same fund used to pay for street repair, park maintenance, fire stations, etc. To increase funding to pay for more projects, to what degree would you support a public safety tax to pay for Police and Fire-Medical personnel?

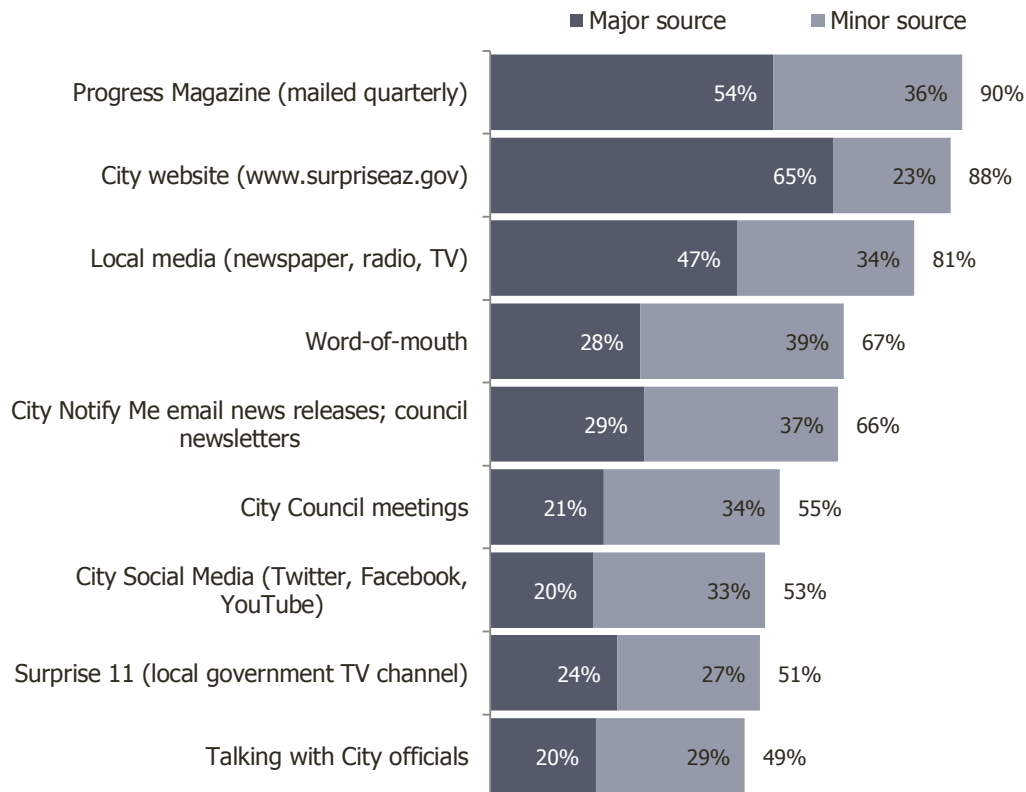


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The final special-interest question on the survey asked respondents to indicate how much of a source, if any, they found certain resources to be for information about the City. About 9 in 10 found Progress Magazine and the City website to be at least minor sources of information and 8 in 10 indicated that local media was a source. About two-thirds of residents used word-of-mouth or City Notify Me emails or council newsletters as at least a minor source of information. While talking with City officials was the least-common source of City information, nearly half of residents still utilized it as a major or minor source.

Figure 7: Sources of City Information

Please indicate how much of a source you consider the following to be for obtaining information about city government, services and events:



Conclusions

Surprise residents continue to enjoy a high quality of life.

More than 8 in 10 residents reported that their quality of life in Surprise was excellent or good and nearly 9 in 10 gave favorable ratings to the City as a place to live, would recommend living in Surprise to someone who asked and planned to remain in Surprise for the next five years. At least three-quarters of residents gave positive ratings to the overall appearance and overall image of Surprise, the City as a place to raise children, their neighborhoods as a place to live and Surprise as a place to retire. Further, the overall appearance of Surprise and Surprise as a place to retire received ratings higher than those given in communities elsewhere.

Safety is a priority for Surprise residents and ratings for it are strong.

Residents indicated that Safety was an important area for the City to focus on in the coming two years, and ratings within this facet were generally positive and similar to those given in other communities. About 9 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to the overall feeling of safety in Surprise and reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods and in Surprise's commercial areas during the day. At least 4 in 5 residents positively rated police services, crime prevention and fire prevention and nearly all residents were pleased with fire and ambulance/EMS services. When asked whether they would support or oppose a public safety tax to pay for Police and Fire-Medical personnel, about two-thirds of survey respondents indicated support for the tax.

Residents also noted that Mobility should be a priority for the City.

Respondents indicated that Mobility was also an important issue for the City to address in the next two years and ratings within this facet varied across the three pillars of community livability. Public parking, street repair, street cleaning, street lighting and sidewalk maintenance all received excellent or good ratings from at least two-thirds of respondents and were rated higher than the national benchmark. However, public transportation may be an area of opportunity for the City: only about one-quarter of residents gave favorable ratings to the ease of travel by public transportation in Surprise and one-third were pleased with bus or transit services (both of which were rated lower than those given in communities elsewhere). Additionally, about 4 in 10 residents had walked or biked instead of driving and only 7% had used public transportation instead of driving, rates which were lower than the national benchmark. In a special-interest question, nearly all residents indicated that completed streets should be a high or medium priority for the City to focus on in the next three years and two-thirds thought that an internal circulator system (public city-only bus/van service) should be a priority.