

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Yakima, WA
Community Livability Report

2015



NRC
National Research Center Inc

2955 Valmont Road Suite 300
Boulder, Colorado 80301
n-r-c.com • 303-444-7863

ICMA

Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

777 North Capitol Street NE Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002
icma.org • 800-745-8780

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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 Yakima. 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).

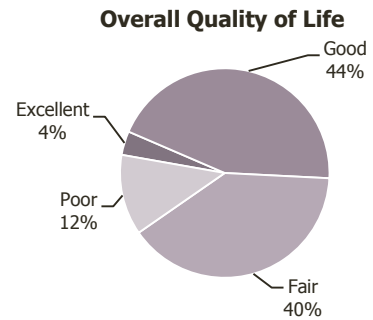
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 735 residents of the City of Yakima. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Yakima

About half of the residents rated the quality of life in Yakima as excellent or good. This was lower than ratings in comparison communities (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.



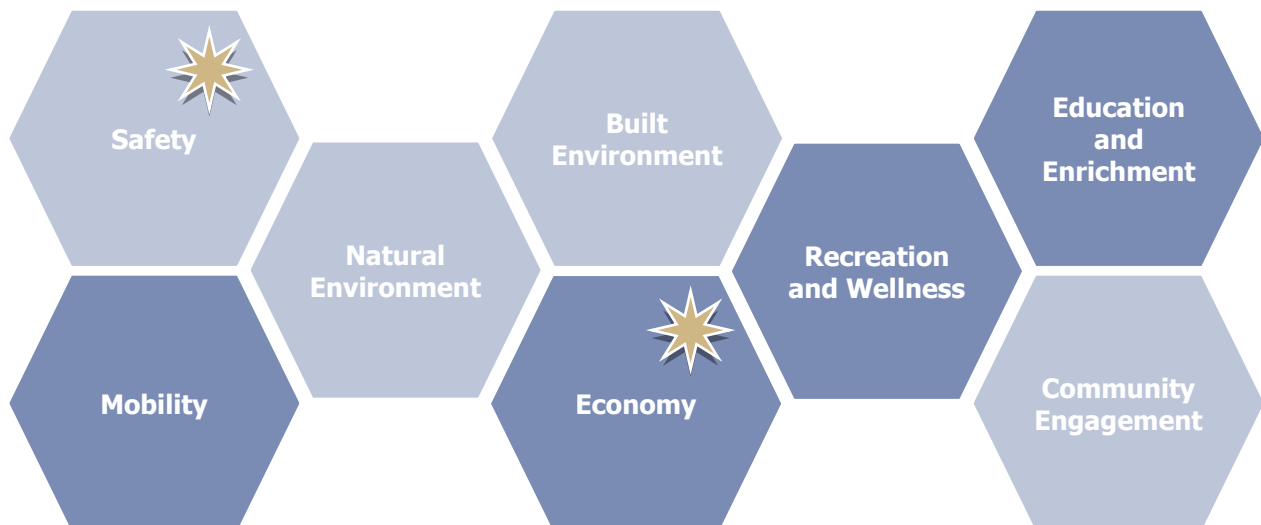
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Yakima community in the coming two years. Ratings for Mobility, Economy, Education and Enrichment and Recreation and Wellness were positive and similar to other communities. Ratings for Safety, Natural Environment, Built Environment and Community Engagement tended to be lower than the benchmark. 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 Yakima’s unique questions.

Legend

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

- * Most important



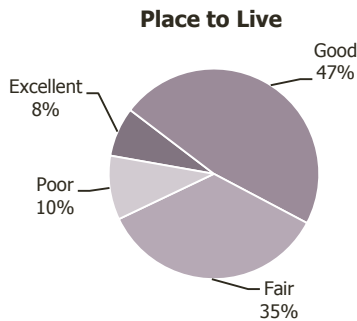
Community Characteristics

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 Yakima, 55% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Yakima as a place to live were lower than 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 Yakima as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Yakima and its overall appearance. About two-thirds of respondents rated their neighborhoods as excellent or good places to live. About 4 in 10 residents rated Yakima as an excellent or good place to raise children or to retire, while Yakima's overall image and overall appearance received lower ratings. All of these ratings were lower than the national benchmark and tended to remain stable over time (for more details on ratings over time, see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover).

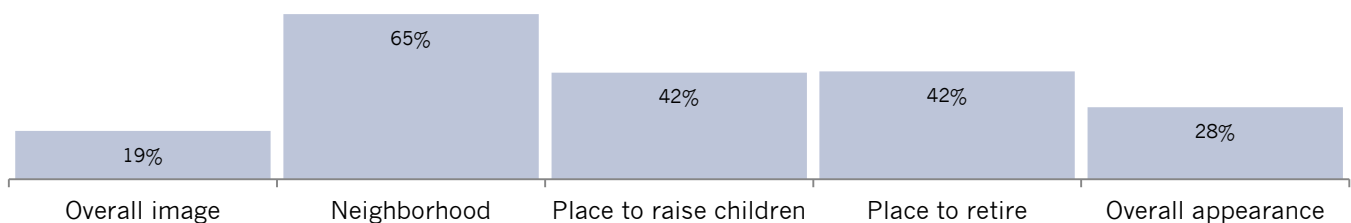
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. These ratings tended to be similar to or lower than ratings in comparison communities. At least 6 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to safety in neighborhoods, the overall feeling of safety in Yakima, overall ease of travel, travel by car, religious or spiritual events and activities and to opportunities to volunteer in Yakima. About half of the respondents gave positive ratings to the availability of paths and walking trails, traffic flow, the overall natural environment, preventive health services, the availability of affordable quality food, fitness opportunities and K-12 education.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



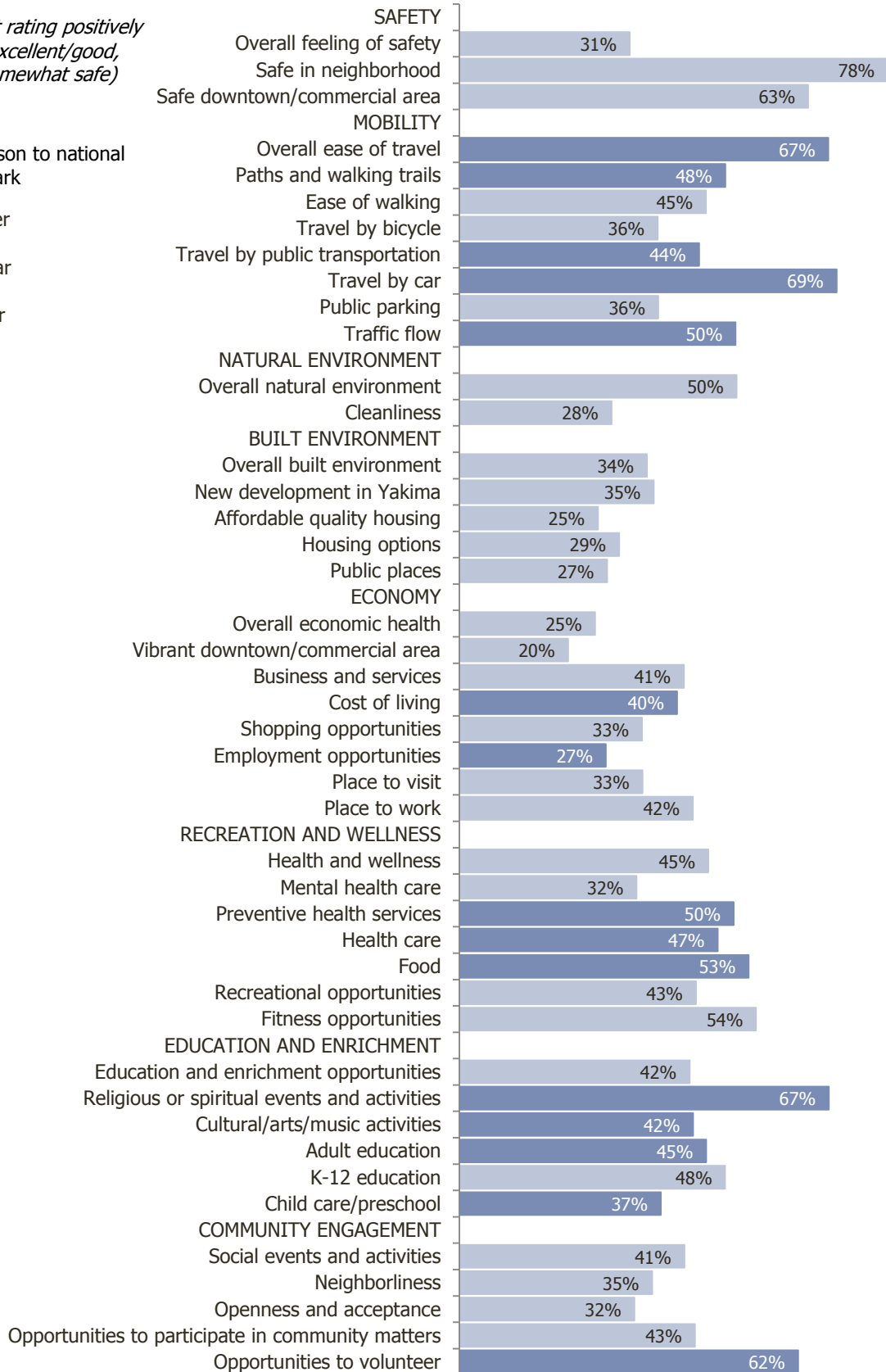
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

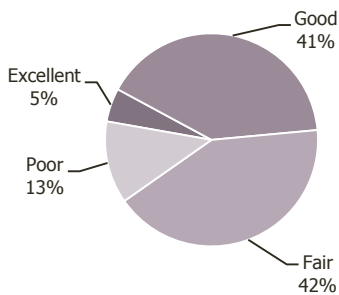
How well does the government of Yakima meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Yakima as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Close to half of the survey respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the City of Yakima, while only about one-third gave excellent or good ratings to the services provided by the Federal Government.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Yakima’s leadership and governance. These ratings tended to be lower than the benchmark. Ratings for the overall direction of the City, welcoming citizen involvement, confidence in City government, acting in the best interest of Yakima, being honest and treating all residents fairly decreased from 2014 to 2015. A majority of respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall customer service provided by City employees; this rating increased from 2014 to 2015.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Yakima. The highest rated services were fire services, ambulance/EMS, garbage collection, yard waste pick-up, drinking water, sewer services and public libraries. Among the lowest rated aspects of Governance were land use, planning and zoning, code enforcement and economic development. There were several differences found in ratings for aspects of Governance from 2014 to 2015. Ratings decreased for street repair, bus or transit services and land use, planning and zoning. Ratings increased from 2014 to 2015 for police services, fire services, ambulance/ems, natural areas preservation and storm drainage.

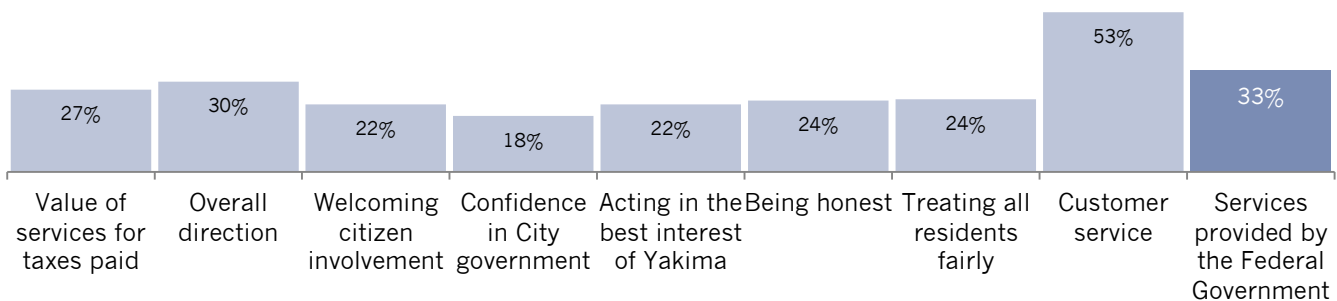
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



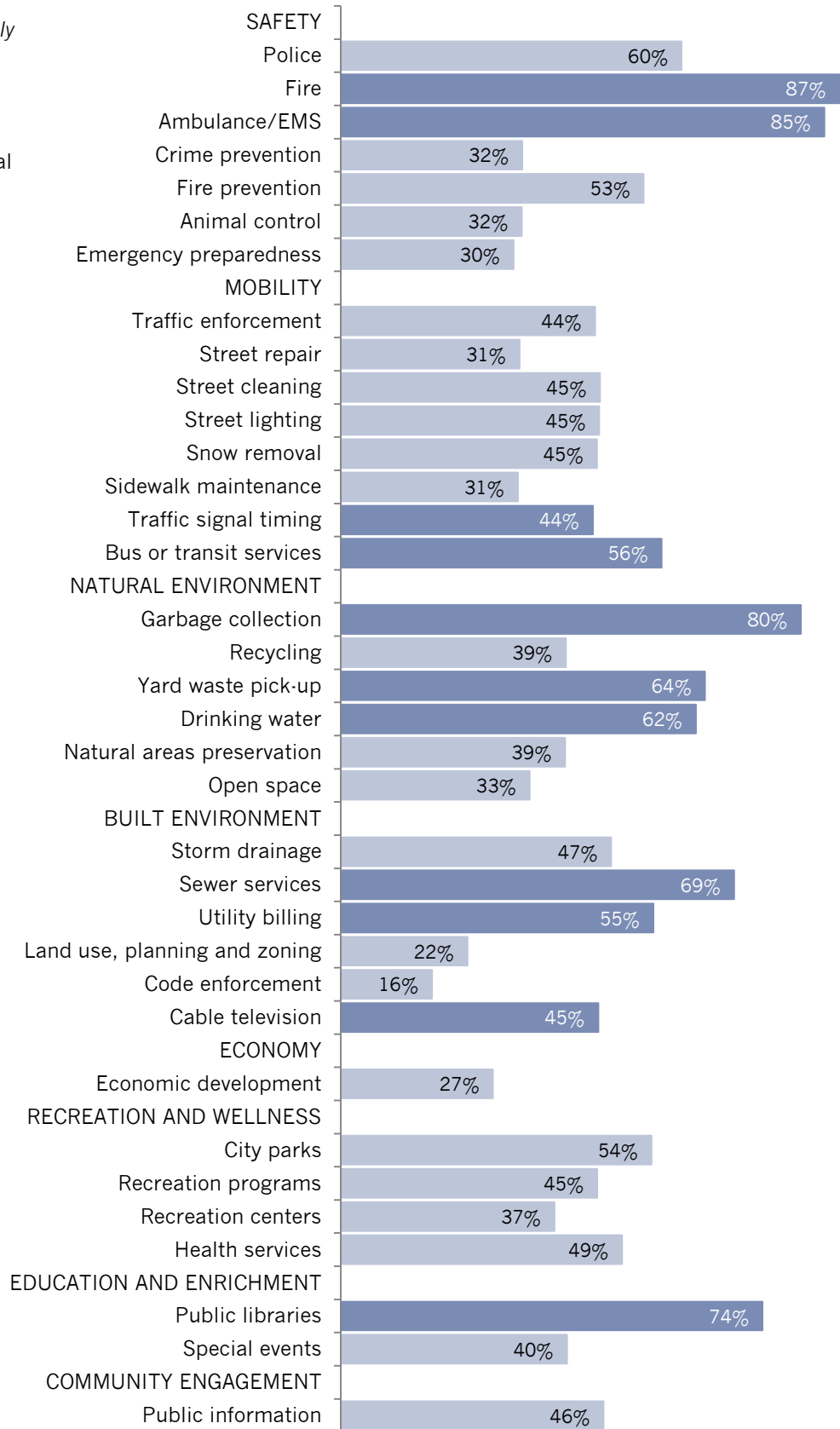
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

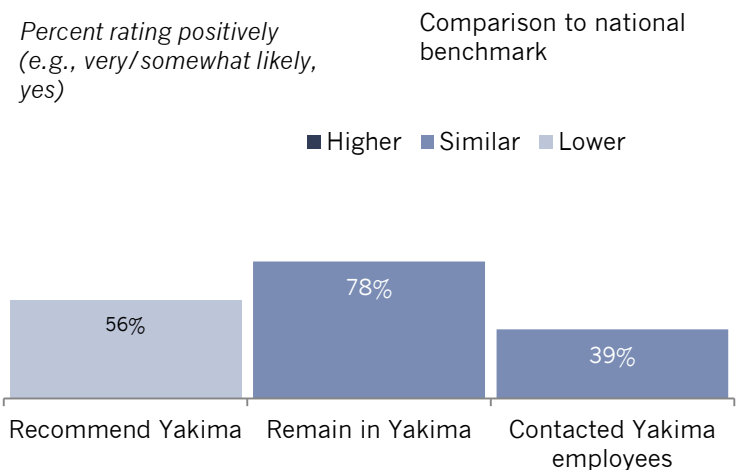
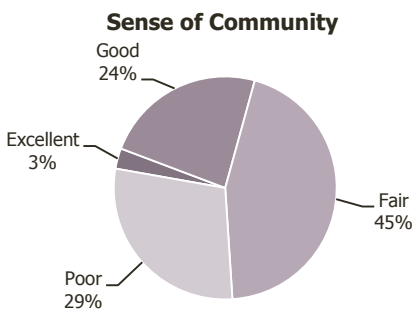


Participation

Are the residents of Yakima 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. Ratings for the sense of community in Yakima were rated fair or higher by about three quarters of residents. A majority reported that they would recommend living in Yakima and planned to remain in Yakima for the next five years. The percentage of residents likely to remain in Yakima for the next five years increased from 2014 to 2015.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Yakima residents tended to report similar rates of Participation when compared to other communities across the nation. Among the activities or behaviors with the highest reported rates of Participation were: purchased goods or services in Yakima, visited a City park, talked to or visited with neighbors, done a favor for a neighbor and read or watched local news. More residents in Yakima reported that they work within the city limits when compared to other communities across the nation. More residents reported having a positive economic outlook in 2015 than in 2014.



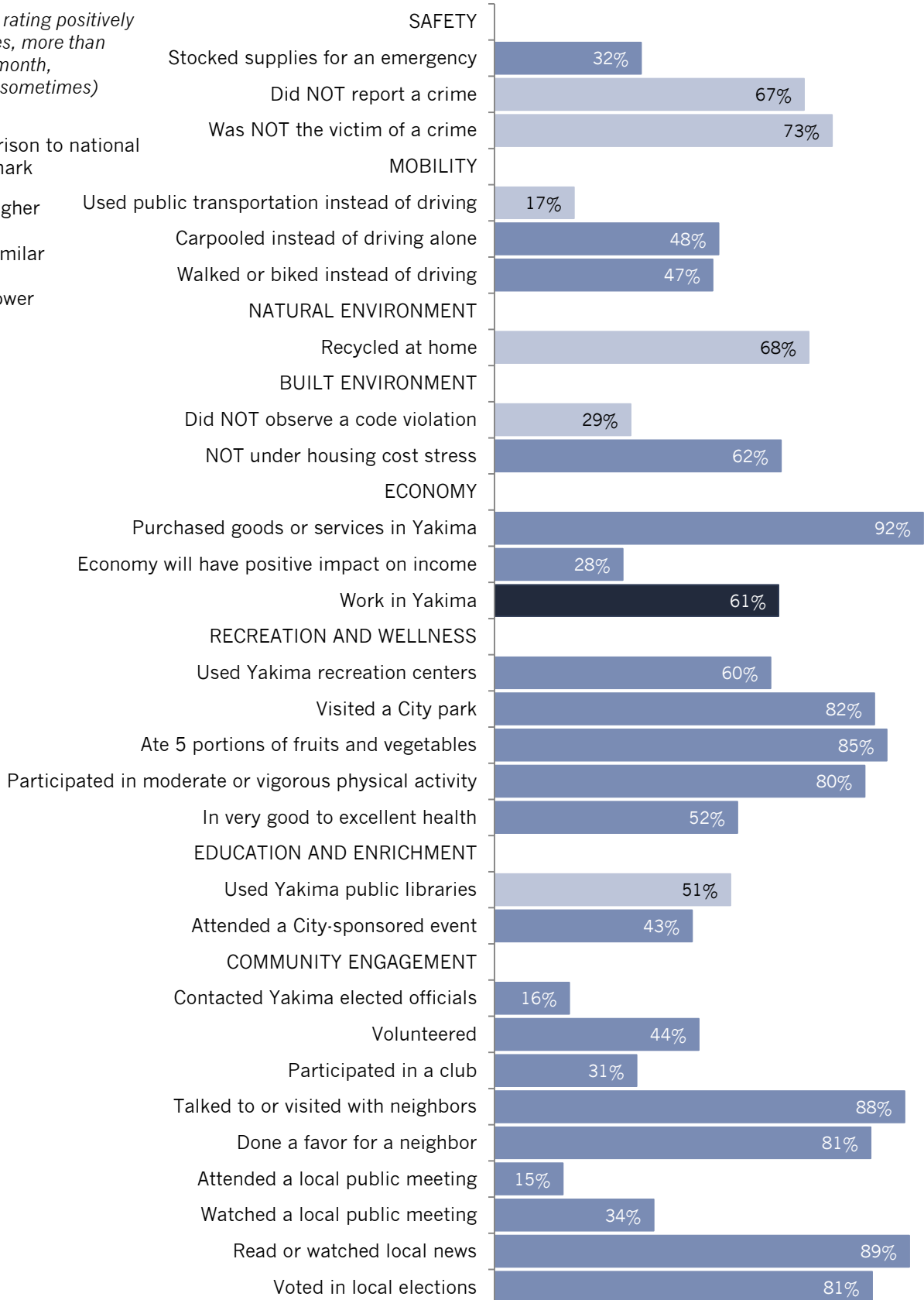
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

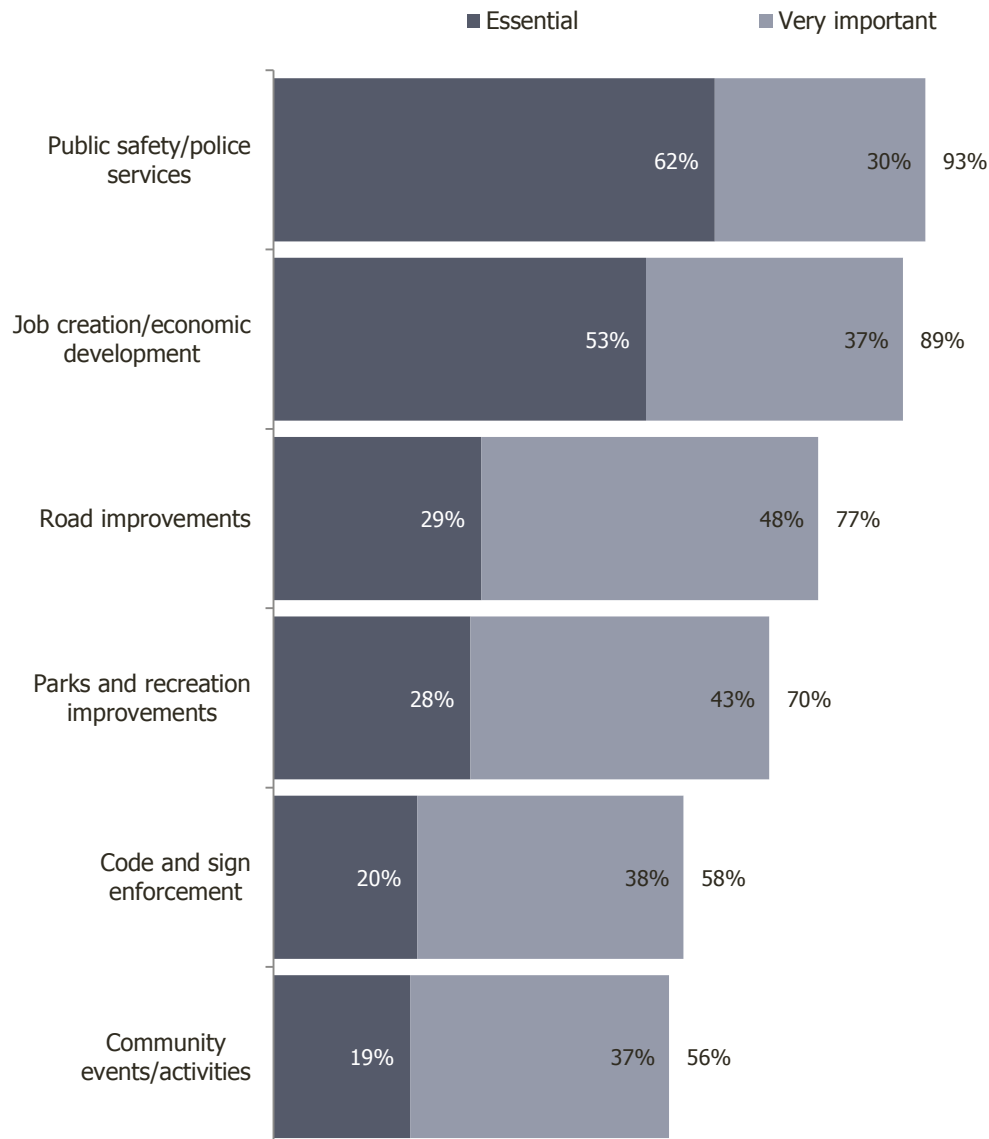


Special Topics

The City of Yakima included a question of special interest on The NCS. The question asked residents to rate the importance of the City investing in several different issues. While a majority of residents rated all items as essential or very important, almost all residents indicated that it was important for the City to invest in public safety/police services and about 9 in 10 indicated that it was important for the City to invest in job creation/economic development.

Figure 4: City Priorities

Please indicate how important, if at all, it is for the City to invest in each of the following issues in the next 12 months:



Conclusions

A majority of residents continue to experience good quality of life in Yakima.

The overall quality of life in Yakima was generally seen as excellent or good by about half of the survey respondents. More than one-half of respondents rated the City as a place to live and their neighborhood as a place to live as excellent or good. These ratings remained stable over time. A majority of residents indicated that they would recommend living in Yakima and planned to remain in Yakima for the next five years. More residents reported that they were likely to remain in Yakima in 2015 than in 2014.

Safety is a top priority for residents.

Safety was identified as a top community focus area by Yakima residents. Overall, more aspects of Safety were lower than the benchmark than similar to the benchmark. However, ratings increased from 2014 to 2015 for police services, fire service and ambulance/EMS services. All other ratings for Safety remained stable from 2014 to 2015. At least 3 in 5 residents reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods and in downtown Yakima during the day.

The Economy is important to residents.

Survey participants indicated that the Economy is an important facet to focus on over the next two years. Economy ratings tended to be similar to ratings seen in other communities. The percent of respondents that reported working in Yakima was higher than in comparison communities. Compared to 2014, nearly all Economy ratings remained stable; however, the number of residents with a positive economic outlook increased from 2014 to 2015. Yakima included a custom question about City funding priorities, and 9 in 10 respondents indicated that job creation/economic development is a top priority for the City in the next 12 months.