

# The National Citizen Survey™

Yakima, WA

*Community Livability Report*

*DRAFT*

*2013*

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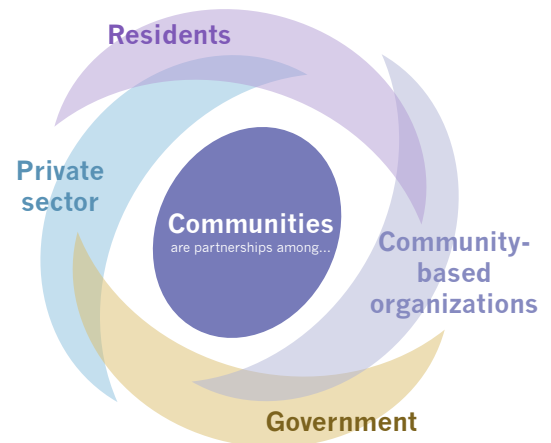
# Summary

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The NCS was developed by NRC to provide a statistically valid survey of resident opinions about community and services provided by local government. The survey results may be used by staff, elected officials and other stakeholders for community planning and resource allocation, program improvement and policy making.

The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality research methods and directly comparable results across The National Citizen Survey communities. Results are statistically weighted to reflect the proper demographic composition of the entire community. A total of 762 completed surveys were obtained, providing an overall response rate of 27% and a margin of error of ±4%. Additional detail on the methods used can be found under separate cover in the Technical Appendices.

Great communities are comprised of partnerships sharing common land - the government, the private sector, community-based organizations and the residents. The NCS captures residents' opinions about their communities and local governance as well as their contribution to their communities across eight aspects of the community: Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement.

The NCS results for Yakima provides the opinions of a representative sample of residents about community quality of life, service delivery, community participation and unique issues of local interest. A periodic sounding of resident opinion offers staff, elected officials and other community stakeholders an opportunity to identify community strengths and challenges to help ensure the success of their community. Community stakeholders will need to leverage their strengths to address the challenges to ensure Yakima remains an attractive, livable community for current and future generations.



## A majority of residents experienced a fairly good quality of life in Yakima and believed that Yakima was a good place to live.

- The overall quality of life in Yakima was generally seen as excellent or good by 4 out of 10 residents. Nearly one-half gave overall quality of life a “fair” rating.
- More than one-half of respondents rated the City as a place live and their neighborhood as a place to live as “excellent” or “good.”
- Community amenities receiving the most positive ratings were safety in neighborhood, opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual activities, overall ease of travel and ease of travel by car. Those receiving the lowest included the overall image or reputation of Yakima, vibrant downtown/commercial area, employment opportunities and overall feeling of safety.

## On average, residents gave favorable ratings to many of the local government services provided by Yakima.

- Nearly one-half of residents gave a rating of “excellent” or “good” to the overall quality of services provided in Yakima.
- Twelve of 36 services offered by Yakima were rated positively by at least half of respondents. Those rated most positively included fire services, ambulance/EMS, garbage collection and public libraries. Services receiving the lowest ratings included code enforcement, street repair, crime prevention and economic development.
- Most indicators on the survey related to residents’ trust in City Government (e.g., overall confidence in Yakima, overall direction that Yakima is taking and acting in the best interest of the community) showed about one-third of residents giving an “excellent” or “good” rating.

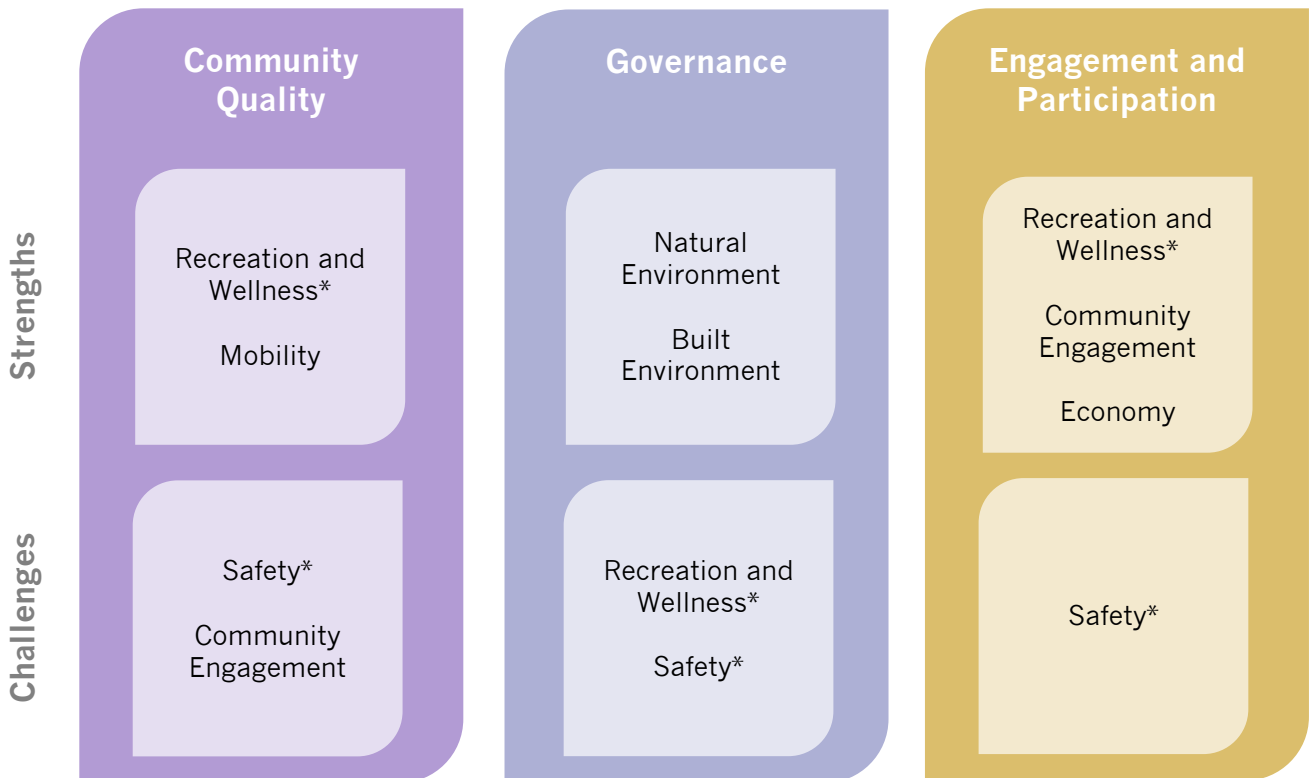
**In general, Yakima residents reported being engaged in their local community.**

- High levels of neighborliness of social engagement were reported in Yakima. Participation in recreation was significant in the City.
- Yakima residents showed moderate levels of participation in their civic engagement including watching and attending public meetings and volunteering.
- Residents were most engaged in purchasing goods or services in Yakima, talking or visiting with neighbors and visiting City parks. They were least engaged in contacting elected officials, campaigning for an issue or cause and using public transportation.



**Community Priorities for Yakima**

- The aspects of Safety, Recreation and Wellness and the overall quality of City services play the biggest role in how residents assess their overall quality of life.
- When asked to indicate which areas the City should invest over the next 12 months, respondents placed the greatest importance on public safety/police services and economic development/job creation. Fire services were also rated as very important.



\* Most important to overall quality of life

# Community Quality

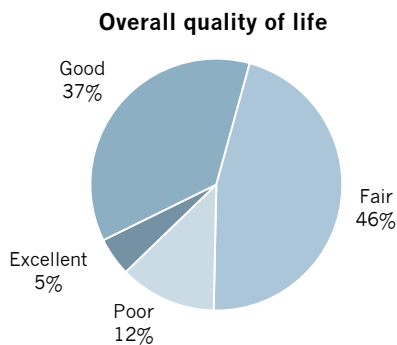
*What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?*

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, more respondents felt they had a “fair” quality of life than “excellent” or “good” (46% “fair” compared to 42% “excellent” or “good”). Respondents’ ratings of quality of life in Yakima were lower than ratings in other communities across the nation (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

In addition to rating their overall quality of life, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Yakima as a place to live, raise children and retire, as well as their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Yakima and its overall appearance. Yakima residents rated their neighborhood as a place to live and the city as a place to live the most positively with half or more of respondents rating these aspects of the community as “excellent” or “good.” Overall, ratings for the various aspects of community quality were stable compared to 2012 (see *Trends over Time* provided under separate cover) and were rated lower in Yakima than in other communities across the nation.

Delving deeper into Community Quality, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight dimensions of Community Livability. Yakima performed well in the areas of Recreation and Wellness and Mobility. For example, aspects of the Recreation and Wellness (including the availability of mental health care, preventative health care, affordable quality health care and affordable quality food) were rated as “excellent” or “good by at least 4 in 10 respondents and all four aspects received ratings similar to the

national benchmarks. As for Mobility, motorized transportation (i.e., ease of travel by car and by public transportation as well as traffic flow) were rated favorably by at least half of respondents, providing ratings that were similar in Yakima when compared to the City’s national peers. Non-motorized transportation (i.e., walking and biking) were rated lower than the national benchmarks. Additionally, ratings for aspects of Mobility tended to be stable when compared to 2012, except for traffic flow, which showed an increase in ratings, and ease of travel by bicycle, which showed a decrease in ratings.



Challenges for Yakima may lie in the areas of Safety and Community Engagement. About one-quarter of respondents rated the overall feeling of safety in Yakima as “excellent” or “good,” which was lower than the national benchmark. While the majority of respondents felt “very” or “somewhat” safe in their neighborhood (74%), these ratings were lower in Yakima than in other communities in the U.S. Additionally, respondents in District 1 and District 4 felt safer in their neighborhoods than respondents in Districts 2 and 3 (see *Geographic Subgroup Comparisons* provided under separate cover). In the area of Community Engagement, about one-third of respondents rated the opportunities to participate in social events and activities, the neighborliness of Yakima and the openness and acceptance of people of diverse backgrounds as “excellent” or “good.” Opportunities to participate in community matters and opportunities to volunteer were rated positively by more respondents (between 41% and 56%, respectively). All five aspects of Community Engagement received ratings lower than the national benchmarks and all but opportunities to volunteer showed stability in their ratings when compared 2012; volunteer opportunities declined in its ratings.

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

Comparison to national benchmark  
 ■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower ■ Not available

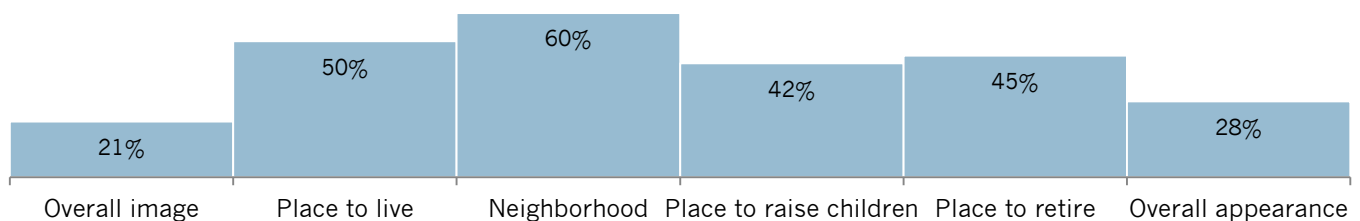
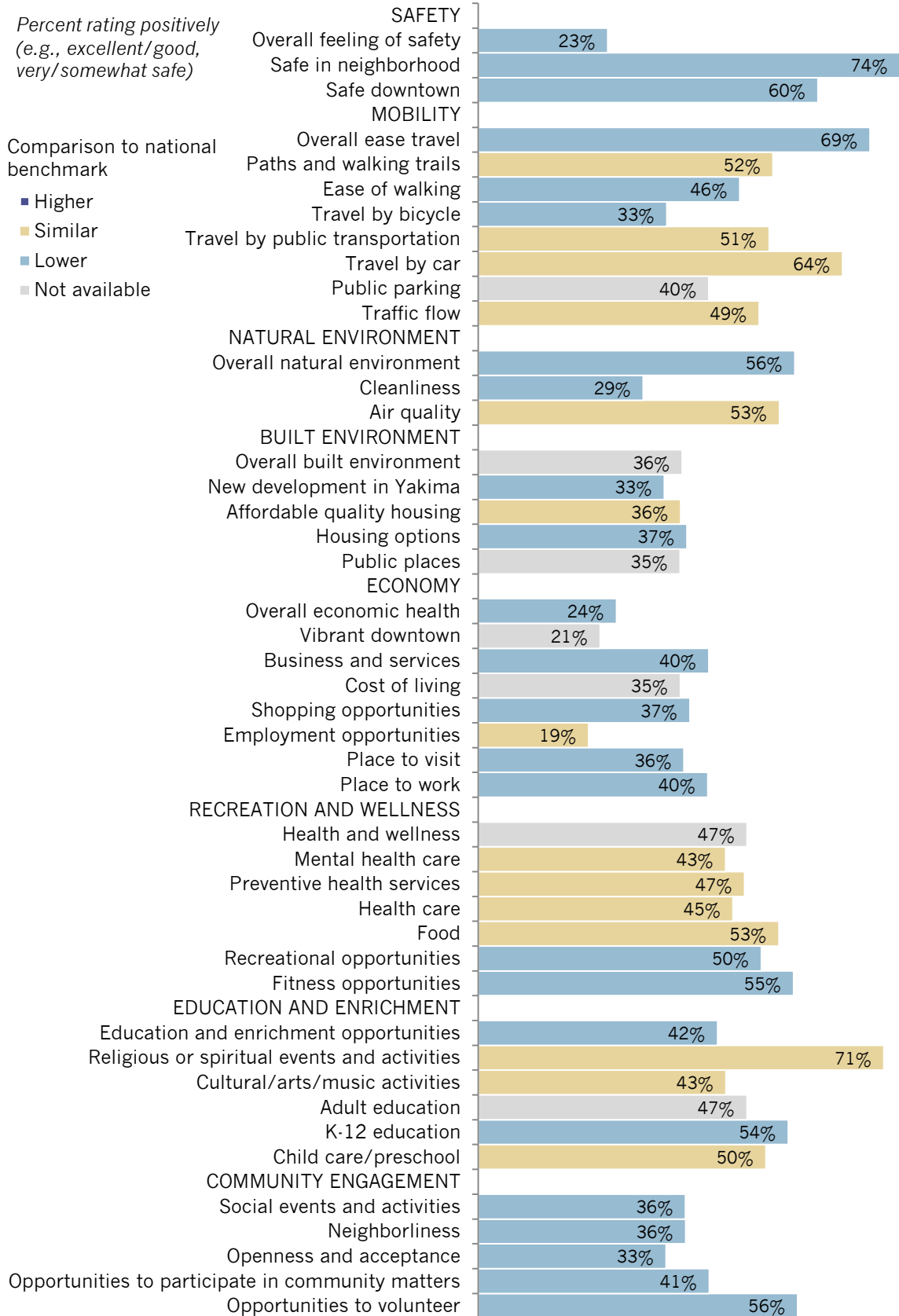


Figure 1: Aspects of Community Quality

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available



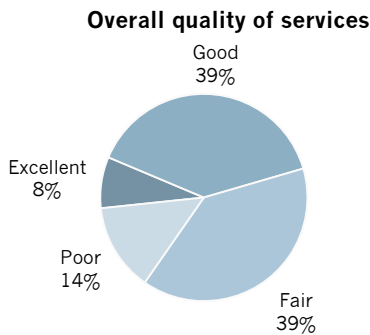
# Governance

*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. Almost half of the survey respondents rated the overall quality of services provided by Yakima as “excellent” or “good” (compared to about one-third of respondents who felt this way about the services provided by the Federal Government). Ratings for the services provided by Yakima were lower when compared to other communities in the U.S.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Yakima’s leadership and governance. On average, about 3 in 10 rated these aspects of leadership and governance as “excellent” or “good” and almost half of respondents felt the employees of Yakima provided “excellent” or “good” customer service. Where comparisons to the national benchmark were available, the ratings in Yakima tended to be lower than in other communities across the nation.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Yakima. Yakima’s services performed best in the area of the Natural Environment. About 8 in 10 respondents rated garbage collection in Yakima as “excellent” or “good” and about 6 in 10 provided positive ratings to yard waste pick-up and drinking water. These three services, as well as the preservation of natural areas, had ratings similar to those in other communities in the U.S. Recycling and open space were felt to be “excellent” or “good” by about 4 in 10 respondents and were rated lower than the national benchmarks. When available, services related to the Natural Environment in 2013 were similar to ratings in 2012.



Aspects of Mobility in Yakima were mixed. About 4 in 10 respondents rated traffic enforcement, street cleaning, street lighting and snow removal as “excellent” or “good.” Slightly fewer (about 3 in 10) rated sidewalk maintenance positively while a majority of respondents (59%) felt the City provided “excellent” or “good” bus or transit services. Overall, six of the eight Mobility-related services received ratings lower than national benchmark comparisons; traffic signal timing and bus or transit services were the two services receiving ratings similar to other communities across the nation. When compared to ratings from 2012, all but traffic signal timing had ratings in 2013 that were similar to the previous year; ratings for traffic signal timing showed a decline. Additionally, respondents in District 3 tended to rate some aspects of Mobility lower than respondents in other

Districts, namely street lighting and snow removal.

Recreation and Wellness may be an opportunity for improvement in the City. While a majority of respondents rated City parks as “excellent” or “good,” ratings were lower in Yakima when compared to the national benchmark. About 4 in 10 respondents rated recreation programs and recreation centers positively and ratings for recreation centers showed a decline between 2012 and 2013.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

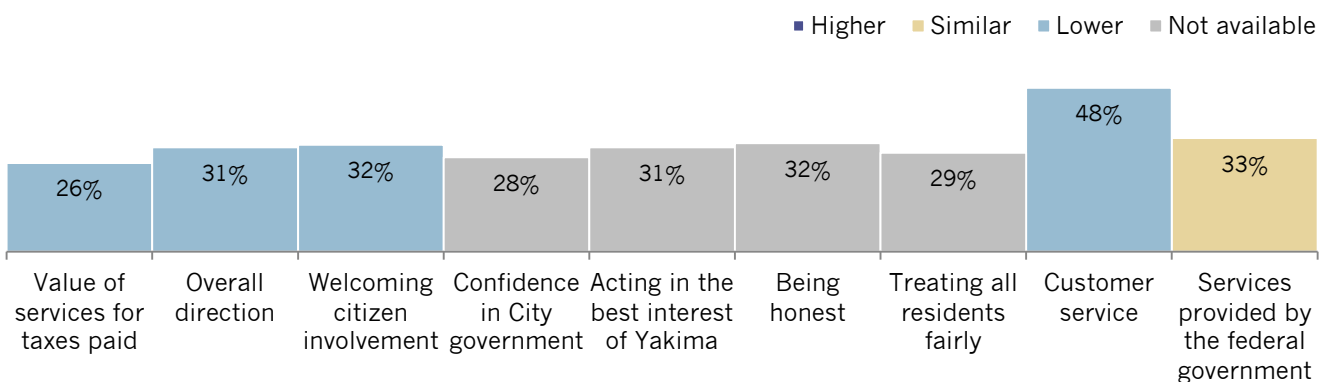
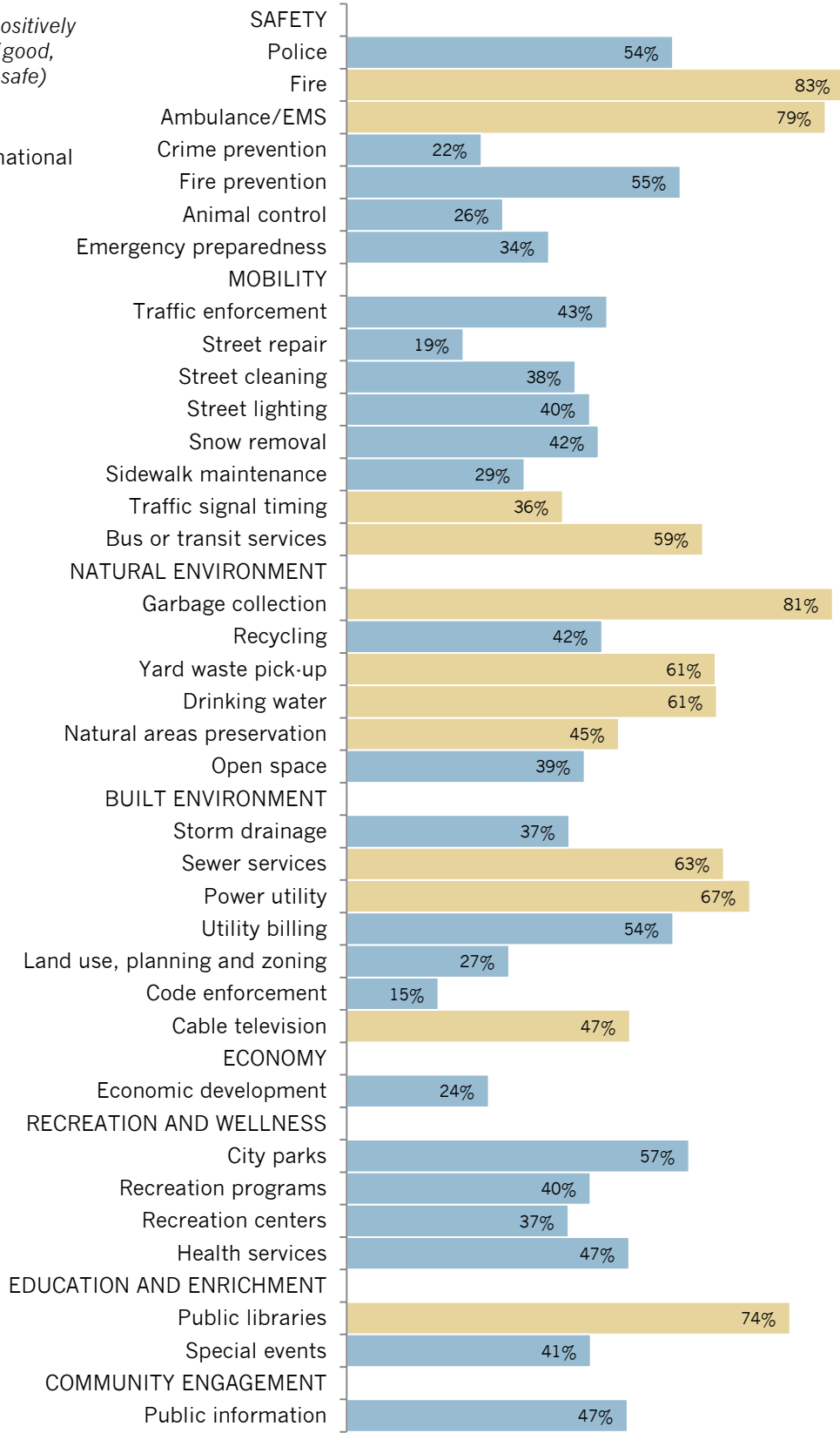


Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available





# Engagement and Participation

*Are the residents of Yakima connected to the community and each other?*

An engaged community is a livable community. The connections and trust between residents, government, businesses and other organizations help to create a sense of community; a shared sense of membership, belonging and history. The sense of community in Yakima was lower than other communities across the nation with about one-third of survey respondents rating it as “excellent” or “good.” About half of respondents were “very” or “somewhat” likely to recommend living in Yakima to someone who asks (lower than the national benchmark) and about three-quarters were “likely” to remain in Yakima for the next five years (similar to the national benchmark). Also, one-third of respondents had reached out to the City for help or information, a proportion that was lower in Yakima than in its national peers.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors that respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Overall, for the 16 activities for which benchmark comparisons were available, Yakima residents tended to participate in these various activities at rates similar to or lower than residents in other communities across the country.

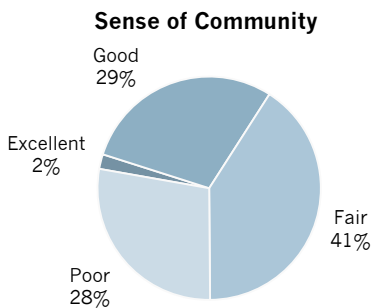
In the area of Community Engagement, more respondents had watched (online or on television) a local public meeting than had attended a meeting (38% watched compared to 18% attended). About one-third of respondents had participated in a club and almost half had volunteered their time to a group or activity in Yakima. These four aspects of Community Engagement were similar in Yakima when compared to the nation. A large majority of respondents had talked or visited with neighbors (87%) or done a favor for a neighbor

(83%); the incidence of respondents talking or visiting with neighbors was higher in 2013 than in 2012 and higher in Yakima than in other communities across the U.S. When compared by City Council District, respondents in Districts 1 and 2 reported higher levels of voting in local elections and campaigning or advocating for an issue, cause or candidate than Districts 3 and 4.

Yakima residents reported high levels of participation in Recreation and Wellness activities. The proportion of residents who had visited a City park (83%) or had used recreation centers (60%) were similar to that of other communities, while fewer residents in Yakima compared to the U.S. took advantage of the public libraries (57%). Additionally, over three-quarters of respondents reported “always” or “sometimes” eating five portions of fruits vegetables or “always” or “sometimes” participating in moderate or

vigorous physical activity. As a result, a strong majority of respondents (86%) reported being in “good,” “very good” or “excellent” health.

Survey respondents were engaged with the Economy of Yakima. About 9 in 10 respondents “always” or “sometimes” purchased goods or services in the City and 6 in 10 worked in the City. About one-quarter of respondents felt the economy would have a positive impact on their incomes, a rating that was similar to the nation and higher when compared to the ratings in 2012.



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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available

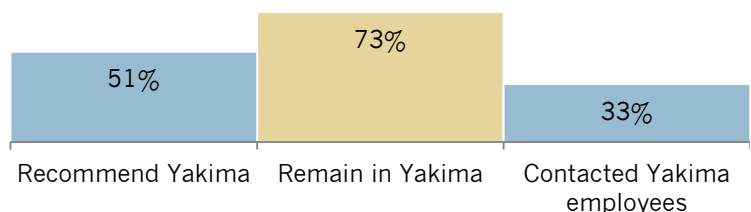
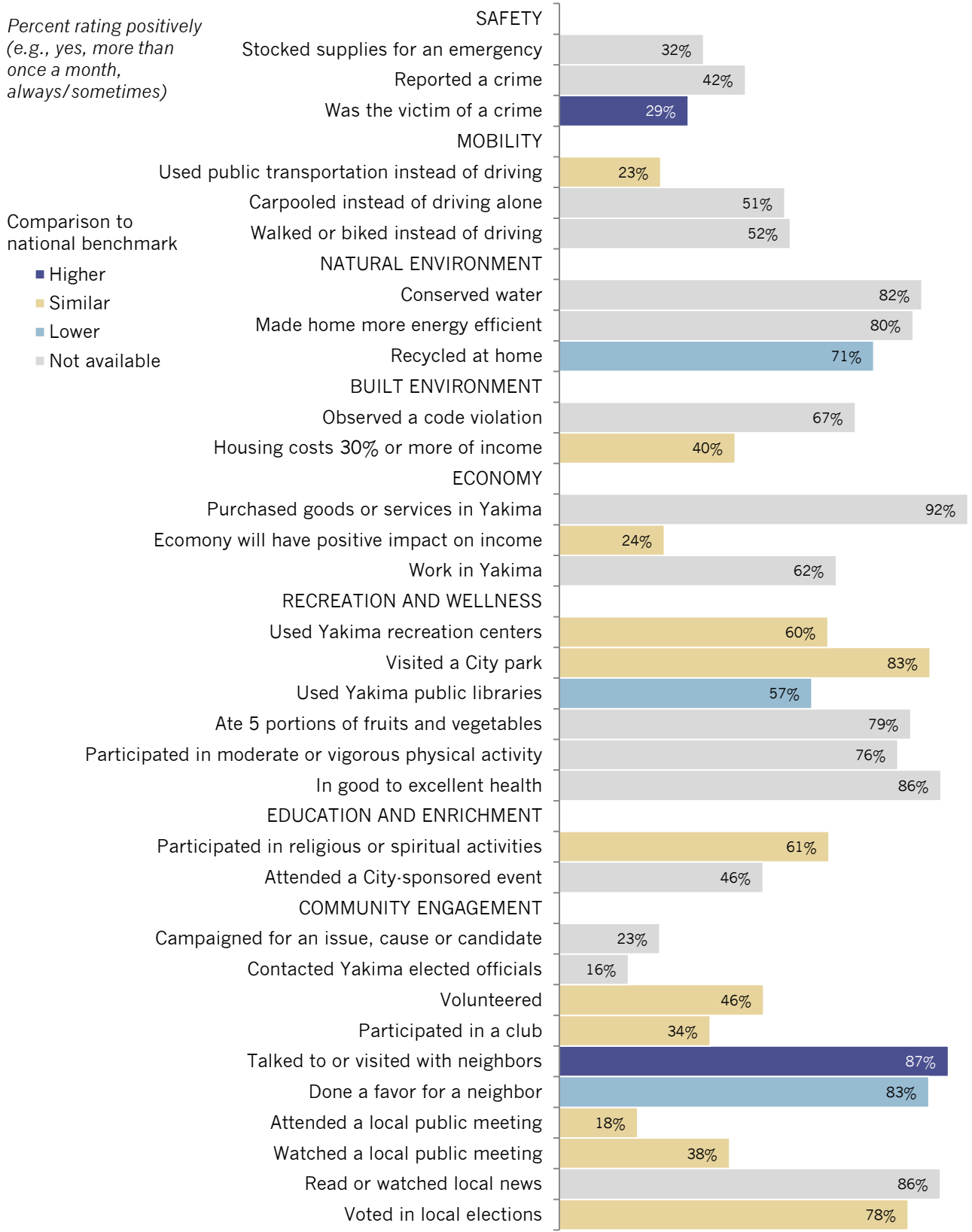


Figure 3: Aspects of Engagement and Participation



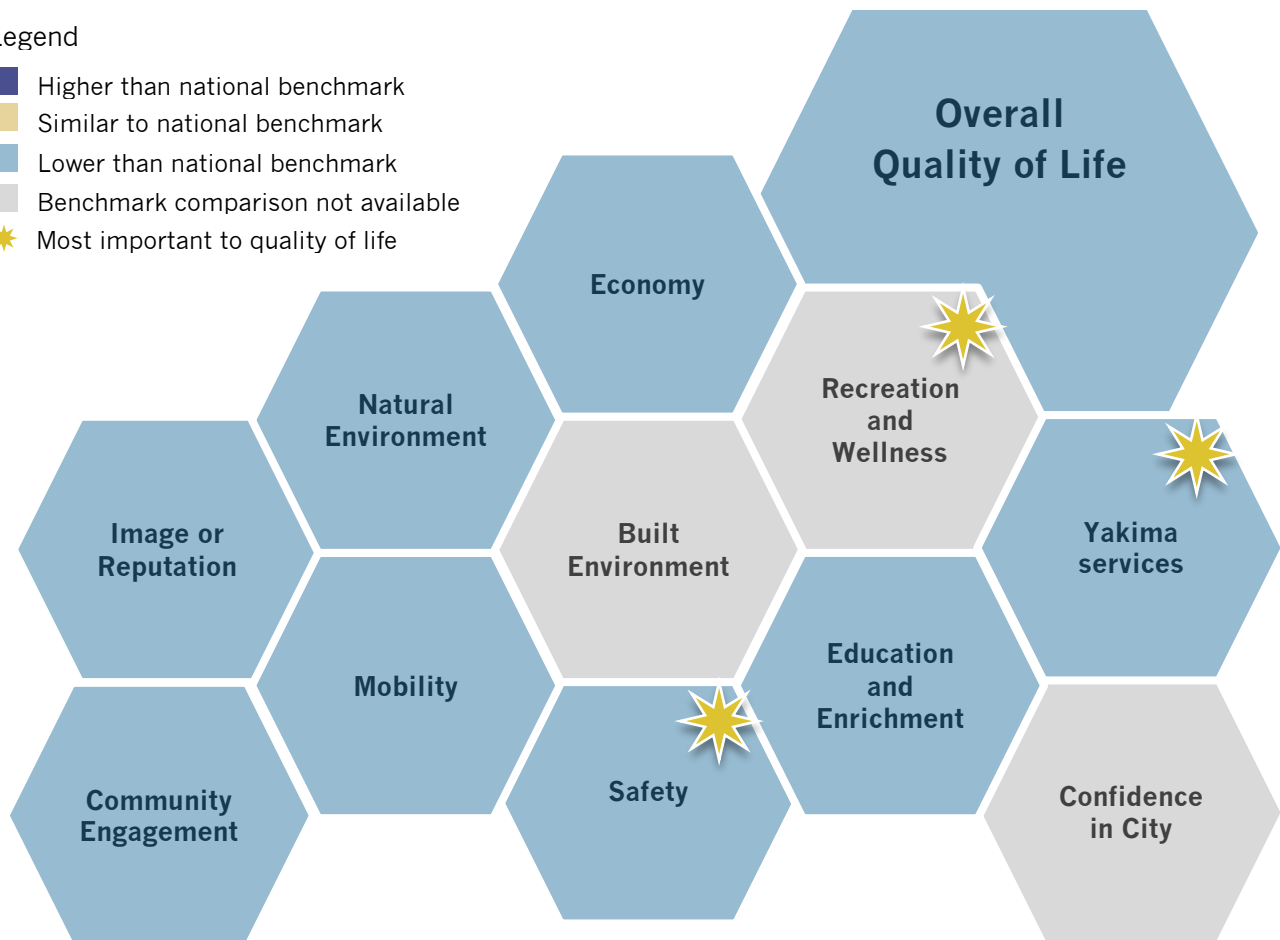
# Community Livability

*Which aspects of Community Livability are most influential to residents' quality of life?*

By knowing what resonates most with residents as they rate their quality of life, Yakima stakeholders will have a window into the aspects that make their community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be. The eight aspects of Community Livability – Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement – as well as residents' confidence in City government, the overall quality of services provided by the City and the overall image or reputation of Yakima were correlated with their overall quality of life to reveal those aspects with the greatest likelihood of having influence over it. This analysis revealed that the aspects of Recreation and Wellness, Safety and the overall quality of City Services play the biggest role in how residents assess their overall quality of life. Of these three aspects, Safety and the overall quality of Yakima services were lower than the benchmark; a benchmark comparison for Recreation and Wellness was not available. Targeted improvements in these three areas could help to elevate residents' opinions about their quality of life.

## Legend

- Higher than national benchmark
- Similar to national benchmark
- Lower than national benchmark
- Benchmark comparison not available
- ★ Most important to quality of life



# Special Topics

The City of Yakima included two questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question invited respondents to indicate which areas the City should invest over the next 12 months. Respondents placed the greatest importance on public safety/police services and economic development/job creation. About 9 in 10 respondents felt these areas were “essential” or “very important” although a slight majority preferred public safety over economic development (55% “essential” compared to 50% “essential”). District 3 placed more importance on community events/activities than the other districts while District 4 placed more importance on infrastructure improvements. Still, public safety/ police services and economic development/job creation were deemed the most important areas to invest overall by all Districts.

The second question on the survey aimed to ascertain the respondents’ willingness to pay for a curbside recycling program. Respondents were most supportive of paying \$0 per month and most opposed to paying \$7.50 per month for such a program. If a dollar amount were required, respondents preferred \$2.50 per month over \$5 per month (69% “strongly” or “somewhat” support compared to 41%).

Figure 4: Question 13a

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:

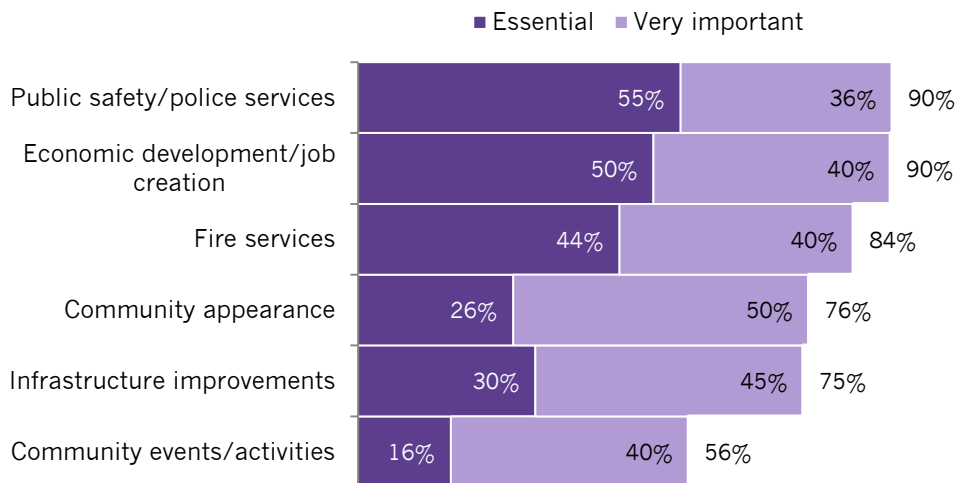


Figure 5: Question 13b

The City is considering implementing a curbside recycling program. Please indicate how much you would support or oppose paying each of the following proposed fees, if any:

