

THE NCSTM
The National Community SurveyTM

Cape Coral, FL
Community Livability Report

2019



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The National Community Survey™
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The NCS™ is presented by NRC in collaboration with ICMA.

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About

The National Community Survey™ (The NCS™) report is about the “livability” of Cape Coral. 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.

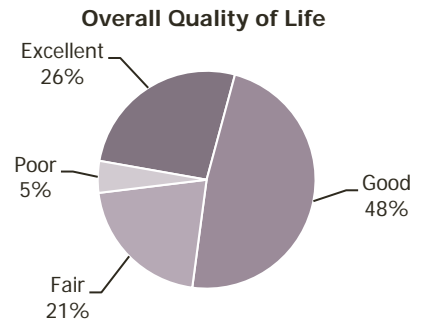
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 415 residents of the City of Cape Coral. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% 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 Cape Coral

Most residents rated the quality of life in Cape Coral as excellent or good. This was similar to the national benchmark comparison (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.

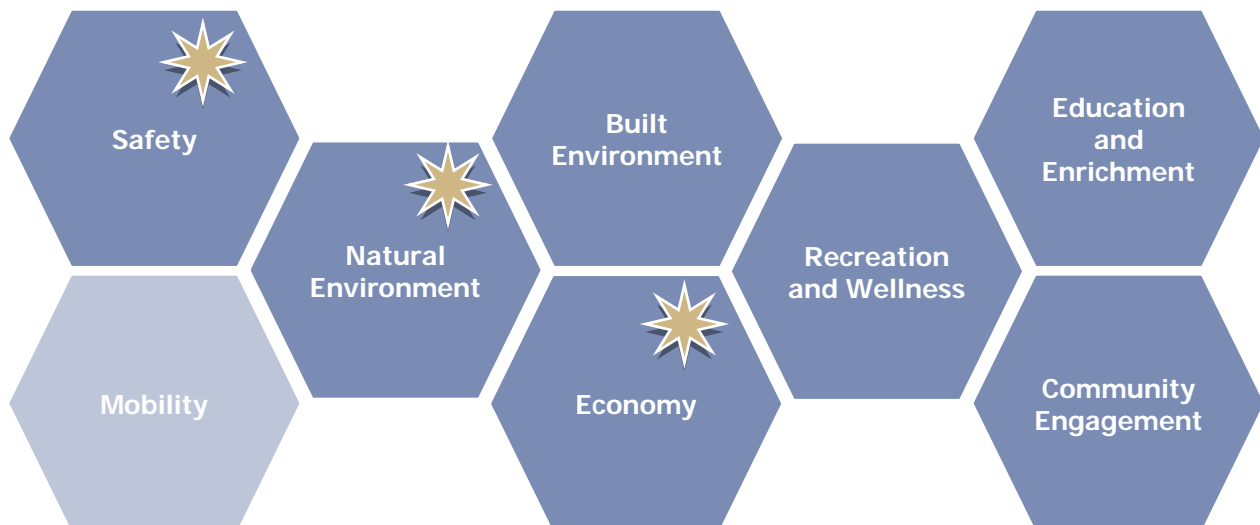
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety, Natural Environment and Economy as priorities for the Cape Coral community in the coming two years. Ratings across all facets tended to be positive and similar to the benchmarks; however Mobility ratings tended to be lower than ratings observed elsewhere. 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.

Legend

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

- Most important



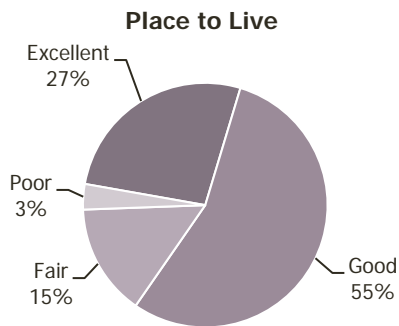
Community Characteristics

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 Cape Coral, 82% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Cape Coral 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 Cape Coral as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Cape Coral and its overall appearance. About 8 in 10 residents rated their neighborhoods as a place to live and Cape Coral as a place to retire as excellent or good. Residents rated the city higher than the nation as a place to retire and these ratings increased 2017 (see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover). Conversely, Cape Coral was rated lower than nation as a place to raise kids—a score showing a significant decrease in ratings since 2017.

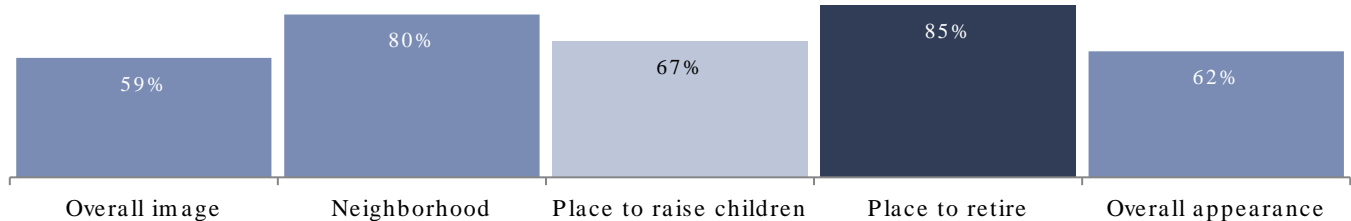
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. The highest rated community amenities related to safety, followed by opportunities to participate in religious/spiritual events and air quality; all of these were rated positively by more than 70% of residents. Community characteristics that received the lowest ratings of quality (rated excellent or good by fewer than one-third of residents) included bus/transit services, employment opportunities, travel by bicycle, mental health care, and paths and walking trails.



When compared to the nation, a majority of Cape Coral's characteristic were rated similarly. Areas where the city fell short were predominantly in the facet of Mobility (ease of travel, car travel, ease of walking, ease of biking, etc.), employment and educational opportunities.

In terms of trends over time, ratings improved for the vibrancy of the downtown and the cultural/art music activities offered. Declines in scores were found within Mobility (ease of travel, car travel, public parking and paths/walking trails), and the natural environment and air quality.

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



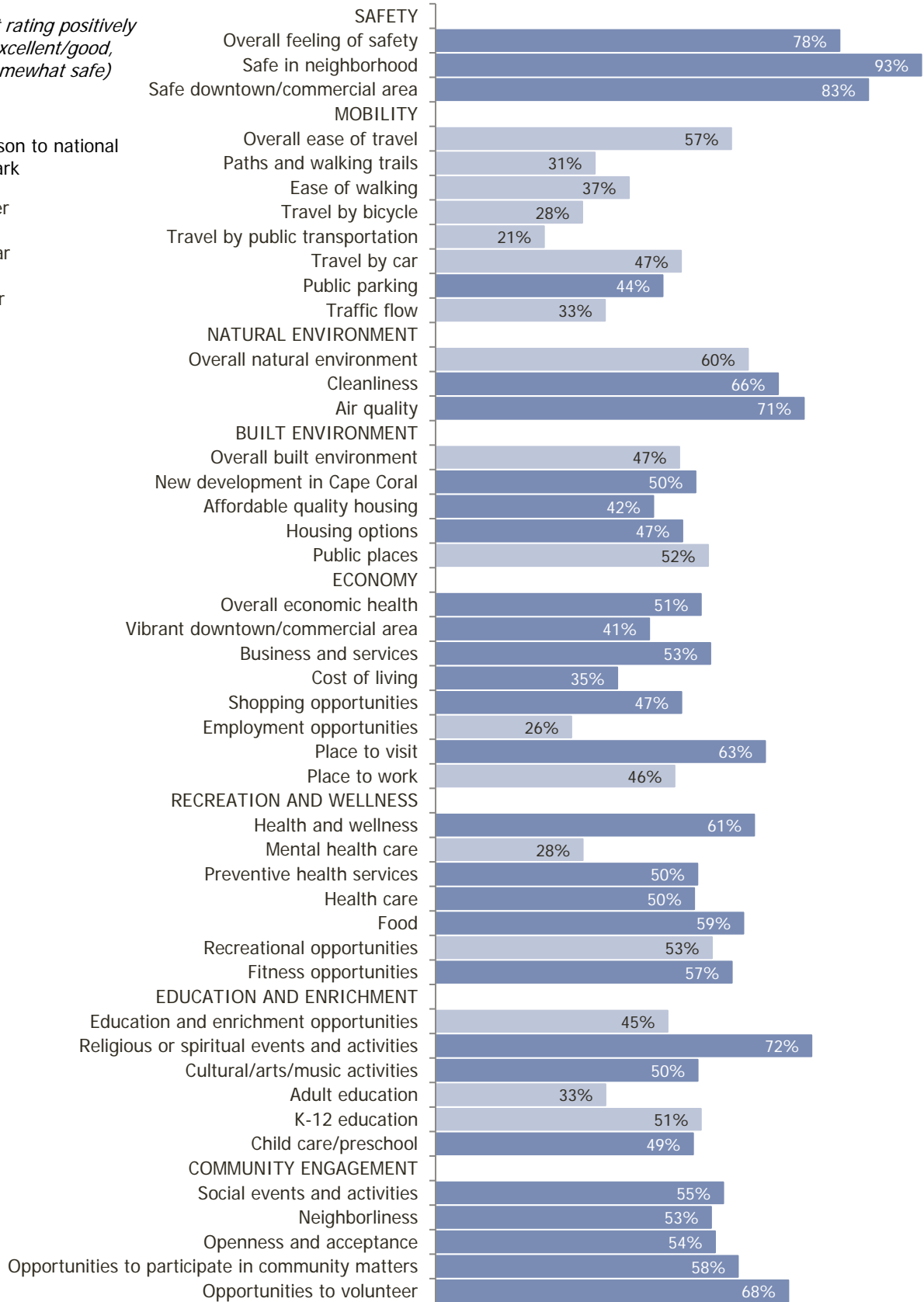
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

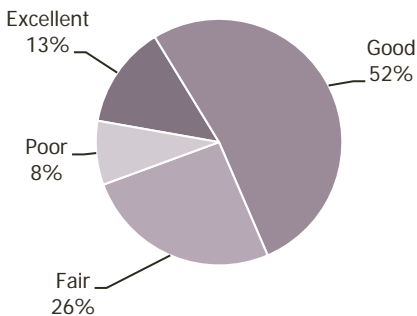
How well does the government of Cape Coral meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Cape Coral as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About two-thirds of residents rated the overall quality of Cape Coral city services excellent or good, a score on par with the nation and significantly higher than given to the Federal government (44%).

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Cape Coral’s leadership and governance. For the eight measures of public trust included in the survey, Cape Coral scored similarly to the nation on seven. Ratings in 2019 for the local government being honest, treating all residents fairly and acting in the best interest of Cape Coral increased from 2017 demonstrating an increase in public confidence.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Cape Coral. The services that received the highest ratings often fell into the facets of Safety and Recreation and Wellness. Public libraries also were rated quite favorably in Cape Coral. Residents gave the lowest quality ratings to services related to travel, land use and planning and cable television; these ratings often falling below the national benchmarks. In addition, services related to the Natural Environment also often scored below the nation.

Overall Quality of City Services

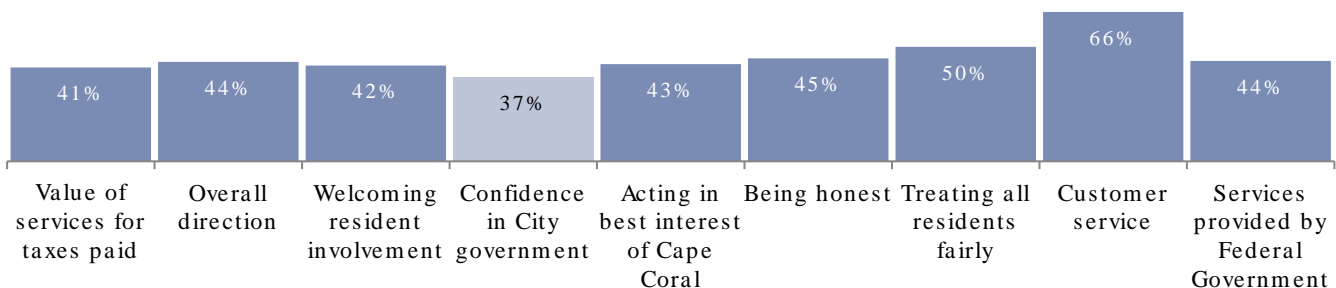


When comparing to 2019, fire prevention, public libraries and public trust received more positive assessments than in 2017. Residents rated street lighting, street maintenance, garbage collection, recycling and yard waste pick-up lower in 2019 than in 2017.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



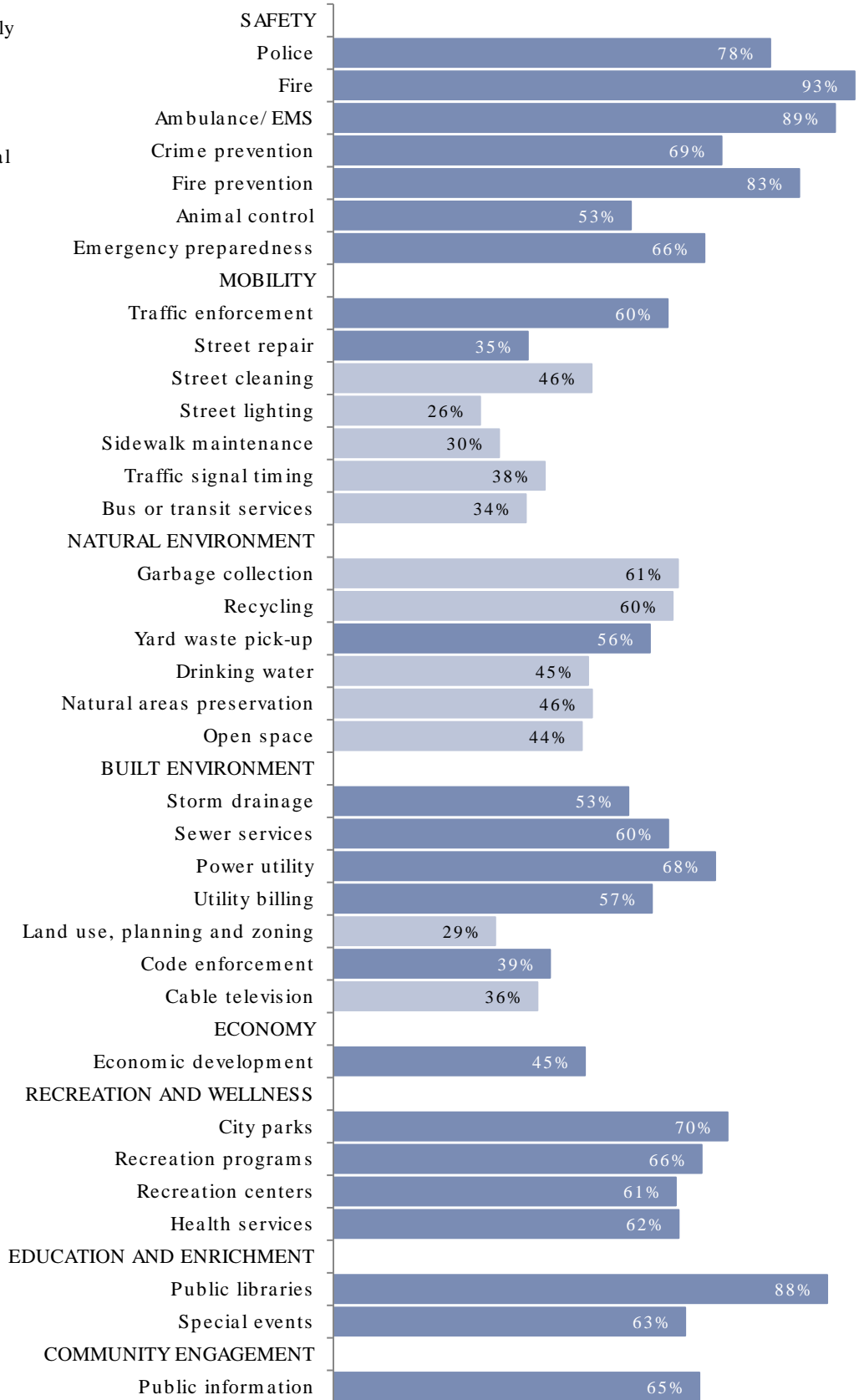
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

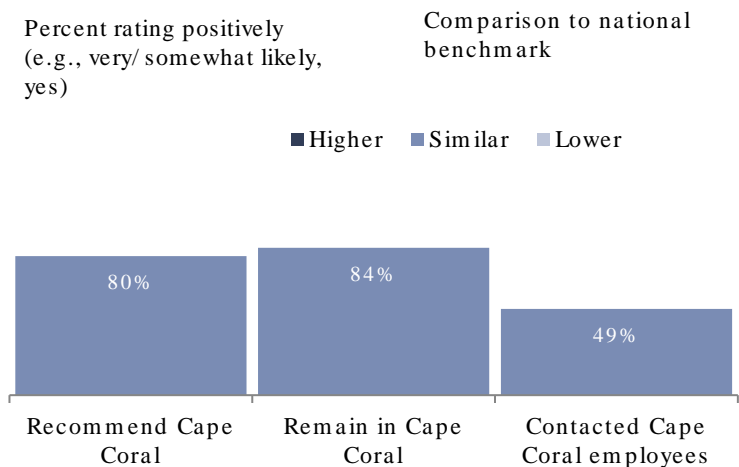
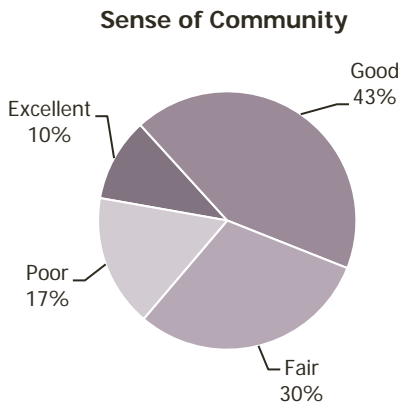


Participation

Are the residents of Cape Coral connected to the community and each other?

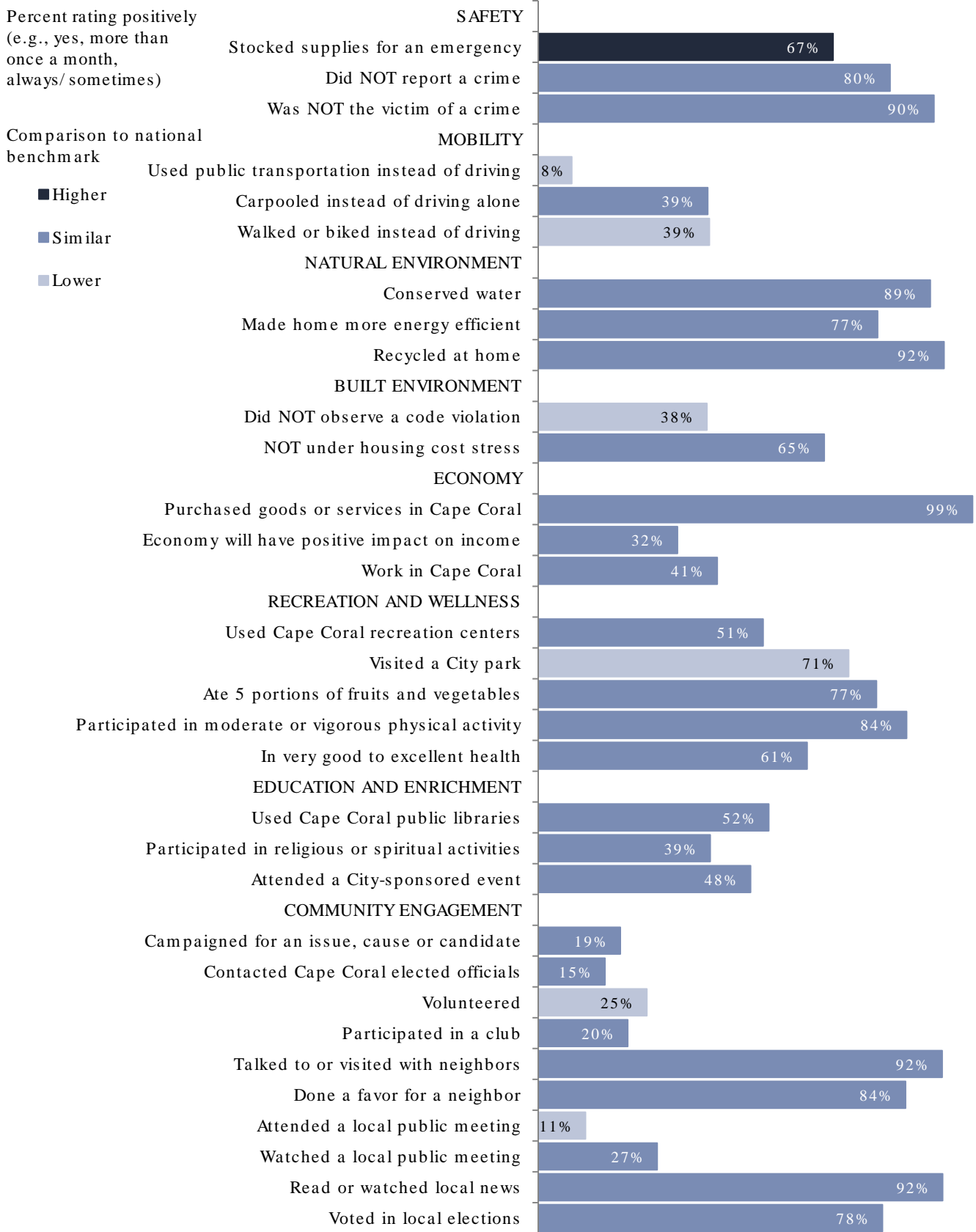
An engaged community harnesses its most valuable resource, its residents. The connections and trust among residents, government, businesses and other organizations help to create a sense of community, a shared sense of membership, belonging and history. More than half of residents felt that the sense of community in Cape Coral was excellent or good.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Community participation was varied by activity and often was similar to patterns seen across the nation. Cape Coral residents reported higher levels of stocking supplies for an emergency than their national counterparts and lower rates of alternate mode use (bus, walking and biking), park visitation, volunteerism and local meeting attendance. They also noticed more code violations than residents in other communities.



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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation



Conclusions

Residents enjoy a positive quality of life in Cape Coral and find it a great place to retire

Cape Coral residents gave strong positive ratings to their city in many areas including the quality of the neighborhoods, the city as a place to visit, its safety and more. Approximately 8 in 10 residents rated Cape Coral as an excellent or good place to live. Residents rated Cape Coral higher than the nation as a place to retire (85% excellent or good) and these ratings significantly increased from 2017.

Mobility is a key challenge in Cape Coral

Community characteristics and services within the facet of Mobility received some of the lowest ratings on the survey. Alternate mode travel (travel by bus/transit services, travel by bicycle, ease of walking and paths and walking trails) comprised many of the community aspects rated low and falling below the national benchmarks. Overall ease of travel and car travel in Cape Coral also scored below the nation. Public parking was the only mobility related community characteristics that received scores similar to the nation.

Further, residents gave a number of the lowest quality ratings to Mobility related services such as street lighting, street cleaning, sidewalk maintenance, traffic signal timing and bus/transit services. These Mobility-related items also fell below national averages. Scores for street lighting and street maintenance declined from 2017 to 2019.

Residents place a high value the Natural Environment but satisfaction with environmental related services is on the decline

When asked the most important area of focus in the next 2 years, the Natural environment was one of the top areas selected. While community characteristics related to the Natural Environment in Cape Coral were rated positively by more than 60% of residents, five of the six city services related to the environment received scores lower than the nation. These services included garbage collection, recycling, drinking water, natural area preservation and open space.

Additionally, the community characteristics of air quality and natural environment showed declines in resident satisfaction from 2017 and residents rated a number of city services related the cleanliness (garbage collection, recycling and yard waste pick-up) lower than in 2017.

Public Trust is on the rise

About two-thirds of residents rated the overall quality of Cape Coral city services excellent or good, a score similar to the national benchmark. In addition, Cape Coral residents rated their government on par with the nation for seven of eight aspects of public trust and confidence. In three areas, Cape Coral saw significant increases since 2017: being honest, treating all residents fairly and government acting in the best interest of Cape Coral.