

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Cape Coral, FL
Community Livability Report

2017



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

NRC is a charter member of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative, providing clear disclosure of our sound and ethical survey research practices.

About

The National Citizen 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.

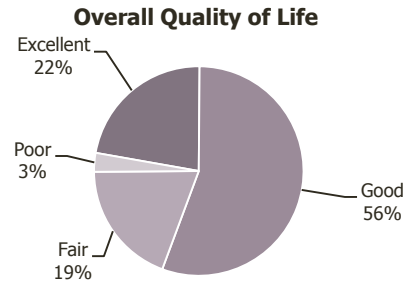
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 388 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 rating was similar to the national benchmark (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.

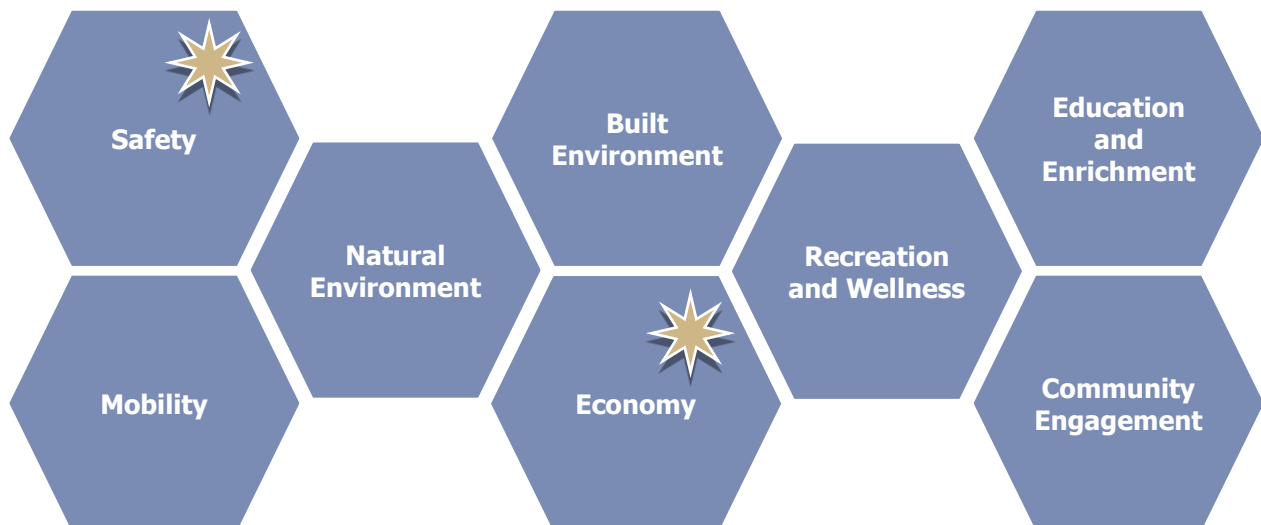
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Cape Coral community in the coming two years. Ratings for all facets were positive and similar to other communities. 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 Cape Coral's unique questions.

Legend

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

- Most important



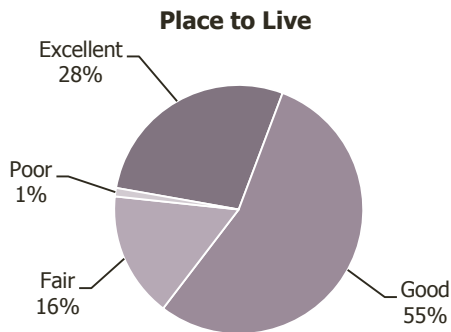
Community Characteristics

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 Cape Coral, 83% 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. These ratings were all similar to the benchmarks, with the exception of Cape Coral as a place to retire, which received ratings higher than those in comparison communities.

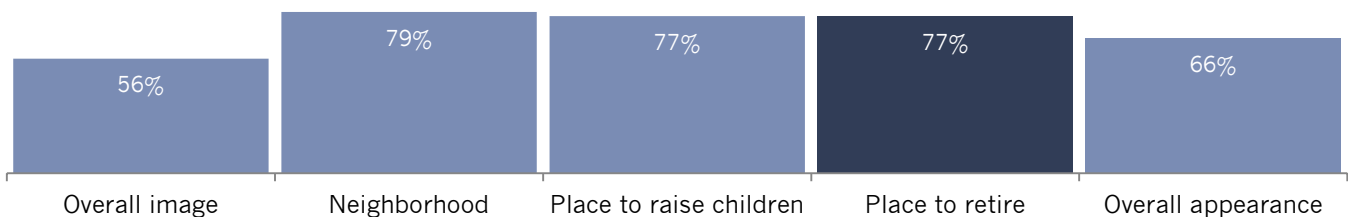
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Most aspects received positive ratings and were similar to the benchmarks. About 4 in 5 respondents or more rated each aspect of Safety as excellent or good. All aspects of Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement received ratings similar to those in comparison communities and a majority of residents tended to give positive marks within these facets. While a majority of residents rated each aspect of Natural Environment positively, ratings for the overall natural environment were lower than the national benchmark. Also, this rating decreased from 2015 to 2017 (see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover).



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



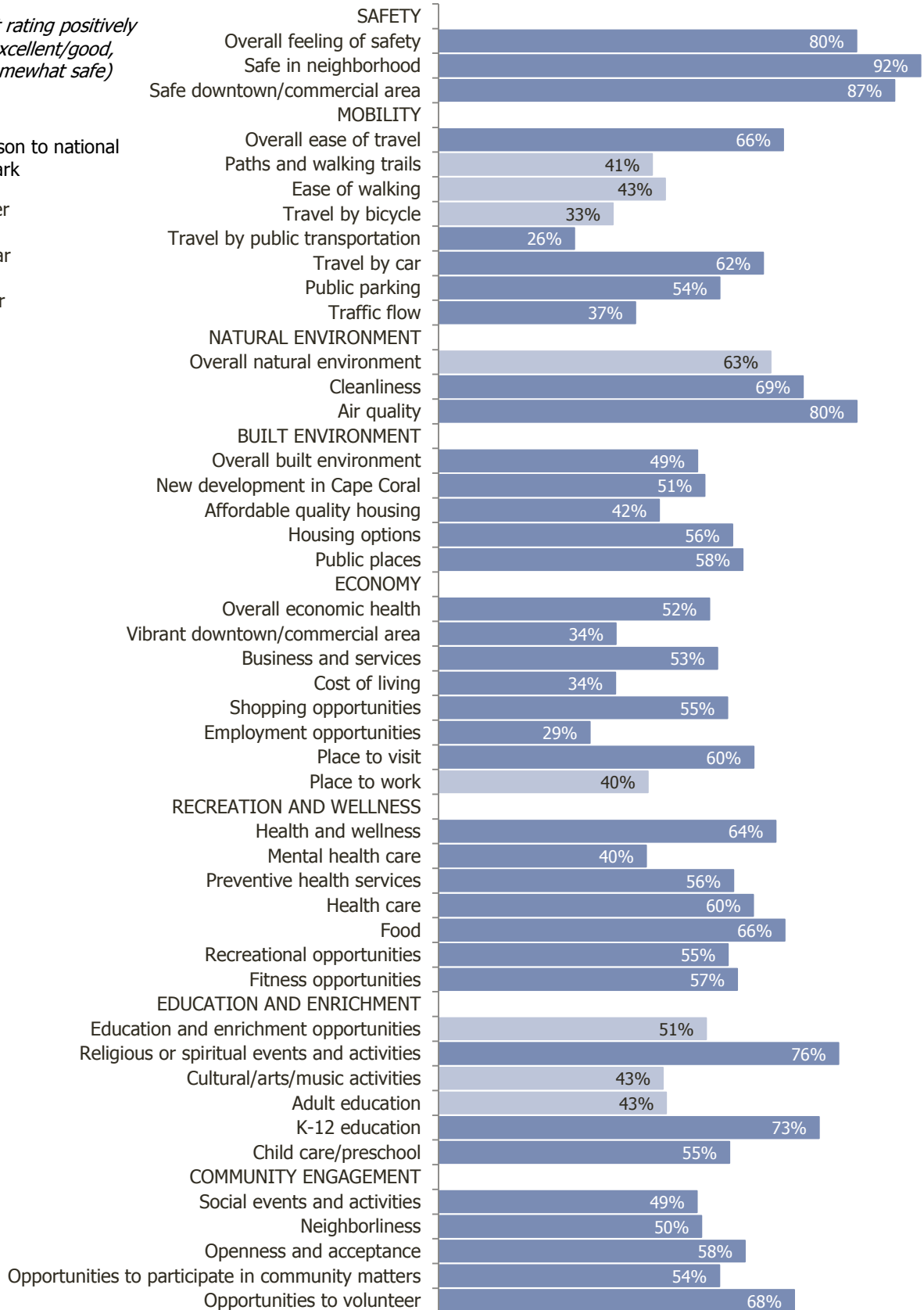
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

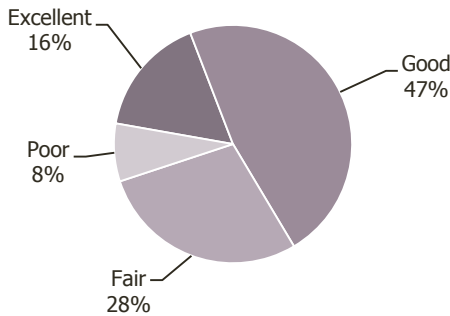
How well does the government of Cape Coral meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Cape Coral as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Close to two-thirds of respondents gave positive ratings to the overall quality of services provided by Cape Coral, while close to half positively rated the Federal Government. Both ratings were similar to the national benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Cape Coral’s leadership and governance. The overall customer service provided by Cape Coral employees received the highest ratings; about two-thirds of residents gave positive marks resulting in ratings similar to comparison communities. Less than half gave positive ratings to confidence in City government, acting in the best interest of Cape Coral, being honest and treating all residents fairly. These ratings were all lower than ratings in other jurisdictions across the nation.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Cape Coral. Broadly, ratings for individual aspects of Governance were positive and similar to the benchmark. All aspects of Safety, Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement were rated as excellent or good by a majority of residents and all were similar to the national benchmarks. Ratings within Natural Environment were mixed; about 4 in 10 residents positively rated drinking water, natural areas preservation and open space. Drinking water and natural areas preservation were lower than ratings in comparison communities. Most ratings within Mobility and Built Environment were similar to the benchmarks. However, ratings for street lighting; bus or transit services; and land use, planning and zoning were lower.

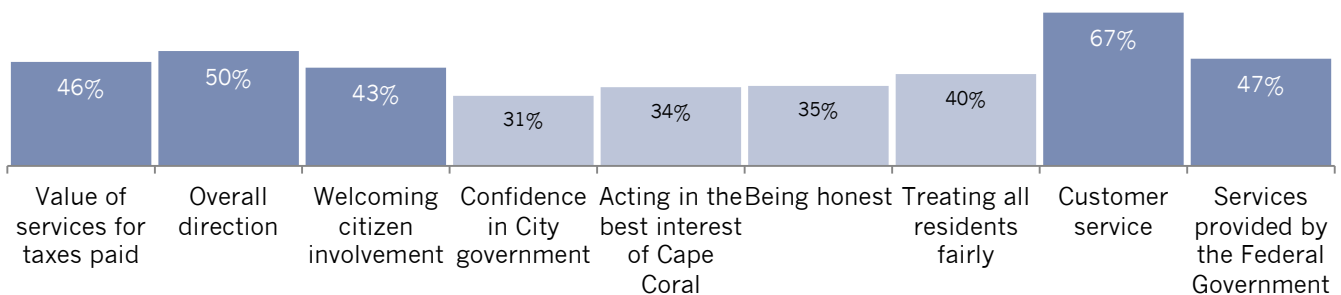
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



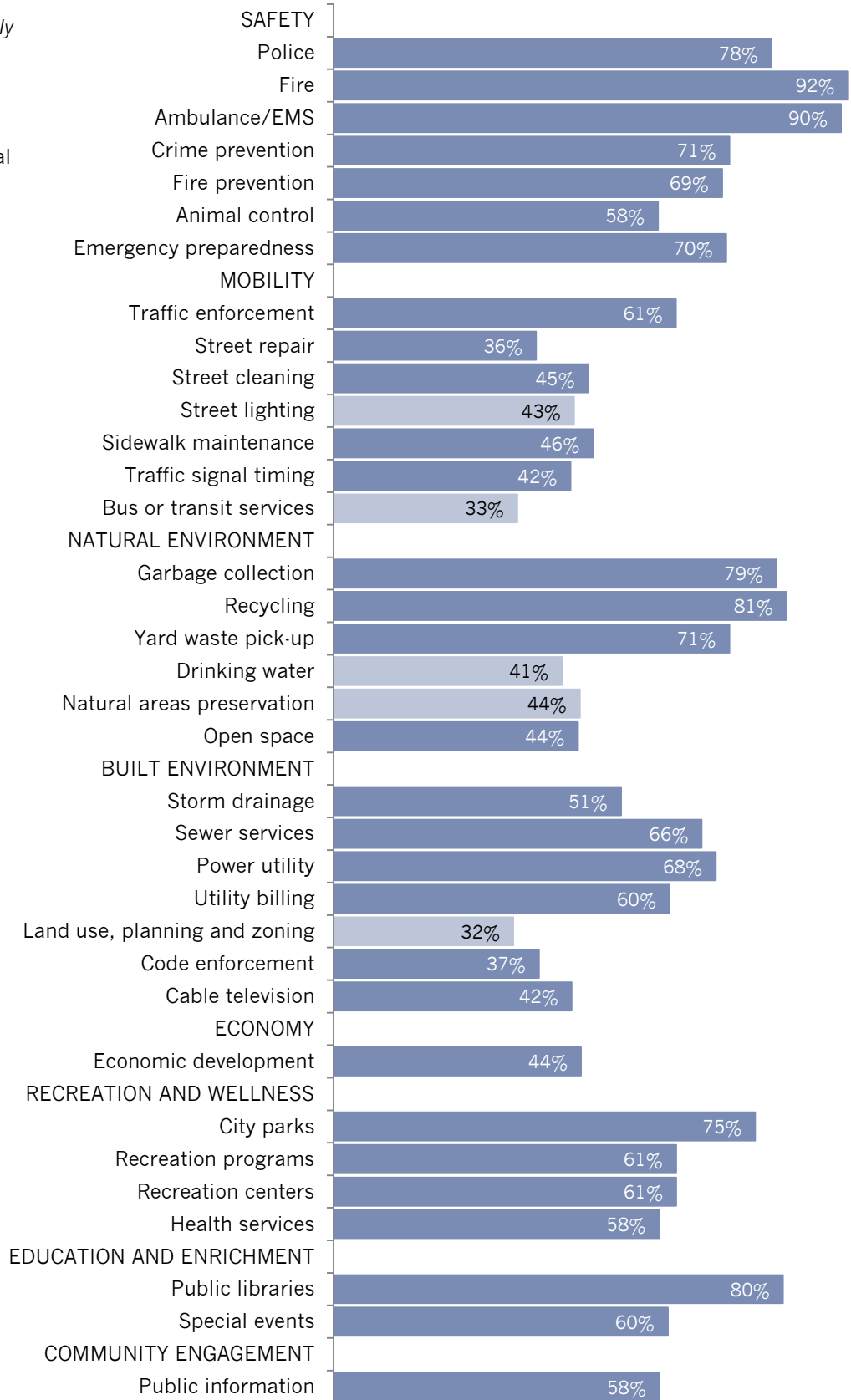
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

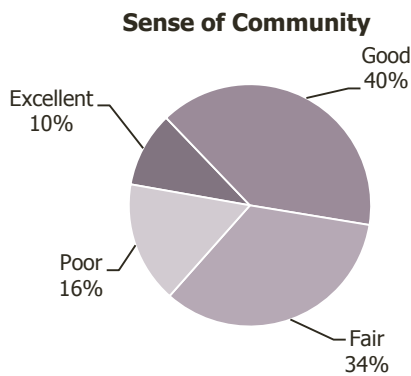


Participation

Are the residents of 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. About half of residents positively rated the overall sense of community in Cape Coral. At least 4 in 5 respondents were likely to recommend living in Cape Coral and were likely to remain in Cape Coral for the next five years. About half reported that they had contacted a City employee in the last 12 months. These rates were all similar to the national benchmarks.

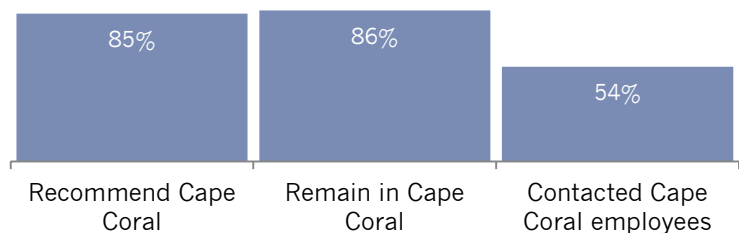
The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Overall, Cape Coral residents engaged in various aspects of the community at rates similar to those of residents in other communities across the country. Reported rates of experience and participation within the facets of Natural Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement were similar to the national benchmarks. Within Safety, more Cape Coral residents had stocked supplies for an emergency than residents in comparison communities. Within Mobility, Cape Coral residents were less likely to use public transportation or walk or bike than residents in other jurisdictions. Within Built Environment, fewer Cape Coral residents had NOT observed a code violation than those in other communities.



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

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



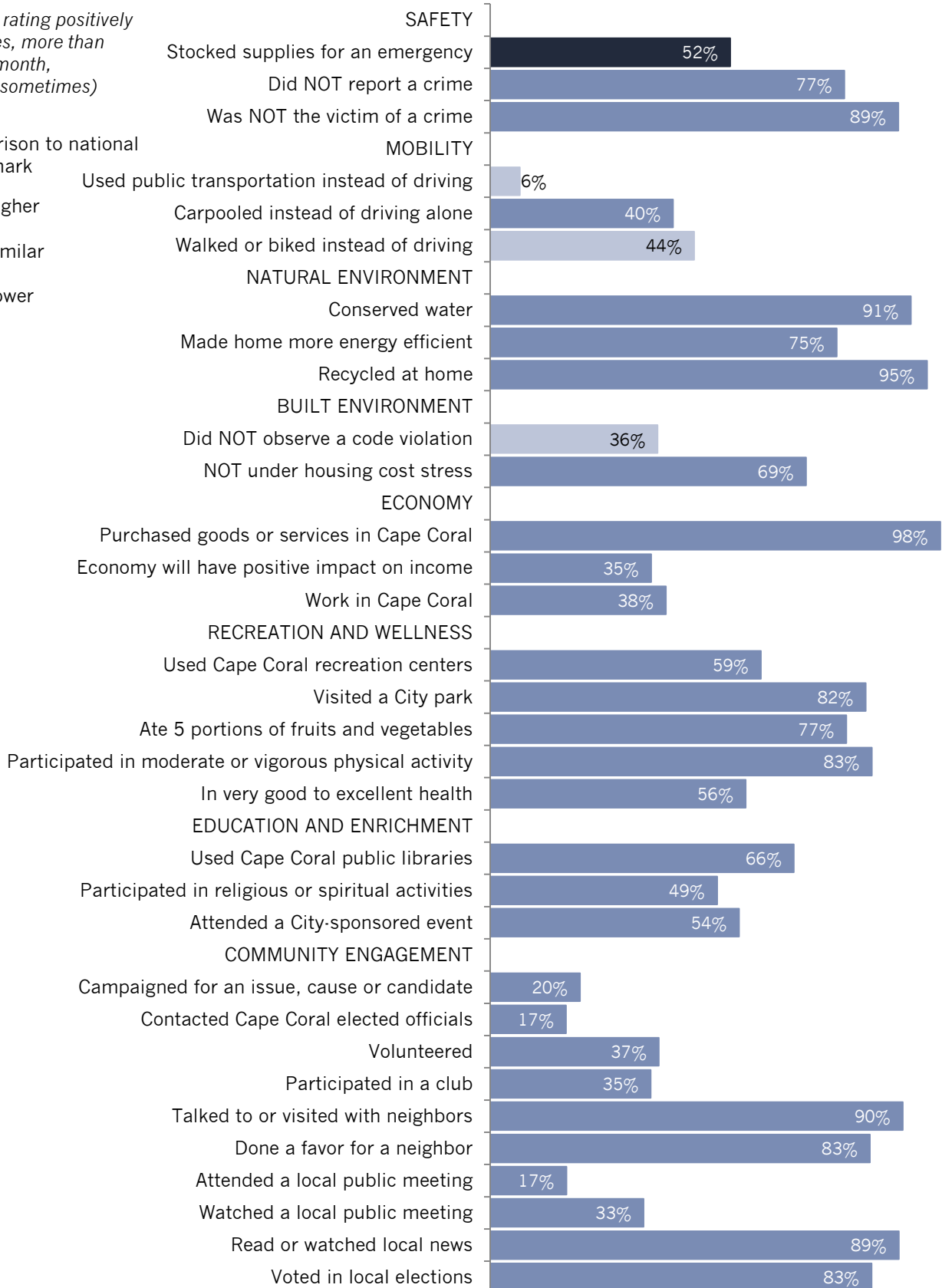
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Conclusions

Cape Coral has a long history of good quality of life.

Since the City's baseline survey in 2005, most residents have rated their overall quality of life as excellent or good. Cape Coral as a place to live and as a place to retire have similar long histories of favorable ratings from residents. While ratings for these items dipped between 2007 and 2009, ratings in 2017 returned to 2005 levels. Over the years, residents willing to recommend living in Cape Coral has increased steadily as has residents' desire to stay in the community for the long-term.

Government performance is on the rise.

Similar to quality of life ratings, aspects of Cape Coral's government performance declined in 2007. Over the past 10 years, these ratings have increased significantly, yet have not fully recovered to 2005 levels. Most recent results showed the majority of residents approved of the overall direction of the City and felt they received good value for the taxed they paid. The customer service provided by City employees has been a highlight of the City's performance over the years. Since 2015, most of these aspects of governance have been on par with other communities across the U.S. The City might consider additional efforts to build trust in local government, specifically in the areas of confidence, honesty and fairness. Cape Coral's performance in these areas was lower than its national peers.

Economy and Safety remain priorities for the community.

In both 2015 and 2017, Cape Coral residents identified Economy and Safety as areas on which the community to focus in the next two years. Overall, Cape Coral residents had positive views of the various aspects of Economy and Safety; most aspects were similar to the national benchmarks and showed stability over time. However, ratings for Cape Coral as a place to visit and the cost of living in Cape Coral decreased from 2015 to 2017 and a higher proportion of residents reported that they worked in Cape Coral in 2017 when compared to 2015. The majority of residents had neither been the victim of a crime nor needed to report a crime. Residents observed an increase in the quality of emergency preparedness in 2017 over 2015 and residents in Cape Coral were more likely than residents in other communities in the U.S. to have stocked supplies in case of an emergency.