

**THE NCS**<sup>TM</sup>  
The National Citizen Survey<sup>TM</sup>

**San José, CA**  
Community Livability Report

2017



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# About

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

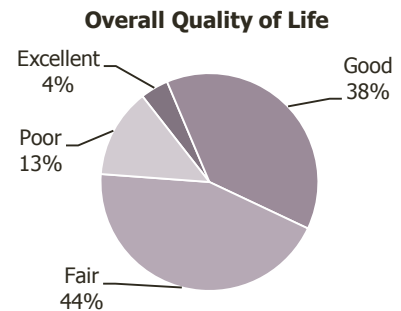
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 1,888 residents of the City of San José. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 2% 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 San José

About 4 in 10 residents rated the quality of life in San José as excellent or good. This was much 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.

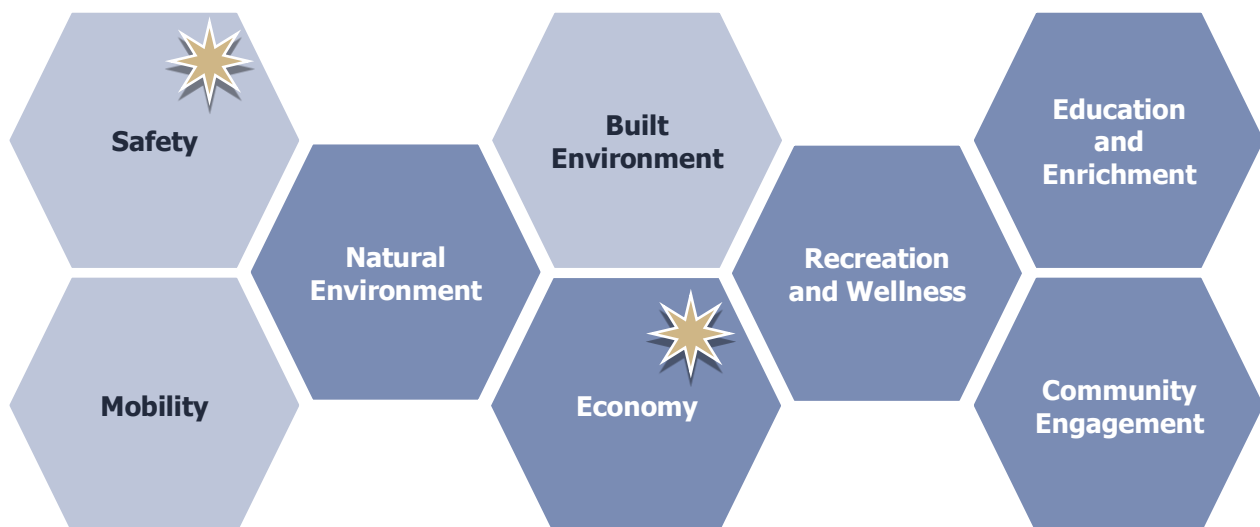
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the San José community in the coming two years. Ratings for Natural Environment,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

## Legend

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

- Most important



# Community Characteristics

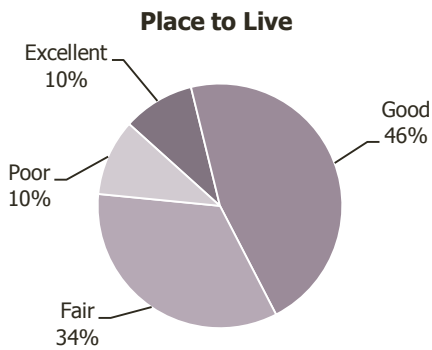
*What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?*

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 San José, 56% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of San José as a place to live were much lower than those 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 San José as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of San José and its overall appearance.

About 6 in 10 participants felt their neighborhoods were excellent or good places to live, and 4 in 10 residents rated San José as an excellent or good place to raise children. About one-third of respondents gave positive marks to the overall image of San José and one-quarter felt positively about the overall appearance of San José. Only 1 in 10 survey participants reported that the city was an excellent or good place to retire.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Ratings were generally lower than the national comparisons for aspects within the facets of Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment and Built Environment. Comparisons to the benchmarks within Economy varied, with two aspects receiving ratings higher than the national averages (shopping and employment opportunities) and three aspects receiving ratings lower than the national averages (cost of living, vibrant downtown/commercial area and San José as a place to visit). Four of the seven features of Recreation and Wellness were evaluated similar to the national comparisons, with positive ratings from about half of survey respondents.



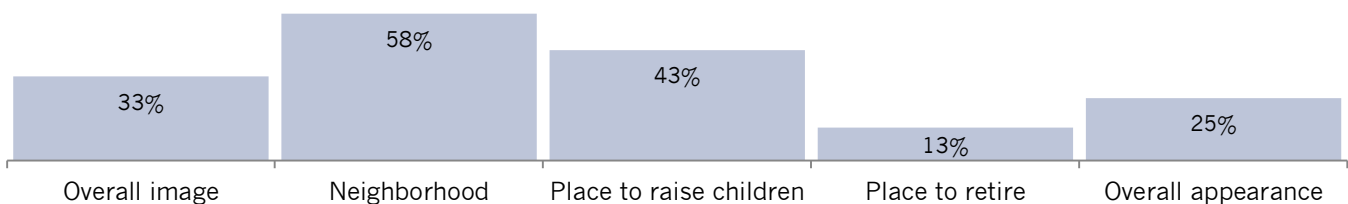
Between 7 in 10 and 5 in 10 residents awarded positive reviews (that were similar to the national averages) to various aspects of Community Engagement including the openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds, opportunities to volunteer, opportunities to participate in community matters and opportunities to participate in social events and activities; however, ratings for opportunities to participate in

community matters decreased in 2017 compared to 2016 (see *The NCS Trends over Time - San José 2017* report under separate cover).

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

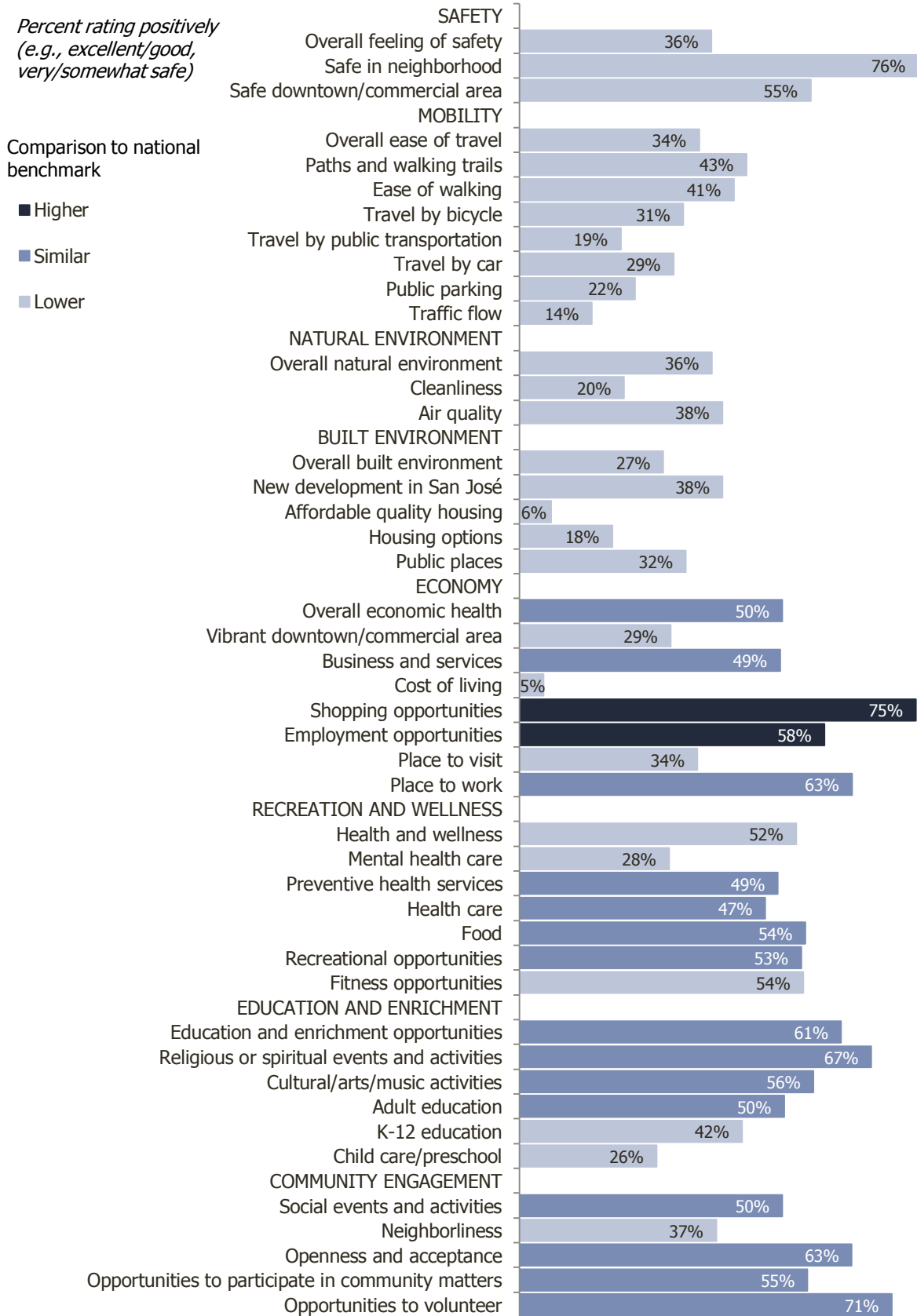
Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics



# Governance

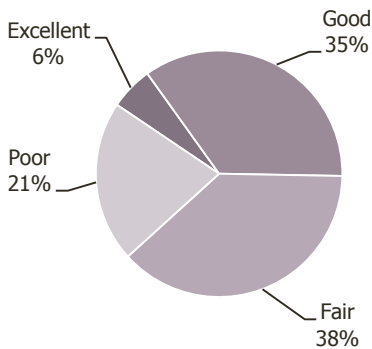
## *How well does the government of San José meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by San José as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 4 in 10 respondents gave excellent or good evaluations to the overall quality of services provided by the City of San José, while about one-quarter said services provided by the Federal Government were excellent or good; both were rated lower than the national averages. Assessments of services provided by the Federal Government decreased in 2017 compared to 2016.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of San José’s leadership and governance, which tended to be evaluated lower than the national benchmark. Roughly 4 in 10 residents gave an excellent or good marks to the customer service provided by City employees, while between 2 in 10 and 3 in 10 residents felt positively about each of the other aspects of leadership and governance included on the survey.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in San José. A majority of ratings for services and amenities were lower than those seen in communities across the nation, with few rated similarly. The services felt to be of higher quality were fire services, ambulance/EMS services, garbage collection, recycling and public libraries, each of which was rated excellent or good by at least 70% of respondents. Garbage collection, recycling and public libraries were evaluated similar to comparison communities, while the Safety related services with the highest quality scores were rated lower than comparison communities. About half of residents offered positive reviews for the listed Recreation and Wellness services but each rating was lower than the national comparison; further, the rating for recreation centers decreased in 2017 compared to 2016.

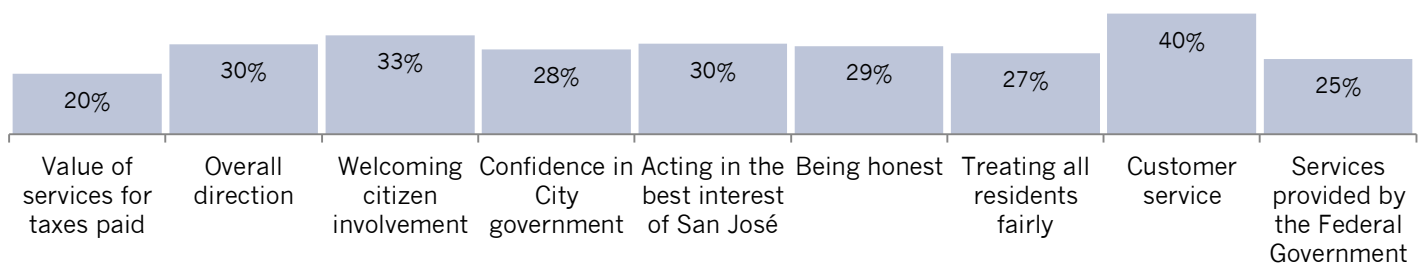
**Overall Quality of City Services**



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



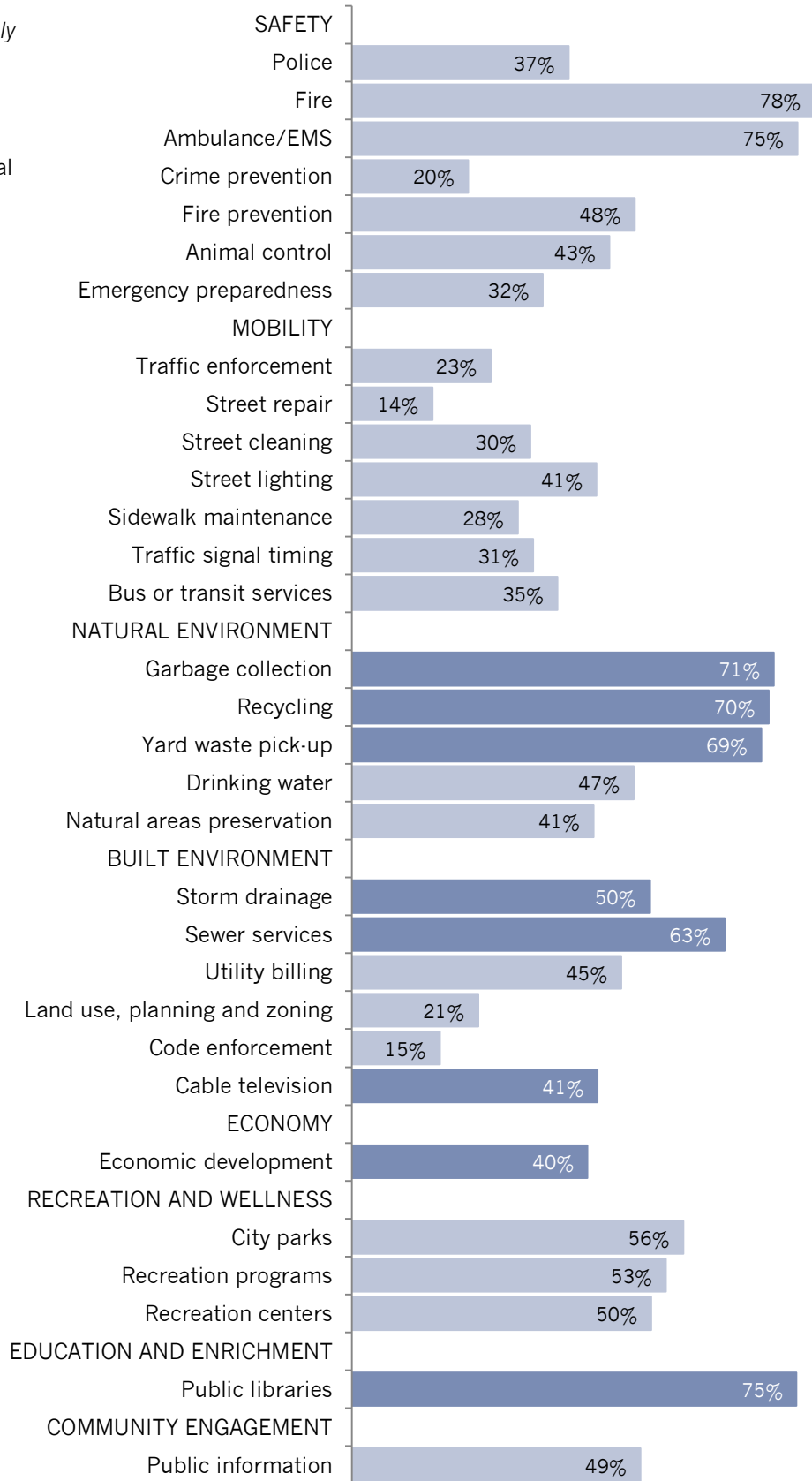
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower





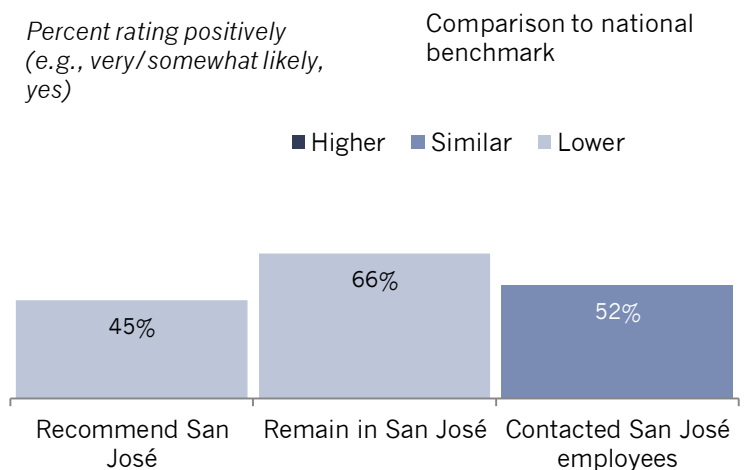
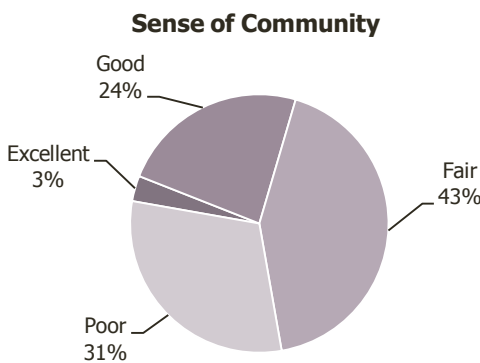
# Participation

## *Are the residents of San José 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 one-quarter respondents rated the overall sense of community as excellent or good and an additional 4 in 10 felt it was fair. About two-thirds of respondents reported that they were likely to remain in San José for the next five years and about 4 in 10 would recommend living in the City to someone who asked (a rating that decreased in 2017 compared to 2016). About half of survey respondents had contacted San José employees.

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 were mixed, but generally were similar to comparison communities. Aspects of Natural Environment were particularly strong with nearly all residents reporting they had conserved water or recycled at home in the previous 12 months (rates higher than the national average) and slightly fewer reporting they had made their home more energy efficient (similar to the benchmark). Within Mobility, more San José residents reported that they had used public transportation instead of driving or had carpooled instead of driving alone than in other communities across the nation. Almost all (97%) residents had purchased goods or services in San José, and about one-third indicated that they felt the economy would have a positive impact on their income in the next six months; both ratings that were similar to the national averages. A majority of residents participated in four of the five activities related to Recreation and Wellness and each was rated similar to the national comparisons; however, usage of San José recreation centers lagged with only 4 in 10 residents reporting use, which was a rate lower than the national average. Levels of Participation within the facet of Community Engagement were similar to or higher than the national benchmarks, with at least 8 in 10 respondents reporting that they had talked to or visited with a neighbor, read or watched the local news or voted in local elections. More residents in 2017 compared to 2016 reported that they had talked to or visited with neighbors, watched a local public meeting, campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate or contacted San José elected officials; these rates have been on the rise since 2015.



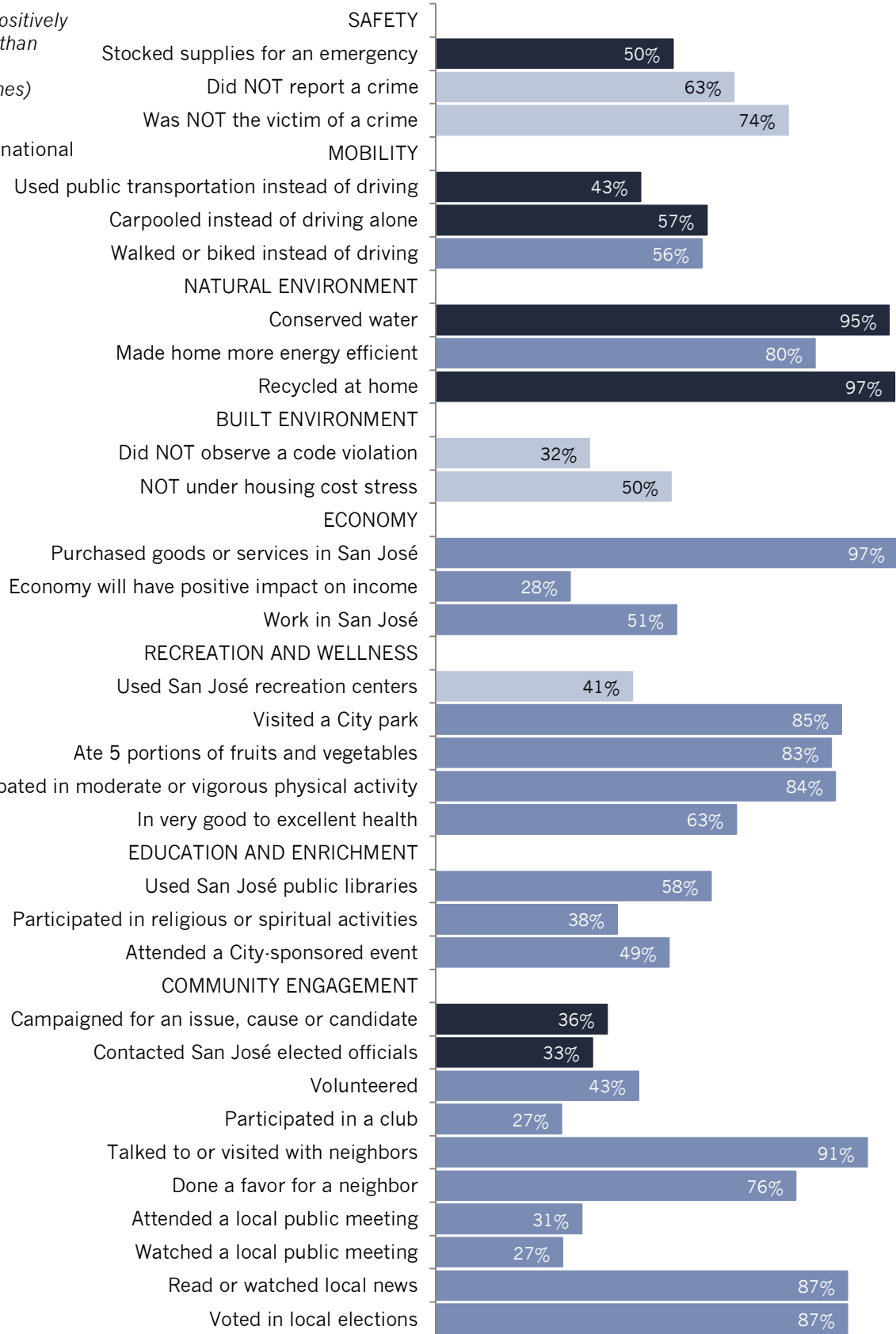
# The National Citizen Survey™

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 San José included several questions of special interest on The NCS, the first related to feelings of safety. About half of survey participants felt very or somewhat safe in their neighborhood after dark, while less than 2 in 10 felt safe in San José’s downtown after dark. About 4 in 10 participants felt somewhat or very safe from violent crime, while about one-quarter felt safe from property crimes.

Figure 4: Safety after Dark  
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel:

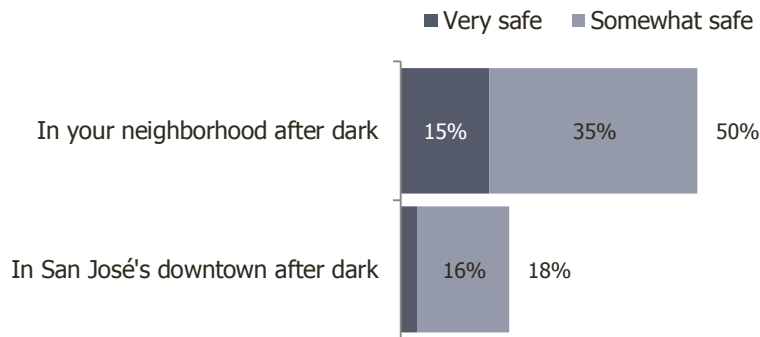
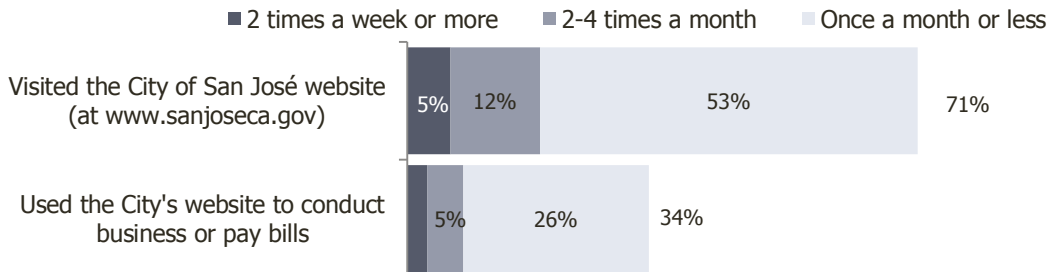


Figure 5: Safe from Violent or Property Crimes  
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel from the following:



Residents were asked how often they visited the City of San José website or used it to conduct business. About 7 in 10 residents indicated that they visited the website at least once in the 12 months prior to the survey while one-third had used the City website to conduct business or pay bills at least once.

Figure 6: City Website Use

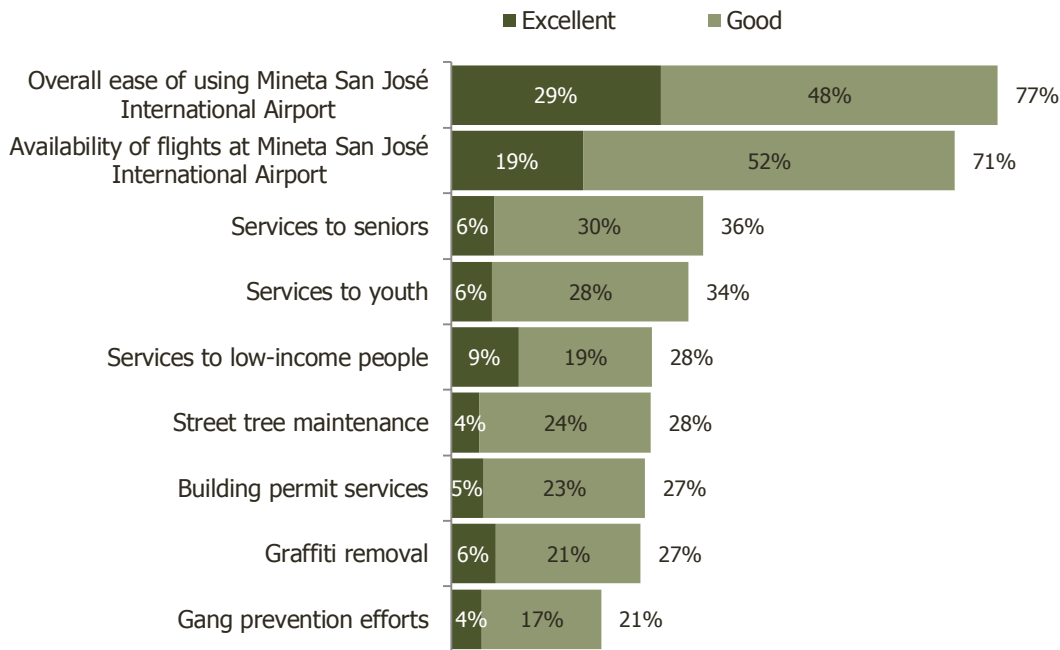


When percentages for responses do not total to the combined percentages shown, it is due to the customary practice rounding values to the nearest whole number.

## The National Citizen Survey™

Survey respondents evaluated several special services provided in San José. The highest rated service unique to San José was the Mineta San José International Airport. Both the availability of flights and the overall ease of using the airport were reviewed positively by at least 7 in 10 residents. About one-third of survey participants felt the services to seniors and youth were excellent or good, while the remaining services received positive ratings from fewer than one-third of respondents.

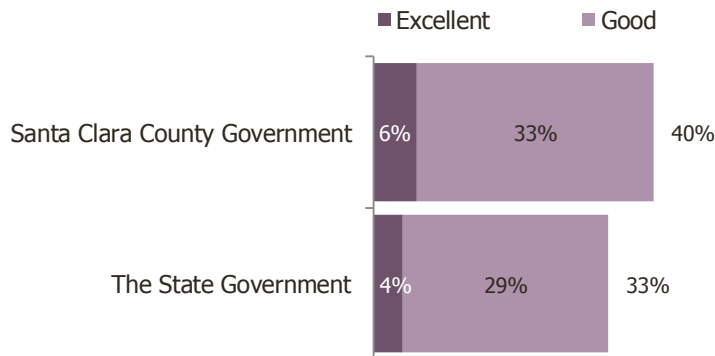
Figure 7: Additional City Services  
Please rate each of the following services in San José:



When percentages for responses (i.e., excellent or good) do not total to the combined percentages shown, it is due to the customary practice rounding values to the nearest whole number.

In addition to rating the City and Federal Government, residents also assessed the quality of services provided by the Santa Clara County Government and the California State Government; about 4 in 10 felt positively about services provided by the Santa Clara County Government and one-third positively said the California State Government was excellent or good.

Figure 8: State and County Government  
Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by each of the following?



When percentages for responses (i.e., excellent or good) do not total to the combined percentages shown, it is due to the customary practice rounding values to the nearest whole number.

# Conclusions

## **Residents identified Economy as a main focus area and applaud shopping and employment opportunities.**

As in 2016, San José's Economy was identified as a key focus area for the community for the next two years. About one-quarter of residents were optimistic that the economy will have a positive impact on their income in the next 6 months, which was rated similar to other communities in the U.S. The overall economic health was viewed as excellent or good by about half of respondents, similar to communities across the nation. Slightly fewer offered positive reviews of economic development but this item was similar to communities across the nation and increased in 2017 compared to 2016. Shopping opportunities and employment opportunities both received ratings that were higher than the national averages, although ratings for the overall quality of business and service establishments and San José as a place to work were similar to the nation.

## **While San José residents are more engaged with the community and feel more positively about the City government in 2017, they want more opportunities to participate.**

San José residents continued to be active and engaged in their community. More residents reported that they had talked to or visited with neighbors, watched a local public meeting, campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate or contacted San José elected officials in 2017 compared to 2016 and have been on the rise since 2015. The proportion of residents who campaigned for an issue or candidate and contacted an elected official was higher in San José than in other communities across the U.S. Respondents also gave more positive evaluations in 2017 compared to 2016 to the City welcoming citizen involvement, the confidence in the City government, the City acting in the best interest of San José and the overall direction the City is taking, although each of these aspects was rated lower than the national benchmark. However, ratings for opportunities to participate in community matters (similar to the nation) and public information services (lower than the nation) decreased in 2017 compared to 2016.

## **Residents feel safer in 2017 compared to 2016, but there is still room for improvement.**

Safety continues to be a priority for San José residents, with respondents identifying this as a key focus area for the next two years. Overall feelings of safety improved from 2016 to 2017, with 36% rating this as excellent or good. Additionally, police services, crime prevention and ambulance/EMS services increased from 2016 to 2017. Fewer respondents in 2017 compared to 2016 reported a crime and more stocked supplies for an emergency. While improvements have been made over the last year and should be celebrated, all but one aspect of Safety (stocked supplies for an emergency) were rated lower than the national averages.

## **Mobility remains a challenge for many but more San José residents use alternative modes of transportation compared to other communities nationwide.**

Survey respondents gave less favorable marks to traffic flow, travel by public transportation, overall ease of travel and public parking in 2017 compared to 2016. Each of these aspects of Mobility were rate lower or much lower than the national averages. However, more residents in San José compared to residents in other communities carpooled instead of driving alone and used public transportation instead of driving.