

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

**San José, CA**  
Community Livability Report

FINAL  
2016



**NRC**  
National Research Center Inc

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



*Leaders at the Core of Better Communities*

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

# Contents

About..... 1

Quality of Life in San José ..... 2

Community Characteristics ..... 3

Governance ..... 5

Participation ..... 7

Special Topics..... 9

Conclusions ..... 12



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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.

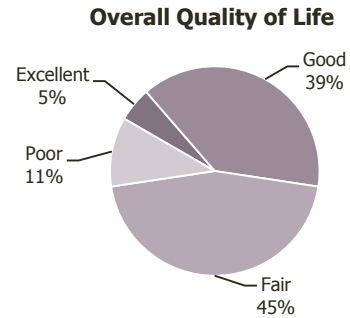
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 3,722 residents of the City of San José. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 2% 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 San José

About 2 in 5 residents rated the quality of life in San José 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.

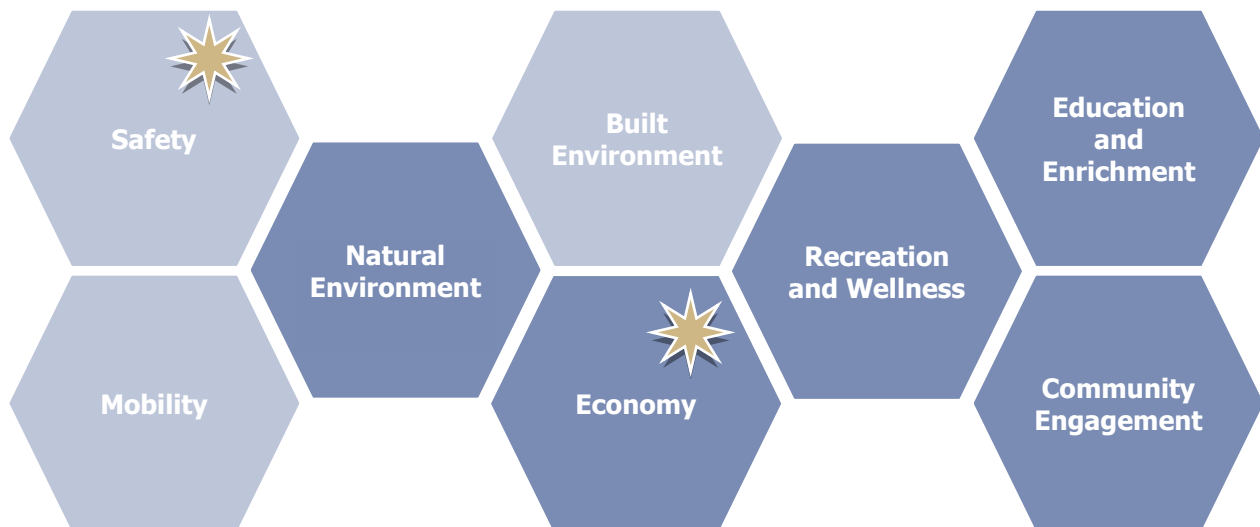
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the San José community in the coming two years. Ratings for Natural Environment, 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

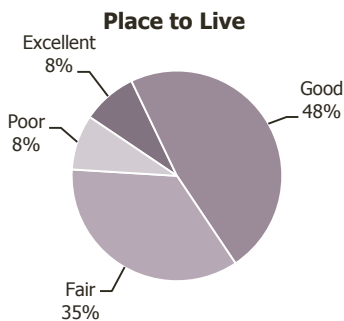
*What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?*

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.

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 3 in 5 participants rated their neighborhoods as excellent or good places to live, and roughly 2 in 5 residents rated San José as an excellent or good place to raise children. Around 3 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to the overall image and overall appearance of San José. About 1 in 5 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. About three-quarters of residents gave positive ratings to the feeling of safety in their neighborhoods and more than half positively rated their feeling of safety in San José's downtown area. About 4 in 10 participants gave positive ratings to availability of paths and walking trails, ease of walking, the overall natural environment and air quality. Ratings in Economy were mixed: about one-third of survey respondents positively rated the vibrant downtown/commercial area and San José as a place to visit, while fewer than 1 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the cost of living in San José. All of the aforementioned aspects were lower than the national benchmark. However, shopping opportunities and employment

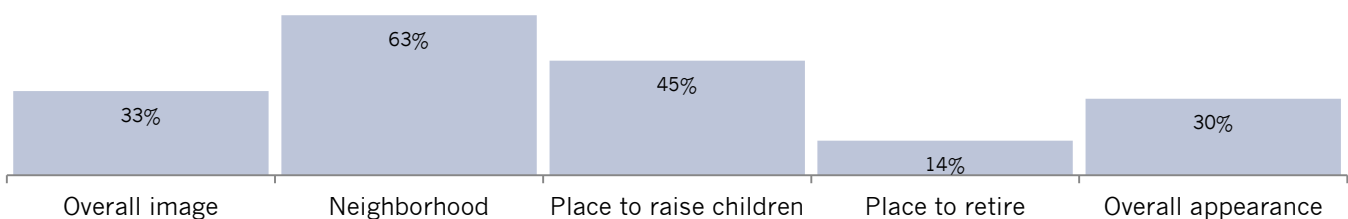
opportunities were rated as excellent or good by a majority of residents; both of these ratings were higher than ratings seen in comparison communities. Around two-thirds of residents awarded positive ratings for opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events and activities, the openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds and opportunities to volunteer. Ratings for opportunities to participate in community matters and opportunities to volunteer increased in 2016 compared to 2015 (see *The NCS Trends over Time- San José 2016* report provided under separate cover).



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



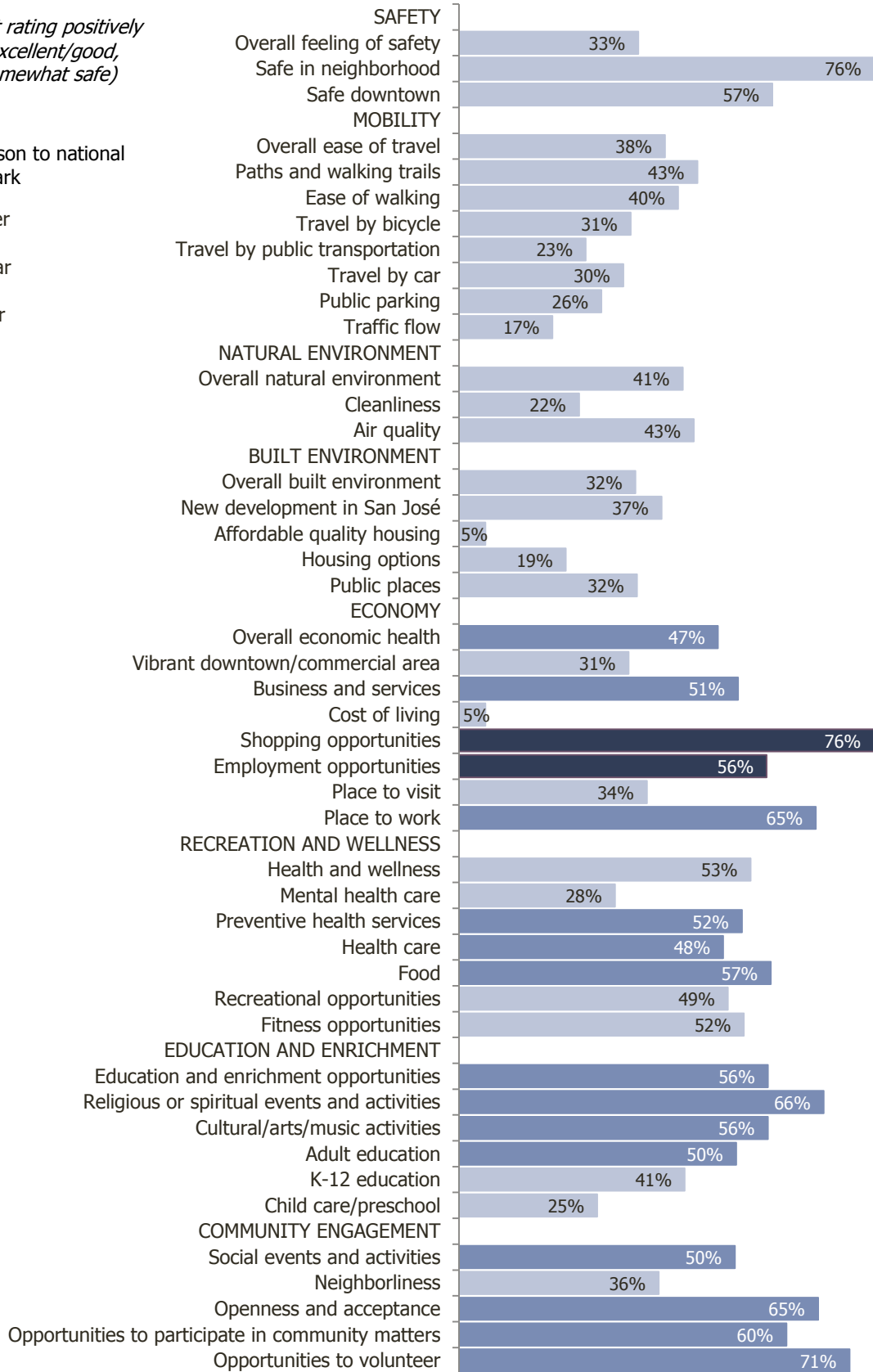
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

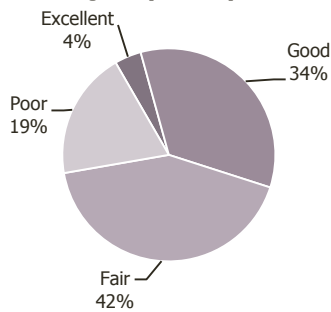
## How well does the government of San José meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by San José as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Close to 4 in 10 respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the City of San José, while about one-third gave excellent or good ratings to the services provided by the Federal Government. Ratings for services provided by the City of San José decreased in 2016 compared to 2015.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of San José’s leadership and governance. These ratings tended to be lower than the national benchmark. Roughly 4 in 10 residents gave an excellent or good rating to the customer service provided by City employees. About 1 in 4 residents or more gave positive ratings to the overall direction of the City, the job the City does at welcoming resident involvement, the City acting in the best interest of San José, the job the City does at being honest and treating all residents fairly.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in San José. Overall, ratings for services and amenities tended to be lower than those seen in communities across the nation. The highest-rated services were fire services, ambulance/EMS services, garbage collection, recycling, yard waste pick-up and public libraries, which were all rated excellent or good by at least 71% of respondents. The ratings for garbage collection, recycling, yard waste pick-up and public libraries were similar to ratings seen in comparison communities, while the ratings for fire services and ambulance/EMS services were lower. Storm drainage, sewer services and recreation centers and public information services were also rated positively by about half of respondents; these ratings were similar to the national benchmark. Ratings for recreation centers increased since 2015. The lowest-rated services were crime prevention, street repair, and code enforcement.

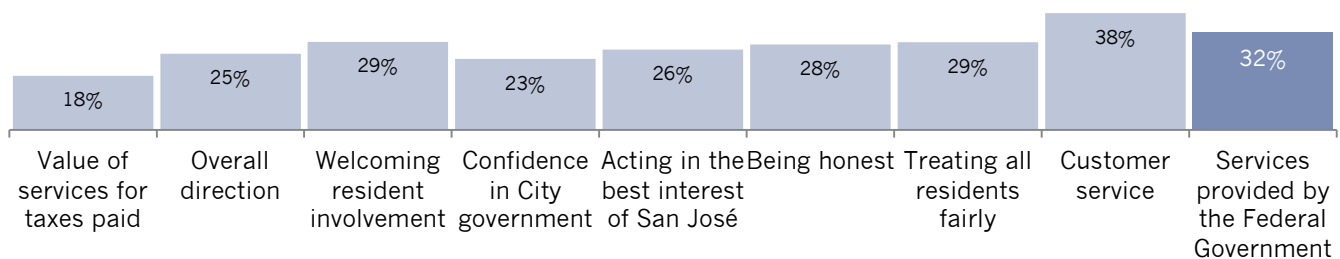
**Overall Quality of City Services**



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



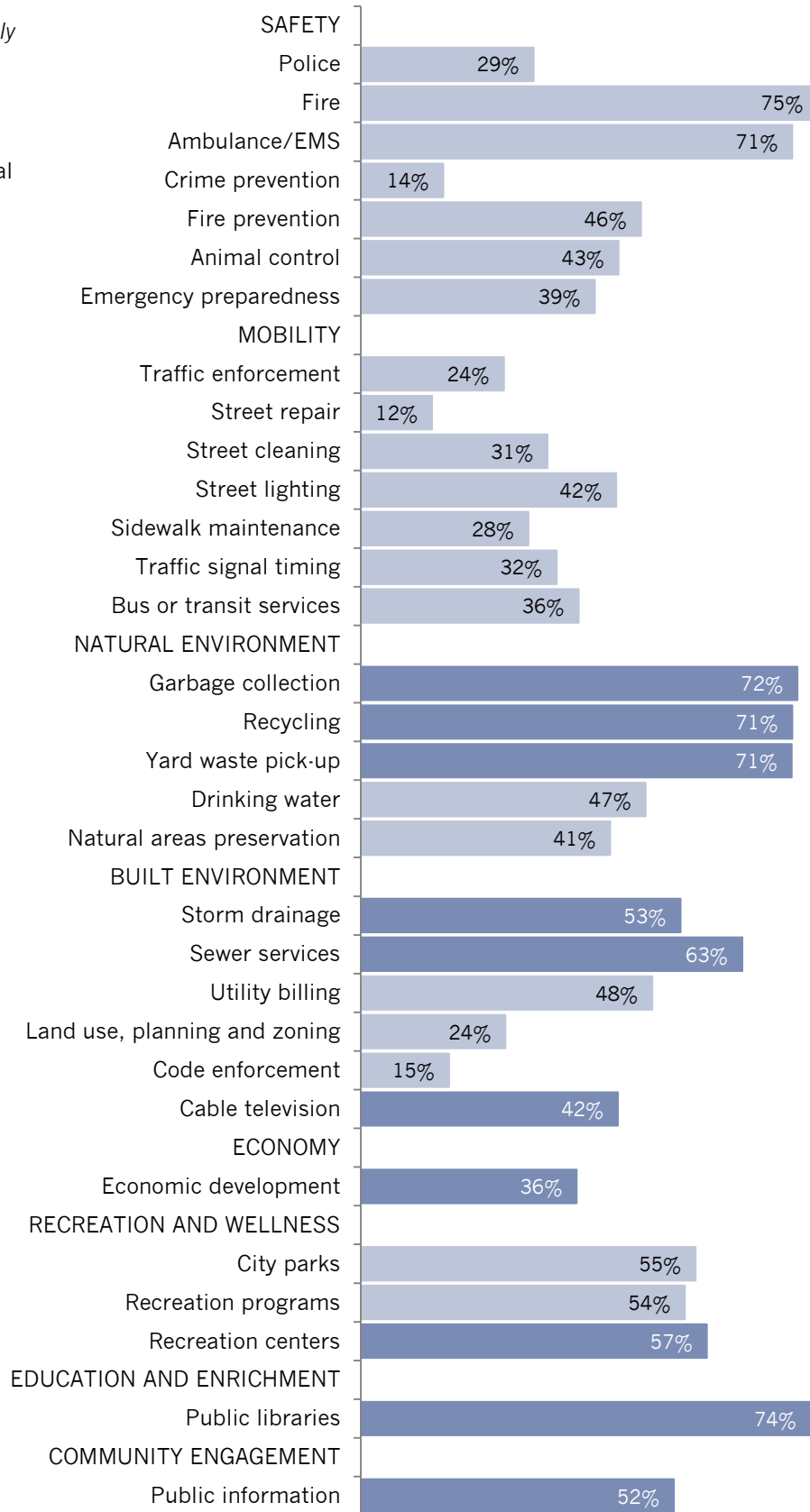
## The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



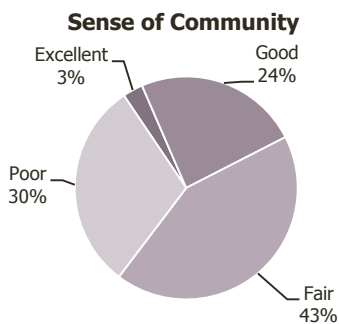


# Participation

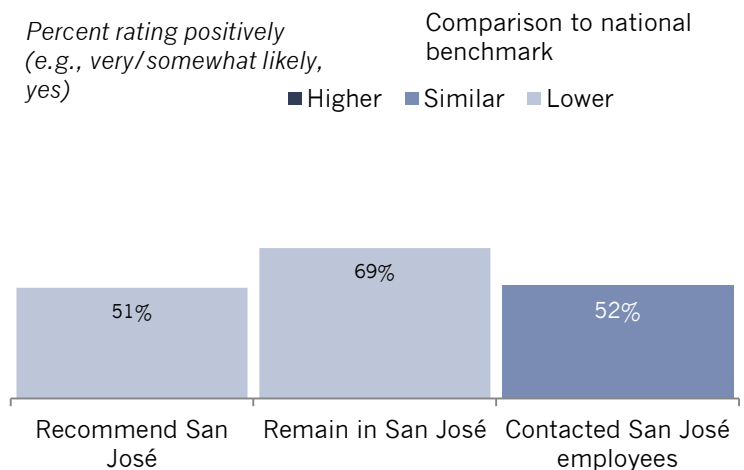
*Are the residents of San José connected to the community and each other?*

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 7 in 10 respondents rated the overall sense of community as fair or better. More than two-thirds of respondents reported that they were likely to remain in San José for the next five years and about half would recommend living in the City to someone who asked. More than half of survey respondents had contacted San José employees, a level that increased since 2015.

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 strong and similar to comparison communities. In Safety, about three-quarters of residents reported not being the victim of a crime and about 6 in 10 did not report a crime in the past 12 months. Within Mobility ratings were strong, and more 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. Nearly all residents had conserved water or recycled at home in the previous 12 months; both of these rates were higher than the national benchmark. Almost all (97%) residents had purchased goods or services in San José, and about 1 in 4 indicated that they felt the economy would have a positive impact on their income in the next six months. More than 8 in 10 residents reported that they had visited a City park, ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables or participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity. About 3 in 5 residents indicated that they had used San José public libraries, while almost half attended a City-sponsored event. Levels of Participation within the facet of Community Engagement were strong and similar to the national benchmark, 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 reported that they had attended a City-sponsored event, voted in local elections, attended a local public meeting, campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate or contacted San José elected officials in 2016 compared to 2015.



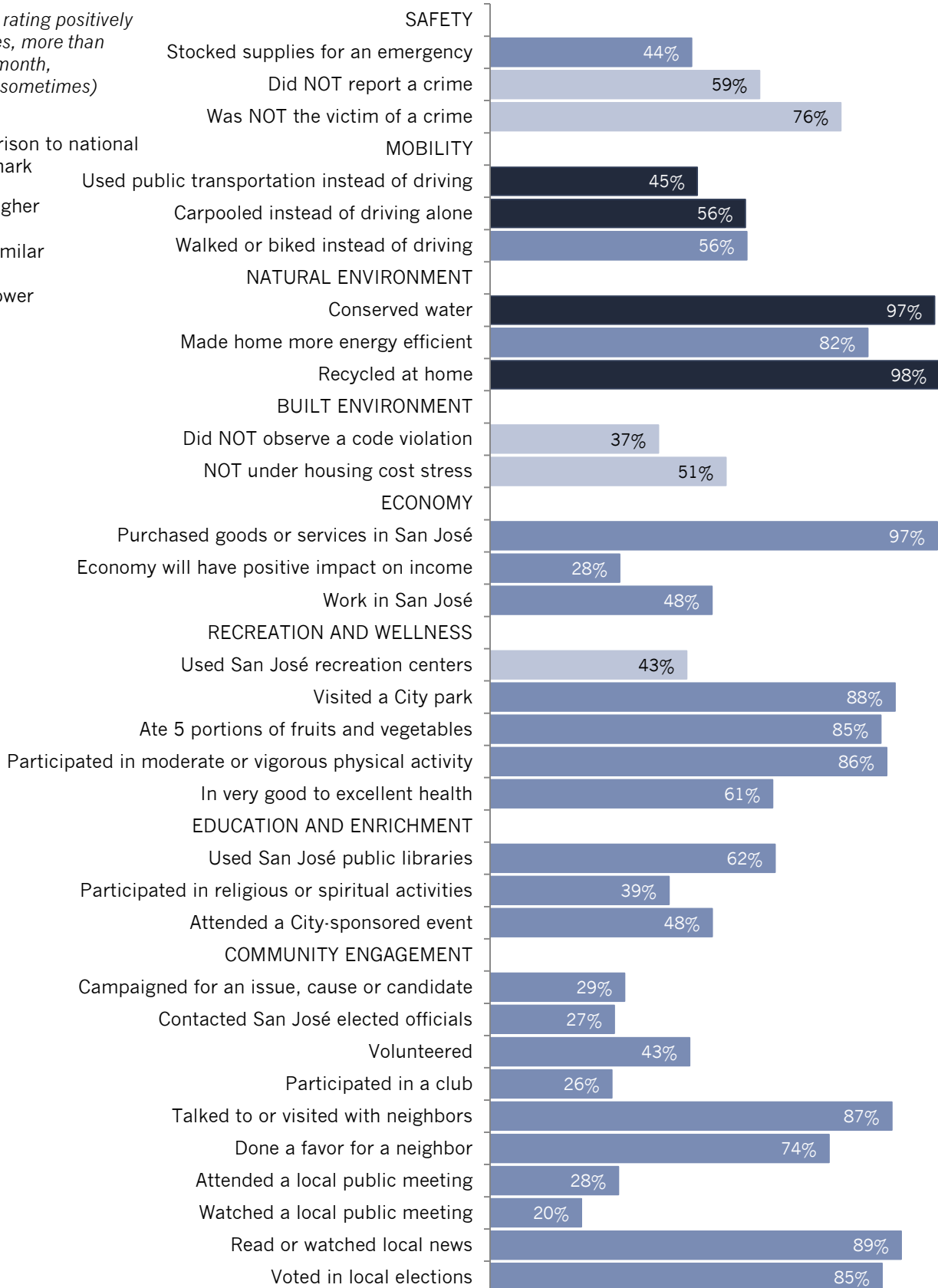
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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 San José included several questions of special interest on The NCS. About 48% of participants felt very or somewhat safe in their neighborhood after dark, while less than 1 in 5 felt safe in San José’s downtown after dark. About 2 in 5 participants felt somewhat or very safe from violent crime, while around 1 in 5 felt safe from property crime.

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

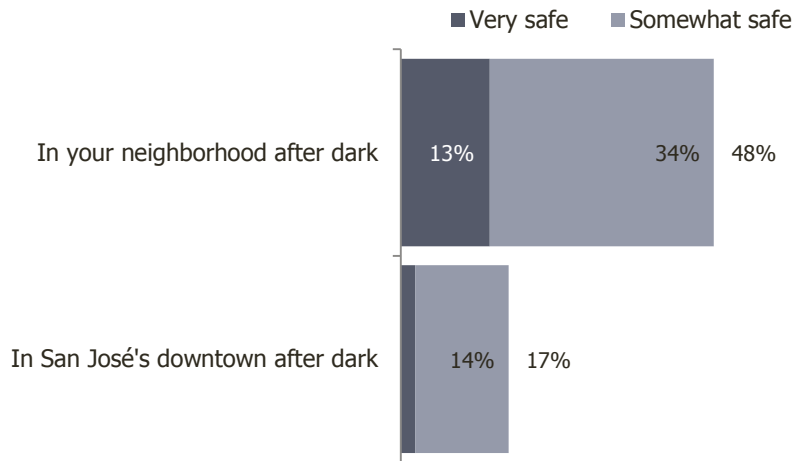
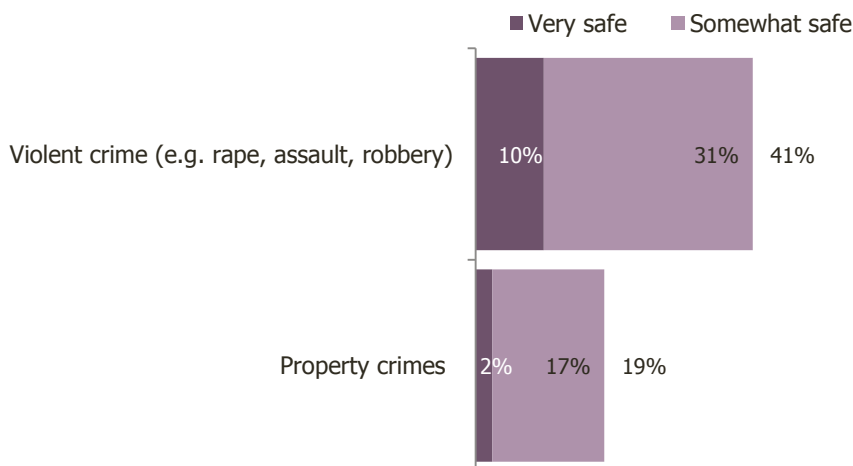


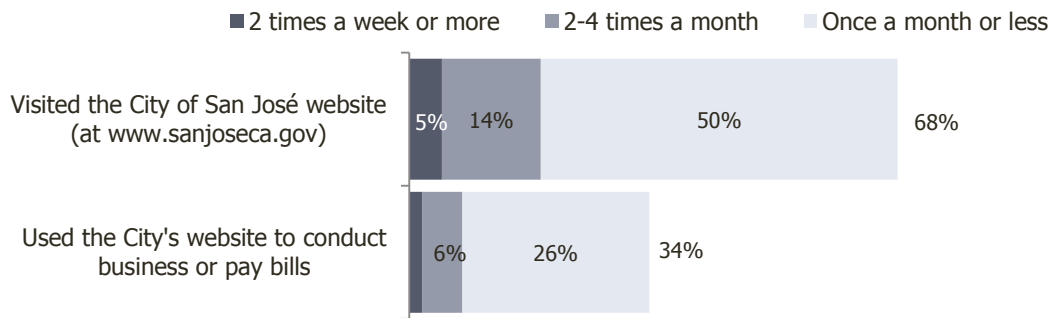
Figure 5: Safe from Violent or Property Crime  
*Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel from the following:*



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Residents were asked how often they visited the City of San José website. About two-thirds of residents indicated that they visited the website at least once in the 12 months prior to the survey. Around 3 in 10 residents had used the City website to conduct business or pay bills at least once.

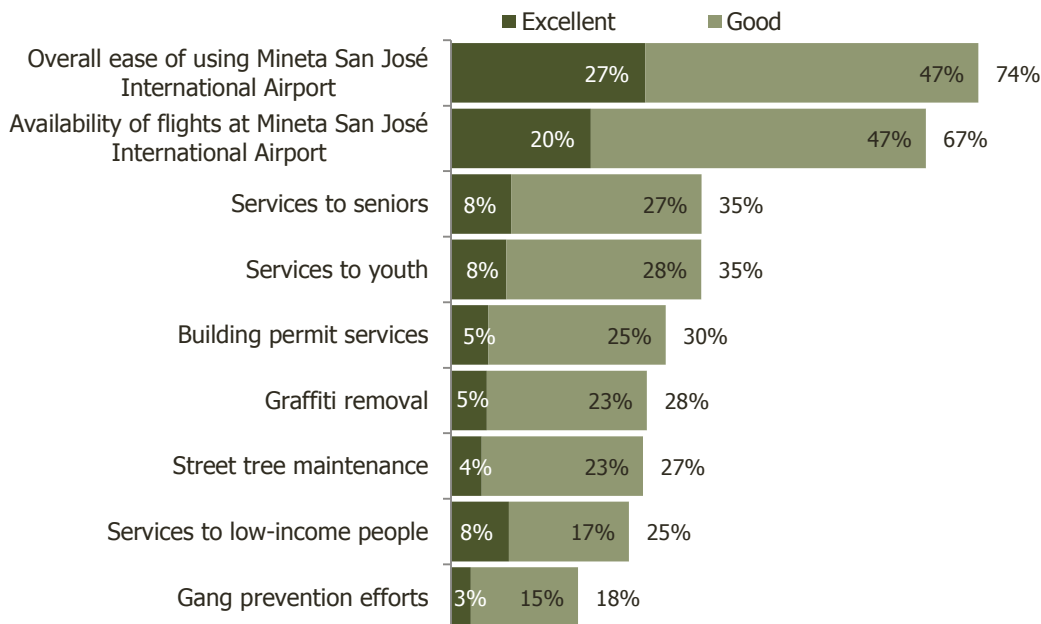
Figure 6: City Website Use



Survey respondents were asked to rate 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 rated positively by most residents. About 3 in 10 survey participants or more rated the services to seniors, services to youth and building permit services as excellent or good.

Figure 7: Additional City Services

Please rate each of the following services in San José:

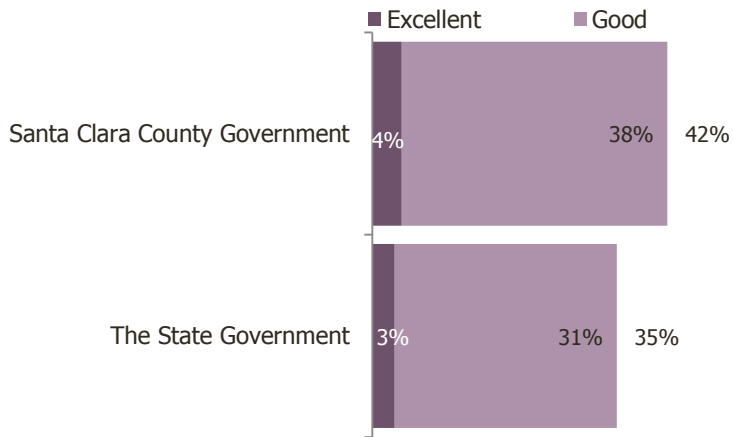


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About 4 in 10 respondents positively rated the quality of services provided by the Santa Clara County Government; meanwhile, about one-third gave positive ratings to the California State Government.

Figure 8: State and County Government

*Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by each of the following?*



# Conclusions

## Safety continues to be important to residents.

As in the 2014 and 2015 surveys, residents identified Safety as a priority for the San José community to focus on in the coming two years. About one-third of residents rated the overall feeling of safety in the community as excellent or good, which was lower than comparison communities and decreased since 2015. Additionally, residents' feelings of safety in their neighborhoods and in downtown during the day were also lower than typically seen elsewhere (ratings that remained stable since 2015). About half of respondents felt safe in their neighborhoods after dark and around 4 in 10 residents felt somewhat or very safe from violent crime. About 7 in 10 residents were pleased with fire services and ambulance/EMS services. Almost three-quarters of residents reported that they had not been the victim of a crime and close to 6 in 10 had not reported a crime in the 12 months prior to the survey, but these rates were below those seen in comparison communities.

## Residents identified Economy as a main focus area.

San José's Economy was also identified as a key focus area for the community for the next two years. The overall economic health was rated as excellent or good by almost half of respondents, similar to municipalities across the nation. More than half of residents positively rated employment opportunities while about three-quarters positively rated the shopping opportunities in San José. These ratings remained stable since 2015 and were higher than ratings in comparison communities across the nation. A majority of residents positively rated the overall quality of business and service establishments in San José, a rate that increased since the 2015 survey. Nearly all residents reported that they had purchased goods or services in San José in the 12 months prior to the survey and more than one-quarter of residents were optimistic that the economy will have a positive impact on their income in the next 6 months; both of these rates were similar to other communities in the U.S.

## Community Engagement is a positive feature of San José.

San José residents are active in their community and reported strong rates of participation. At least 8 in 10 indicated they had talked or visited with neighbors, read or watched the local news and voted in local elections. A vast majority of residents in San José had done a favor for a neighbor, while about 4 in 10 volunteered. More than half of survey participants gave positive scores to public information and around two-thirds gave excellent or good ratings to opportunities to volunteer and openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds. Most aspects within Community Engagement were rated similar to comparison communities.