

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

San José, CA
Community Livability Report

2018



NRC
National Research Center Inc

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

ICMA

Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

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

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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.

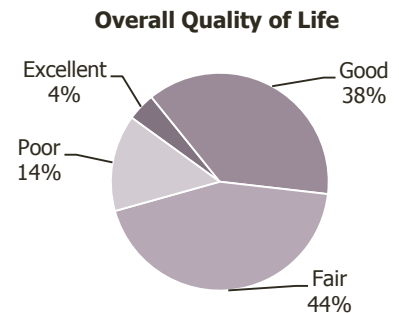
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 3,688 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 rating was much lower than 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.

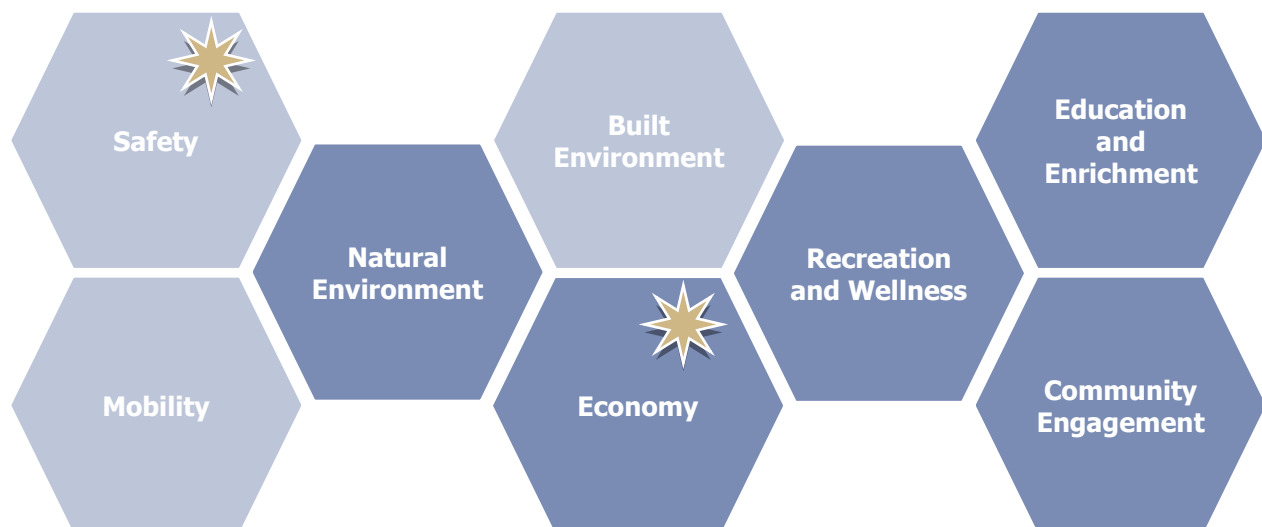
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the San José community in the coming two years. Ratings for Safety tended to be lower than in comparison communities and the facets of Mobility and Built Environment also received ratings lower than the national benchmarks. Ratings for Economy and all other facets tended to receive ratings on par with 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 San José’s unique questions.

Legend

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

- * Most important



Community Characteristics

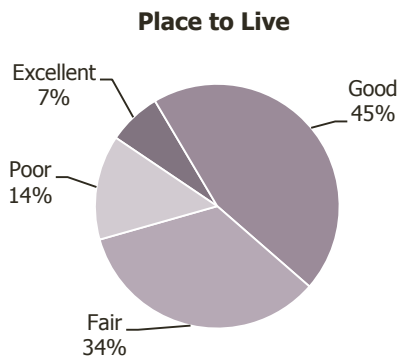
What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?

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, about half 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 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 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. Ratings for all aspects were lower than the national averages. San José as a place to retire received positive ratings from about 1 in 10 respondents while about 6 in 10 positively rated their neighborhoods.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. About one-third of respondents gave high marks to the overall feeling of safety in San José, while about two-thirds felt safe in their neighborhoods and about half felt safe downtown. These ratings of safety were lower than the national averages. Ratings within the facets of Mobility, Natural Environment and Built Environment also received marks that were lower than the benchmarks and received positive ratings from fewer than half of respondents. Within Economy; ratings were a mix of positive and negative. About half or more gave high marks to the overall economic health of San José, the overall quality of businesses and services, shopping opportunities, employment opportunities and San José as a place to work. Further, the ratings for shopping opportunities and employment opportunities were higher than the national benchmarks.

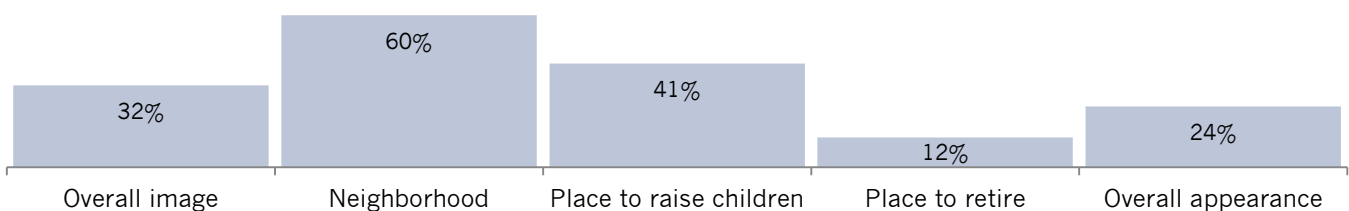
Conversely; only 6% of residents gave positive marks to the overall cost of living in San José, and about one-third positively rated the vibrant downtown/commercial area or San José as a place to visit. These ratings were lower than those observed in comparison communities. Most aspects of Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement received high marks from about half or more of respondents and these aspects tended to be similar to the national benchmark.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



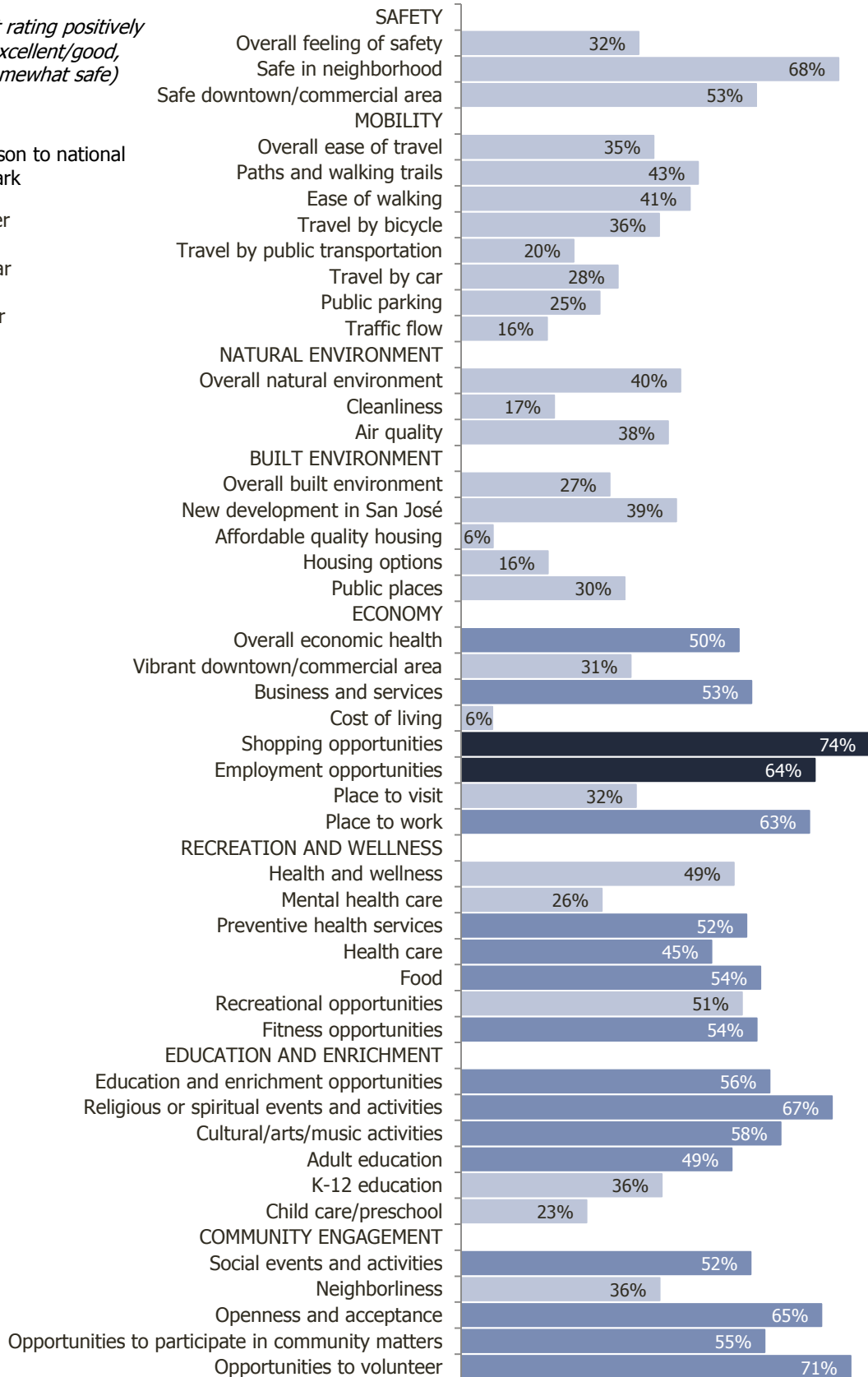
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

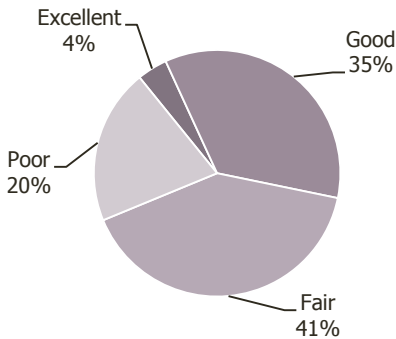
How well does the government of San José meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

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 residents gave positive ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the City of San José, while about half as many (2 in 10) gave positive ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the Federal Government. Ratings for both levels of government were lower than ratings in comparison communities.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of San José’s leadership and governance. Ratings for these aspects were lower than the national benchmarks. Ratings ranged from about 19% excellent or good (value of services for taxes paid) to 43% (overall quality of customer service provided by City employees). While these ratings remained stable from 2017 to 2018; nearly all trended downward since the questions were first asked on the annual survey (see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover).

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, but several were rated similarly. Services on par with national ratings included fire, garbage, recycling, yard waste pick-up, storm drainage, sewer services and cable TV. Economic development and public libraries also made the list of higher ranking services.

Overall Quality of City Services

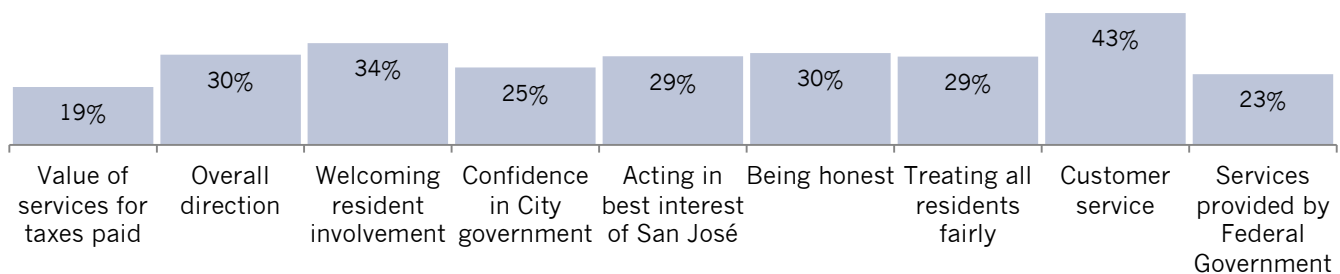


In terms of overall quality scores, residents gave the highest marks to: fire services, ambulance/EMS services, garbage collection, recycling, yard waste pick-up and public libraries. Each of these services was rated excellent or good by at least 70% of respondents. About half of residents offered positive reviews for the listed Recreation and Wellness services but each rating was lower than the national comparison. Ratings for all aspects remained stable from 2017 to 2018, however many trended downward since the baseline survey in 2011.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



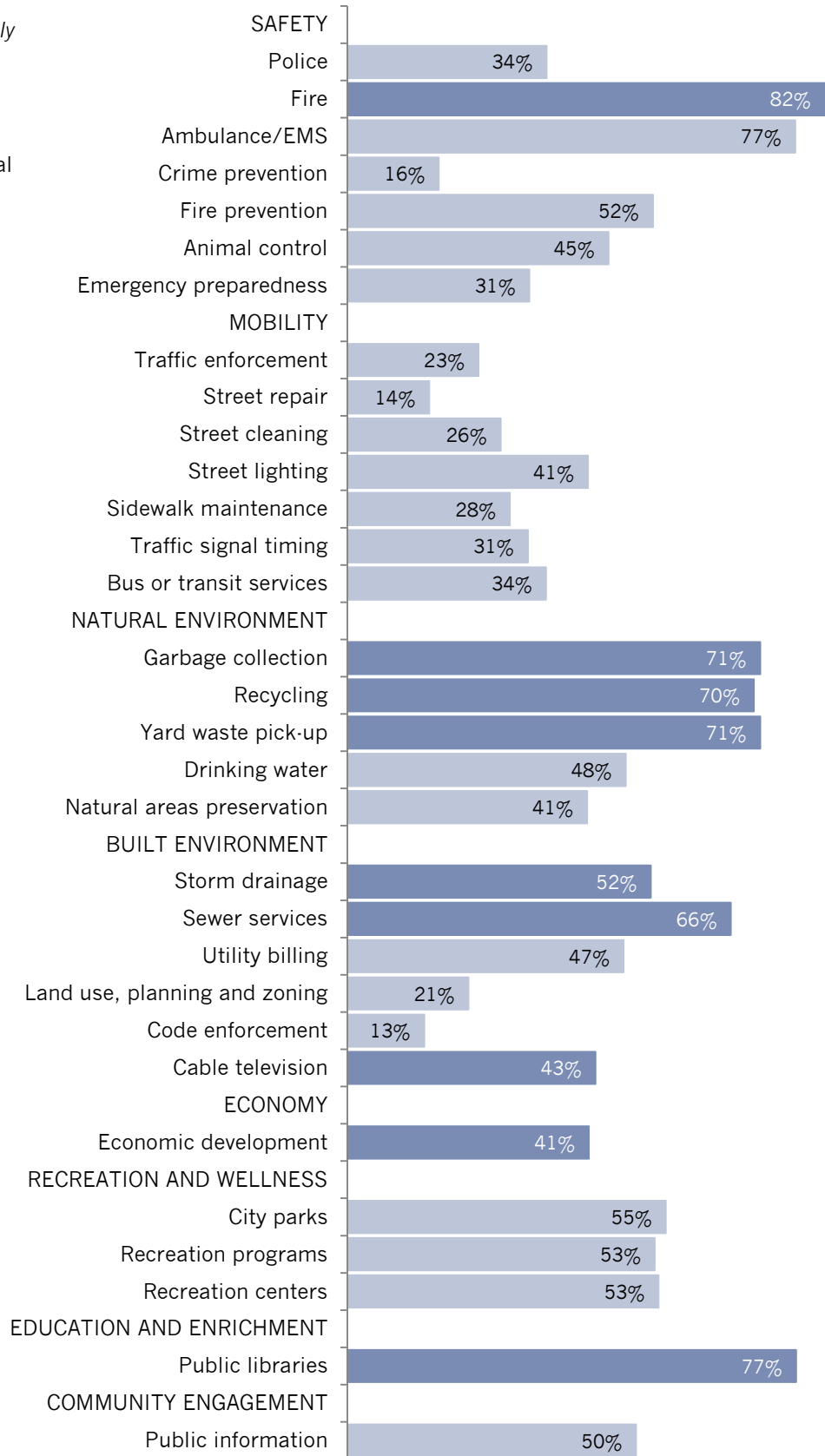
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Participation

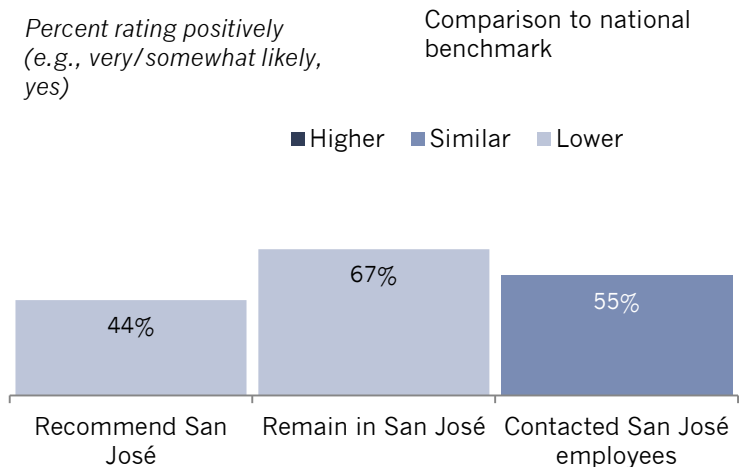
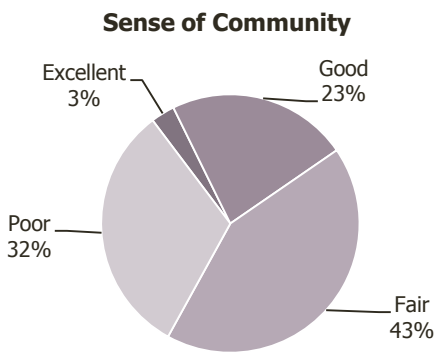
Are the residents of San José connected to the community and each other?

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 of respondents rated the overall sense of community in San Jose 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. 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. Participation rates within San José varied widely and tended to be commensurate with other municipalities.

Over 9 in 10 respondents reported they had conserved water, recycled at home, purchased goods or services in the community and voted in local elections. Residents demonstrated a dedication to alternative modes of transportation, as at least half indicated they had carpoolled or walked or biked instead of driving. The number of residents that used public transportation and carpoolled outpaced nationwide levels.

When compared to national trends, San Jose residents reported higher levels of pro-environmental behavior such as carpooling, conservation and recycling. More survey respondents reported that they had campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate or contacted local elected officials than residents in comparison communities. Overall, rates of Community Engagement were strong in San Jose.



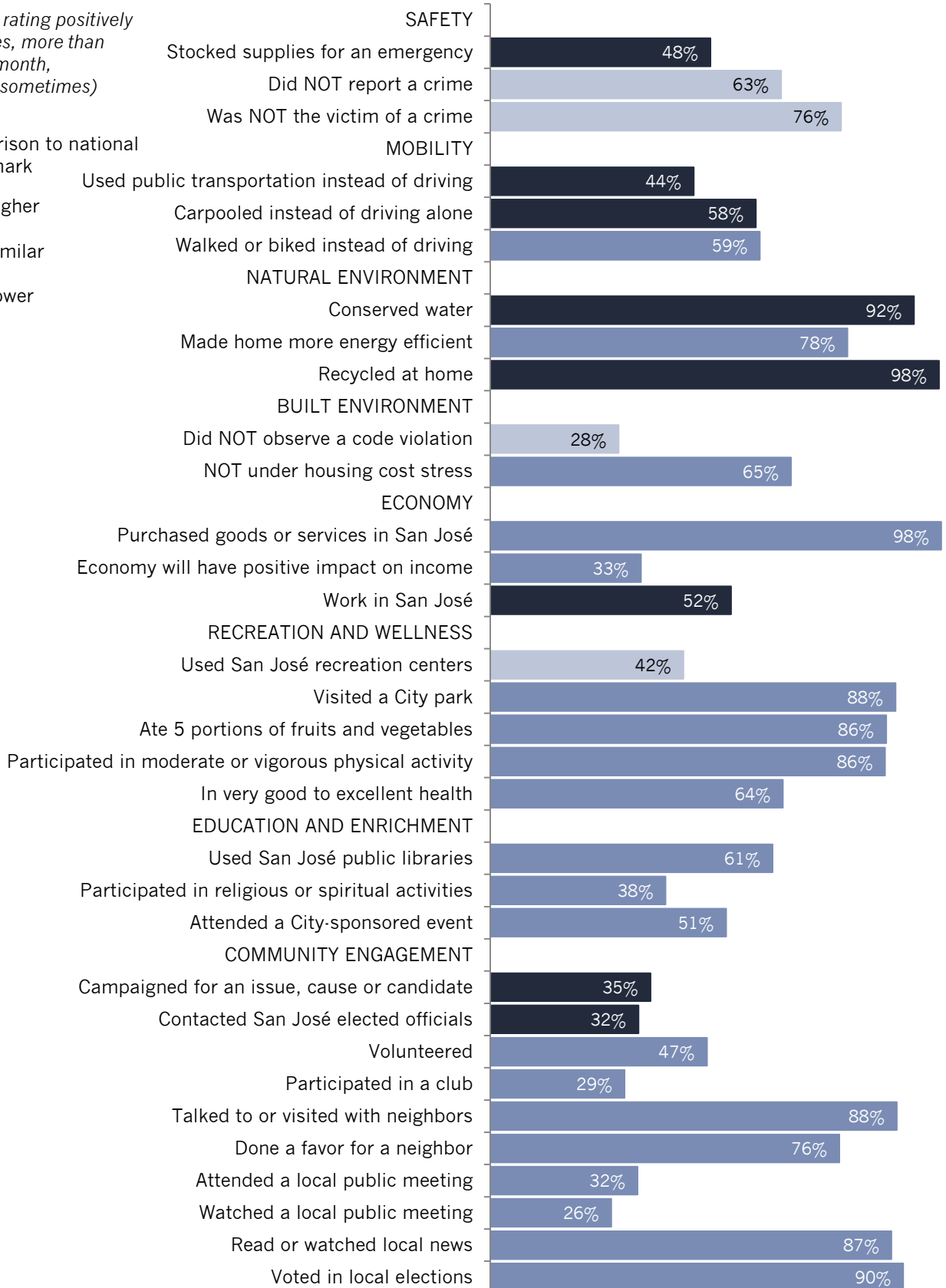
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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. San José residents were asked about their feelings of safety after dark and also from violent crime and property crimes. Nearly 5 in 10 respondents felt very or somewhat safe in their neighborhoods after dark while only 2 in 10 felt very or somewhat safe in San José’s downtown after dark. Further, about one-third of residents reported feeling very safe or somewhat safe from violent crime and only 1 in 5 felt safe from property crimes in the city.

Figure 4: Line Additions to Question 4 (Safety)
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel:

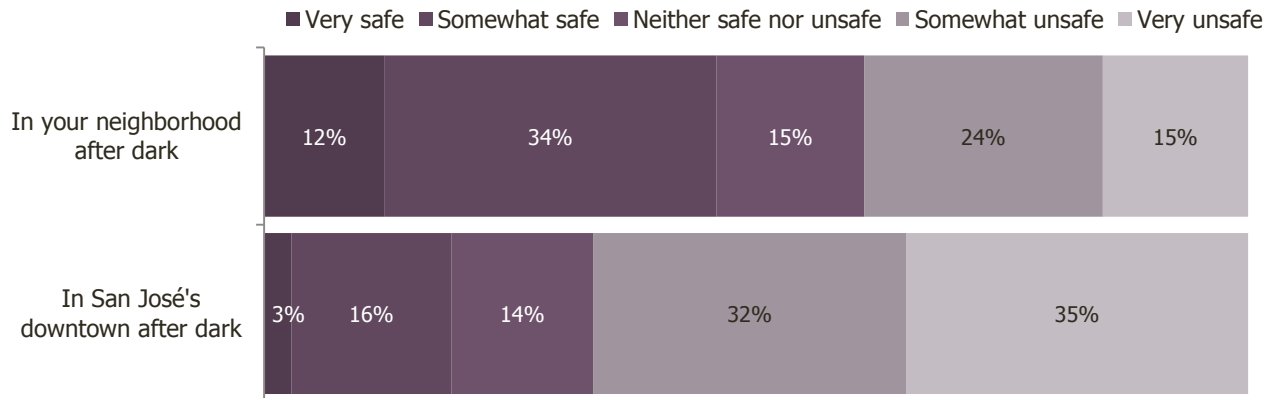
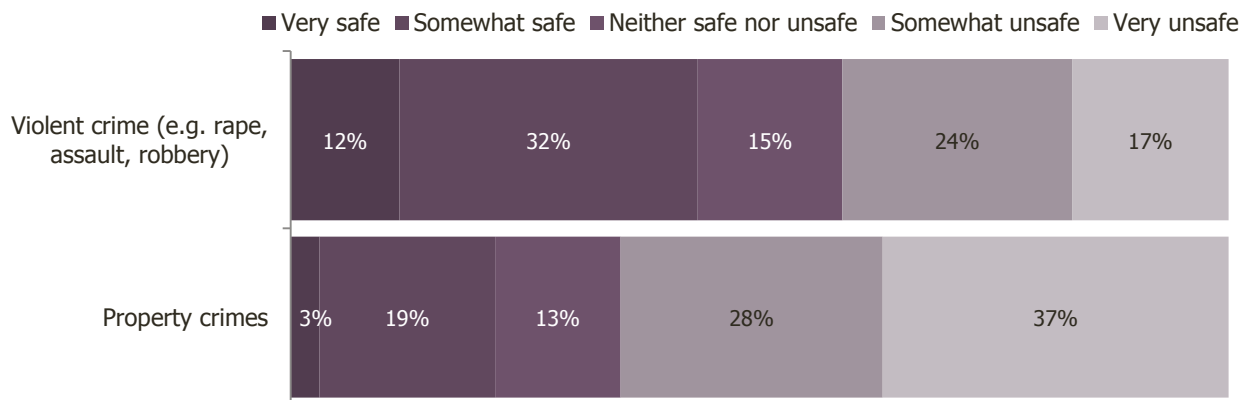


Figure 5: Safety from Violent Crime or Property Crimes
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel from the following:

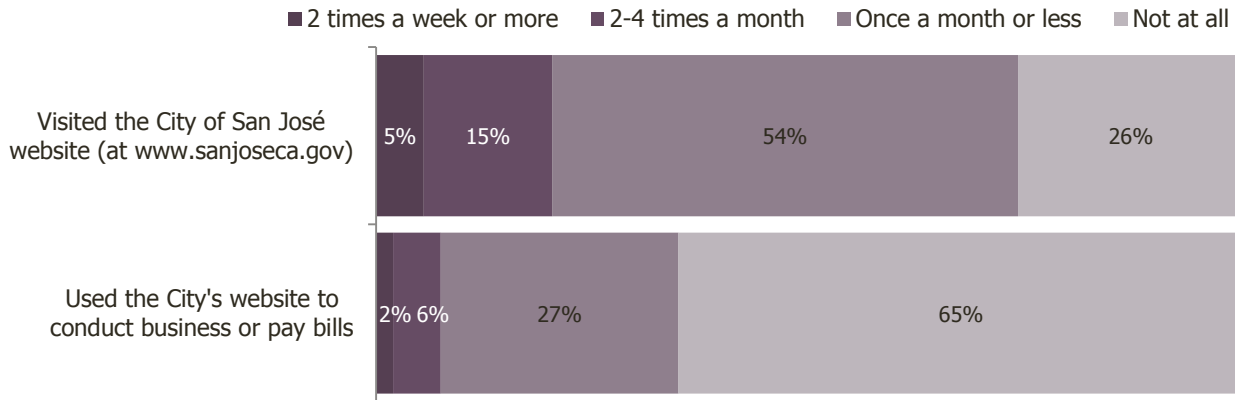


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Residents were asked how often they visited the City of San José website or used it to conduct business. About three-quarters indicated that they visited the website at least once in the 12 months prior to the survey while one-third had used the City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

Figure 6: Line Additions to Question 8 (City Website Use)

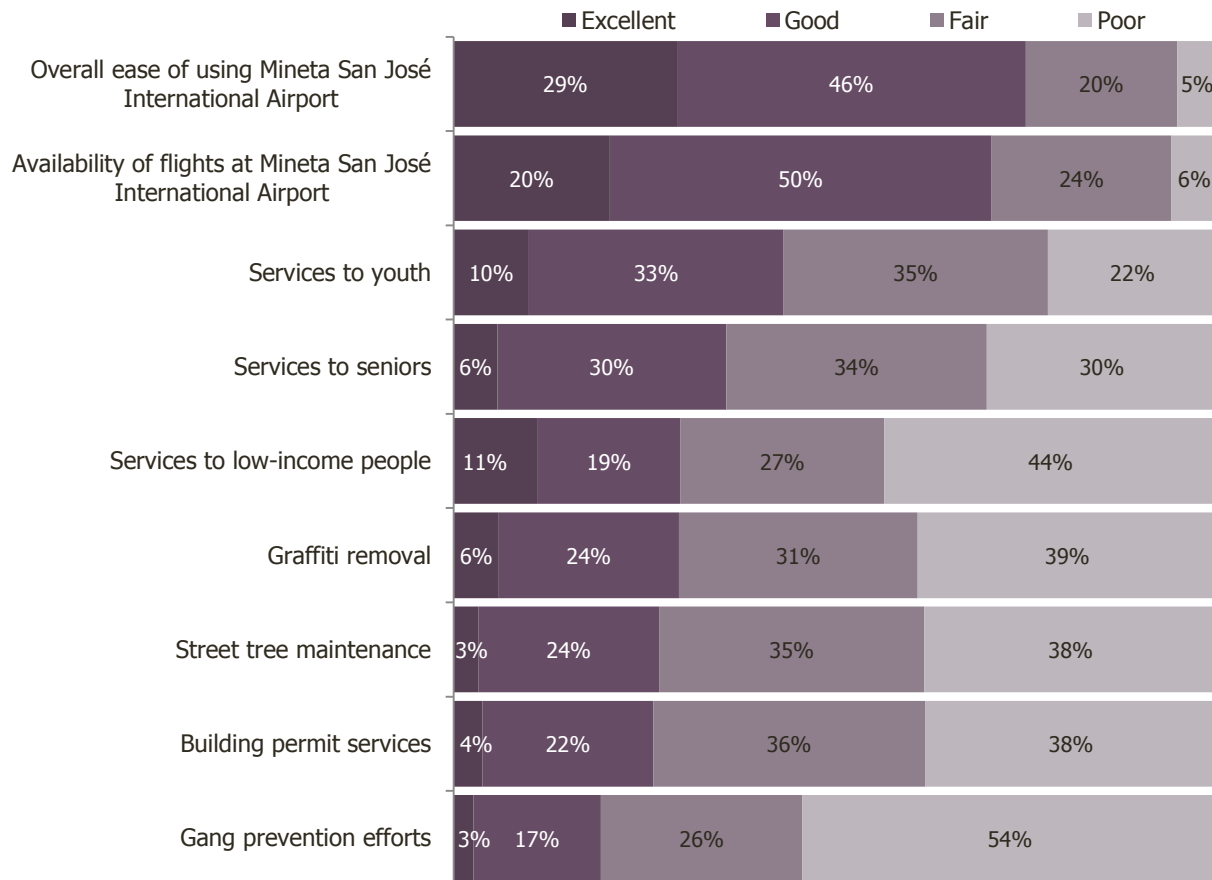
In the last 12 months, about how many times, if at all, have you or other household members done each of the following in San José?



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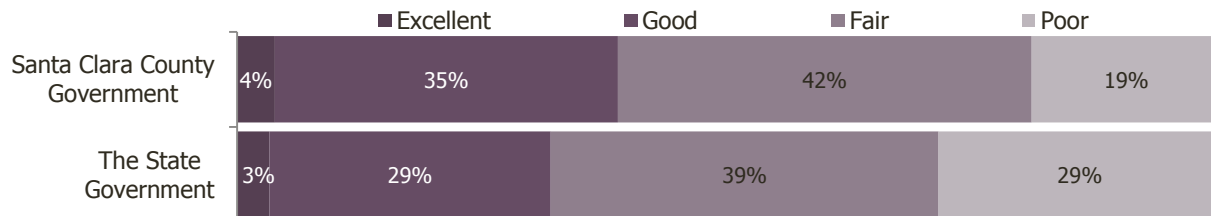
Survey respondents evaluated several services specific to San José. The highest rated service was the Mineta San José International Airport. Both the availability of flights and the overall ease of using the airport were reviewed positively by about 7 in 10 residents. About one-third of survey participants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

Figure 7: Line Additions to Question 10 (Additional City Services)
Please rate the quality of each of the following services in San José:



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. Similar to ratings of the City of San Jose, about 4 in 10 felt positively about services provided by the Santa Clara County Government. A lower number (32%) gave positive assessments to the services provided by the State of California.

Figure 8: Line Additions to Question 11 (State and County Government)
Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by each of the following?



Conclusions

Safety merits continued focus.

As in past years, residents identified Safety-related aspects of community livability as a priority for San José. While all aspects of Safety remained stable from 2017 to 2018; there were some dramatic decreases when looking back at San José's full trendline. Residents in 2018 gave much lower ratings to their overall feeling of safety in the city than when the question was first asked on the 2014 survey. Feelings of safety downtown and in neighborhoods has been tracked since the inaugural survey in 2011, and those ratings also have dropped significantly. Further, about half as many residents gave positive ratings to police services and crime prevention in 2018 compared to 2011. Almost all aspects of Safety received ratings lower than the national benchmarks, and feelings of safety were among the lower recorded in NRC's benchmarking database.

San José included some custom questions related to safety on the 2018 survey. About 4 in 10 respondents felt very or somewhat safe in their neighborhoods after dark or from violent crimes. Only 2 in 10 felt very or somewhat safe in San José's downtown after dark or from property crimes. Residents also reported issues with code enforcement, graffiti and gang prevention. In terms of victimization, about 4 in 10 indicated they had reported a crime in the 12 previous months, and about 3 in 10 reported being a crime victim during the same time period. The proportion of San Jose residents that reported experiences with crime was much higher than those in comparison communities.

San Jose should continue to focus on crime and resident-police relationships as the issue of safety is a fundamental building block of a livable community. Communities experiencing lower ratings of safety and strained relationships with the police often find these issues dominate public perceptions of government performance and community quality.

Residents are engaged in their community but are critical of local government performance.

San José residents reported higher rates of campaigning for an issue cause or candidate and contacting local elected officials than other residents around the country. A majority of residents were pleased with opportunities to participate in community matters, to volunteer and social events and activities, and these ratings were similar to the benchmarks. While residents were engaged in community activities, they were more critical of aspects of government performance. Ratings of the value of services for taxes paid, overall direction of San José, confidence in City government, the City acting in the best interest of the community, being honest and treating all residents fairly all lagged behind communities elsewhere.

A lack of public trust is a formidable threat to community engagement, social capital and community livability. The civic orientation of San Jose's residents, if harnessed properly, may be a conduit to increase public trust as well as make ground on other community issues such as crime.

San José's vibrant Economy is a both a strength and challenge.

As in previous years, residents saw the Economy as an important aspect of their quality of life and focus area for the next two years. Economy-related ratings tended to vary; about 7 in 10 residents awarded high marks to shopping opportunities and at least 6 in 10 applauded the employment opportunities and San José as a place to work. Moreover, about half of respondents reported they worked in the community. Most of these ratings outshined those given in communities nationwide.

Affordability is clearly a major hurdle impacting the quality of life in San José. The availability and variety of affordable quality housing and cost of living in San José were rated positively by less than 1 in 10 community members, which were much lower than national averages. Further, services to low income residents were rated favorably by fewer than 20% of residents. While local government is only one player in the economic landscape of a community, ensuring residents of various socio-economic levels can reside in San Jose will maintain its rich heritage of diversity and inclusion.