

Resident perceptions about Quality of Life and City Services in San José

RESIDENT SURVEY

2019 marked San José's ninth year of participation in The National Community Survey™ (referred to throughout this report as the resident survey). The National Community Survey™ is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The survey was developed by NRC to provide a statistically valid sampling of resident opinions about their community and services provided by local government. Survey results in this chapter and in the following chapters provide the opinions of 4,388 residents of the City who responded to either a mail or online survey.

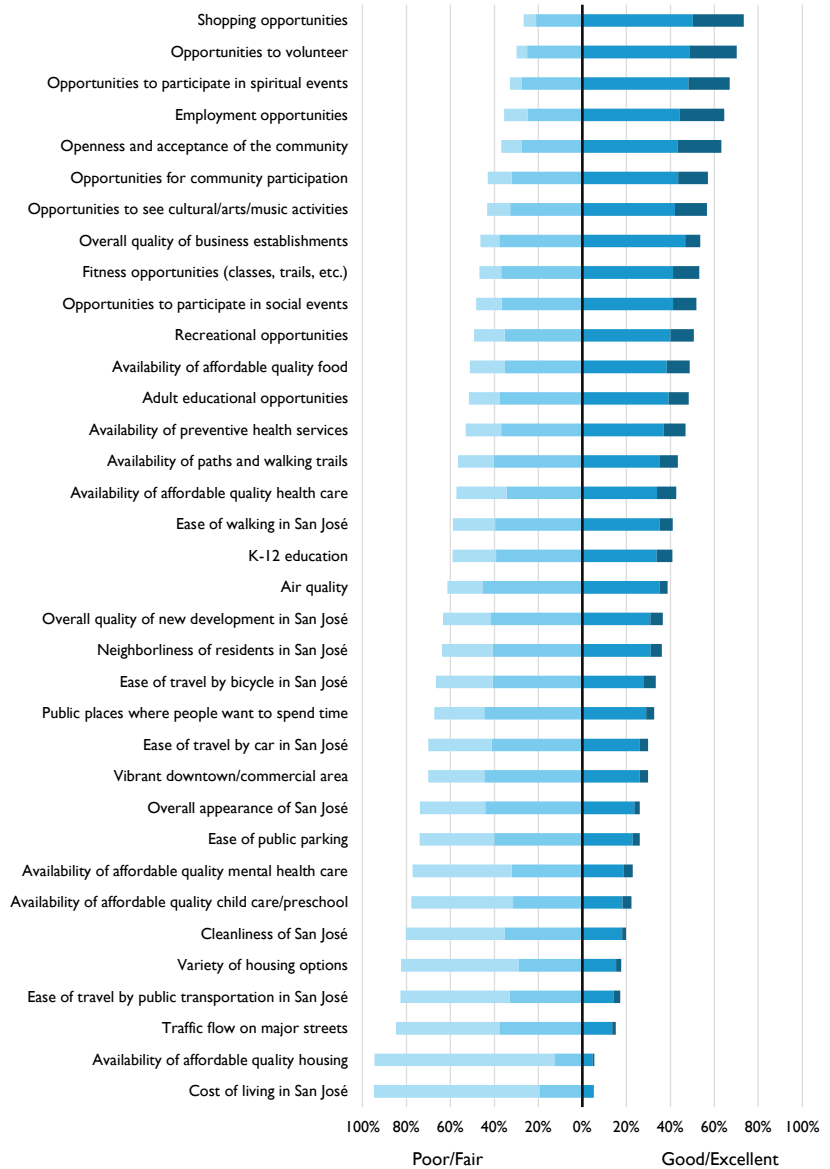
Complete survey results are posted online at sanjoseca.gov/servicesreport. The end of this chapter provides more specific information about the survey methodology.

QUALITY OF LIFE IN SAN JOSÉ

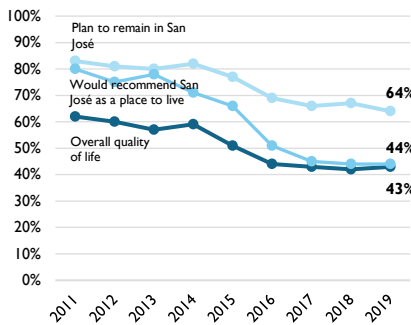
How residents rate their overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. This can include opinions about a community's natural and built environments; the availability of services and amenities; overall feelings about safety or the economic health of the community; and other aspects of life.

Several aspects of community quality were rated highly by survey respondents, including shopping opportunities and opportunities to volunteer. Most ratings from 2019 are similar compared to those from 2018. Positive results on overall image or reputation increased from 32 percent to 36 percent in the past year. The availability of affordable housing and the cost of living remain the lowest rated community characteristics. Three in four respondents said cost of living is "poor."

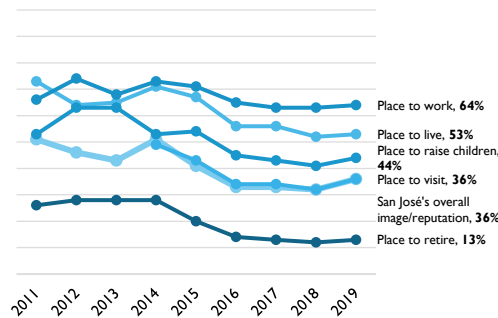
Ratings of Community Characteristics



Quality of Life Indicators



% of Respondents Rating San José as "Excellent" or "Good"

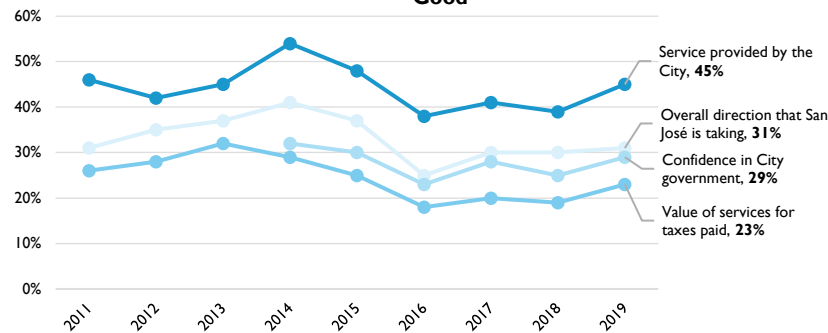


CITYWIDE QUALITY OF SERVICES

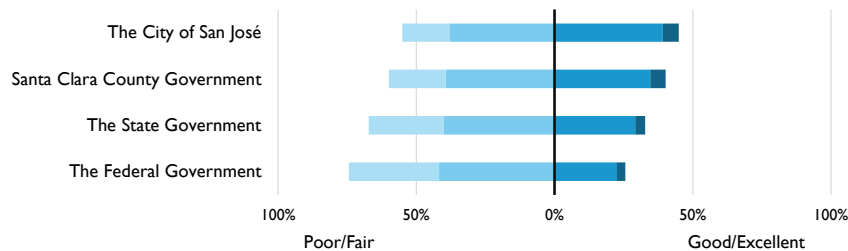
In the resident survey, the percentage of surveyed residents that rated the overall quality of City services "excellent" or "good" is higher than it has been in four years. However, it is still down from years prior to that.

Satisfaction with specific government services ranged from a high of 84 percent of residents rating fire services as "excellent" or "good" to a low of 19 percent for code enforcement. Other highly rated government services include public libraries; the ease of using the the Mineta San José International Airport (SJC); and recycling, garbage, and yard waste pick-up. More information on survey results related to specific services can be found in individual department pages later in this report.

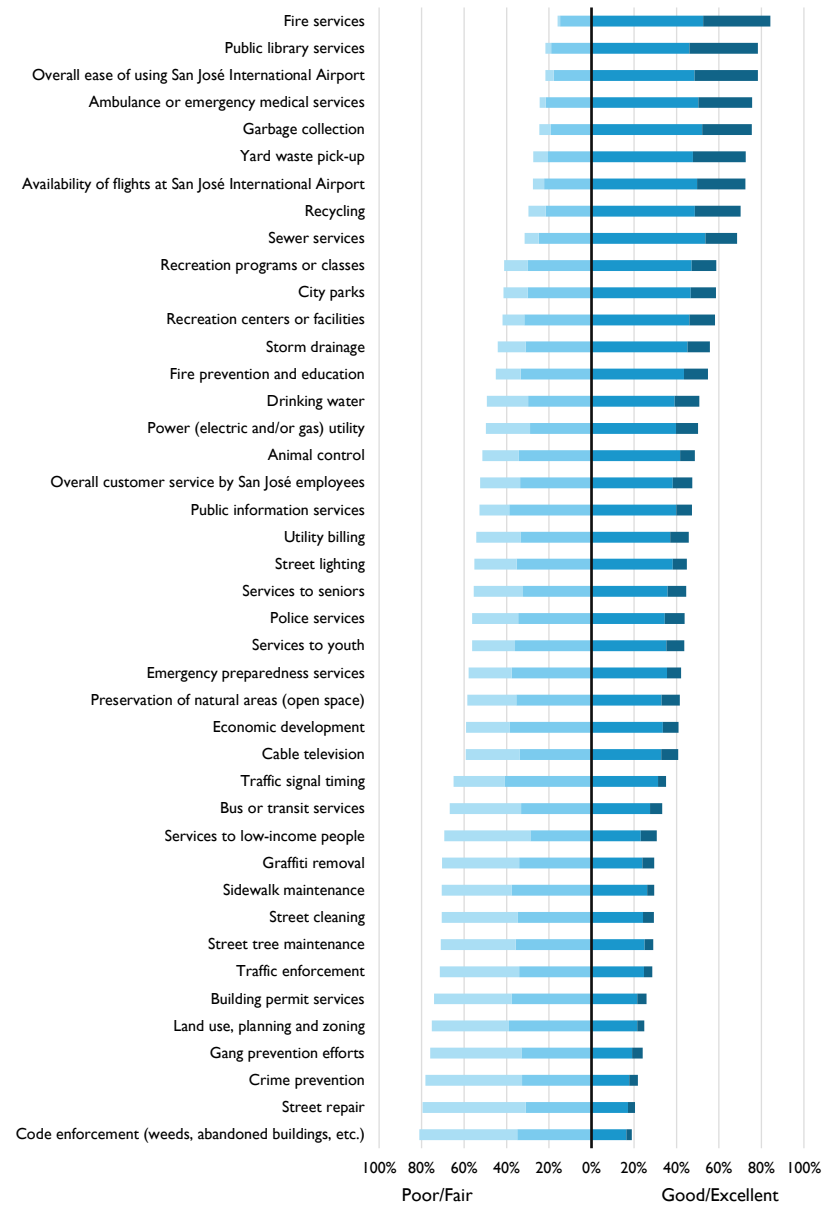
% of Respondents Rating San José Services as "Excellent" or "Good"



Perception of Governance



Quality of Government Services



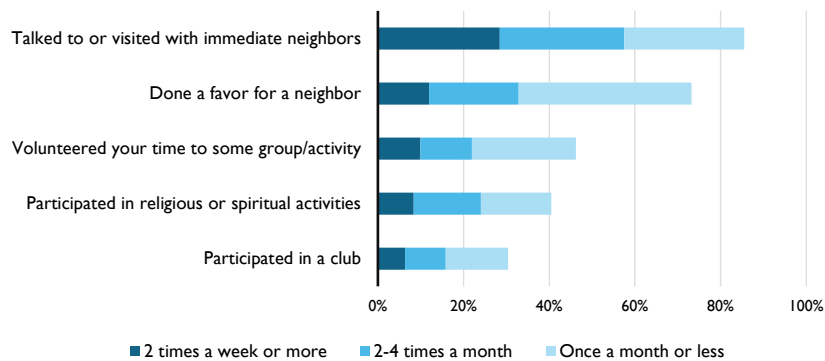
RESIDENT SURVEY

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION & CITYWIDE PUBLIC TRUST

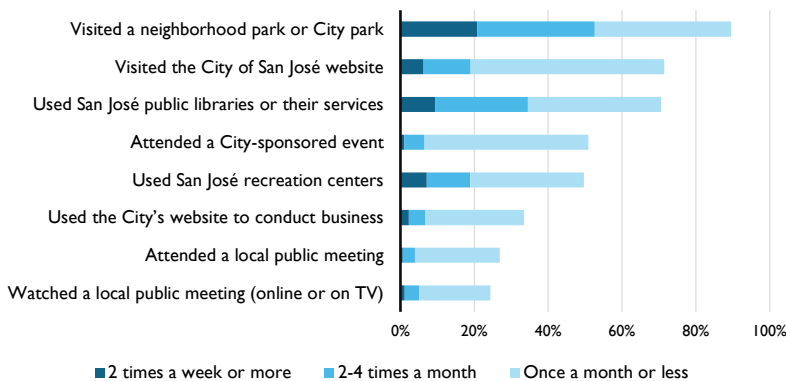
The resident survey also asked residents a variety of questions about their participation in the community, contact with City government, and confidence in San José's governance. Nearly three in four respondents said that they think it is essential or very important for San José to focus on sense of community in the next two years (just 28 percent of respondents rated San José's sense of community positively).

Public participation has generally increased in recent years. Half of respondents said they had contacted the City of San José (in-person, phone, email or web) for help or information in the past year.

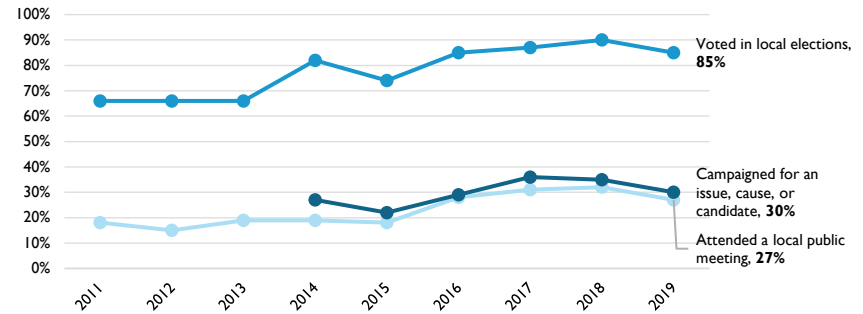
Participation in the San José Community



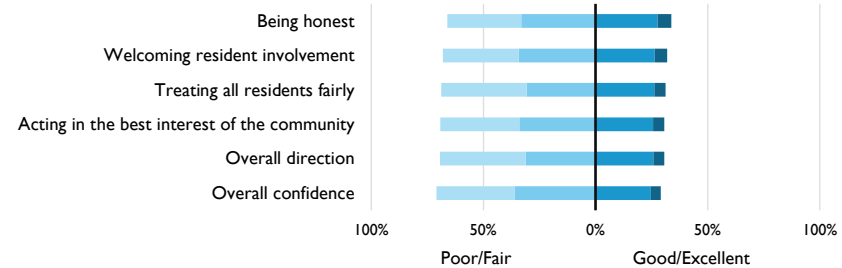
Contact with City Government



Public Participation in San José



Public Trust and Confidence in City Government



PRIORITY ISSUES FOR RESIDENTS

Residents were asked to assess priorities for the San José community to focus on in the coming two years. Nearly all respondents felt that it was essential or very important to focus on the overall feeling of safety in San José and nearly nine out of ten residents also felt it was essential or very important to focus on economic health.

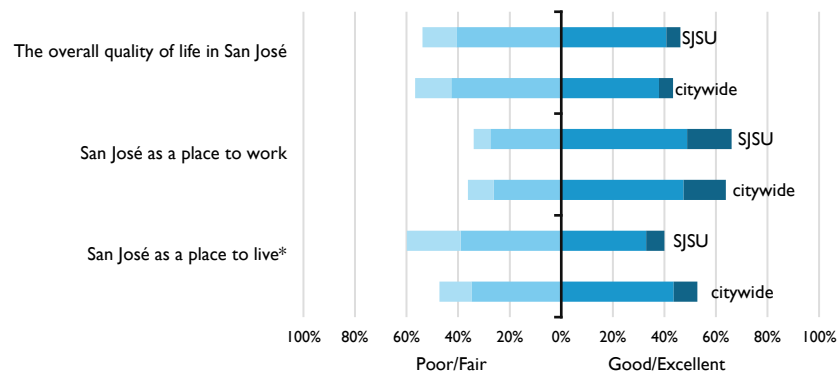
Resident Priorities in San José



SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

2019 marked the first year that San Jose State University (SJSU) participated in the resident survey. The university sent a shortened version of the resident survey to students, faculty, and staff to complete online. (See survey methodology section for more details.) The SJSU survey was administered by NRC, same as the citywide survey. Nearly 700 students, faculty, and staff responded to the survey. Around three-quarters of respondents live in San José.

Quality of Life Comparison



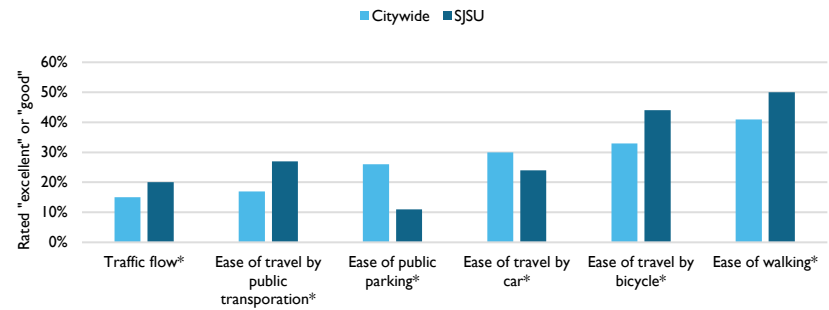
* Statistically significant differences are indicated with an asterisk.

On many measures, SJSU responses and citywide responses were similar. As shown above, SJSU respondents and citywide respondents similarly rated the overall quality of life and the city as a place to work. Citywide respondents gave the city higher ratings as a place to live. Seventy-one percent of SJSU respondents said that they were likely to recommend studying in San José to someone who asks.

Additional characteristics were rated similarly across the survey groups. For example, ratings for cleanliness, appearance, public places where people want to spend time, sense of community, economic health, and overall reputation were similar. In some other cases, responses varied significantly. Citywide respondents rated shopping and employment opportunities higher than SJSU respondents. SJSU respondents rated the quality of new development, vibrancy of downtown, and opportunities to attend cultural activities higher than citywide respondents.

Though not all SJSU respondents live in San José, they all use City services, such as roads and parking. SJSU and citywide responses varied significantly in the ease of different modes of travel, as shown below. Generally, SJSU respondents rated alternatives to driving higher than citywide respondents. Forty-six percent of SJSU respondents rated the overall ease of getting to and from the university as "excellent" or "good."

Ease of Travel in San José



* Statistically significant differences are indicated with an asterisk.

SHARED PRIORITIES FOR THE CITY

Respondents in both surveys rated the overall feeling of safety, economic health, and ease of travel as three top priorities that were "essential" or "very important" to focus on in the coming two years.

SJSU Priorities in San José



* Statistically significant differences are indicated with an asterisk.

RESIDENT SURVEY

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey data presented in this report was collected and analyzed by the [National Research Center, Inc.](#) on behalf of the the City Auditor's Office.

The survey consultant mailed surveys to a statistically valid sample of 3,000 San José households starting in August 2019. They also sent postcards to an additional 1,000 random households inviting residents to complete the survey online. (Seventy-seven, or about 2 percent, of mailings were returned to sender.) Completed surveys were received from 601 residents, for a response rate of 15 percent.

The consultant selected survey respondents at random and tracked survey responses by each quadrant of the City (Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, Southwest). Participation was encouraged with multiple mailings; self-addressed, postage-paid envelopes; and three language choices—English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Of the 601 completed surveys, 587 were completed in English, 11 in Spanish, and three in Vietnamese. The survey consultant statistically re-weighted results, as necessary, to reflect the actual demographic composition of the entire community.

An additional 3,760 residents completed an online “opt-in” survey, which was publicized through a press release, social media, and flyers in City facilities, including libraries and community centers, all of which were translated into Spanish and Vietnamese. A link to the survey was also posted on the City's website and multilingual flyers were distributed to community groups. The survey consultant has protocols to review the integrity of “opt-in” survey responses, such as checking for repeat IP addresses.

Upon completion of data collection of both the mail and “opt-in” surveys, the survey consultant compared data from the two samples to determine whether it was appropriate to combine, or blend, both samples together. Based on the similarity of the mail and “opt-in” sample characteristics, the survey consultant determined that the two samples could be blended.

To blend the data, the consultant weighted “opt-in” survey data using a calibration technique that takes into consideration behavioral characteristics of the sample, as well as demographic data. This calibration technique reduces the differences that may occur between the mail and “opt-in” samples by using the mail results to inform the weighting scheme of the “opt-in” sample.

To do this, the survey consultant calculated an index score based on respondents' levels of engagement in the community (e.g., contact with City employees, recreation center use, frequency of volunteering). They then categorized index scores into four equal groups and used the “norms” for the categorized index scores from the random mail sample as part of the weighting scheme for the “opt-in” sample.

The precision of estimates made from surveys are usually described by a “level of confidence” and accompanying “confidence interval” (or margin of error). A traditional level of confidence, and the one used here, is 95 percent. The margin of error around results for this survey is plus or minus two percentage points. With this margin of error, one may conclude that when 60 percent of survey respondents report that a particular service is “excellent” or “good,” somewhere between 58 to 62 percent of all residents are likely to feel that way. Differences between 2018 and 2019 results can be considered statistically significant if they are plus or minus six percentage points.

More opt-in survey responses were received this year than in past years, attributable in part to expanded outreach efforts for the 2019 survey. As a note, responses on some questions may have increased due to the participation of City departments (e.g., Library and Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services) in promoting the survey. This may represent sampling differences and should be considered within the context of other performance measures.

For complete methodology, see Appendix C of the Technical Appendices, posted online at sanjoseca.gov/servicesreport.

In addition, for the first time this year, the City Auditor's Office worked with the Knight Foundation and San Jose State University to implement a parallel survey of university students and faculty. This survey used a slightly abbreviated version of the City's survey and substituted “campus” for “neighborhood” where appropriate (e.g., “rate how safe you feel on campus during the day”). The university encouraged participation with a message from the president. Responses were submitted online by 694 students, faculty, and staff. The consultant used statistical tests to determine whether responses from SJSU varied significantly from citywide responses within a 95 percent confidence level.