



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

# San José, CA

Community Livability Report

2019



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# About

The National Community 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.

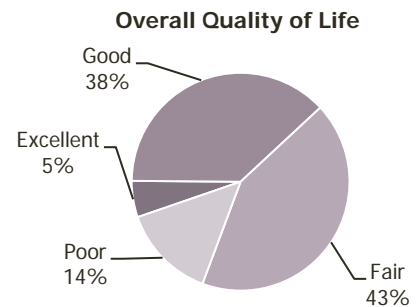
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 4,388 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 (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.

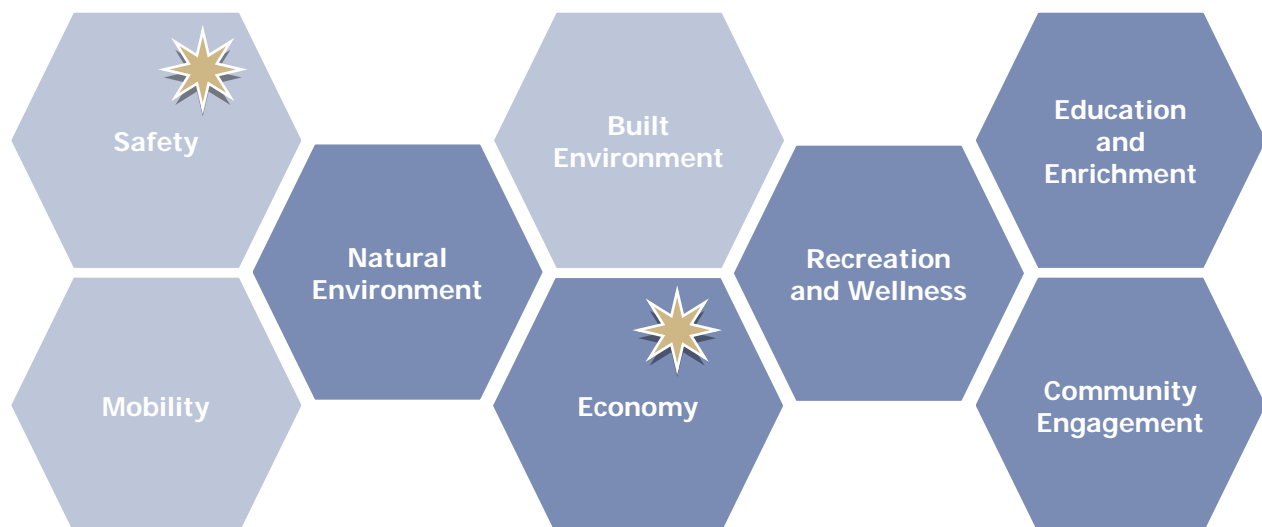
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. As in 2018, residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the San José community in the coming two years. Ratings for Safety 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?*

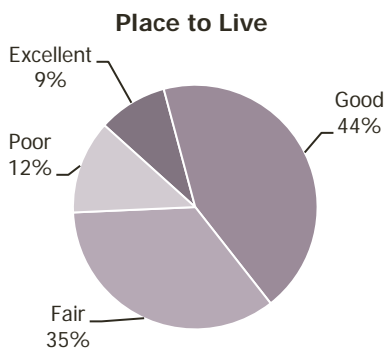
Overall quality of community life represents the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. How residents rate their overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. In the case of San José, 53% rated the City as an excellent or good place 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 and similar to ratings given in 2018 (see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover). 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

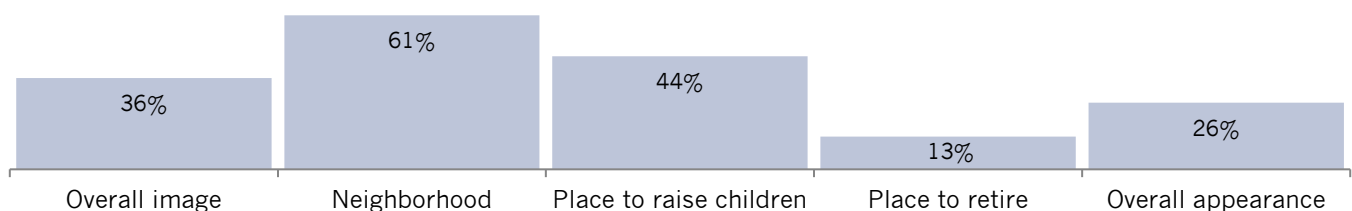
received positive ratings from fewer than half of respondents. Within Economy; ratings were a range of positive and negative. About half or more gave high marks to the overall economic health of San José, the overall quality of businesses and services, shopping opportunities, employment opportunities 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 5% 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 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



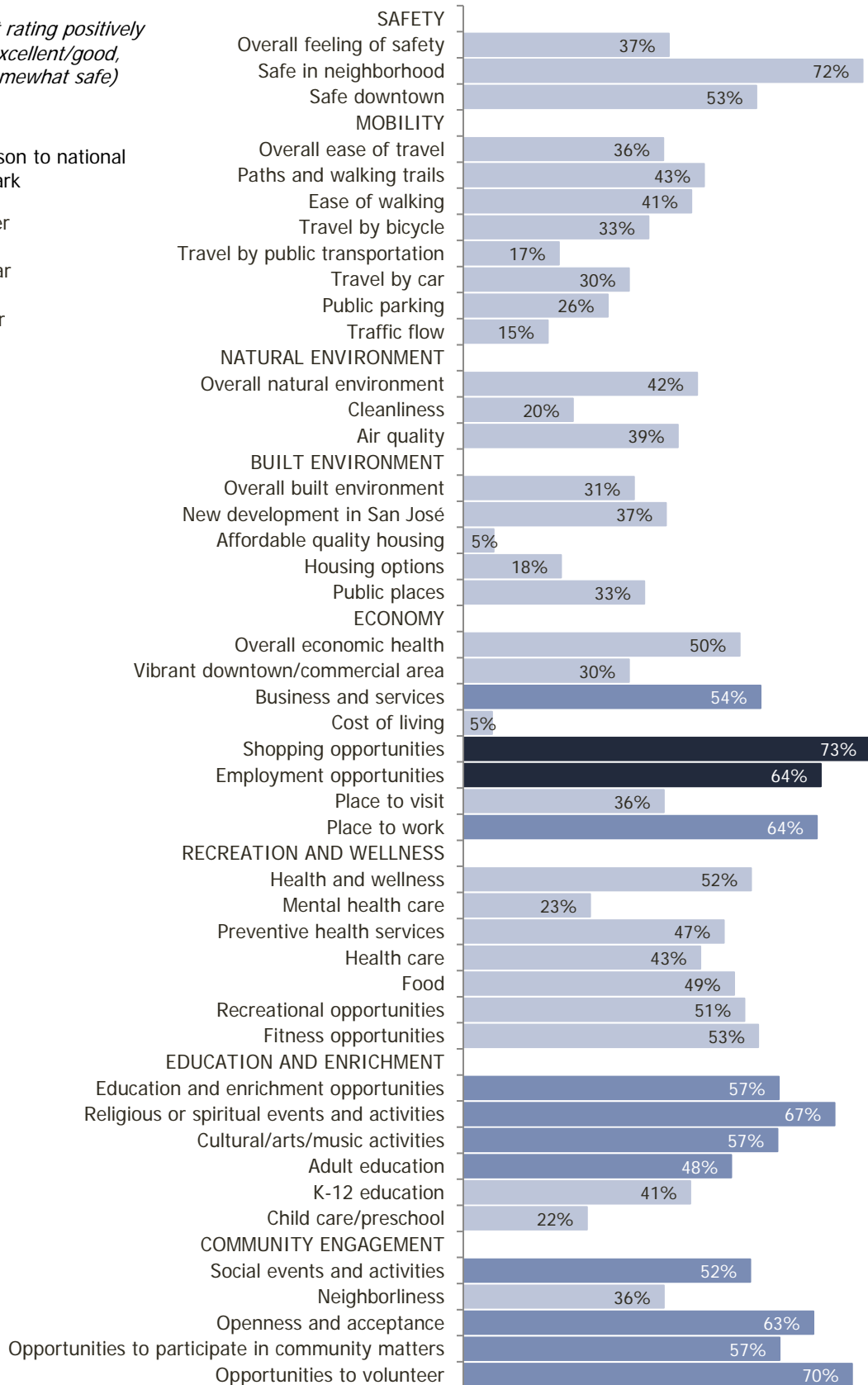
# The National Community Survey™

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?*

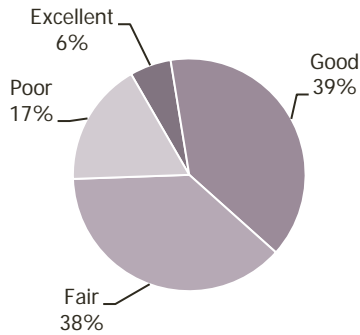
The overall quality of the services provided by San José as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Close to half of respondents rated the overall quality of City services as excellent or good, while about one-quarter gave high marks to the Federal government. Assessment of City and Federal government performance were lower than national averages.

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 23% excellent or good (value of services for taxes paid) to 47% (overall quality of customer service provided by City employees).

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.

In terms of overall quality scores, residents gave the highest marks to: fire services, animal control, garbage collection, recycling, yard waste pick-up, cable television, economic development, recreation programs and centers and public libraries. Each of these services was rated excellent or good by at least 70% of respondents. Most aspects of Governance remained stable from 2018 to 2019; however San José residents gave higher marks to police services, crime prevention, emergency preparedness, traffic enforcement, street repair and recreation programs in 2019.

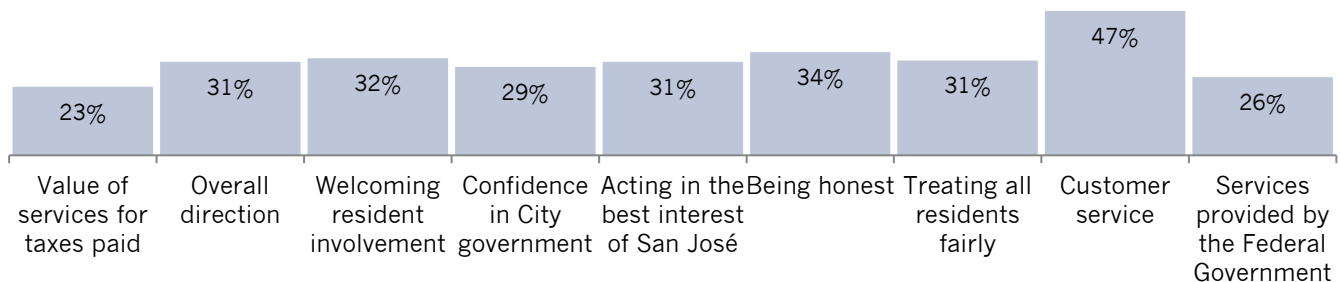
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



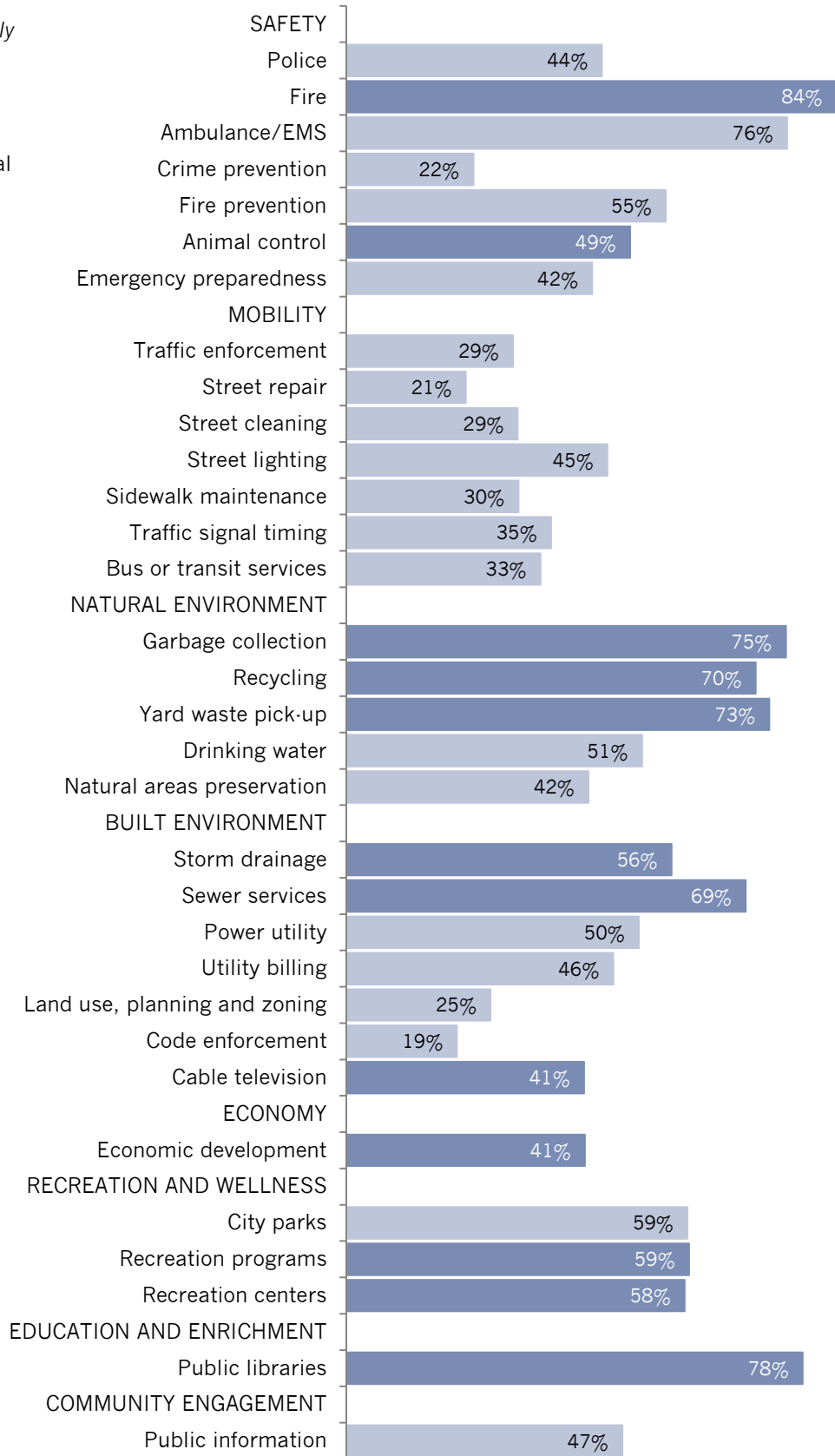
# The National Community Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



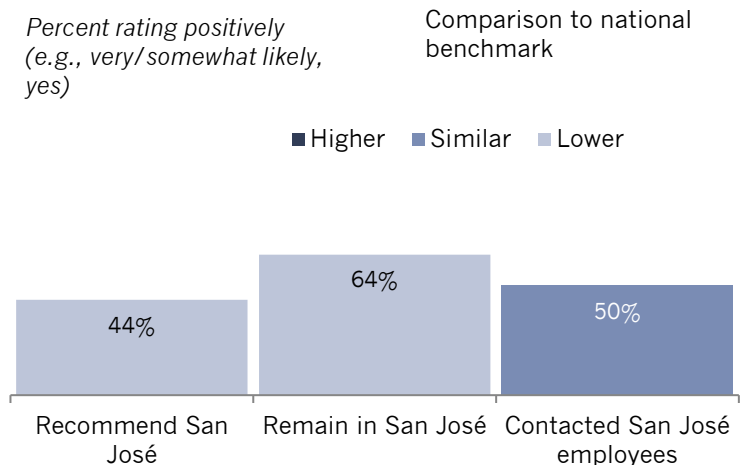
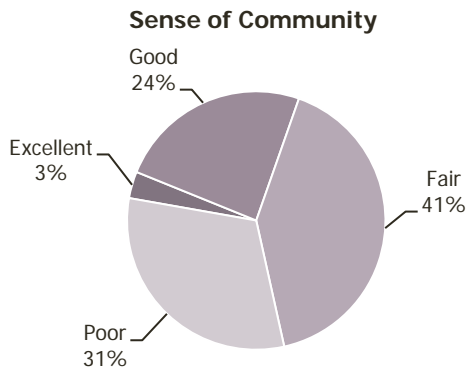


# Participation

*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 of respondents rated the overall sense of community in San José 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. Levels of participation varied widely across the different facets, making the benchmark comparisons, as well as San José’s trend data, useful for interpreting the results. Most reported rates of participation were on par with national averages. More San José residents reported that they had stocked supplies for an emergency, used public transportation or carpooled, recycled at home and worked in San José than those in other communities across the nation. Conversely, fewer survey respondents reported that they had NOT reported a crime or NOT observed a code violation or felt the economy would have a positive impact on them. Further, fewer San José residents thought the economy would have a positive impact on them in 2019 compared to 2018. Several rates of participation increased in 2019 compared to 2018 including: stocking supplies for an emergency, NOT observing a code violation, using San José recreation centers or using San José public libraries.



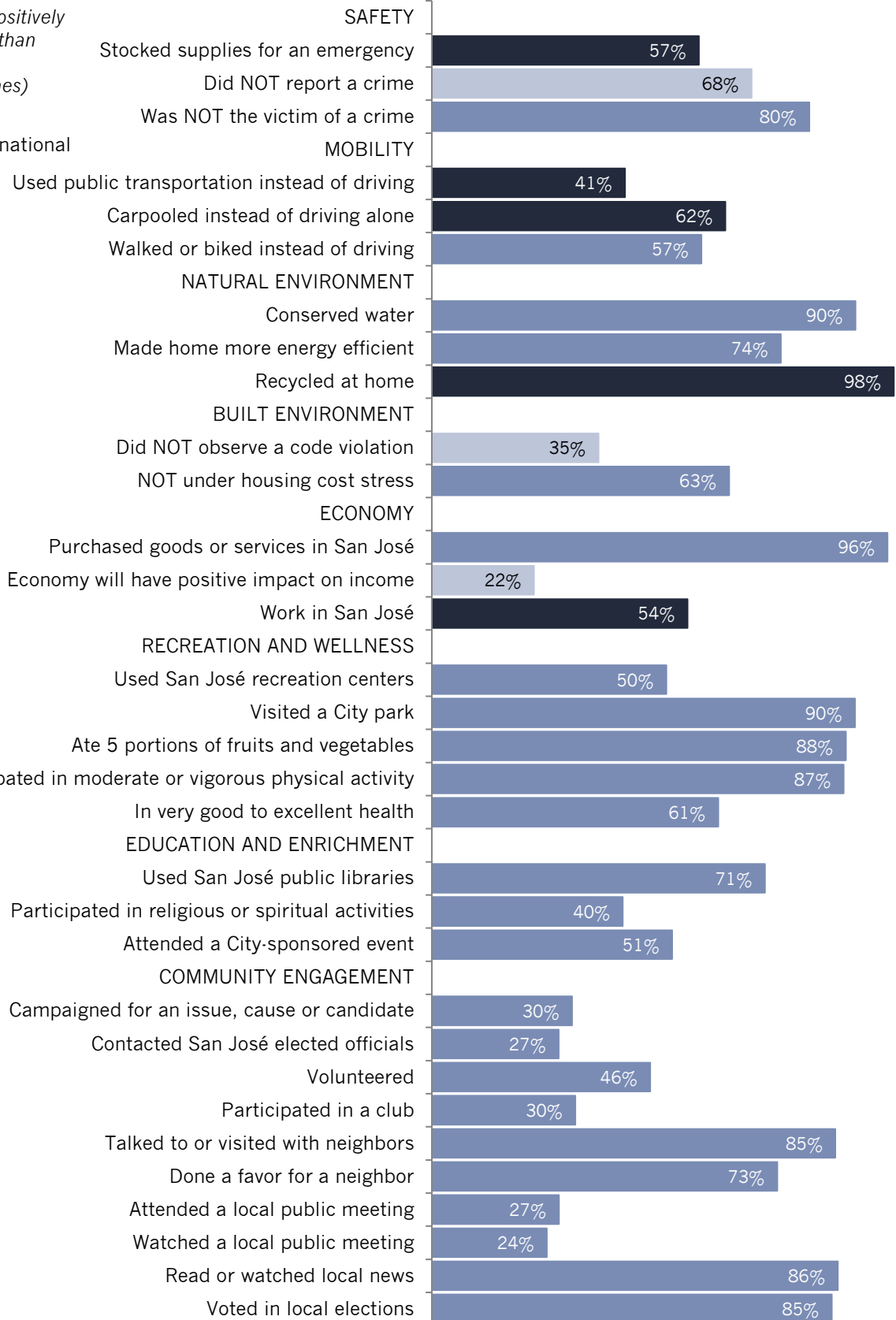
# The National Community Survey™

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. San José residents were asked about their feelings of safety after dark and also from violent crime and property crimes. About half of respondents felt very or somewhat safe in their neighborhoods after dark while about 2 in 10 felt very or somewhat safe in San José’s downtown after dark. Further, about 4 in 10 residents reported feeling very safe or somewhat safe from violent crime and about 3 in 10 felt safe from property crime in the city.

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

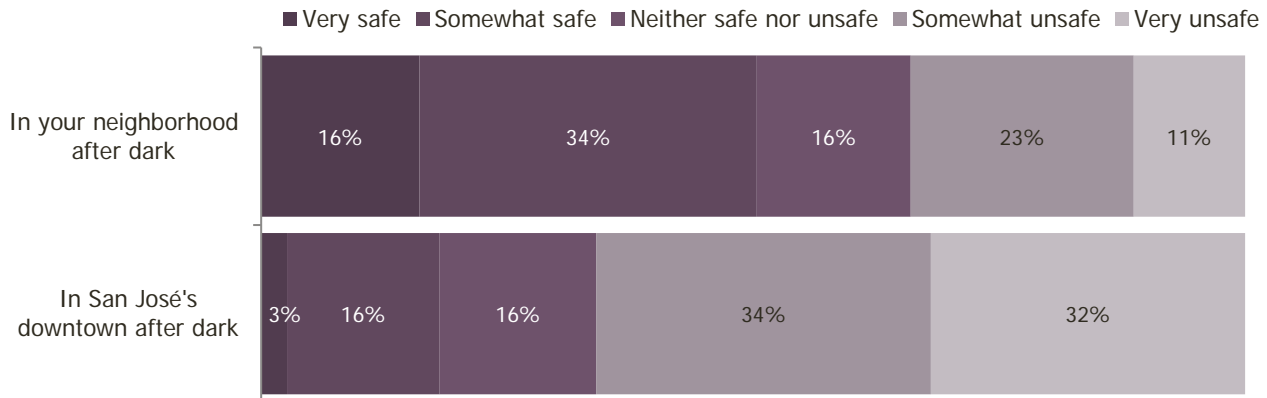
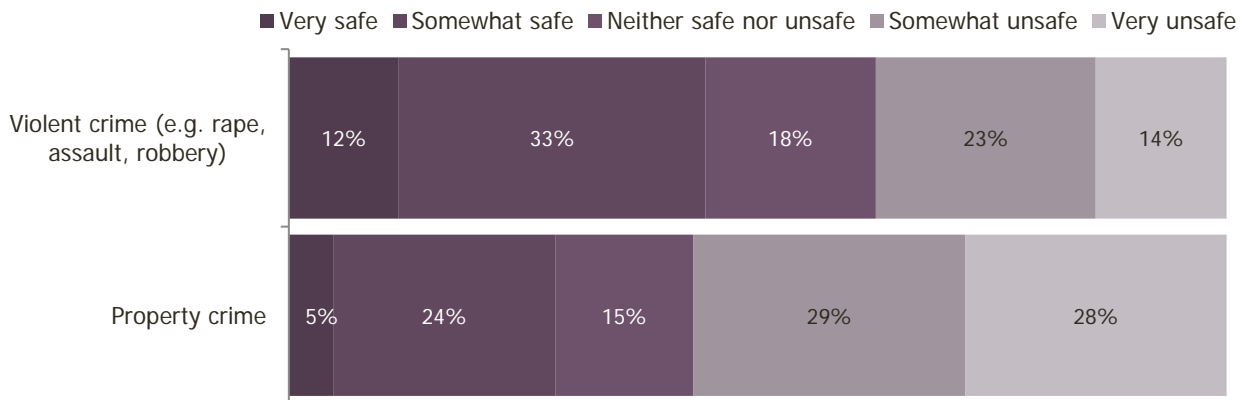


Figure 5: Safety from Violent Crime or Property Crimes  
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel from the following:

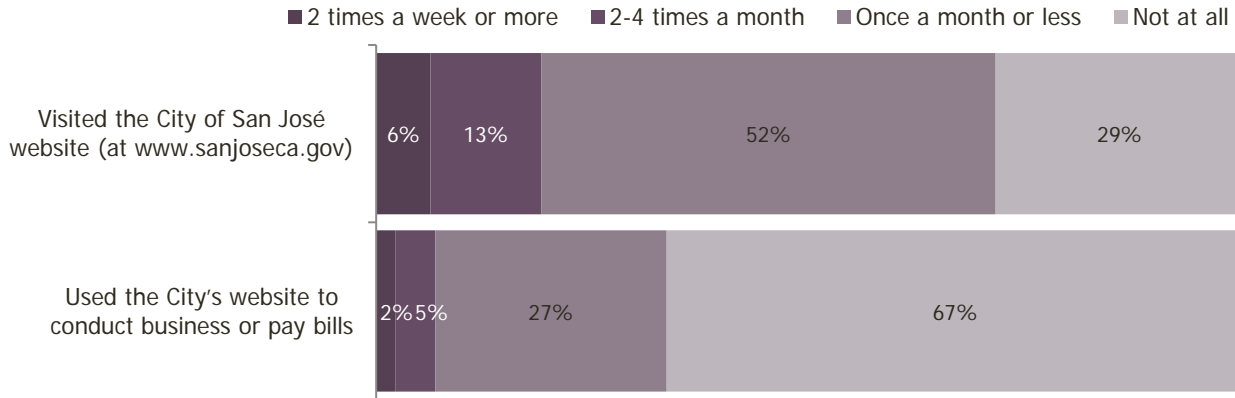


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Residents were asked how often they visited the City of San José website or used it to conduct business. About 7 in 10 indicated that they visited the website at least once in the 12 months prior to the survey while one-third had used the City website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

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

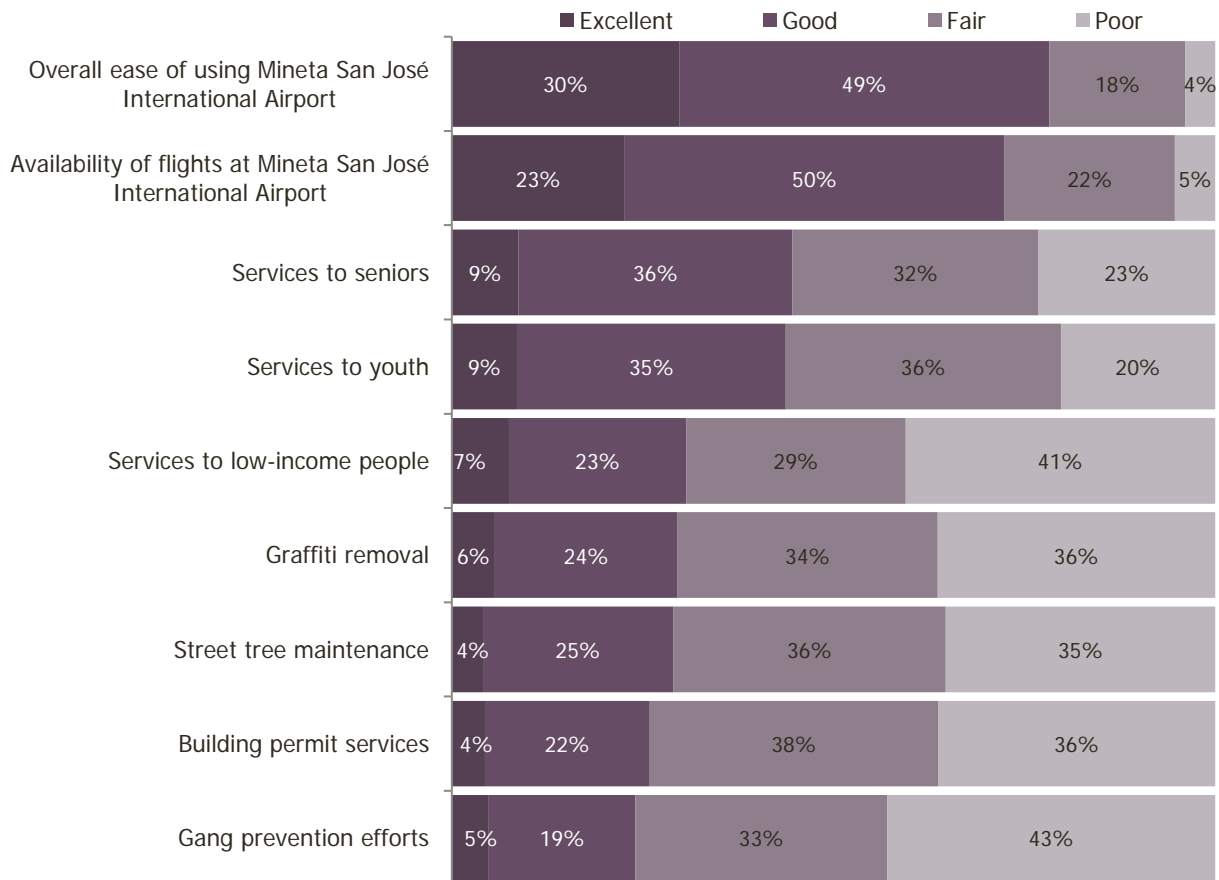
*In the last 12 months, about how many times, if at all, have you or other household members done each of the following in San José?*



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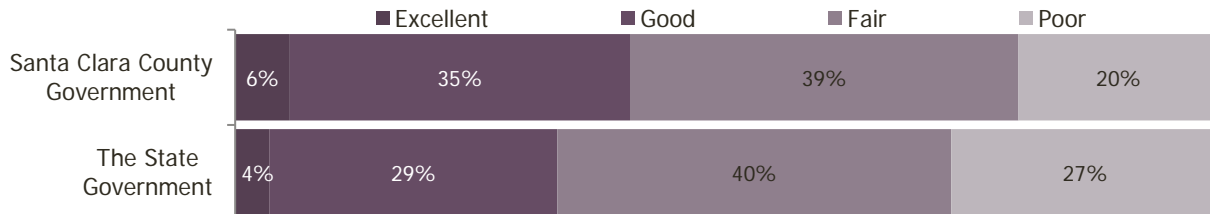
Survey respondents evaluated several services specific to San José. The highest rated service was the Mineta San José International Airport. Both the availability of flights and the overall ease of using the airport were reviewed positively by at least 7 in 10 residents. About 4 in 10 survey participants 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 José, about 4 in 10 felt positively about services provided by the Santa Clara County Government. A lower number (33%) 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 continues to be an important focus area; with some improvements observed.

As in past years, San José residents identified Safety as a top focus area for the community in the next two years. About one-third of respondents gave excellent or good marks to the overall feeling of safety in the city, about half felt safe downtown during the day and about 7 in 10 felt safe in their neighborhoods during the day. These assessments were all lower than national averages and remained stable from 2018 to 2019. Feelings of safety after dark were lower than feelings of safety during the day. While ratings for police services, crime prevention and emergency preparedness remained lower than national averages, more residents gave high marks to these services in 2019 compared to 2018.

## Residents have mixed feelings about San José's economy.

Residents also again identified Economy as a priority in the coming years. Economy-related ratings varied; 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. About half of respondents reported they worked in the community. Most of these ratings outshined those given in communities nationwide.

Affordability remains a major issue 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 about 3 in 10 residents. Fewer residents had a positive economic outlook in 2019 compared to 2018.

## Alternate mode travel is high in San José though automobile travel still a struggle

More San José residents reported that they had used public transportation instead of driving or had carpooled with other adults than those in comparison communities across the nation. Services to Mobility were all lower than the national benchmarks and were rated positively by fewer than half of respondents. However, assessments of traffic enforcement and street repair improved in 2019 compared to 2018.