

THE NCS™

The National Community Survey™

San José, CA

Trends Over Time

2020



POWERED BY POLCO

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About Trends Over Time

The National Community Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality research methods and directly comparable results across The NCS communities. The NCS captures residents' opinions considering ten central facets of a community:

- Economy
- Mobility
- Community Design
- Utilities
- Safety
- Natural Environment
- Parks and Recreation
- Health and Wellness
- Education, Arts and Culture
- Inclusivity and Engagement

This report discusses trends over time, comparing the 2020 ratings for the City of San José to its previous survey results in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.



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The NCS™ is presented by NRC in collaboration with ICMA.

NRC is a charter member of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative, providing clear disclosure of our sound and ethical survey research practices.

Understanding the Tables

Trend data for San José represent important comparison data and should be examined for improvements or declines¹. Deviations from stable trends over time, especially, represent opportunities for understanding how local policies, programs or public information may have affected residents' opinions.

Meaningful differences between survey years have been noted within the following tables as being “higher” or “lower” if the differences are greater than six percentage points between the 2019 and 2020 surveys, otherwise the comparisons between 2019 and 2020 are noted as being “similar.” Additionally, the benchmark comparisons for the current survey results are presented for reference.

Overall, ratings in San José for 2020 generally remained stable. Of the 115 items for which comparisons were available, 81 items were rated similarly in 2019 and 2020, 28 items showed a decrease in ratings and six showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Ratings for the overall economic health of San José, shopping opportunities and employment opportunities were given lower quality ratings in 2020 compared to 2019; however, ratings for the overall quality of business and service establishments in San José improved in 2020 over 2019.
- Four aspects of Parks and Recreation received lower ratings in 2020 compared to 2019 including City parks, recreation centers or facilities, recreation programs or classes and recreational opportunities. Interestingly, residents offered higher evaluations of their personal health in 2020 compared to 2019.
- Ratings for traffic flow on major streets and ease of travel by car in San José improved in 2020 compared to 2019, but overall quality of the transportation system in San José declined and fewer reported that they carpooled with other adults or children instead of driving alone in 2020.

¹ In 2020, The NCS survey was updated to include new and refreshed items. Consequently, some of the trends may be impacted due to wording modifications that could have potentially altered the meaning of the item for the respondent.

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Table 1: Quality of Life

Quality of Life Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat likely)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Overall image or reputation of San José	51%	46%	43%	51%	41%	33%	33%	32%	36%	31%	Similar	Much lower
The overall quality of life in San José	62%	60%	57%	59%	51%	44%	43%	42%	43%	42%	Similar	Much lower
San José as a place to live	73%	64%	65%	71%	67%	56%	56%	52%	53%	52%	Similar	Much lower
Recommend living in San José to someone who asks	80%	75%	78%	71%	66%	51%	45%	44%	44%	47%	Similar	Much lower
Remain in San José for the next five years	83%	81%	80%	82%	77%	69%	66%	67%	64%	63%	Similar	Lower

Table 2: Governance

Governance Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Overall confidence in San José government	NA	NA	NA	32%	30%	23%	28%	25%	29%	30%	Similar	Lower
The overall direction that San José is taking	31%	35%	37%	41%	37%	25%	30%	30%	31%	29%	Similar	Much lower
The value of services for the taxes paid to San José	26%	28%	32%	29%	25%	18%	20%	19%	23%	22%	Similar	Much lower
Generally acting in the best interest of the community	NA	NA	NA	40%	31%	26%	30%	29%	31%	33%	Similar	Lower
Being honest	NA	NA	NA	38%	30%	28%	29%	30%	34%	35%	Similar	Lower
Being open and transparent to the public	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	32%	NA	Lower
Informing residents about issues facing the community	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	36%	NA	Lower
The job San José government does at welcoming resident involvement	38%	37%	26%	37%	31%	29%	33%	34%	32%	31%	Similar	Lower
Treating all residents fairly	NA	NA	NA	38%	31%	29%	27%	29%	31%	34%	Similar	Lower
Treating residents with respect	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	43%	NA	Lower
Overall customer service by San José employees	57%	53%	64%	46%	39%	38%	40%	43%	47%	50%	Similar	Lower

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Governance Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Public information services	43%	44%	40%	51%	47%	52%	49%	50%	47%	49%	Similar	Lower
Quality of services provided by the City of San José	46%	42%	45%	54%	48%	38%	41%	39%	45%	41%	Similar	Much lower
Quality of services provided by the Federal Government	33%	32%	34%	40%	34%	32%	25%	23%	26%	23%	Similar	Lower

Table 3: Economy

Economy Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat positive)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Overall economic health of San José	NA	NA	NA	54%	52%	47%	50%	50%	50%	44%	Lower	Lower
Economic development	32%	34%	28%	48%	42%	36%	40%	41%	41%	41%	Similar	Similar
Overall quality of business and service establishments in San José	59%	66%	57%	58%	43%	51%	49%	53%	54%	61%	Higher	Similar
Variety of business and service establishments in San José	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	62%	NA	Similar
Vibrancy of downtown/commercial area	NA	NA	NA	40%	33%	31%	29%	31%	30%	30%	Similar	Lower
Shopping opportunities	76%	77%	75%	75%	70%	76%	75%	74%	73%	67%	Lower	Similar
San José as a place to visit	NA	NA	NA	49%	43%	34%	34%	32%	36%	31%	Similar	Much lower
San José as a place to work	66%	74%	68%	73%	71%	65%	63%	63%	64%	65%	Similar	Similar
Employment opportunities	46%	51%	45%	61%	53%	56%	58%	64%	64%	57%	Lower	Higher
Cost of living in San José	NA	NA	NA	11%	10%	5%	5%	6%	5%	4%	Similar	Much lower
Economy will have positive impact on income	16%	26%	29%	37%	37%	28%	28%	33%	22%	18%	Similar	Lower
NOT experiencing housing costs stress	41%	48%	37%	49%	51%	51%	50%	65%	63%	59%	Similar	Similar

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Table 4: Mobility

Mobility Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, yes in the last 12 months)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Overall quality of the transportation system in San José	NA	NA	NA	53%	48%	38%	34%	35%	36%	30%	Lower	Much lower
Traffic flow on major streets	23%	26%	23%	32%	23%	17%	14%	16%	15%	22%	Higher	Lower
Ease of travel by car in San José	40%	50%	40%	48%	40%	30%	29%	28%	30%	45%	Higher	Lower
Ease of travel by public transportation in San José	48%	41%	42%	38%	34%	23%	19%	20%	17%	21%	Similar	Lower
Ease of travel by bicycle in San José	37%	40%	34%	44%	39%	31%	31%	36%	33%	35%	Similar	Lower
Ease of walking in San José	46%	53%	43%	52%	47%	40%	41%	41%	41%	41%	Similar	Lower
Ease of public parking	NA	NA	NA	38%	27%	26%	22%	25%	26%	28%	Similar	Lower
Bus or transit services	50%	43%	55%	46%	52%	36%	35%	34%	33%	30%	Similar	Lower
Traffic enforcement	57%	37%	43%	40%	29%	24%	23%	23%	29%	29%	Similar	Much lower
Traffic signal timing	34%	37%	42%	43%	37%	32%	31%	31%	35%	39%	Similar	Similar
Street repair	21%	15%	29%	28%	24%	12%	14%	14%	21%	22%	Similar	Lower
Street cleaning	42%	32%	45%	34%	35%	31%	30%	26%	29%	30%	Similar	Much lower
Street lighting	42%	35%	46%	40%	45%	42%	41%	41%	45%	45%	Similar	Lower
Sidewalk maintenance	35%	30%	43%	35%	30%	28%	28%	28%	30%	31%	Similar	Lower
Used bus, rail, subway, or other public transportation instead of driving	NA	NA	NA	48%	48%	45%	43%	44%	41%	38%	Similar	Higher
Carpooled with other adults or children instead of driving alone	NA	NA	NA	60%	63%	56%	57%	58%	62%	53%	Lower	Higher
Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	NA	NA	65%	57%	56%	56%	59%	57%	63%	Similar	Similar

Prior to 2020, “Overall quality of the transportation system” was “Overall ease of getting to the places you usually have to visit.” Differences in ratings may be at least partially attributable to changes in question wording and should be interpreted cautiously.

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Table 5: Community Design

Community Design Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Overall design or layout of San José's residential and commercial areas	NA	NA	NA	46%	41%	32%	27%	27%	31%	37%	Higher	Lower
Overall appearance of San José	54%	48%	43%	45%	34%	30%	25%	24%	26%	27%	Similar	Much lower
Your neighborhood as a place to live	67%	64%	61%	67%	63%	63%	58%	60%	61%	58%	Similar	Lower
Overall quality of new development in San José	58%	53%	49%	46%	44%	37%	38%	39%	37%	30%	Lower	Lower
Well-planned residential growth	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	20%	NA	Much lower
Well-planned commercial growth	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	29%	NA	Lower
Well-designed neighborhoods	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	28%	NA	Much lower
Preservation of the historical or cultural character of the community	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	39%	NA	Lower
Public places where people want to spend time	NA	NA	NA	50%	40%	32%	32%	30%	33%	30%	Similar	Much lower
Variety of housing options	50%	39%	37%	34%	19%	19%	18%	16%	18%	23%	Similar	Much lower
Availability of affordable quality housing	20%	21%	22%	15%	10%	5%	6%	6%	5%	6%	Similar	Much lower
Land use, planning, and zoning	32%	34%	34%	34%	34%	24%	21%	21%	25%	22%	Similar	Lower
Code enforcement	28%	25%	37%	32%	22%	15%	15%	13%	19%	13%	Lower	Much lower

Table 6: Utilities

Utilities Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in San José	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	48%	NA	Lower
Affordable high-speed internet access	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	33%	NA	Lower
Power (electric and/or gas) utility	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	50%	45%	Similar	Much lower
Garbage collection	74%	77%	77%	71%	72%	72%	71%	71%	75%	69%	Lower	Lower

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Utilities Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Drinking water	51%	53%	53%	52%	52%	47%	47%	48%	51%	56%	Similar	Lower
Sewer services	58%	59%	65%	59%	59%	63%	63%	66%	69%	67%	Similar	Similar
Storm water management	55%	54%	59%	53%	48%	53%	50%	52%	56%	56%	Similar	Similar
Utility billing	NA	NA	NA	50%	53%	48%	45%	47%	46%	39%	Lower	Lower

Table 7: Safety

Safety Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Overall feeling of safety in San José	NA	NA	NA	46%	40%	33%	36%	32%	37%	33%	Similar	Much lower
Police services	61%	54%	51%	46%	44%	29%	37%	34%	44%	36%	Lower	Much lower
Crime prevention	38%	28%	33%	31%	25%	14%	20%	16%	22%	22%	Similar	Much lower
Animal control	46%	45%	46%	49%	44%	43%	43%	45%	49%	47%	Similar	Similar
Ambulance or emergency medical services	83%	73%	73%	68%	76%	71%	75%	77%	76%	67%	Lower	Lower
Fire services	84%	80%	81%	75%	74%	75%	78%	82%	84%	80%	Similar	Similar
Fire prevention and education	58%	56%	52%	54%	46%	46%	48%	52%	55%	56%	Similar	Lower
Emergency preparedness	37%	37%	29%	46%	37%	39%	32%	31%	42%	43%	Similar	Lower
In your neighborhood during the day	87%	84%	82%	83%	78%	76%	76%	68%	72%	77%	Similar	Lower
In San José's downtown/commercial area during the day	71%	62%	58%	64%	57%	57%	55%	53%	53%	52%	Similar	Much lower
From property crime	32%	28%	30%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	36%	NA	Much lower
From violent crime	46%	45%	40%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	48%	NA	Much lower
From fire, flood, or other natural disaster	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	60%	NA	Lower

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Table 8: Natural Environment

Natural Environment Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Overall quality of natural environment in San José	43%	48%	44%	50%	43%	41%	36%	40%	42%	41%	Similar	Much lower
Cleanliness of San José	52%	41%	40%	34%	25%	22%	20%	17%	20%	18%	Similar	Much lower
Water resources	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	22%	NA	Much lower
Air quality	43%	48%	42%	41%	37%	43%	38%	38%	39%	28%	Lower	Much lower
Preservation of natural areas	38%	35%	41%	40%	38%	41%	41%	41%	42%	46%	Similar	Lower
San José open space	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	43%	NA	Lower
Recycling	74%	78%	79%	71%	72%	71%	70%	70%	70%	54%	Lower	Lower
Yard waste pick-up	76%	72%	68%	70%	66%	71%	69%	71%	73%	65%	Lower	Similar

Table 9: Parks and Recreation

Parks and Recreation Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	48%	NA	Much lower
Availability of paths and walking trails	45%	45%	50%	56%	44%	43%	43%	43%	43%	45%	Similar	Lower
City parks	68%	55%	64%	61%	56%	55%	56%	55%	59%	51%	Lower	Much lower
Recreational opportunities	53%	55%	57%	54%	39%	49%	53%	51%	51%	44%	Lower	Lower
Recreation programs or classes	52%	43%	44%	56%	50%	54%	53%	53%	59%	48%	Lower	Lower
Recreation centers or facilities	54%	43%	48%	55%	48%	57%	50%	53%	58%	48%	Lower	Lower
Fitness opportunities	NA	NA	NA	57%	47%	52%	54%	54%	53%	51%	Similar	Lower

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Table 10: Health and Wellness

Health and Wellness Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, excellent/very good)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Overall health and wellness opportunities in San José	NA	NA	NA	61%	56%	53%	52%	49%	52%	49%	Similar	Lower
Health services	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	50%	NA	Lower
Availability of affordable quality health care	28%	44%	32%	49%	42%	48%	47%	45%	43%	42%	Similar	Lower
Availability of preventive health services	NA	NA	NA	55%	47%	52%	49%	52%	47%	47%	Similar	Lower
Availability of affordable quality mental health care	NA	NA	NA	42%	35%	28%	28%	26%	23%	27%	Similar	Lower
Availability of affordable quality food	52%	57%	50%	60%	49%	57%	54%	54%	49%	48%	Similar	Lower
In very good to excellent health	NA	NA	NA	64%	56%	61%	63%	64%	61%	68%	Higher	Similar

Table 11: Education, Arts, and Culture

Education, Arts, and Culture Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	NA	NA	NA	58%	57%	56%	61%	56%	57%	48%	Lower	Lower
Opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities	64%	60%	53%	60%	52%	56%	56%	58%	57%	47%	Lower	Similar
Opportunities to attend special events and festivals	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	46%	NA	Lower
Community support for the arts	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	41%	NA	Lower
Public library services	68%	62%	62%	66%	69%	74%	75%	77%	78%	78%	Similar	Similar
Availability of affordable quality child care/preschool	16%	27%	20%	45%	37%	25%	26%	23%	22%	21%	Similar	Much lower
K-12 education	NA	NA	NA	48%	39%	41%	42%	36%	41%	36%	Similar	Much lower
Adult educational opportunities	NA	NA	NA	53%	54%	50%	50%	49%	48%	43%	Similar	Similar

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Table 12: Inclusivity and Engagement

Inclusivity and Engagement Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	24%	NA	Much lower
Sense of community	36%	42%	37%	36%	32%	27%	27%	26%	28%	27%	Similar	Much lower
Sense of civic/community pride	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	28%	NA	Much lower
Neighborhoodness of San José	NA	NA	NA	41%	36%	36%	37%	36%	36%	32%	Similar	Lower
San José as a place to raise children	53%	63%	63%	53%	54%	45%	43%	41%	44%	43%	Similar	Much lower
San José as a place to retire	26%	28%	28%	28%	20%	14%	13%	12%	13%	14%	Similar	Much lower
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	67%	71%	60%	65%	60%	65%	63%	65%	63%	58%	Similar	Similar
Making all residents feel welcome	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	40%	NA	Much lower
Attracting people from diverse backgrounds	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	64%	NA	Similar
Valuing/respecting residents from diverse backgrounds	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	59%	NA	Similar
Taking care of vulnerable residents	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	22%	NA	Much lower
Opportunities to participate in social events and activities	57%	46%	50%	56%	45%	50%	50%	52%	52%	39%	Lower	Lower
Opportunities to volunteer	70%	61%	57%	62%	59%	71%	71%	71%	70%	59%	Lower	Similar
Opportunities to participate in community matters	55%	53%	42%	53%	47%	60%	55%	55%	57%	46%	Lower	Lower

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Table 13: Participation

Participation Items Percent having done each in last 12 months, or having done each a few times a week or more	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Contacted San José for help or information	32%	30%	45%	44%	40%	52%	52%	55%	50%	46%	Similar	Similar
Contacted San José elected officials to express your opinion	NA	NA	NA	19%	18%	27%	33%	32%	27%	27%	Similar	Similar
Attended a local public meeting	18%	15%	19%	19%	18%	28%	31%	32%	27%	26%	Similar	Similar
Watched (online or on television) a local public meeting	27%	25%	28%	20%	19%	20%	27%	26%	24%	34%	Higher	Higher
Volunteered your time to some group/activity in San José	37%	43%	43%	46%	39%	43%	43%	47%	46%	37%	Lower	Similar
Campaigned or advocated for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	NA	NA	27%	22%	29%	36%	35%	30%	20%	Lower	Similar
Voted in your most recent local election	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	78%	NA	Similar
Access the internet from your home using a computer, laptop or tablet computer	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	98%	NA	Similar
Access the internet from your cell phone	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	95%	NA	Similar
Visit social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	79%	NA	Similar
Use or check email	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	99%	NA	Similar
Share your opinions online	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	36%	NA	Similar
Shop online	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	55%	NA	Similar

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Table 14: Focus Areas

Focus Areas Percent rating each as "essential" or "very important"	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 rating compared to 2019	Comparison to benchmark
Overall economic health of San José	NA	NA	NA	91%	86%	89%	87%	90%	88%	87%	Similar	Similar
Overall quality of the transportation system in San José	NA	NA	NA	81%	77%	80%	84%	84%	82%	75%	Lower	Similar
Overall design or layout of San José's residential and commercial areas	NA	NA	NA	72%	68%	70%	71%	74%	70%	70%	Similar	Similar
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in San José	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	85%	NA	Similar
Overall feeling of safety in San José	NA	NA	NA	94%	94%	94%	95%	94%	94%	92%	Similar	Similar
Overall quality of natural environment in San José	NA	NA	NA	79%	77%	74%	78%	78%	81%	80%	Similar	Similar
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	75%	NA	Similar
Overall health and wellness opportunities in San José	NA	NA	NA	77%	74%	64%	66%	64%	71%	72%	Similar	Similar
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	NA	NA	NA	85%	81%	73%	74%	73%	80%	72%	Lower	Similar
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	NA	NA	NA	76%	75%	73%	72%	72%	74%	62%	Lower	Much lower

Prior to 2020, "Overall quality of the transportation system" was "Overall ease of getting to the places you usually have to visit." Differences in ratings may be at least partially attributable to changes in question wording and should be interpreted cautiously.