

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Las Cruces, NM

Community Livability Report

2017



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About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Las Cruces. 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.

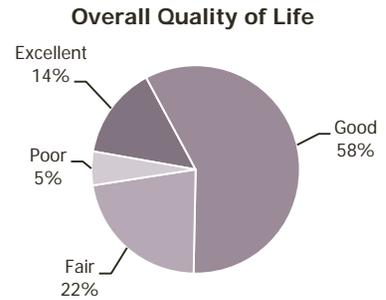
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 345 residents of the City of Las Cruces. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% 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 Las Cruces

About three-quarters of residents rated the quality of life in Las Cruces as excellent or good. This was similar to the national benchmark comparison and to the 2015 rating for quality of life (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.

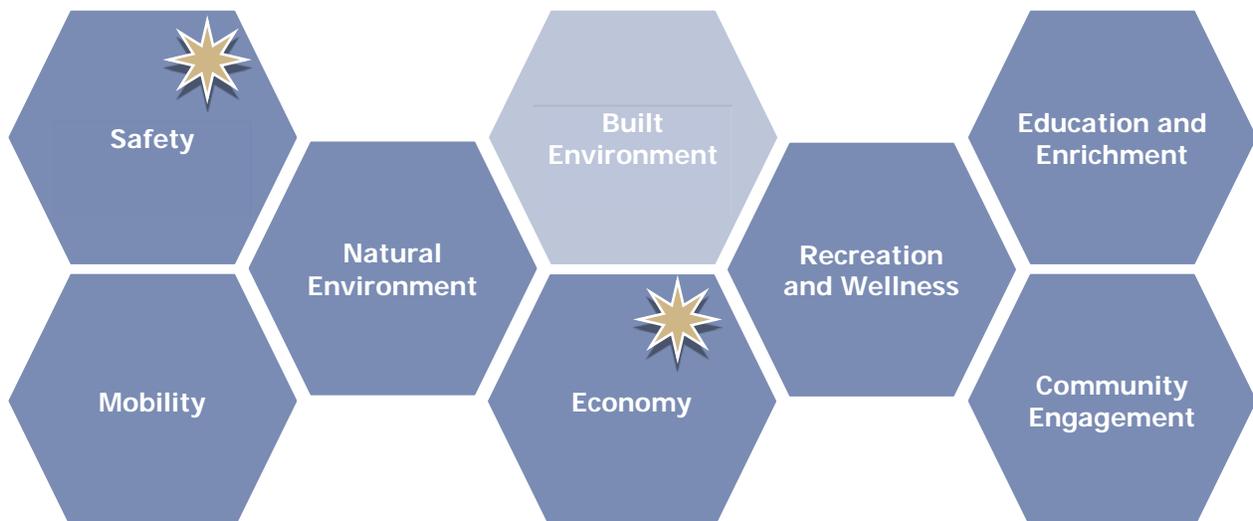
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Las Cruces community in the coming two years. Las Cruces residents gave favorable ratings to each of these facets of community. Ratings for Mobility, Natural Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement were also positive and similar to other communities; however, the facet of Built Environment received ratings lower than those observed elsewhere. 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 Las Cruces' unique questions.

Legend

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

- Most important



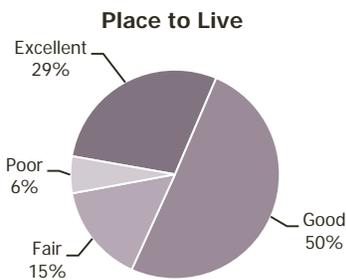
Community Characteristics

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 Las Cruces, 79% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Las Cruces as a place to live were similar to 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 Las Cruces as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Las Cruces and its overall appearance. About 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to Las Cruces as a place to retire and this rating was higher than the benchmark comparison. About three-quarters of respondents favorably rated their neighborhood as a place to live, while about 6 in 10 were pleased with the overall image and overall appearance of the City (these aspects were similar to the benchmark). Similarly, about 6 in 10 respondents gave excellent or good ratings to Las Cruces as a place to raise children, but this rating was lower than those given in other communities across the nation.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Most residents reported feeling safe in their neighborhood and in Las Cruces' downtown/commercial area during the day and about 7 in 10 positively rated the overall feeling of safety in the city; these ratings were similar to the benchmark. While evaluations of Mobility-related aspects tended to vary (from 70% excellent or good for overall ease of travel to 35% for ease of travel by public transportation), all of these were similar to ratings given elsewhere. Within Natural Environment, about three-quarters of residents gave favorable marks to the quality of the overall natural environment and to air quality, which were similar to the benchmark, but only about half gave positive ratings to the cleanliness of the city, which was lower. Ratings within the facets of Built Environment, Economy and Recreation and Wellness tended to be less positive; most items within these facets received positive ratings from less than half of respondents and tended to be rated lower than the benchmark. All aspects of Education and Enrichment were similar to the benchmark with the exception of K-12 education, which was lower. Additionally all aspects of Community Engagement received ratings similar to those observed elsewhere with the exception of opportunities to attend social events and activities, which was lower than the benchmark.

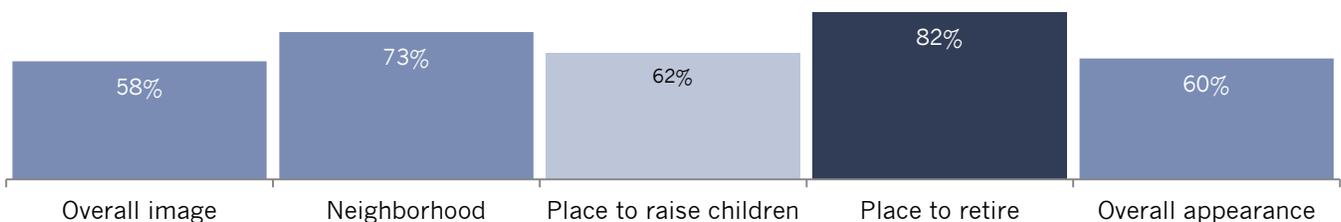


Most aspects of Community Characteristics remained stable over time; however, a few aspects saw a change in rating. Items trending down were the quality of business and service establishments and of K-12 education, and items trending up were ease of walking in the City, overall natural environment, Las Cruces as a place to visit and the cost of living (for more information please see the *Trends Over Time* report under separate cover).

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



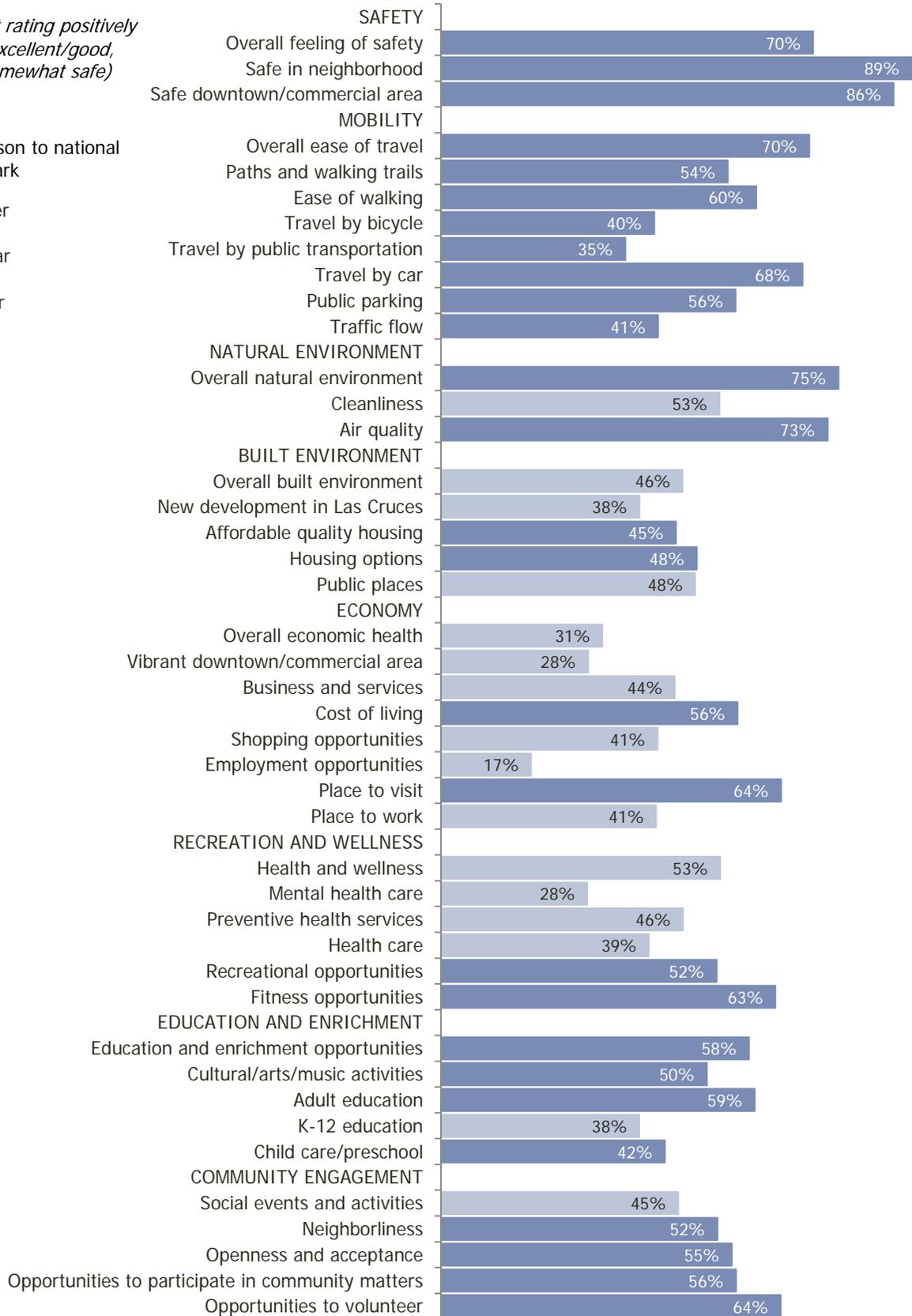
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

How well does the government of Las Cruces meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Las Cruces as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. In Las Cruces, about two-thirds of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of City services while fewer than half gave positive marks to the services provided by the Federal Government; both of these ratings were similar to the national comparison.

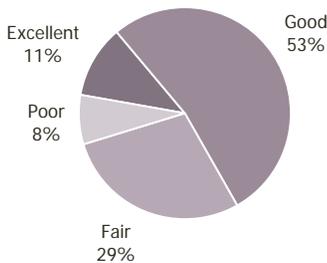
Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Las Cruces' leadership and governance. About 6 in 10 respondents gave favorable ratings to customer service provided by the City, and about half were pleased with the overall direction the City is taking. Less than half of residents gave positive ratings to all remaining aspects of government performance and all of these items were rated similar to the benchmark.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Las Cruces. In general, ratings across the eight facets of community livability tended to be similar to or lower than ratings observed in other communities nationwide. In Safety, while the rating for fire services was similar to the benchmark (79% excellent or good), all other aspects were rated lower than the benchmark. Less than half of residents positively rated all aspects of Mobility and ratings for traffic enforcement, street repair, street cleaning, snow removal and traffic signal timing were lower than ratings observed elsewhere. Within Built Environment, more than half of respondents favorably rated sewer services, power utility and utility billing and these items were similar to the benchmark; however, about 4 in 10 residents or less gave positive ratings to storm drainage, land use, planning and zoning, code enforcement and cable television and these ratings were lower than the national comparison.

Ratings for all aspects of Economy, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment were also lower than those given in other communities across the nation.

Eight aspects of Governance decreased from 2015 to 2017. Items that declined from 2015 to 2017 included: fire services; ambulance/EMS services; emergency preparedness; street cleaning; storm drainage; land use, planning and zoning; code enforcement and economic development. All other ratings within Governance remained stable between survey iterations.

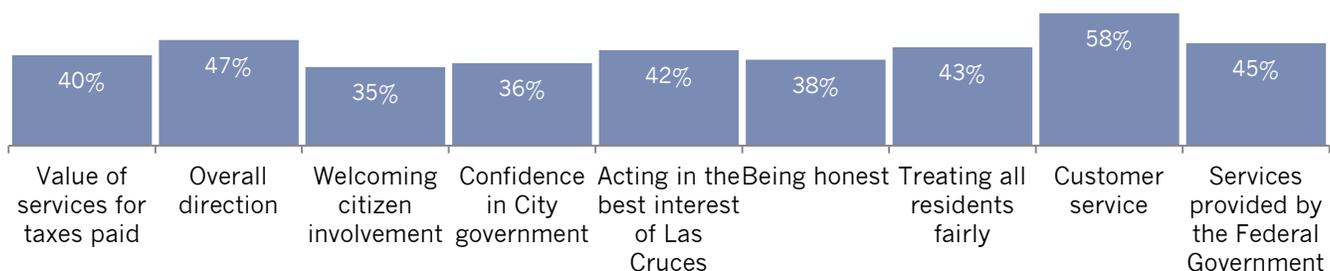
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



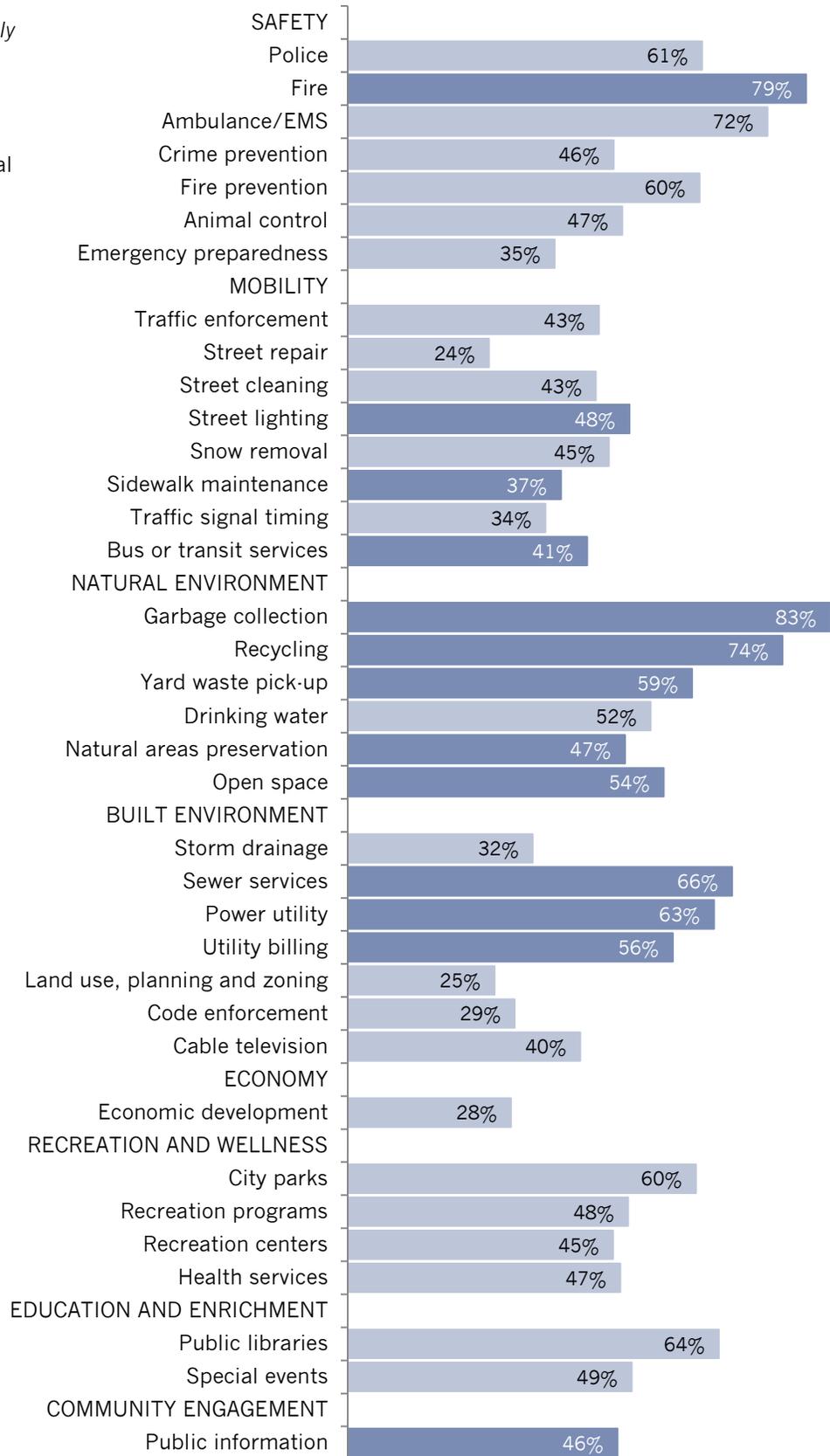
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

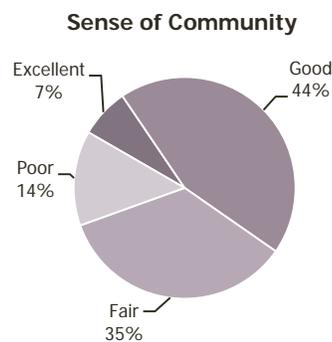


Participation

Are the residents of Las Cruces 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 half of Las Cruces residents gave positive ratings to the sense of community in the city. Further, about 8 in 10 residents indicated that they planned to remain in the City for the next five years and would recommend living in Las Cruces to someone who asked. All of these items were rated similar to ratings observed elsewhere.

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 across all facets tended to be similar to rates seen in other communities nationwide. In Mobility, about 4 in 10 residents had walked or biked instead of driving in the 12 months prior to the survey and only about 1 in 10 had used public transportation instead of driving; these rates were lower than those observed elsewhere. Within Built Environment, about two-thirds of residents reported not being under housing cost stress (a rate similar to the benchmark), but only about one-third had not reported a code violation (a rate lower than the benchmark). In Economy, nearly all residents had purchased goods or services in Las Cruces in the 12 months prior to the survey and about 6 in 10 reported that they worked in Las Cruces; the proportion of those who worked in the City was higher than observed elsewhere. While levels of participation tended to vary widely across the remaining facets of community livability, all were similar to the benchmark comparison.



Most aspects of Participation remained stable over time; however, one aspect increased and one decreased in 2017 compared to 2015. Fewer residents in 2017 indicated that they had contacted Las Cruces employees and more indicated they had attended a City-sponsored event in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Percent rating positively
(e.g., very/somewhat likely,
yes)

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



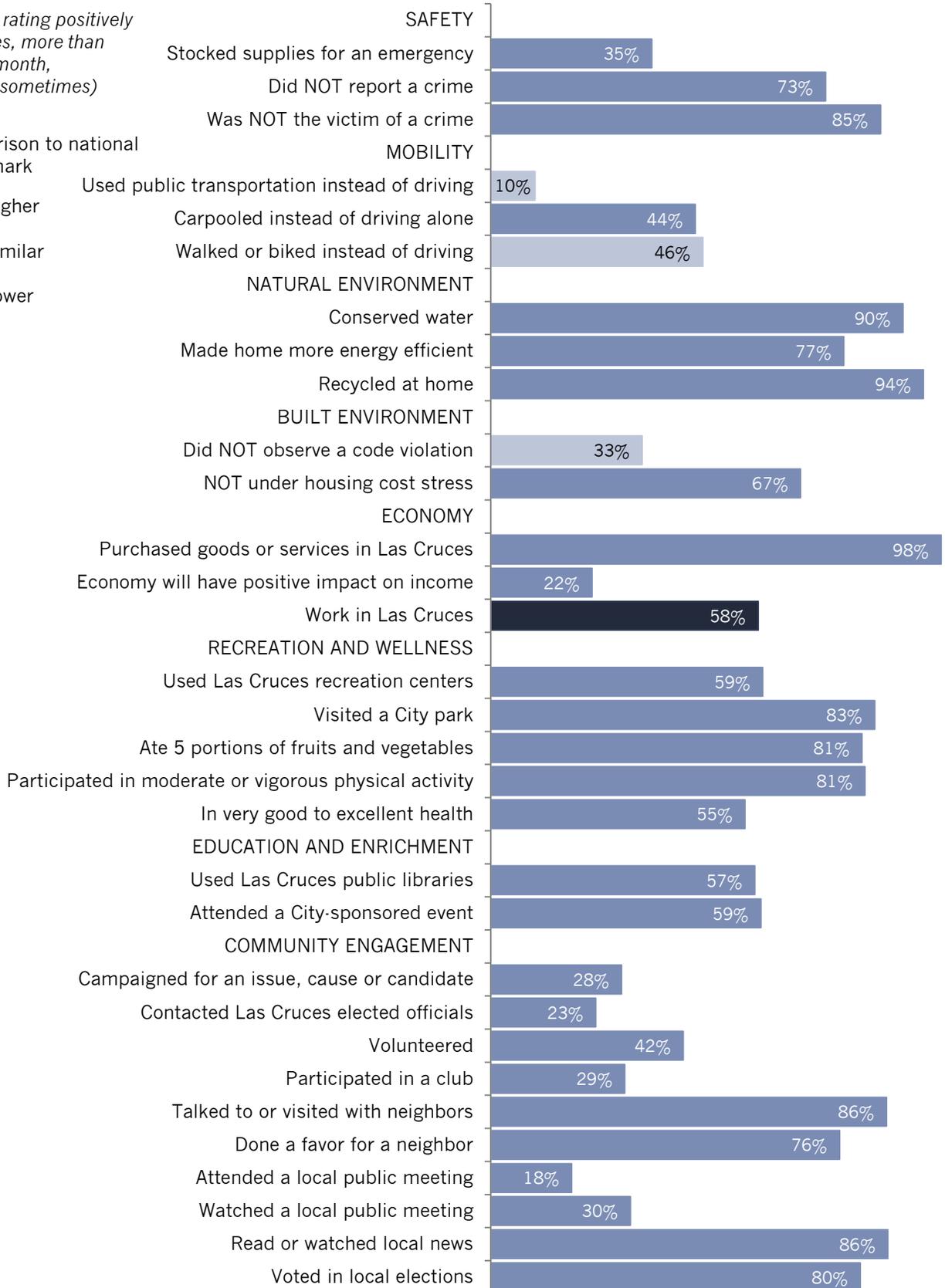
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

Percent rating positively
(e.g., yes, more than
once a month,
always/sometimes)

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

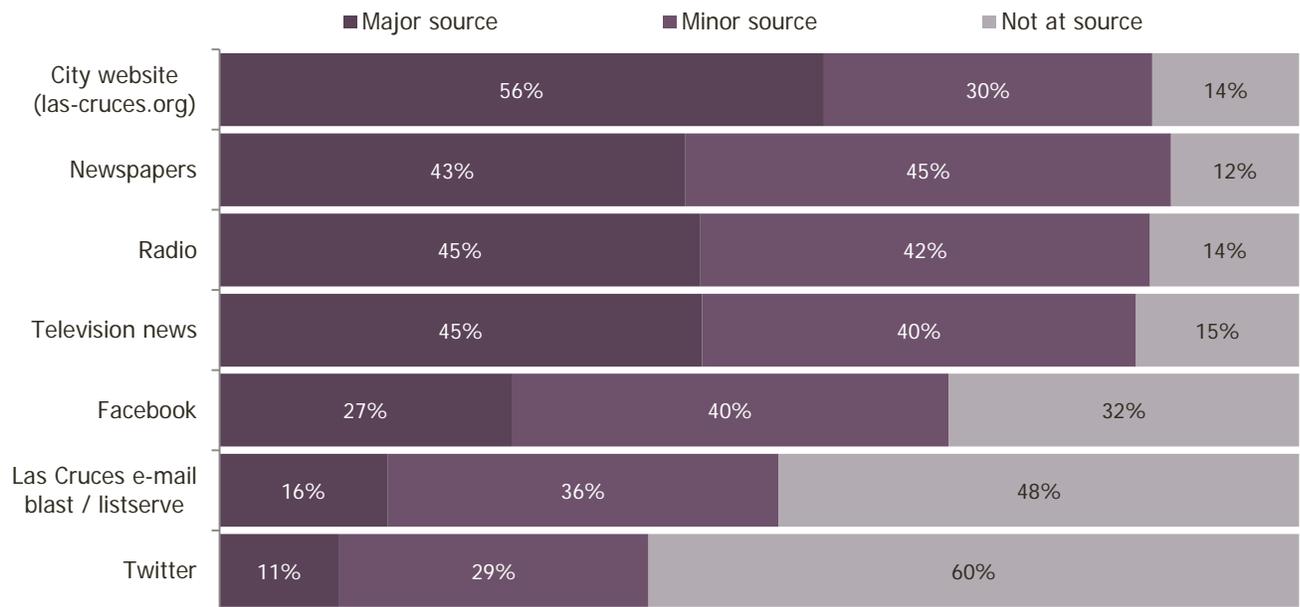


Special Topics

The City of Las Cruces included four questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked residents to consider sources of information about the City and to indicate whether they found each to be a major source, minor source, or not a source of information. More than half of Las Cruces residents found the City website to be a major source of City information, and another 3 in 10 considered it a minor source. More than 8 in 10 considered newspapers, radio and television news to be a major or minor source of information about the City. Only about 4 in 10 residents indicated Twitter as a major or minor source of City information.

Figure 4: Sources of City Information

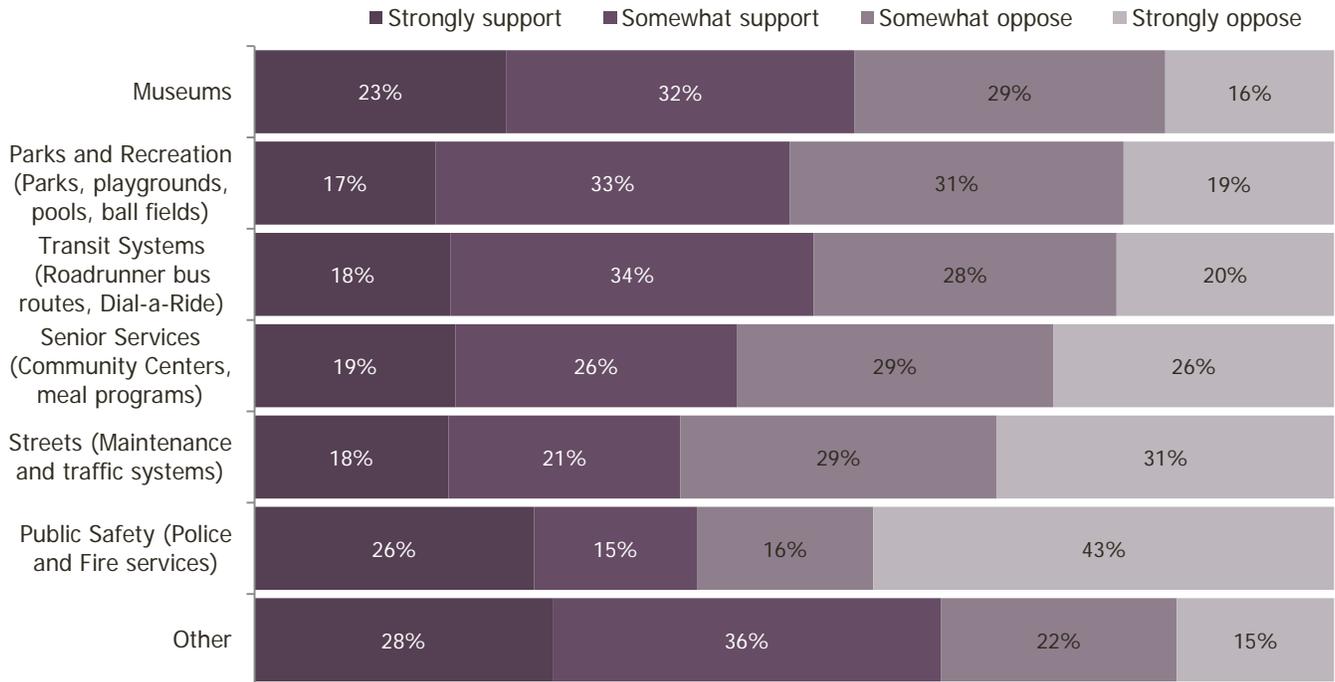
Please indicate how much of a source, if at all, you consider each of the following to be for obtaining information about the City government and its activities, events and services:



The next question asked residents to indicate their support for, or opposition to, reduced spending on several different types of City services. Residents were most likely to indicate support for reducing funding to museums and transit systems, but it is noteworthy that about half of residents still indicated opposition to reducing funding for these items. Residents were most likely to indicate opposition to reducing funding for streets, public safety and street maintenance (at least 55% strongly or somewhat opposed reductions in these areas). Residents were least opposed to reducing services in the “other” category.

Figure 5: Support for Service Reductions

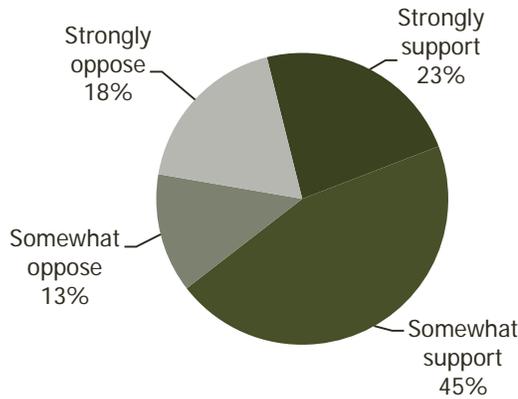
If the City had to reduce spending due to reduced revenues, to what extent would you support or oppose service reductions in each of the following areas?



The following question asked residents to indicate their support or opposition regarding a tax increase to improve roads, traffic management and other mobility-related items. About two-thirds of residents somewhat or strongly supported a tax increase for this purpose, and only about 2 in 10 strongly opposed it.

Figure 6: Support for Transit Tax Increase

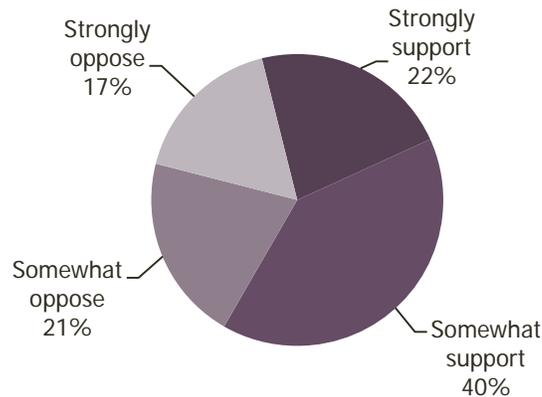
To what extent would you support or oppose a tax increase for better roads, traffic management, transit/public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian trails to boost quality of life and economic development?



The final special-interest question on the survey asked residents to indicate their support or opposition regarding a tax increase to fund quality of life-related improvements. About 6 in 10 residents strongly or somewhat supported a tax increase for this purpose, and only about 2 in 10 strongly opposed it.

Figure 7: Support for Quality of Life Tax Increase

To what extent would you support or oppose a tax increase for quality of life issues in Las Cruces, such as parks, ball fields, community centers, median landscaping and swimming pools?



Conclusions

Las Cruces residents continue to enjoy a positive quality of life.

About three-quarters of survey respondents positively rated their overall quality of life in Las Cruces and the City as a place to live. About 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to Las Cruces as a place to retire, and this rating was higher than the national comparison. About three-quarters of respondents favorably rated their neighborhood as a place to live, while about 6 in 10 were pleased with the overall image and overall appearance of the City. About 8 in 10 residents indicated that they planned to remain in the City for the next five years and would recommend living in Las Cruces to someone who asked.

Safety is important to residents and may be a potential area of focus for the City.

Residents indicated that Safety was an important facet for the City to focus on in the coming two years. Most residents reported feeling safe in their neighborhood and in Las Cruces' downtown/commercial area during the day and about 7 in 10 positively rated the overall feeling of safety in the city. However, while the rating for fire services was similar to ratings seen in other communities, all other Safety-related services received ratings lower than seen elsewhere. Additionally, ratings decreased from 2015 to 2017 for fire services, ambulance/EMS services and emergency preparedness. When asked to indicate their support for, or opposition to, reduced spending on several different types of City services, about 6 in 10 residents indicated opposition to reducing funding for public safety.

Residents continue to prioritize the Economy.

As in 2015, residents identified Economy as another top priority for the Las Cruces community. More than half of residents gave positive marks to the cost of living in Las Cruces and the city as a place to visit; however, other Economy-related aspects, including the overall economic health of the city, the vibrancy of the downtown/commercial area, the overall quality of business and service establishments, shopping opportunities, employment opportunities and economic development, received positive ratings from less than half of residents and were lower than the national comparison. Further, the ratings for business and service establishments and economic development decreased since 2015.