

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Victoria, MN

Community Livability Report

2018



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About

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

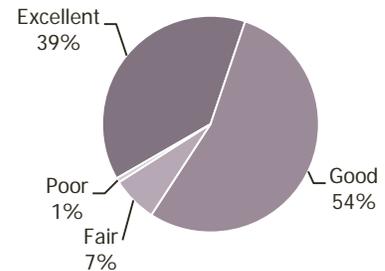
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 612 residents of the City of Victoria. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% for all respondents. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Victoria

Almost all residents (93%) rated the quality of life in Victoria as excellent or good. This rating was similar to those given in other communities across the nation (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

Overall Quality of Life



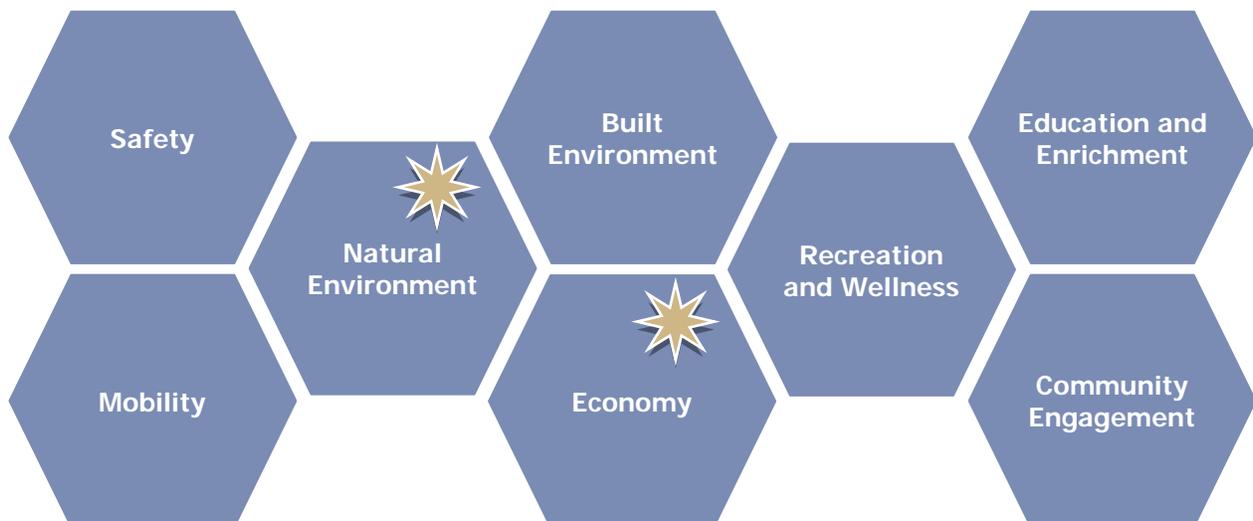
Shown below are the eight facets of community. The color of each community facet summarizes how residents rated it across the three sections of the survey that represent the pillars of a community – Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation. When most ratings across the three pillars were 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 2015, residents identified Economy and Natural Environment as priorities for the Victoria community in the coming two years. These facets, as well as all other facets of community livability, were rated similar to the national benchmark. 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 Victoria’s unique questions.

Legend

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

- Most important

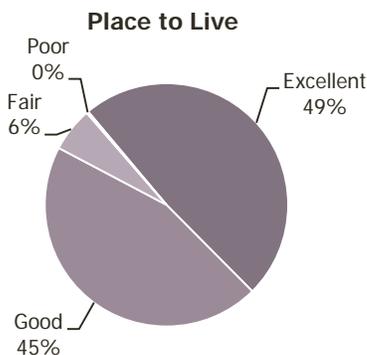


Community Characteristics

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 Victoria, 94% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Victoria 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 Victoria as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Victoria and its overall appearance. At least 9 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to their neighborhood as a place to live, Victoria as a place to raise children and the overall appearance of the city; these ratings were all higher than those given in other communities across the nation. About three-quarters of residents positively rated the overall image of Victoria and the city as a place to retire and these ratings were similar to those given elsewhere.



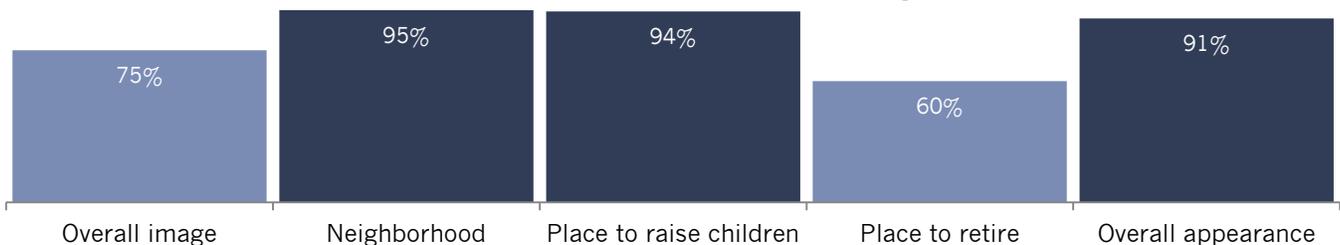
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Ratings within the facets of Safety and Natural Environment were particularly strong, with almost all residents giving positive reviews to each of these aspects; further, nearly all ratings were higher than the national benchmark. A majority of residents gave positive evaluations to almost all aspects of Built Environment, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement, and these aspects were rated similar to other communities, except for K-12 education and the neighborliness of residents, which were higher.

Ratings in other facets of community livability tended to be more mixed. In Mobility, while at least three-quarters of residents were pleased with paths and walking trails, ease of walking and ease of travel by bicycle (all of which were above average), 3 in 10 residents or less gave favorable marks to ease of travel by public transportation and public parking (which were below average). Compared to 2015, resident evaluations of traffic flow and ease of travel by car decreased (for more information see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover).

In Economy, ratings for shopping opportunities, employment opportunities and Victoria as a place to work were lower than the benchmark, but increases from 2015 were noted in the areas of shopping, Victoria as place to visit, downtown vibrancy and business and service establishments.

Health care, mental health care and food-related ratings in Recreation and Wellness were rated lower than those seen in other communities across the U.S., but were similar to ratings given in 2015.

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



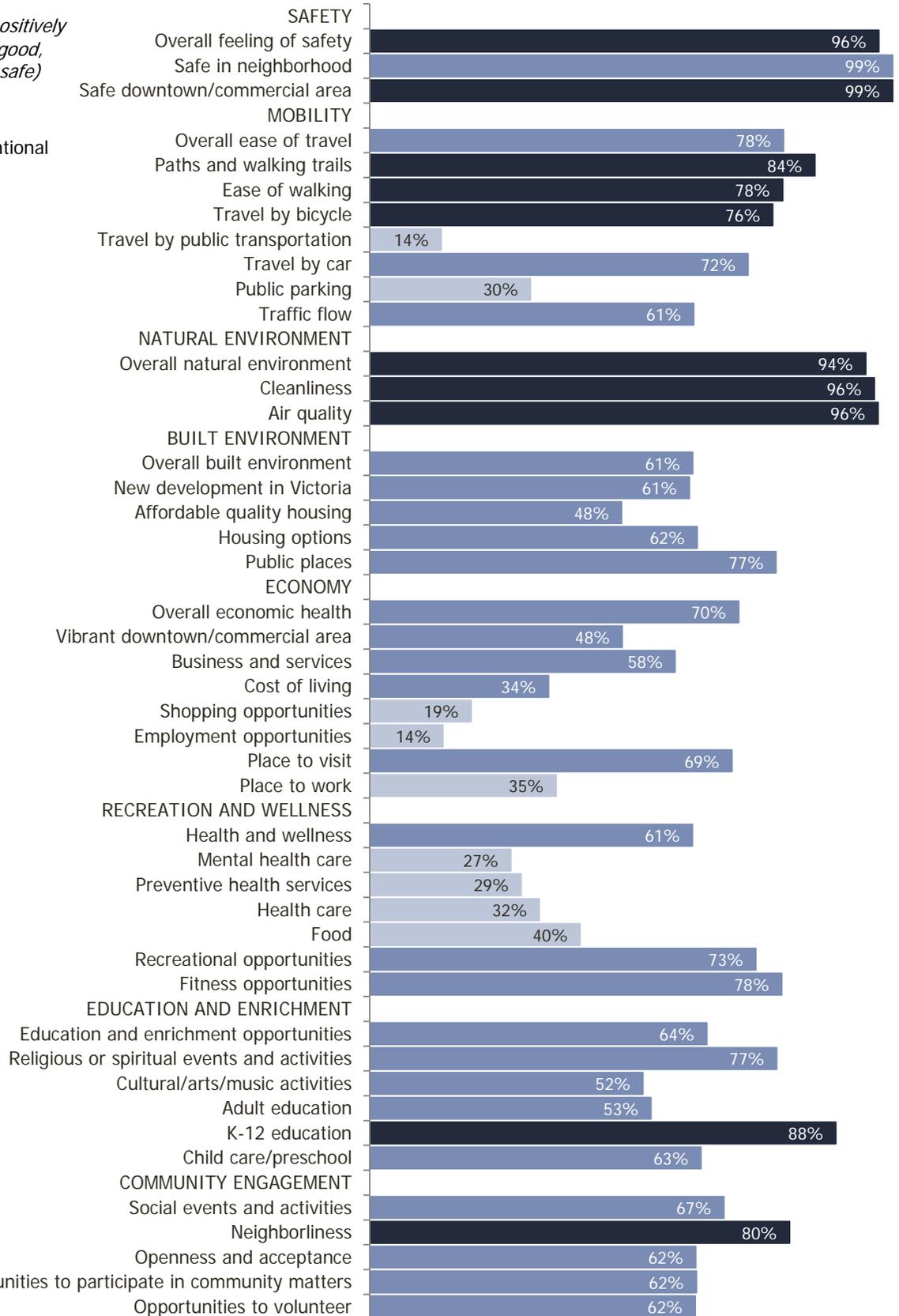
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

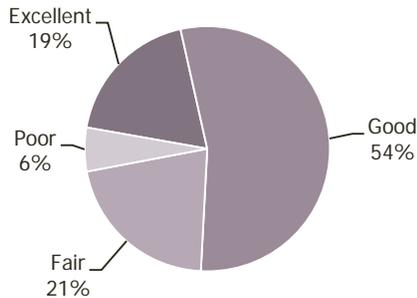
How well does the government of Victoria meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Victoria as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About three-quarters of residents gave positive ratings to the overall quality of City services and nearly half were pleased by the services provided by the Federal Government; both of these ratings were similar to those given in other communities across the nation.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Victoria’s leadership and governance. More than 8 in 10 residents gave favorable marks to the customer service provided by the City, which was similar to the national benchmark. However, less than half of residents positively rated the remaining aspects of government performance; many of these ratings were lower than those given in other communities and decreased significantly since 2015.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Victoria. Service ratings across all facets of community livability tended to be strong and similar to the national benchmark. Four services (crime prevention, street repair, sidewalk maintenance and traffic signal timing) received above average ratings, while three services (bus or transit services, cable television and health services) were below average. When compared to 2015, ratings in 2018 for most City services remained stable, with a few exceptions.

Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



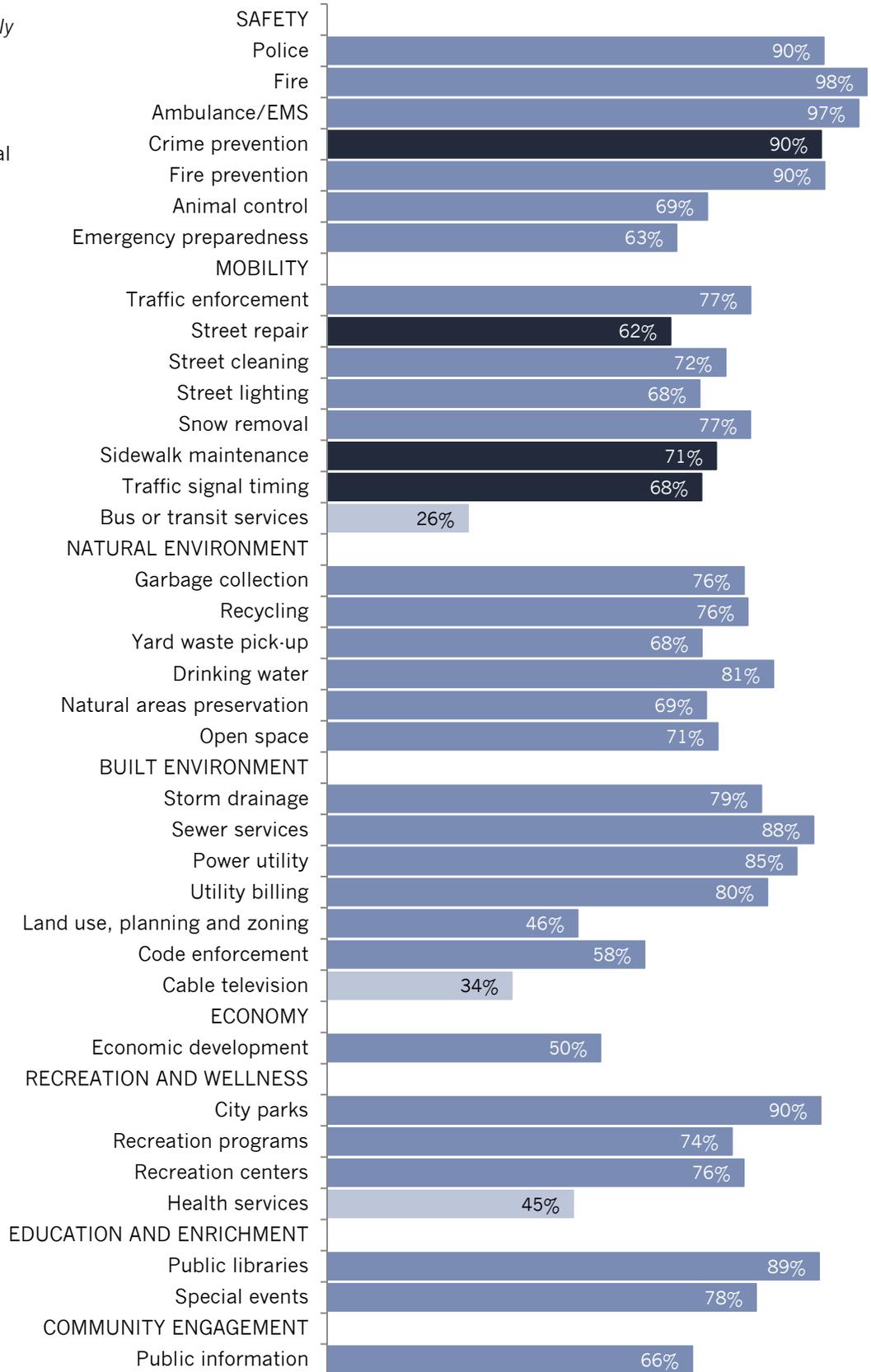
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Participation

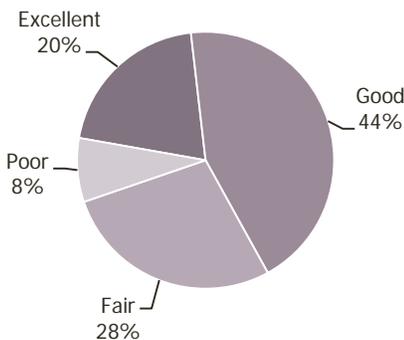
Are the residents of Victoria connected to the community and each other?

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. In Victoria, about two-thirds of residents rated the sense of community in the city as excellent or good, which was similar to the national benchmark. About 9 in 10 residents planned to remain in Victoria for the next five years and would recommend living in the city to someone who asked and these scores were also on par with ratings given in other communities. About 4 in 10 residents had contacted the City in the 12 months prior to the survey and this rate was also similar to the benchmark.

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 varied widely across the different facets, making the benchmark comparison (as well as comparison to Victoria over time) helpful for understanding the results. For example, while about 9 in 10 residents had not reported a crime (higher than the benchmark) or been the victim of a crime (similar to the benchmark), only 16% had stocked supplies for an emergency and this proportion was lower than average. Participation rates across the other facets of livability also tended to vary.

In comparison to 2015, residents in 2018 were more likely to have used public libraries and watched or attended a local public meeting. They also were more likely to believe that the economy would have a positive impact on their income in the next six months. However, fewer residents reported contacting City employees in 2018 compared to 2015.

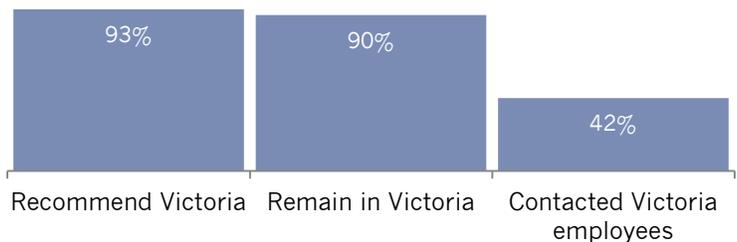
Sense of Community



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

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



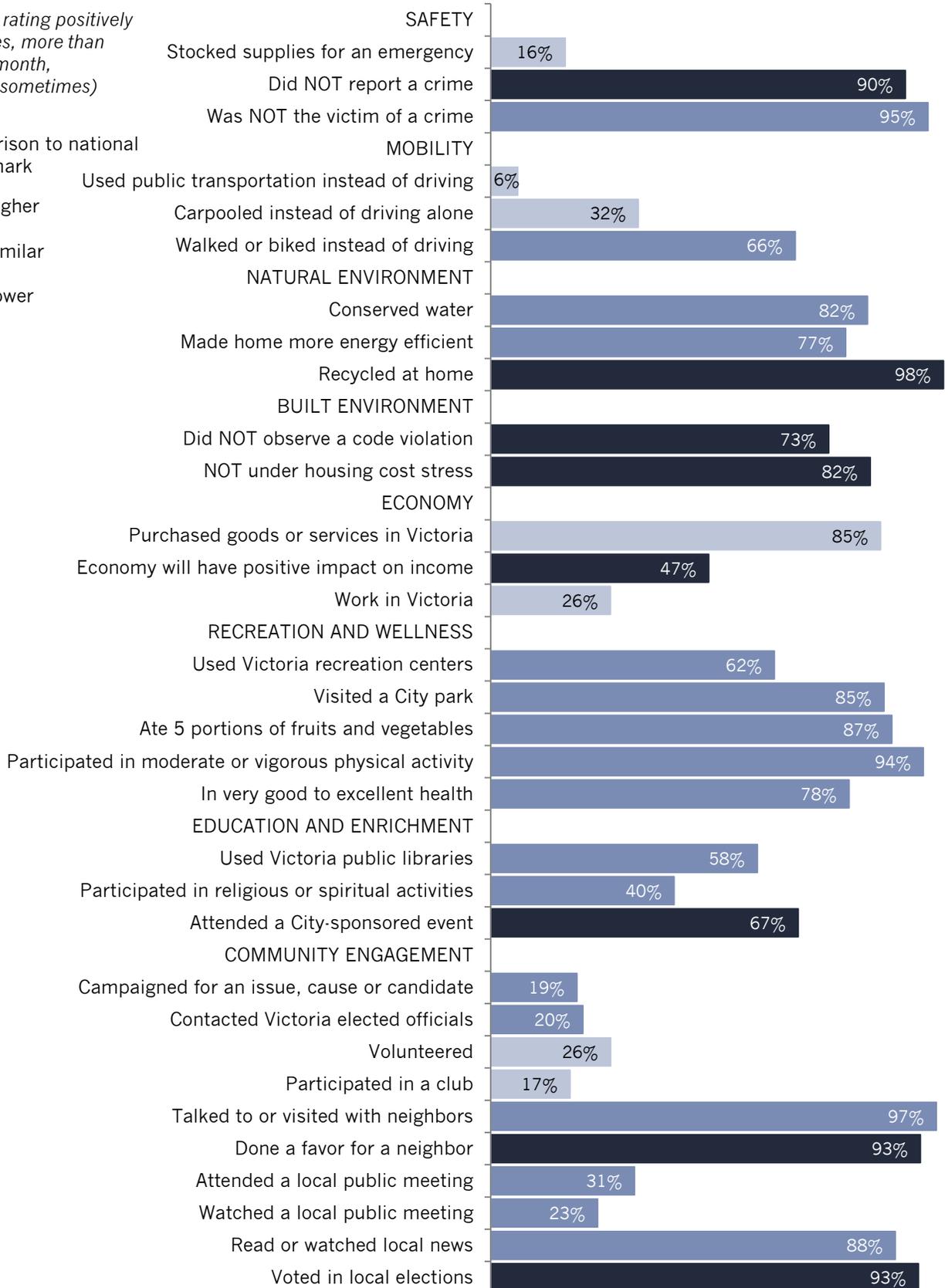
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

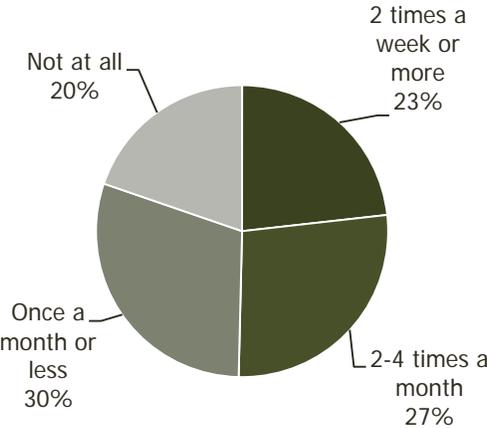


Special Topics

The City of Victoria included five questions of special interest on The NCS as well as one line addition to a standard question. Topic areas included City amenities, the addition of downtown parking, the use of City trails and challenges facing Victoria.

When asked to report about their use of the Victoria trail system in the last 12 months, about one-quarter had used the trails at least twice a week, another one-quarter had used them between two and four times a month, and 3 in 10 used them once a month or less. Only 2 in 10 residents had not used the trails at all in the past year.

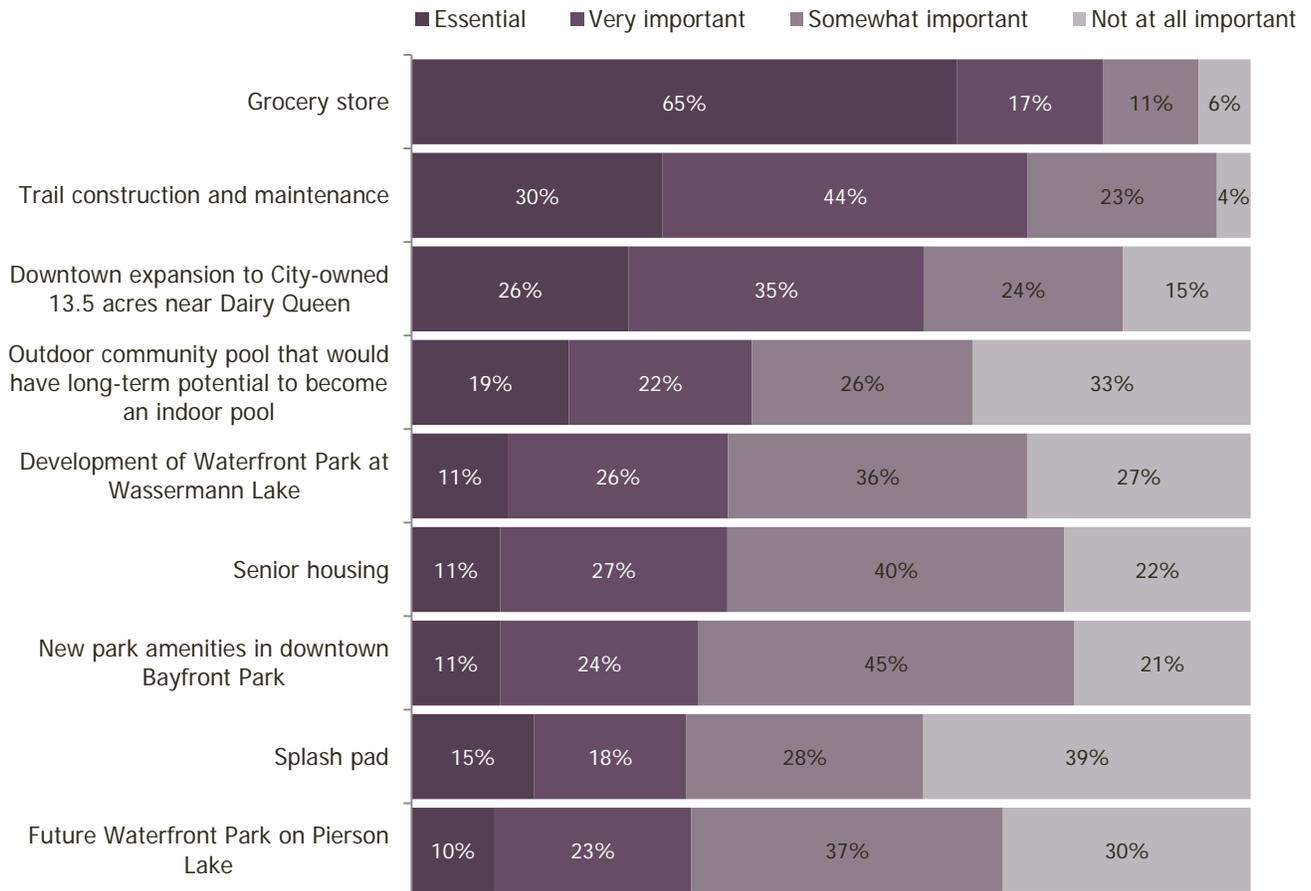
Figure 4: Line Addition to Question 8
In the last 12 months, about how many times, if at all, have you or other household members used the City of Victoria trail system?



When asked to rate the importance of a variety of amenities in relation to quality of life in Victoria, a majority of residents thought a grocery store, trail construction and maintenance, and downtown expansion to City-owned property were essential or very important to quality of life in the city. About 4 in 10 residents rated the remaining amenities as essential or very important, with at least one-third of respondents rating an outdoor community pool and a splash pad as not at all important.

Figure 5: Importance of Amenities to Quality of Life

Please rate how important, if at all, you think each of the following amenities are for the City to pursue in order to improve the quality of life in Victoria:



Thinking about potential solutions to downtown parking issues, at least 7 in 10 residents strongly or somewhat supported the City acquiring additional property within the downtown core, purchasing or leasing a corner grass lot, or building a low-profile, two-level parking deck in order to address these issues. Residents were evenly split in their support for and opposition to considering financing options for parking solutions and only 4 in 10 supported a 1% food and beverage tax in order to generate revenue for parking projects.

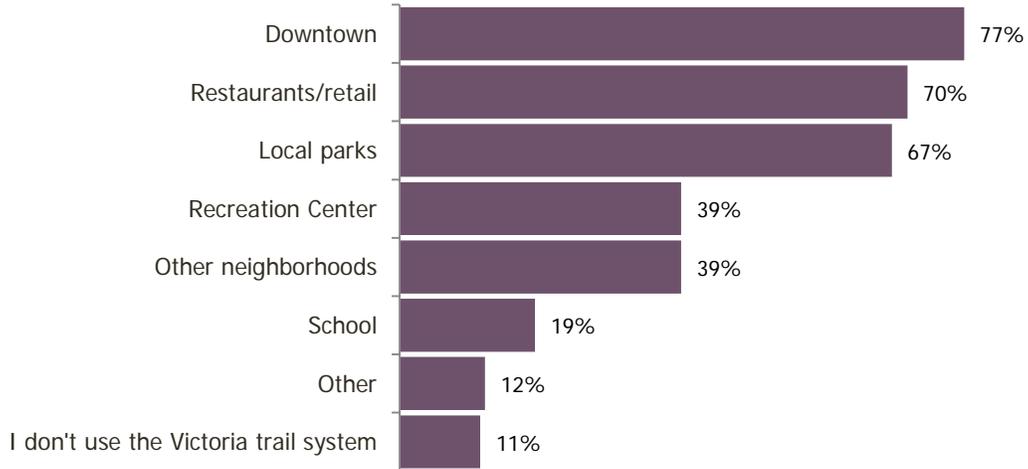
Figure 6: Addition of Downtown Parking

The addition of downtown parking has been identified as a high priority for the City for several years. As the City Council explores opportunities to add parking, please indicate your level of support for the following concepts:



Residents were asked about their potential travel destinations via the Victoria trail system and were instructed to select all destinations where they wished to travel. At least two-thirds of residents indicated that they wanted to use the trails to travel from their homes to downtown, to restaurants/retail or to local parks. About 4 in 10 wanted to travel from their homes to the Recreation Center or to other neighborhoods, and 2 in 10 wanted to travel to school. About 1 in 10 indicated that they wanted to travel to a different destination or that they did not use the Victoria trail system.

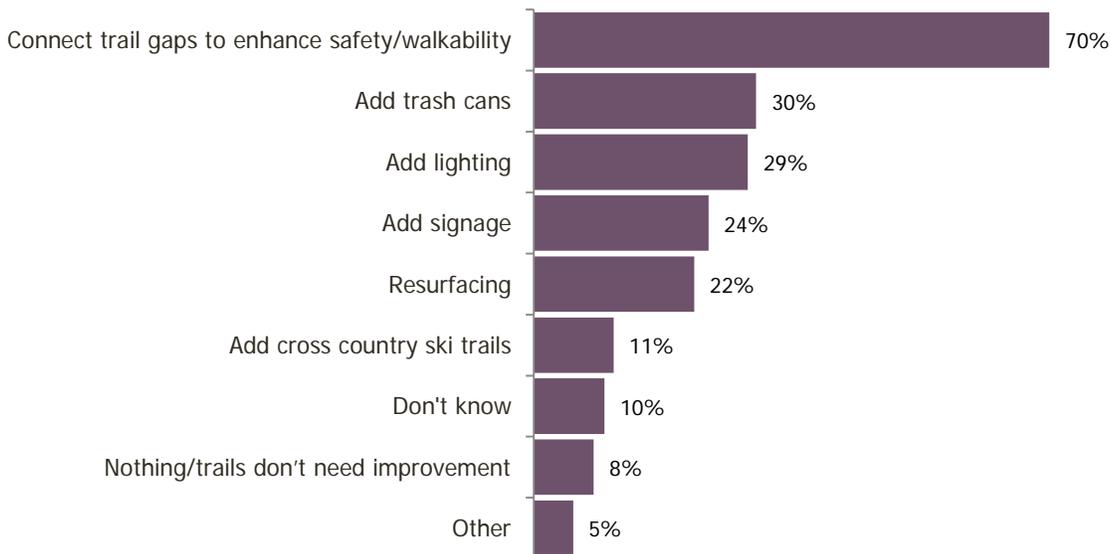
Figure 7: Travel Destination on Trails
Where do you wish to travel from your home via the trails? (Mark all that apply.)



Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

When asked about different ways to improve Victoria’s trails, 7 in 10 residents felt that connecting trail gaps to enhance safety/walkability would improve the trails. This was the most frequently selected choice. About 3 in 10 thought that adding trash cans or adding lighting would improve the trails and roughly 2 in 10 thought that adding signage or resurfacing the trails would improve them. About 1 in 10 thought that adding cross country ski trails would improve them, while another 1 in 10 thought that the trails did not need improvement or selected “don’t know”.

Figure 8: Improving Trail Connectivity
What can be done to improve the trails? (Mark all that apply.)

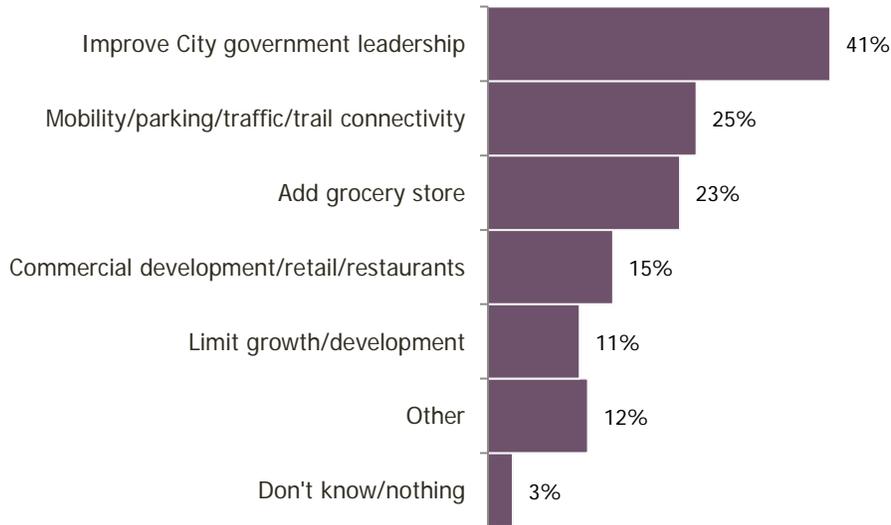


Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

The final special-interest question asked residents to write in their own words how they would address the biggest challenge or issue facing Victoria. A total of 612 surveys were completed by Victoria residents; of these, 427 respondents wrote in responses for the open-ended question. Of the survey respondents who wrote in a comment, 4 in 10 residents made a comment related to improving or changing City government leadership, about one-quarter of residents mentioned an issue related to mobility, parking, traffic or trail connectivity, and another one-quarter thought that the City should work to bring in a grocery store (for more information see the *Open End Report* under separate cover).

Figure 9: Addressing City Issues

How would you address the biggest challenge or issue facing Victoria?



Total may exceed 100% as respondents could write in more than one option.

Conclusions

Residents enjoy a positive quality of life in Victoria and the Natural Environment plays a vital role.

More than 9 in 10 residents reported that their quality of life in Victoria was excellent or good and gave favorable ratings to the city as a place to live. At least 9 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to their neighborhood as a place to live, Victoria as a place to raise children and the overall appearance of the city; these ratings were all higher than those given in other communities across the nation. Nine in 10 residents would recommend living in Victoria to someone who asked and planned to remain in Victoria for the next five years. One of the many reasons residents view their city so favorably is its connection to the outdoors: the facet of Natural Environment received strong ratings and residents rated this as one of their top two facets to address and protect. Almost all residents gave positive reviews to the overall quality of natural environment in Victoria, cleanliness and air quality, and these ratings were higher than those given elsewhere. Virtually all respondents reported that they recycled at home and this proportion was also above average. Additionally, Victoria residents enjoy the outdoor amenities: when asked about their use of Victoria's trails system, half of residents used them at least twice a month and there was significant support and interest for expanding and enhancing the trails and pathways in the community.

Residents are pleased with Mobility overall, but recognize opportunities for improvement with downtown parking, automobile travel and trail connectivity.

Several Mobility-related aspects received ratings higher than those given in other communities; these included paths and walking trails, ease of walking, ease of travel by bicycle, street repair, sidewalk maintenance and traffic signal timing. However, ratings for ease of travel by public transportation, public parking and bus or transit services were lower than average. Further, evaluations for ease of travel by car, traffic flow, public parking and the overall ease of travel in the city decreased from 2015 to 2018. The importance of increased mobility was amplified by resident responses to the policy questions included in the 2018 survey. There was significant support for a number of the proposed solutions to increase parking downtown and for the expansion of the trail system in Victoria. Also, when asked to rate the importance of a variety of amenities in relation to quality of life in Victoria, about three-quarters of residents rated trail construction and maintenance as essential or very important. Finally, in an open-ended question on issues facing Victoria in which residents could write in a response, about one-quarter mentioned an issue related to mobility, parking, traffic or trail connectivity.

Although City services score highly, residents are concerned about leadership in Victoria.

More than three-quarters of residents gave positive ratings to the overall quality of City services in Victoria and nearly all services were rated similar to or higher than the national comparisons. However, recent lawsuits and press coverage in Victoria related to City Council have caused many residents to be concerned about the quality of leadership in the City. Survey questions relating to public trust were rated positively by fewer than one-half of residents in most areas and experienced significant drops since 2015, placing them below the national benchmarks. In the open-ended question asking residents how to best improve Victoria, the most common responses related to the Mayor and City Council relationship and the past and current lawsuits. Four in 10 residents made suggestions related to these issues.

Victoria's Economy has improved, but there is still work to be done.

Residents identified the Economy as an important area of focus in the coming years and ratings within this facet tended to be mixed. A majority of residents gave favorable marks to the overall economic health of the city, overall quality of business and service establishments, Victoria as a place to visit and economic development, and these ratings were similar to those given in other communities. Ratings for shopping opportunities, Victoria as a place to visit, the vibrancy of the downtown area and business and service establishments increased over time. Further, about half of residents thought the economy would have a positive impact on their income in the next six months, which was a higher proportion than seen elsewhere and an increase since 2015. However, about one-third of residents or less gave positive reviews to shopping opportunities, employment opportunities and Victoria as a place to work, and these ratings were lower than those given in other communities across the country. Thinking about the importance of amenities in relation to quality of life in Victoria, about 8 in 10 residents thought a grocery store was essential or very important to quality of life in the city. When asked to write in their own words how they would address the biggest challenge or issue facing Victoria, about one-quarter of residents mentioned the importance of adding a grocery store to the city.