



THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Charlottesville, VA

Community Livability Report

2016



NRC
National Research Center Inc.

2955 Valmont Road Suite 300
Boulder, Colorado 80301
n-r-c.com • 303-444-7863

ICMA

Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

777 North Capitol Street NE Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002
icma.org • 800-745-8780

Contents

About..... 1

Quality of Life in Charlottesville..... 2

Community Characteristics 3

Governance 5

Participation 7

Special Topics..... 9

Conclusions 12



The National Citizen Survey™
© 2001-2016 National Research Center, Inc.

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.

About

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

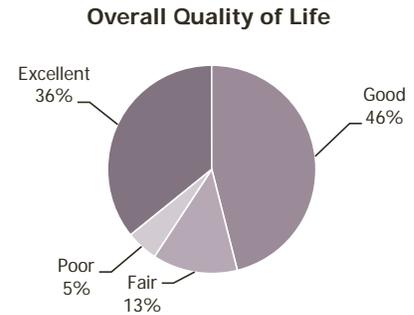
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 368 residents of the City of Charlottesville. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Charlottesville

Most residents rated the quality of life in Charlottesville as excellent or good. This rating was similar to 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.



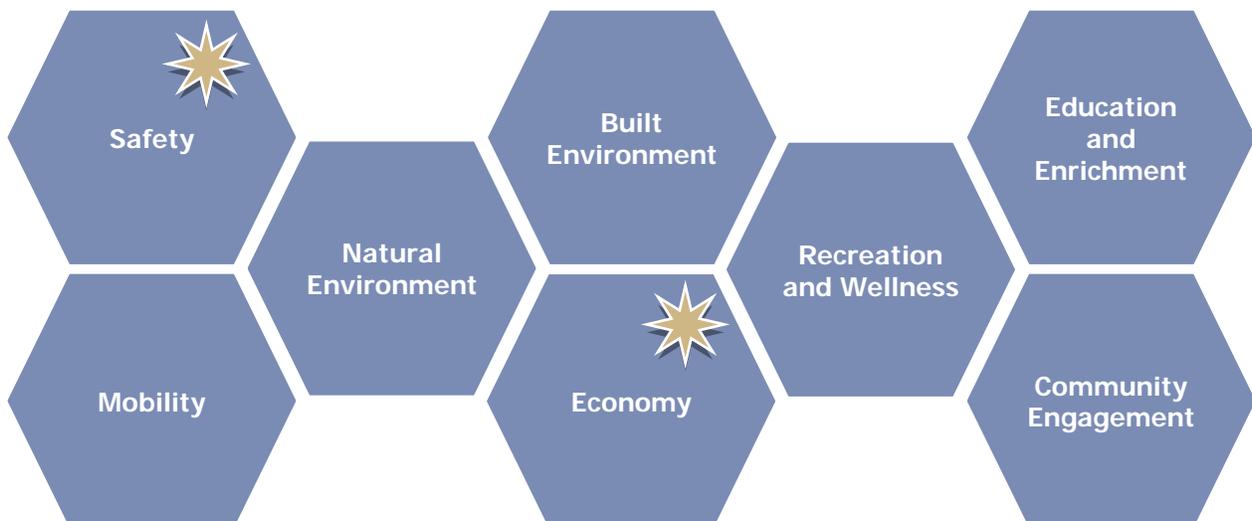
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Charlottesville community in the coming two years. Ratings for all facets were positive and similar to 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 Charlottesville’s unique questions.

Legend

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

★ Most important



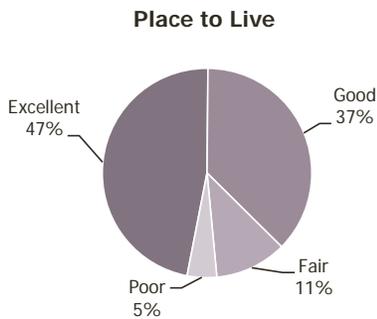
Community Characteristics

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 Charlottesville, 84% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Charlottesville 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 Charlottesville as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Charlottesville and its overall appearance. About 8 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to Charlottesville's overall image, which is higher than ratings reported in comparison communities. About three quarters or more of survey participants gave high ratings to their neighborhoods as places to live, the City as a place to raise children, the overall appearance of the City and Charlottesville as a place to retire. These ratings were similar to ratings seen 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. Within the facet of Safety, about 7 in 10 respondents gave high marks to the overall feeling of safety in Charlottesville, and more than 4 in 5 gave excellent or good ratings to feelings of safety in their neighborhoods and in downtown/commercial areas during the day; these ratings were similar to the national benchmarks. Ratings in Natural Environment were similarly strong: all aspects in this facet received positive ratings from about three-quarters or more of survey participants. Ratings for aspects of Mobility



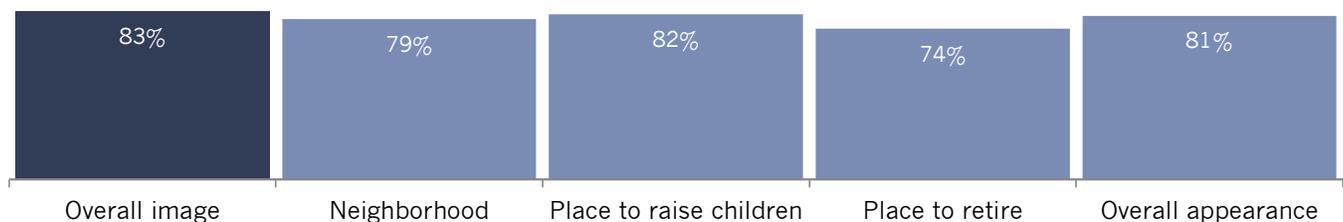
tended to be more mixed: while about two-thirds of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the availability of paths and walking trails and ease of walking in the City, only about 1 in 4 gave high marks to public parking and traffic flow. Travel by car in Charlottesville, public parking and traffic flow all received ratings that were lower than ratings seen in comparison communities. Within the facet of Built Environment, ratings also varied considerably from a high of 80% excellent or good for public places where people like to spend time (which was higher than the national benchmark), to a low of 27% excellent or good for the availability of affordable quality housing (which was lower than the benchmark). Ratings in the facets of Economy, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment

tended to be strong and were generally similar to or higher than the national benchmarks. Several aspects within these facets were rated positively by a majority of respondents and were higher than the benchmarks, including the vibrancy of Charlottesville's downtown/commercial area, the City as a place to visit, overall health and wellness opportunities, the availability of affordable quality health care and overall education and enrichment opportunities. Despite these strong ratings, ratings for several aspects within these facets, including Charlottesville as a place to work and K-12 education, declined from 2014 to 2016 (for more information on trends see the *Trends Over Time* report under separate cover). All aspects within Community Engagement were positively rated by a majority of residents and were similar to or higher than the benchmarks.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



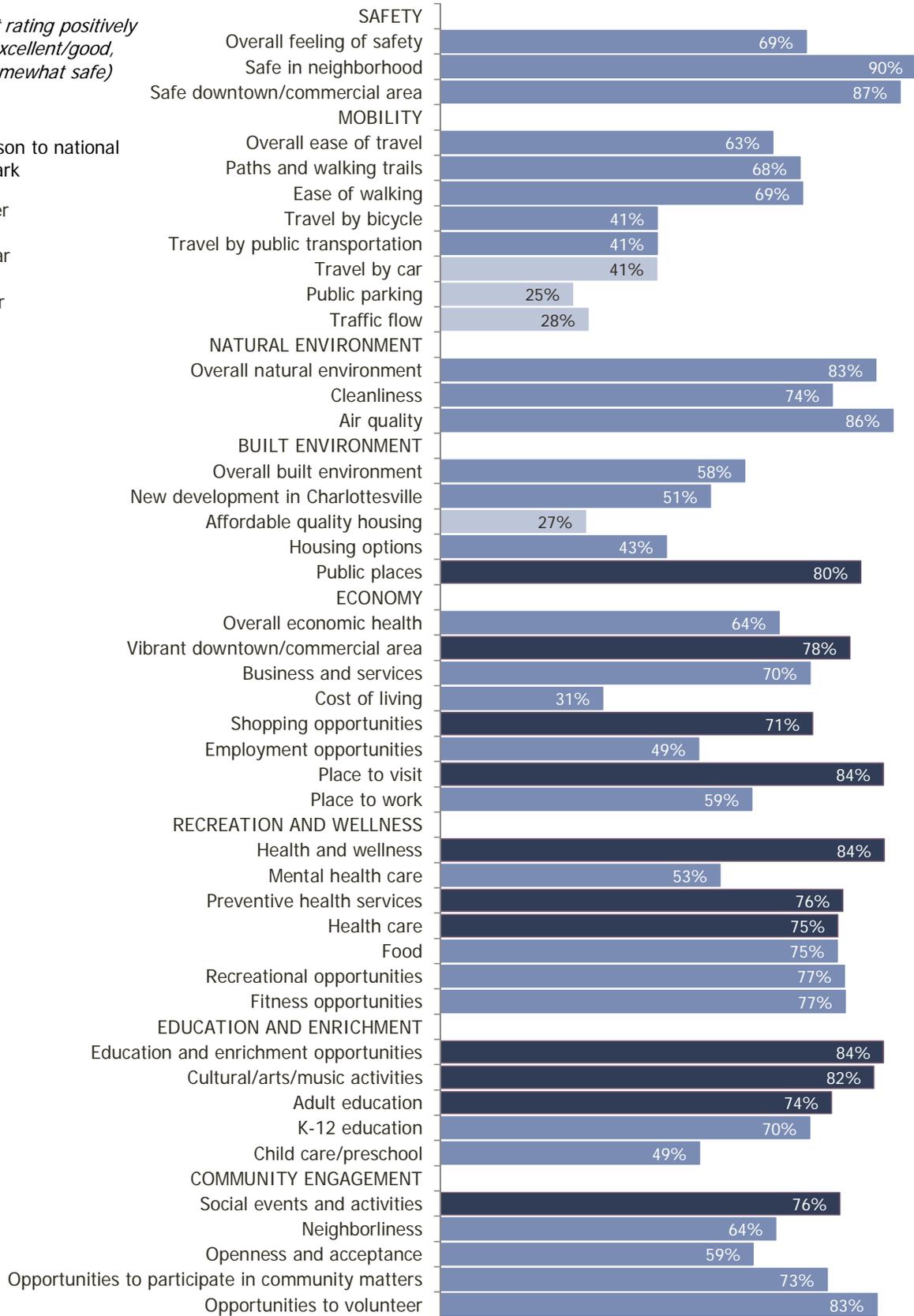
The National Citizen Survey™

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 Charlottesville meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Charlottesville as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 7 in 10 residents rated the overall quality of City services positively; this rating was similar to the national benchmark. Comparably, only 46% of respondents rated Federal Government services positively (which was also similar to the national benchmark).

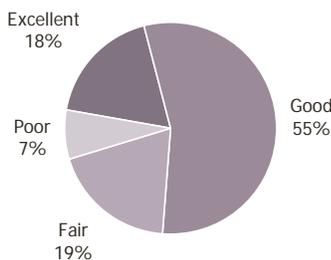
Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Charlottesville’s leadership and governance. About 7 in 10 respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the customer service provided by City employees, and about 6 in 10 gave high marks to the overall direction of Charlottesville; both of these ratings were strong and similar to ratings in comparison communities. The remaining aspects of leadership and governance were all rated positively by a majority of respondents and were similar to the national benchmarks.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Charlottesville. Aspects of Safety, including police, fire, and ambulance/EMS services received excellent or good ratings from about 3 in 5 or more respondents; all Safety services received ratings that were similar to the national benchmarks. It is noteworthy that ratings for crime prevention services increased between 2014 and 2016. Ratings in the facet of Mobility were generally strong and similar to the benchmarks. About half of respondents gave high marks to traffic enforcement,

street cleaning, street lighting, sidewalk maintenance and bus or transit services. However, ratings for snow removal (49% excellent or good) were lower in Charlottesville than in other communities across the nation, and ratings for street repair and street cleaning services declined from 2014 to 2016. Almost all aspects of Natural Environment were rated positively by at least 6 in 10 respondents and were similar to the benchmarks; the only exception was yard waste pick-up (60% excellent or good), which was rated lower in Charlottesville than in other communities nationwide. Ratings for Built Environment-related services were strong and similar to ratings in comparison communities: ratings ranged from a low of 41% excellent or good (for cable television services) to a high of 83% (for Charlottesville’s power utility services.) About 8 in 10 respondents gave excellent or good ratings to all aspects of Recreation and Wellness, and ratings for health services were

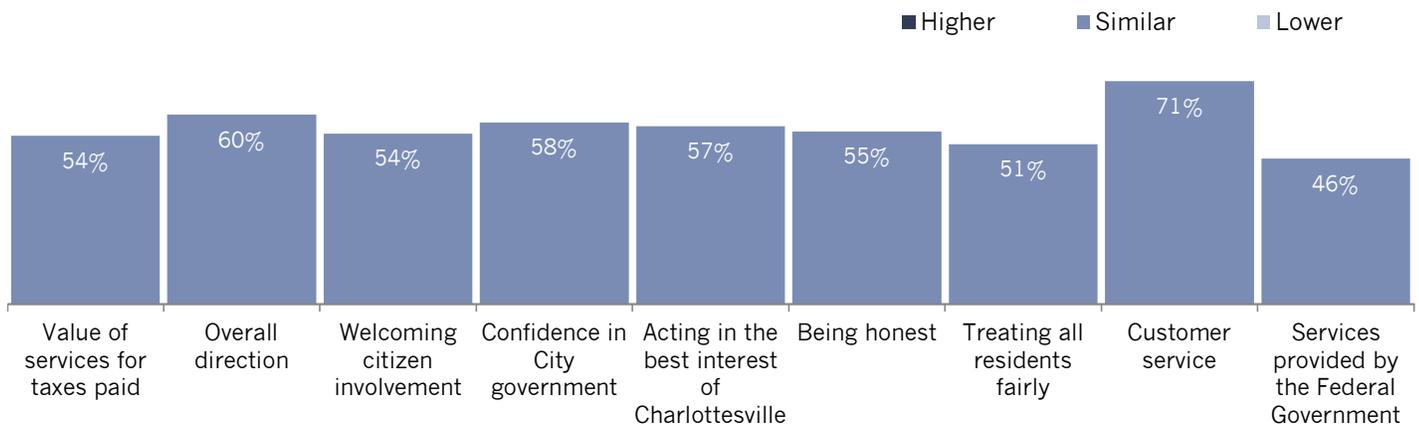
higher than the national benchmark. All services in the facets of Economy, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement were rated positively by a majority of residents and received ratings that were similar to ratings reported in other communities across the nation.

Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark



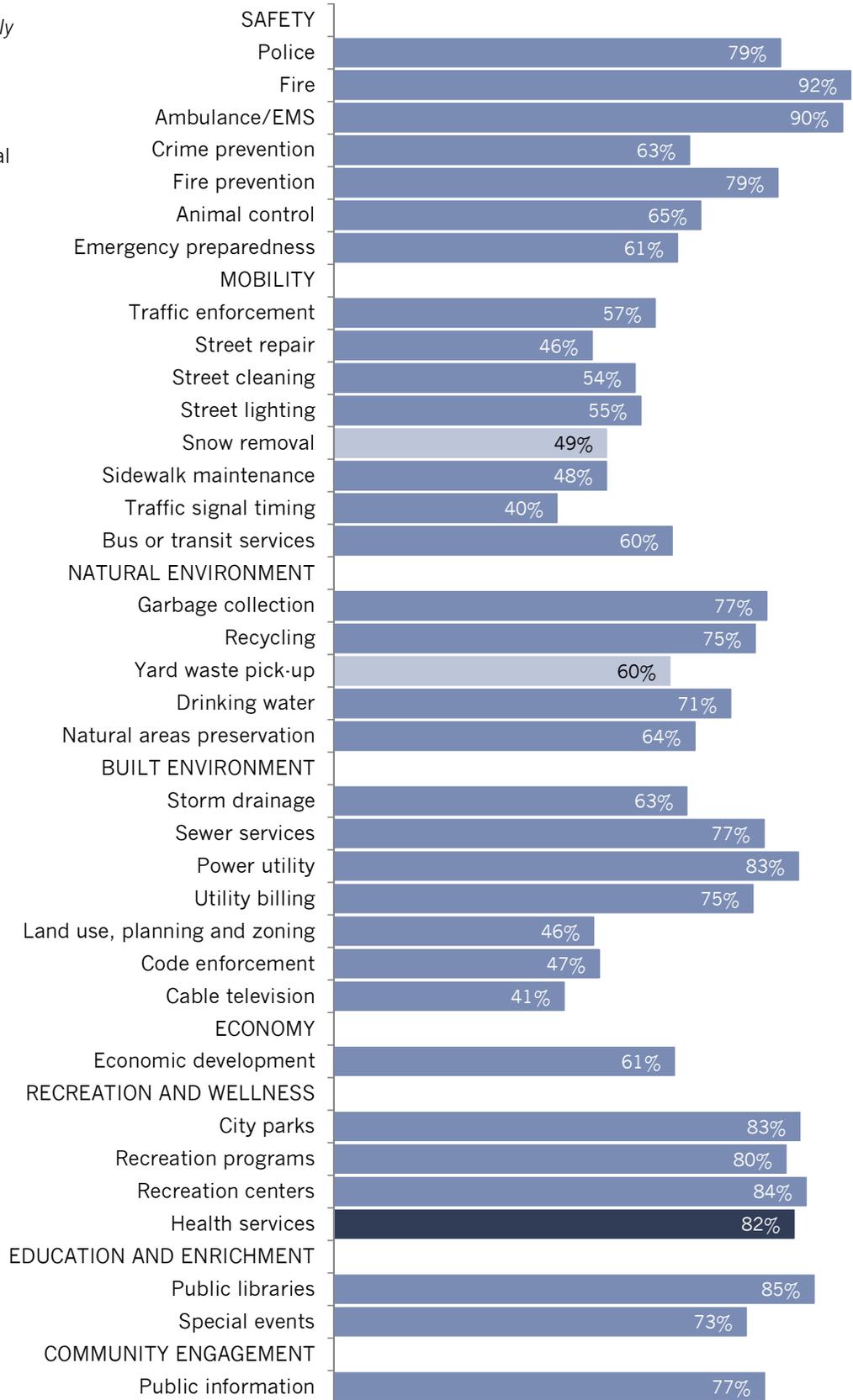
The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



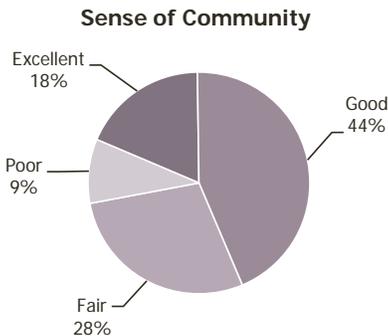
Participation

Are the residents of Charlottesville 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. A majority of respondents (62%) rated sense of community positively, which was similar to the national benchmark. More than 8 in 10 respondents indicated that they would recommend living in Charlottesville to someone who asks, and about half reported that they had contacted the City of Charlottesville for help or information in the past 12 months. Only about two-thirds of respondents reported that they plan to remain in Charlottesville for the next five years, which is lower than rates reported in other communities nationwide.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. In the facet of Safety, most residents had not been the victim of a crime and had not reported a crime to the police; about one-third had stocked supplies for an emergency. Rates of participation in Mobility-related activities were strong and higher than other communities across the nation. About half of residents had used public transportation instead of driving and carpoled instead of driving alone, and about 8 in 10 reported that they walked or biked instead of driving. Within Natural Environment, about 8 in 10 respondents reported that they had conserved water and recycled at home in the past 12 months, which is similar to the national benchmarks. However, only about 6 in 10 survey participants reported that they had made efforts to make their homes more energy efficient, which is lower than rates reported in other communities. At least half or more of survey respondents reported participating in all aspects of Built Environment and Recreation and Wellness; reported rates of participation in these facets were similar to the national benchmarks. Participation

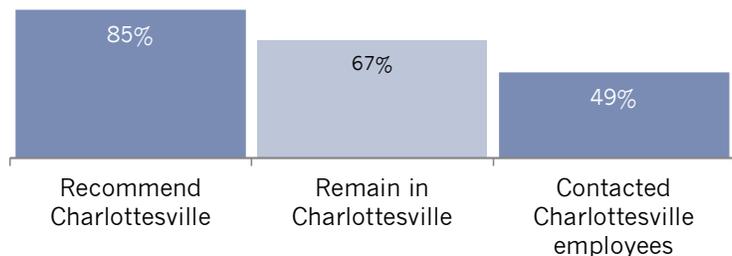
rates in the facets of Economy and Education and Enrichment were strong and similar to or higher than rates seen in other communities. It is noteworthy that aspects in both of these facets saw an increase in participation rates from 2014 to 2016: proportions of residents who reported that the economy will have a positive impact on their income in the next six months and of residents who reported that they had attended a City-sponsored event both increased during this period. Rates of participation in the facet of Community Engagement varied. About 4 in 10 residents reported that they had participated in a club, and almost 6 in 10 had volunteered; these rates are higher than the national benchmarks. However, about two-thirds of respondents reported that they had read or watched the local news; this rate declined over time and is lower than the benchmark.



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

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



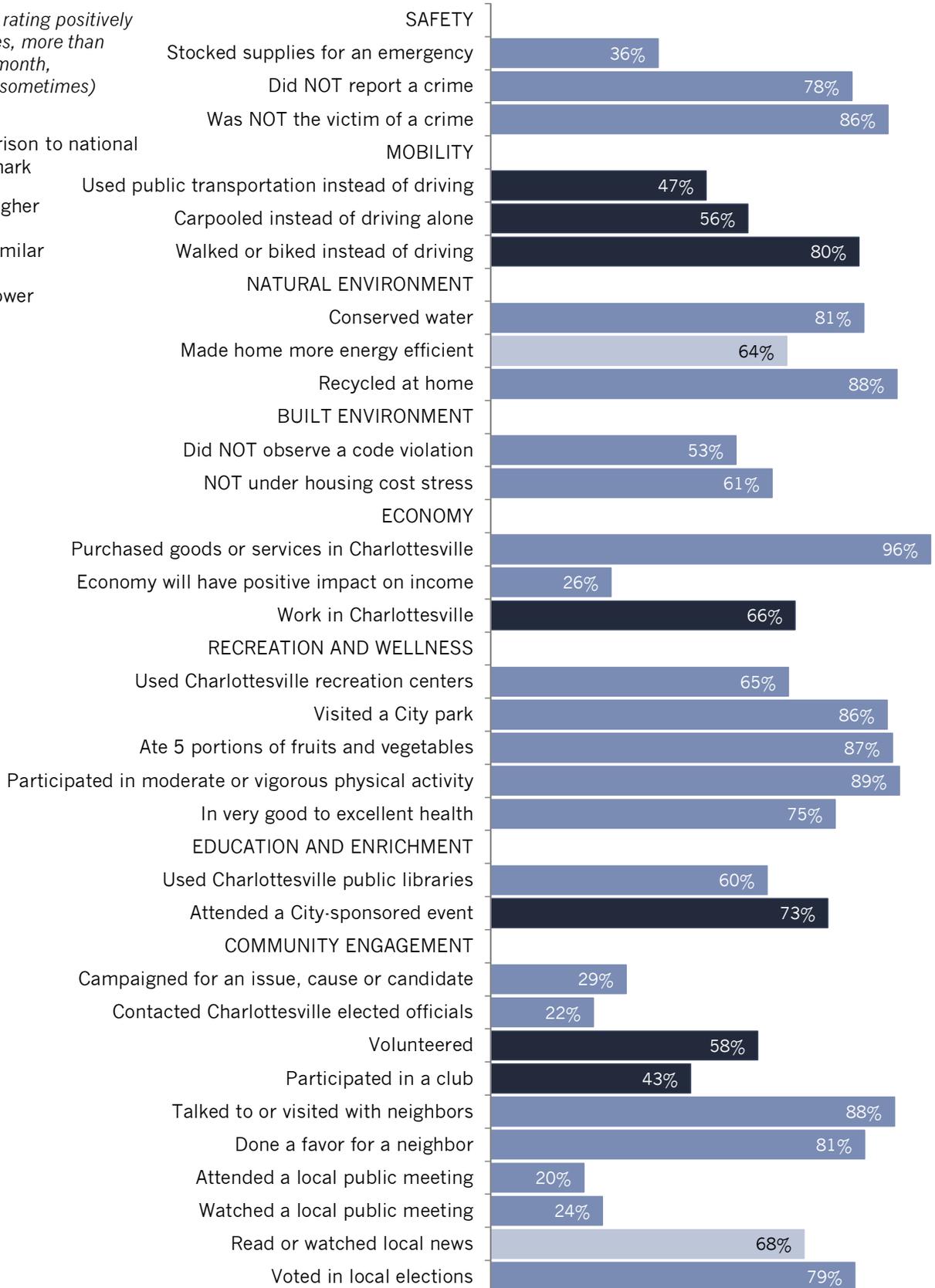
The National Citizen Survey™

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

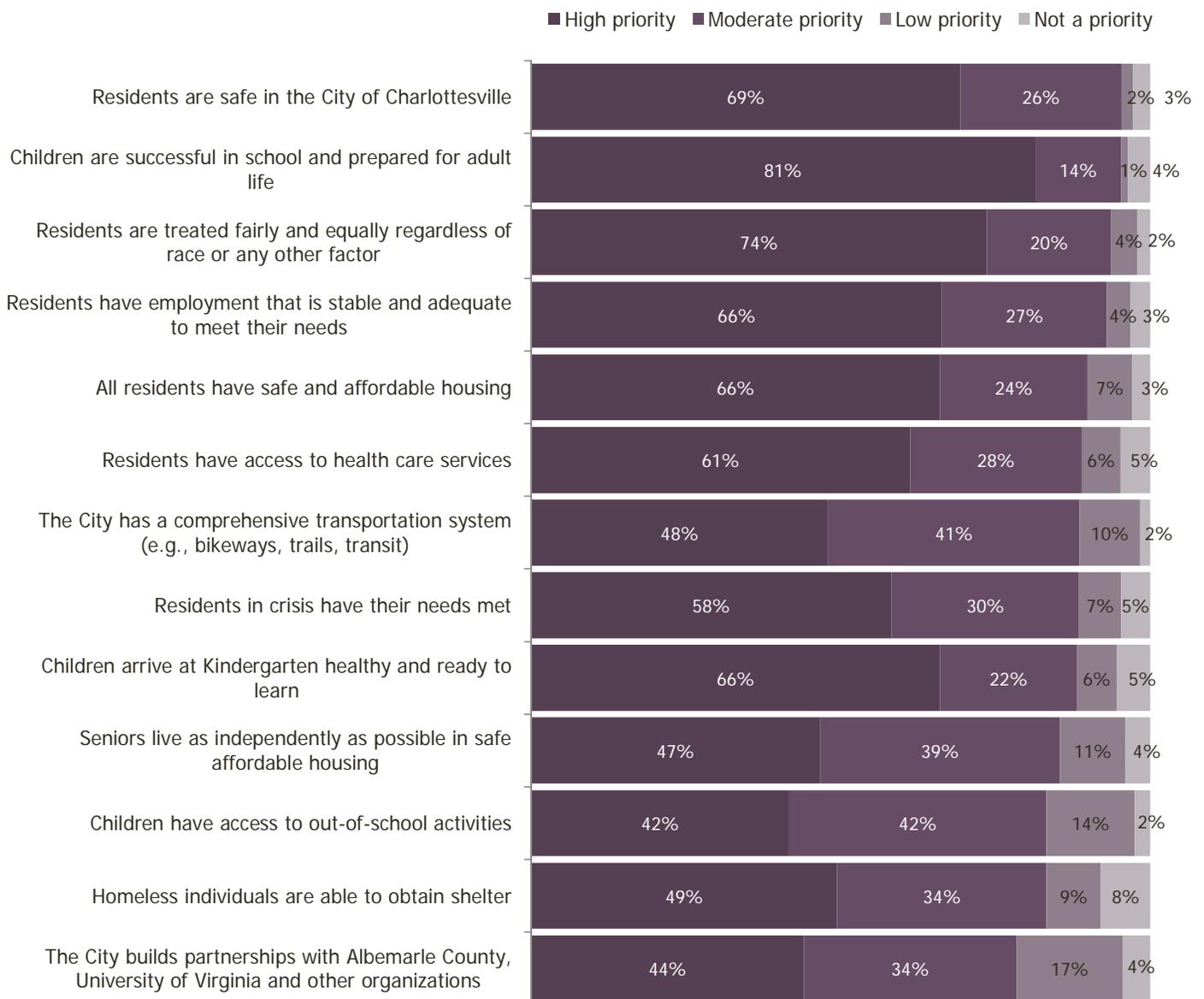


Special Topics

The City of Charlottesville included two questions of special interest on The NCS. The first was a two-part question that asked residents to first rate how much of a priority they deem 13 potential priorities to be for the City (see Figure 4), and then to indicate how much progress, if at all, the City has made accomplishing each of the potential priorities (see Figure 5). Almost all residents (95%) indicated that residents being safe in the City of Charlottesville and children being successful in school and prepared for adult life should be high or moderate priorities for the City. About 9 in 10 survey respondents also identified residents being treated fairly and equally regardless of race or any other factor, residents having employment that is stable and adequate to meet their needs and all residents having safe and affordable housing as high or medium priorities.

Figure 4: City Priority Areas

For each of the following, please indicate how much of a priority, if at all, each area should be to the City and to what extent, if at all, you believe the City is making progress towards meeting each area.

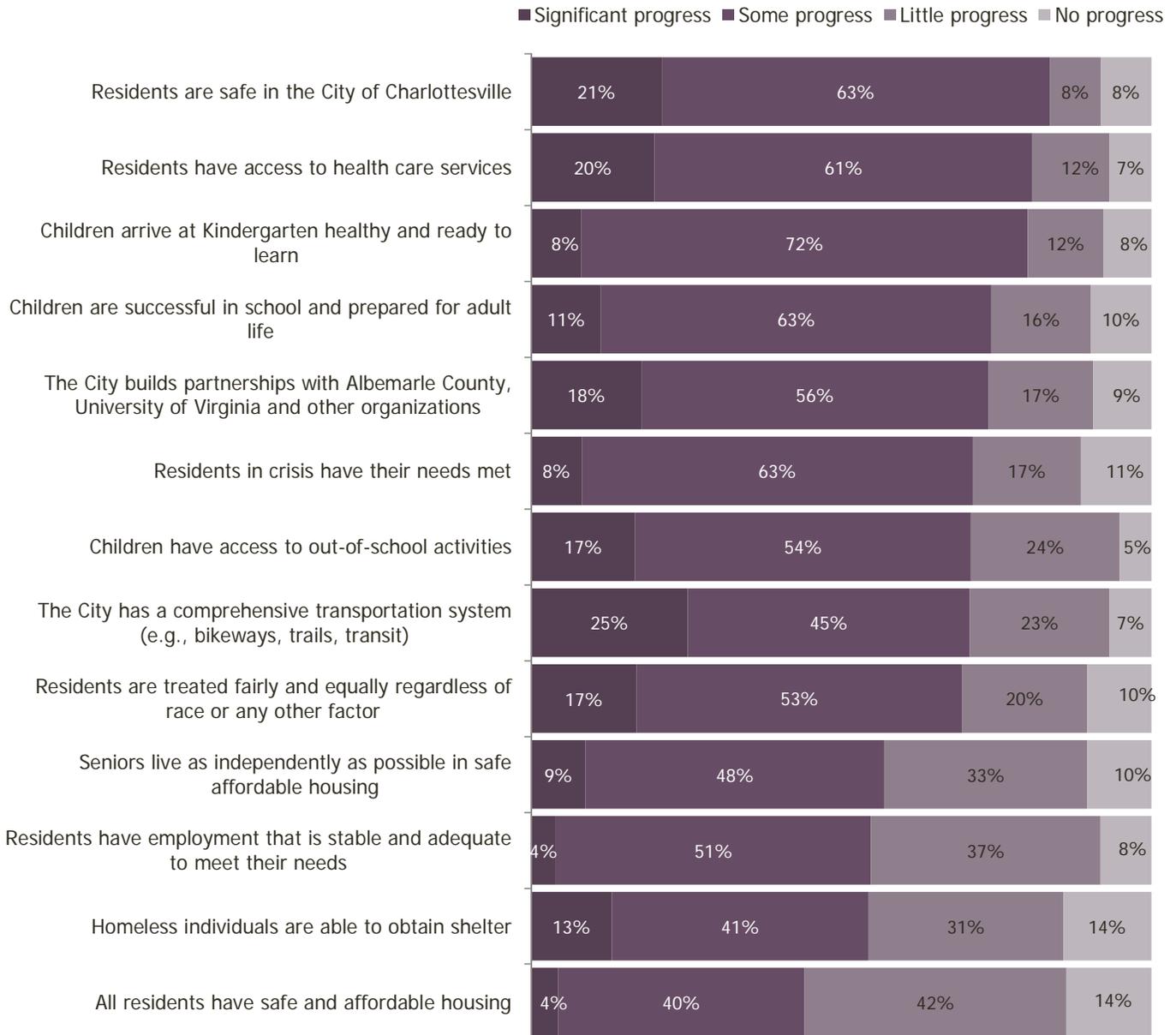


The National Citizen Survey™

In the second part of the first special-interest question, residents were asked to assess the progress the City had made toward meeting each priority area. About 8 in 10 residents reported that they felt the City had made significant or some progress towards ensuring that residents are safe in the City of Charlottesville, that residents have access to health care services and that children arrive at Kindergarten healthy and ready to learn. At least half of residents felt that the City had made significant or some progress toward meeting all other City priority areas. The only exception was the priority that all residents have safe and affordable housing: a majority of residents felt that the City had made little to no progress to achieve this priority area.

Figure 5: Progress Toward Priority Areas

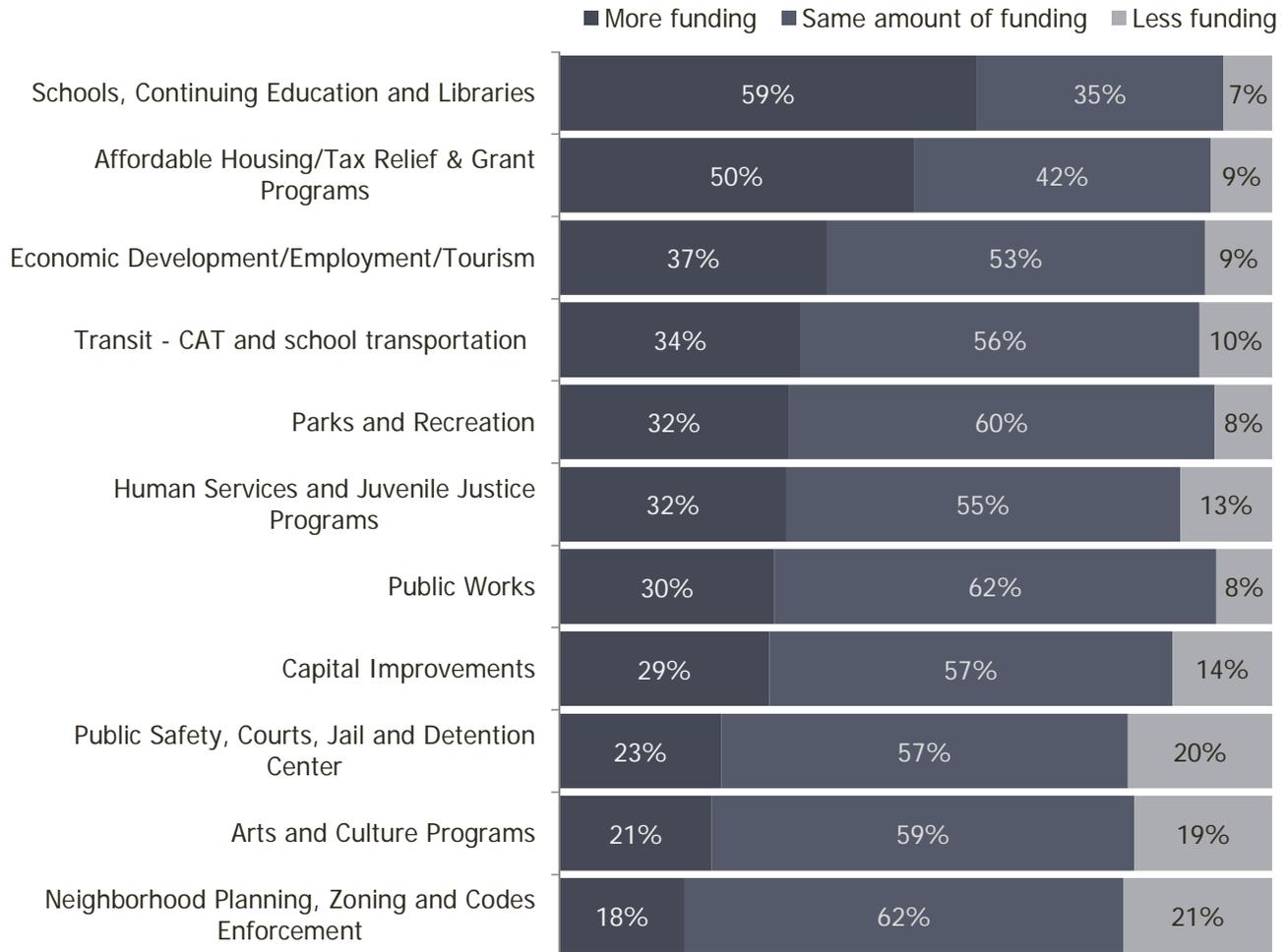
For each of the following, please indicate how much of a priority, if at all, each area should be to the City and to what extent, if at all, you believe the City is making progress towards meeting each area.



Residents were next asked to indicate whether they would like to see an increase, decrease or the same amount of funding allocated for various City services. About 6 in 10 participants indicated that they would like to see more funding allocated for schools, continuing education and libraries. Residents were evenly split on the issue of funding for the delivery of affordable housing/tax relief & grant programs: about half indicated that they support more funding, 4 in 10 would like to see the same amount of funding applied and about 1 in 10 would like to see less funding for this service. A majority of residents reported that they would support the same amount of funding for all other services.

Figure 6: Service Delivery Funding

Considering each of the areas of the City of Charlottesville's service delivery, please indicate whether you feel the City of Charlottesville should apply more funding, the same amount of funding or less funding toward each of the following:



Conclusions

Charlottesville continues to be a great place to live.

A vast majority of survey respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of life in Charlottesville (82%) and the city as a place to live as a place to live (84%); these ratings were similar to the national benchmark comparisons and stable over time. More than 4 in 5 respondents would recommend Charlottesville as a place to live to someone who asked, and about 3 in 5 respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the sense of community in the city. Ratings for features that enhance quality of life, such as Charlottesville as a place to raise children, the overall appearance of the City, and residents' neighborhoods as places to live were given positive ratings by about 8 in 10 respondents. Additionally, about 8 in 10 of respondents gave high marks to the overall image and reputation of Charlottesville; this rating was higher than ratings seen in comparison communities. All of these ratings remained stable between 2014 and 2016.

Safety is a top priority for residents.

More than 8 in 10 survey respondents identified Safety as a top priority for the Charlottesville community in the coming two years. Ratings for Safety in Charlottesville were generally strong and similar to ratings in other communities nationwide. About 7 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall feeling of safety in the City, and about 9 in 10 gave high marks to the feeling of safety in their neighborhoods; however, ratings for the overall feeling of safety in Charlottesville declined from 2014 to 2016. Safety-related services, including police, fire, and animal control services, were rated positively by at least a majority of residents. It is noteworthy that ratings for crime prevention services increased from 2014 to 2016. Further, about 8 in 10 respondents were not the victim of a crime and had not reported a crime. When asked about the City priority areas, almost all residents (95%) identified residents' safety in Charlottesville as a high or moderate priority, and about 4 in 5 respondents indicated that the City had made significant or moderate progress toward meeting this priority area.

The Economy is an important and positive feature of the Community.

Economy was also identified as a key focus area for the community in the coming two years. About 6 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall economic health of Charlottesville, the quality of business and service establishments in the city and economic development services. Ratings for the vibrancy of the City's downtown/commercial area, shopping opportunities and the city as a place to visit were higher in Charlottesville than in comparison communities. About two-thirds of respondents reported that they work in Charlottesville; this rate is higher than rates seen elsewhere. Almost all residents (93%) indicated that residents having employment that is stable and adequate to meet their needs should be a high or moderate priority for the City, and about half of residents (55%) indicated that they thought the City had made significant or some progress toward meeting this priority. Ratings in the facet of Economy were generally stable over time; however, ratings for Charlottesville as a place to work decreased from 2014 to 2016, and the proportion of residents who reported that they think the economy will have a positive impact on their income in the next six months increased.

Ratings for Charlottesville's Built Environment were generally strong, but residents see room for improvement in affordable housing.

Ratings within the facet of Built Environment were generally strong and similar to ratings reported in other communities. About half or more of residents gave high marks to the overall quality of the built environment in Charlottesville, the quality of new development, and to Built Environment-related services including sewer services and power (gas) utility. However, ratings for affordable housing were comparatively low: only about 1 in 4 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the availability of affordable quality housing in Charlottesville, which is lower than ratings seen in comparison communities. Further, about 9 in 10 respondents indicated that all residents having safe and affordable housing should be a high or moderate priority for the City, but more than half of respondents reported that they City and made little or no progress towards meeting this priority. About half of residents indicated that they would support more funding for affordable housing/tax relief & grant programs.