

# THE NCS™

The National Citizen Survey™

## Battle Creek, MI



### Community Livability Report 2015



**NRC**  
National Research Center Inc

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



*Leaders at the Core of Better Communities*

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

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# About

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

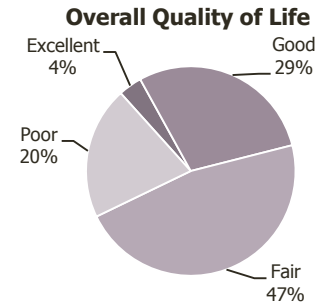
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 626 residents of the City of Battle Creek. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% 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 Battle Creek

About one third of residents rated the quality of life in Battle Creek as excellent or good. This rating was much lower than ratings in comparison communities (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.

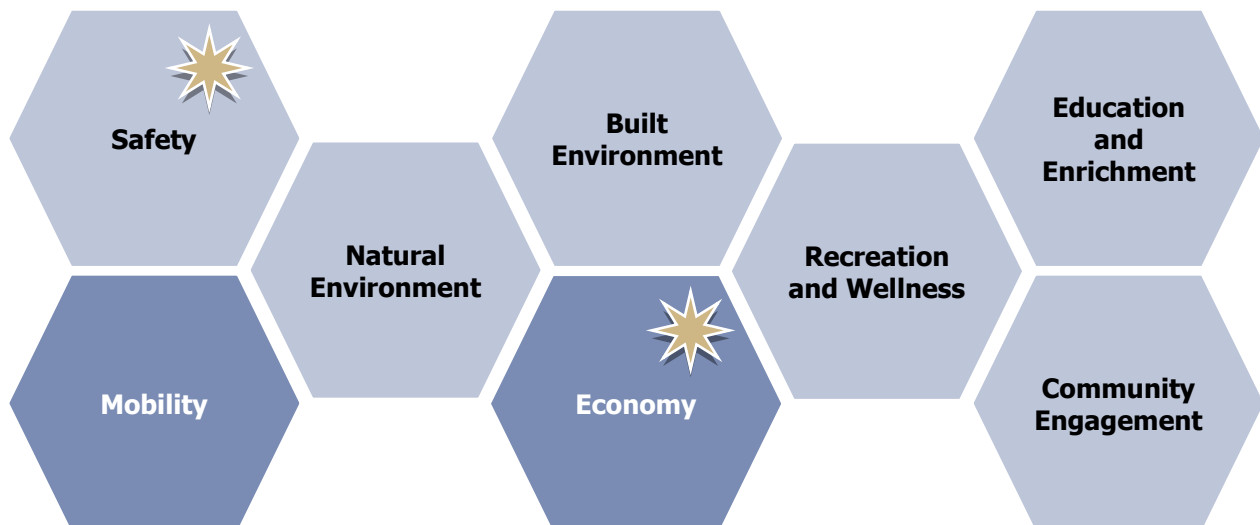
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Battle Creek community in the coming two years. Ratings for Mobility and Economy were positive and similar to other communities. Ratings for Safety, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement tended to be lower than the 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 Battle Creek’s unique questions.

## Legend

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

- \* Most important



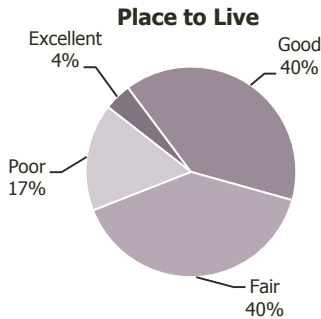
# Community Characteristics

*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 Battle Creek, 44% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Battle Creek 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 Battle Creek as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Battle Creek and its overall appearance. Almost 6 in 10 respondents rated their neighborhoods as excellent or good places to live. About one-third of residents gave positive ratings to Battle Creek as a place to raise children and the overall appearance of the City. Less than one-quarter of survey respondents gave Battle Creek an excellent or good rating to the City's overall image or as a place to retire. All of these ratings were lower than the national benchmark.

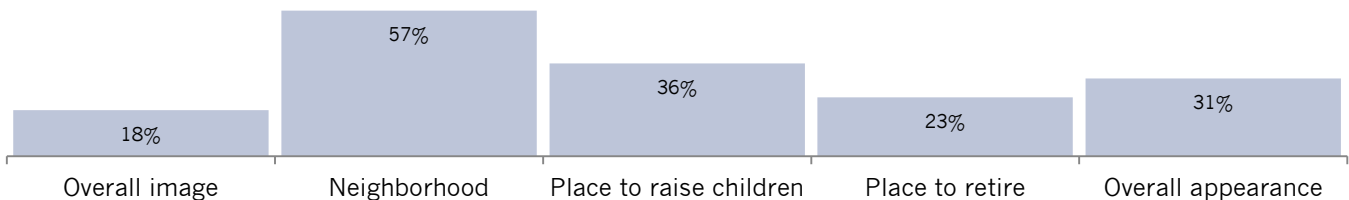
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. These ratings tended to be similar or lower than ratings in communities across the nation. Within the facet of Safety, 3 in 4 residents reported that they felt safe in their neighborhoods, while about 7 in 10 stated they felt safe in Battle Creek's downtown commercial area, both of which were rated below the benchmark. Most aspects of Mobility were rated positively by a majority of residents, including overall ease of travel, paths and walking trails, travel by car and traffic flow. All but one of the Mobility ratings were rated similarly to comparison communities, with the exception of ease of walking (46% rated excellent or good), which had a lower rating.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



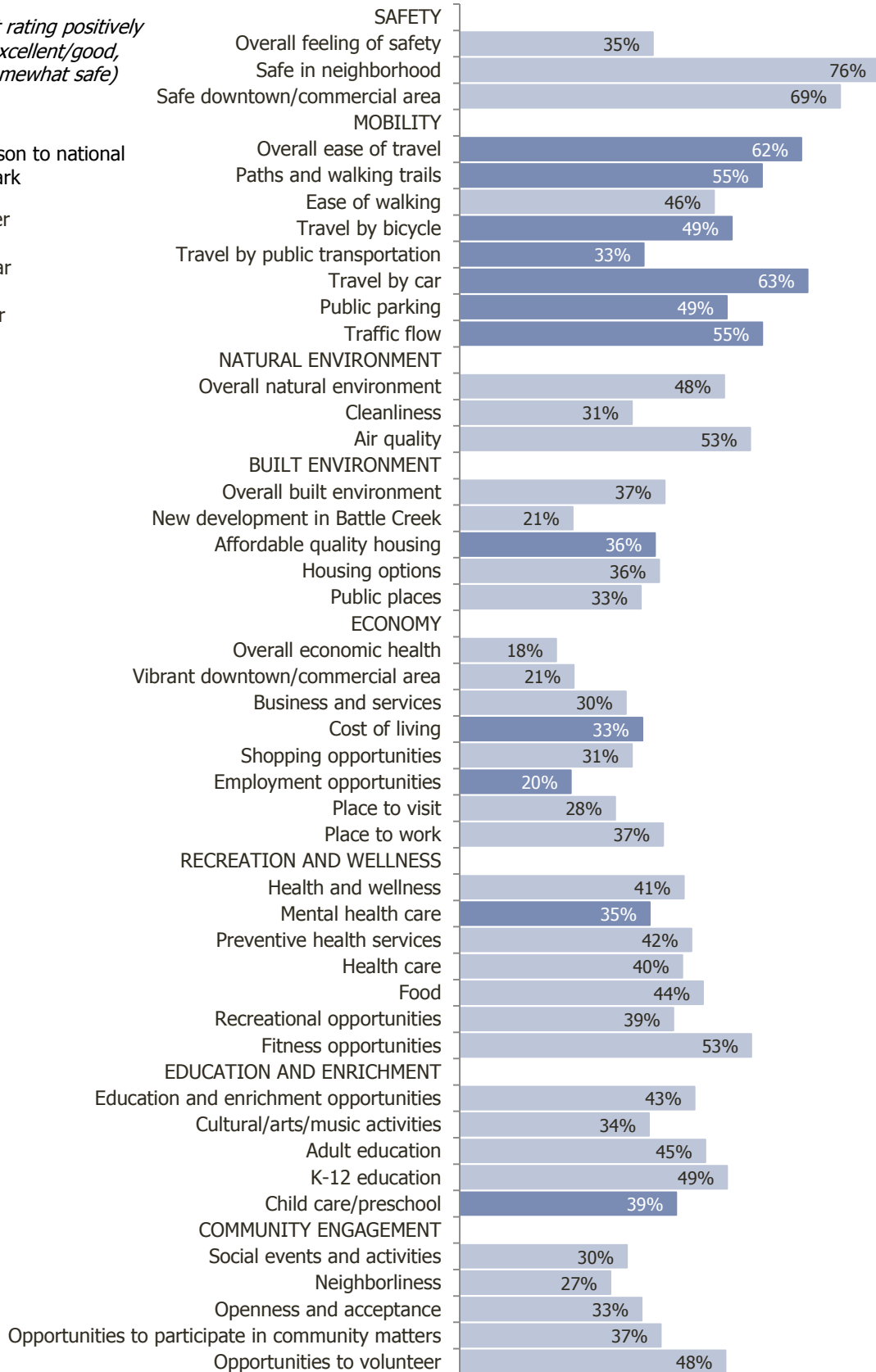
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

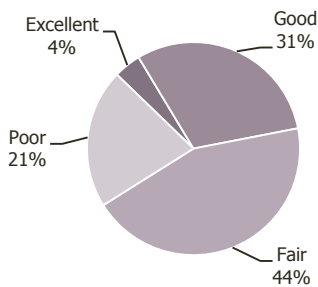
*How well does the government of Battle Creek meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Battle Creek as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About one-third of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the City of Battle Creek. In comparison, only 28% gave excellent or good ratings to the services provided by the Federal Government.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Battle Creek’s leadership and governance. These ratings tended to be lower than the benchmark and were rated as excellent or good by at least 2 in 10 residents.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Battle Creek. The highest rated services were fire services, ambulance/EMS services, garbage collection, yard waste pick-up and public libraries. The lowest rated services were street repair, street cleaning, sidewalk maintenance, code enforcement and economic development. Overall, ratings tended to be similar or lower than the national benchmark.

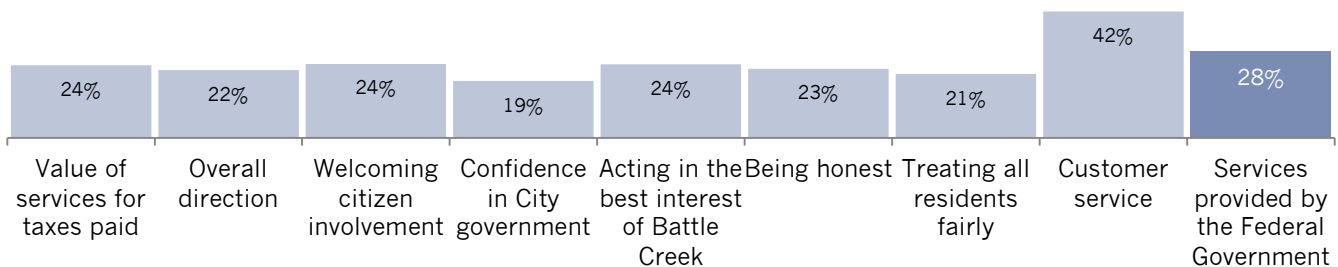
**Overall Quality of City Services**



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



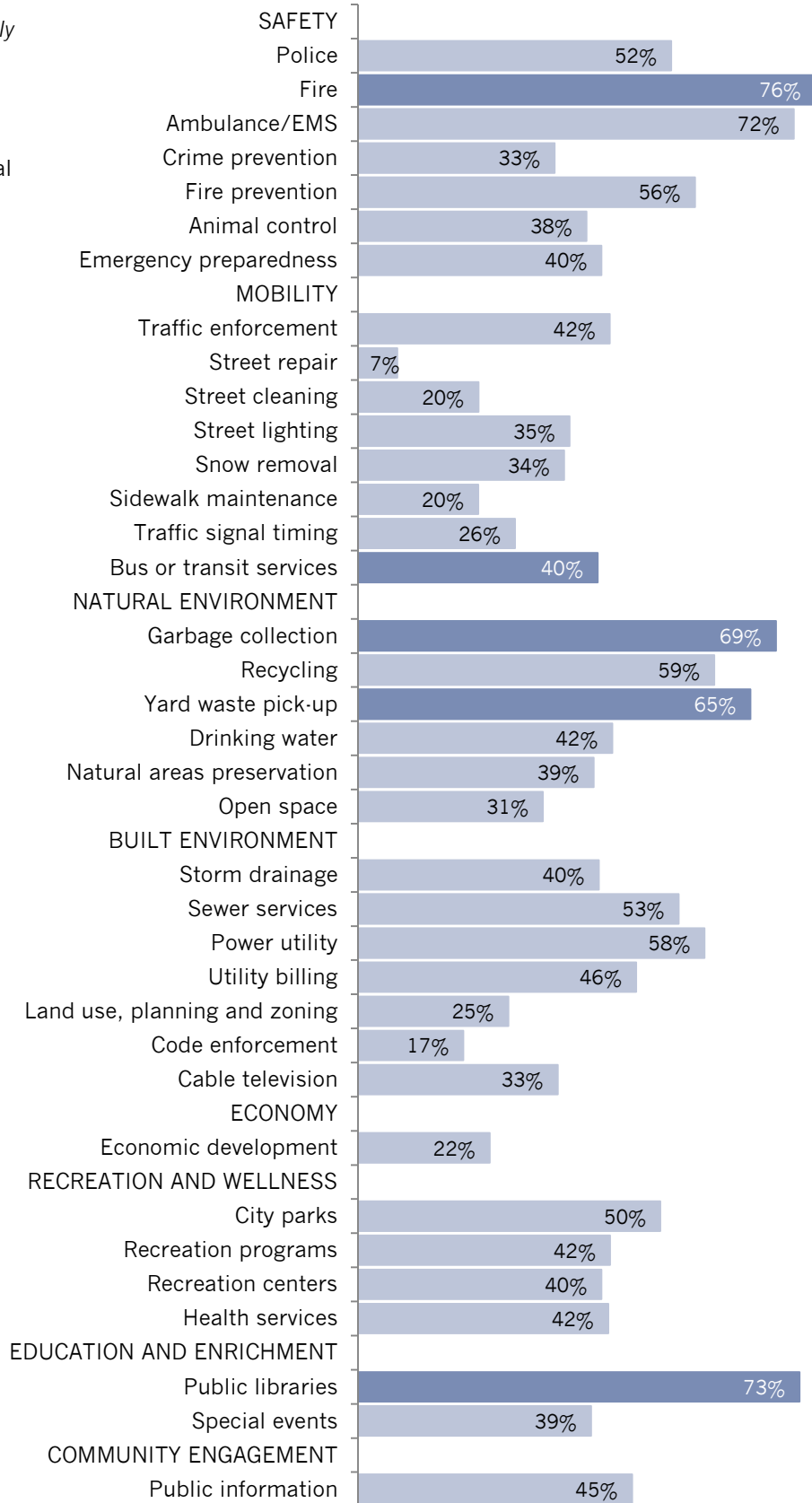
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



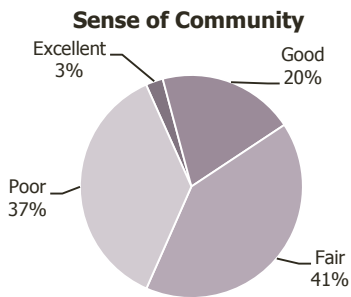


# Participation

*Are the residents of Battle Creek 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. Ratings for the sense of community in Battle Creek were rated fair or higher by about two-thirds of residents. About 3 in 4 respondents reported they were likely to remain in Battle Creek for the next five years and about half of residents would recommend living in the City.

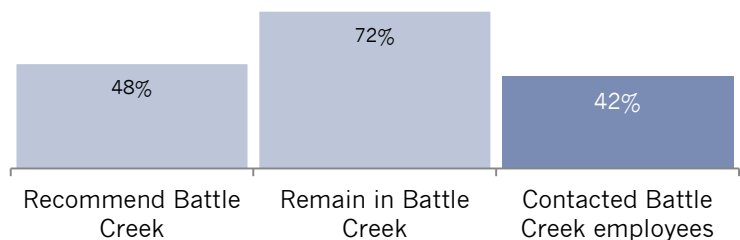
The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Battle Creek residents tended to report similar rates of Participation when compared to communities across the nation. The activities or behaviors with the highest reported rates of Participation were: made home more energy efficient, purchased goods or services in Battle Creek, participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity, talked to or visited with neighbors, done a favor for a neighbor and read or watched the local news. The lowest rates of Participation were seen in: used public transportation instead of driving, campaigned for an issue or cause, contacted Battle Creek elected officials and attended a local public meeting. Nearly 6 in 10 residents reported that they worked within the city limits of Battle Creek, a rating higher than those seen in other communities.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



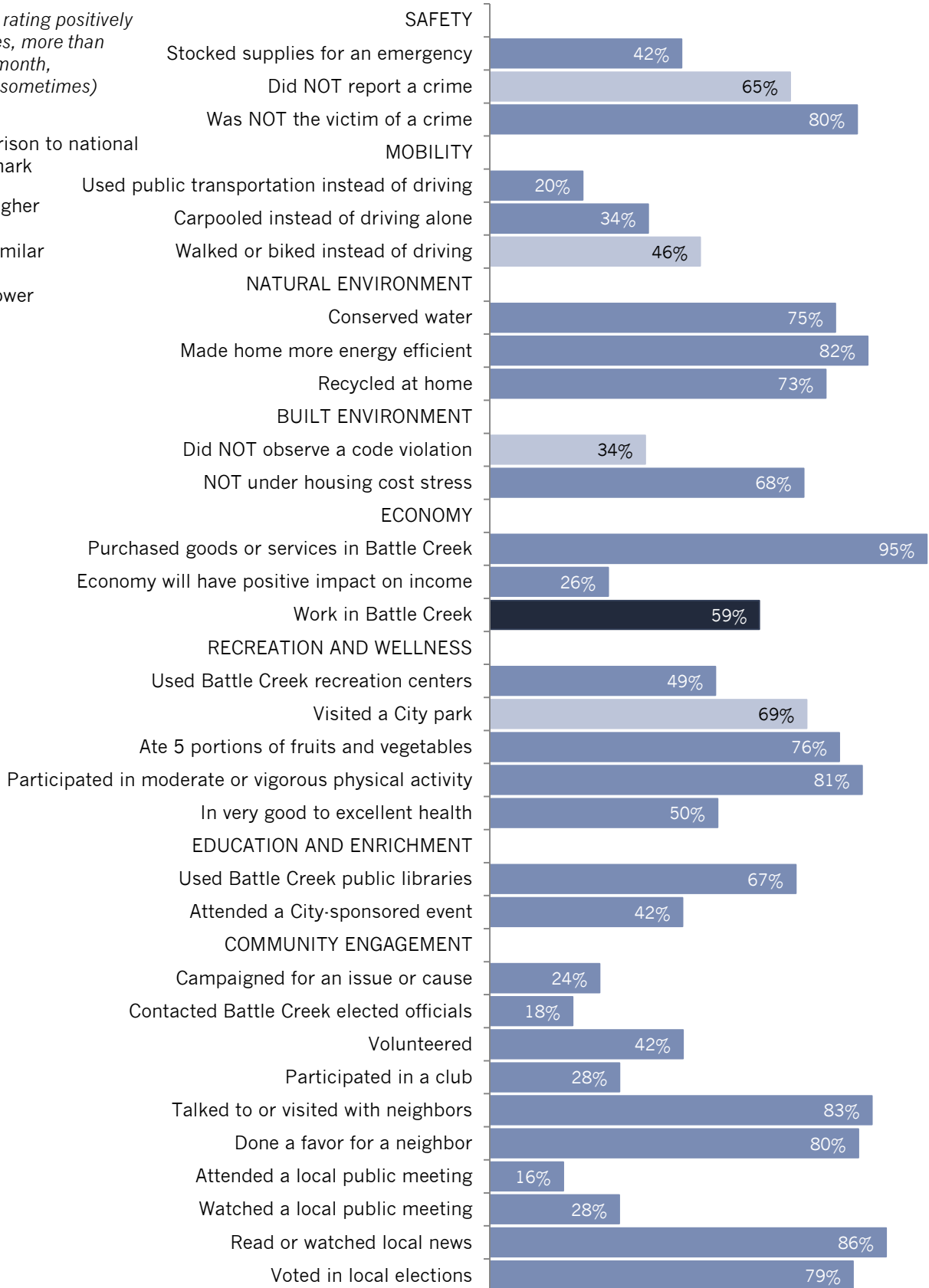
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

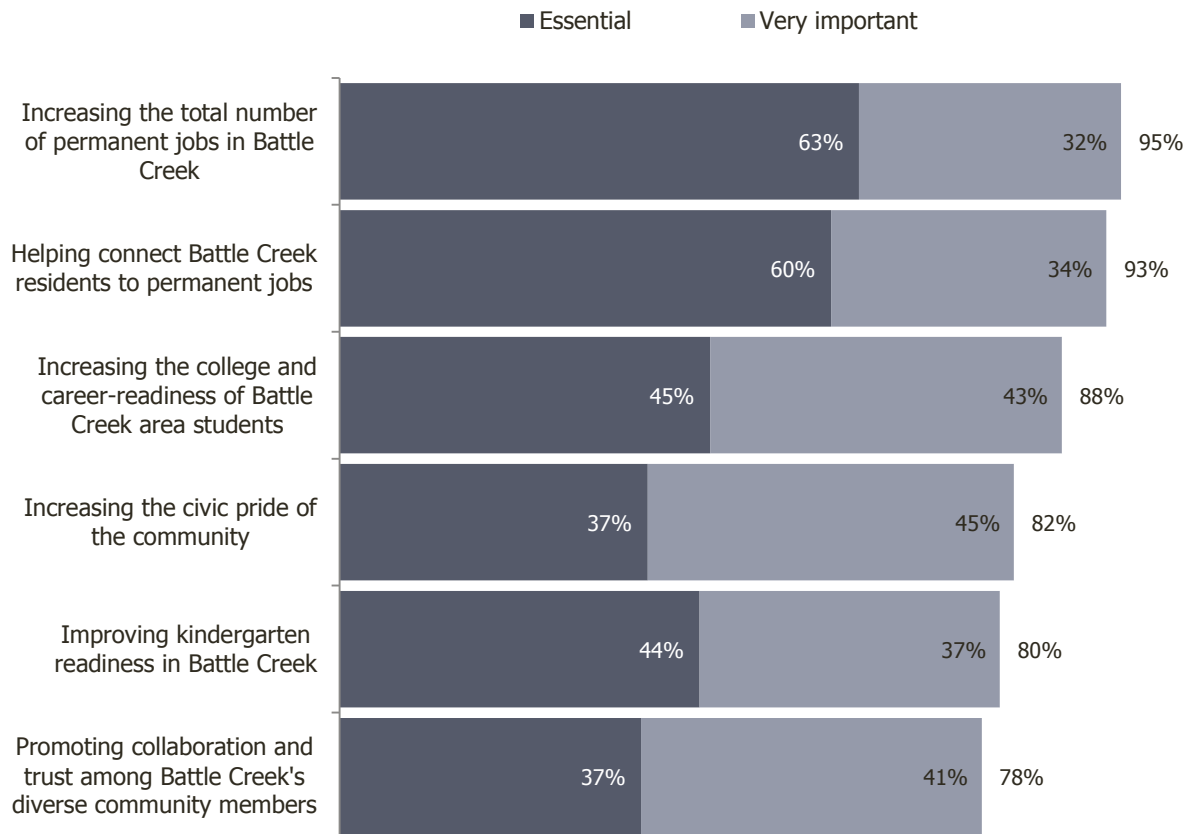


# Special Topics

The City of Battle Creek included six questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked residents to prioritize various tasks for the City to accomplish in the next two years. All of the priorities listed were deemed essential or very important by at least 8 in 10 residents. Almost all residents reported that increasing the total number of permanent jobs and helping connect Battle Creek residents to permanent jobs would be essential or very important.

Figure 4: City Priorities

*Please rate how important, if at all, you think it is for the City of Battle Creek to prioritize each of the following in the coming two years:*

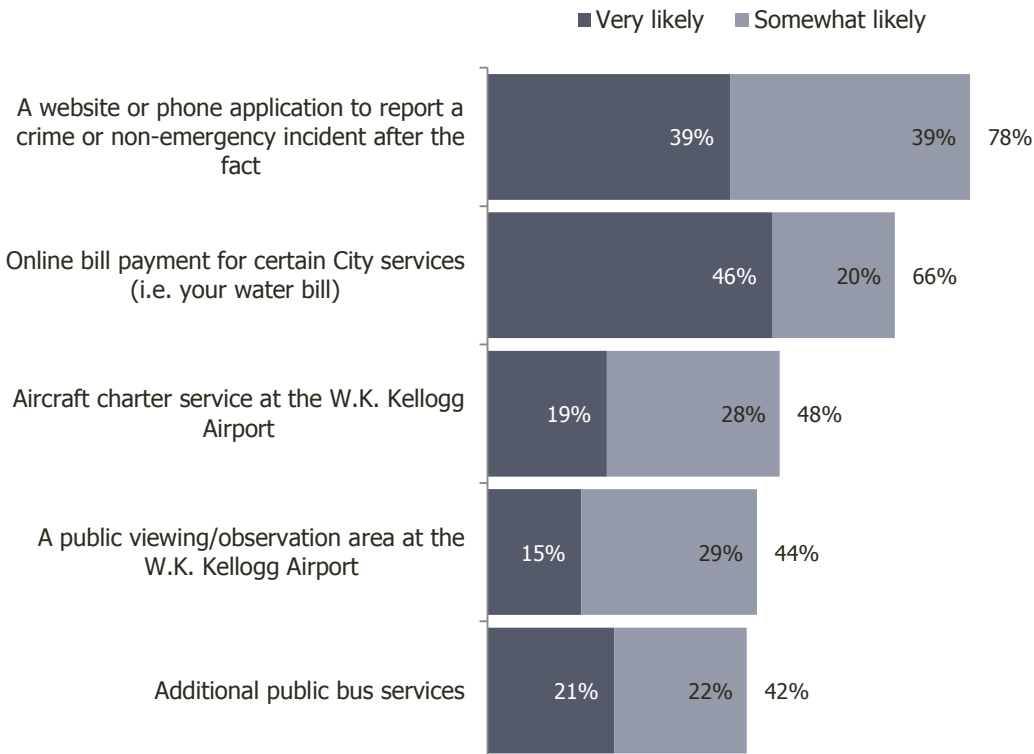


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In the second question, survey respondents were asked to state how likely or unlikely they would be to utilize different services that could be offered to residents. About 8 in 10 residents reported that they were at least somewhat likely to use a website or phone application for reporting crimes or other non-emergency incidents. Citizens also indicated that they were likely to use an online bill payment service for residents, with about two-thirds of residents reporting they were likely to utilize this type of service. Approximately half of the residents or less stated they were not likely to use an aircraft charter service or a public viewing/observation deck at the W.K. Kellogg Airport or use additional public bus services.

Figure 5: Use of Potential City Services

*Please indicate how likely or unlikely you would be to use the following services if they were available in the City of Battle Creek:*



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Residents were also asked if they had requested the services of Battle Creek’s Police and Fire Departments. Respondents indicated that about half of them had requested the services of the police department, while 18% had sought the services of the fire department.

Figure 6: Use of Police Department Services

*Please indicate whether you have requested services from the City of Battle Creek Police Department:*

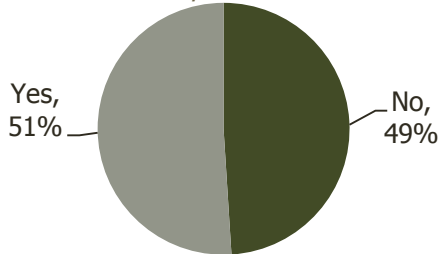
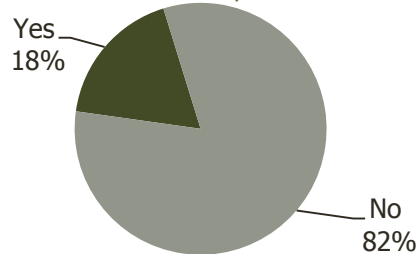


Figure 7: Use of Fire Department Services

*Please indicate whether you have requested services from the City of Battle Creek Fire Department:*



Respondents were asked to rate the two departments if they had requested services. About 6 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the City of Battle Creek’s Police Department regarding their professionalism, knowledge and courtesy and the Fire Department received positive ratings from at least 9 in 10 respondents for each of these measures.

Figure 8: Police Department Ratings

*Please rate the following categories of Battle Creek’s Police Department performance:*

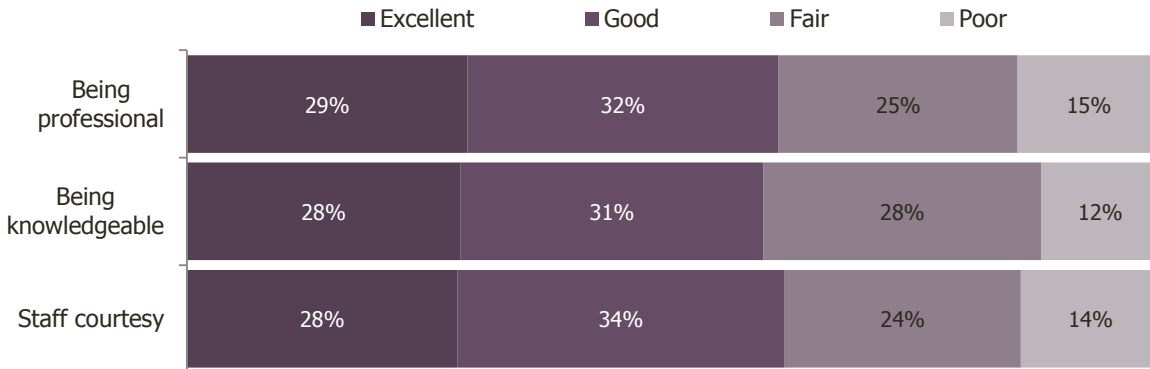
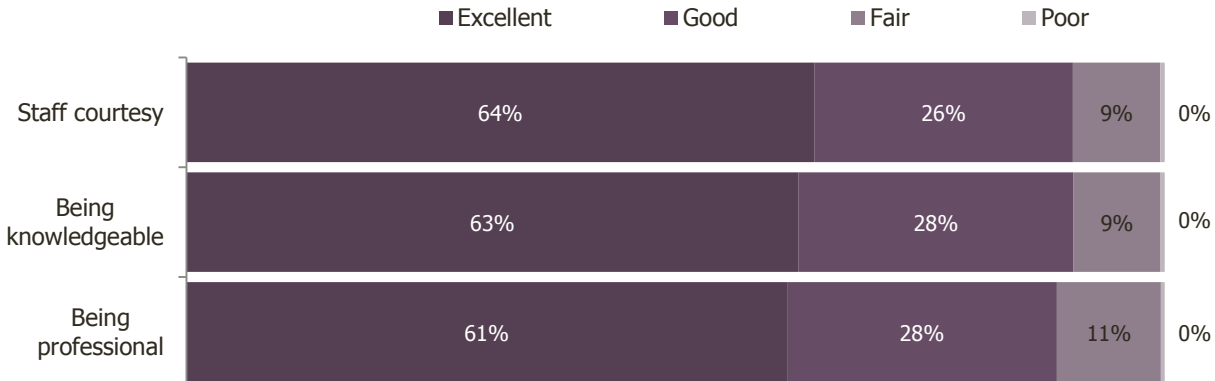


Figure 9: Fire Department Ratings

*Please rate the following categories of Battle Creek’s Fire Department performance:*

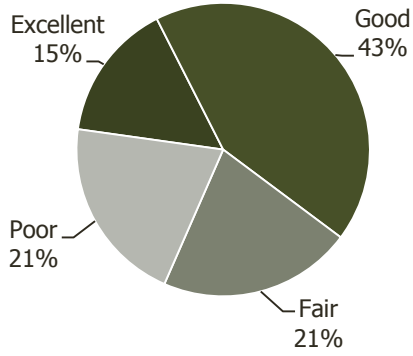


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The last custom question asked Battle Creek residents to report their level of trust for the City's Police Department. Fifty-eight percent of respondents indicated that they had at least a good level of trust in the department and its officers.

Figure 10: Trust for Battle Creek Police Department

*Please indicate your level of trust for the City of Battle Creek Police Department and its officers:*



# Conclusions

## **The Economy is important for residents.**

Residents indicated that Economy is an important facet for Battle Creek to focus on in the coming years. The rating for overall economic health was lower than the national comparison with about 2 in 10 residents giving it a positive rating. Within Community Characteristics, a little less than one-third of participants felt that the quality of business and services establishments in Battle Creek were excellent or good. About 2 in 10 survey participants rated employment opportunities positively, while about one-third of residents felt the city was an excellent or good place to work and that the vibrancy of the downtown/commercial area of Battle Creek was excellent or good; these ratings were all lower than those seen in comparison communities. Almost 6 in 10 residents worked within the city limits of Battle Creek, a rating higher than the national benchmark. Nearly all citizens indicated in the custom questions that increasing the number of permanent jobs in Battle Creek (95%) and helping to connect residents to permanent jobs (93%) was essential or very important for the City to focus on in the next two years.

## **Many residents have relationships with their neighbors, but feel the ties to their community are lacking.**

More than 8 in 10 residents reported that they have talked to or visited with their neighbors and 80% have done a favor for a neighbor; both of these ratings are similar to the national benchmark. However, only 23% of residents felt that the sense of community in Battle Creek was excellent or good which was much lower than the ratings found in similar communities. Furthermore, only one-third of residents gave positive ratings to the openness and acceptance toward people of diverse backgrounds, 18% of residents rate the overall image of the City as excellent or good, and 2 in 10 felt that the City was treating residents fairly; these ratings were all lower than the national comparison. Residents also indicated that only about 4 in 10 felt that they had the opportunity to participate in community matters and one-quarter felt that the City did an excellent or good job welcoming citizen involvement. About 8 in 10 survey participants did report that increasing civic pride in the community and promoting collaboration and trust among Battle Creek's diverse community members was essential or very important.

## **Public transportation is a strong feature of the community.**

Within Community Characteristics, 7 out of the 8 aspects for Mobility were rated positively and similar to the national benchmark by survey participants. One-third of residents reported that they travel by public transportation and 2 in 10 of respondents stated they use public transportation instead of driving. Additionally, 4 in 10 residents said they use the bus or other transit service, a rating also similar to other communities; however, less than half of resident said that there were at least somewhat likely to use additional public bus services if they were provided by Battle Creek.