

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Coventry, CT
Community Livability Report

DRAFT
2019



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

Contents

About..... 1

Quality of Life in Coventry 2

Community Characteristics 3

Governance 5

Participation 7

Special Topics..... 9

Conclusions 12



The National Citizen Survey™
© 2001-2019 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 Coventry. 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.

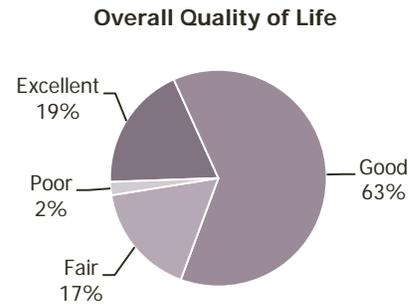
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 496 residents of the Town of Coventry. 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 Coventry

About 8 in 10 residents rated the quality of life in Coventry as excellent or good. This is similar to ratings in communities across the nation (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.

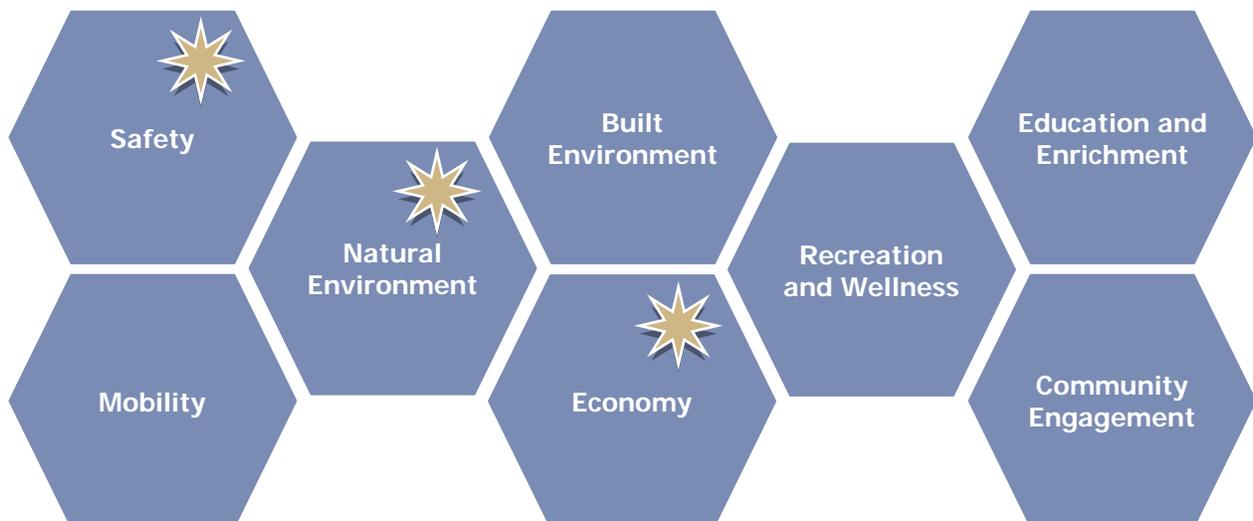
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety, Economy and Natural Environment as priorities for the Coventry community in the coming two years. Broadly, assessments for all community facets tended to be positive and were rated similarly to comparison communities across the nation. 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 Coventry’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 Coventry, 90% rated the Town as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Coventry as a place to live were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the Town as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Coventry as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Coventry and its overall appearance. Approximately 7 in 10 residents rated the overall image of Coventry as excellent or good, on par with comparison communities. At least 8 in 10 residents positively evaluated their neighborhood, Coventry as a place to raise children, and the overall appearance of Coventry. These ratings were also similar to ratings in communities across the nation. Coventry as a place to retire was scored positively by about 4 in 10 residents, a level which was below the national benchmark.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Residents were generally pleased with items relating to travel by automobile (travel by car, public parking, and traffic flow), as these items were scored as excellent or good by at least 7 in 10 residents. These ratings were higher than in comparison communities. Alternative transportation

modes (ease of walking, travel by bicycle and travel by public transportation), however, were rated positively by fewer than half of respondents; levels which were lower than national averages. Within Economy, Coventry as a place to work was positively scored by one-third of residents. Employment opportunities and shopping opportunities were rated as excellent or good by less than one in five residents. These aspects were lower than the national benchmarks. However, about half of residents gave high marks to the overall economic health of Coventry, businesses and services, and Coventry as a place to visit, similar to national averages. Ease of walking, travel by car and Coventry as a place to work increased since the 2008 iteration of this survey (see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover).

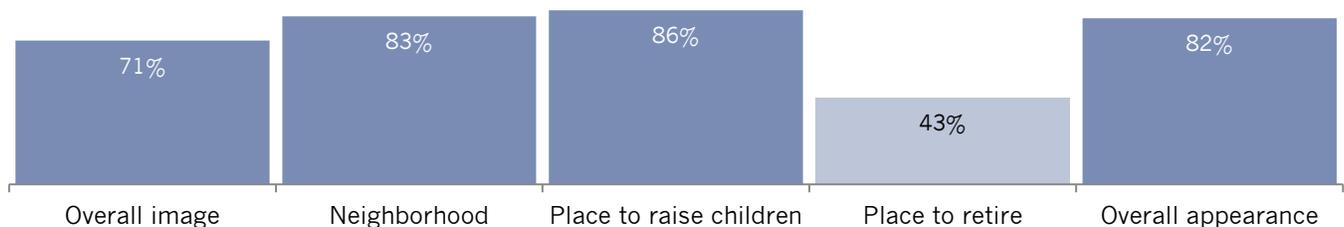


All aspects of Natural Environment were rated positively by at least 8 in 10 residents, levels which were similar to national averages. Within Recreation and Wellness, a majority of residents scored recreational opportunities in Coventry as excellent or good, similar to the national average. However, the availability of affordable quality food, fitness opportunities, health and wellness, mental health care, preventive health services and health care received high marks from fewer than half of residents. These aspects were rated lower than in comparison communities. Scores for the availability of affordable quality food declined since 2008; however, scores for health care increased.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



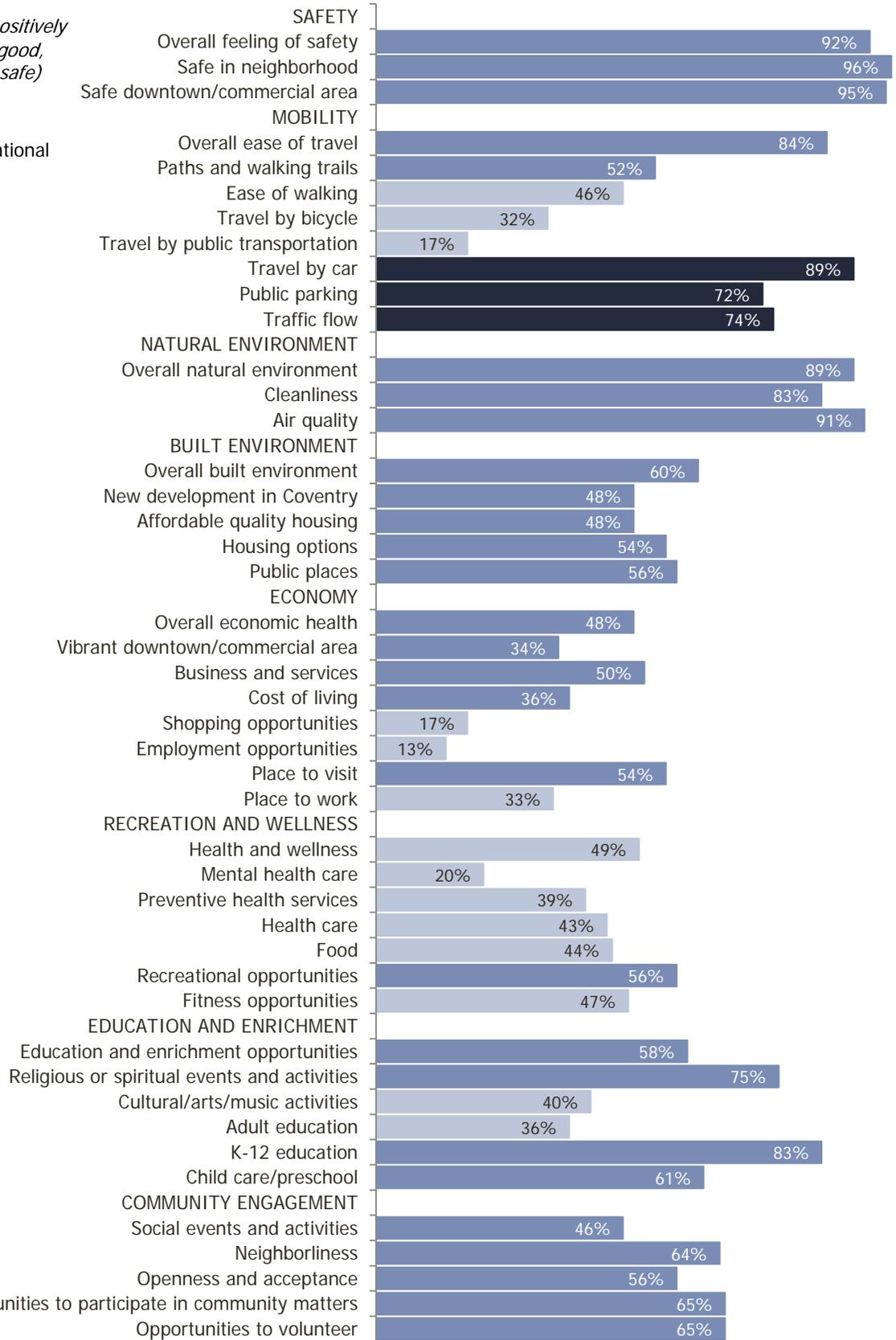
The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

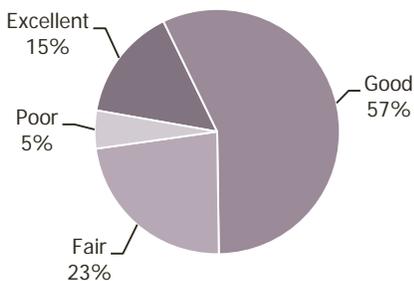
How well does the government of Coventry meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Coventry as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. More than two-thirds of residents rated Town services as excellent or good, a similar proportion to the national average. In comparison, roughly one-third of residents positively scored the services provided by the Federal Government, also similar to the national average.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Coventry’s leadership and governance. Customer service was seen as excellent or good by nearly 8 in 10 residents. More than 4 in 10 residents positively rated their confidence in Town government as well as the value of services for the taxes paid. Remaining items of leadership and governance were rated positively by more than half of respondents. All elements of leadership and governance were rated similarly to comparison communities.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Coventry. Ratings within Mobility were a mix of positive and negative. Traffic signal timing received high marks by nearly 8 in 10 residents, a higher level than the national average. Traffic enforcement, snow removal and sidewalk maintenance were positively scored by about two-thirds of residents; and street repair was rated excellent or good by one-third of residents. These aspects were similar to levels seen in communities across the nation. Street cleaning and street lighting, however, were positively scored by less than half of residents, proportions which were lower than the national averages. Ratings for bus or transit services were also below the benchmark, with fewer than 2 in 10 residents giving it positive scores. Ratings for snow removal and sidewalk maintenance increase since the survey was last administered in 2008.

Overall Quality of Town Services



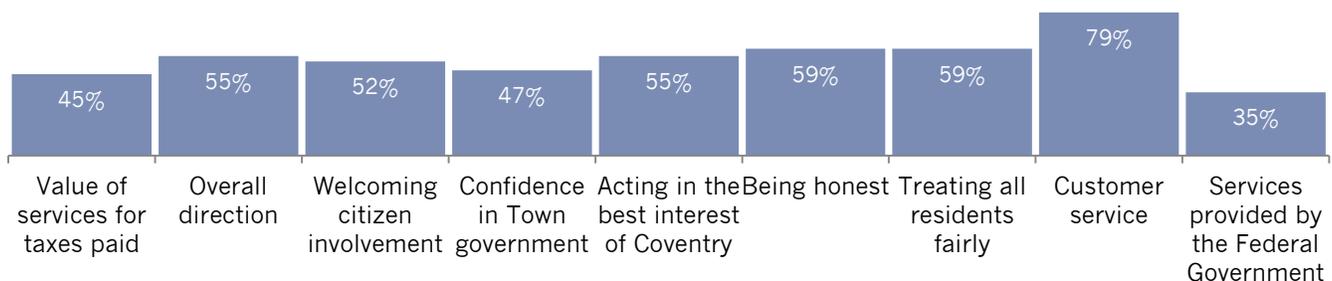
Almost all aspects of Natural Environment were positively scored by at least 7 in 10 residents and were on par with comparison communities. Yard waste pick-up was given excellent or good marks by approximately 6 in 10 residents, and fell below the national average. Marks for drinking water improved in 2019 compared to 2008.

Scores for items within Recreation and Wellness were mixed. Town parks and recreation programs received high marks from at least 6 in 10 residents and were similar to the benchmarks. About 4 in 10 residents rated recreation centers and health services as excellent or good and these ratings were lower than the national averages. Coventry residents gave lower marks to recreation programs and recreation centers in 2019.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



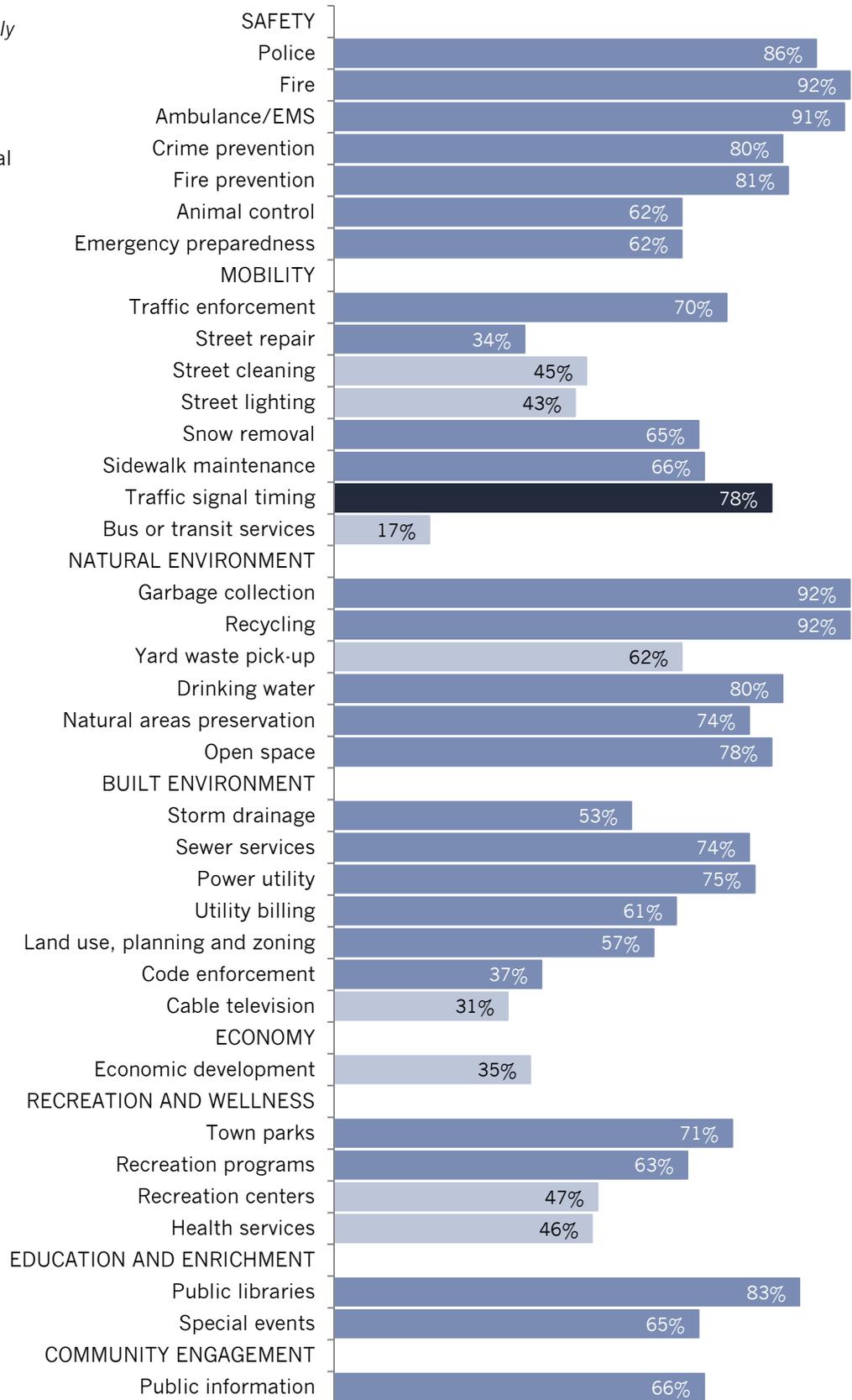
The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Participation

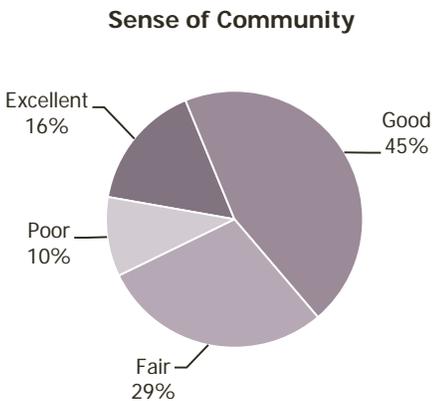
Are the residents of Coventry connected to the community and each other?

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. Approximately 6 in 10 residents rated the sense of community in Coventry as excellent or good. This proportion was similar to the national benchmark. About 8 in 10 residents were likely to recommend living in Coventry and planned to remain in Coventry, these rates were similar to those reported in comparison communities.

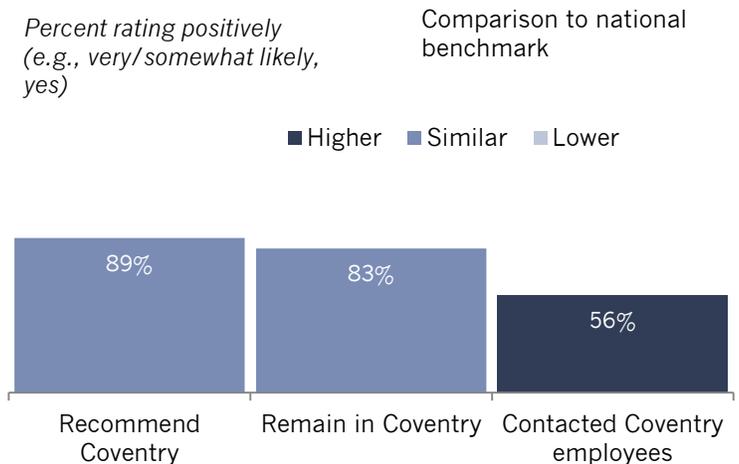
The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Participation rates within Coventry varied widely, making the comparison to the benchmarks, as well as to Coventry over time, useful for interpreting the results

Nearly half of residents indicated they had stocked supplies for an emergency, a higher proportion than the national average. Similar to national averages, more than 8 in 10 residents did NOT report a crime, nor were they victims of a crime.

Coventry residents reported lower rates of participation within Mobility than their counterparts. Fewer than 1 in 10 residents reported having used public transportation instead of driving and about 3 in 10 had carpooled instead of driving alone or walked or biked instead of driving. About 9 in 10 residents purchased goods or services in Coventry, similar to the national average. However, less than one-quarter of residents worked in Coventry and thought the economy would have a positive impact on their income. Marks for these items were lower than in comparison communities; however, the number of respondents that thought the economy would have a positive impact increased since the 2008 iteration of this survey.



Within the facet of Natural Environment more than three-quarters of residents reported having conserved water and made their home more energy efficient. These rates were similar to those seen in comparison communities. Nearly all residents reported having recycled, a proportion that was higher than the national average.



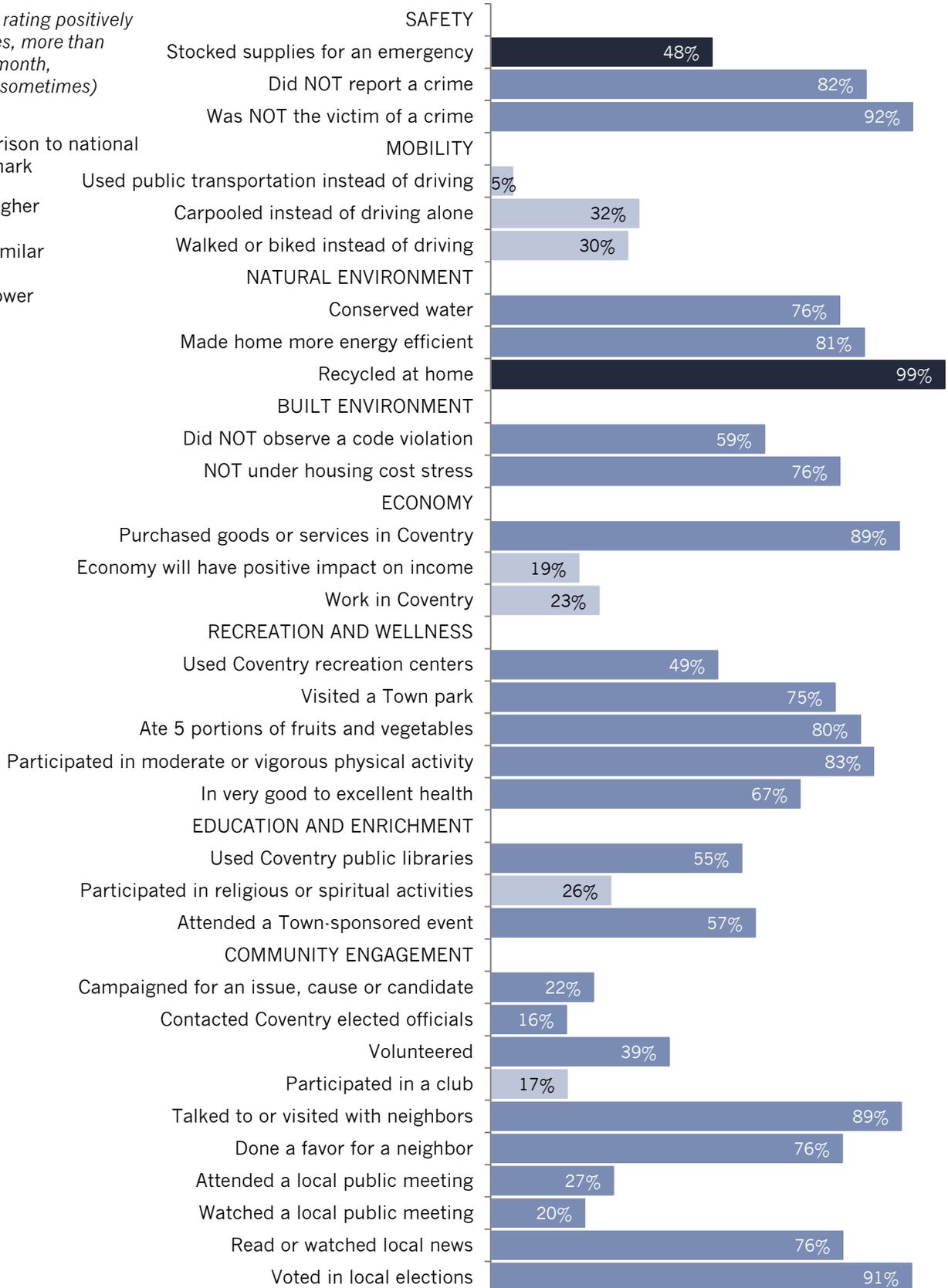
The National Citizen Survey™

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



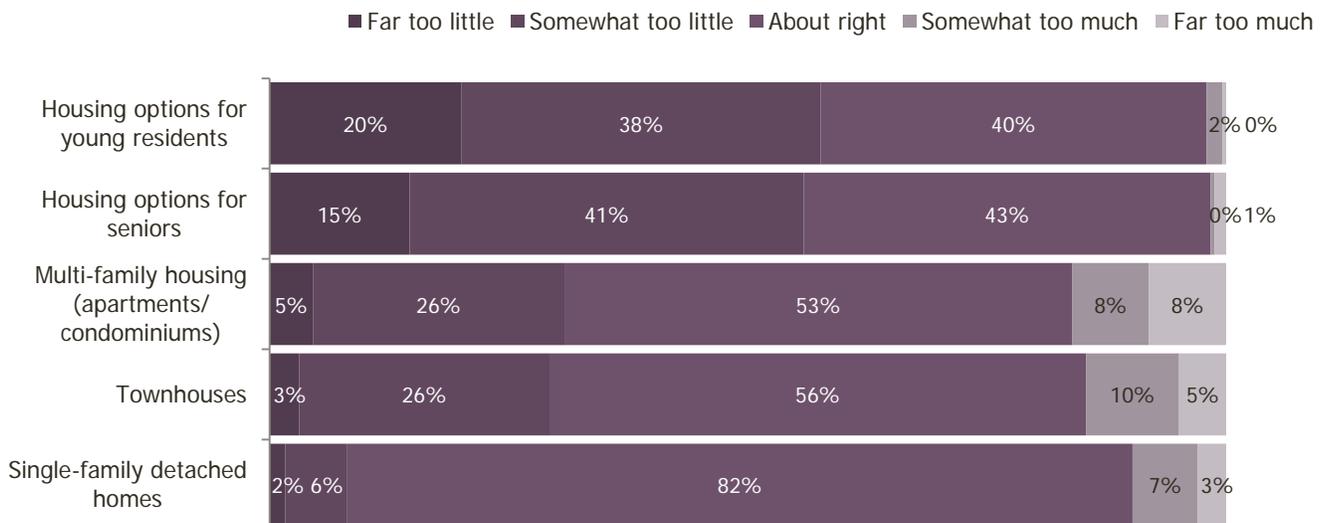
Special Topics

The Town of Coventry included four questions of special interest on The NCS. City leadership sought feedback from residents regarding the amount of housing types, opinions regarding development and growth and infrastructure priorities.

Residents were asked if they felt there was enough of several types of housing to meet the community’s needs in the coming years. A majority of residents felt there was far too little or somewhat too little housing options for young residents and for seniors. A little more than half of residents felt there the amount of multi-family housing and townhouses was about right; approximately one-third of residents felt there was somewhat or far too little of these housing types. More than 8 in 10 residents indicated there was about the right amount of single-family homes in Coventry.

Figure 4: Housing Types

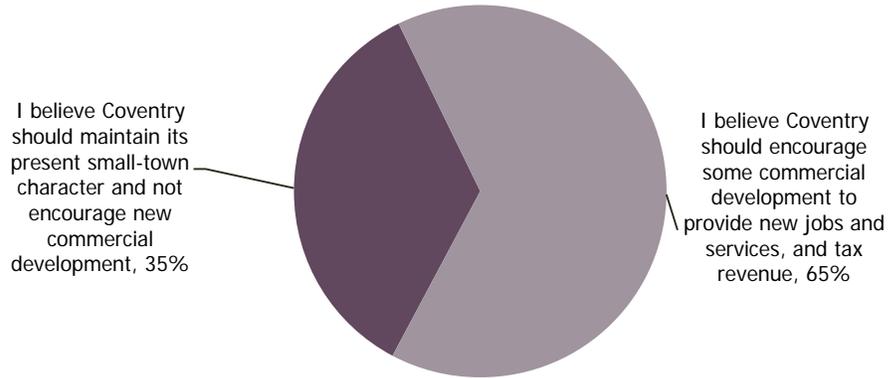
Please indicate if you feel there is too little, too much, or about the right amount of each of the following housing types in Coventry to meet the community's needs in the coming years:



The Town of Coventry asked residents their opinions on the encouragement of commercial development. About 6 in 10 respondents expressed support for the Town encouraging commercial development while about 3 in 10 of residents felt the Town should not encourage new commercial development, in favor of Coventry maintaining its current small-town feel.

Figure 5: Commercial Development

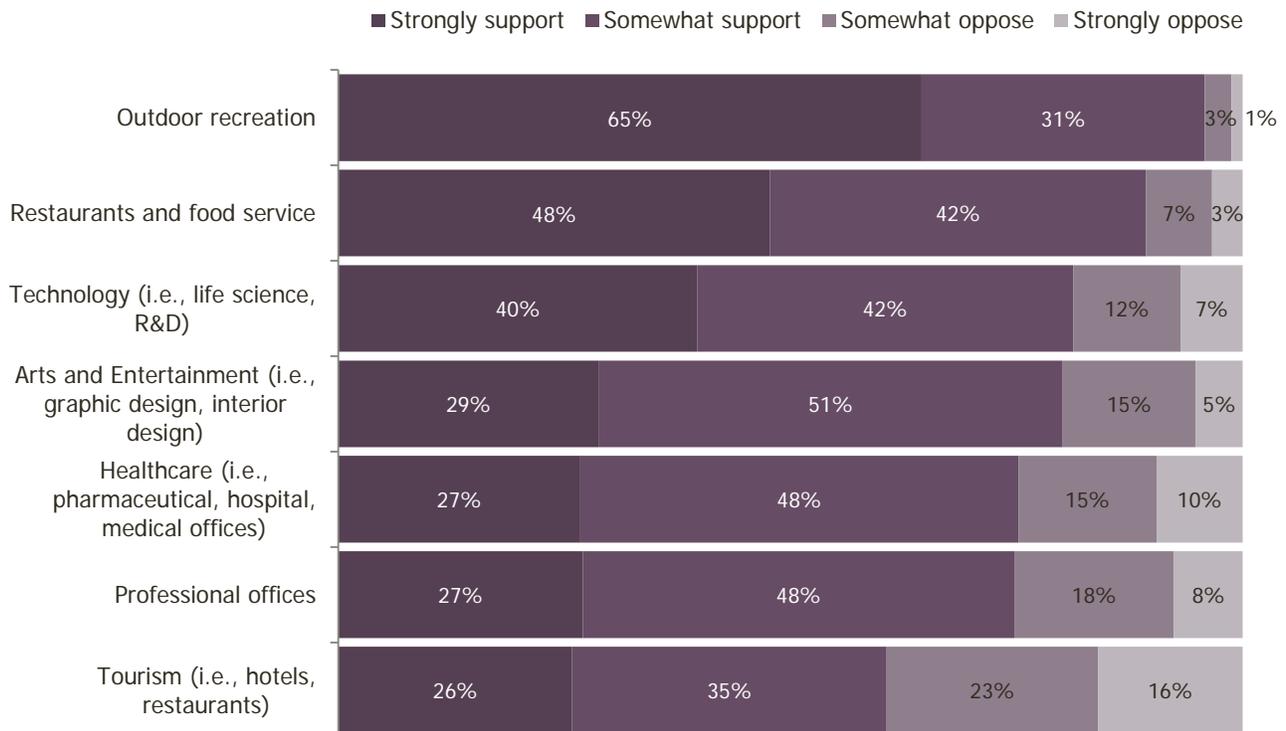
The Town of Coventry is considering encouraging some commercial development to provide new jobs and services, and tax revenue to fund Town projects. Please select the response that best represents your opinion.



The next question Town had to do with support or opposition for the Town to encourage growth in various businesses and industries. The greatest support was for outdoor recreation, with 96% of residents strongly or somewhat supporting the encouragement of growth in that industry. Nine in 10 residents would strongly or somewhat support growth in restaurants and food service. Tourism had the least support of the businesses/industries listed, but 6 in 10 residents would strongly or somewhat support growth in the tourism industry.

Figure 6: Support for Business/Industry Growth

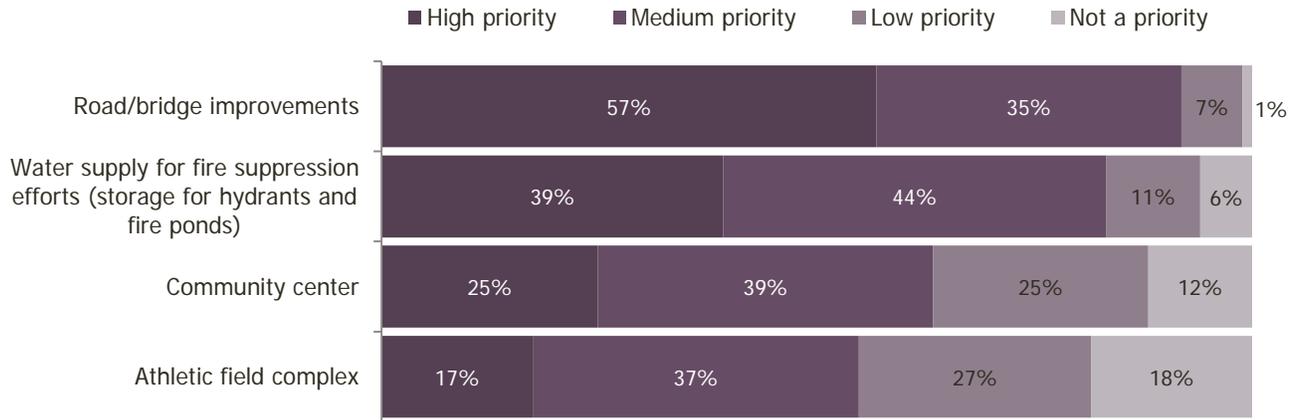
To what extent would you support or oppose the Town of Coventry encouraging growth in the following types of businesses/industries?



Residents gauged which possible infrastructure projects they would consider a priority. More than 9 in 10 residents selected road/bridge improvements has a high or medium priority. Water supply for fire suppression was a high or medium priority for more than 8 in 10 residents.

Figure 7: Priorities for Infrastructure Projects

The Town is updating the Plan of Conservation and Development, which determines which infrastructure projects the Town should consider for the next ten years. Please indicate how much a priority, if at all, each of the following are for the Town to consider for the future:



Conclusions

Coventry residents enjoy a high quality of life and feel safe.

About 9 out of 10 residents rated the quality of life in Coventry as excellent or good. At least 8 in 10 residents positively evaluated their neighborhood and the overall appearance of the community. Coventry respondents felt the Town was a great place to raise a family: 8 in 10 residents gave high marks to Coventry as a place to raise children and K-12 education, and 6 in 10 residents positively evaluated child care/preschool. These scores are similar to national averages and increased since the 2008 iteration of this survey.

Safety was identified as a priority by residents. A majority of respondents reported feeling safe in Coventry overall, in their neighborhood and in Coventry's downtown/commercial areas. At least 8 in 10 residents awarded excellent or good marks for safety services (police, fire, ambulance/EMS), as well as crime prevention and fire prevention. Nearly half of survey participants reported having stocked supplies for an emergency, a proportion greater than the national average.

Residents are pleased with Mobility, but alternative modes of transportation may be an opportunity for improvement.

Residents were satisfied with aspects of Mobility that are related to travel by automobile. Around 7 in 10 residents awarded excellent or good marks to travel by car, public parking and traffic flow, and nearly 8 in 10 respondents gave positive scores to traffic signal timing. Moreover, these ratings exceeded those in comparison communities. Ratings for travel by car, snow removal and sidewalk maintenance increased since the 2008 iteration of this survey. Further, road/bridge improvements were selected as a high or medium priority by more than 9 in 10 survey participants, more than any other option offered for possible infrastructure improvement projects.

In contrast, fewer than half of respondents gave positive scores to several alternative transportation mode (ease of walking, biking and public transit) and less than 2 in 10 residents gave excellent or high scores for bus or transit services. Additionally, less than 1 in 10 residents reported having used public transportation instead of driving. Less than one-third of community members had carpooled or walked or biked instead of driving alone. Scores for aspects related to alternative transportation were lower than national benchmarks.

There have been small gains in the local economy and it remains an area of opportunity.

In 2019, ratings for Coventry as a place to work were higher than those last seen in 2008, with about one-third of survey participants awarding positive scores and more residents were optimistic that the local economy would have a positive impact on their income in the next six months. Most residents gave high marks to the overall economic health of Coventry, quality of business and service establishments and Coventry as a place to visit and nearly 9 in 10 respondents had purchased goods or services in Coventry. However, only about 2 in 10 community members were pleased with employment and shopping opportunities and one-third felt favorably about the economic health of Coventry, levels that lagged behind those in comparison communities. When asked for their opinions on commercial development, about nearly twice the amount of residents (65%) felt the Town should encourage some commercial development to provide new jobs, services and tax revenue compared to the one-third who would prioritize the small town character over growth. Residents were most likely to support encouraging growth in restaurant/food service, technology and arts and entertainment industries, with at least 8 in 10 at least somewhat supporting development in these areas.

The Natural Environment is an asset and a priority.

Coventry residents also placed a high value on Natural Environment and was identified as a focus area for the next two years. At least 8 in 10 residents thought highly of the overall natural environment, cleanliness and air quality. Respondents also appreciated related services, with about 9 in 10 awarding positive scores to garbage collection and recycling and around three-quarters assigned excellent or good reviews to open space, preservation of natural areas and drinking water (a rating that improved since 2008). Residents demonstrated their commitment to the environment by participating in green behaviors at rates at or above national averages; nearly all residents had recycled (a level that eclipsed other communities) and three-quarters or more had conserved water and made their home more energy efficient. When providing their support for growth of different potential commercial industries, almost all residents were supportive of expanding outdoor recreation.