

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Hastings, MN
Community Livability Report

DRAFT
2017



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The National Citizen Survey™
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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 Hastings. 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.

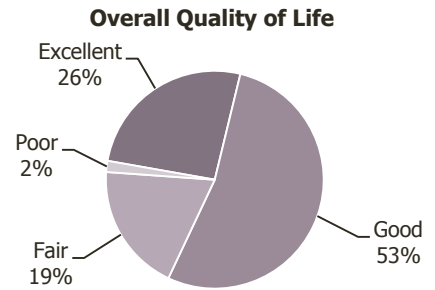
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 426 residents of the City of Hastings. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% 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 Hastings

A majority of residents rated the quality of life in Hastings as excellent or good. This was similar to the national benchmark comparison (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.

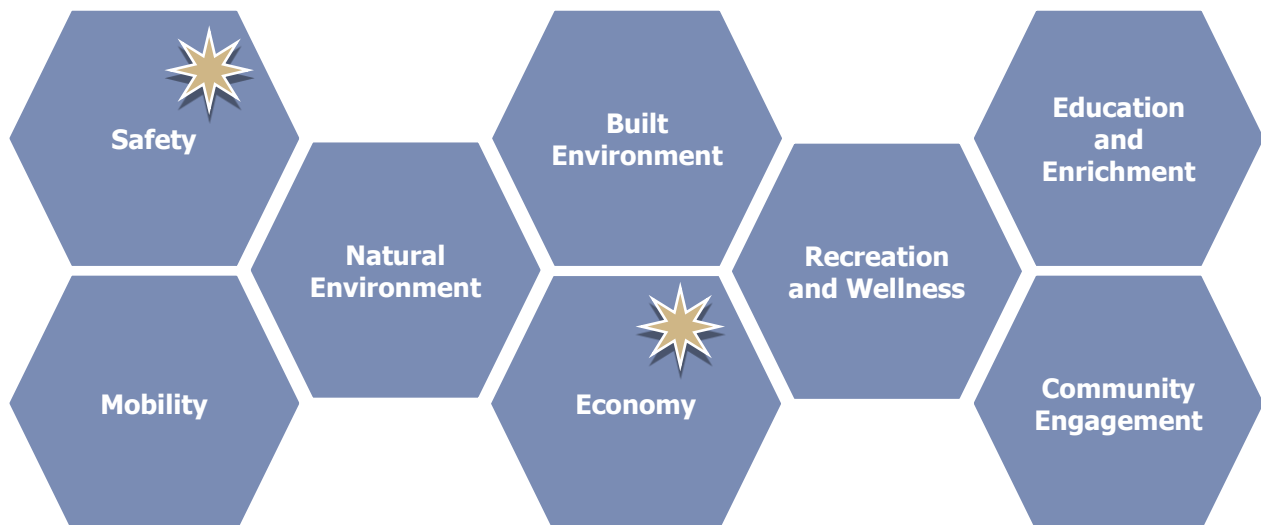
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Hastings community in the coming two years. Ratings for all facets were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

Legend

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

★ Most important



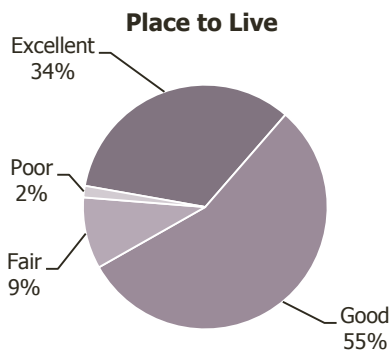
Community Characteristics

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 Hastings, 89% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Hastings 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 Hastings as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Hastings and its overall appearance. About two-thirds of residents or more gave excellent or good ratings to each aspect, and all ratings were similar to the benchmarks.

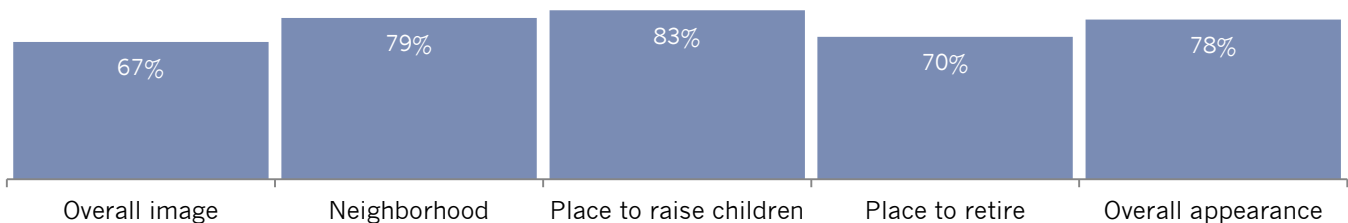
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, ratings tended to be positive and similar to ratings in comparison communities. However, Mobility shined with almost all aspects receiving ratings higher than the national averages; although, the rating for travel by public transportation was lower than the national benchmark. Hastings residents also gave lower evaluations to shopping opportunities and the openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds compared to their counterparts.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



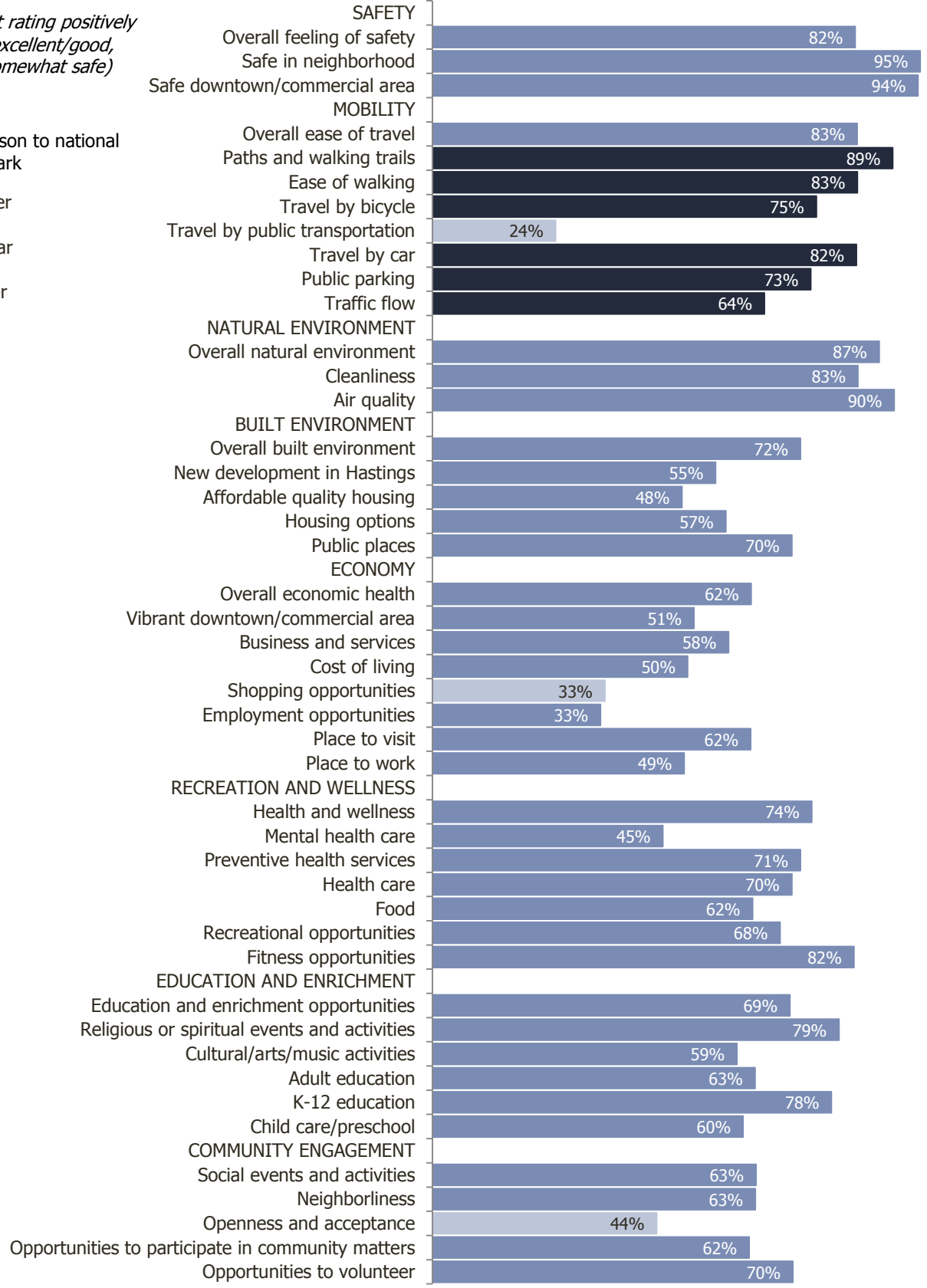
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

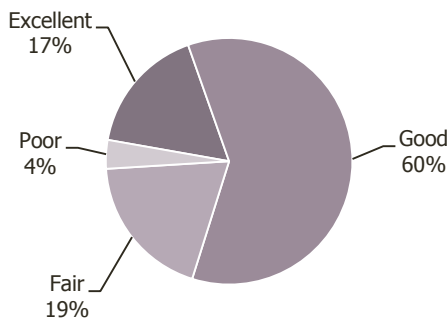
How well does the government of Hastings meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Hastings as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 7 in 10 gave high marks to the overall quality of City services, while about 4 in 10 gave high marks to the services provided by the Federal Government. Both ratings were similar to the national benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Hastings' leadership and governance. About 6 in 10 respondents favorably rated most aspects, and all ratings were similar to those in comparison communities. About three-quarters of respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of customer service provided by City employees.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Hastings. Almost all services and amenities received positive ratings from a majority of residents and were similar to the national benchmarks. However, there were two notable exceptions: evaluations of bus or transit services were lower than ratings in other jurisdictions across the U.S and Hastings residents gave higher marks to recycling services compared to other communities.

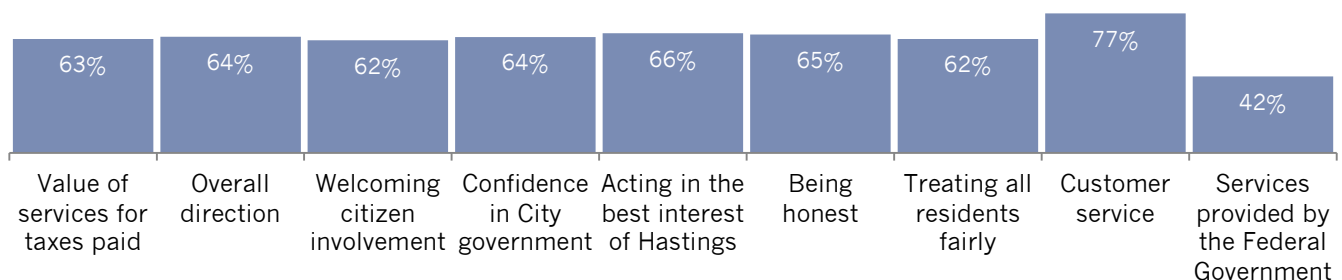
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



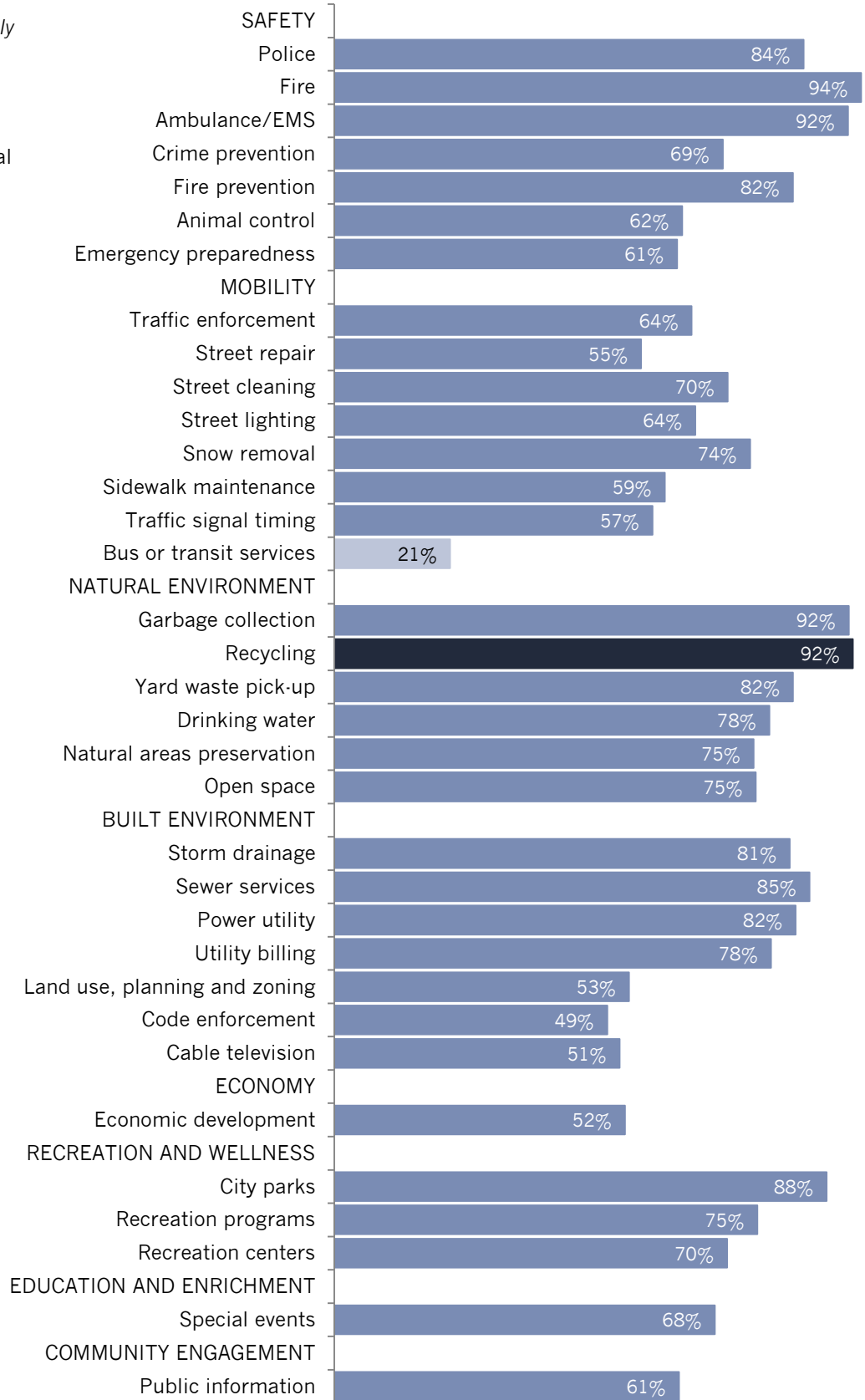
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

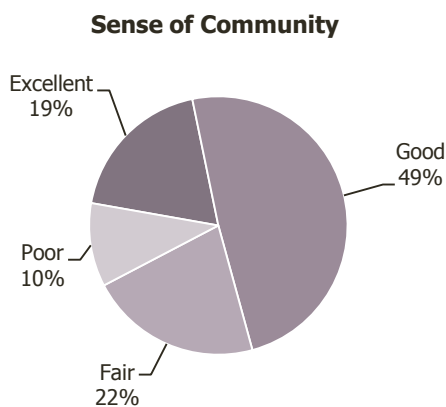


Participation

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

An engaged community harnesses its most valuable resource, its residents. The connections and trust among residents, government, businesses and other organizations help to create a sense of community, a shared sense of membership, belonging and history. About 7 in 10 respondents gave high marks to the overall sense of community in Hastings; this rating was similar to ratings observed elsewhere. About four in five respondents were likely to recommend living in Hastings and planned to remain in Hastings, these rates were similar to those in comparison communities. Fewer Hastings residents had contacted Hastings employees over the last 12 months than residents elsewhere.

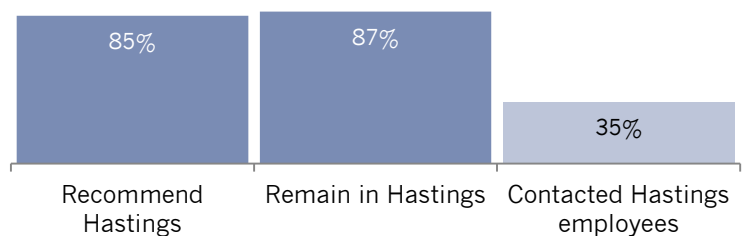
The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Generally, Hastings residents reported rates of behavior and participation that were similar to those reported by residents in comparison communities. Fewer Hastings residents reported that they had used public transportation instead of driving, that they worked in Hastings or that they had used the Hastings Aquatic Center or Civic Arena compared to residents in other jurisdictions. More respondents indicated that they had recycled at home and participated in religious or spiritual activities than those in other communities.



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

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



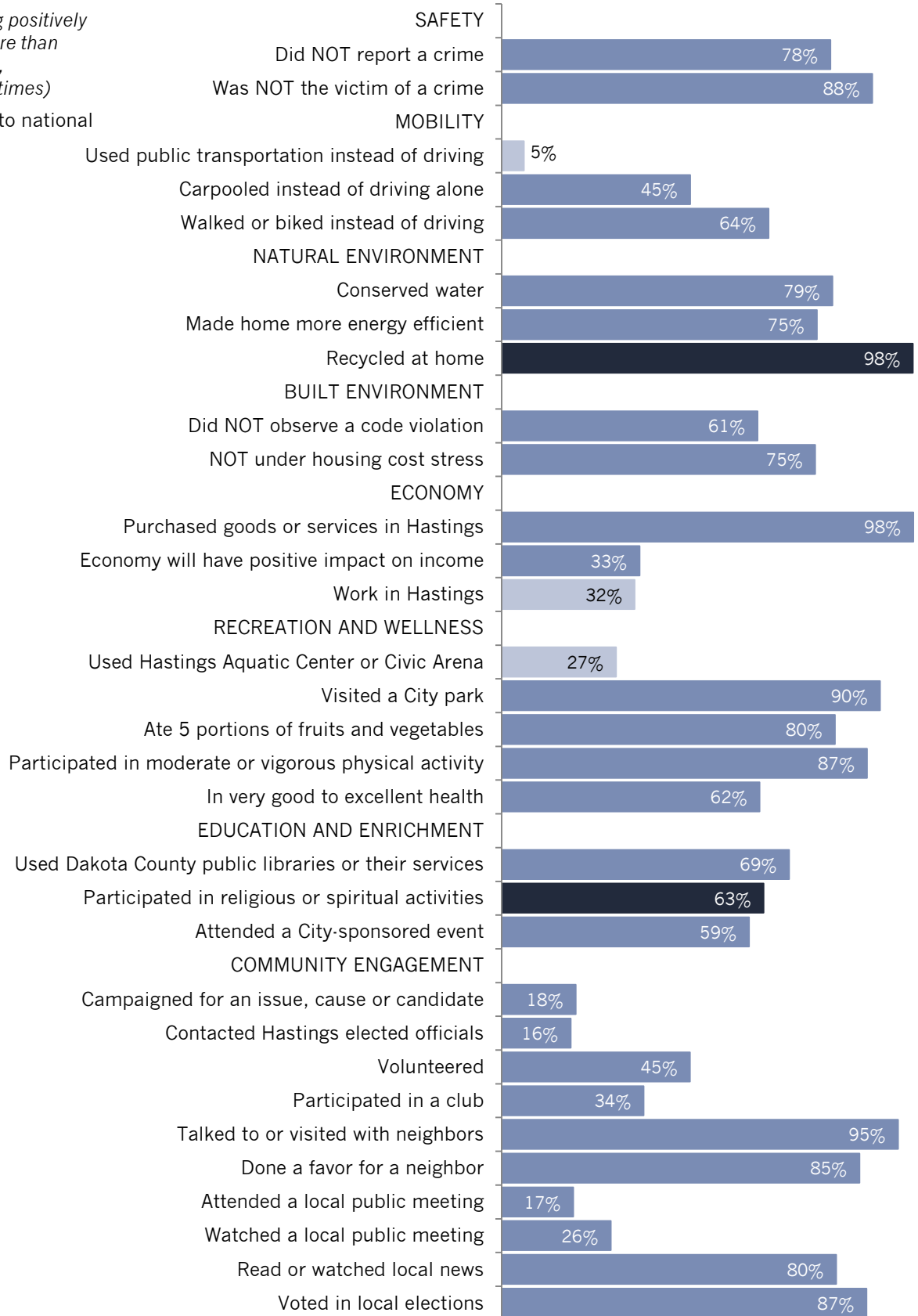
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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 Hastings included four questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked respondents to indicate how much they felt they knew about the work of the Mayor and City Council. About one-third felt they knew a great deal or a fair amount, while close to half felt they knew very little, and close to one-quarter said they had no knowledge about the work of the Mayor and City Council in Hastings. All respondents were then asked if they approved or disapproved of the job the Mayor and City Council were doing, based on what they knew. About 8 in 10 respondents said they approved while about 2 in 10 disapproved.

Figure 4: Knowledge of Mayor and City Council
How much do you feel you know about the work of the Mayor and City Council?

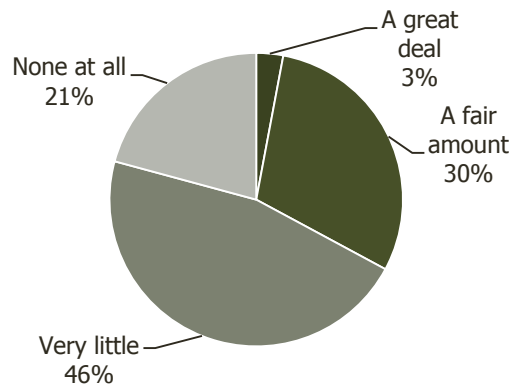
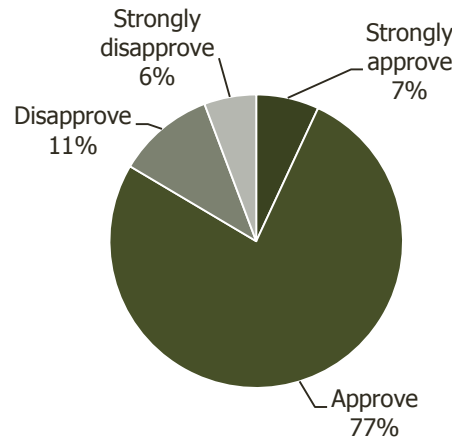


Figure 5: Approval of Mayor and City Council
From what you know, do you approve or disapprove of the job the Mayor and City Council are doing?

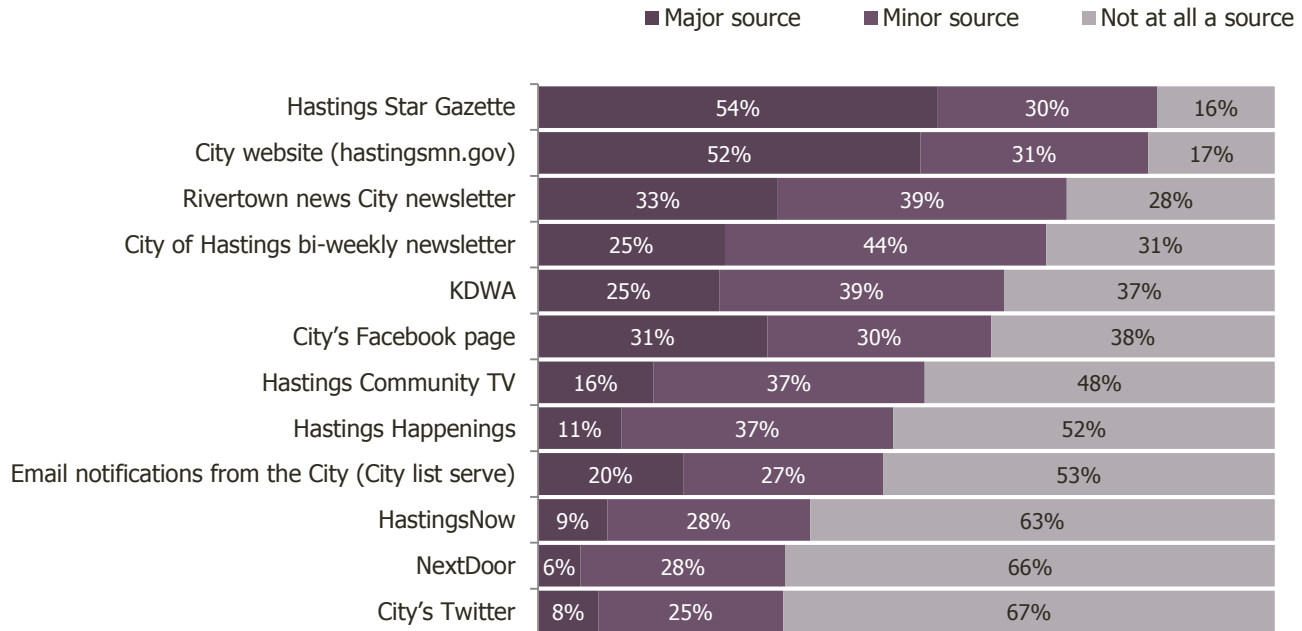


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The next question asked respondents to indicate the degree to which they used different types of information sources to get information about the City of Hastings. The *Hastings Star Gazette* and the City website were considered to be major sources of information by about half of the survey respondents. A majority of residents felt that the City’s Twitter, NextDoor, HastingsNow, email notifications from the City and Hastings Happenings were not at all a source of information about the City.

Figure 6: Information Sources

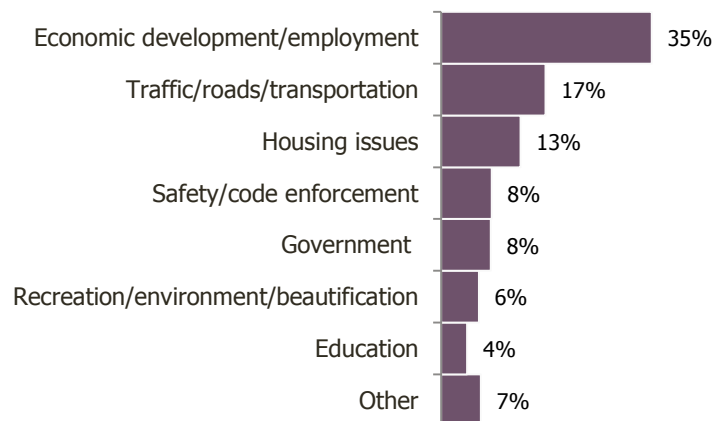
Please indicate how much of a source, if at all, you consider each of the following to be for obtaining information about the City of Hastings:



The final question for respondents was an open-ended question (see the *Open-end Report* under separate cover) asking residents what the single most important thing is that City should do in the next two years. About two-thirds of respondents wrote in a response. Of those, about one-third provided comments about improvements to economic development and employment opportunities in Hastings. The next most commonly mentioned action items for the City had to do with traffic/roads/transportation and housing issues. Less than 1 in 10 cited safety, government, recreation and education as the most important challenges facing the City.

Figure 7: Open-ended Question

Thinking about the challenges facing the City of Hastings today, what is the single most important thing the City should do in the next two years?



Conclusions

Hastings is a desirable place to live.

About 9 in 10 Hastings residents gave an excellent or good rating to the City as a place to live. Ratings that support overall community livability such as neighborhoods as a place to live, the overall appearance of the City and Hastings as a place to raise children received high marks from at least three-quarters of respondents. These positive ratings were reflected again in residents' willingness to recommend living in Hastings to others and to remain in the City for the next five years. Broadly, most ratings of Community Characteristics and Governance were held in positive regard by a majority of respondents and were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

Safety is a key contributor to the quality of life in Hastings.

In general, Safety-related ratings in Hastings were some of its highest. Almost all respondents reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods and in Hastings' downtown/commercial area. Hastings residents were also pleased with the City's fire services and ambulance or emergency medical services, as each of these were rated as excellent or good by about 9 in 10. All services related to safety were given high marks by residents and they indicated that Safety was a top priority for the City to focus on in the coming two years.

Economic development in Hastings may be an area in which to focus improvements.

Survey respondents indicated that Economy was an important priority for the City to focus on in the coming years. Ratings for most Economy-related aspects were similar to those given in other communities; about 6 in 10 awarded high marks to the overall economic health, Hastings as a place to visit and the overall quality of businesses and service establishments. However, residents gave lower-than-average assessments to shopping opportunities. Hastings residents also reported lower rates of working within the City than national comparisons. When residents were asked, in their own words, about the single most important thing the City could do in the next two years, issues related to economic development were cited by the highest proportion of respondents.