



THE NCSTM
The National Community SurveyTM

Palm Coast, FL

Community Livability Report

2019



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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 Community Survey™ (The NCS™) report is about the “livability” of Palm Coast. 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.

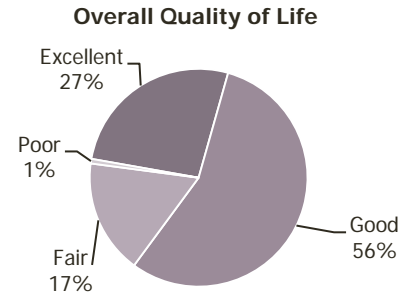
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 417 residents of the City of Palm Coast. 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 Palm Coast

Most residents rated the quality of life in Palm Coast as excellent or good. This rating 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.

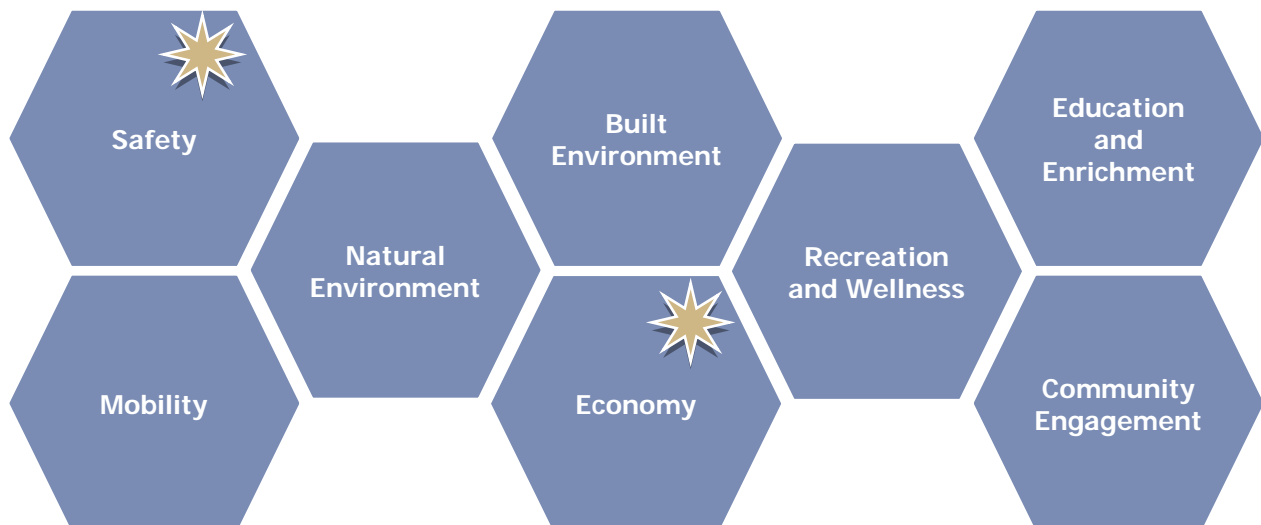
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Palm Coast community in the coming two years. Ratings across all facets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

Legend

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

- Most important



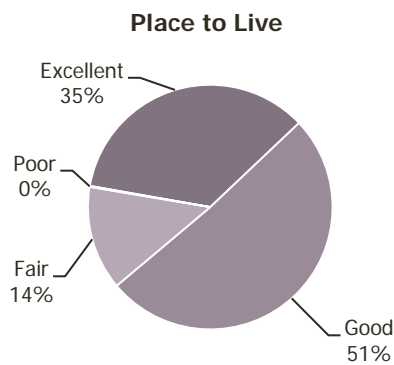
Community Characteristics

What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?

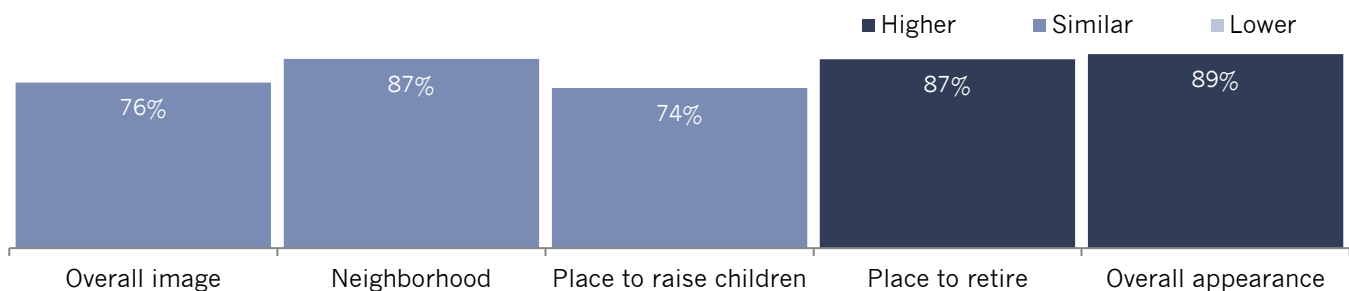
Overall quality of community life represents the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. How residents rate their overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. In the case of Palm Coast, 86% rated the city as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Palm Coast 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 Palm Coast as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Palm Coast and its overall appearance. About three-quarters of respondents gave high marks to the overall image of Palm Coast and to the city as a place to raise children. About 4 in 5 respondents positively rated their neighborhoods, Palm Coast as a place to retire and the overall appearance of the city. Ratings for the city as a place to retire and for its overall appearance eclipsed average ratings in comparison communities. Palm Coast residents gave higher marks to their overall quality of life, the city as a place to retire and to live, to their neighborhoods and to the overall image of the city in 2019 compared to 2017 (see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover).

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Most aspects were rated positively by a majority of residents and ratings tended to be similar to the benchmarks. Ratings for ease of travel by public transportation, the city's vibrant downtown/commercial area, employment opportunities and for the city as a place to work fell below national averages. Palm Coast residents gave high marks to paths and walking trails and to the ease of public parking; these ratings were higher than those observed in other communities across the nation. Several aspects of Community Characteristics demonstrated increased ratings in 2019 compared to 2017; most of the increases were within Mobility.



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



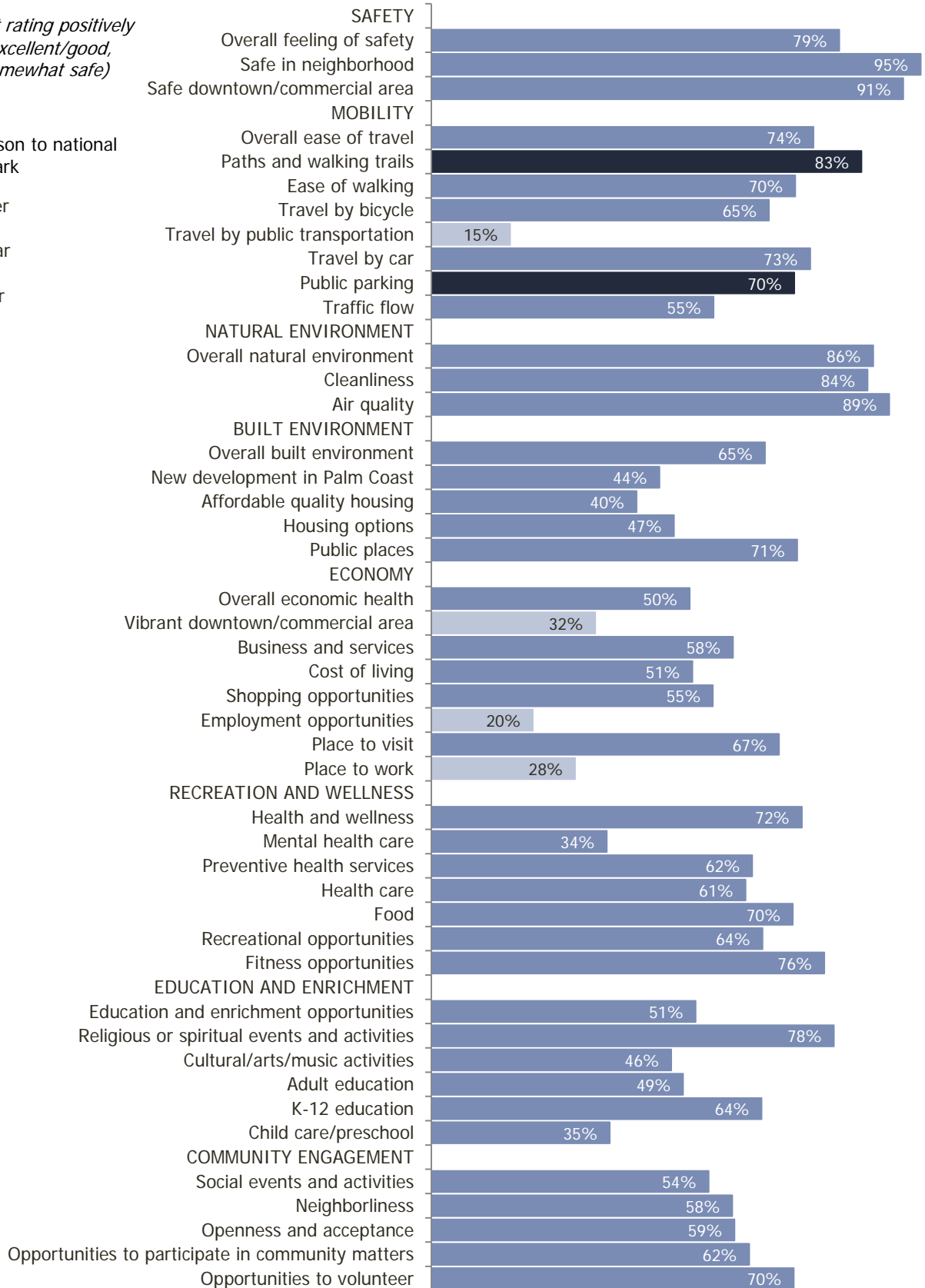
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

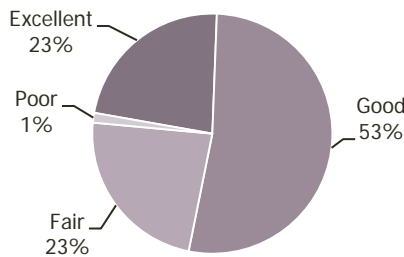
How well does the government of Palm Coast meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Palm Coast 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 respondents gave high marks to the overall quality of City services, while fewer than half positively rated the overall quality of services provided by the Federal Government. Both ratings were similar to those in comparison communities. Ratings for the overall quality of City services increased from 2017 to 2019.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Palm Coast’s leadership and governance. Ratings for all aspects were similar to the national benchmarks and tended to be rated positively by half or more of the survey respondents. Palm Coast residents gave higher marks to the value of services for taxes paid, acting in the best interest of Palm Coast, being honest, treating all residents fairly and to the customer service provided by City employees in 2019.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Palm Coast. All aspects of Safety received high marks from at least 6 in 10 respondents; all were similar to the national benchmark except emergency preparedness, which received higher than average ratings. Further, ratings for emergency preparedness increased in 2019 compared to 2017; as did ratings for crime prevention and fire prevention. Most aspects of Mobility received strong ratings and were similar to the benchmarks; however, ratings for street lighting and bus or transit services were lower than national averages. Assessments of sidewalk maintenance increased in 2019. Ratings across all other facets were similar to the national benchmarks. Increased ratings were observed across most facets of Governance in 2019.

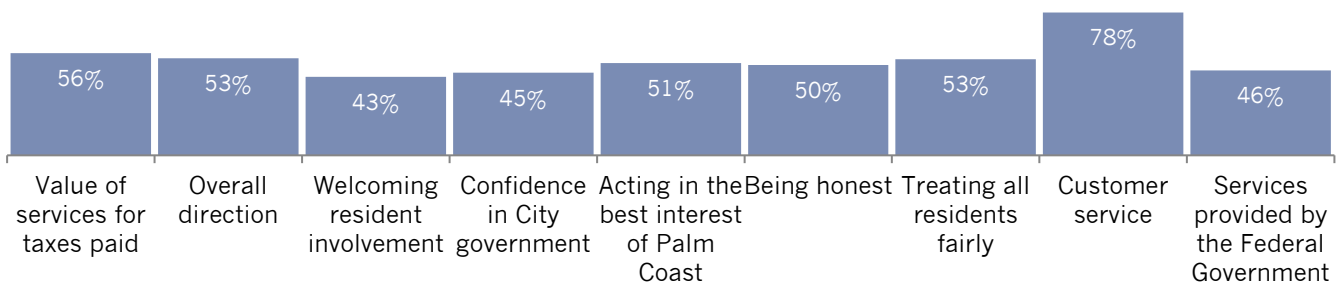
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



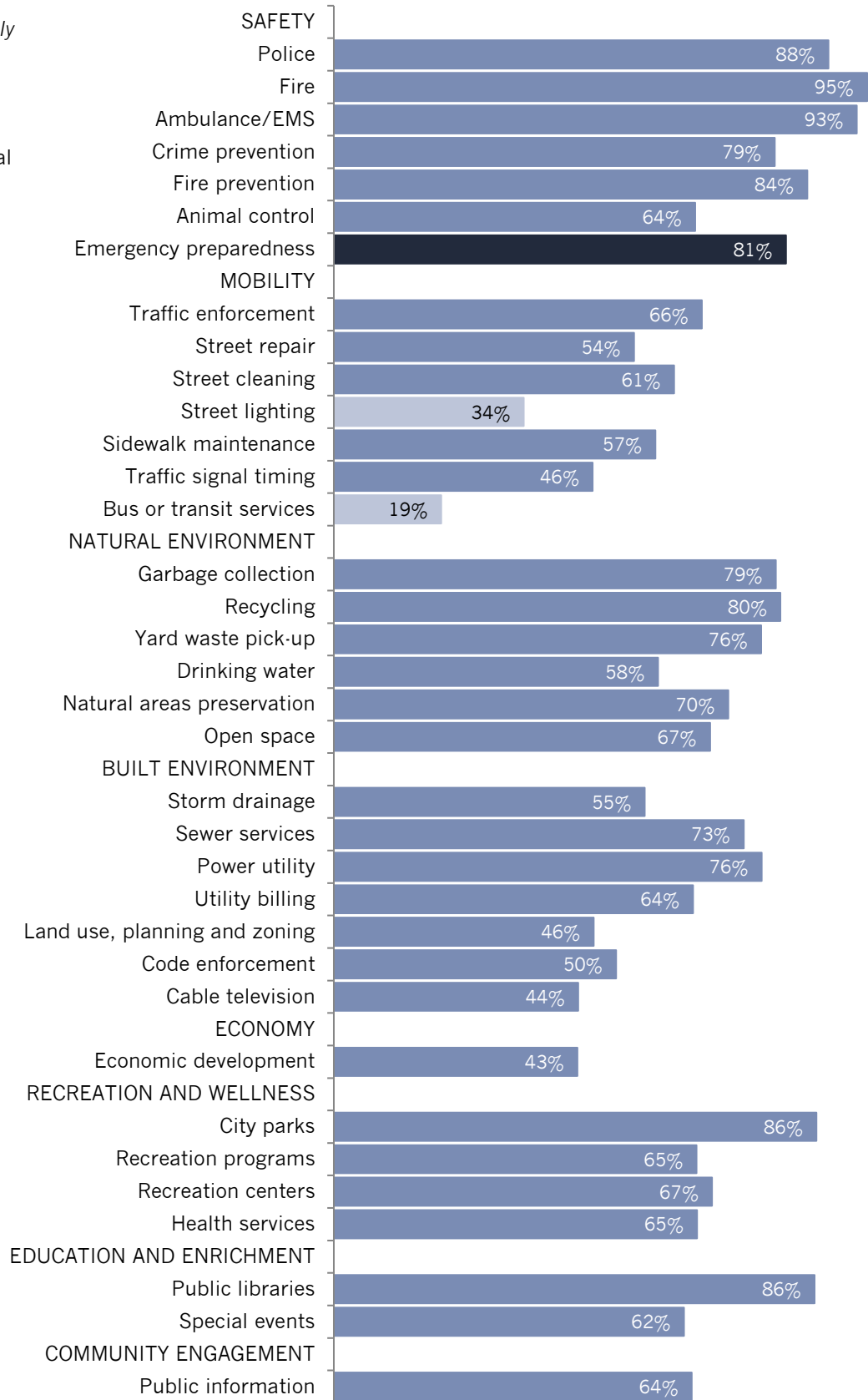
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

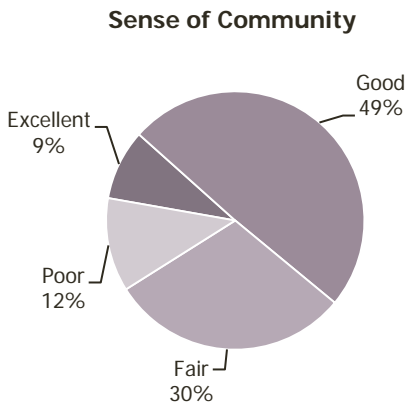


Participation

Are the residents of Palm Coast 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 residents gave high marks to the sense of community in Palm Coast, this rating was similar to the benchmark and improved from 2017 to 2019. About 4 in 5 respondents were likely to recommend living in Palm Coast and planned to remain in Palm Coast; these rates were similar to those observed in comparison communities.

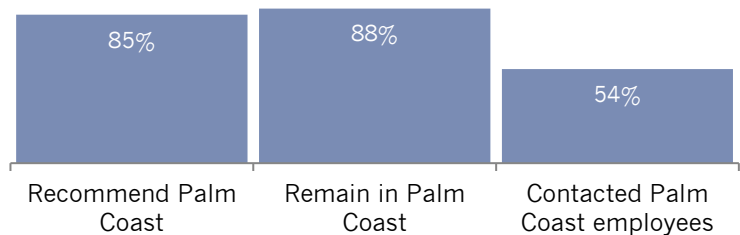
The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Most reported rates of Participation were similar to national averages, and most remained stable over time. More Palm Coast residents reported that they had stocked supplies for an emergency than their counterparts. Palm Coast residents reported lower levels of using public transportation, walking or biking instead of driving, or using public libraries than residents in other communities across that nation. More Palm Coast residents had observed code violations compared to national averages.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



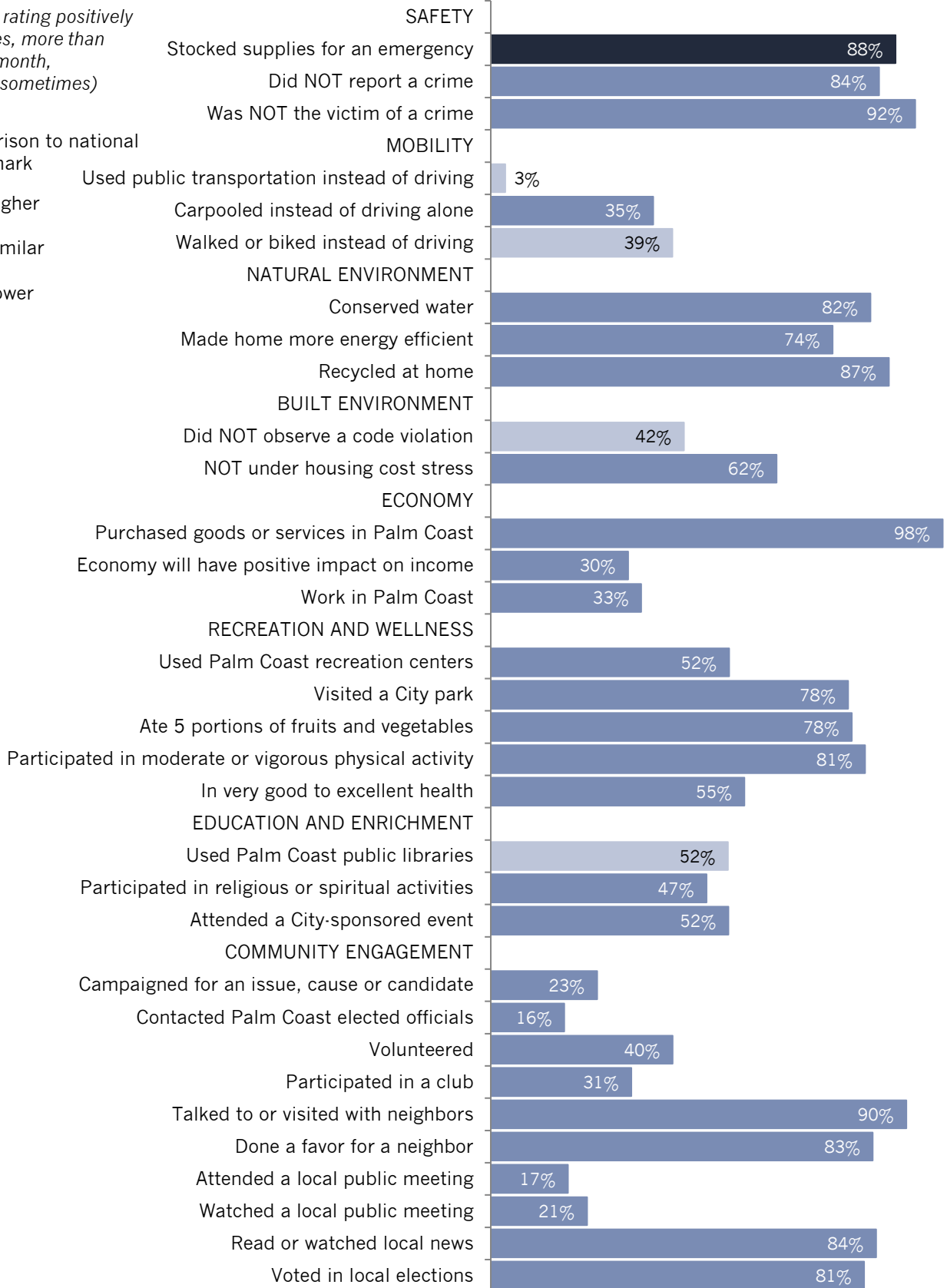
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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 Palm Coast included two questions of special interest on The NCS. The questions had to do with options for the City’s recycling services and awareness/effectiveness of the City’s “Be Local, Buy Local” campaign. About 4 in 5 respondents supported recycling only targeted materials in order for the City to continue providing recycling services without increasing fees. About 7 in 10 respondents supported mechanical collection instead of manual, and about half were in favor of reducing collection to once per week instead of twice per week.

When asked about awareness of the City’s “Be Local, Buy Local” campaign, about half of the respondents indicated that they had not heard of the campaign prior to reading about it on the survey. About 2 in 10 said they had heard of the campaign, but it had not impacted their shopping habits, while another 2 in 10 had heard of the campaign and it had encouraged them to shop locally more often.

Figure 4: Recycling Options

The City of Palm Coast is currently exploring ways to continue providing recycling services to residents without increasing fees. How much would you support or oppose each of the following cost-saving measures?

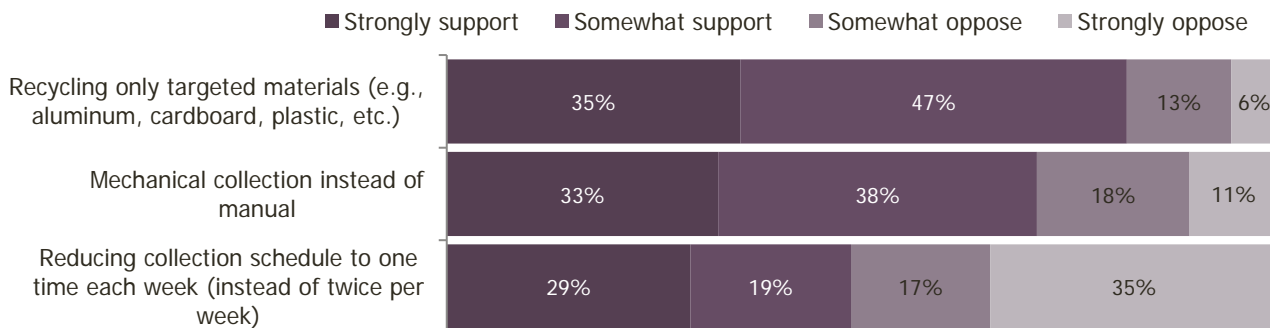
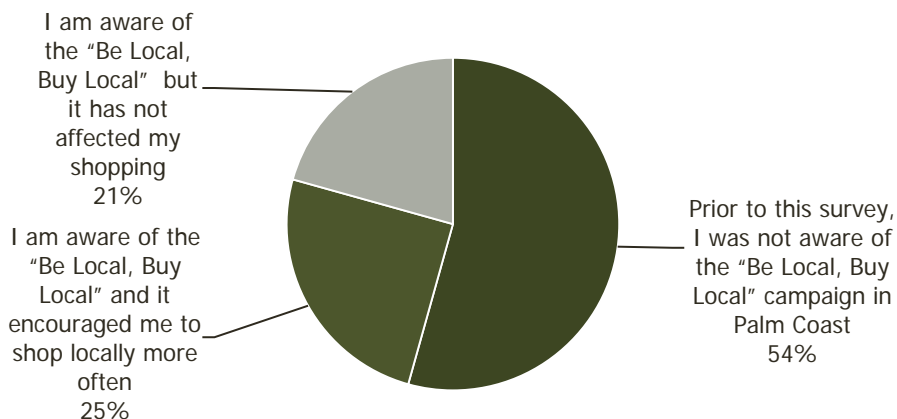


Figure 5: “Be Local, Buy Local”

The City of Palm Coast receives a portion of the revenue generated by local sales tax, which helps fund City parks and other City projects such as streetlights and road maintenance. The City has launched the “Be Local, Buy Local” campaign in order to encourage residents to shop locally more often. Please select the statement below that best describes your awareness of this campaign:



Conclusions

Another active hurricane season continues to influence ratings.

As in 2017, data collection for the 2019 iteration of The NCS occurred towards the end of hurricane season. In 2017, The NCS for Palm Coast was conducted shortly after Hurricane Irma impacted Palm Coast and its surrounding communities. NRC's research has shown that major weather events can and do impact residents' perceptions of services that directly related to the event. In 2017, compared to 2015, Palm Coast residents gave lower ratings to sidewalk maintenance, yard waste pick-up, sewer services and storm drainage in the wake of the hurricane. During this same time period, residents also gave increased quality ratings to police services, fire services and ambulance/EMS. In 2019, Palm Coast was spared from a direct hit (conflicting with what earlier models had shown) from Hurricane Dorian. The ratings that decreased from 2015 to 2017 rebounded in 2019. Increases were observed in 2019 for sidewalk maintenance, garbage collection, recycling, yard waste pick-up, sewer services and storm drainage. Safety ratings also increased in 2019 compared to 2017. Palm Coast residents gave higher marks to their feeling of safety in downtown/commercial areas, and to the quality of emergency preparedness, crime prevention and fire prevention. Palm Coast residents continued to report extremely high levels of stocking supplies in case of emergency.

Residents feel more positively about their quality of life and City government.

In addition to the increased perceptions of service that could be attributed to the relief of not being directly impacted by a large hurricane, residents also gave higher ratings to a number of other Community Characteristics and aspects of Governance. Notably, ratings for the overall quality of life in Palm Coast increased, along with ratings for the City as a place to retire and as a place to live, neighborhoods and the overall image of Palm Coast. Ratings for the City as a place to retire and for the overall appearance of the City eclipsed national averages. Survey respondents also demonstrated higher levels of public trust and satisfaction with City services. Ratings increased in 2019 compared to 2017 for the overall quality of City services, customer service provided by Palm Coast employees, value of services for tax dollars, the job the City government does at acting in the best interest of Palm Coast, being honest, and treating all residents fairly. Ratings for the sense of community in Palm Coast also improved since the last survey iteration.

Residents continue to place a strong emphasis on the economy and some areas are improving.

As in past years, Palm Coast residents indicated that the Economy should be a top focus area for the community in the next two years. While some facets of Economy (the city as a place to work, employment opportunities and the vibrant downtown/commercial area) were lower than national benchmarks and showed room for improvement, other facets of the Economy were on the rise. Survey respondents gave higher marks to the cost of living in Palm Coast, the overall quality of business and services and to economic development in 2019 compared to 2017. One of the custom questions asked respondents about Palm Coast's "Be Local, Buy Local" campaign that was implemented to encourage residents to shop locally more often. About half of the survey respondents were not familiar with the campaign, and about 2 in 10 said it had encouraged them to shop locally more often. It's possible that increased publicity efforts could have a positive impact on local spending behaviors.