

THE NCSTM
The National Community SurveyTM

Rio Rancho, NM

Community Livability Report

2019



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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 Rio Rancho. 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.

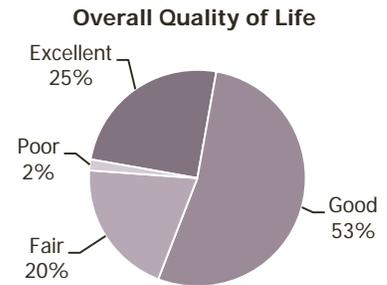
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 499 residents of the City of Rio Rancho. 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 Rio Rancho

Most residents (78%) rated the quality of life in Rio Rancho as excellent or good. This rating was similar to those given in other 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.

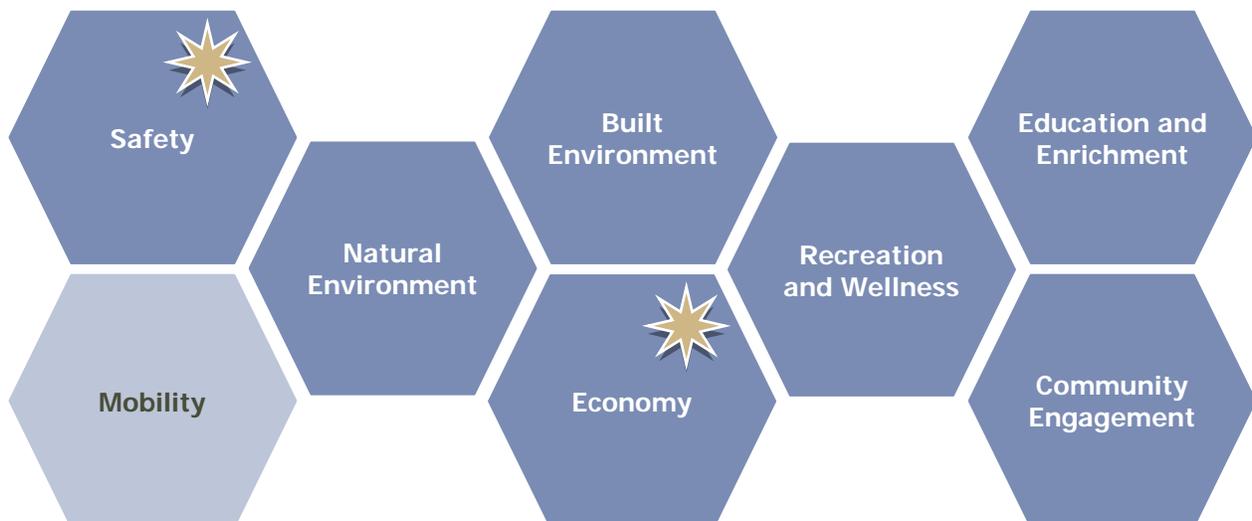
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. As in 2017, residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Rio Rancho community in the coming two years. Most facets were positive and similar to the benchmark comparisons, with the exception of the facet of Mobility, which was lower than the national 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 Rio Rancho’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 Rio Rancho, 83% rated the city as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Rio Rancho 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. At least three-quarters of residents gave positive ratings to their neighborhood as a place to live and Rio Rancho as a place to raise children and retire. About two-thirds of residents gave favorable marks to the overall image or reputation of Rio Rancho, which increased since 2017, and the overall appearance of the city. All of these ratings were on par with comparison communities.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, most ratings for aspects of Community Characteristics were positively scored by at least half of respondents and tended to be similar to the national benchmarks. Within the facet of Mobility, ratings were mixed. About 6 in 10 residents gave excellent or good reviews to the overall ease of travel in Rio Rancho, a level that was lower than those awarded in 2017. Although respondents' ratings of availability of paths and walkways and ease of travel via most modes (walking, biking and public transportation) were lower than the national benchmarks, reviews for public parking were strong and higher than those observed in comparison communities.



Residents viewed the affordability of the community as a strength with evaluations of availability of affordable quality housing and cost of living exceeding national averages, with around 6 in 10 awarding high marks. Conversely, respondents' scores for the availability of affordable quality housing did decrease from 2017 to 2019.

Community members gave lower than average assessments to overall natural environment, vibrant commercial area, shopping opportunities, Rio Rancho as a place to visit, opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities and opportunities to attend social events and activities, although ratings for opportunities to attend social events and activities did increase in 2019.

Assessments of Communities Characteristics tended to remain stable over time. Where decreases in ratings were observed, they tended to be within the facet of Mobility. Twelve aspects increased from 2017 to 2019, with most concentrated in the facets of Economy, Education and Enrichment, and Recreation and Wellness.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



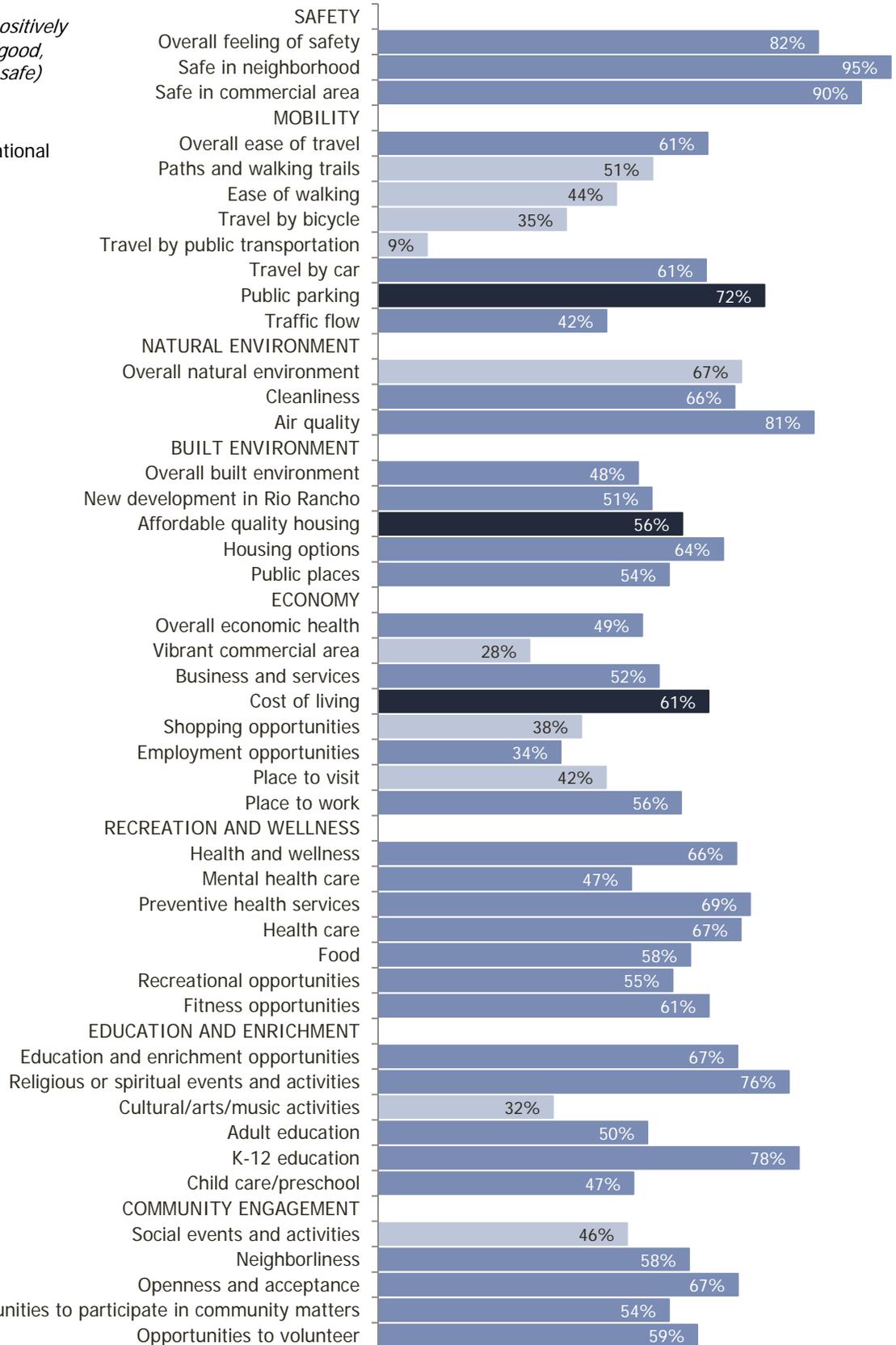
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

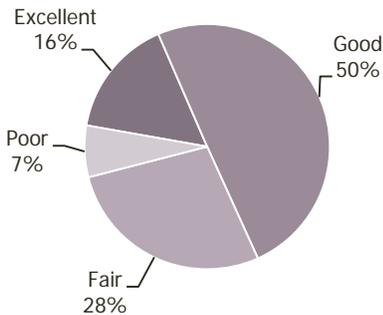
How well does the government of Rio Rancho meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Rio Rancho as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About two-thirds of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of City services, while about 4 in 10 residents gave high marks to services provided by the Federal Government; these ratings were on par with comparison communities. Assessments of services provided by the Federal Government improved from 2017 to 2019.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Rio Rancho’s leadership and governance. The overall customer service provided by Rio Rancho employees received the highest marks, with 74% of respondents rating this aspect as excellent or good. At least half of residents gave high scores to the overall direction the City is taking, the City acting in the best interest of the community, being honest and treating all residents fairly. Ratings for the City being honest improved from 2017 to 2019. At least 4 in 10 respondents positively rated the remaining aspects of government performance and these were similar to national averages.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Rio Rancho. Overall, ratings for individual services provided by the City were positive and similar to national averages. The highest rated services included police, fire, ambulance/EMS and public libraries, with at least 8 in 10 residents assigning positive scores and each were on par with averages nationwide. Additionally, more residents positively rated crime prevention, recreation programs or classes, and public information services in 2019.

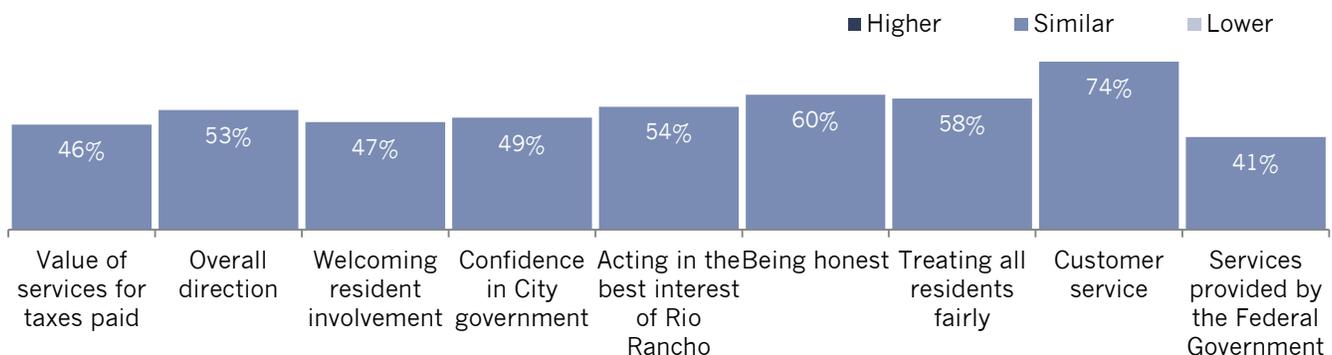
Overall Quality of City Services



Respondents’ were less pleased with Mobility-related services, including those related to streets (repair, cleaning and lighting), sidewalk maintenance and bus or transit services. Several of these services were also rated lower in 2019 than in previous years. Some aspects of Natural Environment and Built Environment were also below average, with half or less residents giving positive reviews.

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

Comparison to national benchmark



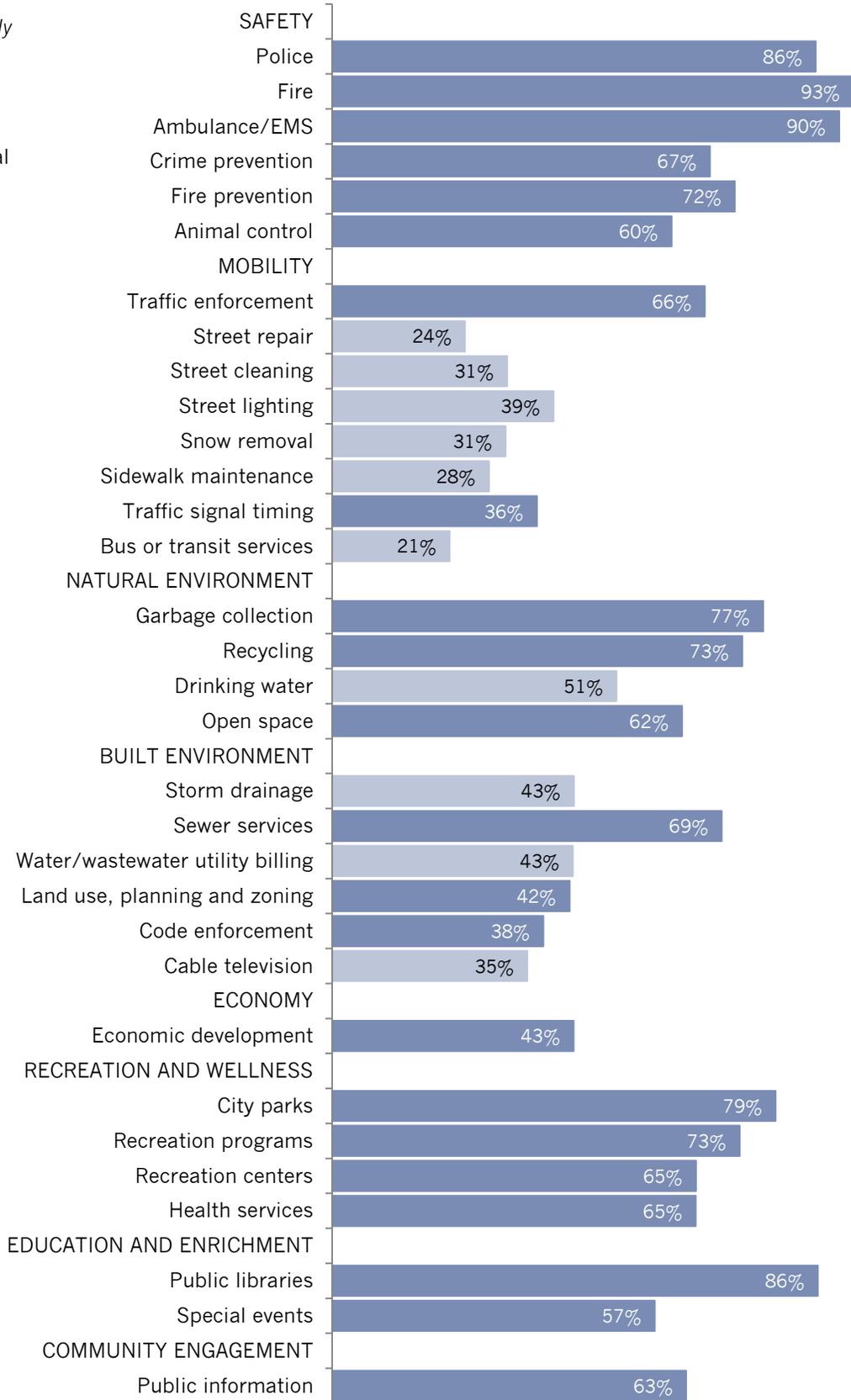
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



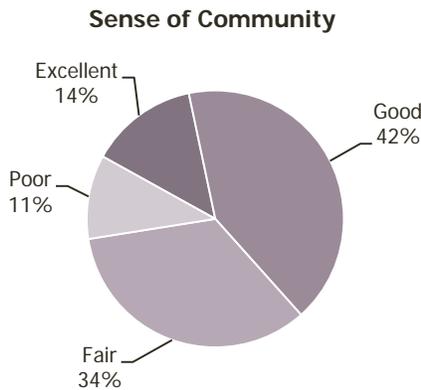
Participation

Are the residents of Rio Rancho 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 half of Rio Rancho residents felt a strong sense of community, which was similar to other communities across the nation, but increased from 2017 to 2019.

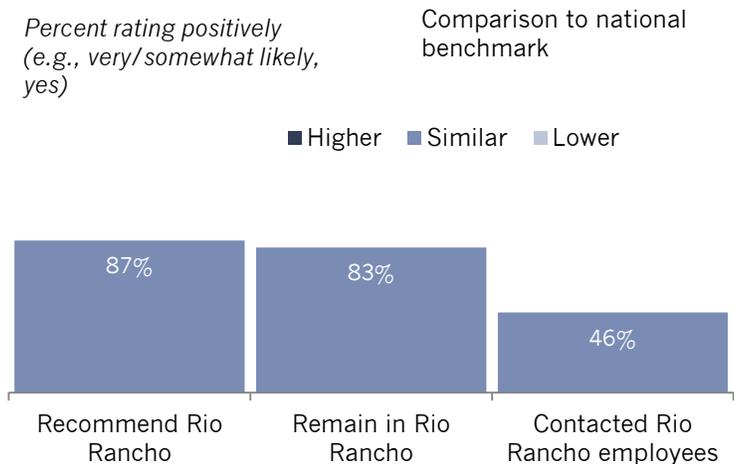
Roughly 8 in 10 survey respondents indicated they would recommend living in Rio Rancho to someone who asked and planned to remain in the community for the next five years. Around 4 in 10 residents reported they had contacted Rio Rancho employees in the 12 months prior to the survey. These ratings were similar to the national benchmarks.

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 varied widely across the different facets, but in general, Rio Rancho residents were engaging with their community at levels similar to their peers. About 9 in 10 respondents had conserved water, recycled at home, purchased goods or services in the city, talked to or visited with a neighbor or voted in local elections.



Respondents in Rio Rancho were less likely than those in other communities to have used public transportation (8%) or walked or biked instead of driving (38%) or to attend a City-sponsored event (42%). They also tended to observe code violations at rates higher than average, with about 4 in 10 indicating they had seen at least one violation in the previous 12 months, which were more prevalent than in previous years.

In 2019, more residents used the Rio Rancho recreation centers or libraries, participated in a club, and believed the economy would have a positive impact on their income. However, fewer residents made efforts to make their home more energy efficient or reported being in good health.



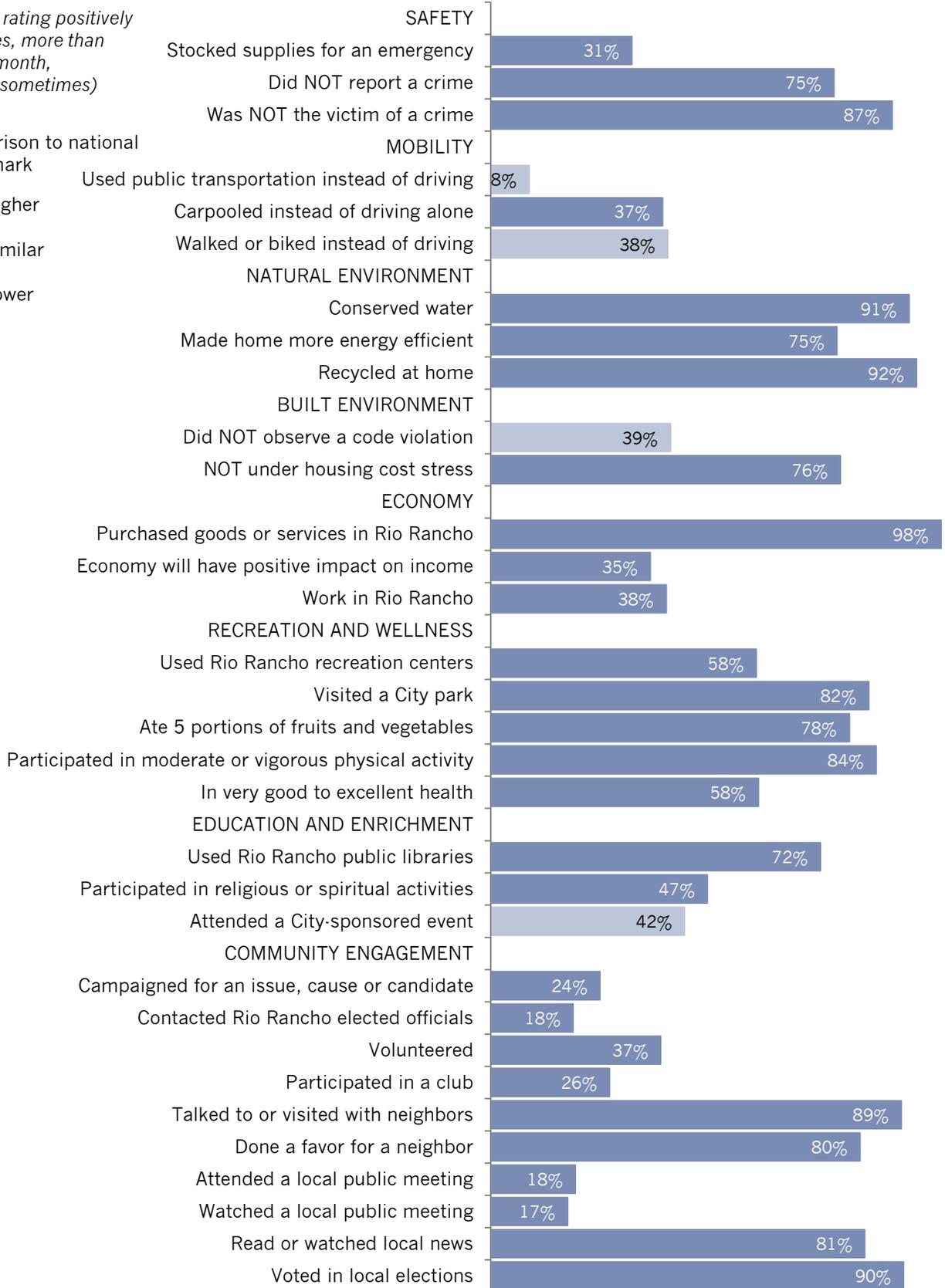
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



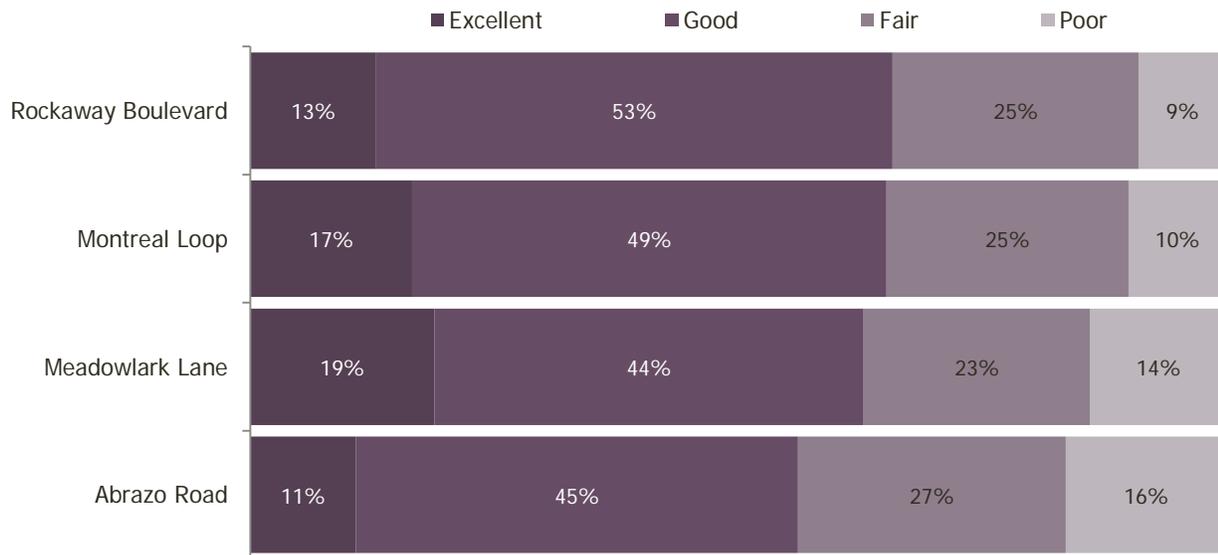
Special Topics

The City of Rio Rancho included four questions of special interest on The NCS, with topics related to roadway construction and improvements and public safety.

Community members rated the quality of several roadway construction projects. At least half of community members gave an excellent or good score to all roadway projects to date. Reviews of the Rockaway Boulevard and Montreal Loop projects were the highest, with two-thirds of residents giving positive assessments.

Figure 4: Quality of Roadway Construction Projects

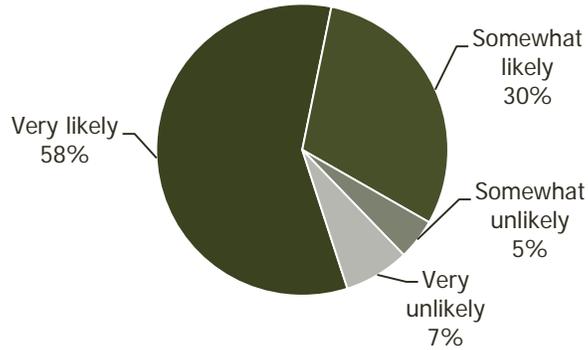
In 2018, voters passed the G.O. Road Bond, which funded the reconstruction and improvement of several City roads. Please rate each of the following G.O. Bond funded roadway construction projects, to date:



Residents indicated their likelihood of voting to fund reconstruction and improvements to additional City roads through the continuance of the G.O. Road Bond. Of those that could or were likely to vote, roughly 9 in 10 residents were very likely or somewhat likely to vote in favor of the continued funding. Less than 1 in 10 residents were very unlikely to vote in favor of funding the additional roadway projects.

Figure 5: Likelihood of Voting in Favor of Funding Road Reconstruction and Improvements

Please rate how likely or unlikely you would be to vote in favor of the continuance of the G.O. Road Bond to fund the reconstruction and improvement of additional City roads if the current property tax levels would NOT change:

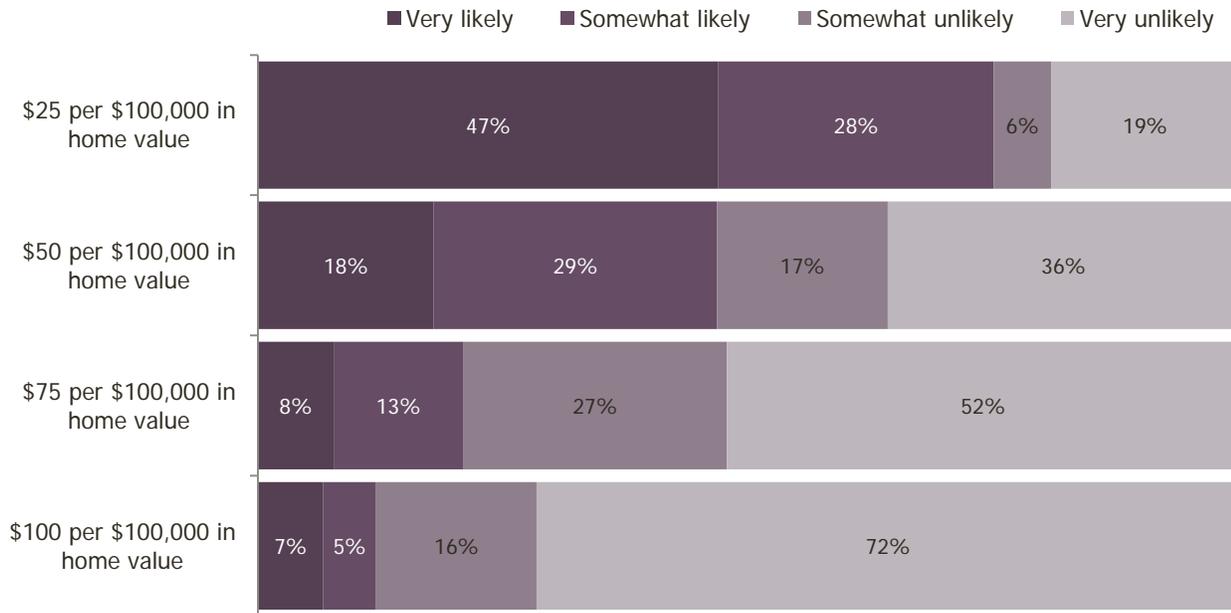


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Residents were asked how likely they would be to vote in favor of a property tax increase to fund roadway improvements. Of those that could or were likely to vote, about three-quarters of residents were very or somewhat likely to vote in favor if the tax increase was \$25 per \$100,000 in home value. Less than half of residents were likely to vote in favor of the other tax increases, with 2 in 10 residents or less likely to vote for a \$75 or \$100 increase per \$100,000 in home value.

Figure 6: Likelihood of Voting in Favor of a Property Tax Increase to Fund Road Reconstruction and Improvements

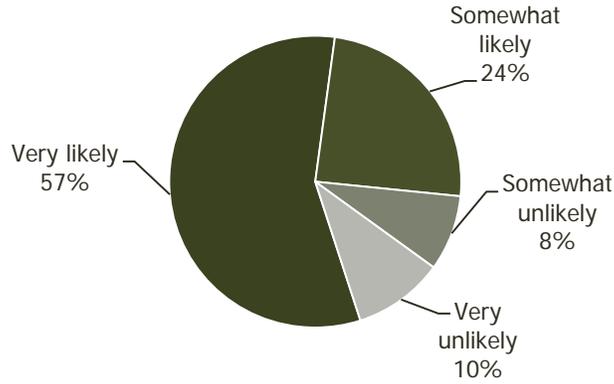
Please rate to what extent you would support or oppose each of the following property tax increases that would allow the City to increase its roadway reconstruction and improvements beyond previous years:



Of those that could or were likely to vote, about 8 in 10 residents were very or somewhat likely to vote in favor of funding for public safety facility improvements, equipment and vehicles, while 1 in 10 residents were very unlikely to vote for the funding.

Figure 7: Likelihood of Voting in Favor of Funding for Public Safety

In 2018, Rio Rancho voters passed the G.O. Public Safety Bond, which allocated funds for public safety facility improvements, equipment, and vehicles (ambulances, fire trucks, and police cars). Please rate how likely or unlikely you would be to vote in favor of the continuance of the G.O. Public Safety Bond if current property tax levels would NOT change:



Conclusions

Rio Rancho continues to be a great place to live, with Safety as a feature that makes Rio Rancho a livable community.

About three-quarters of community members gave high marks to the overall quality of life in Rio Rancho. About 8 in 10 residents positively reviewed Rio Rancho and their neighborhood as a place to live and the city as a place to raise children. Evaluations of the overall image or reputation of Rio Rancho increased from 2017 to 2019. About 8 in 10 respondents were likely to recommend living in Rio Rancho to someone who asked and planned to remain in Rio Rancho for the next five years. These strong ratings tended to remain stable over time. Over half of residents gave high marks to the sense of community in the city, which increased in 2019.

As in 2017, Safety was a top priority for residents. About 9 in 10 residents rated they felt safe in their neighborhoods and in the commercial area. Respondents also felt positively about their safety services, with more than 8 in 10 awarding top marks to police, fire and ambulance or emergency services. More residents gave favorable ratings to crime prevention in 2019 than in 2017. In a show of support, about 8 in 10 respondents were likely to vote in favor of the continuance of the G.O. Public Safety Bond to fund public safety facility improvements, equipment and vehicles.

There have been gains in Economy and residents applaud affordability.

Survey respondents also indicated that the Economy of Rio Rancho should be a top priority, with 9 in 10 reporting this area would be essential or very important to the quality of life in the community over the next two years. About half or more residents gave high marks to overall economic health, Rio Rancho as a place to work and overall quality of business and service establishments. Residents' evaluations of cost of living and availability of affordable quality housing exceeded national averages, with about 6 in 10 residents giving these high scores. Compared to 2017, more residents were pleased with overall economic health, employment opportunities, cost of living and Rio Rancho as a place to work in 2019. Rio Rancho residents also reported higher rates of optimism that the economy would have a positive impact on their income in 2019.

Mobility remains a challenge for the City and residents support improvements.

About 6 in 10 residents gave high marks to the overall ease of travel in Rio Rancho, which was on par with comparison communities, but declined since 2017. While ratings for public parking were strong and higher than the national benchmark, most evaluations of aspects and services were rated lower than observed across the nation, including ease of travel by public transportation, snow removal and bus or transit services. A number of evaluations declined from 2017 to 2019, such as traffic flow, sidewalk maintenance and bus or transit services. Further, fewer residents reported walking, biking or using public transportation instead of driving in Rio Rancho compared to other communities across the nation.

Rio Rancho residents were pleased with the progress the City is making on roadways and were likely to vote to fund continued improvements. In 2018, the G.O. Road Bond funded the reconstruction and improvement of several City roads and at least half of residents positively rated the quality of the roadway construction projects at Rockaway Boulevard, Montreal Loop, Meadowlark Lane and Abrazo Road. Roughly 9 in 10 respondents were likely to vote in favor of the continuance of the G.O. Road Bond to fund reconstruction and improvement of additional City roads if current property tax levels remained the same. Additionally, about three-quarters of residents were likely to vote in favor of a property tax increase of \$25 per \$100,000 in home value to increase roadway reconstruction and improvements in Rio Rancho.