

THE NCSTM
The National Community SurveyTM

Morristown, TN

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 Morristown. 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.

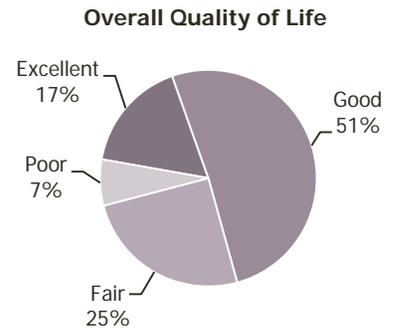
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 444 residents of the City of Morristown. 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 Morristown

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

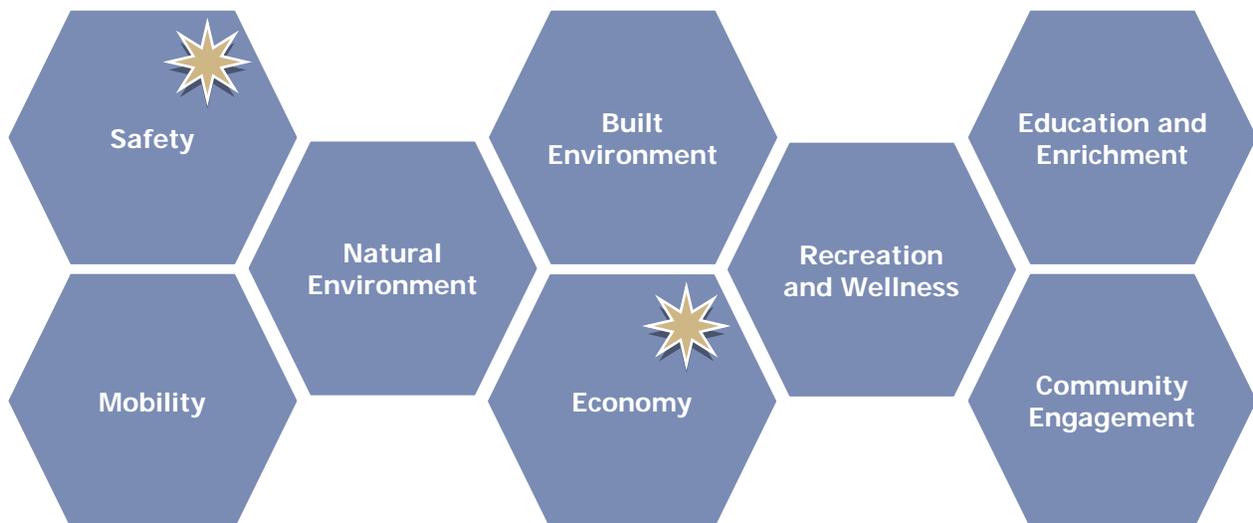
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Morristown community in the coming two years. These facets, as well as all other facets of community livability, were positive and similar to the benchmark comparisons.

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 Morristown’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 Morristown, 74% rated the city as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Morristown as a place to live were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

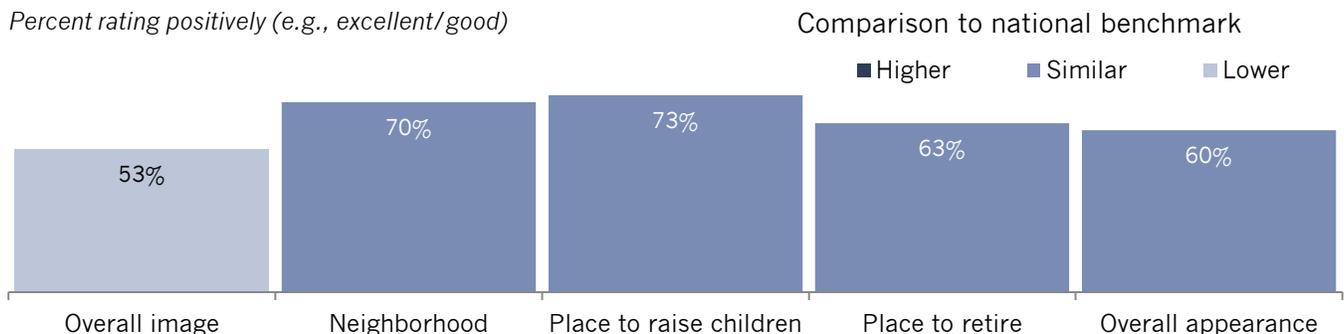
In addition to rating the city as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality. About 7 in 10 residents favorably rated their neighborhood as a place to live and Morristown as a place to raise children, while about 6 in 10 positively reviewed the city as a place to retire and its overall appearance. Assessments of the overall appearance of Morristown increased from 2018 to 2019 (see the *Trends over Time* report provided under separate cover for more details). Ratings for the overall image or reputation of Morristown were lower than the benchmark comparison.



Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, at least half of respondents reviewed the majority of aspects of Community Characteristics positively and these ratings tended to be similar to ratings from across the nation.

Residents' ratings of safety in their neighborhoods were commensurate with other communities in the U.S. However, assessments of the overall feeling of safety and residents' feelings of safety in the downtown/commercial area were lower than the national benchmarks and declined from 2018 to 2019.

About 7 in 10 respondents assigned high marks to the overall ease of travel in Morristown; this rating was on par with comparison communities but declined from 2018 to 2019. Evaluations of the availability of paths and walking trails and ease of travel by walking, by bicycle, and by public transportation were lower than the national benchmark comparisons.



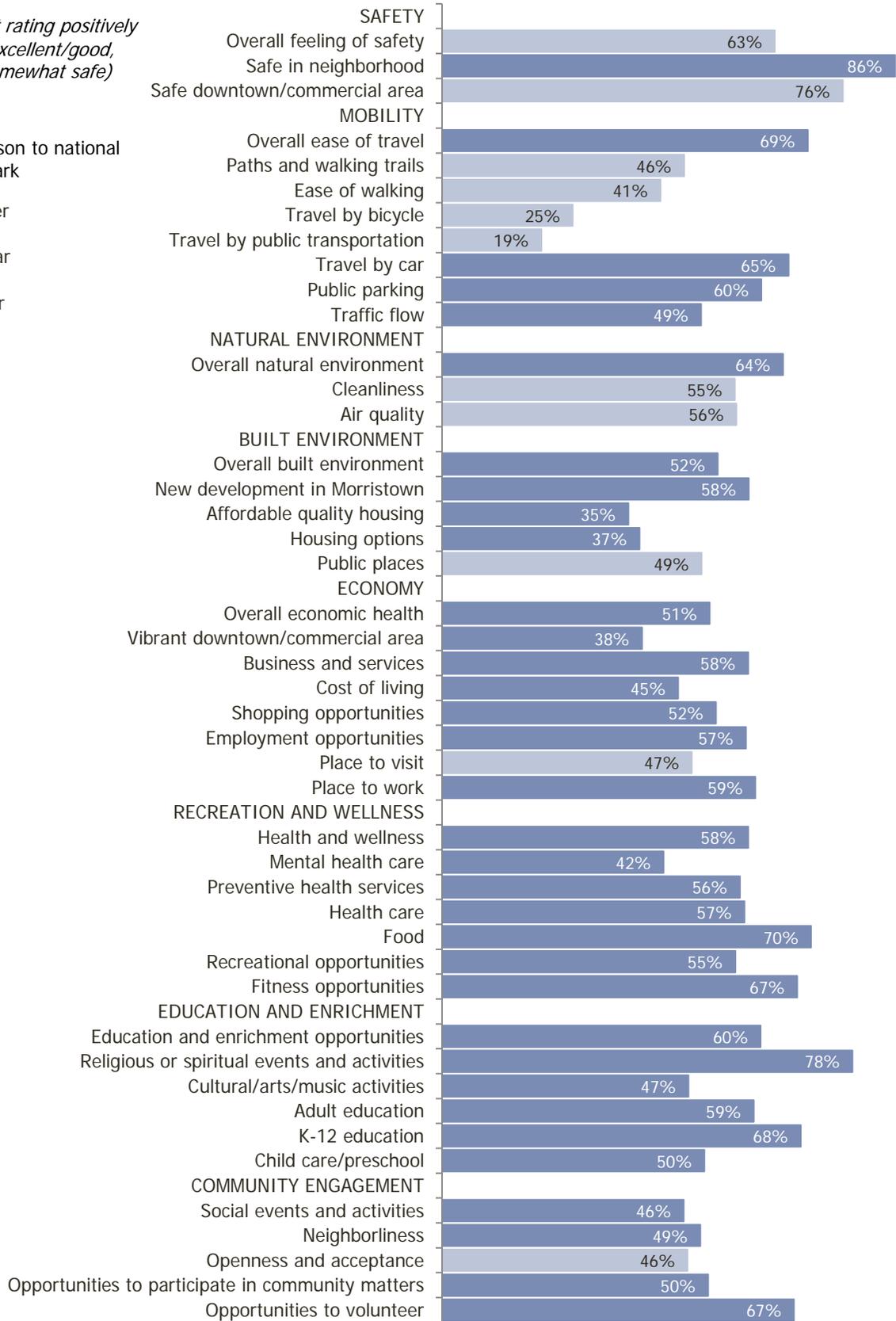
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

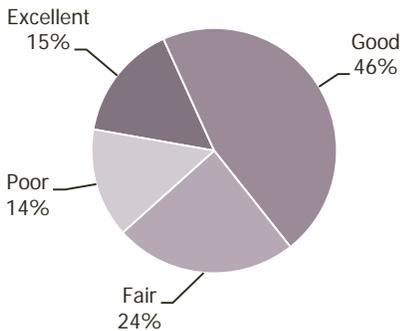
How well does the government of Morristown meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Morristown as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 6 in 10 residents gave favorable evaluations to the overall quality of services provided by the City, while 4 in 10 were pleased with services provided by the Federal Government; these ratings were on par with national averages.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Morristown’s leadership and governance. Similar to comparison communities, about 6 in 10 residents assigned high marks to the overall customer services by Morristown employees, and half felt similarly about the overall direction the City is taking. Less than half gave high marks to the value of services for taxes paid to Morristown, welcoming resident involvement, confidence in City government, and the City acting in the best interest of Morristown; these ratings were on par with comparison communities. Ratings of the overall direction the City is taking and the value of services for taxes paid to Morristown were lower in 2019 than in 2018. Reviews of the City being honest and treating all residents fairly lagged behind national averages.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Morristown. Broadly, at least half of respondents reviewed most government services positively and ratings tended to be similar to those observed in other communities nationwide. The highest-rated services included fire, ambulance/EMS, garbage collection, and public libraries, with about 8 in 10 residents assigning positive scores.

Overall Quality of City Services

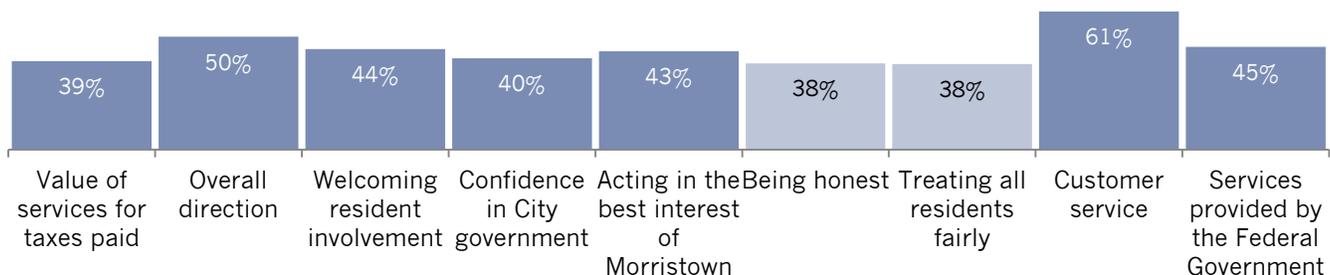


Reviews for animal control, street repair, street cleaning, bus or transit services, open space, utility billing, recreation centers or facilities, and City-sponsored special events were lower than the national benchmarks. Additionally, fewer residents positively rated emergency preparedness, sidewalk maintenance, traffic signal timing, bus or transit services, recycling, storm drainage, utility billing, City parks, and public information in 2019 compared to 2018.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



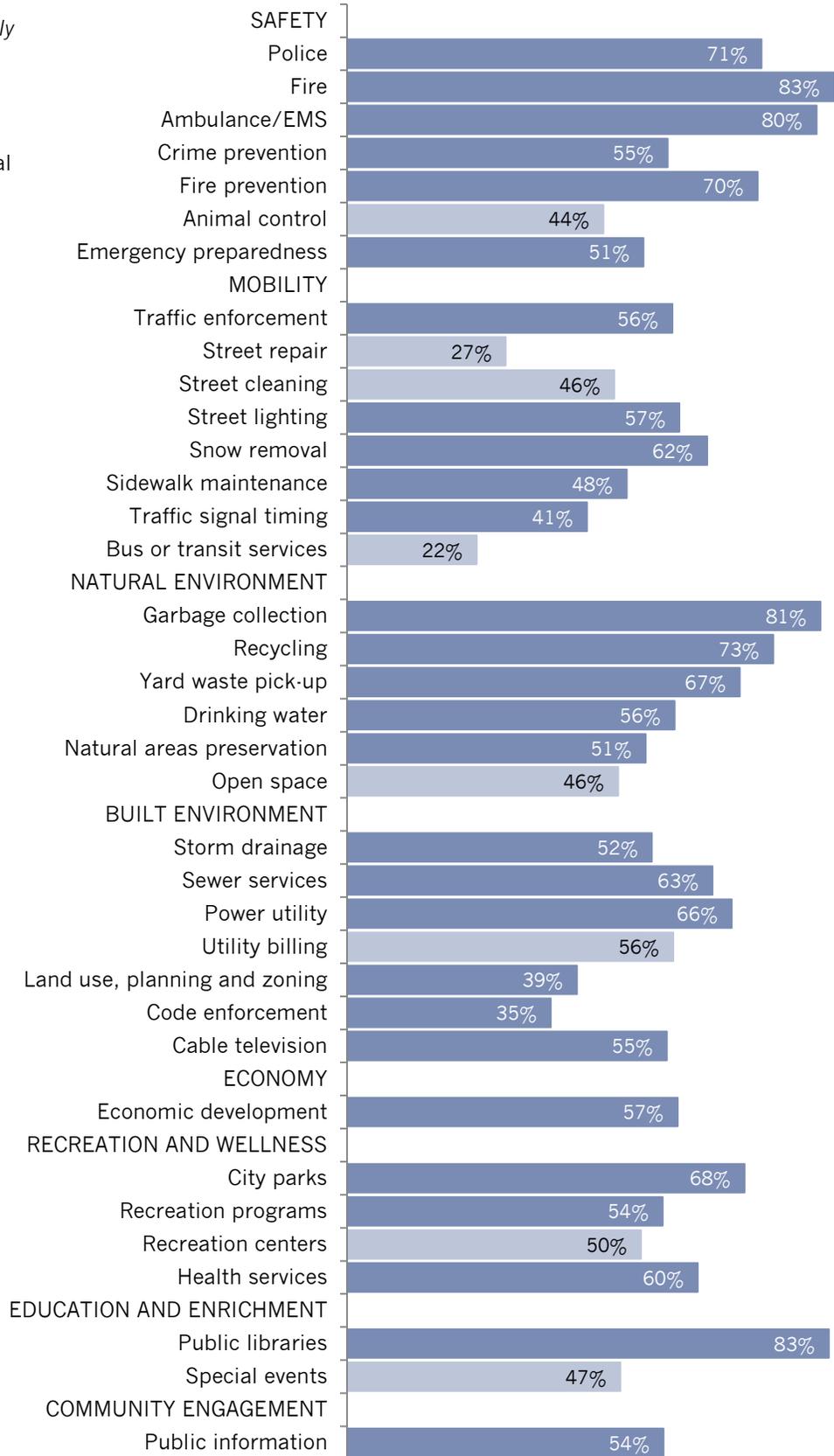
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



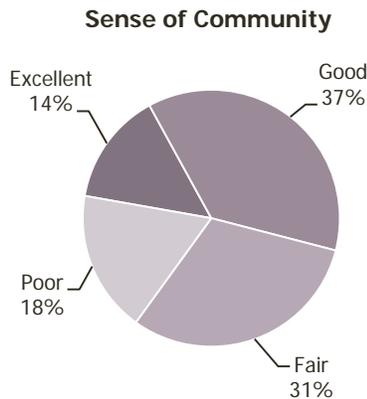
Participation

Are the residents of Morristown 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. Similar to other communities in the U.S., about half of respondents gave excellent or good scores to the sense of community in Morristown; this rating improved from 2018 to 2019.

About three-quarters of respondents indicated they would recommend living in Morristown to someone who asked and planned to remain in the community for the next five years. About one-third of residents had contacted Morristown employees in the 12 months prior to the survey; this rate declined from 2018 to 2019.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Levels of Participation varied widely across the different facets, making the benchmark comparisons, as well as comparisons to Morristown over time, useful for interpreting the results. About 9 in 10 had purchased goods or services in Morristown, while 3 in 10 believed the economy would have a positive impact on their income; these ratings were both on par with communities nationwide. In 2019, more residents had attended a City-sponsored event than in 2018.



Compared to municipalities across the county, more Morristown residents worked in the city (as opposed to outside the city) and participated in religious or spiritual activities. Fewer respondents in Morristown had used public transportation, walked, or biked instead of driving, recycled at home, reported healthy behaviors (diet and exercise) or being in very good to excellent health, compared to the national averages. However, more residents reported being in very good to excellent health in 2019 than in 2018.

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

*Comparison to national
benchmark*

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



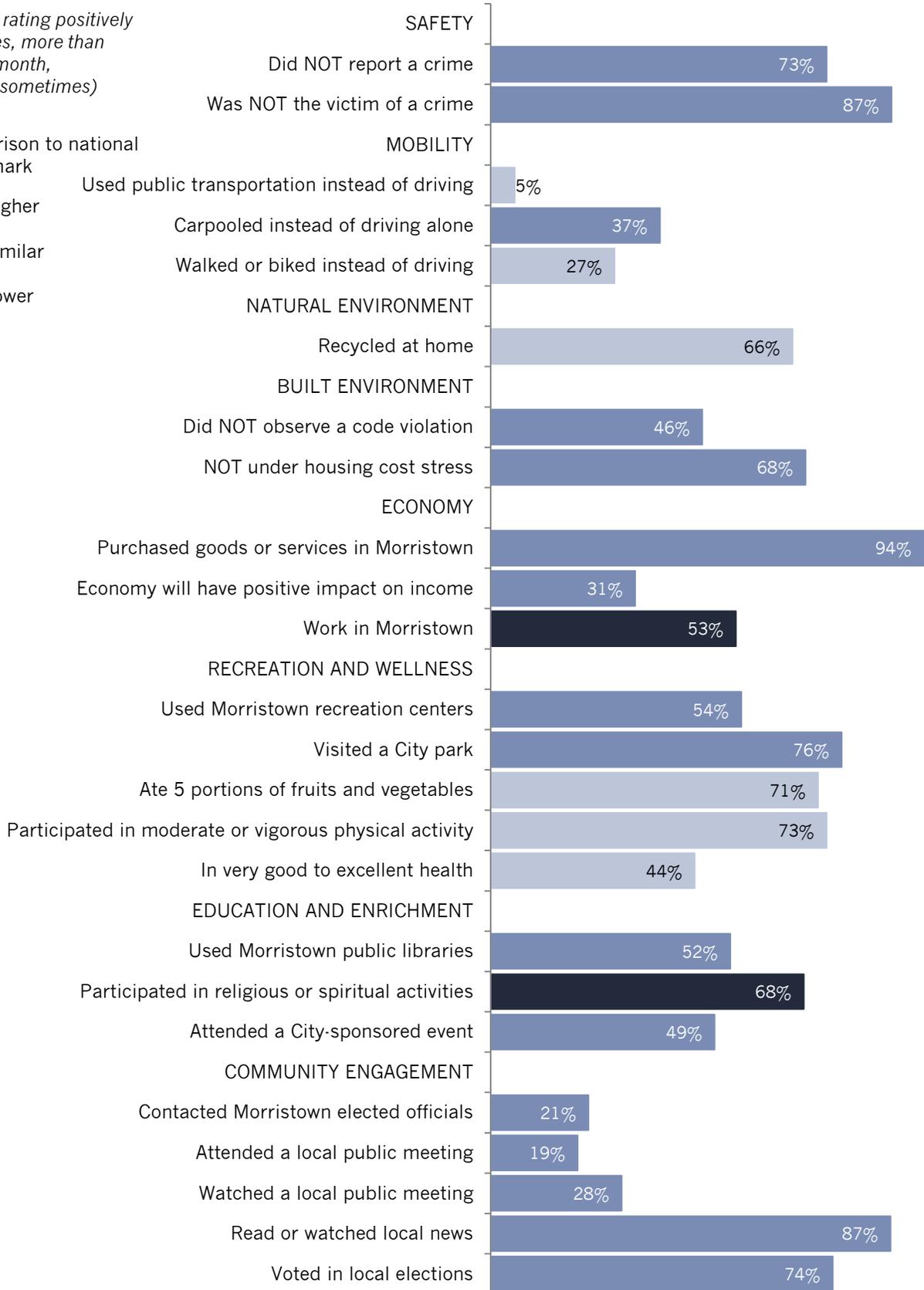
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



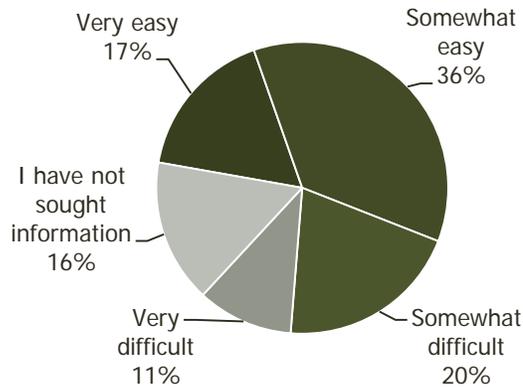
Special Topics

The City of Morristown included several questions of special interest on The NCS, with topics related to City information, safety, contact with City Council members, fixed public transportation, and City events.

About half of respondents found it somewhat or very easy to learn about City services or events, while 3 in 10 found it somewhat or very difficult. (Sixteen percent had not sought information about the City.)

Figure 4: Ease of Finding City Information

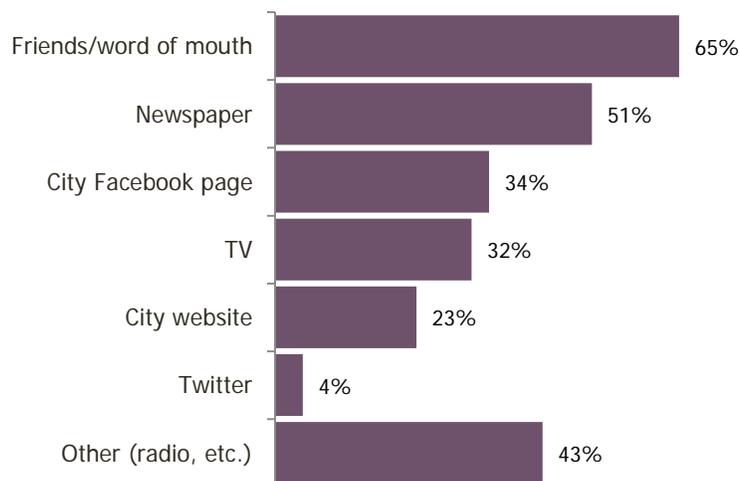
Please rate how easy or difficult it is to learn about City services or events:



The most common way respondents reported that they learned about community events was through friends/word of mouth, indicated by about two-thirds of survey participants. About half indicated they found out about community events was through the newspaper. About one-third of respondents each used the City Facebook page and TV, while less than one-quarter used the City website or Twitter. About 4 in 10 residents used other resources to learn about community events.

Figure 5: Sources of Information about Community Events

How do you learn about community events? (Check all that apply)



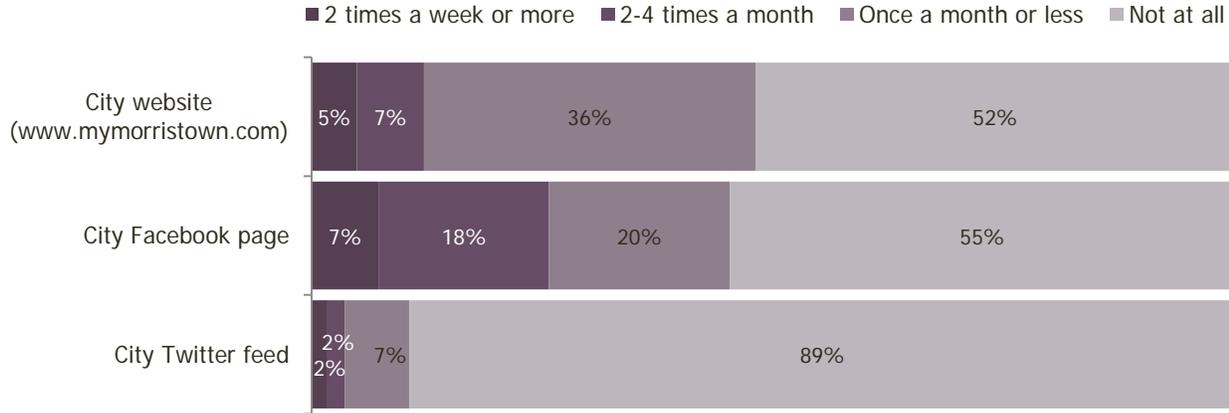
Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

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Survey participants were asked how often they visited the City’s website or social media sites. About half of residents had visited the City website or City Facebook page at least once in the 12 months prior to the survey. About 1 in 10 residents had visited the City Twitter feed.

Figure 6: Sources of City Information

In the last 12 months, about how many times, if at all, have you or other household members visited each of the following:

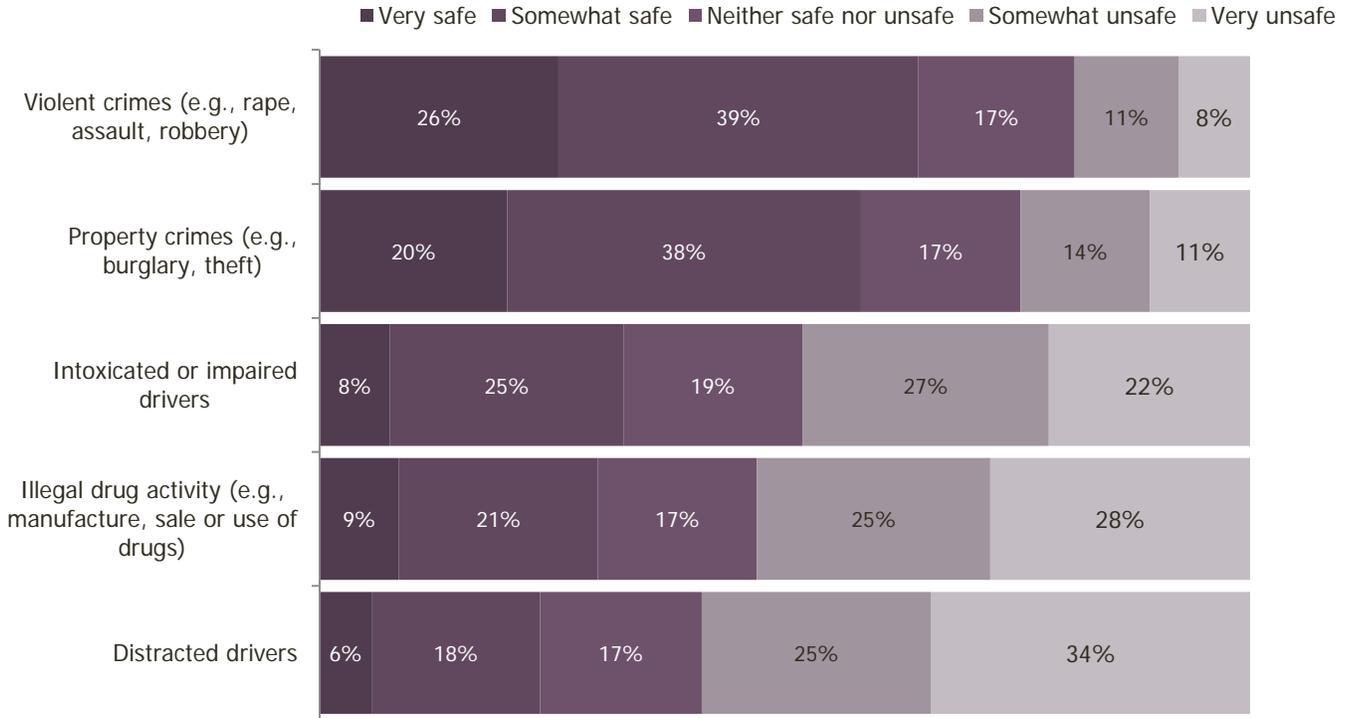


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Over half of Morristown residents indicated they felt very or somewhat safe from violent crimes and property crimes. However, only about one-third felt very or somewhat safe from intoxicated/impaired drivers or illegal drug activity. Only about one-quarter felt very or somewhat safe from distracted drivers.

Figure 7: Feelings of Safety

Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel from the following in Morristown.

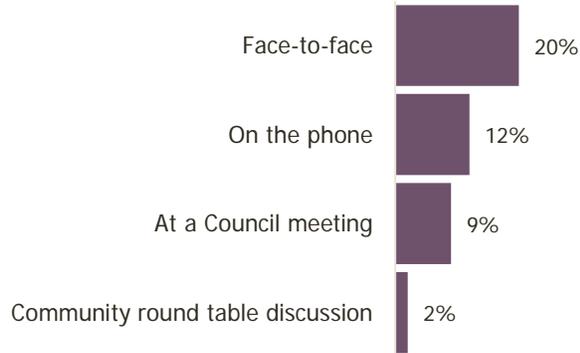


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About 2 in 10 respondents said they had contacted a City Council member in the past 12 months in a face-to-face interaction, while about 1 in 10 reported they had contacted a City Council member on the phone or at a Council meeting. A handful (2%) said they had interacted with a City Council member at a community round table discussion.

Figure 8: Contact with City Council

Please indicate if you have had contact with a City Council member in the past 12 months in each of the following ways:

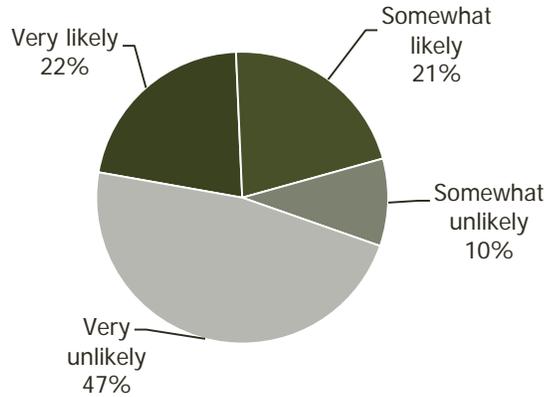


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When asked how likely they would be to use fixed route public transportation in Morristown, about 4 in 10 survey participants said they were very or somewhat likely to use it, while about 6 in 10 were very or somewhat unlikely to use it.

Figure 9: Likelihood of Using Public Transportation

How likely, if at all, would you be to utilize fixed route public transportation in Morristown?



About two-thirds of respondents indicated that affordable pricing, adequate stops to desirable destinations, and convenience/distance of stops from home would make them more likely to use fixed route public transportation, while 4 in 10 felt that schedules that provide options to commute to work would make them more likely to use it.

Figure 10: Factors to Increase Likelihood of Using Public Transportation

Which of the following, if any, would make you more likely to use fixed route public transportation in Morristown? (Select all that apply.)

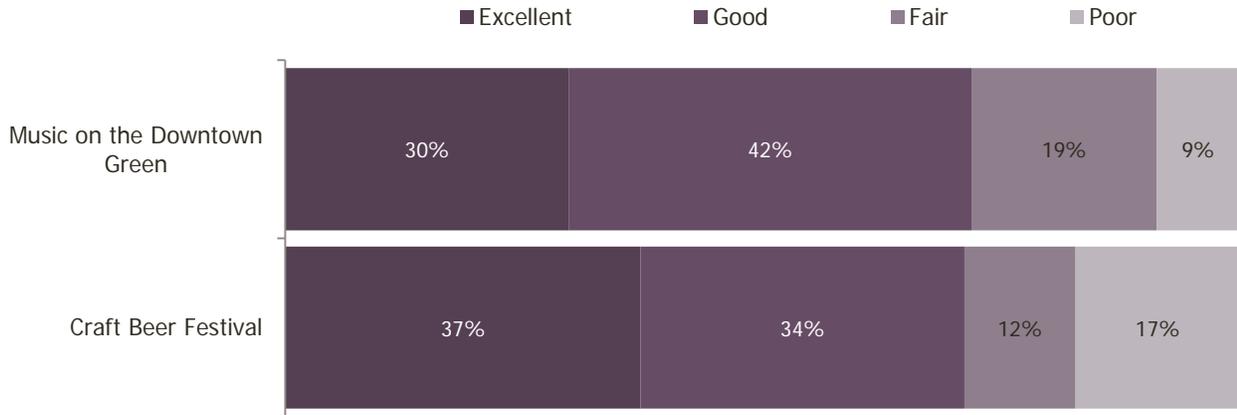


Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

Community members were pleased with the Music on the Downtown Green and Craft Beer Festival, with 7 in 10 rating these as excellent or good.

Figure 11: Quality of Morristown Events

Please rate the quality of each of the following events in Morristown:



Conclusions

Morristown continues to be a desirable place to live.

About 7 in 10 community members gave high marks to the overall quality of life in Morristown, the city as a place to raise children and live, and their neighborhood as a place to live, while 6 in 10 positively rated Morristown as a place to retire and its overall appearance. These reviews were commensurate with other communities in the country and reviews for the city's overall appearance improved from 2018 to 2019. About half of residents favorably rated the sense of community in the city and this rating improved since the last iteration of the survey. About three-quarters of residents were likely to recommend living in Morristown to someone who asked and planned to remain in Morristown for the next five years.

Safety is a priority for residents.

As in 2018, residents indicated that Safety was an important focus area for the City to address in the coming two years, with about 9 in 10 considering it essential or very important. Similar to other communities in the nation, about 9 in 10 residents felt safe in their neighborhoods. Out of all City services, fire and ambulance/emergency medical services were given some of the most positive reviews. However, compared to other municipalities, fewer Morristown residents positively rated the overall feeling of safety and residents' feelings of safety in the downtown/commercial area; in addition, these ratings declined from 2018 to 2019. Assessments of emergency preparedness also decreased since 2018. About 6 in 10 community members felt very or somewhat safe from property crimes and violent crimes in Morristown. One-third or less of respondents felt very or somewhat safe from illegal drug activity, intoxicated or impaired drivers, and distracted drivers.

Mobility may be an area of opportunity in Morristown and residents note they struggle with public transportation.

At least half of residents gave high scores to the overall ease of travel in Morristown, traffic flow on major streets, ease of travel by car, public parking, traffic enforcement, street lighting and snow removal; these ratings were on par with the national benchmarks. Residents were less pleased with the ease of travel by bicycle and by walking, the availability of paths and walking trails, street repair, and street cleaning. Fewer respondents favorably rated the overall ease of travel, sidewalk maintenance, and traffic signal timing in 2019 compared to 2018. Additionally, fewer Morristown residents reported walking or biking instead of driving compared to communities across the nation.

Ratings for the ease of travel by public transportation and bus or transit services lagged behind national averages, with assessments of bus or transit services declining from 2018 to 2019. In Morristown, fewer respondents reported using public transportation instead of driving than in other communities. About 4 in 10 residents indicated they were very or somewhat likely to use fixed route public transportation in Morristown. About two-thirds of respondents indicated that affordable pricing, adequate stops to desirable destinations, and convenience/distance of stops from home would make them more likely to use fixed route public transportation, while 4 in 10 thought schedules that provide options to commute to work would make them more likely to use it.

Residents praise the Economy in Morristown.

About 9 in 10 residents indicated that the economy was an essential or very important focus for the community in the next two years. Over half of community members assigned positive reviews to the overall economic health of Morristown, shopping opportunities, employment opportunities, Morristown as a place to work, the overall quality of business and service establishments, and economic development; these ratings were positive and on par with comparison communities. Since the first iteration of the survey in 2011, evaluations of employment opportunities have increased by 34% (23% excellent or good in 2011 to 57% in 2019). Similar to the national benchmarks, about one-third of residents believed the economy would have a positive impact on their income.