

# **The National Citizen Survey™**

Williamsburg, VA

Community Livability Report

2014

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The National Citizen Survey™  
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# About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Williamsburg. 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 352 residents of the City of Williamsburg. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.

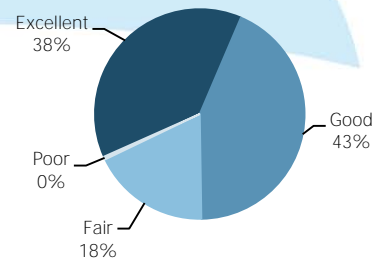


# Quality of Life in Williamsburg

Most residents rated the quality of life in Williamsburg as excellent or good. This level was similar to other communities in 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.





Overall Quality of Life

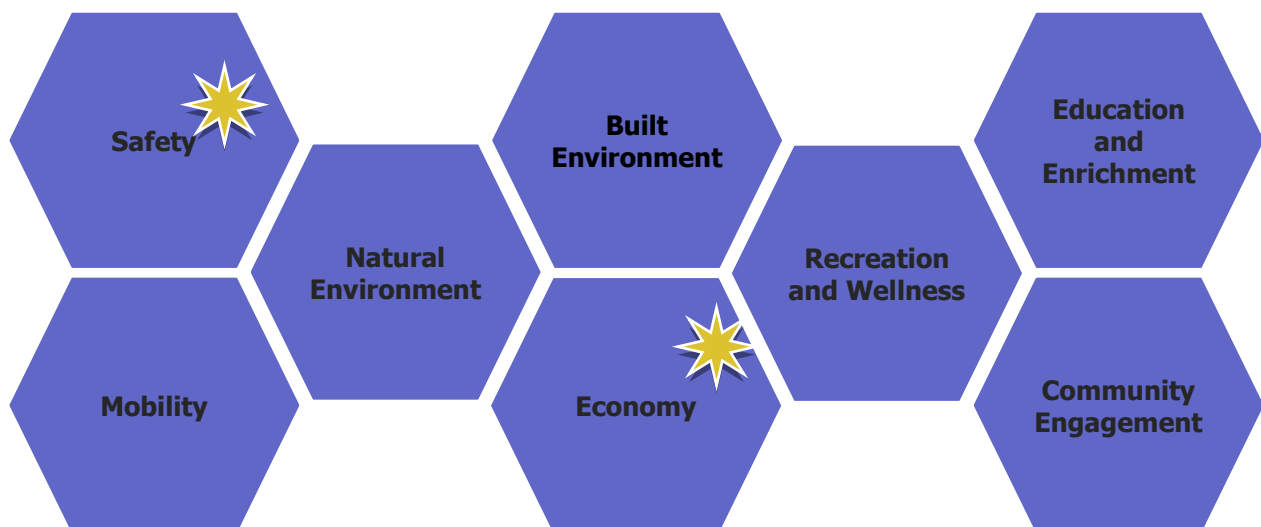


In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified **Safety and Williamsburg’s Economy** as priorities for the community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Williamsburg residents gave favorable ratings to both of these facets of community that were on par with other U.S. communities. Ratings for Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement were also rated positively 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 Williamsburg’s unique questions.

Legend

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



# Community Characteristics

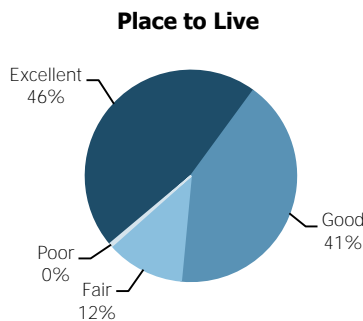
*What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?*

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 Williamsburg, 87% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. **Respondents'** ratings of Williamsburg 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 Williamsburg as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Williamsburg and its overall appearance. All five measures were rated positively by at least 8 in 10 residents. The overall image of the city, Williamsburg as a place to retire and its overall appearance received higher ratings than in other communities.

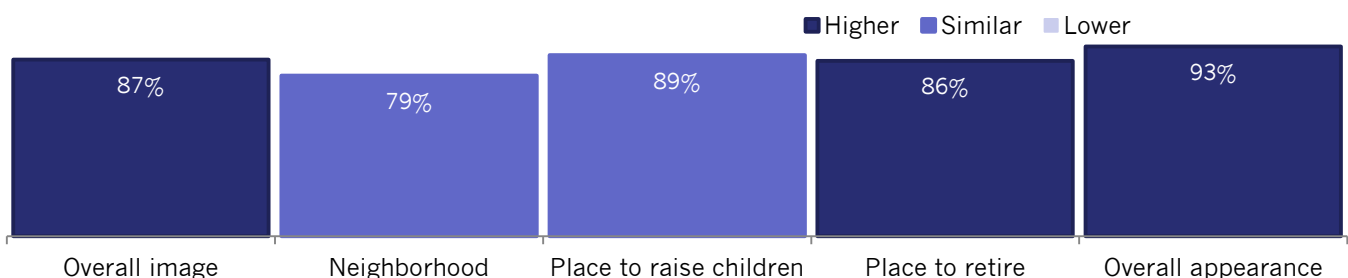
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, Williamsburg residents rated the specific characteristics of their community similar to and sometimes more highly than other communities. Residents consistently rated Community Characteristics related to Safety and Natural Environment favorably, with about 9 in 10 respondents rating each measure in these areas as excellent or good. Moreover, all measures of Natural Environment scored higher **than the benchmark**. **The city's Economy had a mix of ratings that were similar to or higher than the benchmark**, with higher ratings than elsewhere for having a vibrant downtown/commercial area and much higher ratings for shopping opportunities and the city as a place to visit. **The ratings of Williamsburg's Economy that**

fewer respondents rated favorably (about half or less) were the cost of living and employment opportunities. Mobility also had a mix of ratings; ease of walking was rated more favorably in Williamsburg than elsewhere (82% excellent or good), but only 4 in 10 residents rated travel by public transportation as excellent or good. Within Built Environment, three-quarters of respondents approved of the built environment overall and 8 in 10 felt positively about the quality of **Williamsburg's public places, which was more favorable than elsewhere**. In contrast, only 36% of respondents felt that availability of affordable quality housing was excellent or good, though this was still on par with other communities.



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

Comparison to national benchmark



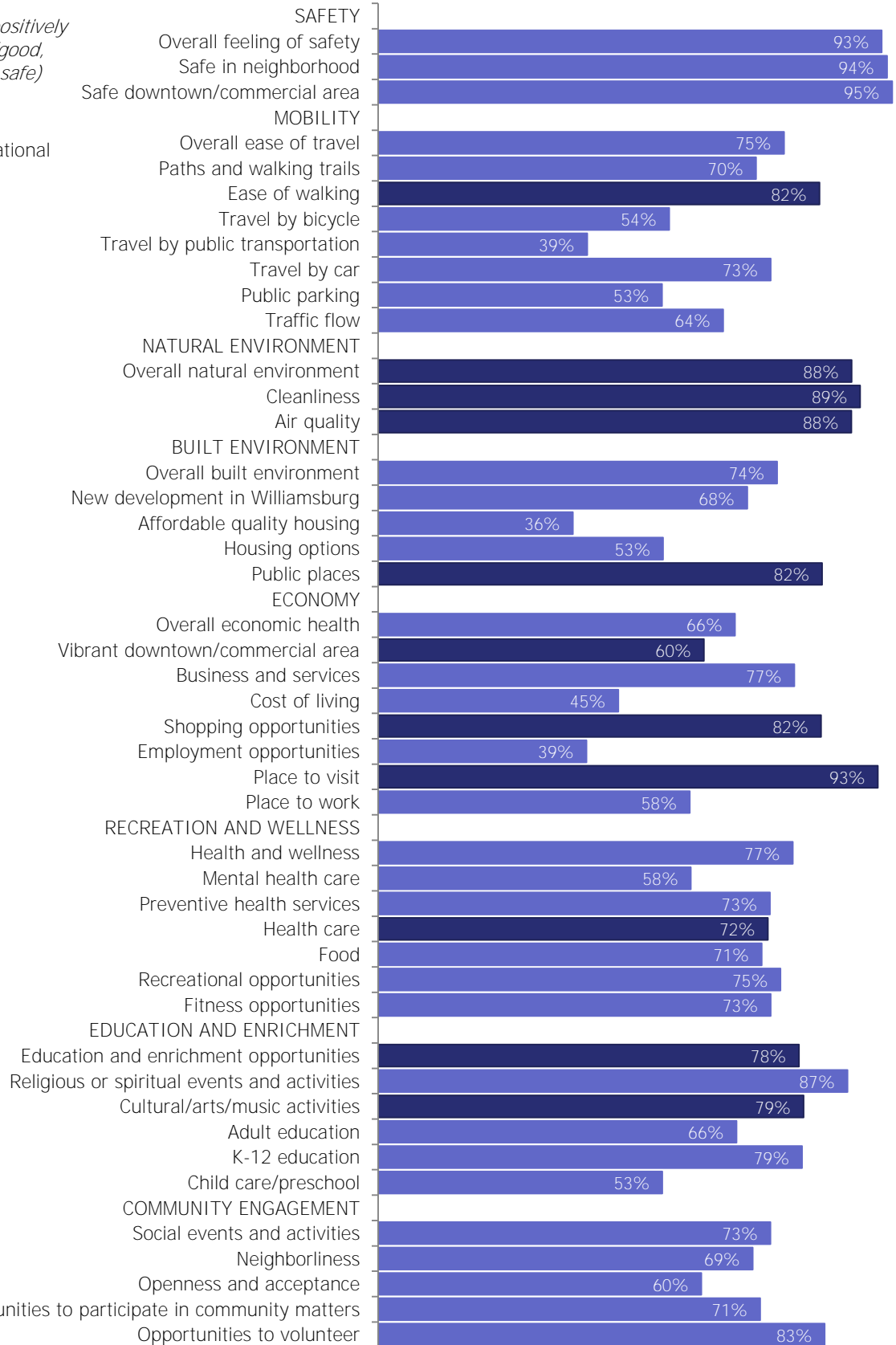
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

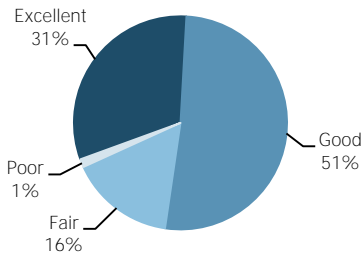
*How well does the government of Williamsburg meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Williamsburg as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 8 in 10 residents rated the overall quality of City services as excellent or good and this was similar to other communities. In contrast, only 43% felt positively about services provided by the Federal Government.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Williamsburg’s **leadership and governance**. Three-quarters of respondents felt that the value of services for taxes paid was excellent or good and this stood out as being higher than the benchmark. Similarly, 82% of residents felt positively about the customer service that they had received from City employees. Between half and two-thirds of residents gave positive ratings to City government for its performance in the overall direction that Williamsburg is taking, welcoming citizen involvement, confidence in City government, acting in the best interest of Williamsburg, being honest and treating all residents fairly.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Williamsburg. Nearly all services received ratings that were similar to other communities. On the high end of ratings, roughly three-quarters of residents or more rated services in the facets of Safety and Recreation and Wellness as excellent or good. More Williamsburg residents than residents of other communities rated health services favorably. The remaining facets all received positive ratings from a majority of residents and were rated similar to other communities across the nation.

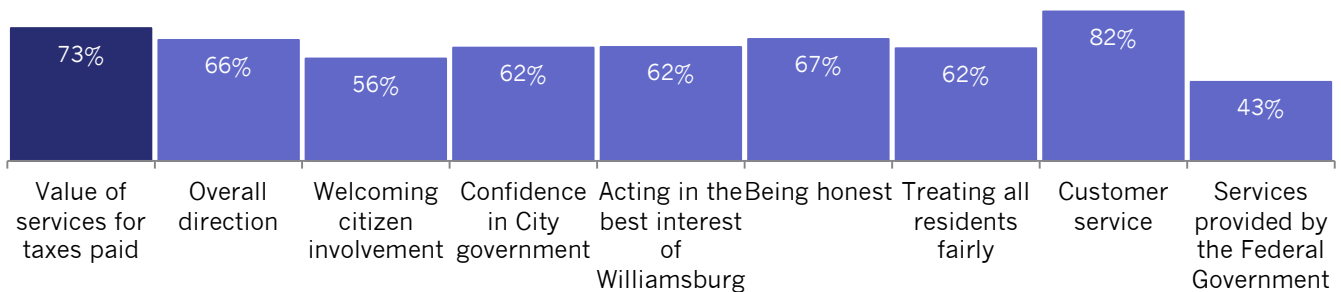
## Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



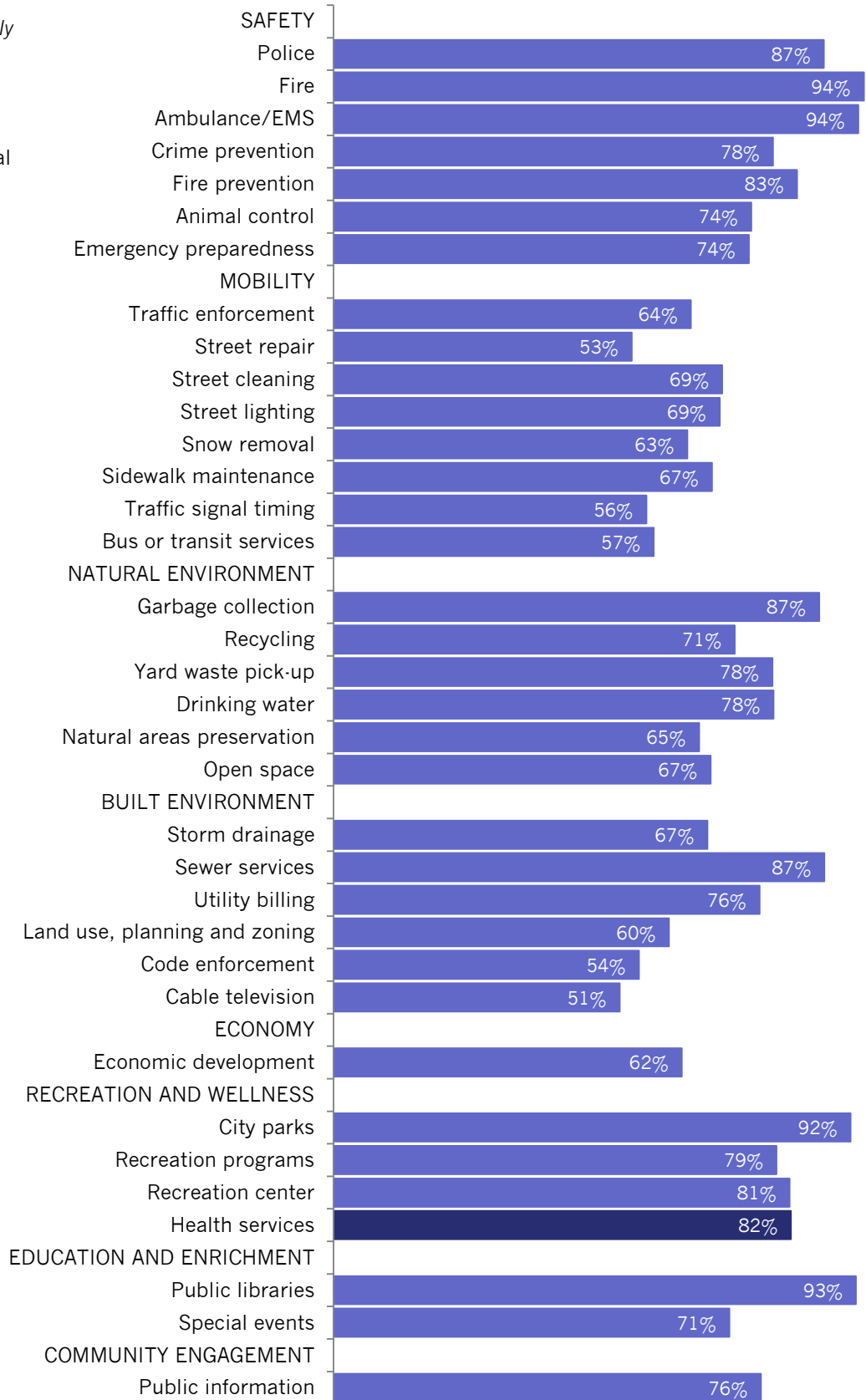
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower





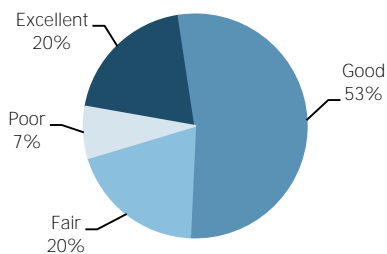
# Participation

*Are the residents of Williamsburg 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, about three-quarters of Williamsburg residents felt that the sense of community in their city was excellent or good. About half of residents said they had contacted a City employee in the last 12 months and most said they would be somewhat or very likely to recommend living in Williamsburg and planned to remain in the city for the next five years.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Results varied between and within each of the eight facets, but Williamsburg residents generally participated in or experienced each of the measures at a frequency similar to other communities. Most residents had not been the victim of a crime and more residents in Williamsburg (49%) compared to other communities had stocked supplies for an emergency. Under the facet of Mobility, many residents said they used alternative modes of transportation once a month or more, including public transportation (28%), carpooling (47%) and more residents of Williamsburg than elsewhere had walked or biked instead of driving (72%). Also of note, fewer residents watched local public meetings; this rating was below the benchmark. Conversely, more respondents had not observed a code violation in Williamsburg (a rating higher than the benchmark) and more participants worked in Williamsburg (also rated higher than the benchmark).

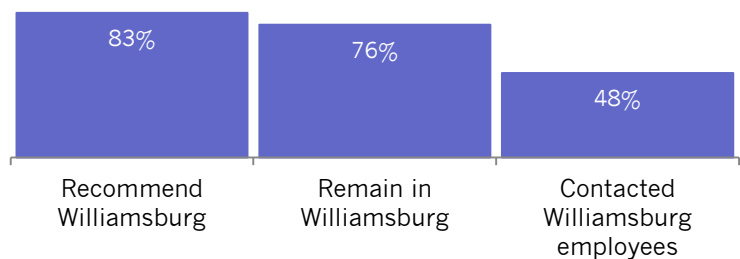
**Sense of Community**



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

**Comparison to national  
benchmark**

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



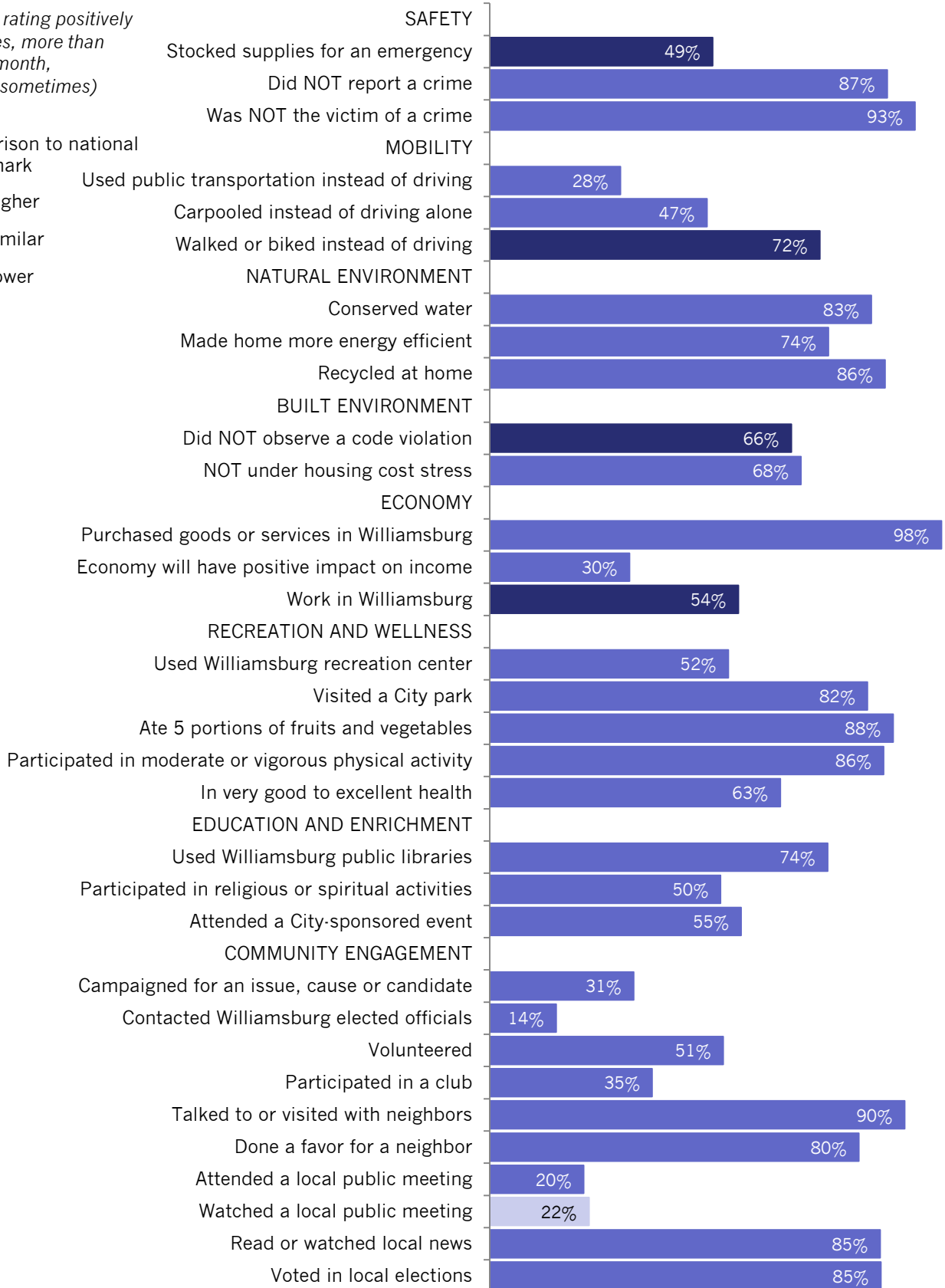
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

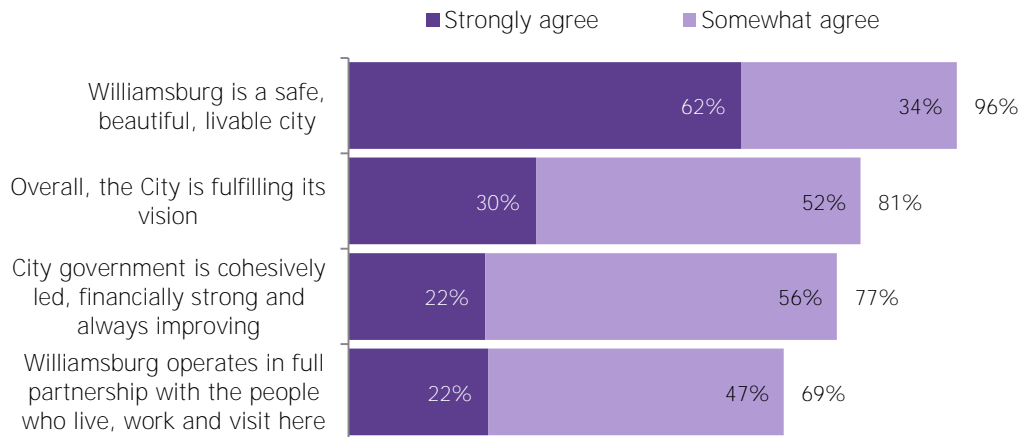


# Special Topics

The City of Williamsburg included one question of special interest on The NCS that related to how well the City was fulfilling its vision statement. Two-thirds or more of residents agreed that the City was meeting each of the **four aspects of the City's vision**. Nearly all agreed that **Williamsburg is a safe, beautiful, livable city** and most (81%) agreed that the City is fulfilling its mission. Of the four statements, fewer residents (69%) agreed that Williamsburg operates in full partnership with the people who live, work and visit here.

Figure 4: Fulfilling Williamsburg's Vision Statement

*The City's vision statement is: "Williamsburg will become an evermore safe, beautiful, livable city of historic and academic renown, served by a city government — cohesively led, financially strong, always improving — in full partnership with the people who live, work and visit here." Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that the City is fulfilling the following aspects of its vision statement:*



# Conclusions

## **Williamsburg residents continue to enjoy a high quality of life**

Most survey respondents felt positively about the overall quality of life in Williamsburg. Respondents nearly unanimously agreed that Williamsburg was meeting its vision to be a safe, beautiful and livable city. Many participants valued the city and their neighborhoods as a place to live and Williamsburg as a place to raise children. More than in other communities, Williamsburg residents **recognized the quality of the city's overall** image and appearance and their community as a place to retire. The vast majority of residents would recommend living in Williamsburg and planned on staying. Ratings in each of these areas were similar to ratings in 2012.

## **The Economy is important to the community.**

Residents identified Williamsburg's **economy** as an important area to focus on in the next few years and felt positively about the overall economic health of the community. A majority of respondents also gave high ratings to Williamsburg as a place to work and the quality of businesses and services as well as for economic development services in the city. Compared to other communities, residents in Williamsburg rated the community more highly for having a vibrant downtown/commercial area and much more highly for the quality of shopping opportunities (this rating increased from 2012 to 2014) as well as their city as a place to visit. Fewer than half of respondents rated the cost of living favorably. Although less than half of residents rated employment opportunities positively, more residents in Williamsburg worked in their city than residents of communities elsewhere. The number of respondents who felt that the economy would have a positive impact on their income increased in 2014 compared to 2012.

## **Residents experience good mobility in Williamsburg.**

Overall, residents felt that it was easy to get around the city, but specific ratings depended somewhat on the mode of transportation. The ease of walking in the city was rated positively and more Williamsburg residents walked or rode bicycles for transportation than in other communities. Travel by car and traffic flow in the city (which was rated more highly in 2014 than in 2012) also received positive ratings. About one-quarter of residents used public transportation and perceptions of the ease of travel via public transportation were somewhat lower than for other forms of travel and lower than in 2012, but still on par with ratings in other communities. Services related to transportation, including street repair, street cleaning, traffic signal timing and bus services received solid ratings that were similar to other communities, although respondents gave lower ratings for transit services and street cleaning in 2014 than in 2012.