

THE NCSTM
The National Community SurveyTM

West Chester, OH

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 West Chester. 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.

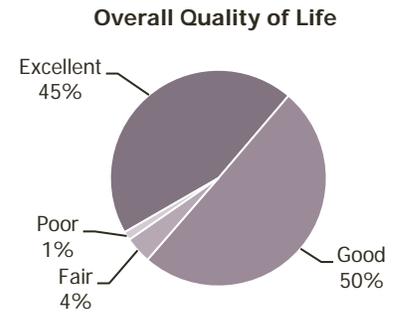
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 402 residents of West Chester Township. 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 West Chester

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in West Chester as excellent or good. This rating was higher than 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.

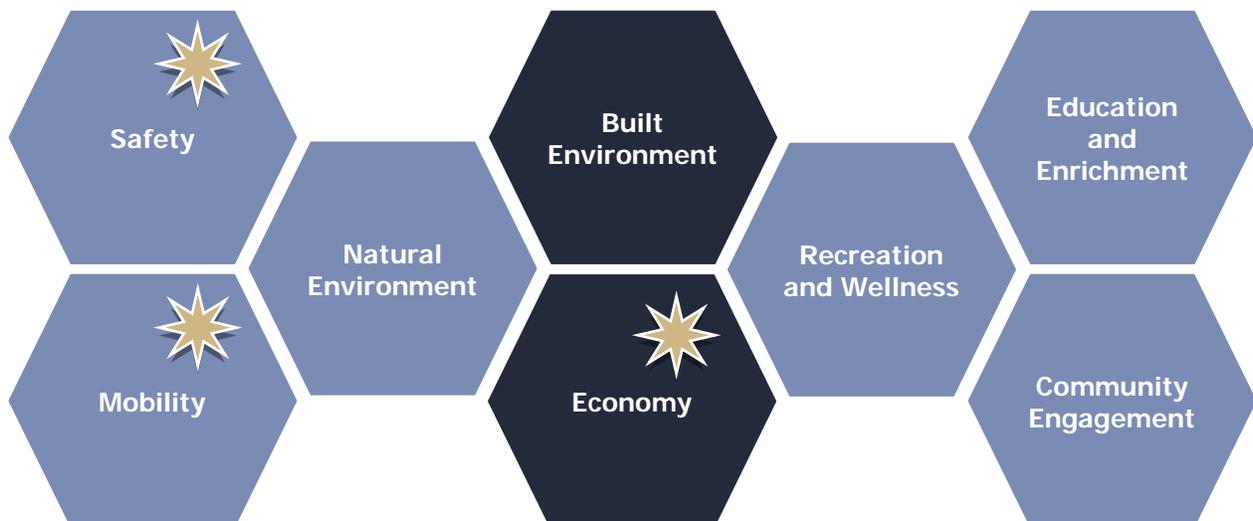
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety, Mobility and Economy as priorities for the West Chester community in the coming two years. Ratings for most facets were similar and positive to national benchmarks, with the exception of Built Environment and Economy, which each exceeded averages. 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 West Chester’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 West Chester, 96% rated the Township as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of West Chester as a place to live were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the Township as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including West Chester as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of West Chester and its overall appearance. Most West Chester residents rated these five aspects as excellent or good and ratings for three aspects were higher than the national benchmark, while the remaining two were similar to national averages.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, ratings for community characteristics in West Chester were strong and similar to or higher than those given in comparison communities. At least 9 in 10 residents gave positive marks to all aspects of Safety and at least 8 in 10 residents gave positive marks to all aspects of Natural Environment. Recreation and Wellness and Economy ratings were especially strong with a majority of aspects rated higher than the national averages (overall economic health, shopping opportunities and health and wellness opportunities, among others). Mobility-related aspects were mixed with as many as 8 in 10 residents offering positive marks to overall ease of travel (a rating higher than the national average) and only 4 in 10 residents or fewer offering positive marks to paths and walking trails, ease of walking and bicycle travel (each rated lower than the national norm).



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



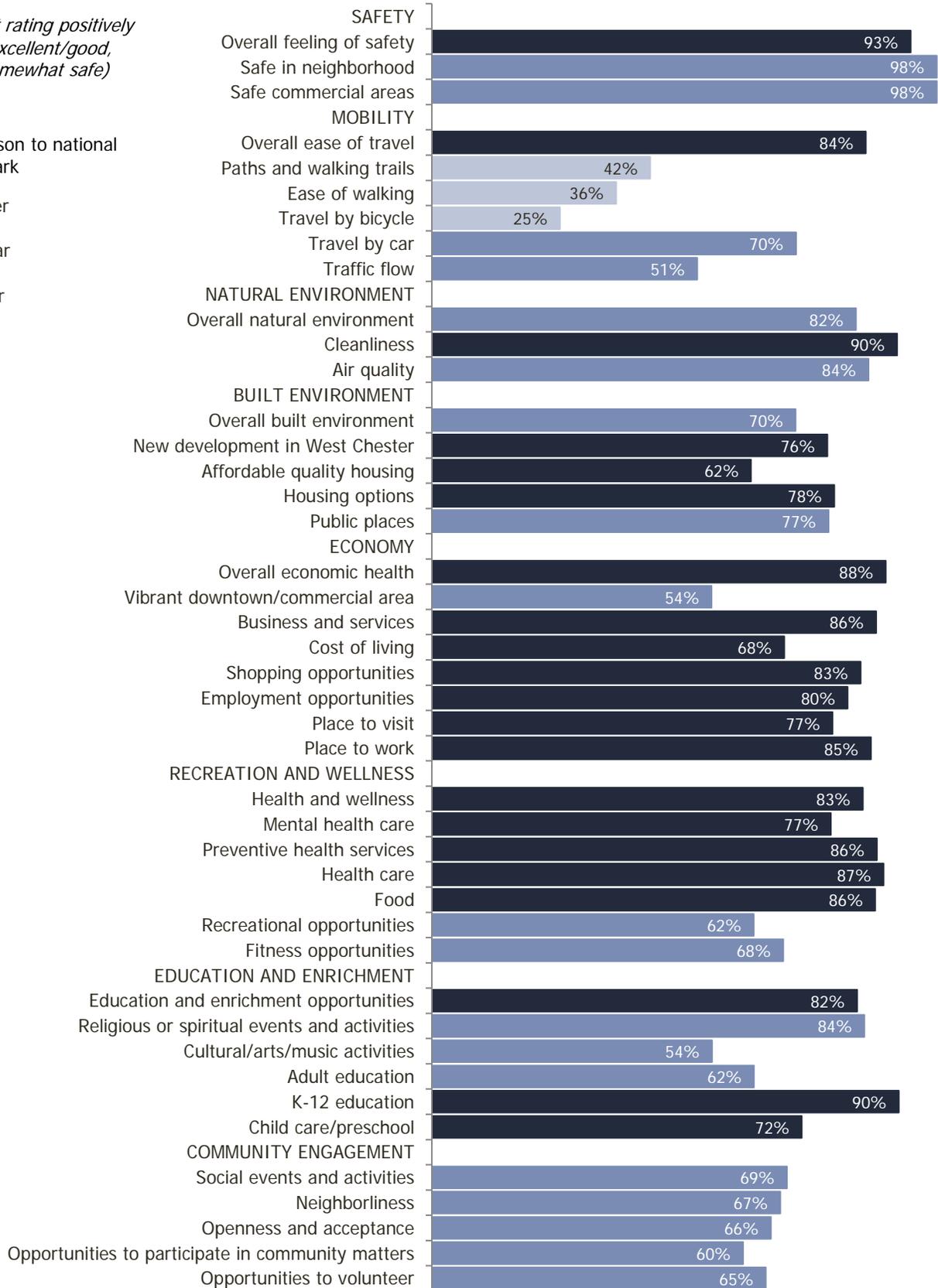
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

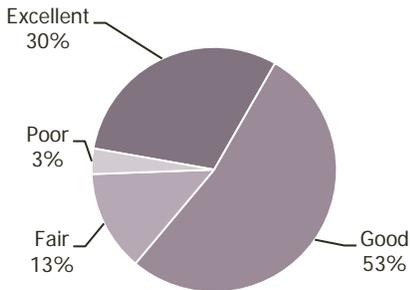
How well does the government of West Chester meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by West Chester as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. The overall quality of Township services was rated positively by 8 in 10 respondents and about 4 in 10 respondents were pleased with the services provided by the Federal Government; these ratings were on par with communities elsewhere.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of West Chester’s leadership and governance. About 8 in 10 residents gave high marks to the customer service provided by Township employees, while between 5 in 10 and 7 in 10 residents gave positive evaluations to the remaining aspects of government performance. Ratings for the overall direction of West Chester and treating all residents fairly were higher than those given in other communities across the nation.

Respondents evaluated over 20 individual services and amenities available in West Chester. Service ratings in West Chester were rated positively by at least half of residents and most were rated similarly to average ratings in comparison communities. Four services were given ratings higher than the national averages including two within Safety (police and crime prevention); Safety ratings were also generally the highest rated overall with nearly all residents offering positive evaluations of fire and ambulance/EMS services and 9 in 10 offering positive evaluations to police, crime prevention and fire prevention. Economic development and land use, planning and zoning were each rated higher than national averages with about two-thirds of residents offering positive evaluations to each.

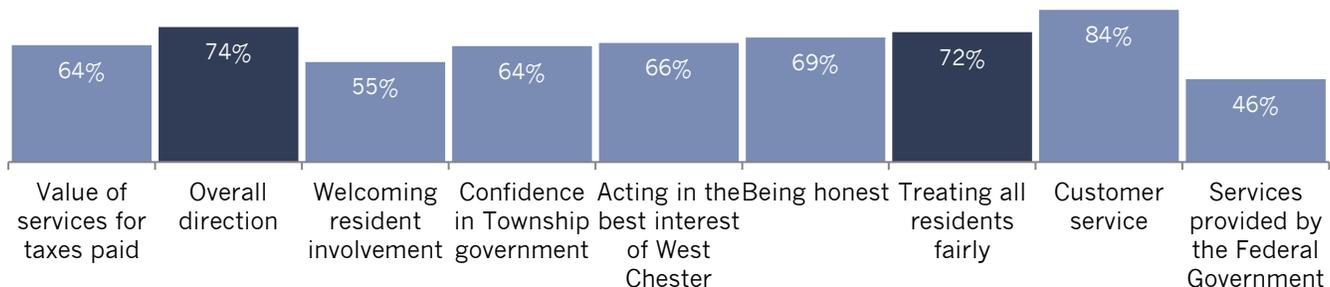
Overall Quality of Township Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



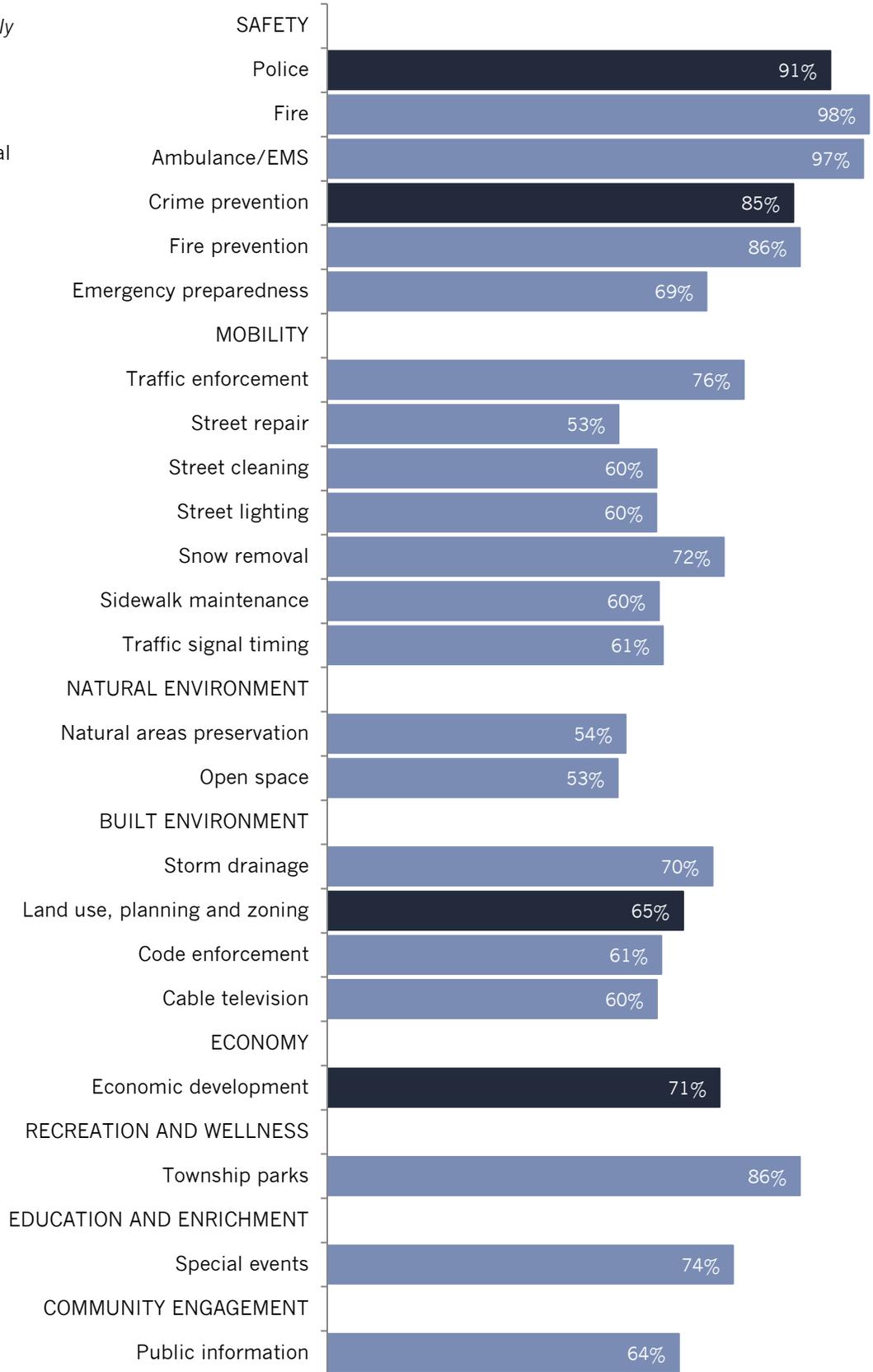
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



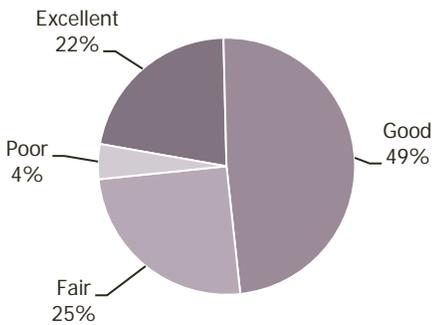
Participation

Are the residents of West Chester 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 residents rated the sense of community in West Chester as excellent or good, while nearly all residents would recommend living in the township to someone who asked and 9 in 10 residents planned to remain in the township for the next five years. The rate of recommending the township was higher than national averages while sense of community and likelihood to remain in the community were similar.

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 tended to vary widely across the different facets, making the comparisons to the benchmarks useful for interpreting the results. Generally, participation rates in West Chester tended to be similar to those observed in other communities. West Chester residents were more likely than those who lived elsewhere to have not observed a code violation or not be under housing cost stress as well as to have a positive economic outlook. However, they were less likely to have stocked supplies for an emergency, walked or biked instead of driving, conserved water or recycled at home.

Sense of Community



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

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



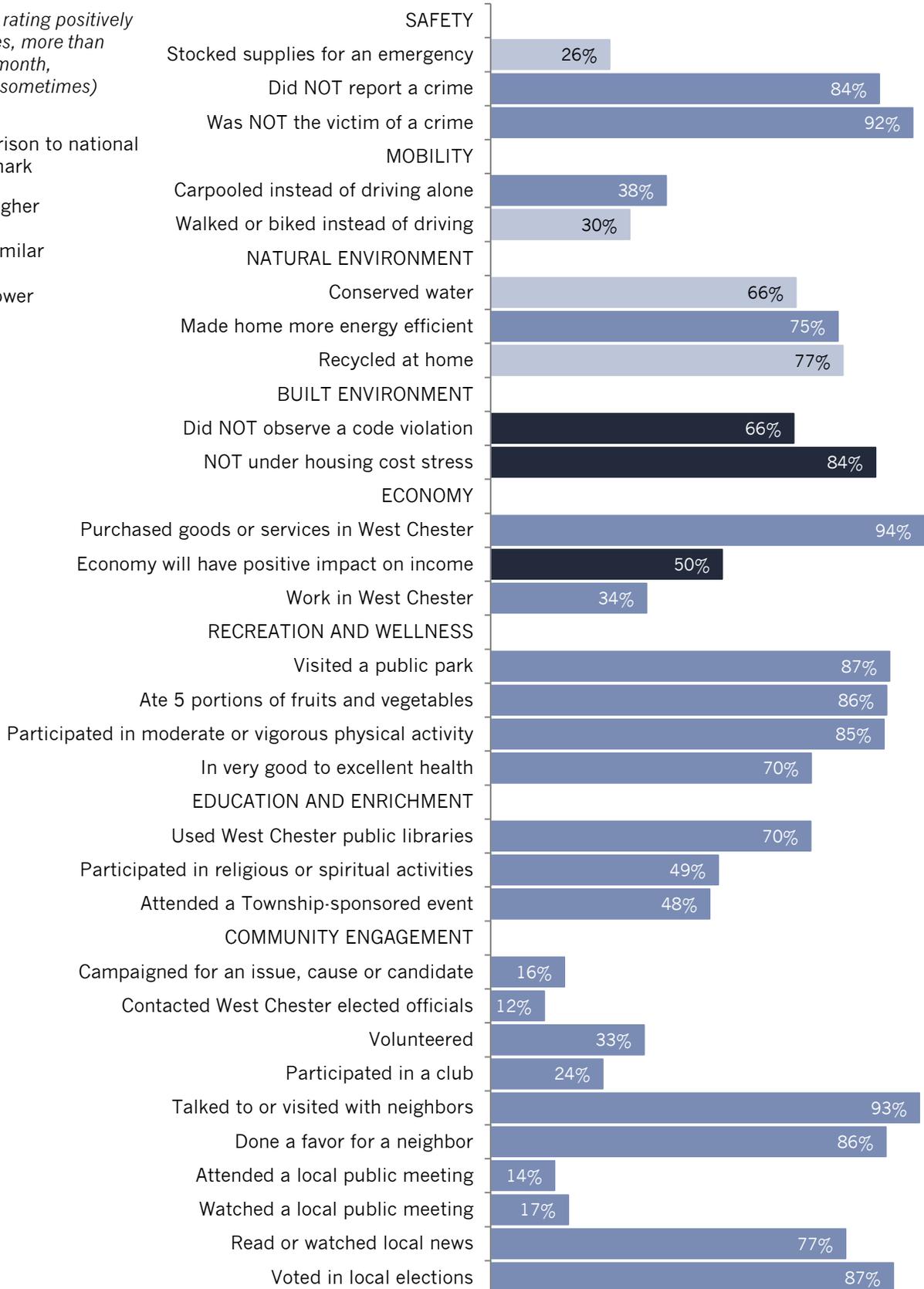
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



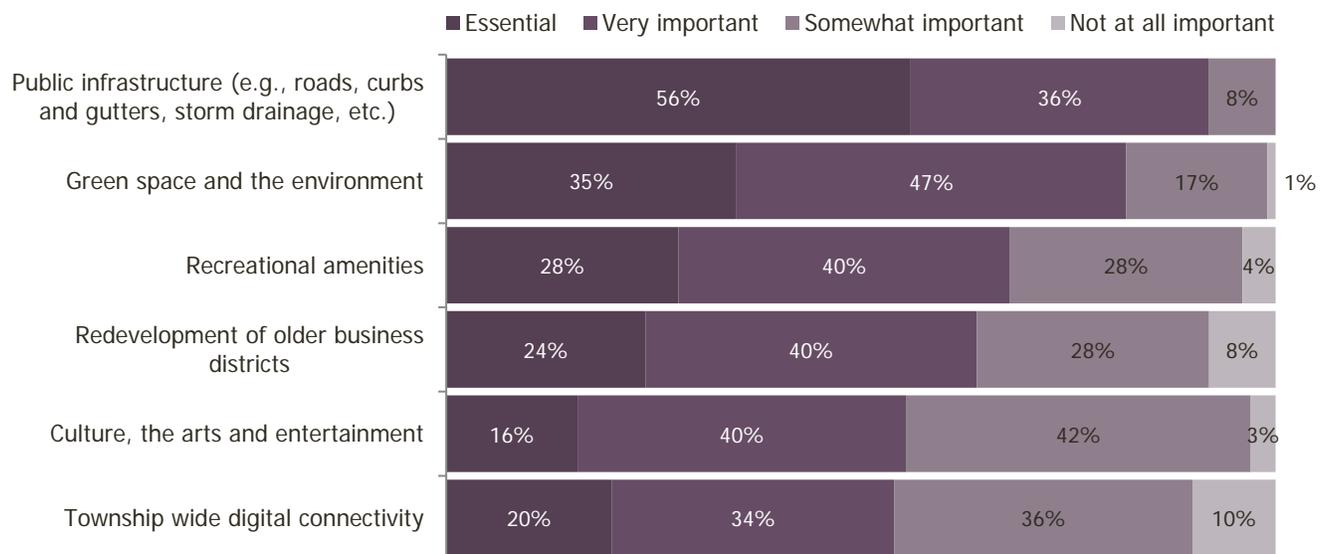
Special Topics

West Chester Township included three questions of special interest on The NCS, including possible focus areas for West Chester, reasons for travelling outside of the township and reliance on various sources of information about the community.

When asked about possible areas for West Chester to invest, over half of residents felt public infrastructure was essential and an additional one-third felt it was very important. Public infrastructure held a strong lead compared to the other areas listed with only one-third of residents offering essential ratings to green space and the environment (the runner up) and an additional 5 in 10 offering very important ratings. Culture, the arts and entertainment and township wide digital connectivity were at the bottom of the list with about half of residents offering essential or very important ratings.

Figure 4: Focus Areas for West Chester

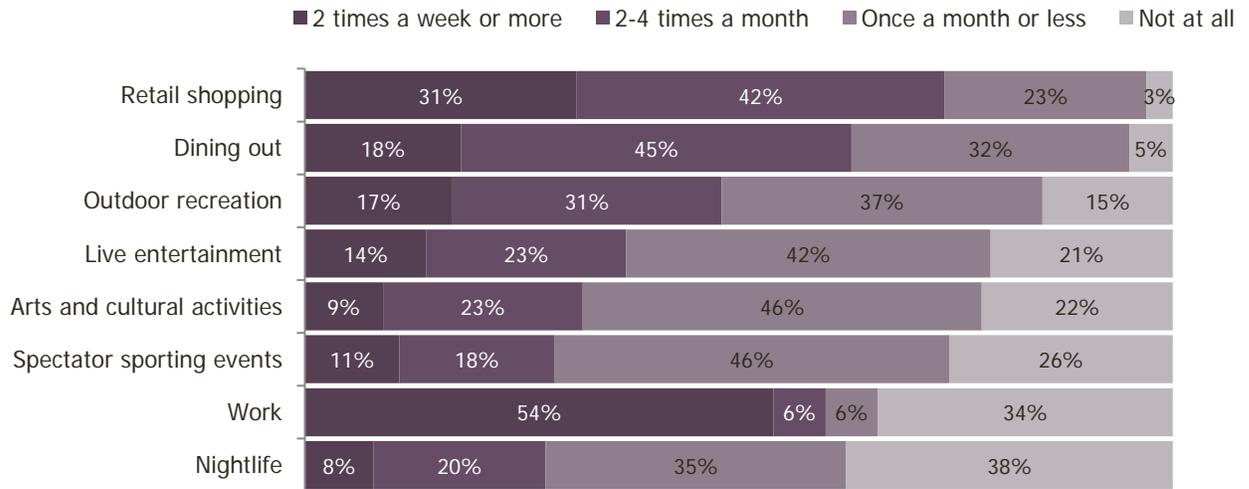
Please rate how important, if at all, it is for West Chester to invest in each of the following areas:



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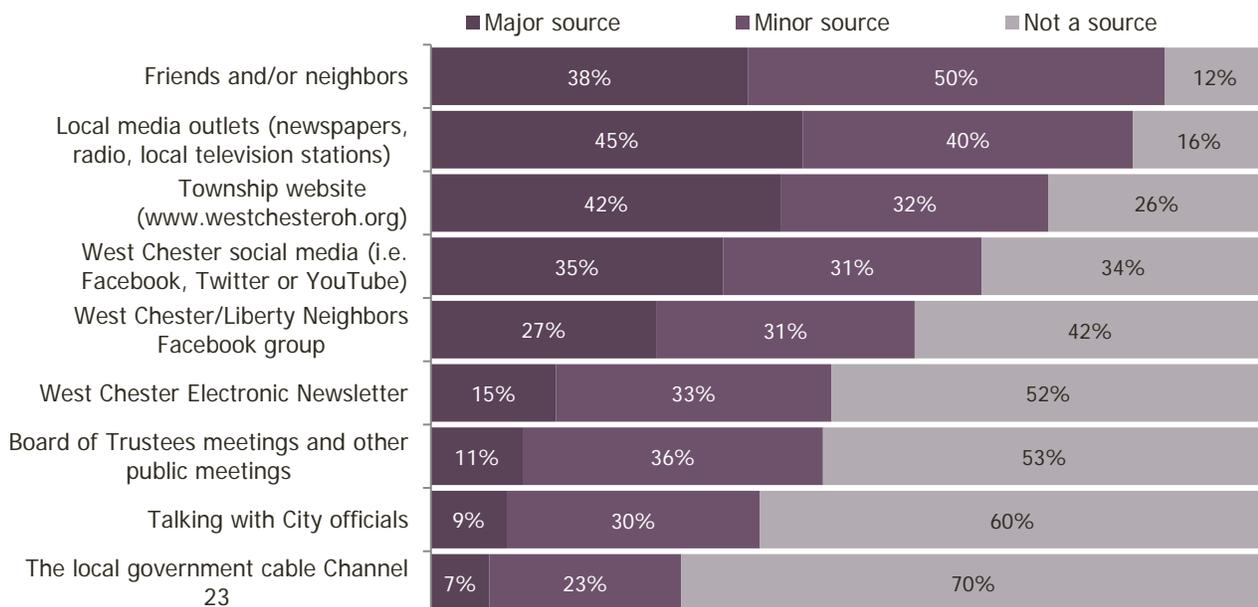
Work was the leading purposes requiring residents to travel outside of West Chester on a regular basis with half of respondents indicating they traveled out of the township two times a week or more. Retail shopping and dining out also caused residents to leave the township with nearly all residents indicating at least some level of travelling outside the township for this purpose. About 4 in 10 or fewer residents indicated not at all for each of the purposes listed.

Figure 5: Reasons for Travelling Out of West Chester
About how frequently, if ever, do you travel outside of West Chester for the following purposes?



When asked about sources of information used for obtaining information about the Township government and its activities, events and services, residents were most likely to indicate friends and/or neighbors as sources of information, with 88% of residents indicating this as a major or minor source of information followed by local media outlets with 85% of residents indicating this as a major or minor source. The local government cable Channel 23 was at the bottom of the list.

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 West Chester Township government and its activities, events, and services:



Conclusions

West Chester residents enjoy a positive quality of life.

Most residents gave positive ratings to all aspects of quality of life in West Chester. Almost all residents rated the overall quality of life in West Chester as excellent or good, a rating higher than the national average. About 9 in 10 or more residents positively rated West Chester as a place to live and to raise children, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image and the overall appearance of the community; these ratings were similar to or higher than the national averages. Nearly all residents would recommend living in the township to someone who asked and 9 in 10 residents planned to remain in the township for the next five years. The rate of recommending the township was higher than national averages likelihood to remain in the community was similar.

The Economy is important to residents, and ratings are especially strong.

Residents indicated that Economy would be an important area of focus for the West Chester community in the next two years and ratings within this category tended to be strong. Seven of the eight Community Characteristics related to Economy were rated higher than the national averages with at least 7 in 10 residents offering positive evaluations to these seven aspects (quality of businesses and services, shopping opportunities, employment opportunities and West Chester as a place to visit, among others). Economic development, within Governance, was also given a rating higher than the national benchmark. Further, West Chester residents were more likely to have a positive economic outlook than residents in communities nationwide.

While overall ease of travel shines, alternate modes of travel could be an area of opportunity.

Mobility was identified by residents as an important area of focus for the West Chester community in the next two years and ratings across each pillar were generally similar to the national averages (travel by car, sidewalk maintenance and street repair, among others); however, some ratings offer insight into a potential focus on alternate modes of transportation. While 8 in 10 West Chester residents gave positive evaluations to the overall ease of travel in the community (a rating higher than the national average), 4 in 10 or fewer offered these same positive evaluations to paths and walking trails, ease of walking and bicycle travel (each rated lower than the national norm). Further, fewer West Chester residents compared to their nationwide counterparts indicated that they had walked or biked instead of driving.