

The National Citizen Survey™

Ramsey, MN

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 Ramsey. 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).

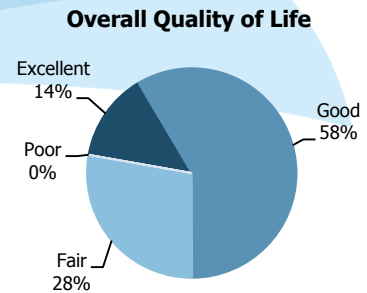
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 430 residents of the City of Ramsey. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Ramsey

Most residents rated the quality of life in Ramsey as excellent or good and this was similar to the 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.




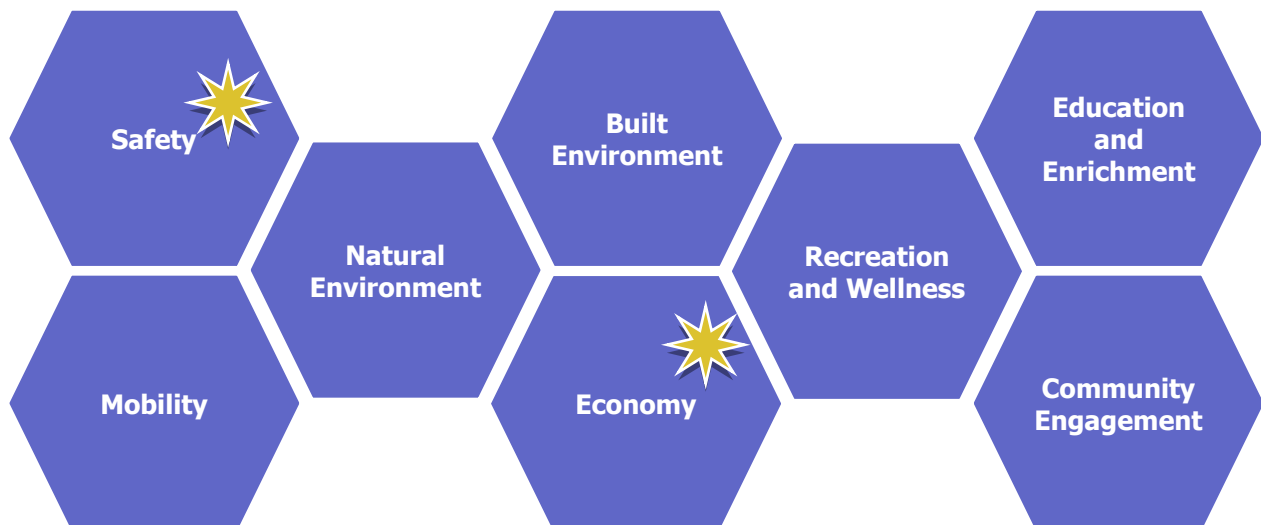
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Ramsey community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Ramsey residents gave favorable ratings to these facets of community. In fact, ratings for all facets including Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement were positive 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 Ramsey’s unique questions.

Legend

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

 Most important



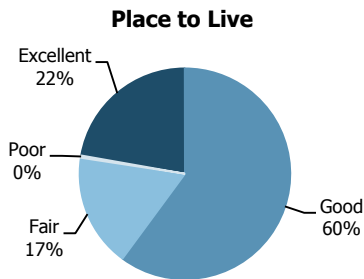
Community Characteristics

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 Ramsey, 82% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Ramsey 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 Ramsey as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Ramsey and its overall appearance. Most residents felt that the overall appearance of Ramsey, Ramsey as a place to raise children and their neighborhood as a place to live were excellent or good. Although a majority felt that this was true of Ramsey as a place to retire and of Ramsey's overall image, these were less than the benchmark.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 30 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Safety and Natural Environment were the facets with the highest ratings, with at least 8 in 10 residents giving positive ratings to each measure in these categories. Conversely, Economy was the facet having the lowest ratings; every item in this area received positive ratings from half or fewer of residents. Overall, most Community Characteristics rated similarly to other communities. Of the seven measures with ratings lower than the benchmark, five related to Ramsey's Economy. Two characteristics of the community rated higher than the benchmark and were in the area of Built Environment: affordable quality housing and housing options.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower

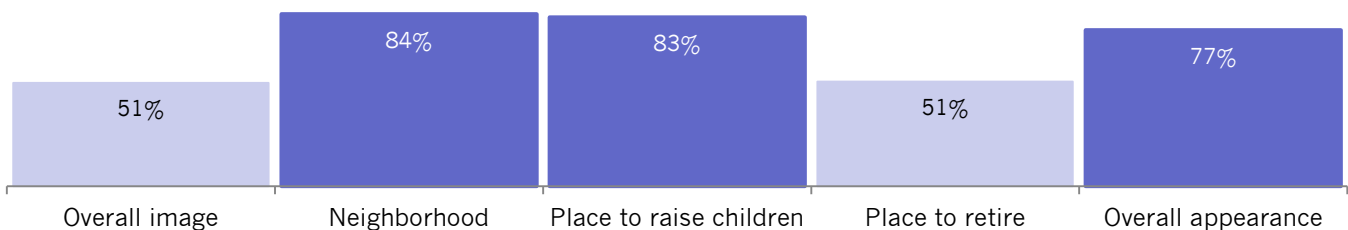
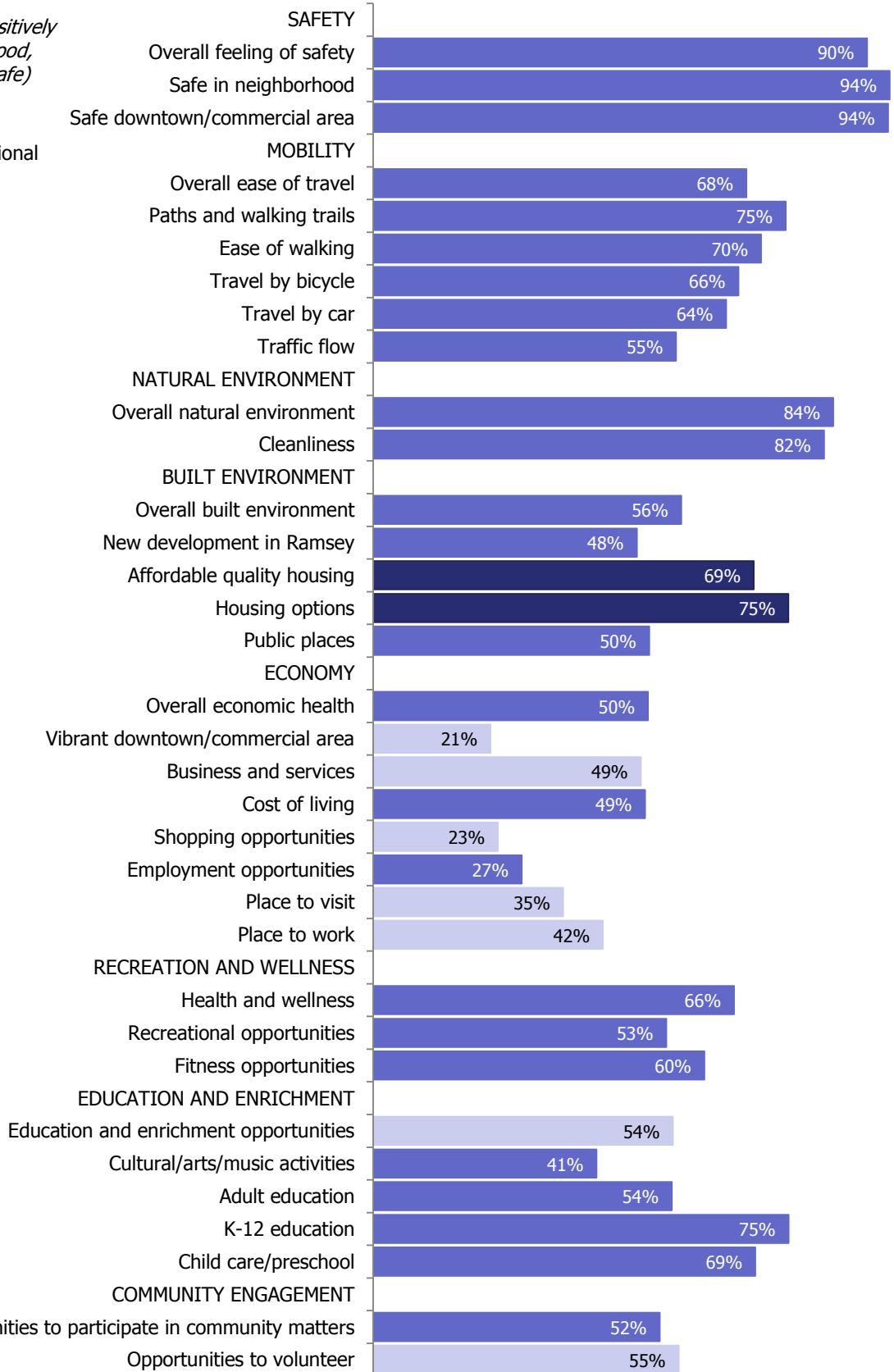


Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

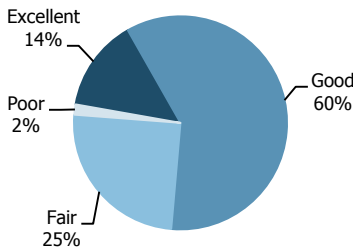
How well does the government of Ramsey meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Ramsey as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. On par with other communities, three-quarters of Ramsey residents rated the overall quality of City services as excellent or good.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Ramsey’s leadership and governance. All measures of general government performance were similar to the benchmark, including value of services for taxes paid, the City’s overall direction, welcoming citizen involvement, acting in the best interest of the community, being honest, treating residents fairly and customer services. Each of these aspects of government performance received ratings of excellent or good from at least 4 in 10 respondents. Customer service was the most highly rated aspect in this area and received positive ratings from 8 in 10 respondents.

Respondents evaluated nearly two dozen individual services and amenities available in Ramsey. Nearly all of the ratings were similar to ratings in communities elsewhere; only recreation centers received ratings that lagged below the benchmark. Similar to Community Characteristics, the most positively rated services were related to Safety, where all but one of the services received positive ratings from 8 in 10 residents, and the least positively rated service was within Economy (43% excellent or good for economic development). Services related to Natural Environment fared well, with 7 in 10 residents rating drinking water and natural areas preservation well.

Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower

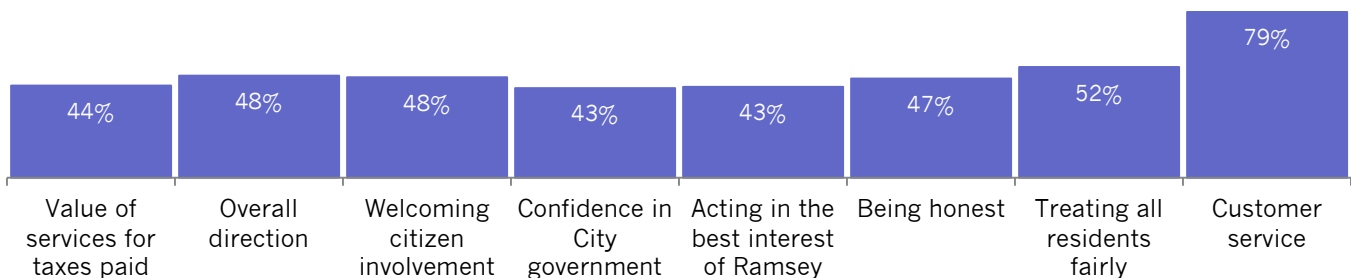
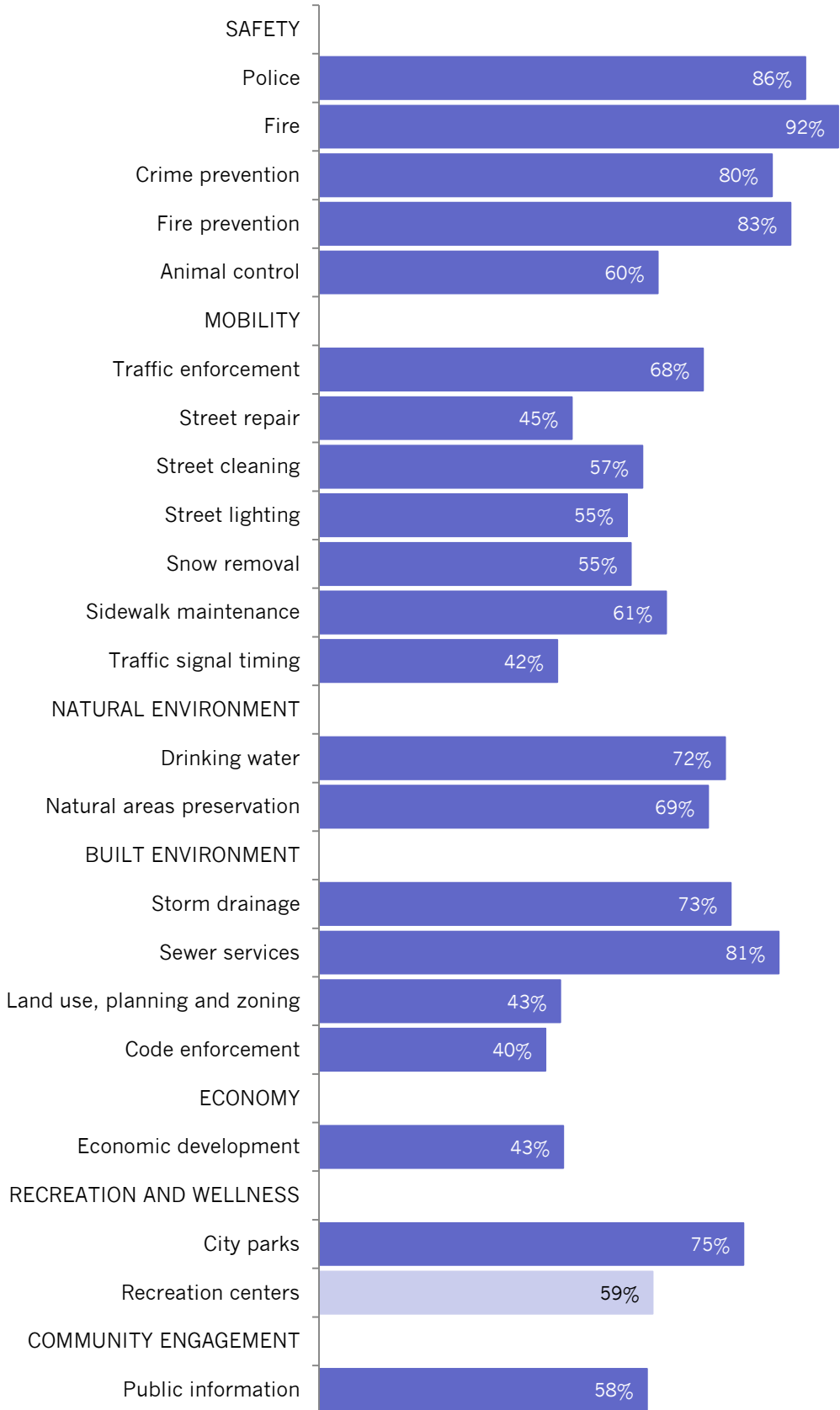


Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

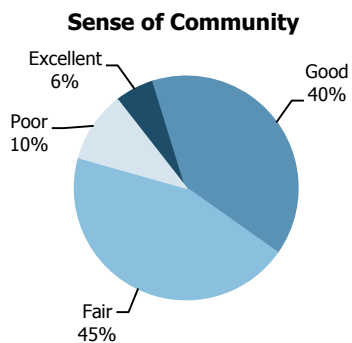


Participation

Are the residents of Ramsey 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. Compared to other communities, fewer residents of Ramsey rated the sense of community as excellent or good (46%). Still, the vast majority of residents said that they would recommend living in Ramsey and had plans to remain living there.

The survey included almost 20 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Overall, measures of Participation varied in relation to the benchmark. Areas where resident participation and experiences rated better than elsewhere were in Natural Environment (recycling), Safety (fewer residents had reported a crime) and Built Environment (fewer residents experienced housing cost stress). Although similar to the benchmark, the rate of purchasing goods or services, visiting City parks, being in good health and voting were high and nearly all residents reported that they had not been the victim of a crime. Most of the measures where Participation fell below the norm were under Community Engagement for campaigning, volunteering and attending public meetings. Under Economy, residents of Ramsey were less likely to work in the City where they lived than residents of other communities.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower

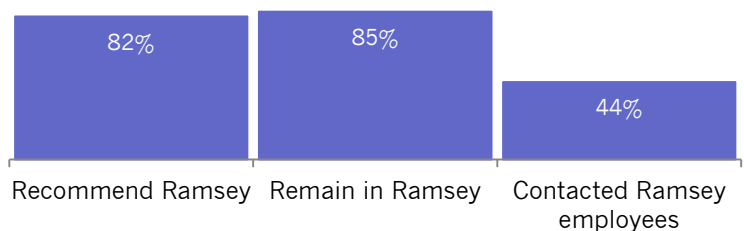
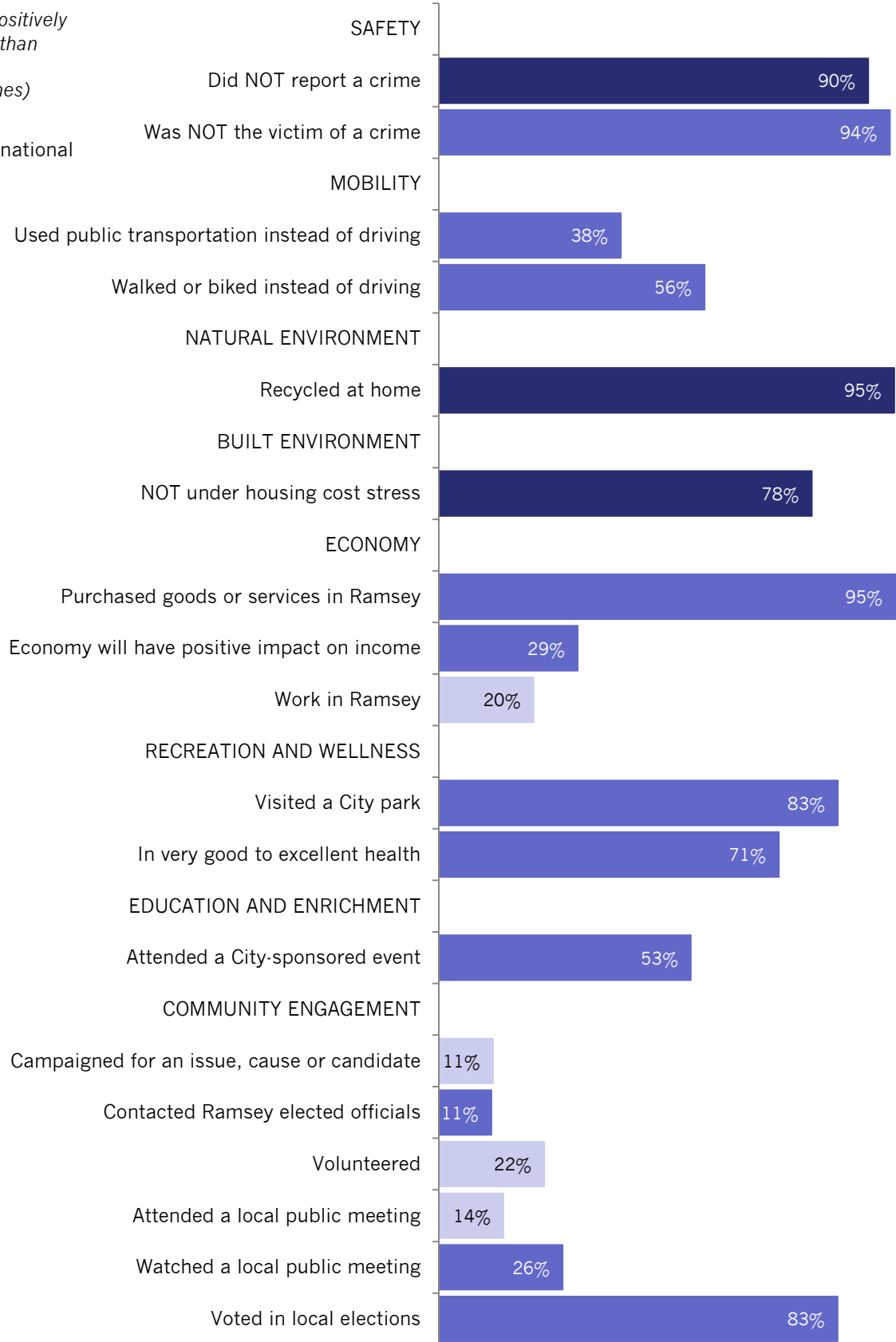


Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

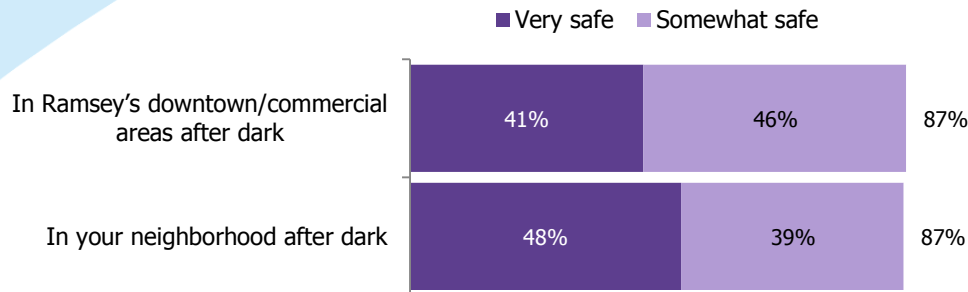


Special Topics

The City of Ramsey included several questions of special interest on The NCS. These questions covered the topics of safety, sources of information about the City, community events, street construction and other characteristics and services in the community.

In addition to asking about safety in various parts of Ramsey during the day, the survey asked residents about feelings of safety at night. Most residents (87%) reported that they felt somewhat or very safe at night in Ramsey’s downtown/commercial areas and in their neighborhoods.

Figure 4: Safety after Dark
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel:



Residents rated the quality of trail maintenance and strategic plan development. Two-thirds of residents gave favorable ratings to the quality of trail maintenance. Less than half of residents rated the City’s strategic planning as excellent or good and one-third rated it as fair.

Figure 5: Trail Maintenance
Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Ramsey: Trail maintenance

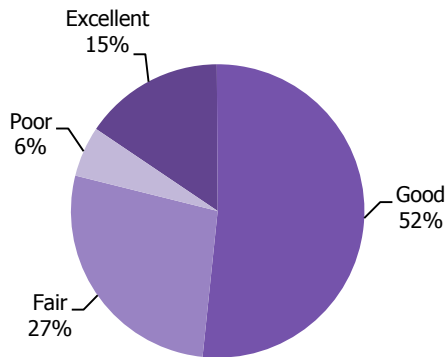
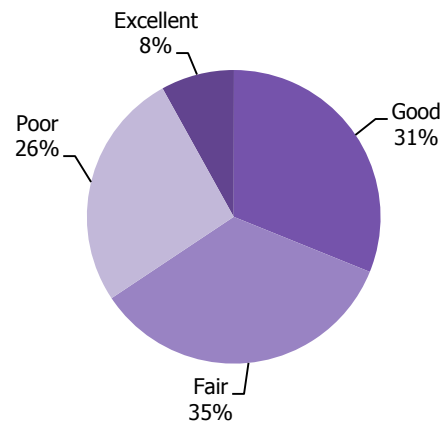


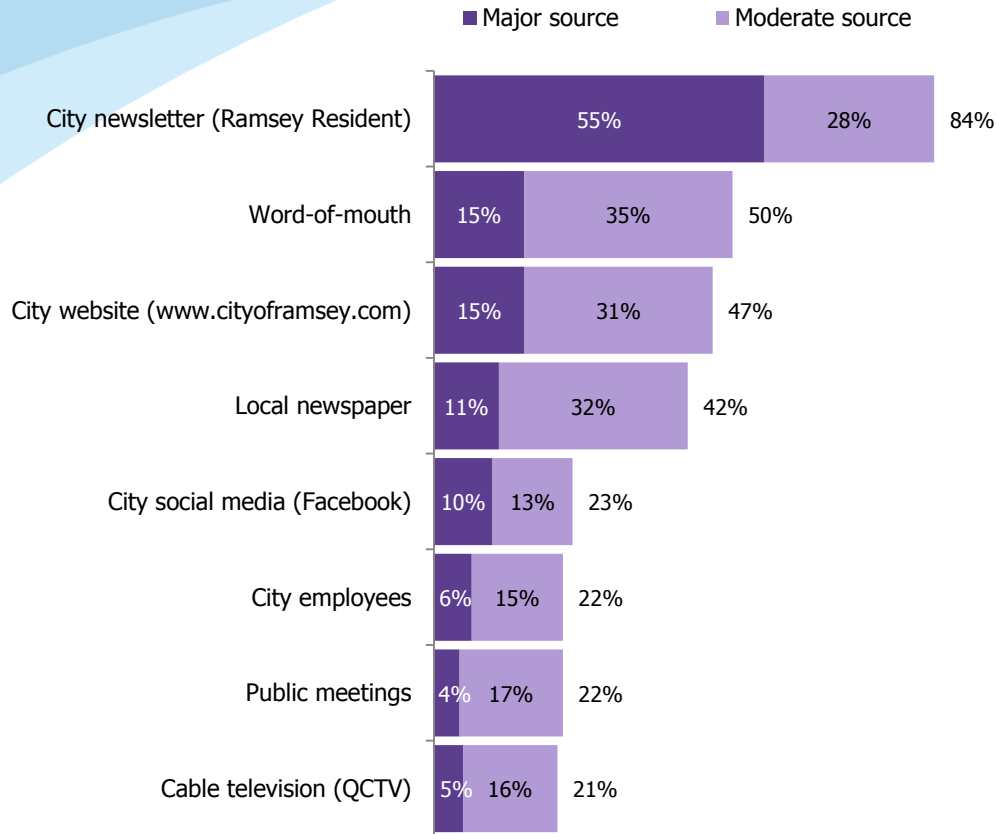
Figure 6: Strategic Planning
Please rate the following categories of Ramsey government performance: Development and success of a strategic action plan



Residents reported using a variety of sources for information about the City. Most residents (84%) said that they used the City newsletter (Ramsey Resident) as a major or moderate source of information. About half relied on word-of-mouth, the City website and the local newspaper for information about the City of Ramsey. About one-quarter said that the City’s Facebook page, City employees, public meetings and QCTV were at least a moderate source of City information for them.

Figure 7: Sources of Information about the City

To what extent are each of the following a source of information for you about Ramsey city government and its activities?



A majority of residents rated each of the listed community events favorably. The most positively rated events were Kids Safety Camp (93% excellent or good) and at least 8 in 10 residents rated The Draw music in the park series, Happy Days Festival, Spring/Fall recycling events and pet clinics as excellent or good and two-thirds felt as positively about the Spring Business Expo and Annual Nite to Unite event. Three-quarters of residents said that they liked the current name of the hometown festival, Happy Days; about one-third at least somewhat agreed that it should be changed.

Figure 8: Community Events

Please rate the quality of each event listed below:

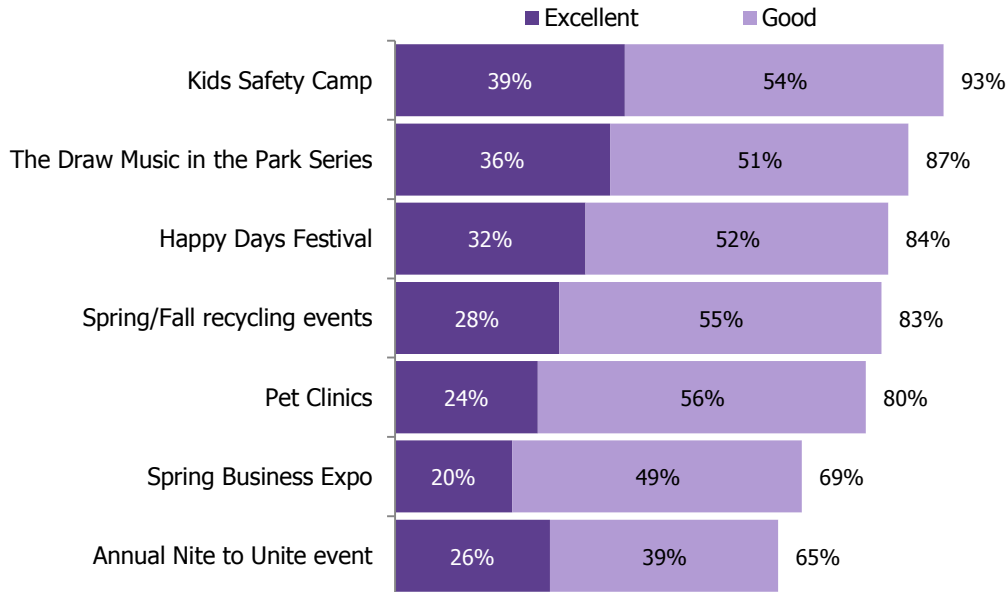
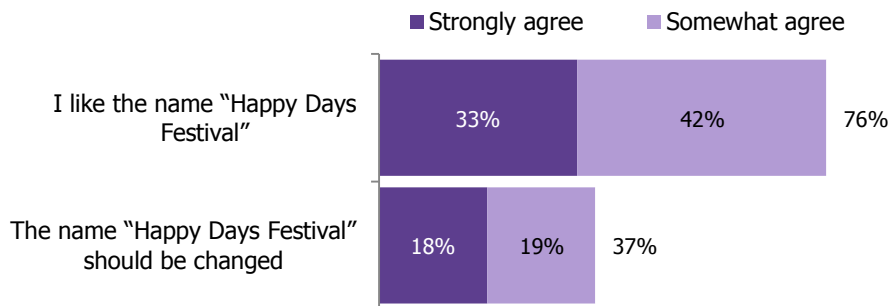


Figure 9: Happy Days Festival

Ramsey's hometown festival, Happy Days, is organized by the volunteer Happy Days Committee. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the event?



A majority of residents rated the overall condition of City streets as excellent or good and one-third rated it as fair. When asked about potential approaches to funding a long-term street reconstruction program, 40% of residents at least somewhat supported special assessments of benefitting properties, versus 33% for electric and/or gas utility fees and 29% for property tax increases.

Figure 10: Overall Condition of Streets

Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Ramsey as a whole: Overall condition of City maintained streets

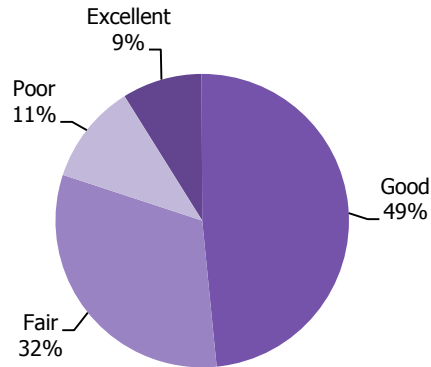
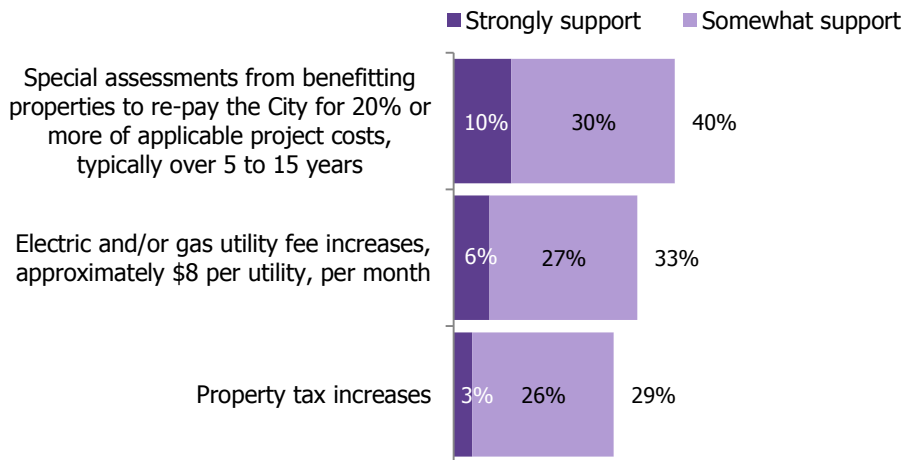


Figure 11: Street Reconstruction

The City is developing a long-term street reconstruction program for maintaining over 174 miles of public streets throughout Ramsey which will require a reliable funding source. Please indicate to what extent you would support or oppose each of the following funding options for this purpose:



Conclusions

Ramsey residents enjoy a high quality of life.

Most residents felt positively about the overall quality of life in Ramsey and the city as a place to live. Ramsey residents also valued the quality of life in their neighborhoods, the city as a place to raise children and its overall appearance; ratings in each of these areas were similar to other communities in the U.S. Ramsey as a place to retire was not perceived as positively as other aspects of the community. While residents of the community appreciated the city, they felt that outside opinion lagged; they rated the overall image or reputation of the city lower than the benchmark. The vast majority of residents would recommend living in the community and planned on staying.

Ramsey's Economy is an important focus area for the community.

Residents identified Ramsey's Economy as a priority for the community. Residents rated Ramsey favorably for its overall economic health, employment opportunities, cost of living and economic development services. The quality of its businesses and services, Ramsey as a place to work, the vibrancy of its downtown/commercial area, Ramsey as a place to visit and the availability of shopping opportunities were rated somewhat less favorably. Still, the number of residents who felt that the economy would have a positive impact on their income in the future was comparable to other communities.

Residents feel safe in Ramsey.

Residents felt that Safety was a positive feature of the community and identified it as another important area to focus on. Residents had a solid feeling of safety in Ramsey overall, in their neighborhoods and in downtown/commercial areas. Similar to residents of other communities, most had not been the victim of a crime, and a lower proportion of Ramsey residents had not reported a crime compared to elsewhere. Residents gave positive ratings to Safety services, including police, fire, crime prevention and fire prevention.