



**THE NCS**<sup>TM</sup>  
The National Citizen Survey<sup>TM</sup>

**Ramsey, MN**  
Community Livability Report

2018



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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.

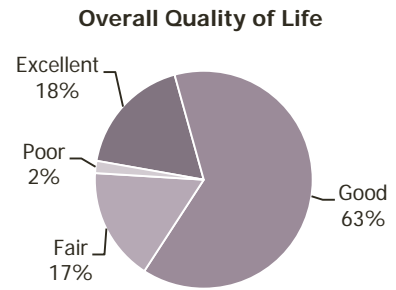
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 465 residents of the City of Ramsey. 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 Ramsey

About 8 in 10 residents rated the quality of life in Ramsey as excellent or good. This was similar to ratings 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.

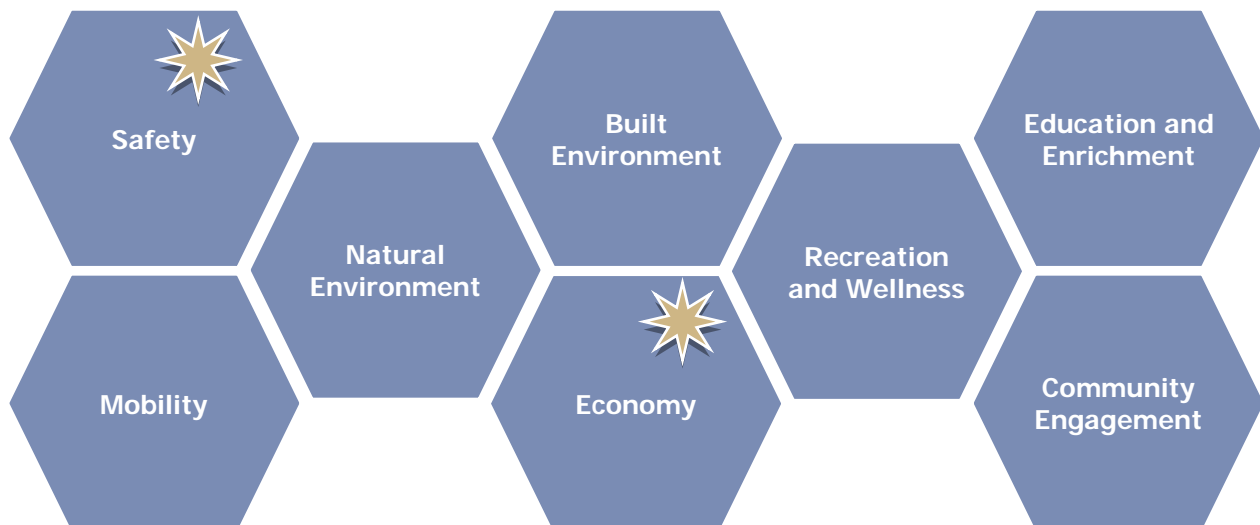
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. As in 2016, residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Ramsey community in the coming two years. All facets of community livability were rated positively and similar to 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 Ramsey’s unique questions.

## Legend

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

- Most important



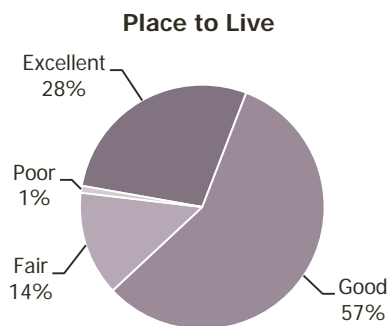
# Community Characteristics

*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, 85% 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. While ratings for these aspects ranged from 55% to 87% excellent or good, all community quality ratings were similar to those given elsewhere.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Resident evaluations within the facets of Safety, Mobility and Natural Environment were positive and similar to the benchmark. In Built Environment, the rating for affordable quality housing was more positive than seen in other communities, while the rating for public places where people want to spend time was perceived as less positive. Other aspects that received ratings lower than the benchmark were recreational, education/enrichment and volunteer opportunities as well as several aspects within the facet of Economy.

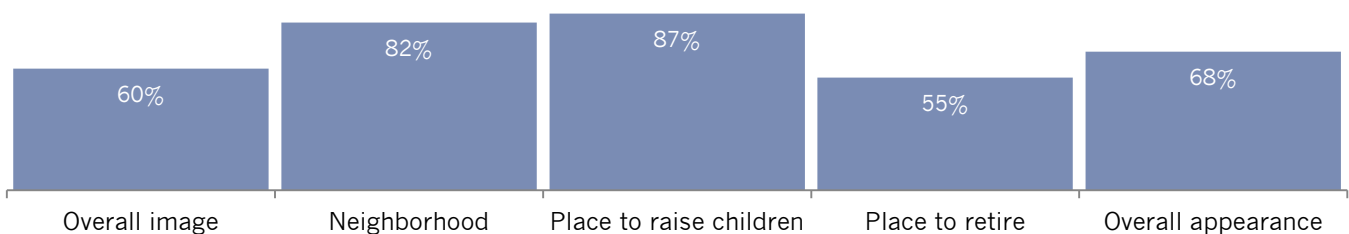


When compared to 2016, residents were more likely in 2018 to positively rate Ramsey as a place to retire, as well as employment and fitness opportunities and cultural/arts/music activities (for more information see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover).

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



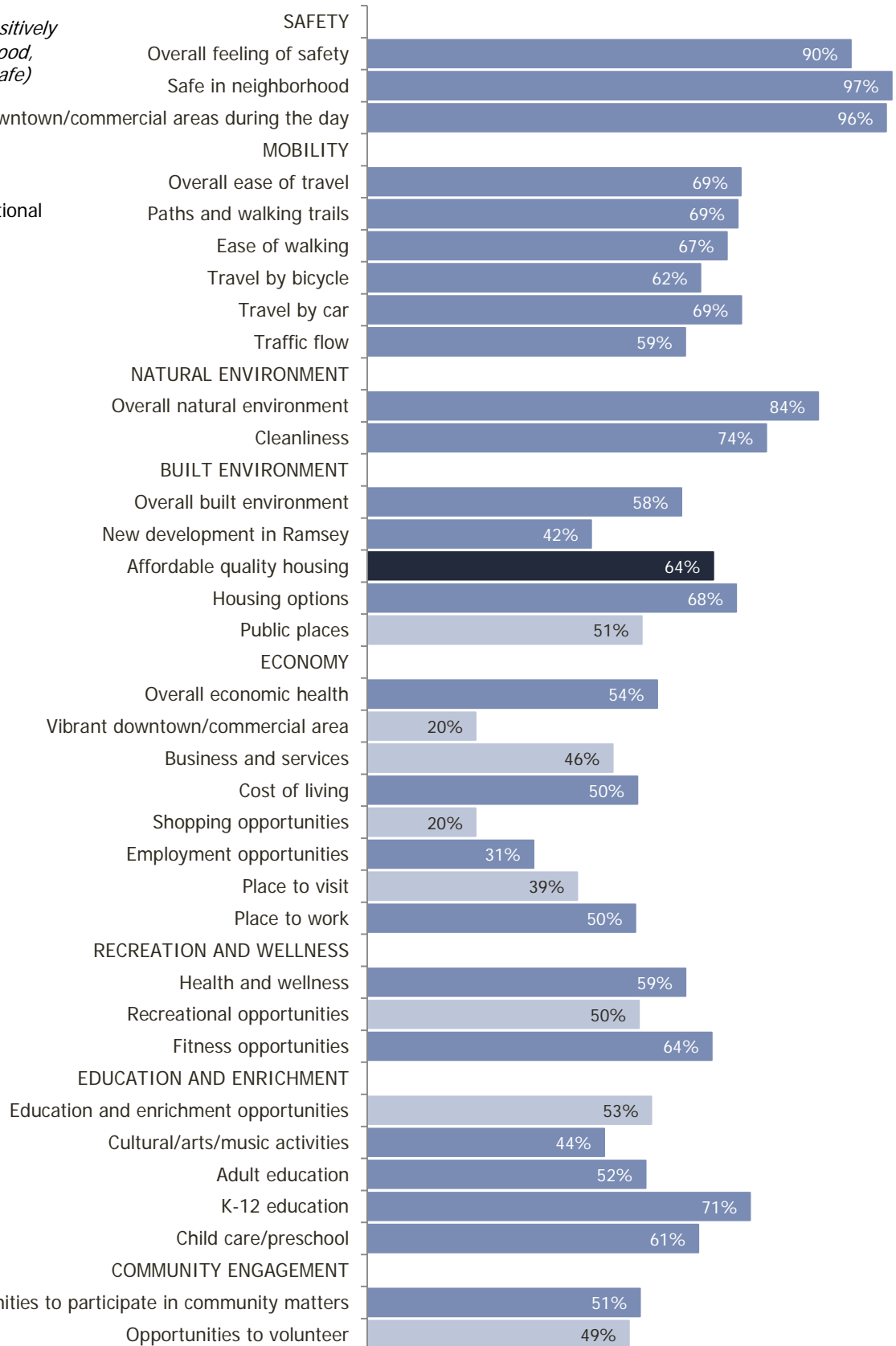
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

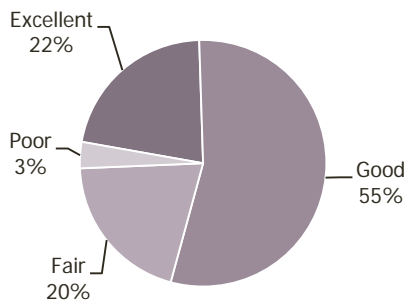
*How well does the government of Ramsey meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Ramsey as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About three-quarters of residents gave positive reviews to the overall quality of City services while about 4 in 10 favorably rated the services provided by the Federal Government; both of these evaluations were similar to those observed elsewhere across the country.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Ramsey’s leadership and governance. About 8 in 10 residents gave favorable marks to the customer service provided by the City, and roughly half were pleased with the remaining aspects of government performance. These ratings were all similar to the national benchmark and several trended up since 2016 (welcoming citizen involvement, confidence in City government, acting in the best interest of Ramsey and being honest).

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Ramsey. Most services were rated positively by a majority of respondents and were similar to ratings given in other communities. Several service evaluations improved from 2016 to 2018, including those for traffic signal timing, economic development and most aspects of Built Environment.

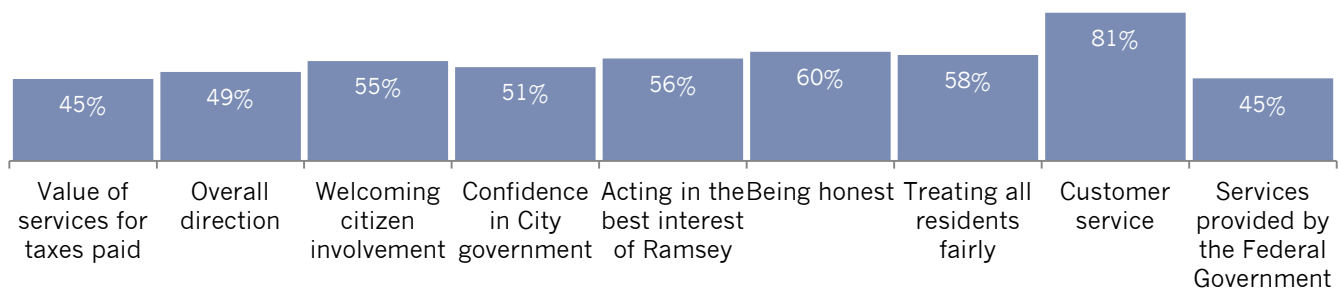
**Overall Quality of City Services**



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



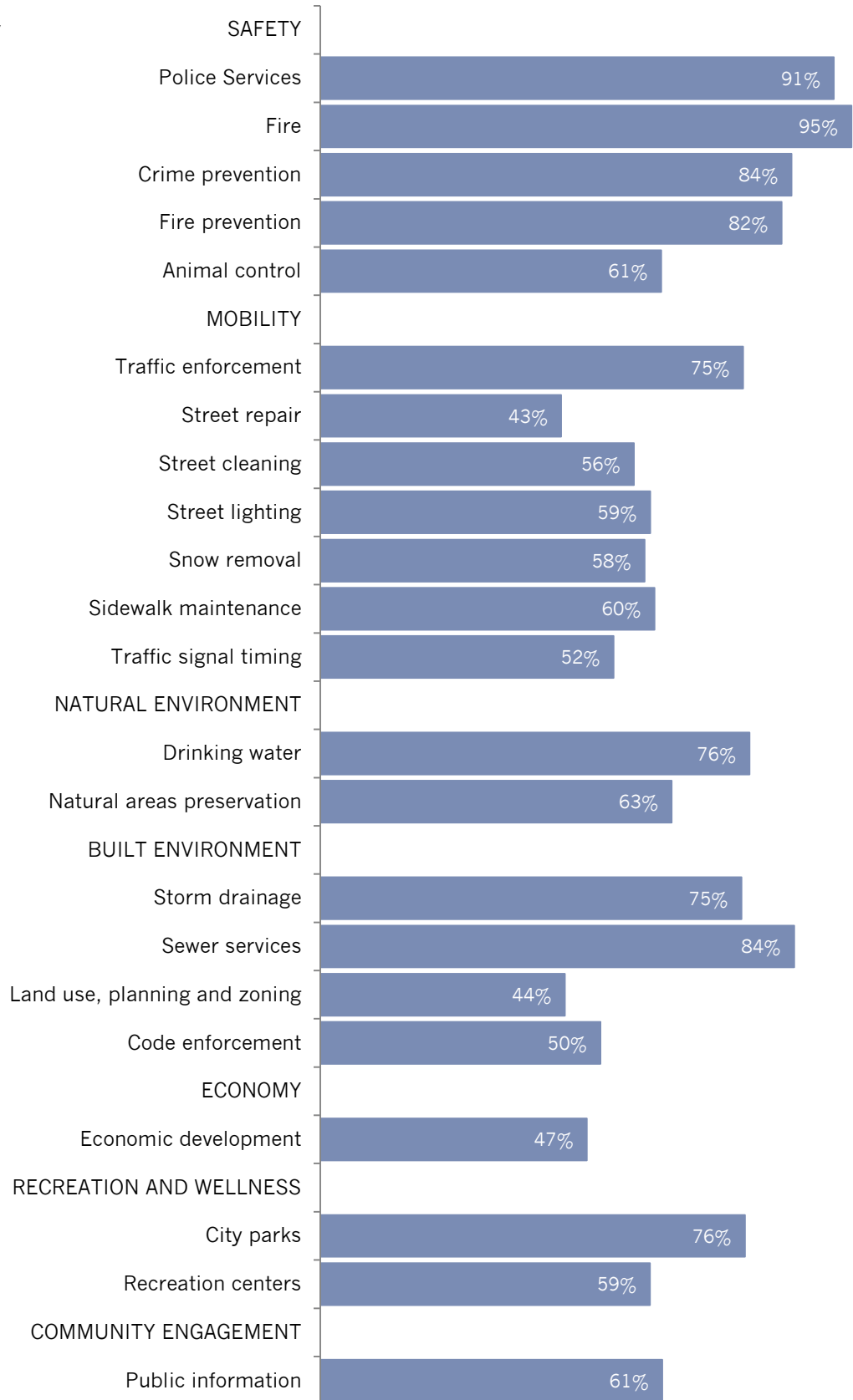
## The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

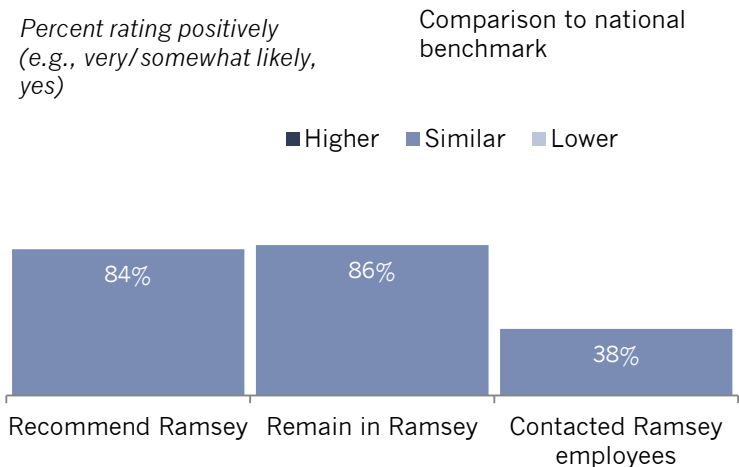
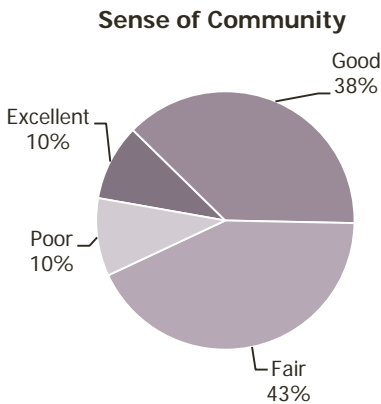


# Participation

*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. About half of residents gave excellent or good marks to the sense of community in Ramsey, which was similar to ratings seen in other communities. More than 8 in 10 residents would recommend living in Ramsey to someone who asked and planned to remain there for the next five years; these ratings were also similar to the national benchmark.

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 comparison to the benchmark (and to Ramsey's ratings over time) helpful for interpreting the results. Participation rates tended to be similar to the national benchmark for most items. However, Ramsey residents were more likely than those who lived in other communities to have recycled at home and to not feel they were under housing cost stress, but less likely to work in Ramsey, to have campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate or to have volunteered. Further, survey respondents were more likely in 2018 than in 2016 to believe the economy would positively impact their income and or to have attended a City-sponsored event.



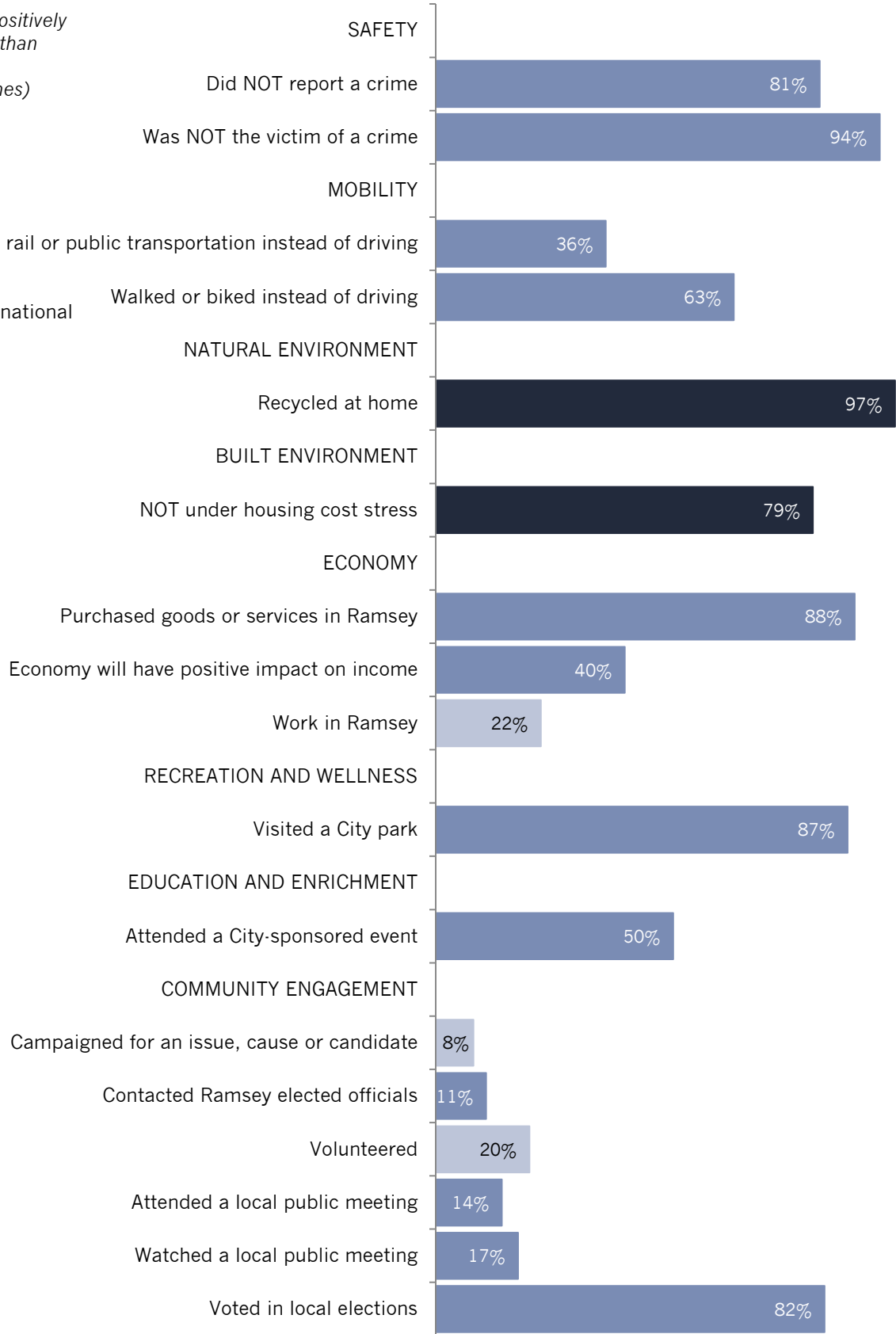
# The National Citizen Survey™

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

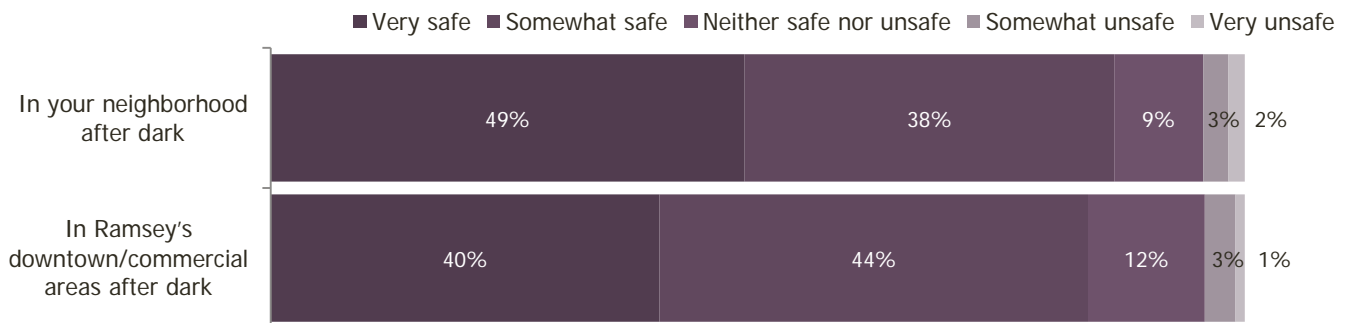


# Special Topics

The City of Ramsey included six questions of special interest on The NCS as well as several line additions to standard questions. Topic areas included sources of City information, changes to new or existing amenities, City priorities and funding options for street maintenance, among others.

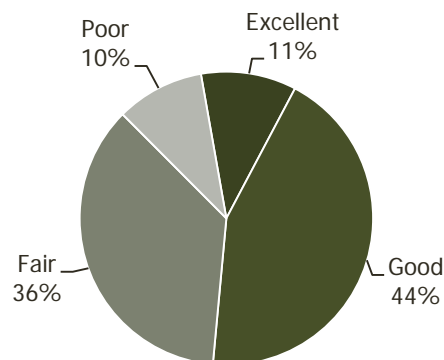
Thinking about their feelings of safety after dark, roughly 9 in 10 residents indicated that they felt safe in their neighborhoods or in Ramsey’s downtown/commercial areas after dark; very few residents felt unsafe in these areas.

Figure 4: Line Additions to Question 4  
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel:



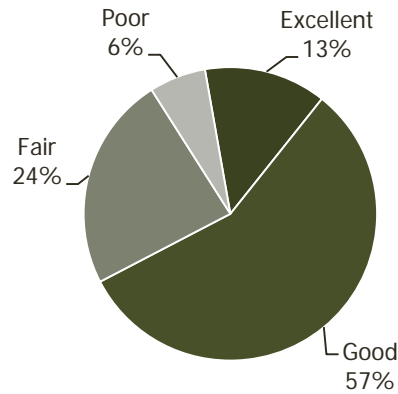
Slightly more than half of residents rated the overall condition of City maintained streets as excellent or good; about one-third thought the roads were in fair condition and 1 in 10 rated them as poor.

Figure 5: Line Addition to Question 5  
Please rate the overall condition of City maintained streets:



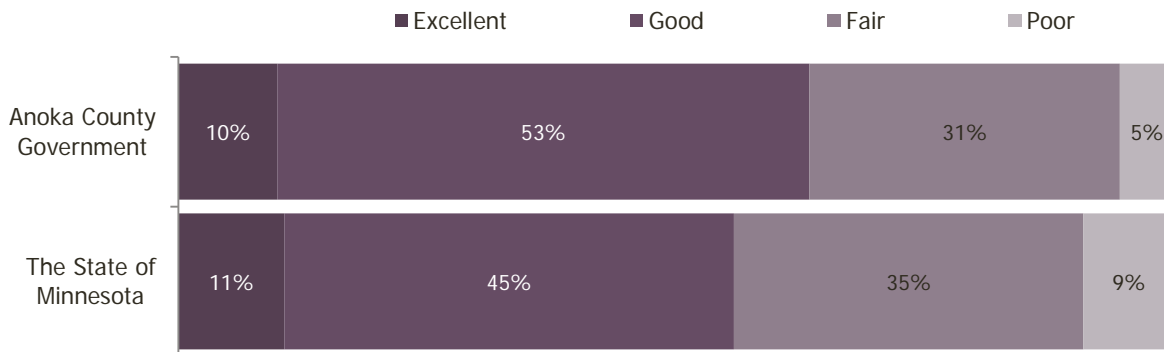
About 7 in 10 residents assessed the quality of Ramsey trail maintenance as excellent or good. About one-quarter rated the quality of the trails as fair and less than 1 in 10 thought it was poor.

Figure 6: Line Addition to Question 10  
Please rate the quality of trail maintenance in Ramsey:



Residents' sentiments toward the County and State governments were similar: about 6 in 10 thought each was excellent or good, 3 in 10 thought each was fair and 1 in 10 rated the governments as poor.

Figure 7: Line Additions to Question 11  
Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by each of the following?

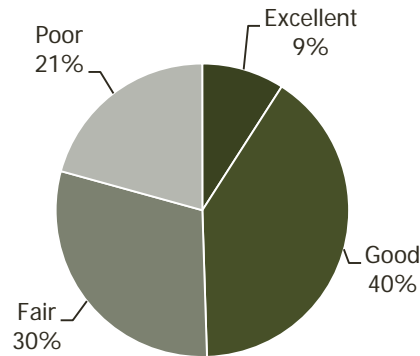


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When asked about the development and success of a Ramsey strategic plan, about half of residents thought that the Ramsey government had done an excellent or good job. Approximately 3 in 10 residents thought Ramsey had done a fair job on the plan and 2 in 10 rated it poorly.

Figure 8: Line Addition to Question 12

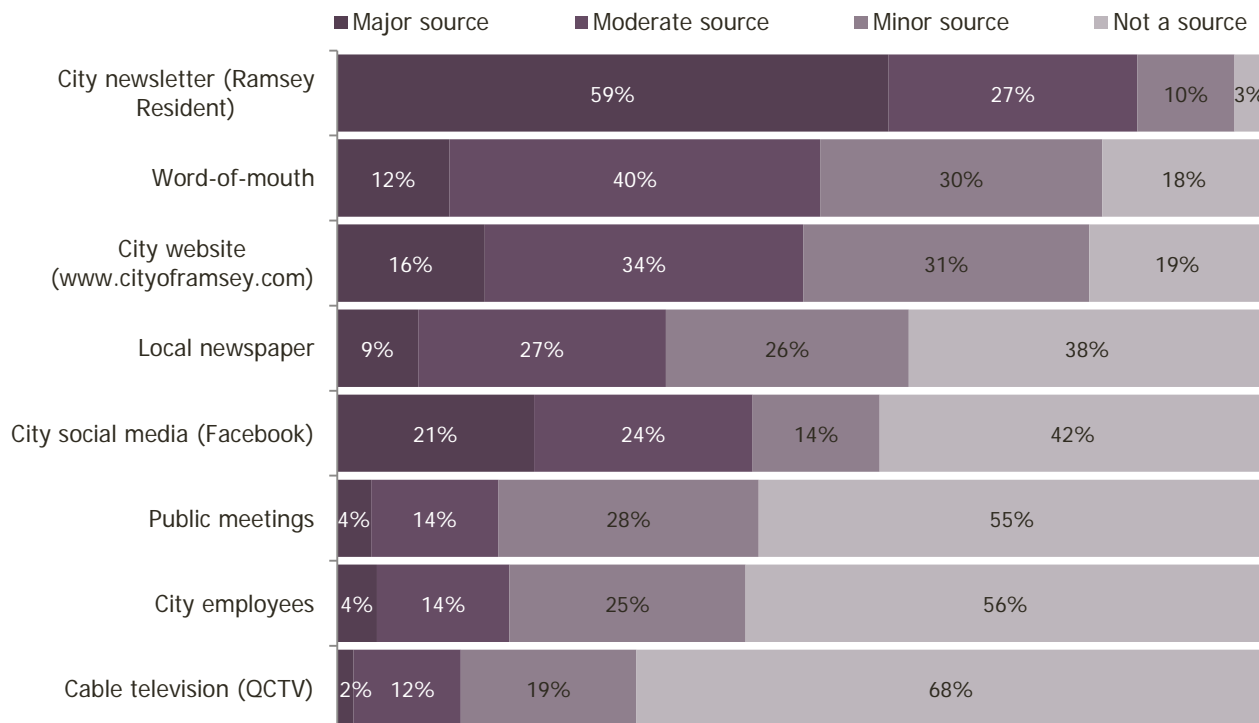
Please rate the following categories of Ramsey government performance: Development and success of a strategic action plan



Residents evaluated a list of sources of City information and indicated whether they considered each to be a major, moderate, minor or not a source of information. About 8 in 10 residents used the City newsletter as a major or moderate information source and another 1 in 10 considered it a minor source. About half of residents used word-of-mouth or the City website as major or moderate sources of information and another 3 in 10 used each of these as a minor source. The least-utilized sources of City information were public meetings, City employees and cable television; less than half of residents used any of these modes as an information source.

Figure 9: Sources of City Information

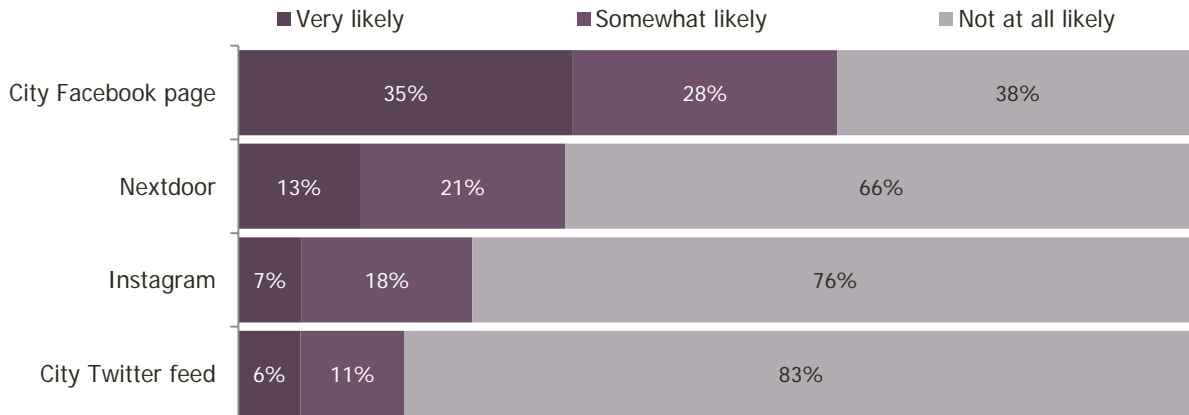
To what extent are each of the following a source of information for you about Ramsey city government and its activities?



When prompted about social media outlets, residents indicated they would be most likely to engage with the City in the future on Facebook (62% very or somewhat likely). In addition, about 4 in 10 would engage with the City on Nextdoor, one-quarter on Instagram and about 2 in 10 residents would be interested in engaging on the City Twitter feed.

Figure 10: Likelihood of Social Media Engagement

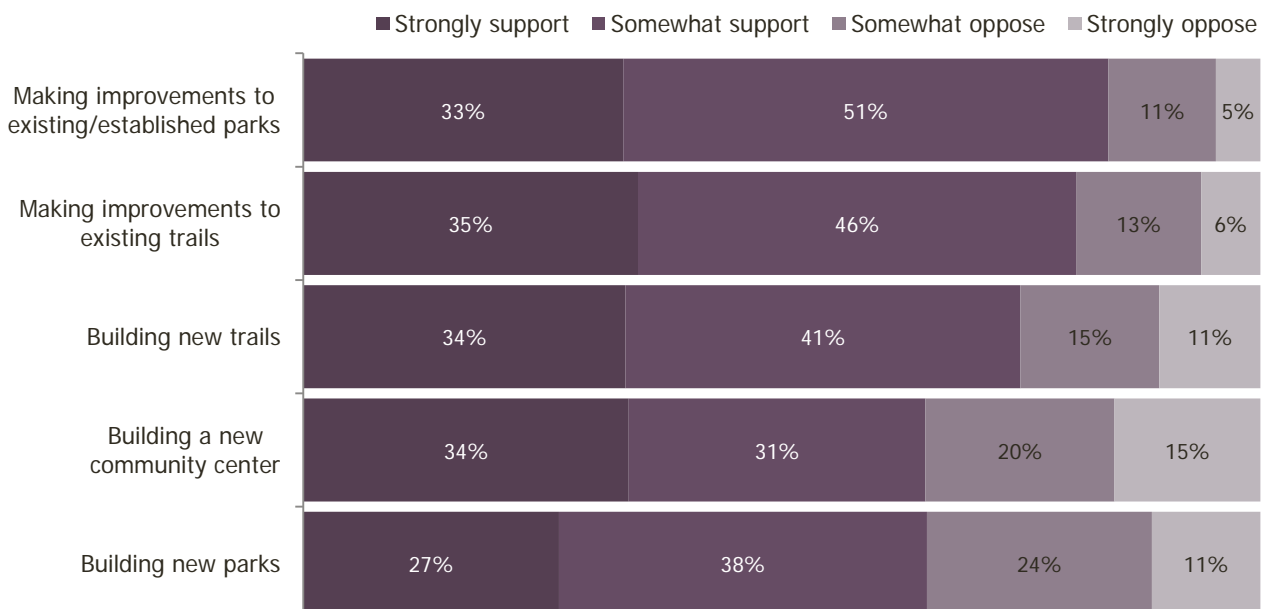
Please indicate how likely you would be, if at all, to engage with the City on the following social media platforms in the future:



Residents considered a list of City amenities and indicated the extent to which they would support or oppose the City investigating changes to each. Even though they were informed that changes to amenities could result in a tax increase, a strong majority of residents strongly or somewhat supported the City investigating each of the potential changes. Support was strongest for making improvements to existing/established parks and to existing trails as well as building new trails.

Figure 11: Support for Changes to City Amenities

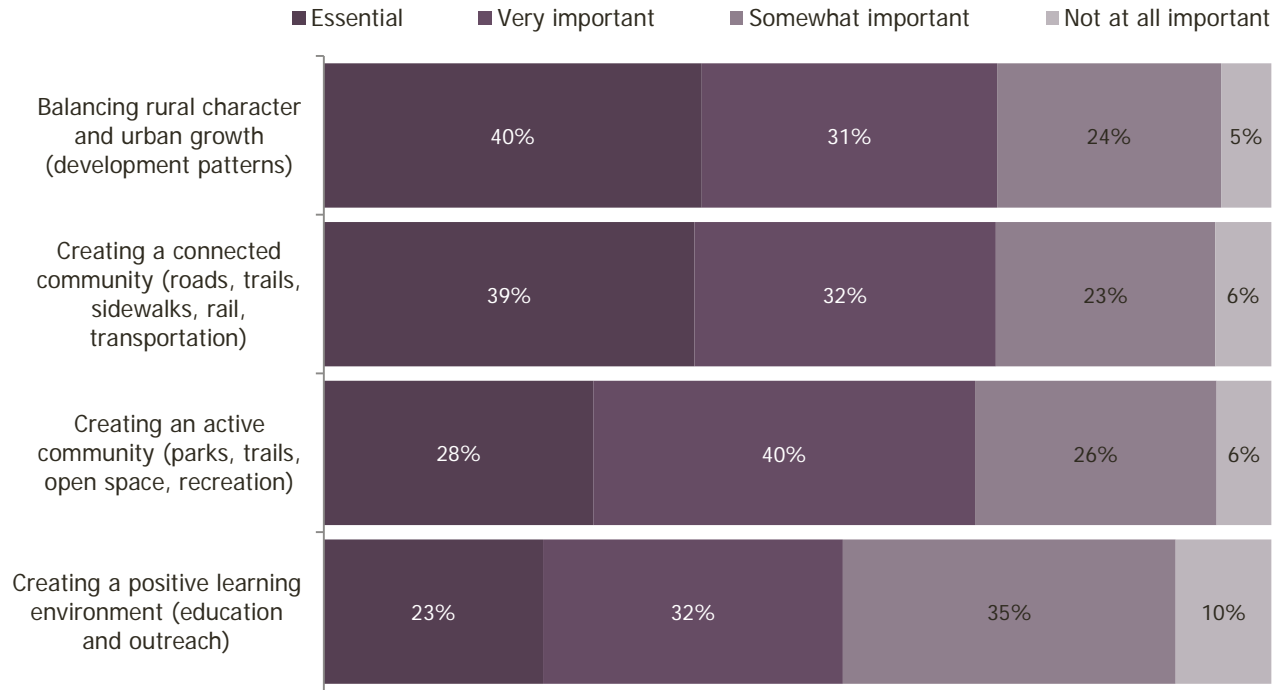
Please indicate to what extent you support or oppose the city investigating the following changes to new or existing amenities, each of which could accordingly result in an increase to the tax levy:



Thinking about the importance of four City priorities, about 7 in 10 residents thought that balancing rural character and urban growth, creating a connected community and creating an active community were each essential or very important. Creating a positive learning environment was rated as at least very important by a majority of Ramsey residents

Figure 12: Importance of City Priorities

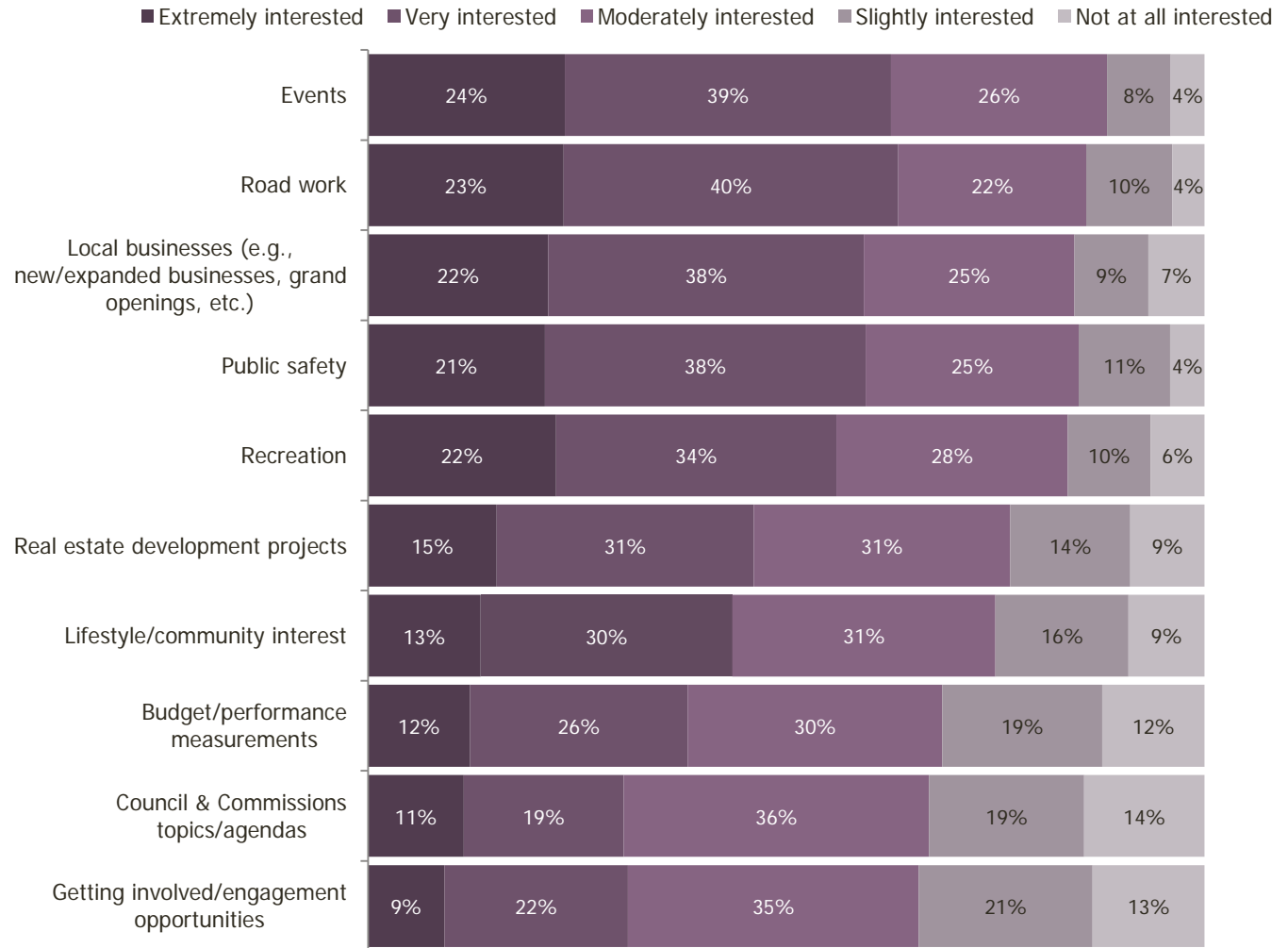
Please rate how important, if at all, you think each of the following priorities are for the City to focus on in the next five years:



Residents considered a list of news topics and indicated how interested they were in receiving information about each. About 8 in 10 residents were at least moderately interested in receiving information about events, road work, local business, public safety and recreation. Respondents were least interested in receiving information about Council and Commissions topics/agendas and getting involved/engagement opportunities; however, about 7 in 10 residents still expressed at least moderate interest in these topics.

Figure 13: Interest in City Information

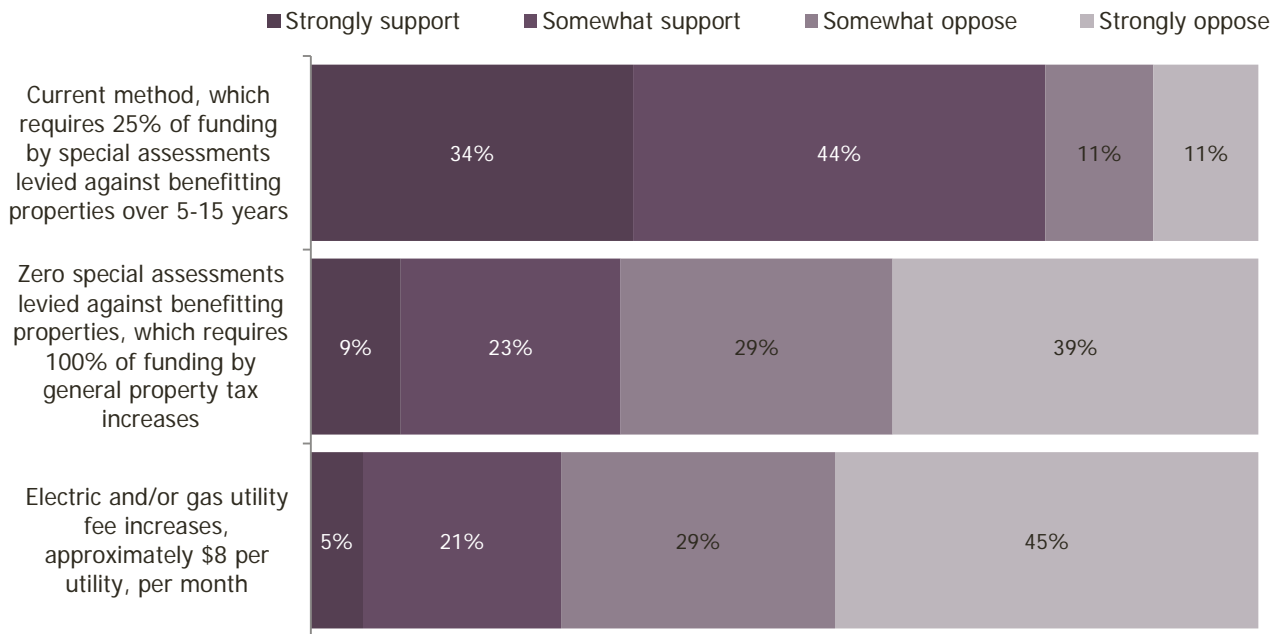
*How interested are you, if at all, in receiving information from the City about each of the following topics?*



For the final special interest question on the survey, residents indicated their level of support for three different funding options for City street maintenance. About 8 in 10 residents strongly or somewhat supported the current method of funding which requires 25% of funding by special assessments of benefitting properties. Residents indicated stronger opposition to the other two types of funding described (general property tax increases or utility fee increases).

Figure 14: Sources of Funding for City Street Maintenance

*The City employs a long-term maintenance program to cost-effectively maintain all 175-plus miles of City streets. Currently, street reconstruction projects are funded 25% by special assessments levied against benefitting properties, and 75% by street reconstruction bonds, which are paid back using general property taxes. The City periodically evaluates funding sources for this on-going program. Please indicate the extent to which you would support or oppose the following funding sources:*



# Conclusions

## Resident satisfaction with City services and government performance is on the upswing.

When presented with a series of questions about leadership and governance in Ramsey, about 8 in 10 residents gave favorable marks to the customer service provided by the City, and roughly half were pleased with items related to local government performance, including the value of services for taxes paid, the overall direction of the City and the job Ramsey government does at welcoming citizen involvement. These ratings were all similar to the national benchmark. Most notably, ratings for welcoming citizen involvement, overall confidence in City government, government acting in the best interest of Ramsey and being honest improved since 2016, demonstrating a positive increase in public trust. Further, ratings for select City services, such as traffic signal timing, land use, planning and zoning, and code enforcement also increased since the last survey iteration, and no services declined in ratings during that time.

## The Economy continues to be a priority for residents.

As in 2016, residents indicated that the facet of Economy would be an important focus area for the City to address in the next two years. About half of residents gave favorable marks to the overall economic health of Ramsey, cost of living, the city as a place to work and economic development and these ratings were all similar to those given elsewhere. Further, resident sentiment toward employment opportunities and economic development improved since 2016, and more residents in 2018 believed that the economy would have a positive impact on their income in the next six months. Also, about 8 in 10 residents were quite interested in receiving information from the City about local business (e.g., new/expanded businesses, grand openings, etc.).

However, ratings for vibrant downtown area, overall quality of business and service establishments, shopping opportunities and Ramsey as a place to visit were lower than those seen in other communities across the country. While these ratings might be indicative of community support for greater economic development, it is important to note that balancing rural character and urban growth was identified as a key priority for the City in the upcoming five years.

## Residents support improvements to Mobility.

About 6 in 10 residents or more gave positive ratings to most aspects of Mobility, including overall ease of travel, ease of travel by car, availability of paths and walking trails and traffic enforcement; these ratings were all similar to those given in other communities across the nation.

Road maintenance was important to residents with nearly 85% of respondents reporting they were interested in receiving information from the City about road work; the only type of information of greater interest related to community events. When asked about street maintenance funding, about 8 in 10 residents supported the current method of funding for City street maintenance, which requires 25% of funding by special assessments of benefitting properties.

Finally, connectivity is a priority for Ramsey residents. Seven in 10 residents thought that creating a connected community (roads, trails, sidewalks, rail, and transportation) was essential or very important to the future of the community. Further, when asked to consider a number of community enhancements (with a potential for a tax increase), a strong majority of residents supported the City making improvements to existing trails as well as building new trails.