

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Carlton, IA

Sample Community Livability Report

2015



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About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Carlton. 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) and across eight central facets of community (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement).

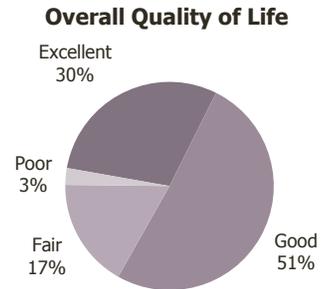
The *Community Livability Report* provides the opinions of a representative sample of 1,200 residents of the City of Carlton. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% for the entire sample (382 completed surveys). The methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Carlton

Most residents rated the quality of life in Carlton as “excellent” or “good,” which was similar to ratings in other communities across the U.S.

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.

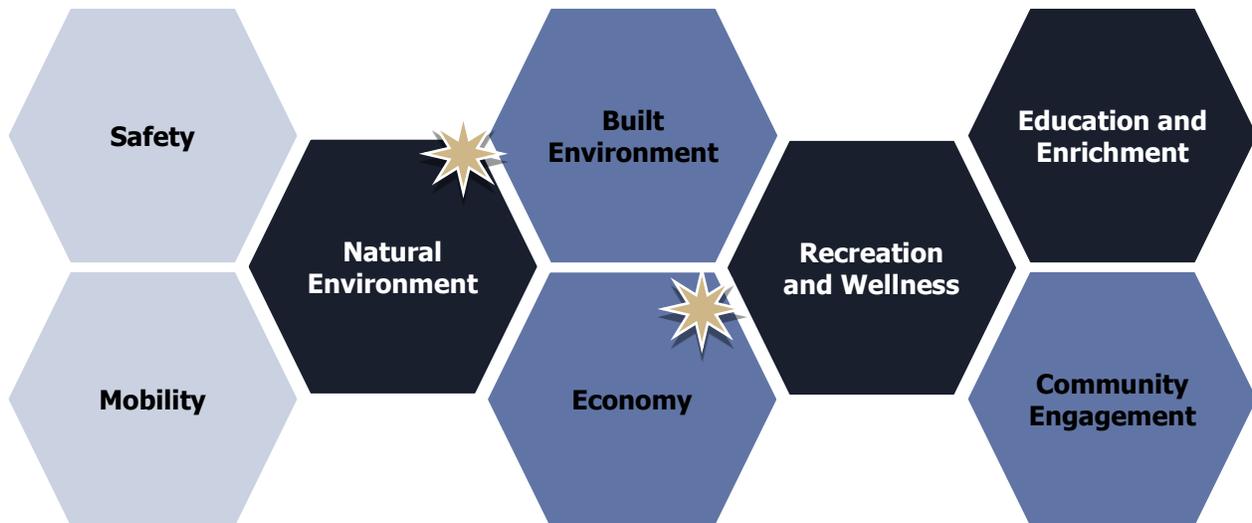


In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important to residents’ overall quality of life. Residents identified these facets of community life, Natural Environment and Economy, as the most central to what makes Carlton their home. It is noteworthy that Carlton residents gave favorable ratings to most aspects of livability, especially in the areas of Safety and Recreation and Wellness. 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 Carlton’s unique questions.

Legend

- Higher than national benchmark
- Similar to national benchmark
- Lower than national benchmark
- Benchmark comparison not available
- ★ Most important to quality of life



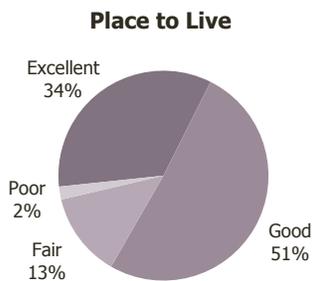
Community Characteristics

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 Carlton, 80% of residents rated their overall quality of life as “excellent” or “good” while only 3% of respondents felt they had a “poor” quality of life. Respondents’ ratings of quality of life in Carlton were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

In addition to rating their overall quality of life, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Carlton as a place to live, raise children and retire, as well as their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Carlton and its overall appearance. Carlton as a place to live was rated the most positively with 85% of respondents rating this aspect of the community as “excellent” or “good;” these ratings were similar to other communities in the U.S. While slightly fewer respondents in Carlton rated the overall image or reputation of Carlton and the overall appearance of Carlton positively (about 70% “excellent” or “good”), these aspects of the community were higher in Carlton than in other communities across the nation.

Delving deeper into Community Quality, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight dimensions of Community Livability. Carlton performed strongly in the areas of the Natural Environment and Education and Enrichment. For example, aspects of the Natural Environment (including the overall natural environment, air quality and cleanliness) were rated as “excellent” or “good” by at least 7 in 10 respondents and all three aspects received ratings higher than the national benchmark.



Challenges for Carlton may lie in the areas of Safety and the Built Environment. About two-thirds of respondents rated the overall feeling of safety in Carlton as “excellent” or “good,” which was lower than the national benchmark. While the majority of respondents felt “very” or “somewhat” safe in their neighborhood (78%), these ratings were lower in Carlton than in other communities in the U.S.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower □ Not available



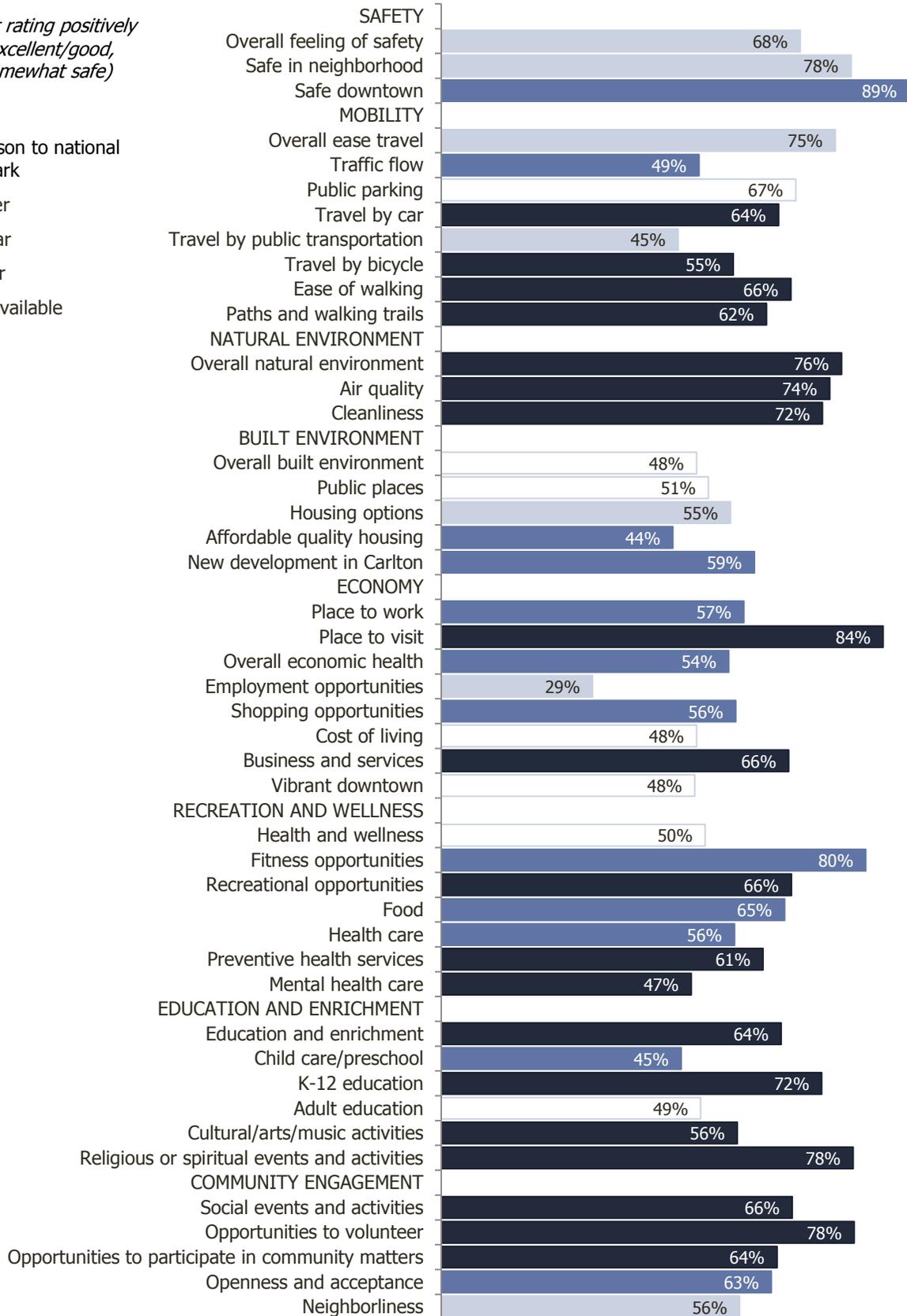
The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available



Governance

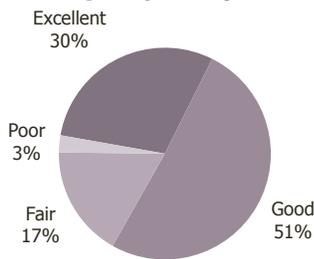
How well does the government of Carlton meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of services provided by Carlton as well as the manner in which these services are provided are key components of how residents rate their quality of life. About 8 in 10 survey respondents rated the overall quality of services provided by Carlton as “excellent” or “good” (about half as many felt this way about the services provided by the federal government). Ratings for the services provided by Carlton were higher than the benchmark when compared to other communities in the U.S.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Carlton’s leadership and governance. Overall, about half of respondents felt the City did an “excellent” or “good” job of welcoming citizen involvement, acting in the best interest of Carlton and treating all residents fairly. While about 60% of respondents were pleased with the overall direction of Carlton, fewer (51%) had confidence in the government of Carlton. About 8 in 10 survey respondents felt City employees provided “excellent” or “good” customer service, a rating that was higher in Carlton when compared to its national peers.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Carlton. Carlton performed well in the areas of Safety, Natural Environment and Recreation and Wellness. Of the seven Safety services rated, six were rated higher the national benchmark: fire, ambulance/EMS, police, fire prevention, crime prevention and emergency preparedness. Ratings for services related to the Natural Environment faired similarly well and all four Recreation and Wellness services were rated higher in Carlton when compared to other communities across the nation.

Overall Quality of City Services

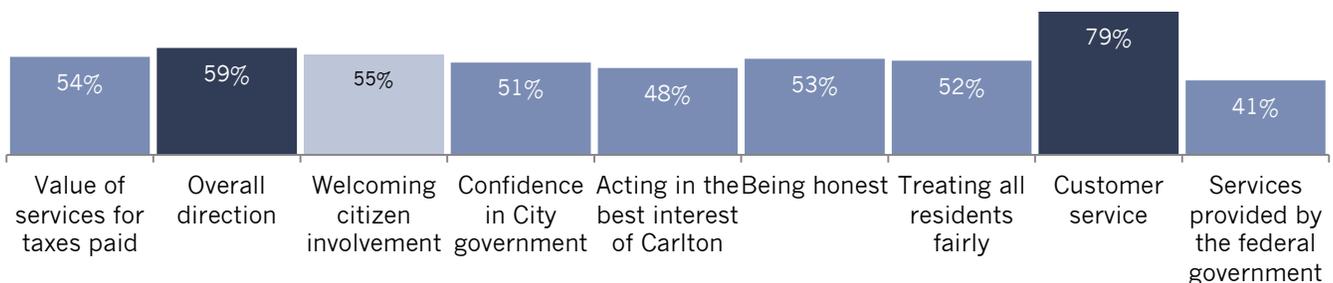


Carlton may face some challenges in the areas of Mobility and the Built Environment. Overall, ratings for Mobility and Built Environment tended to be rated lower when compared to other services provided by the City; between half to three-quarters of respondents rated these services as “excellent” or “good.”

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower □ Not available



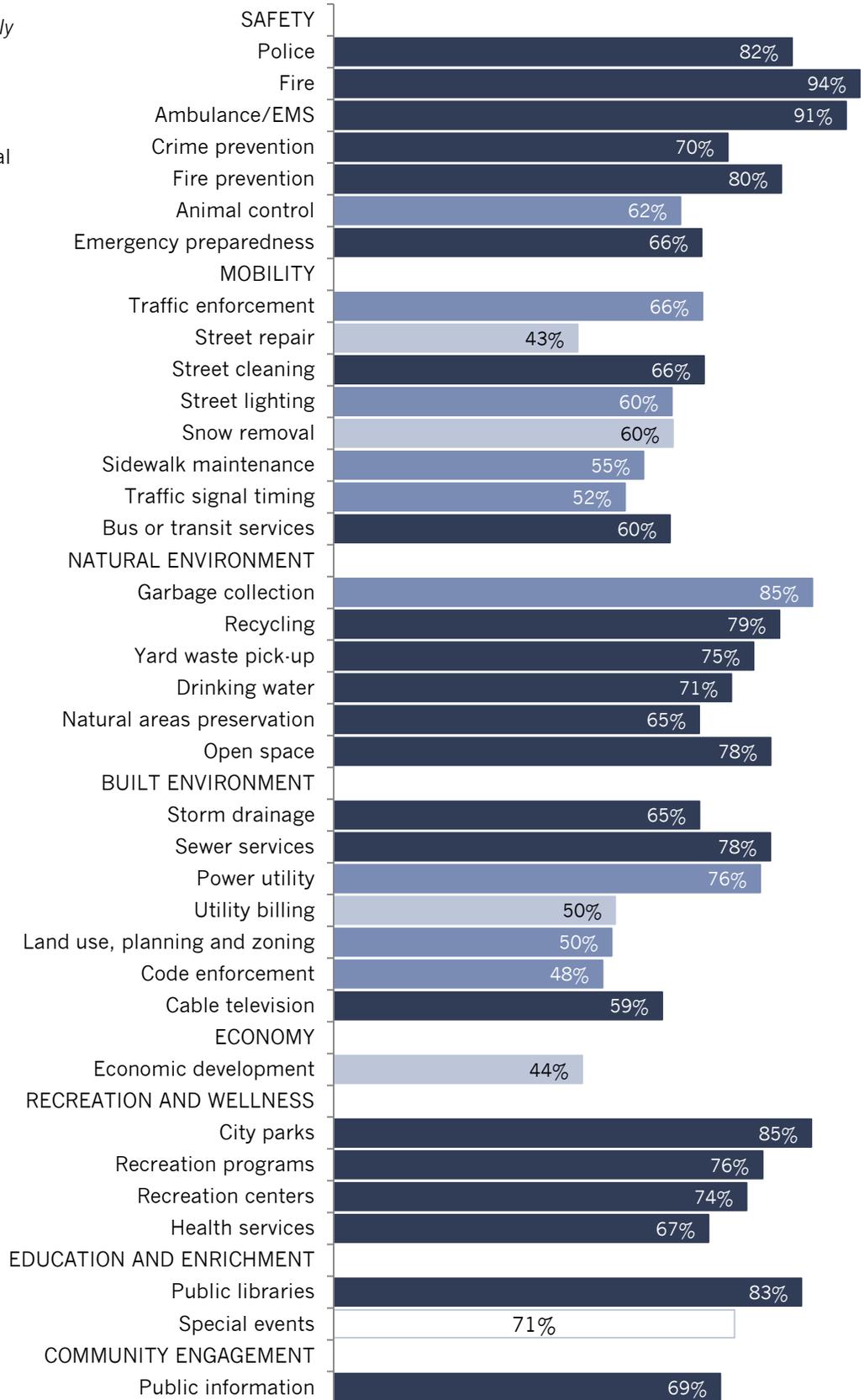
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available



Participation

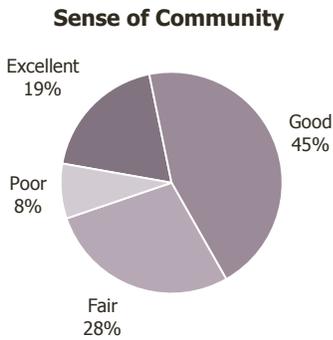
Are the residents of Carlton connected to the community and each other?

The sense of community in Carlton was similar to other communities across the nation with about two-thirds of survey respondents rating it as “excellent” or “good.” About three-quarters of respondents were “very” or “somewhat” likely to recommend living in Carlton to someone who asks (similar to the national benchmark) and to remain in Carlton for the next five years (higher than the national benchmark). Also, about half of respondents had reached out to the City for help or information, a proportion that was lower in Carlton than in its national peers.

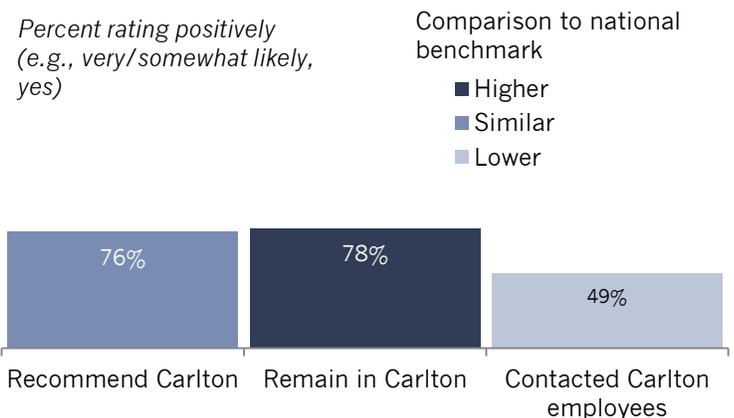
The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors that respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Overall, for the 18 activities for which benchmark comparisons were available, Carlton residents tended to participate in these various activities at rates similar to or lower than residents in other communities across the country.

In the area of Community Engagement, about one-quarter of respondents had attended or watched a local public meeting, a proportion that was higher in Carlton than in other communities. However, fewer respondents in Carlton than in other U.S. communities had participated in other Community Engagement activities such as volunteering, talking with neighbors or voting in local elections.

While the proportion of residents who had visited a City park was similar to that of other communities (about 30%), compared to the national benchmark fewer residents in Carlton took advantage of other Recreation and Wellness activities such as using recreation centers (15% of respondents) or public libraries (21%). The percent of Carlton residents who reported themselves as being in “excellent” or “very good” health (69%) was similar to the national benchmark.



Survey respondents exhibited lower than average engagement in the area of the Natural Environment. Less than 6 in 10 respondents “sometimes” or “always” recycled at home, a rate that was lower in Carlton than in other communities across the nation. About one-third of respondents had conserved water or made their homes more energy efficient in the past 12 months; benchmark comparisons for these two activities were not available.



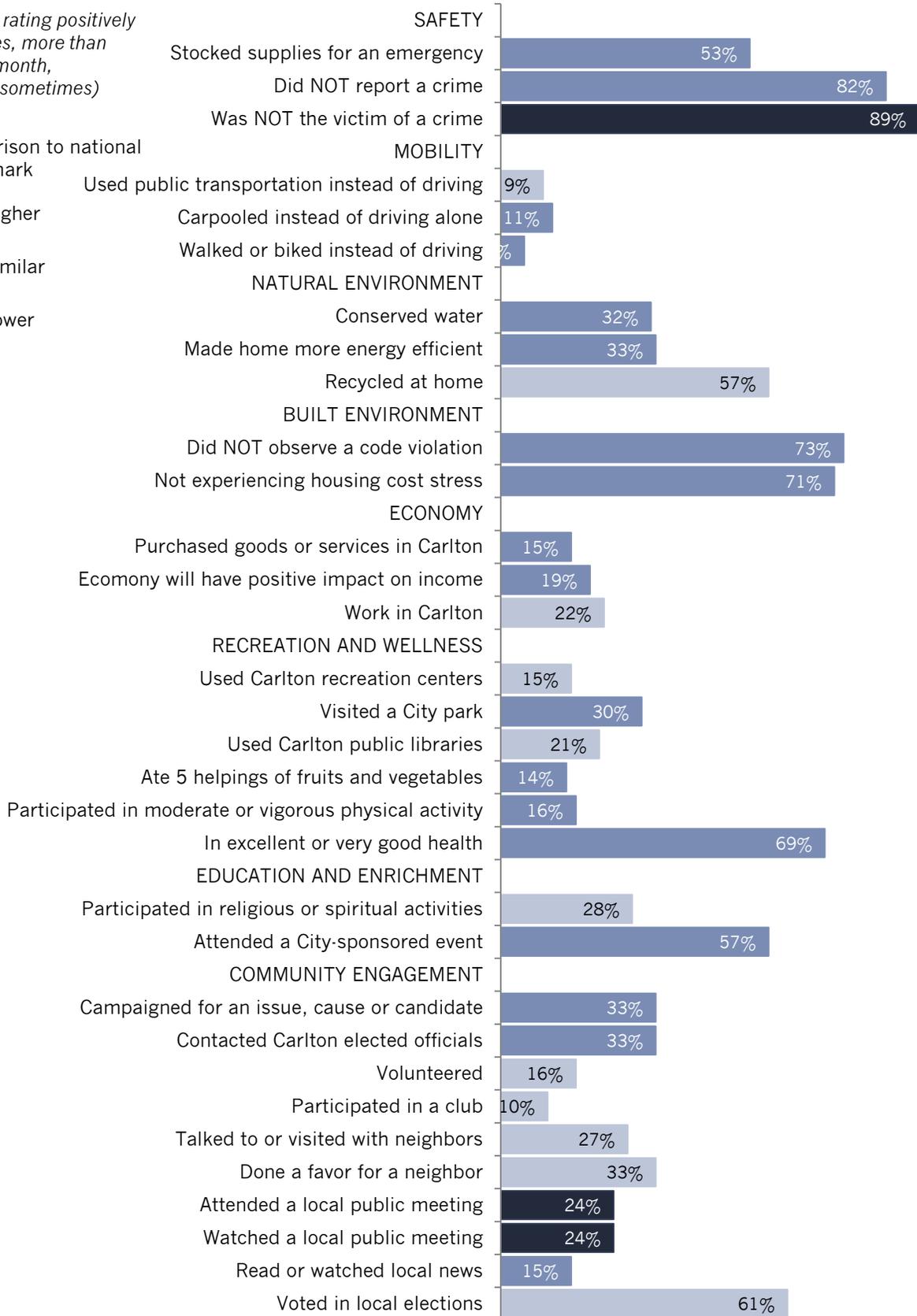
The National Citizen Survey™

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

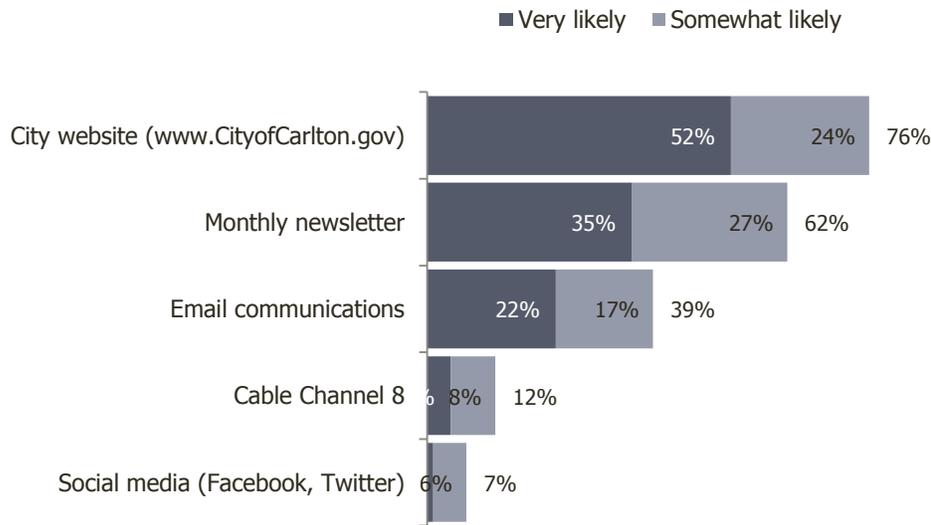


Special Topics

The City of Carlton included a question of special interest on The NCS. The City was interested in knowing which information sources residents would be the most likely to use. Overall, residents expressed strong preferences for the City’s website and monthly newsletter, while few would use social media to find information about the City.

Figure 4: Question 13a

How likely or unlikely are you to use each of the following sources to find information about the City, its services, programs and events?



Conclusions

The Natural Environment is an asset of Carlton.

The overall natural environment, air quality and cleanliness of Carlton were rated as “excellent” or “good” by at least 7 in 10 respondents and all three aspects received ratings higher than the national benchmark. Between 65% and 85% of respondents rated recycling, open space, yard waste pick-up, drinking water and preservation of natural areas as “excellent” or “good” and all were higher than the national benchmark. However, less than 6 in 10 respondents “sometimes” or “always” recycled at home, a rate that was lower in Carlton than in other communities across the nation, and only one-third of respondents had conserved water or made their homes more energy efficient in the past 12 months.

Despite excellent Safety services and low crime victimization, residents do not feel safe.

Of the seven Safety services rated, six were rated higher the national benchmark: fire, ambulance/EMS, police, fire prevention, crime prevention and emergency preparedness. About 1 in 10 respondents had been the victim of a crime (which was lower in Carlton when compared to other communities) and 82% had reported a crime to police (which was similar in Carlton when compared to other communities). While the majority of respondents felt “very” or “somewhat” safe in their neighborhood (78%), this rating was lower in Carlton than in other communities in the U.S. The overall feeling of safety was rated as “excellent” or “good” by 68% of respondents and was lower than the national benchmark.

Residents appreciate Carlton’s great Community Engagement opportunities.

Social events and activities, opportunities to volunteer and opportunities to participate in community matters received ratings higher than the national benchmark, as did the City’s public information services. While higher proportions of residents in Carlton reported having attended or watched a local public meeting when compared to other communities across the country, fewer had volunteered, participated in a club, or voted in local elections. Both the sense of community and the openness and acceptance of people of diverse backgrounds were rated similar to the national benchmark. Compared to other communities in the U.S., Carlton residents were less likely to have talked or visited with neighbors or done a favor for a neighbor; this may account for the neighborliness of Carlton as being rated lower in Carlton than in other communities.