

**THE NBS**<sup>™</sup>  
The National Business Survey<sup>™</sup>

**Carlton, IA**

Business Climate Report

2015



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SAMPLE

# About

The National Business Survey™ (The NBS) report is about the business climate of Carlton and provides guidance about community characteristics and services that support local businesses.

Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NBS captures business owners' and managers' opinions across eight central facets of community livability (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement).

The Business Climate Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 425 business owners and managers of the City of Carlton. 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.



SAMPLE

# Highlights

## **Carlton business owners and managers feel positive about the community as a place to live and conduct business.**

More than 8 in 10 survey respondents rated Carlton as an excellent or good place to live, and a similar number positively rated Carlton as a place to do business, both of which were ratings similar to those given in other communities. About 83% of Carlton business owners and managers gave favorable ratings to Carlton as a place to work; also, about three-quarters thought it was an excellent or good place to retire, which was a rating higher than the national comparison. Around 8 in 10 respondents positively rated the overall appearance of Carlton and nearly 7 in 10 rated Carlton's overall image favorably. Further, about 81% of business owners and managers would recommend operating a business in Carlton to others (a rating higher than the national benchmark) and around 9 in 10 plan to keep their business in Carlton for the next five years. About 4 in 10 Carlton business owners indicated that they plan to hire in the next 6 to 12 months.

## **Mobility is important to Carlton business owners, and ratings for Mobility were generally strong.**

Business owners indicated that Mobility will be an important area for the City to focus on in the next two years. Where comparisons were available, ratings for aspects of Mobility tended to be positive and higher than ratings given in other communities. At least two-thirds of business owners and managers gave positive ratings to traffic flow, amount of public parking in Carlton, street repair and travel by car, by public transportation and by bicycle; all of these aspects were rated higher than the national benchmark. Other services related to Mobility, such as traffic enforcement, street cleaning, sidewalk maintenance and snow removal, were also rated positively by at least 7 in 10 survey respondents and received ratings similar to those given in other communities.

## **Economy is also important to respondents and ratings were similar to those given in other communities.**

Economy was also a key focus area for the business community, and ratings for aspects of Economy tended to be positive and similar to the national benchmark. At least 6 in 10 survey respondents positively rated the overall economic health of Carlton, shopping opportunities and the overall quality of business establishments; these aspects all received ratings similar to ratings given in other communities. Ratings for employment opportunities were especially strong, with virtually all business owners providing a rating of excellent or good (a rate higher than the benchmark). Two-thirds of respondents indicated that they thought the leaders of Carlton do an excellent or good job at retaining existing business, and about three-quarters positively rated the job Carlton government does at attracting new businesses and supporting or creating new jobs.

## **Safety may be an area of opportunity for the City in the future.**

Where comparisons were available, ratings for aspects of Safety in Carlton tended to be lower than those given in comparison communities. More than 8 in 10 business owners rated the overall feeling of Safety in Carlton as excellent or good, but only 6 in 10 reported feeling safe in Carlton's commercial areas during the day and less than half felt safe in the commercial areas at night. Also, about 6 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to police services, fire services and crime prevention in Carlton; all of these ratings were lower than the national benchmark. As such, City staff may want to consider focusing on improving Safety ratings in the future.

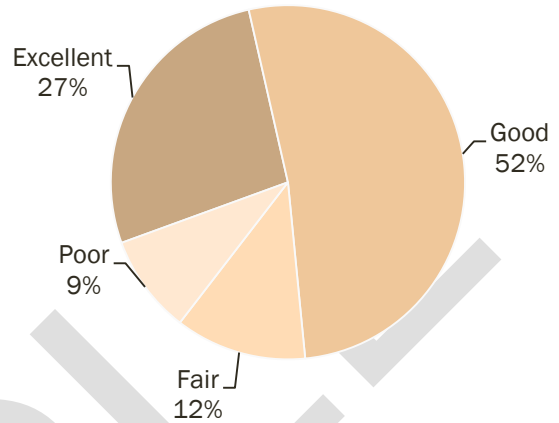
# Doing Business in Carlton

Knowing where to focus resources to establish or preserve a thriving business climate requires information that targets features that are most important to the business community. Overall, about three-quarters of business owners rated Carlton as a place to do business as excellent or good. This rating was similar to ratings in comparison communities (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

Business owners rated eight facets of community (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement) in two dimensions on the survey, first by their overall quality and then how important each was for the City to focus on in the next two years. The chart below summarizes these ratings by showing how each facet's quality compared to the benchmark; stars indicate the areas deemed most important for Carlton's efforts in the future.

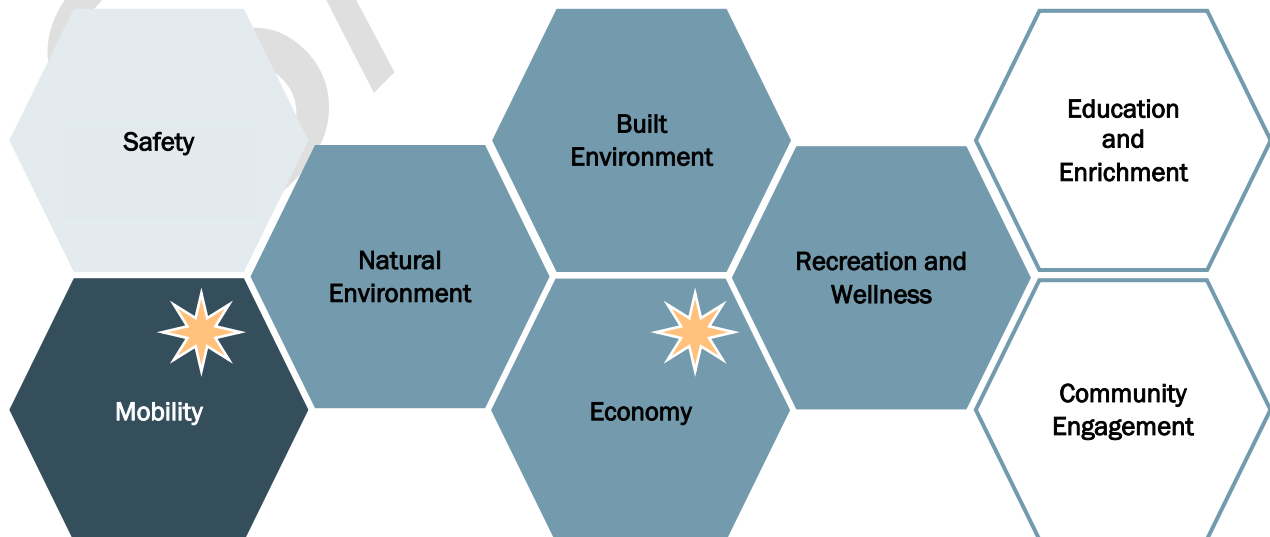
Business owners identified Mobility and Economy as priorities for the Carlton community in the coming two years. Ratings for Mobility were strong and higher than the national benchmark, while ratings for Economy were similar to the benchmark. Ratings for Safety were lower than in ratings given in other communities. Where comparisons were available, the remaining facets of community all received ratings similar to the benchmark. This overview of the key aspects of community quality provides a quick summary of where businesses 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.

Place to do business



**Legend**

- Higher than benchmark
- Similar to benchmark
- Lower than benchmark
- Benchmark not available
- ★ Most important



# Community Characteristics

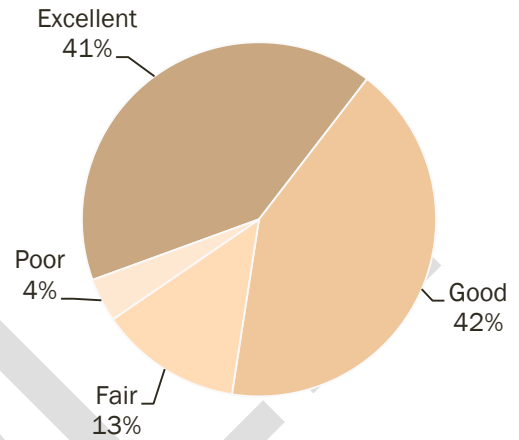
Overall quality of community life represents the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. How the business community views the overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. In the case of Carlton, about four in five respondents felt the City had an excellent or good quality of life. Respondents' ratings of quality of life were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the City as a place to live, business owners and managers rated several aspects of community quality including Carlton as a place to work, to retire and to visit, the overall image or reputation of Carlton and its overall appearance. More than 8 in 10 respondents rated Carlton's overall appearance as excellent or good, and three-quarters of respondents thought Carlton was an excellent or good place to retire. About 7 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to Carlton as a place to work and the overall image of Carlton, and about half rated favorably Carlton as a place to visit. Where benchmark comparisons were available, ratings for these aspects varied.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 25 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. At least 6 in 10 business owners and managers gave positive ratings to all aspects of Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement. Ratings for Safety varied: while more than 8 in 10 respondents rated the overall feeling of Safety in Carlton positively, about 6 in 10 reported feeling safe in Carlton's downtown area during the day and less than half felt safe in the downtown area at night.

When benchmark comparisons were available, ratings for aspects of the community tended to be higher than or similar to ratings given in communities across the nation. This was especially true within the facet of Mobility, where ratings for traffic flow, amount of public parking and ease of travel by car, by public transportation and by bicycle all received ratings higher than those given in comparison communities. Within the facet of Economy, employment opportunities were rated positively by almost all respondents and were rated higher than the benchmark.

Overall quality of life



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

Comparison to benchmark

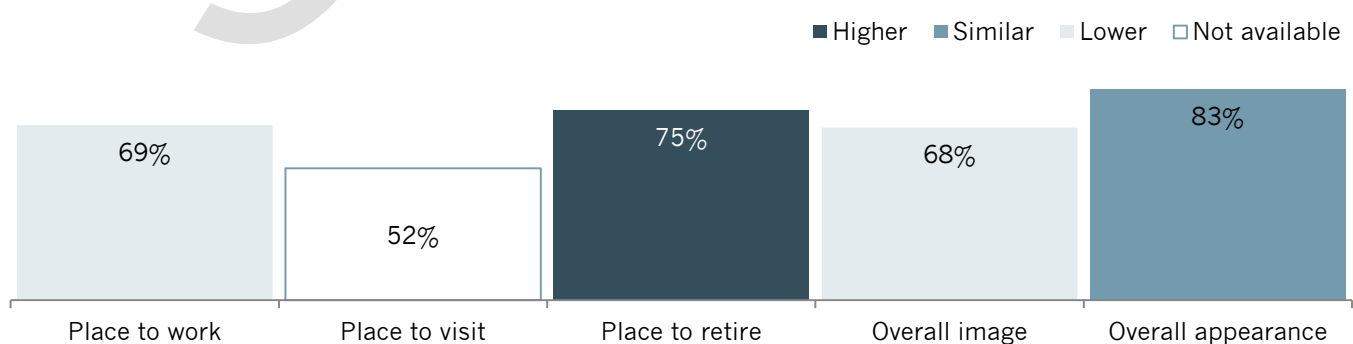
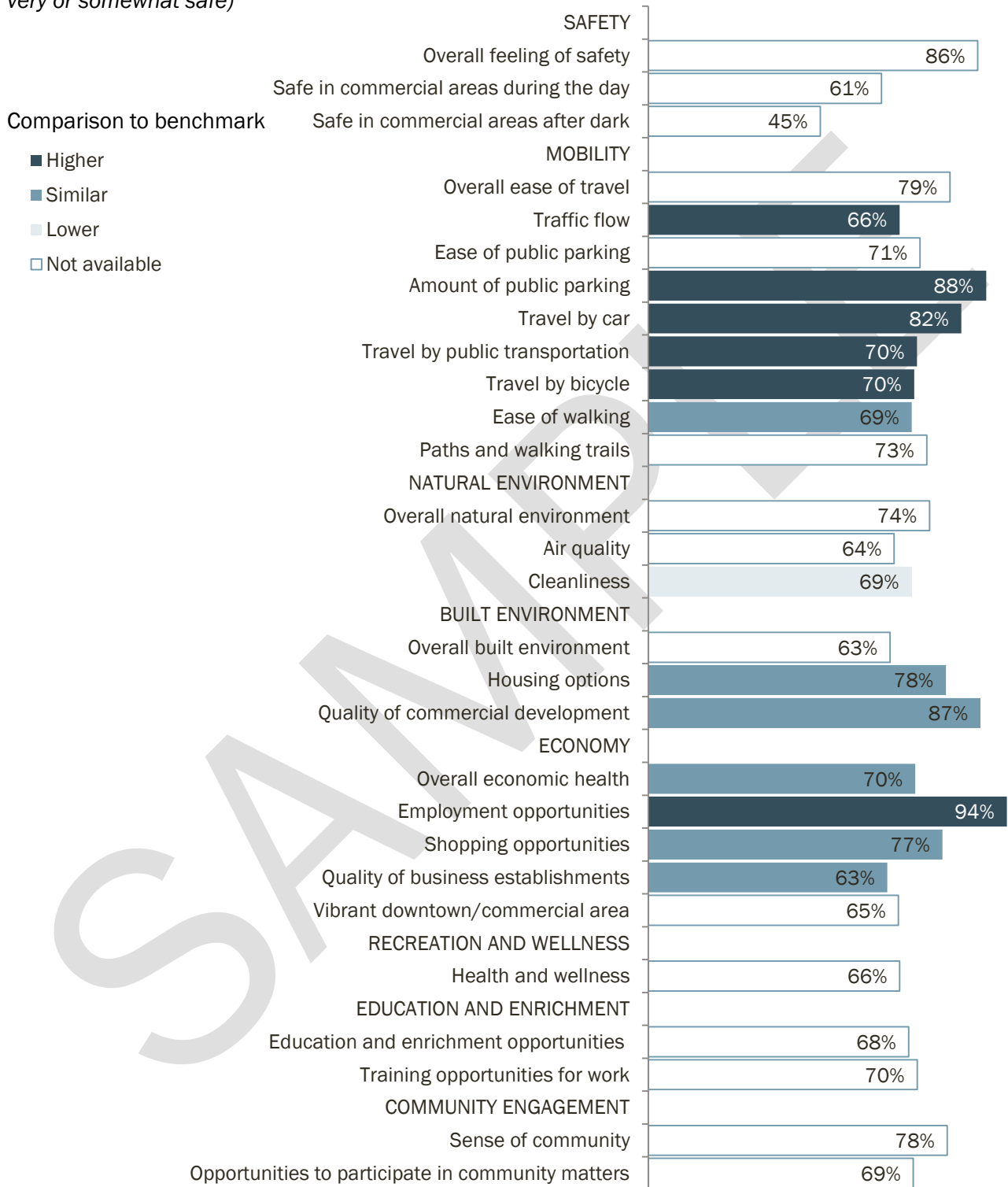


Figure 1: Aspects of the Community

Percent positive (e.g., excellent or good, very or somewhat safe)

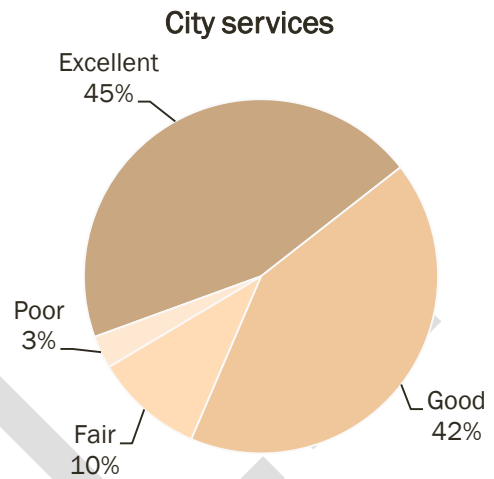


# Governance

The overall quality of the services provided by Carlton as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how the business community rates the quality of life and the City as a place to do business. In Carlton, most business owners and managers gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of city services while about half gave positive ratings to the quality of services provided by the Federal Government. Both of these ratings were similar to ratings given in comparison communities.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Carlton's leadership and governance. When comparisons to the national benchmark were available, ratings in Carlton varied. At least 7 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to most of these aspects, two of which (the value of services for taxes paid and the job Carlton government does at welcoming business involvement) were rated higher than the benchmark.

Respondents evaluated over 20 individual services and amenities available in Carlton. A majority of business owners gave favorable ratings to all aspects of Governance. On average, about three-quarters of business owners and managers felt favorably about various services related to Mobility in the community (e.g., street repair and cleaning, traffic enforcement). About two-thirds on average felt positively about Built Environment services (e.g., code enforcement, building permits and inspections) and Safety services (e.g., police and fire).



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

Comparison to benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower □ Not available

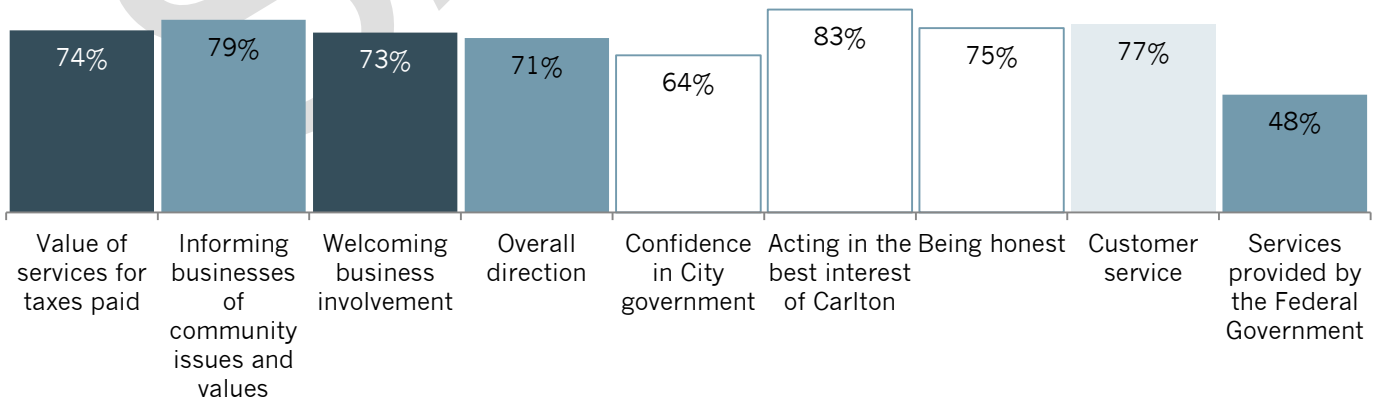


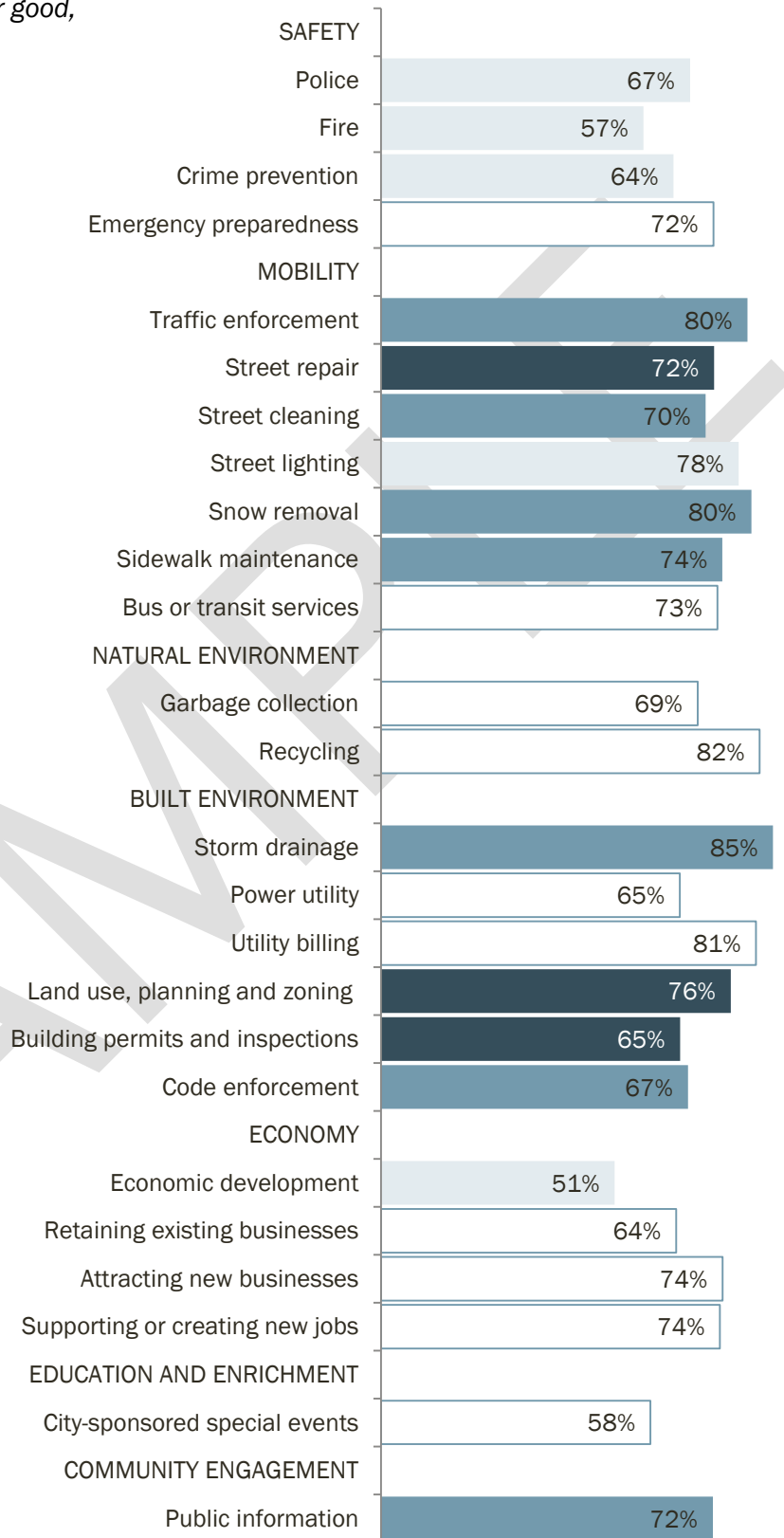


Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

Percent positive (e.g., excellent or good, very or somewhat beneficial)

Comparison to benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available

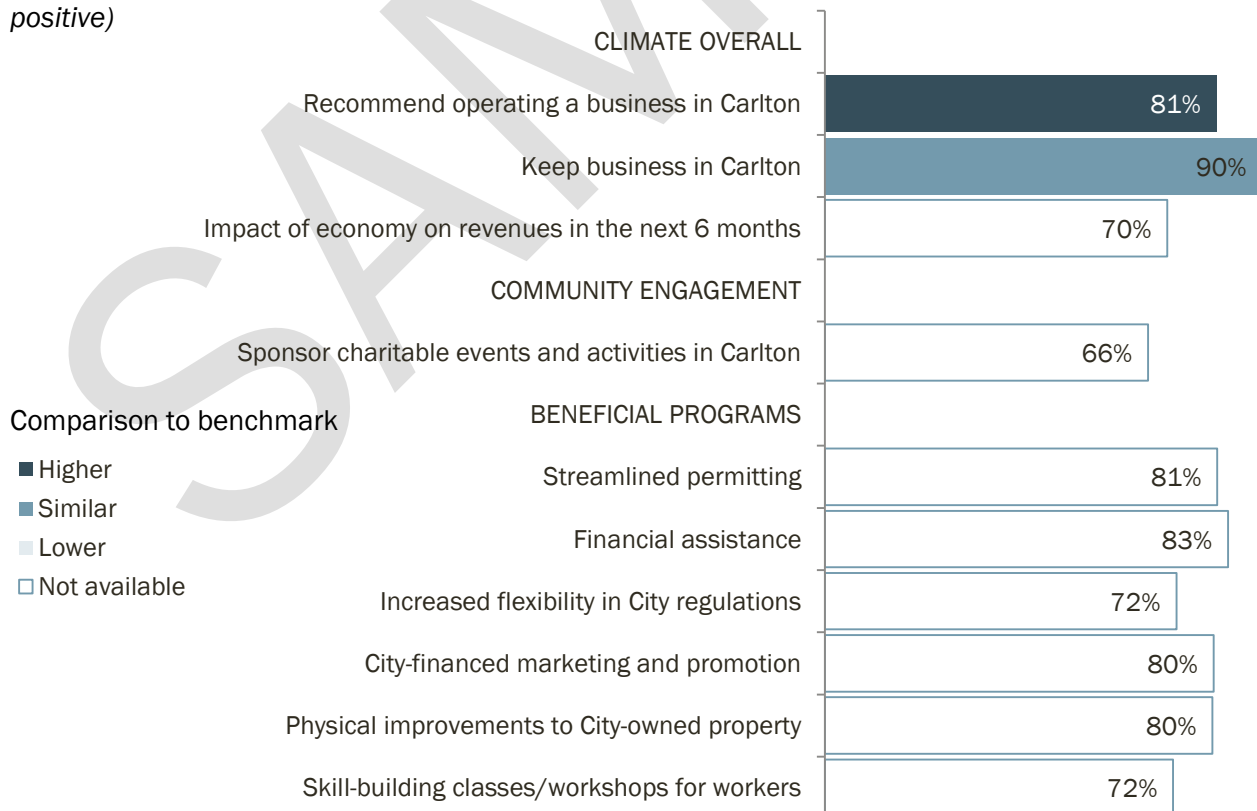


# Business Climate

City businesses weighed in on the business climate of Carlton. Of those surveyed, 81% would be very or somewhat likely to recommend operating a business in Carlton, a rating which was higher than seen in other municipalities across the nation. About 9 in 10 business owners and managers were likely to keep their business in Carlton for the next five years and about 7 in 10 felt positively about the impact of the economy on their revenues in the coming six months.

When asked about potential programs and services to benefit businesses in Carlton, about 8 in 10 business owners indicated that streamlined permitting, financial assistance, City-financed marketing and promotion and physical improvements to City-owned property would be beneficial to their businesses. About two-thirds of business owners and managers would be likely to sponsor charitable events and activities in Carlton.

Percent positive (e.g., very or somewhat likely, very or somewhat beneficial, very or somewhat positive)



# Workforce

Business owners and managers evaluated several aspects of Carlton's workforce, including whether they planned to hire in the near future, the types of positions needed as well as the quality of the applicants they have encountered in the past. Owners and managers also indicated the extent to which they used various hiring resources available in the community.

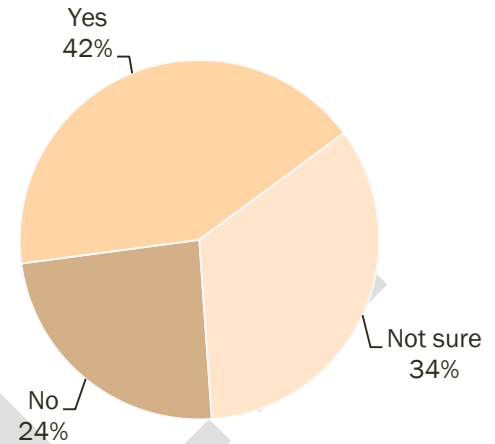
About 4 in 10 of survey respondents planned to hire within the next 6 to 12 months; about 3 in 10 were unsure if they would be hiring.

Those who indicated they were planning to hire or were unsure if they were planning to hire in the next 6 to 12 months were also asked what kind of jobs they might be adding. About two-thirds indicated they would be adding technically skilled jobs or unskilled labor while about half indicated they would be adding administratively skilled jobs. Business owners and managers were least likely to hire for unskilled administrative positions.

When asked about their impression of job applicants in their most recent hiring experience, survey respondents generally felt positively about their applicant pool. A strong majority of about four in five business owners and managers rated the number of applicants as excellent or good; slightly fewer felt positively about applicants' prior experience and the overall impression left by applicants.

Survey respondents were also asked about their reliance on various resources to seek talent for their business. About 8 in 10 indicated relying on their own business's website to a great or moderate extent while about 7 in 10 relied on job websites. About half of survey respondents utilized headhunters/recruiters or colleges/universities. Fewer business owners used career fairs or social networks as an aid in the hiring process.

Planning to hire in the next 6 to 12 months



Types of positions needed

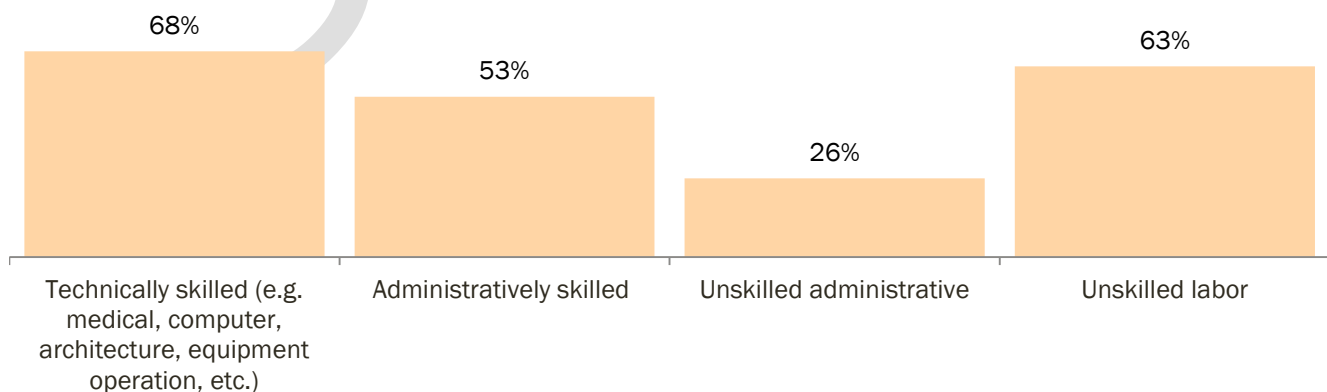


Figure 3: Aspects of the Workforce

Percent positive (e.g., excellent or good, great or moderate extent)

Comparison to benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available

