



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

# Santa Fe, NM

Community Livability Report

2017



2955 Valmont Road Suite 300  
Boulder, Colorado 80301  
n-r-c.com • 303-444-7863



777 North Capitol Street NE Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20002  
icma.org • 800-745-8780

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# About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Santa Fe. 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).

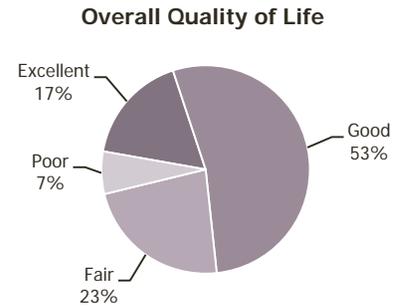
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 1,423 residents of the City of Santa Fe. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 3% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



# Quality of Life in Santa Fe

A majority of residents rated the quality of life in Santa Fe as excellent or good. This was similar to the national and peer community benchmark comparisons (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.



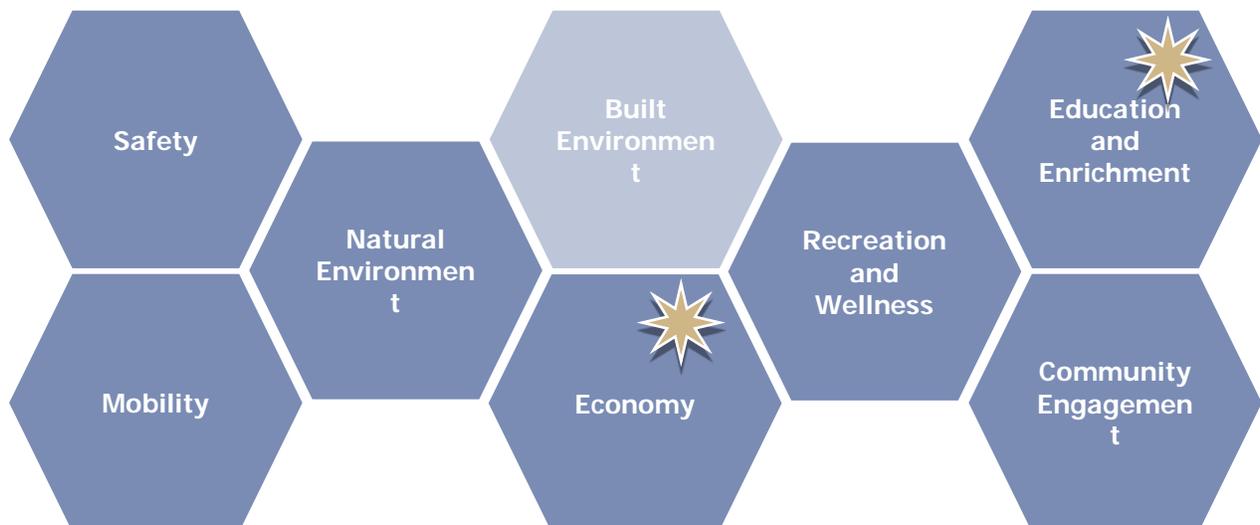
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Economy and Education and Enrichment as priorities for the Santa Fe community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Santa Fe residents gave favorable ratings to both of these facets of community as well as to Safety, Mobility, Economy, Natural Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement. Ratings for Built Environment were tended to be lower than those given in 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 Santa Fe'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 Santa Fe, 78% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Santa Fe 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 Santa Fe as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Santa Fe and its overall appearance. About three-quarters of respondents rated the overall image of Santa Fe and their neighborhood as a place to live as excellent or good, while about two-thirds positively rated Santa Fe as a place to retire and the overall appearance of the City. These ratings were similar to the national benchmarks. Residents were less likely to give positive marks to Santa Fe as a place to raise children, and this aspect was rated lower than the national and regional comparisons.

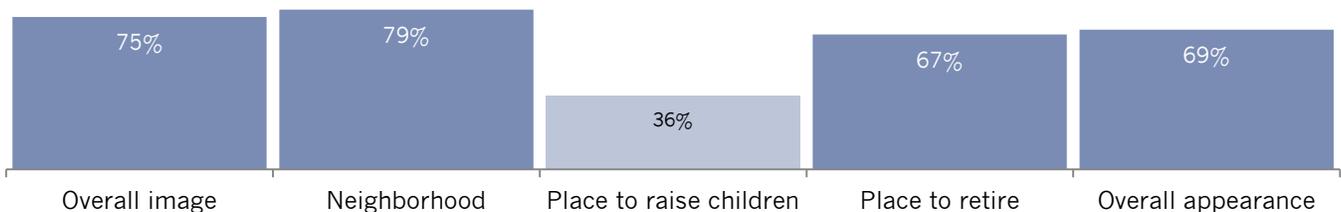
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Ratings across the facets tended to be mixed. In Safety, about 9 in 10 respondents reported feeling safe in their neighborhood and about 8 in 10 felt safe in the downtown/commercial area, and both of these ratings were similar to the benchmark. However, only about two-thirds of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall feeling of safety in the City, which was a lower rating than seen elsewhere. Most aspects of Mobility received ratings similar to the national benchmark except ease of travel by bicycle and ease of public parking, which were lower. In Natural Environment, about 8 in 10 residents or more were pleased with the quality of the overall natural environment in Santa Fe and with air quality, and the rating for air quality was higher than the benchmark. A majority of residents gave positive marks to all aspects of Community Engagement and all of these were similar to the national comparison. Ratings for aspects within the remaining facets of Community Livability tended to vary widely. Within the facet of Economy, the rating for Santa Fe as a place to visit, at 90% positive, was higher than the national benchmark, and about half of residents gave favorable ratings to the vibrancy of the downtown/commercial area, overall quality of business and service establishments and shopping opportunities; these were similar to the benchmark. However, about one-third of residents or less gave positive marks to the overall economic health of the City, cost of living,

employment opportunities and Santa Fe as a place to work, and these items were rated lower than ratings seen elsewhere. Finally, in Education and Enrichment, about 8 in 10 residents were pleased with opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events and activities and opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities, and the latter rating was higher than the national benchmark. However, only about 4 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to overall opportunities for education and enrichment and less than 2 in 10 favorably rated K-12 education and the availability of affordable quality child care/preschool, and these were lower than observed in other communities across the nation.



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

Comparison to national benchmark  
 ■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



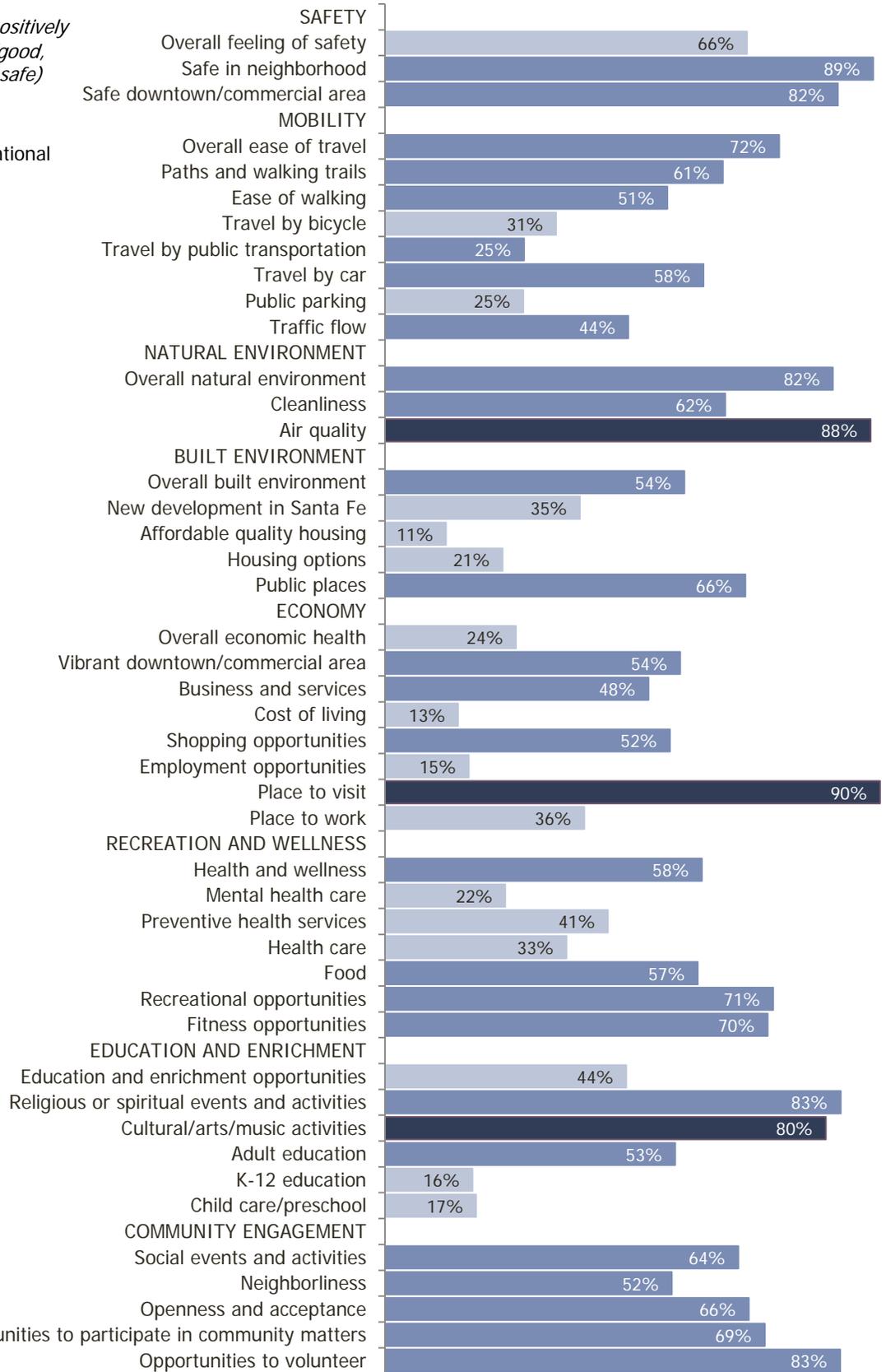
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



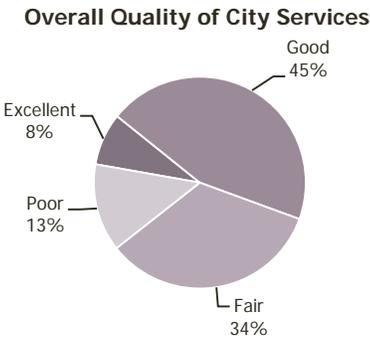
# Governance

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

The overall quality of the services provided by Santa Fe as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About half of Santa Fe residents gave positive ratings to the overall quality of City services, which was lower than seen in other communities nationwide. About 4 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the services provided by the Federal Government, which was similar to the national comparison.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Santa Fe’s leadership and governance. About half of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the customer service provided by City employees and about 4 in 10 residents or fewer gave positive marks to the remaining aspects of government performance. These aspects tended to receive ratings lower than the national benchmark.

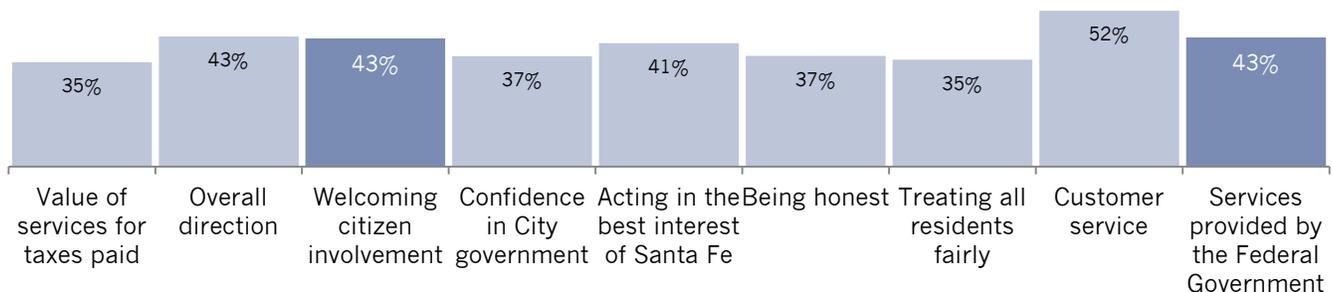
Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Santa Fe. Ratings across all facets were similar to or lower than the national comparisons. At least 7 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to fire services, ambulance/EMS, garbage collection, sewer services and public libraries, and these aspects all received ratings similar to those observed elsewhere. However, only about one-quarter of respondents or less favorably rated street repair, sidewalk maintenance, code enforcement and economic development, and these ratings were lower than those seen in other communities across the nation.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



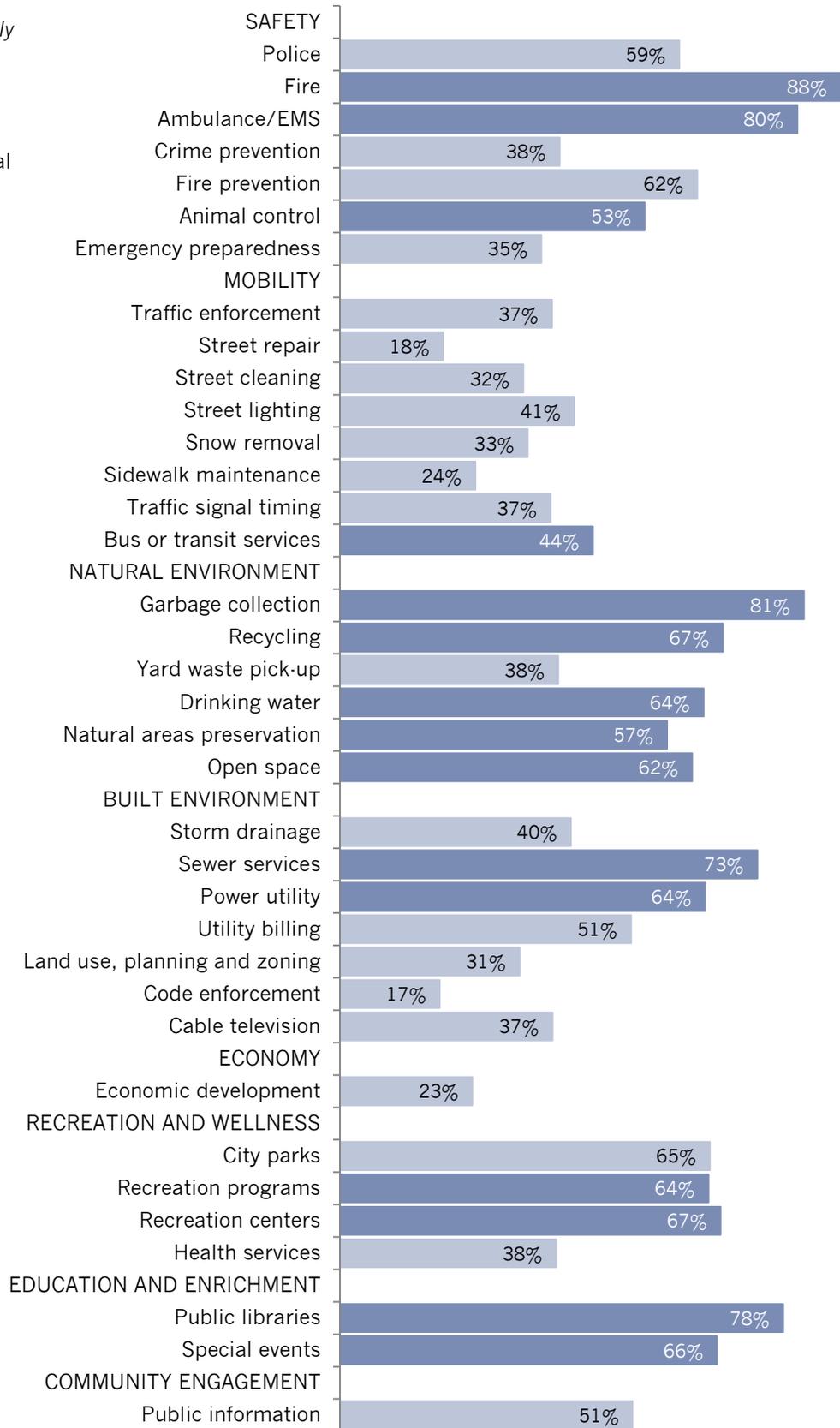
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

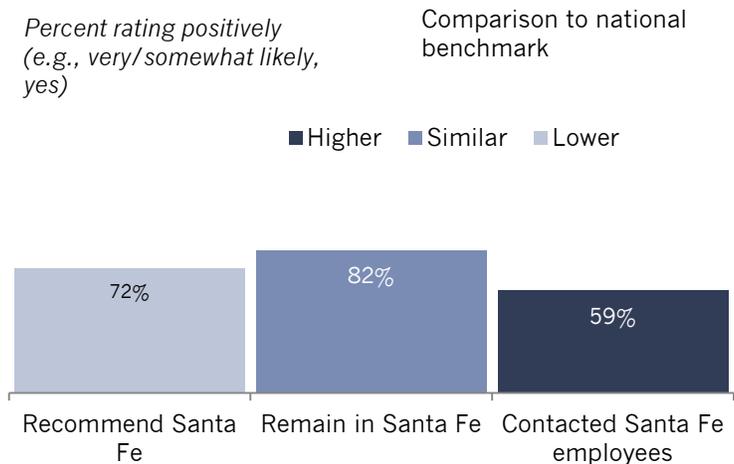
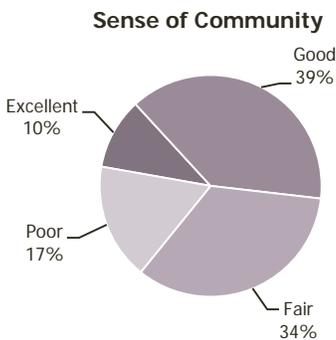


# Participation

*Are the residents of Santa Fe 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. In Santa Fe, about half of residents gave favorable ratings to the sense of community and about 8 in 10 planned to remain in the City for the next five years; these ratings were both similar to the national benchmark. About 6 in 10 respondents had contacted the City in the 12 months prior to the survey, which was a higher rate of contact than observed elsewhere. About 7 in 10 residents were very or somewhat likely to recommend living in Santa Fe to someone who asked, which was lower than 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. Broadly, rates of participation in Santa Fe tended to be similar to or higher than rates observed in other communities across the nation. About 8 in 10 residents or more reported doing each of the following at least once in the 12 months prior to the survey: conserving water, making their home more energy efficient, recycling at home, purchasing goods or services in Santa Fe, visiting a City park, eating 5 portions of fruits or vegetables daily, participating in moderate or vigorous physical activity, talking to or visiting with their neighbors, having done a favor for a neighbor, reading or watching local news and voting in local elections.



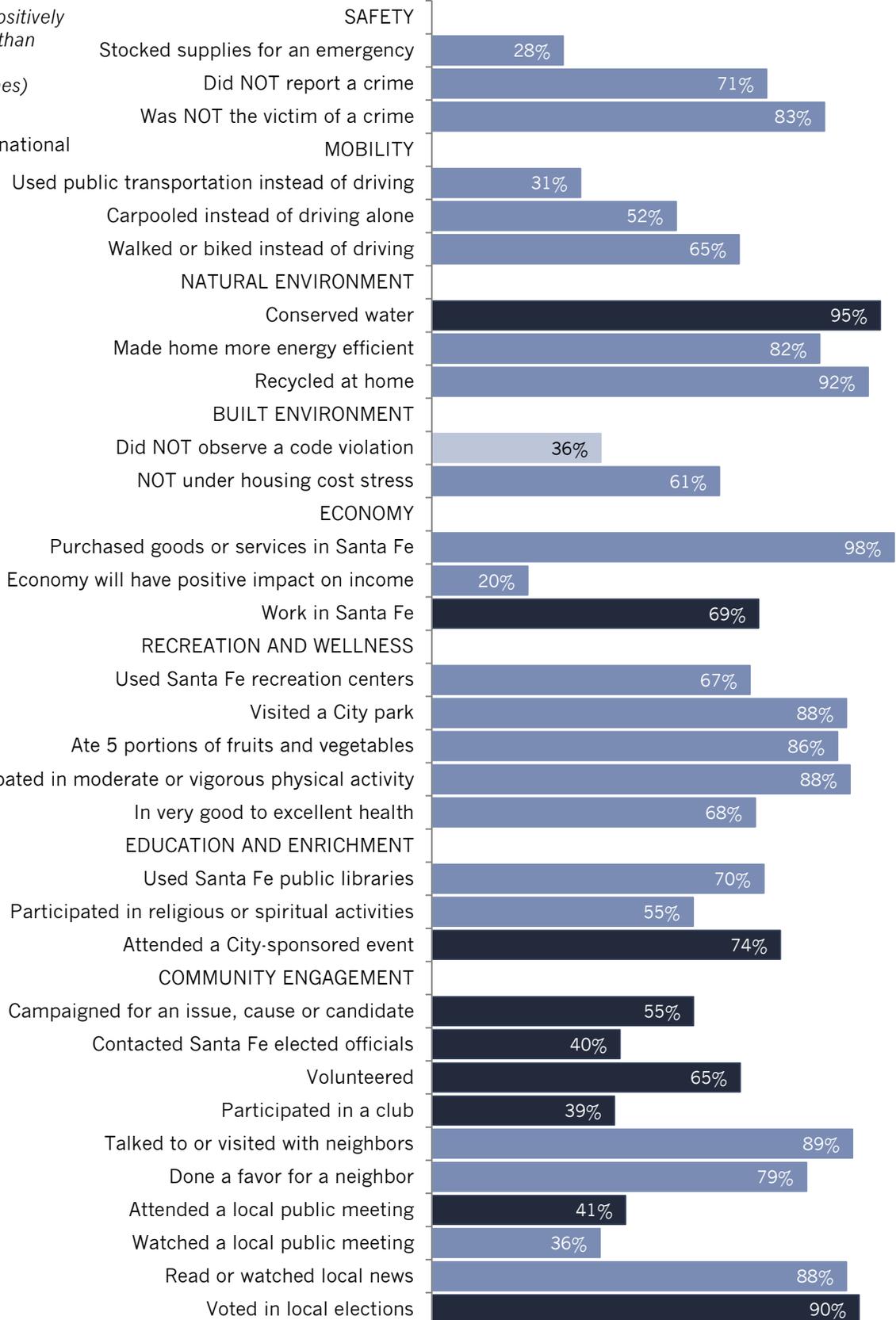
# The National Citizen Survey™

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

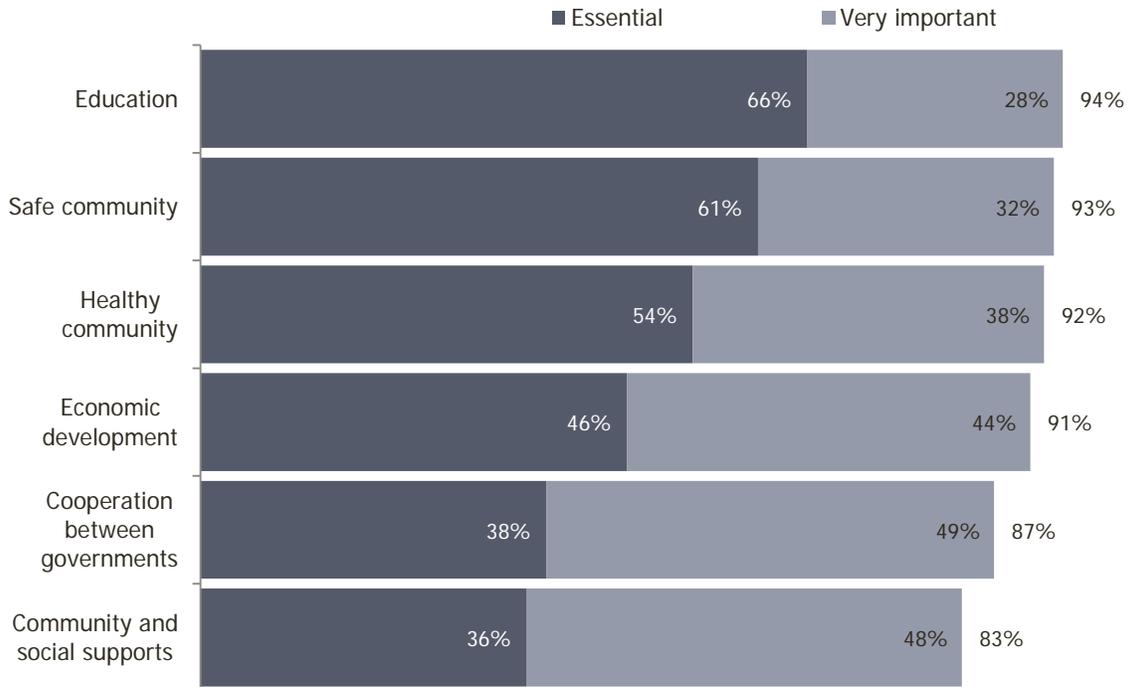


# Special Topics

The City of Santa Fe included three questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked residents to indicate how important they felt a series of strategic planning areas were in relation to the overall quality of life in the City. About 9 in 10 residents or more thought that education, safe community, healthy community and economic development were important strategic planning areas, and at least 8 in 10 residents felt that each area listed was essential or very important.

Figure 4: Importance of Strategic Planning Areas

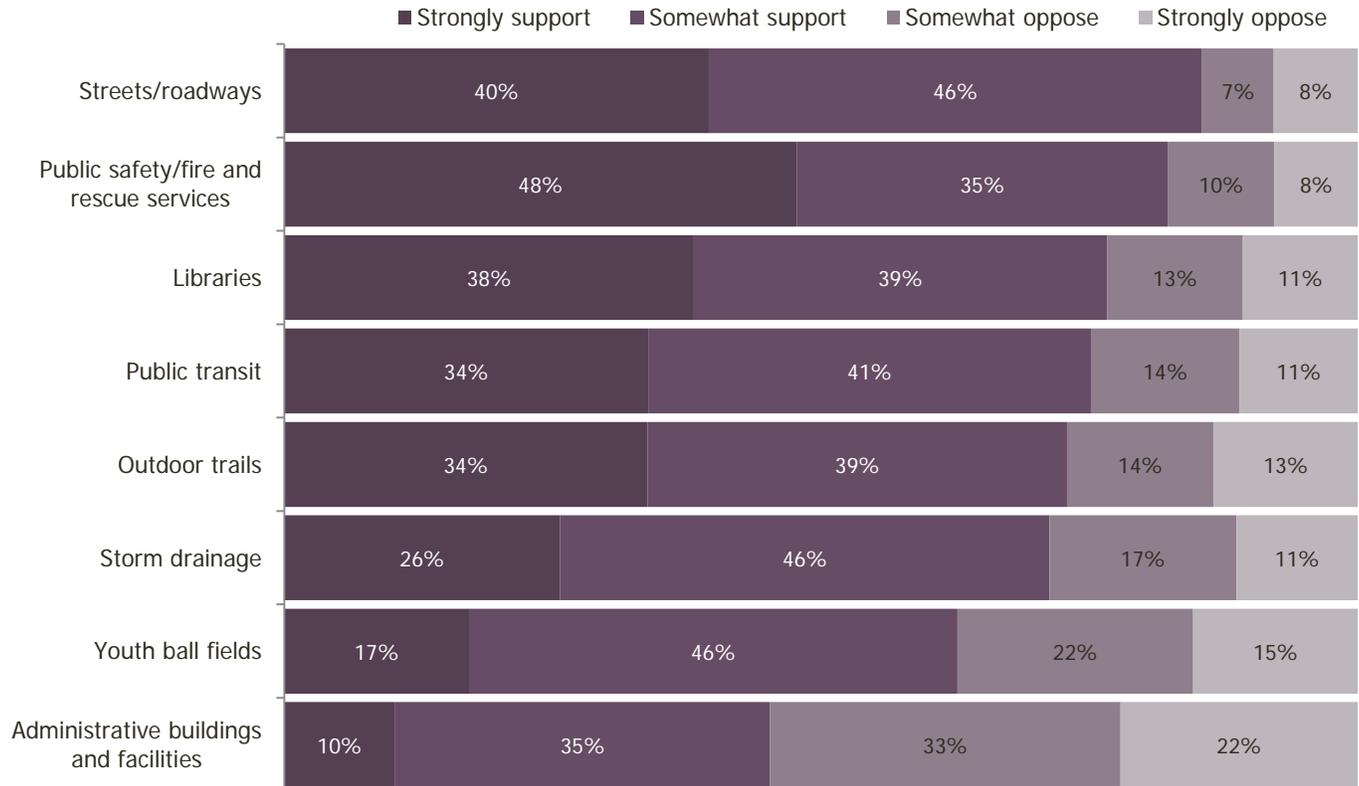
*Please rate how important, if at all, each of the following strategic planning areas are to the overall quality of life in the City of Santa Fe:*



Respondents were next asked to indicate their level of support for three different types of tax increases to fund improvements to City facilities and services. A majority of residents strongly or somewhat supported a Gross Receipts tax increase (Figure 5 below) or a Property Tax increase (Figure 6 on the following page) for improving all listed facilities and services, with the exception of administrative buildings and facilities.

Figure 5: Support for Gross Receipts Tax Increases

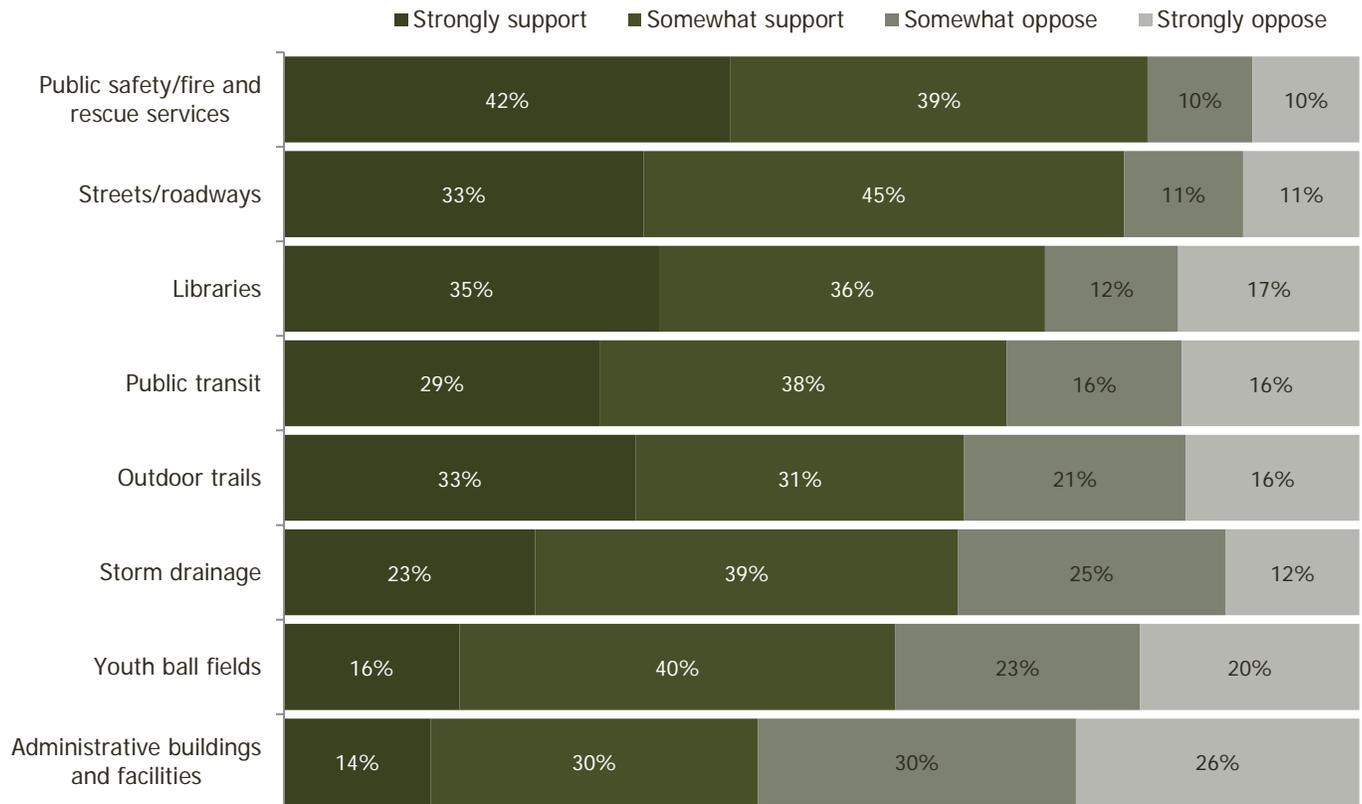
*To what extent you would support or oppose a Gross Receipts Tax increase to fund improvements to the facilities and/or services below?*



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Figure 6: Support for Property Tax Increases

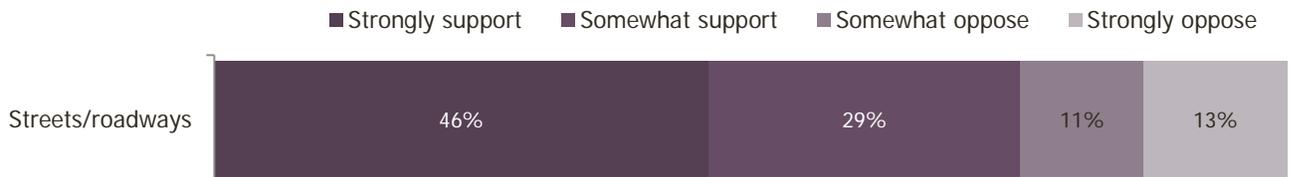
To what extent you would support or oppose a Property Tax increase to fund improvements to the facilities and/or services below?



When asked about their support for a Gasoline Tax increase to fund improvements to streets and roadways, about three-quarters of residents indicated they strongly or somewhat supported such an increase. This was slightly less than the proportion of residents who supported a Gross Receipts Tax increase or Property Tax increase for the same purpose.

Figure 7: Support for Gasoline Tax Increase

To what extent you would support or oppose a Gasoline Tax increase to fund improvements to the facilities and/or services below?

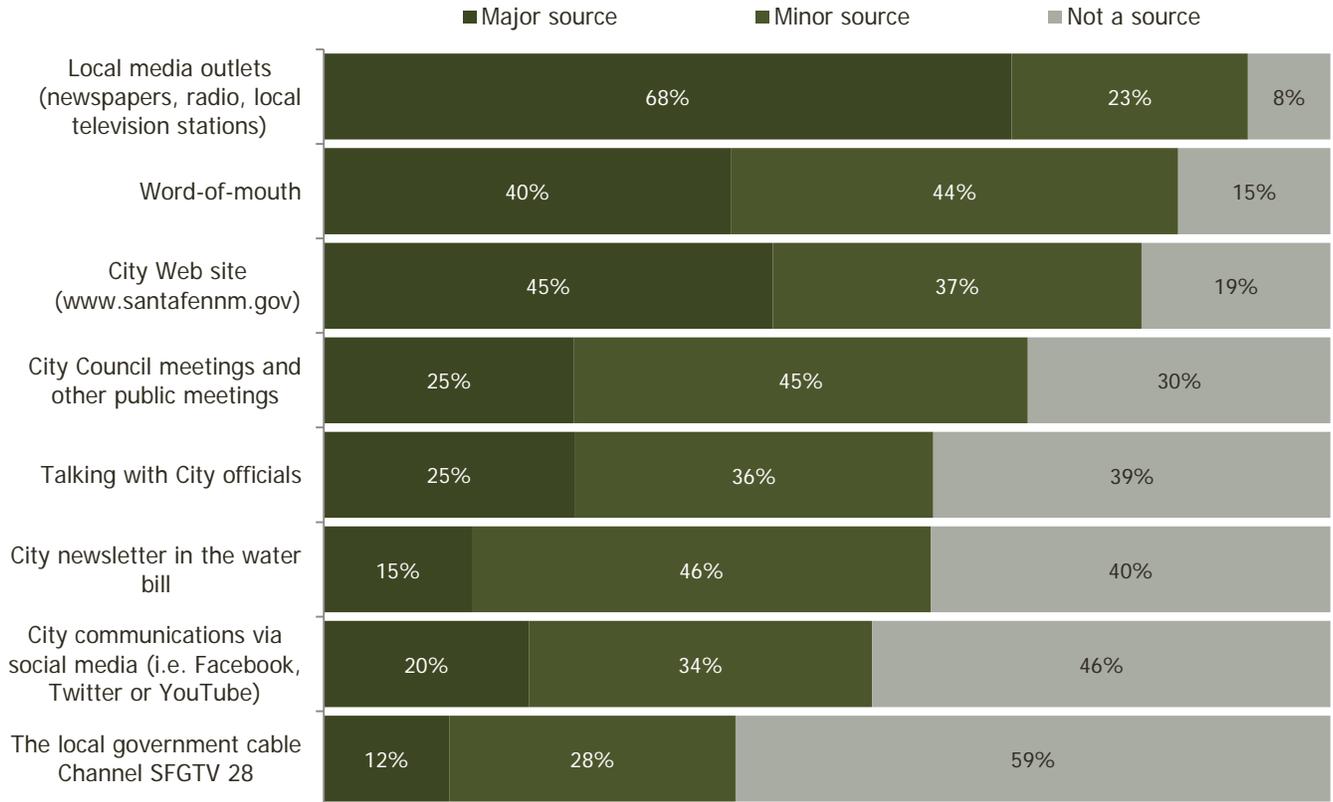


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The next special-interest question asked residents about various information sources about the City. Almost all respondents used local media outlets as a major or minor source for obtaining information about the City government, and at least 8 in 10 found word-of-mouth and the City website to be at least a minor source. Less than half found the local government cable channel SFG28 to be a source.

Figure 8: Sources of City Information

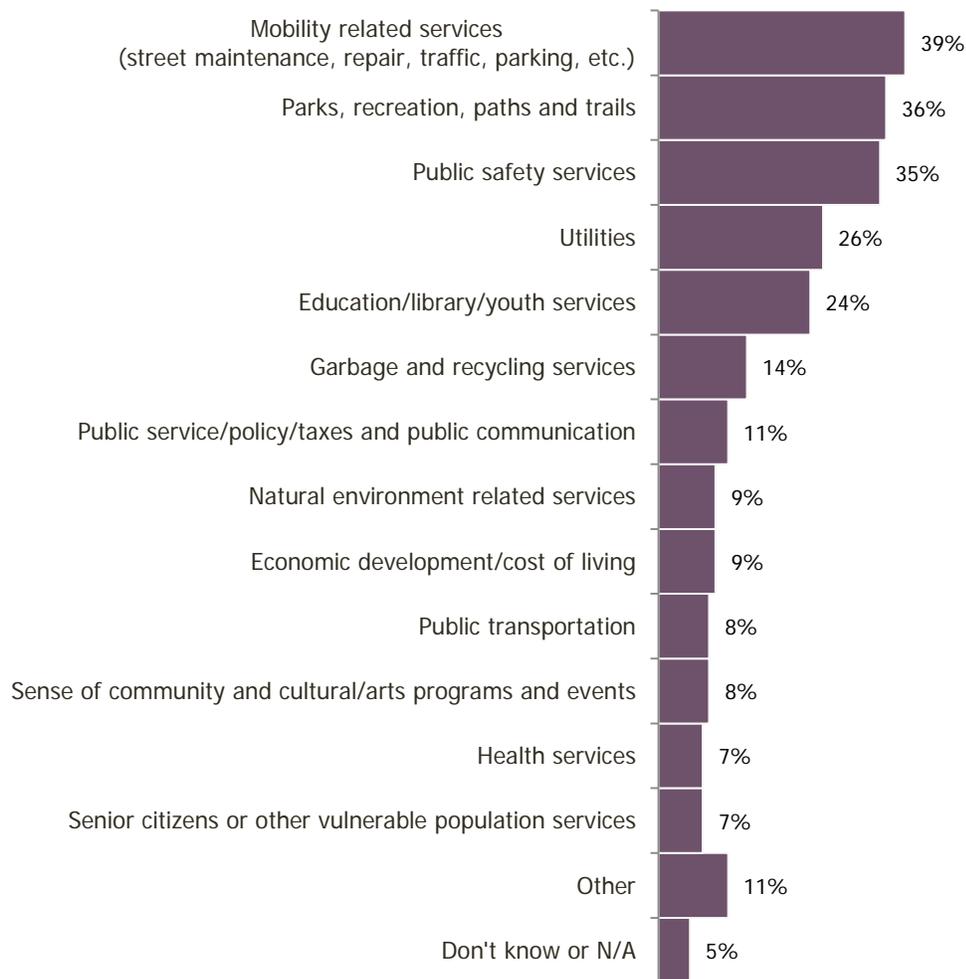
Please indicate how much of a source, if at all, you consider each of the following to be for obtaining information about the City government and its activities, events and services:



The final special-interest question on the survey was an open-ended question that asked residents to write, in their own words, the top three City programs and/or services that had the most impact on their daily quality of life. Nearly 4 in 10 cited services or programs related to mobility such street maintenance and repair, traffic or parking. Slightly fewer cited parks, recreation, paths and walking trails as well as public safety services as having the most impact on everyday quality of life. Around one-quarter of residents mentioned utilities as being important, most of which were centered around water utilities, and a similar percentage mentioned education/library and youth services as being important to quality of life in Santa Fe. Around 1 in 10 respondents or less cited issues related to the natural environment, economic development/cost of living, public transportation, sense of community and cultural/arts programs and events, health services and services provided to senior citizens or other vulnerable populations (for more information see the *Open End Report* under separate cover).

Figure 9: Question 17

*What would you say are the top three programs and/or services provided by the City of Santa Fe that have the most impact on your everyday quality of life?*



Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

# Conclusions

## Santa Fe residents rate their quality of life positively.

Most residents rated their quality of life positively and thought that Santa Fe was an excellent or good place to live. A majority of survey participants gave positive ratings for the overall image and overall appearance of the City, and a majority also felt that Santa Fe was an excellent or good place to retire. About 8 in 10 survey participants planned on remaining in Santa Fe for the next five years and about 7 in 10 would recommend living in Santa Fe to others.

## Economy is important to residents and a potential area of focus.

Residents identified Economy as a top priority for the Santa Fe community. Almost all residents positively rated Santa Fe as a place to visit, which was higher ratings given elsewhere, and about half of residents gave favorable ratings to the vibrancy of the downtown/commercial area, overall quality of business and service establishments and shopping opportunities. However, about one-third of residents or less favorably rated the overall economic health of the City, cost of living, employment opportunities and Santa Fe as a place to work, and these items were rated lower than ratings observed in other communities. Additionally, about 9 in 10 residents felt that economic development was an essential or very important strategic planning area to the overall quality of life in Santa Fe.

## Education and Enrichment is also a priority.

Residents indicated that Education and Enrichment was also an important facet for the City to focus on in the coming two years. Most residents were pleased with opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events and activities and opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities, and the rating for cultural/arts/music activities was higher than ratings observed elsewhere. However, only about 4 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to overall opportunities for education and enrichment and less than 2 in 10 favorably rated K-12 education and the availability of affordable quality child care/preschool, and these were lower than observed in other communities across the nation. When asked about the importance of strategic planning areas, almost all residents indicated that education was essential or very important to the quality of life in Santa Fe. About three-quarters of residents strongly or somewhat supported a Gross Receipts tax increase or a Property tax increase in order to fund improvements to libraries. Finally, when asked to write in their own words which City programs and/or services had the most impact on their daily quality of life, about one-quarter of residents mentioned education/library and youth services as being important to quality of life in Santa Fe.