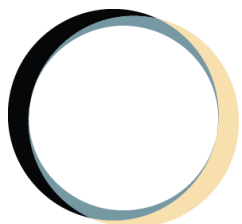


THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Port St. Lucie, FL
Community Livability Report

2018



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The NCS™ is presented by NRC in collaboration with ICMA.

NRC is a charter member of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative, providing clear disclosure of our sound and ethical survey research practices.

About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Port St. Lucie. 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.

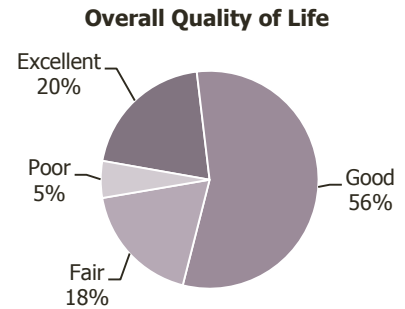
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 323 residents of the City of Port St. Lucie. 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 Port St. Lucie

About three-quarters of residents rated the quality of life in Port St. Lucie as excellent or good, which was higher than ratings in 2009 (a complete list of trends can be found in the *Trends over Time* report). This rating was similar in comparison to the national 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.

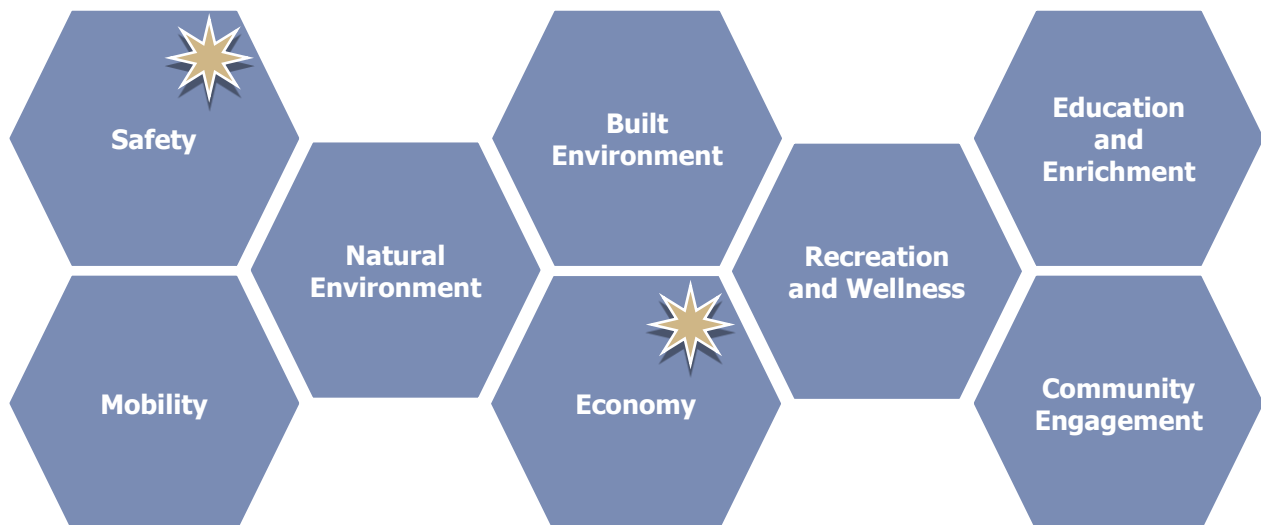
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Port St. Lucie community in the coming two years. Ratings for all facets 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 Port St. Lucie’s unique questions.

Legend

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

- Most important



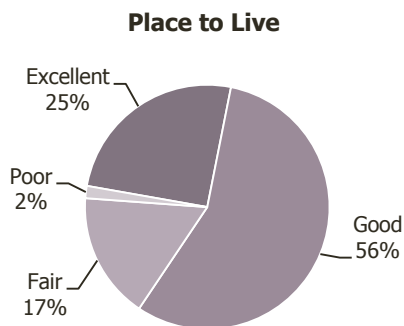
Community Characteristics

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 Port St. Lucie, 82% rated the city as an excellent or good place to live, up 19 percentage points from scores given in 2009. Respondents' ratings of Port St. Lucie 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 Port St. Lucie as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Port St. Lucie and its overall appearance. Overall, at least half of residents felt favorably about each aspects of the community, resulting in most ratings being similar to the national benchmark and higher than 2009 ratings. Notably, about 8 in 10 respondents gave high marks to Port St. Lucie as a place to retire, which was higher than comparison communities.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, at least half of respondents positively scored most aspects of Community Characteristics; ratings tended to be similar to or lower than national benchmarks.



Residents' evaluations of Safety were similar to comparison communities with about 9 in 10 residents indicating they felt safe in their neighborhood and 8 in 10 felt safe in the commercial areas. Port St. Lucie respondents awarded positive scores to aspects of Natural Environment, with at least 7 in 10 respondents rating each aspect as excellent or good. Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement received favorable ratings from about half to two-thirds of respondents.

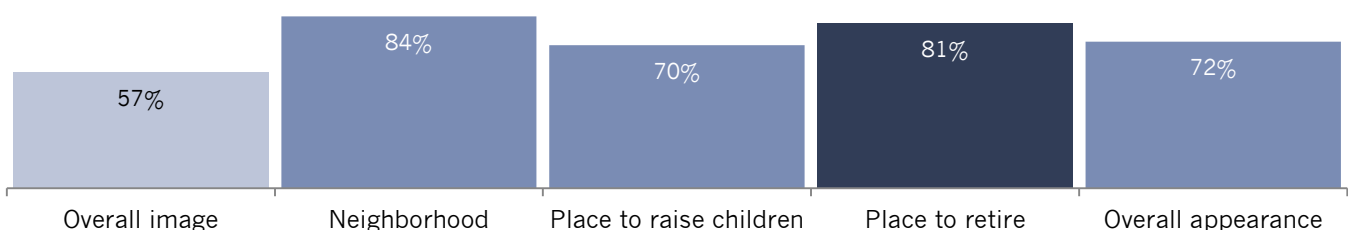
Within Mobility, resident's ratings of alternative modes (walking, biking, and public transit) were lower than car travel in general and lower than the national average. As for Economy and Education and Enrichment, residents' ratings

were a mix of average and below average; overall economic health, vibrancy of downtown, the City as a place to visit and work, education and enrichment, opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities and K-12 education were lower than national averages. However, most of these items, as well as many others measure of community, received higher scores in 2018 than in 2009.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



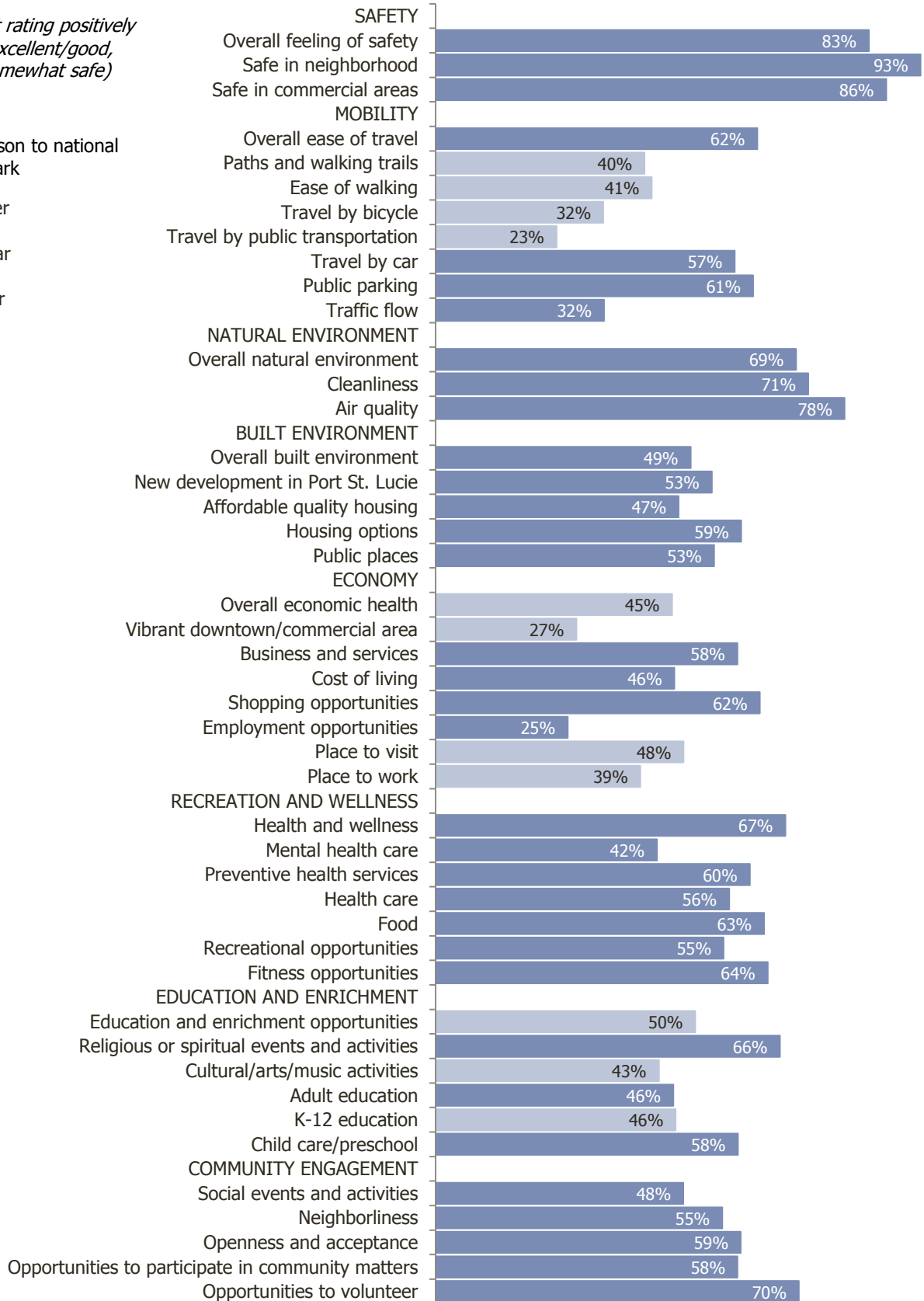
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

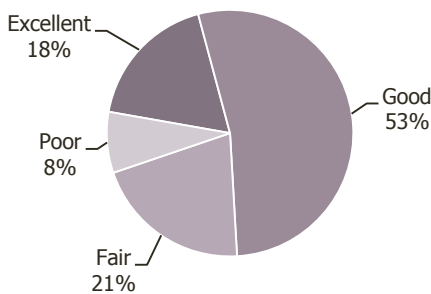
How well does the government of Port St. Lucie meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Port St. Lucie as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 7 in 10 of survey participants gave excellent or good scores to the overall services provided by the City, which was higher than ratings in 2009. Marks for City services as well as services provided by the U.S. Government were similar to national averages.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Port St. Lucie’s leadership and governance. About two in five or more of residents rated each aspect positively, similar to those in other communities nationwide. Reviews for the value of services for taxes paid and the overall direction of the community were higher in 2018 than in 2009. About 7 in 10 respondents scored the customer service provided by Port St. Lucie employees as excellent or good.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Port St. Lucie. Broadly, residents gave ratings that were similar to other communities across the U.S. to all but three government services. Within Mobility, residents’ evaluations of street lighting and bus or transit services lagged behind that national averages; scores for bus or transit services increased since the last survey iteration. Emergency preparedness emerged as a highlight in the community with about 8 in 10 respondents reviewing it was excellent or good, which was higher than the benchmark and higher than 2009 ratings.

Overall Quality of City Services

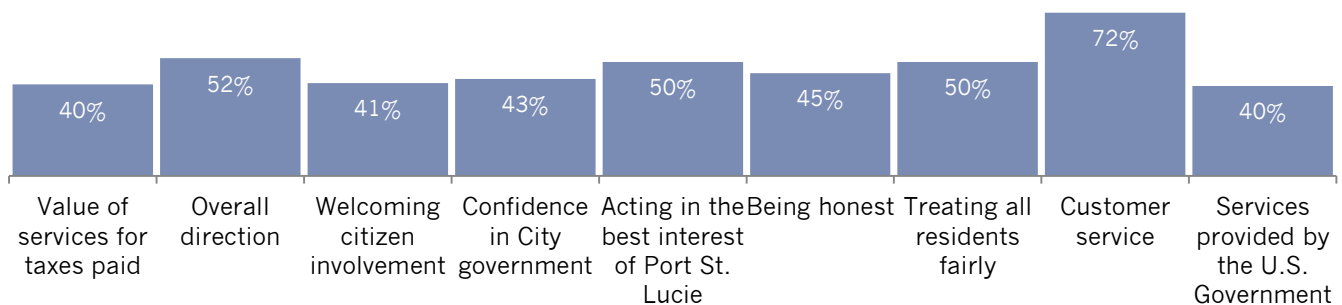


In 2018, 17 services or amenities provided by Port St. Lucie received higher ratings compared to 2009. Most increases occurred within Safety (e.g., police, crime and fire prevention) and Built Environment (e.g., storm drainage, code enforcement, planning and zoning) as well as Economy (economic development) and Recreation and Wellness (health services), among others. None of the services provided by the City were scored lower in 2018.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



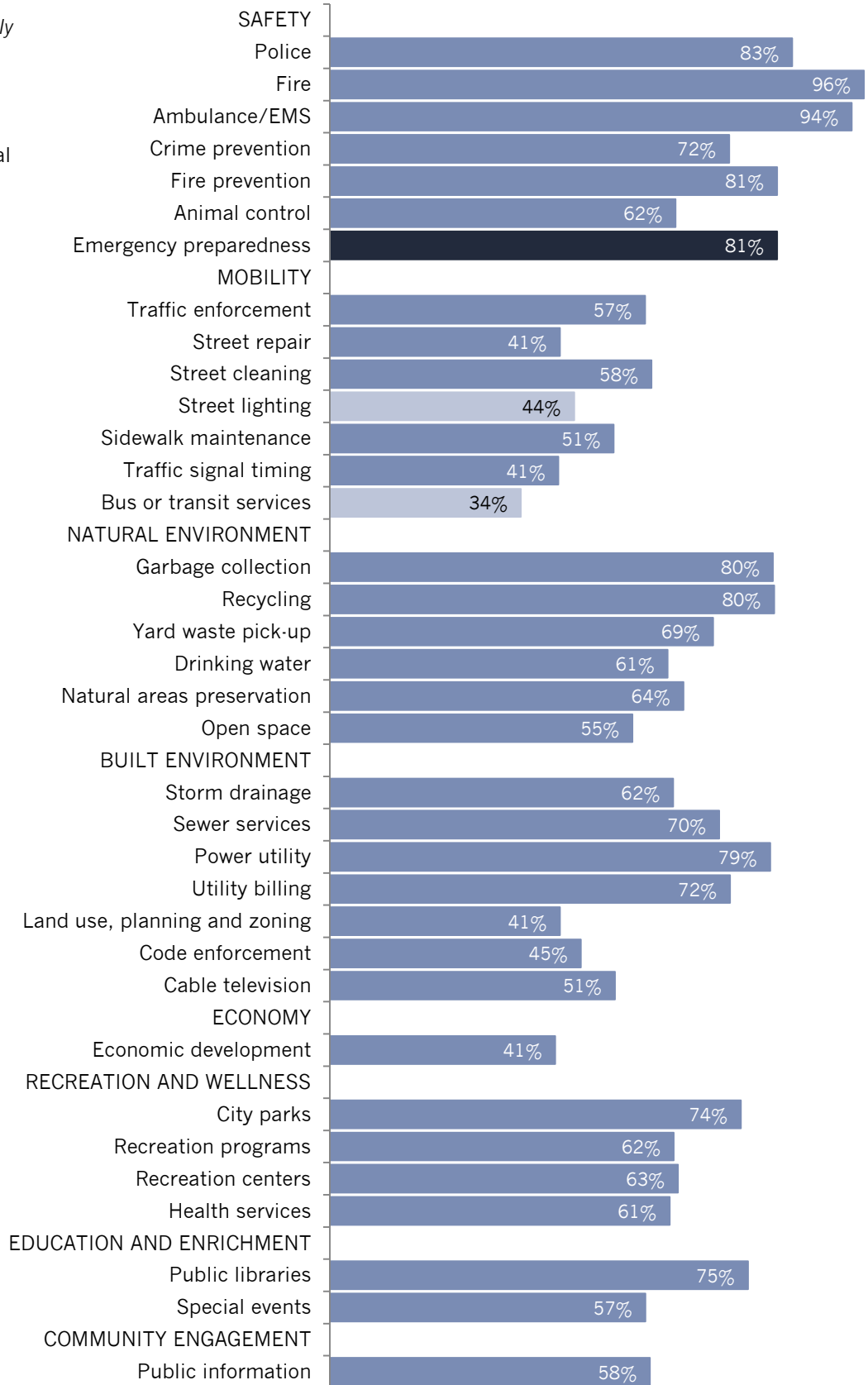
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Participation

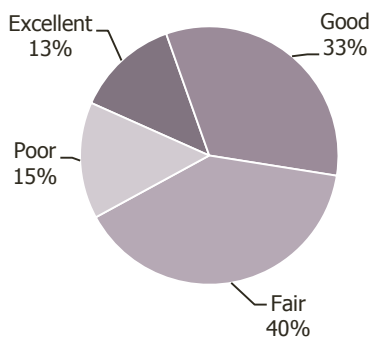
Are the residents of Port St. Lucie connected to the community and each other?

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. Similar to other communities across the nation, about 4 in 10 respondents gave excellent or good scores to the sense of community in Port St. Lucie.

About 8 in 10 residents indicated they would recommend living in Port St. Lucie to someone who asked and planned to remain in the community for the next five years; these levels were higher in 2018 than in 2009. About half of respondents reported they had contacted City employees in the 12 months prior to the survey, which was lower than rates in 2009, but similar to national peers.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Generally, Port St. Lucie's residents tended to participate at levels similar to those seen in comparison communities. Residents were particularly engaged in green initiatives, such as conserving water or recycling, and reported high levels of neighborliness, reading or watching local news and voting behaviors. About 8 in 10 survey respondents indicated they had stocked supplies in case of an emergency, which was much higher than the national averages (the City ranked fourth out of all communities across the country in this area).

Sense of Community

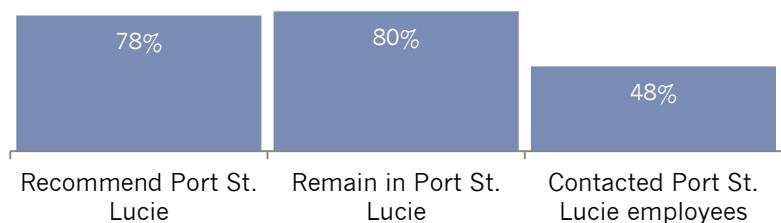


Port St. Lucie residents used public transportation or carpools (instead of driving) at rates lower than the national average. Public library visitation was also lower in the City than elsewhere and experienced a decrease since 2009. Survey respondents were also more likely to be under housing cost stress when compared to the national average; this level has increased over time. On a positive note, Port St. Lucie residents were more optimistic that the economy would positively impact their incomes in 2018 than they were in 2009; this optimism was higher than the national average.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



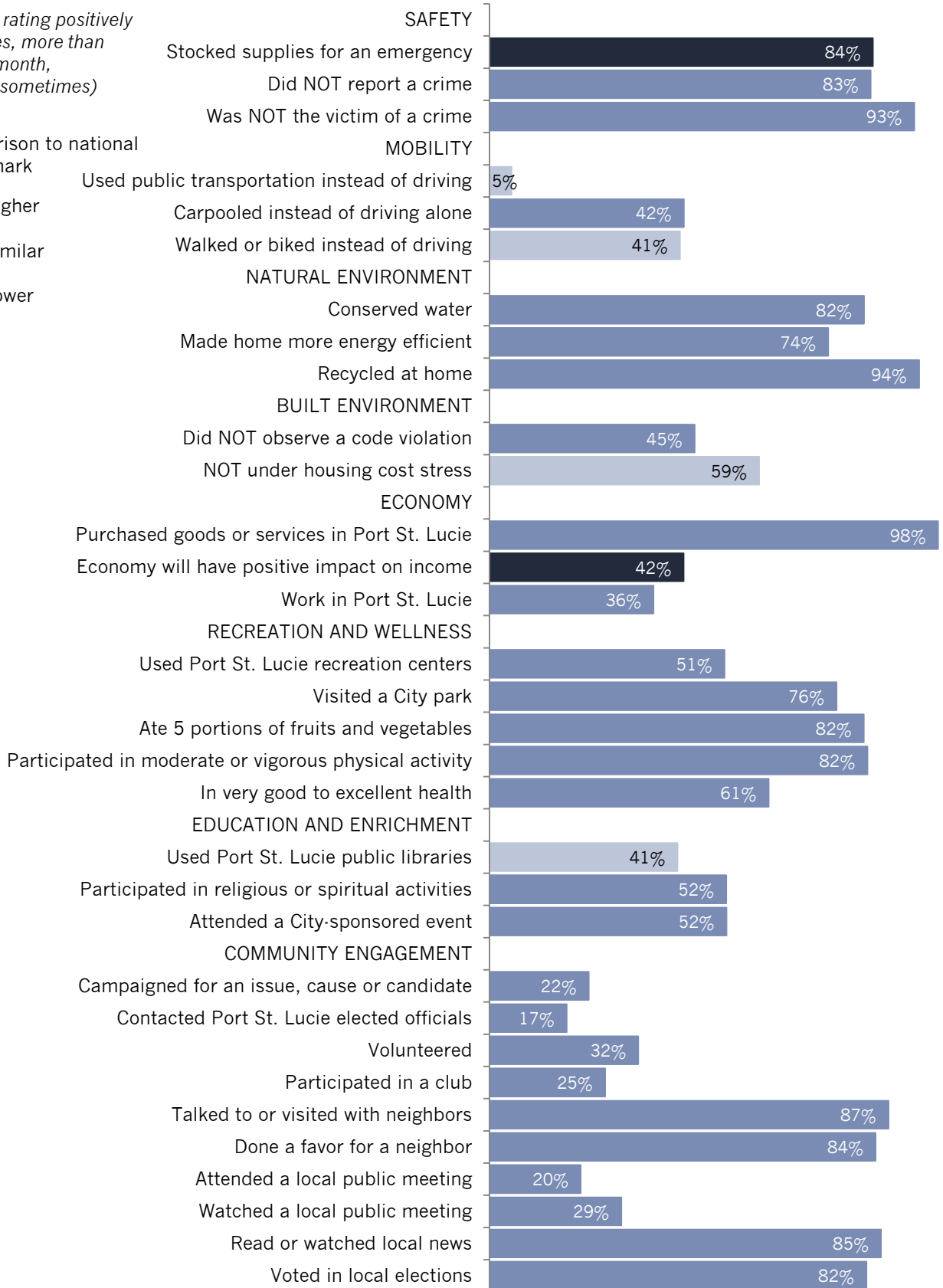
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

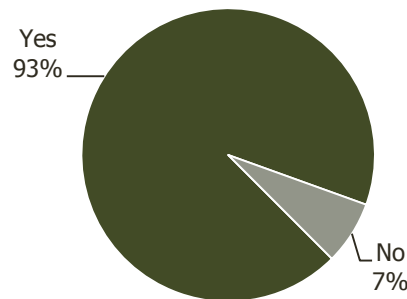


Special Topics

The City of Port St. Lucie included several questions of special interest on The NCS. City leadership sought resident feedback regarding their access to internet services, level of support for two different sales tax scenarios, preferred source of information about the City, importance of providing an alternative high school education and services provided by the state and county. The City also asked residents to identify up to three services they would like the City to provide in their own words (complete responses can be found in the *Open-end Report* provided under a separate cover.)

Nearly all Port St. Lucie survey participants indicated they have access to wireless internet.

Figure 4: Access to Internet
Do you have access to wireless internet?



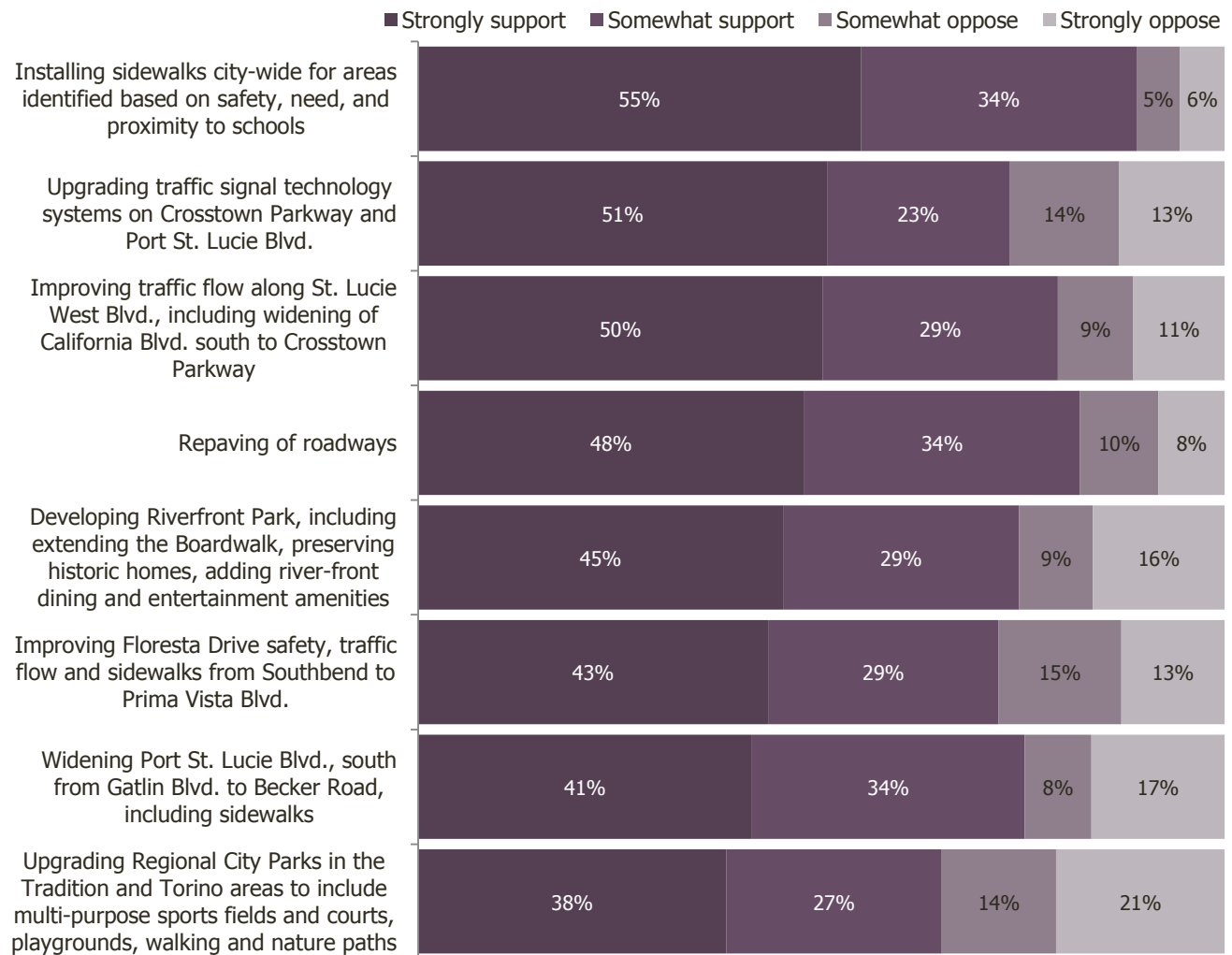
Respondents rated their level of support or opposition to a possible ballot measure regarding a sales tax increase that would provide funding for several City projects (see Figure 5, page 10 and Figure 6, page 11). Residents evaluated two sales tax scenarios, a one-half cent increase for 20 years or a one cent increase over 10 years. Overall, residents supported the projects similarly between the two scenarios; that is, residents did not clearly favor one tax scenario over the other. However, strong opposition to each of the projects tended to be higher in the 10 year scenario than in 20 year scenario.

Broadly, a majority of residents reported they would strongly or somewhat support either tax increase for each of the eight projects, with about three-quarters or more indicating they would support installing sidewalks city-wide, improving traffic flow along St. Lucie West Boulevard and repaving.

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Figure 5: Resident Support for a One Half-Cent Sales Tax Increase Over 20 Years

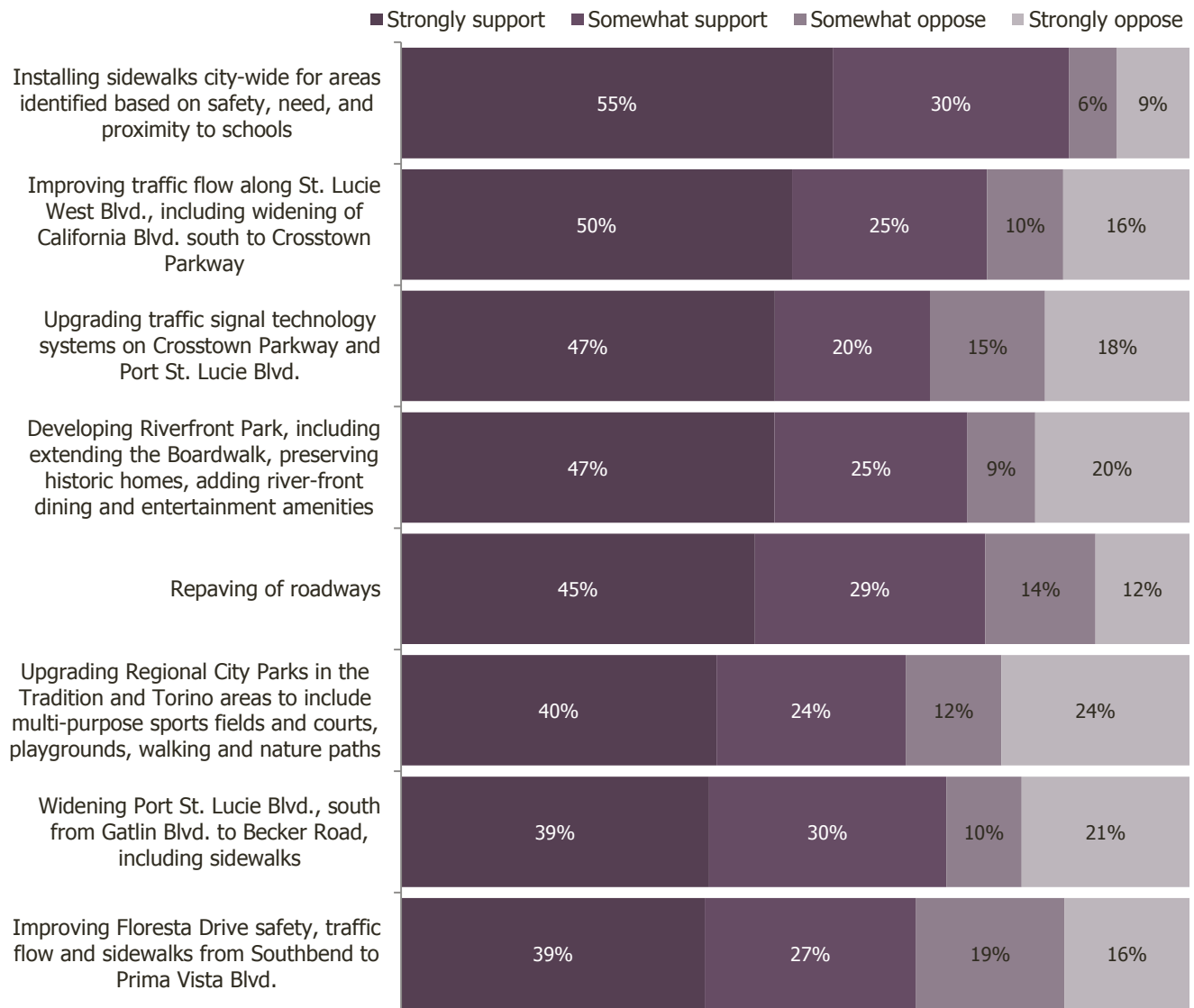
The St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners is considering a ballot question for November 2018 that would ask voters to approve a sales tax increase of one-half cent on the dollar (on purchases up to \$5,000) over 20 years that would provide funding for several of the projects listed below. To what extent would you support or oppose financing each project with the sales tax:



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Figure 6: Resident Support for a One Cent Sales Tax Increase Over 10 Years

The St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners is considering a ballot question for November 2018 that would ask voters to approve a sales tax increase of one cent over 10 years that would provide funding for several of the projects listed below. To what extent would you support or oppose financing each project with the sales tax:

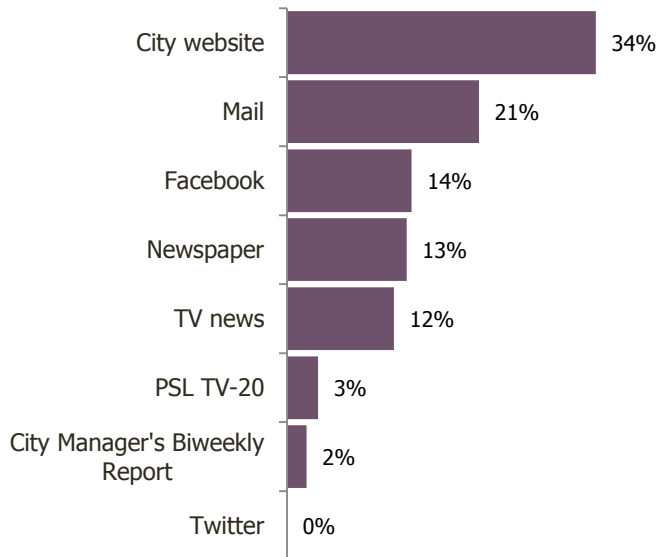


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About one-third of residents preferred the City website for their news, while about 2 in 10 preferred the mail. Survey participants do not prefer to receive news via Twitter.

Figure 7: Preferred Sources of Information

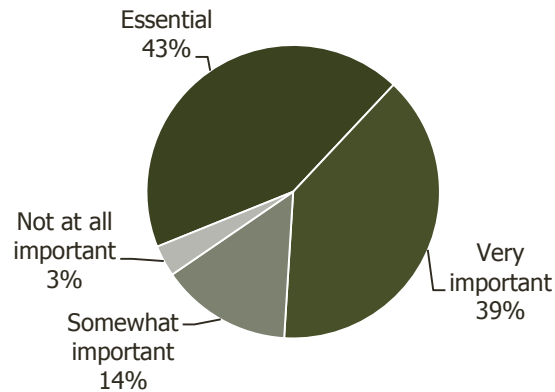
Please indicate which of the following methods, if any, you prefer as a way to receive news about the City of Port St. Lucie:



About 8 in 10 respondents thought that creating a vocational/technical high school to prepare students to enter the workforce was essential or very important.

Figure 8: Importance of Focusing on Creation of Alternative Education

Please rate how important, if at all, you think it is for the City of Port St. Lucie to focus on the creation of a vocational/technical high school to prepare students to enter the workforce:



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Residents rated the overall quality of services provided by the State of Florida and St. Lucie County. Close to half positively rated services provided by both entities, which were lower than scores awarded to the City of Port St. Lucie (see *Governance*, page 5).

Figure 9: State of Florida Services
Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by the State of Florida?

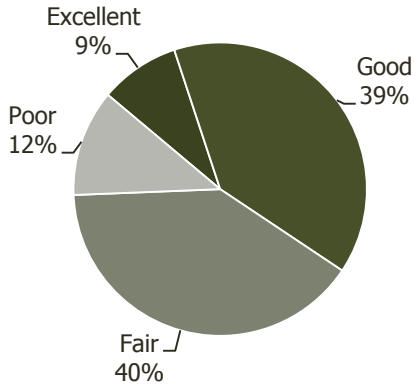
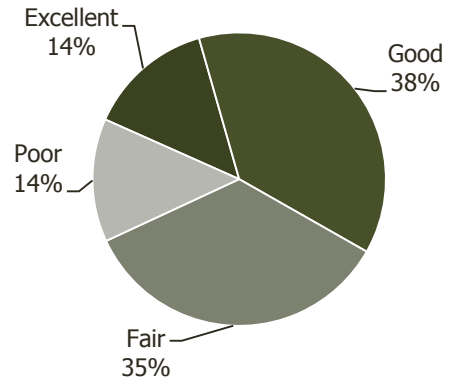
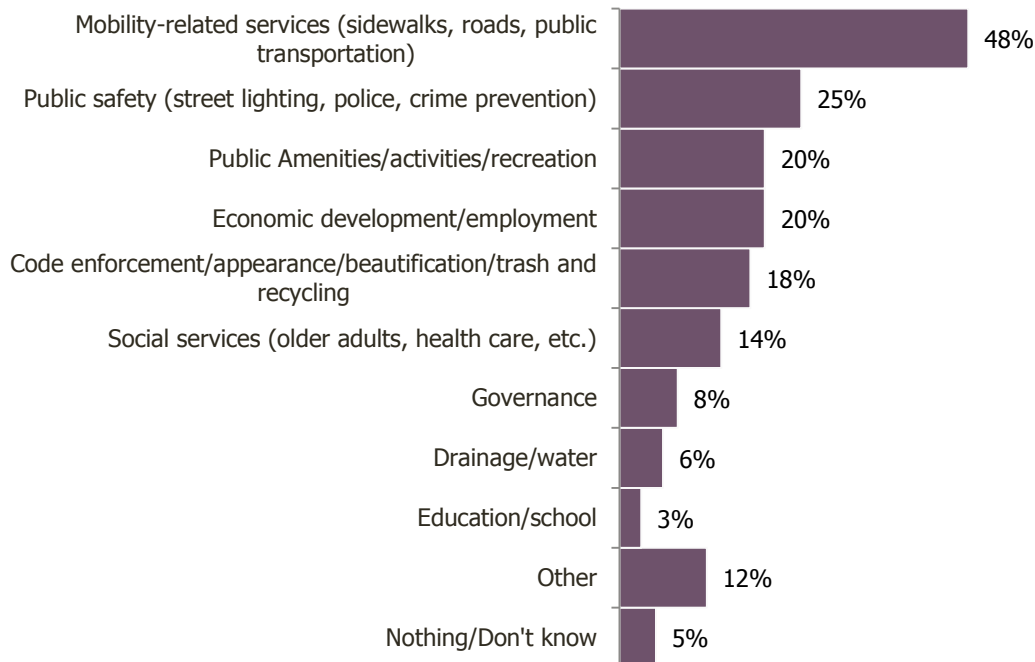


Figure 10: St. Lucie County Services
Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by St. Lucie County?



The City also provided residents with the option to write in three services they would like to see Port St. Lucie provide and 136 respondents chose to provide a response, totaling 297 total responses. Nearly half of the responses provided by residents indicated a desire for the City to provide a service related to mobility, including more or new sidewalks, road repair and widening and public transportation. About 2 in 10 cited a safety service (such as improving street lighting, police patrols and presence and crime prevention); public amenities, activities or recreation; or economic development and employment. (Complete verbatim responses to this open-ended question can be found in the *Open-end Report* provided under a separate cover.)

Figure 11: Top Services for City to Provide to Residents
What are the top three City services that you would like the City to provide that are not currently being provided?



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

Conclusions

Residents' ratings for the quality of life and services provided by the City have improved.

The City of Port St. Lucie has shown growth and improvement since 2009. Across the entire 2018 survey, there were 28 increases for aspects of the community and 17 increases for services provided by the City. Respondents' evaluations for the overall quality of life; neighborhoods; the City as a place to retire, raise children and live; and the overall appearance and image have each improved considerably since the baseline survey in 2009.

Furthermore, resident sentiment toward City services, such as police, crime and fire prevention, natural areas preservation, storm drainage, code enforcement and health services, has improved in 2018. These strides are reflected in a more positive score for the overall services provided by the City and in the increase in residents' recommendations of the City and intentions to remain in the community for the next five years.

Getting around the City is easier, but residents would like to see further improvements in Mobility.

Nine years ago, Port St. Lucie residents expressed some dissatisfaction with travel and transportation within the community. The City listened and residents noticed. Many Mobility-related services increased since the last administration: respondents' assessments of ease of travel by all modes (car, bicycle and walking); the availability of paths and walking trails; sidewalk maintenance; and bus or transit services are all more positive in 2018 than in 2009. While the City has made progress, survey participants identified areas in need of further improvement. Specifically, ratings for travel by car, bicycle and public transportation; paths and walking trails; street lighting; and bus or transit were lower than national averages. Moreover, when residents identified additional services for the City to provide, nearly half of all responses cited Mobility improvements (e.g., new or more sidewalks, road repair and construction and public transportation). In response to a question gauging respondent support for two different sales tax increases, at least three-quarters indicated they would support installing sidewalks city-wide, improving traffic flow along St. Lucie West Boulevard and repaving roadways, regardless of the sales tax terms.

As Economy ratings rise, successes and challenges emerge.

The economic downturn of 2009 may still be in residents' minds; they identified Economy as a key community focus area for the future. Scores for the overall economic health of the community, vibrancy of the downtown/commercial area and the community as a place to work or visit lagged behind U.S. averages. Ratings for the quality of business and service establishments and shopping opportunities increased between 2009 and 2018, yet remained on par with peer communities. Other measures also increased since 2009, including employment opportunities, the City as a place to work and economic development. Additionally, Port St. Lucie residents reported greater optimism about the economy's impact on their future income today than they did nine years ago, which was higher than levels reported elsewhere. Residents cited economic development and employment as a top service for the City to provide and a majority of residents supported a tax increase to develop Riverfront Park.

Survey participants reveal greater need for Education and Enrichment activities.

The overall education and enrichment opportunities provided the City of Port St. Lucie received ratings lower than the national average. Similarly, residents' views on the opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities and scores for K-12 education lagged behind comparison communities. In the next two years, about 8 in 10 respondents emphasized the importance of overall education and enrichment as a focus area. A similar proportion felt it was important for the City to create a vocational/technical high school to prepare students for the workforce. While education was not cited as a top service for the City to provide, a significant number of responses reflected things for residents to do in their free time, such as public amenities, activities and recreation, are a priority.