

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

# Issaquah, WA

Community Livability Report

2019



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# About

The National Community Survey™ (The NCS™) report is about the “livability” of Issaquah. 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 643 residents of the City of Issaquah. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% 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 Issaquah

Almost all residents (90%) rated the quality of life in Issaquah as excellent or good. This rating was similar to those given in other communities across the nation and in other communities in Washington, Oregon and California with average annual household income similar to Issaquah (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.

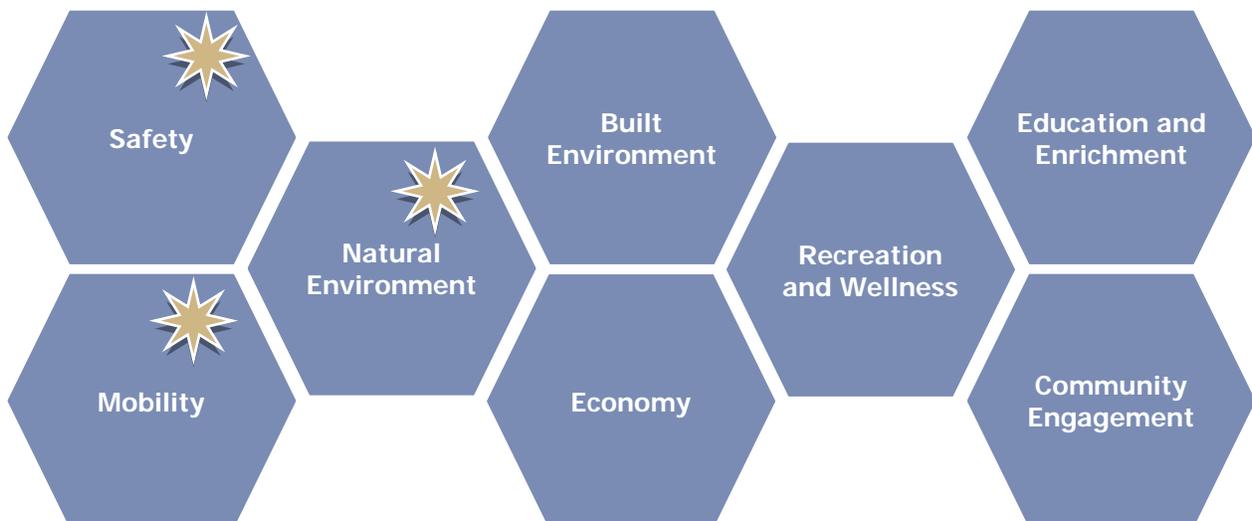
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. As in 2017, residents identified Safety, Mobility and Natural Environment as priorities for the Issaquah community in the coming two years. These facets, as well as all other facets of community livability, received ratings that were similar to the national benchmarks. 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 Issaquah’s unique questions.

## Legend

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

- Most important



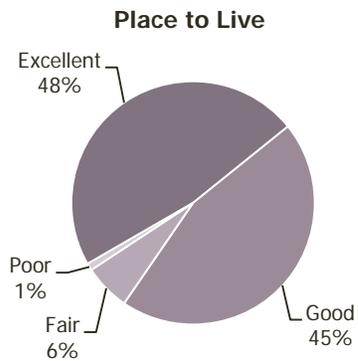
# Community Characteristics

*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 Issaquah, 93% rated the city as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Issaquah as a place to live were similar to the national and peer community benchmarks.

In addition to rating the city as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Issaquah as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Issaquah and its overall appearance. About 9 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to Issaquah as a place to raise children and the overall appearance of the city, and these evaluations were higher than those given elsewhere across the nation. At least 8 in 10 residents were pleased with their neighborhood as a place to live and the overall image of the city, while 6 in 10 gave favorable marks to the city as a place to retire; these ratings were similar to the national benchmarks.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Ratings were particularly strong within the facets of Natural Environment and Recreation and Wellness; many of these aspects received ratings higher than the national benchmarks and most were rated positively by at least 8 in 10 respondents.

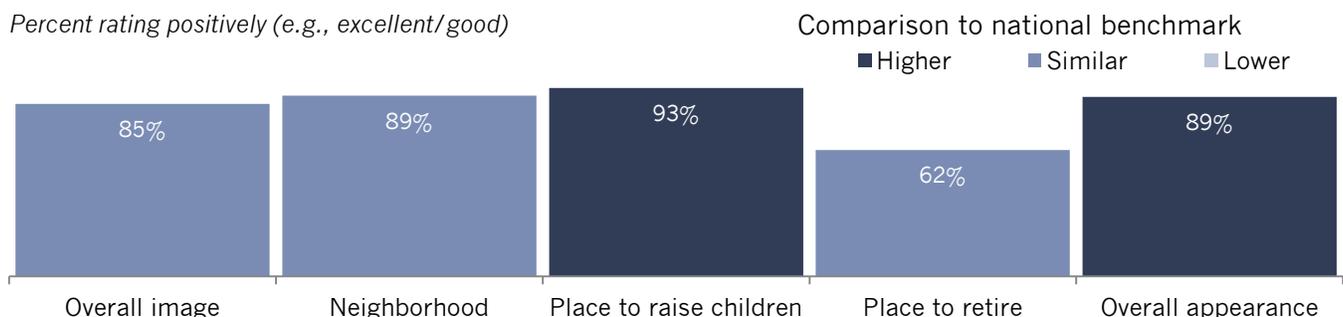


Within the facet of Economy, 8 in 10 residents gave favorable reviews to the overall economic health of the city, which was higher than average. At least 6 in 10 were pleased with most other aspects of the local economy, including shopping opportunities and Issaquah's vibrant downtown/commercial area, and these ratings were similar to the national benchmarks. However, only 2 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to cost of living, which was below average; further, the rating for employment opportunities decreased from 2017 to 2019 (for more information see the *Trends Over Time* report under separate cover).

Ratings within the facet of Mobility were also mixed. While 8 in 10 respondents were pleased with paths and walking trails (an above-average rating) and 7 in 10 positively rated the ease of walking in the city, about half of residents or less gave favorable reviews to the overall ease of travel in Issaquah, ease of travel by car and traffic flow; these ratings were lower than the national benchmarks.

When compared to 2017, ratings in 2019 declined for the overall quality of new development in Issaquah, health and wellness opportunities, adult educational opportunities and several aspects of Community Engagement.

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



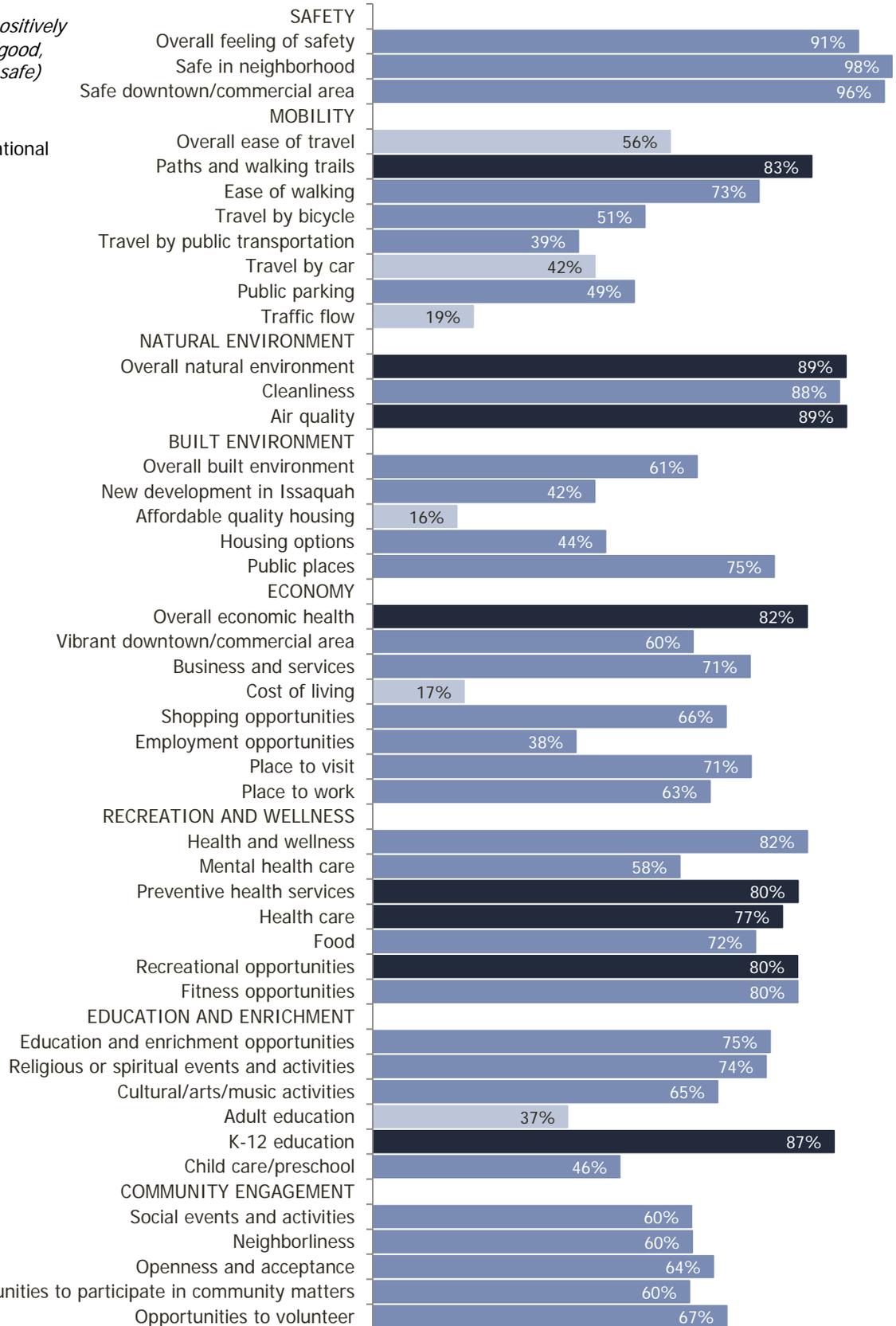
# The National Community Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

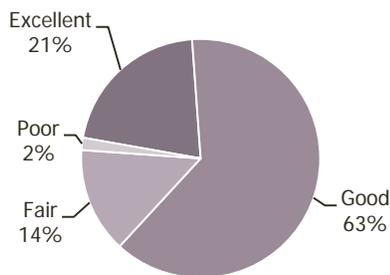
*How well does the government of Issaquah meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Issaquah as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the overall quality of City services while 4 in 10 were pleased with the services provided by the Federal Government; both of these evaluations were similar to those given in other communities across the nation and in Issaquah's peer community comparison group.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Issaquah's leadership and governance. About three-quarters of residents gave favorable marks to the customer service provided by the City employees, which was on par with the benchmark comparisons, but a decrease from 2017. Roughly half of residents or more gave positive ratings to the remaining aspects of government performance; all of these were similar to ratings given in other communities nationwide and to 2017 ratings, except for the job Issaquah government does at treating all residents fairly, which declined.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Issaquah. Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Issaquah. Almost all aspects of Governance received positive ratings from at least half of residents and all were rated similar to or higher than the benchmark. About 9 in 10 residents were pleased with police, fire and ambulance/EMS services, yard waste pick-up, City parks and public libraries. When compared to the national benchmarks, four services provided by the City of Issaquah stood out above national averages: bus or transit services, drinking water, storm drainage and health services.

Overall Quality of City Services

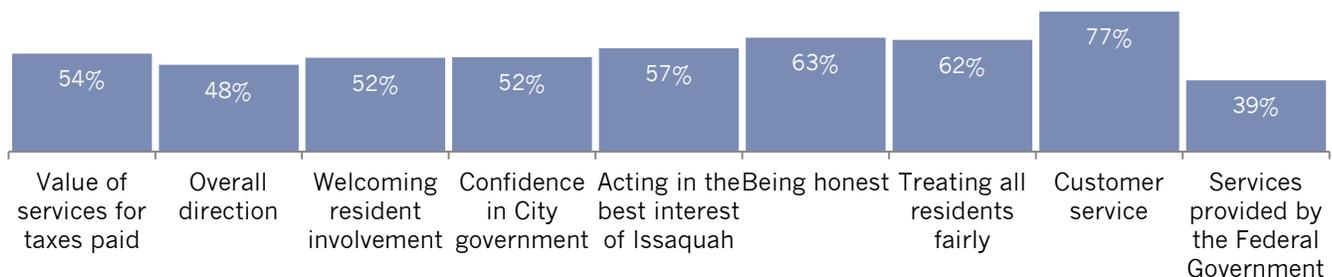


Compared to 2017, ratings in 2019 declined for seven services (emergency preparedness, snow removal, traffic signal timing, power utility, utility billing, cable television and economic development) and improved for one service (natural areas preservation).

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



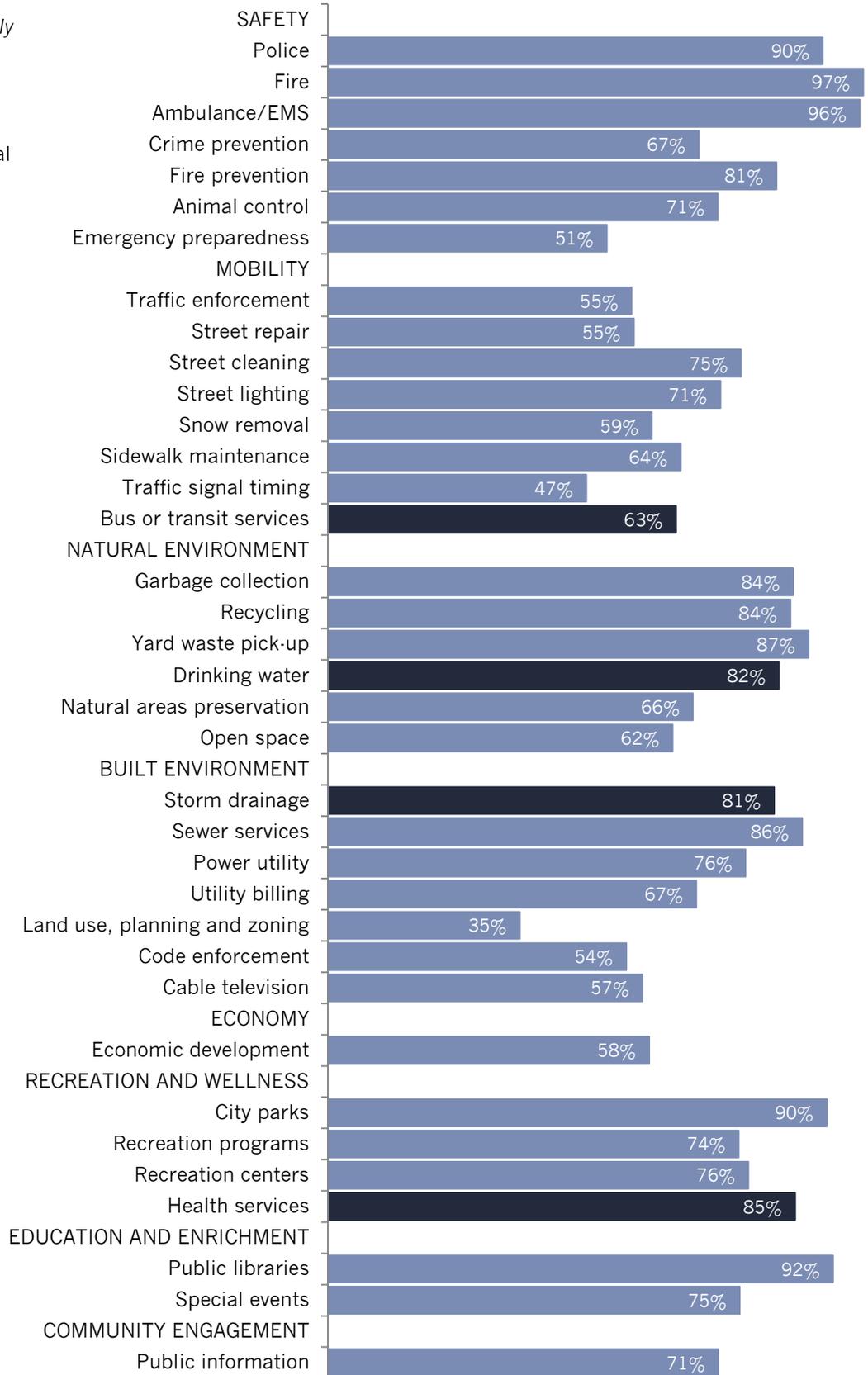
# The National Community Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

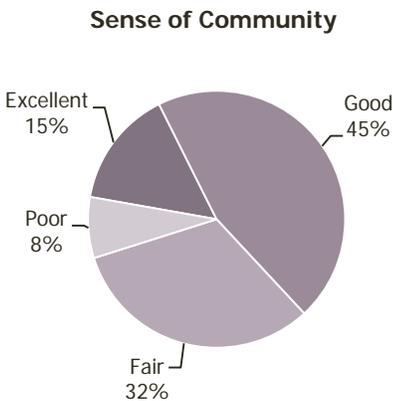


# Participation

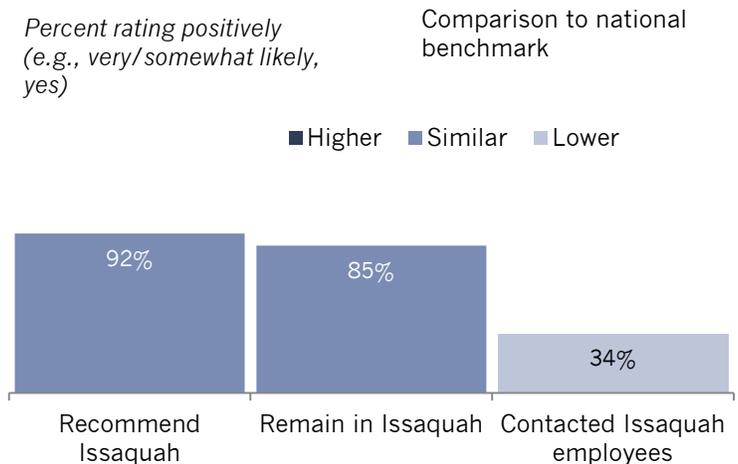
*Are the residents of Issaquah connected to the community and each other?*

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 6 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the sense of community in Issaquah, which was on par with the national and peer community comparisons. At least 8 in 10 residents would recommend living in Issaquah to someone who asked and planned to remain in the community for the next five years; these ratings were similar to the national averages. Only one-third of residents had contacted the City in the 12 months prior to the survey, 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. Participation rates varied widely across the different facets, making the benchmark comparisons (and comparison to Issaquah over time) helpful for understanding the results. Most participation levels were similar to the national benchmarks. Residents in Issaquah were more likely than those who lived in other communities across the country to have stocked supplies for an emergency, used public transportation, carpooled or recycled at home, and they were less likely to have observed a code violation. However, Issaquah residents reported lower rates of participating in religious or spiritual activities or reading or watching local news than others nationwide.



Compared to 2017, fewer residents in 2019 had campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate or read or watched local news. Residents in 2019 were also less likely than in 2017 to have a positive future economic outlook. However, fewer residents in 2019 reported being under housing cost stress.



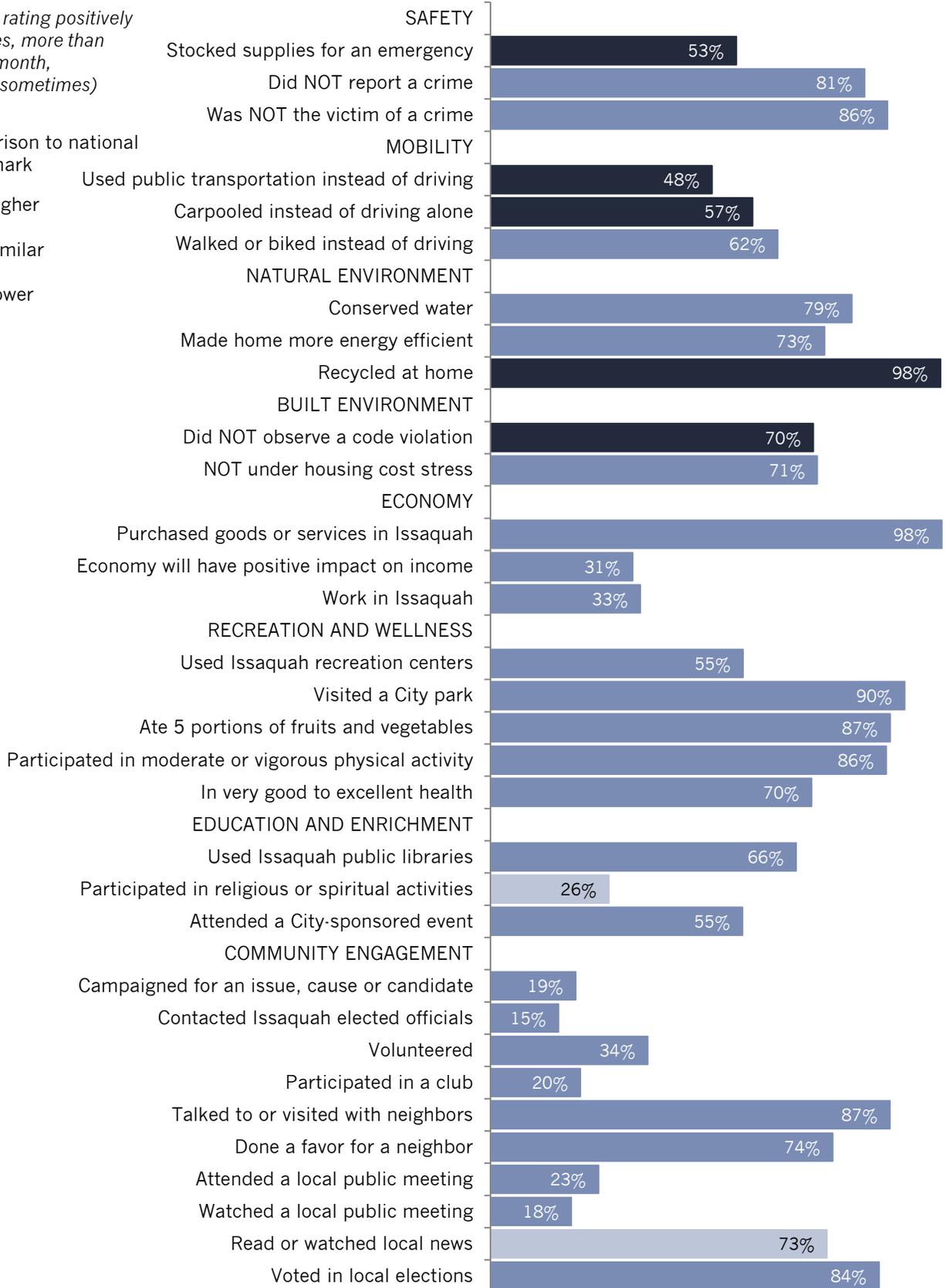
# The National Community Survey™

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

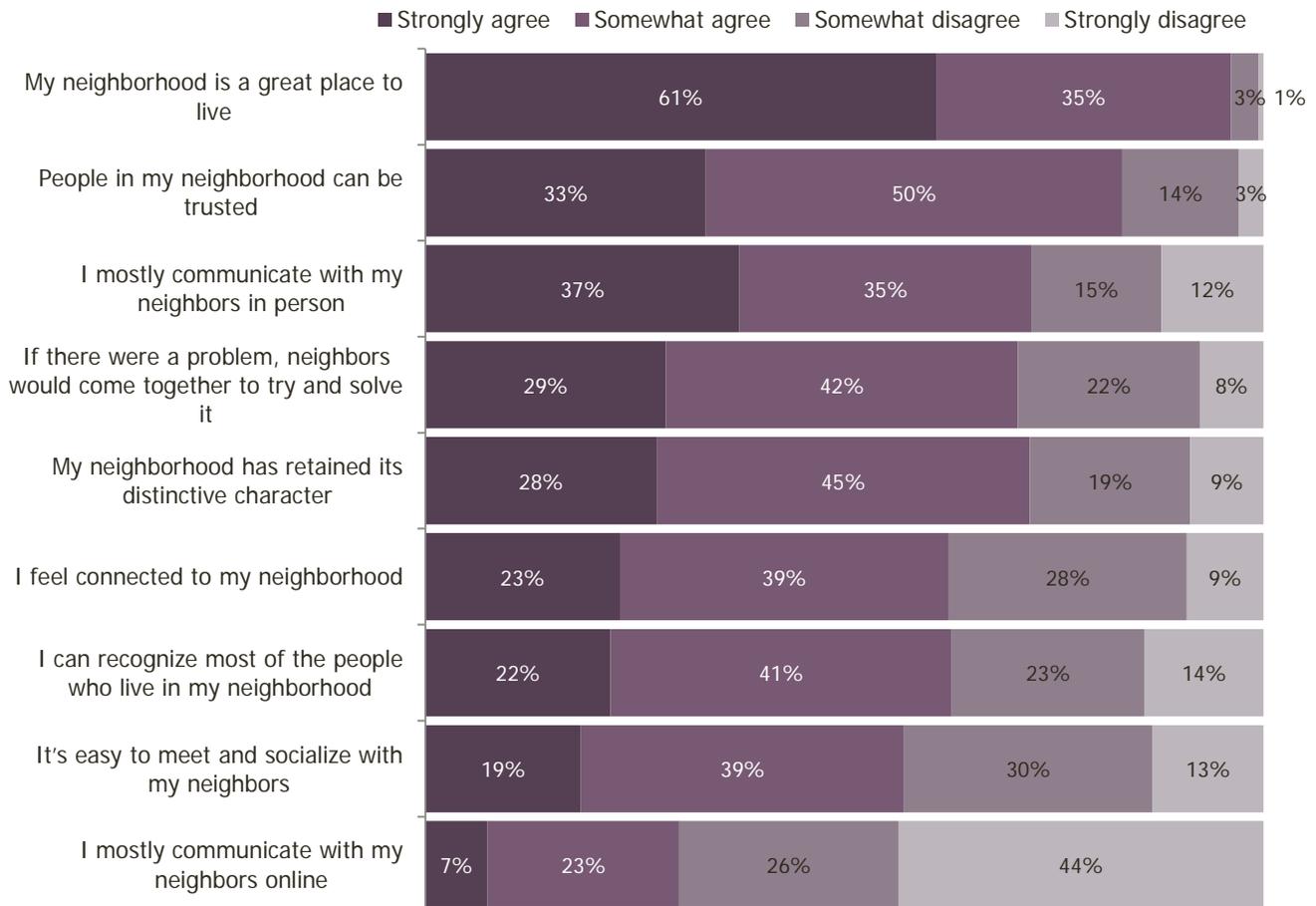


# Special Topics

The City of Issaquah included three questions of special interest on The NCS. Topic areas included residents' feelings of connection with their neighbors and neighborhoods, sources of City information and use of alternate modes of transportation.

Residents considered a series of questions related to their feelings of connectedness with their neighbors and neighborhoods and to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Residents were most likely to agree that their neighborhood was a great place to live (96% strongly or somewhat agree) and that people in their neighborhood could be trusted (83%). About 7 in 10 agreed that they mostly communicated with their neighbors in person, that neighbors would come together to solve a problem and that their neighborhood had retained its distinctive character. Residents were least likely to agree that they mostly communicated with their neighbors online (only 3 in 10 strongly or somewhat agreed with this statement).

Figure 4: Connection to Neighbors and Neighborhoods  
Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding your neighborhood:

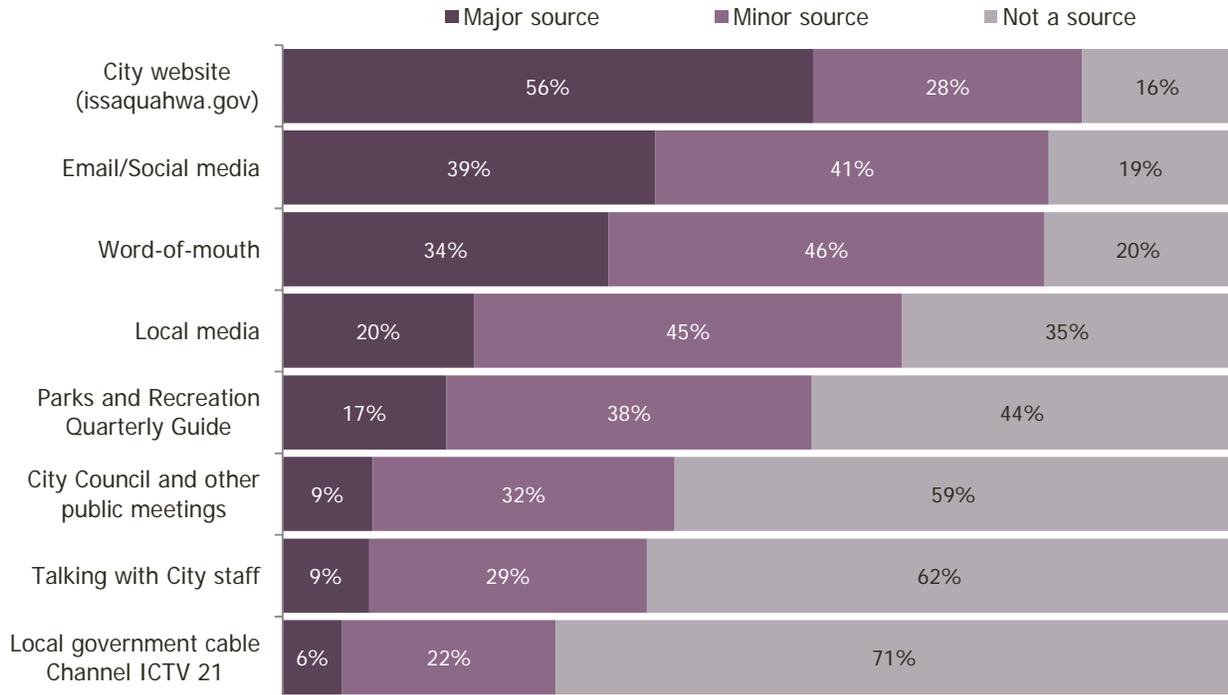


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Respondents were asked to consider a list of potential information sources about the City and to indicate whether they used each as a major source of information, minor source of information, or not at all. Most residents (84%) reported using the City website as an information source, and 8 in 10 utilized email/social media or word-of-mouth as sources of information about the City. About 4 in 10 residents or fewer reported using City Council and other public meetings, talking with City staff and the local government cable channel ICTV 21 as major or minor sources of information about Issaquah.

Figure 5: Sources of City Information

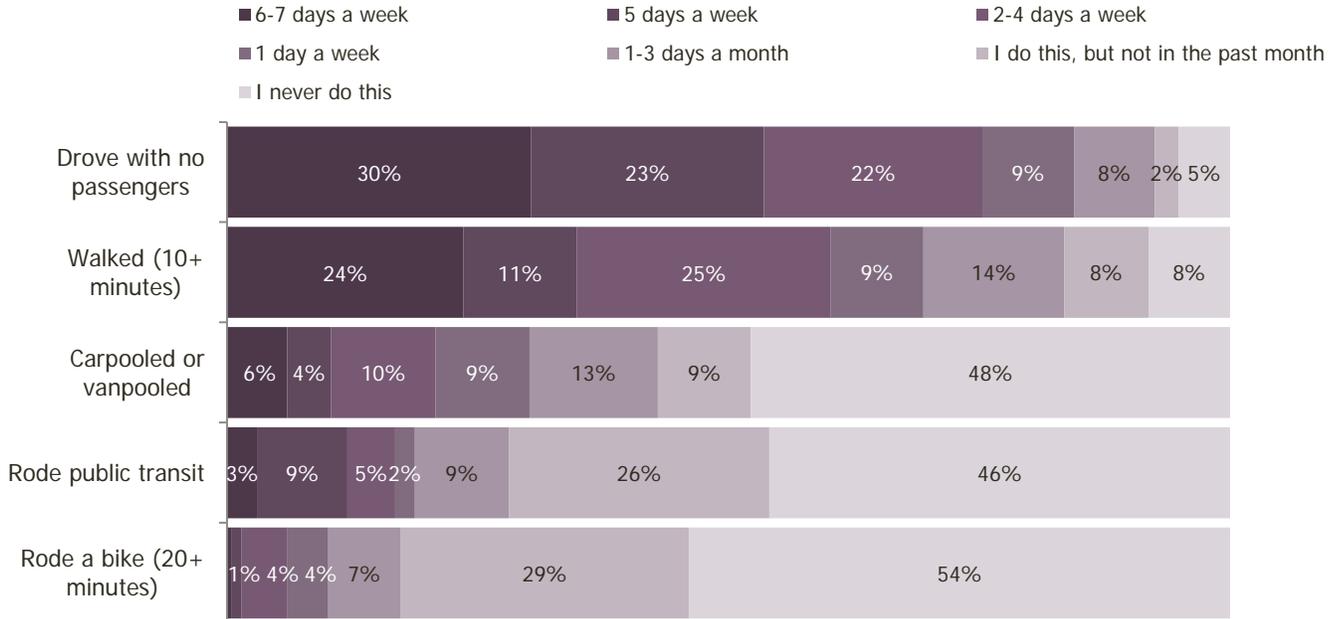
*How much of a source, if at all, do you consider each of the following to be for obtaining information about the City and its activities, events and services:*



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Residents were asked to indicate how often they had used various modes of transportation in the month prior to the survey. Almost all residents had driven without passengers in the previous month, and most (84%) had walked 10 minutes or more. About 4 in 10 residents had carpooled or vanpooled, 3 in 10 had ridden public transit and 2 in 10 had ridden a bike for 20 minutes or more.

Figure 6: Use of Alternate Transportation Modes  
*In the last month, how often have you traveled in each of the following ways?*



# Conclusions

## Issaquah residents continue to rate their quality of life positively.

As in previous years, most residents rated their quality of life positively in Issaquah and think the City is an excellent or good place to live. About 9 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to Issaquah as a place to raise children and the overall appearance of the city, and these evaluations were higher than those given elsewhere across the nation. At least 8 in 10 residents were pleased with their neighborhood as a place to live and the overall image of the city, while 6 in 10 gave favorable marks to the city as a place to retire. At least 8 in 10 residents would recommend living in Issaquah to someone who asked and planned to remain in the community for the next five years. When asked to consider a series of questions related to their feelings of connectedness with their neighbors and neighborhoods, virtually all residents agreed that their neighborhood was a great place to live, and 8 in 10 agreed that people in their neighborhood could be trusted.

## Safety remains a priority to residents and earns high marks in Issaquah.

Residents identified Safety as an important focus area for the City, and aspects within this facet tended to be strong. Nearly all respondents reported feeling safe in their neighborhood and in Issaquah's downtown/commercial area, and 9 in 10 gave positive reviews to the overall feeling of safety in the city. At least 9 in 10 residents gave excellent or good scores to police, fire and ambulance/EMS services. Half of residents reported stocking supplies for an emergency, which was a higher level than the national average. Eight in ten residents had not reported a crime nor been the victim of a crime in the 12 months prior to the survey.

## Challenges remain in the area of Mobility.

Residents also indicated that Mobility would be an important area of focus for the City in the coming years, and ratings within this facet tended to be mixed. Eight in ten respondents were pleased with paths and walking trails (an above-average rating) and 7 in 10 positively rated the ease of walking in the city. Further, about half of residents or more gave positive ratings to all Mobility-related services and 6 in 10 respondents were pleased with bus or transit services, which was higher than the national benchmark. Residents in Issaquah were also more likely than those who lived in other communities across the country to have used public transportation or carpooled in favor of driving alone. However, about half of residents or less gave favorable reviews to the overall ease of travel in Issaquah, ease of travel by car and traffic flow; these ratings were lower than the national averages. Additionally, ratings for snow removal and traffic signal timing declined from 2017 to 2019.

## Community Engagement may also be a potential area of focus for the City.

Most ratings within the facet of Community Engagement received ratings that were similar to those given in other communities across the nation; for example, about 6 in 10 residents gave excellent or good scores to opportunities to volunteer and to participate in community matters, openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds, the neighborliness of residents and social events and activities. However, some Community Engagement ratings declined from the previous survey iteration: opportunities to participate in community matters and to volunteer, openness and acceptance, and the job Issaquah government does at treating all residents fairly. Residents were also less likely in 2019 than 2017 to have campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate or to have read or watched local news. Thus, the City may want to consider additional engagement strategies going forward.