

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Monroe, MI

Community Livability Report

2018



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

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About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Monroe. 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 1,063 residents of the City of Monroe. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 3% 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 Monroe

Most residents rated the quality of life in Monroe as fair or better. The proportion of residents who rated quality of life as excellent or good was lower than seen in other communities across the nation (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.

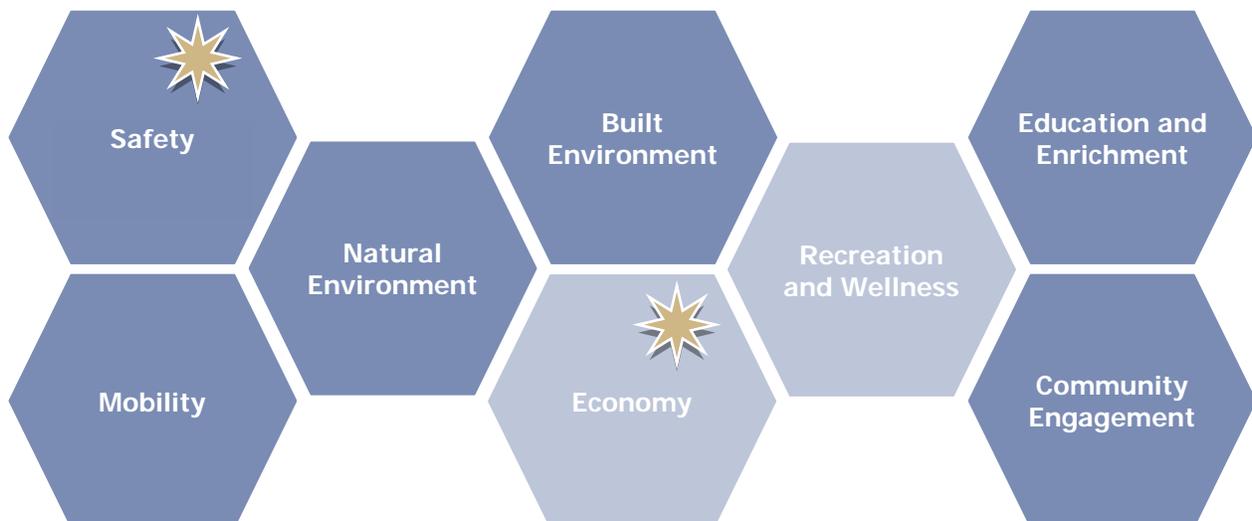
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Monroe community in the coming two years. Most facets of community livability received ratings similar to the benchmark except for Economy and Recreation and Wellness, which were lower. 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 Monroe's unique questions.

Legend

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

- Most important



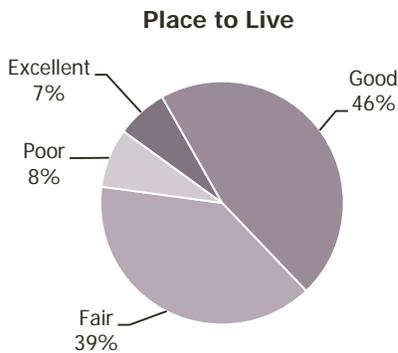
Community Characteristics

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 Monroe, 53% rated the city as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Monroe as a place to live were lower than 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 Monroe as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Monroe and its overall appearance. About 7 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to their neighborhood as a place to live, while fewer than half gave favorable marks to the remaining general aspects of community livability; all of these ratings were lower than the national benchmark.

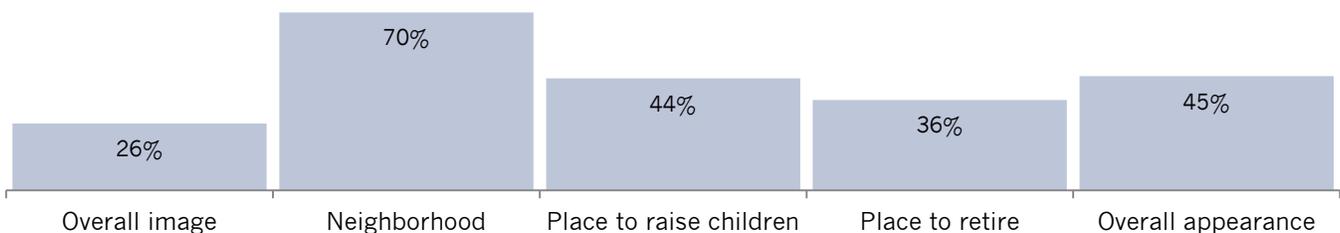
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. While ratings within the facets of Safety, Mobility and Education and Enrichment tended to be similar to national averages, evaluations within other facets tended to be lower. About one-quarter of residents or less gave positive marks to the overall quality of new development in Monroe, overall economic health of the city, vibrant downtown/commercial area, shopping opportunities and employment opportunities; thus, the City may consider prioritizing these aspects.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



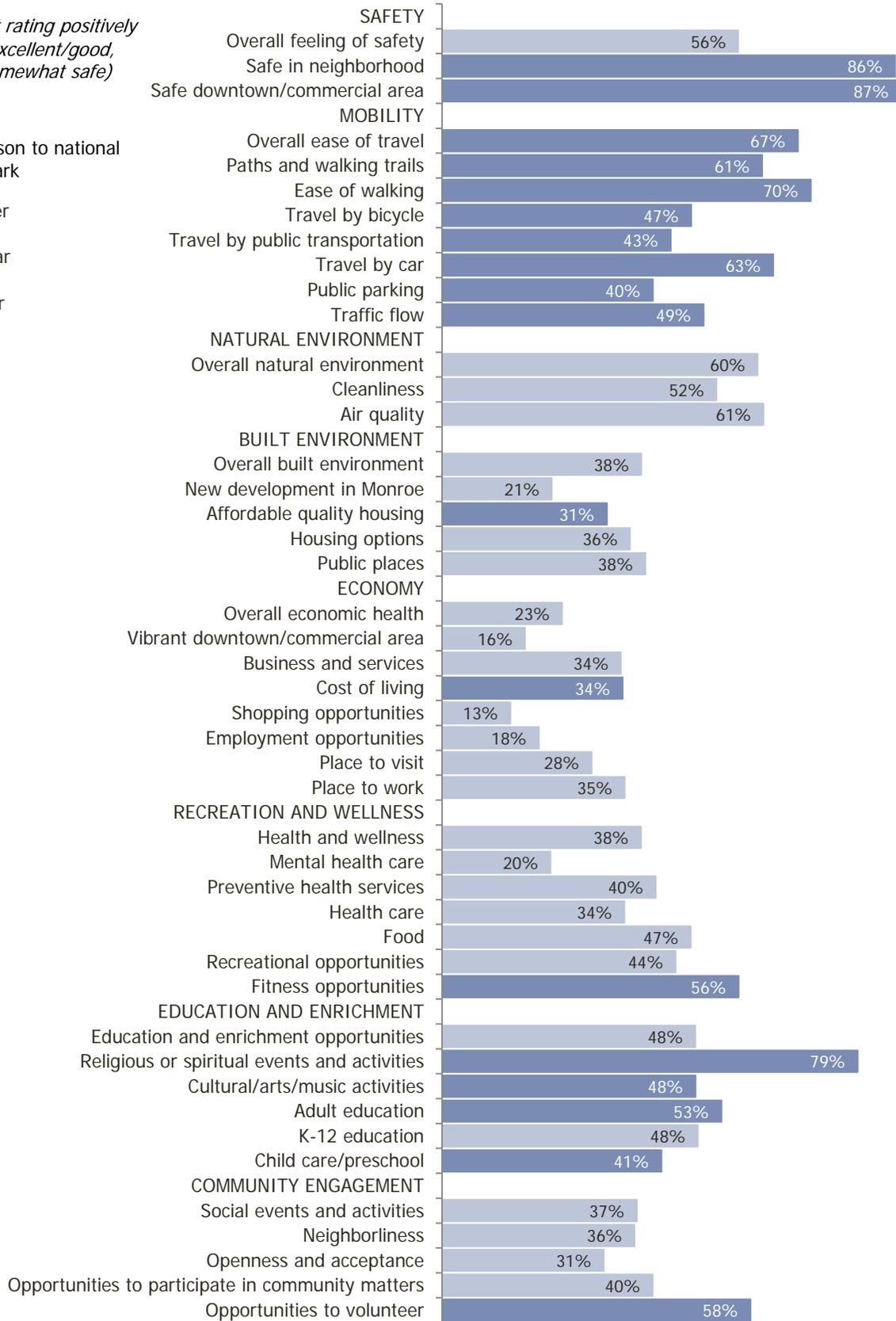
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

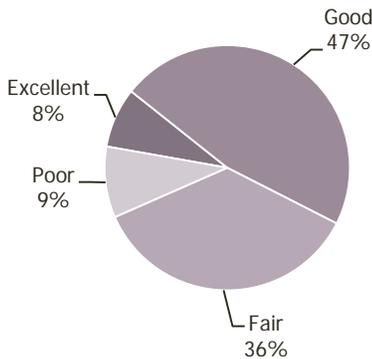
How well does the government of Monroe meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Monroe as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Slightly more than half of residents gave positive reviews to the services provided by the City of Monroe (which was lower than the benchmark comparison) and one-third were pleased with the services provided by the Federal Government (which was similar).

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Monroe’s leadership and governance. About 6 in 10 residents gave favorable evaluations to the customer service provided by the City, which was similar to ratings given elsewhere. The remaining aspects of government performance received positive marks from about 3 in 10 residents and these ratings were lower than the national benchmark.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Monroe. Broadly, ratings for City services tended to be similar to those observed in other communities across the nation. Evaluations were particularly strong for fire, ambulance/EMS, garbage collection, recycling, yard waste pick-up and public libraries; at least three-quarters of residents gave favorable ratings to each of these aspects. However, ratings in Monroe lagged behind the national average for crime prevention; street repair; snow removal; land use, planning and zoning; code enforcement; economic development; and several aspects of Recreation and Wellness.

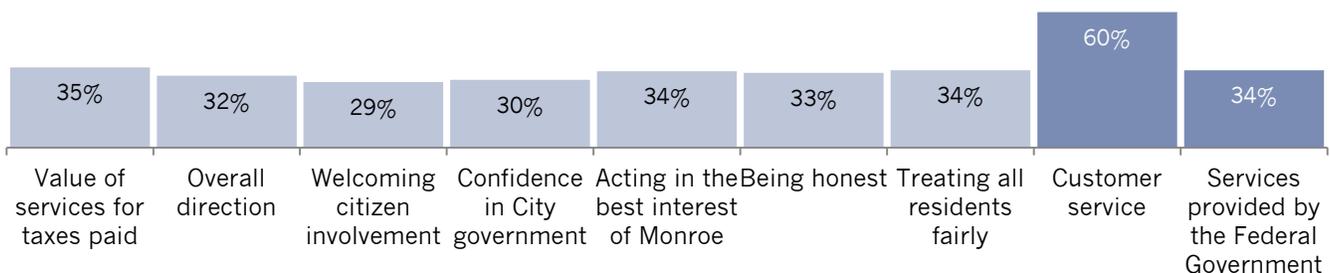
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



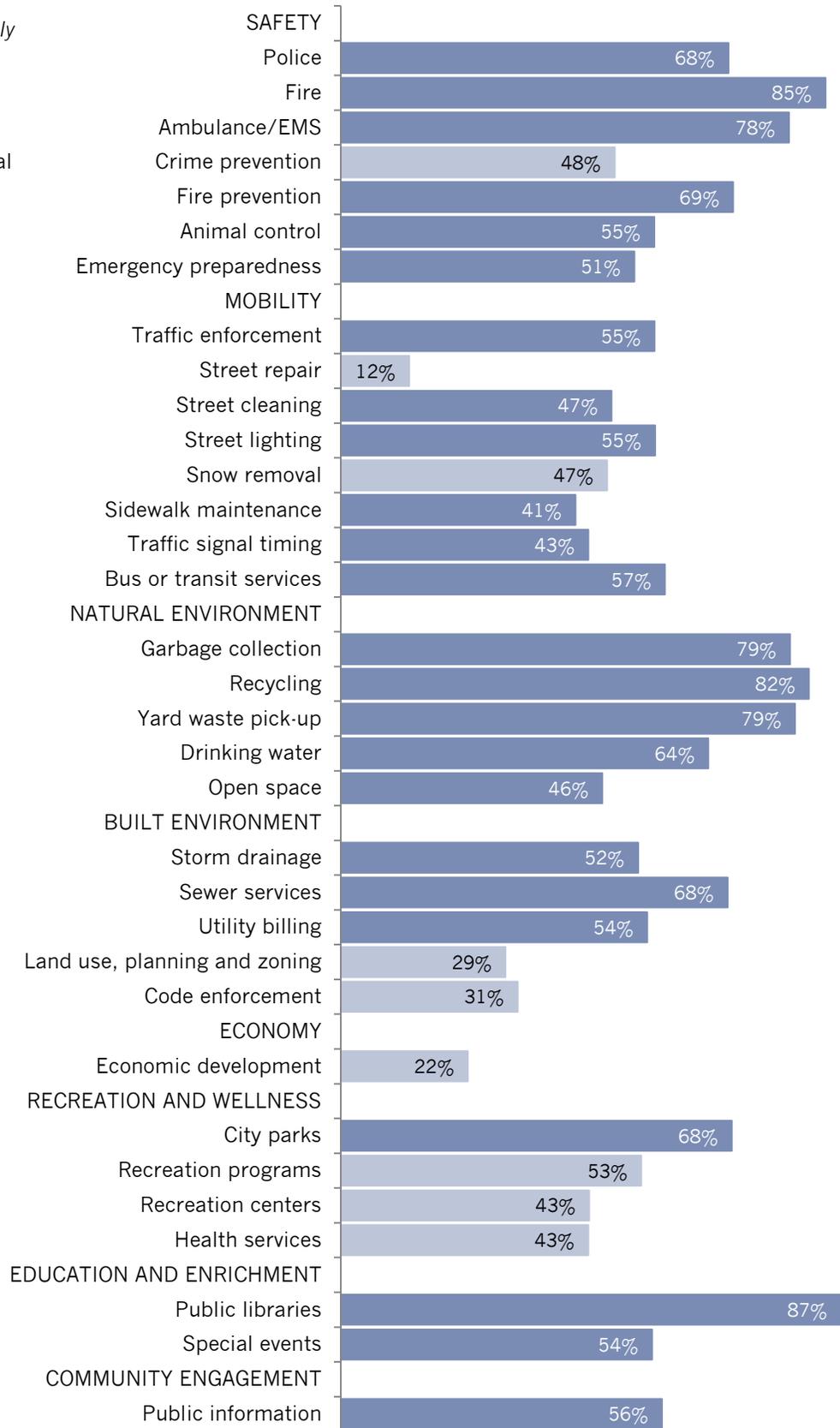
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

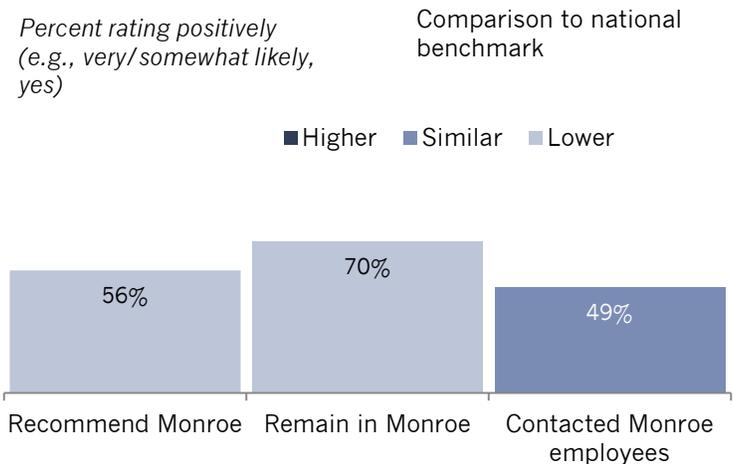
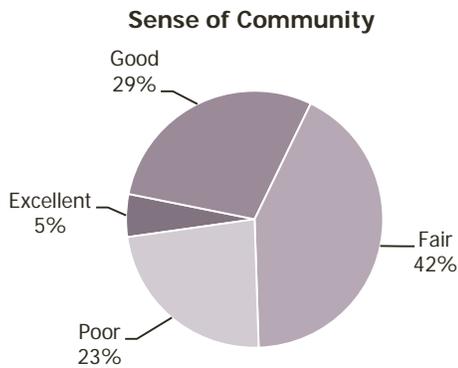


Participation

Are the residents of Monroe 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 Monroe, about one-third of residents gave positive reviews to the sense of community in the city, while about half would recommend Monroe to someone who asked and 7 in 10 planned to remain in the city for the next five years. These ratings were all 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. Levels of participation tended to vary widely across the different facets, making the benchmark comparison useful for interpreting the results. Most participation rates tended to be similar to those observed in other communities across the nation, and roughly 9 in 10 residents reported that they had not been the victim of a crime, recycled at home, purchased goods or services in Monroe, talked to or visited with their neighbors or voted in local elections. Monroe residents were more likely than those in other communities to have walked or biked instead of driving and to not be under housing cost stress; however, they were less likely than others to have used public transportation instead of driving or to have not observed a code violation.



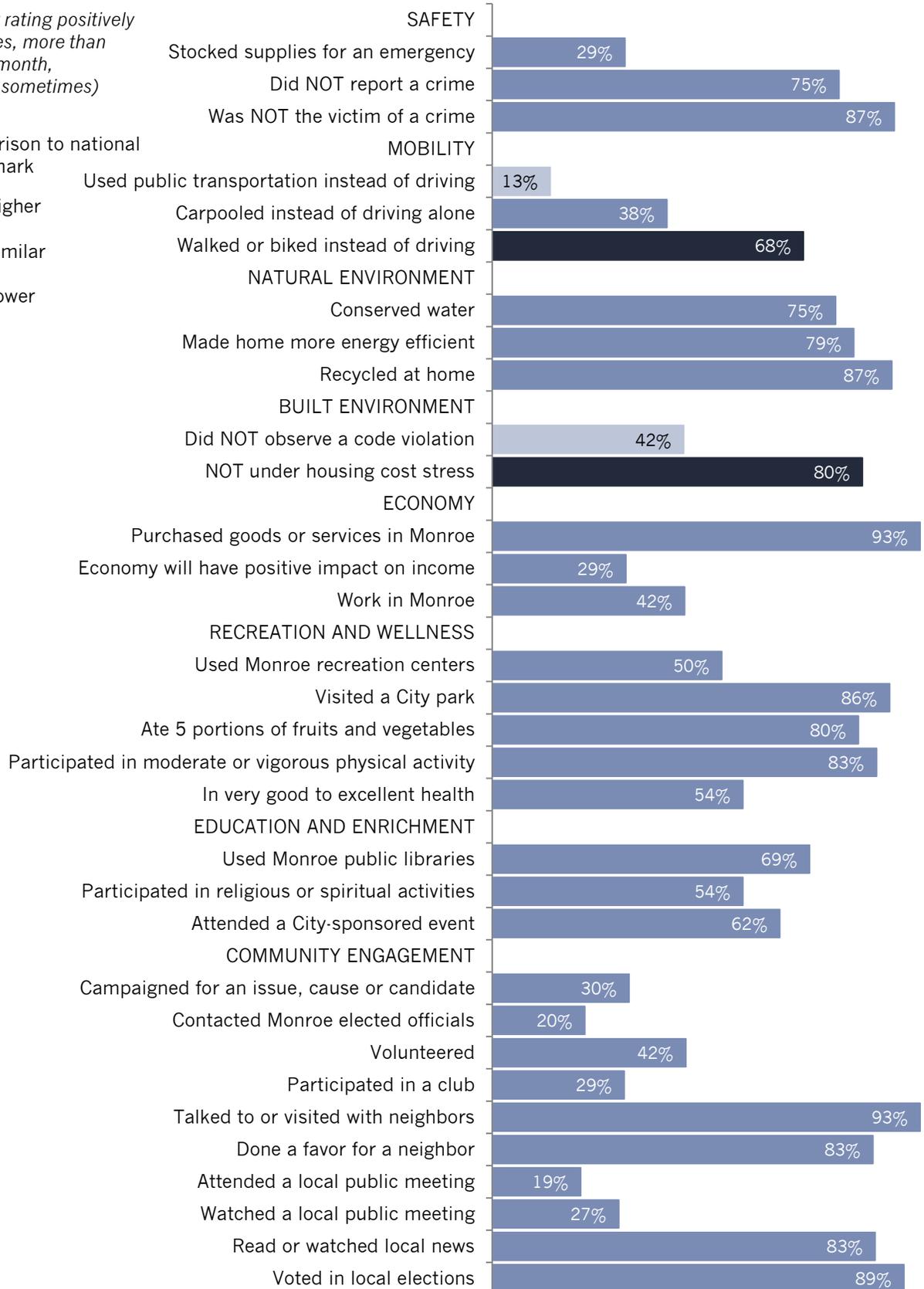
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



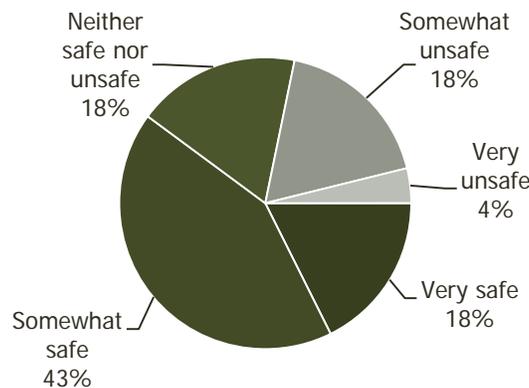
Special Topics

The City of Monroe included four questions of special interest on The NCS as well as three line additions to standard questions. Topic areas included strategic planning areas, City priorities and resident interaction with City departments.

Thinking about how safe they felt in Monroe's downtown/commercial area at night, about 6 in 10 residents reported feeling very or somewhat safe. About 2 in 10 felt unsafe and another 2 in 10 felt neither safe nor unsafe.

Figure 4: Line Addition to Question 4

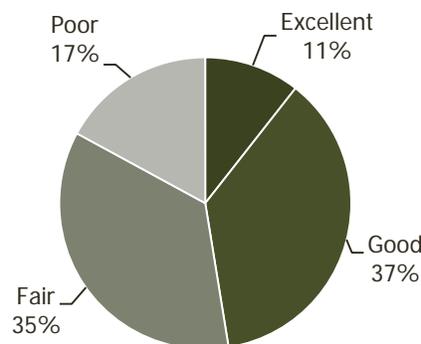
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel in the City of Monroe's downtown/commercial area at night:



About half of residents rated the quality of internet services in the city as excellent or good. Another one-third rated them as fair while 2 in 10 thought they were poor.

Figure 5: Line Addition to Question 10

Please rate the quality of internet services in the City of Monroe:

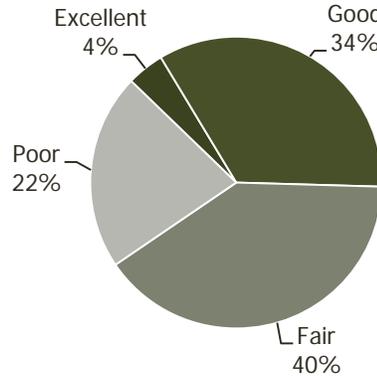


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When asked to rate the quality of the services provided by the State of Michigan, 38% rated them as excellent or good. This was higher than ratings that had been given to the Federal government (34%), but lower than what had been given to the quality of services provided by the City of Monroe (55%).

Figure 6: Line Addition to Question 11

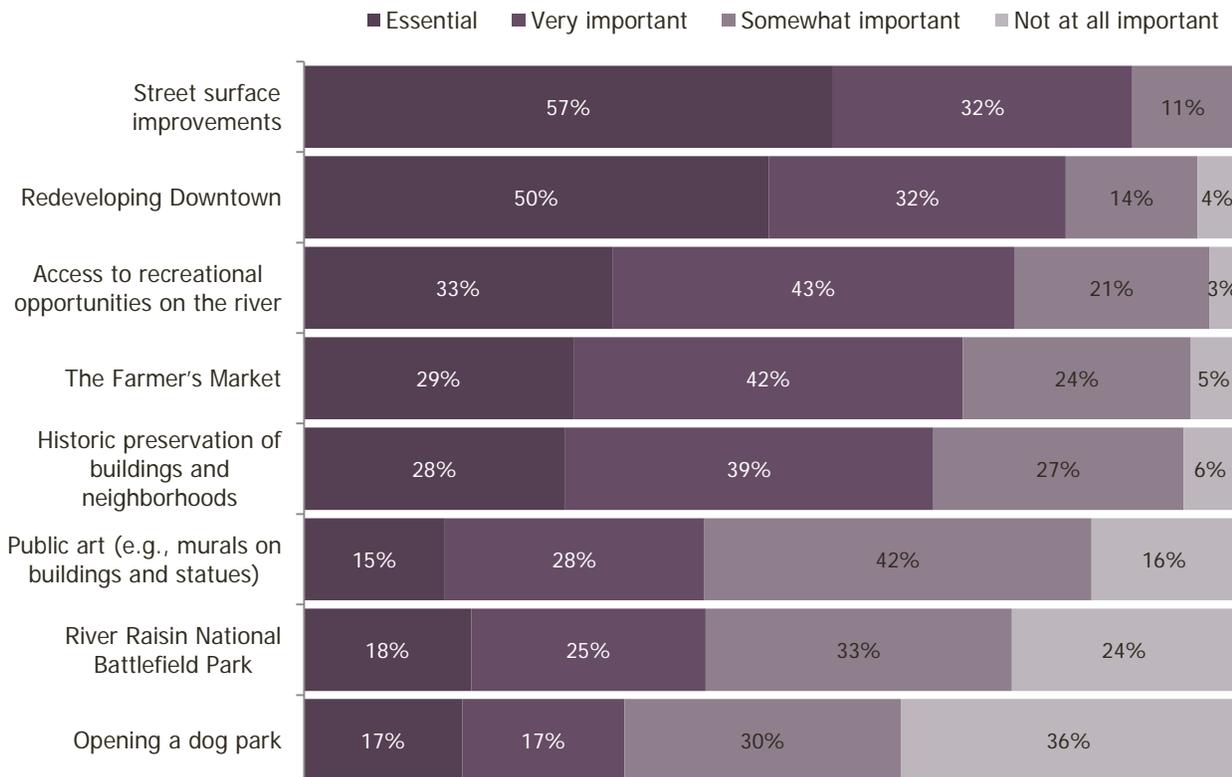
Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by the State of Michigan?



Residents rated the importance of various strategic planning areas to overall quality of life in the city. At least 8 in 10 residents thought that street surface improvements and redeveloping Downtown were essential or very important and at least two-thirds thought access to recreational opportunities on the river, the Farmer’s Market or historic preservation were essential or very important. Less than half (about 4 in 10) Monroe residents rated public art or the River Raisin National Battlefield Park as essential or very important, and only about a third considered opening a dog park essential or very important.

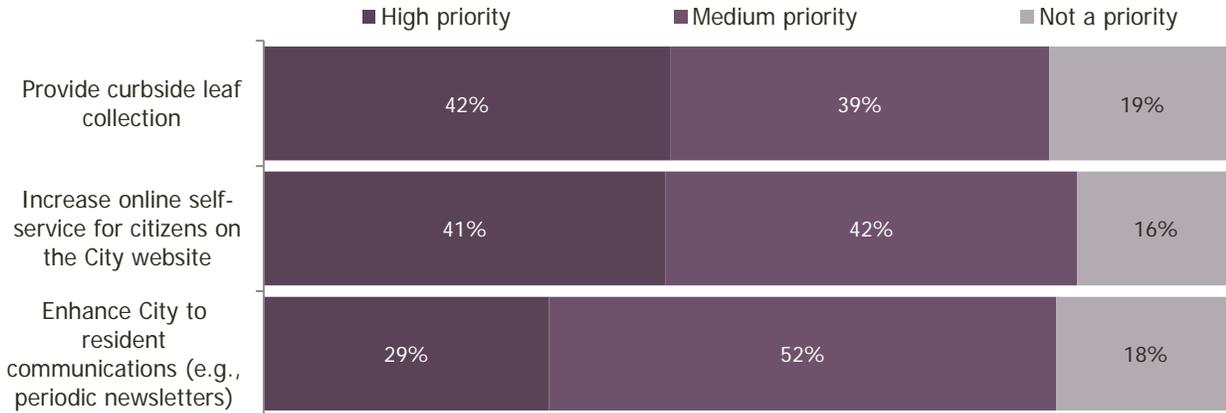
Figure 7: Importance of Strategic Planning Areas

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 Monroe:



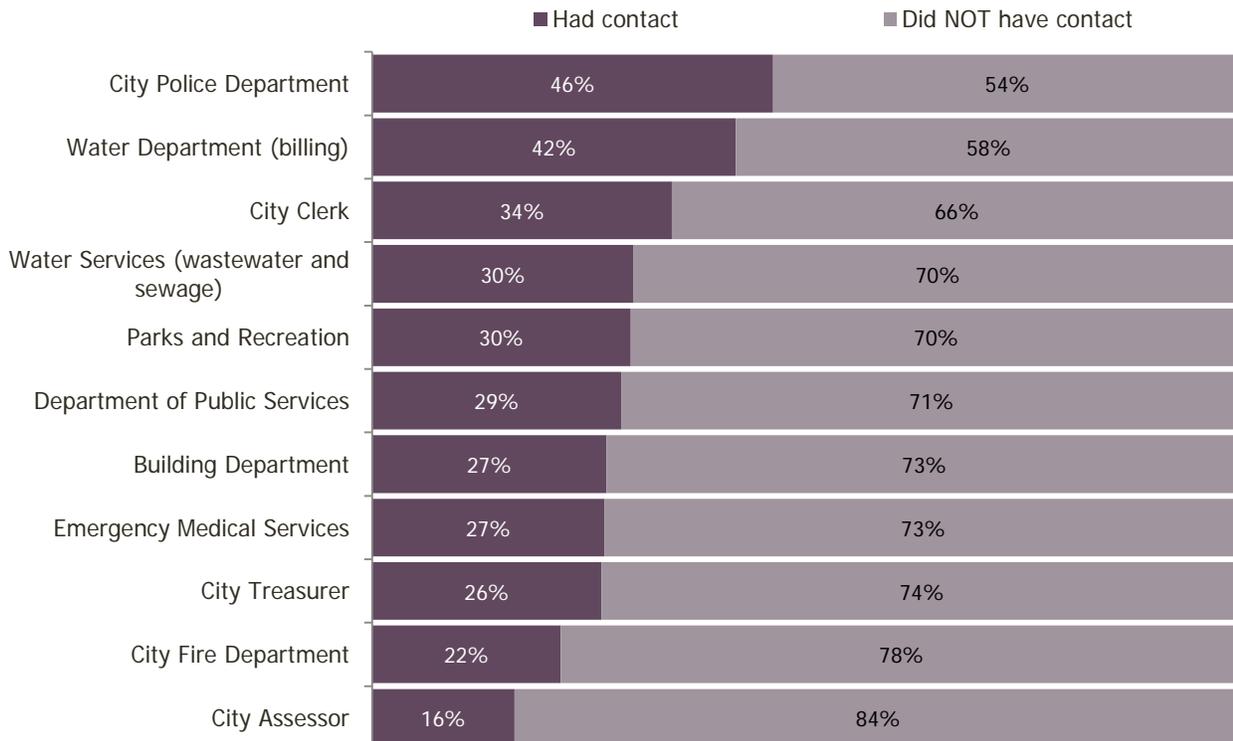
Thinking about City priorities, about 4 in 10 residents thought providing curbside leaf collection or increasing online self-service for citizens on the City website should be high priorities. A slightly lower proportion, about 3 in 10, thought enhancing City to resident communications should be a high priority.

Figure 8: City Priorities
 How much of a priority, if any, should it be for the City to do each of the following?



When asked to indicate whether they had had contact with a number of different City departments, about 4 in 10 residents had contacted the City Police or Water (billing) departments, and less than 1 in 10 had contacted the City Assessor. Between one-third and one-quarter of residents had contacted the other listed City departments.

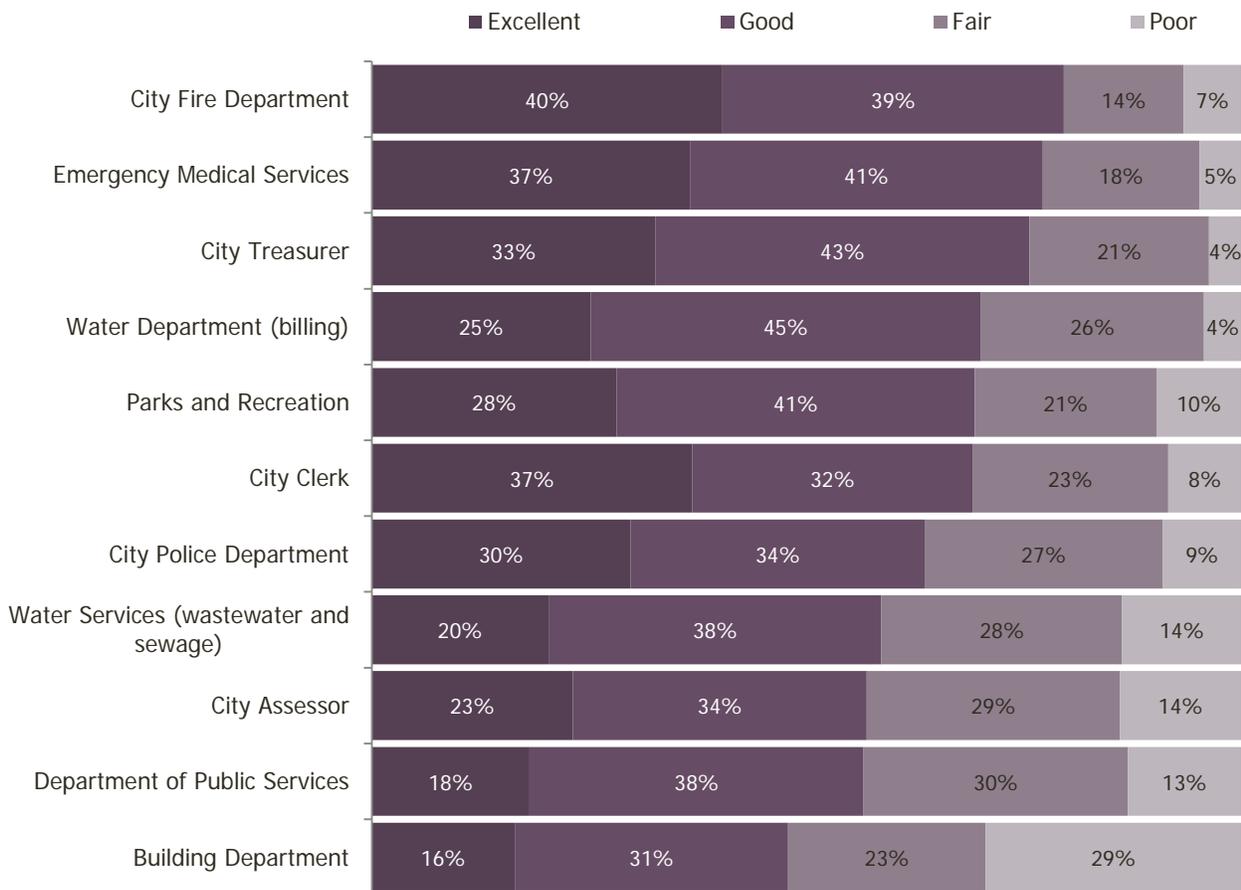
Figure 9: Contact with City Departments
 "Please rate the quality of your most recent interaction with each of the following City of Monroe departments in the past 12 months. (If you have not had contact with a department in the past 12 months, please circle did not contact)."



Residents who had had contact with a City department were asked to rate the quality of their most recent interaction with that department. About three-quarters of respondents or more gave excellent or good ratings to their interactions with the City Fire Department, Emergency Medical Services and the City Treasurer while about 7 in 10 were pleased with their dealings with the Water Department (billing), Parks and Recreation and the City Clerk. About two-thirds rated their interactions with the Police Department satisfactorily, and 6 in 10 gave positive ratings to Water Services (wastewater and sewage) and Public Services. However, only about 4 in 10 rated their most recent interaction with the Building Department as excellent or good.

Figure 10: Interaction with City Departments

"Please rate the quality of your most recent interaction with each of the following City of Monroe departments in the past 12 months. (If you have not had contact with a department in the past 12 months, please circle did not contact)."

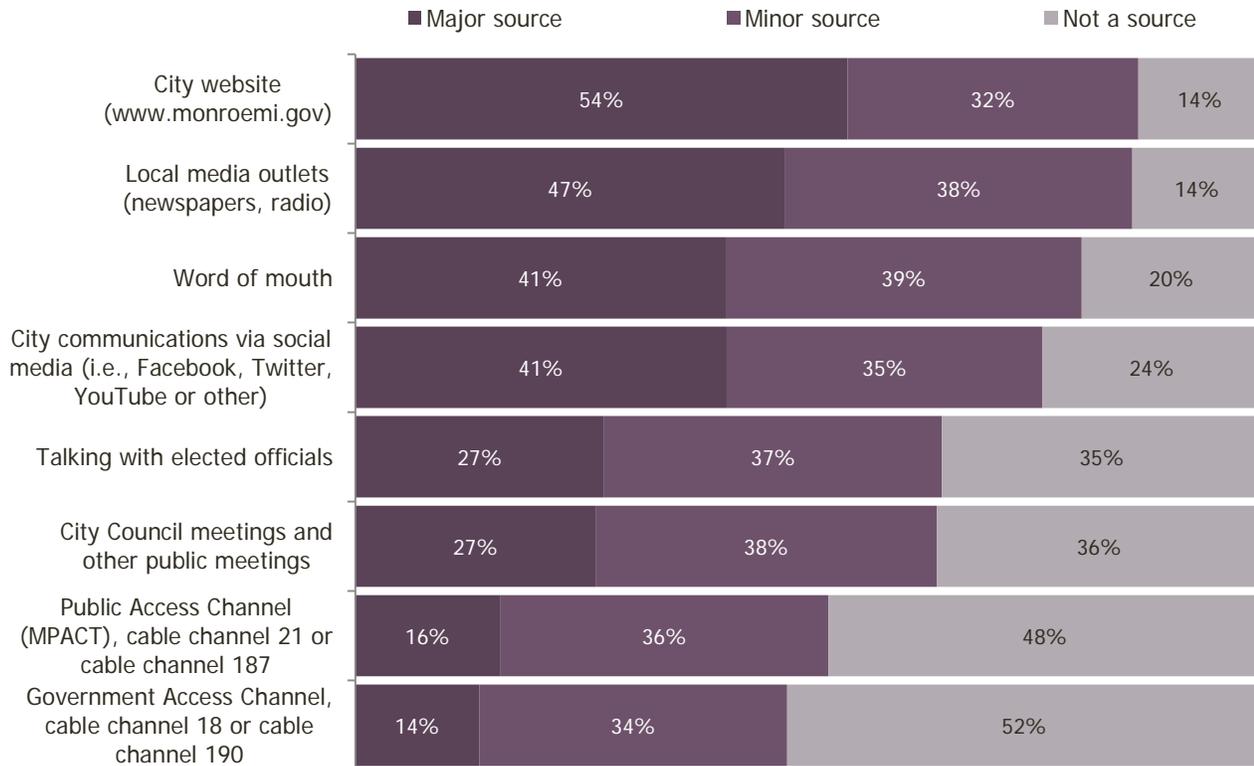


Only those residents who had had contact with each City department in the past 12 months were asked to rate the quality of their interaction.

One of the special-interest question on the survey asked residents to rate how much of an information source they felt each of a list of potential sources was about the City. At least three-quarters of residents used the City website, local media outlets, word of mouth and City social media communications as at least a minor source of information. The City’s website outpaced all of these sources as the most likely to be a major source of information. The least-utilized sources of information were public TV channels; but these were a major source of information for 14% to 16% of respondents, and at least a minor source for about 4 in 10 respondents.

Figure 11: 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:



Conclusions

Residents consider the economic health of Monroe one of the top priorities on which the City should concentrate in the next two years.

When asked how important they thought each of eight areas on which the City of Monroe should focus in the next two years were, just over 9 in 10 residents (92%) rated the economic health of the community as essential or very important. When asked how important various strategic efforts were to improving the quality of life in the City of Monroe, the second most important one was redeveloping the downtown, considered essential or very important by 82% of residents. (The area deemed most important was street surface improvements, rated as essential or very important by 89% of respondents.) Interestingly, the River Raisin National Battlefield Park was considered essential or very important by only 43% of respondents, which could be a tourism draw and possibly help the local economy.

Many ratings related to the local economy tended to be less than optimistic. One-third of residents or less gave positive marks to the overall economic health of Monroe, to a vibrant downtown/commercial area, to the overall quality of business or service establishments, to the shopping opportunities in Monroe or to the employment opportunities; these ratings were lower than those given in other communities nationwide. Two ratings, however, provided a bit of a bright spot. Ratings of the cost of living, considered excellent or good by only about a third of respondents, was a rating similar to the national benchmark. (It is common for residents to feel that cost of living is too high.) Eight in 10 survey respondents were **not** under housing cost stress, measured as the percent of income devoted to housing costs (30% or more is considered “under housing cost stress”). This was higher than the national benchmark.

While most Safety ratings are similar in Monroe to other communities, Safety is a priority for residents.

As focus area on which the City of Monroe should concentrate in the next two years, safety received the second highest proportion of respondents rating it as essential or very important (90%), following the local economy, as noted above. However, ratings of current conditions within this facet tended to be similar to those given in other communities across the nation. Nearly 9 in 10 respondents gave favorable marks to feeling safe in their neighborhoods (86%) and in Monroe’s downtown/commercial area (87%), while two-thirds were pleased with police service and about 8 in 10 with fire services and ambulance/EMS services. These ratings were all similar to the national benchmarks. Further, when asked about prior interactions with various City of Monroe departments in the past 12 months, residents were more likely to have contacted the police department than other departments, and two-thirds of those residents rated their interaction with the police department as excellent or good. However, only about half of residents gave positive ratings to the overall feeling of safety in Monroe or to crime prevention and these ratings were lower than the benchmark comparisons.

The City may also want to address aspects of Recreation and Wellness.

Many items related to Recreation and Wellness received ratings lower than those given in comparison communities on average. Some of the lower-rated health and wellness items included health and wellness opportunities, availability of affordable quality health care and mental health care and health services.

Recreational opportunities were rated positively by only 44% of respondents, a rating below the benchmark, but fitness opportunities received a rating similar to the benchmark comparison. Monroe residents were more likely than the comparison communities to have engaged in active transportation (bicycling and walking), which can confer a health benefit. City parks were given high marks by two-thirds of respondents, a rating similar to the benchmark, but recreation programs and centers were viewed less positively and had ratings lower than the benchmarks. Availability of affordable quality food was also rated as excellent or good by less than half of respondents, a rating below the benchmark comparison.

These ratings may help explain why three-quarters of residents considered access to recreational opportunities on the river or the Farmer’s Market as essential or very important strategic planning areas for the overall quality of life in the City of Monroe.