



**THE NCS™**  
The National Citizen Survey™

# Cañon City, CO

Community Livability Report

2017



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# Contents

About.....	1
Quality of Life in Cañon City .....	2
Community Characteristics .....	3
Governance .....	5
Participation .....	7
Special Topics.....	9
Conclusions .....	13

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# About

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

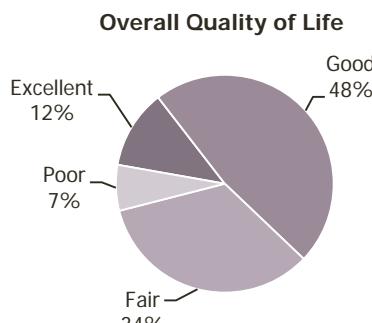
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 558 residents of the City of Cañon City. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% for all respondents. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



# Quality of Life in Cañon City

A majority of residents rated the quality of life in Cañon City as excellent or good. This was lower than ratings observed in other communities across the U.S. (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.



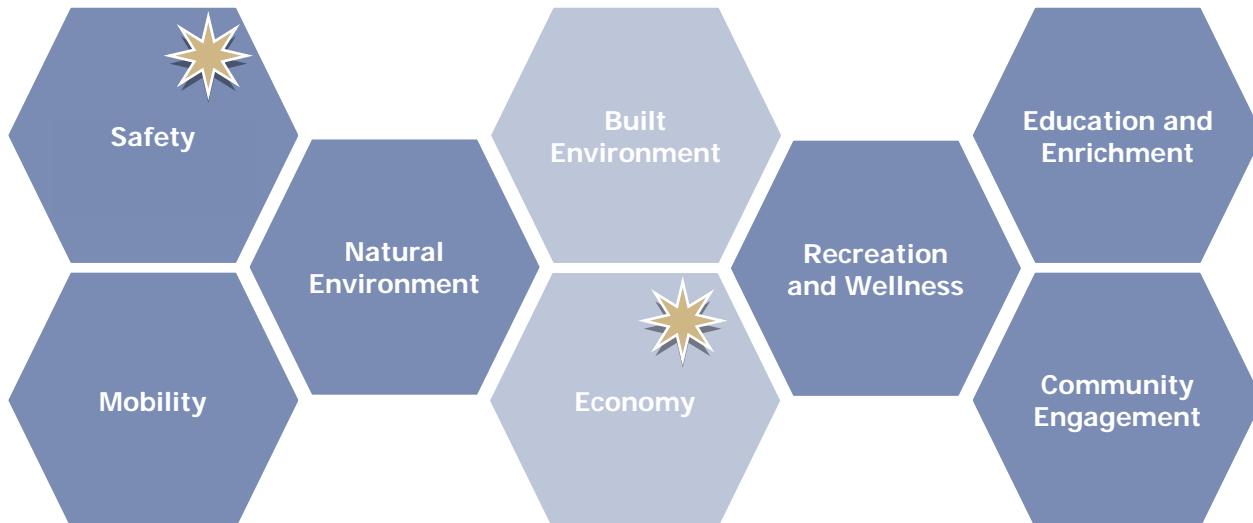
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. As in 2016, residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Cañon City community in the coming two years. This overview 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 Cañon City'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?*

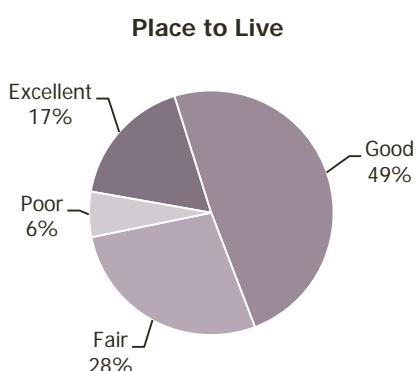
Overall quality of community life represents the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. How residents rate their overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. In the case of Cañon City, two-thirds of residents rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Cañon City 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 Cañon City as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Cañon City and its overall appearance. Roughly two-thirds of residents gave positive reviews to their neighborhood as a place to live, Cañon City as a place to retire and to raise children; about half were pleased with the overall appearance of the city; and about one-third positively rated Cañon City's overall image. These ratings were lower than the benchmark comparison except for the city as a place to retire, which was similar. Residents' reviews of overall quality of life and Cañon City as a place to retire and to raise children declined since 2016.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Generally, residents gave ratings to Safety, Mobility and Natural Environment characteristics that were similar to those given in other communities, while ratings across other facets included more items below the benchmark mixed in with items similar to the national average. Within Built Environment, roughly half of residents were pleased with the overall built environment of the city and public places where people spend time, on par with other communities across the country, while ratings for the overall quality of new development, affordable quality housing and variety of housing options were lower than national averages. About two-thirds of residents thought highly of Cañon City as a place to visit and about a third touted the local cost of living, both similar to the national benchmark. Characteristics similar to the benchmark within

Recreation and Wellness included access to quality food, as well as recreational and fitness opportunities. Residents also saw other aspects of Cañon City similarly to residents nationwide, including religious/spiritual activities, cultural/arts/music activities, child care/preschool, social events/activities, opportunities to participate in community matter and opportunities to volunteer.

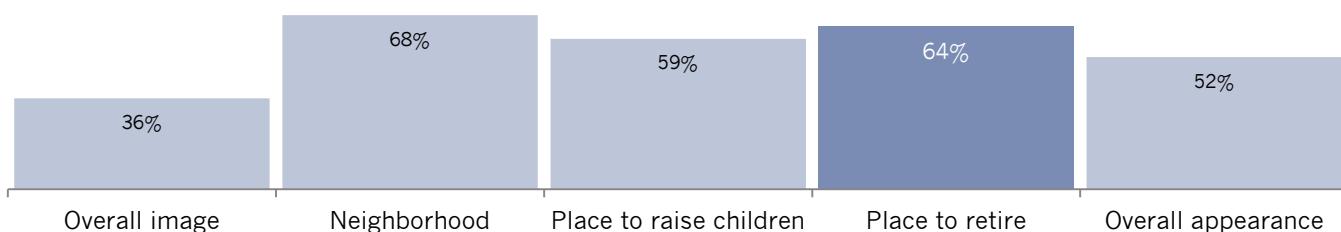
When compared to 2016, most aspects of Community Characteristics tended to remain stable over time. Ratings increased for ease of travel by bicycle, ease of walking and recreational opportunities, but decreased for the overall feeling of safety in the city, cost of living, Cañon City as a place to work, quality of mental health care and K-12 education.



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

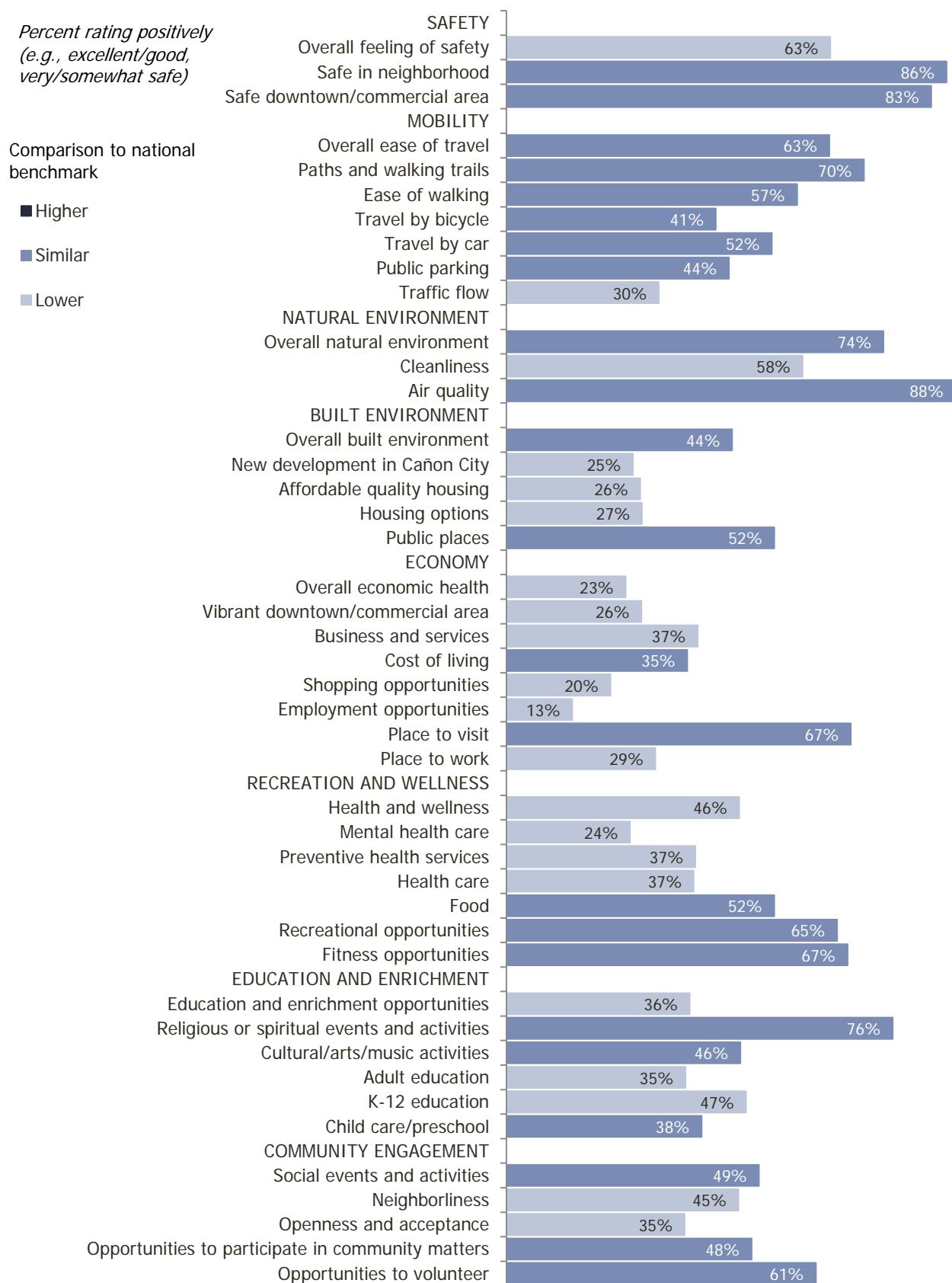
Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics



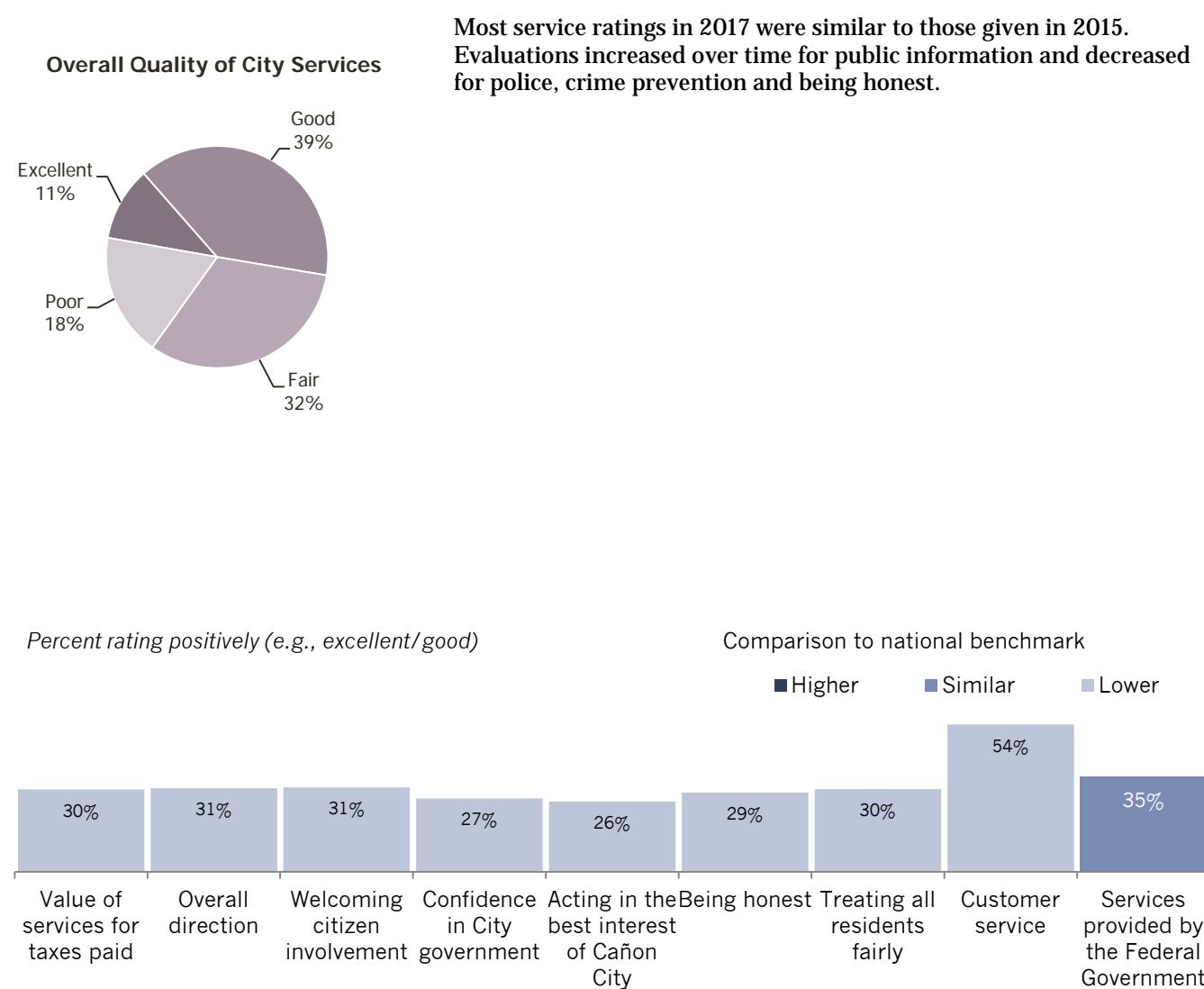
# Governance

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

The overall quality of the services provided by Cañon City as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About half of residents gave positive evaluations to the overall quality of City services, which was lower than the benchmark. About one-third were pleased with the services provided by the Federal Government and this rating was similar to the benchmark.

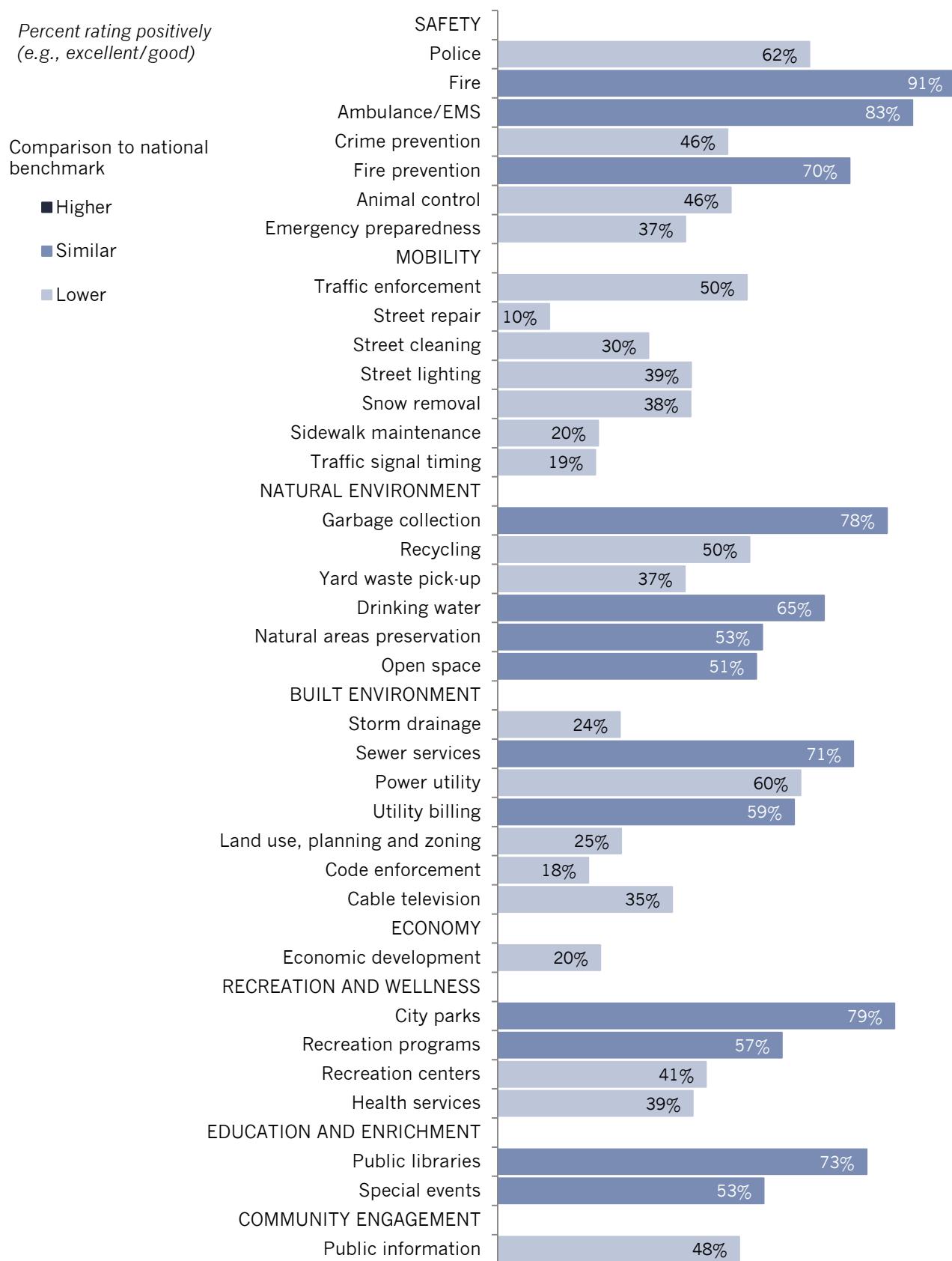
Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Cañon City's leadership and governance (see chart below). About half of residents gave positive ratings to customer service provided by the City, while other general aspects of Governance were rated positively by about 3 in 10 residents. These general aspects were lower than the national comparison.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Cañon City. Governance ratings tended to be similar to or lower than those observed in other communities. At least 7 in 10 survey respondents gave positive marks to fire, ambulance/EMS, fire prevention, garbage collection, sewer services, city parks and public libraries; all of these were similar to the benchmark. Ratings for all aspects Mobility were lower than those observed in other communities.



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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance



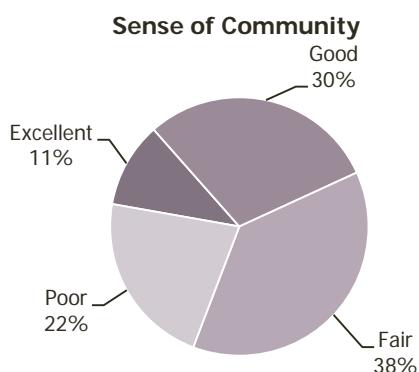
# Participation

*Are the residents of Cañon City 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 Cañon City, about 4 in 10 residents gave positive marks to the sense of community in the city and 7 in 10 said they would recommend living in the city to someone who asked.; these ratings were lower than the national comparison. About 8 in 10 residents planned to remain in the city for the next five years and 4 in 10 had contacted City employees in the 12 months prior to the survey, which were similar rates to those seen elsewhere.

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 comparison (and comparison to Cañon City over time) helpful for understanding the results.

Overall, residents of Cañon City participated in all but four activities at rates similar to those found in other communities across the country. Cañon City residents were more likely than residents elsewhere to have reported a crime, been the victim of a crime or to have observed a code violation. About two-thirds of respondents had recycled at home (lower than the rest of the country).

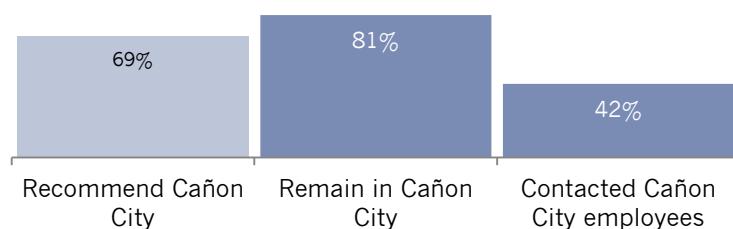


Fewer residents in 2017 reported that they had not been the victim of a crime, made their homes energy efficient, volunteered or would recommend living in Cañon City than in 2016.

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

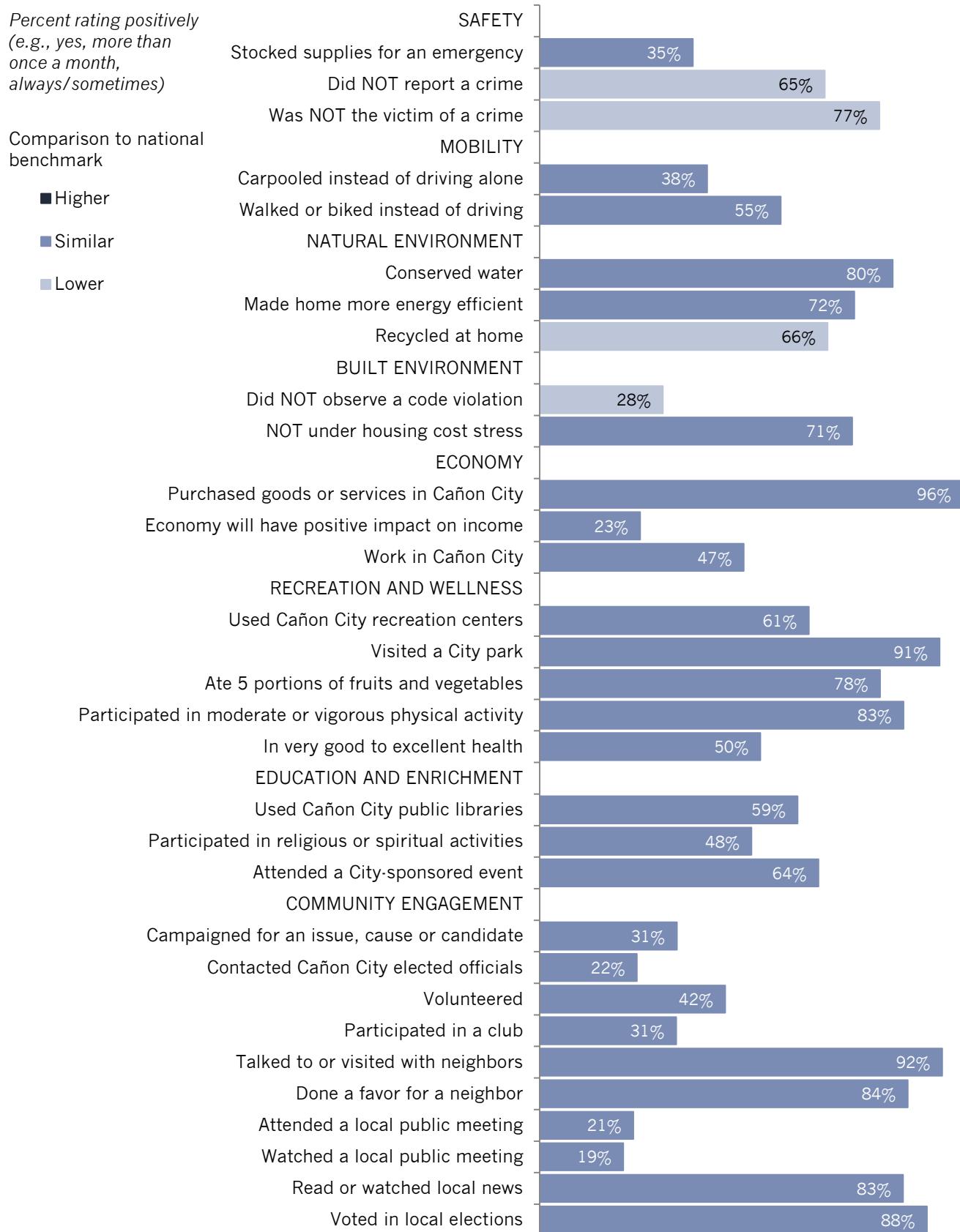
Comparison to national  
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation



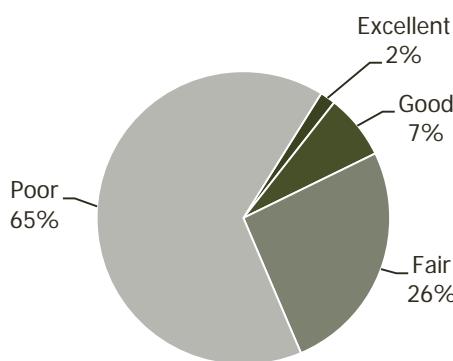
# Special Topics

The City of Cañon City included five questions of special interest on The NCS as well as one line item addition to a standard question. Topic areas included support for tax and rate increases, support for City actions and reducing the deer population.

When evaluating the overall condition of City streets, about 1 in 10 rated them as excellent or good, one-quarter thought they were fair and about two-thirds thought they were in poor condition.

Figure 4: Custom Addition to Question 5

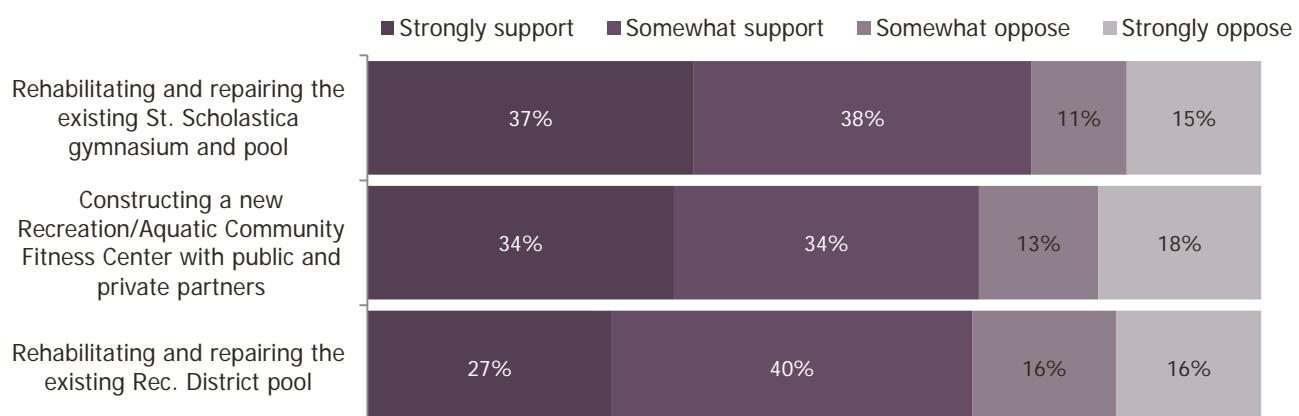
*Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Cañon City as a whole: Overall condition of City streets*



One question offered residents the opportunity to weigh in on potential aquatic projects. About three-quarters of residents supported a tax increase for rehabilitating and repairing the existing St. Scholastica gymnasium and pool and about two-thirds supported increases for rehabilitating and repairing the existing Rec. District pool and constructing a new Recreation/Aquatic Community Fitness Center with public and private partners. Between 15% and 18% of residents strongly opposed tax increases for any of these projects.

Figure 5: Level of Support for Tax Increases for Facilities and Programs

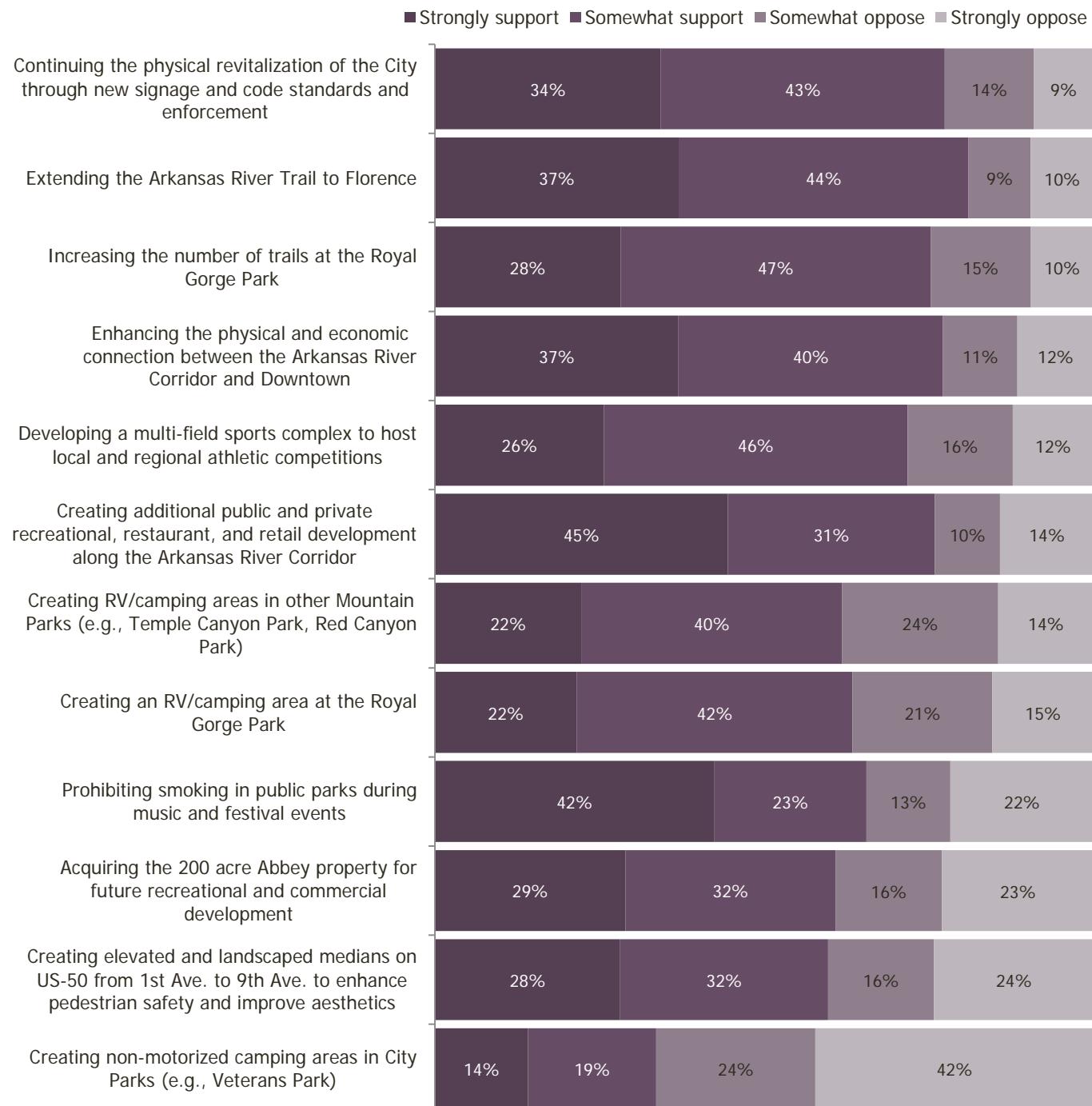
*To what extent would you support or oppose using a tax increase to finance improvements to the following facilities and programs:*



Residents indicated their level of support for the City pursuing a number of potential efforts related to recreation and outdoor events. Of the listed items, residents were most likely to voice strong support for creating additional development along the Arkansas River Corridor, prohibiting smoking in public parks during music and festival events, extending the Arkansas River Trail to Florence, enhancing the connection between the Arkansas River Corridor and Downtown and continuing the physical revitalization of the City. A majority of residents expressed support for all actions listed except for creating non-motorized camping areas in City parks: only about one-third supported this action, and about 4 in 10 strongly opposed it.

Figure 6: Level of Support for City Actions

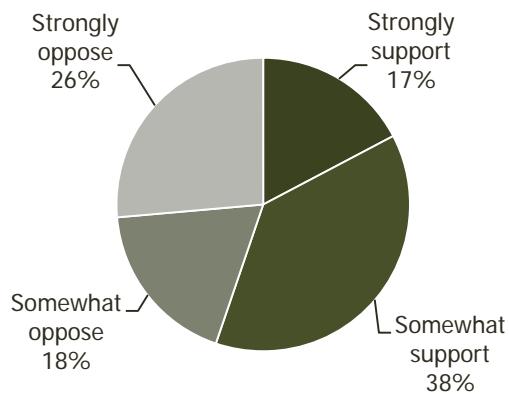
*Please indicate to what extent you would support or oppose the City taking the following actions:*



When asked about a stormwater utility rate increase for the purpose of funding improvements to the City's stormwater infrastructure, slightly more than half supported the increase while slightly less than half opposed it.

Figure 7: Level of Support for Stormwater Utility Rate Increase

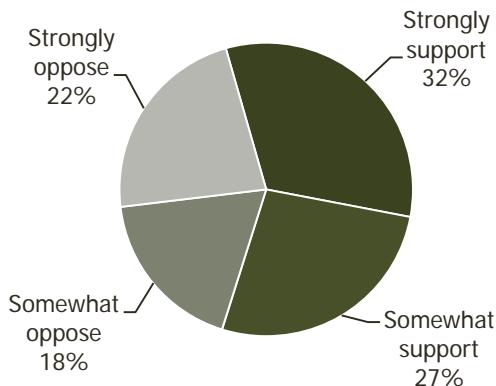
*Please indicate to what extent you would support or oppose a stormwater utility rate increase that would be used to fund improvements to the City's stormwater infrastructure:*



The City asked residents for their perspectives on deer population reduction. About 6 in 10 residents supported reducing the deer population in Cañon City in partnership with Colorado Parks and Wildlife; only about 2 in 10 strongly opposed it.

Figure 8: Level of Support for Reduction of Deer Population

*Please indicate to what extent you would support or oppose the reduction of deer population in Cañon City in partnership with Colorado Parks and Wildlife Deer Management and Harvesting Guidelines:*

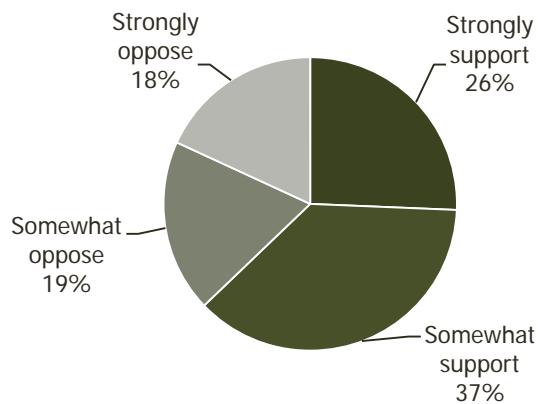


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Residents reviewed a potential lodging tax increase of 2% to 5%. A majority of residents (63%) strongly or somewhat supported a city lodging tax increase to be used for promoting and marketing local tourism, and about 2 in 10 strongly opposed it.

Figure 9: Level of Support for City Lodging Tax Increase

*Please indicate to what extent you would support or oppose a city lodging tax increase from 2% to 5% for only city hotel, motel and lodging accommodations, to be used exclusively for promoting and marketing tourism and special events in the Cañon City and Royal Gorge Region:*



# Conclusions

## Safety continues to be a priority.

As in 2016, Cañon City residents indicated that Safety was an important area for the City to focus on in the next two years. About 8 in 10 residents reported feeling safe in their neighborhood and in Cañon City's downtown/commercial area, and at least 7 in 10 positively rated fire, ambulance/EMS and fire prevention services. However, ratings for the overall feeling of safety in the city, police, crime prevention, animal control and emergency preparedness were lower than seen in other communities, and Cañon City residents were more likely than residents elsewhere to have reported a crime or to have been the victim of a crime. Additionally, evaluations of overall feeling of safety, police and crime prevention decreased since 2016.

## Economy also is still important to residents.

Residents also indicated that Economy was an important focus area for the City. About two-thirds of respondents rated the City as a place to visit as excellent or good and nearly all residents had purchased goods or services in the City; these ratings were similar to other communities. However, about one-quarter of residents or less gave positive marks to the overall economic health of the city, vibrant downtown/commercial area, shopping opportunities, employment opportunities, Cañon City as a place to work and economic development, and these ratings were lower than those given elsewhere. Ratings for cost of living and the city as a place to work decreased over time.

When asked about their level of support for a number of City actions, about three-quarters of residents voiced support for creating additional public and private recreational, restaurant, and retail development along the Arkansas River Corridor as well as enhancing the physical and economic connection between the Arkansas River Corridor and Downtown. Finally, about two-thirds of residents supported a city lodging tax increase to be used exclusively for promoting and marketing tourism and special events in the Cañon City and Royal Gorge Region.

## Mobility-related services are an area of opportunity for the City.

At least half of Cañon City residents positively rated the overall ease of travel in the City, paths and walking trails, ease of walking and ease of travel by car, which were on par with other communities. However, resident sentiment toward Mobility-related services tended to be less positive: ratings for traffic enforcement, street repair, street cleaning, street lighting, snow removal, sidewalk maintenance and traffic signal timing ranged from 50% excellent or good to just 10% and were all lower than average. Further, when evaluating the overall condition of City streets, about two-thirds of respondents thought they were in poor condition. When asked to indicate their support for various City actions, about 6 in 10 residents supported creating elevated and landscaped medians on US-50 from 1st Ave. to 9th Ave. to enhance pedestrian safety and improve aesthetics.