

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Ramsey, MN
Community Livability Report

FINAL
2016



NRC
National Research Center Inc

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



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

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

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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 Ramsey. 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 462 residents of the City of Ramsey. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% 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.

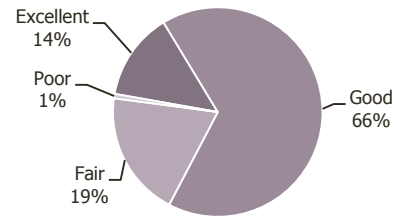


Quality of Life in Ramsey

Most residents rated the quality of life in Ramsey as excellent or good. These ratings were similar 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.

Overall Quality of Life



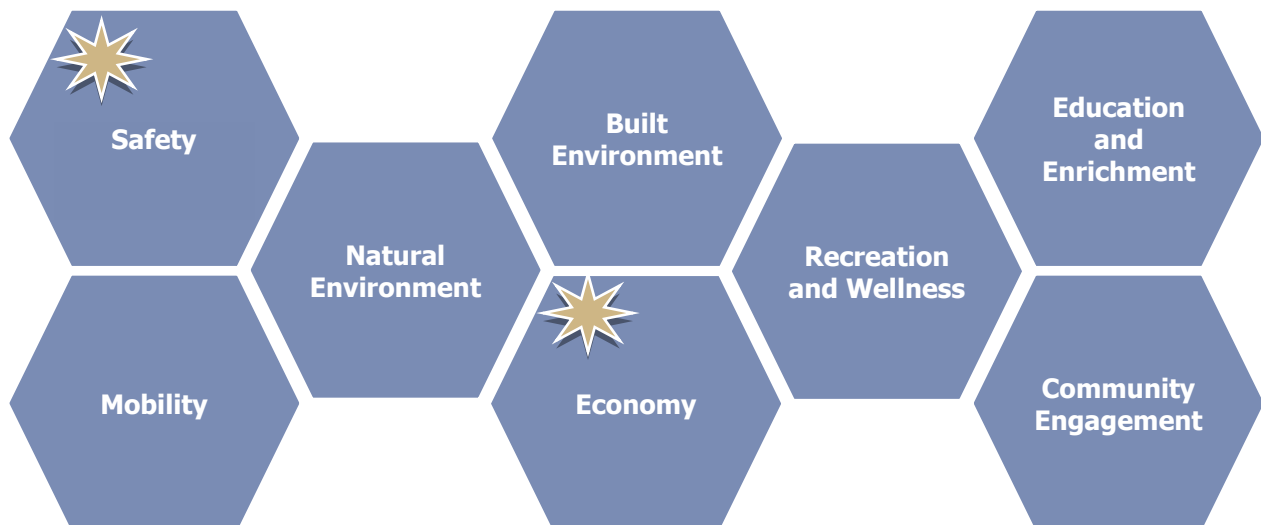
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Ramsey community in the coming two years. Ramsey residents gave favorable ratings to both of these facets of community. Ratings for Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement 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 Ramsey’s unique questions.

Legend

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

- Most important



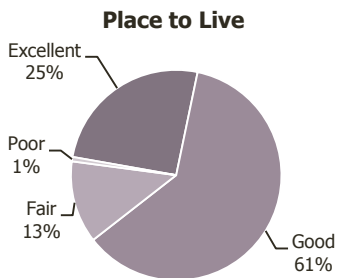
Community Characteristics

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 Ramsey, 87% of residents rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Ramsey 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 Ramsey as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Ramsey and its overall appearance. Roughly 8 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to their neighborhoods and Ramsey as a place to raise children which were similar to the national benchmark. Around three-quarters of residents gave favorable ratings to Ramsey's overall appearance which also was similar to the national benchmark, while about half or less of residents positively rated Ramsey as a place to retire and the overall image which was lower than what was seen in comparison communities.

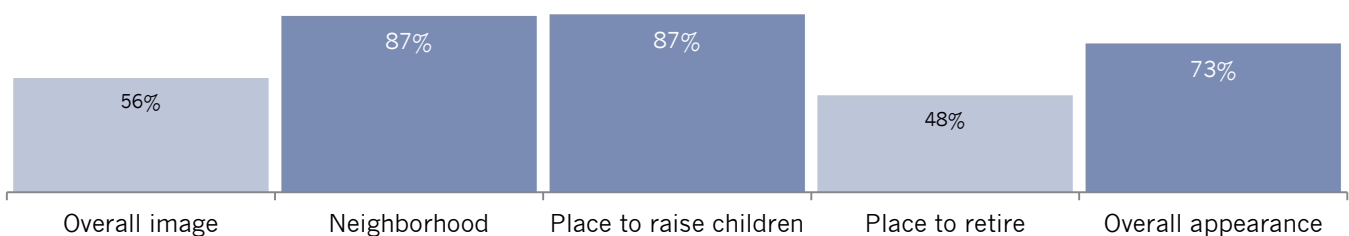
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 30 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, results were similar to other communities and most aspects had positive ratings from a majority of respondents. Around 9 in 10 residents reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods and in the downtown/commercial areas of Ramsey, ratings that were similar to the benchmark. Between half and two-thirds of residents positively rated aspects of Mobility and all of these ratings were similar to jurisdictions across the nation. Within Natural Environment, around 8 in 10 residents rated the overall natural environment and cleanliness of the City positively, which was similar to comparison communities. Within the facet of Built Environment around two-thirds of residents positively rated the availability of affordable quality housing and this rating was higher than the national benchmark. Aspects of Economy, such as the overall economic health, Ramsey as a place to work and the cost of living received positive ratings from about half of residents. However, Ramsey's vibrant downtown/commercial area, businesses and services, shopping opportunities and Ramsey as a place to visit received less favorable ratings that fell below the benchmark. Of the remaining facets, all aspects received positive ratings that were similar to communities elsewhere with the exception of opportunities to attend cultural, arts and musical activities and to volunteer, which were rated positively by around 4 in 10 residents and were lower than ratings seen in national comparisons.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



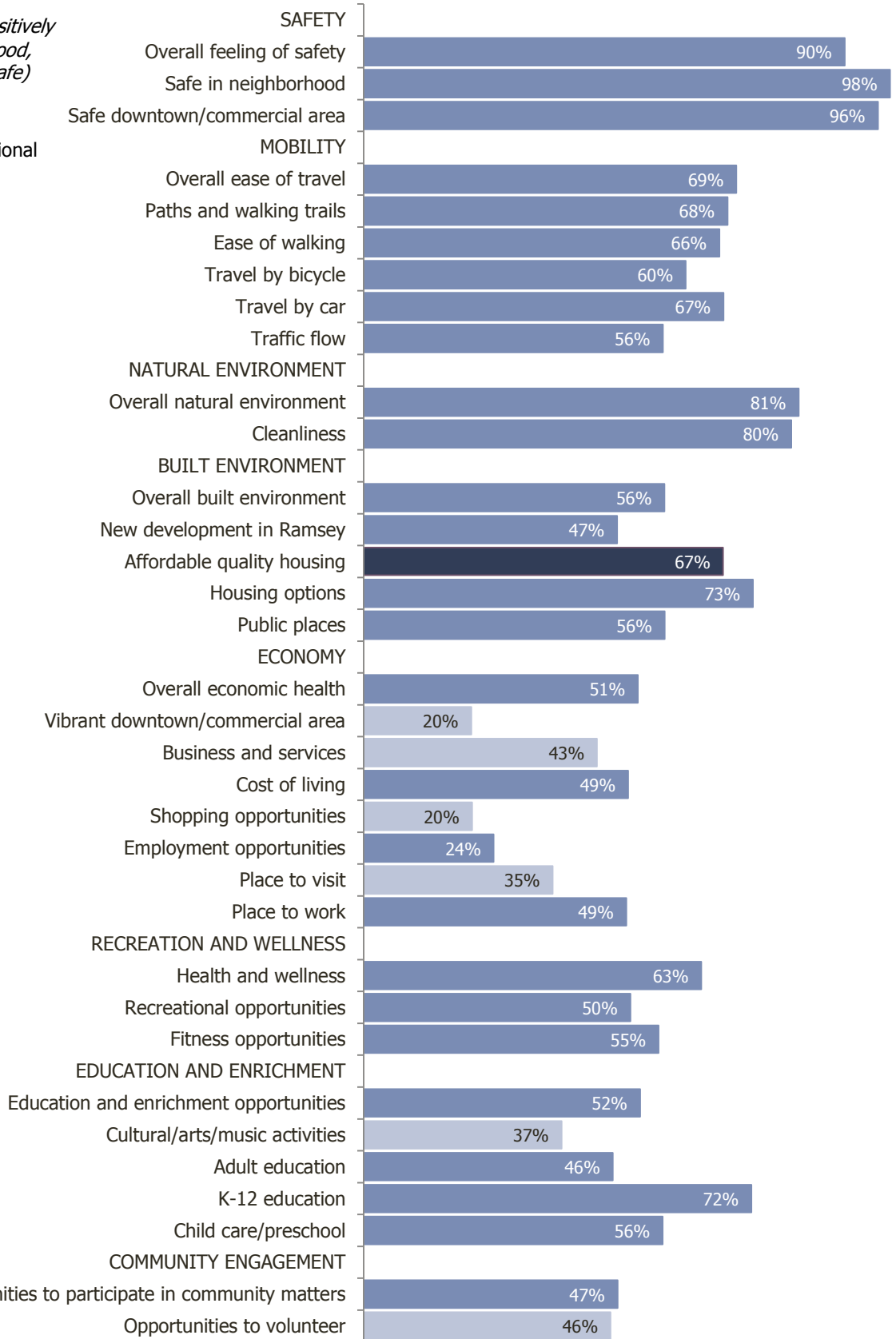
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

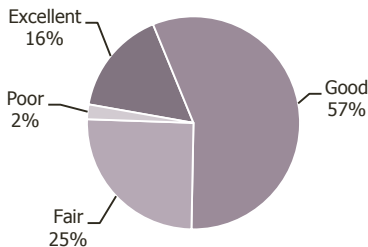
How well does the government of Ramsey meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Ramsey as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. The overall quality of services provided by the City of Ramsey received excellent or good ratings by about three-quarters of residents, while the Federal Government received positive ratings by about one-third of respondents. Both of these ratings were similar to the national benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Ramsey’s leadership and governance. Around 8 in 10 residents gave favorable ratings to the overall customer service provided by Ramsey employees. About half of residents favorably rated the remaining aspects of government performance including: the value of services for taxes paid, the overall direction of the City, welcoming citizen involvement, confidence in City government, acting in the best interest of Ramsey, being honest, and treating all residents fairly. These ratings were all on par with other communities across the nation.

Respondents evaluated over 20 individual services and amenities available in Ramsey. Among the highest rated services were police and fire with about 9 in 10 residents giving high marks to each of these aspects. Around 8 in 10 residents gave a positive rating to crime prevention, fire prevention, sewer services and City parks. All of the aforementioned services were similar to the national benchmark. The remaining services also received ratings similar to the national benchmark, with the exception of recreation centers which were rated positively by about half of residents and lower than in comparison communities.

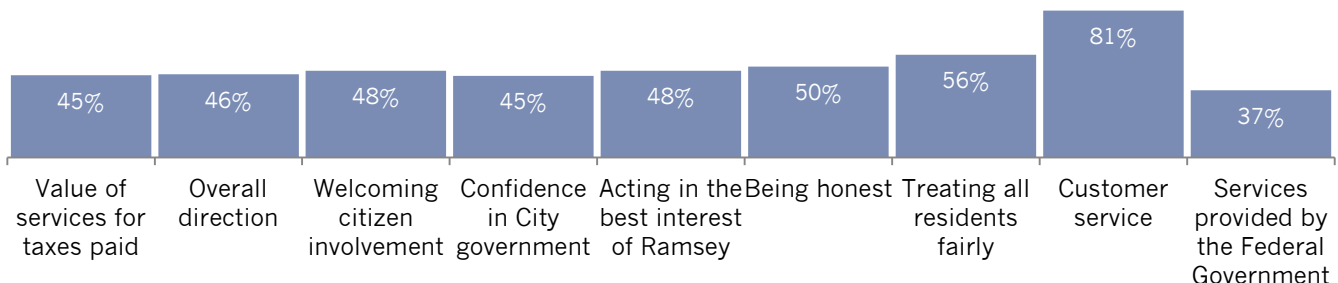
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



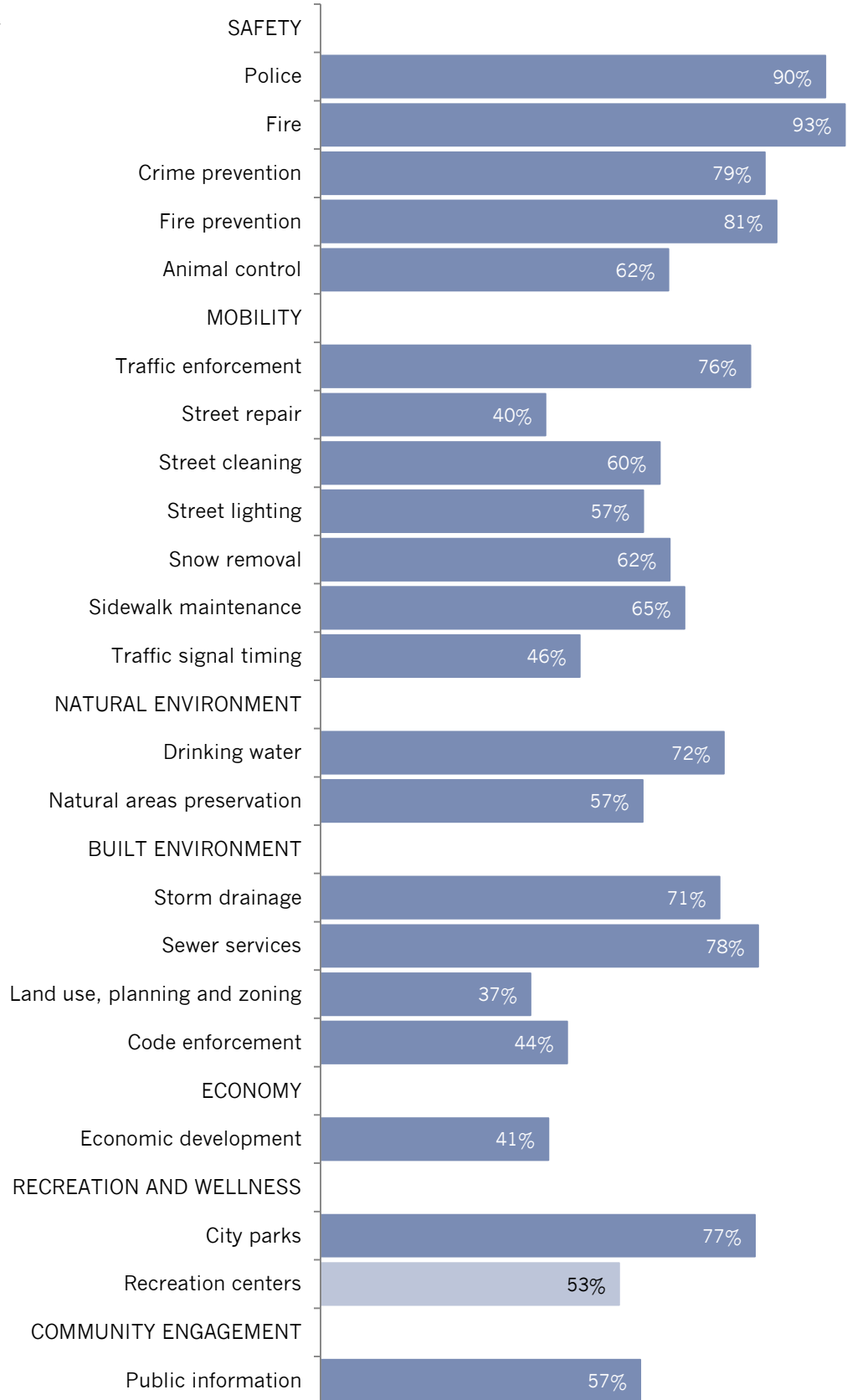
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



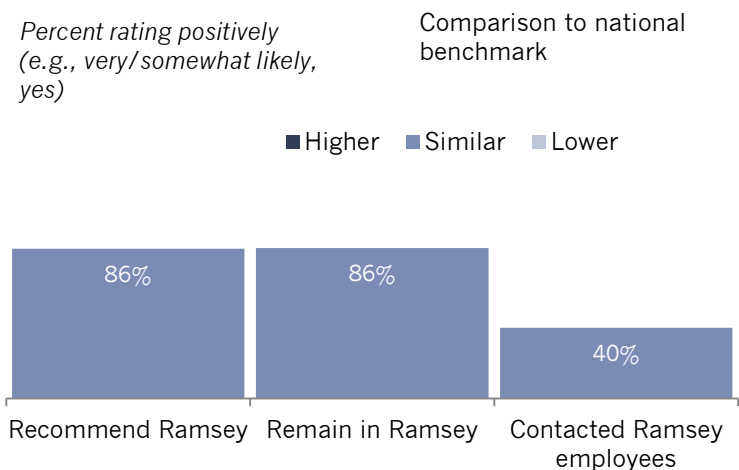
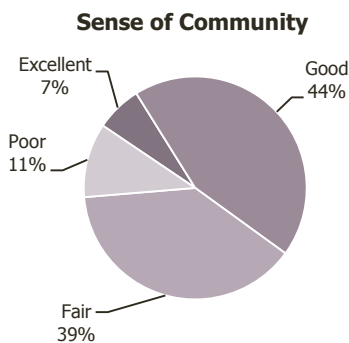
Participation

Are the residents of Ramsey 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. Around half of residents gave a positive rating to the overall sense of community in Ramsey and this level was similar to what was seen in benchmark communities.

More than four in five residents reported that they would recommend Ramsey to others and that they would remain in Ramsey for the next five years. About 4 in 10 residents reported that they had contacted a City employee in the last 12 months. All of these ratings were similar to the national benchmark.

The survey included over 15 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Levels of Participation tended to be mixed across the different facets, but overall reported levels were similar to those in benchmark communities. Within the facet of Safety more than 8 in 10 residents reported that they had not been the victim of crime or reported a crime in the 12 months prior to the survey. Most residents reported that they recycled at home and indicated that they were not under housing cost stress, both of which were higher than levels reported in comparison communities. Meanwhile, around 2 in 10 respondents indicated that they worked in Ramsey, a rate of participation lower than those observed elsewhere. Within the facet of Recreation and Wellness, about three-quarters or more reported that they had visited a City park or stated that they were in excellent or good health. Around 4 in 10 residents stated they had attended a City-sponsored event, a lower rate of participation than those in benchmark communities. Within the facet of Community Engagement, residents reported that they had contacted Ramsey elected officials, watched a local public meeting and voted in local elections at levels that were similar to the national benchmark. However, fewer respondents indicated that they had campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate, volunteered or attended a local public meeting than residents in comparison communities.



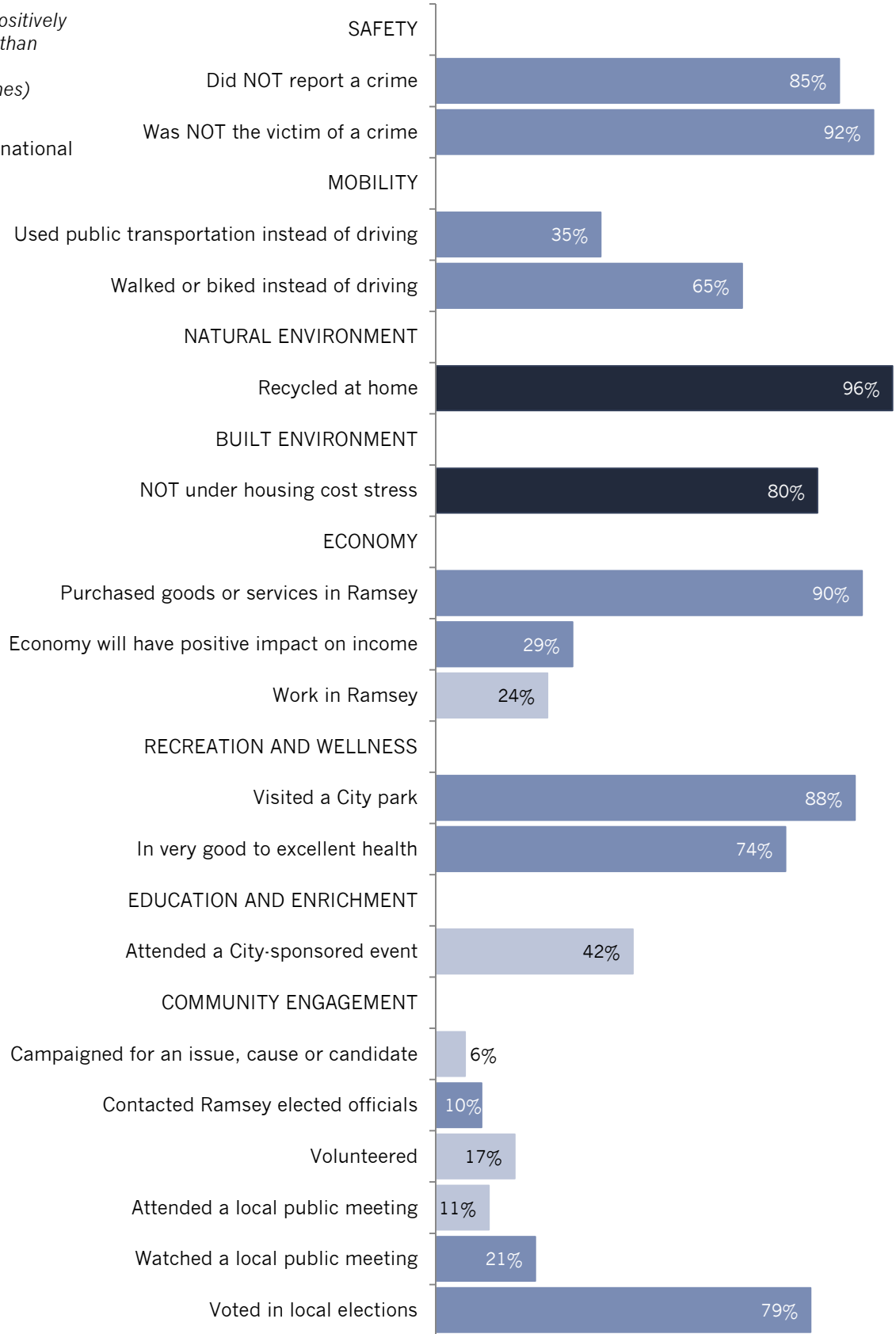
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

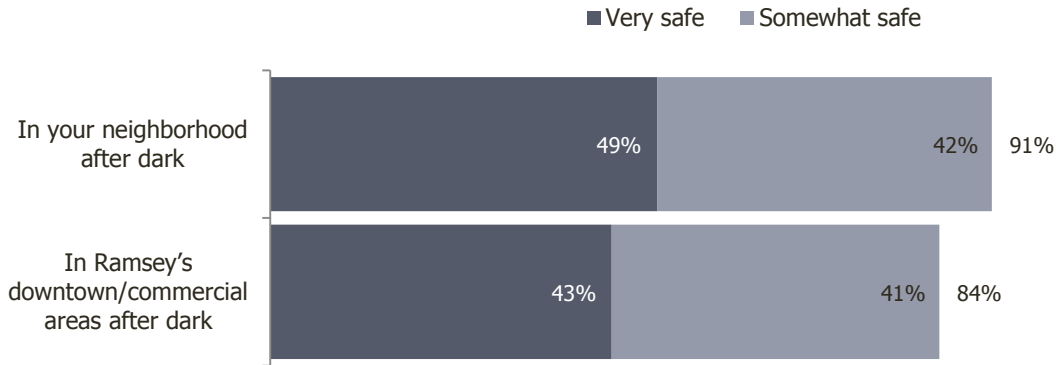
- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Special Topics

The City of Ramsey included eight questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked residents for their opinions about their feelings of safety at night. Most residents (84%) reported that they felt somewhat or very safe at night in Ramsey’s downtown/commercial areas and in their neighborhoods. Around 9 in 10 residents reported that they felt somewhat or very safe in their neighborhoods after dark.

Figure 4: Safety after Dark
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel:



Residents rated the quality of the overall condition of City maintained streets and the quality of trail maintenance. A majority of residents gave favorable ratings to the overall condition of streets and nearly three-quarters rated the quality of trail maintenance as excellent or good.

Figure 5: Overall Condition of Streets
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Ramsey as a whole: Overall condition of City maintained streets

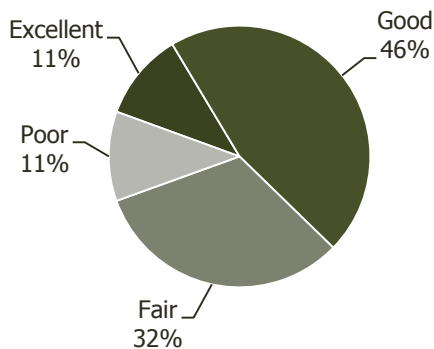
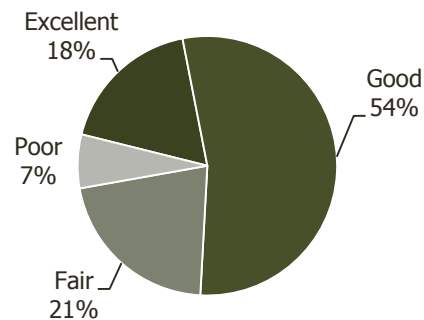


Figure 5: Trail Maintenance
Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Ramsey: Trail maintenance

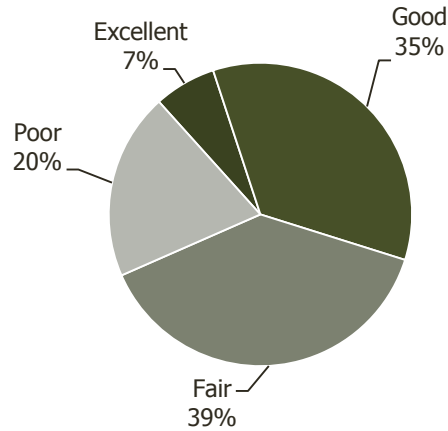


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The next special interest question asked residents to rate the development and success of a strategic action plan in Ramsey. Less than half of residents rated the City's strategic planning as excellent or good and more than one-third rated it as fair.

Figure 7: Strategic Plan Development

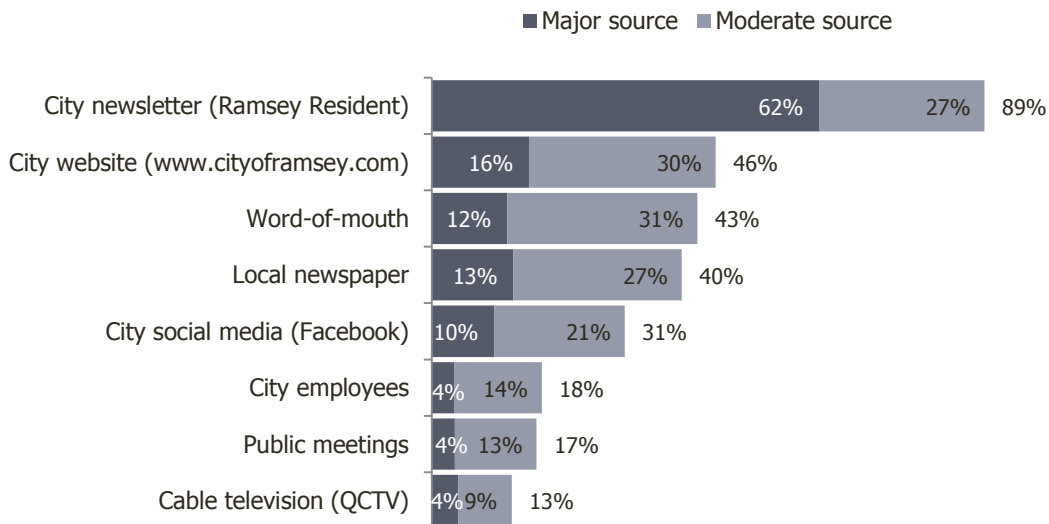
Please rate the following categories of Ramsey government performance: Development and success of a strategic action plan



Residents reported using a variety of sources for information about the City. A vast majority (89%) said that they had used the City newsletter (Ramsey Resident) as a major or moderate source of information. Almost half used the City website and around 4 in 10 relied on word-of-mouth or the local newspaper. The least cited sources of information included cable television, public meetings and information received from City employees.

Figure 8: Source of Information about the City

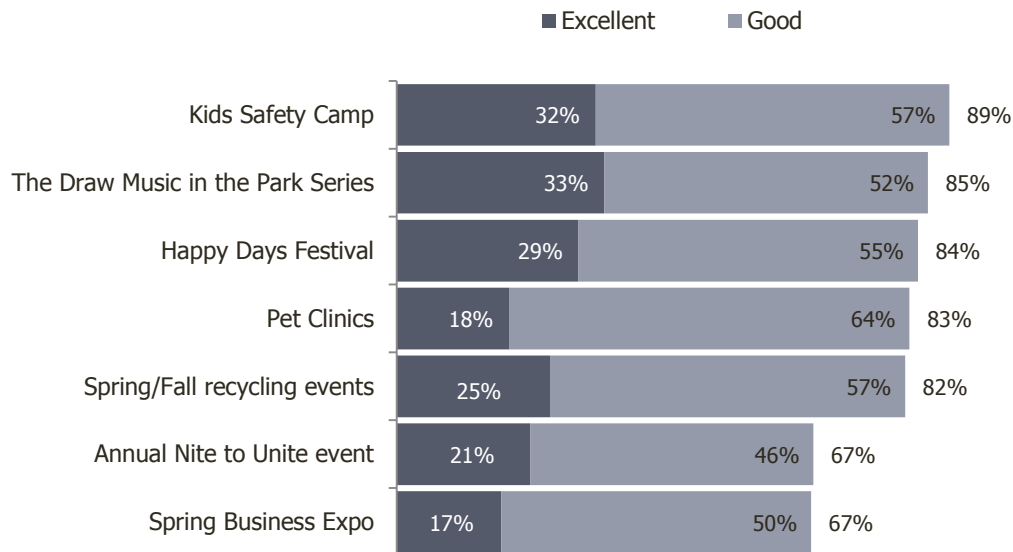
To what extent are each of the following a source of information for you about Ramsey city government and its activities?



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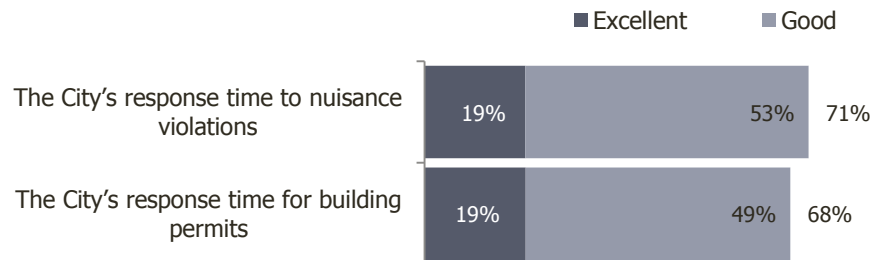
The next special interest question asked residents about the quality of various community events. A majority of residents rated each of the listed community events favorably. The most positively rated events were the Kids Safety Camp (89% excellent or good) and at least 8 in 10 residents rated The Draw Music in the Park Series, Happy Days Festival, Pet Clinics and Spring/Fall recycling events as excellent or good.

Figure 9: Community Events
Please rate the quality of each event listed below:



The following special interest question asked respondents to indicate the quality of the City's response time for various services. Around 7 in 10 residents rated the response time for both building permits and to nuisance violations as excellent or good.

Figure 10: City's Response Time
Please rate the quality of the following:

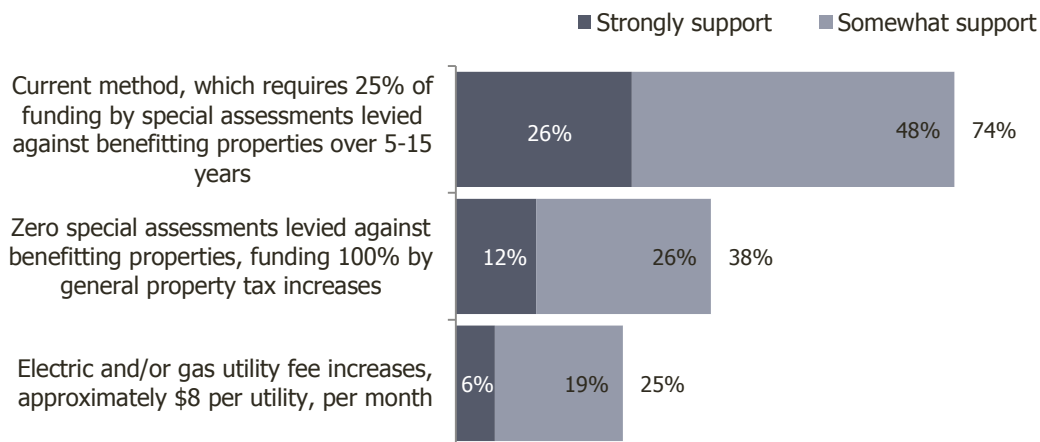


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The final special interest question asked survey participants to indicate their level of support for various funding sources to maintain City streets in Ramsey. The current method received the most support from residents, with approximately three-quarters of residents saying they at least somewhat supported the measure. The least supported funding source by about a quarter of residents was the electric and/or gas utility fee increase.

Figure 11: Street Reconstruction

The City employs a long-term maintenance program to cost-effectively maintain all 175-plus miles of City streets. Currently, street reconstruction projects are funded 25% by special assessments levied against benefitting properties, and 75% by street reconstruction bonds, which are paid back using general property taxes. The City periodically evaluates funding sources for this on-going program. Please indicate the extent to which you would support or oppose the following funding sources:



Conclusions

Ramsey residents continue to enjoy a high quality of life.

Most of residents gave positive ratings for the overall quality of life and Ramsey as a place to live. About 8 in 10 respondents positively rated their neighborhoods and Ramsey as a place to raise children. Additionally, most residents reported that they plan on remaining in the City for the next five years and said they would recommend Ramsey to someone who asks. These ratings are similar to or higher than ratings from the City's 2014 iteration of the survey, which suggests that residents continue enjoy living in Ramsey.

Economy is important to residents and may be an area for improvement.

Residents indicated that Economy is an important facet for Ramsey to focus on in the coming years. The ratings for overall economic health were similar to the national comparison with about half of residents giving it a positive rating. However, ratings for a vibrant downtown/commercial area, business and services, shopping opportunities, Ramsey as a place to visit and residents reporting that they worked in Ramsey were lower than other communities in the nation. Compared to 2014, nearly all Economy ratings remained stable; however, the ratings for Ramsey as a place to work increased from 2014 to 2016.

Safety is valued by residents and is a positive feature of the community.

Survey respondents indicated that Safety is an important facet and a priority for the City. At least 9 in 10 residents reported having an overall high sense of safety, feeling safe in their neighborhoods as well as in the downtown/commercial areas of Ramsey. Residents positively rated safety services, particularly police and fire services, and a vast majority felt that crime and fire prevention services were excellent or good. About 8 in 10 residents or more were NOT the victim of a crime or did NOT report a crime.

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Trends over Time

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Summary

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality research methods and directly comparable results across The NCS communities. 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). This report discusses trends over time, comparing the 2016 ratings for the City of Ramsey to its previous survey results in 2014. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for Ramsey represent important comparison data and should be examined for improvements or declines. Deviations from stable trends over time, especially, represent opportunities for understanding how local policies, programs or public information may have affected residents' opinions.

Meaningful differences between survey years have been noted within the following tables as being "higher" or "lower" if the differences are greater than seven percentage points between the 2014 and 2016 surveys, otherwise the comparison between 2014 and 2016 are noted as being "similar." Additionally, benchmark comparisons for all survey years are presented for reference. Changes in the benchmark comparison over time can be impacted by various trends, including varying survey cycles for the individual communities that comprise the benchmarks, regional and national economic or other events, as well as emerging survey methodologies.

Overall, ratings in Ramsey for 2016 generally remained stable. Of the 94 items for which comparisons were available, 84 items were rated similarly in 2014 and 2016, six items showed a decrease in ratings and four showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- While most ratings within the pillar of Community Characteristics remained stable from 2014 to 2016, there were several items that trended down. Ratings that decreased included: availability of paths and walking trails, availability of affordable quality child care/preschool, adult educational opportunities and opportunities to volunteer. However, ratings for overall quality of life increased as did Ramsey as place to work.
- Within the pillar of Governance, two changes were noted from 2014 to 2016. Ratings decreased for natural areas preservation, while ratings for traffic enforcement increased between 2014 and 2016.
- Within Participation, fewer residents in Ramsey reported that they had attended a City-sponsored event. However, more residents indicated that they had walked or biked instead of driving.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics General

| | Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good) | | 2016 rating compared to 2014 | Comparison to benchmark | |
|-------------------------|--|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| | 2014 | 2016 | | 2014 | 2016 |
| Overall quality of life | 72% | 80% | Higher | Similar | Similar |
| Overall image | 51% | 56% | Similar | Lower | Lower |
| Place to live | 82% | 87% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Neighborhood | 84% | 87% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Place to raise children | 83% | 87% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Place to retire | 51% | 48% | Similar | Lower | Lower |
| Overall appearance | 77% | 73% | Similar | Similar | Similar |

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

| | | Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe) | | 2016 rating compared to 2014 | Comparison to benchmark | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|--|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | | 2014 | 2016 | | 2014 | 2016 |
| Safety | Overall feeling of safety | 90% | 90% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Safe in neighborhood | 94% | 98% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Safe downtown/commercial area | 94% | 96% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Mobility | Overall ease of travel | 68% | 69% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Paths and walking trails | 75% | 68% | Lower | Similar | Similar |
| | Ease of walking | 70% | 66% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Travel by bicycle | 66% | 60% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Travel by car | 64% | 67% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Traffic flow | 55% | 56% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Overall natural environment | 84% | 81% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Natural Environment | Cleanliness | 82% | 80% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Overall built environment | 56% | 56% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Built Environment | New development in Ramsey | 48% | 47% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Affordable quality housing | 69% | 67% | Similar | Higher | Higher |
| | Housing options | 75% | 73% | Similar | Higher | Similar |
| | Public places | 50% | 56% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Overall economic health | 50% | 51% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Economy | Vibrant downtown/commercial area | 21% | 20% | Similar | Lower | Lower |
| | Business and services | 49% | 43% | Similar | Lower | Lower |
| | Cost of living | 49% | 49% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Shopping opportunities | 23% | 20% | Similar | Much lower | Much lower |
| | Employment opportunities | 27% | 24% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Place to visit | 35% | 35% | Similar | Lower | Lower |
| | Place to work | 42% | 49% | Higher | Lower | Similar |

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| | | Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe) | | 2016 rating compared to 2014 | Comparison to benchmark | |
|--------------------------|---|--|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| | | 2014 | 2016 | | 2014 | 2016 |
| Recreation and Wellness | Health and wellness | 66% | 63% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Recreational opportunities | 53% | 50% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Fitness opportunities | 60% | 55% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Education and Enrichment | Cultural/arts/music activities | 41% | 37% | Similar | Similar | Lower |
| | Adult education | 54% | 46% | Lower | Similar | Similar |
| | K-12 education | 75% | 72% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Child care/preschool | 69% | 56% | Lower | Similar | Similar |
| Community Engagement | Opportunities to participate in community matters | 52% | 47% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Opportunities to volunteer | 55% | 46% | Lower | Lower | Lower |

Table 3: Governance General

| | Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good) | | 2016 rating compared to 2014 | Comparison to benchmark | |
|---|--|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| | 2014 | 2016 | | 2014 | 2016 |
| Services provided by Ramsey | 74% | 73% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Customer service | 79% | 81% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Value of services for taxes paid | 44% | 45% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Overall direction | 48% | 46% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Welcoming citizen involvement | 48% | 48% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Confidence in City government | 43% | 45% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Acting in the best interest of Ramsey | 43% | 48% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Being honest | 47% | 50% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Treating all residents fairly | 52% | 56% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Services provided by the Federal Government | NA | 37% | NA | NA | Similar |

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Table 4: Governance by Facet

| | | Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good) | | 2016 rating compared to 2014 | Comparison to benchmark | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| | | 2014 | 2016 | | 2014 | 2016 |
| Safety | Police | 86% | 90% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Fire | 92% | 93% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Crime prevention | 80% | 79% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Fire prevention | 83% | 81% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Animal control | 60% | 62% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Mobility | Traffic enforcement | 68% | 76% | Higher | Similar | Similar |
| | Street repair | 45% | 40% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Street cleaning | 57% | 60% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Street lighting | 55% | 57% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Snow removal | 55% | 62% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Sidewalk maintenance | 61% | 65% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Traffic signal timing | 42% | 46% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Drinking water | 72% | 72% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Natural Environment | Natural areas preservation | 69% | 57% | Lower | Similar | Similar |
| Built Environment | Storm drainage | 73% | 71% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Sewer services | 81% | 78% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Land use, planning and zoning | 43% | 37% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Code enforcement | 40% | 44% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Economy | Economic development | 43% | 41% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Recreation and Wellness | City parks | 75% | 77% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Recreation centers | 59% | 53% | Similar | Lower | Lower |
| Community Engagement | Public information | 58% | 57% | Similar | Similar | Similar |

Table 5: Participation General

| | Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes) | | 2016 rating compared to 2014 | Comparison to benchmark | |
|----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| | 2014 | 2016 | | 2014 | 2016 |
| Sense of community | 45% | 51% | Similar | Lower | Similar |
| Recommend Ramsey | 82% | 86% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Remain in Ramsey | 85% | 86% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Contacted Ramsey employees | 44% | 40% | Similar | Similar | Similar |

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Table 6: Participation by Facet

| | | Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes) | | 2016 rating compared to 2014 | Comparison to benchmark | |
|--------------------------|---|---|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | | 2014 | 2016 | | 2014 | 2016 |
| Safety | Did NOT report a crime | 90% | 85% | Similar | Higher | Similar |
| | Was NOT the victim of a crime | 94% | 92% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Mobility | Used public transportation instead of driving | 38% | 35% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Walked or biked instead of driving | 56% | 65% | Higher | Similar | Similar |
| Natural Environment | Recycled at home | 95% | 96% | Similar | Higher | Higher |
| Built Environment | NOT under housing cost stress | 78% | 80% | Similar | Higher | Higher |
| Economy | Purchased goods or services in Ramsey | 95% | 90% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Economy will have positive impact on income | 29% | 29% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Work in Ramsey | 20% | 24% | Similar | Much lower | Lower |
| Recreation and Wellness | Visited a City park | 83% | 88% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | In very good to excellent health | 71% | 74% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Education and Enrichment | Attended a City-sponsored event | 53% | 42% | Lower | Similar | Lower |
| Community Engagement | Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate | 11% | 6% | Similar | Lower | Lower |
| | Contacted Ramsey elected officials | 11% | 10% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Volunteered | 22% | 17% | Similar | Much lower | Much lower |
| | Attended a local public meeting | 14% | 11% | Similar | Lower | Lower |
| | Watched a local public meeting | 26% | 21% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Voted in local elections | 83% | 79% | Similar | Similar | Similar |