

The National Citizen Survey™

Canton, SD

Community Livability Report

2014

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The National Citizen Survey™
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National Research Center, Inc.
2955 Valmont Road, Suite 300
Boulder, CO 80301
www.n-r-c.com • 303-444-7863

International City/County Management Association
777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002
www.icma.org • 202-289-ICMA

About

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

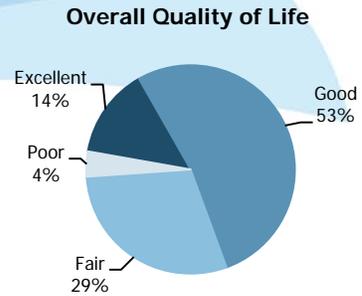
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 499 residents of the City of Canton. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% 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 Canton

Most residents rated the quality of life in Canton as excellent or good. This rating was similar to other communities in 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.

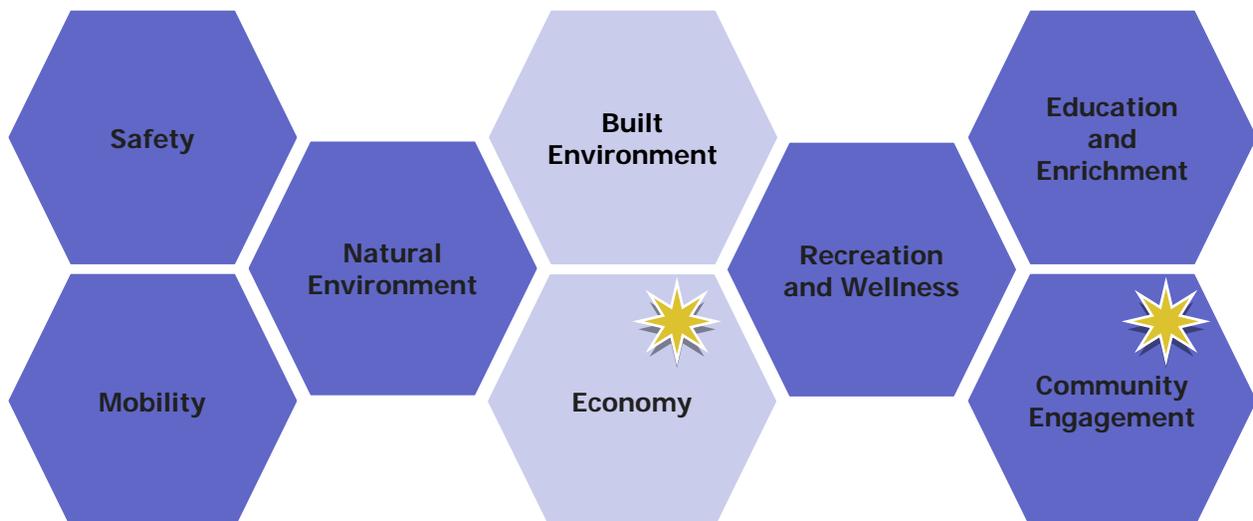
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Economy and Community Engagement as priorities for the Canton community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy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

Legend

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

 Most important



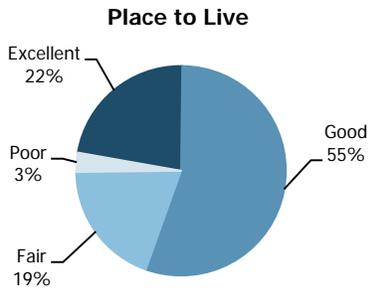
Community Characteristics

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 Canton, 77% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Canton 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 Canton as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Canton and its overall appearance. Eight in 10 respondents gave high ratings for their neighborhoods and Canton as a place to raise children. About half of respondents also gave positive ratings for Canton as a place to retire, which was similar compared to the benchmark. The overall appearance and overall image of Canton were both rated lower compared to other communities.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. A majority of respondents gave high ratings for Safety and the Natural Environment. At least 8 in 10 respondents gave high ratings for Mobility features related to car travel, including ease of getting places, travel by car and traffic flow. Only one item within Mobility was rated poorly – availability of paths and walking trails – which was below the benchmark. Ratings were varied for Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement. Less than half of participants gave positive ratings for features within Built Environment and Economy.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower

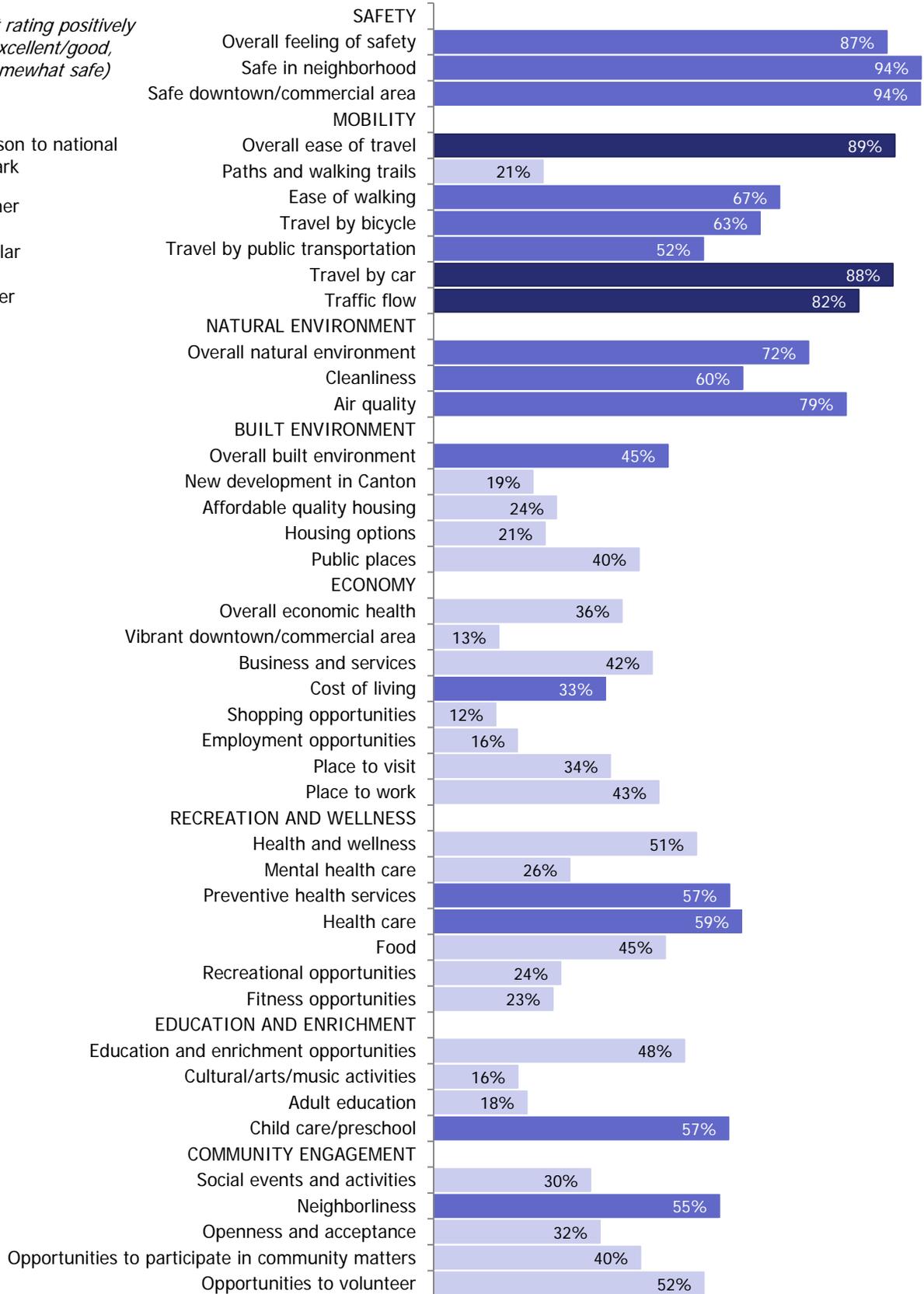


Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

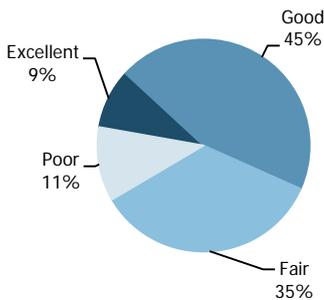
How well does the government of Canton meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Canton as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. A majority of respondents (54%) gave positive ratings for the overall quality of City services, but this rating was lower than ratings across the nation. Ratings for Canton's City services were higher than ratings given to the Federal Government.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Canton's leadership and governance. About one-third of respondents gave positive ratings for the value of services for taxes paid, the overall direction, welcoming citizen involvement, confidence in City government, acting in the best interest of Canton and treating all residents fairly. About 4 in 10 respondents rated being honest positively and over half of respondents gave positive ratings for Canton's customer service. These ratings were lower than ratings in comparison communities.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Canton. Most Safety services received high ratings; six of the seven services listed were rated positively by at least half of respondents and were rated similarly to other communities. Mobility ratings varied widely, with only a third of respondents rating street repair, snow removal and sidewalk maintenance positively, but about two-thirds of respondents rating bus or transit services and traffic signal timing positively. Natural Environment ratings also varied widely, but garbage collection, recycling and natural areas preservation all garnered ratings that were similar to the benchmark. Within Built Environment, only a quarter of respondents gave positive ratings for code enforcement and land use, planning and zoning. Few participants gave positive ratings for recreation programs and recreation centers, but about two-thirds of participants gave positive ratings for City parks and health services. Public libraries were rated highly by 86% of participants and public information services were rated positively by at least half of respondents; both were similar to the benchmark.

Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower

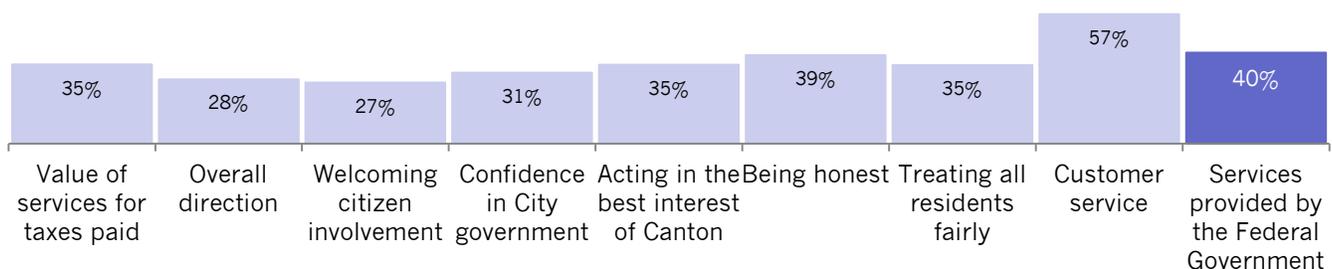
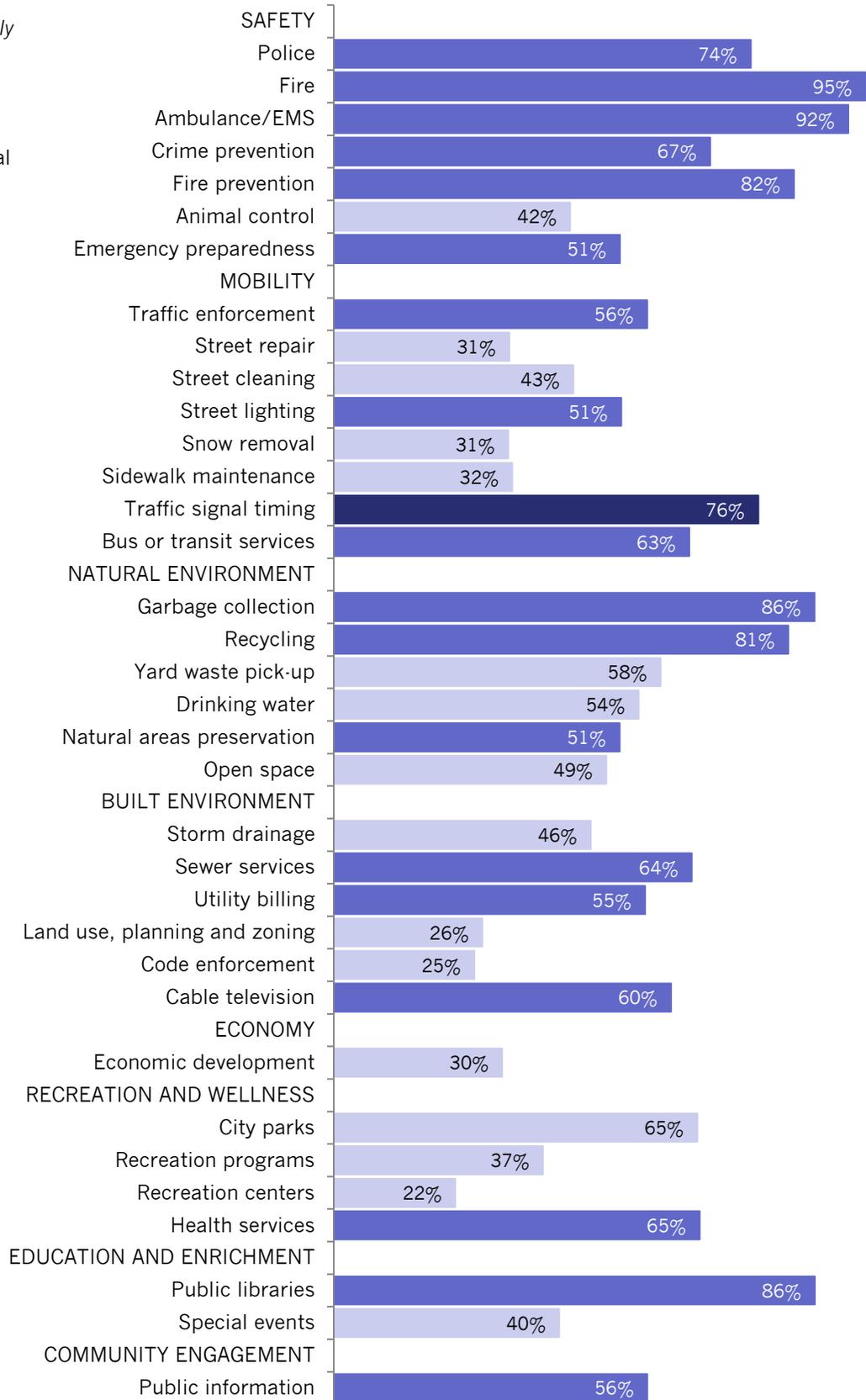


Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available



Participation

Are the residents of Canton 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. Sense of community was rated positively by 53% of respondents (a rating that was similar to the benchmark). About three-quarters of respondents would recommend Canton to others and even more plan on remaining in Canton over the next five years.

The survey included over 25 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Very few participants had been the victim of a crime or had reported a crime; these ratings were similar to other communities. A majority of participants had walked or biked instead of driving and about one-third of respondents carpooled. Most participants conserved water and made their homes more energy efficient and almost all respondents recycled (a rate of participation that was higher than in other communities). Features rated within Economy, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment were all at least similar to the benchmark. Community Engagement participation ratings varied, with as few as a quarter of respondents contacting elected officials or campaigning for an issue, cause or candidate and as many as 8 in 10 respondents doing a favor for a neighbor, visiting with neighbors, reading or watching local news and voting in local elections.

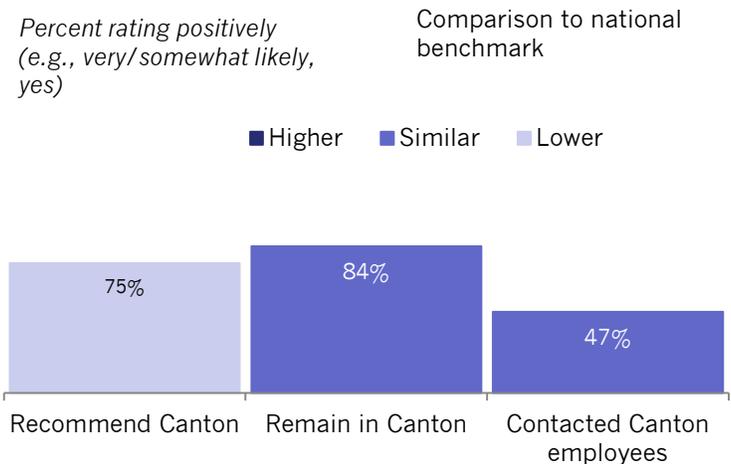
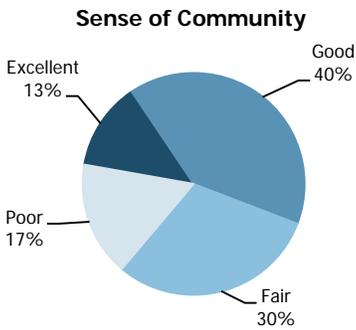
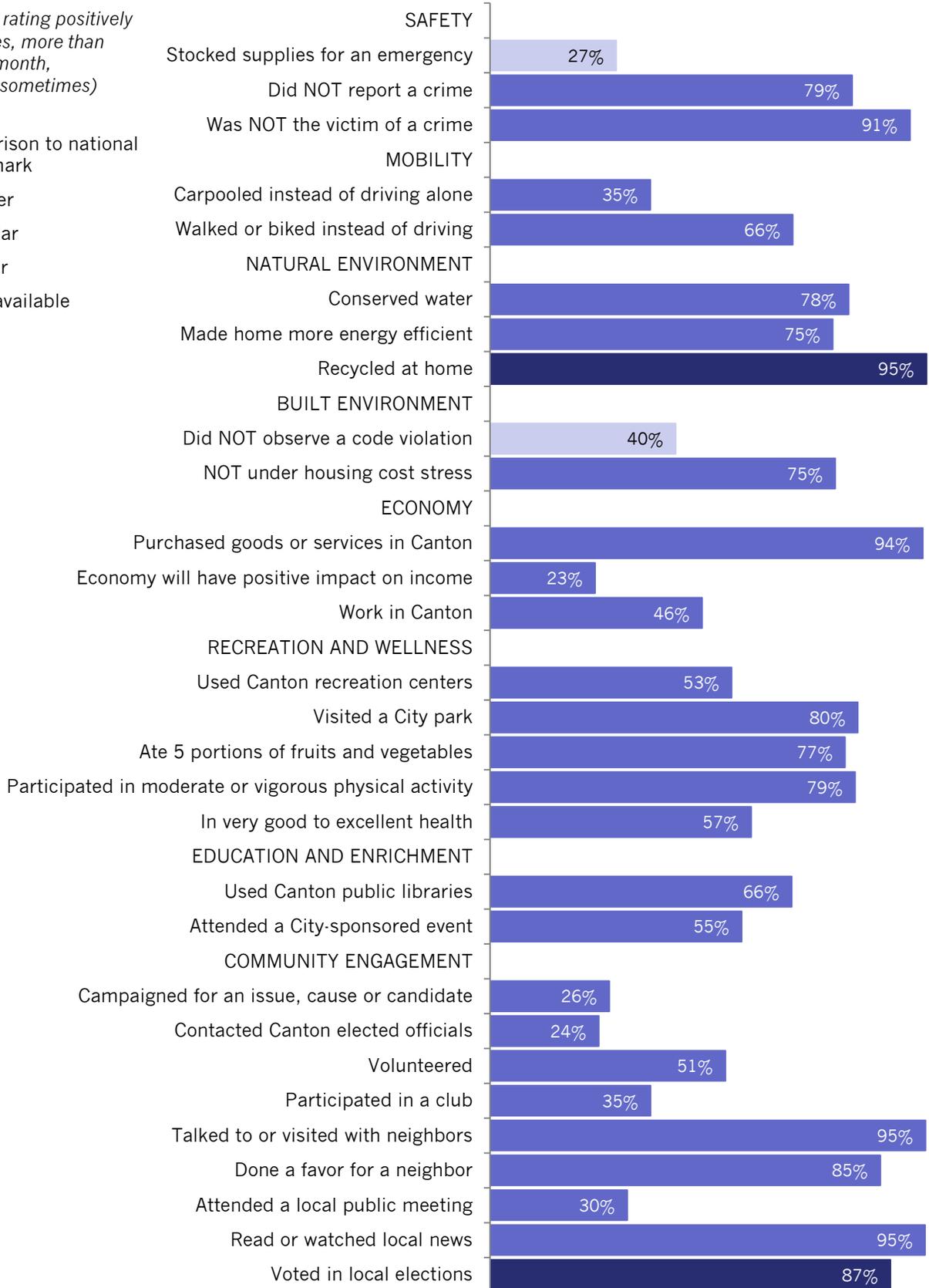


Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available

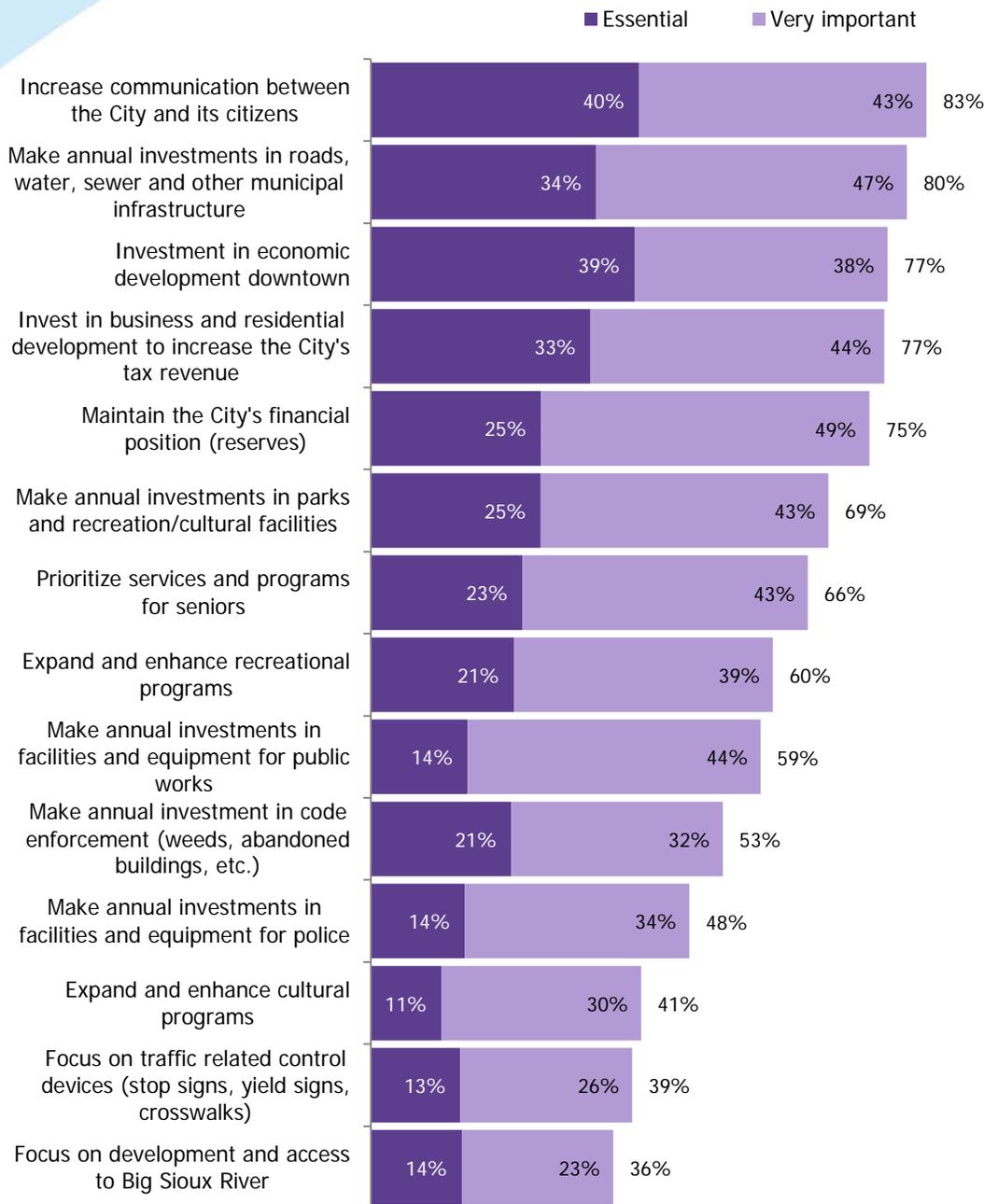


Special Topics

The City of Canton included three questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked participants what priorities the City should have over the next three years. Over three quarters of respondents believed that increasing communication between the City and its citizens, making investments in infrastructure, economic development downtown and business and residential development and maintaining financial reserves were essential or very important. Participants were less enthusiastic about focusing on expanding cultural programs, traffic control devices or development and access to the Big Sioux River.

Figure 4: City Priorities

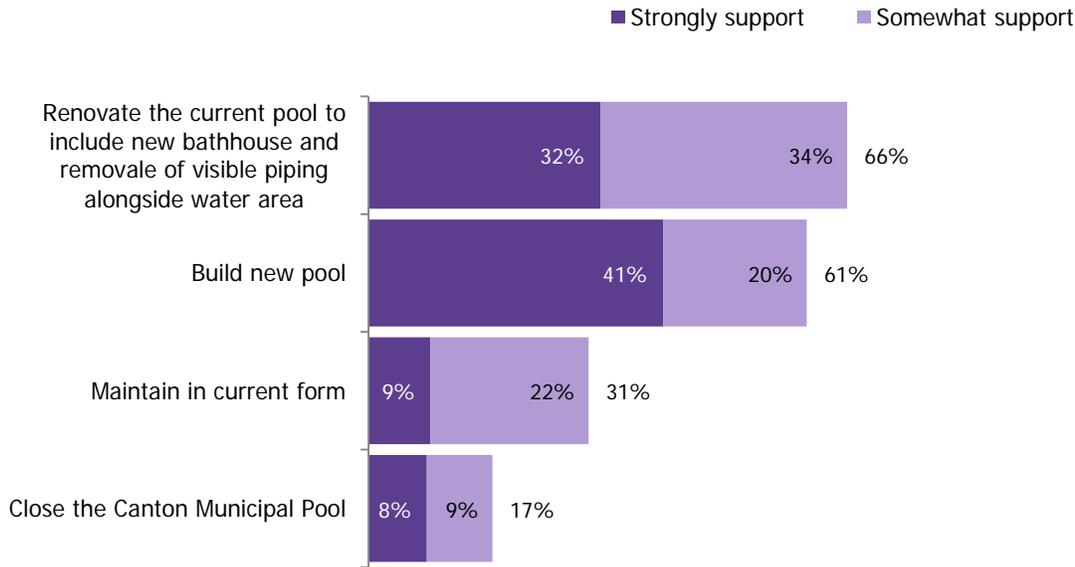
How important, if at all, do you think each of the following priorities should be for the City over the next three years:



The second custom question asked about support for a variety of Canton Municipal Pool related options. A majority of respondents supported renovating the pool or building a new pool. Only one-third of participants supported maintaining the pool in its current form and even fewer respondents supported closing the pool.

Figure 5: Pool Options

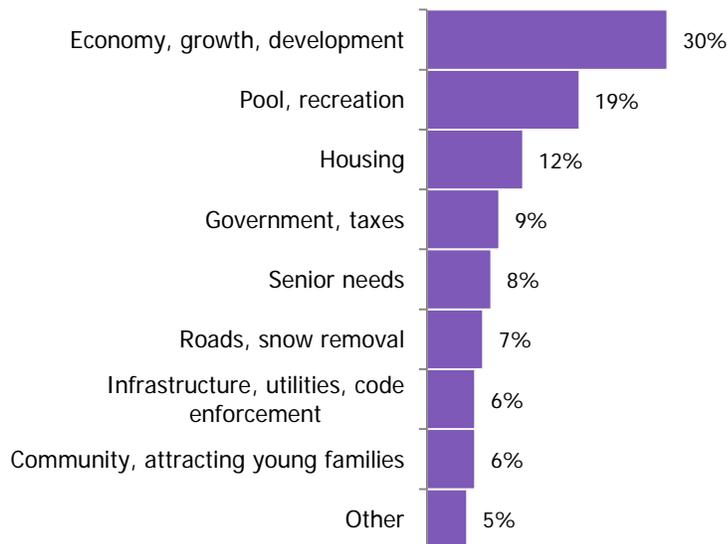
To what extent do you support or oppose each of the following options for the Canton Municipal Pool?



The final custom question asked residents to put in their own words what they believed was the top issue facing Canton. Most comments evolved around improving the economy and the growth and development of the City, particularly its downtown area and storefronts that were vacant. Many other comments also involved the municipal pool and the variety and cost of housing. (A full listing of verbatim comments can be found in *The NCS Open End Report* provided under separate cover.)

Figure 6: Top Issue Facing Canton

What do you think is the top issue facing the Canton community over the next five years?



Conclusions

Canton residents enjoy a high quality of life.

Most residents rated their overall quality of life and Canton as a place to live positively. Participants enjoy living in their neighborhoods and think Canton is a great place to raise a family. Residents in general also feel safe in Canton and tend to give positive ratings for the Natural Environment. Finally, a majority of participants plan on remaining in Canton and would recommend Canton to others.

The Economy is important to participants.

Participants indicated that the Economy is an important facet to focus on over the next few years. Economy ratings tended to be lower than ratings seen in other communities, but the number of participants purchasing goods in Canton, the number who have a positive outlook on the economy, and the number of participants working in Canton along with the cost of living in Canton were all on par with and similar to other communities in the nation. Many participants would like to see investments in economic development downtown and business and residential development, while also being conscious of the City's financial reserves. Most comments that were written on the survey involved the economy and economic development.

It's easy to get around Canton, but there's still room for Mobility improvements.

Most participants thought that it's easy to get around Canton, especially via car. Participants were particularly pleased with traffic signal timing, giving ratings that were higher than what's seen in other communities. Ease of walking and biking was also rated positively with most participants walking or biking instead of driving at least once a month, but participants would like to see improvements to paths and trails. Some government services related to Mobility also have opportunities for improvement, such as sidewalk repair, street repair, snow removal and street cleaning.

Canton has an Engaged Community.

Community Engagement was also indicated as being an important facet for Canton to focus on. While respondents gave lower ratings for Community Characteristics surrounding Community Engagement, Participation in Community Engagement activities (such as the number of participants volunteering, interacting with neighbors, doing favors for neighbors, keeping up with the local news and voting in local elections) was high. Public information services were rated positively by a majority of respondents and about 8 in 10 respondents would like to see more communication between the City and its citizens.