



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

# Ankeny, IA

Community Livability Report

2018



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# About

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

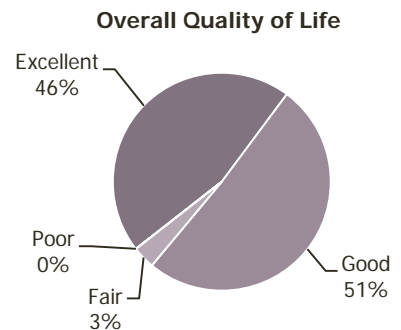
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 444 residents of the City of Ankeny. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% 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 Ankeny

Almost all residents (97%) rated the quality of life in Ankeny as excellent or good. This was higher than ratings given 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.

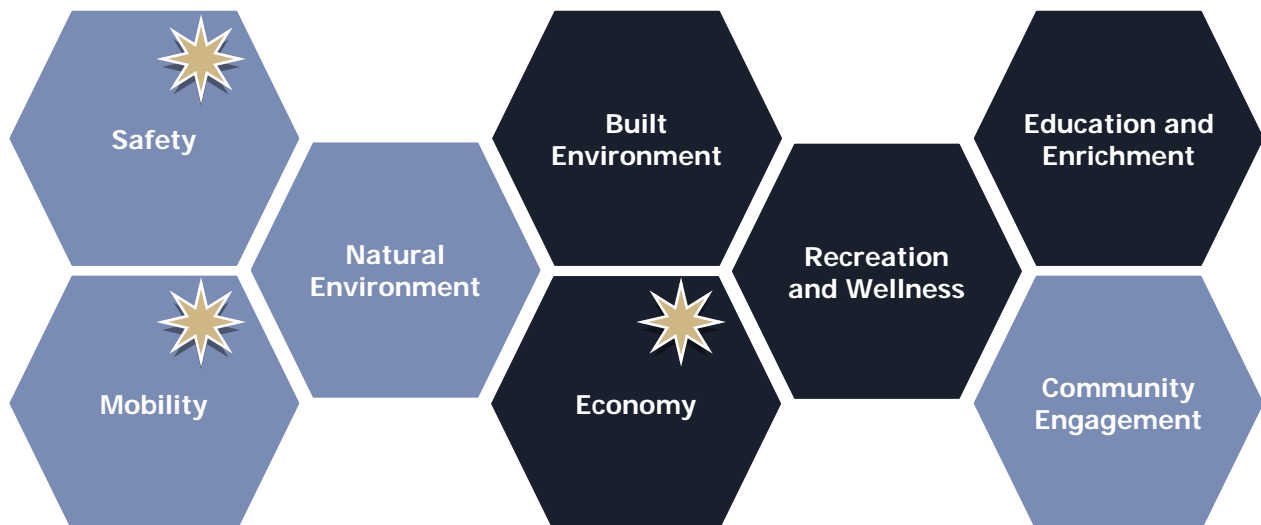
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. As in 2015, residents identified Safety, Mobility and Economy as priorities for the Ankeny community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Economy, as well as Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment, received ratings higher than the national benchmark. All other facets of livability were rated positively 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 Ankeny’s unique questions.

## Legend

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

- Most important



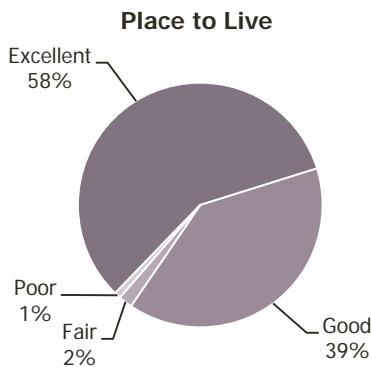
# Community Characteristics

*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 Ankeny, 97% rated the city as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Ankeny as a place to live were higher 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 Ankeny as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Ankeny and its overall appearance. About 9 in 10 residents gave favorable marks to most general aspects of community livability, and the overall image and appearance of the city and Ankeny as a place to raise children received ratings higher than those given elsewhere.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Many aspects were rated positively by at least three-quarters of respondents and were higher than the national benchmark, including almost all aspects of Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment. No aspects of Community Characteristics were rated lower than the benchmark. At least 9 in 10 residents were pleased with the overall feeling of safety in the city, feelings of safety in their neighborhoods and in Ankeny's commercial areas, cleanliness, overall economic health of the City, health and wellness opportunities, preventive wellness services, education and enrichment opportunities, religious or spiritual events and activities and K-12 education.

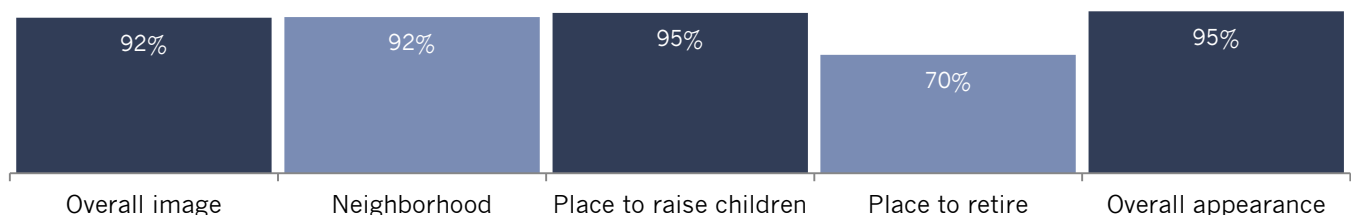


Compared to 2015, while ratings for several aspects increased or decreased, most ratings for Community Characteristics remained stable (for more information see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover).

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



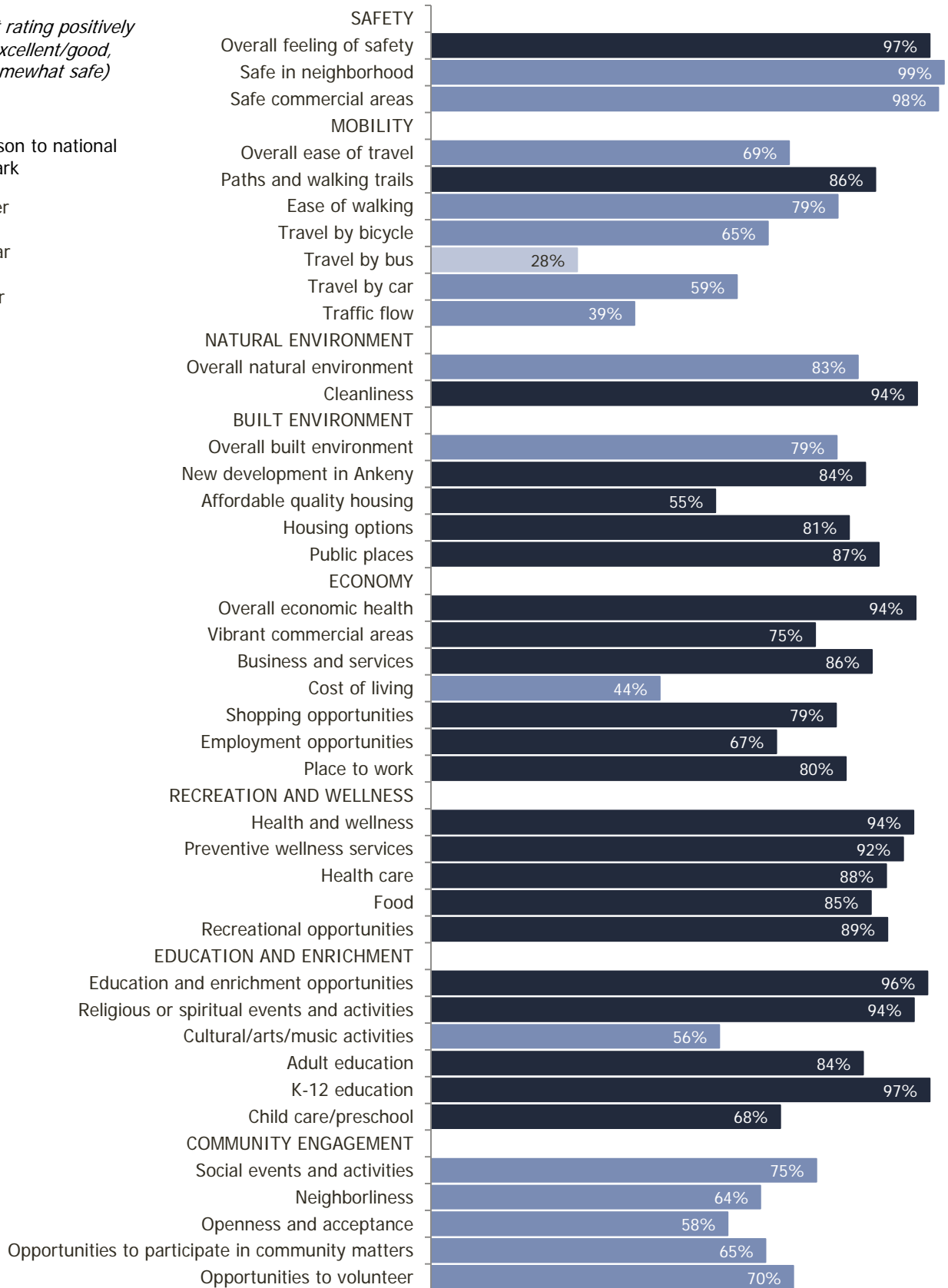
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

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

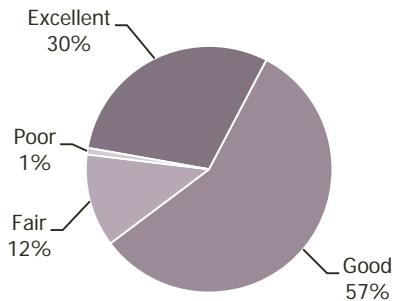
The overall quality of the services provided by Ankeny as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Nearly 9 in 10 residents positively rated the overall quality of City services while half gave favorable marks to the services provided by the Federal Government; both of these ratings were similar to those given elsewhere.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Ankeny’s leadership and governance. About 6 in 10 residents or more gave favorable reviews to all aspects of government performance, and residents awarded above-average marks to the overall direction of the City, overall confidence in City government, government acting in the best interest of Ankeny, being honest and treating all residents fairly. Further, the rating for value of services for taxes paid increased since 2015.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Ankeny. At least 6 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to almost all services in Ankeny and all were similar to or higher than the national comparisons. Residents gave especially high marks to aspects of Safety, Economy, Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement; the majority of these items received ratings higher than those given elsewhere.

Compared to 2015, ratings for most City services remained stable; residents awarded higher marks in 2018 to natural areas preservation, but lower scores to street repair.

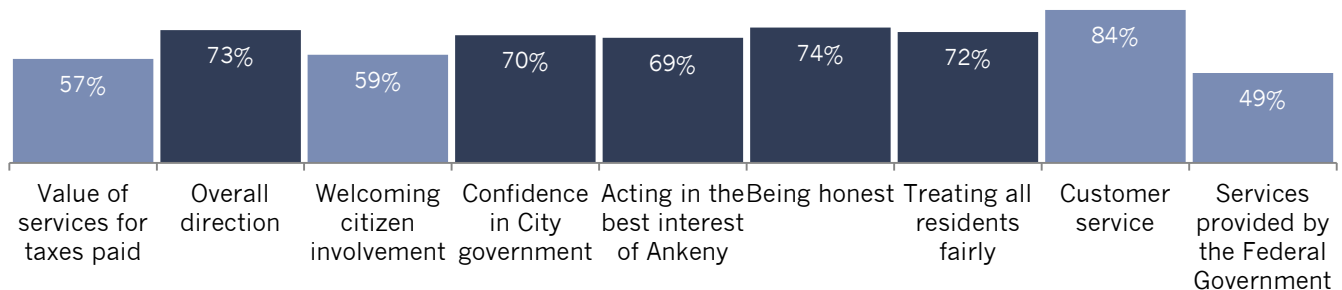
**Overall Quality of City Services**



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



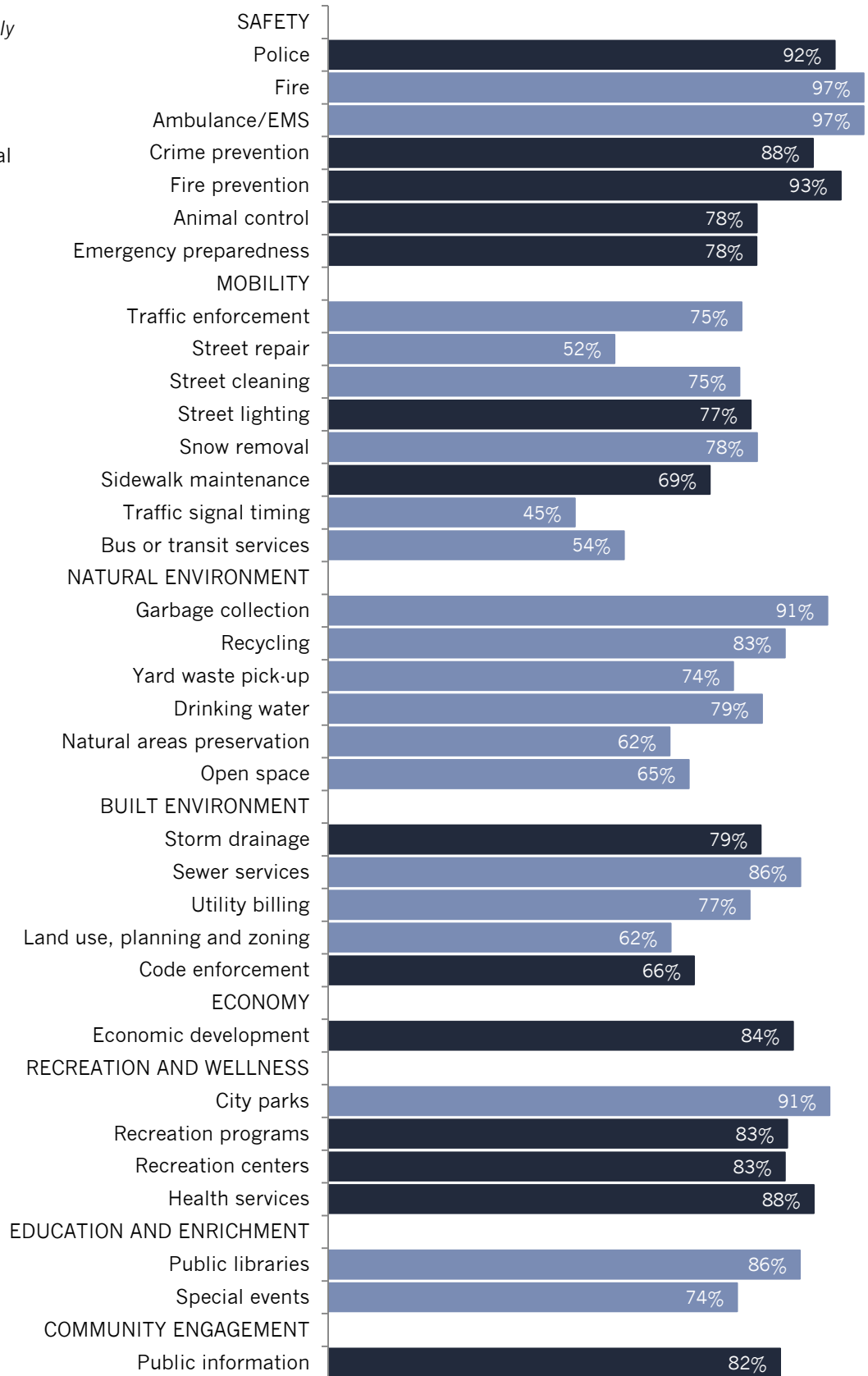
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



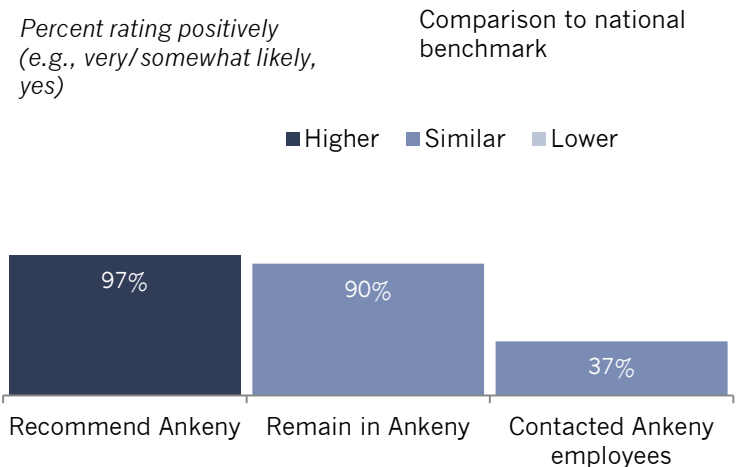
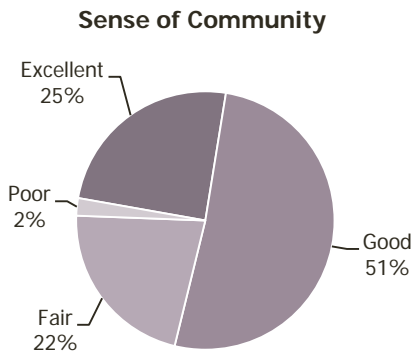


# Participation

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

An engaged community harnesses its most valuable resource, its residents. The connections and trust among residents, government, businesses and other organizations help to create a sense of community, a shared sense of membership, belonging and history. About three-quarters of respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the sense of community in Ankeny and 9 in 10 planned to remain in Ankeny for the next five years; these ratings were similar to those given in other communities across the nation. Virtually all residents would recommend living in the city to someone who asked and this rating was above average.

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 comparison to the benchmark (and to Ankeny over time) helpful for interpreting the results. Most rates of Participation were similar to those observed in other communities across the nation; residents in Ankeny were more likely than those who lived elsewhere to have not observed a code violation or to have participated in religious or spiritual activities, but less likely to have stocked supplies for an emergency, used public transportation instead of driving, conserved water, made their homes more energy efficient, contacted local elected officials or attended a local public meeting. Further, the proportion of residents who had conserved water or made their homes more energy efficient decreased from 2015 to 2018.



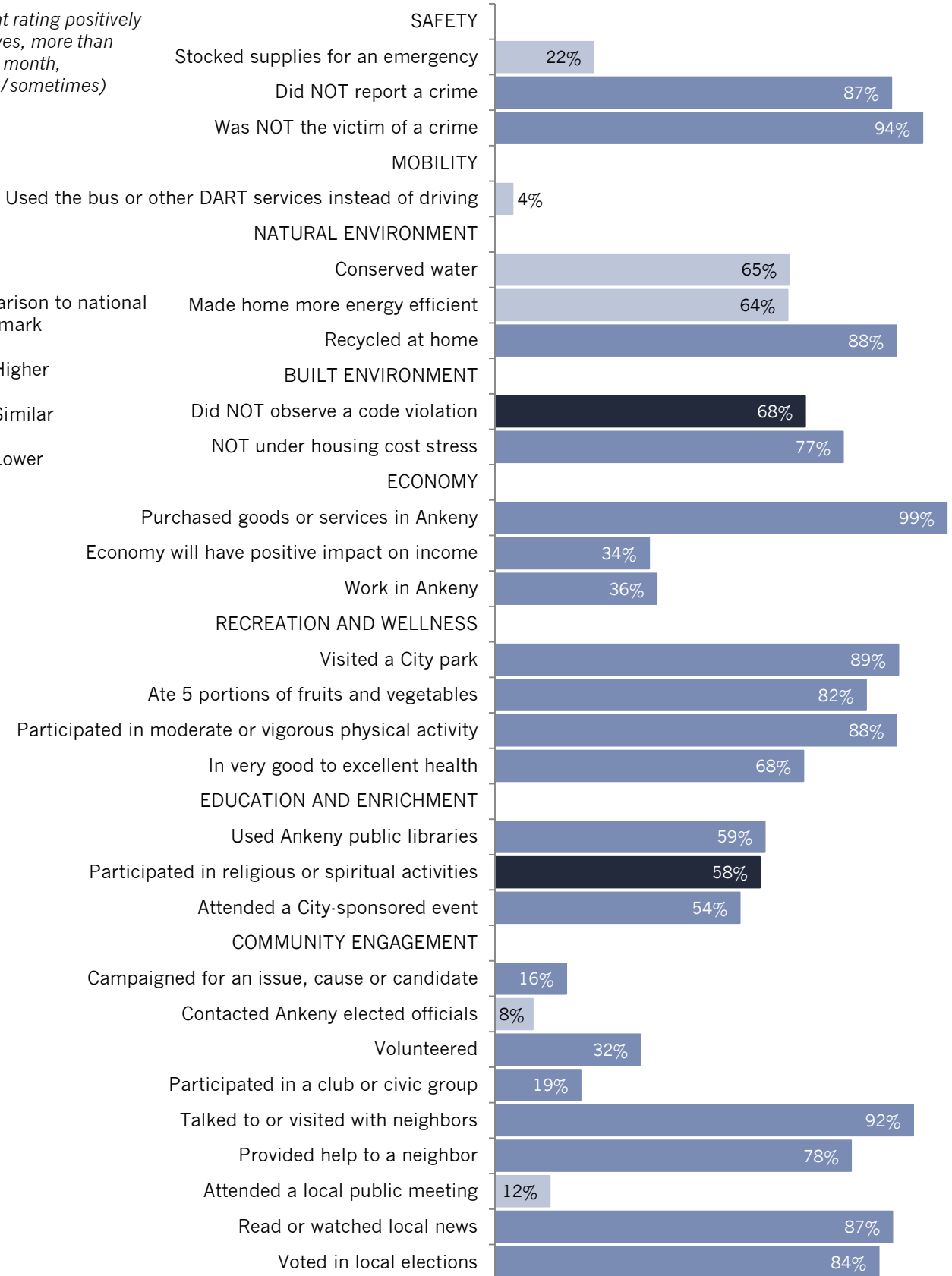
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

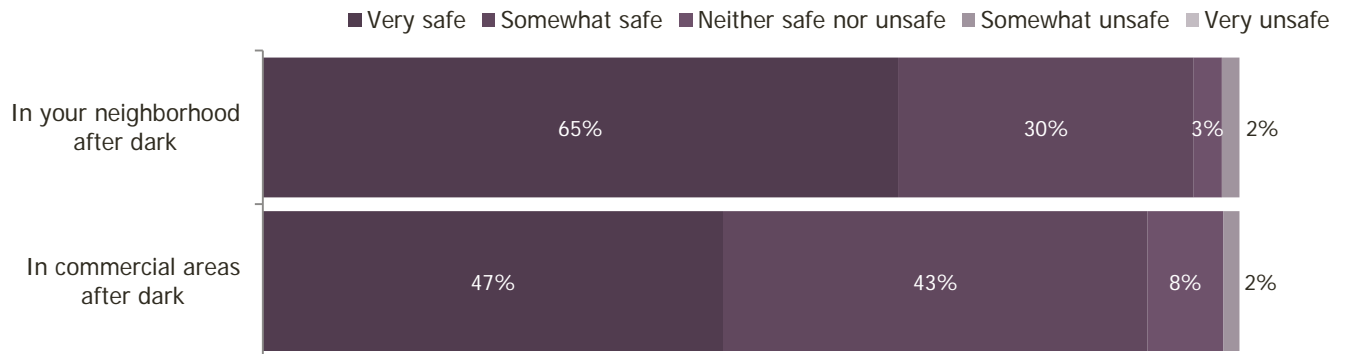


# Special Topics

The City of Ankeny included six questions of special interest on The NCS as well as several line additions to standard questions. Topic areas included the speed of growth in Ankeny, importance of investing resources, how often residents leave the city and parks and cultural amenities, among others.

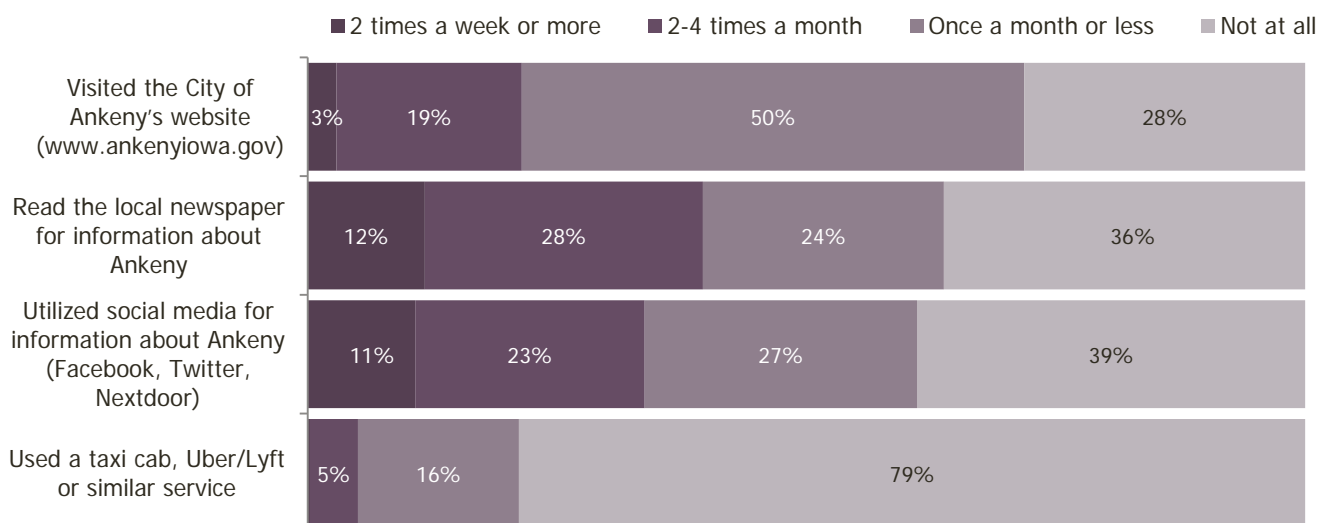
At least 9 in 10 residents indicated that they felt safe in their neighborhood after dark or in Ankeny’s commercial areas after dark, and no one indicated that they felt very unsafe.

Figure 4: Line Additions to Question 4  
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel:



Thinking about the frequency with which they did different activities, about three-quarters of residents had visited the City of Ankeny’s website in the 12 months prior to the survey and two-thirds of residents had read the local newspaper for information about Ankeny. Six in 10 had utilized social media for information about Ankeny. Residents were least likely to have used a taxi cab, Uber/Lyft or a similar service; only 2 in 10 residents had done so in the past year.

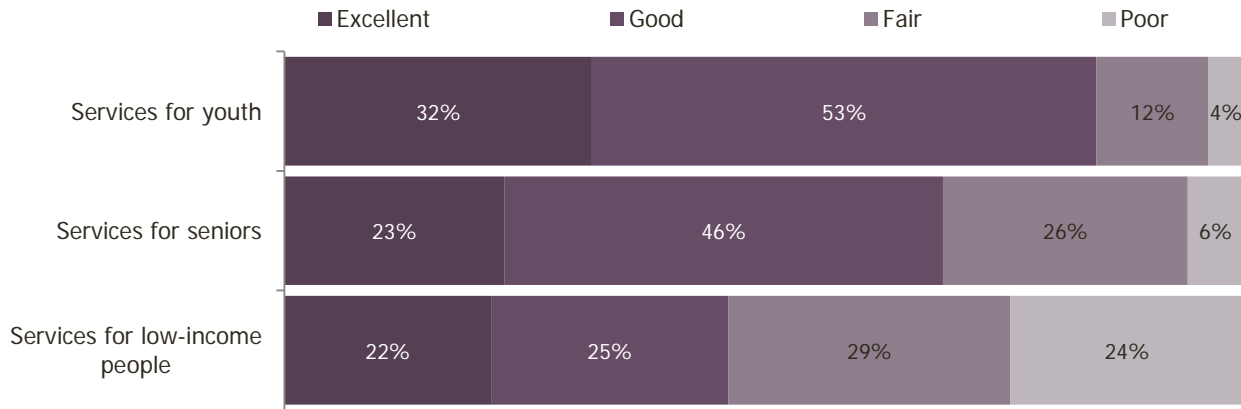
Figure 5: Line Additions to Question 8  
In the last 12 months, about how many times, if at all, have you or other household members done each of the following in Ankeny?



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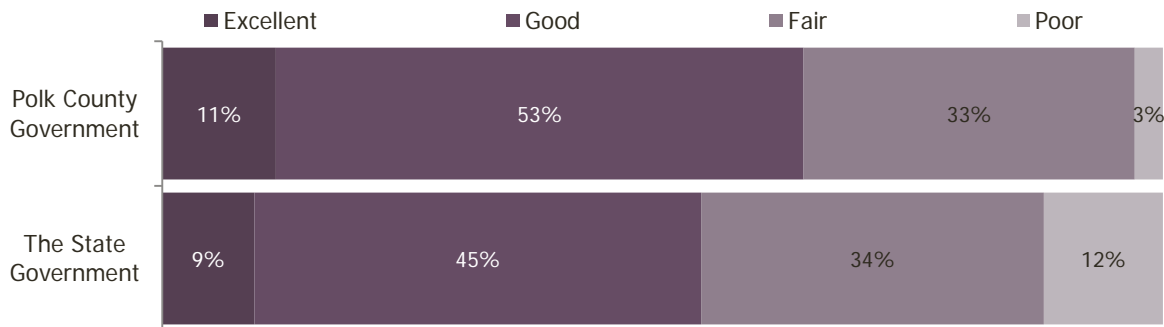
More than 8 in 10 residents rated the quality of Ankeny’s youth services as excellent or good and about 7 in 10 gave positive marks to senior services. About half of residents favorably rated the city’s services for low-income people as excellent or good; another 3 in 10 thought they were fair and one-quarter rated these as poor.

Figure 6: Line Additions to Question 10  
Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Ankeny:



About two-thirds of residents rated the Polk County Government as excellent or good while about half rated the State Government this way. One-third thought rated the services provided by each of these as fair.

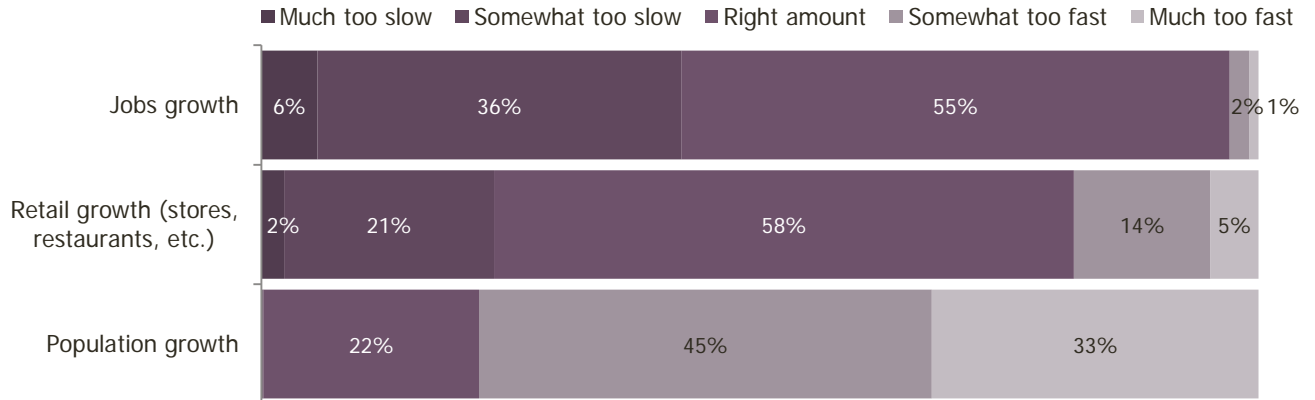
Figure 7: Line Additions to Question 11  
Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by each of the following?



About 4 in 10 residents thought that the speed of jobs growth in Ankeny was too slow, and another 5 in 10 thought it was the right amount; meanwhile, about one-quarter felt that retail growth in the City was too slow, 6 in 10 thought it was the right amount and another 2 in 10 felt it was too fast. Residents' opinions were more divided regarding the speed of population growth: about 2 in 10 thought it was too slow, roughly half thought it was the right amount and one-third thought it was too fast.

Figure 8: Speed of Growth in Ankeny

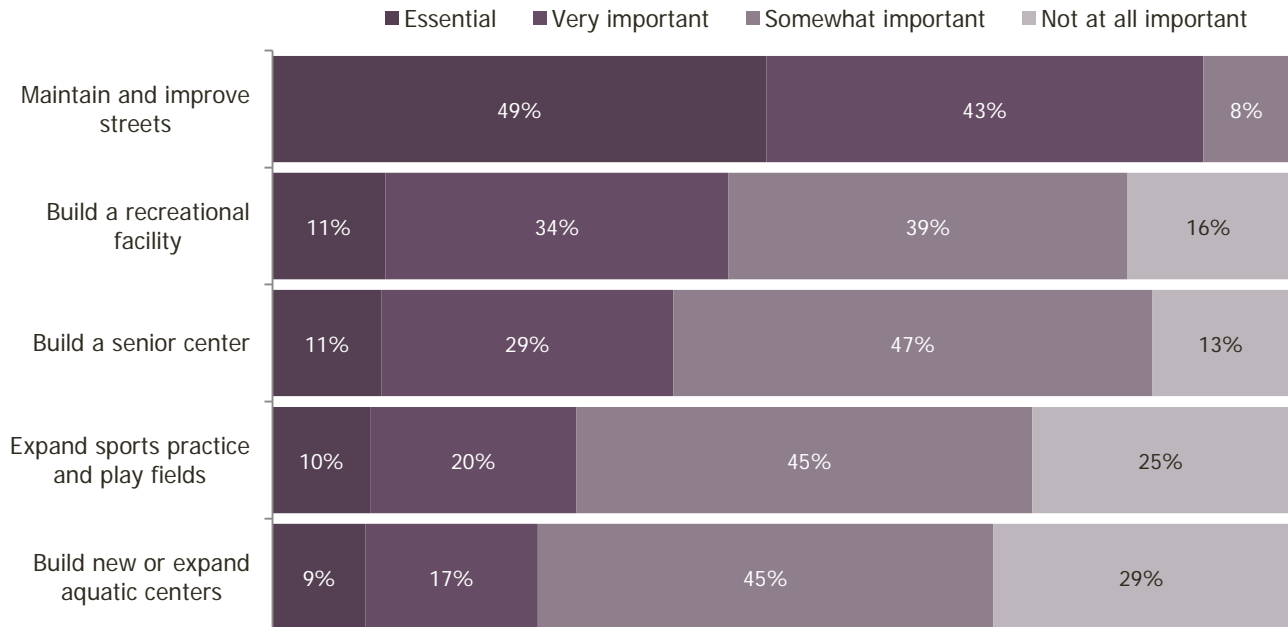
Please rate the speed of growth in the following categories in Ankeny over the past two years:



Most residents thought it was essential or very important for the City to invest resources in maintaining and improving streets in Ankeny, and no residents rated this as not at all important. About 4 in 10 respondents thought building a senior center or expanding sports practice and play fields were important.

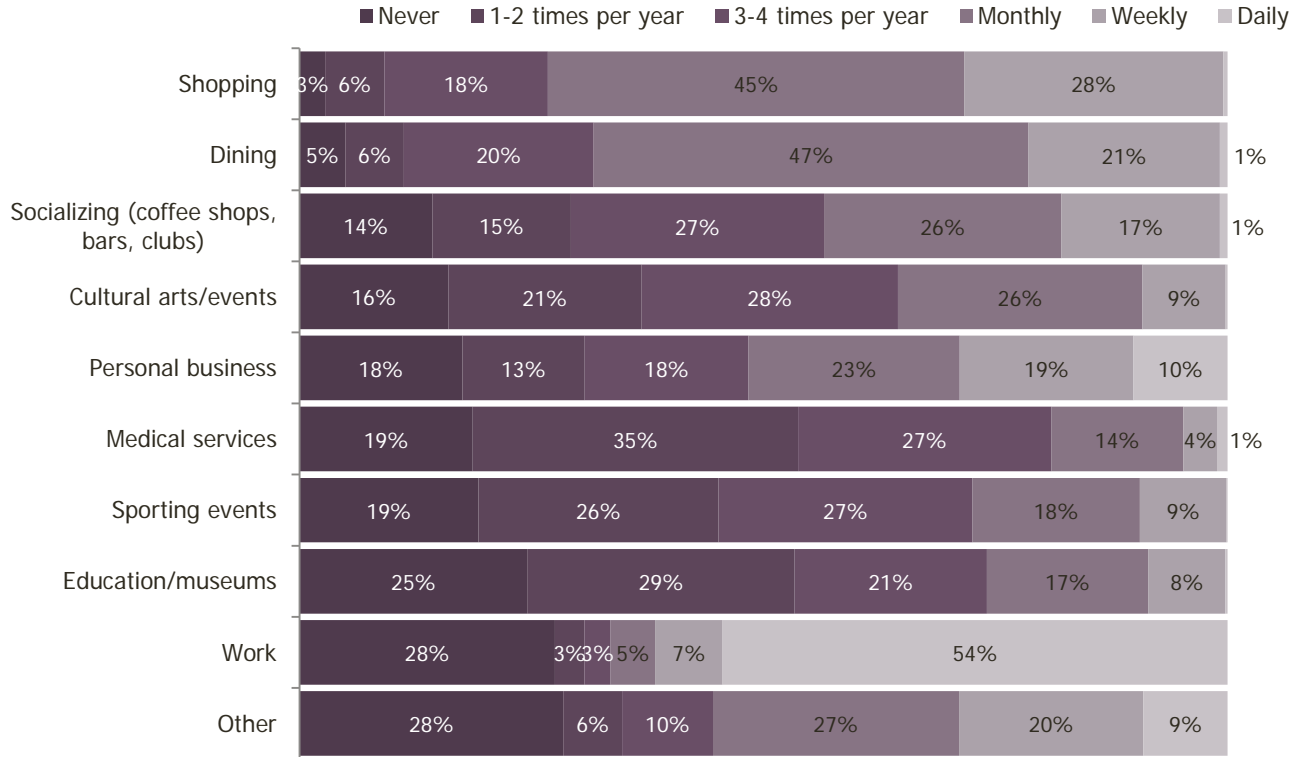
Figure 9: Importance of Investing Resources

Please rate how important, if at all, you think it will be for the City of Ankeny to invest resources in each of the following over the next five years:



Thinking about how often they left Ankeny for a variety of reasons, residents were most likely to leave the city for shopping or dining; roughly 8 in 10 residents left Ankeny at least once per year for socializing, cultural arts/events, personal business, medical services, sporting events and education/museums. About half of residents indicated that they left Ankeny daily for work.

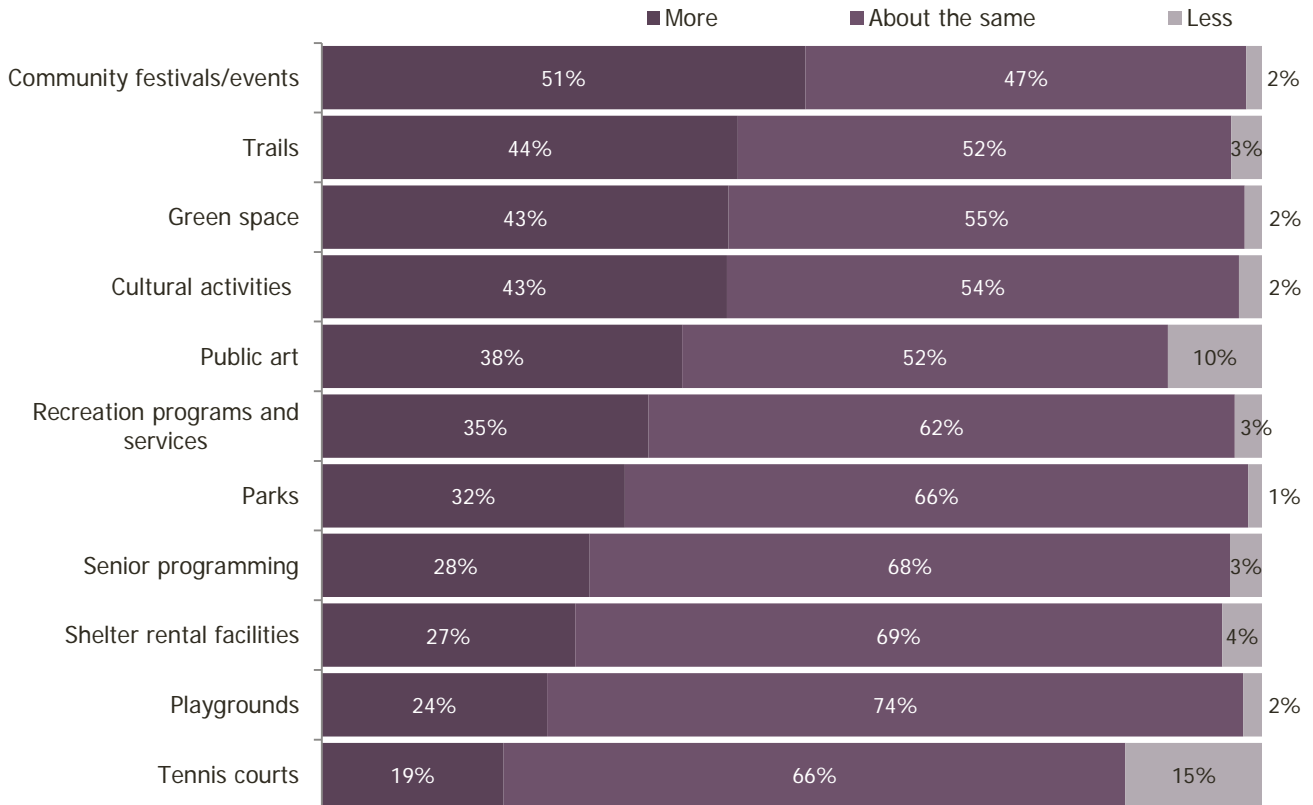
Figure 10: Reasons for Leaving Ankeny  
 How often do you leave Ankeny for the following reasons?



Thinking about the number of parks and cultural amenities in the city, half or more residents thought that there should be about the same number of each amenity listed. Residents were most likely to think there should be more community events/festivals, trails, green space and cultural activities in Ankeny.

Figure 11: Amount of Parks and Cultural Amenities

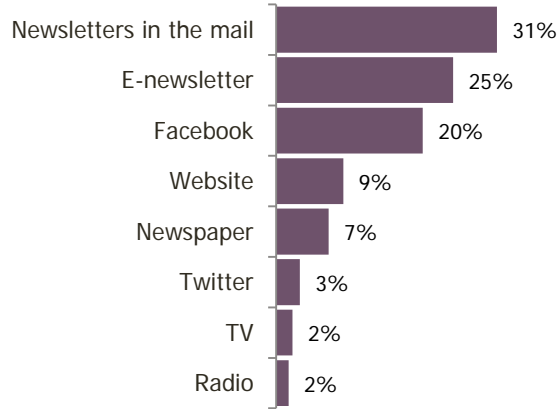
Thinking about parks and cultural amenities in Ankeny, do you think there should be more, about the same amount, or less of each of the following?



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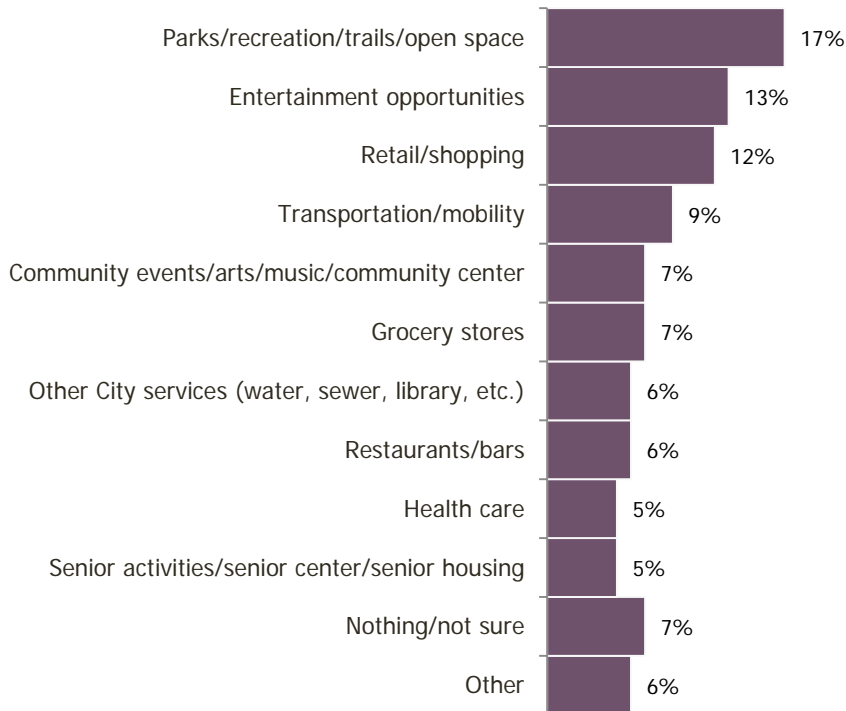
Residents were asked to indicate their most preferred method for receiving information about the City of Ankeny. One-third of residents most preferred newsletters in the mail, one-quarter preferred the e-newsletter and 2 in 10 preferred Facebook. About 1 in 10 preferred the City website or the newspaper. Very few residents preferred Twitter, TV or the radio.

Figure 12: Preferred Method of Receiving City Information  
*What one method do you most prefer to receive information from the City of Ankeny? (Check only one.)*



In the final special-interest question on the survey, residents were asked to write in their own words what one amenity Ankeny needed but did not already have. A total of 441 surveys were completed by Ankeny residents; of these, 272 respondents wrote in responses for the open-ended question. The most common amenities mentioned related to parks, recreation, trails or open space (17% of respondents); entertainment opportunities such as a movie theater, miniature golf or bowling alley (13%); or retail/shopping opportunities (12%) (for more information see the *Open End Report* under separate cover).

Figure 13: Needed Amenities in Ankeny  
*In your opinion, what is the one amenity that you believe Ankeny needs but does not have now?*





# Conclusions

## Ankeny continues to be a great place to live.

Almost all residents gave positive ratings to the overall quality of life in the city and Ankeny as a place to live, and about 9 in 10 were pleased with the overall image and overall appearance of the city and Ankeny as a place to raise children. These ratings were all higher than those given in other communities nationwide. Virtually all residents would recommend living in the City to someone who asked and this was also above average.

## Safety and Economy are important to residents and ratings within these facets are strong.

Residents indicated that Safety and Economy were important areas for the City to focus on in the coming two years and ratings within these facets were positive. Almost all residents positively rated the overall feeling of safety in Ankeny (which was higher than the benchmark) and feelings of safety in their neighborhoods and in Ankeny's commercial areas. Evaluations for police, crime prevention, fire prevention, animal control and emergency preparedness were also higher than those given elsewhere.

Similarly, many aspects of Economy also received ratings higher than the national benchmarks, including the overall economic health of the city, vibrant commercial areas, overall quality of business and service establishments, shopping opportunities, employment opportunities, Ankeny as a place to work and economic development. When thinking about the speed of growth in the city, at least half of residents indicated that the speed of jobs or retail growth was about right.

## Mobility is also a priority for residents and may be an area of opportunity for the City.

Respondents also indicated that Mobility was an important community focus area for Ankeny in the next two years. Ratings within this facet tended to be positive and similar to the benchmark, and evaluations for paths and walking trails, street lighting and sidewalk maintenance were higher than those observed elsewhere. However, one-quarter of residents gave favorable review to ease of travel by bus and only 4% had used the bus or other DART services at least once in the past year; these ratings were lower than average. Further, the ratings for ease of travel by bus and street repair declined from 2015 to 2018. About 9 in 10 residents thought it was essential or very important for the City to invest resources in maintaining and improving streets in Ankeny in the next five years, which was the top priority for resource investment as rated by residents. Finally, in an open-ended question that asked residents to write in their own words what one amenity Ankeny needed but did not already have, about 1 in 10 respondents made a comment related to transportation or mobility.

## Residents value Recreation and Wellness and want more opportunities for it.

Ankeny residents gave consistently high marks to aspects related to Recreation and Wellness (including overall opportunities for health and wellness, preventive wellness services, recreation programs and recreation centers, among others) and almost all of these ratings were higher than average. Thinking about the number of parks and cultural amenities in the city, between 32% and 44% of residents thought there should be more trails, green space, recreation programs and activities and parks. Finally, in an open-ended question regarding amenities lacking in Ankeny, the most frequently-mentioned topic related to parks, trails, recreation or open space (19% of residents wrote in a comment related to these areas).