THE NCS™

The National Citizen Survey™

Key West, FL

Community Livability Report

2015

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About

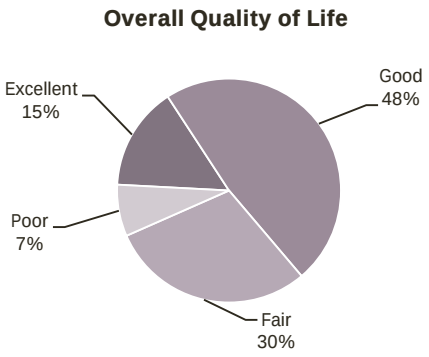
The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the "livability" of Key West. The phrase "livable community" is used here to evoke a place that is not simply habitable, but that is desirable. It is not only where people do live, but where they want to live.

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 376 residents of the City of Key West. The margin of error around any reported percentage is five percent 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 Key West

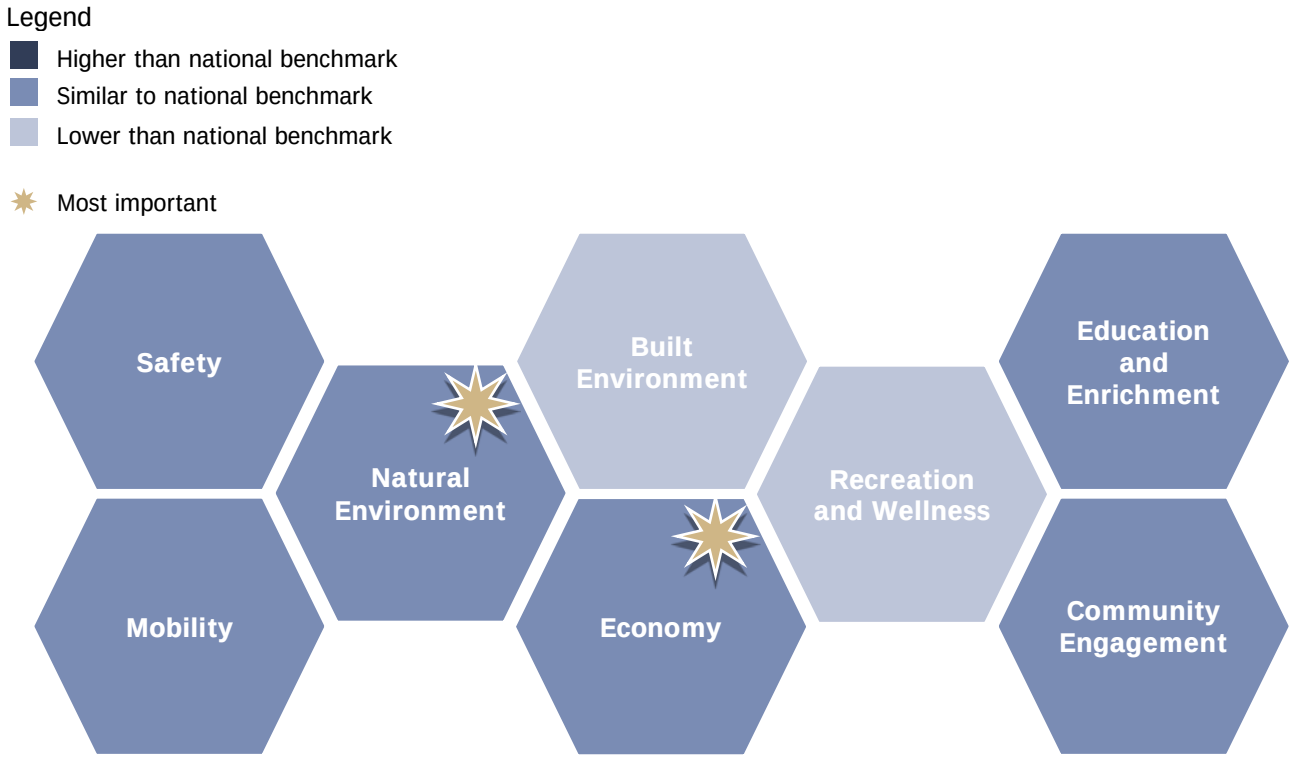
A majority of residents rated the quality of life in Key West as excellent or good. This rating is lower than quality of life ratings in other communities nationally (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).



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 Natural Environment and Economy as priorities for the Key West community in the coming two years. Ratings for both of these priority areas were positive and similar to other communities, along with the facets of Safety, Mobility, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement. There were two facets of community which received ratings lower than the national benchmark, Built Environment and Recreation and Wellness. 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 Key West's unique questions.



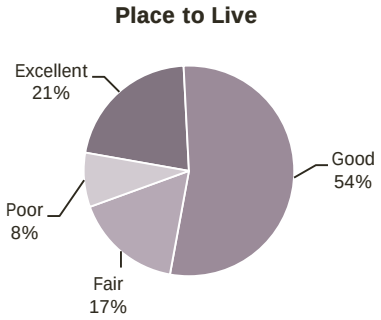
Community Characteristics

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 Key West, 75% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Key West 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 the city as a place to raise children and to retire, neighborhoods as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Key West and its overall appearance. Most residents provided positive ratings to their neighborhood as a place to live positively (7 in 10 rated excellent/good). At least half of residents rated Key West's overall image and overall appearance as excellent or good. Compared to other communities in the nation, residents provided lower ratings when asked about Key West as a place to raise children (29% excellent/good) or as a place to retire (46% excellent/good).

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Safety and Community Engagement received positive ratings, with about 7 in 10 residents providing excellent or good ratings for most items. One item stands out above the others within Community Engagement and received ratings higher than other communities across the country; at least 7 in 10 residents rated the openness and acceptance within Key West as excellent or good. Most residents reported feeling very or somewhat safe in Key West overall and in Key West's downtown/commercial areas (8 in 10 residents) while even more residents felt safe in their neighborhoods (9 in 10 rated very/somewhat safe). All safety items within Community Characteristics were on par with other communities in the United States. All items within Built Environment received ratings lower than the national benchmarks, with excellent or good ratings from less than half of respondents. Affordable quality housing (6% excellent/good) and housing options (7% excellent/good) received the lowest ratings within Built Environment. At least 3 in 5 residents provided positive ratings for overall natural environment and air quality, similar to ratings in other nationally benchmarked communities. Ratings within Economy were mixed, with cost of living receiving the lowest positive rating of 5%. A majority of residents rated Key West's downtown/commercial area as vibrant and more than 4 in 5 residents thought Key West is an excellent or good place to visit, with the latter receiving ratings higher than received in other communities nationally. Cultural/arts/music activities received excellent or good ratings from almost 3 in 4 residents, ratings higher than the national benchmark.



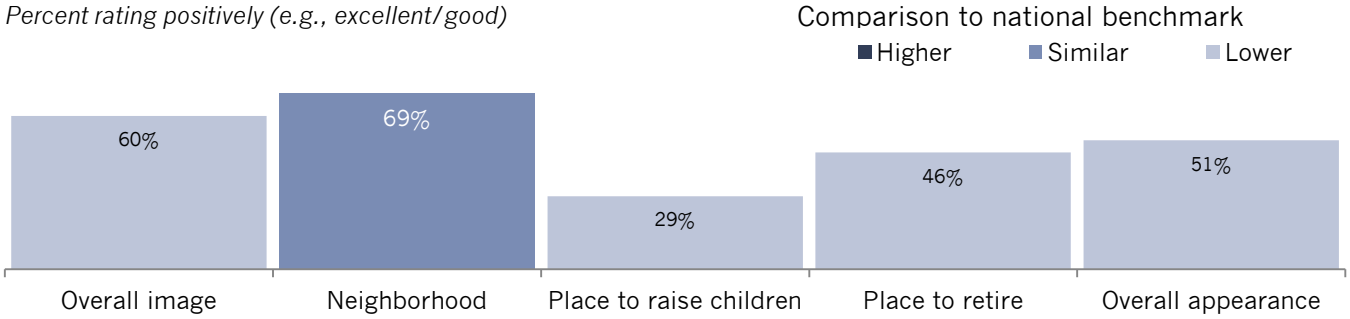
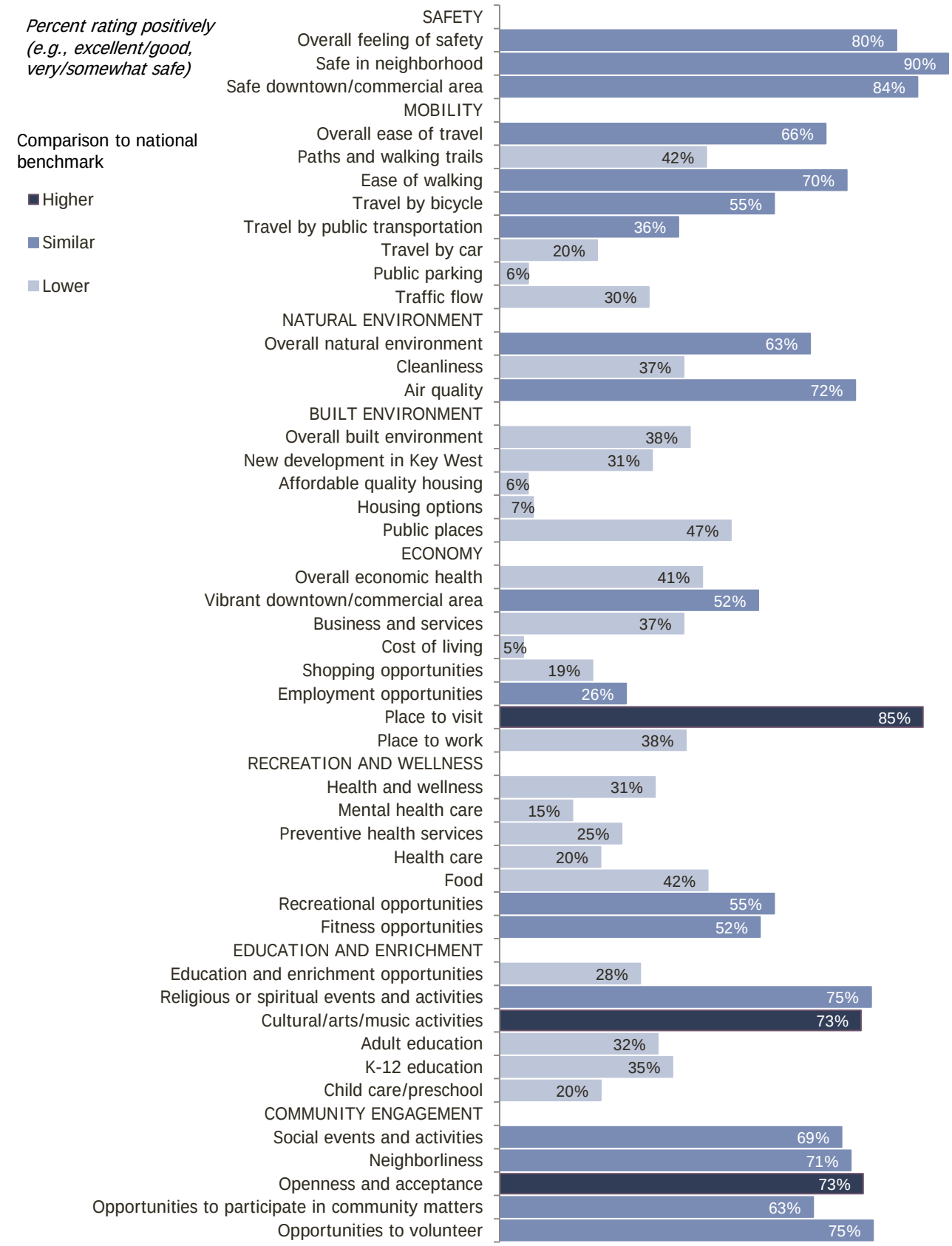


Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics



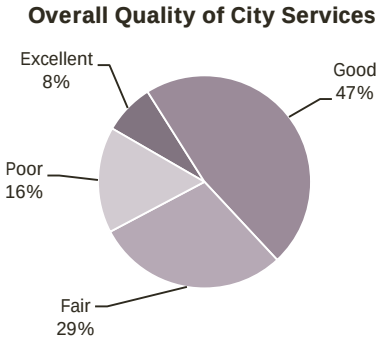
Governance

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

The overall quality of the services provided by Key West as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. When evaluating the overall quality of City services, 55% of Key West residents thought the city is doing an excellent or good job. This rating is lower than the national benchmark but higher than ratings received for services provided by the Federal Government (46% excellent/good).

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Key West's leadership and governance. Ratings of government performance were mostly lower than the national benchmarks, with less than half of residents providing excellent or good ratings to the value of services for taxes paid, overall direction, welcoming citizen involvement, confidence in city government, acting in the best interest of Key West, being honest and treating all residents fairly. More than half of residents rated Key West's customer service as excellent or good (56%).

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Key West. Most Governance items within Safety were rated similar to the national benchmarks. Built Environment within Governance received mixed ratings; approximately 2 in 3 residents provided positive ratings for sewer services and power utility; similarly approximately 3 in 5 thought utility billing services were excellent or good, similar to other communities nationally. Ratings for code enforcement (26% excellent/good), storm drainage (32% excellent/good), and land use, planning and zoning (17% excellent/good) received positive ratings from less than half of residents. No more than 2 in 5 residents provided positive ratings to government services for traffic enforcement, street repair, street cleaning, sidewalk maintenance and traffic signal timing within Mobility. Two ratings within Mobility were similar to the national benchmark, with half of respondents rating street lighting and bus or transit services as excellent or good.



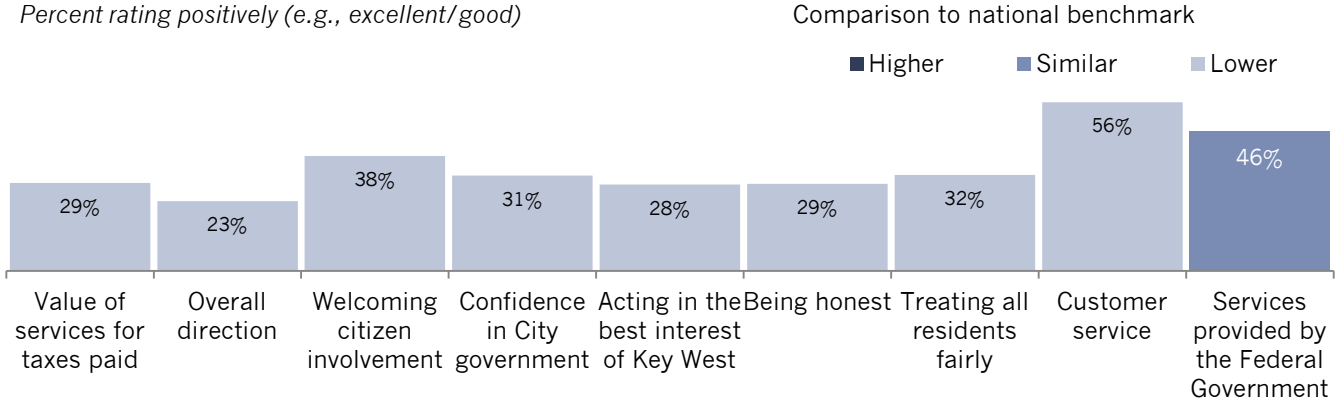
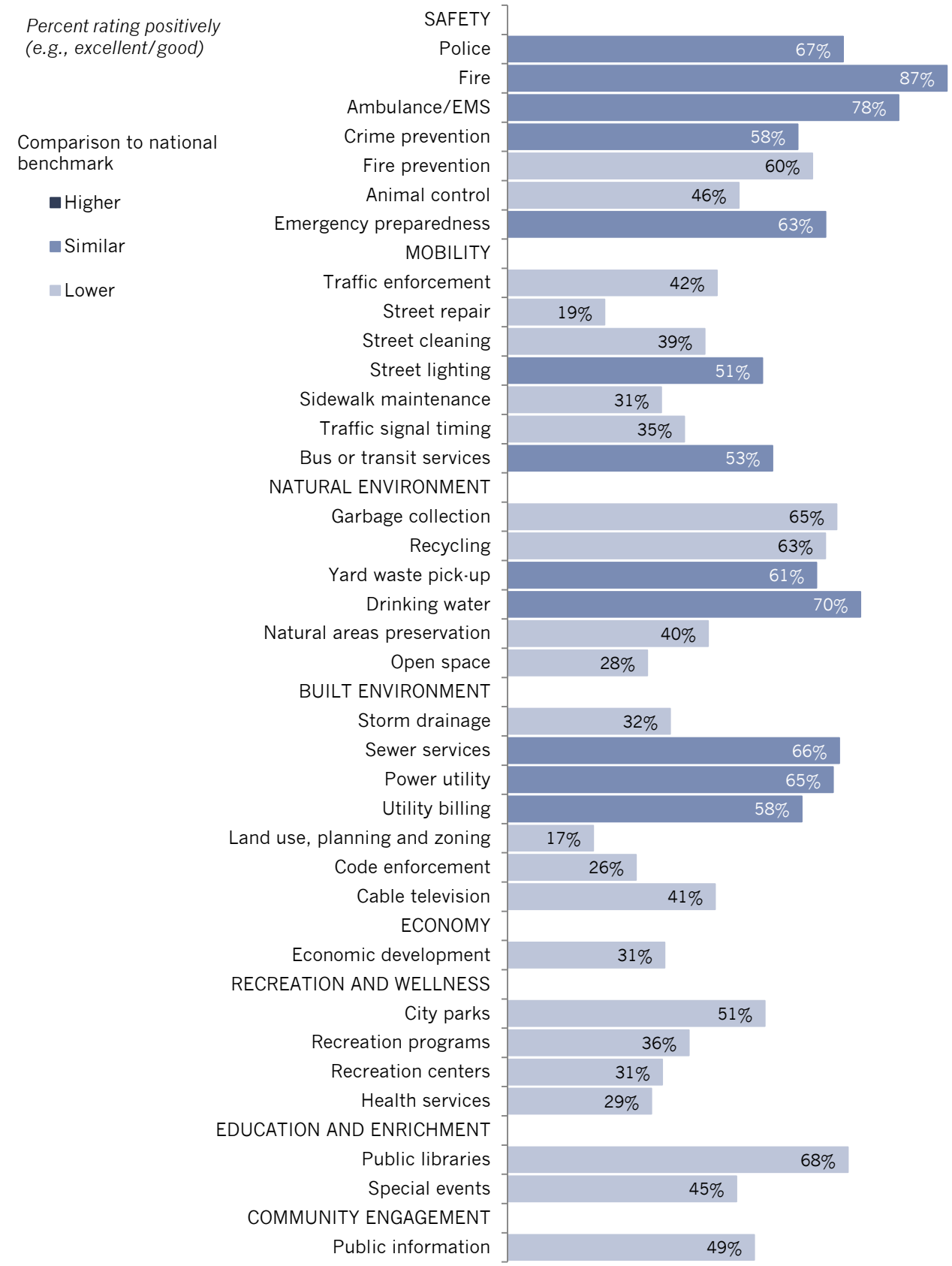


Figure 2: Aspects of Governance



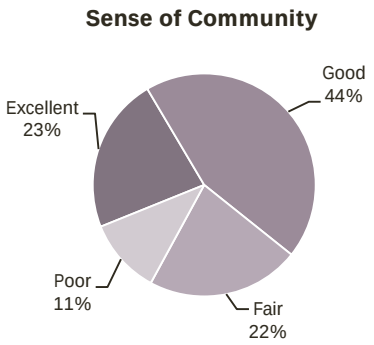
Participation

Are the residents of Key West 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. A majority of the respondents provided an excellent or good rating for the overall sense of community; this is similar to other communities nationally.

Approximately 7 in 10 residents planned on remaining in Key West during the next five years and 6 in 10 residents would recommend the city as a place to live to those who ask. Half of residents had contacted Key West employees in the last 12 months.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Most aspects of Participation were on par with other communities or better. While half of Key West residents reported using a city recreation center in the last 12 months, most visited a city park (85%), ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables (86%), participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity (87%), and reported being in very good to excellent health (71%); each of these Recreation and Wellness items received a rating similar to other communities nationally. Most Community Engagement items within Participation received ratings similar to other communities across the nation with the exception of the number who had volunteered (64%), participated in a club (41%) and attended a local public meeting (33%) in the last 12 months which received ratings higher than the national benchmarks. All but one item within Economy received similar ratings to the benchmarks. The number of residents who work inside the city (7 in 10) was higher in Key West than seen in other communities nationally. When evaluating the Built Environment under Participation, 2 in 5 residents were not under housing cost stress and had not observed a code violation, ratings lower than in other communities in the nation. Education and Enrichment received mixed ratings in Participation. Approximately 7 in 10 residents attended a City-sponsored event (above the national benchmark) while half of residents had used a City public library. Residents of Key West reported being very environmentally conscious with 89% of residents who had conserved water in the last 12 months, 84% made their home more energy efficient and 95% recycled at home (higher than other communities nationally). Key West also had more residents who reported walking or biking instead of driving at least once in the last 12 months compared to other benchmarked communities across the nation (8 in 10).



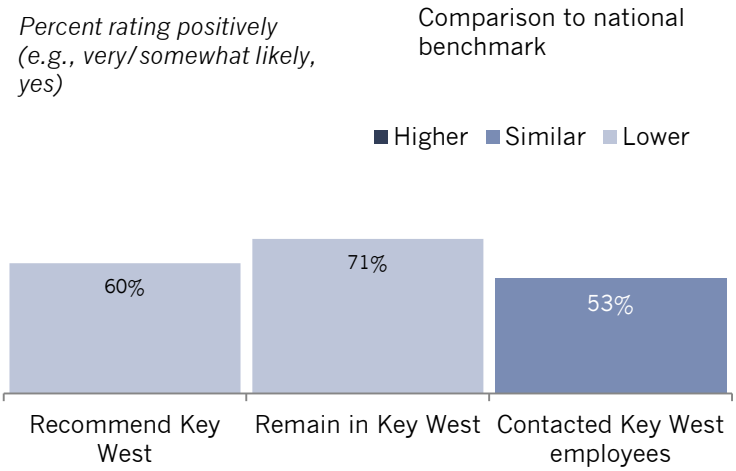
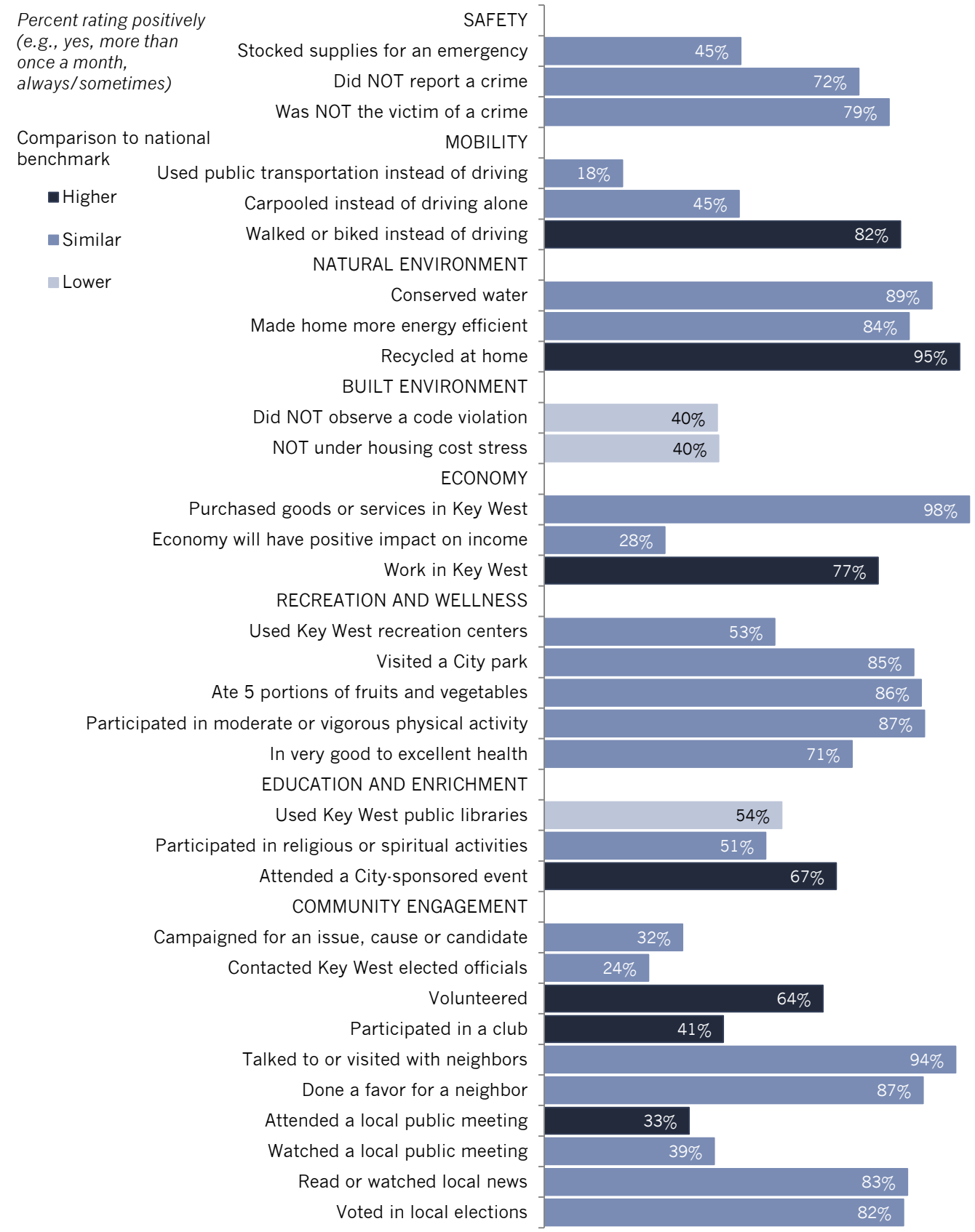


Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

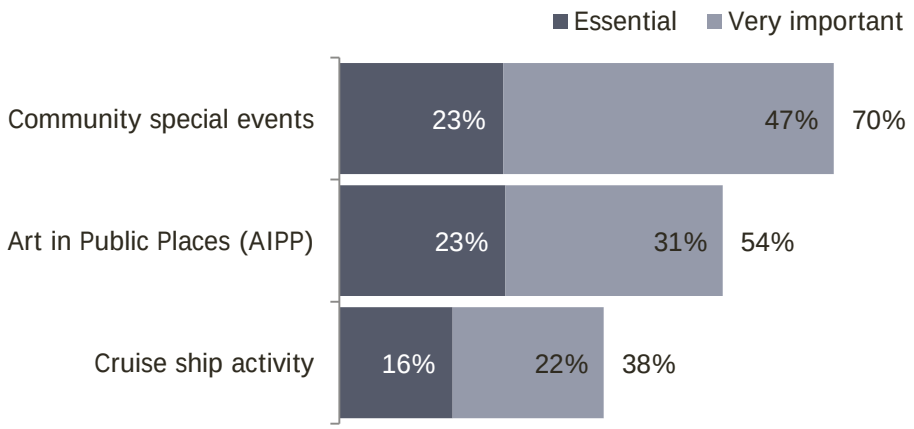


Special Topics

The City of Key West included five questions of special interest on The NCS, including one open-ended question (detailed in the *Open End Report*, under a separate cover). The first special interest question asked by Key West focused on indicators related to resident's quality of life. Community special events was rated highest with 7 in 10 residents voicing they are essential or very important. Approximately half of residents thought Art in Public Places was essential or very important.

Figure 4: Quality of Life Indicators

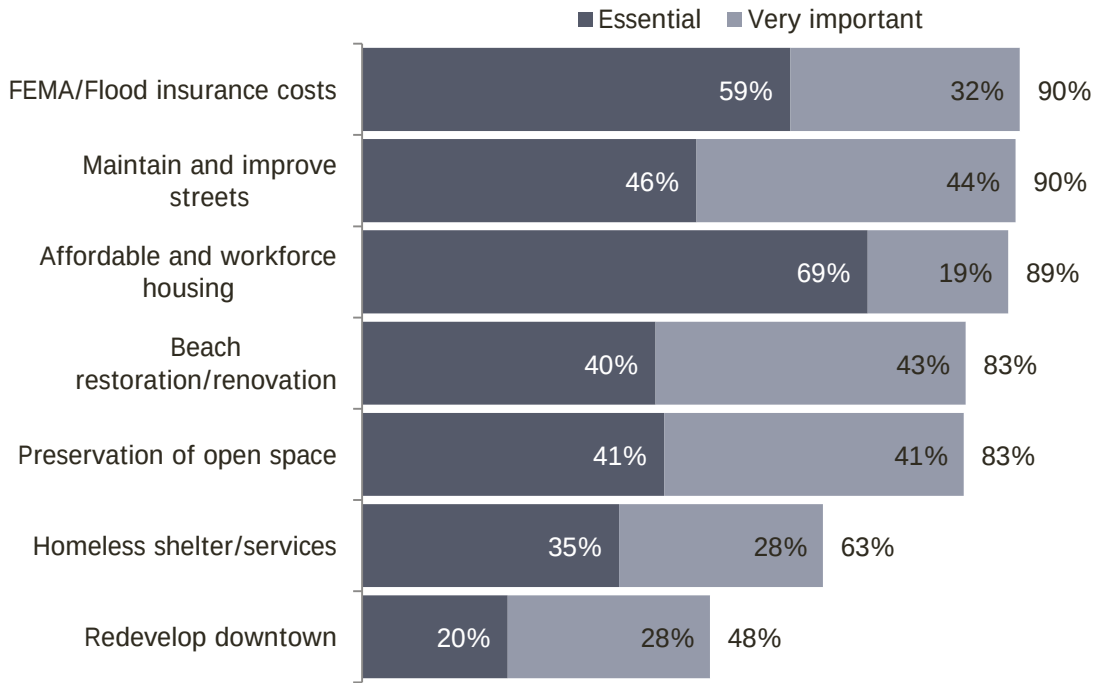
Please rate how important, if at all, each of the following are to the overall quality of life in Key West:



The next question of special interest instructed residents to indicate how important it is for specific projects and issues to be addressed in the near future. Almost everyone indicated that dealing with FEMA/flood insurance costs, maintaining and improving streets and developing affordable and workforce housing was essential or very important. Slightly fewer residents indicated beach restoration/renovation and preservation of open space as essential or very important.

Figure 5: Important Projects and Issues

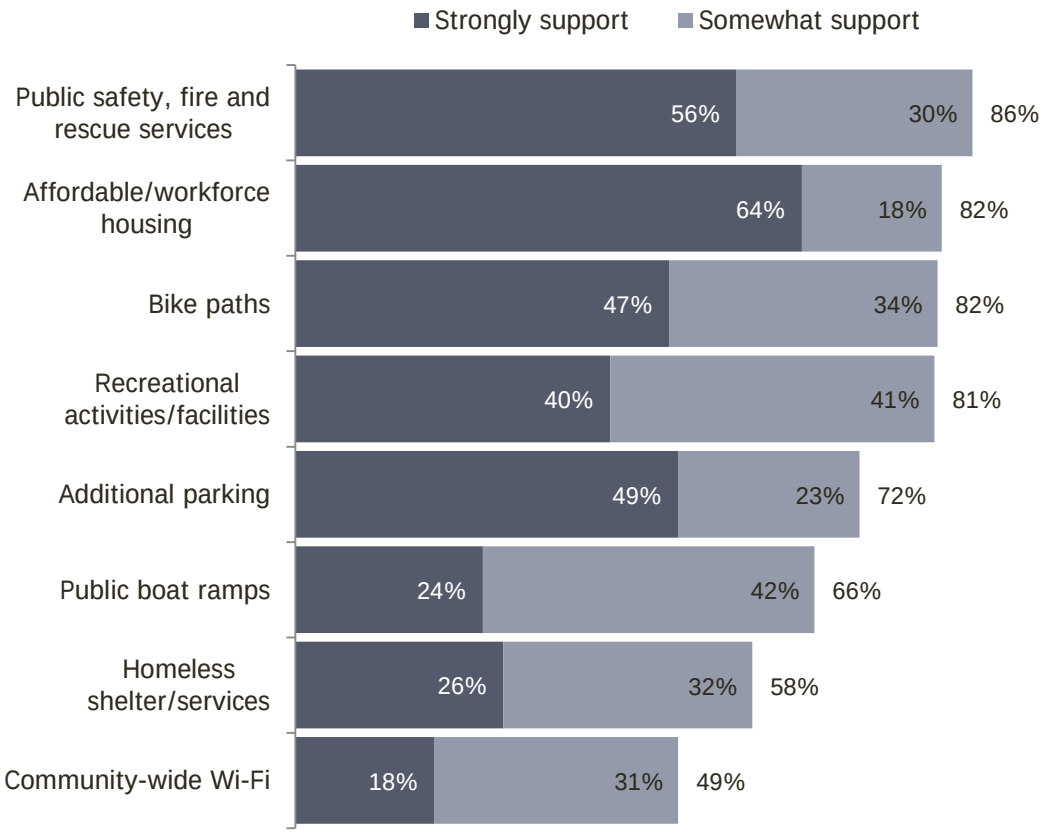
Please indicate how important, if at all, each of the following projects and issues will be for the City to address over the next five years:



More than 4 in 5 residents indicated that they would strongly or somewhat support a property tax increase to fund public safety, fire and rescue services as shown in Key West's third question of special interest. Slightly fewer indicated they would strongly or somewhat support a property tax increase to fund affordable/workforce housing (82%), bike paths (82%) and recreational activities/facilities (81%) .

Figure 6: Property Tax

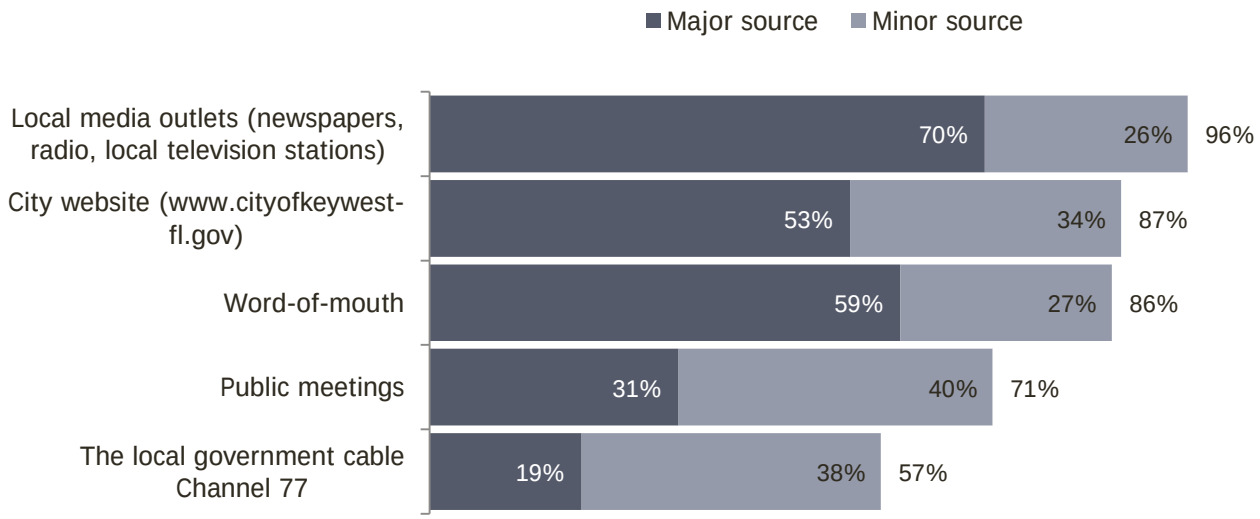
Please indicate to what extent you would support or oppose a property tax increase to fund the following new facilities or services:



Key West's fourth special interest question asked residents to report which information sources they used to find information pertaining to the City government and its services. Almost every resident reported the local media outlets as a major or minor source of City information (96%). Residents rated the City website and word-of-mouth approximately equally as major or minor sources of City information, however slightly more residents rated word-of-mouth (59%) as a major source compared to the City website (53%).

Figure 7: Sources of Information

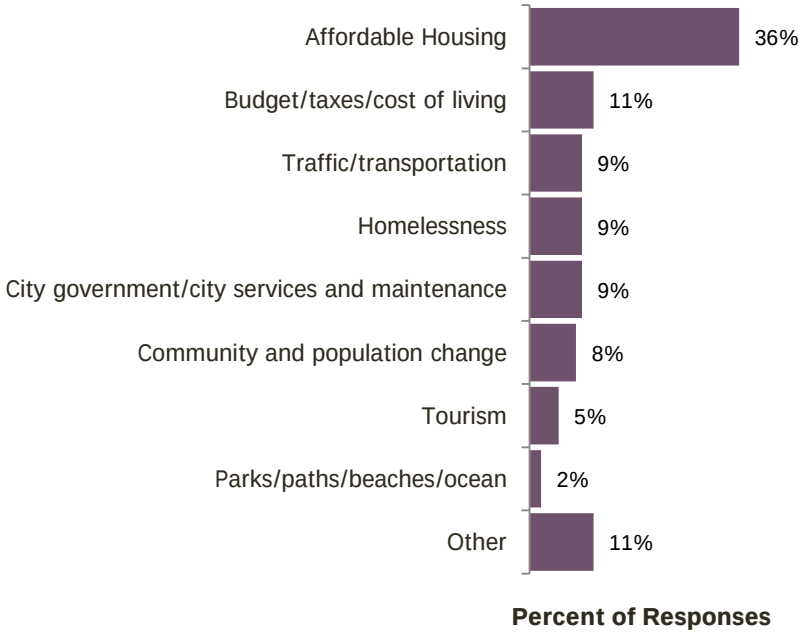
Please indicate how much of a source, if at all, you consider each of the following to be for obtaining information about the City government and its activities, events and services:



The final special interest question was an open ended question asking residents to voice the single biggest issue facing Key West in the near future. Of the 376 survey returns, 328 respondents wrote in responses for this open-ended question. Approximately 1 in 3 residents who provided a response to the open ended question indicated affordable housing issues as the biggest issue for Key West's focus.

Figure 8: Single Biggest Issue Facing Key West

What do you think is the single biggest issue facing Key West over the next three years?



Conclusions

Residents feel safe in Key West

There was a strong feeling of safety in Key West, with 8 in 10 residents feeling very or somewhat safe both overall and in the downtown/commercial area. Further, 9 in 10 residents felt very or somewhat safe in their neighborhood. These feelings of safety are similar to other communities across the nation. Approximately 2 in 3 residents provided excellent or good ratings to police services and emergency preparedness of Key West; fewer residents than elsewhere reported stocking supplies for an emergency (approx. 2 in 5). Approximately 8 in 10 residents reported they were not the victim of a crime in the last 12 months; 7 in 10 residents had not reported a crime. Approximately 3 in 5 residents provided excellent or good ratings to Key West's crime prevention. Fire and ambulance/EMS services received positive ratings from at least approximately 4 in 5 residents, with ratings similar to other communities across the country.

Residents of Key West are engaged in the community

More than 7 in 10 residents provided ratings higher than the national benchmark and rated Key West as excellent or good when rating openness and acceptance; the same number rated social events and activities, neighborliness and opportunities to volunteer as excellent or good. Residents living in Commission District six felt most positive about neighborliness. While public information services provided by Key West received positive ratings from approximately half of residents, more than 8 in 10 residents indicated word-of-mouth as a major or minor source of City information.

Community Engagement within Participation received favorable ratings with 2 in 3 residents volunteering in the last 12 months, ratings higher than the national benchmark. Clubs were more popular in Key West than in other communities across the nation with 2 in 5 residents participating in a club in the last 12 months. Local public meetings in the last 12 months received ratings of attendance from 1 in 3 residents, more than seen in other communities nationally. Almost all residents talked or visit with a neighbor (94% at least once) in the last 12 months and slightly fewer residents reported doing a favor for a neighbor (87% at least once) in the same time frame.

Built Environment as a focus area

The facet of Built Environment received ratings lower than the national benchmark on 11 items. Overall built environment received ratings of excellent or good from approximately 2 in 5 residents. Fewer than 1 in 10 people rated housing options and affordable quality housing in Key West as excellent or good. Further, 8 in 10 residents would support a property tax increase to fund affordable/workforce housing and 36% of the verbatim responses revolved around housing issues. New development in Key West received positive ratings from 3 in 10 residents and public places received positive ratings from approximately half of residents. Land use, planning and zoning government services were rated positively by approximately 1 in 5 residents and code enforcement was rated positively by 1 in 4 residents. Further, 2 in 5 residents reported they had not observed a code violation nor were they under housing cost stress.

Other services provided by Key West within Built Environment received mixed ratings. Power utility (65% excellent/good), sewer services (66% excellent/good) and utility billing (58% excellent/good) received ratings similar to other communities in the nation.