

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

# Apache Junction, AZ

Community Livability Report

2018



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# About

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

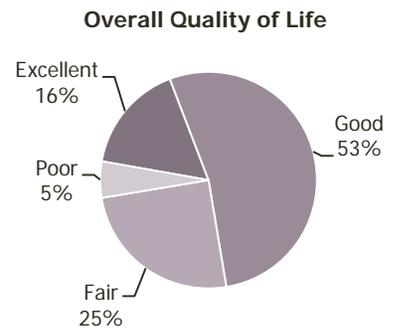
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 577 residents of the City of Apache Junction. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% for all respondents. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



# Quality of Life in Apache Junction

About 7 in 10 residents rated the quality of life in Apache Junction as excellent or good. This was similar to 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.

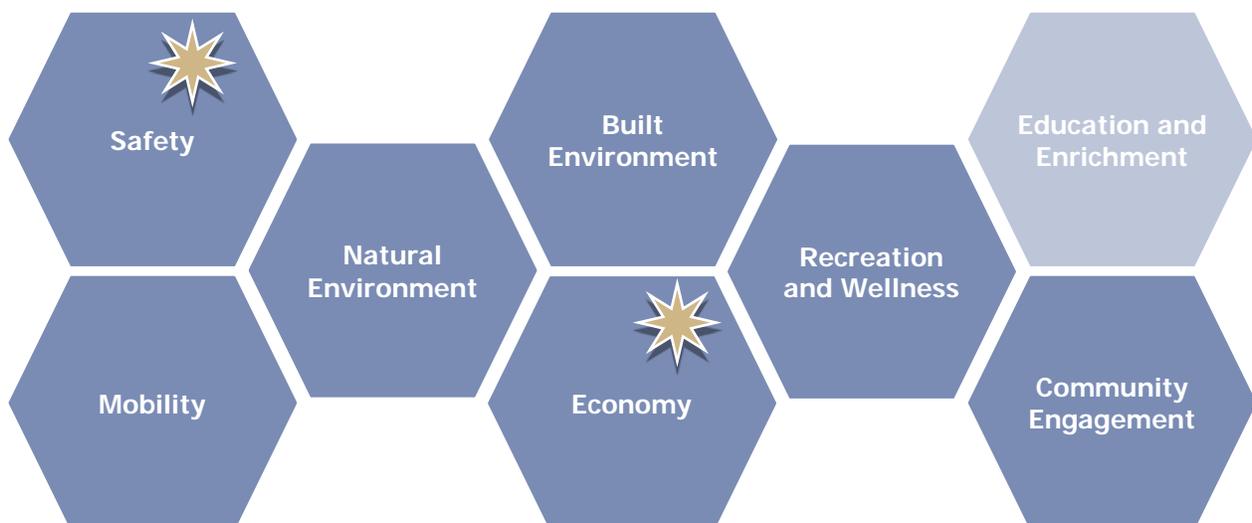
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. As in 2015, residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Apache Junction community in the coming two years. These facets, as well as most other facets of community livability, received ratings similar to the benchmark (except for Education and Enrichment, which was lower). 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 Apache Junction’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 Apache Junction, 72% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Apache Junction as a place to live were lower than ratings in other communities across the nation, although this rating increased from 2015 to 2018 (for more information please see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover). However, it should be noted that the 2015 and 2018 surveys were administered at different times of year and any differences in ratings between the two survey iterations could be at least partially attributable to the different administration timeframes.

In addition to rating the City as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Apache Junction as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Apache Junction and its overall appearance. Residents gave above-average ratings to the city as a place to retire and ratings for neighborhood as a place to live were on par with ratings given in other communities. However, the overall image and overall appearance of the city, as well as Apache Junction as a place to raise children, all received ratings lower than the benchmark.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. While evaluations within the facets of Safety, Mobility, Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement tended to be similar to the benchmark, ratings within other facets tended to be more mixed. For example, within Education and Enrichment, less than half of residents gave positive marks to overall opportunities for education and enrichment, cultural/arts/music activities, K-12 education and the availability of affordable quality child care; these ratings were all lower than those observed elsewhere.

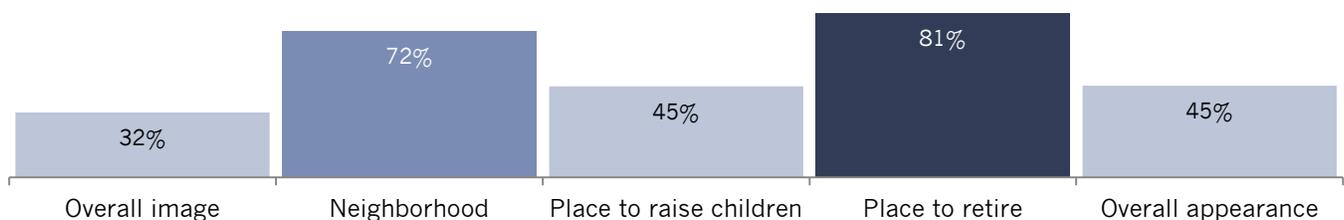


When compared to 2015, residents in 2018 tended to give less positive ratings to aspects of Mobility, but more positive ratings to several aspects of Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



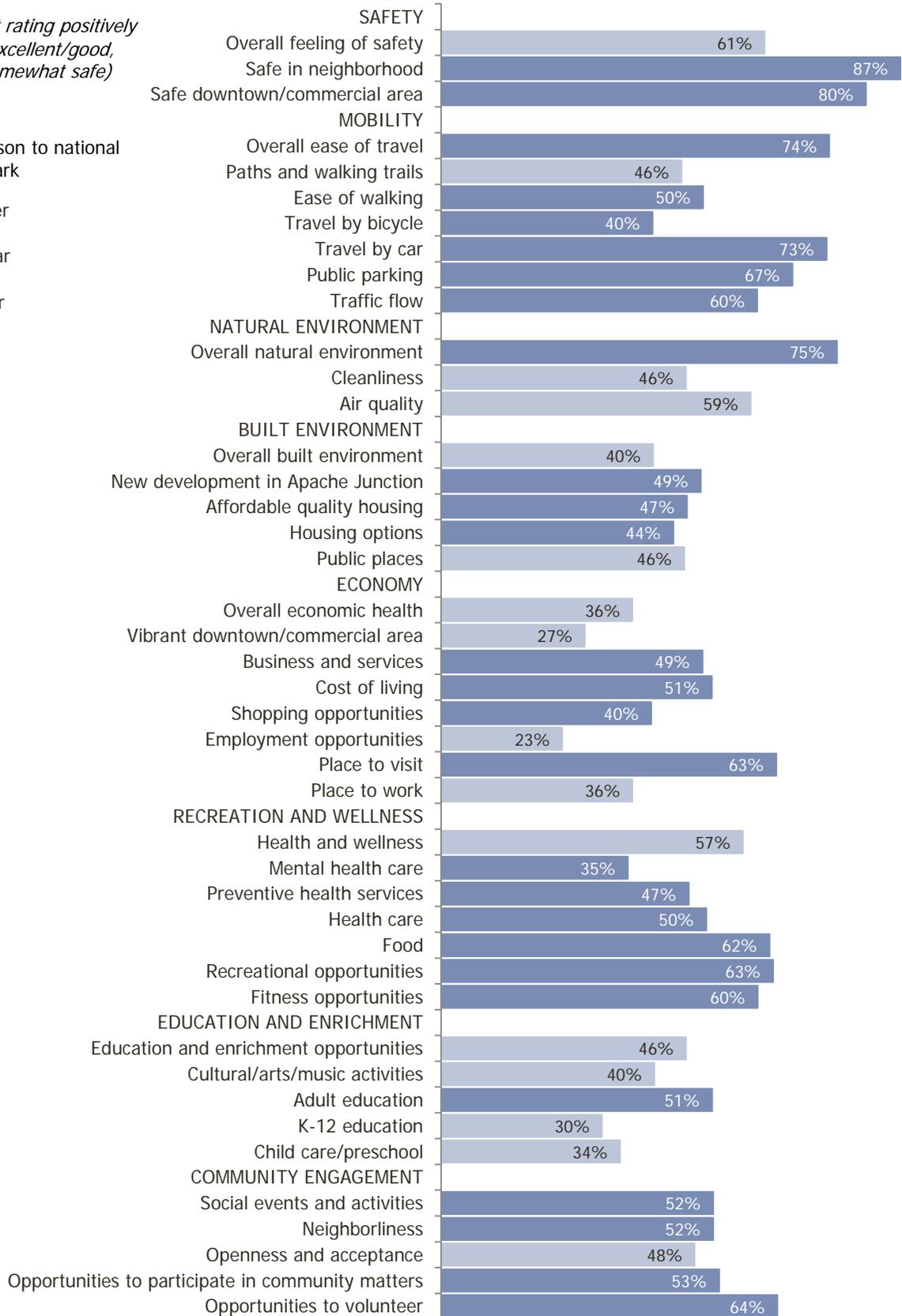
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

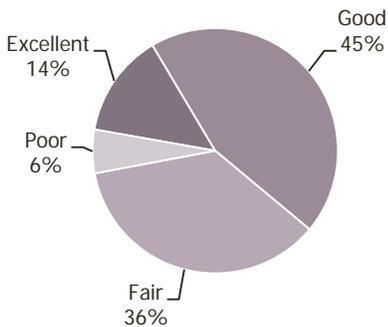
*How well does the government of Apache Junction meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Apache Junction as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 6 in 10 residents gave positive reviews to the overall quality of City services while 3 in 10 were pleased with the services provided by the Federal Government; both of these ratings were similar to those given in other communities across the nation.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Apache Junction’s leadership and governance. About 6 in 10 residents favorably rated the customer service provided by the City and roughly half of residents gave positive marks to the remaining aspects of government performance. These ratings were all similar to the national benchmark.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Apache Junction. A majority of residents gave positive ratings to most aspects of Safety, Natural Environment, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement. Ratings within Mobility, Built Environment and Economy tended to be lower. When compared to 2015, most service ratings in 2018 remained stable except for emergency preparedness, street repair, traffic signal timing and cable television, which decreased.

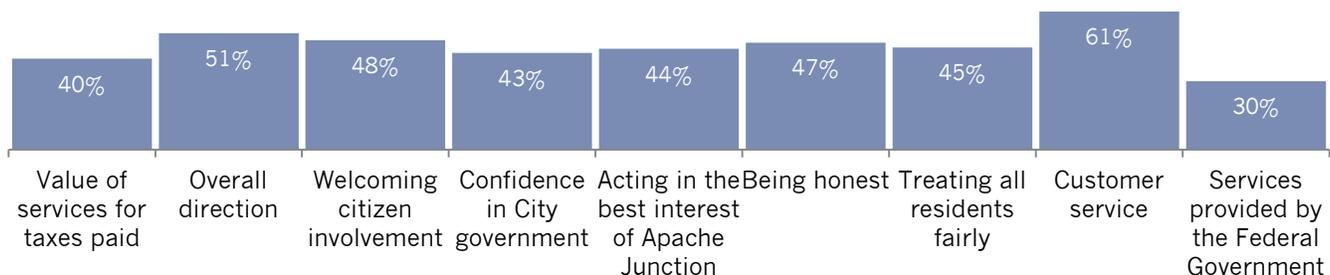
**Overall Quality of City Services**



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

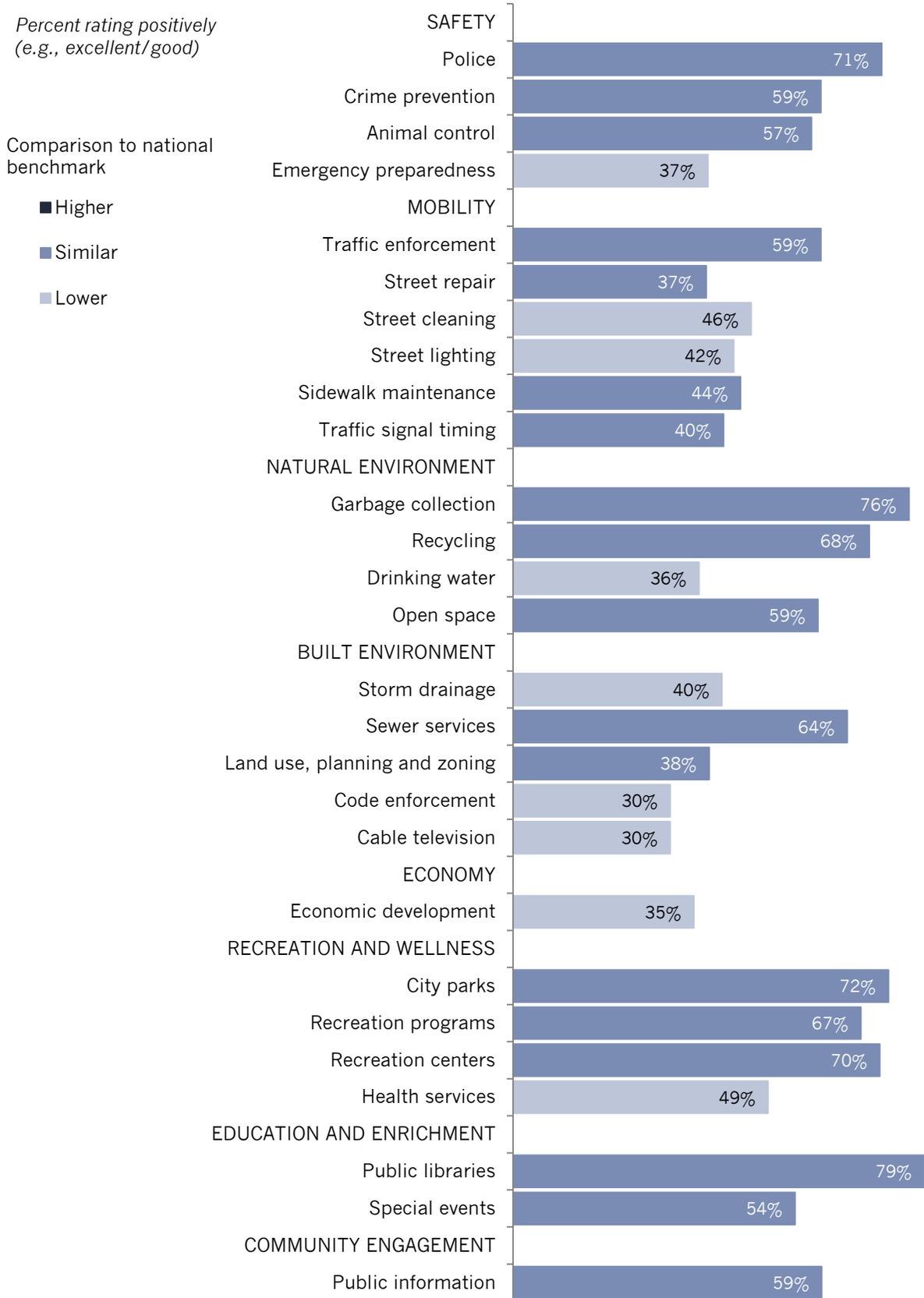
Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



## The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

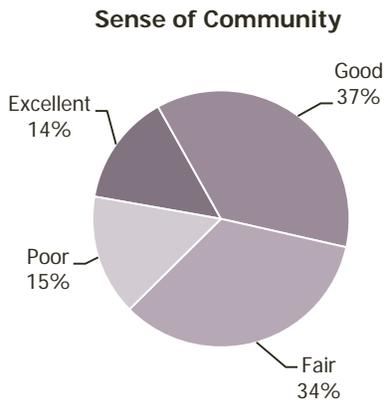


# Participation

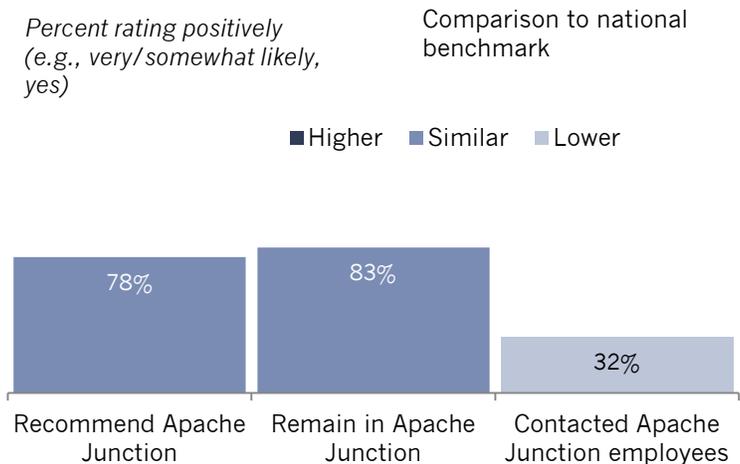
*Are the residents of Apache Junction connected to the community and each other?*

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 half of residents gave positive ratings to the sense of community in the city (an increase since 2015), while roughly 8 in 10 would recommend living in the city to someone who asked and planned to remain in Apache Junction for the next five years. These ratings were similar to those given in other communities across the country. Only about one-third of respondents had contacted City employees in the 12 months prior to the survey, which was a lower proportion than observed in communities elsewhere.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Participation rates varied widely across the different facets, making the benchmark comparison and comparisons to the City's 2015 ratings helpful for understanding the results. For example, virtually all residents had purchased goods or services in the city, which was similar to the benchmark, but only one-quarter worked in Apache Junction, which was lower. Generally, however, most participation levels across the different facets of community livability were similar to those seen in other communities.



When compared to 2015, residents in 2018 were more likely to have attended a City-sponsored event and participated in physical activity. They were also more likely to believe that the economy would have a positive impact on their income in the next six months.



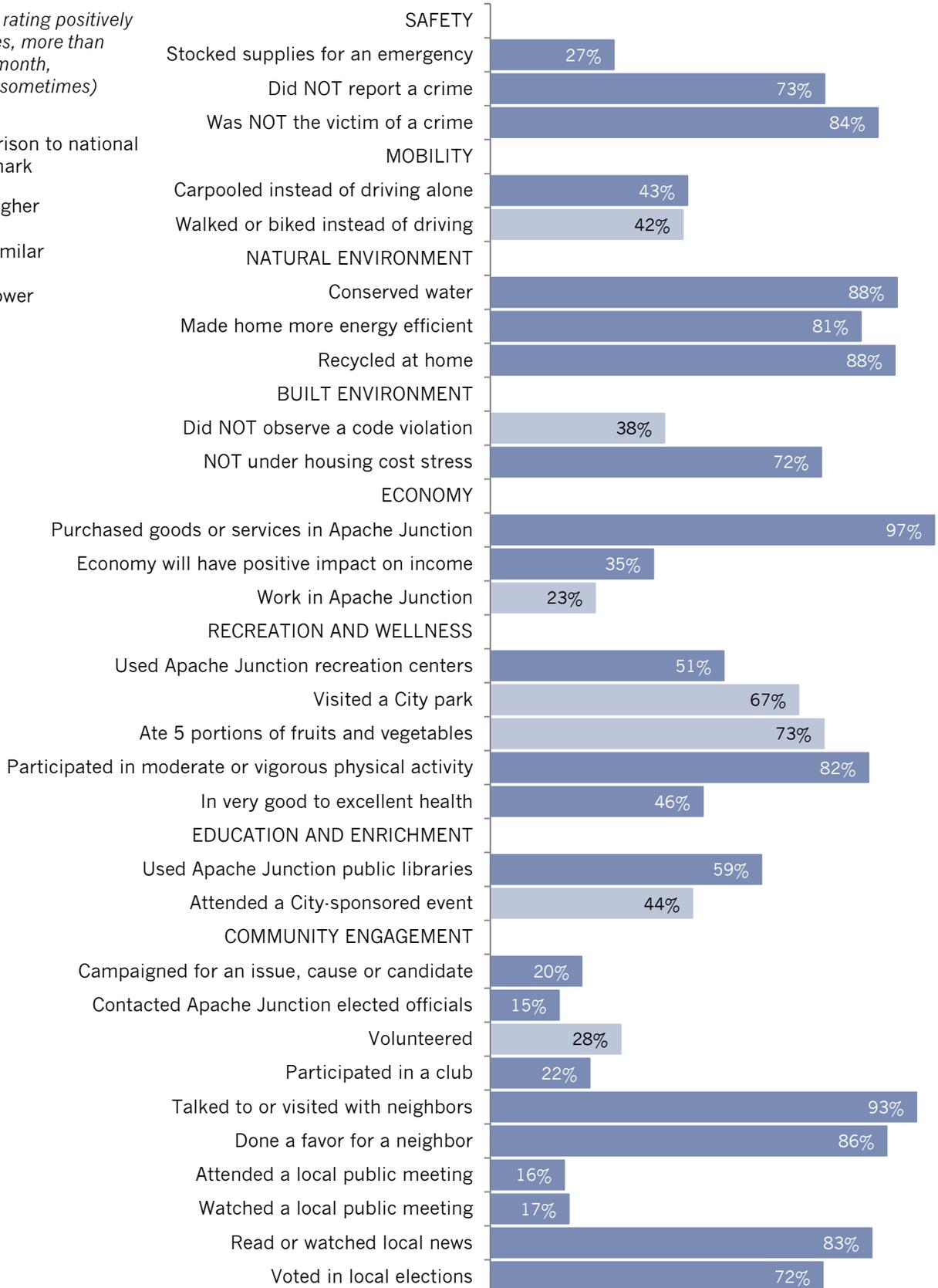
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



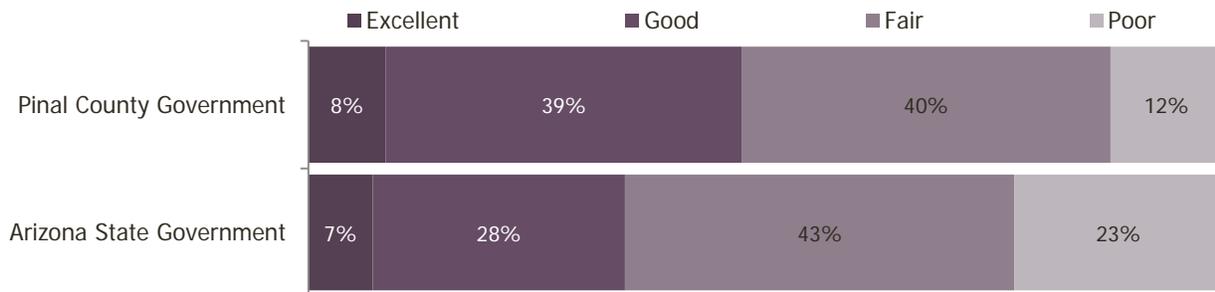
# Special Topics

The City of Apache Junction included several questions of special interest on The NCS as well as two line additions to a standard question set. Topic areas included strategic planning areas, sources of City information and the quality of that information.

Thinking about the quality of services provided by the County and State Governments, about half of residents positively rated the Pinal County Government while about one-third gave positive marks to the State Government.

Figure 4: Line Additions to Question 11

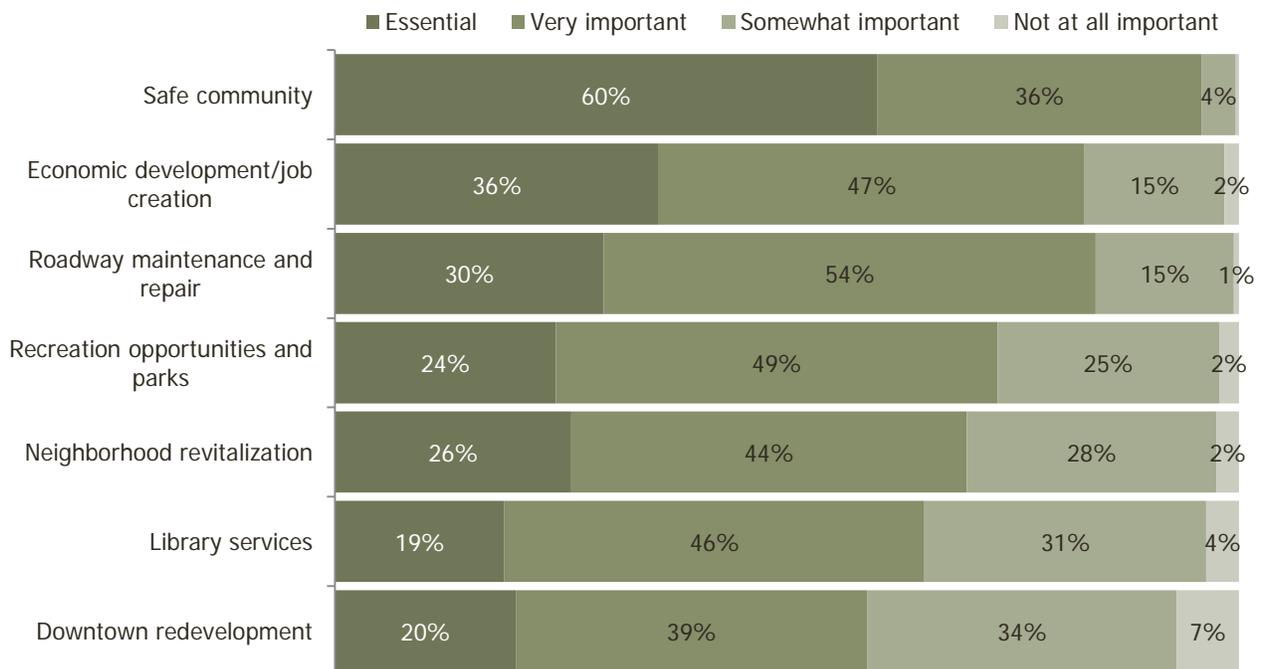
*Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by each of the following?*



When asked about the importance of seven different strategic planning areas, nearly all residents (96%) thought that safe community was essential or very important to quality of life in the city. About 8 in 10 residents thought economic development/job creation and roadway maintenance and repair were essential or very important. Residents were least likely to rate downtown redevelopment as important to quality of life; only 6 in 10 did so.

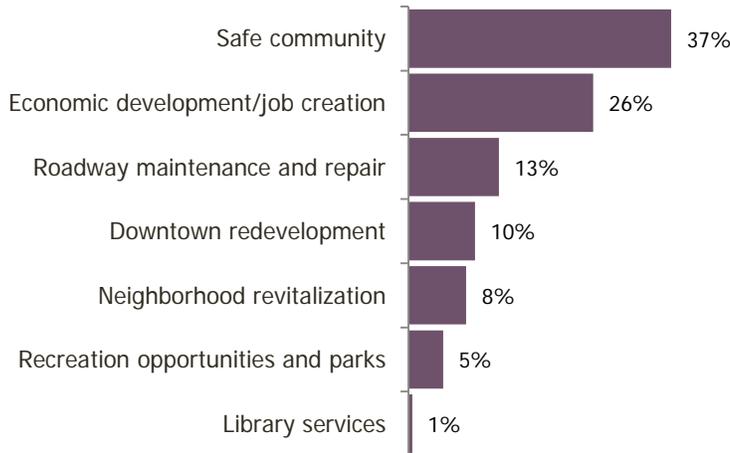
Figure 5: Importance of Strategic Planning Areas

*Please rate how important, if at all, each of the following strategic planning areas are to the overall quality of life in the City.*



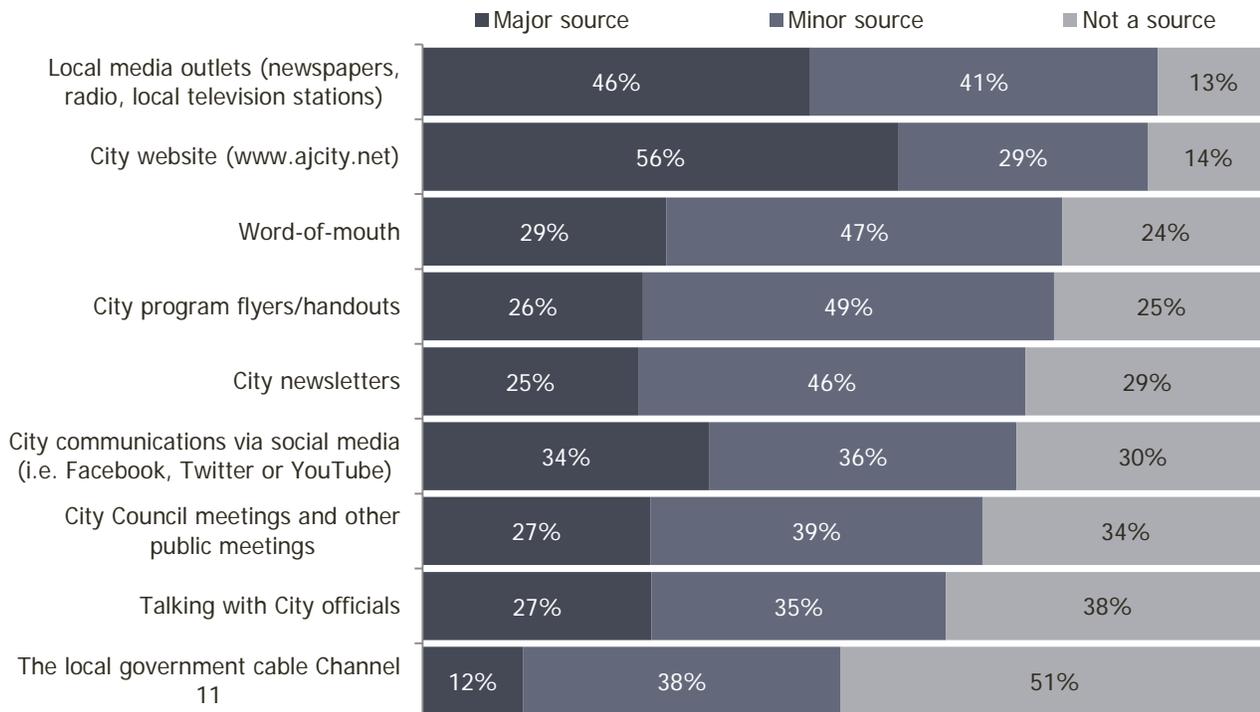
Residents also indicated which of the seven planning areas they felt was the most important. About 4 in 10 residents thought safe community was most important, about 2 in 10 thought economic development/job creation was the most important and 1 in 10 thought either roadway maintenance and repair or downtown redevelopment were the most important. Five percent or less of respondents felt that recreation opportunities and parks or library services were the most important strategic planning areas.

Figure 6: Most Important Strategic Planning Area  
 Indicate which planning area you think is the MOST important.



Thinking about various sources for City information, more than 8 in 10 residents considered local media outlets such as newspapers, radio or local television stations and the City website to be major or minor information sources. About 7 in 10 used word-of-mouth, City program flyers/handouts as information sources, City newsletters and City communications via social media as information sources. Only about half of residents used the local government cable Channel 11 as a source for City information.

Figure 7: Sources of City 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:

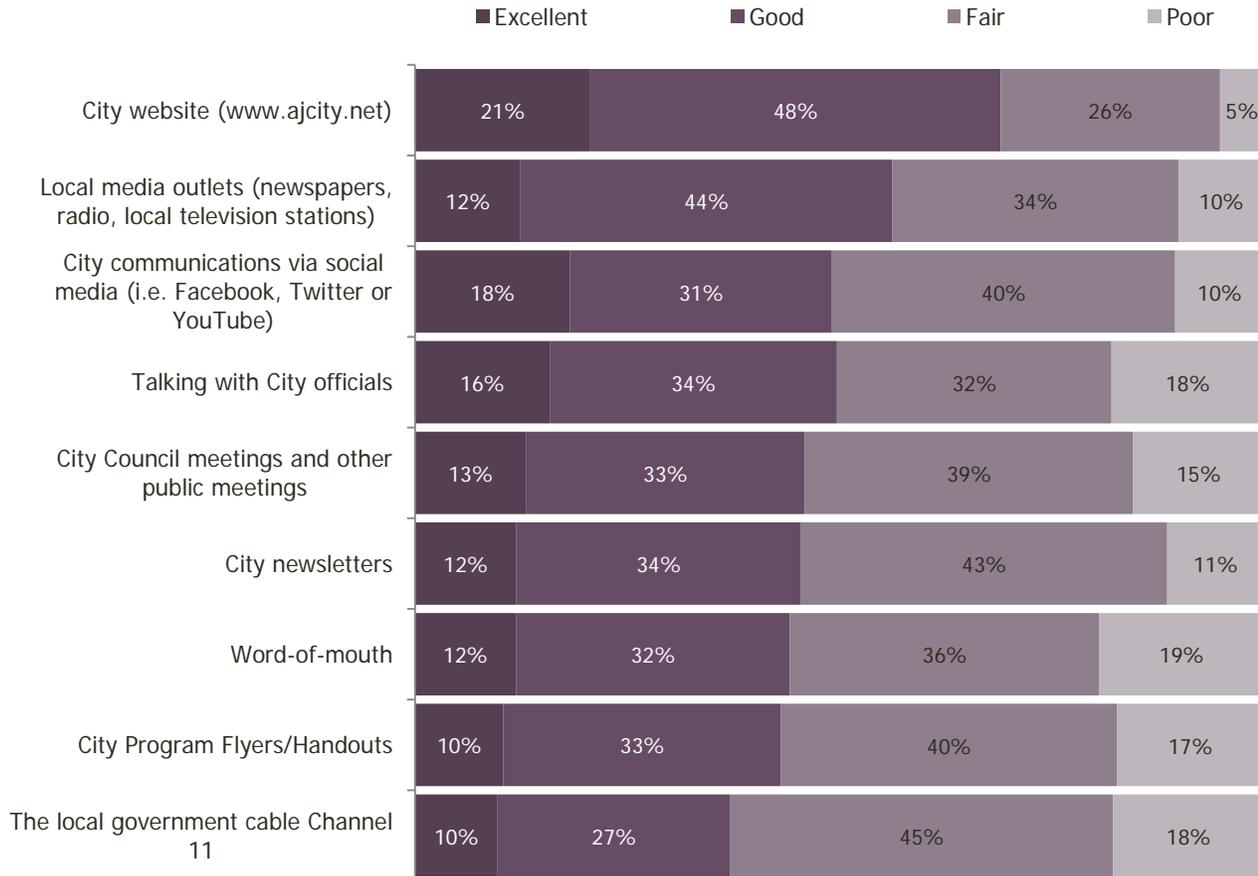


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Residents rated the quality of each of the nine information sources. Of those who provided an evaluation, about 7 in 10 rated the quality of information provided by the City website as excellent or good, while about half were pleased with local media outlets, City communications via social media and talking with City officials. Less than 4 in 10 felt the quality of information provided by local government cable Channel 11 was excellent or good. Between 15% and 61% of respondents did not feel like they knew enough about each source to provide an evaluation.

Figure 8: Quality of City Information

*Thinking about the major sources of information indicated in the previous question, how would you rate the quality of the information provided by each source?*



# Conclusions

## Apache Junction residents continue to experience a positive quality of life and value the city as a place to retire.

About 7 in 10 residents felt positively about the overall quality of life in the city and Apache Junction as a place to live. They also valued their neighborhoods as places to live and the city as a place to retire, and the rating for place to retire was higher than ratings given in other communities. About 8 in 10 residents would recommend living in Apache Junction to someone who asked (an increase from 2015) and planned to remain in the city for the next five years. Further, about half of residents positively rated the sense of community in the city, which was an increase from 2015.

## Safety is a key contributor to residents' quality of life and remains a top priority.

As in 2015, residents identified Safety as a priority for Apache Junction to focus on in the next two years. About 9 in 10 residents reported feeling safe in their neighborhood and 8 in 10 felt safe in Apache Junction's downtown/commercial area; these ratings were on par with those in other communities. Further, ratings for police services, crime prevention and animal control also were similar to the national benchmark. However, only about 6 in 10 gave excellent or good ratings to the overall feeling of safety in the city, which was lower than average. Additionally, the rating for emergency preparedness was lower than seen in other communities and declined since 2015. When prioritizing the City's seven strategic planning areas, nearly all residents thought that safe community was essential or very important to quality of life in the city; this also topped the list as the "most important" strategic planning area.

## Although residents are optimistic about their own economic future, Economy continues to be an important focus for the community.

More residents in 2018 than in 2015 believed the economy would have a positive impact on their income and, as in 2015, residents identified Economy as an important focus area in the coming years. However, ratings within this facet tended to be mixed. About 6 in 10 residents positively rated Apache Junction as a place to visit, which was similar to the benchmark, but fewer than 4 in 10 respondents gave favorable marks to the overall economic health of the city, vibrant downtown/commercial area, employment opportunities, Apache Junction as a place to work and economic development. These ratings were all lower than average. Economic development/job creation was rated as the second most important strategic planning area, after safe community.

## Mobility is a challenge and residents seek improvements.

Ratings for many aspects of Mobility declined from 2015 to 2018, including traffic flow, travel by car and by bicycle, ease of walking, public parking, street repair and traffic signal timing. However, these ratings were similar to those given in other communities across the nation. Evaluations of paths and walking trails, street cleaning and street lighting were lower than the national average, though these ratings remained stable over time. Out of a list of seven strategic planning areas, roadway maintenance and repair was rated as essential or very important by 84% of respondents (third out of seven) and was deemed the third "most important" planning area.