



THE NCSTM
The National Community SurveyTM

Elk Grove, CA

Community Livability Report

2019



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Contents

About..... 1

Quality of Life in Elk Grove 2

Community Characteristics 3

Governance 5

Participation 7

Special Topics..... 9

Conclusions 14



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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 Community Survey™ (The NCS™) report is about the “livability” of Elk Grove. 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.

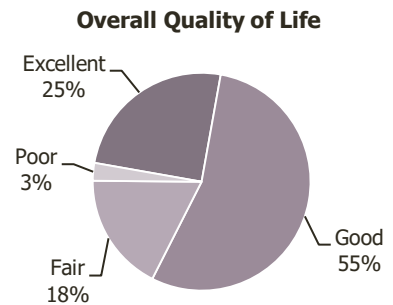
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance, and Participation) across eight central 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 494 residents of the City of Elk Grove. 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 Elk Grove

About 8 in 10 residents rated the quality of life in Elk Grove 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.

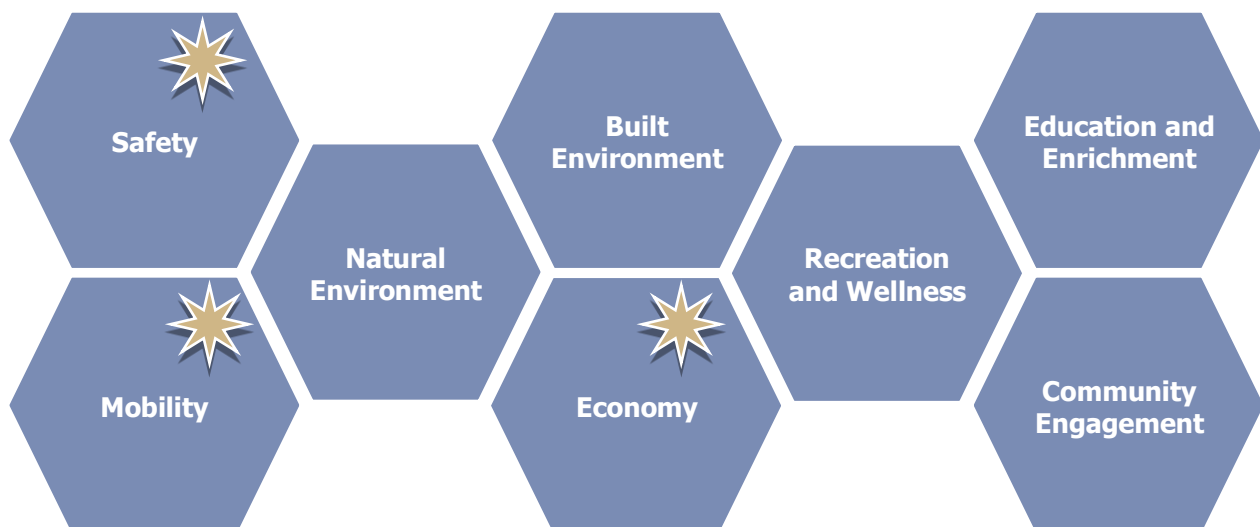
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety, Mobility, and Economy as priorities for the Elk Grove community in the coming two years. These facets, as well as all other facets of community livability, were rated similarly to the national benchmarks. 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 Elk Grove’s unique questions.

Legend

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

- Most important



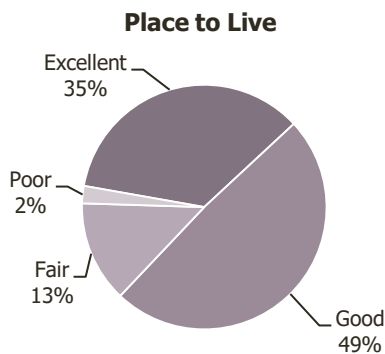
Community Characteristics

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 Elk Grove, 84% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Elk Grove as a place to live were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

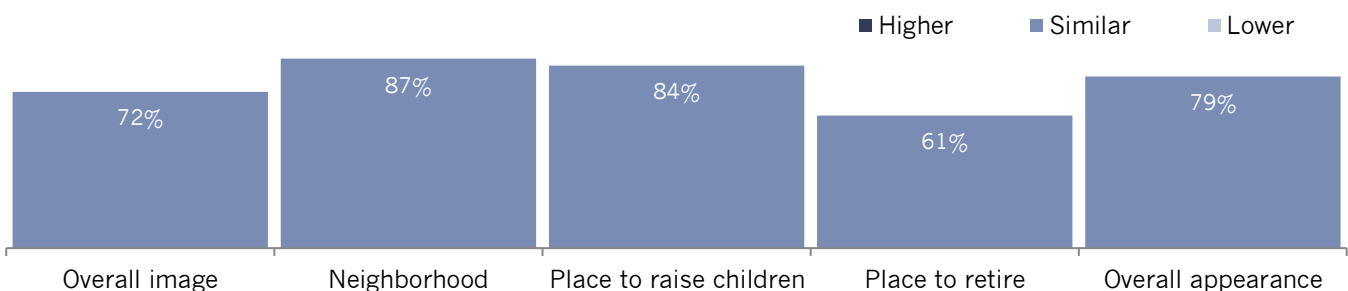
In addition to rating the City as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Elk Grove as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Elk Grove and its overall appearance. Roughly 8 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to their neighborhood as a place to live, Elk Grove as a place to raise children and the overall appearance of the city, while 7 in 10 were pleased with Elk Grove's overall image and 6 in 10 awarded high marks to the city as a place to retire. All of these ratings were similar to those given in other communities nationwide.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Virtually all ratings were similar to the national benchmarks, and only two Economy-related aspects, vibrant downtown/commercial area and Elk Grove as a place to visit, were rated lower. Elk Grove's highest-rated characteristics, with about three-quarters of residents or more providing positive scores to each, were the overall feeling of safety in the city, feeling safe in the downtown/commercial area and in their neighborhoods, cleanliness of the city, health and wellness opportunities, opportunities for education and enrichment, and K-12 education.



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

Comparison to national benchmark



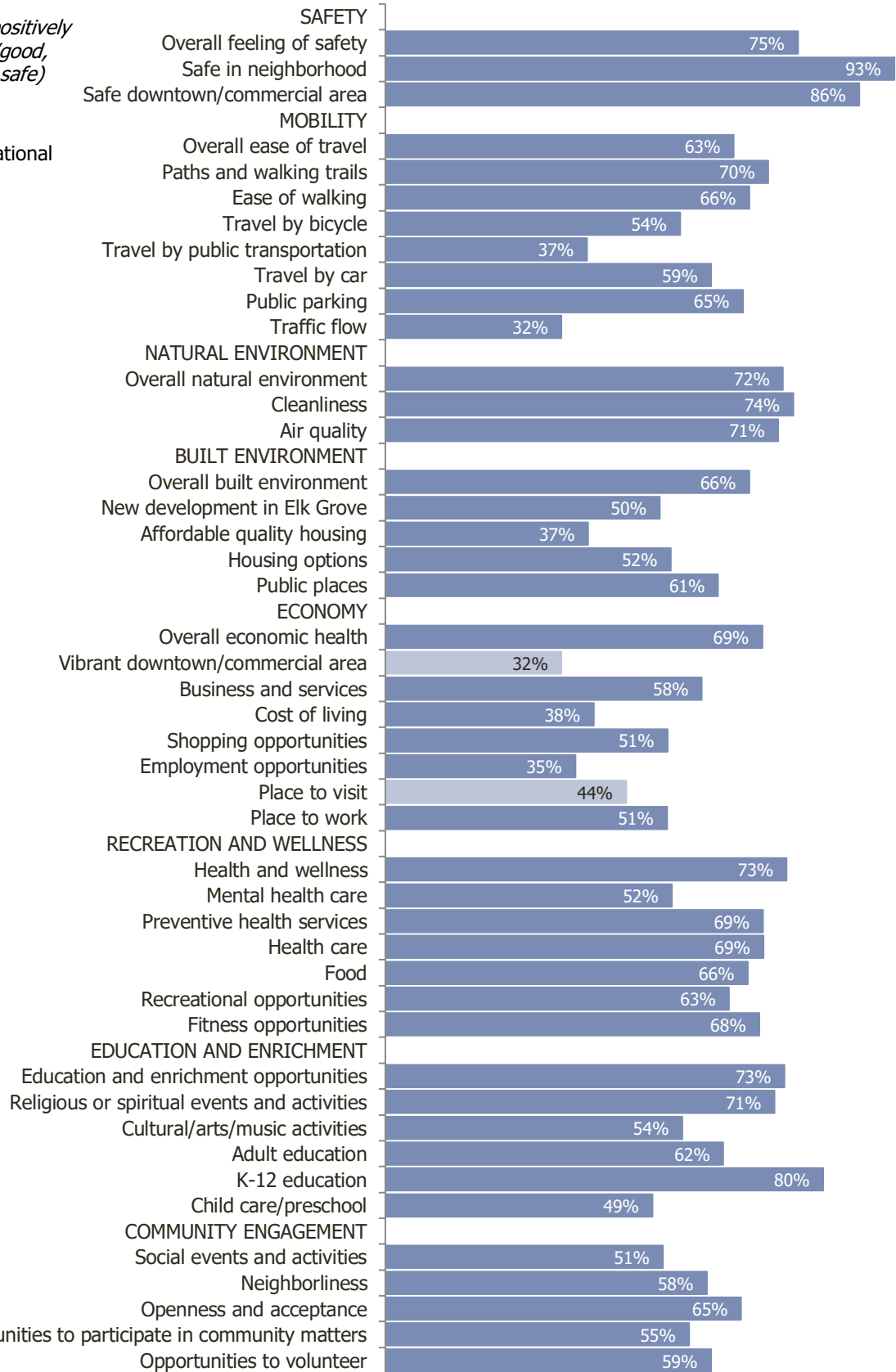
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

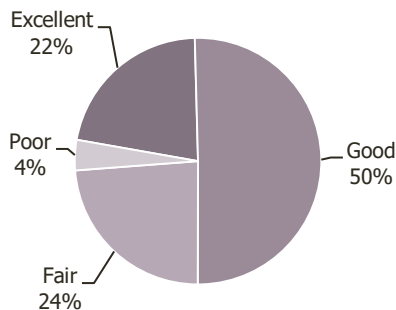
How well does the government of Elk Grove meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Elk Grove as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 7 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of City services, while about 4 in 10 were pleased with the services provided by the Federal Government. Both of these ratings were similar to those given elsewhere across the nation.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Elk Grove’s leadership and governance. Seven in ten residents gave favorable marks to the customer service provided by the City and roughly half gave high scores to the remaining aspects of government performance; all of these ratings were similar to the national benchmarks. Further, ratings for the job Elk Grove government does at welcoming resident involvement and being honest improved from 2017 to 2019 (see the *Trends Over Time* report under separate cover for more information).

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Elk Grove. At least half of survey respondents gave excellent or good ratings to most City services and all received scores similar to the national benchmark comparisons. The highest-rated services, with at least 8 in 10 residents providing favorable marks, were police, garbage collection, recycling, yard waste pick-up, City parks and public libraries. Compared to 2017, ratings for crime prevention and emergency preparedness increased in 2019, while those for open space and land use, planning and zoning decreased.

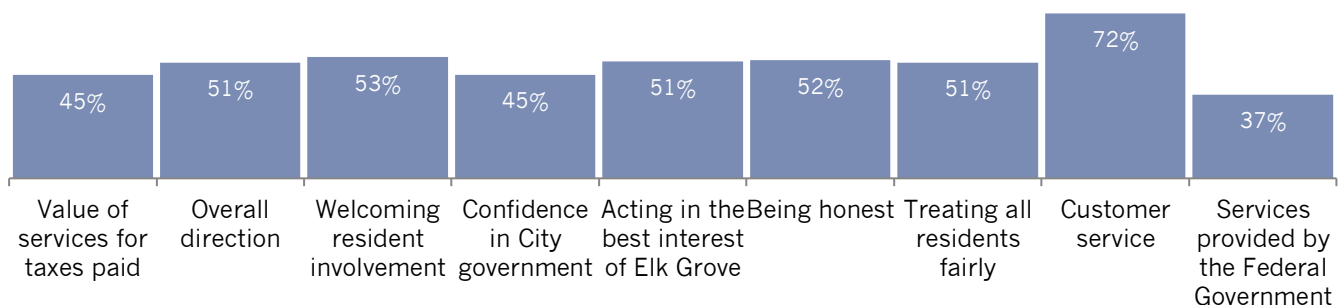
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



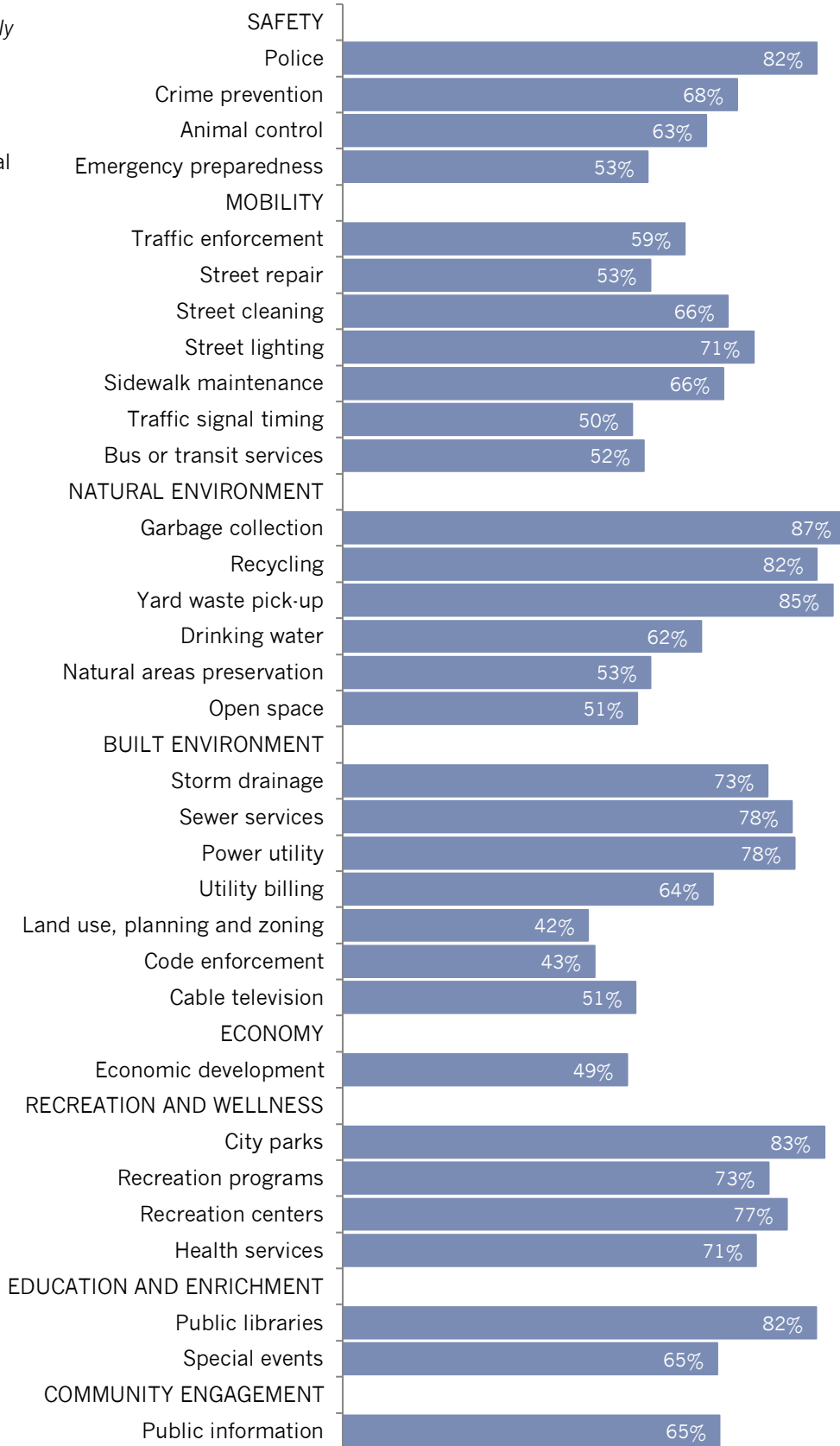
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



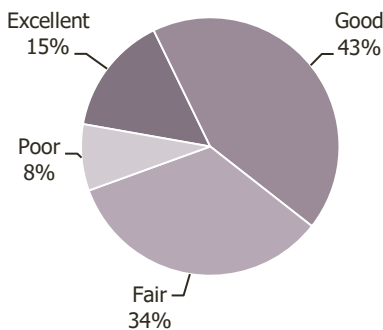
Participation

Are the residents of Elk Grove 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 6 in 10 residents gave positive scores to the sense of community in Elk Grove, while nearly 9 in 10 planned to remain in the community for the next five years and would recommend living in Elk Grove to someone who asked. These ratings were all similar to those given in other jurisdictions across the country.

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 comparisons to the benchmarks, and to Elk Grove over time, useful for interpreting the results. Participation rates tended to be similar to those observed in other communities nationwide. Elk Grove residents were more likely than those who lived elsewhere to have carpooled instead of driving alone and to have conserved water, but less likely to work in City limits; further, the proportion of residents who were under housing cost stress (defined as housing cost being more than 30% of income), increased since 2017. Residents in 2019 were also less likely than in 2017 to have campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate, read or watched local news, done a favor for a neighbor, or to have contacted City of Elk Grove employees. However, they were more likely to have not been the victim of a crime, stocked supplies for an emergency, and to not have observed a code violation.

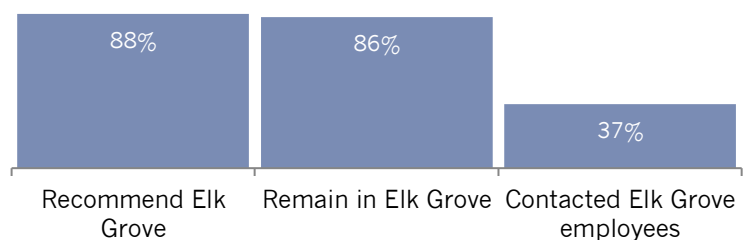
Sense of Community



Percent rating positively
(e.g., very/somewhat likely,
yes)

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



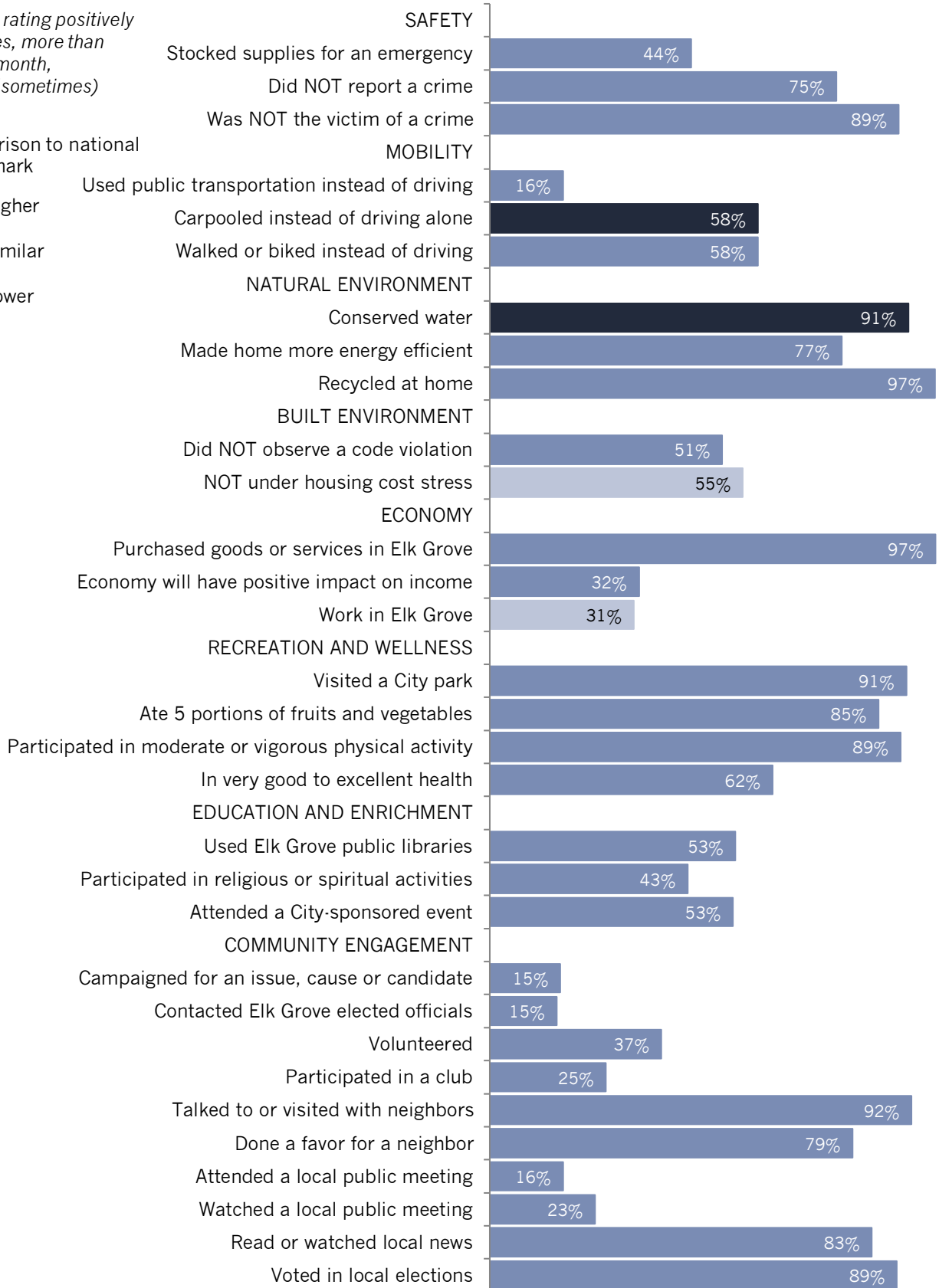
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

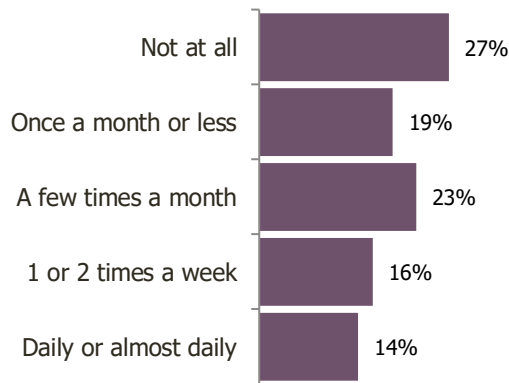


Special Topics

The City of Elk Grove included eight questions of special interest on The NCS. Topic areas included biking and bikeways, walking in the city, and the most critical challenge facing the City.

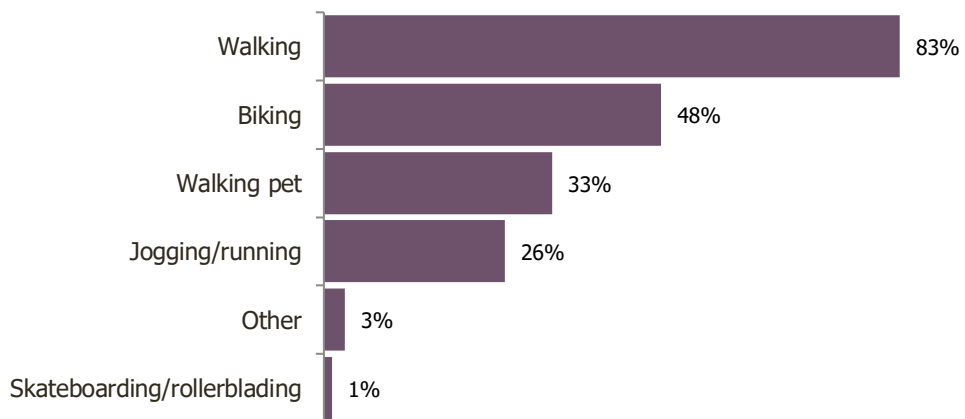
Thinking about how often they had used City trails or bikeways in the past 12 months, resident trail use was relatively evenly split among the five listed categories. Roughly 2 in 10 residents indicated using them once a month or less, a few times a month, 1 or 2 times a week, or daily or almost daily. About one-quarter of respondents had not used Elk Grove trails or bikeways at all.

Figure 4: Frequency of Use of City Trails or Bikeways in Past 12 Months
On average, about how often did you use City of Elk Grove trails or bikeways in the past 12 months?



Most residents (83%) who used the trails indicated that they used the trails for walking, while about half used them for biking. One-third used the trails and bikeways to walk their pet and one-quarter used them for jogging or running.

Figure 5: Activities on City Trails or Bikeways
If you use the trails or bikeways - what activities do you usually engage in? (Mark all that apply.)

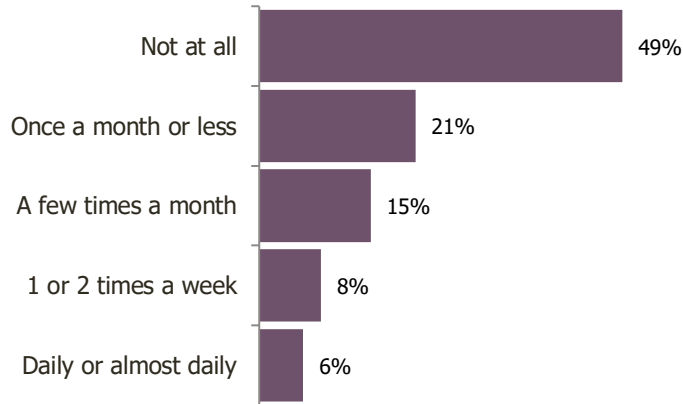


Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

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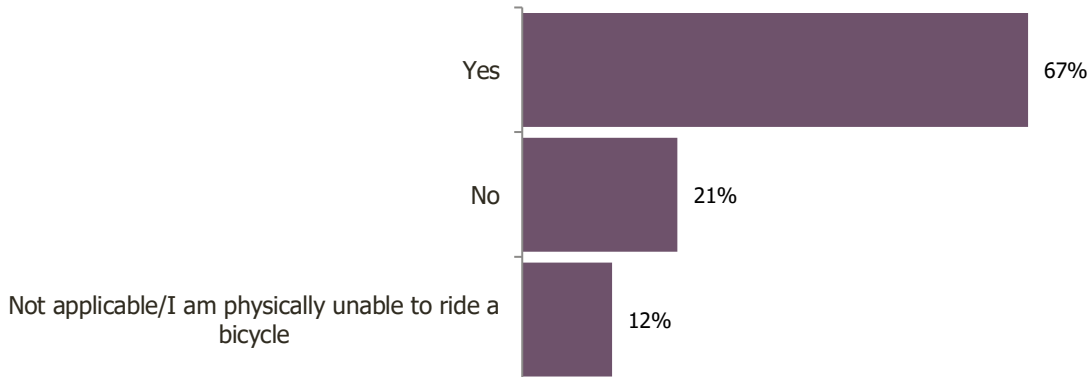
Thinking specifically about using the bikeways and trails for bicycling, about half of residents had not used the trails at all in the past 12 months to ride a bicycle, while 2 in 10 had used them for this purpose once a month or less and 15% had used them a few times a month. Less than 1 in 10 had used City trails and bikeways 1 or 2 times a week or daily or almost daily.

Figure 6: Frequency of Use of City Trails or Bikeways in Past 12 Months
On average, about how often did you ride a bicycle in the past 12 months?



When asked whether they would like to ride a bicycle more often, about two-thirds of residents indicated that they would, 2 in 10 indicated that they would not, and about 1 in 10 responded that this question did not apply to them or that they were not physically able to ride a bicycle.

Figure 7: Preference on Increased Bicycle Use
Would you like to ride a bicycle more often?

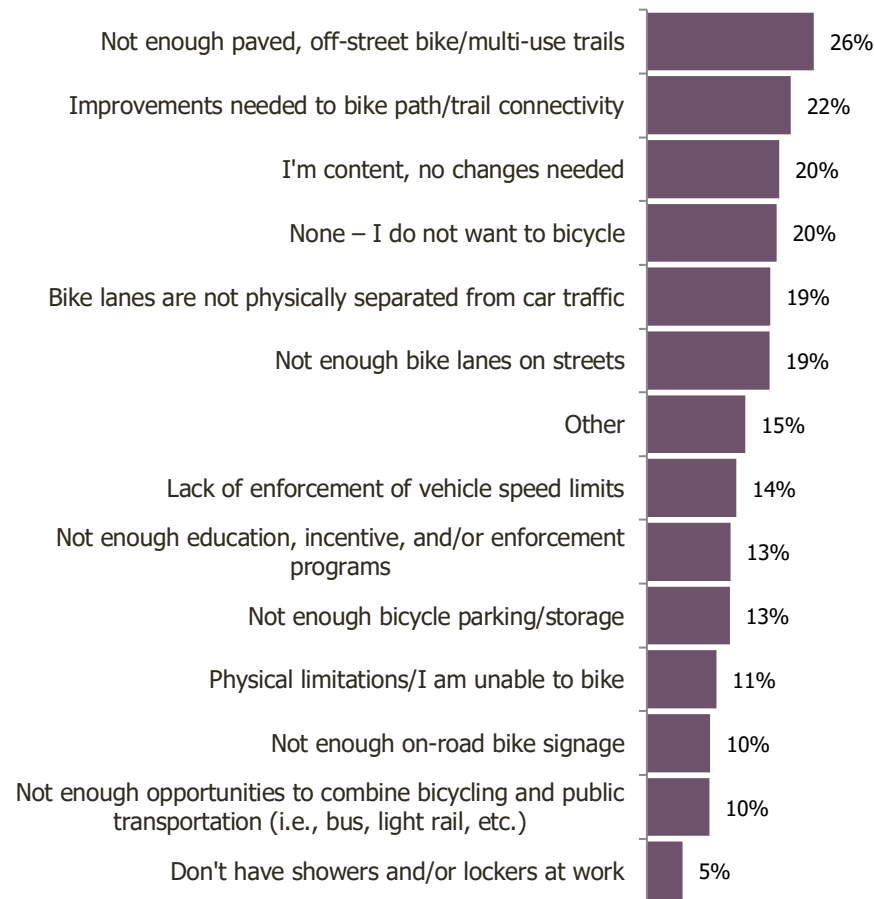


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Residents were asked to consider a list of various reasons why they did not bike more frequently and to mark as many as applied to them. About one-quarter indicated that there were not enough paved, off-street bike and multi-use trails, while 2 in 10 mentioned that improvements were needed to bike path and trail connectivity, that bike lanes were not physically separated from car traffic or that there were not enough bike lanes on streets. Another 2 in 10 residents noted that they did not think changes were needed or that they did not want to bicycle. Fifteen percent of residents marked “other” as a reason for not biking more frequently, while about 1 in 10 or less indicated one of the other listed reasons.

Figure 8: Reasons for Not Biking More Frequently

Which of the following do you consider to be reasons that you do not bike more frequently? (Mark all that apply.)



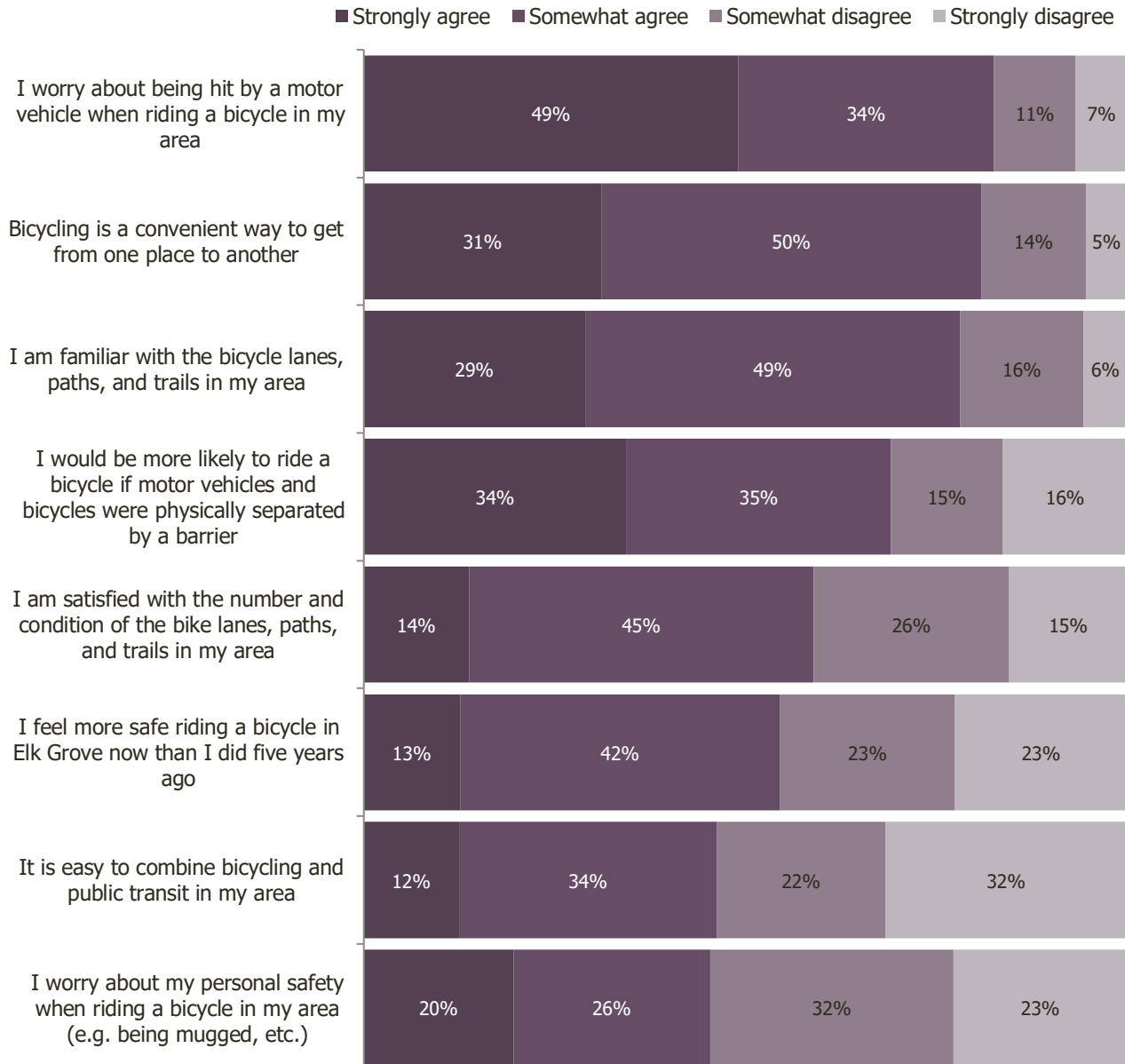
Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

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When asked to consider a series of statements related to bicycling in Elk Grove, about 8 in 10 residents strongly or somewhat agreed that they worried about being hit by a motor vehicle when riding a bicycle, that bicycling is a convenient way to get from one place to another, and that they were familiar with the bicycle lanes, paths, and trails in their area. About 7 in 10 respondents agreed that they would be more likely to ride a bicycle if motor vehicles and bicycles were physically separated by a barrier. Six in ten residents agreed that they were satisfied with the bike lanes, paths, and trails in their area and half agreed that they felt more safe riding a bicycle in Elk Grove now than they did five years ago. Only about one-third of residents agreed that it is easy to combine bicycling and public transit in their area or that they worried about their personal safety when riding a bicycle in their area.

Figure 9: Resident Sentiment on Bicycling in Elk Grove

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

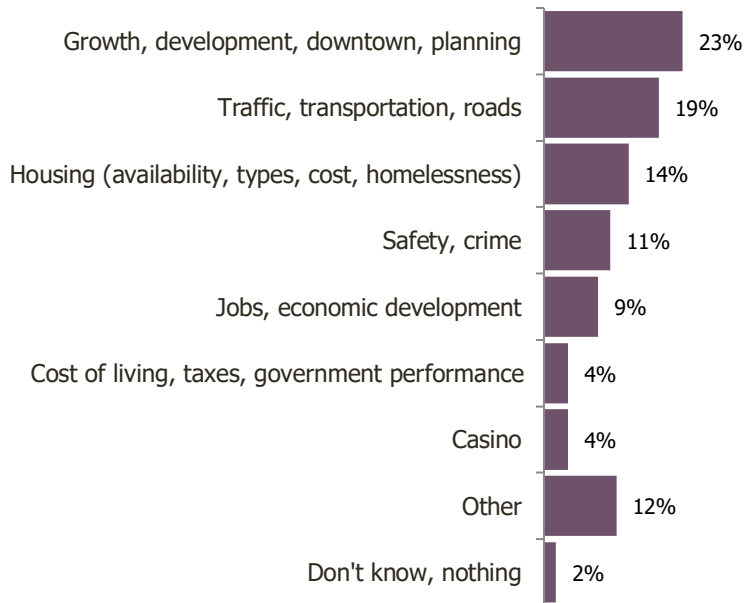


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Finally, in an open-ended question in which residents could write in their responses, survey respondents commented on what they thought was the most critical challenge facing the City in the next five years. A total of 494 surveys were completed by Elk Grove residents; of these, 389 respondents wrote in responses for the open-ended question. Roughly one-quarter of residents made a comment related to growth, development, the downtown, or planning, and about 2 in 10 mentioned traffic, transportation, or roads. One in ten commented on an aspect of housing in the city, safety or crime, or jobs/economic development. Four percent wrote in a response related either to cost of living, taxes, or government performance, or the proposed casino. About 1 in 10 respondents commented about a topic area outside of the other listed categories (for more information see the *Open-End Report* under separate cover).

Figure 10: Most Critical Challenge in Elk Grove

What do you think is the most critical challenge facing the City of Elk Grove in the next 5 years?



Conclusions

As in previous years, Elk Grove residents report a positive quality of life.

About 8 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of life in Elk Grove and to the city as a place to live. Roughly 8 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to their neighborhood as a place to live, Elk Grove as a place to raise children and the overall appearance of the city, while 7 in 10 were pleased with Elk Grove's overall image. About 6 in 10 residents gave positive scores to the sense of community in Elk Grove, while nearly 9 in 10 planned to remain in the community for the next five years and would recommend living in Elk Grove to someone who asked. These ratings were all similar to those given in other jurisdictions across the country.

Safety and Economy continue to be resident priorities.

As in 2017, residents identified Safety and Economy as two important areas of focus for the next two years. Ratings for Safety tended to be strong and similar to the national benchmarks. Roughly 9 in 10 respondents reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods and in Elk Grove's downtown/commercial area, while three-quarters gave positive marks to the overall feeling of safety in the city; this latter rating improved from 2017 to 2019. Scores for police, crime prevention, animal control and emergency preparedness were all on par with those observed in other communities. Nine in ten residents had not been the victim of a crime and three-quarters had not reported a crime in the 12 months prior to the survey. Ratings for several Safety-related aspects improved from 2017 to 2019.

Ratings for Economy were similarly positive and similar to those given in other communities. About 7 in 10 residents gave positive reviews to the overall economic health of the city, while 6 in 10 were pleased with the quality of Elk Grove's business and service establishments. Half of residents gave high scores to shopping opportunities, Elk Grove as a place to work, and economic development. Most Economy ratings were similar to the national benchmarks except for vibrant downtown/commercial area and the city as a place to visit, which were lower. Ratings within the facet of Economy remained stable since 2017.

Mobility is also important to residents, with possibilities to further promote bicycling in the City.

Residents also identified Mobility as an important focus area for the coming years. About 6 in 10 residents or more gave favorable marks to the overall ease of travel in the city, paths and walking trails, ease of walking, ease of travel by car, public parking, traffic enforcement, street cleaning, street lighting, and sidewalk maintenance. Ratings for overall ease of travel in the city and ease of travel by bicycle improved from 2017 to 2019. Further, Elk Grove residents were more likely than those who lived elsewhere to have carpooled instead of driving alone.

In a series of custom questions, residents were asked to provide their feedback about bicycling, walking, and bikeways and trails in the city. Of the residents who had used City trails and bikeways in the 12 months prior to the survey (about three-quarters of respondents), most residents indicated that they used the trails for walking, while about half used them for biking. One-third used the trails and bikeways to walk their pet and one-quarter used them for jogging or running. However, thinking specifically about using the bikeways and trails for bicycling, about half of residents had not used the trails at all in the past 12 months to ride a bicycle, while 2 in 10 had used them for this purpose once a month or less and 15% had used them a few times a month. Fewer used the trails for biking more frequently.

When asked whether they would like to ride a bicycle more often, about two-thirds of residents indicated that they would, 2 in 10 indicated that they would not, and about 1 in 10 responded that this question did not apply to them or that they were not physically able to ride a bicycle. Considering a list of various reasons why they did not bike more frequently, about one-quarter indicated that there were not enough paved, off-street bike and multi-use trails, while 2 in 10 mentioned that improvements were needed to bike path and trail connectivity, that bike lanes were not physically separated from car traffic or that there were not enough bike lanes on streets. Another 2 in 10 residents noted that they did not think changes were needed or that they did not want to bicycle. Finally, about 8 in 10 residents strongly or somewhat agreed that they worried about being hit by a motor vehicle when riding a bicycle, that bicycling is a convenient way to get from one place to another, and that they were familiar with the bicycle lanes, paths, and trails in their area. About 7 in 10 respondents agreed that they would be more likely to ride a bicycle if motor vehicles and bicycles were physically separated by a barrier.