

# **The National Citizen Survey™**

## **Decatur, GA**

Community Livability Report

2014

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The National Citizen Survey™  
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# About

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

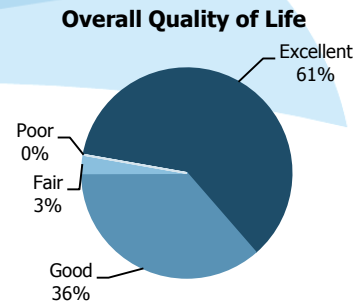
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 478 residents of the City of Decatur. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



# Quality of Life in Decatur

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Decatur as excellent or good. This rating was higher than the national benchmark comparison (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.



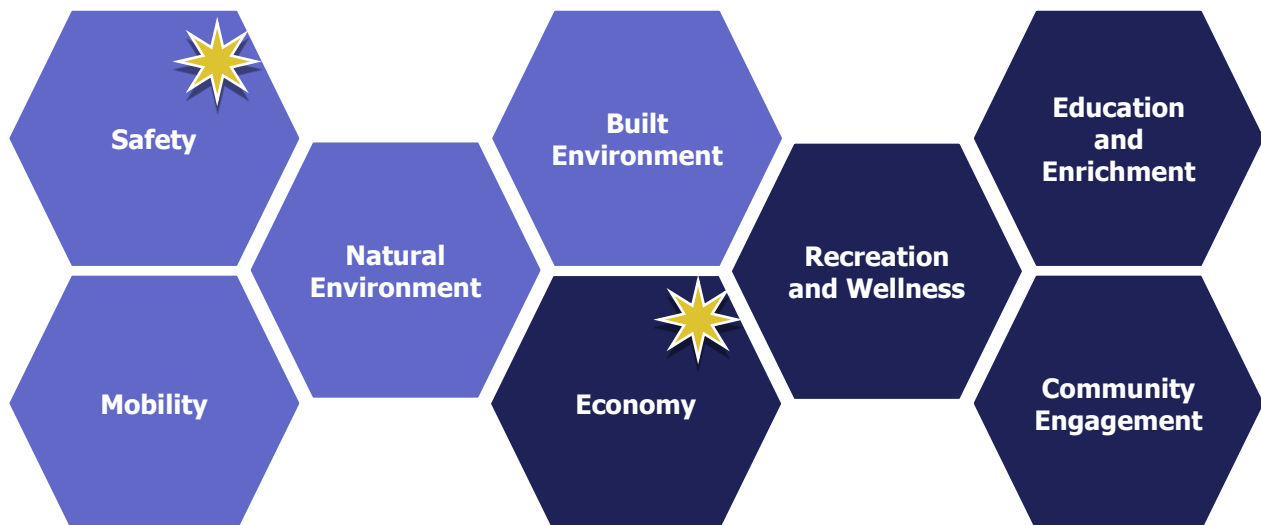
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Decatur community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Decatur residents gave favorable ratings to all facets of community. Ratings for Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement tended to be higher than in comparison jurisdictions. 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 Decatur’s unique questions.

## Legend

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

★ Most important



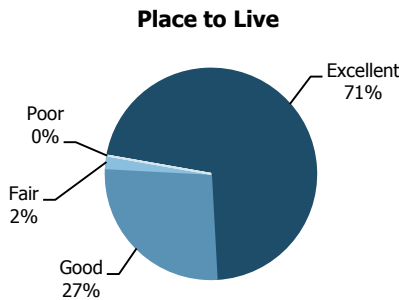
# Community Characteristics

*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 Decatur, 98% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Decatur 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 Decatur as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Decatur and its overall appearance. At least 9 in 10 respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall image or reputation of Decatur, their neighborhoods, Decatur as a place to raise children and the overall appearance of Decatur. About three-quarters of respondents gave positive ratings to Decatur as a place to retire. All of these ratings were higher than the national benchmark comparisons.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Most of these ratings were higher than the national benchmark, a handful were similar, and only one (public parking) was lower than the benchmark comparison. At least 8 in 10 respondents rated all aspects of Community Engagement and Safety as excellent or good. A majority rated all of the aspects of Education and Enrichment, Recreation and Wellness and Natural Environment positively. Almost all aspects of Economy were rated positively and were above the benchmark; however 44% rated the cost of living as excellent or good, and this rating was similar to the benchmark comparison. Ratings for Built Environment were mixed; about one-third of residents rated affordably quality housing positively. However, about 8 in 10 gave favorable ratings to the overall built environment and public places in Decatur, which were higher than the benchmark comparison.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower

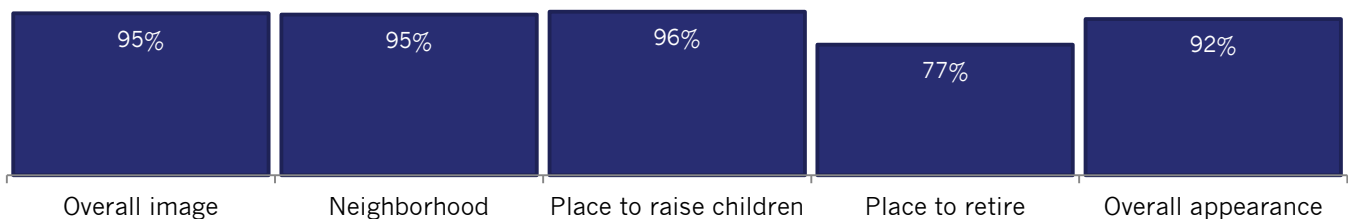
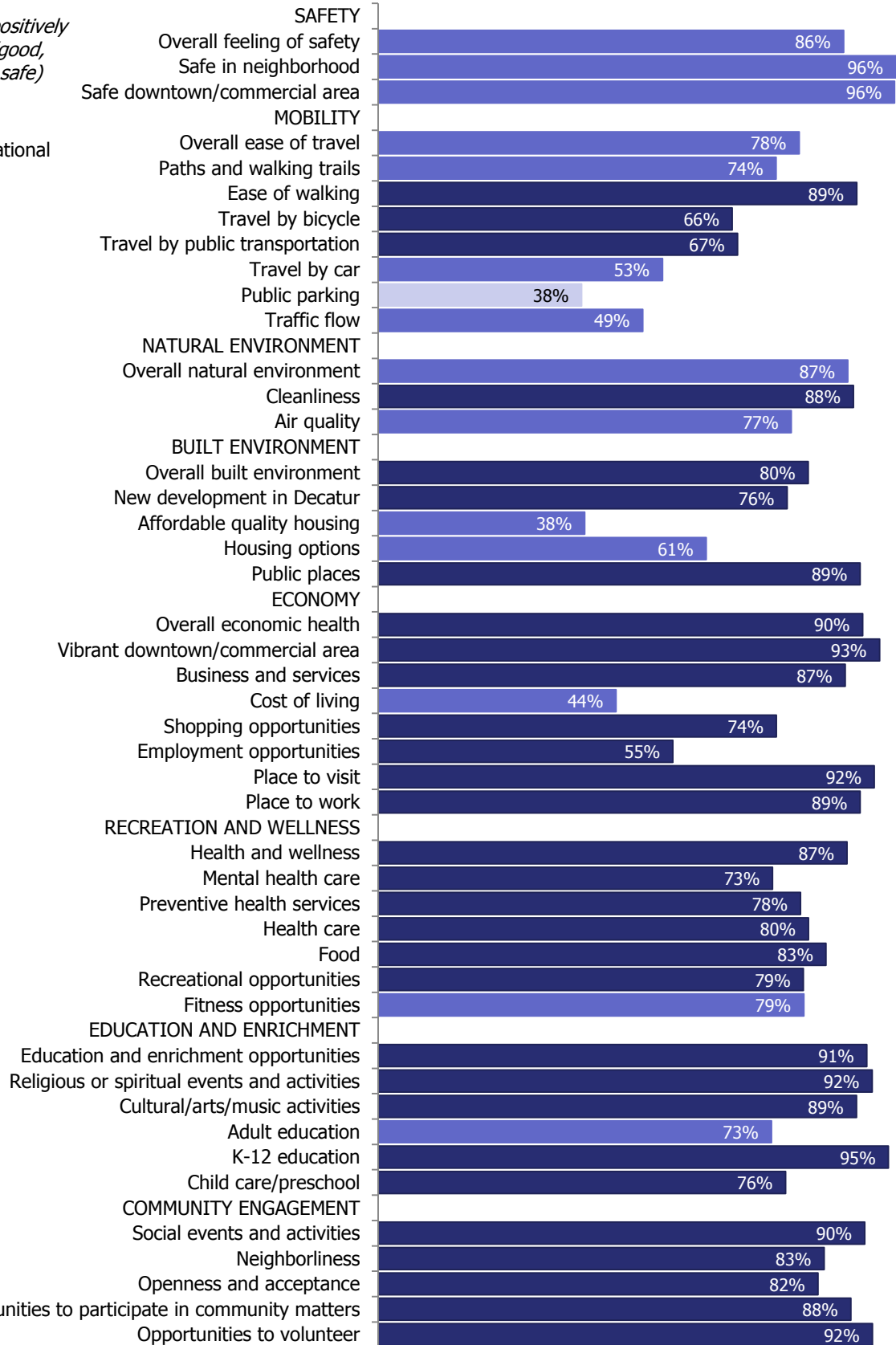


Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

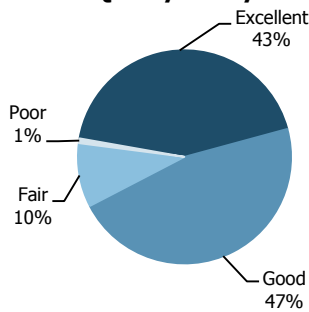
*How well does the government of Decatur meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Decatur as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Nine in 10 survey respondents rated the overall quality of services provided by the City of Decatur as excellent or good; this rating was higher than in comparison communities. Only about half of survey respondents rated the overall quality of services provided by the Federal Government as excellent or good – this rating was similar to other communities across the nation.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Decatur’s leadership and governance. At least three-quarters gave high ratings to the value of services for taxes paid, the overall direction of Decatur, welcoming citizen involvement, confidence in City government, acting in the best interest of Decatur, being honest and treating all residents fairly. All of these ratings were higher than those in comparison communities.

Respondents evaluated about 30 individual services and amenities available in Decatur. These ratings were all at least similar to the benchmark; several were higher than in comparison communities. All aspects of Education and Enrichment, Recreation and Wellness, Economy and Community Engagement were rated as excellent or good by 83% of respondents or higher. Ratings for Mobility were mixed, with most residents giving favorable ratings – of the seven aspects of Mobility six were similar to the benchmark and one was higher than the benchmark.

**Overall Quality of City Services**



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower

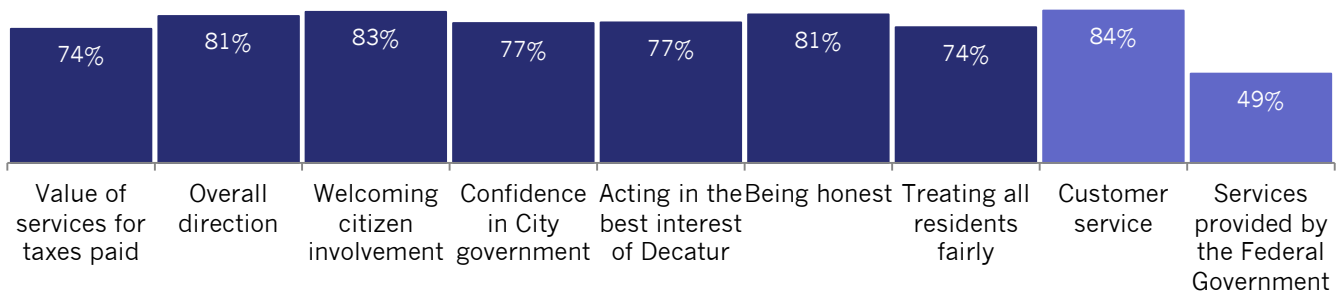
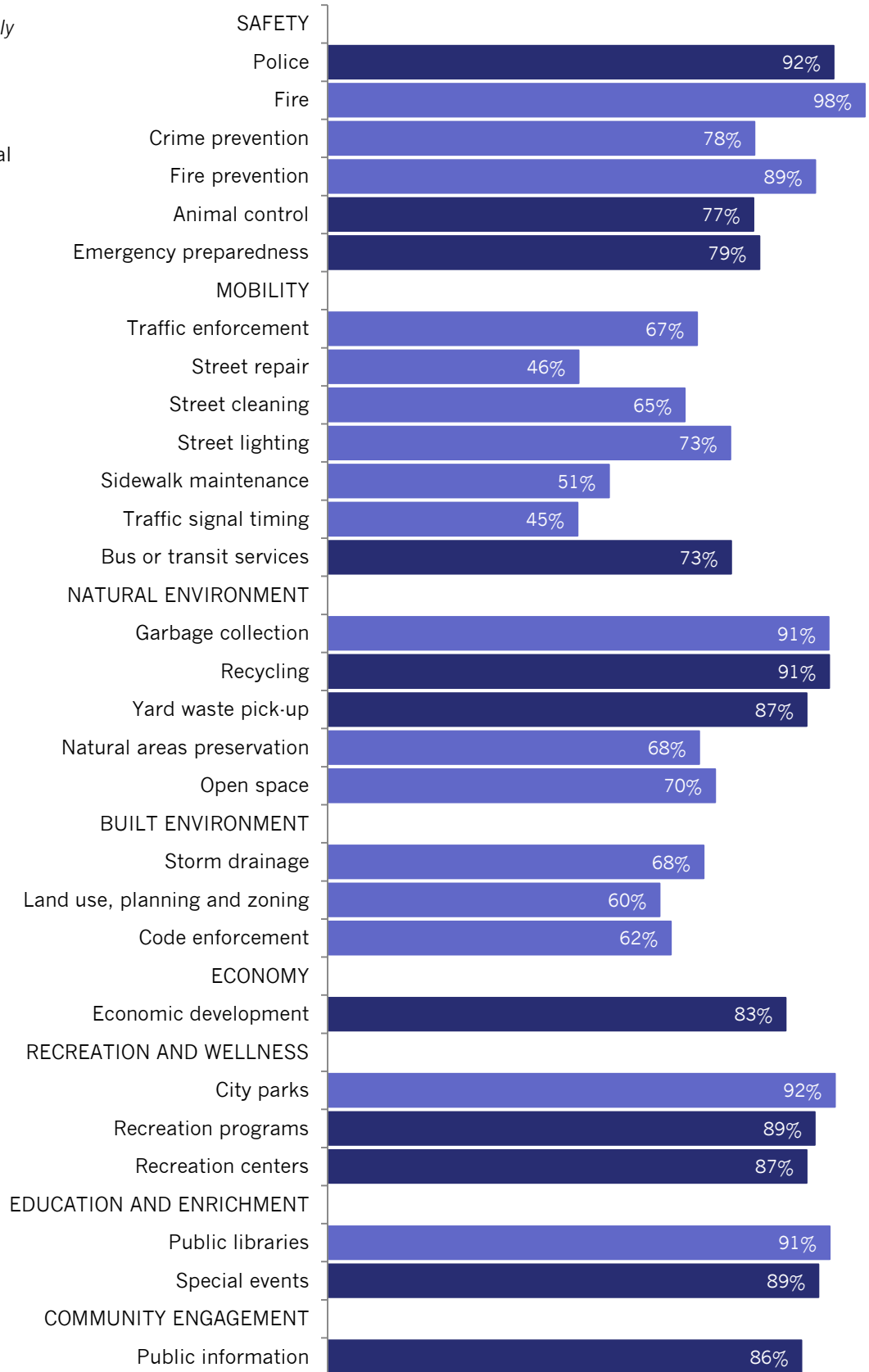


Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower





# Participation

*Are the residents of Decatur 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. Nine in 10 residents rated the overall sense of community as excellent or good. This rating remained stable over time (see *Trends over Time* report under separate cover) and was much higher than the national benchmark comparison. Almost all residents would recommend living in Decatur and plan to remain in Decatur; about half had been in contact with an employee of the City of Decatur in the last 12 months. Ratings for recommending and remaining in Decatur increased from 2012 to 2014.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Of the 32 aspects of Participation, six were higher than the benchmark, 23 were similar and three were lower than the benchmark. The aspects of participation that were lower than the benchmark included: work in Decatur, participated in religious or spiritual activities and watched a local public meeting. Residents in Decatur showed high rates of participation for many aspects including used public transportation instead of driving, carpooled, walked or biked instead of driving, positive outlook on the economy and attended a City-sponsored event.

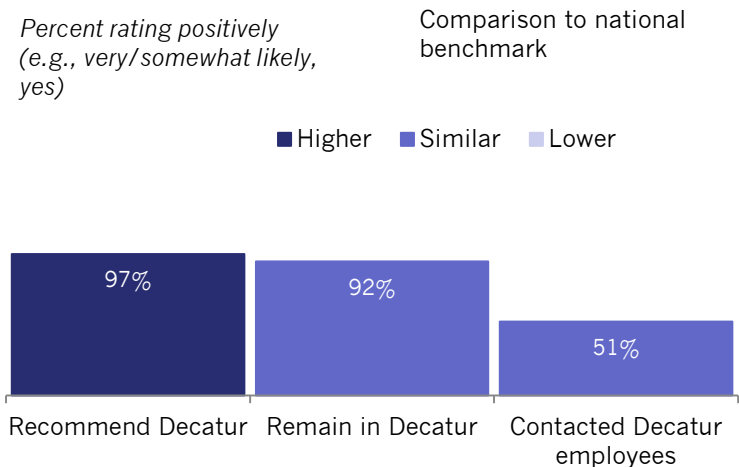
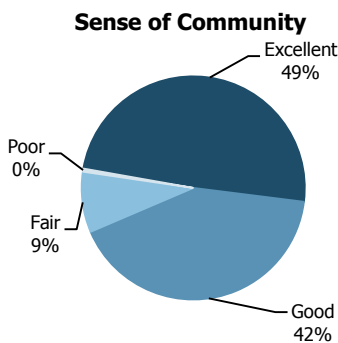
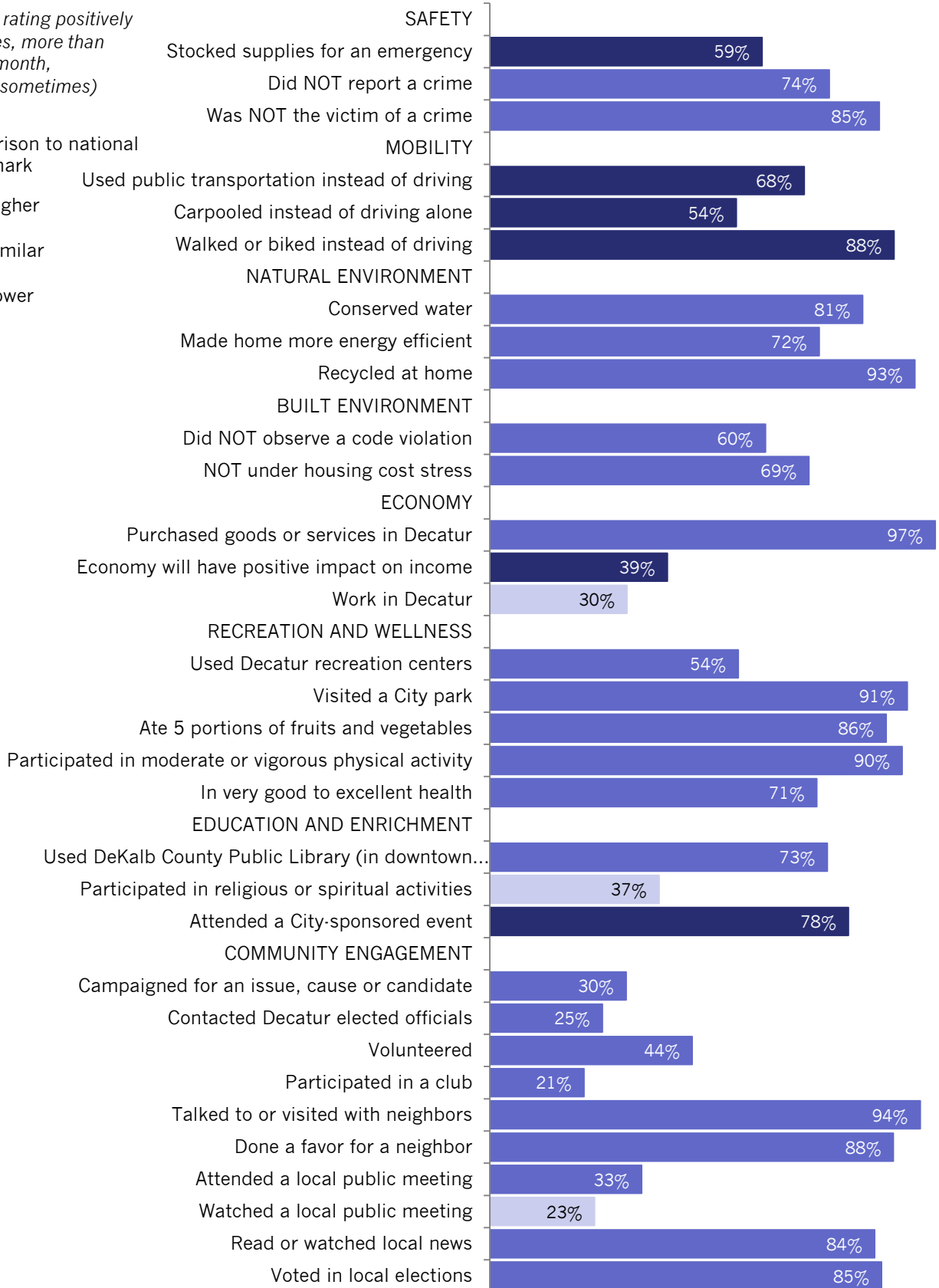


Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

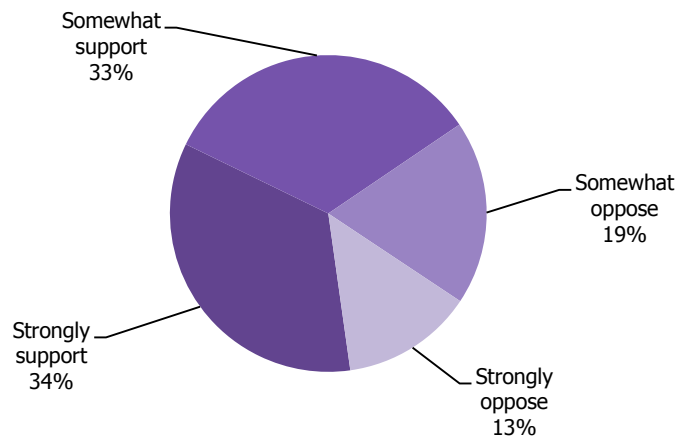


# Special Topics

The City of Decatur included three questions of special interest on The NCS. In the first special interest question, respondents were asked to indicate their level of support or opposition for establishing a 25 mile per hour speed limit on most Decatur roadways. About two-thirds of respondents indicated they would support the establishment of a 25 mile per hour speed limit.

Figure 4: Establishing a 25 MPH Speed Limit on Decatur Roadways

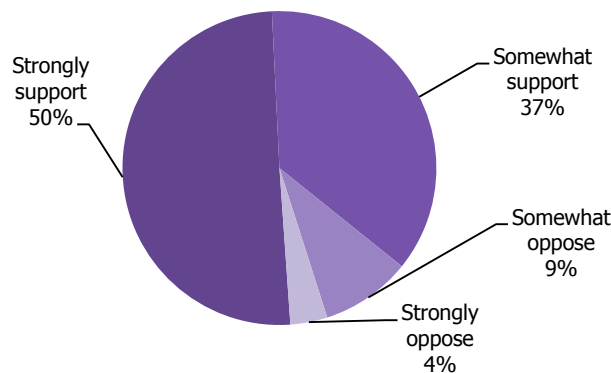
*To what extent would you support or oppose a policy of establishing a 25 mile per hour speed limit on most Decatur roadways?*



In the second special interest question, respondents were asked to indicate their level of support or opposition for the creation of a local historic district that would include the Decatur Square and surrounding blocks. More than 8 in 10 respondents demonstrated support for the creation of a historic district.

Figure 5: Creation of a Local Historic District

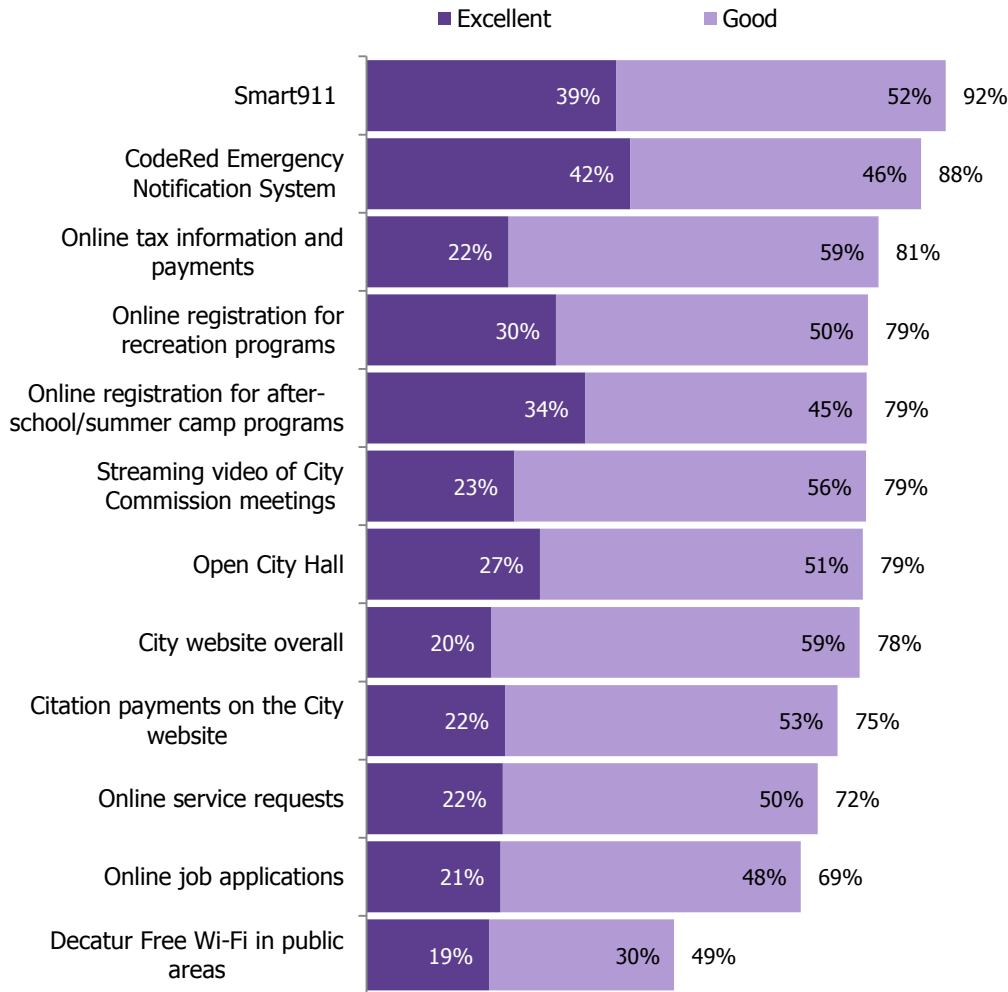
*Local historic districts require design review for construction and renovation and prohibit demolition of historic buildings. Currently, the Decatur Square is not in a local historic district. To what extent would you support or oppose the creation of a local historic district that would include the Decatur Square and the surrounding blocks?*



The final special interest question asked respondents to rate the quality of several aspects of the City’s technology services. While a majority of the aspects of the City’s technology services were rated positively; most of these aspects also received very high percentages of “don’t know” responses (Full frequencies for each item can be found in Appendix A of the *Technical Appendices* report). “Don’t know” responses ranged from 31% to as high as 82%.

Figure 6: City Technology Services

*Please rate the quality of each of the following aspects of the City’s technology services:*



# Conclusions

## **Decatur residents continue to enjoy an exceptional quality of life.**

Almost all residents rate their overall quality of life as excellent or good and at least 9 in 10 would be likely to recommend Decatur as a place to live to someone who asks. The number of residents that would recommend Decatur and are likely to remain increased from 2012 to 2014. Decatur's overall appearance and overall image along with the City as a place to live, neighborhoods as a place to live and to raise children received high ratings by about 9 in 10 residents. Most of the aspects that aid in community livability were rated positively and either remained stable or increased from 2012 to 2014.

## **Residents feel safe in Decatur.**

Safety was an important feature of the community for residents and most residents want the City to continue to provide excellent safety services and amenities. About 86% respondents feel safe overall, and almost all feel safe in their neighborhoods and in downtown/commercial areas. Residents rate safety services highly (3 out of 6 services were higher than the benchmark) and most participants were not a victim of a crime or did not report a crime. A higher number of residents than in comparison communities had stocked supplies for an emergency.

## **The Economy is important to the community.**

Residents believe that the economy is an important community feature to focus on over the next two years. Participants felt very positive about the overall economic health of the community and also gave high ratings to business and services in Decatur and to shopping opportunities. Economic development services were rated highly, increased from 2012 to 2014, and were above the benchmark. Further, ratings for employment opportunities and positive economic outlook also increased from 2012 to 2014 and were higher than the benchmark comparisons.

## **Residents demonstrated support for establishing a 25 mile per hour speed limit and creation of a historic district; City technology ratings received high ratings but most residents aren't aware of them.**

A majority of respondents indicated that they would support the establishment of a 25 mile per hour speed limit on most Decatur roadways. When asked about the creation of a historic district that would include Decatur Square, 87% of respondents indicated that they were in favor of this. Respondents were given a list of City technology services to rate; almost all received high ratings from those that had an opinion. However, almost all of these items received "don't know" responses from a majority of respondents.