





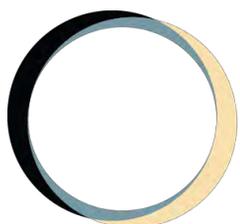


**THE NCS**<sup>TM</sup>  
The National Citizen Survey<sup>TM</sup>

## Decatur, GA

Community Livability Report

2016



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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 558 residents of the City of Decatur. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% 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.



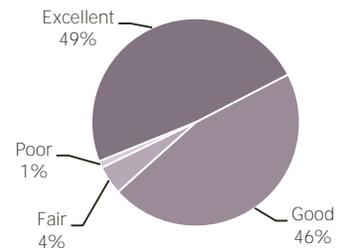
# Quality of Life in Decatur

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Decatur as excellent or good. This rating was higher than 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, Economy and Built Environment as priorities for the Decatur community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Decatur residents gave strong ratings to the facet of Economy as well as to Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement. Ratings for Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment and Recreation and Wellness were positive 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.

**Overall Quality of Life**

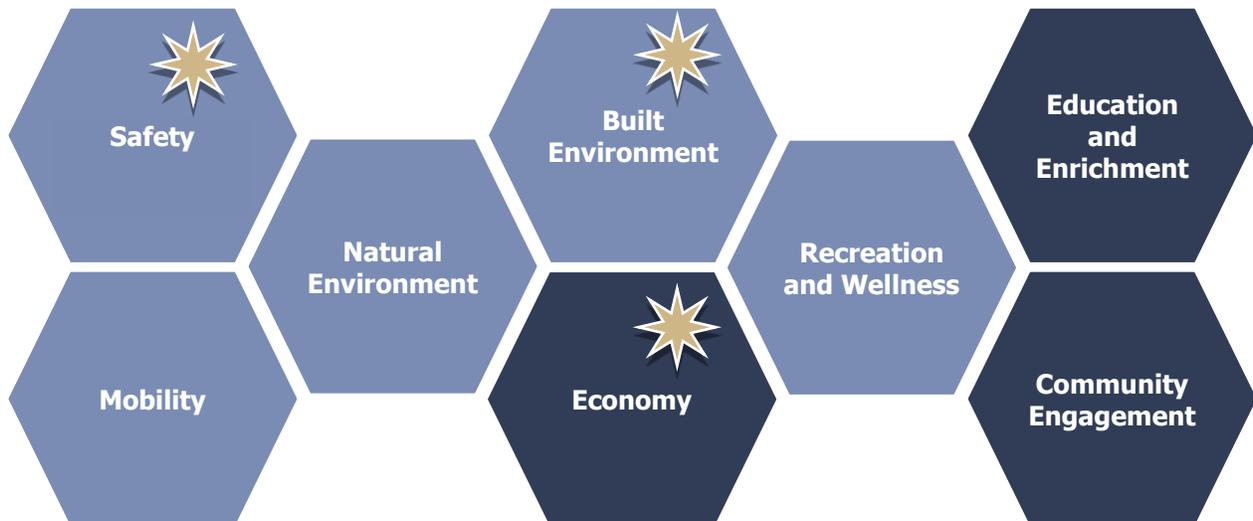


Details that support these findings are contained in the remainder of this Livability Report, starting with the ratings for Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation and ending with results for Decatur’s unique questions.

**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, 97% 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. Nearly all residents gave positive ratings to the overall image of Decatur, their neighborhood as a place to live and Decatur as a place to raise children, and about 9 in 10 were pleased with the overall appearance of Decatur; these ratings were all higher than the national benchmark. About two-thirds of residents favorably rated Decatur as a place to retire and this rating was similar to the benchmark.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Broadly, ratings across all three pillars tended to be strong. Many aspects received ratings higher than the national benchmark; this included all aspects of Community Engagement as well as many aspects within Economy, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment. Ratings were more varied within the facet of Built Environment: while more than 8 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to public places where people want to spend time and about 7 in 10 favorably rated the overall built environment and new development in Decatur, only about 2 in 10 were pleased with affordable quality housing (a rating lower than the benchmark). Ratings within the facet of Mobility were also mixed. About 8 in 10 residents positively rated ease of walking and about 6 in 10 gave favorable ratings to travel by public transportation, both of which were higher than ratings given elsewhere. However, only about 4 in 10 were pleased with ease of travel by car and about one-quarter positively rated public parking, ratings which were lower than the national benchmark.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



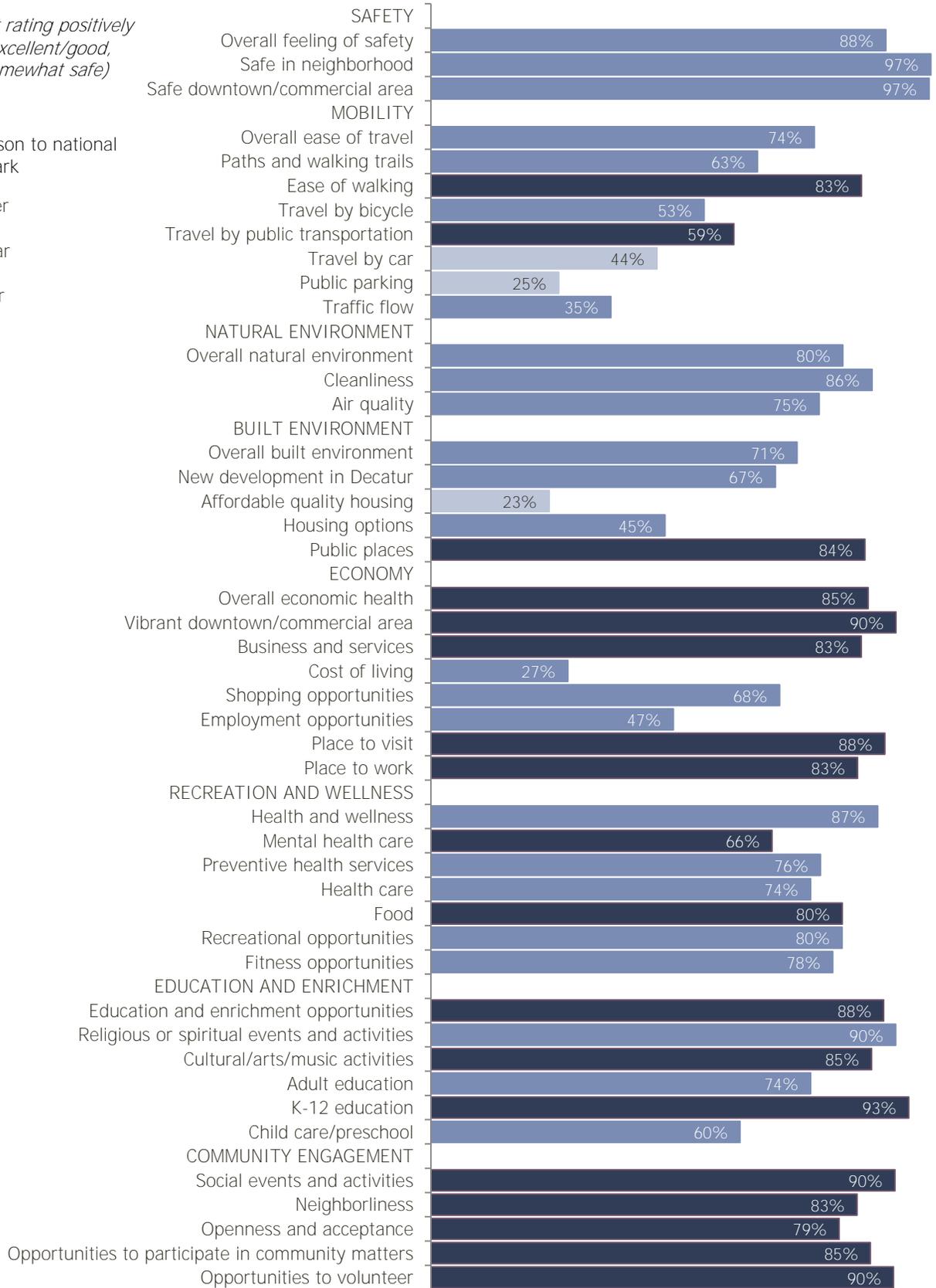
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

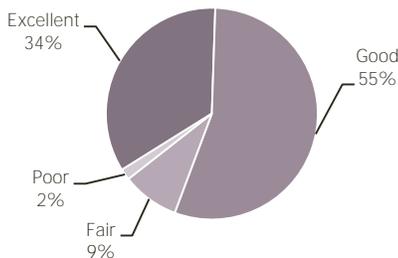
*How well does the government of Decatur meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

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. In Decatur, about 9 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of City services, which was higher than the national benchmark, and about 4 in 10 positively rated services provided by the Federal Government, which was similar to the benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Decatur’s **leadership and governance**. About 8 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to the overall customer service by Decatur employees and the job City government does at welcoming citizen involvement, and about 7 in 10 favorably rated their overall confidence in City government, government acting in the best interest of Decatur, being honest and treating all residents fairly. About two-thirds of survey participants were pleased with the value of services for taxes paid and the overall direction that Decatur is taking. These aspects received ratings similar to or higher than ratings given in other communities.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Decatur. Aspects of Safety received positive ratings from at least three-quarters of respondents and police services were rated higher than the benchmark. Within Natural Environment, at least 8 in 10 residents gave favorable ratings to garbage collection, recycling and yard waste pick-up, and at least 8 in 10 respondents positively rated all aspects of Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement. Additionally, economic development, recreation programs, recreation centers and special events all received ratings higher than those given in communities elsewhere.

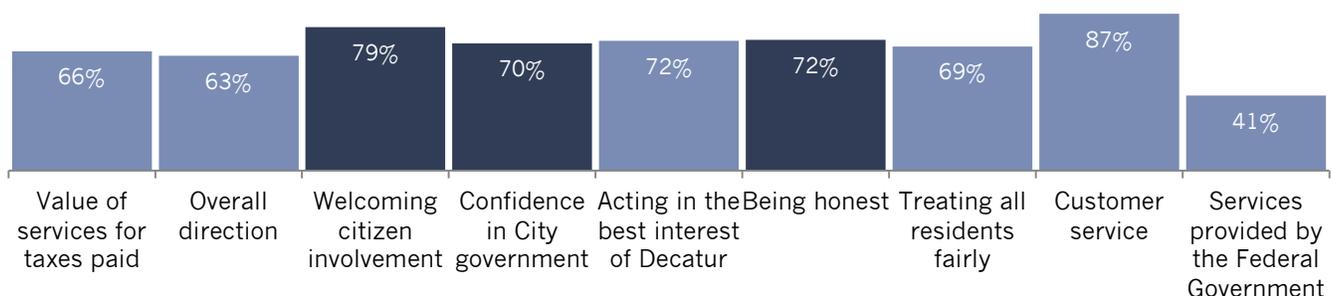
## Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



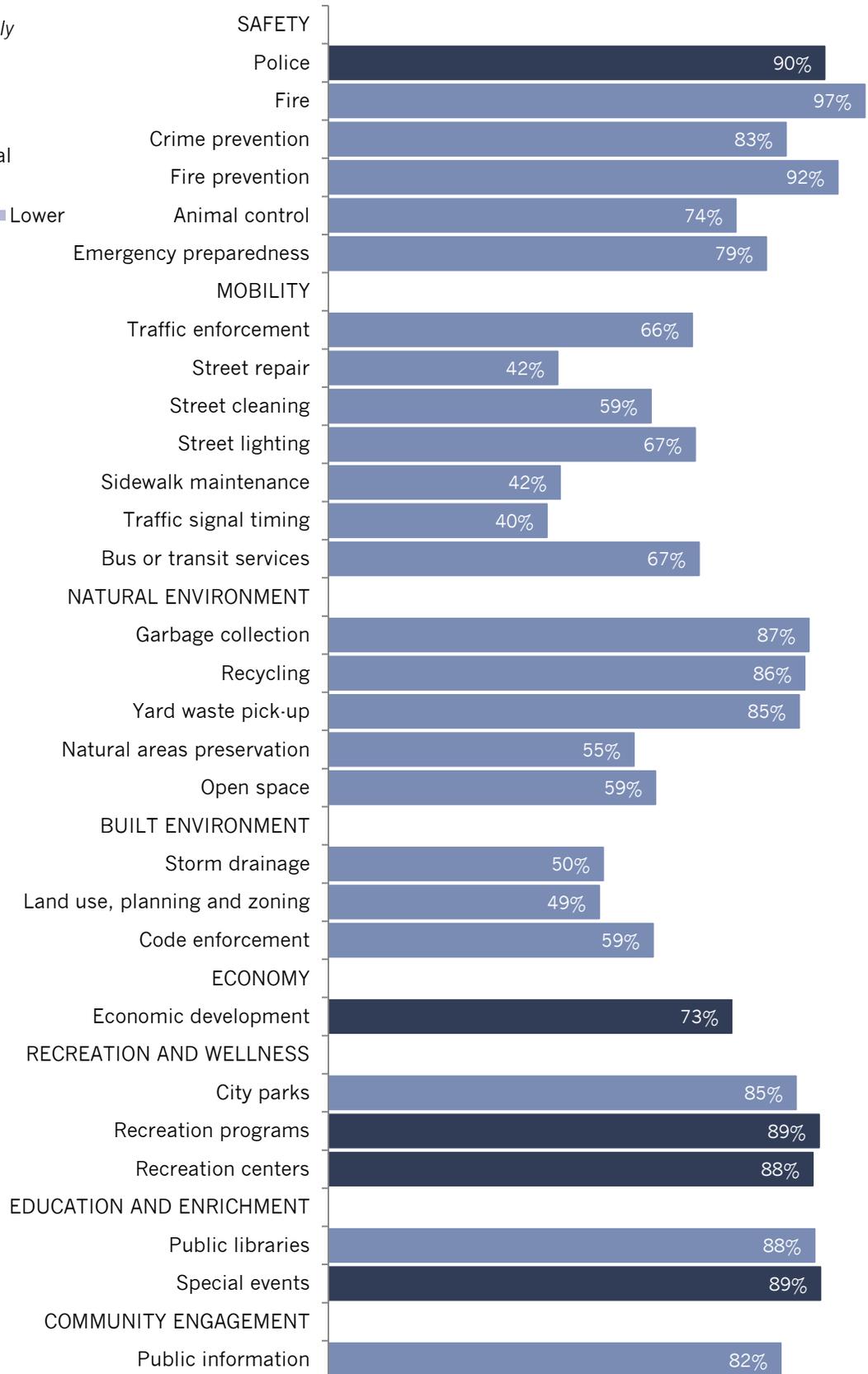
## The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower

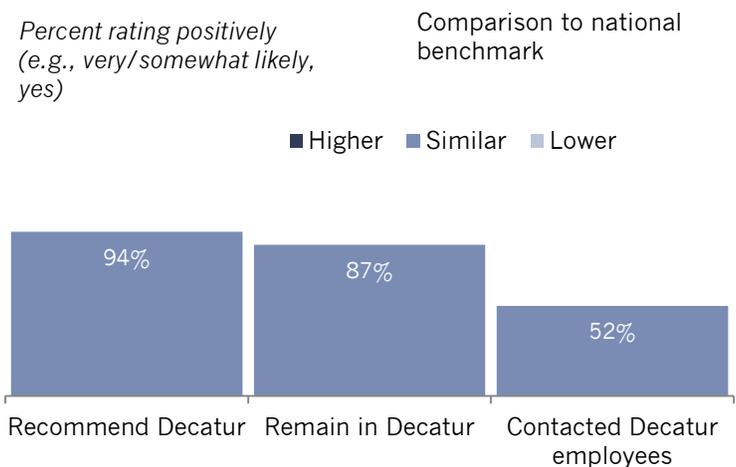
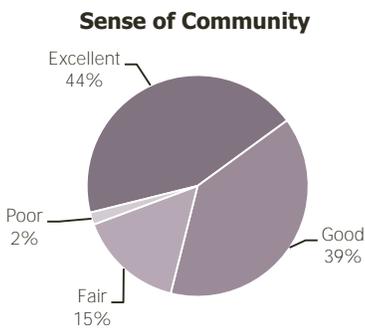


# Participation

*Are the residents of 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. In Decatur, 83% of survey participants described the sense of community in the City as excellent or good, a rate that was higher than the national benchmark. Also, nearly all residents would recommend living in Decatur to someone who asked and about 4 in 5 planned to remain in Decatur for the next five years.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. While rates of Participation generally varied across the facets of Community Livability, all were similar to or higher than the national benchmark. Rates were particularly strong in the facet of Mobility: about 9 in 10 respondents had walked or biked instead of driving, 7 in 10 had used public transportation instead of driving and about half had carpooled. All of these rates were higher than those seen in other communities. Within Recreation and Wellness, about 9 in 10 residents had visited a City park, eaten 5 portions of fruits and vegetables a day and participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity. While rates of participation in aspects of Community Engagement tended to vary, the rates at which respondents had campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate (33%), done a favor for a neighbor (92%) and attended a local public meeting (35%) were higher than rates of participation in other communities across the nation. Finally, about 8 in 10 respondents had attended a City-sponsored event, a rate that was also higher than the national benchmark.



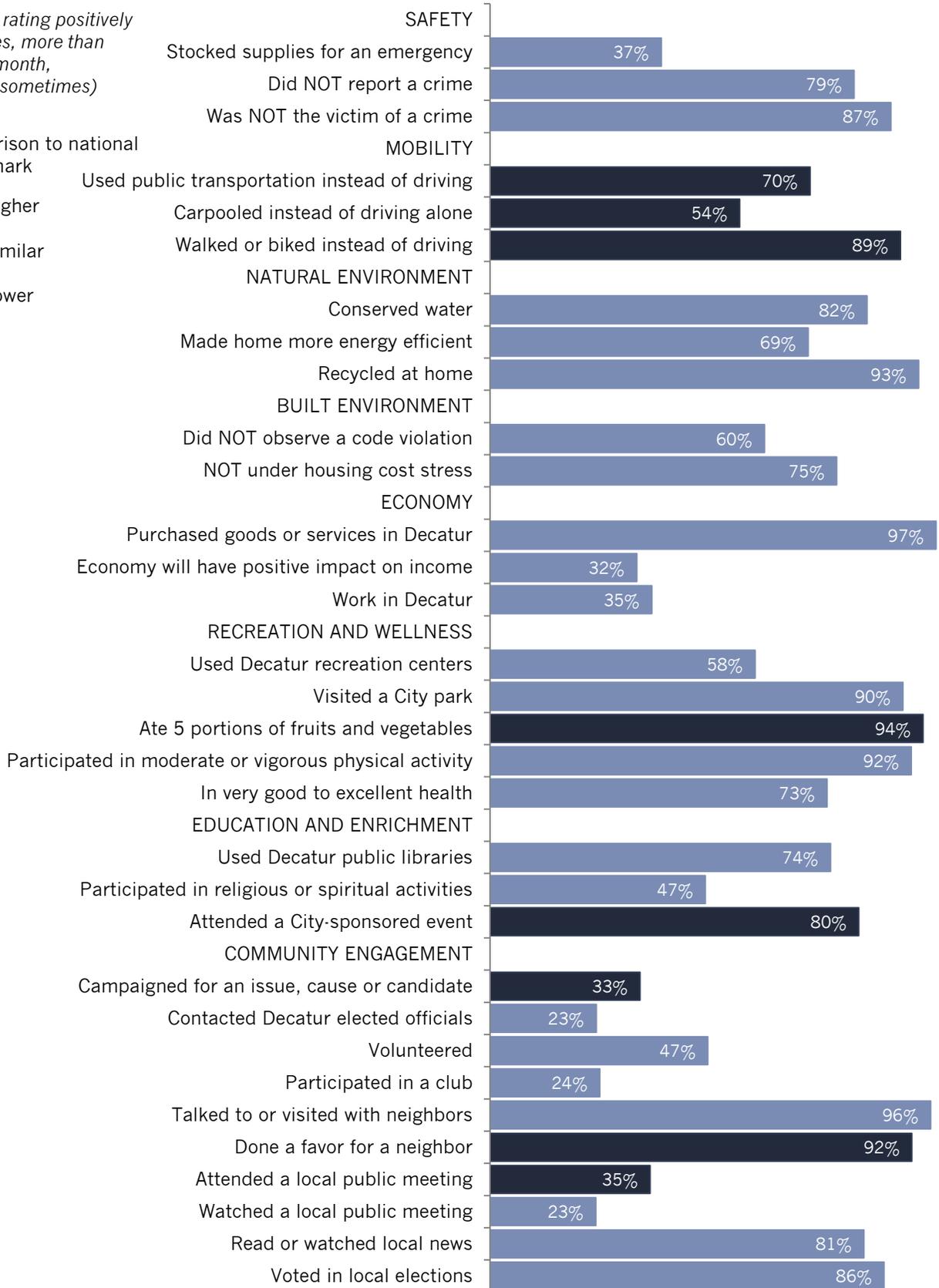
# The National Citizen Survey™

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

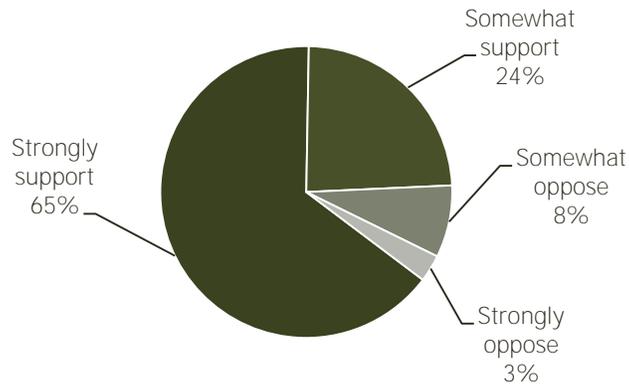


# Special Topics

The City of Decatur included three questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked residents to indicate their level of support for the continued use of the “Complete Streets” policy in Decatur. Nearly 9 in 10 residents strongly or somewhat supported the continued use of the policy, and only 3% strongly opposed it.

Figure 4: Support for “Complete Streets”

*The City of Decatur now has a “Complete Streets” policy that requires all streets to have bicycle and pedestrian safety features. These involve the use of lower speed limits, narrower vehicle lanes, fewer “right-on-red” opportunities, more mid-block crosswalks and similar techniques. To what extent do you support or oppose continued use of this policy?*

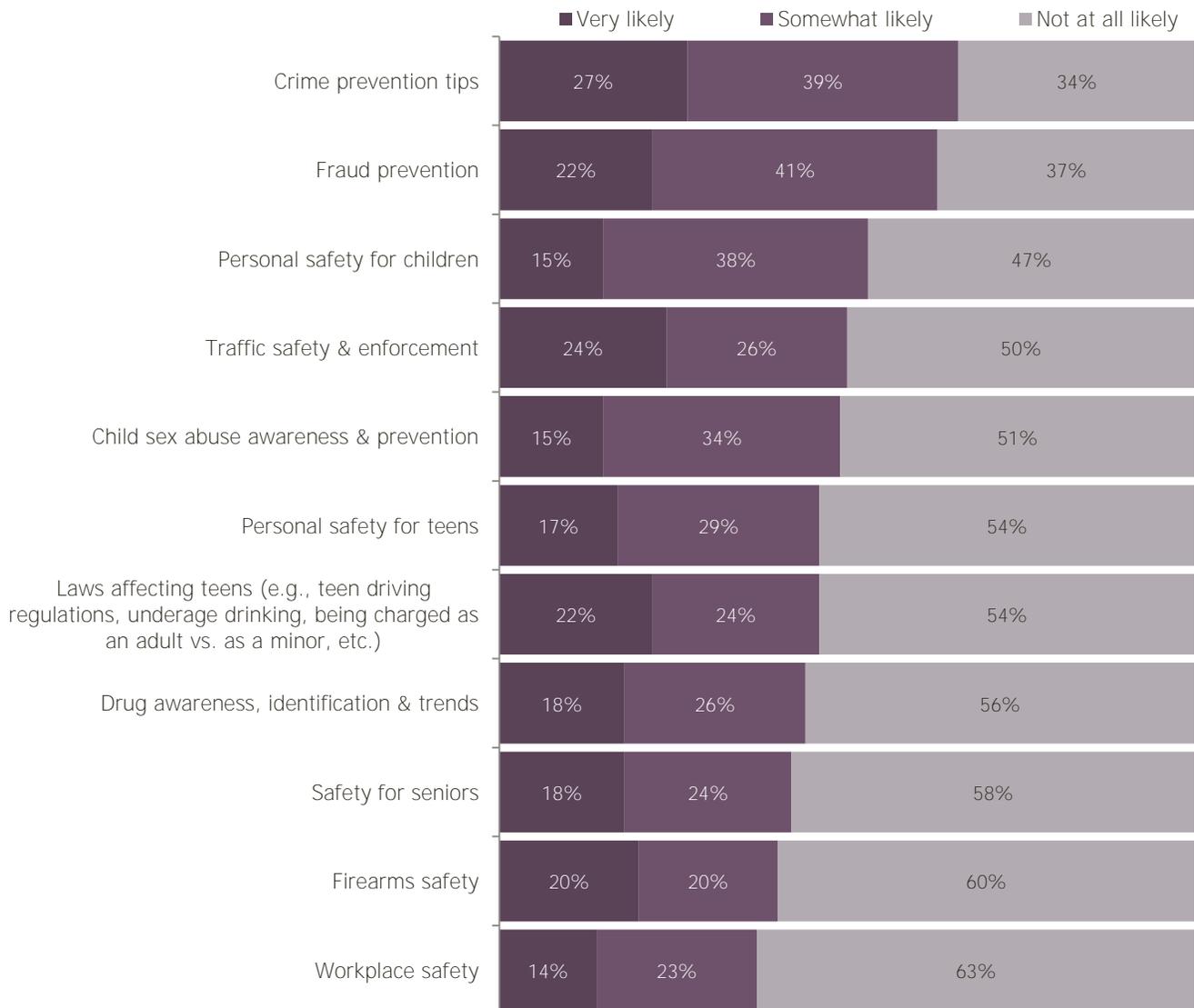


## The National Citizen Survey™

The second special-interest question asked residents how likely or unlikely they would be to attend presentations by the Decatur police department on a variety of topics. Topic areas on which residents would be most likely to attend presentations included crime prevention tips (66% very or somewhat likely to attend), fraud prevention (63%) personal safety for children (53%), traffic safety and enforcement (50%) and child sex abuse awareness and prevention (49%). Residents indicated that they would be least likely to attend presentations on workplace safety (37% very or somewhat likely to attend) and firearms safety (40%).

Figure 4: Community Presentations by Police Department

*The Decatur Police Department is considering offering community presentations on the following topics. How likely or unlikely would you be to attend a presentation for each of the following?*

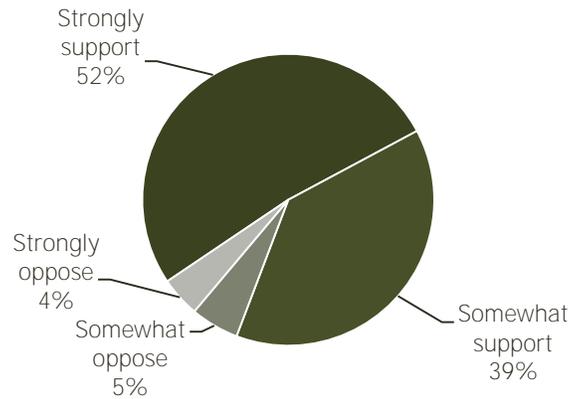


## The National Citizen Survey™

The final question asked residents to indicate their level of support for establishing a Community Advisory Board. About 9 in 10 survey respondents indicated that they strongly or somewhat supported establishing the board, while only 4% strongly opposed it.

Figure 5: Support for Community Advisory Board

*The City Commission is considering establishing a community advisory board which would provide recommendations regarding various activities, potentially including economic, cultural and racial diversity, inclusion and equity. To what extent do you support or oppose the City Commission establishing this type of community advisory board?*



# Conclusions

## Residents continue to enjoy a high quality of life in Decatur.

Nearly all survey respondents rated their overall quality of life, Decatur as a place to live and the City as a place to raise children as excellent or good and would recommend living in Decatur to someone who asked. About 9 in 10 planned to remain in the City for the next five years and gave positive ratings to the overall image and overall appearance of Decatur and their neighborhood as a place to live. Ratings for most quality of life indicators remained stable when compared from the previous survey in 2014 (for more information, see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover).

## Economy is important to residents and is highly rated in the City.

Residents indicated that the Economy was an important area for the City to focus on in the next two years and ratings for aspects of Economy were generally high across the three pillars of community livability. At least 8 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings for the overall economic health of Decatur, its vibrant downtown/commercial area, the overall quality of business and service establishments and Decatur as a place to visit and to work. Additionally, about three-quarters of residents rated economic development in the City as excellent or good. All of these aspects received ratings higher than the benchmark. However, ratings for shopping opportunities, employment opportunities, cost of living, Decatur as place to work and economic development decreased from 2014 to 2016.

## Built Environment is also a priority for residents.

Survey respondents also indicated that Built Environment would be an important area of focus in the coming years. More than 8 in 10 residents positively rated public places where people want to spend time (a rating higher than the benchmark) and around 7 in 10 gave favorable ratings to the overall built environment and the overall quality of new development in Decatur. However, only about one-quarter gave excellent or good ratings to the availability of affordable quality housing, which was lower than ratings given in other communities, and ratings for new development, affordable quality housing, variety of housing options and overall built environment decreased from 2014 to 2016. When asked to indicate their level of support for a “**Complete Streets**” policy that requires all streets to have bicycle and pedestrian safety features, nearly 9 in 10 respondents indicated that they strongly or somewhat supported the continued use of the policy.

## Decatur residents are highly engaged in the community.

Eight in 10 survey respondents rated the sense of community in Decatur as excellent or good, which was a higher rating than seen elsewhere. Many other aspects of Community Engagement received ratings higher than the national benchmark, including social events and activities, neighborliness, openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds, opportunities to participate in community matters and opportunities to volunteer. Further, more Decatur residents campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate, did a favor for a neighbor or attended a local public meeting at higher rates than residents of other communities. When asked how likely or unlikely they would be to attend presentations by the Decatur police department on a variety of topics, between one-third and two-thirds of respondents indicated they would be at least somewhat likely to attend presentations on all topics listed; also, when asked about their level of support for establishing a Community Advisory Board, most residents indicated that they strongly or somewhat supported it. Ratings for Community Engagement tended to remain stable from 2014 to 2016, although the rating for sense of community decreased.