

THE NCS™

The National Community Survey™

Decatur, GA

*Community Livability Report
2020*



POWERED BY POLCO

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Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

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The National Community Survey™
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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 NCS™

The National Community 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 considering ten central facets of a community:

- Economy
- Mobility
- Community Design
- Utilities
- Safety
- Natural Environment
- Parks and Recreation
- Health and Wellness
- Education, Arts and Culture
- Inclusivity & Engagement



The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 522 residents of the City of Decatur. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% for all respondents and the response rate for the 2020 survey was 32%. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.

Overview of Results

Decatur continues to be an extremely desirable place to live and trust in City Government is high.

As in previous years, almost all residents rated their overall quality of life, Decatur as a place to live and the overall image or reputation of Decatur as excellent or good. These ratings all eclipsed national averages. Further, at least 9 in 10 respondents were likely to remain in Decatur and would recommend living in Decatur.

High ratings across almost all facets of livability have generally remained stable over time. In evaluating Decatur governance, at least 7 in 10 respondents positively rated their overall confidence in Decatur government, the overall direction that Decatur is taking, generally acting in the best interest of the community, being honest, being open and transparent to the public, informing resident about issues facing the community, the job Decatur does at welcoming resident involvement, treating all residents fairly and with respect, overall customer service, public information services, and the quality of services provided by the City of Decatur. Not only were most ratings higher than the benchmarks, but some of the ratings were among the highest ever recorded in NRC's benchmarking database. Decatur ranked #1 out of hundreds of other jurisdictions nationwide for the job the government does at welcoming resident involvement.

Decatur's Economy is a valued asset, but resident optimism is on the decline.

As in previous years, the Economy continued to be a top priority for the Decatur community. Ratings within this facet were generally strong and many were higher than the national comparisons, including overall economic health of Decatur, overall quality and variety of business and service establishments in Decatur, Decatur as a place to work, as a place to visit, and shopping and employment opportunities.

However, there were some potential challenges. Possibly highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis, residents' optimism about their own personal economic futures dropped significantly in 2020 compared to 2018. Ratings also declined for shopping opportunities, and more residents were under housing cost stress in 2020. Ratings for the cost of living in Decatur continued to be lower than the national benchmark. Conversely, ratings for employment opportunities increased during this time period.

Residents support the City taking actions to address climate change.

The City chose to ask several questions related to climate change and sustainability on the 2020 survey. Almost all felt that it was at least somewhat important, and 8 in 10 respondents felt that it was essential or very important for the City to take actions to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and to take actions to prepare the city for the impacts of climate change. Residents were also asked to indicate their levels of support or opposition for several possible actions the City could take regarding sustainability (e.g., setting a deadline for reaching net-zero emissions, converting the City fleet to hybrids or electric vehicles, installing solar energy systems, etc.) and all received strong support from a majority of respondents. Further, most residents supported the creation of a City-wide composting program and a majority indicated that they would be likely to participate in a City-wide composting program if it was available to them.

Facets of Livability

Ratings of importance were compared to ratings of quality to help guide City staff and officials with decisions on future resource allocation and strategic planning areas. When competition for limited resources demands that efficiencies or cutbacks be instituted, it is wise not only to know what facets are deemed most important to residents' quality of life, but which among the most important are perceived to be of relatively lower quality in your community. It is these facets of community livability – more important facets perceived as being of lower quality – to which attention needs to be paid first.

To identify the facets perceived by residents to have relatively lower quality at the same time as relatively higher importance, the national benchmark comparisons for quality and importance ratings were compared for each. The upper left-hand quadrant contains those facets of higher importance but lower quality, and may be considered as areas of focus for the entire community of Decatur.

		QUALITY		
		LOWER	SIMILAR	HIGHER
IMPORTANCE	HIGHER		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility 	
	SIMILAR		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Design • Utilities • Safety • Natural Environment • Parks and Recreation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy • Health and Wellness • Education, Arts and Culture • Inclusivity and Engagement
	LOWER			

FIGURE 1: QUALITY OF FACETS OF LIVABILITY- SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall economic health of Decatur	↑	↔	87%
Overall quality of the transportation system in Decatur	↔	↔	70%
Overall design or layout of Decatur's residential and commercial areas	↔	↔	75%
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Decatur	↔	*	67%
Overall feeling of safety in Decatur	↔	↔	85%
Quality of overall natural environment in Decatur	↔	↔	84%
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities	↔	*	87%
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Decatur	↑	↔	88%
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	↑	↔	86%
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	↑↑	*	85%

FIGURE 2: IMPORTANCE OF FACETS OF LIVABILITY- SUMMARY

Percent essential or very important	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall economic health of Decatur	↔	↔	93%
Overall quality of the transportation system in Decatur	↑	↔	89%
Overall design or layout of Decatur's residential and commercial areas	↔	↔	81%
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Decatur	↔	*	92%
Overall feeling of safety in Decatur	↔	↔	91%
Quality of overall natural environment in Decatur	↔	↔	89%
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities	↔	*	88%
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Decatur	↔	↔	68%
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	↔	↑	78%
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	↔	↓	79%

Legend

↑↑ Much higher ↑ Higher ↔ Similar ↓ Lower ↓↓ Much lower * Not available

Quality of Life

Measuring community livability starts with assessing the quality of life of those who live there, and ensuring that the community is attractive, accessible, and welcoming to all.

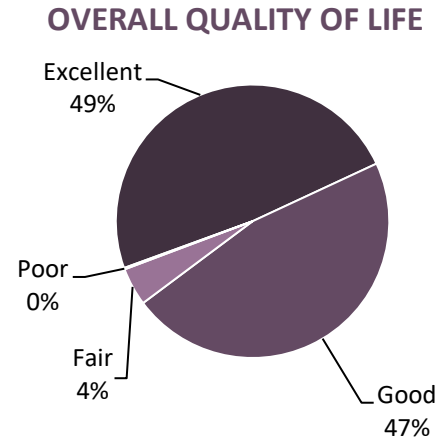


FIGURE 3: QUALITY OF LIFE IN DECATUR

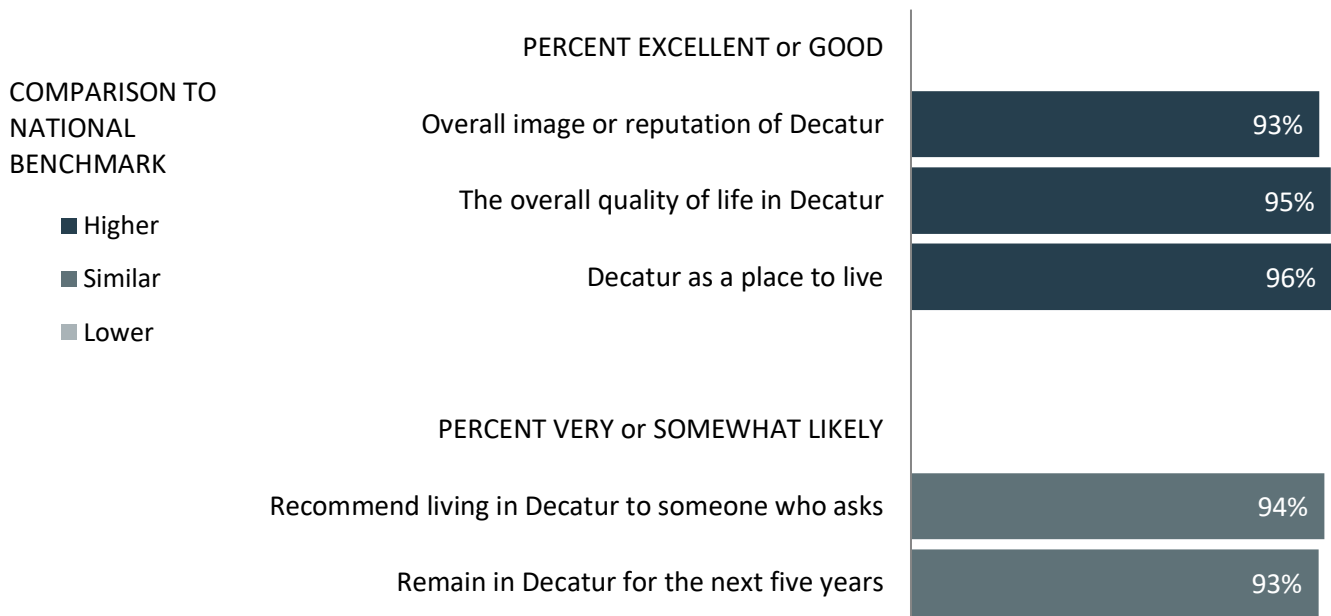


FIGURE 4: QUALITY OF LIFE IN DECATUR - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall image or reputation of Decatur	↑	↔	93%
The overall quality of life in Decatur	↑	↔	95%
Decatur as a place to live	↑	↔	96%

FIGURE 5: RECOMMEND DECATUR - SUMMARY

Percent very or somewhat likely	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Recommend living in Decatur to someone who asks	↔	↔	94%
Remain in Decatur for the next five years	↔	↔	93%

Governance

Strong local governments produce results that meet the needs of residents while making the best use of available resources, and are responsive to the present and future needs of the community as a whole.

OVERALL CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT

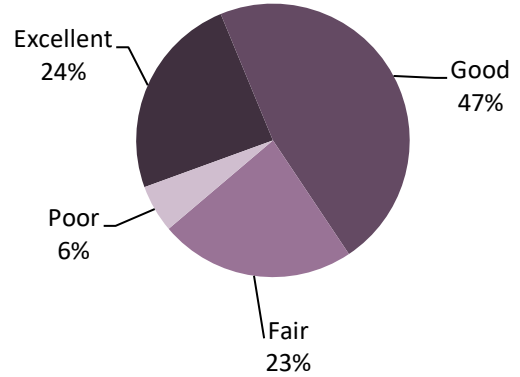


FIGURE 6: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND SERVICES

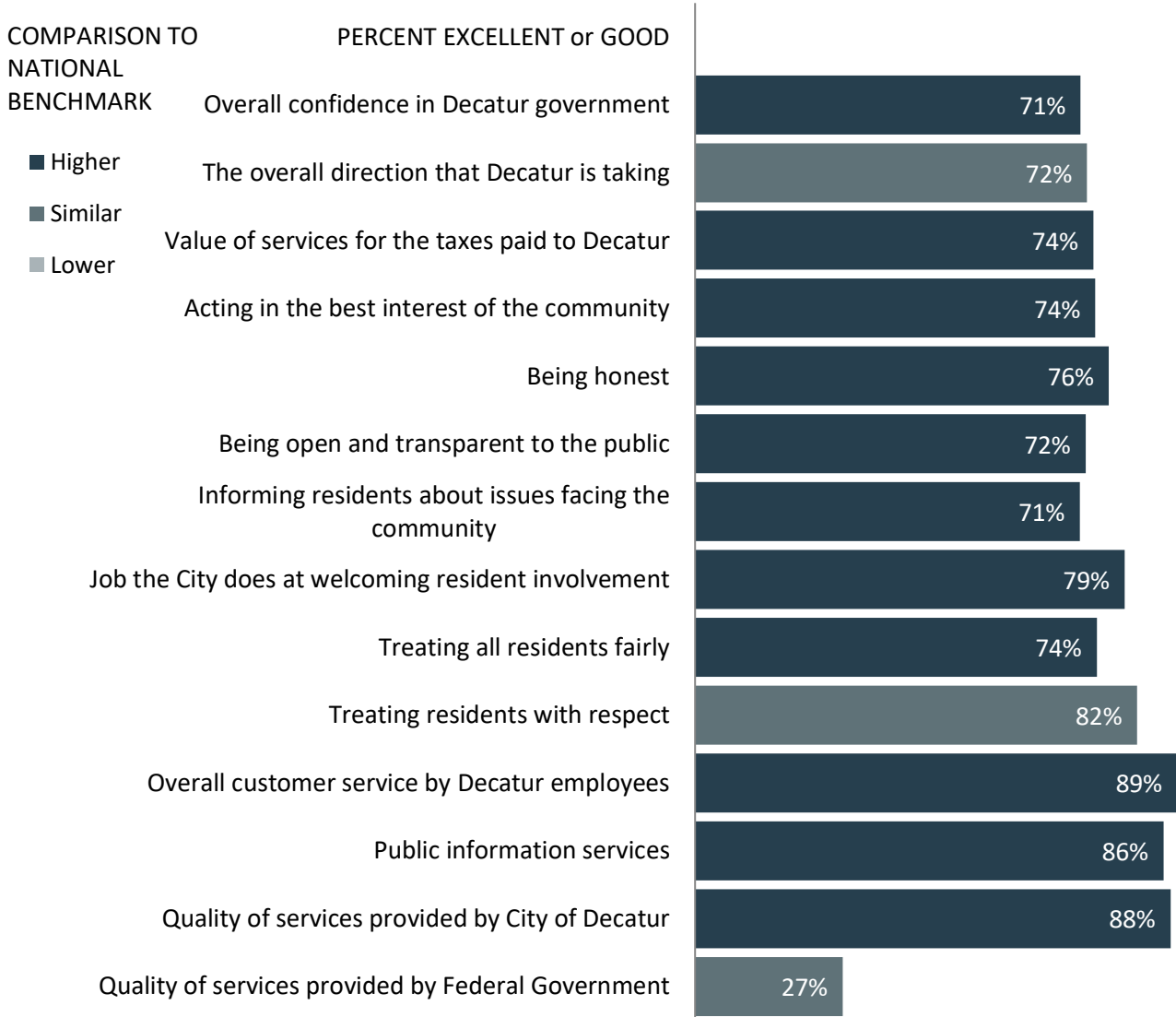


FIGURE 7: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND SERVICES - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall confidence in Decatur government	↑	↔	71%
The overall direction that Decatur is taking	↔	↔	72%
The value of services for the taxes paid to Decatur	↑	↔	74%
Generally acting in the best interest of the community	↑	↔	74%
Being honest	↑	↔	76%
Being open and transparent to the public	↑	*	72%
Informing residents about issues facing the community	↑	*	71%
The job Decatur government does at welcoming resident involvement	↑	↔	79%
Treating all residents fairly	↑	↔	74%
Treating residents with respect	↔	*	82%
Overall customer service by Decatur employees	↑	↔	89%
Public information services	↑	↔	86%
Quality of services provided by the City of Decatur	↑	↔	88%
Quality of services provided by the Federal Government	↔	↔	27%

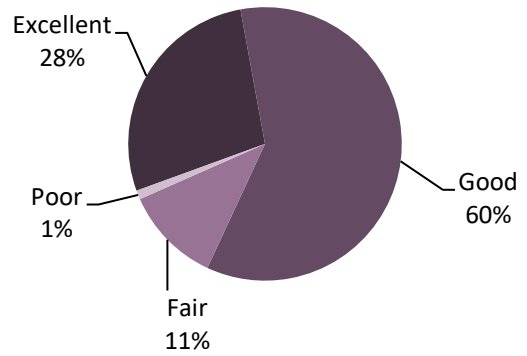
Legend

↑↑ Much higher ↑ Higher ↔ Similar ↓ Lower ↓↓ Much lower * Not available

Economy

Local governments work together with private and nonprofit businesses, and with the community at large, to foster sustainable growth, create jobs, and promote a thriving local economy.

OVERALL ECONOMIC HEALTH



What impact, if any, do you think the economy will have on your family income in the next 6 months?

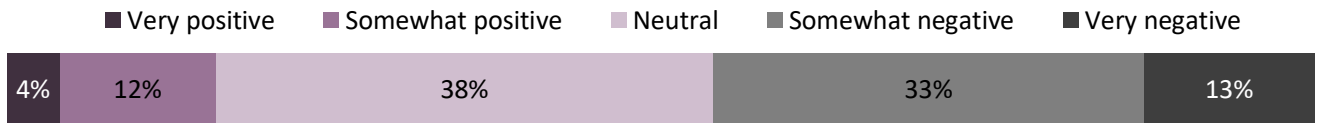


FIGURE 8: ECONOMIC HEALTH



FIGURE 9: ECONOMIC HEALTH - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall economic health of Decatur	↑	↔	87%
Economic development	↑	↔	75%
Overall quality of business and service establishments in Decatur	↑↑	↔	93%
Variety of business and service establishments in Decatur	↑	*	79%
Vibrant downtown/commercial area	↑↑	↔	91%
Shopping opportunities	↔	↓	65%
Decatur as a place to visit	↑	↔	86%
Decatur as a place to work	↑	↔	83%
Employment opportunities	↑	↑	59%
Cost of living in Decatur	↓	↔	26%

FIGURE 10: ECONOMIC IMPACT - SUMMARY

Percent very or somewhat positive	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Economy will have positive impact on income	↓	↓	16%

FIGURE 11: HOUSING COST - SUMMARY

Percent for whom housing costs are NOT 30% or more of household income	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
NOT experiencing housing costs stress	↔	↓	71%

Legend

↑↑ Much higher ↑ Higher ↔ Similar ↓ Lower ↓↓ Much lower * Not available

Mobility

The ease with which residents can move about their communities, whether for commuting, leisure, or recreation, plays a major role in the quality of life for all who live, work, and play in the community.

THE OVERALL QUALITY OF THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

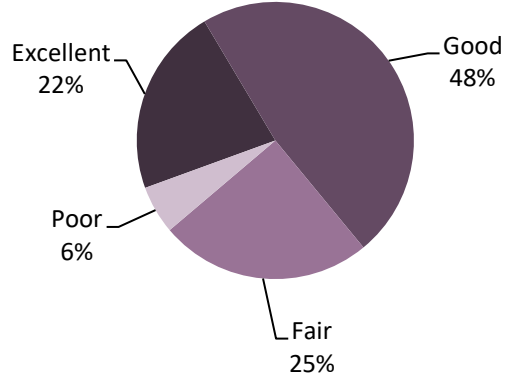


FIGURE 12: MOBILITY IN DECATUR

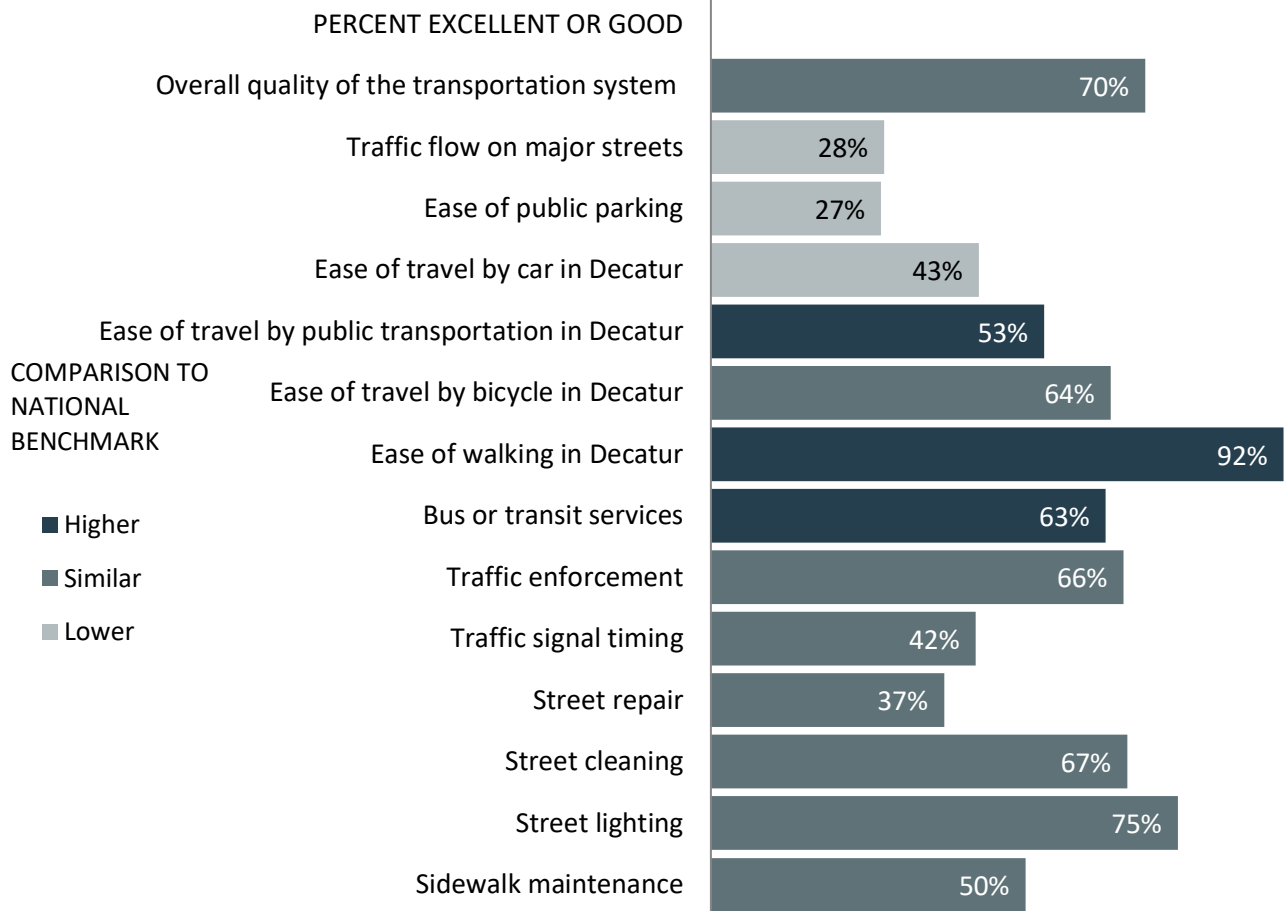


FIGURE 13: USE OF ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION MODES

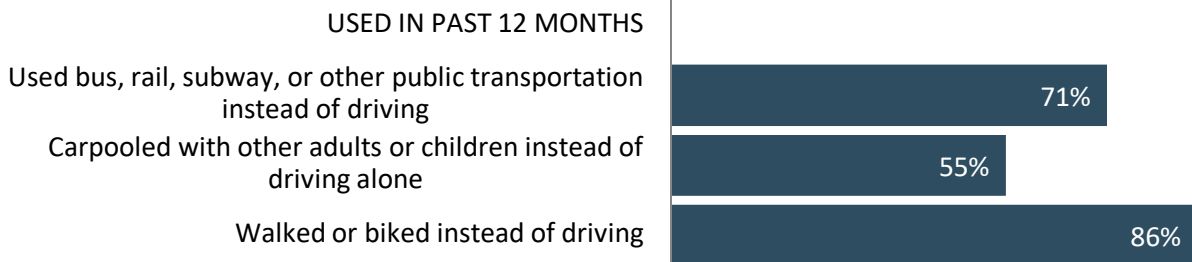


FIGURE 14: MOBILITY IN DECATUR - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
The overall quality of the transportation system in Decatur	↔	↔	70%
Traffic flow on major streets	↓	↔	28%
Ease of travel by car in Decatur	↓	↑	43%
Ease of travel by public transportation in Decatur	↑	↔	53%
Ease of travel by bicycle in Decatur	↔	↑	64%
Ease of walking in Decatur	↑	↔	92%
Ease of public parking	↓	↔	27%
Bus or transit services	↑	↔	63%
Traffic enforcement	↔	↔	66%
Traffic signal timing	↔	↔	42%
Street repair	↔	↔	37%
Street cleaning	↔	↔	67%
Street lighting	↔	↔	75%
Snow removal	↔	↔	50%
Sidewalk maintenance	↔	↔	70%

FIGURE 15: USE OF ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION MODES - SUMMARY

Percent who did this in past 12 months	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Used bus, rail, subway or other public transportation instead of driving	↑↑	↔	71%
Carpooled with other adults or children instead of driving alone	↑	↔	55%
Walked or biked instead of driving	↑↑	↔	86%

Legend

↑↑ Much higher ↑ Higher ↔ Similar ↓ Lower ↓↓ Much lower * Not available

Community Design

A well-designed community enhances the quality of life for its residents by encouraging smart land use and zoning, ensuring that affordable housing is accessible to all, and providing access to parks and other green spaces.

THE OVERALL DESIGN OR LAYOUT OF RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL AREAS

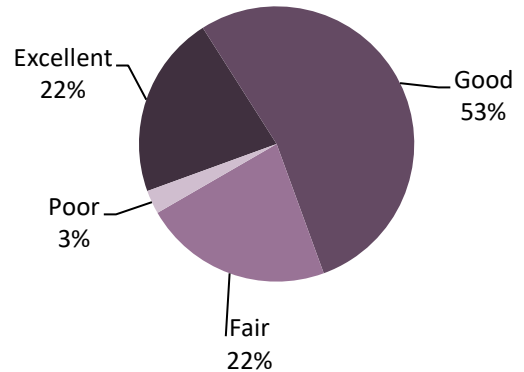


FIGURE 16: COMMUNITY DESIGN

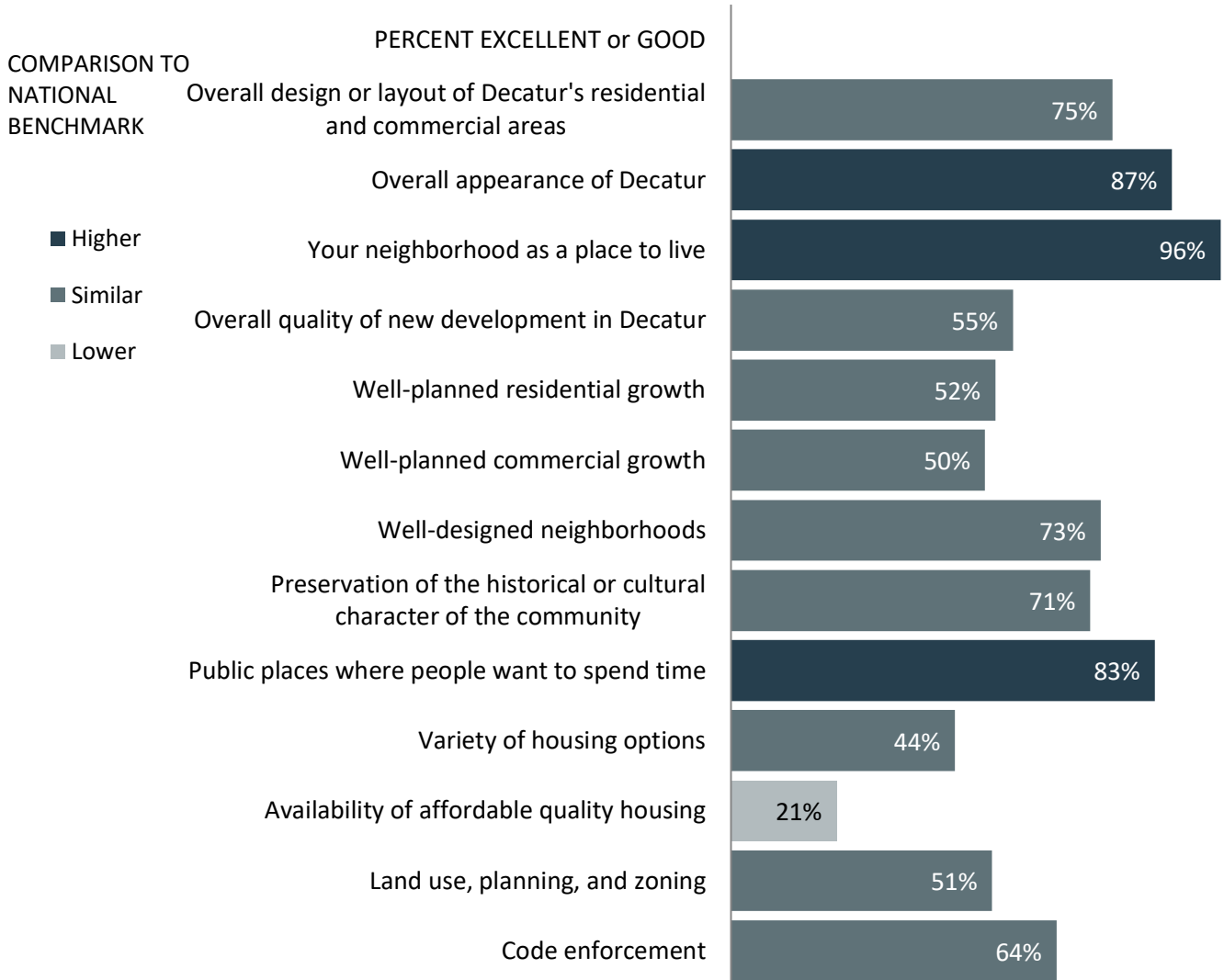


FIGURE 17: COMMUNITY DESIGN - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
The overall design or layout of Decatur’s residential and commercial areas	↔	↔	75%
Overall appearance of Decatur	↑	↔	87%
Your neighborhood as a place to live	↑	↔	96%
Overall quality of new development in Decatur	↔	↓	55%
Well planned residential growth	↔	*	52%
Well planned commercial growth	↔	*	50%
Well-designed neighborhoods	↔	*	73%
Preservation of the historical or cultural character of the community	↔	*	71%
Public places where people want to spend time	↑	↔	83%
Variety of housing options	↔	↔	44%
Availability of affordable quality housing	↓	↔	21%
Land use, planning and zoning	↔	↔	51%
Code enforcement	↔	↔	64%

Legend

↑↑ Much higher ↑ Higher ↔ Similar ↓ Lower ↓↓ Much lower * Not available

Utilities

Services such as water, gas, electricity, and internet access play a vital role in ensuring the physical and economic health and well-being of the communities they serve.

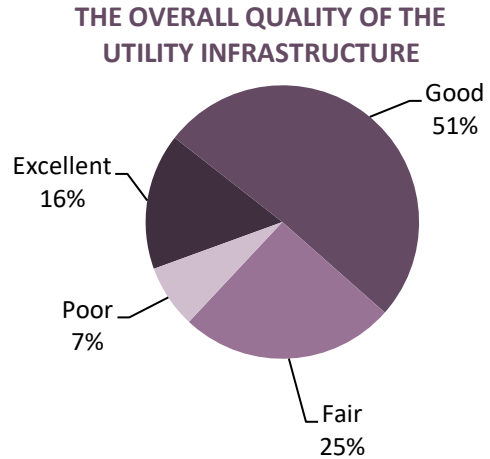


FIGURE 18: UTILITES

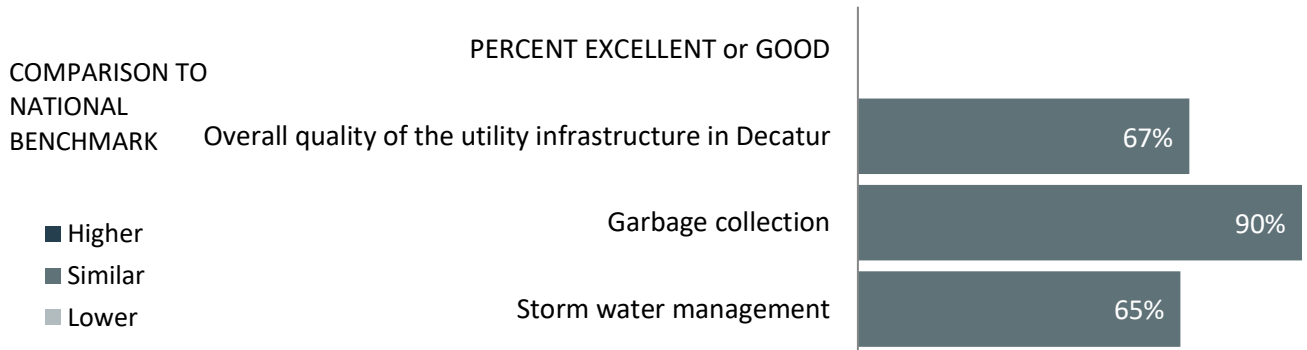


FIGURE 19: UTILITES - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Decatur	↔	*	67%
Garbage collection	↔	↔	90%
Storm water management	↔	↔	65%

Safety

Public safety is often the most important task facing local governments. All residents should feel safe and secure in their neighborhoods and in the greater community, and providing robust Safety-related services is essential to residents' quality of life.

OVERALL FEELING OF SAFETY

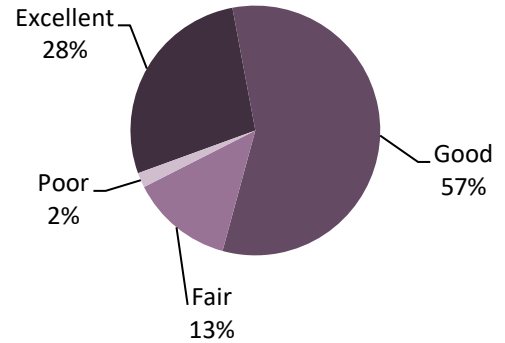


FIGURE 20: SAFETY IN DECATUR

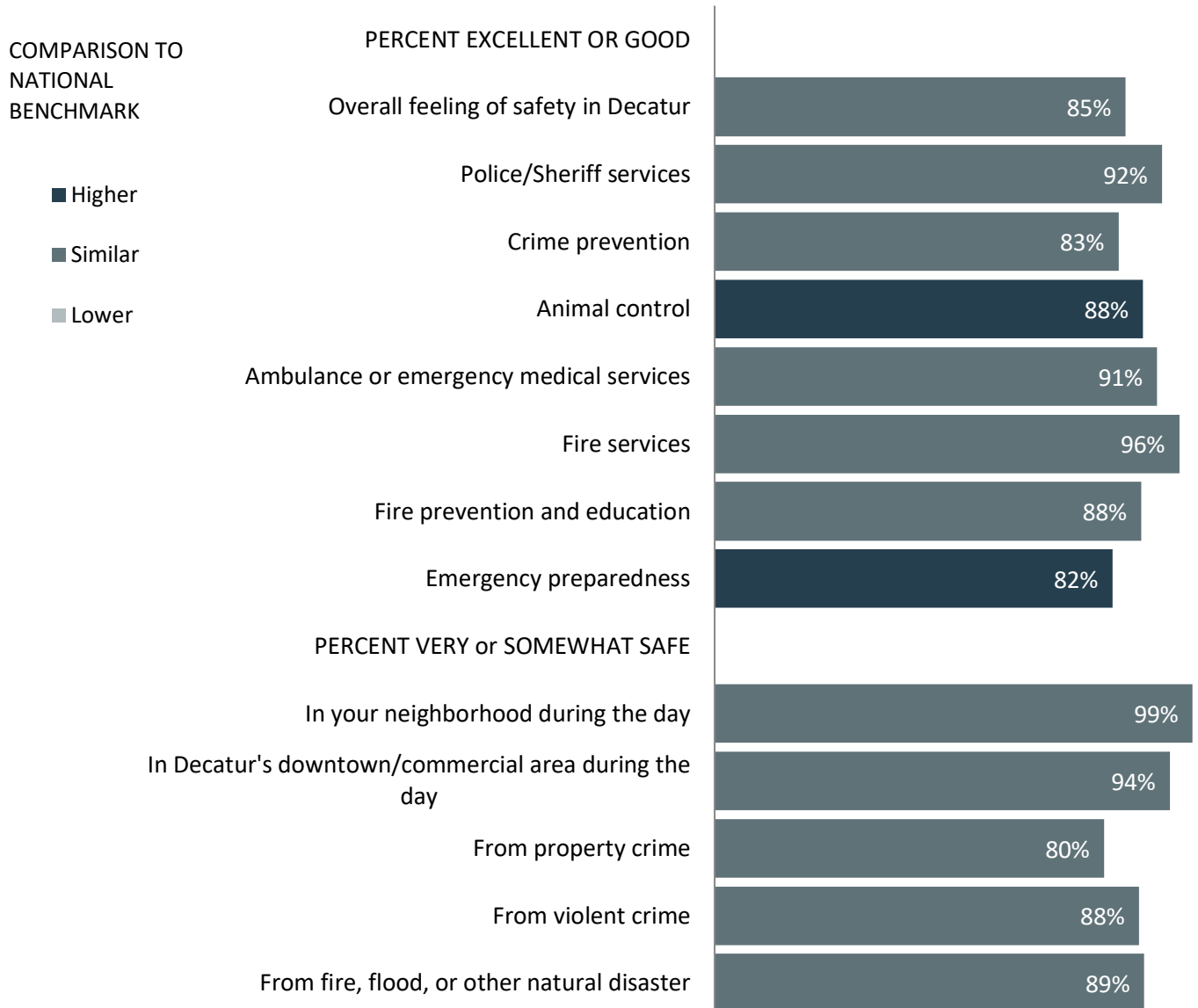


FIGURE 21: SAFETY-RELATED SERVICES - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall feeling of safety in Decatur	↔	↔	85%
Police/Sheriff services	↔	↔	92%
Crime prevention	↔	↔	83%
Animal control	↑	↑	88%
Ambulance or emergency medical services	↔	*	91%
Fire services	↔	↔	96%
Fire prevention and education	↔	↔	88%
Emergency preparedness	↑	↔	82%

FIGURE 22: FEELINGS OF SAFETY- SUMMARY

Percent who feel very or somewhat safe	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
In your neighborhood during the day	↔	↔	99%
In Decatur's downtown/commercial area during the day	↔	↔	94%
From property crime	↔	*	80%
From violent crime	↔	*	88%
From fire, flood, or other natural disaster	↔	*	89%

Legend

↑↑ Much higher ↑ Higher ↔ Similar ↓ Lower ↓↓ Much lower * Not available

Natural Environment

The natural environment plays a vital role in the health and well-being of residents. The natural spaces in which residents live and experience their communities has a direct and profound effect on quality of life.

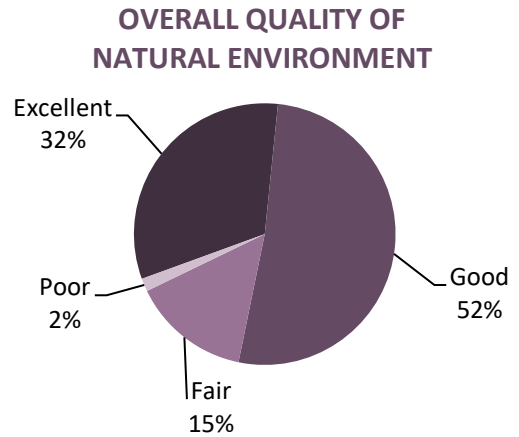


FIGURE 23: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

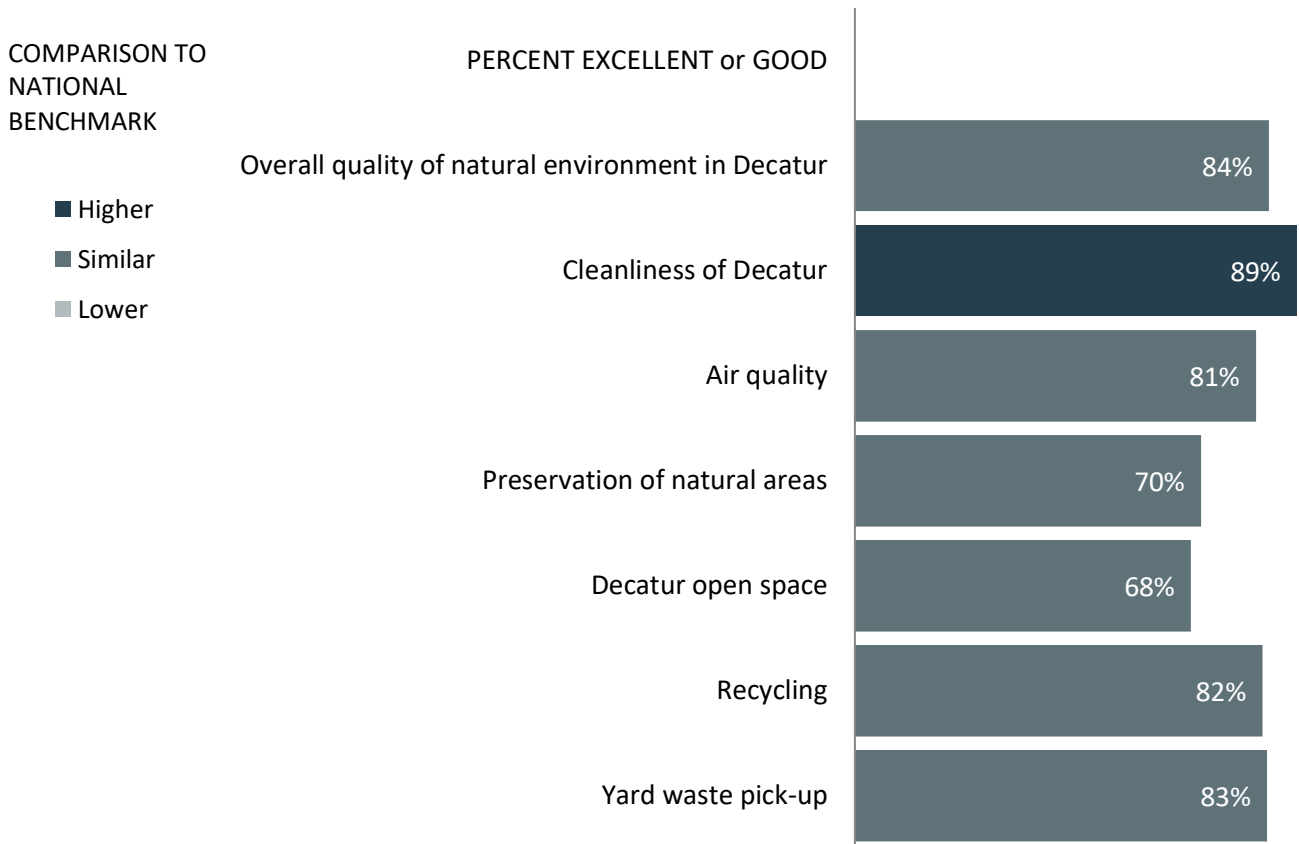


FIGURE 24: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall quality of natural environment in Decatur	↔	↔	84%
Cleanliness of Decatur	↑	↔	89%
Air quality	↔	↔	81%
Preservation of natural areas	↔	↑	70%
Decatur open space	↔	↑	68%
Recycling	↔	↔	82%
Yard waste pick-up	↔	↓	83%

Legend

↑↑ Much higher ↑ Higher ↔ Similar ↓ Lower ↓↓ Much lower * Not available

Parks and Recreation

"There are no communities that pride themselves on their quality of life, promote themselves as a desirable location for businesses to relocate, or maintain that they are environmental stewards of their natural resources, without such communities having a robust, active system of parks and recreation programs for public use and enjoyment." - National Recreation and Park Association

THE OVERALL QUALITY OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

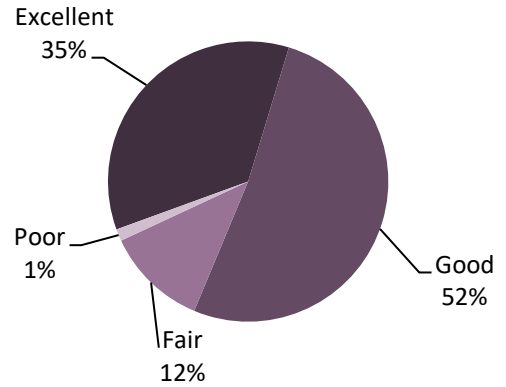


FIGURE 25: PARKS AND RECREATION



FIGURE 26: PARKS AND RECREATION - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities in Decatur	↔	*	87%
Availability of paths and walking trails	↔	↑	75%
City parks	↔	↔	87%
Recreational opportunities	↔	↔	79%
Recreation programs or classes	↑	↔	88%
Recreation centers or facilities	↑	↔	87%
Fitness opportunities	↔	↔	80%

Legend

↑↑ Much higher ↑ Higher ↔ Similar ↓ Lower ↓↓ Much lower * Not available

Health and Wellness

The characteristics of and amenities available in the communities in which people live has a direct impact on the health and wellness of residents, and thus, on their quality of life overall.

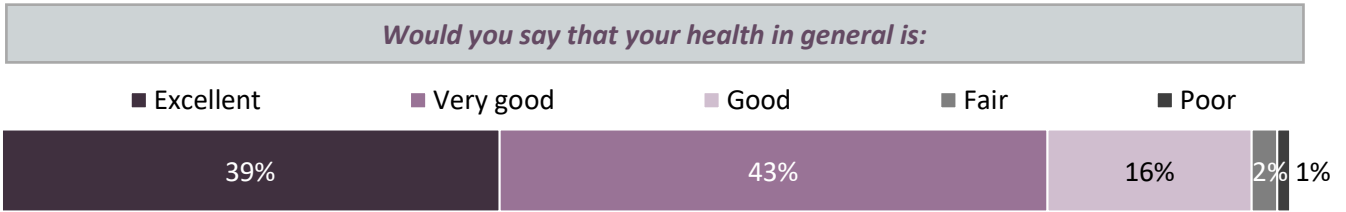
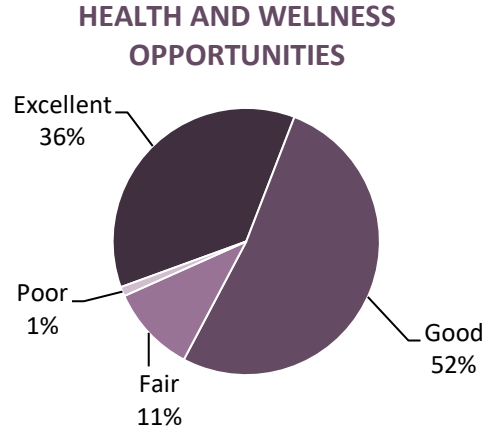


FIGURE 27: HEALTH AND WELLNESS

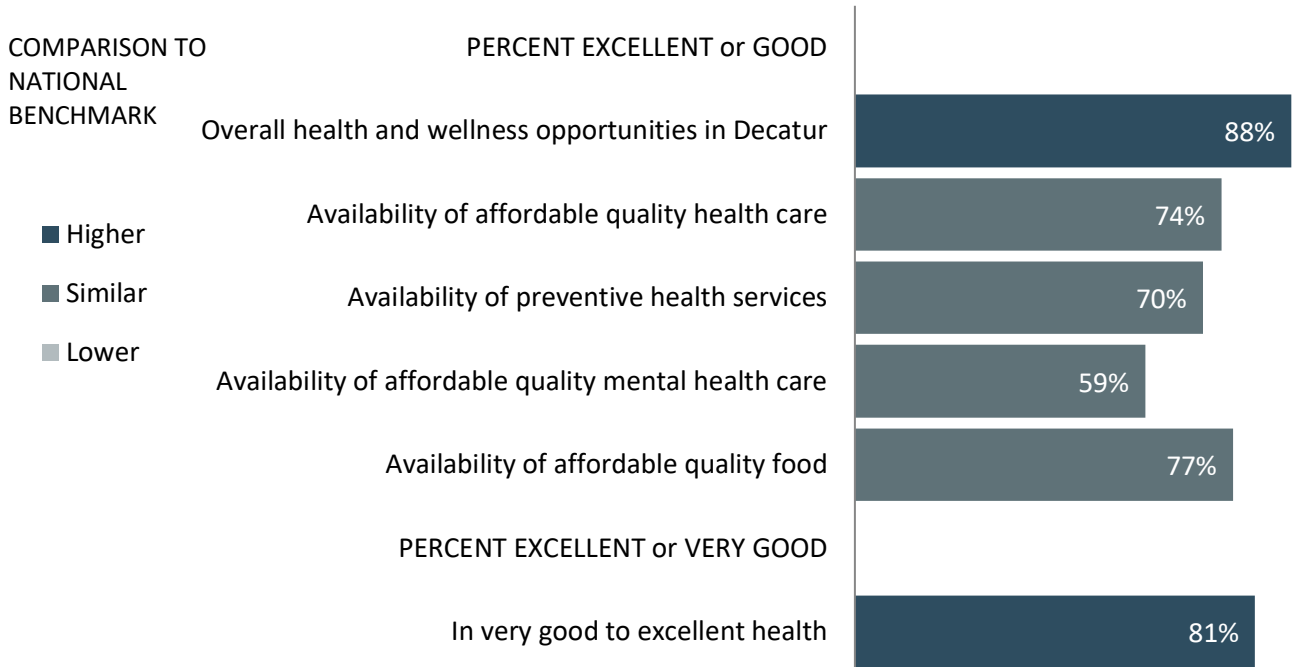


FIGURE 28: HEALTH AND WELLNESS - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Decatur	↑	↔	88%
Availability of affordable quality health care	↔	↔	74%
Availability of preventive health services	↔	↔	70%
Availability of affordable quality mental health care	↔	↔	59%
Availability of affordable quality food	↔	↔	77%
In very good to excellent health	↑	↑	81%

Legend

↑↑ Much higher ↑ Higher ↔ Similar ↓ Lower ↓↓ Much lower * Not available

Education, Arts, and Culture

Participation in the arts, in educational opportunities, and in cultural activities is linked to increased civic engagement, greater social tolerance, and enhanced enjoyment of the local community.

OVERALL OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND THE ARTS

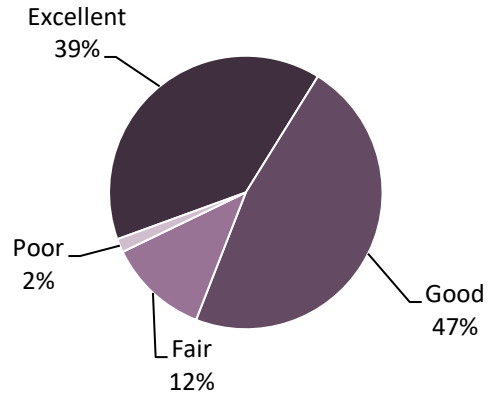


FIGURE 29: EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

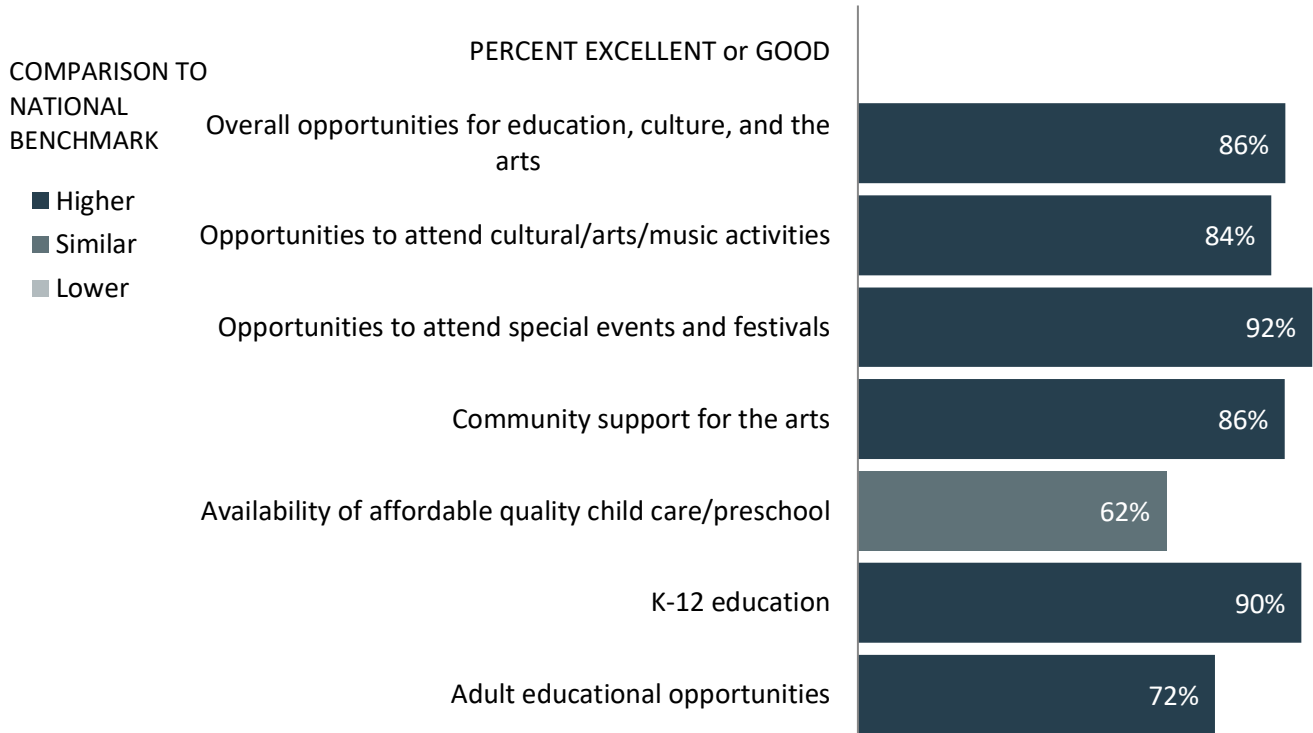


FIGURE 30: EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall opportunities for education, culture and the arts in Decatur	↑	↔	86%
Opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities	↑	↔	84%
Opportunities to attend special events and festivals	↑↑	↔	92%
Community support for the arts	↑↑	*	86%
Public library services	↔	↔	62%
Availability of affordable quality childcare/preschool	↑	↔	90%
K-12 education	↑	↔	72%
Adult educational opportunities	↑	↔	86%

Legend

↑↑ Much higher ↑ Higher ↔ Similar ↓ Lower ↓↓ Much lower * Not available

Inclusivity and Engagement

Inclusivity refers to a cultural and environmental feeling of belonging; residents who feel invited to participate within their communities feel more included, involved, and engaged than those who do not.

RESIDENTS' CONNECTION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH THEIR COMMUNITY

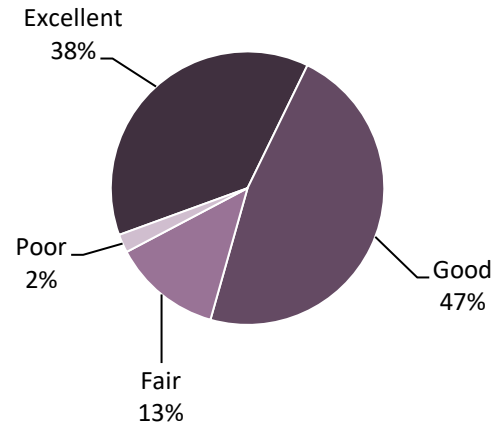


FIGURE 31: INCLUSIVITY & ENGAGEMENT

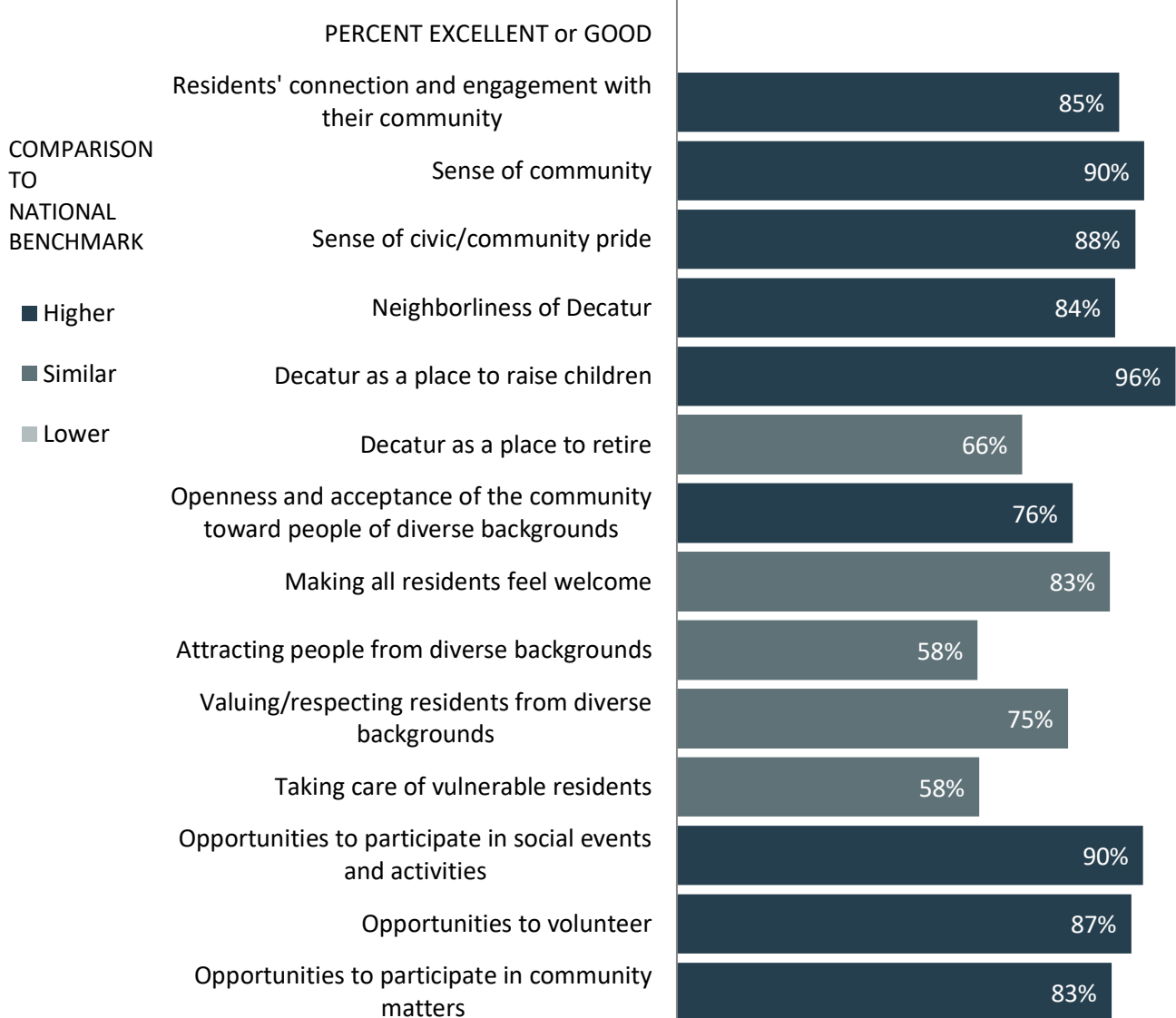


FIGURE 32: INCLUSIVITY & ENGAGEMENT - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	↑↑	*	85%
Sense of community	↑↑	↔	90%
Sense of civic/community pride	↑	*	88%
Neighborliness of residents in Decatur	↑	↔	84%
Decatur as a place to raise children	↑	↔	96%
Decatur as a place to retire	↔	↔	66%
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	↑	↔	76%
Making all residents feel welcome	↔	*	83%
Attracting people from diverse backgrounds	↔	*	58%
Valuing/respecting residents from diverse backgrounds	↔	*	75%
Taking care of vulnerable residents	↔	*	58%
Opportunities to participate in social events and activities	↑	↔	90%
Opportunities to volunteer	↑	↔	87%
Opportunities to participate in community matters	↑	↔	83%

Legend

↑↑ Much higher ↑ Higher ↔ Similar ↓ Lower ↓↓ Much lower * Not available

FIGURE 33: RESIDENTS' PARTICIPATION LEVELS

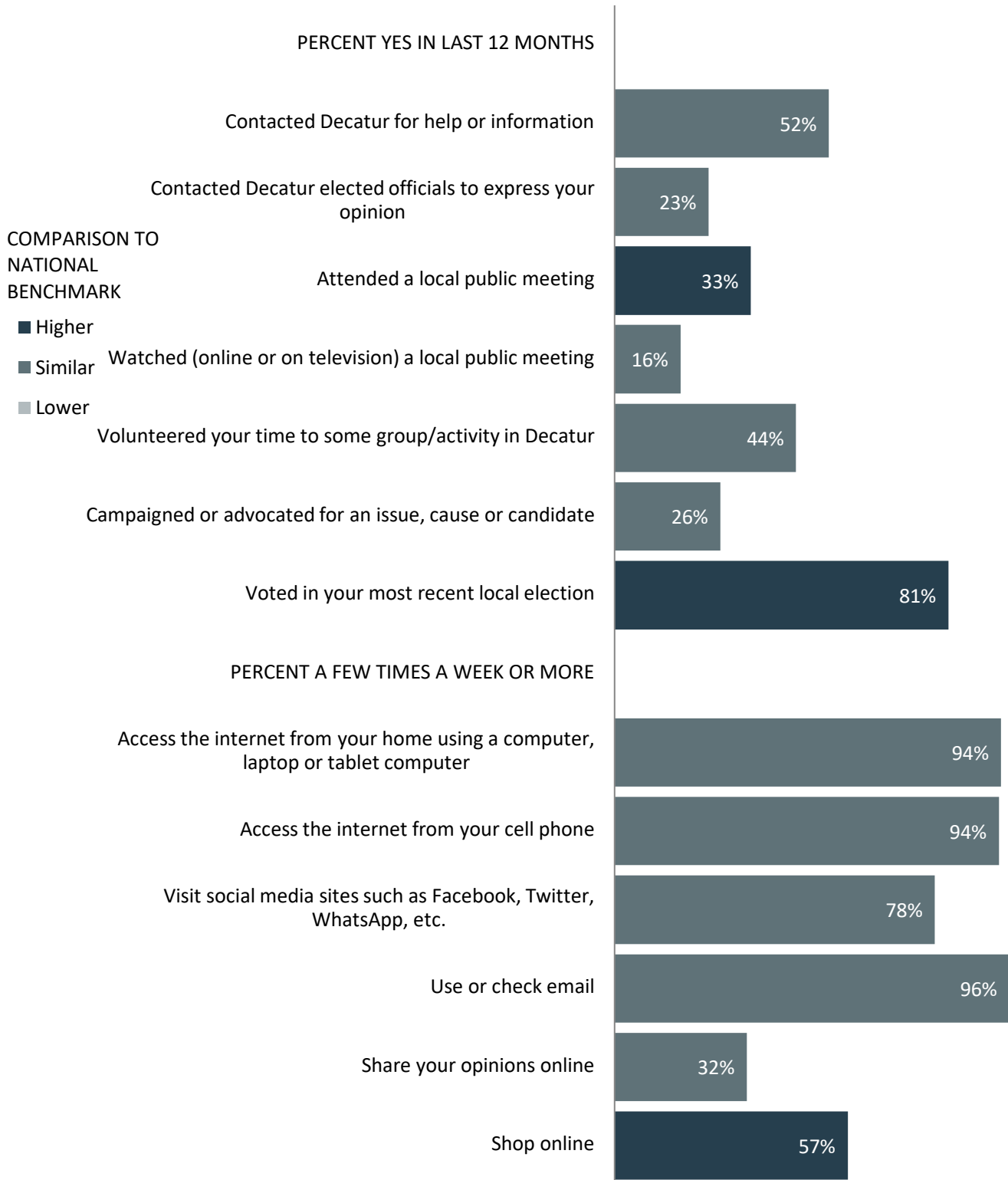


FIGURE 34: RESIDENTS’ PARTICIPATION IN LAST 12 MONTHS- SUMMARY

Percent who had done each in last 12 months	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Contacted the City of Decatur for help or information	↔	↔	52%
Contacted Decatur elected officials to express your opinion	↔	↔	23%
Attended a local public meeting	↑	↔	33%
Watched (online or on television) a local public meeting	↔	↔	16%
Volunteered your time to some group/activity in Decatur	↔	↔	44%
Campaigned or advocated for a local issue, cause or candidate	↔	↓	26%
Voted in your most recent local election	↑	*	81%

FIGURE 35: RESIDENTS’ GENERAL USE OF TECHNOLOGY- SUMMARY

Percent who report doing each at least a few times a week	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Access the internet from your home using a computer, laptop or tablet computer	↔	*	94%
Access the internet from your cell phone	↔	*	94%
Visit social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.	↔	*	78%
Use or check email	↔	*	96%
Share your opinions online	↔	*	32%
Shop online	↑	*	57%

Legend

↑↑ Much higher ↑ Higher ↔ Similar ↓ Lower ↓↓ Much lower * Not available

Special Topics

FIGURE 36: IMPORTANCE OF ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

How important, if at all, do you think it is for the City of Decatur to do each of the following?

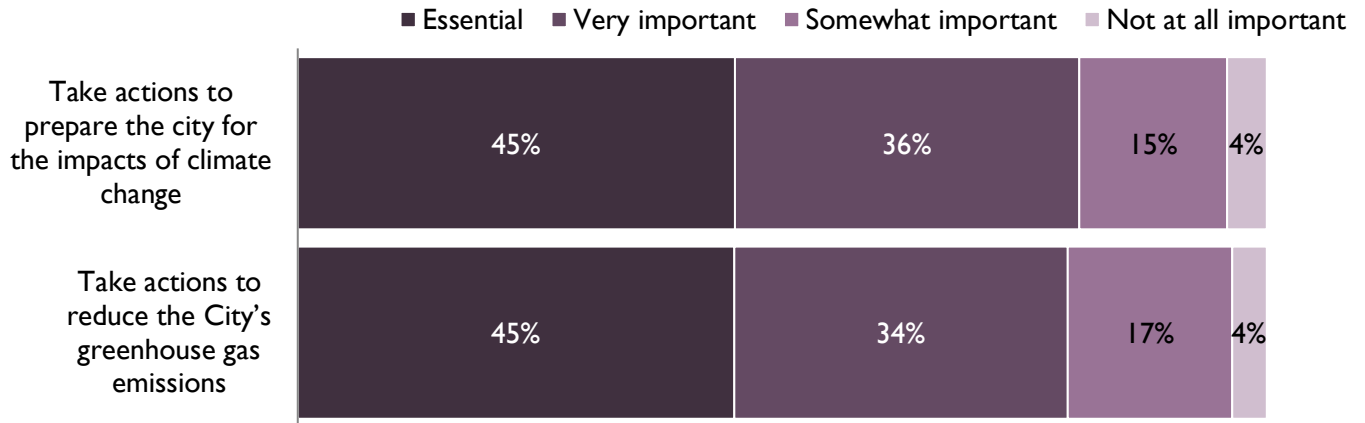


FIGURE 37: SUPPORT FOR TAKING ACTIONS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

How much would you support or oppose the City of Decatur taking each of the following actions?

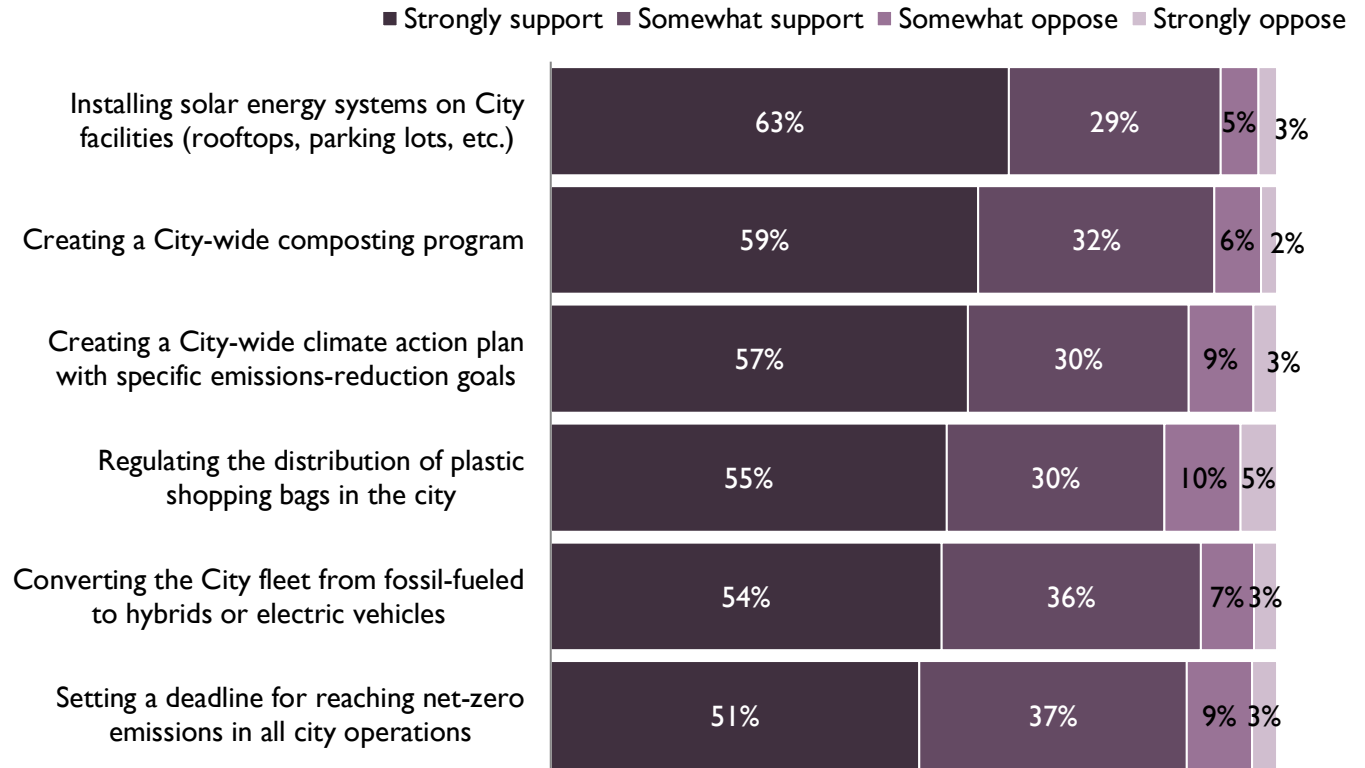


FIGURE 38: HOUSEHOLD COMPOSTING

Please select the statement that most closely represents your activities around composting:

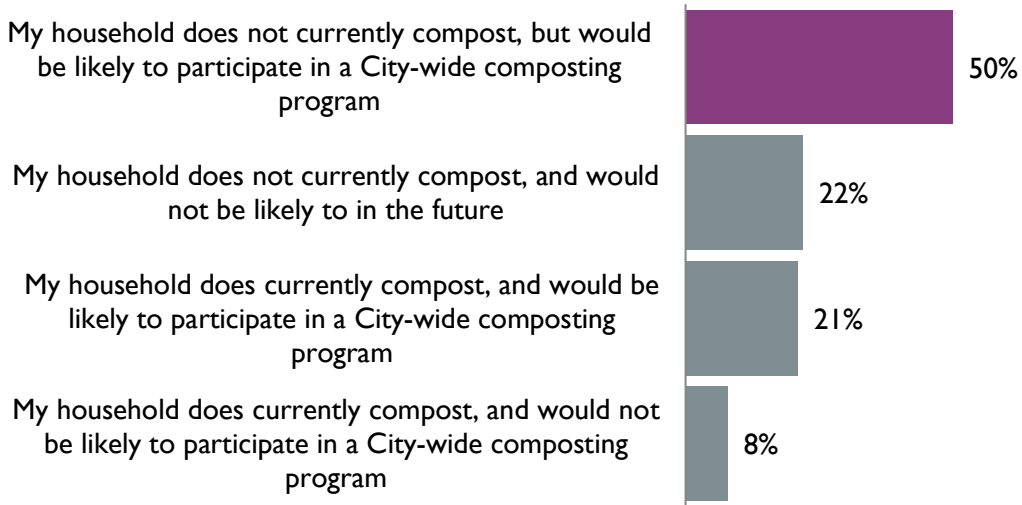


FIGURE 39: RE-ZONING RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Currently, 91% of residential-zoned land in the City of Decatur allows only for detached single-family homes. The City is considering re-zoning to allow duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes and cottage courts. The goal of re-zoning would be to promote economic diversity, while still maintaining design and development standards. How much would you support or oppose re-zoning of residential areas to allow for duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, and cottage courts?

