



Appendix F

CITIZEN SURVEY RESULTS

Budget FY 2023-2024

Decatur, GA

The National Community Survey

Report of Results
2022

Report by:



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About The NCS™

The National Community Survey™ (The NCS™) report is about the “livability” of Decatur. A livable community is 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. The survey was developed by the experts from National Research Center at Polco.

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 and Engagement

The report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 573 residents of the City of Decatur collected from March 21, 2022 to May 9, 2022. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% for all respondents and the response rate for the 2022 survey was 21%. Survey results were weighted so that the demographic profile of respondents was representative of the demographic profile of adults in Decatur.



How the results are reported

For the most part, the percentages presented in the following tabs represent the “percent positive.” Most commonly, the percent positive is the combination of the top two most positive response options (i.e., excellent/good, very safe/somewhat safe, etc.). On many of the questions in the survey respondents may answer “don’t know.” The proportion of respondents giving this reply is shown in the full set of responses included in the tab “Complete data.” However, these responses have been removed from the analyses presented in most of the tabs. In other words, the tables and graphs display the responses from respondents who had an opinion about a specific item.

Comparisons to benchmarks

NRC’s database of comparative resident opinion is comprised of resident perspectives gathered in surveys from over 600 communities whose residents evaluated the same kinds of topics on The National Community Survey. The comparison evaluations are from the most recent survey completed in each community in the last five years. NRC adds the latest results quickly upon survey completion, keeping the benchmark data fresh and relevant. The communities in the database represent a wide geographic and population range. In each tab, Decatur’s results are noted as being “higher” than the benchmark, “lower” than the benchmark, or “similar” to the benchmark, meaning that the average rating given by Decatur residents is statistically similar to or different (greater or lesser) than the benchmark. Being rated as “higher” or “lower” than the benchmark means that Decatur’s average rating for a particular item was more than 10 points different than the benchmark. If a rating was “much higher” or “much lower,” then Decatur’s average rating was more than 20 points different when compared to the benchmark.

The survey was administered during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time of challenge for many local governments. While we provide comparisons to national benchmarks, it is important to note that much of the benchmark data was collected prior to the pandemic. This may impact how your City’s 2022 ratings compare to other communities’ ratings from the past five years.

Trends over time

Trend data for Decatur represent important comparison data and should be examined for improvements or declines*. Deviations from stable trends over time represent opportunities for understanding how local policies, programs, or public information may have affected residents' opinions. Changes between survey years have been noted with an arrow and the percent difference. If the difference is greater than 6 percentage points between the 2020 and 2022 surveys, the change is statistically significant.

* In 2020, The NCS survey was updated to include new and refreshed items. Consequently, some of the trends may be impacted due to wording modifications that could have potentially altered the meaning of the item for the respondent.

Methods

Selecting survey recipients

All households within the City of Decatur were eligible to participate in the survey. A list of all households within the zip codes serving Decatur was purchased from Go-Dog Direct based on updated listings from the United States Postal Service. Since some of the zip codes that serve the City of Decatur households may also serve addresses that lie outside of the community, the exact geographic location of each housing unit was compared to community boundaries using the most current municipal boundary file. Addresses located outside of the City of Decatur boundaries were removed from the list of potential households to survey. Each address identified as being within city boundaries was further identified as being within one of the two districts. From that list, addresses were randomly selected as survey recipients, with multi-family housing units (defined as those with a unit number) sampled at a rate of 5:3 compared to single family housing units.

An individual within each household was selected using the birthday method. The birthday method selects a person within the household by asking the “person whose birthday has most recently passed” to complete the questionnaire. The underlying assumption in this method is that day of birth has no relationship to the way people respond to surveys. This instruction was contained in the introduction of the survey.

Conducting the survey

The 2,800 randomly selected households received mailings beginning on March 21, 2021 and the survey remained open for 7 weeks. The first mailing was a postcard inviting the household to participate in the survey. The next mailing contained a cover letter with instructions, the survey questionnaire, and a postage-paid return envelope. All mailings included a web link to give residents the opportunity to respond to the survey online. All follow-up mailings asked those who had not completed the survey to do so and those who had already done so to refrain from completing the survey again.

About 3% of the 2800 mailed invitations or surveys were returned because the household address was vacant or the postal service was unable to deliver the survey as addressed. Of the remaining 2721 households that received the invitations to participate, 573 completed the survey, providing an overall response rate of 21%. The response rate was calculated using AAPOR’s response rate #2* for mailed surveys of unnamed persons.

It is customary to describe the precision of estimates made from surveys by a “level of confidence” and accompanying “confidence interval” (or margin of error). A traditional level of confidence, and the one used here, is 95%. The 95% confidence interval can be any size and quantifies the sampling error or imprecision of the survey results because some residents’ opinions are relied on to estimate all residents’ opinions. The margin of error for the City of Decatur survey is no greater than plus or minus 4 percentage points around any given percent reported for all respondents (573 completed surveys).

In addition to the randomly selected “probability sample” of households, a link to an online open participation survey was publicized by the City of Decatur. The open participation survey was identical to the probability sample survey with two small updates; it included a map at the beginning asking where the respondent lives and a question about where they heard about the survey. The open participation survey was open to all city residents and became available on April 25, 2022. The survey remained open for 2 weeks. The data presented in the following tabs exclude the open participation survey data, but a tab at the end provides the complete frequency of responses to questions by the open participation respondents.

Analyzing the data

Responses from mailed surveys were entered into an electronic dataset using a “key and verify” method, where all responses are entered twice and compared to each other. Any discrepancies were resolved in comparison to the original survey form. Range checks as well as other forms of quality control were also performed. Responses from surveys completed on Polco were downloaded and merged with the mailed survey responses.

The demographics of the survey respondents were compared to those found in the 2010 Census and 2019 American Community Survey estimates for adults in the City of Decatur. The primary objective of weighting survey data is to make the survey respondents reflective of the larger population of the community. The characteristics used for weighting were age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, housing type, housing tenure, and area. No adjustments were made for design effects. Weights were calculated using an iterative, multiplicative raking model known as the ANES Weighting Algorithm.* The results of the weighting scheme for the probability sample are presented in the following table.

NRC aligns demographic labels with those used by the U.S. Census for reporting purposes, when possible. Some categories (e.g., age, race/Hispanic origin, housing type, and length of residency) are combined into smaller subgroups.

		Unweighted	Weighted	Target*
Age	18-34	8%	22%	22%
	35-54	42%	46%	46%
	55+	50%	32%	31%
Area	District 1	64%	57%	57%
	District 2	36%	43%	43%
Hispanic origin	No, not Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino	96%	96%	96%
	Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino	4%	4%	4%
Housing tenure	Own	83%	66%	66%
	Rent	17%	34%	34%
Housing type	Attached	38%	47%	47%
	Detached	62%	53%	53%
Race & Hispanic origin	Not white alone	21%	30%	30%
	White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	79%	70%	70%
Sex	Female	61%	59%	59%
	Male	39%	41%	41%
Sex/age	Female 18-34	5%	16%	16%
	Female 35-54	26%	25%	25%
	Female 55+	30%	18%	18%
	Male 18-34	3%	6%	6%
	Male 35-54	16%	21%	21%
	Male 55+	20%	13%	13%

The survey datasets were analyzed using all or some of a combination of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), R, Python and Tableau. For the most part, the percentages presented in the reports represent the “percent positive.” The percent positive is the combination of the top two most positive response options (i.e., excellent/good, very safe/somewhat safe, essential/very important, etc.), or, in the case of resident behaviors/participation, the percent positive represents the proportion of respondents indicating “yes” or participating in an activity at least once a month.

On many of the questions in the survey respondents may answer “don’t know.” The proportion of respondents giving this reply is shown in the full set of responses included in the tab “Complete data”. However, these responses have been removed from the analyses presented in the reports. In other words, the tables and graphs display the responses from respondents who had an opinion about a specific item.

Contact

The City of Decatur funded this research. Please contact Meredith Roark of the City of Decatur at Meredith.Roark@decaturga.com if you have any questions about the survey.

Survey Validity

See the Polco Knowledge Base article on survey validity at <https://info.polco.us/knowledge/statistical-vali>

* See AAPOR’s Standard Definitions for more information at

<https://www.aapor.org/Publications-Media/AAPOR-Journals/Standard-Definitions.aspx>

* Pasek, J. (2010). ANES Weighting Algorithm. Retrieved from

<https://web.stanford.edu/group/iriss/cgi-bin/anesrake/resources/RakingDescription.pdf>

* Targets come from the 2010 Census and 2019 American Community Survey

Highlights

Decatur residents continue to experience a high quality of life.

All items relating to the quality of life in Decatur received high marks and were largely similar to the previous iteration of The NCS. About 9 in 10 survey participants gave positive ratings to Decatur as a place to live, the overall quality of life in the city, and the overall image or reputation of Decatur. These were all higher than the national comparisons. A strong majority of residents reported that they would recommend living in Decatur to someone who asks (94% very or somewhat likely) and also planned to remain in Decatur for the next five years (84%). Both of these were similar to ratings given in comparison communities nationwide; however, the proportion of respondents who planned to remain in Decatur for the next five years declined slightly since the previous survey, dropping from 93% to 84%.

Residents report widespread use of alternate forms of transportation, while other areas of mobility present opportunities for growth.

Decatur residents show continued support and use of alternate forms of transportation in the city. This is highlighted by strong evaluations of the ease of walking in Decatur, rated positively by 90% of residents, which was higher than the national benchmark. About 6 in 10 gave excellent or good marks to the ease of travel by bicycle, on par with peer comparison communities. A similarly high proportion approved of the ease of travel by public transportation (58%) and favorably reviewed the city's bus or transit services (70%), both of which exceeded the national averages. These positive ratings aligned with the demonstrated use of these alternate modes of transportation. Nearly 9 in 10 residents indicated they had walked or biked instead of driving in the past 12 months, and around 6 in 10 reported using public transportation. Each of these was much higher than other communities across the nation. Additionally, about half of residents had also carpooled with others instead of driving alone, which was also higher than the benchmark.

Other aspects of mobility in Decatur received mixed reviews. Nearly half of residents approved of the ease of travel by car, which held steady from previous survey results but was lower than in comparison communities. Evaluations of traffic signal timing (49% excellent or good) and traffic flow on major streets (39%) both increased over the 2020 survey and were on par with national benchmarks, while the ease of public parking also improved since 2020 but remained lower than the national average (with 35% excellent or good ratings).

The economy in Decatur remains strong, despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The economy is a bright spot for Decatur, with a number of items in this facet receiving higher ratings than the national benchmark comparisons. Residents gave above-average evaluations to Decatur as a place to work (82% excellent or good) and as a place to visit (89%). The overall quality of business and service establishments (90%), the vibrancy of the city's downtown and commercial area (86%), and the variety of business and service establishments in Decatur (78%) also surpassed ratings given in comparison communities across the nation. Two-thirds of residents approved of shopping opportunities in the city, and at least half felt favorably about Decatur's employment opportunities, both of which were on par with the benchmarks. Although the cost of living remains a potential area of focus, with only 21% positive ratings, results indicate that residents were generally more optimistic about the economy's effect on their own finances. When asked what impact the economy would likely have on their family income in the next six months, 28% of respondents anticipated a very or somewhat positive impact this year, rebounding from a brief but steep decline in 2020.

Residents raise concerns about community design and housing.

Survey items within the facet of community design received mixed results, with a few aspects declining since the 2020 survey iteration. The highest-rated areas included residents' evaluations of their neighborhood as a place to live (95% excellent or good, higher than national benchmarks), the overall appearance of Decatur (85%, similar to comparison communities), and public places where people want to spend time (82%, also higher than average). Aside from these, however, many other areas received less support from respondents. Well-planned commercial growth, well-planned residential growth, and quality of new development garnered positive scores from roughly half of residents, and ratings for both the quality of new development and well-planned residential growth decreased since the previous survey results. Land use, planning and zoning, and code enforcement also received similar ratings and experienced notable declines from the 2020 iteration of The NCS. Consistent with resident views toward the cost of living, about 40% felt favorably about the variety of housing options in the city. In addition, only 15% offered excellent or good ratings for the availability of affordable quality housing, which was lower than the national average.

Decatur residents feel a strong sense of community.

Decatur received high marks on nearly all survey items related to community engagement, indicating that this is a strength for the city. Nearly 9 in 10 positively evaluated the sense of civic/community pride and opportunities to volunteer in Decatur. About 8 in 10 gave excellent or good ratings to the neighborliness of residents, opportunities to participate in social events and activities, opportunities to participate in community matters, openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds, sense of community, and residents' connection and engagement with their community. Although the sense of community experienced a slight decline from 2020, this item was still reviewed favorably by a strong majority of residents (79%). All of these aspects of community engagement were rated higher than the national benchmarks.

Facets of livability

Resident perceptions of quality and importance for each of the facets of community livability provide an overview of community strengths and challenges that are useful for planning, budgeting and performance evaluation.

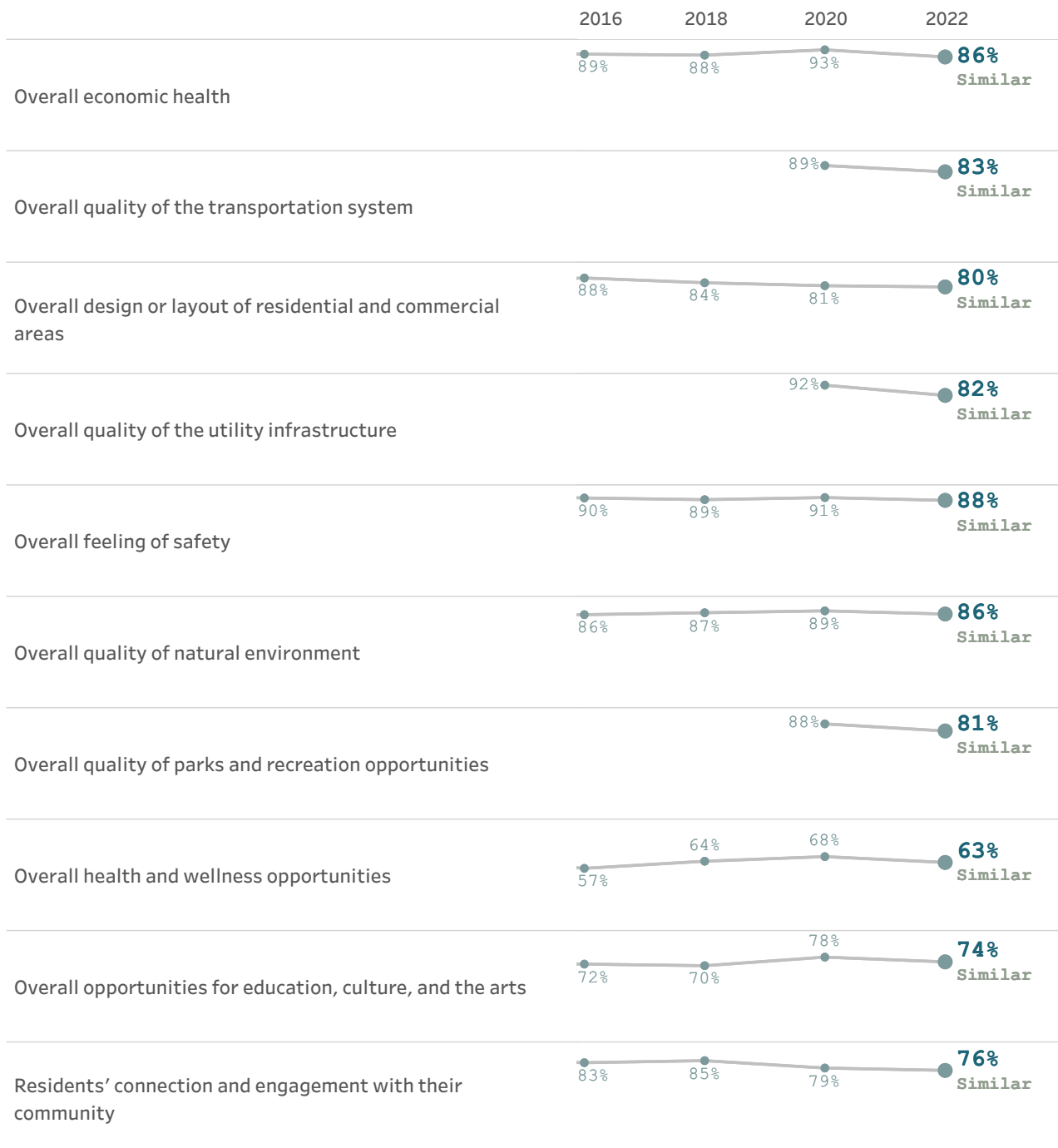
The charts below show the proportion of residents who rated the community facets positively for quality and the priority (importance) placed on each. Also displayed is whether local ratings were lower, similar, or higher than communities across the country (the national benchmark).

Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Decatur as a whole.
(% excellent or good)



Please rate how important, if at all, you think it is for the Decatur community to focus on each of the following in the coming two years.

(% essential or very important)



* Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

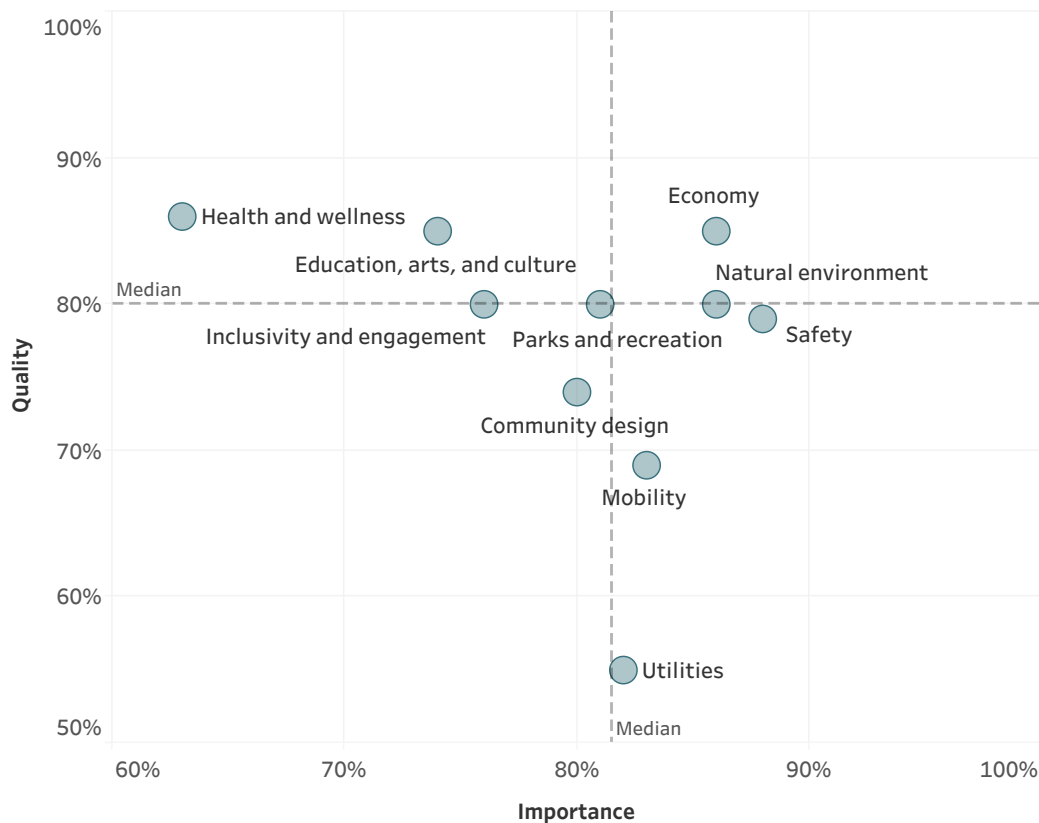
Balancing performance and importance

Every jurisdiction must balance limited resources while meeting resident needs and striving to optimize community livability. To this end, it is helpful to know what aspects of the community are most important to residents and which they perceive as being of higher or lower quality. It is especially helpful to know when a facet of livability is considered of high importance but rated as lower quality, as this should be a top priority to address.

To help guide City staff and officials with decisions on future resource allocation, resident ratings of the importance of services were compared to their ratings of the quality of these services. To identify the services perceived by residents to have relatively lower quality at the same time as relatively higher importance, all services were ranked from highest perceived quality to lowest perceived quality and from highest perceived importance to lowest perceived importance. Some services were in the top half of both lists (higher quality and higher importance); some were in the top half of one list but the bottom half of the other (higher quality and lower importance or lower quality and higher importance); and some services were in the bottom half of both lists.

Services receiving quality ratings of excellent or good by 80% or more of respondents were considered of “higher quality” and those with ratings lower than 80% were considered to be of “lower quality.” Services were classified as “more important” if they were rated as essential or very important by 82% or more of respondents. Services were rated as “less important” if they received a rating of less than 82%. This classification uses the median ratings for quality and importance to divide the services in half.

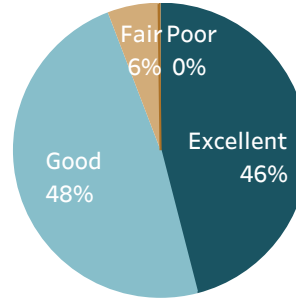
The quadrants in the figure below show which community facets were given higher or lower importance ratings (right-left) and which had higher or lower quality ratings (up-down). Facets of livability falling closer to a diagonal line from the lower left to the upper right are those where performance ratings are more commensurate with resident priorities. Facets scoring closest to the lower right hand corner of the matrix (higher in importance and lower in quality) are those that may warrant further investigation to see if changes to their delivery are necessary to improve their performance. This is the key part of this chart on which to focus. Facets falling in the top left hand corner of the chart (lower in importance but higher in quality) are areas where performance may outscore resident priorities, and may be a consideration for lower resource allocation.



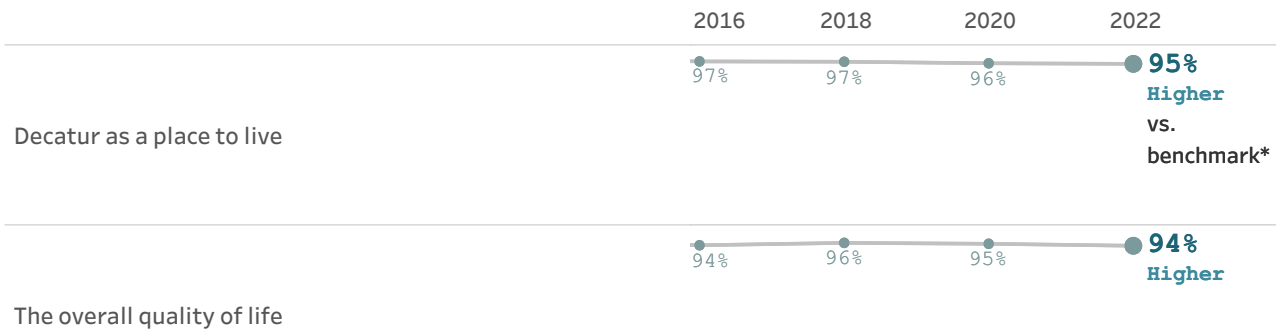
Quality of life

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.

The overall quality of life in Decatur, 2022



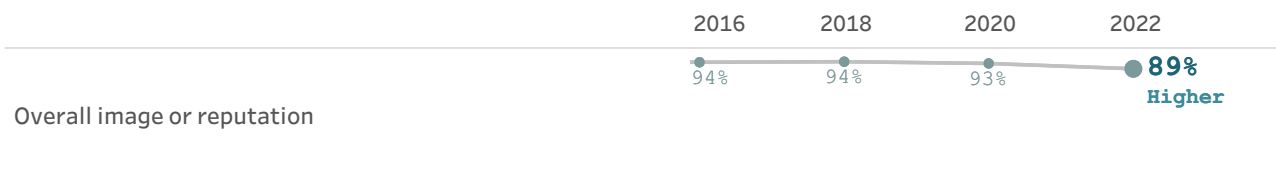
Please rate each of the following aspects of quality of life in Decatur.
(% excellent or good)



Please indicate how likely or unlikely you are to do each of the following.
(% very or somewhat likely)



Please rate each of the following in the Decatur community.
(% excellent or good)

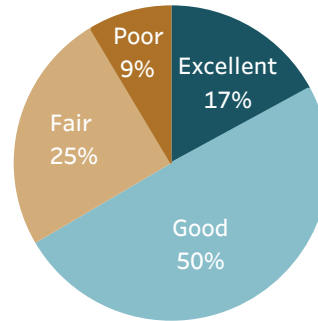


* Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

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.

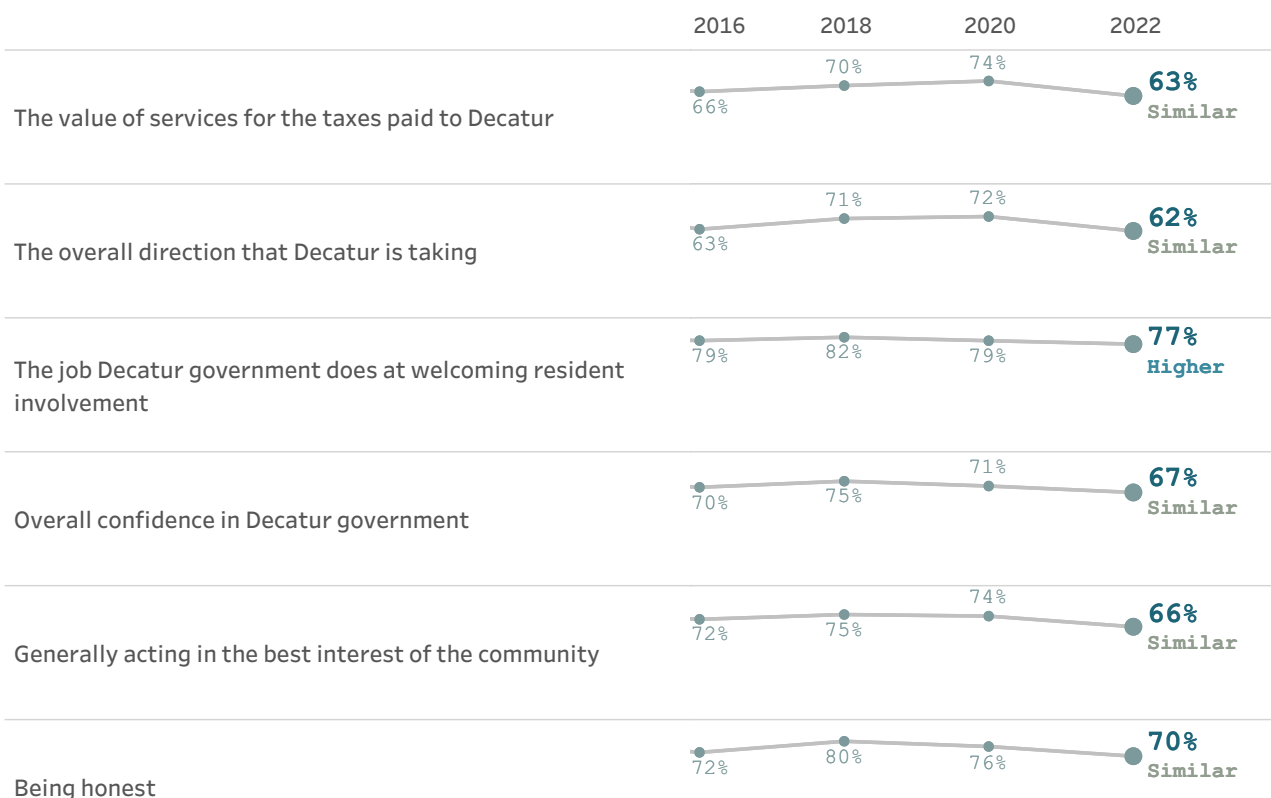
Overall confidence in Decatur government, 2022

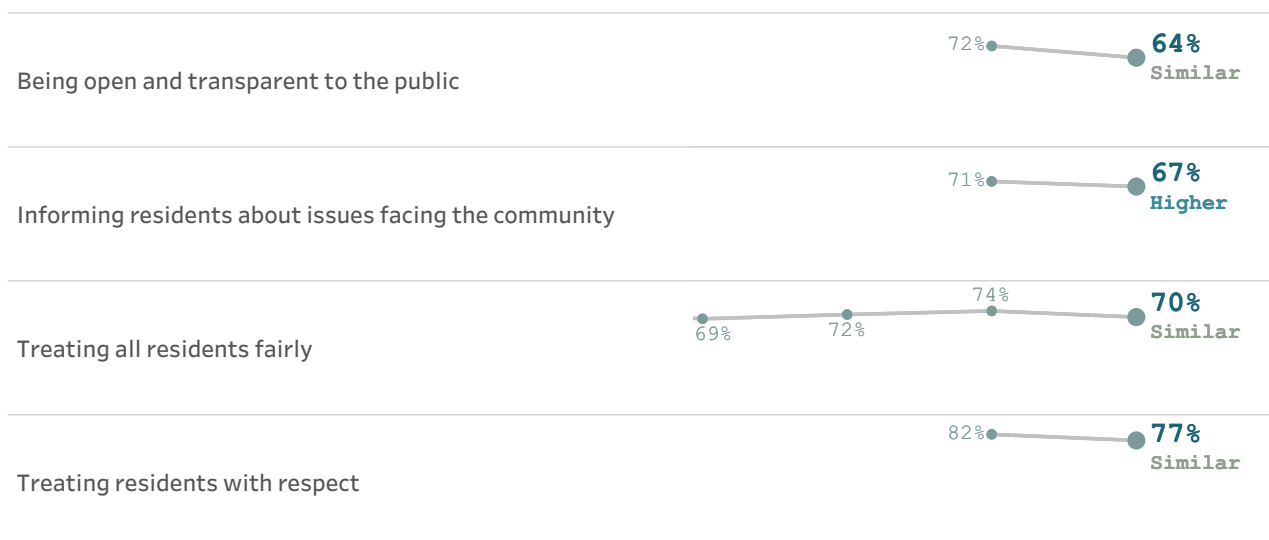


Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Decatur.
(% excellent or good)

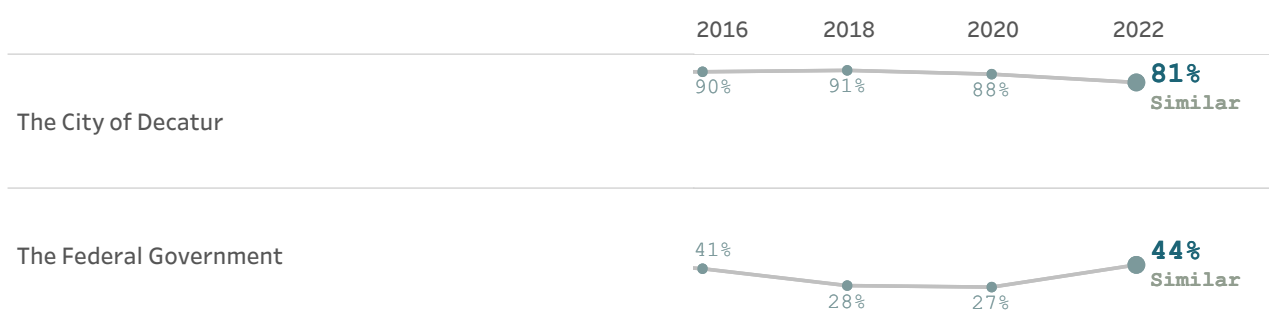


Please rate the following categories of Decatur government performance.
(% excellent or good)





Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by each of the following?
 (% excellent or good)

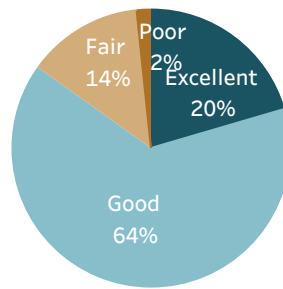


* Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

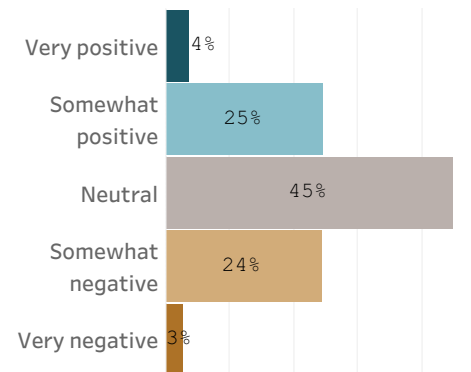
Economy

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.

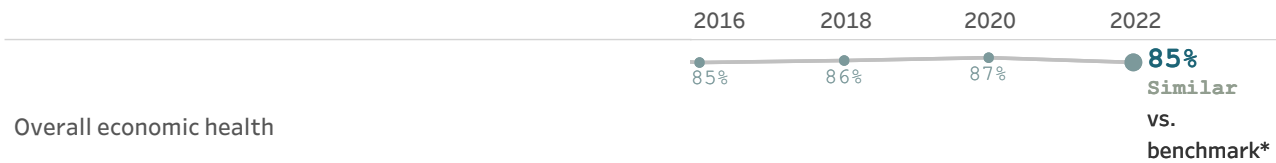
Overall economic health of Decatur, 2022



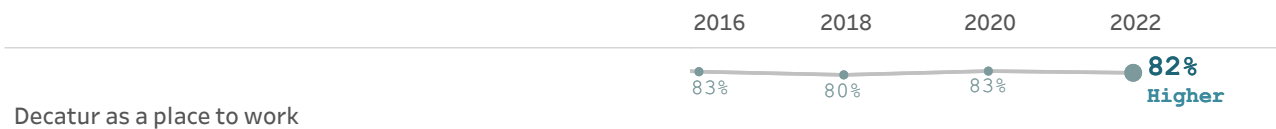
What impact, if any, do you think the economy will have on your family income in the next 6 months? Do you think the impact will be:



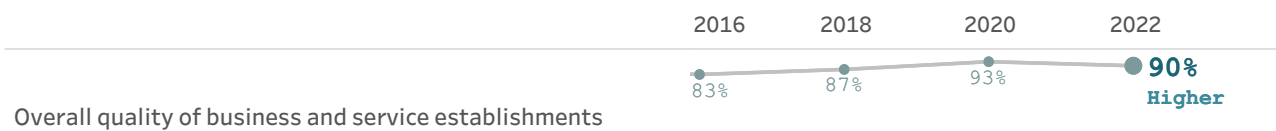
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Decatur as a whole.
(% excellent or good)

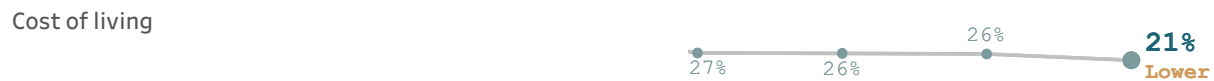


Please rate each of the following aspects of quality of life in Decatur.
(% excellent or good)

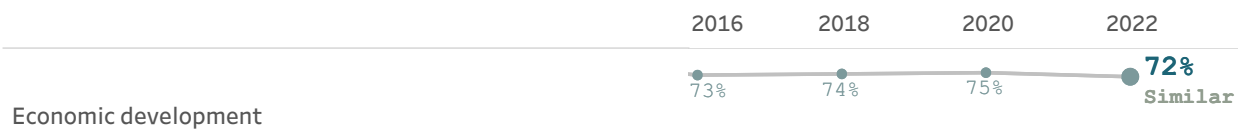


Please rate each of the following in the Decatur community.
(% excellent or good)





Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Decatur.
(% excellent or good)



What impact, if any, do you think the economy will have on your family income in the next 6 months? Do you think the impact will be:
(% very or somewhat positive)

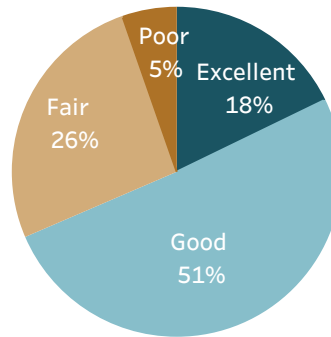


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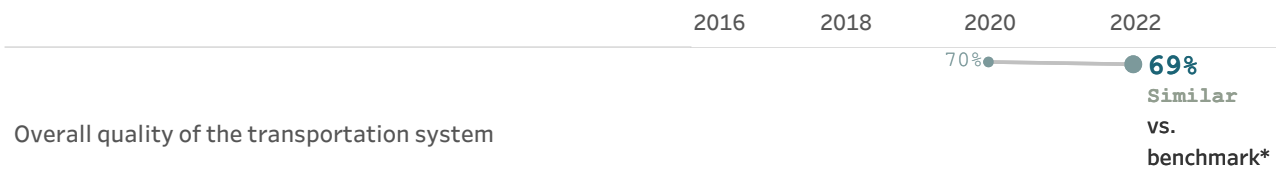
Mobility

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.

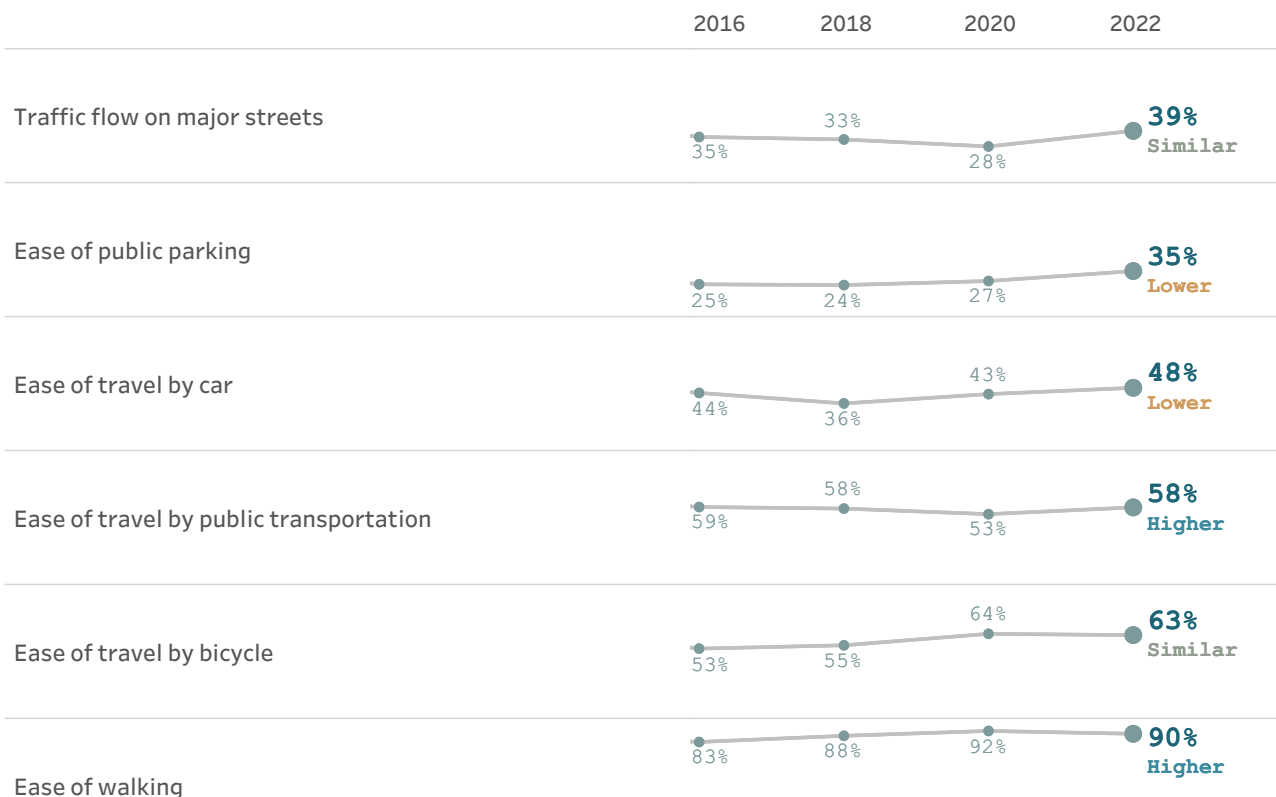
Overall quality of the transportation system in Decatur, 2022



Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Decatur as a whole.
(% excellent or good)

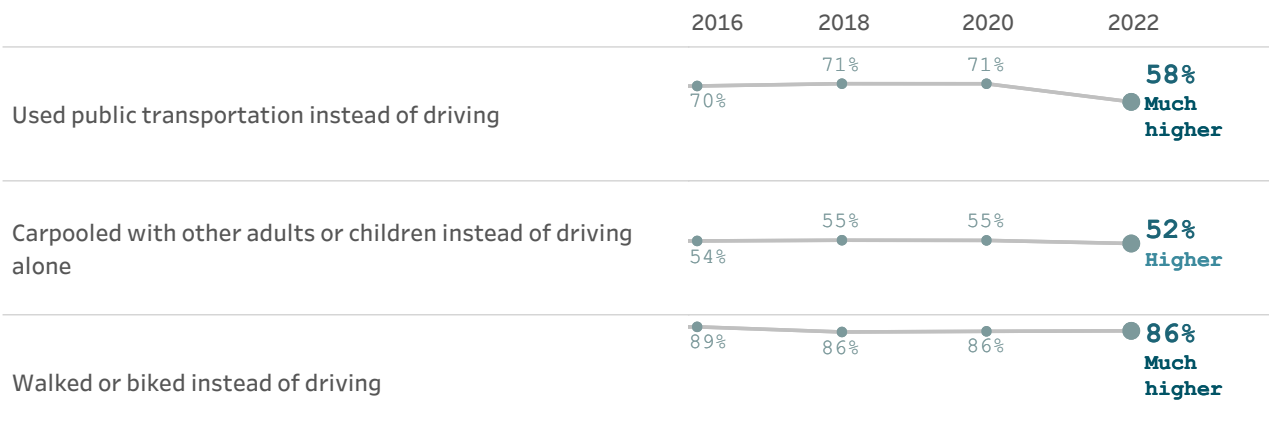


Please also rate each of the following in the Decatur community.
(% excellent or good)



Please indicate whether or not you have done each of the following in the last 12 months.

(% yes)



Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Decatur.

(% excellent or good)

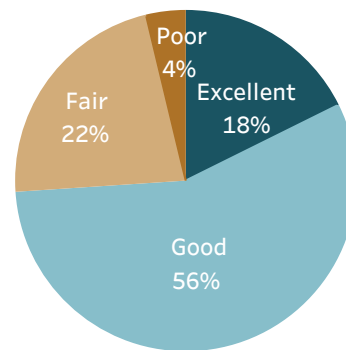


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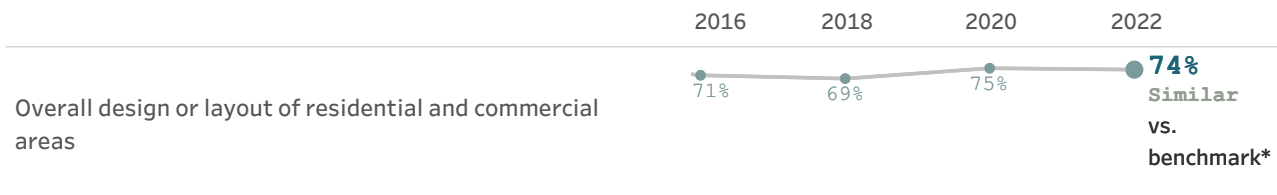
Community design

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.

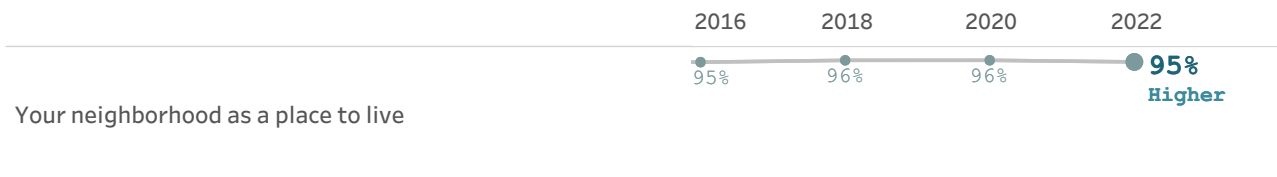
Overall design or layout of Decatur's residential and commercial areas, 2022



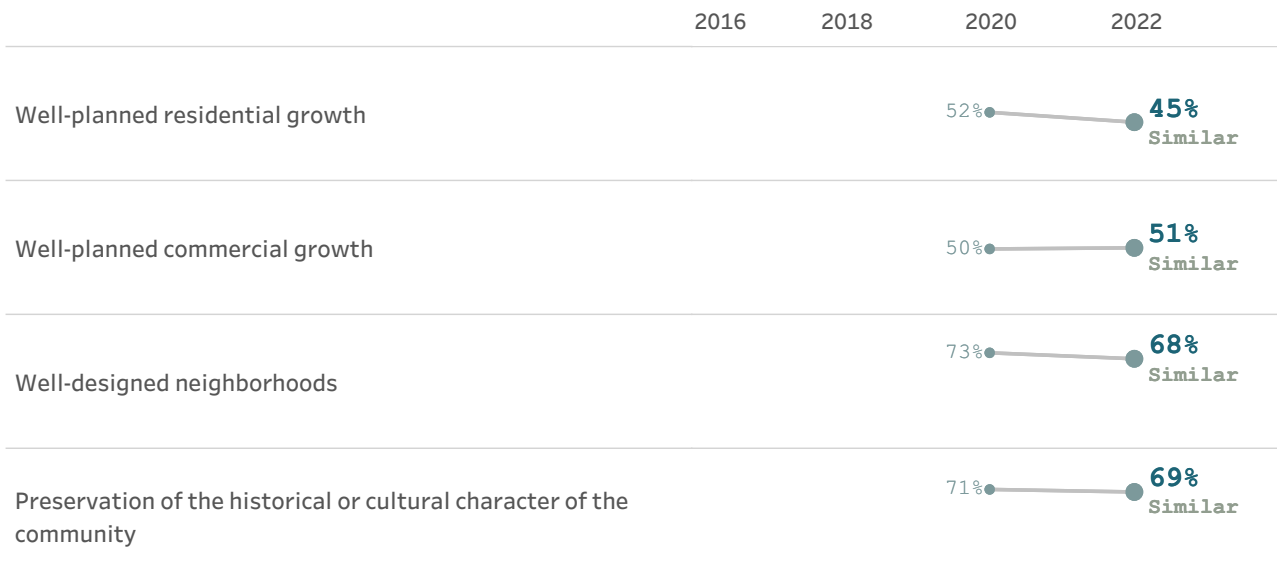
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Decatur as a whole.
(% excellent or good)

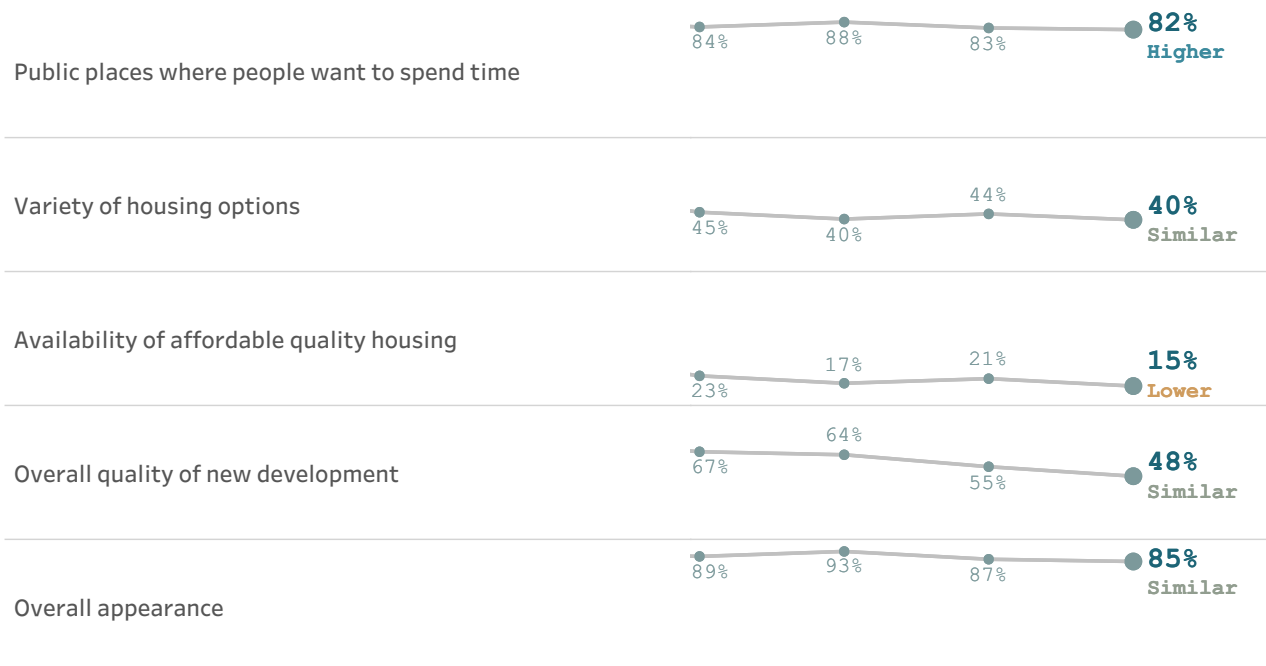


Please rate each of the following aspects of quality of life in Decatur.
(% excellent or good)

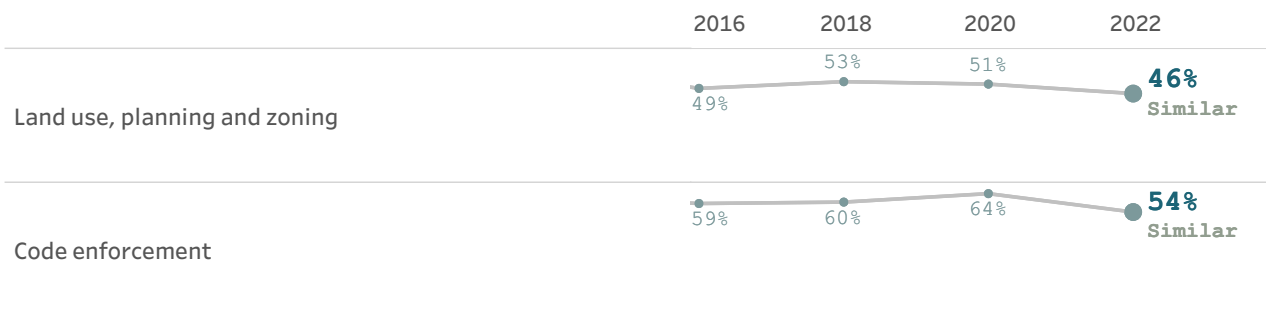


Please also rate each of the following in the Decatur community.
(% excellent or good)





Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Decatur.
 (% excellent or good)

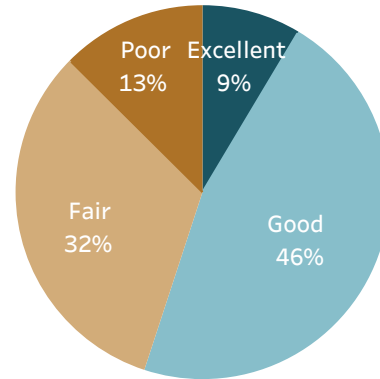


* Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

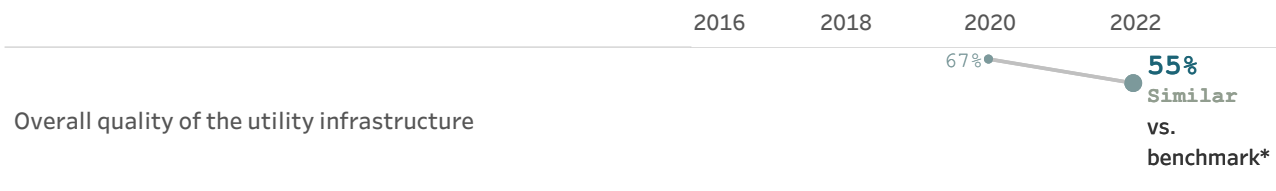
Utilities

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.

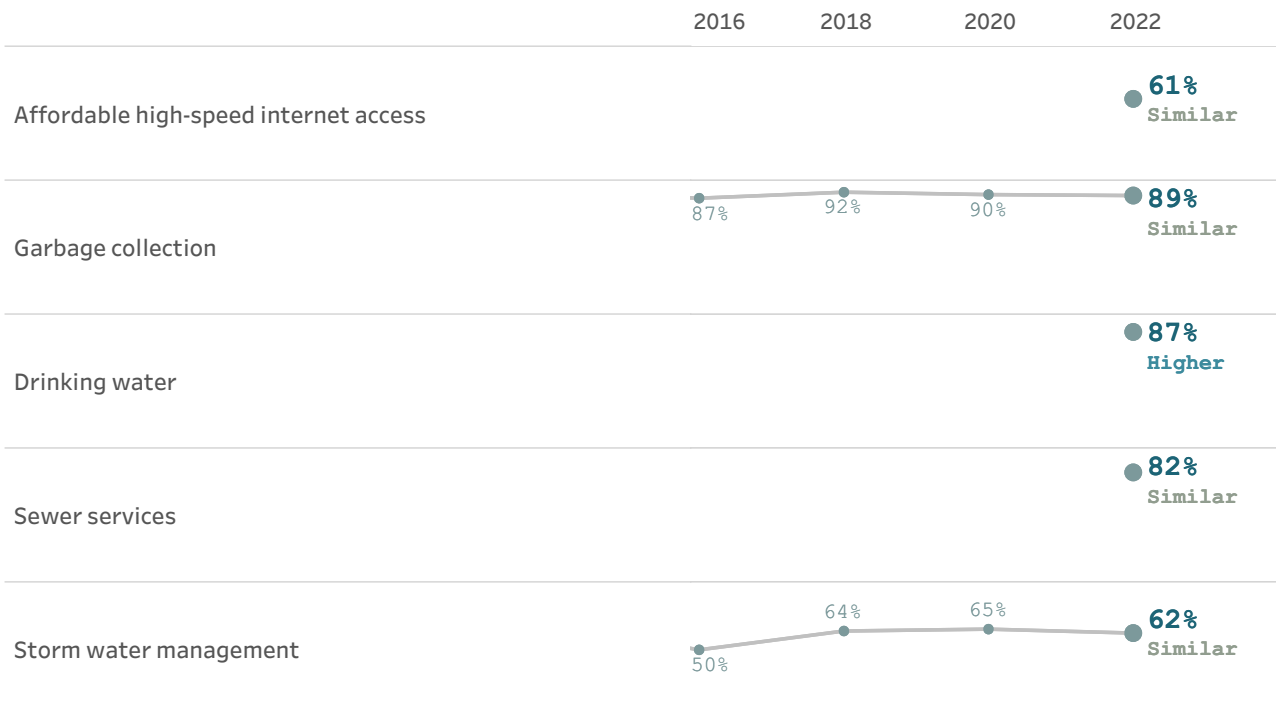
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Decatur, 2022



Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Decatur as a whole.
(% excellent or good)



Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Decatur.
(% excellent or good)

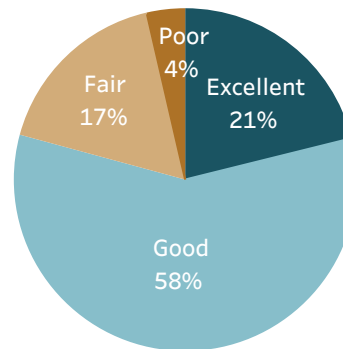


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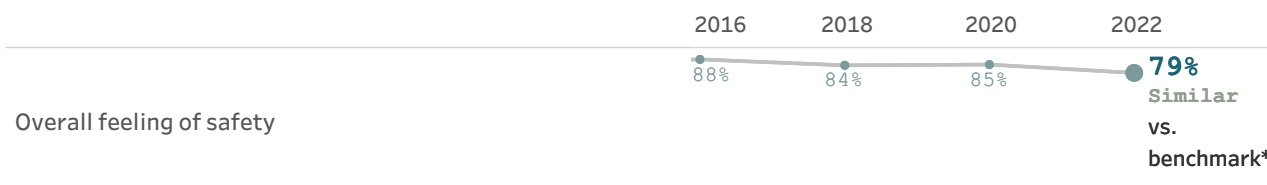
Safety

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.

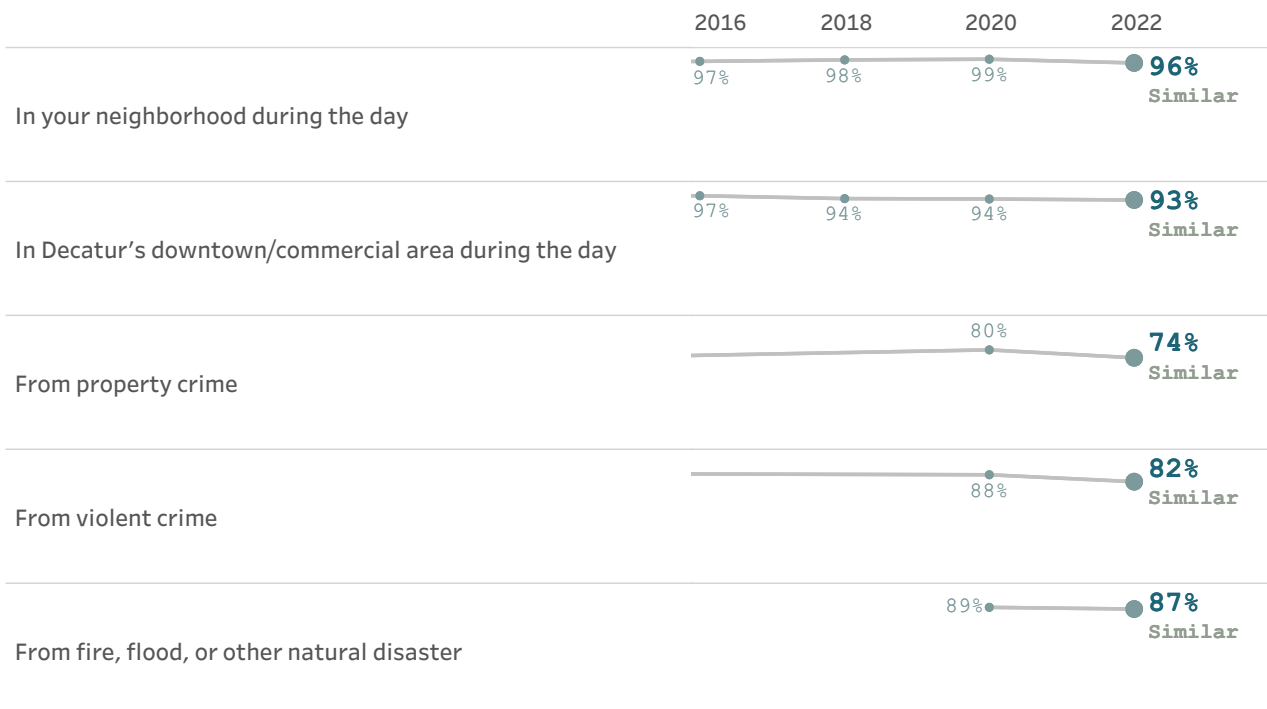
Overall feeling of safety in
Decatur, 2022



Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Decatur as a whole.
(% excellent or good)



Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel:
(% very or somewhat safe)

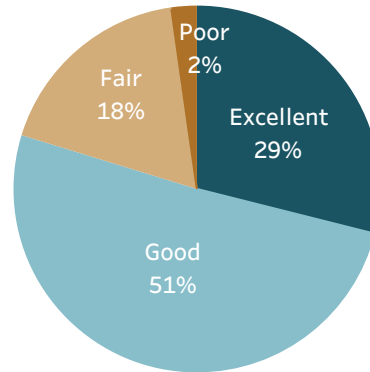


Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Decatur.
(% excellent or good)



* Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

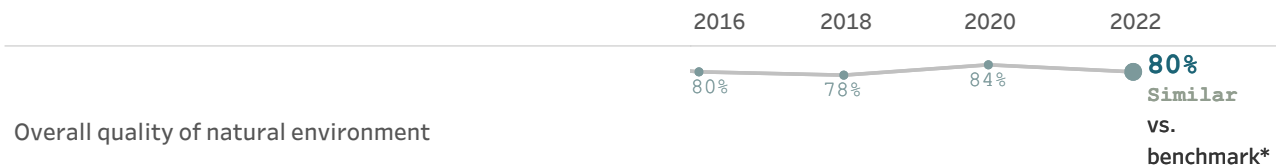
Overall quality of natural environment in Decatur, 2022



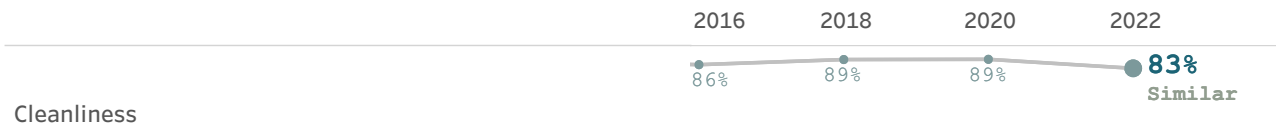
Natural environment

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.

Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Decatur as a whole.
(% excellent or good)

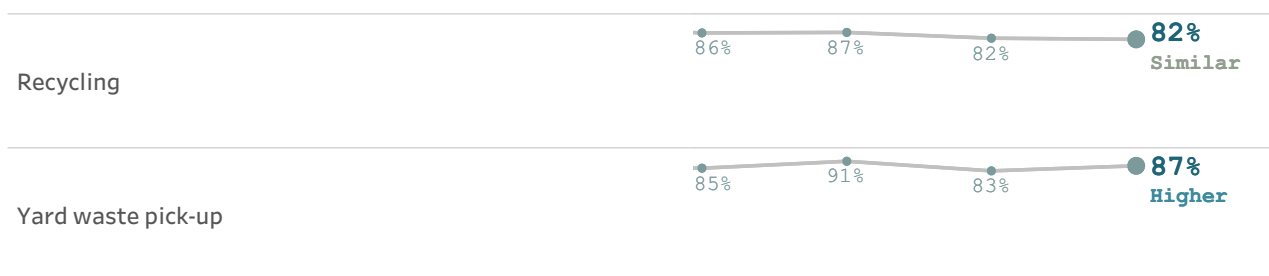


Please also rate each of the following in the Decatur community.
(% excellent or good)



Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Decatur.
(% excellent or good)





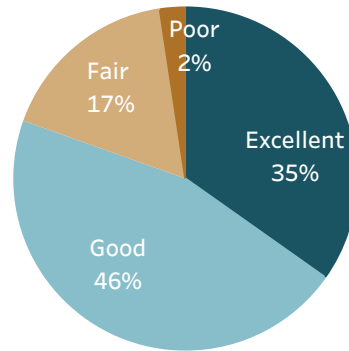
* Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities, 2022

Parks and recreation

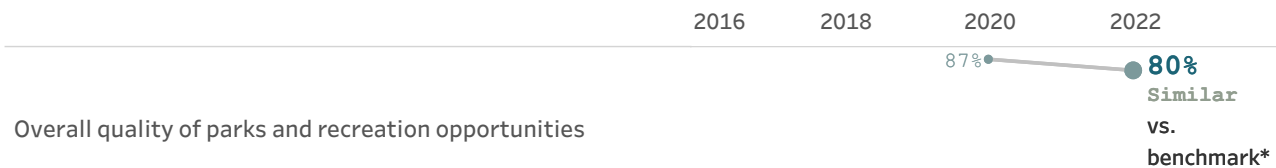
"There are no communities that pride themselves on their quality of life, promote themselves as a desirable location for businesses to relocate, or maintain that they are environmental stewards of their natural resources, without such communities having a robust, active system of parks and recreation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

- National Recreation and Park Association



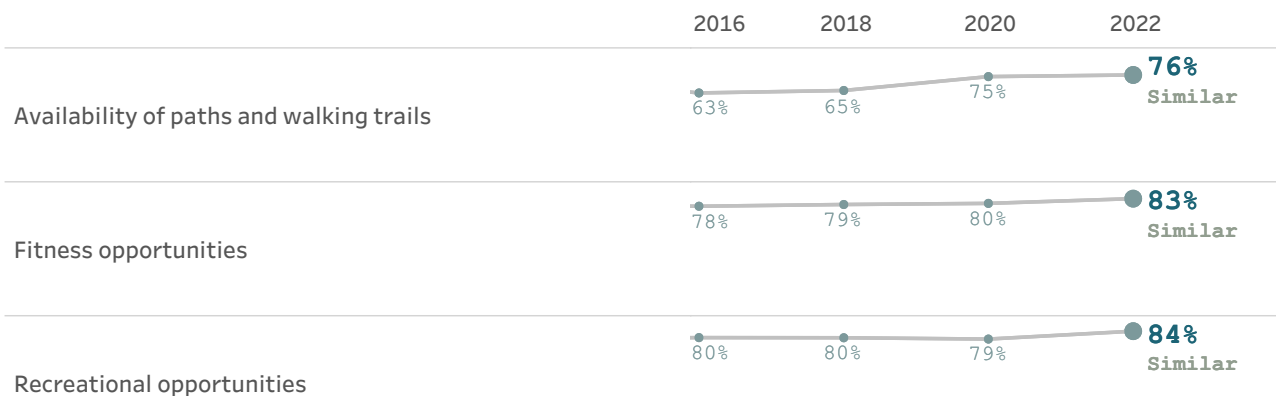
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Decatur as a whole.

(% excellent or good)



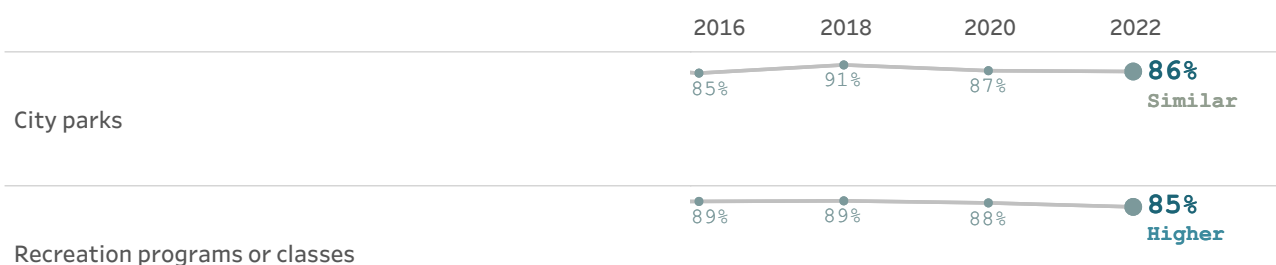
Please also rate each of the following in the Decatur community.

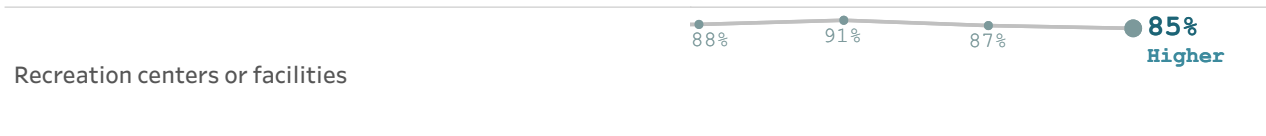
(% excellent or good)



Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Decatur.

(% excellent or good)



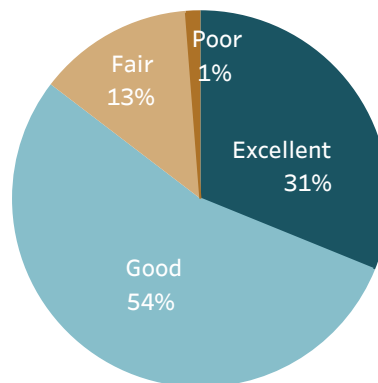


* Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

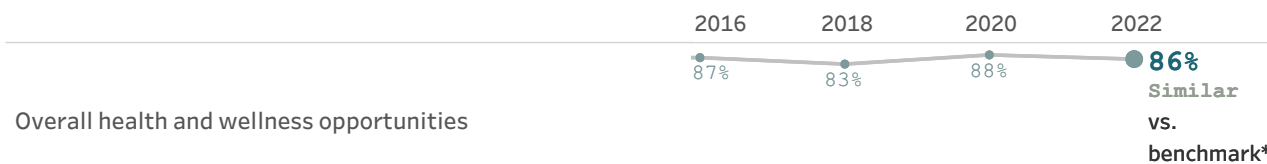
Health and wellness

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.

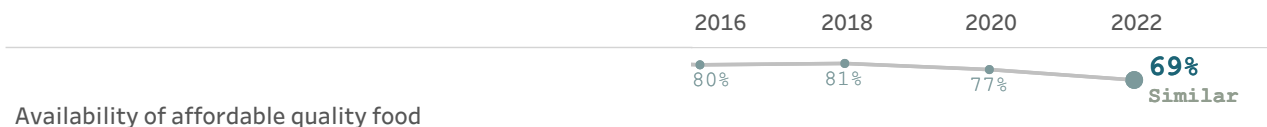
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Decatur, 2022



Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Decatur as a whole.
(% excellent or good)



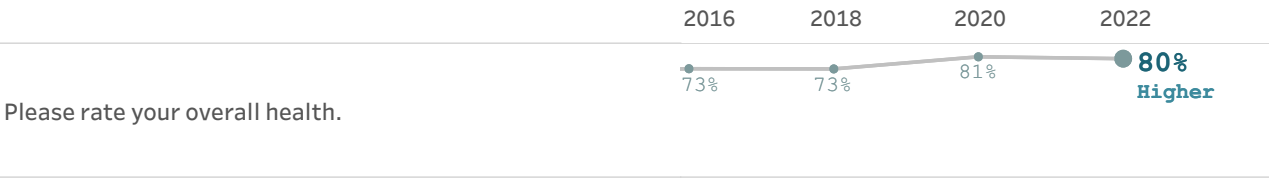
Please also rate each of the following in the Decatur community.
(% excellent or good)



Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Decatur.
(% excellent or good)



Please rate your overall health.
(% excellent or very good)

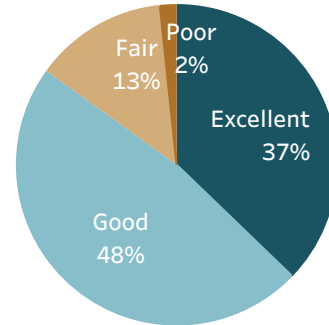


* Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

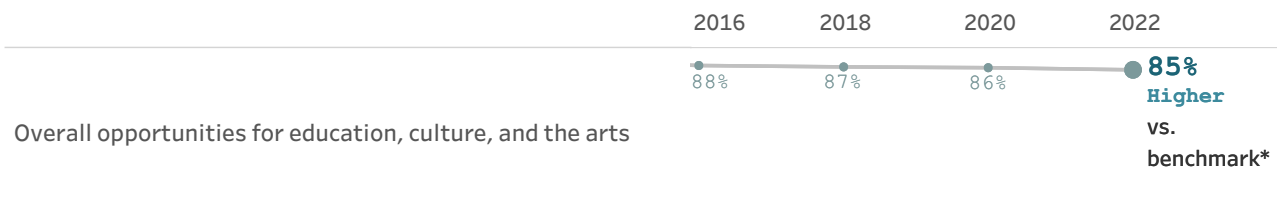
Education, arts, and culture

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.

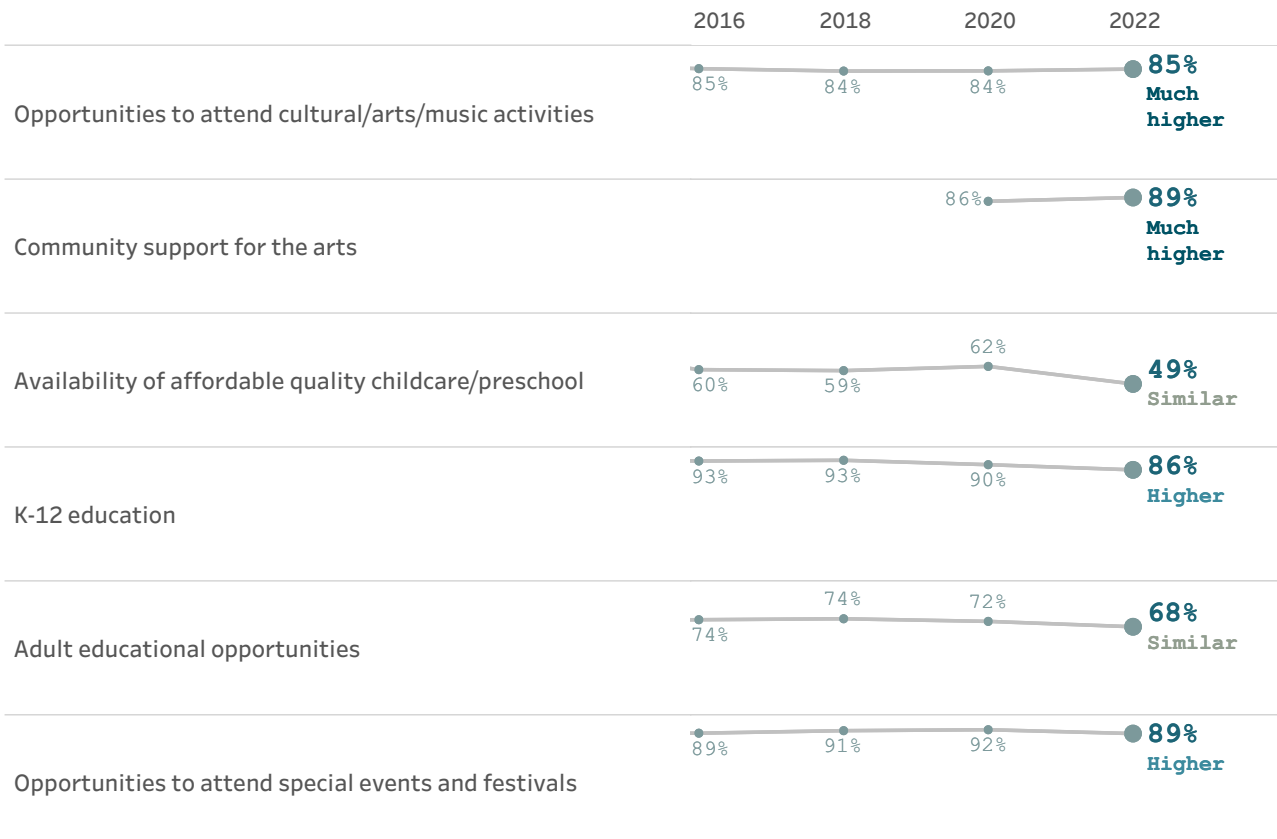
Overall opportunities for education, culture and the arts, 2022



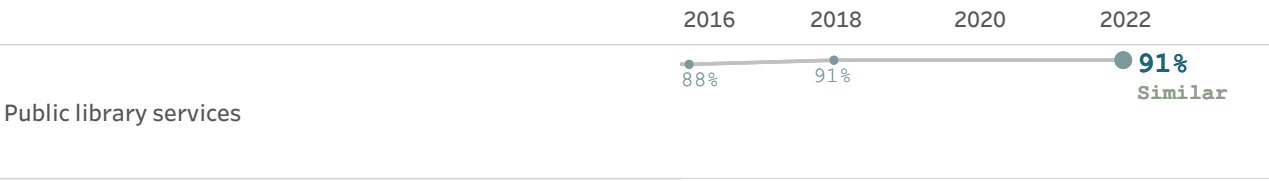
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Decatur as a whole.
(% excellent or good)



Please also rate each of the following in the Decatur community.
(% excellent or good)

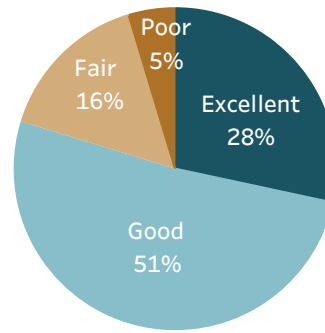


Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Decatur.
(% excellent or good)



* Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

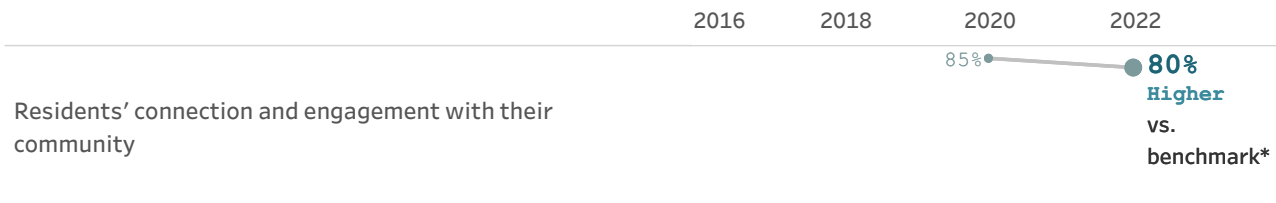
Residents' connection and engagement with their community, 2022



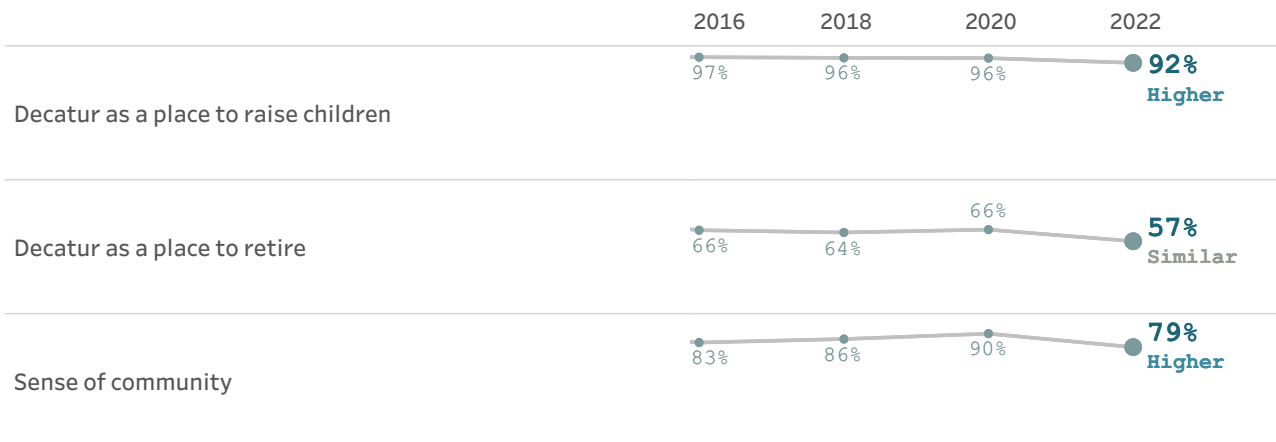
Inclusivity and engagement

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.

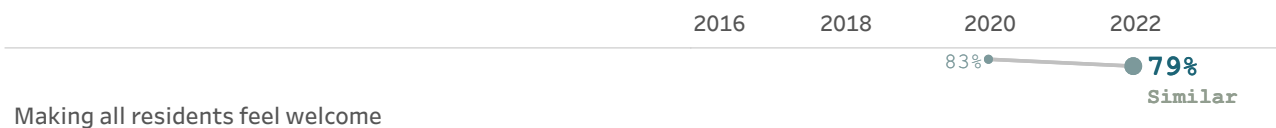
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Decatur as a whole.
(% excellent or good)

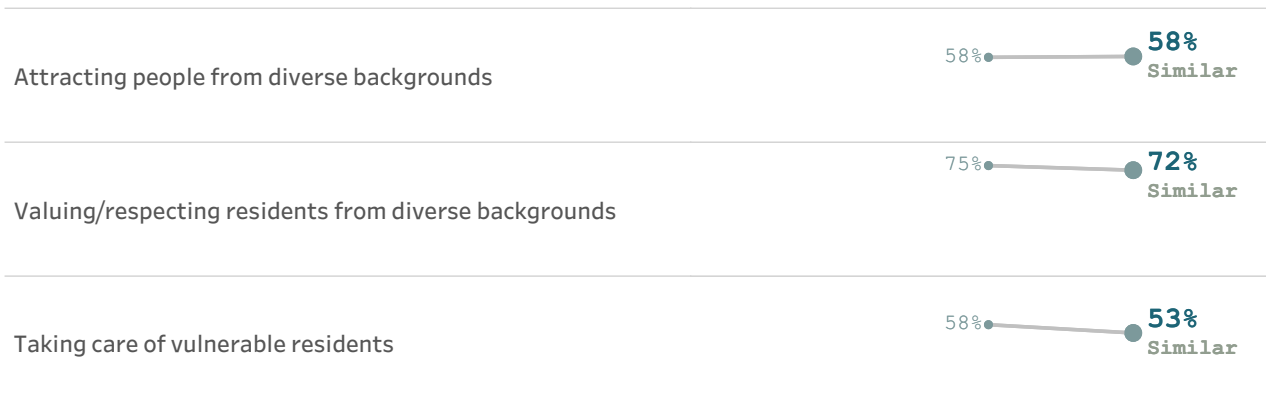


Please rate each of the following aspects of quality of life in Decatur.
(% excellent or good)



Please rate the job you feel the Decatur community does at each of the following.
(% excellent or good)





Please also rate each of the following in the Decatur community.
 (% excellent or good)

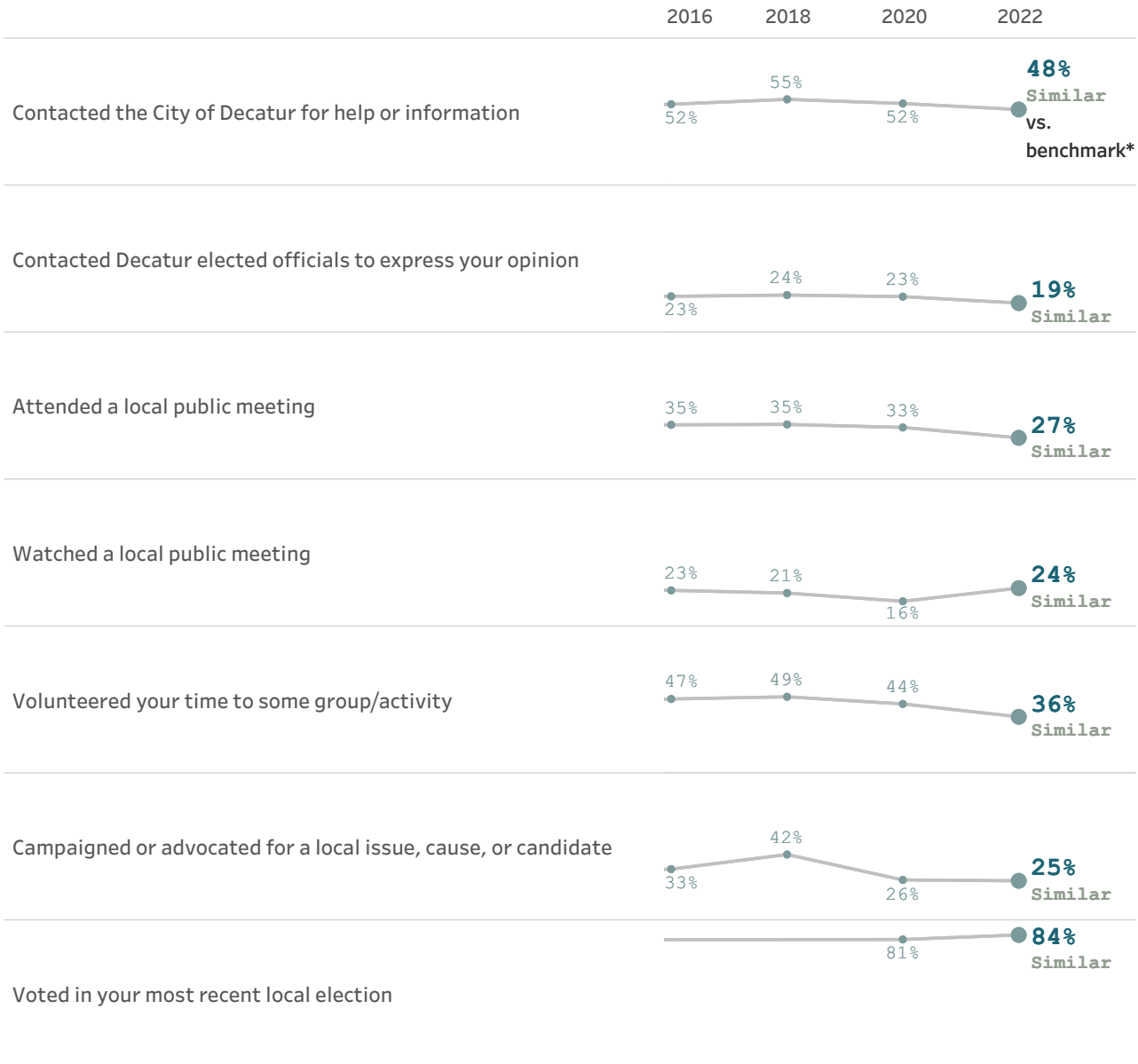


* Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

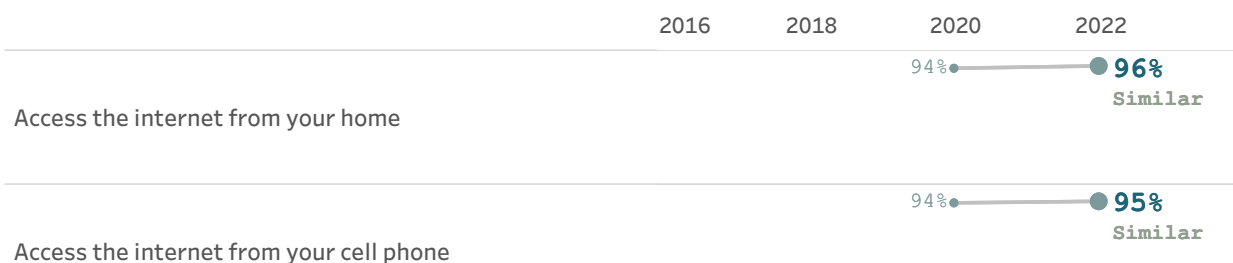
Residents' participation levels

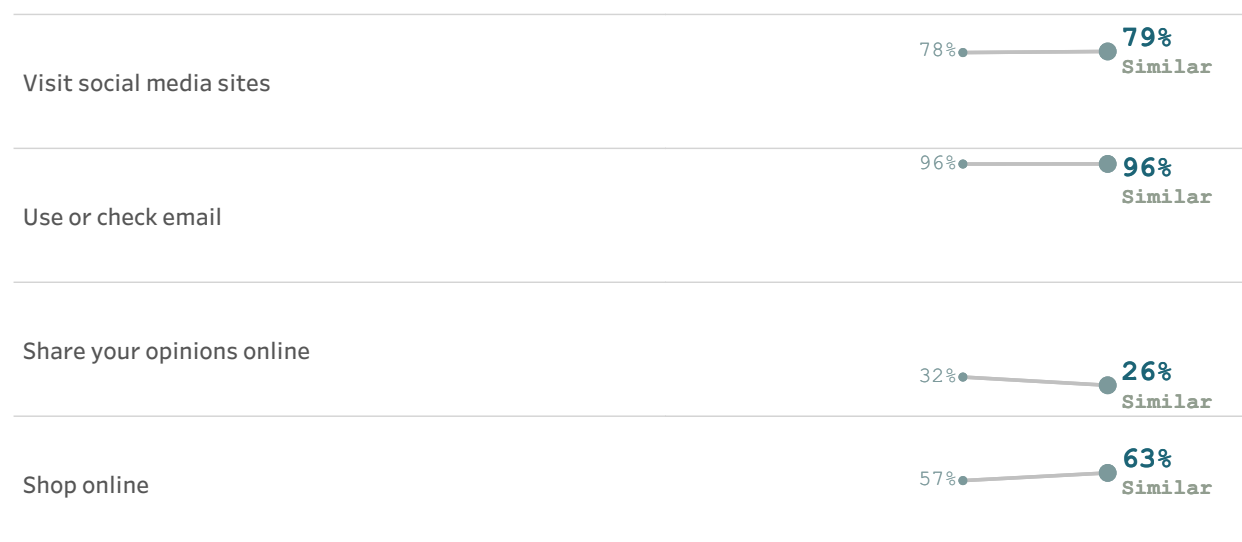
Please indicate whether or not you have done each of the following in the last 12 months.

(% yes)



In general, how many times do you:
(% a few times a week or more)





* Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Custom questions

Below are the results of each custom question on the survey. The percentage of positive responses (Strongly/Somewhat support) is shown.

