

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Richmond, CA
Community Livability Report

2015



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The National Citizen Survey™
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The NCS™ is presented by NRC in collaboration with ICMA.

NRC is a proud member of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative, providing clear disclosure of our sound and ethical survey research practices.

About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Richmond. 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 422 residents of the City of Richmond. 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 Richmond

About one-third of residents rated the quality of life in Richmond as excellent or good. This rating was lower than ratings in comparison communities (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.

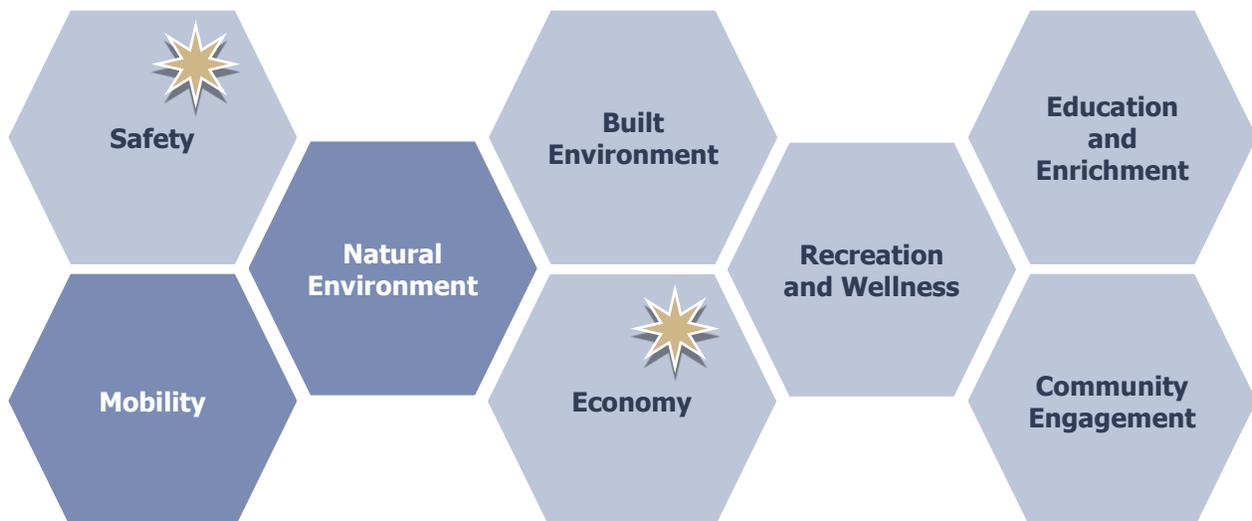
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Richmond community in the coming two years. Ratings for Natural Environment and Mobility were positive and similar to other communities. Ratings for Safety, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement tended to be lower than the benchmark. 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 Richmond’s unique questions.

Legend

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

★ Most important



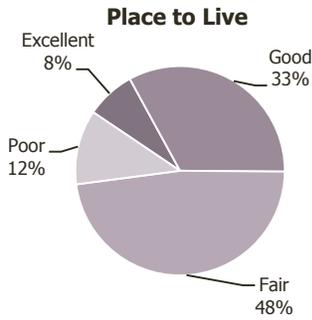
Community Characteristics

What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?

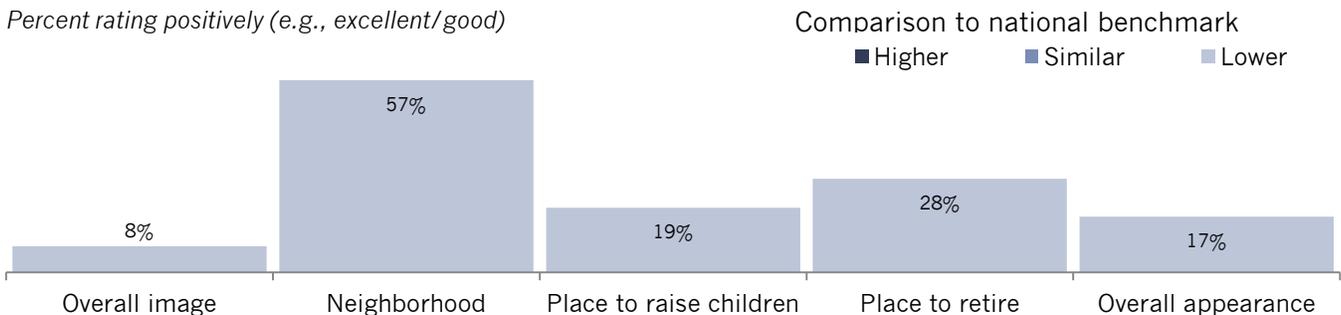
Overall quality of community life represents the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. How residents rate their overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. In the case of Richmond, 41% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Richmond as a place to live were lower 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 Richmond as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Richmond and its overall appearance. Almost 6 in 10 respondents rated their neighborhoods as excellent or good places to live. About one-quarter of residents gave positive ratings to Richmond as a place to retire. Less than 1 in 5 of survey respondents gave an excellent or good rating to the City's overall image and appearance or Richmond as a place to raise children. All of these ratings were lower than the national benchmark.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. These ratings tended to be similar to or lower than ratings in communities across the nation. Within Safety, nearly three-quarters indicated that they felt safe in their neighborhood and about half reported feeling safe in Richmond's downtown/commercial area which was a rating that increased in 2015 compared to 2013 (see the *Trends over Time* report provided under separate cover). A majority of aspects related to Mobility were rated similarly to the national benchmark and about 7 in 10 gave high marks to travel by car and public parking; additionally, traffic flow, travel by car and ease of walking were rated higher in 2015 than in the previous iteration of the survey. Other notable changes in 2015 included an increase in overall natural environment, Richmond as a place to work and the availability of cultural/arts/music activities. There were only two decreases in the aspects of Community Characteristics; ratings in Built Environment (affordable quality housing) and Community Engagement (opportunities to volunteer) were lower in 2015. Ratings within the facet of Economy ranged from 12% excellent or good for vibrant downtown/commercial area to 34% for Richmond as a place to work. An even wider range of ratings is seen in the facet of Education and Enrichment with 20% giving an excellent or good rating to child care/preschool to 53% for religious or spiritual events and activities.



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



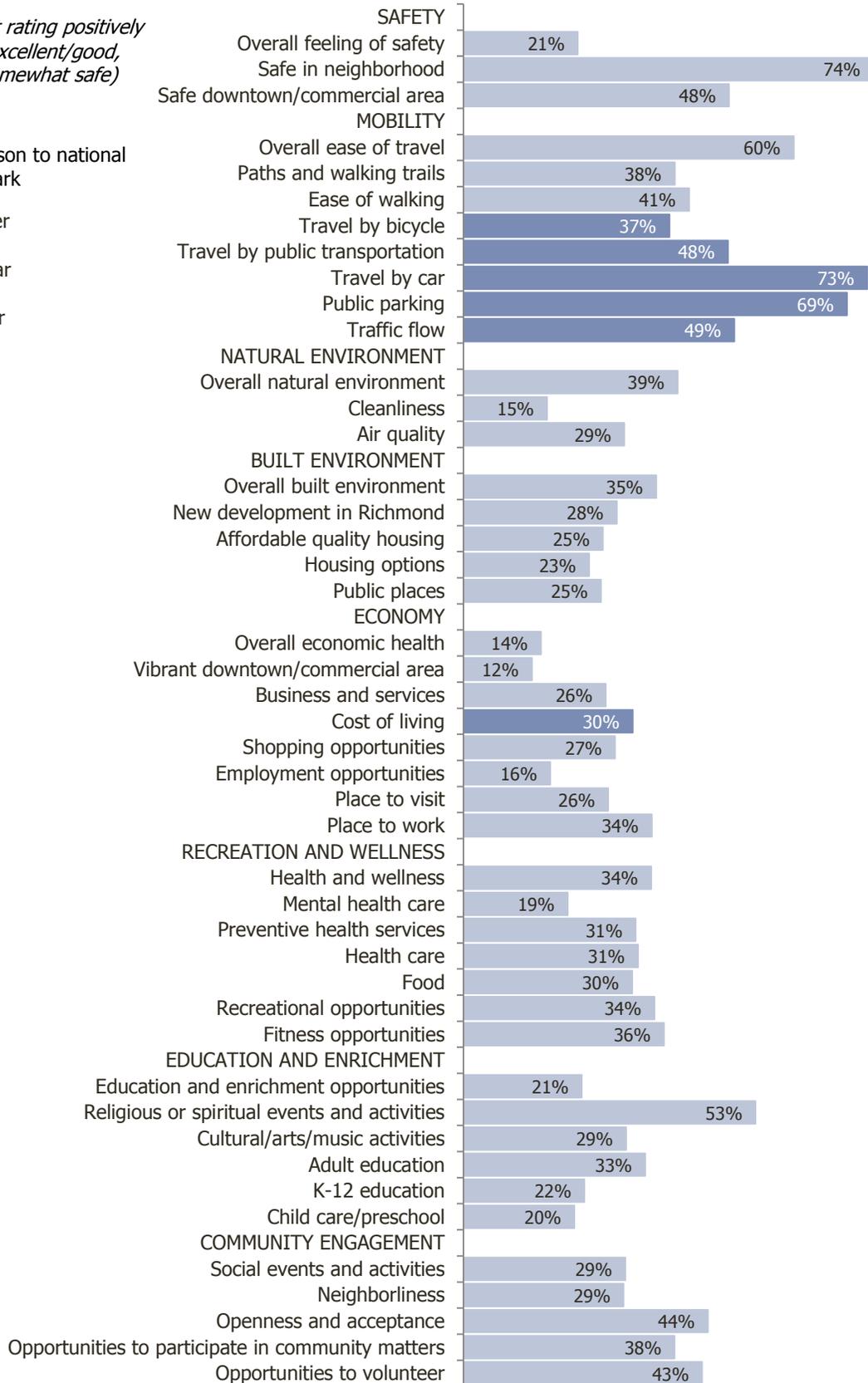
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

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

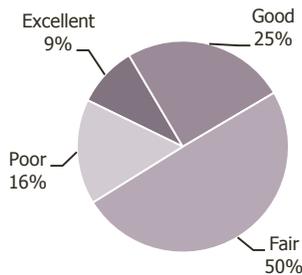
The overall quality of the services provided by Richmond as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About one-third of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the City of Richmond. In comparison, about 29% gave excellent or good ratings to the services provided by the Federal Government.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Richmond’s leadership and governance. These ratings tended to be lower than the benchmark and were rated as excellent or good by at least one-quarter of residents. The overall direction that Richmond is taking was rated positively by 42% of residents, a rating similar to other communities.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Richmond. The highest rated services were fire services (79% excellent or good), ambulance/EMS services (72%) and garbage collection (72%). The rating for fire services and garbage collection were similar to the national benchmark while the rating for ambulance/EMS services was lower. Recycling and yard waste collection were also rated positively by 7 in 10 respondents and were similar to the national benchmark. Four of the six aspects of Built Environment were rated positively by a majority of residents, including storm drainage, power utility, and utility billing. The lowest rated services were street repair, economic development, land use, planning and zoning and code enforcement. Overall, ratings tended to be similar or lower than those seen in communities across the nation.

There were also several differences found in ratings for aspects of Governance from 2013 to 2015. The items street cleaning, value of services for taxes paid and customer service decreased over time, while services in Safety (crime prevention, fire and fire prevention), Natural Environment (yard waste pick-up), Built Environment (code enforcement) and Education and Enrichment (public libraries) were higher in 2015.

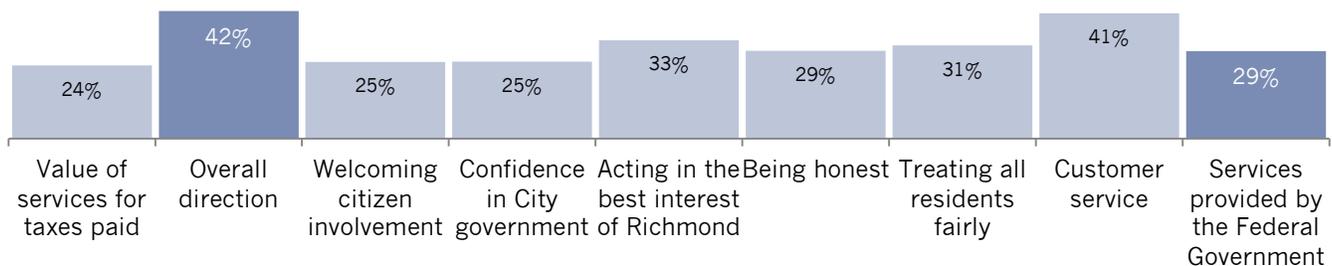
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



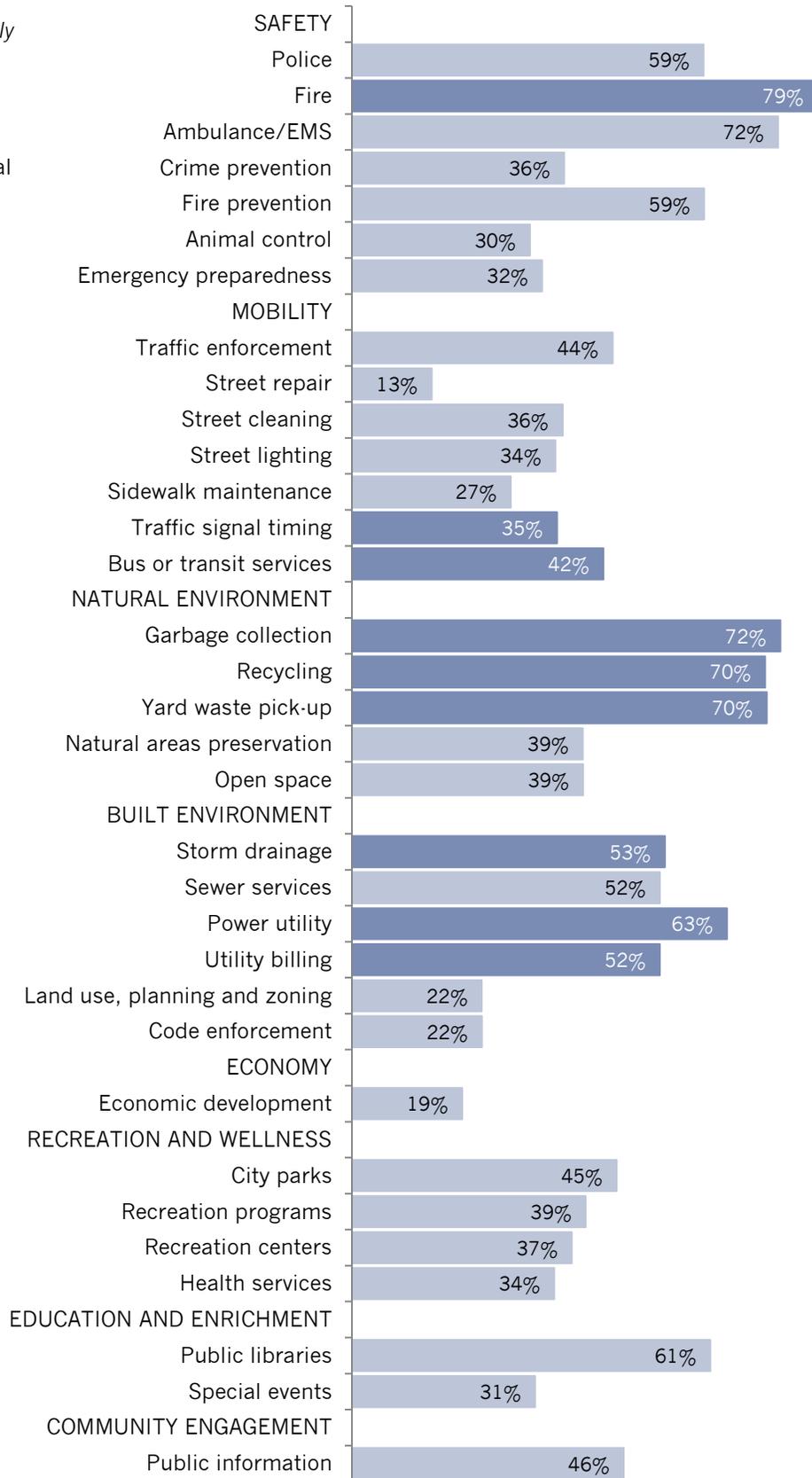
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



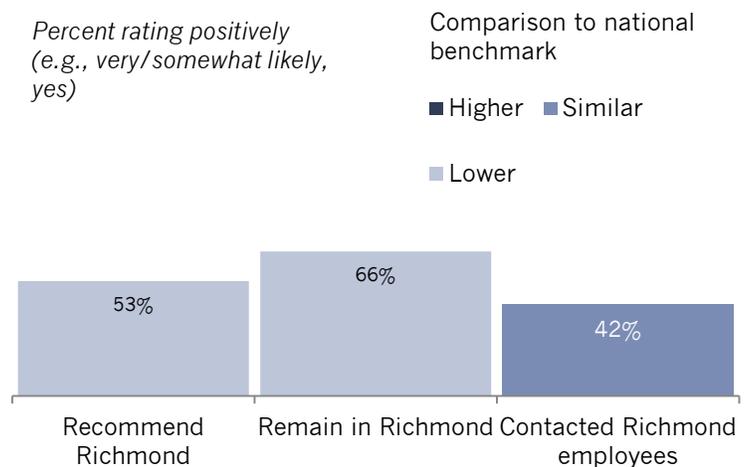
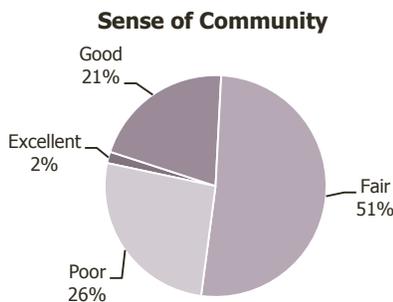
Participation

Are the residents of Richmond 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. Ratings for the sense of the community in Richmond were rated fair or higher by about three-quarters of residents. About two-thirds of respondents reported that they were likely to remain in Richmond for the next five years and approximately half would recommend living in the City.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Richmond residents tended to report similar rates of participation when compared to other communities. The activities or behaviors with the highest reported rates of participation were conserving water and recycling at home which were ratings that were higher than the national benchmark. Richmond residents also reported high levels of optimism regarding the effect of Richmond’s economy on their income, a rating that was also higher than other cities and had increased from 2013 to 2015. Ratings for Community Engagement were mixed, with low rates of participation reported in volunteering and contacting Richmond elected officials; however, at least 8 in 10 of residents indicated they had visited or talked to a neighbor, done a favor for a neighbor, read or watched local news and voted in local elections.

Richmond citizens reported that they attended and watched local public meetings and participated in clubs less often in 2015 than in 2013, but more respondents indicated they had voted in local elections and contacted Richmond employees more frequently than they had in previous years.



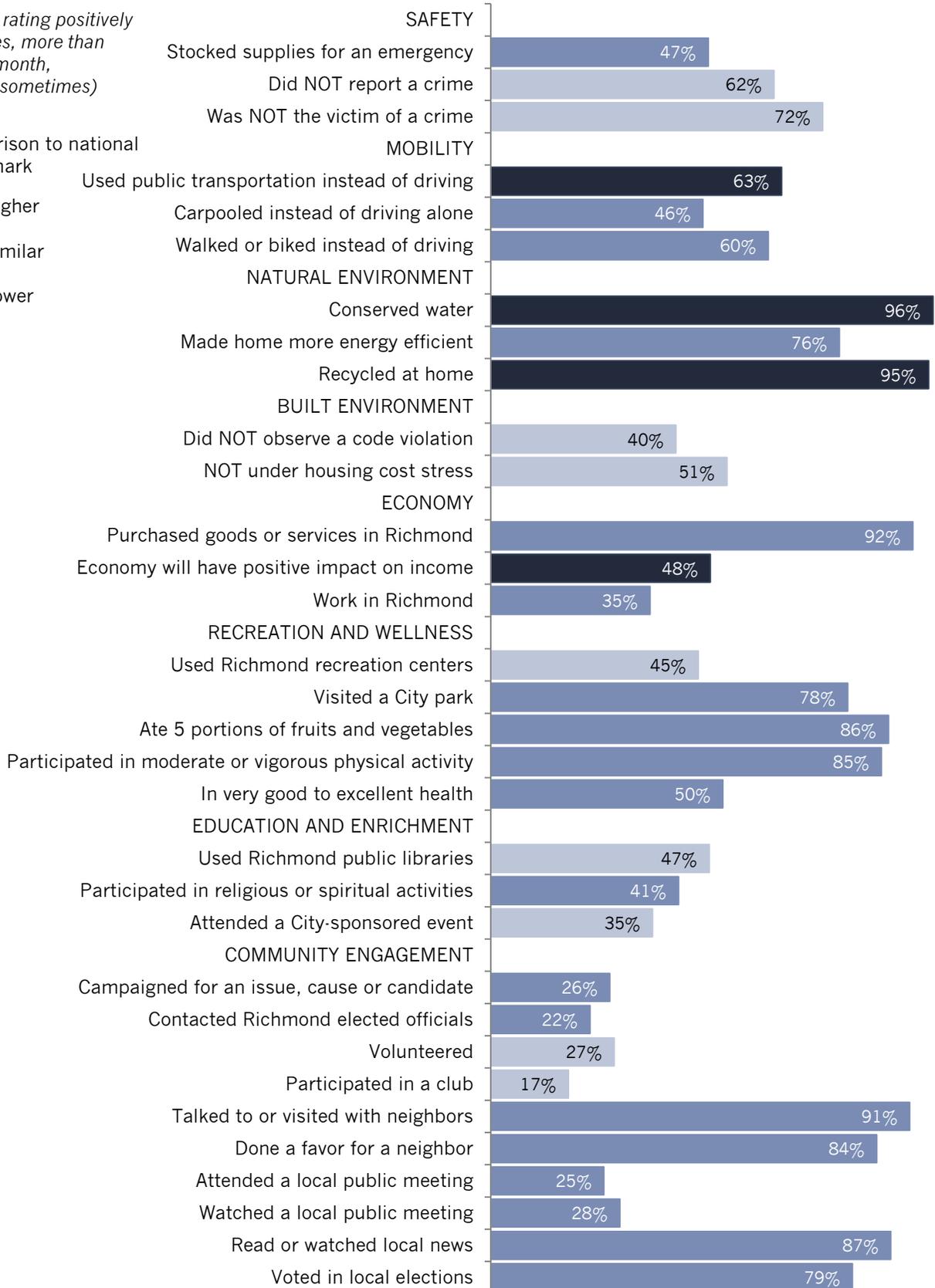
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



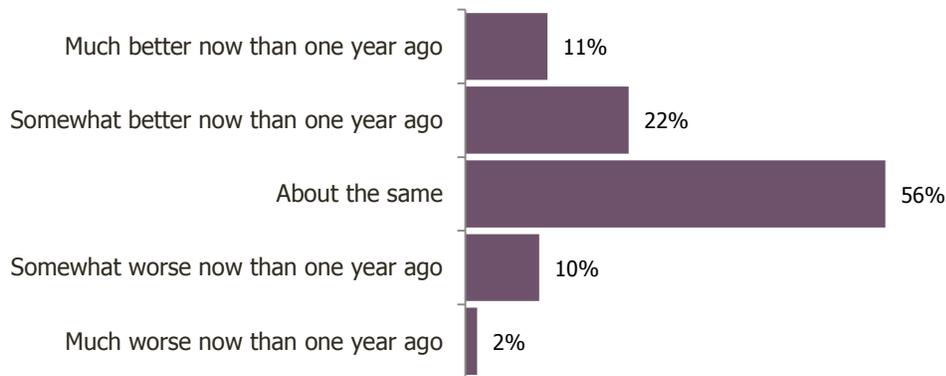
Special Topics

The City of Richmond included several questions of special interest on The NCS.

Richmond residents were asked to rate their current overall health compared to one year ago. A majority of resident reported their health to be about the same, while one-third indicated their health had improved in the last year.

Figure 4: Ratings for General Health

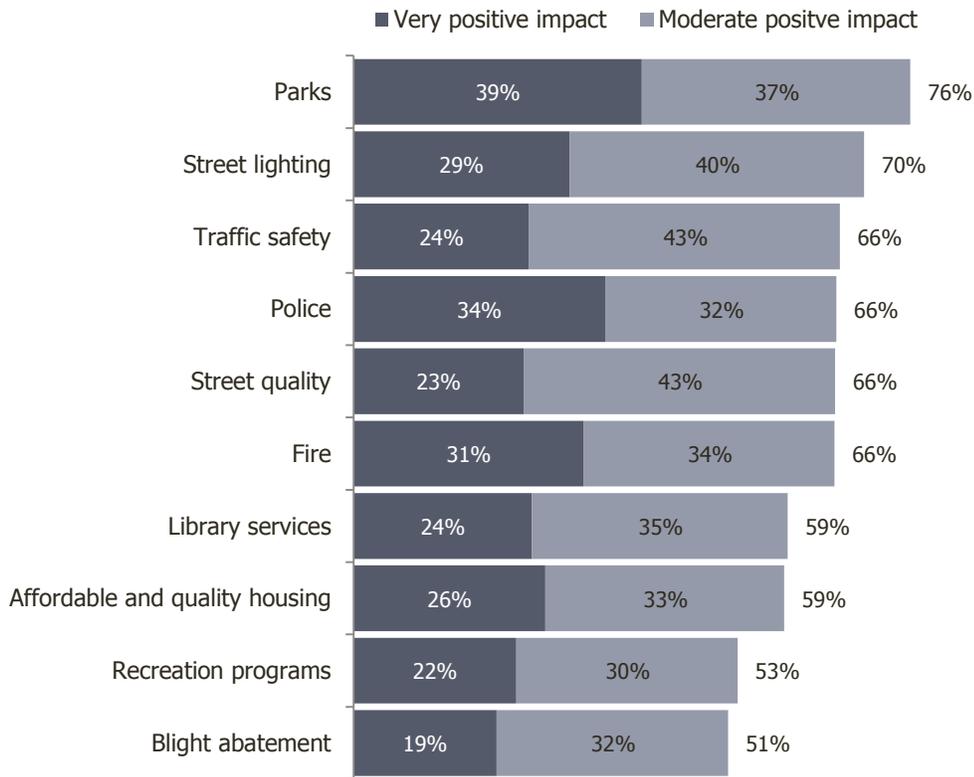
Compared to one year ago, how would you rate your health in general now?



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Survey respondents were also asked about the impact of City services on their overall health and well-being. Three in four residents cited that parks had the highest positive impact on their health. About half of Richmond citizens indicated that recreation programs and blight abatement had a positive impact which were the two listed services with the lowest impact rating.

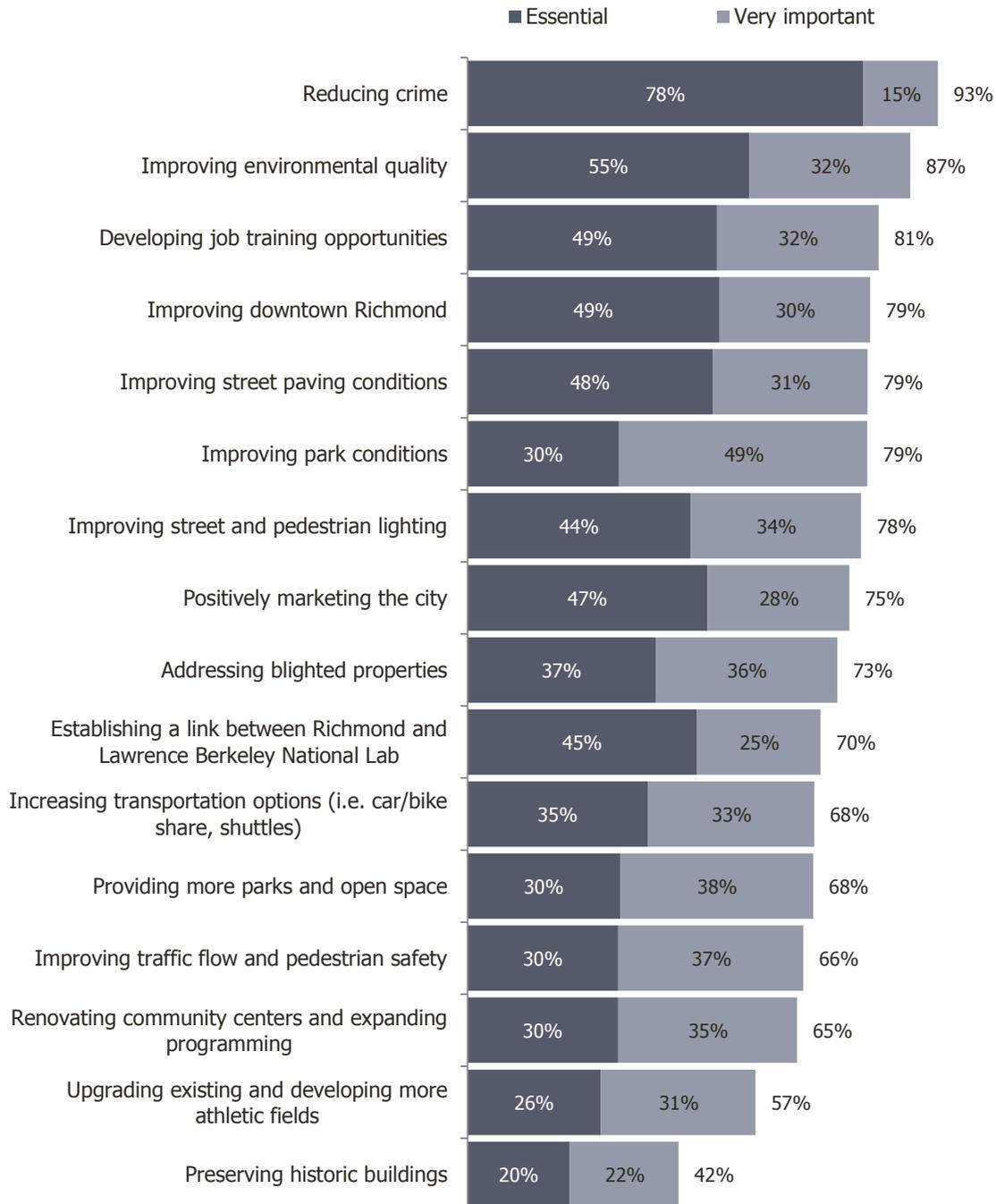
Figure 5: Impact of City Services on Health and Well-being
 Please rate the impact of the following City services on your health and well-being:



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Another question asked pertained to priorities for the City to accomplish in the next two years. Reducing crime was deemed essential or very important by about 9 in 10 respondents. Improving environmental quality and developing job training opportunities were given high ratings of importance by at least 8 in 10 residents. The lowest priorities were upgrading existing and developing more athletic fields and preserving historic buildings.

Figure 6: Important City Issues to Address
How important, if at all, are the following issues for the City to address within the next two years?

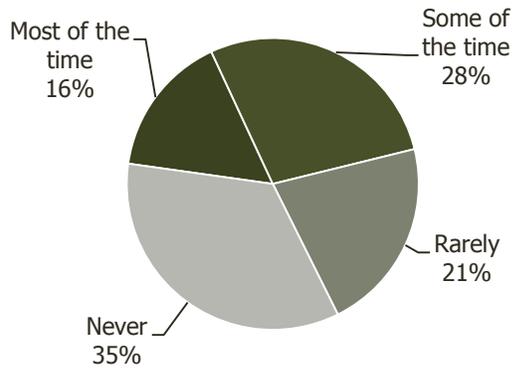


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When asked about concern about unfair treatment due to race, ethnicity or color, about 4 in 10 Richmond residents reported that they worried about bias for themselves, their family or other people of their race/ethnicity/nationality at least some of the time. About one-third reported they never worry about unfair treatment.

Figure 7: Frequency of Unfair Treatment Due to Race, Ethnicity or Color

In the last year, how often, if at all, did you worry about you, someone in your family or any other person of your same race, ethnicity or nationality experiencing unfair treatment because of your race, ethnicity, or color?

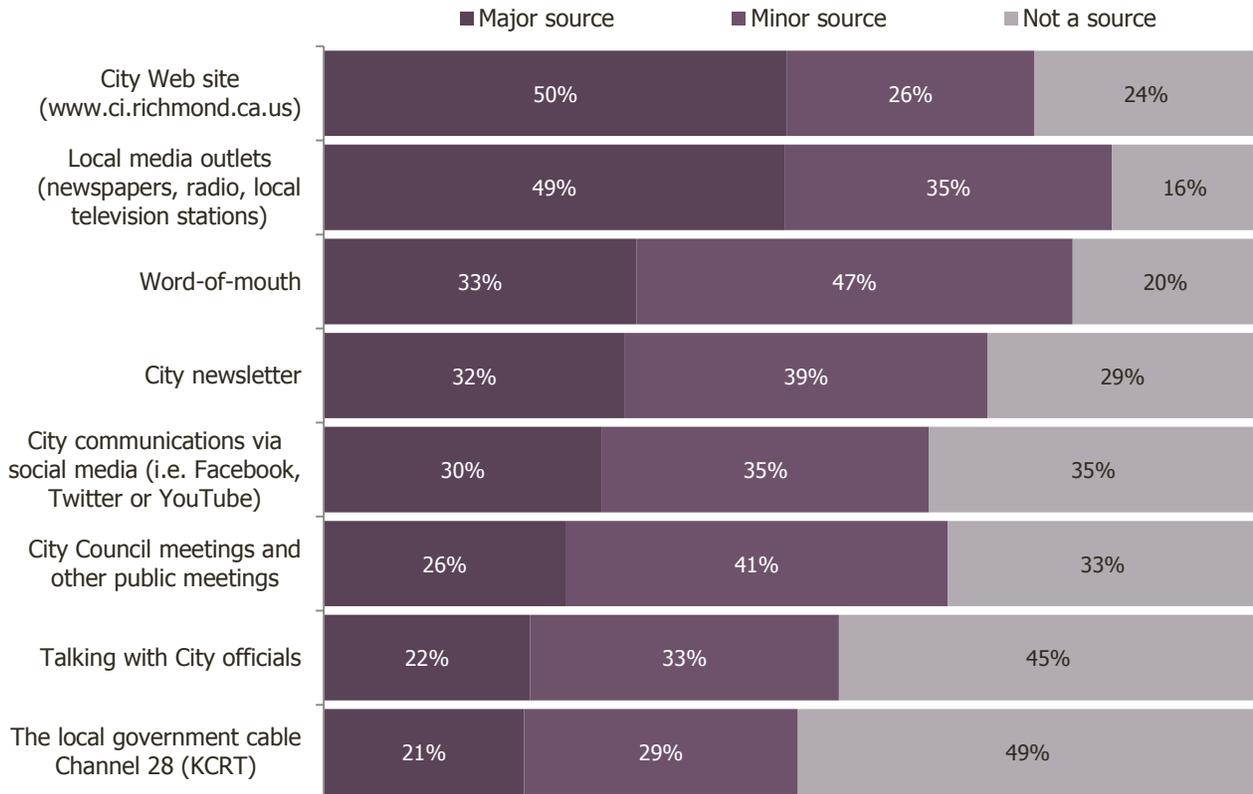


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At least three-quarters of City residents use the City web site, local media outlets and word of mouth as a major or minor source of information about Richmond government and its activities, events and services. About half of residents indicated that talking to City officials and watching the local government cable Channel 28 were sources of information.

Figure 8: Information Sources

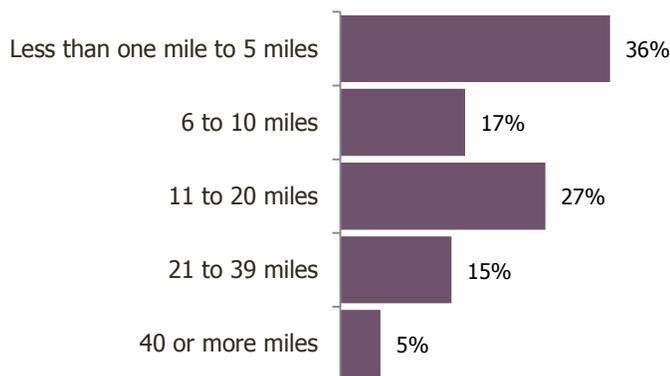
Please indicate how much of a source, if at all, you consider each of the following to be for obtaining information about the City government and its activities, events and services:



The City of Richmond also included a question about the distance between residents' place of work and their residences. About one in three residents live less than five miles from their work while 1 in 20 live more than 40 miles away.

Figure 9: Distance of Work from Home

About how far is your home from work?



Conclusions

Safety is a priority and has improved from 2013 to 2015.

Residents indicated that Safety is an important facet for Richmond to focus on in the coming years. Richmond residents rated several aspects of Safety higher in 2015 than in 2013. Within Community Characteristics and Governance, ratings increased for Safety in Richmond's downtown/commercial area, crime prevention, fire services and fire prevention. However, there is still room for improvement in Richmond's Safety ratings, especially those that were lower than the national benchmark including overall feeling of safety and police services among others. Additionally, residents identified reducing crime as the most important priority for the City to accomplish in the next two years and two-thirds of residents reported that police have a very positive or moderate positive impact on their overall health and well-being.

Many residents have relationships with their neighbors, but feel opportunities to be engaged and ties to their community are lacking.

More than 9 in 10 residents reported that they have talked to or visited with their neighbors and 84% have done a favor for a neighbor; both of these ratings are similar to the national benchmark. However, only 23% of residents felt that the sense of community in Richmond was excellent or good, which was lower than the ratings found in similar communities. Furthermore, about 4 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the openness and acceptance toward people of diverse backgrounds, 8% of residents rated the overall image of the City as excellent or good, and 3 in 10 felt that the City was treating residents fairly; these ratings were all lower than the national comparison. About 4 in 10 felt that they had the opportunity to participate in community matters and one-quarter felt that the City did an excellent or good job welcoming citizen involvement. When respondents were asked about priorities for the City, 75% indicated that positively marketing the community was essential or very important.

Compared to 2013, most Community Engagement ratings remained stable; however, the ratings for opportunities to volunteer, value of services for taxes paid, Richmond customer service, attending and watching public meetings and participation in clubs decreased, while voting in local elections increased from 2013 to 2015.

Economy is important to residents and ratings for it varied.

Residents indicated that Economy is an important facet for Richmond to focus on in the coming years. The rating for overall economic health was lower than the national comparison with about 1 in 10 residents giving it a positive rating. Within Community Characteristics, about one-quarter of participants felt that the quality of business and services establishments in Richmond was excellent or good and only 16% rated employment opportunities positively, ratings that were also lower than those seen in comparison communities. However, the percent of residents who have a positive economic outlook increased by 26% from 2013 to 2015. Additionally, while the rating for Richmond as a place to work was positively rated by about one-third of residents, this rating increased 12% in 2015 compared to 2013. Eight in ten Richmond residents also indicated that developing job training opportunities was a top priority for the City in the next two years.