

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

**Richmond, CA**  
Community Livability Report

2019



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# About

The National Community 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 913 residents of the City of Richmond. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 3% for all respondents. 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 8 in 10 residents rated the quality of life in Richmond as fair or better. This rating was lower than the national benchmark, but increased from 2017 to 2019 (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* and the *Trends over Time* report provided under separate cover for more information).



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.

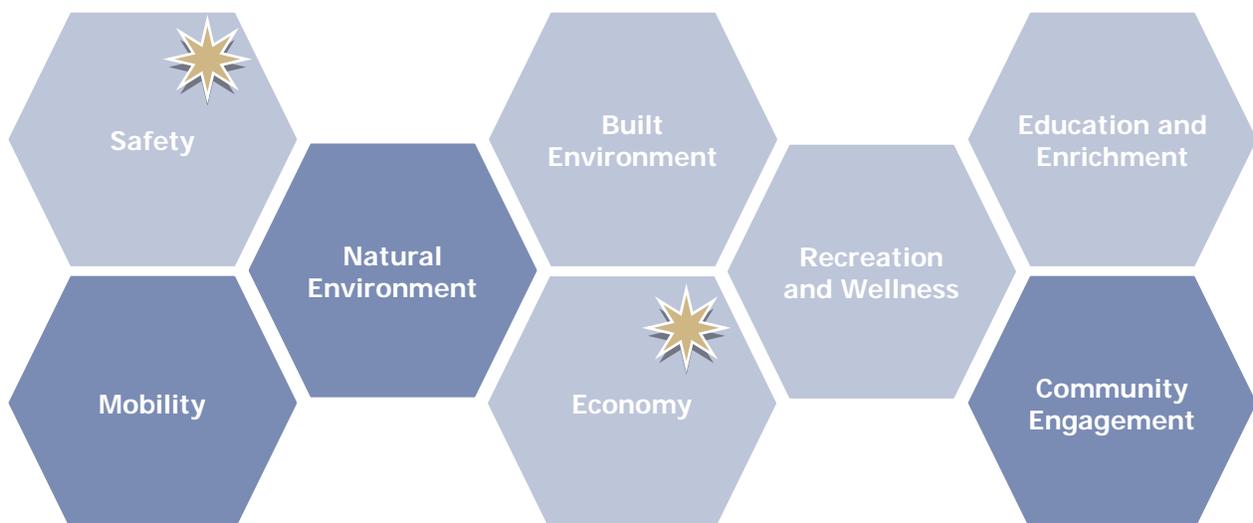
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. As in previous years, residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Richmond community in the coming two years. Ratings for these facets, as well as Built Environment, Education and Enrichment, and Recreation and Wellness were lower than the national averages, while evaluations for the remaining facets were on par with national comparison 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.

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, 47% 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. About two-thirds of residents gave positive reviews to their neighborhood as a place to live, while less than one-third of residents gave favorable marks to Richmond as a place to raise children and retire, the city's overall image or reputation, and its overall appearance. These ratings were lower than national averages.

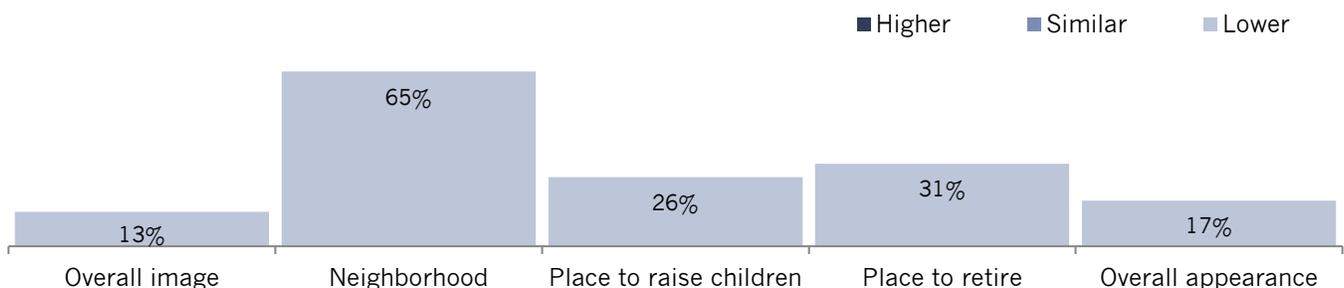
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Generally, ratings across the facets tended to be similar to or lower than the national comparisons. Assessments of several aspects of Mobility, including ease of travel by most modes (by bicycle, public transportation, and by car) and Community Engagement (such as opportunities to volunteer and participate in community matters) were positive and on par with comparison communities.

In 2019, more resident gave favorable marks to fitness and recreational opportunities, availability of affordable quality food and preventive health services, and health and wellness opportunities than in 2017. Furthermore, respondents' evaluations of opportunities to volunteer, overall education and enrichment opportunities, and opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events and activities improved over time. Only assessments of K-12 education declined from 2017 to 2019.



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

Comparison to national benchmark



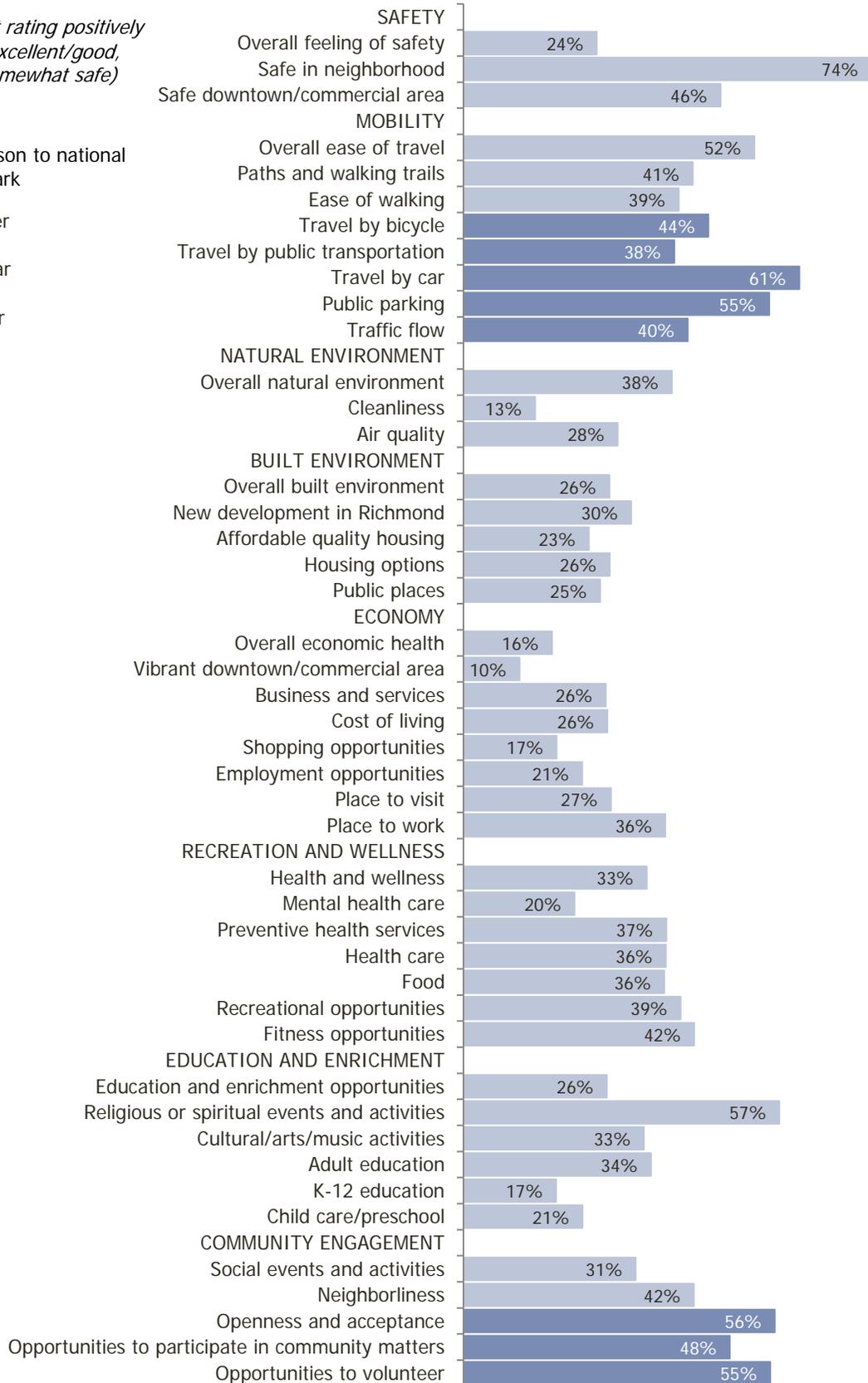
# The National Community Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

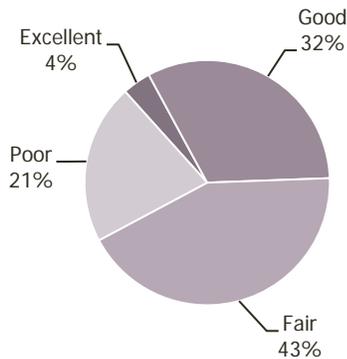
*How well does the government of Richmond meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Richmond as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About one-third of residents gave favorable assessments to the overall quality of City services, while 2 in 10 were pleased with services provided by the Federal Government; these ratings were lower than the national benchmarks. Additionally, reviews of services provided by the Federal Government decreased from 2017 to 2019.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Richmond’s leadership and governance. Less than half of residents were pleased with all aspects of government performance, with assessments that were below average. Evaluations of the City being honest declined from 2017 to 2019.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Richmond. Overall, evaluations of these services and amenities were similar to or lower than the national benchmarks. The highest-rated service was fire services, with 8 in 10 residents assigning positive reviews, on par with comparison communities. Other areas where evaluations were positive and similar to the national averages included traffic signal timing, bus or transit services, recycling, yard waste pick-up, natural areas preservation, and open space. Residents’ ratings for emergency preparedness, street repair, street lighting, natural areas preservation, and public information improved from 2017 to 2019.

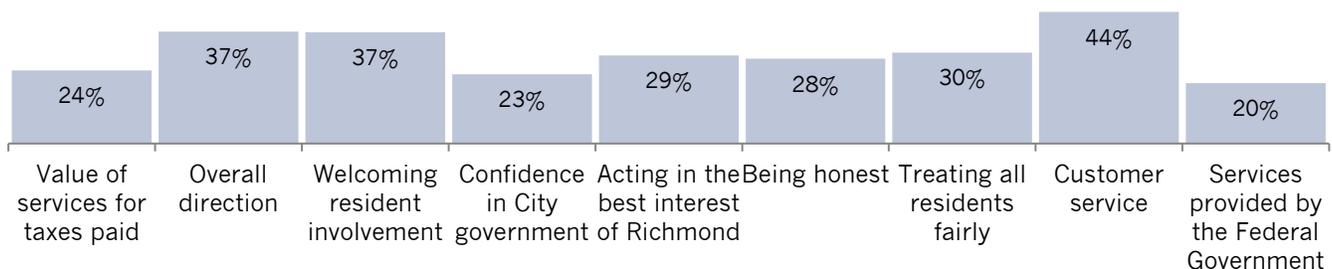
**Overall Quality of City Services**



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



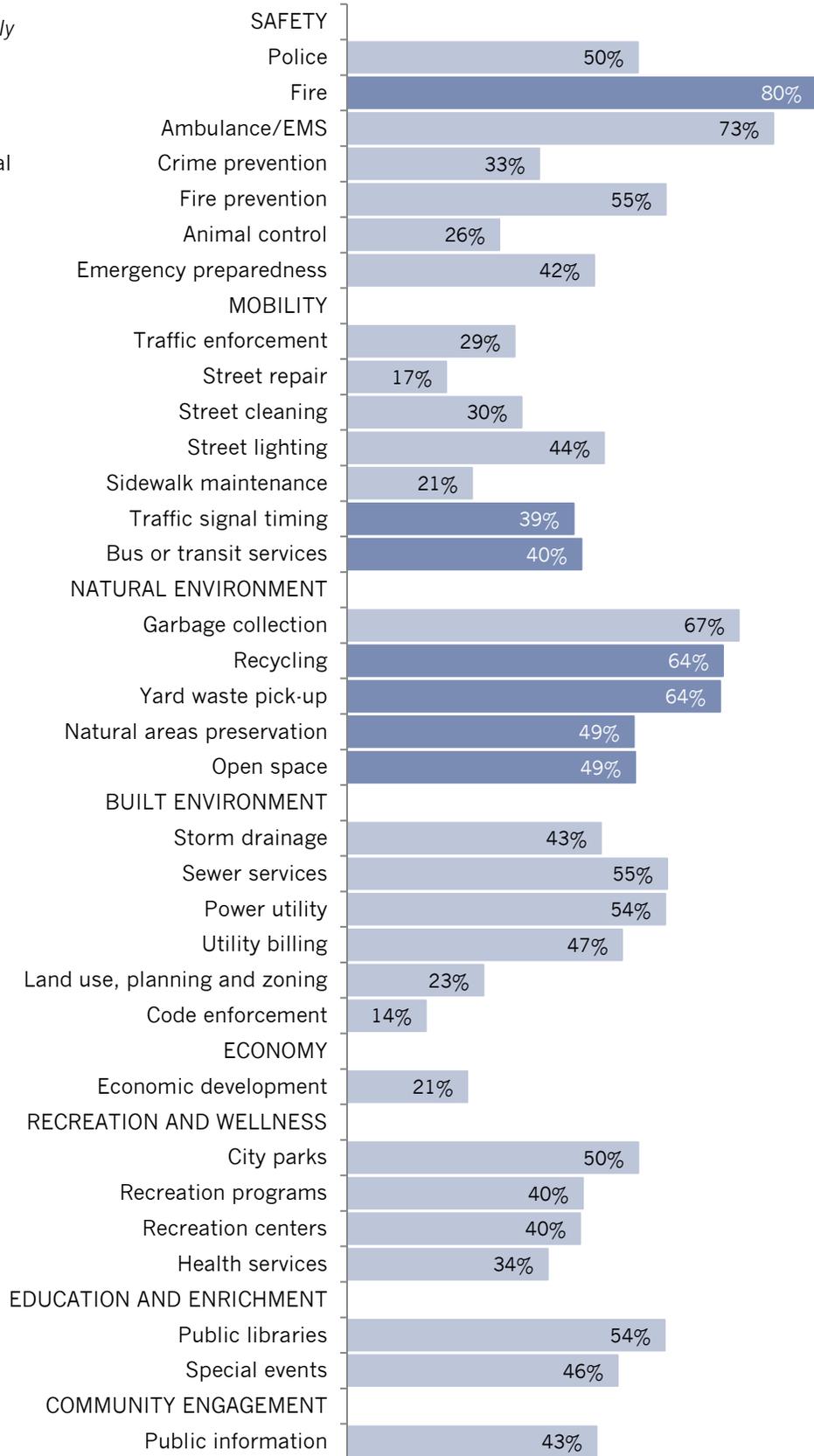
# The National Community Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Participation

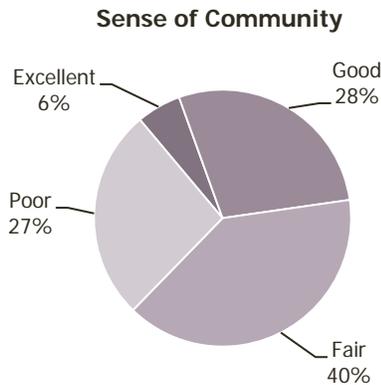
*Are the residents of Richmond connected to the community and each other?*

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. About one-third of residents assessed the sense of community in Richmond as excellent or good and this assessment was lower than the national average.

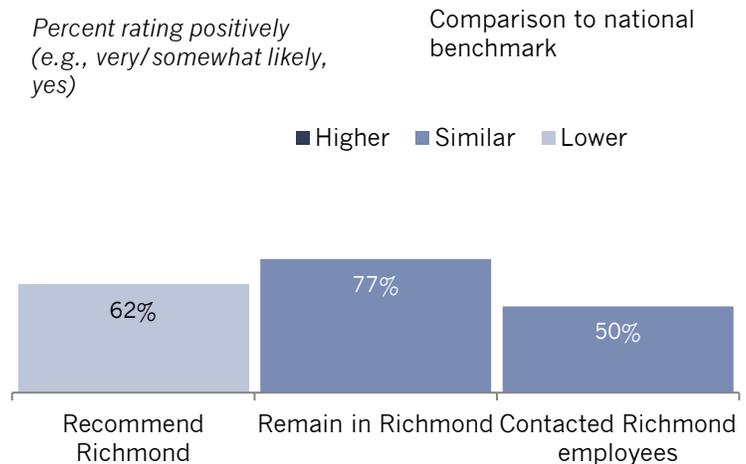
Similar to other communities, about three-quarters of respondents planned to remain in Richmond for the next five years and half had contacted Richmond City employees. About 6 in 10 residents would recommend living in the city to someone who asked, which was lower than comparison communities nationwide.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Levels of Participation varied widely across the different facets, making the benchmark comparisons, and comparisons over time, useful for interpreting the results. About 9 in 10 residents had conserved water, recycled at home, talked to or visited with their neighbors, and voted in local elections. These rates of participation were similar to those in other communities across the nation.

More Richmond residents reported stocking supplies in preparation for an emergency, using public transportation instead of driving, conserving water, contacting Richmond elected officials, attending or watching a local public meeting, and campaigning for an issue, cause or candidate than residents in comparison communities. In 2019, more survey participants had used public transportation instead of driving and fewer were under housing cost stress than in 2017.



Compared to municipalities across the country, fewer Richmond community members used Richmond recreation centers, participated in religious or spiritual activities, or used Richmond public libraries. More residents in Richmond reported a crime or were the victim of a crime than elsewhere in the county, and were more likely to observe a code violation and be under housing cost stress. In 2019, fewer residents had used Richmond recreation centers, watched a local public meeting, or read or watched the local news than in 2017. Additionally, more respondents observed a code violation in 2019.



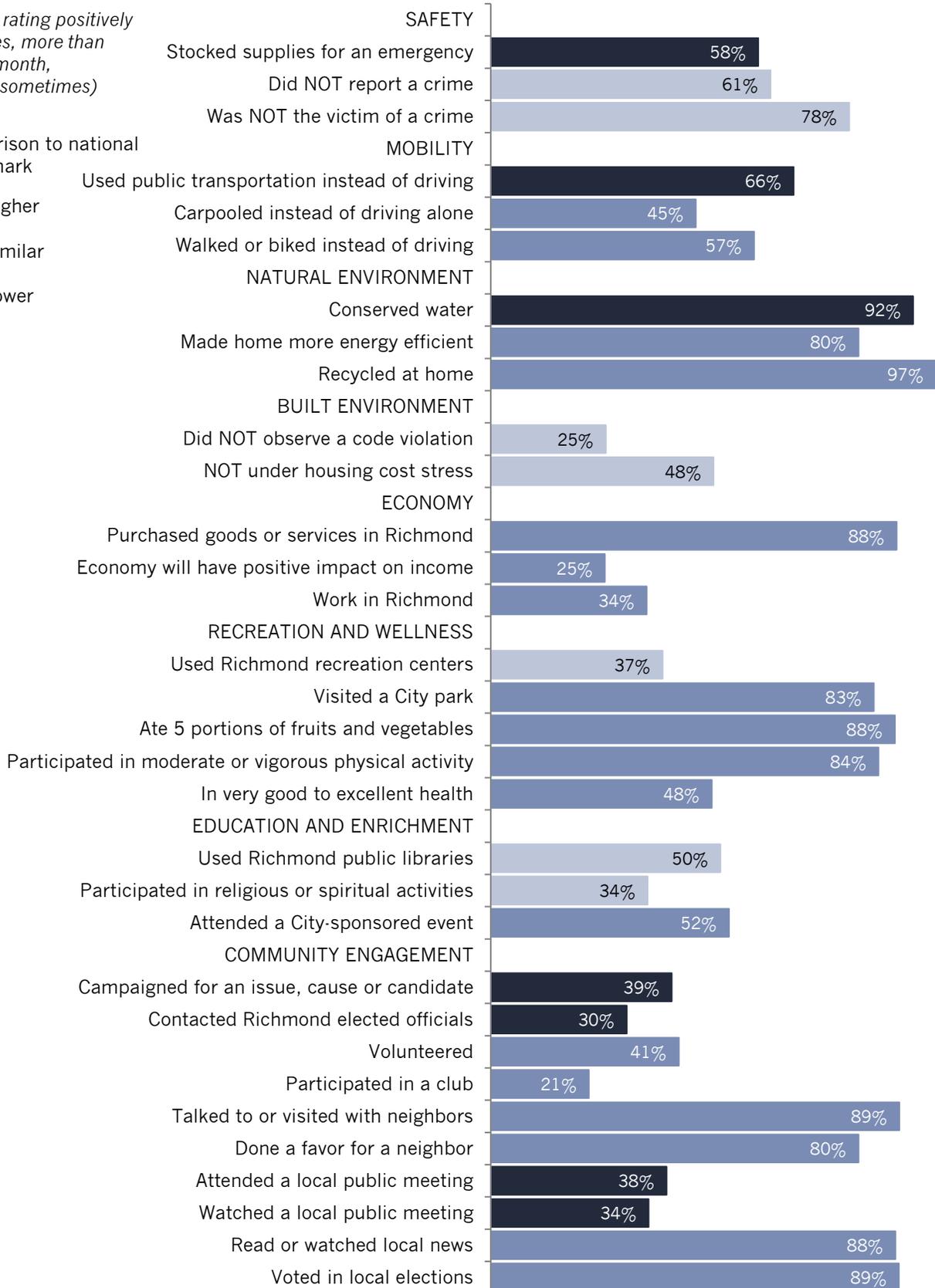
## The National Community Survey™

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



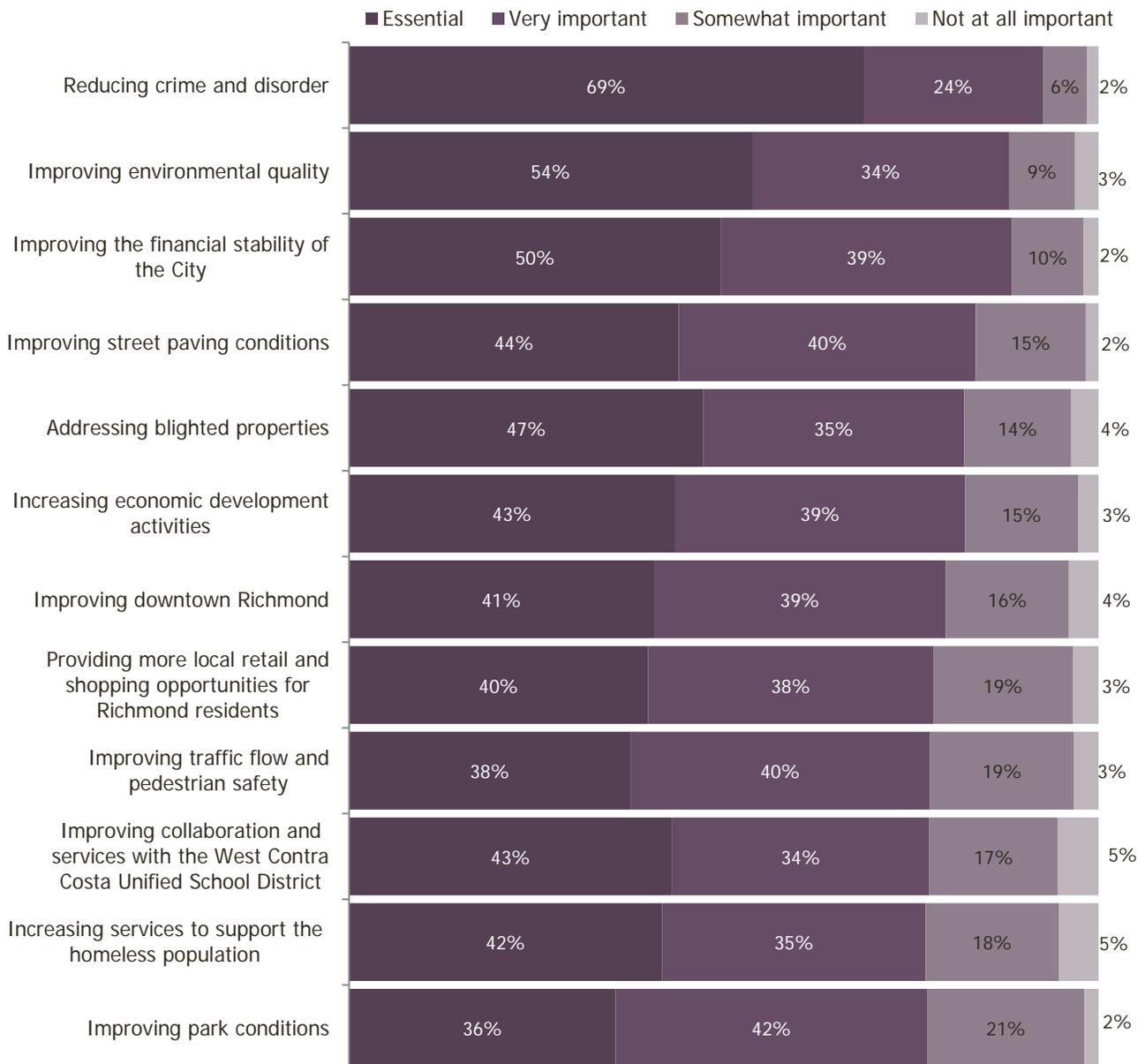
# Special Topics

The City of Richmond included five questions of special interest on The NCS, with topics related to the importance of City issues, resident health, concern of unfair treatment, and City priorities to support young people.

The City asked residents how important it was to address various issues in the next two years. Respondents felt that reducing crime and disorder, improving environmental quality, and improving the financial stability of the City were the most important, with about 9 in 10 rating these issues as essential or very important. At least half of residents felt the remaining issues were essential or very important, with the exception of expanding community wi-fi, which just under half of residents felt was at least very important (see Figure 4 and 5).

Figure 4: City Issues (Figure 1 of 2)

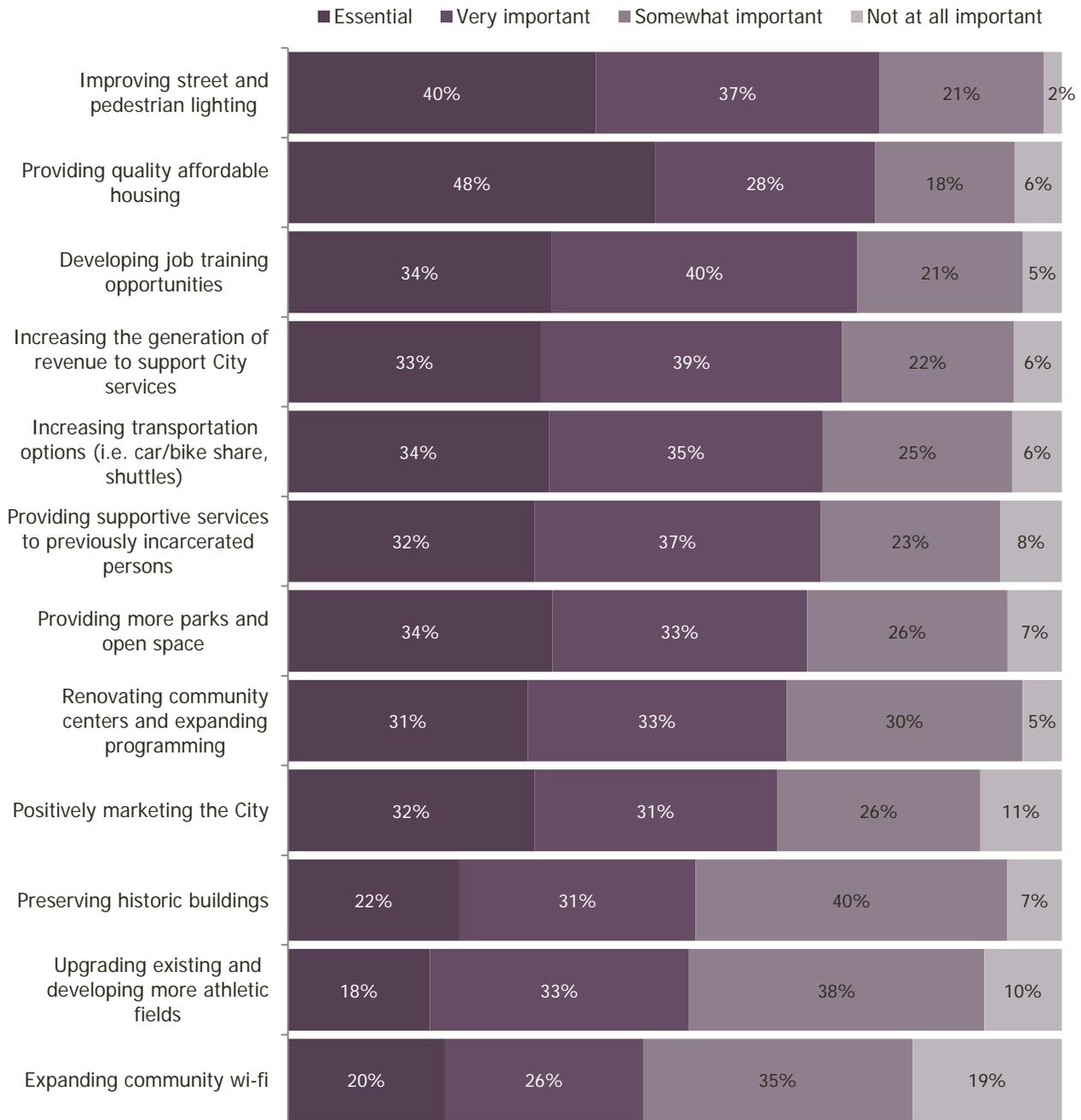
*How important, if at all, are the following issues for the City to address within the next two years?*



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Figure 5: City Issues (Figure 2 of 2)

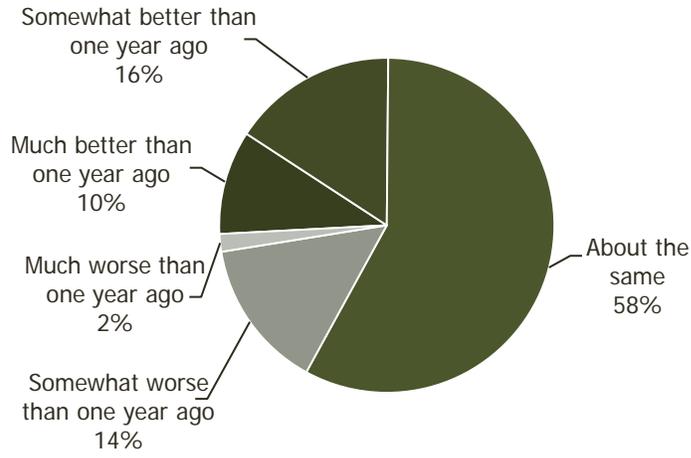
How important, if at all, are the following issues for the City to address within the next two years?



About 6 in 10 residents reported their health was about the same as a year ago. About 1 in 10 residents felt their health was much better than one year ago, while only 2% felt their health was much worse than one year ago.

Figure 6: Resident Health

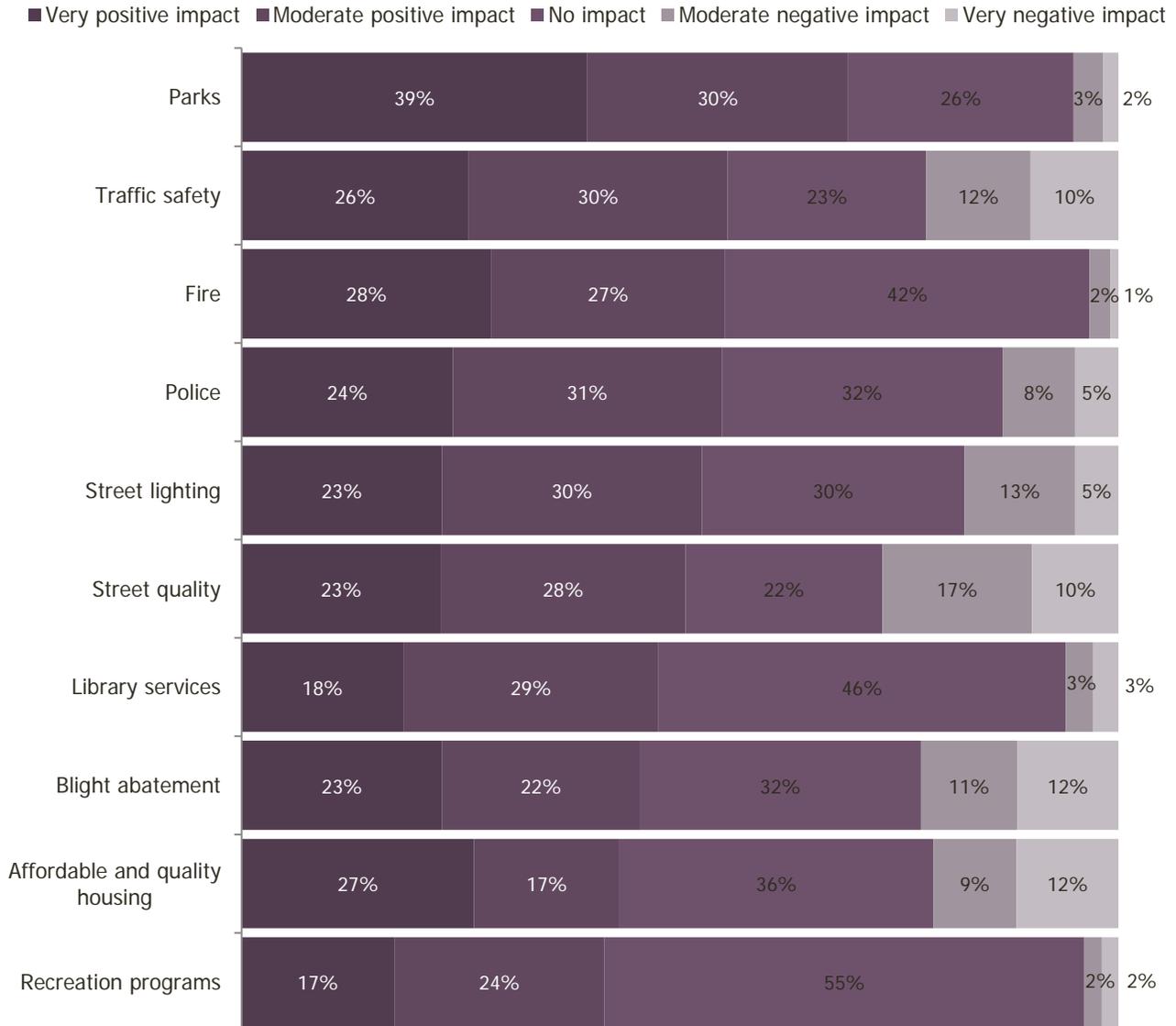
*Compared to one year ago, how would you rate your health in general now?*



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Residents rated the impact that several City services had on their health and well-being. About 7 in 10 residents indicated that parks had a very positive or moderately positive impact on their health and well-being, while over half felt similarly about traffic safety, fire, police, street lighting, and street quality. The majority of residents (55%) indicated that recreation programs had no impact on their health and well-being. Conversely, about 1 in 10 residents indicated that traffic safety, street quality, blight abatement, and affordable and quality housing had a very negative impact on their health and well-being.

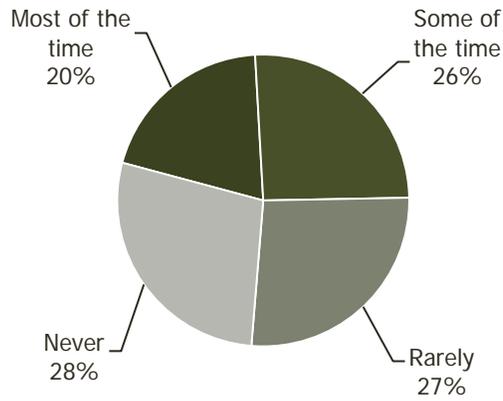
Figure 7: Impact of City Services on Health and Well-Being  
Please rate the impact of the following City services on your health and well-being:



**Just under half of residents (46%) worried about themselves, someone in their family, or any other person of their race, ethnicity or nationality receiving unfair treatment most or some of the time because of their race, ethnicity, or color. About one-quarter of residents indicated they never had this concern.**

Figure 8: Concern about Unfair Treatment

*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?*

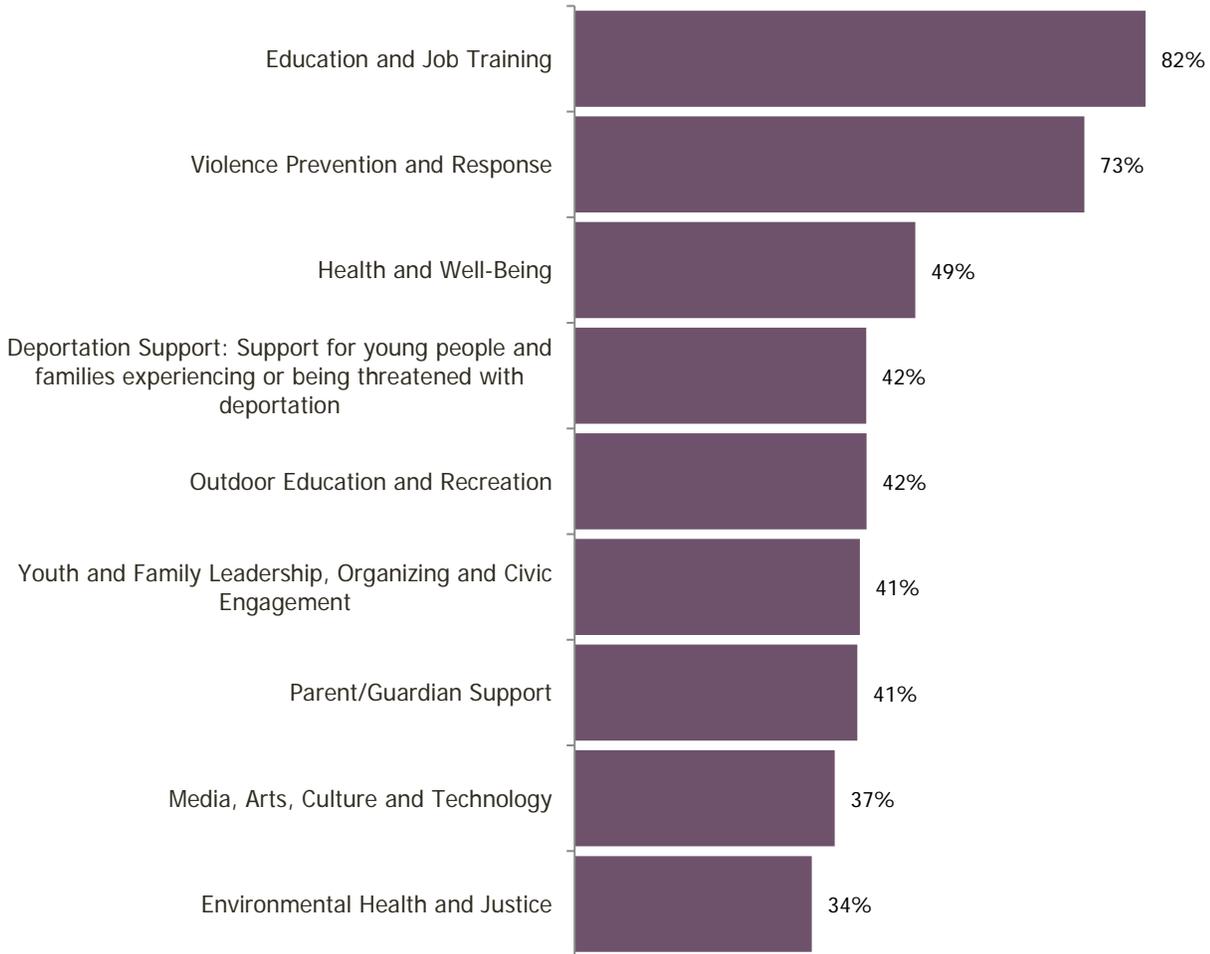


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Community members indicated which areas the City should prioritize to best support the young people of Richmond. About 8 in 10 residents felt that education and job training was a priority, while 7 in 10 felt that violence prevention and response was a priority. Half or fewer residents indicated that the other areas were priorities, with environmental health and justice receiving the least amount of precedence (34%).

Figure 9: City Priorities to Support Young People

*Which of the following areas should the City prioritize in order to best support young people (ages 0 to 24) in Richmond?*

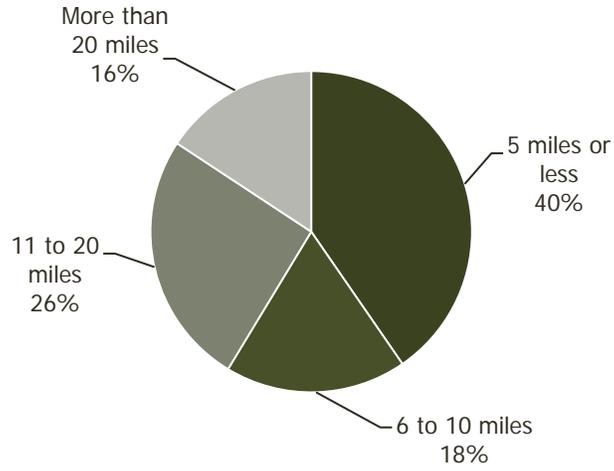


Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

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Over half of residents (58%) reported their home is 10 miles or less from work. About one-quarter of respondents reported their home is 11 to 20 miles from work, while 16% indicated their home is more than 20 miles from work.

Figure 10: Distance from Home to Work  
*About how far is your home from work?*



# Conclusions

## Safety remains a priority for residents in Richmond.

About 9 in 10 residents felt that Safety was an essential or very important focus for the community in the coming two years. Around three-quarters of residents felt safe in their neighborhoods, while just under half felt safe in the downtown/commercial area; these assessments were lower than observed in other communities across the county. Ratings for fire services were positive and on par with the national benchmarks, while other safety-related City services lagged behind averages. More residents in Richmond reported a crime or were the victim of a crime than in other communities. However, respondents in Richmond were more likely to have stocked supplies in preparation for an emergency than in communities nationwide.

Over half of residents indicated that police and fire services had a very positive or moderately positive impact on their health and well-being. In a question asked to gauge community members' concern regarding unfair treatment, close to half reported they were worried about themselves and household members would be mistreated because of their race, ethnicity, or color. Additionally, about 7 in 10 residents felt that violence prevention and response should be a priority to best support young people in the community. When asked about the importance of various issues for the City to address in the next two years, residents felt that reducing crime and disorder was most important issue, with nearly all indicating this was essential or very important.

## Residents voice Economy as an area for opportunity.

Survey participants also indicated that Economy was a priority for the city. Roughly one-quarter or more of residents positively rated Richmond as a place to work and to visit, overall quality of business and service establishments, and cost of living. About 2 in 10 residents or less gave high marks to overall economic health, shopping, and employment opportunities, vibrancy of the downtown/commercial area and economic development. These ratings were lower than national averages.

At least three-quarters of respondents indicated that improving the financial stability of the City, developing job training opportunities, improving downtown Richmond, increasing economic development activities, and providing more local retail and shopping opportunities for Richmond residents were essential or very important issues to address in the next two years. When asked what the City should prioritize in order to best support young people, the most common response was education and job training, with 8 in 10 selecting this focus area.

## Richmond residents are pleased with ease of travel by car, bike, and public transportation, but have concerns about walkways and streets.

At least half of community members assigned positive reviews to ease of travel by car and public parking, while about 4 in 10 gave high marks to traffic flow on major streets, ease of travel by bicycle and by public transportation, traffic signal timing, and bus or transit services. These ratings were on par with national averages. Compared to municipalities across the country, more residents in Richmond used public transportation instead of driving. Additionally, respondents carpooled, walked, or biked instead of driving at rates that were commensurate with rates nationwide.

While assessments of street repair and street lighting improved from 2017 to 2019, these ratings were below average. Other areas where evaluations were lower than the national benchmarks included ease of walking, overall ease of travel, availability of paths and walking trails, traffic enforcement, street cleaning, and sidewalk maintenance. At least 7 in 10 residents indicated that improving traffic flow and pedestrian safety, improving street and pedestrian lighting, increasing transportation options, and improving street paving conditions were essential or very important issues for the City to address in the coming years. About half of residents felt that street quality, street lighting, and traffic safety had a very positive or moderately positive impact on their health and well-being; however, about 2 in 10 residents indicated that street quality and traffic safety had a very or moderately negative impact on their health and well-being.

## Residents are engaged in the civic process.

About 3 in 10 Richmond community members indicated they had contacted elected officials; campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate; and had watched or attended a local public meeting, all of which exceeded national averages. Additionally, around half of survey participants felt positively about the opportunities to participate in community matters. Conversely, respondents gave lower evaluations than those seen elsewhere to government performance measures; therefore, the City might consider additional efforts to communicate their willingness to involve residents in local government to build trust.