

The National Citizen Survey™

Clearwater, FL

Community Livability Report

2014

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The National Citizen Survey™
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About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Clearwater. 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).

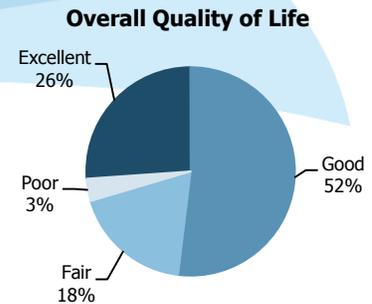
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 632 residents of the City of Clearwater. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Clearwater

Most residents rated the quality of life in Clearwater as excellent or good. This level was similar to the benchmark (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.

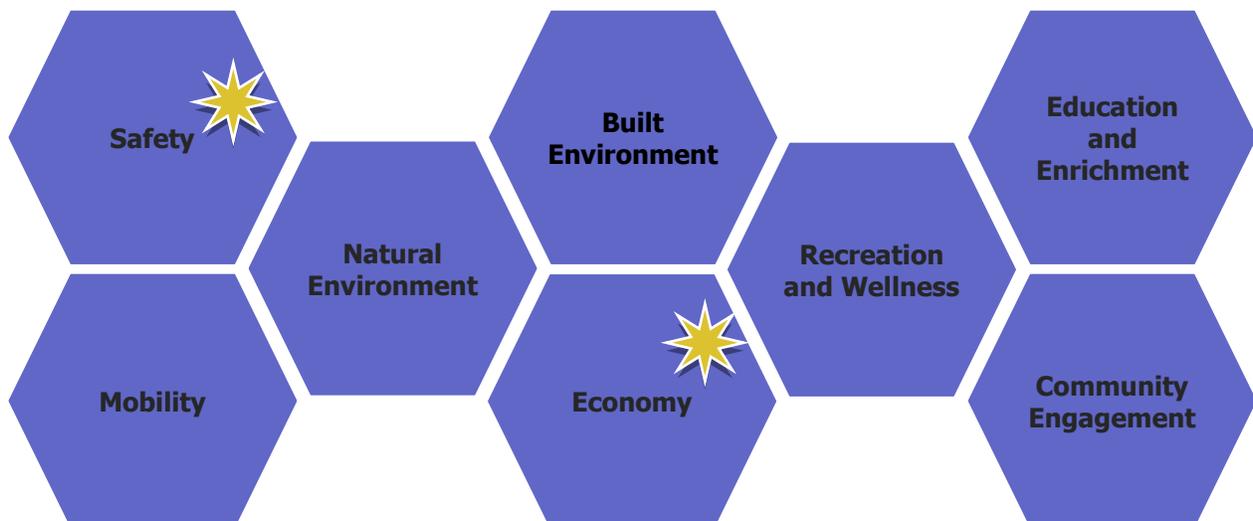


In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Clearwater community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Clearwater residents gave favorable ratings to these and the remaining facets of community, including Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement. Ratings for each facet were similar to other communities. This overview of the key aspects of community quality provides a quick summary of where residents see exceptionally strong performance and where performance offers the greatest opportunity for improvement. Linking quality to importance offers community members and leaders a view into the characteristics of the community that matter most and that seem to be working best.

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 Clearwater’s unique questions.

Legend

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



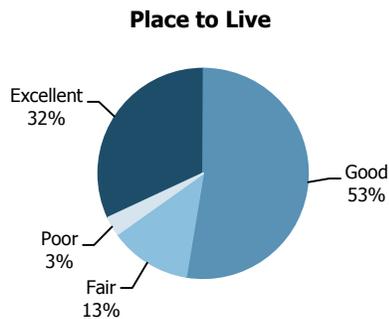
Community Characteristics

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 Clearwater, 85% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Clearwater as a place to live were similar to 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 Clearwater as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Clearwater and its overall appearance. Similar to communities elsewhere, at least two-thirds of respondents rated each as excellent or good.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Most ratings were similar to other communities in the U.S. Nine in 10 residents felt safety in their neighborhoods and agreed that Clearwater was an excellent or good place to visit. Nearly all aspects of Community Characteristics related to Natural Environment and Recreation and Wellness were rated positively by at least 6 in 10 respondents. Within the facet of Economy, more residents in Clearwater rated the city's shopping opportunities and the city as a place to visit favorably compared to other communities. Residents rated characteristics related to car travel and transit in Clearwater less highly than the benchmark. In contrast, ease of travel by walking or biking received positive ratings by a majority of respondents. Other ratings lagging behind the benchmark were the quality of new development, the vibrancy of the downtown/commercial area, the feeling of safety in the downtown/commercial area and K-12 education.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower

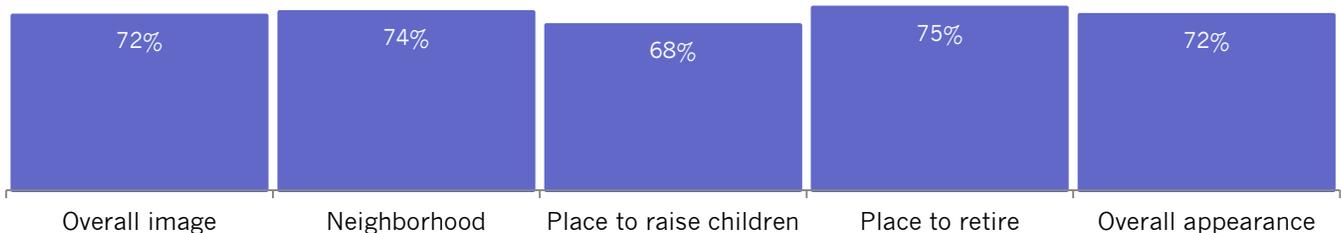
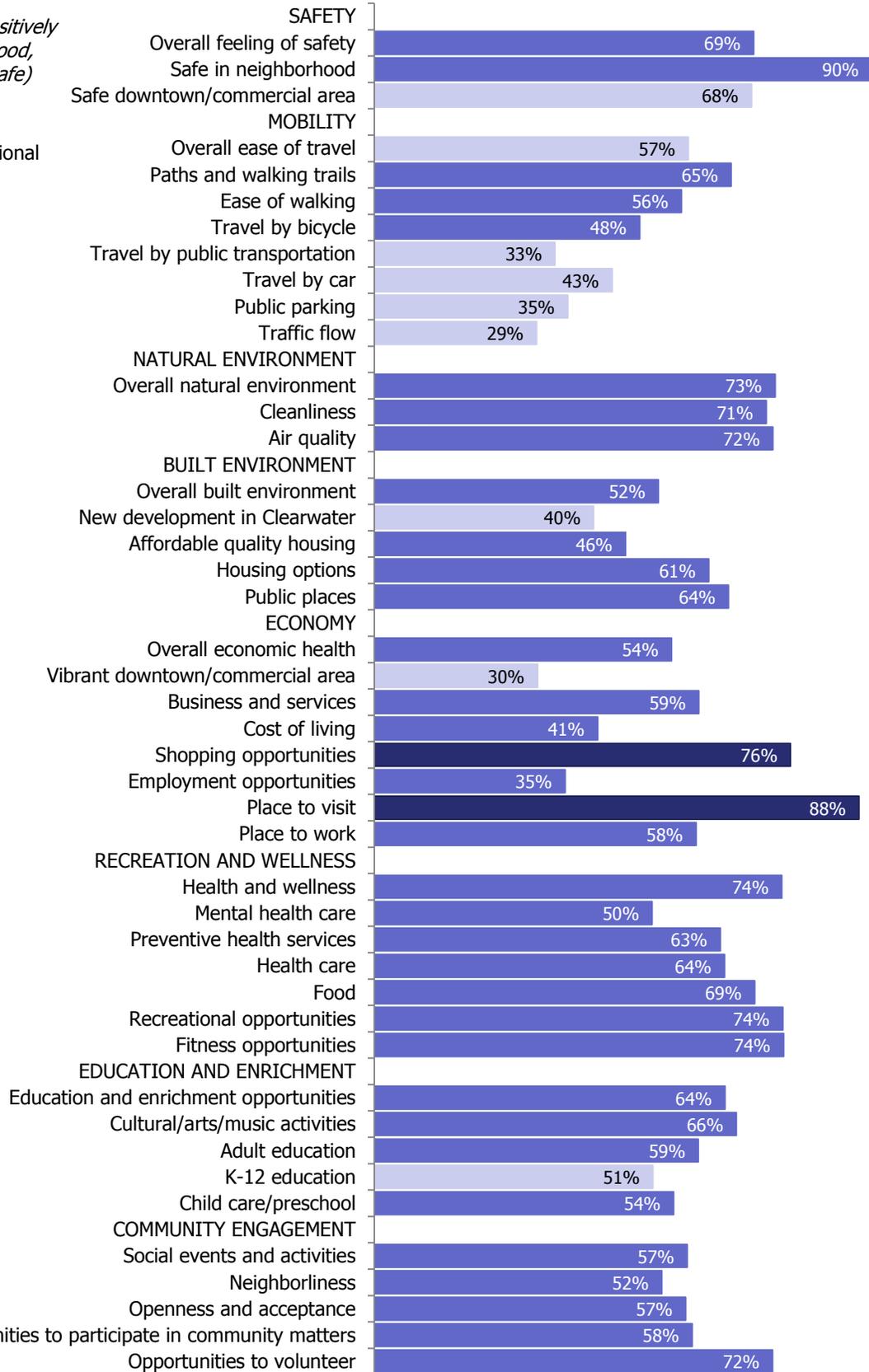


Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

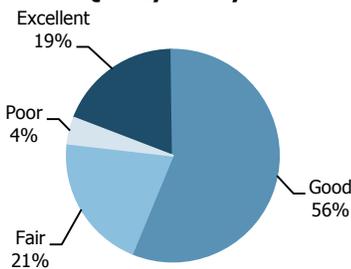
How well does the government of Clearwater meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Clearwater as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Three-quarters of residents rated the overall quality of services provided by Clearwater as excellent or good and this was similar to other communities. In contrast, only 4 in 10 felt as positively about services provided by the Federal Government.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Clearwater’s leadership and governance. At a level similar to other communities, almost half of Clearwater residents rated the City’s value of services for taxes paid, overall direction, welcoming citizen involvement, acting in the best interest of Clearwater, honesty, treating all residents fairly and their confidence in City government favorably. Seven in ten indicated that the City’s customer service was excellent or good and this was also similar to the benchmark.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Clearwater. In general, ratings were similar to the benchmark and only two services (traffic signal timing and drinking water) were rated lower than in other communities. The facets of Safety, Natural Environment and Recreation and Wellness had the highest rated services, with most rated as excellent or good by at least two-thirds of residents. Mobility and Economy were the lowest-rated facets, but similar to other communities, at least 4 in 10 residents rated nearly all of these services positively.

Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower

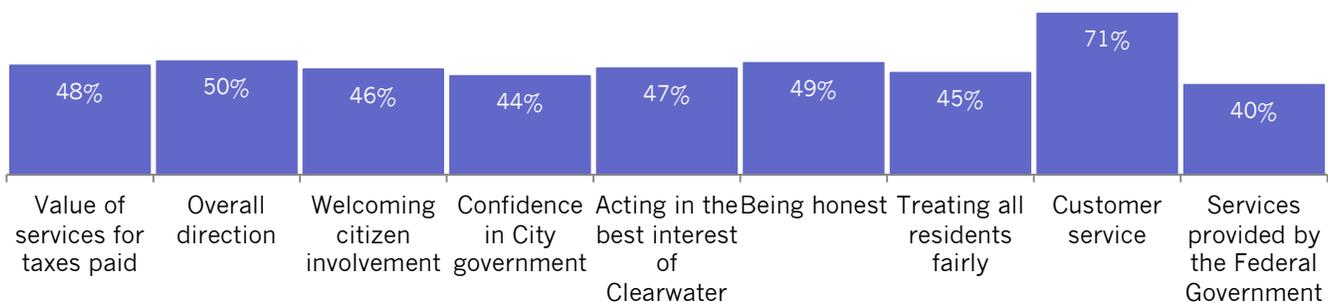


Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

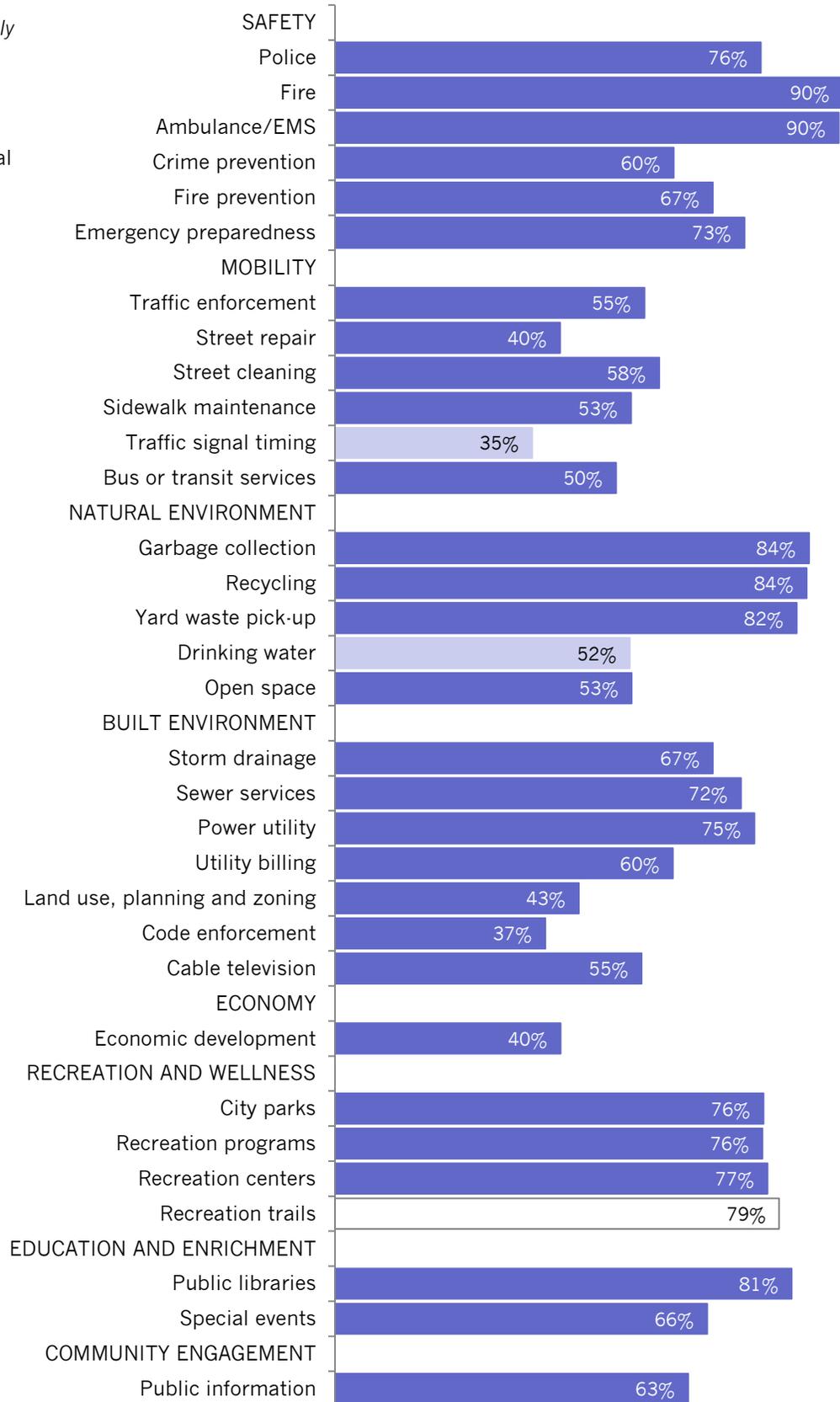
Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher

■ Similar

■ Lower

□ Not available



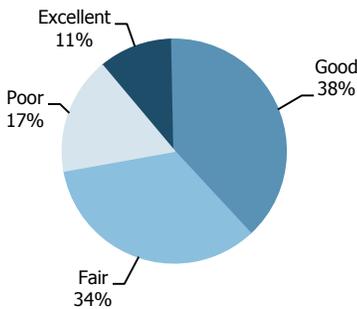
Participation

Are the residents of Clearwater 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. Fewer residents of Clearwater (49%) compared to other communities described the city’s sense of community as excellent or good. But, over 8 in 10 respondents would recommend Clearwater to others and also planned on remaining in Clearwater.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Although levels of participation varied widely by each experience, Clearwater residents participated or experienced each at levels similar to the benchmark, with a higher level of emergency preparation than elsewhere. Among Clearwater residents, participation was highest in activities related to the Natural Environment, purchasing goods or services in Clearwater, participating in physical activity, visiting with neighbors and reading or watching local news, which about 8 in 10 residents said they had done. Similarly, most residents (87%) had not been the victim of a crime. Only about a quarter of respondents felt that the economy would have a positive impact on their income and participation was least frequent for carpooling, campaigning, contacting elected officials and attending public meetings, but all were similar to levels found in other communities.

Sense of Community



Percent rating positively (e.g., very/somewhat likely, yes)

Comparison to national benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

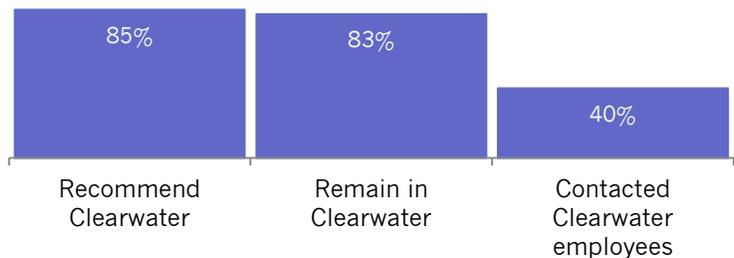
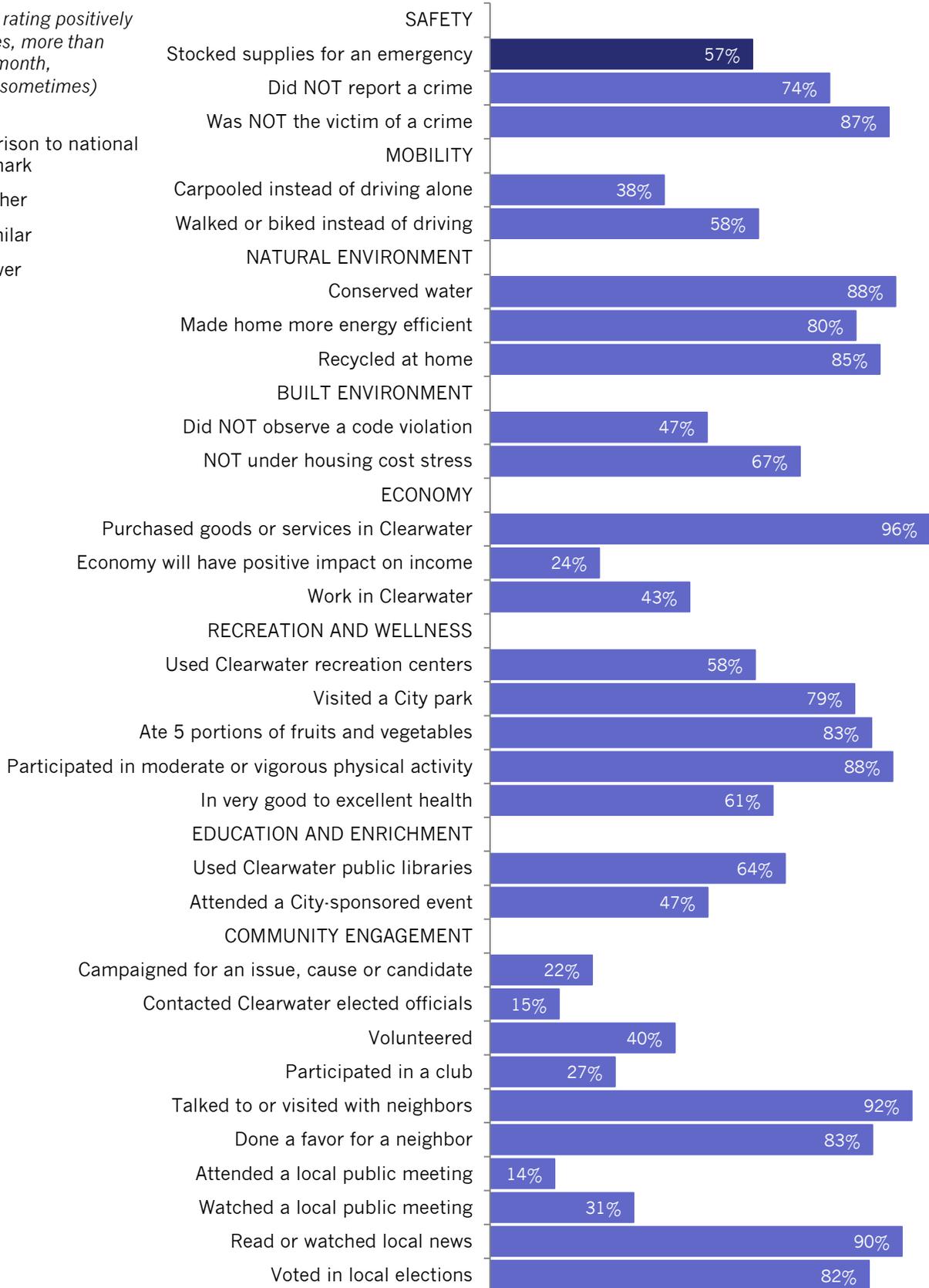


Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



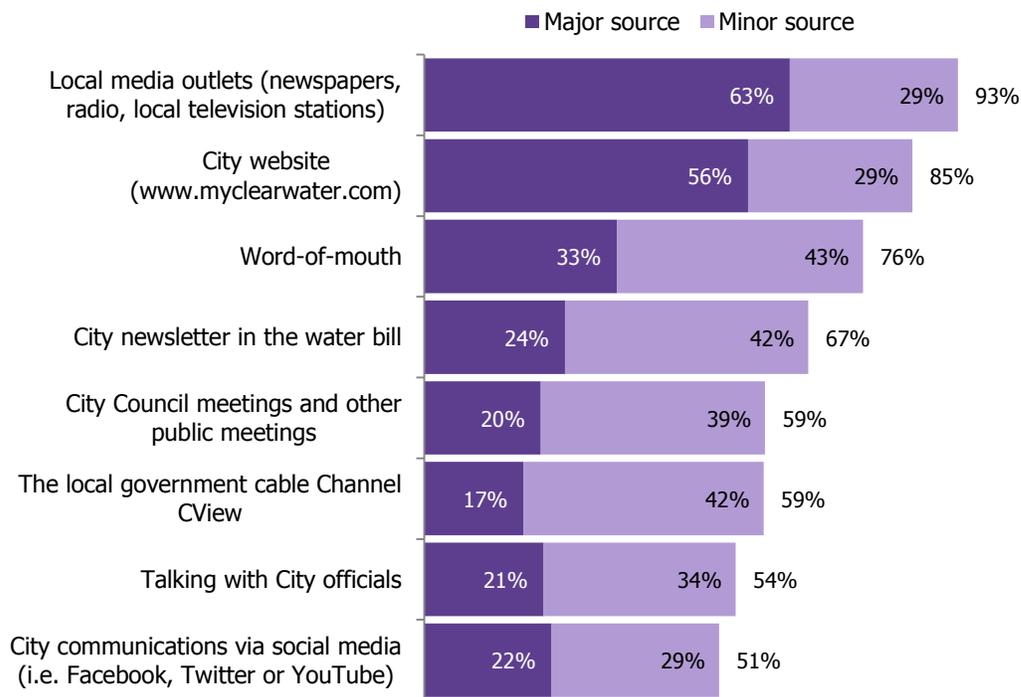
Special Topics

The City of Clearwater included six questions of special interest on The NCS. Special question topics included information sources, trash pick-up, drinking water and the image of Clearwater.

Residents used a variety of sources for information about the City. About 9 in 10 used local media outlets or the City website as a major or minor source of information, followed by word-of-mouth (76%) and the City newsletter included with the water bill (67%). In addition, a majority said that City Council meetings, the local government cable channel, talking with City officials and City communications via social media were other sources of information that they used.

Figure 4: 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 currently offers twice-weekly trash pickup. About three-quarters of residents used both pick-ups and one-quarter put their trash out once a week or less. About half had concerns about once-a-week trash pick-up. When asked to describe their concerns about weekly trash pick-up, comments centered on the accumulation of trash (59% of responses), odor (19%) and pests (8%; see the *Open End Report*, provided under separate cover). Some residents (6%) thought that the level of service that they received should be tied to cost. Some residents (6%) thought that the level of service that they received should be tied to cost.

Figure 5: Frequency of Putting Trash Out
*The City offers trash pick-up two times per week.
 How often do you put your trash out for pick-up?*

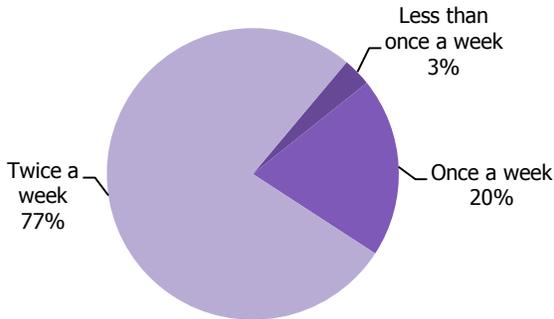


Figure 6: Opinions on Weekly Trash Pick-up
If the trash pick-up schedule were changed from two times per week to one time per week, would you have any concerns?

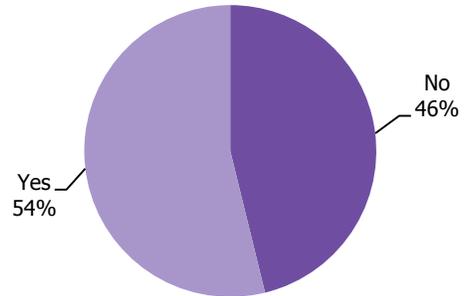
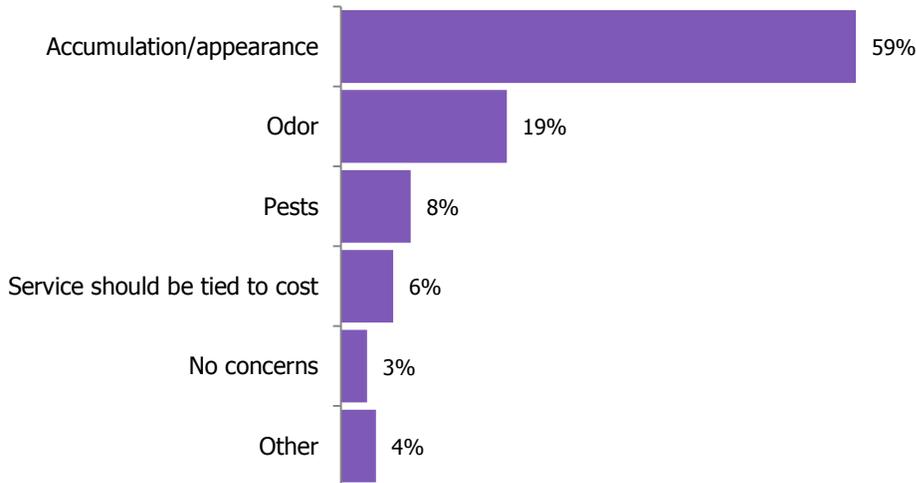


Figure 7: Weekly Trash Pick-up Concerns
(If yes) Please describe your concerns:



Clearwater residents use both tap water and bottled water for drinking or cooking. Most residents used bottled water at least some of the time for these purposes (85%) or filtered tap water (74%). Still, two-thirds of residents used unfiltered tap water for drinking or cooking at least some of the time. When considering the quality of drinking water in Clearwater, 7 in 10 respondents rated the water pressure and clarity of the water as excellent or good; fewer (42%) rated the taste of the water as positively.

Figure 8: Water Used for Drinking or Cooking

How often, if ever, do you use the following types of water for drinking or cooking?

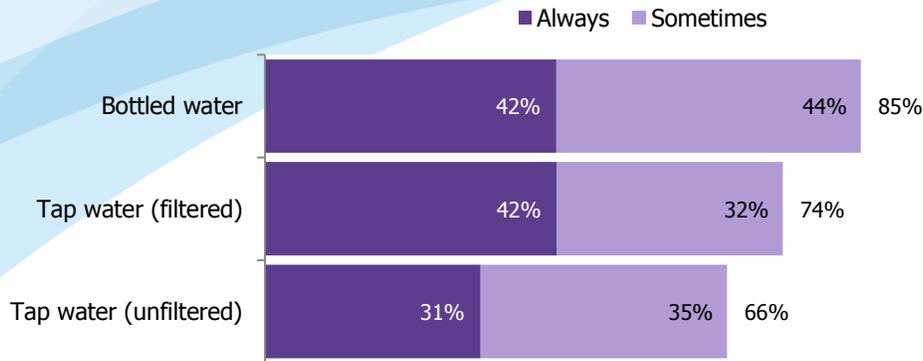
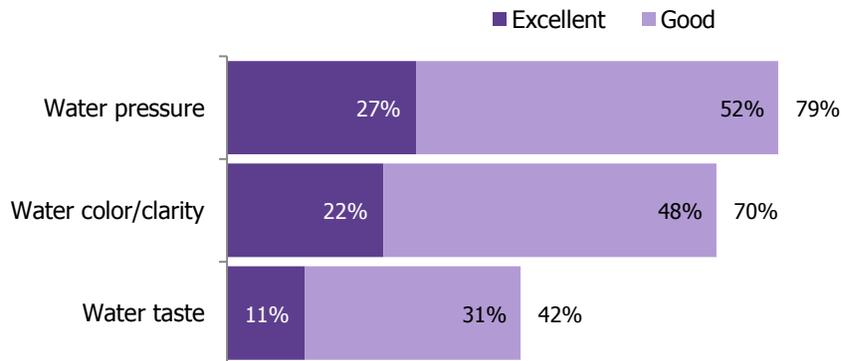


Figure 9: Water Quality

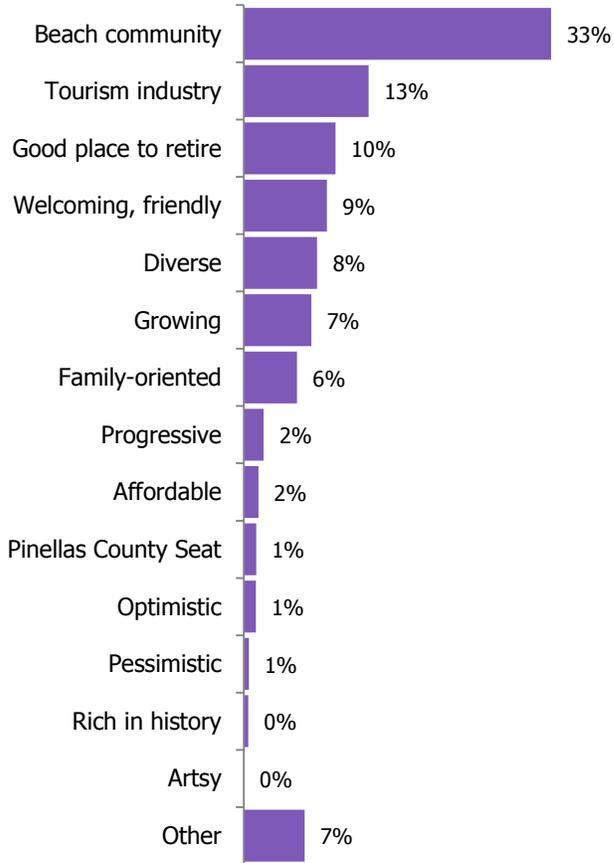
Thinking about drinking water in Clearwater, please rate the quality of each of the following characteristics:



Thinking about the image of Clearwater, respondents most commonly recognized the city as a beach community and as a tourist destination. One-third of residents identified Clearwater as a beach community, followed by 13% for its tourism and 10% as a good place to retire. Between 5% and 10% indicated that they thought of the community as friendly and welcoming, diverse, growing and family-oriented.

Figure 10: Image of Clearwater

Which adjective or phrase below do you think best describes Clearwater? (Please select only ONE.)



Conclusions

Clearwater residents continue to enjoy a high quality of life.

Clearwater residents felt positively about the overall quality of life in Clearwater. Survey participants valued the city and their neighborhoods as a place to live. Clearwater residents recognized the quality of the city's overall image and appearance and their community as a place to raise children and retire, and each of these ratings were higher in 2014 than in 2008. Clearwater as a beach community, a destination for tourism and a good place to retire resonated most with respondents when thinking about the city's image. The vast majority of residents would recommend living in Clearwater and planned on staying and ratings in both of these areas were higher than ratings in 2008.

Clearwater's Natural Environment is a strong positive feature of the community.

Clearwater's Natural Environment was an area that consistently received positive ratings from residents. Ratings of the overall natural environment, cleanliness and air quality in Clearwater were positive in 2014 and higher than in 2008. Residents rated most services in this area positively, including garbage collection, recycling and yard waste pick up. Only ratings for the quality of drinking water lagged behind other communities. A majority of residents said that they used unfiltered tap water for drinking and cooking at least some of the time, but more reported that they used filtered tap water or bottled water. Participation in recycling, conserving water and making home energy efficiency improvements was high. Most residents made use of twice-weekly trash pick-up and about half expressed concerns about moving to one-a-week trash pick-up that centered on the accumulation of trash, odor and pests. Compared to 2008, ratings of recycling services increased, as did participation in recycling.

Walking and biking lead the way for Mobility in Clearwater.

Clearwater received solid ratings for ease of travel on foot or by bicycle, but ratings for ease of travel overall and in relation to travel by car or transit lagged behind other communities, including, travel by car, traffic flow, public parking and ease of travel by public transportation. Residents generally rated transportation services on par with other communities, with the exception of traffic signal timing which was lower than the benchmark. Ratings decreased for street repair, street cleaning, traffic signal timing and transit services in 2014 compared to 2008. Similar to other communities, a majority of respondents to the survey reported walking or biking instead of driving and some had carpooled instead of driving.