THE NCS™

The National Citizen Survey™

O'Fallon, IL

Community Livability Report

2018

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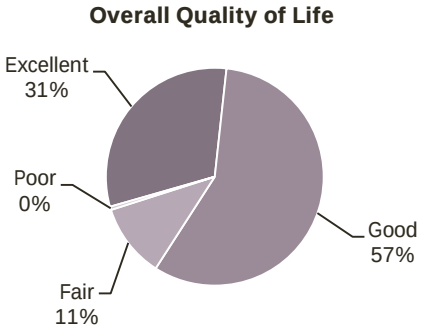
About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the "livability" of O'Fallon. 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 417 residents of the City of O'Fallon. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% 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 O'Fallon

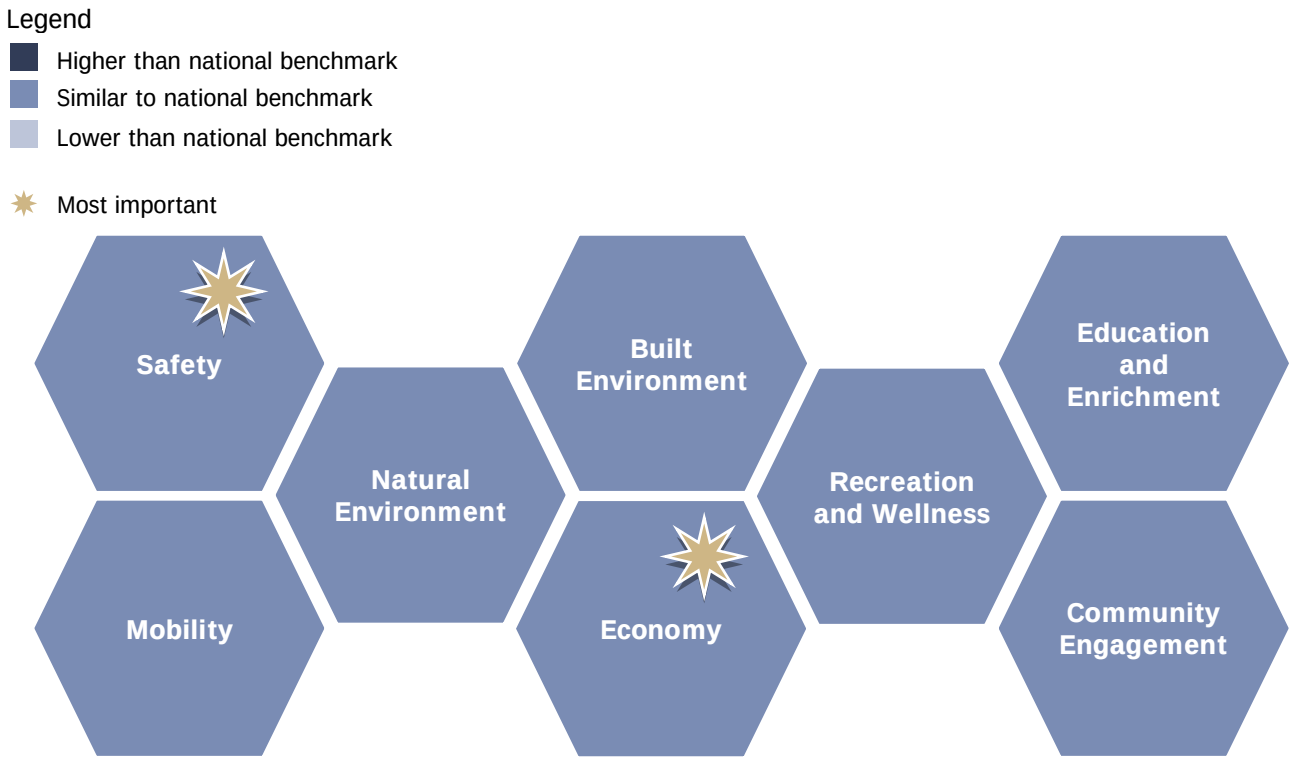


Most residents rated the quality of life in O'Fallon as excellent or good. This was similar to ratings given in other communities across the nation (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

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. As in 2016, residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the O'Fallon community in the coming two years. These facets, as well as all other facets of community livability, tended to receive ratings that were positive and similar to the national 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 O'Fallon's unique questions.



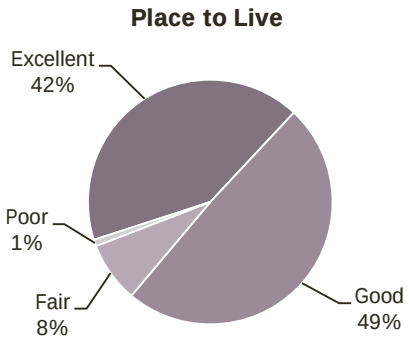
Community Characteristics

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 O'Fallon, 91% rated the city as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of O'Fallon 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 O'Fallon as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of O'Fallon and its overall appearance. About 8 in 10 residents or more gave favorable marks to all of these aspects and most were similar to ratings given in communities elsewhere except for overall image of the city, which was above average.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Many aspects received positive ratings from a majority of residents; for example, 9 in 10 residents positively rated the overall feeling of safety in O'Fallon, and virtually all felt safe in their neighborhoods and in the Downtown area during the day. Residents' ratings for aspects of Built Environment (overall quality of new development and variety of housing options), as well as health care-related aspects of Recreation and Wellness, were higher than those observed in other communities nationwide. O'Fallon residents also rated K-12 education more favorably than residents of other communities.



Compared to 2016, ratings for several aspects of Mobility and Built Environment decreased in 2018, while health care-related aspects of Recreation and Wellness increased (for more information see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover).

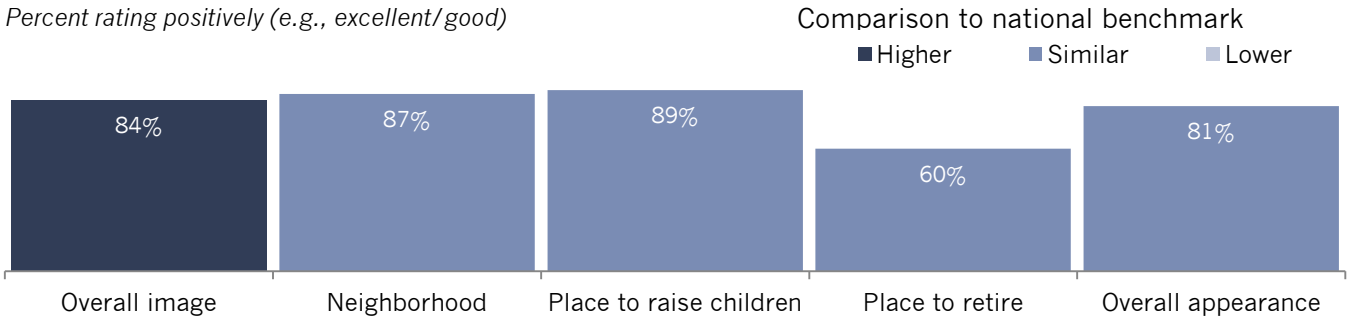
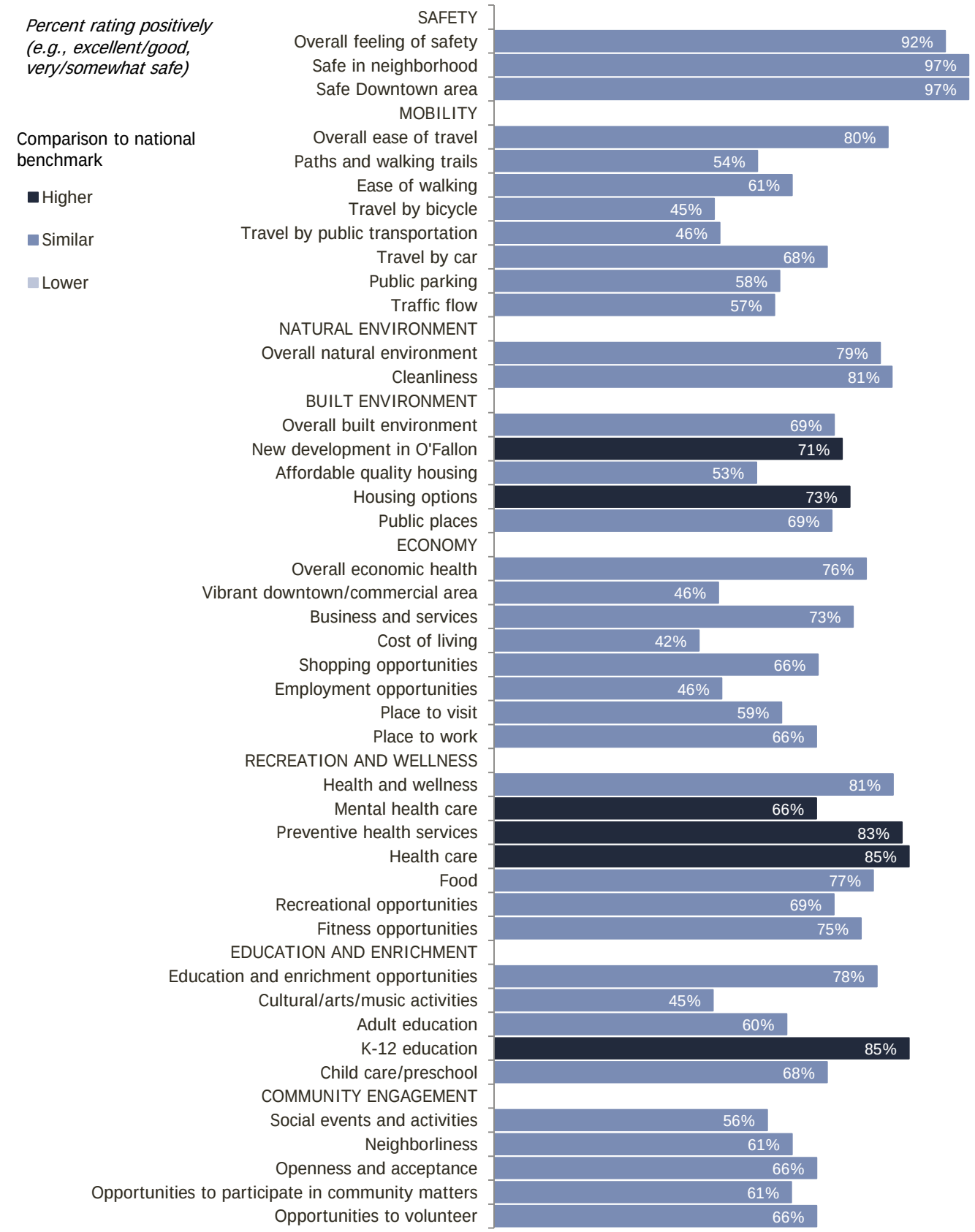


Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics



Governance

How well does the government of O'Fallon meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

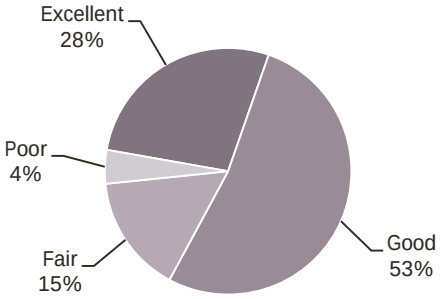
The overall quality of the services provided by O'Fallon as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Eight in ten residents gave favorable evaluations to the overall quality of services provided by the City, while about one-third were pleased with the services provided by the Federal Government; both of these ratings were similar to the national benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of O'Fallon's leadership and governance. Roughly two-thirds of residents gave positive reviews to most aspects of government performance and all of these ratings were similar to those given in other communities.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in O'Fallon. All City services were rated positively by a majority of respondents and were rated similar to or higher than national benchmarks. Services that stood out with above-average ratings included police; crime prevention; bus or transit services; land use, planning and zoning; economic development; recreation programs; and health services. At least 6 in 10 residents gave favorable ratings to each of these services.

When compared to 2016, most ratings remained stable, although evaluations for several aspects of Mobility (including traffic enforcement, street cleaning and bus or transit services) declined in 2018.

Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

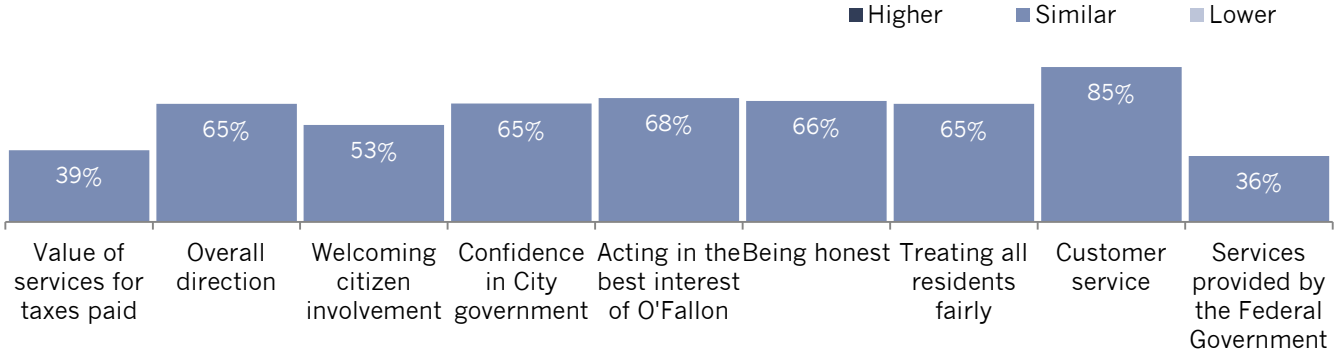
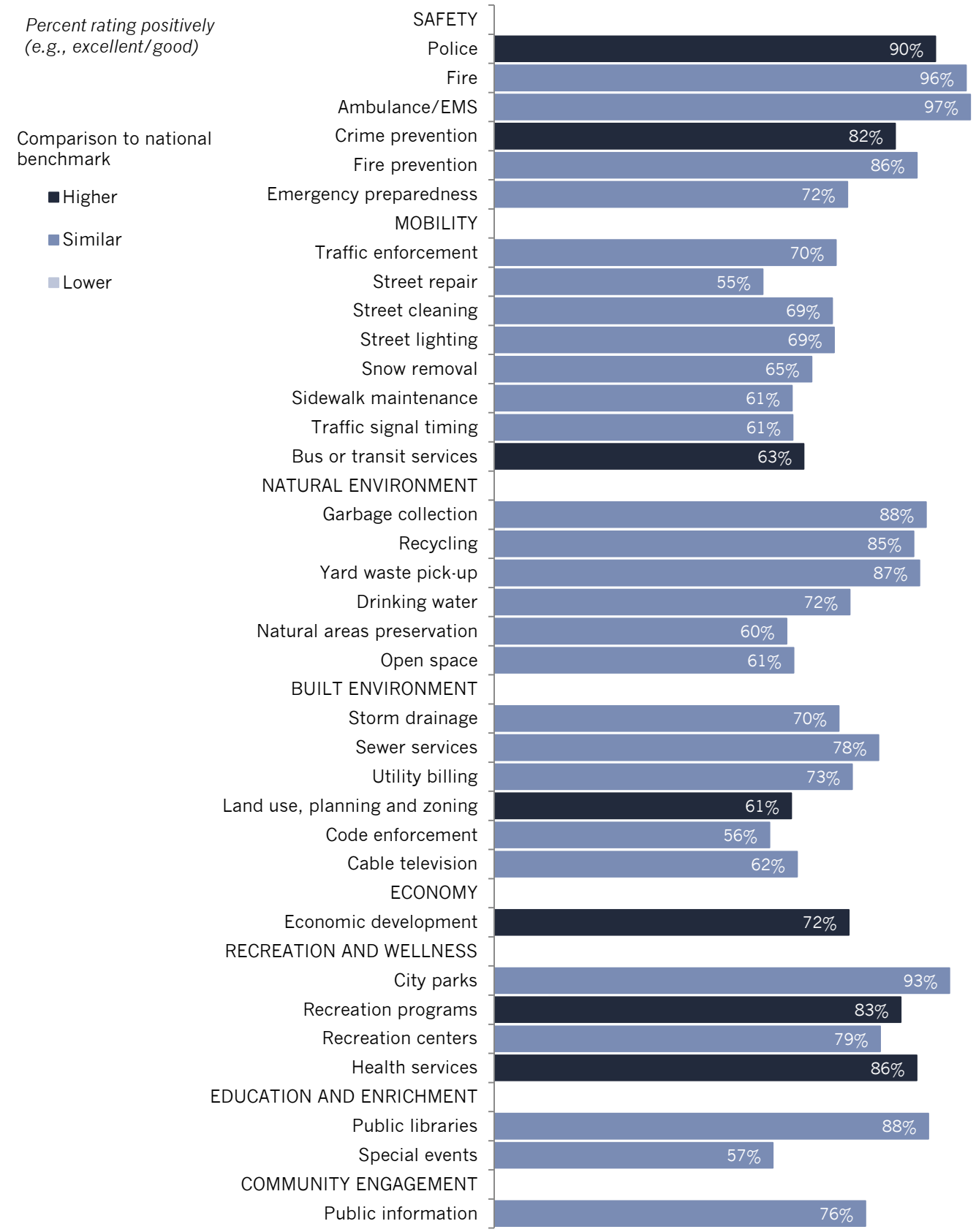


Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

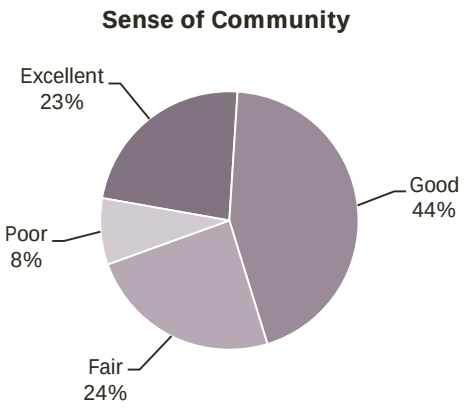


Participation

Are the residents of O'Fallon 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. Two-thirds of residents gave positive reviews to the sense of community in O'Fallon, while 9 in 10 would recommend living in the city to someone who asked and 8 in 10 planned to remain in the city for the next five years. These ratings were all similar to those given in other communities across the nation (although the proportion of residents who planned to remain in the city for the next five years decreased from 2016 to 2018).

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Participation rates varied widely, making the comparison to the benchmark, as well as to O'Fallon's ratings over time, useful for interpreting the results. All activity levels within the facets of Safety, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement were similar to those observed in other communities. O'Fallon residents were less likely than those who lived elsewhere to be under housing cost stress and more likely to have a positive economic outlook; further, more residents had a positive economic outlook in 2018 than in 2016. However, the proportions of residents who had used public transportation instead of driving, conserved water or worked in the City were lower than average.



Compared to 2016, most participation rates remained stable in 2018. Residents in 2018 were more likely to have watched a local public meeting or to have contacted O'Fallon employees, but also more likely to have observed a code violation.

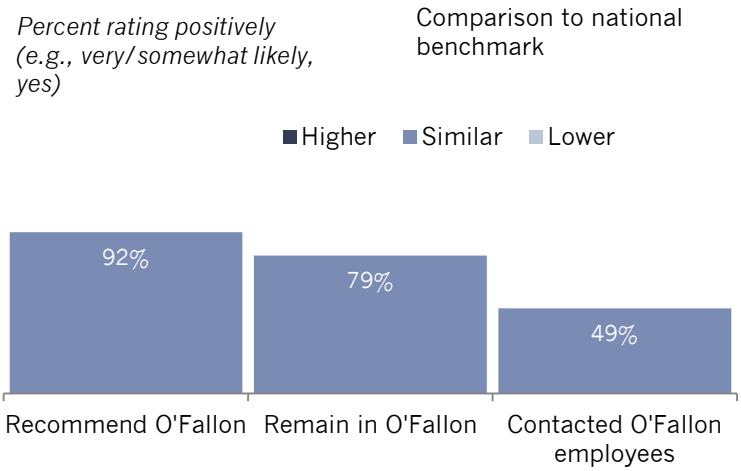
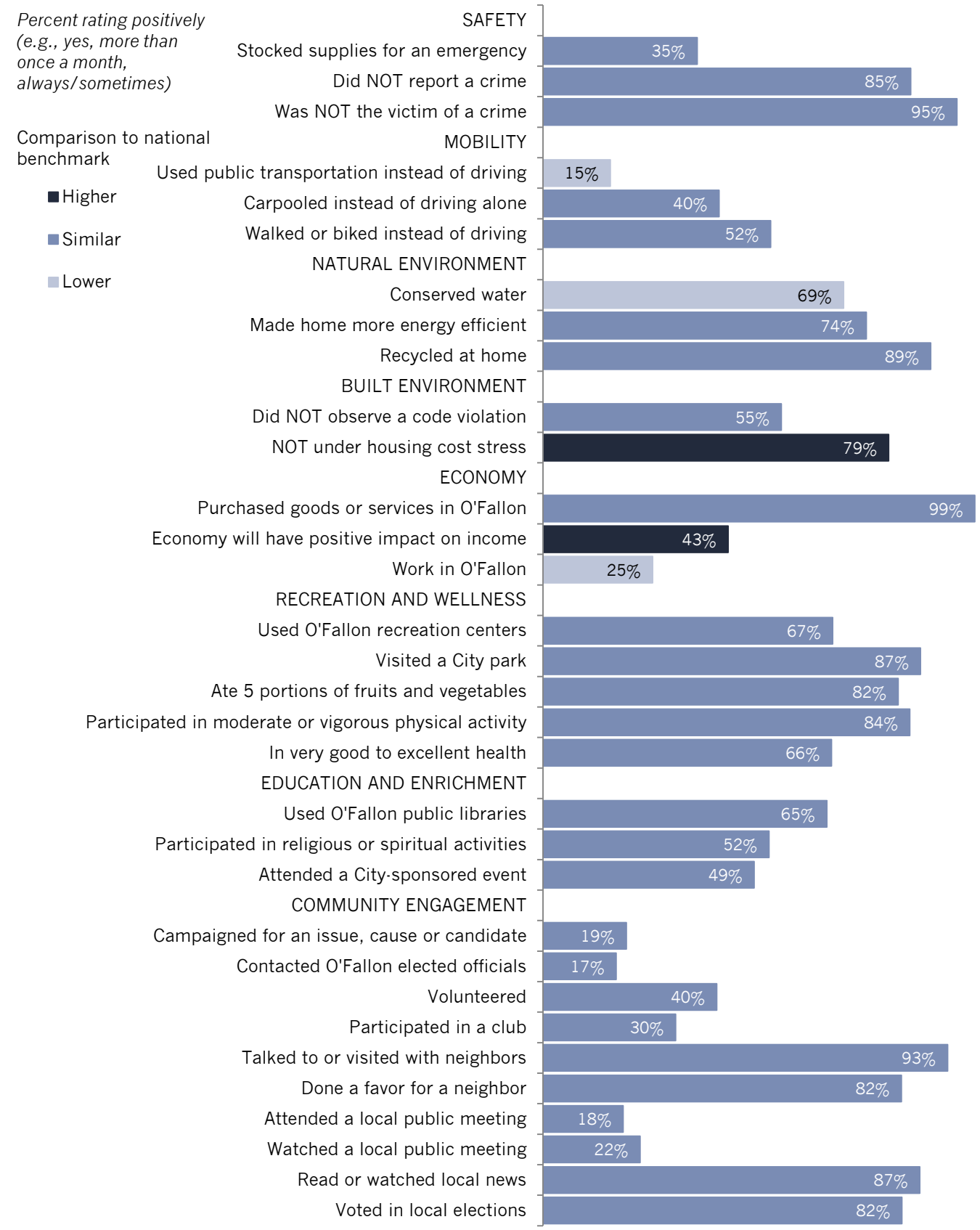


Figure 3: Aspects of Participation



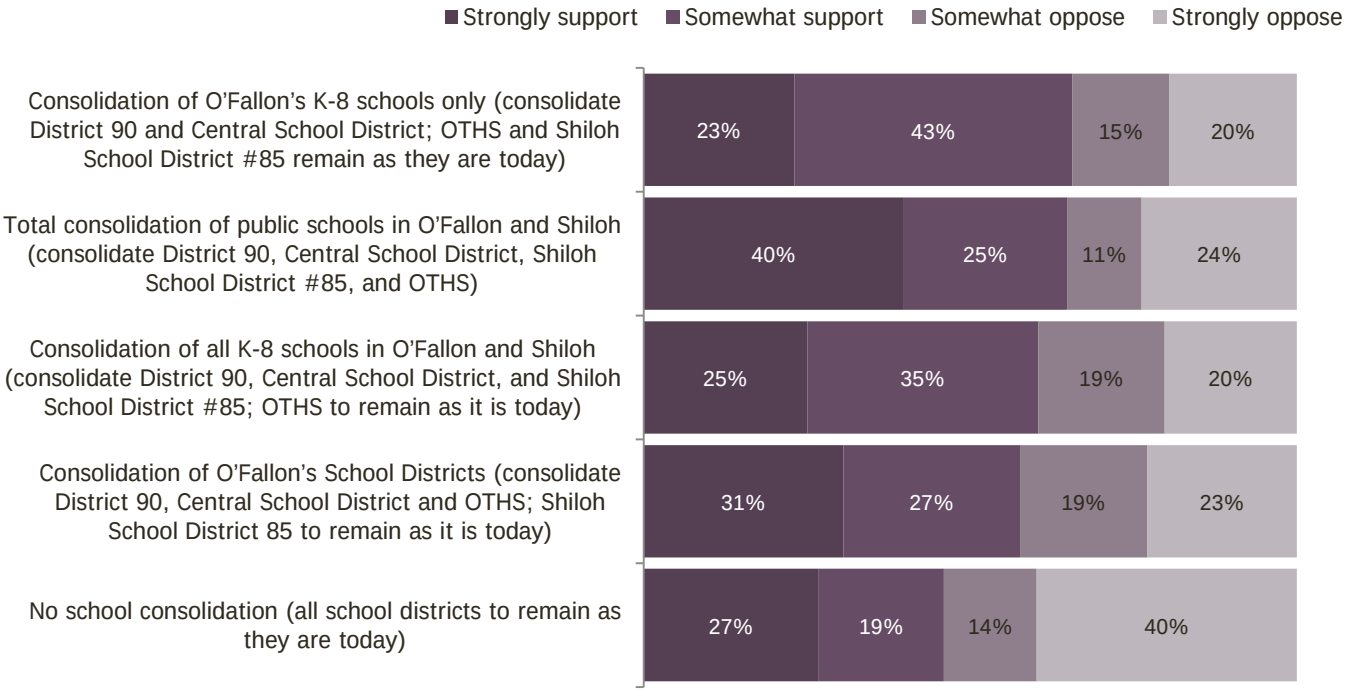
Special Topics

The City of O'Fallon included three questions of special interest on The NCS. Topic areas included school consolidation, future focus areas for O'Fallon and residents' opinions of the city, among others.

When asked about different options for school consolidation, there were similar levels of support for all consolidation options offered (roughly 6 in 10 residents strongly or somewhat supported each of these). Residents were least likely to support no school consolidation, and 4 in 10 strongly opposed this option.

Figure 4: Options for School Consolidation

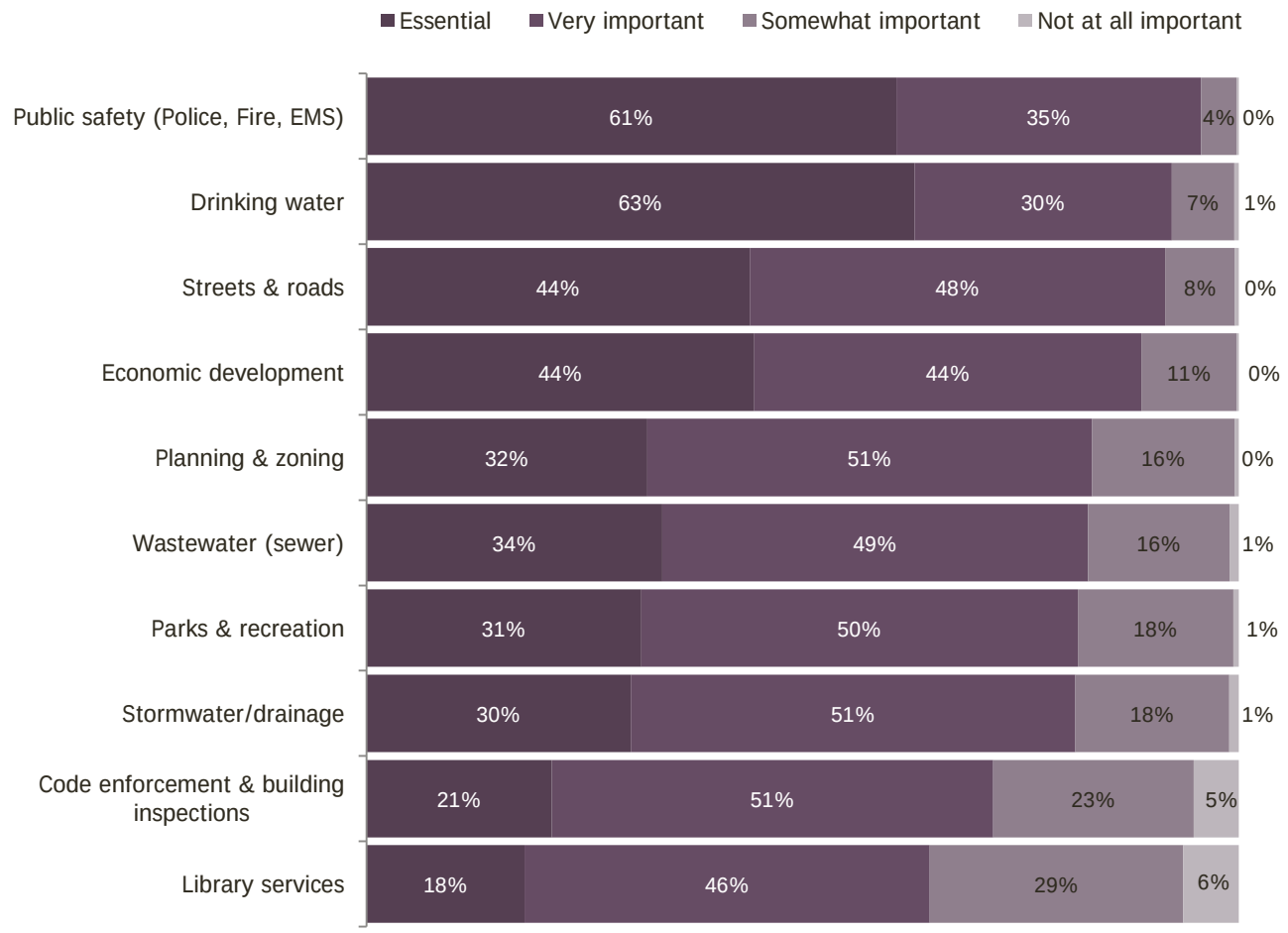
Please indicate the extent to which you support or oppose each of the following options for school consolidation:



When asked about the importance of various focus areas for the City, about 6 in 10 residents rated public safety and drinking water as essential and another 3 in 10 rated each of these as very important; streets and roads and economic development were also deemed as at least very important by about 9 in 10 residents. While residents were least likely to place high importance on code enforcement/building inspections and library services, at least 6 in 10 residents still rated these as essential or very important.

Figure 8: Importance of Focus Areas

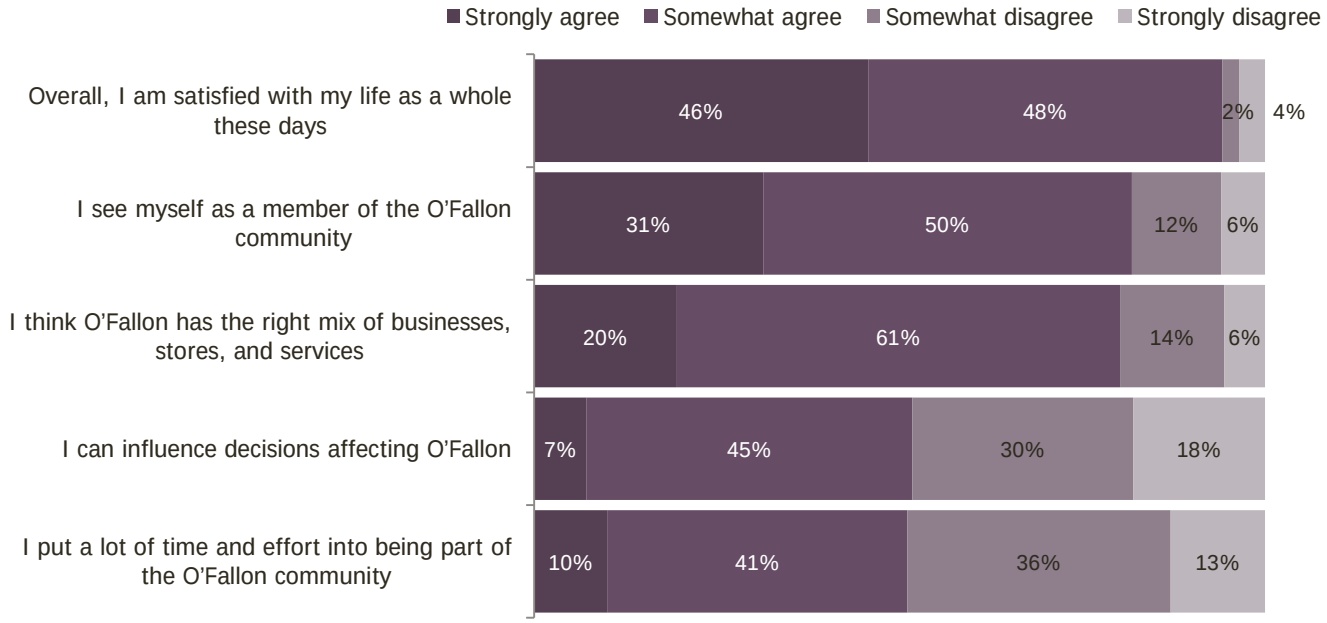
How important, if at all, do you think it is for the City of O'Fallon to focus on each of the following in the coming years:



Almost all O'Fallon residents agreed that they were satisfied with their life as a whole, and about 8 in 10 agreed that they saw themselves as a member of the O'Fallon community and that they thought O'Fallon had the right mix of businesses, stores and services. However, only about half agreed that they could influence decisions affecting O'Fallon or that they put a lot of time and effort into being part of the community.

Figure 9: Resident Opinions of the City

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:



Conclusions

Residents continue to enjoy a positive quality of life in the city and feel connected to the community.

About 8 in 10 O'Fallon residents or more gave favorable marks to the overall quality of life in the city, O'Fallon as a place to live, the overall image of the city (which was above average), their neighborhood as a place to live, O'Fallon as a place to retire and the city's overall appearance. Two-thirds of residents gave positive reviews to the sense of community in O'Fallon, while 9 in 10 would recommend living in the city to someone who asked and 8 in 10 planned to remain in the city for the next five years. Further, almost all O'Fallon residents agreed that they were satisfied with their life as a whole, and about 8 in 10 agreed that they saw themselves as a member of the O'Fallon community.

Safety is still a priority for residents.

As in 2016, residents indicated that the facet of Safety was an important area of focus for the City in the next two years, and when asked about the importance of various focus areas, about 6 in 10 residents rated public safety as essential and another 3 in 10 rated it as very important. Ratings within this area tended to be strong: 9 in 10 residents rated the overall feeling of safety in O'Fallon as excellent or good, and virtually all reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods and in O'Fallon's Downtown area. Further, about 9 in 10 residents reported feeling very or somewhat safe in their neighborhoods at night and in the commercial/Interstate area during the day, more than 8 in 10 felt safe in the Downtown area at night and three-quarters felt safe in the commercial/Interstate area at night. Most residents had not been the victim of a crime and more than 8 in 10 had not reported a crime in the 12 months prior to the survey. At least 8 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to police, fire and ambulance/EMS services as well as to crime prevention and fire prevention, and the ratings for police and crime prevention were higher than the benchmark comparisons.

Economy is also important to residents and ratings reflect successes and challenges.

Residents also rated the facet of Economy as an important area for the City in the next two years, and when asked about the importance of various focus areas, about 9 in 10 rated economic development as essential or very important. At least 7 in 10 residents gave positive reviews to the overall economic health of the city, overall quality of business and service establishments and economic development (a rating which was higher than the benchmark and increased in 2018). O'Fallon residents were more likely than those who lived elsewhere to have a positive economic outlook and this proportion also increased since 2016. The rating for shopping opportunities, at 66% excellent or good, also increased over time. When asked their opinion on various aspects of the city, about 8 in 10 agreed that they thought O'Fallon had the right mix of businesses, stores and services. However, the proportion of residents who worked in the city was lower than average, and the rating for O'Fallon as a place to visit decreased from 2016 to 2018.

Ratings for Recreation and Wellness are positive and moving in the right direction.

Residents' ratings of health care-related aspects of Recreation and Wellness, including the availability of affordable quality health care and mental health care, as well as the availability of preventive health services, were higher than those observed in other communities nationwide and increased in 2018. Resident evaluations of recreation programs and health services were also above average, and the rating for health services saw a 21% increase from 2016 to 2018. At least 8 in 10 residents reported participating in healthy behaviors, such as eating the daily recommended amount of fruits and vegetables, exercising regularly and visiting a park. Additionally, when asked about the importance of various focus areas, about 8 in 10 residents rated parks and recreation as essential or very important.