

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

# Apache Junction, AZ

Community Livability Report

2020



2955 Valmont Road Suite 300  
Boulder, Colorado 80301  
n-r-c.com • 303-444-7863



*Leaders at the Core of Better Communities*

777 North Capitol Street NE Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20002  
icma.org • 800-745-8780

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

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

# About

The National Community Survey™ (The NCS™) report is about the “livability” of Apache Junction. 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.

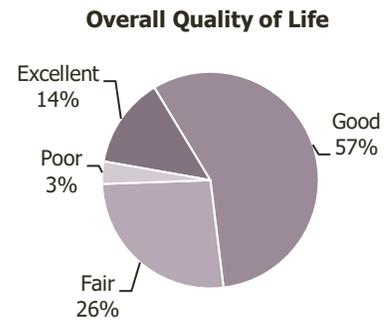
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 418 residents of the City of Apache Junction. 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 Apache Junction

About 7 in 10 residents rated the quality of life in Apache Junction 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.

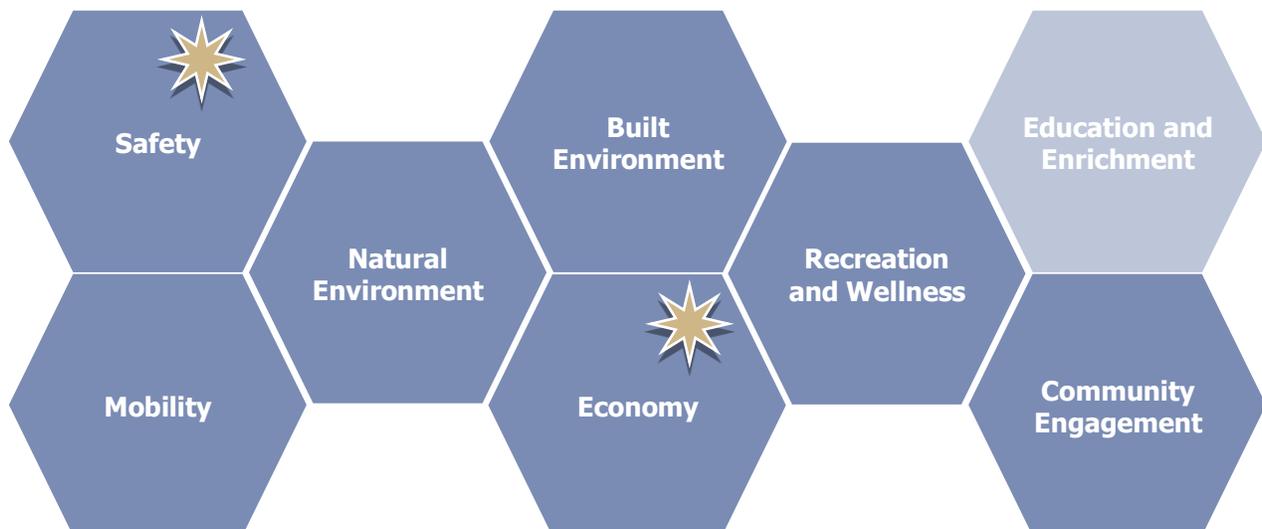
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Apache Junction community in the coming two years. All facets tended to receive ratings similar to the national benchmarks except for Education and Enrichment, which was lower. 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 Apache Junction’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 Apache Junction, about three-quarters of residents rated the city as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Apache Junction 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 Apache Junction as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Apache Junction and its overall appearance. About three-quarters of residents gave positive marks to their neighborhood as a place to live and Apache Junction as a place to retire and these ratings were on par with those given in other municipalities nationwide. About 4 in 10 respondents gave favorable ratings to the overall image and overall appearance of the city and Apache Junction as a place to raise children, and these ratings were lower than average.

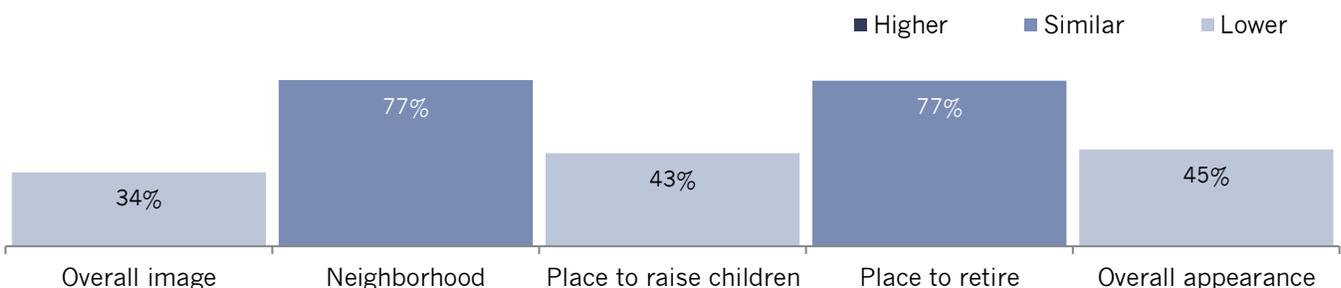
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Ratings for most aspects of Community Characteristics tended to be similar to or lower than the national benchmarks.



The highest-rated aspects, with at least 7 in 10 residents awarding positive marks, were feeling safe in their neighborhood and in Apache Junction's downtown/commercial area, the overall ease of travel in the city, ease of travel by car, public parking (which was higher than average), and quality of the overall natural environment. When compared to 2018, ratings in 2020 remained stable except for new development in Apache Junction, adult educational opportunities, and opportunities to participate in community matters (which decreased over time) and K-12 education (which increased).

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

Comparison to national benchmark



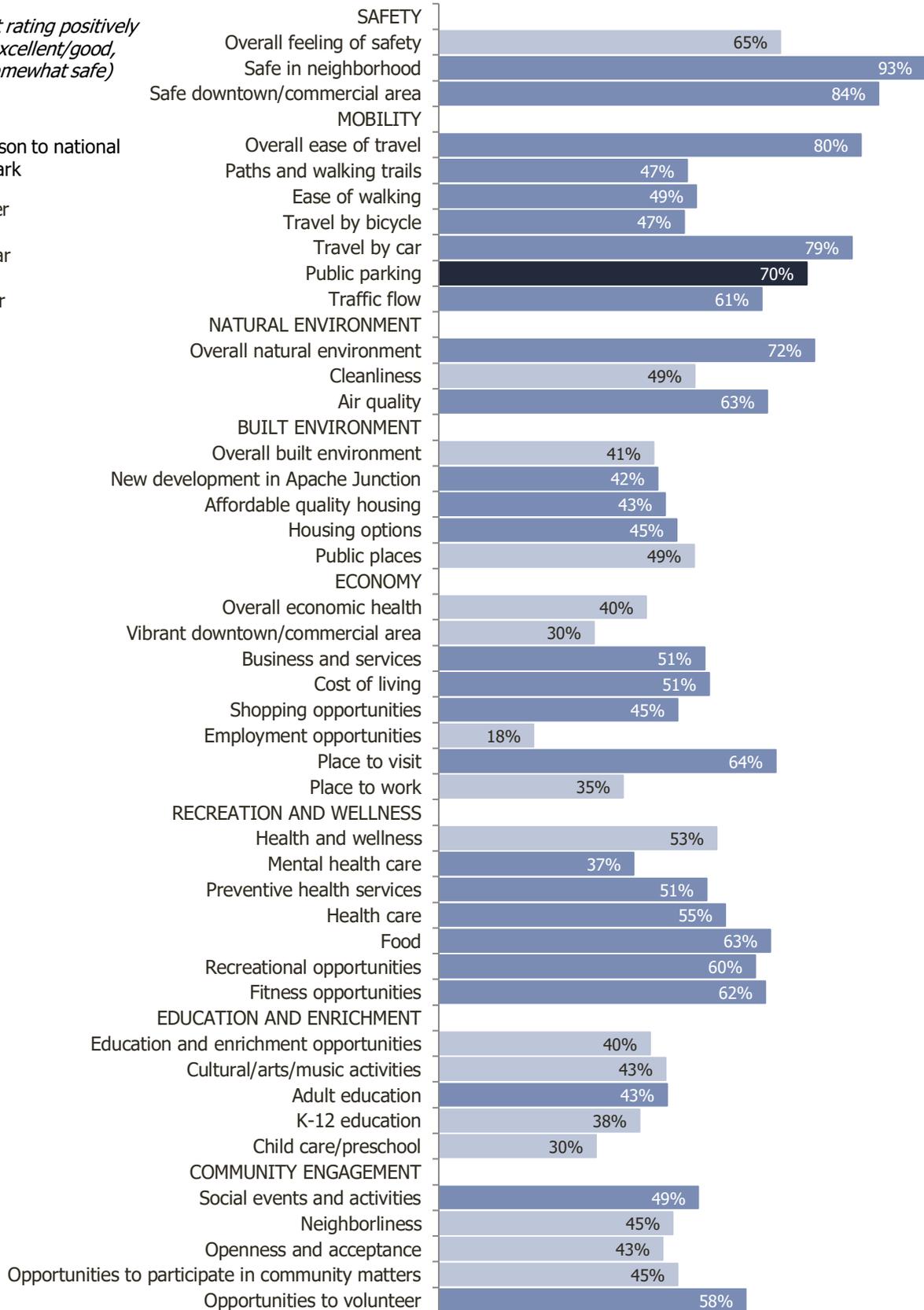
# The National Community Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

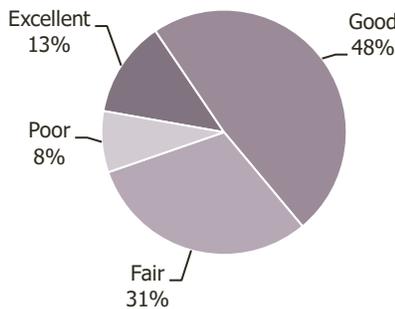
*How well does the government of Apache Junction meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Apache Junction as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. In Apache Junction, 61% of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of City services and 31% gave positive marks to the services provided by the Federal Government; both of these ratings were similar to those given in other communities nationwide.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Apache Junction’s leadership and governance. Roughly 4 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to all aspects of government performance and these scores were similar to those given elsewhere. The rating for the job City government does at welcoming resident involvement decreased from 2018 to 2020, while all other government performance ratings remained stable since the previous survey administration.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Apache Junction. City service ratings tended to be similar to or lower than the national benchmarks. Most below-average ratings were concentrated in the facets of Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, and Economy. Compared to 2018, ratings in 2020 decreased for animal control, garbage collection, recycling, open space, storm drainage, and code enforcement; no service ratings increased over time.

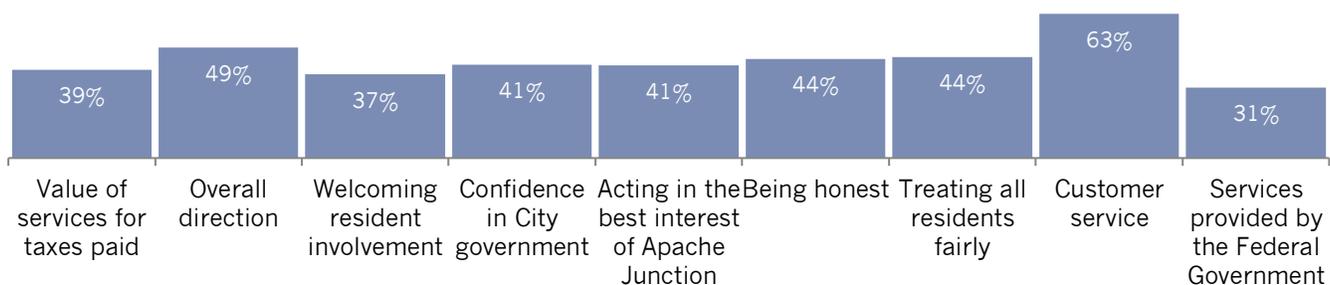
## Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



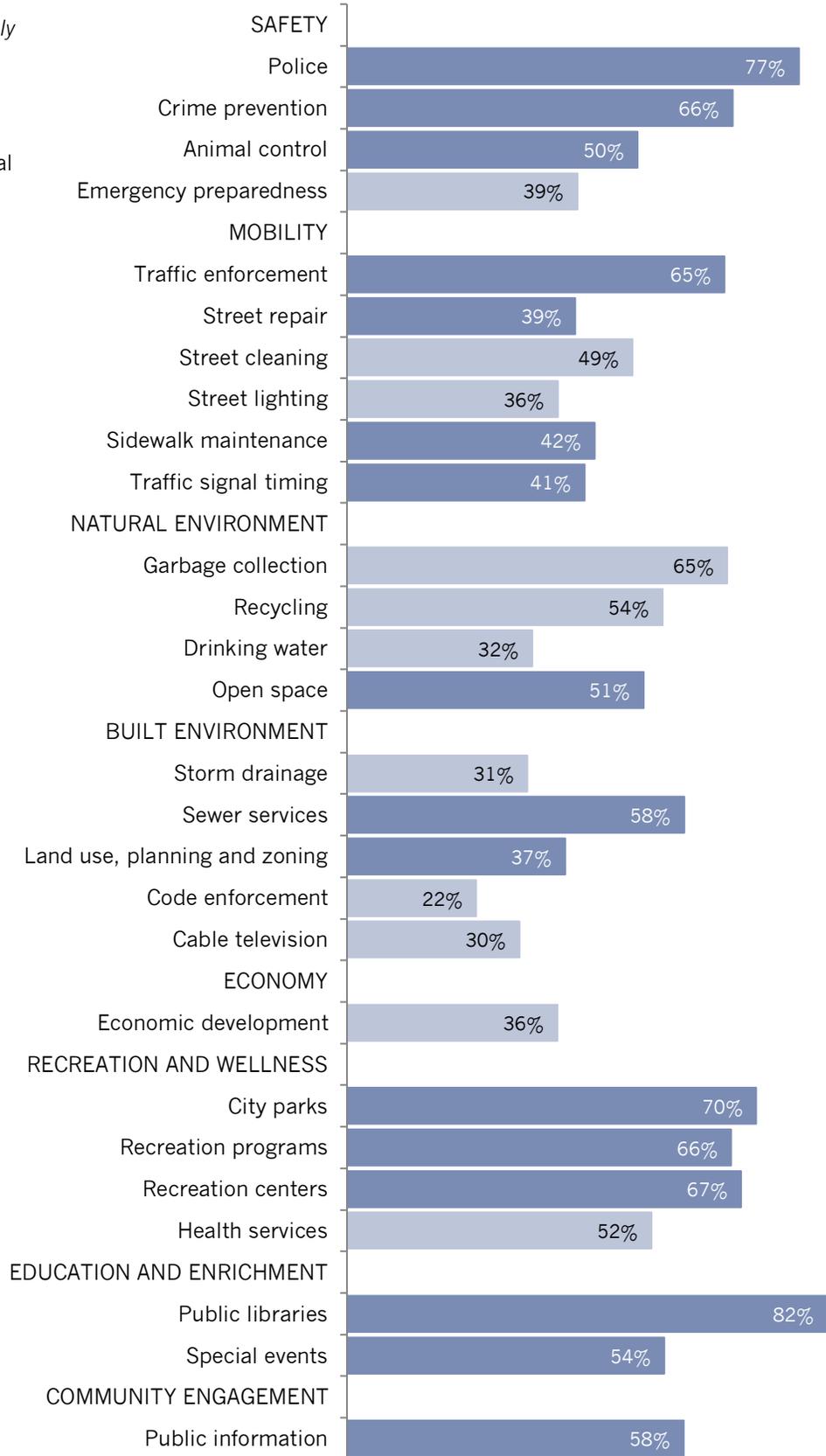
# The National Community Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

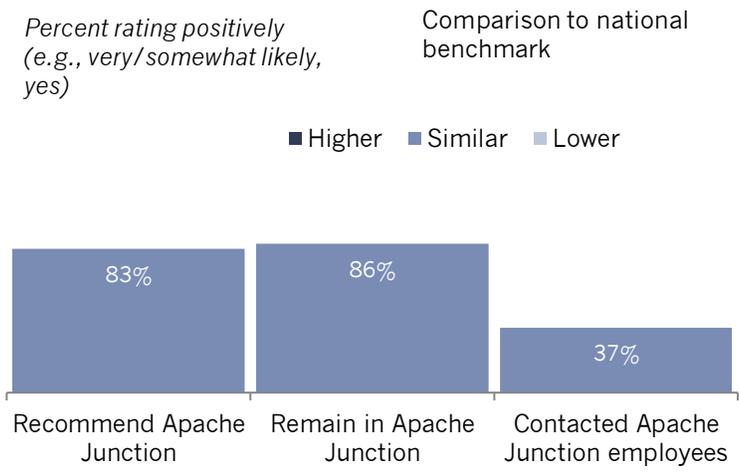
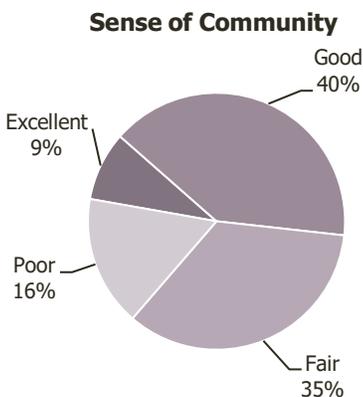


# Participation

*Are the residents of Apache Junction 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 half of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the sense of community in the city, while about 8 in 10 planned to remain in Apache Junction for the next five years and would recommend living in the City to someone who asked. These ratings were on par with those given elsewhere.

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 tended to vary widely across the different facets, making the comparisons to the benchmarks, and to Apache Junction over time, useful for interpreting the results. The majority of participation rates were similar to national averages. At least 8 in 10 residents reported not being the victim of a crime, conserving water, recycling at home, purchasing goods or services in the city, being physically active, interacting with neighbors, and reading or watching local news. Compared to 2018, residents in 2020 were less likely to have walked or biked instead of driving, used Apache Junction recreation centers, or used Apache Junction public libraries.



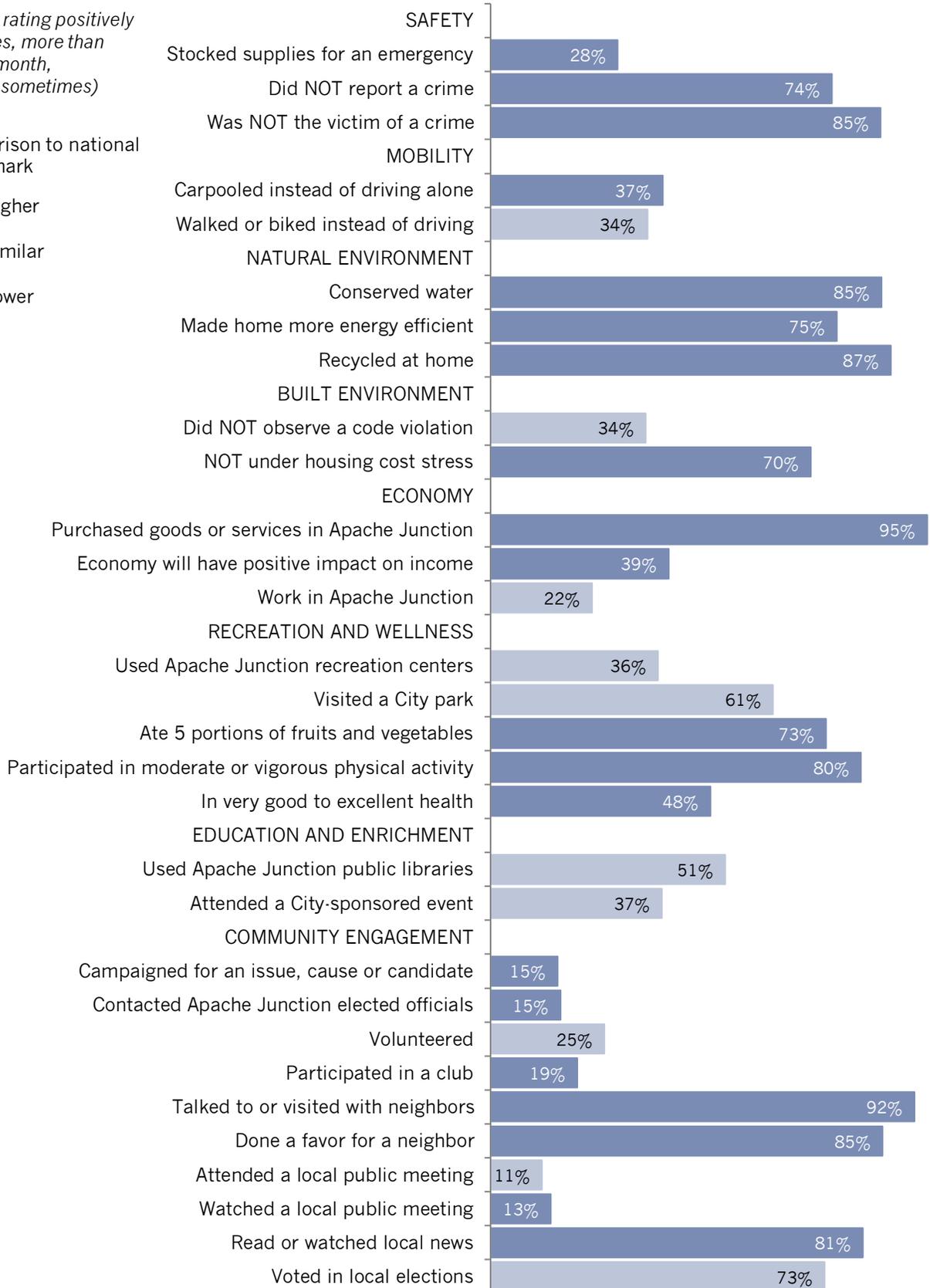
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



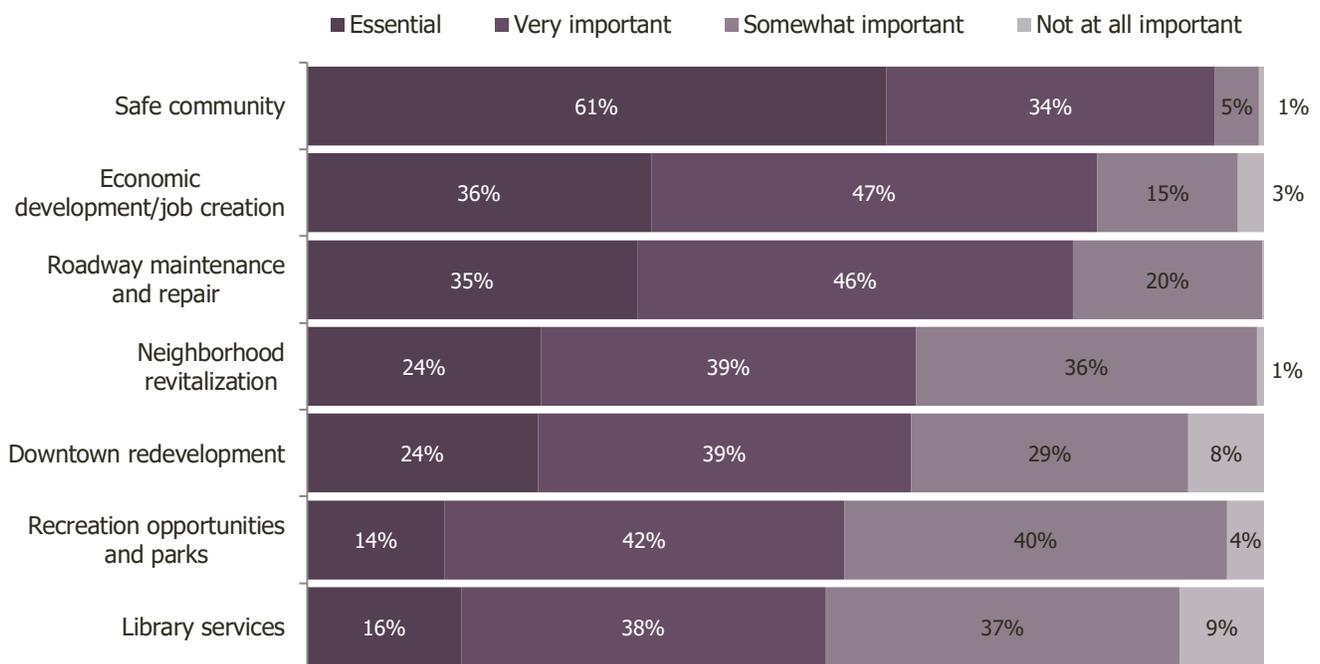
# Special Topics

The City of Apache Junction included three questions of special interest on The NCS. Topic areas included strategic planning areas and sources of City information.

Thinking about the importance of Apache Junction’s strategic planning areas, residents were most likely to indicate that “safe community” was essential or very important to the overall quality of life in the city; nearly all residents did so. About 8 in 10 respondents noted that economic development/job creation and roadway maintenance and repair were essential or very important, while 6 in 10 thought neighborhood revitalization or downtown redevelopment were important. While residents were least likely to rate recreation opportunities and parks and library services as important, about half of residents still did so.

Figure 4: Importance of Strategic Planning Areas

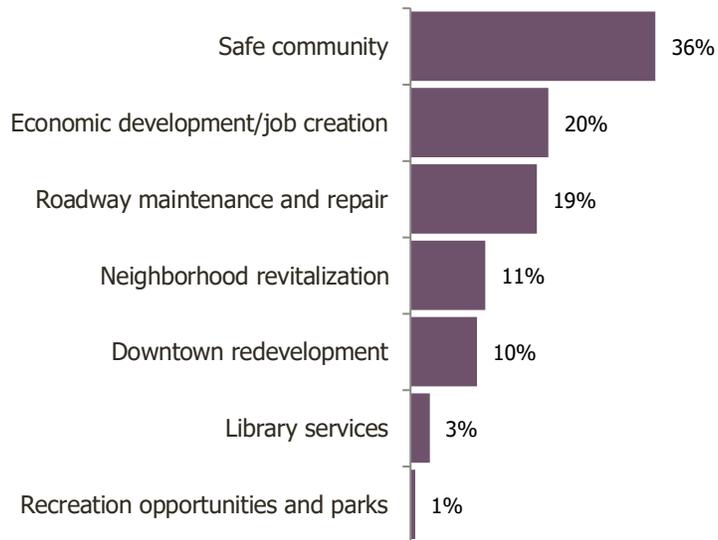
*Please rate how important, if at all, each of the following strategic planning areas are to the overall quality of life in the City.*



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When asked which one of the strategic planning areas in the previous question they thought was the most important, residents were most likely to indicate safe community (36% selected this area). About 2 in 10 selected economic development/job creation or roadway maintenance and repair and 1 in 10 selected neighborhood revitalization or downtown redevelopment. Very few residents selected library services or recreation opportunities and parks as most important.

Figure 5: Most Important Strategic Planning Area  
*indicate which planning area you think is the MOST important.*

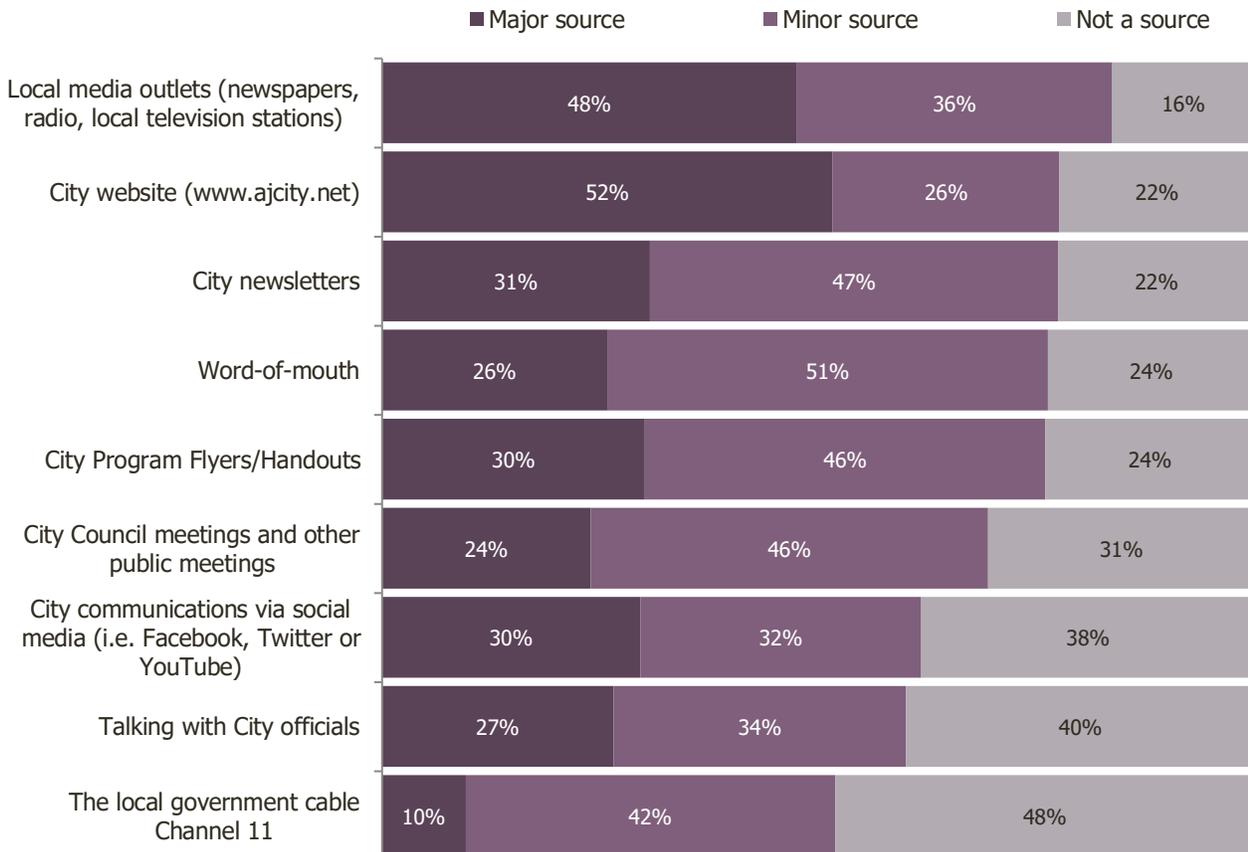


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Thinking about the sources they used to obtain information about the City, residents were most likely to rate local media outlets such as newspapers, radio and local television stations as a major or minor source of information (84%). About three-quarters of residents utilized the City website, City newsletters, word-of-mouth or City Program Flyers/Handouts as information sources. Respondents were least likely to use the local government cable channel as an information source.

Figure 6: Sources of City Information

*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:*

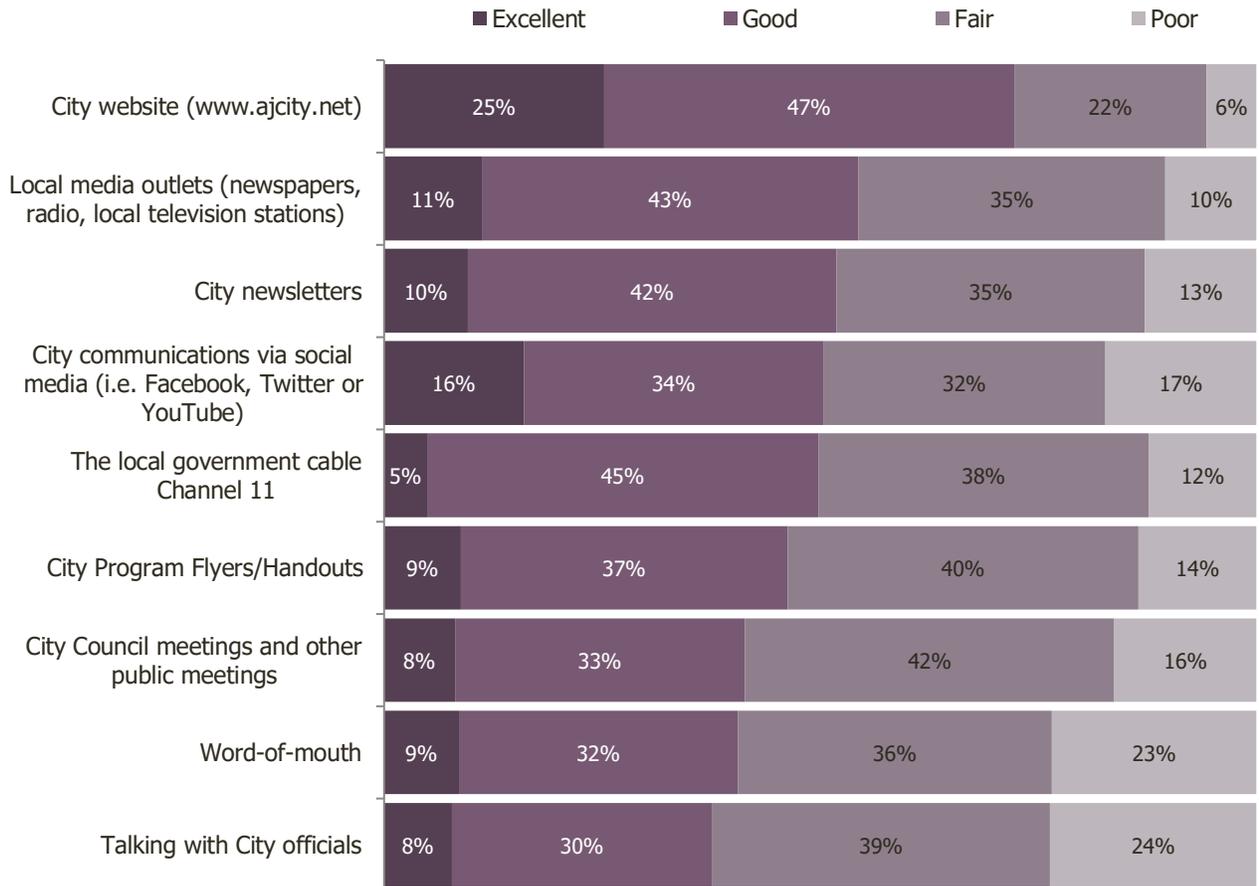


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Residents were asked to rate the quality of the information provided by each of the sources listed in the preceding question. Residents rated the City website most positively, with about 7 in 10 residents awarding excellent or good marks. Between 38% and 54% of residents gave excellent or good ratings to each of the remaining information sources.

**Figure 7: Quality of Sources of City Information**

*Thinking about the major sources of information indicated in the previous question, how would you rate the quality of the information provided by each source?*



# Conclusions

## **Apache Junction residents continue to experience a positive quality of life.**

About 7 in 10 residents or more felt positively about the overall quality of life in the city and Apache Junction as a place to live. Three-quarters of residents gave excellent or good ratings to their neighborhoods as places to live and the city as a place to retire. About 8 in 10 residents would recommend living in Apache Junction to someone who asked and planned to remain in the city for the next five years. Further, about half of residents positively rated the sense of community in the city; most of these ratings were similar to those given in other communities across the nation.

## **Safety is a key factor to residents' quality of life and remains a top priority.**

As in previous years, residents identified Safety as a priority for Apache Junction to focus on in the next two years. About 9 in 10 residents reported feeling safe in their neighborhood and 8 in 10 felt safe in Apache Junction's downtown/commercial area, and these ratings were on par with those in other communities. Further, ratings for police services, crime prevention and animal control also were similar to the national benchmark. However, only about two-thirds gave excellent or good ratings to the overall feeling of safety in the city, which was lower than average. Additionally, the rating for emergency preparedness was lower than seen in other communities. As in 2018, when prioritizing the City's seven strategic planning areas, nearly all residents thought that safe community was essential or very important to quality of life in the city; this also topped the list as the "most important" strategic planning area.

## **Economy also continues to be an important focus for the community.**

As in prior survey years, residents identified Economy as an important focus area in the coming years. However, ratings within this facet tended to be mixed. About two-thirds of residents positively rated Apache Junction as a place to visit, while half were pleased with the cost of living in the city and the overall quality of business and service establishments; these aspects were similar to the benchmark. However, about 4 in 10 respondents or less gave favorable marks to the overall economic health of the city, vibrant downtown/commercial area, employment opportunities, Apache Junction as a place to work and economic development. These ratings were all lower than average and similar to those given in 2018. Economic development/job creation was rated as the second most important strategic planning area, after safe community.

## **Education and Enrichment presents an area of opportunity for the City.**

About 4 in 10 residents or less gave excellent or good ratings to opportunities for education and enrichment, cultural/arts/music activities, K-12 education and the availability of affordable quality child care/preschool; further, Apache Junction residents were less likely than those who lived elsewhere to have visited public libraries or attended a City-sponsored event. Ratings for adult educational opportunities and the rate of public library use declined from 2018 to 2020. Thus, this facet may serve as an additional potential area of focus for the City.