



# St. Lucie County, FL

## Community Livability Report

2019



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The National Community Survey™  
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# About

The National Community Survey™ (The NCS™) report is about the “livability” of St. Lucie County. 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 287 residents of St. Lucie County. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 6% for all respondents. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



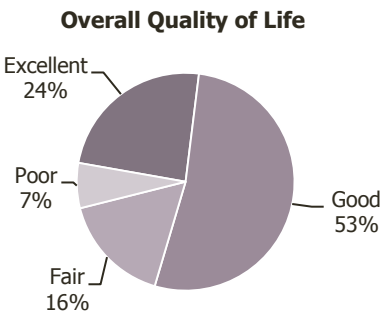
# Quality of Life in St. Lucie County

About three-quarters of residents rated the quality of life in St. Lucie County as excellent or good. These ratings were similar to the national 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.

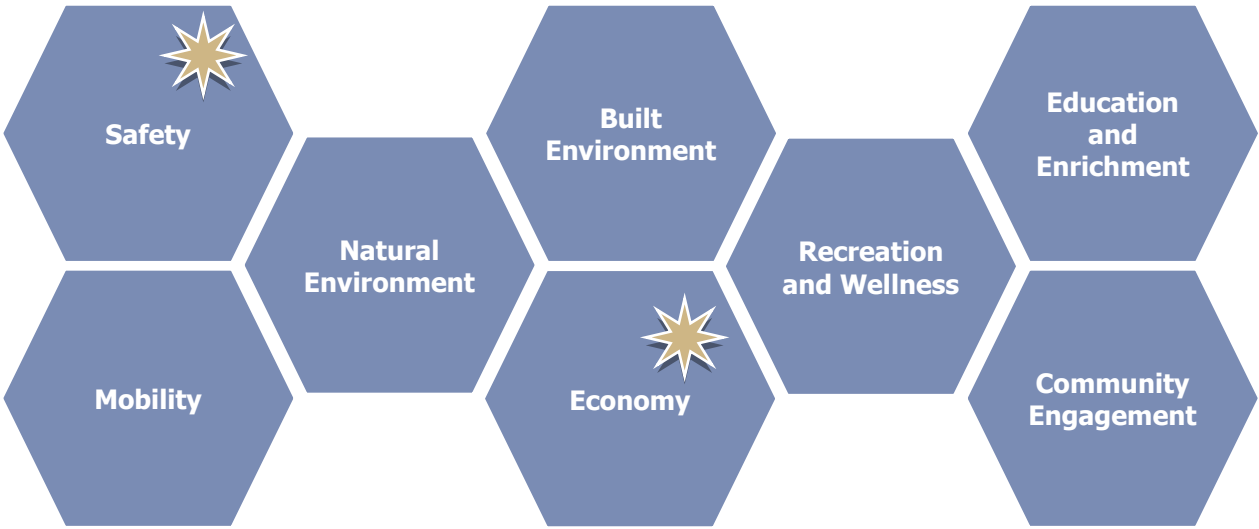
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the St. Lucie County community in the coming two years. Evaluations for all facets were positive and similar to national comparisons. 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 St. Lucie County'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?*

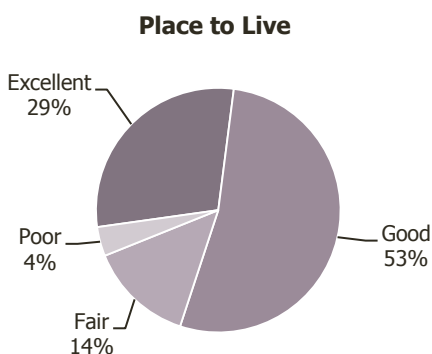
Overall quality of community life represents the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. How residents rate their overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. In the case of St. Lucie County, 82% rated the county as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of St. Lucie County as a place to live were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the county as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including St. Lucie County as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of St. Lucie County and its overall appearance. At least 7 in 10 residents gave high marks to most of these aspects and they tended to be on par with national averages. Around half of respondents felt the overall image or reputation of St. Lucie County was excellent or poor, which was below average.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Broadly, nearly aspects of the community were on par with national comparisons and tended to be rated as excellent or good by at least half of St. Lucie County residents.

Evaluations of Safety were positive, with about 9 in 10 residents indicating they felt safe in their neighborhoods and in the downtown/commercial areas of the County and 7 in 10 reporting they felt safe in the community overall. Around three-quarters of community members also felt positively about Natural Environment-related

aspects, including the overall natural environment, cleanliness and air quality. A similar proportion of respondents were pleased with public parking, St. Lucie County as a place to visit and opportunities to attend religious or spiritual events and activities in the community.

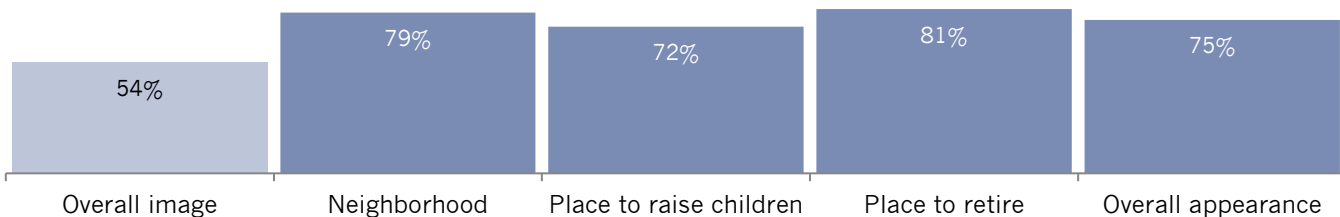


Similarly, residents' reviews for Mobility-related characteristics tended to be commensurate to other communities nationwide; around 6 in 10 gave positive scores to the overall ease of travel and car travel and at least one-third were appreciative of other modes of travel (walking, biking and public transportation). However, ratings for the ease of walking lagged behind levels seen in other municipalities.

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

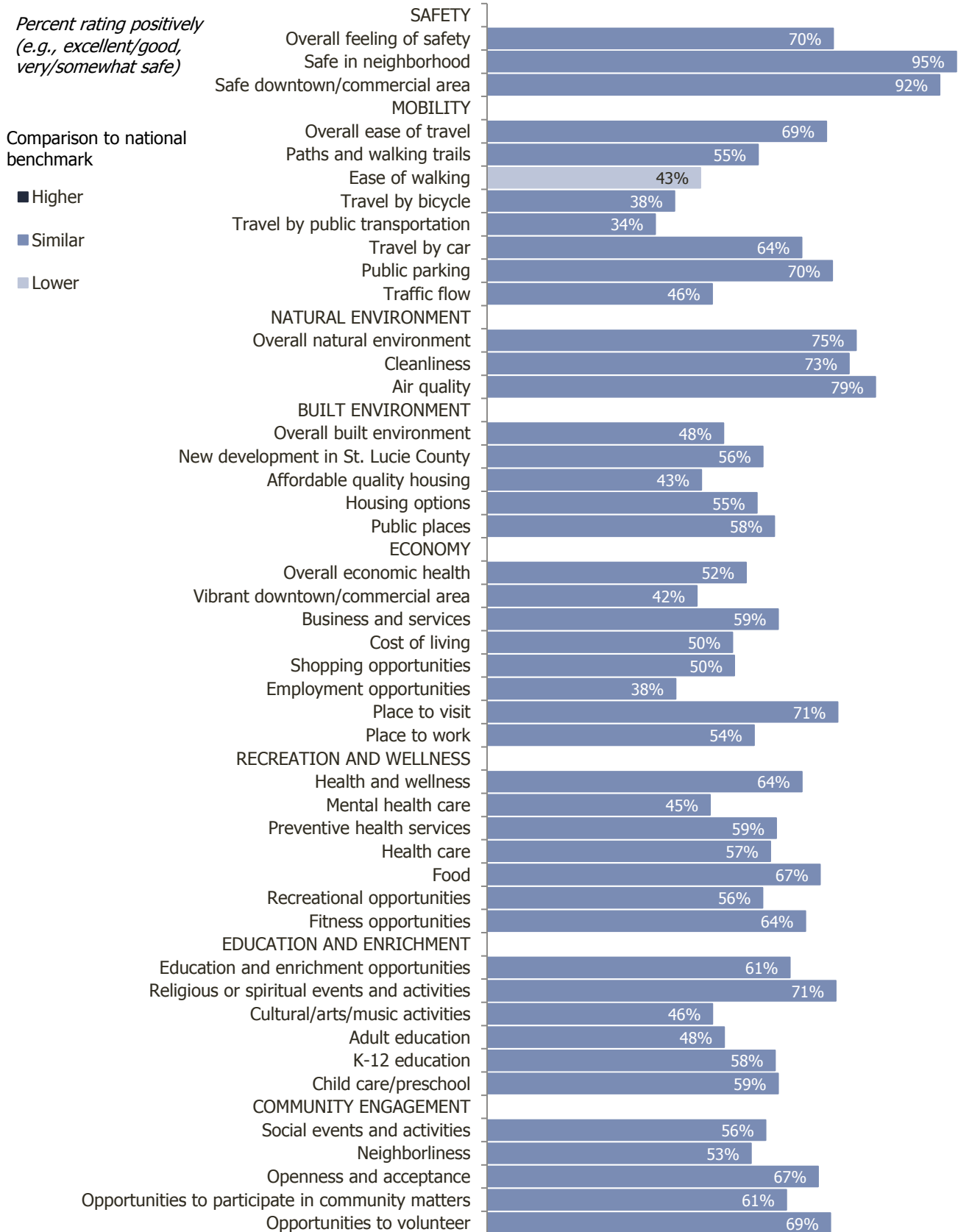
Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



# The National Community Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics



# Governance

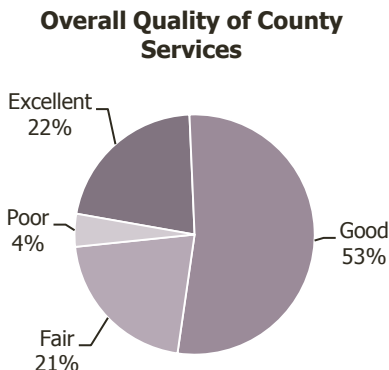
*How well does the government of St. Lucie County meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by St. Lucie County as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Three-quarters of community members praised the overall services provided by St. Lucie County, compared to half who felt the same about services provided by the Federal Government. Scores for both levels of government were comparable to those in comparison communities.

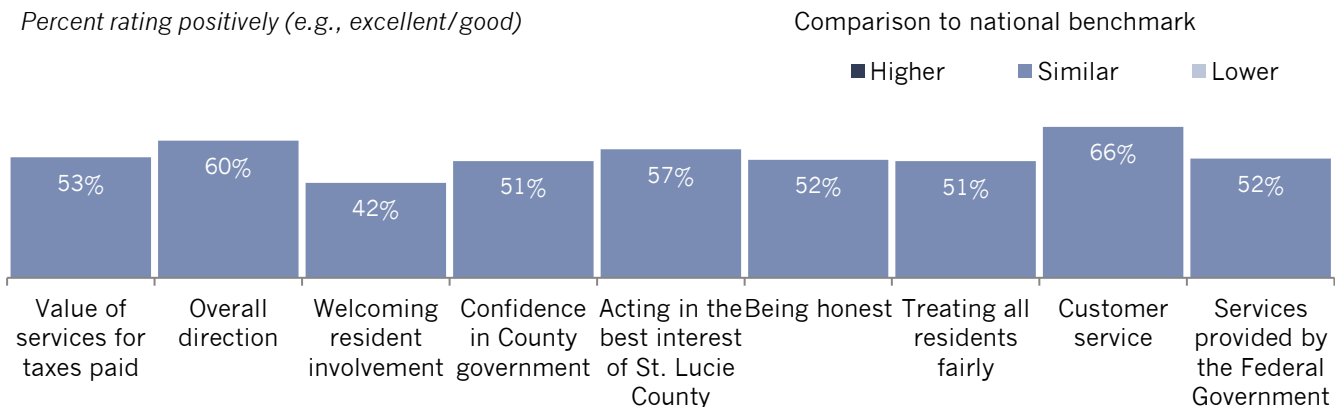
Survey respondents also rated various aspects of St. Lucie County's leadership and governance. In general, about half of residents rated most aspects positively and reviews for customer services provided by St. Lucie County employees was a highlight. All ratings were similar to other communities nationwide.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in St. Lucie County. In general, at least half of residents favorably rated a majority of the services provided by the County and all were reviewed at levels at or above national levels. The highest-rated services were police, fire, ambulance/EMS, fire prevention, garbage collection, recycling and power utility, with about 8 in 10 or more awarding excellent or good marks to each.

Notably, about 7 in 10 respondents lauded the emergency preparedness services provided in St. Lucie County, which exceeded national benchmark averages. A similar proportion also agreed that sewer services, utility billing, County parks and public libraries were excellent or good.



The lowest-rated services were street repair and code enforcement, with around 4 in 10 survey participants providing favorable evaluations; however, these services were still equivalent to comparison communities across the U.S.



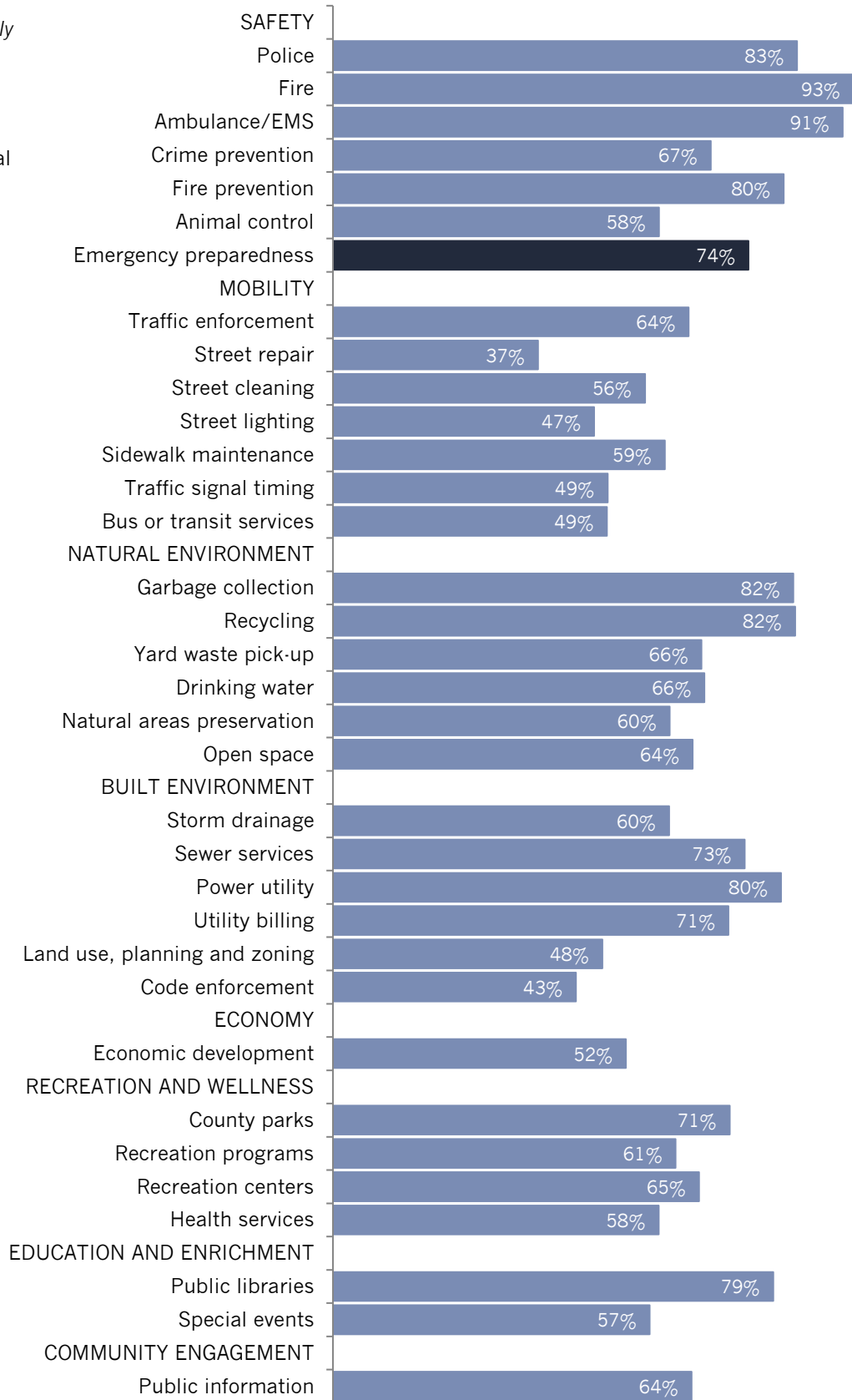
# The National Community Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower





# Participation

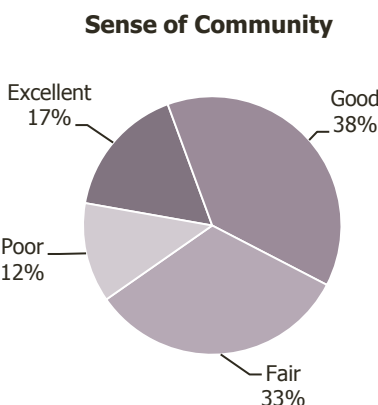
## *Are the residents of St. Lucie County connected to the community and each other?*

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. Similar to other communities across the nation, around half of St. Lucie County residents thought highly of their sense of community.

About 8 in 10 participants reported that they would recommend living in St. Lucie County to someone who might ask and planned to remain in the community for the next five years. Around 4 in 10 community members indicated they had contacted County employees in the 12 months prior to the survey. These ratings were similar to municipalities elsewhere.

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 within St. Lucie County varied widely and tended to be on par with the County's national peers. At least 8 in 10 participants indicated they had participated in green behaviors (conserving water, making their homes more energy efficient and recycling) and purchased goods or services in the community. As for Community Engagement, most residents reported high levels of neighborliness, voting and attention to local news. Further, more County residents watched a local public meeting than their national peers.

St. Lucie County residents also exhibited higher than national average rates of stocking supplies in the event of an emergency and participating in religious or spiritual activities. The proportion of residents who were optimistic about the effect of the local economy on their income in the next six months also surpassed benchmark averages.

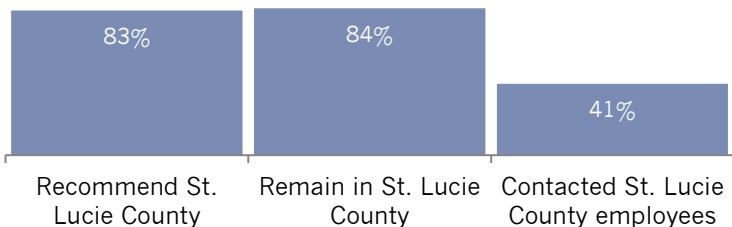


Compared to municipalities across the country, fewer St. Lucie County residents reported they had used alternative modes of transportation (public transit and walking or biking) instead of driving and had visited public libraries at lower than average rates. Additionally, more St. Lucie County respondents reported they were under housing cost stress than levels seen nationwide.

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



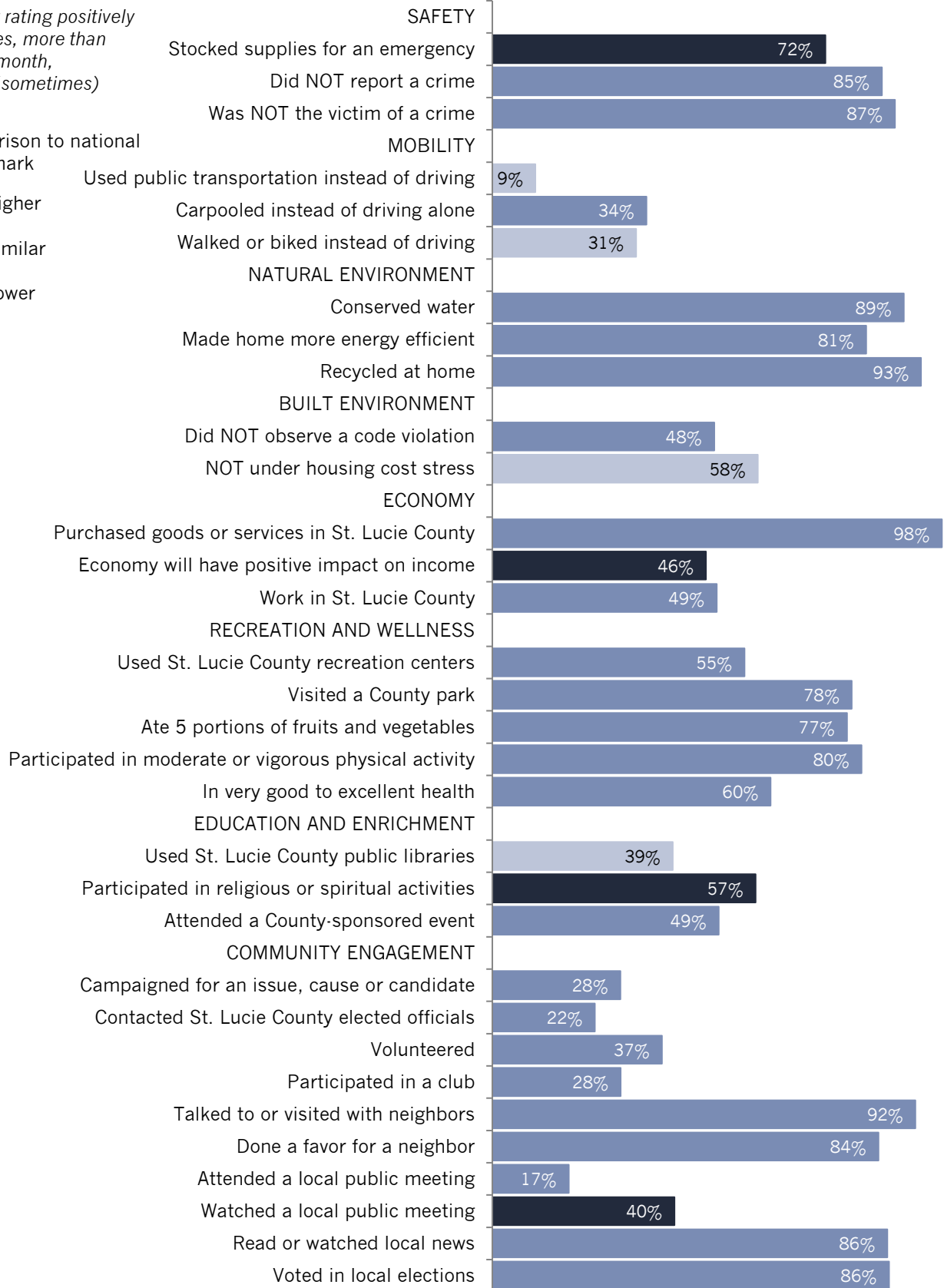
# The National Community Survey™

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



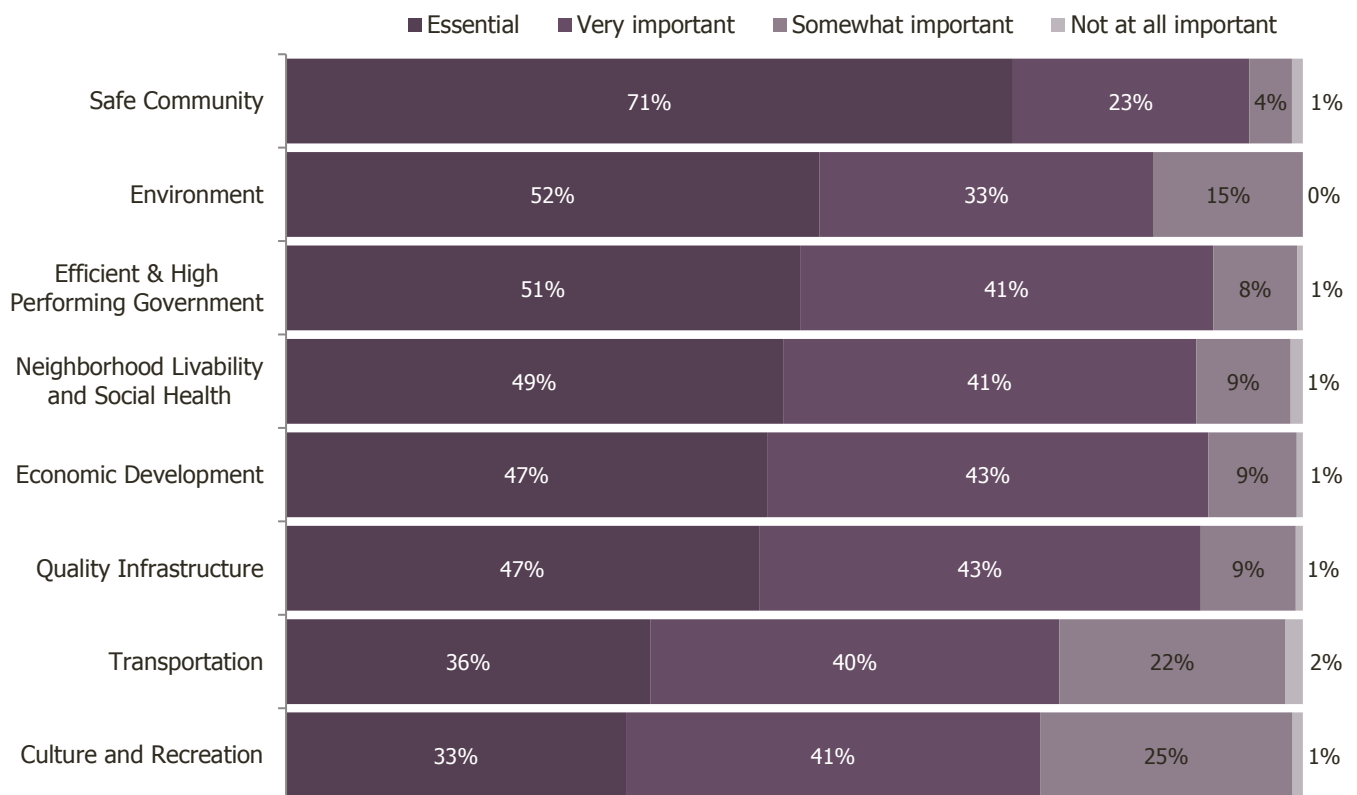
# Special Topics

St. Lucie County included two questions of special interest on The NCS: asking for resident feedback regarding County strategic planning areas and priorities for possible future projects.

Around 9 in 10 residents felt five of the strategic areas would be essential or very important for their quality of life; further, about half felt the areas of Environment, Efficient and High Performing Government, Neighborhood Livability and Social Health, Economic Development and Quality Infrastructure were essential, while 7 in 10 said the same of the area of Safe Community. Around three-quarters indicated that Transportation and Culture and Recreation were important to their quality of life.

Figure 4: 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 County:*

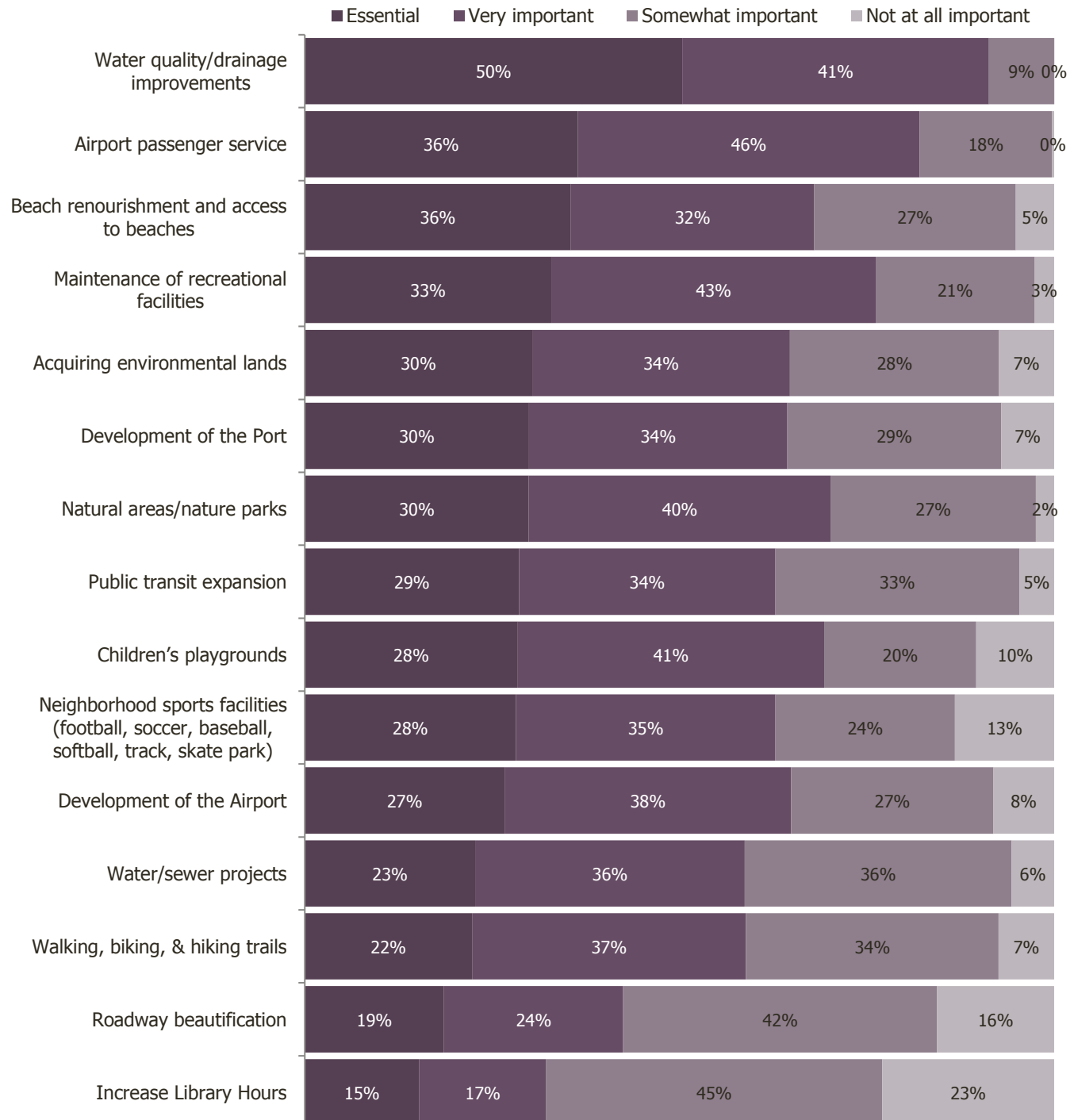


## The National Community Survey™

St. Lucie County survey recipients were also asked to prioritize 15 projects for the County to address in the next five years. Respondents identified water quality and drainage improvements as their top priority, with about 9 in 10 indicating this project was essential or very important. At least three-quarters of residents also felt airport passenger service and maintenance of recreational facilities was at least very important, while roughly two-thirds or more said the same about beach renourishment/access to beaches, acquiring environmental lands, development of the Port, natural areas/nature parks, children's playgrounds and development of the airport. Residents were least likely to prioritize an increase in library hours, with only 32% reporting this issue as essential or very important.

**Figure 5: Resident Priority Projects**

*Please indicate how important, if at all, each of the following projects and issues will be for the County to address over the next five years:*



# Conclusions

## Residents enjoy living in St. Lucie County.

Most residents rated their quality of life positively in St. Lucie County and think the County is an excellent or good place to live. At least 7 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the overall appearance of the County, their neighborhood as a place to live and St. Lucie County as a place to raise children and to retire; these ratings were on par with levels observed elsewhere. About 8 in 10 residents would recommend living in the County to someone who asked and planned to remain in the community for the next five years.

## Residents are pleased with Mobility, with room for improvements.

Around 9 in 10 St. Lucie County residents indicated that Mobility would be an important focus area for the County in the next two years. Many Mobility-related items were rated positively by around half or more of respondents and most ratings were similar to those seen elsewhere, with the exception of ease of walking, which was below average. County respondents were also less likely to use alternative transportation instead of driving (e.g., public transportation, walking or biking) than respondents in comparison communities. When asked about potential projects or issue for the County to address in the next five years, around 6 in 10 survey participants thought public transit expansion and walking, biking and hiking trails would be essential or very important. Additionally, roughly 8 in 10 respondents prioritized airport passenger service and two-thirds said the same of the development of the airport. Finally, around three-quarters of residents felt that the strategic planning area of Transportation was essential or very important. Combined, these results indicate residents may like to see improvements in Mobility.

## Natural Environment is an asset and residents prioritize related nature-related projects.

Many St. Lucie County residents gave high marks to aspects of Natural Environment and tended to be rated similarly to those found in other communities across the U.S. About three-quarters of respondents gave excellent or good reviews to the overall natural environment, cleanliness and air quality in the community. Scores for garbage collection and recycling were among the highest-scored services provided St. Lucie County, and were also on par with national averages. Respondents demonstrated their commitment to the environment, with at least 8 in 10 reporting they had participated in green behaviors (conserving water, making their homes energy efficient and recycling). Among potential County projects and issues for the County to address in the next five years, water quality/drainage improvements topped with the list, with 9 in 10 stating this project was essential or very important. Other priorities included natural areas/nature parks (70%), beach renourishment (67%) and acquiring environmental lands (64%). Moreover, the strategic planning area of Environment was deemed as essential by around half of residents, with another one-third stating this area as very important.

## Safety and Economy are important and positive features of the community.

Residents identified Safety and Economy as two of the most important facets on which the County should focus for the coming two years. Nearly all community members felt safe in their neighborhoods and in the downtown/commercial areas and about 7 in 10 awarded excellent or good scores to the overall safety of St. Lucie County. More than 8 in 10 survey participants praised Safety-related services, including police, fire, ambulance/EMS and fire prevention. Residents also applauded emergency preparedness services in the County, with around three-quarters assigning top scores, which exceeded benchmark averages. In return, more residents in the County reported that they stock supplies in the event of an emergency than their peers nationwide. Further, a Safe Community was identified as the most important strategic planning area for the County.

Residents gave Economy evaluations that tended to be similar to ratings given in comparison communities. About half of respondents gave high marks to the overall economic health of the County, and a similar proportion felt positively about the quality of business and service establishments, cost of living, shopping opportunities, the county as a place to work and economic development. Additionally, roughly 7 in 10 participants thought highly of the community as a place to visit. County residents' levels of optimism about the local economy surpassed the national average. Finally, Economic Development as a strategic planning area was deemed at least very important by 9 in 10 survey respondents, and two-thirds cited the development of the Port as a priority project in the next five years.