



THE NCSTM
The National Community SurveyTM

Niles, IL

Community Livability Report

DRAFT
2019



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

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About

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

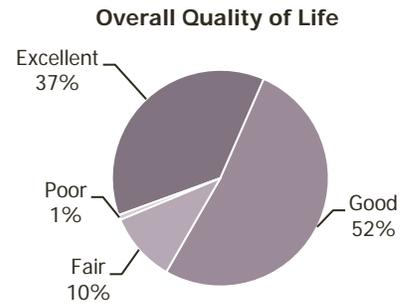
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 408 residents of the Village of Niles. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% for all respondents. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Niles

Most residents (89%) rated the quality of life in Niles as excellent or good. This rating was 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.



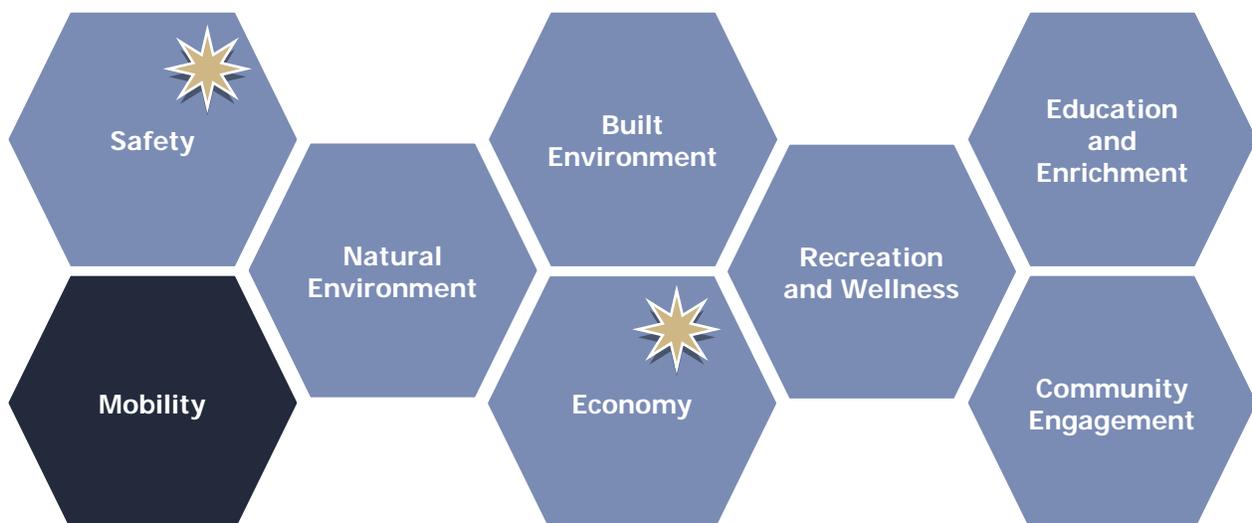
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Niles community in the coming two years. These facets, as well as most other facets of community livability, received ratings similar to those given elsewhere, with the exception of Mobility, which received above-average ratings. 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 Niles’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 Niles, 94% rated the village as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Niles as a place to live were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the village as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Niles as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Niles and its overall appearance. About 9 in 10 residents were pleased with their neighborhood as a place to live and Niles as a place to raise children, while roughly 8 in 10 awarded positive marks to the overall image and overall appearance of the village and Niles as a place to retire. These ratings were all similar to the national benchmarks except for as a place to retire, which was higher.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, ratings for community characteristics in Niles were strong and similar to or higher than those given in comparison communities. At least 9 in 10 residents gave positive marks to all aspects of Safety. Mobility ratings were especially strong: overall ease of travel and ease of travel by car and by public transportation were rated positively by at least 8 in 10 residents, while ease of travel by bicycle and traffic flow on major streets received favorable marks from around 6 in 10 residents. These ratings were higher than those given in other communities nationwide.

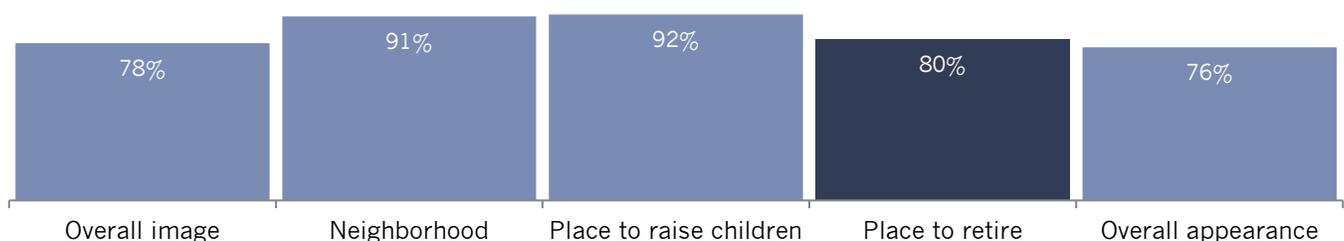


Niles also rated highly as an affordable place to live. About 6 in 10 village residents or more gave excellent or good scores to the availability of affordable quality housing, childcare/preschool, health care, mental health care, preventive health services and food, and also to cost of living and the variety of housing options. These ratings were higher than the national benchmarks. Other above-average ratings included employment opportunities, Niles as a place to work and the openness and acceptance of the community.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



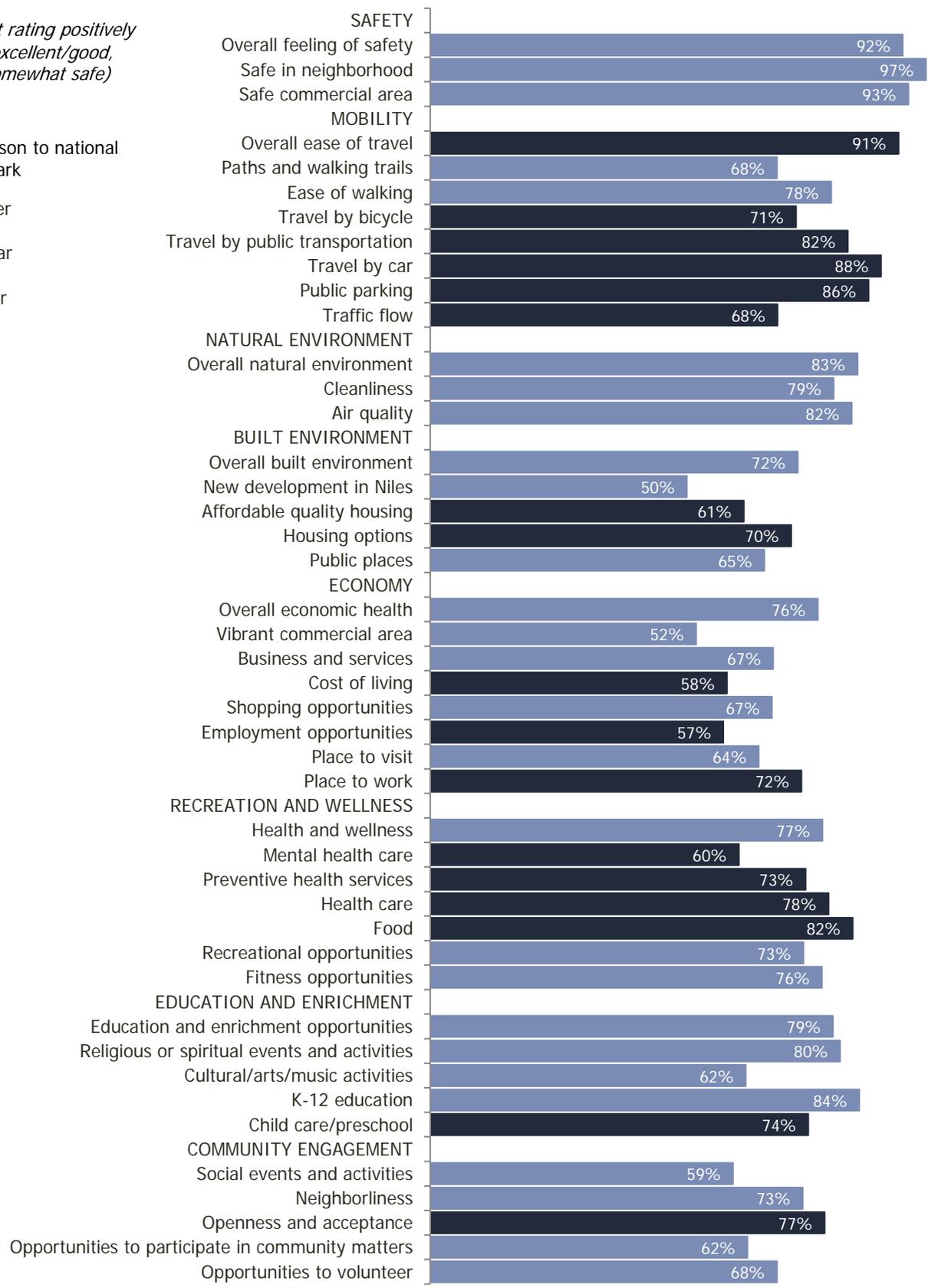
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

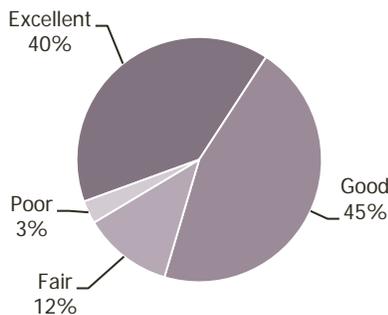
How well does the government of Niles meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Niles as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. The overall quality of Village services was rated positively by 85% of respondents, which was higher than the national benchmark; about half of residents were pleased with the services provided by the Federal Government, which was on par with communities elsewhere.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Niles’s leadership and governance. About 8 in 10 residents gave high marks to the customer service provided by Village employees, while about 7 in 10 residents or more gave positive evaluations to the remaining aspects of government performance. Ratings for the value of services for taxes paid, confidence in Village government, government acting in the best interest of Niles, being honest and treating all residents fairly were higher than those given in other communities across the nation.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Niles. Service ratings in Niles were noteworthy: about 6 in 10 residents or more gave favorable ratings to all Village services, and 24 of the 36 listed services eclipsed average ratings in comparison communities. These exceptionally high scores were mostly concentrated within the facets of Safety, Mobility and Natural Environment, though several aspects within other facets also shined.

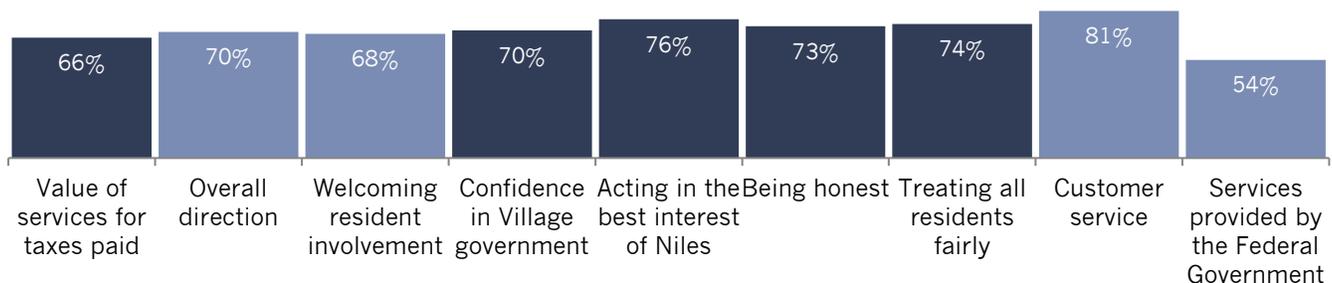
Overall Quality of Village Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



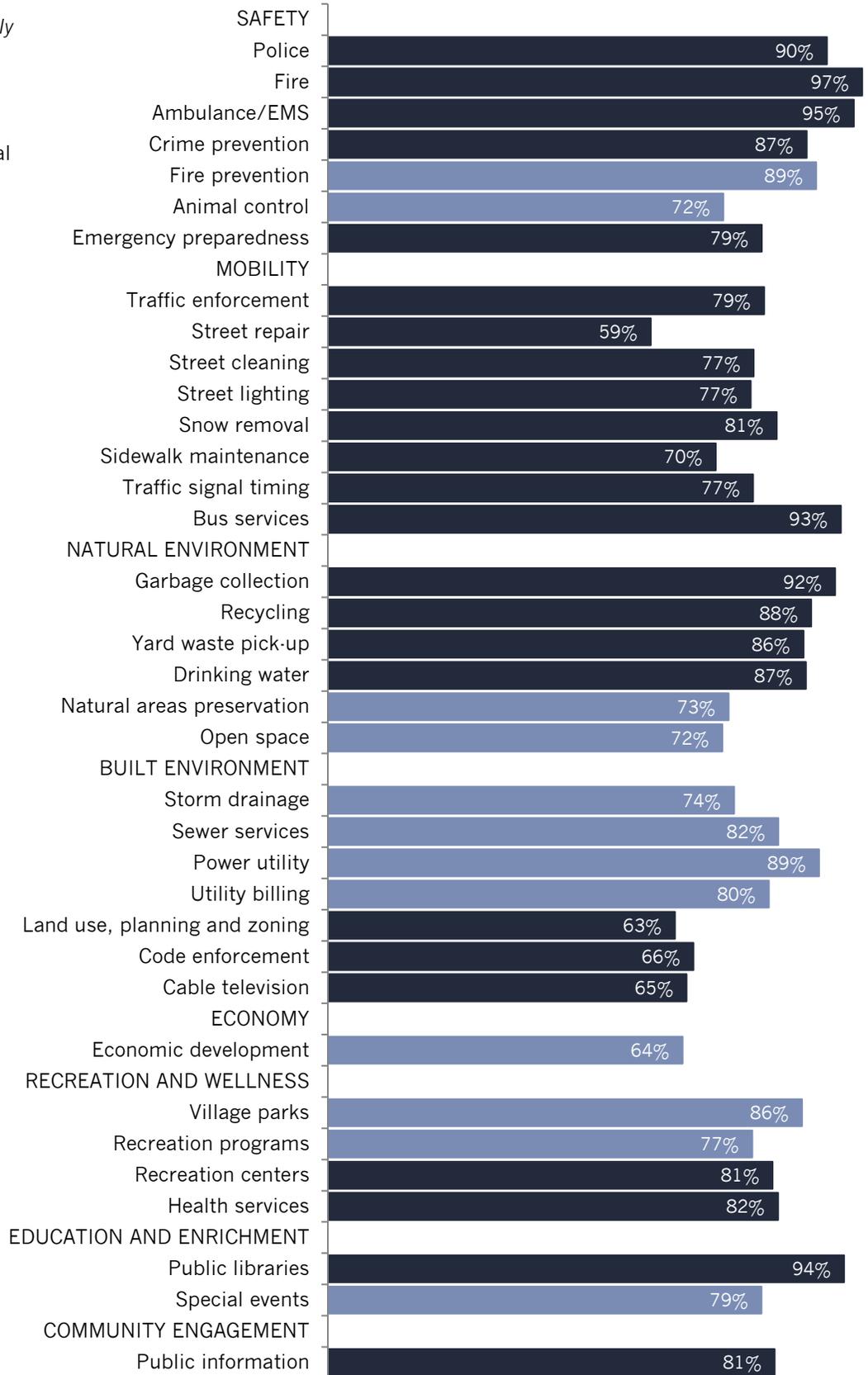
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

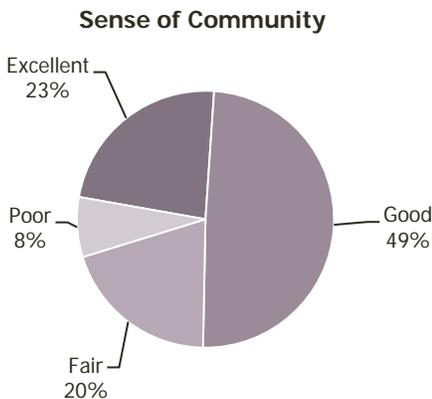


Participation

Are the residents of Niles 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 three-quarters of residents rated the sense of community in Niles as excellent or good, while 9 in 10 would recommend living in the village to someone who asked or planned to remain in the village for the next five years. These ratings were similar to the national benchmarks.

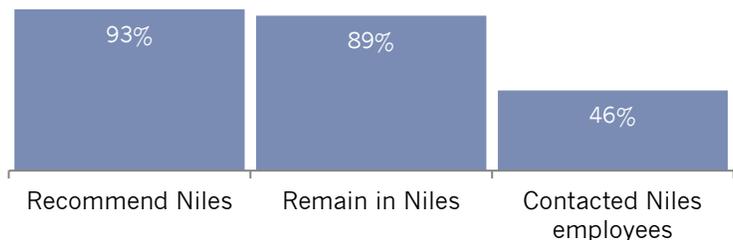
The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Levels of participation tended to vary widely across the different facets, making the comparisons to the benchmarks useful for interpreting the results. Generally, participation rates in Niles tended to be similar to or lower than those observed in other communities. Niles residents were more likely than those who lived elsewhere to have not observed a code violation, but less likely to have stocked supplies for an emergency, carpooled, to work in Niles, used the Niles Family Fitness Center, visited a Village park, attended a Village-sponsored event, campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate, volunteered or participated in a club.



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

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



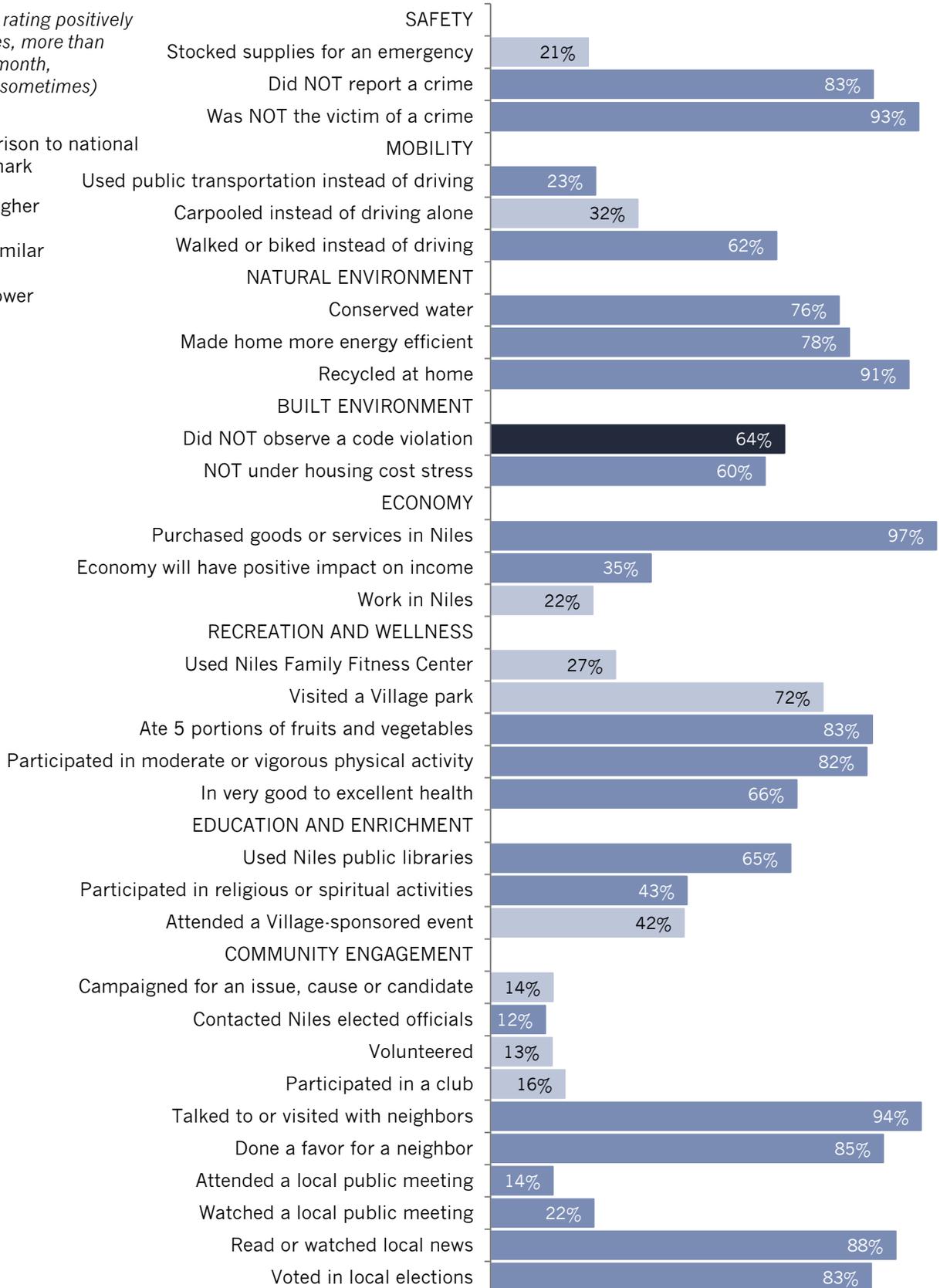
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



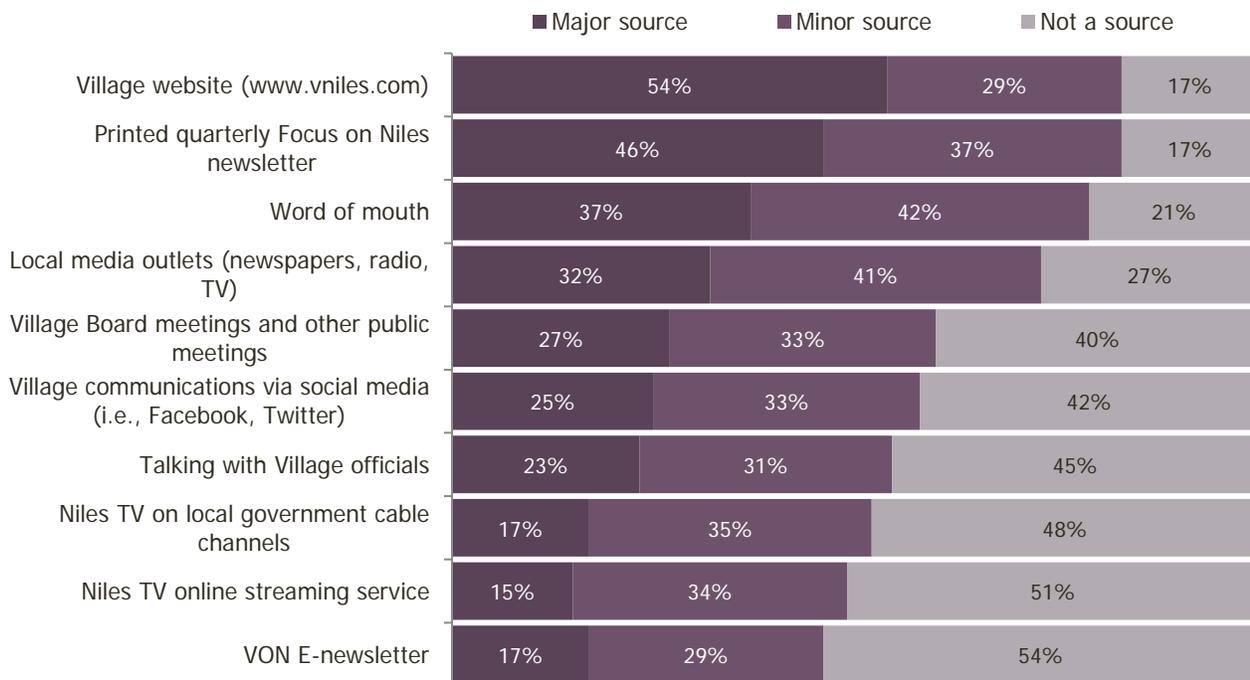
Special Topics

The Village of Niles included five questions of special interest on The NCS, including reliance on various sources of information about the community, level of support for various neighborhood improvements, factors to boost attendance at the Niles Teen Center, level of support for a dog park and likelihood of attending various community events.

When asked about sources of information used for obtaining information about the Village government and its activities, events and services, residents were most likely to indicate the Village website and the Focus on Niles newsletter as sources of information, with 83% indicating each of these as major or minor sources of information. Niles TV on local government cable channels, Niles TV online streaming service and VON E-newsletter were at the bottom of the list.

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 Village government and its activities, events, and services:

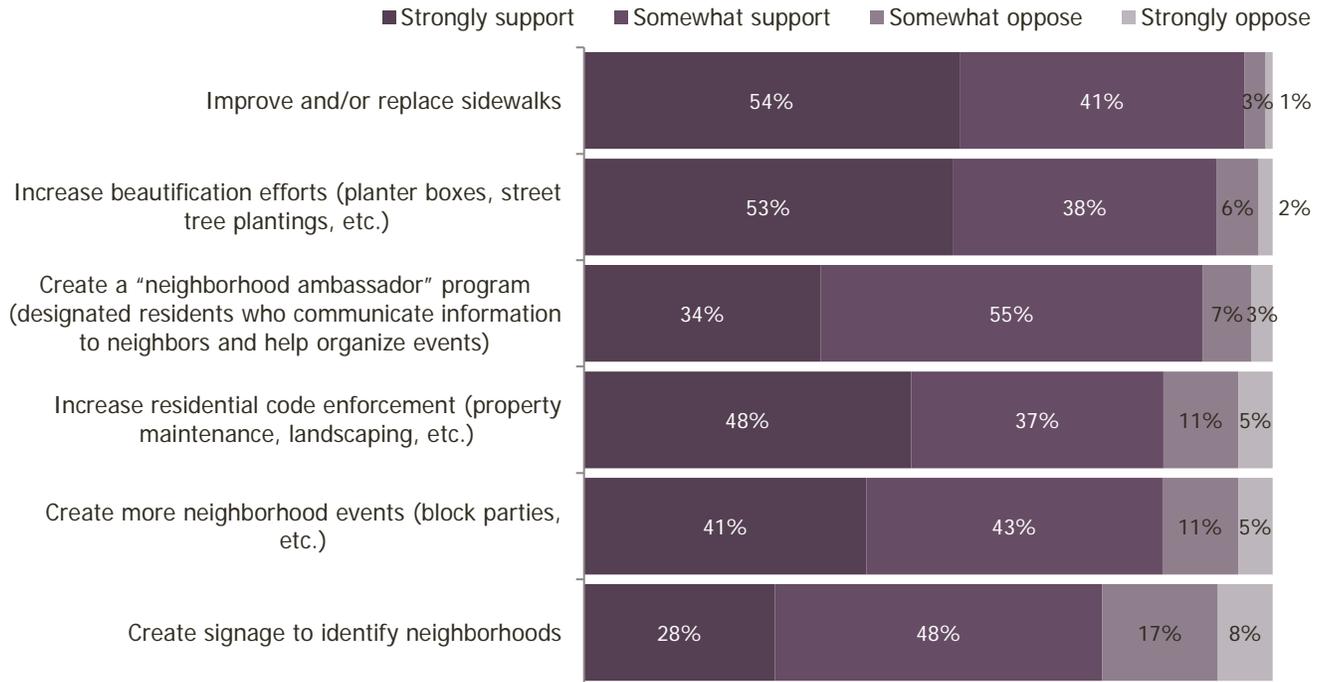


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Thinking about their level of support for a variety of various possible improvements to neighborhoods, at least 9 in 10 residents supported the Village improving and/or replacing sidewalks, increasing beautification efforts and creating a neighborhood ambassador program. While creating signage to identify neighborhoods received the lowest level of support, three-quarters of residents still did so.

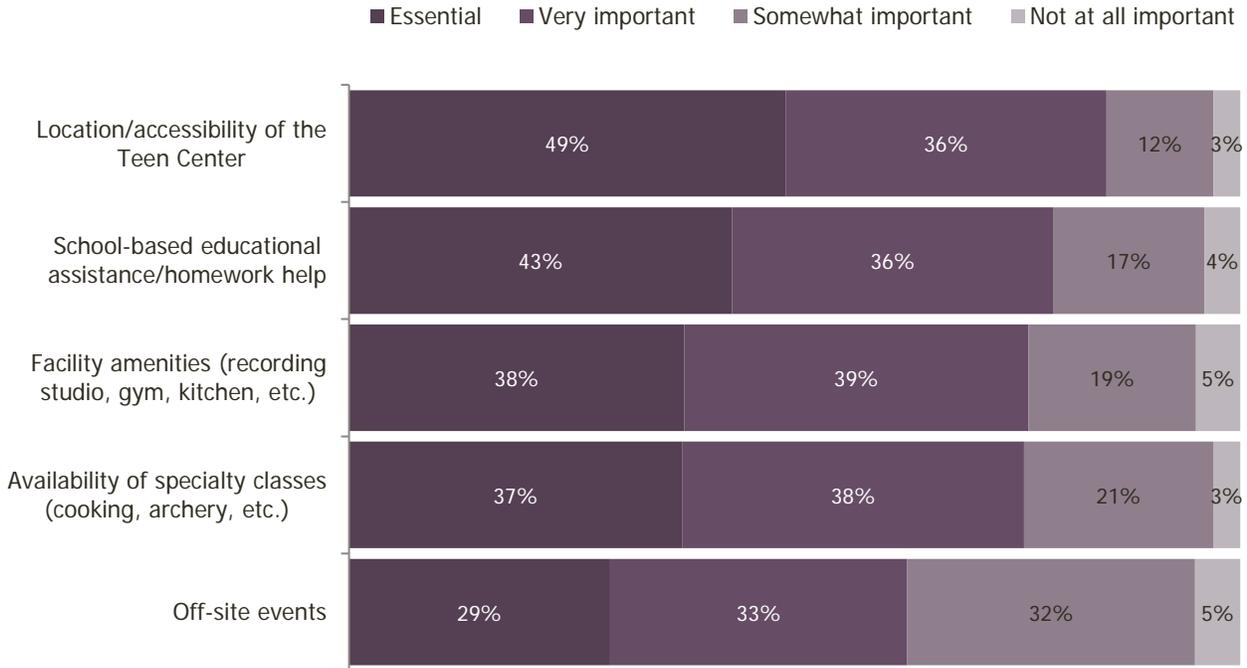
Figure 5: Support for Various Improvements to Neighborhoods

The Village of Niles is exploring options to improve our neighborhoods. Please indicate how much you would support or oppose the Village implementing each of the following:



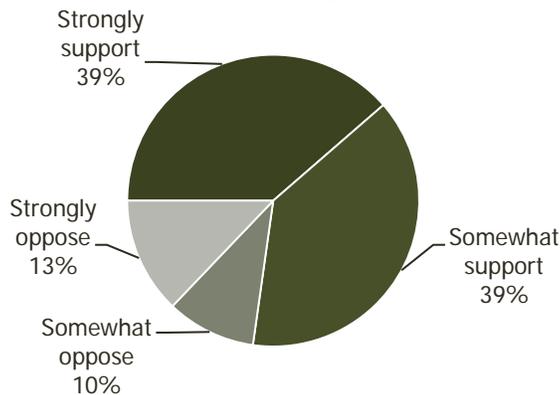
Eighty-five percent of Niles residents thought the location and accessibility of the Teen Center was essential or very important to helping boost teen attendance at the Teen Center, while about 8 in 10 thought school-based educational assistance, facility amenities and the availability of specialty classes were important. About 6 in 10 residents thought off-site events was important for boosting teen attendance.

Figure 6: Importance of Factors to Boost Attendance at the Niles Teen Center
How important, if at all, do you think each of the following are to help boost teen attendance at the Niles Teen Center?



About 8 in 10 residents supported the creation of a dog park in Niles, while 2 in 10 opposed it.

Figure 7: Level of Support for Dog Park
How much would you support or oppose the creation of a dog park in Niles?

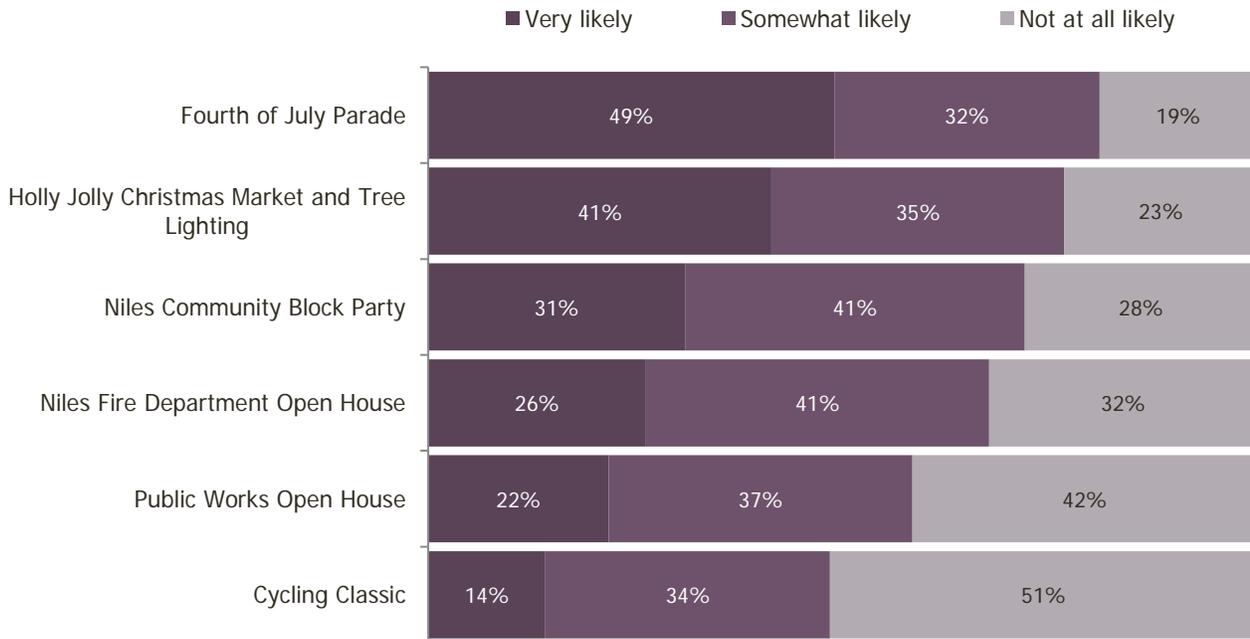


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Thinking about their likelihood of attending Village events, about 8 in 10 residents indicated that they would be very or somewhat likely to attend the Fourth of July Parade, while three-quarters were likely to attend the Holly Jolly Christmas Market and Tree Lighting. Seven in ten residents thought they would be likely to attend the Niles Community Block Party or the Niles Fire Department Open House. Only about half of residents were likely to attend the Cycling Classic.

Figure 8: Likelihood of Event Attendance

Please indicate how likely, if at all, you and/or members of your household would be to attend each of the following events:



Conclusions

Niles residents enjoy a positive quality of life.

Most residents gave positive ratings to all aspects of quality of life in Niles. About 9 in 10 residents positively rated the overall quality of life in the village and Niles as a place to work. Further, about 9 in 10 residents were pleased with their neighborhood as a place to live and Niles as a place to raise children, while roughly 8 in 10 awarded high marks to the overall image and overall appearance of the village and Niles as a place to retire. These ratings were all similar to the national benchmarks except for place to retire, which was higher. About three-quarters of residents rated the sense of community in Niles as excellent or good, while 9 in 10 would recommend living in the village to someone who asked or planned to remain in the village for the next five years.

The Economy is important to residents, and affordability is a particular advantage.

Residents indicated that Economy would be an important area of focus for the Niles community in the next two years and ratings within this category tended to be strong. About 6 in 10 residents or more gave positive reviews to the overall economic health of the village, overall quality of business and service establishments, shopping opportunities, employment opportunities, economic development and Niles as a place to visit and to work; further, employment opportunities and place to work were rated higher than the benchmark comparisons.

Residents were also pleased with aspects of affordability in Niles. About 6 in 10 village residents or more gave excellent or good scores to the availability of affordable quality housing, childcare/preschool, health care, mental health care, preventive health services and food, and also to cost of living and the variety of housing options.

Mobility ratings are especially strong.

While Niles saw many ratings across the different facets of community livability that were especially strong, many of these above-average marks were observed within Mobility. The overall ease of travel in the village and ease of travel by car and by public transportation were rated positively by at least 8 in 10 residents, while ease of travel by bicycle and traffic flow on major streets received favorable marks from around 6 in 10 residents. These ratings were higher than those given in other communities nationwide. Further, all Mobility-related services (bus services, traffic signal timing, sidewalk maintenance, snow removal, street lighting, street cleaning, street repair and traffic enforcement) received high scores from at least 6 in 10 residents and were also above average. While the rating for sidewalk maintenance was higher than seen elsewhere, residents would still like to see sidewalk improvements: when asked about their level of support for a variety of various possible improvements to neighborhoods, almost all residents supported the Village improving and/or replacing sidewalks.

Residents are pleased with their local government and with Village-provided services.

The overall quality of Village services was rated positively by 85% of respondents, which was higher than the national benchmark. About 8 in 10 residents gave favorable scores to the customer service provided by Village employees, while about 7 in 10 residents or more gave positive evaluations all the remaining aspects of government performance. Further, ratings for the value of services for taxes paid, confidence in Village government, government acting in the best interest of Niles, being honest and treating all residents fairly were higher than those given in other communities across the nation.

Looking more broadly at Village services, ratings in Niles were noteworthy: about 6 in 10 residents or more gave favorable ratings to all Village services, and 24 of the 36 listed services received higher than average marks. In addition to the exceptional ratings for Mobility previously mentioned, many other above-average service ratings were concentrated within the facets of Safety, Natural Environment and Built Environment.