



THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Pasco County, FL

Community Livability Report

2015



NRC

National Research Center Inc.

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

ICMA

Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

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

Contents

- About..... 1
- Quality of Life in Pasco County 2
- Community Characteristics 3
- Governance 5
- Participation 7
- Special Topics..... 9
- Conclusions 10

The National Citizen Survey™
© 2001-2015 National Research Center, Inc.

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

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

About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Pasco 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 328 residents of Pasco County. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% 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 Pasco County

A majority of residents rated the quality of life in Pasco County as excellent or good. This rating was lower than the average rating in other communities across the U.S. (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.

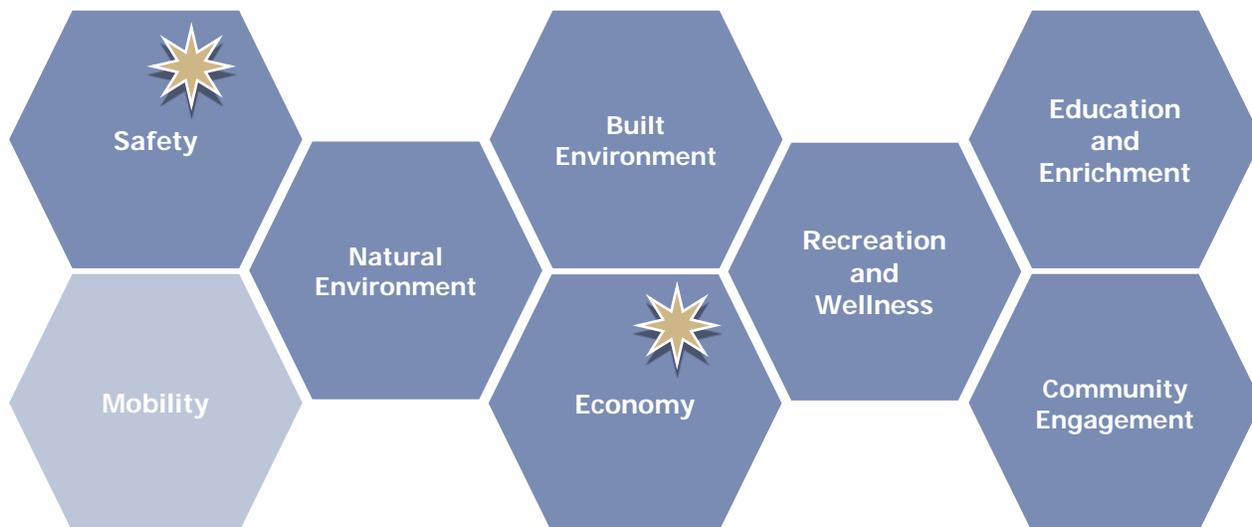
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Pasco County community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Pasco County residents gave favorable ratings to both of these facets of community. Ratings for Natural Environment, Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement were also positive and similar to other communities. Mobility was the only facet rated lower than the 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 Pasco County's unique questions.

Legend

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

- Most important



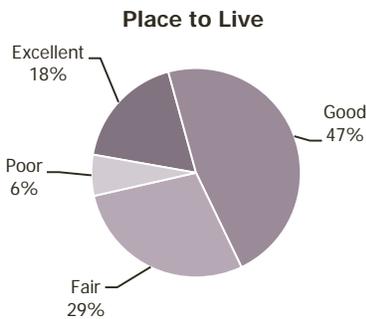
Community Characteristics

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 Pasco County, 65% rated the County as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Pasco County as a place to live were lower than 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 Pasco County as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Pasco County and its overall appearance. Ratings for neighborhood and place to retire were similar to ratings in other communities, while overall image, place to raise children and overall appearance were rated lower.

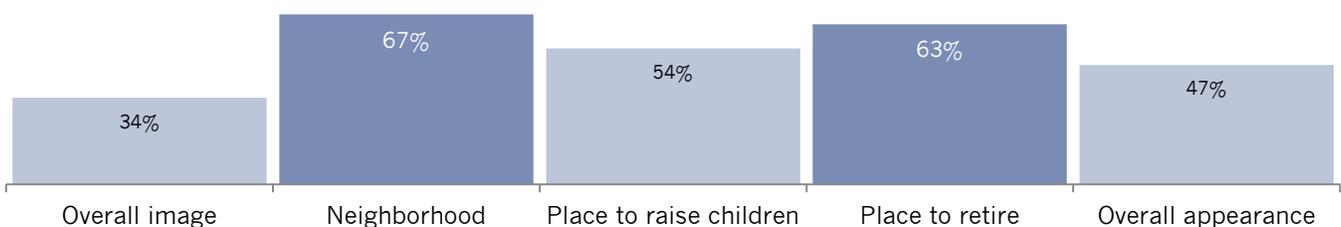
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. A majority of survey participants gave positive ratings for each aspect of Safety. Within Mobility, ratings varied. Overall ease of travel was rated positively by about two-thirds of respondents, while travel by car and public parking were rated positively by half and traffic flow by about one-third of residents; all of these aspects were rated similar to other communities. Forty-two percent of respondents gave favorable ratings to paths and walking trails, while less than a third rated ease of walking, travel by bicycle and travel by public transportation positively. These aspects were rated lower than the benchmark. At least 4 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to Natural Environment and Built Environment, and five of the eight features were rated similar to other communities. Ratings for Economy were mixed: about half of participants gave favorable ratings to business and services, cost of living, and shopping opportunities, while about one-quarter rated employment opportunities positively. These ratings were all similar to other communities. Overall economic health, Pasco County as a place to visit and as a place to work were each rated favorably by about one-third of residents and were lower than the benchmark. Most aspects of Recreation and Wellness were rated positively by a majority of respondents and were similar to ratings across the nation. With the exception of cultural/arts/music activities, at least 4 in 10 respondents gave favorable ratings to all aspects of Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



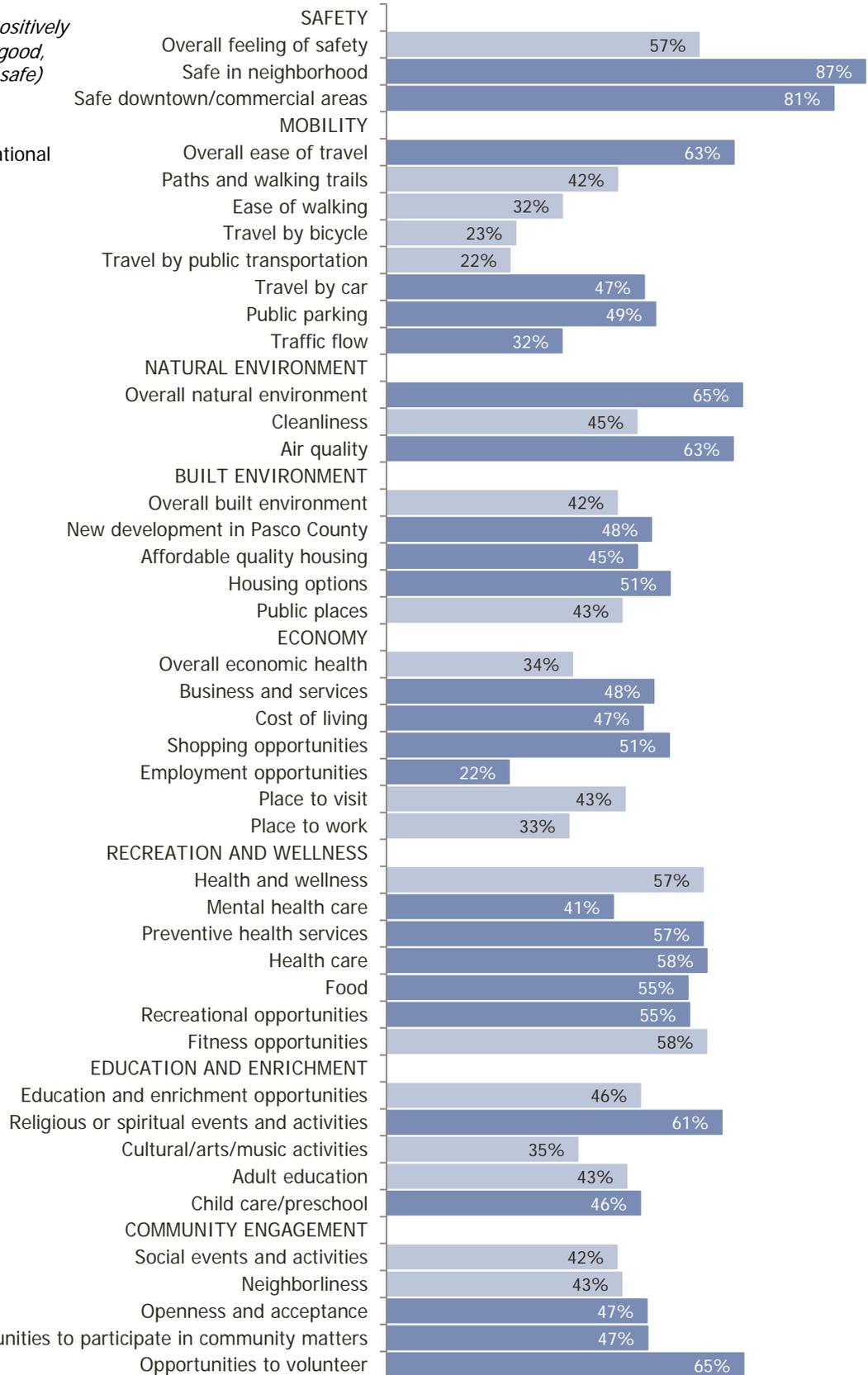
The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



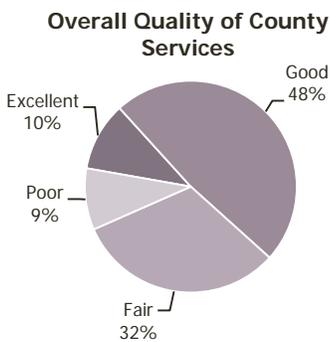
Governance

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

The overall quality of the services provided by Pasco County as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. More than half of survey participants rated the overall quality of county services positively, whereas only one-third of participants gave positive ratings for the Federal Government. Both Pasco County and the Federal Government's ratings were similar to the national benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Pasco County's leadership and governance. Nearly two-thirds of residents were pleased with Pasco County's customer service, and around 4 in 10 gave favorable ratings to value of services for taxes paid, overall direction, welcoming citizen involvement, confidence in County government, acting in the best interest of residents, being honest, and treating all residents fairly. All of these aspects were rated similar to other communities across the nation.

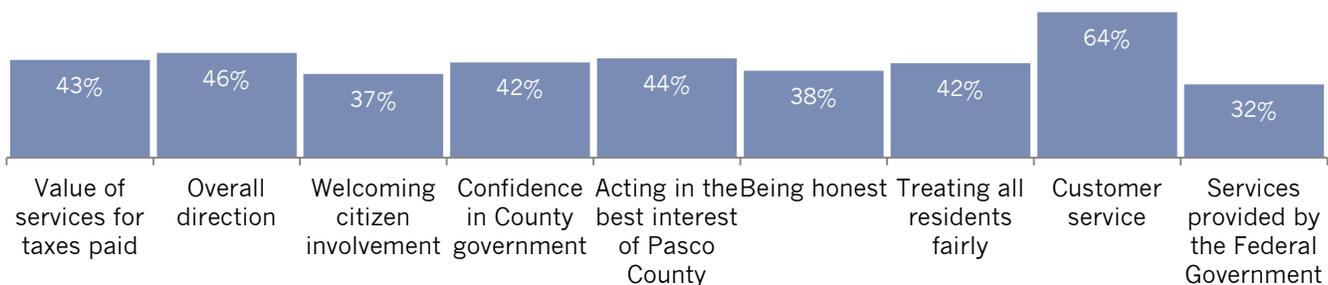
Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Pasco County. All aspects of Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement were rated positively by a majority of respondents and were similar to the benchmark with the exception of recreation programs, which was lower than the benchmark but still had a positive rating by a majority of residents. In Safety, both fire and ambulance/EMS were rated favorably by more than 8 in 10 participants; police was rated positively by around three-quarters of residents, while about 6 in 10 were pleased with crime prevention and emergency preparedness. All of these were rated similar to ratings given in other communities. Fire prevention (57% excellent or good) and animal control (39%) were rated lower than the benchmark. In Mobility, about half of residents rated traffic enforcement and street lighting positively and about 4 in 10 gave favorable ratings to sidewalk maintenance and traffic signal timing; these were similar to ratings given in other communities. About one-third were pleased with street cleaning and bus or transit services and one-quarter gave favorable ratings to street repair, all of which were rated lower than the benchmark. About half of the survey participants gave positive ratings to 11 of the 13 aspects of Natural Environment and Built Environment. In Education and Enrichment, nearly three-quarters of respondents gave favorable ratings to public libraries (which was rated similar to the benchmark) and about half were pleased with special events (which was rated lower than the benchmark).



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



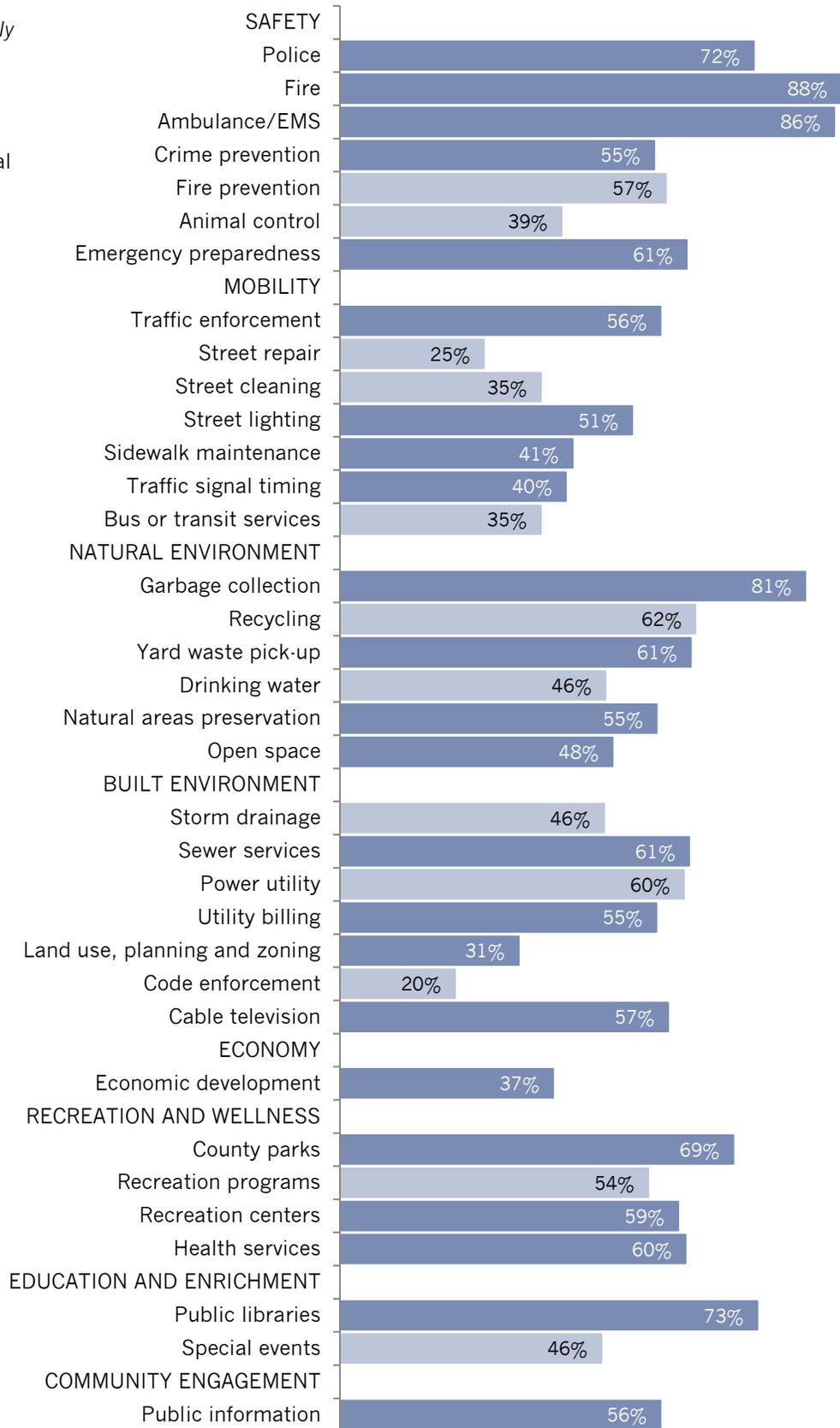
The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



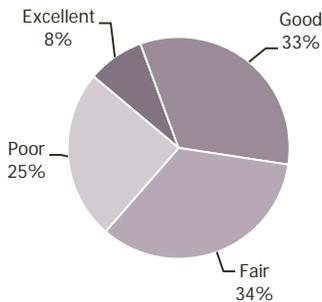
Participation

Are the residents of Pasco 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. About 4 in 10 respondents rated the sense of community in Pasco County favorably, which was a lower rating than given in other communities across the nation. About three-quarters of respondents would recommend Pasco County to others and plan to remain in Pasco County for the next five years; about half had contacted Pasco County employees in the past 12 months.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Rates of Participation across the various facets were mixed. All aspects of Safety and Natural Environment were rated similar to the benchmark, and around 8 in 10 indicated they had conserved water, made their home more energy efficient, recycled at home and had not been the victim of a crime. All facets of Mobility were rated lower than the benchmark; around one-third of residents had carpooled instead of driving or walked or biked instead of driving and fewer than 1 in 10 had used public transportation instead of driving. All aspects of Economy were similar to ratings in other communities: virtually all respondents had purchased goods or services in Pasco County in the past 12 months, more than a third worked in Pasco County, and one-quarter thought that the economy would have a positive impact on their income in the next 12 months. Within the facet of Recreation and Wellness, at least 7 in 10 participants had visited a County park, eaten 5 portions of fruits or vegetables and participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity, and more than half had used Pasco County recreation centers and considered themselves to be in very good to excellent health. Likewise, in Education and Enrichment, about half of participants had used Pasco County public libraries, participated in religious or spiritual activities and attended a County-sponsored event. Most aspects of Community Engagement were similar to the benchmark, and around 9 in 10 respondents indicated they had talked to or visited with neighbors, done a favor for a neighbor and read or watched local news. Only one aspect was rated lower than the benchmark (watched a local public meeting) and one was rated higher (voted in local elections).

Sense of Community



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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



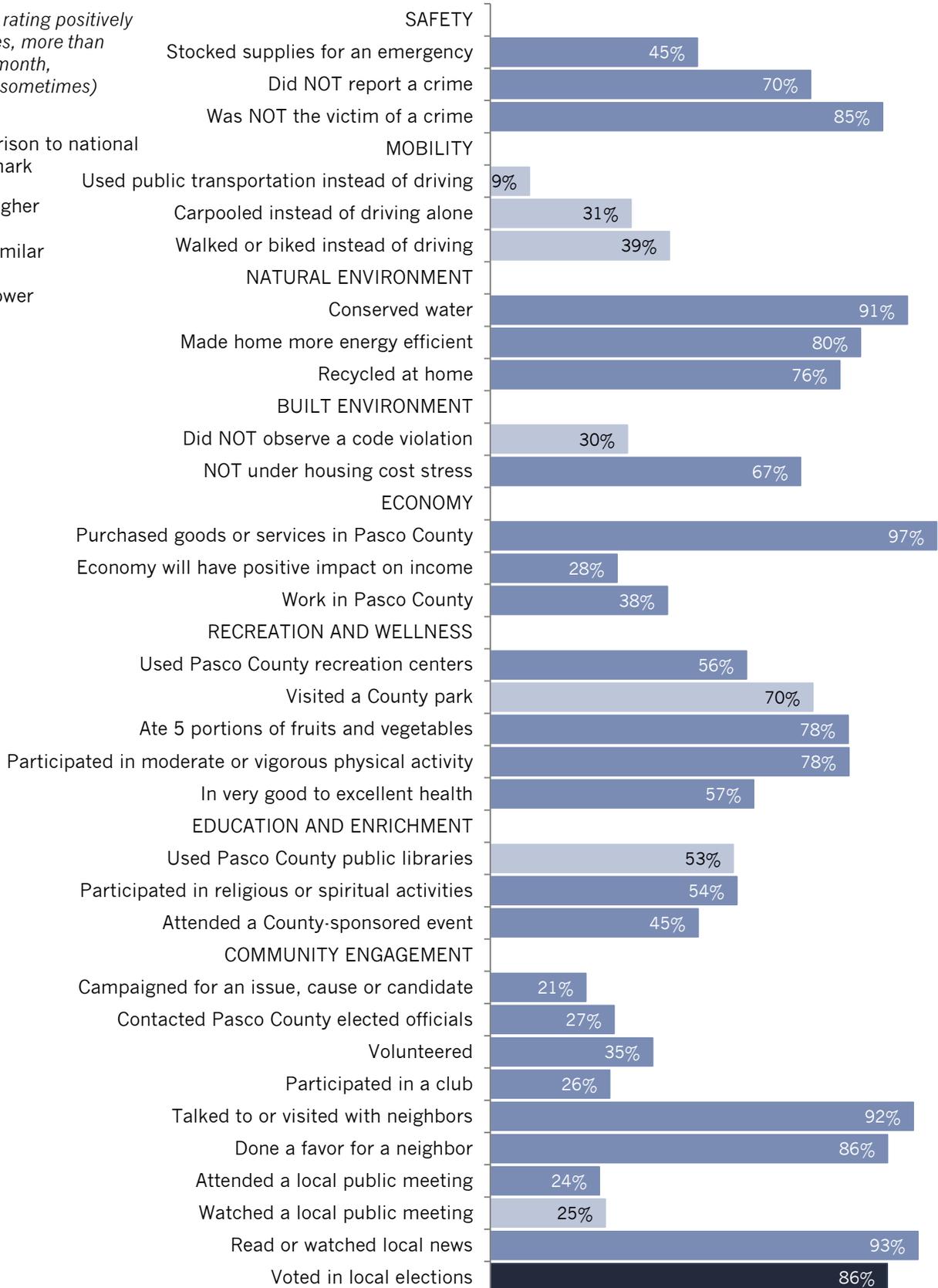
The National Citizen Survey™

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



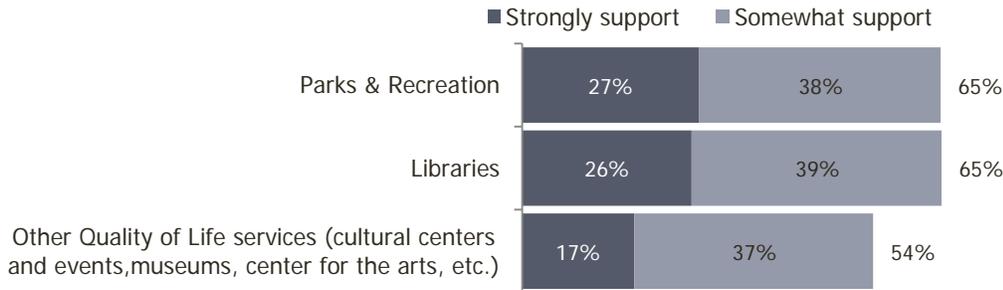
Special Topics

Pasco County included a three-part question of special interest on The NCS, which asked respondents about their level of support for three different funding strategies for Quality of Life services. Out of the three strategies, continuing user fees for services garnered the most support, followed by increasing property taxes; a majority of respondents strongly or somewhat supported both of these strategies. Establishing Municipal Service Taxing Units or Municipal Services Benefit Units to increase property taxes for specific geographic areas received the least amount of support. Levels of support for specific amenities varied, depending on the type of funding strategy in question.

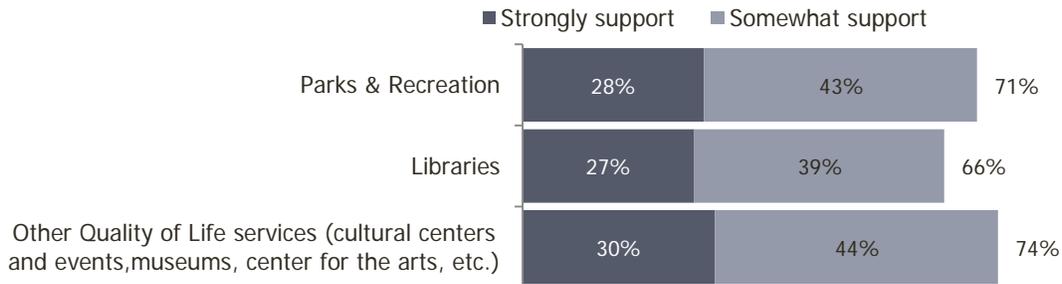
Figure 4: Support for Funding Strategies

Faced with declining or stagnant property tax revenue and substantial budget deficits since 2009, Pasco County has frequently had to cut services. Our popular public services such as Libraries and Parks & Recreation have been hardest hit. We would like to know how important these services are to you. To what extent would you support or oppose each of the following options to pay for unfunded Quality of Life services in Pasco County:

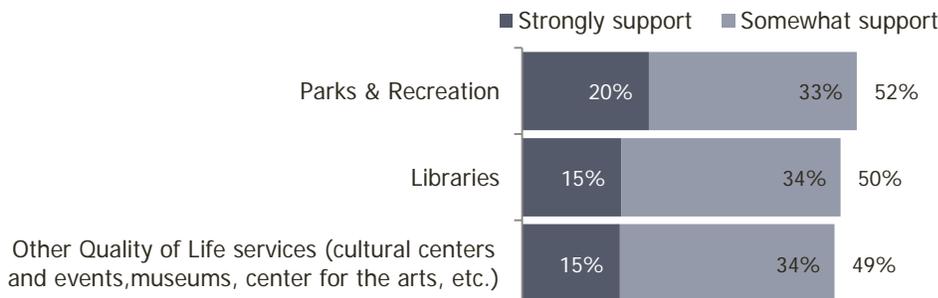
Increase property taxes county-wide to fund Quality of Life services.



Continue user fees for Quality of Life services, applied only to those who use the service(s).



Establish Municipal Service Taxing Units (MSTUs), or Municipal Services Benefit Units (MSBUs), to increase property taxes or assessments only for those geographic areas that desire a higher level of Quality of Life services.



Conclusions

Pasco County residents enjoy a positive quality of life.

A majority of residents rated their quality of life positively and think Pasco County is an excellent or good place to live. Participants gave positive ratings for their neighborhoods and also think Pasco County is a good place to retire. About 8 in 10 participants plan on remaining in Pasco County and about 7 in 10 would recommend Pasco County to others.

Economic health contributes to quality of life in Pasco County.

Participants indicated that the Economy would be an important focus area over the next two years, and Economy ratings varied. Compared to other communities across the nation, overall economic health, Pasco County as a place to visit and Pasco County as a place to work were all rated lower than the benchmark, whereas businesses and services, cost of living, employment and shopping opportunities and economic development were all rated similar to other communities. The proportion of respondents who had purchased goods or services in Pasco County, worked in Pasco County and believed the economy will have a positive impact on income was also similar to other communities.

Safety is important to residents and may be a possible area of focus for Pasco County.

Respondents also indicated that Safety is a top priority over the next two years. Most aspects of Safety, including feelings of safety in their neighborhood and in downtown/commercial areas along with services such as police, ambulance/EMS and emergency preparedness, were all rated similar to other communities. Other aspects of Safety, including the overall feeling of safety in Pasco County, fire prevention and animal control, were rated lower than the benchmark and may present areas of opportunity for Pasco County.

Pasco County residents are engaged with their community.

Many aspects of Community Engagement were rated positively by a majority of participants and were rated similar to other communities across the nation. These aspects included opportunities to volunteer and public information along with activities such as talking to or visiting with neighbors, doing a favor for a neighbor and reading or watching local news. Nearly 9 in 10 respondents voted in local elections which was a rate higher than the national benchmark.