

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

**Rio Rancho, NM**  
Community Livability Report

2017



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# About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Rio Rancho. 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.

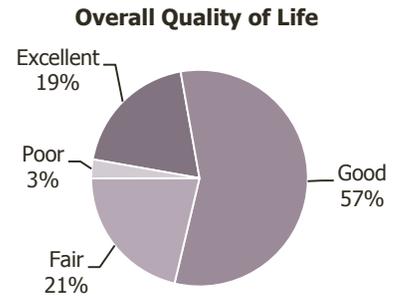
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 476 residents of the City of Rio Rancho. 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 Rio Rancho

A majority of residents rated the quality of life in Rio Rancho as excellent or good. This rating 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.

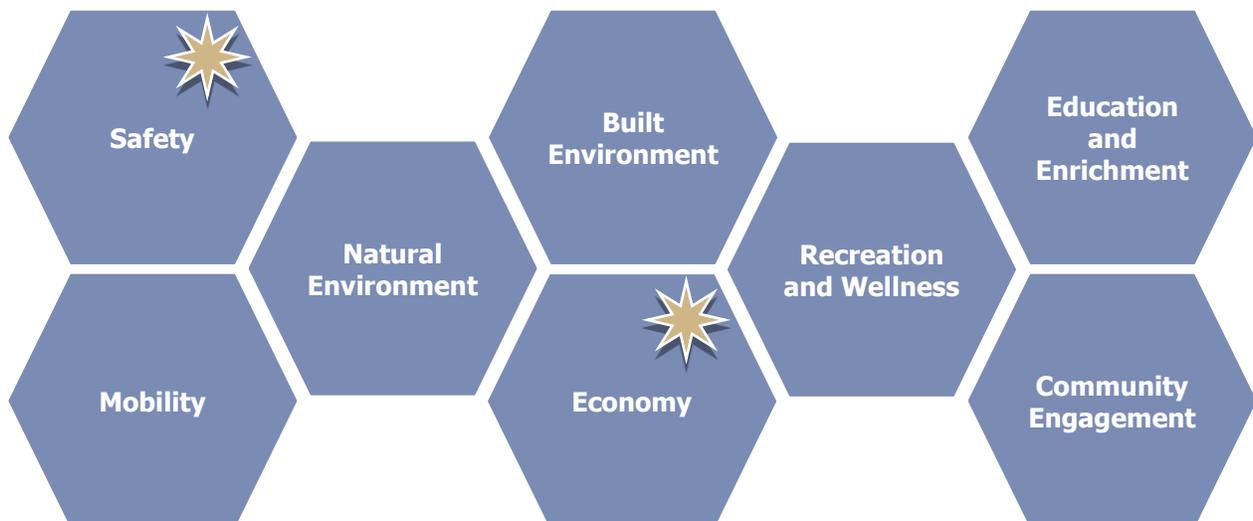
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Similar to 2015, residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Rio Rancho community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that in 2015, assessments of Mobility were lower than average, but in 2017 evaluations were similar to comparison communities (see the *Trends Over Time Report* available under separate cover for additional details). This overview of the key aspects of community quality provides a quick summary of overall performance. 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 Rio Rancho’s unique questions.

## Legend

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

- Most important



# Community Characteristics

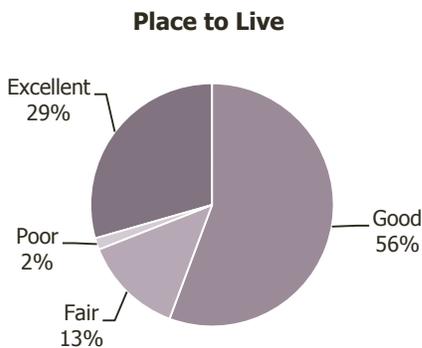
*What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?*

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 Rio Rancho, 85% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Rio Rancho 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 Rio Rancho as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Rio Rancho and its overall appearance. Around 6 in 10 were pleased with these aspects of community and all were similar to the national benchmark. Most of these items remained stable between 2015 and 2017, but the overall image of Rio Rancho and the City as a place to raise children declined during that time period.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, residents appraised most features positively and on par with the national benchmark. Residents consistently assessed Safety and Natural Environment aspects positively – and similarly to the rest of the country. Residents saw public parking as a strength within Mobility, with ratings both higher than in 2015 and above the national average. Respondents provided below-average assessments of ease of travel by alternative modes of transportation in Rio Rancho, though ease of travel by bicycle improved since the previous survey. Respondents in 2017 found it easier to travel by car than in 2015. Within Economy, residents felt that the quality of business/service establishments, cost of living and shopping opportunities were similar to those nationwide, while seeing the remaining aspects of Economy as worse off than the national average. Compared to 2015, respondents saw improvements in the cost of living and the vibrancy of Rio Rancho's commercial area in 2017.

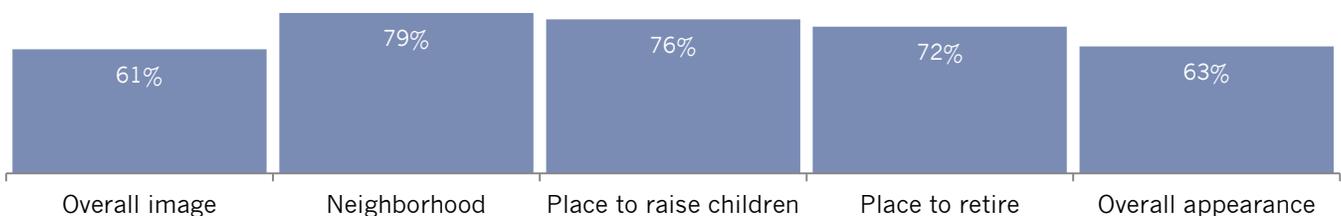
Among other changes since 2015, fitness opportunities increased in 2017, while aspects related to child care and education declined.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



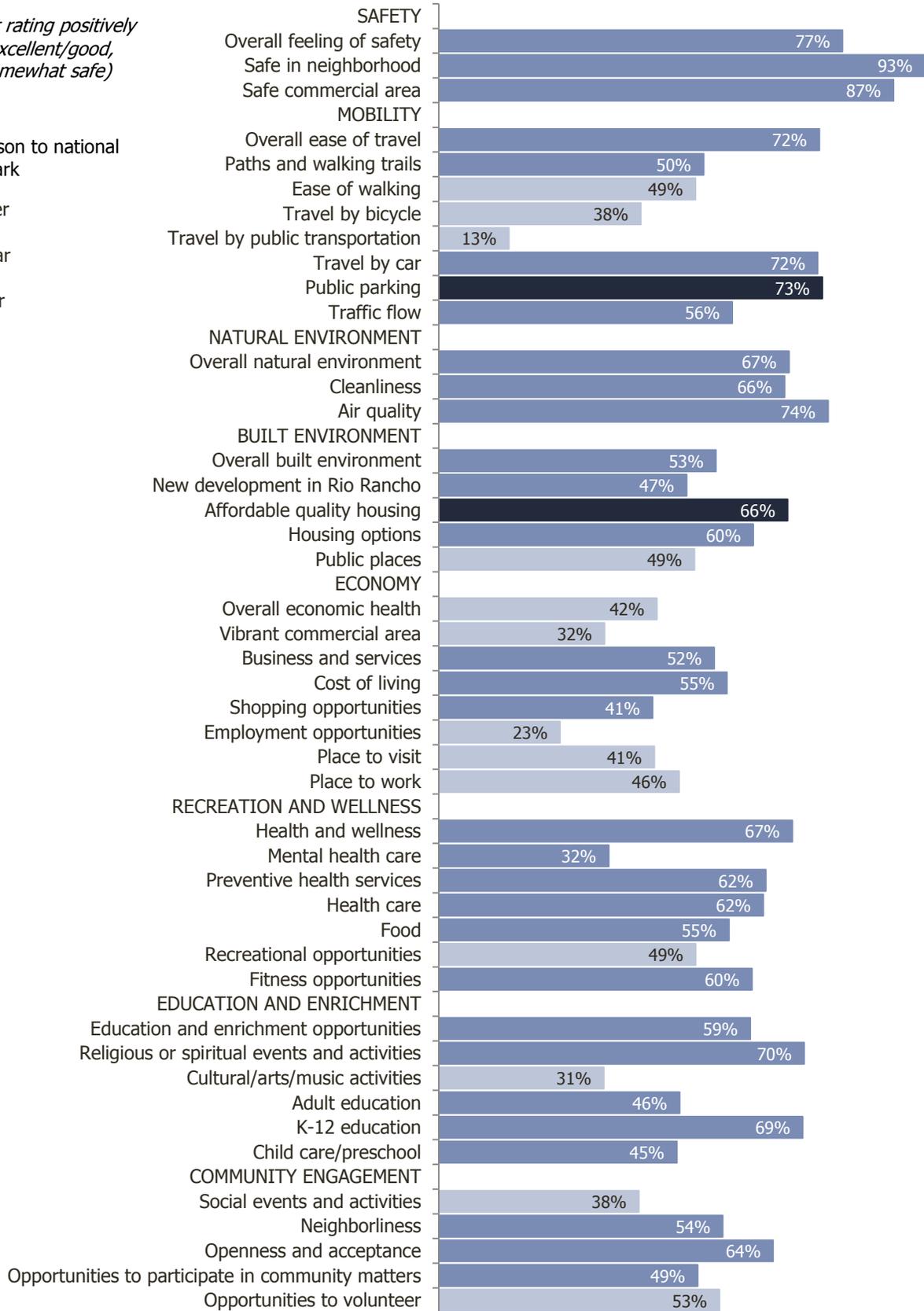
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

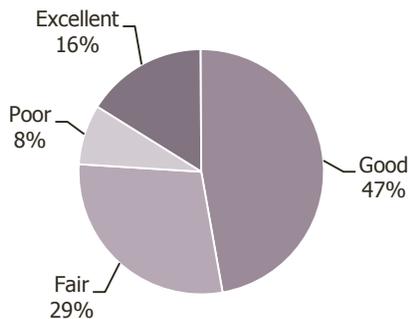
*How well does the government of Rio Rancho meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Rio Rancho as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 6 in 10 were pleased with the overall quality of City services, while about half as many approved of the services provided by the Federal Government, which declined in 2017. Both of these ratings were similar to what was seen in comparison communities.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Rio Rancho’s leadership and governance. Overall, government performance scores were positive and similar to the nation and residents saw improvement in the City treating all residents fairly, being honest and acting in the best interest of Rio Rancho.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Rio Rancho. Residents generally provided service ratings that were similar to the benchmark; just Mobility and Built Environment included services with below-average ratings. Survey respondents saw five aspects of Mobility less positively than residents of other communities across the country, though one of these (bus/ transit services) improved since 2015, as did street lighting and traffic signal timing, which were similar to the benchmark. Among six services within Built Environment, residents rated three as similar to the benchmark and three below (utility billing, code enforcement and cable television). Ratings for storm drainage and code enforcement were higher than in the last survey. Among other ratings changes over time, open space and City parks improved since 2015, while some aspects of Safety declined.

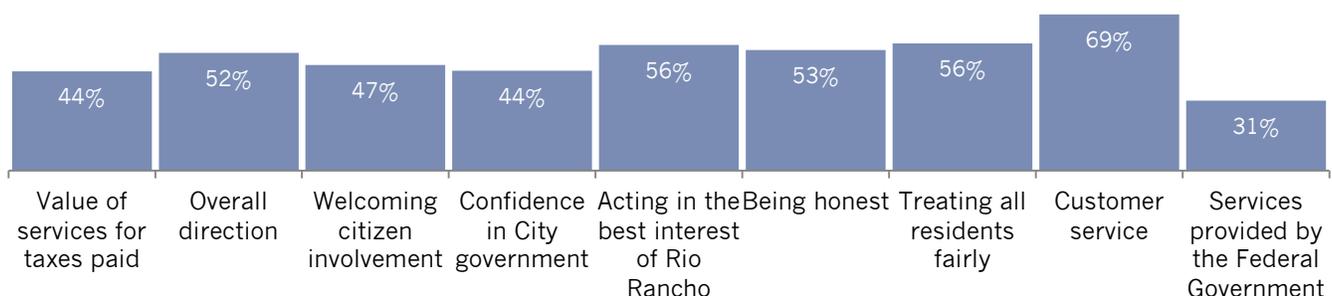
## Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



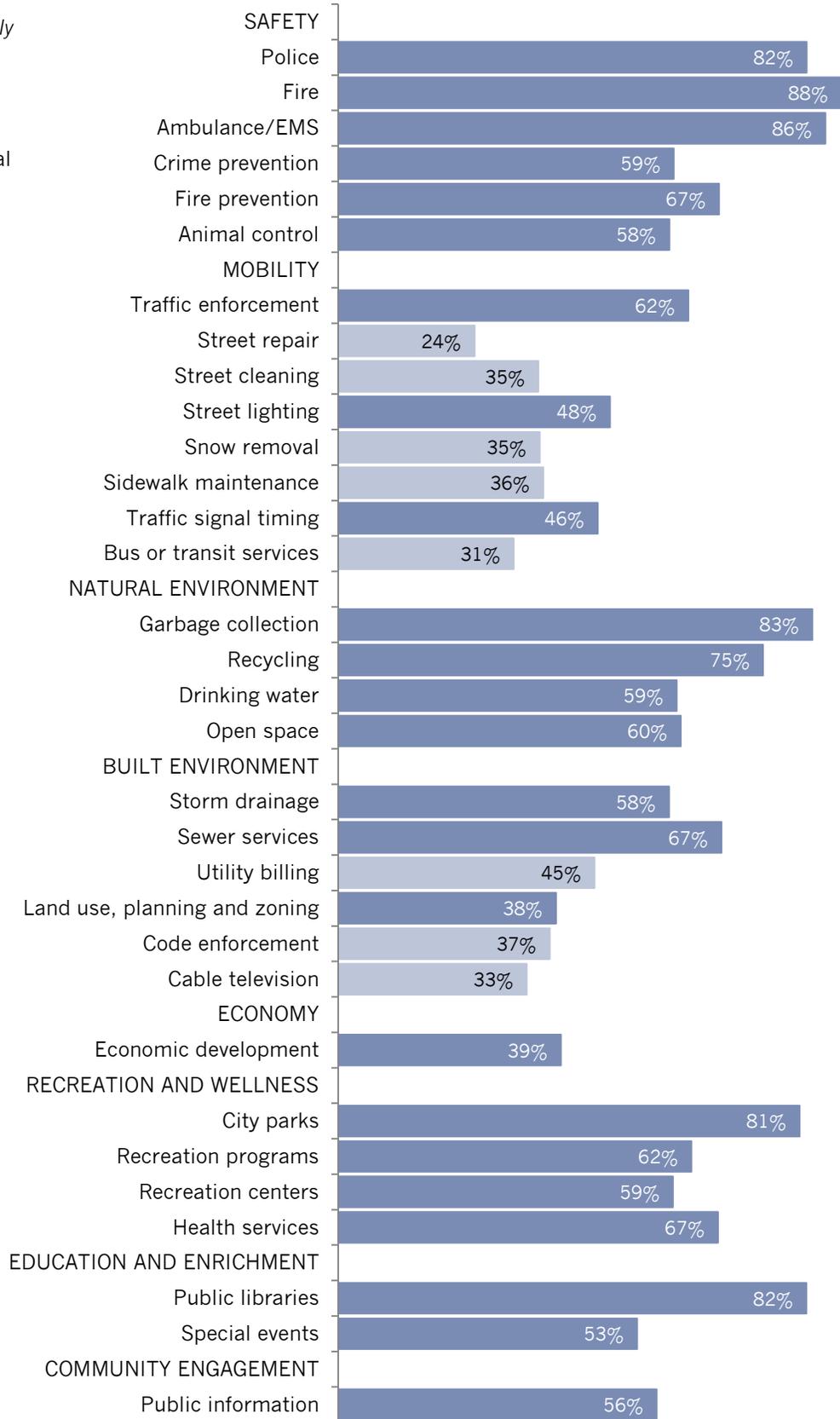
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



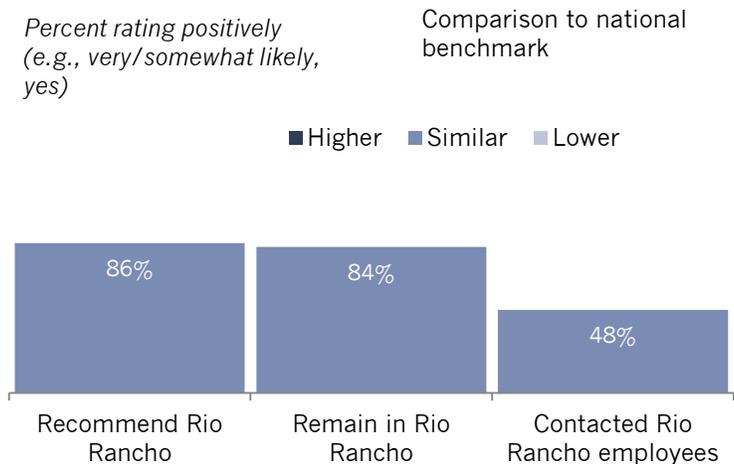
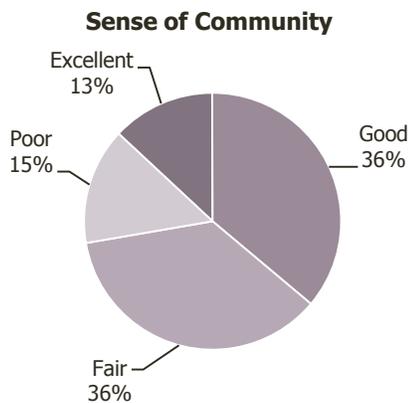
# Participation

*Are the residents of Rio Rancho 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 or residents gave high marks to the sense of community in Rio Rancho which was similar to what was observed elsewhere, but which declined in 2017. Resident loyalty remained stable and similar to the national average with around 8 in 10 reporting that they would recommend the City to someone who asked and that they planned to remain in Rio Rancho for the next five years. About half stated that they contacted Rio Rancho employees within the 12 months prior to the survey.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Engagement by Rio Rancho Residents tended to be on par with peer communities nationwide. Nearly all residents reported purchasing good or services and conserving water (water conservation was higher in Rio Rancho than elsewhere). Fewer residents than in comparison cities reported using alternate modes of transportation or attending a City-sponsored event.

Compared with the 2015 survey, fewer respondents had attended a City-sponsored event, while more had campaigned. Additionally, residents in 2017 were less likely to have observed a code violation than in 2015.



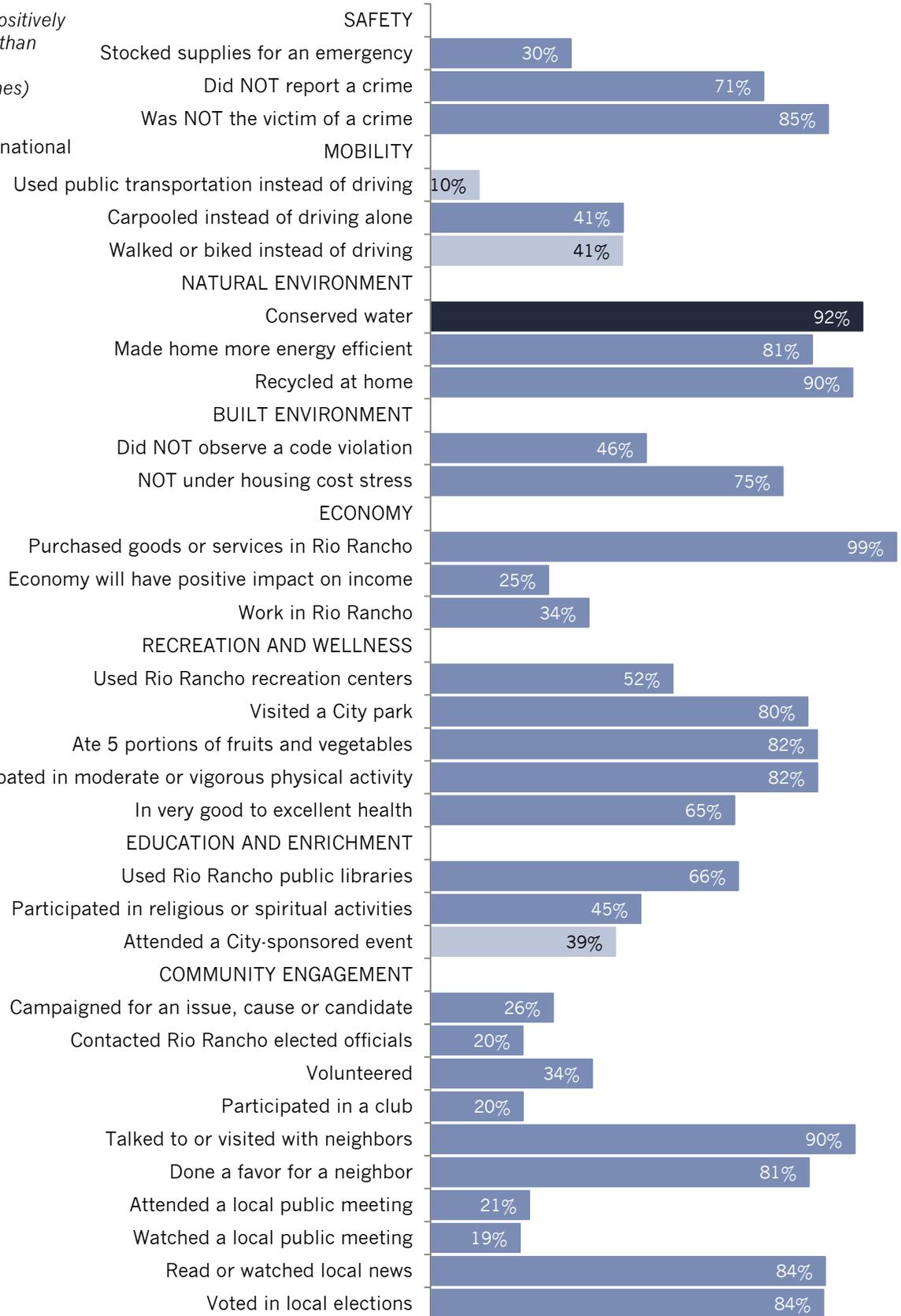
# The National Citizen Survey™

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

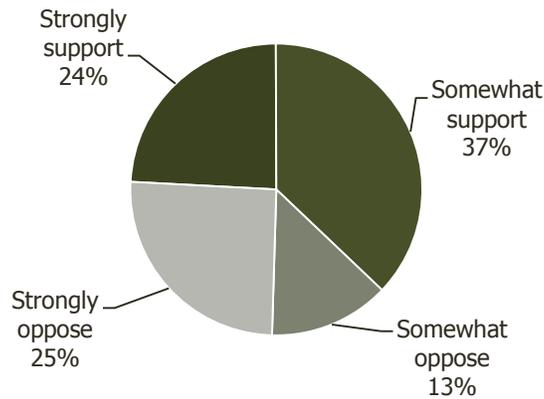


# Special Topics

The City of Rio Rancho included six questions of special interest, on topics ranging from taxes to quality of recent road construction projects. One question gauged resident support for an increased property tax to support public safety facility improvements, equipment and vehicles. Around 6 in 10 demonstrated support for the measure, though strong supporters (24%) were matched by those who strongly opposed (25%).

Figure 4: Support for Property Tax Increase to Support Public Safety Facility Improvements, Equipment and Vehicles

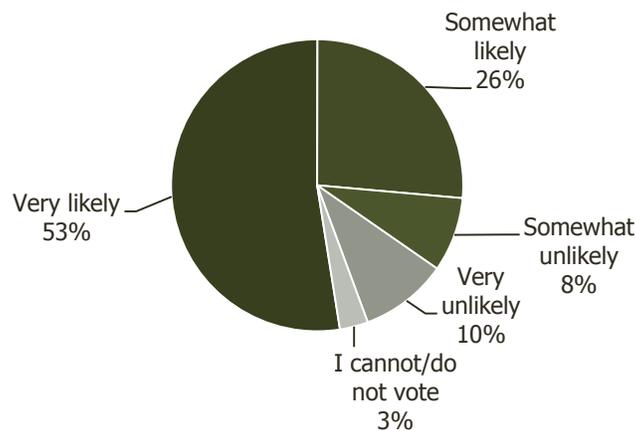
*Please rate to what extent you would support or oppose a \$25 property tax increase (per \$100,000 in home value) that would be used for public safety facility improvements, equipment and vehicles (e.g., ambulances, fire trucks and police cars):*



Another tax-related question asked respondents their likelihood of voting in favor of continuing the GO Road Bond, with the assumption of no increase in property tax. About half reported they would be very likely to vote in favor of the measure and another quarter of residents said they would be somewhat likely. About 1 in 5 said they would be unlikely to vote for the continuance of the GO Road Bond.

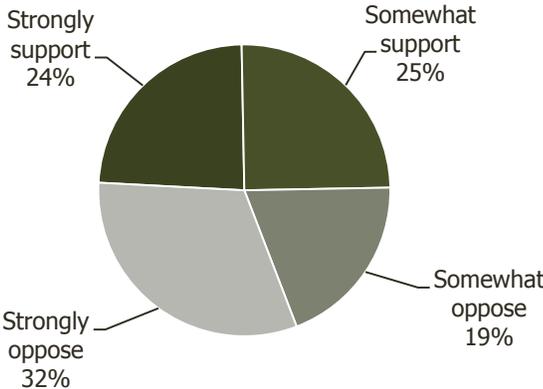
Figure 5: Support for Continuance of the GO Road Bond

*In 2016, Rio Rancho voters passed the GO Road Bond, which allocated funds for the reconstruction and improvement of City roads (High Resort Boulevard and Sara Road). Please rate how likely or unlikely you would be to vote in favor of the continuance of the GO Road Bond if current property tax levels would not change:*



Rio Rancho also sought resident opinion on support for a gross receipts tax to support the City’s purchase and maintenance of the old Club Rio Rancho/Chamisa Hills Golf and Country Club as open space. Total support and opposition were equal, with those who strongly opposed outnumbering strong supporters.

Figure 6: Support for Acquiring Club Rio Rancho  
*To what extent would you support or oppose a gross receipts tax (GRT) increase of about 6 cents for a \$100 purchase of goods and services (1/16 of 1%) to have the City acquire and maintain the property formerly known as Club Rio Rancho/ Chamisa Hills Golf and Country Club as natural open space, excluding amenities such as trails and landscaping?*

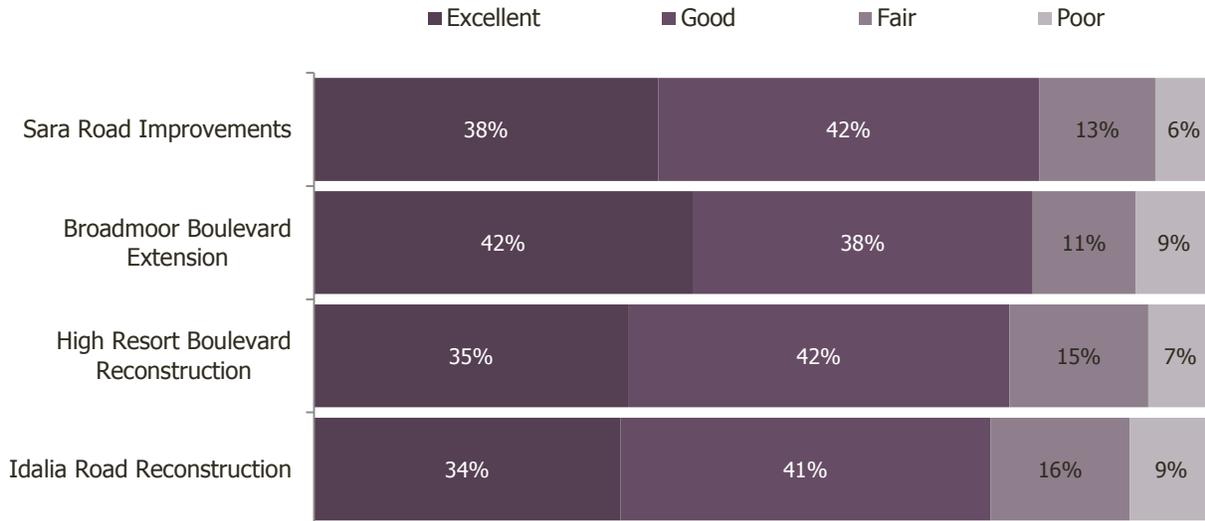


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One question included a list of recent roadway construction projects throughout the City, asking residents to rate quality of each project. About three-quarters of residents awarded excellent or good marks to each project.

Figure 7: Quality of Road Projects

*Please rate the quality of the following recent roadway construction projects:*



Rio Rancho included a two-part question about the potential location of the upcoming new senior center. In the first part of the question, residents provided their support or opposition to each of four potential locations. At least 6 in 10 respondents supported each location, but Loma Colorado and Unser Boulevard topped the list. Part two of the question asked residents to select their single preferred location, revealing the same location ranking.

Figure 8: Support for Senior Center Locations

*The City of Rio Rancho has received \$3.4 million to build the first phase of a new senior center. First, please rate to what extent you would support or oppose the construction of a new senior center at each of the following locations. Then, please select a single location that you feel would be the best site for a new senior center.*

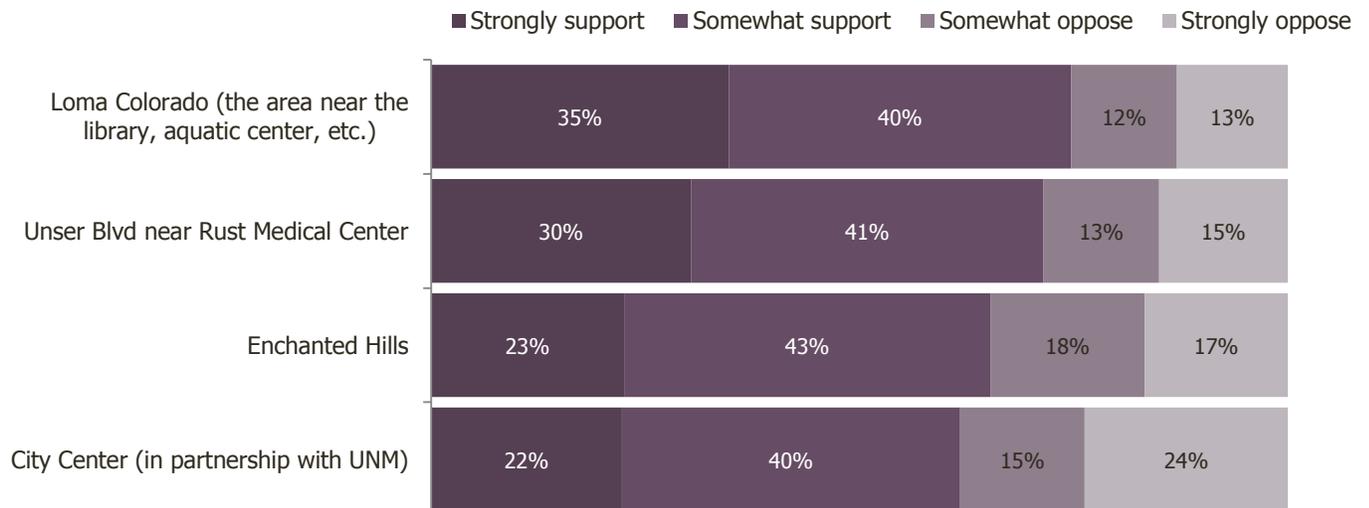
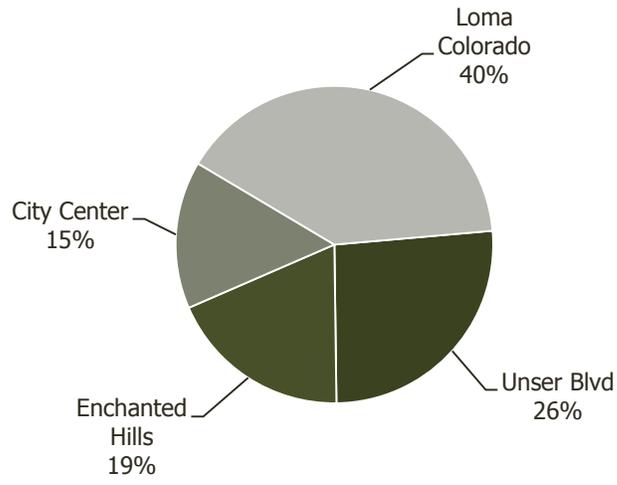


Figure 9: Most Preferred Senior Center Location



# Conclusions

## **Safety continues to be a priority for the community.**

As in 2015, survey respondents chose Safety as a focus area for the City in the coming two years. Overall, Safety ratings were strong with around 9 in 10 saying they felt safe in their neighborhood and in the commercial area and 8 in 10 applauding the overall feeling of safety in the City. Additionally, first responder services such as police, fire and ambulance were all appreciated by at least 8 in 10 respondents. While most aspects related to Safety remained stable over time, crime prevention, fire prevention and ambulance/EMS services declined between 2015 and 2017.

When asked the extent to which they would support a \$25 property tax increase to support public safety facility improvements, equipment and vehicles, around 6 in 10 said they would support the measure, though many opposed the potential tax.

## **Mobility continues to be a sore spot in the City, but impressions are improving.**

Residents appreciated public parking but had difficulty with other aspects of Mobility in the City. Alternate modes of transportation such as walking, biking or public transit as well as Mobility-related services were all lower than the national benchmark; relatedly, fewer residents reported utilizing alternate modes of transportation compared to peers in other communities.

However, some Mobility ratings improved since the previous survey. Residents gave ease of travel by car and bicycle, as well as public parking, street lighting, traffic signal timing and bus/ transit services all higher ratings in 2017 compared to 2015. About half of respondents reported being very likely to support the GO Road Bond continuance and respondents generally gave positive ratings to recent roadway construction projects.

## **Rio Rancho residents are increasingly impressed with local government.**

More residents in 2017 were pleased with a number of aspects of Rio Rancho's leadership and governance than in 2015, including residents' impressions of the City being honest, treating all residents fairly and acting in the best interest of Rio Rancho.