



THE NCS

The National Community Survey

Ferguson Township, PA

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 Ferguson Township. 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).

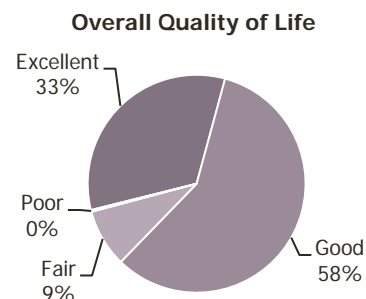
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 432 residents of the Township of Ferguson Township. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% for all respondents. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Ferguson Township

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Ferguson Township 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.



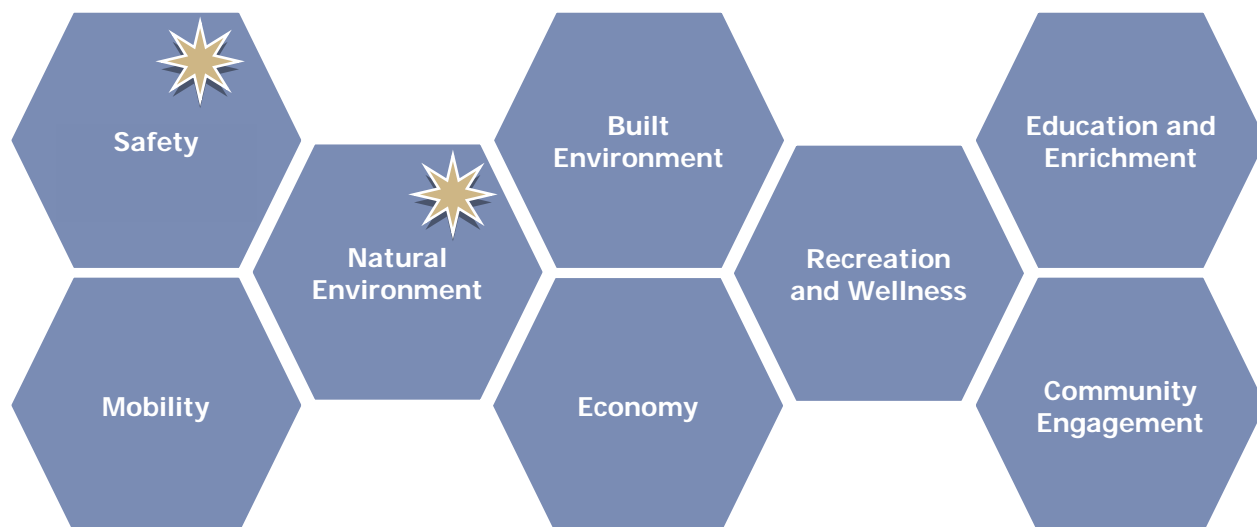
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Natural Environment as priorities for the Ferguson Township community in the coming two years. These facets, as well as all other facets of community livability, received ratings similar to the benchmark 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 Ferguson Township's unique questions.

Legend

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

- Most important

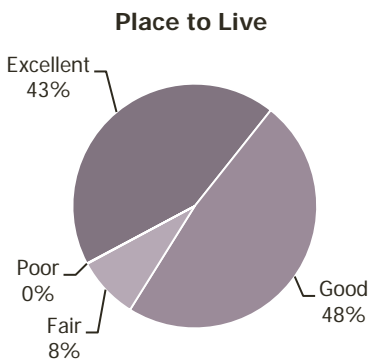


Community Characteristics

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 Ferguson Township, 92% rated the Township as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Ferguson Township as a place to live were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the Township as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Ferguson Township as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Ferguson Township and its overall appearance. About 9 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall appearance of the Township and Ferguson Township as a place to raise children and both of these ratings were higher than those given in other communities across the nation. Roughly 9 in 10 respondents gave positive scores to the overall image of the Township and their neighborhood as a place to live, while three-quarters were pleased with Ferguson Township as a place to retire; these ratings were similar to those given elsewhere.



Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Virtually all residents gave favorable marks to all aspects of Safety, and the rating for the overall feeling of safety in Ferguson Township was above average. A majority of residents awarded positive ratings to all aspects of Natural Environment, Education and Enrichment, and Community Engagement and these ratings tended to be similar to the benchmarks, with a few that were above average (cleanliness of the city, air quality, K-12 education and affordable quality child care/preschool).

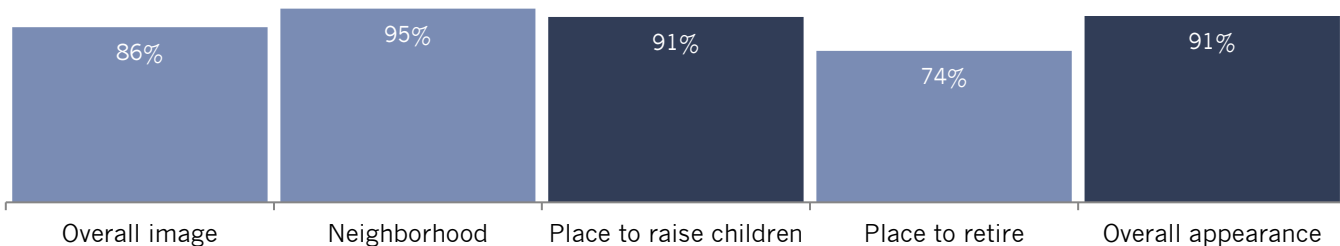
Ratings for Mobility were especially strong. About 8 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to the overall ease of travel in the Township and paths and walking trails; this latter rating was higher than those seen elsewhere. About 7 in 10 residents gave high scores to ease of travel by bicycle and by public transportation (which were above average) and to ease of travel by car and ease of walking (similar to the average).

Economy ratings in the Township were also positive. More than 8 in 10 residents gave favorable marks to the overall economic health of Ferguson Township and 6 in 10 were pleased with employment opportunities; both of these ratings were higher than the national benchmarks. About two-thirds of residents or more were pleased with the overall quality of business and service establishments and Ferguson Township as a place to visit and to work. These evaluations were similar to those given in other communities.

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

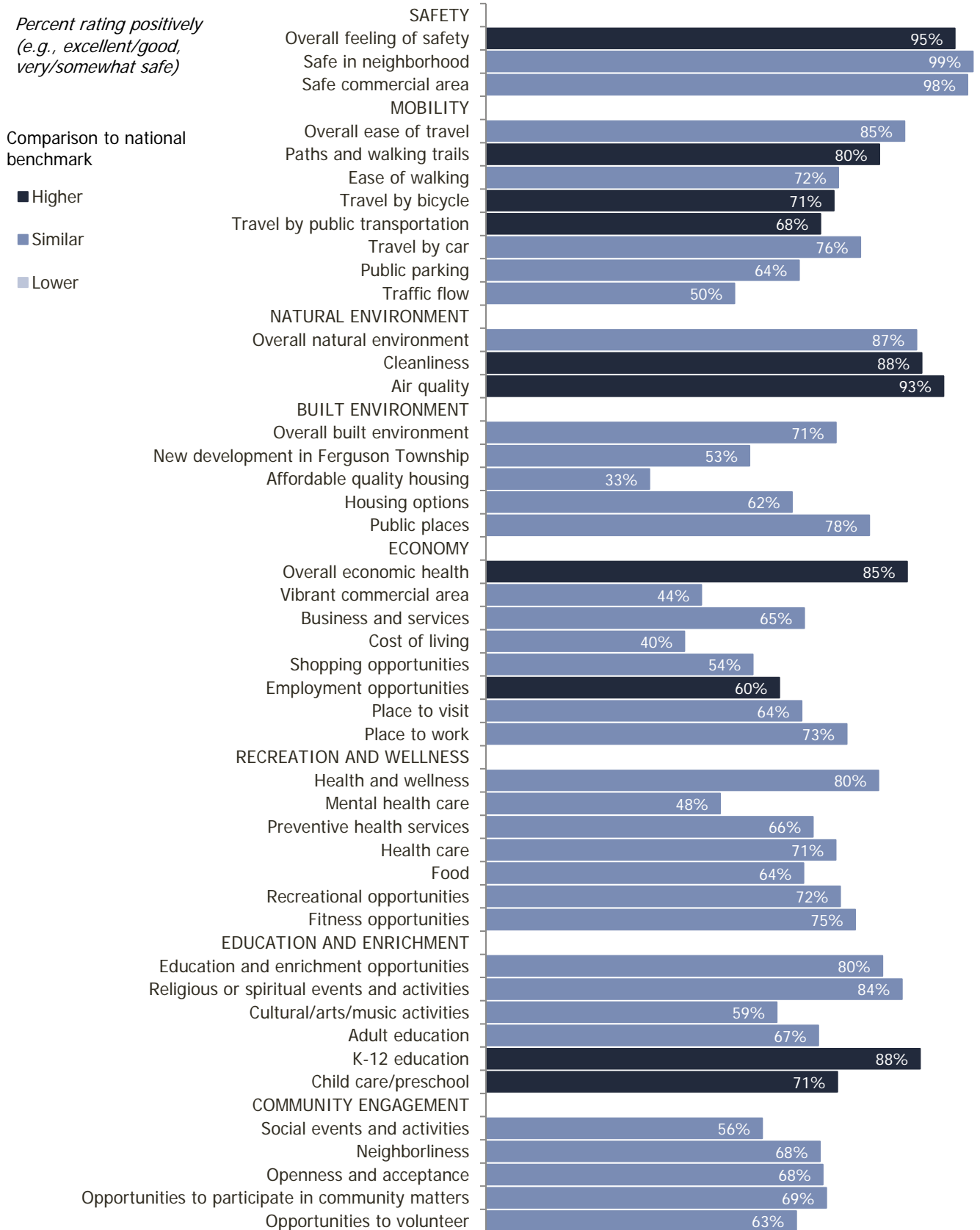
Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics



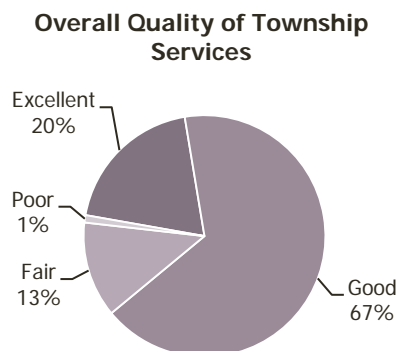
Governance

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

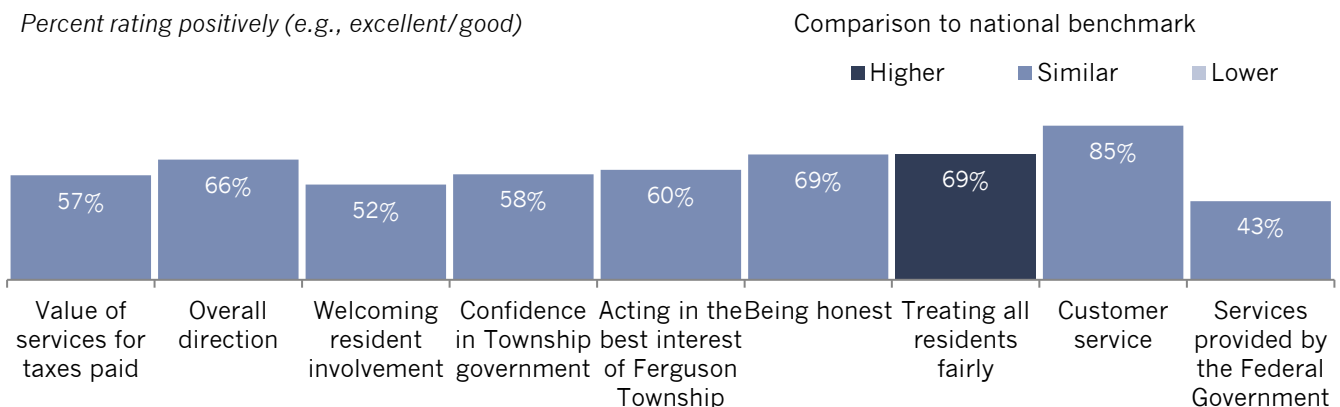
The overall quality of the services provided by Ferguson Township as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. More than 8 in 10 residents awarded excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of Township services and 4 in 10 were pleased with the services provided by the Federal Government. Both of these ratings were similar to those given in other communities across the nation.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Ferguson Township's leadership and governance. More than 8 in 10 residents gave positive marks to the customer service provided by the Township, and about two-thirds were pleased with the overall direction of the Township, being honest and treating all residents fairly (this latter rating was higher than average). About 6 in 10 residents gave favorable evaluations to the value of services for taxes paid, overall confidence in Township government and government acting in the best interest of the Township. About half of respondents gave positive ratings to the job Township government does at welcoming resident involvement.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Ferguson Township. Ratings within the facet of Safety were especially positive: at least 9 in 10 residents awarded positive marks to police, fire, ambulance/EMS and crime prevention services, while three-quarters gave excellent or good ratings to fire prevention and animal control. Further, ratings for police and crime prevention were higher than those given in other communities nationwide.

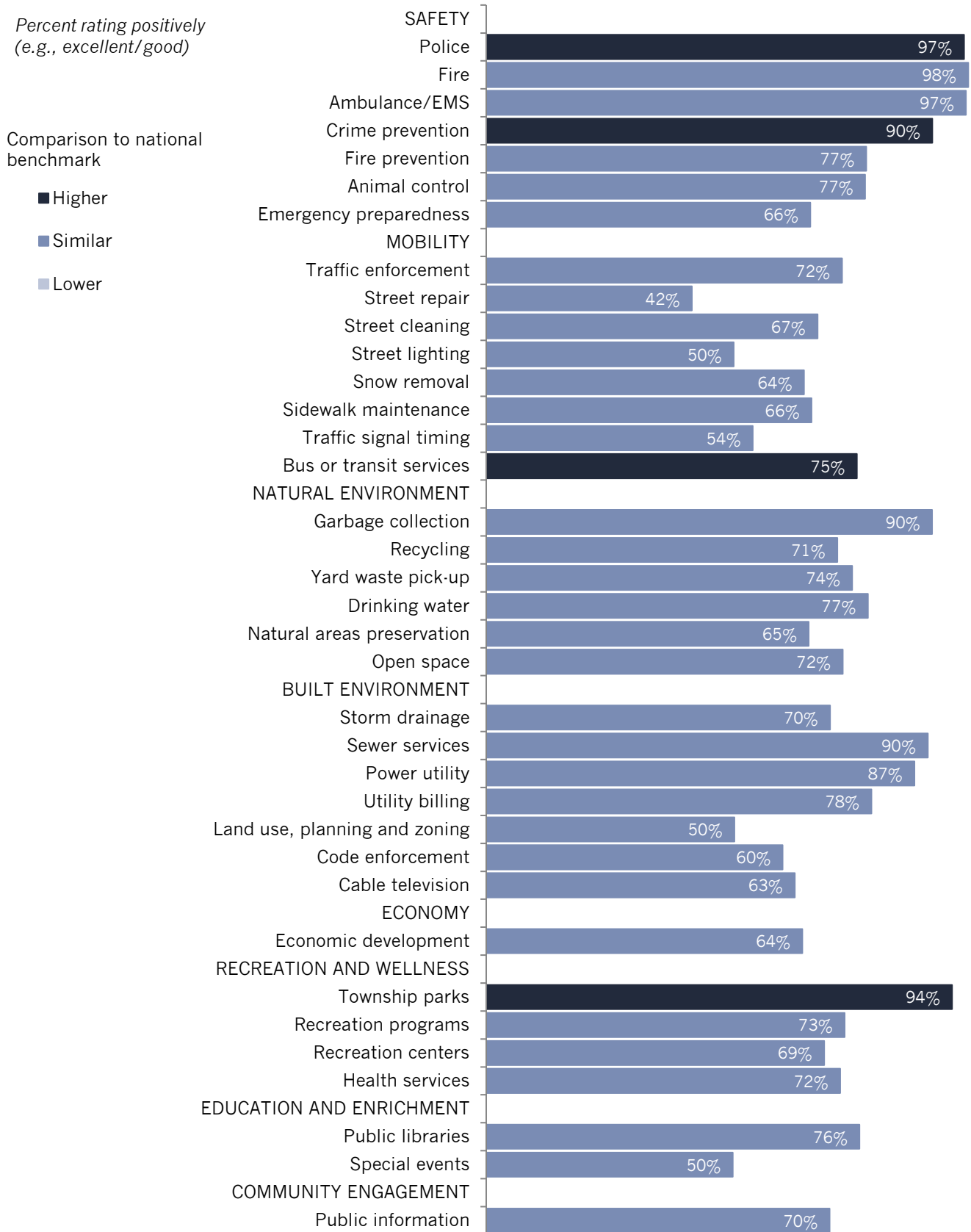


Resident evaluations of Township parks (94% excellent or good) and bus or transit services (75%) were also higher than the national benchmarks. All other service ratings in Ferguson Township were similar to those seen in other jurisdictions.



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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

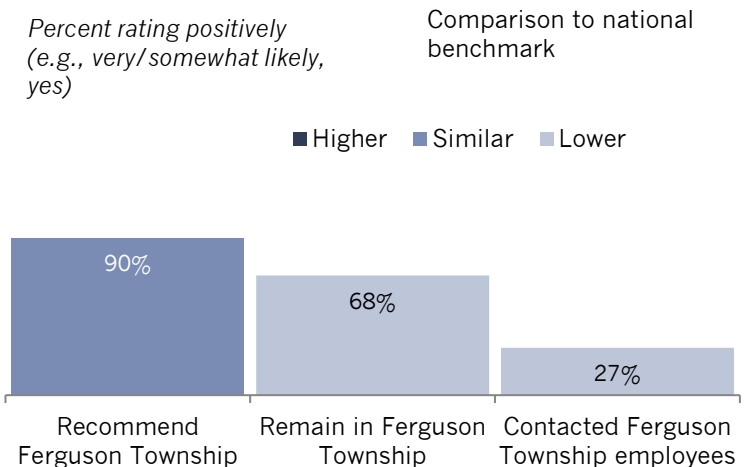
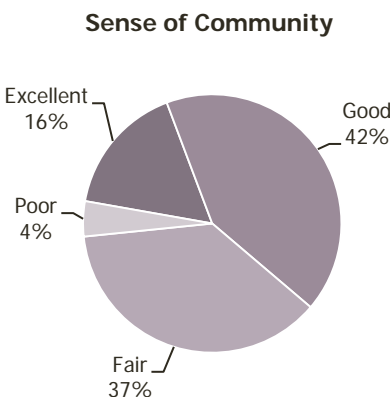


Participation

Are the residents of Ferguson Township connected to the community and each other?

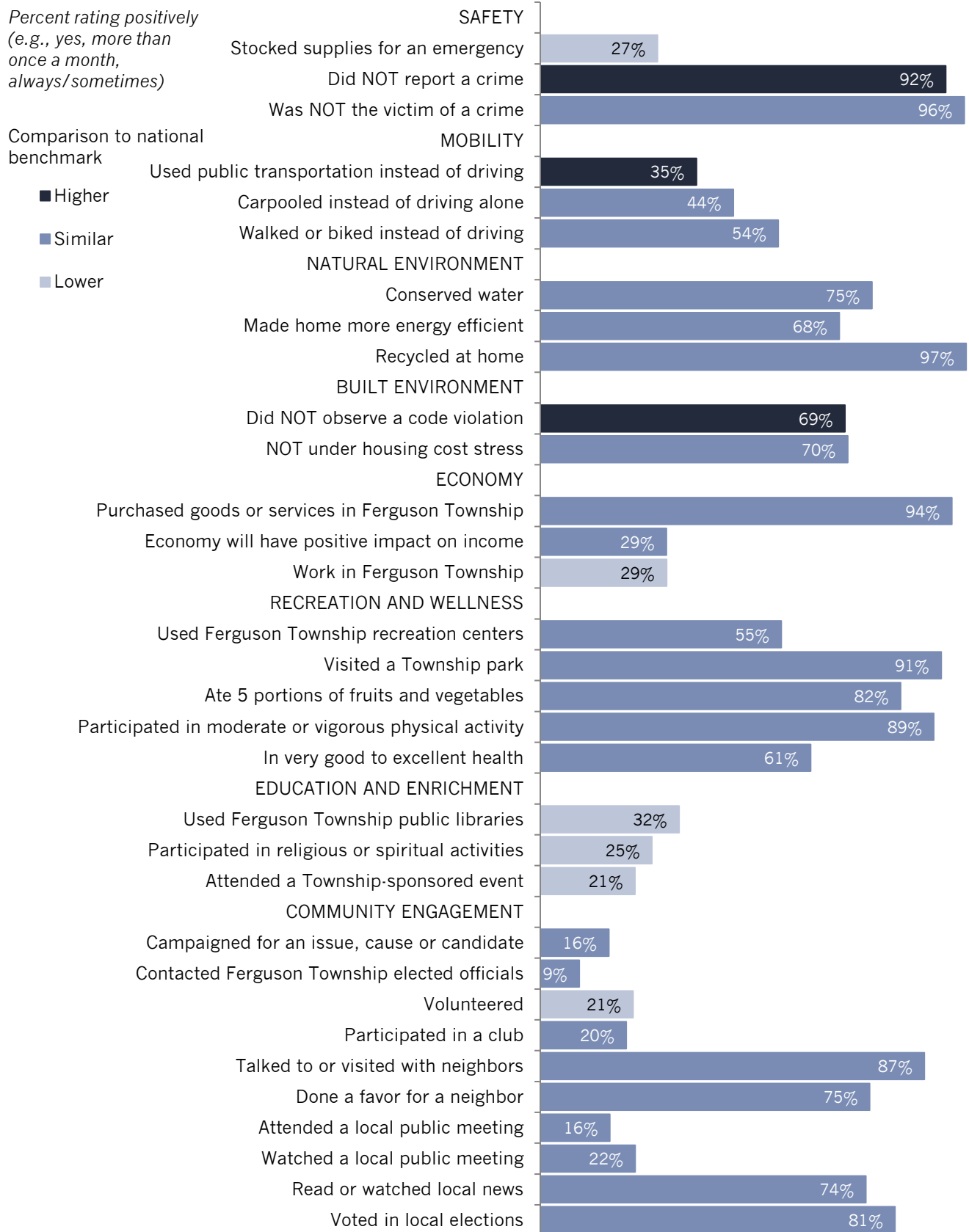
An engaged community harnesses its most valuable resource, its residents. The connections and trust among residents, government, businesses and other organizations help to create a sense of community, a shared sense of membership, belonging and history. About 6 in 10 residents gave excellent or good marks to the sense of community in Ferguson Township and 9 in 10 would recommend living in the Township to someone who asked. These ratings were similar to the national benchmarks. However, two-thirds of residents would recommend living in Ferguson Township to someone who asked and only one-quarter had contacted the Township in the 12 months prior to the survey, and both of these levels were lower than observed in other communities.

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 varied widely across the different facets of community livability, making the comparisons to the benchmarks useful for interpreting the results. Most levels of participation were similar to those observed elsewhere. Ferguson Township residents were more likely than those who lived in other communities to have not reported a crime to the police or to have not observed a code violation, and also more likely to have used public transportation instead of driving. However, they were less likely than residents in other communities to have stocked supplies for an emergency, to work in the community, to have volunteered or to have participated in all aspects of Education and Enrichment.



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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation



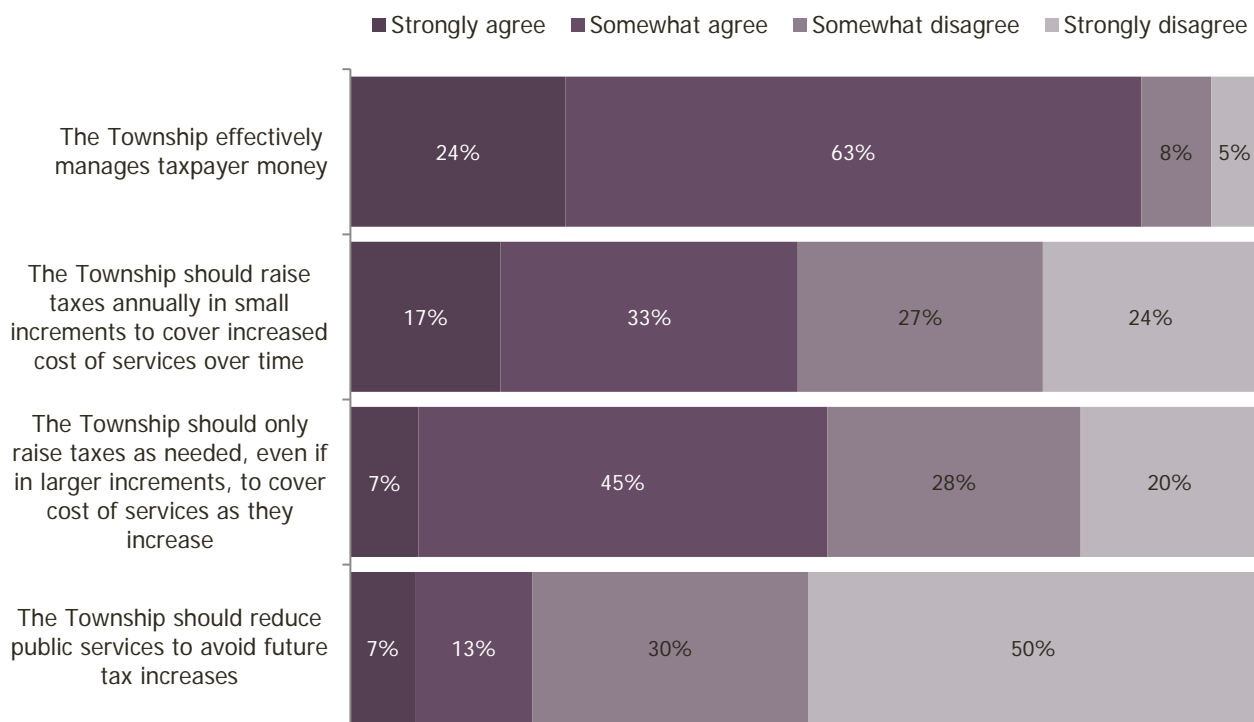
Special Topics

Ferguson Township included six questions of special interest on The NCS. Topic areas included management of tax revenue, community policing and sources of Township information, among others.

When indicating how much they agreed or disagreed with several statements related to Township management of taxpayer funds, residents were most likely to indicate they strongly or somewhat agreed that the Township effectively manages taxpayer money; more than 8 in 10 did so. Residents were evenly split on whether the Township should only raise taxes as needed or raise taxes annually: about half of residents agreed with each of these statements, while the other half disagreed. Survey respondents were least likely to agree that the Township should reduce public services to avoid future tax increases, with only 2 in 10 indicating they agreed with this statement, while 8 in 10 disagreed (5 in 10 *strongly* disagreed).

Figure 4: Township Management of Taxpayer Funds

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

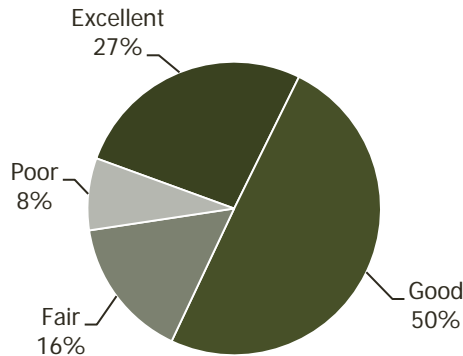


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Survey participants were provided a definition of community policing, and then were asked how they would rate Ferguson Township in practicing community policing. About one-quarter rated Ferguson Township as excellent in practicing community policing, and one-half gave a rating of good. About one-quarter of respondents felt that Ferguson Township does an only fair or poor job of practicing community policing.

Figure 5: Community Policing

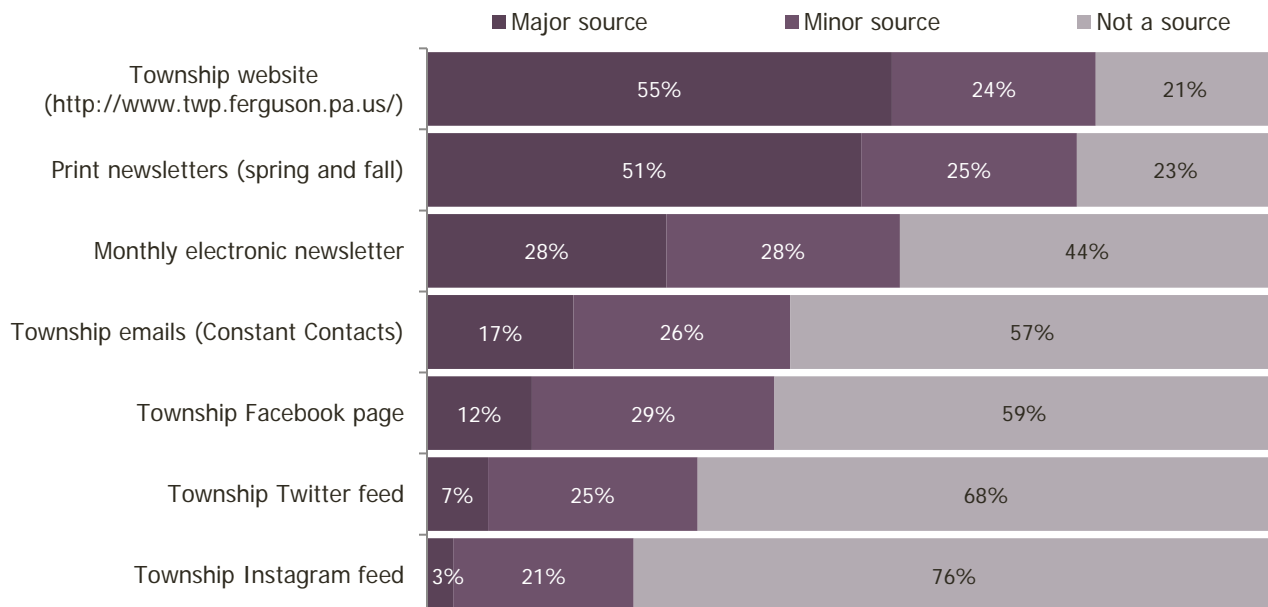
Community policing involves police officers working with the community to address causes of crime in an effort to reduce the problems themselves through a wide range of activities. How do you rate Ferguson Township in practicing community policing?



Those completing the survey reported the degree to which they considered various media to be personal sources for obtaining information about Township government. The sources most frequently indicated as sources of information were the Township website and the spring and fall print newsletters, with about 8 in 10 residents saying each were major or minor sources of information. About half stated the monthly electronic newsletter was a major or minor information source. About 4 in 10 residents considered Township emails or the Township Facebook page a major or minor source. Twitter was a major or minor source of information about Township government for about 3 in 10 respondents, while the Township Instagram feed was a source of Township information for about one-quarter of respondents.

Figure 6: Sources of Township Information

Please indicate how much of a source, if at all, you consider each of the following to be for obtaining information about the Township government and its activities, events, and services:

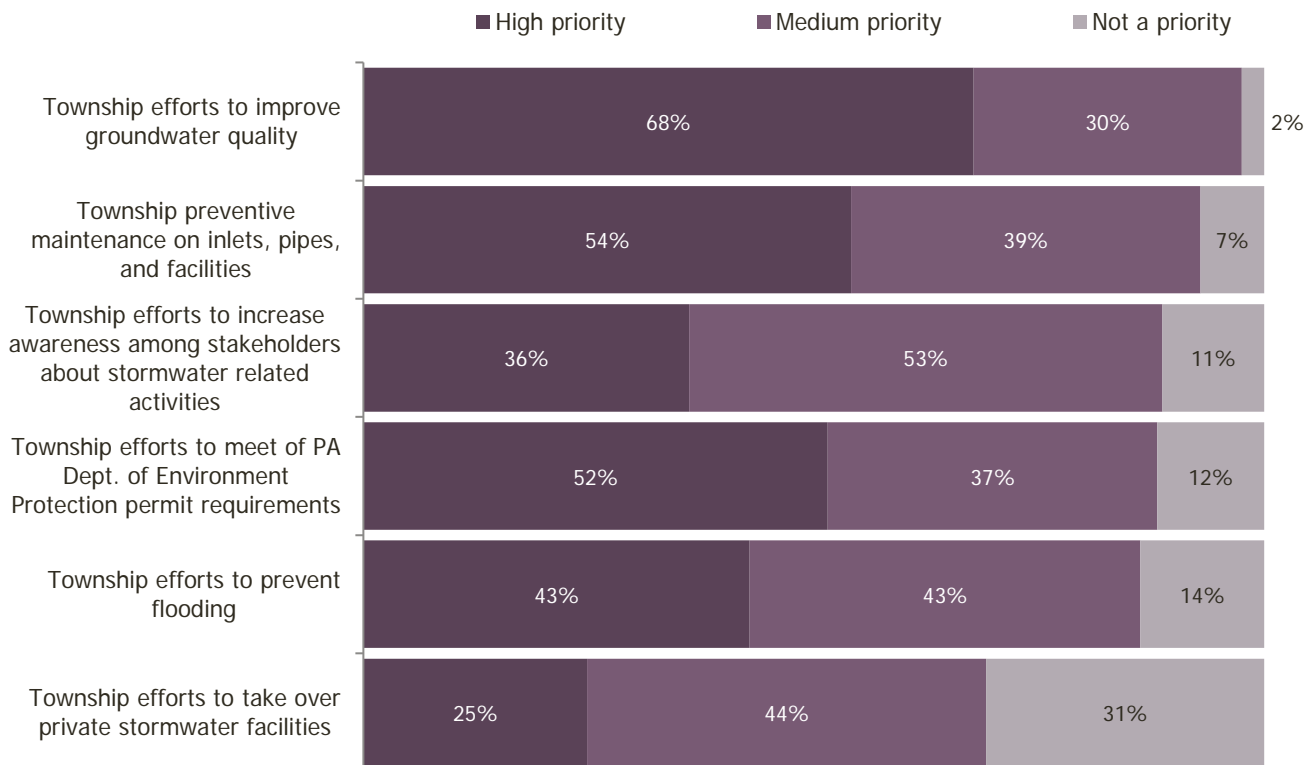


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A number of issues face Ferguson Township; the survey was used to gain insight on what the residents think are the important priorities. Thinking about a number of activities related to stormwater management, virtually all residents rated various Township efforts to improve groundwater quality as a high or medium priority. The ones to which the highest priority was given, with more than half of respondents rating them as a high priority, were efforts to improve groundwater quality, preventive maintenance on groundwater infrastructure and efforts to meet State Department of Environment Protection permit requirements. About 4 in 10 felt efforts to prevent flooding were a high priority, while one-third believed efforts to increase awareness about stormwater-related activities was a high priority. None of these five activities was considered “not a priority” by more than 14% of respondents. However, about 3 in 10 respondents felt the Township efforts to take over private stormwater facilities was not a priority, while 25% felt it was a high priority (with the remaining 44% considering it a medium priority).

Figure 7: Stormwater Management Priorities

Please rate how much of a priority, if any, each of the following stormwater-related activities are to you:

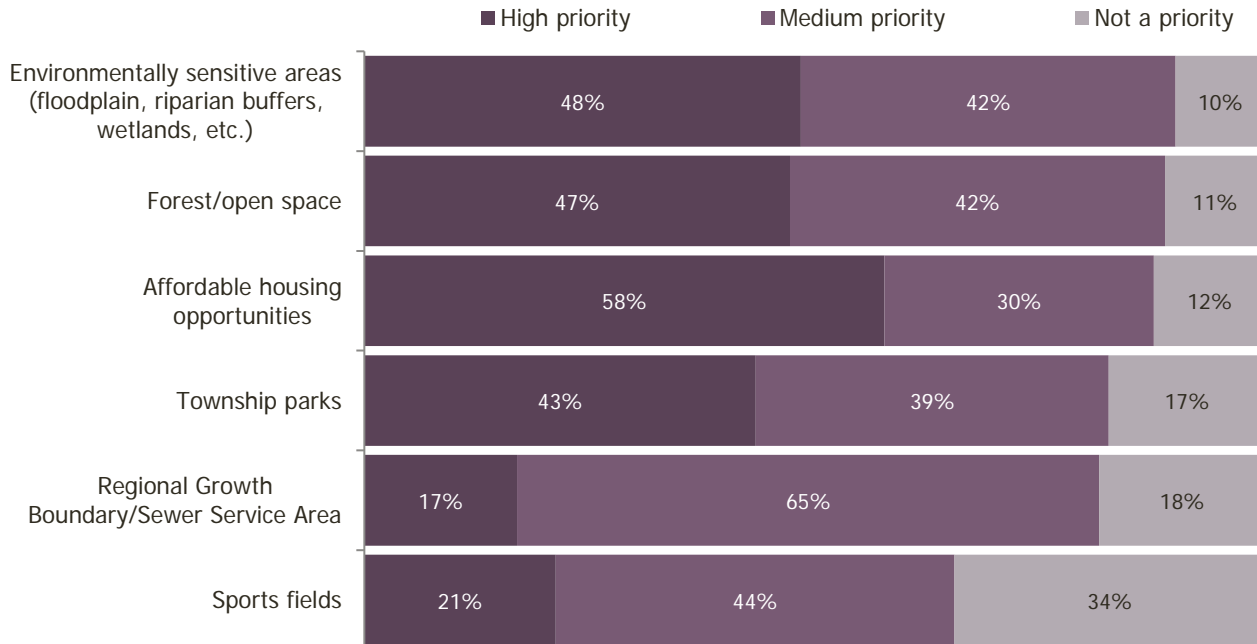


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When asked how much of a priority they felt it was for the Township to further improve or expand a variety of amenities, the one most likely to be considered a high priority was affordable housing opportunities, with 6 in 10 rating this a high priority and 8 in 10 a medium or high priority. Three of the six items were considered a high priority by 43% to 48% of respondents and included: environmentally sensitive areas, forest/open space, and Township parks; these three were considered a medium or high priority by 8 in 10 respondents. The Regional Growth Boundary/Sewer Service Area was considered a high priority by 17% of respondents, but about 8 in 10 felt it was at least a medium priority. About 2 in 10 considered sports fields a high priority, with about two-thirds considering it a high or medium priority.

Figure 8: Prioritization of Township Amenities

Please rate how much of a priority, if any, you think it is for the Township to further improve or expand each of the following amenities:

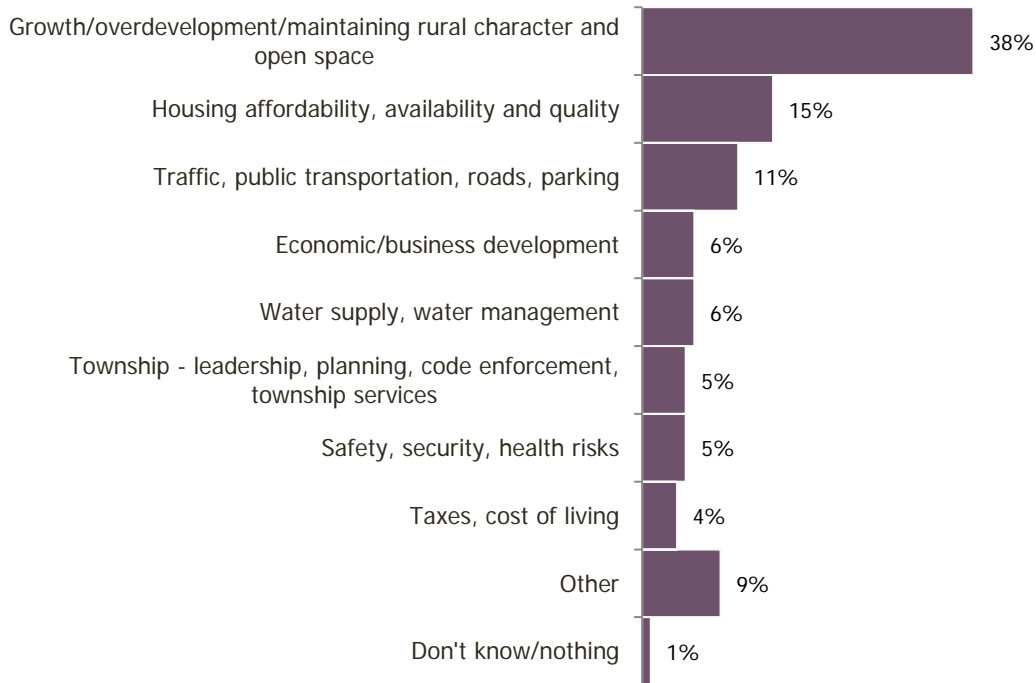


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An open-ended question on the survey asked residents to write in their own words what they believed would be the biggest challenge facing the Township in the next five years. A total of 432 surveys were completed by Ferguson Township residents; of these, 255 respondents wrote in responses for the open-ended question. Nearly 4 in 10 of those who had made a comment gave an answer related to growth, overdevelopment, or maintaining rural character and open space; this was the most-frequently-mentioned topic area. Fifteen percent commented on the affordability, availability and/or quality of housing in Ferguson Township, while an additional 1 in 10 mentioned transportation: traffic, public transportation, roads and/or parking (for more information see the *Open-End Report* under separate cover).

Figure 9: Biggest Challenge Facing Township

What do you believe will be the biggest challenge the Township will face within the next five years?



Conclusions

Ferguson Township is a great place to live.

Nine in ten residents rated the overall quality of life in Ferguson Township and the Township as a place to live as excellent or good. About 9 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall appearance of the Township and Ferguson Township as a place to raise children, and both of these ratings were higher than those given in other communities nationwide. Roughly 9 in 10 respondents gave positive scores to the overall image of the Township and their neighborhood as a place to live, while three-quarters were pleased with Ferguson Township as a place to retire. Nine in ten residents would recommend living in Ferguson Township to someone who asked.

The Natural Environment is important to residents, with nearly all residents considering it a priority for the Township to expand or improve environmentally sensitive areas.

Residents identified Natural Environment as an important area of focus for the Township in the next two years and ratings within this facet tended to be positive. About 9 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the quality of the overall natural environment in Ferguson Township (similar to the national benchmark) and to the cleanliness of the Township and air quality (both higher than the benchmarks). Nine in ten respondents gave positive scores to garbage collection while roughly 7 in 10 were pleased with recycling, yard waste pick-up, drinking water, open space and natural areas preservations. These ratings of Township services were similar to those given elsewhere.

About 9 in 10 residents thought that environmentally sensitive areas and forest/open space should be high or medium priorities for the Township to improve or expand while 8 in 10 rated Township parks as a priority. Finally, in an open-ended question that asked residents to write in their own words what they believed would be the biggest challenge facing the Township in the next five years, 4 in 10 of those who made a comment gave an answer related to growth, overdevelopment, or maintaining rural character and open space; this was the most-frequently-mentioned topic area.

Residents feel safe in the community.

Safety was also identified as an important focus area by residents. Virtually all residents gave favorable marks to the overall feeling of safety in the Township and to feeling safe in their neighborhood and in Ferguson Township's commercial area, and the rating for the overall feeling of safety was above average. Service ratings within the facet of Safety were also positive: at least 9 in 10 residents awarded positive marks to police, fire, ambulance/EMS and crime prevention services, while three-quarters gave excellent or good ratings to fire prevention and animal control. Further, ratings for police and crime prevention were higher than those given in other communities nationwide. When asked to rate the job Ferguson Township does at practicing community policing, three-quarters of residents awarded excellent or good ratings.

Residents are pleased with Mobility, and particularly with alternative transportation modes.

Ratings for Mobility were especially strong. About 8 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to the overall ease of travel in the Township and paths and walking trails; this latter rating was higher than those seen elsewhere. About 7 in 10 residents gave high scores to ease of travel by bicycle and by public transportation (which were above average) and to ease of travel by car and ease of walking (similar to the average). Three-quarters of residents were pleased with bus or transit services in the community, and one-third reported using public transportation instead of driving; these were both higher than the national benchmarks.