

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

**Mariposa County, CA**  
Community Livability Report

2018



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# About

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

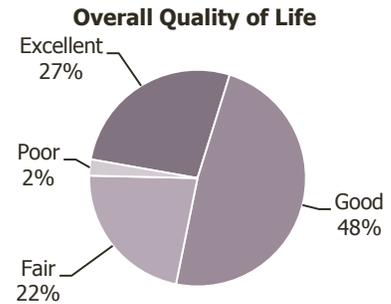
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 449 residents of Mariposa County. 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 Mariposa County

About three-quarters of residents rated the quality of life in Mariposa County as excellent or good. This was similar to the national benchmark comparison (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.

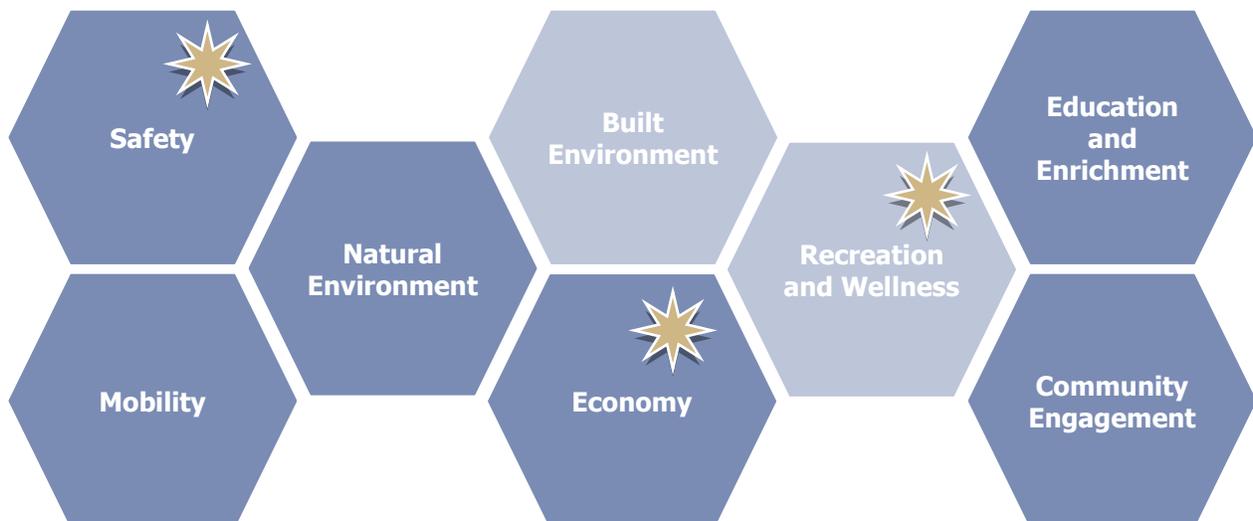
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety, Economy and Recreation and Wellness as priorities for the Mariposa County community in the coming two years. Ratings for Recreation and Wellness and Built Environment tended to be lower than the benchmarks while ratings within the other facets tended to be similar to comparison jurisdictions. 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 Mariposa County’s unique questions.

## Legend

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

- \* Most important



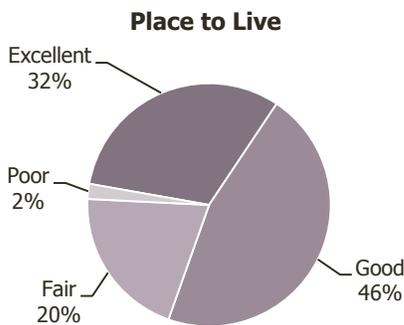
# Community Characteristics

*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 Mariposa County, 78% rated the County as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Mariposa 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 Mariposa County as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Mariposa County and its overall appearance. About 7 in 10 or more gave high marks to each aspect; all ratings were similar to the national benchmarks.

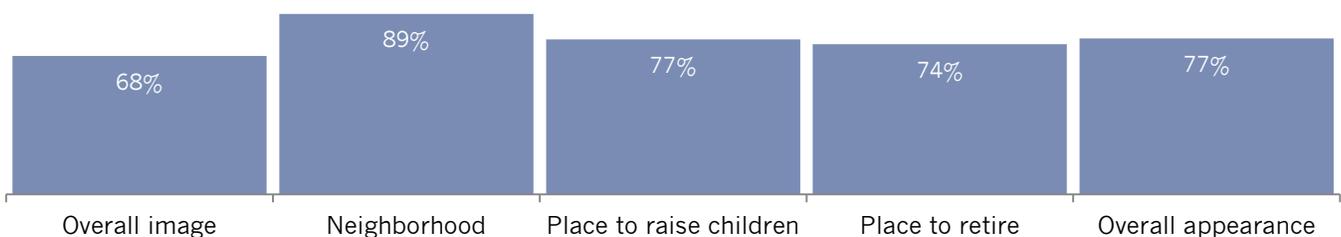
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. At least 4 in 5 residents rated each aspect of Safety and Natural Environment positively and all ratings were similar to those observed elsewhere. Mobility ratings were mixed; more Mariposa County residents gave positive ratings to traffic flow in the County while fewer gave positive ratings to paths and walking trails, ease of walking and travel by bicycle than residents in comparison jurisdictions. Ratings of Mariposa County's Built Environment and Recreation and Wellness tended to be lower than the benchmarks and rated positively by fewer than half of the survey respondents. Ratings within Economy varied widely; about 8 in 10 gave positive ratings to Mariposa County as a place to visit (higher than the national benchmark) while only about 1 in 10 gave positive ratings to employment opportunities (lower than the national benchmark).



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



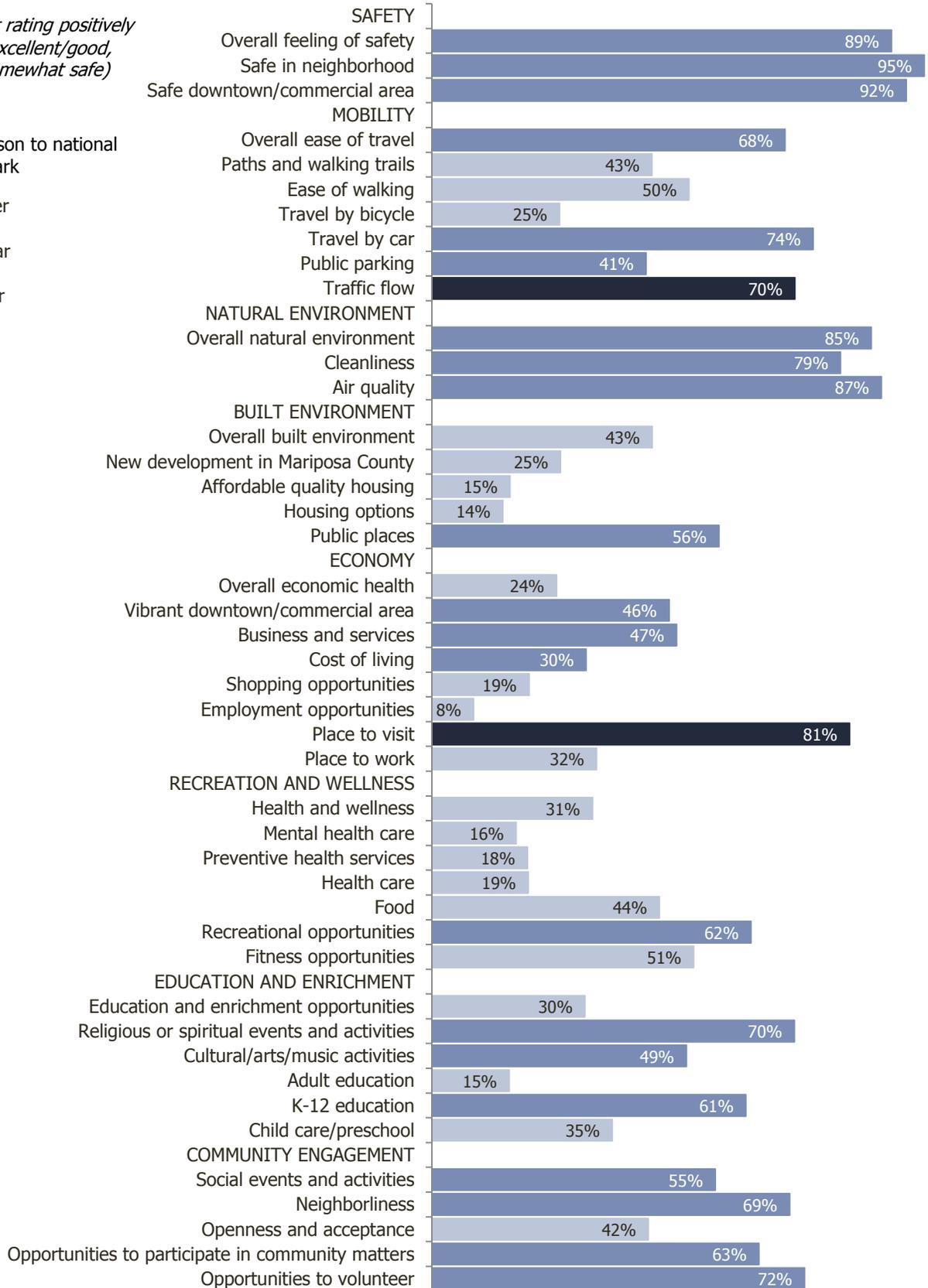
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

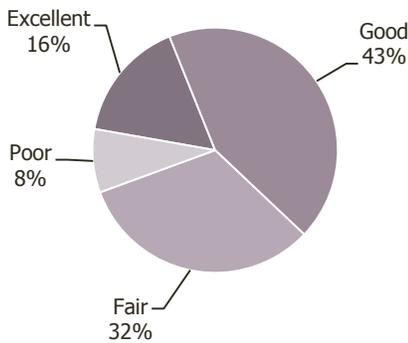
*How well does the government of Mariposa County meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Mariposa County as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 59% gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the County; while about 28% gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the Federal Government. Both ratings were similar to those in comparison communities across the nation.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Mariposa County’s leadership and governance. The overall quality of customer services provided by County employees received the highest marks; about 7 in 10 rated this highly and this rating was similar to the national benchmark. All other aspects received positive ratings from about 4 in 10 respondents and they tended to be similar to the national benchmarks. The overall direction Mariposa County is taking was lower than the national benchmark.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Mariposa County. All aspects of Safety, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement were rated positively by at least 6 in 10 residents and all ratings were similar to those observed in comparison communities. With Mobility and Natural Environment, ratings were a mix of similar to and lower than the benchmarks. Most aspects of Built Environment were lower than ratings in other jurisdictions across the U.S and all aspects of Economy and Recreation and Wellness were lower than observed elsewhere.

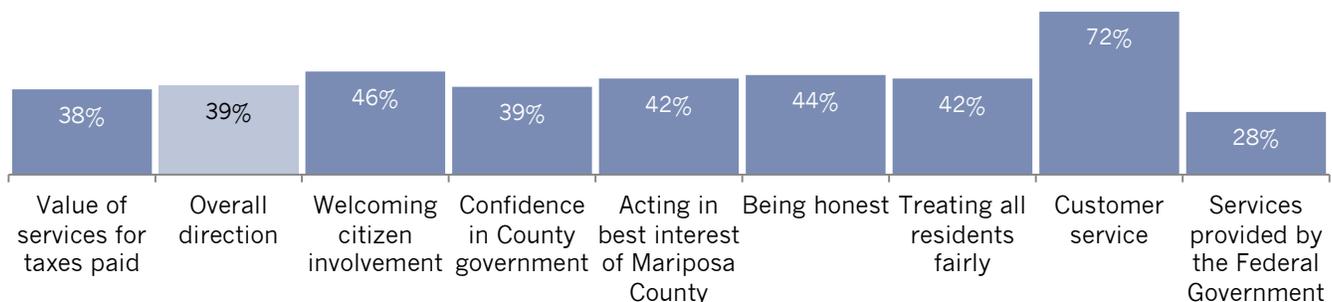
**Overall Quality of County Services**



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



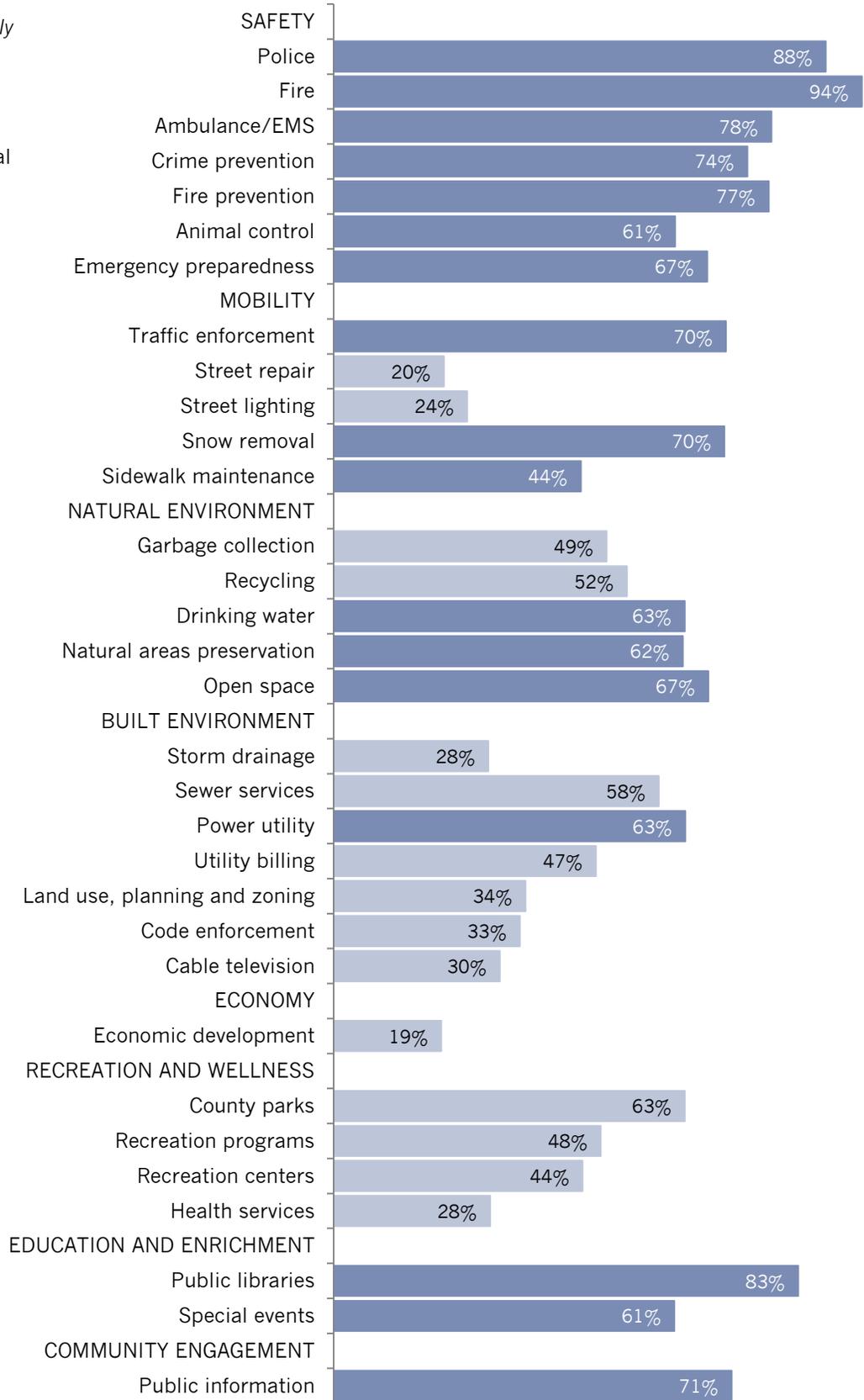
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

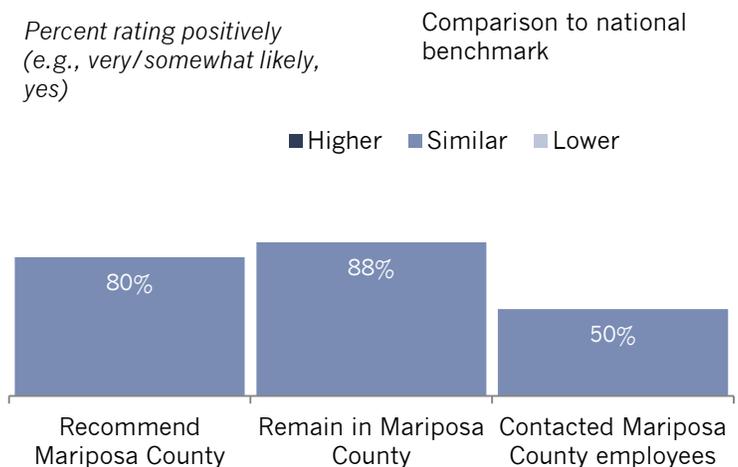
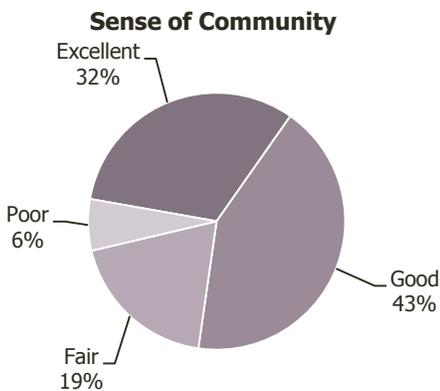


# Participation

## *Are the residents of Mariposa 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. The overall sense of community in Mariposa County was rated positively by about three-quarters of respondents and this rating was similar to the national benchmark. About 4 in 5 residents indicated that they were likely to recommend living in Mariposa County and planned to remain in the County for the next five years.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Most reported rates of Participation were similar to those observed in comparison communities. However, fewer Mariposa County residents reported that they had walked or biked instead of driving, visited a County park or participated in religious or spiritual events or activities in the 12 months prior to the survey as compared to residents in other communities across the nation. Survey respondents demonstrated strong levels of Participation within Safety, Natural Environment, Economy and Community Engagement. More Mariposa County residents reported that they had stocked supplies for an emergency, conserved water, recycled, worked in the County, volunteered, attended a local public meeting or had voted in local elections than residents in comparison communities.



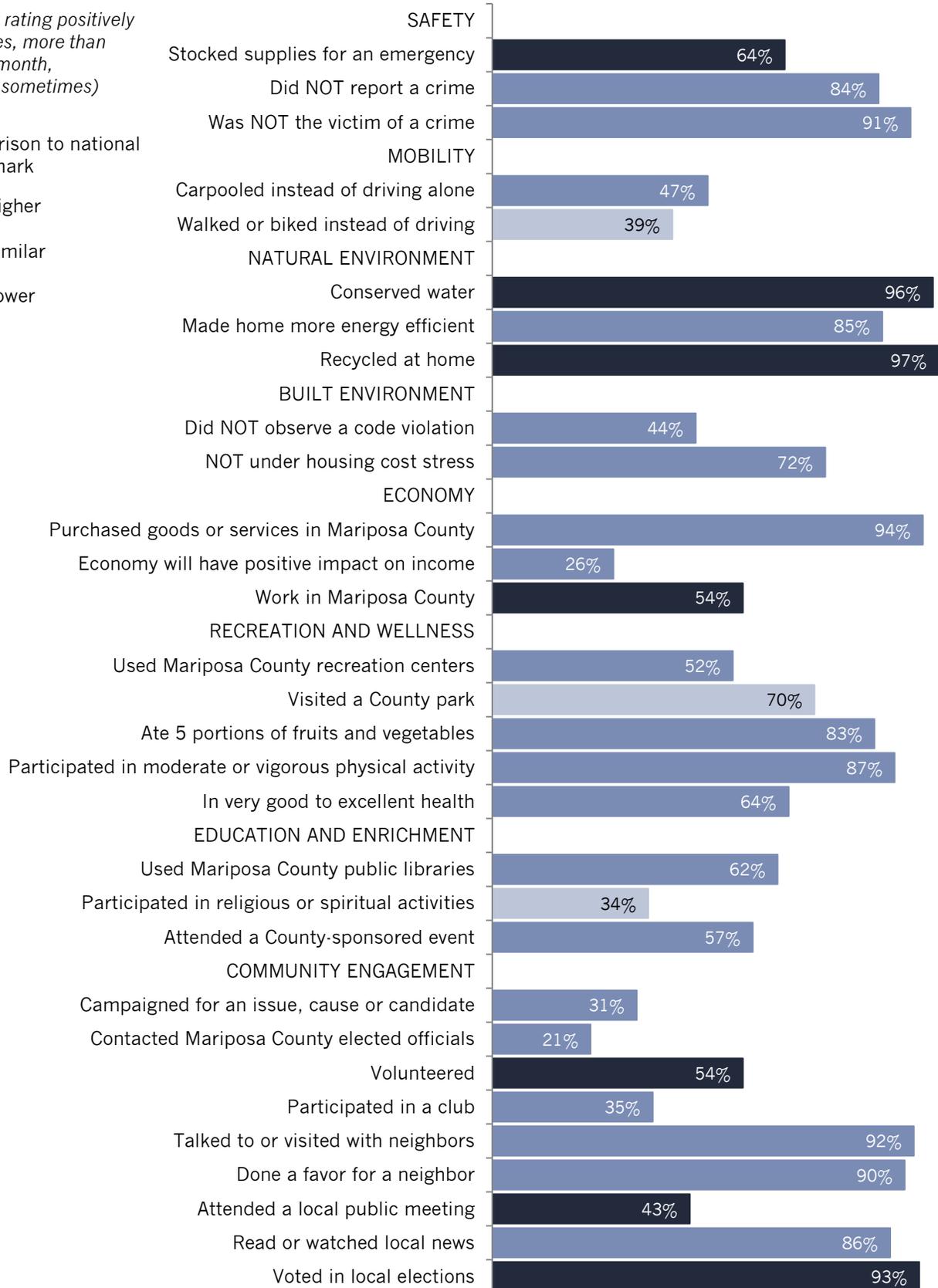
## The National Citizen Survey™

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



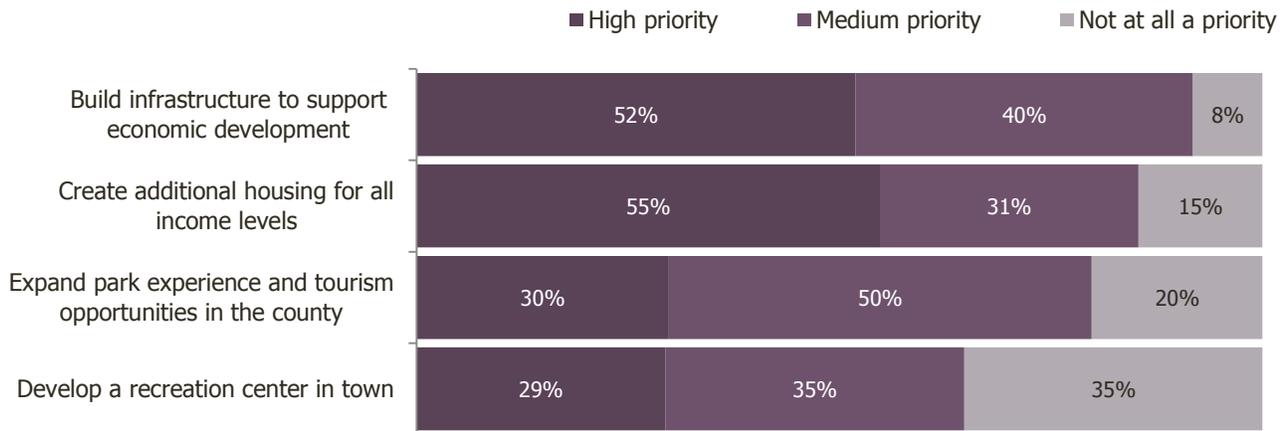
# Special Topics

Mariposa County included three questions of special interest on The NCS. The questions had to do with potential County priorities, ways to balance the County budget and a potential tax increase on tourists and visitors.

When asked to rate the importance potential County priorities over the next three years, about two-thirds or more indicated that each item was at least a medium priority. Building infrastructure to support economic development and creating additional housing for all income levels received the highest ratings of importance, with ratings of high priority given by about half of the respondents.

Figure 4: County Priorities

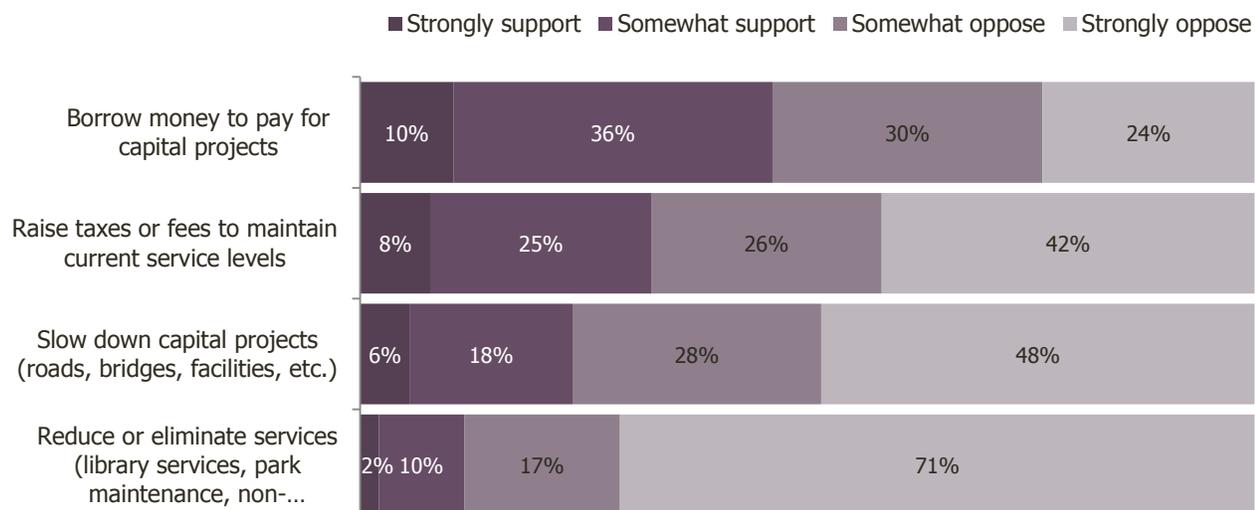
*How much of a priority, if at all, should it be for Mariposa County to address each of the following over the next three years?*



Respondents then voiced their support or opposition for potential actions to balance the County budget. A majority indicated they somewhat or strongly opposed each option presented. Borrowing money received the highest level support, although still only by a minority of residents. About 7 in 10 strongly opposed reducing or eliminating services to balance the budget.

Figure 5: Balancing the County Budget

*Mariposa County is in the process of developing long-term budget forecasts to help balance the budget and reinforce long-term fiscal stability. Please indicate how much you support or oppose each of the following methods of balancing the County budget:*

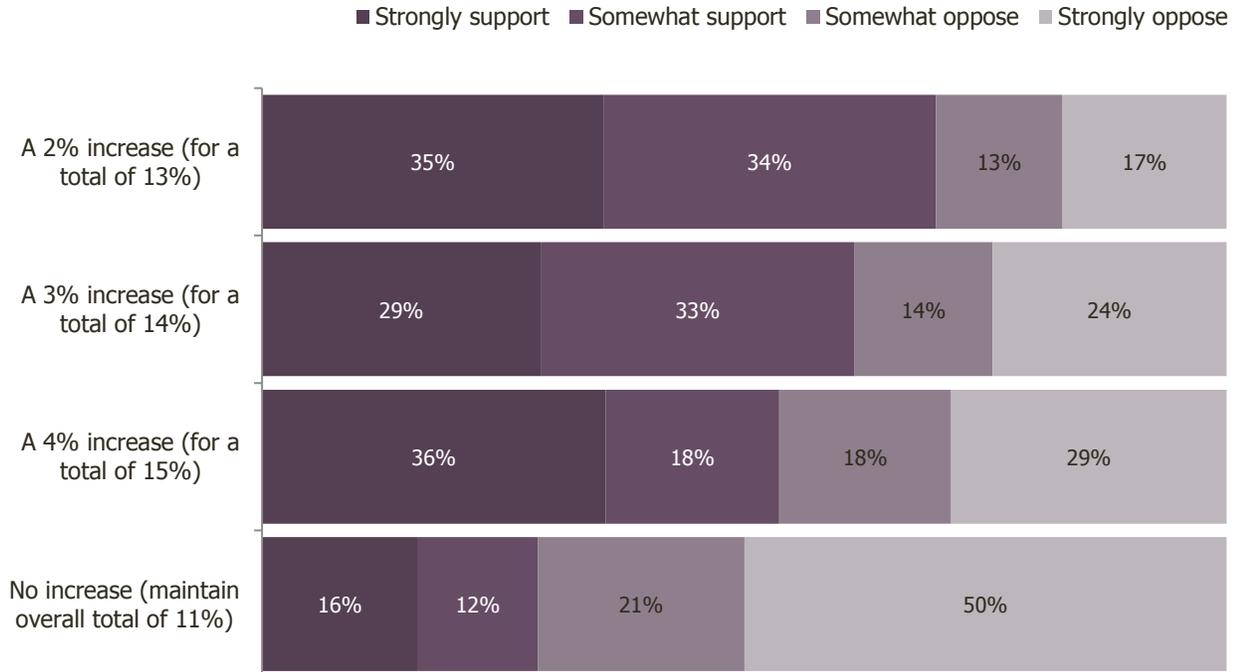


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In the final custom question, respondents were asked about their level of support or opposition regarding tax increases on tourists and visitors. About 7 in 10 supported a 2% increase; about 6 in 10 supported a 3% increase, while about 5 in 10 supported a 4% tax increase to tourists and visitors. Only about 3 in 10 supported no tax increase.

Figure 6: Potential Tax Increases on Tourists and Visitors

*The County is interested in raising taxes on tourists and visitors staying in local lodging establishments. Visitors and tourists would pay these taxes to help fund the continuation or development of services including roads, fire prevention and response, crime prevention and housing development. Comparable jurisdictions typically charge 14-17%; Mariposa County's rate is 11%. Please indicate whether you would support or oppose a ballot initiative for each of the following potential tax increases on tourists and visitors to help fund the services previously listed:*



# Conclusions

## **Mariposa County residents enjoy a high quality of life and feel safe.**

A majority of residents rated their overall quality of life as excellent or good and would be likely to remain in Mariposa County for the next five years. Additionally, about 8 in 10 residents would be likely to recommend the community to others. About three-quarters rated Mariposa County as an excellent or good place to live, to raise children and to retire. Further, a majority rated their neighborhoods, and the overall appearance of the County positively; all ratings that were similar to the national benchmarks.

Survey participants not only prioritized the facet of Safety for Mariposa County to focus on in the coming years, but also rated aspects of this facet positively and similarly to the national averages. Residents felt safe in general, as well as in their neighborhood and in downtown/commercial areas. Safety service ratings were strong and similar to the national averages and about 8 in 10 residents indicated they had not reported a crime and 9 in 10 had not been the victim of a crime.

## **Economy is a priority, with room for improvement.**

Economy was selected by residents as a priority for the Mariposa County community in the coming two years. About one-third scored the County as a place to work positively, which was lower than national averages. Ratings for the overall economic health, employment opportunities, shopping opportunities and economic development also were lower than the national benchmarks. About half of the respondents reported that they worked in Mariposa County, which was higher than levels reported elsewhere.

When asked about Mariposa County priorities, a majority felt that building infrastructure for economic development was a high priority. However, when it came to options for balancing the County's budget, most residents were opposed to each measure. Residents did agree that there should be a tax increase on tourists and visitors in Mariposa County.

## **Recreation and Wellness is a key focus area and residents would like to see more opportunities.**

Recreation and Wellness also was identified by respondents as a top community priority. Overall, ratings within this facet tended to be lower than the national averages. While a majority of residents positively rated recreational opportunities in Mariposa County, about half or fewer gave positive marks to fitness opportunities, the availability of affordable quality food, health care, preventive health services, mental health care and health and wellness. Ratings for each of these items were lower than the national benchmarks. Resident assessment of health services, recreation centers, recreation programs and County parks also were lower than observed elsewhere. About two-thirds of respondents indicated support for the construction of a recreation center in town.