

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

## Elk Grove, CA

Community Livability Report

2015



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# Contents

- About..... 1
- Quality of Life in Elk Grove ..... 2
- Community Characteristics ..... 3
- Governance ..... 5
- Participation ..... 7
- Special Topics..... 9
- Conclusions ..... 16

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# About

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

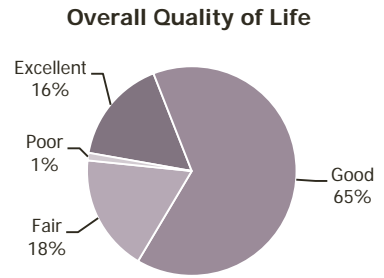
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 275 residents of the City of Elk Grove. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 6% 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 Elk Grove

Most residents rated the quality of life in Elk Grove as excellent or good. This rating was similar to those 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.

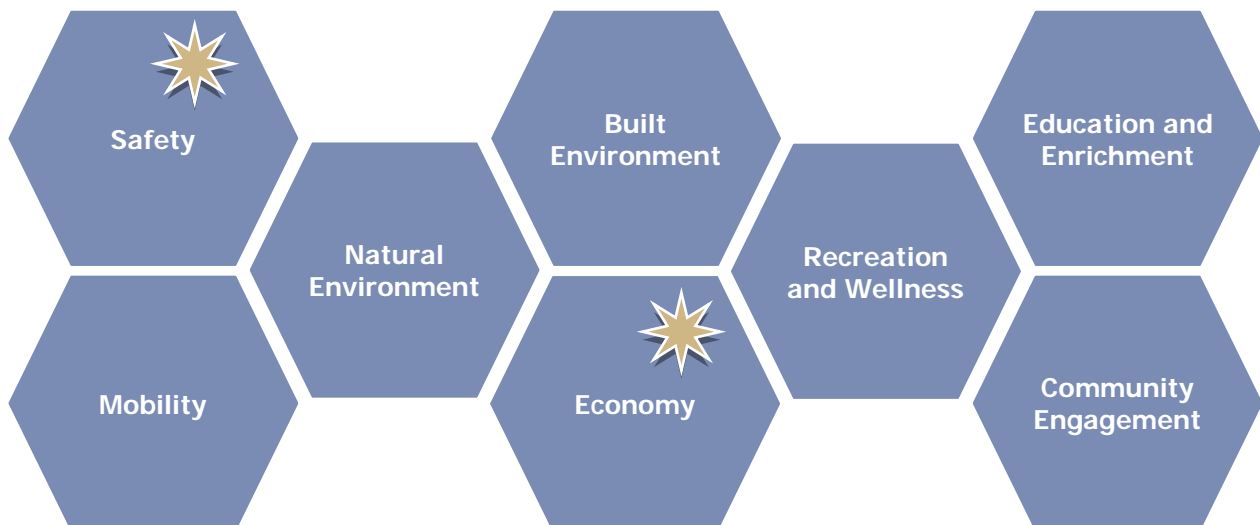
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Elk Grove community in the coming two years. Ratings for these and all other aspects of community livability were positive and similar to other communities. 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 Elk Grove’s unique questions.

## Legend

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

- \* Most important



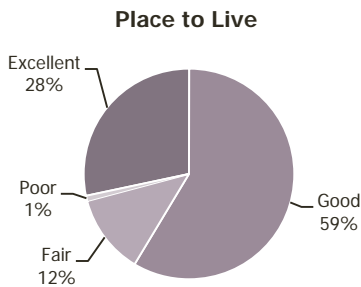
# Community Characteristics

*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 Elk Grove, 87% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Elk Grove 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 Elk Grove as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Elk Grove and its overall appearance. At least 8 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to their neighborhood as a place to live and Elk Grove as a place to raise children, while about 7 in 10 favorably rated the overall image and overall appearance of Elk Grove. Close to two-thirds of respondents gave positive ratings to Elk Grove as a place to retire; all of these aspects received ratings similar to the national benchmark.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, ratings tended to be positive and rated similar to the national benchmark. The strongest ratings were seen in the facet of Safety: about 9 in 10 respondents reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods and in Elk Grove's downtown/commercial area, and about 7 in 10 gave positive ratings for the overall feeling of safety in the City. At least a majority of respondents also gave positive ratings to all measures of Natural Environment and Recreation and Wellness and all aspects within these facets received ratings similar to those given in other communities. Ratings within the facets of Mobility and Economy tended to be more mixed. In Mobility, about two-thirds of survey participants gave favorable ratings to the overall ease of travel in Elk Grove, paths and walking trails, ease of walking and public parking, and about 6 in 10 were pleased with travel by bicycle and travel by car. However, only about 4 in 10 positively rated ease of travel by public transportation and about one-third gave favorable ratings to traffic flow (which was rated lower than the benchmark). In Economy, at least half of residents gave positive ratings to the overall economic health of Elk Grove, the quality of business and service establishments, shopping opportunities and Elk Grove as a place to work, but only about 4 in 10 or fewer gave favorable marks to employment opportunities, Elk Grove's vibrant downtown/commercial area and Elk Grove as a place to visit. The latter two aspects received ratings lower than those given in other communities.

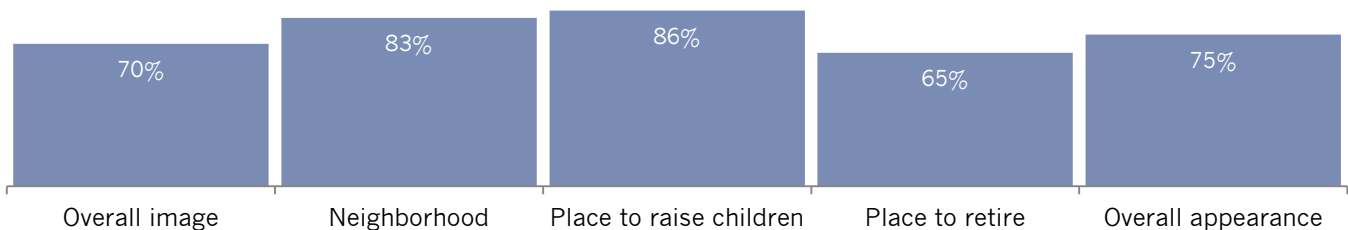


When comparing Elk Grove's 2015 ratings to their previous survey results in 2013, ratings for traffic flow, overall ease of travel, recreational opportunities and the neighborliness of residents decreased over time, while ratings for the safety of Elk Grove's downtown/commercial area, K-12 education, religious or spiritual events and activities and adult education increased (for more information on trends see the *Trends Over Time* report provided under separate cover).

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



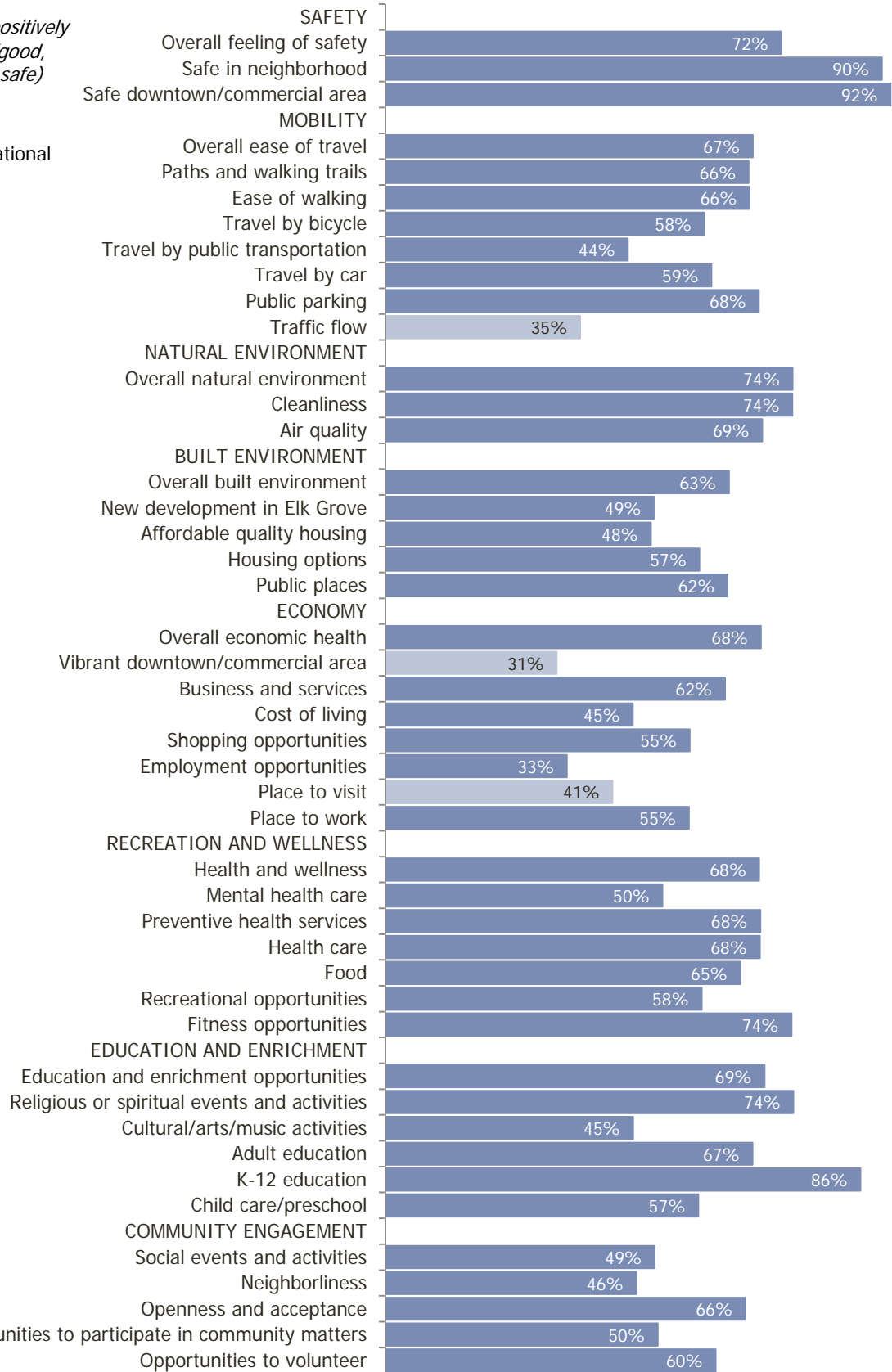
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

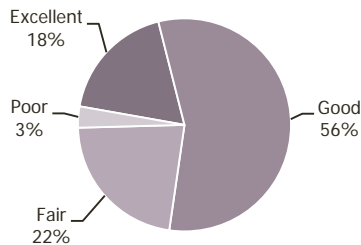
*How well does the government of Elk Grove meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Elk Grove as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. In Elk Grove, three-quarters of respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of City services and about one-third gave positive ratings to 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 Elk Grove’s leadership and governance. About two-thirds of survey participants positively rated the overall customer service provided by Elk Grove employees, and about half were pleased with the value of services for taxes paid, the overall direction that Elk Grove is taking, government acting in the best interest of Elk Grove, being honest and treating all residents fairly. About 4 in 10 gave positive ratings to the job Elk Grove does at welcoming citizen involvement and overall confidence in City government; all of these aspects of Governance were rated similar to the national benchmark.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Elk Grove. Ratings within Safety tended to vary; about 7 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to police services, crime prevention and animal control, while only about 4 in 10 favorably rated emergency preparedness (a rating lower than the national benchmark). Aspects across the remaining facets of Governance tended to be positive and similar to the benchmark. Exceptionally strong ratings were given to street repair (62% excellent or good), yard waste pick-up (86%) and storm drainage (80%), as all of these measures received ratings higher than those given in other communities.

Overall Quality of City Services

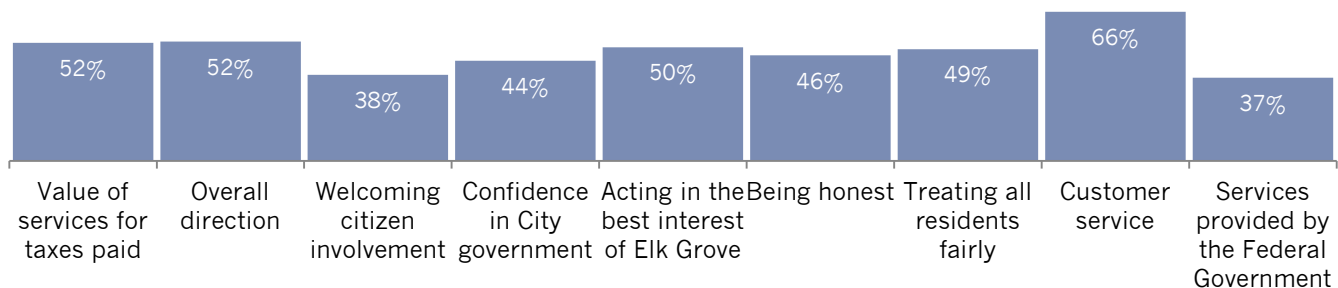


When comparing 2015 ratings to those given in 2013, ratings decreased for emergency preparedness, cable television and the job Elk Grove government does at welcoming citizen involvement, while ratings increased for animal control and storm drainage.

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

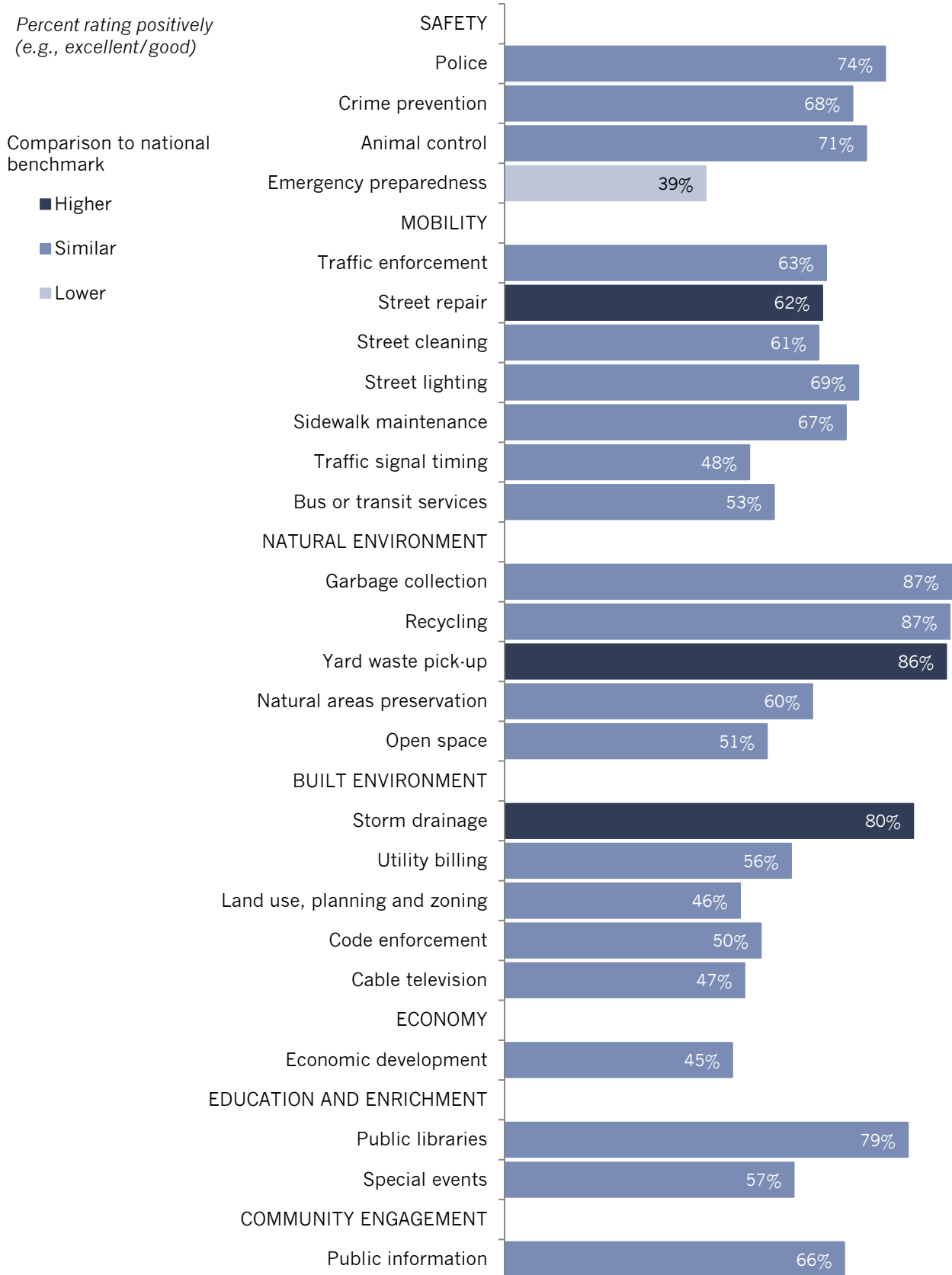
Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



## The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance



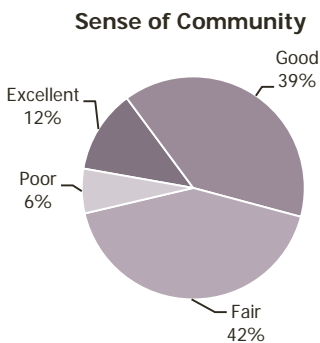


# Participation

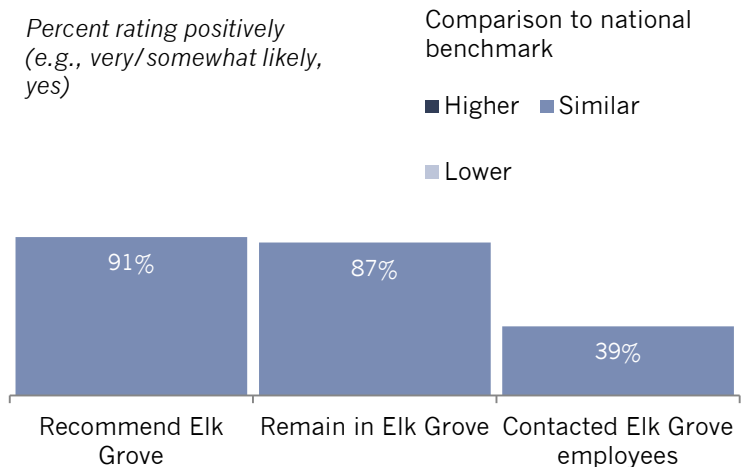
*Are the residents of Elk Grove connected to the community and each other?*

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. In Elk Grove, about half of survey respondents rated the sense of community as excellent or good, and about 9 in 10 residents would recommend living in Elk Grove to someone who asked and planned to remain in Elk Grove for the next five years. These ratings were similar to those given 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. Rates of Participation tended to vary across the different facets. In Mobility, about 6 in 10 residents had carpooled instead of driving alone or walked or biked instead of driving, and the rate of those who carpooled was higher than seen in other communities. In Natural Environment, virtually all residents had conserved water or recycled at home and both of these rates of Participation were also higher than the national benchmark. Rates of Participation within the facets of Built Environment and Economy tended to be lower. Only 41% of respondents had not observed a code violation in the 12 months prior to the survey and about 3 in 10 residents worked in Elk Grove; both of these were lower rates than those reported in other communities. Rates varied most widely in the facet of Community Engagement: at least 8 in 10 survey participants had talked to or visited with neighbors, done a favor for a neighbor, read or watched local news or voted in local elections, but only 4 in 10 had volunteered and about one-quarter or fewer reported they had campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate, contacted Elk Grove elected officials, participated in a club, or attended or watched a local public meeting. However, all rates of participation within Community Engagement were similar to the benchmark.



When comparing 2015 survey results to those in 2013, more participants reported they had stocked supplies for an emergency, carpooled, and participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity, but fewer residents reported that they had not observed a code violation. The rating for the sense of community in Elk Grove also decreased in 2015.



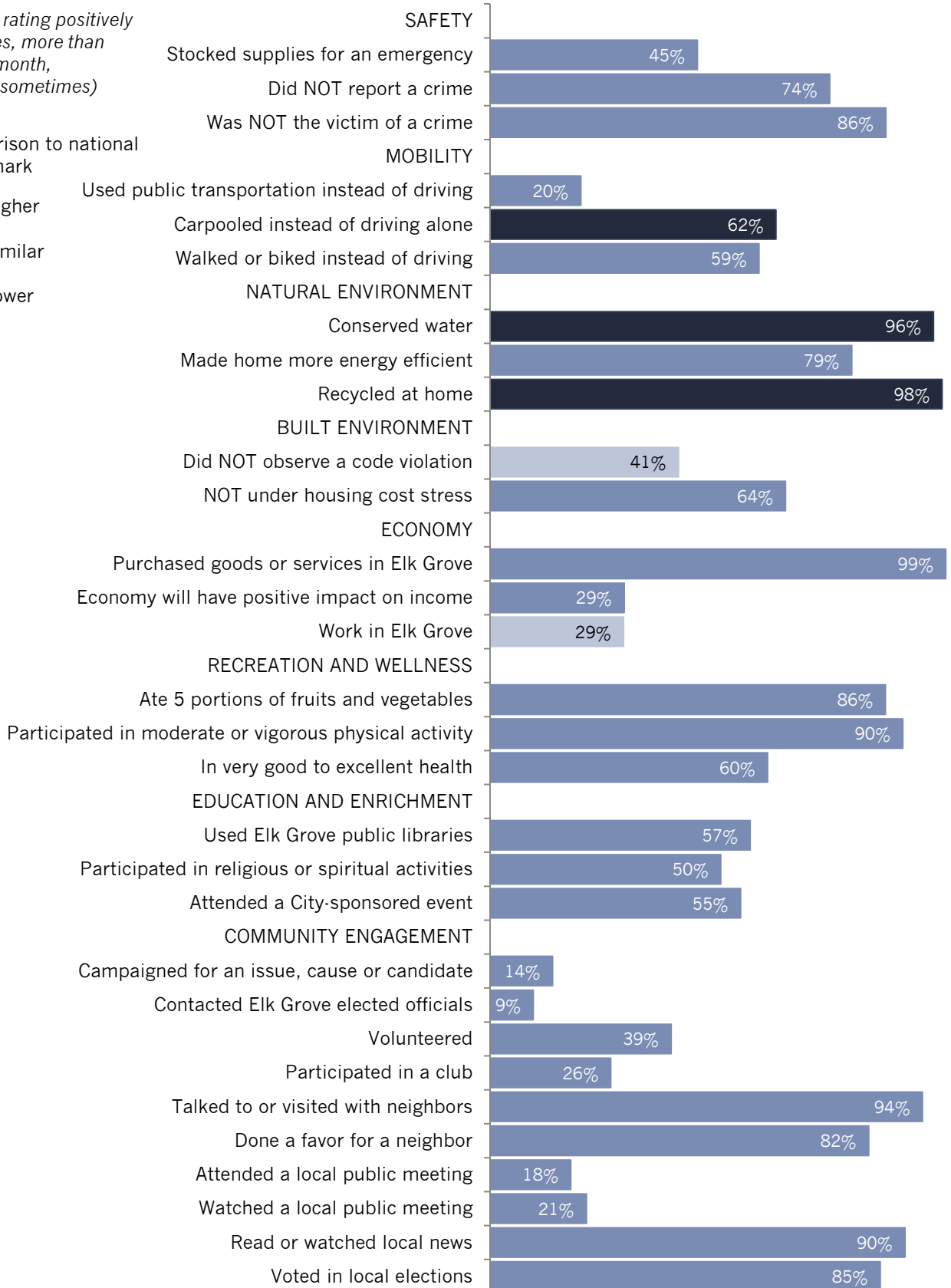
## The National Citizen Survey™

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

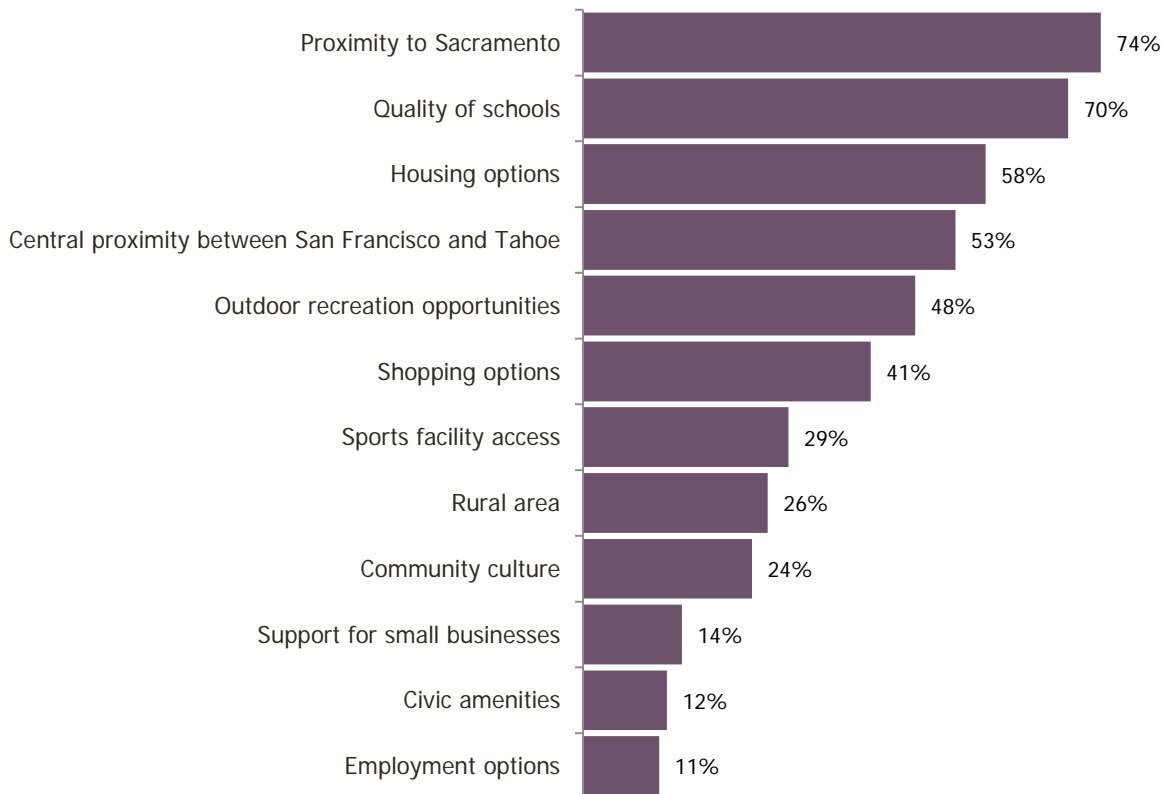


# Special Topics

The City of Elk Grove included eleven questions of special interest on The NCS. In the first question, residents were asked to indicate which aspects of Elk Grove they would highlight to someone who was considering moving to the community. About 7 in 10 respondents noted that the proximity to Sacramento and the quality of schools were reasons to move to Elk Grove and about half indicated that they would highlight housing options, the central proximity of Elk Grove and outdoor recreation opportunities. Fewer than 2 in 10 residents said they would highlight support for small businesses, civic amenities or employment options.

Figure 4: Reasons to Move to Elk Grove

*If someone you knew was considering a move to Elk Grove, what aspects of the City would you highlight to help them decide? (Check all that apply.)*

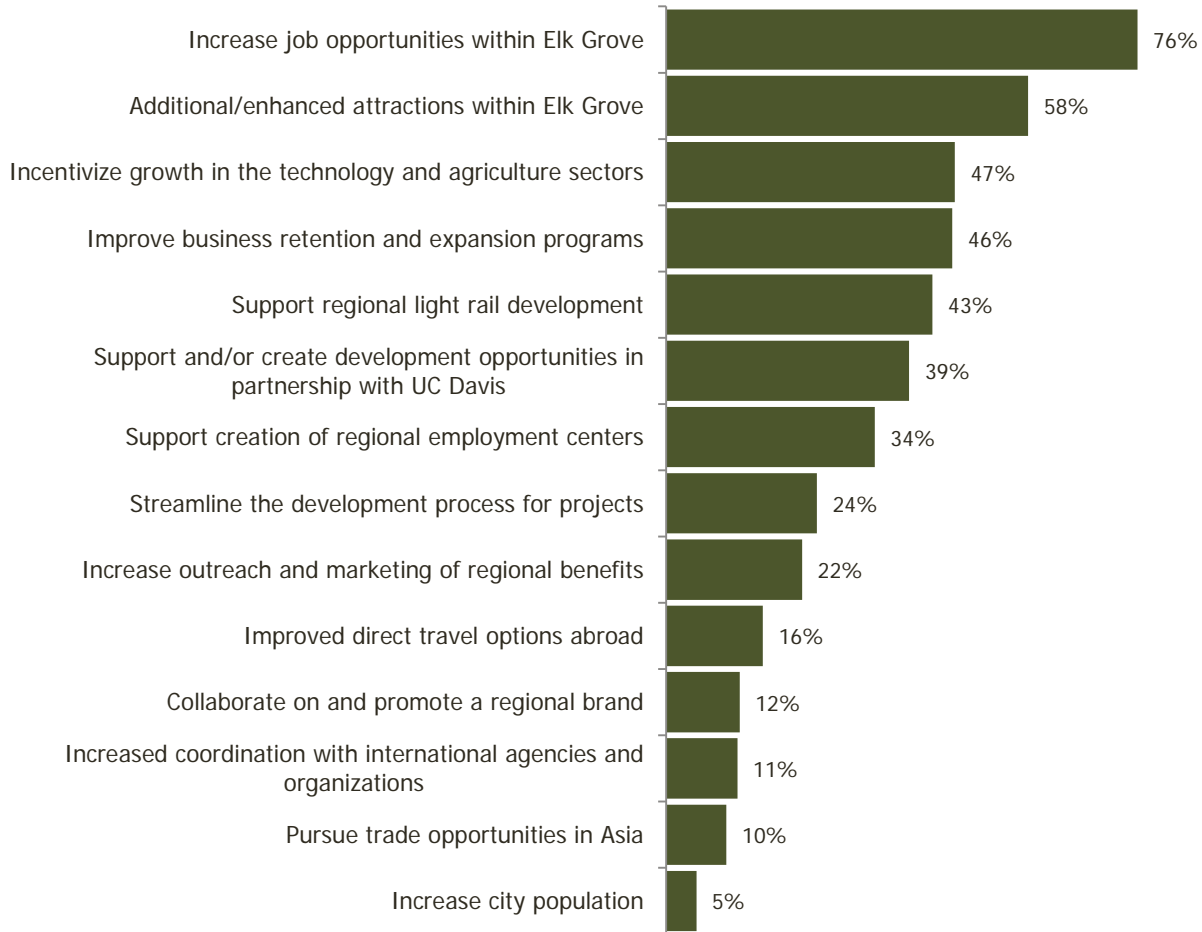


Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

The second special-interest question asked residents to indicate ways in which Elk Grove could become a more influential presence in the region. About three-quarters of survey respondents thought that increasing job opportunities within Elk Grove would make the City more influential and about 6 in 10 thought adding or enhancing attractions within the City would do so. At least 4 in 10 residents indicated that incentivizing growth in the technology and agriculture sectors, improving business retention and expansion programs or supporting regional light rail development would make Elk Grove more influential. Ten percent or less of respondents thought that pursuing trade opportunities in Asia or increasing the city population would increase Elk Grove’s influence in the region.

Figure 5: Regional Influence of Elk Grove

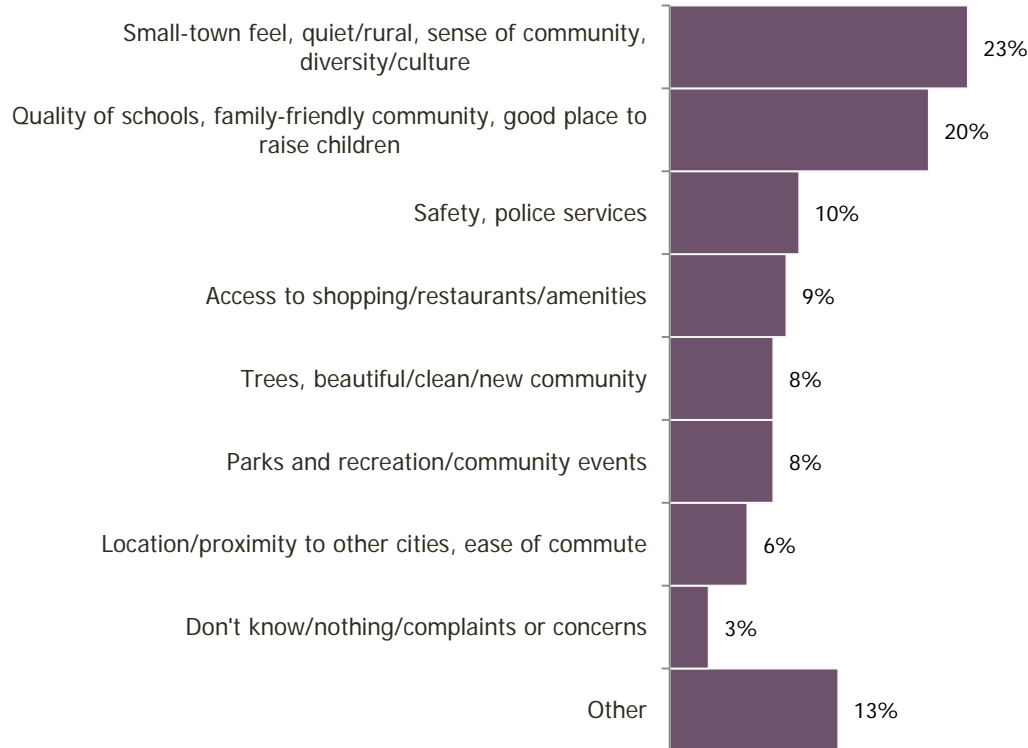
*In what ways do you think Elk Grove can become a more influential presence in the Sacramento region? (Check all that apply.)*



Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

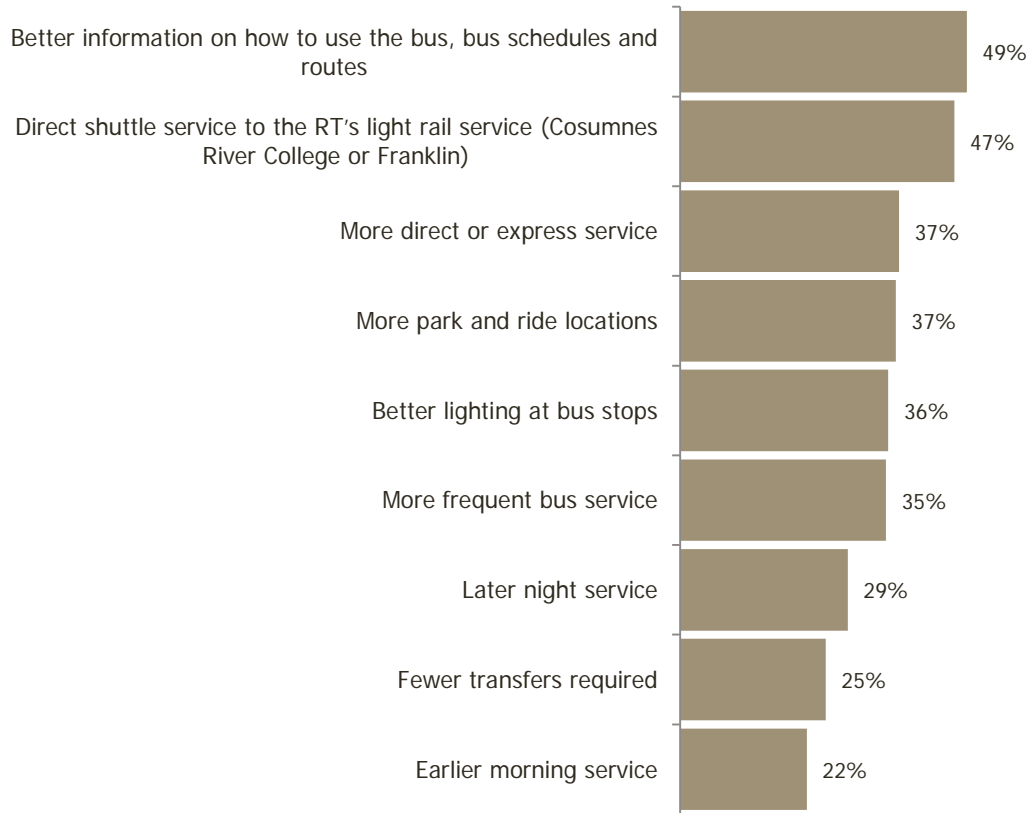
The next question on the survey was an open-ended question in which residents were asked to write in the one thing they loved most about Elk Grove. The verbatim responses were categorized by topic area and those topics are reported in the following chart with the percent of responses given in each category. Of the residents who wrote in a response, about one-quarter of residents made a comment relating to Elk Grove’s small-town feel, the quietness or rurality of Elk Grove, or the sense of community, diversity or culture of the City. About 2 in 10 residents mentioned aspects of raising children in Elk Grove, including the quality of schools or family-friendliness of the community. About 13% of respondents either made a broad comment about living in Elk Grove or commented on an aspect of Elk Grove outside of the established categories. For the full verbatim responses, see *The Open End Report* under separate cover.

Figure 6: Living in Elk Grove  
*In your own words, what one thing do you love most about Elk Grove?*



The next question on the survey asked residents to indicate improvements to transit service that they would like to see. About half of residents wanted to see better information on how to use the bus, bus schedules and routes and direct shuttle service to the light rail, while about one-third indicated that they would like more direct or express service, more park and ride locations or better lighting at bus stops. Less than one-quarter of residents wanted earlier morning service.

Figure 7: Preferences for Transit Service Improvements  
*What types of transit service improvements would you like to see? (Please check all that apply.)*

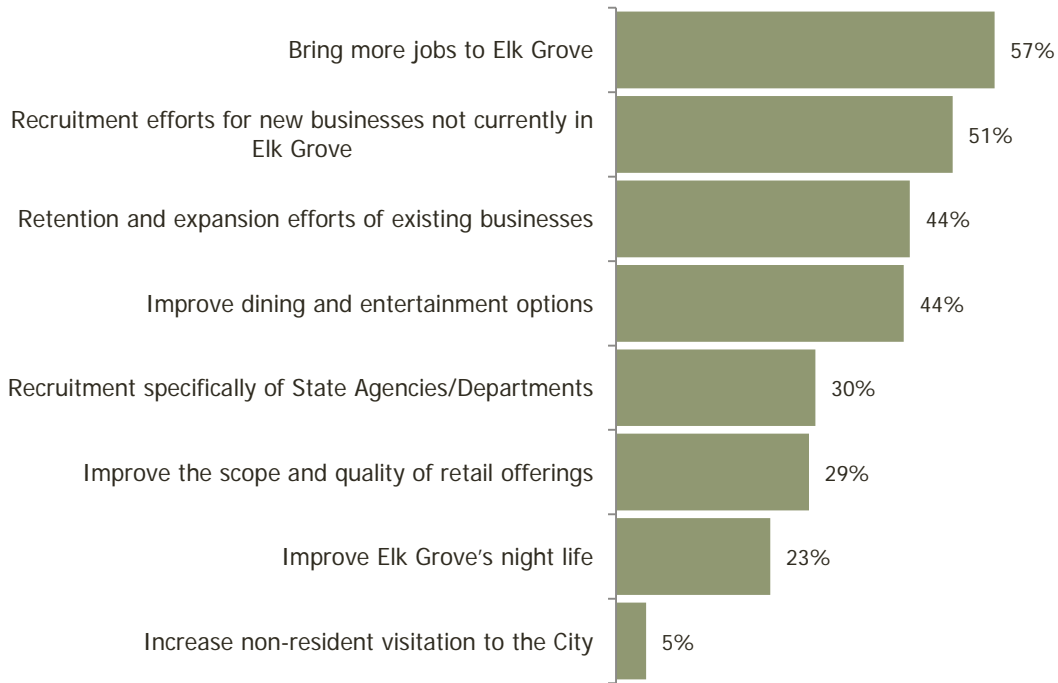


Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

Participants were also asked to select the top three priorities for the City to focus on over the next two years. More than half of respondents thought that bringing more jobs to Elk Grove or recruiting new businesses not currently located in the City should be a priority, while slightly fewer thought retaining and expanding existing businesses or improving dining and entertainment options should be a priority. Only about one-quarter thought that improving Elk Grove's night life should be a priority and just five percent prioritized increasing non-resident visitation to the City.

Figure 8: Priorities for Economic Development

*In terms of Economic Development, please select the top 3 priorities the City should focus on over the next two years:*



Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

The next questions on the survey asked respondents whether they were an employee of the State of California, and if they were, to indicate whether they commuted outside of Elk Grove to get to work and how they typically commuted. About one-third of survey respondents indicated that they were a State employee, and of those, nearly 9 in 10 commuted outside of Elk Grove to get to work. Close to 7 in 10 State employees typically drove themselves to work alone while about one-quarter carpooled and 14% took the e-Tran bus. Six percent or fewer of State employees used another means of transportation to get to work.

Figure 9: State Employees  
*Are you a State of California employee?*

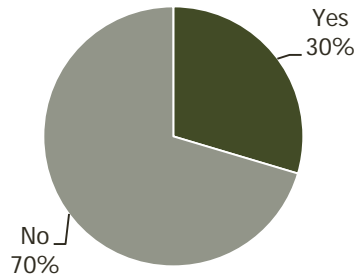


Figure 10: Commuting Outside of Elk Grove  
*If yes, do you commute outside the boundaries of Elk Grove to your state job?*

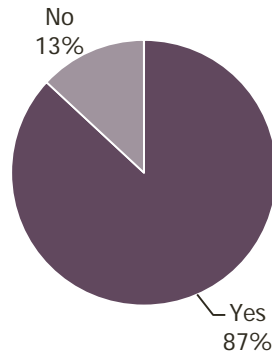
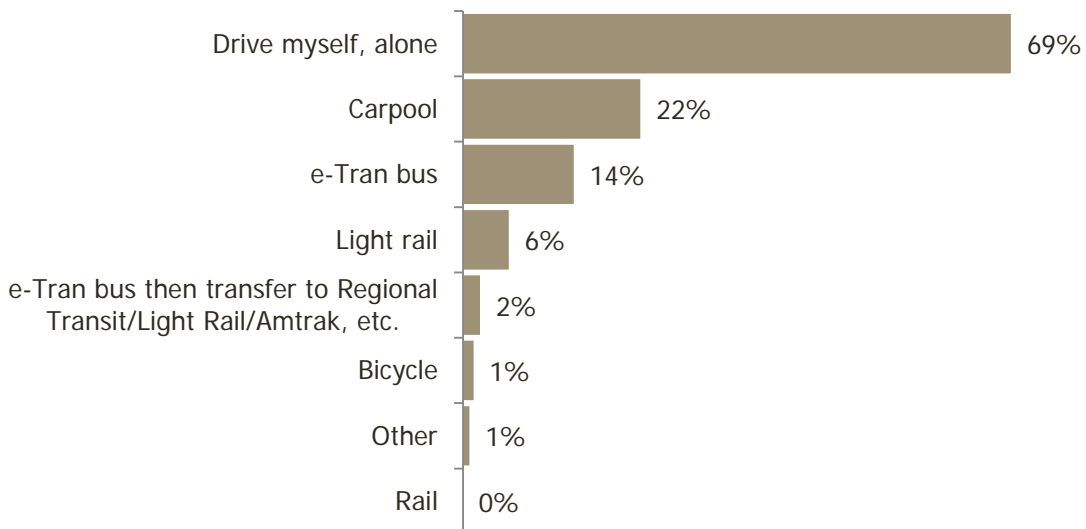


Figure 11: Methods of Commuting  
*How do you typically commute to your State job outside the boundaries of Elk Grove?*



Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.



The final special-interest questions on the survey asked respondents who were employees of the State of California to indicate whether they would prefer more State agencies or departments to be located in Elk Grove and, if an agency other than the one they worked for were to locate in the City, how likely they would be to pursue a transfer there. Nearly all respondents indicated that they would prefer more State agencies in Elk Grove and more than 8 in 10 would be very or somewhat likely to pursue a transfer to an agency located in Elk Grove.

Figure 12: Preferences for Locating State Agencies in Elk Grove  
*Would you prefer that more State agencies or departments were located in Elk Grove?*

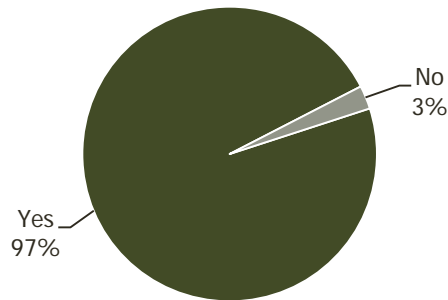
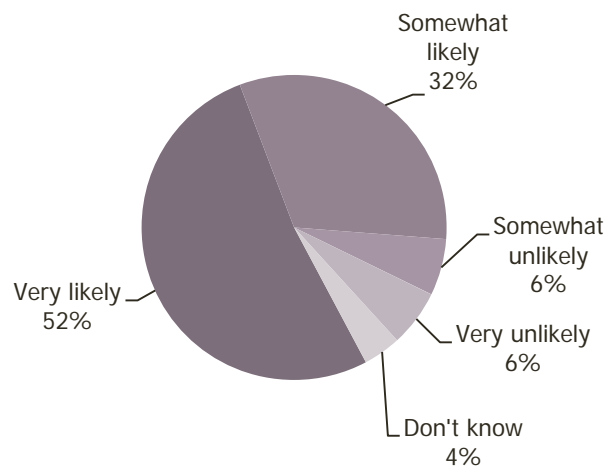


Figure 13: Likelihood of Transferring to Elk Grove Agency  
*If a State agency or department other than one you work for were to locate in Elk Grove, how likely would you be to pursue a transfer to that agency?*



# Conclusions

## Residents of Elk Grove continue to enjoy a high quality of life.

More than 8 in 10 survey respondents gave positive ratings to the overall quality of life in Elk Grove, the City as a place to live and as a place to raise children and their neighborhoods as a place to live. Additionally, about 9 in 10 residents would recommend Elk Grove to someone who asked and a similar number planned to remain in Elk Grove for the next five years. In an open-ended question in which residents were asked the one thing they loved most about Elk Grove, the most common responses were related to the community's small-town feel, the quietness or rurality of Elk Grove, or the sense of community, diversity or culture of the City.

## Residents value and appreciate a high level of Safety.

Residents indicated that Safety was an important area for the City to focus on in the coming two years, and ratings within this facet were generally positive and similar to those given in other communities. Nine in 10 respondents reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods and in Elk Grove's downtown/commercial area (a rating which has increased since 2013) and 7 in 10 positively rated the overall feeling of safety in the City. Also, at least two-thirds of respondents favorably rated police, crime prevention and animal control services. When asked to comment on the one thing they love most about Elk Grove, responses related to safety or police services were the third most-commonly mentioned category.

## Economy is also a priority to residents and may be an area of opportunity for the City.

Respondents also indicated that Economy was an important issue for the City to address in the next two years, and ratings within this facet varied across the three pillars of community livability. At least a majority of respondents gave positive ratings to the overall economic health of Elk Grove, the quality of business and service establishments, shopping opportunities and Elk Grove as a place to work, but ratings were lower for Elk Grove as a place to visit (41% excellent or good) and vibrant downtown/commercial area (31%); both of these received ratings lower than the benchmark. Furthermore, only 3 in 10 residents worked in Elk Grove, which is lower than levels seen in other communities. When asked about priorities for economic development in the City, nearly 6 in 10 respondents indicated that bringing more jobs to Elk Grove should be a top priority. Finally, nearly all respondents who indicated they were a State of California employee preferred that more State agencies be located in Elk Grove and more than 8 in 10 would be very or somewhat likely to pursue a transfer to an agency located in the City.

## Public transportation may also be an area for potential improvement, particularly for the City's commuters.

In a series of special-interest questions on the survey, respondents were asked to indicate whether they were employed by the State of California, and if so, whether they commuted outside Elk Grove to get to work and their preferences for commuting. Three in 10 residents indicated that they were State employees, and of those, nearly 9 in 10 commuted outside of the City to get to work. About 7 in 10 residents who are State employees drive themselves to work alone and about 2 in 10 typically carpool; however, only 14% of State employees typically use the e-Tran bus and 6% typically use light rail. Respondents were also asked about the types of public transit service improvements they would most like to see, and nearly half indicated that they would like to see better information on how to use the bus, bus schedules and routes and direct shuttle service to the RT's light rail service. Given that the rating for traffic flow in Elk Grove (35% excellent or good) is lower than the national benchmark and has decreased since 2013, improvements to public transportation may be a valuable consideration.