



Hutchinson, MN

Community Livability Report

2019



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

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About

The National Community Survey™ (The NCS™) report is about the “livability” of Hutchinson. 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 540 residents of the City of Hutchinson. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% 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 Hutchinson

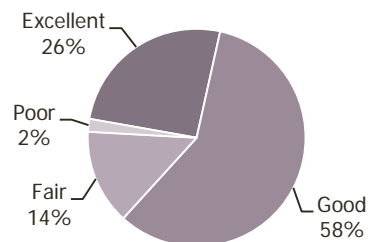
Most residents (84%) rated the quality of life in Hutchinson as excellent or good. This rating was similar to the national benchmark (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

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. As in 2015, residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Hutchinson community in the coming two years. Ratings for all eight facets of community livability were positive and similar to other communities across the nation. 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 Hutchinson's unique questions.

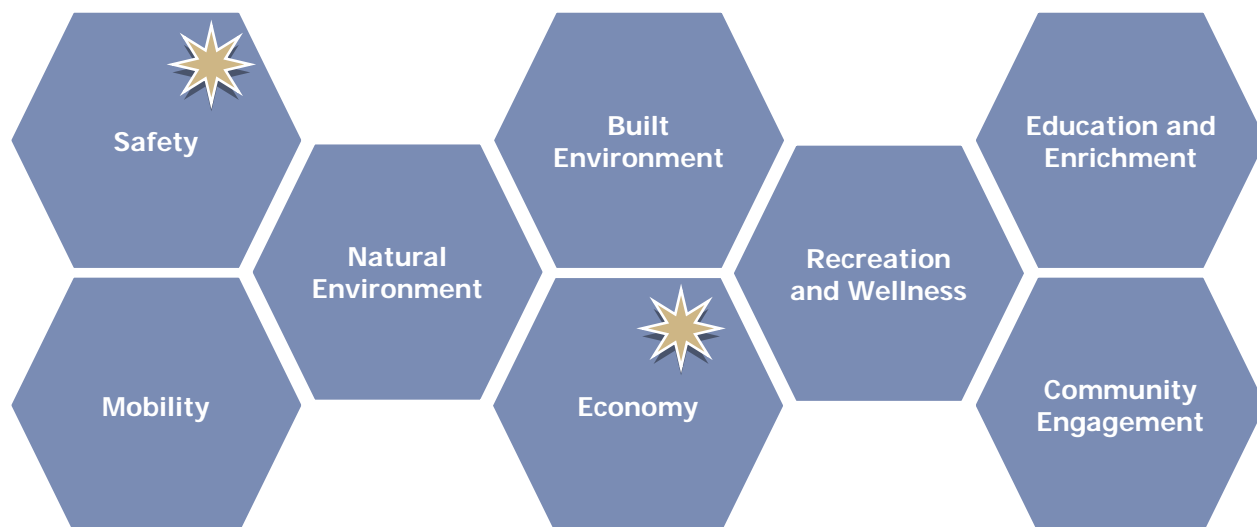
Overall Quality of Life



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 Hutchinson, 90% rated the city as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Hutchinson as a place to live were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

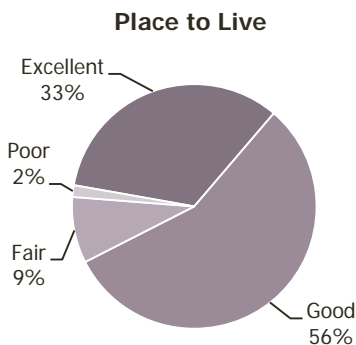
In addition to rating the city as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality. About 9 in 10 residents favorably rated the overall appearance of Hutchinson, while 8 in 10 residents gave high marks to their neighborhood as a place to live and the city as a place to raise children. At least two-thirds of residents positively reviewed the overall image or reputation of Hutchinson and the city as a place to retire and these ratings increased in 2019 (see the *Trends over Time* report provided under separate cover for more details). These ratings were on par with national averages.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, at least 6 in 10 respondents positively scored a majority of the aspects of Community Characteristics; ratings tended to be similar to the national benchmarks.

As a highlight within Community Characteristics, assessments of availability of paths and walking trails and ease of travel by bicycle and by walking were especially strong and higher than the national average, with at least three-quarters of residents giving high marks. Respondents' ratings for many aspects improved from 2015 to 2019, with

most increases concentrated within Economy, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement. Areas with the highest increases (more than 10 percentage points) included public parking, new development in Hutchinson, public places, overall economic health, availability of affordable quality food, K-12 education and the openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds.

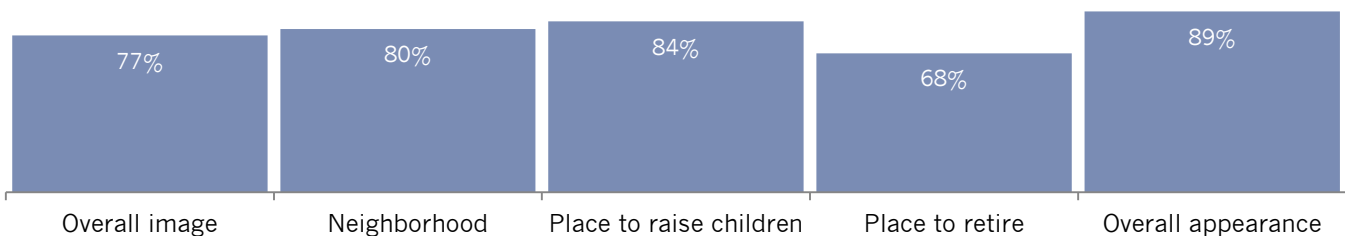
Residents' ratings for shopping opportunities were lower than those observed in other communities and declined in 2019.



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

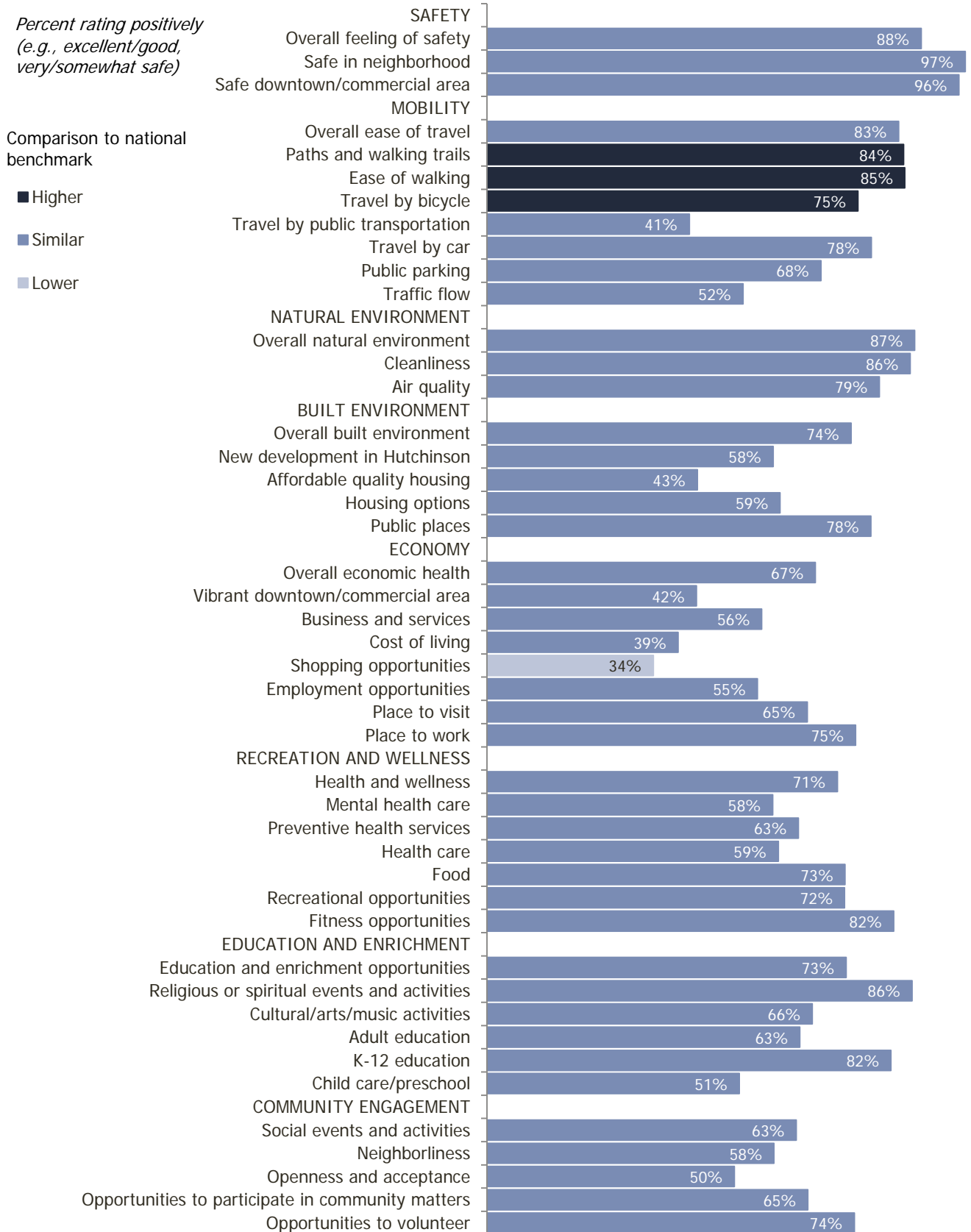
Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



The National Community Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics



Governance

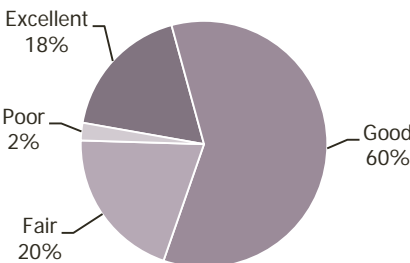
How well does the government of Hutchinson meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Hutchinson as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About three-quarters of residents gave favorable evaluations to the overall quality of services provided by the City, while 4 in 10 were pleased with the services provided by the Federal Government. Both of these evaluations were similar to those observed elsewhere and improved from 2015 to 2019.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Hutchinson's leadership and governance. About three-quarters of respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall customer service provided by the City. Roughly 6 in 10 residents gave positive reviews to all other aspects of government performance. These ratings were similar to those given in other communities and all were scored higher in 2019 compared to 2015.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Hutchinson. Broadly, at least 6 in 10 respondents reviewed most government services positively and ratings tended to be similar to those observed in other benchmark communities. The highest-rated services included police, fire, ambulance/EMS, yard waste pick-up, sewer services, power utility and City parks, with about 9 in 10 residents assigning positive scores and each being on par with averages nationwide. Evaluations of street lighting were strong and higher than the national benchmark, with about 8 in 10 community members giving favorable reviews. Over half of the services provided by Hutchinson received improved scores from survey participants in 2019, with recreation centers or facilities showing the greatest gains (17%) in ratings between survey administrations.

Overall Quality of City Services

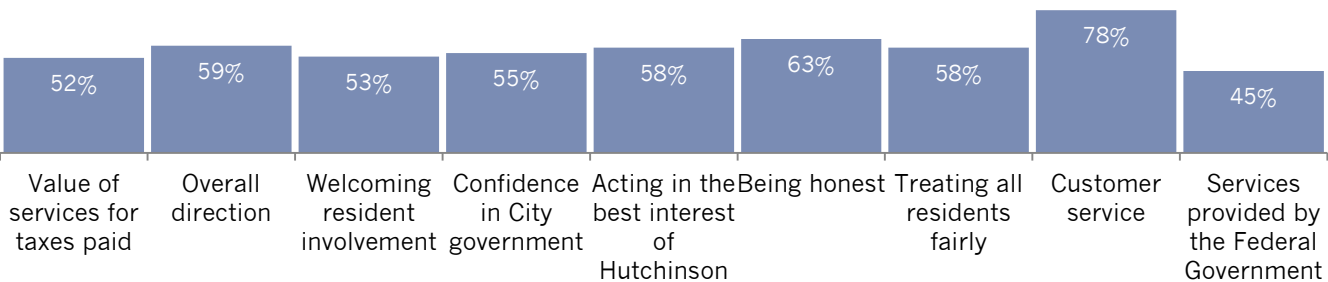


Respondents were less pleased with assessments of street repair (26% excellent or good), which was lower than the national benchmark. Ratings for street repair declined from 2015 to 2019.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



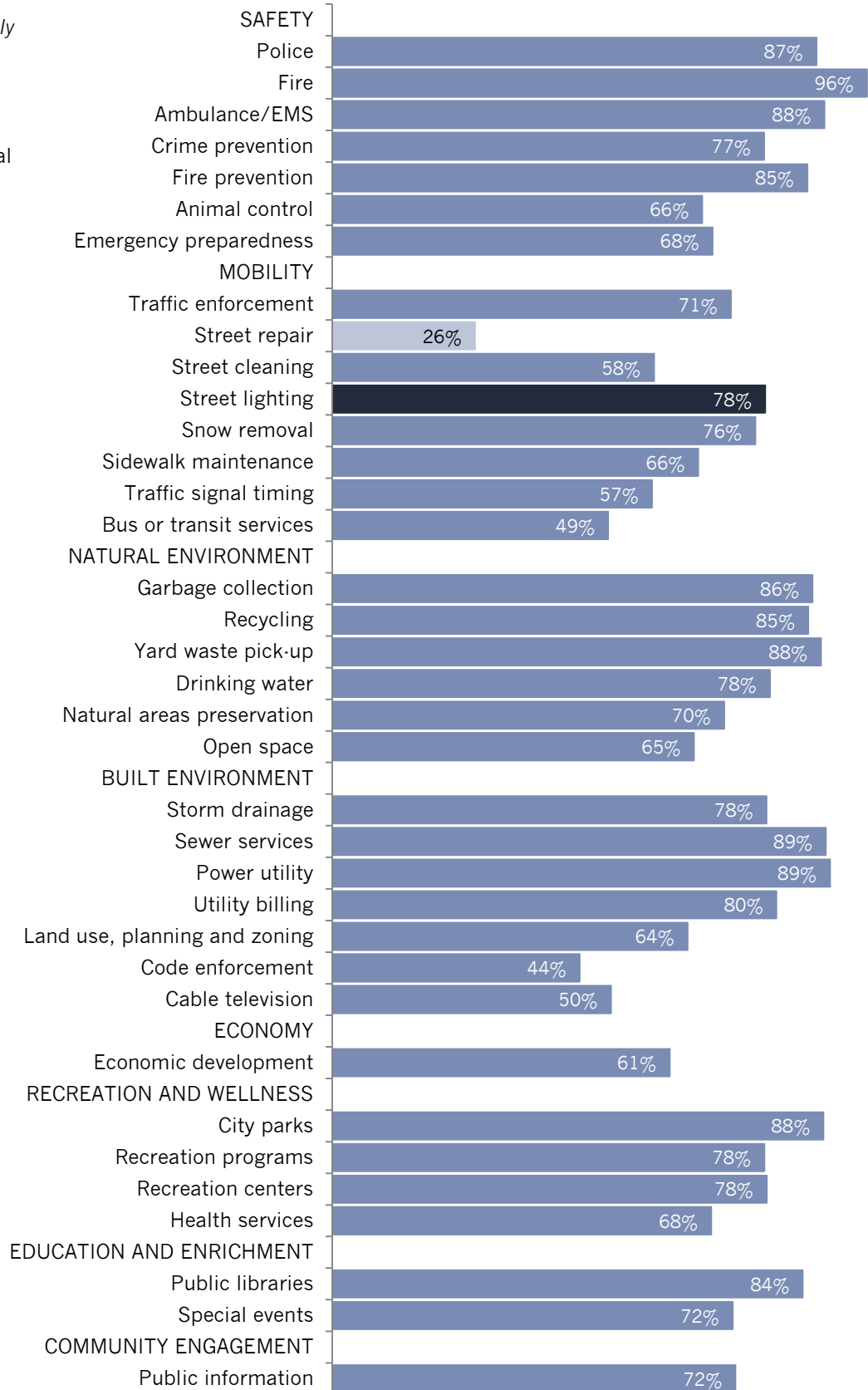
The National Community Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Participation

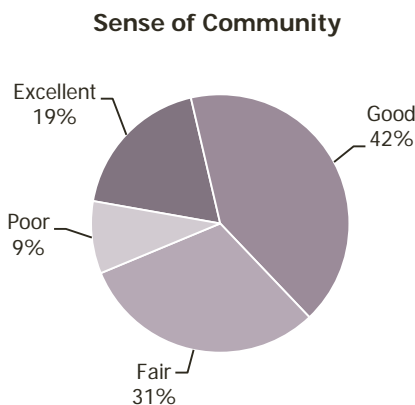
Are the residents of Hutchinson connected to the community and each other?

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. Similar to other communities in the U.S., about 6 in 10 respondents gave excellent or good scores to the sense of community in Hutchinson.

More than 8 in 10 survey respondents indicated they would recommend living in Hutchinson to someone who asked and planned to remain in the community for the next five years. About 4 in 10 residents reported they had contacted Hutchinson employees. These ratings were similar to those reported across the nation.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Levels of Participation varied widely across the different facets, making the benchmark comparisons, as well as comparisons to Hutchinson over time, useful for interpreting the results. About 9 in 10 respondents had recycled at home, purchased goods or services in the city, or talked to or visited with a neighbor.

Residents' reported rates of working in the city and participating in religious or spiritual activities were higher in Hutchinson than in other comparison communities nationwide. In 2019, residents were more likely to have made efforts to make their home more energy efficient, used Hutchinson recreation centers or to believe the local economy would have a positive impact on their income.

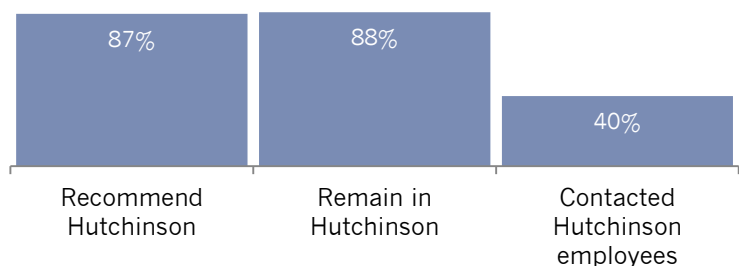


Compared to municipalities across the country, fewer Hutchinson residents reported stocking supplies in preparation for an emergency, using public transportation instead of driving or campaigning for an issue, cause or candidate. In 2019, fewer residents read or watched local news than in 2015.

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



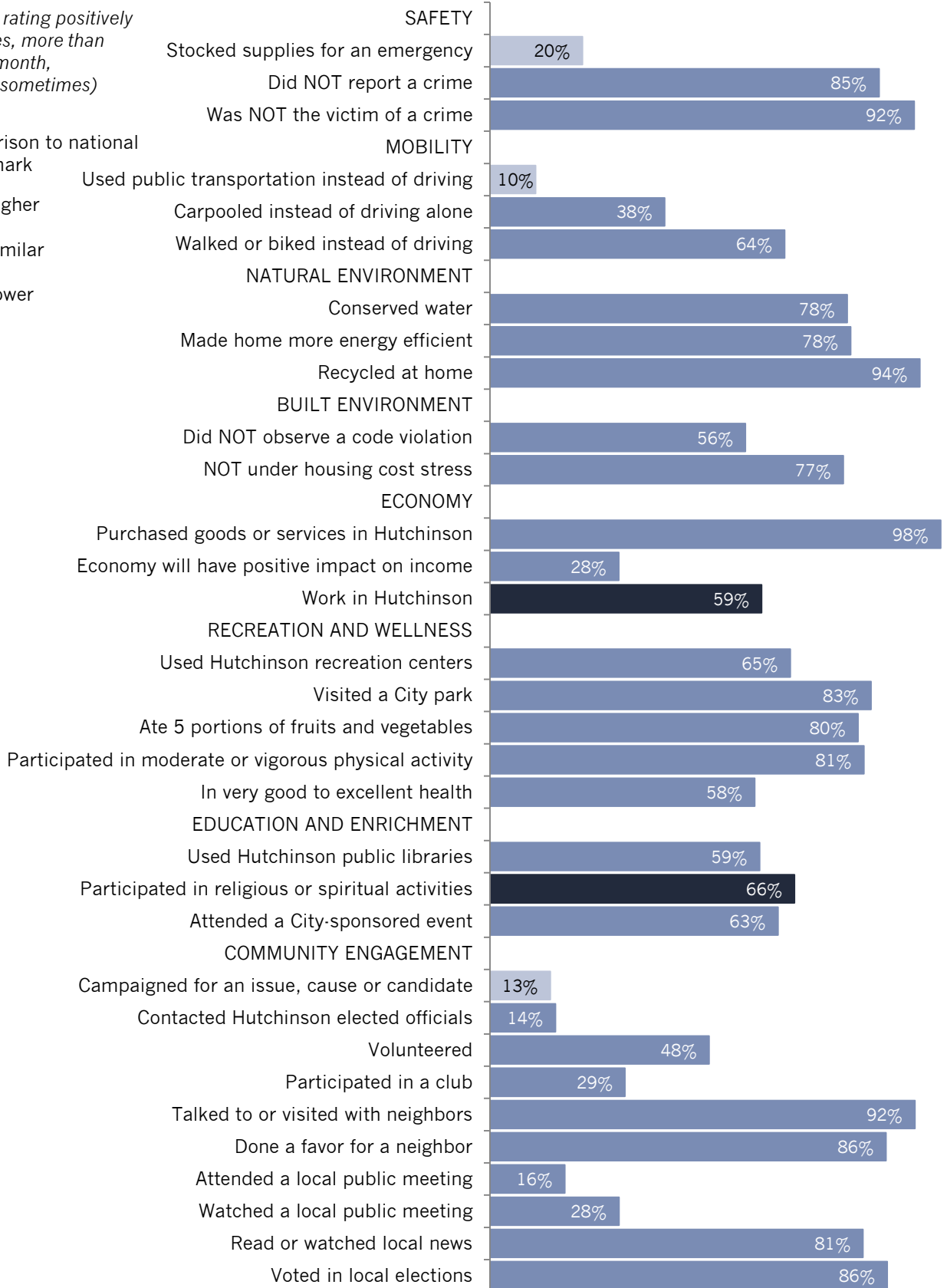
The National Community Survey™

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



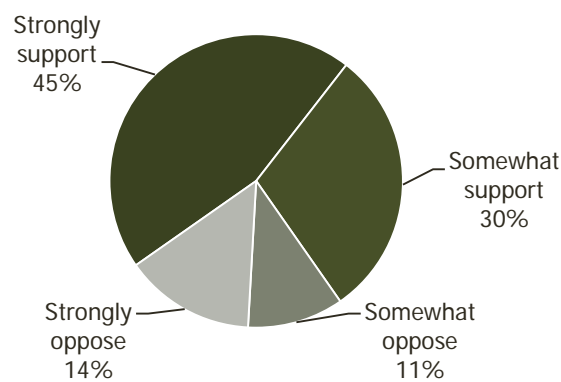
Special Topics

The City of Hutchinson included three questions of special interest on The NCS, with topics related to recreational facilities and City streets.

Residents indicated whether they supported or opposed a renewal of the ½ cent sales tax to make improvements and upgrades to City recreational facilities. About three-quarters or residents strongly or somewhat supported the renewal, while only 1 in 10 strongly opposed it.

Figure 4: Support to Fund Improvements to City Recreational Facilities

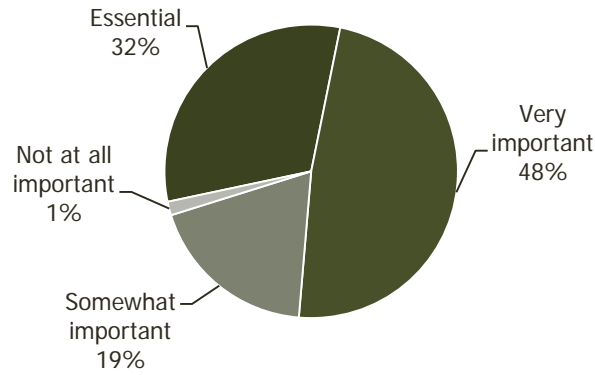
The City's ½ cent sales tax currently helps pay debt requirements for the water and wastewater plants and generates about \$1.3 million a year in revenue. It is set to expire in 2026 when the debt is paid off. How much would you support or oppose a voter approved renewal of the ½ cent sales tax after it expires to make improvements and upgrades to city-owned recreational facilities (Rec Center, Burich Arena, athletic fields, etc.)?



Community members rated the importance of funding street repair and maintenance in Hutchinson. About 8 in 10 residents reported it was essential or very important to put additional funding toward street repair and maintenance, while 2 in 10 felt it was somewhat important. Only 1% of residents indicated it was not at all important.

Figure 5: Importance of Funding Street Repair and Maintenance

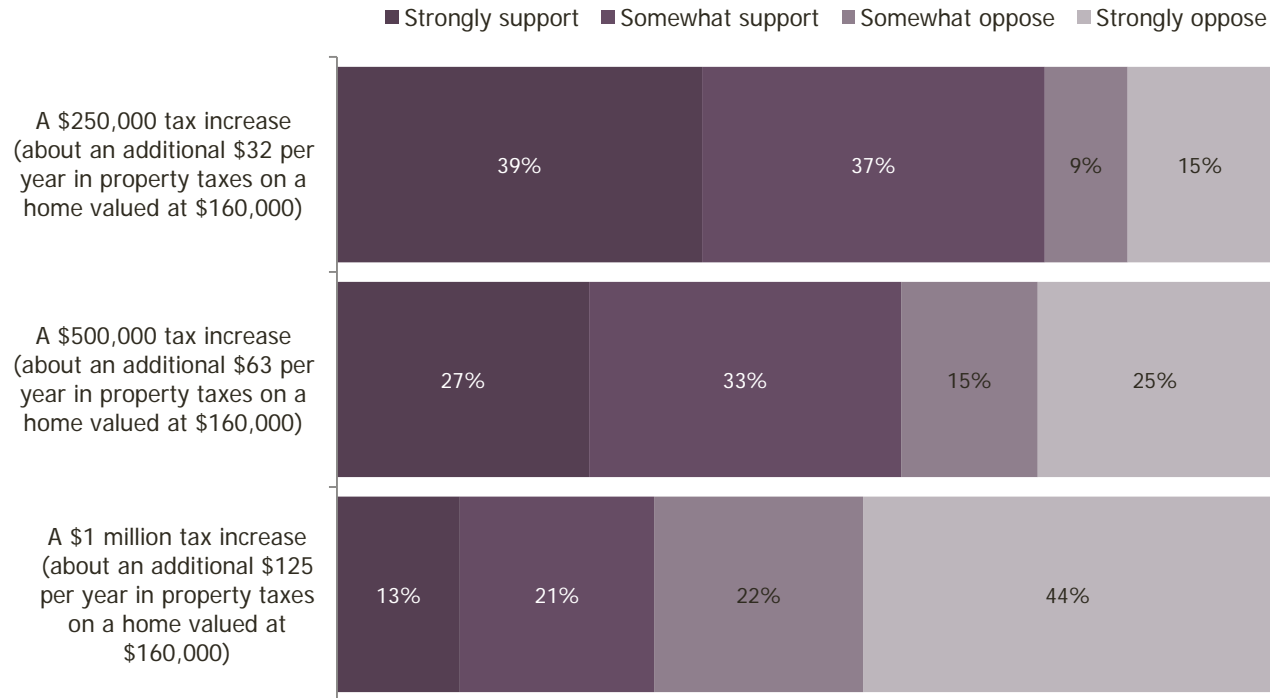
On the City's prior surveys, ratings of street repair have consistently been lower when compared to other communities across the nation. How important, if at all, do you think it is that the City put additional funding toward street repair and maintenance?



Respondents reported whether they supported or opposed a property tax increase to fund fixing, repairing and upgrading city streets. About three quarters of residents strongly or somewhat supported a \$250,000 tax increase, while 6 in 10 supported a \$500,000 tax increase. Only 3 in 10 respondents supported a \$1 million tax increase, with 4 in 10 strongly opposing it.

Figure 6: Support to Fund Improvements to City Streets

Currently, the City spends about \$4 million a year on street repair and maintenance. In order to fund additional street repair and still maintain the current levels of all City-provided services and programs, additional tax revenue would be needed. How much of a property tax increase would you support or oppose if the revenue generated would be dedicated to fixing, repairing and upgrading city streets and its related infrastructure?



Conclusions

Hutchinson continues to be a desirable place to live, with Safety as a feature that contributes to quality of life.

At least 8 in 10 community members gave high marks to the overall quality of life in Hutchinson, the city and their neighborhood as a place to live, Hutchinson as a place to raise children and its overall appearance. In 2019, more residents gave positive scores to Hutchinson as a place to retire and its overall image or reputation than in 2015. More than 8 in 10 respondents were likely to recommend living in Hutchinson to someone who asked and planned to remain in Hutchinson for the next five years and about 6 in 10 residents favorably evaluated the sense of community in the city.

As in 2015, residents indicated that Safety was an important focus area for the City to address in the coming years. About 9 in 10 survey participants positively rated the overall feeling of safety in Hutchinson, which was an increase from 2015. Almost all residents felt safe in their neighborhoods (97%) and in the downtown/commercial area (96%). Out of all City services, police, fire and ambulance/EMS were given some of the most positive reviews from community members. Assessments of police, crime prevention, emergency preparedness and animal control increased from 2015 to 2019.

Residents are generally pleased with Mobility, but support improvements to City streets.

About 8 in 10 residents positively assessed the overall ease of travel in Hutchinson. Ratings for ease of travel by bicycle and by walking, the availability of paths and walking trails, and street lighting were strong and higher than the national benchmarks, with at least three-quarters of respondents giving these high marks. More residents gave high scores to public parking, traffic enforcement, street lighting, snow removal, sidewalk maintenance and traffic signal timing in 2019 than in 2015.

City streets continue to be viewed less favorably by residents in Hutchinson compared to communities nationwide. Assessments of street repair were rated positively by one-quarter of residents and declined from 2015 to 2019. About 8 in 10 participants felt it was essential or very important for the City to put additional funding toward street repair and maintenance. Additionally, about three-quarters of residents supported a \$250,000 property tax increase dedicated to fixing, repairing and upgrading city streets and related infrastructure, while 6 in 10 supported a \$500,000 tax increase for the same improvements.

Hutchinson residents value Economy and emphasize its importance.

As in 2015, survey participants highlighted the Economy as a priority for the City in the next two years. Similar to comparison communities, at least 6 in 10 residents positively rated the overall economic health of Hutchinson, the city as a place to visit and to work, and economic development. Many improvements were observed in Economy ratings in 2019, including increases in residents' scores for overall economic health, employment opportunities, Hutchinson as a place to visit and to work, economic development and new development in Hutchinson. Furthermore, residents in 2019 were more likely to believe the local economy would have a positive impact on their income.