

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Greer, SC

Community Livability Report
2015



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About

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

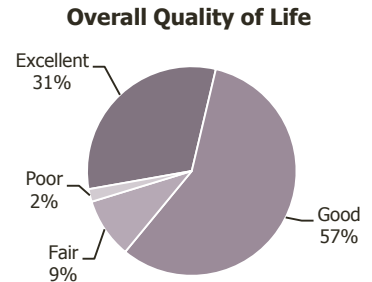
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 276 residents of the City of Greer. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 6% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Greer

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Greer as excellent or good. This rating was similar to other communities (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.



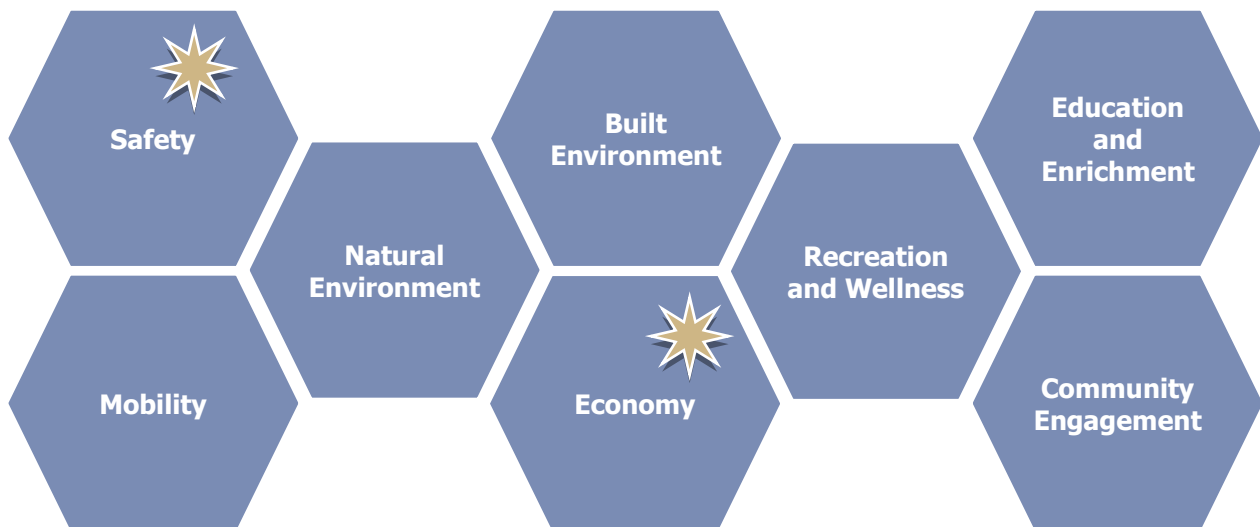
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Greer community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Greer residents gave favorable ratings to both of these facets of community. Ratings for all of the other facets, including Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement were also 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 Greer’s unique questions.

Legend

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

★ Most important



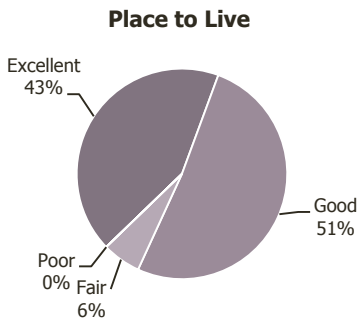
Community Characteristics

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 Greer, 94% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Greer 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 Greer as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Greer and its overall appearance. At least 8 in 10 rated Greer as a place to raise children and their neighborhoods as places to live (a rating that increased since 2011) as excellent or good. About three-quarters of participants gave high marks to the City's overall image and appearance and 7 in 10 highly rated Greer as a place to retire. All of these ratings were 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. In general, ratings were similar to comparison communities and most aspects were given positive ratings by at least a majority of residents. Almost all residents reported that they felt safe in their neighborhoods and in Greer's downtown/commercial area and 8 in 10 respondents felt safe overall. The facets of Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement were also rated positively by at least 5 in 10 residents. Within these facets, overall natural environment, cleanliness, air quality and K-12 education, a rating that increased from 2011 to 2015, were given high marks by about 8 in 10 participants, while variety of housing options, public places where people want to spend time, overall economic health, overall quality of business and service establishments, Greer as a place to work, health and wellness opportunities, preventative health services, availability of affordable quality health care and food, education and enrichment opportunities, opportunities to attend religious or spiritual events and activities, the neighborliness of Greer residents and opportunities to volunteer were rated as excellent or good by at least two-thirds of respondents; all of these ratings were similar to the national benchmark. Especially strong ratings included the availability of affordable quality housing (68% excellent or good), cost of living (63%), employment opportunities



(59%) and the availability of affordable quality child care/preschool (74%) and each of these items were rated higher in Greer than in other communities. Ratings tended to be a bit mixed within the facets of Mobility and Recreation and Wellness. In Mobility, availability of paths and walking trails, ease of travel by bicycle and public transportation were awarded positive ratings by about one-third of residents and were rated lower than the benchmark; however, all other aspects were favorably rated by a majority of participants and similar to comparison communities. All aspects of Recreation and Wellness were also given high marks by at least half of residents, but the measure for fitness opportunities was rated lower than the national benchmark.

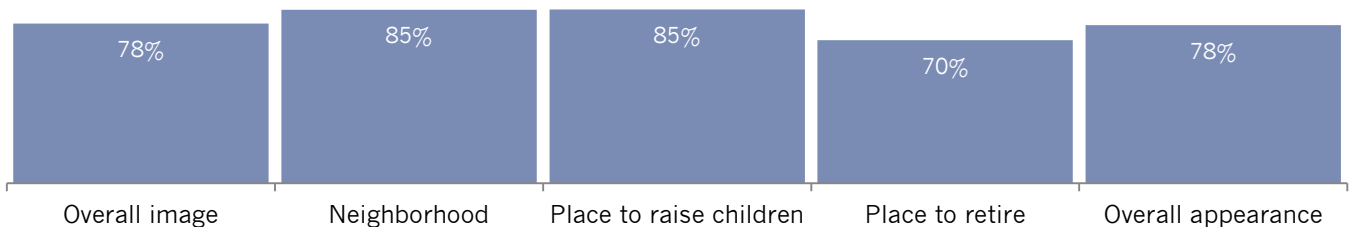
Compared to 2011, ratings for ease of walking, cleanliness, employment opportunities, K-12 education and availability of affordable quality child care/preschool were rated more positively in 2015 (see the *Trends over Time* report for additional details).

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



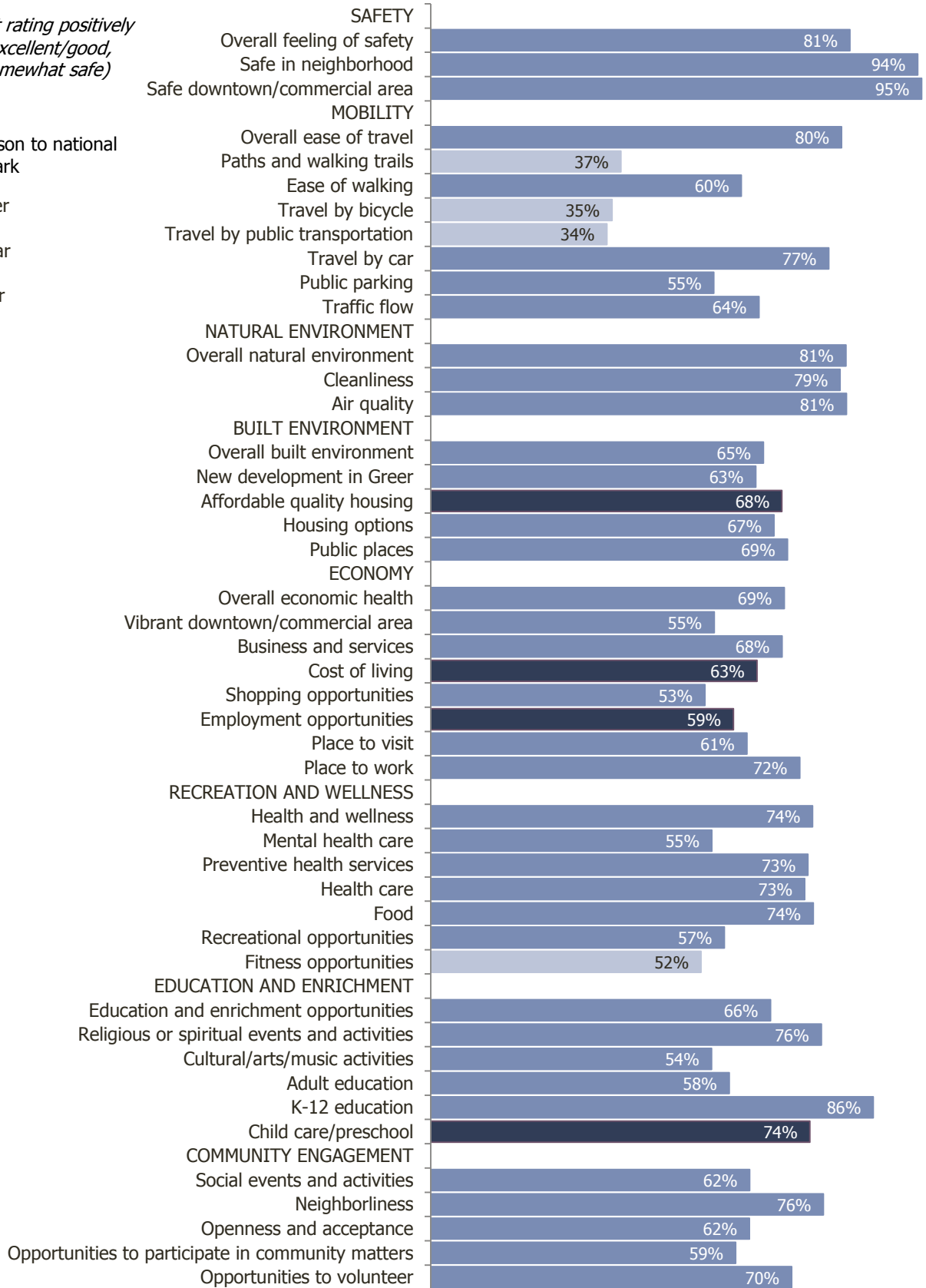
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

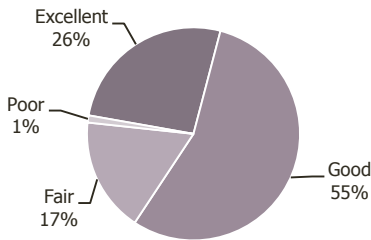
How well does the government of Greer meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Greer as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 8 in 10 respondents rated the overall quality of City services as excellent or good, a rating that increased from 2011 to 2015. Only about 4 in 10 gave high marks to the services provided by the Federal Government. Both of these ratings were similar to other communities.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Greer’s leadership and governance. At least two-thirds of participants awarded high marks to Greer acting in the best interest of the City, being honest, treating all residents fairly, overall direction of government and the customer service provided by Greer employees. About 6 in 10 or fewer indicated that they were confident in City government and thought the government did an excellent or good job at welcoming citizen involvement and about half of participants favorably rated the value of services for taxes paid. All of these ratings were similar to the national benchmark.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Greer. Most ratings for services in Greer were rated as excellent or good by at least 6 in 10 residents and tended to be similar to the national benchmark. Over 9 in 10 gave high marks to fire and ambulance/EMS services and at least 8 in 10 rated police, crime and fire prevention, garbage collection, City parks and public libraries positively. Other notably high ratings included traffic enforcement, drinking water, sewer services, power utilities, utility billing, recreation programs, health services, special events and public information, with 7 in 10 or more ranking these services as excellent or good. The lowest rated services were found within the facet of Mobility, such as street repair, snow removal and bus or transit services; these ratings were lower than communities across the nation. Recycling services was rated favorably by 6 in 10 residents and was also lower than benchmark communities.

Overall Quality of City Services

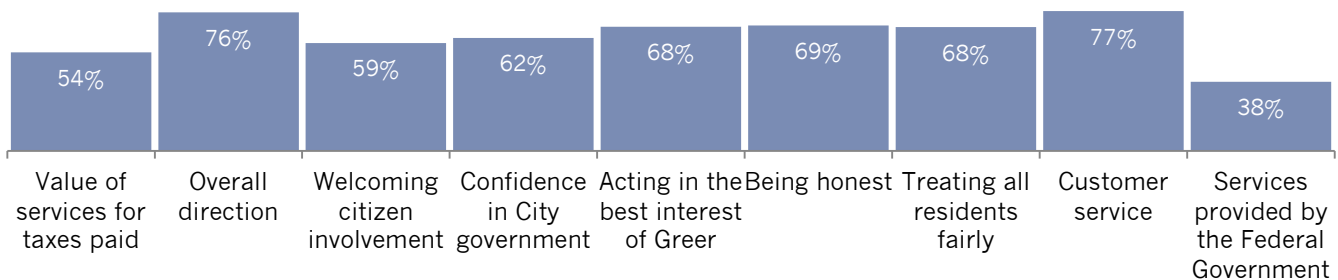


In 2015, police services, crime prevention, code enforcement and economic development were higher than 2011 and the measures for street repair and street lighting were lower than the previous iteration of the survey.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



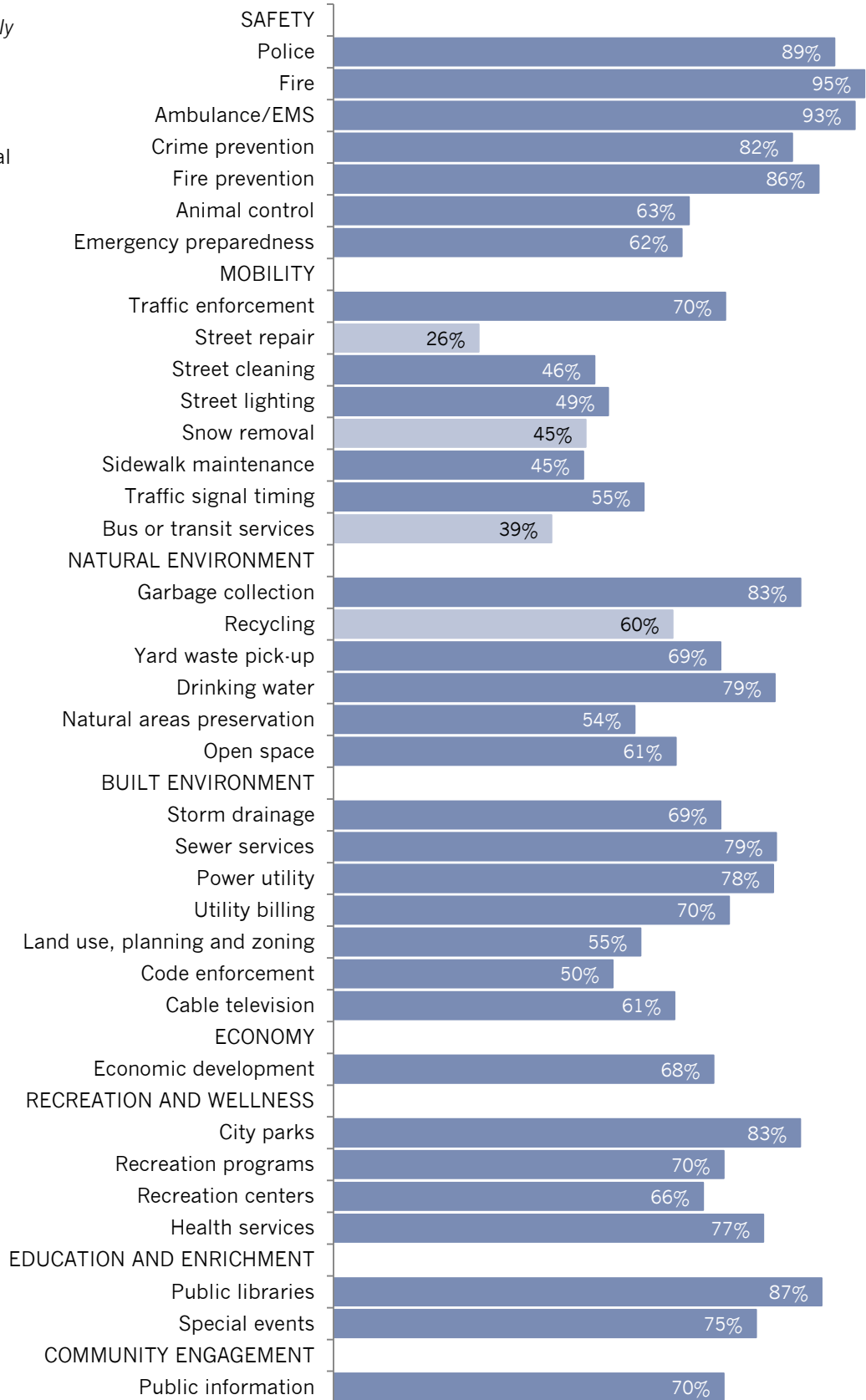
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



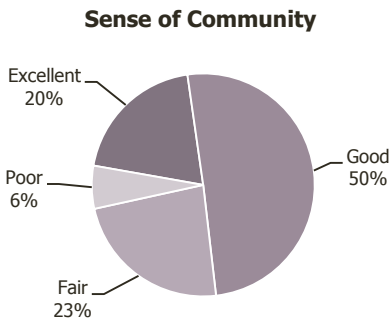
Participation

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

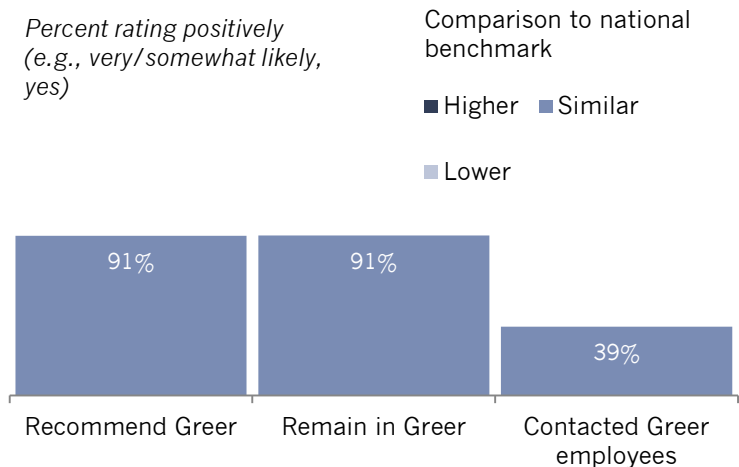
An engaged community harnesses its most valuable resource, its residents. The connections and trust among residents, government, businesses and other organizations help to create a sense of community; a shared sense of membership, belonging and history. A majority of residents gave high marks to the sense of community of Greer, a rating that was similar to the national benchmark. At least 9 in 10 would recommend living in Greer and planned to remain in the City for the next five years. About 4 in 10 reported that they had contacted City employees; these ratings were similar to levels seen in comparison 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 ratings tended to vary across facets, but most aspects were similar to communities across the U.S. Within the facet of Safety, 8 in 10 residents indicated that they had not reported a crime and 9 in 10 reported that they were not the victims of crimes. About one-third asserted that they had stocked supplies in case of an emergency and all of these measures were similar to the national benchmark. All measures within Recreation and Wellness were also positively rated by a majority of respondents and similar to other communities. Measures within Mobility, Natural Environment, Economy, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement were more mixed. For Mobility, only three percent of participants reported they had used public transportation and about one-third had walked or biked instead of driving. Both of these measures were lower than the national benchmark. Nearly 4 in 10 respondents had carpooled, which was comparable to communities across the nation. At least 7 in 10 citizens indicated they had conserved water or made their homes

more energy efficient, but only about two-thirds had recycled at home, which was lower than the benchmark. Almost all residents had purchased good or services in Greer (88%), while only one-quarter worked in City limits (a level lower than seen elsewhere). At least one-third of respondents were optimistic that the economy will have a positive impact on income, a rating that has increased since 2011 and was higher than ratings given by residents in other communities. Ratings were most varied within Community Engagement; at least three-quarters or more had talked to or visited with their neighbors, done a favor for a neighbor, read or watched local news and voted in local elections, Participation ratings that were similar to the benchmark. However, less than one-quarter had campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate, contacted elected City officials, attended or watched a local public meeting, volunteered or participated in a club.



Two aspects of Participation were lower in 2011 compared to 2015 and three aspects were higher. Fewer residents had used Greer recreation centers or public libraries in 2015 and more residents reported that they were not under housing stress, had voted in local elections and thought the economy would have a positive impact on their income than in 2011.



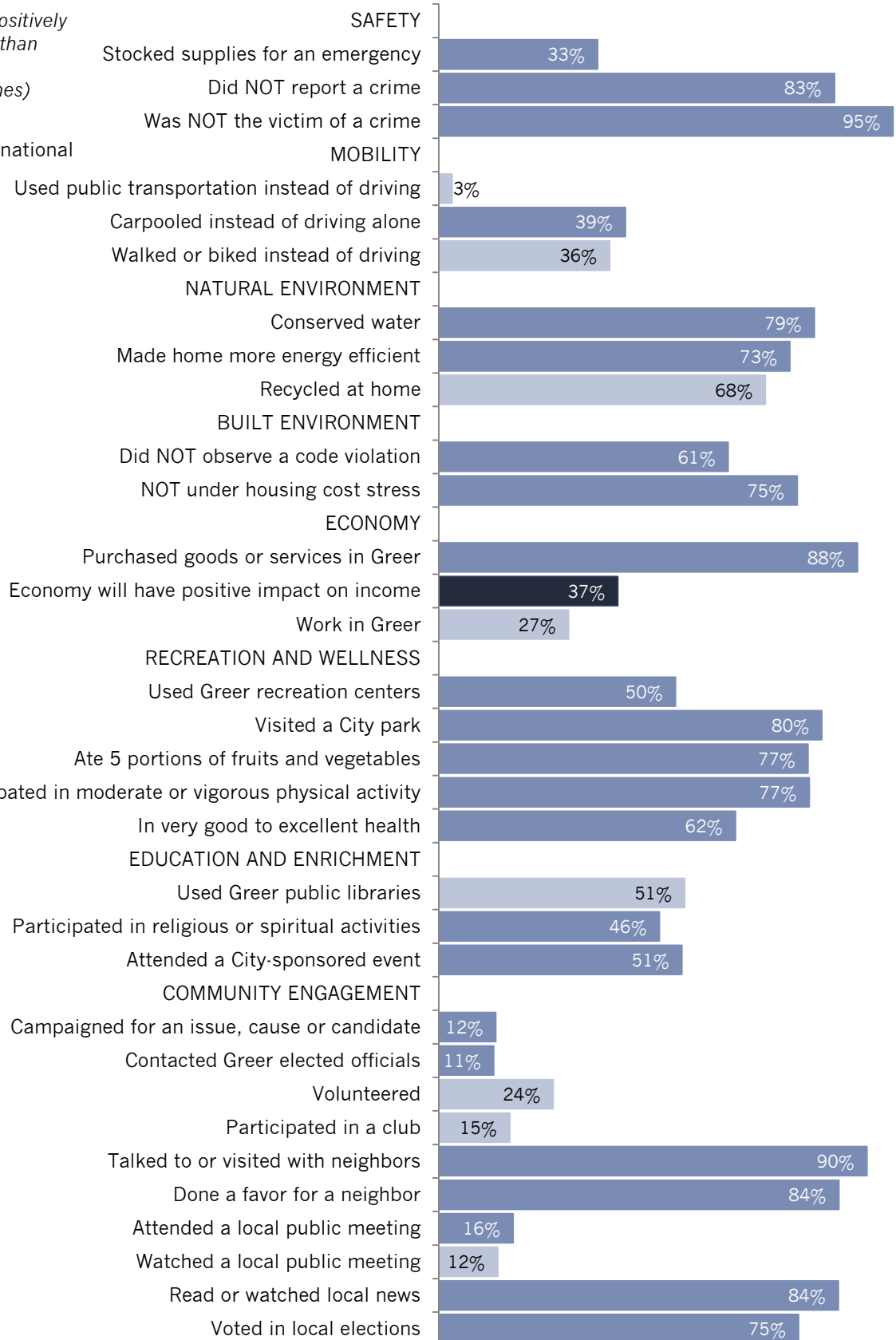
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

Percent rating positively
(e.g., yes, more than
once a month,
always/sometimes)

Comparison to national
benchmark

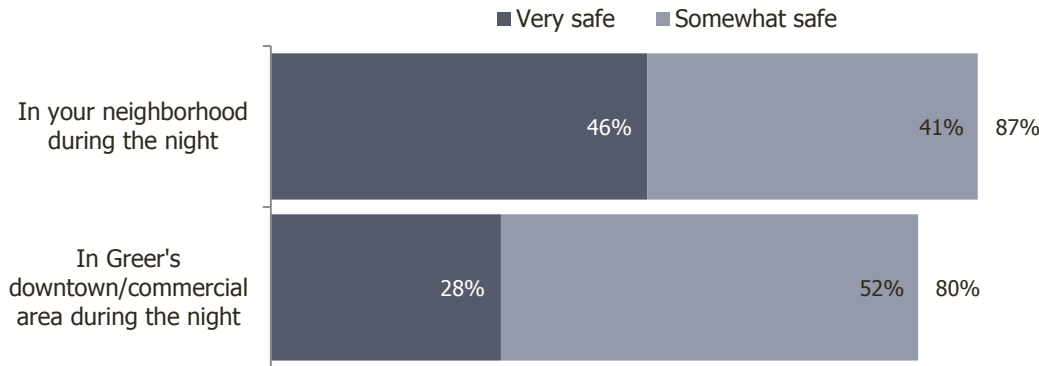
- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Special Topics

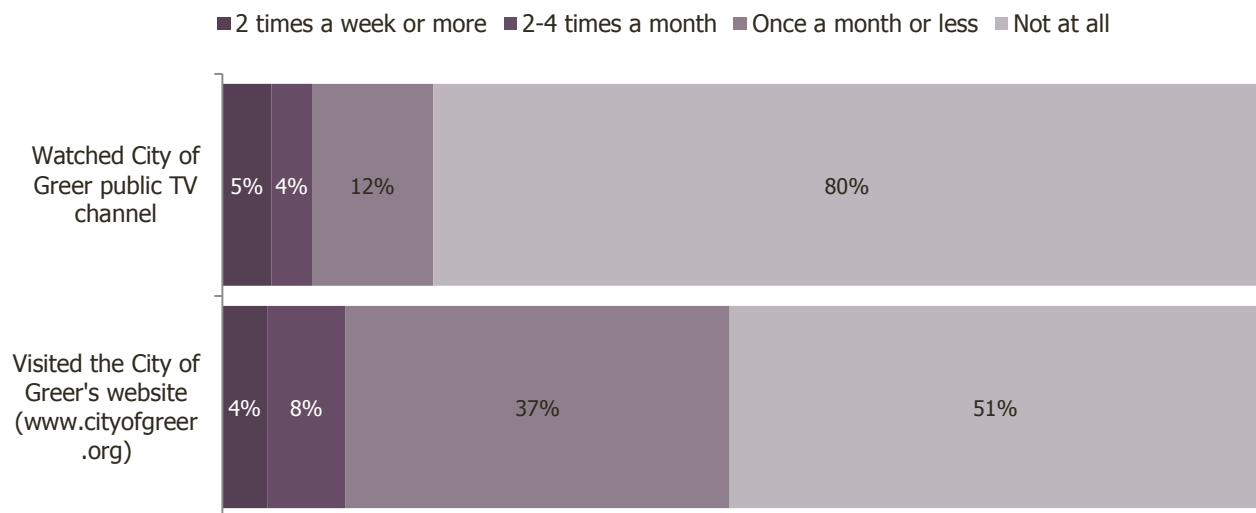
The City of Greer included several questions of special interest on The NCS. The first set of questions asked residents how safe they felt in their neighborhoods and in the City’s downtown/commercial area at night. At least 8 in 10 reported that they felt safe in both areas, with almost half of participants indicating that they felt very safe in their neighborhoods at night.

Figure 4: Perceptions of Safety after Dark
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel:



Respondents were also asked how often they watched the City’s public TV channel and visited the Greer government website. Less than one-quarter reported that they had watched the City of Greer’s public TV channel once a month and 80% had never watched the channel. About half of residents indicated that they had visited the website for Greer at least once a month and an equal proportion had not used the website at all in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Figure 5: City of Greer TV Channel and Website Use
Please indicate whether or not you have done each of the following in the last 12 months.

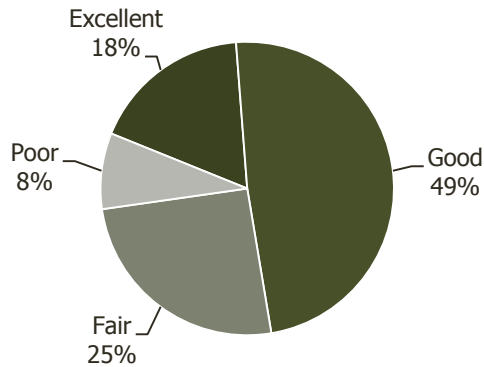


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The next custom question asked participants to rate the quality of arts programs or classes in Greer. About two-thirds rated arts programs and classes as excellent or good and less than 1 in 10 gave poor ratings.

Figure 6: Quality of Arts Programs and Classes

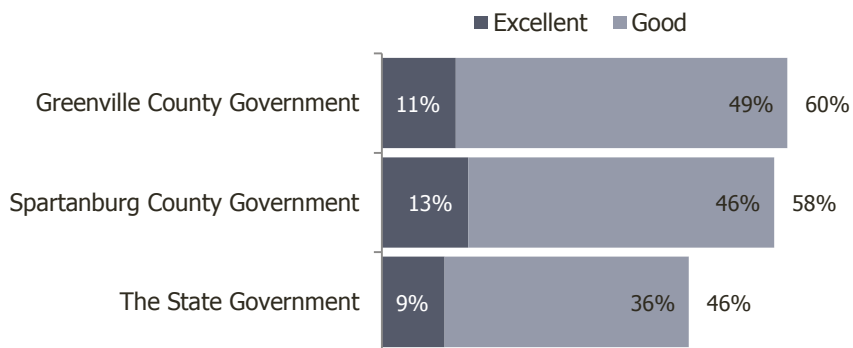
Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Greer:



In addition to City and Federal Governments, Greer residents were asked to rate the services provided by County and State Governments. About 6 in 10 awarded high marks to both Greenville and Spartanburg County Governments, while nearly half gave favorable ratings to the Government of South Carolina.

Figure 7: Quality of State and County Governments

Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by each of the following?

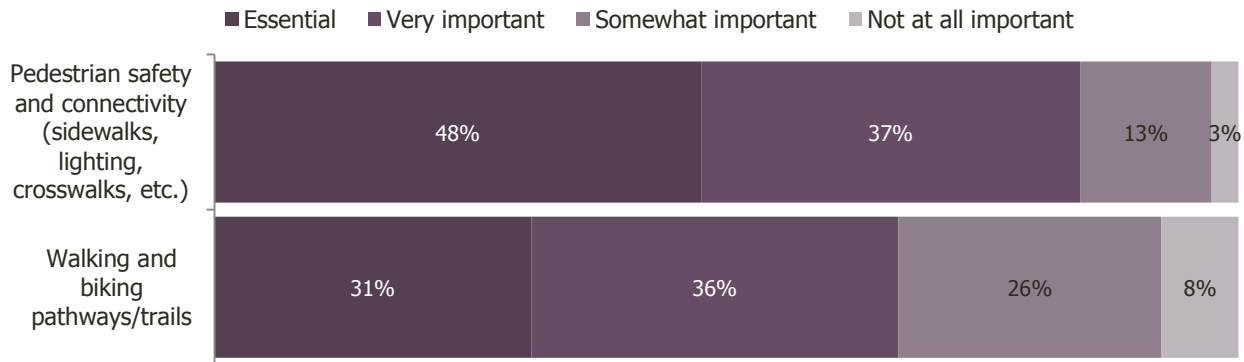


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Greer respondents were also asked to indicate the importance of a couple of City priorities. At least 8 in 10 indicated that pedestrian safety and connectivity was essential or very important, while about two-thirds placed high importance on walking and biking pathways and trails.

Figure 8: City of Greer Priorities

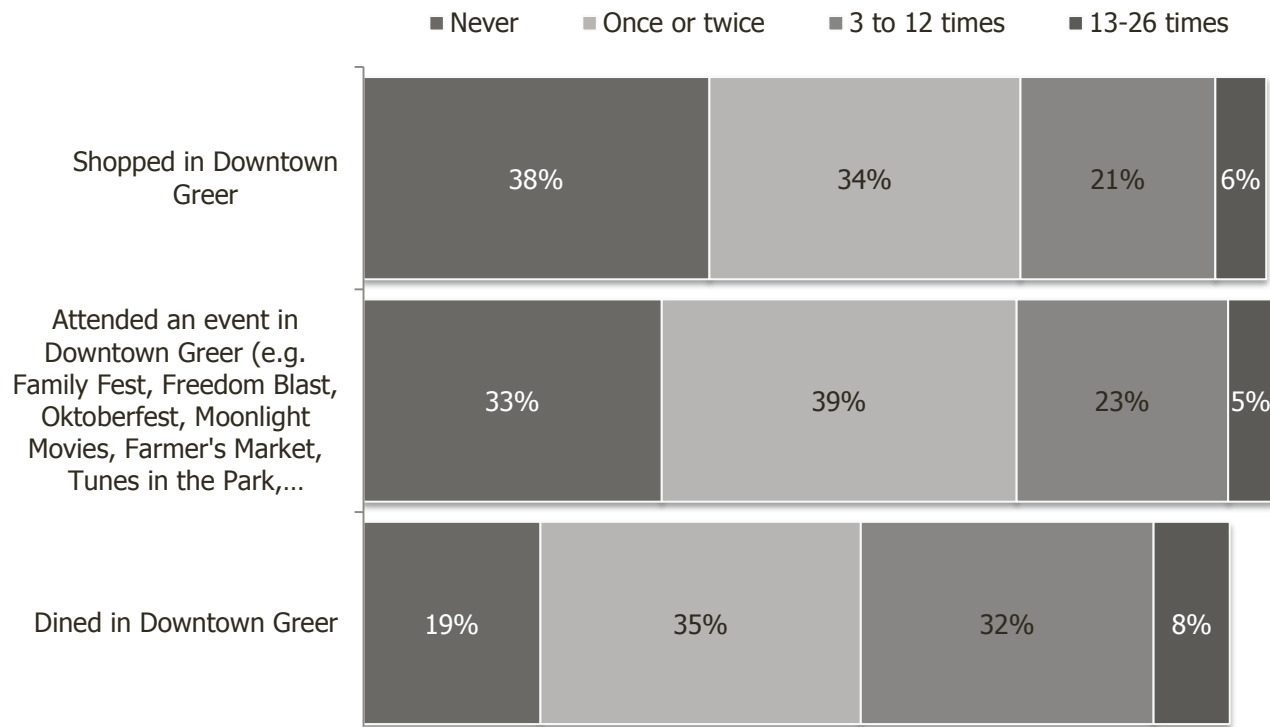
Please rate how important, if at all, you think it is for the Greer community to focus on each of the following in the coming two years:



The survey also gauged how often Greer residents visited the City's downtown area for a number of reasons. About 4 in 10 reported that they had never shopped in Downtown Greer, while over one-quarter had shopped in the area three times or more in the previous 12 months. About two-thirds of participants have attended an event downtown at least once in the last year, while at least 8 in 10 had dined in Downtown Greer in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Figure 9: Downtown Greer Visitation

In the last 12 months, how many times, if ever, have you or another household member visited Downtown Greer to do the following?

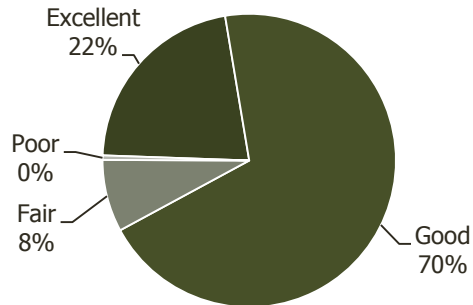


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The City of Greer also asked residents to rate their overall experience in Downtown Greer. Almost all respondents rated their experience as excellent or good and no participants indicated they had a poor experience.

Figure 10: Overall Experience in Downtown Greer

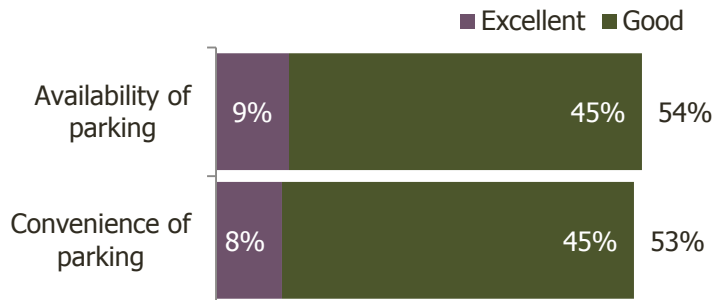
Please rate your overall experience while visiting Downtown Greer:



When asked about the availability and convenience of parking in Downtown Greer, at least half gave high marks to each aspect of parking while visiting the area.

Figure 11: Downtown Greer Parking

Please rate each of the following aspects of parking while visiting Downtown Greer:

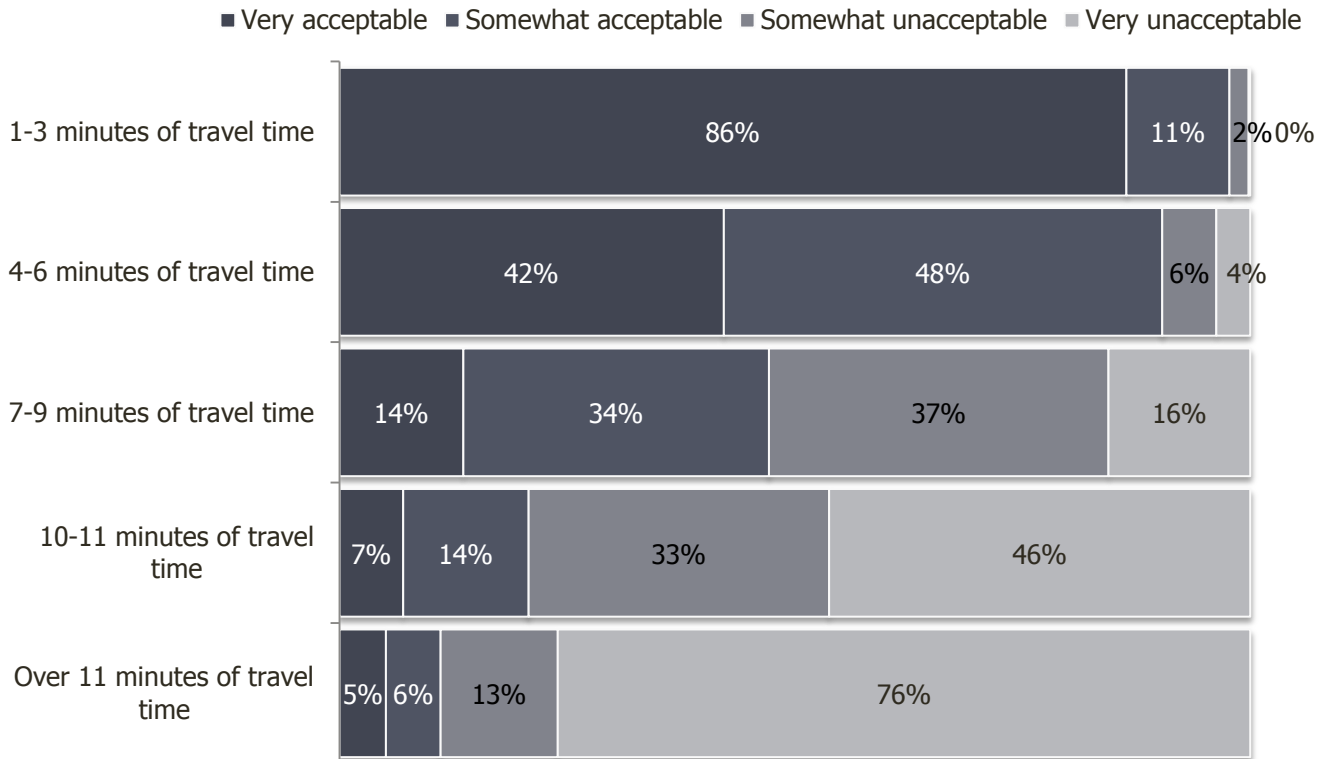


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The final question asked Greer citizens to gauge the acceptability of different fire response travel times. Nearly all respondents indicated that six minutes or less would be acceptable, while less than half reported that seven to nine minutes would be justified. About 8 in 10 thought that 10-11 minutes would be somewhat or very unacceptable and 9 in 10 would be unacceptable of travel times of over 11 minutes.

Figure 12: Fire Response Travel Time

Regarding fire response times, the amount of time it takes to process a 911 call and for firefighters to be ready to leave the station is currently between 2 and 2.5 minutes. In your opinion, what would be an acceptable or unacceptable number of additional minutes allowed for travel time after leaving the fire station?



Conclusions

Greer residents continue to enjoy a high quality of life.

At least 4 in 5 residents rated their overall quality of life positively and more than 9 in 10 reported that their City is an excellent or good place to live. At least 8 in 10 respondents felt positively about Greer as a place to raise children and their neighborhoods as places to live, a rating that increased from 2011 to 2015. About three-quarters of participants gave high marks to Greer's overall image and appearance and 7 in 10 gave positive ratings to the City as a place to retire. Not only did Greer citizens appreciate living in the City, 9 in 10 reported that they would recommend living in the community to others and planned to remain in Greer in the future. Overall, these ratings tended to be similar or higher compared to the 2011 iteration of this survey, which suggests that residents continue to enjoy living in Greer.

Residents value Economy and ratings have improved over time.

Participants indicated that the Economy was an important focus area and economic ratings tended to be similar compared to other communities. Ratings have improved for several Economic measures in Greer, including employment opportunities (which was rated higher than the national benchmark), economic development and the number of respondents who believe the economy will have a positive impact on their income has risen (a level higher than levels in communities across the nation). Cost of living was also positively rated by about two-thirds of residents and was rated higher than comparison communities. The only item lower than the benchmark was the number of residents reported they worked inside the boundaries of Greer (27%). Almost all measures of Economy were rated as excellent or good by a majority of respondents.

Ratings for Mobility vary.

Many aspects of Mobility received positive ratings from most residents. Overall ease of travel was given excellent or good marks by 8 in 10 participants and at least 6 in 10 awarded high marks to ease of walking (a rating that increased in 2015), ease of travel by car, traffic flow and traffic enforcement. On the other hand, about one-third gave favorable ratings to availability of paths and walking trails, ease of travel by bicycle and public transportation, ratings that were lower than the national benchmark. Other ratings that were lower compared to other communities across the U.S. included street repair, snow removal and bus or transit services, and Greer residents reported lower levels of walking/biking or using public transportation instead of driving than residents elsewhere. At least two-thirds of participants indicated that walking and biking pathways/trails and pedestrian safety and connectivity was essential or very important priorities for the City of Greer.

Safety is a priority for Greer.

Respondents also indicated that Safety is an essential or very important facet to prioritize in the next two years. The highest ratings across all pillars were within the facet of Safety; at least 9 in 10 participants reported that they felt safe in their neighborhoods and in Greer's downtown/commercial area, both during the day and night, and gave excellent or good ratings to fire and ambulance/EMS services. Additionally, 95% of residents indicated that they were not the victims of a crime. Other highly rated services included police services and fire prevention and a majority gave high marks to animal control and Greer's emergency preparedness. In general, ratings for aspects of Safety were stable and similar to comparison communities; however, ratings for police services and crime prevention services increased since the last iteration of the survey. When asked about fire response times, a vast majority indicated that six minutes or less would be very or somewhat acceptable amount of time for travel between the fire station and the emergency.