

The National Citizen Survey™

Brookline, MA

Community Livability Report

2014

Contents

About.....	1
Quality of Life in Brookline.....	2
Community Characteristics	3
Governance	5
Participation	7
Special Topics.....	9
Conclusions	12

The National Citizen Survey™
© 2001-2014 National Research Center, Inc.

National Research Center, Inc.
2955 Valmont Road, Suite 300
Boulder, CO 80301
www.n-r-c.com • 303-444-7863

International City/County Management Association
777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002
www.icma.org • 202-289-ICMA

About

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

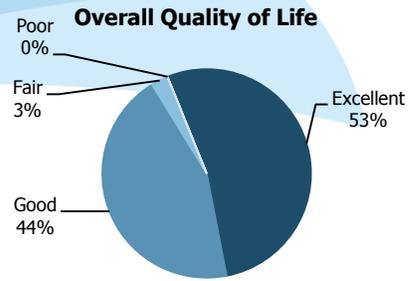
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 379 residents of the Town of Brookline. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Brookline

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Brookline as “excellent” or “good.” Brookline’s rating for overall quality of life was higher than the national benchmark.

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.



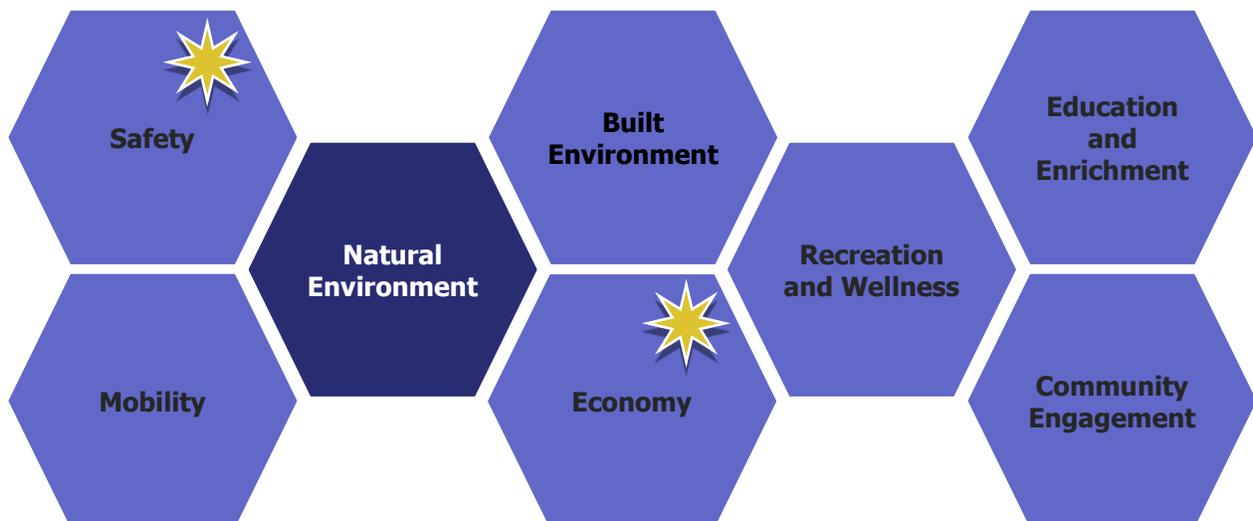
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Brookline community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Brookline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

Legend

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

★ Most important



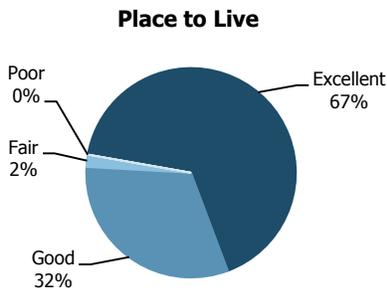
Community Characteristics

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 Brookline, 99% rated the Town as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Brookline as a place to live were higher than ratings in other communities across the nation (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

In addition to rating the Town as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Brookline as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Brookline and its overall appearance. At least 9 in 10 respondents gave "excellent" or "good" ratings to the overall image of Brookline, their neighborhoods, Brookline as a place to raise children and to the overall appearance of Brookline. These ratings were all higher than the national benchmarks. Brookline as place to retire was rated positively by about three-quarters of residents, and this rating was similar to the benchmark.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. In general, facets of Community Characteristics were higher than or similar to the benchmark comparisons and rated as "excellent" or "good" by a majority of respondents. At least 97% of respondents gave high ratings to aspects of Safety. Aspects of Mobility were mixed, and ratings of "excellent" or "good" ranged from 27% (public parking) to 94% (ease of walking in Brookline). All aspects of Natural Environment were rated highly, and all were above the benchmark comparison. Ratings for Economy were very strong, with the exception of ratings for cost of living in Brookline. Built Environment ratings tended to be positive, with the exception of ratings for affordable quality housing.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower ■ Not available

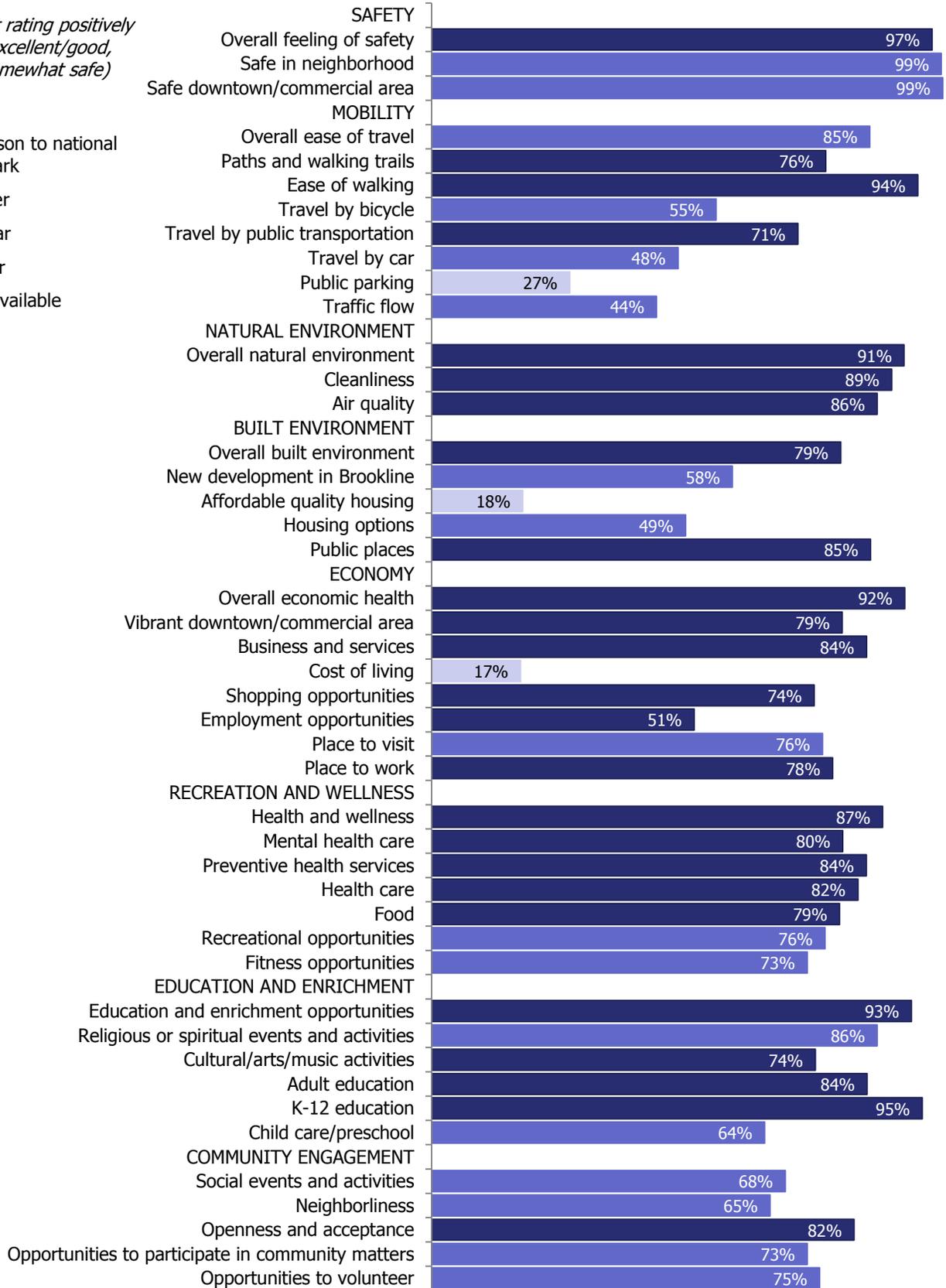


Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available



Governance

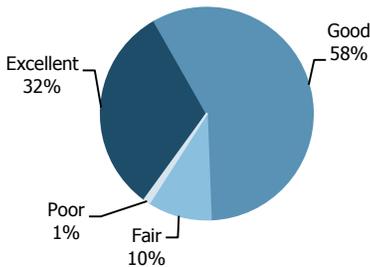
How well does the government of Brookline meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Brookline as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. The overall quality of services provided by Brookline was rated as “excellent” or “good” by about 90% of respondents, while the overall quality of services provided by the Federal Government was rated as “excellent” or “good” by about half of the respondents. Brookline’s overall services were higher than the benchmark comparison, while Federal Government ratings were similar to the benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Brookline’s leadership and governance. At least 7 in 10 gave “excellent” or “good” ratings to the value of services, overall direction, confidence in Town government, acting in the best interest of Brookline, being honest, treating all residents fairly and to overall customer service. These ratings tended to be higher than the benchmark comparisons.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Brookline. All of these aspects of Governance were rated positively by a majority of residents and all were similar to or higher than the national benchmark comparisons. At least 7 in 10 respondents gave high ratings to aspects of Safety, Natural Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment. At least 9 in 10 respondents gave ratings of “excellent” or “good” to Town parks, recreation centers and health services, these ratings were all higher than national benchmarks.

Overall Quality of Town Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower □ Not available

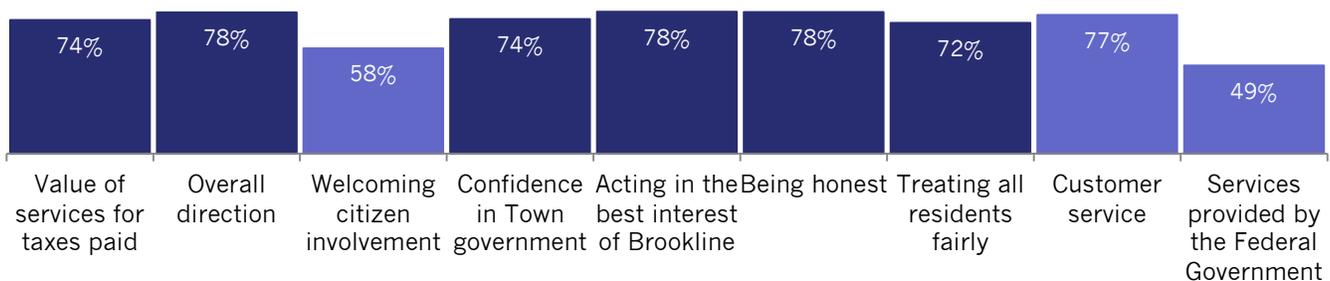
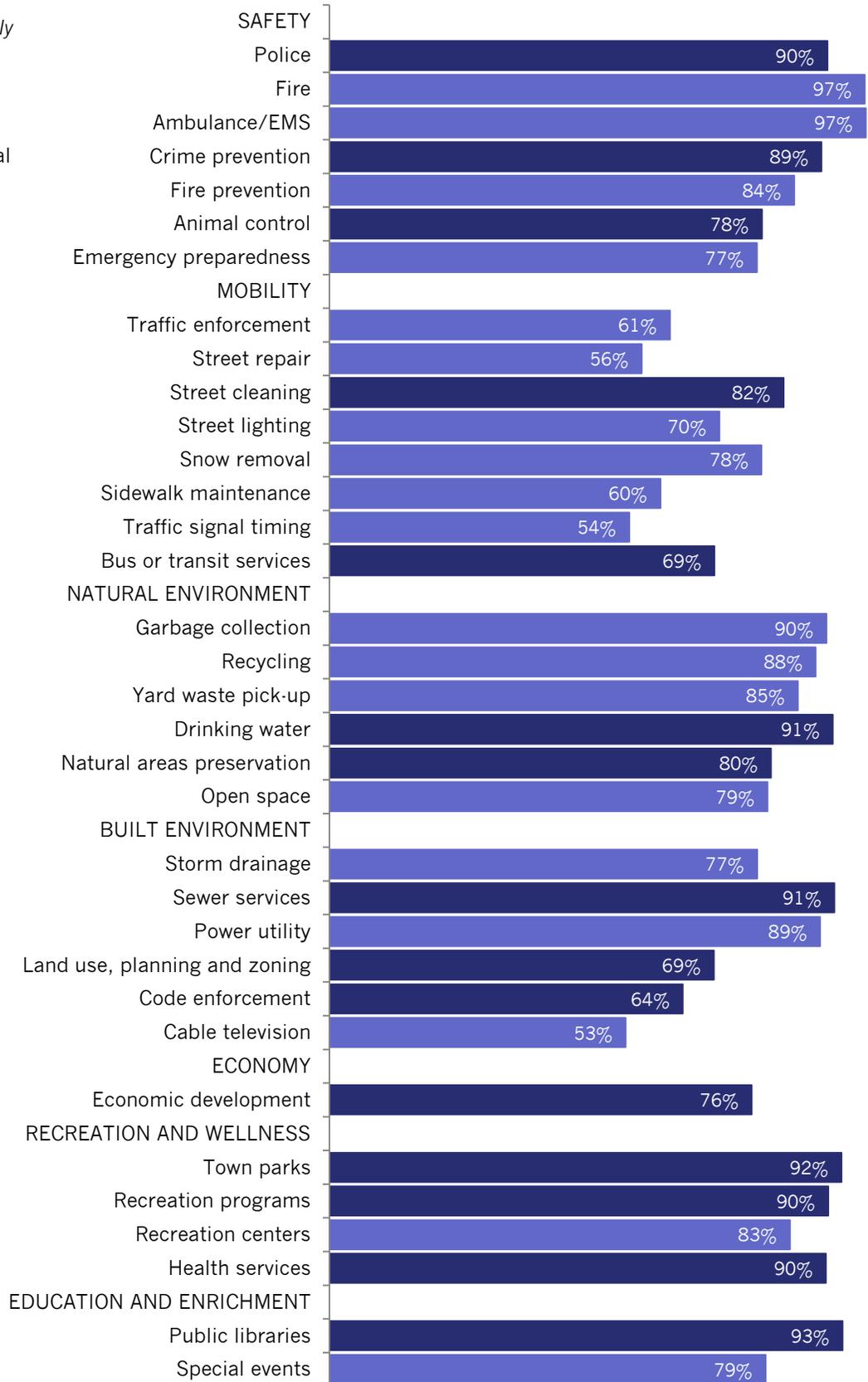


Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available

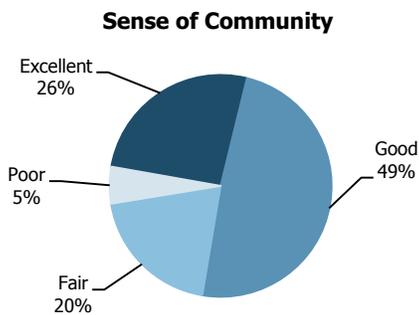


Participation

Are the residents of Brookline 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 three-quarters of Brookline’s residents gave “excellent” or “good” ratings to the sense of community, this rating was similar to the national benchmark. Almost all residents plan to remain in Brookline and would recommend Brookline as a place to live. About half of the survey respondents reported having contact with a Brookline employee in the last 12 months.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Aspects of Participation had mixed ratings when compared to the national benchmark. Most were similar to the benchmark, five were higher and eight were lower than the benchmark. When compared to the national benchmark, Brookline residents were more likely to use public transportation, walk or bike instead of driving, and recycle at home. When compared to other communities, Brookline residents were less likely to work in Brookline, use Brookline recreation centers, participate in religious or spiritual activities, volunteer, participate in a club or watch a local meeting. Participation aspects in the facets of Safety, Mobility and Natural Environment were all similar to or higher than benchmark comparisons.



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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available

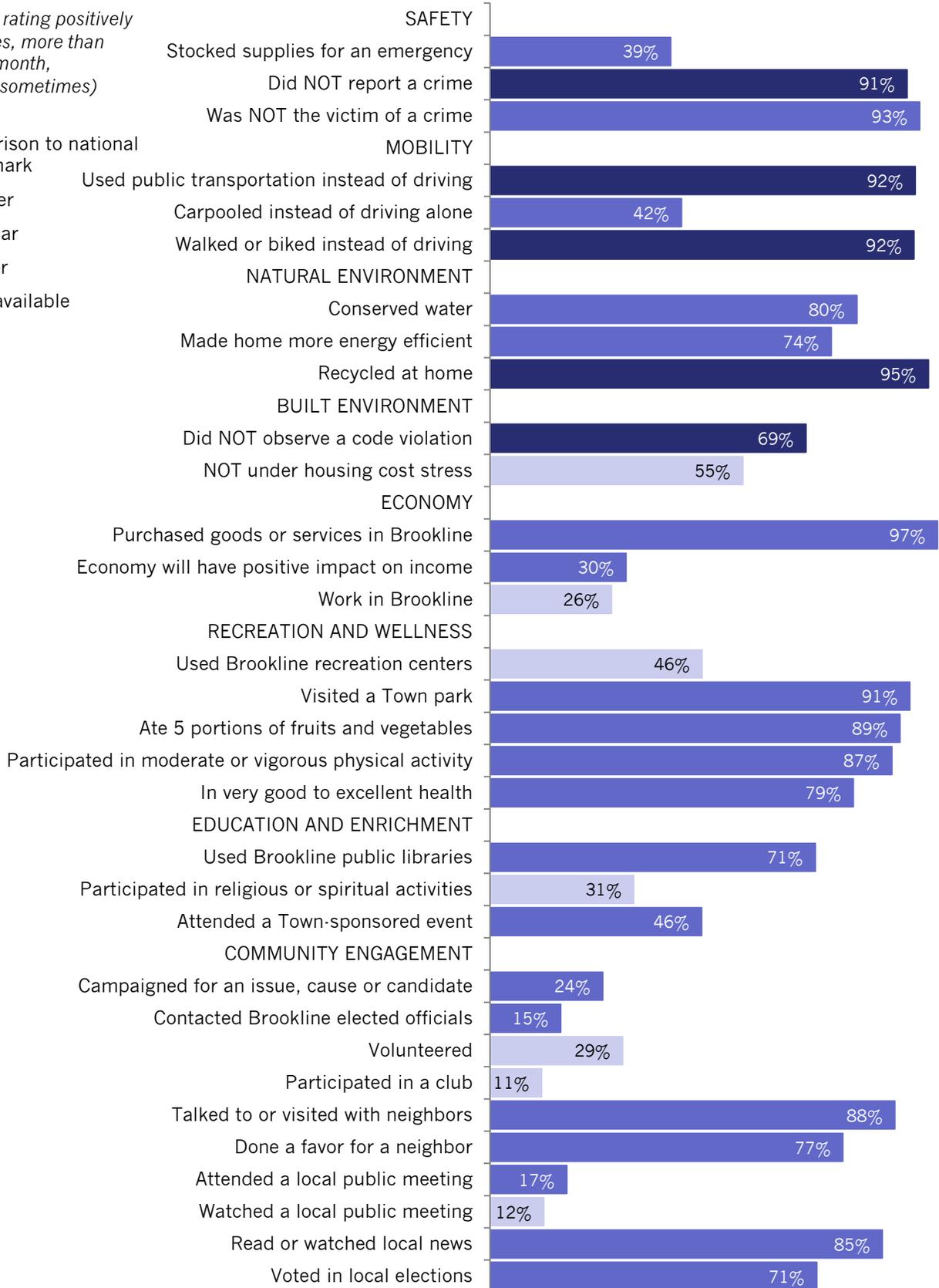


Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available

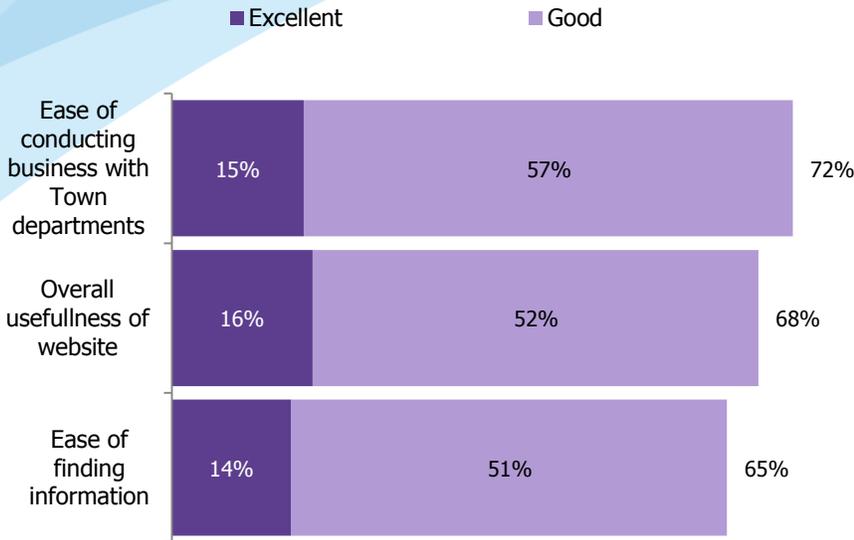


Special Topics

The Town of Brookline included several questions of special interest on The NCS. In the first question of special interest, at least two-thirds of respondents gave positive ratings to different aspects of the Town of Brookline website.

Figure 4: Custom Question 1

Please rate the quality of the following aspects of the Town of Brookline website (www.brooklineMA.gov):



When asked about sources of information about Brookline, a majority of respondents selected US mail, local newspapers, the Town website and radio/television as a “major” or “minor source.” Most respondents did not consider mobile apps, social media or Town email notifications to be a “major” or “minor source” of information about Brookline.

Figure 5: Custom Question 2

Please indicate how much of a source, if at all, each of the following is for you to get information about Town events, projects or issues:

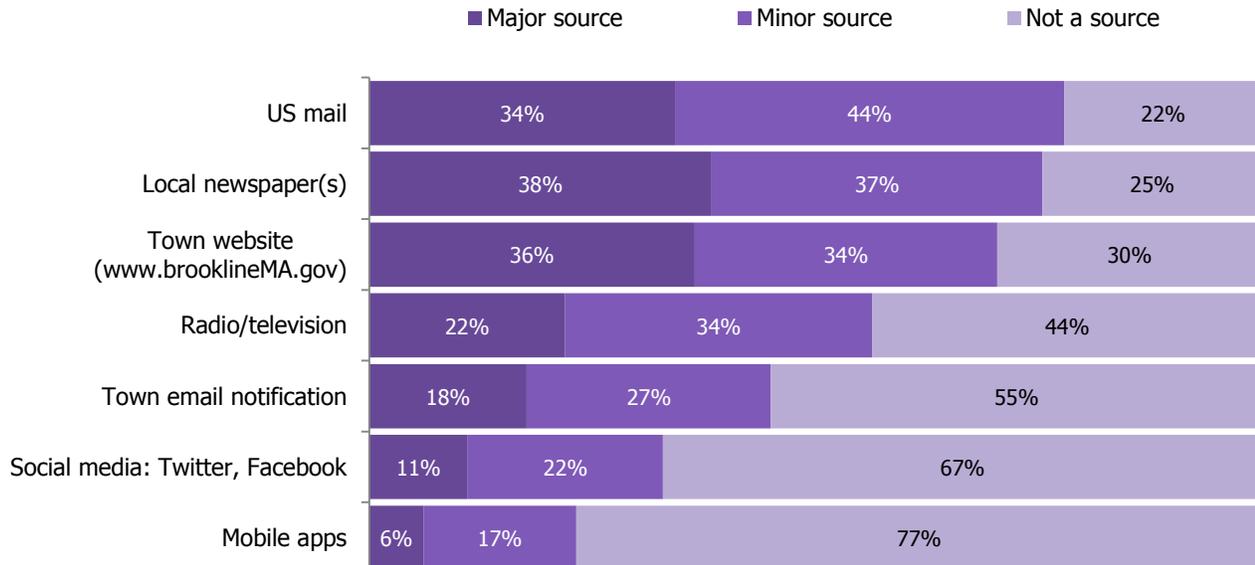


Figure 6: Custom Question 3
Which best describes your housing?

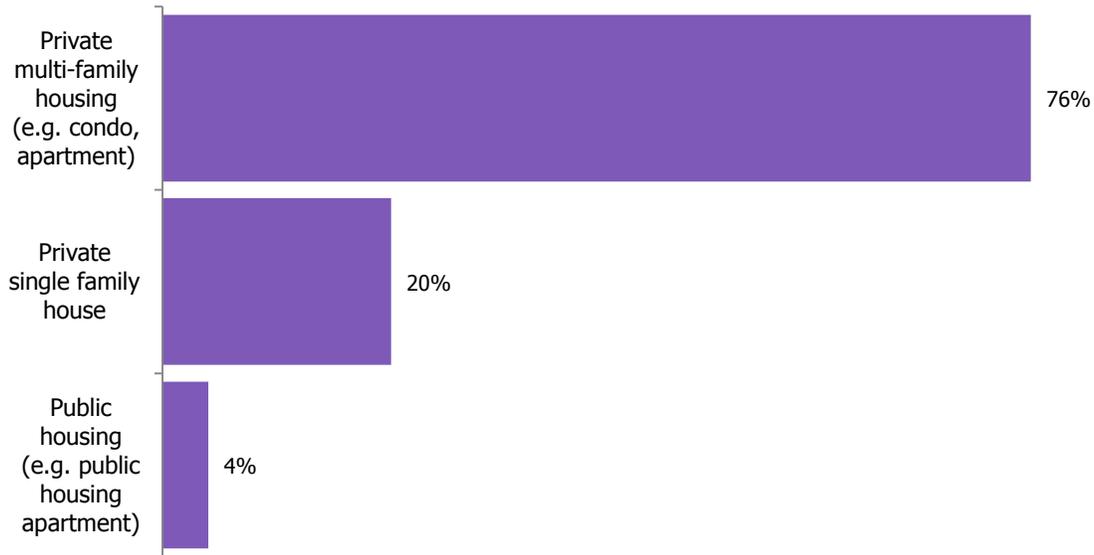


Figure 7: Custom Question 4
Do you have health insurance?

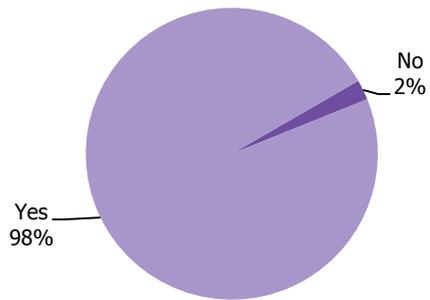


Figure 8: Custom Question 5
What is your sexual orientation?

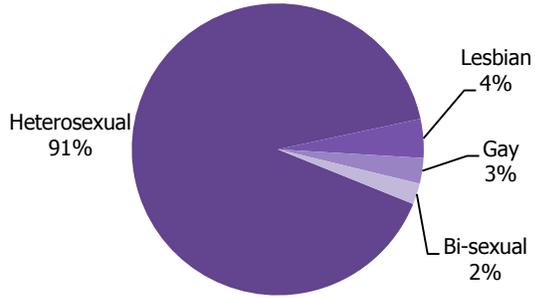
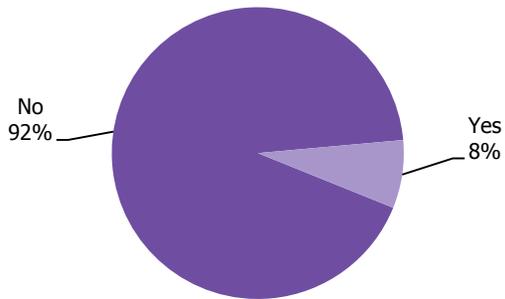


Figure 9: Custom Question 6
Does any member of your household have a physical handicap or is anyone disabled?



Conclusions

Brookline residents enjoy an exceptionally high quality of life.

Almost all residents rate their overall quality of life as “excellent” or “good” and would be “very” or “somewhat” likely to recommend Brookline as a place to live to someone who asks. Brookline’s overall appearance and overall image along with the Town and neighborhoods as a place to live and to raise children received favorable ratings by at least 9 in 10 residents. Most of the aspects that aid in community livability were rated positively and were similar to or higher than national benchmark comparisons.

Safety, an important facet to maintaining residents overall quality of life, received high ratings.

Safety was identified by residents as one of the most important facets for Brookline to focus on in the coming two years. Nearly all survey respondents felt aspects of Safety within Community Characteristics were “excellent” or “good.” Safety services were rated favorably by at least 8 in 10 respondents with many ratings higher than other communities in the U.S. When asked to rate their overall feeling of safety in Brookline, 97% of residents gave ratings of “excellent” or “good.”

Brookline’s Economy is a strong community feature.

Economy was also identified as one of the facets most important for the Brookline community to focus on in the coming two years. At least 8 in 10 respondents rated overall economic health, the vibrancy of downtown/commercial areas, businesses and services in Brookline and Brookline as a place to work highly. Economic development services were above the benchmark, as were shopping opportunities and employment opportunities.

The Natural Environment is appreciated by residents.

Participants gave high ratings for Brookline’s overall natural environment, with 91% rating it as “excellent” or “good,” a rating that was higher than the benchmark. At least 8 in 10 respondents also gave high ratings to air quality and the cleanliness of Brookline. When asked about government services related to Natural Environment, more than three-quarters of respondents gave these services positive ratings. Ratings for drinking water and natural area preservation were both above the benchmark. Almost all participants recycled at home (95%), a rating that was above the benchmark.