



THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Nevada County, CA

Community Livability Report

2017



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

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About

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

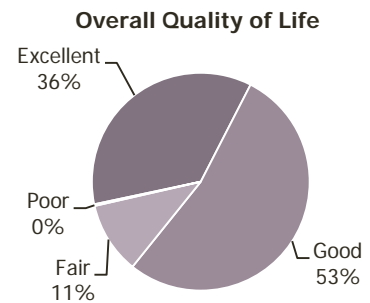
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 545 residents of the County of Nevada County. 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 Nevada County

Most residents (89%) rated the quality of life in Nevada County as excellent or good. This rating was similar to ratings 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.

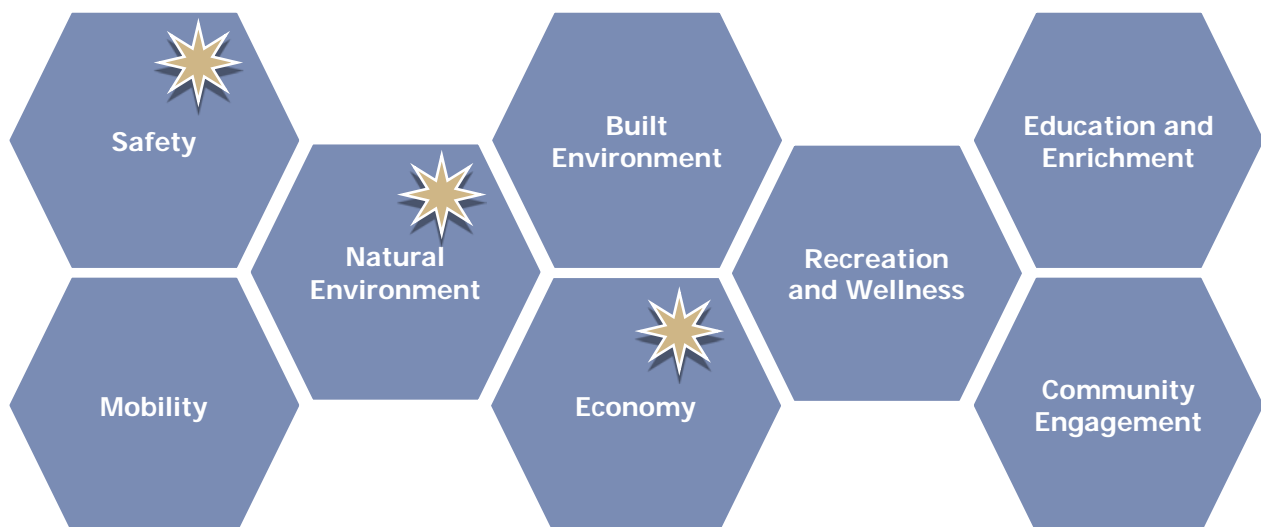
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety, Natural Environment and Economy as priorities for the Nevada County community in the coming two years; average ratings for each of these facets were similar when compared to the national benchmark 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 Nevada County’s unique questions.

Legend

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

- * Most important



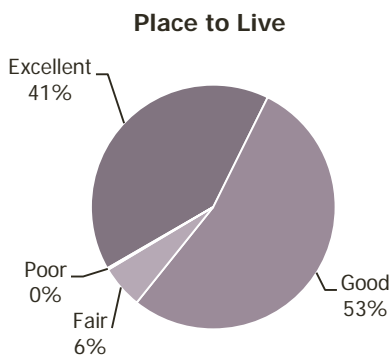
Community Characteristics

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 Nevada County, 94% rated the County as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' evaluations of Nevada 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 assessed several aspects of community quality including Nevada County as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live and the overall image or reputation of Nevada County. About 8 in 10 residents or more gave positive ratings to all of these aspects of community quality; evaluations for the County as a place to retire were particularly strong and higher than the national benchmark.

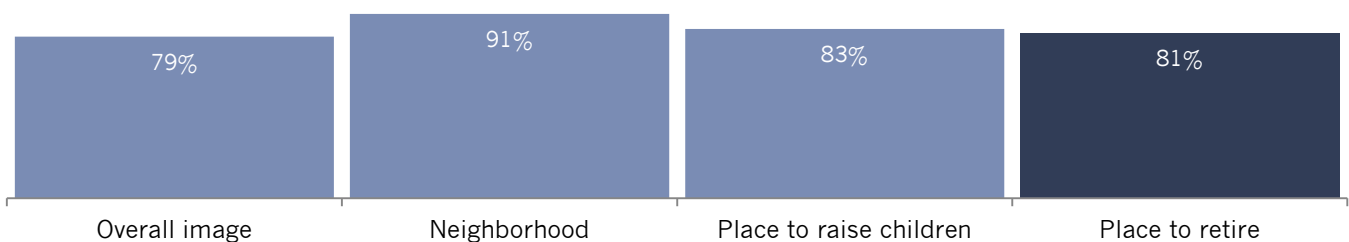
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Generally, most evaluations were similar to or higher than the benchmark. Ratings of Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement were particularly strong. Economy evaluations revealed a higher-than-average rating for the County as a place to visit, but some challenges around employment opportunities and Nevada County as a place to work. Although many aspects of Mobility were similar to the benchmark, ease of travel by bicycle and travel by public transportation were lower. Additionally, Nevada County residents gave less positive reviews to affordable quality housing and variety of housing options compared to those observed elsewhere.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



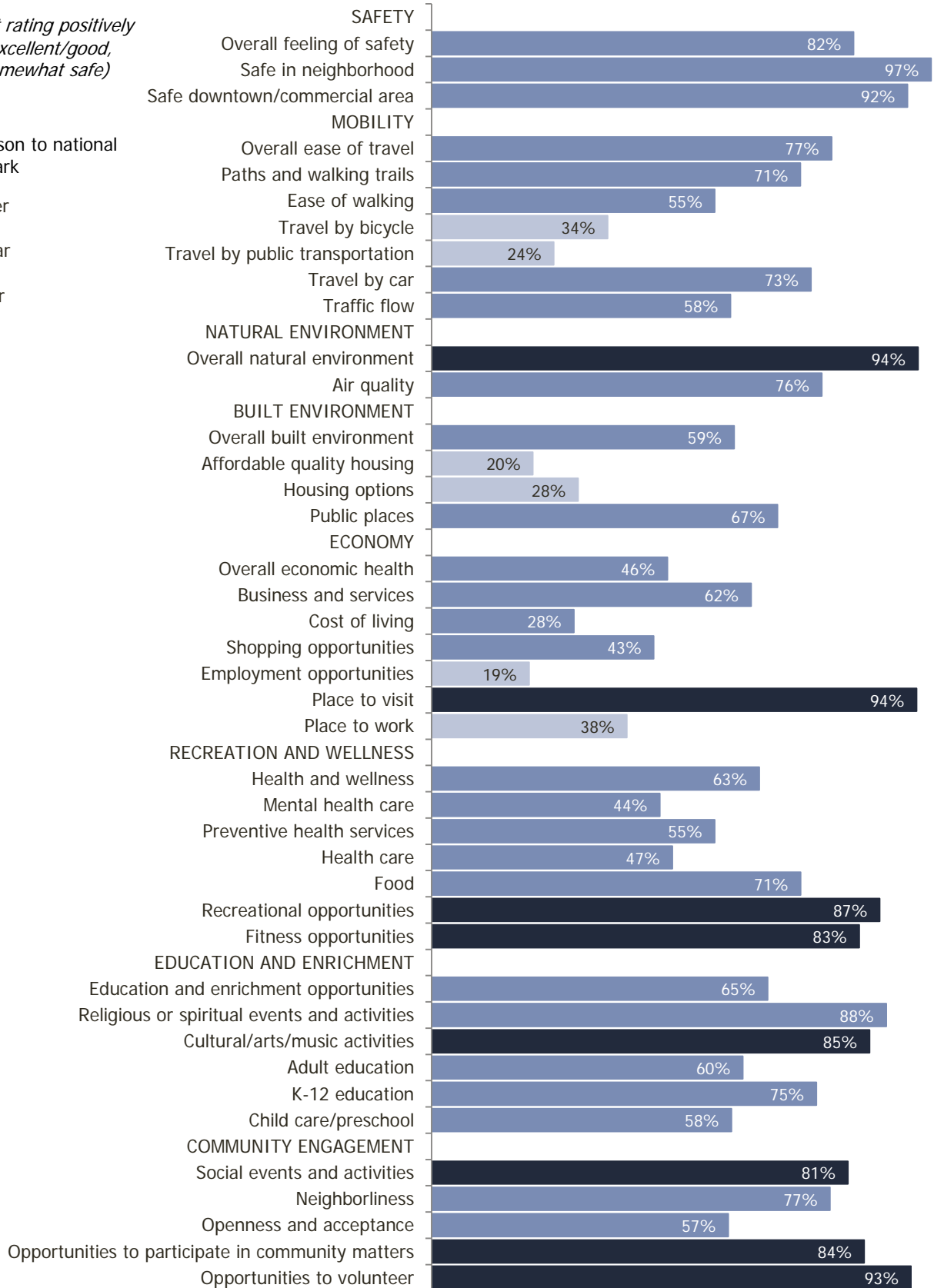
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

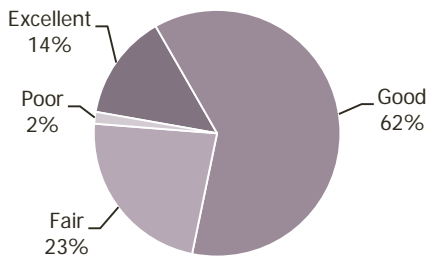
How well does the government of Nevada County meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Nevada 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 three-quarters of survey respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of County services; this was similar to evaluations given in other communities across the nation.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Nevada County’s leadership and governance. About three-quarters of residents were pleased with the customer service provided by the County and roughly half of residents gave excellent or good marks to the remaining aspects of Nevada County government performance. All aspects were similar to the national comparison.

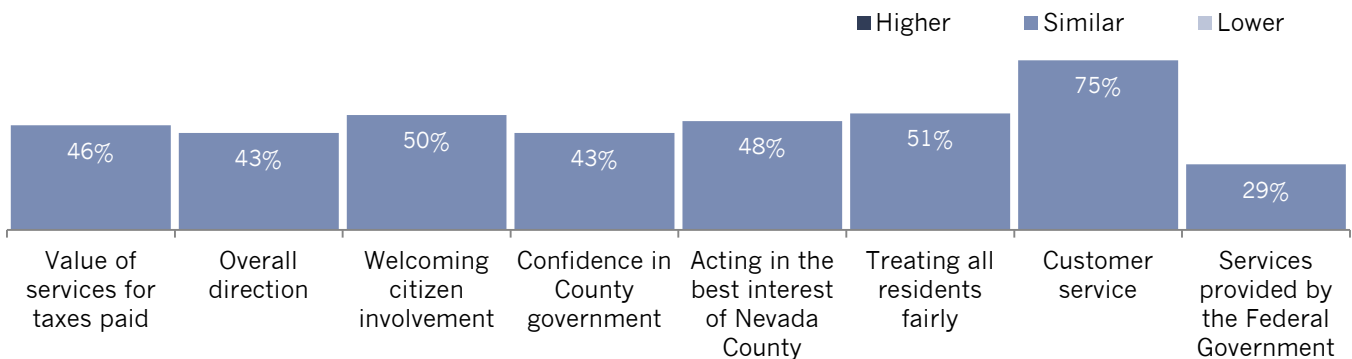
Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Nevada County. While ratings tended to vary across the different facets of community livability, almost all services received ratings similar to the national comparison. Evaluations were particularly strong for Sheriff services, fire prevention, garbage collection and public libraries. Only one County service, street repair, received ratings lower than the benchmark.

Overall Quality of County Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark



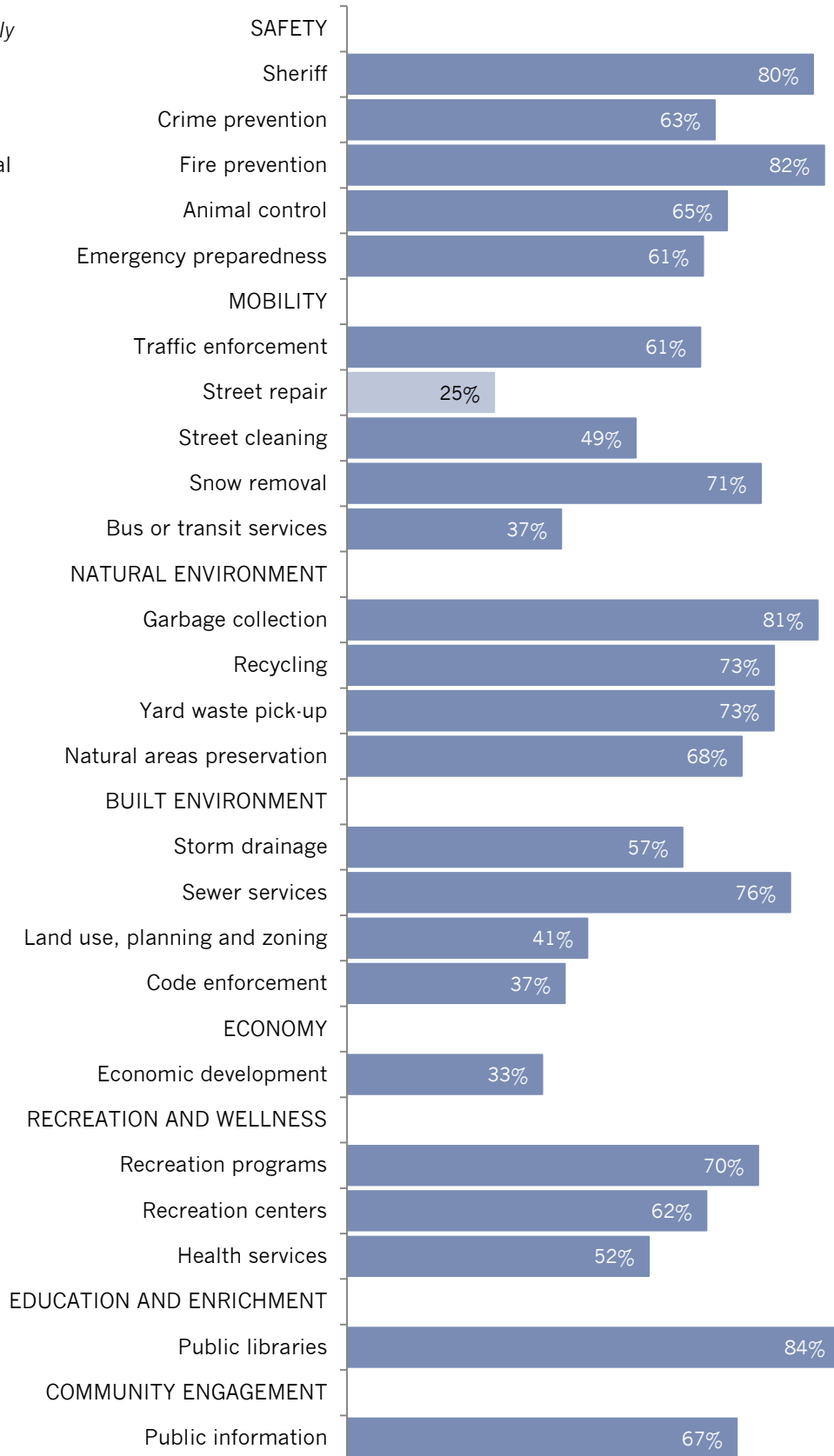
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Participation

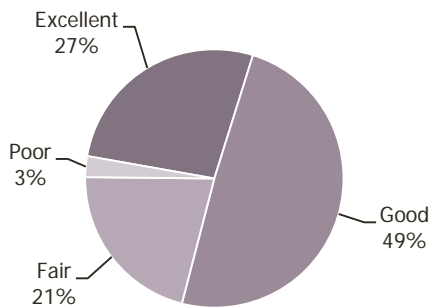
Are the residents of Nevada County connected to the community and each other?

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. About three-quarters of Nevada County residents gave positive marks to the sense of community, which was similar to the national comparison. Almost all residents planned to remain in the County for the next five years (a rate higher than the benchmark) or would recommend living in the County to someone who asked (similar to the benchmark). About 4 in 10 residents had contacted Nevada County in the 12 months prior to the survey, which was similar to contact rates seen 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. Participation rates varied widely across the different facets, making the benchmark comparison helpful for understanding the results.

Overall, residents of Nevada County participated in most activities at rates similar to or higher than those found in other communities across the country. Within Safety, at least 8 in 10 residents had not reported a crime or been the victim of a crime in the 12 months prior to the survey (on par with the rest of the country) and about half of respondents had stocked supplies for an emergency (higher than the rest of the country). Nevada County residents were more likely than residents in other communities to have participated in activities related to the Natural Environment or Community Engagement. Survey respondents had rates of participation similar to those of other communities in the areas of Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment.

Sense of Community



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

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



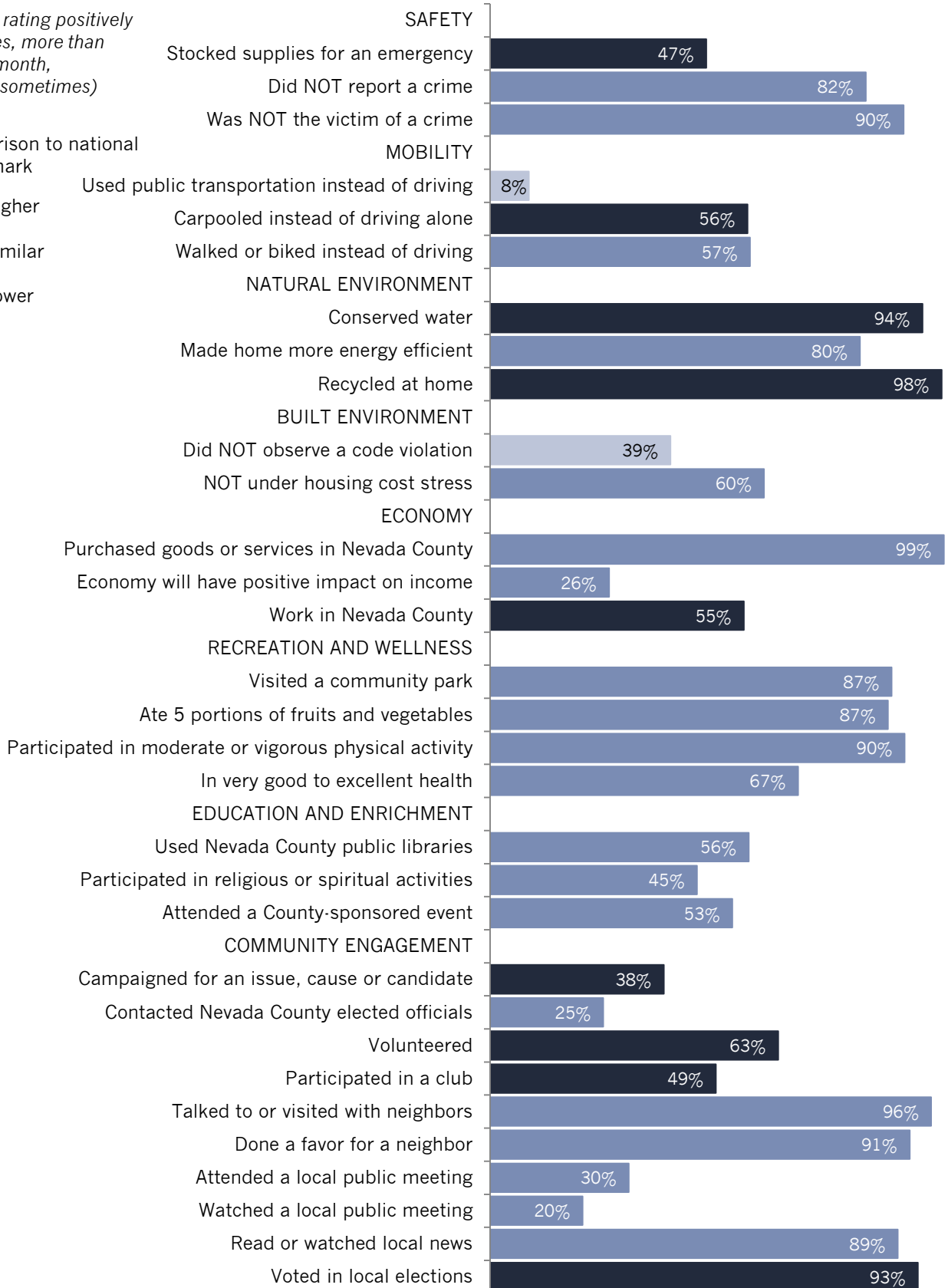
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



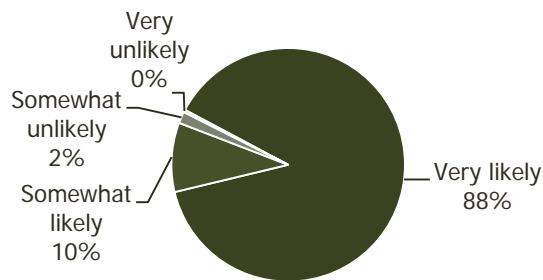
Special Topics

Nevada County included 16 questions of special interest on The NCS as well as several line item additions to some of the standard question sets. Topics included potential sales of cannabis in the County, fire safety, homelessness, Internet access, the Nevada County airport and income/job satisfaction.

In addition to asking residents how likely they were to remain in the county for the next five years, they also were asked about their likelihood of remaining for the next 12 months. Most residents (88%) indicated that they were very likely to remain in Nevada County for the next 12 months and another 1 in 10 were somewhat likely.

Figure 4: Line Item Addition to Question 3

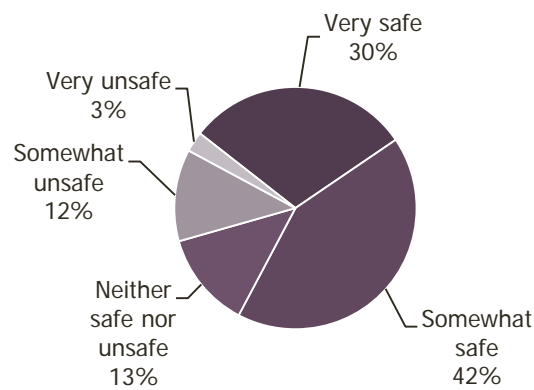
Please indicate how likely or unlikely you are to remain in Nevada County for the next 12 months:



While about 9 in 10 residents felt very or somewhat safe in Nevada County's downtown/commercial areas during the day (see Figure 1 on page 4), about three-quarters of survey respondents felt very or somewhat safe at night. About 1 in 10 felt neither safe nor unsafe and less than 2 in 10 felt unsafe.

Figure 5: Line Item Addition to Question 4

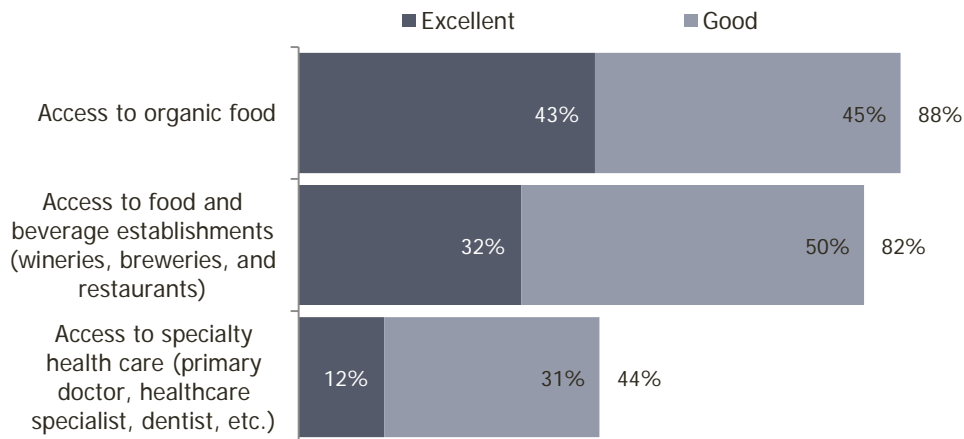
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel in Nevada County's downtown/commercial areas at night:



Roughly 8 in 10 respondents rated their access to organic food and access to food and beverage establishments as excellent or good. However, less than half positively evaluated their access to specialty health care.

Figure 6: Line Item Additions to Questions 5 and 6

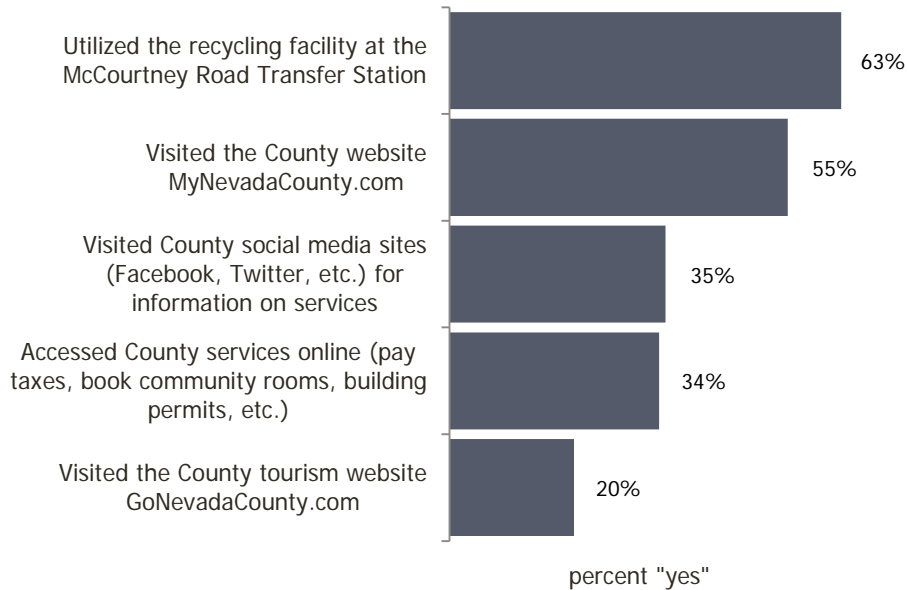
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Nevada County as a whole:



About two-thirds of residents had utilized the McCourtney Road Transfer Station recycling facility in the 12 months prior to the survey and about half had visited the County website. One-third had visited County social media sites or accessed County services online; only 2 in 10 had visited the County tourism website.

Figure 7: Line Item Additions to Question 7

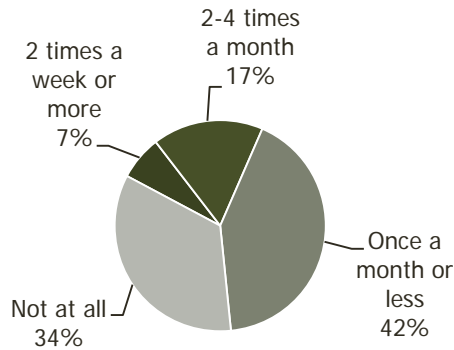
In the last 12 months, about how many times, if at all, have you or other household members done each of the following in Nevada County?



Two-thirds of residents had utilized a recycling center other than the transfer station for hard-to-recycle items at least once in the 12 months prior to the survey, while about one-third had not.

Figure 8: Line Item Addition to Question 8

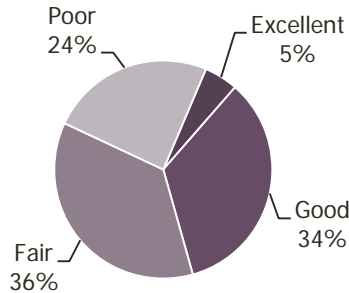
In the last 12 months, about how many times, if at all, have you or other household members utilized a recycling facility other than the transfer station to recycle: batteries, light bulbs, commingle [paper/plastic], mattresses, beverage containers, etc.?



Nevada County residents gave mixed reviews of the State Government, with 4 in 10 saying it was excellent or good and about one-third saying it was fair. One-quarter gave it a poor assessment.

Figure 9: Line Item Addition to Question 11

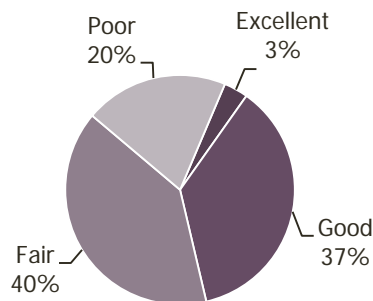
Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by the State Government?



When asked about the transparency of Nevada County government, 4 in 10 residents felt it was excellent or good, another 4 in 10 rated it as fair and 2 in 10 thought it was poor.

Figure 10: Line Item Addition to Question 11

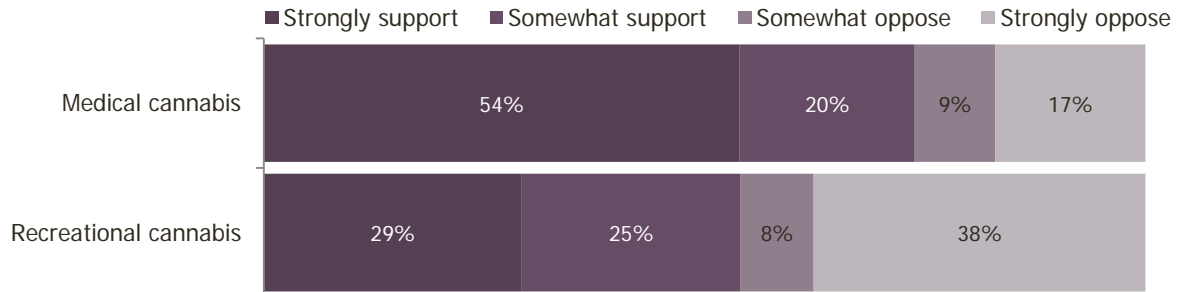
Please rate the following categories of Nevada County government performance - being transparent:



Residents also were asked to indicate their level of support for retail sales of cannabis in the County. About three-quarters of residents supported retail sales of medical cannabis, with half voicing strong support of this measure. However, while only half of respondents supported recreational cannabis, nearly 4 in 10 strongly opposed it.

Figure 11: Level of Support for Retail Sales of Cannabis

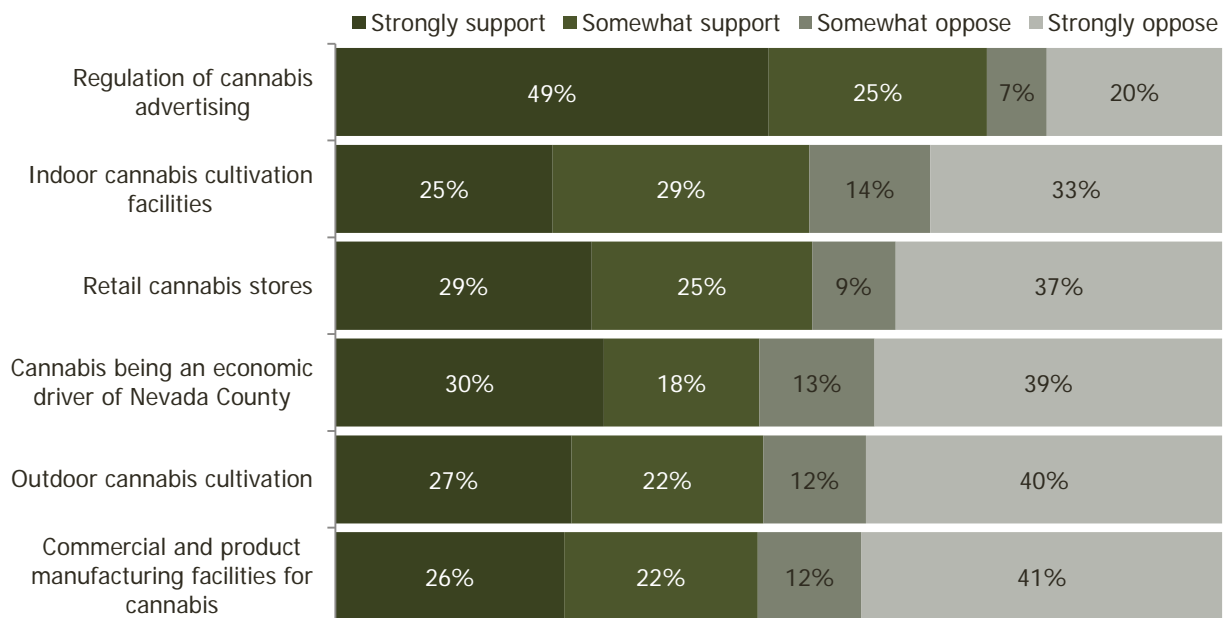
To what extent do you support or oppose each of the following types of retail sales of cannabis in Nevada County?



When asked about their level of support for future aspects of cannabis cultivation and sales in the County, residents were most supportive of the regulation of cannabis advertising (49% strongly supported and 25% somewhat supported). A slim majority strongly or somewhat supported indoor cannabis cultivation facilities and retail cannabis stores; however, it is noteworthy that about one-third of residents strongly opposed each of these options. Slightly less than half of residents supported cannabis being an economic driver of the County, outdoor cannabis cultivation or commercial and product manufacturing facilities for cannabis; 4 in 10 strongly opposed each of these ideas.

Figure 12: Level of Support for Future Presence of Cannabis

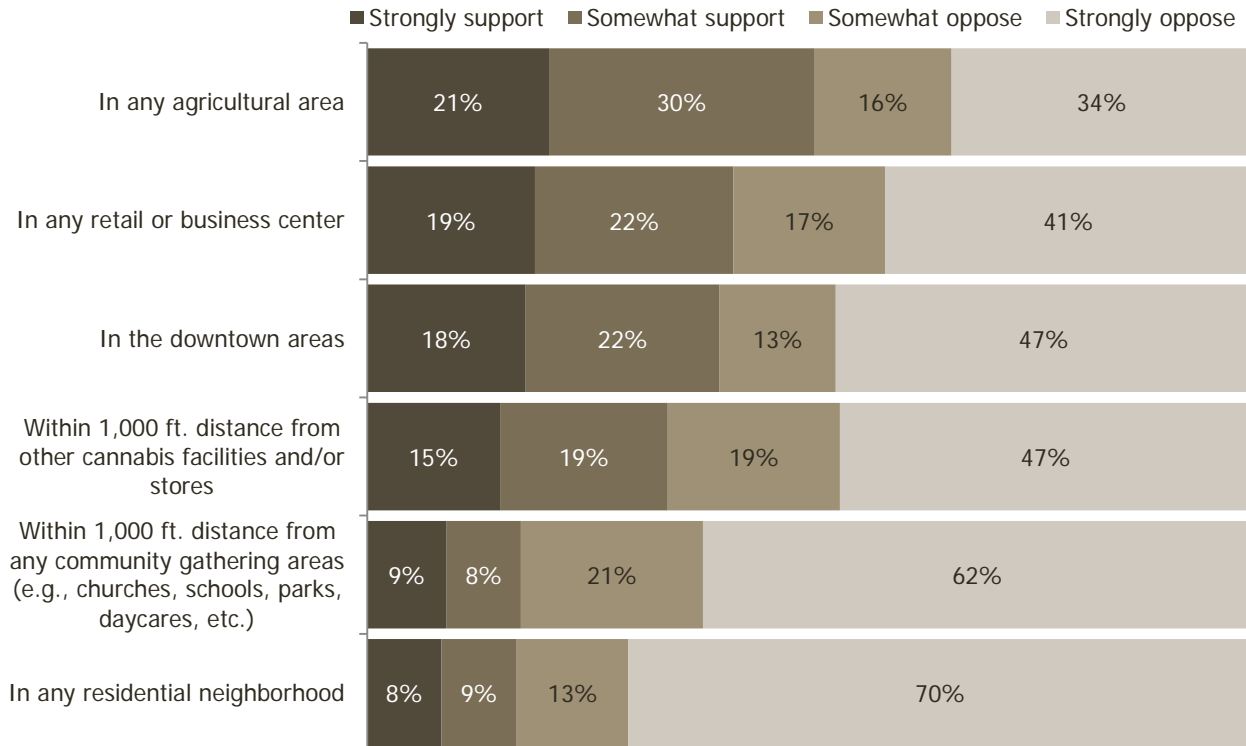
To what extent would you support or oppose each of the following in the future in Nevada County?



Respondents were also asked about their level of support for or opposition to specific potential locations of retail cannabis facilities in Nevada County. Overall, at least half of residents were opposed to each potential location of retail cannabis facilities in the County. Residents were most supportive of retail cannabis facilities located in agricultural areas (51%), although about one-third of residents were strongly opposed to this location. Residents were least supportive of the facilities being located within 1,000 feet of community gathering areas or residential neighborhoods, with roughly 7 in 10 strongly opposing this location.

Figure 13: Level of Support for Locations of Retail Cannabis Facilities

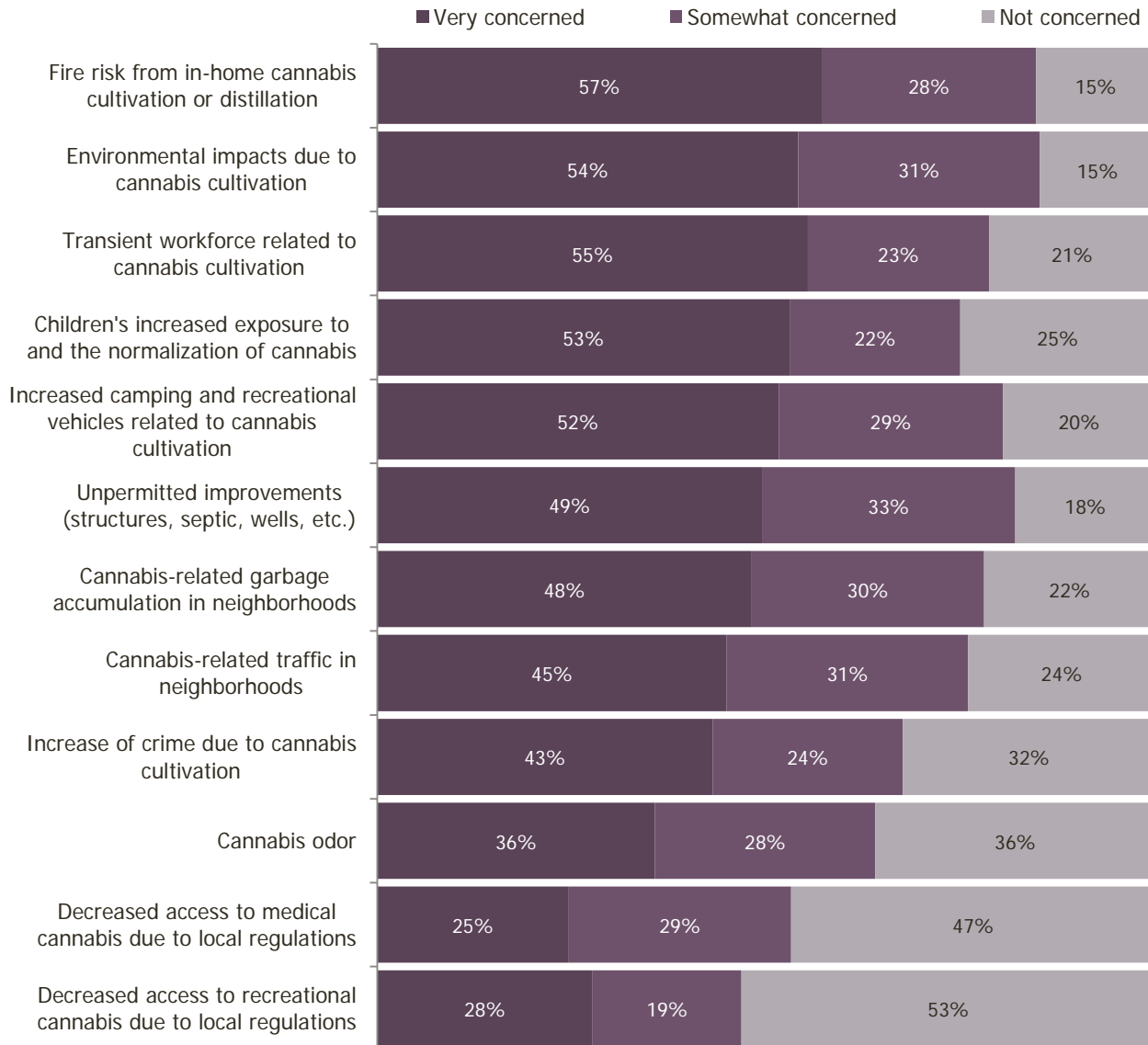
To what extent do you support or oppose the following locations for retail cannabis facilities within Nevada County?



When asked to indicate their level of concern with aspects of cannabis in the County, about half of respondents were very concerned with 7 of the 12 listed aspects, including fire risk, environmental impacts, transient workforce and children’s increased exposure to and normalization of cannabis. Residents were least concerned with decreased access to medical or recreation cannabis due to local regulations.

Figure 14: Level of Concern with Aspects of Cannabis

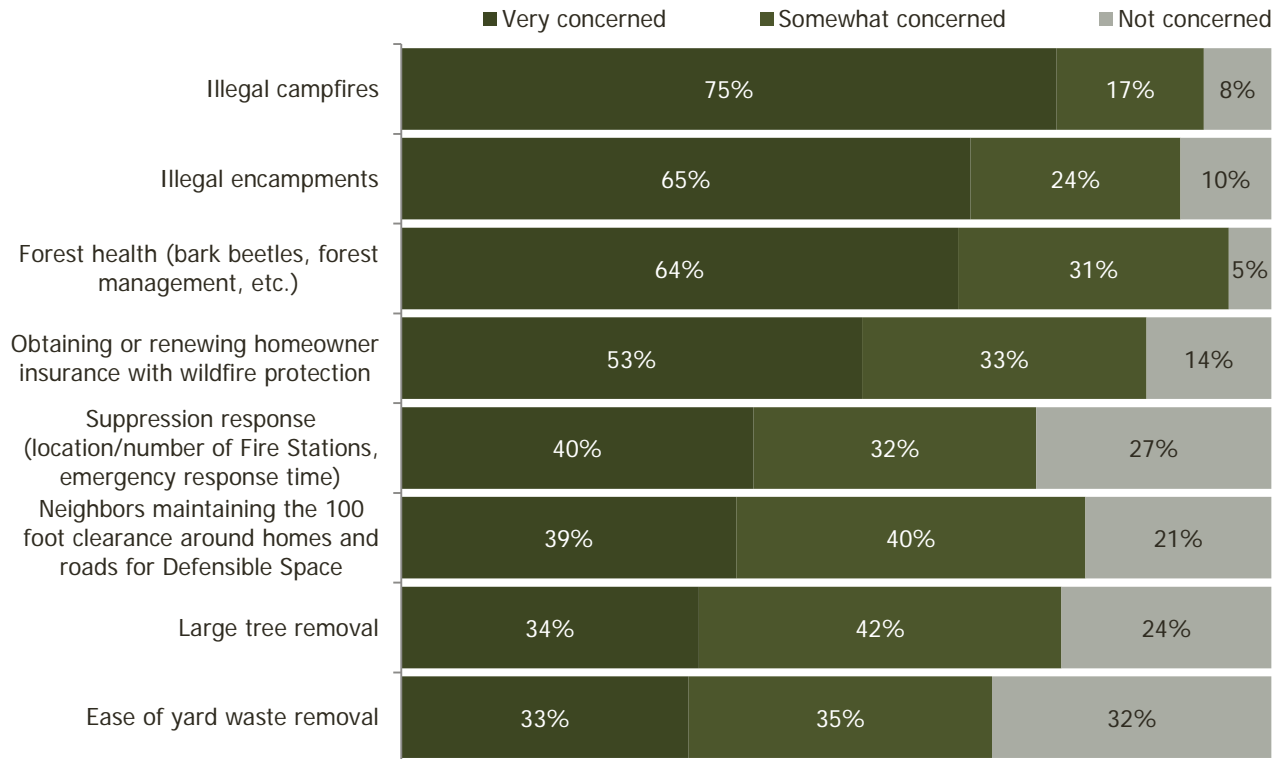
To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about each of the following aspects of cannabis in Nevada County?



When thinking about issues related to fire danger in their neighborhood, at least 6 in 10 residents were very or somewhat concerned with all the items listed. Residents were most likely to feel very concerned about illegal campfires (75%). About two-thirds were very concerned with illegal encampments and forest health and about half were very concerned with obtaining or renewing homeowner insurance with wildfire protection.

Figure 15: Level of Concern with Fire Danger

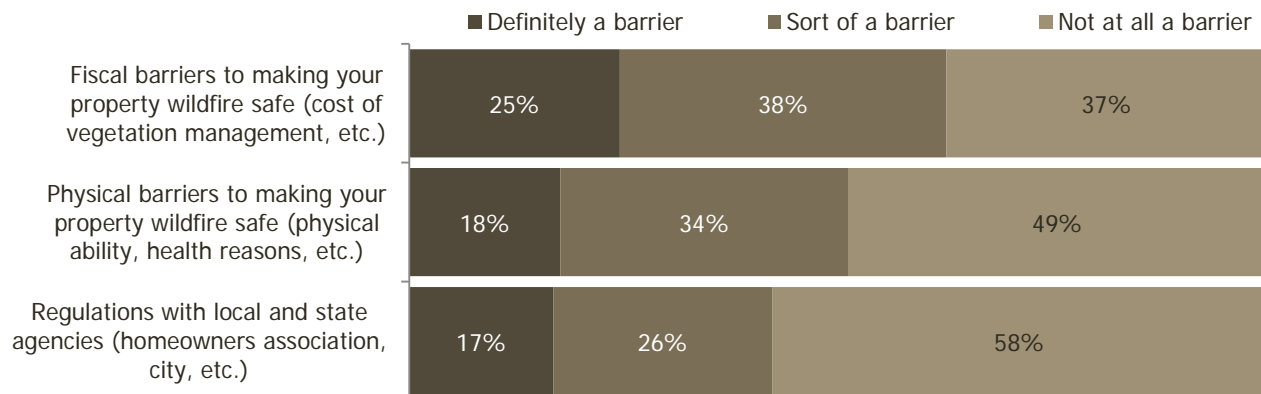
Regarding issues related to fire danger in your neighborhood, please rate how concerned, if at all, you are with each of the following:



When residents were asked about barriers to wildfire safety on their property, about one-quarter felt that fiscal barriers to making their property wildfire safety were definitely a barrier and another 4 in 10 felt they were sort of a barrier. Respondents were less likely to indicate that physical barriers or regulations with local and state agencies were obstacles for wildfire safety.

Figure 16: Barriers to Wildfire Safety

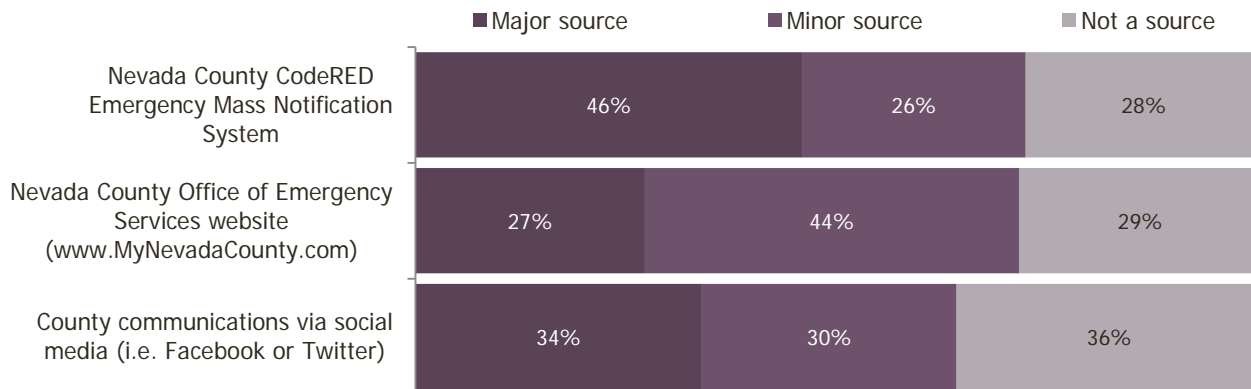
To what degree, if at all, do the following barriers exist for wildfire safety on your property?



Residents considered three County information sources and were asked to indicate how much of a source they felt each one was during emergencies. Nearly half of residents considered the Nevada County CodeRED notification system to be a major source of information during emergencies, and another one-quarter considered it a minor source. About 7 in 10 residents considered the County Office of Emergency Services website to be a major or minor source while about two-thirds used County communications on social media as an information source during emergencies.

Figure 17: Sources of Information during Emergencies

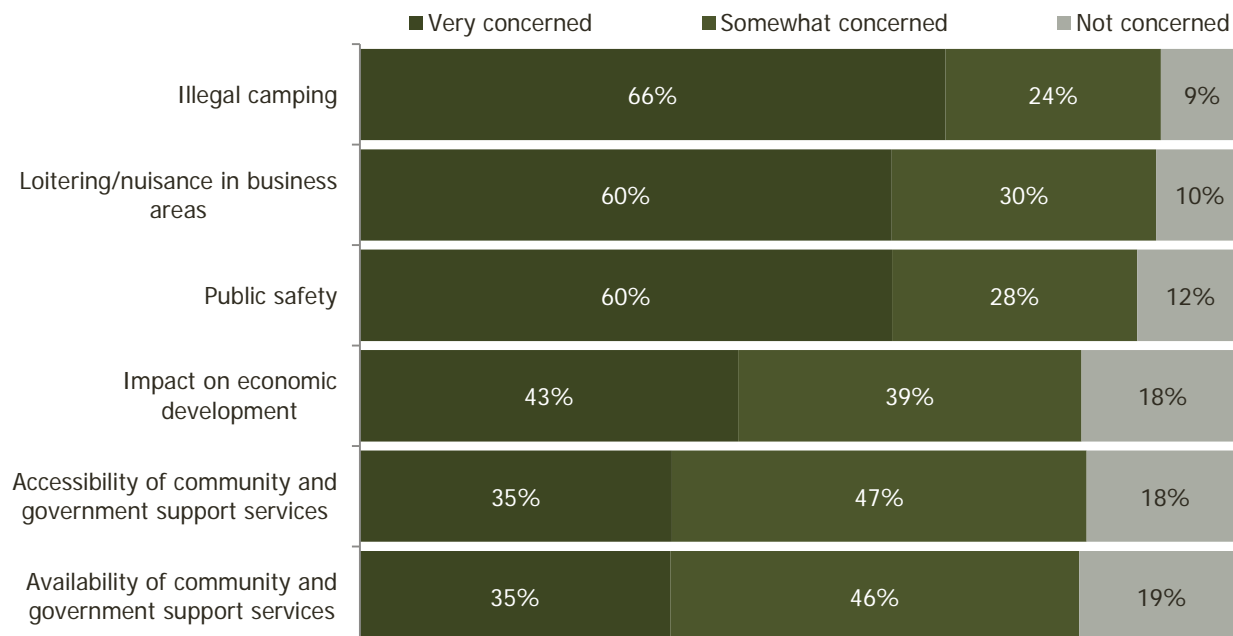
How much of a source, if any, do you consider each of the following for obtaining information during an emergency?



When thinking about their level of concern related to aspects of homelessness in Nevada County, at least 6 in 10 residents felt very concerned about illegal camping, loitering/nuisance in business areas and public safety. Less than half of respondents were very concerned about the impact on economic development, accessibility or availability of community and government support services, although roughly 4 in 10 residents indicated that they were somewhat concerned with these aspects.

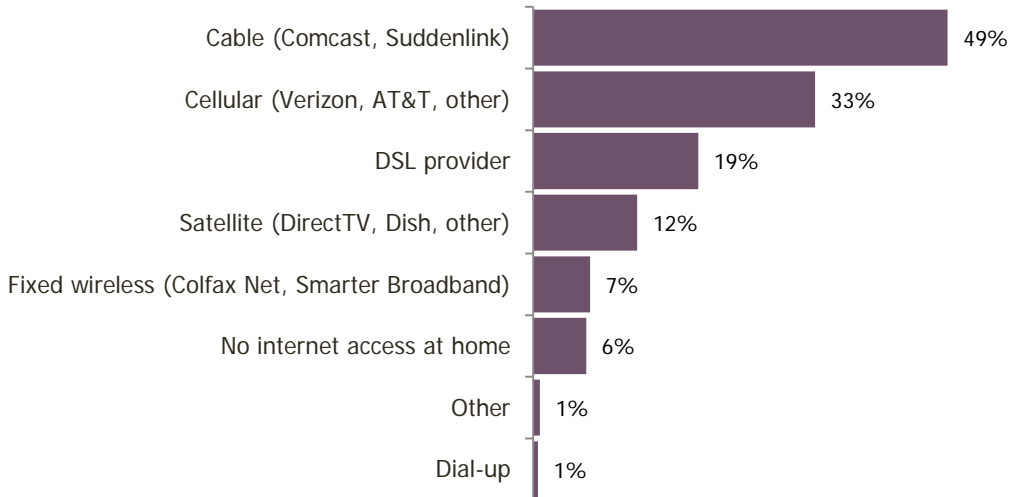
Figure 18: Level of Concern with Aspects of Homelessness

To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about each of the following aspects of homelessness in Nevada County?



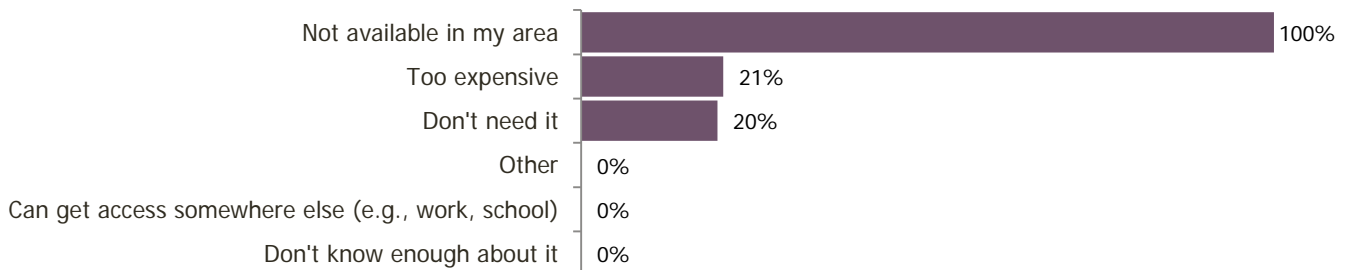
Residents were also asked about Internet service and broadband. About half of residents had a home Internet connection via cable, about one-third connected via cellular and another 2 in 10 had a DSL connection. Roughly 1 in 10 connected to the Internet using satellite or fixed wireless, and only 1% reported using a dial-up connection. Slightly more than half of residents rated their current broadband availability as excellent or good, about 3 in 10 felt it was fair and about 2 in 10 rated it as poor (see Figure 21 below).

Figure 19: Type of Internet Connection
How do you connect to the Internet at home? (Mark all that apply.)



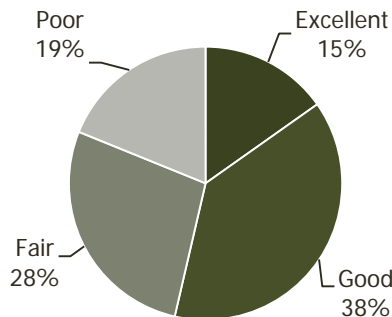
Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

Figure 20: Reasons for Not Having High-Speed Internet
[IF YOU HAVE DIAL-UP INTERNET] What is preventing you from getting high-speed service (e.g., broadband, DSL)? (Mark all that apply.)



Asked only of the 1% of all respondents who indicated that they had dial-up Internet. Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

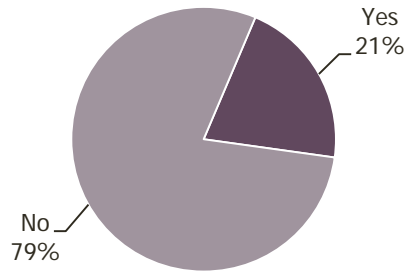
Figure 21: Quality of Current Broadband Availability
Please rate the quality of your current broadband availability:



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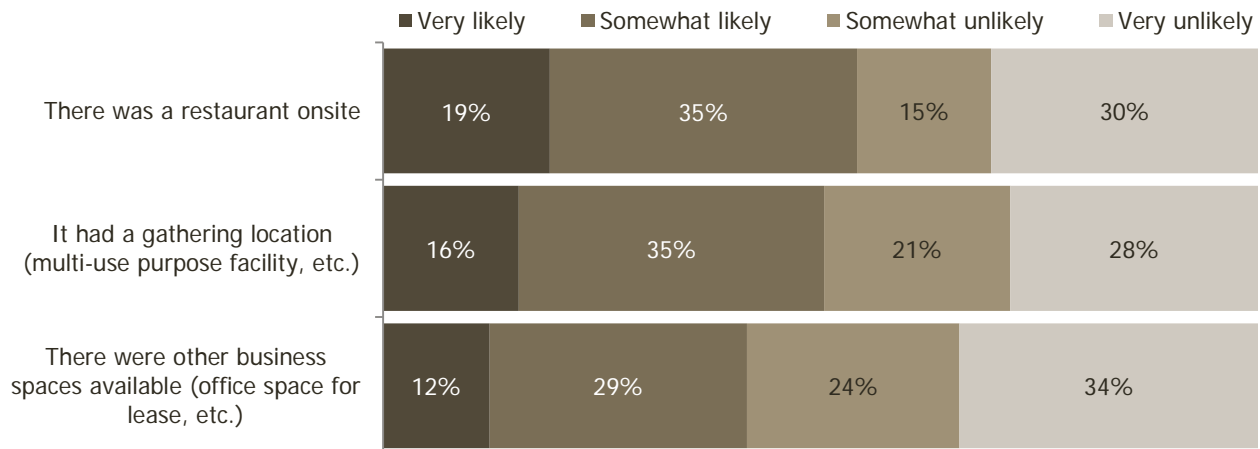
A series of questions asked residents about aspects of the Nevada County Airport. About 2 in 10 residents indicated that they had not visited the airport in the 12 months prior to the survey, while about 8 in 10 had not.

Figure 22: Visits to Nevada County Airport
Have you visited the Nevada County Airport for any reason in the last 12 months?



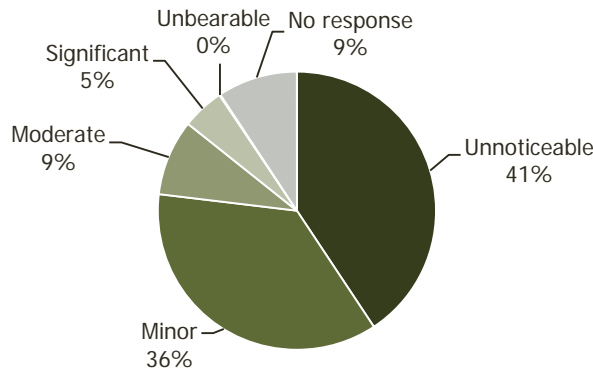
When asked about their likelihood of visiting the airport if additional amenities were offered, about half of residents indicated they would be likely to visit if there were a restaurant or a gathering location on-site. Slightly fewer said that they would be likely to visit if there were other business spaces available.

Figure 23: Likelihood of Visiting Airport
How likely or unlikely would you be to visit the Nevada County Airport if:



Most survey respondents felt that the aircraft noise originating from the airport was unnoticeable or minor; about 1 in 10 thought it was moderate and even fewer felt it was significant. No one rated it as unbearable. It is worth noting that about 1 in 10 respondents did not provide a response to this question.

Figure 24: Impression of Airport Noise
What is your impression of the noise generated by the aircraft at the Nevada County Airport?



The final set of special-interest questions related to resident income and levels of employment. About two-thirds of residents felt that their household income comfortably supported their household, and about one-third indicated that their household struggled to get by on their income.

Figure 25: Adequacy of Household Income

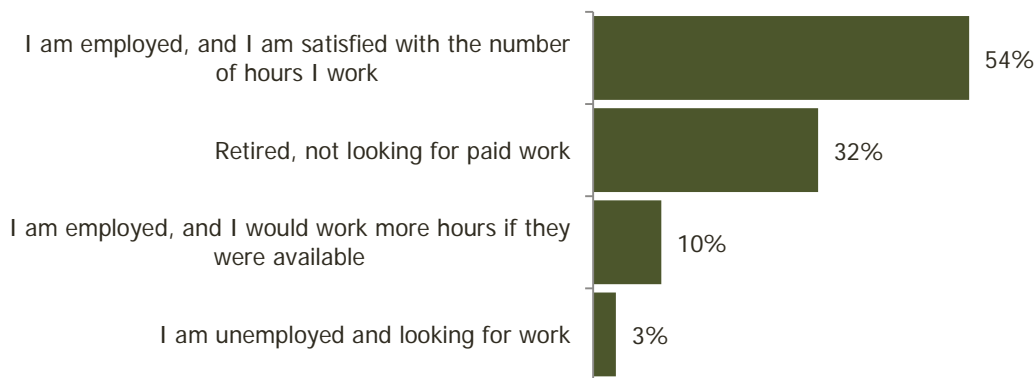
From each set of statements below, please select the one you lean toward more:



When asked about employment, a majority indicated that they were both employed and satisfied with the number of hours they worked. About one-third of respondents were retired, and about 1 in 10 were employed and would work more hours if available. Few respondents were unemployed and looking for paid work.

Figure 26: Satisfaction with Number of Hours Worked

From each set of statements below, please select the one you lean toward more:

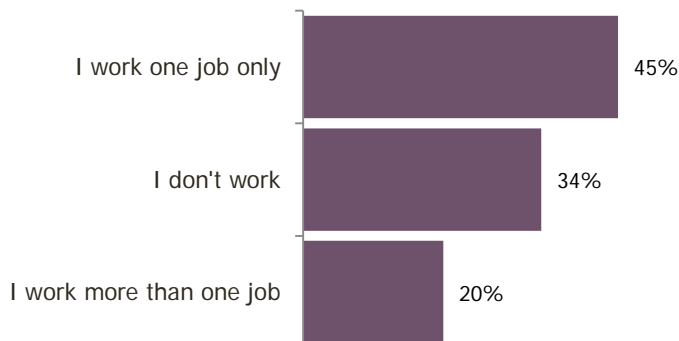


"Retired, not looking for paid work" was not included on the survey as a response option for this question. It was created using question D4 to help identify respondents who were actually unemployed versus those who were retired or not looking for paid work. Additionally, respondents who skipped the question entirely but indicated that they were "unemployed, not looking for work" or "retired" in question D4 were added to this new response category.

Residents were also asked about the number of jobs they worked. The largest proportion (45%) worked one job, about one-third did not work and about 2 in 10 worked more than one job.

Figure 27: Number of Jobs Worked

Please choose the statement that best describes you:



Conclusions

Nevada County residents feel positively about the community and are engaged.

Most residents evaluated their quality of life in Nevada County favorably and thought the County was an excellent or good place to live. At least 8 in 10 residents gave positive reviews to the County as a place to retire and indicated that they were likely to remain in the county for the next five years, ratings that were both higher than the national benchmark. Most respondents positively evaluated the County's overall image and would recommend living in the County to others.

Residents thought highly of the overall natural environment, which was one of the three most important community focus areas identified by residents. Given the importance of the natural environment to residents and its high quality ratings, it makes sense that Nevada County residents conserve water and recycle at home at rates higher than those in other communities across the nation.

A majority of residents also gave favorable marks to recreation and fitness opportunities, cultural and arts activities, social events, opportunities to participate in community matters and to volunteer. Each of these characteristics were given ratings that were higher in Nevada County than those given in other communities across the nation.

Residents value the Economy but identified some challenges.

Survey respondents indicated that Economy was an important priority for the County to focus on the coming years. Ratings for the County as a place to visit were higher than those given in other communities, but residents gave lower-than-average assessments to employment opportunities and Nevada County as a place to work compared to the U.S. averages.

In a series of questions related to resident income and levels of employment, about two-thirds of residents felt that their household income comfortably supported their household, and about one-third indicated that their household struggled to get by on their income. About 1 in 10 residents indicated that they were employed, but would work more hours if available, and about 2 in 10 worked more than one job.

Although residents placed a high priority on the Economy over the next few years, they had limitations about how to bolster it. Residents were asked a series of questions related to retail sales of cannabis in the County. Generally, residents appear divided on the topic and many feel strongly opposed to cannabis in Nevada County. Respondents were more supportive of retail sales of medical cannabis (74% support) than they were of recreational cannabis (54%). While a majority of residents supported the regulation of cannabis advertising, half or less supported other aspects of cannabis cultivation and sales. When asked to indicate their level of concern with aspects of cannabis in the County, respondents were most concerned with fire risk, environmental impacts, transient workforce and children's increased exposure to and normalization of cannabis.

Survey respondents feel safe overall but have concerns about wildfires and homelessness.

Residents identified Safety as an important aspect of community livability to their quality of life and reported feeling safe in Nevada County. At least 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the overall feeling of safety in Nevada County, safety in their neighborhoods and in the County's downtown/commercial areas, as well as to Sheriff services and fire prevention. Most residents had not reported a crime or been the victim of a crime. These evaluations of safety were on par with national averages.

However, when asked about their concerns related to fire danger in their neighborhoods, 9 in 10 respondents were very or somewhat concerned with illegal campfires, illegal encampments, forest health and obtaining or renewing homeowner insurance with wildfire protection. Additionally, residents provided perspectives about various aspects of homelessness in Nevada County; public safety was identified as the third biggest concern related to homelessness (88% of respondents said they were very or somewhat concerned).