

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

## El Cerrito, CA

Dashboard Summary of Findings

2016



2955 Valmont Road Suite 300  
Boulder, Colorado 80301  
n-r-c.com • 303-444-7863



*Leaders at the Core of Better Communities*

777 North Capitol Street NE Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20002  
icma.org • 800-745-8780

# Summary

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality research methods and directly comparable results across The NCS communities. 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). This report summarizes El Cerrito’s performance in the eight facets of community livability with the “General” rating as a summary of results from the overarching questions not shown within any of the eight facets. The “Overall” represents the community pillar in its entirety (the eight facets and general).

By summarizing resident ratings across the eight facets and three pillars of a livable community, a picture of El Cerrito’s community livability emerges. Below, the color of each community facet summarizes how residents rated each of the pillars that support it – Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation. When most ratings were higher than the benchmark, the color 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.

Overall ratings for El Cerrito were strong and similar to comparison communities. Within Community Characteristics, Recreation and Wellness tended to receive lower ratings than the national benchmarks. In Participation, aspects of Mobility and Natural Environment tended to receive higher ratings while Education and Enrichment tended to receive lower ratings than in comparison jurisdictions. This information can be helpful in identifying the areas that merit more attention.

Figure 1: Dashboard Summary

	Community Characteristics			Governance			Participation		
	Higher	Similar	Lower	Higher	Similar	Lower	Higher	Similar	Lower
Overall	3	35	14	2	40	3	6	23	7
General	0	7	0	0	3	0	0	3	0
Safety	0	3	0	0	6	1	1	2	0
Mobility	3	5	0	0	7	0	2	1	0
Natural Environment	0	3	0	2	4	0	2	1	0
Built Environment	0	3	2	0	7	0	0	2	0
Economy	0	4	4	0	1	0	0	2	1
Recreation and Wellness	0	3	4	0	3	1	1	4	0
Education and Enrichment	0	3	3	0	1	1	0	0	3
Community Engagement	0	4	1	0	8	0	0	8	3

Legend	
	Higher
	Similar
	Lower

# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Detailed Dashboard

	Community Characteristics	Trend	Benchmark	Percent positive	Governance	Trend	Benchmark	Percent positive	Participation	Trend	Benchmark	Percent positive
General	Overall appearance	↔	↔	67%	Customer service	↓	↔	68%	Recommend El Cerrito	↔	↔	89%
	Overall quality of life	↔	↔	84%	Services provided by El Cerrito	↔	↔	73%	Remain in El Cerrito	↔	↔	87%
	Place to retire	↔	↔	71%	Services provided by the Federal Government	↑	↔	48%	Contacted El Cerrito employees	↔	↔	46%
	Place to raise children	↔	↔	76%								
	Place to live	↔	↔	85%								
	Neighborhood	↔	↔	85%								
Safety	Overall image	↔	↔	65%								
	Overall feeling of safety	*	↔	69%	Police	↔	↔	80%	Was NOT the victim of a crime	↓	↔	80%
	Safe in neighborhood	↓	↔	85%	Crime prevention	↓	↓	53%	Did NOT report a crime	*	↔	73%
	Safe commercial area	↔	↔	83%	Fire	↔	↔	89%	Stocked supplies for an emergency	*	↑↑	62%
					Fire prevention	↔	↔	70%				
					Ambulance/EMS	↔	↔	85%				
Mobility					Emergency preparedness	↔	↔	50%				
					Animal control	↔	↔	59%				
	Traffic flow	↔	↔	56%	Traffic enforcement	↔	↔	60%	Carpooled instead of driving alone	*	↔	51%
	Travel by car	↔	↔	75%	Street repair	↔	↔	57%	Walked or biked instead of driving	*	↑	77%
	Travel by bicycle	↔	↑	76%	Street cleaning	↔	↔	66%	Used public transportation instead of driving	*	↑↑	88%
	Ease of walking	↔	↔	82%	Street lighting	↔	↔	47%				
	Travel by public transportation	↓	↑	69%	Sidewalk maintenance	↔	↔	45%				
Natural Environment	Overall ease travel	*	↔	76%	Traffic signal timing	↔	↔	50%				
	Public parking	*	↑	71%	Bus or transit services	↔	↔	67%				
	Paths and walking trails	↔	↔	76%								
	Overall natural environment	↔	↔	78%	Garbage collection	↔	↔	90%	Recycled at home	↔	↑	98%
	Air quality	↑	↔	83%	Recycling	↔	↑	93%	Conserved water	*	↑	97%
	Cleanliness	↔	↔	73%	Yard waste pick-up	↔	↑	88%	Made home more energy efficient	*	↔	81%
					Drinking water	*	↔	87%				
Built Environment					Open space	*	↔	64%				
					Natural areas preservation	↔	↔	66%				
	New development in El Cerrito	↓	↓	39%	Sewer services	↑	↔	81%	NOT experiencing housing cost stress	↔	↔	64%
	Affordable quality housing	↓	↓	27%	Storm drainage	↔	↔	73%	Did NOT observe a code violation	*	↔	55%
	Housing options	↓	↔	46%	Power utility	*	↔	74%				
	Overall built environment	*	↔	55%	Utility billing	*	↔	65%				
	Public places	*	↔	51%	Land use, planning and zoning	↓	↔	45%				
				Code enforcement	↔	↔	42%					
				Cable television	↔	↔	48%					

**Legend**

↑↑ Much higher    ↑ Higher    ↔ Similar    ↓ Lower    ↓↓ Much lower    \* Not available

# The National Citizen Survey™

	Community Characteristics	Trend	Benchmark	Percent positive	Governance	Trend	Benchmark	Percent positive	Participation	Trend	Benchmark	Percent positive
Economy	Overall economic health	*	↔	56%	Economic development	↓	↔	35%	Economy will have positive impact on income	↑	↔	29%
	Shopping opportunities	↔	↔	50%					Purchased goods or services in El Cerrito	*	↔	99%
	Employment opportunities	↓	↓	15%					Work in El Cerrito	*	↓	26%
	Place to visit	*	↓	41%								
	Cost of living	*	↔	34%								
	Vibrant downtown/commercial area	*	↓	28%								
	Place to work	↔	↓	48%								
Recreation and Wellness	Business and services	↓	↔	50%								
	Fitness opportunities	*	↔	65%	City parks	↓	↔	79%	In very good to excellent health	*	↔	69%
	Recreational opportunities	↔	↔	58%	Recreation centers	↓	↔	67%	Used El Cerrito recreation centers	↑	↔	61%
	Health care	↔	↓	43%	Recreation programs	↔	↔	71%	Visited a City park	↔	↔	85%
	Food	↔	↔	64%	Health services	↑	↓	45%	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	*	↑	94%
	Mental health care	*	↓	31%					Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	*	↔	92%
	Health and wellness	*	↓	57%								
Education and Enrichment	Preventive health services	↓	↓	39%								
	K-12 education	↔	↓	48%	Public libraries	↔	↓	60%	Used El Cerrito public libraries	↔	↓	55%
	Cultural/arts/music activities	↔	↔	42%	Special events	*	↔	64%	Participated in religious or spiritual activities	↔	↓↓	19%
	Child care/preschool	↔	↔	57%					Attended a City-sponsored event	*	↓	42%
	Religious or spiritual events and activities	↓	↓	51%								
	Adult education	*	↔	54%								
Community Engagement	Overall education and enrichment	*	↓	48%								
	Opportunities to participate in community matters	↔	↔	61%	Public information	↓	↔	55%	Sense of community	↓	↔	54%
	Opportunities to volunteer	↓	↔	58%	Overall direction	↔	↔	63%	Voted in local elections	↑	↔	85%
	Openness and acceptance	↓	↔	68%	Value of services for taxes paid	↓	↔	52%	Talked to or visited with neighbors	*	↔	93%
	Social events and activities	↓	↓	40%	Welcoming citizen involvement	↔	↔	56%	Attended a local public meeting	↔	↔	21%
	Neighborliness	*	↔	66%	Confidence in City government	*	↔	58%	Watched a local public meeting	↓	↓	9%
					Acting in the best interest of El Cerrito	*	↔	64%	Volunteered	↔	↓	25%
					Being honest	*	↔	64%	Participated in a club	↔	↓	18%
					Treating all residents fairly	*	↔	65%	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	*	↔	25%
									Contacted El Cerrito elected officials	*	↔	16%
								Read or watched local news	*	↔	85%	
								Done a favor for a neighbor	*	↔	83%	

**Legend**

↑↑ Much higher    ↑ Higher    ↔ Similar    ↓ Lower    ↓↓ Much lower    \* Not available

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

**El Cerrito, CA**  
Community Livability Report

2016



**NRC**  
National Research Center Inc

2955 Valmont Road Suite 300  
Boulder, Colorado 80301  
n-r-c.com • 303-444-7863

**ICMA**

*Leaders at the Core of Better Communities*

777 North Capitol Street NE Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20002  
icma.org • 800-745-8780

# Contents

About..... 1

Quality of Life in El Cerrito..... 2

Community Characteristics ..... 3

Governance ..... 5

Participation ..... 7

Special Topics..... 9

Conclusions ..... 12



The National Citizen Survey™  
© 2001-2016 National Research Center, Inc.

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

NRC is a charter member of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative, providing clear disclosure of our sound and ethical survey research practices.

# About

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

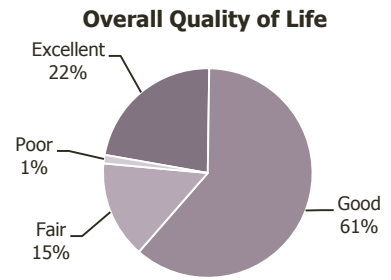
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 400 residents of the City of El Cerrito. 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 El Cerrito

Most residents rated the quality of life in El Cerrito as excellent or good. This rating was similar to comparison 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.

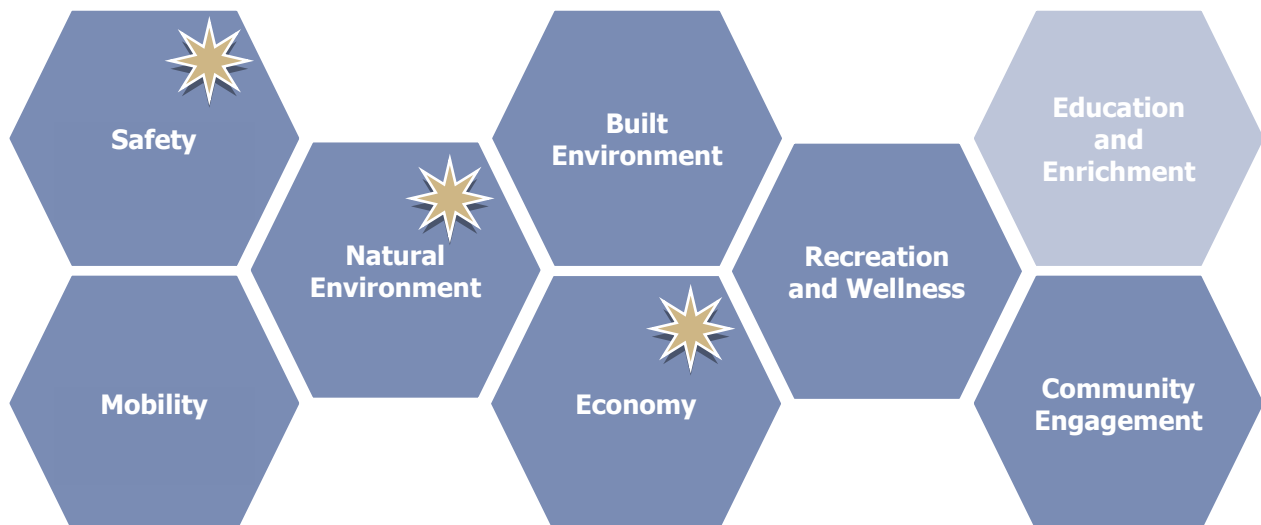
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety, Economy and Natural Environment as priorities for the El Cerrito community in the coming two years. El Cerrito residents gave favorable ratings to these facets of community as well as to Built Environment, Mobility, Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement. 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 El Cerrito’s unique questions.

## Legend

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

- Most important





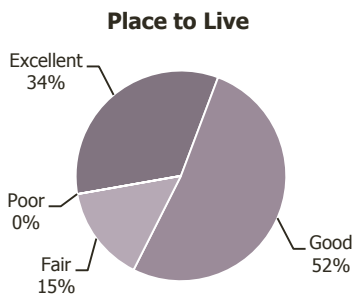
# Community Characteristics

*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 El Cerrito, 85% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of El Cerrito 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 El Cerrito as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of El Cerrito and its overall appearance. All of these were similar to the national benchmark and were rated positively by at least 6 in 10 residents.

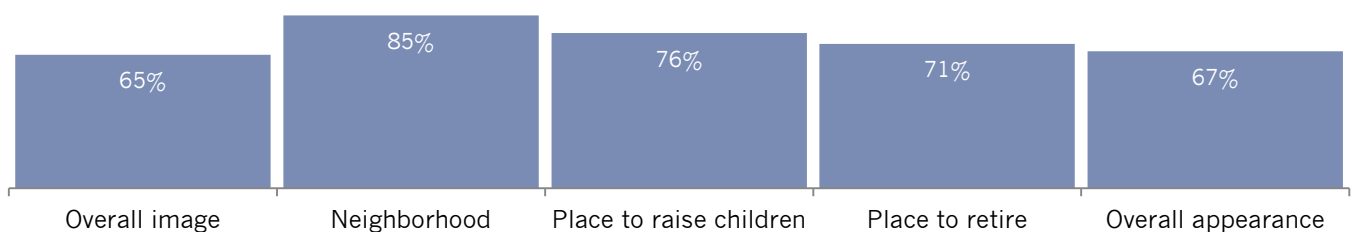
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall the majority of items were rated similar to the benchmark. Each item in Mobility was favorably rated by at least half of the participants and travel by bicycle, travel by public transportation and public parking were rated higher than the benchmark. Safety and Natural Environment were also strong with favorable ratings from at least 2 in 3 residents. Fewer than one-third of respondents gave positive ratings to affordable quality housing, El Cerrito's vibrant downtown/commercial area and employment opportunities. These ratings were all lower than ratings in comparison communities.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



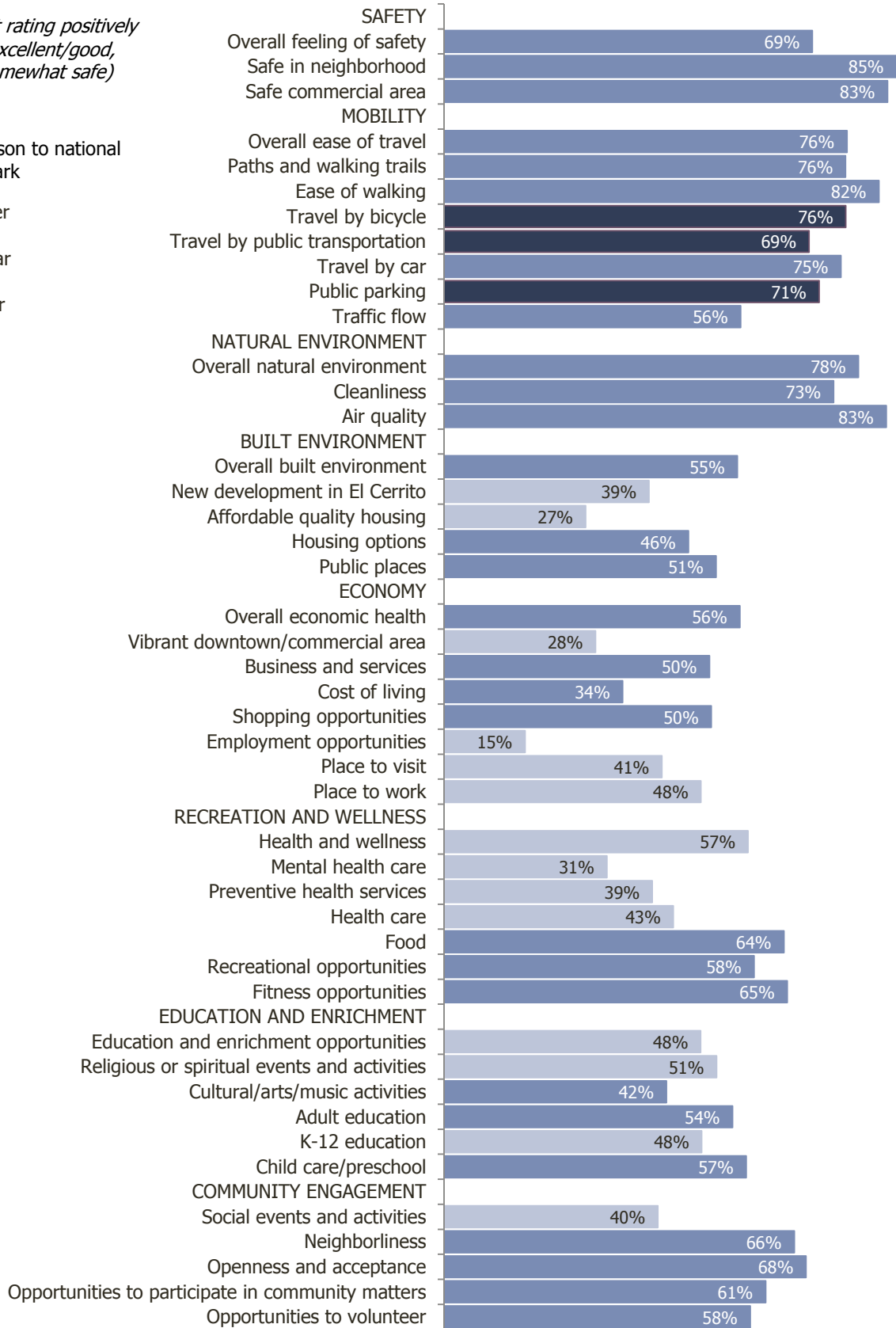
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

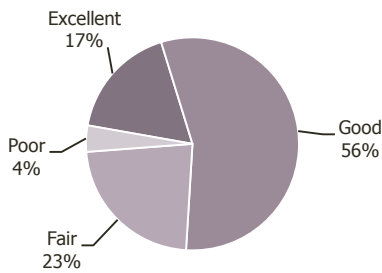
## How well does the government of El Cerrito meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by El Cerrito as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 7 in 10 residents gave positive ratings for the quality of services provided by the City of El Cerrito while around 5 in 10 participants gave favorable marks for the Federal Government. Ratings for both the City and Federal Governments were similar to the benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of El Cerrito’s leadership and governance. The value of services for taxes paid, welcoming citizen involvement, confidence in City government, overall direction, acting in the best interest of El Cerrito, being honest, treating all residents fairly and customer service were all rated positively by a majority of respondents. All of these aspects were similar to the benchmark.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in El Cerrito. The majority of services were similar to the benchmark. A majority of residents rated all services in Safety positively with about 4 in 5 residents giving positive marks for police, fire and EMS services. All aspects of Natural Environment were rated as excellent or good by at least 6 in 10 residents. Further, drinking water, garbage collection, recycling and yard waste pick-up services were rated favorably by about 9 in 10 residents. All services within the facets of Mobility, Economy, Built Environment and Community Engagement were rated similarly to communities across the nation. About 6 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to both aspects of Education and Enrichment; however, ratings for public library services were lower than in comparison communities. Recreation and Wellness ratings were seen as excellent or good by about 7 in 10 participants and were similar to the benchmarks, except for health services. About 45% of residents positively rated health services and this rating was lower than the national benchmark comparison.

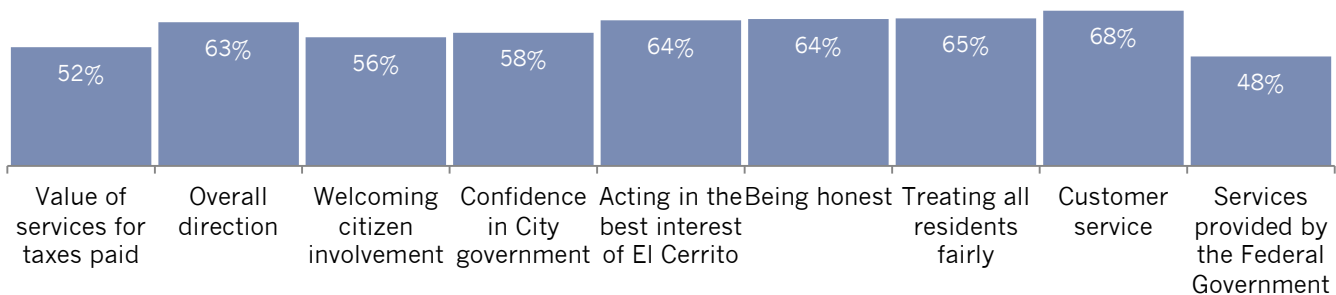
**Overall Quality of City Services**



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



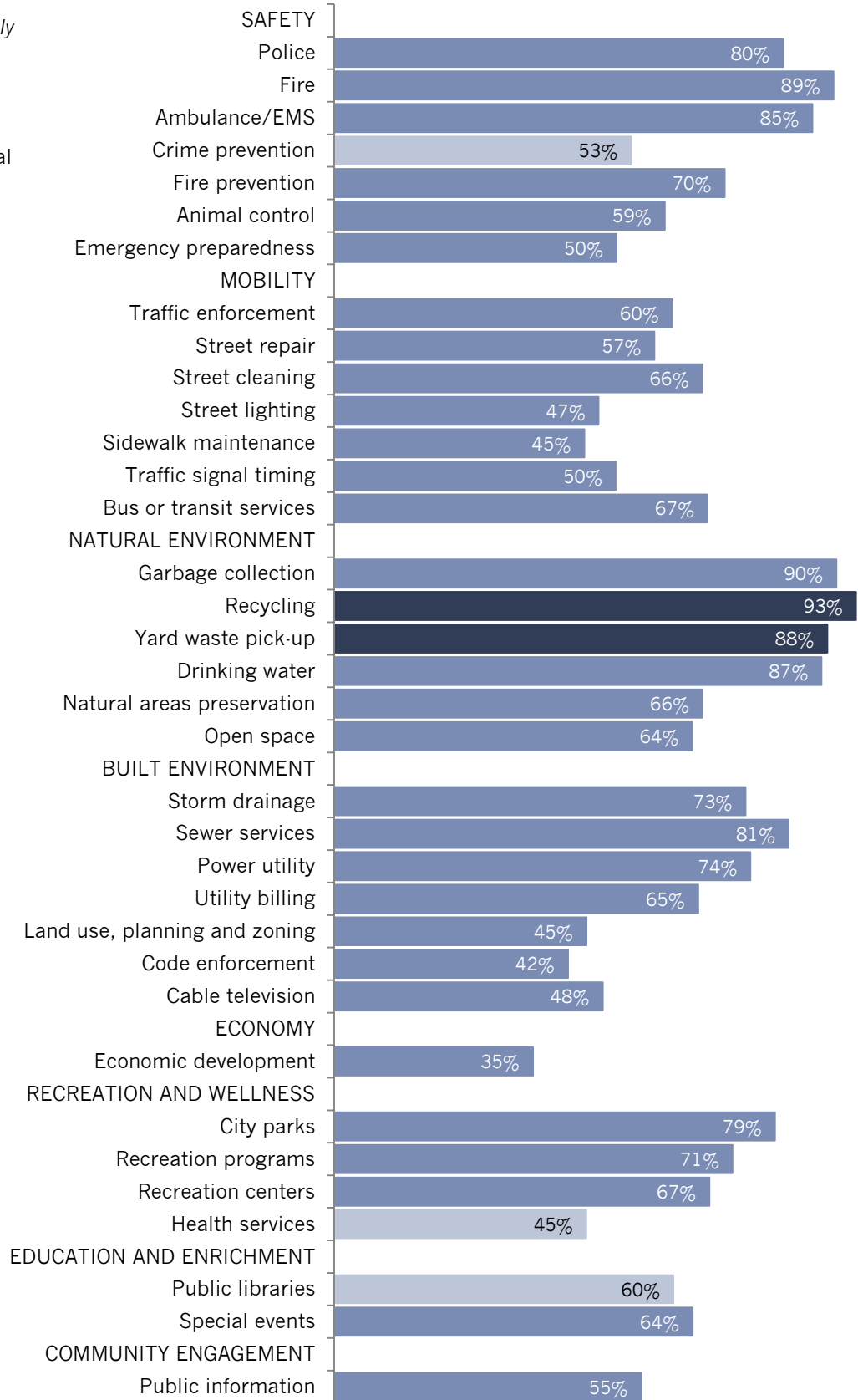
## The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

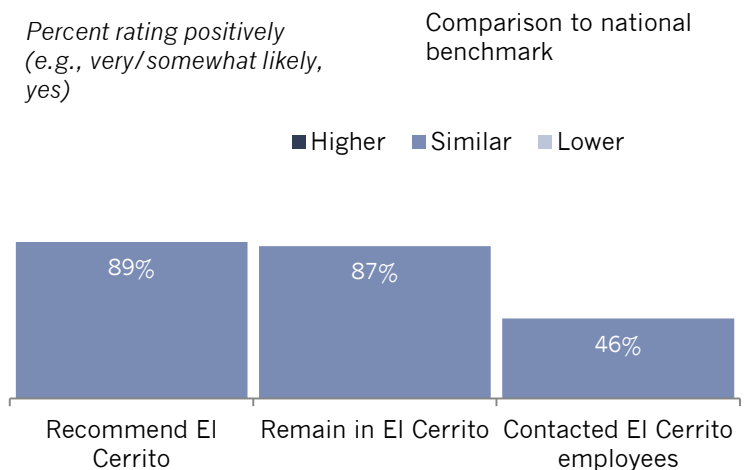
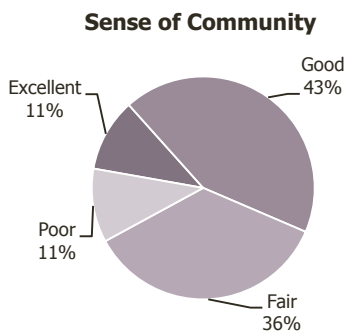


# Participation

*Are the residents of El Cerrito 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. Around half of residents reported an excellent or good sense of community and this rating was similar to the benchmark. About 4 in 5 participants indicated that they were likely to recommend El Cerrito and planned to remain in El Cerrito. These rates were similar to rates 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. Most reported rates of Participation were similar to those in other communities. Within Mobility nearly 9 in 10 residents reported that they had used public transportation instead of driving and nearly 8 in 10 walked or biked instead of driving. These rates of Participation were higher than those in comparison jurisdictions. Nearly all residents reported that they conserved water and that they recycled at home, both higher rates than the national benchmark. About 9 in 10 residents reported that they ate 5 portions of fruit and vegetables which was higher than in comparison communities. When compared to other communities, fewer El Cerrito residents reported that they worked in El Cerrito, used El Cerrito public libraries, participated in religious or spiritual events or activities, attended a City-sponsored event, volunteered, participated in a club or watched a local public meeting.



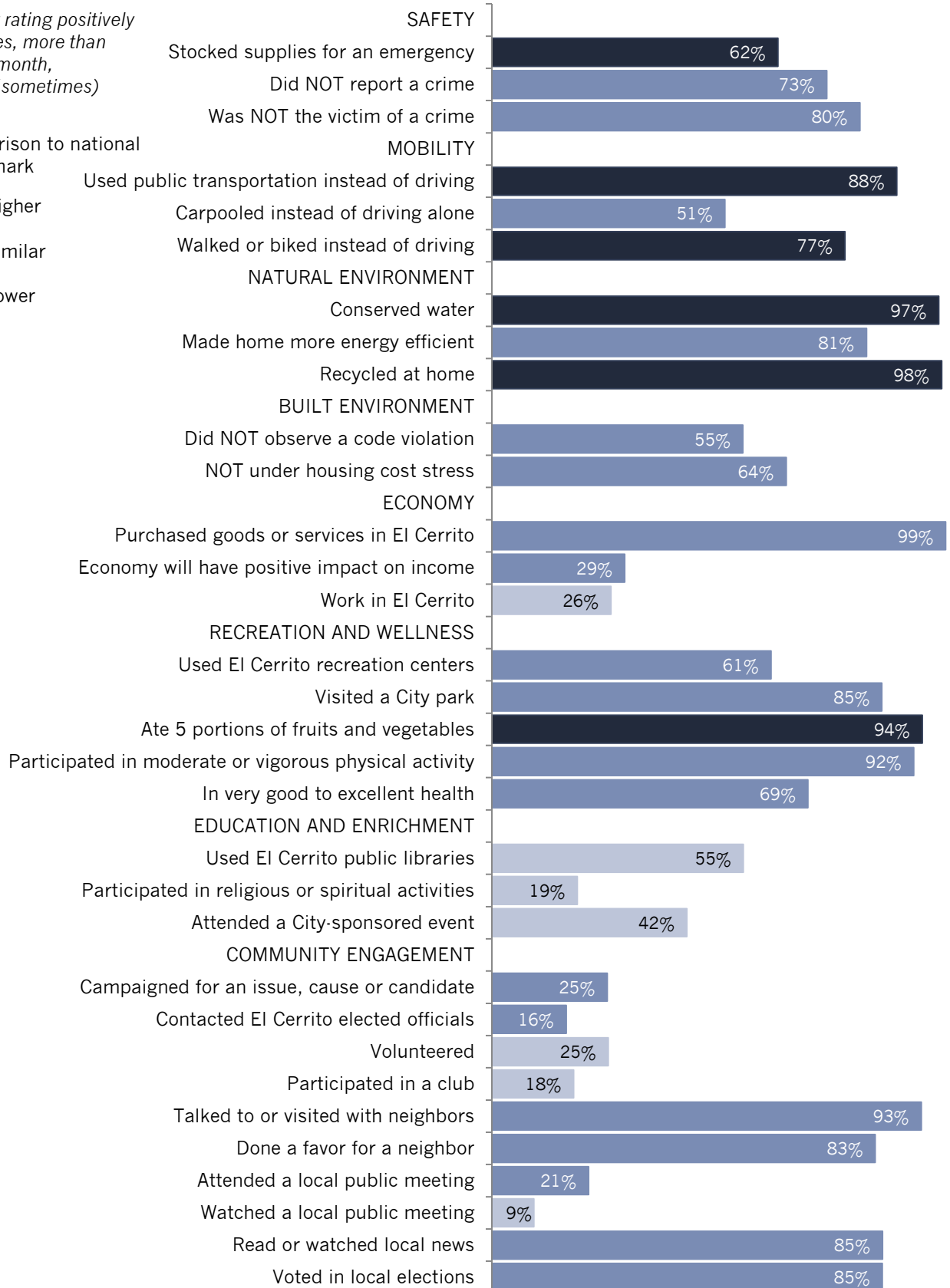
## The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

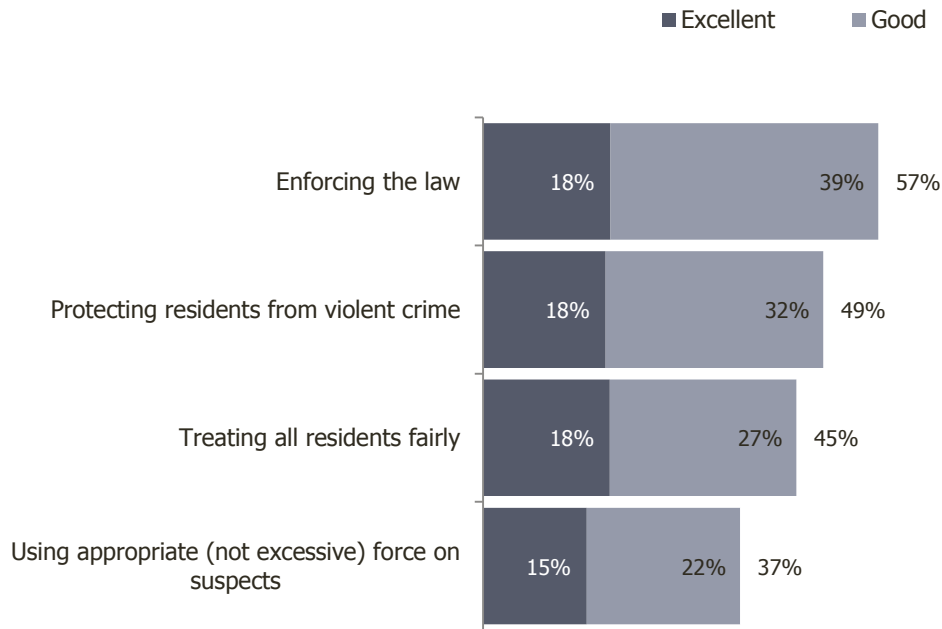
- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Special Topics

The City of El Cerrito included three questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked about the performance of the El Cerrito Police Department. A majority residents gave excellent or good ratings regarding the Police Department's job at enforcing the law while about one-third gave positive ratings to using appropriate (not excessive) force on suspects.

Figure 4: Quality of Police Department Performance  
*Please rate the job the City of El Cerrito Police Department does at each of the following:*

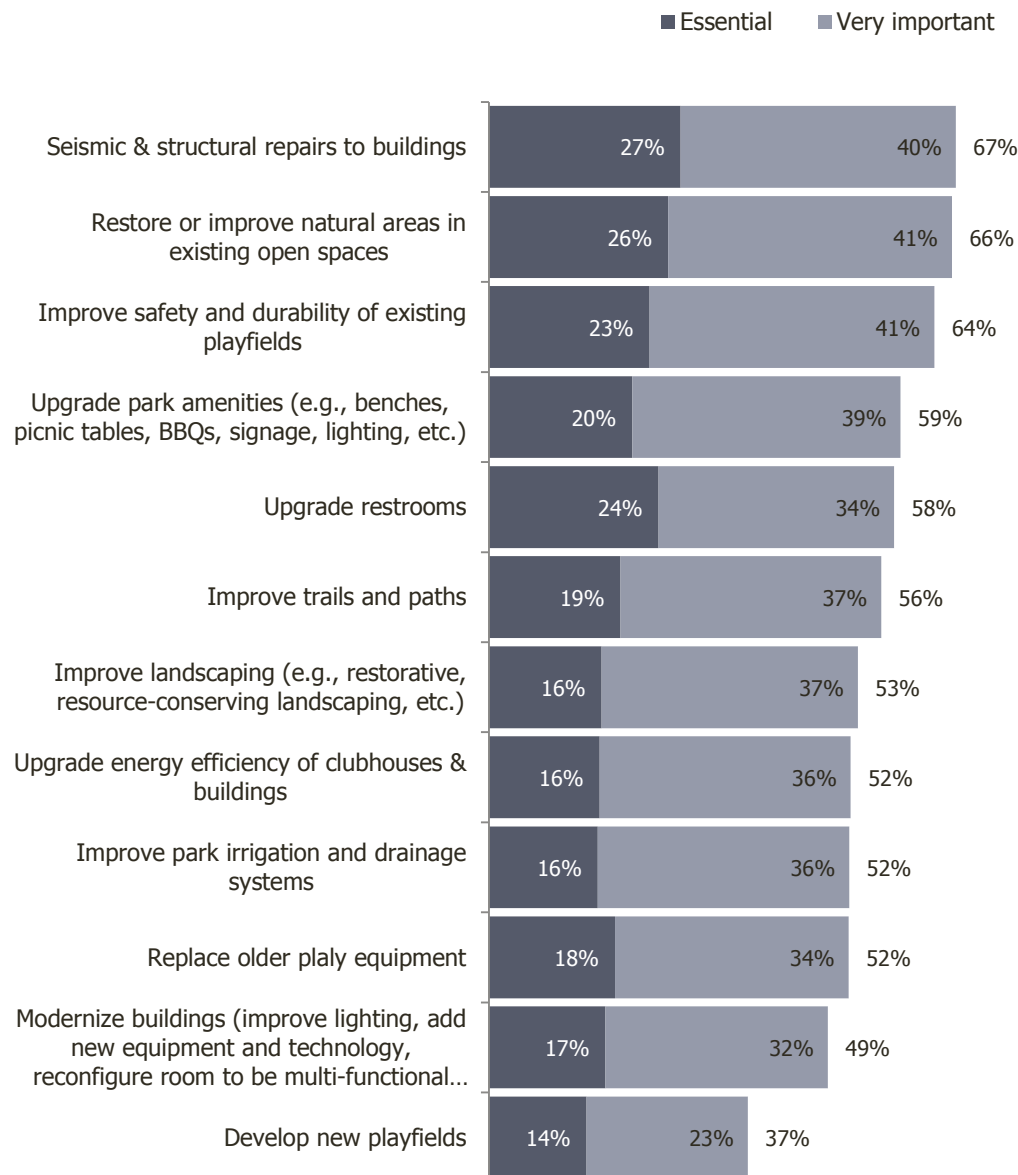


## The National Citizen Survey™

The second question of special interest regarded resident opinion on parks and recreation facility improvements over the coming 5 to 10 years. A majority rated most of the potential improvements as essential or very important. Seismic & structural repairs to buildings, restoring or improving natural areas and improving safety and durability of existing playfields were rated the most important by residents.

Figure 5: Importance of Parks and Recreation Facility Improvements

*Please rate how important, if at all, you think it is for the City to focus on each of the following parks and recreation facility improvements in the coming 5 to 10 years:*



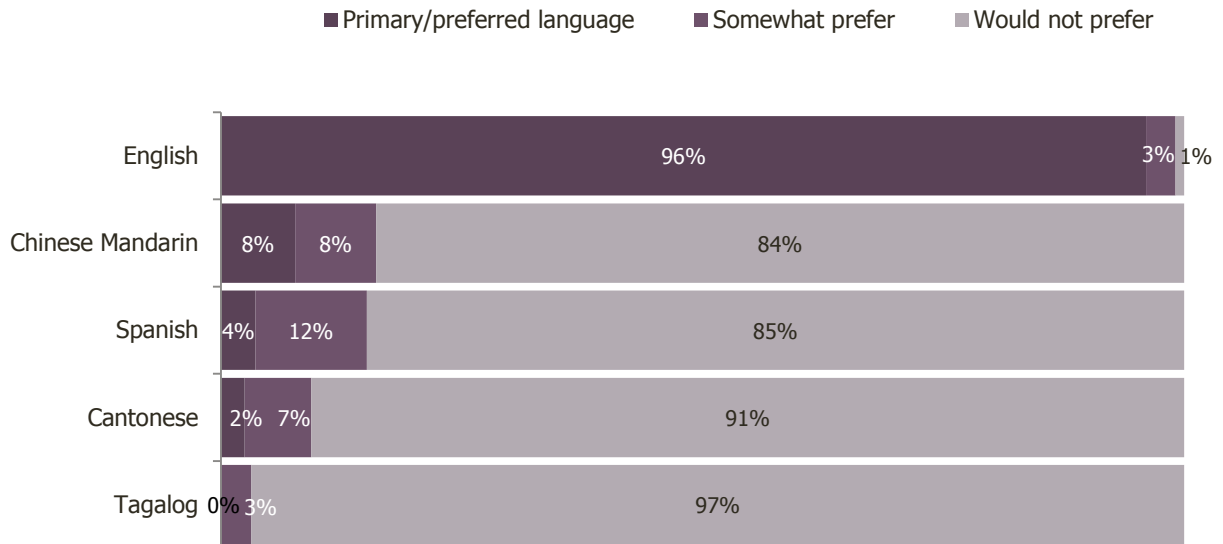


## The National Citizen Survey™

The last special interest asked residents to rate their preferred language for receiving communications at home. Almost all residents indicated that they preferred English for communication. About 1 in 10 indicated a preference (either primary or somewhat prefer) for Chinese Mandarin or Spanish. Cantonese and Tagalog had less than 1 in 10 indicate that they preferred or somewhat preferred that language.

Figure 6: Preferred Languages

*Thinking about the kinds of languages you might receive communications in at your home, please rate your preference for receiving communications in each of the following languages:*



# Conclusions

## **El Cerrito residents continue to enjoy a positive quality of life.**

High quality of life is enjoyed by most El Cerrito Residents. About 8 in 10 residents reported that their overall quality of life was excellent or good. This rating was similar to comparison communities and remained stable from 2012 to 2016 (for more information see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover). Further, about 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to their neighborhoods and to El Cerrito as a place to live while at least that many cited that they would recommend El Cerrito to someone who asked and planned to remain in the community. Most residents cited El Cerrito as an excellent or good place to raise children and to retire and also favorably rated the overall image and overall appearance of El Cerrito.

## **Safety is a priority for the community.**

Residents gave positive ratings to most aspects of Safety in El Cerrito and indicated that it was a top priority for the next two years. Most residents gave positive ratings for fire and ambulance/EMS services. A vast majority of participants also indicated that they felt safe in their neighborhoods and safe in the commercial area. About half of residents gave positive ratings for emergency preparedness. Over 6 in 10 indicated that they had stocked supplies for an emergency. About 80% of participants gave favorable ratings for police services. When asked to rate the job that the El Cerrito Police Department does, a majority of respondents indicated that the police did an excellent or good job at enforcing the law. However, fewer than half of residents felt the police did an excellent or good job at protecting residents from violent crime, treating all residents fairly and using appropriate (not excessive) force on suspects.

## **Residents value Economy and emphasize its importance.**

Participants cited Economy as being a key focus area for the next two years for El Cerrito community. About half of residents gave positive ratings for overall economic health, businesses and services, shopping opportunities and to El Cerrito as a place to work. About a quarter of residents reported working in El Cerrito, which was a lower rate than in comparison communities. Fewer than 2 in 10 gave positive ratings for employment opportunities. This rating decreased from 2012 to 2016 and was lower than the national benchmark comparison. About 30% indicated that they expect the economy to have a positive impact on their household income, this was an increase from the 2012 survey, and similar to other communities across the nation. Ratings for economic development decreased from 2012 to 2016, but were similar to ratings in comparison communities.

## **The Natural Environment is a key feature of El Cerrito.**

Natural Environment had strong ratings and residents indicated its importance for the community in the next two years. Around 78% of residents gave favorable ratings for the overall natural environment. About 8 in 10 residents rated air quality favorably and this rating increased from 2012 to 2016. Most participants gave positive ratings for garbage collection, yard waste pick-up and drinking water. About 8 in 10 residents reported that they had made efforts to make their home more energy efficient. Almost all residents indicated that they had conserved water and recycled, both of these rates were higher than in comparison communities. Further, almost all respondents gave excellent or good ratings to recycling services and this rating was higher than the national benchmark.