



THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Lower Merion Township, PA

Community Livability Report

2016



NRC
National Research Center Inc.

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

Contents

About..... 1

Quality of Life in Lower Merion Township 2

Community Characteristics 3

Governance 5

Participation 7

Special Topics..... 9

Conclusions 11



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 Lower Merion Township. 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).

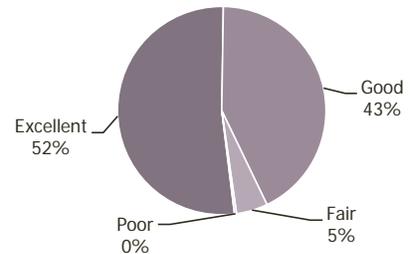
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 847 residents of Lower Merion Township. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 3% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Lower Merion Township

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Lower Merion Township as excellent or good. This rating was higher than what was seen in comparison communities (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

Overall Quality of Life



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.

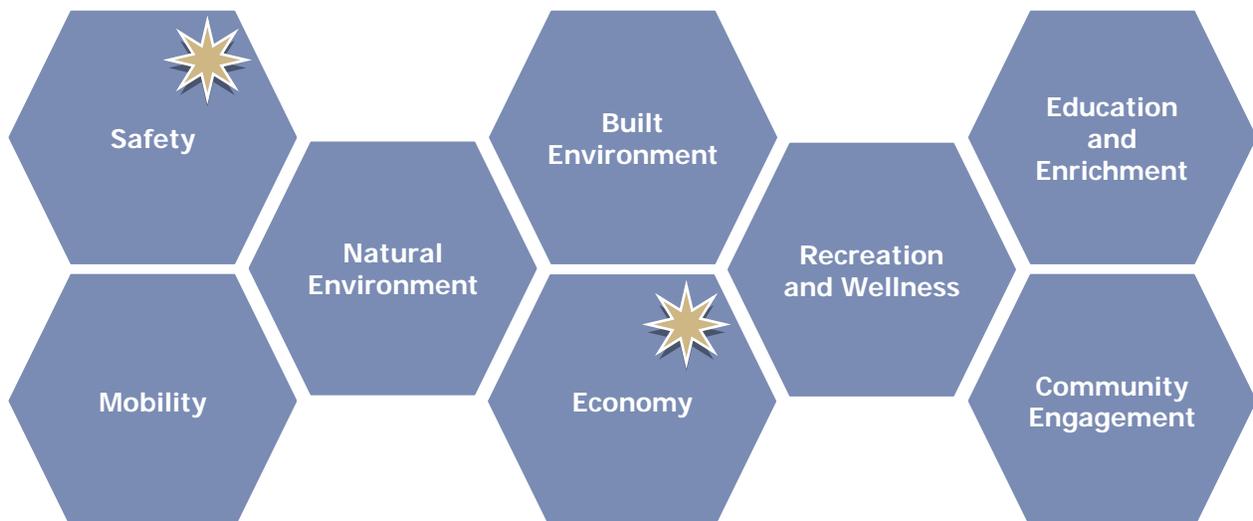
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Lower Merion Township community in the coming two years. Lower Merion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

Legend

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

- Most important



Community Characteristics

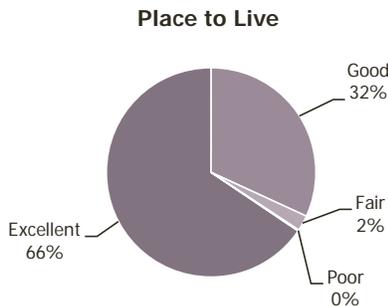
What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?

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 Lower Merion Township, 97% rated the Township as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Lower Merion Township as a place to live were higher than ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the Township as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Lower Merion Township as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Lower Merion Township and its overall appearance. Almost all residents highly rated their neighborhoods as places to live and Lower Merion Township as a place to raise children and around 9 in 10 residents were pleased with the overall image of the Township and its overall appearance. All of these ratings were higher in Lower Merion Township than what was seen in comparison communities. Meanwhile, about two-thirds of residents positively rated Lower Merion Township as a place to retire, which was 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. Generally, most ratings within Community Characteristics were strong and similar to or higher than the national benchmark. Ratings for aspects within Safety were particularly positive with nearly all residents stating they felt somewhat or very safe in the downtown/commercial areas as well as in their neighborhoods. Additionally, 94% of residents rated their overall feeling of safety as excellent or good which was higher than what was seen in comparison communities. Most ratings for aspects within Mobility were positively rated. The only exception to this was for ease of travel by bicycle which was awarded excellent or good ratings by about one-third of residents and was lower in Lower Merion Township than in other communities. Aspects within Economy were also appreciated by Township residents with around 9 in 10 reporting excellent or good ratings for the overall economic health which was higher than the national benchmark. Furthermore, about three quarters of residents favorably rated shopping opportunities in Lower Merion Township and the Township as a place to work, both of which were above the benchmark. Employment opportunities were also appreciated by Township residents, more so than in comparison communities, with more than half of residents stating that they were excellent or good. Residents provided strong ratings for aspects within Recreation and Wellness including,

health and wellness opportunities, availability of preventative health services and availability of affordable quality health care which were rated positively by approximately 8 in 10 residents and higher than the national benchmark. Nearly all residents favorably rated K-12 education within the Township and only slightly fewer rated overall opportunities for education and enrichment as excellent or good. Both of these ratings were higher in Lower Merion Township than elsewhere in the nation.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



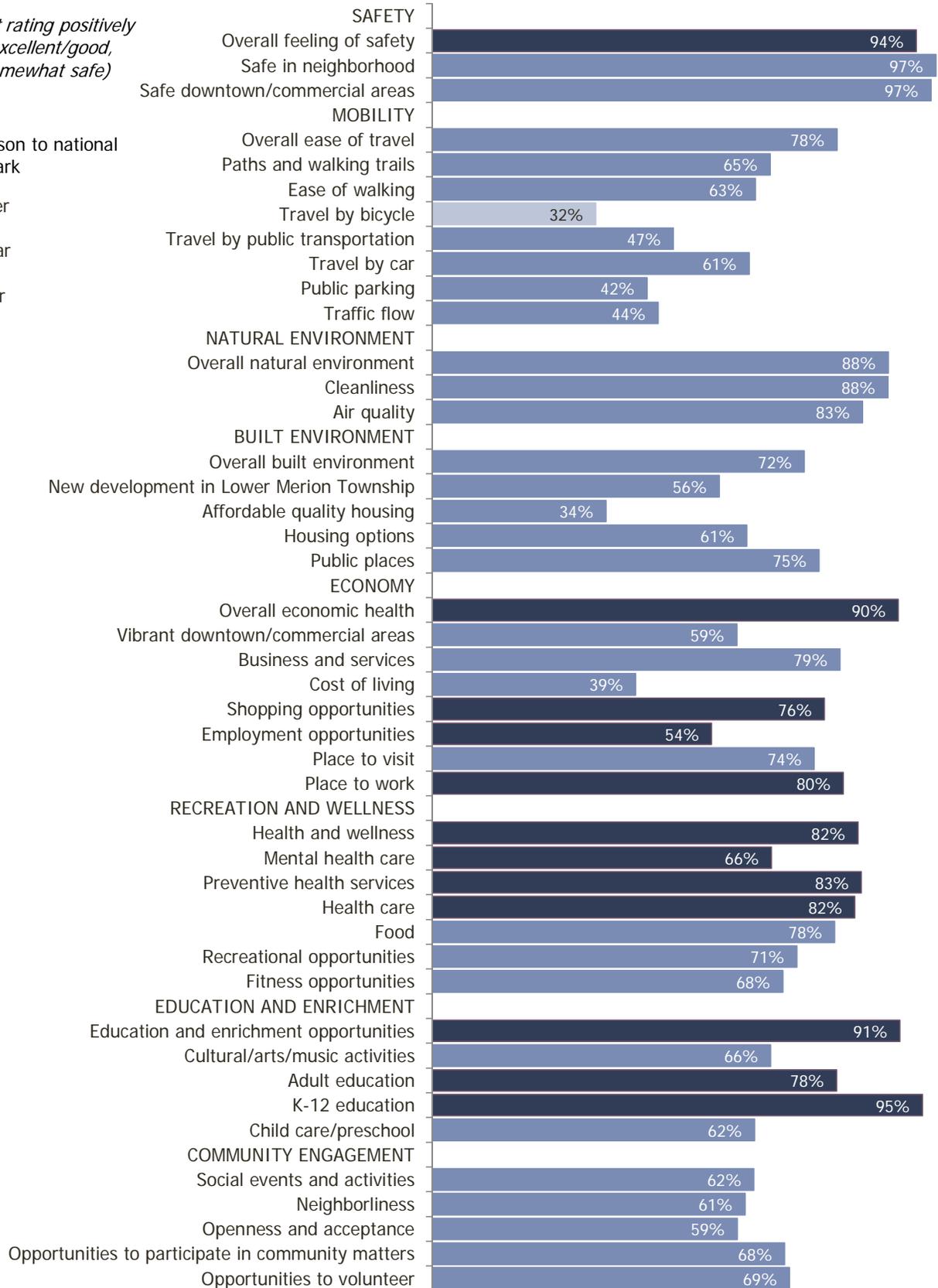
The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



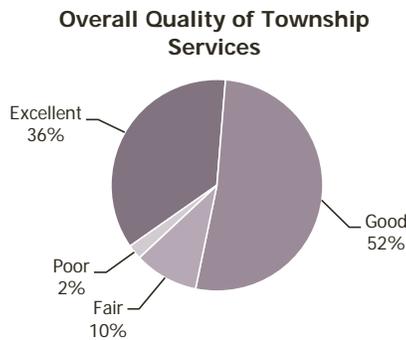
Governance

How well does the government of Lower Merion Township meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Lower Merion Township as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Nearly 9 in 10 residents positively rated the overall quality of services provided by Lower Merion Township which was higher than in comparison communities. Meanwhile, around half of residents rated the services provided by the Federal Government excellent or good (a rating which was similar to the national benchmark).

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Lower Merion Township's leadership and governance. More than four in five residents gave positive ratings to the overall customer service provided by the Lower Merion Township employees. Most other aspects of government also received strong ratings by around two-thirds of residents with the exception of the job Lower Merion Township does at welcoming citizen involvement which received positive ratings by about 6 in 10 residents. All aspects of government performance received ratings that were similar to comparison communities.

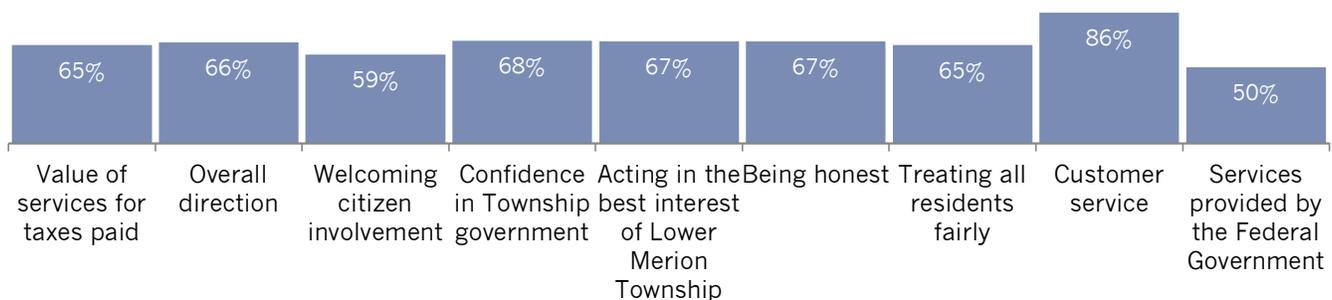
Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Lower Merion Township. All aspects of Governance received positive ratings and several were rated higher in Lower Merion Township than elsewhere. The highest rated services included: police, fire, ambulance/EMS, fire prevention and public libraries which were favorably rated by around 9 in 10 or more residents. Within Safety, police, fire, crime prevention and fire prevention were all rated higher than the national benchmark comparisons. Other services such as cable television, health services, public libraries and public information services all received positive marks by around two-thirds of residents or more and all were noted as being higher than the national benchmark.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



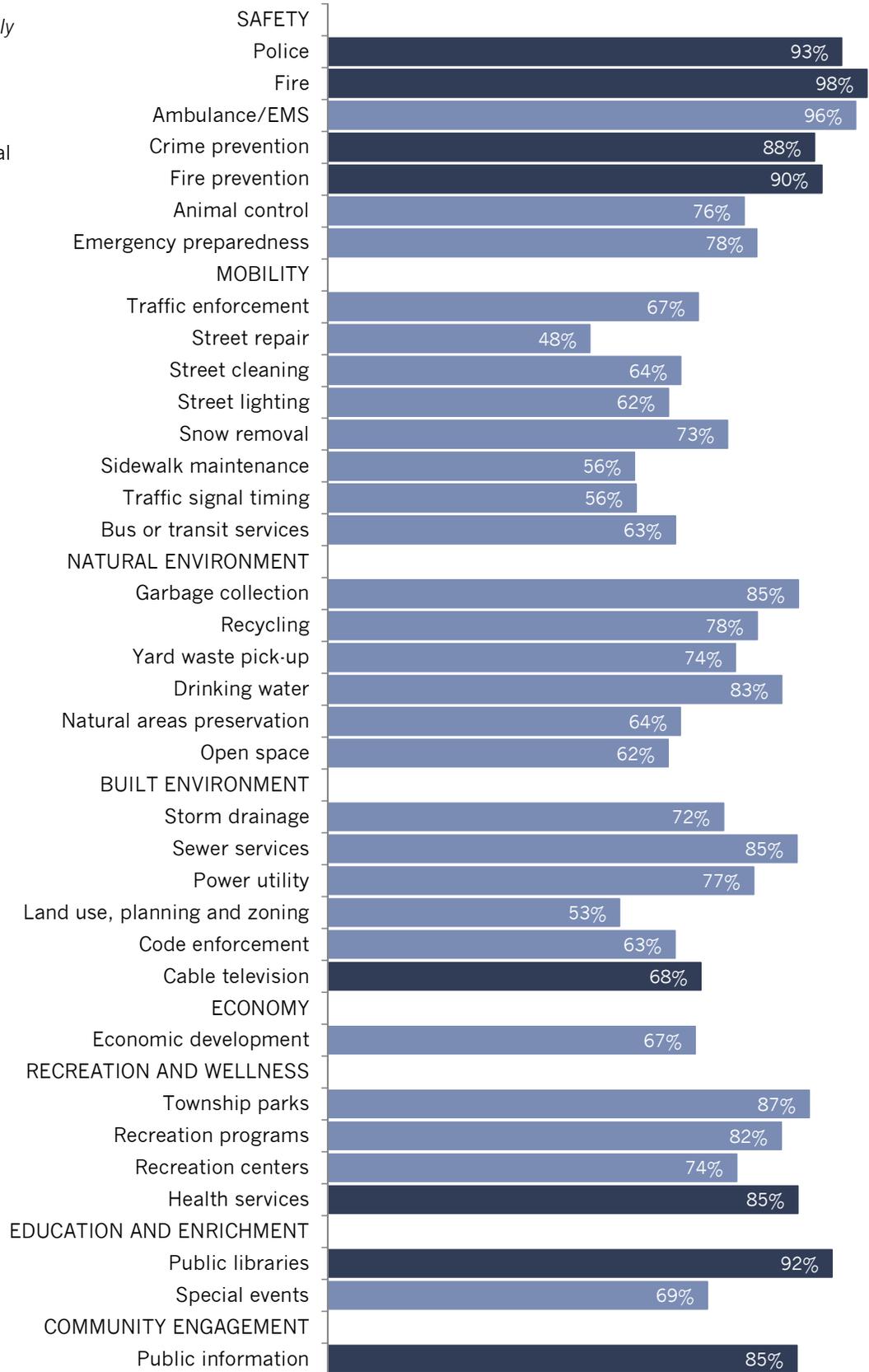
The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



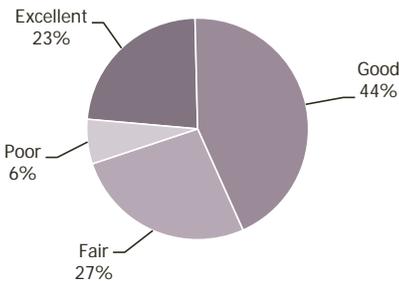
Participation

Are the residents of Lower Merion Township 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 two-thirds of respondents rated their overall sense of community favorably and these ratings were similar to those seen in communities nationally. Additionally, nearly all residents reported that they would recommend living in the Township to others and around 9 in 10 residents stated that they planned to remain in the Township for the next five years.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Overall, levels of Participation varied across all facets. The most common reported behaviors were recycling at home, purchasing goods or services in the Township, eating 5 portions of fruits and vegetables, participating in moderate or vigorous physical activity, talking to or visiting with neighbors and voting in local elections (90% or higher). Additionally, about 9 in 10 residents had not been the victim of a crime. More residents in Lower Merion Township than elsewhere reported using public transportation instead of driving, walking or biking instead of driving, recycling at home, and voting in local elections. Additionally, more Township residents said they had not observed a code violation and were not under housing cost stress compared to residents in comparison communities. However, fewer Township residents reported using the Lower Merion Township recreation center or attending a Township-sponsored event than elsewhere. All other behaviors and activities were reported at similar levels of participation in Lower Merion Township when compared to communities across the nation.

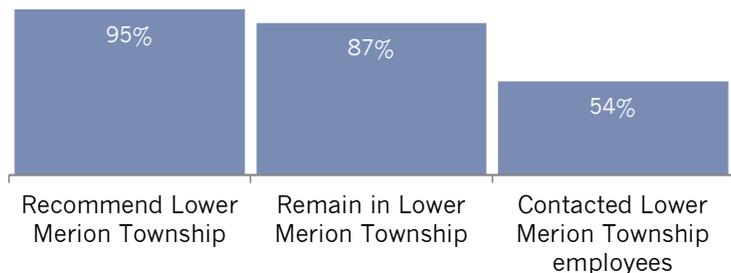
Sense of Community



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

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



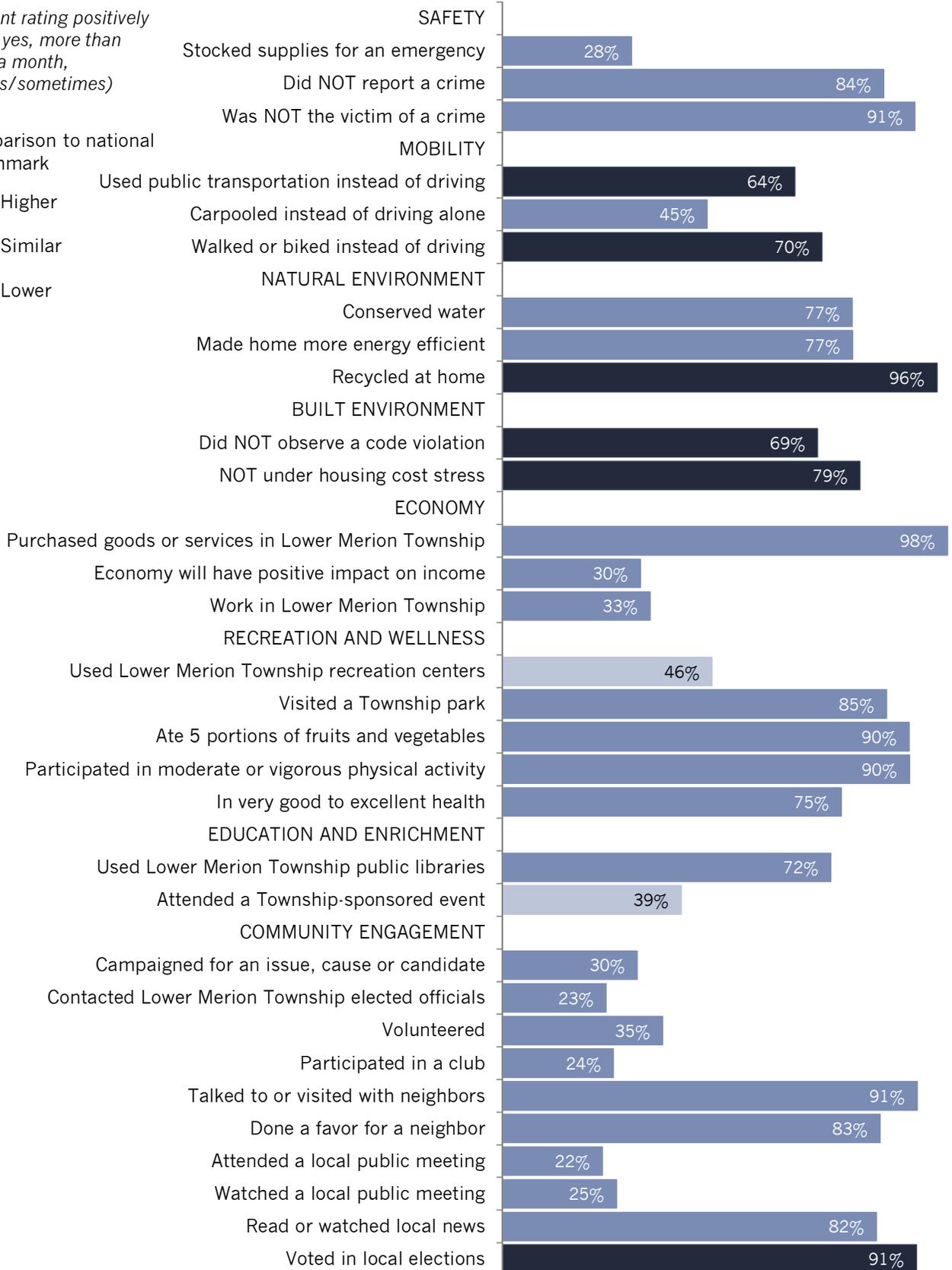
The National Citizen Survey™

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

Lower Merion Township included four questions of special interest on The NCS. The first custom question asked residents how satisfied, if at all, they were with aspects of the Lower Merion Township Police Department. A vast majority stated that their level of satisfaction was high for all aspects including: response time, personal respect, the department's ability to respond to neighborhood problems, personal confidence, the department's interactions within the community, the department's presence and the Police Department overall.

Figure 4: Satisfaction with Police Department

Please rate how satisfied, if at all, you are with these aspects of the Lower Merion Police Department:



The next set of special interest questions asked residents about their frequency of use of library services in person and online. Roughly three-quarters of residents reported using the library in-person at least once a year with about 1 in 10 saying they used it as frequently as 2 times a week or more. Meanwhile, fewer than half or respondents reported using the library services online at least once a year and more than half said they didn't use the online library services at all.

Figure 5: Used Library Services In-Person

In the last 12 months, how often, if at all, have you or a member of your household used Lower Merion Township Library services in person?

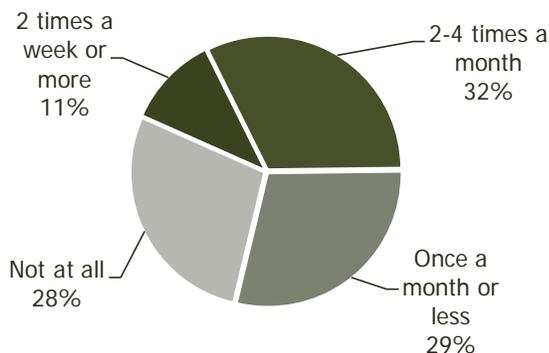
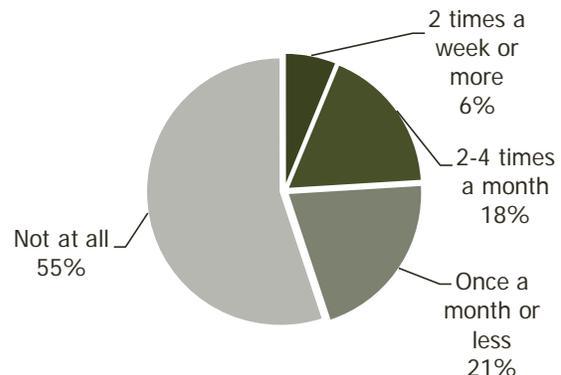


Figure 6: Used Library Services Online

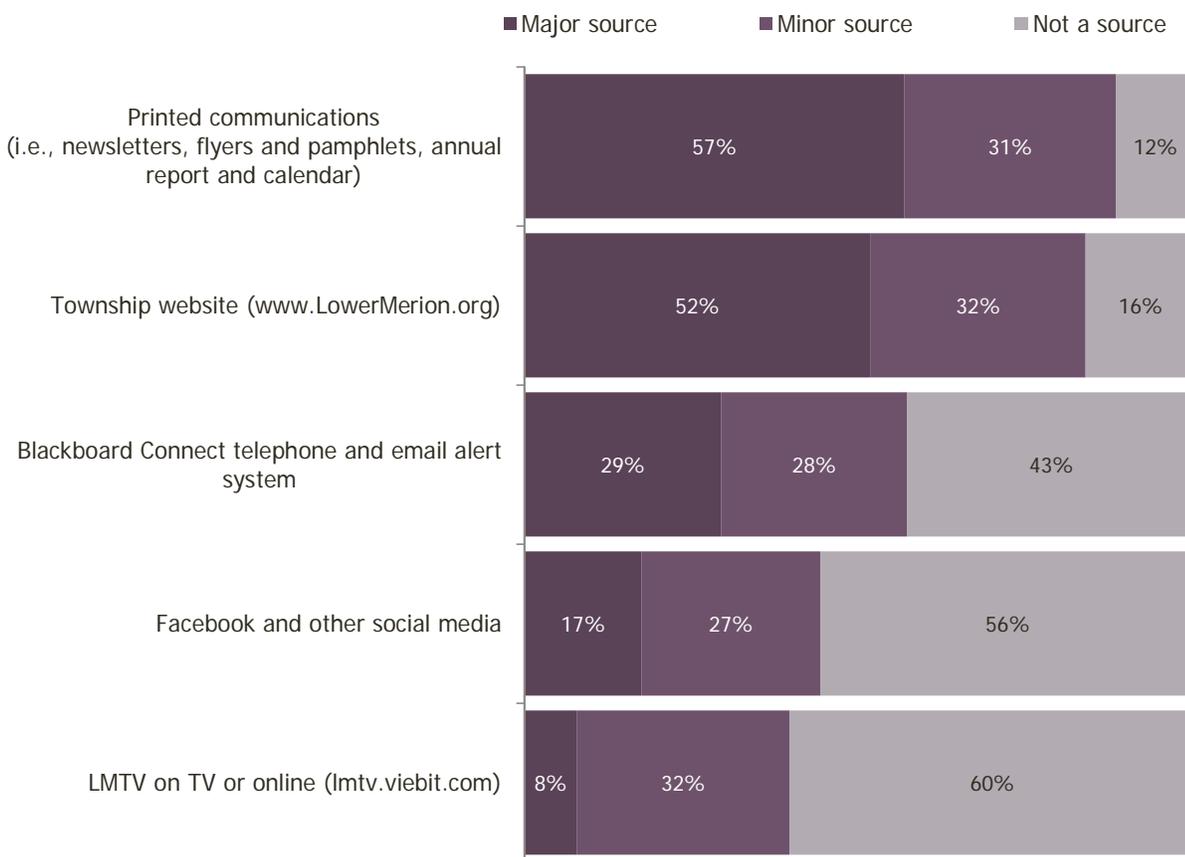
In the last 12 months, how often, if at all, have you or a member of your household used Lower Merion Township Library services online?



The last custom question Lower Merion Township asked its residents was the amount to which various modes of City communication were sources of information about City activities, events and services. Printed communications including newsletters, flyers, pamphlets, the annual report and calendar was the top-most listed source of information by about 9 in 10 residents as being at least a minor source. Slightly fewer also cited the Township website as a minor or major source of information. LMTV on TV or online was utilized least by residents with about 6 in 10 indicating they did not use it as a source at all.

Figure 7: Sources of Information

Please indicate how much of a source, if at all, you consider each of the following to be for obtaining information about the Township government and its activities, events and services:



Conclusions

Township residents enjoy a high quality of life.

Nearly all residents gave positive ratings to the overall quality of life and the Township as a place to live. Around 9 in 10 residents or more highly rated their neighborhoods as places to live, the Township as a place to raise children the Township's overall image. Additionally, resident loyalty was high with 9 in 10 or more residents reporting they would recommend living in Lower Merion Township and plan to remain there for the next five years.

Safety is a top priority for residents and received high marks.

Safety was identified by Township residents as a top community focus area in the next two years. Safety ratings were notably high with more than 9 in 10 residents giving high marks to their overall feeling of safety, safety in their neighborhoods and in the downtown/commercial area. Furthermore, safety services such as police, fire, ambulance/EMS and fire prevention all received favorable ratings by a vast majority of residents.

A strong Economy is another feature that makes Lower Merion Township a desirable community.

Economy was also highlighted as an important to residents. The overall economic health in the Township was rated excellent or good by 9 in 10 residents and several other aspects, including shopping opportunities, employment opportunities and Lower Merion Township as a place to work, were higher in the Township than in other communities nationally. Furthermore, nearly all residents reported purchasing goods or services within the Township and around 7 in 10 positively rated the overall economic development in the community.

Nearly all residents are satisfied with the Lower Merion Township Police Department.

Residents were asked to rate their satisfaction with seven aspects of the Lower Merion Township Police Department. Particularly high satisfaction ratings were given to the response time of officers, the personal respect for the Police Department officers and employees and to the Police Department overall. More than 9 in 10 residents were satisfied with the department's ability to respond to problems in their neighborhoods, with their personal confidence in the Police Department and the department presence in their neighborhood. These ratings also resonate with Lower Merion Township residents' aforementioned ratings of safety. Nearly all residents reported feeling safe in their neighborhood and safe in the downtown/commercial areas and more than 9 in 10 residents favorably rated their overall feeling of safety which was higher in Lower Merion Township than elsewhere across the nation.