



CITY OF ASHEVILLE, NC  
2008



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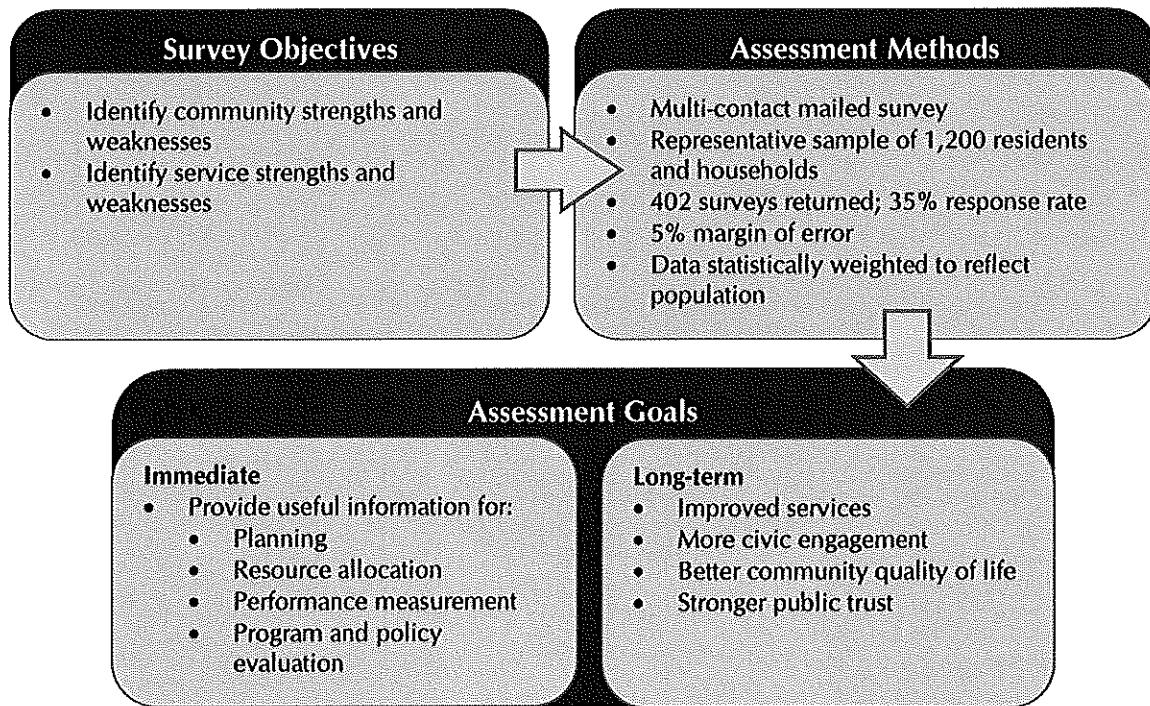
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## SURVEY BACKGROUND

### ABOUT THE NATIONAL CITIZEN SURVEY™

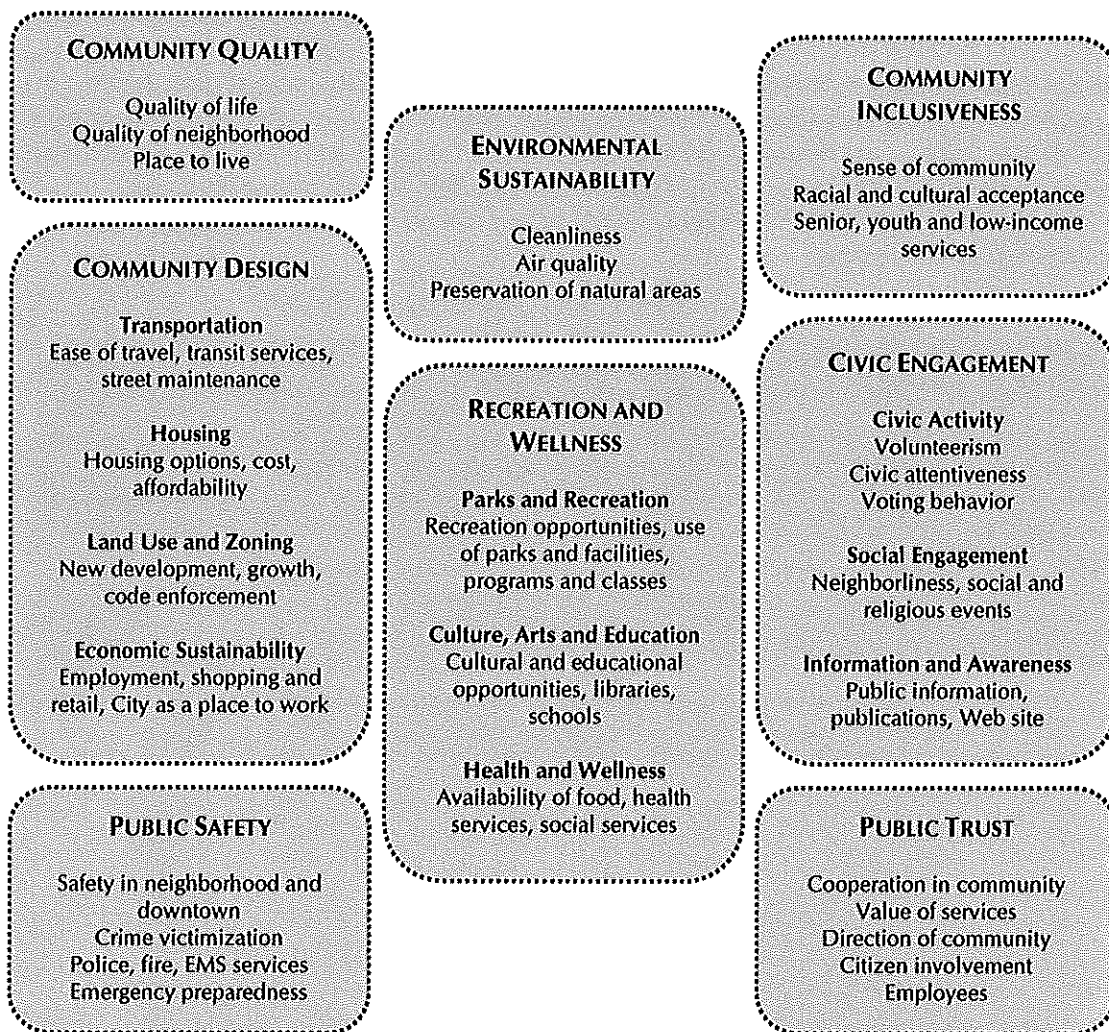
The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The NCS was developed by NRC to provide a statistically valid survey of resident opinions about community and services provided by local government. The survey results may be used by staff, elected officials and other stakeholders for community planning and resource allocation, program improvement and policy making.

FIGURE 1: THE NATIONAL CITIZEN SURVEY™ METHODS AND GOALS



The NCS focuses on a series of community characteristics and local government services, as well as issues of public trust. Resident behaviors related to civic engagement in the community also were measured in the survey.

FIGURE 2: THE NATIONAL CITIZEN SURVEY™ FOCUS AREAS



The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality research methods and directly comparable results across The National Citizen Survey™ jurisdictions. Participating households are selected at random and the household member who responds is selected without bias. Multiple mailings give each household more than one chance to participate with self-addressed and postage-paid envelopes. Results are statistically weighted to reflect the proper demographic composition of the entire community. A total of 402 completed surveys were obtained, providing an overall response rate of 35%. Typically, response rates obtained on citizen surveys range from 25% to 40%.

The National Citizen Survey™ customized for the City of Asheville was developed in close cooperation with local jurisdiction staff. Asheville staff selected items from a menu of questions about services and community problems and provided the appropriate letterhead and signatures for mailings. City of Asheville staff also augmented The National Citizen Survey™ basic service through a variety of options including demographic crosstabulation of results and several policy questions, including an open-ended question..

## UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS

As shown in Figure 2, this report is based around respondents' reports about eight larger categories: community quality, community design, public safety, environmental sustainability, recreation and wellness, community inclusiveness, civic engagement and public trust. Each section begins with residents' ratings of community characteristics and is followed by residents' ratings of service quality. For all evaluative questions, the percent of residents rating the service or community feature as "excellent" or "good" is presented. To see the full set of responses for each question on the survey, please see Appendix A: Complete Survey Frequencies.

### Margin of Error

It is customary to describe the precision of estimates made from surveys by a "level of confidence" (or margin of error). The 95% confidence interval quantifies the sampling error or precision of the estimates made from the survey results. A 95% confidence interval can be calculated for any question and indicates that for every 100 random samples of this many residents, the population response to that question would be within the stated interval 95 times. The 95% confidence level for the City of Asheville survey is generally no greater than plus or minus five percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample (402 completed surveys).

### Comparing Survey Results

Certain kinds of services tend to be thought better of by residents in many communities across the country. For example, public safety services tend to be received better than transportation services by residents of most American communities. Where possible, the better comparison is not from one service to another in the City of Asheville, but from City of Asheville services to services like them provided by other jurisdictions.

### Benchmark Comparisons

NRC's database of comparative resident opinion is comprised of resident perspectives gathered in citizen surveys from approximately 500 jurisdictions whose residents evaluated local government services and gave their opinion about the quality of community life. The City of Asheville chose to have comparisons made to the entire database. A benchmark comparison (the average rating from all the comparison jurisdictions where a similar question was asked) has been provided when a similar question on the City of Asheville Survey was included in NRC's database and there were at least five jurisdictions in which the question was asked. For most questions compared to the entire dataset, there were more than 100 jurisdictions included in the benchmark comparison.

Where comparisons were available, the City of Asheville results were noted as being "above" the benchmark, "below" the benchmark or "similar to" the benchmark. This evaluation of "above," "below" or "similar to" comes from a statistical comparison of the City of Asheville's rating to the benchmark.

### "Don't Know" Responses and Rounding

On many of the questions in the survey respondents may answer "don't know." The proportion of respondents giving this reply is shown in the full set of responses included in Appendix A. However, these responses have been removed from the analyses presented in the body of the report. In other words, the tables and graphs display the responses from respondents who had an opinion about a specific item.

For some questions, respondents were permitted to select more than one answer. When the total exceeds 100% in a table for a multiple response question, it is because some respondents did select

more than one response. When a table for a question that only permitted a single response does not total to exactly 100%, it is due to the customary practice of percentages being rounded to the nearest whole number.

For more information on understanding The NCS report, please see Appendix B: Survey Methodology.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report of the City of Asheville survey provides the opinions of a representative sample of residents about community quality of life, service delivery, civic participation and unique issues of local interest. A periodic sounding of resident opinion offers staff, elected officials and other stakeholders an opportunity to identify challenges and to plan for and evaluate improvements and to sustain services and amenities for long-term success.

Most residents experience a good quality of life in the City of Asheville and believe the City is a good place to live. The overall quality of life in the City of Asheville was rated as "excellent" or "good" by 80% of respondents. Most report they plan on staying in the City of Asheville for the next five years.

A variety of characteristics of the community were evaluated by those participating in the study. The four receiving the most favorable ratings were opportunities to volunteer, opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events and activities, opportunities to attend cultural activities, and the overall image or reputation of Asheville. The three characteristics receiving the least positive ratings were availability of affordable quality housing, employment opportunities, and the amount of public parking.

All of the community characteristics rated were able to be compared to the benchmark database. Of the 27 characteristics for which comparisons were available, 12 were above the benchmark comparison, 2 were similar to the benchmark comparison and 13 were below.

Residents in the City of Asheville were somewhat civically engaged. While only 30% had attended a meeting of local elected public officials or other local public meeting in the previous 12 months, 96% had provided help to a friend or neighbor. A majority had volunteered their time to some group or activity in the City of Asheville.

In general, survey respondents demonstrated mild trust in local government. Less than half rated the overall direction being taken by the City of Asheville as "good" or "excellent." This was lower than the benchmark. Those residents who had interacted with an employee of the City of Asheville in the previous 12 months gave high marks to those employees. Nearly all rated their overall impression as excellent or good.

On average, residents gave somewhat favorable ratings to local government services. Many of the City services rated were able to be compared to the benchmark database. Of the 32 services for which comparisons were available, none were above the benchmark comparison, nine were similar to the benchmark comparison and 23 were below.

A Key Driver Analysis was conducted for the City of Asheville which examined the relationships between ratings of each service and ratings of the City of Asheville's services overall. Those key driver services that correlated most strongly with residents' perceptions about overall City service quality have been identified. By targeting improvements in key services, the City of Asheville can focus on the services that have the greatest likelihood of influencing residents' opinions about overall service quality. Services found to be influential in ratings of overall service quality from the Key Driver Analysis were:

- \* Land use, planning and zoning
- \* City parks
- \* Street cleaning
- \* Public schools

We recommend that key driver services below benchmark comparisons form the center of your focus for improvement including: land use, planning and zoning, city parks, street cleaning, and public schools.



## COMMUNITY RATINGS

### OVERALL COMMUNITY QUALITY

Overall quality of community life may be the single best indicator of success in providing the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. The National Citizen Survey™ contained many questions related to quality of community life in the City of Asheville – not only direct questions about quality of life overall and in neighborhoods, but questions to measure residents' commitment to the City of Asheville. Residents were asked whether they planned to move soon or if they would recommend the City of Asheville to others. Intentions to stay and willingness to make recommendations provide evidence that the City of Asheville offers services and amenities that work.

Most of the City of Asheville's residents gave favorable ratings to their neighborhoods and the community as a place to live. Further, a majority reported they would recommend the community to others and plan to stay for the next five years.

FIGURE 3: RATINGS OF OVERALL COMMUNITY QUALITY

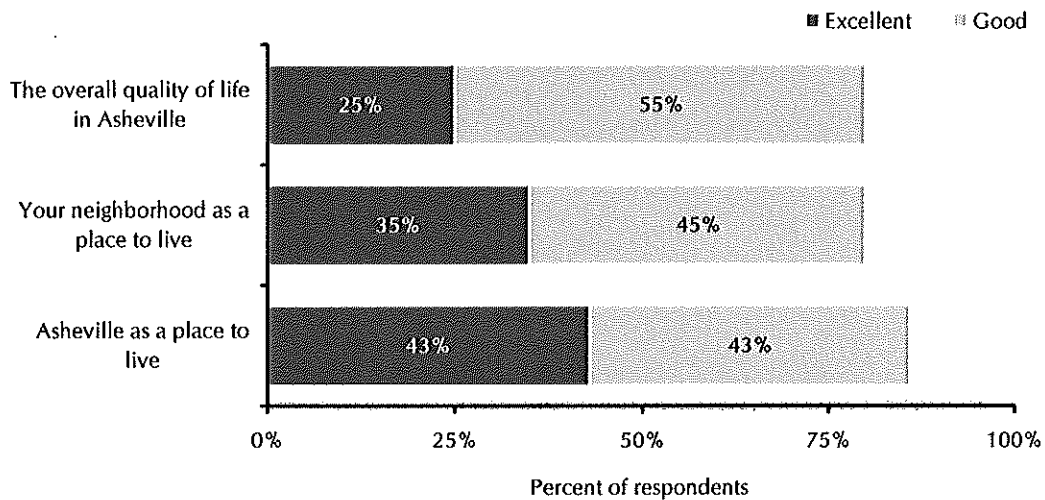


FIGURE 4: LIKELIHOOD OF REMAINING IN COMMUNITY AND RECOMMENDING COMMUNITY

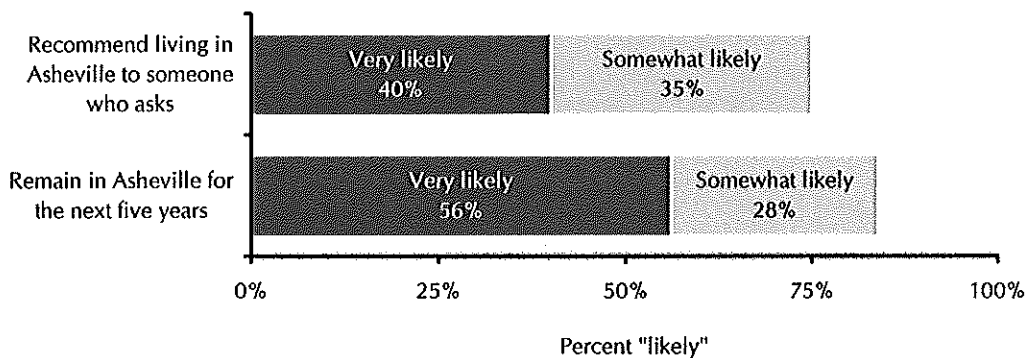


FIGURE 5: OVERALL COMMUNITY QUALITY BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Overall quality of life in Asheville	Similar
Your neighborhood as place to live	Similar
Asheville as a place to live	Above
Remain in Asheville for the next five years	Similar
Recommend living in Asheville to someone who asks	Below

## COMMUNITY DESIGN

### Transportation

The ability to move easily throughout a community can greatly affect the quality of life of residents by diminishing time wasted in traffic congestion and by providing opportunities to travel quickly and safely by modes other than the automobile. High quality options for resident mobility not only require local government to remove barriers to flow but they require government programs and policies that create quality opportunities for all modes of travel.

Residents responding to the survey were given a list of six aspects of mobility to rate on a scale of "excellent," "good," "fair" and "poor." Ease of car travel was given the most positive rating, followed by ease of walking in Asheville.

FIGURE 6: RATINGS OF TRANSPORTATION IN COMMUNITY

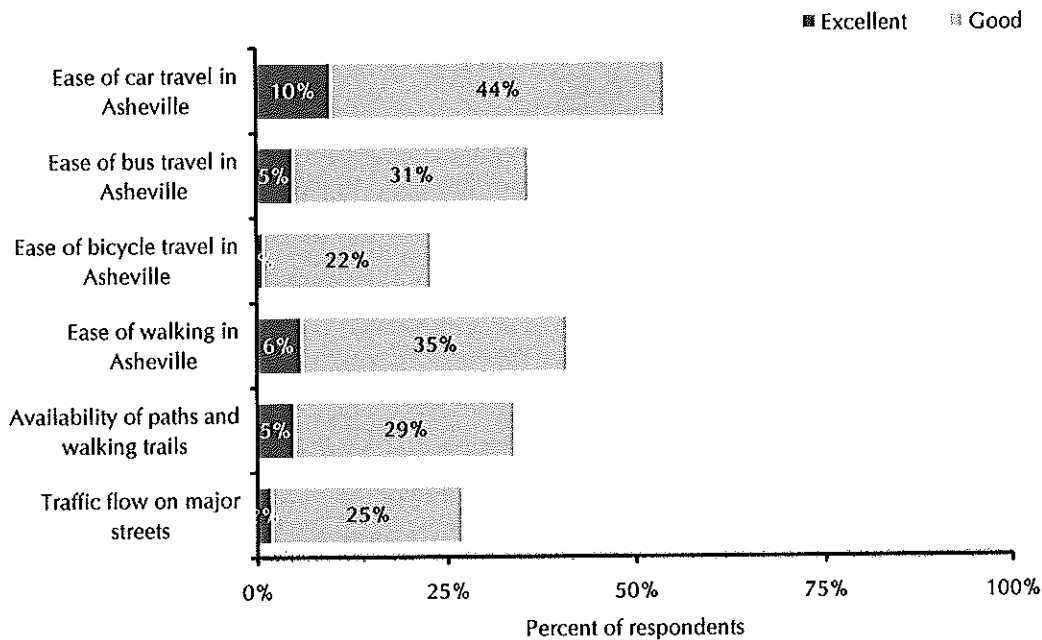


FIGURE 7: COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Ease of bus travel in Asheville	Below
Ease of car travel in Asheville	Similar
Ease of walking in Asheville	Below
Ease of bicycle travel in Asheville	Below
Availability of paths and walking trails	Below
Traffic flow on major streets	Below

Eight transportation services were rated in Asheville. As compared to other communities across America, ratings tended to be negative. None were above the benchmark, seven below the benchmark and one was similar to the benchmark.

FIGURE 8: RATINGS OF TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING SERVICES

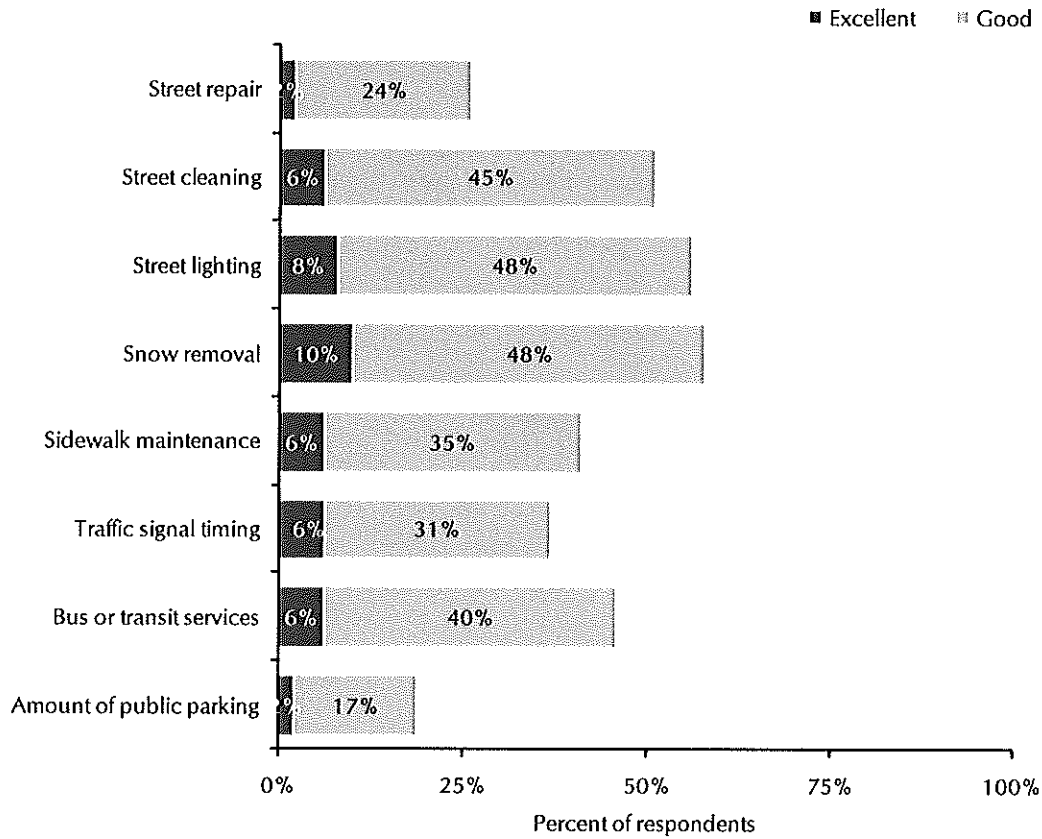


FIGURE 9: TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING SERVICES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Street repair /maintenance	Below
Street cleaning	Below
Street lighting	Similar
Snow removal	Below
Sidewalk maintenance	Below
Light timing	Below
Bus or transit services	Below
Amount of public parking	Below

By measuring choice of travel mode over time, communities can monitor their success in providing attractive alternatives to the traditional mode of travel, the single-occupied automobile. When asked how they typically traveled to work, single-occupancy (SOV) travel was the overwhelming mode of use. However, 4% of work commute trips were made by transit, 3% by bicycle and 5% by foot.

FIGURE 10: FREQUENCY OF BUS USE IN LAST 12 MONTHS

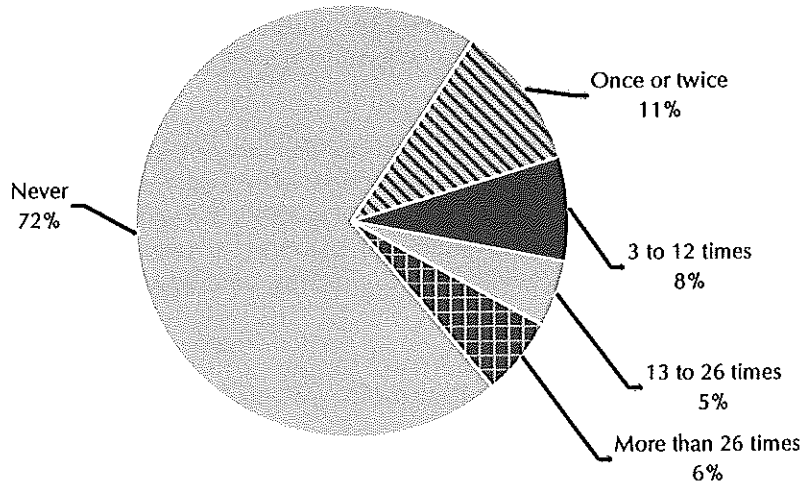
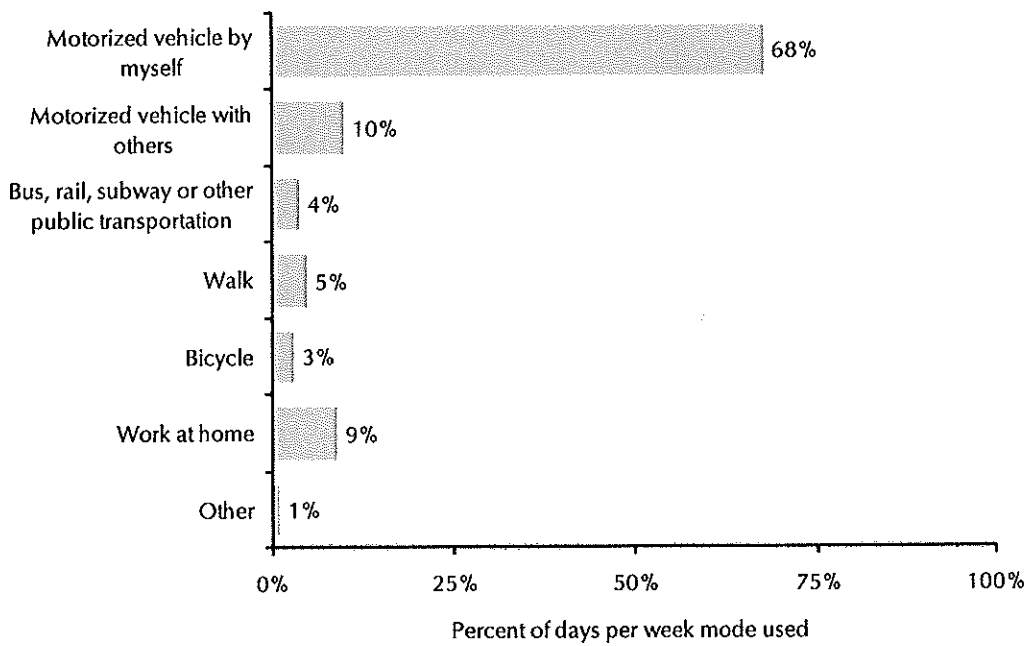


FIGURE 11: MODE OF TRAVEL USED FOR WORK COMMUTE



The National Citizen Survey™ by National Research Center, Inc.

## Housing

Housing variety and affordability are not luxuries for any community. When there are too few options for housing style and affordability, the characteristics of a community tilt heavily to a homogeneous palette, often of well-off residents. While this may seem attractive to a community, the absence of affordable townhomes, condominiums, mobile homes, single family detached homes and apartments means that in addition to losing the vibrancy of diverse thoughts and lifestyles, the community loses the service workers that sustain all communities – police officers, school teachers, house painters and electricians. These workers must live elsewhere and commute in at great personal cost and to the detriment of traffic flow and air quality. Furthermore lower income residents who can sustain in a community with mostly high cost housing pay so much of their income to rent or mortgage that little remains to bolster their own quality of life or local business.

The survey of the City of Asheville residents asked respondents to reflect on the availability of affordable housing as well as the variety of housing options. The availability of affordable housing was rated as “excellent” or “good” by 12% of respondents, while the variety of housing options was rated as “excellent” or “good” by 28% of respondents. The rating of perceived affordable housing availability was worse in the City of Asheville than the ratings, on average, in comparison jurisdictions.

FIGURE 12: RATINGS OF HOUSING IN COMMUNITY

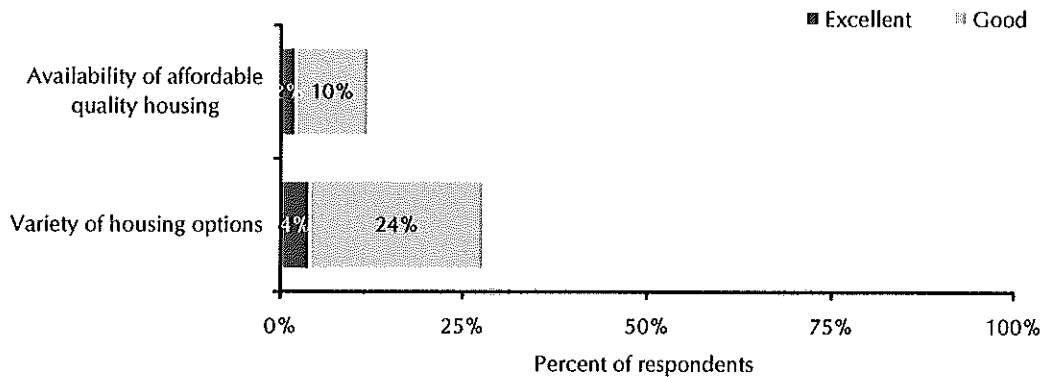
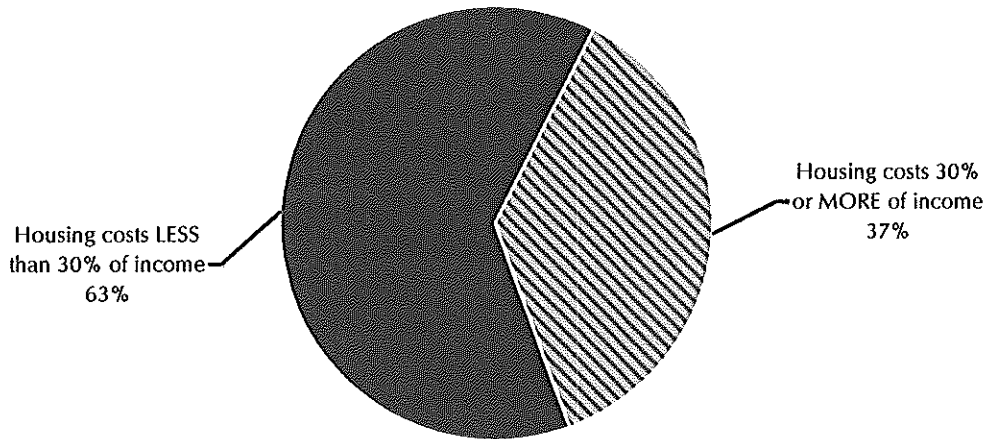


FIGURE 13: HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Availability of affordable quality housing	Below
Variety of housing options	Below

To augment the perceptions of affordable housing in Asheville, the cost of housing as reported in the survey was compared to residents' reported monthly income to create a rough estimate of the proportion of residents of the City of Asheville experiencing housing cost stress. About one-third of survey participants were found to pay housing costs of more than 30% of their monthly household income.

FIGURE 14: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WHOSE HOUSING COSTS ARE "AFFORDABLE"



## Land Use and Zoning

Community development contributes to a feeling among residents and even visitors of the attention given to the speed of growth, the location of residences and businesses, the kind of housing that is appropriate for the community and the ease of access to commerce, green space and residences. Even the community's overall appearance often is attributed to the planning and enforcement functions of the local jurisdiction. Residents will appreciate an attractive, well-planned community. The NCS questionnaire asked residents to evaluate the quality of new development, the appearance of the City of Asheville and the speed of population growth. Problems with the appearance of property were rated, and the quality of land use planning, zoning and code enforcement services were evaluated.

The overall quality of new development in the City of Asheville was rated as "excellent" by 6% of respondents and as "good" by an additional 34%. The overall appearance of Asheville was rated as "excellent" or "good" by 68% of respondents and was similar to the benchmark. When rating to what extent run down buildings, weed lots or junk vehicles were a problem in the City of Asheville, 54% thought they were a "major" or "moderate" problem.

FIGURE 15: RATINGS OF THE COMMUNITY'S "BUILT ENVIRONMENT"

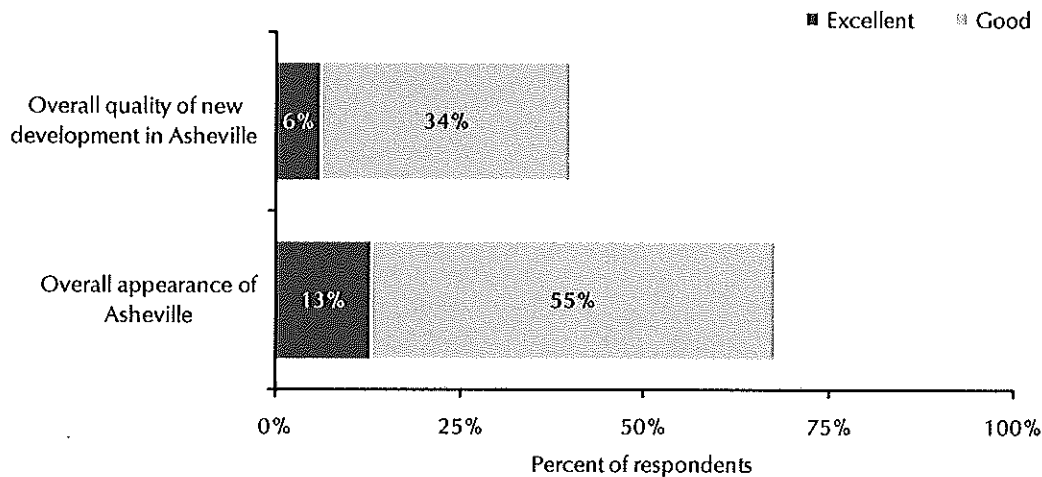


FIGURE 16: BUILT ENVIRONMENT BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Quality of new development in city	Below
Overall appearance of Asheville	Similar



FIGURE 17: RATINGS OF POPULATION GROWTH

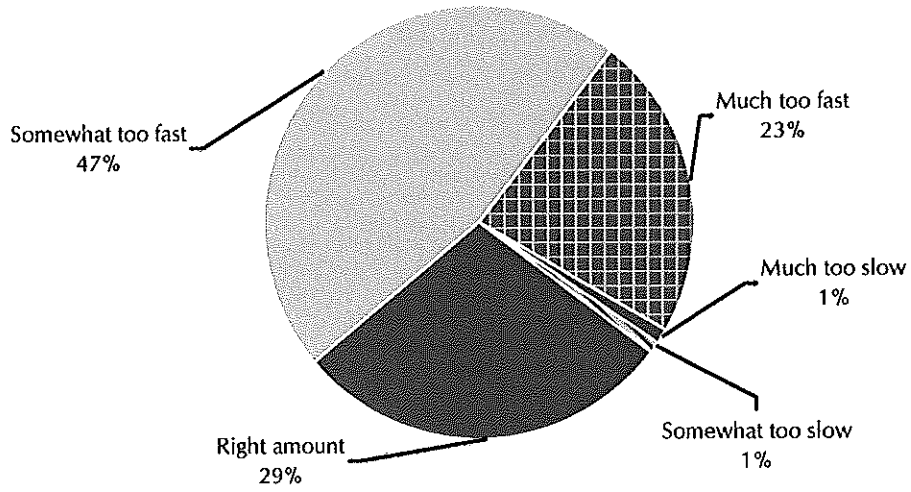


FIGURE 18: RATINGS OF NUISANCE PROBLEMS

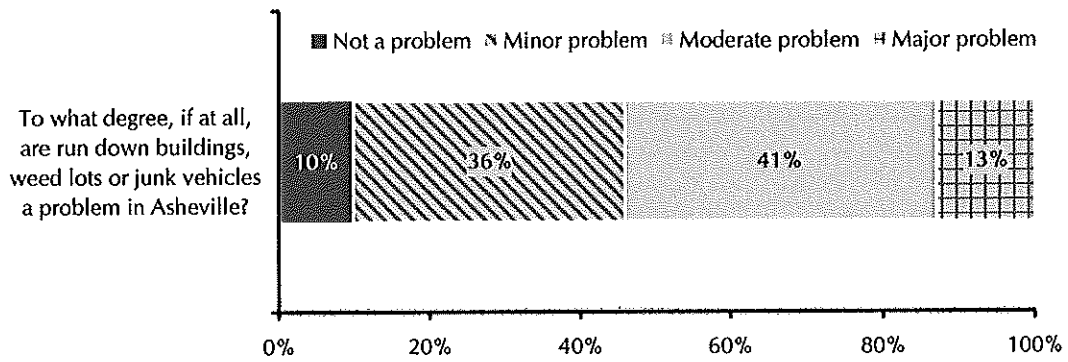


FIGURE 19: RATINGS OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY CODE ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

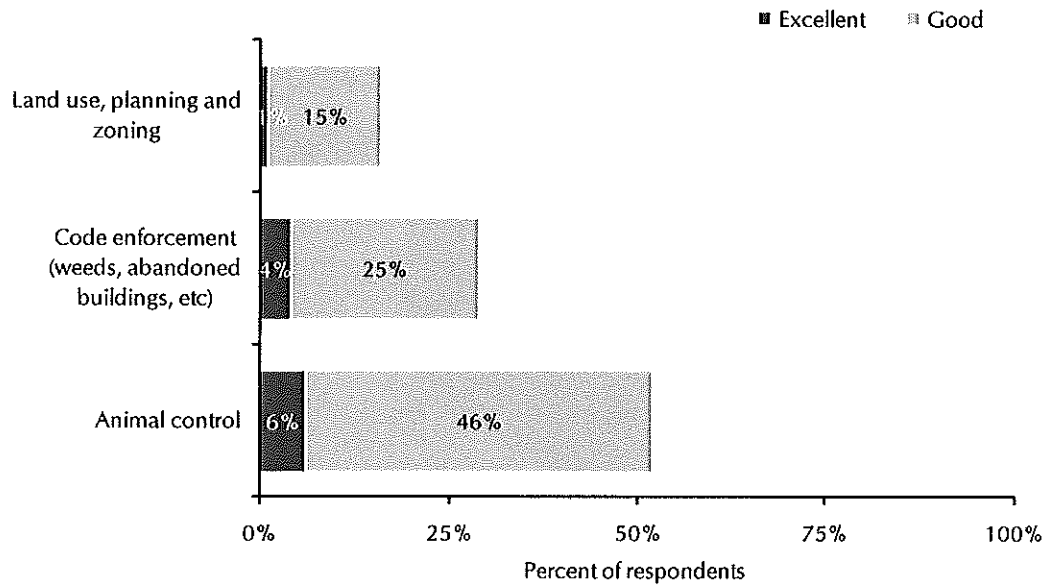


FIGURE 20: PLANNING AND COMMUNITY CODE ENFORCEMENT SERVICES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Land use, planning and zoning	Below
Code enforcement (weeds, abandoned buildings, etc)	Below
Animal control	Below

## ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

The health of the economy may color how residents perceive their environment and all the services that local government delivers. In particular, a strong or weak local economy will shape what residents think about job and shopping opportunities. Just as residents have an idea about the speed of local population growth, they have a sense of how fast job and shopping opportunities are growing.

Survey respondents were asked to rate a number of community features related to economic opportunity and growth. The most positively rated features were shopping opportunities and the overall quality of business and service establishments in Asheville. Receiving the lowest rating was employment opportunities.

FIGURE 21: RATINGS OF ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AND OPPORTUNITIES

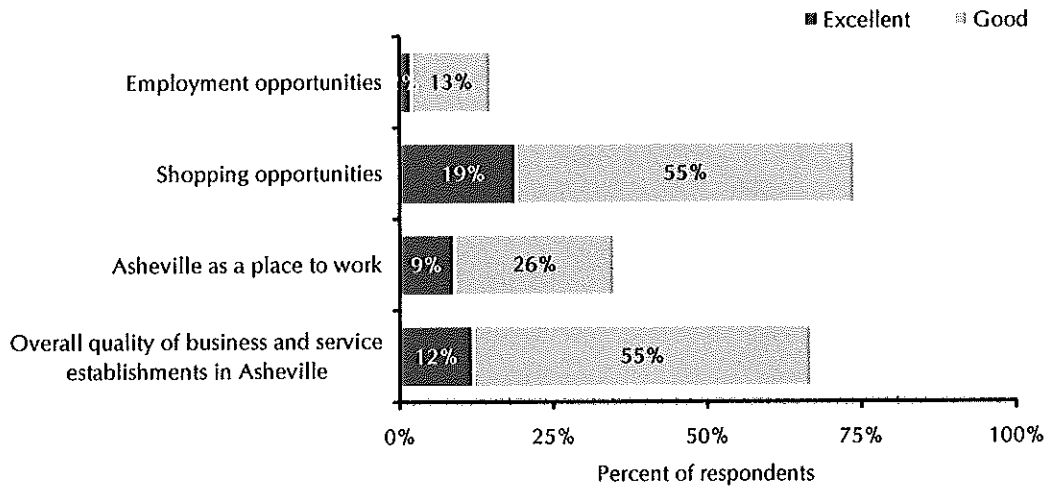


FIGURE 22: ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AND OPPORTUNITIES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Employment opportunities	Below
Shopping opportunities	Above
Place to work	Below
Overall quality of business and service establishments in Asheville	Above

When asked to evaluate the rate of job growth in Asheville, 7% responded that it was the “right amount,” while 46% reported the “right amount” of retail growth was occurring in Asheville.

FIGURE 23: RATINGS OF RETAIL AND JOB GROWTH

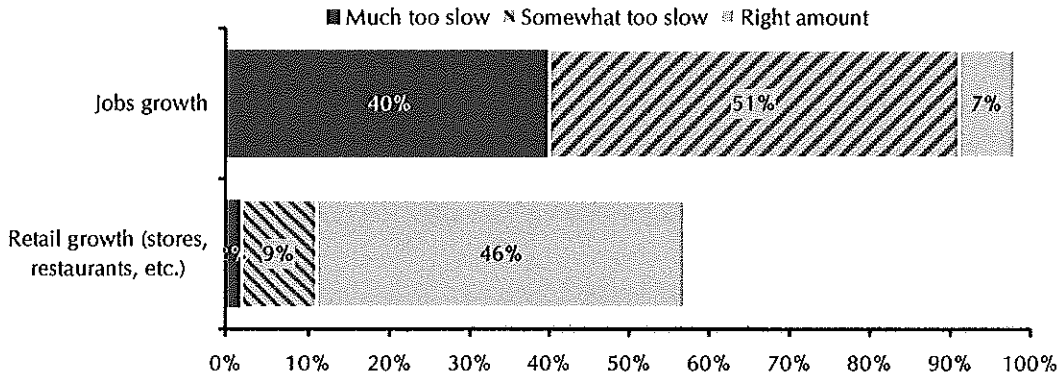


FIGURE 24: RATINGS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

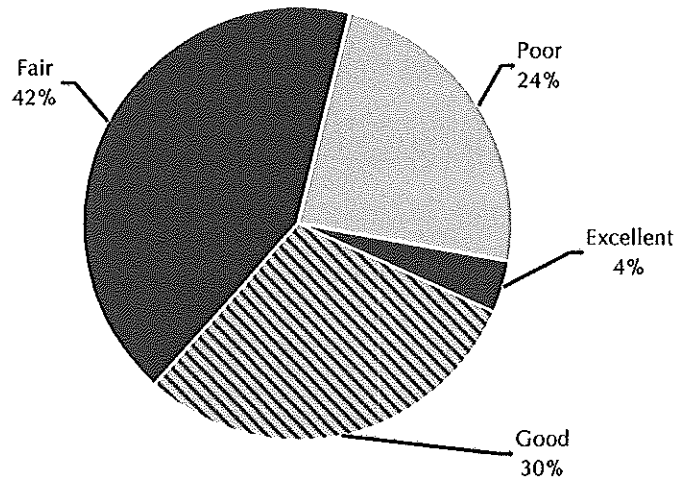
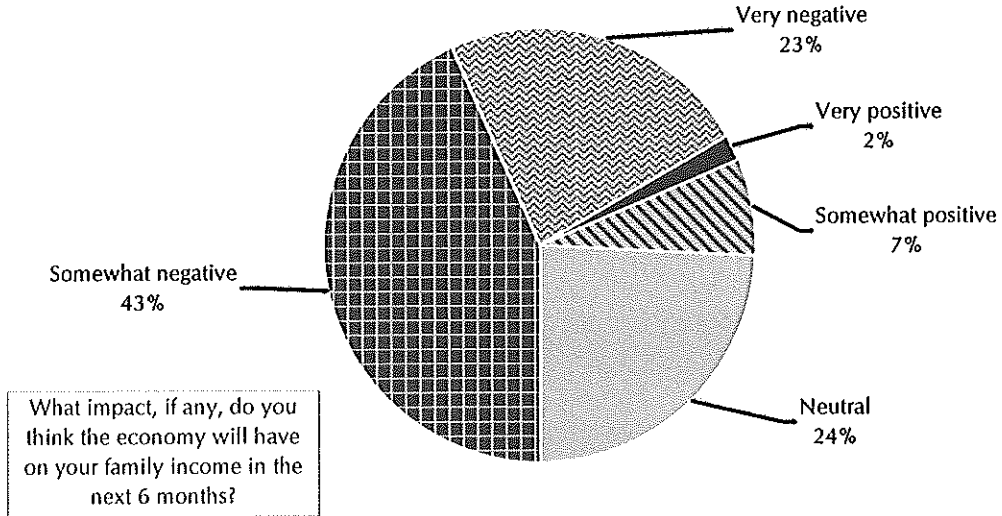


FIGURE 25: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES BENCHMARKS

Comparison to benchmark	
Economic development	Below

Residents were asked to reflect on their economic prospects in the near term. Nine percent of the City of Asheville residents expected that the coming six months would have a "somewhat" or "very" positive impact on their family, while 66% felt that the economic future would be "somewhat" or "very" negative.

FIGURE 26: RATINGS OF PERSONAL ECONOMIC FUTURE



## PUBLIC SAFETY

Safety from violent or property crimes creates the cornerstone of an attractive community. No one wants to live in fear of crime, fire or natural hazards, and communities in which residents feel protected or unthreatened are communities that are more likely to show growth in population, commerce and property value.

Residents were asked to rate their feelings of safety from violent crimes, property crimes, fire and environmental dangers and to evaluate the local agencies whose main charge is to provide protection from these dangers. A majority gave positive ratings of safety in the City Asheville. About 63% percent of those completing the questionnaire said they felt "very" or "somewhat" safe from violent crimes and 61% felt "very" or "somewhat" safe from environmental hazards. Daytime sense of safety was better than nighttime safety and neighborhoods felt safer than downtown.

FIGURE 27: RATINGS OF COMMUNITY AND PERSONAL PUBLIC SAFETY

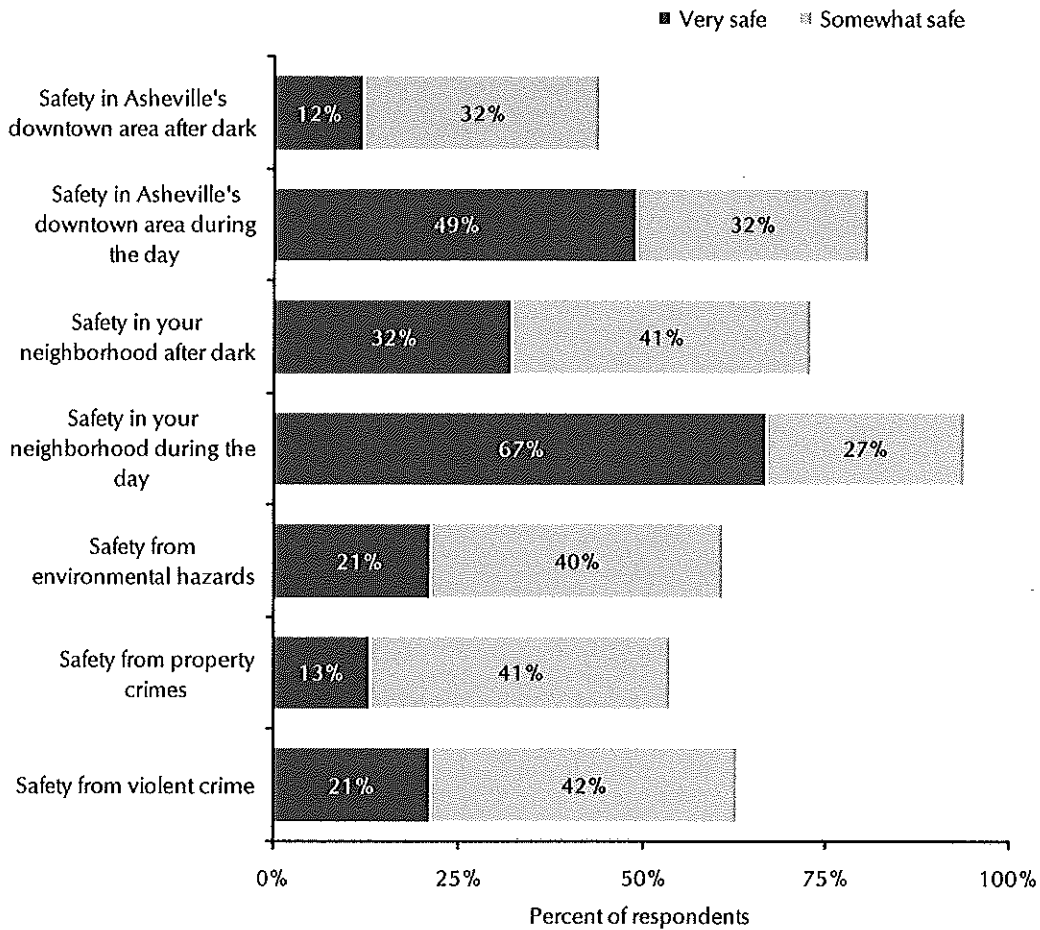
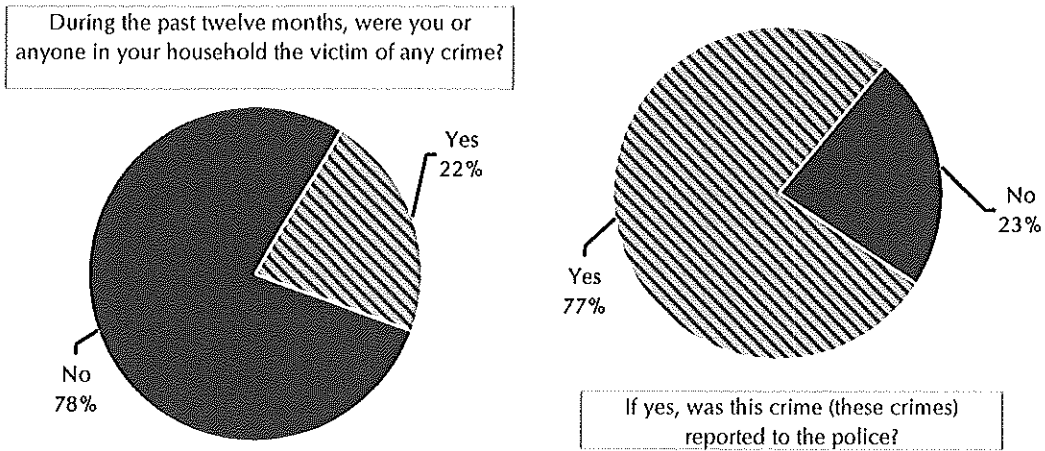


FIGURE 28: COMMUNITY AND PERSONAL PUBLIC SAFETY BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Safety in Asheville's downtown area after dark	Below
Safety in Asheville's downtown area during the day	Similar
Safety in your neighborhood after dark	Similar
Safety in your neighborhood during the day	Above
Toxic waste or other environmental hazard(s)	Below
Safety from property crimes (e.g., burglary, theft)	Below
Safety from violent crime (e.g., rape, assault, robbery)	Below

As assessed by the survey, 22% of respondents reported that someone in the household had been the victim of one or more crimes in the past year. Of those who had been the victim of a crime, 77% had reported it to police.

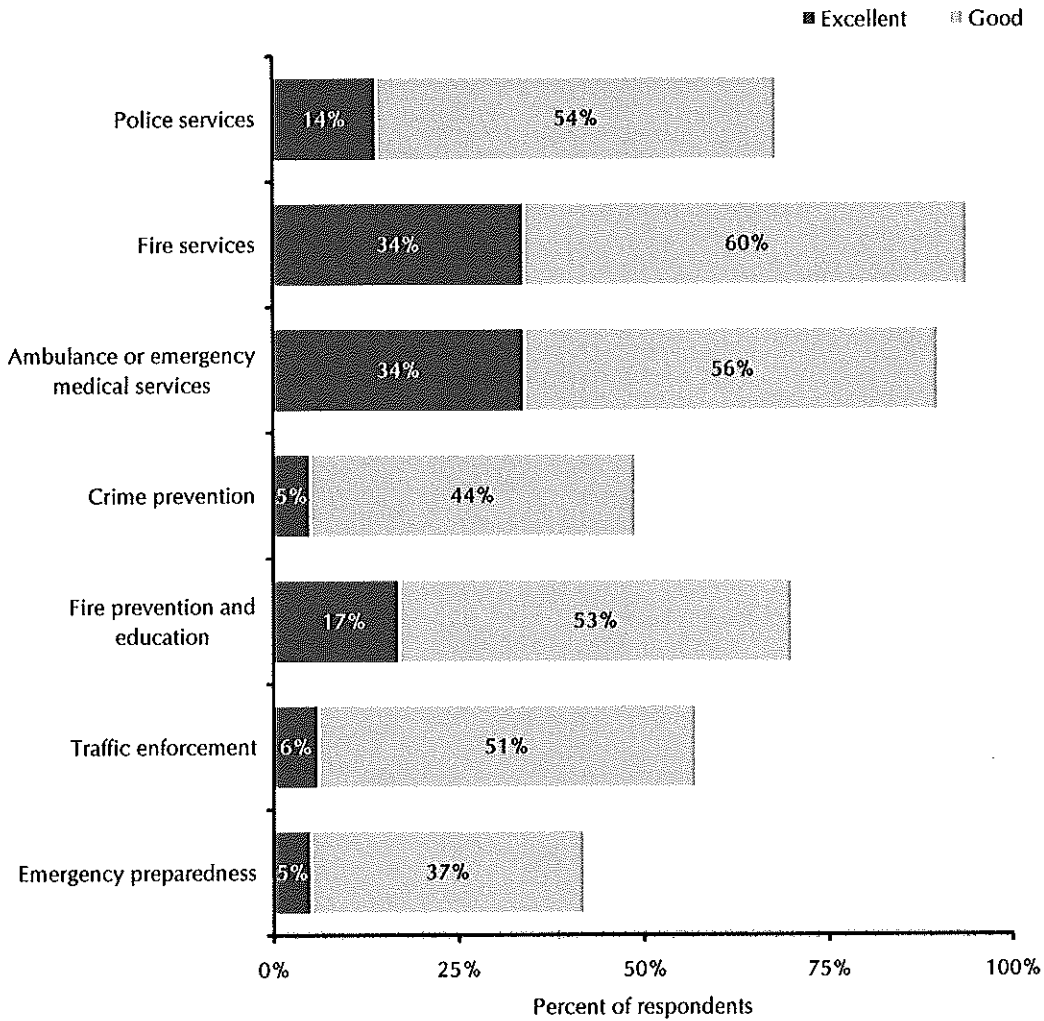
FIGURE 29: CRIME VICTIMIZATION AND REPORTING





Residents rated seven City public safety services; of these, none were rated above the benchmark comparison, three were rated similar to the benchmark comparison and four were rated below the benchmark comparison. Fire and emergency medical services received the highest ratings, while emergency preparedness and crime prevention received the lowest ratings.

FIGURE 30: RATINGS OF PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES



The National Citizen Survey™ by National Research Center, Inc.

FIGURE 31: PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Police services	Below
Fire services	Similar
EMS/ambulance	Similar
Crime prevention	Below
Fire prevention and education	Similar
Traffic enforcement	Below
Emergency preparedness	Below

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Residents value the aesthetic qualities of their hometowns and appreciate features such as overall cleanliness and landscaping. In addition, the appearance and smell or taste of the air and water do not go unnoticed. These days, increasing attention is paid to proper treatment of the environment. At the same time that they are attending to community appearance and cleanliness, cities, counties, states and the nation are going "Green". These strengthening environmental concerns extend to trash haul, recycling, sewer services, the delivery of power and water and preservation of open spaces. Treatment of the environment affects air and water quality and, generally, how habitable and inviting a place appears

Residents of the City of Asheville were asked to evaluate their local environment and the services provided to ensure its quality. The overall quality of the natural environment was rated as "excellent" or "good" by 68% of survey respondents, it received the highest rating, and it was below the benchmark.

FIGURE 32: RATINGS OF THE COMMUNITY'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

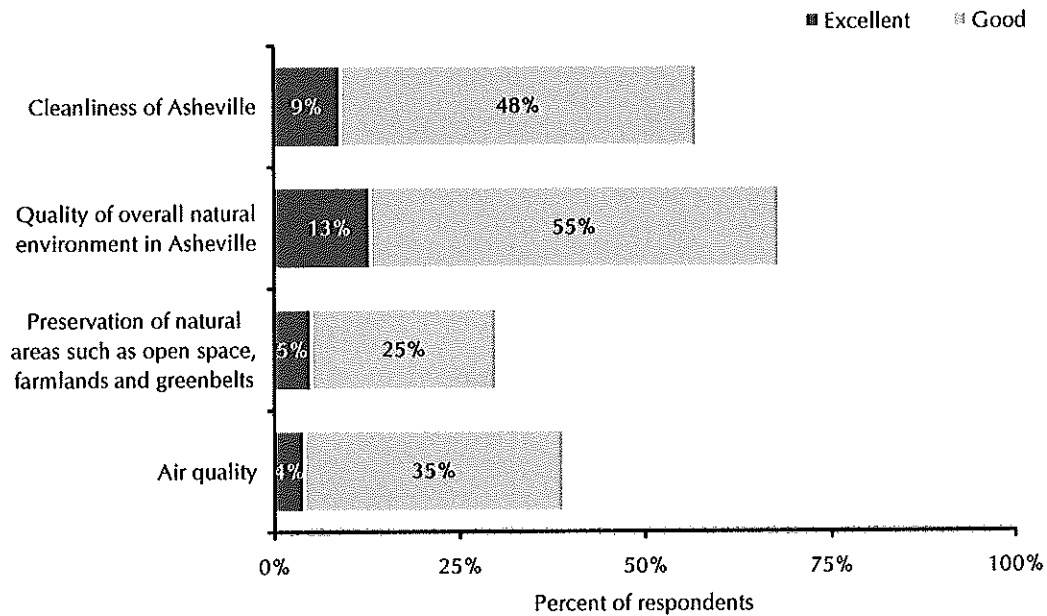


FIGURE 33: COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Cleanliness of Asheville	Below
Quality of overall natural environment in Asheville	Below
Preservation of natural areas such as open space, farmlands and greenbelts	Below
Air quality	Below

Of the five utility services rated by those completing the questionnaire, four were similar and one was below the benchmark comparison.

FIGURE 34: RATINGS OF UTILITY SERVICES

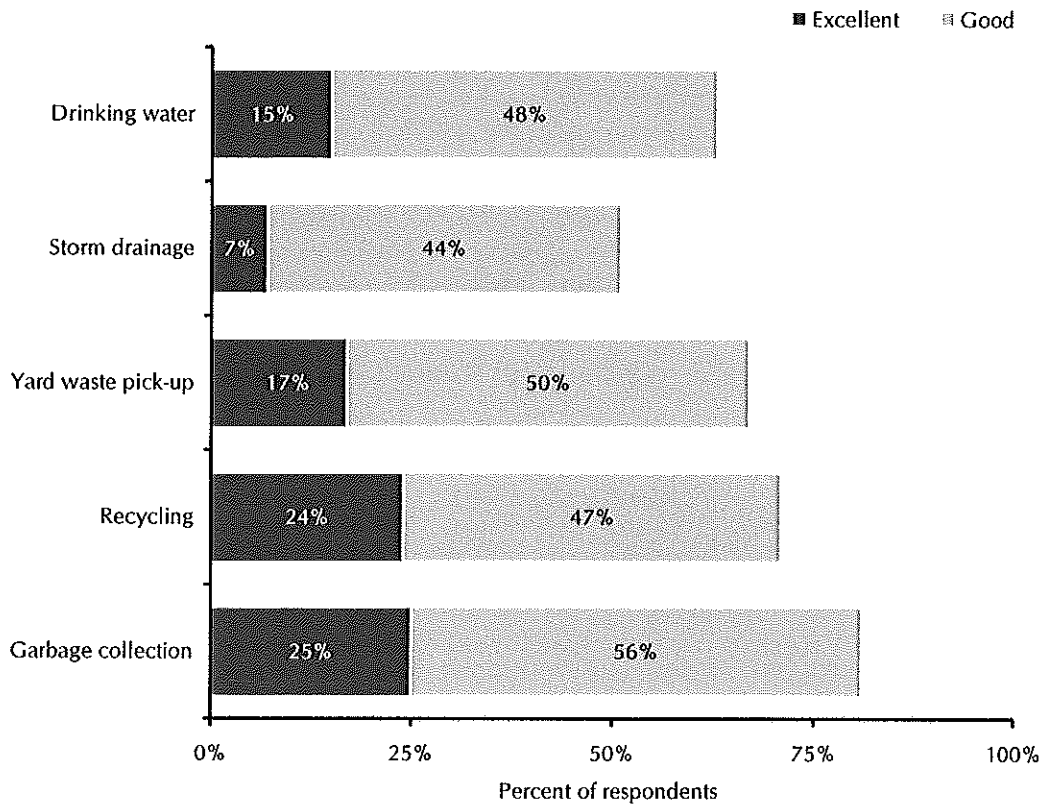


FIGURE 35: UTILITY SERVICES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Drinking water	Similar
Storm drainage	Similar
Yard waste pick-up	Below
Recycling	Similar
Garbage collection	Similar

## RECREATION AND WELLNESS

### Parks and Recreation

Quality parks and recreation opportunities help to define a community as more than the grind of its business, traffic and hard work. Leisure activities vastly can improve the quality of life of residents, serving both to entertain and mobilize good health. The survey contained questions seeking residents' perspectives about opportunities and services related the community's parks and recreation services.

Recreation opportunities in the City of Asheville were rated positively as were services related to parks and recreation.

FIGURE 36: RATINGS OF COMMUNITY RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

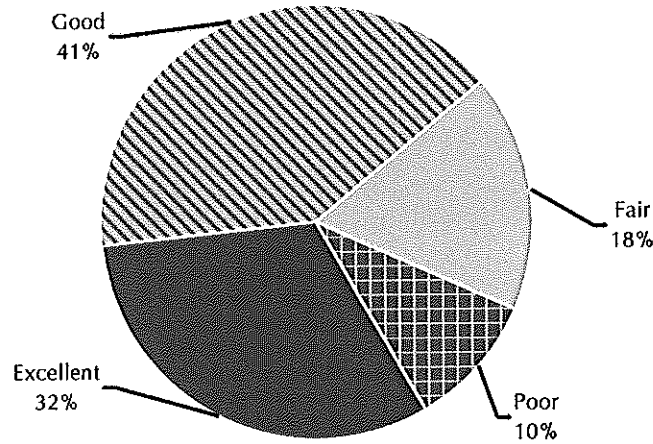


FIGURE 37: COMMUNITY RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES BENCHMARKS

Comparison to benchmark	
Recreation opportunities	Above

FIGURE 38: PARTICIPATION IN PARKS AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

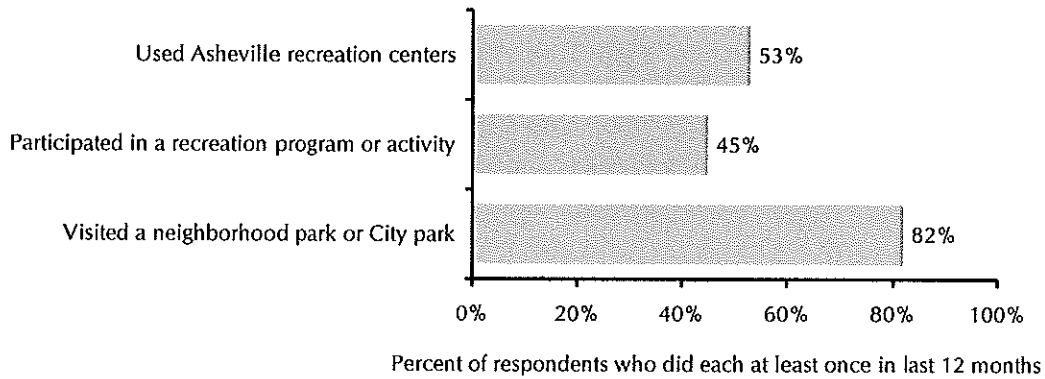


FIGURE 39: RATINGS OF PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES

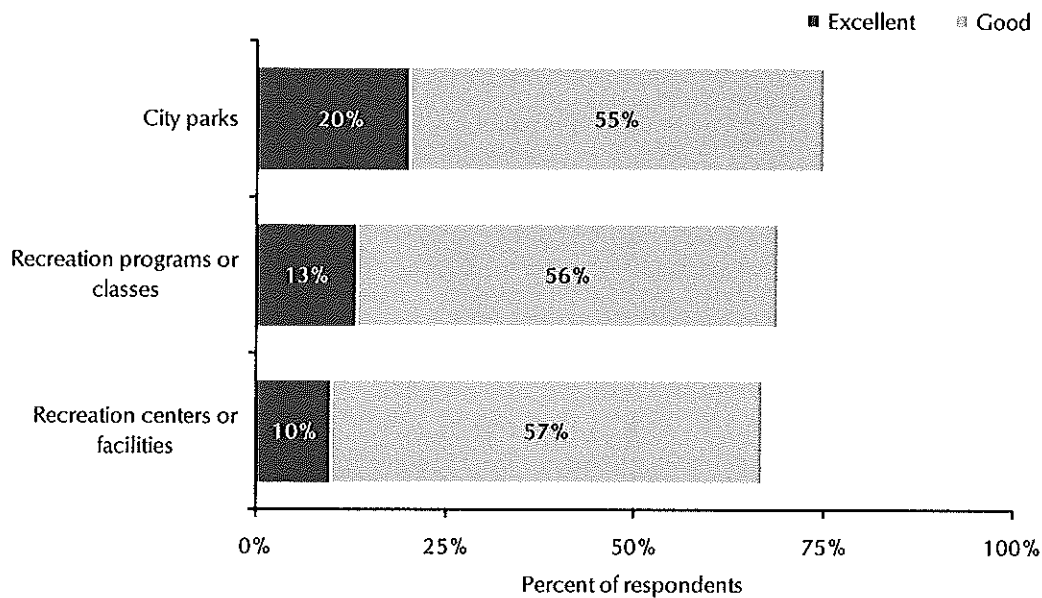


FIGURE 40: PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
City parks	Below
Recreation programs or classes	Similar
Recreation centers or facilities	Below

### Culture, Arts and Education

A full service community does not address only the life and safety of its residents. Like an individual who drudges to the office and returns home, a community that pays attention only to the life sustaining basics becomes insular, dreary and uninspiring to business and individuals. In the case of communities without thriving culture, arts and education opportunities, the magnet that attracts those who might consider relocating there is vastly weakened. Cultural, artistic, social and educational services elevate the opportunities for personal growth among residents. In the survey, residents were asked about the quality of opportunities to participate in cultural and educational activities.

Opportunities to attend cultural activities was rated as "excellent" or "good" by 80% of respondents. Educational opportunities were rated as "excellent" or "good" by 70% of respondents. Compared to the benchmark data, educational opportunities were above the average of comparison jurisdictions, as was cultural activity opportunities.

FIGURE 41: RATINGS OF CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

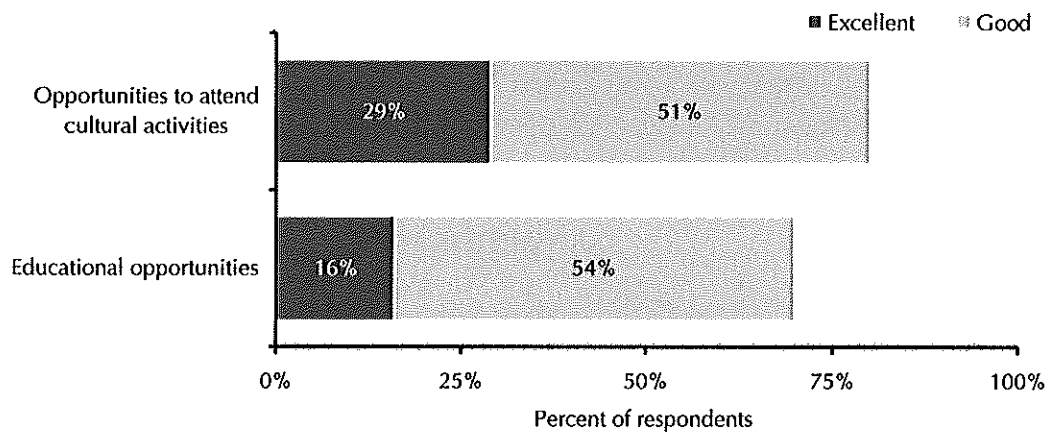


FIGURE 42: CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Opportunities to attend cultural activities	Above
Educational opportunities	Above

FIGURE 43: PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

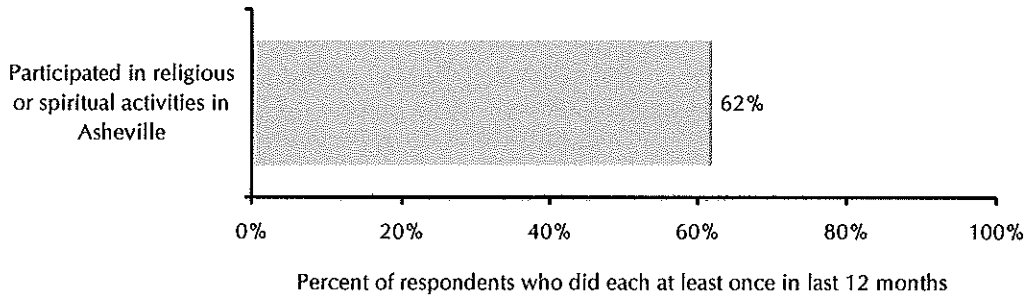


FIGURE 44: PERCEPTION OF CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

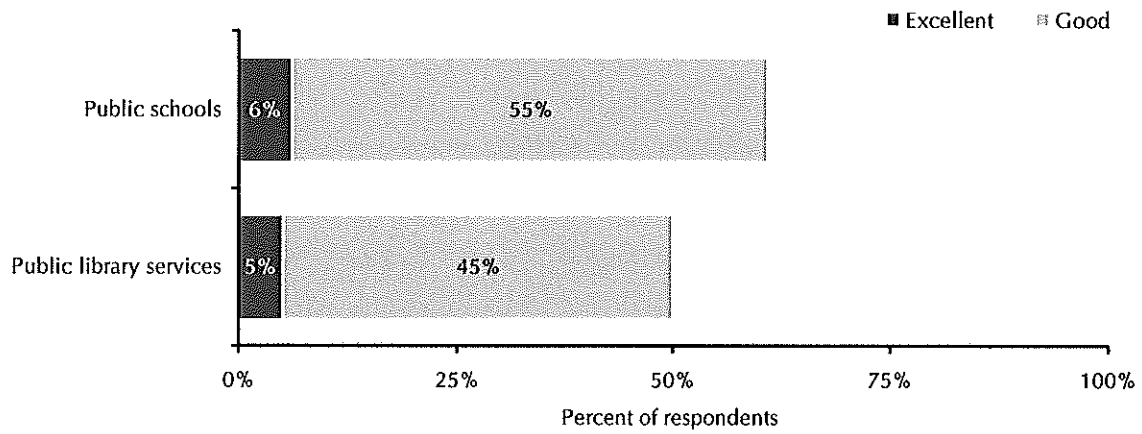


FIGURE 45: CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Public schools	Below
Public library services	Below



### Community Inclusiveness

Diverse communities that include among their residents a mix of races, ages, wealth, ideas and beliefs have the raw material for the most vibrant and creative society. However, the presence of these features alone does not ensure a high quality or desirable space. Surveyed residents were asked about the success of the mix: the sense of community, the openness of residents to people of diverse backgrounds and the attractiveness of the City of Asheville as a place to raise children or to retire. They were also questioned about the quality of services delivered to various population subgroups, including older adults, youth and residents with few resources. A community that succeeds in creating an inclusive environment for a variety of residents is a community that offers more to many.

A high percentage of residents rated the City of Asheville as an “excellent” or “good” place to raise kids and a high percentage rated it as an excellent or good place to retire. Most residents felt the local sense of community was excellent or good. Most survey respondents felt the City of Asheville was open and accepting towards people of diverse backgrounds. Sense of community was rated the lowest by residents but was higher than the benchmark.

FIGURE 46: RATINGS OF COMMUNITY QUALITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

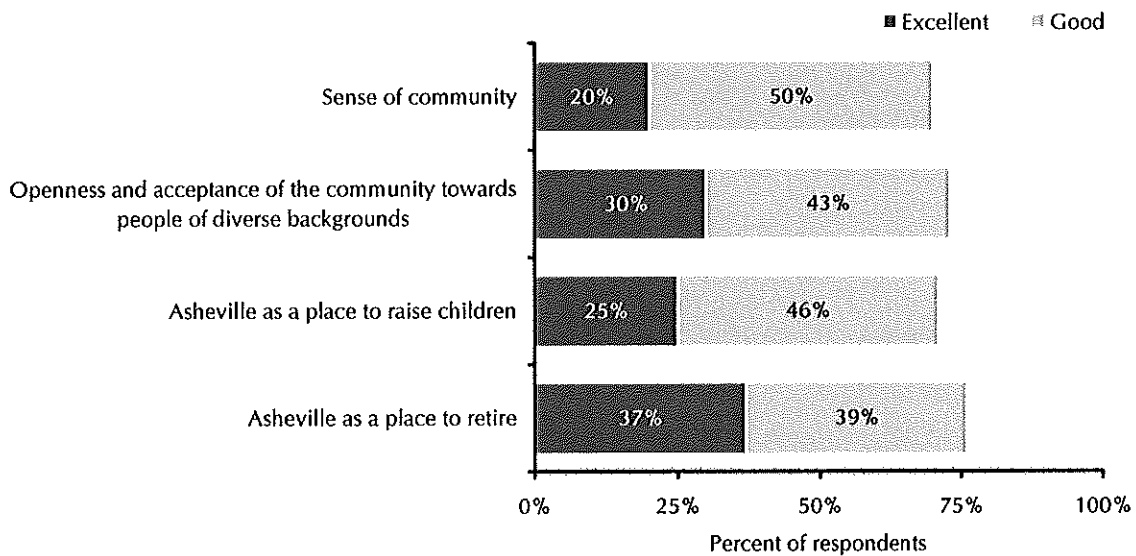


FIGURE 47: COMMUNITY QUALITY AND INCLUSIVENESS BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Sense of community	Above
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	Above
Asheville as a place to raise children	Similar
Asheville as a place to retire	Above

The National Citizen Survey™ of National Research Corporation, Inc.

Services to more vulnerable populations (e.g., seniors, youth or low-income residents) ranged from 32% to 49% with ratings of "excellent" or "good."

FIGURE 48: RATINGS OF QUALITY OF SERVICES PROVIDED FOR POPULATION SUBGROUPS

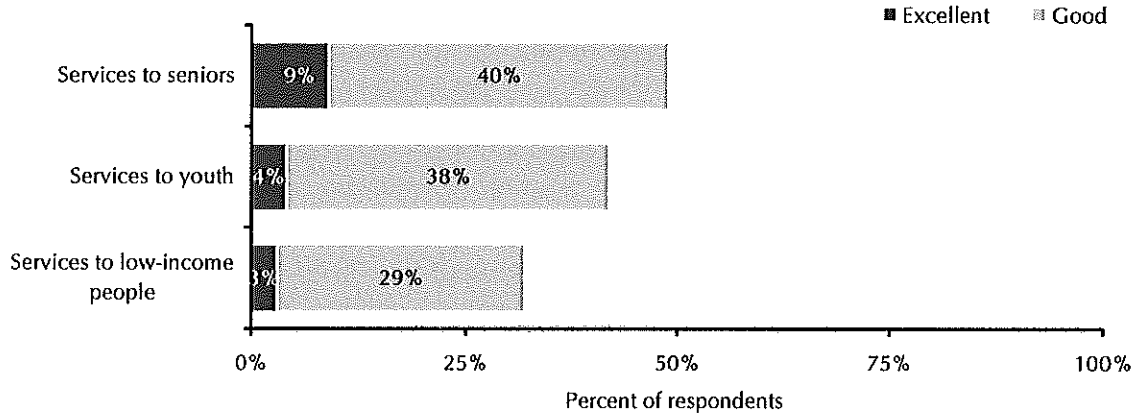


FIGURE 49: SERVICES PROVIDED FOR POPULATION SUBGROUPS BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Services to seniors	Below
Services to youth	Below
Services to low income residents	Below

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Government leaders, elected or hired, cannot run a jurisdiction alone and a jurisdiction cannot run effectively if residents remain strangers with little to connect them. Staff and elected officials require the assistance of local residents whether that assistance comes in tacit approval or eager help; and commonality of purpose among the electorate facilitates policies and programs that appeal to most and causes discord among few. Furthermore, when neighbors help neighbors, the cost to the community to provide services to residents in need declines. When residents are civically engaged, they have taken the opportunity to participate in making the community more livable for all. The extent to which local government provides opportunities to become informed and engaged and the extent to which residents take those opportunities is an indicator of the connection between government and populace. By understanding your residents' level of connection to, knowledge of and participation in local government, the City can find better opportunities to communicate and educate citizens about its mission, services, accomplishments and plans. This survey information is essential for public communication and for helping local government staff to conceive strategies for reaching reluctant voters whose confidence in government may need boosting prior to important referenda.

### Civic Activity

Respondents were asked about the perceived community volunteering opportunities and their participation as citizens of the City of Asheville. Survey participants rated the volunteer opportunities in the City of Asheville favorably. Opportunities to attend or participate in community matters were rated less favorably.

FIGURE 50: RATINGS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

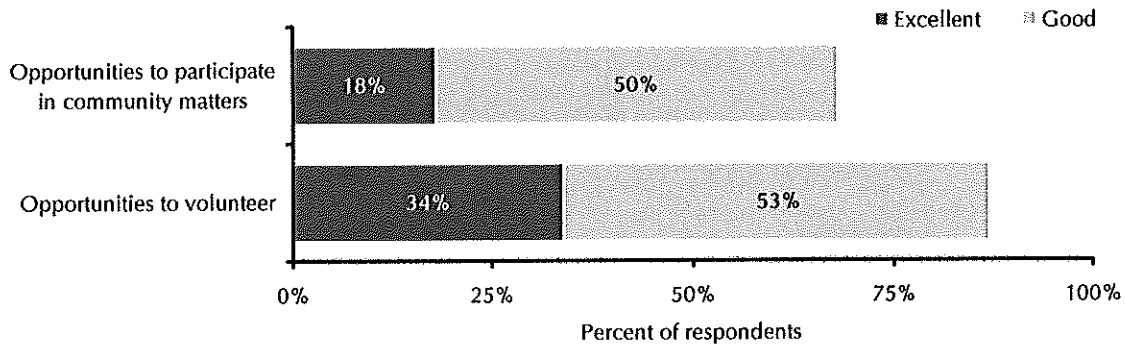
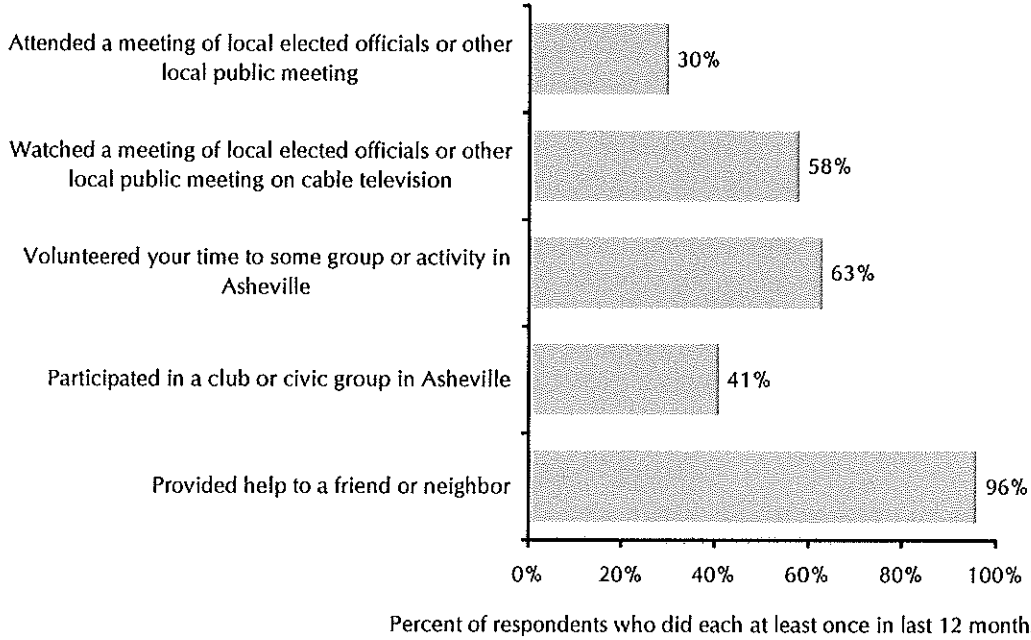


FIGURE 51: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Opportunities to participate in community matters	Above
Opportunities to volunteer	Above

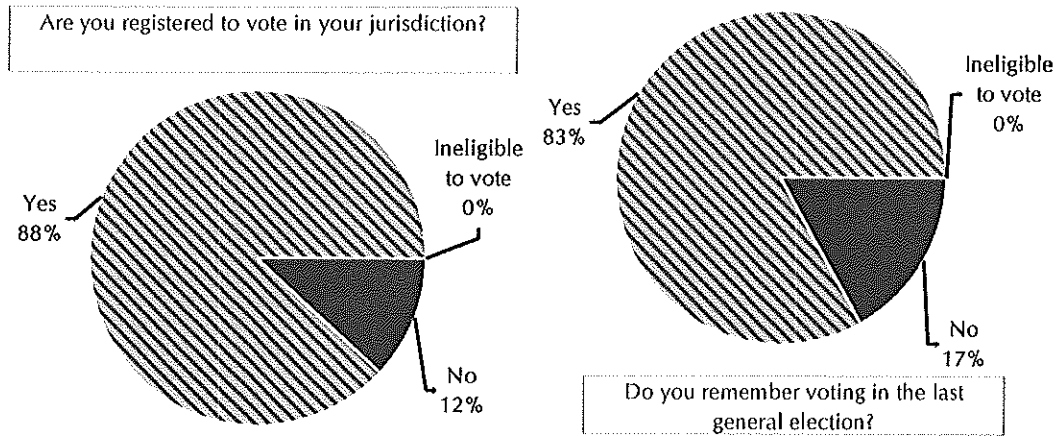
Most of the participants in this survey had not attended a public meeting in the 12 months prior, but the vast majority had helped a friend.

FIGURE 52: PARTICIPATION IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES



City of Asheville residents showed the largest amount of civic engagement in the area of electoral participation. About 88% reported they were registered to vote; 83% indicated they had voted in the last general election.

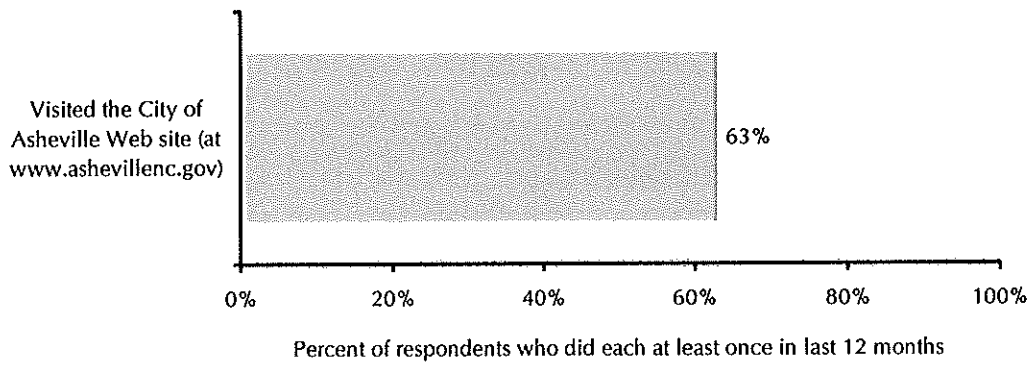
FIGURE 53: REPORTED VOTING BEHAVIOR



### Information and Awareness

Those completing the survey were asked about their use and perceptions of various information sources and local government media services. When asked whether they had visited the City of Asheville Web site in the previous 12 months, 63% reported they had done so at least once.

FIGURE 54: USE OF INFORMATION SOURCES



## Social Engagement

Opportunities to participate in social events and activities were rated as “excellent” or “good” by 78% of respondents, while even more rated opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events and activities as “excellent” or “good.”

FIGURE 55: RATINGS OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

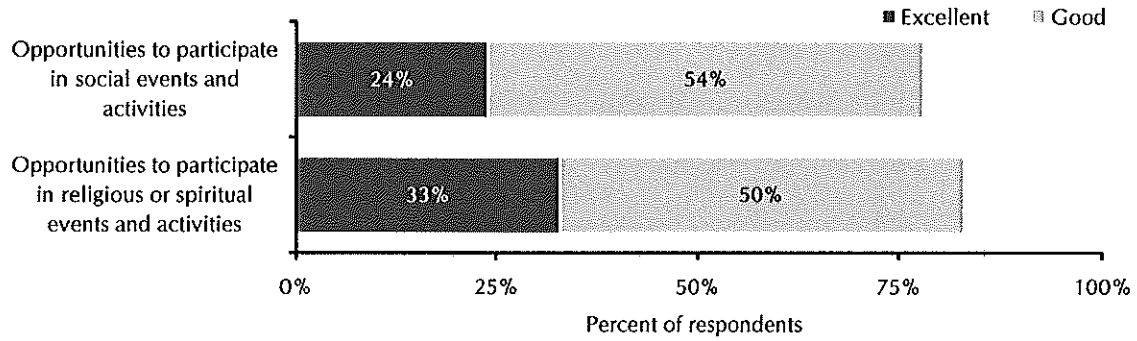


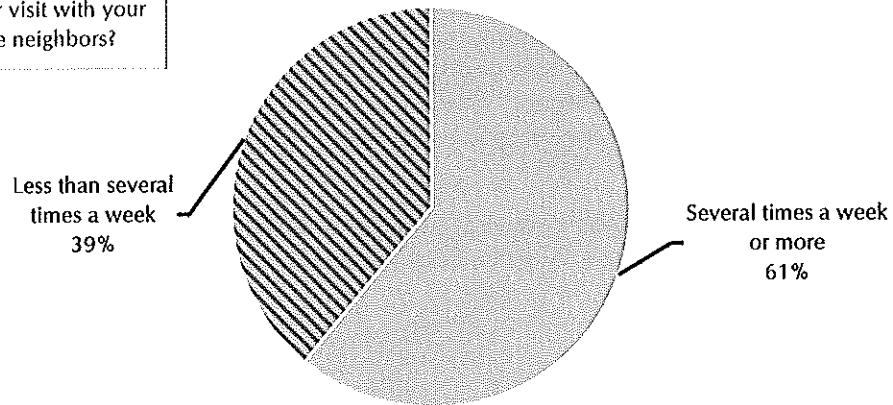
FIGURE 56: SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Opportunities to participate in social events and activities	Above
Opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events	Above

Residents in Asheville reported a strong amount of neighborliness. More than 61% indicated talking or visiting with their neighbors several times a week or more frequently.

FIGURE 57: CONTACT WITH IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS

About how often, if at all, do you talk to or visit with your immediate neighbors?



### Public Trust

Residents are more likely to cooperate with the proposals and policies advanced by their community leaders when trust in local government officials runs high. Trust can be measured in residents' opinions about the overall direction the City of Asheville is taking, their perspectives about the service value their taxes purchase and the openness of government to citizen participation. In addition, resident opinion about services provided by the City of Asheville could be compared to their opinion about services provided by the state and federal governments. If residents find nothing to admire in the services delivered by any level of government, their opinions about the City of Asheville may be colored by their dislike of what all levels of government provide.

Less than half of respondents felt that the value of services for taxes paid was "excellent" or "good." When asked to rate the job the City of Asheville does at listening to citizens, 47% rated it as "excellent" or "good."

FIGURE 58: PUBLIC TRUST RATINGS

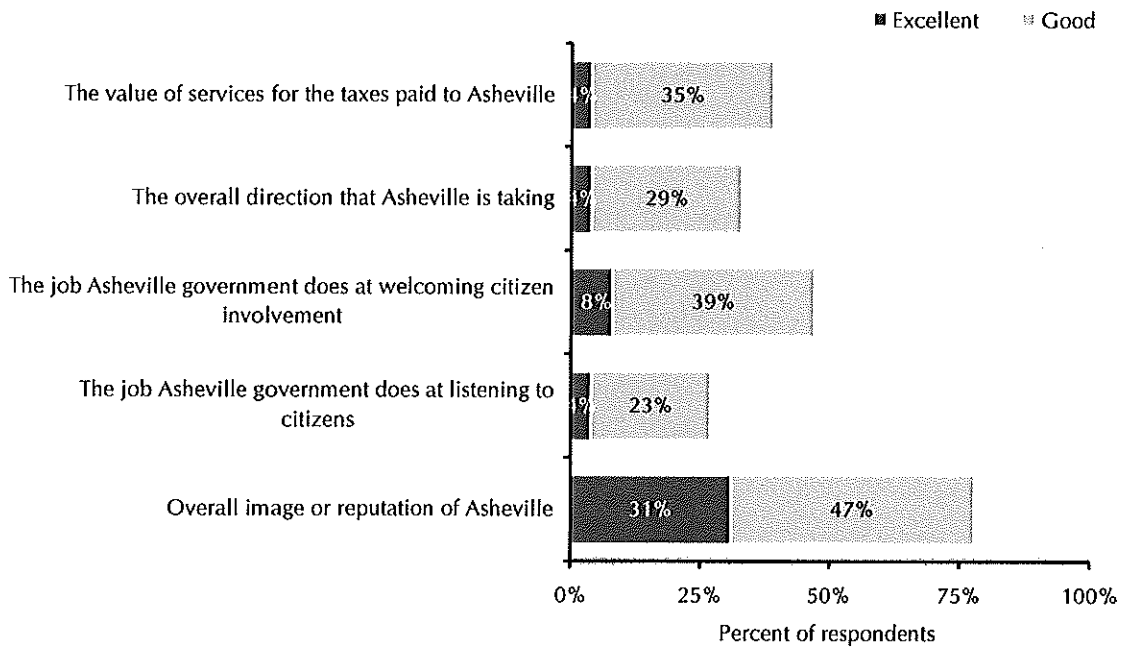


FIGURE 59: PUBLIC TRUST BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Value of services for the taxes paid to Asheville	Below
The overall direction that Asheville is taking	Below
Job Asheville government does at welcoming citizen involvement	Below
Job Asheville government does at listening to citizens	Below
Overall image or reputation of Asheville	Above

The National Citizen Survey™ by National Research Center, Inc.



On average, residents of the City of Asheville gave the highest evaluations to their own local government and the lowest average rating to the federal government. The overall quality of services delivered by the City of Asheville was rated as “excellent” or “good” by 64% of survey participants. The City of Asheville’s rating was below the benchmark when compared to other communities in the nation.

FIGURE 60: RATINGS OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS

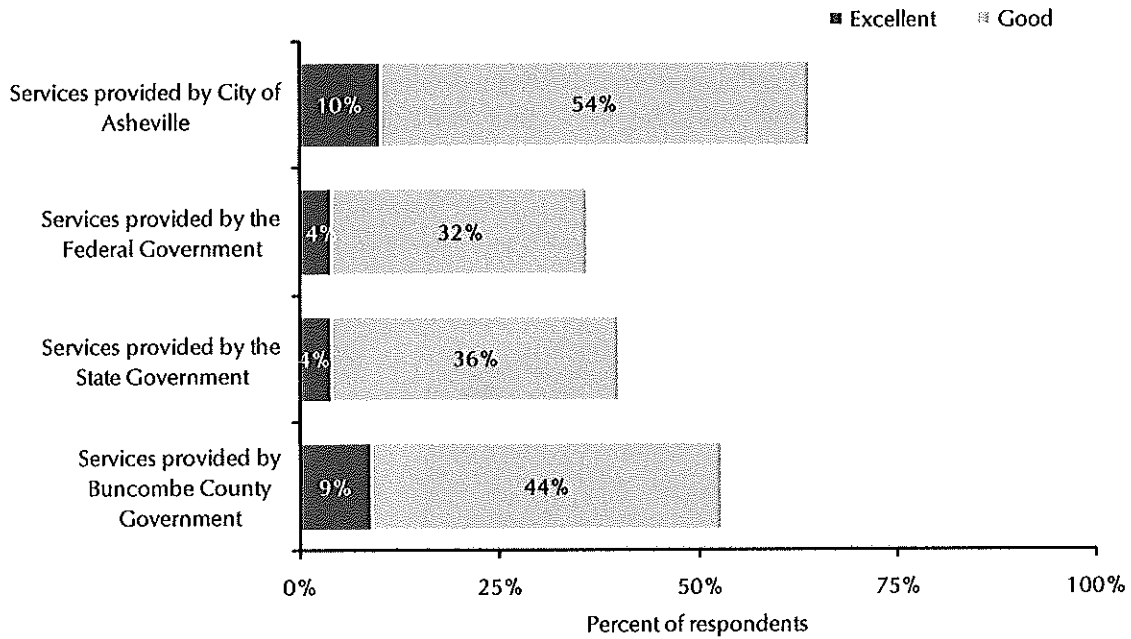


FIGURE 61: SERVICES PROVIDED BY LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Services provided by the City of Asheville	Below
Services provided by the Federal Government	Below
Services provided by the State Government	Below
Buncombe County government general	Similar

### City of Asheville Employees

The employees of the City of Asheville who interact with the public create the first impression that most residents have of the City of Asheville. Front line staff who provide information, assist with bill paying, collect trash, create service schedules, fight fires and crime and even give traffic tickets are the collective face of the City of Asheville. As such, it is important to know about residents' experience talking with that "face." When employees appear to be knowledgeable, responsive and courteous, residents are more likely to feel that any needs or problems may be solved through positive and productive interactions with the City of Asheville staff.

Those completing the survey were asked if they had been in contact with a City employee either in-person or over the phone in the last 12 months; the 60% who reported that they had been in contact were then asked to indicate overall how satisfied they were with the employee in their most recent contact. City employees were rated highly; 75% of respondents rated their overall impression as "excellent" or "good."

FIGURE 62: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAD CONTACT WITH CITY EMPLOYEES IN PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

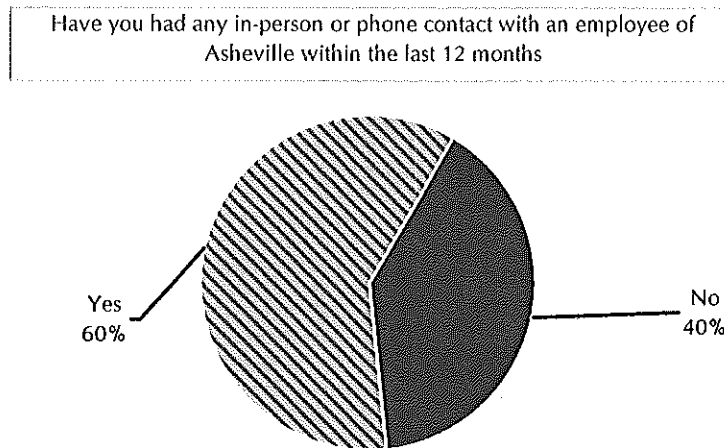
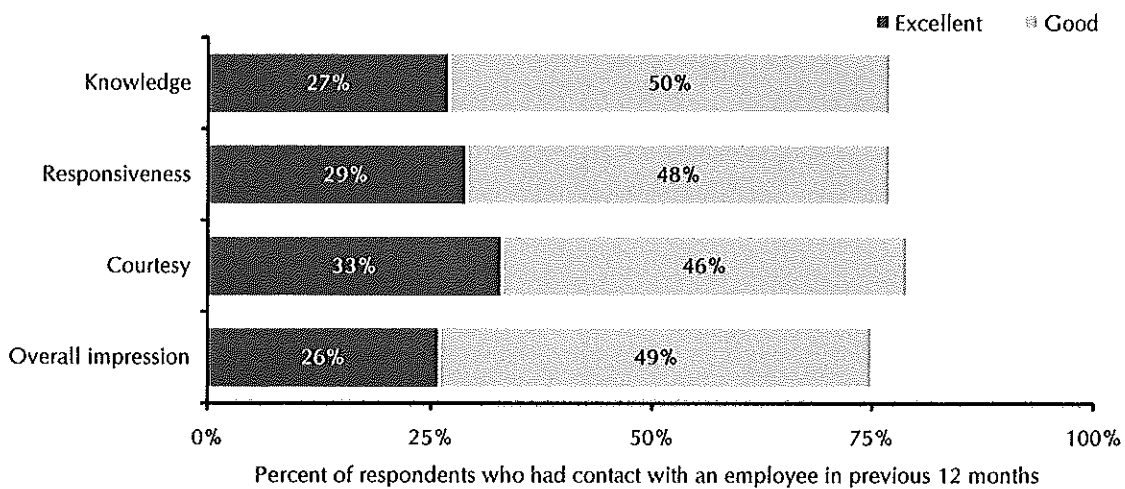


FIGURE 63: RATINGS OF CITY EMPLOYEES (AMONG THOSE WHO HAD CONTACT)



The National Citizen Survey™ by National Research Center, Inc.

FIGURE 64: RATINGS OF CITY EMPLOYEES (AMONG THOSE WHO HAD CONTACT) BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Knowledge	Similar
Responsiveness	Similar
Courtesy	Similar
Overall impression	Similar

## FROM DATA TO ACTION

### RESIDENT PRIORITIES

Knowing where to focus limited resources to improve residents' opinions of local government requires information that targets the services that are most important to residents. However, when residents are asked what services are most important, they rarely stray beyond core services – those directed to save lives and improve safety.

In market research, identifying the most important characteristics of a transaction or product is called Key Driver Analysis. The key drivers that are identified from that analysis do not come from asking customers to self-report which service or product characteristic most influenced their decision to buy or return, but rather from statistical analyses of the predictors of their behavior. When customers are asked to name the most important characteristics of a good or service, responses often are expected or misleading – just as they can be in the context of a citizen survey. For example, air travelers often claim that safety is the primary consideration in their choice of an airline, yet key driver analysis reveals that frequent flier perks or in-flight entertainment predicts their buying decisions.

In local government core services – like fire protection – invariably land at the top of the list created when residents are asked about the most important local government services. And core services are important. But by using Key Driver Analysis, our approach digs deeper to identify the less obvious, but more influential services that are most related to residents' ratings of overall quality of local government services. Because services focused directly on life and safety remain essential to quality government, it is suggested that core services should remain the focus of continuous monitoring and improvement where necessary – but monitoring core services or asking residents to identify important services is not enough.

A Key Driver Analysis (KDA) was conducted for the City of Asheville by examining the relationships between ratings of each service and ratings of the City of Asheville's overall services. Those key driver services that correlated most highly with residents' perceptions about overall City service quality have been identified. By targeting improvements in key services, the City of Asheville can focus on the services that have the greatest likelihood of influencing residents' opinions about overall service quality.

Services found to be most strongly correlated with ratings of overall service quality from the Asheville Key Driver Analysis were:

- Land use, planning and zoning
- City parks
- Street cleaning
- Police services