

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

## DeLand, FL

Community Livability Report

2019



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# About

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

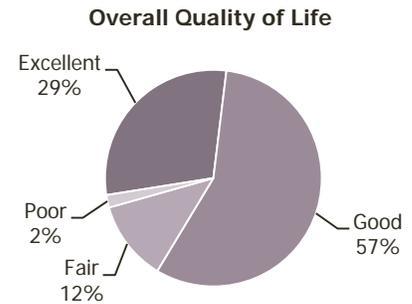
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 532 residents of the city of DeLand. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% for all respondents. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



# Quality of Life in DeLand

More than 8 in 10 residents rated the quality of life in DeLand as excellent or good. This rating was similar to those given in other communities across the nation (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover) and improved from 2016 to 2019 (for more information see the *Trends over Time* report 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.

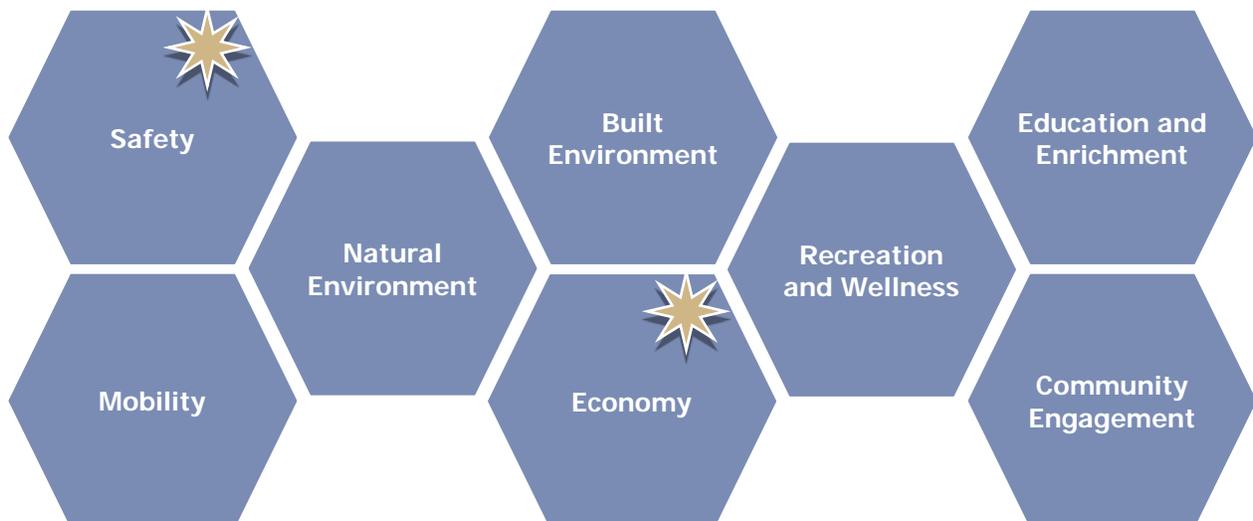
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. As in 2016, residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the DeLand community in the coming two years. These facets, as well as all other facets of community livability, were positive and similar to the benchmark comparisons. 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 DeLand’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 DeLand, 89% rated the city as an excellent or good place to live. This rating was similar to the national benchmark.

In addition to rating the city as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality. About 8 in 10 residents gave high marks to all aspects of community livability, including the overall image or reputation of DeLand, their neighborhood as a place to live and DeLand as a place to raise children (a rating that increased since 2016). Additionally, evaluations of DeLand as a place to retire were strong and higher than the national average.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Residents' ratings for all aspects within the facets of Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment and Recreation and Wellness were on par with comparison communities nationally.

At least half of respondents gave favorable reviews to most aspects of Economy, comparable to national comparisons. Marks for the vibrant downtown/commercial area and DeLand as a place to visit were higher than the benchmarks. Moreover, ratings improved since 2016 for overall economic health, employment opportunities and DeLand as a place to visit, but declined for overall quality of business and services establishments.



Residents also appreciated the opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities and opportunities to participate in social events and activities, evaluations that exceeded the national benchmarks.

Compared to 2016, survey participants' ratings for ease of travel by bicycle, adult educational opportunities and overall opportunities for education and enrichment declined in 2019. On a positive note, residents' assessments for ease of travel by public transportation, availability of housing options and openness and acceptance of the community towards people of diverse backgrounds improved from 2016 to 2019.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



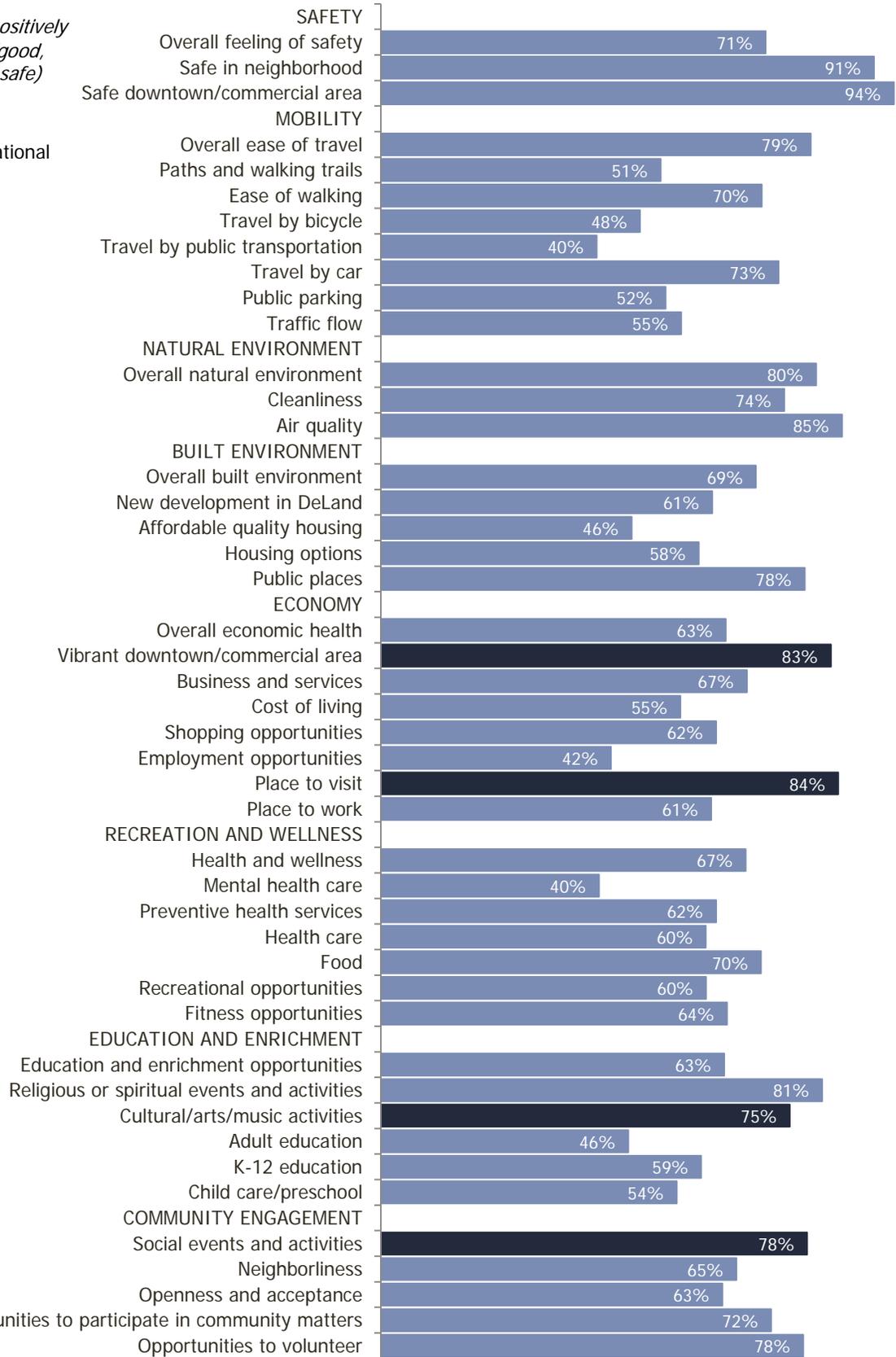
# The National Citizen Survey™

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 DeLand meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

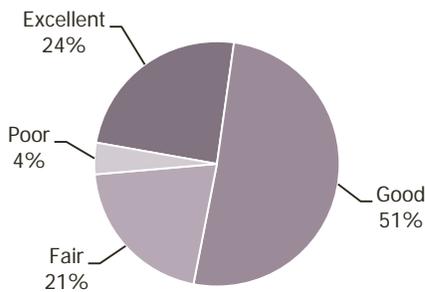
The overall quality of the services provided by DeLand as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About three-quarters of residents gave positive marks to the overall quality of City services, compared to 4 in 10 residents who were pleased with the services provided by the Federal Government. Both of these ratings were similar to those given in other communities.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of DeLand’s leadership and governance. The overall customer service provided by DeLand employees received the highest marks, with 73% of respondents rating this aspect as excellent or good. At least half of residents gave excellent or good ratings to all remaining aspects of government performance and these were similar to national averages. Reviews for the job the City government does at welcoming citizen involvement improved over time.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in DeLand. Almost all services were evaluated positively by a majority of residents and were on par with the national averages.

The highest-rated services were fire, ambulance/EMS and garbage collection, with at least 8 in 10 respondents awarding excellent or good ratings. Residents’ evaluations for City-sponsored special events eclipsed the national benchmarks. The lowest rated services tended to be concentrated within the facet of Built Environment (e.g., land use, planning and zoning; code enforcement and cable television); however, all of these services were still similar to those given nationwide.

Overall Quality of City Services

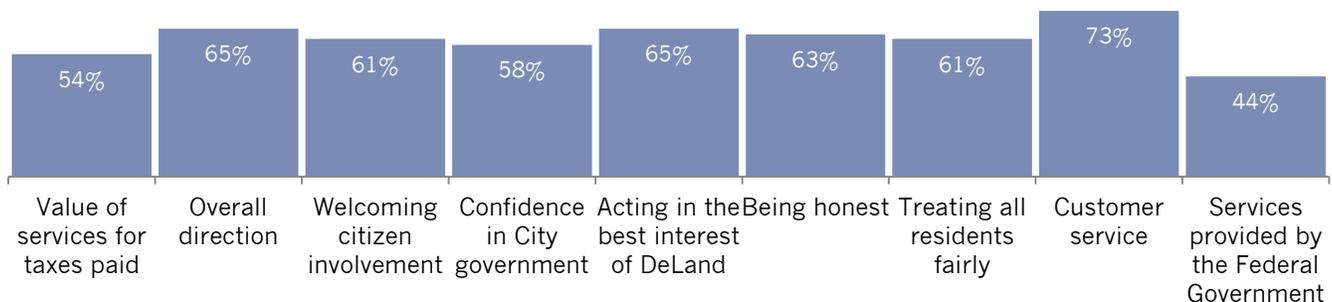


Reviews for eight services provided by the City improved from 2016 to 2019, including several Mobility-related services (e.g., street cleaning, street lighting, sidewalk maintenance and traffic signal timing). Improvements were also seen for animal control, storm drainage and recreation programs or classes.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



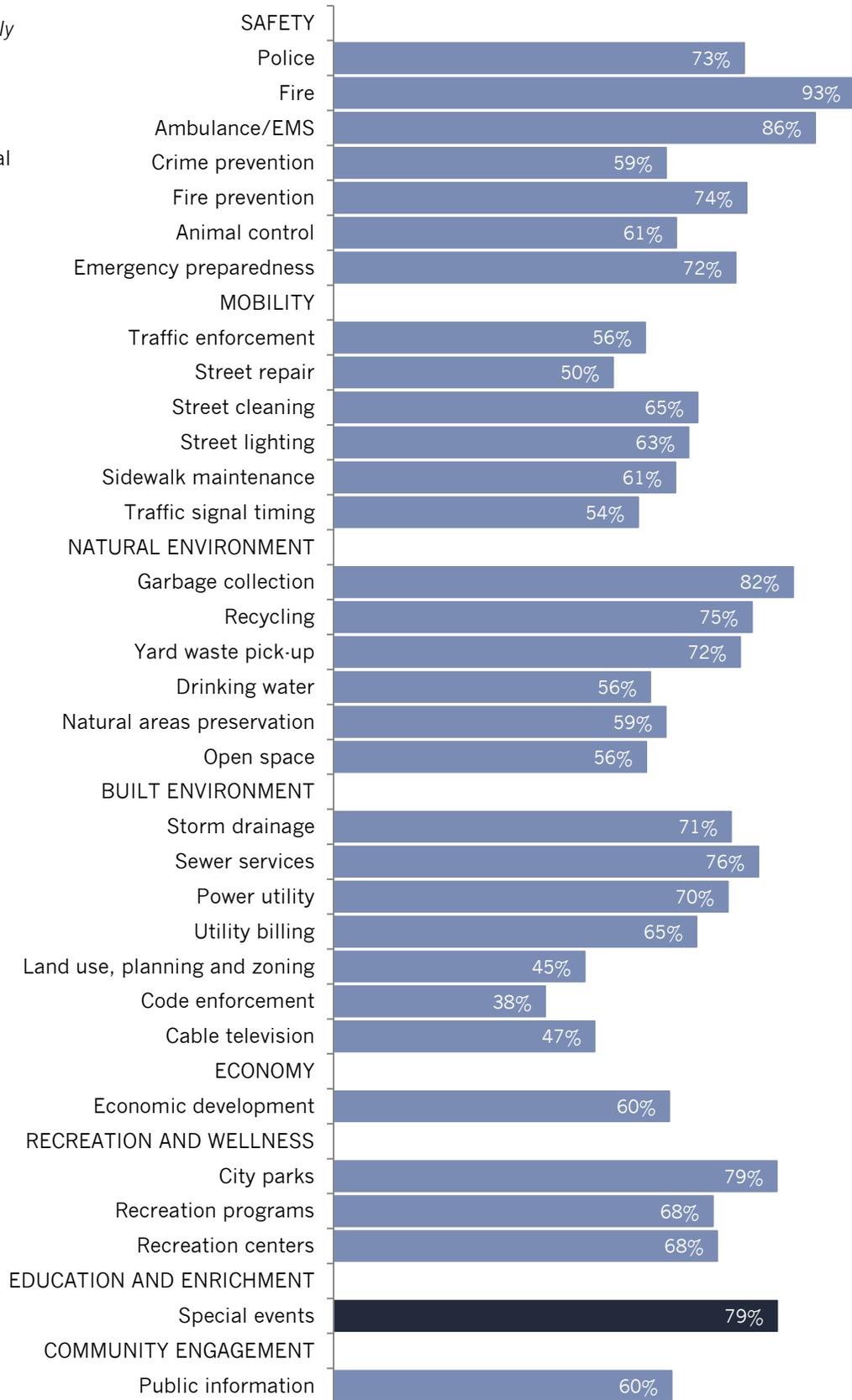
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



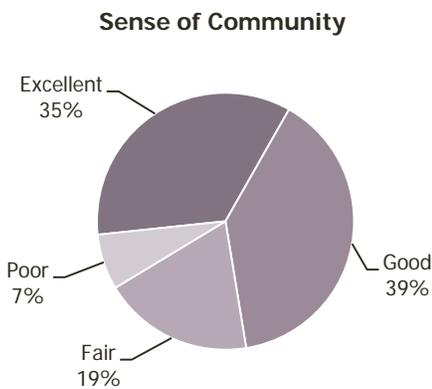
# Participation

*Are the residents of DeLand connected to the community and each other?*

An engaged community harnesses its most valuable resource, its residents. The connections and trust among residents, government, businesses and other organizations help to create a sense of community, a shared sense of membership, belonging and history. About three-quarters of DeLand residents gave high marks to the overall sense of community. This assessment was higher than what was observed in comparison communities across the nation.

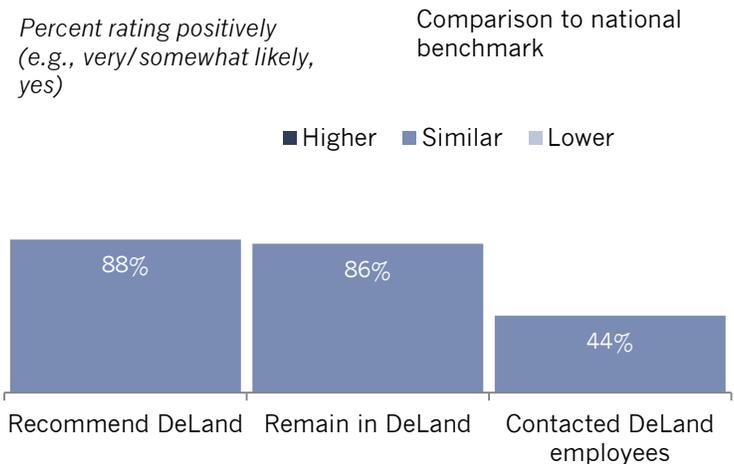
At least 8 in 10 residents were likely to recommend living in DeLand to someone who asked and planned to remain in DeLand for the next five years. These ratings were similar to the national benchmarks. About 4 in 10 residents had contacted DeLand employees to ask for help or information in the 12 months prior to the survey; this rate was on par with comparison communities, yet declined from 2016 to 2019.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Participation rates within DeLand varied widely, making the comparison to the benchmarks, as well as to rates over time, useful for interpreting the results. Residents' levels of participation related to the areas of Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, and Community Engagement were all on par with comparison communities across the nation.



DeLand residents were more likely than those who lived elsewhere to have stocked supplies for an emergency and attended a City-sponsored event, but also less likely to have used public transportation instead of driving.

DeLand residents indicated they were less involved in a number of activities in 2019 compared to 2016, including volunteering, participating in a club and campaigning for an issue, cause or candidate. They were also less likely to have reported they had used the recreation center or attended City-sponsored events, among others.



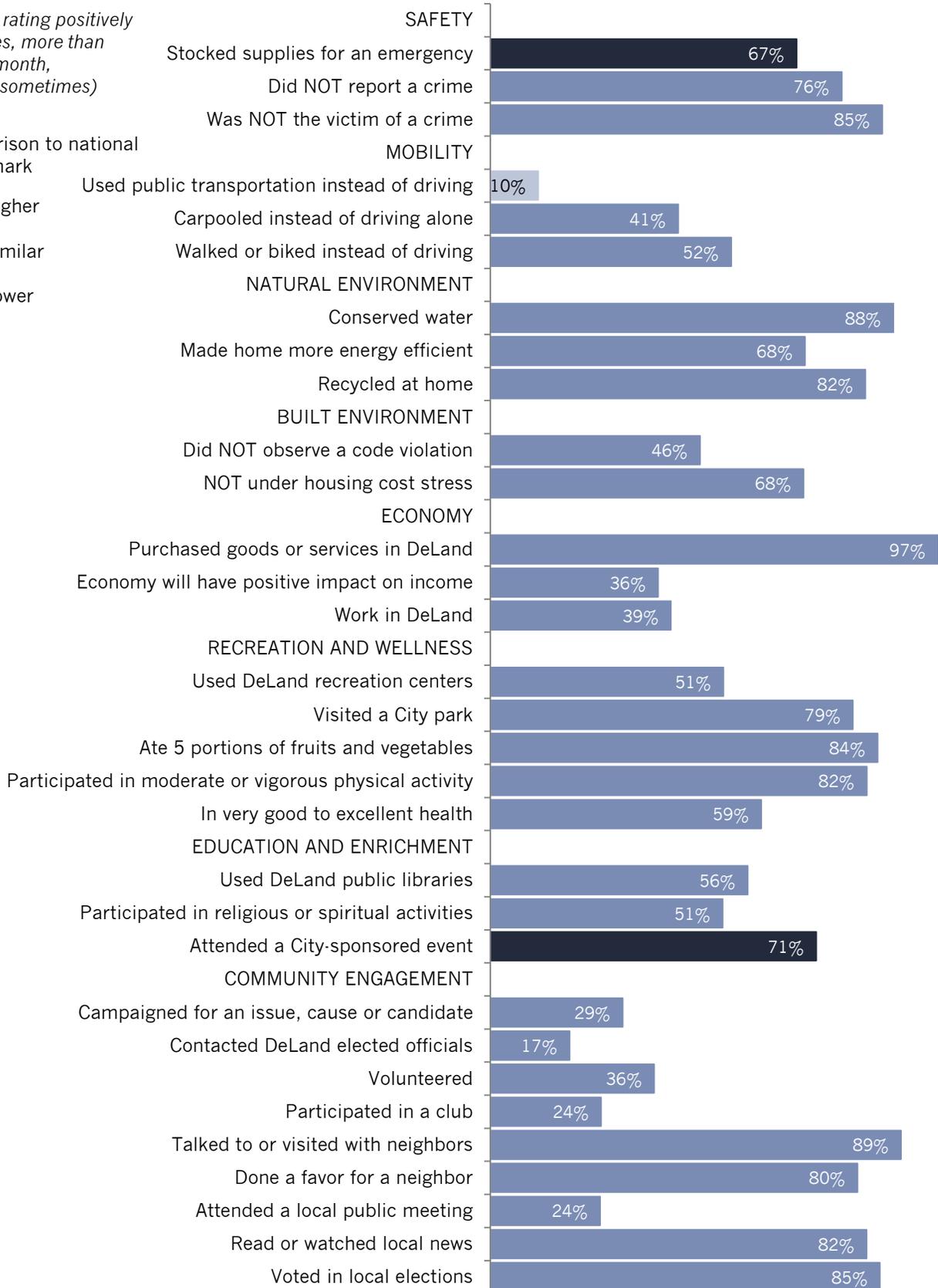
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Special Topics

The City of DeLand included eight questions of special interest on The NCS, with topics related to safety, the DeLand Police Department and utility billing.

Residents were asked to relay how safe they felt from potential crimes or issues in DeLand. At least half of residents said they felt very safe or somewhat safe from violent crime, property crimes and illegal drug activity in DeLand. About 4 in 10 residents felt safe from intoxicated or impaired drivers, and around one-quarter of residents felt safe from distracted drivers. It is worth noting that one-quarter of residents felt very unsafe from distracted drivers in DeLand.

Residents also indicated how their feelings of safety from crime have changed from five years ago. About 3 in 10 residents strongly or somewhat agreed that they felt safer from crime, while about one-quarter of residents strongly or somewhat disagreed.

Figure 4: Feelings of Safety

Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel from the following in DeLand:

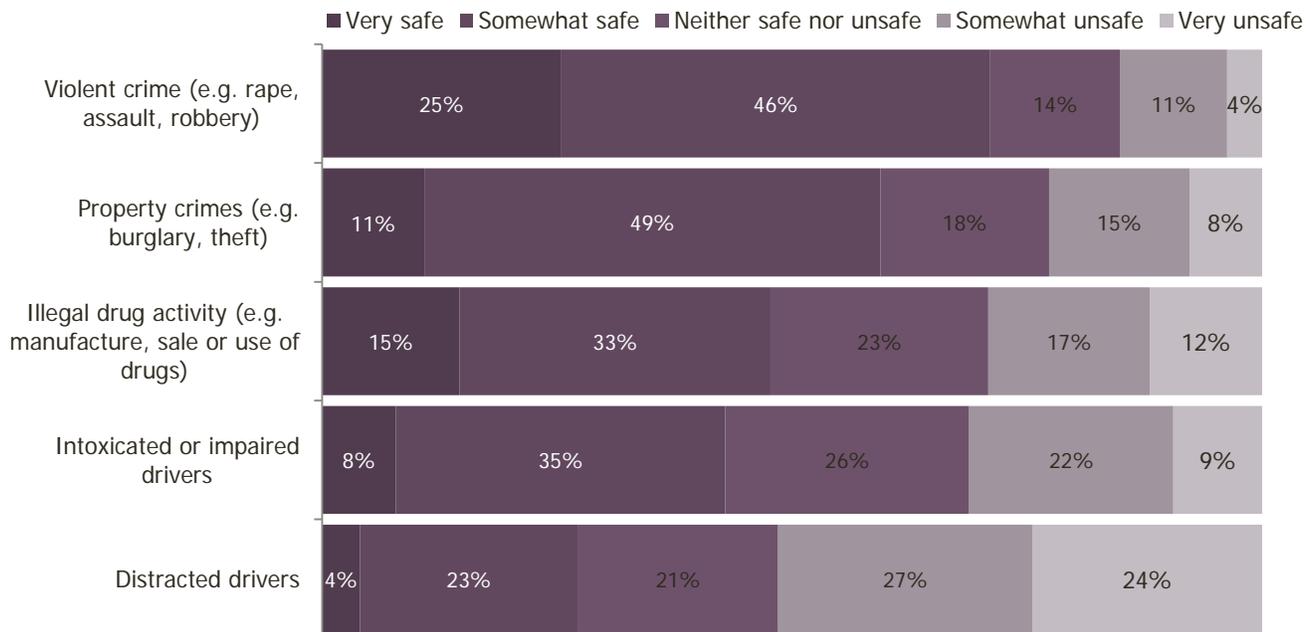
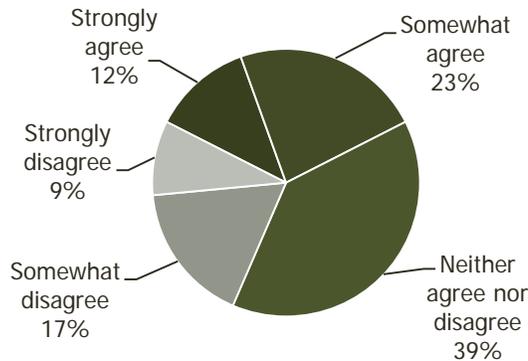


Figure 5: Feelings of Safety over Time

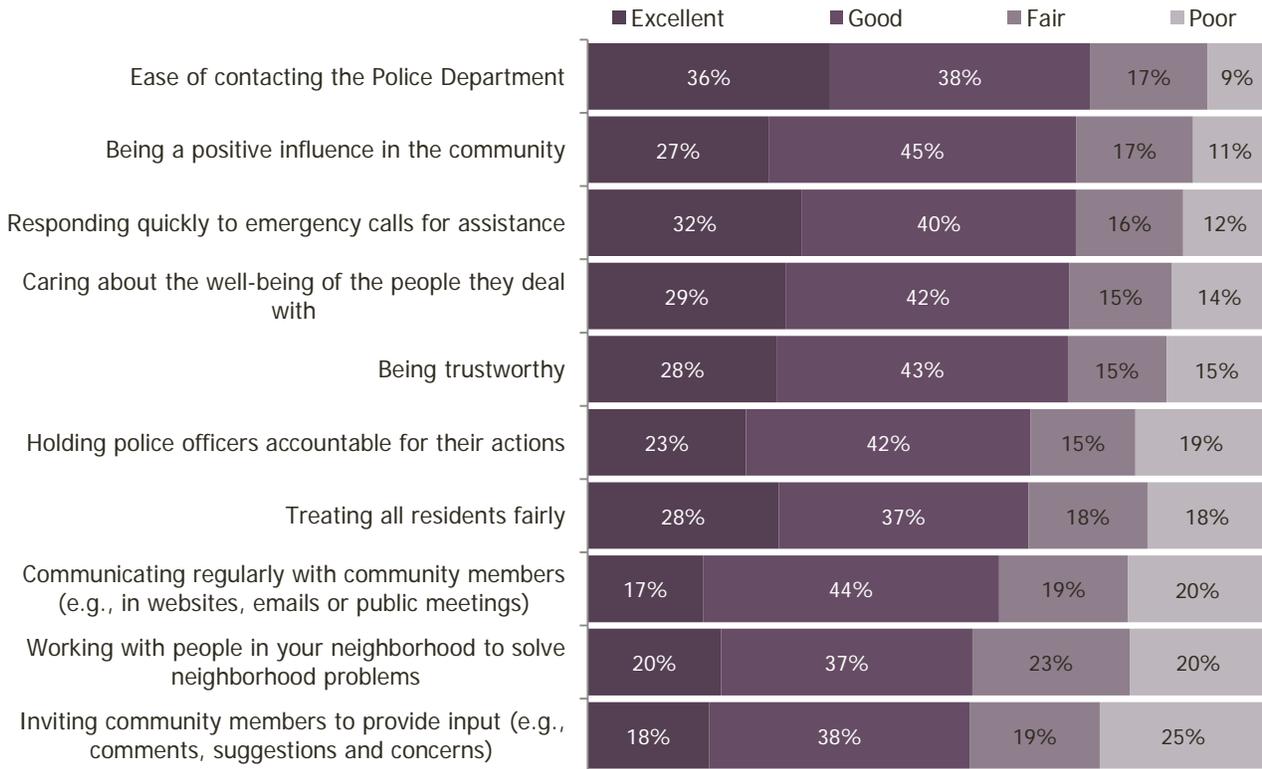
Please indicate your level of agreement about the following statement: *I feel safer from crime now than I did five years ago.*



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Community members rated the quality of various aspects of DeLand Police Department performance. About 7 in 10 community members gave an excellent or good score to the ease of contacting the police department, and the department being a positive influence in the community, responding quickly to emergency calls for assistance, caring about the well-being of the people they deal with and being trustworthy. At least half of respondents positively assessed the remaining aspects of police department performance.

Figure 6: Quality of DeLand Police Department Services  
 Please rate the job the DeLand Police Department does at each of the following in your community:

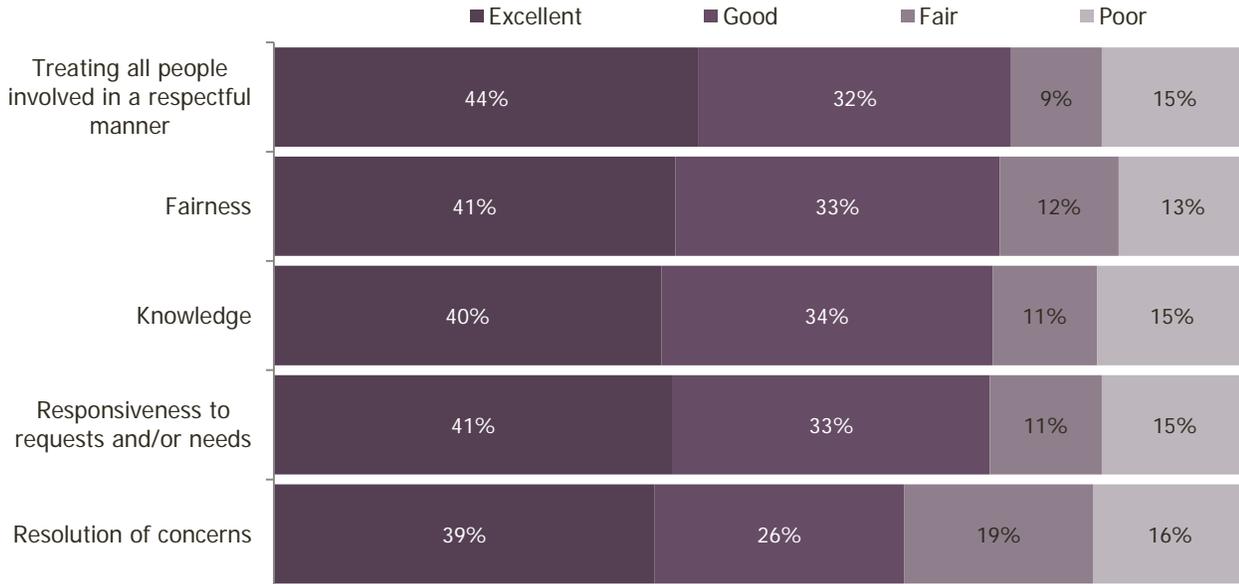


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Community members also rated the quality of customer service from their most recent interaction with a member of the DeLand Police Department. About three-quarters of community members gave favorable marks (excellent or good) to the employee treating all people involved in a respectful manner, and to their fairness, knowledge and responsiveness to requests and/or needs, while two-thirds gave high scores to the resolution of concerns.

Quality of DeLand Police Department Customer Service

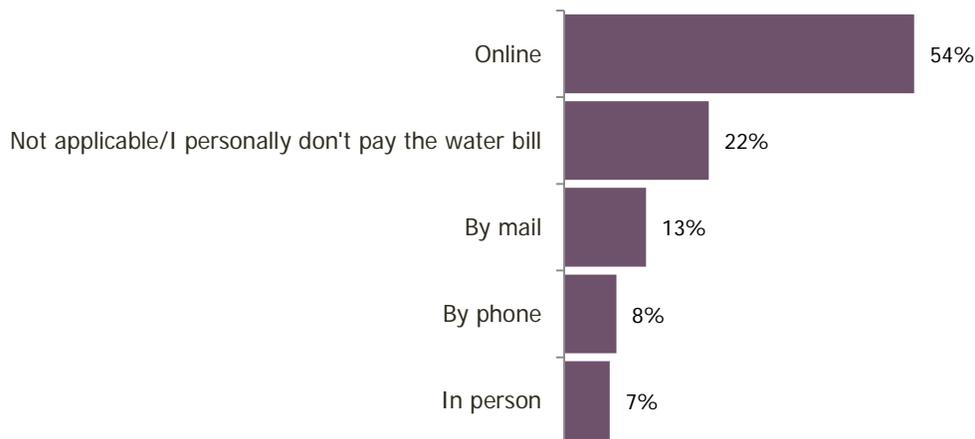
Based on your most recent contact with a member of the DeLand Police Department, please rate each of the following aspects of the last employee with whom you had contact.



Respondents were asked about how they pay their water bill. Over half of residents said they paid their water bill online and roughly 1 in 10 residents paid by mail, phone or in person.

Figure 7: Methods to Pay Water Bill

Please indicate which method you use to pay your water bill: (Please select all that apply.)

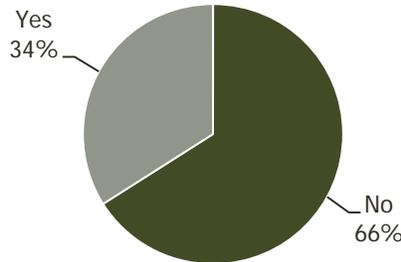


Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.

About two-thirds of residents had not contacted the City’s Utility Billing service within the 12 months prior to the survey, while one-third of residents had in-person, phone or email contact with an employee.

Figure 8: Contact with City’s Utility Billing Service

Have you had any in-person, phone or email contact with an employee of the City’s Utility Billing service within the last 12 months?

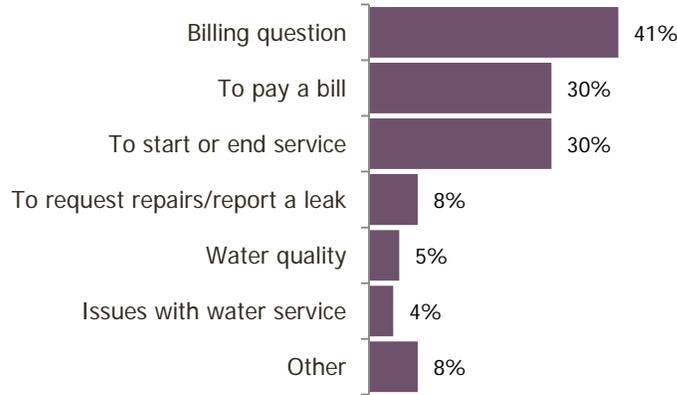


Residents who indicated they had contact with an employee of the City’s Utility Billing service within the last 12 months were asked about why they contacted the Utility Billing service and their impressions of the employee they interacted with. About 4 in 10 residents contacted the service with a billing question, and 3 in 10 had reached out to pay a bill or to start or end service. Less than 1 in 10 respondents had contacted the City’s Utility Billing service to request repairs/report a leak, regarding water quality or about issues with water service.

About 8 in 10 respondents positively rated the City’s Utility Billing employee for their responsiveness to the request or issue, courtesy and overall impression.

Figure 9: Reasons for Contacting City’s Utility Billing Service

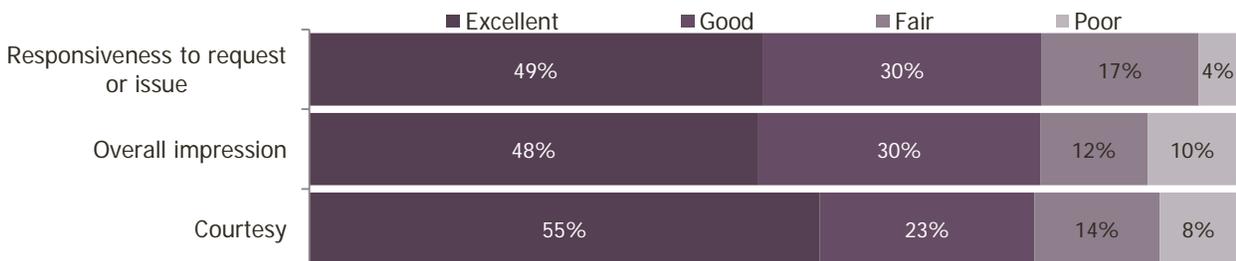
For which reason(s) did you contact the City’s Utility Billing service in your most recent contact?



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

Figure 10: Impression of Contact with City’s Utility Billing Service

What was your impression of the employee of the City’s Utility Billing service in your most recent contact?



# Conclusions

## DeLand continues to be a great place to live, with Safety as a feature that makes DeLand a livable community.

At least 8 in 10 community members gave high marks to the overall quality of life in DeLand, a rating which improved from 2016 to 2019. About 8 in 10 residents positively reviewed the overall image or reputation of DeLand, their neighborhood as a place to live, DeLand as a place to raise children and the overall appearance of the city. Scores for DeLand as a place to raise children increased since 2016. Marks for DeLand as a place to retire were strong and higher than the benchmark. About 8 in 10 respondents were likely to recommend living in DeLand to someone who asked and planned to remain in DeLand for the next five years. Three-quarters of residents gave high marks to the sense of community in the city, a level that eclipsed comparison communities.

Safety was a top priority for residents. About 9 in 10 residents rated they felt safe in their neighborhoods and in the downtown/commercial areas. More residents had stocked supplies for an emergency in DeLand than in other communities across the nation. Respondents also felt positively about their safety services, with more than 8 in 10 awarding top marks to fire and ambulance/EMS services. Moreover, at least half of residents said they felt safe from violent crime, property crimes and illegal drug activity in DeLand and one-third of respondents indicated that they felt safer from crime now than five years ago. Finally, community members thought highly of their police department's performance, with about 7 in 10 assigning high scores to the ease of contacting the police department, and the force being a positive influence in the community, responding quickly to emergency calls, caring about the well-being of the people they deal with and being trustworthy.

## Residents enjoy the events and opportunities to socialize in their community.

About three-quarters of residents were pleased with opportunities to attend social events and activities, City-sponsored special events and opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities. Scores for these amenities in DeLand were higher than those seen across the nation. DeLand residents also reported higher rates of attendance at City-sponsored events than residents elsewhere in the county.

## The Economy is an asset and residents applaud the vibrant downtown/commercial area.

As in 2016, the facet of Economy was also identified as a continued priority for the community in the coming two years. About two-thirds of residents rated the overall economic health, overall quality of business and service establishments, shopping opportunities, DeLand as a place to work and economic development favorably. Survey participants' assessments of overall economic health, employment opportunities and DeLand as a place to visit improved from 2016 to 2019. Further, residents' evaluations of vibrant downtown/commercial area and DeLand as a place to visit exceeded national averages.