

# THE NCS™

## The National Community Survey™

### Williamsburg, VA

*Community Livability Report  
2020*



POWERED BY POLCO

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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 NCS™

The National Community Survey™ (The NCS™) report is about the “livability” of Williamsburg. 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 considering ten central facets of a community:

- Economy
- Mobility
- Community Design
- Utilities
- Safety
- Natural Environment
- Parks and Recreation
- Health and Wellness
- Education, Arts and Culture
- Inclusivity and Engagement



The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 654 residents of the City of Williamsburg. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% for all respondents and the response rate for the 2020 survey was 26%. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.

# Overview of Results

## Residents applaud mobility in Williamsburg.

About two-thirds of residents gave high marks to the overall quality of the transportation system in Williamsburg. Respondents' assessments of traffic flow on major streets, ease of travel by car, street repair, and street cleaning were exceptional and above the national benchmarks. Ratings for nine aspects of mobility improved from 2018 to 2020, with the greatest increases seen in reviews of street repair, street cleaning, snow removal, and sidewalk maintenance. More residents in Williamsburg reported walking or biking instead of driving compared to residents in comparison communities across the U.S.

## Community members see improvements in the economy yet also see it as an area of opportunity.

Residents' assessments of shopping opportunities and Williamsburg as a place to visit were outstanding and higher than the national averages. About 8 in 10 respondents positively rated the overall quality of business and service establishments; this rating was higher than the national benchmarks and improved from 2018 to 2020. Additional improvements were observed in evaluations of the overall economic health of Williamsburg, economic development, Williamsburg as a place to work, and the cost of living.

However, only about half of community members did not experience housing cost stress; this declined from 2018 to 2020 and was lower than what was observed in comparison communities nationwide. Additionally, fewer people in Williamsburg believed the economy would have a positive impact on their income in the six months following the survey compared to the national average, possibly highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis.

## The natural environment is a valued part of Williamsburg.

About 9 in 10 residents gave high marks to the overall quality of natural environment and cleanliness of Williamsburg; these ratings were above average. Respondents' reviews of air quality, preservation of natural areas, and Williamsburg open space were higher than the national benchmarks and increased from 2018 to 2020.

## Residents are pleased with their local government.

At least 7 in 10 community members positively reviewed the value of services for the taxes paid to the City, the overall confidence in Williamsburg government, the City being honest, and the City generally acting in the best interest of the community; these assessments were higher than then national benchmarks and improved from 2018 to 2020. Residents also gave exceptional ratings to the overall customer service provided by Williamsburg employees. From 2018 to 2020, improvements were also seen in evaluations of the overall direction that Williamsburg is taking, the City treating all residents fairly, and the job Williamsburg government does at welcoming resident involvement. About 8 in 10 of residents strongly or somewhat agreed that the City government is cohesively led, financially strong, operating in full partnership with the people who visit the city, and that overall the City is fulfilling its vision.

# Facets of Livability

Ratings of importance were compared to ratings of quality to help guide City staff and officials with decisions on future resource allocation and strategic planning areas. When competition for limited resources demands that efficiencies or cutbacks be instituted, it is wise not only to know what facets are deemed most important to residents' quality of life, but which among the most important are perceived to be of relatively lower quality in your community. It is these facets of community livability – more important facets perceived as being of lower quality – to which attention needs to be paid first.

		QUALITY		
		LOWER	SIMILAR	HIGHER
IMPORTANCE	HIGHER			
	SIMILAR		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economy</li> <li>• Mobility</li> <li>• Community Design</li> <li>• Utilities</li> <li>• Parks and Recreation</li> <li>• Inclusivity and Engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and Wellness</li> <li>• Natural Environment</li> <li>• Education, Arts, and Culture</li> </ul>
	LOWER			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety</li> </ul>

**FIGURE 1: QUALITY OF FACETS OF LIVABILITY- SUMMARY**

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall economic health of Williamsburg	↔	↑	73%
Overall quality of the transportation system in Williamsburg	↔	↓	68%
Overall design or layout of Williamsburg's residential and commercial areas	↔	↔	70%
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Williamsburg	↔	*	81%
Overall feeling of safety in Williamsburg	↑	↔	95%
Overall quality of natural environment in Williamsburg	↑	↔	91%
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities	↔	*	87%
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Williamsburg	↑	↑	84%
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	↑	↔	84%
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	↔	*	68%

**FIGURE 2: IMPORTANCE OF FACETS OF LIVABILITY- SUMMARY**

Percent essential or very important	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall economic health of Williamsburg	↔	↔	90%
Overall quality of the transportation system in Williamsburg	↔	↔	79%
Overall design or layout of Williamsburg's residential and commercial areas	↔	↔	71%
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Williamsburg	↔	*	81%
Overall feeling of safety in Williamsburg	↓	↓	81%
Overall quality of natural environment in Williamsburg	↔	↔	83%
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities	↔	*	77%
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Williamsburg	↔	↔	77%
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	↔	↔	81%
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	↔	↓	75%

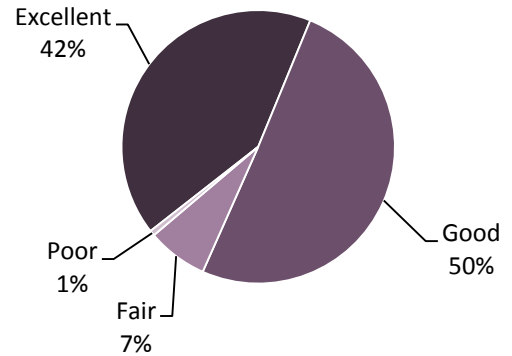
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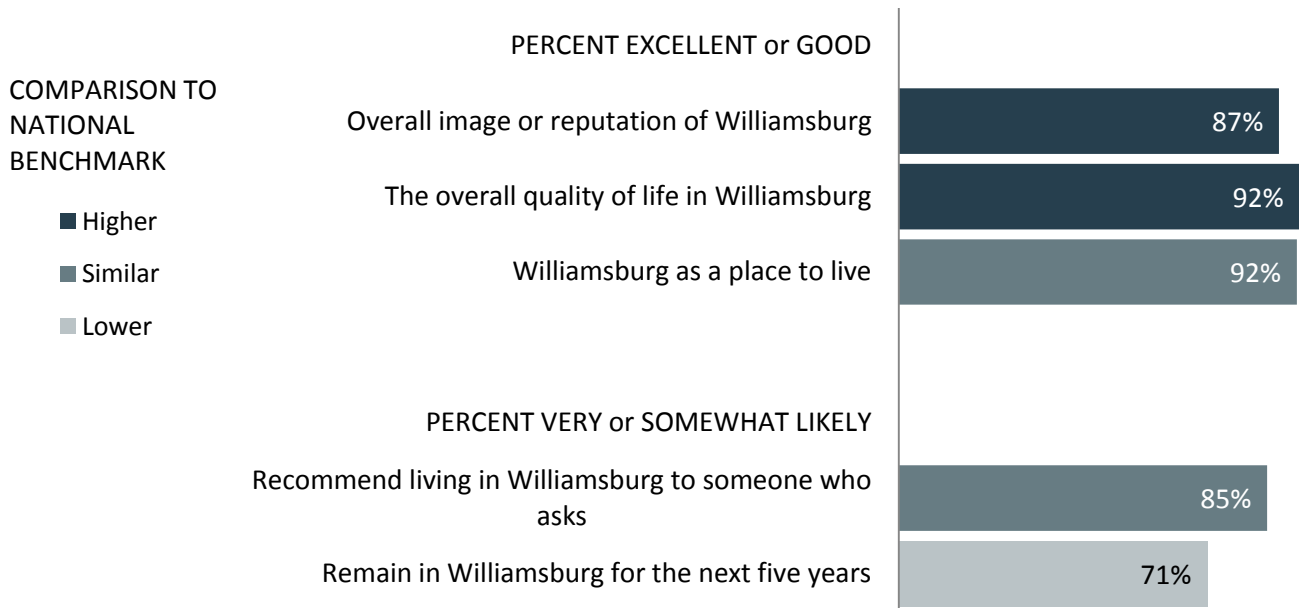
# Quality of Life

*Measuring community livability starts with assessing the quality of life of those who live there, and ensuring that the community is attractive, accessible, and welcoming to all.*

**OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE IN WILLIAMSBURG**



**FIGURE 3: QUALITY OF LIFE IN WILLIAMSBURG**



**FIGURE 4: QUALITY OF LIFE IN WILLIAMSBURG - SUMMARY**

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall image or reputation of Williamsburg	↑	↔	87%
The overall quality of life in Williamsburg	↑	↔	92%
Williamsburg as a place to live	↔	↔	92%

**FIGURE 5: RECOMMEND WILLIAMSBURG - SUMMARY**

Percent very or somewhat likely	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Recommend living in Williamsburg to someone who asks	↔	↔	85%
Remain in Williamsburg for the next five years	↓	↔	71%

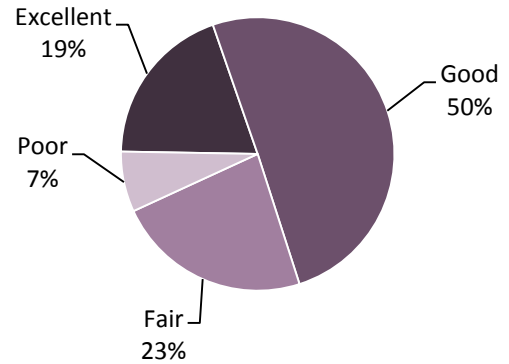
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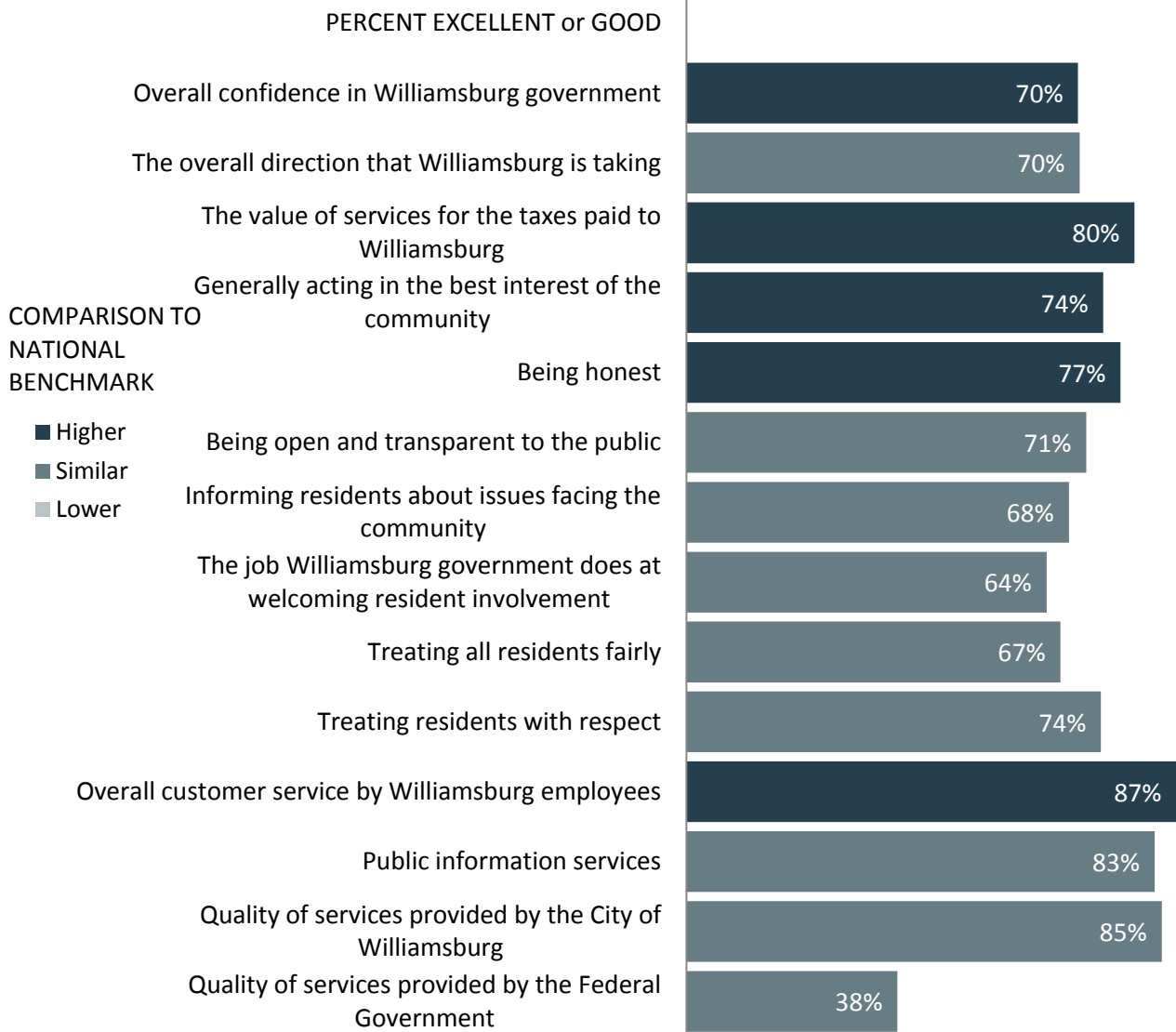
# Governance

*Strong local governments produce results that meet the needs of residents while making the best use of available resources, and are responsive to the present and future needs of the community as a whole.*

## OVERALL CONFIDENCE IN WILLIAMSBURG GOVERNMENT



**FIGURE 6: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND SERVICES**





**FIGURE 7: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND SERVICES - SUMMARY**

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall confidence in Williamsburg government	↑	↑	70%
The overall direction that Williamsburg is taking	↔	↑	70%
The value of services for the taxes paid to Williamsburg	↑	↑	80%
Generally acting in the best interest of the community	↑	↑	74%
Being honest	↑	↑	77%
Being open and transparent to the public	↔	*	71%
Informing residents about issues facing the community	↔	*	68%
The job Williamsburg government does at welcoming resident involvement	↔	↑	64%
Treating all residents fairly	↔	↑	67%
Treating residents with respect	↔	*	74%
Overall customer service by Williamsburg employees	↑	↔	87%
Public information services	↔	↔	83%
Quality of services provided by the City of Williamsburg	↔	↔	85%
Quality of services provided by the Federal Government	↔	↓	38%

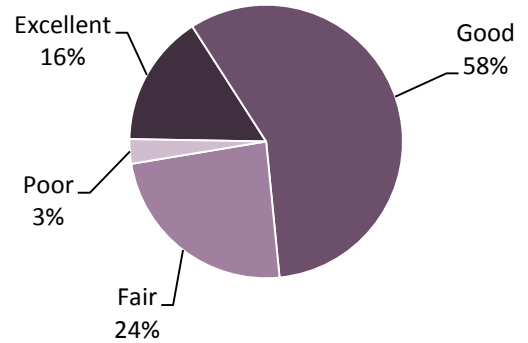
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# Economy

*Local governments work together with private and nonprofit businesses, and with the community at large, to foster sustainable growth, create jobs, and promote a thriving local economy.*

OVERALL ECONOMIC HEALTH OF WILLIAMSBURG



What impact, if any, do you think the economy will have on your family income in the next 6 months?

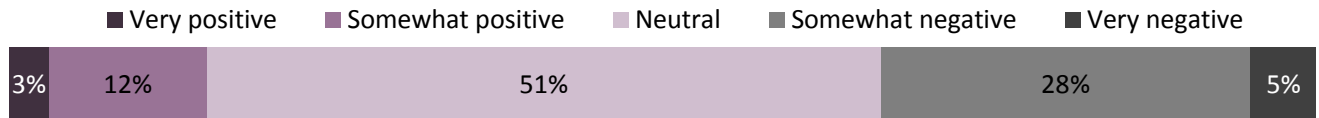
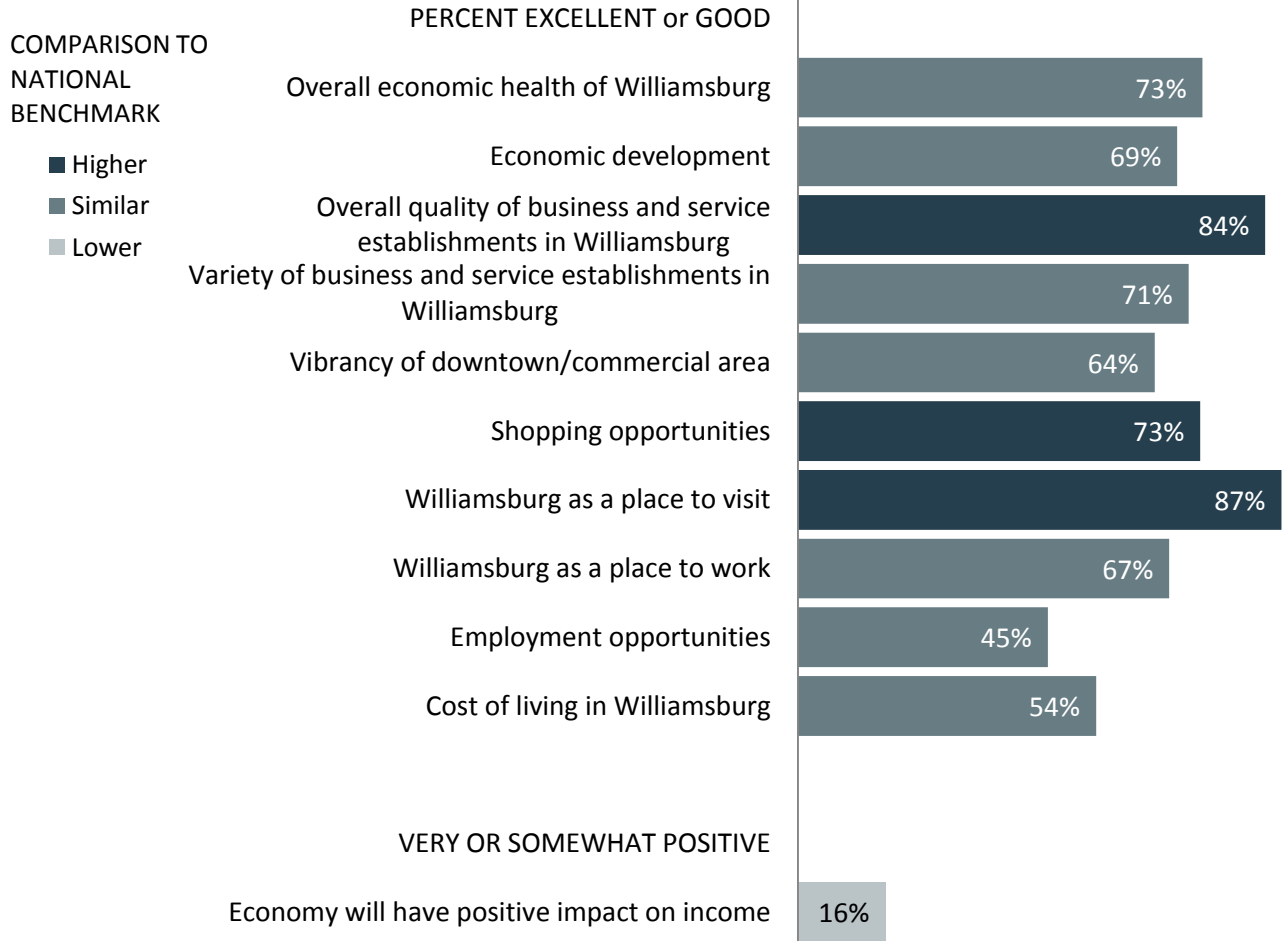


FIGURE 8: ECONOMIC HEALTH



**FIGURE 9: ECONOMIC HEALTH - SUMMARY**

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall economic health of Williamsburg	↔	↑	73%
Economic development	↔	↑	69%
Overall quality of business and service establishments in Williamsburg	↑	↑	84%
Variety of business and service establishments in Williamsburg	↔	*	71%
Vibrancy of downtown/commercial area	↔	↔	64%
Shopping opportunities	↑	↔	73%
Williamsburg as a place to visit	↑↑	↔	87%
Williamsburg as a place to work	↔	↑	67%
Employment opportunities	↔	↔	45%
Cost of living in Williamsburg	↔	↑	54%

**FIGURE 10: ECONOMIC IMPACT - SUMMARY**

Percent very or somewhat positive	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Economy will have positive impact on income	↓	↓	16%

**FIGURE 11: HOUSING COST - SUMMARY**

Percent for whom housing costs are NOT 30% or more of household income	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
NOT experiencing housing costs stress	↓↓	↓	46%

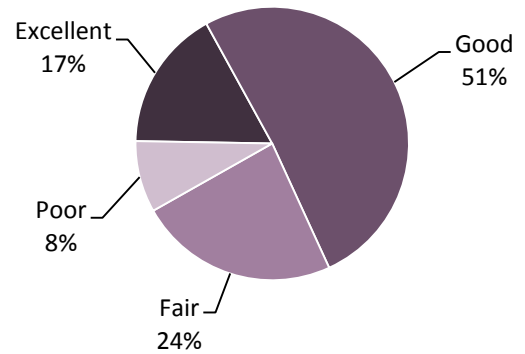
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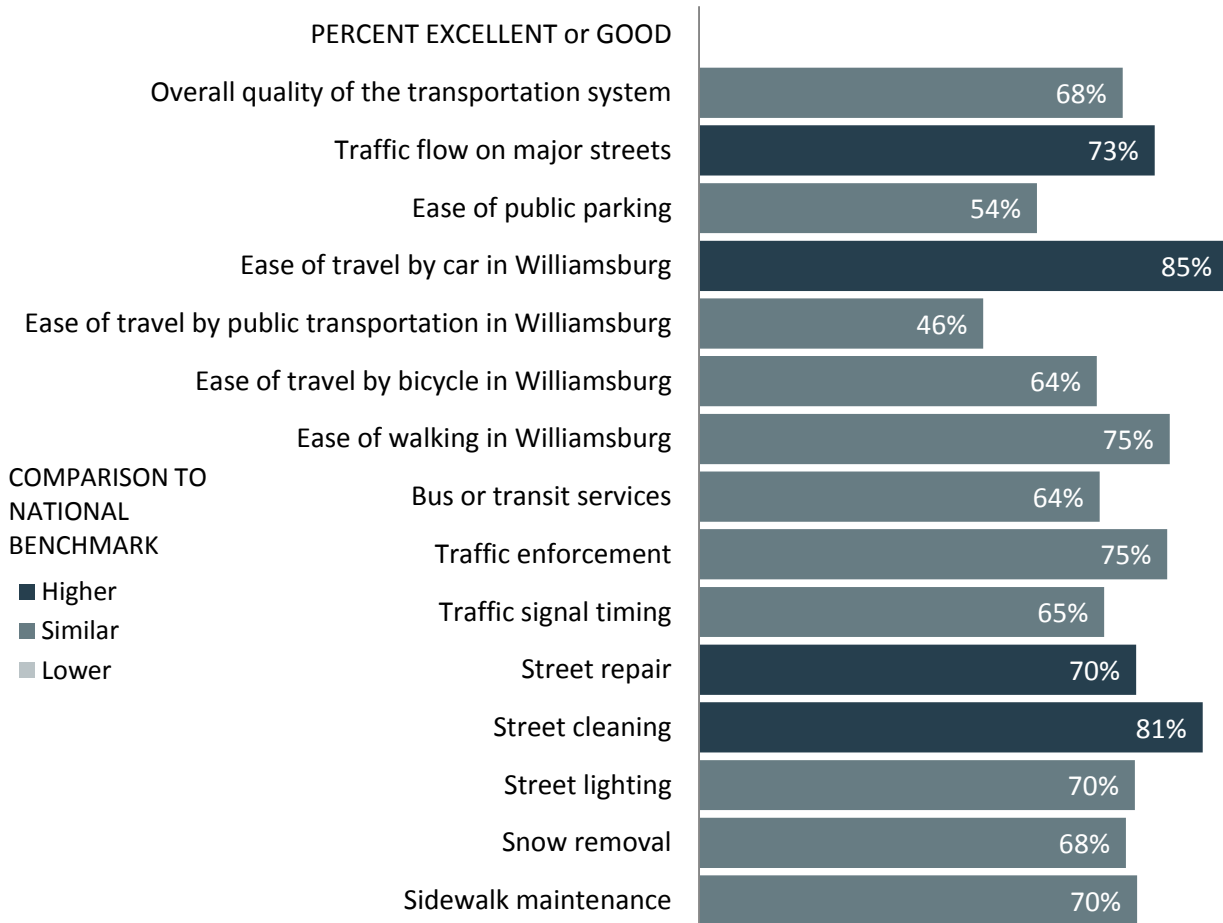
# Mobility

*The ease with which residents can move about their communities, whether for commuting, leisure, or recreation, plays a major role in the quality of life for all who live, work and play in the community.*

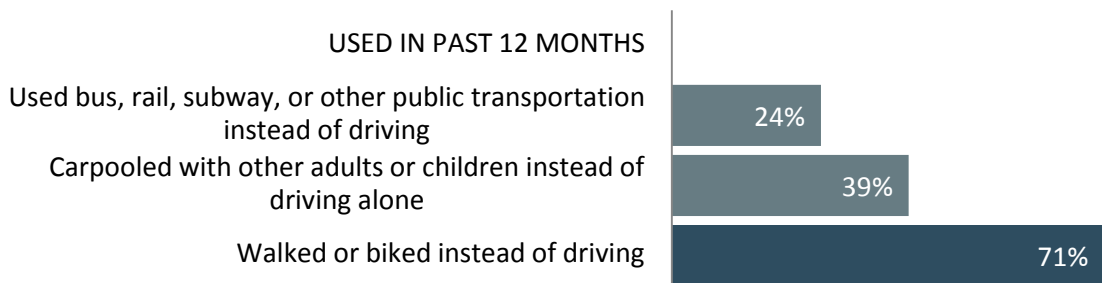
## OVERALL QUALITY OF THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IN WILLIAMSBURG



**FIGURE 12: MOBILITY IN WILLIAMSBURG**



**FIGURE 13: USE OF ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION MODES**



**FIGURE 14: MOBILITY IN WILLIAMSBURG - SUMMARY**

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall quality of the transportation system in Williamsburg	↔	↓	68%
Traffic flow on major streets	↑	↔	73%
Ease of travel by car in Williamsburg	↑	↑	85%
Ease of travel by public transportation in Williamsburg	↔	↔	46%
Ease of travel by bicycle in Williamsburg	↔	↑	64%
Ease of walking in Williamsburg	↔	↑	75%
Ease of public parking	↔	↔	54%
Bus or transit services	↔	↔	64%
Traffic enforcement	↔	↑	75%
Traffic signal timing	↔	↔	65%
Street repair	↑	↑	70%
Street cleaning	↑	↑	81%
Street lighting	↔	↑	70%
Snow removal	↔	↑	68%
Sidewalk maintenance	↔	↑	70%

**FIGURE 15: USE OF ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION MODES - SUMMARY**

Percent who did this in past 12 months	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Used bus, rail, subway, or other public transportation instead of driving	↔	↔	24%
Carpooled with other adults or children instead of driving alone	↔	↓	39%
Walked or biked instead of driving	↑	↔	71%

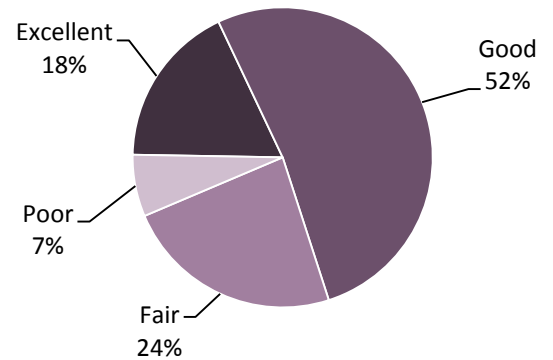
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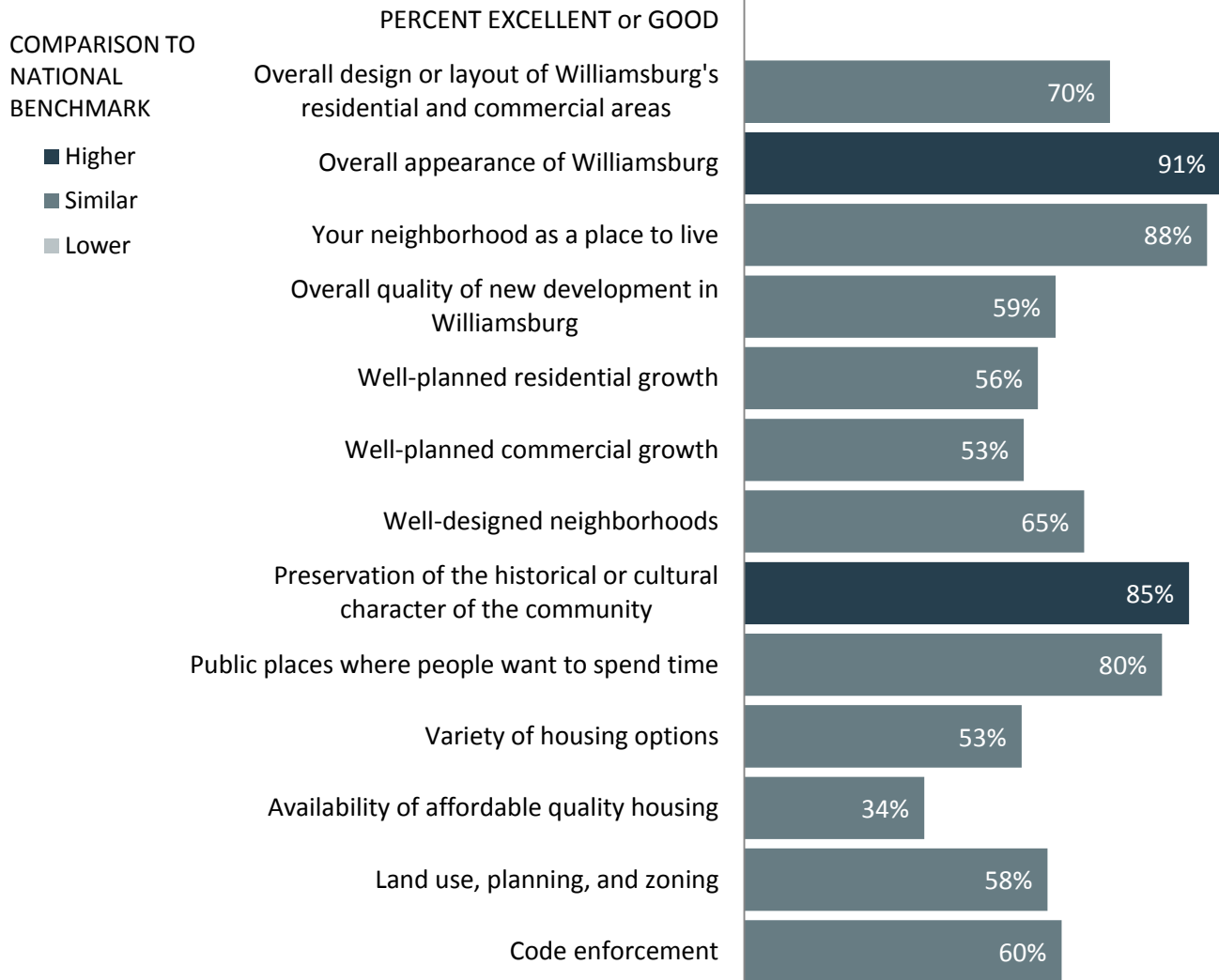
# Community Design

*A well-designed community enhances the quality of life for its residents by encouraging smart land use and zoning, ensuring that affordable housing is accessible to all, and providing access to parks and other green spaces.*

**OVERALL DESIGN OR LAYOUT OF WILLIAMSBURG'S RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL AREAS**



**FIGURE 16: COMMUNITY DESIGN**



**FIGURE 17: COMMUNITY DESIGN - SUMMARY**

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall design or layout of Williamsburg's residential and commercial areas	↔	↔	70%
Overall appearance of Williamsburg	↑	↔	91%
Your neighborhood as a place to live	↔	↑	88%
Overall quality of new development in Williamsburg	↔	↔	59%
Well-planned residential growth	↔	*	56%
Well-planned commercial growth	↔	*	53%
Well-designed neighborhoods	↔	*	65%
Preservation of the historical or cultural character of the community	↑	*	85%
Public places where people want to spend time	↔	↔	80%
Variety of housing options	↔	↑	53%
Availability of affordable quality housing	↔	↔	34%
Land use, planning, and zoning	↔	↔	58%
Code enforcement	↔	↔	60%

**Legend**

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

# Utilities

Services such as water, gas, electricity, and internet access play a vital role in ensuring the physical and economic health and well-being of the communities they serve.

OVERALL QUALITY OF THE UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE IN WILLIAMSBURG

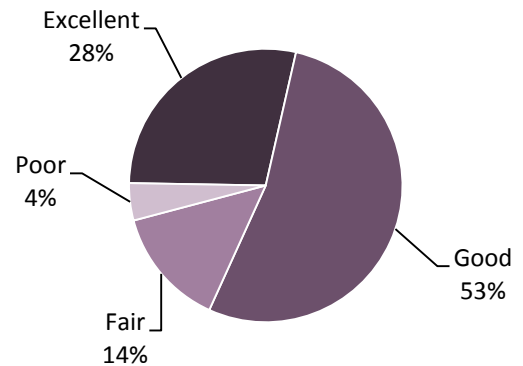


FIGURE 18: UTILITES

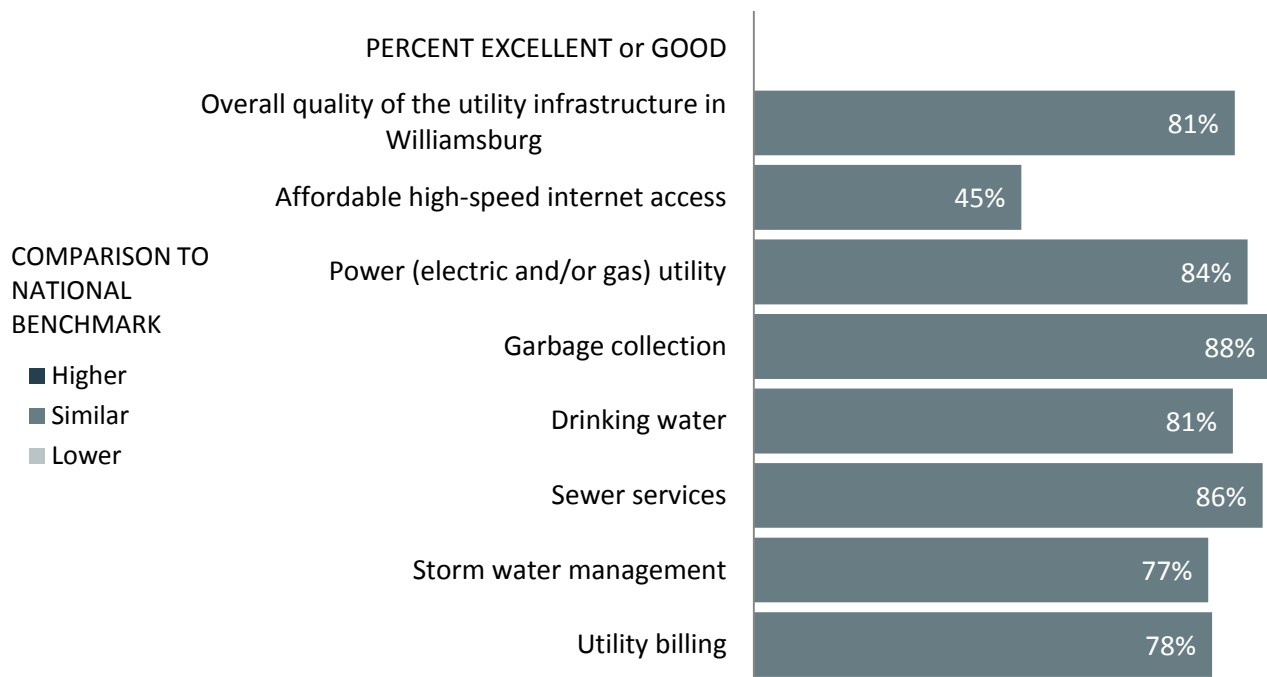


FIGURE 19: UTILITES - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Williamsburg	↔	*	81%
Affordable high-speed internet access	↔	*	45%
Power (electric and/or gas) utility	↔	*	84%
Garbage collection	↔	↔	88%
Drinking water	↔	↑	81%
Sewer services	↔	↔	86%
Storm water management	↔	↔	77%
Utility billing	↔	↔	78%

Legend

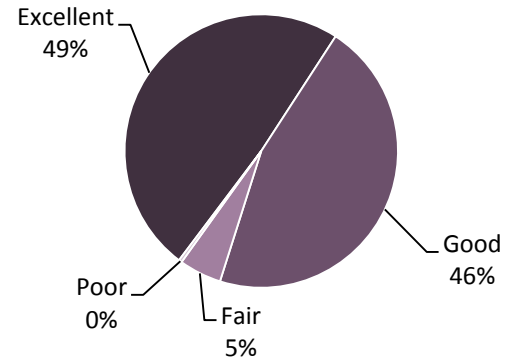
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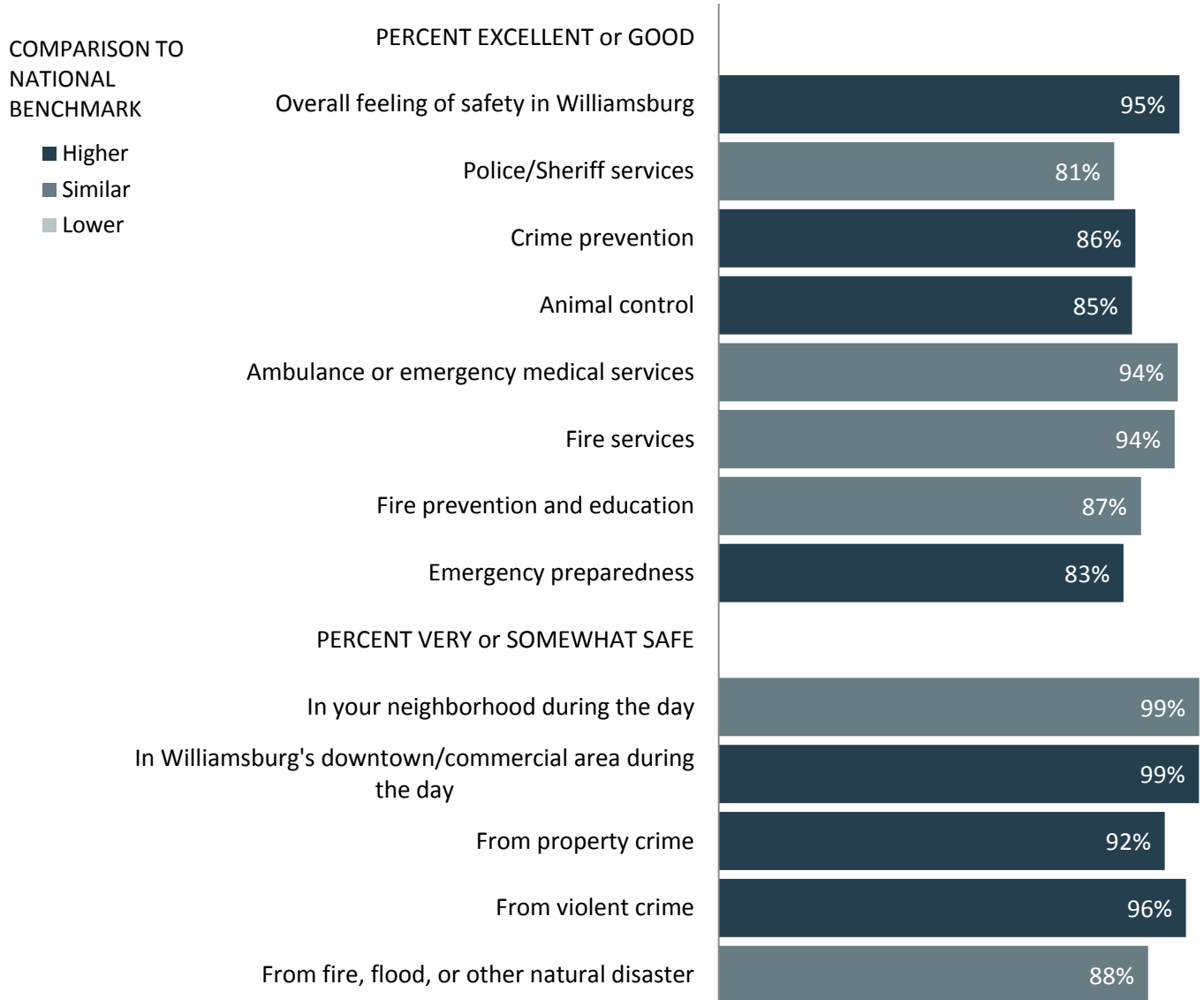
# Safety

*Public safety is often the most important task facing local governments. All residents should feel safe and secure in their neighborhoods and in the greater community, and providing robust Safety-related services is essential to residents' quality of life.*

**OVERALL FEELING OF SAFETY IN WILLIAMSBURG**



**FIGURE 20: SAFETY IN WILLIAMSBURG**



**FIGURE 21: SAFETY-RELATED SERVICES - SUMMARY**

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall feeling of safety in Williamsburg	↑	↔	95%
Police/Sheriff services	↔	↔	81%
Crime prevention	↑	↑	86%
Animal control	↑	↑	85%
Ambulance or emergency medical services	↔	↔	94%
Fire services	↔	↔	94%
Fire prevention and education	↔	↔	87%
Emergency preparedness	↑	↑	83%

**FIGURE 22: FEELINGS OF SAFETY- SUMMARY**

Percent who feel very or somewhat safe	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
In your neighborhood during the day	↔	↔	99%
In Williamsburg's downtown/commercial area during the day	↑	↔	99%
From property crime	↑	*	92%
From violent crime	↑	*	96%
From fire, flood, or other natural disaster	↔	*	88%

**Legend**

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

# Natural Environment

*The natural environment plays a vital role in the health and well-being of residents. The natural spaces in which residents live and experience their communities has a direct and profound effect on quality of life.*

OVERALL QUALITY OF NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN WILLIAMSBURG

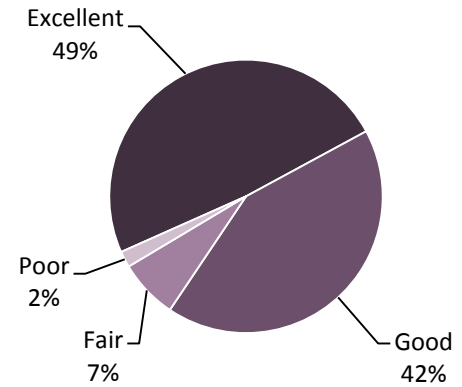


FIGURE 23: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

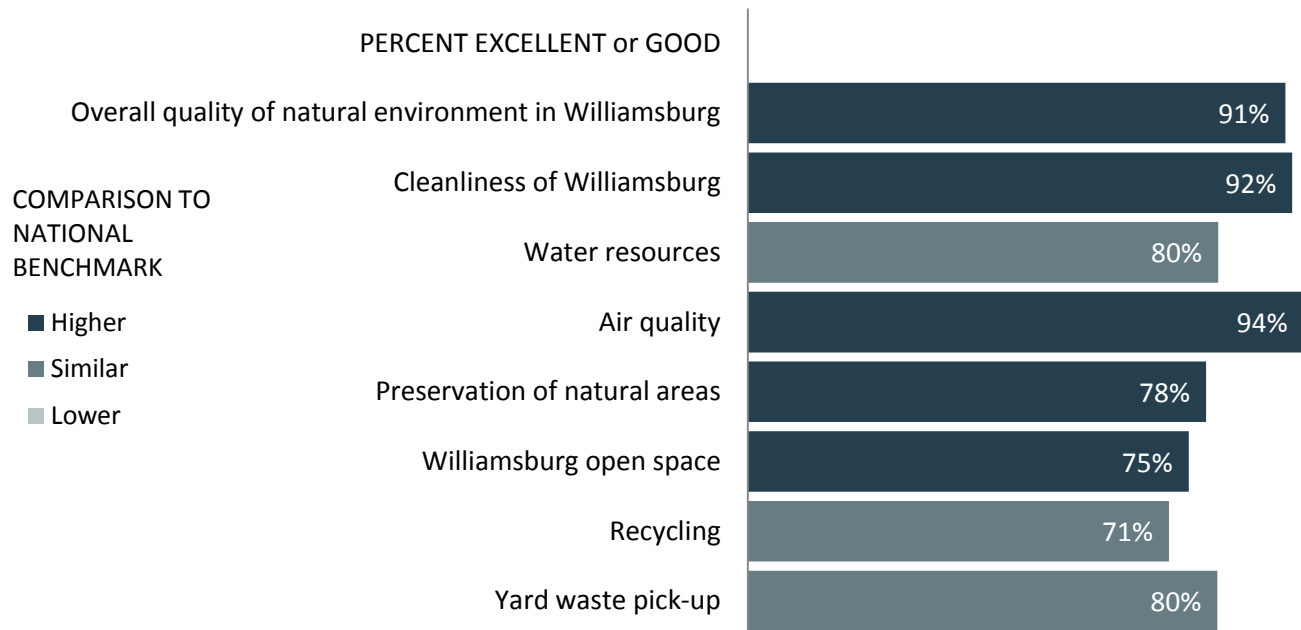


FIGURE 24: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall quality of natural environment in Williamsburg	↑	↔	91%
Cleanliness of Williamsburg	↑	↔	92%
Water resources	↔	*	80%
Air quality	↑	↑	94%
Preservation of natural areas	↑	↑	78%
Williamsburg open space	↑	↑	75%
Recycling	↔	↔	71%
Yard waste pick-up	↔	↔	80%

Legend

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

# Parks and Recreation

*"There are no communities that pride themselves on their quality of life, promote themselves as a desirable location for businesses to relocate, or maintain that they are environmental stewards of their natural resources, without such communities having a robust, active system of parks and recreation programs for public use and enjoyment."*  
 - National Recreation and Park Association

OVERALL QUALITY OF PARKS AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN WILLIAMSBURG

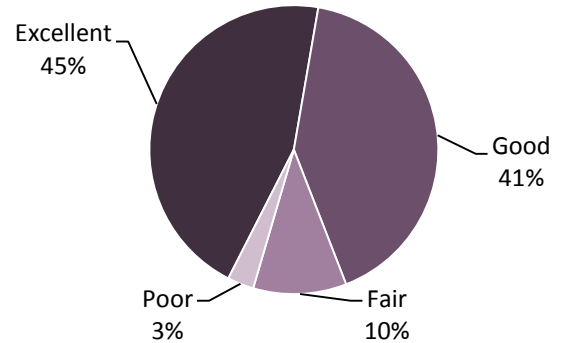


FIGURE 25: PARKS AND RECREATION



FIGURE 26: PARKS AND RECREATION - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities	↔	*	87%
Availability of paths and walking trails	↑	↑	84%
City parks	↔	↔	89%
Recreational opportunities	↔	↔	81%
Recreation programs or classes	↔	↓	77%
Recreation centers or facilities	↔	↔	80%
Fitness opportunities	↔	↑	82%

Legend

↑↑ Much higher    ↑ Higher    ↔ Similar    ↓ Lower 20    ↓↓ Much lower    \* Not available

# Health and Wellness

*The characteristics of and amenities available in the communities in which people live has a direct impact on the health and wellness of residents, and thus, on their quality of life overall.*

HEALTH AND WELLNESS OPPORTUNITIES IN WILLIAMSBURG

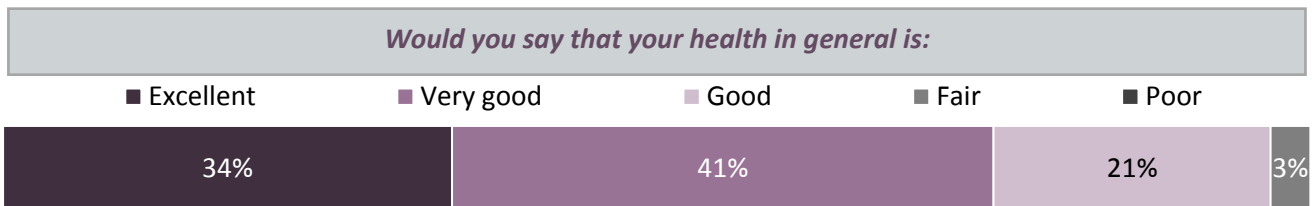
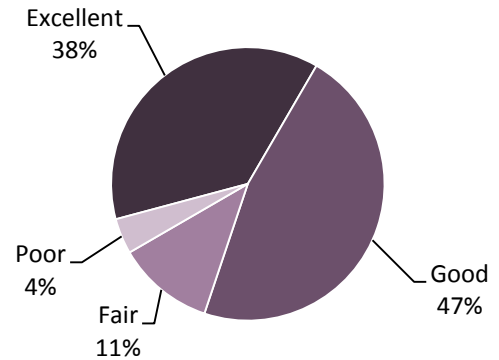
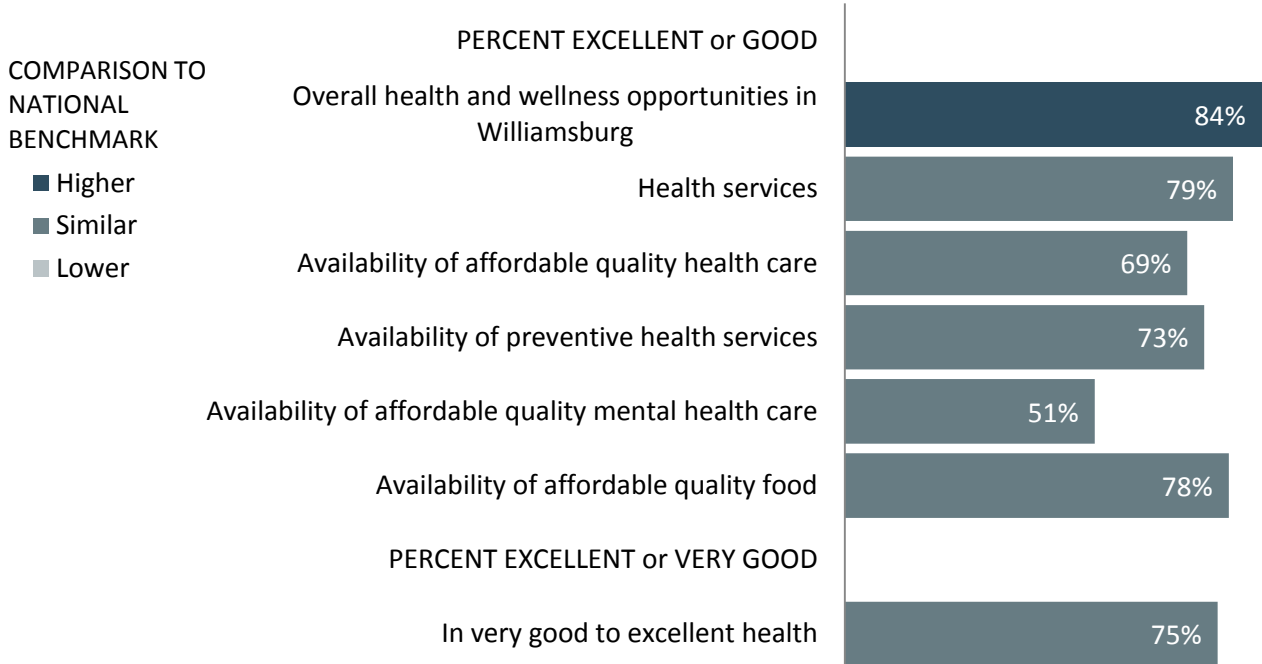


FIGURE 27: HEALTH AND WELLNESS



**FIGURE 28: HEALTH AND WELLNESS - SUMMARY**

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Williamsburg	↑	↑	84%
Health services	↔	↑	79%
Availability of affordable quality health care	↔	↔	69%
Availability of preventive health services	↔	↔	73%
Availability of affordable quality mental health care	↔	↔	51%
Availability of affordable quality food	↔	↑	78%

**FIGURE 29: PERSONAL HEALTH - SUMMARY**

	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
In very good to excellent health	↔	↑	75%

**Legend**

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

# Education, Arts, and Culture

*Participation in the arts, in educational opportunities, and in cultural activities is linked to increased civic engagement, greater social tolerance, and enhanced enjoyment of the local community.*

OVERALL OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND THE ARTS IN WILLIAMSBURG

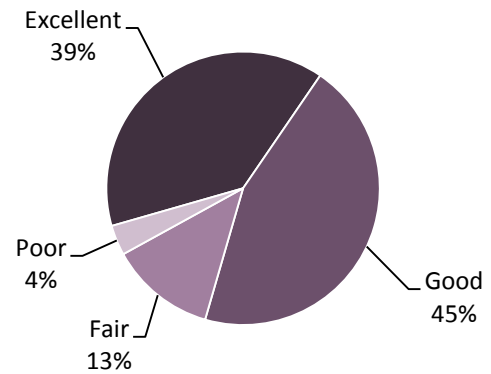
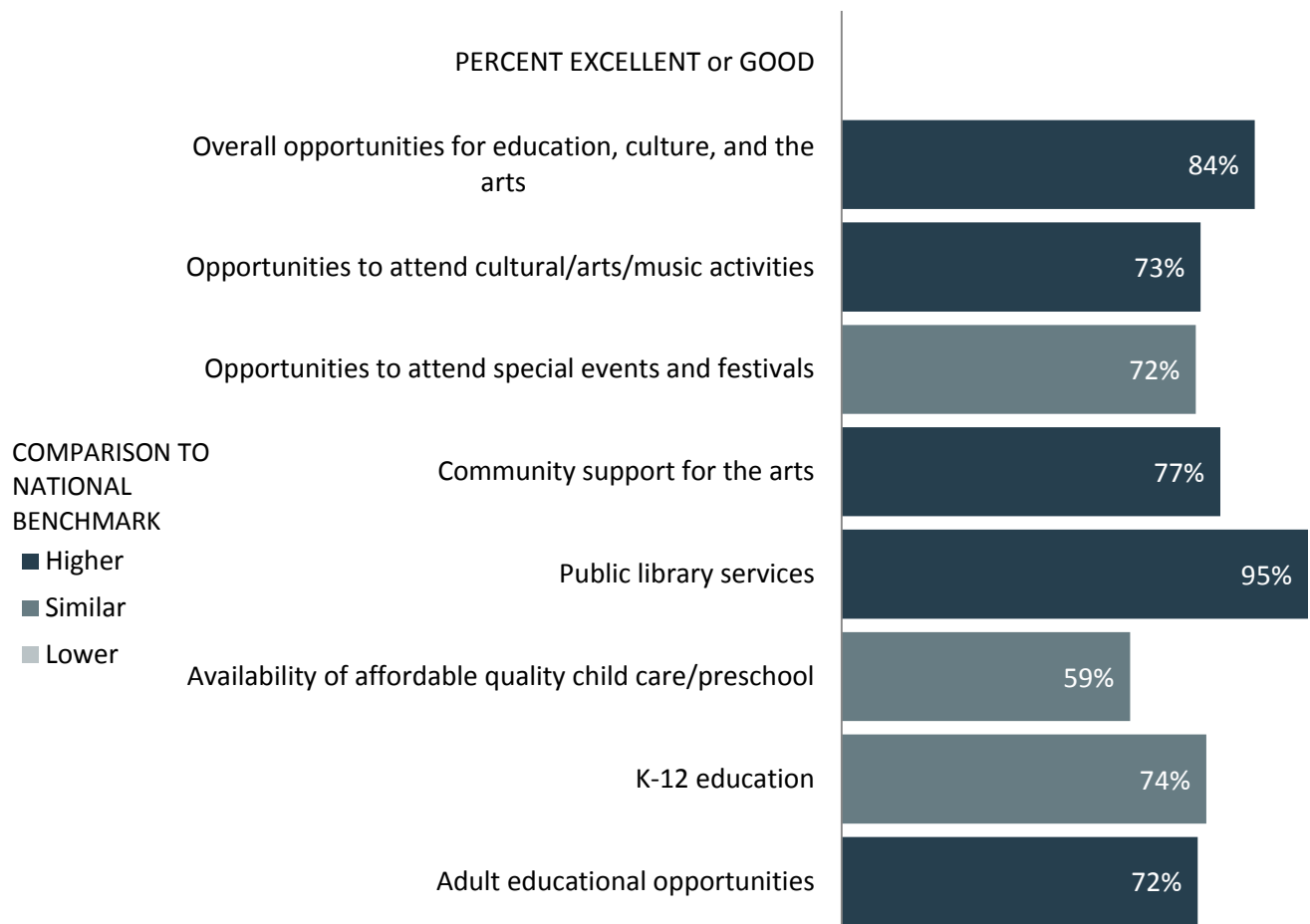


FIGURE 30: EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE



**FIGURE 31: EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE - SUMMARY**

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	↑	↔	84%
Opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities	↑	↔	73%
Opportunities to attend special events and festivals	↔	↔	72%
Community support for the arts	↑	*	77%
Public library services	↑	↔	95%
Availability of affordable quality child care/preschool	↔	↑	59%
K-12 education	↔	↔	74%
Adult educational opportunities	↑	↔	72%

**Legend**

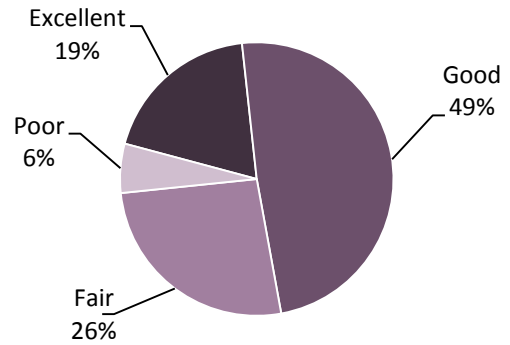
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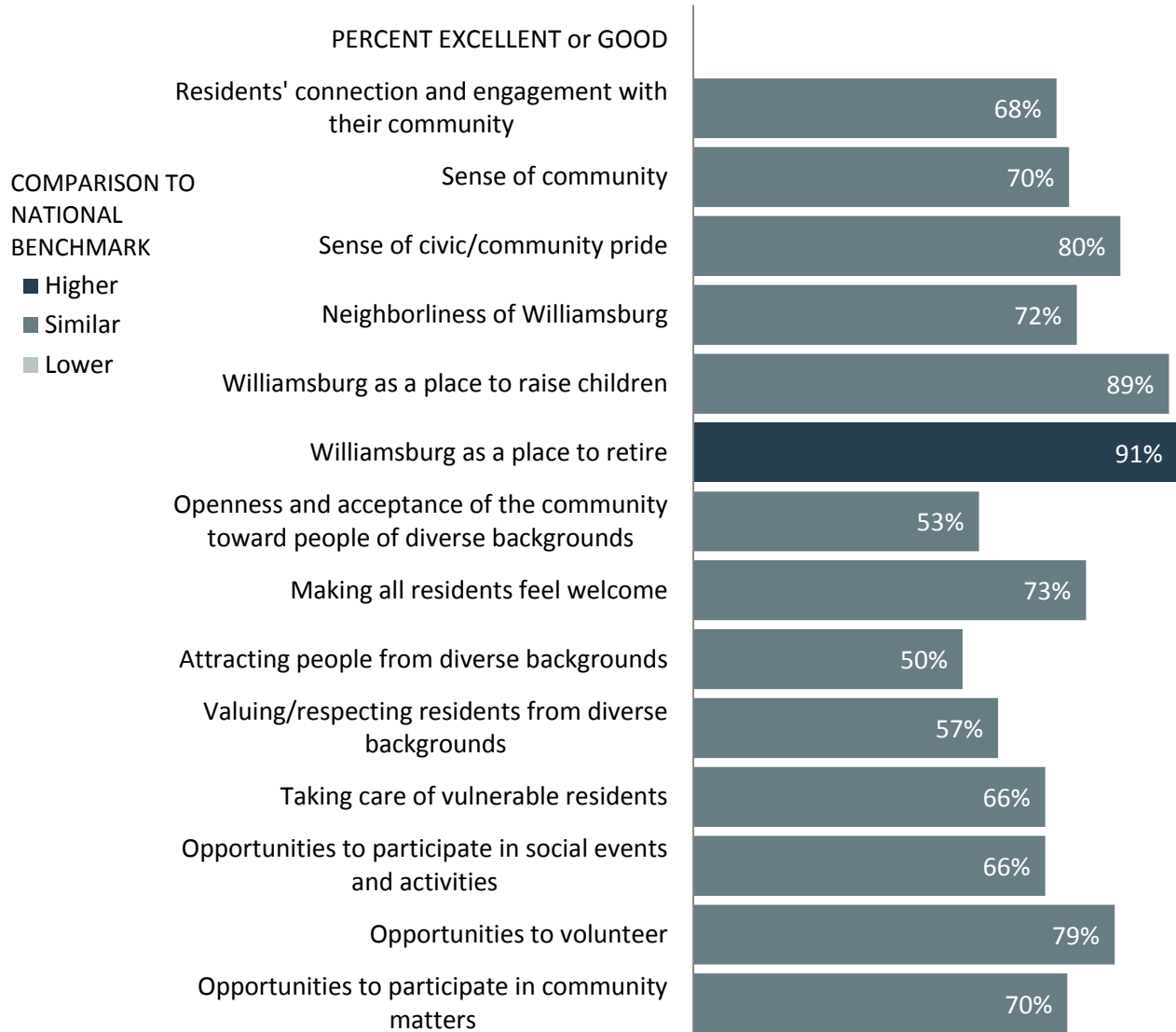
# Inclusivity and Engagement

*Inclusivity refers to a cultural and environmental feeling of belonging; residents who feel invited to participate within their communities feel more included, involved, and engaged than those who do not.*

**RESIDENTS' CONNECTION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH THEIR COMMUNITY**



**FIGURE 32: INCLUSIVITY AND ENGAGEMENT**



**FIGURE 33: INCLUSIVITY AND ENGAGEMENT - SUMMARY**

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	↔	*	68%
Sense of community	↔	↔	70%
Sense of civic/community pride	↔	*	80%
Neighborliness of Williamsburg	↔	↔	72%
Williamsburg as a place to raise children	↔	↔	89%
Williamsburg as a place to retire	↑↑	↔	91%
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	↔	↑	53%
Making all residents feel welcome	↔	*	73%
Attracting people from diverse backgrounds	↔	*	50%
Valuing/respecting residents from diverse backgrounds	↔	*	57%
Taking care of vulnerable residents	↔	*	66%
Opportunities to participate in social events and activities	↔	↓	66%
Opportunities to volunteer	↔	↔	79%
Opportunities to participate in community matters	↔	↔	70%

**Legend**

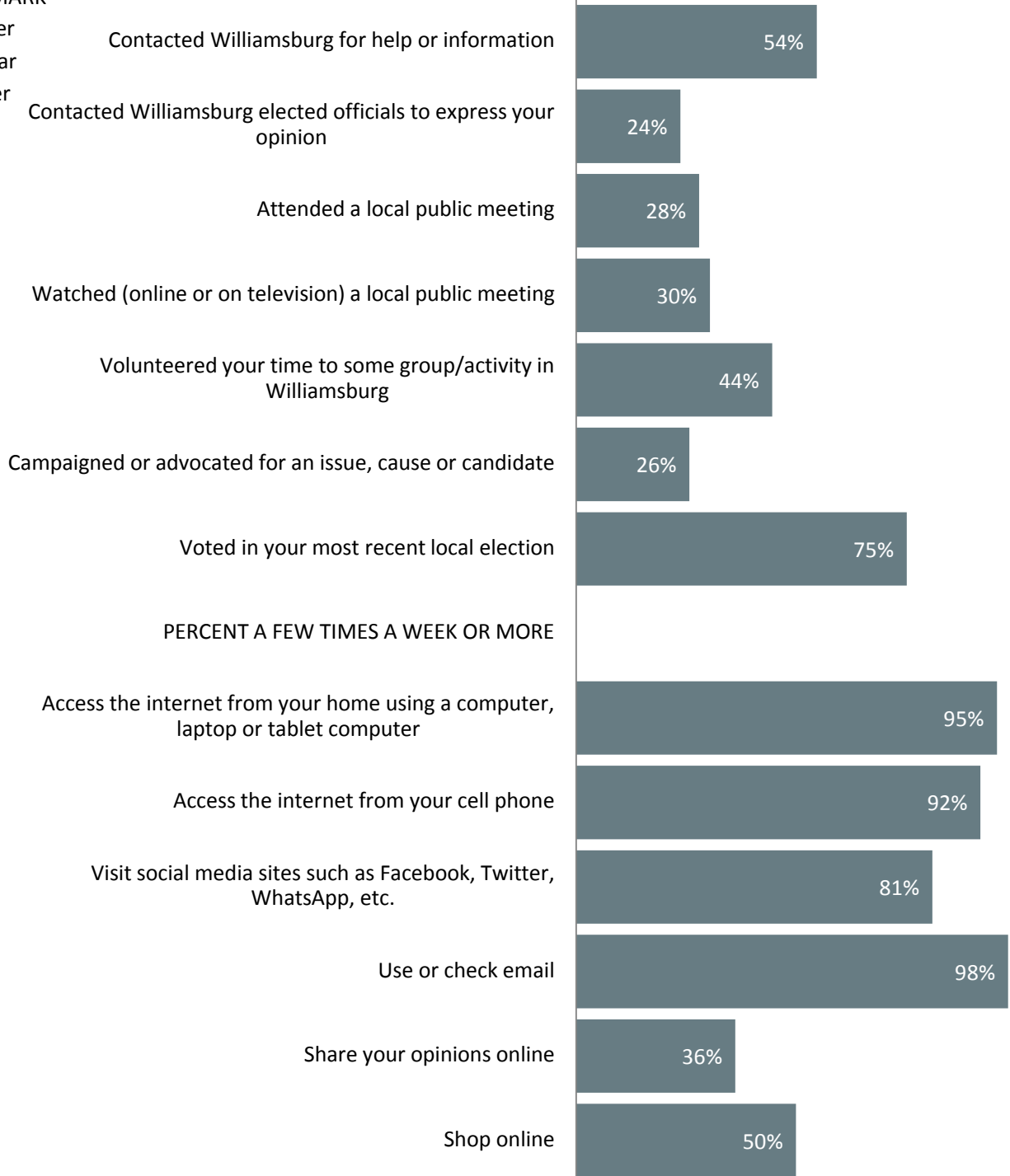
↑↑ Much higher    ↑ Higher    ↔ Similar    ↓ Lower    ↓↓ Much lower    \* Not available

**FIGURE 34: RESIDENTS' PARTICIPATION LEVELS**

COMPARISON TO NATIONAL BENCHMARK

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

PERCENT YES IN LAST 12 MONTHS



**FIGURE 35: RESIDENTS’ PARTICIPATION IN LAST 12 MONTHS- SUMMARY**

Percent who had done each in last 12 months	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Contacted Williamsburg for help or information	↔	↔	54%
Contacted Williamsburg elected officials to express your opinion	↔	↔	24%
Attended a local public meeting	↔	↔	28%
Watched (online or on television) a local public meeting	↔	↔	30%
Volunteered your time to some group/activity in Williamsburg	↔	↓	44%
Campaigned or advocated for an issue, cause or candidate	↔	↓	26%
Voted in your most recent local election	↔	*	75%

**FIGURE 36: RESIDENTS’ GENERAL USE OF TECHNOLOGY- SUMMARY**

Percent who report doing each at least a few times a week	Comparison to benchmark	Change 2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Access the internet from your home using a computer, laptop or tablet computer	↔	*	95%
Access the internet from your cell phone	↔	*	92%
Visit social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.	↔	*	81%
Use or check email	↔	*	98%
Share your opinions online	↔	*	36%
Shop online	↔	*	50%

**Legend**

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

# Special Topics

**FIGURE 37: CITY FULFILLING ASPECTS OF VISION STATEMENT**

*The City’s vision statement is:*

*“Williamsburg will become an evermore safe, beautiful, livable city of historic and academic renown, served by a city government — cohesively led, financially strong, always improving and innovating — in full partnership with the people who live, work and visit here.”*

*Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that the City is fulfilling the following aspects of its vision statement:*

