

# THE NCS™

## The National Community Survey™

### Urbandale, IA

*Community Livability Report  
2020*



POWERED BY POLCO

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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 Urbandale. 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 403 residents of the City of Urbandale. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% for all respondents and the response rate for the 2020 survey was 15%. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.

# Overview of Results

## **While Economy-related ratings are on par with comparison communities, various ratings are declining.**

About 9 in 10 residents reported positive evaluations of Urbandale's overall economic health and a similar percentage gave positive evaluations to Urbandale as a place to work. About three-quarters of survey respondents or more gave positive ratings to Urbandale's economic development and the overall quality of business and service establishments in Urbandale. The aforementioned ratings for aspects of Urbandale's economy were similar to or higher than those given in communities across the nation.

However, when reviewing differences between Urbandale's 2018 and 2020 ratings, seven aspects declined. The largest drop in rating was employment opportunities with 21% fewer residents offering positive evaluations in 2020 compared to 2018. Other aspects with a significant drop in positive ratings include shopping opportunities, economic outlook and housing cost stress among others. These observed declines could be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and should be reviewed cautiously.

## **Residents continue to enjoy a high quality of life but fewer report plans to remain in the community.**

As in past years, most residents rated their overall quality of life and Urbandale as a place to live as excellent or good and would be likely to recommend living in Urbandale, all other ratings were similar to those given in other communities across the country. A similar percentage plan to remain in Urbandale for the next five years (also similar to the national average), however, this rating declined in 2020 compared to 2018.

## **Residents report a strong sense of safety and applaud the Urbandale Police Department.**

Most survey respondents rated aspects of safety positively and in general, similar to the national averages and similar to ratings given in 2018. About 9 in 10 residents gave high ratings to the overall feeling of safety in Urbandale, and reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods and in the downtown/commercial area during the day. Further, feelings of safety from property crime and violent crime were strong, about 9 in 10 residents indicated they felt very or somewhat safe from crimes. Safety service ratings were strong and similar to the national averages with the exception of animal control which was higher than the national average.

When asked to rate the quality of various aspects of the Urbandale Police Department and the quality of the job they are doing, residents showed strong appreciation. About 9 in 10 offered excellent or good ratings to the job they do assisting fire responders and maintaining public order. Additionally, a similar percentage gave positive ratings to the department responding to citizens' emergency calls for service, acting in the best interest of the community, being trustworthy and caring about the well-being of the people they deal with.

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

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

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark <sup>1</sup>	2018 to 2020 <sup>2</sup>	2020 rating
Overall economic health of Urbandale	↔	↔	89%
Overall quality of the transportation system in Urbandale	↔	↓	78%
Overall design or layout of Urbandale's residential and commercial areas	↔	↔	80%
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Urbandale	↔	*	88%
Overall feeling of safety in Urbandale	↔	↔	88%
Overall quality of natural environment in Urbandale	↔	↔	89%
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities	↔	*	91%
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Urbandale	↔	↔	83%
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	↔	↓	67%
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	↔	*	64%

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

Percent essential or very important	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall economic health of Urbandale	↔	↔	88%
Overall quality of the transportation system in Urbandale	↔	↓	73%
Overall design or layout of Urbandale's residential and commercial areas	↔	↔	72%
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Urbandale	↔	*	89%
Overall feeling of safety in Urbandale	↔	↔	89%
Overall quality of natural environment in Urbandale	↔	↔	80%
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities	↔	*	81%
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Urbandale	↔	↔	75%
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	↔	↔	72%
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	↓	↓	70%

<sup>1</sup> For more detail about the benchmark comparisons, please see the *Technical Appendices Report* under separate cover.

<sup>2</sup> Differences between 2018 and 2020 can be considered statistically significant if they are greater than six percentage points, for more detail about the trends, please see the *Trends over Time Report* under separate cover.

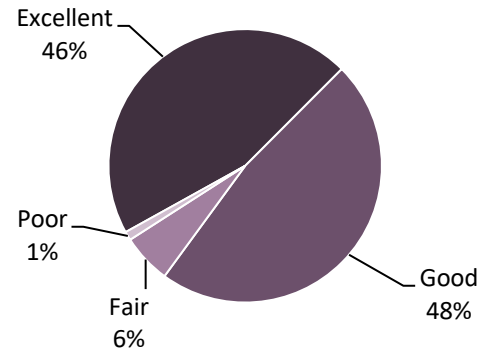
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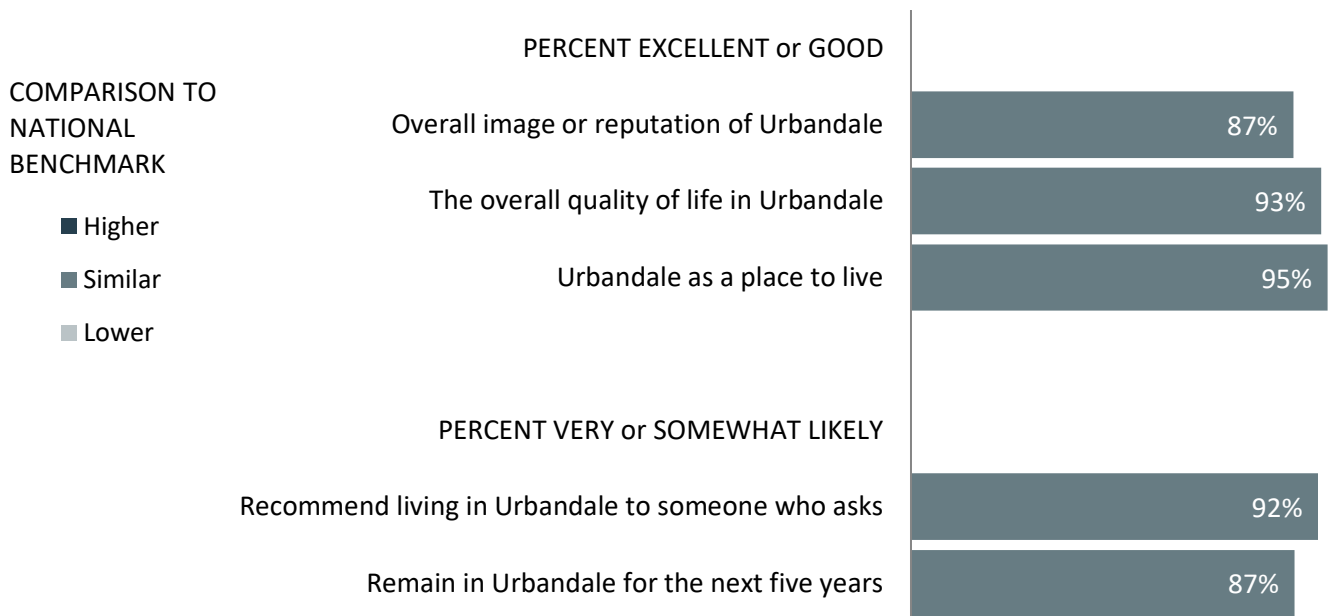
# Quality of Life

*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 URBANDALE



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



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

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall image or reputation of Urbandale	↔	↔	87%
The overall quality of life in Urbandale	↔	↔	93%
Urbandale as a place to live	↔	↔	95%

**FIGURE 5: RECOMMEND URBANDALE - SUMMARY**

Percent very or somewhat likely	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Recommend living in Urbandale to someone who asks	↔	↔	92%
Remain in Urbandale for the next five years	↔	↓	87%

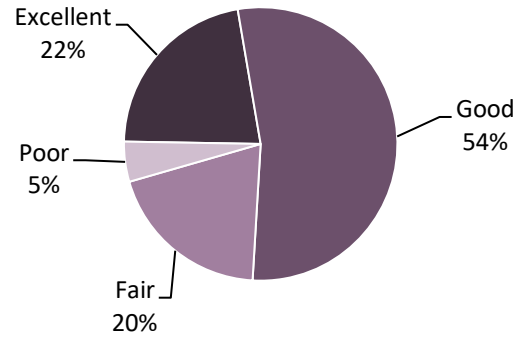
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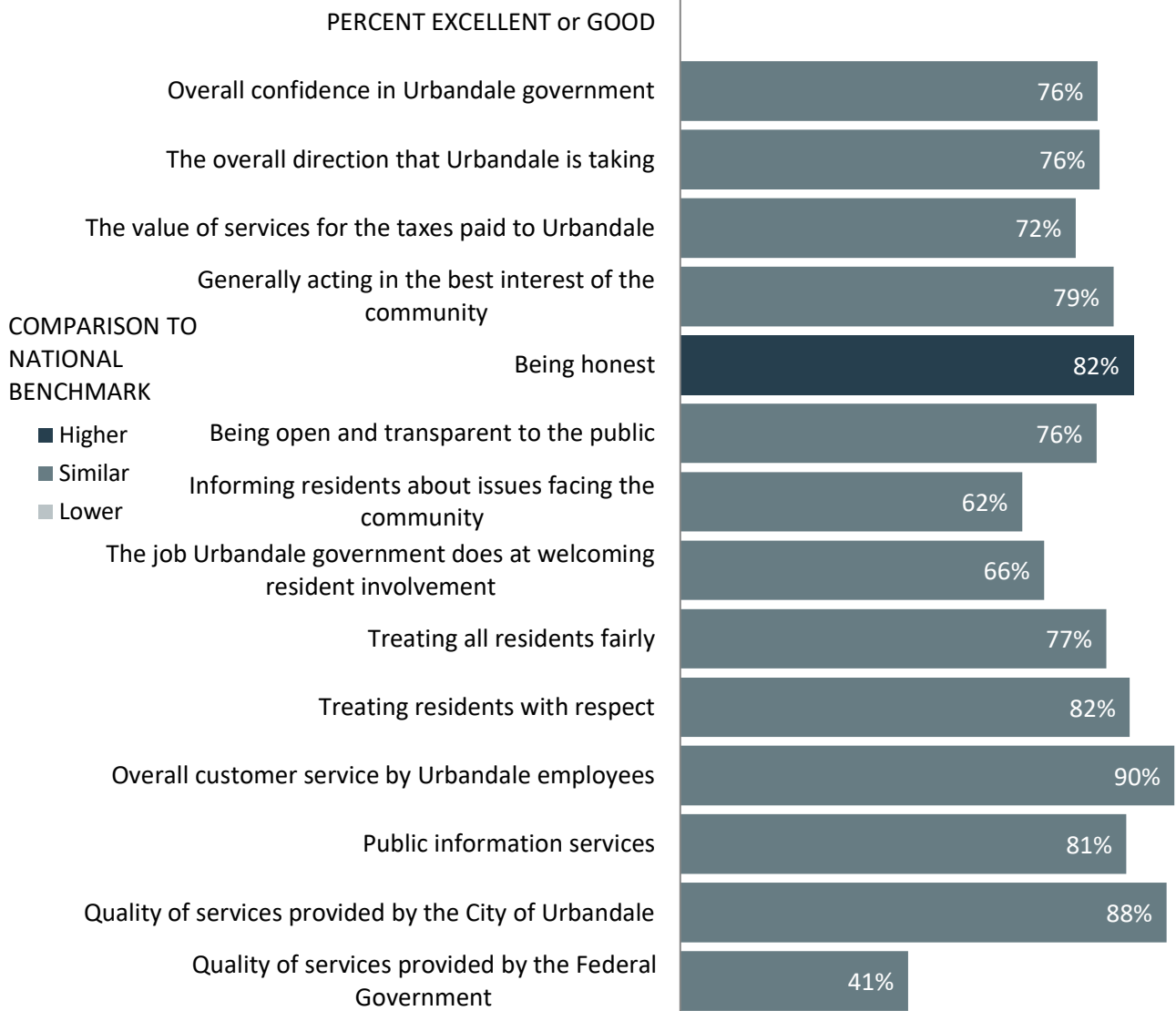
# Governance

*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 URBANDALE GOVERNMENT**



**FIGURE 6: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND SERVICES**





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

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall confidence in Urbandale government	↔	↔	76%
The overall direction that Urbandale is taking	↔	↓	76%
The value of services for the taxes paid to Urbandale	↔	↔	72%
Generally acting in the best interest of the community	↔	↔	79%
Being honest	↑	↔	82%
Being open and transparent to the public	↔	*	76%
Informing residents about issues facing the community	↔	*	62%
The job Urbandale government does at welcoming resident involvement	↔	↔	66%
Treating all residents fairly	↔	↔	77%
Treating residents with respect	↔	*	82%
Overall customer service by Urbandale employees	↔	↔	90%
Public information services	↔	↔	81%
Quality of services provided by the City of Urbandale	↔	↔	88%
Quality of services provided by the Federal Government	↔	↓	41%

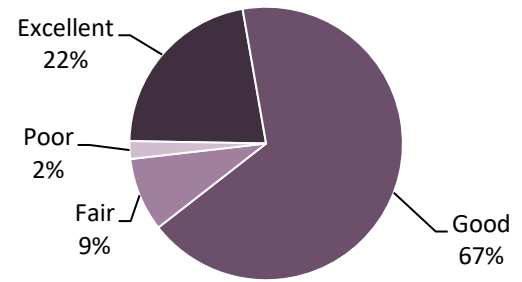
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# Economy

*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 URBANDALE



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

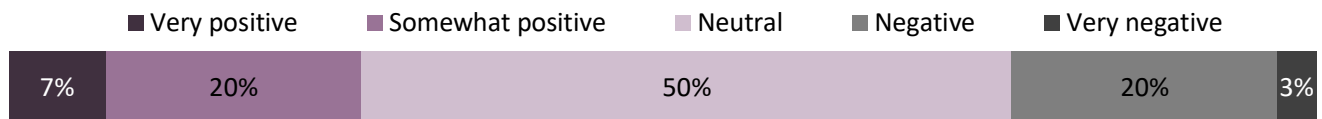
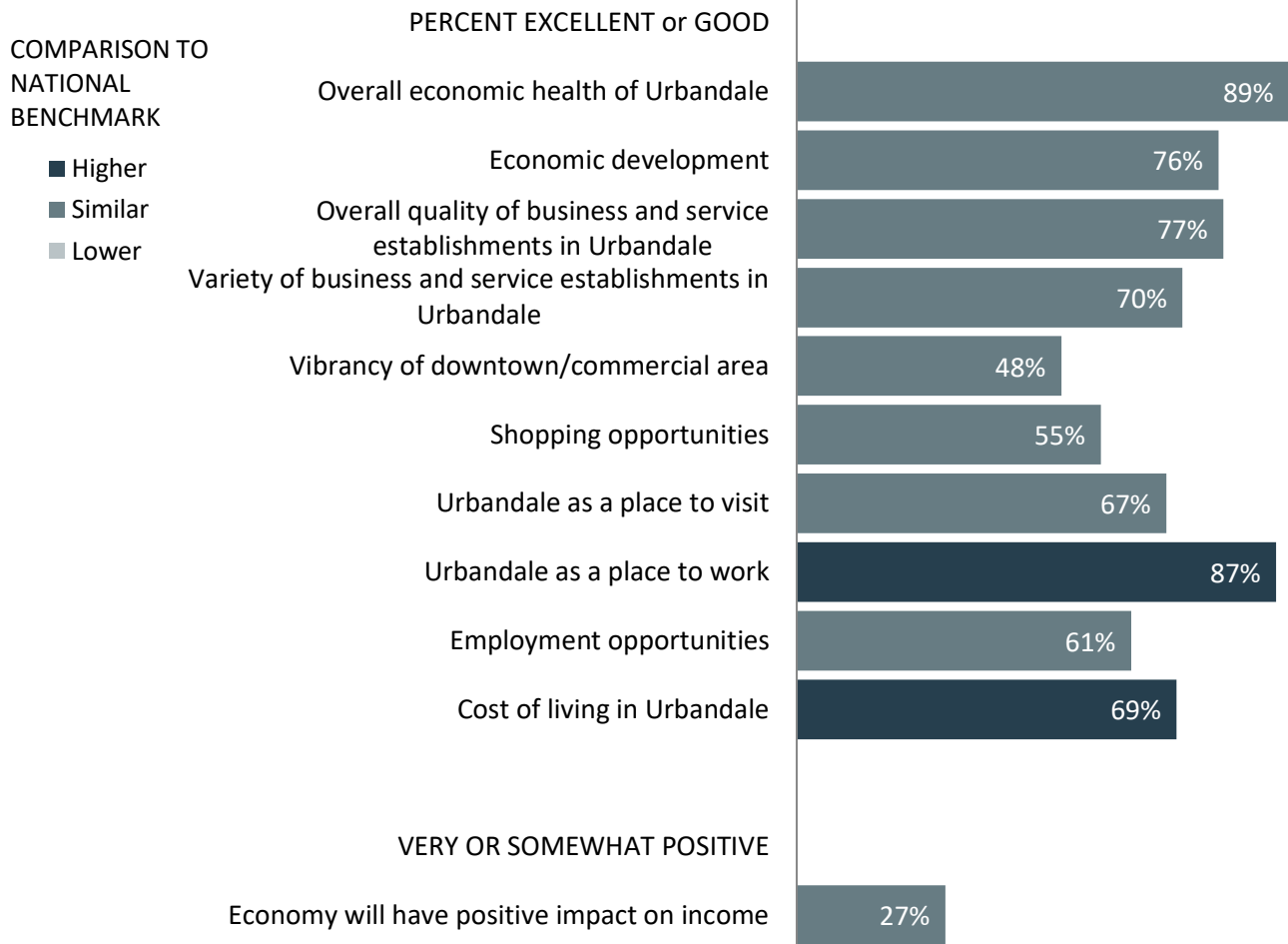


FIGURE 8: ECONOMIC HEALTH



**FIGURE 9: ECONOMIC HEALTH - SUMMARY**

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall economic health of Urbandale	↔	↔	89%
Economic development	↔	↓	76%
Overall quality of business and service establishments in Urbandale	↔	↓	77%
Variety of business and service establishments in Urbandale	↔	*	70%
Vibrancy of downtown/commercial area	↔	↔	48%
Shopping opportunities	↔	↓	55%
Urbandale as a place to visit	↔	↔	67%
Urbandale as a place to work	↑	↔	87%
Employment opportunities	↔	↓	61%
Cost of living in Urbandale	↑	↓	69%

**FIGURE 10: ECONOMIC IMPACT - SUMMARY**

Percent very or somewhat positive	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Economy will have positive impact on income	↔	↓	27%

**FIGURE 11: HOUSING COST - SUMMARY**

Percent for whom housing costs are NOT 30% or more of household income	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
NOT experiencing housing costs stress	↔	↓	77%

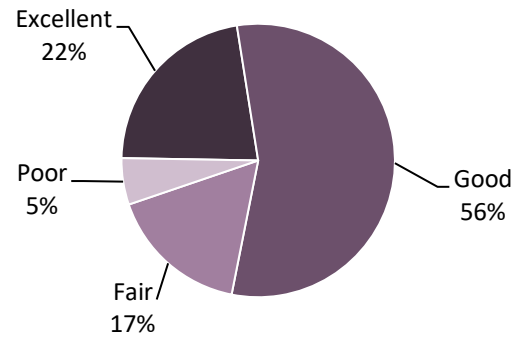
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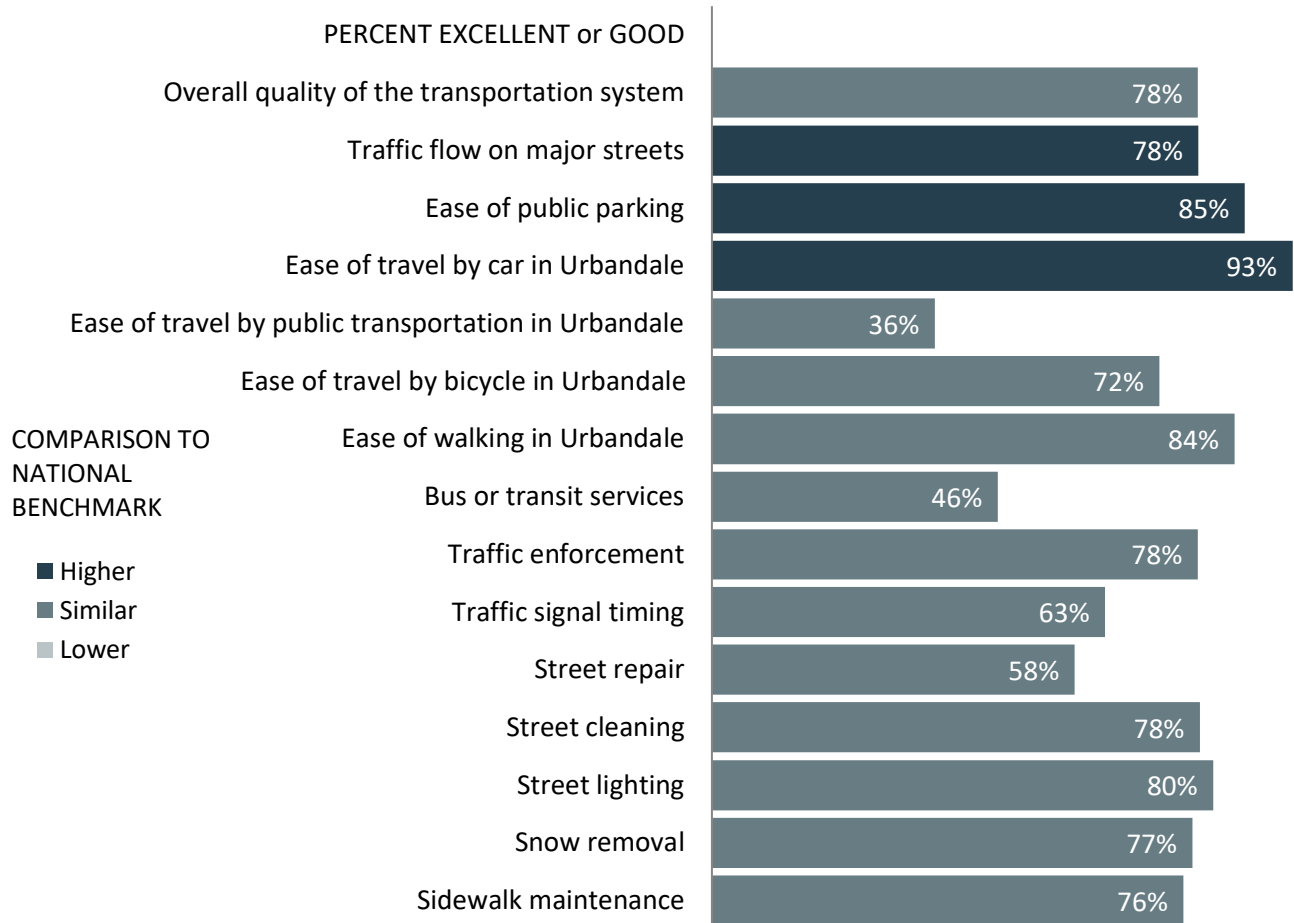
# Mobility

*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.*

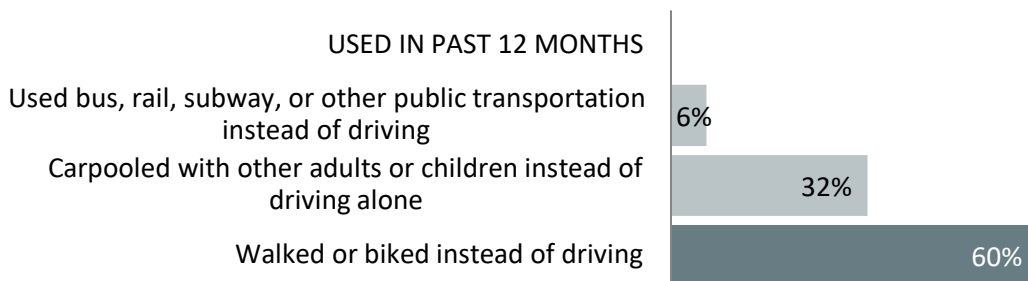
## OVERALL QUALITY OF THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IN URBANDALE



**FIGURE 12: MOBILITY IN URBANDALE**



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



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

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall quality of the transportation system in Urbandale	↔	↓	78%
Traffic flow on major streets	↑	↔	78%
Ease of travel by car in Urbandale	↑	↔	93%
Ease of travel by public transportation in Urbandale	↔	↔	36%
Ease of travel by bicycle in Urbandale	↔	↔	72%
Ease of walking in Urbandale	↔	↔	84%
Ease of public parking	↑	*	85%
Bus or transit services	↔	↓	46%
Traffic enforcement	↔	↔	78%
Traffic signal timing	↔	↔	63%
Street repair	↔	↓	58%
Street cleaning	↔	↔	78%
Street lighting	↔	↔	80%
Snow removal	↔	↔	77%
Sidewalk maintenance	↔	↔	76%

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

Percent who did this in past 12 months	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Used bus, rail, subway, or other public transportation instead of driving	↓	↔	6%
Carpooled with other adults or children instead of driving alone	↓	↔	32%
Walked or biked instead of driving	↔	↑	60%

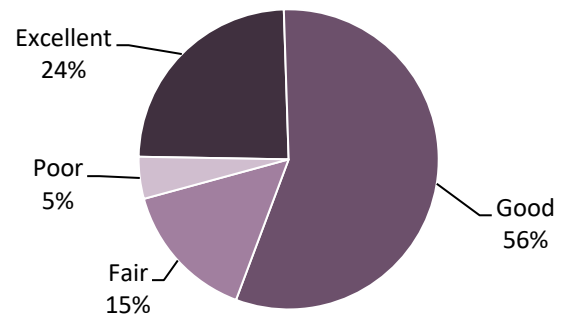
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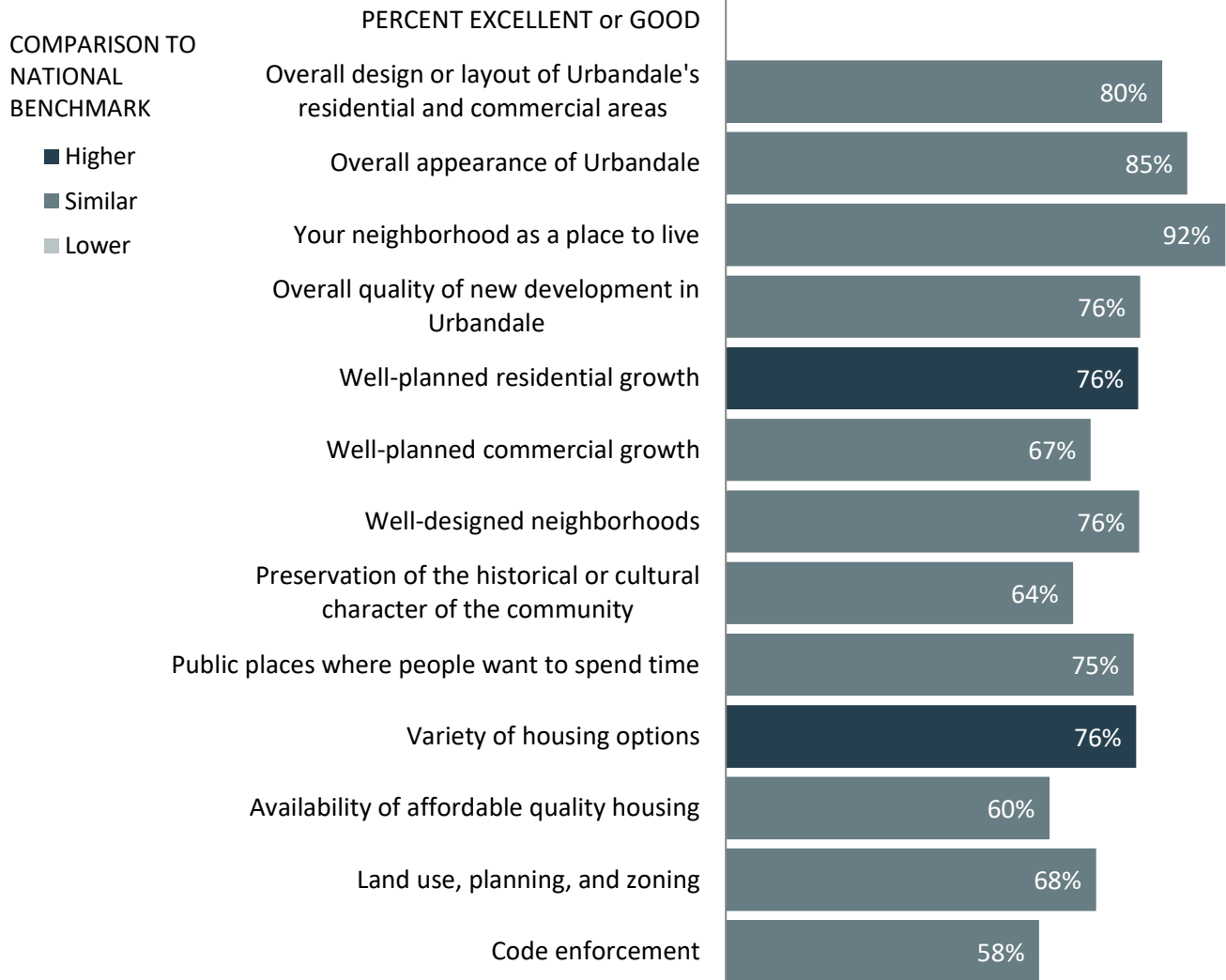
# Community Design

*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 URBANDALE'S RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL AREAS**



**FIGURE 16: COMMUNITY DESIGN**



**FIGURE 17: COMMUNITY DESIGN - SUMMARY**

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall design or layout of Urbandale's residential and commercial areas	↔	↔	80%
Overall appearance of Urbandale	↔	↓	85%
Your neighborhood as a place to live	↔	↔	92%
Overall quality of new development in Urbandale	↔	↔	76%
Well-planned residential growth	↑	*	76%
Well-planned commercial growth	↔	*	67%
Well-designed neighborhoods	↔	*	76%
Preservation of the historical or cultural character of the community	↔	*	64%
Public places where people want to spend time	↔	↓	75%
Variety of housing options	↑	↓	76%
Availability of affordable quality housing	↔	↓	60%
Land use, planning, and zoning	↔	↓	68%
Code enforcement	↔	↓	58%

**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 URBANDALE

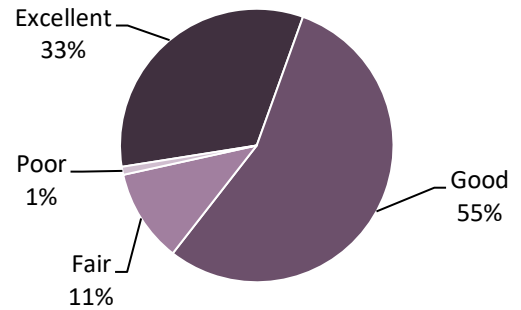


FIGURE 18: UTILITES

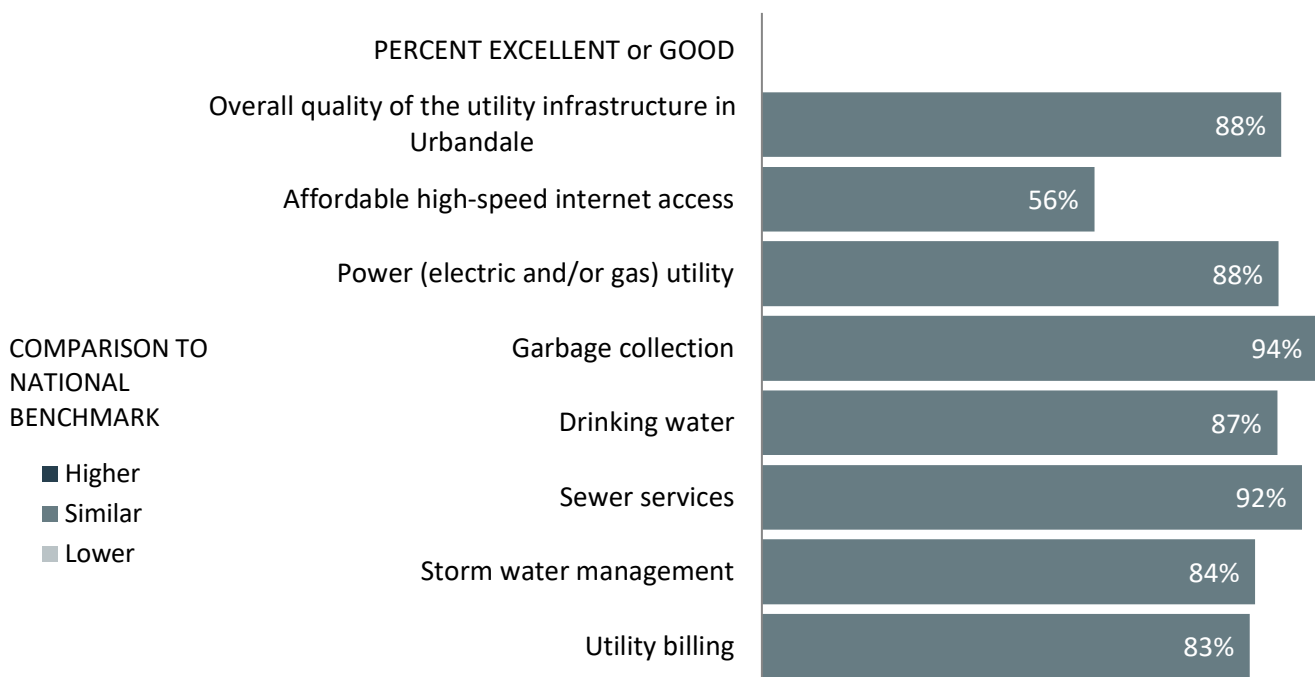


FIGURE 19: UTILITES - SUMMARY

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Urbandale	↔	*	88%
Affordable high-speed internet access	↔	*	56%
Power (electric and/or gas) utility	↔	↔	88%
Garbage collection	↔	↔	94%
Drinking water	↔	↔	87%
Sewer services	↔	↔	92%
Storm water management	↔	↑	84%
Utility billing	↔	↔	83%

Legend

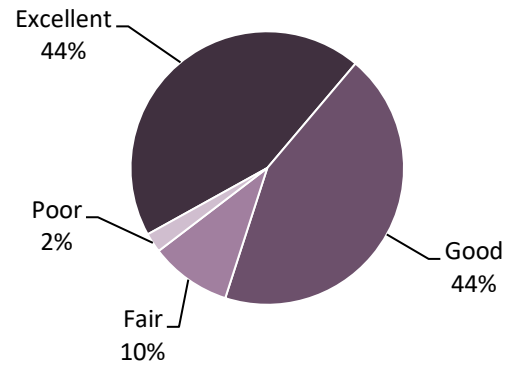
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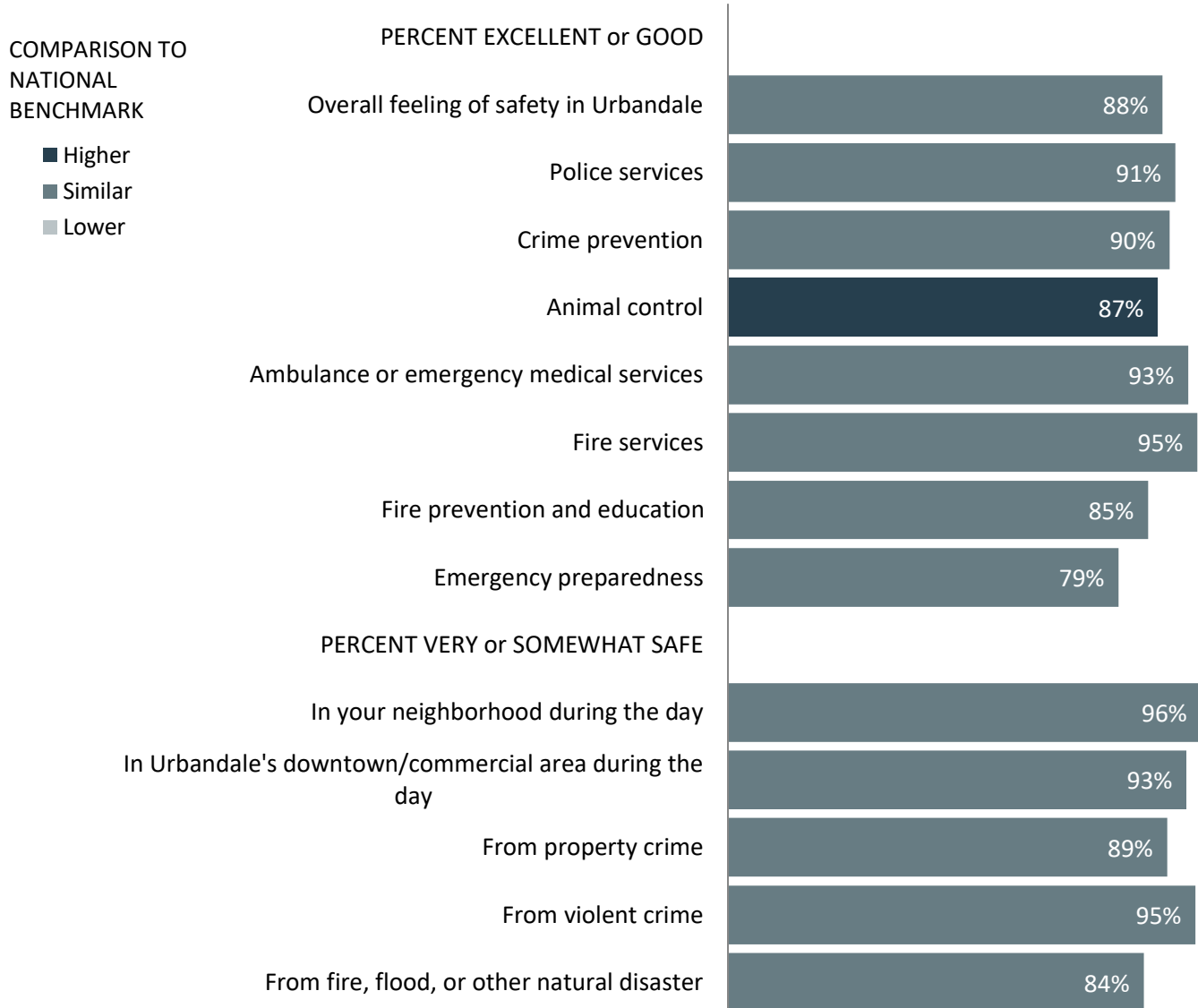
# Safety

*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 URBANDALE



**FIGURE 20: SAFETY IN URBANDALE**



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

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall feeling of safety in Urbandale	↔	↔	88%
Police services	↔	↔	91%
Crime prevention	↔	↔	90%
Animal control	↑	↔	87%
Ambulance or emergency medical services	↔	↔	93%
Fire services	↔	↔	95%
Fire prevention and education	↔	↓	85%
Emergency preparedness	↔	↔	79%

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

Percent who feel very or somewhat safe	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
In your neighborhood during the day	↔	↔	96%
In Urbandale's downtown/commercial area during the day	↔	↔	93%
From property crime	↔	*	89%
From violent crime	↔	*	95%
From fire, flood, or other natural disaster	↔	*	84%

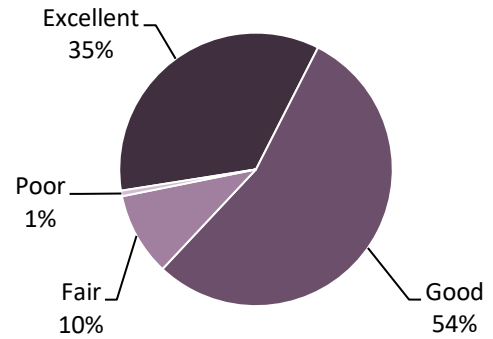
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# Natural Environment

*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 URBANDALE



**FIGURE 23: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**



**FIGURE 24: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT - SUMMARY**

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall quality of natural environment in Urbandale	↔	↔	89%
Cleanliness of Urbandale	↔	↔	91%
Water resources	↓	*	47%
Air quality	↔	↔	91%
Preservation of natural areas	↔	↔	74%
Urbandale open space	↔	↔	76%
Recycling	↔	↓	82%
Yard waste pick-up	↔	↔	88%

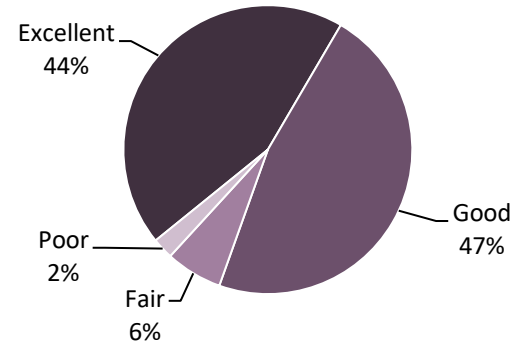
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# Parks and Recreation

*"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 URBANDALE



**FIGURE 25: PARKS AND RECREATION**



**FIGURE 26: PARKS AND RECREATION - SUMMARY**

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities	↔	*	91%
Availability of paths and walking trails	↑	↔	88%
City parks	↔	↔	90%
Recreational opportunities	↔	↓	72%
Recreation programs or classes	↔	↔	75%
Recreation centers or facilities	↔	↓	71%
Fitness opportunities	↔	↓	83%

**Legend**

↑↑ Much higher    ↑ Higher    ↔ Similar    ↓ Lower    ↓↓ 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 URBANDALE

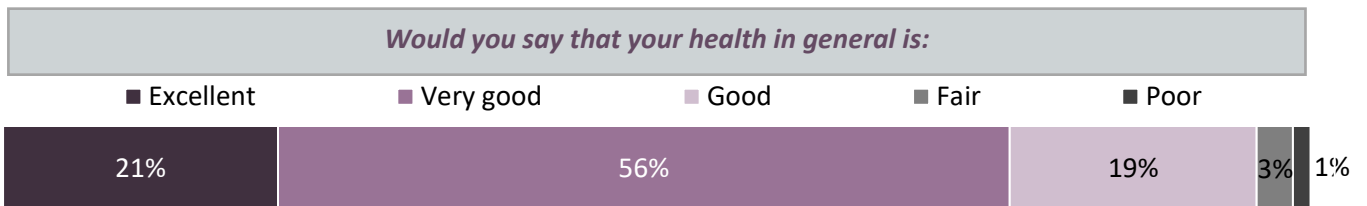
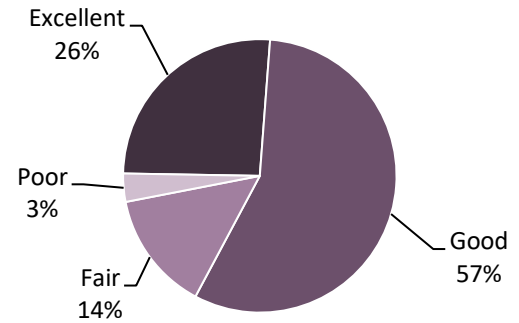
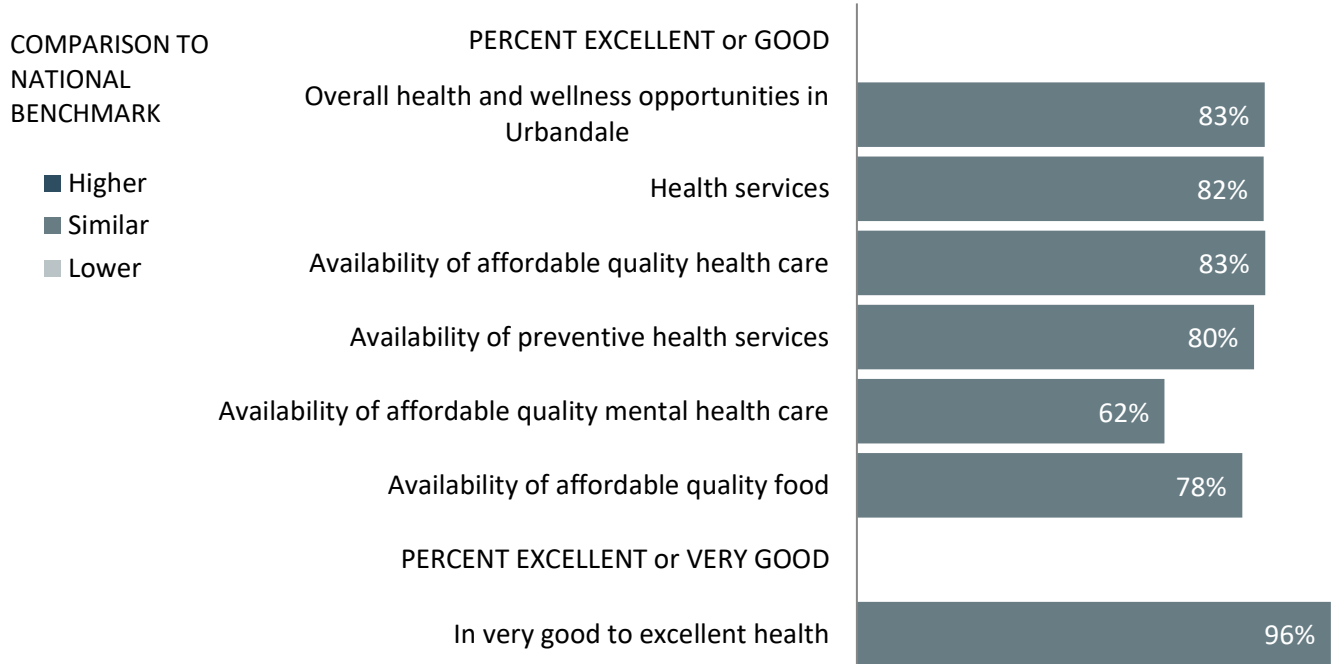


FIGURE 27: HEALTH AND WELLNESS



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

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Urbandale	↔	↔	83%
Health services	↔	↔	82%
Availability of affordable quality health care	↔	↔	83%
Availability of preventive health services	↔	↔	80%
Availability of affordable quality mental health care	↔	↑	62%
Availability of affordable quality food	↔	↓	78%

**FIGURE 29: PERSONAL HEALTH - SUMMARY**

	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
In very good to excellent health	↔	↔	96%

**Legend**

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

# 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 URBANDALE

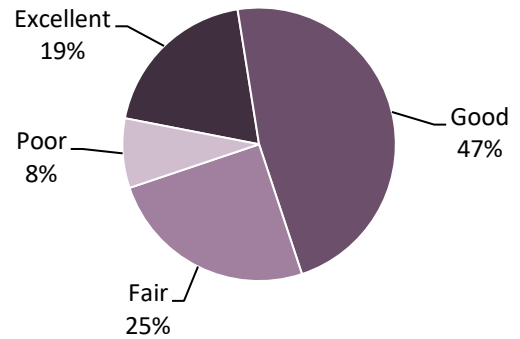
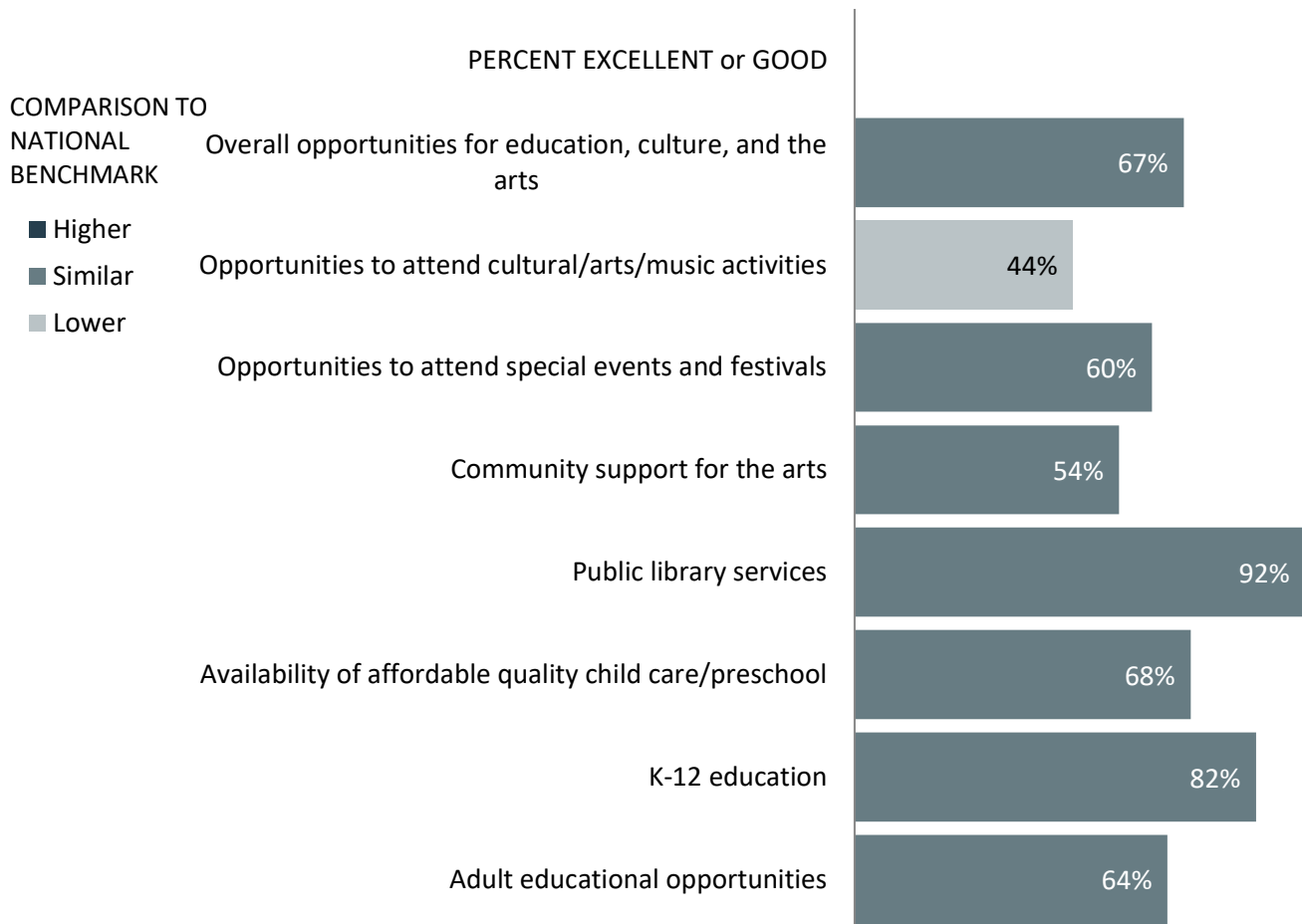


FIGURE 30: EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE



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

Percent excellent or good	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	↔	↓	67%
Opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities	↓	↓	44%
Opportunities to attend special events and festivals	↔	↓	60%
Community support for the arts	↔	*	54%
Public library services	↔	↔	92%
Availability of affordable quality child care/preschool	↔	↓	68%
K-12 education	↔	↓	82%
Adult educational opportunities	↔	↓	64%

**Legend**

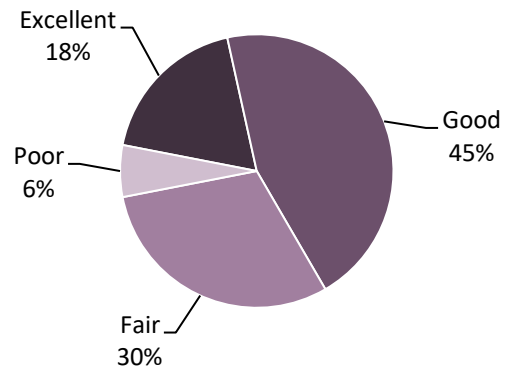
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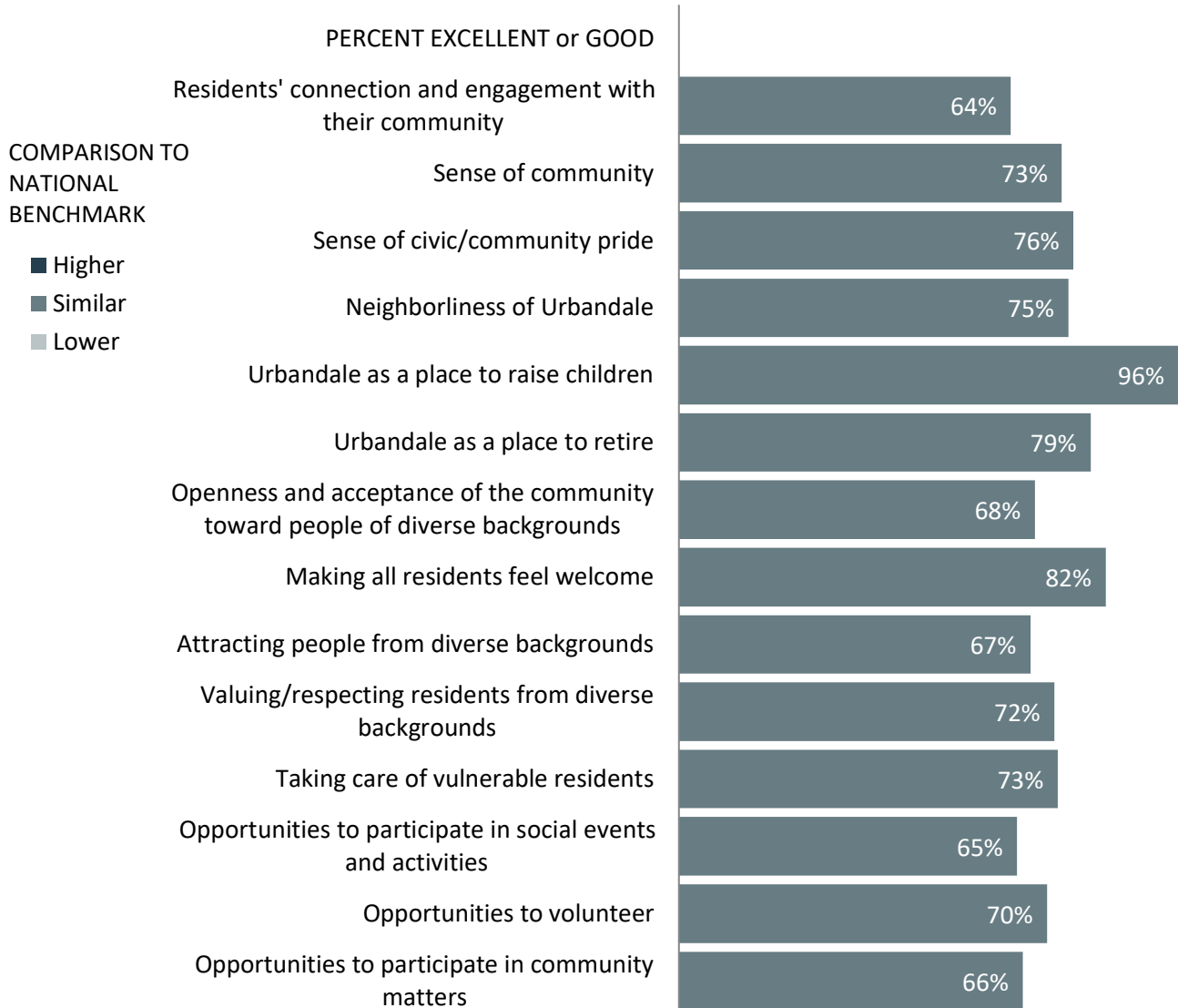
# Inclusivity and Engagement

*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	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	↔	*	64%
Sense of community	↔	↔	73%
Sense of civic/community pride	↔	*	76%
Neighborliness of Urbandale	↔	↔	75%
Urbandale as a place to raise children	↔	↔	96%
Urbandale as a place to retire	↔	↔	79%
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	↔	↓	68%
Making all residents feel welcome	↔	*	82%
Attracting people from diverse backgrounds	↔	*	67%
Valuing/respecting residents from diverse backgrounds	↔	*	72%
Taking care of vulnerable residents	↔	*	73%
Opportunities to participate in social events and activities	↔	↓	65%
Opportunities to volunteer	↔	↓	70%
Opportunities to participate in community matters	↔	↓	66%

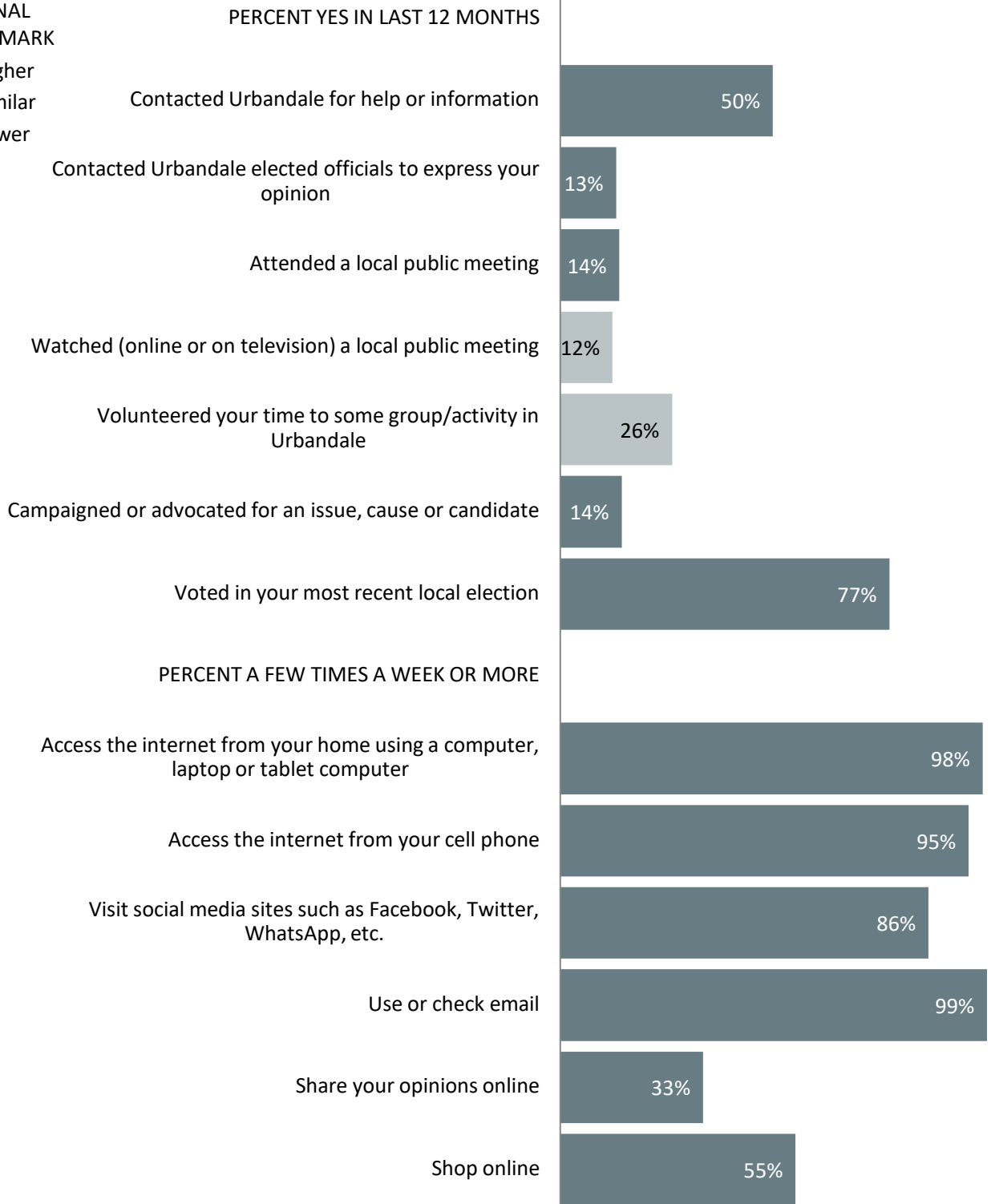
**Legend**

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

**FIGURE 34: RESIDENTS' PARTICIPATION LEVELS**

COMPARISON TO NATIONAL BENCHMARK

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



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

Percent who had done each in last 12 months	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Contacted Urbandale for help or information	↔	↔	50%
Contacted Urbandale elected officials to express your opinion	↔	↔	13%
Attended a local public meeting	↔	↔	14%
Watched (online or on television) a local public meeting	↓	↔	12%
Volunteered your time to some group/activity in Urbandale	↓	↔	26%
Campaigned or advocated for an issue, cause or candidate	↔	↓	14%
Voted in your most recent local election	↔	*	77%

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

Percent who report doing each at least a few times a week	Comparison to benchmark	2018 to 2020	2020 rating
Access the internet from your home using a computer, laptop or tablet computer	↔	*	98%
Access the internet from your cell phone	↔	*	95%
Visit social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.	↔	*	86%
Use or check email	↔	*	99%
Share your opinions online	↔	*	33%
Shop online	↔	*	55%

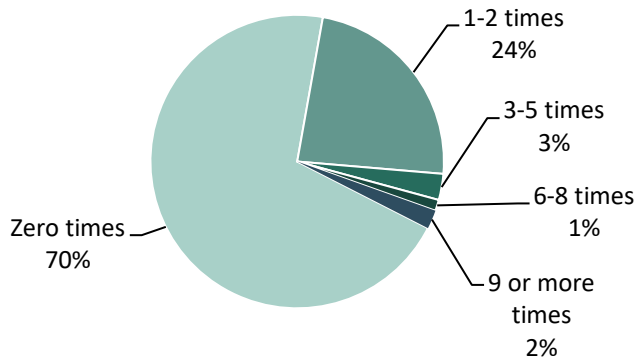
**Legend**

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

# Special Topics

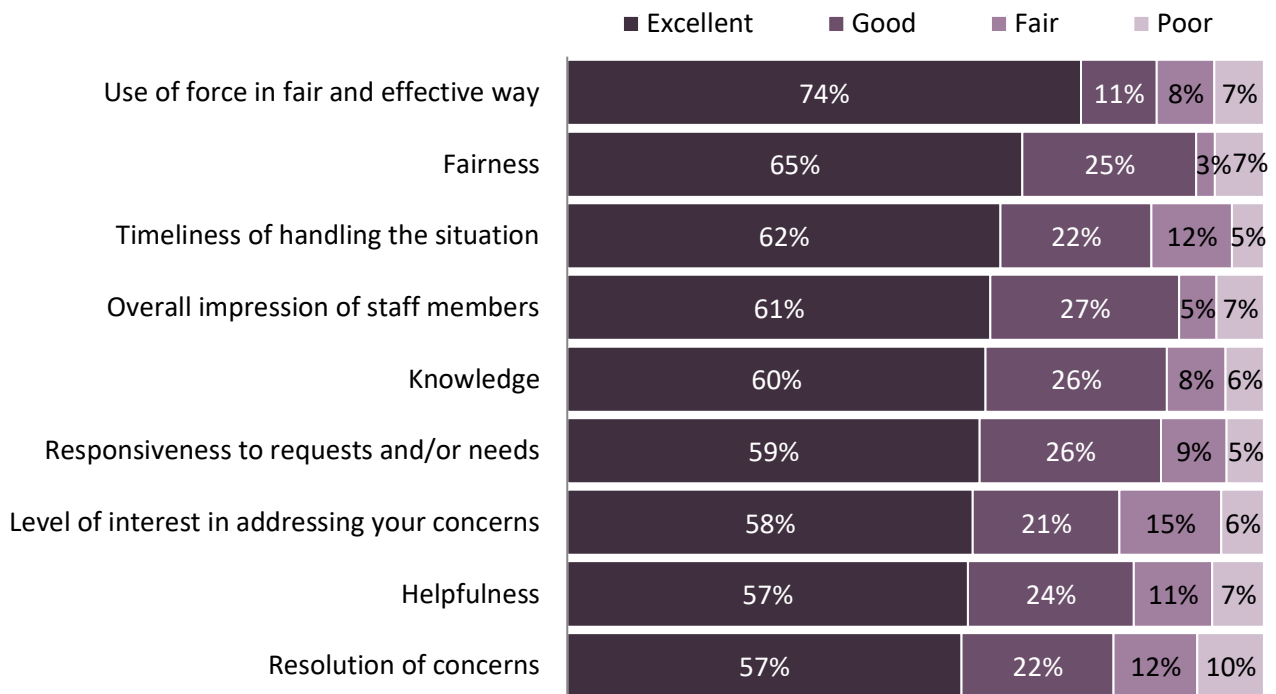
**FIGURE 37: LEVEL OF CONTACT WITH POLICE DEPARTMENT**

*If you had contact with the City of Urbandale Police Department, please indicate about how many times you've been in contact over the last 12 months.*



**FIGURE 38: ASPECTS OF POLICE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE INTERACTIONS**

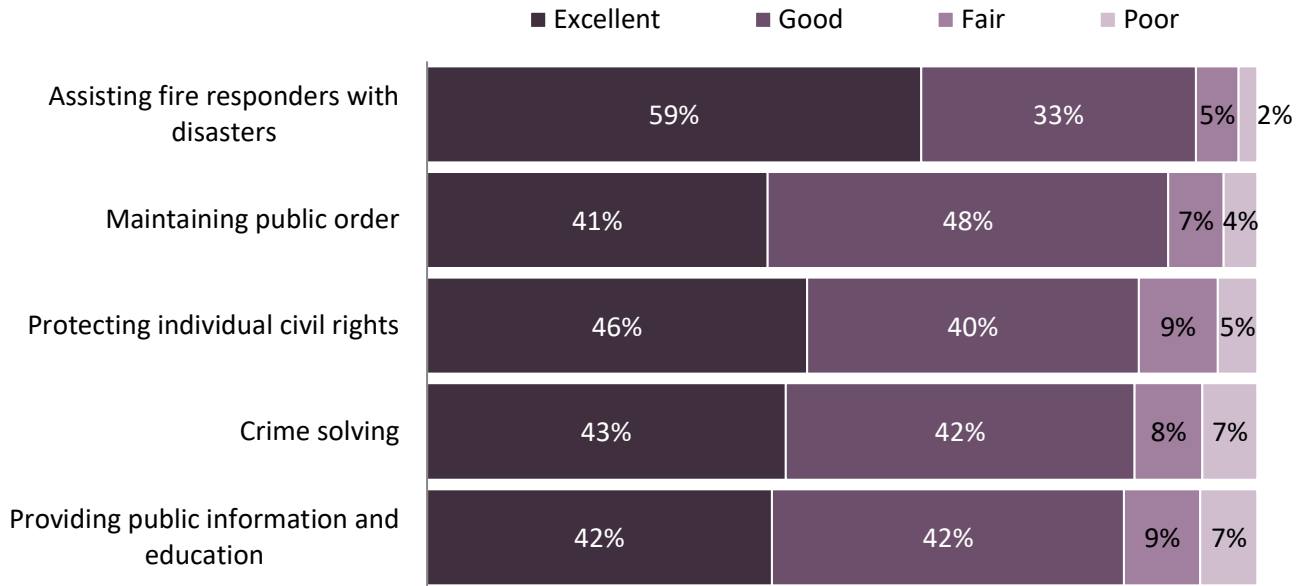
*Based on your most recent contact with a member of the Urbandale Police Department, please rate each of the following aspects of the employee with whom you had contact.*



This question was only asked of survey respondents who reported having been in contact with the Urbandale Police Department at least once in the last 12 months

**FIGURE 39: THE JOB THE POLICE DEPARTMENT DOES AT VARIOUS PRIORITIES**

*Please rate the job the Urbandale Police Department does at each of the following in Urbandale.*



**FIGURE 40: ASPECTS OF POLICE DEPARTMENT**

*Please rate the Urbandale Police Department on the following.*

