

Grand Rapids, MI

The National Community Survey™ 2026 Results

PRESENTED BY

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The civic engagement & performance platform
behind Engage and Track.



Polco's survey research department — three
decades of benchmark survey science.



The National Community Survey™ — the
benchmark instrument behind these results.

Helping every community govern like the best



OUR MISSION

Strengthen local democracy and government performance — helping leaders understand the priorities of their constituents, allocate resources against them, and build not only transparency, but trust.

OUR STORY

Polco unites a decade-plus of civic engagement software with the National Research Center — our in-house think tank and pioneer of the national benchmark surveys — and GPAL, the public-sector performance data platform.



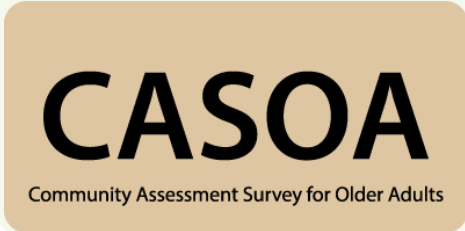
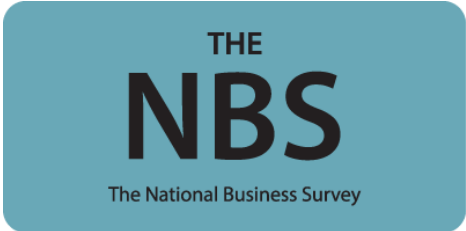
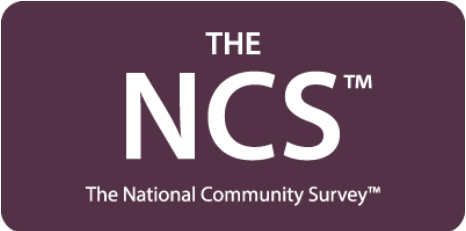
The civic engagement & performance platform



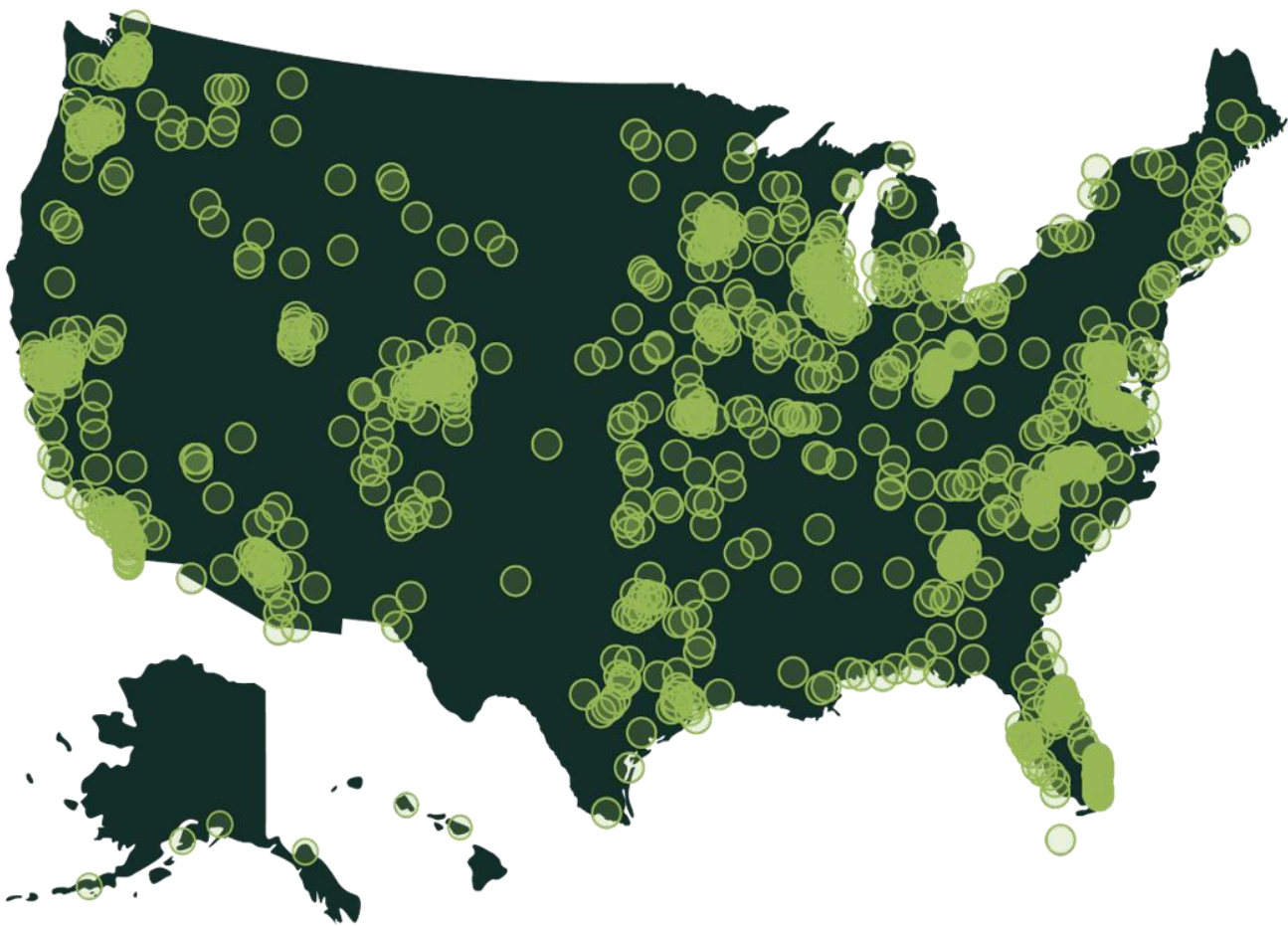
Our in-house think tank — pioneers of the national benchmark surveys



Government Performance Action Lab — the data platform behind Track



Over 400 communities across all 50 states



POLCO'S BENCHMARKING DATABASE

400

comparison communities nationwide

2,000+

NCS administrations nationwide

50M

residents' opinions represented

1,000+

communities served

40K+

jurisdictions with 500+ benchmark indicators

30 yrs

of benchmark survey science

The modern priorities-based governing cycle



The NCS is step one.

Everything that follows — priorities, budget, performance, outcomes — is built on what residents told you.

1 · Gather Data

Benchmark surveys & polls · Track + GPAL records · bring your own data

2 · Strategic Planning

Evidence-based priorities · AI planning · baselines & goals

3 · Budgeting & Execution

Budget Simulation & Prioritize · AI budgeting

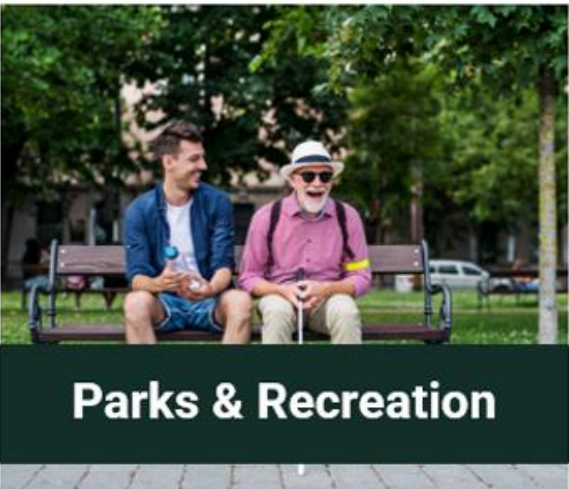
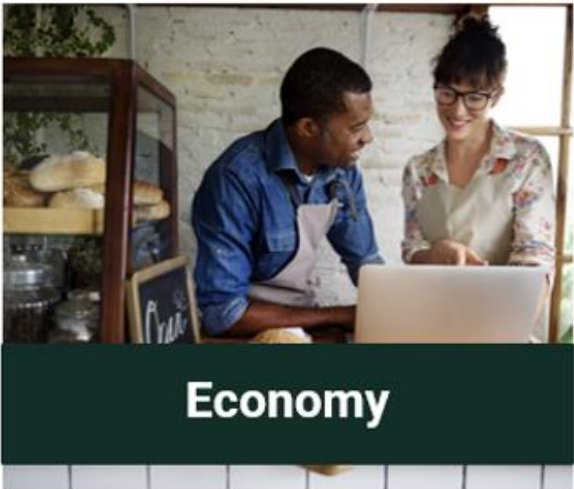
4 · Measure Performance

Year-end stocktake · grant applications · performance reports

5 · Share Outcomes

Taxpayer receipts · dashboards · interactive budget book

Facets of Community Livability



The National Community Survey™ in Grand Rapids



METHODOLOGY

- 1 Address-based random sample survey
- 2 Survey open March 9 – April 20, 2026
- 3 Invitations were sent to 4,000 randomly selected households in all three areas
- 4 +/- 5% margin of error
- 5 Results weighted to reflect Grand Rapids

RESPONSE

- 381 completed surveys
- 10% response rate
- English and Spanish

WHAT RESIDENTS RECEIVED

Postcard invitation

Mailed first, with QR codes in both languages inviting the household to respond online

Cover letter with instructions

Explaining the survey and how to access it, printed in English and Spanish

Printed questionnaire

Full paper survey with a postage-paid return envelope, so respondents could answer on paper or online

Open participation survey

Publicized separately from April 6, 2026:

393 responses are reported apart from the random sample

SECTION

Overview of Survey Results



Quality and importance across the ten facets of livability, then two ways of reading the numbers:

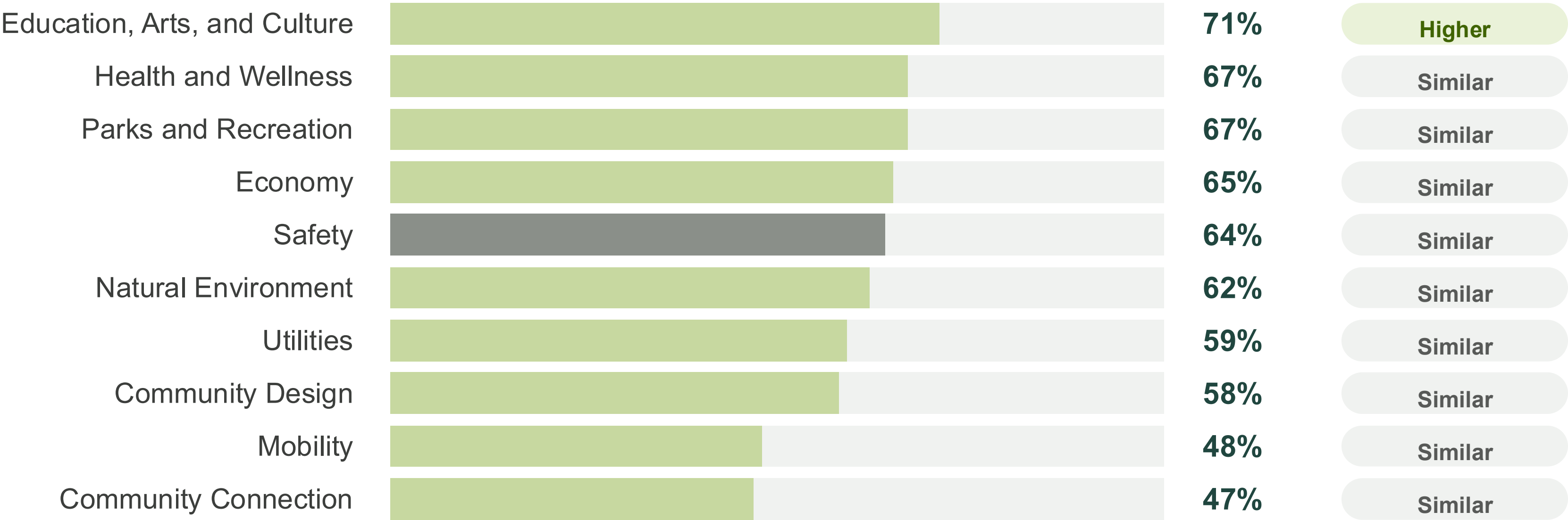
- Against 32 demographically similar communities
(Custom Benchmark)
- Against Grand Rapids' 2024 survey
(Trends over Time)

Facets of Community Livability: Quality



Please rate the quality of each of the following in the Grand Rapids community.
(percent excellent or good)

CUSTOM BENCHMARKS



VS. NATIONAL BENCHMARK

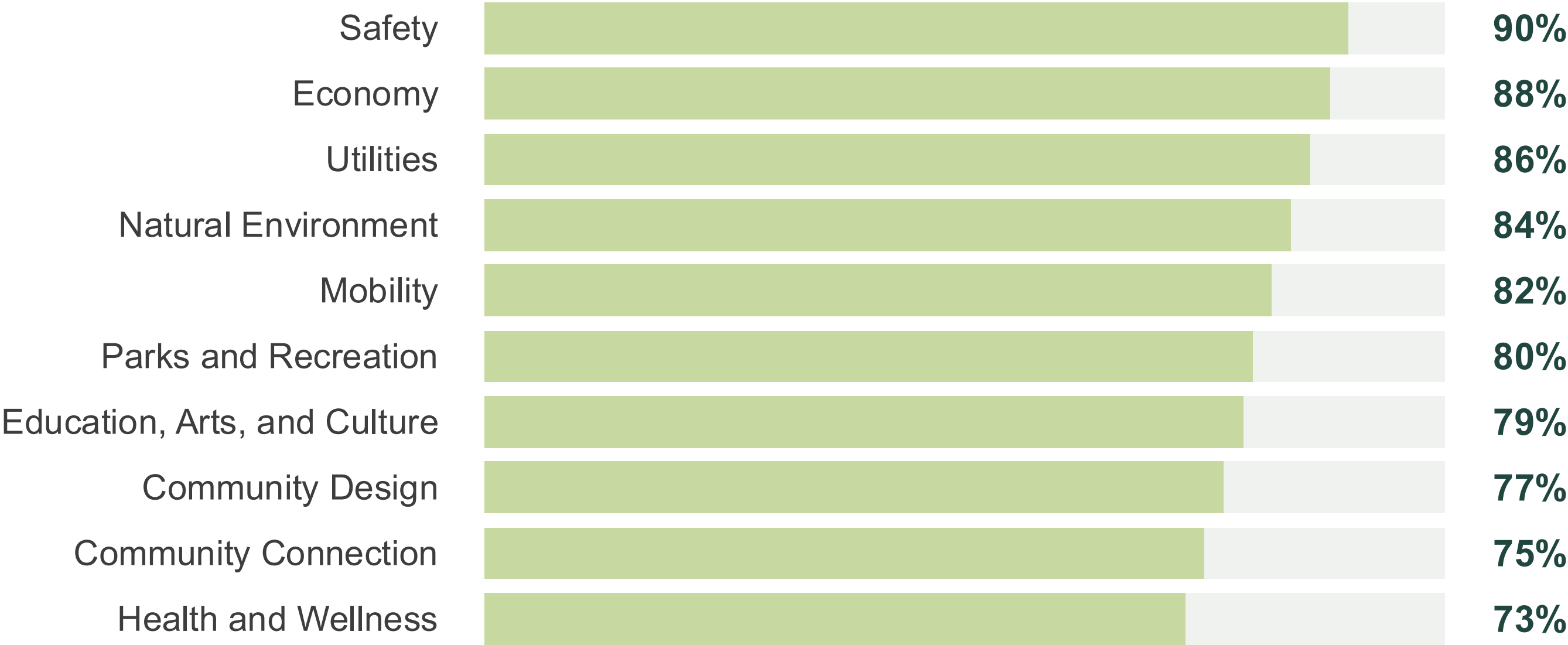
- Similar (−9.9 to +9.9 pts)
- Lower (−10 to −19.9 pts)

Facets of Community Livability: Importance



Please rate how important it is for Grand Rapids to focus on each of the following in the coming two years.
(percent essential or very important)

CUSTOM BENCHMARKS



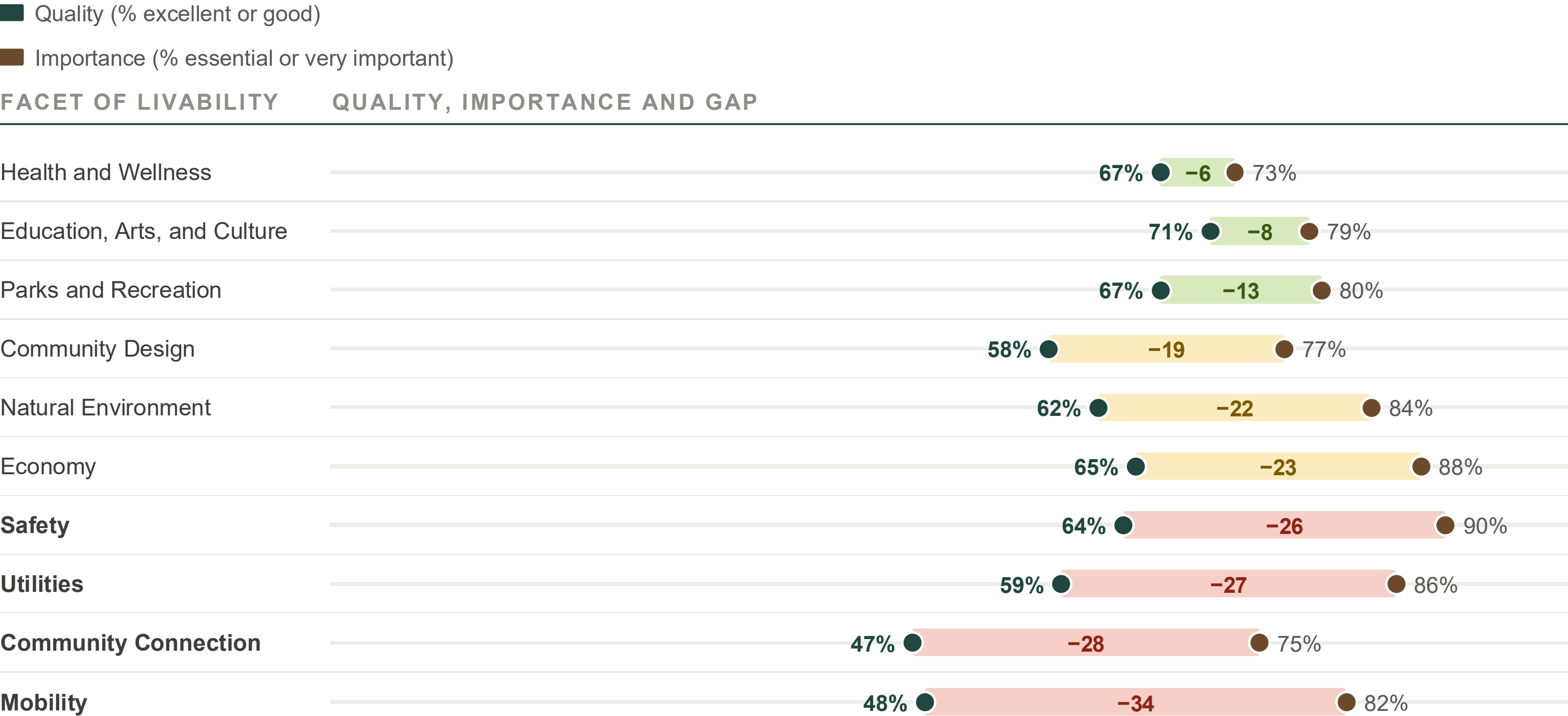
Similar
Similar
Similar
Similar
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Similar
Similar

VS. NATIONAL BENCHMARK

Similar (-9.9 to +9.9 pts)

Balancing Quality and Importance

Where residents' priorities outpace perceived quality, the gap turns negative.



How Grand Rapids Compares

National Benchmarks

127 items rated by residents

2 higher ratings

111 similar ratings

10 lower ratings

Ratings count as similar when they fall within 10 points of the national average, and higher or lower when they differ by more than 10 points.

Custom Benchmarks

32 demographically similar communities

14 higher ratings

106 similar ratings

3 lower ratings

Ratings count as similar when they fall within 10 points of the cohort average, and higher or lower when they differ by more than 10 points.

Areas of Greatest Change, 2024 to 2026

INCREASES

ITEM	GRAND RAPIDS TREND		NATIONAL TREND
Recreation centers or facilities	64% → 70%	+6	No change
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	69% → 75%	+6	No change

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Several mobility items declined nationally — the overall transportation system, ease of travel by public transportation and by bicycle, and bus or transit services — while Grand Rapids held steady on each.

DECREASES

ITEM	GRAND RAPIDS TREND		NATIONAL TREND
Storm water management	73% → 53%	-20	No change
Utility billing	70% → 55%	-15	No change
Attracting people from diverse backgrounds	62% → 48%	-14	No change
Traffic flow on major streets	55% → 42%	-13	No change
Employment opportunities	65% → 55%	-10	No change
Sense of civic/community pride	66% → 56%	-10	No change

SECTION

Key Findings



Three community strengths and three focus areas drawn from the report, with each rating set against national and custom cohort averages.

KEY FINDING 01

Residents view Grand Rapids as a great place to live and are committed to the community.

1

Overall Quality of Life



Residents gave excellent or good ratings to:

91%

Would recommend living in Grand Rapids to someone who asks

↑ National: Similar
Custom: Higher

85%

Grand Rapids as a place to live

– National: Similar
Custom: Similar

83%

Plan to remain in Grand Rapids for the next five years

– National: Similar
Custom: Similar

81%

The overall quality of life in Grand Rapids

– National: Similar
Custom: Similar

80%

Your neighborhood as a place to live

– National: Similar
Custom: Similar

71%

Overall image or reputation of Grand Rapids

– National: Similar
Custom: Similar

KEY FINDING 02

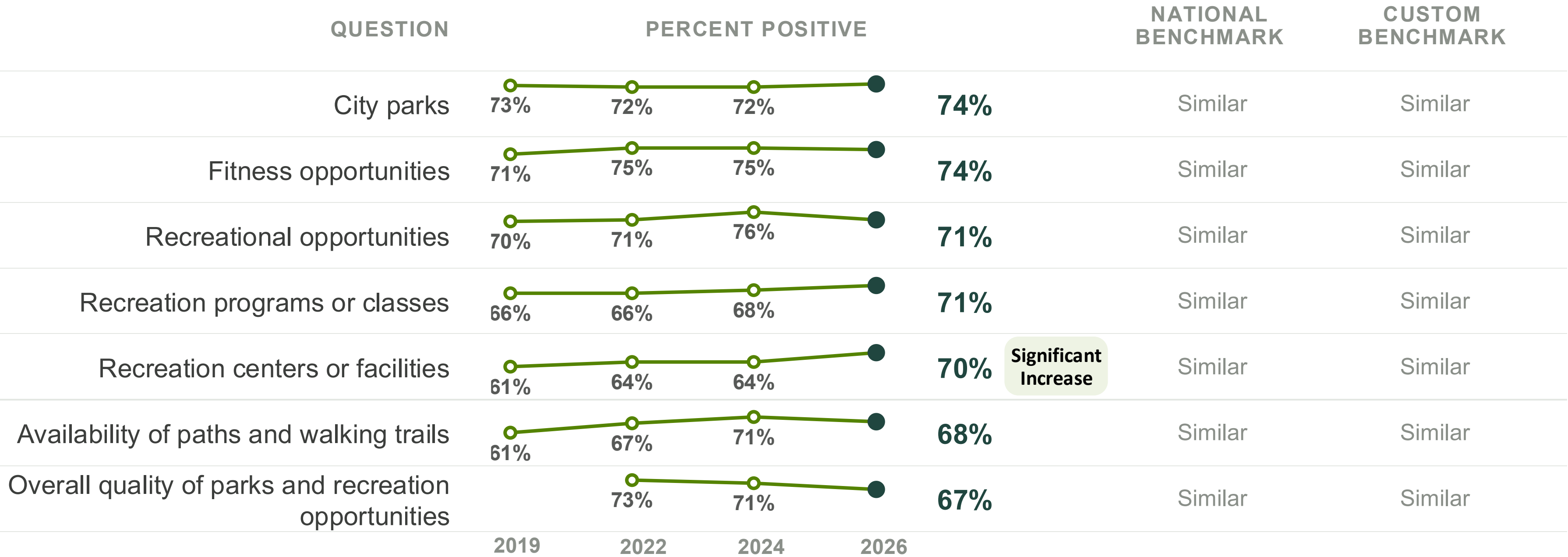
Most measures related to Grand Rapids' parks and recreation system scored in line with comparison communities.

2

Parks and Recreation in Grand Rapids



Please rate each of the following in the Grand Rapids community.
(percent excellent or good)



KEY FINDING 03

Education, culture, and arts offerings are a community asset, with several results above benchmarks.

3

Education, Arts, and Culture in Grand Rapids



Please rate the following in the Grand Rapids community.
(percent excellent or good)

QUESTION	PERCENT POSITIVE				NATIONAL BENCHMARK	CUSTOM BENCHMARK								
Public library services	<table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Percent Positive</th></tr><tr><td>2019</td><td>86%</td></tr><tr><td>2022</td><td>88%</td></tr><tr><td>2024</td><td>89%</td></tr><tr><td>2026</td><td>93%</td></tr></table>	Year	Percent Positive	2019	86%	2022	88%	2024	89%	2026	93%	93%	Similar	Similar
Year	Percent Positive													
2019	86%													
2022	88%													
2024	89%													
2026	93%													
Opportunities to attend special events and festivals	<table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Percent Positive</th></tr><tr><td>2019</td><td>66%</td></tr><tr><td>2022</td><td>79%</td></tr><tr><td>2024</td><td>80%</td></tr><tr><td>2026</td><td>75%</td></tr></table>	Year	Percent Positive	2019	66%	2022	79%	2024	80%	2026	75%	75%	Similar	Higher
Year	Percent Positive													
2019	66%													
2022	79%													
2024	80%													
2026	75%													
Opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities	<table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Percent Positive</th></tr><tr><td>2019</td><td>79%</td></tr><tr><td>2022</td><td>79%</td></tr><tr><td>2024</td><td>81%</td></tr><tr><td>2026</td><td>73%</td></tr></table>	Year	Percent Positive	2019	79%	2022	79%	2024	81%	2026	73%	73%	Higher	Higher
Year	Percent Positive													
2019	79%													
2022	79%													
2024	81%													
2026	73%													
Community support for the arts	<table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Percent Positive</th></tr><tr><td>2019</td><td>79%</td></tr><tr><td>2022</td><td>79%</td></tr><tr><td>2024</td><td>80%</td></tr><tr><td>2026</td><td>72%</td></tr></table>	Year	Percent Positive	2019	79%	2022	79%	2024	80%	2026	72%	72%	Higher	Higher
Year	Percent Positive													
2019	79%													
2022	79%													
2024	80%													
2026	72%													
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	<table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Percent Positive</th></tr><tr><td>2019</td><td>71%</td></tr><tr><td>2022</td><td>74%</td></tr><tr><td>2024</td><td>73%</td></tr><tr><td>2026</td><td>71%</td></tr></table>	Year	Percent Positive	2019	71%	2022	74%	2024	73%	2026	71%	71%	Similar	Higher
Year	Percent Positive													
2019	71%													
2022	74%													
2024	73%													
2026	71%													
Opportunities to participate in social events and activities	<table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Percent Positive</th></tr><tr><td>2019</td><td>74%</td></tr><tr><td>2022</td><td>68%</td></tr><tr><td>2024</td><td>72%</td></tr><tr><td>2026</td><td>67%</td></tr></table>	Year	Percent Positive	2019	74%	2022	68%	2024	72%	2026	67%	67%	Similar	Higher
Year	Percent Positive													
2019	74%													
2022	68%													
2024	72%													
2026	67%													
Adult educational opportunities	<table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Percent Positive</th></tr><tr><td>2019</td><td>58%</td></tr><tr><td>2022</td><td>59%</td></tr><tr><td>2024</td><td>63%</td></tr><tr><td>2026</td><td>54%</td></tr></table>	Year	Percent Positive	2019	58%	2022	59%	2024	63%	2026	54%	54%	Similar	Similar
Year	Percent Positive													
2019	58%													
2022	59%													
2024	63%													
2026	54%													

KEY FINDING 04

Some safety and emergency readiness measures indicate room for growth.

4

Safety in Grand Rapids



Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel:
(percent very or somewhat safe)

QUESTION	PERCENT POSITIVE				NATIONAL BENCHMARK	CUSTOM BENCHMARK								
In your neighborhood during the day	<table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Percent Positive</th></tr><tr><td>2019</td><td>90%</td></tr><tr><td>2022</td><td>91%</td></tr><tr><td>2024</td><td>92%</td></tr><tr><td>2026</td><td>94%</td></tr></table>	Year	Percent Positive	2019	90%	2022	91%	2024	92%	2026	94%	94%	Similar	Similar
Year	Percent Positive													
2019	90%													
2022	91%													
2024	92%													
2026	94%													
In Grand Rapids's downtown/commercial area during the day	<table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Percent Positive</th></tr><tr><td>2019</td><td>85%</td></tr><tr><td>2022</td><td>85%</td></tr><tr><td>2024</td><td>86%</td></tr><tr><td>2026</td><td>85%</td></tr></table>	Year	Percent Positive	2019	85%	2022	85%	2024	86%	2026	85%	85%	Similar	Similar
Year	Percent Positive													
2019	85%													
2022	85%													
2024	86%													
2026	85%													
From fire, flood, or other natural disaster	<table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Percent Positive</th></tr><tr><td>2022</td><td>81%</td></tr><tr><td>2024</td><td>87%</td></tr><tr><td>2026</td><td>79%</td></tr></table>	Year	Percent Positive	2022	81%	2024	87%	2026	79%	79%	Similar	Similar		
Year	Percent Positive													
2022	81%													
2024	87%													
2026	79%													
From property crime	<table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Percent Positive</th></tr><tr><td>2022</td><td>64%</td></tr><tr><td>2024</td><td>66%</td></tr><tr><td>2026</td><td>67%</td></tr></table>	Year	Percent Positive	2022	64%	2024	66%	2026	67%	67%	Similar	Similar		
Year	Percent Positive													
2022	64%													
2024	66%													
2026	67%													
From violent crime	<table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Percent Positive</th></tr><tr><td>2022</td><td>71%</td></tr><tr><td>2024</td><td>69%</td></tr><tr><td>2026</td><td>67%</td></tr></table>	Year	Percent Positive	2022	71%	2024	69%	2026	67%	67%	Similar	Similar		
Year	Percent Positive													
2022	71%													
2024	69%													
2026	67%													
Overall feeling of safety (excellent or good)	<table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Percent Positive</th></tr><tr><td>2019</td><td>63%</td></tr><tr><td>2022</td><td>61%</td></tr><tr><td>2024</td><td>62%</td></tr><tr><td>2026</td><td>64%</td></tr></table>	Year	Percent Positive	2019	63%	2022	61%	2024	62%	2026	64%	64%	Lower	Similar
Year	Percent Positive													
2019	63%													
2022	61%													
2024	62%													
2026	64%													

Safety Services in Grand Rapids



Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Grand Rapids.
(percent excellent or good)

QUESTION	PERCENT POSITIVE					NATIONAL BENCHMARK	CUSTOM BENCHMARK
Fire services		91%	87%	93%	87%	Similar	Similar
Ambulance or emergency medical services		89%	79%	86%	83%	Similar	Similar
Fire prevention and education		72%	70%	78%	76%	Similar	Similar
Animal control		50%	62%	66%	62%	Similar	Similar
Emergency preparedness		62%	56%	61%	60%	Similar	Similar
Police/Sheriff services		63%	57%	57%	51%	Lower	Lower
Crime prevention		48%	44%	45%	50%	Lower	Similar
	2019	2022	2024	2026			

KEY FINDING 05

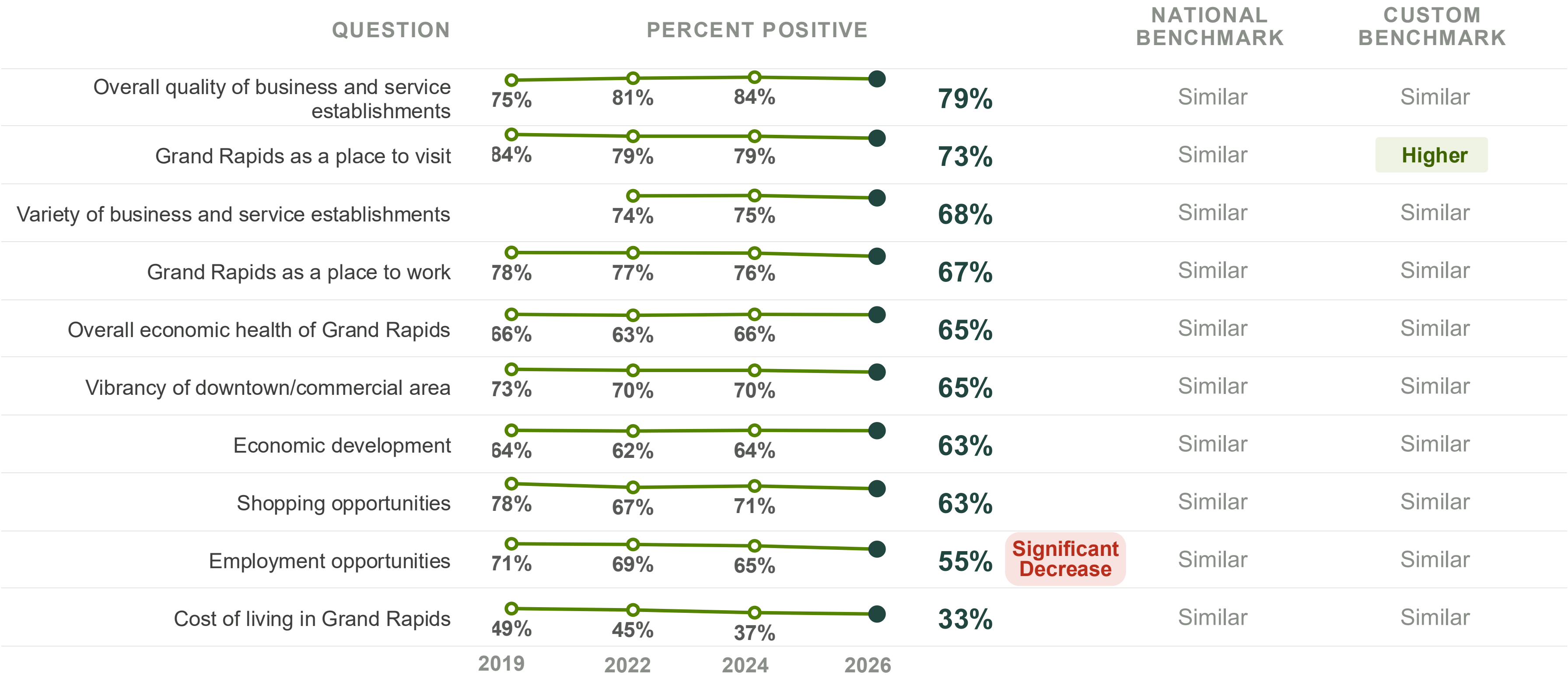
Economic confidence in Grand Rapids remains strong but shows some declines.

5

The Economy in Grand Rapids



Please rate each of the following in the Grand Rapids community.
(percent excellent or good)



KEY FINDING 06

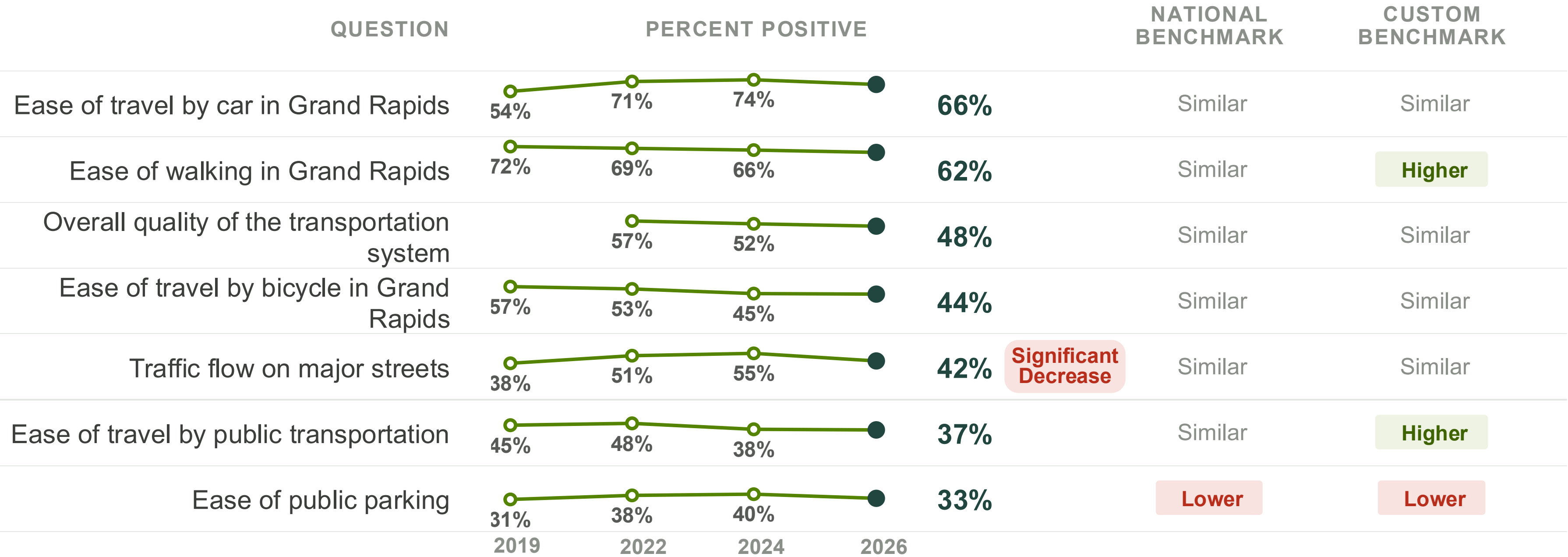
Residents give lower marks to many mobility services compared to the 2023 survey.

6

Getting Around Grand Rapids



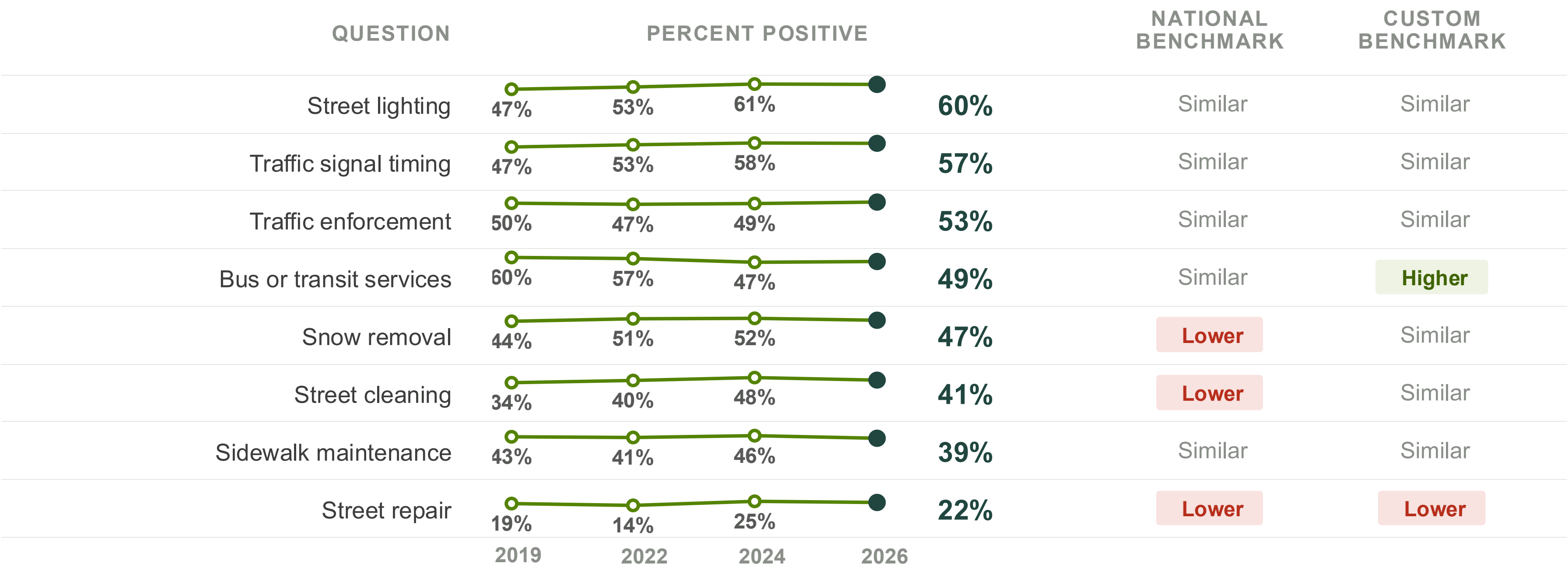
Please rate each of the following in the Grand Rapids community.
(percent excellent or good)



Street and Transit Services



Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Grand Rapids.
(percent excellent or good)



SECTION

Additional Special Topics

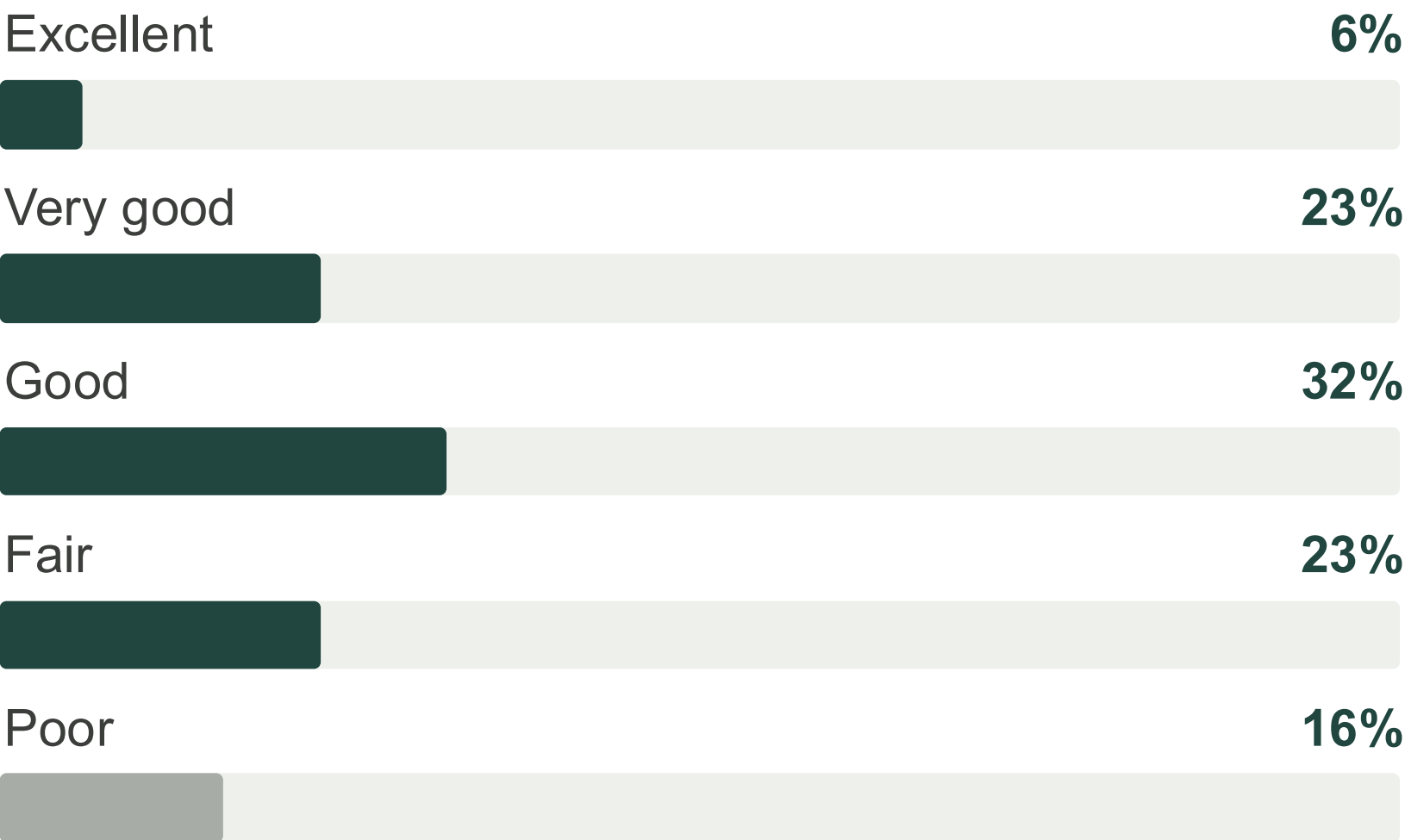


Custom questions added to Grand Rapids's NCS questionnaire — construction and roadwork communication, which projects residents want to hear about, and how the City is performing on routine updates.



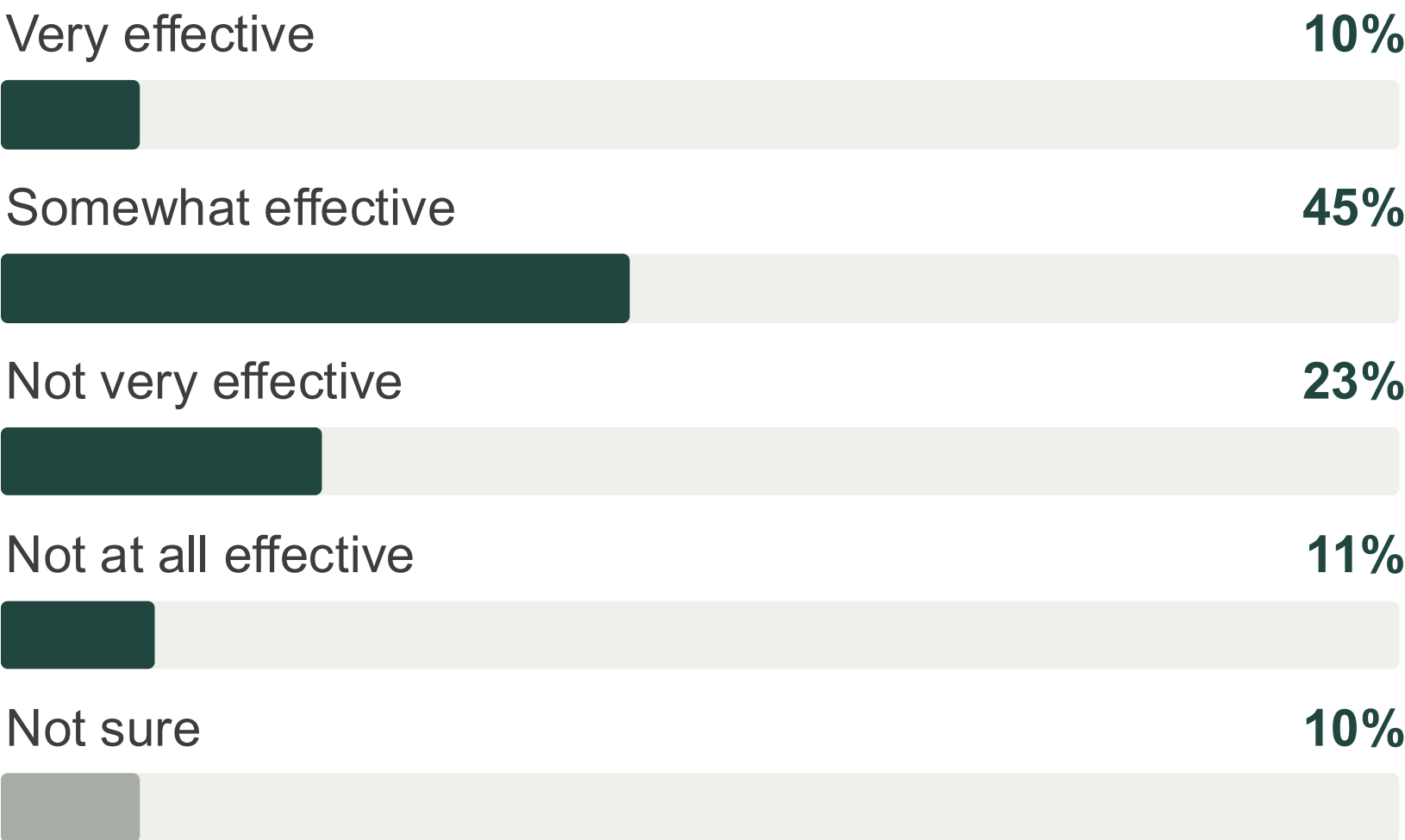
Construction and Roadwork Communication

How would you rate the **quality of information** provided to you by the City regarding local construction or roadwork projects?



61% rated the information excellent, very good, or good, while 4 in 10 rated the quality of information as fair or poor.

How **effective** are the current methods used by the City to notify you about construction impacts?

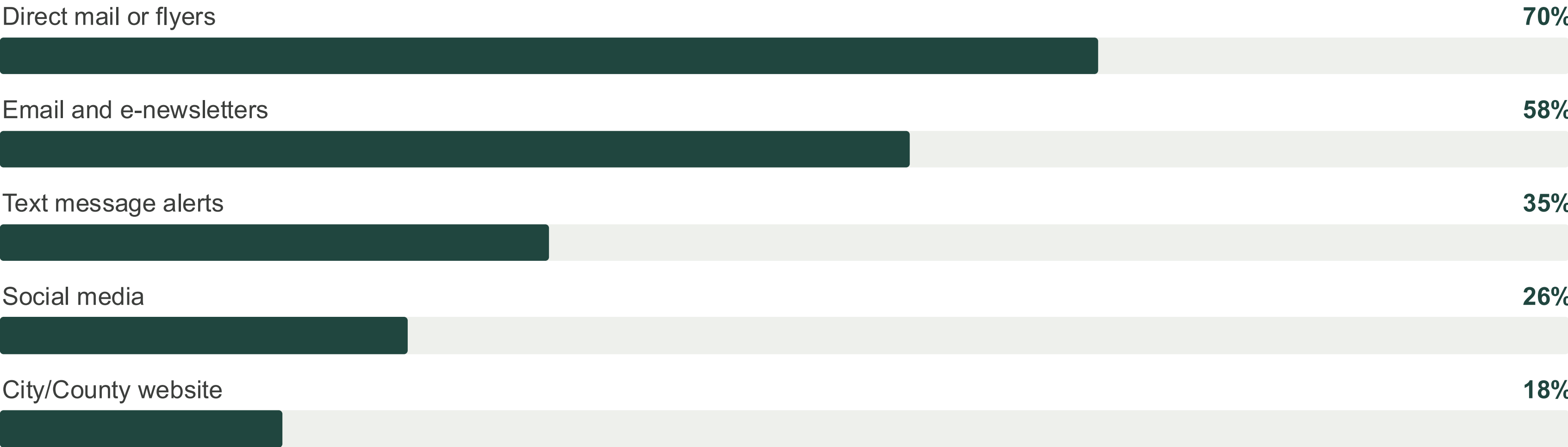


55% found the current notification methods effective; a third did not, and 1 in 10 were unsure.



Preferred Ways to Hear About Construction

What is your preferred method for receiving information about upcoming construction or roadwork projects in your area?
(Select all that apply.)





Project Interest and Invitations to Participate

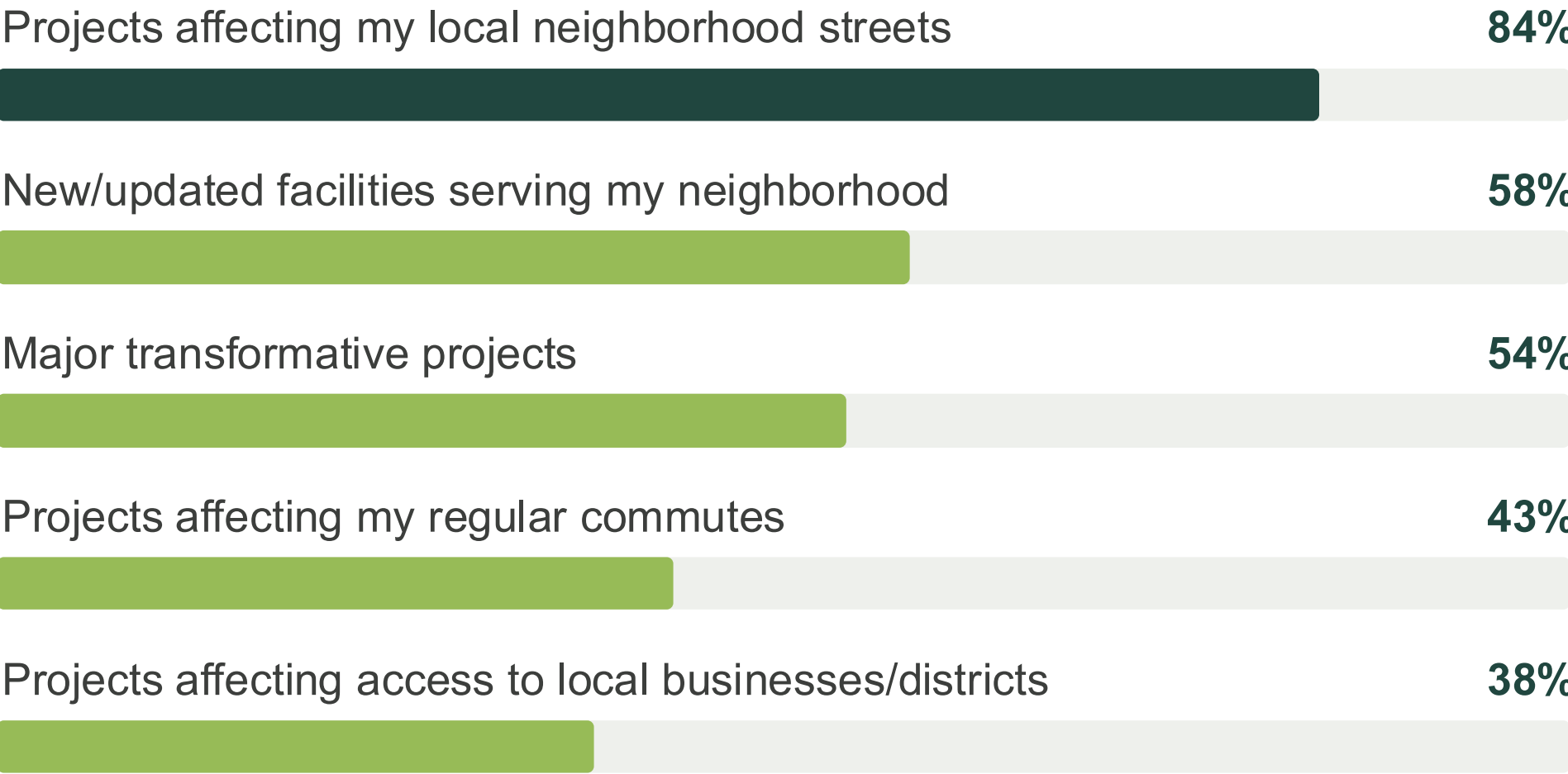
Have you ever received an invitation to participate or provide feedback in planning for a project in your neighborhood?

69%

said no — they have never received an invitation

31% said yes

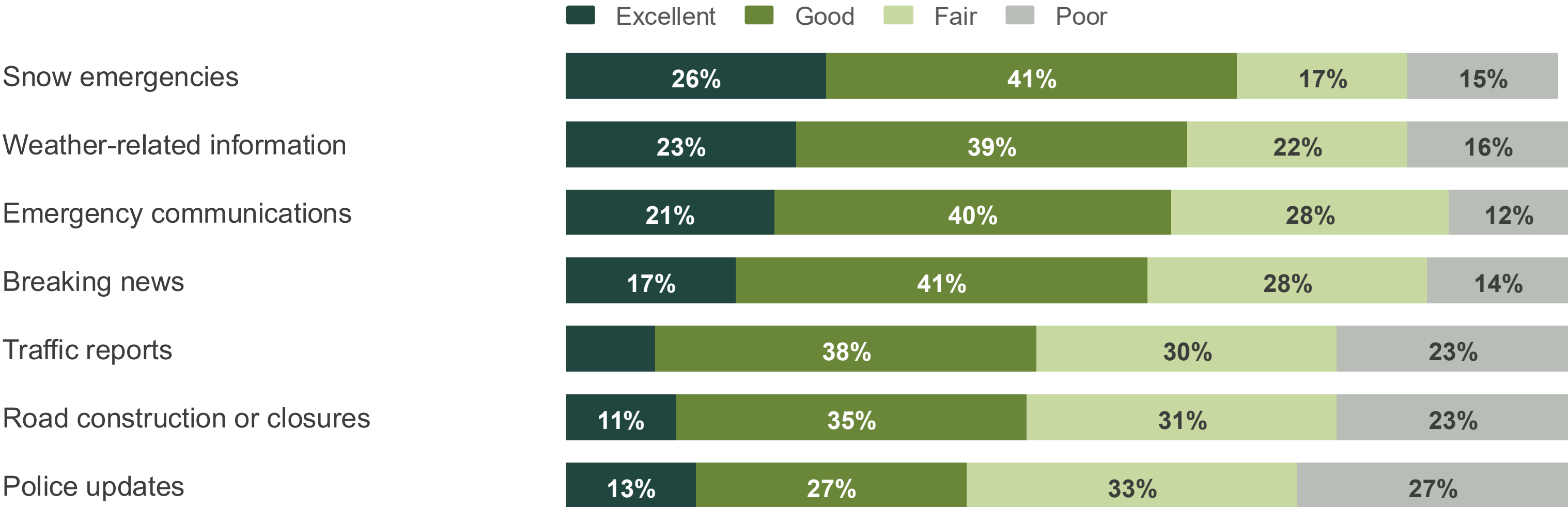
Which types of projects are you most interested in knowing about?
(Select up to three.)





City Communication Performance

Please rate the City's overall performance in communicating information about the following items.
(percent of respondents)



Summary of Findings



01

Place to Live

Strong ratings for living in, recommending, and staying in Grand Rapids.

81% as a place to live

– Similar



02

Parks and Recreation

Well-regarded across parks, programs, and facilities.

67% Parks and Recreation

– Similar



03

Education & Culture

A community asset; four items above the custom cohort.

71% Education & Culture

↑ Higher



04

Safety

Daytime safety strong; police services and crime prevention lag.

64% Safety

– Similar



05

Economy

Confidence holds, but jobs and shopping ratings slipped.

65% Economy

– Similar



06

Mobility

Widest quality-importance gap; parking and street repair below benchmarks.

48% Mobility

– Similar

Results show the overall quality rating for each facet (percent excellent or good) and the comparison to the custom benchmark cohort.

Next Steps: Priorities-Based Governance Cycle



You are here, and the loop continues.

Step one is done. Priorities, budget, performance, and outcomes shared back all build on what Grand Rapids residents told you — and shape the next survey.

1 · Gather Data

Benchmark surveys & polls · Track + GPAL records · bring your own data

2 · Strategic Planning

Evidence-based priorities · AI planning · baselines & goals

3 · Budgeting & Execution

Budget Simulation & Prioritize · AI budgeting

4 · Measure Performance

Year-end stocktake · grant applications · performance reports

5 · Share Outcomes

Taxpayer receipts · dashboards · interactive budget book

Next Steps: What We've Already Started



ITEM	GRAND RAPIDS TREND	
Storm water management	73% → 53%	-20
Utility billing	70% → 55%	-15
Attracting people from diverse backgrounds	62% → 48%	-14
Traffic flow on major streets	55% → 42%	-13
Employment opportunities	65% → 55%	-10
Sense of civic/community pride	66% → 56%	-10

WHAT DO WE'RE DOING WITH IT

- Results shared with Department Directors, Stakeholders, and Senior Leadership to inform planning and budgeting processes
- Results shared with the public in accordance with our Engagement Framework
- Identify opportunities for further analysis and engagement

GRAND RAPIDS CURRENT ACTION HIGHLIGHTS

Storm water management:

- Believed to be related to spring flooding
- Developing a comprehensive sweeping, green infrastructure maintenance and basin cleaning program as part of new State road funding

Utility billing:

- Passing findings along to Consumers Energy and DTE
- Will present on upcoming utility rate study at 11/17 meeting

Attracting people from diverse backgrounds:

- Believe this is related, in part, to on-going Federal actions
- Continuing Welcome Plan Support
- Continue ensuring outreach and engagement activities are inclusive

Traffic flow on major streets:

- State activity has substantially increased recently (131, Beltline, I-96)
- Mobility Blueprint under development
- ROW Working Group

Employment opportunities:

- Sharing with local workforce development entities
- The City, as an employer, has a turnover of <8% for FY26

Sense of civic/community pride:

- Further analysis needed given high overall scores

Questions?

Thank you!

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The civic engagement & performance platform behind Engage and Track.



Polco's survey research department — three decades of benchmark survey science.



The National Community Survey™ — the benchmark instrument behind these results.