

Savage, MN

The National Community Survey

Report of Results
2024

Report by:



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National Research Center at Polco 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 Savage. A livable community is 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. The survey was developed by the experts from National Research Center at Polco.

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



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The report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 728 residents of the City of Savage collected from July 1st, 2024 to August 12, 2024. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% for all respondents and the response rate for the 2024 survey was 17%. Survey results were weighted so that the demographic profile of respondents was representative of the demographic profile of adults in Savage.



How the results are reported

For the most part, the percentages presented in the following tabs represent the “percent positive.” Most commonly, the percent positive is the combination of the top two most positive response options (i.e., excellent/good, very safe/somewhat safe, etc.). On many of the questions in the survey respondents may answer “don’t know.” The proportion of respondents giving this reply is shown in the full set of responses included in the tab “Complete data.” However, these responses have been removed from the analyses presented in most of the tabs. In other words, the tables and graphs display the responses from respondents who had an opinion about a specific item.

Comparisons to benchmarks

NRC’s database of comparative resident opinion is comprised of resident perspectives gathered in surveys from over 500 communities whose residents evaluated the same kinds of topics on The National Community Survey. The comparison evaluations are from the most recent survey completed in each community in the last five years. NRC adds the latest results quickly upon survey completion, keeping the benchmark data fresh and relevant. The communities in the database represent a wide geographic and population range. In each tab, Savage’s results are noted as being “higher” than the benchmark, “lower” than the benchmark, or “similar” to the benchmark, meaning that the average rating given by Savage residents is statistically similar to or different (greater or lesser) than the benchmark. Being rated as “higher” or “lower” than the benchmark means that Savage’s average rating for a particular item was more than 10 points different than the benchmark. If a rating was “much higher” or “much lower,” then Savage’s average rating was more than 20 points different when compared to the benchmark.

Trends over time

Trend data for Savage represent important comparison data and should be examined for improvements or declines.¹ Deviations from stable trends over time represent opportunities for understanding how local policies, programs, or public information may have affected residents’ opinions. Changes between survey years have been noted with an arrow and the percent difference. If the difference is greater than six percentage points between the 2022 and 2024 surveys, the change is statistically significant.

1. In 2020, The NCS survey was updated to include new and refreshed items. Consequently, some of the trends may be impacted due to wording modifications that could have potentially altered the meaning of the item for the respondent.

Methods

Selecting survey recipients

All households within the City of Savage were eligible to participate in the survey. A list of all households within the zip codes serving Savage was purchased from Polco's mailing vendor, Go-Dog Direct, based on updated listings from the United States Postal Service. Since some of the zip codes that serve the City of Savage households may also serve addresses that lie outside of the community, the exact geographic location of each housing unit was compared to community boundaries using the most current municipal boundary file. Addresses located outside of the City of Savage boundaries were removed from the list of potential households to survey. Each address identified as being within city boundaries was further identified as being within one of three areas. From that list, addresses were randomly selected as survey recipients, with multi-family housing units (defined as those with a unit number) sampled at a rate of 5:3 compared to single family housing units.

An individual within each household was randomly selected using the "birthday method". The birthday method selects a person within the household by asking the "person who most recently had a birthday" to complete the questionnaire. The underlying assumption in this method is that day of birth has no relationship to the way people respond to surveys. This instruction was contained in the introduction of the survey.

Conducting the survey

The 3,000 randomly selected households received mailings beginning on July 1st, 2024 and data collection for the survey remained open for five weeks. The first mailing was a postcard inviting the household to participate in the survey. The next mailing contained a cover letter with instructions, the survey questionnaire, and a postage-paid return envelope. All mailings included a web link to give residents the opportunity to respond to the survey online, as well as QR codes to further encourage participation. The follow-up mailings asked those who had not completed the survey to do so, and those who had already done so to refrain from completing the survey again.

The survey was available in English and Spanish. All mailings contained paragraphs in both languages instructing participants on how to complete the survey in their preferred language.

About 1% of the 3,000 mailed invitations or surveys were returned because the household address was vacant or the postal service was unable to deliver the survey as addressed. Of the remaining 2,965 households that received the invitations to participate, 493 completed the survey, providing an overall response rate of 17%. The response rate was calculated using AAPOR's response rate #2 for mailed surveys of unnamed persons.²

It is customary to describe the precision of estimates made from surveys by a "level of confidence" and accompanying "confidence interval" (or margin of error). A traditional level of confidence, and the one used here, is 95%. The 95% confidence interval can be any size and quantifies the sampling error or imprecision of the survey results because some residents' opinions are relied on to estimate all residents' opinions. The margin of error for the City of Savage survey is no greater than plus or minus four percentage points around any given percent reported for all respondents (493 completed surveys).

In addition to the randomly selected "probability sample" of households, a link to an online open participation survey was publicized by the City of Savage. The open participation survey was identical to the probability sample survey with two small updates; it included a map at the beginning asking where the respondent lives and a question about where they heard about the survey. The open participation survey was open to all city residents and became available on July 22nd, 2024. The survey remained open for two weeks. The open participation survey received 235 responses, for a grand total of 728 overall. The data presented in the following tabs represent opinions from both the scientific (probability) and non-scientific open participation (non-probability) surveys. Data from these surveys were compared in order to determine whether it was appropriate to combine, or blend both data sets together; in the case of Savage, characteristics of respondents to both the non-probability survey were similar to the probability survey, in both respondent trait and opinion, indicating the two data sets could be blended.

Analyzing the data

Responses from mailed surveys were entered into an electronic dataset using a “key and verify” method, where all responses are entered twice and compared to each other. Any discrepancies were resolved in comparison to the original survey form. Range checks as well as other forms of quality control were also performed. Responses from surveys completed on Polco were downloaded and merged with the mailed survey responses.

The demographics of the survey respondents were compared to those found in the 2020 Census and 2022 American Community Survey estimates for adults in the City of Savage. The primary objective of weighting survey data is to make the survey respondents reflective of the larger population of the community. The characteristics used for weighting were age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, housing type, housing tenure, and area. No adjustments were made for design effects. Weights were calculated using an iterative, multiplicative raking model known as the ANES Weighting Algorithm.³ The results of the weighting scheme for the probability sample are presented in the following table.

NRC aligns demographic labels with those used by the U.S. Census for reporting purposes, when possible. Some categories (e.g., age, race/Hispanic origin, housing type, and length of residency) are combined into smaller subgroups.

		Unweighted	Weighted	Target ⁴
Age	18-34	8%	28%	27%
	35-54	32%	39%	39%
	55+	60%	33%	33%
Area	Burnsville-Eagan-Savage	45%	45%	46%
	Prior Lake-Savage	47%	49%	49%
	Shakopee	7%	5%	5%
Hispanic origin	No, not of Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or Spanish origin	99%	97%	95%
	Yes, I consider myself to be of Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or Spanish origin	1%	4%	5%
Housing tenure	Own	96%	86%	86%
	Rent	4%	14%	14%
Housing type	Attached	20%	29%	29%
	Detached	80%	71%	71%
Race & Hispanic origin	Not white alone	8%	22%	22%
	White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	92%	79%	78%
Sex	Man	45%	52%	52%
	Woman	55%	48%	48%

Sex/age	Man 18-34	4%	15%	15%
	Man 35-54	14%	22%	22%
	Man 55+	27%	15%	15%
	Woman 18-34	5%	12%	12%
	Woman 35-54	18%	18%	18%
	Woman 55+	32%	18%	18%

The survey datasets were analyzed using all or some of a combination of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), R, Python and Tableau. For the most part, the percentages presented in the reports represent the “percent positive.” The percent positive is the combination of the top two most positive response options (i.e., excellent/good, very safe/somewhat safe, essential/very important, etc.), or, in the case of resident behaviors/participation, the percent positive represents the proportion of respondents indicating “yes” or participating in an activity at least once a month.

On many of the questions in the survey respondents may answer “don’t know.” The proportion of respondents giving this reply is shown in the full set of responses included in the tab “Complete data”. However, these responses have been removed from the analyses presented in the reports. In other words, the tables and graphs display the responses from respondents who had an opinion about a specific item.

Contact

The City of Savage funded this research. Please contact Emily Gunderson of the City of Savage at EGunderson@cityofsavage.com if you have any questions about the survey.

Study Limitations

All public opinion research is subject to unmeasured error. While the methodologies employed for this survey were designed to minimize this error as much as possible, these other sources of potential error should be acknowledged. **Non-response error** arises when those who were selected to participate in the survey did not do so, and may have different opinions or experiences than those who did respond. **Coverage error** refers to the possibility that some respondents that should have been included in the surveyed population were not (e.g., for a general resident survey, USPS mailing lists may exclude certain types of housing units, such as multi-family buildings where mail is delivered to a common area rather than to a specific unit (though this is rare), or where mail is received at a PO box instead of the at household's physical location. Finally, **recall bias** occurs when respondents may not perfectly remember their experiences in the past year (such as participation in social or civic events), and **social desirability bias** may cause respondents to answer in ways they think cast their responses in a more favorable light.

Survey Validity

See the Polco Knowledge Base article on survey validity at <https://info.polco.us/knowledge/statistical-vali>

2. See AAPOR's Standard Definitions for more information at <https://aapor.org/standards-and-ethics/standard-definitions/>
3. Pasek, J. (2014). ANES Weighting Algorithm. Retrieved from <https://surveyinsights.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Full-anesrake-paper.pdf>
4. Targets come from the 2020 Census and 2022 American Community Survey

Key Findings

Highest-performing areas:

- Residents continue to enjoy a very high quality of life in Savage, with nearly all participants positively rating Savage as a place to live.
- The overall feeling of safety in Savage was rated excellent or good by 9 in 10 residents, a significant increase from 2022.
- A strong majority of residents offered high marks to local government treating all residents fairly, treating all residents with respect, and informing residents about issues facing the community, all of which were higher than the national benchmark.
- Contrasting national trends, the availability of affordable quality housing and affordable quality mental health care remained stable with previous results, and were both rated higher than the national benchmark.

Lowest-performing areas:

- Recreation opportunities, programs or classes, and centers or facilities declined significantly since 2022.
- Several ratings related to arts and culture saw significant declines from the previous results.
- Opportunities to participate in community matters, opportunities to volunteer, and residents' connection and engagement with their community were trending downward.
- The vibrancy of Savage's downtown/commercial area was rated much lower than the national benchmark.
- Some ratings related to the local economy declined from the previous survey iteration, including economic development and employment opportunities.

Other notable results:

- Shopping and dining opportunities drew residents to downtown Savage.
- In the past two years, the Farmers Market was the highest attended community event, followed by Dan Patch Days and Night to Unite.
- About half of residents indicated that continued protection and limited access to the Savage Fen Scientific and Natural Area is essential.

Areas of greatest change since 2022:

Of the 123 evaluative questions included on both the 2022 and current survey iterations, 92 were statistically similar to previous results. Upward trends were seen in 3 items, while 28 ratings decreased since 2022. The most significant of those trends are listed below.

Increases

- The Federal Government (+10%)
- Safety from property crime (+7%)
- Recycling (+6%)

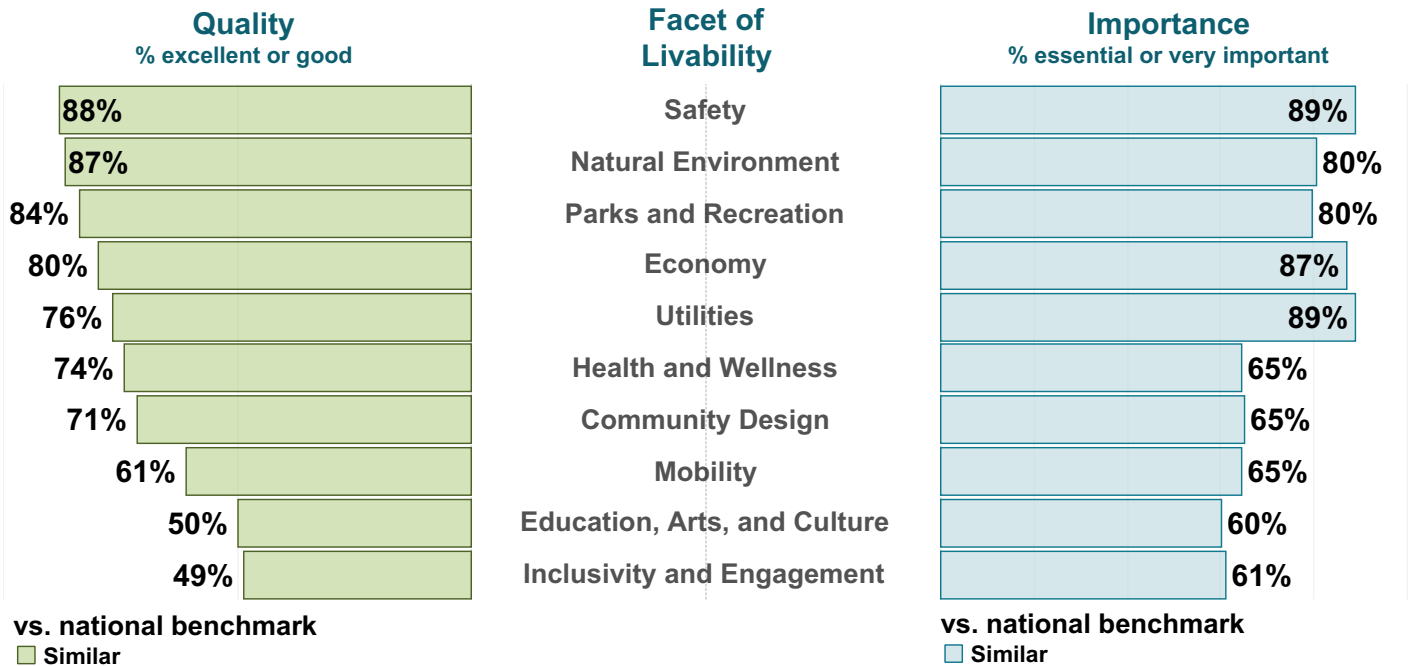
Decreases

- Drinking water (-18%)
- Employment opportunities (-17%)
- Opportunities to participate in community matters (-17%)

Every jurisdiction must balance limited resources while meeting resident needs and striving to optimize community livability. To this end, it is helpful to know what aspects of the community are most important to residents and which they perceive as being of higher or lower quality. It is especially helpful to know when a facet of livability is considered of high importance but rated as lower quality, as this should be a top priority to address.

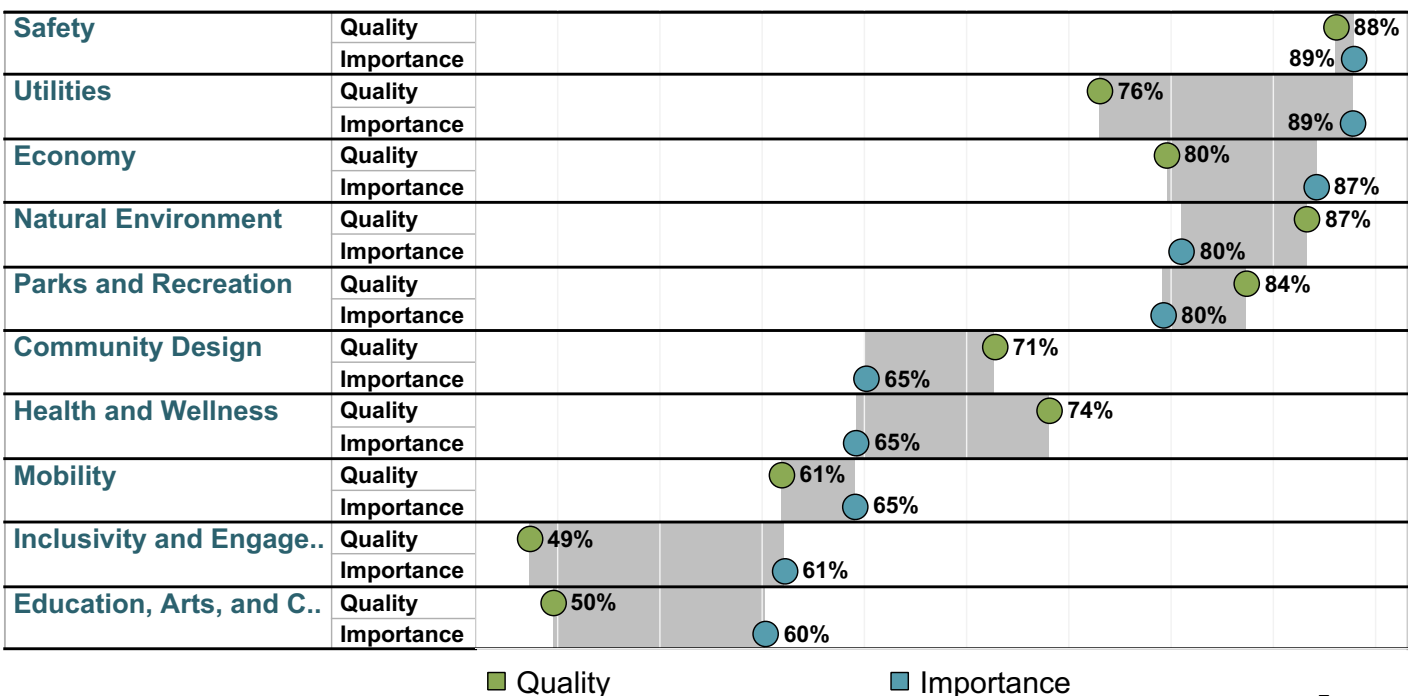
Quality and Importance by the Numbers

The table below shows the proportion of residents who rated the community facets positively for quality and the priority (importance) placed on each. Also displayed is whether local quality ratings were lower, similar, or higher t..



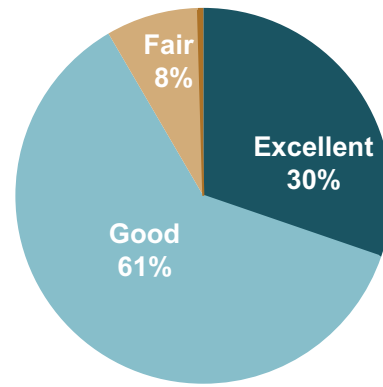
Quality/Importance Gap Analysis

The gap analysis chart below shows the same data as above; however, this chart more clearly illustrates the comparative differences in quality and importance ratings for each facet, as well as the absolute ratings for each.

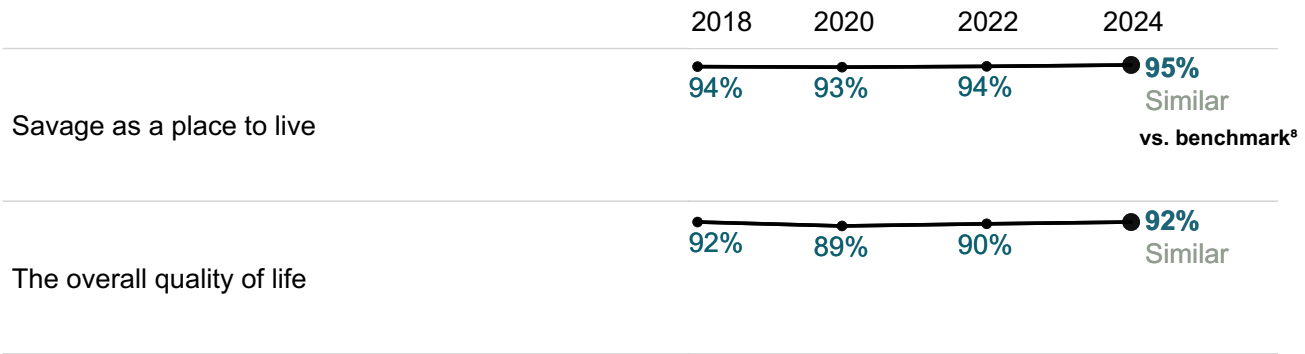


Quality of Life

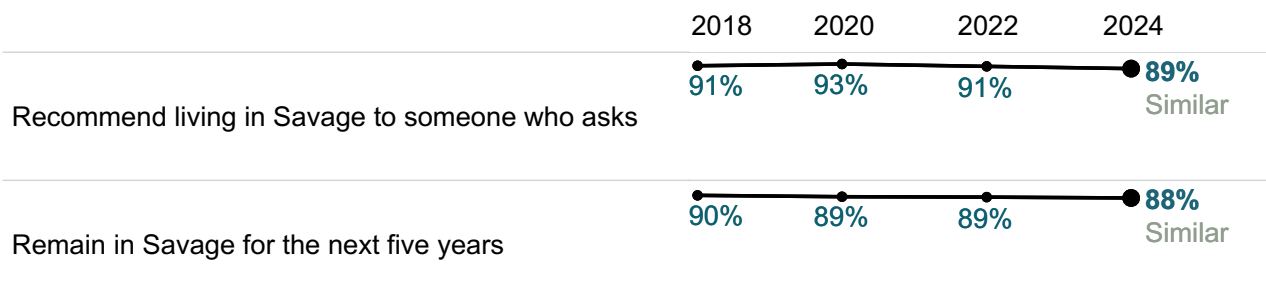
Measuring community livability starts with assessing the quality of life of those who live there, and ensuring that the community is attractive, accessible, and welcoming to all.



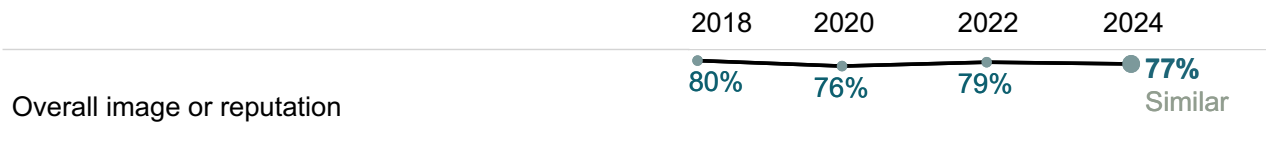
Please rate each of the following aspects of quality of life in Savage.
(% excellent or good)



Please indicate how likely or unlikely you are to do each of the following.
(% very or somewhat likely)



Please rate each of the following in the Savage community.
(% excellent or good)

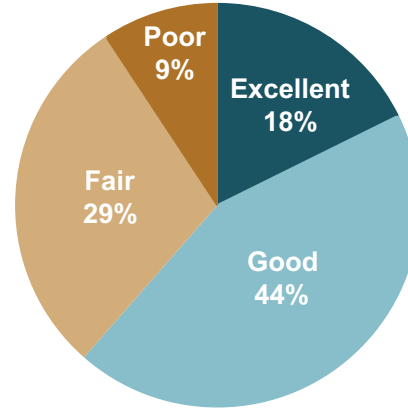


8. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

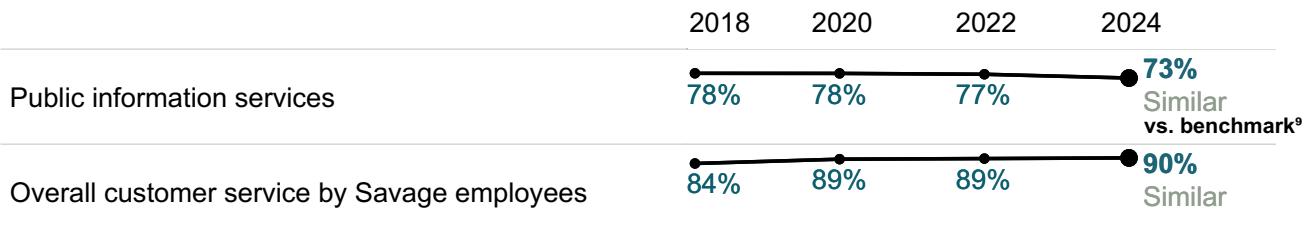
Governance

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.

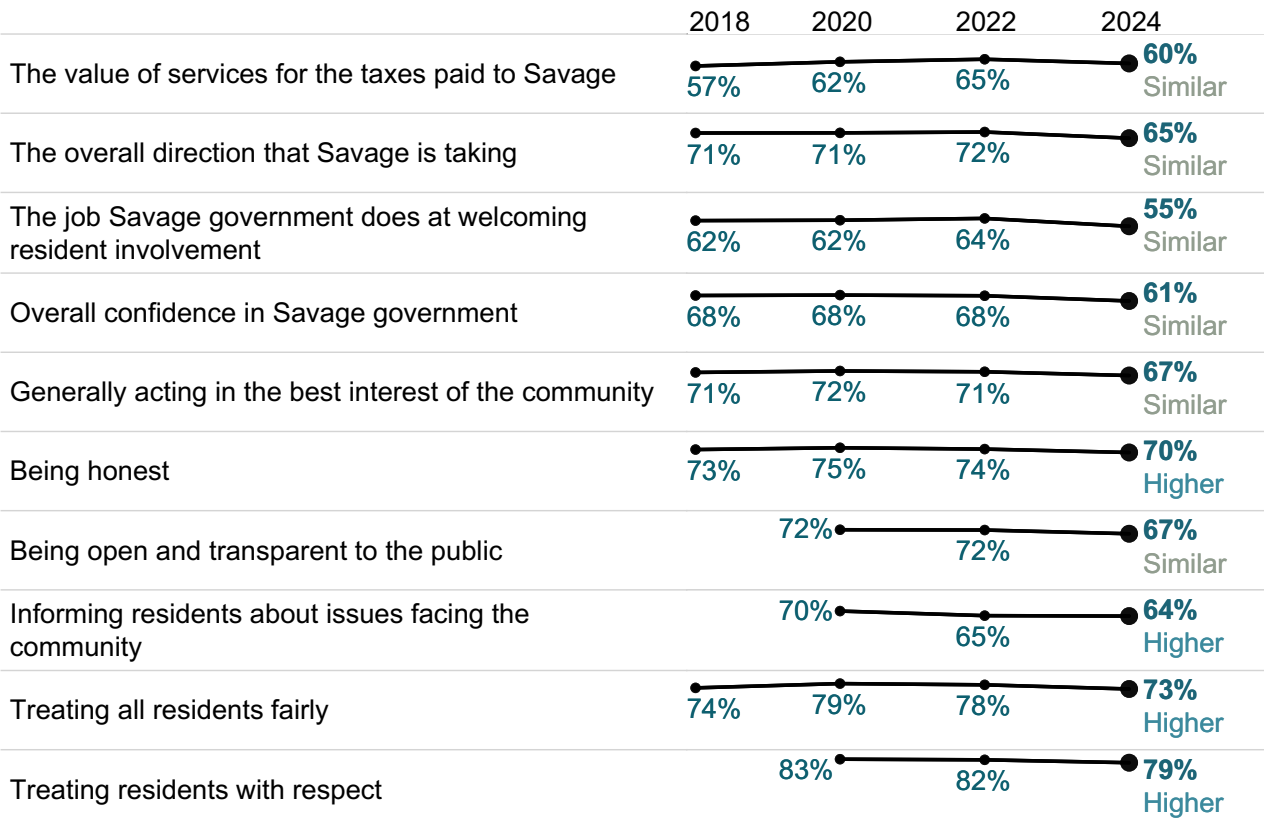
Overall confidence in Savage government, 2024



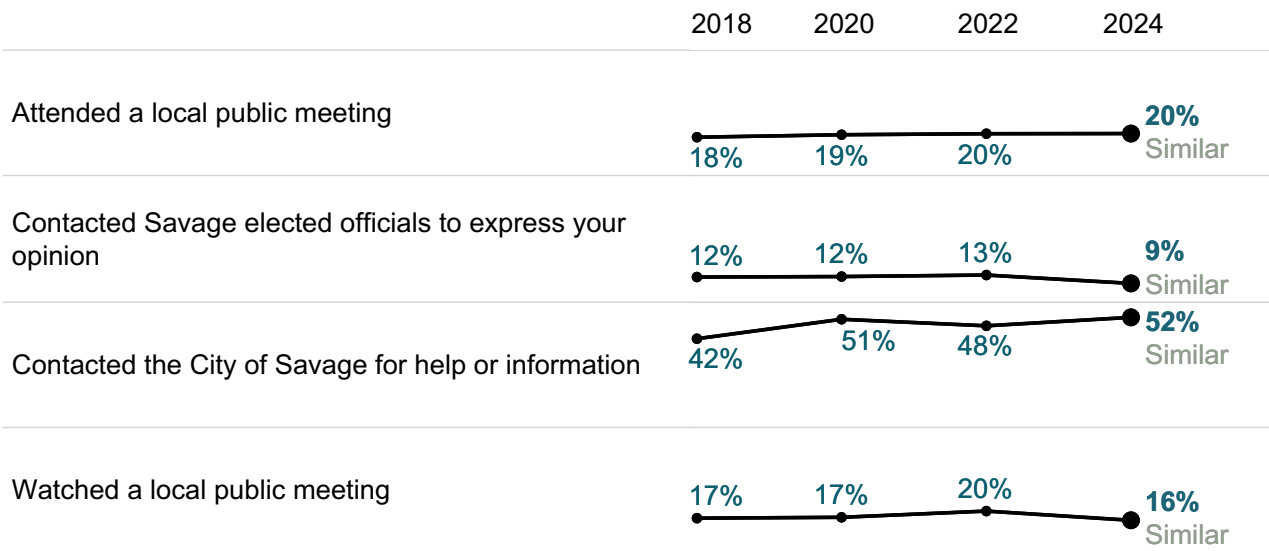
Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Savage. (% excellent or good)



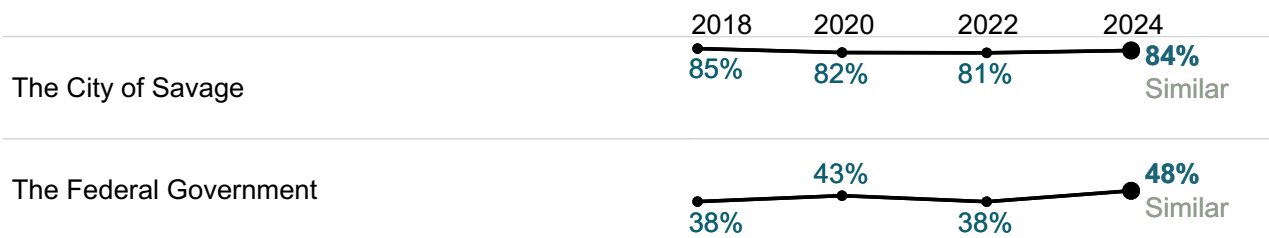
Please rate the following categories of Savage government performance. (% excellent or good)



Please indicate whether or not you have done each of the following in the last 12 months.
 (% excellent or good)



Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by each of the following?
 (% excellent or good)



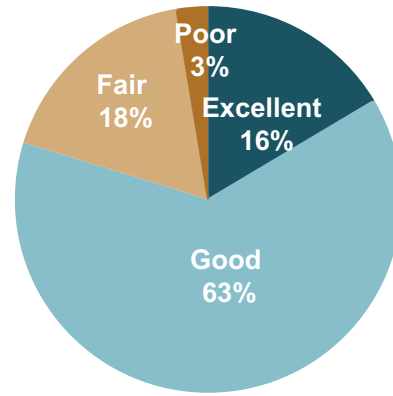
9. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.



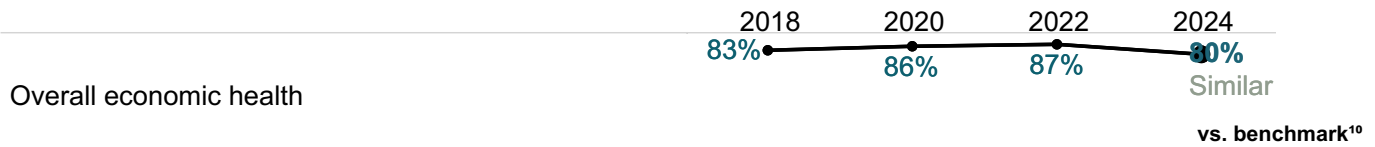
Economy

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.

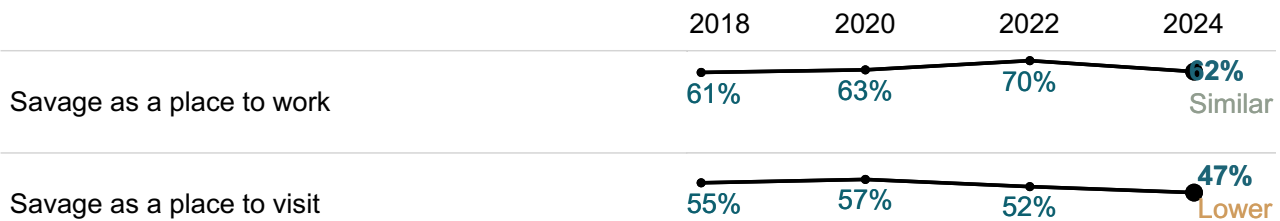
Overall economic health of Savage, 2024



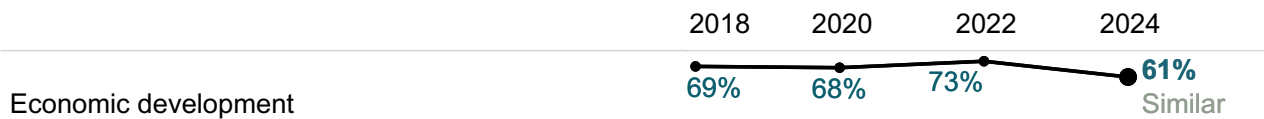
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Savage as a whole.
(% excellent or good)



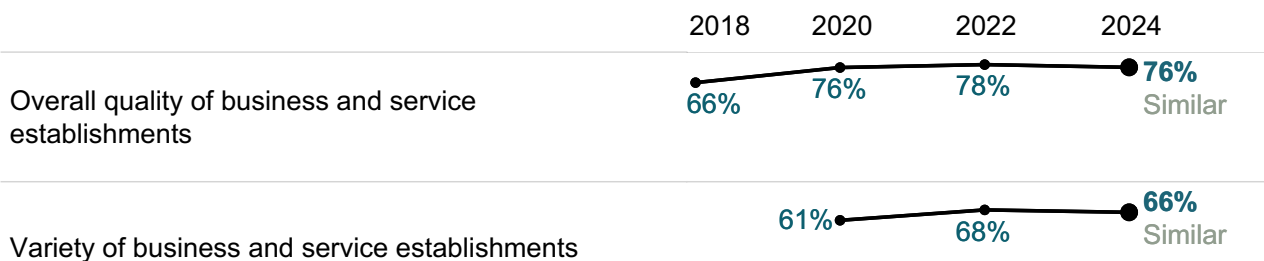
Please rate each of the following aspects of quality of life in Savage.
(% excellent or good)

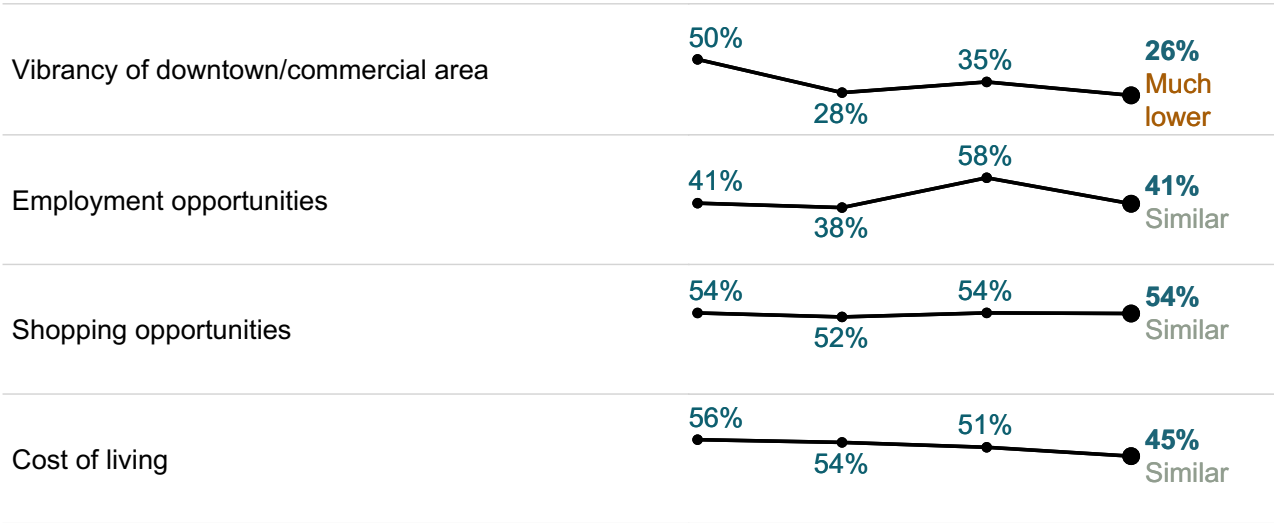


Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Savage.
(% excellent or good)

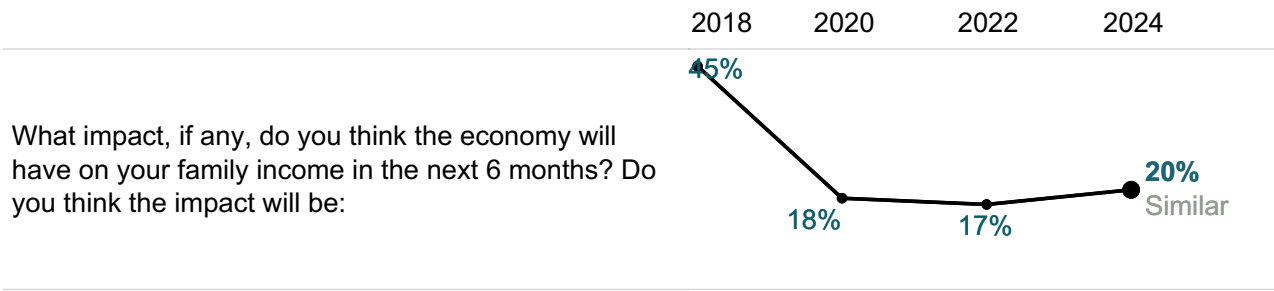


Please rate each of the following in the Savage community.
(% excellent or good)





What impact, if any, do you think the economy will have on your family income in the next 6 months? Do you think the impact will be:
 (% very or somewhat positive)

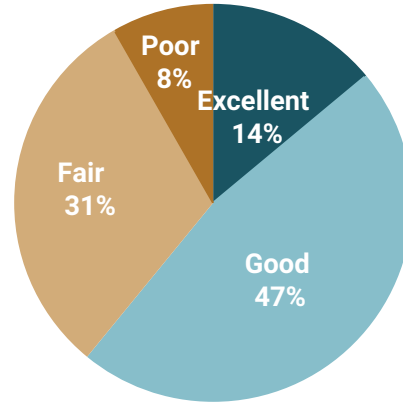


10. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Overall quality of the transportation system in Savage, 2024

Mobility

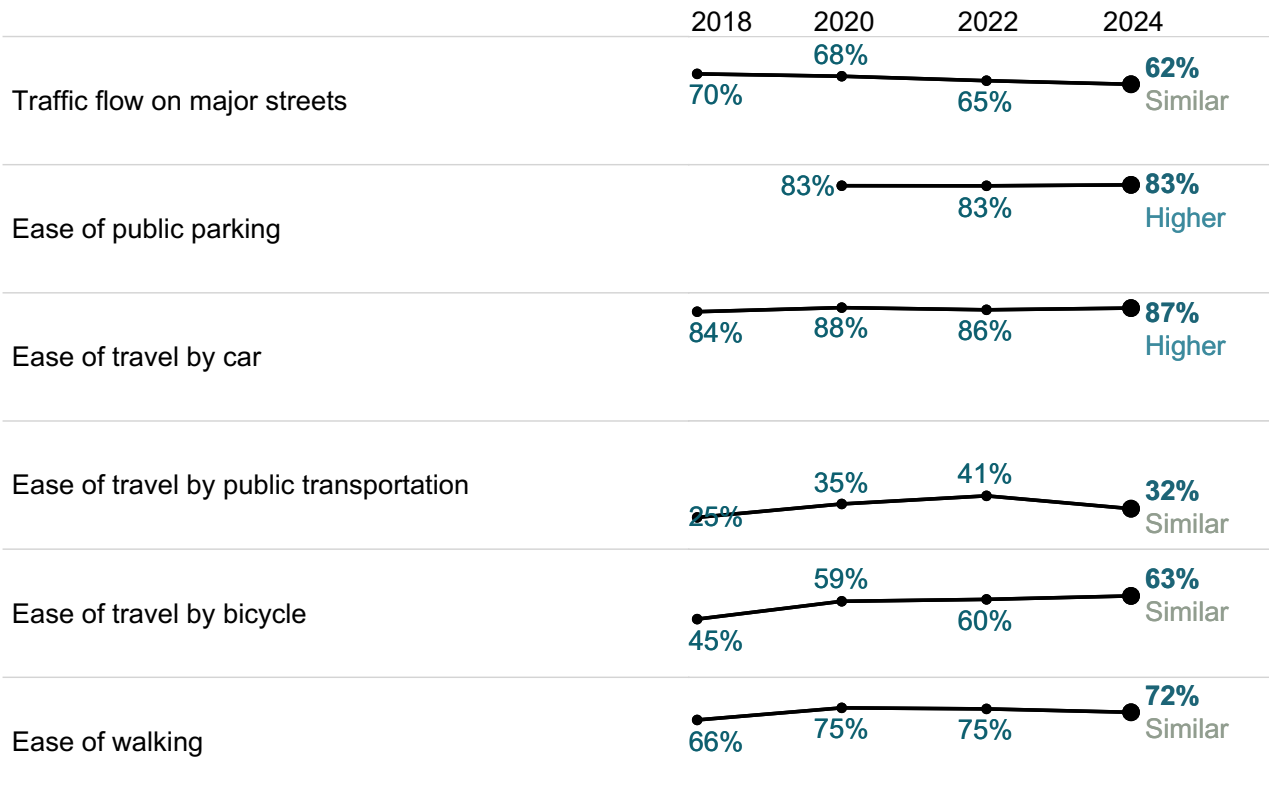
The ease with which residents can move about their communities, whether for commuting, leisure, or recreation, plays a major role in the quality of life for all who live, work, and play in the community.



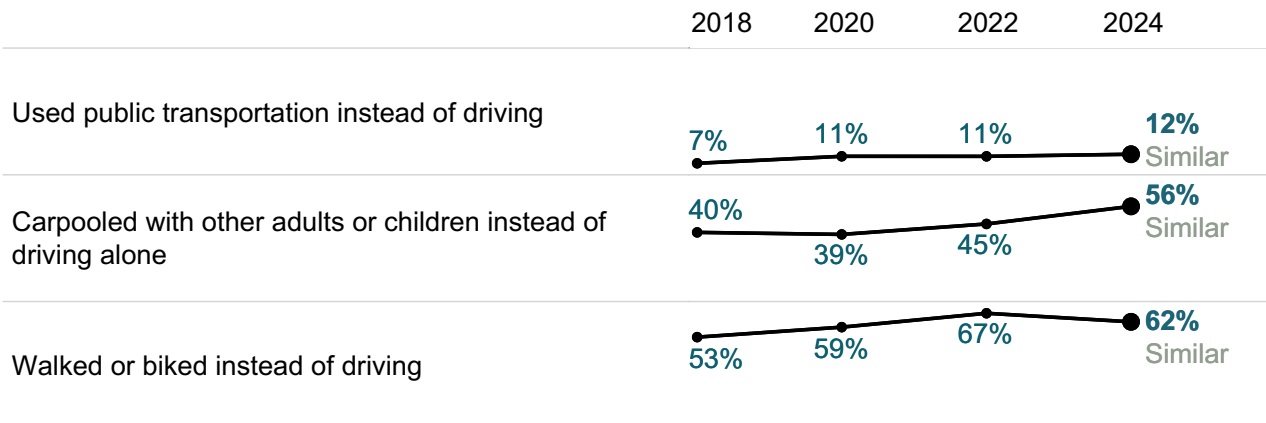
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Savage as a whole.
(% excellent or good)



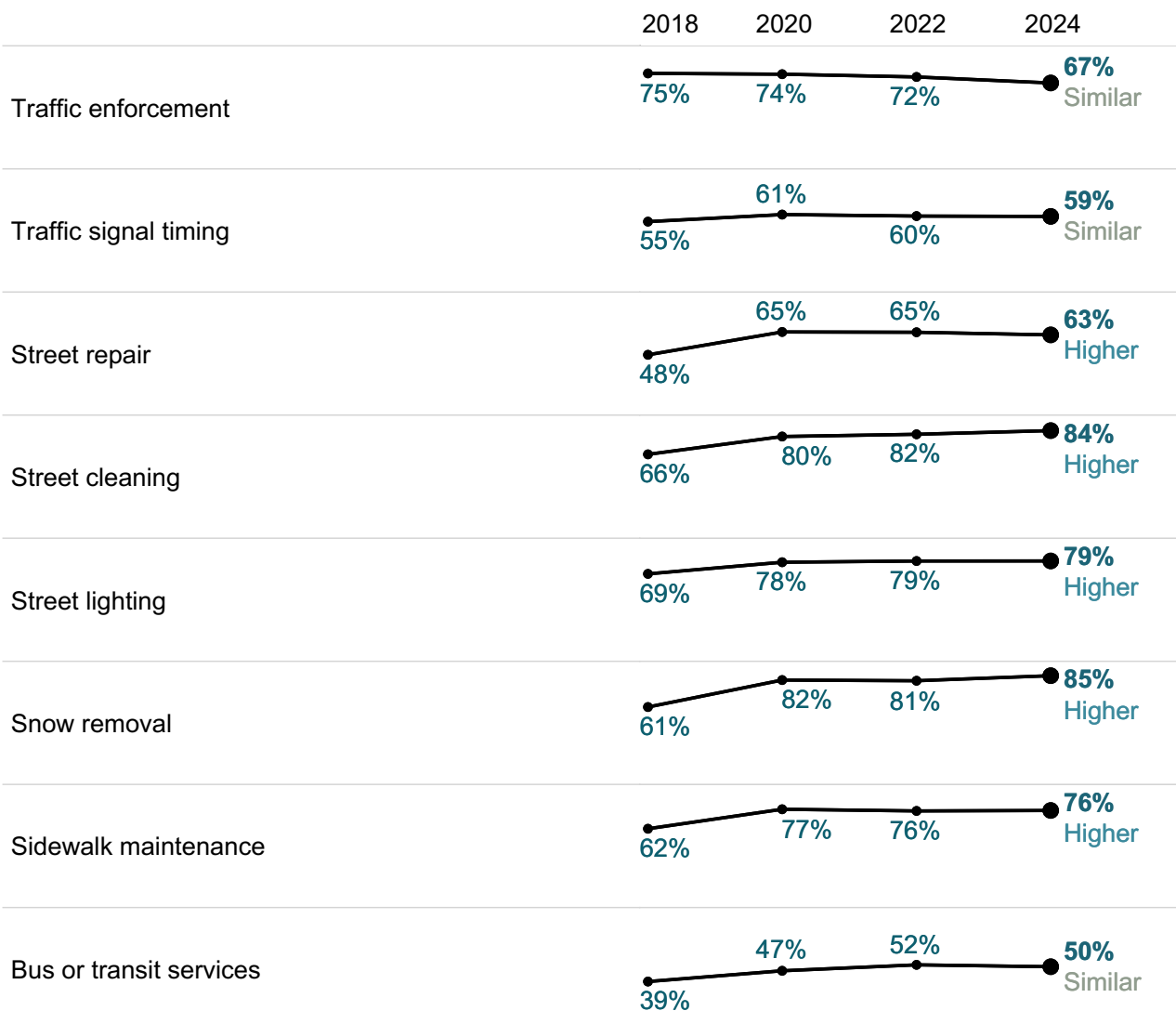
Please also rate each of the following in the Savage community.
(% excellent or good)



Please indicate whether or not you have done each of the following in the last 12 months.
 (% yes)



Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Savage.
 (% excellent or good)

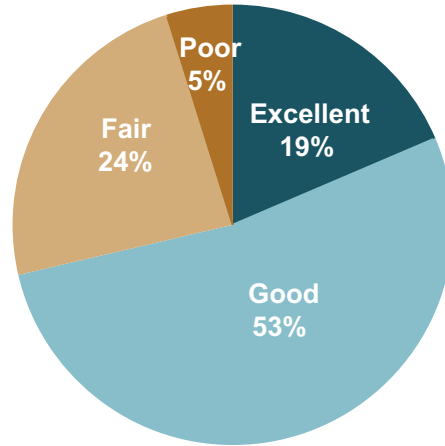


11. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

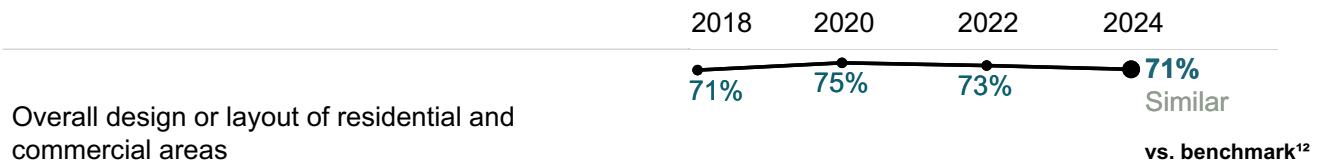
Overall design or layout of Savage's residential and commercial areas, 2024

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.



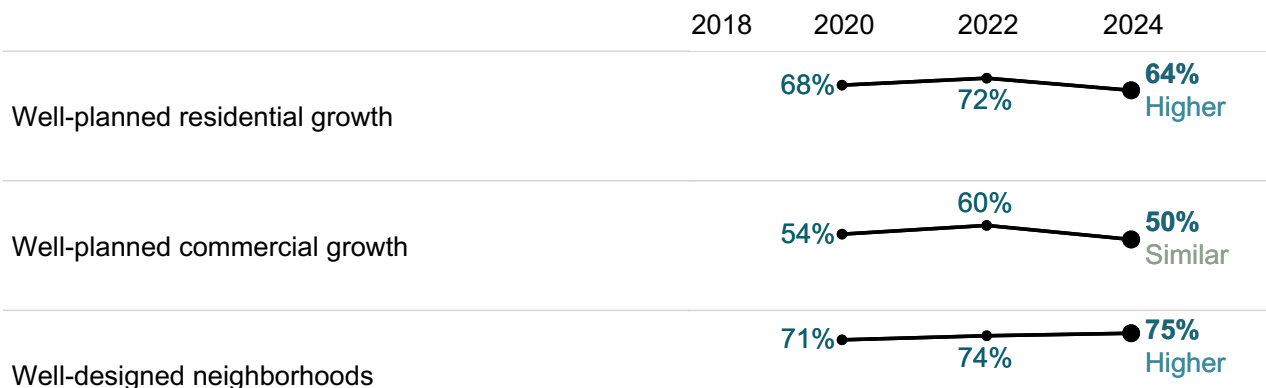
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Savage as a whole. (% excellent or good)



Please rate each of the following aspects of quality of life in Savage. (% excellent or good)

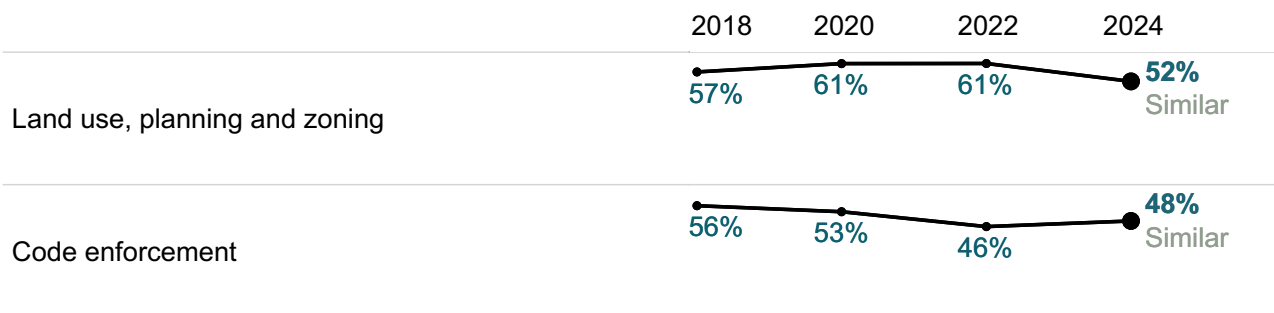


Please also rate each of the following in the Savage community. (% excellent or good)





**Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Savage.
(% excellent or good)**

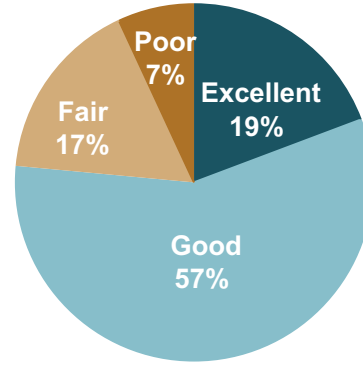


12. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

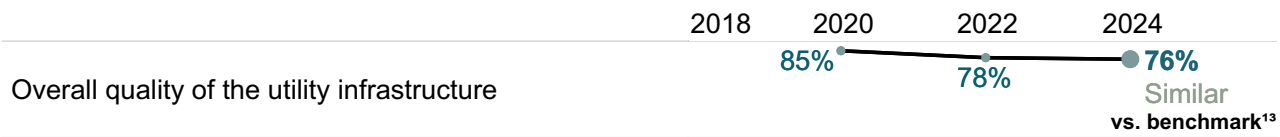
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Savage, 2024

Utilities

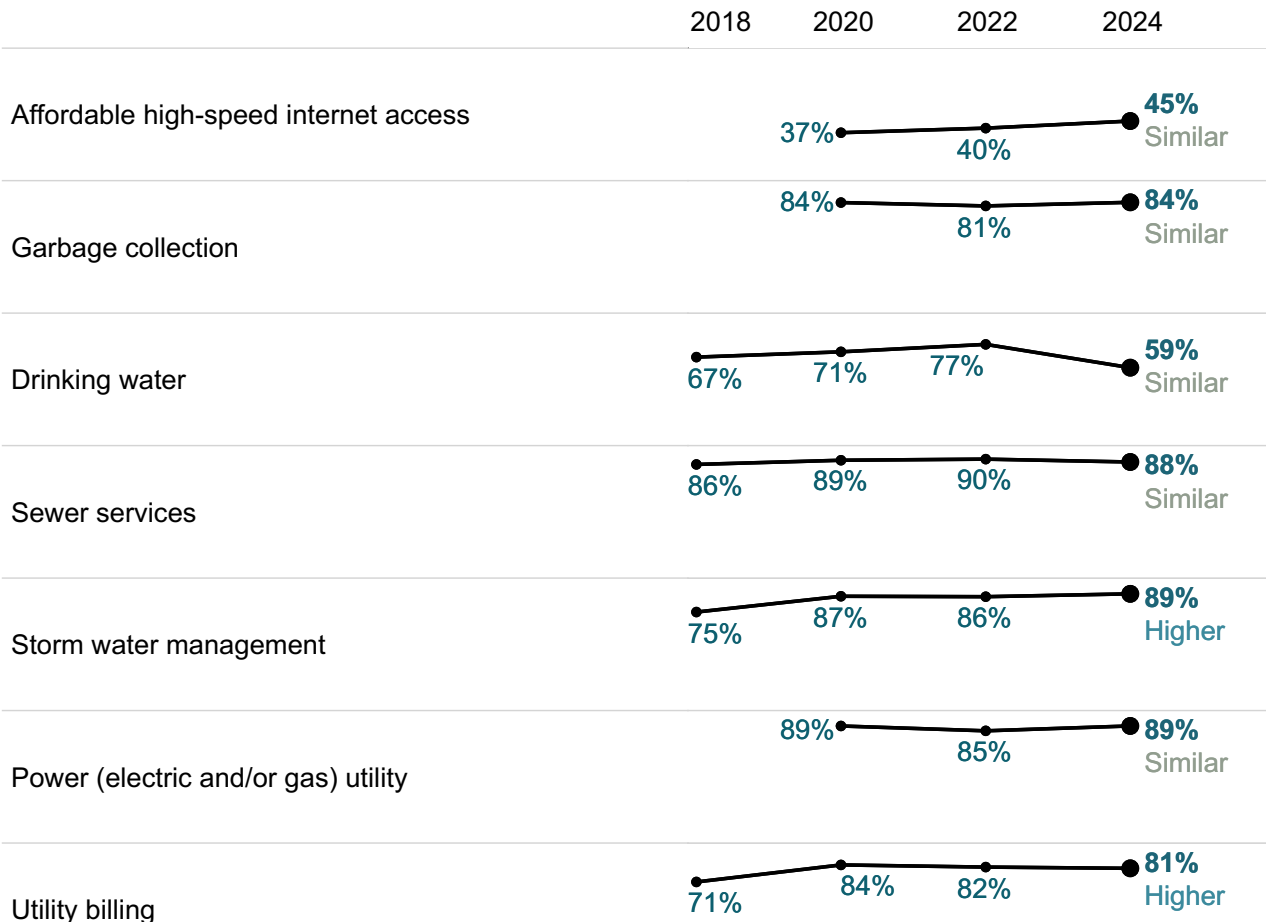
Services such as water, gas, electricity, and internet access play a vital role in ensuring the physical and economic health and well-being of the communities they serve.



Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Savage as a whole. (% excellent or good)



Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Savage. (% excellent or good)

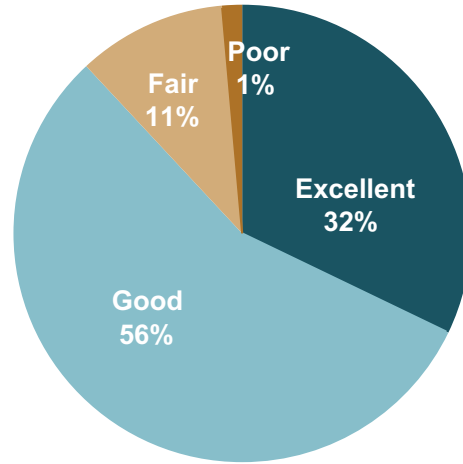


13. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

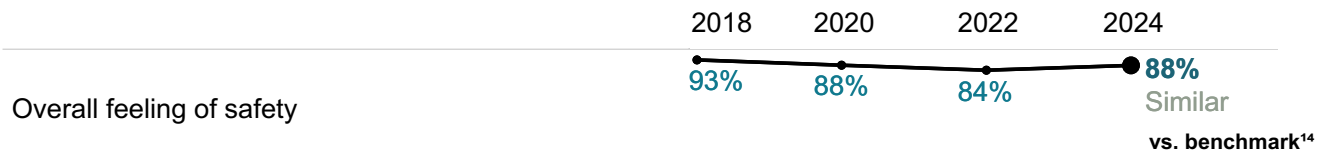
Overall feeling of safety in Savage, 2024

Safety

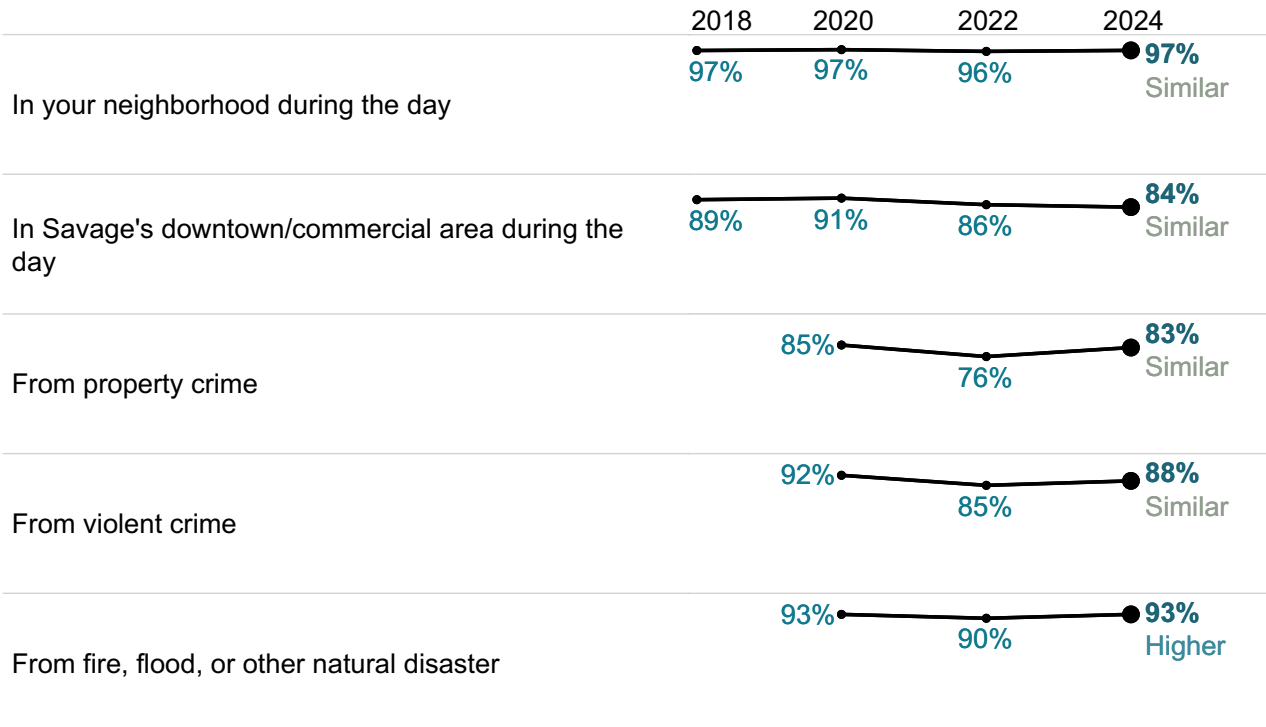
Public safety is often the most important task facing local governments. All residents should feel safe and secure in their neighborhoods and in the greater community, and providing robust safety-related services is essential to residents' quality of life.



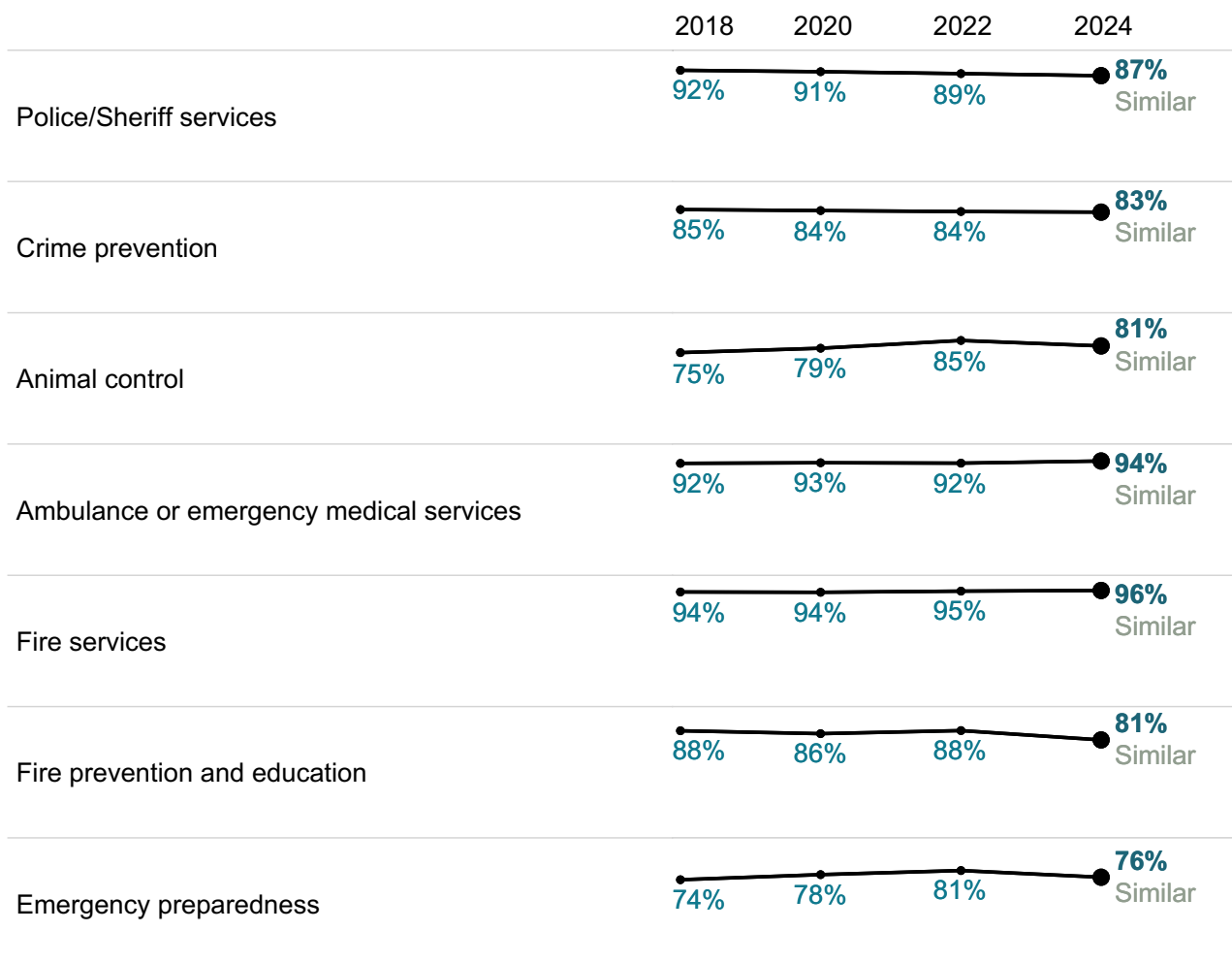
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Savage as a whole.
(% excellent or good)



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



Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Savage.
 (% excellent or good)



14. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

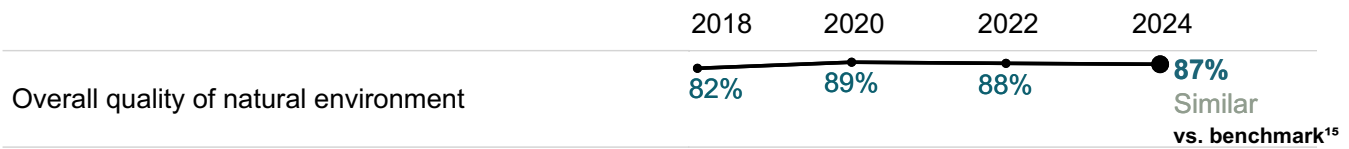
Overall quality of natural environment in Savage, 2024

Natural Environment

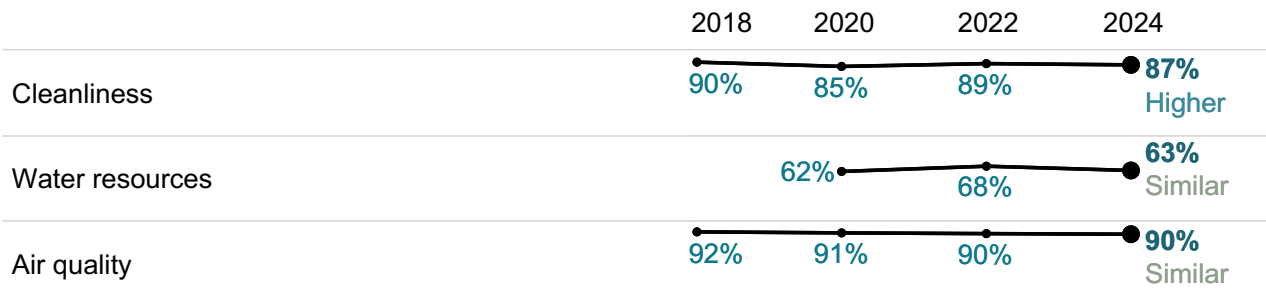
The natural environment plays a vital role in the health and well-being of residents. The natural spaces in which residents live and experience their communities has a direct and profound effect on quality of life.



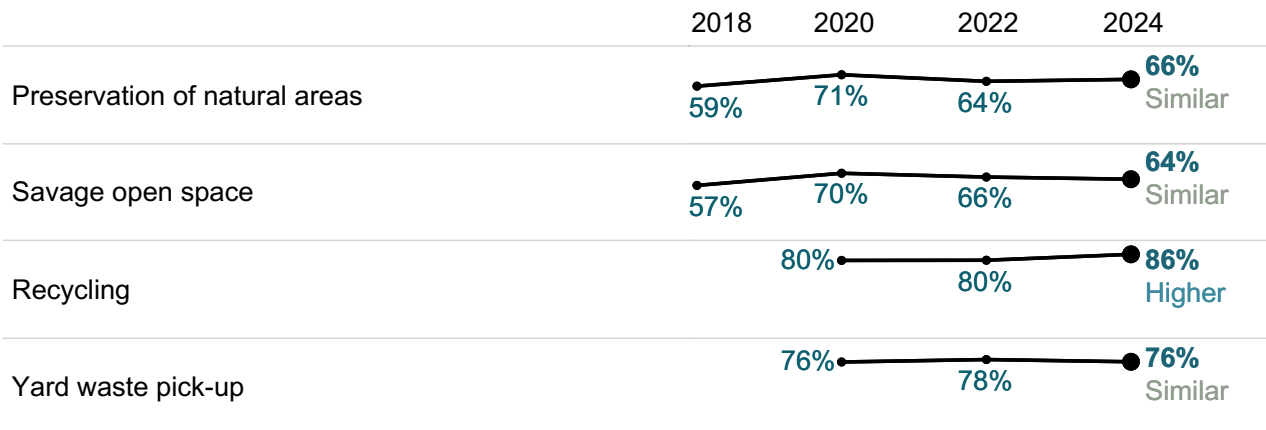
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Savage as a whole. (% excellent or good)



Please also rate each of the following in the Savage community. (% excellent or good)



Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Savage. (% excellent or good)



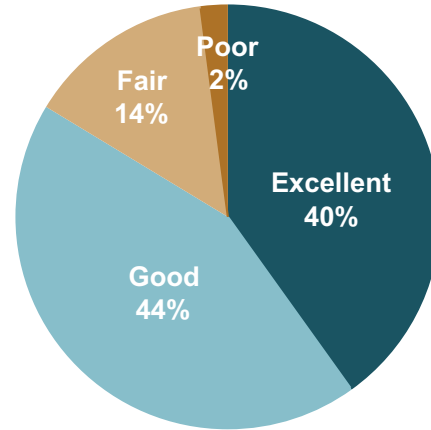
15. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities, 2024

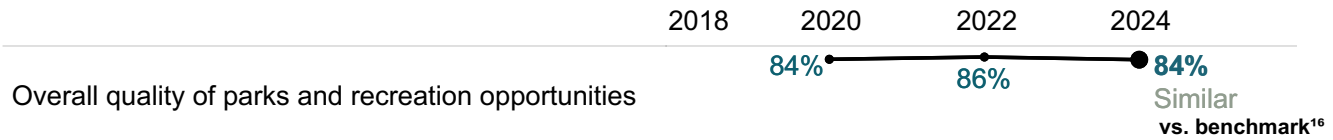
Parks and Recreation

"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."

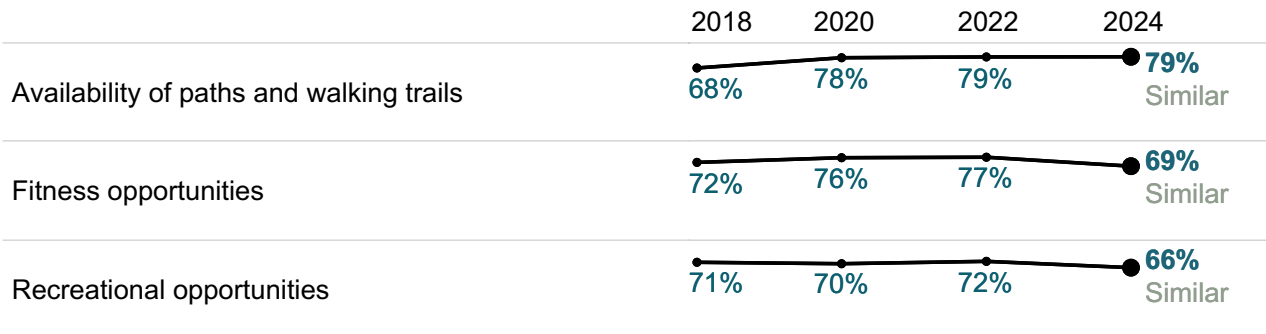
- National Recreation and Park Association



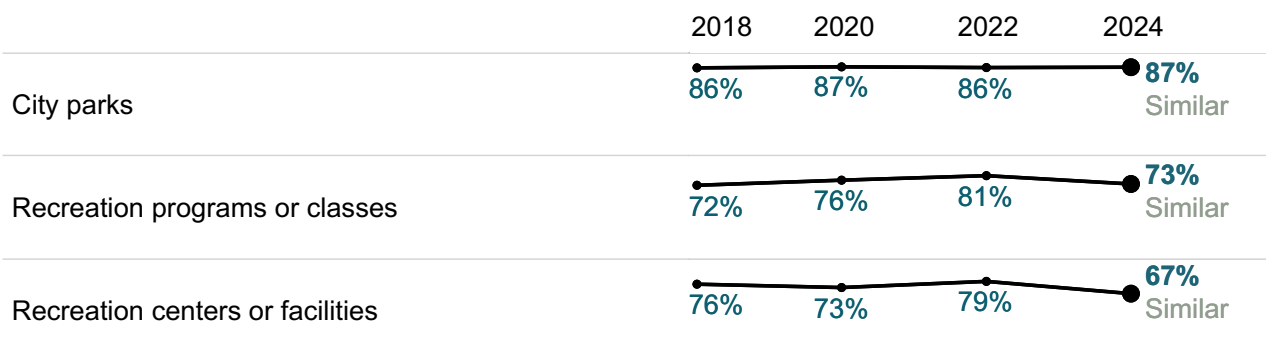
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Savage as a whole. (% excellent or good)



Please also rate each of the following in the Savage community. (% excellent or good)



Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Savage. (% excellent or good)

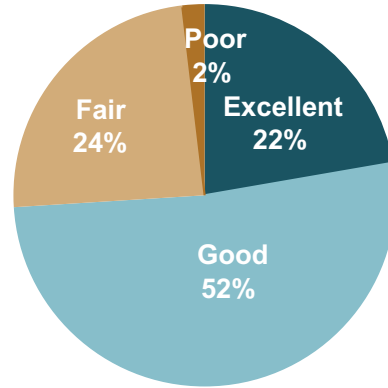


¹⁶ Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

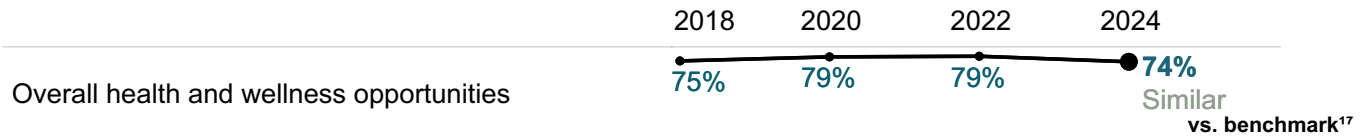
Polco
Health and Wellness

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.

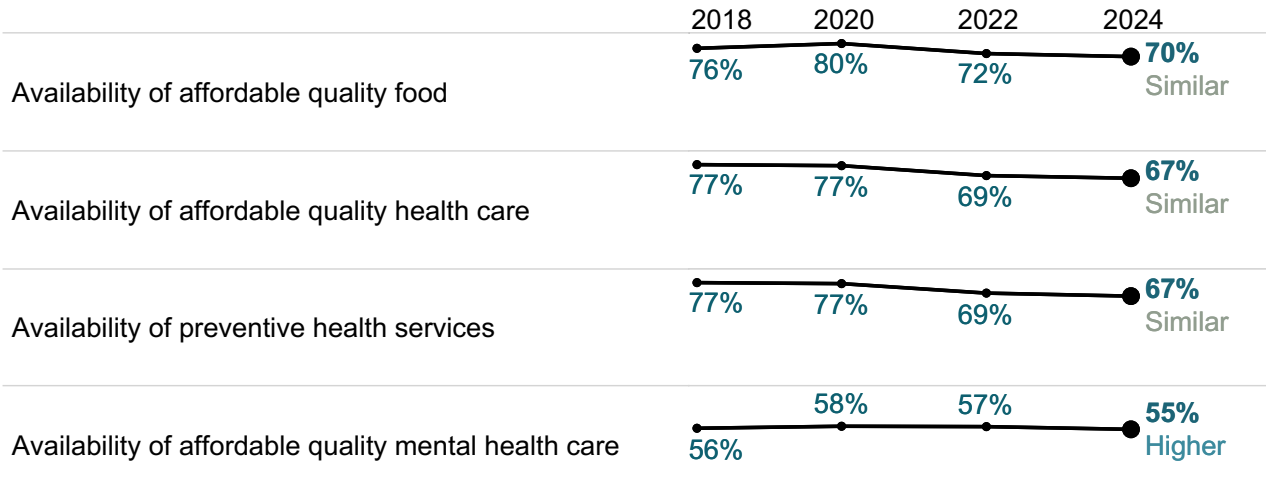
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Savage, 2024



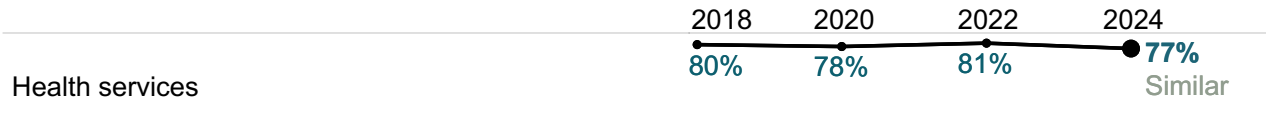
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Savage as a whole.
(% excellent or good)



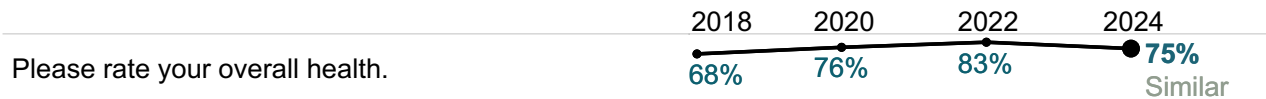
Please also rate each of the following in the Savage community.
(% excellent or good)



Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Savage.
(% excellent or good)



Please rate your overall health.
(% excellent or very good)



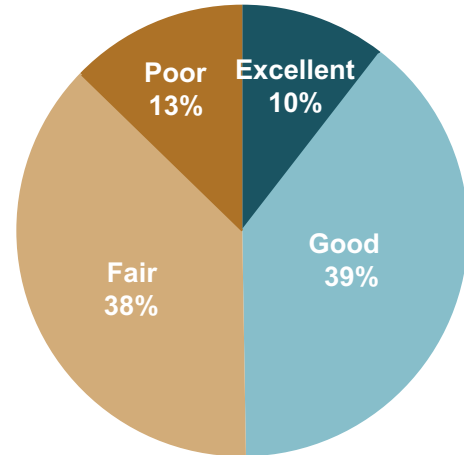
17. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.



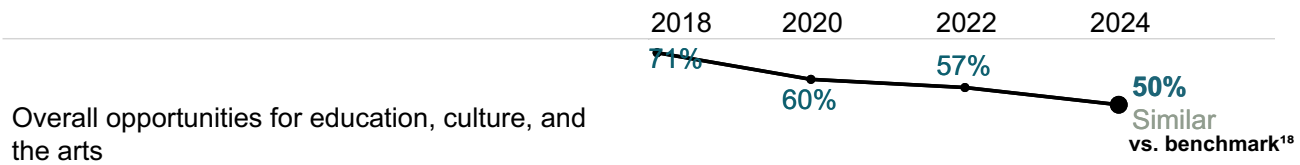
Overall opportunities for education, culture and the arts, 2024

Education, Arts, and Culture

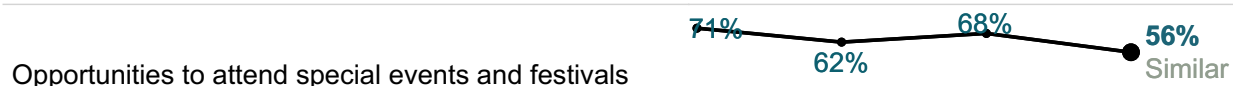
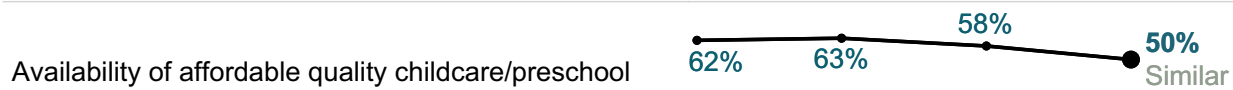
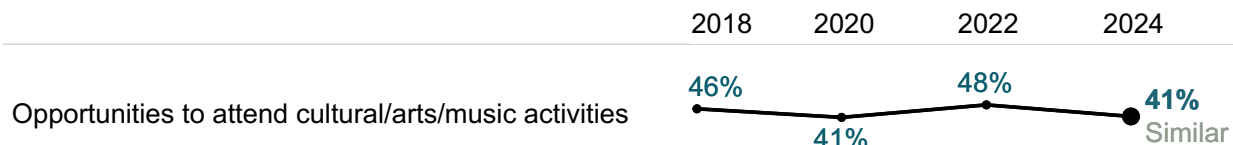
Participation in the arts, in educational opportunities, and in cultural activities is linked to increased civic engagement, greater social tolerance, and enhanced enjoyment of the local community.



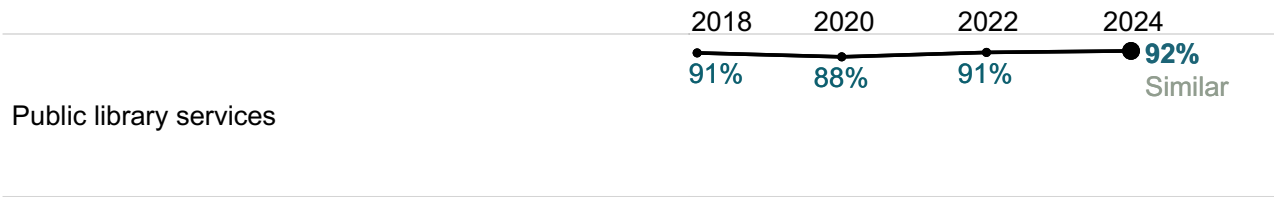
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Savage as a whole.
(% excellent or good)



Please also rate each of the following in the Savage community.
(% excellent or good)



Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Savage.
(% excellent or good)

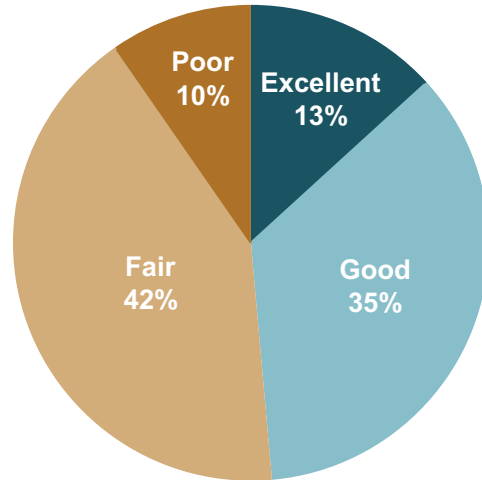


18. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

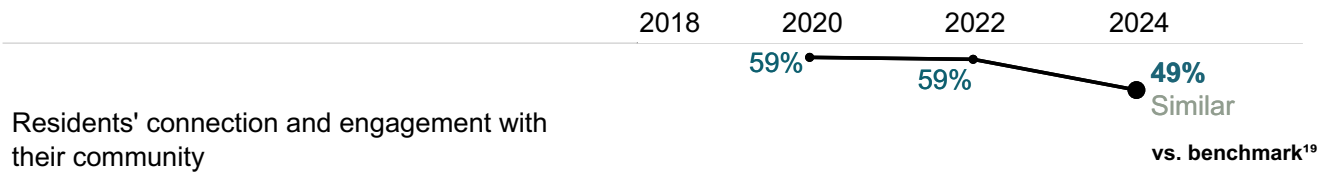
Residents' connection and engagement with their community, 2024

Inclusivity and Engagement

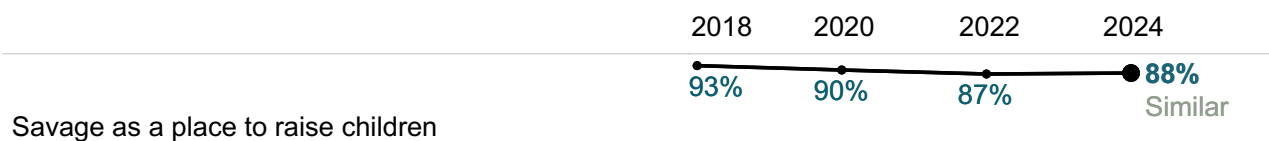
Inclusivity refers to a cultural and environmental feeling of belonging; residents who feel invited to participate within their communities feel more included, involved, and engaged than those who do not.



Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Savage as a whole. (% excellent or good)

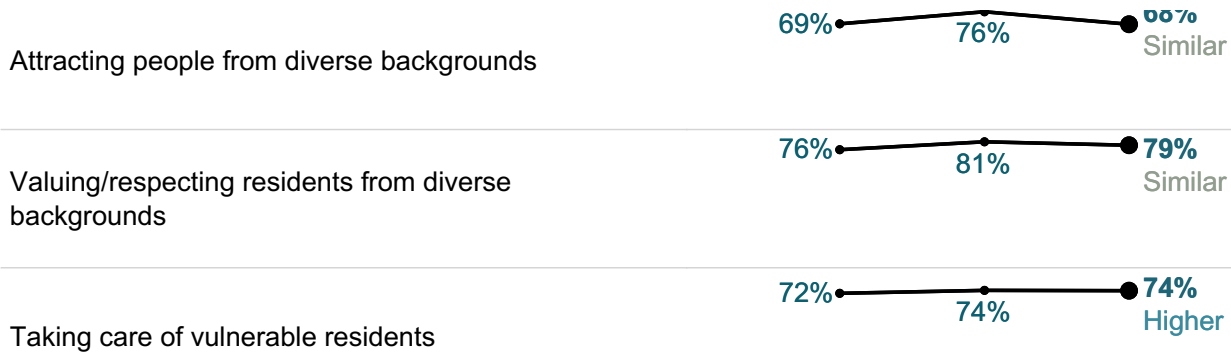


Please rate each of the following aspects of quality of life in Savage. (% excellent or good)

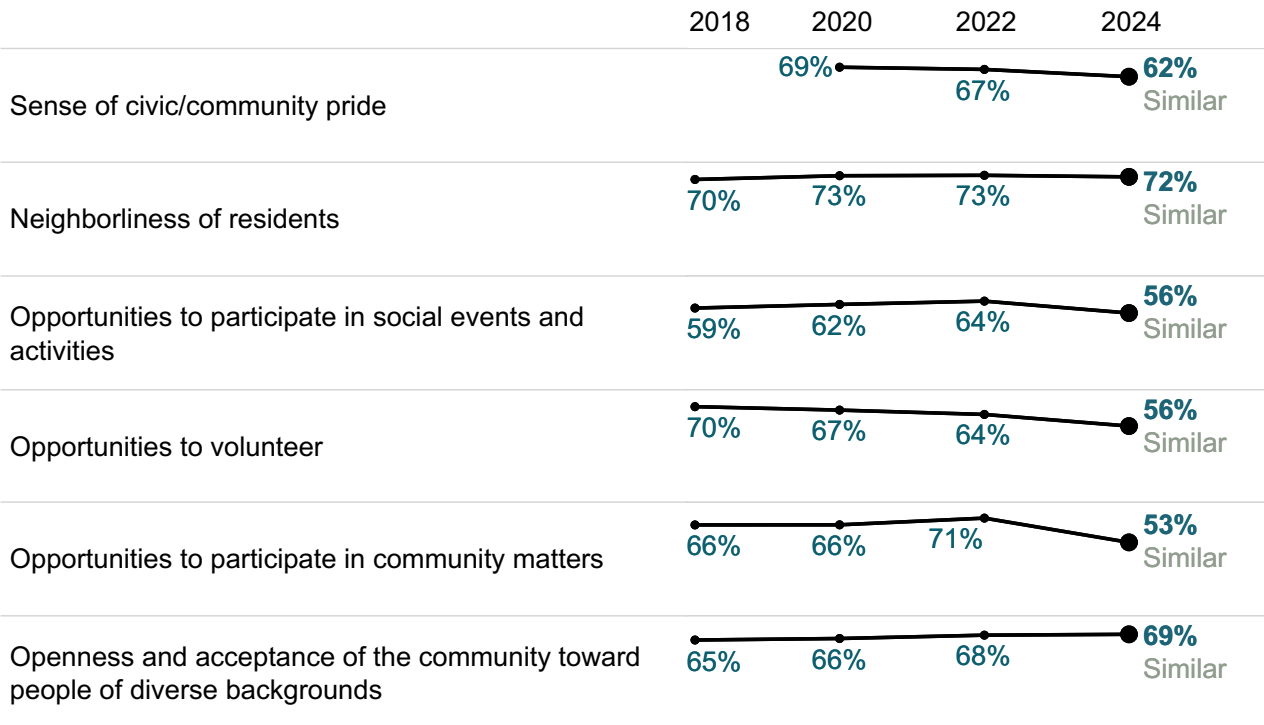


Please rate the job you feel the Savage community does at each of the following. (% excellent or good)

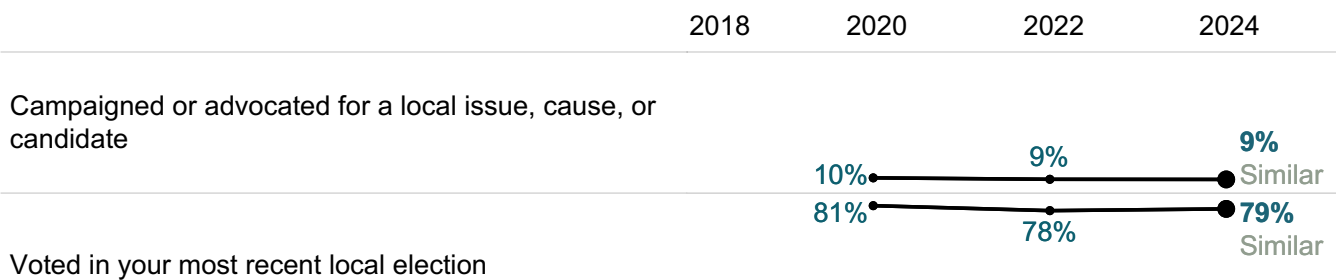




**Please also rate each of the following in the Savage community.
(% excellent or good)**



**Please indicate whether or not you have done each of the following in the last 12 months.
(% excellent or good)**

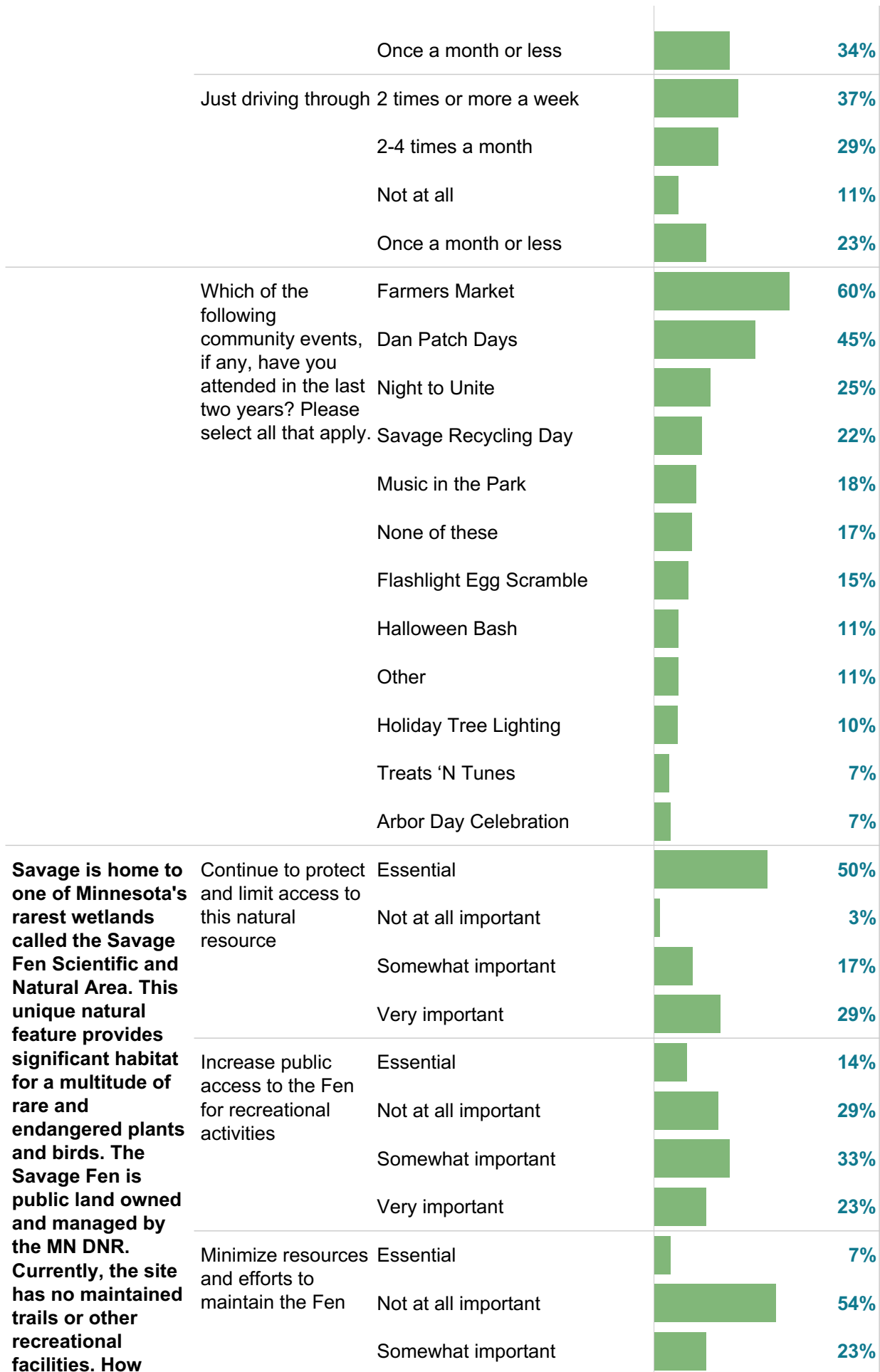


19. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Custom questions

Below are the complete set of responses to each custom question on the survey. By default, “don’t know” responses are excluded, but may be added to the table using the response filter below.

			Include "don't know" No	
In the past 12 months, how many times, if at all, have you or another household member visited Downtown Savage for the following reasons?	Shopping	2 times or more a week		11%
		2-4 times a month		9%
		Not at all		48%
		Once a month or less		33%
	Dining	2 times or more a week		8%
		2-4 times a month		19%
		Not at all		28%
		Once a month or less		45%
	Attending school or classes	2 times or more a week		2%
		2-4 times a month		2%
		Not at all		92%
		Once a month or less		3%
	Attending Church	2 times or more a week		4%
		2-4 times a month		7%
		Not at all		82%
		Once a month or less		7%
Access public transportation	2 times or more a week		1%	
	2-4 times a month		1%	
	Not at all		93%	
	Once a month or less		5%	
Visit the farmers market	2 times or more a week		2%	
	2-4 times a month		18%	
	Not at all		46%	



Very important



15%