

# Stafford County, VA

## 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 Stafford County. 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 469 residents of Stafford County collected from March 1, 2024 to April 12, 2024. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4.5% for all respondents and the response rate for the 2024 survey was 11%. Survey results were weighted so that the demographic profile of respondents was representative of the demographic profile of adults in Stafford County.



## 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, Stafford County'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 Stafford County residents is statistically similar to or different (greater or lesser) than the benchmark. Being rated as "higher" or "lower" than the benchmark means that Stafford County'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 Stafford County's average rating was more than 20 points different when compared to the benchmark.

## Trends over time

Trend data for Stafford County represent important comparison data and should be examined for improvements or declines.<sup>1</sup> 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 Stafford County were eligible to participate in the survey. A list of all households within the zip codes serving Stafford County 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 Stafford County 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 Stafford County 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 the subareas. 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 4,500 randomly selected households received mailings beginning on March 1, 2024 and data collection for the survey remained open for six 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. All 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/all languages instructing participants on how to complete the survey in their preferred language.

About 2% of the 4,500 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 4,422 households that received the invitations to participate, 469 completed the survey, providing an overall response rate of 11%. Of the 469 responses, 466 were completed in English and 3 were completed in Spanish. The response rate was calculated using AAPOR's response rate #2 for mailed surveys of unnamed persons.<sup>2</sup>

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 Stafford County survey is no greater than plus or minus 4.5 percentage points around any given percent reported for all respondents (469 completed surveys).

In addition to the randomly selected "probability sample" of households, a link to an online open-participation survey was publicized by Stafford County. The open-participation survey was identical to the random sample survey, with two small updates; it asked a question to confirm the respondent was a resident of Stafford County and also a question about where they heard about the survey. The open-participation survey was open to all county residents and became available on March 29, 2024. The survey remained open for two weeks. The data presented in the following tabs exclude the open participation survey data, but a tab at the end provides the complete frequency of responses to questions by the open-participation respondents.

## 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 County of Stafford County. 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.<sup>3</sup> 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 <sup>4</sup>
<b>Age</b>	18-34	<b>5%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>30%</b>
	35-54	<b>29%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>39%</b>
	55+	<b>65%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Area</b>	Aquia	<b>15%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>14%</b>
	Falmouth	<b>14%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>16%</b>
	Garrisonville	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>
	George Washing	<b>17%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>17%</b>
	Griffis-Widewater	<b>6%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>12%</b>
	Hartwood	<b>19%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>
	Rock Hill	<b>17%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Hispanic origin</b>	No, not of Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or Spanish or..	<b>93%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>87%</b>
	Yes, I consider myself to be of Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or Spanish origin	<b>7%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Housing tenure</b>	Own	<b>92%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>80%</b>
	Rent	<b>8%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Housing type</b>	Attached	<b>14%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>25%</b>
	Detached	<b>86%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Race &amp; Hispanic origin</b>	Not white alone	<b>25%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>42%</b>
	White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	<b>75%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>Sex</b>	Man	<b>51%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>50%</b>
	Woman	<b>49%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>50%</b>

<b>Sex/age</b>	Man 18-34	<b>3%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>16%</b>
	Man 35-54	<b>12%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>
	Man 55+	<b>36%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>15%</b>
	Woman 18-34	<b>3%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>
	Woman 35-54	<b>18%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>19%</b>
	Woman 55+	<b>28%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>16%</b>

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 County of Stafford County funded this research. Please contact Andrew Spence of the County of Stafford County at ASpence@staffordcountyva.gov 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:

- Evaluations of emergency preparedness services and residents' feeling of safety from fire, flood, or other natural disaster both showed significant growth from 2022.
- Multiple items pertaining to mobility experienced significant improvement from 2022, including:
  - snow removal,
  - ease of travel by public transportation,
  - ease of travel by car,
  - sidewalk maintenance, and
  - street repair.
- Items related to economic outlook—specifically economic development and the expected positive impact of the economy on residents' household income—showed significant growth from 2022.

### Lowest-performing areas:

- Resident sentiment around overall health and wellness opportunities significantly declined from 2022.
- Evaluations of the availability of affordable quality childcare and K-12 education decreased significantly compared to prior results and ranked lower than national benchmark comparisons.
- Cost of living emerged as an area of growing concern for residents.

### Areas of greatest change since 2020:

Of the 123 evaluative questions included on both the 2022 and current survey iterations, 78 were statistically similar to previous results. Upward trends were seen in 23 items, while 22 ratings decreased since 2022. The most significant of those trends are listed below.

#### **Increases**

- Expected positive impact of the economy on residents' family income (+22%)
- Snow removal (+21%)
- Residents' overall health (+17%)
- Street cleaning (+12%)
- Emergency preparedness (services that prepare the community for natural disasters or other emergency situations) (+11%)

#### **Decreases**

- Garbage collection (-18%)
- Availability of affordable quality childcare/preschool (-13%)
- Recycling (-12%)
- [County government] treating all residents fairly (-11%)
- Overall health and wellness opportunities in Stafford County (-10%)

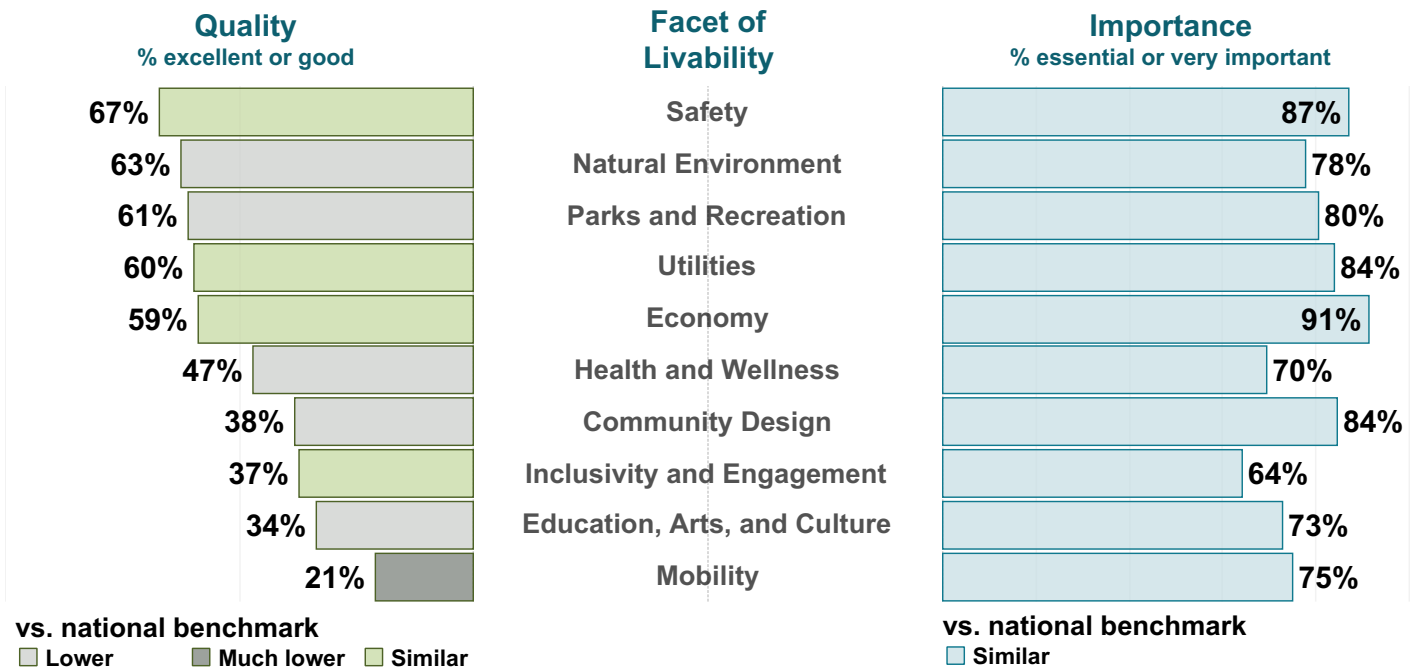


## Facets of livability

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.

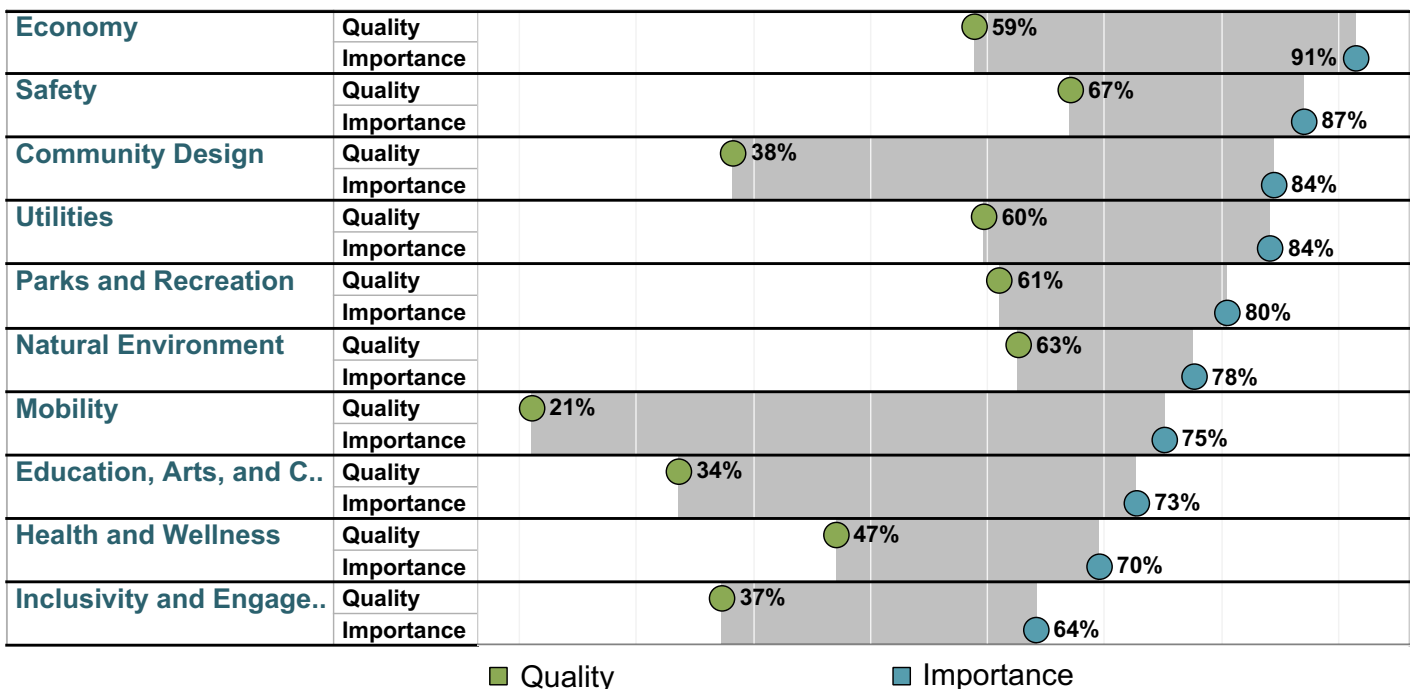
### Quality and Importance by the Numbers

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.

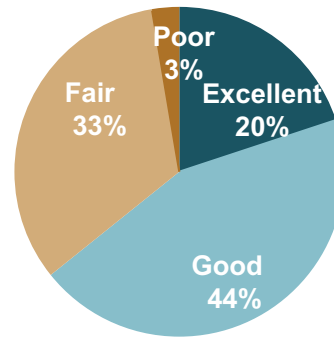




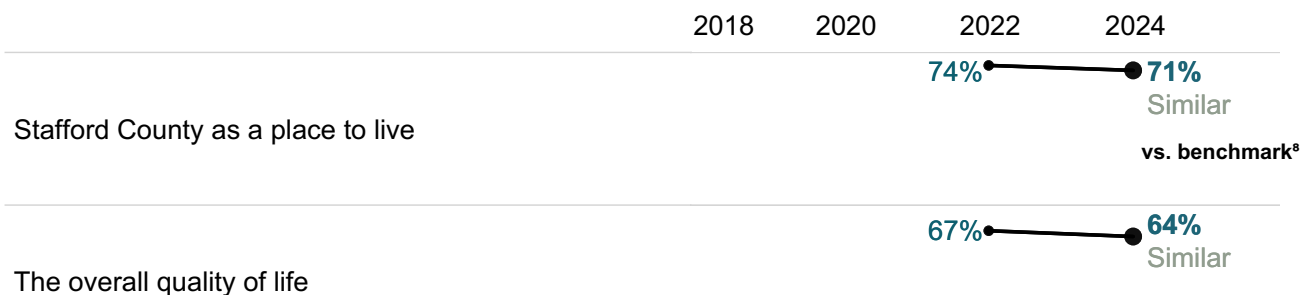
## Quality of Life

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.

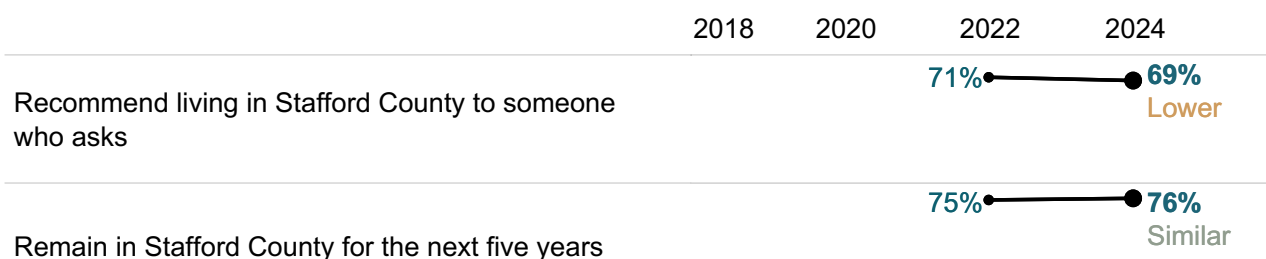
### The overall quality of life in Stafford County, 2024



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

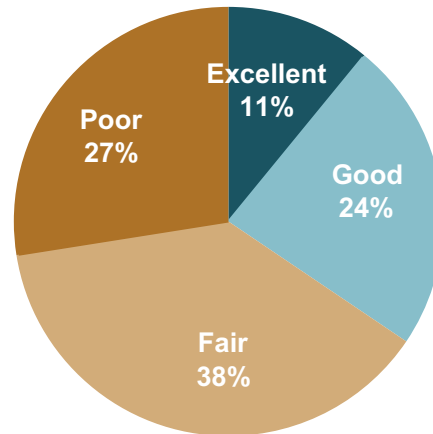


8. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

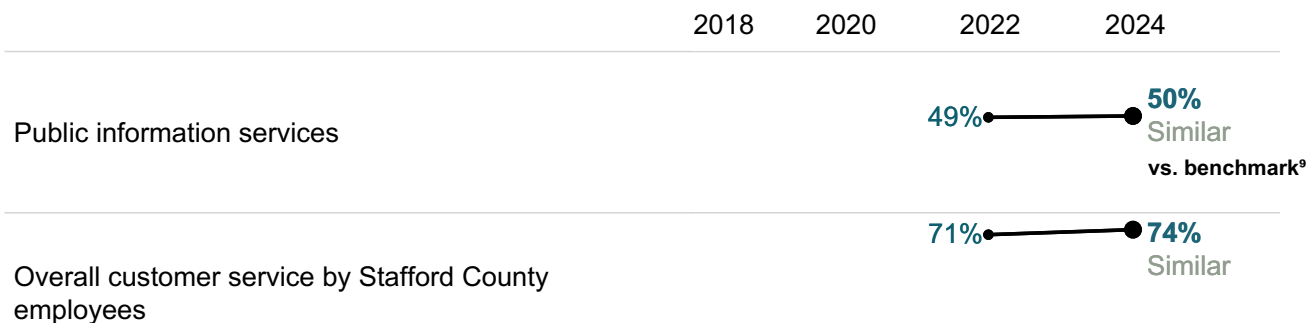
## Governance

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.

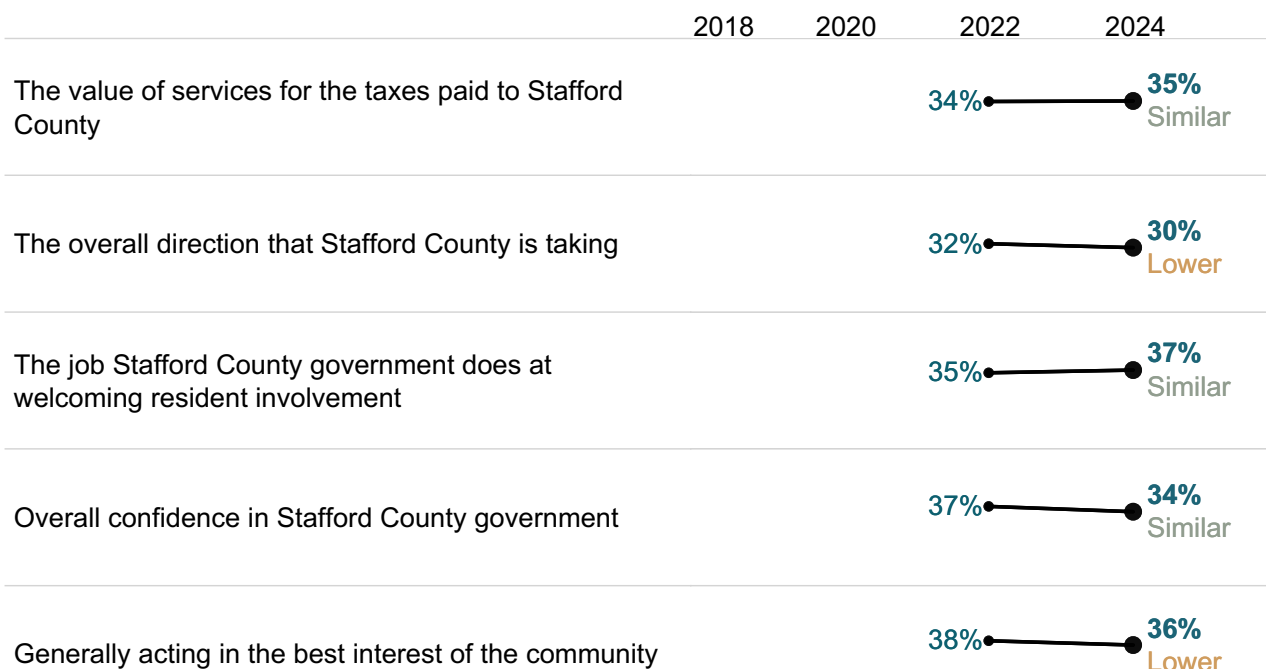
### Overall confidence in Stafford County government, 2024

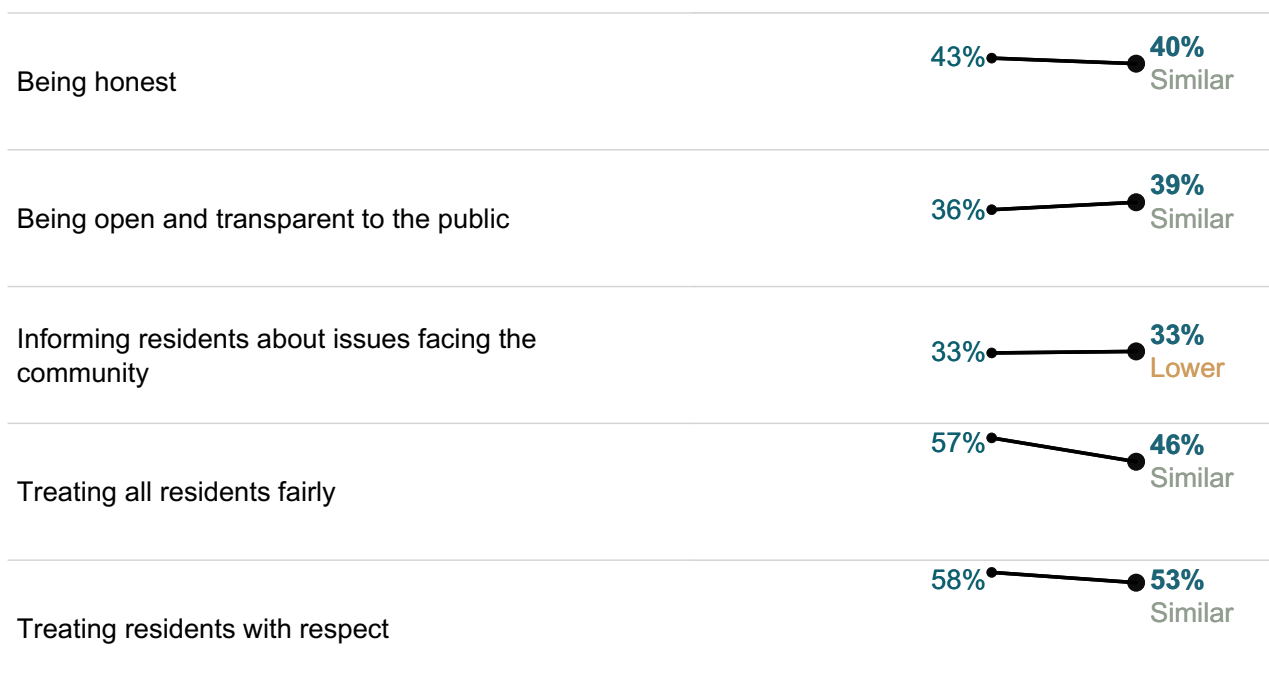


Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Stafford County.  
(% excellent or good)



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





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



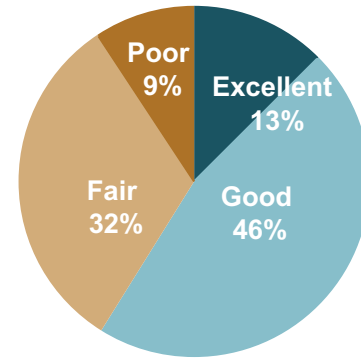
9. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.



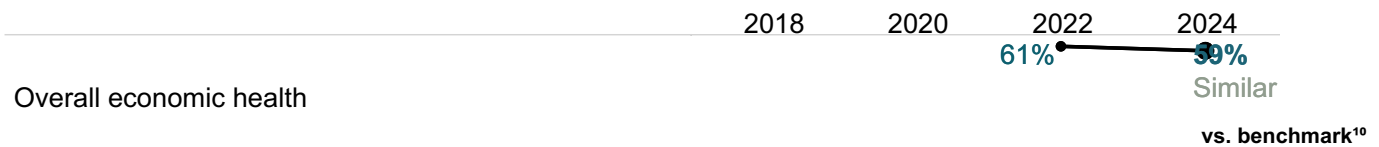
## Economy

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.

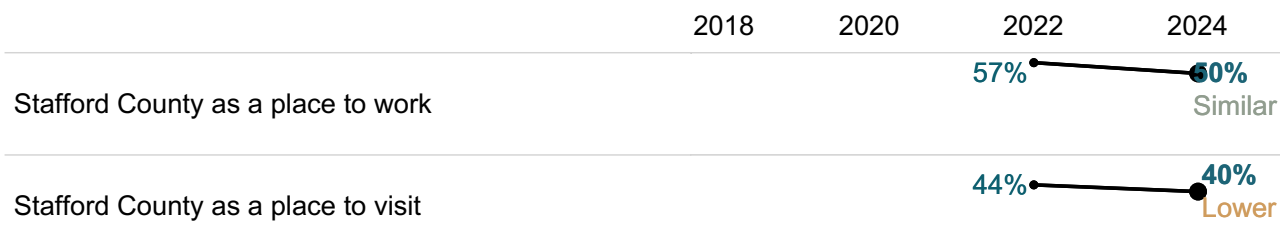
### Overall economic health of Stafford County, 2024



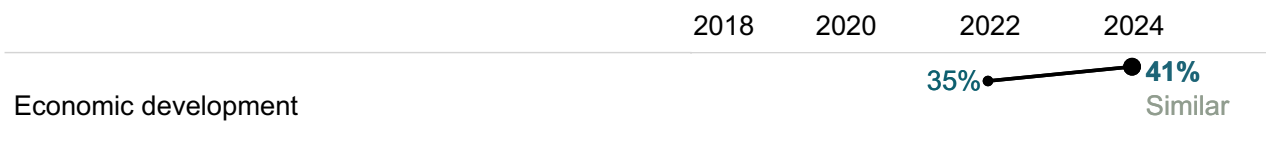
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Stafford County as a whole.  
(% excellent or good)



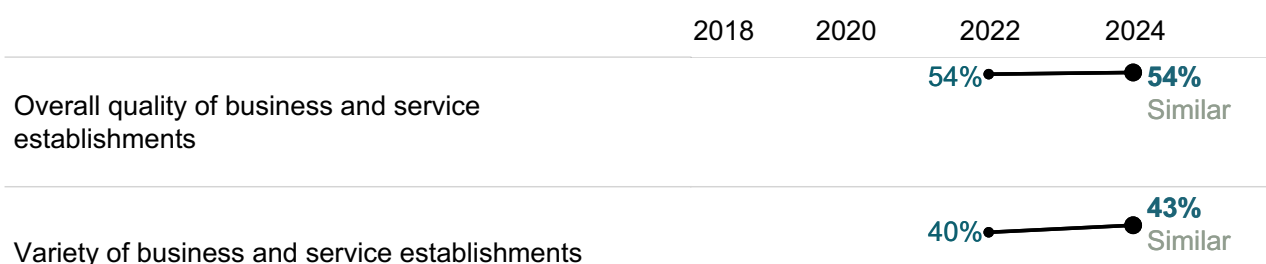
Please rate each of the following aspects of quality of life in Stafford County.  
(% excellent or good)

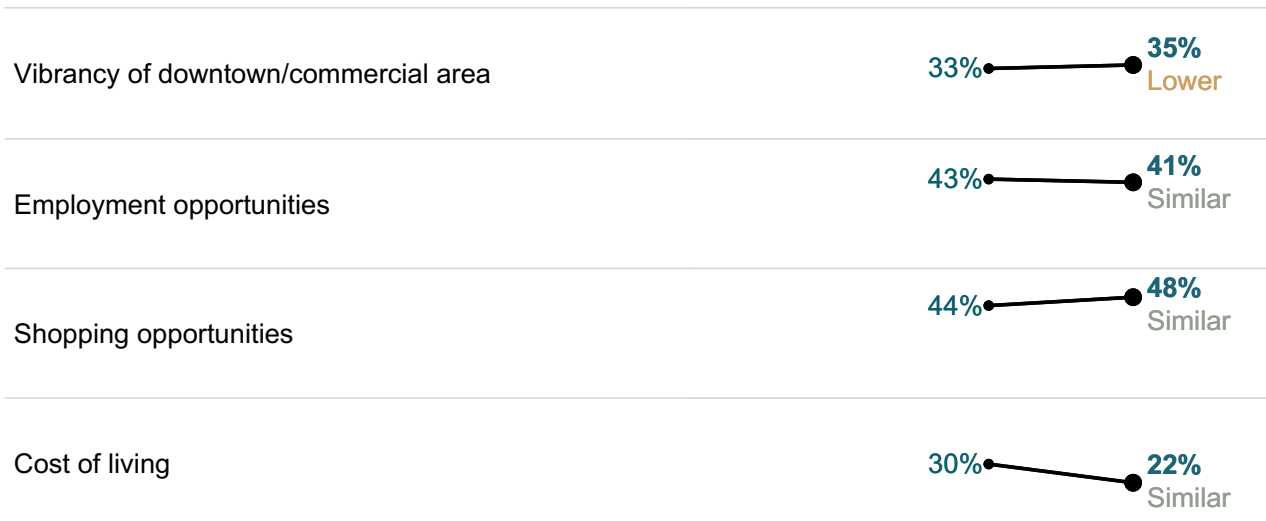


Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Stafford County.  
(% excellent or good)

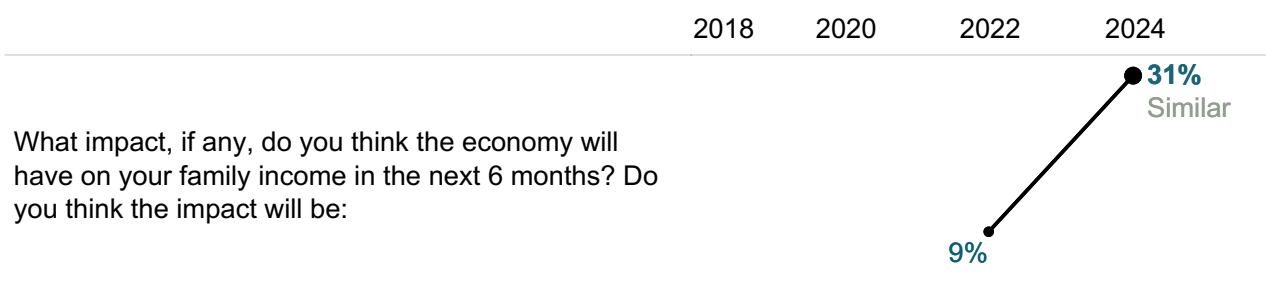


Please rate each of the following in the Stafford County community.  
(% excellent or good)





**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)

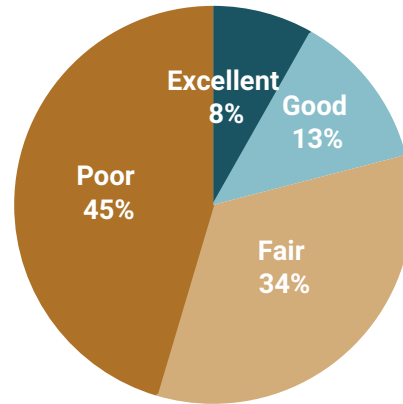


10. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

## Overall quality of the transportation system in Stafford County, 2024

### Mobility

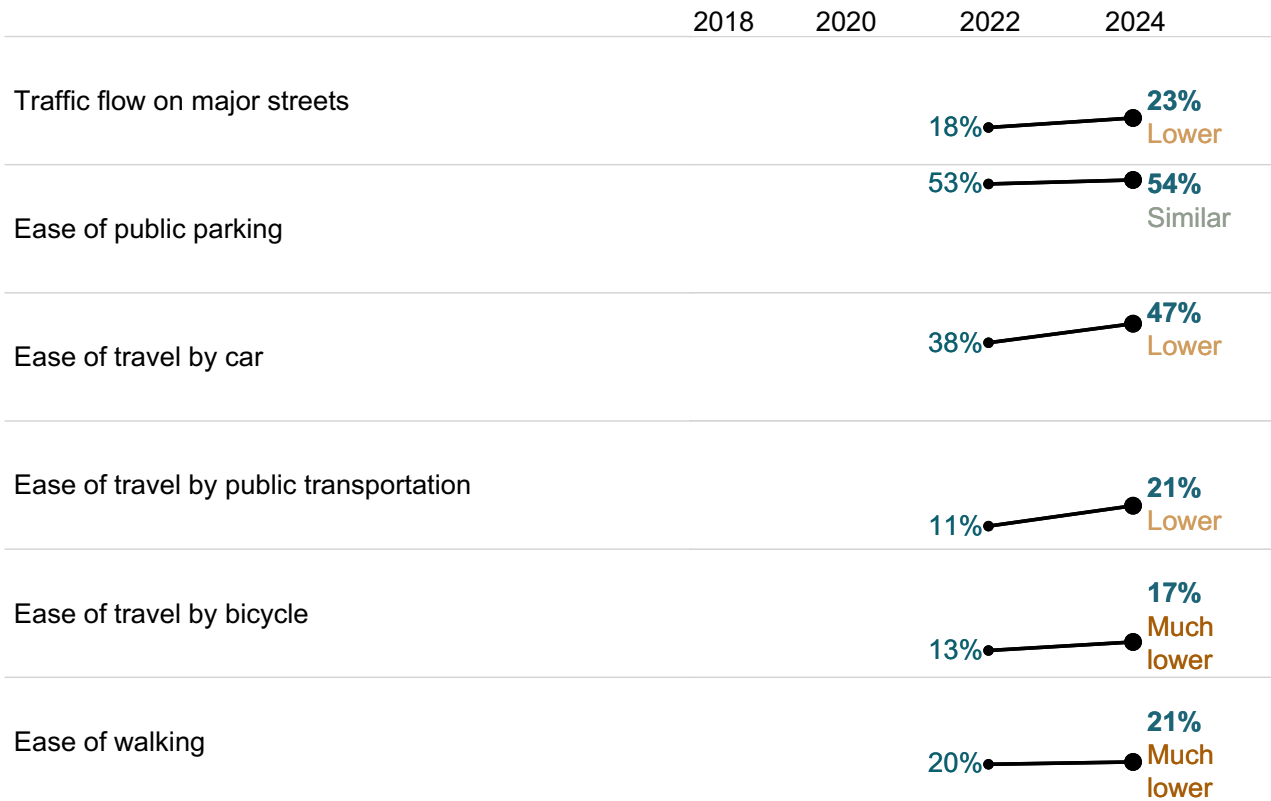
The ease with which residents can move about their communities, whether for commuting, leisure, or recreation, plays a major role in the quality of life for all who live, work, and play in the community.



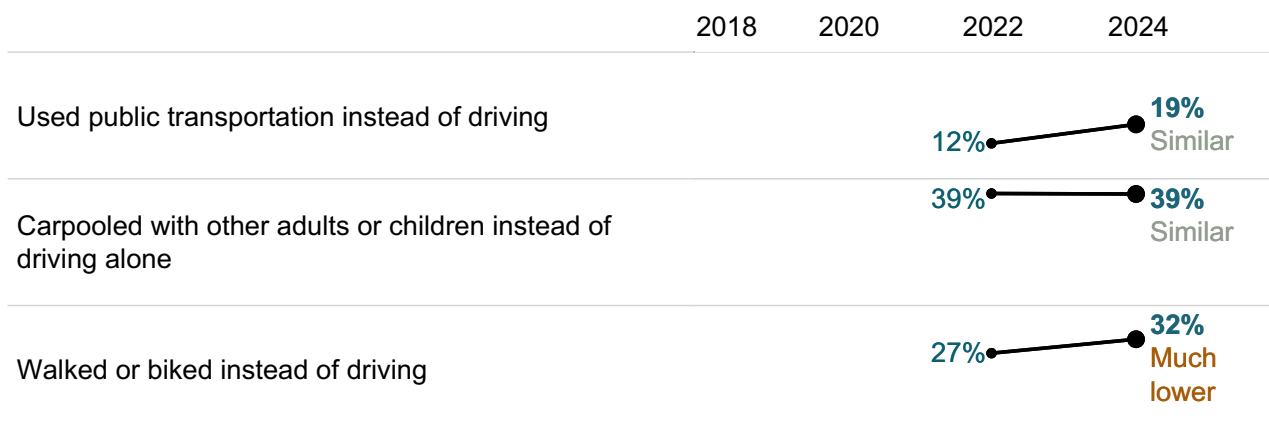
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Stafford County as a whole.  
(% excellent or good)



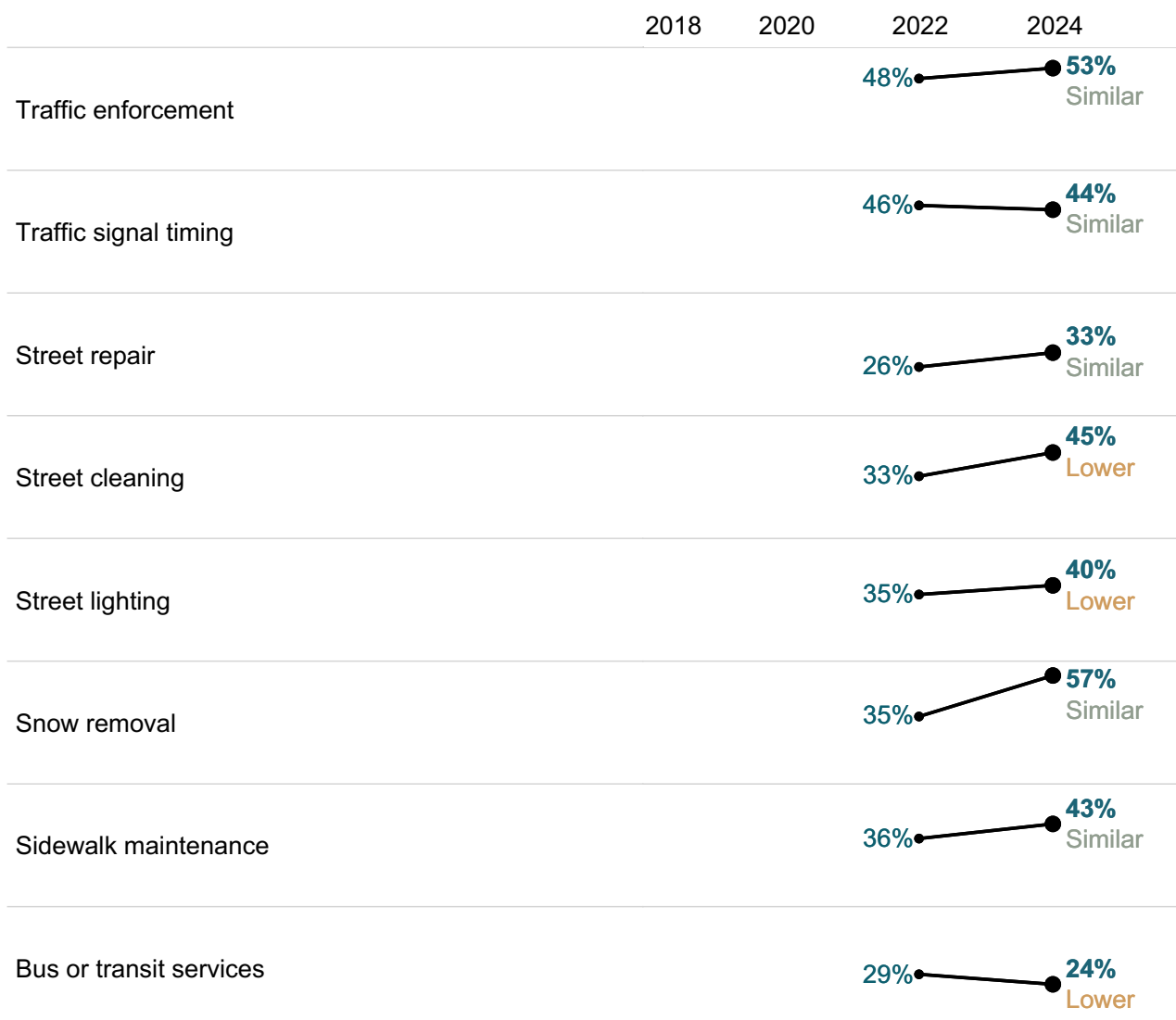
Please also rate each of the following in the Stafford County community.  
(% excellent or good)



**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 Stafford County.**  
 (% excellent or good)



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



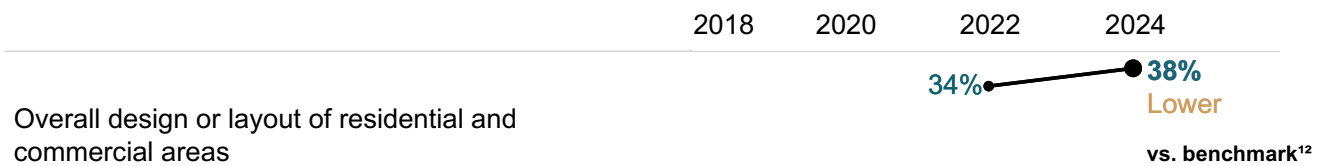
## Overall design or layout of Stafford County's residential and commercial areas, 2024

### Community Design

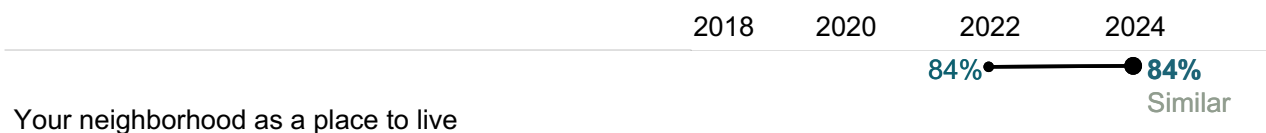
A well-designed community enhances the quality of life for its residents by encouraging smart land use and zoning, ensuring that affordable housing is accessible to all, and providing access to parks and other green spaces.



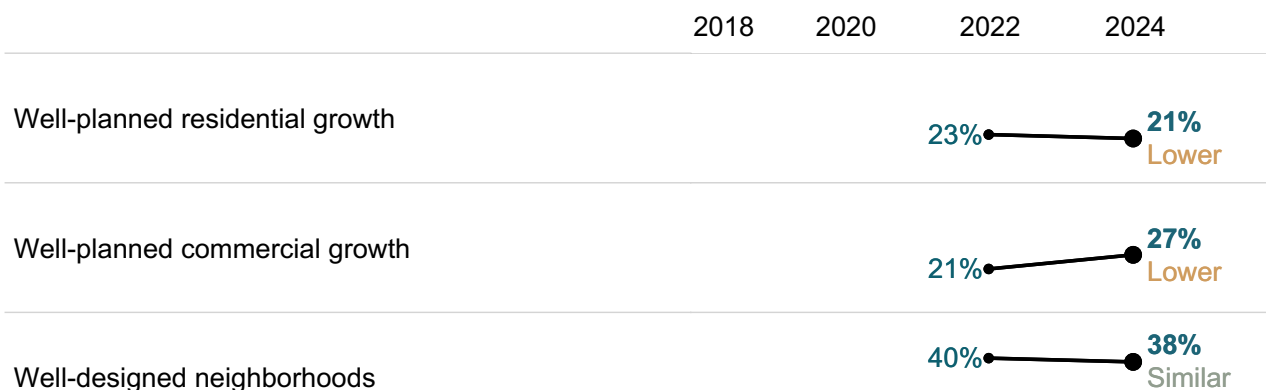
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Stafford County as a whole.  
(% excellent or good)

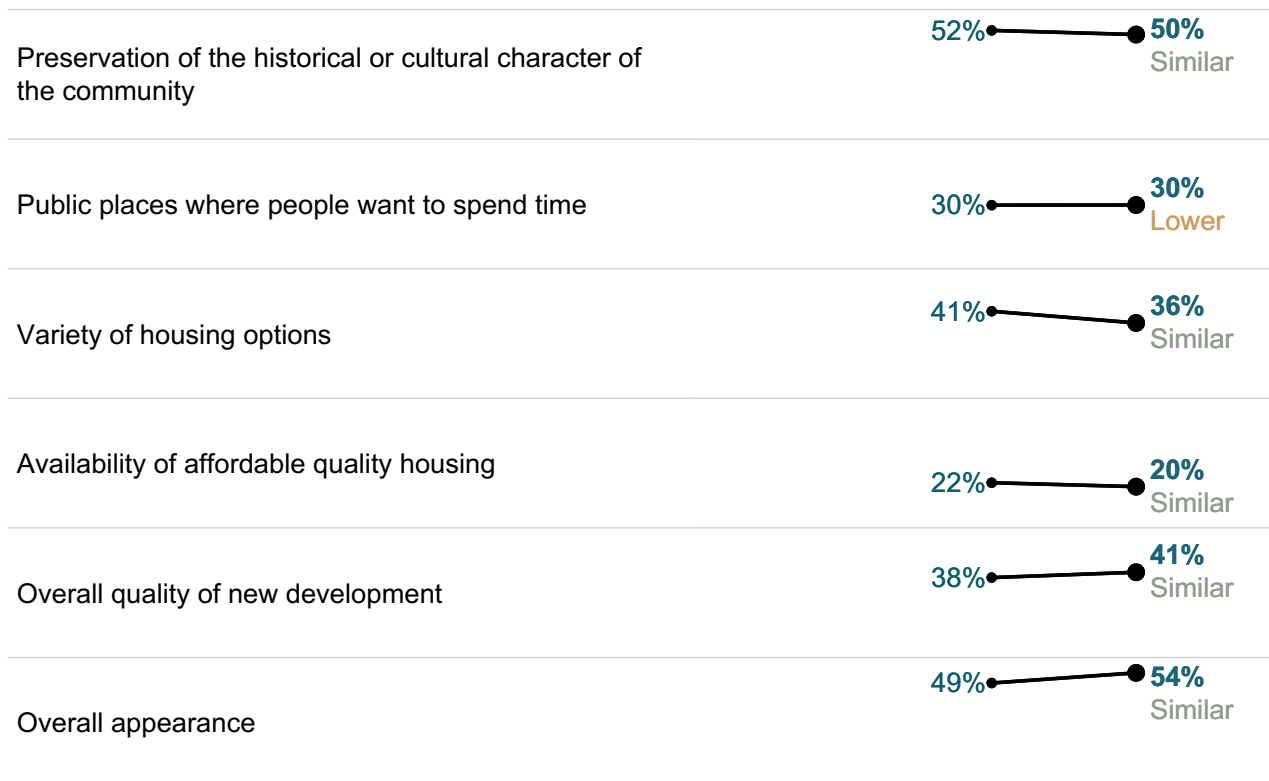


Please rate each of the following aspects of quality of life in Stafford County.  
(% excellent or good)

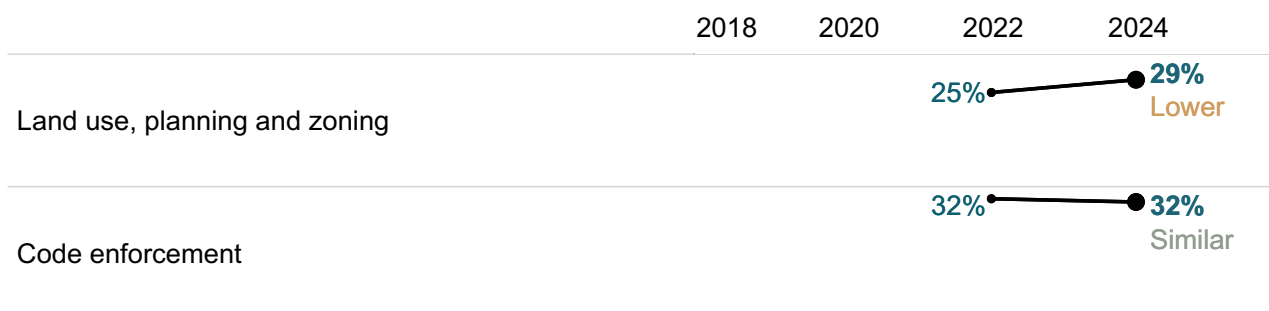


Please also rate each of the following in the Stafford County community.  
(% excellent or good)





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

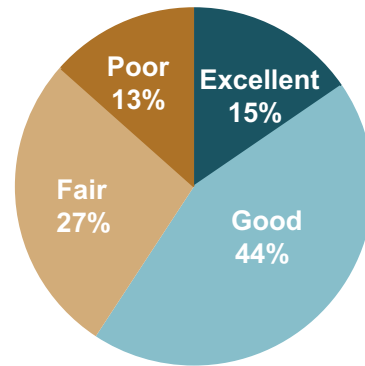


12. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

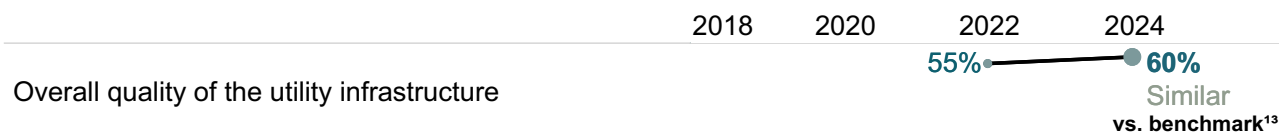
## Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Stafford County, 2024

### Utilities

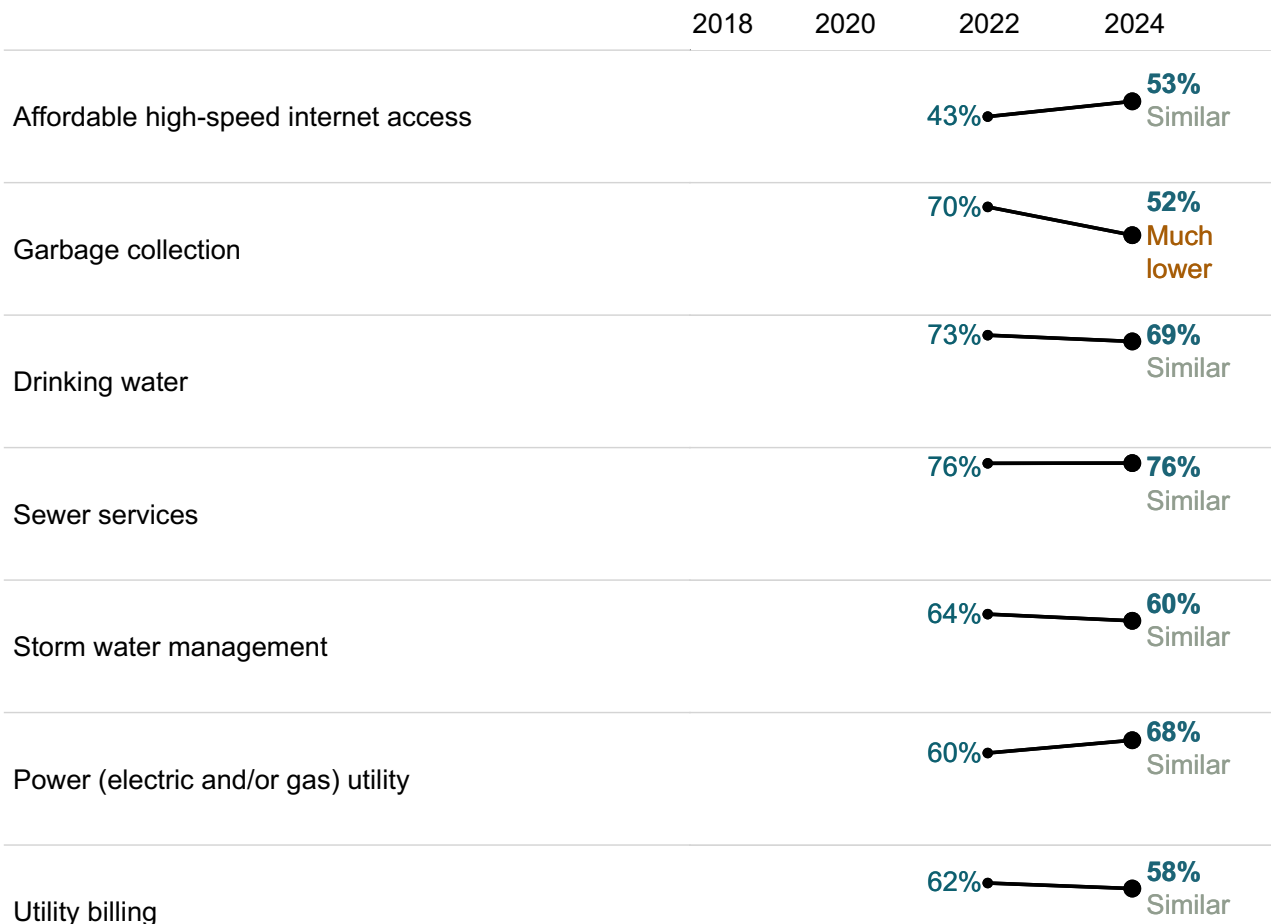
Services such as water, gas, electricity, and internet access play a vital role in ensuring the physical and economic health and well-being of the communities they serve.



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



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

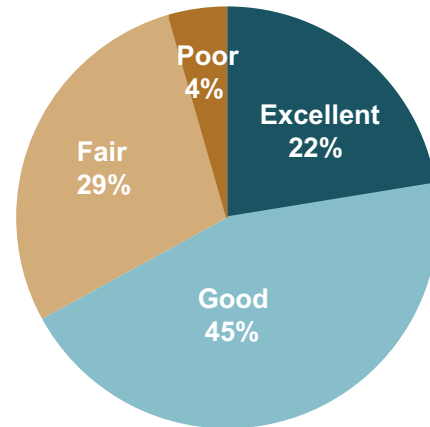


13. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

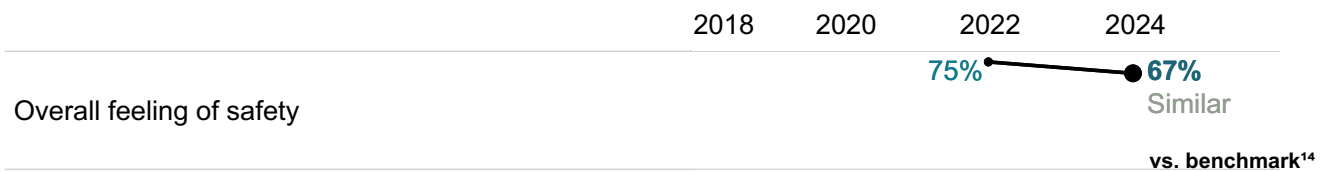
## Overall feeling of safety in Stafford County, 2024

### Safety

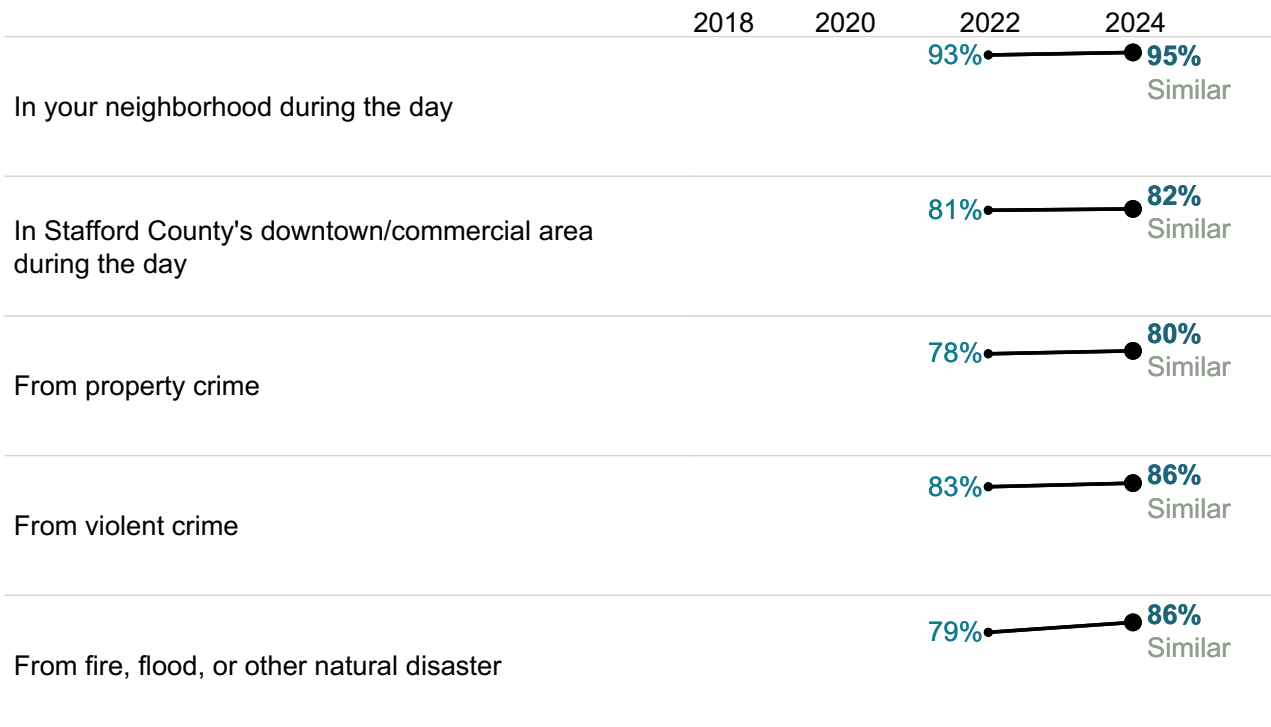
Public safety is often the most important task facing local governments. All residents should feel safe and secure in their neighborhoods and in the greater community, and providing robust safety-related services is essential to residents' quality of life.



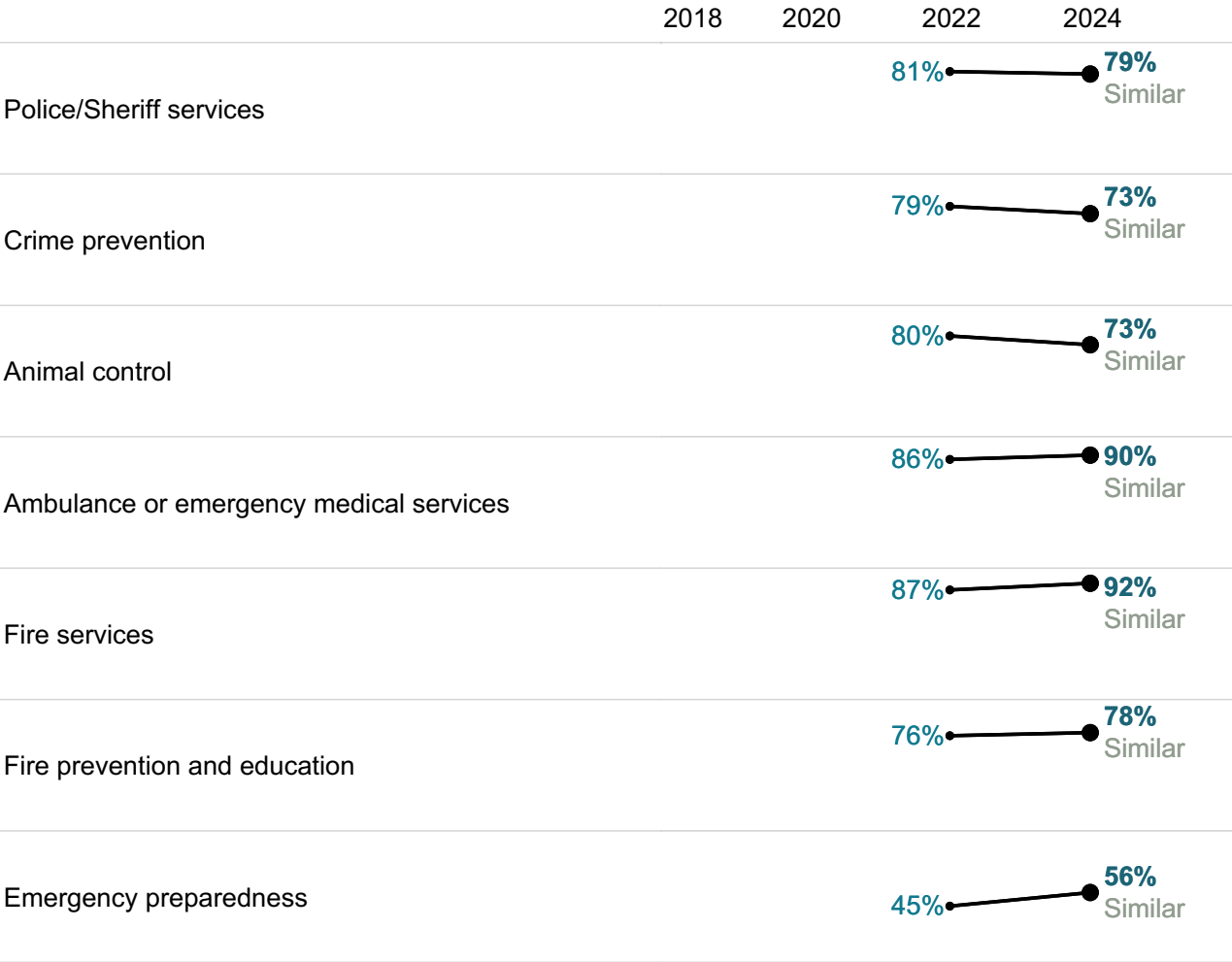
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Stafford County as a whole.  
(% excellent or good)



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



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

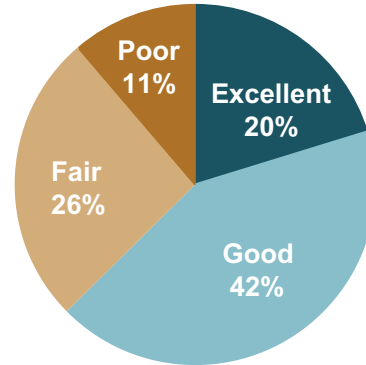


14. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

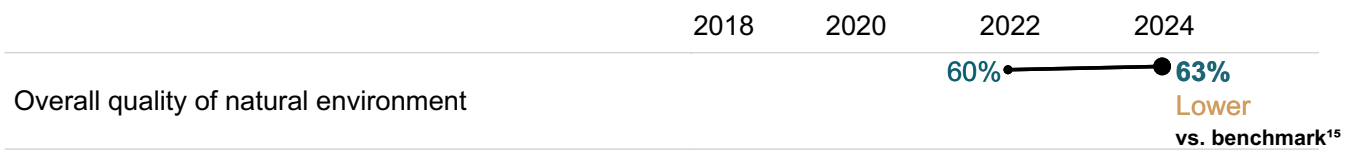
## Overall quality of natural environment in Stafford County, 2024

### 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 Stafford County as a whole.  
(% excellent or good)



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



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



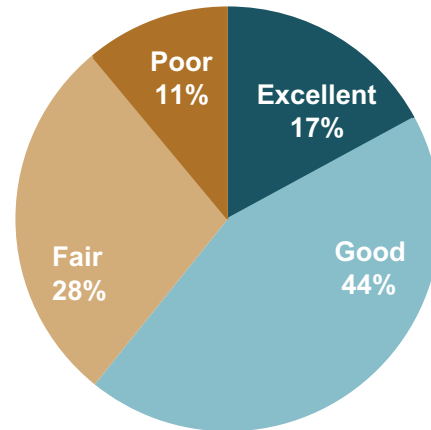
<sup>15</sup>. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

## Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities, 2024

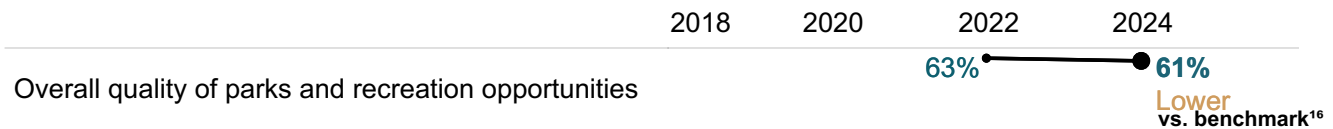
### Parks and Recreation

"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."

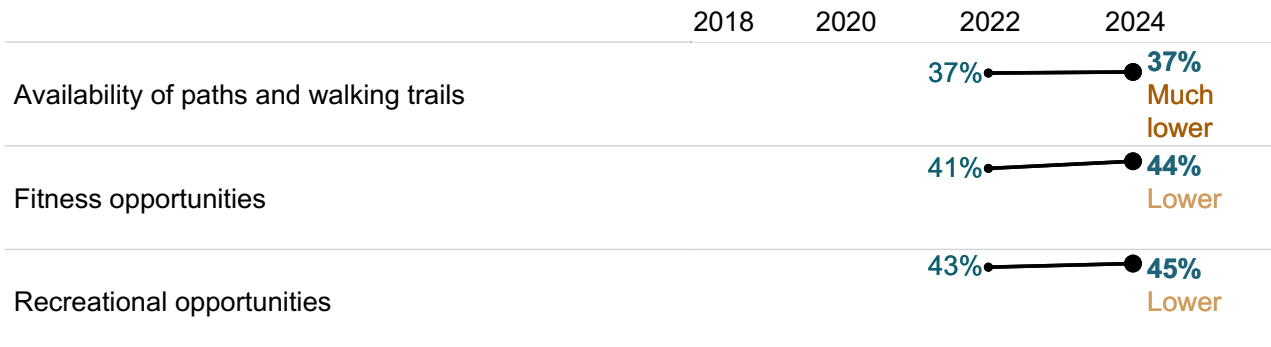
- National Recreation and Park Association



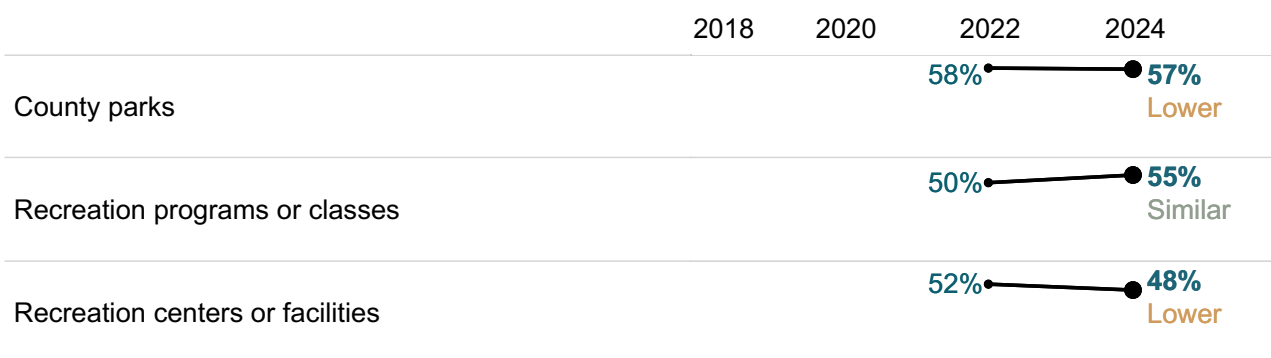
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Stafford County as a whole.  
(% excellent or good)



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



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



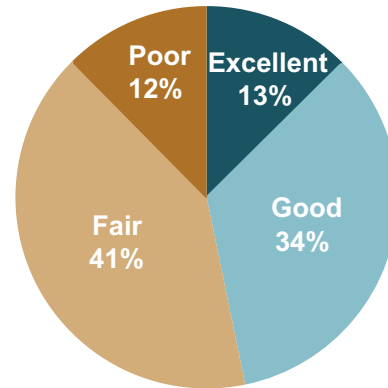
<sup>16</sup>. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.



## Overall health and wellness opportunities in Stafford County, 2024

### 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.



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



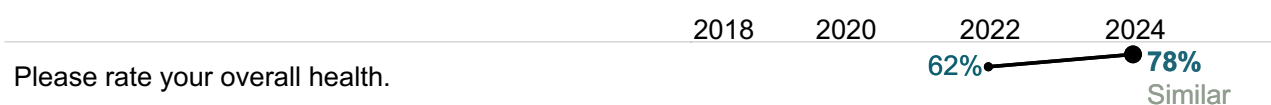
Please also rate each of the following in the Stafford County community.  
(% excellent or good)



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

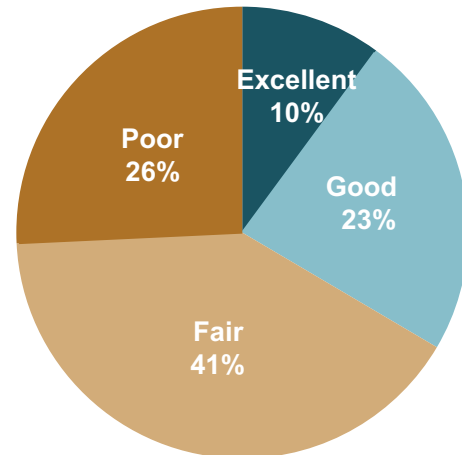


Please rate your overall health.  
(% excellent or very good)



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

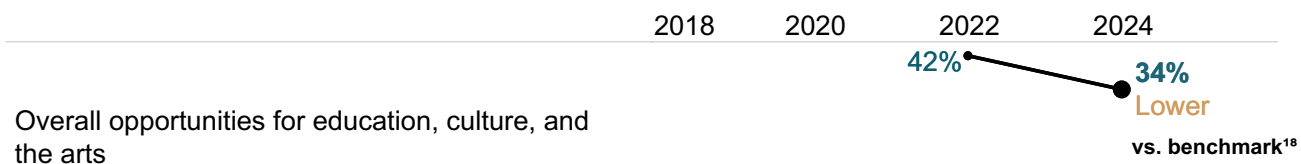
## Overall opportunities for education, culture and the arts, 2024



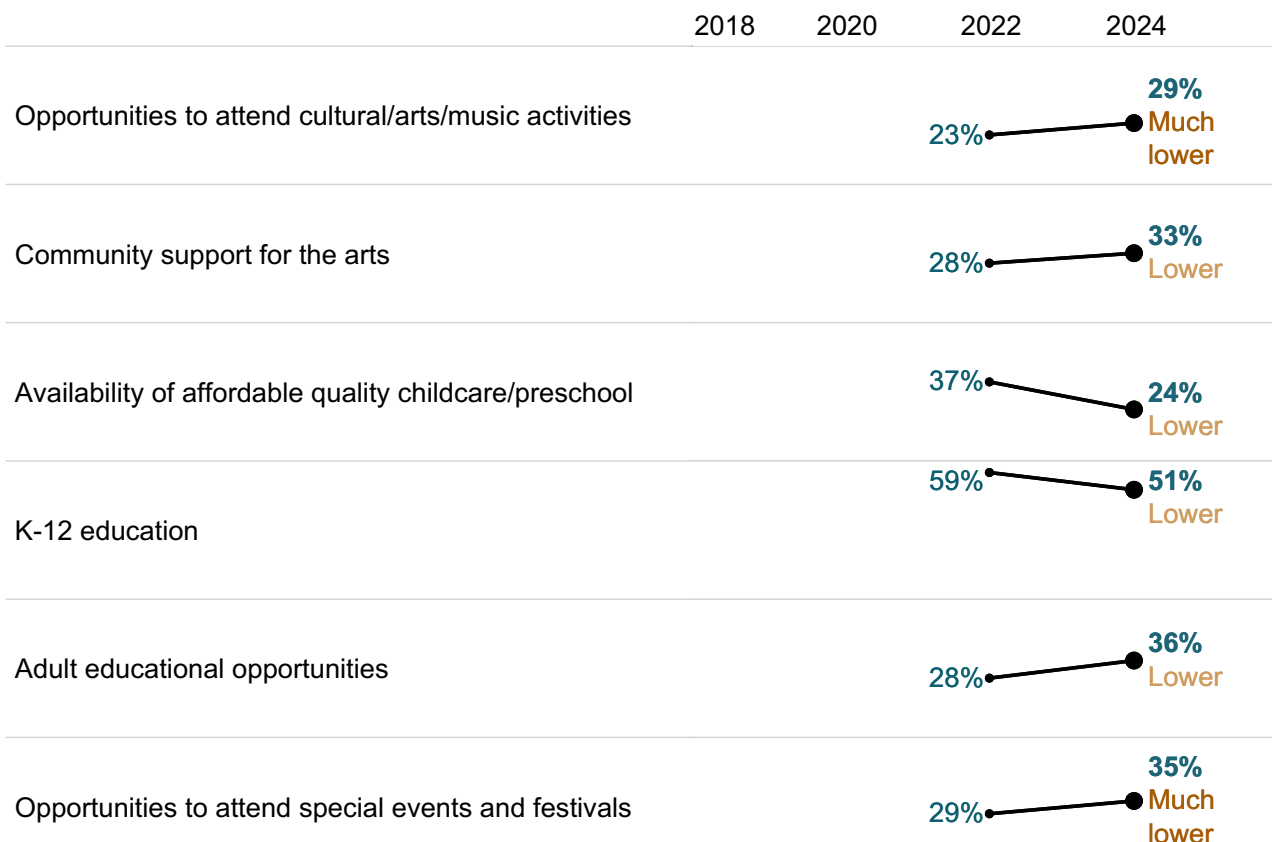
## Education, Arts, and Culture

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 Stafford County as a whole.  
(% excellent or good)



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



Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Stafford County.

(% excellent or good)

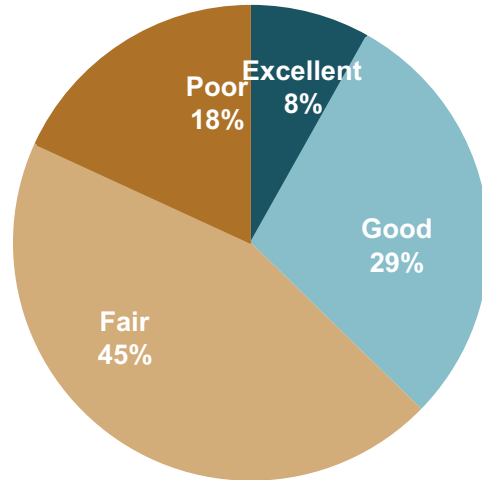


18. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

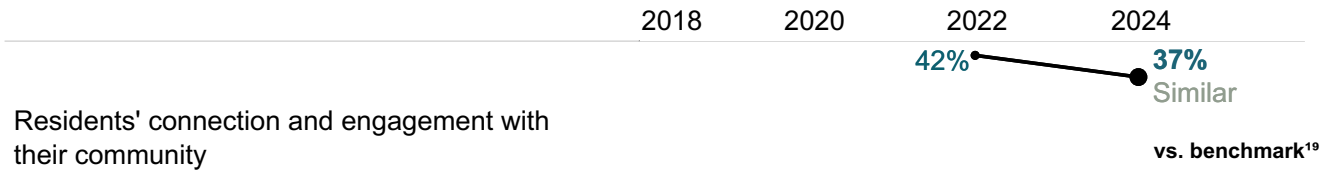
## Residents' connection and engagement with their community, 2024

### 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.



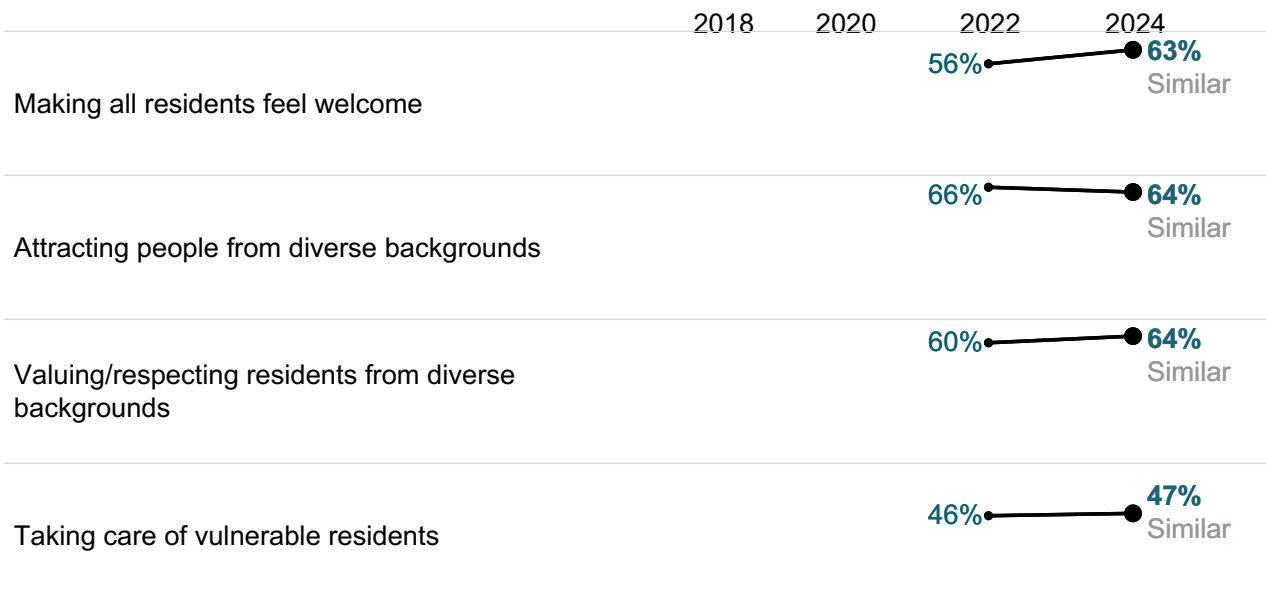
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Stafford County as a whole.  
(% excellent or good)



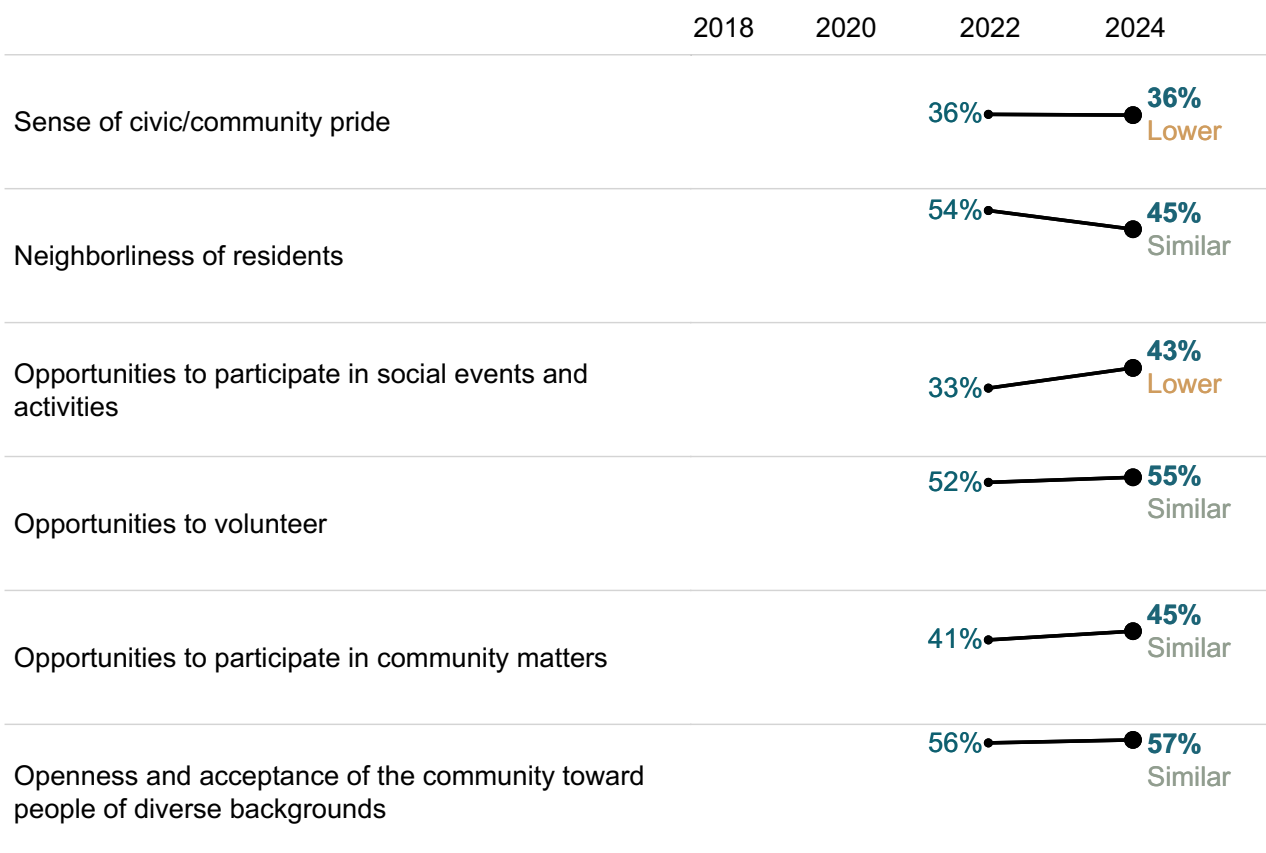
Please rate each of the following aspects of quality of life in Stafford County.  
(% excellent or good)



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



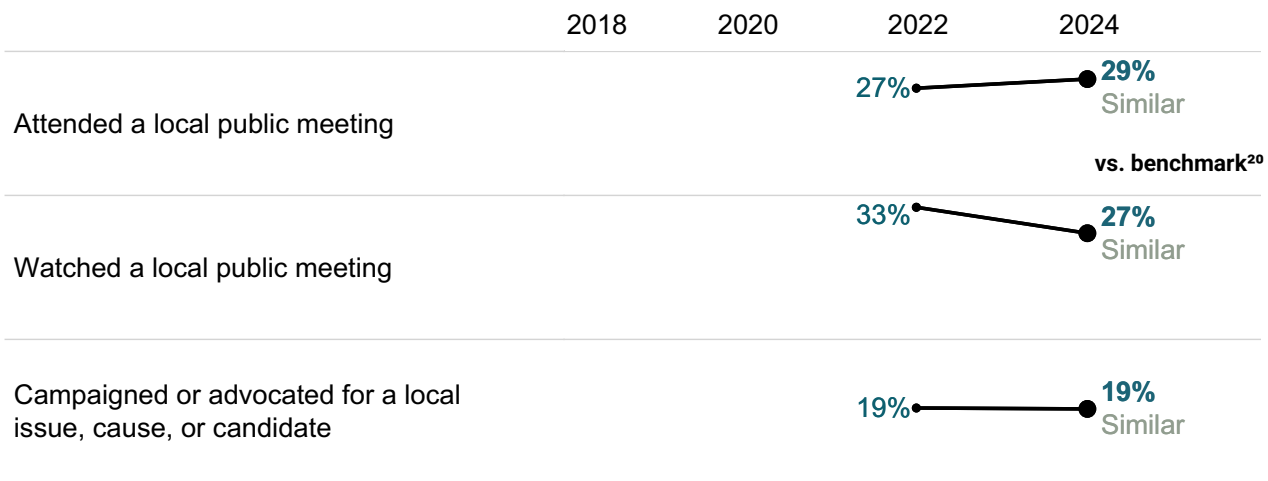
**Please also rate each of the following in the Stafford County community.**  
 (% excellent or good)



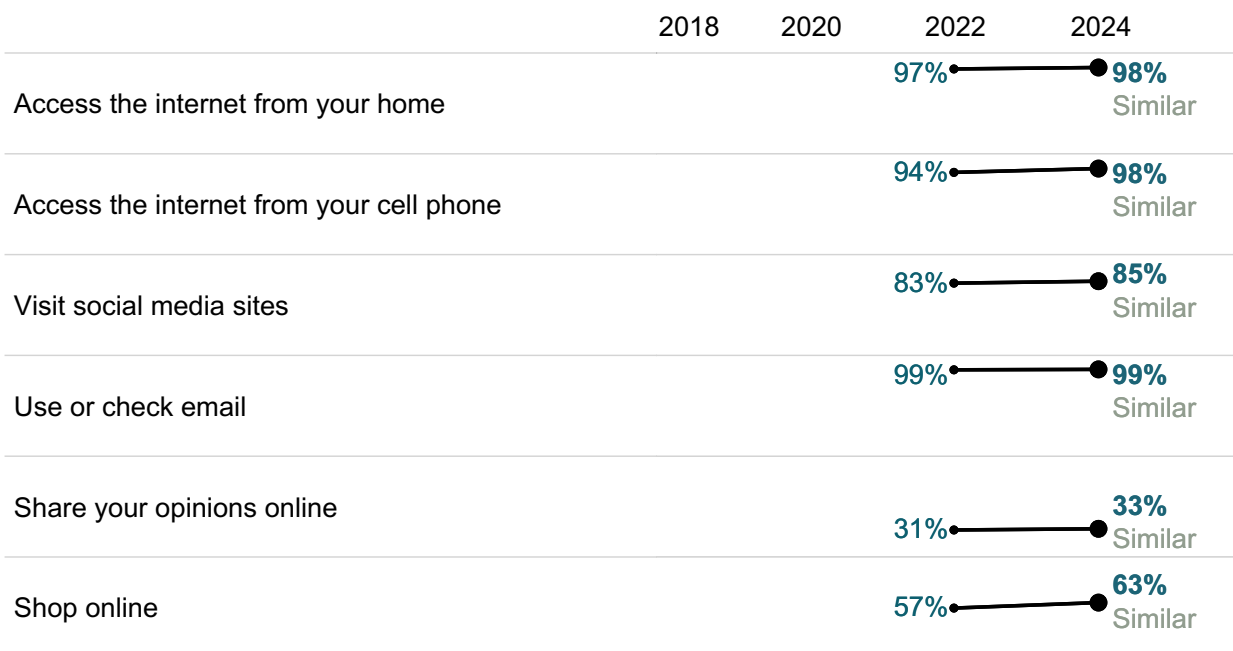
19. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

## Residents' Participation Levels

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



In general, how many times do you:  
(% a few times a week or more)































<sup>20</sup>. 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
<b>How important to you, if at all, are each of these aspects to create/preserve a sense of community?</b>	Knowing and being friendly with your neighbors	Essential	<div></div> 36%
		Very important	<div></div> 38%
		Somewhat important	<div></div> 22%
		Not at all important	<div></div> 4%
	Attending community events	Essential	<div></div> 8%
		Very important	<div></div> 36%
		Somewhat important	<div></div> 49%
		Not at all important	<div></div> 7%
	Having informal public spaces to gather such as downtown, parks or community centers	Essential	<div></div> 29%
		Very important	<div></div> 39%
		Somewhat important	<div></div> 29%
		Not at all important	<div></div> 4%
	Easy access to amenities such as parks, shopping, etc.	Essential	<div></div> 38%
		Very important	<div></div> 50%
		Somewhat important	<div></div> 12%
		Not at all important	<div></div> 1%
	Feeling safe at home and in the community	Essential	<div></div> 74%
		Very important	<div></div> 23%
		Somewhat important	<div></div> 2%
	Having neighborhoods that are easy to walk around	Essential	<div></div> 48%
		Very important	<div></div> 37%
		Somewhat important	<div></div> 13%
		Not at all important	<div></div> 3%



	Limiting the speed of residential growth	Essential		46%
		Very important		23%
		Somewhat important		24%
		Not at all important		7%
	Limiting the speed of commercial growth	Essential		32%
		Very important		27%
		Somewhat important		29%
		Not at all important		13%
	Which of the following have you done in the past 2 years? (Select all that apply)	Voted in a local election		98%
		Attended a local government public meeting		30%
		Contacted my local government to share my opinion		30%
		Volunteered to be on a local advisory committee		8%
<b>How much of a priority, if at all, should each of the following be for Stafford County to address in the next two years?</b>	Economy (employment, retail, restaurants, downtown, economic develop..	High priority		63%
		Medium priority		30%
		Not a priority		7%
	Mobility (roads, parking, traffic flow, pedestrian/bike trails, transportation options)	High priority		74%
		Medium priority		24%
		Not a priority		2%
	Community design (historical preservation, planned residential and commercial gr..	High priority		46%
		Medium priority		42%
		Not a priority		12%
	Utilities (water, sewer, garbage collection, power, internet)	High priority		50%
		Medium priority		42%
		Not a priority		8%
	Safety (safety, fire, flood, crime prevention, animal control)	High priority		67%
		Medium priority		25%
		Not a priority		8%
	Natural environment (air quality, water resources, recycling, open sp..	High priority		53%

Natural environment (air quality, water resources, recycling, open sp..	Medium priority		37%
	Not a priority		10%
Parks and recreation (recreational opportunities, fitness choices, w..	High priority		42%
	Medium priority		44%
	Not a priority		14%
Health and wellness (health services, health care, food, mental health)	High priority		52%
	Medium priority		39%
	Not a priority		9%
Education, arts, and culture (K-12 education, childcare, special events, festivals, a..	High priority		65%
	Medium priority		27%
	Not a priority		9%
During a typical month, how many hours do you spend volunteering in your local community?	None		55%
	1 to 3 hours		21%
	4 to 5 hours		12%
	6 to 10 hours		7%
	11 to 19 hours		3%
	20 or more hours		2%

# Stafford County 2024 Community Survey

Please complete this survey if you are the adult (age 18 or older) in the household who most recently had a birthday (the year of birth does not matter). Your responses are confidential and no identifying information will be shared.

## 1. Please rate each of the following aspects of quality of life in Stafford County.

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
Stafford County as a place to live .....	1	2	3	4	5
Your neighborhood as a place to live .....	1	2	3	4	5
Stafford County as a place to raise children.....	1	2	3	4	5
Stafford County as a place to work.....	1	2	3	4	5
Stafford County as a place to visit.....	1	2	3	4	5
Stafford County as a place to retire.....	1	2	3	4	5
The overall quality of life in Stafford County.....	1	2	3	4	5
Sense of community .....	1	2	3	4	5

## 2. Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Stafford County as a whole.

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
Overall economic health of Stafford County .....	1	2	3	4	5
Overall quality of the transportation system (auto, bicycle, foot, bus) in Stafford County .....	1	2	3	4	5
Overall design or layout of Stafford County's residential and commercial areas (e.g., homes, buildings, streets, parks, etc.) .....	1	2	3	4	5
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Stafford County (water, sewer, storm water, electric/gas, broadband) .....	1	2	3	4	5
Overall feeling of safety in Stafford County.....	1	2	3	4	5
Overall quality of natural environment in Stafford County.....	1	2	3	4	5
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities .....	1	2	3	4	5
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Stafford County .....	1	2	3	4	5
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts .....	1	2	3	4	5
Residents' connection and engagement with their community .....	1	2	3	4	5

## 3. Please indicate how likely or unlikely you are to do each of the following.

	<u>Very likely</u>	<u>Somewhat likely</u>	<u>Somewhat unlikely</u>	<u>Very unlikely</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
Recommend living in Stafford County to someone who asks.....	1	2	3	4	5
Remain in Stafford County for the next five years.....	1	2	3	4	5

## 4. Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel:

	<u>Very safe</u>	<u>Somewhat safe</u>	<u>Neither safe nor unsafe</u>	<u>Somewhat unsafe</u>	<u>Very unsafe</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
In your neighborhood during the day.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
In Stafford County's downtown/commercial area during the day .....	1	2	3	4	5	6
From property crime.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
From violent crime .....	1	2	3	4	5	6
From fire, flood, or other natural disaster.....	1	2	3	4	5	6

## 5. Please rate the job you feel the Stafford County community does at each of the following.

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
Making all residents feel welcome .....	1	2	3	4	5
Attracting people from diverse backgrounds.....	1	2	3	4	5
Valuing/respecting residents from diverse backgrounds .....	1	2	3	4	5
Taking care of vulnerable residents (elderly, disabled, homeless, etc.) .....	1	2	3	4	5

## 6. Please rate each of the following in the Stafford County community.

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
Overall quality of business and service establishments in Stafford County ...	1	2	3	4	5
Variety of business and service establishments in Stafford County.....	1	2	3	4	5
Vibrancy of downtown/commercial area.....	1	2	3	4	5
Employment opportunities.....	1	2	3	4	5
Shopping opportunities .....	1	2	3	4	5
Cost of living in Stafford County.....	1	2	3	4	5
Overall image or reputation of Stafford County .....	1	2	3	4	5

**7. Please also rate each of the following in the Stafford County community.**

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
Traffic flow on major streets .....	1	2	3	4	5
Ease of public parking.....	1	2	3	4	5
Ease of travel by car in Stafford County .....	1	2	3	4	5
Ease of travel by public transportation in Stafford County.....	1	2	3	4	5
Ease of travel by bicycle in Stafford County.....	1	2	3	4	5
Ease of walking in Stafford County .....	1	2	3	4	5
Well-planned residential growth.....	1	2	3	4	5
Well-planned commercial growth.....	1	2	3	4	5
Well-designed neighborhoods.....	1	2	3	4	5
Preservation of the historical or cultural character of the community.....	1	2	3	4	5
Public places where people want to spend time .....	1	2	3	4	5
Variety of housing options .....	1	2	3	4	5
Availability of affordable quality housing.....	1	2	3	4	5
Overall quality of new development in Stafford County .....	1	2	3	4	5
Overall appearance of Stafford County.....	1	2	3	4	5
Cleanliness of Stafford County .....	1	2	3	4	5
Water resources (beaches, lakes, ponds, riverways, etc.) .....	1	2	3	4	5
Air quality .....	1	2	3	4	5
Availability of paths and walking trails .....	1	2	3	4	5
Fitness opportunities (including exercise classes and paths or trails, etc.) ...	1	2	3	4	5
Recreational opportunities.....	1	2	3	4	5
Availability of affordable quality food .....	1	2	3	4	5
Availability of affordable quality health care .....	1	2	3	4	5
Availability of preventive health services.....	1	2	3	4	5
Availability of affordable quality mental health care .....	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities.....	1	2	3	4	5
Community support for the arts .....	1	2	3	4	5
Availability of affordable quality childcare/preschool .....	1	2	3	4	5
K-12 education .....	1	2	3	4	5
Adult educational opportunities.....	1	2	3	4	5
Sense of civic/community pride .....	1	2	3	4	5
Neighborliness of residents in Stafford County.....	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities to participate in social events and activities.....	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities to attend special events and festivals.....	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities to volunteer .....	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities to participate in community matters.....	1	2	3	4	5
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds .....	1	2	3	4	5

**8. Please indicate whether or not you have done each of the following in the last 12 months.**

	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Contacted Stafford County (in-person, phone, email, or web) for help or information.....	1	2
Contacted Stafford County elected officials (in-person, phone, email, or web) to express your opinion..	1	2
Attended a local public meeting (of local elected officials like County Council or County Commissioners, advisory boards, town halls, HOA, neighborhood watch, etc.) .....	1	2
Watched (online or on television) a local public meeting .....	1	2
Volunteered your time to some group/activity in Stafford County.....	1	2
Campaigned or advocated for a local issue, cause, or candidate.....	1	2
Voted in your most recent local election.....	1	2
Used bus, rail, subway, or other public transportation instead of driving.....	1	2
Carpooled with other adults or children instead of driving alone.....	1	2
Walked or biked instead of driving .....	1	2

# Stafford County 2024 Community Survey

## 9. Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Stafford County.

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
Public information services.....	1	2	3	4	5
Economic development.....	1	2	3	4	5
Traffic enforcement.....	1	2	3	4	5
Traffic signal timing.....	1	2	3	4	5
Street repair.....	1	2	3	4	5
Street cleaning.....	1	2	3	4	5
Street lighting.....	1	2	3	4	5
Snow removal.....	1	2	3	4	5
Sidewalk maintenance.....	1	2	3	4	5
Bus or transit services.....	1	2	3	4	5
Land use, planning, and zoning.....	1	2	3	4	5
Code enforcement (weeds, abandoned buildings, etc.).....	1	2	3	4	5
Affordable high-speed internet access.....	1	2	3	4	5
Garbage collection.....	1	2	3	4	5
Drinking water.....	1	2	3	4	5
Sewer services.....	1	2	3	4	5
Storm water management (storm drainage, dams, levees, etc.).....	1	2	3	4	5
Power (electric and/or gas) utility.....	1	2	3	4	5
Utility billing.....	1	2	3	4	5
Police/Sheriff services.....	1	2	3	4	5
Crime prevention.....	1	2	3	4	5
Animal control.....	1	2	3	4	5
Ambulance or emergency medical services.....	1	2	3	4	5
Fire services.....	1	2	3	4	5
Fire prevention and education.....	1	2	3	4	5
Emergency preparedness (services that prepare the community for natural disasters or other emergency situations).....	1	2	3	4	5
Preservation of natural areas (open space, farmlands, and greenbelts).....	1	2	3	4	5
Stafford County open space.....	1	2	3	4	5
Recycling.....	1	2	3	4	5
Yard waste pick-up.....	1	2	3	4	5
County parks.....	1	2	3	4	5
Recreation programs or classes.....	1	2	3	4	5
Recreation centers or facilities.....	1	2	3	4	5
Health services.....	1	2	3	4	5
Public library services.....	1	2	3	4	5
Overall customer service by Stafford County employees (police, receptionists, planners, etc.).....	1	2	3	4	5
Building permits and inspections.....	1	2	3	4	5
Landfill services.....	1	2	3	4	5

## 10. Please rate the following categories of Stafford County government performance.

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
The value of services for the taxes paid to Stafford County.....	1	2	3	4	5
The overall direction that Stafford County is taking.....	1	2	3	4	5
The job Stafford County government does at welcoming resident involvement ..	1	2	3	4	5
Overall confidence in Stafford County government.....	1	2	3	4	5
Generally acting in the best interest of the community.....	1	2	3	4	5
Being honest.....	1	2	3	4	5
Being open and transparent to the public.....	1	2	3	4	5
Informing residents about issues facing the community.....	1	2	3	4	5
Treating all residents fairly.....	1	2	3	4	5
Treating residents with respect.....	1	2	3	4	5

## 11. Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by each of the following?

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
Stafford County.....	1	2	3	4	5
The Federal Government.....	1	2	3	4	5
The State Government.....	1	2	3	4	5

**12. Please rate how important, if at all, you think it is for the Stafford County community to focus on each of the following in the coming two years.**

	<u>Essential</u>	<u>Very important</u>	<u>Somewhat important</u>	<u>Not at all important</u>
Overall economic health of Stafford County .....	1	2	3	4
Overall quality of the transportation system (auto, bicycle, foot, bus) in Stafford County .....	1	2	3	4
Overall design or layout of Stafford County's residential and commercial areas (e.g., homes, buildings, streets, parks, etc.) .....	1	2	3	4
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Stafford County (water, sewer, storm water, electric/gas, broadband) .....	1	2	3	4
Overall feeling of safety in Stafford County .....	1	2	3	4
Overall quality of natural environment in Stafford County .....	1	2	3	4
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities .....	1	2	3	4
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Stafford County .....	1	2	3	4
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts .....	1	2	3	4
Residents' connection and engagement with their community .....	1	2	3	4

**13. How important to you, if at all, are each of these aspects to create/preserve a sense of community?**

	<u>Essential</u>	<u>Very important</u>	<u>Somewhat important</u>	<u>Not at all important</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
Knowing and being friendly with your neighbors .....	1	2	3	4	5
Attending community events .....	1	2	3	4	5
Having informal public spaces to gather such as downtown, parks or community centers .....	1	2	3	4	5
Easy access to amenities such as parks, shopping, etc. ....	1	2	3	4	5
Feeling safe at home and in the community .....	1	2	3	4	5
Having neighborhoods that are easy to walk around .....	1	2	3	4	5
Limiting the speed of residential growth .....	1	2	3	4	5
Limiting the speed of commercial growth .....	1	2	3	4	5

**14. Which of the following have you done in the past 2 years? (Select all that apply)**

- ☐ Voted in a local election
 ☐ Contacted my local government to share my opinion  
☐ Attended a local government public meeting
 ☐ Volunteered to be on a local advisory committee

**15. How much of a priority, if at all, should each of the following be for Stafford County to address in the next two years?**

	<u>High priority</u>	<u>Medium priority</u>	<u>Not a priority</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
Economy (employment, retail, restaurants, downtown, economic development) .....	1	2	3	4
Mobility (roads, parking, traffic flow, pedestrian/bike trails, transportation options) .....	1	2	3	4
Community design (historical preservation, planned residential and commercial growth, neighborhoods) .....	1	2	3	4
Utilities (water, sewer, garbage collection, power, internet) .....	1	2	3	4
Safety (safety, fire, flood, crime prevention, animal control) .....	1	2	3	4
Natural environment (air quality, water resources, recycling, open space, preservation) .....	1	2	3	4
Parks and recreation (recreational opportunities, fitness choices, walking trails, parks, programs/classes) .....	1	2	3	4
Health and wellness (health services, health care, food, mental health) .....	1	2	3	4
Education, arts, and culture (K-12 education, childcare, special events, festivals, arts, library) .....	1	2	3	4

**16. During a typical month, how many hours do you spend volunteering in your local community?**

- ☐ None
 ☐ 4 to 5 hours
 ☐ 11 to 19 hours
 ☐ Don't know  
☐ 1 to 3 hours
 ☐ 6 to 10 hours
 ☐ 20 or more hours

Stafford County 2024 Community Survey

Our last questions are about you and your household.  
Again, all of your responses to this survey are confidential and no identifying information will be shared.

D1. In general, how many times do you:

	Several times a day	Once a day	A few times a week	Every few weeks	Less often or never	Don't know
Access the internet from your home using a computer, laptop, or tablet computer.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
Access the internet from your cell phone .....	1	2	3	4	5	6
Visit social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor, etc. ....	1	2	3	4	5	6
Use or check email .....	1	2	3	4	5	6
Share your opinions online .....	1	2	3	4	5	6
Shop online .....	1	2	3	4	5	6

D2. Please rate your overall health.  
☐ Excellent    ☐ Very good    ☐ Good    ☐ Fair    ☐ Poor

D3. 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 positive    ☐ Somewhat positive    ☐ Neutral    ☐ Somewhat negative    ☐ Very negative

D4. How many years have you lived in Stafford County?  
☐ Less than 2 years  
☐ 2-5 years  
☐ 6-10 years  
☐ 11-20 years  
☐ More than 20 years

D5. Which best describes the building you live in?  
☐ Single-family detached home  
☐ Townhouse or duplex (may share walls but no units above or below you)  
☐ Condominium or apartment (have units above or below you)  
☐ Mobile home  
☐ Other

D6. Do you rent or own your home?  
☐ Rent  
☐ Own

D7. About how much is your monthly housing cost for the place you live (including rent, mortgage payment, property tax, property insurance, and homeowners' association (HOA) fees)?  
☐ Less than \$300    ☐ \$2,500 to \$3,999  
☐ \$300 to \$599    ☐ \$4,000 to \$6,999  
☐ \$600 to \$999    ☐ \$7,000 to \$9,999  
☐ \$1,000 to \$1,499    ☐ \$10,000 or more  
☐ \$1,500 to \$2,499

D8. Do any children 17 or under live in your household?  
☐ No    ☐ Yes

D9. Are you or any other members of your household aged 65 or older?  
☐ No    ☐ Yes

D10. How much do you anticipate your household's total income before taxes will be for the current year? (Please include in your total income money from all sources for all persons living in your household.)  
☐ Less than \$25,000    ☐ \$100,000 to \$149,999  
☐ \$25,000 to \$49,999    ☐ \$150,000 to \$199,999  
☐ \$50,000 to \$74,999    ☐ \$200,000 to \$299,999  
☐ \$75,000 to \$99,999    ☐ \$300,000 or more

D11. Are you of Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or Spanish origin?  
☐ No    ☐ Yes

D12. What is your race? (Mark one or more races to indicate what race you consider yourself to be.)  
☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native  
☐ Asian  
☐ Black or African American  
☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
☐ White  
☐ A race not listed

D13. In which category is your age?  
☐ 18-24 years    ☐ 55-64 years  
☐ 25-34 years    ☐ 65-74 years  
☐ 35-44 years    ☐ 75 years or older  
☐ 45-54 years

D14. What is your gender?  
☐ Woman  
☐ Man  
☐ Identify in another way → go to D14a

D14a. If you identify in another way, how would you describe your gender?  
☐ Agender/I don't identify with any gender  
☐ Genderqueer/gender fluid  
☐ Non-binary  
☐ Transgender man  
☐ Transgender woman  
☐ Two-spirit  
☐ Identify in another way

Thank you! Please return the completed survey in the postage-paid envelope to:  
National Research Center, Inc., PO Box 549, Belle Mead, NJ 08502