THE NCS™

THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY SURVEY™

San Marcos, TX

The National Community Survey

Report of Results
2025

Report by:

National Research Center

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About The NCS™

The National Community Survey™ (The NCS™) report is about the "livability" of San Marcos. 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 NCS was developed by the experts from National Research Center at Polco in partnership with the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and has been administered in hundreds of communities across the United States.

Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS focuses on the livability of San Marcos by categorizing survey questions into the ten main "facets" of community livability shown below, in addition to ratings for quality of life and local governance. These facets have been identified through years of extensive survey research as those that are most impactful to residents' quality of life.

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

The report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 224 residents of the City of San Marcos collected from September 29th, 2025 to November 10th, 2025. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 6.5% for all respondents. Survey results were weighted so that the demographic profile of respondents was representative of the demographic profile of adults in San Marcos.

Reporting Results

For the most part, the percentages presented in this report represent the "percent positive." Most commonly, the percent positive is the combination of the top two most positive response options (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 a "don't know" response is shown in the full set of responses included in the "Complete Data" section; however, these responses have been removed from the analyses presented in the main body of the report. Therefore, the tables and graphs display the responses from respondents who had an opinion about a specific item.

Benchmark Comparisons

Polco's database of comparative resident opinion is comprised of resident perspectives gathered in surveys from over 400 communities whose residents evaluated the same kinds of topics on The NCS. The comparison evaluations include surveys from the past five years. If a jurisdiction has conducted multiple efforts in the past five years, only the most recent survey is included in the benchmark database. Polco 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, San Marcos'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 San Marcos residents. Being rated as "higher" or "lower" than the benchmark means that San Marcos'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 San Marcos's average rating was more than 20 points different when compared to the benchmark.

In addition to these national benchmarks, comparisons were also made to a smaller cohort of communities with characteristics that align more closely to the demographics in San Marcos. A full list of custom benchmark communities and a table including all comparisons to these communities can be found throughout the report and in the Custom Benchmarks tab.

Trends over time

Trend data for San Marcos 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 nine percentage points between the 2022 and 2025 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 San Marcos were eligible to participate in the survey. A list of all households within the zip codes serving San Marcos was purchased from Polco's mailing vendor, based on updated listings from the United States Postal Service.

Since some of the zip codes that serve San Marcos 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 San Marcos 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 four areas. From that list, addresses were randomly selected as survey recipients, with multi-family housing units sampled at a rate of 5:3 compared to single family housing units.

Conducting the Random Sample Survey

The 3,500 randomly selected households received mailings beginning on September 29th, 2025 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 online. The next mailing contained a cover letter with instructions, the survey questionnaire, and a postage-paid return envelope. Both 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 survey was available in English and Spanish. All mailings contained paragraphs in both languages instructing participants on how to access the survey in their preferred language.

About 8% of the 3,500 mailed invitations were returned because the household address was vacant or the postal service was unable to deliver the survey as addressed. Of the remaining 3,219 households that received the invitations to participate, 225 completed the survey, providing an overall response rate of 7%. The response rate was calculated using AAPOR's response rate #2 for mailed surveys of unnamed persons.[1]

It is customary to describe the precision of estimates 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 quantifies the sampling error or imprecision of the survey results based on the total number of responses received. This is because *some* residents' opinions are relied on to estimate *all* residents' opinions. The margin of error for the City of San Marcos survey is no greater than plus or minus 6.5% around any given percent reported for all respondents (225 completed surveys).

Conducting the Open Participation Survey

In addition to the randomly selected "probability sample" of households, a link to an online open-participation survey was publicized by the City of San Marcos. 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 San Marcos and also a question about where they heard about the survey.

The open-participation survey was open to all city residents and became available on October 27th, 2025. The survey remained open for two weeks and 1,095 responses were received. The data presented in the following report excludes the open participation survey data, but the online report includes a tab which provides the complete open participation results.

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 survey datasets were analyzed using all or some of a combination of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), R, Python, and Tableau.

The demographics of the survey respondents were compared to those found in the 2020 Census and 2023 American Community Survey estimates for adults in the City of San Marcos. 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.[2] The results of the weighting scheme for the probability sample are presented in the following table.

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

		Unweighted	Weighted	Target [4]
Age	18-34	**20%**	**61%**	**61%**
	35-54	**21%**	**19%**	**19%**
	55+	**59%**	**20%**	**20%**
Area	Adam	**10%**	**17%**	**17%**
	Baker	**27%**	**29%**	**29%**
	Charlie	**43%**	**28%**	**28%**
	David	**20%**	**26%**	**26%**
Hispanic origin	No	**78%**	**61%**	**61%**
	Yes	**22%**	**39%**	**39%**
Housing tenure	Own	**63%**	**30%**	**30%**
	Rent	**38%**	**70%**	**70%**
Housing type	Attached	**37%**	**66%**	**66%**
	Detached	**63%**	**34%**	**34%**
Race & Hispanic origin	Not white alone	**33%**	**52%**	**52%**
	White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	**67%**	**48%**	**48%**
Sex	Man	**41%**	**46%**	**46%**
	Woman	**59%**	**54%**	**54%**
Sex/age	Man 18-34	**6%**	**28%**	**28%**
	Man 35-54	**9%**	**9%**	**9%**
	Man 55+	**25%**	**9%**	**9%**
	Woman 18-34	**14%**	**33%**	**33%**
	Woman 35-54	**12%**	**10%**	**10%**
	Woman 55+	**34%**	**11%**	**11%**

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, and can include non-response error, coverage error, recall bias and social desirability bias.

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 that survey responders. For general resident surveys, where the results are meant to be generalized to the entire adult population living in households, the mailing lists based on the Delivery Sequence File from the United States Post Office may exclude certain types of housing units, such as those in multi-family buildings where mail is addressed to a named resident at the address rather than to a specific unit or where residents only receive their mail at a post office box and the geographic location of a residence cannot be determined, there may be a *coverage error*, although for most locations, this is minimal. Respondents may not perfectly remember their experiences in the past year (such as participation in social or civic events, for example), and for some survey items, they may answer in ways they think cast their responses in a more favorable light (*recall bias* and *social desirability bias*).

Survey Validity

See the Polco Knowledge Base article on survey validity at https://blog.polco.us/polco-knowledgebase/margin-of-error-and-confidence-level-in-survey-results

Contact

The City of San Marcos funded this research. Please contact Lauren Surley of the City of San Marcos at LSurley@sanmarcostx.gov if you have any questions about the survey.

1. See AAPOR's Standard Definitions for more information at https://aapor.org/standards-and-ethics/standard-definitions/
2. Pasek, J. (2014). ANES Weighting Algorithm. Retrieved from https://surveyinsights.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Full-anesrake-paper.pdf
3. Targets come from the 2020 Census and 2023 American Community Survey

Key Findings

Community Strengths

San Marcos is recognized as a desirable place to live, visit, and raise families.
- About 8 in 10 residents positively rated San Marcos as a place to live (79% excellent or good), an increase of 9% since 2022.
- San Marcos as a place to visit also saw a 12-point improvement, with about 9 in 10 (86%) participants responding favorably.
- Nearly 7 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to San Marcos as a place to raise children (68%), a substantial improvement from 53% in 2022.
- About 6 in 10 considered San Marcos an excellent or good place to retire, marking a 16-point increase.
- A majority (84%) would recommend living in San Marcos to someone who asked.

Results indicate that residents feel safe across the community.
- About 9 in 10 respondents reported feeling safe in their neighborhood and the downtown/commercial area during the day.
- Roughly 7 in 10 participants indicated they felt safe from both property and violent crime.
- Ratings for animal control (66%) and ambulance/emergency medical services (85%) rose significantly since 2022.
- While fire services overall were rated positively by 9 in 10 respondents, ratings for fire prevention and education declined from 69% in 2022 to 60% in 2025.
- About 6 in 10 residents provided excellent or good reviews to police services and crime prevention.

Civic engagement, pride, and government services show significant gains.
- Residents' connection and engagement with their community climbed 17 points to 63% excellent or good.
- Ratings for the sense of civic/community pride in San Marcos also improved by 14 points (reaching 68% positive).
- Overall customer service by city employees increased by 15 points to 84% positive in 2025.
- Public information services also improved, rising from 51% in 2022 to 63%

Focus Areas

Mobility experiences vary across modes, reflecting both gains and declines
- Fewer than half of residents rated the overall quality of the transportation system positively (37%), though consistent with national benchmarks and stable since 2022.
- Relatively smaller proportions positively rated walking (39%), travel by public transportation (25%), and travel by bicycle (30%), similar to previous results.
- Ratings for bus or transit services declined 17 points to 40%.
- Conversely, satisfaction with traffic flow on major streets (35%) and ease of travel by car (57%) increased significantly since 2022.

Affordability and housing continue to present challenges
- Only about 2 in 10 participants positively rated the availability of affordable quality housing (22%), and about 3 in 10 for the variety of housing options (32%), though both were similar to the benchmarks.
- Cost of living was viewed favorably by fewer than 3 in 10 residents (29%), remaining consistent with 2022 results.
- About 3 in 10 gave positive reviews to the availability of affordable quality childcare/preschool.

Mixed reviews for economy-related items may merit additional research.
- The overall economic health and economic development in San Marcos garnered positive ratings from about 4 in 10 residents.
- Similarly, employment opportunities received lower marks, with only about 3 in 10 rating them positively.
- However, some economy-centered ratings increased significantly since 2022, including:
    - The vibrancy of the downtown/commercial area (from 59% in 2022 to 72% in 2025)
    - San Marcos as a place to visit (from 73% to 86%)

Other Notable Results (Custom Questions)

- When asked how often they leave San Marcos to visit certain businesses, residents most frequently reported going elsewhere for grocery shopping (e.g., H-E-B Plus!, Trader Joe's, Whole Foods). Additionally, about 8 in 10 residents indicated that they felt the City should actively pursue attracting more grocery stores (81% yes).
- Residents also prioritized attracting additional family entertainment options (83% yes), casual dine-in restaurants (72%), upscale/fine dining (61%), and personal services such as salons, spas, and fitness centers (60%).
- Overall, residents showed no clear consensus on whether paid parking would be an effective tool for managing parking challenges.
- Participants most often relied on the City's website, social media, and word-of-mouth to get information about San Marcos government, activities, events, and services.
- Most respondents (85%) felt it was essential or very important for the City to address the impacts of river recreation on natural resources.

Areas of Greatest Change

Of the evaluative questions included on both the 2022 and 2025survey iterations, 82 were statistically similar to previous results. Upward trends were seen in 34 items, while 6 ratings decreased since 2022. The most significant of those trends are listed below.

Increases

- Storm water management (storm drainage, dams, levees, etc.) (+32%)
- Ease of travel by car in San Marcos (+20%)
- Sewer services (+19%)

Decreases

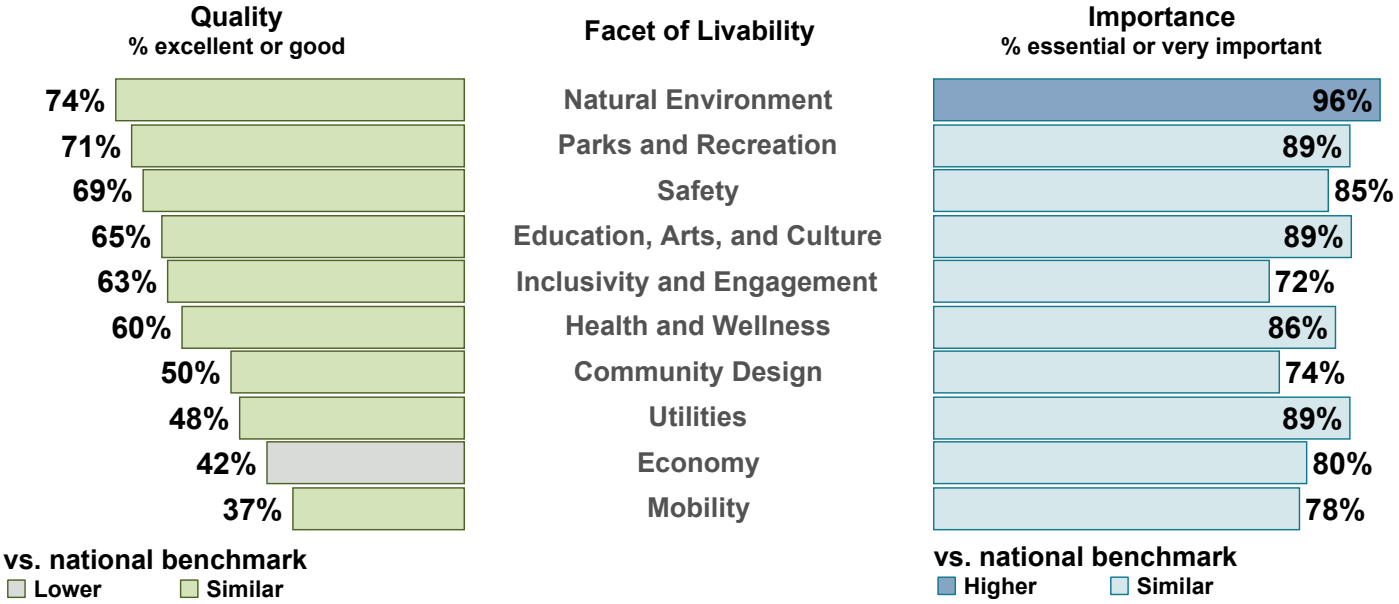
- Bus or transit services (-17%)
- Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities (-14%)
- Local government treating residents with respect (-11%)

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.

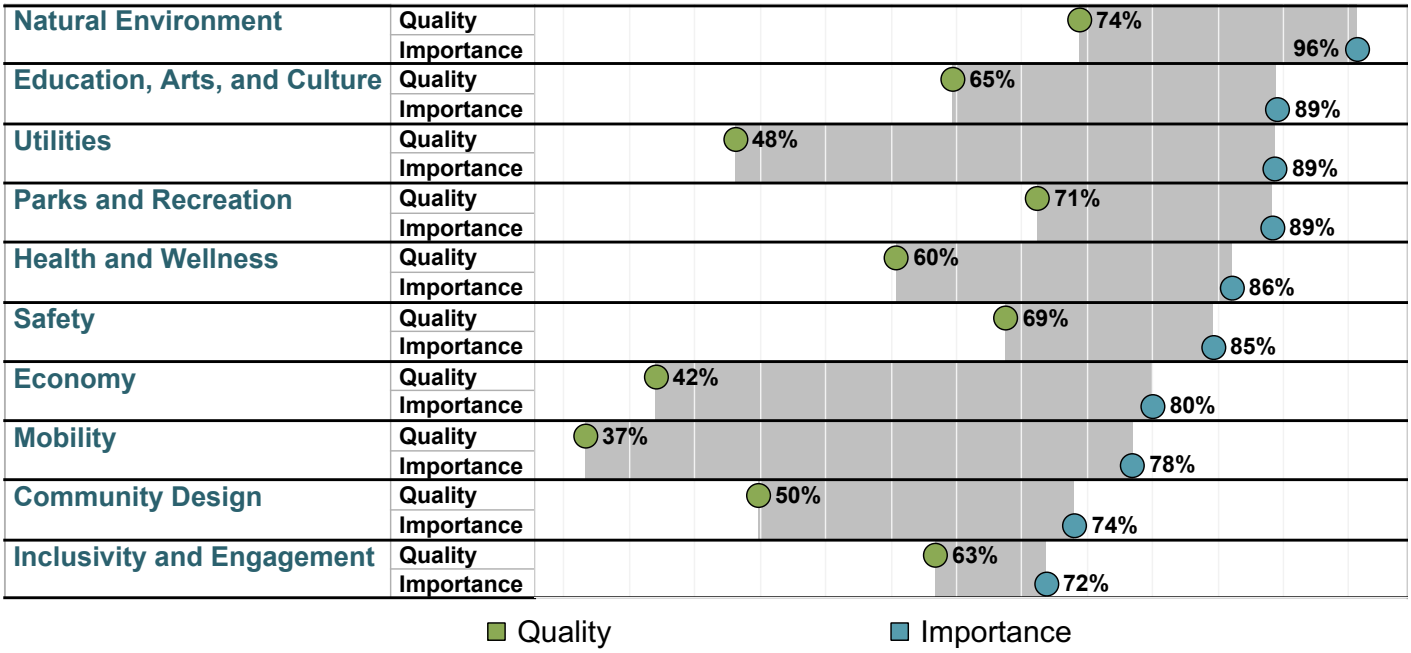
Quality and Importance by the Numbers

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 than communities across the country (the national benchmark).



Quality/Importance Gap Analysis

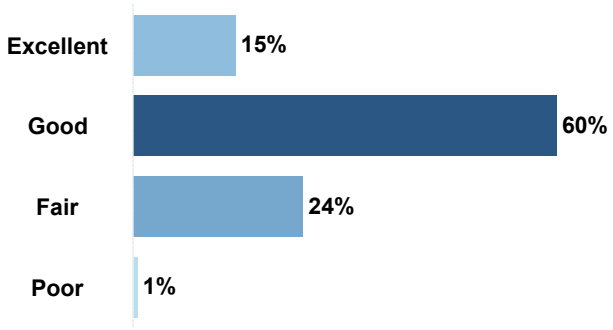
The gap analysis chart below shows the same data as above; however, this chart more clearly illustrates the comparative differences in quality and importance ratings for each facet, as well as the absolute ratings for each.



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 San Marcos, 2025



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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[8]	vs. custom benchmark[9]
San Marcos as a place to live	69%		79% ↗	Similar	Similar
The overall quality of life	66%		75% ↗	Similar	Similar

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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[8]	vs. custom benchmark[9]
Recommend living in San Marcos to someone who asks	76%		84%	Similar	Similar
Remain in San Marcos for the next five years	73%		72%	Lower	Similar

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

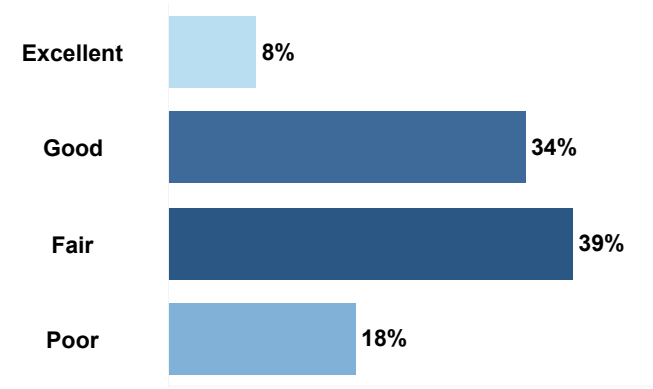
	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[8]	vs. custom benchmark[9]
Overall image or reputation	62%		69%	Similar	Similar

8. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.
9. Comparison to the custom benchmark is shown. A description of the custom benchmark cohort can be found in the About section of the report. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Governance

Strong local governments deliver results that meet residents' needs, use resources effectively, and respond to both current and future community priorities.

Overall confidence in San Marcos government, 2025



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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[10]	vs. custom benchmark[11]
Public information services	51%		63% ↗	Similar	Similar
Overall customer service by San Marcos employees (receptionists, planners, etc.)	68%		84% ↗	Similar	Similar

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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark	vs. custom benchmark
The value of services for the taxes paid to San Marcos	39%		54% ↗	Similar	Similar
The overall direction that San Marcos is taking	45%		46%	Similar	Similar
The job San Marcos government does at welcoming resident involvement	47%		45%	Similar	Similar
Overall confidence in San Marcos government	38%		43%	Similar	Similar
Generally acting in the best interest of the community	37%		40%	Similar	Similar
Being honest	33%		35%	Lower	Similar

Being open and transparent to the public	35% → 34%	Similar	Similar
Informing residents about issues facing the community	42% → 39%	Similar	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	44% → 39%	Lower	Similar
Treating residents with respect	62% → 51% ↘	Similar	Similar

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

	2021 → 2023 → 2025		
Attended a local public meeting	21% → 20%	Similar	Similar
Contacted San Marcos elected officials to express your opinion	14% → 17%	Similar	Similar
Contacted the City of San Marcos for help or information	48% → 55%	Similar	Similar
Watched a local public meeting	25% → 25%	Similar	Similar

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

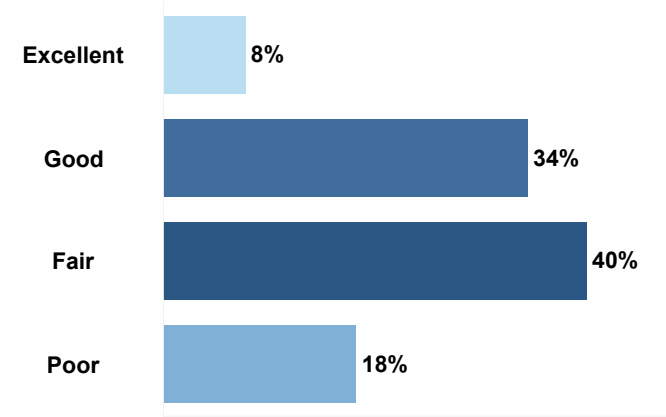
	2021 → 2023 → 2025		
The City of San Marcos	63% → 71%	Similar	Similar
The State of Texas	• 24%		
The Federal Government	31% → 21% ↘	Lower	Lower

10. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.
11. Comparison to the custom benchmark is shown. A description of the custom benchmark cohort can be found in the About section of the report. 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 San Marcos, 2025



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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[12]	vs. custom benchmark[13]
Overall economic health	41%		42%	Lower	Similar

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

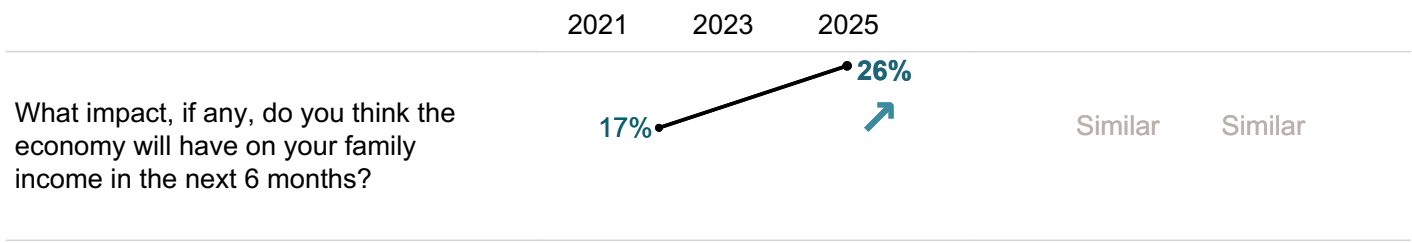
	2021	2023	2025		
San Marcos as a place to work	46%		52%	Similar	Similar
San Marcos as a place to visit	73%		86% ↗	Higher	Higher

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

	2021	2023	2025		
Economic development	39%		39%	Similar	Similar

Please rate each of the following in the San Marcos 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)

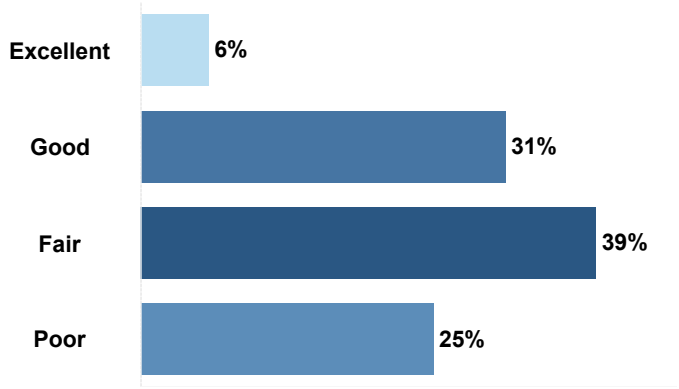


12. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.
13. Comparison to the custom benchmark is shown. A description of the custom benchmark cohort can be found in the About section of the report. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Mobility

The ability of residents to move about their community with ease plays an important role in the overall quality of life for everyone who lives, works, and spends time there.

Overall quality of the transportation system in San Marcos, 2025



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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[14]	vs. custom benchmark[15]
Overall quality of the transportation system	35%		37%	Similar	Similar

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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[14]	vs. custom benchmark[15]
Traffic flow on major streets	18%		35% ↗	Lower	Lower
Ease of public parking	25%		34% ↗	Lower	Lower
Ease of travel by car	37%		57% ↗	Similar	Similar
Ease of travel by public transportation	29%		25%	Similar	Similar
Ease of travel by bicycle	34%		30%	Lower	Lower
Ease of walking	42%		39%	Lower	Lower

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

	2021	2023	2025		
Used public transportation instead of driving	31%		25%	Similar	Similar
Carpooled with other adults or children instead of driving alone	49%		58%	Higher	Higher
Walked or biked instead of driving	56%		56%	Similar	Similar

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

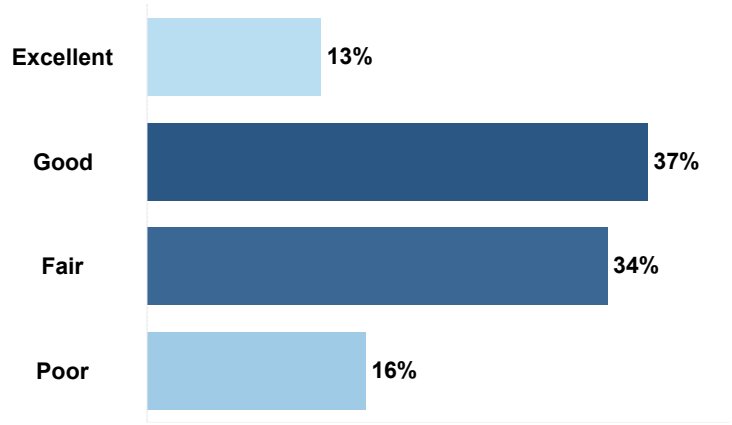
	2021	2023	2025		
Traffic enforcement	32%		47% ↗	Similar	Similar
Traffic signal timing	38%		41%	Similar	Similar
Street repair	26%		33%	Similar	Similar
Street cleaning	52%		59%	Similar	Similar
Street lighting	47%		58% ↗	Similar	Similar
Sidewalk maintenance	45%		48%	Similar	Similar
Bus or transit services	57%		40% ↘	Similar	Similar

14. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.
15. Comparison to the custom benchmark is shown. A description of the custom benchmark cohort can be found in the About section of the report. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

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 supporting development that suits residents' needs.

Overall design or layout of San Marcos's residential and commercial areas, 2025



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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[16]	vs. custom benchmark[17]
Overall design or layout of residential and commercial areas	38%		50% ↗	Similar	Similar

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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark	vs. custom benchmark
Your neighborhood as a place to live	68%		77%	Similar	Similar

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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark	vs. custom benchmark
Well-planned residential growth	22%		33% ↗	Similar	Similar
Well-planned commercial growth	22%		34% ↗	Similar	Similar
Well-designed neighborhoods	29%		38%	Similar	Similar
Preservation of the historical or cultural character of the community	69%		61%	Similar	Similar

Public places where people want to spend time	65% → 64%	Similar	Similar
Variety of housing options	34% → 32%	Similar	Similar
Availability of affordable quality housing	18% → 22%	Similar	Similar
Overall quality of new development	34% → 42%	Similar	Similar
Overall appearance	57% → 59%	Similar	Similar

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

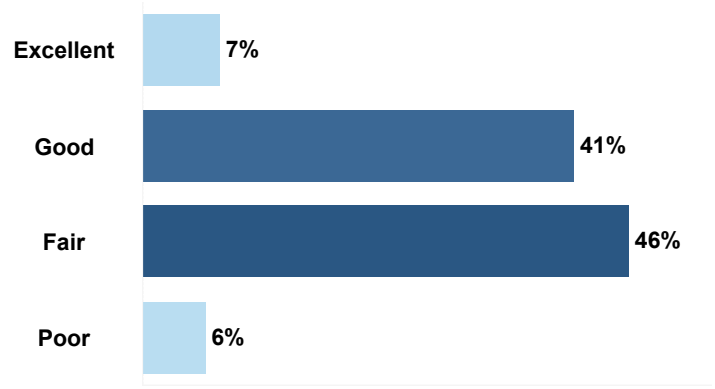
	2021 2023 2025		
Land use, planning and zoning	23% → 37% ↗	Similar	Similar
Code enforcement	36% → 43%	Similar	Similar

16. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.
17. Comparison to the custom benchmark is shown. A description of the custom benchmark cohort can be found in the About section of the report. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Utilities

Access to essential services like water, gas, electricity, and internet is crucial for safeguarding the physical health, economic stability, and overall well-being of the communities they support.

Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in San Marcos, 2025



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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[18]	vs. custom benchmark[19]
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure	37%		48% ↗	Similar	Similar

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

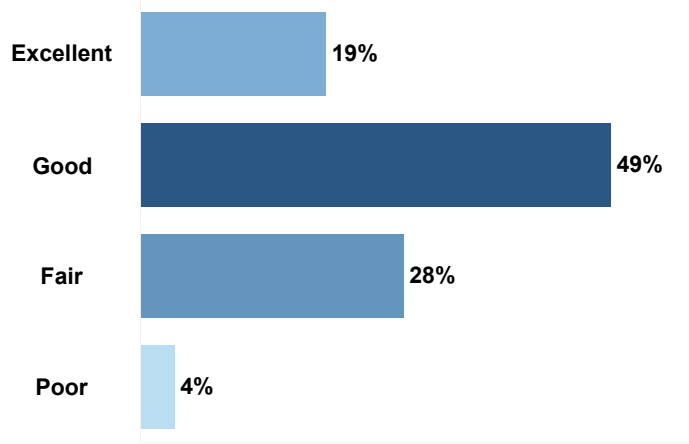
	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[18]	vs. custom benchmark[19]
Affordable high-speed internet access	43%		51%	Similar	Similar
Garbage collection	76%		86% ↗	Similar	Similar
Drinking water	48%		59% ↗	Similar	Similar
Sewer services	62%		80% ↗	Similar	Similar
Storm water management	54%		86% ↗	Similar	Similar
Power (electric and/or gas) utility	62%		73% ↗	Similar	Similar
Utility billing	58%		63%	Similar	Similar

18. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.
19. Comparison to the custom benchmark is shown. A description of the custom benchmark cohort can be found in the About section of the report. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Safety

Public safety is one of the most important responsibilities of local governments, as every resident deserves to feel safe and secure both in their neighborhoods and across the wider community. The provision of strong, reliable safety services is essential to ensuring a high quality of life.

Overall feeling of safety in San Marcos, 2025



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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[20]	vs. custom benchmark[21]
Overall feeling of safety	61%		69%	Similar	Similar

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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[20]	vs. custom benchmark[21]
In your neighborhood during the day	89%		92%	Similar	Similar
In San Marcos's downtown/commercial area during the day	85%		91%	Similar	Similar
From property crime	64%		71%	Similar	Similar
From violent crime	69%		67%	Similar	Similar
From fire, flood, or other natural disaster	62%		67%	Lower	Lower

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

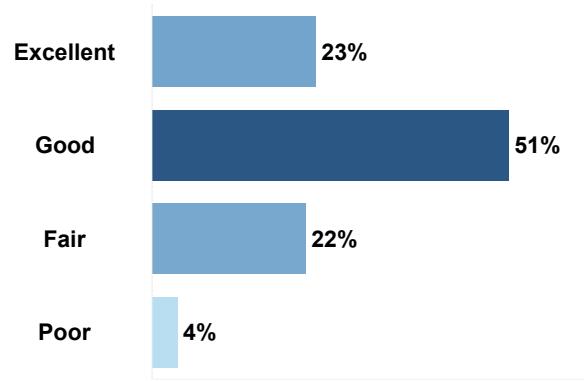
	2021	2023	2025		
Police services	52%		59%	Lower	Lower
Crime prevention	57%		57%	Similar	Similar
Animal control	49%		66% ↗	Similar	Similar
Ambulance or emergency medical services	71%		85% ↗	Similar	Similar
Fire services	89%		90%	Similar	Similar
Fire prevention and education	69%		60% ↘	Lower	Similar
Emergency preparedness	58%		57%	Similar	Similar

20. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.
21. Comparison to the custom benchmark is shown. A description of the custom benchmark cohort can be found in the About section of the report. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Natural Environment

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

Overall quality of natural environment in San Marcos, 2025



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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[22]	vs. custom benchmark[23]
Overall quality of natural environment	85%		74% ↘	Similar	Similar

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

	2021	2023	2025		
Cleanliness	58%		62%	Similar	Similar
Water resources (riverways, tributaries, creeks, etc.)	80%		79%	Higher	Higher
Air quality	64%		64%	Similar	Similar

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

	2021	2023	2025		
Preservation of natural areas	59%		62%	Similar	Similar
San Marcos open space	57%		64%	Similar	Similar
Recycling	65%		68%	Similar	Similar
Yard waste pick-up	65%		74%	Similar	Similar

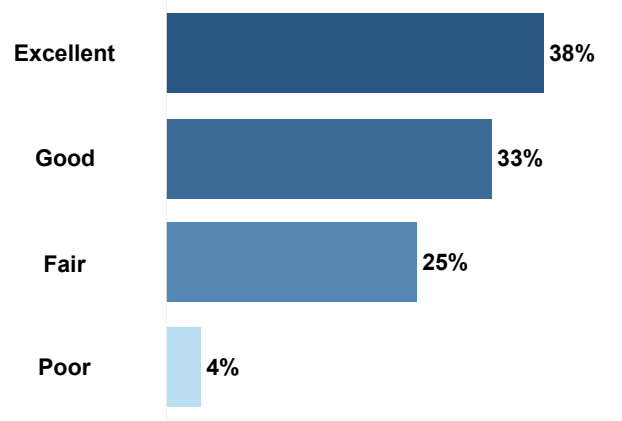
22. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.
23. Comparison to the custom benchmark is shown. A description of the custom benchmark cohort can be found in the About section of the repor..

Parks and Recreation

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

- National Recreation and Park Association

Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities, 2025



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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[24]	vs. custom benchmark[25]
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities	85%		71% ↘	Similar	Similar

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

	2021	2023	2025		
Availability of paths and walking trails	68%		67%	Similar	Similar
Fitness opportunities	64%		66%	Similar	Similar
Recreational opportunities	67%		66%	Similar	Similar

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

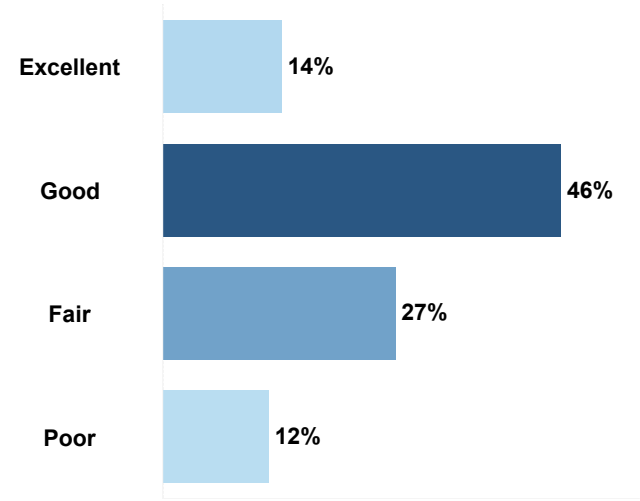
	2021	2023	2025		
City parks	78%		84%	Similar	Similar
Recreation programs or classes	62%		78% ↗	Similar	Higher
Recreation centers or facilities	62%		77% ↗	Similar	Higher

24. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.
25. Comparison to the custom benchmark is shown. A description of the custom benchmark cohort can be found in the About section of the repor..

Health and Wellness

The features and amenities of a community directly influence residents' health and well-being, shaping their overall quality of life.

Overall health and wellness opportunities in San Marcos, 2025



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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[26]	vs. custom benchmark[27]
Overall health and wellness opportunities	59%		60%	Similar	Similar

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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[26]	vs. custom benchmark[27]
Availability of affordable quality food	58%		50%	Similar	Similar
Availability of affordable quality health care	34%		42%	Lower	Similar
Availability of preventive health services	41%		44%	Lower	Similar
Availability of affordable quality mental health care	27%		33%	Similar	Similar

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

	2021	2023	2025		
Health services	47%		62% ↗	Similar	Similar

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

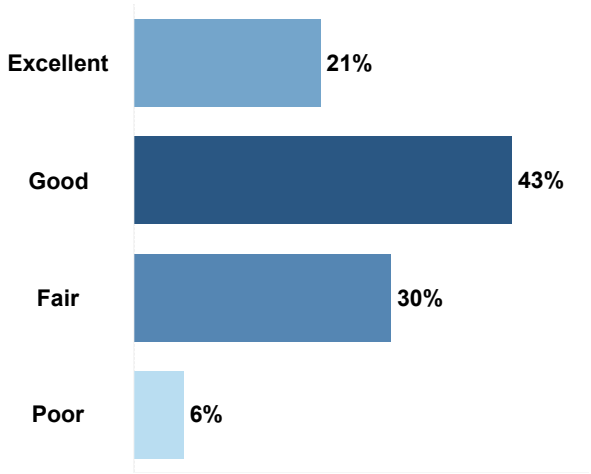
	2021	2023	2025		
Please rate your overall health.	63%		66%	Similar	Similar

26. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.
27. Comparison to the custom benchmark is shown. A description of the custom benchmark cohort can be found in the About section of the report. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Education, Arts, and Culture

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

Overall opportunities for education, culture and the arts, 2025



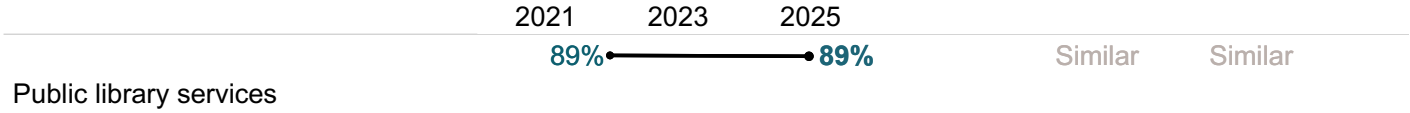
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to San Marcos as a whole.
(% excellent or good)

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[28]	vs. custom benchmark[29]
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	69%		65%	Similar	Similar

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

	2021	2023	2025		
Opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities	59%		67%	Similar	Higher
Community support for the arts	70%		70%	Similar	Higher
Availability of affordable quality childcare/preschool	32%		30%	Lower	Similar
K-12 education	40%		36%	Much lower	Lower
Adult educational opportunities	54%		63% ↗	Similar	Similar
Opportunities to attend special events and festivals	67%		69%	Similar	Similar

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

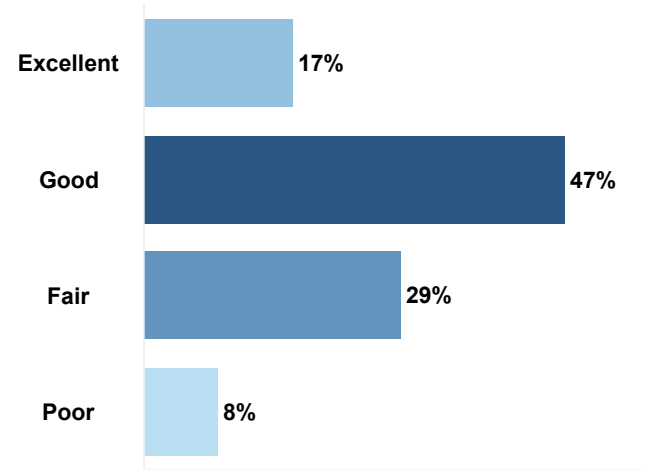


28. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.
29. Comparison to the custom benchmark is shown. A description of the custom benchmark cohort can be found in the About section of the report. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

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.

Residents' connection and engagement with their community, 2025



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

	2021	2023	2025	vs. national benchmark[30]	vs. custom benchmark[31]
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	46%		63% ↗	Similar	Similar

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

	2021	2023	2025		
San Marcos as a place to raise children	53%		68% ↗	Lower	Similar
San Marcos as a place to retire	44%		60% ↗	Similar	Similar
Sense of community	57%		64%	Similar	Similar

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

	2021	2023	2025		
Making all residents feel welcome	68%		62%	Similar	Similar
Attracting people from diverse backgrounds	68%		76%	Similar	Higher

Valuing/respecting residents from diverse backgrounds	66% → 71%	Similar	Similar
Taking care of vulnerable residents	43% → 47%	Similar	Similar

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

	2021 → 2025		
Sense of civic/community pride	54% → 68% ↗	Similar	Similar
Neighborliness of residents	50% → 57%	Similar	Similar
Opportunities to participate in social events and activities	58% → 66%	Similar	Similar
Opportunities to volunteer	58% → 70% ↗	Similar	Similar
Opportunities to participate in community matters	59% → 63%	Similar	Similar
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	66% → 62%	Similar	Similar

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

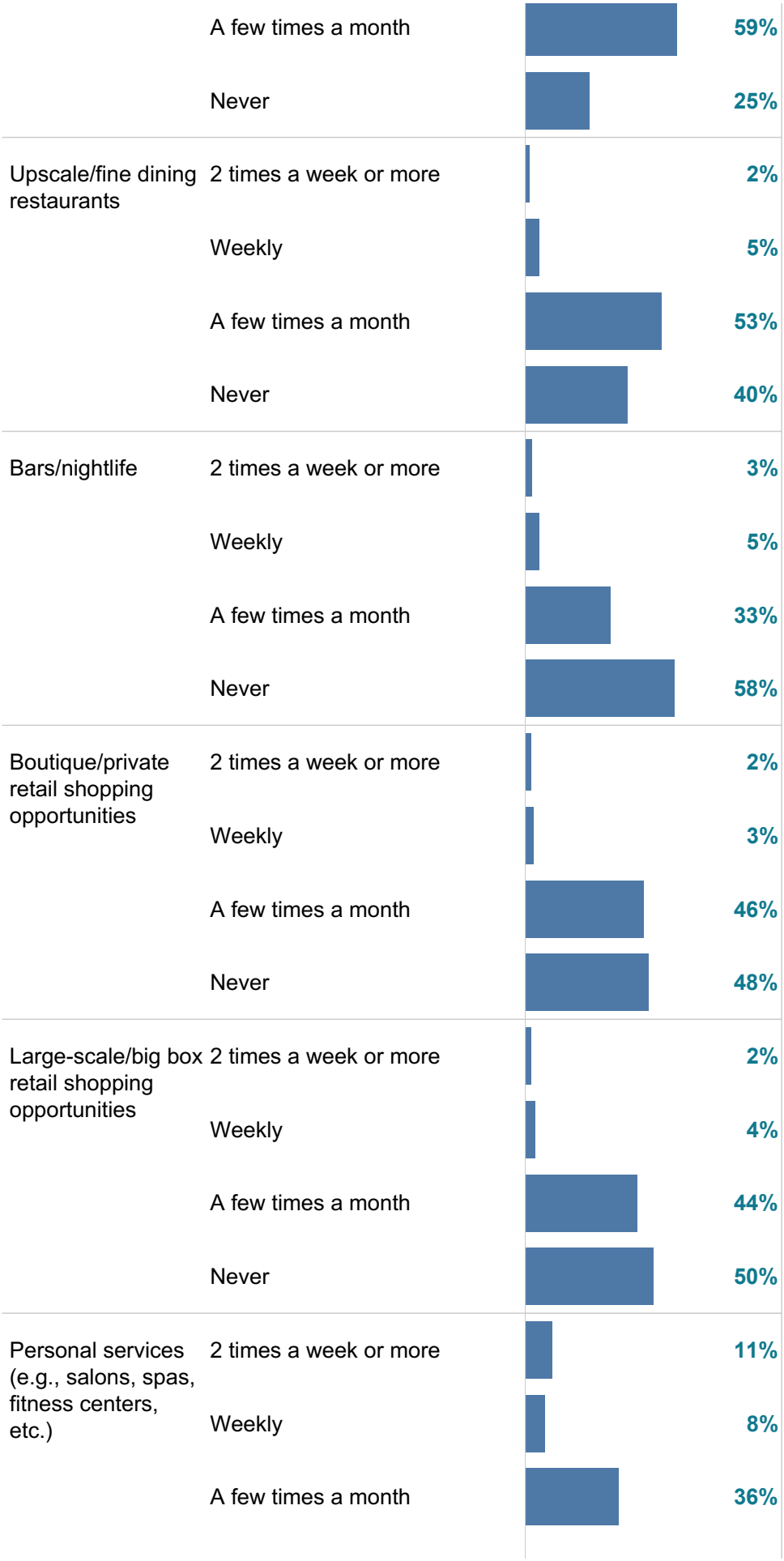
	2021 → 2025		
Campaigned or advocated for a local issue, cause, or candidate	17% → 28% ↗	Higher	Similar

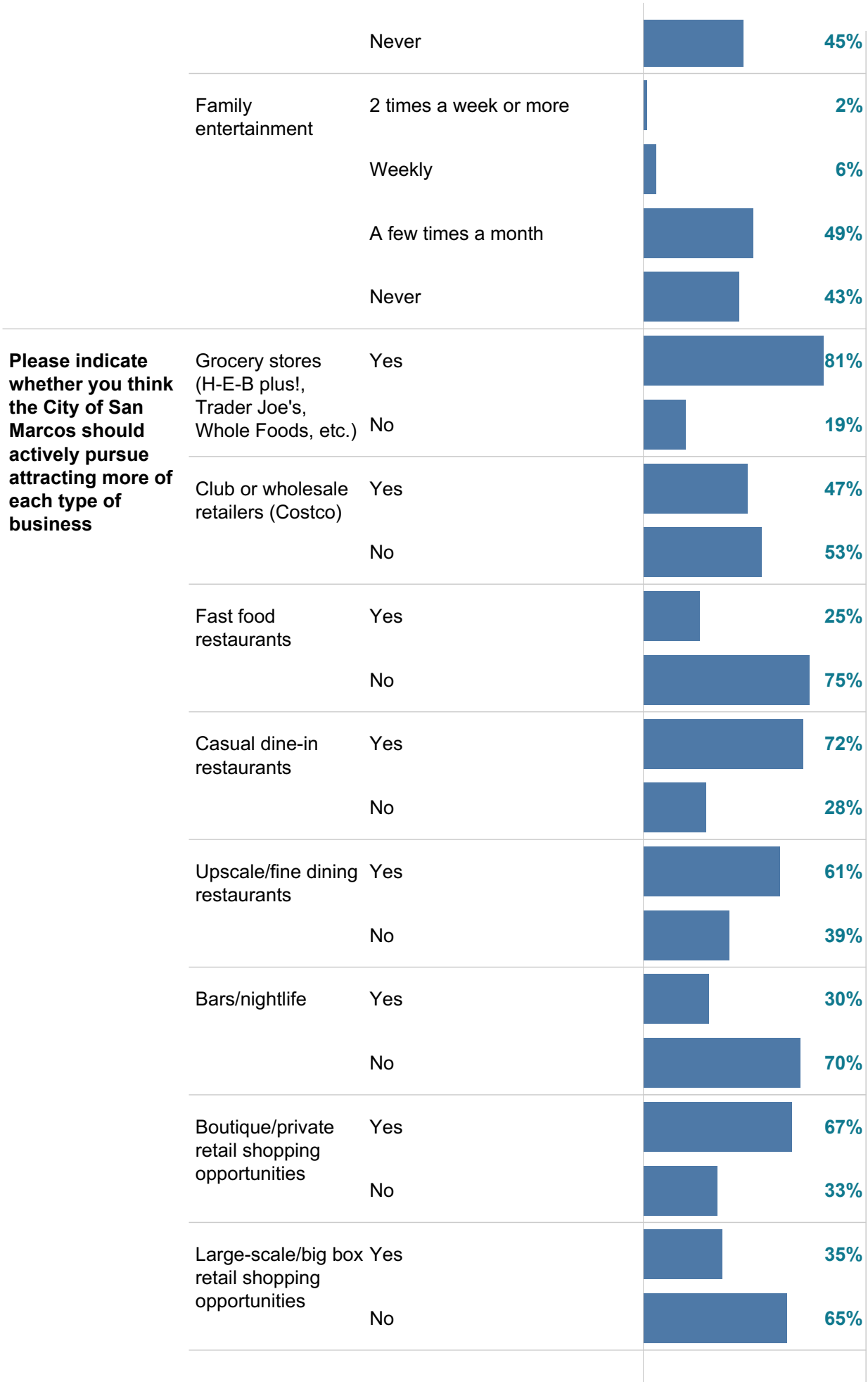
30. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.
31. Comparison to the custom benchmark is shown. A description of the custom benchmark cohort can be found in the About section of the report. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Custom Questions

Below are the complete set of responses to each custom question on the survey. By default, “don’t know” responses are excluded.

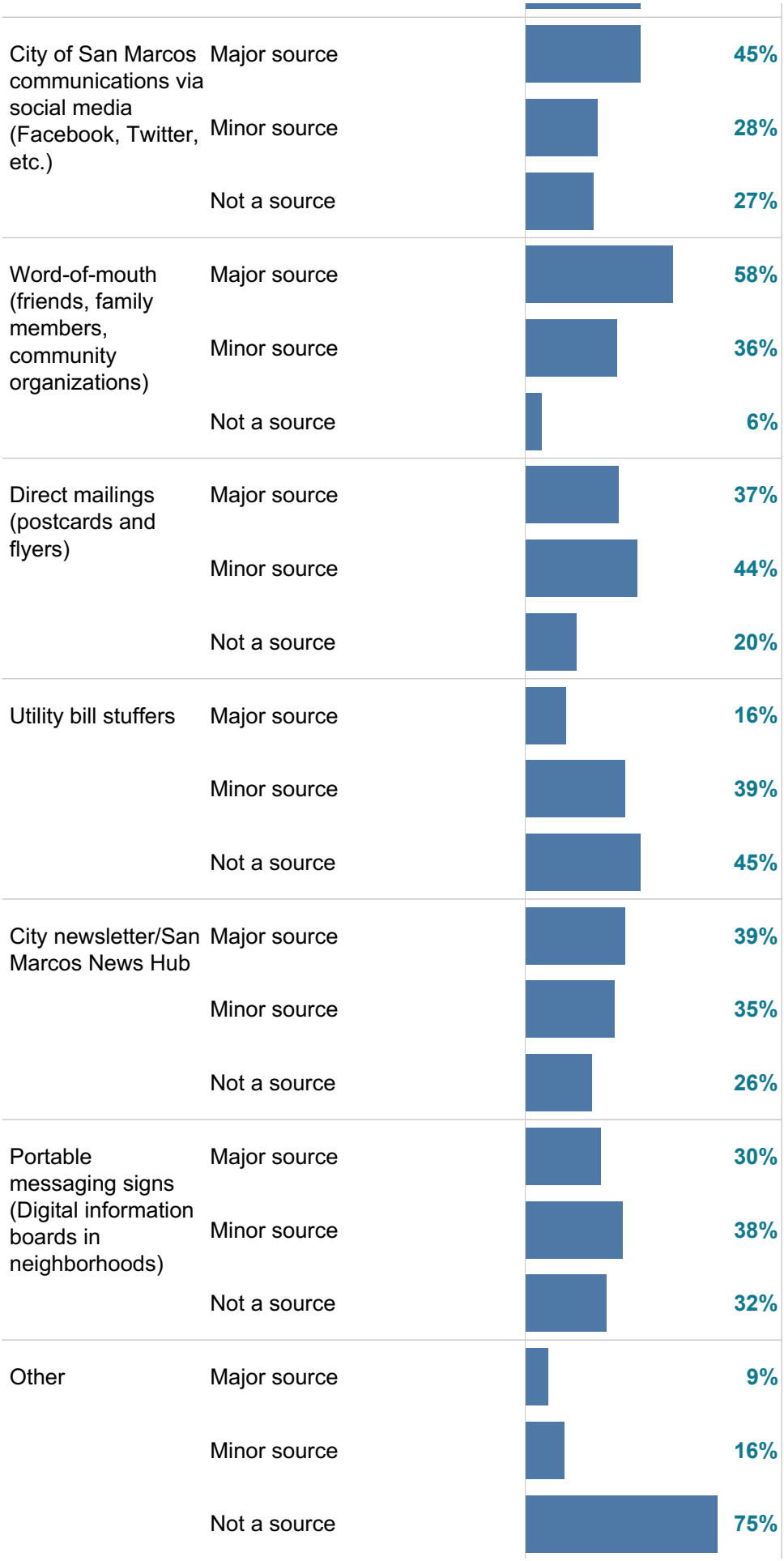
Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by each of the following?	The State of Texas	Excellent	8%
		Good	16%
		Fair	32%
		Poor	43%
Please indicate how often, if at all, do you leave San Marcos to frequent each of the following types of businesses in nearby communities	Grocery stores (H-E-B plus!, Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, etc.)	2 times a week or more	17%
		Weekly	25%
		A few times a month	32%
		Never	26%
	Club or wholesale retailers (Costco)	2 times a week or more	5%
		Weekly	8%
		A few times a month	29%
		Never	57%
	Fast food restaurants	2 times a week or more	7%
		Weekly	15%
		A few times a month	34%
		Never	45%
	Casual dine-in restaurants	2 times a week or more	4%
		Weekly	11%


A few times a month 59%
Never 25%
Upscale/fine dining restaurants
2 times a week or more 2%
Weekly 5%
A few times a month 53%
Never 40%
Bars/nightlife
2 times a week or more 3%
Weekly 5%
A few times a month 33%
Never 58%
Boutique/private retail shopping opportunities
2 times a week or more 2%
Weekly 3%
A few times a month 46%
Never 48%
Large-scale/big box retail shopping opportunities
2 times a week or more 2%
Weekly 4%
A few times a month 44%
Never 50%
Personal services (e.g., salons, spas, fitness centers, etc.)
2 times a week or more 11%
Weekly 8%
A few times a month 36%


Never 45%
Family entertainment
2 times a week or more 2%
Weekly 6%
A few times a month 49%
Never 43%
Please indicate whether you think the City of San Marcos should actively pursue attracting more of each type of business
Grocery stores (H-E-B plus!, Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, etc.)
Yes 81%
No 19%
Club or wholesale retailers (Costco)
Yes 47%
No 53%
Fast food restaurants
Yes 25%
No 75%
Casual dine-in restaurants
Yes 72%
No 28%
Upscale/fine dining restaurants
Yes 61%
No 39%
Bars/nightlife
Yes 30%
No 70%
Boutique/private retail shopping opportunities
Yes 67%
No 33%
Large-scale/big box retail shopping opportunities
Yes 35%
No 65%

	Personal services (e.g., salons, spas, fitness centers, etc.)	Yes	60%
		No	40%
	Family entertainment	Yes	83%
		No	17%
The City is considering introducing paid parking in the downtown area. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements	Paid parking would help address parking availability downtown	Strongly support	10%
		Somewhat support	25%
		Somewhat oppose	23%
		Strongly oppose	42%
	Paid parking would help make parking spaces available more often, so more people can access businesses downtown	Strongly support	15%
		Somewhat support	21%
		Somewhat oppose	27%
		Strongly oppose	37%
	Paid parking would discourage long-term use of high-demand spaces near businesses	Strongly support	24%
		Somewhat support	27%
		Somewhat oppose	20%
		Strongly oppose	30%
	Paid parking would provide a necessary source of revenue for the City	Strongly support	15%
		Somewhat support	27%
		Somewhat oppose	24%
		Strongly oppose	34%
	Paid parking would negatively impact downtown businesses	Strongly support	35%
		Somewhat support	34%

		Somewhat oppose	19%
		Strongly oppose	12%
	Overall, paid parking would be an effective tool for managing downtown parking concerns	Strongly support	10%
		Somewhat support	26%
		Somewhat oppose	30%
		Strongly oppose	34%
How much of a source, if at all, are each of the following for you for getting information about the City of San Marcos government and its activities, events, and services?	City website (www.sanmarcostx.gov)	Major source	46%
		Minor source	37%
		Not a source	16%
	Regional media outlets (Austin or San Antonio tv, radio, newspapers, etc.)	Major source	34%
		Minor source	41%
		Not a source	25%
	Government access channel (Spectrum 10 or Grande 16)	Major source	9%
		Minor source	23%
		Not a source	69%
	San Marcos Council meetings and other public meetings	Major source	15%
		Minor source	40%
		Not a source	46%
	Talking with San Marcos officials and/or San Marcos employees	Major source	28%
		Minor source	27%
		Not a source	45%


City of San Marcos communications via social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
Major source 45%
Minor source 28%
Not a source 27%
Word-of-mouth (friends, family members, community organizations)
Major source 58%
Minor source 36%
Not a source 6%
Direct mailings (postcards and flyers)
Major source 37%
Minor source 44%
Not a source 20%
Utility bill stuffers
Major source 16%
Minor source 39%
Not a source 45%
City newsletter/San Marcos News Hub
Major source 39%
Minor source 35%
Not a source 26%
Portable messaging signs (Digital information boards in neighborhoods)
Major source 30%
Minor source 38%
Not a source 32%
Other
Major source 9%
Minor source 16%
Not a source 75%

When thinking about ways to engage with the City of San Marcos, what is your preferred way to participate?	Online platforms		41%
	Community events		28%
	Virtual meetings		13%
	In-person Town Halls		10%
	Neighborhood meetings		4%
	Other		4%
How important, if at all, is it for the City of San Marcos to focus on assessing/ addressing the impacts of river recreation on our city's natural resources?	Essential		63%
	Very important		22%
	Somewhat important		14%
	Not at all important		2%