



2023 Resident Opinion Survey
Prepared for The City of Cambridge, MA

November 1, 2023
Polity Research Consulting LLC

Methodology

Polity Research Consulting conducted a random telephone survey among 400 adult residents of the city of Cambridge, Massachusetts between September 18th and September 23rd 2023. The sample was constructed to represent the adult population of the City—and was comprised of both landline and cell-phone households. The margin of error on the full, 400-member sample is $\pm 4.90\%$ at the mid-range of the 95% confidence interval. That is, when conducting 100 such surveys, 95 of them will yield results that fall—at worst—4.9 points on either side of a given percentage. When looking at smaller segments of the sample, the margins of error will increase.

Executive Summary Of Key Findings

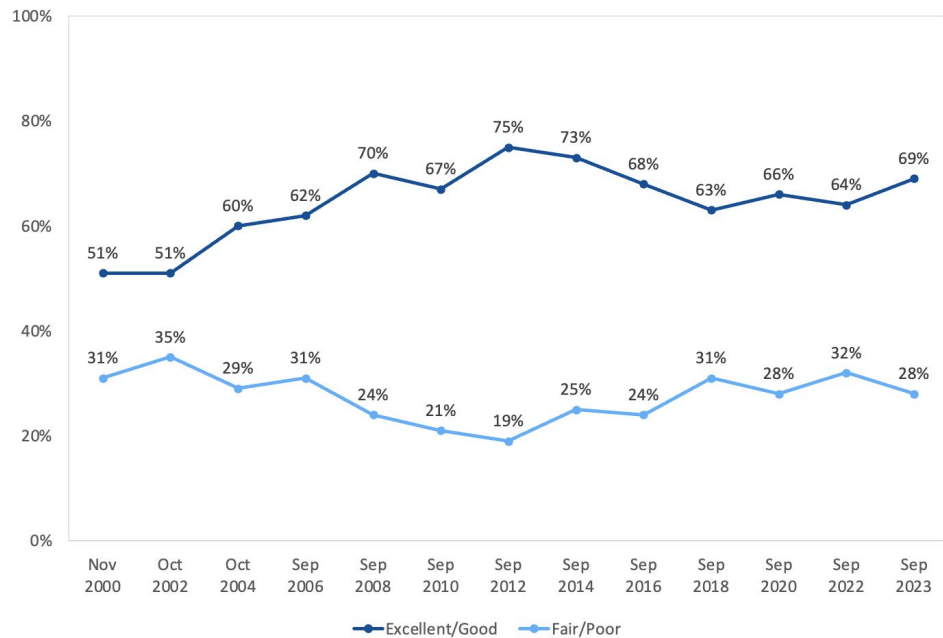
All in all, the results of this survey point to a Cambridge resident population that is more positive about most City-related issues than we saw in 2022. Some of the highlights are:

- 'Performance of City government' got the highest "excellent" rating (22%) in the history of the survey program—dating back to 2000. Moreover, almost seven in ten residents give either an “excellent” or “good” rating of City government performance (69%);
 - Most other key metrics are up—some significantly higher. For example, "Cambridge as a place to live" saw "excellent" ratings soar from 48% in 2022 to 56% today;
 - Preliminary "Gap Analysis" shows that the areas needing greatest attention are: "providing market housing that is affordable" (2.01 mean score gap between 'importance' and 'performance'); affordable housing (i.e. subsidized) (1.61 mean score gap between 'importance' and 'performance'); and the 'quality of the transportation system' (1.13 mean score gap between 'importance' and 'performance');
 - Not surprisingly, 'affordable' housing' still dominates the list as the most important issue the city needs to focus on (39% of open-ended responses). Public transportation is second at 7%;
 - Educational opportunities did show a drop in performance—going from 43% "excellent" in 2022 to 33% today—*although the wording did differ on the two surveys*);
 - Efforts to mitigate climate change and address equity issues also show relatively low "excellent" scores (9% and 16%, respectively);
 - The Fire and Library departments both show impressive increases in "excellent" ratings;
 - City of Cambridge communications are —*by far*—seen as the most "valuable" information source by respondents (53% "very valuable", 32% "somewhat valuable");
 - Respondents most want the City to focus on public transportation options—like buses and subway (although the City's control over this issue is limited).
- What follows is a question-by-question analysis of the full survey results.

City Performance Ratings

As the chart shows, close to seven in ten residents (69%) give the city either “excellent” or “good” marks on the overall performance of city government in Cambridge—a 5-point increase from the 2022 score. Moreover, 22% now assign “excellent” ratings to overall performance—the highest level in the history of this survey program.

Overall performance of City government here in Cambridge

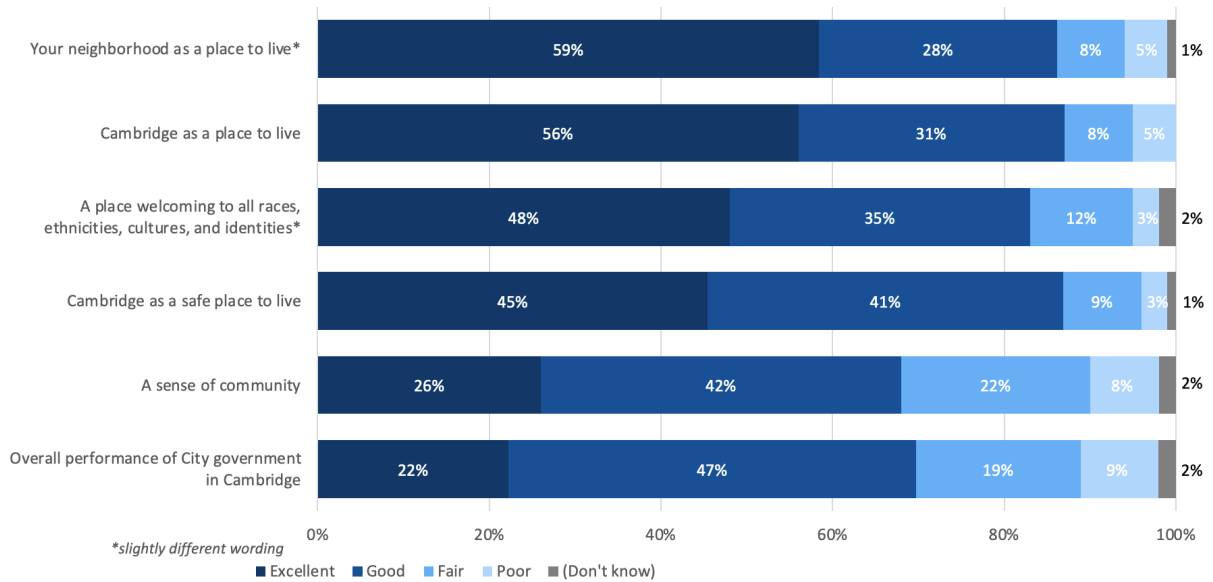


Demographically, the tendency to assign “excellent” ratings to the city comes most often from: men, people aged 18-34, students, lower-income residents, residents with high school educations, renters, and residents of the West and East areas of Cambridge. “Poor” ratings are most likely to come from residents earning under \$50-\$100,000 a year, Hispanic residents, those with some college education, and longer-term residents.

City Attribute Ratings

Respondents were also asked to rate a range of city attributes. As the chart shows, almost six in ten respondents assign “excellent” ratings to their **neighborhood being a safe place to live** (59%), followed by **the city overall as a place to live** (56% excellent); the **city as a welcoming place** (48% excellent); **Cambridge as a safe place to live** (45% excellent); **a sense of community** (26% excellent—up five points from 2022); and **overall performance of the city government** (22% excellent—up one point from 2022).

Please rate the following on a scale of excellent, good, fair, or poor.

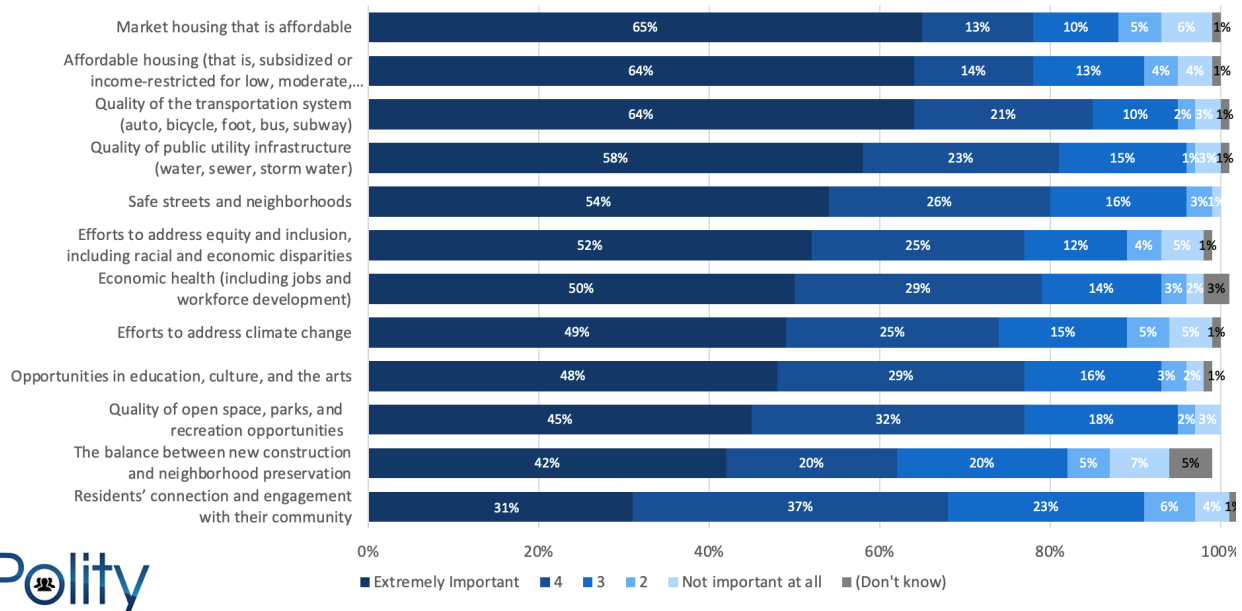


Importance/Performance Gap Analysis

This year, respondents were asked to rate a listing of 12 aspects of the community on two separate scales—first a “1” to “5” importance scale and next a “1” to “5” performance scale. We then analyzed the mean score results to construct a Gap Analysis—showing areas that the City performs well on and areas that need improvements.

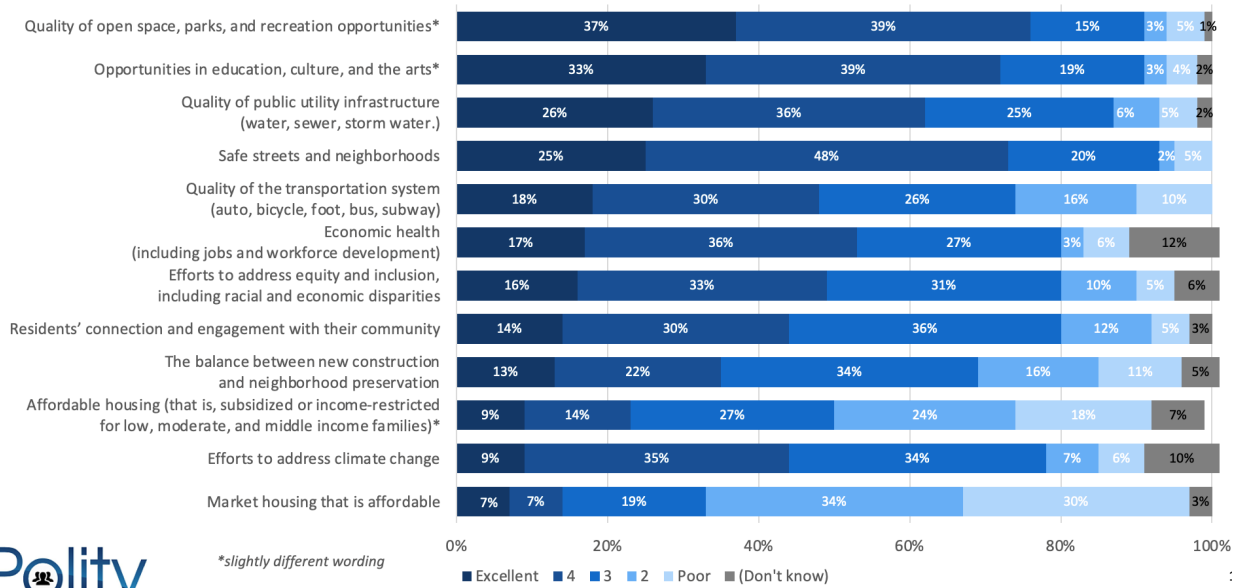
First, here are the overall results to the *importance* ratings. As the chart shows, **both affordable housing** measures garner the highest percentages of “*extremely important*” ratings (65% “market” and 64% “subsidized”). Interestingly, the **quality of the transportation system** (at 64% “extremely” important) is next in line of importance. The importance list continues with: **quality of public utility infrastructure** (58% “extremely” important); **safe streets and neighborhoods** (54%); **efforts to address equity and inclusion** (52%); **economic health** (50%); **efforts to address climate change** (49%); **opportunities in education/culture/arts** (48%); **quality of open space/recreation** (45%); **construction/preservation balance** (42%); **connection and engagement with the community** (31%).

How important is it for the Cambridge community to focus on each of the following in the coming two years:



Next, here are the overall results to the *performance* ratings. As the chart shows, **quality of open space/recreation** tops the performance list—with 37% assigning “excellent” ratings to the City. **Opportunities in education/culture/arts** finishes second on the list (33% “excellent” ratings). Next in succession on City performance are: **quality of public utility infrastructure** (26%); **safe streets and neighborhoods** (25%); **quality of transportation system** (18%); **economic health** (17%); **efforts to address equity and inclusion** (16%); **engagement with the community** (14%); **construction/preservation balance** (13%); **subsidized affordable housing** (9%); **efforts to address climate change** (9%); **market affordable housing** (7%).

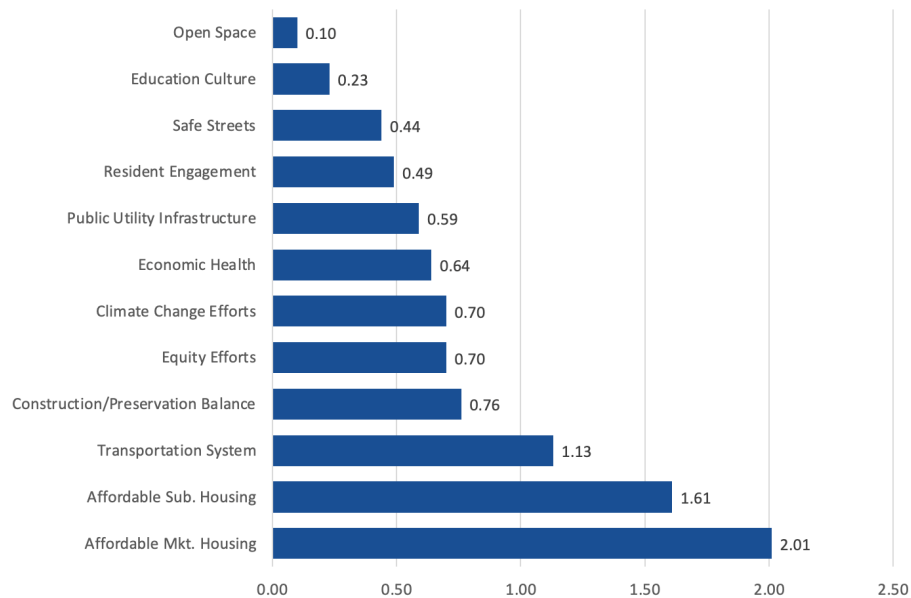
Please rate how well the City of Cambridge performs on each of these.



Next, we calculated the mean scores of all the importance/performance measures and matched them up with one another. We find that (not surprisingly) the two affordable housing measures show the biggest negative gaps between importance and performance (2.01 “market”, 1.61 “subsidized”). Interestingly, transportation system issues show the next biggest gap (1.13), followed by construction/preservation balance (0.76), equity efforts (0.70), climate change efforts (0.70); economic health (0.64); public utility infrastructure (0.59); resident engagement (0.49); safe streets (0.44); education/culture/arts (0.23); open space (0.10).

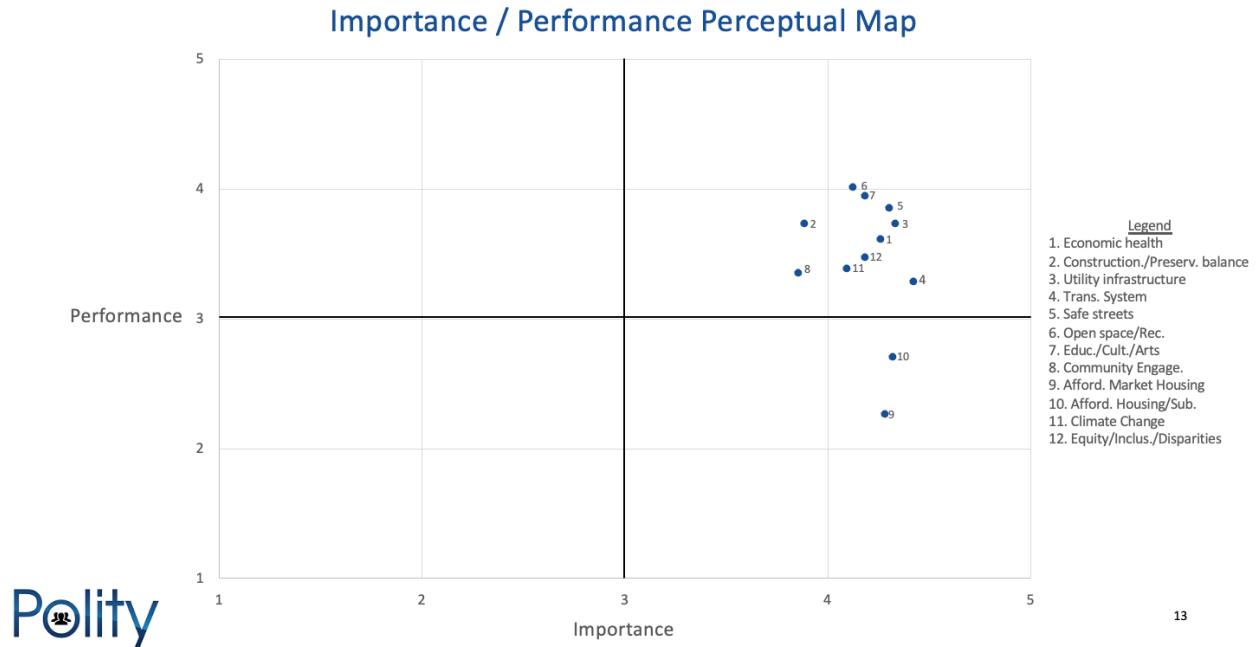
The bottom line is that the community aspects at the *top* of the Gap Analysis “pyramid” are relatively important to residents *and* the City is performing well on them. Conversely, those on the bottom of the pyramid are relatively important to residents and the City is performing less well on them.

Importance/Performance Gap Ranking (higher number=greater attention needed)



Another way of looking at this issue is by use of a “perceptual map”—which plots the relative mean scores of the community aspects on a matrix of importance and performance. Aspects in the upper right-hand quadrant of the map represent areas where the City is performing well on important areas. Aspects in the lower right-hand quadrant represent those where the City performance needs improvement on issues that are important to residents.

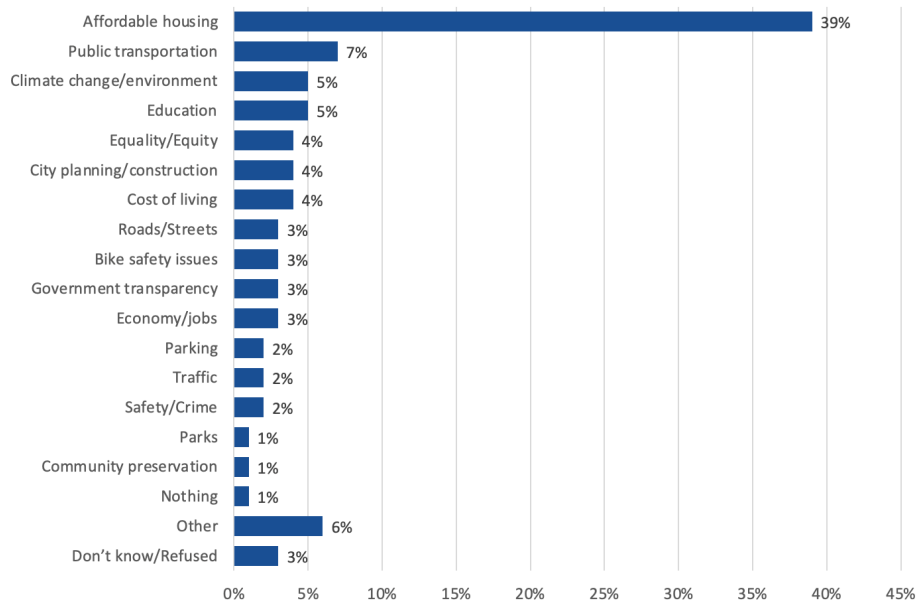
Again, the affordable housing issues are clearly in need of improved performance by the City—while transportation issues are also trending in a negative direction.



Most Important Issues Needing City Attention

Respondents were also asked to tell us—in their own words—what they think is the single most important issue that the City of Cambridge needs to focus on in the next *two* years. As the chart shows, affordable housing again tops the list—with almost four in ten of all responses (39%). Following far down the list are: public transportation (7%); climate change/environment (5%); education (5%); equality/equity (4%); city planning/construction (4%) and cost of living (4%).

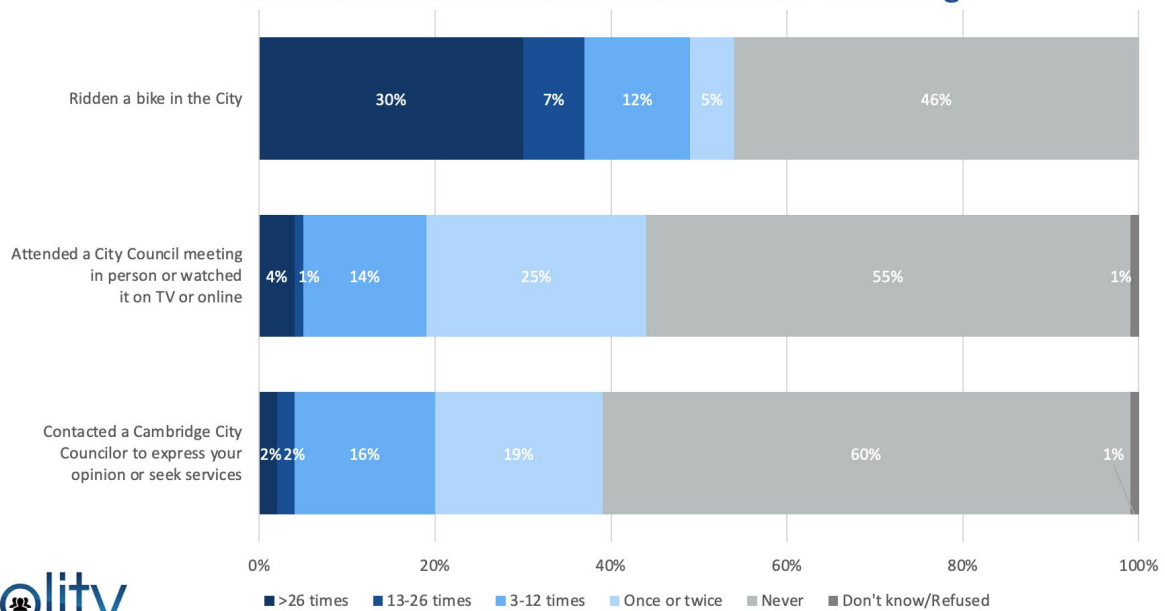
What is the *single most important* issue the City of Cambridge should focus on in the coming two years?



Frequency Of Activities

Respondents were also asked to tell us how many times they had participated in activities in the city. As the chart shows, the percentage of residents who have **ridden a bike** more than 26 times stands at 30%—about the same as we saw in 2022 (29%). The percentage who say they have "never" **attended a City Council meeting** is now at 55%—exactly the same as we saw in 2022. And, the percentage of residents who have **never** contacted a Cambridge City Councilor is 60%.

In the last 12 months, about how many times, if ever, have you or another household member done the following:

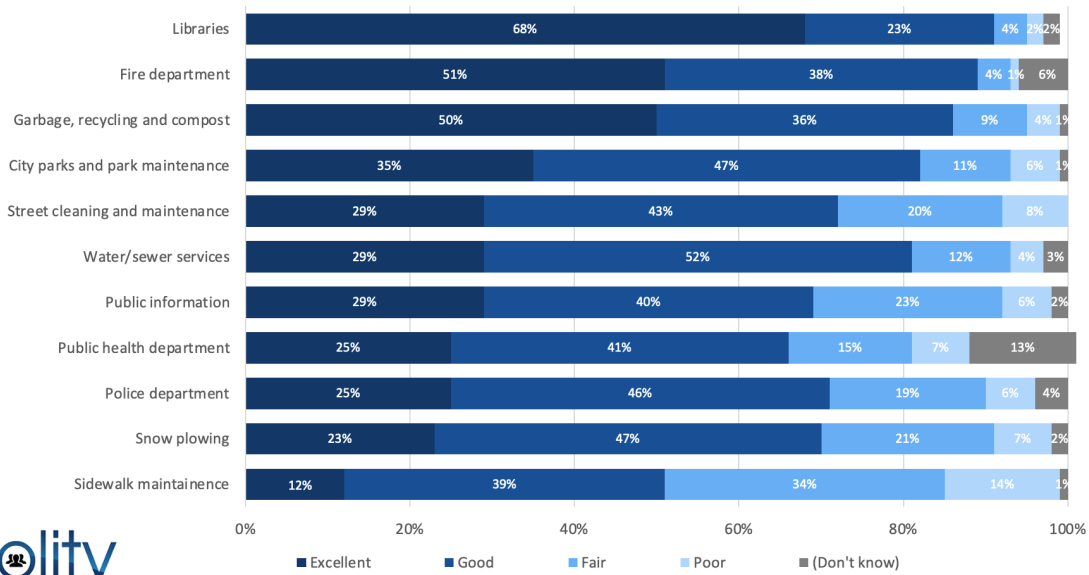


Ratings Of Specific City Services

Respondents were also asked to rate a range of City services on a scale of “excellent” to “poor”. Since the 2022 survey, notable *improvements* in “excellent” scores occurred on: **library services** (up 11 points); **fire department services** (up 9 points); **public information** (up 4 points) and **water/sewer services** (up 3 points).

In terms of overall “excellent” scores, the top six were: library (68%); Fire Department services (51%); garbage, compost and recycling (50%) and city parks and maintenance (35%).

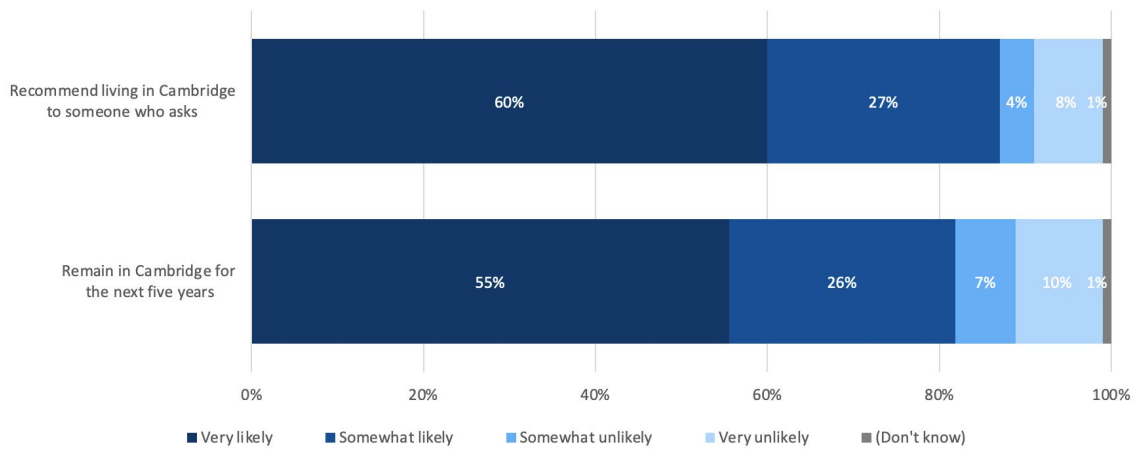
Now, I'd like to read you a number of services provided by the City of Cambridge. For each one, please rate the *quality* of these services on a scale of excellent, good, fair or poor.



Resident Intentions And Recommendations

This year, we asked respondents two questions that reflect their level of pride in the City of Cambridge. First, we gauged the likelihood that residents would “recommend” living in the city to someone who asked them. As the table shows, fully six in ten residents (60%) are “very likely” to make that recommendation. Also, almost the same number (55%) say they are “very likely” to “remain in Cambridge for the next five years”.

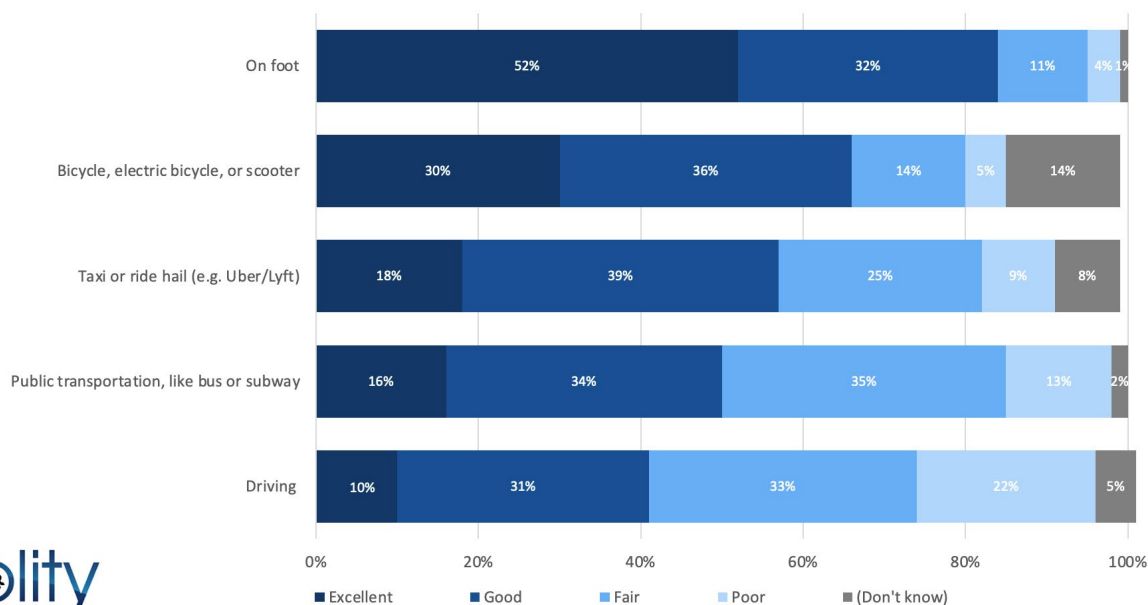
Please tell me how likely you’d be to do each of the following—
very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely.



Transportation Options

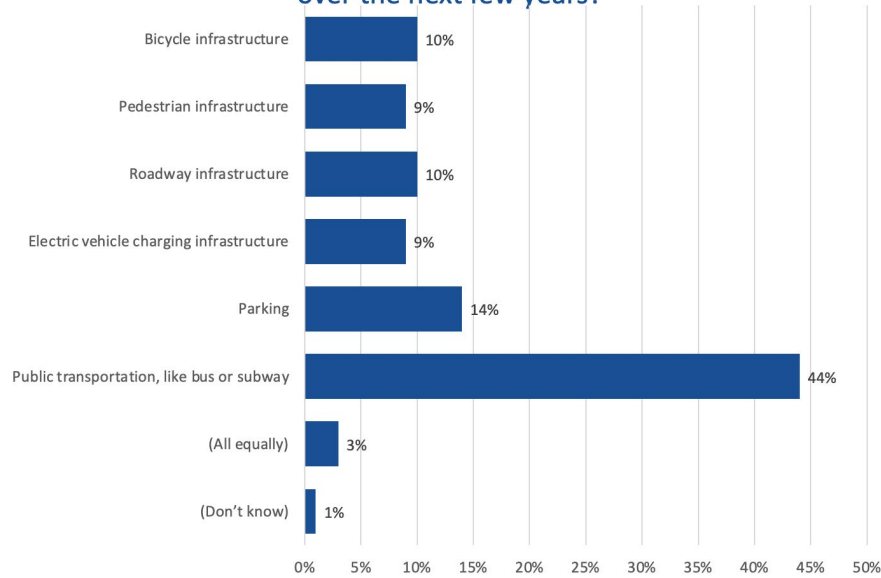
As the following chart indicates, Cambridge residents clearly see walking as the best way to get around the city—with more than half rating that option as “excellent” (52%). Bicycle riding is seen as the next best option (30% “excellent”), followed by Taxi/Uber (18%), public bus or subway (16%) and driving (10%).

On a scale of excellent, good, fair or poor, please rate the ease of getting around the city for each of the following transportation options.



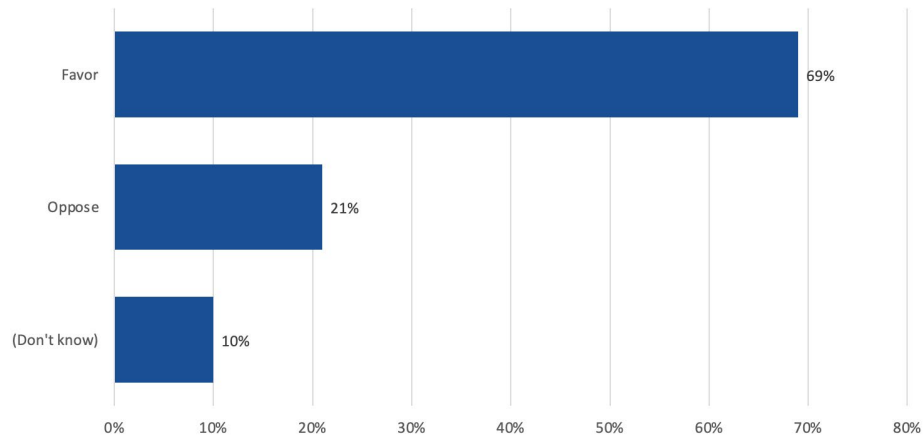
And, when asked which single transportation option is the most important for the City to improve—public transportation far and away tops the list at 44%. Parking comes in second place at 14%, followed by bicycle infrastructure at 10% and roadway infrastructure at 10%.

As you continue to think about transportation options to get around Cambridge, which of the following do you think is the *single most important option* for the city to focus on improving over the next few years?



Lasty on transportation-related issues, we found overwhelming support (69%) for making *permanent* the City policy that replaced towing with a \$50 fine with regard to street cleaning.

As you may know, the City implemented a street cleaning pilot program that replaced towing associated with street cleaning with a \$50 fine. Thinking about the current level of cleanliness of our streets, do you favor or oppose this pilot program becoming permanent?

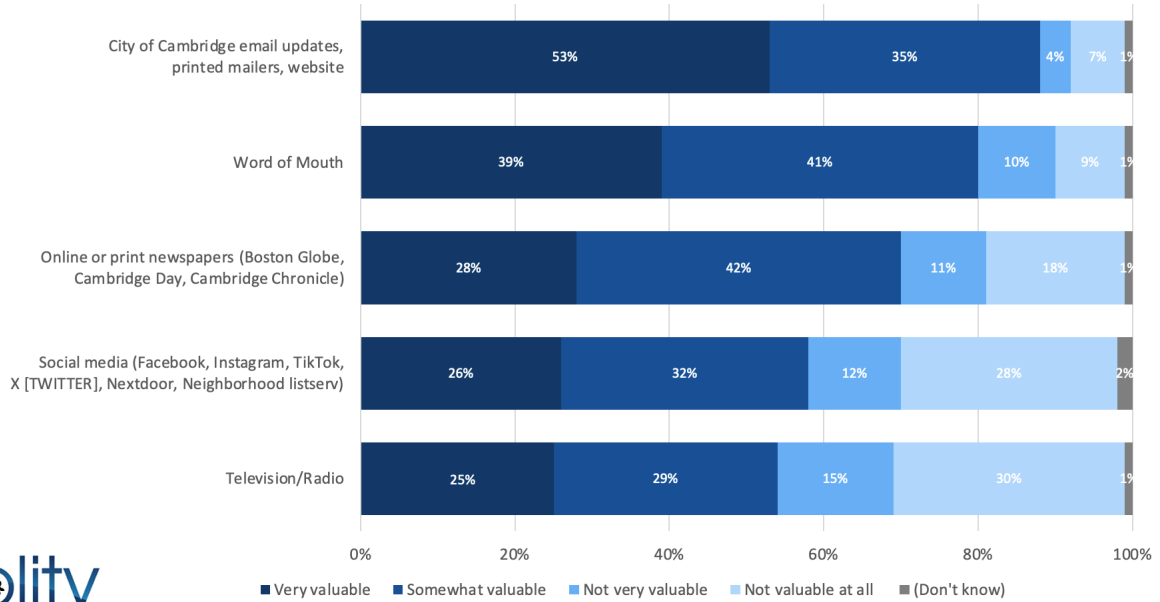


The highest levels of support for making this policy permanent are in the Central (74%) and West (73%) sections of the city,

Value Of Information Sources

As the next chart shows, Cambridge residents find official city information sources (emails, mailers, city website) as the most valuable for their household (53% “very valuable”). Next on the valued information source list are: word of mouth (39% “very valuable”); online or print newspapers (28%), social media (26%) and television/radio (25%).

Please rate how valuable each of the following Cambridge-related information sources for your household





Polity Research Consulting, LLC
 9 Bartlet Street, Suite 178
 Andover, Massachusetts 01810
 (617)-852-5814

2023 CITY OF CAMBRIDGE RESIDENT SURVEY
PRC #5300—SEPTEMBER 2023

SOME PERCENTAGES MAY NOT TOTAL 100% DUE TO ROUNDING ERROR

Interviewing dates: 9/18-9/23/2023; Sample size: N=400 Phone; MOE: ±4.90%

To begin, on a scale of excellent, good, fair or poor, how would you rate each of the following quality of life aspects here in the City of Cambridge?

- SCALE:**
- | | |
|-----------------|---------|
| 1. Excellent | 2. Good |
| 3. Fair | 4. Poor |
| 5. (Don't know) | |

1. Cambridge as a place to live

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
September 2023	56%	31	8	5	--
September 2022	48%	40	9	4	--
September 2020	50%	42	6	2	--
September 2018	49%	42	8	-	-
September 2016	54%	32	11	3	-
September 2014	49%	43	6	2	-
September 2012	62%	34	3	1	-
September 2010	48%	42	8	1	1
September 2008	43%	49	7	2	-
September 2006	41%	45	10	3	1
October 2004	42%	47	8	2	1
October 2002	42%	44	10	3	1
November 2000	39%	50	8	2	1

2. Your neighborhood as a place to live*

**different wording*

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
September 2023	59%	28	8	5	1
September 2022	42%	45	9	4	-
September 2020	47%	40	11	1	1
September 2018	45%	43	11	1	-
September 2016	43%	48	6	3	-

September 2014	37%	51	10	2	-
September 2012	46%	43	10	-	-
September 2010	42%	43	14	-	-
September 2008	37%	46	14	3	-
September 2006	36%	48	12	4	-
October 2004	34%	51	12	3	-
October 2002	32%	48	17	2	1
November 2000	36%	49	13	2	-

3. Cambridge as a safe place to live

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
September 2023	45%	41	9	3	1
September 2022	39%	43	14	5	-
September 2020	45%	44	9	--	2
September 2018	38%	48	12	1	-
September 2016	41%	37	18	3	-
September 2014	34%	52	14	1	-
September 2012	32%	51	15	1	-
September 2010	25%	52	22	1	1
September 2008	17%	55	24	4	-
September 2006	19%	54	22	3	1
October 2004	21%	58	17	3	1
October 2002	24%	52	19	4	1
November 2000	21%	62	15	1	1

4. A sense of community

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
September 2023	26%	42	22	8	2
September 2022	21%	44	26	8	2
September 2020	18%	53	25	4	1
September 2018	21%	48	22	7	1
September 2016	20%	47	21	11	2
September 2014	27%	51	18	4	-
September 2012	16%	55	27	1	1
September 2010	21%	49	25	3	1
September 2008	16%	46	30	5	2
September 2006	17%	47	30	3	3
October 2004	18%	52	24	4	2
October 2002	17%	45	29	6	3
November 2000	10%	52	31	5	2

5. A place welcoming to all races, ethnicities, cultures, and identities*

**slightly different wording*

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
September 2023	48%	35	12	3	2
September 2022	36%	40	18	4	3
September 2020	34%	43	19	2	2
September 2018	41%	37	18	3	-
September 2016	38%	46	13	3	-
September 2014	53%	35	9	2	-
September 2012	44%	45	8	1	1
September 2010	42%	47	9	1	1
September 2008	38%	44	13	3	2
September 2006	37%	46	13	2	1
October 2004	37%	46	14	1	2
October 2002	33%	46	15	3	3
November 2000	32%	45	17	4	3

6. Overall performance of City government here in Cambridge

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
September 2023	22%	47	19	9	2
September 2022	21%	43	21	11	4
September 2020	16%	50	24	4	6
September 2018	16%	47	25	5	6
September 2016	20%	48	20	4	8
September 2014	16%	57	17	8	2
September 2012	18%	57	17	2	6
September 2010	14%	53	16	5	11
September 2008	12%	58	21	3	6
September 2006	12%	50	24	7	7
October 2004	9%	51	23	6	11
October 2002	6%	45	27	8	14
November 2000	5%	46	26	5	18

Please tell me how likely you'd be to do each of the following—very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely.

SCALE: 1. Very likely 2. Somewhat likely
 3. Somewhat unlikely 4. Very unlikely
 5. (Don't know)

	1	2	3	4	5
7. Recommend living in Cambridge to someone who asks	60%	27	4	8	1
8. Remain in Cambridge for the next five years	55%	26	7	10	1

Next, on a scale of "1" to "5", where "1" means "Not important at all" and "5" means "Extremely important", please rate how important, if at all, you think it is *for the Cambridge community to focus on each of the following in the coming two years*:

Not important at all		Extremely Important				(Don't Know)
1	2	3	4	5	6	
	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Economic health (including jobs and workforce development)	2%	3	14	29	50	3
10. The balance between new construction and neighborhood preservation	7%	5	20	20	42	5
11. Quality of public utility infrastructure (water, sewer, storm water)	3%	1	15	23	58	1
12. Quality of the transportation system (auto, bicycle, foot, bus, subway)	3%	2	10	21	64	1
13. Safe streets and neighborhoods	1%	3	16	26	54	--
14. Quality of open space, parks, and recreation opportunities	3%	2	18	32	45	--
15. Opportunities in education, culture, and the arts	2%	3	16	29	48	1
16. Residents' connection and engagement with their community	4%	6	23	37	31	1
17. Market housing that is affordable	6%	5	10	13	65	1
18. Affordable housing (that is, subsidized or income-restricted for low, moderate, and middle income families)	4%	4	13	14	64	1
19. Efforts to address climate change	5%	5	15	25	49	1

Not important at all					Extremely Important	(Don't Know)
1	2	3	4	5	6	6
				1	2	3
				4	5	6

20. Efforts to address equity and inclusion, including racial and economic disparities

	5%	4	12	25	52	1
--	----	---	----	----	----	---

21. And, what is the *single most important issue* the City of Cambridge should focus on in the coming two years?

Affordable housing	39%
Public transportation	7
Education	5
Climate change/environment	5
Cost of living	4
City planning/construction	4
Equality/Equity	4
Economy/jobs	3
Government transparency	3
Bike safety issues	3
Roads/Streets	3
Safety/Crime	2
Traffic	2
Parking	2
Community preservation	1
Parks	1
Nothing	1
Other	6
Don't know/Refused	3

Now, using a “1” to “5” scale, where “1” means “poor” and “5” means “excellent”, please rate how well *the City of Cambridge performs* on each of these.

Poor					Excellent	(Don't Know)
1	2	3	4	5	6	6
				1	2	3
				4	5	6*

**different scaling in 2023*

22. Economic health (including jobs and workforce development) **2023**

	6%	3	27	36	17	12
--	-----------	----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
September 2022	14%	39	26	11	10
September 2020	11%	48	27	5	9
September 2018	23%	45	16	8	8
September 2016	30%	35	25	7	4
September 2014	23%	53	16	3	5
September 2012	23%	53	17	1	7

September 2010	13%	52	23	2	11
September 2008	10%	49	22	4	15
September 2006	8%	43	27	6	17
October 2004	8%	52	20	5	15
October 2002	9%	44	25	4	18
November 2000	12%	54	20	2	11

23. The balance between new construction and neighborhood preservation

Poor					Excellent		(Don't Know)			
1	2	3	4		5		6			
					<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6*</u>
<i>*different scaling in 2023</i>			2023		11%	16	34	22	13	5

					<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
	September 2022				7%	34	29	26	5
	September 2020				8%	33	34	19	6
	September 2018				9%	34	32	19	6
	September 2016				14%	35	25	25	2
	September 2014				10%	47	28	11	3
	September 2012				18%	44	26	8	3
	September 2010				11%	48	27	4	9
	September 2008				10%	50	25	11	4
	September 2006				6%	40	33	15	6
	October 2004				7%	45	27	12	9
	October 2002				8%	39	32	12	9
	November 2000				5%	39	32	17	8

Poor					Excellent		(Don't Know)			
1	2	3	4		5		6			
					<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6*</u>

24. Quality of public utility infrastructure (water, sewer, storm water,)

2023	5%	6	25	36	26	2
-------------	-----------	----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	----------

25. Quality of the transportation system (auto, bicycle, foot, bus, subway)

2023	10%	16	26	30	18	--
-------------	------------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------

26. Safe streets and neighborhoods

2023	5%	2	20	48	25	--
-------------	-----------	----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------

27. Quality of open space, parks,
and recreation opportunities*

**different wording*

Poor				Excellent	(Don't Know)				
1	2	3	4	5	6				
<hr/>									
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6*</u>			
			2023	5%	3	15	39	37	1
				<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>	
			September 2022	<u>27%</u>	43	22	7	2	
			September 2020	29%	47	19	4	1	
			September 2018	34%	48	13	2	2	
			September 2016	19%	41	33	6	-	
			September 2014	28%	42	24	5	-	
			September 2012	27%	41	28	2	2	
			September 2010	31%	43	20	5	1	
			September 2008	19%	52	24	5	-	
			September 2006	22%	41	29	8	1	
			October 2004	15%	45	31	8	1	
			October 2002	13%	41	33	9	4	
			November 2000	10%	42	33	12	2	

28. Opportunities in education, culture,
and the arts **different wording*

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6*</u>
2023	4%	3	19	39	33	2
	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>	
September 2022	<u>43%</u>	38	13	4	3	

Poor 1 2 3 4 Excellent 5 (Don't Know) 6

29. Residents' connection and engagement with their community

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	5%	12	36	30	14	3

30. Market housing that is affordable

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	30%	34	19	7	7	3

31. Affordable housing (that is, subsidized or income-restricted for low, moderate, and middle income families)

**different wording*

	2023	1	2	3	4	5	6*
		18%	24	27	14	9	7
		<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>	
September 2022		4%	10	28	55	4	
September 2020		1%	10	33	50	6	
September 2018		2%	17	29	47	6	
September 2016		7%	12	26	52	4	
September 2014		8%	20	44	26	2	
September 2012		10%	22	35	23	9	
September 2010		8%	18	40	22	11	
September 2008		5%	19	38	30	8	
September 2006		4%	11	32	44	9	
October 2004		4%	11	29	50	6	
October 2002		2%	12	24	54	8	
November 2000		2%	7	24	63	4	

32. Efforts to address climate change

Poor 1 2 3 4 Excellent 5 (Don't Know) 6

2023

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	6%	7	34	35	9	10

33. Efforts to address equity and inclusion, including racial and economic disparities

2023

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	5%	10	31	33	16	6

Now, I'd like to read you a number of services provided by the City of Cambridge. For each one, please rate the *quality* of these services on a scale of excellent, good, fair or poor.

- SCALE:**
- | | |
|-----------------|---------|
| 1. Excellent | 2. Good |
| 3. Fair | 4. Poor |
| 5. (Don't know) | |

		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
34. Police department						
		<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
	September 2023	25%	46	19	6	4
	September 2022	25%	42	18	6	10
	September 2020	19%	44	22	5	10
	September 2018	29%	52	10	4	5
	September 2016	36%	42	16	1	5
	September 2014	25%	52	15	4	5
	September 2012	33%	38	16	2	10
	September 2010	24%	52	11	3	11
	September 2008	26%	53	13	4	3
	September 2006	23%	53	14	3	7
	October 2004	22%	56	10	2	10
	October 2002	21%	54	10	3	12
	November 2000	15%	58	15	2	9

35. Fire department						
		<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
	September 2023	51%	38	4	1	6
	September 2022	42%	44	5	--	9
	September 2020	36%	43	4	--	16
	September 2018	52%	36	3	--	10
	September 2016	55%	34	3	--	7
	September 2014	41%	52	1	--	6
	September 2012	47%	35	2	--	16
	September 2010	37%	40	2	1	19
	September 2008	40%	48	3	--	9
	September 2006	36%	46	5	1	12
	October 2004	31%	47	3	--	19
	October 2002	34%	46	2	--	18
	November 2000	24%	53	3	--	19

36. Libraries

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
September 2023	68%	23	4	2	2
September 2022	57%	32	2	1	8
September 2020	53%	32	5	--	10
September 2018	56%	34	2	1	8
September 2016	67%	24	3	-	6
September 2014	56%	39	1	-	5
September 2012	56%	32	3	-	8
September 2010	47%	38	3	-	12
September 2008	38%	39	6	1	16
September 2006	38%	38	6	2	16
October 2004	34%	43	6	-	17
October 2002	30%	44	4	-	22
November 2000	21%	54	9	1	16

37. Public health department

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
2023	25%	41	15	7	13

38. City parks and park maintenance

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
September 2023	35%	47	11	6	1
September 2022	37%	50	8	4	2
September 2020	37%	51	8	2	2
September 2018	39%	49	6	3	2
September 2016	36%	43	13	4	3
September 2014	33%	53	12	1	1
September 2012	36%	51	7	3	3
September 2010	28%	57	9	3	4
September 2008	27%	57	12	3	2
September 2006	29%	53	14	1	3
October 2004	23%	59	12	2	4
October 2002	22%	58	12	2	6
November 2000	17%	61	14	2	5

39. Street cleaning and maintenance

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
September 2023	29%	43	20	8	--
September 2022	28%	51	17	4	1
September 2020	29%	51	14	4	2
September 2018	20%	51	22	6	-
September 2016	16%	47	28	9	-
September 2014	20%	44	22	14	-
September 2012	26%	46	18	10	-
September 2010	19%	49	22	9	1
September 2008	13%	50	27	9	1
September 2006	13%	42	34	10	-
October 2004	9%	48	30	12	1
October 2002	11%	50	28	10	1
November 2000	10%	53	27	8	1

40. Sidewalk maintenance

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
September 2023	12%	39	34	14	1
September 2022	15%	45	27	12	2
September 2020	14%	44	31	8	3
September 2018	16%	47	28	7	1
September 2016	15%	40	29	15	1
September 2014	10%	47	34	8	1
September 2012	15%	51	23	9	1
September 2010	13%	51	26	9	1
September 2008	6%	48	34	11	1
September 2006	7%	44	35	11	3
October 2004	8%	42	34	14	2
October 2002	9%	41	32	15	3
November 2000	6%	47	30	16	1

41. Snow plowing

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
September 2023	23%	47	21	7	2
September 2022	26%	47	21	6	1

42. Water/sewer services

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
September 2023	29%	52	12	4	3
September 2022	26%	50	18	4	3
September 2020	31%	51	11	1	6
September 2018	32%	55	6	2	5
September 2016	43%	43	3	5	5
September 2014	31%	57	8	1	3
September 2012	35%	53	6	1	6
September 2010	24%	50	11	2	12
September 2008	17%	57	13	5	8
September 2006	16%	61	12	3	8
October 2004	13%	60	14	4	9
October 2002	13%	58	16	3	10
November 2000	10%	66	15	3	6

43. Garbage, recycling and compost

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
2023	50%	36	9	4	1

44. Public information

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>(DK)</u>
September 2023	29%	40	23	6	2
September 2022	25%	54	15	4	2
September 2020	30%	53	13	2	2
September 2018	27%	49	17	4	3
September 2016	21%	58	14	5	2
September 2014	25%	58	12	3	2
September 2012	22%	55	14	2	7
September 2010	22%	56	14	1	6
September 2008	17%	58	15	2	7
September 2006	18%	59	13	3	6
October 2004	14%	58	17	3	8
October 2002	12%	55	20	4	9
November 2000	9%	59	22	4	7

45. As you may know, the City implemented a street cleaning pilot program that replaced towing associated with street cleaning with a \$50 fine. Thinking about the current level of cleanliness of our streets, do you favor or oppose this pilot program becoming permanent?

- 1. Favor 69%
- 2. Oppose 21
- 3. (Don't know) 10

In the last 12 months, about how many times, if ever, have you or another household member done the following: (ROTATE Qs. 46-48)

SCALE: 1. (Never) 2. (Once) 3. (Twice)
 4. (3 to 12 times) 5. (13-26 times) 6. (More than 26 times)
 8. (Don't know/Refused)

	<u>(Never)</u>	<u>(Once)</u>	<u>(Twice)</u>	<u>(3-12 times)</u>	<u>(13-26 times)</u>	<u>(> 26 times)</u>	<u>(DK/Ref)</u>
46. Attended a City Council meeting in person or watched it on TV or online							
September 2023	55%	15	10	14	1	4	1
September 2022	55%	14	10	17	3	2	1
September 2020	57%	13	10	13	1	3	2
September 2018	64%	6	7	18	1	4	-
September 2016	59%	12	6	18	2	4	-
September 2014	80%	10	3	7	-	-	-
September 2012	79%	8	5	7	1	-	1
September 2010	76%	7	4	10	-	1	1
September 2008	77%	6	6	10	1	-	-
September 2006	78%	8	5	8	1	-	-
October 2004	77%	9	6	7	-	1	-
October 2002	77%	9	6	6	-	1	1
November 2000	83%	9	3	4	-	1	1
	<u>(Never)</u>	<u>(Once)</u>	<u>(Twice)</u>	<u>(3-12 times)</u>	<u>(13-26 times)</u>	<u>(> 26 times)</u>	<u>(DK/Ref)</u>
47. Contacted a Cambridge City Councilor to express your opinion or seek services	60%	11	8	16	2	2	1
48. Ridden a bike in the City							
September 2023	46%	2	3	12	7	30	-
September 2022	41%	3	6	15	7	29	-
September 2020	37%	4	5	14	6	34	-
September 2018	47%	2	4	11	6	30	-

Please rate how valuable each of the following Cambridge-related information sources for your household—using a scale of very valuable, somewhat valuable, not very valuable or not valuable at all. [ROTATE LIST]

SCALE: 1. Very valuable 2. Somewhat valuable
 3. Not very valuable 4. Not valuable at all
 5. (Don't know)

		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
49.	Television/Radio	25%	29	15	30	1
50.	City of Cambridge email updates, printed mailers, website	53%	35	4	7	1
51.	Social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X [TWITTER], Nextdoor, Neighborhood listserv)	26%	32	12	28	2
52.	Online or print newspapers (Boston Globe, Cambridge Day, Cambridge Chronicle)	28%	42	11	18	1
53.	Word of Mouth	39%	41	10	9	1

On a scale of excellent, good, fair or poor, please rate the ease of getting around the city for each of the following transportation options.

SCALE: 1. Excellent 2. Good
 3. Fair 4. Poor
 5. (Don't know)

		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
54.	Bicycle, electric bicycle, or scooter	30%	36	14	5	14
55.	On foot	52%	32	11	4	1
56.	Driving	10%	31	33	22	5
57.	Taxi or ride hail (e.g. Uber/Lyft)	18%	39	25	9	8
58.	Public transportation, like bus or subway	16%	34	35	13	2

59. As you continue to think about transportation options to get around Cambridge, which of the following do you think is the **single most important option** for the city to focus on improving over the next few years [READ 1-6]:

1.	Bicycle infrastructure	10%
2.	Pedestrian infrastructure	9
3.	Roadway infrastructure	10
4.	Electric vehicle charging infrastructure	9
5.	Parking	14
6.	Public transportation, like bus or subway	44
7.	(All equally)	3
8.	(Don't know)	1

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.*

60. Are there any children under the age of 18 living in your household?
- | | |
|--------------|-----|
| 1. Yes | 28% |
| 2. No | 72 |
| 3. (Refused) | -- |
61. What is your gender identity? **[DO NOT READ CATEGORIES]**
- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Female/woman | 48% |
| 2. Male/man | 48 |
| 3. Non-binary/gender non-conforming | 1 |
| 4. Transgender—birth gender different from current gender | -- |
| 5. Cisgender—birth gender same as current gender | -- |
| 6. Other, SPECIFY _____ | 1 |
| 7. Refused | 2 |
62. In which of the following categories is your age?
- | | |
|----------------|-----|
| 1. 18-24 | 12% |
| 2. 25-34 | 20 |
| 3. 35-44 | 18 |
| 4. 45-54 | 14 |
| 5. 55-64 | 13 |
| 6. 65-74 | 15 |
| 7. 75 and over | 5 |
| 8. (Refused) | 2 |
63. How many years have you lived in Cambridge?
- | | |
|---------------------|----|
| 1. Less than 1 year | 3% |
| 2. 1.1 to 2 years | 8 |
| 3. 2.1 to 5 years | 13 |
| 4. 5.1 to 10 years | 13 |
| 5. 10.1 to 20 years | 23 |
| 6. 20.1 to 30 years | 12 |
| 7. Over 30 years | 17 |
| 8. All my life | 10 |
| 9. (Refused) | -- |

64. What is the primary language you speak at home? **[DO NOT READ]**

01. (Amharic)	1%
02. (Arabic)	1
03. (Bengali)	--
04. (Chinese)	1
05. (English)	89
06. (Haitian Kreyol)	--
07. (Portuguese)	2
08. (Spanish)	2
09. (Other, SPECIFY _____)	3
10. (Don't know/Refused)	1

65. Do you own or rent your home?

1. Own	45%
2. Rent	55
3. (Other)	--
9. (Refused)	--

66. Which one of the following *best* describes the neighborhood of Cambridge you live in?

[READ RESPONSES 01-13]

01. East Cambridge (Kendall Sq. northeast of Broadway)	9%
02. MIT/Area 2	4
03. Wellington/Harrington	5
04. The Port (Central Square north of Mass Ave)	9
05. CambridgePort	10
06. Mid-Cambridge	6
07. Riverside	5
08. Baldwin (formally Agassiz)	4
09. Neighborhood Nine	7
10. West Cambridge	8
11. North Cambridge	21
12. Cambridge Highlands	1
13. Strawberry Hill	4
14. (Other _____)	3
15. (Don't know/Not sure/Refused)	2

67. Please tell me which of the following groups you identify with racially or ethnically:
[READ RESPONSES 1-7, ACCEPT UP TO 3 RESPONSES]
- | | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Asian/East Indian | 9% |
| 2. Black/African American | 16 |
| 3. Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | -- |
| 4. Hispanic/Latinx | 11 |
| 5. Middle Eastern or North African | 1 |
| 6. Native American/Alaskan | -- |
| 7. White/Caucasian | 58 |
| 8. (Self-describe _____) | 2 |
| 9. (Don't know/Refused) | 3 |
68. What is the highest level of education you have completed? **[READ ALL GROUPS EXCEPT RESPONSE 7]**
- | | |
|--|----|
| 1. Less than High School/GED | 1% |
| 2. High School/GED | 7 |
| 3. Some college, no degree | 5 |
| 4. Associate degree or technical certificate | 6 |
| 5. Bachelor's degree | 29 |
| 6. Graduate school, professional, or advanced studies; no degree | 7 |
| 7. Graduate school, professional, or advanced degree | 44 |
| 8. (Refused/Don't know) | 1 |
69. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?
[READ ALL GROUPS EXCEPT RESPONSE 7]
- | | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| 1. Employed full-time | 59% |
| 2. Employed part-time | 12 |
| 3. Student | 5 |
| 4. Retired | 17 |
| 5. Homemaker | -- |
| 6. Not employed | 5 |
| 7. Other _____ | 1 |
| 8. (Refused/Don't know) | 1 |
70. 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. **[READ ALL GROUPS EXCEPT RESPONSE 7]**
- | | |
|---------------------------|----|
| 1. Less than \$25,000 | 6% |
| 2. \$25,000-\$49,999 | 14 |
| 3. \$50,000-\$74,999 | 11 |
| 4. \$75,000-\$99,999 | 11 |
| 5. \$100,000-\$124,999 | 8 |
| 6. \$125,000 or more | 39 |
| 7. (Prefer not to answer) | 12 |



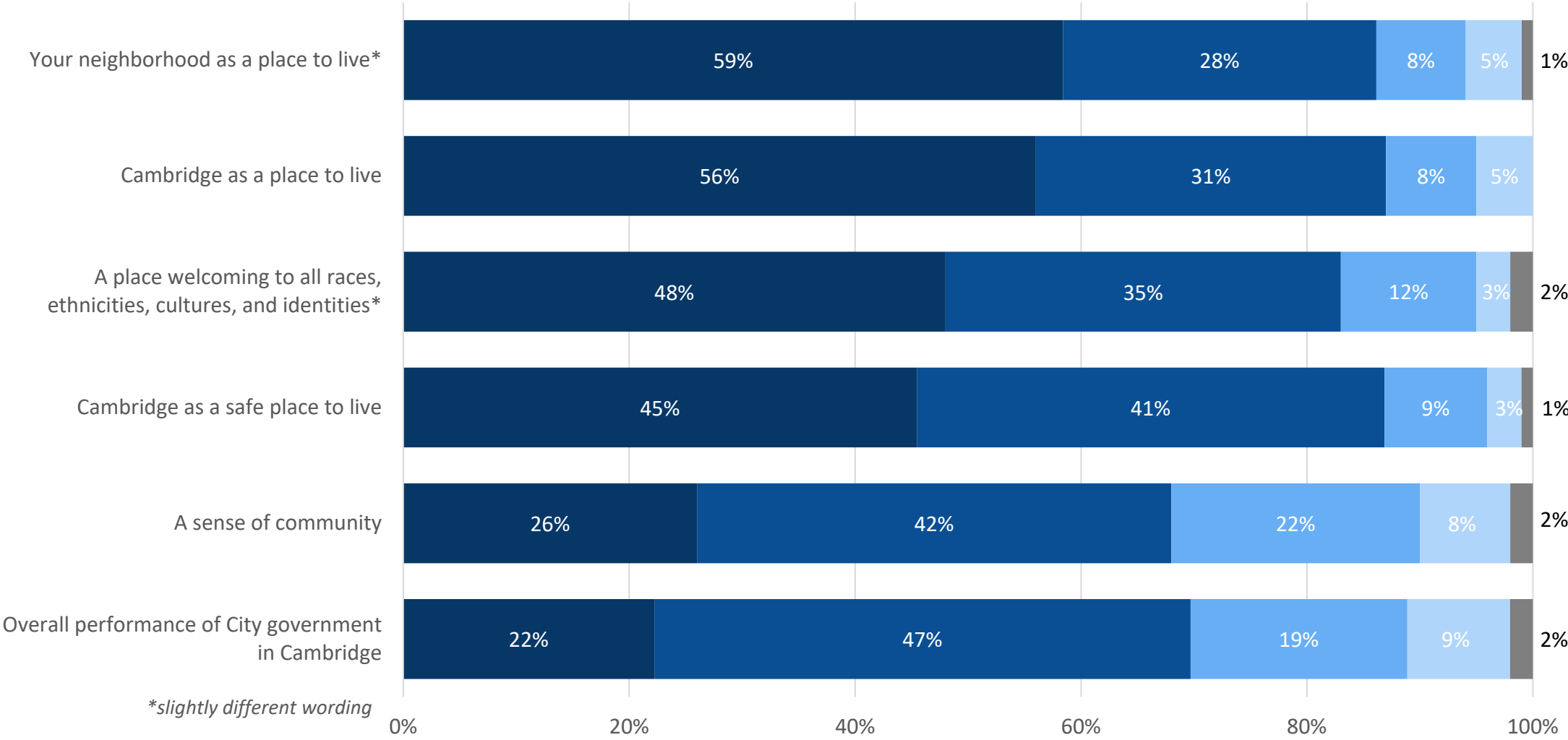
September 2023

Cambridge Resident Survey

Executive Summary

- 'Performance of City government' got the highest "excellent" rating (22%) in the history of the survey program—dating back to 2000;
- Most other key metrics are up—some significantly higher. For example, "Cambridge as a place to live" saw "excellent" ratings soar from 48% in 2022 to 56% today;
- "Gap Analysis" shows that the areas needing greatest attention are: "providing market housing that is affordable" (2.01 mean score gap between 'importance' and 'performance'); affordable housing (i.e., subsidized) (1.61 mean score gap between 'importance' and 'performance'); and the 'quality of the transportation system' (1.13 mean score gap between 'importance' and 'performance');
- Not surprisingly, 'affordable housing' still dominates the list as the most important issue the city needs to focus on (39% of open-ended responses). Public transportation is second at 7%;
- Educational opportunities did show a drop in performance—going from 43% "excellent" in 2022 to 33% today—*although the wording did differ on the two surveys*);
- Efforts to mitigate climate change and address equity issues also show relatively low "excellent" scores (9% and 16%, respectively);
- The Fire and Library departments both show impressive increases in "excellent" ratings;
- City of Cambridge communications are —*by far*—seen as the most "valuable" information source by respondents (53% "very valuable", 32% "somewhat valuable");
- Respondents most want the City to focus on public transportation options—like buses and subway (although the City's control over this issue is limited).

Please rate the following on a scale of excellent, good, fair, or poor.

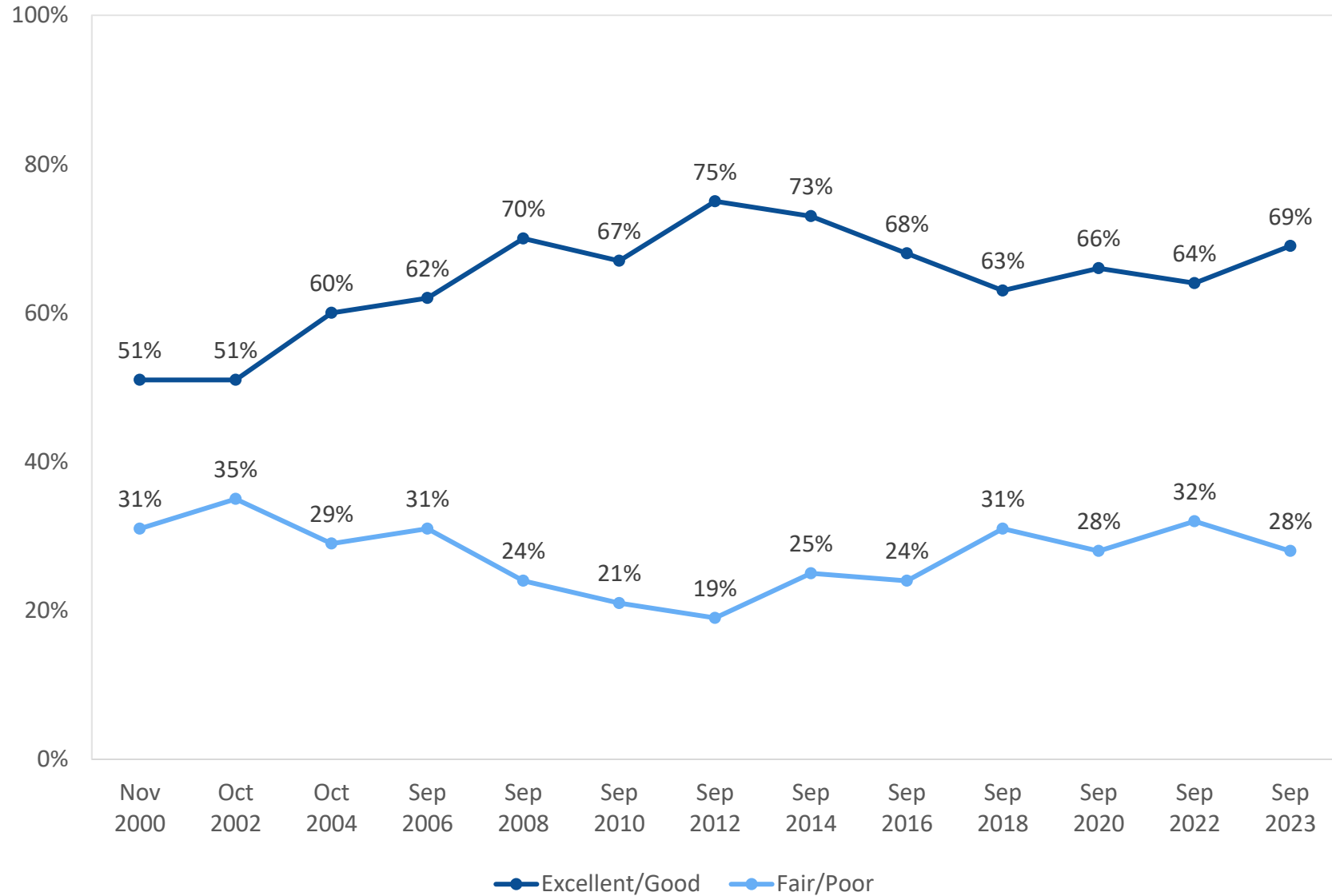


**slightly different wording*

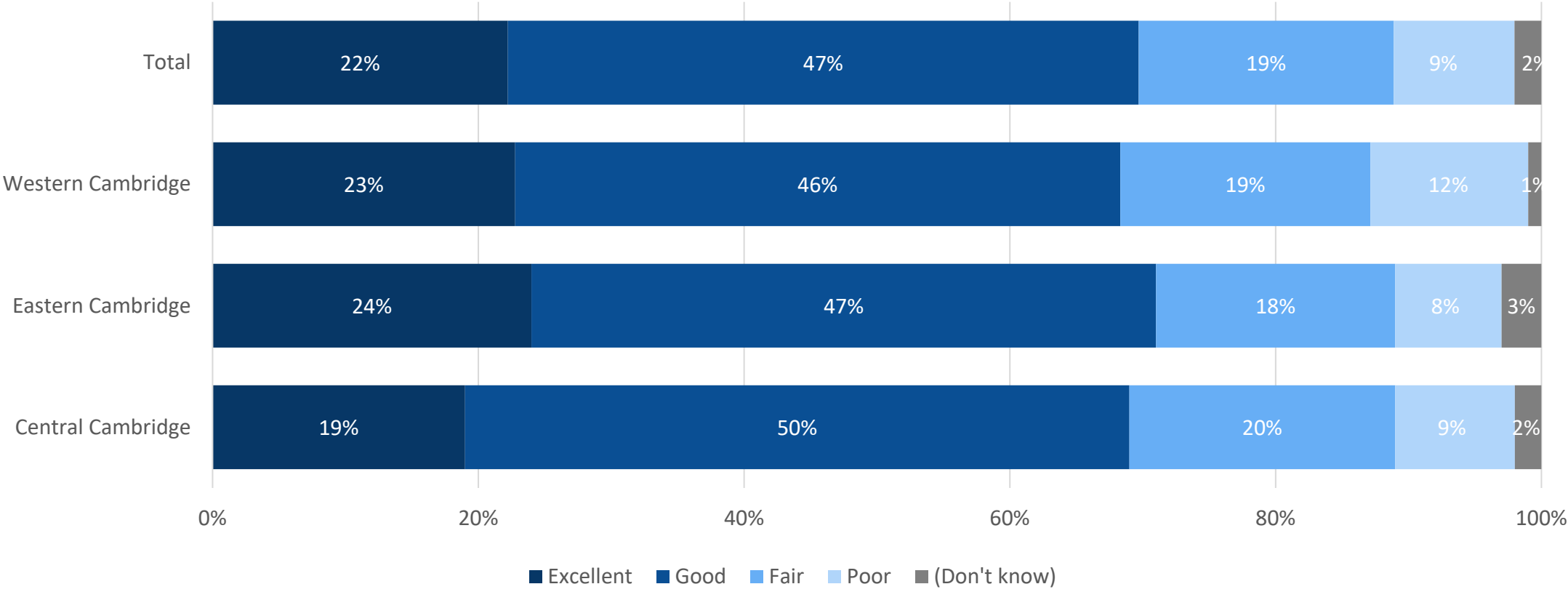
■ Excellent
 ■ Good
 ■ Fair
 ■ Poor
 ■ (Don't know)



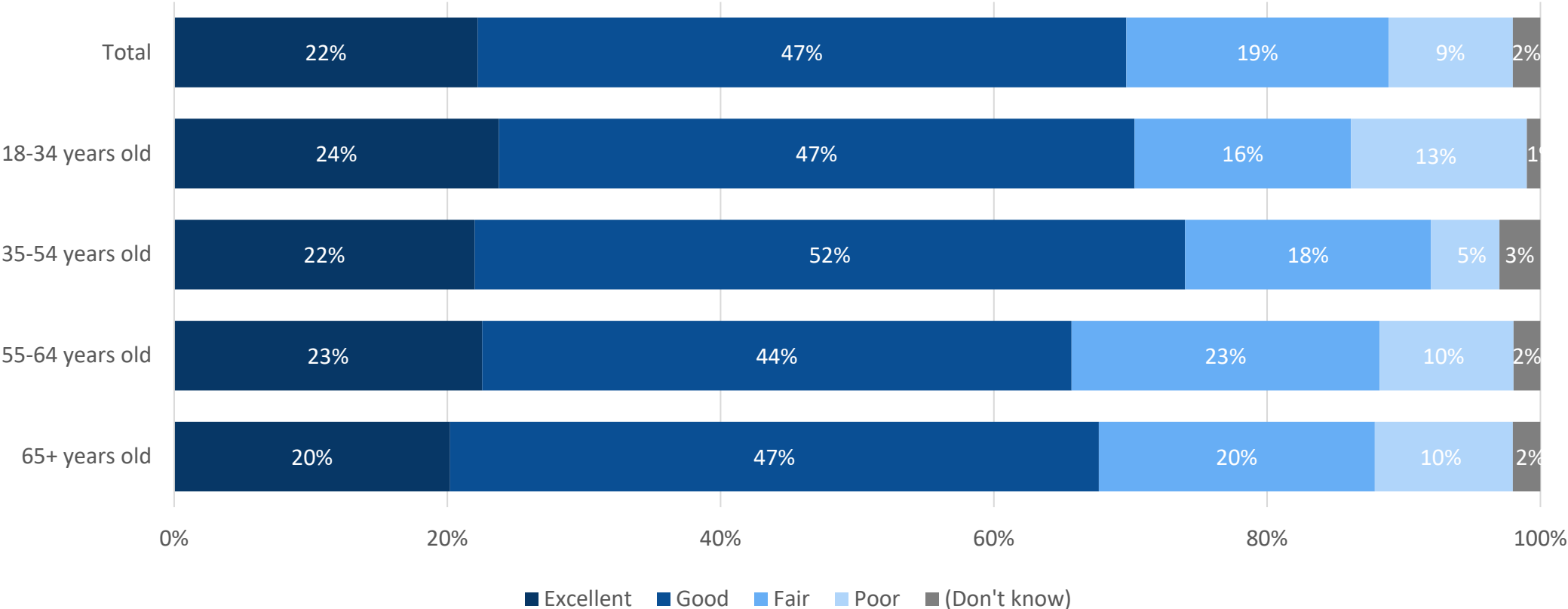
Overall performance of City government here in Cambridge



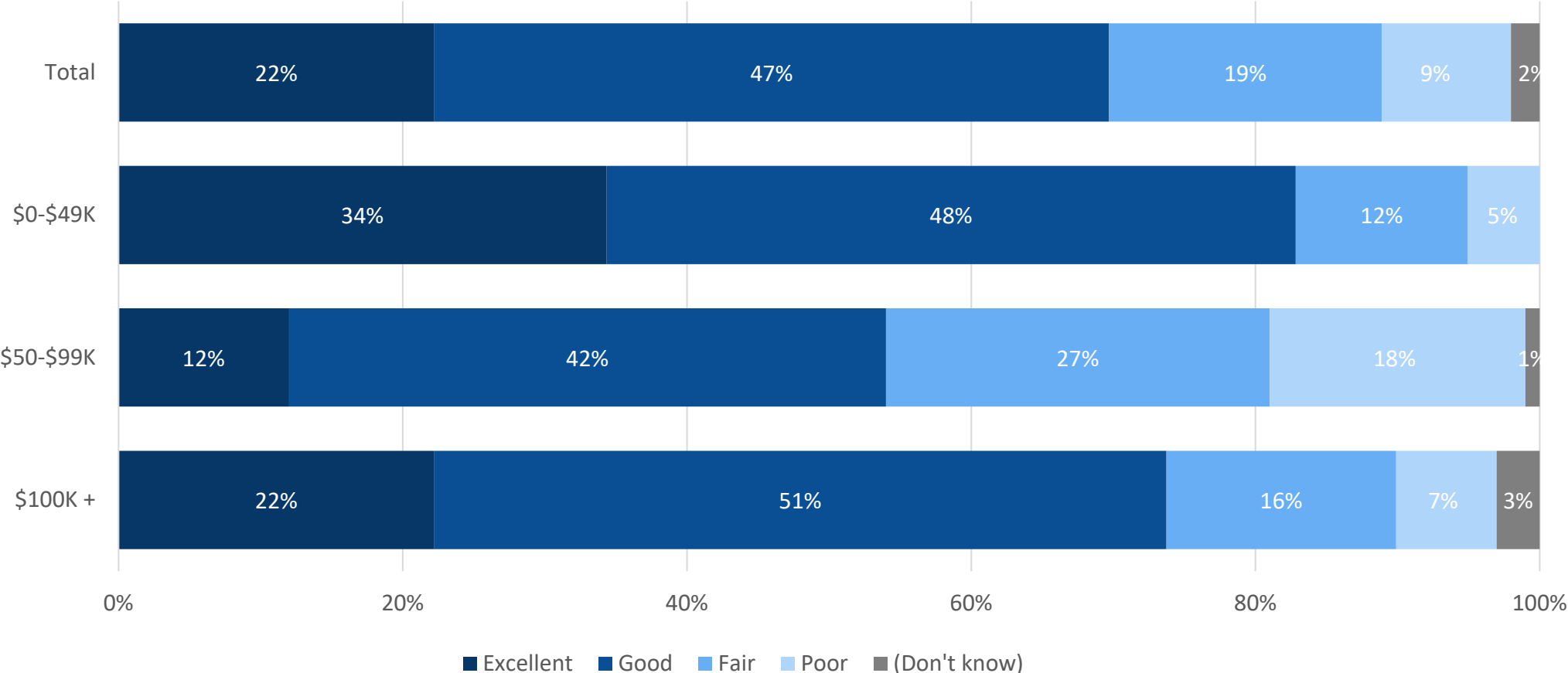
Overall performance of City government here in Cambridge By Area



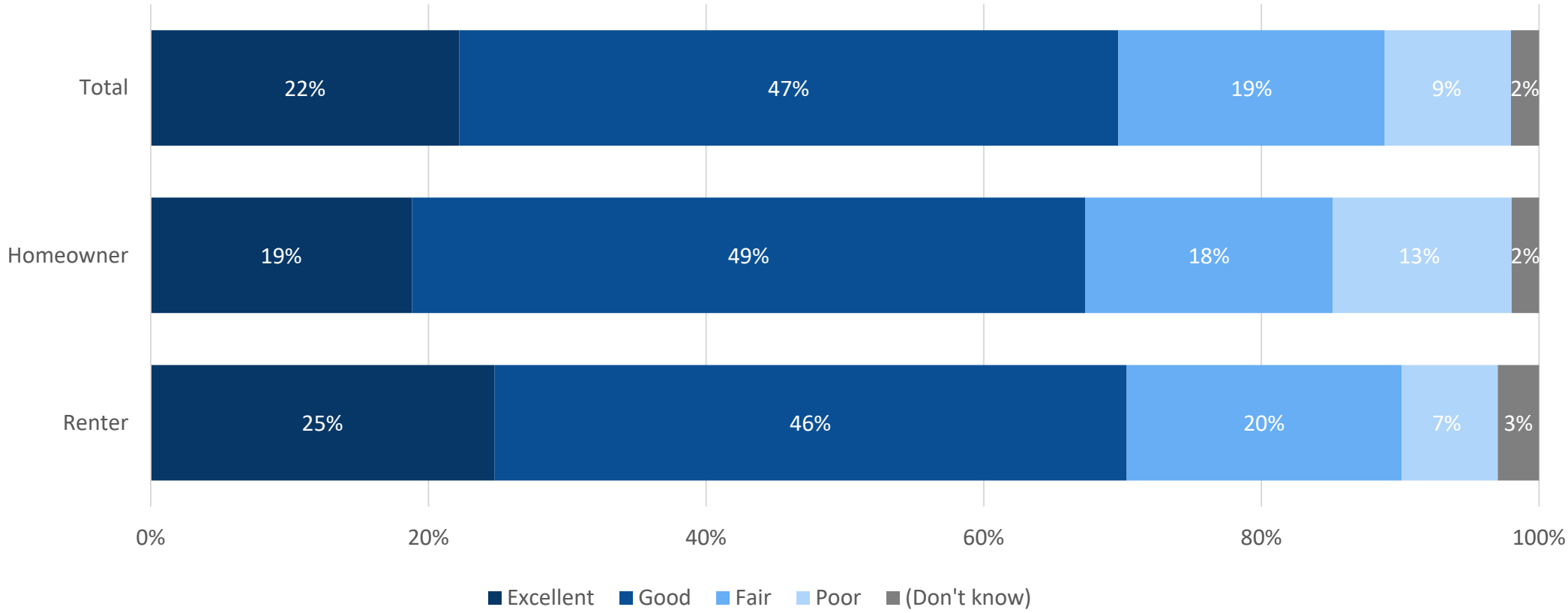
Overall performance of City government here in Cambridge By Age



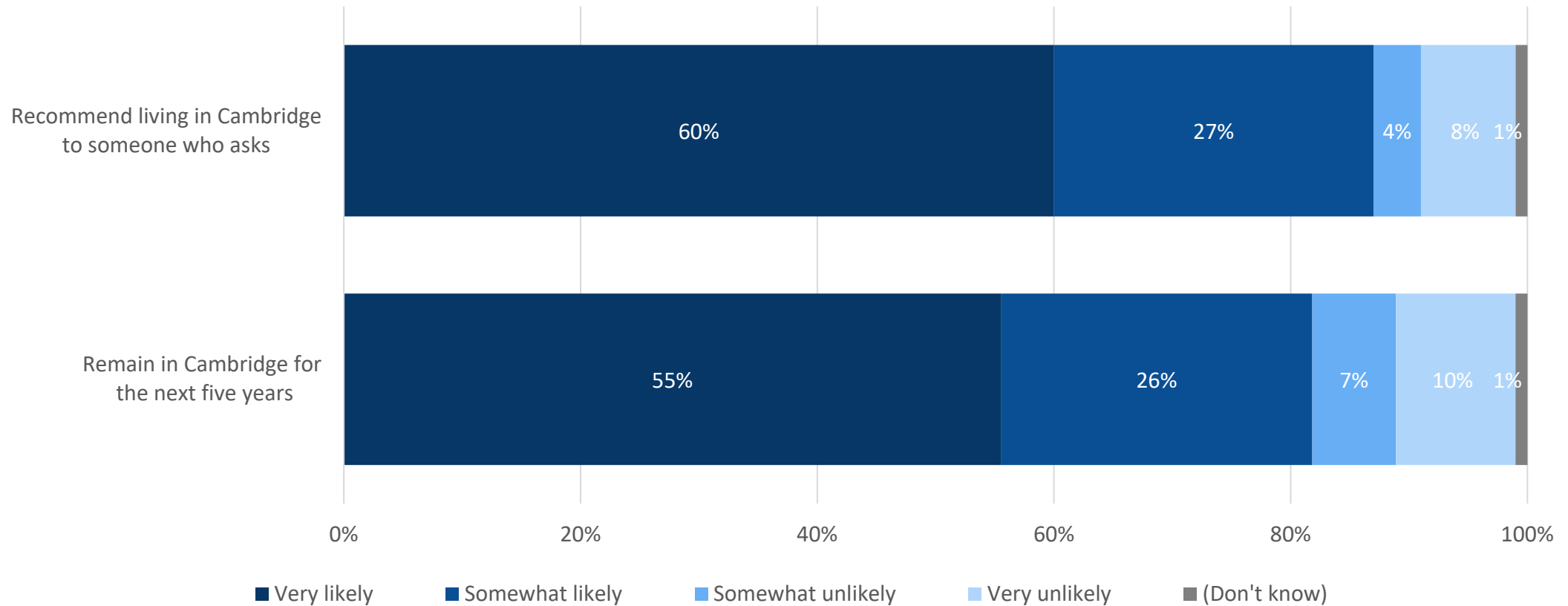
Overall performance of City government here in Cambridge By Income



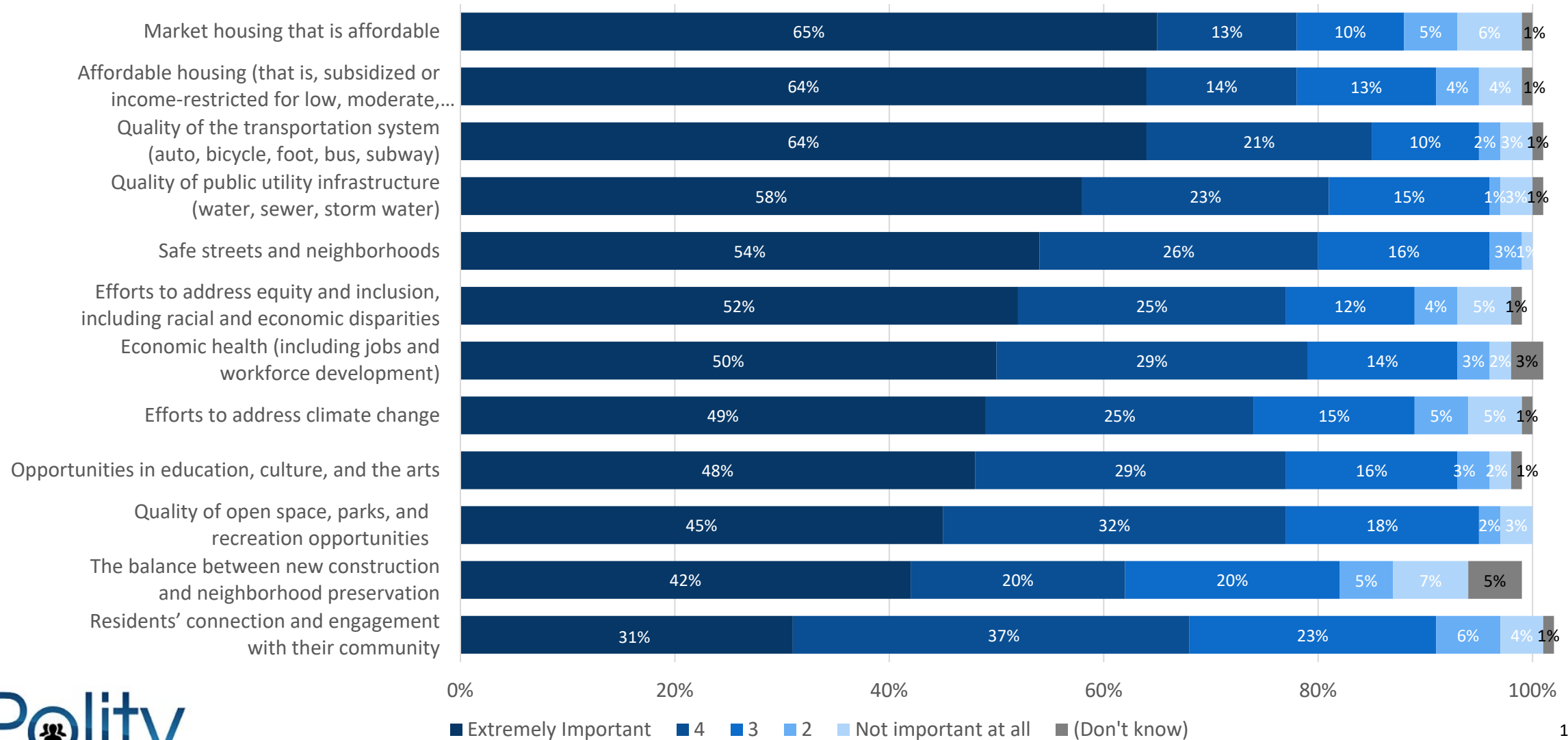
Overall performance of City government here in Cambridge By Homeowner / Renter



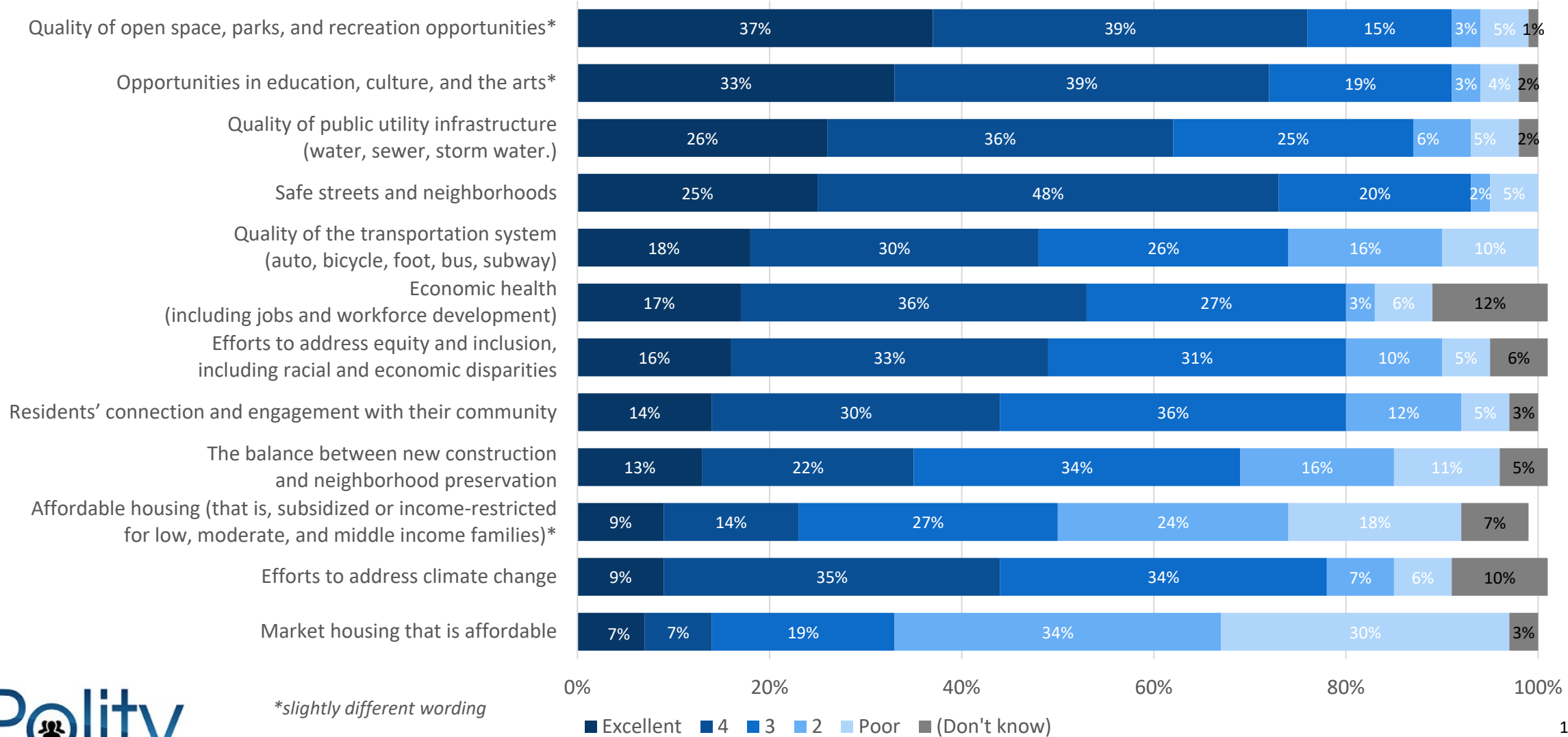
Please tell me how likely you'd be to do each of the following—very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely.



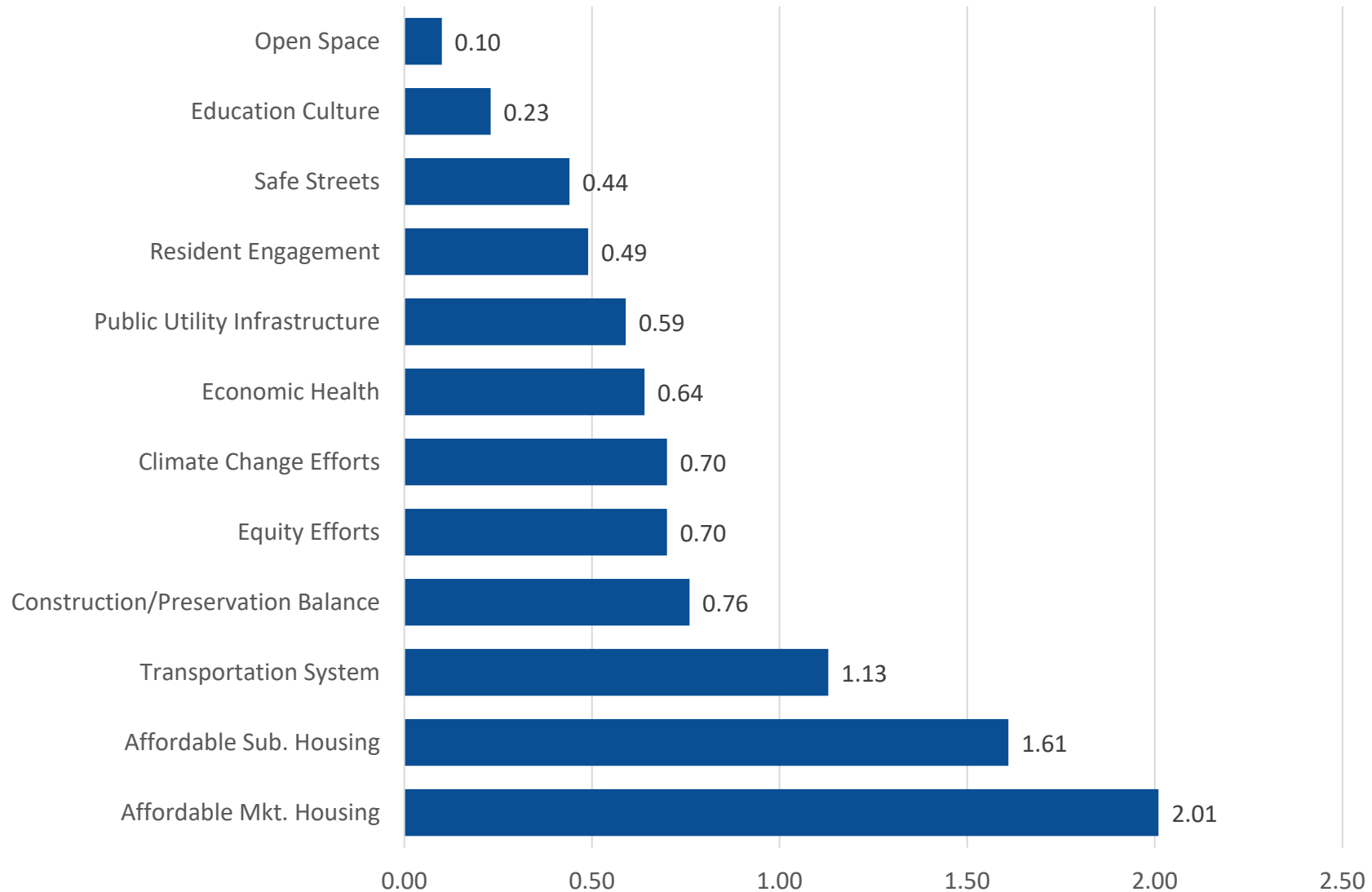
How important is it for the Cambridge community to focus on each of the following in the coming two years:



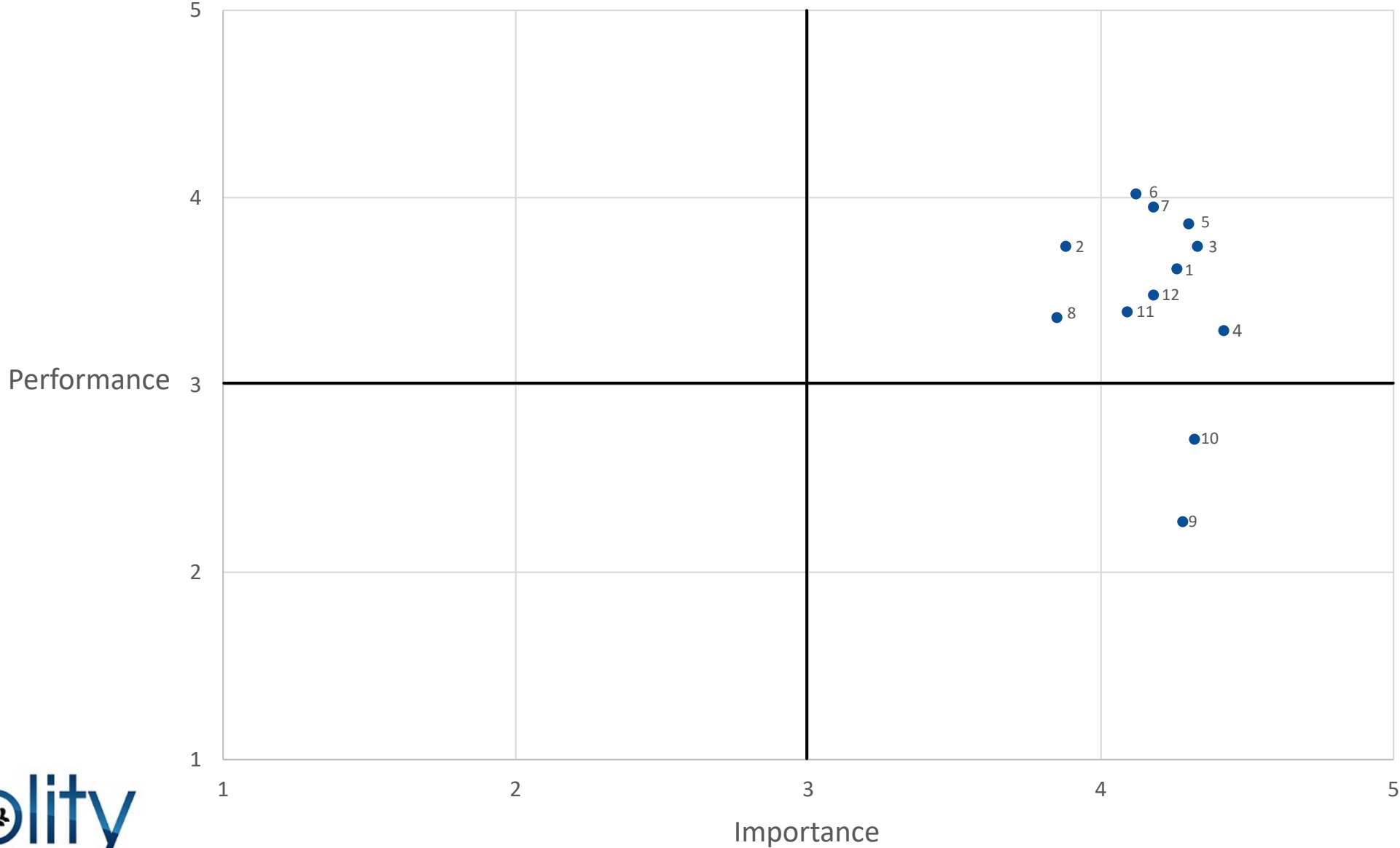
Please rate how well the City of Cambridge performs on each of these.



Importance/Performance Gap Ranking (higher number=greater attention needed)

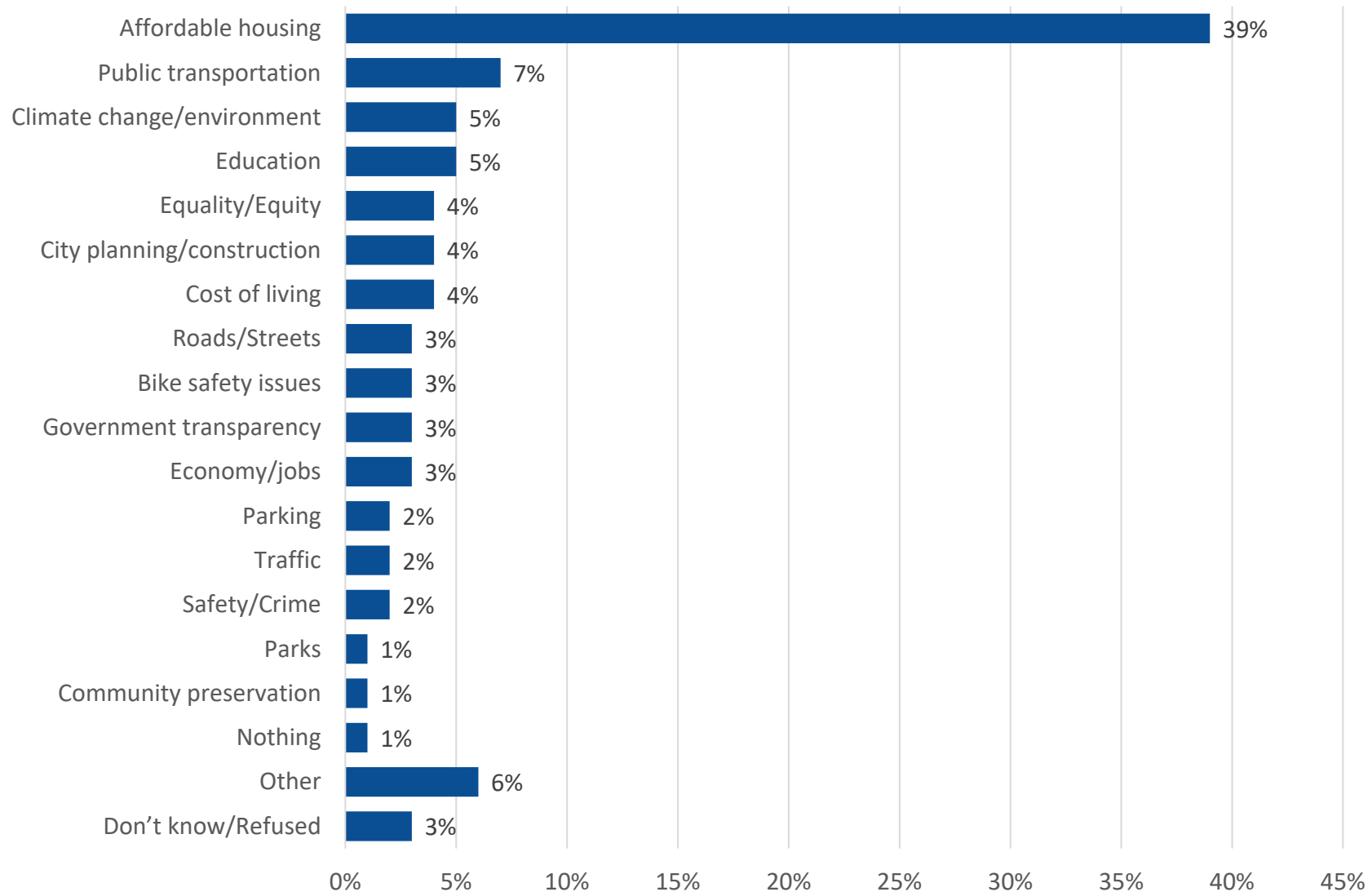


Importance / Performance Perceptual Map

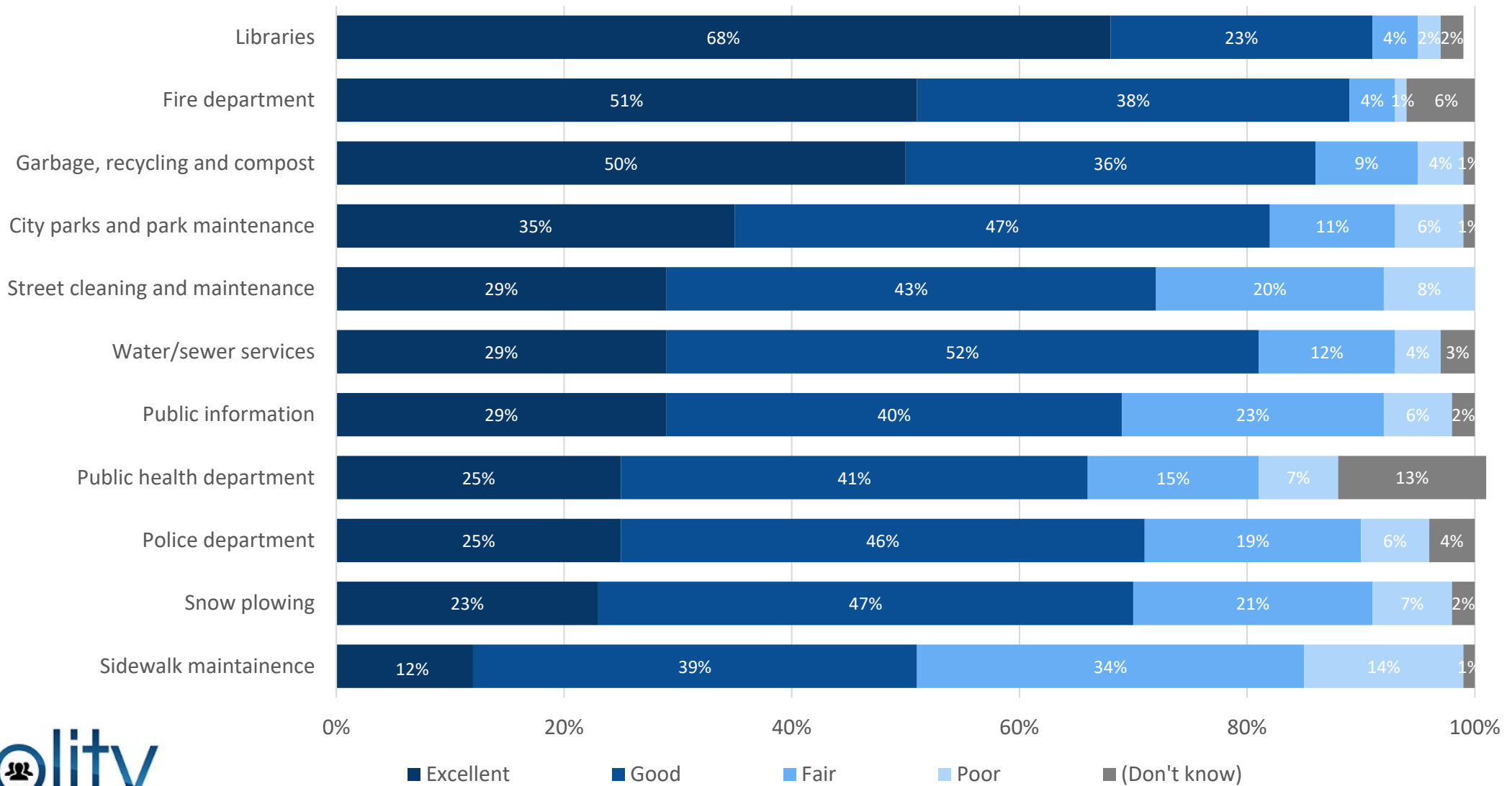


- Legend
- 1. Economic health
 - 2. Construction./Preserv. balance
 - 3. Utility infrastructure
 - 4. Trans. System
 - 5. Safe streets
 - 6. Open space/Rec.
 - 7. Educ./Cult./Arts
 - 8. Community Engage.
 - 9. Afford. Market Housing
 - 10. Afford. Housing/Sub.
 - 11. Climate Change
 - 12. Equity/Inclus./Disparities

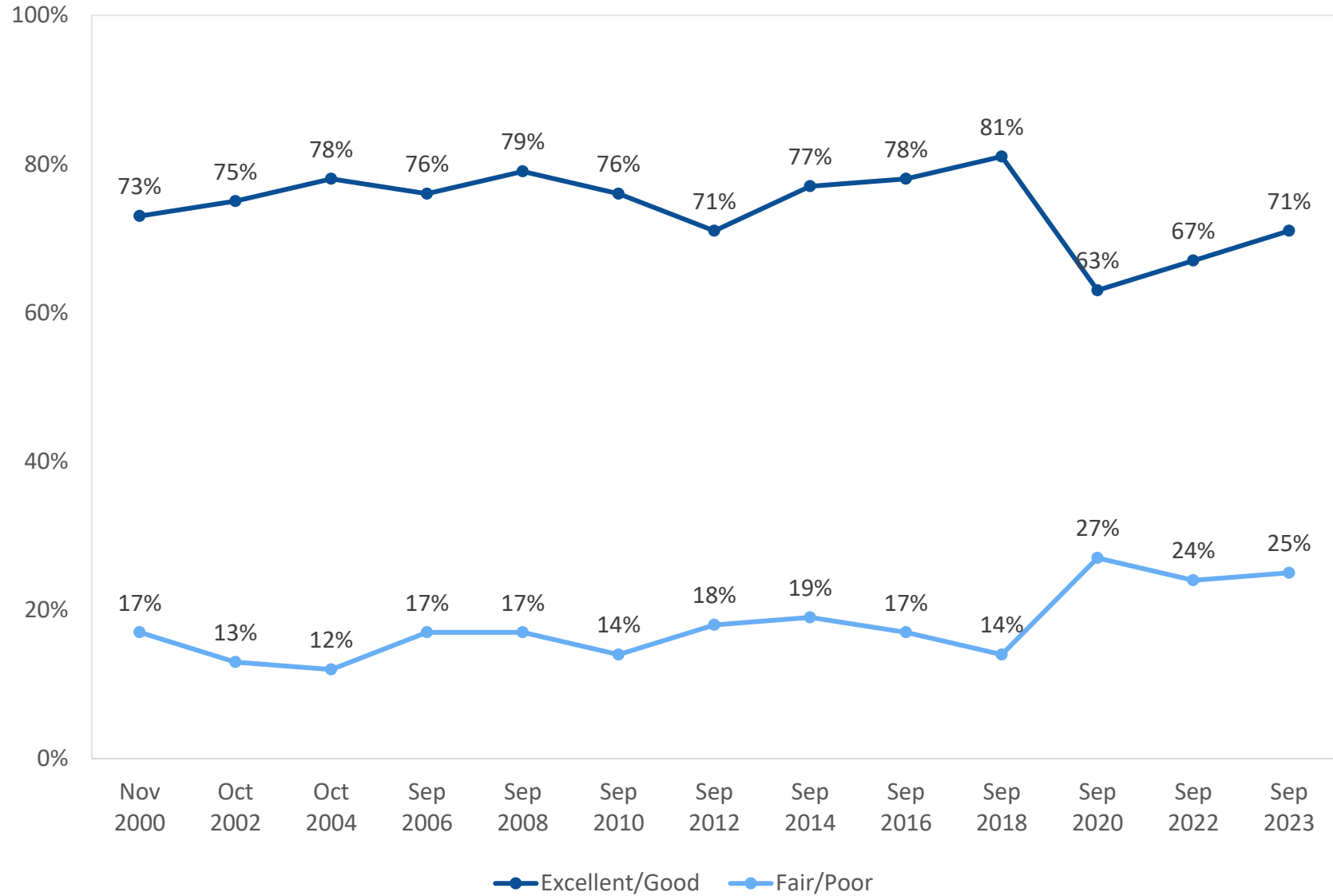
What is the *single most important* issue the City of Cambridge should focus on in the coming two years?



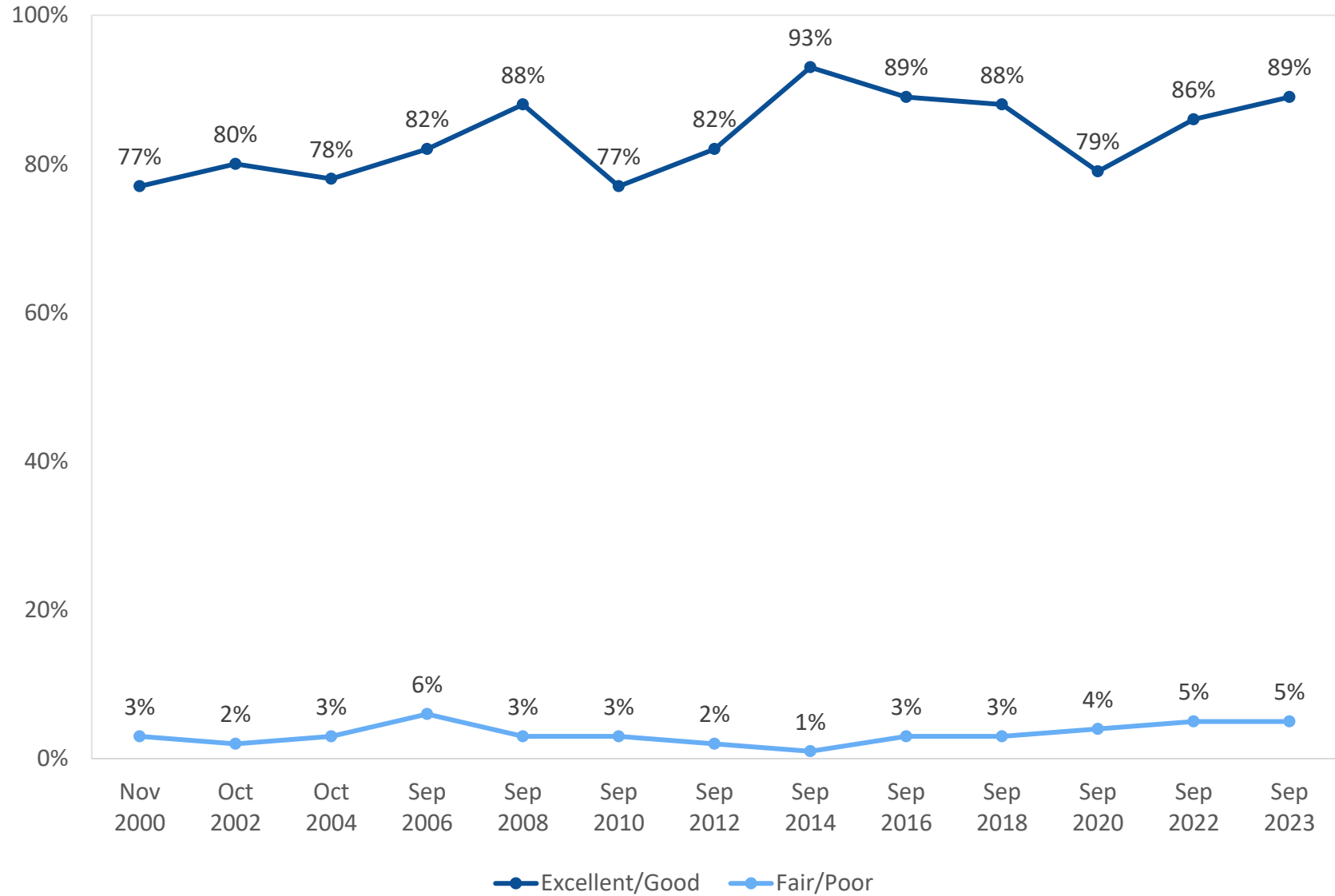
Now, I'd like to read you a number of services provided by the City of Cambridge. For each one, please rate the *quality* of these services on a scale of excellent, good, fair or poor.



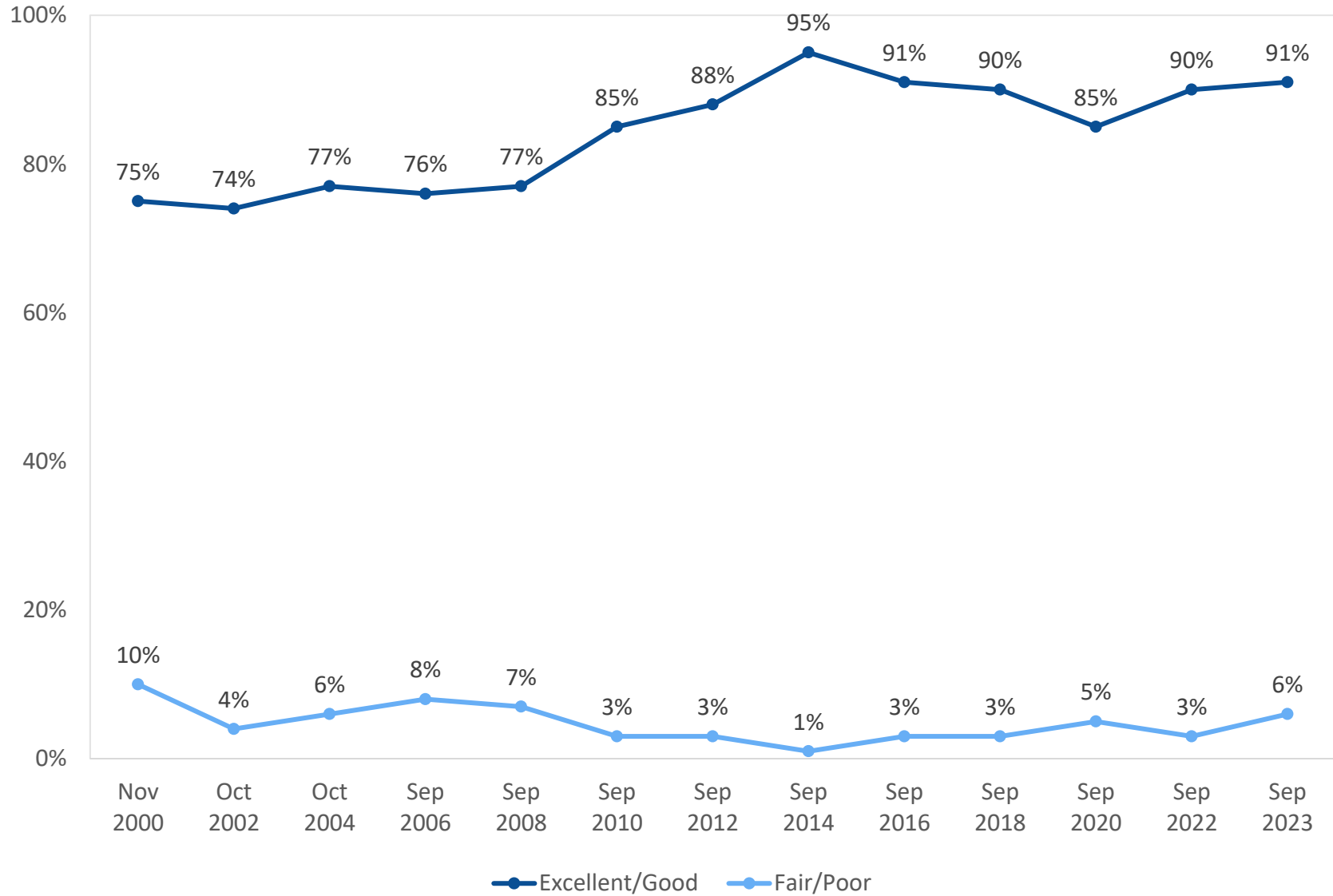
Police Department



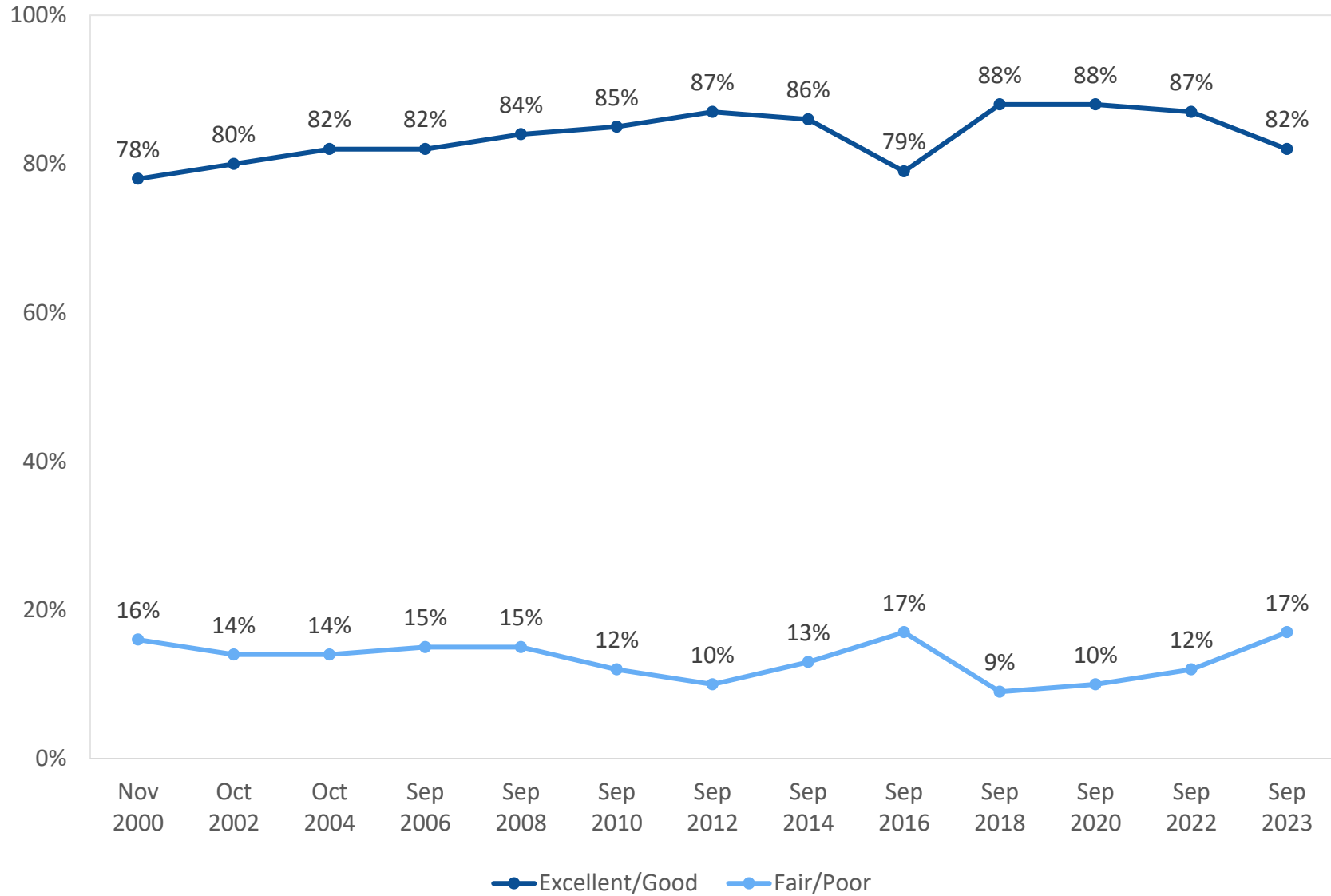
Fire Department



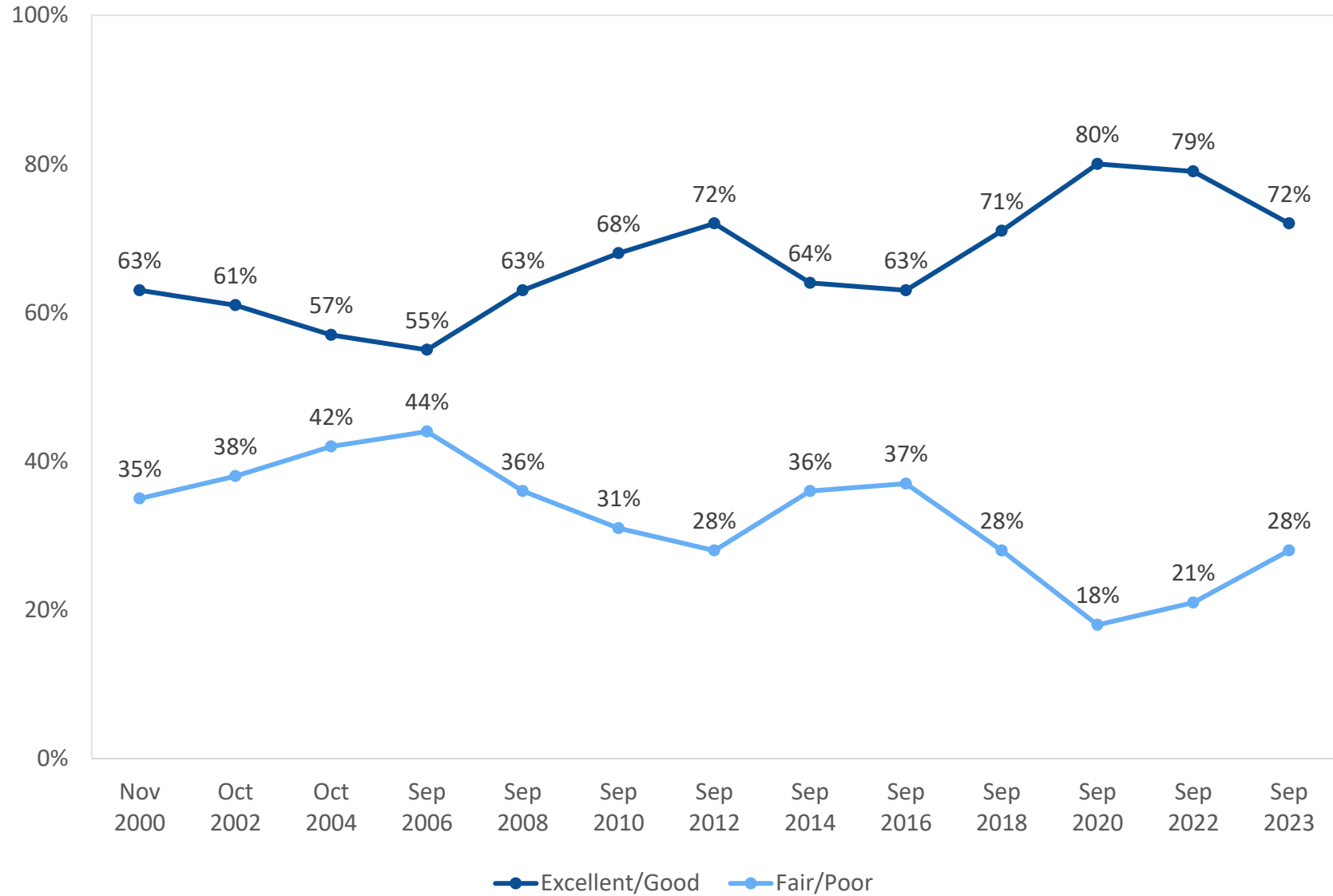
Libraries



City parks and park maintenance

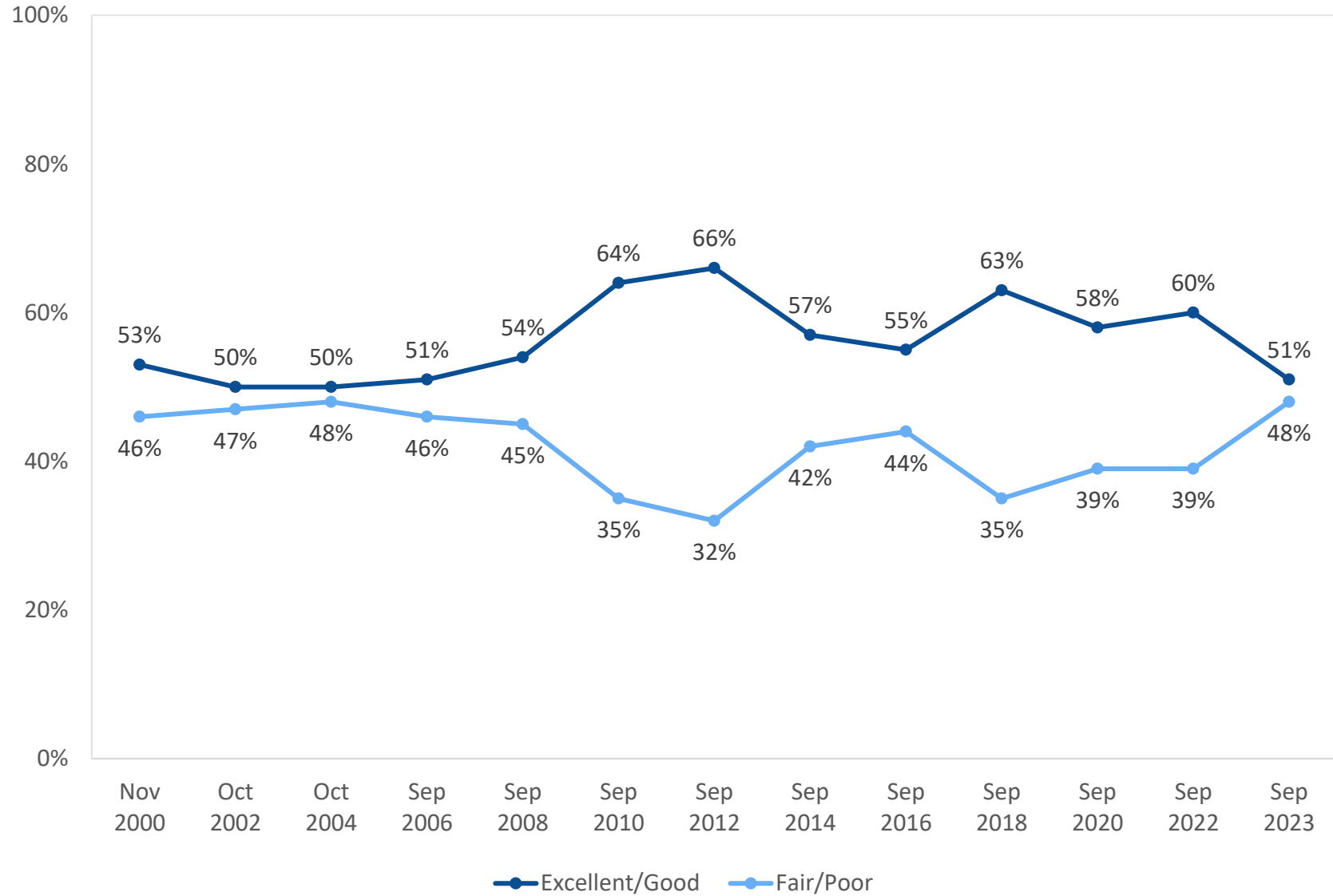


Street cleaning and maintenance*

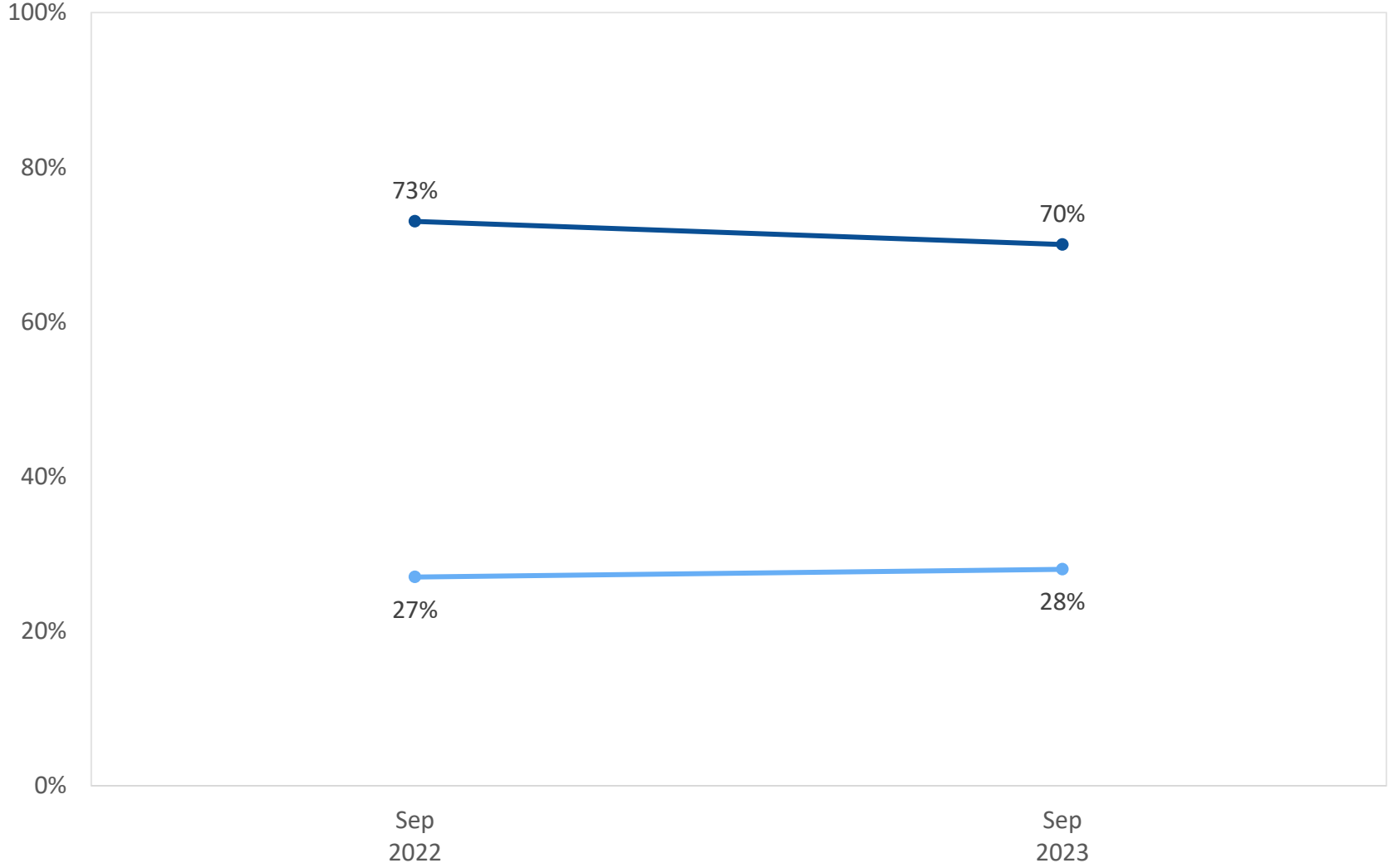


* new wording in 2020

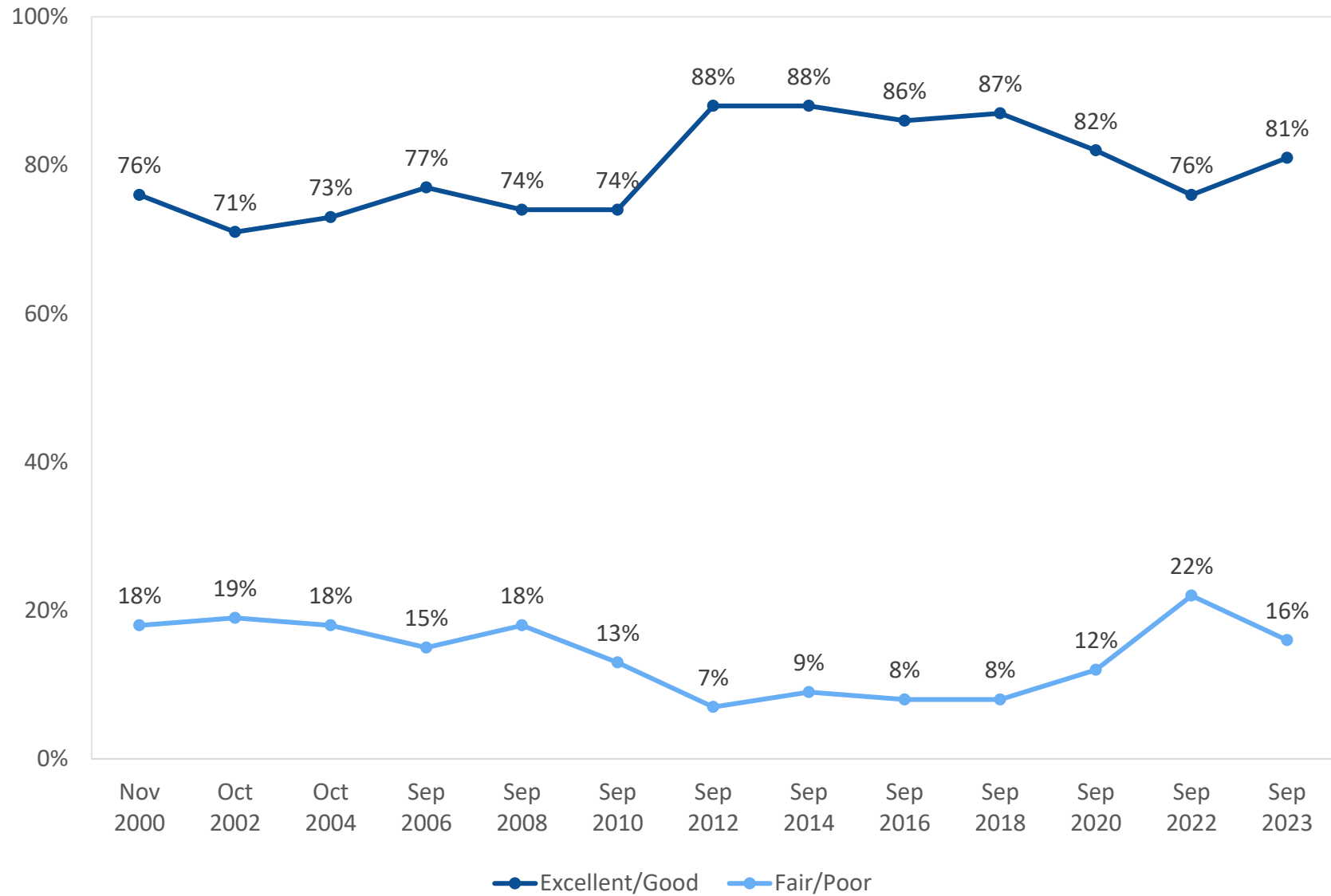
Sidewalk maintenance



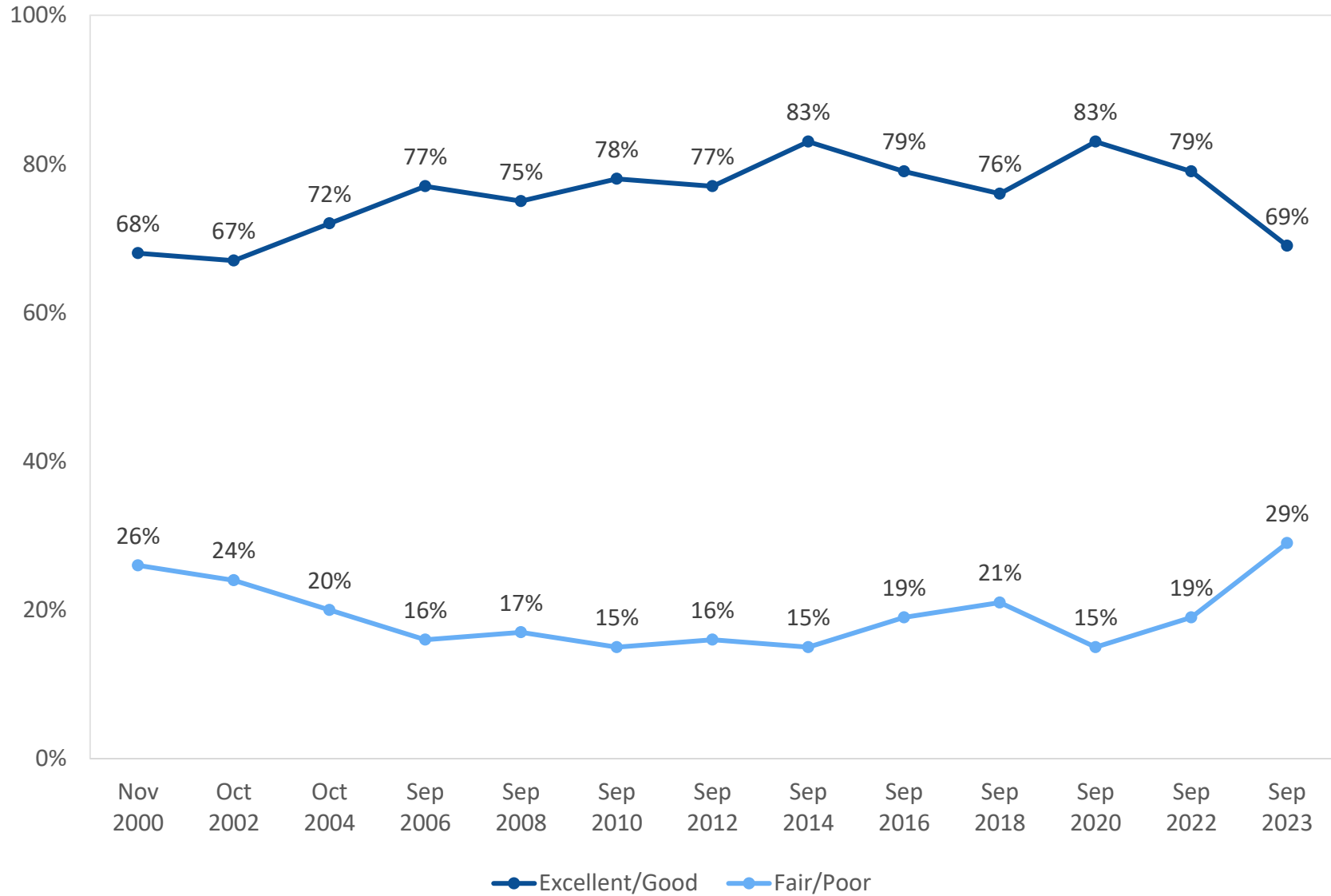
Snow plowing



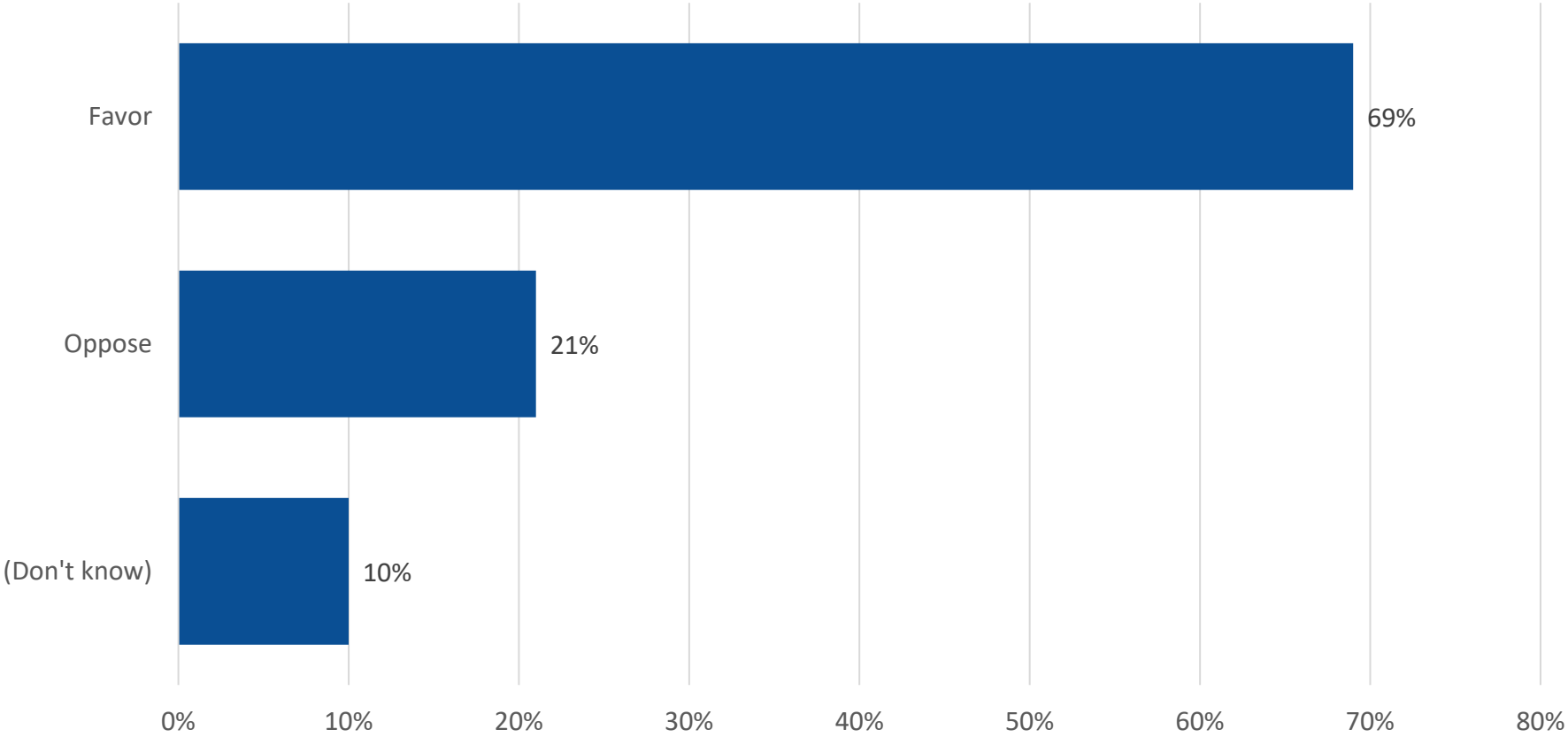
Water/sewer services



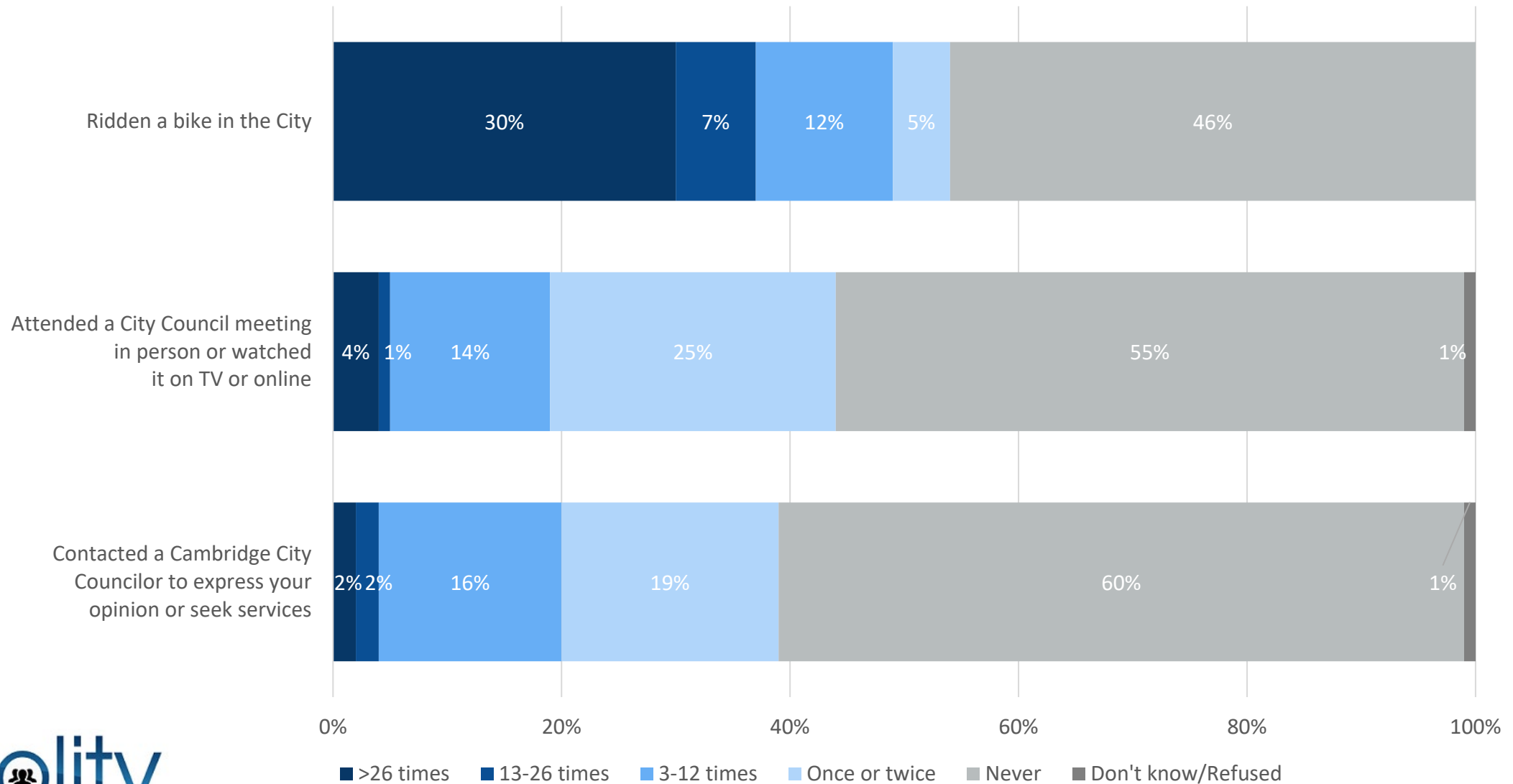
Public Information



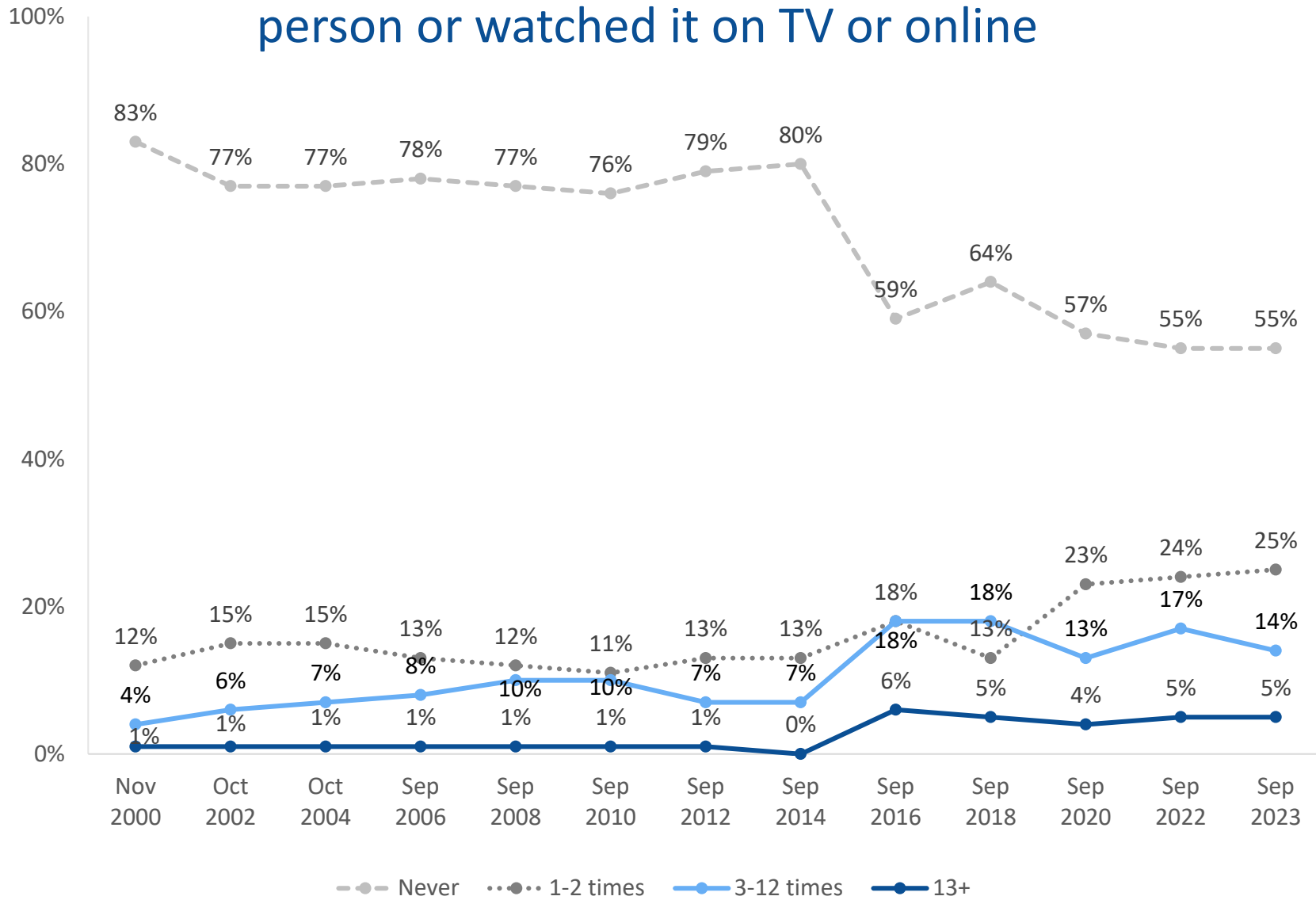
As you may know, the City implemented a street cleaning pilot program that replaced towing associated with street cleaning with a \$50 fine. Thinking about the current level of cleanliness of our streets, do you favor or oppose this pilot program becoming permanent?



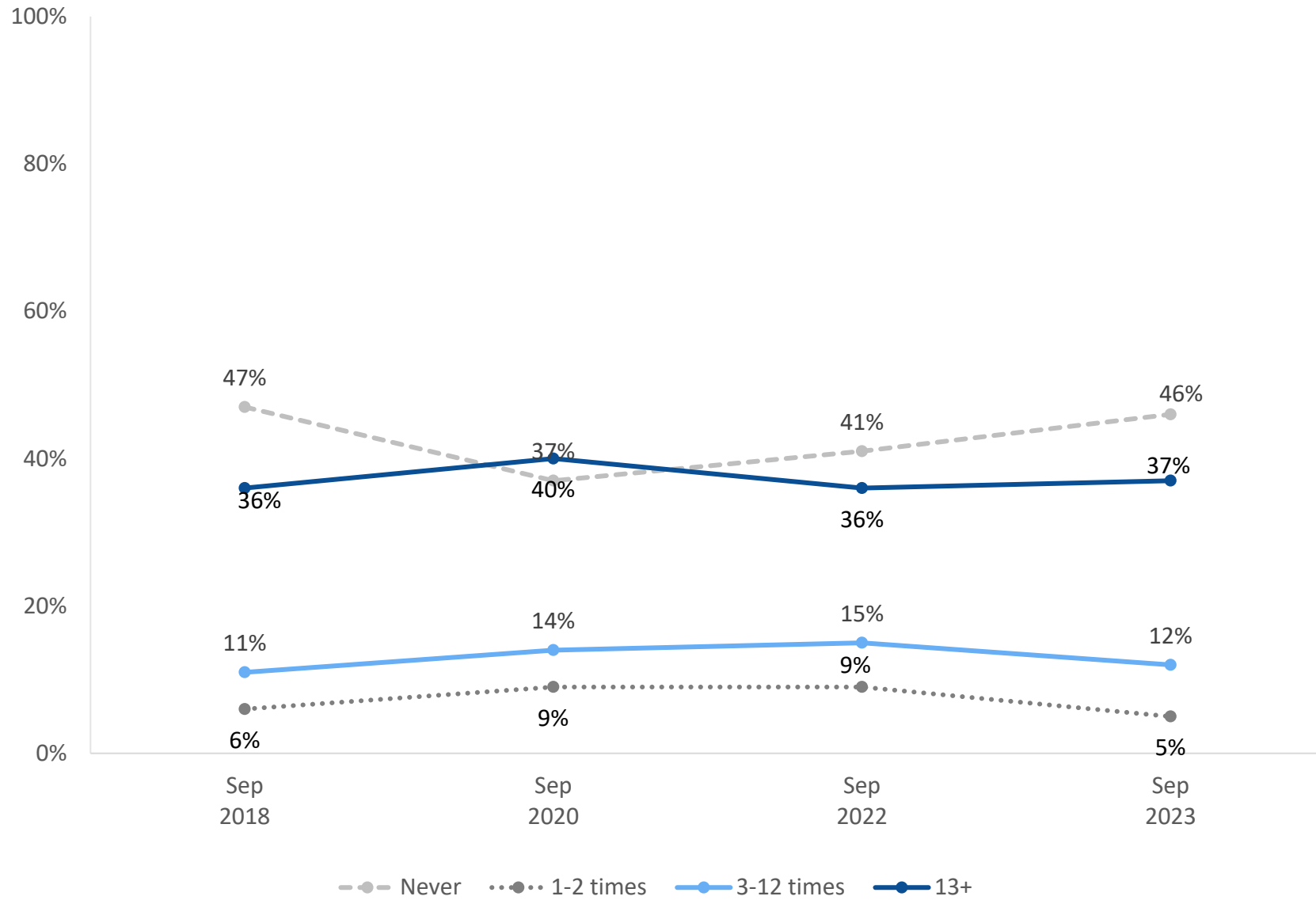
In the last 12 months, about how many times, if ever, have you or another household member done the following:



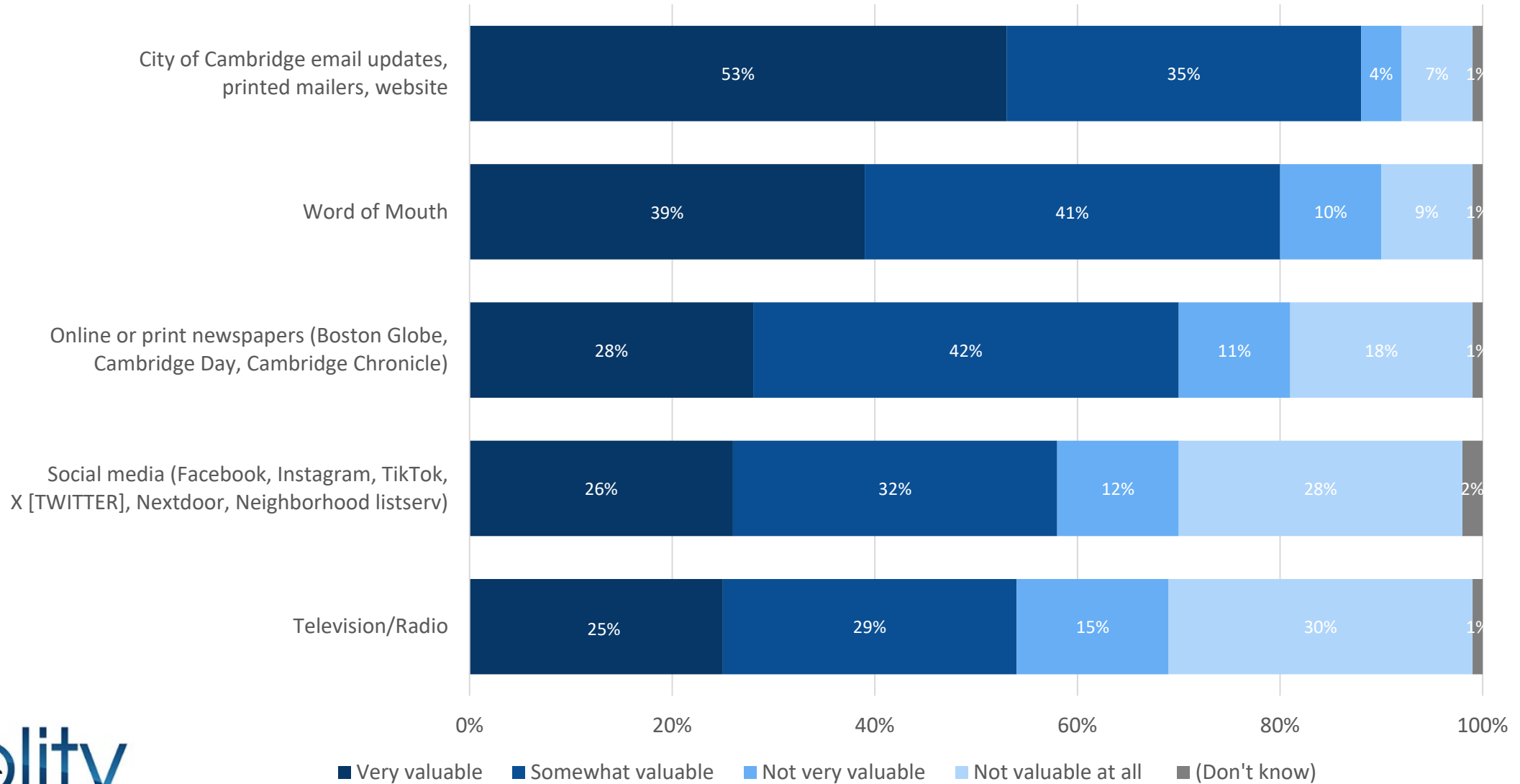
Times in the Last 12 Months: Attended a City Council meeting in person or watched it on TV or online



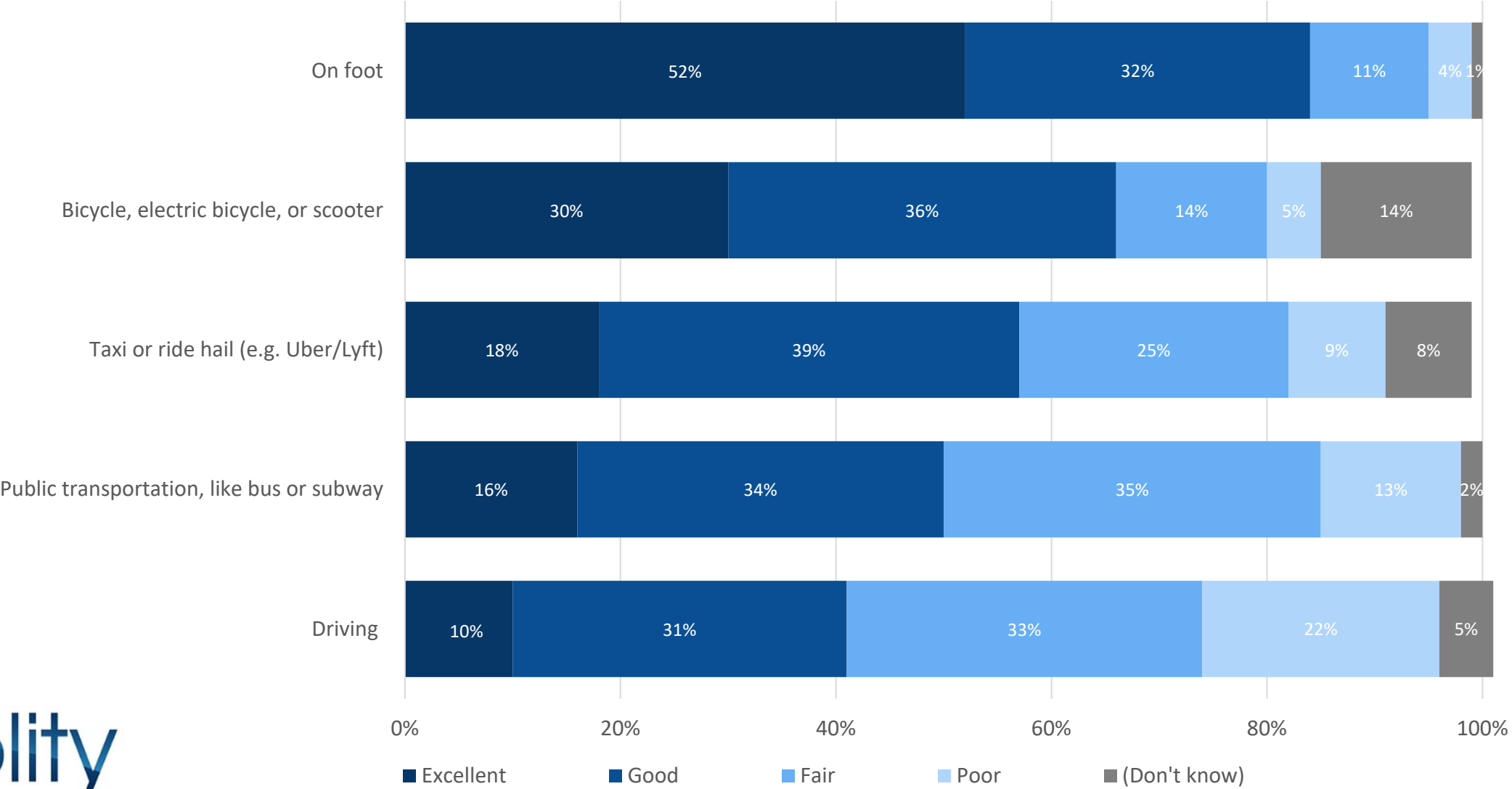
Times in the Last 12 Months: Ridden a bike in the City



Please rate how valuable each of the following Cambridge-related information sources for your household

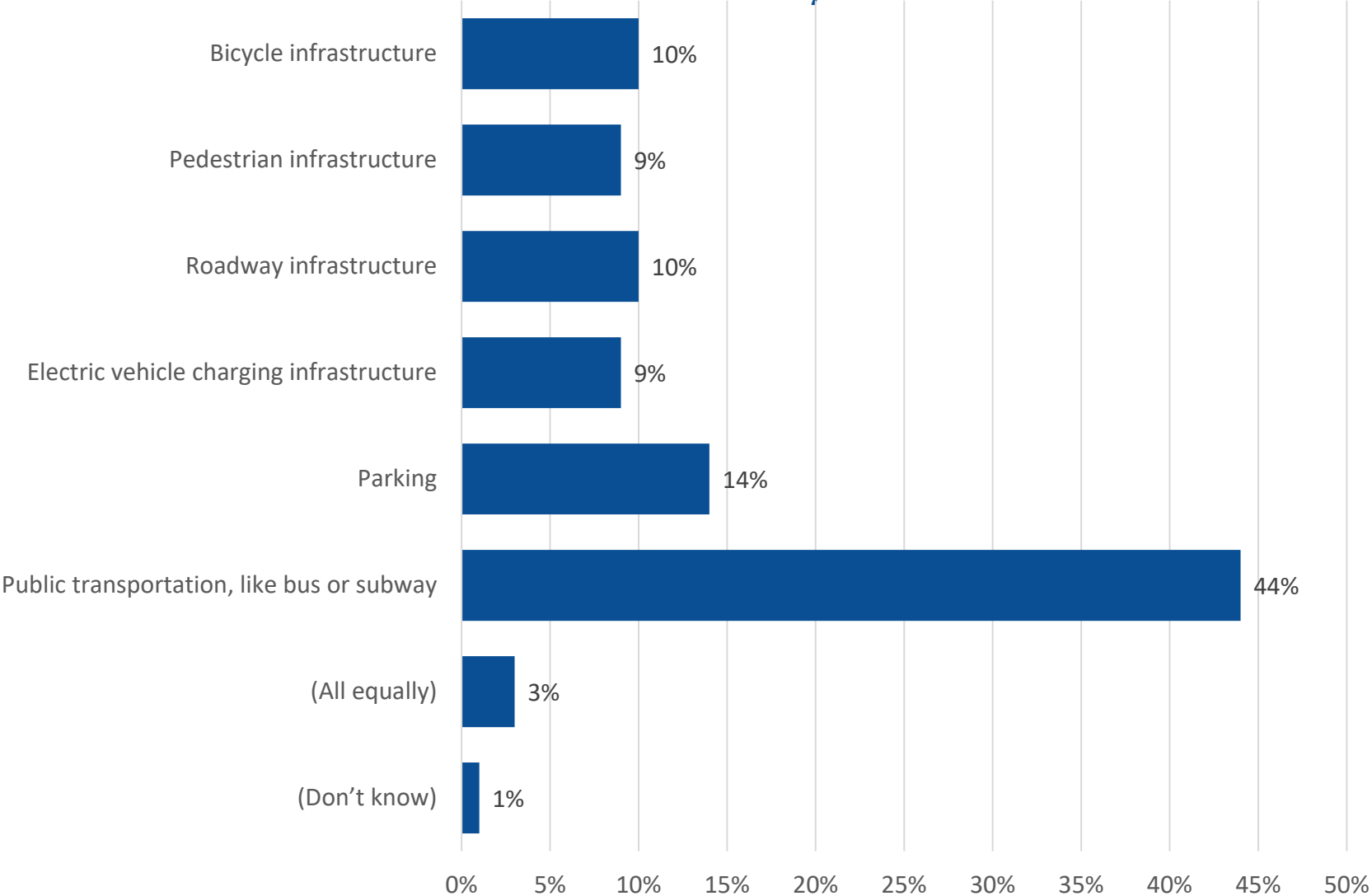


On a scale of excellent, good, fair or poor, please rate the ease of getting around the city for each of the following transportation options.

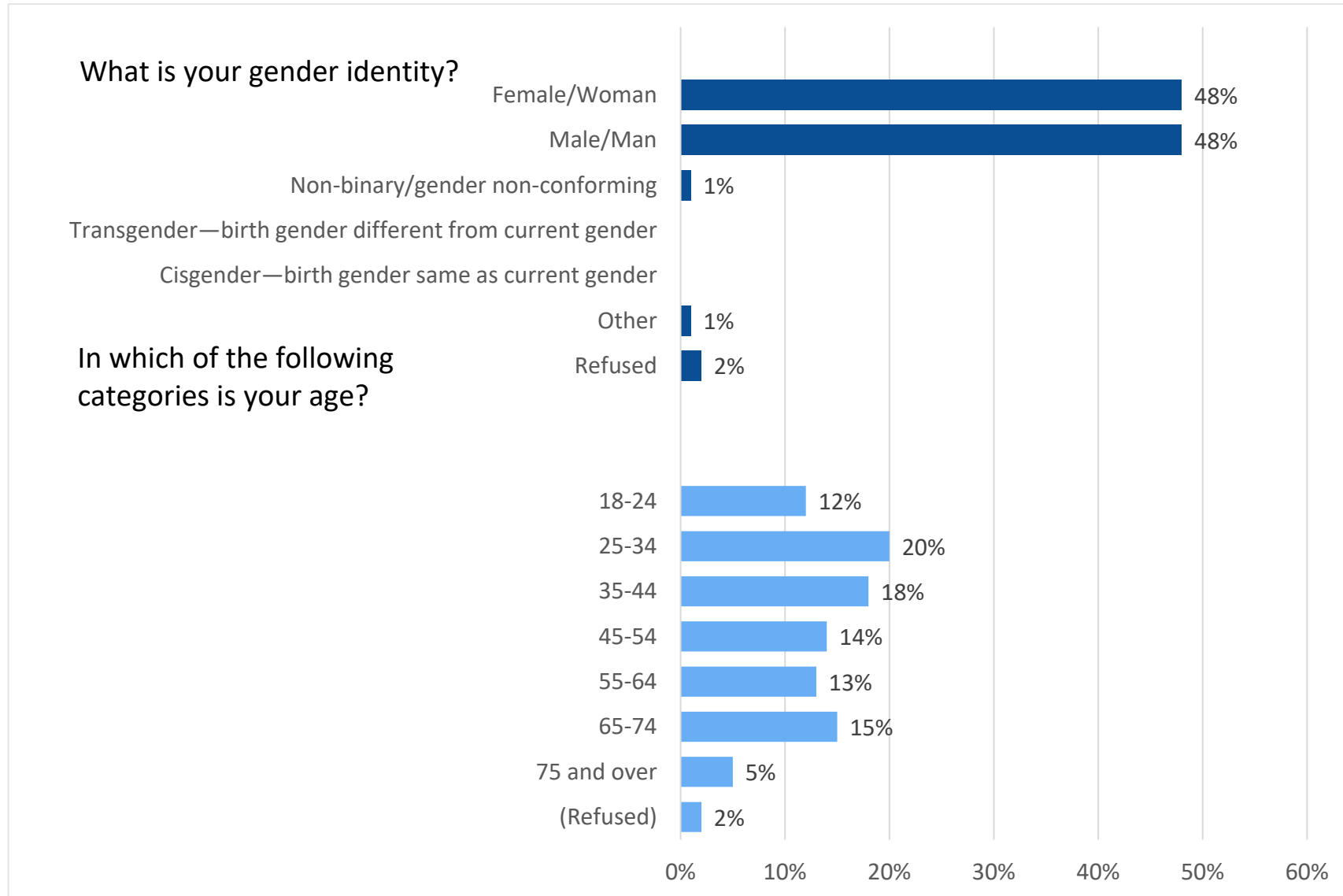


As you continue to think about transportation options to get around Cambridge, which of the following do you think is the *single most important option* for the city to focus on improving

over the next few years?

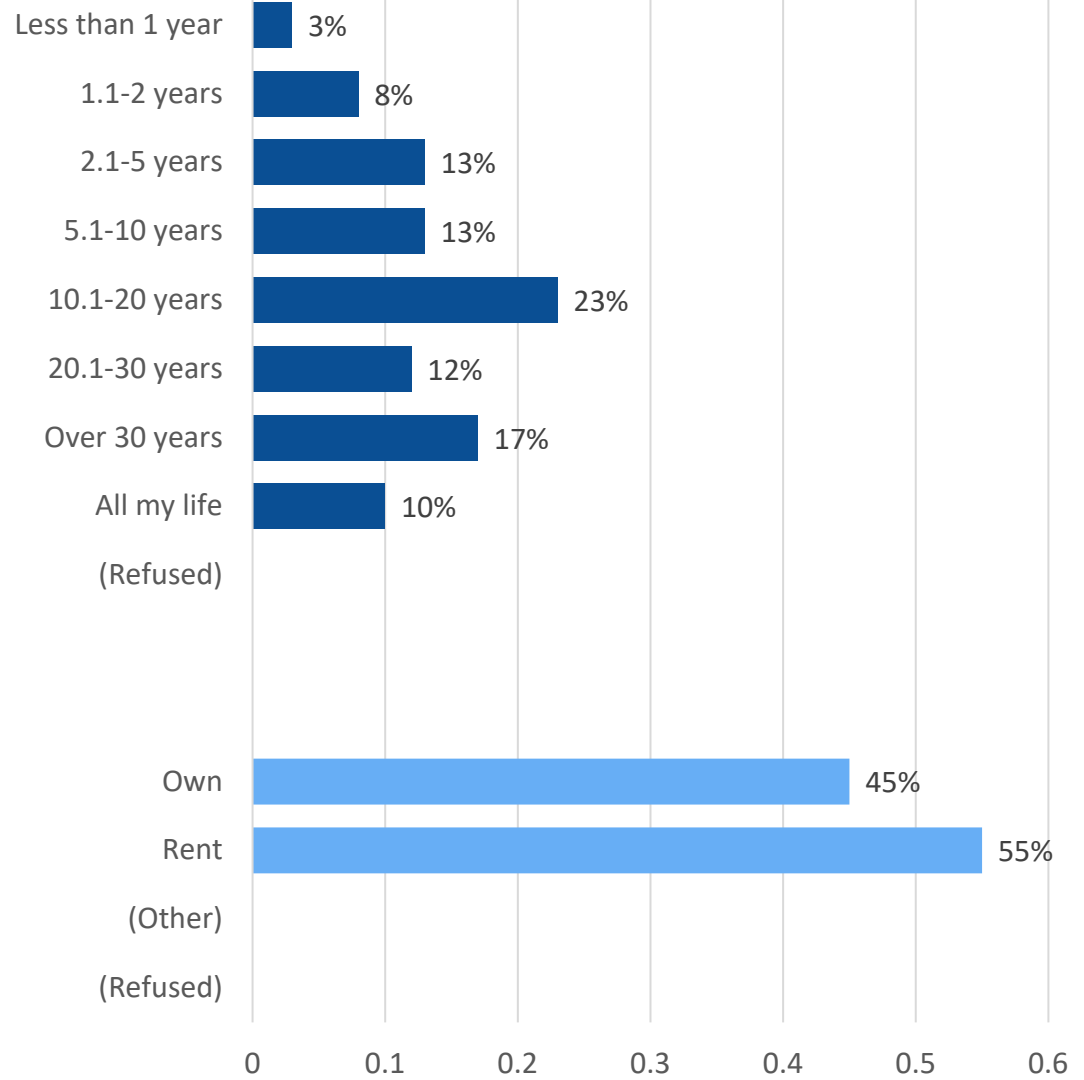


Demographics

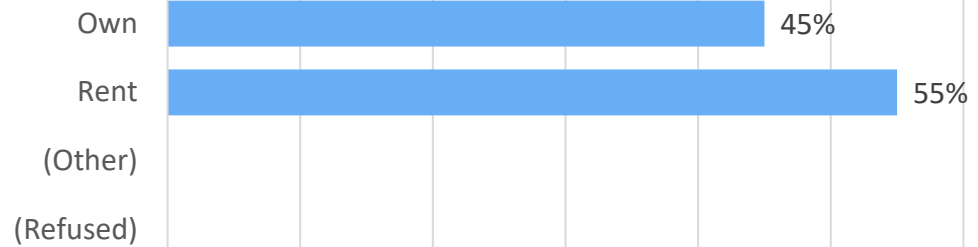


Demographics

How many years have you lived in Cambridge?

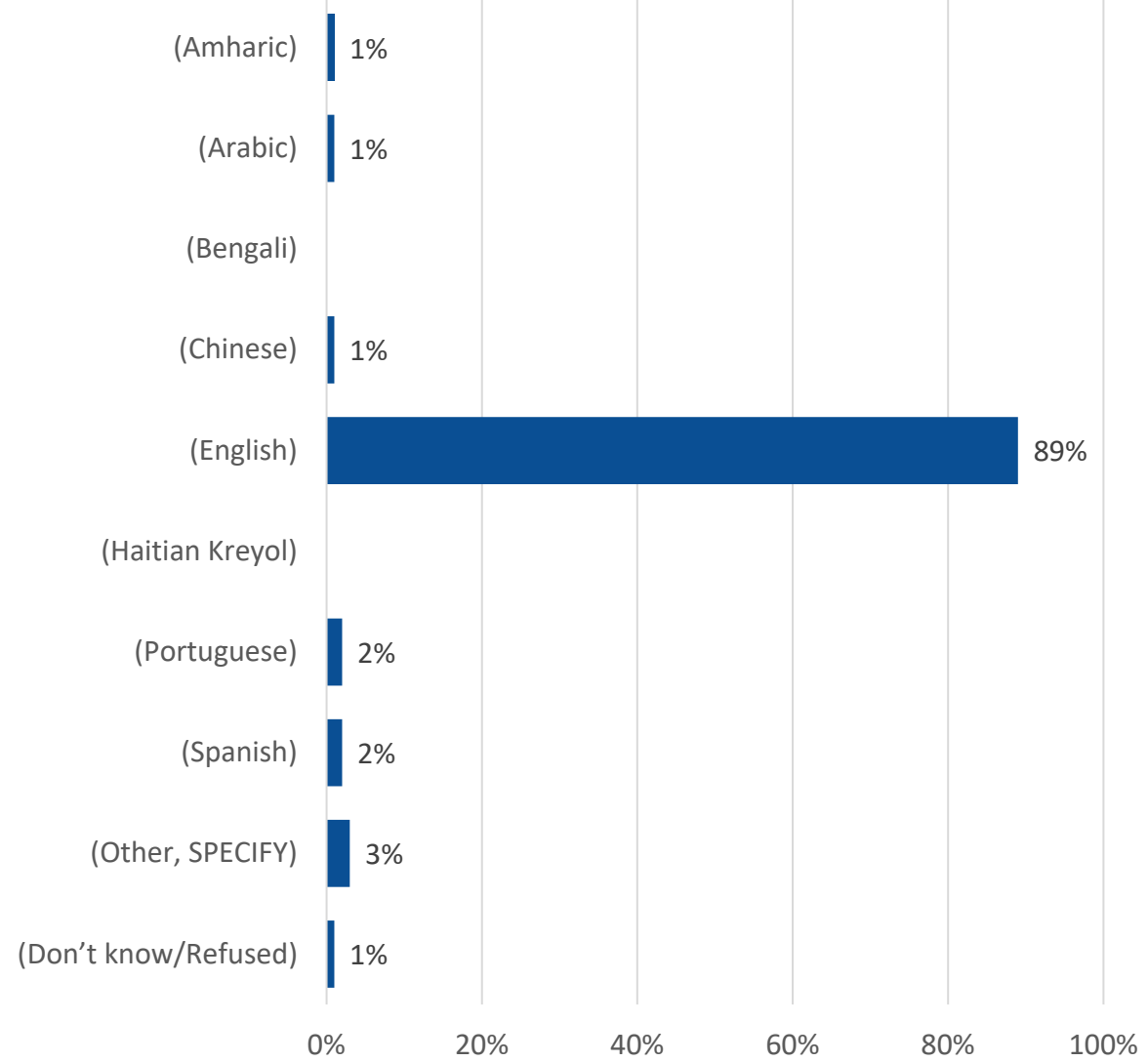


Do you own or rent your home?



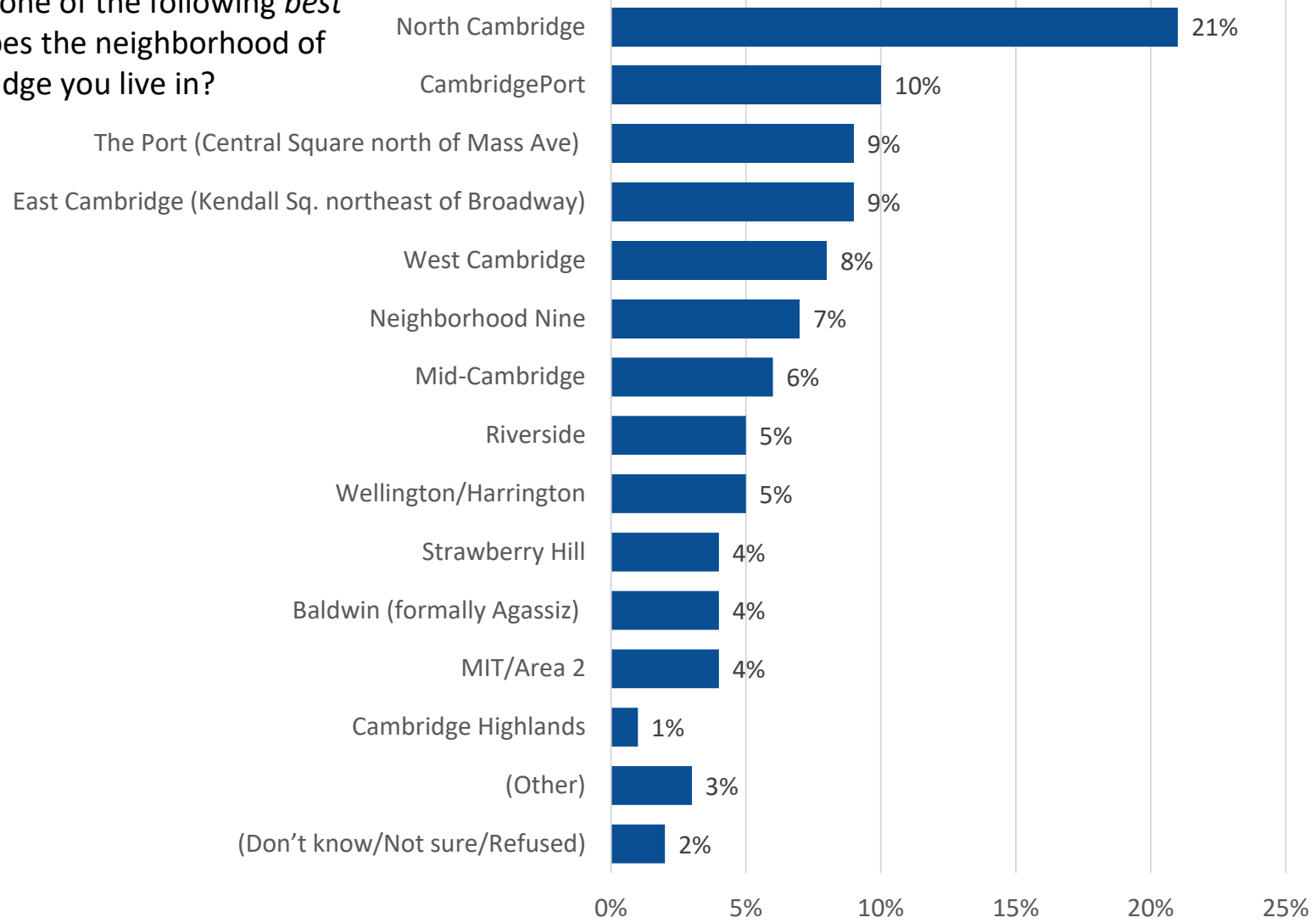
Demographics

What is the primary language you speak at home?

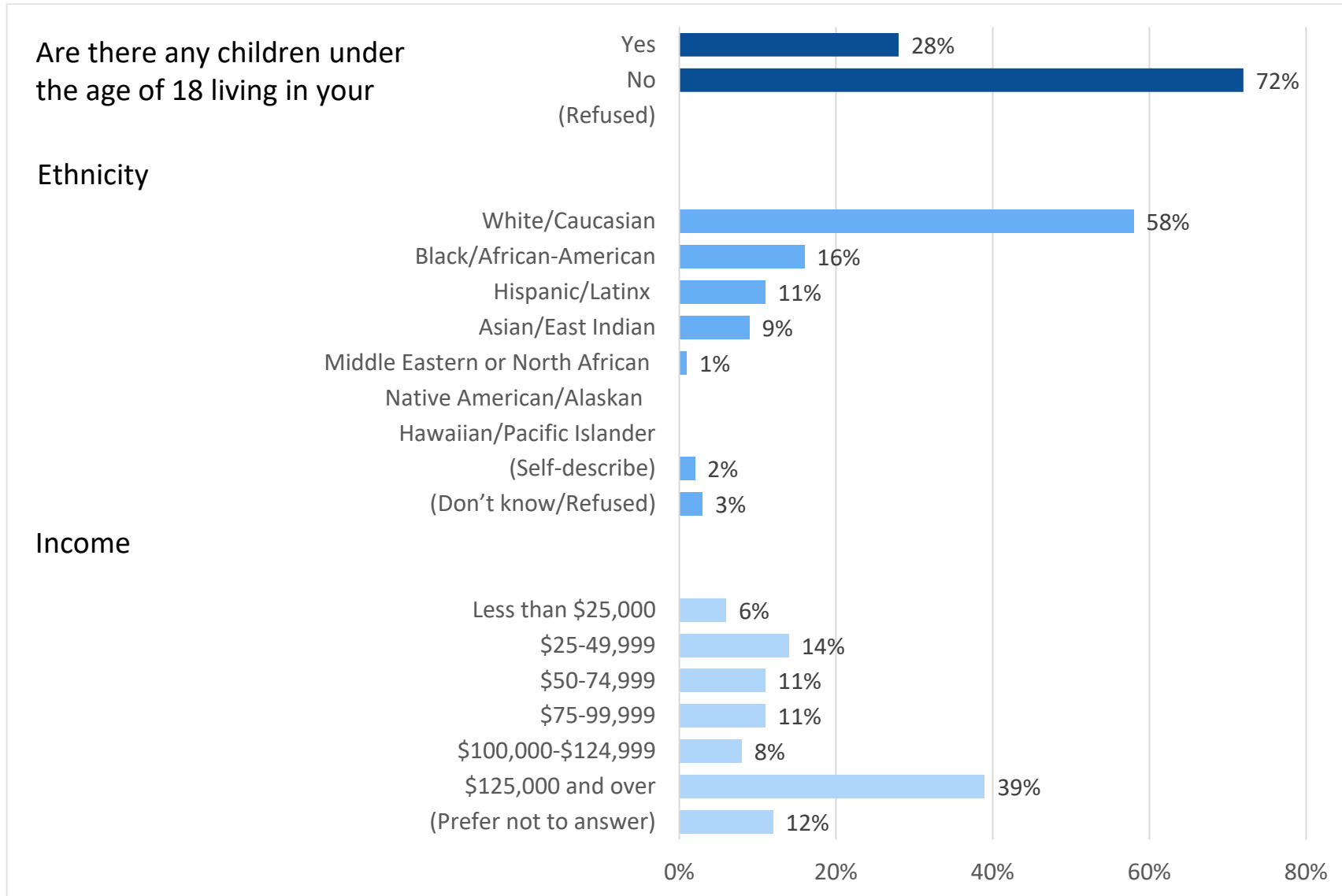


Demographics

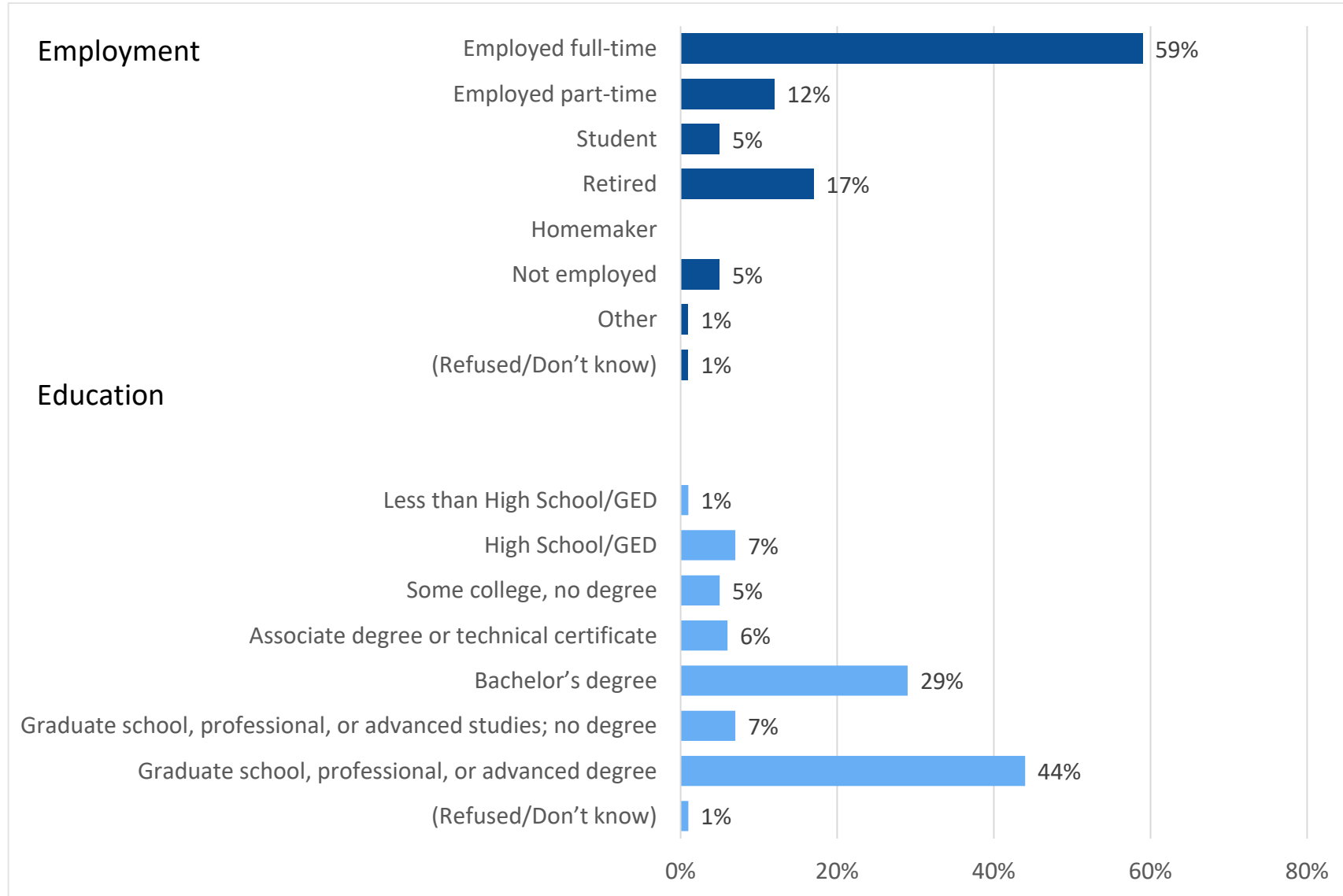
Which one of the following *best* describes the neighborhood of Cambridge you live in?

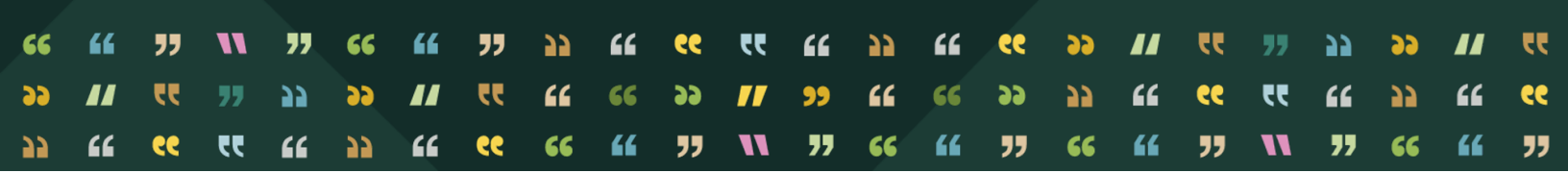


Demographics



Demographics





Cambridge, MA Public Opinion Survey

National Benchmark Comparisons

October 2023



8001 Terrace Ave., Middleton, WI 53562
info.polco.us • 608-709-8683

Detailed Benchmark Comparisons

Comparison Data

Polco/National Research Center (NRC)'s database of comparative resident opinion comprises resident perspectives gathered in surveys from over 500 communities. The comparison evaluations are from the most recent survey completed in each community; most communities conduct surveys every year or in alternating 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.

Interpreting the Results

Ratings are compared when there are at least five communities in which a similar question was asked. Where comparisons are available, four columns are provided in the table. The first column is Cambridge's "percent positive." The percent positive is the combination of the top two most positive response options (i.e., "excellent" and "good," "very safe" and "somewhat safe," "essential" and "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. The second column is the rank assigned to Cambridge's rating among communities where a similar question was asked. The third column is the number of communities that asked a similar question. The final column shows the comparison of Cambridge's rating to the benchmark.

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

National Benchmark Comparisons

Table 1: Quality of Life

Quality of Life Items	Percent positive	Rank	Number of communities in comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Cambridge as a place to live	90%	170	355	Similar
Recommend living in Cambridge to someone who asks	89%	120	309	Similar
Remain in Cambridge for the next five years	85%	122	307	Similar

Table 2: Governance

Governance Items	Percent positive	Rank	Number of communities in comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Public information	73%	144	310	Similar

Table 3: Economy

Economy Items	Percent positive	Rank	Number of communities in comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Economic health (including jobs and workforce development)	59%	196	309	Similar

Table 4: Mobility

Mobility Items	Percent positive	Rank	Number of communities in comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Quality of the transportation system (auto, bicycle, foot, bus, subway)	48%	155	253	Similar
Driving	42%	315	319	Much lower
Public transportation, like bus or subway	53%	74	294	Similar
On foot	87%	36	322	Higher
Snow plowing	73%	141	260	Similar
Sidewalk maintenance	52%	242	312	Similar

Table 5: Community Design

Community Design Items	Percent positive	Rank	Number of communities in comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Your neighborhood as a place to live	89%	147	317	Similar

Table 6: Utilities

Utilities Items	Percent positive	Rank	Number of communities in comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Quality of public utility infrastructure (water, sewer, storm water)	63%	149	244	Similar

Table 7: Safety

Safety Items	Percent positive	Rank	Number of communities in comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Cambridge as a safe place to live	90%	151	344	Similar
Police department	76%	312	366	Similar
Fire department	95%	206	333	Similar

Table 8: Parks and Recreation

Parks and Recreation Items	Percent positive	Rank	Number of communities in comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Quality of open space, parks, and recreation opportunities	78%	170	250	Similar
City parks and park maintenance	84%	212	322	Similar

Table 9: Health and Wellness

Health and Wellness Items	Percent positive	Rank	Number of communities in comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Public health department	77%	135	283	Similar

Table 10: Education, Arts, and Culture

Education, Arts, and Culture Items	Percent positive	Rank	Number of communities in comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Opportunities in education, culture, and the arts	75%	105	306	Similar
Libraries	94%	66	318	Similar

Table 11: Inclusivity and Engagement

Inclusivity and Engagement Items	Percent positive	Rank	Number of communities in comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	46%	173	247	Similar
A sense of community	71%	181	324	Similar
A place welcoming to all races, ethnicities, cultures, and identities	86%	7	320	Higher

Table 12: Participation

Participation Items	Percent positive	Rank	Number of communities in comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Contacted a Cambridge City Councilor to express your opinion or seek services	40%	2	295	Much higher

Table 13: Focus Areas

Importance Items	Percent essential or very important	Rank	Number of communities in comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Economic health (including jobs and workforce development)	79%	67	284	Similar
Quality of the transportation system (auto, bicycle, foot, bus, subway)	86%	2	244	Much higher
Quality of public utility infrastructure (water, sewer, storm water)	82%	29	244	Similar
Quality of open space, parks, and recreation opportunities	77%	5	245	Higher
Opportunities in education, culture, and the arts	79%	1	284	Much higher
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	67%	11	284	Higher