Cobalt CommunityResearch

Supporting Decisions | Inspiring Ideas

City of Walla Walla Engagement and Priority Assessment

January 2024

City of Walla Walla

2026056

© 2024 CobaltCommunityResearch

Background on Cobalt Community Research

- 501c3 not for profit research coalition
- Mission to provide research and education
- Developed to meet the research needs of schools, local governments, and nonprofit organizations

Measuring Where You Are:
Why Research Matters

- Understanding community values and priorities helps you plan and communicate more effectively about City decisions
- Perception impacts behaviors you care about
- Understanding community perception helps you improve and promote the City
- Community engagement improves support for difficult decisions
- Reliable data on community priorities aids in balancing demands of vocal groups with the reality of limited resources
- Bottom line outcome measurement of service and trust: Good administration requires quality measurement and reporting

Study Goals

- Support budget and strategic planning decisions
- Explore service compared with baseline measures
- Identify which aspects of community provide the greatest leverage on Residents' overall satisfaction – and how satisfaction, in turn, influences the community's image and Resident behaviors such as volunteering, remaining in the community, recommending it to others and encouraging businesses to start up in the community
- Benchmark performance against a standardized performance index statewide, regionally and nationally
- Compare performance to 2013-2022 Resident surveys

Bottom Line

- City continues to outperform benchmarks in most areas and generally improved or held steady when compared to 2022
- 2023 ACSI Score = 67 (65 in 2022)
  - Washington (25,000-100,000 residents) = 60
  - West = 62
  - National = 62
- 2023 Local Government Management Score = 73 (70 in 2022)
  - Washington (25,000-100,000 residents) = 57
  - West = 61
  - National = 60
- There are several areas where improvement can have significant impact on engagement:

2023 Drivers:
City Government Management
Community Image
City Services
Economic Health
Parks/Recreation

2022 Drivers:
City Government Management
City Services
Community Image
Economic Health
Parks/Recreation

Bottom Line

- Residents express concern around street repairs, drug use, homelessness, traffic enforcement, residential code enforcement, and affordability of homes (especially for young families and seniors)
- 53% support a sales tax to address home affordability, 29% do not support, and 16% undecided
- Residents would like more enforcement for distracted drivers at crosswalks, fireworks, and lawn overgrowth
- Library use is rising, and residents see and support the efforts to do new programs
- Top funding priorities are street maintenance, police services, ambulance services, and fire services

American Customer Satisfaction Index:
Sample of Private Sector Companies Measured

- Allstate
- Albertsons
- Apple, Inc.
- Bank of America
- Bell South (U.S.)
- Best Buy (U.S.)
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield
- Charter Communications
- Citibank
- Coca-Cola (U.S.)
- Comcast
- Dell
- DIRECTV
- Facebook
- FedEx
- Ford Motor Company
- General Electric
- General Motors
- Google
- Hilton
- Home Depot
- Kellogg
- McDonald's
- Microsoft
- MillerCoors
- Netflix
- Nike
- Sears Roebuck and Co.
- Southwest Airlines
- Sprint
- Starbucks
- Target
- Verizon
- Wal-Mart
- Yahoo!

View more: www.theacsi.org

American Customer Satisfaction Index:
Sample of Public Sector Agencies Measured

- Department of Education, Federal Student Aid
- Department of Energy
- Federal Emergency Management Administration
- Federal Trade Commission
- General Services Administration
- Health Resources and Services Administration
- Internal Revenue Service
- Municipal-owned Utilities
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- National Weather Service
- National Recreation Reservation Service
- Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation
- Small Business Administration
- Veterans Affairs

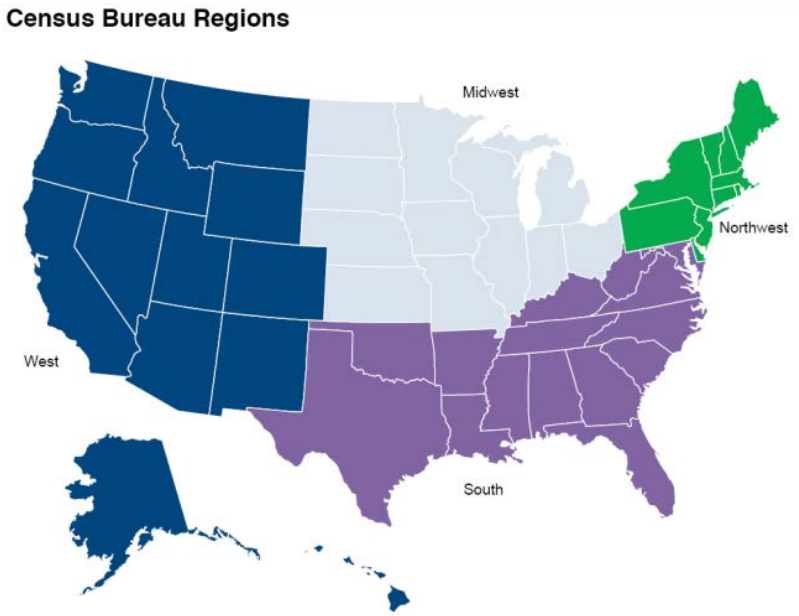
View more: www.theacsi.org

Scores in Context

	2023 U.S. 25-100k	2023 U.S.	2023 West 25-100k	2023 West	2023 WA 25-100k	2023 WA
Community ACSI	62	62	62	62	61	60
Local schools ACSI	60	60	61	61	60	59
County/parish government ACSI	58	58	58	59	57	56
State government ACSI	56	55	57	57	54	53
City of Walla Walla 67						

Available Tools

- Detailed questions and responses broken by demographic group and “thermal mapped”, so lower scores are red and higher scores are blue
- Comparison scores with local governments in Washington, the West and across the nation
- Comparison scores with non-local government benchmarks (industries, companies, federal agencies)



Methodology

- Random sample of 2,000 residents drawn from utility records
- Utilized www.random.org, a well-respected utility to generate true random numbers
- Performed a random stratified sample based on ward, with an equal representation of 500 surveys sent to each
- Conducted using two mailings in November and December 2023
- Valid response from 344 residents, providing a solid response rate and a margin of error of +/- 5.19 percent
  - Note: National surveys with a margin of error +/- 5% require a sample of 384 responses to reflect a population of 330,000,000
- Results weighted to adjust ward representation to proportions in utility records
- In addition, 58 residents responded who were not part of the random sample, producing a total response of 402. These responses were not included in the statistical results, but are included as a row in the crosstab report

Preserving Voice: Looking Into Detail

2023 Rating Questions City of Walla Walla Response: 344, Margin of Error +/- 5.19%		Fire services						Utilities						
		Fire overall	Fire coverage for the community	Fire prevention education	Response time to fires	Response time to medical emergencies	Availability and quality of services in Spanish	Utilities overall	Drinking water quality	Residential garbage collection service	Landfill services	Recycling service	Green waste collection	Availability and quality of services in Spanish
2013 Overall Satisfaction		85	88	78	87	87	-	81	83	84	69	81	67	-
2015 Overall Satisfaction		87	88	77	90	89	-	82	84	86	72	82	69	-
2016 Overall Satisfaction		87	89	78	90	90	-	82	83	85	83	75	74	-
2017 Overall Satisfaction		86	89	77	89	88	-	84	85	87	84	72	74	-
2018 Overall Satisfaction		87	89	78	89	90	78	81	82	86	82	64	64	74
2019 Overall Satisfaction		87	89	79	90	89	79	80	83	86	84	66	76	83
2020 Overall Satisfaction		83	89	73	89	89	74	77	82	87	84	61	73	76
2021 Overall Satisfaction		83	88	73	88	88	77	72	82	84	83	44	64	73
2022 Overall Satisfaction		86	90	79	92	91	79	77	83	87	86	50	72	82
2023 Overall Satisfaction		84	87	78	88	89	80	77	82	87	83	56	70	82
Residency	One year or less*	-	-	-	-	-	-	56	67	67	-	33	-	-
	1-5 years	84	89	74	92	94	72	82	78	88	89	57	80	100
	6-10 years	81	84	72	86	90	72	70	79	84	73	49	58	79
	10 years+	85	88	79	88	89	82	77	84	87	83	57	70	82

Consistent Scores Regardless of Demographics

Checkered Scores that Vary by Demographics

Results

Comparing 2022 and 2023

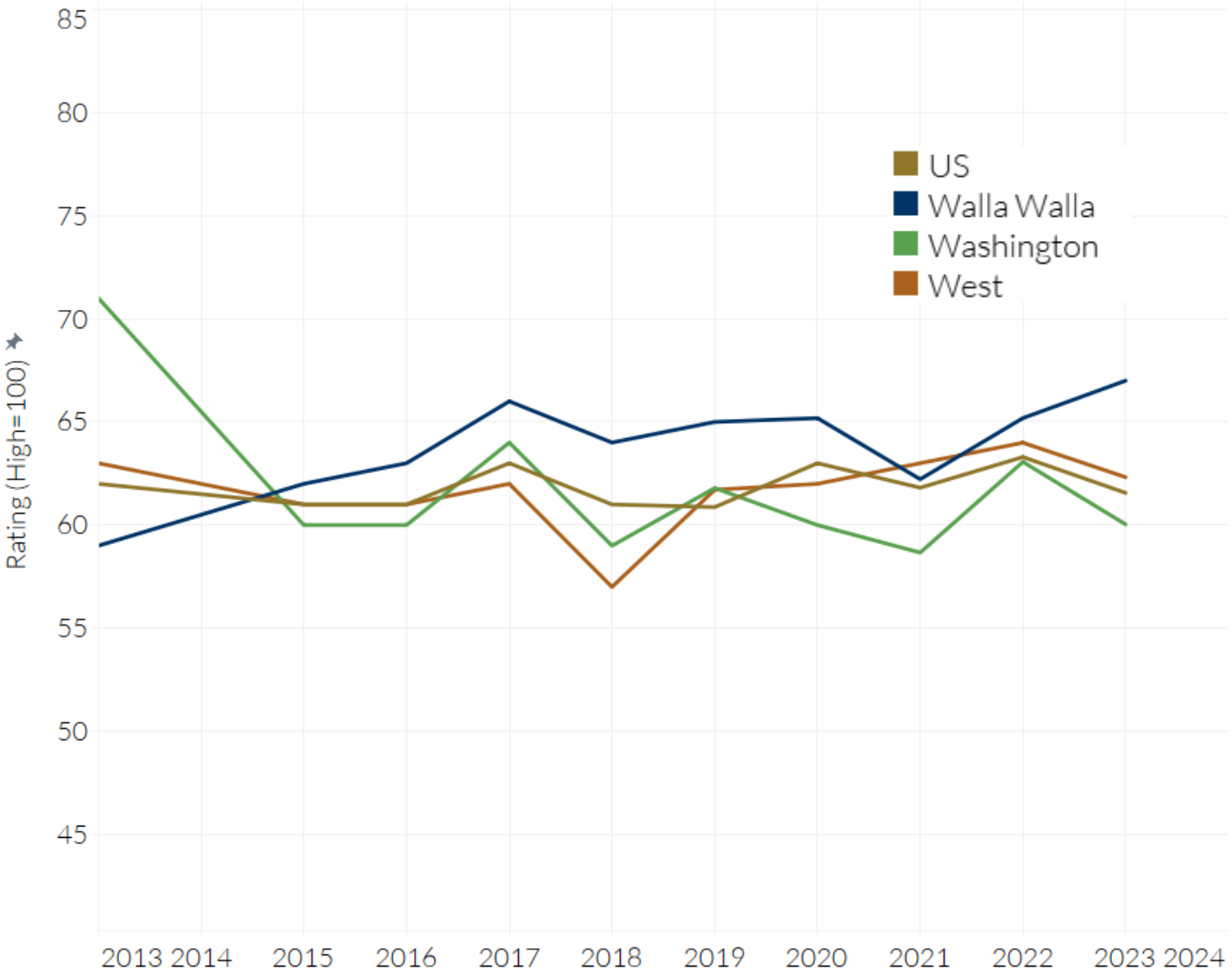
(High score = 100)

2023 areas with strong impact on overall engagement

	2023 U.S. 25-100k	2023 U.S.	2023 West 25-100k	2023 West	2023 WA 25-100k	2023 WA	2022 Walla Walla	2023 Walla Walla	Change
Fire and Emergency Medical Services Overall	75	76	75	77	76	78	86	84	-2.0
Transportation Overall	62	63	65	66	65	64	65	66	0.9
Utility Services Overall	70	69	73	72	73	73	77	77	0.0
Police Department Overall	67	68	67	69	66	68	84	82	-2.4
Shopping Opportunities Overall	75	72	77	74	76	74	59	58	-1.4
Local Government Overall	59	60	59	61	57	58	70	73	2.1
Community Events Overall	63	63	64	65	63	63	71	72	1.6
Economic Health Overall	56	57	54	56	54	54	50	49	-1.7
Parks and Recreation Overall	66	67	66	68	66	67	78	79	1.4
Library Overall	68	70	69	71	69	71	82	84	2.4
Community Image Overall	64	65	65	66	62	63	71	73	1.5
Other City Services							77	73	-4.1
Community Satisfaction Overall - ACSI	**62**	**62**	**62**	**62**	**61**	**60**	**65**	**67**	**1.9**

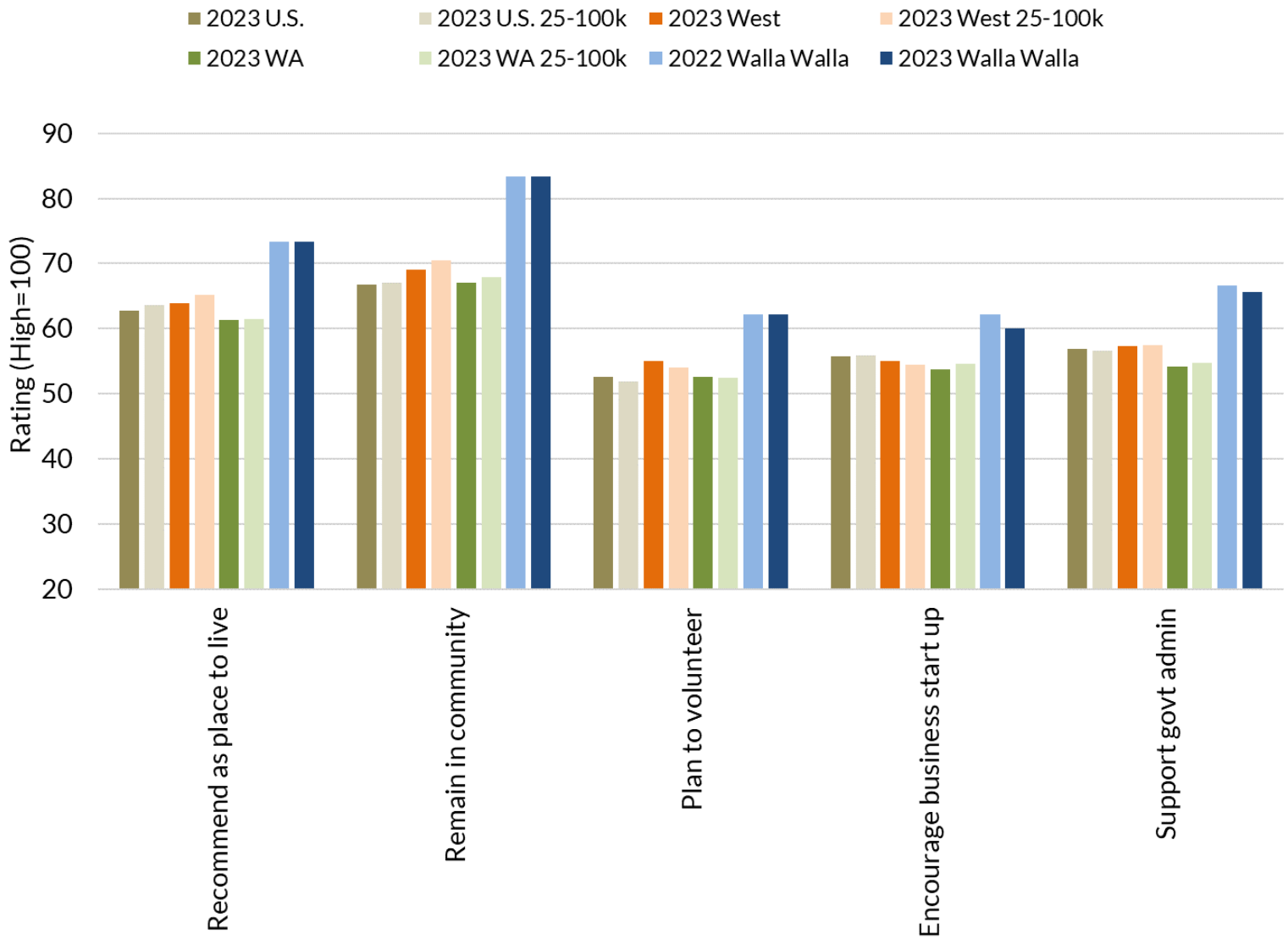
Note: Change is calculated from unrounded numbers

Community Satisfaction to Benchmarks



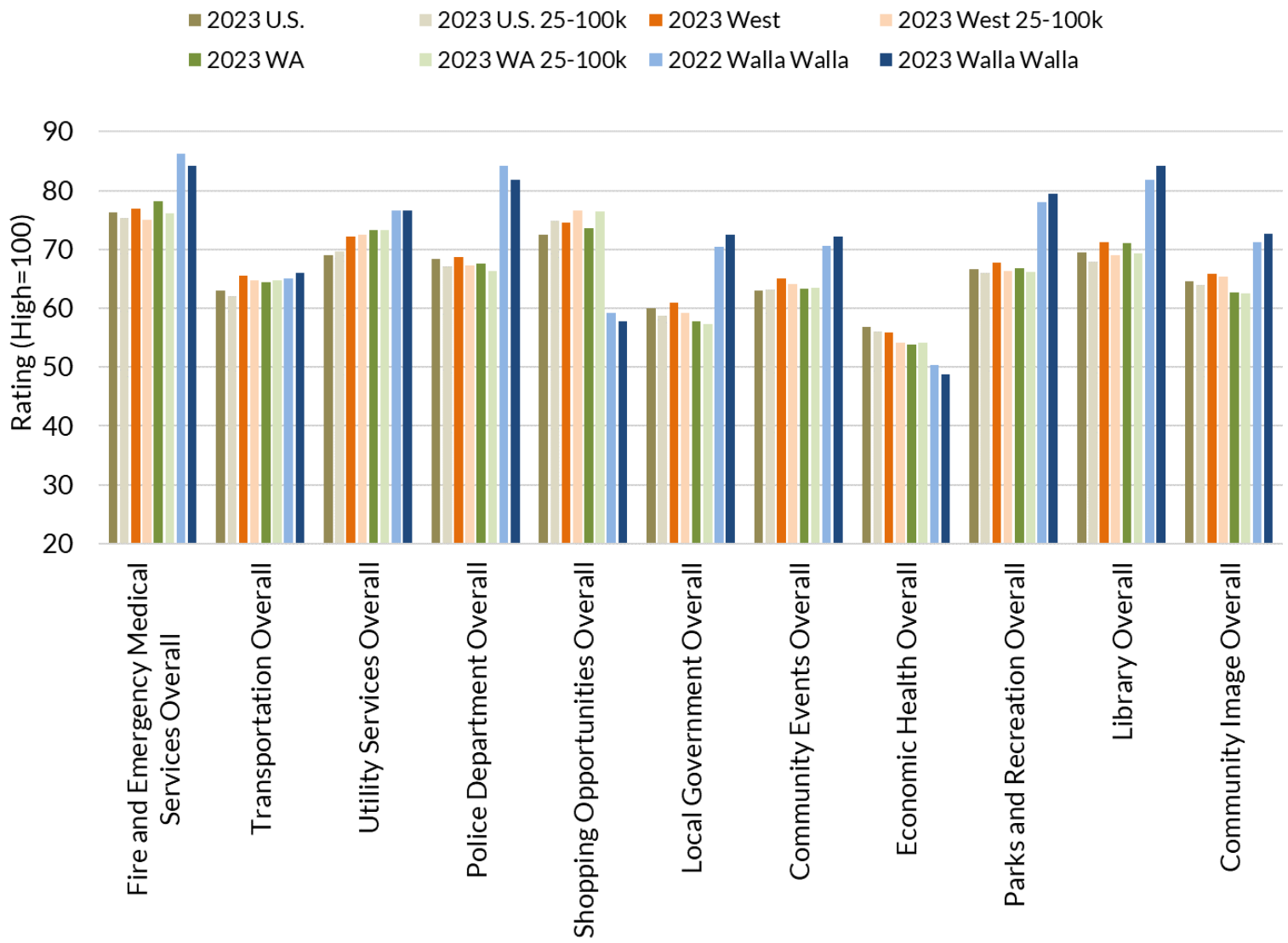
Outcome Behaviors to Benchmarks

(High score = 100)



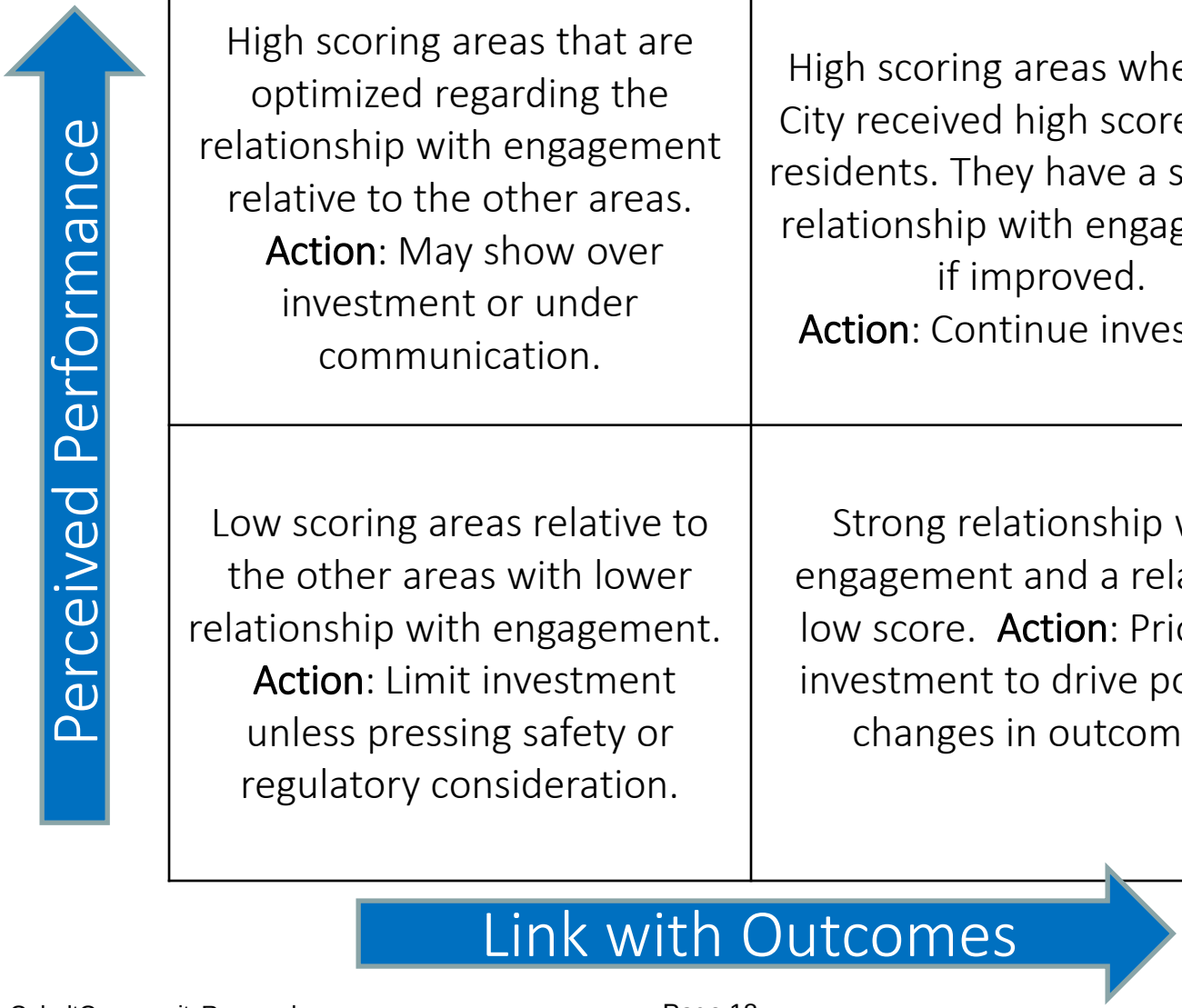
Community Experience Components

High score = 100)

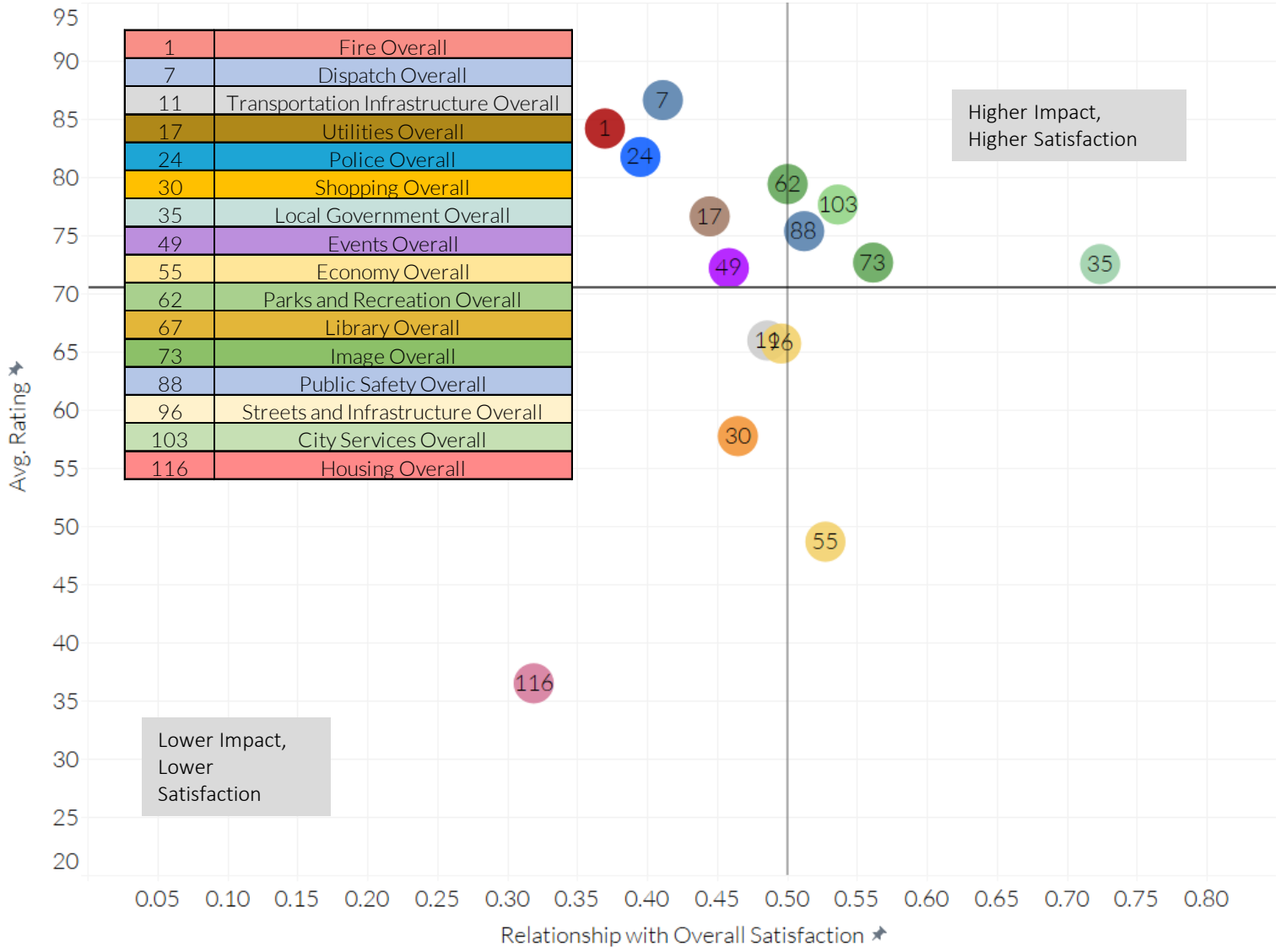


Understanding the Charts:

Community Questions – Long-term Drivers

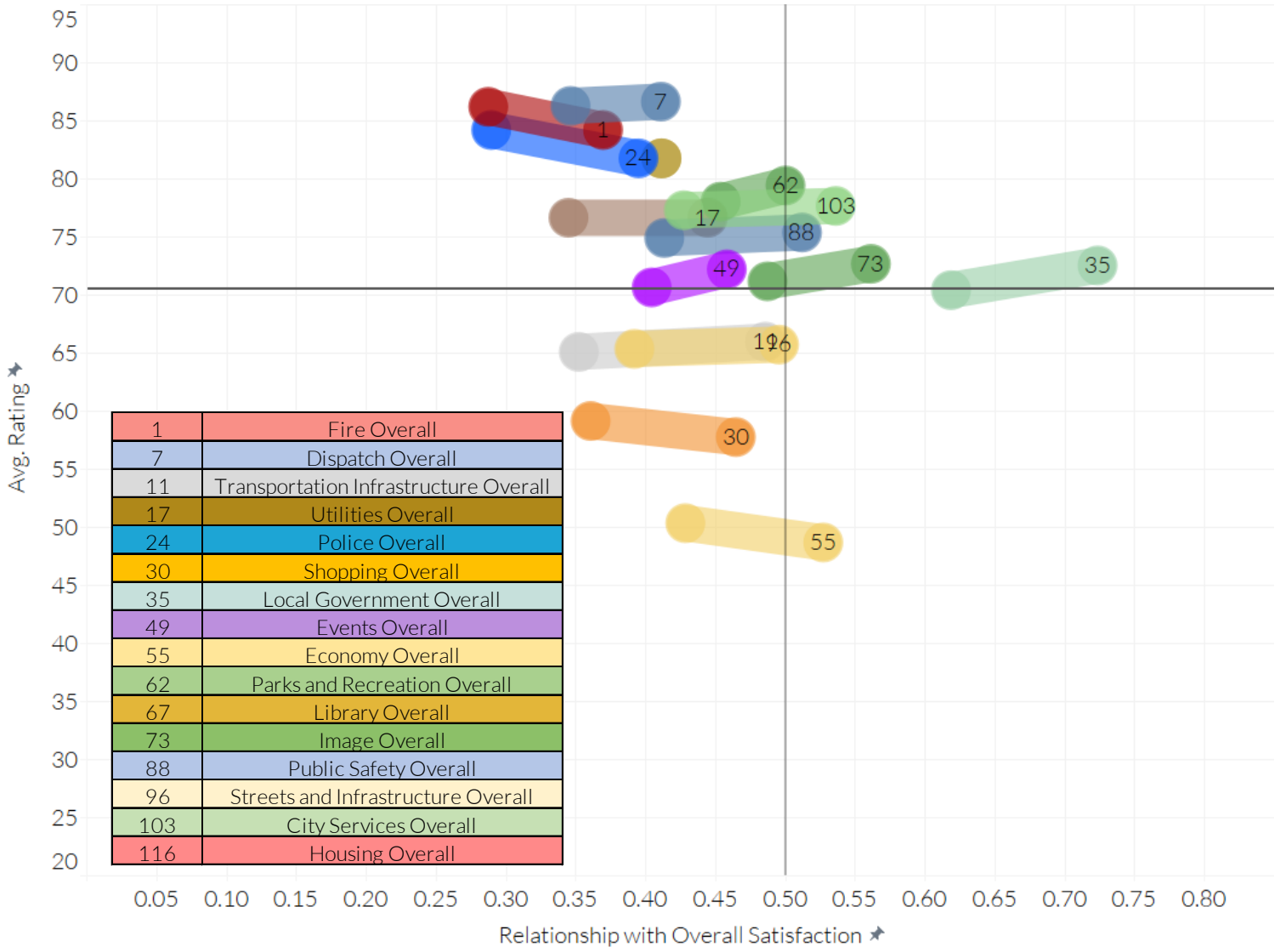


Drivers of Satisfaction and Behavior:
Strategic Priorities



Drivers of Satisfaction and Behavior:

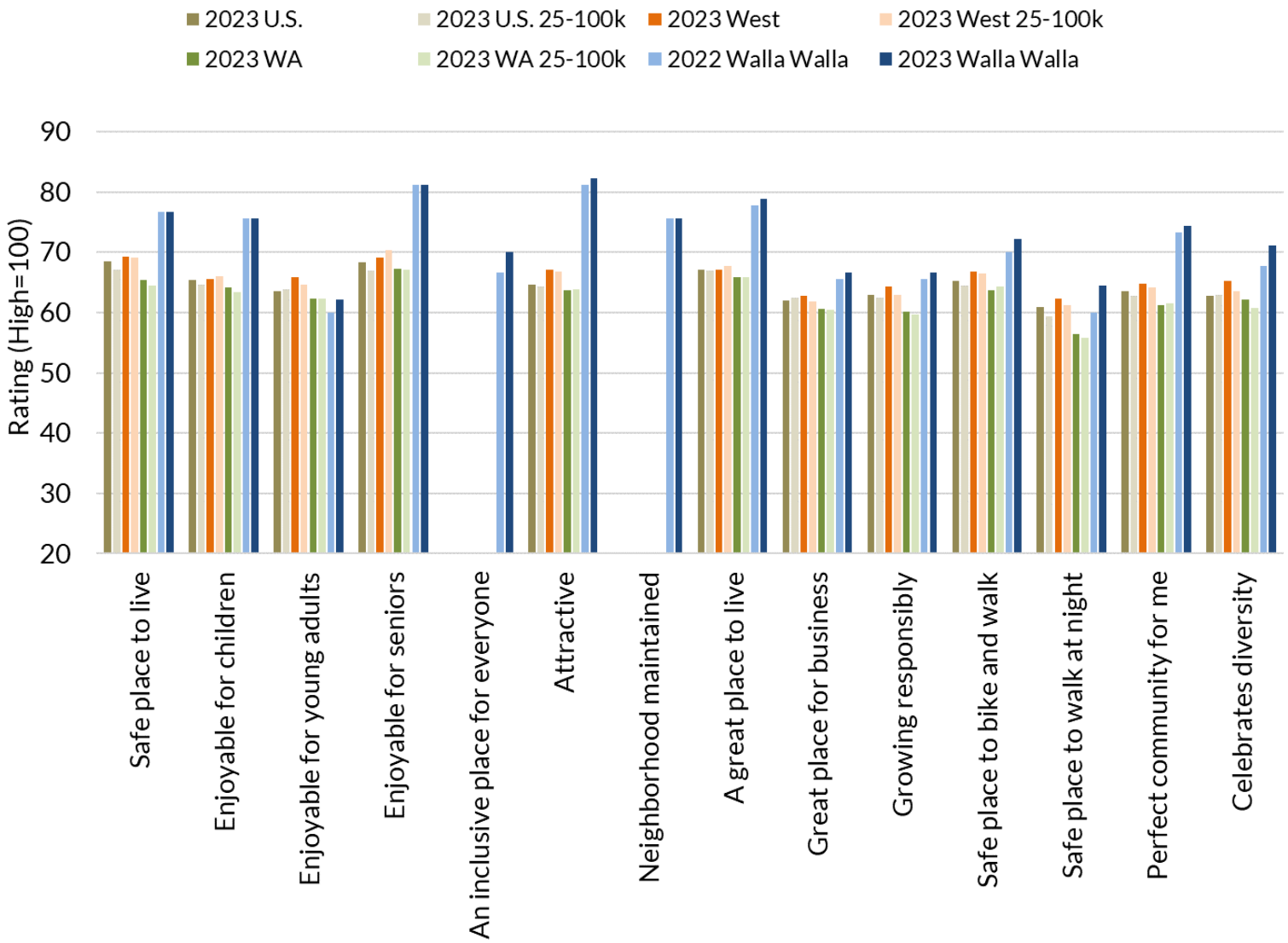
Strategic Priorities Compared to 2022



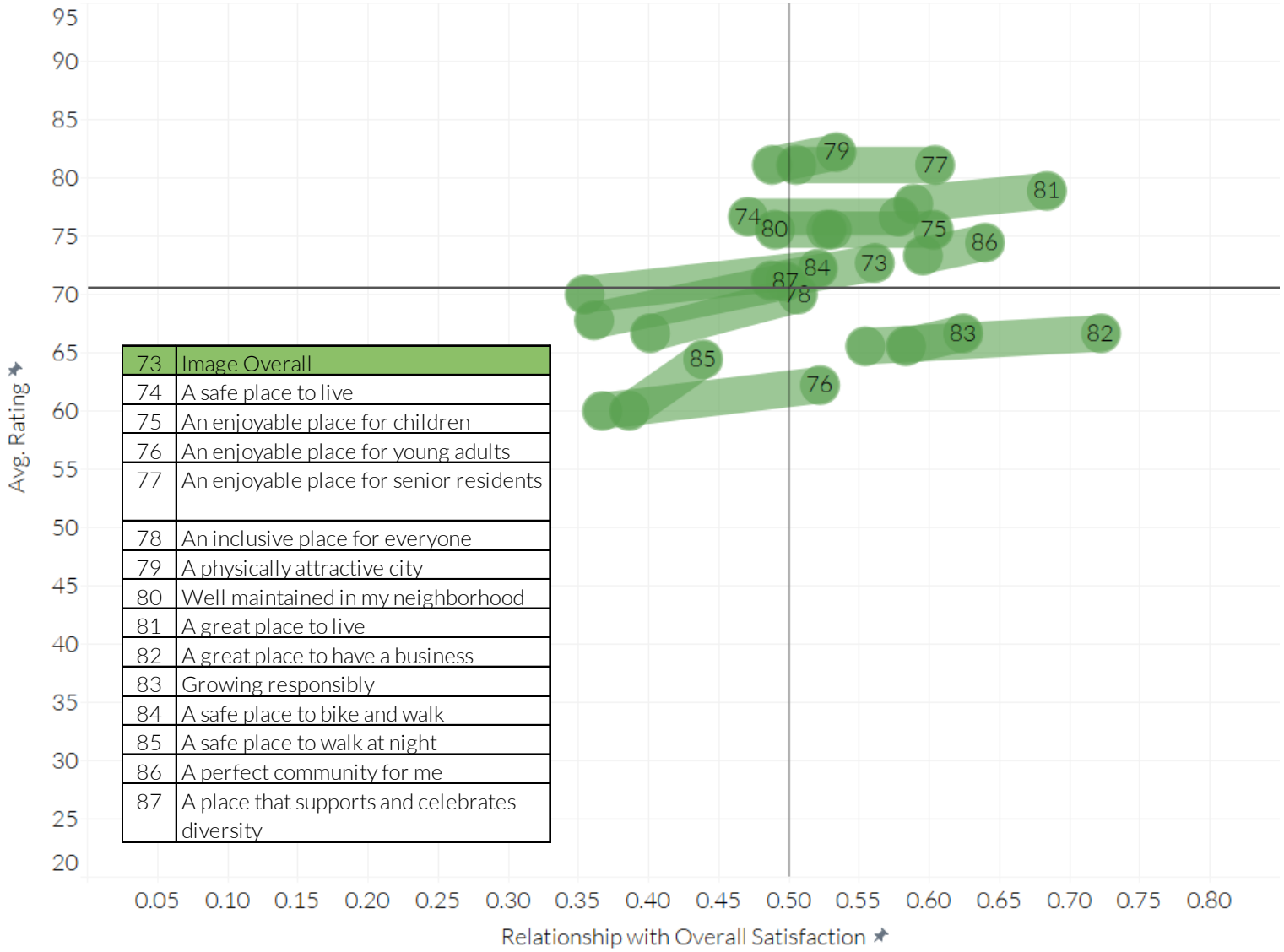
1	Fire Overall
7	Dispatch Overall
11	Transportation Infrastructure Overall
17	Utilities Overall
24	Police Overall
30	Shopping Overall
35	Local Government Overall
49	Events Overall
55	Economy Overall
62	Parks and Recreation Overall
67	Library Overall
73	Image Overall
88	Public Safety Overall
96	Streets and Infrastructure Overall
103	City Services Overall
116	Housing Overall

Community Image to Benchmarks

(High score = 100)



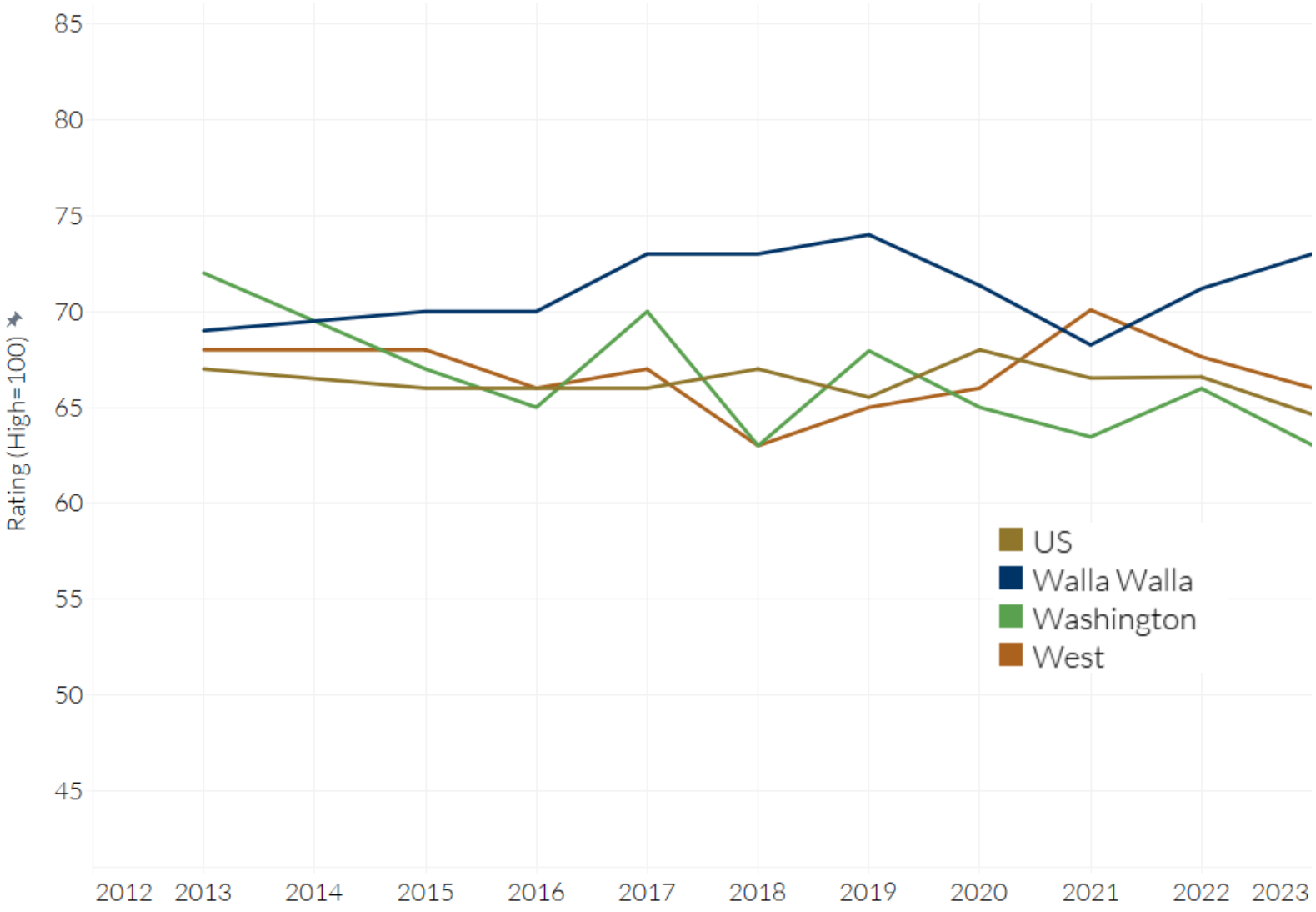
City Image



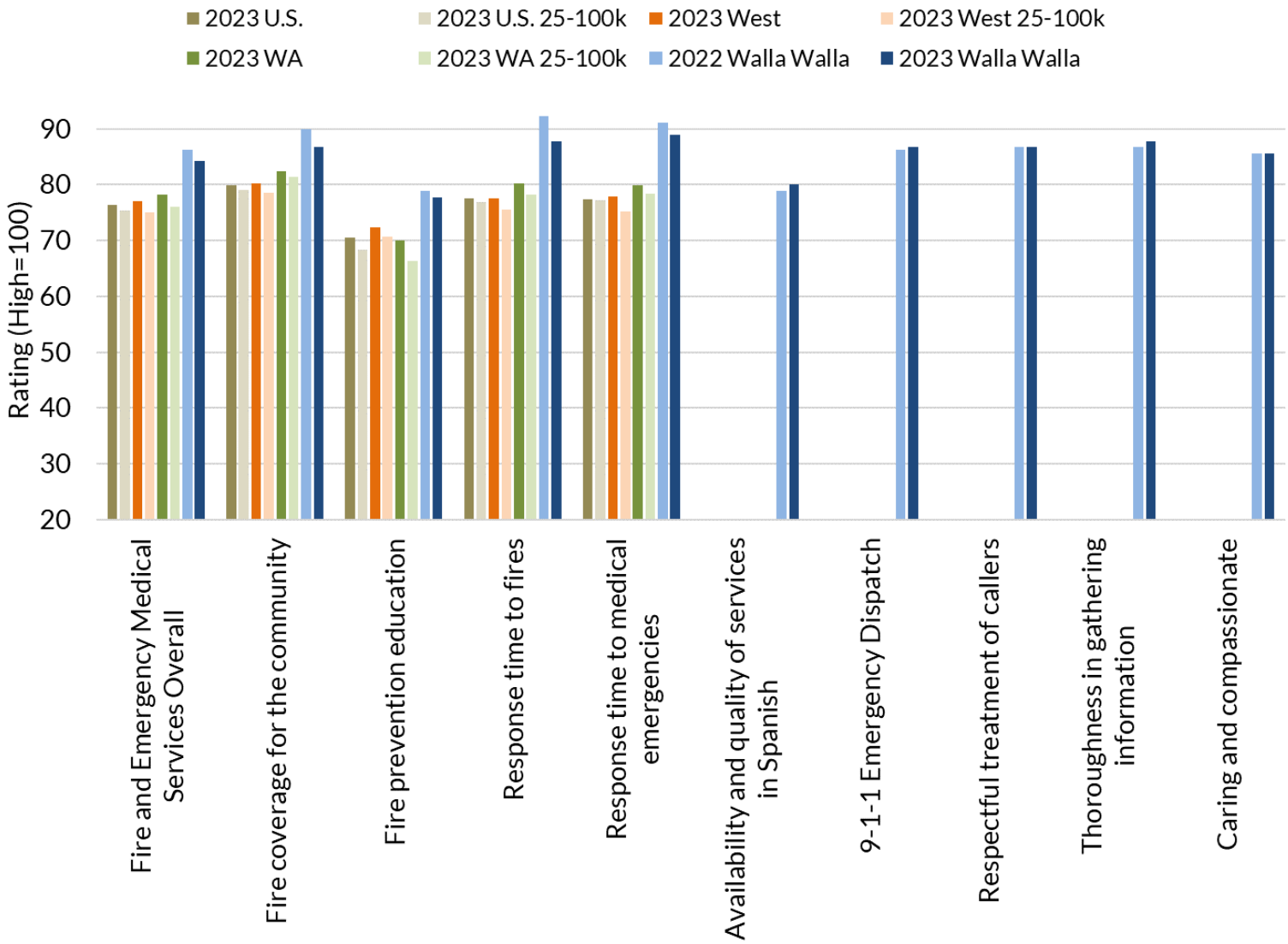
73	Image Overall
74	A safe place to live
75	An enjoyable place for children
76	An enjoyable place for young adults
77	An enjoyable place for senior residents
78	An inclusive place for everyone
79	A physically attractive city
80	Well maintained in my neighborhood
81	A great place to live
82	A great place to have a business
83	Growing responsibly
84	A safe place to bike and walk
85	A safe place to walk at night
86	A perfect community for me
87	A place that supports and celebrates diversity

Drivers of Satisfaction and Behavior:

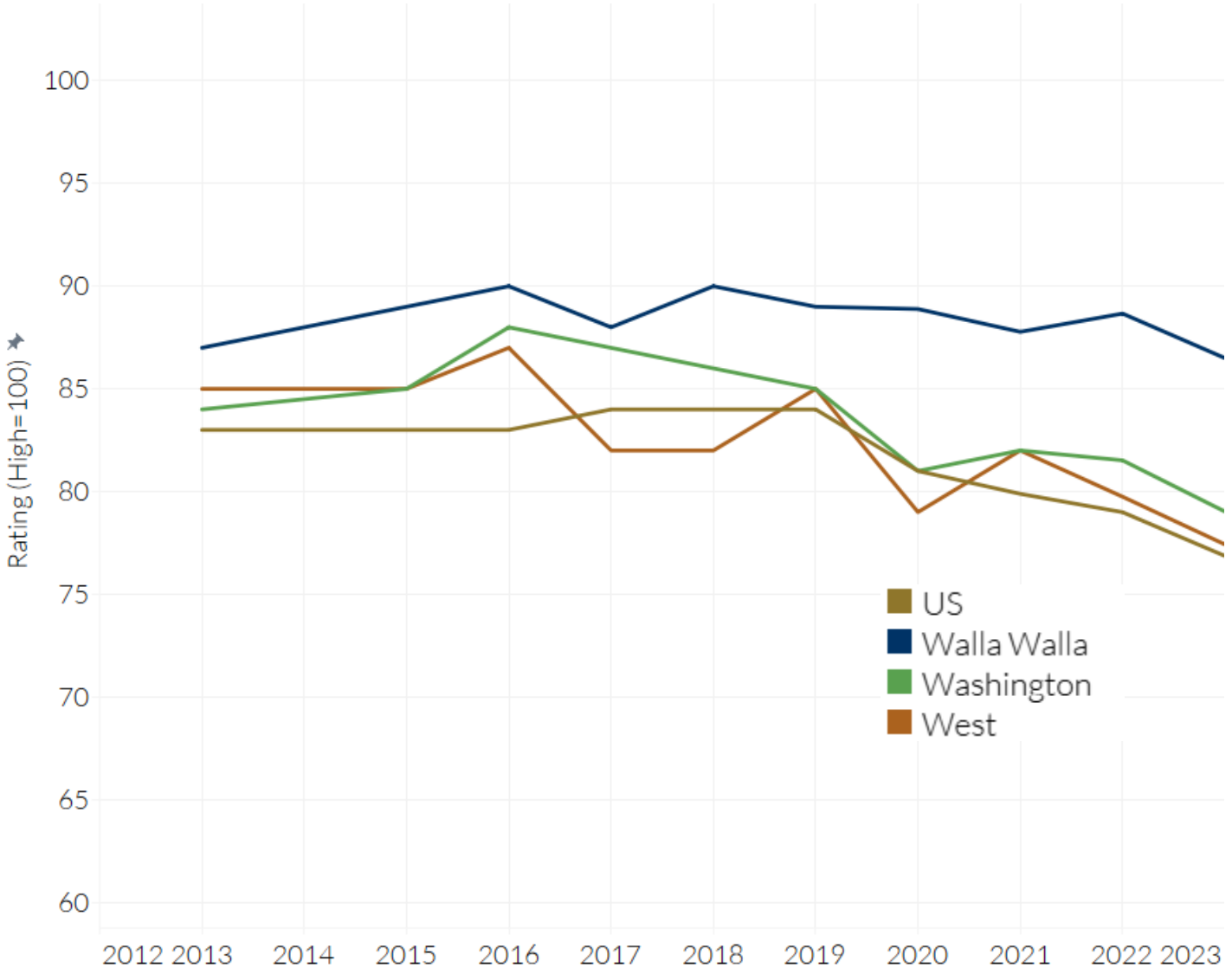
Community Image - Trends



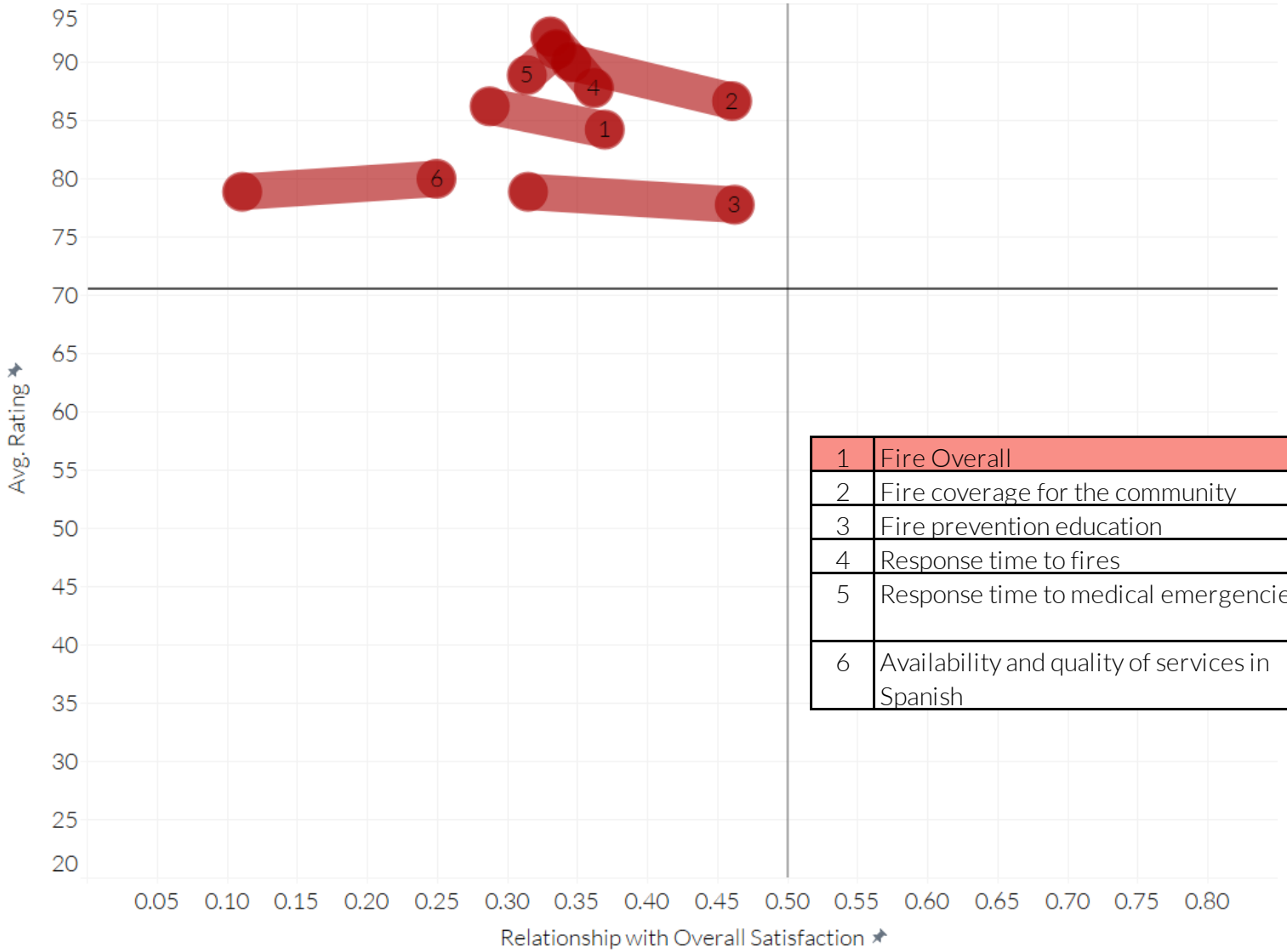
Fire and Emergency Dispatch



Emergency Response - Trends

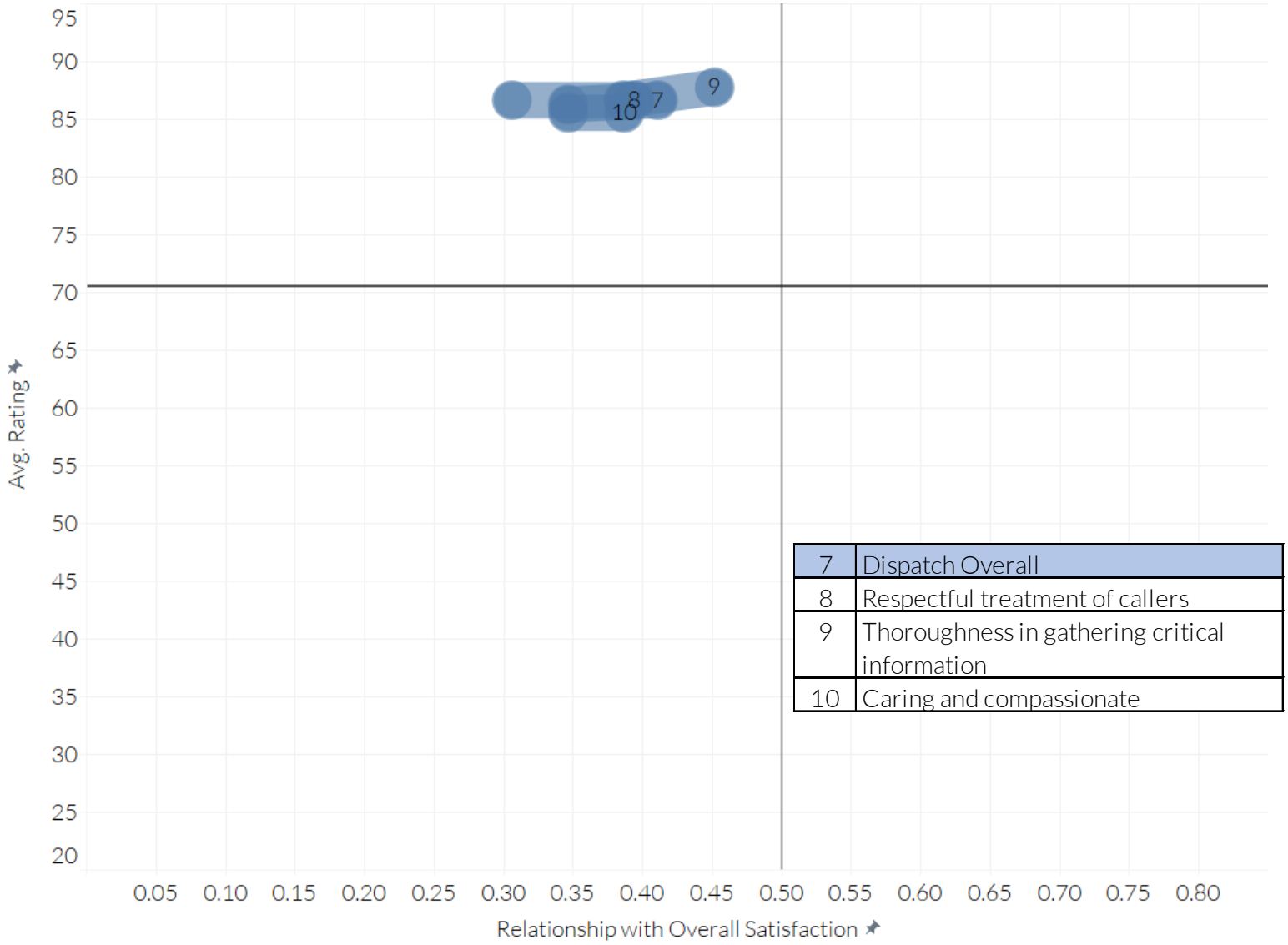


Fire and Emergency Medical Services



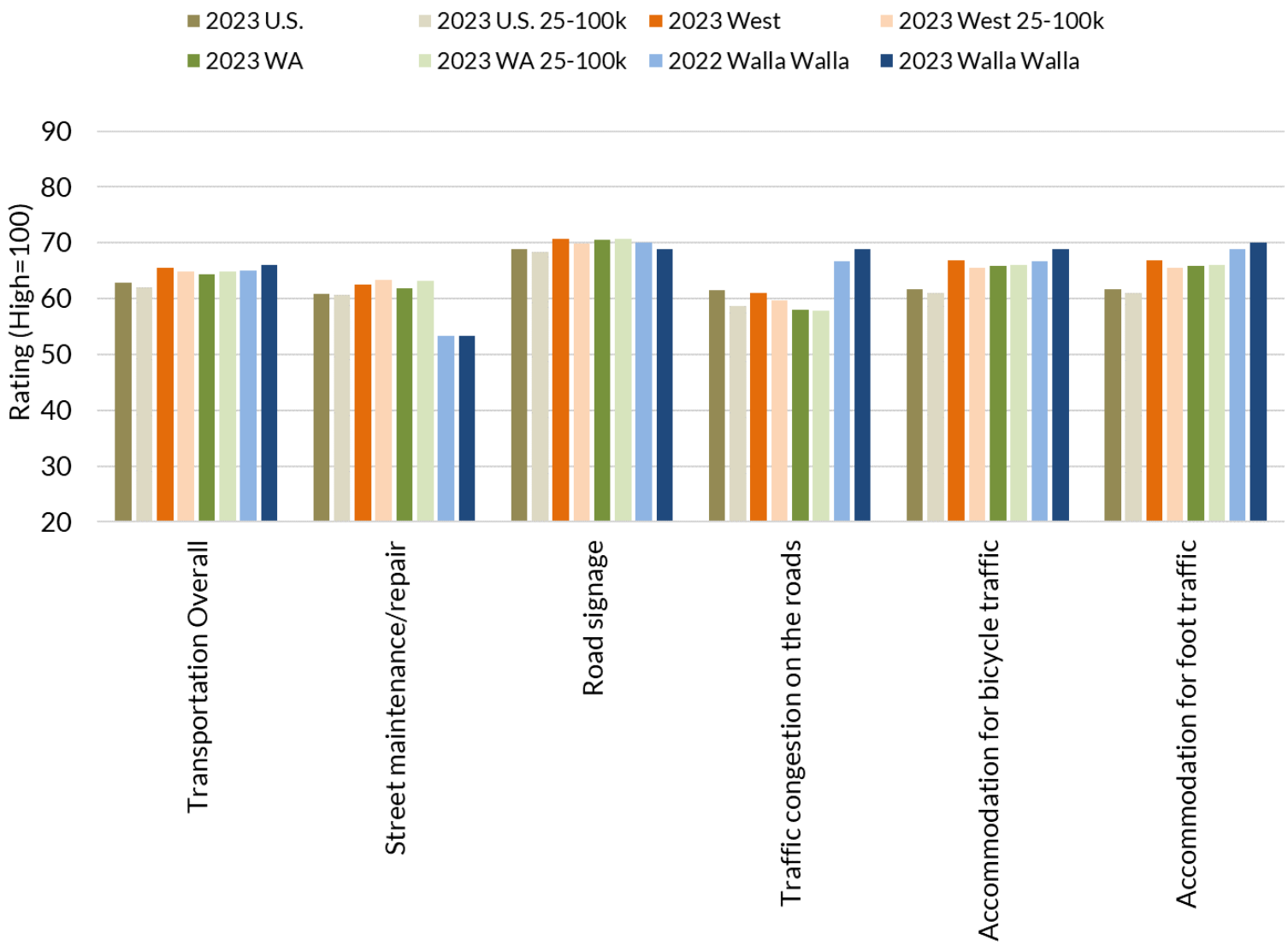
1	Fire Overall
2	Fire coverage for the community
3	Fire prevention education
4	Response time to fires
5	Response time to medical emergencies
6	Availability and quality of services in Spanish

911 Fire and Police Dispatch

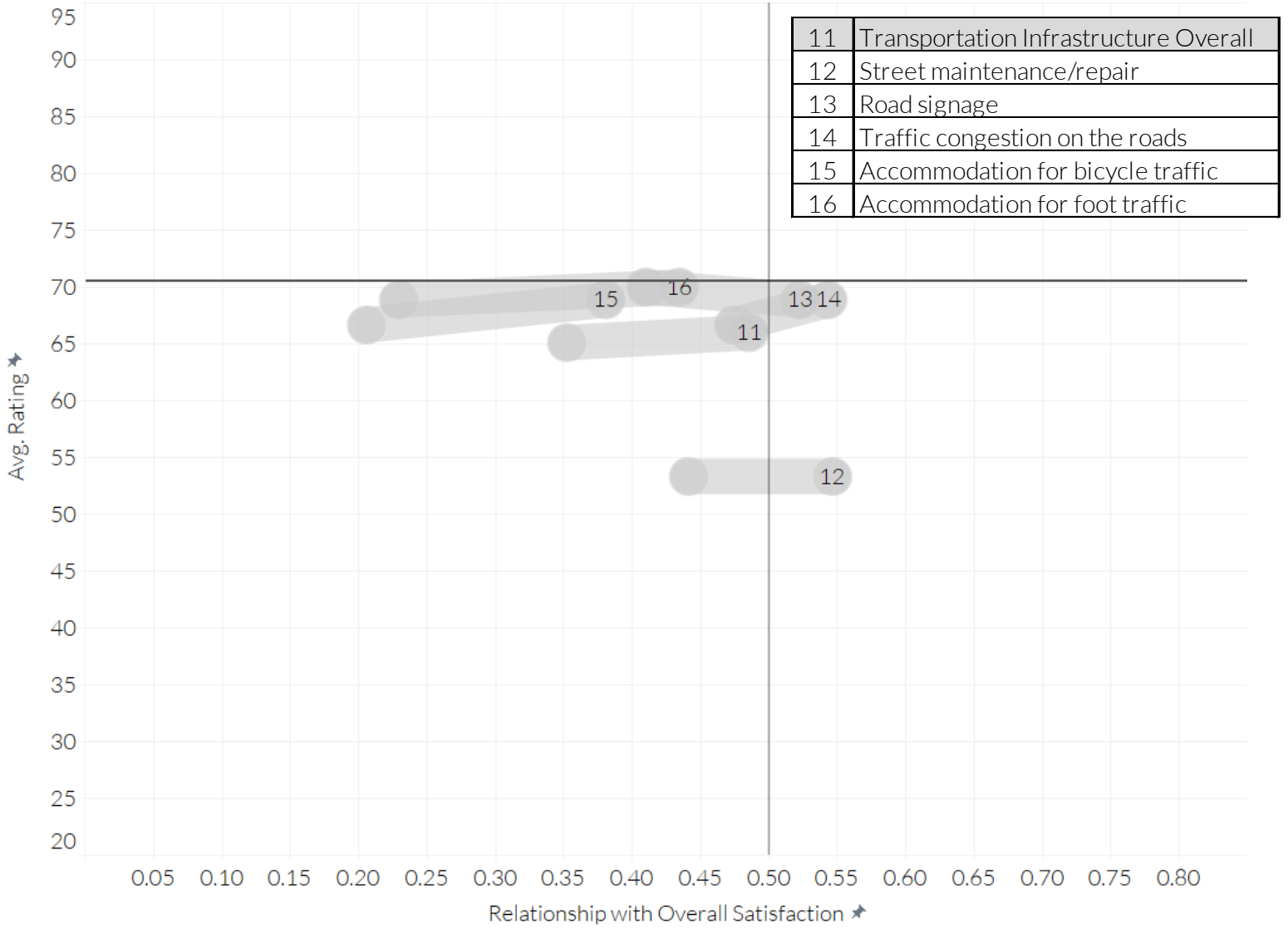


7	Dispatch Overall
8	Respectful treatment of callers
9	Thoroughness in gathering critical information
10	Caring and compassionate

Transportation Infrastructure

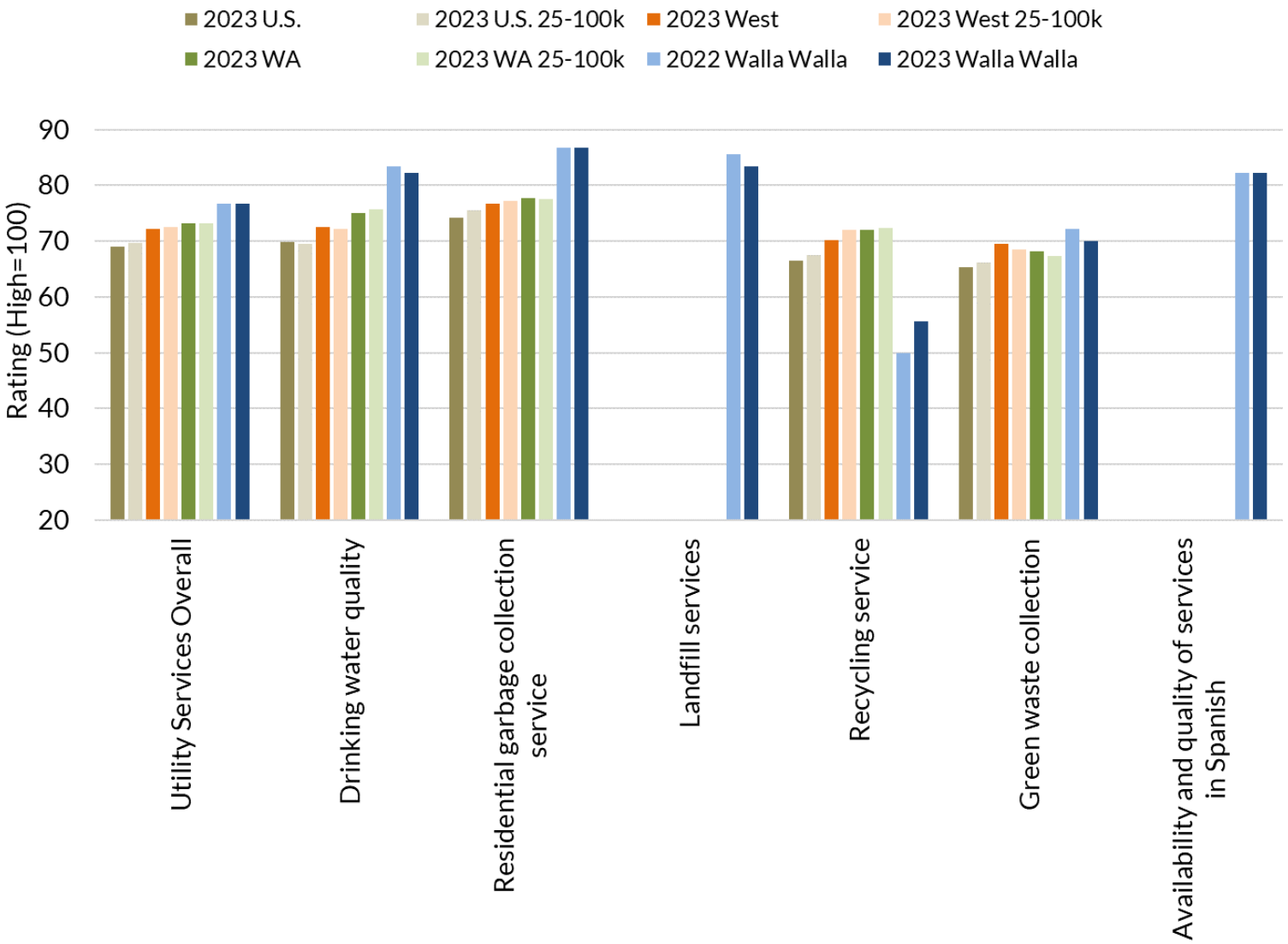


Transportation Infrastructure

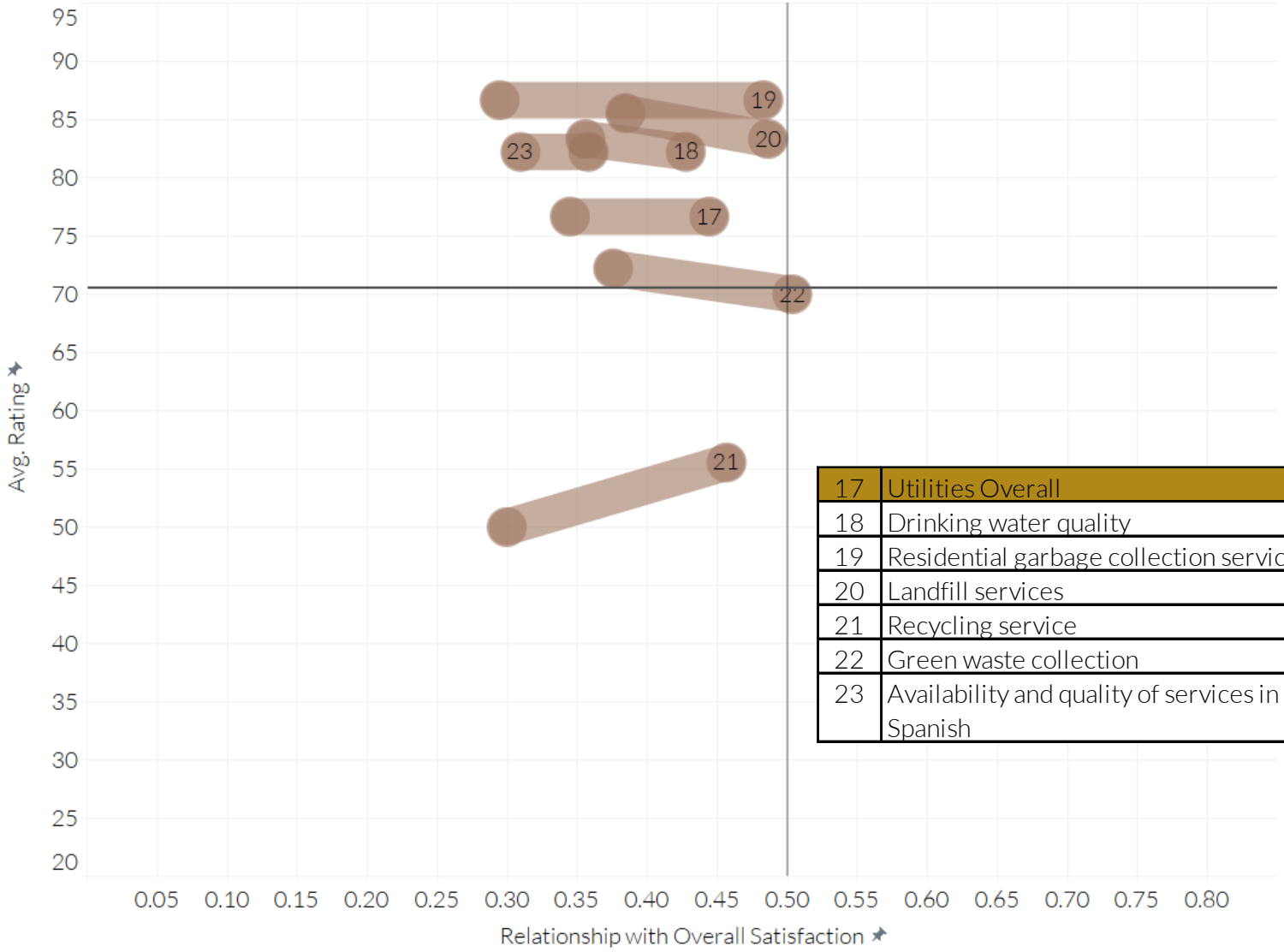


11	Transportation Infrastructure Overall
12	Street maintenance/repair
13	Road signage
14	Traffic congestion on the roads
15	Accommodation for bicycle traffic
16	Accommodation for foot traffic

Utility Services

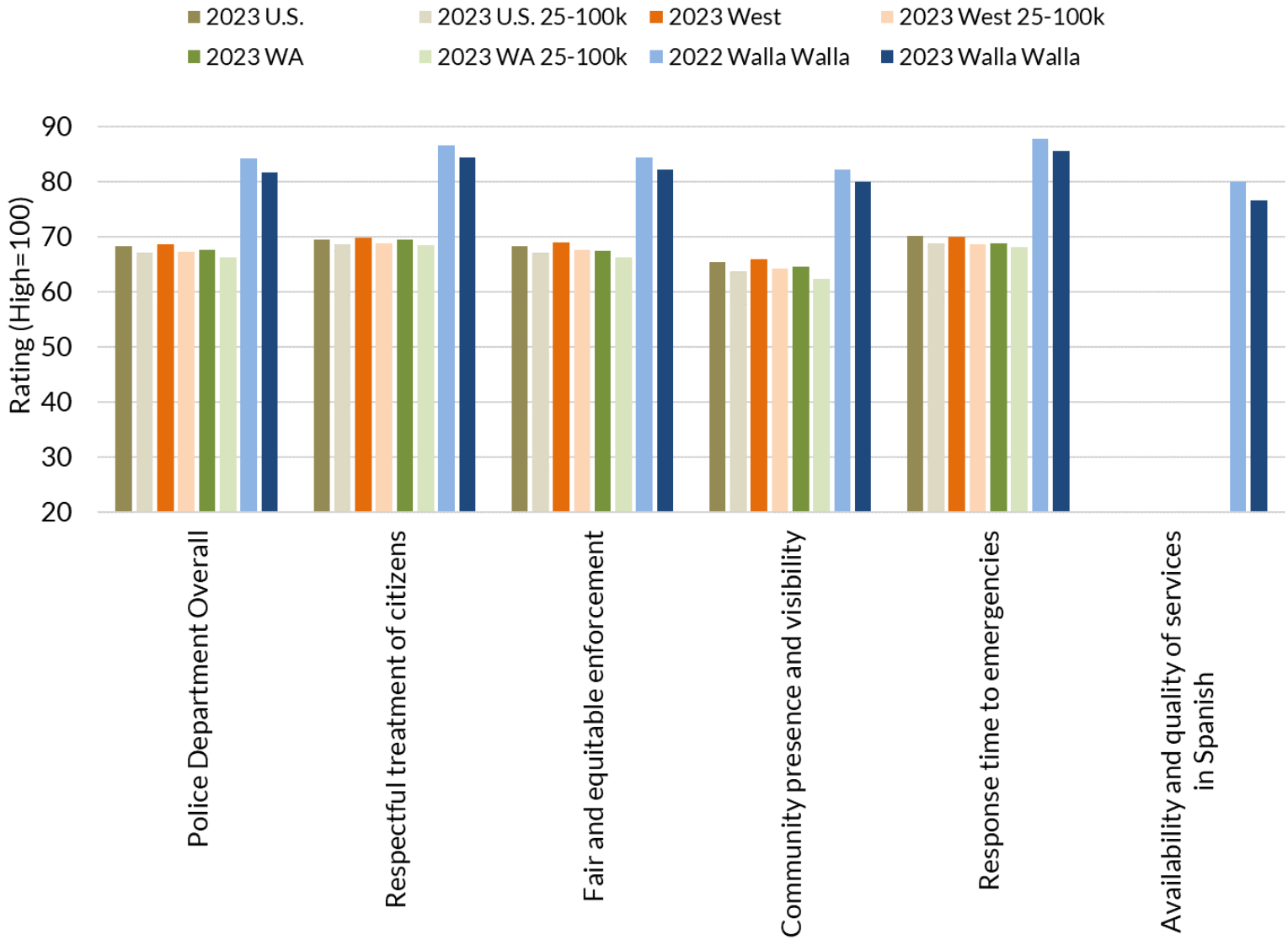


Utility Services

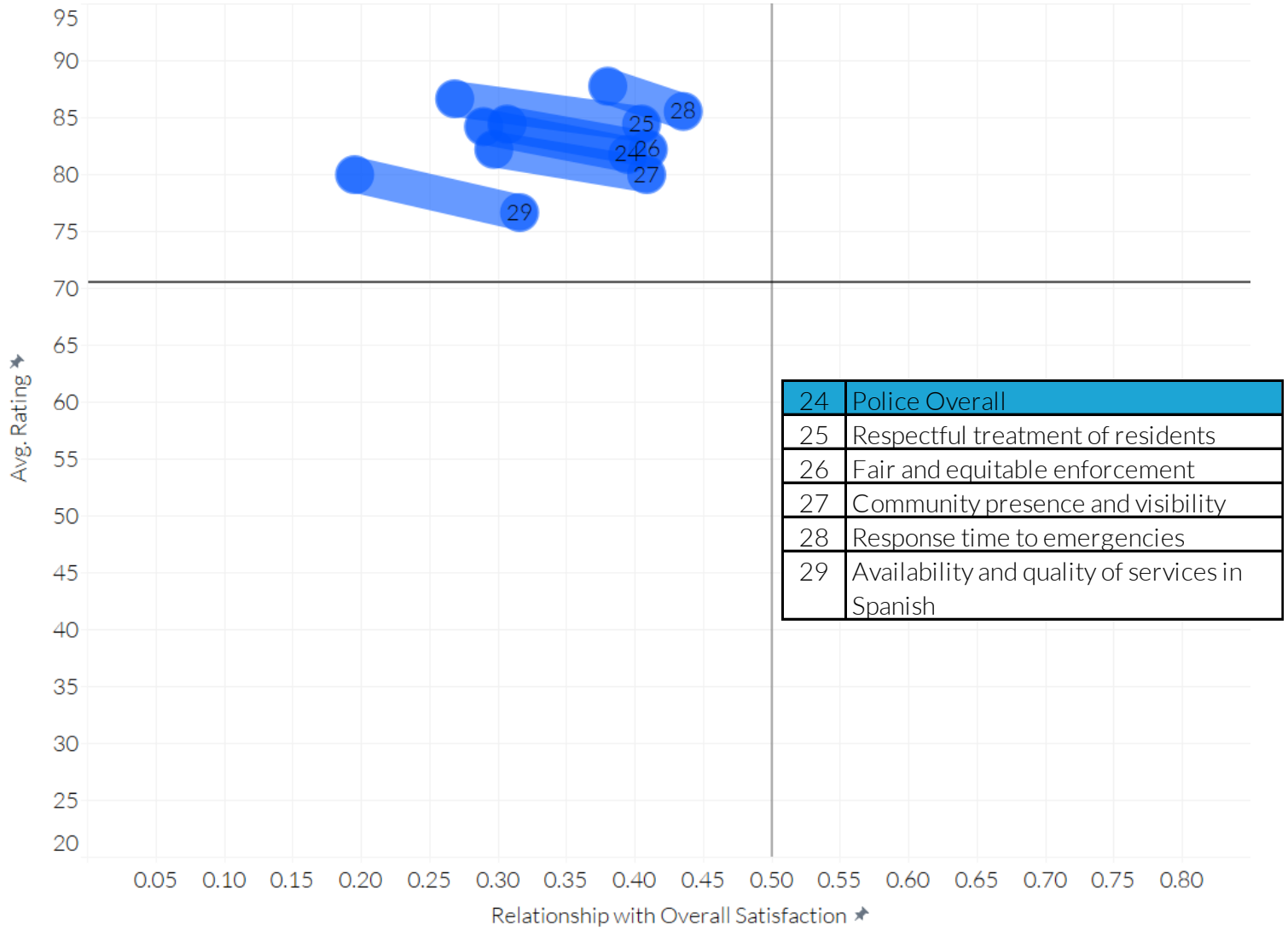


17	Utilities Overall
18	Drinking water quality
19	Residential garbage collection service
20	Landfill services
21	Recycling service
22	Green waste collection
23	Availability and quality of services in Spanish

Police Services



Law Enforcement



24	Police Overall
25	Respectful treatment of residents
26	Fair and equitable enforcement
27	Community presence and visibility
28	Response time to emergencies
29	Availability and quality of services in Spanish

Word Cloud:

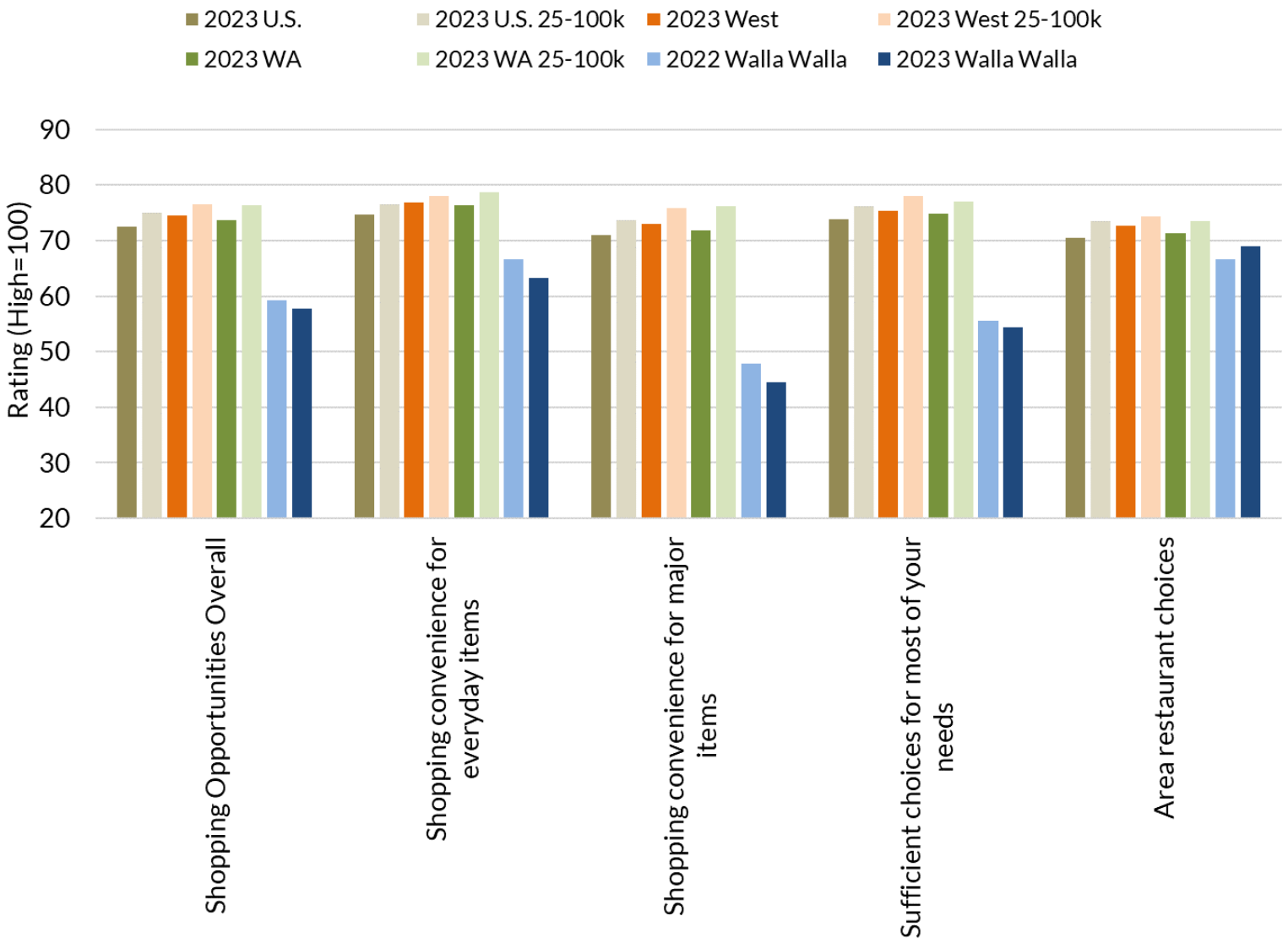
What are ways the Walla Walla Police Department can continue to strengthen the services provided to the City?

Top Themes:

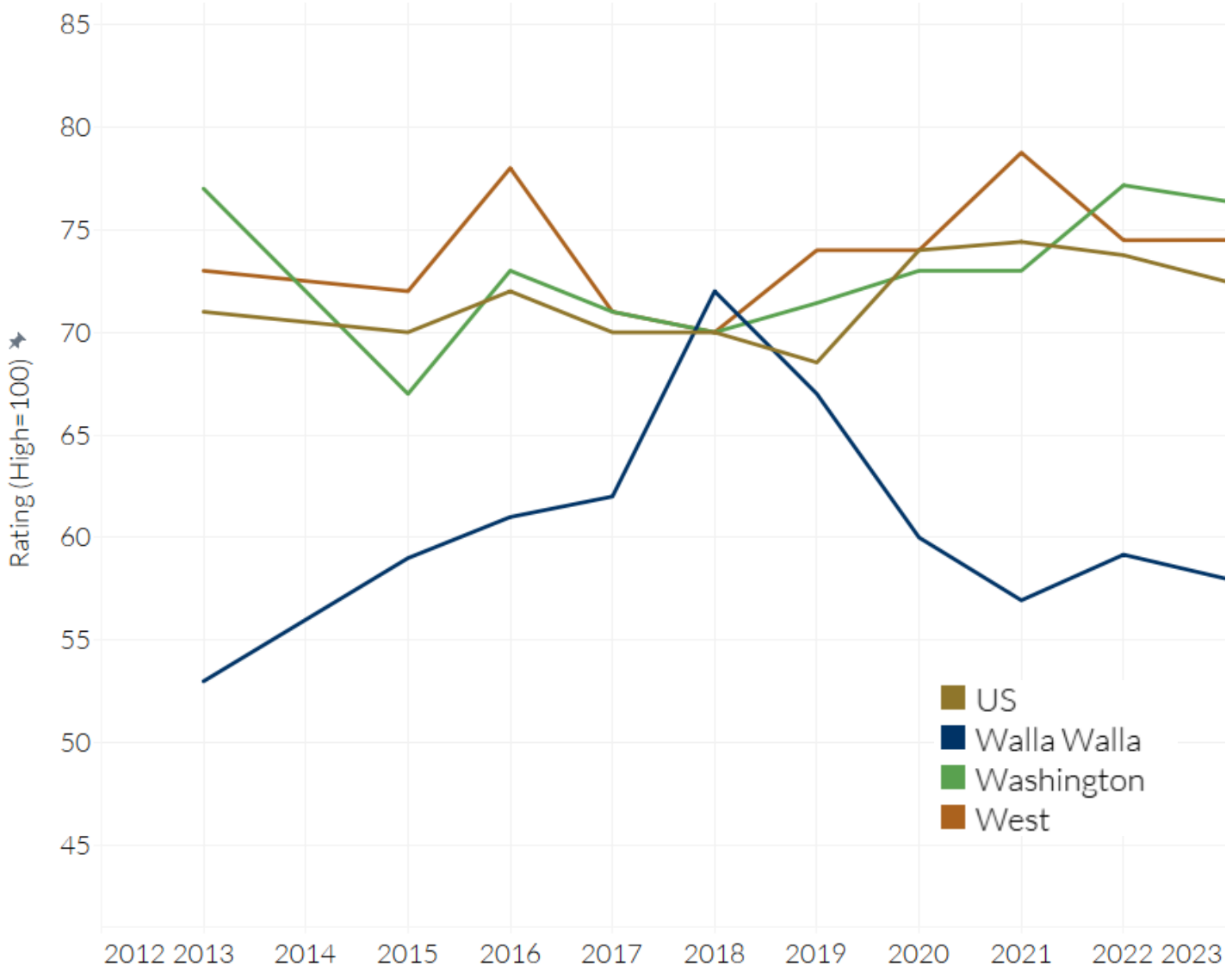
1. Police- Doing a great job. Would like police (and vehicles) to be more visible in the community. Some residents have had contact with officers who did not express much empathy during the interaction/difficult to approach. Also, some felt that the police seem to be more militarized.
2. Concern - Residents are worried about the increase in drug usage by the homeless in the city. They would also like to see more speed limit enforcement.
3. Park- Residents would like to see a police presence in the local parks. They have noticed an increase in drug usage in the parks.

Note: See full list of comments for context

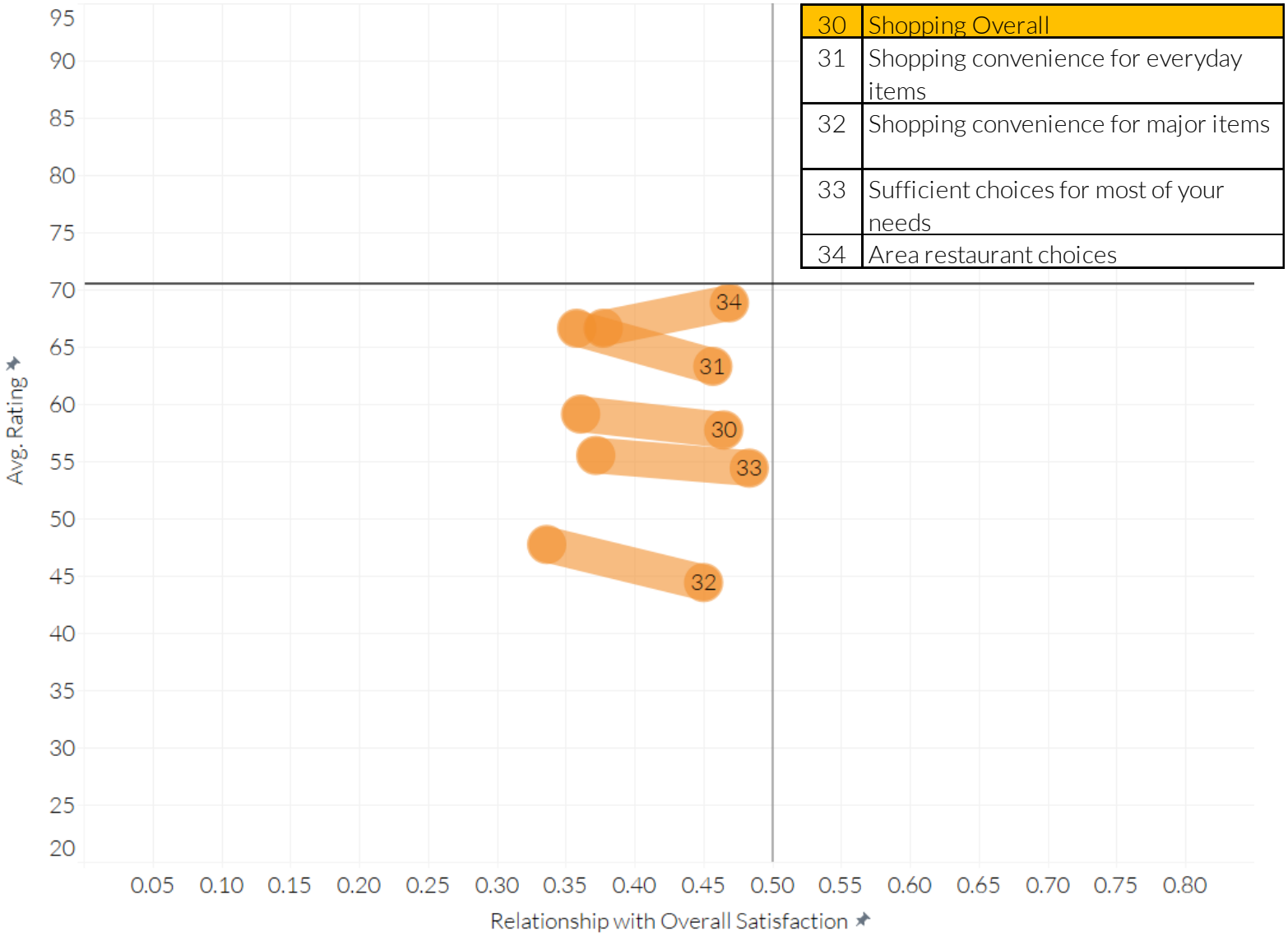
Shopping


2023 U.S.
2023 U.S. 25-100k
2023 West
2023 West 25-100k
2023 WA
2023 WA 25-100k
2022 Walla Walla
2023 Walla Walla
Rating (High=100)
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
Shopping Opportunities Overall
Shopping convenience for everyday items
Shopping convenience for major items
Sufficient choices for most of your needs
Area restaurant choices

Shopping Opportunities - Trends

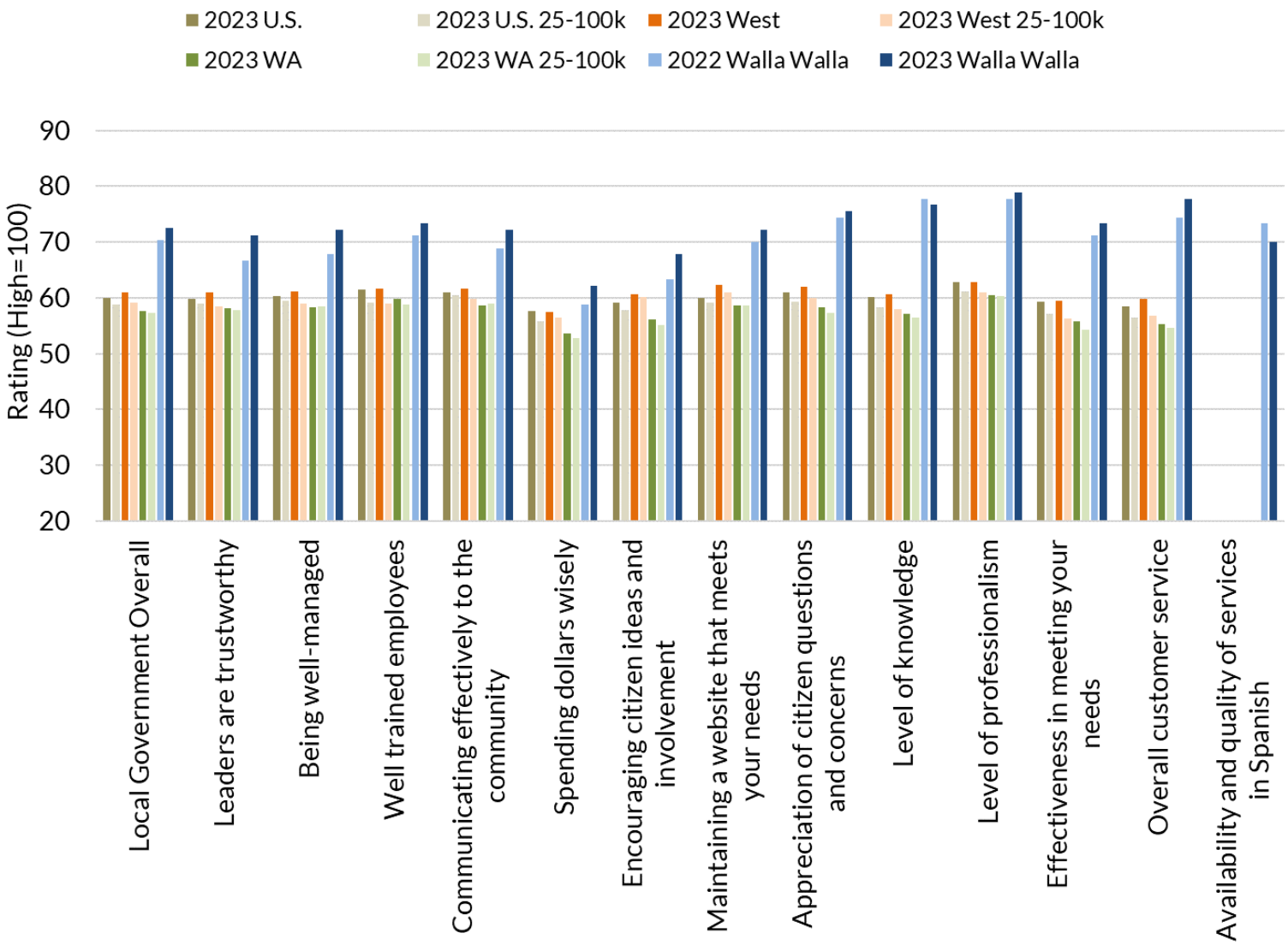


Shopping Opportunities

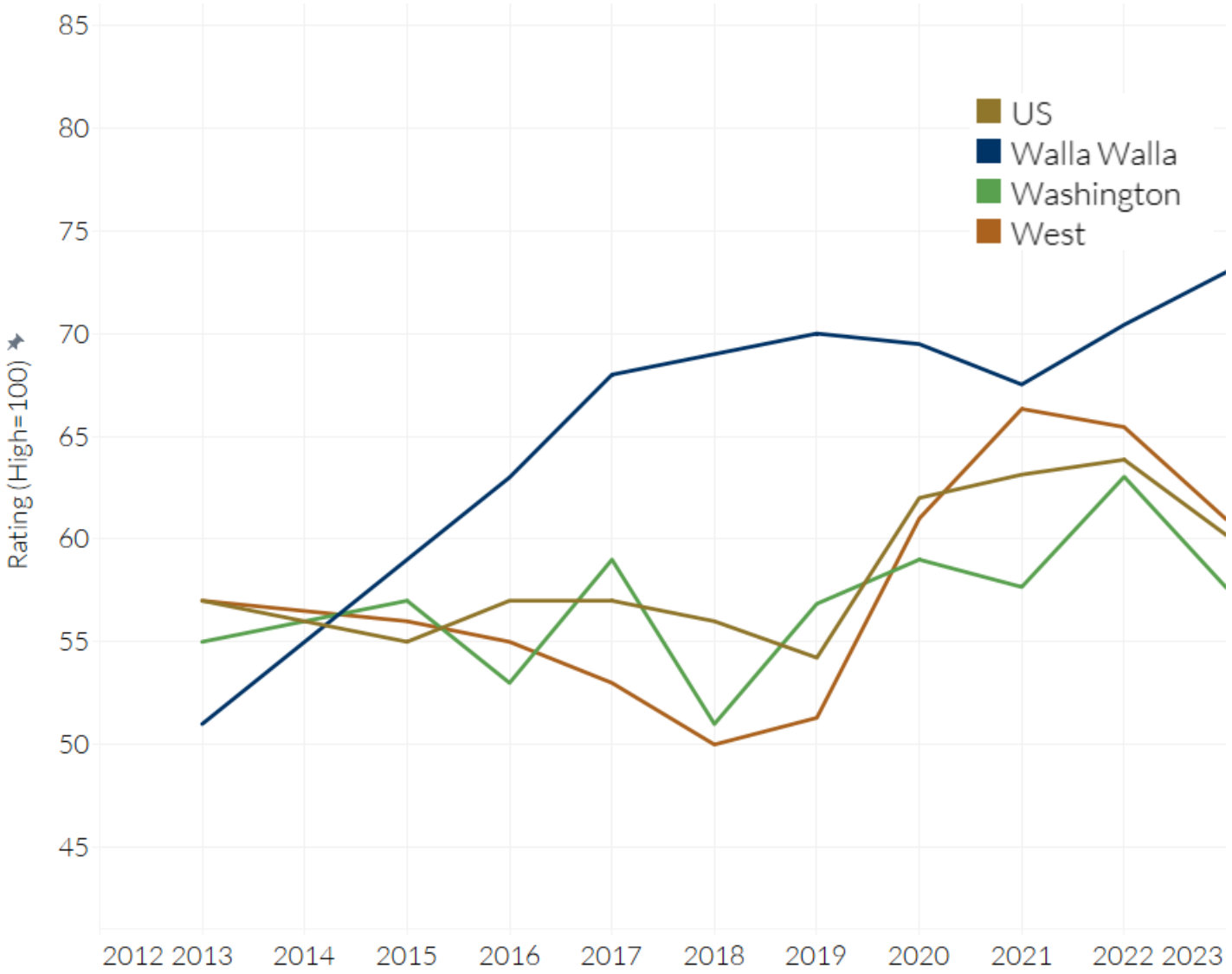


30	Shopping Overall
31	Shopping convenience for everyday items
32	Shopping convenience for major items
33	Sufficient choices for most of your needs
34	Area restaurant choices

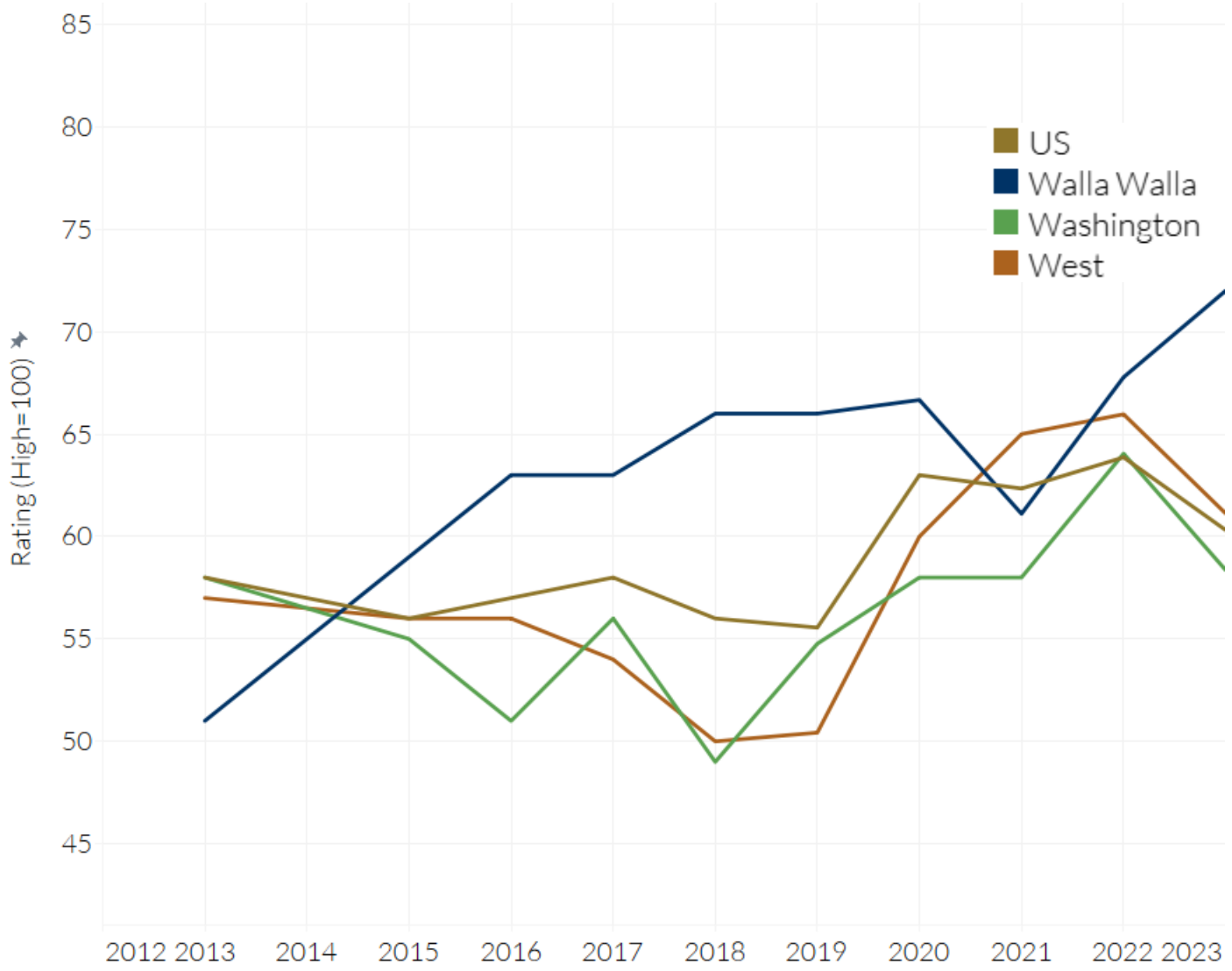
Government Management



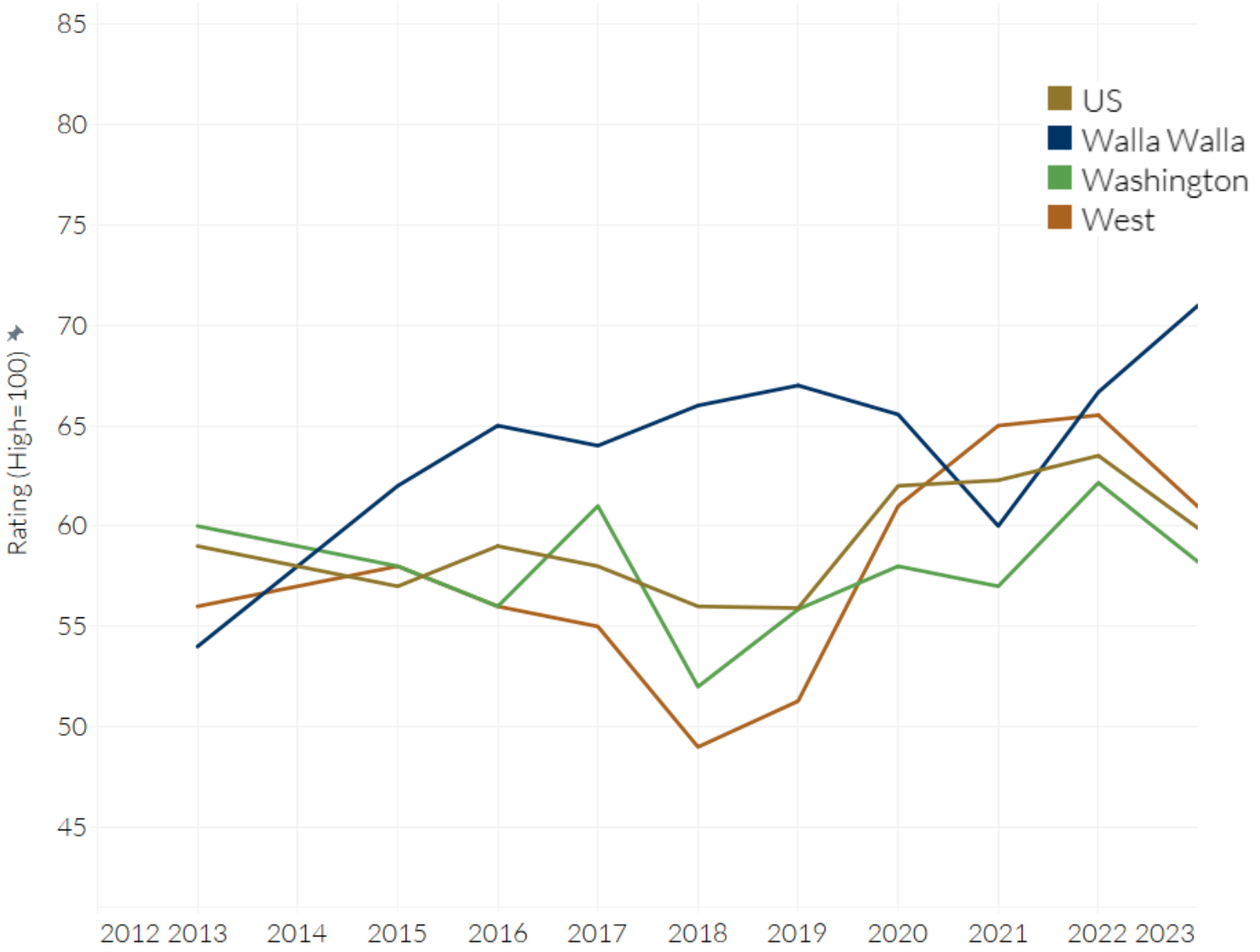
Government Management - Overall



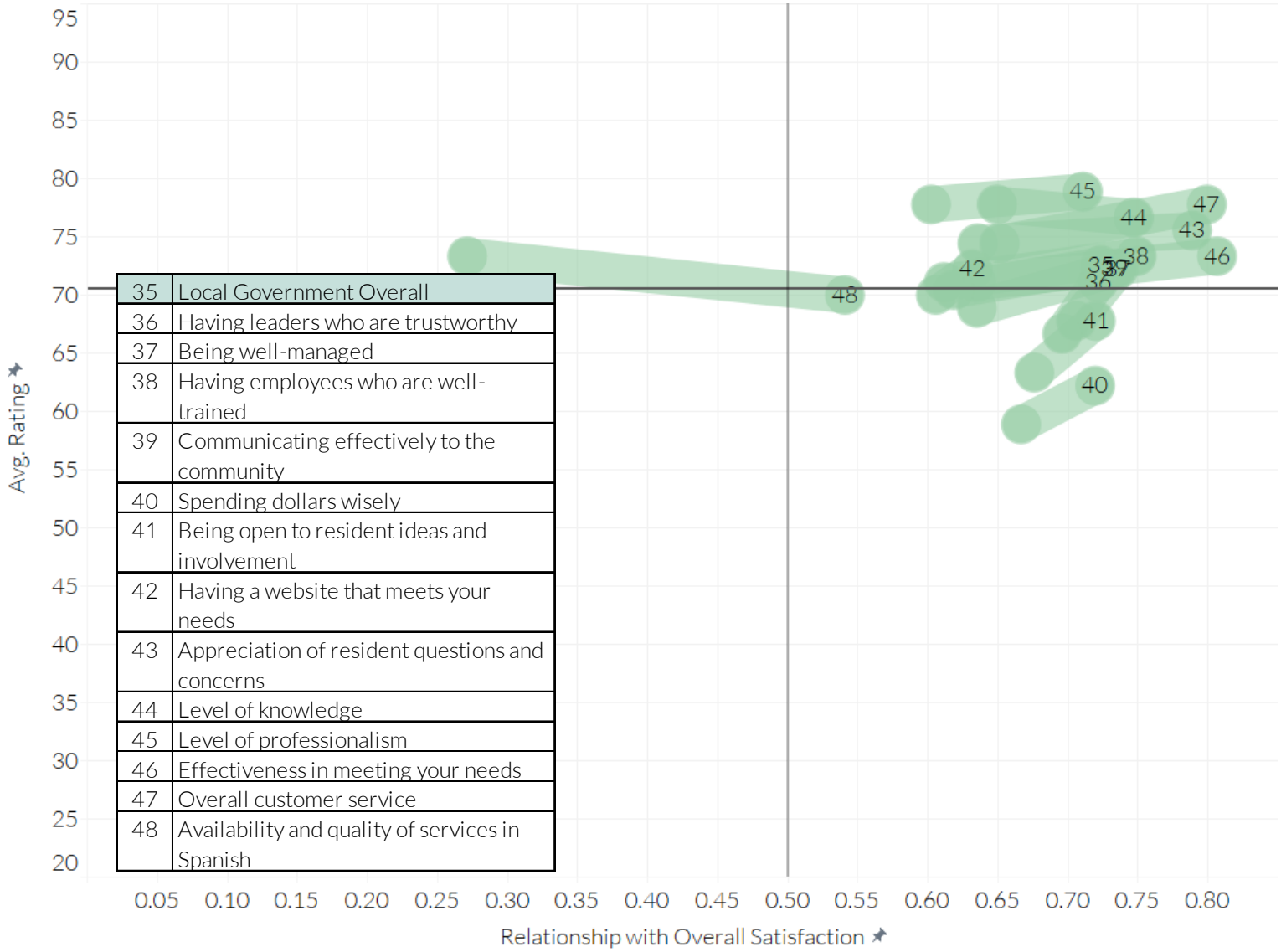
Being Well Managed - Trends



Leaders are Trustworthy - Trends

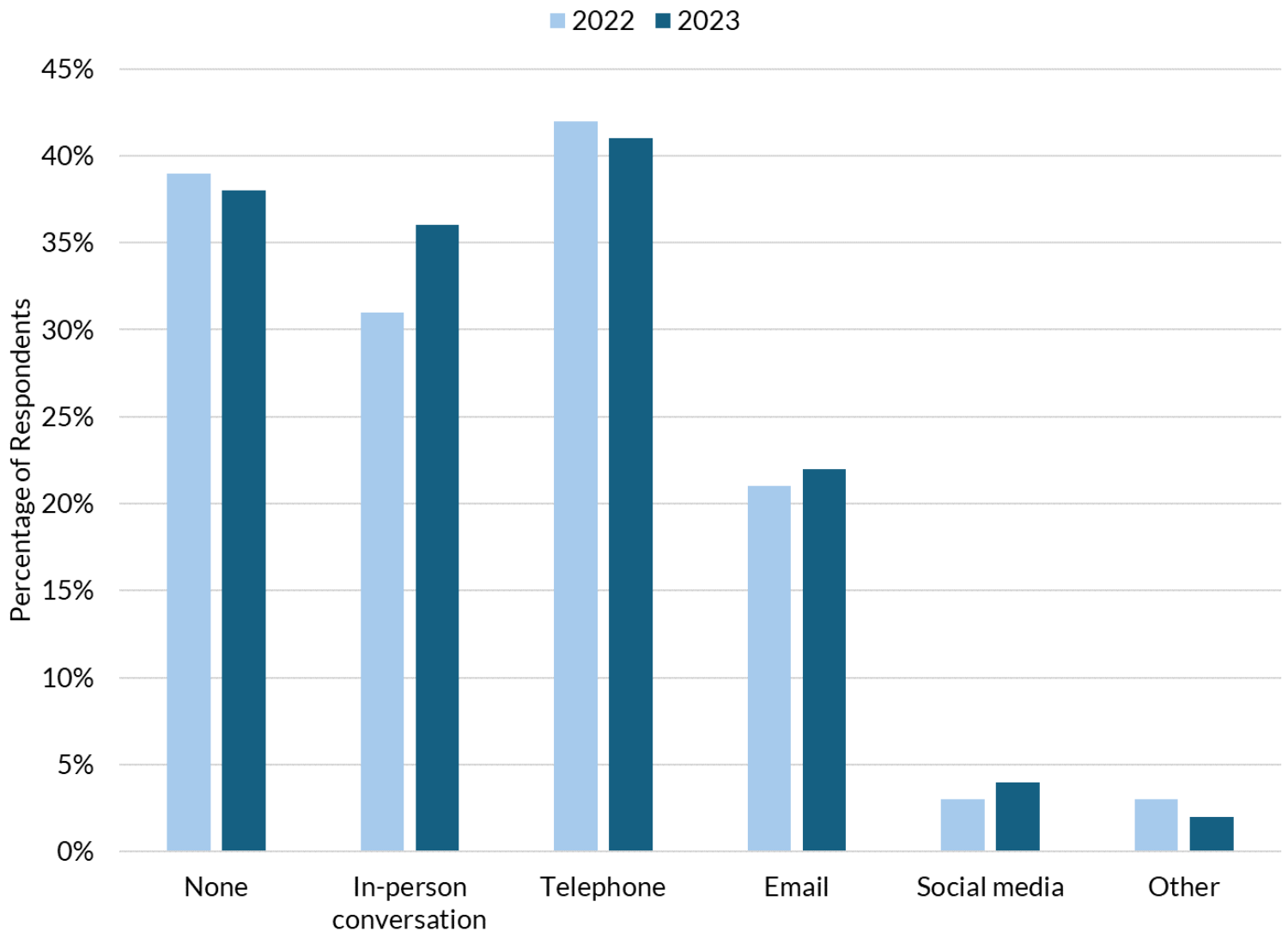


Local Government



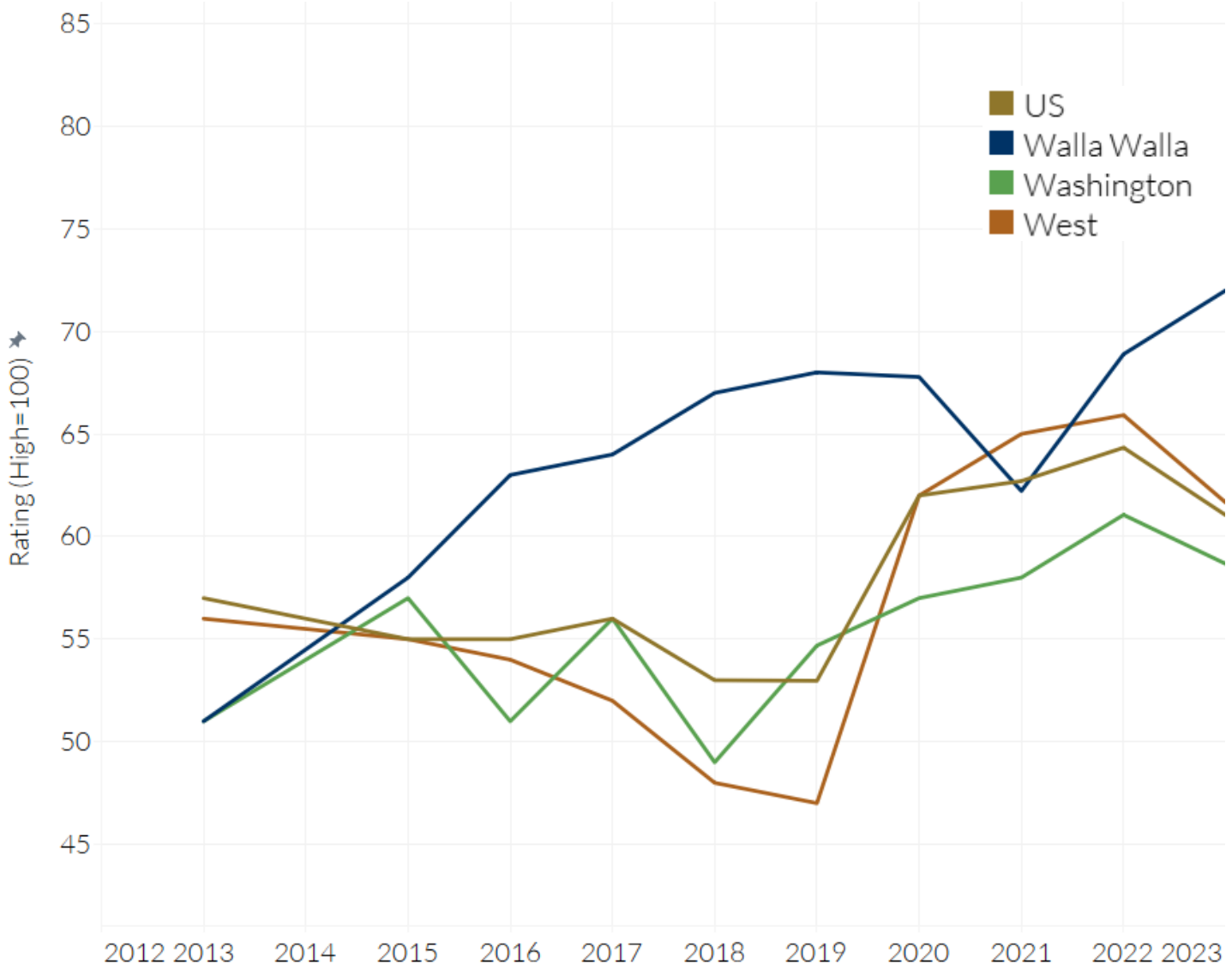
35	Local Government Overall
36	Having leaders who are trustworthy
37	Being well-managed
38	Having employees who are well-trained
39	Communicating effectively to the community
40	Spending dollars wisely
41	Being open to resident ideas and involvement
42	Having a website that meets your needs
43	Appreciation of resident questions and concerns
44	Level of knowledge
45	Level of professionalism
46	Effectiveness in meeting your needs
47	Overall customer service
48	Availability and quality of services in Spanish

How have you contacted a City employee or official in the past 12 months?

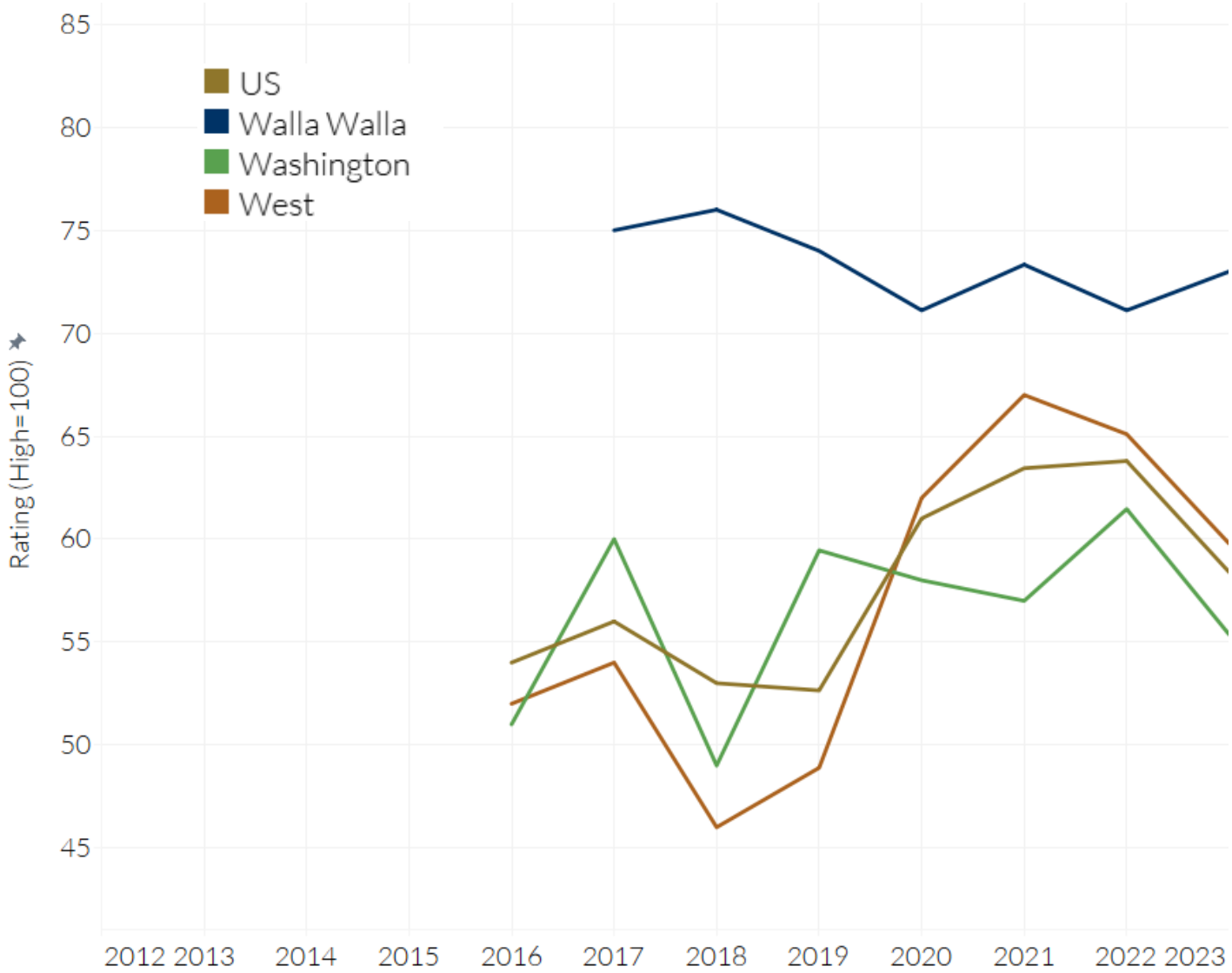


Drivers of Satisfaction and Behavior:

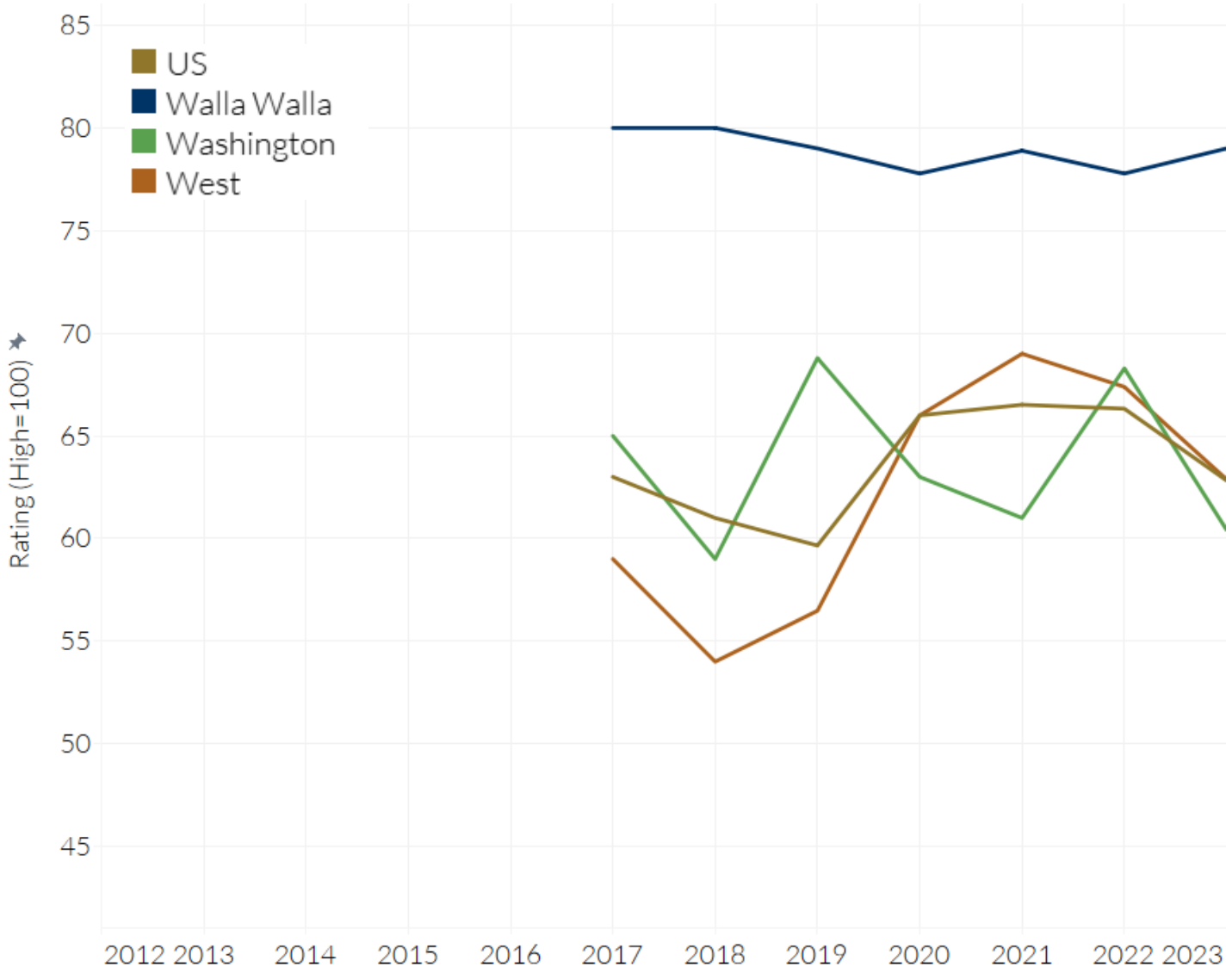
Communicating Effectively - Trends



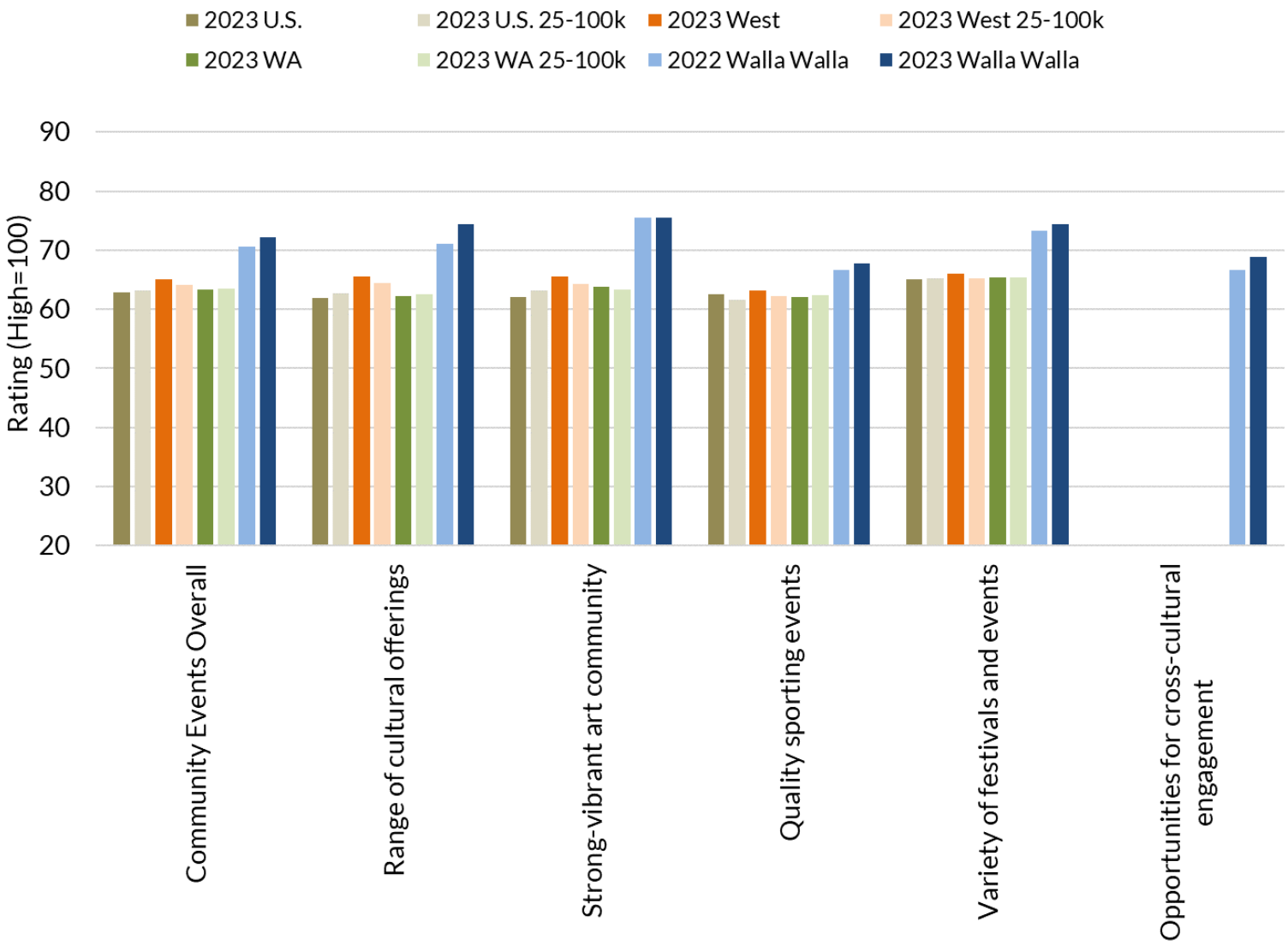
Customer Service Meeting Your Needs



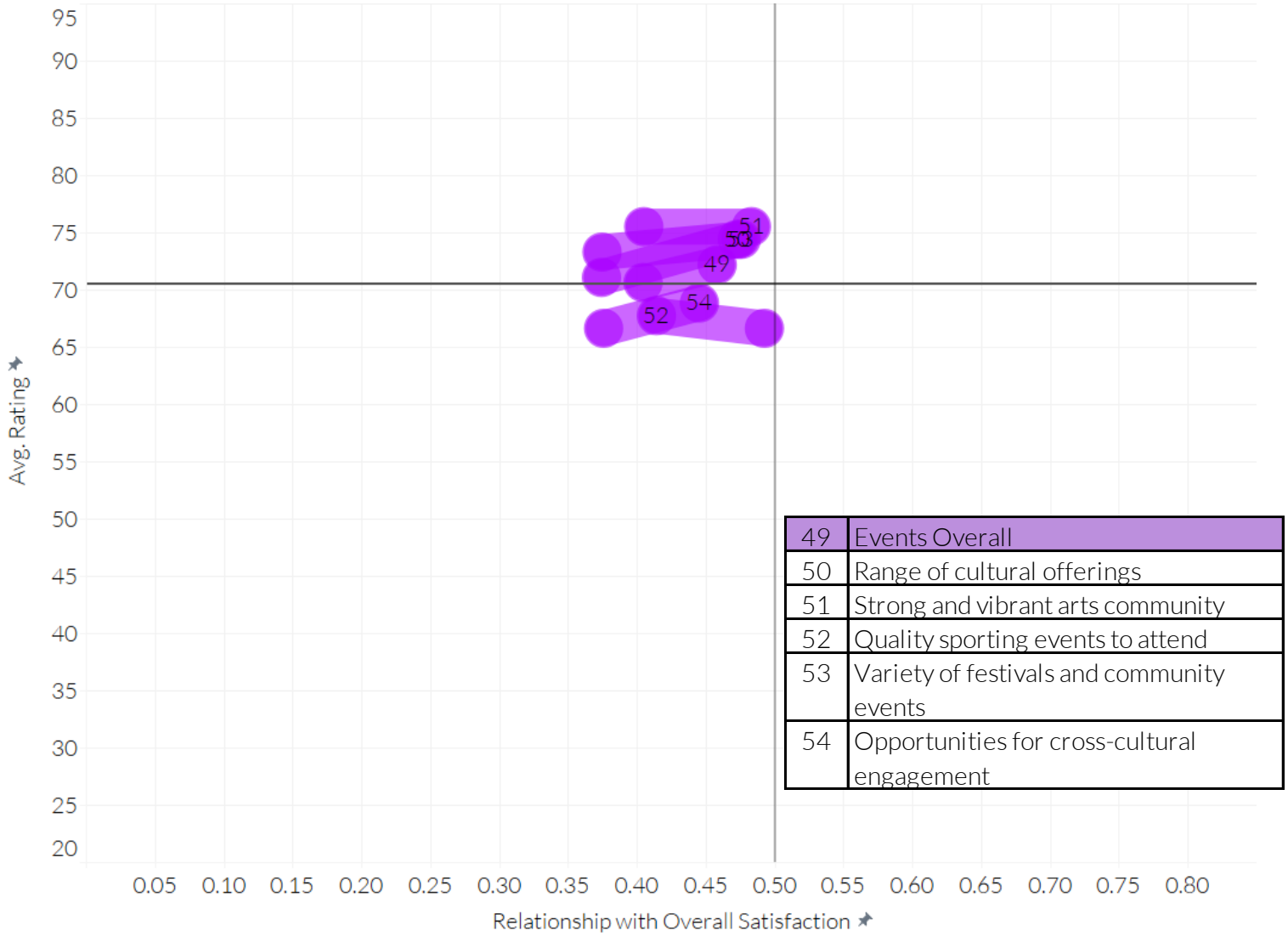
Level of Professionalism - Trends



Community Events

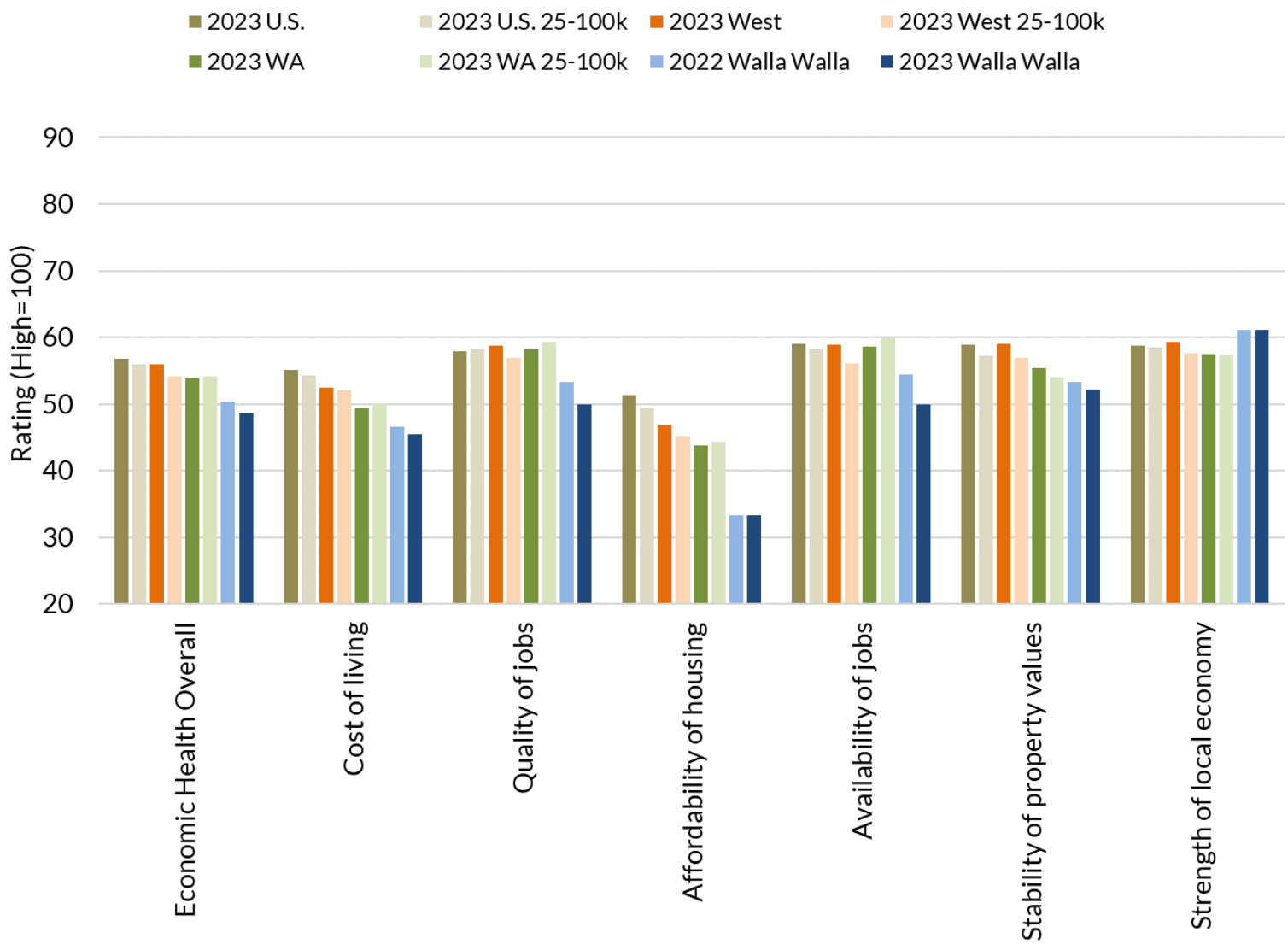


Community Events

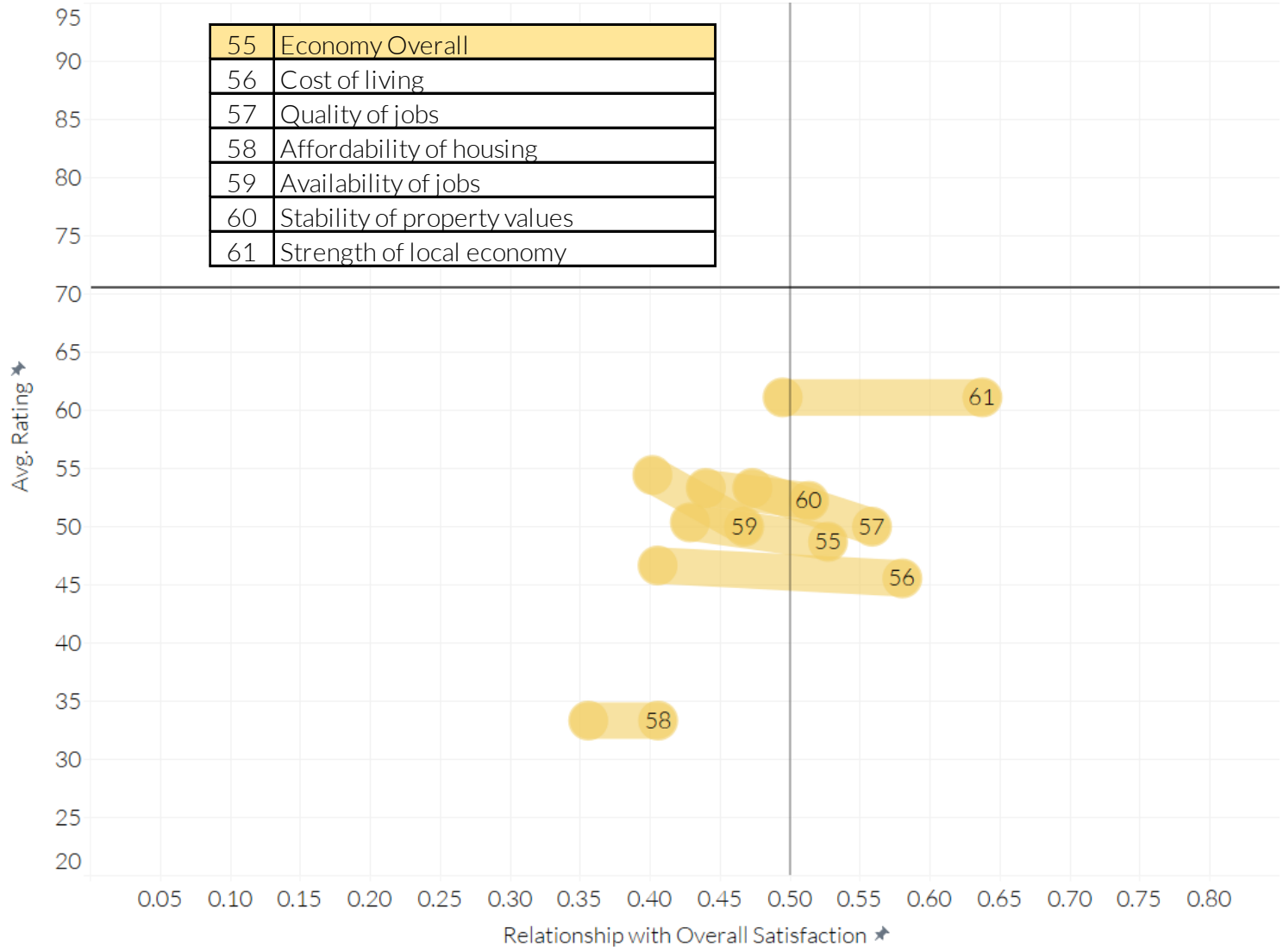


49	Events Overall
50	Range of cultural offerings
51	Strong and vibrant arts community
52	Quality sporting events to attend
53	Variety of festivals and community events
54	Opportunities for cross-cultural engagement

Economic Health

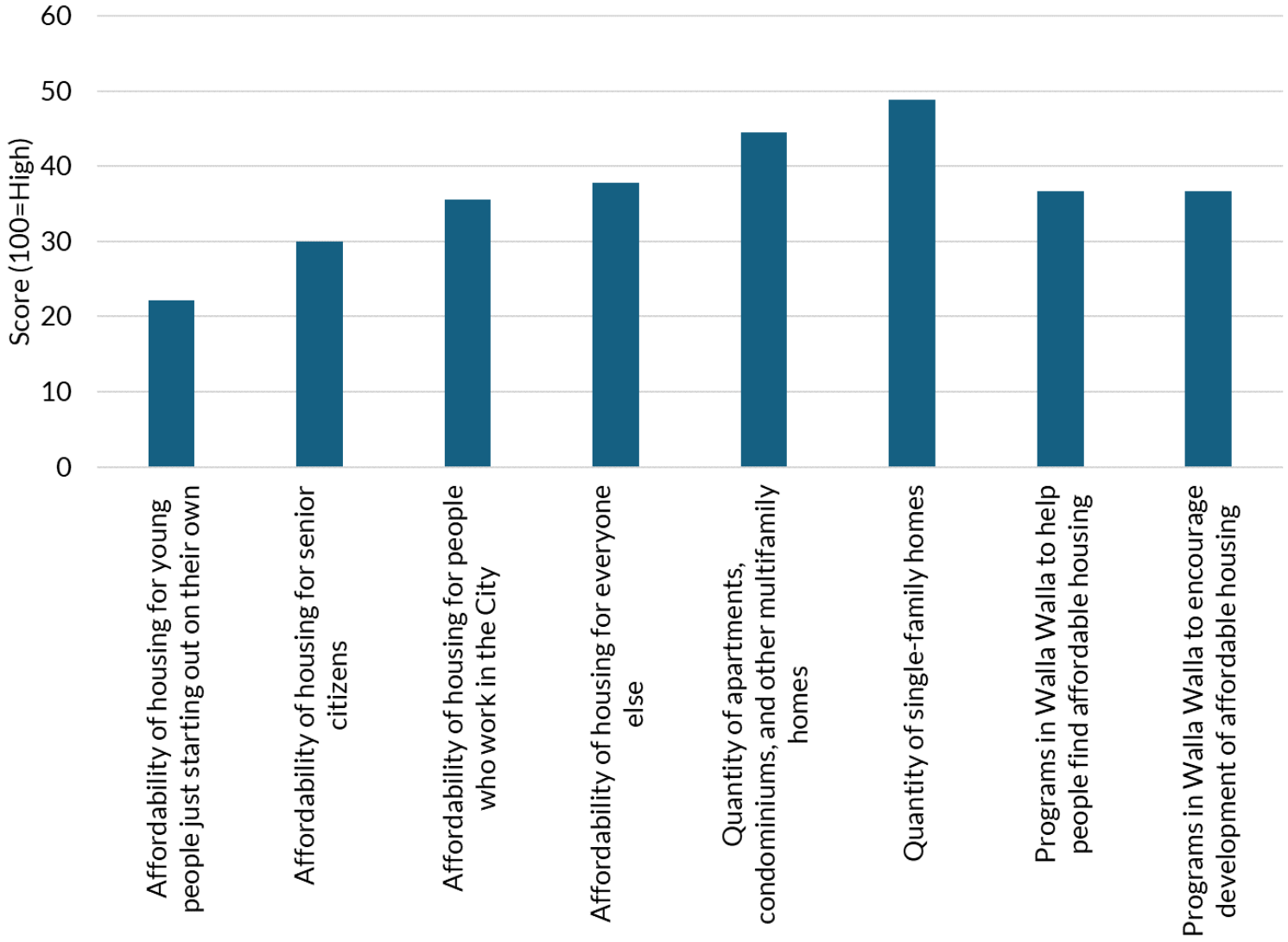


Economic Health

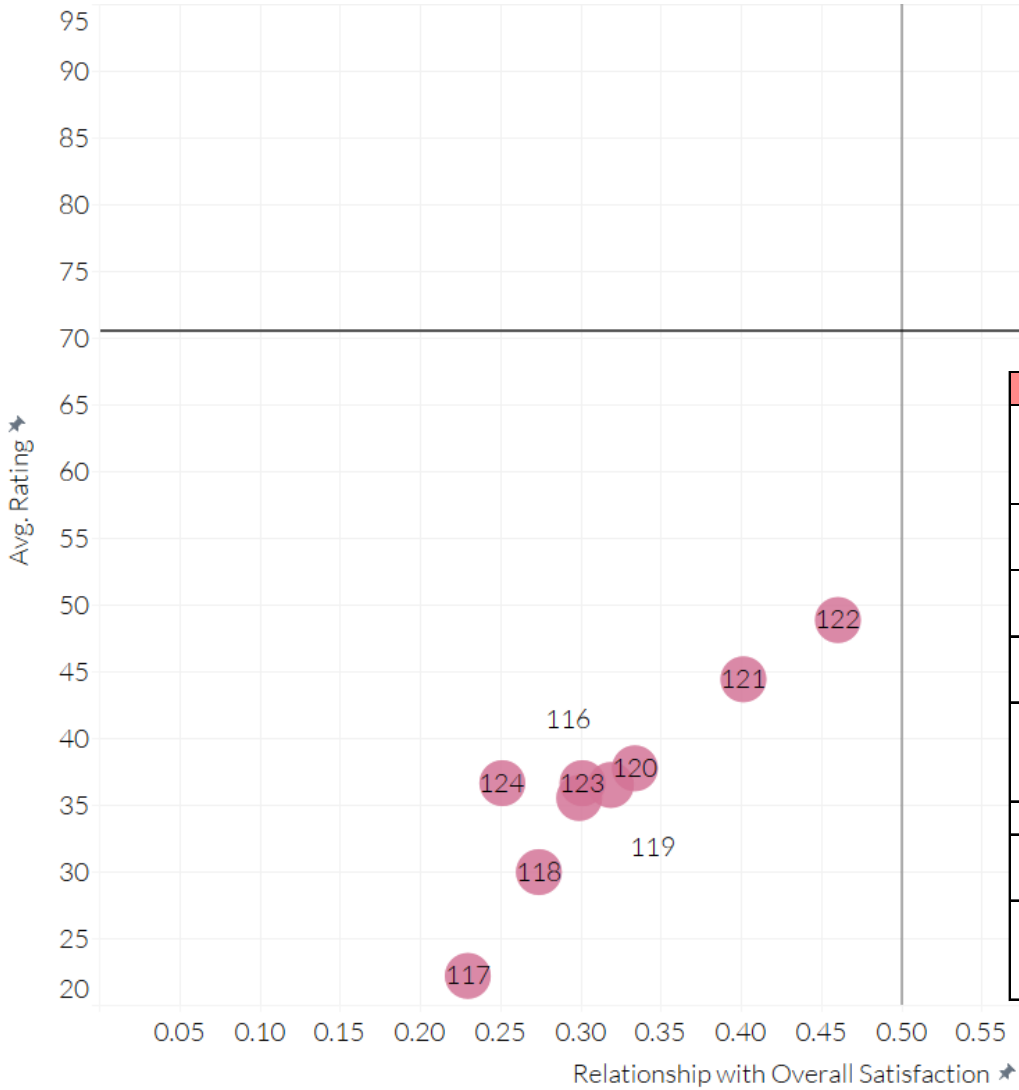


Housing in Walla Walla

(High score = 100)

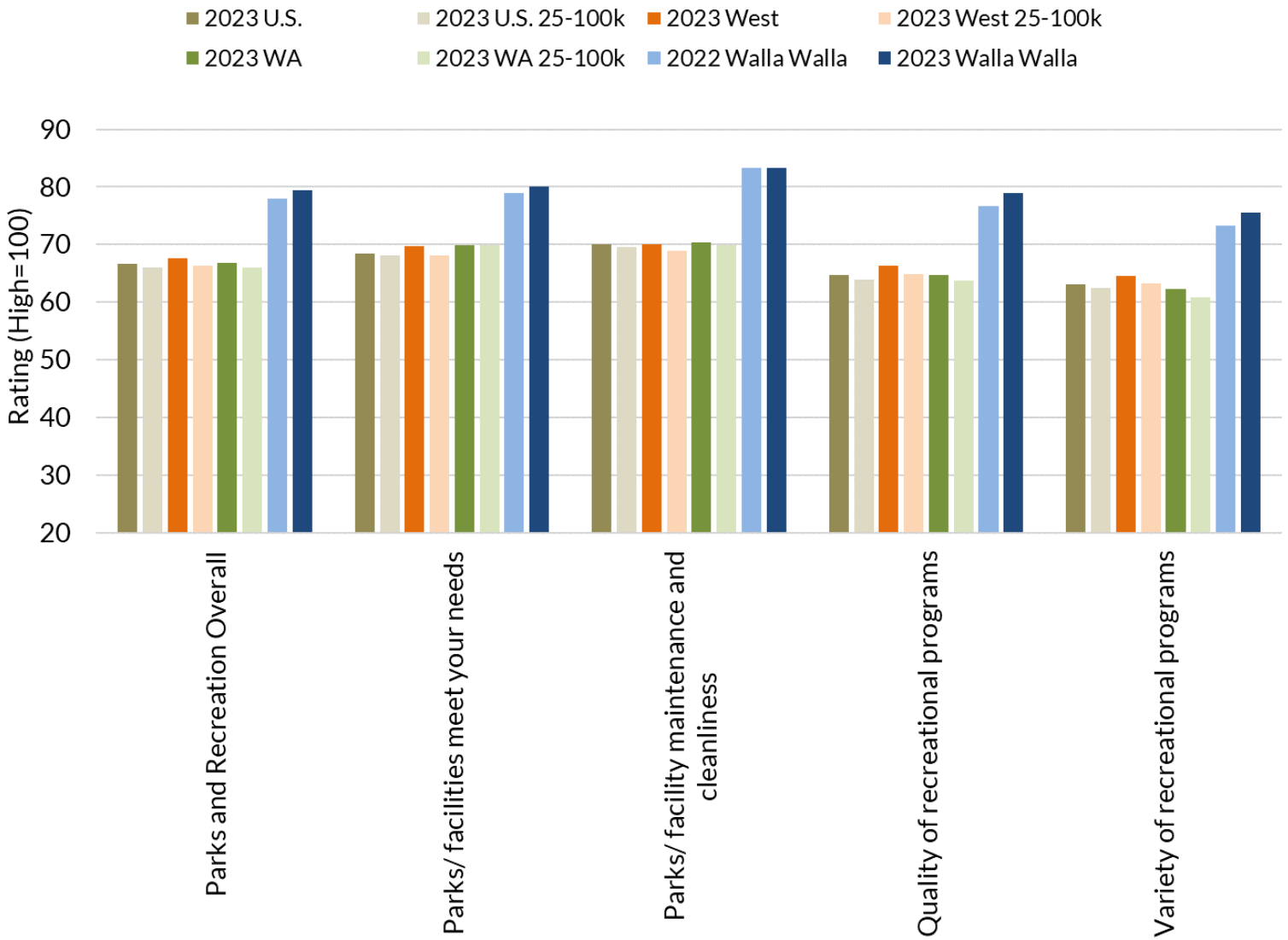


Housing

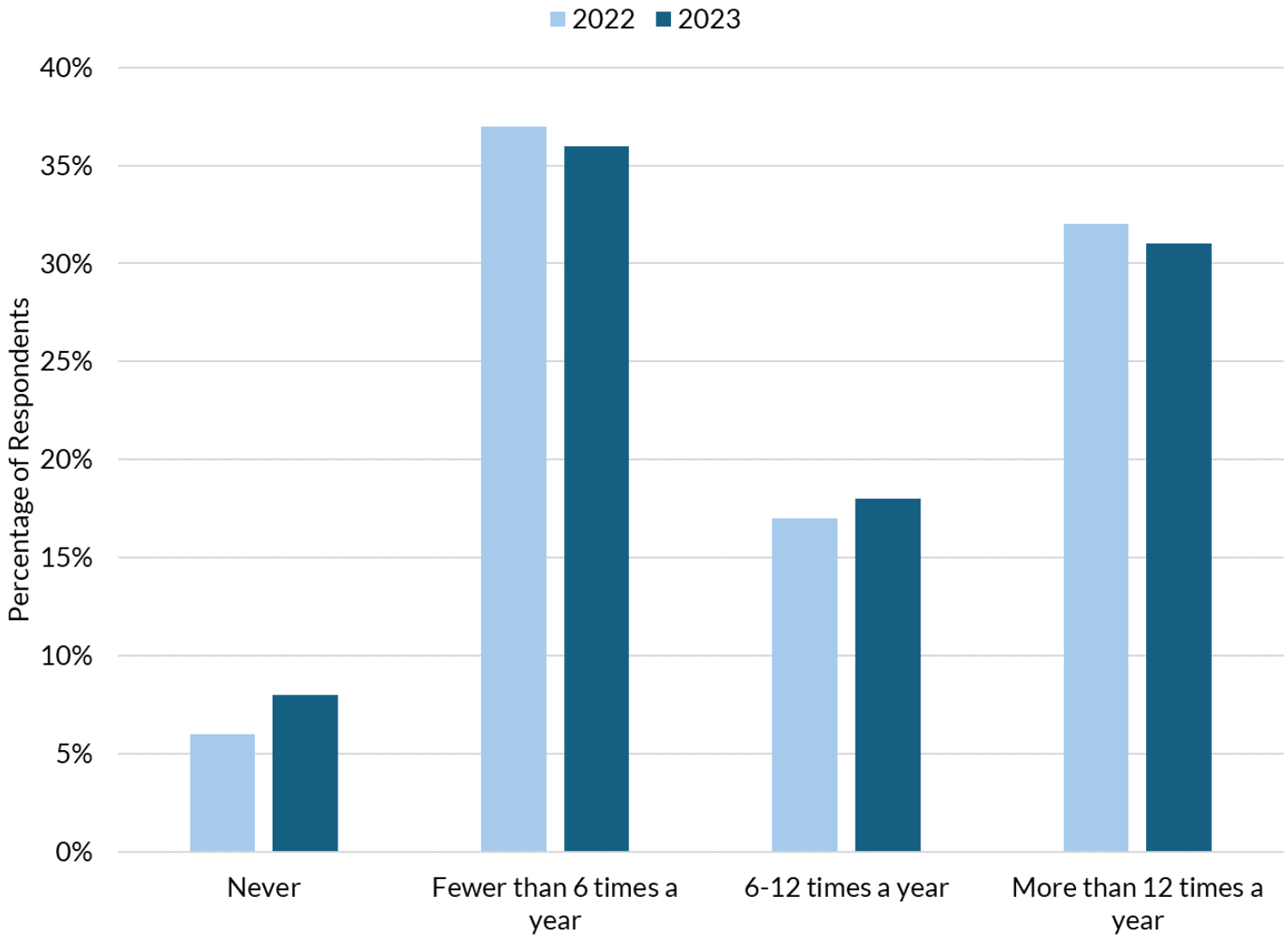


116	Housing Overall
117	Affordability of housing for young people just starting out on their own
118	Affordability of housing for senior citizens
119	Affordability of housing for people who work in the City
120	Affordability of housing for everyone else
121	Quantity of apartments, condominiums, and other multifamily homes
122	Quantity of single-family homes
123	Programs in Walla Walla to help people find affordable housing
124	Programs in Walla Walla to encourage development of affordable housing

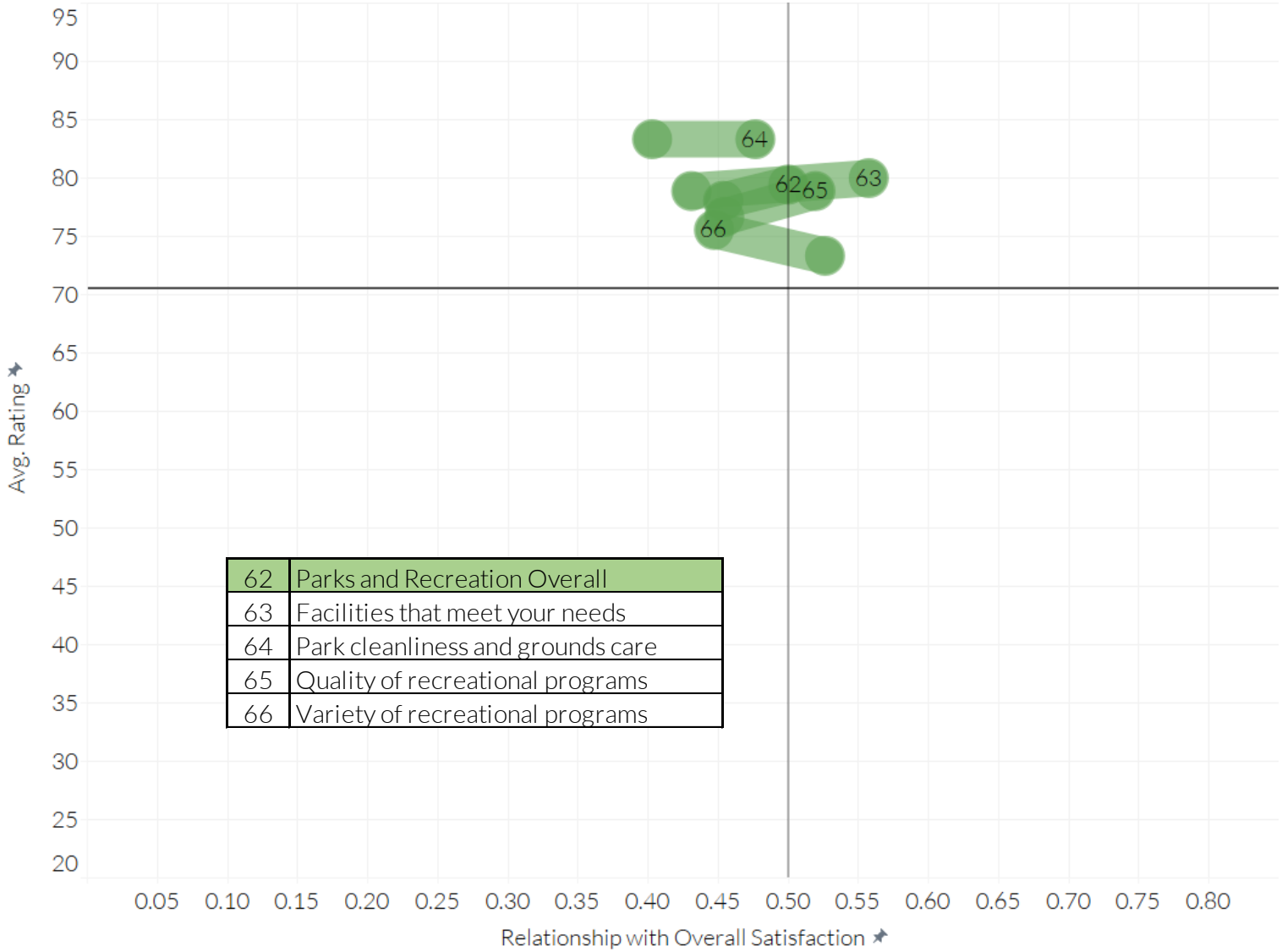
Parks and Recreation



How frequently do you use the parks and recreation facilities and programs?

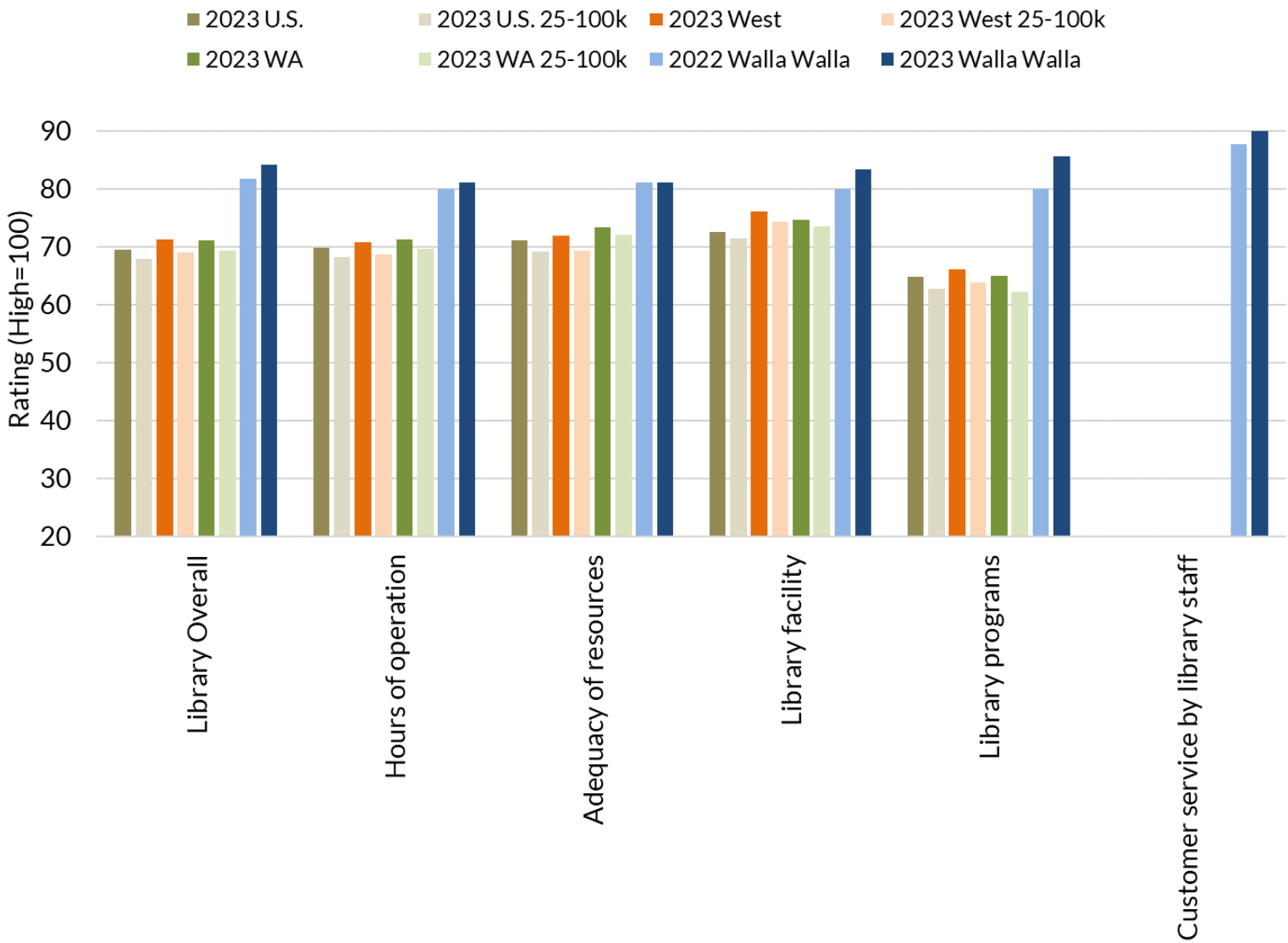


Parks and Recreation

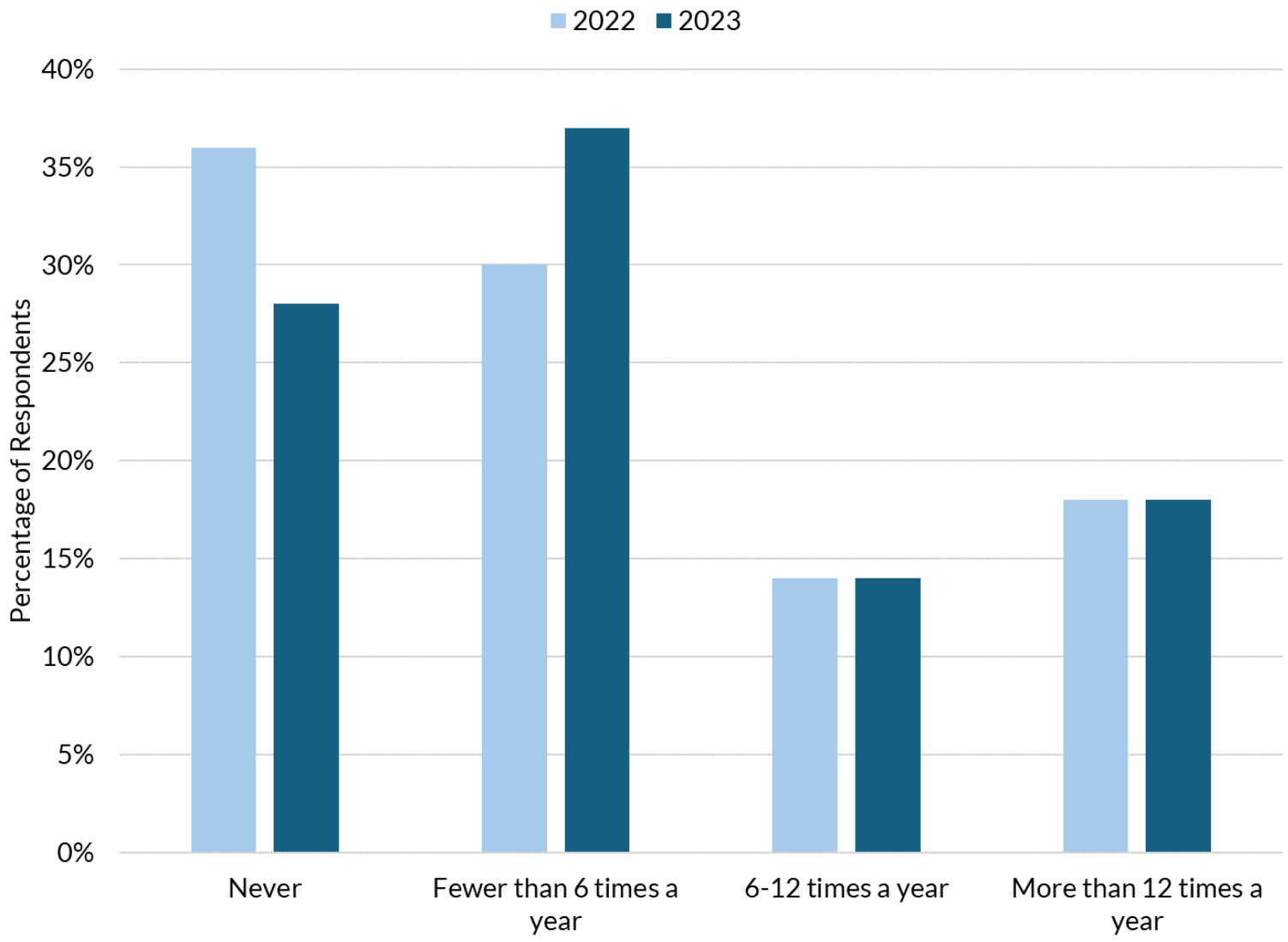


62	Parks and Recreation Overall
63	Facilities that meet your needs
64	Park cleanliness and grounds care
65	Quality of recreational programs
66	Variety of recreational programs

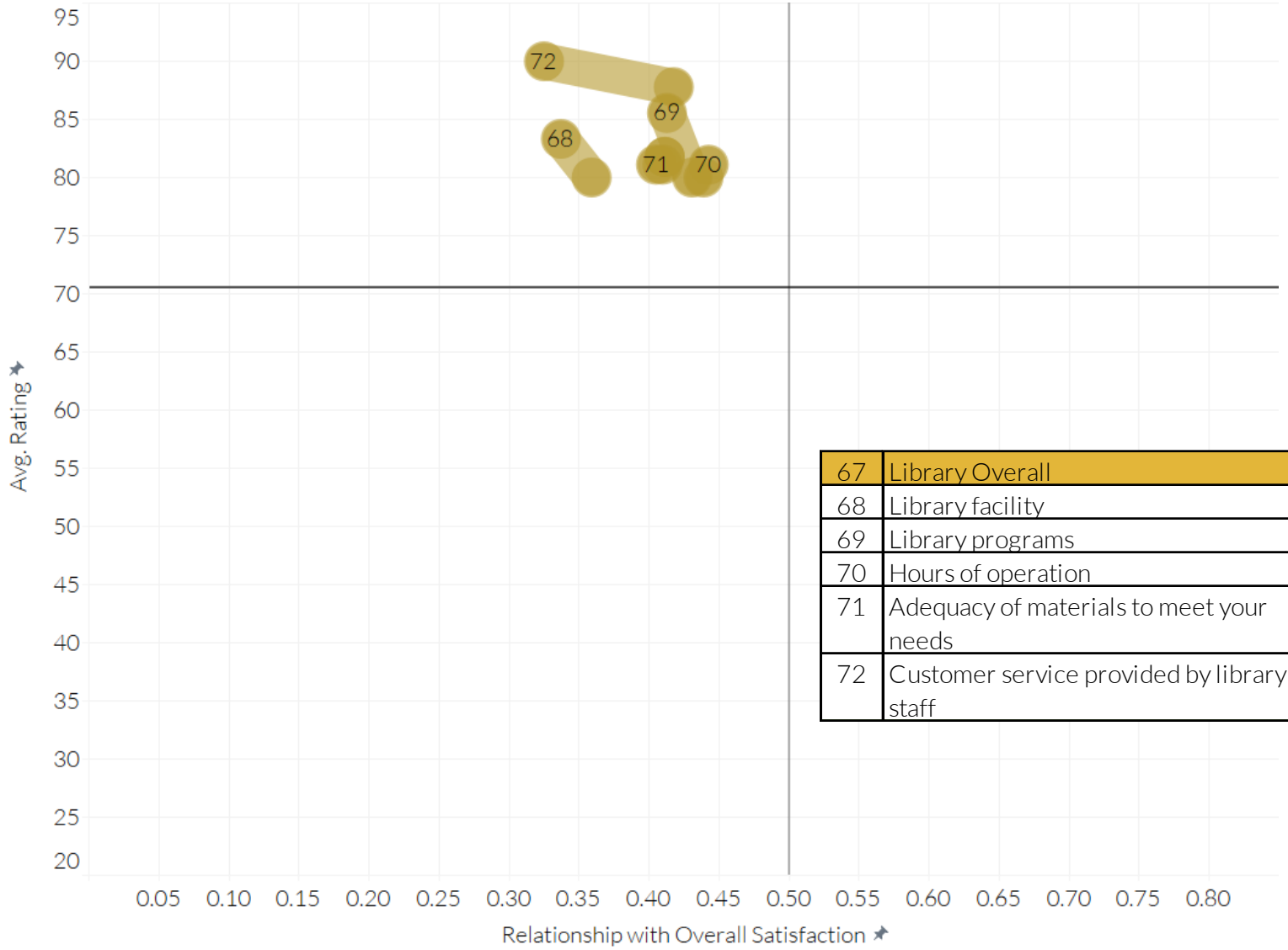
Library Services



How frequently do you use Walla Walla's local library?



Library Services



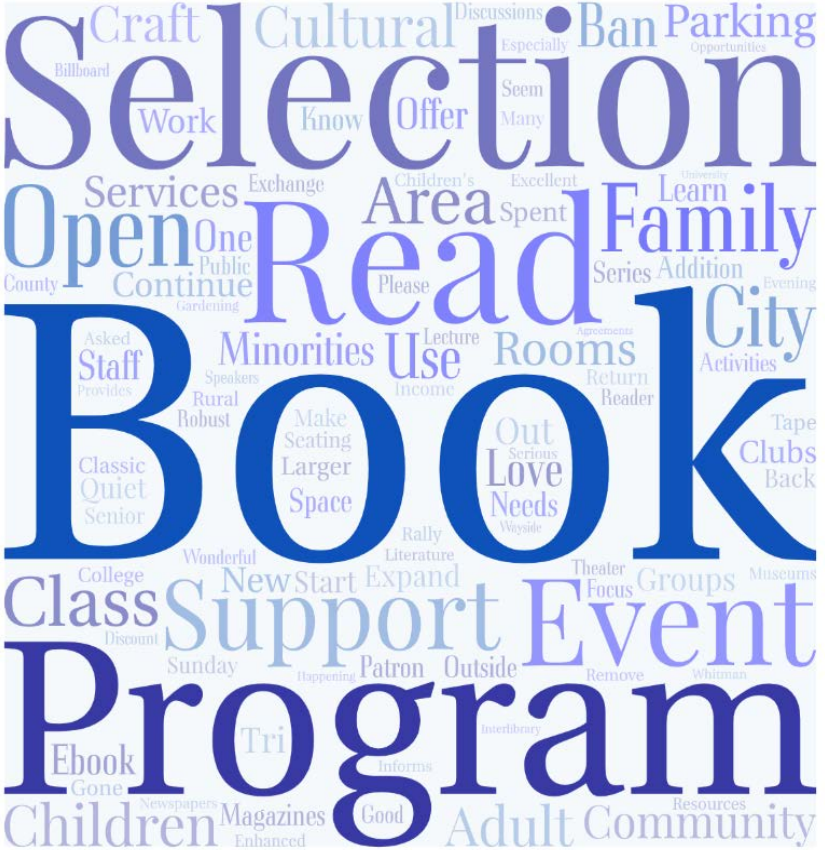
67	Library Overall
68	Library facility
69	Library programs
70	Hours of operation
71	Adequacy of materials to meet your needs
72	Customer service provided by library staff

Word Cloud:

What are some new or enhanced programs and amenities you would like to see at the library?

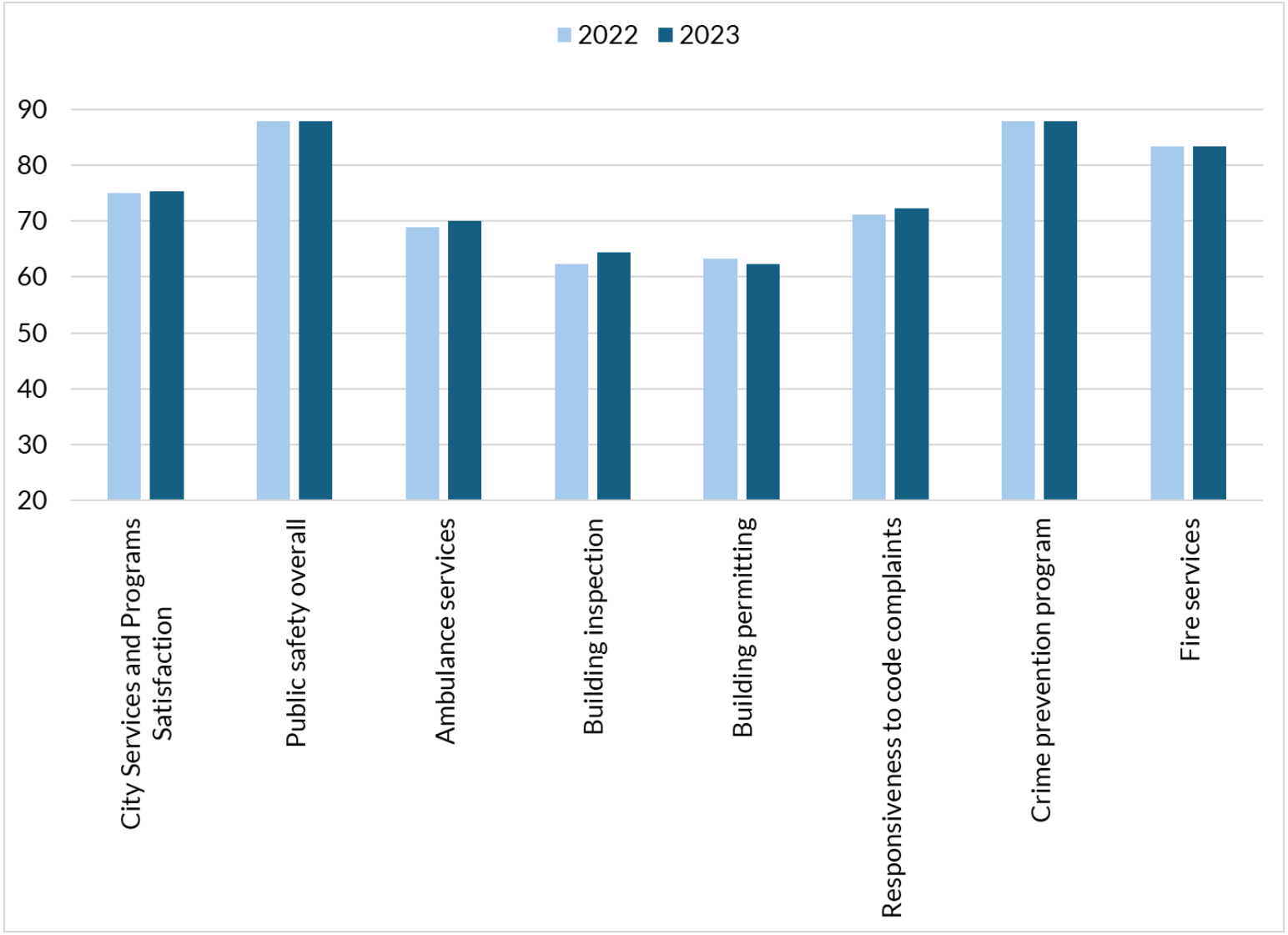
Top Themes:

1. Book: Residents would like to see more book clubs/group discussions available. They also have concerns about book bans.
2. Selection - Residents would like a more selection; they mentioned cooking/ parenting and a larger ebook/ audio selection.
3. Program- Residents overall like the programs that are offered and would like to see continued improvement on the current programs. They have suggested that the library add a meet-the-author program.

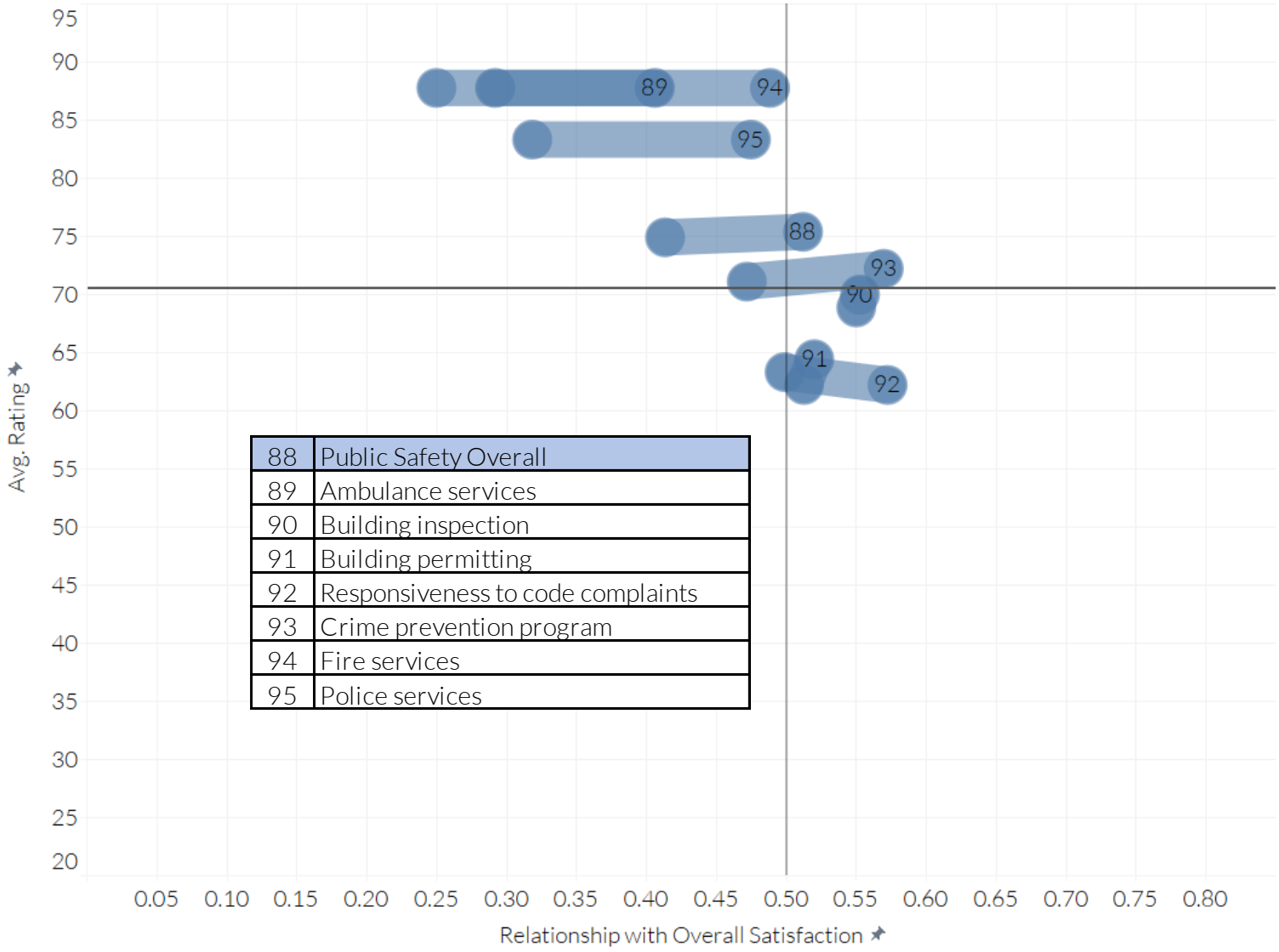


Note: See full list of comments for context

City Services and Programs Satisfaction
Public Safety (Scale = 0 to 100)

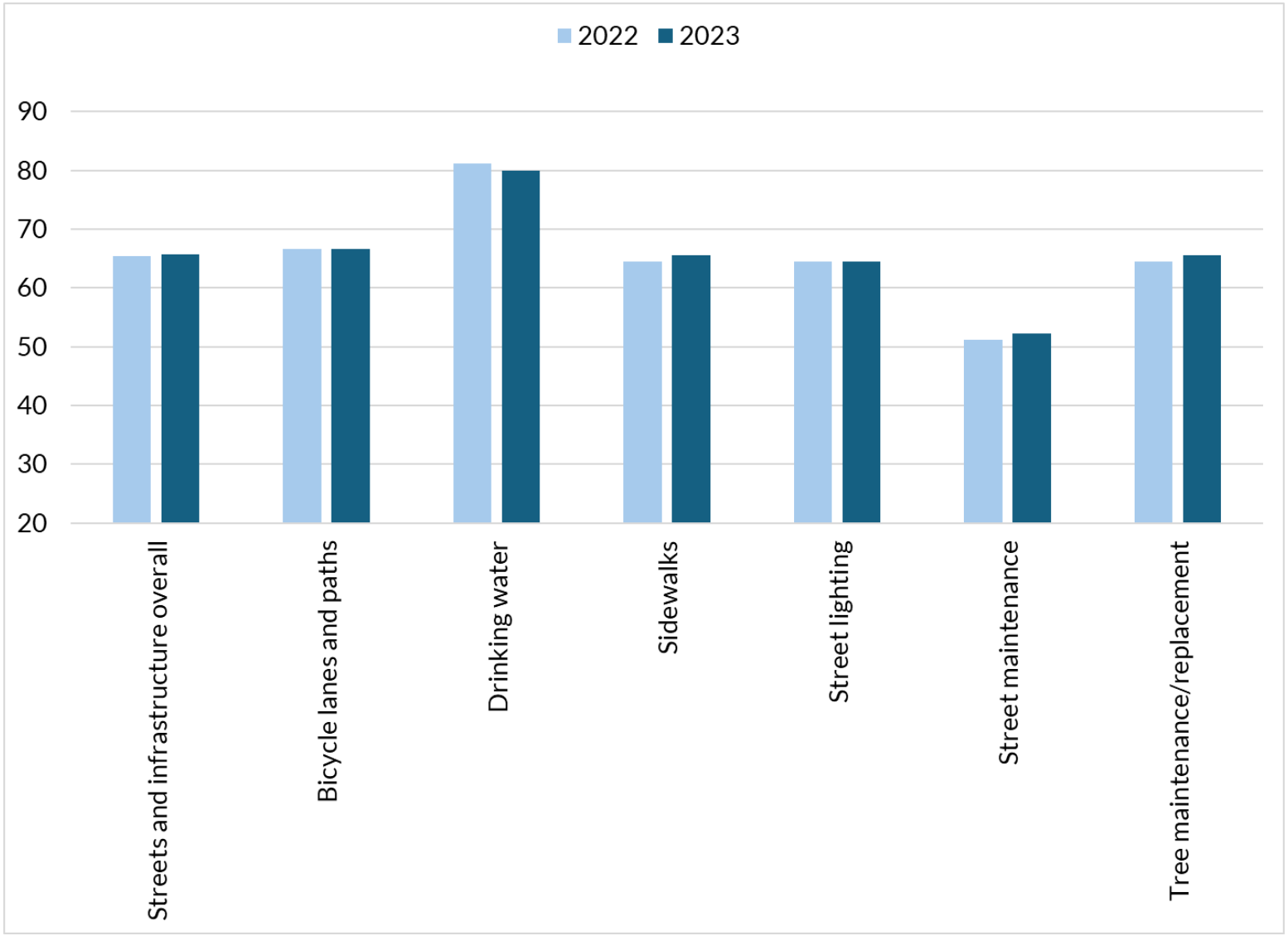


Public Safety

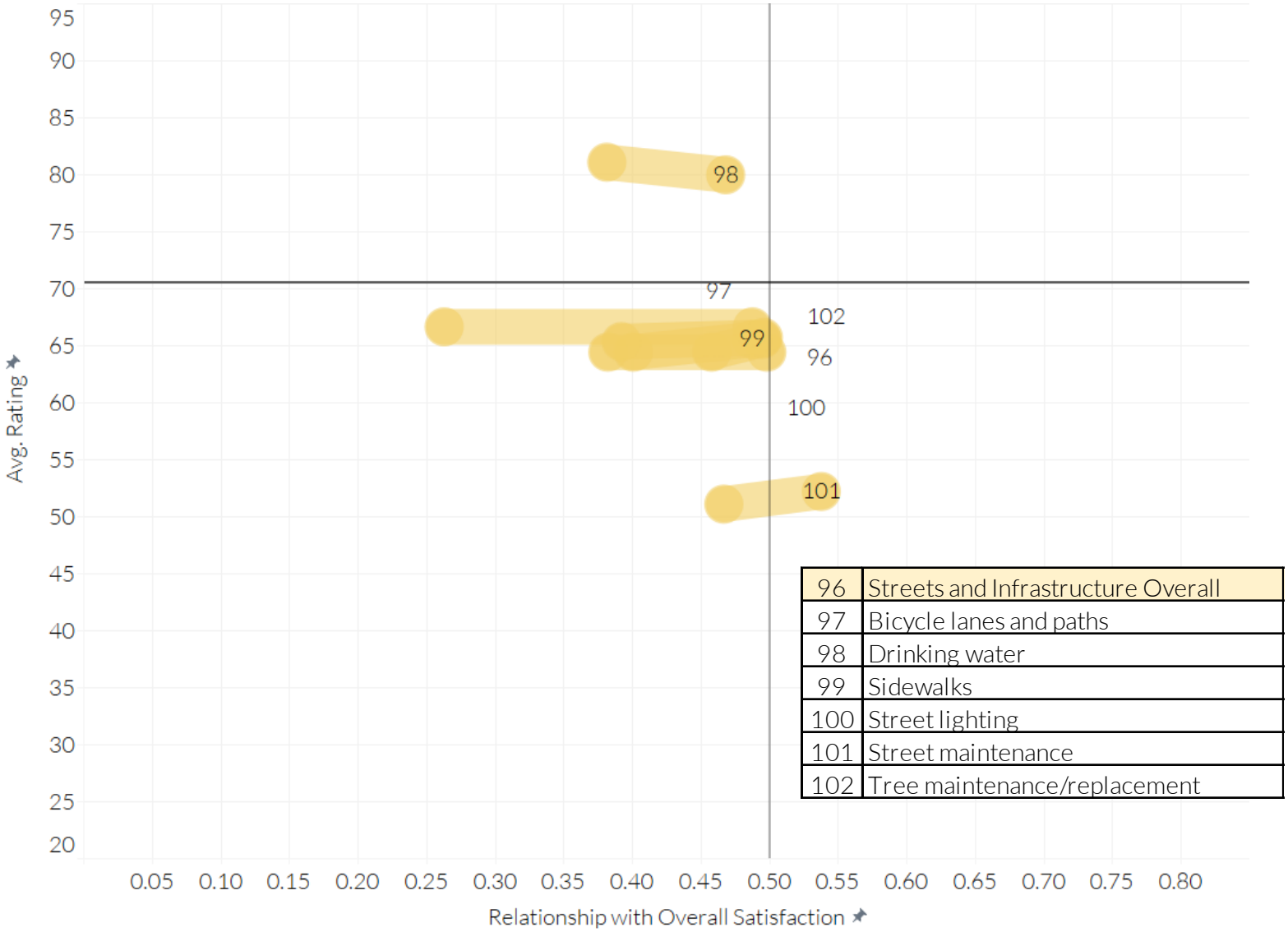


88	Public Safety Overall
89	Ambulance services
90	Building inspection
91	Building permitting
92	Responsiveness to code complaints
93	Crime prevention program
94	Fire services
95	Police services

City Services and Programs Satisfaction Streets and Infrastructure (Scale = 0 to 100)

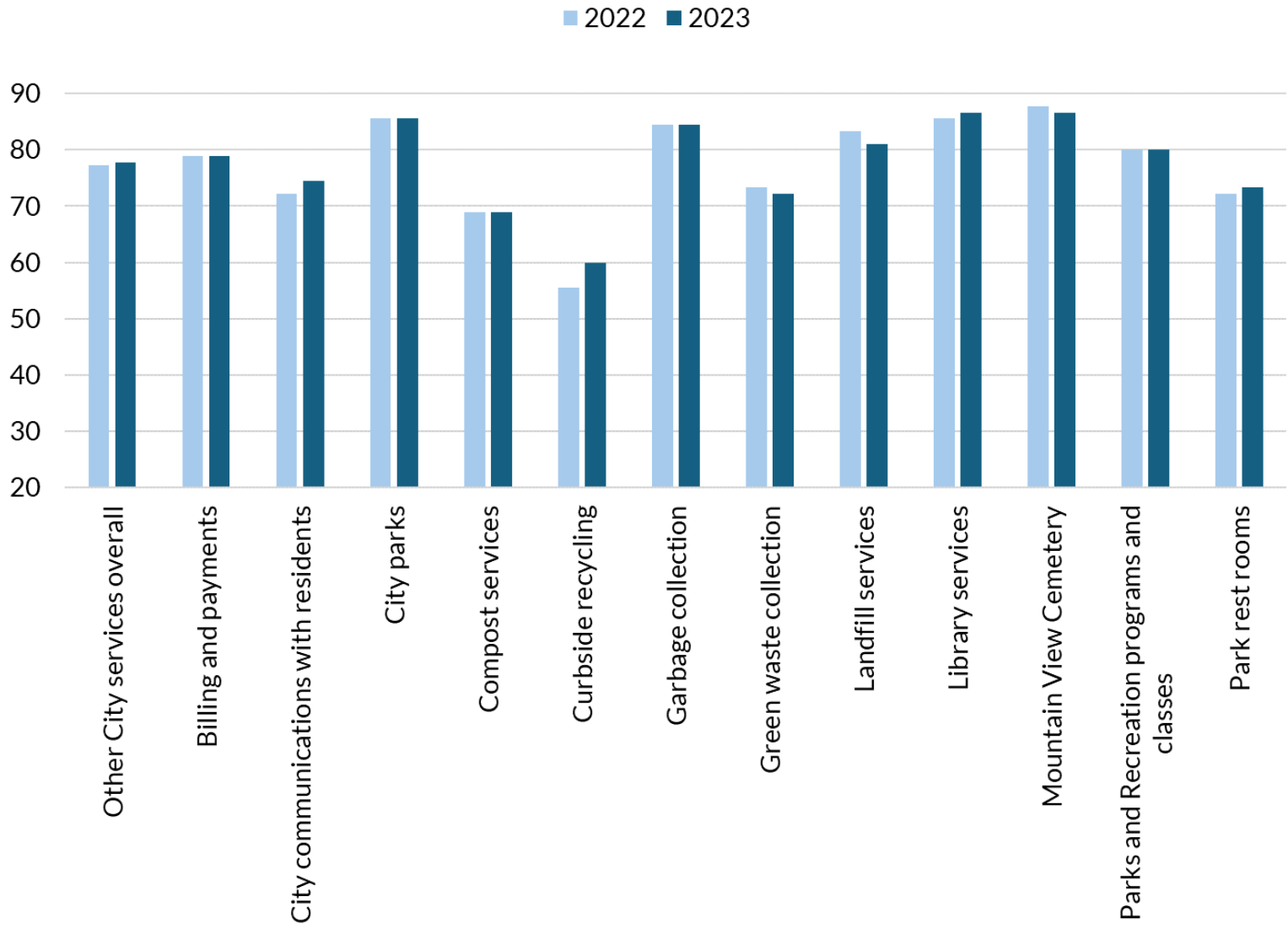


Streets and Infrastructure

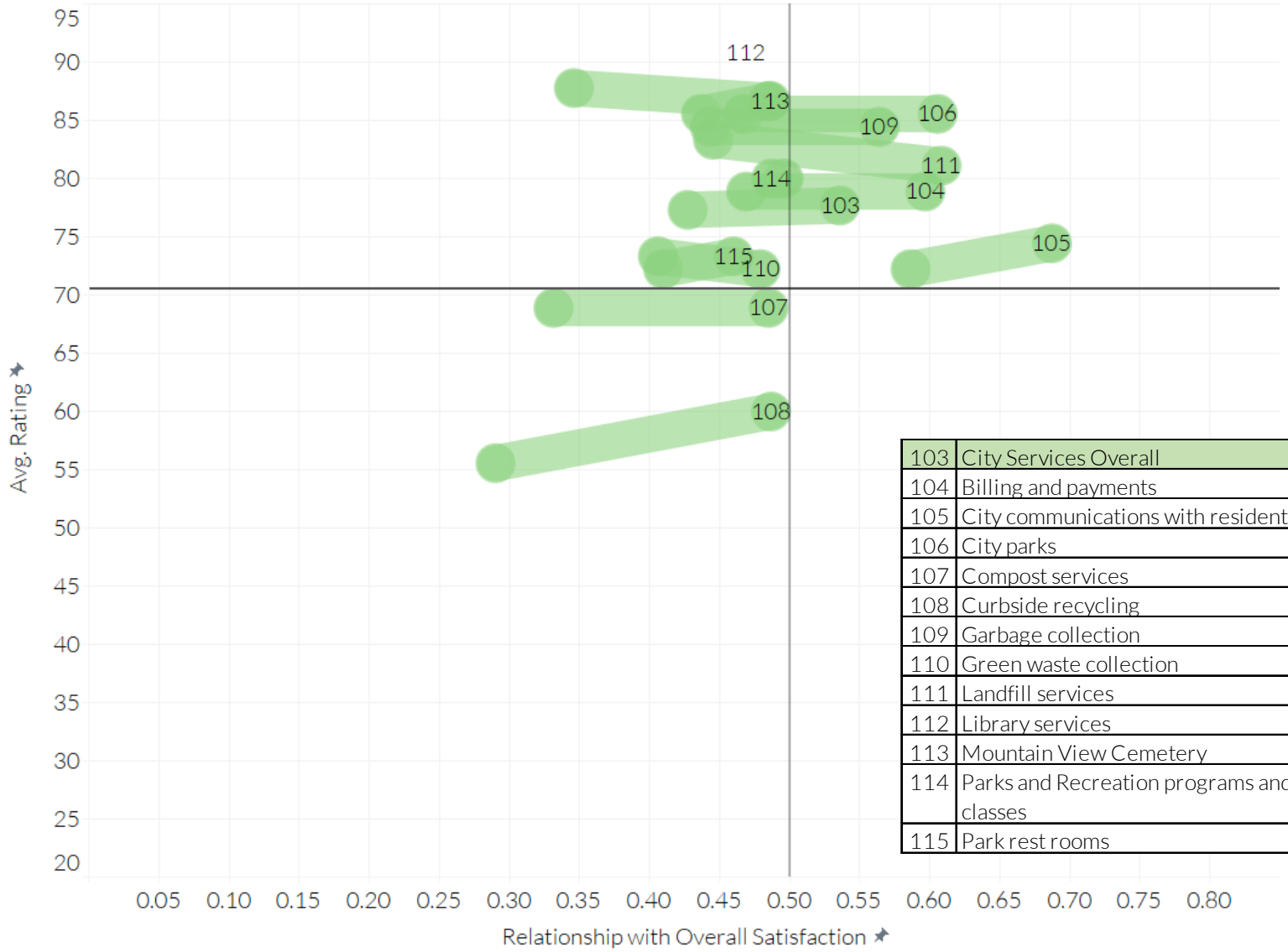


96	Streets and Infrastructure Overall
97	Bicycle lanes and paths
98	Drinking water
99	Sidewalks
100	Street lighting
101	Street maintenance
102	Tree maintenance/replacement

Other City Services and Programs Satisfaction (Scale = 0 to 100)



Other City Services



103	City Services Overall
104	Billing and payments
105	City communications with residents
106	City parks
107	Compost services
108	Curbside recycling
109	Garbage collection
110	Green waste collection
111	Landfill services
112	Library services
113	Mountain View Cemetery
114	Parks and Recreation programs and classes
115	Park rest rooms

Word Cloud:

What are two improvements you would like to see the City implement to improve your satisfaction?

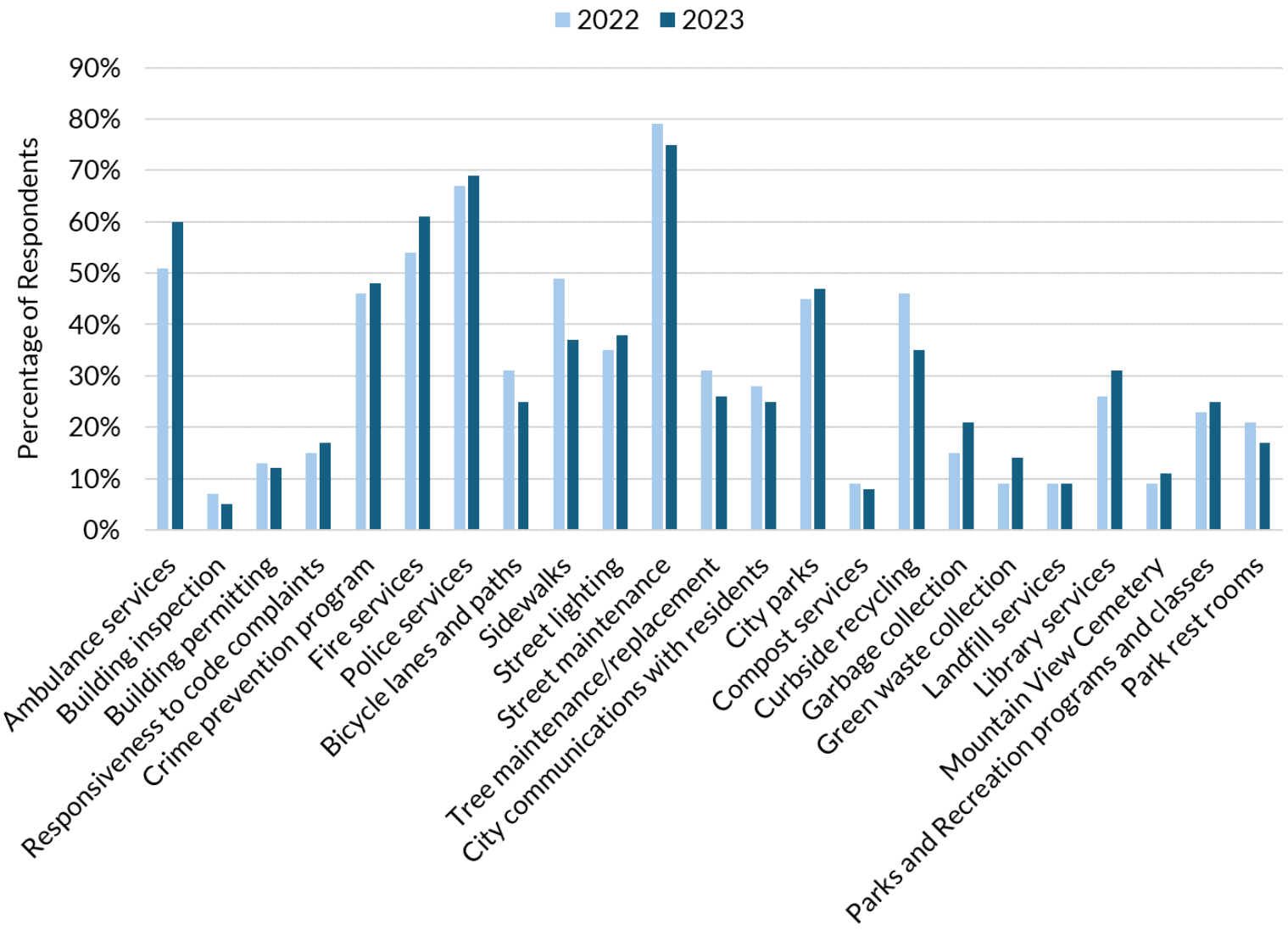
Top Themes:

1. Repairs- Residents would like to see the city make repairs to the streets and clean up the sidewalks from tree roots. They also do not like that construction timeframes are so long.
2. Shop- Residents would like to see more shopping options; they specifically mentioned large box retail stores such as Costco or Target.
3. Improve- Several residents shared concerns related to improving community safety, with a focus on addressing homelessness. Some expressed a desire for improved safety and security.

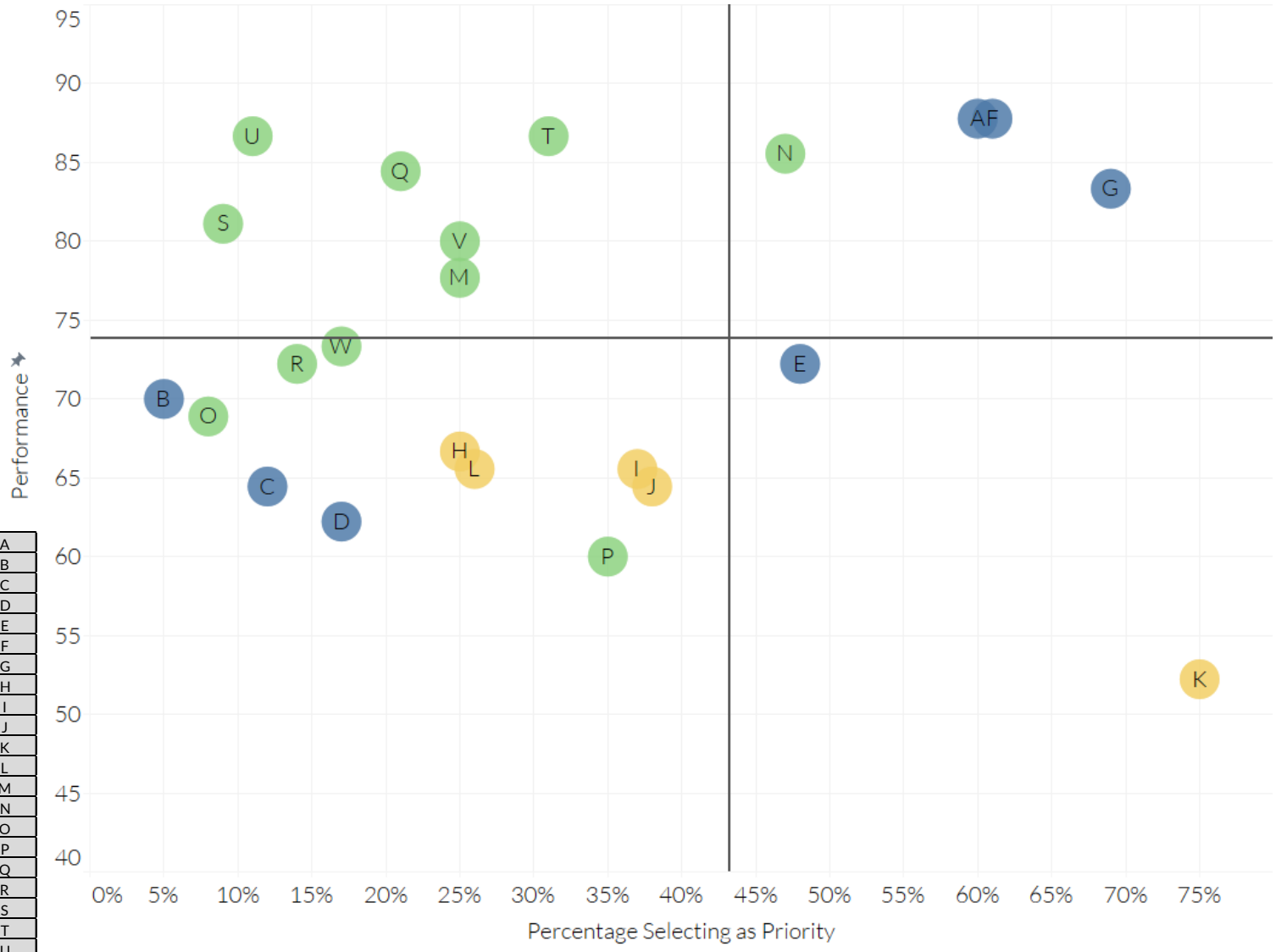
Note: See full list of comments for context

Planning and Future Budget Considerations

City services that you believe should be the most important priorities to fund in the next few years.

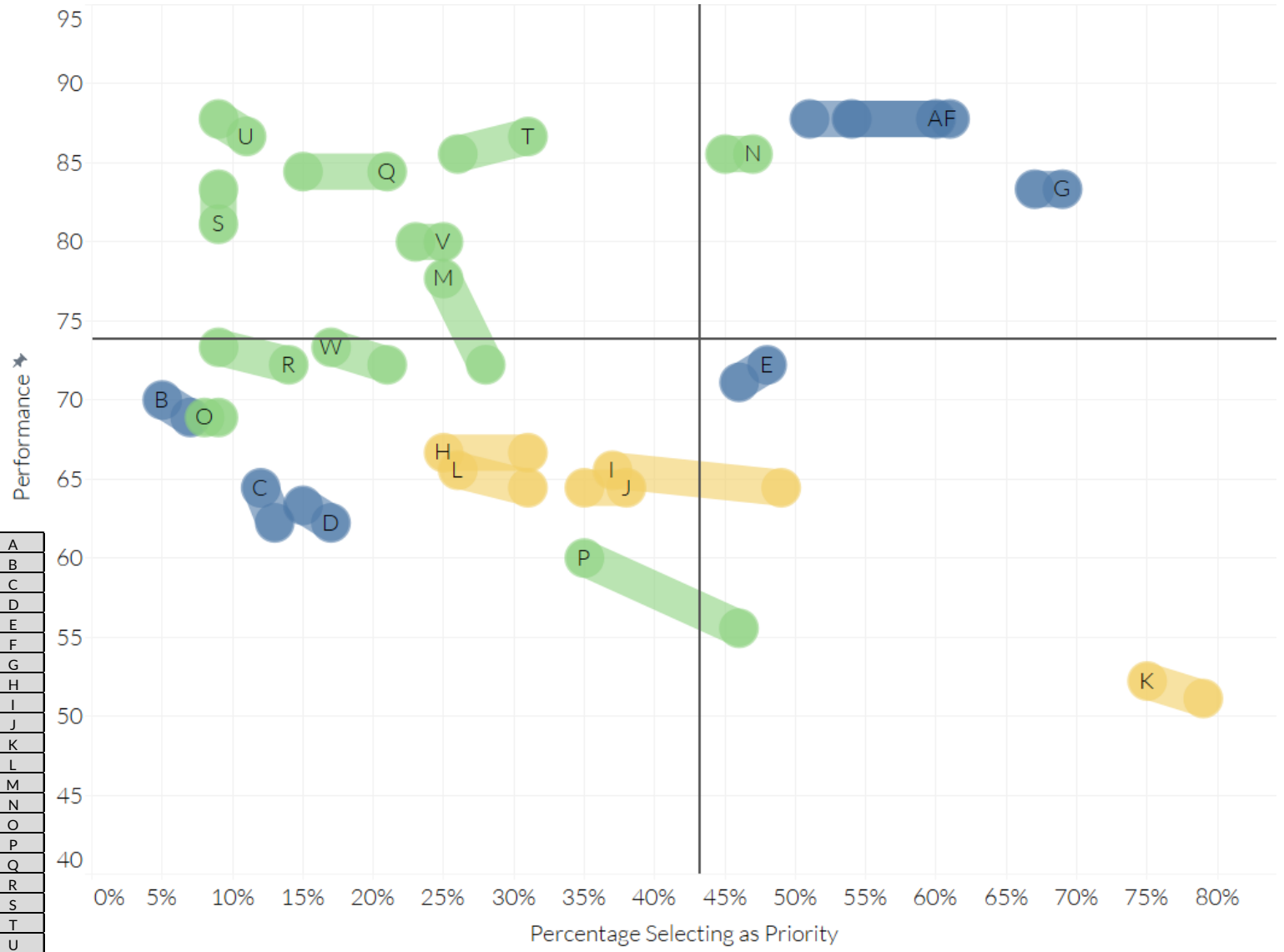


City & Programs Bubble Chart



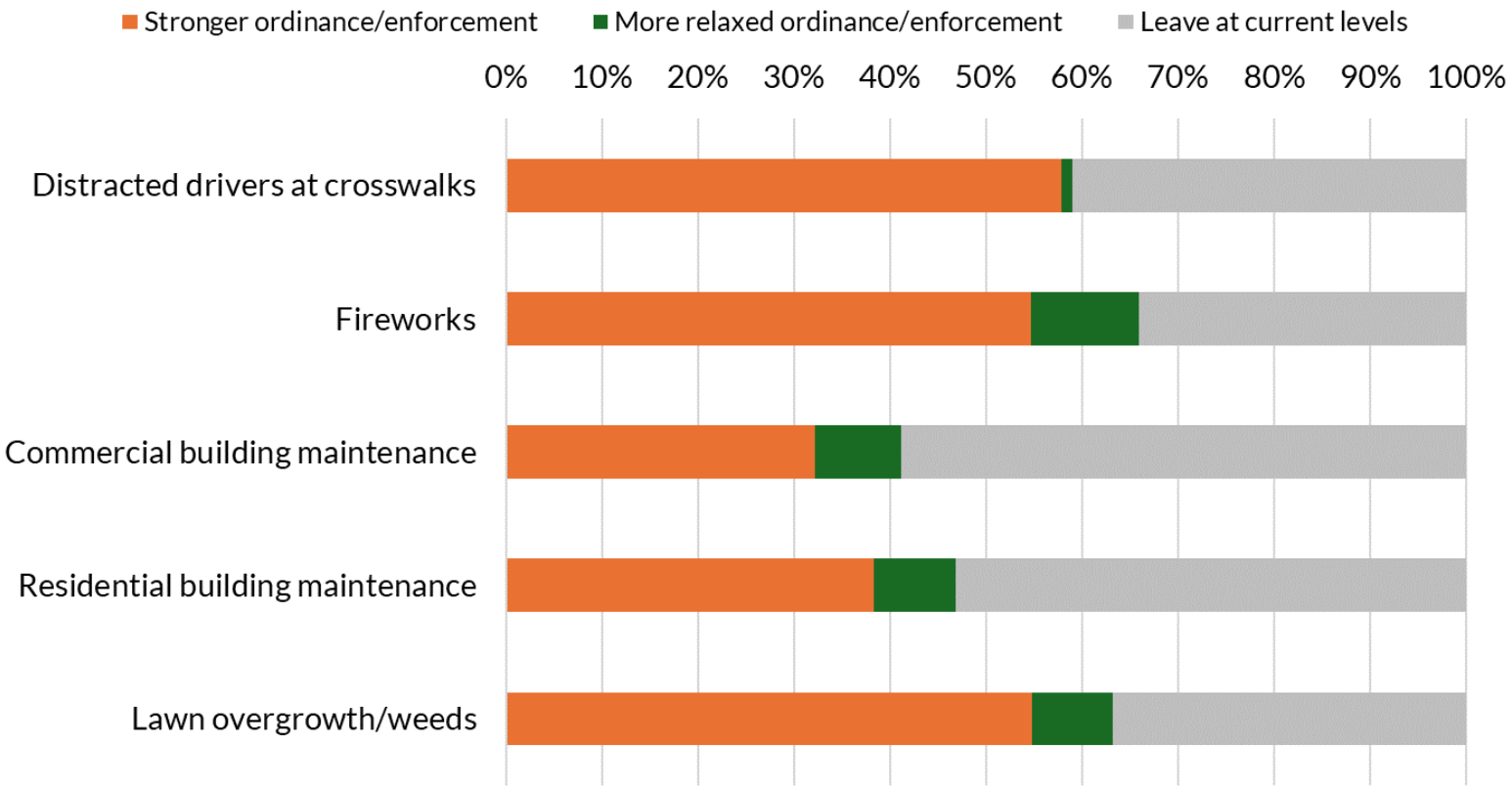
Ambulance services	A
Building inspection	B
Building permitting	C
Responsiveness to code complaints	D
Crime prevention program	E
Fire services	F
Police services	G
Bicycle lanes and paths	H
Sidewalks	I
Street lighting	J
Street maintenance	K
Tree maintenance/replacement	L
City communications with residents	M
City parks	N
Compost services	O
Curbside recycling	P
Garbage collection	Q
Green waste collection	R
Landfill services	S
Library services	T
Mountain View Cemetery	U
Parks/Recreation programs and classes	V
Park rest rooms	W

City & Programs Bubble Chart



Ambulance services	A
Building inspection	B
Building permitting	C
Responsiveness to code complaints	D
Crime prevention program	E
Fire services	F
Police services	G
Bicycle lanes and paths	H
Sidewalks	I
Street lighting	J
Street maintenance	K
Tree maintenance/replacement	L
City communications with residents	M
City parks	N
Compost services	O
Curbside recycling	P
Garbage collection	Q
Green waste collection	R
Landfill services	S
Library services	T
Mountain View Cemetery	U
Parks/Recreation programs and classes	V
Park rest rooms	W

Ordinance Enforcement



Word Cloud:
Code Enforcement

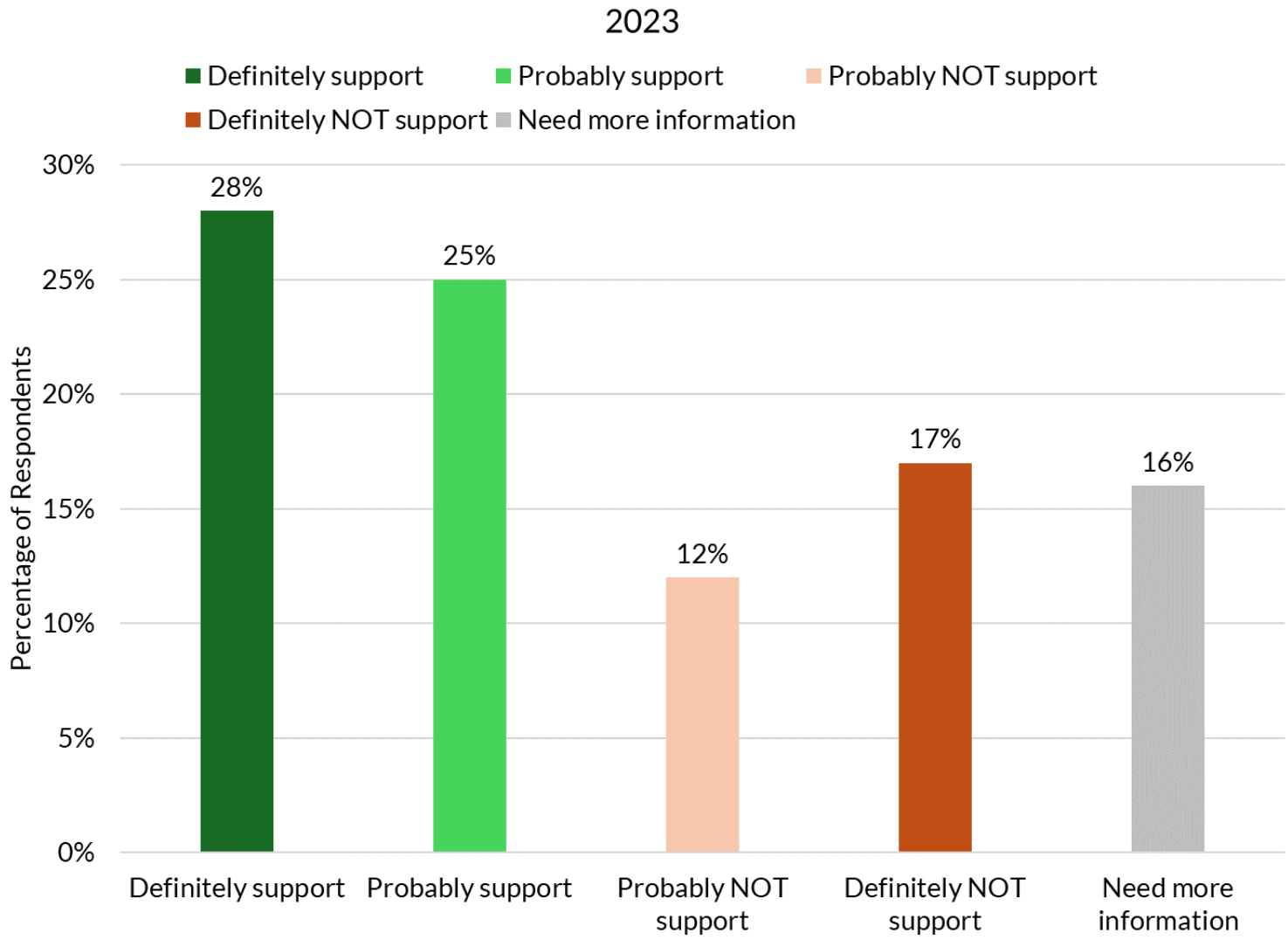
Themes:

1. **Firework-** Residents feel that the amount of fireworks has gotten out of hand. In that no one is following the firework ordinances and they are concerned for the safety of the abandoned houses catching fire.

2. **Yard-** Residents are concerned with the increased number of overgrown yards and abandoned houses. They would like to see the city code enforcement reviewing these areas of town.

3. **Enforce-** Residents strongly urge the city's code enforcement to be more active and visible

Support for sales tax to address affordable housing of $0.001 for every dollar spent as matching



Word Cloud:

Housing

Themes:

1. **Tax-** Residents would like to see taxes going to areas that need improvement over areas that are well developed for the wealthy residents of Walla Walla. They are concerned about tax levels and would like to ensure there is strong transparency.

2. **Afford-** Residents would like to see more affordable housing. They are concerned with the current state of the homeless population and challenges faced by seniors and young families.

3. **House-** Residents do not like to see abandoned houses and would like the city to link affordable housing with restoring properties and strengthening community character.

Questions