

# Upper Merion Township Community Survey Overview of Findings

Center for Opinion Research  
Franklin & Marshall College  
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# Goals

The purpose of this study is to determine citizens' satisfaction with the municipal services provided by the Township, determine the need for additional services, and assess changes since the 2007 survey.

# Methodology

This research gathered data using a telephone and online survey of **778 Upper Merion Township residents** (335 via telephone and 443 via web). The survey interviewing took place from **July 8 – July 28, 2019**. The survey used an addressed-based sample to identify households located in Upper Merion Township.

The **sample error for this survey is +/- 3.5 percentage points**.<sup>\*</sup> In addition to sampling error, this poll is also subject to other sources of non-sampling error. Generally speaking, two sources of error concern researchers most. Non-response bias is created when selected participants either choose not to participate in the survey or are unavailable for interviewing. Response errors are the product of the question and answer process. Surveys that rely on self-reported behaviors and attitudes are susceptible to biases related to the way respondents process and respond to survey questions.

*\*The estimated sample error is +/- 7.5 percent when the design effects of weighting are considered.*

# Main Findings

## Changes since 2007

- Upper Merion Township's population has increased, has gotten older, and has become more diverse. The average household income has increased, but median household income has decreased (Slide 7).
- There has been a large change in attitudes about affordable housing since the prior survey, with less than half (43%) of residents agreeing that the Township provides access to affordable housing (Slide 10).
- More residents believe drugs are a problem in Upper Merion Township compared to 2002 and 2007 (Slide 14).
- Township publication readership has increased since 2007, while park visits and the use of the library have decreased. Far fewer residents watched a board of supervisors meeting in 2019 than in prior years. (Slide 16).
- Fewer Upper Merion Township residents are aware of township services related to recreation programs, park and recreation classes, youth services, Rambler shuttle service, and planning and zoning (Slide 17).

# Main Findings

## Satisfaction with Municipal Services

- Almost all (96%) Upper Merion Township residents believe the Township is an excellent or good place to live (Slide 9).
- Township residents feel most positively about the economic, recreational, and employment opportunities in the Township (Slide 10).
- About half of Township residents say they frequently or sometimes get township information through Upper Merion Township's web page (56%), Township Lines newsletter (50%), and social media pages (47%) (Slide11).
- Nearly half (47%) of residents say Upper Merion's police do an excellent job dealing with crime (Slide 12).
- Most of the residents who interacted with a township employee rated their overall experience, employee knowledge, employee responsiveness, and employee courteousness as excellent or good (Slide 18).
- Upper Merion residents feel positively about Township governance. Nearly nine in ten (86%) feel they receive good value for the taxes they pay and are largely satisfied with how the Township allocates their tax dollars (Slide 19 & 20).

# Main Findings

## Need for Additional Services

- Few Township residents are very concerned about crime, although property crimes concern more residents than other crimes (Slide 13).
- More than half (52%) of Upper Merion Township residents say traffic is a major problem (Slide 14).
- Fewer Upper Merion Township residents are aware of township services related to recreation programs, park and recreation classes, youth services, Rambler shuttle service, and planning and zoning (Slide 17).
- Nearly two in five residents feel the Township spends too little on roads (39%) and traffic management (38%). Three in ten (29%) feel too little is spent on storm water management, and a quarter feel the Township spends too little on sidewalks (24%) and parks (23%) (Slide 20).

# American Community Survey Resident Demographics

There has been considerable change in the characteristics of the adult population of Upper Merion since the last survey of Township residents was conducted in 2007. This slide provides Census bureaus data about a few of the changes that have taken place:

- Upper Merion Township's **population increased 9%** between 2009 and 2017.
- There are **more owner-occupied housing units** compared to 2009.
- Nearly two in five (38%) residents are over fifty-five, compared to one in four (28%) in 2009.
- The Township **is more racially diverse**.
- Average household income has increased, although median household income has declined.

	2017	2009
<b>Total Population</b>	28,945	26,624
<b>Total Population Over 18</b>	23,413	21,539
<b>Housing</b>		
Total Units	13,037	12,898
Owner Occupied	8,361	8,039
<b>Age</b>		
Under 35	23%	24%
35-54	26%	29%
Over 55	38%	28%
Over 65	18%	15%
Median Age	40.7	40.0
<b>Education</b>		
HS or less	23%	26%
Some college	12%	14%
College degree	59%	54%
<b>Race</b>		
White	73%	82%
<b>Employment (Population Age 16+)</b>		
In Labor Force	69%	72%
Employed	66%	69%
Unemployed	4%	4%
<b>Income</b>		
Under 35	15%	17%
35-75	25%	30%
Over 75	60%	53%
Mean	\$ 124,552.00	\$ 120,033.00
Median	\$ 91,515.00	\$ 97,184.00
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single, Never Married	28%	31%
Married	57%	55%
Not currently married	15%	15%
<b>Children in Household</b>		
Yes	27%	26%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	49%	50%
Female	51%	50%

Dollar values for 2009 are inflation adjusted and expressed in 2019 dollars using BLS data: [https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm)

# Survey Demographics

The demographic characteristics of the survey respondents reflect the changing characteristics of adults in the Township as seen in the Census data.

- Two in five Upper Merion Township adult residents are over 55, significantly higher than in prior surveys.
- Upper Merion Township has become more diverse since 2002.

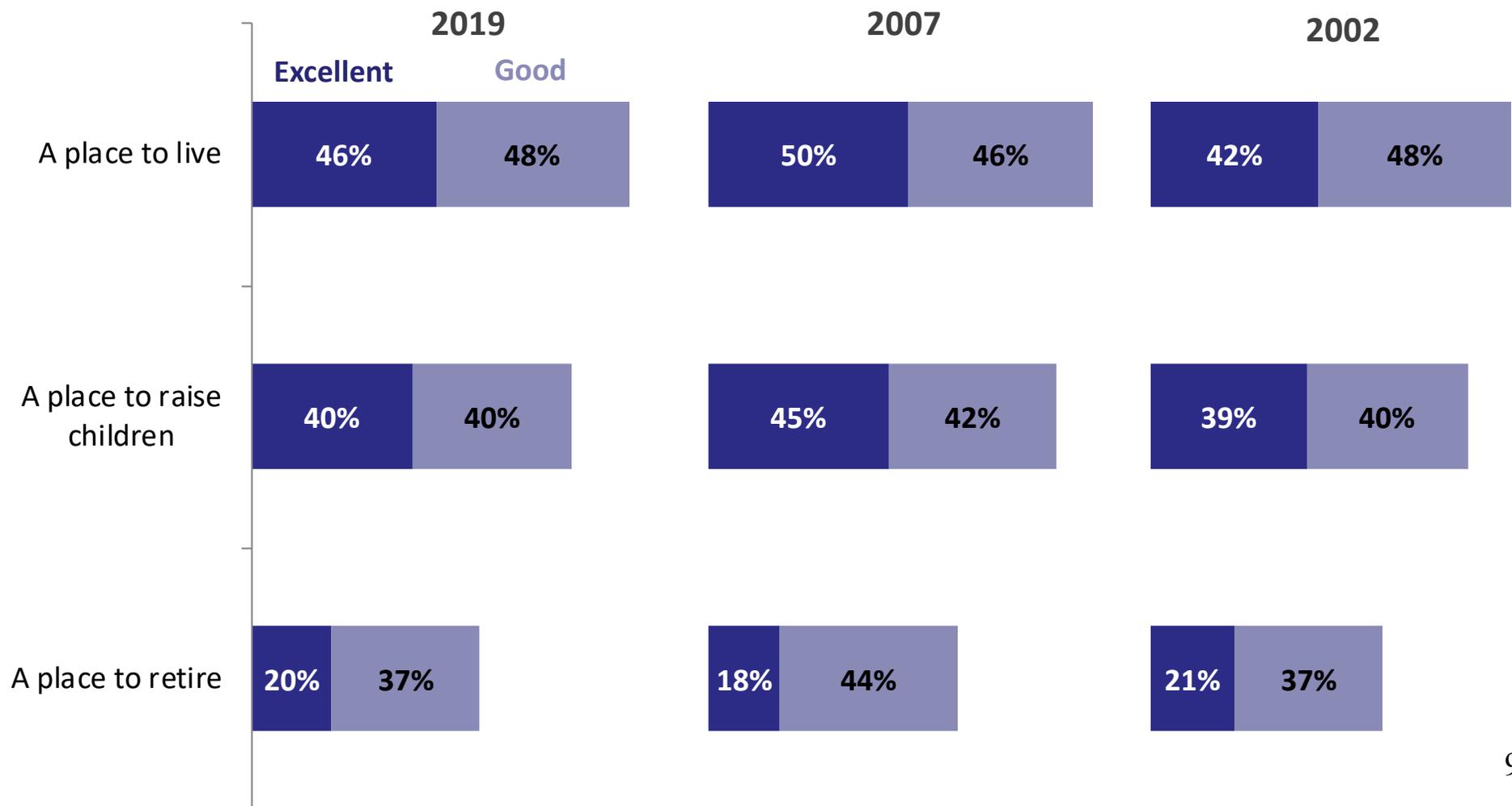
	2019	2007	2002
<b>Age*</b>			
Under 35	28%	31%	32%
35-54	32%	35%	49%
Over 55	40%	34%	19%
<b>Years at Present Address*</b>			
Mean	19.4	14.8	13.9
<b>Education</b>			
HS or less	23%	19%	19%
Some college	18%	19%	17%
College degree	59%	63%	64%
<b>Race*</b>			
White	74%	85%	85%
Nonwhite	26%	15%	15%
<b>Employment*</b>			
Fulltime	60%	57%	59%
Other	15%	27%	23%
Retired	25%	15%	17%
<b>Income*</b>			
Under 35	11%	10%	---
35-75	20%	33%	---
Over 75	69%	57%	---
<b>Marital Status*</b>			
Single, Never Married	25%	18%	29%
Married	60%	64%	57%
Not currently married	15%	18%	14%
<b>Children in Household*</b>			
No	72%	63%	72%
Yes	28%	37%	28%
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	49%	48%	47%
Female	51%	52%	53%

\*  $P < .05$

Standardized Residual > 3

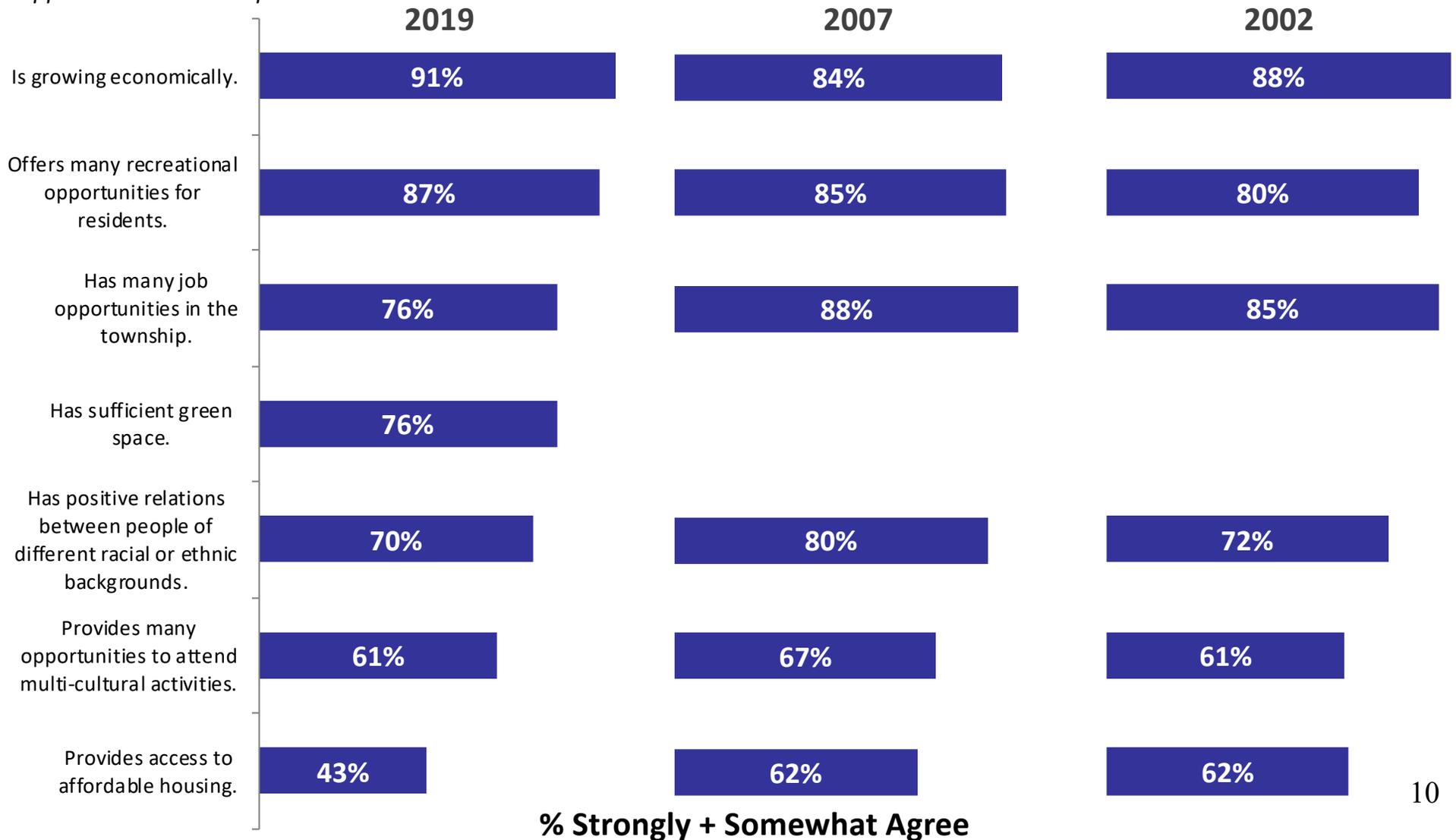
Almost all (96%) Upper Merion Township residents believe the Township is an excellent or good place to live. Four in five residents feel the Township is an excellent or good place to raise children, and nearly three in five (57%) say Upper Merion is an excellent or good place to retire. Residents' feelings about the Township have remained largely unchanged from 2007.

*How would you rate Upper Merion Township as...*



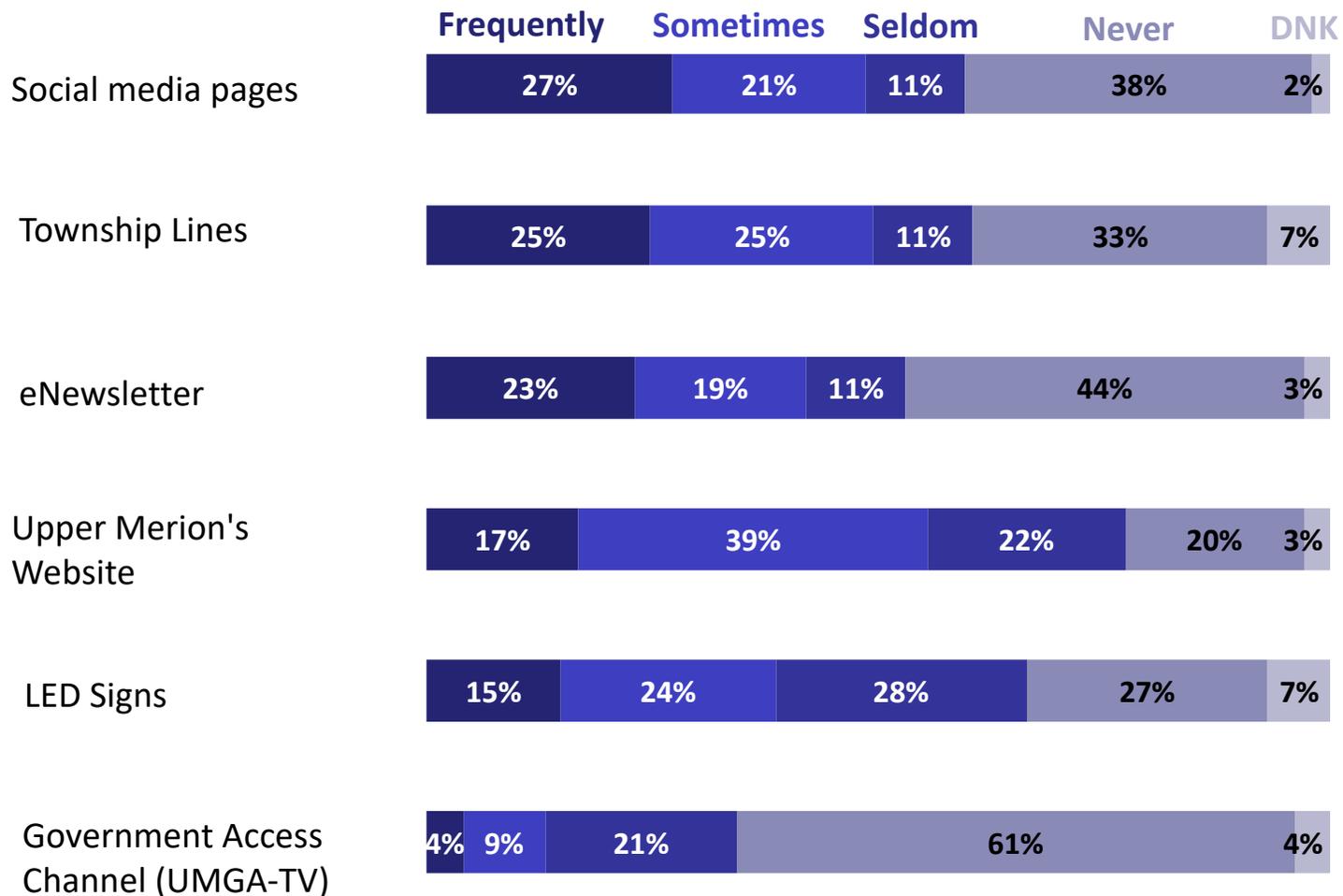
Township residents feel most positively about the economic, recreational, and employment opportunities in the Township and are least positive about the availability of affordable housing. The change in attitudes about affordable housing is the largest change since the prior survey.

*Do you agree, disagree, or neither agree nor disagree with each statement as it pertains to Upper Merion Township.*  
Upper Merion Township...



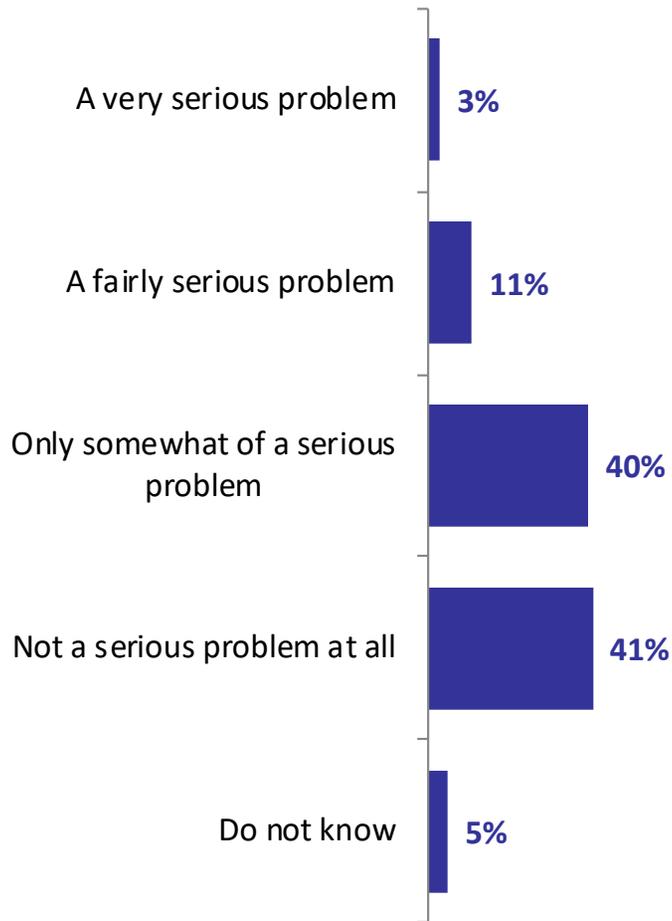
About half of Township residents say they frequently or sometimes get township information through Upper Merion Township’s web page (56%), Township Lines newsletter (50%), and social media pages (47%). The government access channel (UMGA-TV) is the least frequently used source for Township information.

*The following is a list of communication methods used by Upper Merion Township. How often do you use each of them to get information about the Township?*

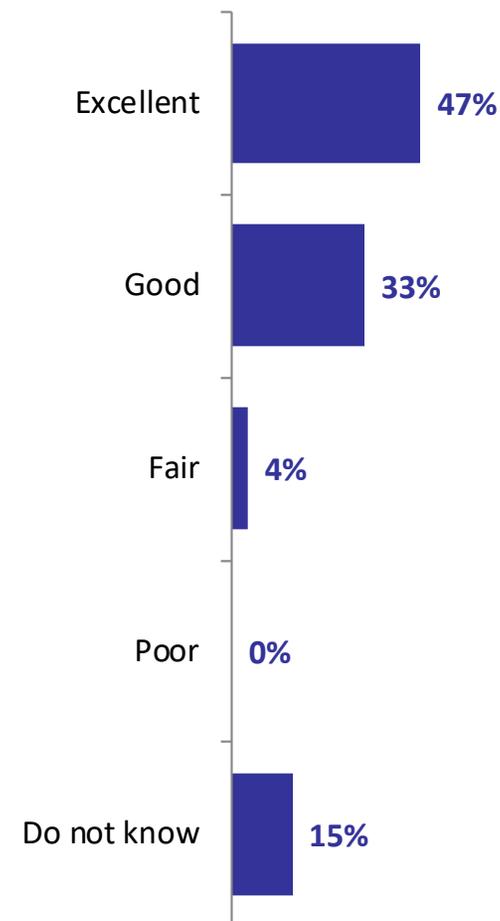


Only one in seven (14%) Township residents says that crime is a very or fairly serious problem; there has been no significant change in residents' perception of crime since 2002. Nearly half (47%) of residents say Upper Merion's police do an excellent job dealing with crime. One in ten (11%) residents feels minorities are treated differently by the police and other municipal government employees, although one in three (35%) said they did not know if this was true or not.

*Do you think crime is a very serious problem, a fairly serious problem, only somewhat of a serious problem, or not a serious problem at all, in the community you currently live in?*

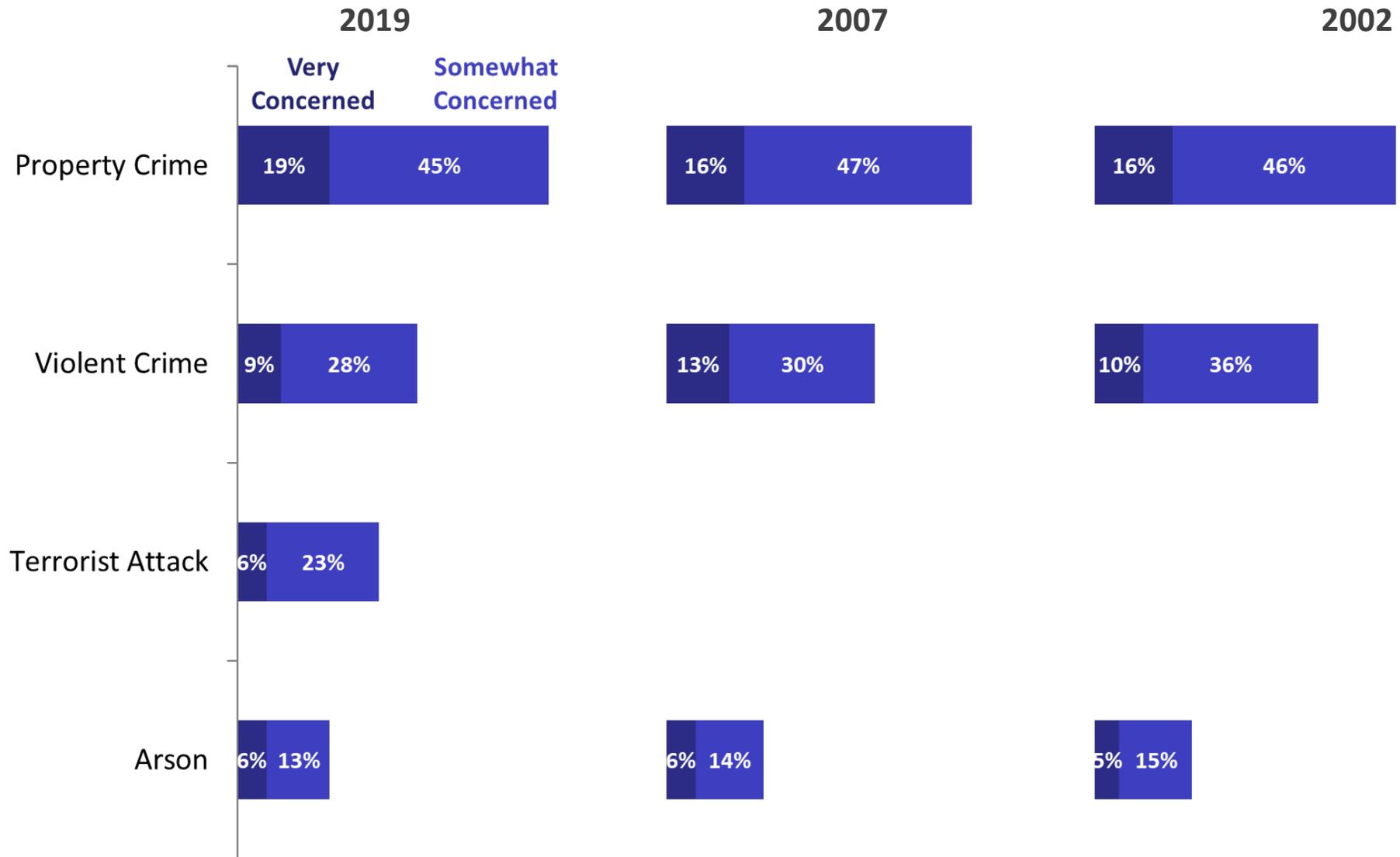


*How do you feel the Upper Merion police deal with urgent situations like crime, violence, and disorder?*



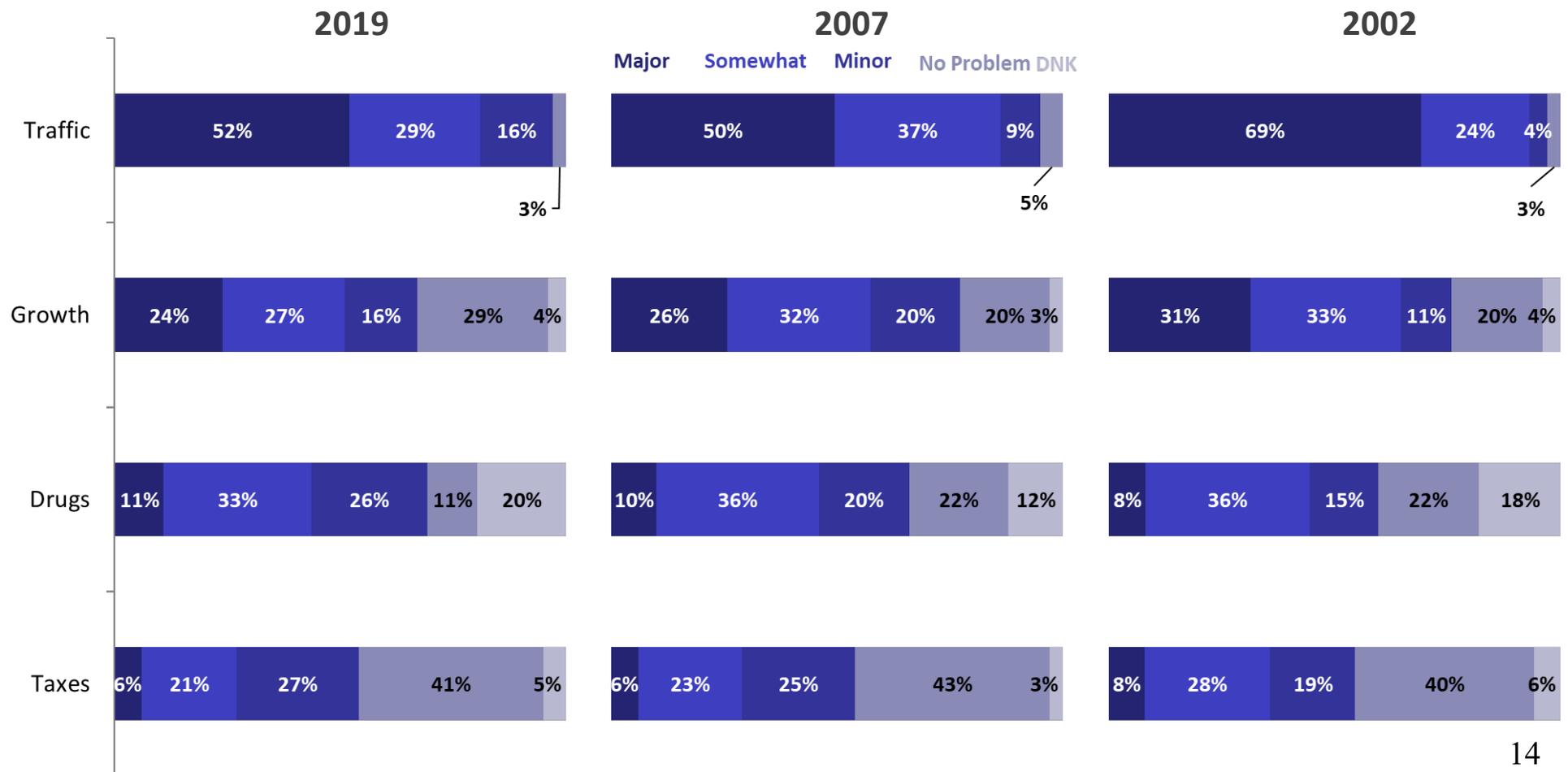
Few Township residents are very concerned about crime, although property crimes concern more residents than other crimes.

*How concerned are you that each could happen to you here in Upper Merion Township?*



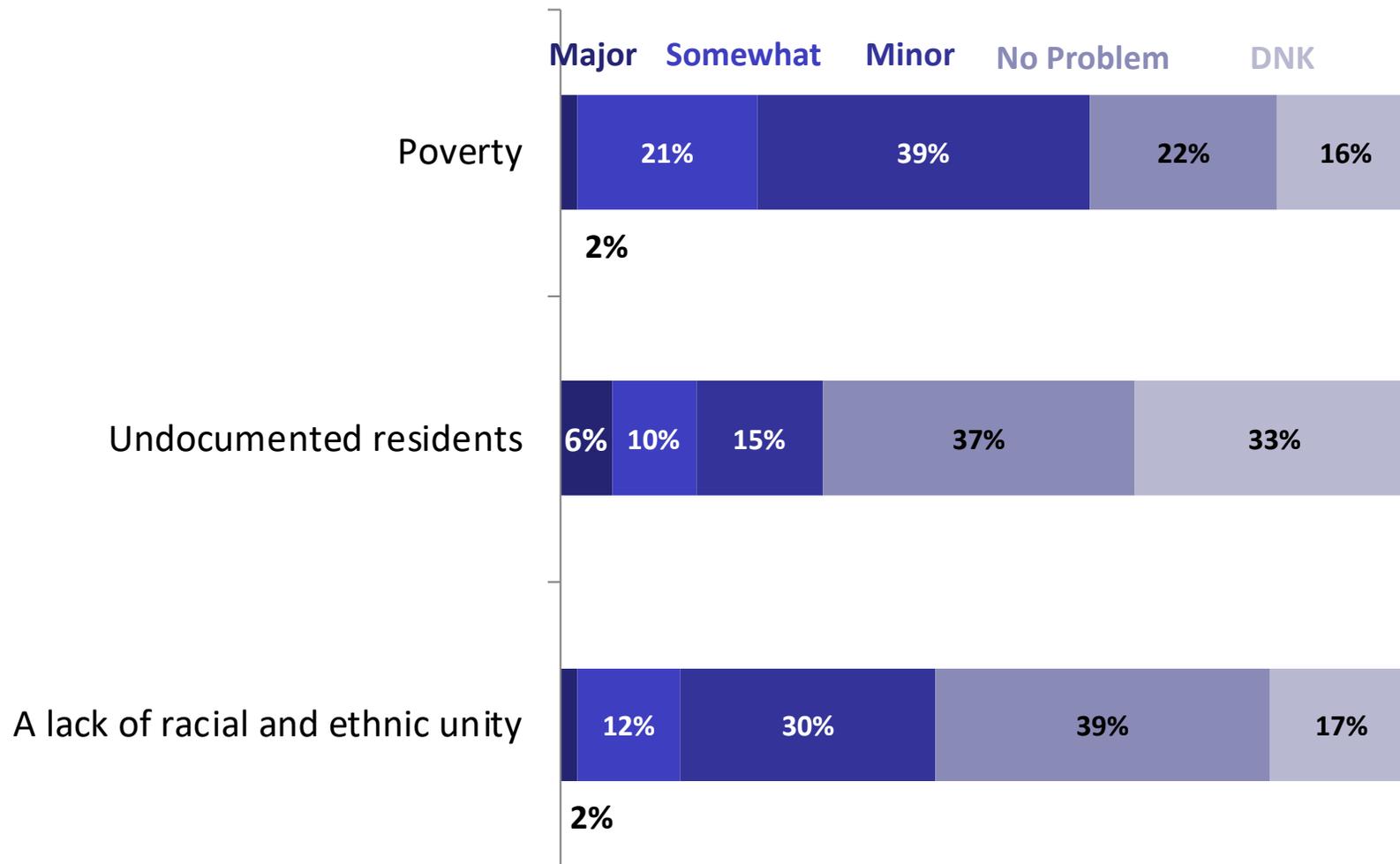
More than half (52%) of Upper Merion Township residents say traffic is a major problem, which is unchanged since 2007, but significantly lower than in 2002. Residents are less concerned than in prior years about problems associated with growth. More residents believe drugs are a problem in Upper Merion Township compared to 2002 and 2007. A quarter (27%) of residents feel taxes are a problem which is similar to 2002 and 2007.

*Is each one a major problem, somewhat of a problem, a minor problem, or no problem for Upper Merion Township?*



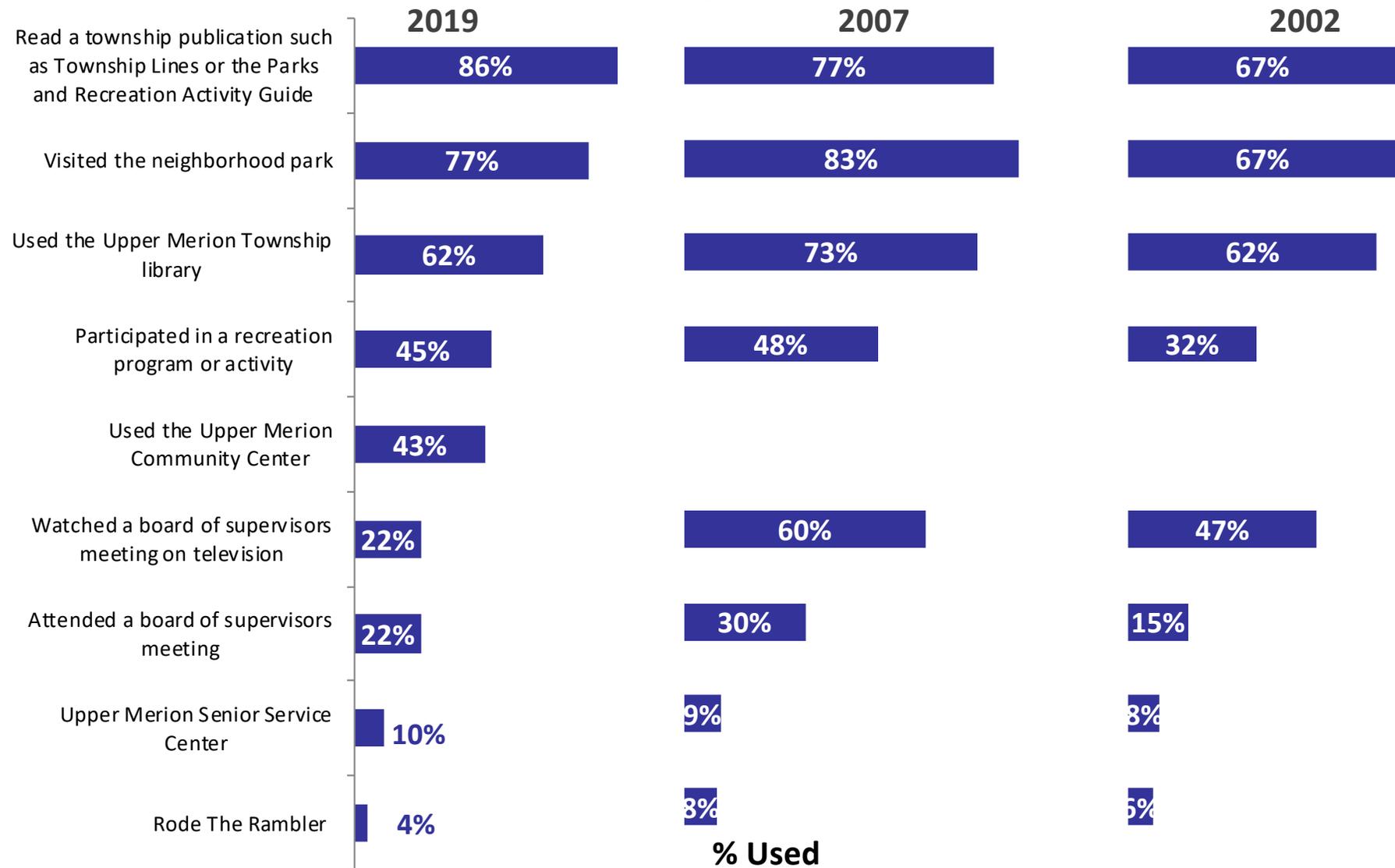
Few Township residents think poverty, undocumented residents, or a lack of racial and ethnic unity are major problems for Upper Merion.

*Is each one a major problem, somewhat of a problem, a minor problem, or no problem for Upper Merion Township?*



Most Upper Merion residents have read a township publication (86%), visited a neighborhood park (77%), and used the library (62%) within the past twelve months. A small number of residents has used the Senior Center (10%) or rode The Rambler (4%) within the past twelve months. Township publication readership has increased since 2007, while park visits and the use of the library have decreased. Far fewer residents watched a board of supervisors meeting in 2019 than in prior years.

*Now, thinking about the activities of you and the other members of your household during the last 12 months, about how many times, if at all, have you or other household members done the following activities?*



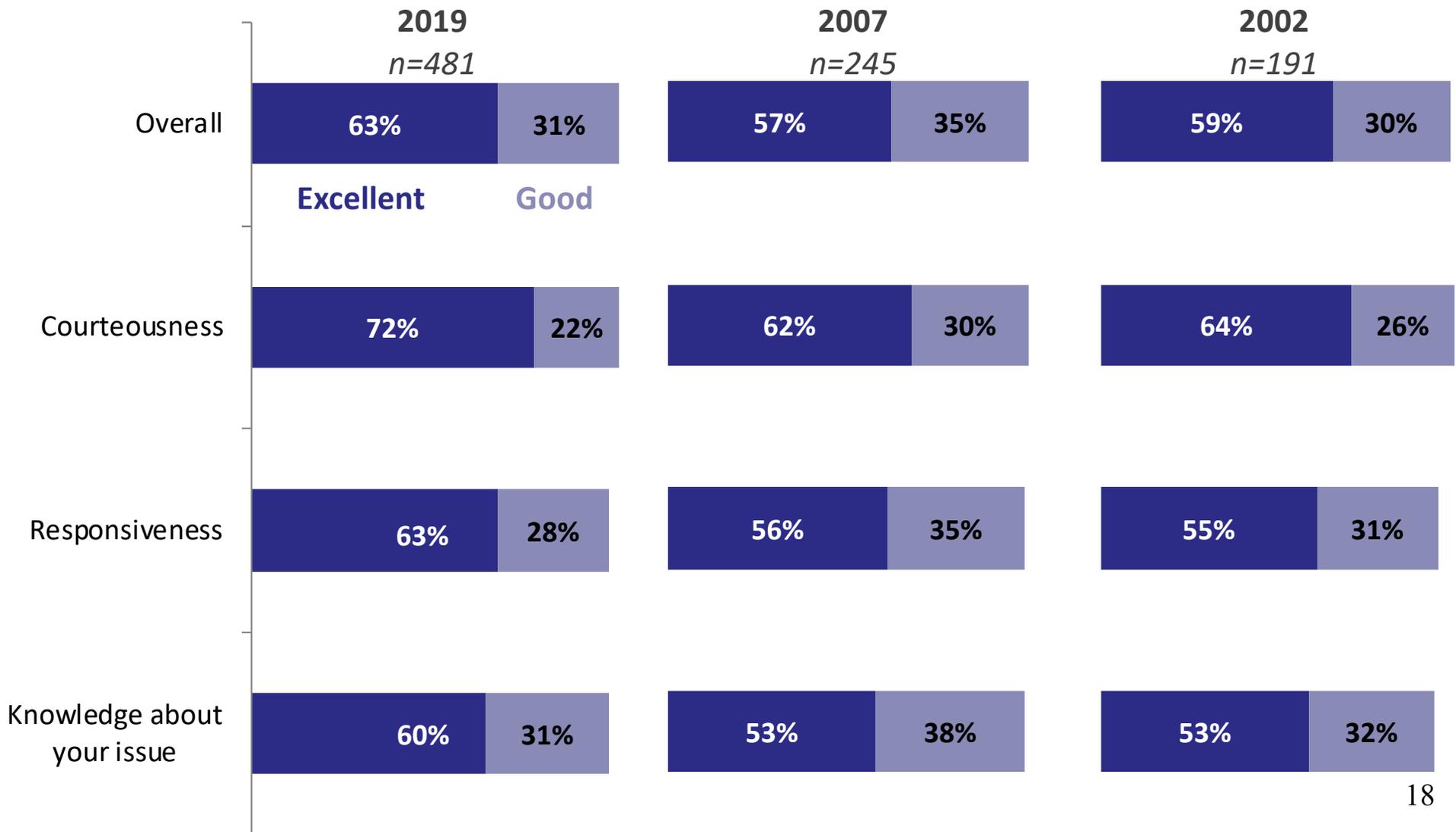
Fewer Upper Merion Township residents are aware of township services related to recreation programs, park and recreation classes, youth services, Rambler shuttle service, and planning and zoning, although most residents who know about these services are satisfied with them.

*Are each of the following services provided by the Township, excellent, good, fair or poor?*

	Awareness		% Excellent + Good		
	2019	% Change Since 2002	2003	2007	2019
Recreation programs	76%	-12%	79%	86%	86%
Sewer services	82%	-7%	89%	89%	84%
Park and recreation classes	62%	-19%	84%	87%	84%
Services for youth	55%	-10%	73%	80%	83%
Leaf collection	---	---	---	---	81%
Rambler shuttle service	29%	-23%	72%	78%	81%
Park maintenance	89%	-4%	92%	88%	80%
Snow removal	97%	3%	81%	72%	77%
Street cleaning	92%	-4%	78%	77%	77%
Enforcement of traffic laws	90%	-2%	73%	78%	71%
Sidewalk maintenance	79%	-4%	66%	57%	62%
Street maintenance	97%	-1%	75%	77%	60%
Storm drainage	89%	-1%	75%	66%	57%
Planning and zoning	71%	-12%	50%	57%	43%

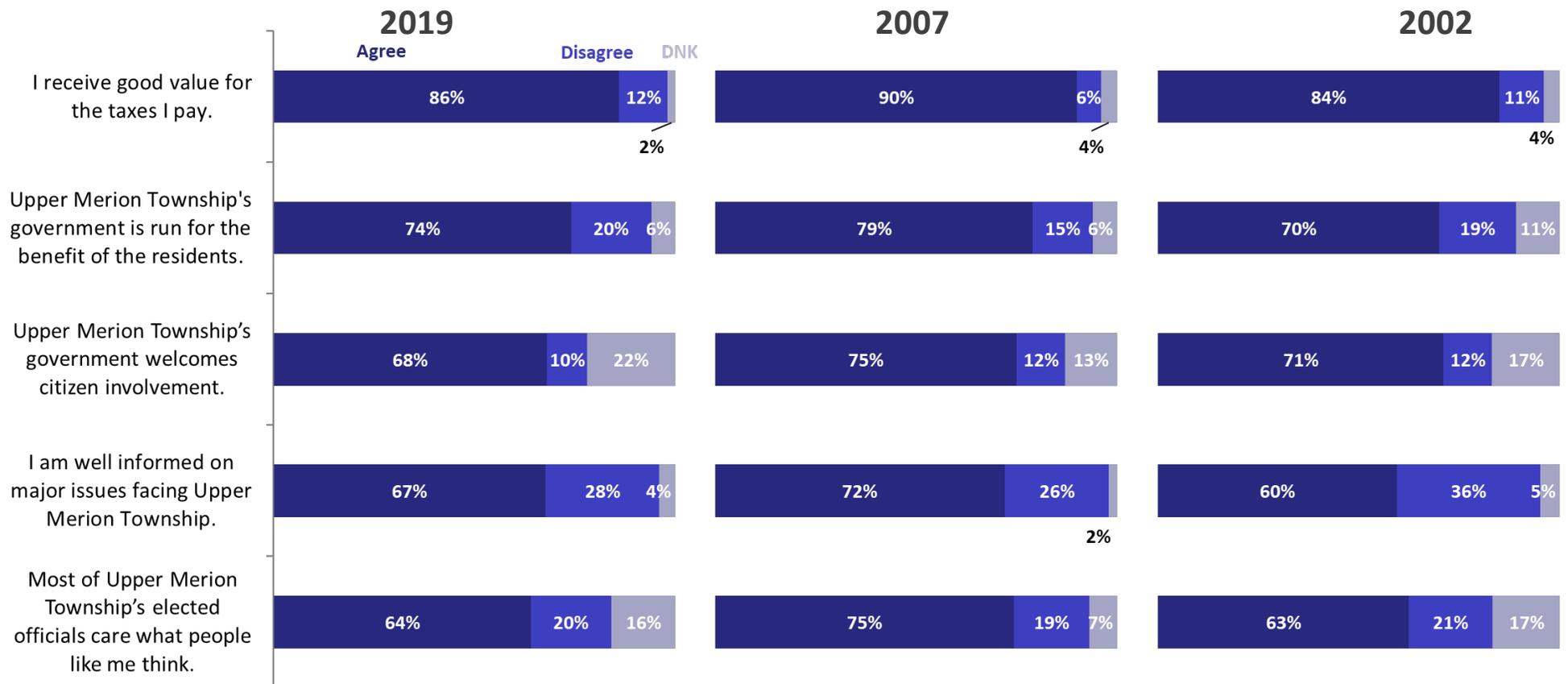
Three in five (62%) Upper Merion Township residents have had phone or in-person contact with a township employee in the past twelve months. Most of the residents who interacted with a township employee rated their overall experience, employee knowledge, employee responsiveness, and employee courteousness as excellent or good.

*How would you rate the township employee....*



Upper Merion residents feel positively about Township governance. Nearly nine in ten (86%) feel they receive good value for the taxes they pay; three in four (74%) agree the Township is run for the benefit of its residents; two in three believe the Township welcomes citizen involvement (68%); two in three say they are informed on major issues facing the township (67%); and two in three agree the Township’s elected officials care what they think (64%).

*Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*



Upper Merion Township residents are largely satisfied with how the Township allocates their tax dollars, with majorities or near majorities saying the Township spends about the right amount on most services. Nearly two in five residents feel the Township spends too little on roads (39%) and traffic management (38%). Three in ten (29%) feel too little is spent on storm water management, and a quarter feel the Township spends too little on sidewalks (24%) and parks (23%).

*Do you think Upper Merion spends too much, too little, or about the right amount on each one?*

