

# WATCH mUSkeGOOn Perceptions Research

Presentation to the WATCH mUSkeGOOn Committee

# Watch Muskegon



**In 2015, a group of community partners from Muskegon County rallied together to launch ‘Watch Muskegon’ – a three-year campaign to improve the overall image of the Muskegon area share the positive changes that have already taken place and educate key audiences on Muskegon’s assets.**

**This research study at the mid-point of the campaign is meant to assess what’s worked and where there are still opportunities.**

# Logistics and Sample Characteristics

A total of 1,221 respondents completed an online survey in March, 2017. The panel distribution is generally representative of West Michigan.

## Data Sources

- The survey was promoted by a number of community partners in Muskegon County through email, web postings, social media, etc.
- Avenue ISR also partnered with a major national online research panel to recruit a random cross-section of residents of West Michigan

Source	N	%
Community Partners	827	67.7%
Online Research Panel	394	32.3%
Total	1,221	100.0%



## Sample Characteristics

GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION		
	Muskegon Comm. Partners	West Michigan Panel
Muskegon County	82%	19%
Kent County	4%	50%
Ottawa County	7%	26%
Newaygo County	1%	3%
Oceana County	1%	3%
Other County in MI	3%	0%
Other State	3%	0%
GENDER		
Female	68%	65%
Male	32%	34%
AGE		
Under 35	20%	21%
35-44	20%	15%
45-54	26%	15%
55-64	24%	22%
65+	10%	27%

# Based on these results, most of those who work in the Muskegon area also live in Muskegon County.

- Only about 9% are commuting in for work
- These are from Ottawa County (6%), Kent County (2%) and Other Locations (1%)

Questions: *Where do you live? AND Where do you work?*

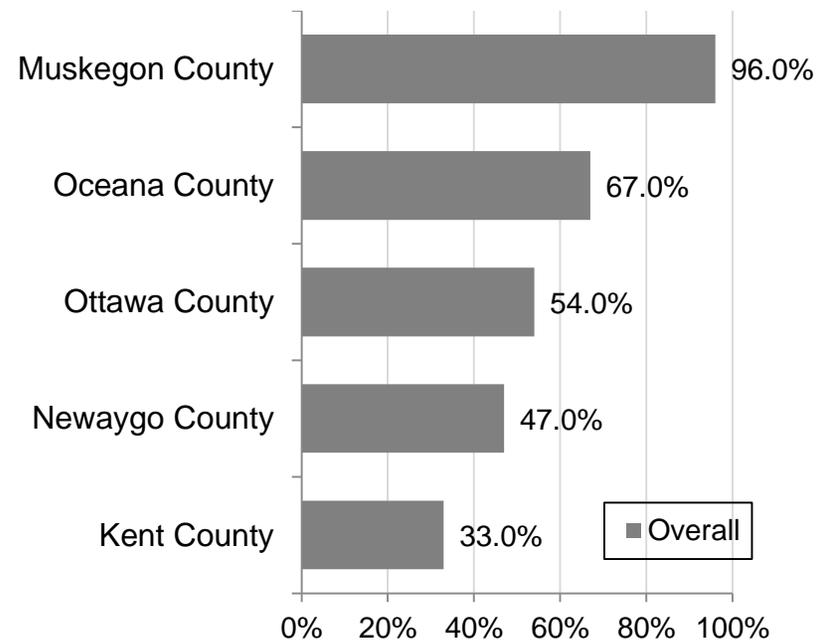
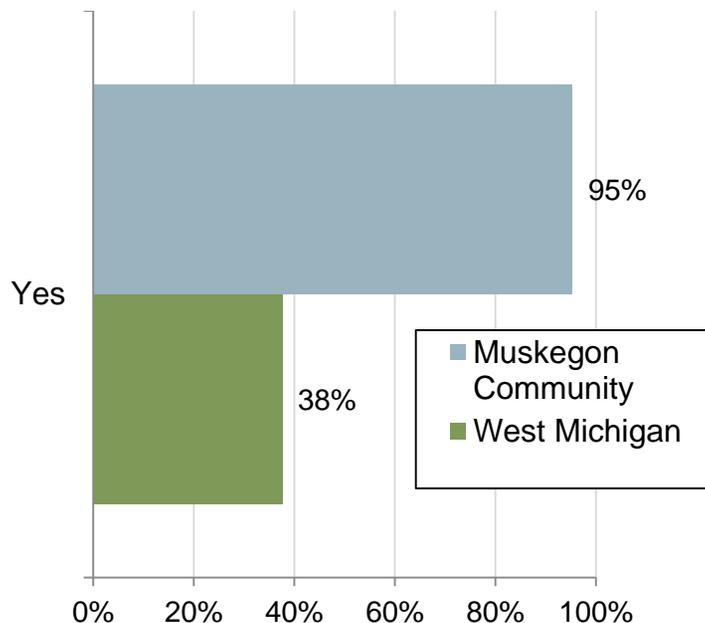
## Respondents Who Work in the Muskegon Area – Where do they Live?

	%
City of Muskegon	26%
Norton Shores	21%
Muskegon Township	9%
North Muskegon	7%
Ottawa County	6%
Fruitport/Fruitport Twp	6%
Laketon Twp	6%
Roosevelt Park	4%
Whitehall/Montague	4%
Kent County	2%
Elsewhere in Muskegon County	8%
All Others	1%

# Awareness of the Watch Muskegon campaign is high.

- 95% of Muskegon residents and 38% of respondents from throughout West Michigan recall seeing or hearing messages related to this campaign

**Question:** *Following are two images from a communications campaign called "Watch Muskegon." Have you seen or heard any messages related to this campaign?*



# A somewhat different mix of media are used by members of the Muskegon community relative to West Michigan overall.

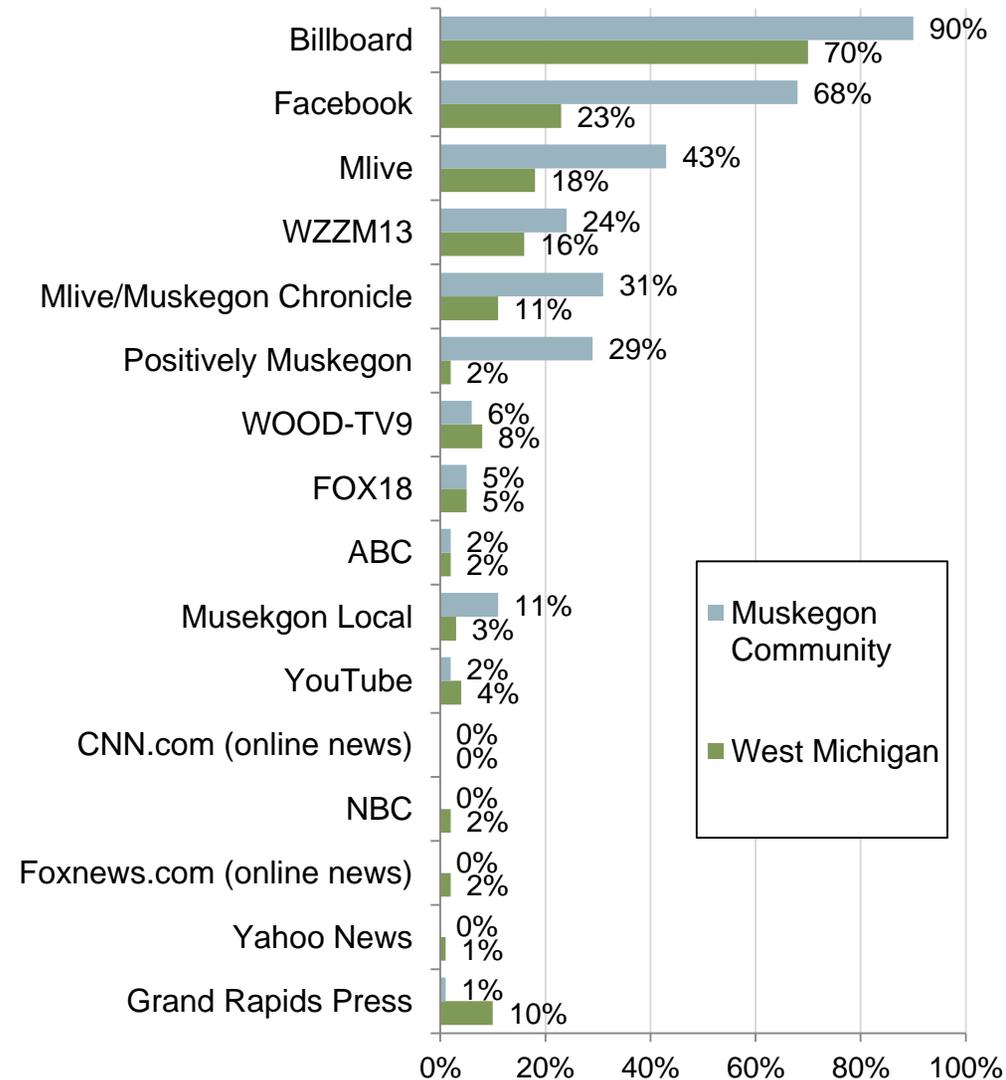
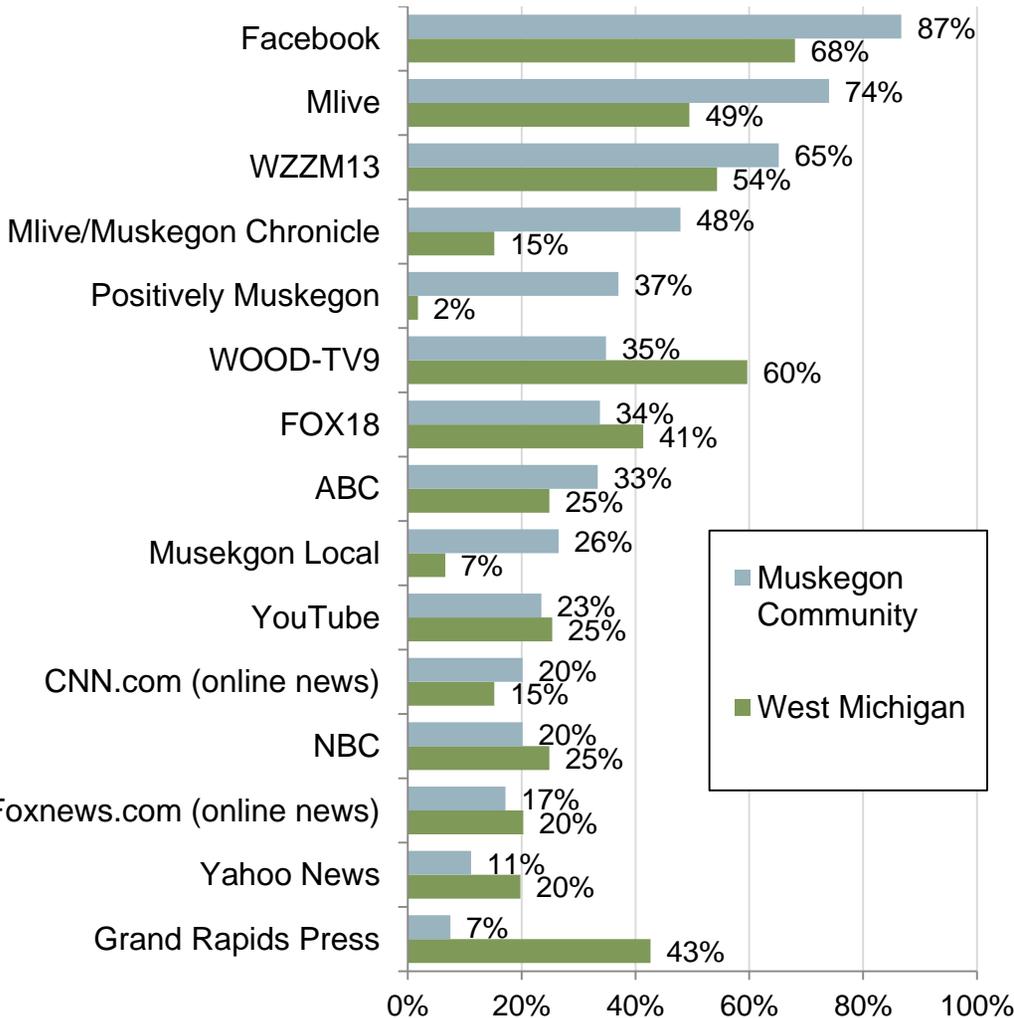
- Overall, the most memorable placements of the Watch Muskegon campaign have been billboards, Facebook and Mlive

**Question:** Which of the follow sources of information do you use for news and information of any kind? (select all that apply)

**Question:** Where would you say you have seen or heard any messages related to this campaign?

## Saw/Heard Watch Muskegon Message(s)

### Use Overall



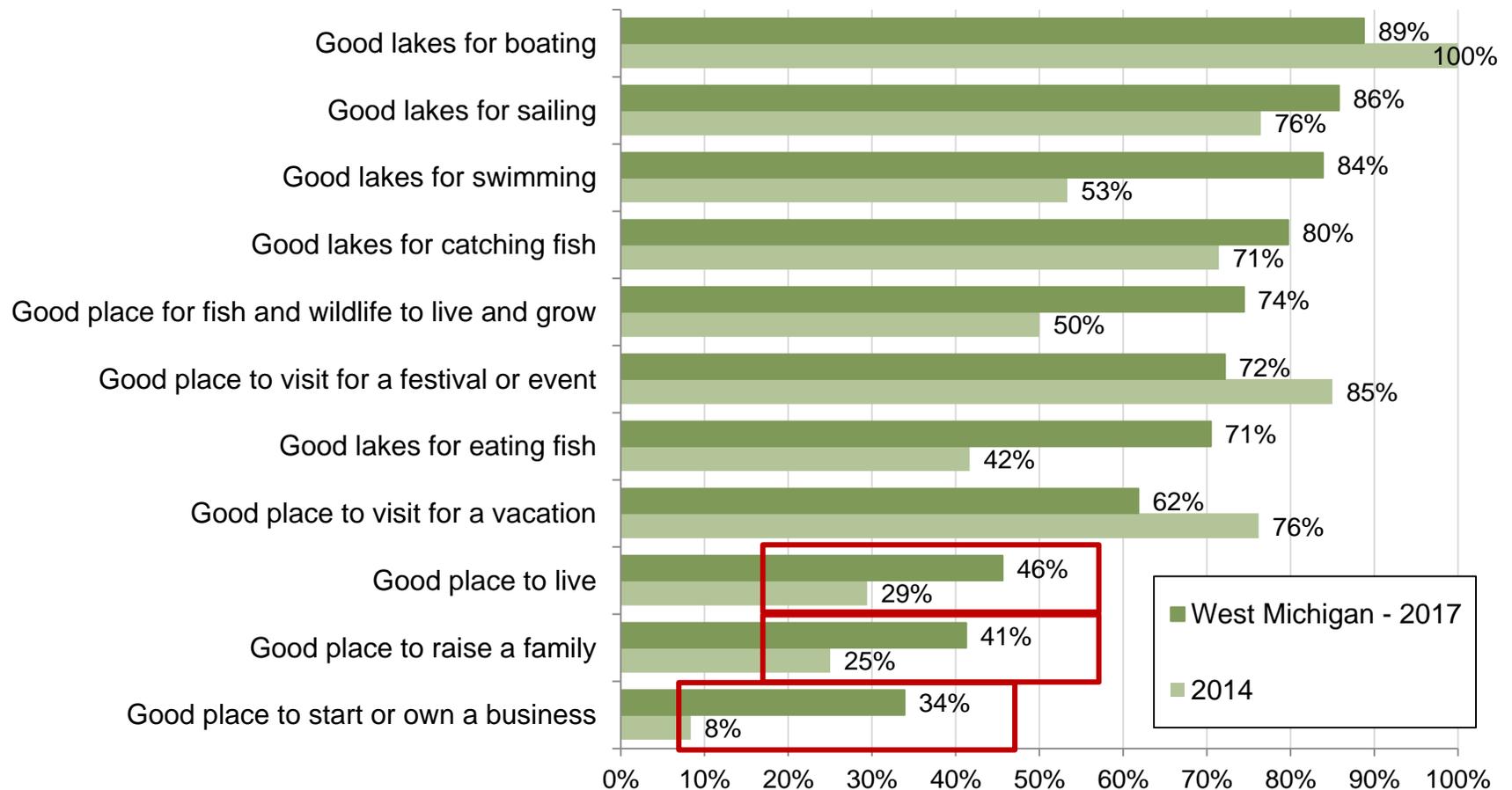
# Compared to results collected in 2014 as part of the Muskegon Lake Perceptions Research, West Michigan residents have an improved view of Muskegon.

- In most categories, the view of the Muskegon area has improved significantly
- There has been a big jump in the view of Muskegon as a place to live, raise a family and start or own a business

**Question:** *Would you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Muskegon area?*

**2014 Question:** *To what extent do you agree with the following statements about Muskegon Lake and the Muskegon Lake area?*

## “Strongly Agree” or “Somewhat Agree” Combined



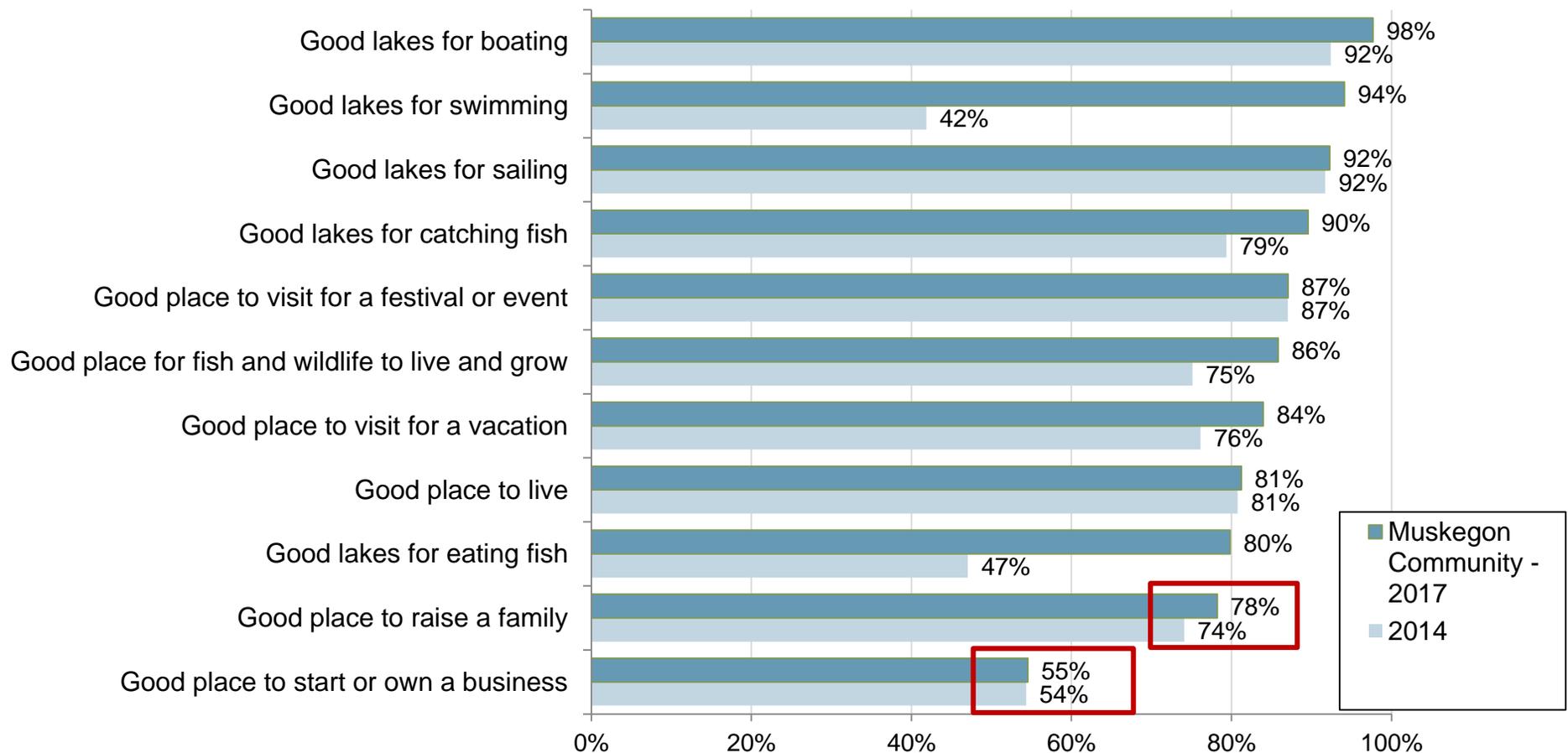
# Compared to results collected in 2014 as part of the Muskegon Lake Perceptions Research, Muskegon area residents also have an improved view of Muskegon.

- In most categories, the view of the Muskegon area has remained strong and improved
- “Good place to raise a family” has grown by four points

**Question:** *Would you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Muskegon area?*

**2014 Question:** *To what extent do you agree with the following statements about Muskegon Lake and the Muskegon Lake area?*

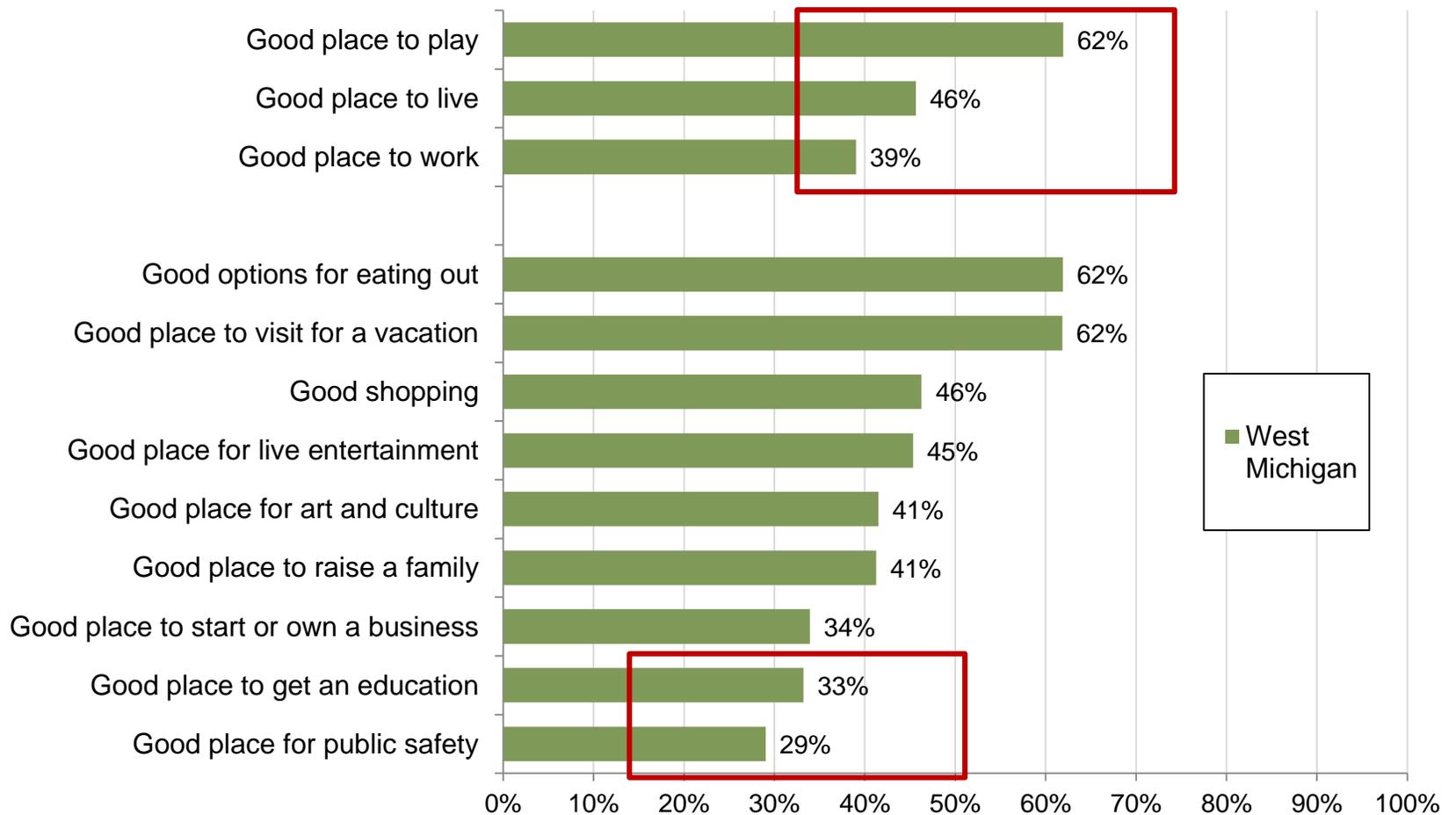
## “Strongly Agree” or “Somewhat Agree” Combined



In terms of the goals of the campaign – to emphasize Muskegon as a place to live, work and play – “good place to play” has made the most progress.

**Question:** *Would you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Muskegon area?*

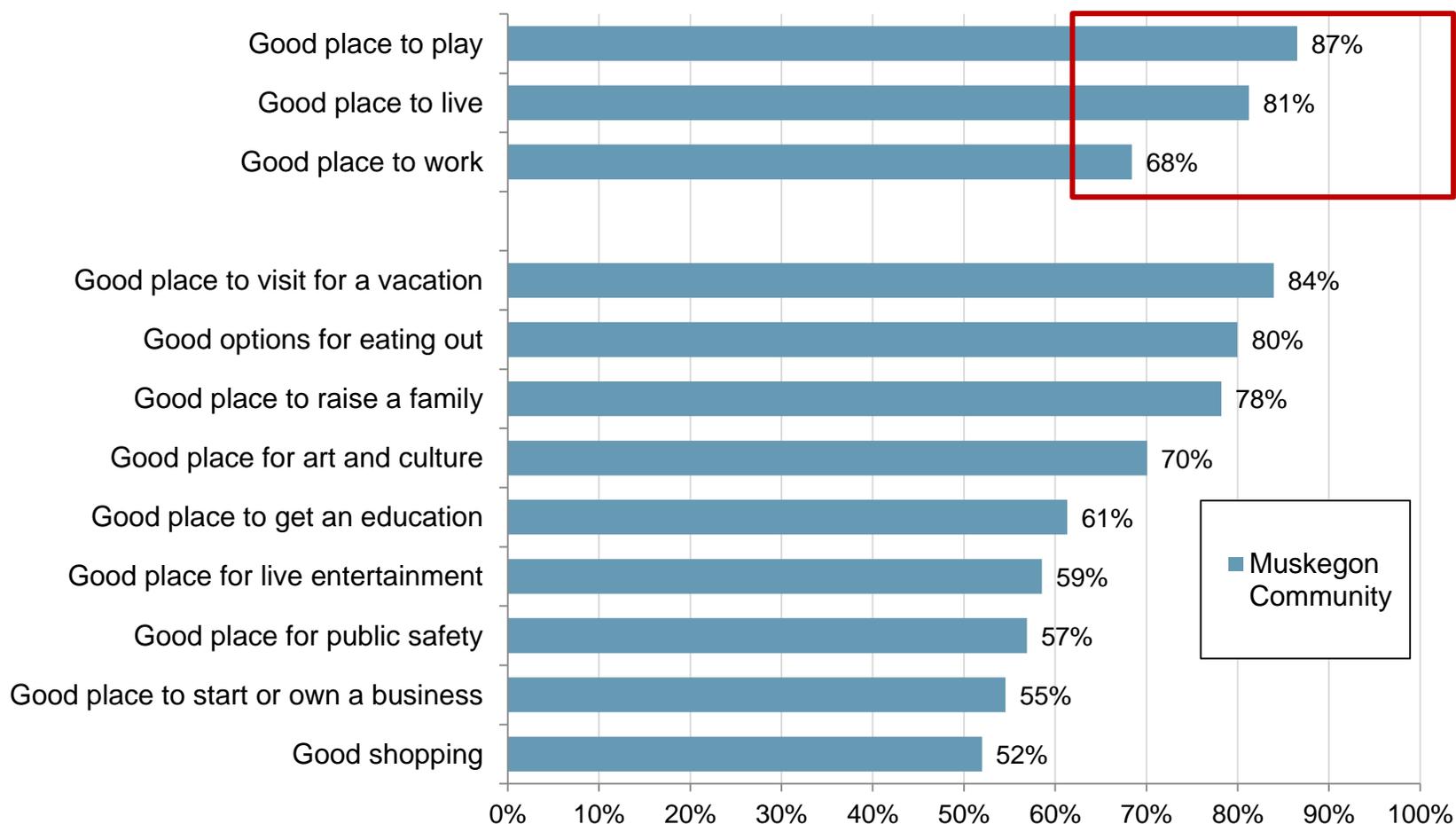
**“Strongly Agree” or “Somewhat Agree” Combined**



Although ratings of the Muskegon area are higher than for the West Michigan panel, a similar rank order of high level attributes persist.

**Question:** *Would you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Muskegon area?*

**“Strongly Agree” or “Somewhat Agree” Combined**

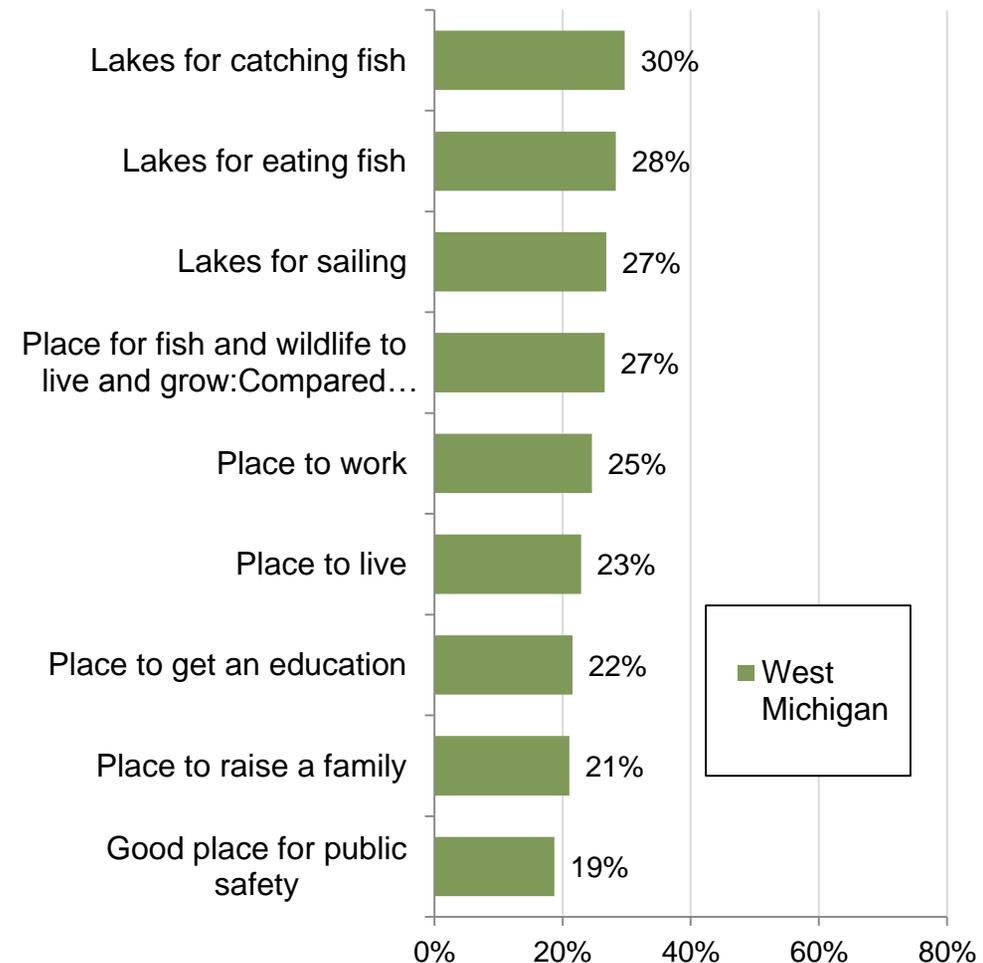
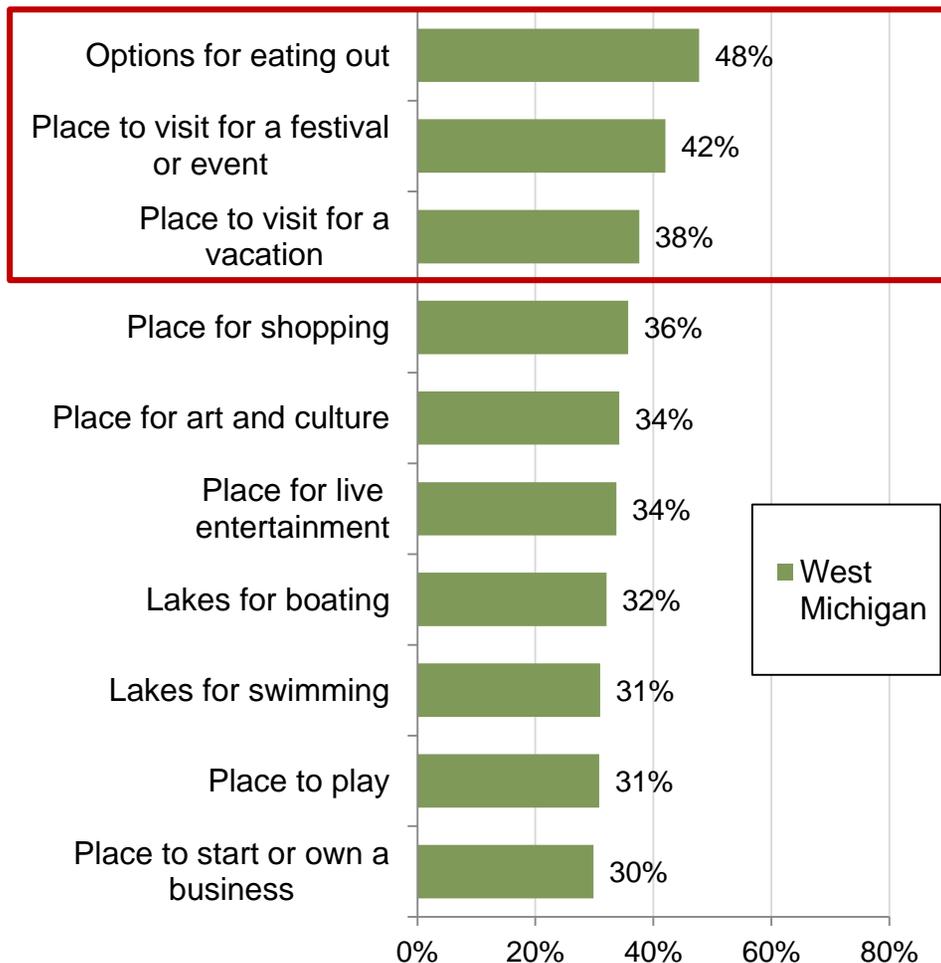


# In the eyes of West Michigan residents, the Muskegon area has improved in a number of categories in the past 10 years.

- Options for eating out, availability of attractive festivals/events and overall qualities as a vacation destination have all improved in their eyes

**Question:** *Compared to 10 years ago, do you feel that these conditions have improved, worsened or stayed the same?*

## % Who Indicated this Attribute has "Improved" in the Past 10 Years

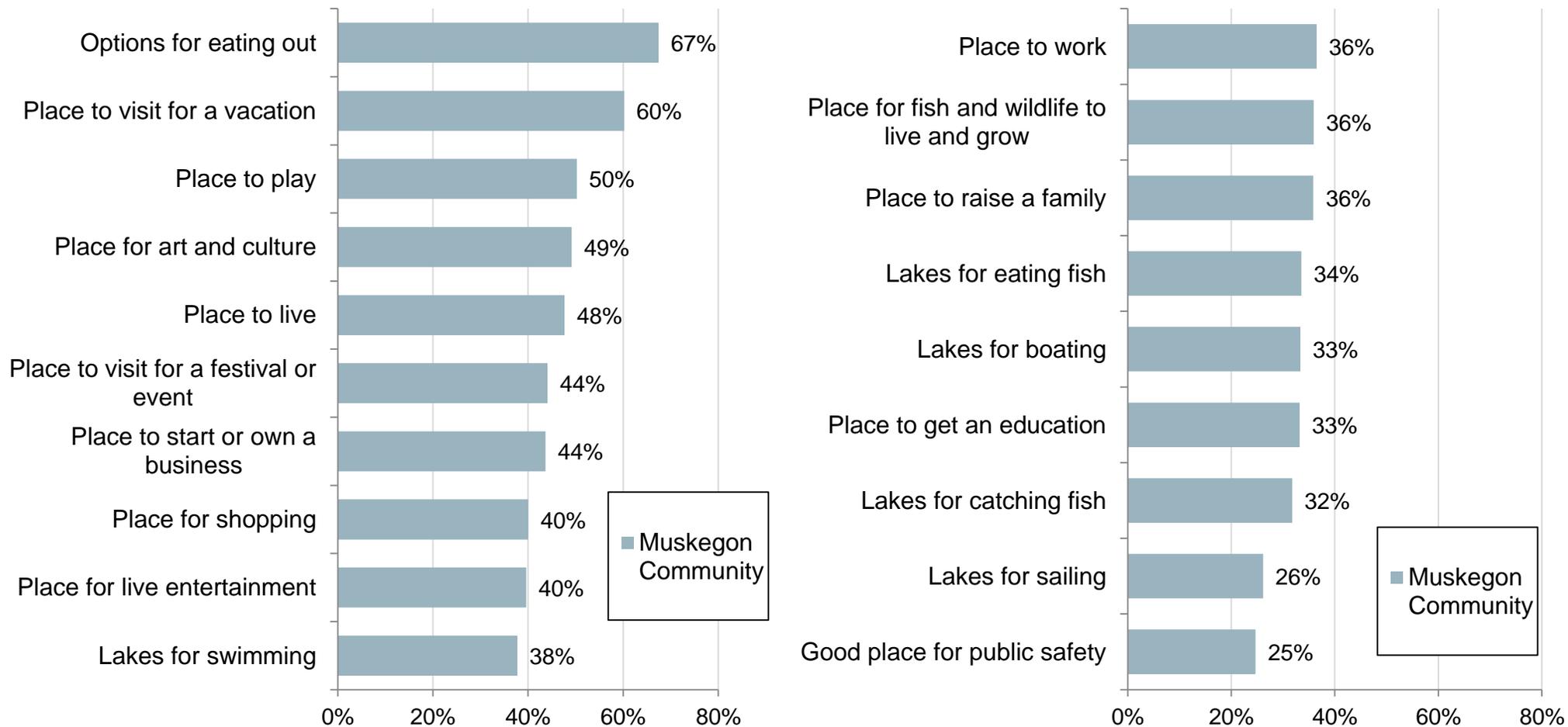


# Muskegon has made great gains over the past 10 years in the eyes of residents as a great place to live and play

- Across a broad set of indicators, these Muskegon residents appear to believe that Muskegon is moving in the right direction

**Question:** *Compared to 10 years ago, do you feel that these conditions have improved, worsened or stayed the same?*

## % Who Indicated this Attribute has “Improved” in the Past 10 Years





# Muskegon is well known by all for its natural landscapes, recreational opportunities and lively festivals.

- The most positive comments about the area tend to focus on things related to the lakeshore and recreation

**Question:** *If you were describing the Muskegon area to someone who was unfamiliar with the region, what words or short phrases would you use to describe or compare?*

- Wonderful lakes, parks and trails
  - *“Picturesque Michigan shoreline. Great rivers and inland lakes. A great place to have fun on trails.”*
  - *“Muskegon's beauty is the best kept secret in the world. (unfortunately).”*
- A place with lots to do
  - *“Good museums worth visiting, nearby state parks, good restaurants. Something for everyone.”*
  - *“It is a nice place to visit with plenty of things to do. They have a great amusement park, nice beaches and festivals.”*
- Rebuilding
  - *“Muskegon has been quietly reinventing itself and provides opportunities to engage in all types of activities.”*
  - *“Lakeshore area is a natural wonderland, rich history, undergoing a slow but steady renewal...”*
  - *“I have not been there in a while but what I understand they are improving in cleanliness and activities.”*
  - *“Beautiful, on the lake, revitalization...has a bad reputation but many are working to change that.”*

Despite its improving image, Muskegon has yet to overtake Grand Haven and Holland in the eyes of West Michigan as a place to live, work and play.

**Question:** Which of the following Michigan cities best matches the following descriptions?

**Muskegon Compared to Grand Haven, Holland, Pentwater, South Haven and Saugatuck (6 Towns and Cities)**

**West Michigan**

	Muskegon Rank	1 <sup>st</sup> Position
Place to visit for a vacation	3rd	Grand Haven
Place for live entertainment	2nd	Grand Haven
Options for eating out	3rd	Holland
Shopping	3rd	Holland
Visit for a festival or event	3rd	Grand Haven
Place to live	3rd	Grand Haven
Place to raise a family	3rd	Grand Haven
Place to work	3rd	Holland
Place to start or own a business	3rd	Holland

**Muskegon Community**

	Muskegon Rank	1 <sup>st</sup> Position
Place to visit for a vacation	1st	-
Place for live entertainment	1st	-
Options for eating out	1st	-
Shopping	2nd	Holland
Visit for a festival or event	1st	-
Place to live	1st	-
Place to raise a family	2nd	Grand Haven
Place to work	1st	-
Place to start or own a business	1st	-



Though seen as having more cultural and natural riches, the Muskegon area still has to contend with an image of higher crime and urban challenges.

- While Muskegon is making great strides in their efforts to overcome past stigma, some still remains today.

**Question:** *Compared to these other communities – Grand Haven, Holland, Pentwater, South Haven, Saugatuck, and Traverse City – what do you think is different or unique about Muskegon?*

- Cultural diversity and history
- Better beaches, festivals and events
- Crime and poverty

# Key Takeaways

1. Overall, the Watch Muskegon campaign has been effective at being noticed and helping to positively influence the image of Muskegon, both locally and throughout West Michigan.
2. Overall, residents of Muskegon County and the surrounding counties are more likely to see Muskegon as a place to work, live and play, compared to 2014 (before the campaign began).
3. West Michiganders are more likely to see the Muskegon area as a place to vacation or play rather than as a place to live or work, partially because of concerns about safety and urban challenges.
4. Muskegon County's greatest points of difference appear to be its natural amenities (beaches, parks, lakes), as well as cultural amenities and diversity.
5. Though it can sometimes be difficult for people to recall where they saw or heard specific messages, it is clear that billboards, Facebook and Mlive have had widespread influence.
6. Though there may be some opportunities to refine messaging and media placement, it seems clear that the Watch Muskegon campaign has the potential to continue to shift opinions and generate enhanced visits, economic activity and community momentum.