

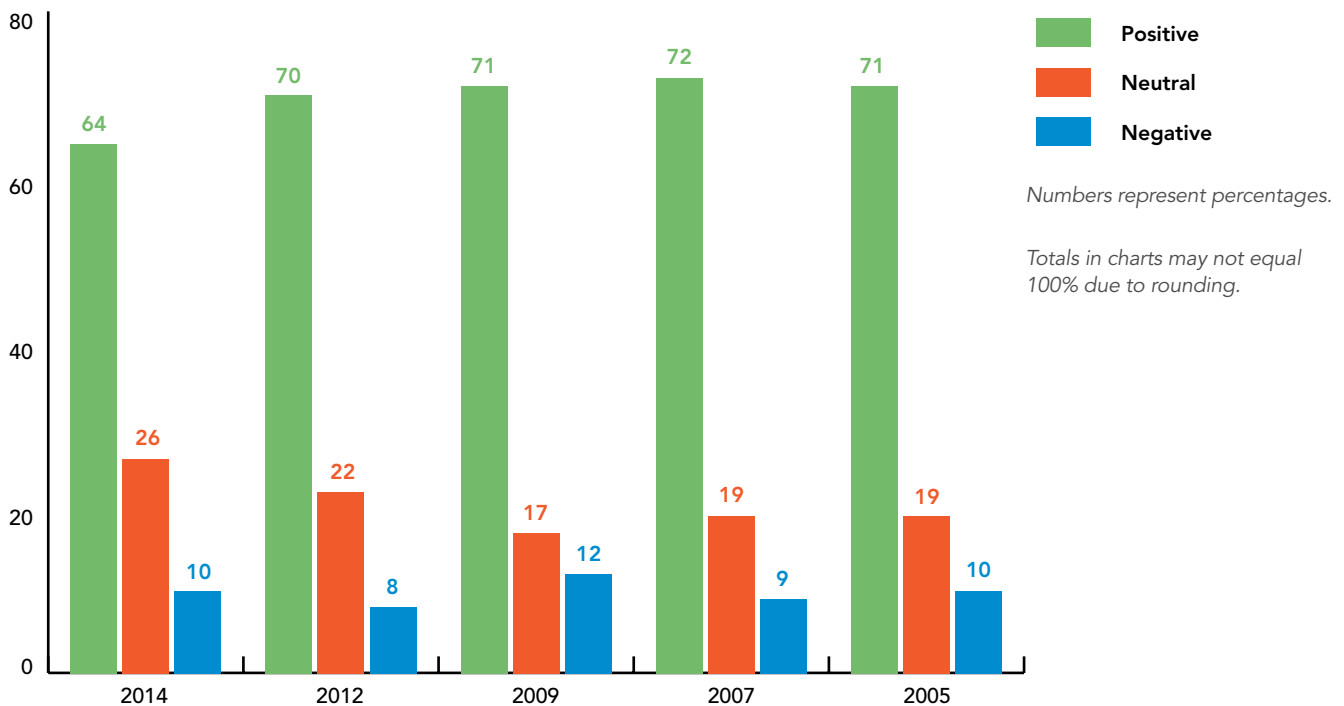


verdict

AMERICANS GRADE THEIR
ASSOCIATIONS, BOARD MEMBERS
AND COMMUNITY MANAGERS

2014 NATIONAL RESEARCH BY PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

Are residents satisfied with their overall community association experience?



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS »

A national survey conducted in early 2014 by Public Opinion Strategies affirms what we learned from similar national surveys in 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2012.

90% of residents rate their overall community association experience as positive (64%) or neutral (26%).

90% of residents say association board members “absolutely” or “for the most part” serve the best interests of their communities.

83% say they get along well with their immediate neighbors.

92% say they are on friendly terms with their association board.

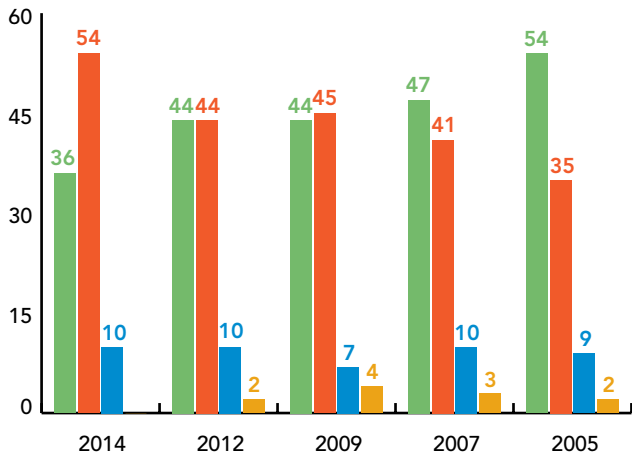
83% of residents say their community managers provide value and support to residents and their associations.

88% of residents who had direct contact with their community manager say it was a positive experience.

70% of residents say their association’s rules protect and enhance property values; only 4% say the rules harm property values.

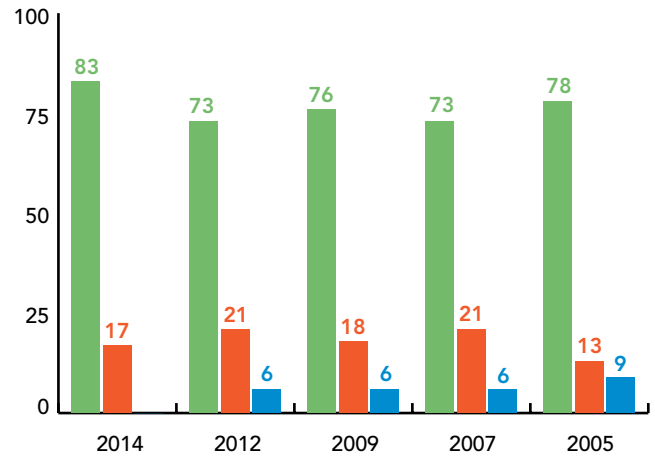
Do community association board members serve the best interests of the community?

■ Absolutely
 ■ For the most part
 ■ Not at all
 ■ Not sure

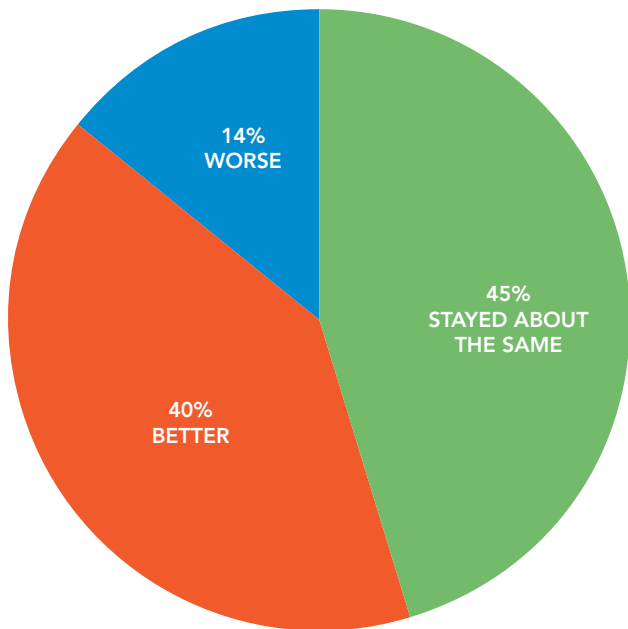


Does the community manager provide value and support to residents and the community?

■ Yes
 ■ No
 ■ Not sure



In terms of professionalism, leadership and knowledge, indicate how the performance of the people who manage your association has changed since you moved into the community.



Government Regulation—More or Less?

When asked what level of government regulation they would prefer, 86% of respondents said they want less or no additional government control. This is a significant finding in light of the steady stream of state legislative proposals affecting common-interest communities but not surprising considering many pieces of legislation are proposed based on a constituent’s grievance with his or her community. We know issues arise between individual residents and their associations, but we’ve learned from independent national research that such disputes are relatively few in number and typically tangential to the actual operation and performance of community associations.

Still, some of these disagreements make their way into the media when disgruntled residents turn to news outlets to air their grievances, valid or not. In addition to unfairly tarnishing all associations, these anecdotal stories can lead to calls for legislation that would impose costs and burdens on community associations and their homeowners—the very homeowners who oppose further regulation.

REALITY VALIDATED

Critics of community associations often focus on isolated, incomplete, anecdotal reports in the media. Conflicts make headlines, and that's what most Americans see on social media sites, read in newspapers and see on television about community associations. These stories are news because they are the exceptions to the rule.

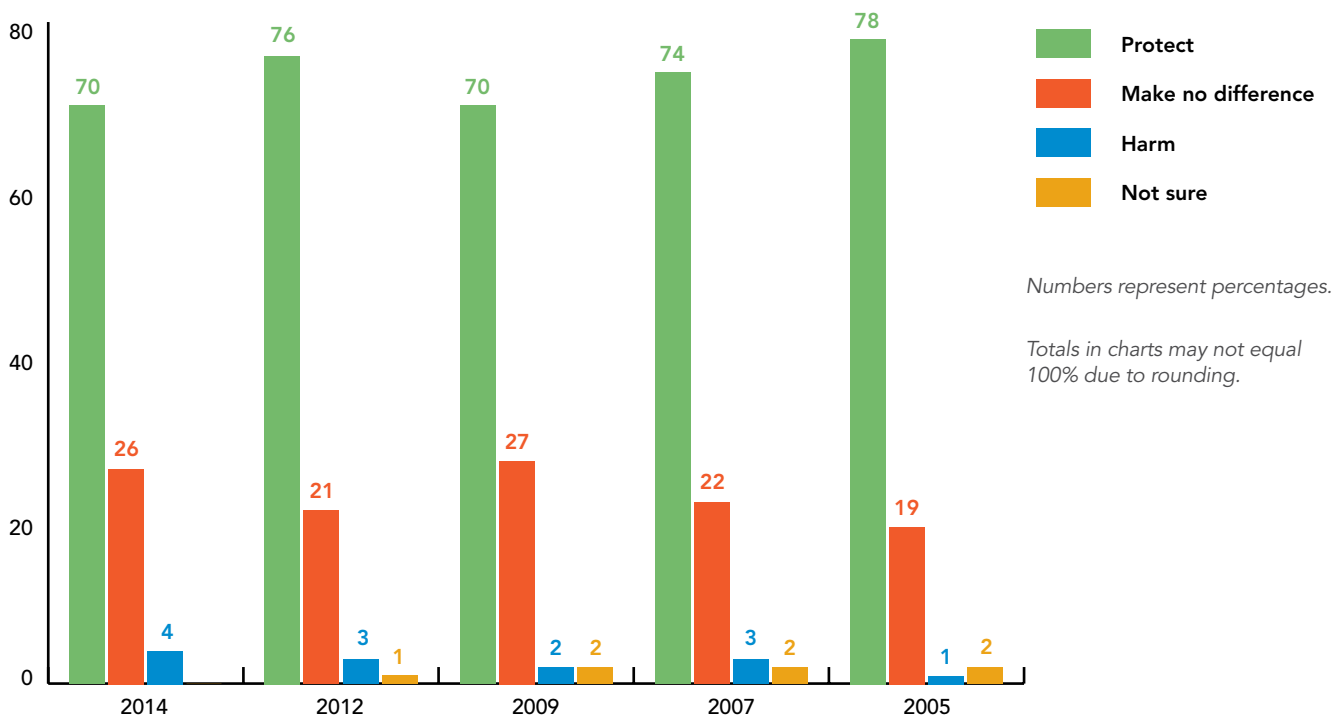
Unfortunately, good news is close to being an oxymoron. We don't see stories about the tens of millions of homeowners who are satisfied in their communities. We read few media profiles about volunteer board members who lead their associations effectively and without fanfare. We rarely see stories about managers and other professionals who provide invaluable guidance and support to their community association clients.

But when you ask residents about their own community associations—when you ask the people who know—the news is overwhelmingly positive.

But not perfect. Some community associations contend with disagreements and conflict—not unlike our workplaces, schools, social organizations and places of worship. There are opportunities for disagreements and conflict in every type of neighborhood, including community associations. While all associations do not function as well as we might like, it's reassuring to know that reality is much more positive than some HOA critics would have us believe.

It's unfair, unreasonable and inaccurate to condemn community associations when strong majorities believe their governing boards and community managers serve the best interests of their communities. These findings validate reality: The vast majority of people who lead community associations—homeowner volunteer leaders and professional managers—are working conscientiously and effectively to build and sustain successful communities.

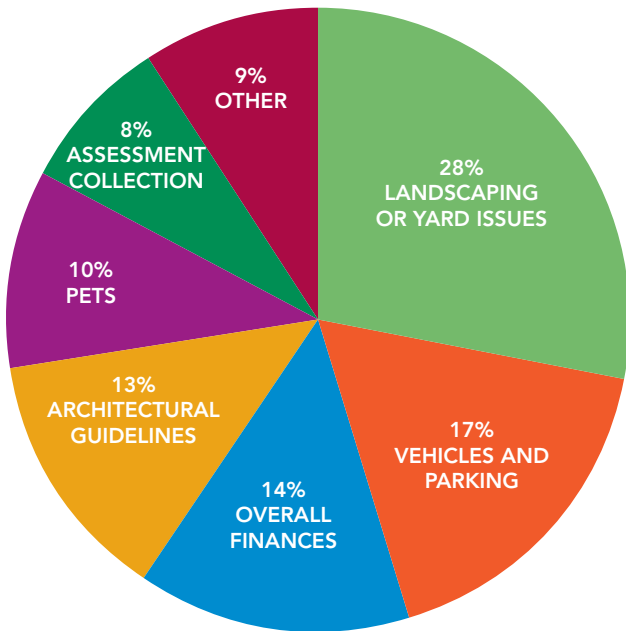
Do association rules and restrictions protect and enhance property values?



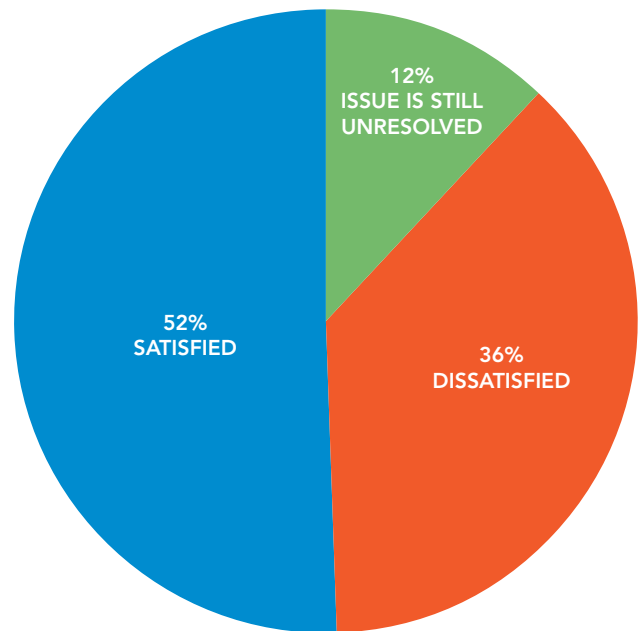
DISAGREEMENTS WITH ASSOCIATIONS

24% of respondents say they had experienced a significant issue or disagreement with the association.

Nature of disagreements



How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the outcome of the most recent issue?



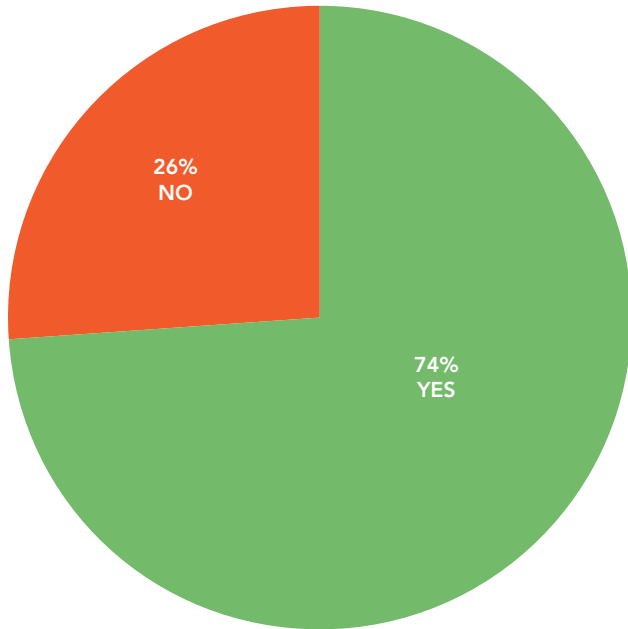
Net Benefit

Almost a quarter of respondents reported a “significant” personal issue or disagreement with their associations in the past. Of those, 52% were satisfied with the outcome, while 36% were dissatisfied. For most of the others, the issue was unresolved at the time of the survey. It’s interesting that 24% had experienced a significant issue and that 36% of them were dissatisfied, yet only 10% of residents are dissatisfied with their associations overall. This strongly suggests that the vast majority of residents recognize and appreciate the net benefit of living in their communities—even when there are differences of opinion.

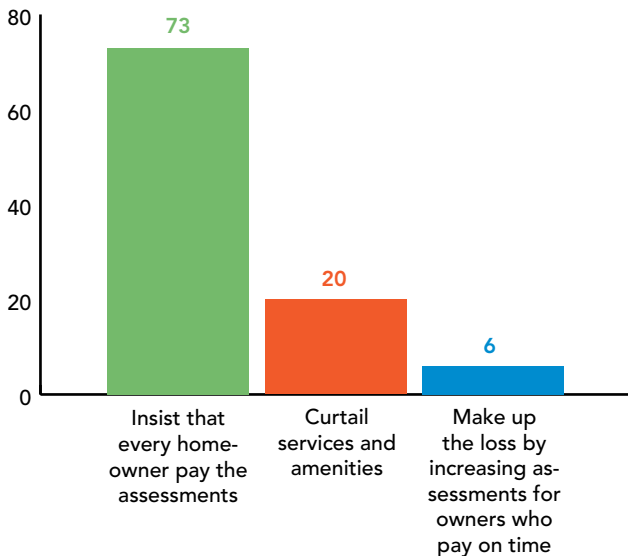
ASSESSMENT DELINQUENCIES

12% of respondents report being behind in the past on their association assessments.

Did the association attempt to work with you in some way, such as offering a payment plan, partial payments or deferred payments?



What do you think your community association should do when residents neglect to pay their assessments?



Best and Worst

Best aspects of living in a community association:

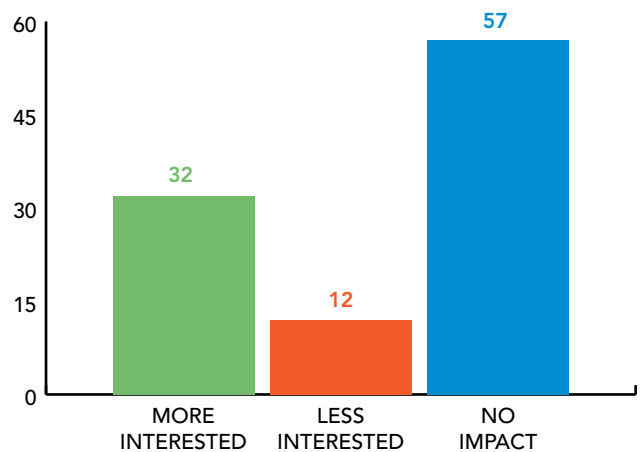
- 23% Clean, attractive neighborhood
- 16% Safe neighborhood
- 15% Maintenance-free neighborhood
- 9% Property values
- 9% Quiet neighborhood
- 7% Responsible neighbors

Worst aspects of living in a community association:

- 18% Nothing bad about the association
- 17% Paying assessments
- 16% Restrictions on parking or landscaping
- 10% Rules
- 9% Dealing with neighbors
- 7% Dissatisfaction with the association board

PRE-PURCHASE AWARENESS

Did the fact that your current home is in a community association make you more or less interested about purchasing or renting the home, or did it have no impact?



WHY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS WORK

The number of community associations in the United States has increased from just 10,000 in 1970 to more than 328,000 today. That's little surprise given the numerous factors that drive the continued growth of association-governed communities. Here are a few of the reasons the community association concept works—for municipalities, the U.S. housing market and the millions of Americans who choose to make their homes in these communities.

BENEFITTING FROM COLLECTIVE MANAGEMENT.

Independent, national surveys show Americans have largely accepted the collective management structure of associations. In traditional housing, rules and restrictions are adopted and administered by municipal governments. In associations, private governing boards composed of homeowners are elected by their neighbors to lead their associations.

PRIVATIZING PUBLIC FUNCTIONS. Because of the fiscal challenges faced by municipalities, many housing developments often are approved with the stipulation that associations will assume many responsibilities that traditionally fell to local and state governments. These obligations can include road maintenance, snow removal, trash pickup and stormwater management. This privatization of services allows municipalities to permit the continued development of needed housing without having to pay directly for that infrastructure through the tax base.

EXPANDING AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP.

There has been a persistent effort to increase homeownership in America. In today's economic climate and housing market, achieving affordability is an ongoing challenge. Without the construction and operating efficiencies inherent in association development and operations, affordability would be an even greater problem.



MAXIMIZING EFFICIENCIES. Community associations not only maintain home values but also reduce the need for government oversight. Put simply, community associations are an efficient means of providing essential services, assigning payment responsibility and being responsive to homeowner preferences and concerns.

PROVIDING AMENITIES AND OPTIONS. Associations offer a diverse variety of services and amenities, from pools, golf courses and marinas to equestrian facilities, nature trails and fitness centers. Very few Americans can afford such benefits without the shared responsibility enabled by common-interest communities. Community associations give people options, alternatives, facilities and resources most Americans could not otherwise enjoy.

BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY. By their nature, community associations bring people together, strengthen neighborhood bonds and promote a sense of community and belonging—attributes that are often overlooked in a highly transient society. A large percentage of the more than 65 million Americans who make their homes in associations take advantage of association-sponsored activities like holiday events, social clubs, athletic and fitness activities, pool parties and more. These activities help residents get to know their neighbors, forge new, supportive friendships and build a stronger sense of community.



This document was developed and published by Community Associations Institute (CAI), an international organization with more than 33,000 members dedicated to building better communities. CAI works in partnership with 60 chapters, providing information, education and resources to community associations and the professionals who support them. CAI's mission is to inspire professionalism, effective leadership and responsible citizenship—ideals reflected in communities that are preferred places to call home. Visit www.caionline.org or call (888) 224-4321 (M-F, 9–6:30 Eastern).



The Public Opinion Strategies survey was sponsored by the Foundation for Community Association Research, a nonprofit organization that provides authoritative research and analysis on community association trends, issues and operations. Visit www.cairf.org for information about research projects, publications, scholarships and more.