



THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Albemarle County, VA

Trends over Time

2015



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Summary

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality research methods and directly comparable results across The NCS communities. The NCS captures residents' opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central facets of community (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement). This report discusses trends over time, comparing the 2015 ratings for Albemarle County to its previous survey results in 2011 and 2013. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for Albemarle County represent important comparison data and should be examined for improvements or declines. Deviations from stable trends over time, especially, represent opportunities for understanding how local policies, programs or public information may have affected residents' opinions.

Meaningful differences between survey years have been noted within the following tables as being "higher" or "lower" if the differences are greater than seven percentage points between the 2013 and 2015 surveys, otherwise the comparison between 2013 and 2015 are noted as being "similar." Additionally, benchmark comparisons for all survey years are presented for reference. Changes in the benchmark comparison over time can be impacted by various trends, including varying survey cycles for the individual communities that comprise the benchmarks, regional and national economic or other events, as well as emerging survey methodologies.

Overall, ratings in Albemarle County for 2015 generally remained stable. Of the 83 items for which comparisons were available, 66 items were rated similarly in 2013 and 2015, 13 items showed a decrease in ratings and four showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Within the facet Recreation and Wellness, ratings for preventative health services and health care increased from 2013 to 2015.
- Ratings for child care/preschool and the percent of residents that participated in religious or spiritual activities saw an increase from 2013 to 2015.
- Among those aspects available for comparison within Built Environment, ratings for new development in Albemarle County, affordable quality housing and housing options decreased from 2013 to 2015. All other aspects were rated similarly in 2013.
- Ratings within the facet of Community Engagement decreased from 2013 to 2015 within each of the three pillars (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation). Ratings for openness and acceptance, social events and activities, public information, value of services for taxes paid, sense of community and the percent of respondents that had volunteered decreased from 2013 to 2015.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)			2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark		
	2011	2013	2015		2011	2013	2015
Overall quality of life	90%	92%	94%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Overall image	90%	89%	89%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Place to live	94%	91%	95%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Neighborhood	87%	89%	87%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Place to raise children	90%	92%	94%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Place to retire	82%	81%	81%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Overall appearance	90%	89%	87%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)			2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark		
		2011	2013	2015		2011	2013	2015
Safety	Overall feeling of safety	NA	NA	89%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Safe in neighborhood	96%	97%	91%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar
Mobility	Overall ease of travel	NA	NA	61%	NA	NA	NA	Lower
	Paths and walking trails	52%	57%	60%	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Ease of walking	44%	40%	45%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Lower
	Travel by bicycle	33%	36%	27%	Lower	Much lower	Much lower	Lower
	Travel by public transportation	29%	19%	25%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Lower
	Travel by car	56%	50%	55%	Similar	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Public parking	NA	NA	38%	NA	NA	NA	Lower
	Traffic flow	34%	32%	36%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Similar
	Natural Environment	Overall natural environment	88%	89%	92%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher
Cleanliness		83%	84%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Air quality		83%	86%	84%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Built Environment	Overall built environment	NA	NA	61%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	New development in Albemarle County	62%	65%	55%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Affordable quality housing	33%	39%	28%	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower
	Housing options	48%	62%	49%	Lower	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Public places	NA	NA	74%	NA	NA	NA	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)			2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark		
		2011	2013	2015		2011	2013	2015
Economy	Overall economic health	NA	NA	78%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Business and services	78%	75%	74%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Cost of living	NA	NA	23%	NA	NA	NA	Lower
	Shopping opportunities	67%	65%	68%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Employment opportunities	41%	53%	46%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Place to visit	NA	NA	87%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
	Place to work	71%	76%	73%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Health and wellness	NA	NA	89%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
	Mental health care	NA	NA	55%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Preventive health services	75%	73%	81%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Recreation and Wellness	Health care	68%	66%	77%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Food	73%	73%	73%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Recreational opportunities	77%	76%	72%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Fitness opportunities	NA	NA	74%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Religious or spiritual events and activities	NA	82%	84%	Similar	NA	Higher	Similar
	Cultural/arts/music activities	75%	76%	82%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Adult education	NA	NA	79%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
	K-12 education	83%	81%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Child care/preschool	38%	36%	49%	Higher	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Education and Enrichment	Social events and activities	79%	80%	73%	Lower	Much higher	Much higher
Neighborliness		NA	NA	61%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Openness and acceptance		65%	75%	58%	Lower	Higher	Much higher	Similar
Opportunities to participate in community matters		80%	74%	78%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Opportunities to volunteer		89%	87%	84%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Community Engagement								

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Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)			2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark		
	2011	2013	2015		2011	2013	2015
Services provided by Albemarle County	84%	77%	81%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar
Customer service	73%	76%	69%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
Value of services for taxes paid	57%	57%	48%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
Overall direction	53%	51%	50%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Welcoming citizen involvement	58%	55%	49%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar
Confidence in County government	NA	NA	44%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Acting in the best interest of Albemarle County	NA	NA	50%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Being honest	NA	NA	48%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	NA	NA	46%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Services provided by the Federal Government	39%	43%	42%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar

Table 4: Governance by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)			2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark		
		2011	2013	2015		2011	2013	2015
Safety	Police	85%	89%	82%	Lower	Higher	Higher	Similar
	Fire	97%	92%	94%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Ambulance/EMS	96%	93%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar
	Crime prevention	76%	73%	72%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar
	Fire prevention	86%	80%	80%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Animal control	74%	68%	65%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar
	Emergency preparedness	62%	65%	63%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Traffic enforcement	67%	65%	61%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street lighting	NA	NA	50%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Bus or transit services	56%	49%	48%	Similar	Similar	Lower	Similar
Natural Environment	Garbage collection	81%	84%	77%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recycling	69%	72%	69%	Similar	Lower	Lower	Similar
	Drinking water	76%	77%	77%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar
	Natural areas preservation	61%	66%	70%	Similar	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Open space	76%	75%	70%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Storm drainage	63%	63%	65%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Sewer services	82%	81%	83%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar
	Utility billing	NA	NA	61%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Land use, planning and zoning	45%	40%	46%	Similar	Similar	Much lower	Similar
	Code enforcement	50%	50%	47%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar
Economy	Economic development	49%	58%	55%	Similar	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	County parks	92%	86%	84%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Recreation programs	84%	78%	82%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar

The National Citizen Survey™

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)			2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark		
		2011	2013	2015		2011	2013	2015
Education and Enrichment	Recreation centers	77%	73%	79%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Health services	82%	78%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Special events	NA	NA	62%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Public libraries	90%	87%	88%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Public information	76%	75%	67%	Lower	Higher	Higher	Similar

Table 5: Participation General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)			2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark		
	2011	2013	2015		2011	2013	2015
Sense of community	74%	76%	65%	Lower	Higher	Much higher	Similar
Recommend Albemarle County	93%	92%	95%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Remain in Albemarle County	87%	87%	85%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar
Contacted Albemarle County employees	52%	45%	38%	Lower	Lower	Lower	Similar

Table 6: Participation by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)			2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark		
		2011	2013	2015		2011	2013	2015
Safety	Stocked supplies for an emergency	NA	NA	35%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Did NOT report a crime	NA	NA	84%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Was NOT the victim of a crime	92%	95%	92%	Similar	Higher	Much higher	Similar
Mobility	Used public transportation instead of driving	NA	NA	15%	NA	NA	NA	Lower
	Carpooled instead of driving alone	NA	NA	44%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	NA	39%	NA	NA	NA	Lower
Natural Environment	Conserved water	NA	NA	82%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Made home more energy efficient	NA	NA	69%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Recycled at home	81%	77%	72%	Similar	Similar	Much lower	Lower
Built Environment	Did NOT observe a code violation	NA	NA	65%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
	NOT under housing cost stress	69%	69%	70%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar
Economy	Purchased goods or services in Albemarle County	NA	NA	97%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Economy will have positive impact on income	15%	26%	27%	Similar	Similar	Much higher	Similar

The National Citizen Survey™

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)			2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark		
		2011	2013	2015		2011	2013	2015
	Work in Albemarle County	NA	NA	64%	NA	NA	NA	Much higher
Recreation and Wellness	Used Albemarle County recreation centers	51%	50%	55%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Similar
	Visited a County park	83%	84%	80%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	NA	NA	90%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	NA	NA	88%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	In very good to excellent health	NA	NA	73%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Used Albemarle County public libraries	64%	70%	67%	Similar	Much lower	Similar	Similar
	Participated in religious or spiritual activities	NA	52%	59%	Higher	NA	Similar	Higher
	Attended a County-sponsored event	NA	NA	49%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Community Engagement	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	NA	24%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Contacted Albemarle County elected officials	NA	NA	18%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Volunteered	54%	61%	54%	Lower	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Participated in a club	37%	39%	38%	Similar	Higher	Much higher	Similar
	Talked to or visited with neighbors	NA	NA	93%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Done a favor for a neighbor	NA	NA	84%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Attended a local public meeting	32%	30%	24%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar
	Read or watched local news	NA	NA	79%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Voted in local elections	78%	78%	85%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar