



THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Asheville, NC

Trends over Time

2015



NRC

National Research Center Inc

2955 Valmont Road Suite 300
Boulder, Colorado 80301
n-r-c.com • 303-444-7863

ICMA

Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

777 North Capitol Street NE Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002
icma.org • 800-745-8780

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 the City of Asheville to its previous survey results in 2008. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for Asheville 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 2008 and 2015 surveys, otherwise the comparison between 2008 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 Asheville for 2015 generally remained stable. Of the 71 items for which comparisons were available, 53 items were rated similarly in 2008 and 2015, 6 items showed a decrease in ratings and 12 showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Within the pillar of Community Characteristics, eight aspects were trending up from 2008 to 2015, while only one decreased over time. Ratings for openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds decreased from 2008 to 2015. Ratings for safety downtown/commercial areas, traffic flow, ease of walking, paths and walking trails, overall natural environment, air quality, quality of new development and opportunities to participate in community matters all increased.
- While most ratings within the pillar of Governance remained stable, a handful increased and a handful decreased from 2008 to 2015. Ratings for police, traffic enforcement, street cleaning, bus or transit services and overall customer service decreased. Ratings increased for emergency preparedness, natural areas preservation, land use, planning and zoning and public libraries.
- When comparisons were available within the pillar of Participation, all participation rates were consistent from 2008 to 2015.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics General

| | Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good) | | 2015 rating compared to 2008 | Comparison to benchmark | |
|-------------------------|--|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| | 2008 | 2015 | | 2008 | 2015 |
| Overall quality of life | 81% | 81% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Overall image | 78% | 82% | Similar | Much higher | Higher |
| Place to live | 85% | 89% | Similar | Much higher | Similar |
| Neighborhood | 80% | 86% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Place to raise children | 71% | 78% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Place to retire | 75% | 77% | Similar | Much higher | Higher |
| Overall appearance | 68% | 73% | Similar | Similar | Similar |

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

| | | Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe) | | 2015 rating compared to 2008 | Comparison to benchmark | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|--|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | 2008 | 2015 | | 2008 | 2015 |
| Safety | Overall feeling of safety | NA | 77% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Safe in neighborhood | 94% | 94% | Similar | Higher | Similar |
| | Safe downtown/commercial area | 81% | 88% | Higher | Similar | Similar |
| Mobility | Overall ease of travel | NA | 71% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Paths and walking trails | 34% | 47% | Higher | Much lower | Lower |
| | Ease of walking | 41% | 49% | Higher | Much lower | Lower |
| | Travel by bicycle | 23% | 24% | Similar | Much lower | Much lower |
| | Travel by public transportation | NA | 26% | NA | NA | Lower |
| | Travel by car | 53% | 54% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Public parking | NA | 26% | NA | NA | Lower |
| | Traffic flow | 27% | 36% | Higher | Much lower | Similar |
| | Overall natural environment | 68% | 83% | Higher | Lower | Similar |
| Natural Environment | Cleanliness | 57% | 63% | Similar | Much lower | Similar |
| | Air quality | 40% | 65% | Higher | Much lower | Similar |
| | Overall built environment | NA | 51% | NA | NA | Similar |
| Built Environment | New development in Asheville | 39% | 55% | Higher | Much lower | Similar |
| | Affordable quality housing | 12% | 11% | Similar | Much lower | Much lower |
| | Housing options | 28% | 26% | Similar | Much lower | Much lower |
| | Public places | NA | 70% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Overall economic health | NA | 50% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Vibrant downtown/commercial area | NA | 83% | NA | NA | Much higher |
| Economy | Business and services | 67% | 72% | Similar | Higher | Similar |
| | Cost of living | NA | 16% | NA | NA | Much lower |
| | Shopping opportunities | 74% | 75% | Similar | Much higher | Higher |
| | Employment opportunities | 15% | 14% | Similar | Much lower | Lower |

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| | | Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe) | | 2015 rating compared to 2008 | Comparison to benchmark | |
|--------------------------|---|--|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | 2008 | 2015 | | 2008 | 2015 |
| | Place to visit | NA | 93% | NA | NA | Much higher |
| | Place to work | 35% | 36% | Similar | Much lower | Lower |
| Recreation and Wellness | Health and wellness | NA | 84% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Mental health care | NA | 34% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Preventive health services | NA | 62% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Health care | NA | 57% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Food | NA | 65% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Recreational opportunities | 72% | 78% | Similar | Much higher | Higher |
| | Fitness opportunities | NA | 73% | NA | NA | Similar |
| Education and Enrichment | Religious or spiritual events and activities | 83% | 86% | Similar | Much higher | Similar |
| | Cultural/arts/music activities | 80% | 86% | Similar | Much higher | Much higher |
| | Adult education | NA | 76% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | K-12 education | 61% | 64% | Similar | Lower | Similar |
| | Child care/preschool | NA | 38% | NA | NA | Similar |
| Community Engagement | Social events and activities | 77% | 79% | Similar | Much higher | Higher |
| | Neighborliness | NA | 69% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Openness and acceptance | 74% | 64% | Lower | Much higher | Similar |
| | Opportunities to participate in community matters | 68% | 78% | Higher | Higher | Similar |
| | Opportunities to volunteer | 87% | 86% | Similar | Much higher | Higher |

Table 3: Governance General

| | Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good) | | 2015 rating compared to 2008 | Comparison to benchmark | |
|---|--|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| | 2008 | 2015 | | 2008 | 2015 |
| Services provided by Asheville | 63% | 63% | Similar | Lower | Similar |
| Customer service | 75% | 62% | Lower | Similar | Lower |
| Value of services for taxes paid | 39% | 32% | Similar | Much lower | Lower |
| Overall direction | 33% | 39% | Similar | Much lower | Similar |
| Welcoming citizen involvement | 47% | 42% | Similar | Much lower | Similar |
| Confidence in City government | NA | 35% | NA | NA | Similar |
| Acting in the best interest of Asheville | NA | 37% | NA | NA | Similar |
| Being honest | NA | 38% | NA | NA | Similar |
| Treating all residents fairly | NA | 31% | NA | NA | Lower |
| Services provided by the Federal Government | 36% | 34% | Similar | Lower | Similar |

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Table 4: Governance by Facet

| | | Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good) | | 2015 rating compared to 2008 | Comparison to benchmark | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| | | 2008 | 2015 | | 2008 | 2015 |
| Safety | Police | 68% | 60% | Lower | Much lower | Lower |
| | Fire | 94% | 91% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Ambulance/EMS | 89% | 89% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Crime prevention | 49% | 49% | Similar | Much lower | Lower |
| | Fire prevention | 70% | 66% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Animal control | 52% | 50% | Similar | Much lower | Similar |
| | Emergency preparedness | 41% | 60% | Higher | Much lower | Similar |
| Mobility | Traffic enforcement | 58% | 47% | Lower | Lower | Lower |
| | Street repair | 27% | 20% | Similar | Much lower | Lower |
| | Street cleaning | 51% | 42% | Lower | Much lower | Lower |
| | Street lighting | 56% | 60% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Snow removal | 58% | 56% | Similar | Lower | Similar |
| | Sidewalk maintenance | 41% | 35% | Similar | Much lower | Lower |
| | Traffic signal timing | 36% | 42% | Similar | Much lower | Similar |
| | Bus or transit services | 45% | 33% | Lower | Much lower | Lower |
| Natural Environment | Garbage collection | 81% | 83% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Recycling | 71% | 78% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Yard waste pick-up | 67% | 65% | Similar | Lower | Similar |
| | Drinking water | 62% | 69% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Natural areas preservation | 30% | 47% | Higher | Much lower | Similar |
| Built Environment | Open space | NA | 50% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Storm drainage | 51% | 51% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Sewer services | NA | 66% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Power utility | NA | 63% | NA | NA | Lower |
| | Utility billing | NA | 54% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Land use, planning and zoning | 16% | 31% | Higher | Much lower | Lower |
| | Code enforcement | 29% | 30% | Similar | Much lower | Lower |
| Economy | Cable television | NA | 41% | NA | NA | Similar |
| Recreation and Wellness | Economic development | 34% | 39% | Similar | Much lower | Similar |
| | City parks | 74% | 81% | Similar | Lower | Similar |
| | Recreation programs | 69% | 74% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| | Recreation centers | 66% | 69% | Similar | Lower | Similar |
| Education and Enrichment | Health services | NA | 67% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Special events | NA | 56% | NA | NA | Similar |
| Community Engagement | Public libraries | 50% | 84% | Higher | Much lower | Similar |
| | Public information | NA | 67% | NA | NA | Similar |

Table 5: Participation General

| | Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes) | | 2015 rating compared to 2008 | Comparison to benchmark | |
|-------------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| | 2008 | 2015 | | 2008 | 2015 |
| Sense of community | 70% | 65% | Similar | Higher | Similar |
| Recommend Asheville | 76% | 80% | Similar | Lower | Similar |
| Remain in Asheville | 85% | 83% | Similar | Similar | Similar |
| Contacted Asheville employees | NA | 38% | NA | NA | Similar |

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Table 6: Participation by Facet

| | | Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes) | | 2015 rating compared to 2008 | Comparison to benchmark | |
|--------------------------|--|---|------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | 2008 | 2015 | | 2008 | 2015 |
| Safety | Stocked supplies for an emergency | NA | 31% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Did NOT report a crime | NA | 79% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Was NOT the victim of a crime | NA | 91% | NA | NA | Similar |
| Mobility | Used public transportation instead of driving | NA | 17% | NA | NA | Lower |
| | Carpooled instead of driving alone | NA | 53% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Walked or biked instead of driving | NA | 60% | NA | NA | Similar |
| Natural Environment | Conserved water | NA | 86% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Made home more energy efficient | NA | 79% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Recycled at home | NA | 94% | NA | NA | Similar |
| Built Environment | Did NOT observe a code violation | NA | 45% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | NOT under housing cost stress | 63% | 68% | Similar | NA | Similar |
| Economy | Purchased goods or services in Asheville | NA | 98% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Economy will have positive impact on income | NA | 31% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Work in Asheville | NA | 66% | NA | NA | Much higher |
| Recreation and Wellness | Used Asheville recreation centers | NA | 60% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Visited a City park | NA | 86% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables | NA | 88% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity | NA | 91% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | In very good to excellent health | NA | 71% | NA | NA | Similar |
| Education and Enrichment | Used Asheville public libraries | NA | 71% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Participated in religious or spiritual activities | NA | 50% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Attended a City-sponsored event | NA | 61% | NA | NA | Similar |
| Community Engagement | Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate | NA | 41% | NA | NA | Higher |
| | Contacted Asheville elected officials | NA | 23% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Volunteered | NA | 60% | NA | NA | Higher |
| | Participated in a club | NA | 41% | NA | NA | Higher |
| | Talked to or visited with neighbors | NA | 93% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Done a favor for a neighbor | NA | 89% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Attended a local public meeting | NA | 24% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Watched a local public meeting | NA | 26% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Read or watched local news | NA | 85% | NA | NA | Similar |
| | Voted in local elections | 83% | 87% | Similar | NA | Similar |