

Since 2002, the County has contracted with survey consultants to conduct a reliable and statistically valid County-wide citizen survey biennially. Most recently, staff conducted the County’s 2015 survey using the survey tool offered by the National Citizen Survey (NCS), which is a collaboration between the National Research Center (NCR) and the International City/County Management Association. The NCS provides a statistically valid survey of resident opinions regarding the community and the services provided by local government, with the additional benefit of providing comparisons with benchmark communities. The results of this survey are statistically valid within a margin of error of plus or minus 5% points.

Staff presented results of the 2015 Citizen Survey at the September 2, 2015 Board meeting. However, staff feels that the attached two documents are worth revisiting, since the data is particularly relevant to the Board’s priority-setting discussions:

1. **Dashboard Summary of Findings:** This report provides survey data in a summary chart format that shows how Albemarle County results compare with national benchmarks, as well as over time. A few notes to understand this report:
 - To establish national benchmarks, the NCS uses data gathered in surveys from over 500 communities whose residents evaluated the same kinds of topics on the NCS. The comparison evaluations are from the most recent survey completed in each community; most communities conduct surveys every year or in alternating years. The communities in the database represent a wide geographic and population range.
 - The “trend” column indicates the relative change in Albemarle County’s rating for a particular survey question over time; in this case, comparing the 2015 result with the 2013 survey results.
 - Symbols are used (see legend below) to indicate “trend” direction and degree over time, as well as how the County compares with the benchmark. Note that data may not be available (indicated by the asterisk) if the question was not included in the 2013 Albemarle County survey and/or has not been asked by other localities.

Legend									
↑↑	Much higher	↑	Higher	↔	Similar	↓	Lower	↓↓	Much lower
								*	Not available

2. **Select Questions:** This document provides complete survey responses for select questions on topics that provide context for the Board’s prioritization work.

Two important acknowledgements about this data:

1. The survey measures what citizens think about the community. Beyond the local government, other sectors that influence community quality include businesses, non-profit agencies, service organizations, and other community groups (like neighborhood associations). Therefore, some of these questions are not necessarily a reflection on County services.
2. Much of this data is most meaningful when compared to the national benchmark. Even then, as NCS points out, less desirable ratings for some indicators should not automatically be seen as negative for a community, but instead a reflection of the community’s resources and priorities. Communities may have intentionally directed their resources to areas with a higher priority. In addition, not all indicators that show a lower level of achievement require a call to action, just as not all indicators that are strong should become a gateway to complacency. Without this framework in which to consider the data, it might be easy to misinterpret some of the data.

Looking at the 2015 survey results, citizens continue to rate overall quality of life in the County very high. Of the survey respondents, 93% rated the quality of life in the County as excellent or good, and 95% rated the County as an excellent or good place to live.

Other notable survey findings according to NCS include:

- ❑ **County residents identified Safety as one of the most important focus areas for the community.** Safety services such as fire, fire prevention, ambulance/EMS and police services were all rated highly by more than 80% of residents. Almost all residents said they felt safe in their neighborhood and had an overall feeling of safety in the County.
- ❑ **Mobility is a potential area for improvement.** Some aspects of Mobility tended to be lower than for the other facets of community. Ease of walking, travel by bicycle, travel by public transportation and public parking all received ratings that were lower than the national benchmarks.
- ❑ **Education and Enrichment is important to County residents.** Almost all residents thought it was essential or very important for Albemarle County Public Schools to focus on student to teacher/educator ratio and student performance over the next two years. More residents in the County than in other communities rated education and enrichment opportunities positively and approximately 80% of respondents rated cultural/arts/music activities and adult education higher than the national benchmark. Child care/preschool ratings saw an increase from 2013 to 2015 and more residents participated in religious or spiritual activities than in 2013.
- ❑ **Recreation and Wellness is a priority for County residents.** Almost all residents rated health and wellness in the County as excellent or good. More residents in the County positively rated preventative health services and health care than residents in other communities across the nation; these ratings increased from 2013 to 2015.

Complete 2015 Albemarle County Citizen Survey results are available on the County's website [here](#). There are six reports in total, including geographic and demographic crosstabs, as well as comparison against custom benchmarks (those localities similar to the County).