



**THE NCS**<sup>TM</sup>  
The National Citizen Survey<sup>TM</sup>

# Albemarle County, VA

Trends over Time

2017



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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 2017 ratings for Albemarle County to its previous survey results in 2015, 2013 and 2011. 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 2015 and 2017 surveys, otherwise the comparison between 2015 and 2017 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 2017 generally remained stable. Of the 123 items for which comparisons were available, 108 items were rated similarly in 2015 and 2017, 10 items showed a decrease in ratings and five showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Assessments of the majority of items within the pillar of Community Characteristics remained stable from 2017 to 2015. With respect to Mobility, residents were more pleased in 2017 than in 2015 with traffic flow in the County and less satisfied with the ease of walking. Economically, residents rated employment opportunities higher in 2017 than in 2015. After several years of stability, the overall image of the County declined significantly.
- Most of the declines in ratings for the County occurred in residents' reporting of their levels of participation in various activities in the community. Compared to 2015, fewer residents reported they participated in religious or spiritual activities, attended a County-sponsored event, watched a local public meeting or participated in a club. Additionally, fewer residents would recommend living in Albemarle County to someone who asked.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2017 rating compared to 2015	Comparison to benchmark			
	2011	2013	2015	2017		2011	2013	2015	2017
Overall quality of life	90%	92%	94%	89%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Overall image	90%	89%	89%	81%	Lower	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Similar
Place to live	94%	91%	95%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Neighborhood	87%	89%	87%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Place to raise children	90%	92%	94%	93%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
Place to retire	82%	81%	81%	80%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
Overall appearance	90%	89%	87%	88%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)				2017 rating compared to 2015	Comparison to benchmark			
		2011	2013	2015	2017		2011	2013	2015	2017
Safety	Overall feeling of safety	NA	NA	89%	89%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Safe in neighborhood	96%	97%	91%	97%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Overall ease of travel	NA	NA	61%	62%	Similar	NA	NA	Lower	Lower
	Paths and walking trails	52%	57%	60%	60%	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ease of walking	44%	40%	45%	35%	Lower	Much lower	Much lower	Lower	Lower
	Travel by bicycle	33%	36%	27%	27%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Lower	Lower
	Travel by public transportation	29%	19%	25%	24%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Lower	Lower
	Travel by car	56%	50%	55%	57%	Similar	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Public parking	NA	NA	38%	42%	Similar	NA	NA	Lower	Similar
	Traffic flow	34%	32%	36%	43%	Higher	Much lower	Much lower	Similar	Similar
Natural Environment	Overall natural environment	88%	89%	92%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
	Cleanliness	83%	84%	83%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Air quality	83%	86%	84%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Overall built environment	NA	NA	61%	58%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	New development in Albemarle County	62%	65%	55%	54%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Affordable quality housing	33%	39%	28%	26%	Similar	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower
	Housing options	48%	62%	49%	44%	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Public places	NA	NA	74%	76%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Economy	Overall economic health	NA	NA	78%	76%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Business and services	78%	75%	74%	73%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Cost of living	NA	NA	23%	25%	Similar	NA	NA	Lower	Lower
	Shopping opportunities	67%	65%	68%	71%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Employment opportunities	41%	53%	46%	54%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Place to visit	NA	NA	87%	89%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
	Place to work	71%	76%	73%	73%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)				2017 rating compared to 2015	Comparison to benchmark			
		2011	2013	2015	2017		2011	2013	2015	2017
Recreation and Wellness	Health and wellness	NA	NA	89%	85%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
	Mental health care	NA	NA	55%	53%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Preventive health services	75%	73%	81%	78%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
	Health care	68%	66%	77%	74%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
	Food	73%	73%	73%	74%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Recreational opportunities	77%	76%	72%	77%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Fitness opportunities	NA	NA	74%	77%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Religious or spiritual events and activities	NA	82%	84%	88%	Similar	NA	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Cultural/arts/music activities	75%	76%	82%	84%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Much higher
	Adult education	NA	NA	79%	79%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
Community Engagement	Child care/preschool	38%	36%	49%	38%	Lower	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Social events and activities	79%	80%	73%	74%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Neighborliness	NA	NA	61%	64%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Openness and acceptance	65%	75%	58%	62%	Similar	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Opportunities to participate in community matters	80%	74%	78%	77%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Opportunities to volunteer	89%	87%	84%	84%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher

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Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2017 rating compared to 2015	Comparison to benchmark			
	2011	2013	2015	2017		2011	2013	2015	2017
Services provided by Albemarle County	84%	77%	81%	80%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Customer service	73%	76%	69%	73%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Value of services for taxes paid	57%	57%	48%	50%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Overall direction	53%	51%	50%	48%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Welcoming citizen involvement	58%	55%	49%	52%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
Confidence in County government	NA	NA	44%	49%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Acting in the best interest of Albemarle County	NA	NA	50%	52%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Being honest	NA	NA	48%	54%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	NA	NA	46%	52%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Services provided by the Federal Government	39%	43%	42%	43%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar

Table 4: Governance by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2017 rating compared to 2015	Comparison to benchmark			
		2011	2013	2015	2017		2011	2013	2015	2017
Safety	Police	85%	89%	82%	88%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Fire	97%	92%	94%	94%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ambulance/EMS	96%	93%	90%	93%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Crime prevention	76%	73%	72%	76%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Fire prevention	86%	80%	80%	81%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Animal control	74%	68%	65%	69%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Emergency preparedness	62%	65%	63%	71%	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Traffic enforcement	67%	65%	61%	55%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street lighting	NA	NA	50%	53%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Bus or transit services	56%	49%	48%	37%	Lower	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar
Natural Environment	Garbage collection	81%	84%	77%	80%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recycling	69%	72%	69%	64%	Similar	Lower	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Drinking water	76%	77%	77%	73%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Natural areas preservation	61%	66%	70%	62%	Lower	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Open space	76%	75%	70%	66%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Storm drainage	63%	63%	65%	61%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Sewer services	82%	81%	83%	81%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Utility billing	NA	NA	61%	67%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Land use, planning and zoning	45%	40%	46%	41%	Similar	Similar	Much lower	Similar	Similar
Economy	Code enforcement	50%	50%	47%	43%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Economic development	49%	58%	55%	54%	Similar	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2017 rating compared to 2015	Comparison to benchmark			
		2011	2013	2015	2017		2011	2013	2015	2017
Recreation and Wellness	County parks	92%	86%	84%	87%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recreation programs	84%	78%	82%	78%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recreation centers	77%	73%	79%	76%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Health services	82%	78%	85%	79%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Special events	NA	NA	62%	63%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Public libraries	90%	87%	88%	92%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Public information	76%	75%	67%	75%	Higher	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar

Table 5: Participation General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)				2017 rating compared to 2015	Comparison to benchmark			
	2011	2013	2015	2017		2011	2013	2015	2017
Sense of community	74%	76%	65%	63%	Similar	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Recommend Albemarle County	93%	92%	95%	87%	Lower	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Remain in Albemarle County	87%	87%	85%	87%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
Contacted Albemarle County employees	52%	45%	38%	37%	Similar	Lower	Lower	Similar	Similar

Table 6: Participation by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)				2017 rating compared to 2015	Comparison to benchmark			
		2011	2013	2015	2017		2011	2013	2015	2017
Safety	Stocked supplies for an emergency	NA	NA	35%	35%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Did NOT report a crime	NA	NA	84%	88%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Higher
	Was NOT the victim of a crime	92%	95%	92%	95%	Similar	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Used public transportation instead of driving	NA	NA	15%	16%	Similar	NA	NA	Lower	Lower
	Carpooled instead of driving alone	NA	NA	44%	41%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	NA	39%	42%	Similar	NA	NA	Lower	Lower
Natural Environment	Conserved water	NA	NA	82%	81%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Made home more energy efficient	NA	NA	69%	68%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Recycled at home	81%	77%	72%	76%	Similar	Similar	Much lower	Lower	Lower
Built Environment	Did NOT observe a code violation	NA	NA	65%	60%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Similar
	NOT under housing cost stress	69%	69%	70%	73%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
Economy	Purchased goods or services in Albemarle County	NA	NA	97%	97%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Economy will have positive impact on income	15%	26%	27%	26%	Similar	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)				2017 rating compared to 2015	Comparison to benchmark			
		2011	2013	2015	2017		2011	2013	2015	2017
Recreation and Wellness	Work in Albemarle County	NA	NA	64%	59%	Similar	NA	NA	Much higher	Higher
	Used Albemarle County recreation centers	51%	50%	55%	59%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Similar	Similar
	Visited a County park	83%	84%	80%	83%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	NA	NA	90%	91%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	NA	NA	88%	88%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	In very good to excellent health	NA	NA	73%	74%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Used Albemarle County public libraries	64%	70%	67%	68%	Similar	Much lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Participated in religious or spiritual activities	NA	52%	59%	47%	Lower	NA	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Attended a County-sponsored event	NA	NA	49%	41%	Lower	NA	NA	Similar	Lower
Community Engagement	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	NA	24%	33%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Contacted Albemarle County elected officials	NA	NA	18%	18%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Volunteered	54%	61%	54%	48%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Similar
	Participated in a club	37%	39%	38%	31%	Lower	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Talked to or visited with neighbors	NA	NA	93%	93%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Done a favor for a neighbor	NA	NA	84%	81%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Attended a local public meeting	32%	30%	24%	19%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Watched a local public meeting	42%	NA	NA	28%	Lower	Similar	NA	NA	Similar
	Read or watched local news	NA	NA	79%	84%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Voted in local elections	78%	78%	85%	87%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	