

# **The National Citizen Survey™**

## **Charlottesville, VA**

Trends over Time

2014

# 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 2014 ratings for the City of Charlottesville to its previous survey results in 2012. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for Charlottesville 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 six percentage points between the 2012 and 2014 surveys, otherwise the comparison between 2012 and 2014 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 Charlottesville for 2014 generally remained stable. Of the 90 items for which comparisons were available, 78 items were rated similarly in 2012 and 2014, 11 items showed a decrease in ratings and one showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Generally, aspects within Community Characteristics remained relatively stable over time; however, new development in Charlottesville received a lower rating in 2014 compared to 2012 and K-12 education received a higher rating.
- Within the pillar of Governance, aspects of Safety (crime prevention and emergency preparedness), Mobility (snow removal and bus or transit services) and Built Environment (code enforcement and cable television) saw decreases in 2014 compared to 2012.
- Rates of Participation also saw a variety of decreases when looking back to 2012 rates. Residents reported lower ratings for sense of community and were less likely to make use of Charlottesville libraries or to have attended or watched a local public meeting.

Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2014 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
	2012	2014		2012	2014
Overall quality of life	84%	87%	Similar	Higher	Similar
Overall image	89%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
Place to live	88%	88%	Similar	Higher	Similar
Neighborhood	82%	83%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Place to raise children	88%	89%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Place to retire	77%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
Overall appearance	84%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Similar

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)		2014 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
		2012	2014		2012	2014
Safety	Overall feeling of safety	NA	78%	NA	NA	Similar
	Safe in neighborhood	94%	96%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Safe downtown/commercial area	89%	90%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Overall ease of travel	NA	66%	NA	NA	Similar
	Paths and walking trails	68%	65%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Ease of walking	69%	65%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Travel by bicycle	46%	43%	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Travel by public transportation	NA	42%	NA	NA	Similar
	Travel by car	48%	48%	Similar	Much lower	Lower
	Public parking	NA	21%	NA	NA	Much lower
	Traffic flow	30%	23%	Similar	Much lower	Lower
Natural Environment	Overall natural environment	87%	86%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Cleanliness	82%	80%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Air quality	86%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Built Environment	Overall built environment	NA	63%	NA	NA	Similar
	New development in Charlottesville	62%	52%	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Affordable quality housing	31%	29%	Similar	Much lower	Lower
	Housing options	50%	43%	Similar	Lower	Similar

The National Citizen Survey™

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)		2014 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
		2012	2014		2012	2014
Economy	Public places	NA	75%	NA	NA	Similar
	Overall economic health	NA	65%	NA	NA	Similar
	Vibrant downtown/commercial area	NA	76%	NA	NA	Much higher
	Business and services	75%	73%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Cost of living	NA	29%	NA	NA	Lower
	Shopping opportunities	62%	70%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Employment opportunities	44%	41%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Place to visit	NA	85%	NA	NA	Higher
	Place to work	71%	69%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Recreation and Wellness	Health and wellness	NA	84%	NA	NA
Mental health care		NA	51%	NA	NA	Similar
Preventive health services		74%	73%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Health care		68%	71%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
Food		72%	67%	Similar	Higher	Similar
Recreational opportunities		77%	73%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Fitness opportunities		NA	76%	NA	NA	Similar
Education and Enrichment		Cultural/arts/music activities	80%	84%	Similar	Much higher
	Adult education	NA	82%	NA	NA	Higher
	K-12 education	70%	78%	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Child care/preschool	39%	46%	Similar	Lower	Similar
Community Engagement	Social events and activities	81%	75%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Neighborliness	NA	62%	NA	NA	Similar
	Openness and acceptance	68%	61%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Opportunities to participate in community matters	77%	75%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Opportunities to volunteer	87%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Similar

Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2014 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
	2012	2014		2012	2014
Services provided by Charlottesville	81%	77%	Similar	Higher	Similar
Customer service	84%	76%	Similar	Higher	Similar
Value of services for taxes paid	62%	62%	Similar	Higher	Similar
Overall direction	65%	60%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Welcoming citizen involvement	64%	65%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Confidence in City government	NA	59%	NA	NA	Similar
Acting in the best interest of Charlottesville	NA	58%	NA	NA	Similar
Being honest	NA	59%	NA	NA	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	NA	48%	NA	NA	Similar
Services provided by the Federal Government	51%	50%	Similar	Much higher	Similar

Table 4: Governance by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2014 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
		2012	2014		2012	2014
Safety	Police	81%	77%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Fire	94%	96%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Ambulance/EMS	92%	89%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Crime prevention	61%	49%	Lower	Similar	Lower
	Fire prevention	82%	76%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Animal control	66%	65%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Emergency preparedness	72%	58%	Lower	Higher	Similar
Mobility	Traffic enforcement	57%	60%	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Street repair	54%	56%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Street cleaning	65%	63%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street lighting	57%	49%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Snow removal	58%	48%	Lower	Similar	Lower
	Sidewalk maintenance	55%	55%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Traffic signal timing	42%	39%	Similar	Lower	Similar
Natural Environment	Bus or transit services	68%	58%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
	Garbage collection	85%	78%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recycling	84%	77%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Yard waste pick-up	73%	66%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Drinking water	65%	67%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Natural areas preservation	67%	59%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Storm drainage	66%	63%	Similar	Similar	Similar

The National Citizen Survey™

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2014 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
		2012	2014		2012	2014
	Sewer services	79%	78%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Power utility	75%	73%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Utility billing	NA	74%	NA	NA	Similar
	Land use, planning and zoning	40%	41%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Code enforcement	54%	45%	Lower	Higher	Similar
	Cable television	51%	40%	Lower	Lower	Lower
Economy	Economic development	57%	57%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	City parks	84%	84%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Recreation programs	83%	81%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Recreation centers	78%	77%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Health services	85%	79%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Special events	NA	73%	NA	NA	Similar
	Public libraries	88%	84%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Public information	72%	77%	Similar	Higher	Similar

Table 5: Participation General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2014 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
	2012	2014		2012	2014
Sense of community	79%	64%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
Recommend Charlottesville	85%	88%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Remain in Charlottesville	70%	72%	Similar	Much lower	Lower
Contacted Charlottesville employees	57%	53%	Similar	Higher	Similar

Table 6: Participation by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2014 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
		2012	2014		2012	2014
Safety	Stocked supplies for an emergency	NA	38%	NA	NA	Similar
	Did NOT report a crime	NA	77%	NA	NA	Similar
	Was NOT the victim of a crime	83%	88%	Similar	Lower	Similar
Mobility	Used public transportation instead of driving	NA	50%	NA	NA	Higher
	Carpooled instead of driving alone	NA	58%	NA	NA	Higher
Natural Environment	Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	82%	NA	NA	Much higher
	Conserved water	NA	80%	NA	NA	Similar

The National Citizen Survey™

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2014 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
		2012	2014		2012	2014
	Made home more energy efficient	NA	71%	NA	NA	Similar
	Recycled at home	88%	88%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Did NOT observe a code violation	NA	60%	NA	NA	Similar
Built Environment	NOT under housing cost stress	50%	58%	Similar	Much lower	Similar
	Purchased goods or services in Charlottesville	NA	96%	NA	NA	Similar
Economy	Economy will have positive impact on income	21%	17%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Work in Charlottesville	NA	68%	NA	NA	Much higher
	Used Charlottesville recreation centers	53%	60%	Similar	Lower	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Visited a City park	93%	89%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	NA	85%	NA	NA	Similar
	Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	NA	87%	NA	NA	Similar
	In very good to excellent health	NA	70%	NA	NA	Similar
	Used Charlottesville public libraries	65%	53%	Lower	Much lower	Lower
Education and Enrichment	Attended a City-sponsored event	NA	65%	NA	NA	Higher
	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	23%	NA	NA	Similar
Community Engagement	Contacted Charlottesville elected officials	NA	14%	NA	NA	Similar
	Volunteered	60%	59%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
	Participated in a club	37%	40%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
	Talked to or visited with neighbors	NA	85%	NA	NA	Similar
	Done a favor for a neighbor	NA	77%	NA	NA	Similar
	Attended a local public meeting	32%	22%	Lower	Higher	Similar
	Watched a local public meeting	45%	29%	Lower	Higher	Similar
	Read or watched local news	NA	80%	NA	NA	Similar
	Voted in local elections	75%	76%	Similar	Similar	Similar