



Alexandria, VA

Trends over Time

2020



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



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

Summary

The National Community 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 2020 ratings for the City of Alexandria to its previous survey results in 2016, 2017 and 2018. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for Alexandria 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 five percentage points¹ between the 2018 and 2020 surveys, otherwise the comparisons between 2018 and 2020 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 Alexandria for 2020 generally remained stable. Of the 122 items for which comparisons were available, 84 items were rated similarly in 2018 and 2020, 34 items showed a decrease in ratings and four showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Within Community Characteristics, decreased ratings were observed across all facets except Safety (all aspects of Safety remained stable from 2018 to 2020). Most decreases occurred within Mobility (traffic flow, travel by car, overall ease of travel, public parking), Recreation and Wellness (access to affordable quality food, mental health care, preventive health services), and Education and Enrichment (K-12 education, child care/preschool, adult education). Alexandria residents gave higher marks to cultural/arts/music opportunities in 2020 compared to 2018.
- While most aspects of Governance remained stable over time, decreases were observed across all facets except Economy in 2020 compared to 2018. Survey respondents gave lower ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the City, and also gave lower marks to the job the City government did at acting in the best interest of Alexandria, being honest, and treating all residents fairly. However, residents gave higher marks to emergency preparedness in 2020 compared to 2018.
- Almost all reported rates of Participation in 2020 remained on par with the levels reported in 2018, but some differences were observed. Fewer Alexandria residents reported that they had made their homes more energy efficient, were in very good to excellent health, contacted City employees, or had NOT observed a code violation. Residents' perception of sense of community also declined in 2020 compared to 2018. More Alexandria residents reported that they had eaten 5 portions of fruits or vegetables and that they worked in Alexandria in 2020.

¹ The margin of error for by-year comparisons was calculated using the standards issued by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR). More information about margin of error and confidence interval can be found in the Technical Appendices report.

The National Community Survey™

Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark			
	2016	2017	2018	2020		2016	2017	2018	2020
Overall quality of life	83%	89%	86%	86%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Overall image	87%	90%	89%	87%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
Place to live	91%	95%	92%	91%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Neighborhood	83%	86%	86%	82%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Place to raise children	73%	75%	76%	77%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Place to retire	52%	54%	53%	46%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Lower
Overall appearance	88%	86%	86%	87%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)				2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark			
		2016	2017	2018	2020		2016	2017	2018	2020
Safety	Overall feeling of safety	80%	84%	85%	85%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Safe in neighborhood	93%	96%	96%	95%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Safe downtown area	96%	97%	96%	96%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Overall ease of travel	73%	75%	77%	68%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Paths and walking trails	78%	77%	76%	76%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Ease of walking	83%	80%	79%	77%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Travel by bicycle	72%	62%	68%	64%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Travel by public transportation	68%	64%	64%	61%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Travel by car	51%	56%	57%	48%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Lower
	Public parking	27%	34%	39%	31%	Lower	Lower	Lower	Similar	Lower
	Traffic flow	43%	39%	40%	34%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Overall natural environment	79%	76%	79%	75%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Natural Environment	Cleanliness	83%	81%	81%	79%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Air quality	76%	77%	78%	72%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Overall built environment	75%	75%	74%	71%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	New development in Alexandria	64%	65%	67%	64%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Affordable quality housing	21%	23%	24%	18%	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower
	Housing options	50%	52%	51%	43%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Public places	82%	82%	81%	81%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
Economy	Overall economic health	74%	74%	77%	76%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)					Comparison to benchmark			
		2016	2017	2018	2020		2016	2017	2018	2020
	Vibrant downtown/commercial area	86%	79%	81%	79%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher
	Business and services	78%	75%	78%	76%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Cost of living	18%	20%	23%	18%	Similar	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower
	Shopping opportunities	79%	77%	82%	77%	Lower	Higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Employment opportunities	53%	56%	64%	64%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Place to visit	90%	92%	89%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Place to work	81%	81%	85%	83%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Health and wellness	76%	78%	79%	76%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Mental health care	50%	53%	65%	51%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Preventive health services	63%	69%	75%	66%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Health care	62%	70%	70%	66%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Food	67%	73%	77%	69%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recreational opportunities	79%	72%	75%	75%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Fitness opportunities	74%	72%	76%	74%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Education and enrichment opportunities	69%	71%	74%	72%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Cultural/arts/music activities	74%	74%	70%	75%	Higher	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Adult education	68%	56%	68%	59%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	K-12 education	52%	54%	56%	50%	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower
	Child care/preschool	42%	45%	45%	40%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Lower
	Social events and activities	75%	71%	75%	71%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Neighborliness	59%	66%	66%	64%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Openness and acceptance	71%	73%	76%	71%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Opportunities to participate in community matters	69%	70%	74%	73%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Opportunities to volunteer	80%	74%	83%	75%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar

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Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark			
	2016	2017	2018	2020		2016	2017	2018	2020
Services provided by Alexandria	78%	84%	82%	77%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Customer service	69%	72%	74%	70%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Value of services for taxes paid	52%	60%	59%	56%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Overall direction	59%	67%	66%	62%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Welcoming citizen involvement	52%	56%	59%	55%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Confidence in City government	54%	63%	61%	59%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Acting in the best interest of Alexandria	58%	62%	63%	57%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Being honest	58%	66%	68%	59%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	53%	62%	61%	55%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Services provided by the Federal Government	57%	59%	54%	51%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Higher	Similar

Table 4: Governance by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark			
		2016	2017	2018	2020		2016	2017	2018	2020
Safety	Police	90%	86%	88%	87%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Fire	96%	94%	96%	95%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ambulance/EMS	95%	92%	92%	93%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Crime prevention	71%	77%	78%	74%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Fire prevention	79%	82%	81%	78%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Animal control	84%	78%	78%	69%	Lower	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Emergency preparedness	65%	70%	64%	69%	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Traffic enforcement	62%	64%	66%	59%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street repair	42%	41%	42%	37%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street cleaning	63%	66%	62%	64%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street lighting	60%	67%	68%	65%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Snow removal	55%	56%	71%	69%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Sidewalk maintenance	52%	54%	58%	58%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Traffic signal timing	51%	53%	57%	52%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Bus or transit services	74%	77%	79%	74%	Lower	Higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Garbage collection	84%	84%	83%	82%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recycling	81%	78%	78%	63%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Lower
Natural Environment	Yard waste pick-up	84%	73%	79%	72%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Drinking water	77%	74%	74%	75%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)					Comparison to benchmark			
		2016	2017	2018	2020		2016	2017	2018	2020
	Natural areas preservation	65%	67%	65%	60%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Open space	64%	63%	63%	60%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Storm water drainage	69%	70%	73%	62%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Sewer services	78%	78%	77%	75%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Land use, planning and zoning	60%	58%	51%	50%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Code enforcement	65%	67%	59%	56%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Cable television	32%	39%	37%	33%	Similar	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower
Economy	Economic development	65%	68%	69%	64%	Similar	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar
	City parks	90%	84%	87%	87%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recreation programs	84%	73%	83%	77%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recreation centers	83%	73%	79%	76%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Health services	76%	74%	77%	69%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Special events	75%	72%	78%	70%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Public libraries	88%	88%	88%	87%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Public information	78%	72%	78%	73%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar

Table 5: Participation General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)					Comparison to benchmark			
	2016	2017	2018	2020		2016	2017	2018	2020
Sense of community	59%	65%	66%	60%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Recommend Alexandria	93%	95%	94%	91%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Remain in Alexandria	80%	84%	80%	80%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Contacted Alexandria employees	49%	43%	47%	41%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar

Table 6: Participation by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)					Comparison to benchmark			
		2016	2017	2018	2020		2016	2017	2018	2020
	Did NOT report a crime	86%	84%	87%	84%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Safety	Was NOT the victim of a crime	91%	90%	92%	92%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Conserved water	76%	77%	75%	73%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Natural Environment	Made home more energy efficient	64%	73%	70%	64%	Lower	Lower	Similar	Similar	Lower

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)					Comparison to benchmark			
		2016	2017	2018	2020		2016	2017	2018	2020
	Recycled at home	88%	87%	86%	87%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Did NOT observe a code violation	74%	73%	73%	68%	Lower	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	NOT under housing cost stress	56%	59%	61%	66%	Similar	Lower	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Purchased goods or services in Alexandria	94%	98%	98%	98%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Economy	Economy will have positive impact on income	33%	31%	40%	36%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Work in Alexandria	33%	34%	30%	38%	Higher	Similar	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Used Alexandria recreation centers	50%	45%	50%	48%	Similar	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Visited a City park	85%	81%	86%	87%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	83%	85%	83%	88%	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	88%	88%	86%	88%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	In very good to excellent health	73%	71%	70%	65%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Used Alexandria public libraries	64%	57%	63%	61%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Attended a City-sponsored event	56%	52%	52%	54%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Contacted Alexandria elected officials	18%	17%	17%	16%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Volunteered	30%	36%	34%	33%	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Attended a local public meeting	15%	15%	15%	18%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Watched a local public meeting	22%	19%	17%	19%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Read or watched local news	85%	87%	84%	86%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Voted in local elections	78%	78%	82%	84%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar