

THE NCS™

The National Community Survey™

Ann Arbor, MI

Trends Over Time

2020



POWERED BY POLCO

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



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

International City/County Management Association
777 North Capitol Street NE Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002
icma.org • 800-745-8780

About Trends Over Time

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 considering ten central facets of a community:

- Economy
- Mobility
- Community Design
- Utilities
- Safety
- Natural Environment
- Parks and Recreation
- Health and Wellness
- Education, Arts and Culture
- Inclusivity and Engagement

This report discusses trends over time, comparing the 2020 ratings for the City of Ann Arbor to its previous survey results in 2007, 2008, 2013, 2015, and 2018. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.



The National Community Survey™
© 2001-2020 National Research Center, Inc.

The NCS™ is presented by NRC in collaboration with ICMA.

NRC is a charter member of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative, providing clear disclosure of our sound and ethical survey research practices.

Understanding the Tables

Trend data for Ann Arbor represent important comparison data and should be examined for improvements or declines¹. 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 2018 and 2020 surveys, otherwise the comparisons between 2018 and 2020 are noted as being "similar." Additionally, the benchmark comparisons for the current survey results are presented for reference.

Overall, ratings in Ann Arbor for 2020 generally remained stable. Of the 119 items for which comparisons were available, 80 items were rated similarly in 2018 and 2020, 36 items showed a decrease in ratings and three showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Within the facet of Mobility, ratings of street cleaning improved from 2018 to 2020 while assessments of bus or transit services and ease of public transportation declined.
- From 2018 to 2020, fewer Ann Arbor respondents gave positive assessments to six aspects of Community Design, including the overall quality of new development in Ann Arbor, the availability of affordable quality housing, and public places where people want to spend time.
- Since 2018, fewer residents favorably rated Police/Sheriff services; however, more residents gave high marks to emergency preparedness.
- Within the facet of Economy, from 2018 to 2020, fewer community members believed the economy would have a positive impact on their income. Additionally, residents' ratings of shopping opportunities, employment opportunities, and Ann Arbor as a place to work declined.
- Residents' evaluations of health services, the availability of preventive health services, the availability of affordable quality health care and the availability of affordable quality food decreased in 2020 compared to 2018.

¹ In 2020, The NCS survey was updated to include new and refreshed items. Consequently, some of the trends may be impacted due to wording modifications that could have potentially altered the meaning of the item for the respondent.

The National Community Survey™ - Trends Over Time

Table 1: Quality of Life

Quality of Life Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat likely)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall image or reputation of Ann Arbor	93%	93%	92%	92%	94%	90%	Similar	Higher
The overall quality of life in Ann Arbor	90%	92%	92%	93%	94%	89%	Similar	Similar
Ann Arbor as a place to live	91%	94%	95%	94%	95%	92%	Similar	Similar
Recommend living in Ann Arbor to someone who asks	NA	92%	93%	92%	94%	87%	Lower	Similar
Remain in Ann Arbor for the next five years	NA	69%	76%	77%	83%	71%	Lower	Lower

Table 2: Governance

Governance Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall confidence in Ann Arbor government	NA	NA	60%	62%	63%	57%	Similar	Similar
The overall direction that Ann Arbor is taking	63%	63%	66%	63%	61%	58%	Similar	Similar
The value of services for the taxes paid to Ann Arbor	58%	55%	58%	57%	61%	54%	Lower	Similar
Generally acting in the best interest of the community	NA	NA	64%	63%	65%	56%	Lower	Similar
Being honest	NA	NA	67%	66%	66%	60%	Similar	Similar
Being open and transparent to the public	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	53%	NA	Similar
Informing residents about issues facing the community	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	55%	NA	Similar
The job Ann Arbor government does at welcoming resident involvement	68%	58%	60%	60%	66%	59%	Lower	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	NA	NA	66%	62%	62%	58%	Similar	Similar
Treating residents with respect	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	68%	NA	Similar
Overall customer service by Ann Arbor employees	100%	78%	77%	78%	84%	87%	Similar	Similar
Public information services	77%	81%	78%	81%	86%	77%	Lower	Similar
Quality of services provided by the City of Ann Arbor	82%	84%	81%	85%	86%	80%	Similar	Similar
Quality of services provided by the Federal Government	37%	37%	49%	52%	39%	25%	Lower	Lower

The National Community Survey™ - Trends Over Time

Table 3: Economy

Economy Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat positive)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall economic health of Ann Arbor	NA	NA	83%	85%	88%	82%	Similar	Similar
Economic development	62%	54%	69%	70%	68%	65%	Similar	Similar
Overall quality of business and service establishments in Ann Arbor	NA	81%	83%	80%	86%	88%	Similar	Higher
Variety of business and service establishments in Ann Arbor	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	75%	NA	Similar
Vibrancy of downtown/commercial area	NA	NA	83%	83%	84%	80%	Similar	Much higher
Shopping opportunities	72%	72%	75%	77%	81%	70%	Lower	Higher
Ann Arbor as a place to visit	NA	NA	78%	81%	85%	79%	Similar	Higher
Ann Arbor as a place to work	78%	80%	86%	85%	90%	83%	Lower	Higher
Employment opportunities	52%	51%	63%	66%	77%	64%	Lower	Higher
Cost of living in Ann Arbor	NA	NA	32%	28%	21%	15%	Similar	Lower
Economy will have positive impact on income	14%	5%	24%	28%	27%	13%	Lower	Lower
NOT experiencing housing costs stress	NA	58%	63%	68%	70%	53%	Lower	Lower

Table 4: Mobility

Mobility Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, yes in the last 12 months)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall quality of the transportation system in Ann Arbor	NA	NA	72%	71%	76%	61%	Lower	Similar
Traffic flow on major streets	46%	46%	39%	39%	43%	44%	Similar	Similar
Ease of travel by car in Ann Arbor	53%	59%	51%	52%	57%	57%	Similar	Similar
Ease of travel by public transportation in Ann Arbor	NA	NA	61%	61%	64%	48%	Lower	Similar
Ease of travel by bicycle in Ann Arbor	63%	64%	62%	59%	55%	60%	Similar	Similar
Ease of walking in Ann Arbor	82%	86%	86%	83%	89%	83%	Similar	Higher
Ease of public parking	NA	NA	36%	39%	42%	37%	Similar	Lower
Bus or transit services	76%	78%	77%	73%	78%	68%	Lower	Higher

The National Community Survey™ - Trends Over Time

Mobility Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, yes in the last 12 months)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Traffic enforcement	61%	67%	58%	59%	63%	64%	Similar	Similar
Traffic signal timing	49%	48%	46%	54%	50%	54%	Similar	Similar
Street repair	39%	30%	25%	21%	20%	21%	Similar	Lower
Street cleaning	65%	66%	57%	59%	56%	66%	Higher	Similar
Street lighting	58%	61%	63%	67%	69%	70%	Similar	Similar
Snow removal	65%	49%	53%	51%	49%	54%	Similar	Similar
Sidewalk maintenance	50%	53%	55%	53%	57%	59%	Similar	Similar
Used bus, rail, subway, or other public transportation instead of driving	NA	NA	61%	54%	60%	50%	Lower	Much higher
Carpooled with other adults or children instead of driving alone	NA	NA	52%	51%	55%	51%	Similar	Similar
Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	NA	83%	82%	82%	81%	Similar	Much higher

Prior to 2020, "Overall quality of the transportation system" was "Overall ease of getting to the places you usually have to visit." Differences in ratings may be at least partially attributable to changes in question wording and should be interpreted cautiously.

Table 5: Community Design

Community Design Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall design or layout of Ann Arbor's residential and commercial areas	NA	NA	74%	72%	72%	65%	Lower	Similar
Overall appearance of Ann Arbor	84%	85%	87%	85%	89%	81%	Lower	Similar
Your neighborhood as a place to live	84%	86%	88%	90%	93%	92%	Similar	Similar
Overall quality of new development in Ann Arbor	62%	56%	63%	62%	61%	43%	Lower	Similar
Well-planned residential growth	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	41%	NA	Similar
Well-planned commercial growth	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	42%	NA	Similar
Well-designed neighborhoods	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	60%	NA	Similar
Preservation of the historical or cultural character of the community	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	70%	NA	Similar

The National Community Survey™ - Trends Over Time

Community Design Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Public places where people want to spend time	NA	NA	79%	80%	86%	75%	Lower	Similar
Variety of housing options	NA	56%	52%	53%	37%	36%	Similar	Lower
Availability of affordable quality housing	23%	29%	28%	26%	18%	12%	Lower	Lower
Land use, planning, and zoning	52%	56%	54%	58%	56%	44%	Lower	Similar
Code enforcement	66%	63%	53%	55%	66%	60%	Similar	Similar

Table 6: Utilities

Utilities Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Ann Arbor	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	68%	NA	Similar
Affordable high-speed internet access	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	50%	NA	Similar
Power (electric and/or gas) utility	NA	76%	78%	80%	77%	73%	Similar	Similar
Garbage collection	86%	91%	88%	91%	90%	89%	Similar	Similar
Drinking water	77%	80%	84%	85%	85%	82%	Similar	Similar
Sewer services	84%	83%	85%	85%	89%	87%	Similar	Similar
Storm water management	69%	78%	67%	71%	80%	78%	Similar	Higher
Utility billing	NA	NA	75%	78%	78%	75%	Similar	Similar

Table 7: Safety

Safety Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall feeling of safety in Ann Arbor	NA	NA	89%	91%	93%	93%	Similar	Higher
Police/Sheriff services	79%	82%	80%	82%	84%	72%	Lower	Similar
Crime prevention	72%	75%	71%	75%	85%	81%	Similar	Similar
Animal control	75%	75%	74%	72%	77%	79%	Similar	Higher
Ambulance or emergency medical services	91%	94%	94%	94%	95%	94%	Similar	Similar
Fire services	92%	95%	89%	93%	97%	93%	Similar	Similar

The National Community Survey™ - Trends Over Time

Safety Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Fire prevention and education	79%	82%	77%	82%	84%	80%	Similar	Similar
Emergency preparedness	NA	69%	65%	76%	64%	74%	Higher	Similar
In your neighborhood during the day	97%	98%	97%	97%	98%	98%	Similar	Similar
In Ann Arbor's downtown/commercial area during the day	96%	95%	92%	94%	96%	94%	Similar	Similar
From property crime	65%	72%	NA	NA	NA	86%	NA	Similar
From violent crime	79%	82%	NA	NA	NA	93%	NA	Similar
From fire, flood, or other natural disaster	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	91%	NA	Similar

Table 8: Natural Environment

Natural Environment Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall quality of natural environment in Ann Arbor	NA	88%	92%	91%	90%	92%	Similar	Higher
Cleanliness of Ann Arbor	NA	84%	82%	85%	87%	82%	Similar	Similar
Water resources	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	80%	NA	Similar
Air quality	86%	84%	88%	89%	91%	91%	Similar	Higher
Preservation of natural areas	NA	75%	77%	77%	79%	84%	Similar	Higher
Ann Arbor open space	NA	NA	74%	73%	78%	83%	Similar	Higher
Recycling	86%	89%	90%	90%	86%	81%	Similar	Similar
Yard waste pick-up	77%	84%	80%	84%	82%	81%	Similar	Similar

Table 9: Parks and Recreation

Parks and Recreation Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	94%	NA	Higher
Availability of paths and walking trails	NA	79%	81%	80%	89%	91%	Similar	Much higher
City parks	90%	92%	90%	90%	92%	93%	Similar	Higher
Recreational opportunities	84%	87%	83%	87%	90%	89%	Similar	Higher

The National Community Survey™ - Trends Over Time

Parks and Recreation Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Recreation programs or classes	89%	89%	87%	86%	91%	91%	Similar	Higher
Recreation centers or facilities	86%	87%	87%	83%	88%	87%	Similar	Higher
Fitness opportunities	NA	NA	84%	85%	89%	90%	Similar	Higher

Table 10: Health and Wellness

Health and Wellness Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, excellent/very good)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Ann Arbor	NA	NA	90%	90%	93%	89%	Similar	Higher
Health services	85%	86%	87%	89%	92%	85%	Lower	Higher
Availability of affordable quality health care	NA	NA	78%	81%	80%	72%	Lower	Higher
Availability of preventive health services	NA	76%	81%	86%	87%	78%	Lower	Higher
Availability of affordable quality mental health care	NA	NA	67%	71%	63%	58%	Similar	Higher
Availability of affordable quality food	NA	NA	77%	73%	79%	64%	Lower	Similar
In very good to excellent health	NA	NA	76%	73%	72%	78%	Similar	Similar

Table 11: Education, Arts, and Culture

Education, Arts, and Culture Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	NA	NA	94%	96%	97%	94%	Similar	Much higher
Opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities	90%	88%	92%	93%	93%	90%	Similar	Much higher
Opportunities to attend special events and festivals	NA	NA	81%	79%	84%	88%	Similar	Higher
Community support for the arts	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	91%	NA	Much higher
Public library services	93%	94%	91%	95%	96%	96%	Similar	Higher
Availability of affordable quality child care/preschool	NA	NA	63%	65%	53%	51%	Similar	Similar
K-12 education	79%	86%	86%	88%	92%	87%	Similar	Higher
Adult educational opportunities	NA	NA	90%	90%	93%	85%	Lower	Much higher

Table 12: Inclusivity and Engagement

Inclusivity and Engagement Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	72%	NA	Similar
Sense of community	73%	76%	69%	73%	77%	65%	Lower	Similar
Sense of civic/community pride	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	83%	NA	Higher
Neighborliness of Ann Arbor	NA	NA	69%	72%	77%	72%	Similar	Similar
Ann Arbor as a place to raise children	89%	90%	92%	92%	97%	91%	Lower	Higher
Ann Arbor as a place to retire	58%	67%	71%	68%	75%	67%	Lower	Similar
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	85%	87%	83%	79%	80%	67%	Lower	Similar
Making all residents feel welcome	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	64%	NA	Similar
Attracting people from diverse backgrounds	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	59%	NA	Similar
Valuing/respecting residents from diverse backgrounds	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	68%	NA	Similar
Taking care of vulnerable residents	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	49%	NA	Similar
Opportunities to participate in social events and activities	NA	86%	81%	85%	88%	82%	Similar	Higher
Opportunities to volunteer	NA	91%	84%	87%	92%	88%	Similar	Higher
Opportunities to participate in community matters	NA	77%	77%	79%	84%	80%	Similar	Higher

Table 13: Participation

Participation Items Percent having done each in last 12 months, or having done each a few times a week or more	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Contacted Ann Arbor for help or information	47%	50%	37%	41%	42%	48%	Similar	Similar
Contacted Ann Arbor elected officials to express your opinion	NA	NA	15%	16%	21%	23%	Similar	Similar
Attended a local public meeting	21%	20%	15%	16%	17%	18%	Similar	Similar
Watched (online or on television) a local public meeting	39%	36%	19%	19%	18%	24%	Higher	Similar
Volunteered your time to some group/activity in Ann Arbor	54%	59%	52%	55%	58%	49%	Lower	Higher
Campaigned or advocated for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	NA	24%	25%	39%	28%	Lower	Similar

The National Community Survey™ - Trends Over Time

Participation Items Percent having done each in last 12 months, or having done each a few times a week or more	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Voted in your most recent local election	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	77%	NA	Similar
Access the internet from your home using a computer, laptop or tablet computer	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	99%	NA	Similar
Access the internet from your cell phone	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	95%	NA	Similar
Visit social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	81%	NA	Similar
Use or check email	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	99%	NA	Similar
Share your opinions online	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	34%	NA	Similar
Shop online	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	55%	NA	Similar

Table 14: Focus Areas

Focus Areas Percent rating each as "essential" or "very important"	2007	2008	2013	2015	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall economic health of Ann Arbor	NA	NA	NA	87%	87%	85%	Similar	Similar
Overall quality of the transportation system in Ann Arbor	NA	NA	NA	84%	83%	84%	Similar	Higher
Overall design or layout of Ann Arbor's residential and commercial areas	NA	NA	NA	78%	78%	64%	Lower	Lower
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Ann Arbor	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	86%	NA	Similar
Overall feeling of safety in Ann Arbor	NA	NA	NA	83%	80%	72%	Lower	Much lower
Overall quality of natural environment in Ann Arbor	NA	NA	NA	83%	85%	84%	Similar	Similar
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	79%	NA	Similar
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Ann Arbor	NA	NA	NA	73%	70%	75%	Similar	Similar
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	NA	NA	NA	74%	74%	75%	Similar	Similar
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	NA	NA	NA	71%	69%	67%	Similar	Lower

Prior to 2020, "Overall quality of the transportation system" was "Overall ease of getting to the places you usually have to visit." Differences in ratings may be at least partially attributable to changes in question wording and should be interpreted cautiously.