

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Albert Lea, MN

Comparisons by Geographic Subgroups
2015



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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. This report discusses differences in opinion of survey respondents by Ward.

Responses in the following tables show only the proportion of respondents giving a certain answer; for example, the percent of respondents who rated the quality of life as “excellent” or “good,” or the percent of respondents who attended a public meeting more than once a month. ANOVA and chi-square tests of significance were applied to these comparisons of survey questions. A “p-value” of 0.05 or less indicates that there is less than a 5% probability that differences observed between ward are due to chance; or in other words, a greater than 95% probability that the differences observed are “real.” Where differences were statistically significant, they have been shaded grey.

The margin of error for this report is generally no greater than plus or minus five percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample (448 completed surveys). For each area (Wards 1 and 4, Wards 2 and 3 and Wards 5 and 6), the margin of error rises to approximately plus or minus 10 percentage points since sample sizes were approximately 175 for Wards 1 and 4, 171 for Wards 2 and 3 and 102 for Wards 5 and 6. Notable differences between wards included the following:

- Within the pillar of Community Characteristics, ratings for the overall quality of life in Albert Lea and Albert Lea as a place to live, retire and raise children were lowest among residents in Wards 5 and 6. These residents also rated the City lower on all aspects of Natural Environment **and Safety** such as overall quality of natural environment in Albert Lea, air quality, **y-and** cleanliness of Albert Lea, overall feeling of safety in Albert Lea, feeling safe in their neighborhood during the day and feeling safe in Albert Lea’s downtown/commercial area during the day.
- Albert Lea as a place to work and to visit and overall quality of business and services in Albert Lea received the lowest ratings from residents in Wards 5 and 6.
- Within the pillar of Governance, residents from Wards 1 and 2 tended to give higher ratings for general aspects of Governance such as the value of services for the taxes paid to Albert Lea, the overall direction that Albert Lea is taking, the job Albert Lea government does at welcoming citizen involvement and generally acting in the best interest of the community.
- Residents’ ratings for Built Environment within the pillar of Governance were lowest among residents living in Wards 5 and 6. These residents rated Albert Lea lower on storm drainage, sewer services, power utility, utility billing and land use, planning and zoning than residents in Wards 1 and 4 and Wards 2 and 3.
- Positive ratings for garbage collection, recycling, drinking water, preservation of natural areas and Albert Lea open space were higher among those living in Wards 1 and 4 than their counterparts.
- Within Participation, residents living in Wards 1 and 4 reported the highest rates of participating in a club and voting in local elections. These residents were also more likely to eat at least 5 portions of fruits and vegetables a day and participate in moderate or vigorous physical activity.
- More residents living in Wards 1 and 4 than in other Wards thought the City should focus on health and wellness opportunities, the quality of overall natural environment in Albert Lea and the sense of community in the next two years.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics - General

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
The overall quality of life in Albert Lea	60%	61%	41%	56%
Overall image or reputation of Albert Lea	45%	38%	30%	38%
Albert Lea as a place to live	74%	63%	48%	63%
Your neighborhood as a place to live	84%	71%	45%	69%
Albert Lea as a place to raise children	76%	70%	45%	66%
Albert Lea as a place to retire	62%	70%	44%	61%
Overall appearance of Albert Lea	62%	63%	45%	58%

Table 2: Community Characteristics - Safety

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Overall feeling of safety in Albert Lea	74%	70%	47%	66%
In your neighborhood during the day	89%	95%	76%	88%
In Albert Lea's downtown/commercial area during the day	88%	94%	72%	86%

Table 3: Community Characteristics - Mobility

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Overall ease of getting to the places you usually have to visit	85%	83%	62%	79%
Traffic flow on major streets	69%	65%	51%	63%
Ease of public parking	73%	67%	48%	64%
Ease of travel by car in Albert Lea	86%	77%	61%	76%
Ease of travel by public transportation in Albert Lea	34%	36%	35%	35%
Ease of travel by bicycle in Albert Lea	65%	65%	53%	62%
Ease of walking in Albert Lea	91%	80%	67%	81%
Availability of paths and walking trails	89%	79%	73%	81%

Table 4: Community Characteristics - Natural Environment

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Quality of overall natural environment in Albert Lea	78%	72%	52%	69%
Air quality	89%	84%	66%	81%
Cleanliness of Albert Lea	70%	64%	36%	59%

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Table 5: Community Characteristics - Built Environment

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Overall "built environment" of Albert Lea (including overall design, buildings, parks and transportation systems)	57%	54%	45%	53%
Public places where people want to spend time	64%	59%	49%	58%
Variety of housing options	46%	38%	35%	40%
Availability of affordable quality housing	42%	32%	33%	36%
Overall quality of new development in Albert Lea	30%	22%	33%	28%

Table 6: Community Characteristics - Economy

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Overall economic health of Albert Lea	26%	32%	24%	28%
Albert Lea as a place to work	43%	37%	17%	34%
Albert Lea as a place to visit	49%	51%	25%	44%
Employment opportunities	20%	17%	20%	19%
Shopping opportunities	20%	21%	20%	20%
Cost of living in Albert Lea	41%	35%	34%	37%
Overall quality of business and service establishments in Albert Lea	48%	29%	37%	38%
Vibrant downtown/commercial area	28%	26%	22%	26%

Table 7: Community Characteristics - Recreation and Wellness

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Health and wellness opportunities in Albert Lea	64%	64%	51%	61%
Fitness opportunities (including exercise classes and paths or trails, etc.)	70%	67%	64%	67%
Recreational opportunities	63%	54%	49%	56%
Availability of affordable quality food	59%	52%	52%	54%
Availability of affordable quality health care	58%	64%	38%	55%
Availability of preventive health services	59%	54%	39%	52%
Availability of affordable quality mental health care	38%	43%	29%	38%

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Table 8: Community Characteristics - Education and Enrichment

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Overall opportunities for education and enrichment	46%	51%	42%	47%
Availability of affordable quality child care/preschool	69%	63%	46%	61%
K-12 education	73%	65%	53%	65%
Adult educational opportunities	56%	52%	51%	53%
Opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities	55%	44%	44%	48%
Opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events and activities	84%	81%	74%	80%

Table 9: Community Characteristics - Community Engagement

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Opportunities to participate in social events and activities	46%	36%	39%	40%
Opportunities to volunteer	73%	55%	59%	62%
Opportunities to participate in community matters	52%	45%	46%	48%
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	41%	32%	38%	37%
Neighborliness of residents in Albert Lea	58%	54%	32%	50%

Table 10: Governance - General

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
The City of Albert Lea	67%	61%	52%	61%
The value of services for the taxes paid to Albert Lea	46%	34%	25%	36%
The overall direction that Albert Lea is taking	34%	23%	19%	26%
The job Albert Lea government does at welcoming citizen involvement	40%	28%	25%	31%
Overall confidence in Albert Lea government	35%	28%	24%	29%
Generally acting in the best interest of the community	42%	32%	18%	32%
Being honest	40%	31%	25%	33%
Treating all residents fairly	44%	32%	22%	34%
Overall customer service by Albert Lea employees (police, fire, recreation, receptionists, inspections, administration, etc.)	72%	66%	54%	65%
Freeborn County	65%	62%	48%	59%
The State of Minnesota	63%	58%	39%	55%

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Table 11: Governance - Safety

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Police services	78%	80%	61%	74%
Fire services	88%	94%	75%	87%
Ambulance or emergency medical services	85%	90%	74%	85%
Crime prevention	69%	65%	40%	59%
Fire prevention and education	79%	80%	64%	76%
Animal control	53%	40%	37%	44%
Emergency preparedness (services that prepare the community for natural disasters or other emergency situations)	58%	60%	59%	59%

Table 12: Governance - Mobility

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Traffic enforcement	59%	67%	42%	58%
Street repair	25%	20%	18%	21%
Street cleaning	54%	42%	48%	48%
Street lighting	62%	54%	56%	57%
Snow removal	59%	56%	53%	56%
Sidewalk maintenance	46%	42%	36%	42%
Traffic signal timing	49%	45%	38%	44%

Table 13: Governance - Natural Environment

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Garbage collection	94%	83%	77%	86%
Recycling	96%	83%	78%	86%
Drinking water	82%	71%	50%	70%
Preservation of natural areas such as open space, farmlands and greenbelts	66%	53%	44%	55%
Albert Lea open space	61%	51%	40%	52%

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Table 14: Governance - Built Environment

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Storm drainage	70%	59%	39%	57%
Sewer services	79%	69%	60%	70%
Power (electric and/or gas) utility	81%	73%	61%	73%
Utility billing	70%	58%	47%	59%
Land use, planning and zoning	45%	40%	20%	36%
Code enforcement (weeds, abandoned buildings, etc.)	27%	30%	25%	28%
Cable television	41%	42%	39%	41%

Table 15: Governance - Economy

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Economic development	23%	24%	12%	21%

Table 16: Governance - Recreation and Wellness

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
City parks	91%	87%	73%	85%
Recreation programs or classes	76%	60%	68%	68%
Recreation centers or facilities	72%	52%	59%	61%
Health services	63%	61%	53%	60%

Table 17: Governance - Education and Enrichment

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Public library services	86%	80%	65%	78%
City-sponsored special events	56%	51%	45%	51%

Table 18: Governance - Community Engagement

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Public information services	67%	59%	45%	58%

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Table 19: Participation General

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Sense of community	55%	46%	29%	45%
Recommend living in Albert Lea to someone who asks	68%	67%	51%	64%
Remain in Albert Lea for the next five years	85%	79%	71%	79%
Contacted the City of Albert Lea (in-person, phone, email or web) for help or information	46%	31%	41%	38%

Table 20: Participation - Safety

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Was NOT the victim of a crime	91%	90%	75%	87%
Did NOT report a crime	83%	82%	64%	78%
Stocked supplies in preparation for an emergency	27%	21%	40%	28%

Table 21: Participation - Mobility

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Walked or biked instead of driving	61%	57%	50%	56%
Carpooled with other adults or children instead of driving alone	37%	41%	35%	38%
Used bus, rail, subway or other public transportation instead of driving	8%	14%	10%	11%

Table 22: Participation - Natural Environment

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Recycle at home	97%	96%	80%	92%
Made efforts to make your home more energy efficient	83%	75%	74%	77%
Made efforts to conserve water	69%	73%	74%	72%

Table 23: Participation - Built Environment

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
NOT under housing cost stress	83%	77%	69%	77%
Did NOT observe a code violation	30%	43%	40%	38%

The National Citizen Survey™

Table 24: Participation - Economy

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Purchase goods or services from a business located in Albert Lea	99%	98%	87%	96%
Economy will have positive impact on income	19%	20%	18%	19%
Work in Albert Lea	54%	57%	54%	56%

Table 25: Participation - Recreation and Wellness

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Used Albert Lea recreation centers or their services	55%	49%	59%	54%
Visited a neighborhood park or City park	86%	77%	77%	80%
Eat at least 5 portions of fruits and vegetables a day	80%	68%	65%	72%
Participate in moderate or vigorous physical activity	87%	71%	77%	78%
Reported being in "very good" or "excellent" health	56%	50%	36%	49%

Table 26: Participation - Education and Enrichment

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Used Albert Lea public libraries or their services	63%	57%	63%	61%
Participated in religious or spiritual activities in Albert Lea	76%	68%	60%	68%
Attended a City-sponsored event	64%	47%	54%	55%

Table 27: Participation - Community Engagement

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Campaigned or advocated for an issue, cause or candidate	27%	18%	18%	21%
Contacted Albert Lea elected officials (in-person, phone, email or web) to express your opinion	26%	22%	34%	26%
Volunteered your time to some group/activity in Albert Lea	55%	44%	44%	48%
Participated in a club	49%	35%	40%	41%
Talked to or visited with your immediate neighbors	98%	97%	82%	94%
Done a favor for a neighbor	91%	86%	81%	86%
Attended a local public meeting	32%	20%	26%	26%
Watched (online or on television) a local public meeting	47%	32%	37%	38%
Read or watch local news (via television, paper, computer, etc.)	87%	82%	80%	83%
Vote in local elections	95%	79%	75%	84%

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Table 28: Community Focus Areas

	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Percent rating positively (e.g., essential/very important)				
Overall feeling of safety in Albert Lea	83%	77%	74%	78%
Overall ease of getting to the places you usually have to visit	65%	69%	58%	65%
Quality of overall natural environment in Albert Lea	83%	74%	63%	74%
Overall "built environment" of Albert Lea (including overall design, buildings, parks and transportation systems)	74%	69%	58%	68%
Health and wellness opportunities in Albert Lea	79%	84%	59%	76%
Overall opportunities for education and enrichment	83%	82%	70%	80%
Overall economic health of Albert Lea	94%	93%	75%	89%
Sense of community	84%	77%	60%	76%

Table 29: Information Sources

Please indicate how much of a source, if at all, you consider each of the following to be for obtaining information about the City of Albert Lea: (Percent rating as "major source" or "minor source").	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Local TV stations	87%	89%	73%	84%
Government Access Channel 180	48%	48%	47%	48%
Albert Lea Tribune	92%	89%	86%	89%
Local radio stations	91%	86%	83%	87%
Word of mouth	85%	89%	81%	86%
Community newsletter	74%	76%	74%	75%
City website	68%	58%	66%	64%
The City's social media sites (Facebook and Twitter)	49%	56%	53%	53%

Table 30: New Community Center Development

	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
The City could use about one-third of the Blazing Star Landing site to build a new Community Center. To what extent would you support or oppose this facility if paying for it required a \$100 annual increase on a \$100,000 home valuation? (Percent rating as "strongly support" or "somewhat support").	41%	41%	39%	41%

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Table 31: City Ice Arena Facility Renovation or Replacement

The City could renovate the City Ice Arena Facility or replace it with a new facility on the Blazing Star Landing. Please indicate to what extent you support or oppose each of the following additional cost options: (Percent rating as "strongly support" or "somewhat support").	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Additional \$5 per year (on a \$100,000 home) for general improvements, bleachers, etc.	57%	55%	49%	54%
Additional \$15 per year (on a \$100,000 home) for general/structural improvements, bleachers and new lobby to extend its life for another 20 years at the present site	53%	44%	49%	49%
Additional \$75 per year (on a \$100,000 home) for a new Arena	29%	30%	32%	30%
I am not willing to pay any subsidy, resulting in no improvements to the Arena	28%	42%	35%	35%

Table 32: Support for Improvement Efforts

To what extent do you support or oppose each of the following improvement efforts: (Percent rating as "strongly support" or "somewhat support").	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
An extension of the current half-cent sales tax to improve water quality in our local lakes through the Shell Rock River Watershed District for another 10 years	79%	72%	75%	75%
An additional source of revenue to complete streets, water and sewer projects faster	70%	67%	60%	66%
A 25% increase in your property taxes to make street improvements as a replacement for using individual assessments on projects that directly benefit your property	24%	30%	20%	25%
A dedicated source of funds for the City of Albert Lea's water quality improvements	66%	70%	56%	65%

Table 33: Cost-share Partnership for New Programs/Initiatives

The City is considering a cost-share partnership with other organization(s) to fund new programs/initiatives. To what extent would you support or oppose the following if a City cost-share meant an increase in property taxes? (Percent rating as "strongly support" or "somewhat support").	Ward			Overall
	Wards 1 and 4	Wards 2 and 3	Wards 5 and 6	
Splash Pad Downtown (One-time total expense of \$200,000)	36%	35%	25%	33%
Blue Zones/National Vitality Center Sustainability (\$25,000 annually)	29%	40%	32%	34%
Artwork on Downtown Broadway Streetscape (One-time total expense of \$25,000)	41%	44%	41%	42%
Holiday lights, decorative banners and flowers (\$2,500 annually)	81%	74%	53%	72%
Free Wi-Fi hot spots in public areas (\$100,000 for three locations)	37%	47%	43%	43%