

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Albert Lea, MN

Trends over Time
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. 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 2015 ratings for the City of Albert Lea to its previous survey results in 2012. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for Albert Lea 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 2015 surveys, otherwise the comparison between 2012 and 2015 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 Albert Lea for 2015 generally remained stable. Of the 81 items for which comparisons were available, 61 items were rated similarly in 2012 and 2015, 14 items showed a decrease in ratings and 6 showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Within the facet of Recreation and Wellness, ratings for preventive health services decreased since 2012 as well as rates for visited a City park. Positive ratings for recreational opportunities in Albert Lea saw an increase from 2012 to 2015.
- Ratings for fire prevention, emergency preparedness and feeling safe in their neighborhood decreased from 2012 to 2015.
- Positive ratings for opportunities to volunteer, openness and acceptance, social events and activities, sense of community and rates of volunteering all saw a decrease from 2012 to 2015.
- Rates of participation for using Albert Lea public libraries decreased from 2012 to 2015 but positive ratings for cultural/arts/music activities and child care/preschool increased since 2012.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2015 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
	2012	2015		2012	2015
Overall quality of life	57%	56%	Similar	Much lower	Lower
Overall image	37%	38%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower
Place to live	64%	63%	Similar	Much lower	Lower
Neighborhood	74%	69%	Similar	Lower	Similar
Place to raise children	68%	66%	Similar	Much lower	Lower
Place to retire	59%	61%	Similar	Lower	Similar
Overall appearance	58%	58%	Similar	Much lower	Similar

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)		2015 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark		
		2012	2015		2012	2015	
Safety	Overall feeling of safety	NA	66%	NA	NA	Lower	
	Safe in neighborhood	96%	88%	Lower	Higher	Similar	
	Safe downtown/commercial area	89%	86%	Similar	Similar	Similar	
Mobility	Overall ease of travel	NA	79%	NA	NA	Similar	
	Paths and walking trails	80%	81%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	
	Ease of walking	76%	81%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	
	Travel by bicycle	67%	62%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	
	Travel by public transportation	NA	35%	NA	NA	Similar	
	Travel by car	69%	76%	Higher	Much higher	Similar	
	Public parking	NA	64%	NA	NA	Similar	
	Traffic flow	53%	63%	Higher	Higher	Similar	
	Natural Environment	Overall natural environment	66%	69%	Similar	Lower	Similar
		Cleanliness	59%	59%	Similar	Much lower	Similar
Air quality		75%	81%	Similar	Higher	Similar	
Built Environment	Overall built environment	NA	53%	NA	NA	Similar	
	New development in Albert Lea	26%	28%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	
	Affordable quality housing	40%	36%	Similar	Similar	Similar	
	Housing options	38%	40%	Similar	Much lower	Lower	
	Public places	NA	58%	NA	NA	Similar	

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)		2015 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
		2012	2015		2012	2015
Economy	Overall economic health	NA	28%	NA	NA	Much lower
	Vibrant downtown/commercial area	NA	26%	NA	NA	Lower
	Business and services	37%	38%	Similar	Much lower	Lower
	Cost of living	NA	37%	NA	NA	Similar
	Shopping opportunities	20%	20%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower
	Employment opportunities	12%	19%	Similar	Much lower	Lower
	Place to visit	NA	44%	NA	NA	Lower
	Place to work	36%	34%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower
	Recreation and Wellness	Health and wellness	NA	61%	NA	NA
Mental health care		NA	38%	NA	NA	Similar
Preventive health services		60%	52%	Lower	Similar	Similar
Health care		52%	55%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Food		60%	54%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Recreational opportunities		46%	56%	Higher	Much lower	Similar
Fitness opportunities		NA	67%	NA	NA	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Religious or spiritual events and activities	76%	80%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Cultural/arts/music activities	31%	48%	Higher	Much lower	Similar
	Adult education	NA	53%	NA	NA	Similar
	K-12 education	NA	65%	NA	NA	Similar
	Child care/preschool	52%	61%	Higher	Much higher	Similar
Community Engagement	Social events and activities	48%	40%	Lower	Much lower	Lower
	Neighborliness	NA	50%	NA	NA	Similar
	Openness and acceptance	44%	37%	Lower	Much lower	Lower
	Opportunities to participate in community matters	51%	48%	Similar	Much lower	Similar
	Opportunities to volunteer	74%	62%	Lower	Similar	Similar

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Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2015 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
	2012	2015		2012	2015
Services provided by Albert Lea	55%	61%	Similar	Much lower	Similar
Customer service	76%	65%	Lower	Similar	Similar
Value of services for taxes paid	34%	36%	Similar	Much lower	Lower
Overall direction	19%	26%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower
Welcoming citizen involvement	31%	31%	Similar	Much lower	Lower
Confidence in City government	NA	29%	NA	NA	Lower
Acting in the best interest of Albert Lea	NA	32%	NA	NA	Lower
Being honest	NA	33%	NA	NA	Lower
Treating all residents fairly	NA	34%	NA	NA	Lower
Services provided by the Federal Government	35%	NA	NA	Similar	NA

Table 4: Governance by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2015 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
		2012	2015		2012	2015
Safety	Police	74%	74%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Fire	87%	87%	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Ambulance/EMS	89%	85%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Crime prevention	63%	59%	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Fire prevention	83%	76%	Lower	Higher	Similar
	Animal control	46%	44%	Similar	Much lower	Lower
	Emergency preparedness	66%	59%	Lower	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Traffic enforcement	65%	58%	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Street repair	25%	21%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower
	Street cleaning	59%	48%	Lower	Similar	Lower
	Street lighting	55%	57%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Snow removal	52%	56%	Similar	Much lower	Similar
	Sidewalk maintenance	43%	42%	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Traffic signal timing	39%	44%	Similar	Much lower	Similar
Natural Environment	Garbage collection	NA	86%	NA	NA	Similar
	Recycling	NA	86%	NA	NA	Similar
	Drinking water	72%	70%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Natural areas preservation	61%	55%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Open space	NA	52%	NA	NA	Similar
Built Environment	Storm drainage	53%	57%	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Sewer services	73%	70%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Power utility	NA	73%	NA	NA	Similar
	Utility billing	NA	59%	NA	NA	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2015 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
		2012	2015		2012	2015
	Land use, planning and zoning	32%	36%	Similar	Much lower	Lower
	Code enforcement	30%	28%	Similar	Much lower	Lower
	Cable television	NA	41%	NA	NA	Lower
Economy	Economic development	20%	21%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower
Recreation and Wellness	City parks	87%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Recreation programs	73%	68%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recreation centers	63%	61%	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Health services	NA	60%	NA	NA	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Special events	NA	51%	NA	NA	Similar
	Public libraries	79%	78%	Similar	Lower	Similar
Community Engagement	Public information	NA	58%	NA	NA	Similar

Table 5: Participation General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2015 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
	2012	2015		2012	2015
Sense of community	52%	45%	Lower	Much lower	Lower
Recommend Albert Lea	64%	64%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower
Remain in Albert Lea	82%	79%	Similar	Lower	Similar
Contacted Albert Lea employees	41%	38%	Similar	Much lower	Similar

Table 6: Participation by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2015 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
		2012	2015		2012	2015
Safety	Stocked supplies for an emergency	NA	28%	NA	NA	Similar
	Did NOT report a crime	NA	78%	NA	NA	Similar
	Was NOT the victim of a crime	91%	87%	Similar	Higher	Similar
Mobility	Used public transportation instead of driving	NA	11%	NA	NA	Lower
	Carpooled instead of driving alone	NA	38%	NA	NA	Similar
	Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	56%	NA	NA	Similar
Natural Environment	Conserved water	NA	72%	NA	NA	Lower
	Made home more energy efficient	NA	77%	NA	NA	Similar
	Recycled at home	82%	92%	Higher	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Did NOT observe a code violation	NA	38%	NA	NA	Lower
	NOT under housing cost stress	73%	77%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Economy	Purchased goods or services in Albert Lea	NA	96%	NA	NA	Similar
	Economy will have positive impact on income	20%	19%	Similar	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2015 rating compared to 2012	Comparison to benchmark	
		2012	2015		2012	2015
Recreation and Wellness	Work in Albert Lea	NA	56%	NA	NA	Higher
	Used Albert Lea recreation centers	51%	54%	Similar	Much lower	Similar
	Visited a City park	87%	80%	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	NA	72%	NA	NA	Lower
	Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	NA	78%	NA	NA	Similar
	In very good to excellent health	NA	49%	NA	NA	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Used Albert Lea public libraries	70%	61%	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Participated in religious or spiritual activities	71%	68%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
	Attended a City-sponsored event	NA	55%	NA	NA	Similar
Community Engagement	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	21%	NA	NA	Similar
	Contacted Albert Lea elected officials	NA	26%	NA	NA	Similar
	Volunteered	57%	48%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
	Participated in a club	44%	41%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
	Talked to or visited with neighbors	NA	94%	NA	NA	Similar
	Done a favor for a neighbor	NA	86%	NA	NA	Similar
	Attended a local public meeting	29%	26%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Watched a local public meeting	NA	38%	NA	NA	Similar
	Read or watched local news	NA	83%	NA	NA	Similar
	Voted in local elections	78%	84%	Similar	Higher	Similar