



THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Athens-Clarke County, GA

Trends over Time

2018



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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 2018 ratings for Athens-Clarke County to its previous survey results in 2016. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for Athens-Clarke County 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 eight percentage points between the 2016 and 2018 surveys, otherwise the comparisons between 2016 and 2018 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 Athens-Clarke County for 2018 generally remained stable. Of the 132 items for which comparisons were available, 109 items were rated similarly in 2016 and 2018, eight items showed a decrease in ratings and 15 showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Several ratings within the facet of Economy improved from 2016 to 2018, including employment opportunities, the County as a place to work, overall quality of business and service establishments and economic development.
- Within Community Engagement, residents were less likely in 2018 to have volunteered and read or watched local news, and also gave fewer positive ratings to the sense of community in the County. However, they gave more favorable assessments in 2018 than in 2016 to their overall confidence in County government, the government acting in the best interest of the County and opportunities to volunteer.
- Ratings declined over time for the variety of housing options in the County, but improved for the overall built environment and public places where people want to spend time.
- Residents in 2018 were more likely than in 2016 to have contacted County employees and to positively rate the services provided by the County overall.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark	
	2016	2018		2016	2018
Overall quality of life	84%	81%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Overall image	66%	71%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Place to live	87%	88%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Neighborhood	79%	76%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Place to raise children	62%	62%	Similar	Lower	Lower
Place to retire	75%	72%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Overall appearance	69%	69%	Similar	Similar	Similar

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)		2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark	
		2016	2018		2016	2018
Safety	Overall feeling of safety	58%	68%	Higher	Lower	Lower
	Safe in neighborhood	92%	95%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Safe downtown/commercial area	89%	87%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Overall ease of travel	74%	81%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Paths and walking trails	55%	56%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ease of walking	52%	54%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Travel by bicycle	33%	33%	Similar	Lower	Lower
	Travel by public transportation	46%	49%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Travel by car	67%	63%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Public parking	39%	36%	Similar	Lower	Lower
	Traffic flow	43%	44%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Natural Environment	Overall natural environment	76%	83%	Similar	Similar
Cleanliness		57%	52%	Similar	Lower	Lower
Air quality		77%	74%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Overall built environment	60%	68%	Higher	Similar	Similar
	New development in Athens-Clarke County	61%	61%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Affordable quality housing	51%	45%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Housing options	60%	47%	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Public places	64%	78%	Higher	Similar	Similar
Economy	Overall economic health	44%	42%	Similar	Lower	Lower
	Vibrant downtown/commercial area	75%	78%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
	Business and services	67%	79%	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Cost of living	60%	66%	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Shopping opportunities	68%	71%	Similar	Similar	Higher

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)		2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark	
		2016	2018		2016	2018
	Employment opportunities	42%	52%	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Place to visit	81%	87%	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Place to work	66%	74%	Higher	Similar	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Health and wellness	73%	75%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Mental health care	53%	44%	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Preventive health services	70%	66%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Health care	68%	58%	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Food	76%	79%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recreational opportunities	72%	77%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Fitness opportunities	71%	77%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Education and enrichment opportunities	79%	73%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Religious or spiritual events and activities	82%	85%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Cultural/arts/music activities	87%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
	Adult education	73%	75%	Similar	Higher	Higher
	K-12 education	39%	36%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower
Community Engagement	Child care/preschool	49%	42%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Social events and activities	78%	81%	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Neighborliness	64%	59%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Openness and acceptance	60%	60%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Opportunities to participate in community matters	72%	70%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Opportunities to volunteer	80%	88%	Higher	Similar	Higher

Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark	
	2016	2018		2016	2018
Services provided by Athens-Clarke County	64%	75%	Higher	Similar	Similar
Customer service	71%	67%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Value of services for taxes paid	47%	52%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Overall direction	55%	61%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Welcoming citizen involvement	51%	59%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Confidence in County government	53%	61%	Higher	Similar	Similar
Acting in the best interest of Athens-Clarke County	51%	60%	Higher	Similar	Similar
Being honest	57%	60%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	46%	48%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Services provided by the Federal Government	43%	39%	Similar	Similar	Similar

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Table 4: Governance by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark	
		2016	2018		2016	2018
Safety	Police	80%	81%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Fire	94%	93%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ambulance/EMS	84%	84%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Crime prevention	53%	55%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Fire prevention	71%	71%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Animal control	56%	61%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Emergency preparedness	55%	54%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Traffic enforcement	60%	65%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street repair	36%	41%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street cleaning	53%	50%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street lighting	50%	47%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Sidewalk maintenance	54%	49%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Traffic signal timing	50%	50%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Bus or transit services	62%	66%	Similar	Similar	Higher
Natural Environment	Garbage collection	79%	83%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recycling	74%	78%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Yard waste pick-up	61%	55%	Similar	Similar	Lower
	Drinking water	72%	78%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Natural areas preservation	55%	66%	Higher	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Open space	53%	57%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Storm drainage	56%	54%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Sewer services	72%	68%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Utility billing	59%	62%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Land use, planning and zoning	38%	43%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Economy	Code enforcement	37%	36%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Cable television	46%	45%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Economic development	45%	54%	Higher	Similar	Similar
	County parks	80%	85%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recreation programs	67%	78%	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Recreation centers	72%	75%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Health services	68%	70%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Special events	59%	69%	Higher	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Public libraries	81%	89%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Public information	59%	64%	Similar	Similar	Similar

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Table 5: Participation General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark	
	2016	2018		2016	2018
Sense of community	68%	57%	Lower	Similar	Similar
Recommend Athens-Clarke County	91%	86%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Remain in Athens-Clarke County	73%	60%	Lower	Lower	Much lower
Contacted Athens-Clarke County employees	41%	51%	Higher	Similar	Similar

Table 6: Participation by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark	
		2016	2018		2016	2018
Safety	Stocked supplies for an emergency	31%	35%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Did NOT report a crime	78%	79%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Was NOT the victim of a crime	88%	90%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Used public transportation instead of driving	37%	36%	Similar	Similar	Higher
	Carpooled instead of driving alone	65%	57%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
	Walked or biked instead of driving	55%	54%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Natural Environment	Conserved water	83%	80%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Made home more energy efficient	73%	56%	Lower	Similar	Lower
	Recycled at home	85%	77%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Did NOT observe a code violation	55%	54%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	NOT under housing cost stress	62%	65%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Economy	Purchased goods or services in Athens-Clarke County	98%	96%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Economy will have positive impact on income	35%	28%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Work in Athens-Clarke County	65%	64%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher
Recreation and Wellness	Used Athens-Clarke County recreation centers	68%	61%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Visited a County park	82%	79%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	77%	78%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	85%	84%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	In very good to excellent health	61%	61%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Used Athens-Clarke County public libraries	55%	58%	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Participated in religious or spiritual activities	54%	57%	Similar	Similar	Higher

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark	
		2016	2018		2016	2018
Community Engagement	Attended a County-sponsored event	61%	58%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	22%	27%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Contacted Athens-Clarke County elected officials	14%	18%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Volunteered	52%	43%	Lower	Higher	Similar
	Participated in a club	39%	34%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Talked to or visited with neighbors	80%	83%	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Done a favor for a neighbor	70%	66%	Similar	Lower	Lower
	Attended a local public meeting	22%	23%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Watched a local public meeting	21%	22%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Read or watched local news	82%	71%	Lower	Similar	Lower
Voted in local elections	67%	70%	Similar	Lower	Lower	