

# The National Citizen Survey™

## Urbandale, IA

Trends over Time

2013

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The National Citizen Survey™  
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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 2013 ratings for the City of Urbandale to its previous survey results in 2009 and 2011. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for Urbandale 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 seven percentage points between the 2011 and 2013 surveys, otherwise the comparison between 2011 and 2013 are noted as being "similar." Additionally benchmark comparison 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 Urbandale for 2013 generally remained stable. Of the 91 items for which comparisons were available, 78 items were rated similarly in 2011 and 2013; eight items showed a decrease in ratings and five showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Overall, ratings for Economy trended upward. Not only were increases noted within Community Characteristics, but also within Governance. Within these two pillars, ratings increased for economic development and employment opportunities.
- Within the pillar of Participation, there were increases and decreases across facets. Rates of volunteerism decreased from 2011 to 2013. However, the percent of respondents that would recommend living in Urbandale and plan to remain in the city increased since 2011.
- In the pillar of Governance, ratings were mostly stable; however decreases were noted in the facets of Mobility and Natural Environment.
- Community Characteristics saw decreases within Built Environment and Community Engagement, but increases within Economy and Education and Enrichment.

Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)			2013 compared to 2011	Comparison to benchmark		
	2009	2011	2013		2009	2011	2013
Overall quality of life	96%	95%	93%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Overall image	90%	91%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Place to live	97%	96%	97%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Neighborhood	93%	93%	95%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Place to raise children	96%	96%	92%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Place to retire	75%	81%	82%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Overall appearance	87%	90%	92%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)			2013 compared to 2011	Comparison to benchmark		
		2009	2011	2013		2009	2011	2013
Safety	Overall feeling of safety	NA	NA	94%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Safe in neighborhood	97%	98%	98%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Safe downtown/commercial area	95%	92%	96%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar
Mobility	Overall ease travel	NA	NA	90%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
	Paths and walking trails	87%	89%	92%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher
	Ease of walking	87%	88%	89%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Travel by bicycle	78%	74%	72%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Travel by public transportation	NA	NA	45%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Travel by car	87%	87%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Traffic flow	71%	77%	77%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Natural Environment	Overall natural environment	87%	89%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Cleanliness	89%	92%	93%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Air quality	93%	95%	96%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Built Environment	Overall built environment	NA	NA	81%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
	New development in Urbandale	83%	86%	75%	Lower	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Affordable quality housing	75%	75%	78%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher
	Housing options	87%	79%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Public places	NA	NA	81%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Economy	Overall economic health	NA	NA	87%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
	Vibrant downtown/commercial area	NA	NA	43%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Business and services	80%	78%	75%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Cost of living	NA	NA	67%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
	Shopping opportunities	63%	63%	64%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Employment opportunities	51%	55%	63%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher
	Place to visit	NA	NA	68%	NA	NA	NA	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)			2013 compared to 2011	Comparison to benchmark		
		2009	2011	2013		2009	2011	2013
Recreation and Wellness	Place to work	84%	85%	86%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Health and wellness	NA	NA	82%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Mental health care	NA	NA	73%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
	Preventive health services	79%	83%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Health care	79%	77%	84%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Food	84%	82%	84%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Recreational opportunities	72%	71%	78%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar
	Fitness opportunities	NA	NA	85%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Religious or spiritual events and activities	78%	82%	85%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Cultural/arts/music activities	44%	41%	53%	Higher	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Adult education	NA	NA	67%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	K-12 education	87%	88%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Community Engagement	Child care/preschool	67%	70%	72%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Social events and activities	71%	69%	63%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar
	Neighborhoodness	NA	NA	71%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Openness and acceptance	73%	78%	70%	Lower	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Opportunities to participate in community matters	73%	77%	70%	Lower	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Opportunities to volunteer	76%	79%	73%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar

Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)			2013 compared to 2011	Comparison to benchmark		
	2009	2011	2013		2009	2011	2013
Services provided by Urbandale	88%	90%	89%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Customer service	81%	83%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Value of services for taxes paid	67%	75%	72%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Overall direction	77%	84%	81%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Welcoming citizen involvement	60%	68%	69%	Similar	Similar	Much higher	Higher
Confidence in City government	NA	NA	76%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
Acting in the best interest of Urbandale	NA	NA	76%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
Being honest	NA	NA	79%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
Treating all residents fairly	NA	NA	77%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
Services provided by the Federal Government	44%	42%	32%	Lower	Higher	Similar	Similar

Table 4: Governance by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)			2013 compared to 2011	Comparison to benchmark		
		2009	2011	2013		2009	2011	2013
Safety	Police	89%	92%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Fire	95%	96%	97%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar
	Ambulance/EMS	95%	96%	96%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Crime prevention	82%	90%	88%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Fire prevention	88%	91%	88%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Animal control	75%	79%	75%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Emergency preparedness	73%	78%	76%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Mobility	Traffic enforcement	76%	86%	76%	Lower	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Street repair	57%	62%	60%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Street cleaning	75%	77%	75%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Street lighting	76%	76%	77%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Snow removal	82%	81%	77%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Sidewalk maintenance	73%	75%	71%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Traffic signal timing	61%	59%	63%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Bus or transit services	58%	55%	59%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Natural Environment	Garbage collection	94%	95%	93%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher
Recycling		93%	93%	89%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Yard waste pick-up		89%	97%	89%	Lower	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Drinking water		89%	89%	86%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Natural areas preservation		68%	75%	69%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Open space		NA	NA	71%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Built Environment	Storm drainage	80%	82%	81%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Sewer services	94%	90%	89%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Power utility	NA	93%	88%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar
	Utility billing	NA	NA	84%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Land use, planning and zoning	64%	71%	74%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Code enforcement	64%	70%	69%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Economy	Economic development	72%	69%	81%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher
Recreation and Wellness	City parks	92%	94%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Recreation programs	85%	83%	78%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Recreation centers	74%	80%	78%	Similar	Higher	Much higher	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Special events	NA	NA	72%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Public libraries	93%	94%	95%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Community Engagement	Public information	84%	80%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar

Table 5: Participation General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)			2013 compared to 2011	Comparison to benchmark		
	2009	2011	2013		2009	2011	2013
Sense of community	79%	76%	74%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Recommend Urbandale	87%	88%	97%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Remain in Urbandale	83%	84%	91%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Contacted Urbandale employees	54%	42%	41%	Similar	Lower	Much lower	Similar

Table 6: Participation by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)			2013 compared to 2011	Comparison to benchmark		
		2009	2011	2013		2009	2011	2013
Safety	Stocked supplies for an emergency	NA	NA	23%	NA	NA	NA	Lower
	Did NOT report a crime	NA	NA	87%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
	Was NOT the victim of a crime	94%	95%	94%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Mobility	Used public transportation instead of driving	NA	NA	5%	NA	NA	NA	Much lower
	Carpooled instead of driving alone	NA	NA	30%	NA	NA	NA	Lower
	Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	NA	51%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Natural Environment	Conserved water	NA	NA	79%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Made home more energy efficient	NA	NA	82%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Recycled at home	94%	89%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Built Environment	Did NOT observe a code violation	NA	NA	71%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
	NOT under housing cost stress	82%	82%	81%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Economy	Purchased goods or services in Urbandale	NA	NA	98%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Economy will have positive impact on income	17%	14%	20%	Similar	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Work in Urbandale	NA	NA	26%	NA	NA	NA	Much lower
Recreation and Wellness	Used Urbandale recreation centers	54%	49%	51%	Similar	Lower	Much lower	Similar
	Visited a City park	85%	87%	80%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	NA	NA	81%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	NA	NA	83%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	In very good to excellent health	NA	NA	65%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Used Urbandale public libraries	77%	76%	71%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar
	Participated in religious or spiritual activities	44%	41%	39%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Lower
Community Engagement	Attended a City-sponsored event	NA	NA	47%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Campaigned for an issue, cause or	NA	NA	17%	NA	NA	NA	Similar

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	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)			2013 compared to 2011	Comparison to benchmark		
	2009	2011	2013		2009	2011	2013
candidate							
Contacted Urbandale elected officials	NA	NA	12%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Volunteered	37%	34%	25%	Lower	Much lower	Much lower	Lower
Participated in a club	24%	21%	19%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Lower
Talked to or visited with neighbors	NA	NA	44%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Done a favor for a neighbor	NA	NA	85%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Attended a local public meeting	17%	12%	11%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Lower
Watched a local public meeting	23%	17%	12%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower
Read or watched local news	NA	NA	89%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Voted in local elections	89%	82%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar