

THE NCS™

The National Community Survey™

Urbandale, IA

Trends Over Time

2020



POWERED BY POLCO

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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 Urbandale to its previous survey results in 2009, 2011, 2013, 2016 and 2018. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.



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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 Urbandale 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 Urbandale for 2020 generally remained stable. Of the 118 items for which comparisons were available, 77 items were rated similarly in 2018 and 2020, 38 items showed a decrease in ratings and three showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Seven of the items that decreased in 2020 compared to 2018 were housed within the facet of Economy (e.g., employment opportunities, shopping opportunities, economic outlook and housing cost stress, etc.).²
- Various aspects of Community Design including variety of housing options, availability of affordable quality housing and public places where people want to spend time declined in 2020 compared to 2018; however, these ratings tended to be similar to or higher than the national comparisons.
- Residents offered lower quality ratings to six aspects of Education, Arts and Culture with three declining by more than 15% (opportunities to attend special events and festivals, opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities and overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts).³

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.

² These observed declines could be, in part, impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and should be reviewed cautiously.

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Table 1: Quality of Life

Quality of Life Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat likely)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall image or reputation of Urbandale	90%	91%	90%	92%	91%	87%	Similar	Similar
The overall quality of life in Urbandale	96%	95%	93%	94%	95%	93%	Similar	Similar
Urbandale as a place to live	97%	96%	97%	97%	97%	95%	Similar	Similar
Recommend living in Urbandale to someone who asks	95%	95%	97%	96%	97%	92%	Similar	Similar
Remain in Urbandale for the next five years	90%	89%	91%	96%	94%	87%	Lower	Similar

Table 2: Governance

Governance Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall confidence in Urbandale government	NA	NA	76%	78%	78%	76%	Similar	Similar
The overall direction that Urbandale is taking	77%	84%	81%	86%	82%	76%	Lower	Similar
The value of services for the taxes paid to Urbandale	67%	75%	72%	71%	68%	72%	Similar	Similar
Generally acting in the best interest of the community	NA	NA	76%	82%	79%	79%	Similar	Similar
Being honest	NA	NA	79%	83%	81%	82%	Similar	Higher
Being open and transparent to the public	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	76%	NA	Similar
Informing residents about issues facing the community	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	62%	NA	Similar
The job Urbandale government does at welcoming resident involvement	60%	68%	69%	68%	71%	66%	Similar	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	NA	NA	77%	76%	80%	77%	Similar	Similar
Treating residents with respect	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	82%	NA	Similar
Overall customer service by Urbandale employees	81%	83%	85%	89%	91%	90%	Similar	Similar
Public information services	84%	80%	83%	85%	85%	81%	Similar	Similar
Quality of services provided by the City of Urbandale	88%	90%	89%	91%	91%	88%	Similar	Similar
Quality of services provided by the Federal Government	44%	42%	32%	51%	50%	41%	Lower	Similar

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Table 3: Economy

Economy Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat positive)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall economic health of Urbandale	NA	NA	87%	89%	91%	89%	Similar	Similar
Economic development	72%	69%	81%	78%	84%	76%	Lower	Similar
Overall quality of business and service establishments in Urbandale	80%	78%	75%	81%	83%	77%	Lower	Similar
Variety of business and service establishments in Urbandale	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	70%	NA	Similar
Vibrancy of downtown/commercial area	NA	NA	43%	41%	48%	48%	Similar	Similar
Shopping opportunities	63%	63%	64%	65%	65%	55%	Lower	Similar
Urbandale as a place to visit	NA	NA	68%	71%	71%	67%	Similar	Similar
Urbandale as a place to work	84%	85%	86%	83%	91%	87%	Similar	Higher
Employment opportunities	51%	55%	63%	64%	81%	61%	Lower	Similar
Cost of living in Urbandale	NA	NA	67%	72%	76%	69%	Lower	Higher
Economy will have positive impact on income	17%	14%	20%	26%	35%	27%	Lower	Similar
NOT experiencing housing costs stress	82%	82%	81%	83%	86%	77%	Lower	Similar

Table 4: Mobility

Mobility Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, yes in the last 12 months)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall quality of the transportation system in Urbandale	NA	NA	90%	91%	90%	78%	Lower	Similar
Traffic flow on major streets	71%	77%	77%	71%	79%	78%	Similar	Higher
Ease of travel by car in Urbandale	87%	87%	85%	86%	88%	93%	Similar	Higher
Ease of travel by public transportation in Urbandale	NA	NA	45%	44%	38%	36%	Similar	Similar
Ease of travel by bicycle in Urbandale	78%	74%	72%	76%	73%	72%	Similar	Similar
Ease of walking in Urbandale	87%	88%	89%	87%	85%	84%	Similar	Similar
Ease of public parking	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	85%	NA	Higher
Bus or transit services	58%	55%	59%	67%	53%	46%	Lower	Similar

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Mobility Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, yes in the last 12 months)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Traffic enforcement	76%	86%	76%	80%	81%	78%	Similar	Similar
Traffic signal timing	61%	59%	63%	62%	67%	63%	Similar	Similar
Street repair	57%	62%	60%	61%	65%	58%	Lower	Similar
Street cleaning	75%	77%	75%	77%	82%	78%	Similar	Similar
Street lighting	76%	76%	77%	79%	82%	80%	Similar	Similar
Snow removal	82%	81%	77%	85%	83%	77%	Similar	Similar
Sidewalk maintenance	73%	75%	71%	70%	75%	76%	Similar	Similar
Used bus, rail, subway, or other public transportation instead of driving	NA	NA	5%	6%	4%	6%	Similar	Lower
Carpooled with other adults or children instead of driving alone	NA	NA	30%	30%	31%	32%	Similar	Lower
Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	NA	51%	52%	52%	60%	Higher	Similar

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)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall design or layout of Urbandale's residential and commercial areas	NA	NA	81%	86%	83%	80%	Similar	Similar
Overall appearance of Urbandale	87%	90%	92%	92%	92%	85%	Lower	Similar
Your neighborhood as a place to live	93%	93%	95%	94%	94%	92%	Similar	Similar
Overall quality of new development in Urbandale	83%	86%	75%	75%	78%	76%	Similar	Similar
Well-planned residential growth	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	76%	NA	Higher
Well-planned commercial growth	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	67%	NA	Similar
Well-designed neighborhoods	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	76%	NA	Similar
Preservation of the historical or cultural character of the community	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	64%	NA	Similar

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Community Design Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Public places where people want to spend time	NA	NA	81%	85%	82%	75%	Lower	Similar
Variety of housing options	87%	79%	85%	81%	87%	76%	Lower	Higher
Availability of affordable quality housing	75%	75%	78%	74%	70%	60%	Lower	Similar
Land use, planning, and zoning	64%	71%	74%	75%	75%	68%	Lower	Similar
Code enforcement	64%	70%	69%	68%	67%	58%	Lower	Similar

Table 6: Utilities

Utilities Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Urbandale	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	88%	NA	Similar
Affordable high-speed internet access	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	56%	NA	Similar
Power (electric and/or gas) utility	NA	93%	88%	93%	92%	88%	Similar	Similar
Garbage collection	94%	95%	93%	97%	95%	94%	Similar	Similar
Drinking water	89%	89%	86%	86%	86%	87%	Similar	Similar
Sewer services	94%	90%	89%	88%	90%	92%	Similar	Similar
Storm water management	80%	82%	81%	80%	76%	84%	Higher	Similar
Utility billing	NA	NA	84%	89%	80%	83%	Similar	Similar

Table 7: Safety

Safety Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall feeling of safety in Urbandale	NA	NA	94%	96%	94%	88%	Similar	Similar
Police services	89%	92%	90%	95%	94%	91%	Similar	Similar
Crime prevention	82%	90%	88%	92%	89%	90%	Similar	Similar
Animal control	75%	79%	75%	83%	87%	87%	Similar	Higher
Ambulance or emergency medical services	95%	96%	96%	99%	99%	93%	Similar	Similar
Fire services	95%	96%	97%	98%	98%	95%	Similar	Similar

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Safety Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Fire prevention and education	88%	91%	88%	94%	93%	85%	Lower	Similar
Emergency preparedness	73%	78%	76%	82%	83%	79%	Similar	Similar
In your neighborhood during the day	97%	98%	98%	98%	97%	96%	Similar	Similar
In Urbandale's downtown/commercial area during the day	95%	92%	96%	95%	93%	93%	Similar	Similar
From property crime	78%	83%	NA	NA	NA	89%	NA	Similar
From violent crime	91%	89%	NA	NA	NA	95%	NA	Similar
From fire, flood, or other natural disaster	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	84%	NA	Similar

Table 8: Natural Environment

Natural Environment Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall quality of natural environment in Urbandale	87%	89%	91%	92%	90%	89%	Similar	Similar
Cleanliness of Urbandale	89%	92%	93%	95%	92%	91%	Similar	Similar
Water resources	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	47%	NA	Lower
Air quality	93%	95%	96%	95%	95%	91%	Similar	Similar
Preservation of natural areas	68%	75%	69%	78%	75%	74%	Similar	Similar
Urbandale open space	NA	NA	71%	78%	77%	76%	Similar	Similar
Recycling	93%	93%	89%	93%	90%	82%	Lower	Similar
Yard waste pick-up	89%	97%	89%	93%	93%	88%	Similar	Similar

Table 9: Parks and Recreation

Parks and Recreation Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	91%	NA	Similar
Availability of paths and walking trails	87%	89%	92%	93%	91%	88%	Similar	Higher
City parks	92%	94%	91%	94%	90%	90%	Similar	Similar
Recreational opportunities	72%	71%	78%	81%	83%	72%	Lower	Similar

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Parks and Recreation Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Recreation programs or classes	85%	83%	78%	89%	81%	75%	Similar	Similar
Recreation centers or facilities	74%	80%	78%	86%	78%	71%	Lower	Similar
Fitness opportunities	NA	NA	85%	82%	90%	83%	Lower	Similar

Table 10: Health and Wellness

Health and Wellness Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, excellent/very good)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Urbandale	NA	NA	82%	84%	83%	83%	Similar	Similar
Health services	NA	83%	NA	NA	NA	82%	Similar	Similar
Availability of affordable quality health care	79%	77%	84%	88%	85%	83%	Similar	Similar
Availability of preventive health services	79%	83%	83%	87%	84%	80%	Similar	Similar
Availability of affordable quality mental health care	NA	NA	73%	68%	54%	62%	Higher	Similar
Availability of affordable quality food	84%	82%	84%	87%	84%	78%	Lower	Similar
In very good to excellent health	NA	NA	95%	95%	97%	96%	Similar	Similar

Table 11: Education, Arts, and Culture

Education, Arts, and Culture Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	NA	NA	80%	84%	83%	67%	Lower	Similar
Opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities	44%	41%	53%	56%	61%	44%	Lower	Lower
Opportunities to attend special events and festivals	NA	NA	72%	82%	81%	60%	Lower	Similar
Community support for the arts	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	54%	NA	Similar
Public library services	93%	94%	95%	96%	97%	92%	Similar	Similar
Availability of affordable quality child care/preschool	67%	70%	72%	75%	78%	68%	Lower	Similar
K-12 education	87%	88%	91%	84%	90%	82%	Lower	Similar
Adult educational opportunities	NA	NA	67%	72%	76%	64%	Lower	Similar

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Table 12: Inclusivity and Engagement

Inclusivity and Engagement Items Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	64%	NA	Similar
Sense of community	79%	76%	74%	80%	77%	73%	Similar	Similar
Sense of civic/community pride	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	76%	NA	Similar
Neighborliness of Urbandale	NA	NA	71%	77%	77%	75%	Similar	Similar
Urbandale as a place to raise children	96%	96%	92%	96%	98%	96%	Similar	Similar
Urbandale as a place to retire	75%	81%	82%	83%	83%	79%	Similar	Similar
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	73%	78%	70%	74%	76%	68%	Lower	Similar
Making all residents feel welcome	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	82%	NA	Similar
Attracting people from diverse backgrounds	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	67%	NA	Similar
Valuing/respecting residents from diverse backgrounds	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	72%	NA	Similar
Taking care of vulnerable residents	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	73%	NA	Similar
Opportunities to participate in social events and activities	71%	69%	63%	67%	72%	65%	Lower	Similar
Opportunities to volunteer	76%	79%	73%	76%	82%	70%	Lower	Similar
Opportunities to participate in community matters	73%	77%	70%	72%	78%	66%	Lower	Similar

Table 13: Participation

Participation Items Percent having done each in last 12 months, or having done each a few times a week or more	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Contacted Urbandale for help or information	54%	42%	41%	44%	47%	50%	Similar	Similar
Contacted Urbandale elected officials to express your opinion	NA	NA	12%	11%	12%	13%	Similar	Similar
Attended a local public meeting	17%	12%	11%	18%	16%	14%	Similar	Similar
Watched (online or on television) a local public meeting	23%	17%	12%	17%	13%	12%	Similar	Lower
Volunteered your time to some group/activity in Urbandale	37%	34%	25%	34%	29%	26%	Similar	Lower
Campaigned or advocated for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	NA	17%	23%	28%	14%	Lower	Similar

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Participation Items Percent having done each in last 12 months, or having done each a few times a week or more	2009	2011	2013	2016	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	98%	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	86%	NA	Similar
Use or check email	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	99%	NA	Similar
Share your opinions online	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	33%	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"	2009	2011	2013	2016	2018	2020	2020 rating compared to 2018	Comparison to benchmark
Overall economic health of Urbandale	NA	NA	NA	89%	90%	88%	Similar	Similar
Overall quality of the transportation system in Urbandale	NA	NA	NA	83%	84%	73%	Lower	Similar
Overall design or layout of Urbandale's residential and commercial areas	NA	NA	NA	73%	72%	72%	Similar	Similar
Overall quality of the utility infrastructure in Urbandale	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	89%	NA	Similar
Overall feeling of safety in Urbandale	NA	NA	NA	94%	93%	89%	Similar	Similar
Overall quality of natural environment in Urbandale	NA	NA	NA	83%	84%	80%	Similar	Similar
Overall quality of parks and recreation opportunities	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	81%	NA	Similar
Overall health and wellness opportunities in Urbandale	NA	NA	NA	67%	71%	75%	Similar	Similar
Overall opportunities for education, culture, and the arts	NA	NA	NA	72%	74%	72%	Similar	Similar
Residents' connection and engagement with their community	NA	NA	NA	83%	82%	70%	Lower	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.