

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Montgomery County, MD

Trends over Time

2017



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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 2017 ratings for the Montgomery County to its previous survey results in 2007 and 2009. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for Montgomery 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 five percentage points between the 2009 and 2017 surveys, otherwise the comparisons between 2009 and 2017 are noted as being "similar." Additionally, benchmark comparisons for all survey years are presented for reference (for more information about the benchmarks, see the *Technical Appendices* report under separate cover). 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 Montgomery County for 2017 generally remained stable. Of the 61 items for which comparisons were available, 31 items were rated similarly in 2009 and 2017, 14 items showed a decrease in ratings and 16 showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- When comparisons were available, most aspects of Community Characteristics remained stable from 2009 to 2017, however a handful were trending up and a handful were trending down over time. Ratings decreased in 2017 compared to 2009 for the ease of travel by public transportation, variety of housing options, recreational opportunities, opportunities to attend cultural activities, opportunities to volunteer and for Montgomery County as a place to retire. During this same time period, ratings increased for safety in Montgomery County's downtowns/commercial areas during the day, ease of travel by car, the quality of the overall natural environment, air quality, availability of affordable quality health care and the availability of affordable quality child care.
- When differences were observed between 2009 and 2017 ratings within Governance, more ratings increased than decreased. Montgomery County residents gave lower ratings to street repair, bus or transit services, garbage collection, recycling and overall customer service in 2017. However, residents gave higher marks to police services, animal control, drinking water, preservation of natural areas, land use, planning and zoning, code enforcement, health services and the overall direction that Montgomery County is taking.
- Fewer differences were observed within the pillar of Participation over time. In 2017, fewer residents reported that they had used Montgomery County recreation centers or libraries than in 2009. However, more residents reported feeling optimistic about their personal economic futures in 2017.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)			2017 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark		
	2007	2009	2017		2007	2009	2017
The overall quality of life in Montgomery County	79%	82%	82%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar
Overall image or reputation of Montgomery County	84%	83%	80%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Montgomery County as a place to live	86%	88%	88%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Your neighborhood as a place to live	82%	81%	82%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar
Montgomery County as a place to raise children	81%	86%	84%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Montgomery County as a place to retire	41%	48%	42%	Lower	Much lower	Much lower	Lower
Overall appearance of Montgomery County	74%	74%	79%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)			2017 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark		
		2007	2009	2017		2007	2009	2017
Safety	Overall feeling of safety in Montgomery County	NA	NA	81%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	In your neighborhood during the day	90%	90%	93%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	In Montgomery County's downtowns/commercial areas during the day	84%	82%	88%	Higher	Much higher	Much lower	Similar
	Overall ease of getting to the places you usually have to visit	NA	NA	60%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Availability of paths and walking trails	NA	NA	62%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Ease of walking in Montgomery County	NA	NA	53%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Ease of travel by bicycle in Montgomery County	41%	43%	40%	Similar	Lower	Much lower	Similar
	Ease of travel by public transportation in Montgomery County	60%	59%	45%	Lower	NA	Much higher	Similar
Mobility	Ease of travel by car in Montgomery County	32%	35%	47%	Higher	Much lower	Much lower	Lower
	Ease of public parking	NA	NA	44%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Traffic flow on major streets	NA	NA	26%	NA	NA	NA	Lower
Natural Environment	Quality of the overall natural environment in Montgomery County	NA	70%	78%	Higher	NA	Lower	Similar
	Cleanliness of Montgomery County	NA	NA	76%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Air quality	48%	55%	73%	Higher	Similar	Much lower	Similar
Built Environment	Overall "built environment" of Montgomery County (including overall design, buildings, parks and transportation systems)	NA	NA	64%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Overall quality of new development in Montgomery County	NA	NA	62%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Availability of affordable quality housing	15%	23%	27%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Similar
	Variety of housing options	NA	57%	52%	Lower	NA	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)			2017 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark		
		2007	2009	2017		2007	2009	2017
Economy	Public places where people want to spend time	NA	NA	72%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Overall economic health of Montgomery County	NA	NA	78%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Vibrant downtowns/commercial areas	NA	NA	68%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
	Overall quality of business and service establishments in Montgomery County	NA	NA	68%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Cost of living in Montgomery County	NA	NA	21%	NA	NA	NA	Lower
	Shopping opportunities	NA	NA	77%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
	Employment opportunities	69%	59%	62%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Montgomery County as a place to visit	NA	NA	64%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Montgomery County as a place to work	78%	76%	80%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Higher
	Recreation and Wellness	Health and wellness opportunities in Montgomery County	NA	NA	75%	NA	NA	NA
Availability of affordable quality mental health care		NA	NA	57%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Availability of preventive health services		NA	NA	69%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Availability of affordable quality health care		35%	37%	66%	Higher	Much lower	Much lower	Similar
Availability of affordable quality food		NA	NA	69%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Recreational opportunities		81%	80%	74%	Lower	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Fitness opportunities (including exercise classes and paths or trails, etc.)		NA	NA	71%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events and activities		NA	NA	83%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities	73%	81%	76%	Lower	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
	Adult educational opportunities	NA	NA	71%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	K-12 education	81%	82%	82%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Availability of affordable quality child care/preschool	21%	24%	49%	Higher	Much lower	Much lower	Similar
	Opportunities to participate in social events and activities	NA	NA	70%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Community Engagement	Neighborliness of residents in Montgomery County	NA	NA	57%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	71%	79%	75%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar
	Opportunities to participate in community matters	NA	NA	69%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Opportunities to volunteer	NA	83%	76%	Lower	NA	Much higher	Similar

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Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)			2017 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark		
	2007	2009	2017		2007	2009	2017
Montgomery County	77%	77%	81%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar
Overall customer service by Montgomery County employees (police, receptionists, planners, etc.)	71%	76%	70%	Lower	Much higher	Similar	Similar
The value of services for the taxes paid to Montgomery County	54%	50%	49%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
The overall direction that Montgomery County is taking	52%	53%	58%	Higher	Much lower	Similar	Similar
The job Montgomery County government does at welcoming resident involvement	NA	NA	52%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Overall confidence in Montgomery County government	NA	NA	57%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Generally acting in the best interest of the community	NA	NA	57%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Being honest	NA	NA	59%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	NA	NA	58%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
The Federal Government	NA	NA	48%	NA	NA	NA	Similar

Table 4: Governance by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)			2017 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark		
		2007	2009	2017		2007	2009	2017
Safety	Police services	81%	79%	85%	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Fire services	94%	93%	95%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar
	Ambulance or emergency medical services	90%	90%	94%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar
	Crime prevention	NA	NA	70%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Fire prevention and education	NA	NA	80%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Animal control	66%	65%	70%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Emergency preparedness (services that prepare the community for natural disasters or other emergency situations)	54%	63%	64%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Traffic enforcement	55%	58%	58%	Similar	Much higher	Lower	Similar
	Street repair	51%	46%	41%	Lower	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Street cleaning	NA	NA	57%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Street lighting	NA	NA	61%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Snow removal	65%	65%	60%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)			2017 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark		
		2007	2009	2017		2007	2009	2017
	Sidewalk maintenance	NA	NA	57%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Traffic signal timing	NA	NA	50%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Bus or transit services	67%	68%	61%	Lower	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Natural Environment	Garbage collection	82%	87%	81%	Lower	Much higher	Higher	Similar
	Recycling	85%	87%	80%	Lower	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Yard waste pick-up	NA	NA	79%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Drinking water	69%	69%	75%	Higher	Much higher	Higher	Similar
	Preservation of natural areas such as open space, farmlands and greenbelts	NA	52%	59%	Higher	NA	Lower	Similar
	Montgomery County open space	NA	NA	61%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Storm drainage	73%	69%	73%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
Built Environment	Sewer services	NA	NA	80%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Power (electric and/or gas) utility	NA	NA	74%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Utility billing	NA	NA	61%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Land use, planning and zoning	40%	44%	50%	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Code enforcement (weeds, abandoned buildings, etc.)	39%	41%	53%	Higher	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Cable television	35%	41%	56%	Higher	NA	Much lower	Similar
	Economic development	NA	NA	64%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	County parks	85%	87%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar
	Montgomery County recreation programs or classes	NA	NA	79%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Montgomery County recreation centers or facilities	NA	NA	79%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Health services	61%	64%	74%	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	County-sponsored special events	NA	NA	69%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Public library services	85%	87%	86%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar
Community Engagement	Public information services	68%	70%	74%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar

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Table 5: Participation General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)			2017 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark		
	2007	2009	2017		2007	2009	2017
Sense of community	59%	62%	55%	Lower	NA	Similar	Similar
Recommend living in Montgomery County to someone who asks	NA	89%	87%	Similar	NA	Higher	Similar
Remain in Montgomery County for the next five years	NA	85%	83%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar
Contacted Montgomery County (in-person, phone, email or web) for help or information	NA	43%	47%	Similar	NA	Much lower	Similar

Table 6: Participation by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)			2017 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark		
		2007	2009	2017		2007	2009	2017
Safety	Stocked supplies in preparation for an emergency	NA	NA	35%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Reported a crime to the police in Montgomery County	NA	NA	82%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Household member was a victim of a crime in Montgomery County	NA	NA	89%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Mobility	Used Ride On bus, Metrobus, Metro, MARC or other public transportation instead of driving	NA	NA	66%	NA	NA	NA	Much higher
	Carpooled with other adults or children instead of driving alone	NA	NA	42%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	NA	58%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Natural Environment	Made efforts to conserve water	NA	NA	80%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Made efforts to make your home more energy efficient	NA	NA	77%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Recycle at home	NA	95%	96%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Higher
Built Environment	Observed a code violation or other hazard in Montgomery County (weeds, abandoned buildings, etc.)	NA	NA	65%	NA	NA	NA	Higher
	Housing costs 30% OR MORE of income	NA	NA	60%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Economy	Purchase goods or services from a business located in Montgomery County	NA	NA	98%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Economy will have positive impact on income	NA	6%	32%	Higher	NA	Much lower	Similar
	Do you work inside the boundaries of Montgomery County?	NA	NA	50%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Used Montgomery County recreation centers or their services	NA	65%	59%	Lower	NA	Much higher	Similar
	Visited a neighborhood park or County park	NA	91%	89%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar
	Eat at least 5 portions of fruits and vegetables a day	NA	NA	90%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Participate in moderate or vigorous physical activity	NA	NA	90%	NA	NA	NA	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)			2017 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark		
		2007	2009	2017		2007	2009	2017
	Would you say that in general your health is:	NA	NA	69%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Used Montgomery County public libraries or their services	NA	79%	71%	Lower	NA	Much higher	Similar
	Participated in religious or spiritual activities in Montgomery County	NA	NA	50%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Attended a County-sponsored event	NA	NA	48%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Campaigned or advocated for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	NA	26%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
Community Engagement	Contacted Montgomery County elected officials (in-person, phone, email or web) to express your opinion	NA	NA	20%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Volunteered your time to some group/activity in Montgomery County	NA	45%	43%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar
	Participated in a club	NA	NA	30%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Talked to or visited with your immediate neighbors	NA	NA	85%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Done a favor for a neighbor	NA	NA	78%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Attended a local public meeting	NA	27%	25%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar
	Watched (online or on television) a local public meeting	NA	NA	26%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Read or watch local news (via television, paper, computer, etc.)	NA	NA	86%	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Vote in local elections	NA	NA	80%	NA	NA	NA	Similar