



**THE NCS**<sup>TM</sup>  
The National Community Survey<sup>TM</sup>

# Montgomery County, MD

Trends over Time

2019



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# Summary

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 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 2019 ratings for Montgomery County to its previous survey results in 2007, 2009 and 2017. 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 four percentage points between the 2017 and 2019 surveys, otherwise the comparisons between 2017 and 2019 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 2019 remained stable. Of the 134 items for which comparisons were available, 83 items were rated similarly in 2017 and 2019, 3 items showed a decrease in ratings and 48 showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Montgomery County residents gave more favorable assessments to 17 aspects of Community Characteristics, and less favorable assessments to two aspects in 2019 compared to 2017. The facets that saw the highest number of improved ratings included Mobility (traffic flow, ease of walking, ease of travel by public transportation, overall ease of travel, ease of public parking, availability of paths and trails) and Economy (shopping opportunities, Montgomery County as a place to visit, vibrant downtowns/commercial areas, overall quality of businesses and service establishments). However, improvements were also noted within Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement. Survey respondents gave lower marks to the availability of affordable quality mental health care and to the availability of affordable quality child care in 2019 compared to 2017.
- There were also several notable increases for aspects of Governance when comparing 2017 ratings to 2019. General aspects of County Governance, along with Mobility, Natural Environment and Built Environment saw the highest concentration of rating increases. Montgomery County residents gave more positive assessments to the overall customer service provided by County employees, the value of services for taxes paid to the County, the job the County government does at welcoming resident involvement, overall confidence in County government and generally acting in the best interest of the community. Some of the other highlights included increased assessments of street lighting, snow removal, bus or transit services, preservation of natural areas, power utility and utility billing. No aspects of Governance decreased from 2017 to 2019.
- Almost all reported rates of Participation remained stable in 2019. Fewer survey respondents reported that they thought the economy would have a positive impact on their incomes and more survey respondents felt positively about the overall sense of community in 2019 compared to 2017.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
	2007	2009	2017	2019		2007	2009	2017	2019
The overall quality of life in Montgomery County	79%	82%	82%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
Overall image or reputation of Montgomery County	84%	83%	80%	84%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Montgomery County as a place to live	86%	88%	88%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Your neighborhood as a place to live	82%	81%	82%	87%	Higher	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
Montgomery County as a place to raise children	81%	86%	84%	86%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Montgomery County as a place to retire	41%	48%	42%	43%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Lower	Lower
Overall appearance of Montgomery County	74%	74%	79%	81%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar	Similar

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
		2007	2009	2017	2019		2007	2009	2017	2019
Safety	Overall feeling of safety in Montgomery County	NA	NA	81%	84%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	In your neighborhood during the day	90%	90%	93%	94%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	In Montgomery County's downtowns/commercial areas during the day	84%	82%	88%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Much lower	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Overall ease of getting to the places you usually have to visit	NA	NA	60%	67%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Availability of paths and walking trails	NA	NA	62%	66%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Ease of walking in Montgomery County	NA	NA	53%	58%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Ease of travel by bicycle in Montgomery County	41%	43%	40%	43%	Similar	Lower	Much lower	Similar	Similar
	Ease of travel by public transportation in Montgomery County	60%	59%	45%	51%	Higher	NA	Much higher	Similar	Higher
	Ease of travel by car in Montgomery County	32%	35%	47%	48%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Lower	Similar
	Ease of public parking	NA	NA	44%	49%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Traffic flow on major streets	NA	NA	26%	32%	Higher	NA	NA	Lower	Similar
Natural Environment	Quality of overall the natural environment in Montgomery County	NA	70%	78%	82%	Similar	NA	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Cleanliness of Montgomery County	NA	NA	76%	78%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Air quality	48%	55%	73%	71%	Similar	Similar	Much lower	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Overall "built environment" of Montgomery County (including overall design, buildings, parks and transportation systems)	NA	NA	64%	71%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Overall quality of new development in Montgomery	NA	NA	62%	66%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
		2007	2009	2017	2019		2007	2009	2017	2019
	County									
	Availability of affordable quality housing	15%	23%	27%	25%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Similar	Similar
	Variety of housing options	NA	57%	52%	54%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Public places where people want to spend time	NA	NA	72%	77%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Overall economic health of Montgomery County	NA	NA	78%	78%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Vibrant downtowns/commercial areas	NA	NA	68%	75%	Higher	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
	Overall quality of business and service establishments in Montgomery County	NA	NA	68%	75%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Cost of living in Montgomery County	NA	NA	21%	22%	Similar	NA	NA	Lower	Lower
	Shopping opportunities	NA	NA	77%	85%	Higher	NA	NA	Higher	Much higher
	Employment opportunities	69%	59%	62%	66%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
	Montgomery County as a place to visit	NA	NA	64%	70%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Economy	Montgomery County as a place to work	78%	76%	80%	80%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Higher	Higher
	Health and wellness opportunities in Montgomery County	NA	NA	75%	82%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Availability of affordable quality mental health care	NA	NA	57%	53%	Lower	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Availability of preventive health services	NA	NA	69%	72%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Availability of affordable quality health care	35%	37%	66%	64%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Similar	Similar
	Availability of affordable quality food	NA	NA	69%	72%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Recreational opportunities	81%	80%	74%	77%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Fitness opportunities (including exercise classes and paths or trails, etc.)	NA	NA	71%	74%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Overall opportunities for education and enrichment	NA	NA	84%	85%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Higher
	Opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events and activities	NA	NA	83%	85%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities	73%	81%	76%	76%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
	Adult educational opportunities	NA	NA	71%	76%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Higher
	K-12 education	81%	82%	82%	82%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Availability of affordable quality child care/preschool	21%	24%	49%	44%	Lower	Much lower	Much lower	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Opportunities to participate in social events and activities	NA	NA	70%	71%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Neighborliness of residents in Montgomery County	NA	NA	57%	62%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar

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	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
	2007	2009	2017	2019		2007	2009	2017	2019
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	71%	79%	75%	75%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar	Higher
Opportunities to participate in community matters	NA	NA	69%	74%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Opportunities to volunteer	NA	83%	76%	79%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar	Similar

Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
	2007	2009	2017	2019		2007	2009	2017	2019
Montgomery County	77%	77%	81%	84%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
Overall customer service by Montgomery County employees (police, receptionists, planners, etc.)	71%	76%	70%	77%	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
The value of services for the taxes paid to Montgomery County	54%	50%	49%	57%	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
The overall direction that Montgomery County is taking	52%	53%	58%	57%	Similar	Much lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
The job Montgomery County government does at welcoming resident involvement	NA	NA	52%	57%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Overall confidence in Montgomery County government	NA	NA	57%	62%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Generally acting in the best interest of the community	NA	NA	57%	61%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Being honest	NA	NA	59%	59%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	NA	NA	58%	55%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
The Federal Government	NA	NA	48%	53%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar

Table 4: Governance by Facet

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark				
	2007	2009	2017	2019		2007	2009	2017	2019	
Safety	Police services	81%	79%	85%	84%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Fire services	94%	93%	95%	96%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Ambulance or emergency medical services	90%	90%	94%	94%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Crime prevention	NA	NA	70%	72%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Fire prevention and education	NA	NA	80%	83%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
		2007	2009	2017	2019		2007	2009	2017	2019
	Animal control	66%	65%	70%	69%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Emergency preparedness (services that prepare the community for natural disasters or other emergency situations)	54%	63%	64%	71%	Higher	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Traffic enforcement	55%	58%	58%	62%	Similar	Much higher	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Street repair	51%	46%	41%	42%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street cleaning	NA	NA	57%	63%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Street lighting	NA	NA	61%	70%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Snow removal	65%	65%	60%	72%	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Sidewalk maintenance	NA	NA	57%	65%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Traffic signal timing	NA	NA	50%	57%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Bus or transit services	67%	68%	61%	79%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
Natural Environment	Garbage collection	82%	87%	81%	86%	Higher	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Recycling	85%	87%	80%	86%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Yard waste pick-up	NA	NA	79%	85%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Drinking water	69%	69%	75%	78%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Preservation of natural areas such as open space, farmlands and greenbelts	NA	52%	59%	69%	Higher	NA	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Montgomery County open space	NA	NA	61%	67%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Storm drainage	73%	69%	73%	75%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Sewer services	NA	NA	80%	87%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Power (electric and/or gas) utility	NA	NA	74%	83%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Utility billing	NA	NA	61%	70%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Land use, planning and zoning	40%	44%	50%	55%	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Code enforcement (weeds, abandoned buildings, etc.)	39%	41%	53%	58%	Higher	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar
Economy	Cable television	35%	41%	56%	62%	Higher	NA	Much lower	Similar	Similar
	Economic development	NA	NA	64%	62%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
		2007	2009	2017	2019		2007	2009	2017	2019
Recreation and Wellness	County parks	85%	87%	85%	90%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Montgomery County recreation programs or classes	NA	NA	79%	86%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Higher
	Montgomery County recreation centers or facilities	NA	NA	79%	85%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Higher
	Health services	61%	64%	74%	77%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	County-sponsored special events	NA	NA	69%	74%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Public library services	85%	87%	86%	92%	Higher	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Public information services	68%	70%	74%	82%	Higher	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar

Table 5: Participation General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
	2007	2009	2017	2019		2007	2009	2017	2019
Sense of community	59%	62%	55%	60%	Higher	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Recommend living in Montgomery County to someone who asks	NA	89%	87%	88%	Similar	NA	Higher	Similar	Similar
Remain in Montgomery County for the next five years	NA	85%	83%	84%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Contacted Montgomery County (in-person, phone, email or web) for help or information	NA	43%	47%	47%	Similar	NA	Much lower	Similar	Similar

Table 6: Participation by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
		2007	2009	2017	2019		2007	2009	2017	2019
Safety	Stocked supplies in preparation for an emergency	NA	NA	35%	38%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Reported a crime to the police in Montgomery County	NA	NA	82%	86%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Household member was a victim of a crime in Montgomery County	NA	NA	89%	89%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Used Ride On bus, Metrobus, Metro, MARC or other public transportation instead of driving	NA	NA	66%	70%	Similar	NA	NA	Much higher	Much higher
	Carpooled with other adults or children instead of driving alone	NA	NA	42%	44%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	NA	58%	60%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Natural	Made efforts to conserve water	NA	NA	80%	80%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
		2007	2009	2017	2019		2007	2009	2017	2019
Environment	Made efforts to make your home more energy efficient	NA	NA	77%	76%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Recycle at home	NA	95%	96%	97%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Higher	Similar
Built Environment	Observed a code violation or other hazard in Montgomery County (weeds, abandoned buildings, etc.)	NA	NA	65%	67%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
	Housing costs 30% OR MORE of income	NA	NA	60%	59%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Economy	Purchase goods or services from a business located in Montgomery County	NA	NA	98%	98%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Economy will have positive impact on income	NA	6%	32%	27%	Lower	NA	Much lower	Similar	Similar
	Do you work inside the boundaries of Montgomery County?	NA	NA	50%	51%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Used Montgomery County recreation centers or their services	NA	65%	59%	62%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Visited a neighborhood park or County park	NA	91%	89%	89%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Eat at least 5 portions of fruits and vegetables a day	NA	NA	90%	90%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Participate in moderate or vigorous physical activity	NA	NA	90%	88%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Would you say that in general your health is:	NA	NA	69%	66%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Used Montgomery County public libraries or their services	NA	79%	71%	74%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar	Higher
	Participated in religious or spiritual activities in Montgomery County	NA	NA	50%	48%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Attended a County-sponsored event	NA	NA	48%	45%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Campaigned or advocated for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	NA	26%	26%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Contacted Montgomery County elected officials (in-person, phone, email or web) to express your opinion	NA	NA	20%	22%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Volunteered your time to some group/activity in Montgomery County	NA	45%	43%	40%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Participated in a club	NA	NA	30%	26%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Talked to or visited with your immediate neighbors	NA	NA	85%	87%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Done a favor for a neighbor	NA	NA	78%	78%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar



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	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
	2007	2009	2017	2019		2007	2009	2017	2019
Attended a local public meeting	NA	27%	25%	24%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Watched (online or on television) a local public meeting	NA	NA	26%	25%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Read or watch local news (via television, paper, computer, etc.)	NA	NA	86%	85%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Vote in local elections	NA	NA	80%	83%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar