



THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

River Falls, WI

Trends over Time

2015



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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 2015 ratings for the City of River Falls to its previous survey results in 2013. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for River Falls 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 2013 and 2015 surveys, otherwise the comparison between 2013 and 2015 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 River Falls for 2015 generally remained stable. Of the 83 items for which comparisons were available, 70 items were rated similarly in 2013 and 2015, 10 items showed a decrease in ratings and 3 showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Almost all 2015 ratings within the pillar of Community Characteristics remained similar to ratings in 2013. Items that were rated lower in 2015 were River Falls as a place to work and the availability of affordable quality food, while ease of travel by car was rated higher in 2015 than in 2013. These aspects received ratings similar to those in other benchmark communities.
- Within the pillar of Governance, ratings for all aspects within the facets of Economy and Natural Environment remained stable since 2013. Ratings decreased for emergency preparedness (Safety), cable television (Built Environment), recreation programs (Recreation and Wellness), the value of services for taxes paid (Community Engagement) and the services provided by the Federal Government; ratings increased in 2015 for snow removal in the facet of Mobility. Ratings for these aspects were also all similar to the national benchmark.
- Rates of Participation in River Falls generally remained the same from 2013 to 2015. While fewer residents used River Falls' public libraries, voted in local elections and attended a local public meeting in 2015 than in 2013, the participation rates for these aspects were similar to rates seen in other communities across the nation.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark	
	2013	2015		2013	2015
Overall quality of life	86%	87%	Similar	Higher	Similar
Overall image	80%	84%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Place to live	92%	92%	Similar	Higher	Similar
Neighborhood	84%	78%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Place to raise children	89%	86%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Place to retire	68%	71%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Overall appearance	85%	87%	Similar	Much higher	Similar

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)		2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark	
		2013	2015		2013	2015
Safety	Overall feeling of safety	NA	90%	NA	NA	Similar
	Safe in neighborhood	98%	98%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Safe downtown/commercial area	98%	97%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Mobility	Overall ease of travel	NA	86%	NA	NA	Similar
	Paths and walking trails	74%	78%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
	Ease of walking	84%	89%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
	Travel by bicycle	68%	71%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Travel by car	65%	72%	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Public parking	NA	60%	NA	NA	Similar
	Traffic flow	53%	49%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Natural Environment	Overall natural environment	89%	89%	Similar	Much higher
Cleanliness		86%	86%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Air quality		93%	95%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
Built Environment	Overall built environment	NA	69%	NA	NA	Similar
	New development in River Falls	67%	65%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Affordable quality housing	60%	55%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Housing options	65%	63%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Public places	NA	76%	NA	NA	Similar
	Overall economic health	NA	74%	NA	NA	Similar
Economy	Vibrant downtown/commercial area	NA	61%	NA	NA	Similar
	Business and services	55%	61%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Cost of living	NA	53%	NA	NA	Similar
	Shopping opportunities	27%	27%	Similar	Much lower	Lower
	Employment opportunities	32%	31%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Place to visit	NA	67%	NA	NA	Similar
	Place to work	53%	45%	Lower	Much lower	Similar
	Recreation and Wellness	Health and wellness	NA	67%	NA	NA
Mental health care		NA	40%	NA	NA	Similar
Preventive health services		75%	74%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Health care		60%	62%	Similar	Higher	Similar
Food		74%	60%	Lower	Higher	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)		2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark	
		2013	2015		2013	2015
	Recreational opportunities	72%	73%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Fitness opportunities	NA	75%	NA	NA	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Religious or spiritual events and activities	NA	90%	NA	NA	Similar
	Cultural/arts/music activities	53%	77%	Higher	Similar	Higher
	Adult education	NA	84%	NA	NA	Higher
	K-12 education	87%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
	Child care/preschool	63%	64%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Social events and activities	78%	72%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Community Engagement	Neighborhoodliness	NA	70%	NA	NA	Similar
	Openness and acceptance	66%	64%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Opportunities to participate in community matters	72%	72%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Opportunities to volunteer	75%	73%	Similar	Higher	Similar

Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark	
	2013	2015		2013	2015
Services provided by River Falls	83%	87%	Similar	Higher	Similar
Value of services for taxes paid	62%	53%	Lower	Higher	Similar
Overall direction	64%	69%	Similar	Higher	Similar
Welcoming citizen involvement	65%	62%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Confidence in City government	NA	63%	NA	NA	Similar
Acting in the best interest of River Falls	NA	65%	NA	NA	Similar
Being honest	NA	68%	NA	NA	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	NA	63%	NA	NA	Similar
Services provided by the Federal Government	41%	30%	Lower	Similar	Similar

Table 4: Governance by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark	
		2013	2015		2013	2015
Safety	Police	87%	82%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Fire	94%	95%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ambulance/EMS	95%	96%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Crime prevention	78%	73%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Fire prevention	88%	86%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Animal control	71%	73%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Emergency preparedness	71%	61%	Lower	Higher	Similar
	Traffic enforcement	74%	74%	Similar	Higher	Similar
Mobility	Street repair	52%	53%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street cleaning	73%	73%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Street lighting	72%	70%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Snow removal	62%	72%	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Sidewalk maintenance	57%	63%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Natural Environment	Traffic signal timing	60%	62%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Garbage collection	84%	84%	Similar	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark	
		2013	2015		2013	2015
	Recycling	87%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Drinking water	79%	77%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Natural areas preservation	73%	71%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Open space	NA	70%	NA	NA	Similar
Built Environment	Storm drainage	80%	82%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Sewer services	87%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Power utility	86%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Utility billing	NA	78%	NA	NA	Similar
	Land use, planning and zoning	60%	61%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Code enforcement	55%	54%	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Cable television	67%	59%	Lower	Higher	Similar
Economy	Economic development	59%	55%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	City parks	93%	87%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Recreation programs	89%	77%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
	Health services	77%	75%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Special events	NA	78%	NA	NA	Similar
	Public libraries	96%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Community Engagement	Public information	82%	77%	Similar	Much higher	Similar

Table 5: Participation General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark	
	2013	2015		2013	2015
Sense of community	83%	81%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
Recommend River Falls	89%	94%	Similar	Higher	Similar
Remain in River Falls	81%	79%	Similar	Similar	Similar

Table 6: Participation by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark	
		2013	2015		2013	2015
Safety	Stocked supplies for an emergency	NA	17%	NA	NA	Much lower
	Did NOT report a crime	NA	79%	NA	NA	Similar
	Was NOT the victim of a crime	89%	92%	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Carpooled instead of driving alone	NA	42%	NA	NA	Similar
	Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	79%	NA	NA	Much higher
Natural Environment	Conserved water	NA	80%	NA	NA	Similar
	Made home more energy efficient	NA	76%	NA	NA	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2015 rating compared to 2013	Comparison to benchmark	
		2013	2015		2013	2015
	Recycled at home	NA	95%	NA	NA	Similar
Built Environment	Did NOT observe a code violation	NA	59%	NA	NA	Similar
	NOT under housing cost stress	73%	70%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Purchased goods or services in River Falls	NA	99%	NA	NA	Similar
Economy	Economy will have positive impact on income	26%	24%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Work in River Falls	NA	45%	NA	NA	Similar
	Visited a City park	95%	92%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	NA	81%	NA	NA	Similar
	Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	NA	89%	NA	NA	Similar
	In very good to excellent health	NA	57%	NA	NA	Similar
	Used River Falls public libraries	81%	73%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Participated in religious or spiritual activities	NA	49%	NA	NA	Similar
	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	21%	NA	NA	Similar
Community Engagement	Contacted River Falls elected officials	NA	17%	NA	NA	Similar
	Volunteered	53%	55%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
	Participated in a club	41%	36%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Talked to or visited with neighbors	NA	92%	NA	NA	Similar
	Done a favor for a neighbor	NA	73%	NA	NA	Similar
	Attended a local public meeting	27%	16%	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Watched a local public meeting	27%	21%	Similar	Much lower	Similar
	Read or watched local news	NA	74%	NA	NA	Lower
	Voted in local elections	85%	76%	Lower	Much higher	Similar