

# THE NCS<sup>TM</sup>

The National Citizen Survey<sup>TM</sup>

## Needham, MA

Dashboard Summary of Findings

2016



**NRC**  
National Research Center Inc

2955 Valmont Road Suite 300  
Boulder, Colorado 80301  
n-r-c.com • 303-444-7863



*Leaders at the Core of Better Communities*

777 North Capitol Street NE Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20002  
icma.org • 800-745-8780

# 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 summarizes Needham’s performance in the eight facets of community livability with the “General” rating as a summary of results from the overarching questions not shown within any of the eight facets. The “Overall” represents the community pillar in its entirety (the eight facets and general).

By summarizing resident ratings across the eight facets and three pillars of a livable community, a picture of Needham’s community livability emerges. Below, the color of each community facet summarizes how residents rated each of the pillars that support it – Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation. When most ratings were higher than the benchmark, the color is the darkest shade; when most ratings were lower than the benchmark, the color is the lightest shade. A mix of ratings (higher and lower than the benchmark) results in a color between the extremes.

Overall, ratings for the dimensions of community livability were strong and similar to or higher than other communities across the nation. General Community Characteristics and characteristics related to Safety, Natural Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment tended to receive ratings that were higher than ratings in other communities. Within the pillar of Governance, ratings for Safety and Education and Enrichment also tended to be higher than the benchmarks. Rates of Participation in the facets of Mobility, General Participation, and Built Environment were strong and higher than rates reported in comparison communities. This information can be helpful in identifying the areas that merit more attention.

Figure 1: Dashboard Summary

	Community Characteristics			Governance			Participation		
	Higher	Similar	Lower	Higher	Similar	Lower	Higher	Similar	Lower
Overall	22	28	2	11	30	0	8	28	0
General	6	1	0	0	3	0	2	1	0
Safety	2	1	0	6	1	0	1	2	0
Mobility	2	6	0	0	8	0	2	1	0
Natural Environment	2	1	0	1	3	0	0	3	0
Built Environment	0	3	2	1	3	0	1	1	0
Economy	3	5	0	0	1	0	0	3	0
Recreation and Wellness	4	3	0	1	3	0	0	5	0
Education and Enrichment	3	3	0	1	1	0	1	2	0
Community Engagement	0	5	0	1	7	0	1	10	0

Legend	
	Higher
	Similar
	Lower

# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Detailed Dashboard

	Community Characteristics	Trend	Benchmark	Percent positive	Governance	Trend	Benchmark	Percent positive	Participation	Trend	Benchmark	Percent positive
General	Overall appearance	↔	↑	90%	Customer service	↔	↔	89%	Recommend Needham	↔	↑	96%
	Overall quality of life	↔	↑	94%	Services provided by Needham	↔	↔	90%	Remain in Needham	↔	↔	91%
	Place to retire	↔	↔	54%	Services provided by the Federal Government	↔	↔	52%	Contacted Needham employees	↔	↑	59%
	Place to raise children	↔	↑	96%								
	Place to live	↔	↑	98%								
	Neighborhood	↔	↑	93%								
Safety	Overall image	↔	↑	95%								
	Overall feeling of safety	↔	↑↑	98%	Police	↔	↑	94%	Was NOT the victim of a crime	↔	↔	94%
	Safe in neighborhood	↔	↔	99%	Crime prevention	↔	↑	93%	Did NOT report a crime	↔	↑	89%
	Safe downtown/commercial area	↔	↑	98%	Fire	↔	↑	98%	Stocked supplies for an emergency	↔	↔	30%
					Fire prevention	↔	↑	88%				
					Ambulance/EMS	↔	↑	96%				
Mobility					Emergency preparedness	↔	↔	77%				
					Animal control	↔	↑	77%				
	Traffic flow	↔	↔	52%	Traffic enforcement	↔	↔	78%	Carpooled instead of driving alone	↔	↔	45%
	Travel by car	↔	↔	76%	Street repair	↔	↔	46%	Walked or biked instead of driving	↔	↑	69%
	Travel by bicycle	↔	↔	55%	Street cleaning	↔	↔	69%	Used public transportation instead of driving	↔	↑↑	53%
	Ease of walking	↔	↑	85%	Street lighting	↑	↔	67%				
	Travel by public transportation	↔	↔	54%	Snow removal	↑	↔	76%				
Natural Environment	Overall ease travel	↔	↑	89%	Sidewalk maintenance	↑	↔	54%				
	Public parking	↑	↔	64%	Traffic signal timing	↔	↔	62%				
	Paths and walking trails	↔	↔	64%	Bus or transit services	↑	↔	65%				
	Overall natural environment	↔	↔	83%	Recycling	↔	↔	82%	Recycled at home	↔	↔	95%
Built Environment	Air quality	↔	↑	91%	Drinking water	↔	↑	90%	Conserved water	↔	↔	86%
	Cleanliness	↔	↑	91%	Open space	↔	↔	60%	Made home more energy efficient	↔	↔	80%
					Natural areas preservation	↔	↔	60%				
	New development in Needham	↔	↔	49%	Sewer services	↔	↔	90%	NOT experiencing housing cost stress	↔	↔	75%
Affordable quality housing	↔	↓	19%	Storm drainage	↑	↔	80%	Did NOT observe a code violation	↔	↑↑	74%	
Housing options	↔	↓	38%	Land use, planning and zoning	↓	↔	41%					
Overall built environment	↔	↔	67%	Cable television	↔	↑	76%					
Public places	↔	↔	73%									

**Legend**

↑↑ Much higher    ↑ Higher    ↔ Similar    ↓ Lower    ↓↓ Much lower    \* Not available

# The National Citizen Survey™

	Community Characteristics	Trend	Benchmark	Percent positive	Governance	Trend	Benchmark	Percent positive	Participation	Trend	Benchmark	Percent positive
Economy	Overall economic health	↔	↑	87%	Economic development	↔	↔	63%	Economy will have positive impact on income	↓	↔	28%
	Shopping opportunities	↔	↔	44%					Purchased goods or services in Needham	↔	↔	98%
	Employment opportunities	↑	↑	52%					Work in Needham	↔	↔	36%
	Place to visit	↔	↔	68%								
	Cost of living	↔	↔	30%								
	Vibrant downtown/commercial area	↔	↔	51%								
	Place to work	↑	↑	77%								
Recreation and Wellness	Business and services	↔	↔	68%								
	Fitness opportunities	↔	↔	67%	Town parks	↔	↔	86%	In very good to excellent health	↔	↔	74%
	Recreational opportunities	↔	↔	71%	Recreation centers	↔	↔	72%	Used Needham recreation centers	↑	↔	64%
	Health care	↔	↑	86%	Recreation programs	↔	↔	82%	Visited a Town park	↔	↔	80%
	Food	↔	↔	73%	Health services	↔	↑	88%	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	↔	↔	84%
	Mental health care	↔	↑	68%					Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	↔	↔	88%
	Health and wellness	↔	↑	84%								
Education and Enrichment	Preventive health services	↔	↑	85%								
	K-12 education	↔	↑	93%	Public libraries	↔	↑	93%	Used Needham public libraries	↔	↑	85%
	Cultural/arts/music activities	↑	↔	69%	Special events	↔	↔	78%	Participated in religious or spiritual activities	↔	↔	51%
	Child care/preschool	↔	↔	63%					Attended a Town-sponsored event	↔	↔	62%
	Religious or spiritual events and activities	↔	↔	90%								
	Adult education	↑	↑	83%								
Community Engagement	Overall education and enrichment	↔	↑	88%								
	Opportunities to participate in community matters	↔	↔	79%	Public information	↔	↔	82%	Sense of community	↔	↑	83%
	Opportunities to volunteer	↔	↔	79%	Overall direction	↔	↔	62%	Voted in local elections	↔	↔	87%
	Openness and acceptance	↓	↔	63%	Value of services for taxes paid	↔	↔	65%	Talked to or visited with neighbors	↔	↔	93%
	Social events and activities	↔	↔	71%	Welcoming citizen involvement	↓	↔	57%	Attended a local public meeting	↔	↔	26%
	Neighborliness	↔	↔	75%	Confidence in Town government	↔	↔	65%	Watched a local public meeting	↔	↔	26%
					Acting in the best interest of Needham	↔	↔	68%	Volunteered	↔	↔	47%
					Being honest	↔	↑	72%	Participated in a club	↔	↔	31%
					Treating all residents fairly	↔	↔	66%	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	↔	↔	25%
									Contacted Needham elected officials	↔	↔	21%
								Read or watched local news	↓	↔	84%	
								Done a favor for a neighbor	↔	↔	90%	

**Legend**

↑↑ Much higher    ↑ Higher    ↔ Similar    ↓ Lower    ↓↓ Much lower    \* Not available