



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

# Grand Rapids, MI

## Dashboard Summary of Findings

DRAFT  
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 summarizes Grand Rapids’ 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 Grand Rapids’ 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. This information can be helpful in identifying the areas that merit more attention.

Overall, ratings for community livability were positive and similar to communities elsewhere. The facet of Economy within Community Characteristics exceeded comparisons nationwide and levels of Participation within Mobility also surpassed average rates in other municipalities.

Figure 1: Dashboard Summary

	Community Characteristics			Governance			Participation		
	Higher	Similar	Lower	Higher	Similar	Lower	Higher	Similar	Lower
Overall	7	42	3	0	38	5	4	29	0
General	0	7	0	0	3	0	0	3	0
Safety	0	2	1	0	5	2	0	3	0
Mobility	0	7	1	0	5	3	2	1	0
Natural Environment	0	3	0	0	5	0	0	3	0
Built Environment	1	4	0	0	5	0	0	2	0
Economy	5	3	0	0	1	0	1	2	0
Recreation and Wellness	0	7	0	0	4	0	0	4	0
Education and Enrichment	1	4	1	0	2	0	0	2	0
Community Engagement	0	5	0	0	8	0	1	9	0

National Benchmark	
	Higher
	Similar
	Lower

# The National Community Survey™

Figure 2: Detailed Dashboard

	Community Characteristics	Benchmark	Percent positive	Governance	Benchmark	Percent positive	Participation	Benchmark	Percent positive
General	Overall appearance	↔	78%	Customer service	↔	65%	Recommend Grand Rapids	↔	89%
	Overall quality of life	↔	78%	Services provided by Grand Rapids	↔	68%	Remain in Grand Rapids	↔	88%
	Place to retire	↔	58%	Services provided by the Federal Government	↔	30%	Contacted Grand Rapids employees	↔	52%
	Place to raise children	↔	75%						
	Place to live	↔	87%						
	Neighborhood	↔	71%						
	Overall image	↔	77%						
Safety	Overall feeling of safety	↓	63%	Police	↓	63%	Was NOT the victim of a crime	↔	82%
	Safe in neighborhood	↔	90%	Crime prevention	↓	48%	Did NOT report a crime	↔	70%
	Safe downtown area	↔	85%	Fire	↔	91%	Stocked supplies for an emergency	↔	28%
				Fire prevention	↔	72%			
				Ambulance/EMS	↔	89%			
				Emergency preparedness	↔	62%			
			Animal control	↔	50%				
Mobility	Traffic flow	↔	38%	Traffic enforcement	↔	50%	Carpooled instead of driving alone	↔	52%
	Travel by car	↔	54%	Street repair	↓	19%	Walked or biked instead of driving	↑	72%
	Travel by bicycle	↔	57%	Street cleaning	↓	34%	Used public transportation instead of driving	↑	39%
	Ease of walking	↔	72%	Street lighting	↔	47%			
	Travel by public transportation	↔	45%	Snow removal	↓	44%			
	Overall ease of travel	↔	62%	Sidewalk maintenance	↔	43%			
	Public parking	↓	31%	Traffic signal timing	↔	47%			
Paths and walking trails	↔	61%	Bus or transit services	↔	60%				
Natural Environment	Overall natural environment	↔	66%	Garbage collection	↔	79%	Recycled at home	↔	90%
	Air quality	↔	73%	Recycling	↔	80%	Conserved water	↔	76%
	Cleanliness	↔	61%	Yard waste pick-up	↔	65%	Made home more energy efficient	↔	78%
				Drinking water	↔	67%			
			Natural areas preservation	↔	49%				
Built Environment	New development in Grand Rapids	↑	74%	Sewer services	↔	70%	NOT experiencing housing cost stress	↔	76%
	Affordable quality housing	↔	28%	Storm drainage	↔	56%	Did NOT observe a code violation	↔	51%
	Housing options	↔	46%	Utility billing	↔	65%			
	Overall built environment	↔	60%	Land use, planning and zoning	↔	47%			
	Public places	↔	71%	Code enforcement	↔	35%			

**Legend**

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

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	Community Characteristics	Benchmark	Percent positive	Governance	Benchmark	Percent positive	Participation	Benchmark	Percent positive
Economy	Overall economic health	↔	66%	Economic development	↔	64%	Economy will have positive impact on income	↔	28%
	Shopping opportunities	↑	78%				Purchased goods or services in Grand Rapids	↔	97%
	Employment opportunities	↑	71%				Work in Grand Rapids	↑	62%
	Place to visit	↑	84%						
	Cost of living	↔	49%						
	Vibrant downtown area	↑	73%						
	Place to work	↑	78%						
Business and services	↔	75%							
Recreation and Wellness	Fitness opportunities	↔	71%	City parks	↔	73%	In very good to excellent health	↔	62%
	Recreational opportunities	↔	70%	Recreation centers	↔	61%	Visited a City park	↔	88%
	Health care	↔	64%	Recreation programs	↔	66%	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	↔	75%
	Food	↔	68%	Health services	↔	68%	Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	↔	80%
	Mental health care	↔	47%						
	Health and wellness	↔	75%						
Preventive health services	↔	66%							
Education and Enrichment	K-12 education	↓	47%	Public libraries	↔	86%	Used Grand Rapids public libraries	↔	72%
	Cultural/arts/music activities	↑	79%	Special events	↔	66%	Attended a City-sponsored event	↔	59%
	Child care/preschool	↔	46%						
	Religious or spiritual events and activities	↔	82%						
	Adult education	↔	58%						
	Overall education and enrichment	↔	71%						
Community Engagement	Opportunities to participate in community matters	↔	65%	Public information	↔	69%	Sense of community	↔	58%
	Opportunities to volunteer	↔	81%	Overall direction	↔	68%	Voted in local elections	↔	84%
	Openness and acceptance	↔	46%	Value of services for taxes paid	↔	48%	Talked to or visited with neighbors	↔	91%
	Social events and activities	↔	74%	Welcoming resident involvement	↔	47%	Attended a local public meeting	↔	23%
	Neighborhoodliness	↔	52%	Confidence in City government	↔	58%	Watched a local public meeting	↔	30%
				Acting in the best interest of Grand Rapids	↔	60%	Volunteered	↑	55%
				Being honest	↔	54%	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	↔	29%
				Treating all residents fairly	↔	42%	Contacted Grand Rapids elected officials	↔	21%
							Read or watched local news	↔	75%
						Done a favor for a neighbor	↔	81%	

**Legend**

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