

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Needham, MA

Trends over Time

2018



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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 2018 ratings for the Town of Needham to its previous survey results in 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for Needham 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 six percentage points between the 2016 and 2018 surveys, otherwise the comparisons between 2016 and 2018 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 Needham for 2018 generally remained stable. Of the 129 items for which comparisons were available, 116 items were rated similarly in 2016 and 2018; five items showed a decrease in ratings and eight showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Almost all aspects of Community Characteristics remained stable from 2016 to 2018. The only exception was a ratings increase for the overall quality of new development in Needham during this time period.
- A handful of items increased within the pillar of Governance in 2018 compared to 2016. Needham residents gave more positive marks to land use, planning and zoning, economic development, recreation centers, the overall direction of the Town, the job the Town Government does at welcoming citizen involvement and the job the Town does at treating all residents fairly. Only one item, street lighting, decreased in ratings since 2016.
- Most reported rates of Participation also remained stable in 2018 compared to 2016. Fewer Needham residents reported that they had made their homes more energy efficient, worked in Needham, had watched a local public meeting or that they had done a favor for a neighbor in 2018. More survey respondents felt the economy would have a positive impact on their incomes in 2018 compared to 2016.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)						2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark					
	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Overall quality of life	91%	96%	97%	93%	94%	94%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
Overall image	89%	91%	95%	91%	95%	94%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
Place to live	96%	98%	97%	96%	98%	98%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
Neighborhood	89%	94%	93%	90%	93%	93%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
Place to raise children	94%	97%	97%	95%	96%	98%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
Place to retire	51%	57%	59%	51%	54%	54%	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Overall appearance	73%	83%	85%	88%	90%	89%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)						2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark					
		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Safety	Overall feeling of safety	NA	NA	NA	97%	98%	99%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Higher	Much higher	Higher
	Safe in neighborhood	99%	99%	99%	96%	99%	99%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Safe downtown/commercial area	98%	99%	98%	96%	98%	98%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Overall ease of travel	NA	NA	NA	88%	89%	89%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Paths and walking trails	44%	50%	57%	61%	64%	66%	Similar	Much lower	Lower	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ease of walking	76%	81%	83%	84%	85%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Travel by bicycle	50%	59%	60%	55%	55%	54%	Similar	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Travel by public transportation	78%	77%	72%	51%	54%	55%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Higher
	Travel by car	75%	78%	79%	75%	76%	76%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Public parking	NA	NA	NA	55%	64%	61%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Traffic flow	48%	48%	51%	58%	52%	53%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Natural Environment	Overall natural environment	72%	81%	84%	86%	83%	87%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Cleanliness	78%	85%	89%	89%	91%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Air quality	NA	86%	85%	91%	91%	93%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
Built Environment	Overall built environment	NA	NA	NA	70%	67%	71%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	New development in Needham	51%	65%	60%	52%	49%	55%	Higher	Lower	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)						2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark						
		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	
Economy	Affordable quality housing	22%	29%	25%	25%	19%	19%	Similar	Much lower	Lower	Much lower	Lower	Lower	Lower	
	Housing options	40%	47%	45%	42%	38%	33%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Lower	Lower	Lower	
	Public places	NA	NA	NA	67%	73%	75%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar	
	Overall economic health	NA	NA	NA	84%	87%	89%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Higher	Higher	Higher	
	Vibrant downtown/commercial area	NA	NA	NA	47%	51%	51%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar	
	Business and services	63%	65%	66%	63%	68%	68%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	
	Cost of living	NA	NA	NA	28%	30%	26%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar	
	Shopping opportunities	30%	36%	36%	39%	44%	44%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Lower	Similar	Similar	
	Employment opportunities	34%	36%	43%	37%	52%	56%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher	
	Place to visit	NA	NA	NA	66%	68%	67%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar	
Recreation and Wellness	Place to work	72%	75%	79%	65%	77%	76%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher	
	Health and wellness	NA	NA	NA	83%	84%	83%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Higher	Similar	
	Mental health care	NA	NA	NA	65%	68%	71%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Higher	Higher	Higher	
	Preventive health services	NA	77%	78%	82%	85%	88%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher	
	Health care	71%	76%	79%	82%	86%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher	
	Food	NA	72%	70%	72%	73%	67%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	
	Recreational opportunities	65%	71%	67%	66%	71%	74%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	
	Fitness opportunities	NA	NA	NA	66%	67%	71%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar	
	Education and enrichment opportunities	NA	NA	NA	85%	88%	91%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Higher	Higher	Higher	
	Religious or spiritual events and activities	87%	90%	92%	88%	90%	89%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	
Education and Enrichment	Cultural/arts/music activities	42%	47%	53%	62%	69%	68%	Similar	Much lower	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	
	Adult education	NA	NA	NA	74%	83%	83%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Higher	Higher	
	K-12 education	91%	89%	93%	91%	93%	96%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Much higher	
	Child care/preschool	44%	52%	51%	62%	63%	66%	Similar	Higher	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	
	Community Engagement	Social events and activities	67%	73%	75%	69%	71%	72%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar

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	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)						2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark					
	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Neighborhoodliness	NA	NA	NA	78%	75%	74%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Higher	Similar	Similar
Openness and acceptance	69%	71%	71%	71%	63%	68%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Opportunities to participate in community matters	78%	78%	83%	79%	79%	79%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Opportunities to volunteer	85%	86%	87%	79%	79%	81%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar

Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)						2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark					
	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Services provided by Needham	85%	89%	90%	85%	90%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Higher
Customer service	86%	84%	84%	84%	89%	86%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Value of services for taxes paid	62%	61%	67%	65%	65%	66%	Similar	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Overall direction	60%	65%	70%	67%	62%	70%	Higher	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Welcoming citizen involvement	62%	63%	67%	63%	57%	66%	Higher	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Confidence in Town government	NA	NA	NA	65%	65%	68%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Acting in the best interest of Needham	NA	NA	NA	69%	68%	73%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Higher
Being honest	NA	NA	NA	72%	72%	73%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Higher	Higher
Treating all residents fairly	NA	NA	NA	69%	66%	73%	Higher	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Higher
Services provided by the Federal Government	43%	50%	55%	50%	52%	51%	Similar	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar

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Table 4: Governance by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)						2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark					
		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Safety	Police	95%	96%	94%	92%	94%	96%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Fire	98%	99%	98%	94%	98%	99%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Ambulance/EMS	98%	97%	98%	95%	96%	97%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Crime prevention	94%	91%	93%	91%	93%	97%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Much higher
	Fire prevention	92%	92%	92%	88%	88%	94%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Animal control	79%	78%	77%	79%	77%	81%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Emergency preparedness	83%	87%	80%	75%	77%	81%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Traffic enforcement	76%	80%	77%	77%	78%	73%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street repair	32%	39%	52%	43%	46%	45%	Similar	Much lower	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street cleaning	55%	61%	73%	64%	69%	72%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street lighting	56%	66%	70%	60%	67%	59%	Lower	Similar	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Snow removal	63%	63%	72%	65%	76%	78%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Higher
	Sidewalk maintenance	41%	46%	51%	44%	54%	52%	Similar	Much lower	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Traffic signal timing	56%	57%	55%	61%	62%	59%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Bus or transit services	NA	59%	60%	58%	65%	63%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Natural Environment	Recycling	84%	84%	82%	80%	82%	81%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Drinking water	83%	89%	89%	85%	90%	86%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Natural areas preservation	60%	64%	70%	64%	60%	63%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Open space	NA	NA	NA	63%	60%	62%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Storm drainage	70%	67%	77%	66%	80%	77%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)						2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark					
		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
	Sewer services	83%	86%	92%	88%	90%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Higher
	Land use, planning and zoning	47%	49%	51%	50%	41%	52%	Higher	Higher	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Cable television	77%	76%	78%	73%	76%	76%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
Economy	Economic development	52%	50%	52%	60%	63%	70%	Higher	Higher	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Higher
Recreation and Wellness	Town parks	78%	88%	89%	82%	86%	89%	Similar	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recreation programs	79%	86%	86%	77%	82%	87%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recreation centers	NA	68%	65%	69%	72%	79%	Higher	NA	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Health services	83%	85%	89%	87%	88%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
Education and Enrichment	Special events	NA	NA	NA	76%	78%	81%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Public libraries	94%	93%	94%	90%	93%	96%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
Community Engagement	Public information	81%	81%	82%	80%	82%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar

Table 5: Participation General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)						2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark					
	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Sense of community	81%	84%	87%	85%	83%	79%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
Recommend Needham	93%	96%	97%	94%	96%	95%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
Remain in Needham	90%	90%	91%	89%	91%	88%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Contacted Needham employees	74%	60%	61%	58%	59%	57%	Similar	NA	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher

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Table 6: Participation by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)						2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark					
		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Safety	Stocked supplies for an emergency	NA	NA	NA	35%	30%	29%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Did NOT report a crime	NA	NA	NA	91%	89%	91%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Was NOT the victim of a crime	98%	96%	94%	95%	94%	97%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Used public transportation instead of driving	NA	NA	NA	50%	53%	56%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Higher	Much higher	Much higher
	Carpooled instead of driving alone	NA	NA	NA	47%	45%	46%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	NA	NA	73%	69%	71%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Higher	Higher	Higher
Natural Environment	Conserved water	NA	NA	NA	88%	86%	85%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Made home more energy efficient	NA	NA	NA	77%	80%	74%	Lower	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recycled at home	94%	89%	89%	95%	95%	94%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Did NOT observe a code violation	NA	NA	NA	69%	74%	73%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Higher	Much higher	Higher
	NOT under housing cost stress	70%	74%	71%	74%	75%	77%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Economy	Purchased goods or services in Needham	NA	NA	NA	97%	98%	95%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Economy will have positive impact on income	7%	15%	17%	34%	28%	35%	Higher	NA	Similar	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Work in Needham	NA	NA	NA	35%	36%	30%	Lower	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Lower
Recreation and Wellness	Used Needham recreation centers	NA	NA	NA	55%	64%	60%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Visited a Town park	85%	84%	82%	80%	80%	77%	Similar	NA	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	NA	NA	NA	88%	84%	87%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	NA	NA	NA	87%	88%	91%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	In very good to excellent health	NA	NA	NA	77%	74%	76%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Used Needham public libraries	88%	86%	88%	83%	85%	82%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)						2018 rating compared to 2016	Comparison to benchmark					
		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Community Engagement	Participated in religious or spiritual activities	59%	56%	59%	56%	51%	46%	Similar	NA	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Attended a Town-sponsored event	NA	NA	NA	62%	62%	61%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	NA	NA	29%	25%	23%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Contacted Needham elected officials	NA	NA	NA	22%	21%	18%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Volunteered	51%	51%	55%	50%	47%	42%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Participated in a club	37%	39%	38%	36%	31%	29%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Talked to or visited with neighbors	NA	NA	NA	95%	93%	93%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Done a favor for a neighbor	NA	NA	NA	87%	90%	84%	Lower	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Attended a local public meeting	35%	28%	30%	23%	26%	23%	Similar	NA	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Watched a local public meeting	51%	46%	38%	31%	26%	20%	Lower	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Read or watched local news	NA	NA	NA	90%	84%	86%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Voted in local elections	89%	90%	82%	87%	87%	83%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar