

The National Citizen Survey™

State College, PA

Comparisons by Geographic
Subgroups

2014

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. This report discusses differences in opinion of survey respondents by neighborhood.

Responses in the following tables show only the proportion of respondents giving a certain answer; for example, the percent of respondents who rated the quality of life as “excellent” or “good,” or the percent of respondents who attended a public meeting more than once a month. ANOVA and chi-square tests of significance were applied to these comparisons of survey questions. A “p-value” of 0.05 or less indicates that there is less than a 5% probability that differences observed between Districts are due to chance; or in other words, a greater than 95% probability that the differences observed are “real.” Where differences were statistically significant, they have been shaded grey.

The margin of error for this report is generally no greater than plus or minus four percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample (489 completed surveys). For each neighborhood (Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown, College Heights, Holmes-Foster/West End, Suburban), the margin of error rises to approximately plus or minus 13 percentage points since sample sizes were approximately 158 for Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown, 54 for College Heights, 60 for Holmes-Foster/West End and 217 for Suburban. Notable differences between neighborhoods included the following:

- In most neighborhoods, 9 in 10 respondents rated their overall quality of life highly; but fewer residents (about 8 in 10) in the Suburban neighborhood rated their overall quality of life positively. Those in College Heights were the most pleased with State College as a place to live and as a place to raise children and residents in Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown were most pleased with the overall appearance and overall image of State College.
- Most residents feel safe in State College. Where there were differences in ratings, Holmes-Foster/West End felt the least safe overall and Suburban gave the lowest ratings to animal control. Also, 9 in 10 residents in Suburban had not reported a crime, while about 8 in 10 residents in Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown, Holmes-Foster/West End and College Heights had not reported a crime.
- Where there were differences in ratings of Mobility, they often varied across groups. For example, those in Suburban gave higher ratings for ease of car travel, but lower ratings for ease of walking. In Governance, Mobility ratings (such as street repair, snow removal, street lighting, etc.) varied widely across neighborhoods, with some tendencies for College Heights to give lower ratings for these services. More participants in Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown and Holmes-Foster/West End walked instead of driving and those in the Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown also used the bus more often.
- Ratings for Community Characteristics surrounding Economy (such as overall economic health, employment opportunities, cost of living, etc.) tended to be rated lower by those living in Suburban. Economic development services received the highest ratings from those in the Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown neighborhoods and the lowest ratings from Holmes-Foster/West End.
- When asked what problems were having the biggest effect on overall quality of life, Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown rated noise disturbances as the biggest problem compared to other neighborhoods. Both College Heights and Suburban had more problems with the intermittent rental of homes for special events and potholes and other road deterioration than the other neighborhoods.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics - General

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
The overall quality of life in State College	92%	99%	92%	82%	89%
Overall image or reputation of State College	82%	56%	72%	69%	74%
State College as a place to live	89%	99%	89%	83%	88%
Your neighborhood as a place to live	85%	84%	67%	81%	81%
State College as a place to raise children	75%	91%	78%	91%	81%
State College as a place to retire	65%	85%	65%	64%	66%
Overall appearance of State College	94%	90%	78%	84%	88%

Table 2: Community Characteristics - Safety

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Overall feeling of safety in State College	94%	98%	86%	97%	94%
In your neighborhood during the day	99%	100%	95%	98%	98%
In State College's downtown/commercial area during the day	98%	100%	99%	99%	98%

Table 3: Community Characteristics - Mobility

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Overall ease of getting to the places you usually have to visit	84%	79%	72%	81%	81%
Traffic flow on major streets	53%	51%	41%	61%	54%
Ease of public parking	43%	39%	27%	42%	40%
Ease of travel by car in State College	59%	65%	42%	75%	62%
Ease of travel by public transportation in State College	68%	72%	53%	58%	63%
Ease of travel by bicycle in State College	66%	76%	58%	64%	65%
Ease of walking in State College	96%	94%	90%	84%	91%
Availability of paths and walking trails	85%	88%	73%	80%	82%

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Table 4: Community Characteristics - Natural Environment

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Quality of overall natural environment in State College	87%	97%	76%	86%	86%
Air quality	95%	98%	97%	92%	94%
Cleanliness of State College	90%	92%	71%	87%	87%

Table 5: Community Characteristics - Built Environment

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Overall "built environment" of State College (including overall design, buildings, parks and transportation systems)	72%	62%	67%	59%	66%
Public places where people want to spend time	79%	75%	67%	70%	75%
Variety of housing options	51%	42%	58%	45%	49%
Availability of affordable quality housing	36%	36%	41%	26%	34%
Overall quality of new development in State College	60%	53%	42%	56%	56%

Table 6: Community Characteristics - Economy

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Overall economic health of State College	83%	95%	72%	71%	78%
State College as a place to work	64%	84%	73%	62%	66%
State College as a place to visit	68%	63%	68%	52%	62%
Employment opportunities	57%	48%	68%	37%	51%
Shopping opportunities	54%	47%	56%	47%	51%
Cost of living in State College	46%	48%	30%	35%	40%
Overall quality of business and service establishments in State College	76%	74%	76%	66%	72%
Vibrant downtown/commercial area	75%	67%	62%	59%	68%

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Table 7: Community Characteristics - Recreation and Wellness

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Health and wellness opportunities in State College	85%	91%	66%	76%	80%
Fitness opportunities (including exercise classes and paths or trails, etc.)	81%	77%	74%	80%	79%
Recreational opportunities	80%	72%	76%	75%	77%
Availability of affordable quality food	73%	66%	71%	72%	72%
Availability of affordable quality health care	73%	59%	66%	72%	71%
Availability of preventive health services	81%	70%	62%	77%	76%
Availability of affordable quality mental health care	67%	47%	49%	71%	64%

Table 8: Community Characteristics - Education and Enrichment

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Overall opportunities for education and enrichment	92%	100%	96%	91%	93%
Availability of affordable quality child care/preschool	75%	60%	93%	65%	72%
K-12 education	90%	93%	83%	93%	90%
Adult educational opportunities	90%	76%	97%	77%	85%
Opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities	82%	86%	68%	78%	79%
Opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events and activities	94%	99%	87%	86%	91%

Table 9: Community Characteristics - Community Engagement

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Opportunities to participate in social events and activities	77%	85%	78%	62%	73%
Opportunities to volunteer	86%	87%	80%	82%	84%
Opportunities to participate in community matters	75%	74%	71%	70%	73%
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	80%	59%	73%	61%	71%
Neighborliness of residents in State College	68%	51%	42%	53%	58%

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Table 10: Governance - General

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
The Borough of State College	91%	73%	81%	71%	81%
The value of services for the taxes paid to State College	83%	60%	59%	59%	69%
The overall direction that State College is taking	83%	70%	66%	56%	71%
The job State College government does at welcoming citizen involvement	69%	51%	39%	53%	58%
Overall confidence in State College government	70%	52%	65%	58%	64%
Generally acting in the best interest of the community	79%	65%	60%	67%	71%
Being honest	77%	60%	82%	73%	75%
Treating all residents fairly	72%	36%	67%	67%	66%
Overall customer service by State College employees (police, receptionists, planners, etc.)	83%	70%	64%	79%	78%
The Federal Government	48%	25%	29%	35%	39%

Table 11: Governance - Safety

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Police services	86%	78%	76%	74%	80%
Fire services	92%	100%	97%	91%	93%
Ambulance or emergency medical services	98%	100%	92%	93%	96%
Crime prevention	85%	85%	74%	75%	81%
Fire prevention and education	77%	60%	82%	85%	79%
Animal control	92%	83%	83%	71%	83%
Emergency preparedness (services that prepare the community for natural disasters or other emergency situations)	71%	76%	65%	70%	70%

Table 12: Governance - Mobility

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Traffic enforcement	69%	36%	50%	58%	61%
Street repair	57%	13%	56%	33%	45%
Street cleaning	88%	71%	69%	68%	78%
Street lighting	73%	75%	49%	62%	66%
Snow removal	68%	90%	54%	70%	69%

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Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Sidewalk maintenance	66%	58%	63%	50%	60%
Traffic signal timing	72%	56%	43%	53%	61%
Bus or transit services	79%	73%	78%	79%	79%

Table 13: Governance - Natural Environment

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Garbage collection	91%	100%	86%	91%	91%
Recycling	72%	84%	64%	78%	74%
Yard waste pick-up	82%	97%	58%	74%	78%
Drinking water	73%	79%	66%	68%	71%
Preservation of natural areas such as open space, farmlands and greenbelts	69%	67%	50%	62%	64%
State College open space	56%	76%	49%	58%	58%

Table 14: Governance - Built Environment

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Storm drainage	75%	83%	70%	54%	68%
Sewer services	93%	86%	76%	84%	87%
Power (electric and/or gas) utility	81%	66%	61%	66%	73%
Utility billing	76%	51%	51%	62%	66%
Land use, planning and zoning	57%	70%	45%	48%	54%
Code enforcement (weeds, abandoned buildings, etc.)	76%	81%	59%	63%	70%
Cable television	72%	38%	67%	55%	63%

Table 15: Governance - Economy

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Economic development	78%	65%	52%	58%	67%

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Table 16: Governance - Recreation and Wellness

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Borough parks	87%	87%	75%	87%	85%
Recreation programs or classes	89%	93%	69%	83%	84%
Recreation centers or facilities	81%	92%	72%	87%	83%
Health services	86%	65%	57%	90%	82%

Table 17: Governance - Education and Enrichment

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Public library services	98%	99%	84%	92%	94%
Borough-sponsored special events	71%	51%	59%	72%	68%

Table 18: Governance - Community Engagement

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Public information services	90%	69%	66%	78%	81%

Table 19: Participation General

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Sense of community	83%	48%	65%	63%	71%
Recommend living in State College to someone who asks	83%	91%	90%	75%	82%
Remain in State College for the next five years	24%	58%	46%	53%	39%
Contacted the Borough of State College (in-person, phone, email or web) for help or information	26%	37%	37%	39%	33%

Table 20: Participation - Safety

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Was NOT the victim of a crime	92%	84%	85%	93%	91%
Did NOT report a crime	81%	78%	78%	92%	84%

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Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Stocked supplies in preparation for an emergency	20%	32%	13%	22%	20%

Table 21: Participation - Mobility

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Walked or biked instead of driving	91%	83%	91%	82%	87%
Carpooled with other adults or children instead of driving alone	49%	55%	64%	49%	51%
Used CATA Bus services or van pool or ride share programs instead of driving alone	73%	42%	60%	63%	66%
Used Zipcar for vehicular transportation	2%	0%	0%	4%	2%

Table 22: Participation - Natural Environment

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Recycle at home	87%	100%	90%	93%	90%
Made efforts to make your home more energy efficient	71%	95%	54%	71%	71%
Made efforts to conserve water	65%	75%	63%	70%	67%

Table 23: Participation - Built Environment

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
NOT under housing cost stress	30%	64%	36%	54%	41%
Did NOT observe a code violation	76%	71%	72%	77%	76%

Table 24: Participation - Economy

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Purchase goods or services from a business located in State College	99%	100%	95%	96%	97%
Economy will have positive impact on income	19%	22%	22%	18%	19%

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Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Work in State College	51%	74%	62%	73%	61%

Table 25: Participation - Recreation and Wellness

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Used Centre Region recreation centers or their services	37%	71%	36%	40%	40%
Visited a neighborhood park or Borough park	83%	97%	64%	83%	82%
Eat at least 5 portions of fruits and vegetables a day	79%	89%	76%	78%	79%
Participate in moderate or vigorous physical activity	82%	91%	93%	85%	85%
Reported being in "very good" or "excellent" health	78%	90%	87%	66%	76%

Table 26: Participation - Education and Enrichment

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Used the Schlow Centre Region library or their services	46%	50%	36%	64%	51%
Participated in religious or spiritual activities in State College	31%	36%	48%	43%	38%
Attended a Borough-sponsored event	42%	51%	47%	37%	42%

Table 27: Participation - Community Engagement

Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Campaigned or advocated for an issue, cause or candidate	16%	18%	25%	14%	17%
Contacted State College elected officials (in-person, phone, email or web) to express your opinion	8%	24%	11%	7%	10%
Volunteered your time to some group/activity in State College	49%	48%	45%	50%	49%
Participated in a club	57%	40%	43%	33%	46%
Talked to or visited with your immediate neighbors	71%	76%	68%	65%	69%
Done a favor for a neighbor	51%	67%	52%	52%	53%
Attended a local public meeting	9%	8%	16%	10%	10%
Watched (online or on television) a local public meeting	15%	14%	11%	28%	19%

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Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Read or watch local news (via television, paper, computer, etc.)	71%	72%	65%	77%	72%
Vote in local elections	49%	71%	66%	61%	57%

Table 28: Community Focus Areas

Percent rating positively (e.g., essential/very important)	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Overall feeling of safety in State College	84%	69%	66%	81%	80%
Overall ease of getting to the places you usually have to visit	74%	90%	75%	71%	74%
Quality of overall natural environment in State College	76%	81%	80%	77%	77%
Overall "built environment" of State College (including overall design, buildings, parks and transportation systems)	67%	73%	65%	68%	68%
Health and wellness opportunities in State College	70%	74%	52%	72%	69%
Overall opportunities for education and enrichment	67%	74%	60%	70%	67%
Overall economic health of State College	83%	89%	73%	81%	82%
Sense of community	64%	45%	62%	74%	66%

Table 29: Factors Having a Negative Impact on Quality of Life

The Borough is interested in learning which of these factors you believe currently have the greatest negative impact on quality of life in the Borough: (Percent rating as "Large impact" or "Medium impact").	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Noise disturbances	64%	37%	59%	32%	51%
Refuse violations	27%	23%	21%	22%	24%
Intermittent rental of homes for special events	13%	23%	11%	22%	16%
Traffic or parking on neighborhood streets	52%	47%	59%	56%	54%
Potholes and other road deterioration	46%	77%	51%	66%	56%
Assaults in neighborhoods	28%	45%	26%	34%	31%
Impacts of alcohol consumption	64%	45%	51%	60%	59%
Availability of illegal drugs	42%	33%	42%	42%	41%

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Table 30: Involvement in Community Planning Initiatives

Below is a list of community planning initiatives that were completed in 2013. Using the following scale please identify your level of involvement with each activity.: (Percent rating as "Involved (Participated, Read about, etc.)").	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
State College Neighborhood Plan	16%	25%	22%	29%	22%
Downtown Master Plan	22%	34%	24%	28%	25%
Community & Economic Development Goals	14%	28%	11%	20%	16%
Lunch and Learn	10%	13%	9%	14%	11%

Table 31: Schlow Centre Region Library services

Schlow Centre Region Library currently provides the following services. How likely or unlikely would you be to use the following services in the next 12 months?: (Percent rating as "Very likely" or "Somewhat likely").	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Check out e-books	38%	44%	38%	44%	40%
Music downloads	32%	22%	22%	24%	27%
Access free WiFi	48%	63%	43%	51%	50%
Use online research databases and tools	40%	45%	38%	51%	44%
Receive technology device training and assistance	13%	10%	15%	17%	15%
Attend concerts	40%	48%	24%	46%	40%
Attend author lectures	29%	45%	18%	33%	30%
View art gallery	42%	32%	29%	44%	40%
Request homebound delivery of materials for disabled	11%	0%	5%	7%	8%

Table 32: Enrolled as Student at Penn State

(Percent rating as "Yes")	Neighborhood				Overall
	Highlands and Bellaire/Downtown	College Heights	Holmes-Foster/West End	Suburban	
Are you currently enrolled as a full-time student at Penn State?	74%	47%	54%	33%	56%