



THE NCSTM
The National Community SurveyTM

Walnut Creek, CA

Trends over Time

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 discusses trends over time, comparing the 2019 ratings for the City of Walnut Creek to its previous survey results in 2007, 2012 and 2017. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for Walnut Creek 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 2017 and 2019 surveys, otherwise the comparisons between 2017 and 2019 are noted as being "similar." Additionally, benchmark comparisons for all survey years are presented for reference. Walnut Creek's previous survey in 2017 included mail data collection, as well as responses to an online, open participation survey; because self-selecting survey methodology is known to yield more engaged respondents than data collected by random sampling of residents, it is unsurprising to find a number of decreases within the area of Community Engagement. 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 Walnut Creek for 2019 generally remained stable. Of the 116 items for which comparisons were available, 81 items were rated similarly in 2017 and 2019, 13 items showed a decrease in ratings and 22 showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- In 2019, Walnut Creek residents were generally more pleased with aspects related to Mobility compared to 2017, with 10 of the 22 increases overall seen in this area. Ratings for traffic flow, public parking and street lighting had the largest increases of 10 or more percentage points improving over time.
- A number of increases were also found within measures for government performance. Respondents gave more favorable reviews to the overall direction that the City is taking, confidence in leadership, the government welcoming resident involvement and acting in the best interest of Walnut Creek.
- Other increases were noted within the areas of Economy (employment opportunities and the city as a place to work) and Recreation and Wellness (overall opportunities and recreation centers), as well as overall built environment, the neighborliness of Walnut Creek residents, crime prevention and City-sponsored special events.
- All decreases in 2019 were within the pillar of Participation including decreased rates of public transportation use, visiting recreation centers or public libraries and attending City-sponsored events.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
	2007	2012	2017	2019		2007	2012	2017	2019
Overall quality of life	95%	96%	91%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
Overall image	95%	95%	88%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
Place to live	97%	97%	94%	94%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
Neighborhood	89%	93%	91%	93%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
Place to raise children	94%	93%	93%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
Place to retire	81%	82%	70%	73%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Overall appearance	95%	94%	90%	93%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
		2007	2012	2017	2019		2007	2012	2017	2019
Safety	Overall feeling of safety	NA	NA	92%	90%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Safe in neighborhood	97%	97%	96%	97%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Safe downtown/commercial area	96%	97%	95%	95%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Overall ease of travel	NA	NA	57%	65%	Higher	NA	NA	Lower	Similar
	Paths and walking trails	NA	89%	83%	89%	Higher	NA	Much higher	Higher	Higher
	Ease of walking	83%	84%	77%	84%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
	Travel by bicycle	72%	76%	55%	62%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Travel by public transportation	NA	49%	36%	42%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Travel by car	45%	46%	37%	46%	Higher	Similar	Much lower	Lower	Similar
Mobility	Public parking	NA	NA	30%	40%	Higher	NA	NA	Lower	Similar
	Traffic flow	24%	32%	23%	33%	Higher	NA	Much lower	Lower	Similar
	Overall natural environment	NA	89%	86%	90%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar	Higher
Natural Environment	Cleanliness	NA	92%	88%	89%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar	Higher
	Air quality	80%	77%	86%	80%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Overall built environment	NA	NA	64%	73%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
		2007	2012	2017	2019		2007	2012	2017	2019
	New development in Walnut Creek	74%	76%	62%	66%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Affordable quality housing	17%	33%	16%	14%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Lower
	Housing options	NA	62%	43%	44%	Similar	NA	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Public places	NA	NA	84%	88%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
Economy	Overall economic health	NA	NA	87%	85%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
	Vibrant downtown/commercial area	NA	NA	87%	90%	Similar	NA	NA	Much higher	Much higher
	Business and services	NA	89%	83%	84%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Higher	Higher
	Cost of living	NA	NA	23%	19%	Similar	NA	NA	Lower	Lower
	Shopping opportunities	95%	92%	90%	93%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher
	Employment opportunities	56%	47%	50%	65%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
	Place to visit	NA	NA	83%	85%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
	Place to work	87%	81%	79%	87%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Much higher
	Health and wellness	NA	NA	86%	92%	Higher	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
	Mental health care	NA	NA	62%	57%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
Recreation and Wellness	Preventive health services	NA	75%	82%	84%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Higher	Higher
	Health care	74%	74%	77%	76%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
	Food	81%	81%	71%	70%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Recreational opportunities	83%	87%	84%	84%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
	Fitness opportunities	NA	NA	85%	84%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
	Education and enrichment opportunities	NA	NA	86%	88%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
	Cultural/arts/music activities	80%	78%	79%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
Education and Enrichment	Adult education	NA	NA	77%	81%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
	K-12 education	NA	80%	85%	86%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar	Higher
	Child care/preschool	40%	41%	57%	58%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Social events and activities	NA	76%	75%	80%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar	Higher

The National Community Survey™

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
	2007	2012	2017	2019		2007	2012	2017	2019
Neighborhoodliness	NA	NA	64%	70%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Openness and acceptance	67%	NA	62%	62%	Similar	Higher	NA	Similar	Similar
Opportunities to participate in community matters	NA	68%	70%	74%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Opportunities to volunteer	NA	78%	77%	82%	Similar	NA	Higher	Similar	Similar

Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
	2007	2012	2017	2019		2007	2012	2017	2019
Services provided by Walnut Creek	86%	89%	82%	87%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
Customer service	85%	83%	81%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Value of services for taxes paid	77%	73%	60%	65%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
Overall direction	70%	72%	51%	58%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Welcoming resident involvement	65%	64%	56%	63%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Confidence in City government	NA	NA	54%	60%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Acting in the best interest of Walnut Creek	NA	NA	54%	62%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Being honest	NA	NA	57%	63%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	NA	NA	58%	61%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Services provided by the Federal Government	31%	37%	40%	39%	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar

Table 4: Governance by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
		2007	2012	2017	2019		2007	2012	2017	2019
Safety	Police	88%	91%	87%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Crime prevention	84%	78%	76%	83%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
	Emergency preparedness	NA	69%	72%	71%	Similar	NA	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Traffic enforcement	65%	67%	60%	63%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Street repair	60%	60%	53%	59%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
	Street cleaning	79%	73%	75%	80%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
	Street lighting	76%	72%	67%	77%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
Mobility	Sidewalk maintenance	66%	62%	63%	67%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
	Traffic signal timing	49%	49%	47%	55%	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar

The National Community Survey™

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
		2007	2012	2017	2019		2007	2012	2017	2019
Natural Environment	Natural areas preservation	NA	84%	80%	86%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Higher	Higher
	Walnut Creek Open Space	NA	NA	84%	90%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Much higher
Built Environment	Land use, planning and zoning	64%	61%	52%	54%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Code enforcement	72%	66%	65%	67%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
Economy	Economic development	76%	71%	70%	70%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
Recreation and Wellness	City parks	92%	94%	91%	93%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
	Recreation programs	91%	85%	86%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher
	Recreation centers	89%	84%	80%	90%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher
	Health services	NA	87%	86%	86%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Higher	Higher
Education and Enrichment	Special events	NA	NA	77%	85%	Higher	NA	NA	Similar	Higher
Community Engagement	Public information	63%	NA	77%	74%	Similar	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar

Table 5: Participation General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
	2007	2012	2017	2019		2007	2012	2017	2019
Sense of community	72%	76%	66%	67%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Recommend Walnut Creek	NA	97%	91%	90%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Remain in Walnut Creek	NA	93%	87%	85%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Contacted Walnut Creek employees	42%	32%	37%	28%	Lower	NA	Much lower	Similar	Lower

The National Community Survey™

Table 6: Participation by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
		2007	2012	2017	2019		2007	2012	2017	2019
Safety	Stocked supplies for an emergency	NA	NA	48%	42%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Similar
	Did NOT report a crime	NA	NA	80%	80%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Was NOT the victim of a crime	86%	88%	88%	88%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Used public transportation instead of driving	NA	NA	57%	50%	Lower	NA	NA	Much higher	Much higher
	Carpooled instead of driving alone	NA	NA	52%	47%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	NA	70%	68%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
Natural Environment	Conserved water	NA	NA	95%	92%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
	Made home more energy efficient	NA	NA	80%	77%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Recycled at home	94%	97%	97%	96%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Higher	Similar
Built Environment	Did NOT observe a code violation	NA	NA	65%	67%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	Higher
	NOT under housing cost stress	NA	64%	63%	61%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Economy	Purchased goods or services in Walnut Creek	NA	NA	97%	97%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Economy will have positive impact on income	28%	22%	34%	32%	Similar	NA	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Work in Walnut Creek	NA	NA	33%	30%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Lower
Recreation and Wellness	Used Walnut Creek recreation centers	42%	44%	64%	55%	Lower	NA	Much lower	Similar	Similar
	Visited a City park	83%	88%	87%	84%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	NA	NA	91%	91%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	NA	NA	91%	91%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	In very good to excellent health	NA	NA	75%	68%	Lower	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Used Walnut Creek public libraries	60%	73%	69%	62%	Lower	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Attended a City-sponsored event	NA	NA	56%	46%	Lower	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	NA	37%	23%	Lower	NA	NA	Higher	Similar
	Contacted Walnut Creek elected officials	NA	NA	20%	11%	Lower	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Volunteered	39%	42%	40%	32%	Lower	NA	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Participated in a club	NA	32%	39%	31%	Lower	NA	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Talked to or visited with neighbors	NA	NA	91%	90%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Done a favor for a neighbor	NA	NA	82%	79%	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Attended a local public meeting	18%	20%	26%	18%	Lower	NA	Much lower	Similar	Similar

The National Community Survey™

	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
	2007	2012	2017	2019		2007	2012	2017	2019
Watched a local public meeting	40%	37%	25%	18%	Lower	NA	Lower	Similar	Similar
Read or watched local news	NA	NA	89%	78%	Lower	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Voted in local elections	82%	82%	93%	89%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Higher	Similar