

# The National Citizen Survey™

## Bedford, MA

Trends over Time

2014

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The National Citizen Survey™  
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National Research Center, Inc.  
2955 Valmont Road, Suite 300  
Boulder, CO 80301  
[www.n-r-c.com](http://www.n-r-c.com) • 303-444-7863

International City/County Management Association  
777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20002  
[www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org) • 202-289-ICMA

# 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 2014 ratings for the Town of Bedford to its previous survey results in 2009. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for Bedford 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 2009 and 2014 surveys, otherwise the comparison between 2009 and 2014 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 Bedford for 2014 generally remained stable. Of the 89 items for which comparisons were available, 60 items were rated similarly in 2009 and 2014, 23 items showed a decrease in ratings and six showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Within the facet of Economy, ratings decreased for Bedford as a place to work and economic development services. However, ratings increased from 2009 to 2014 for shopping opportunities and personal economic future.
- Within Mobility, ratings declined from 2009 to 2014 for traffic flow and bus or transit services while ratings increased for paths and walking trails in Bedford.
- Several aspects of Participation decreased from 2009 to 2014 including: sense of community, attending a local public meeting, watching a local public meeting, volunteering, participating in a club and contacting Town of Bedford employees.
- While most aspects of Governance remained stable from 2009 to 2014, there were some decreases in ratings. Aspects of Governance that decreased include: drinking water, sewer services, Town parks, recreation programs, health services, the overall direction Bedford is taking, value of services for taxes paid and overall quality of services provided by Bedford.

Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2014 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark	
	2009	2014		2009	2014
Overall quality of life	94%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Overall image	92%	88%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Place to live	96%	95%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Neighborhood	88%	86%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Place to raise children	95%	92%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
Place to retire	64%	53%	Lower	Higher	Similar
Overall appearance	77%	78%	Similar	Much higher	Similar

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)		2014 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark	
		2009	2014		2009	2014
Safety	Overall feeling of safety	NA	97%	NA	NA	Higher
	Safe in neighborhood	99%	96%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Safe downtown/commercial area	99%	96%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Mobility	Overall ease of travel	NA	68%	NA	NA	Similar
	Paths and walking trails	67%	77%	Higher	Much higher	Higher
	Ease of walking	57%	60%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Travel by bicycle	58%	53%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Travel by public transportation	NA	24%	NA	NA	Lower
	Travel by car	46%	50%	Similar	Much lower	Similar
	Public parking	NA	62%	NA	NA	Similar
	Traffic flow	24%	16%	Lower	Much lower	Much lower
Natural Environment	Overall natural environment	82%	88%	Higher	Much higher	Similar
	Cleanliness	85%	87%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Air quality	85%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
Built Environment	Overall built environment	NA	53%	NA	NA	Similar
	New development in Bedford	64%	53%	Lower	Higher	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)		2014 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark		
		2009	2014		2009	2014	
	Affordable quality housing	39%	38%	Similar	Higher	Similar	
	Housing options	56%	49%	Lower	Similar	Similar	
	Public places	NA	60%	NA	NA	Similar	
Economy	Overall economic health	NA	82%	NA	NA	Higher	
	Vibrant downtown/commercial area	NA	38%	NA	NA	Similar	
	Business and services	67%	72%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	
	Cost of living	NA	36%	NA	NA	Similar	
	Shopping opportunities	66%	74%	Higher	Much higher	Higher	
	Employment opportunities	48%	51%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	
	Place to visit	NA	57%	NA	NA	Similar	
	Place to work	81%	75%	Lower	Much higher	Similar	
	Recreation and Wellness	Health and wellness	NA	75%	NA	NA	Similar
		Mental health care	NA	51%	NA	NA	Similar
Preventive health services		62%	67%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	
Health care		63%	66%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	
Food		72%	71%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	
Recreational opportunities		76%	73%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	
Fitness opportunities		NA	77%	NA	NA	Similar	
Education and Enrichment	Religious or spiritual events and activities	88%	84%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	
	Cultural/arts/music activities	49%	56%	Higher	Lower	Similar	
	Adult education	NA	70%	NA	NA	Similar	
	K-12 education	93%	96%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	
	Child care/preschool	58%	73%	Higher	Much higher	Higher	
Community Engagement	Social events and activities	69%	67%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	
	Neighborliness	NA	74%	NA	NA	Similar	
	Openness and acceptance	84%	68%	Lower	Much higher	Similar	

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)		2014 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark	
		2009	2014		2009	2014
	Opportunities to participate in community matters	82%	81%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Opportunities to volunteer	85%	78%	Lower	Much higher	Similar

Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2014 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark	
	2009	2014		2009	2014
Services provided by Bedford	94%	88%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
Customer service	89%	86%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Value of services for taxes paid	77%	64%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
Overall direction	77%	66%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
Welcoming citizen involvement	73%	72%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
Confidence in Town government	NA	71%	NA	NA	Higher
Acting in the best interest of Bedford	NA	71%	NA	NA	Higher
Being honest	NA	76%	NA	NA	Higher
Treating all residents fairly	NA	73%	NA	NA	Higher
Services provided by the Federal Government	51%	48%	Similar	Much higher	Similar

Table 4: Governance by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2014 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark	
		2009	2014		2009	2014
Safety	Police	95%	92%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
	Fire	98%	97%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Ambulance/EMS	98%	96%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Crime prevention	94%	89%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
	Fire prevention	91%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Animal control	76%	78%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Emergency preparedness	79%	75%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Traffic enforcement	73%	70%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Mobility	Street repair	41%	47%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street cleaning	67%	65%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Street lighting	70%	68%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Snow removal	87%	82%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
	Sidewalk maintenance	59%	59%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Traffic signal timing	68%	62%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Bus or transit services	63%	42%	Lower	Much higher	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)		2014 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark	
		2009	2014		2009	2014
Natural Environment	Garbage collection	91%	89%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Recycling	92%	91%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Yard waste pick-up	NA	74%	NA	NA	Similar
	Drinking water	88%	57%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
	Natural areas preservation	76%	79%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
	Open space	NA	69%	NA	NA	Similar
	Storm drainage	75%	72%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Sewer services	89%	80%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
	Power utility	88%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Utility billing	NA	71%	NA	NA	Similar
Built Environment	Land use, planning and zoning	64%	63%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Code enforcement	69%	64%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Cable television	73%	68%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
	Economy	Economic development	66%	60%	Lower	Much higher
Recreation and Wellness	Town parks	90%	80%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
	Recreation programs	88%	81%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
	Recreation centers	NA	77%	NA	NA	Similar
	Health services	84%	76%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Special events	NA	73%	NA	NA	Similar
	Public libraries	96%	96%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
Community Engagement	Public information	87%	81%	Similar	Much higher	Higher

Table 5: Participation General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2014 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark	
	2009	2014		2009	2014
Sense of community	86%	75%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
Recommend Bedford	96%	92%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Remain in Bedford	89%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Contacted Bedford employees	73%	61%	Lower	Much higher	Higher

Table 6: Participation by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2014 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark	
		2009	2014		2009	2014
Safety	Stocked supplies for an emergency	NA	37%	NA	NA	Similar
	Did NOT report a crime	NA	89%	NA	NA	Higher
	Was NOT the victim of a crime	95%	94%	Similar	Much higher	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2014 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark	
		2009	2014		2009	2014
Mobility	Used public transportation instead of driving	NA	24%	NA	NA	Similar
	Carpooled instead of driving alone	NA	44%	NA	NA	Similar
	Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	61%	NA	NA	Similar
Natural Environment	Conserved water	NA	75%	NA	NA	Similar
	Made home more energy efficient	NA	75%	NA	NA	Similar
	Recycled at home	93%	95%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
Built Environment	Did NOT observe a code violation	NA	74%	NA	NA	Much higher
	NOT under housing cost stress	68%	66%	Similar	Much higher	Similar
Economy	Purchased goods or services in Bedford	NA	97%	NA	NA	Similar
	Economy will have positive impact on income	7%	30%	Higher	Much lower	Similar
	Work in Bedford	NA	34%	NA	NA	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Used Bedford recreation centers	NA	60%	NA	NA	Similar
	Visited a Town park	84%	79%	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	NA	88%	NA	NA	Similar
	Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	NA	88%	NA	NA	Similar
Education and Enrichment	In very good to excellent health	NA	74%	NA	NA	Similar
	Used Bedford public libraries	89%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Higher
Community Engagement	Participated in religious or spiritual activities	48%	43%	Similar	Much lower	Similar
	Attended a Town-sponsored event	NA	63%	NA	NA	Higher
	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	20%	NA	NA	Similar
	Contacted Bedford elected officials	NA	18%	NA	NA	Similar
	Volunteered	52%	44%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
	Participated in a club	41%	29%	Lower	Much higher	Similar
	Talked to or visited with neighbors	NA	90%	NA	NA	Similar
	Done a favor for a neighbor	NA	83%	NA	NA	Similar
Attended a local public meeting	44%	35%	Lower	Much higher	Higher	

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	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)		2014 rating compared to 2009	Comparison to benchmark	
	2009	2014		2009	2014
Watched a local public meeting	39%	31%	Lower	Much lower	Similar
Read or watched local news	NA	83%	NA	NA	Similar
Voted in local elections	84%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Similar