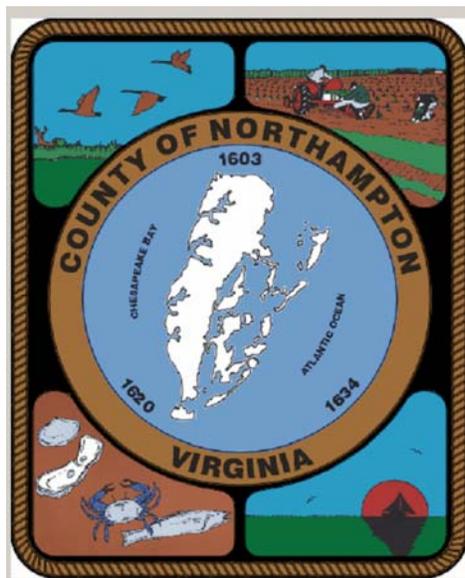


The National
CITIZEN SURVEY™

2005

**Report of Geographic
Subgroup Comparisons for
Northampton County, Virginia**



Submitted by:

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SURVEY BACKGROUND

ABOUT THE NATIONAL CITIZEN SURVEY™

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 National Citizen Survey™ was developed to provide local jurisdictions an accurate, affordable and easy way to assess and interpret resident opinion about important community issues. While standardization of question wording and survey methods provide the rigor to assure valid results, each jurisdiction has enough flexibility to construct a customized version of The National Citizen Survey™ that asks residents about key local services and important local issues.

Results offer insight into residents' perspectives about local government performance and as such provide important benchmarks for jurisdictions working on performance measurement. The National Citizen Survey™ is designed to help with budget, land use and strategic planning as well as to communicate with local residents. The National Citizen Survey™ permits questions to test support for local policies and answers to its questions also speak to community trust and involvement in community-building activities as well as to resident demographic characteristics.

The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality survey methods and comparable results across The National Citizen Survey™ jurisdictions. Participating households are selected at random and the household member who responds is selected without bias. Multiple mailings give each household more than one chance to participate with self-addressed and postage paid envelopes. Results are statistically reweighted to reflect the proper demographic composition of the entire community. The National Citizen Survey™ customized for this jurisdiction was developed in close cooperation with local jurisdiction staff. Northampton County staff selected items from a menu of questions about services and community problems; they defined the jurisdiction boundaries we used for sampling; and they provided the appropriate letterhead and signatures for mailings. Northampton County staff also determined local

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interest in a variety of add-on options for The National Citizen Survey™ Basic Service.

One of the add-on options that Northampton County chose was to have crosstabulations of evaluative questions 1-15 by geographic areas, as defined by the following areas in question 16f:

- Region 1: Cheapside, Townsend, Capeville, Kiptopeke, Cape Center, Bayview, Oyster, Pat Town, Fairview
- Region 2: Simpkins, Smith Beach, Machipongo, Shadyside, Birdsnest, Treherneville
- Region 3: Fairgrounds, Weirwood, Marionville, Red Bank, Franktown, Hare Valley
- Region 4: Silver Beach, Jamesville, Bayford, Willis Warf, Wardtown
- Cape Charles
- Cheriton
- Eastville
- Nassawadox
- Exmore

These areas were combined into rural (Regions 1-4) and urban distinctions (the individually listed towns) so that meaningful comparisons could be made.

UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS

“Don’t Know” Responses

On many of the questions in the survey respondents may answer “don’t know.” The proportion of respondents giving this reply are shown in the full set of responses included in Appendix I of the Report of Results. However, these responses have been removed from the analyses presented in this report. In other words, the tables display the responses from respondents who had an opinion about a specific item.

There were two exceptions to the removal of “don’t know” responses. For items related to crime victimization and crime reporting, “don’t know” responses were not removed. In addition, the “don’t know” responses were not removed from the policy questions.

Putting Evaluations Onto a 100-Point Scale

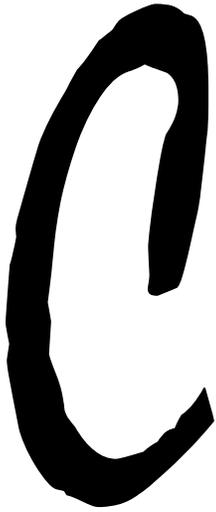
Although responses to many of the evaluative questions were made on a 4 point scale with 4 representing the best rating and 1 the worst, many of the results in this summary are reported on a common scale where 0 is the worst possible rating and 100 is the best possible rating. If everyone reported “excellent,” then the result would be 100 on the 100-point scale. Likewise, if all respondents gave a “poor” rating, the result would be 0 on the 100-point scale. If the average rating for quality of life was “good,” then the result would be 67 on a 100-point scale; “fair” would be 33 on the 100-point scale.

Understanding the Tables

In this report, comparisons between geographic subgroups are shown. For most of the questions, we have shown only one number for each question. Usually this number is the rating on a 100-point scale. Sometimes this scale was not appropriate to use. In these cases we have summarized responses to show only the proportion of respondents giving a certain answer; for example, the percent of respondents who reported a crime, or the percent of respondents who felt the rate of growth was “about right.” For a few questions, we have shown the full set of responses: these include the question about respondents’ perceptions about the economy.

Anova and chi-square tests of significance were applied to these comparisons of survey questions by geographic subgroups. A “p-value” of 0.05 or less indicates that there is less than a 5% probability that differences observed between subgroups 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 are marked in gray.

The 95 percent confidence level for this survey is generally no greater than plus or minus 5 percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample (298 completed surveys). For each geographic area, the margin of error rises to approximately + or – 8.8% since sample sizes were approximately 123 for rural (Regions 1-4) and 172 (towns).



COMPARISONS

Figure 1: Quality of Life Ratings		
	Geographic Location	
	Rural	Urban
Northampton County as a place to live	57	57
Neighborhood as a place to live	69	60
Northampton County as a place to raise children	56	51
Northampton County as a place to retire	64	62
Overall quality of life in Northampton County	53	48
Average Rating on a 100-point Scale (0=poor, 100=excellent)		

Figure 2: Characteristics of the Community		
	Geographic Location	
	Rural	Urban
Sense of community	53	50
Openness and acceptance	39	38
Overall appearance of Northampton County	36	36
Opportunities to attend cultural activities	33	34
Shopping opportunities	15	14
Air quality	65	61
Recreational opportunities	32	29
Job opportunities	12	11
Access to affordable quality housing	17	24

Access to affordable quality child care	29	30
Access to affordable quality health care	33	37
Ease of car travel	53	55
Ease of bus travel	29	37
Ease of bicycle travel	41	38
Ease of walking	48	40
Average Rating on a 100-point Scale (0=poor, 100=excellent)		

Figure 3: Ratings of Growth		
	Geographic Location	
	Rural	Urban
Population growth	31%	29%
Retail growth (stores, restaurants etc.)	20%	21%
Jobs growth	11%	6%
Proportion of Respondents Rating as "About Right"		

Figure 4: Ratings of Potential Problems in Northampton County		
	Geographic Location	
	Rural	Urban
Crime	43	41
Drugs	19	17
Too much growth	50	50
Noise	70	61
Run down buildings, weed lots, or junk vehicles	33	28
Taxes	42	35
Traffic congestion	66	67
Unsupervised youth	41	33
Homelessness	51	47
Road condition	53	53
Average Rating on a 100-point Scale (0=major problem, 100=not a problem)		

Figure 5: Ratings of Safety from Various Problems		
	Geographic Location	
	Rural	Urban
Violent crime	69	63
Property crimes	61	55
Fire	67	70
Average Rating on a 100-Point Scale (0=very unsafe, 100=very safe)		

Figure 6: Ratings of Feelings of Safety in Various Areas		
	Geographic Location	
	Rural	Urban
In your neighborhood during the day	87	84
In your neighborhood after dark	78	70
In Northampton County's downtown area during the day	83	82
In Northampton County's downtown area after dark	66	63
In Northampton County's parks during the day	81	79
In Northampton County's parks after dark	60	59
Average Rating on a 100-Point Scale (0=very unsafe, 100=very safe)		

Figure 7: Crime Victimization and Reporting		
	Geographic Location	
	Rural	Urban
During the past twelve months, were you or anyone in your household the victim of any crime?	6%	13%
If yes, was this crime (these crimes) reported to the police?	47%	98%
Percent of Respondents Whose Households Were Victims of Crime, and Who Reported the Crime		

Figure 8: Use of Community Amenities		
	Geographic Location	
	Rural	Urban
Used Northampton County public libraries or their services	49%	49%
Used Northampton County recreation centers	43%	37%
Participated in a recreation program or activity	43%	37%
Visited a Northampton County park	63%	63%
Ridden a local bus within Northampton County	9%	14%
Attended a meeting of local elected officials or other local public meeting	58%	52%
Volunteered your time to some group/activity in Northampton County	53%	46%
Used the Internet for anything	69%	58%
Purchased an item over the Internet	51%	43%
Proportion of Respondents Rating Engaging in Activity At Least Once in Last 12 Months		

Figure 9a: Quality of Service Ratings		
	Geographic Location	
	Rural	Urban
Sheriff services	56	58
Fire services	66	70
Ambulance/emergency medical services	65	65
Crime prevention	48	42
Fire prevention and education	55	50
Storm drainage	20	23
County parks	44	43
Recreation programs or classes	39	39
Recreation centers/facilities	33	36
Land use, planning and zoning	28	34
Code enforcement (weeds, abandoned buildings, etc)	17	23
Animal control	40	39

Economic development	27	25
Health services	46	43
Services to seniors	36	39
Services to low-income people	31	32
Public library services	42	48
Public information services	40	44
County courts	50	49
Public schools	46	52
Cable television	30	33
Agricultural/Farm advisor	54	50
Nature programs or classes	35	36
Range/variety of nature programs and classes	33	35
Accessibility of trails	34	34
Accessibility of historic sites	44	45
Services to adolescents/teens	19	27
Services to children (age 0-12)	23	30
Average Rating on a 100-Point Scale (0=poor, 100=excellent)		

Figure 10: Ratings of Various Levels of Government		
	Geographic Location	
	Rural	Urban
Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by Northampton County?	39	44
Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by the Federal Government?	40	41
Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by the State Government?	41	42
Average Rating on a 100-point Scale (0=poor, 100=excellent)		

Figure 11: Proportion of Population Having Contact with County Employees		
	Geographic Location	
	Rural	Urban
Have you had any in-person or phone contact with an employee of Northampton County within the last 12 months?	67%	59%
Percent of Respondents Who Reported Contact with a County Employee in the Last 12 Months		

Figure 12: Ratings of Contact with County Employees		
	Geographic Location	
	Rural	Urban
Knowledge	65	57
Responsiveness	66	56
Courtesy	70	70
Overall Impression	65	56
Average Rating on a 100-point Scale (0=poor, 100=excellent)		

Figure 13: Ratings of Public Trust		
	Geographic Location	
	Rural	Urban
I receive good value for the Northampton County taxes I pay	50	48
I am pleased with the overall direction that Northampton County is taking	46	51
The Northampton County government welcomes citizen involvement	56	56
The Northampton County government listens to citizens	52	46
Average Rating on a 100-point Scale (0=strongly disagree, 100=strongly agree)		

Figure 14: Perceptions of Economy			
		Geographic Location	
		Rural	Urban
What impact, if any, do you think the economy will have on your family income in the next 6 months? Do you think the impact will be:	very positive	6%	2%
	somewhat positive	13%	27%
	neutral	41%	38%
	somewhat negative	35%	26%
	very negative	4%	6%
Total		100%	100%