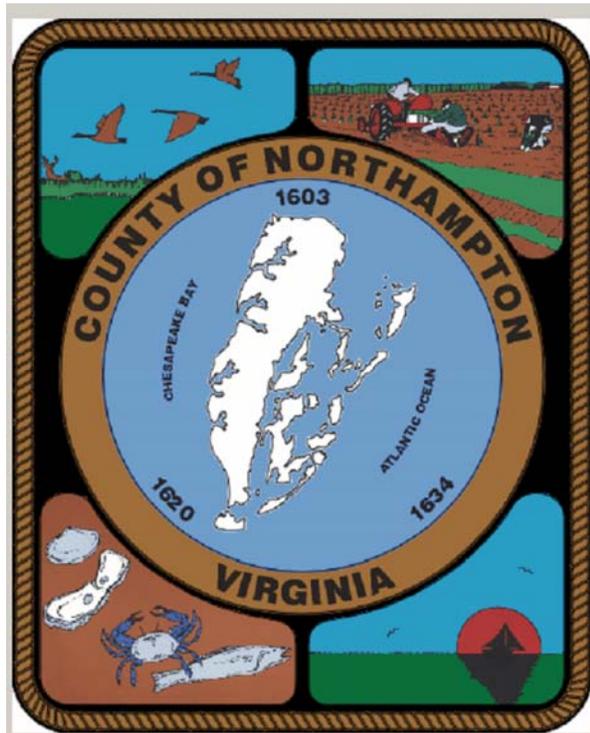


The National
CITIZEN SURVEY™

2005

**Summary Report 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).

UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS

Survey Administration

Following the mailing of a pre-survey notification postcard to a random sample of 1,200 households, surveys were mailed to the same residences approximately one week later. A reminder letter and a new survey were sent to the same households after two weeks. Of the mailed postcards, 150 were undeliverable due to vacant or “not found” addresses. Completed surveys were received from 298 residents, for a response rate of 28%. Typically, the response rates obtained on citizen surveys range from 25% to 40%. In theory, in 95 cases out of 100, the results based on such samples will differ by no more than 5 percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained had responses been collected from all Northampton County adults.

The results were weighted to reflect the demographic profile of all residents in Northampton County. (For more information on the survey methodology, see Appendix II in the Report of Results. A copy of the survey materials can be found in Appendix III of the Report of Results.)

Use of the “Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor” Response Scale

The scale on which respondents are asked to record their opinions about service and community quality is “excellent,” “good,” “fair” or “poor” (EGFP). While symmetrical scales often are the right choice in other measurement tasks, we have found that ratings of almost every local government service in almost every jurisdiction tend, on average, to be positive (that is, above the scale midpoint). Therefore, to permit finer distinctions among positively rated services, EGFP offers three options across which to spread those ratings. EGFP is more neutral

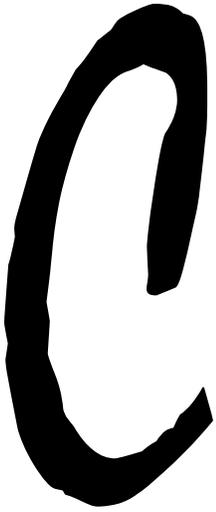
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because it requires no positive statement of service quality to judge (as agree-disagree scales require) and, finally, EGFP intends to measure absolute quality of service delivery or community quality (unlike satisfaction scales which ignore residents' perceptions of quality in favor of their report on the acceptability of the level of service offered).

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. The 95 percent confidence interval around an average score on the 100-point scale is no greater than plus or minus 5 points based on all respondents.



COMMUNITY LIFE

The National Citizen Survey™ contained many questions related to the life of residents in the community. Survey participants were asked to rate their overall quality of life, as well as other aspects of quality of life in Northampton County. They also evaluated characteristics of the community, and gave their perceptions of safety in Northampton County. The questionnaire assessed use of the amenities of the community and involvement by respondents in the civic and economic life of Northampton County.

- **QUALITY OF LIFE**

When asked to rate the overall quality of life in Northampton County, 8% of respondents thought it was “excellent.” 12% rated overall quality of life as “poor.” Northampton County as a place to retire received a rating of 63 on the 100-point scale.

- **RATINGS OF COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS IN NORTHAMPTON COUNTY**

The highest rated characteristics of Northampton County were air quality, sense of community, and openness and acceptance. When asked about potential problems in Northampton County, the three concerns rated by the highest proportion of respondents as a “major problem” were drugs, run down buildings, weed lots, or vehicles, and taxes. The rate of population growth in Northampton County was viewed as “too fast” by 47% of respondents, while 23% thought it was “too slow.”

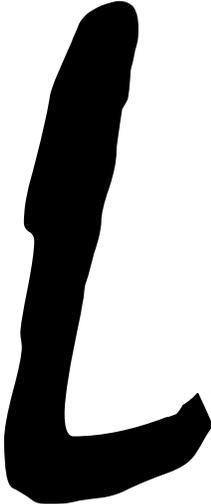
- **PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY**

When evaluating safety in the community, 67% of respondents felt “somewhat” or “very safe” from violent crimes in Northampton County. In their neighborhood after dark, 80% of survey participants felt “somewhat” or “very safe.”

As assessed by the survey, 10% of households reported that at least one member had been the victim of one or more crimes in the past year. Of those who had been the victim of a crime, 85% had reported it to police.

- **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

Participation in the civic, social and economic life of Northampton County during the past year was assessed on the survey. Among those completing the questionnaire, 62% reported visiting a park in Northampton County in the past year and 54% had attended a meeting of elected officials or other local public meeting.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Several aspects of the government of Northampton County were evaluated by residents completing The National Citizen Survey.™ They were asked how much trust they placed in their local government, and what they felt about the services they receive from Northampton County. Those who had any contact with a County employee in the past year gave their impressions of the most recent encounter.

- **PUBLIC TRUST**

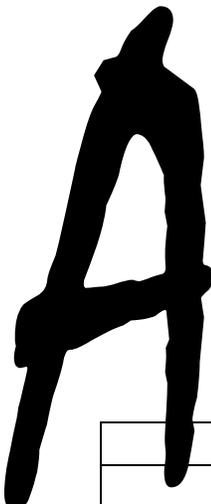
When asked to evaluate whether they felt they received good value for taxes they pay, residents gave an average rating of 48 on a 100-point scale.

- **SERVICES PROVIDED BY NORTHAMPTON COUNTY**

The responses of residents with an opinion about the overall quality of services in Northampton County gave an average rating of 42 on the 100-point scale.

- **NORTHAMPTON COUNTY EMPLOYEES**

Impressions of Northampton County employees were assessed on the questionnaire. Those who had been in contact with a Northampton County employee in the past year (62%) rated their overall impression as 60 on a 100-point scale.



ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Six additional questions were asked by Northampton County as listed below.
 The results for these questions are also available in the Report of Results.

Question #16a: Top issues facing Northampton County		
		Percent of Respondents*
What do you consider to be the top issues facing Northampton County in the next 10 years?	managing growth and development	52%
	economic development	47%
	increasing affordable housing opportunities	40%
	improving public education	34%
	improving infrastructure (water, sewer, streets, trash, etc)	33%
	groundwater protection	22%
	protecting natural resources	17%
	improving law enforcement	17%
	improving Emergency Medical Services and fire fighting response	17%
	coordinating transportation with development	10%
	developing public greenways (parks and trails)	4%
*Percents may add to more than 100% as respondents could give more than one answer		

Question #16b: To what degree are you satisfied or unsatisfied with the current level of local services in Northampton County?		
		Percent of Respondents
To what degree are you satisfied or unsatisfied with the current level of local services in Northampton County?	very satisfied	6%
	somewhat satisfied	37%
	neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	24%
	somewhat unsatisfied	18%
	very unsatisfied	7%
	don't know	6%
Total		100%

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Question #16c: To what degree would you support or oppose the County taking a more active role in economic development?		
		Percent of Respondents
To what degree would you support or oppose the County taking a more active role in economic development?	strongly support	36%
	somewhat support	28%
	neither support nor oppose	15%
	somewhat oppose	5%
	strongly oppose	4%
	don't know	12%
Total		100%

Question #16d: If you support the County taking a more active role in economic development, please rate how important it is for the County to support economic development in the following areas:					
	essential	very important	somewhat important	not at all important	Total
Work force training	46%	44%	7%	4%	100%
Development of business incentives	40%	38%	19%	2%	100%
Assistance with small business development	38%	45%	15%	2%	100%
Downtown Revitalization Program	22%	38%	28%	12%	100%
County department dedicated to active recruitment of outside investors	19%	25%	39%	18%	100%
Cultural diversity of the County	23%	37%	27%	13%	100%

Question #16e: To what degree would you support or oppose a significant increase in dedicated County resources for Parks and Recreation?		
		Percent of Respondents
To what degree would you support or oppose a significant increase in dedicated County resources for Parks and Recreation?	strongly support	33%
	somewhat support	30%
	neither support nor oppose	19%
	somewhat oppose	8%
	strongly oppose	3%
	don't know	7%
Total		100%

Question #16f: Please select the region or incorporated town in which you live		
		Percent of Respondents
Please select the region or incorporated town in which you live:	Region 1: Cheapside, Townsend, Capeville, Kiptopeke, Cape Center, Bayview, Oyster, Pat Town, Fairview	13%
	Region 2: Simpkins, Smith Beach, Machipongo, Shadyside, Birdsnest, Treherneville	14%
	Region 3: Fairgrounds, Weirwood, Marionville, Red Bank, Franktown, Hare Valley	4%
	Region 4: Silver Beach, Jamesville, Bayford, Willis Wharf, Wardtown	11%
	Cape Charles	11%
	Cheriton	9%
	Eastville	7%
	Nassawadox	10%
	Exmore	21%
Total		100%

