



THE NCSTM
The National Community SurveyTM

River Falls, WI

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 River Falls to its previous survey results in 2013, 2015 and 2017. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for River Falls 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. 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 River Falls for 2019 generally remained stable. Of the 125 items for which comparisons were available, 99 items were rated similarly in 2017 and 2019, 22 items showed a decrease in ratings and four showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Nearly half of the items trending down were housed within Community Engagement (opportunities to volunteer, rate of volunteering, the City being welcoming to citizen involvement and overall confidence in City government, among others).
- While ratings for economic development, shopping opportunities and cost of living declined in 2019 compared to 2017, the rating for employment opportunities increased.
- New development received a higher rating in 2019 compared to 2017, but ratings for variety of housing options and affordable quality housing declined.
- Several services related to Natural Environment (garbage collection, recycling, open space and natural areas preservation) also saw ratings decline from 2017 to 2019.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
	2013	2015	2017	2019		2013	2015	2017	2019
Overall quality of life	86%	87%	90%	90%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Overall image	80%	84%	86%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Place to live	92%	92%	93%	93%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Neighborhood	84%	78%	86%	88%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Place to raise children	89%	86%	94%	92%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Similar
Place to retire	68%	71%	69%	72%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Overall appearance	85%	87%	89%	89%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	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			
		2013	2015	2017	2019		2013	2015	2017	2019
Safety	Overall feeling of safety	NA	90%	94%	91%	Similar	NA	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Safe in neighborhood	98%	98%	98%	97%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Safe downtown/commercial area	98%	97%	99%	97%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Overall ease of travel	NA	86%	89%	88%	Similar	NA	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Paths and walking trails	74%	78%	87%	83%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Ease of walking	84%	89%	90%	89%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Travel by bicycle	68%	71%	74%	69%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
Mobility	Travel by public transportation	NA	NA	NA	25%	NA	NA	NA	NA	Lower
	Travel by car	65%	72%	74%	76%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Public parking	NA	60%	58%	55%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Traffic flow	53%	49%	58%	56%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Overall natural environment	89%	89%	89%	92%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
Natural Environment	Cleanliness	86%	86%	93%	89%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Air quality	93%	95%	96%	94%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Overall built environment	NA	69%	72%	72%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	New development in River Falls	67%	65%	58%	65%	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Affordable quality housing	60%	55%	49%	34%	Lower	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
		2013	2015	2017	2019		2013	2015	2017	2019
	Housing options	65%	63%	63%	45%	Lower	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Public places	NA	76%	75%	77%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Economy	Overall economic health	NA	74%	74%	73%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Vibrant downtown/commercial area	NA	61%	56%	54%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Business and services	55%	61%	64%	59%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Cost of living	NA	53%	51%	44%	Lower	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Shopping opportunities	27%	27%	34%	26%	Lower	Much lower	Lower	Lower	Lower
	Employment opportunities	32%	31%	36%	46%	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Place to visit	NA	67%	69%	71%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Place to work	53%	45%	55%	57%	Similar	Much lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Health and wellness	NA	67%	71%	76%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Mental health care	NA	40%	41%	43%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Preventive health services	75%	74%	69%	75%	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Health care	60%	62%	66%	69%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Food	74%	60%	66%	72%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recreational opportunities	72%	73%	76%	72%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Fitness opportunities	NA	75%	77%	73%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Education and enrichment opportunities	NA	88%	90%	87%	Similar	NA	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Religious or spiritual events and activities	NA	90%	88%	83%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Cultural/arts/music activities	53%	77%	77%	72%	Similar	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Adult education	NA	84%	79%	75%	Similar	NA	Higher	Higher	Higher
	K-12 education	87%	91%	92%	87%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
	Child care/preschool	63%	64%	65%	61%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Social events and activities	78%	72%	76%	74%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Neighborliness	NA	70%	72%	69%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Openness and acceptance	66%	64%	65%	60%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Opportunities to participate in community matters	72%	72%	77%	71%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Opportunities to volunteer	75%	73%	82%	76%	Lower	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar

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Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
	2013	2015	2017	2019		2013	2015	2017	2019
Services provided by River Falls	83%	87%	88%	87%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Customer service	87%	NA	NA	86%	Similar	Much higher	NA	NA	Similar
Value of services for taxes paid	62%	53%	64%	54%	Lower	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Overall direction	64%	69%	73%	66%	Lower	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Welcoming citizen involvement	65%	62%	69%	58%	Lower	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Confidence in City government	NA	63%	70%	61%	Lower	NA	Similar	Higher	Similar
Acting in the best interest of River Falls	NA	65%	76%	62%	Lower	NA	Similar	Higher	Similar
Being honest	NA	68%	76%	67%	Lower	NA	Similar	Higher	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	NA	63%	74%	63%	Lower	NA	Similar	Higher	Similar
Services provided by the Federal Government	41%	30%	37%	36%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar

Table 4: Governance by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
		2013	2015	2017	2019		2013	2015	2017	2019
Safety	Police	87%	82%	89%	93%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Fire	94%	95%	95%	98%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Ambulance/EMS	95%	96%	90%	93%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Crime prevention	78%	73%	85%	87%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Fire prevention	88%	86%	88%	85%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Emergency preparedness	71%	61%	71%	68%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Traffic enforcement	74%	74%	81%	79%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Street repair	52%	53%	56%	55%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street cleaning	73%	73%	78%	77%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street lighting	72%	70%	79%	78%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Snow removal	62%	72%	77%	73%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Sidewalk maintenance	57%	63%	66%	65%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Traffic signal timing	60%	62%	70%	66%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Bus or transit services	NA	NA	NA	29%	NA	NA	NA	NA	Lower
Natural Environment	Garbage collection	84%	84%	89%	78%	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recycling	87%	83%	89%	81%	Lower	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Yard waste pick-up	NA	NA	NA	66%	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Drinking water	79%	77%	79%	75%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Natural areas preservation	73%	71%	77%	66%	Lower	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Open space	NA	70%	75%	67%	Lower	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Storm drainage	80%	82%	84%	70%	Lower	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Sewer services	87%	90%	90%	87%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Power utility	86%	90%	90%	90%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
		2013	2015	2017	2019		2013	2015	2017	2019
Economy	Utility billing	NA	78%	84%	84%	Similar	NA	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Land use, planning and zoning	60%	61%	65%	61%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Code enforcement	55%	54%	57%	60%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Economic development	59%	55%	67%	56%	Lower	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	City parks	93%	87%	93%	93%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Recreation programs	89%	77%	82%	85%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recreation centers	NA	NA	NA	75%	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar
	Health services	77%	75%	72%	69%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Special events	NA	78%	77%	73%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Public libraries	96%	90%	94%	93%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Public information	82%	77%	77%	75%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	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			
	2013	2015	2017	2019		2013	2015	2017	2019
Sense of community	83%	81%	75%	74%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
Recommend River Falls	89%	94%	94%	92%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Remain in River Falls	81%	79%	87%	83%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Contacted River Falls employees	61%	NA	NA	47%	Lower	Much higher	NA	NA	Similar

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			
		2013	2015	2017	2019		2013	2015	2017	2019
Safety	Stocked supplies for an emergency	NA	17%	18%	24%	Similar	NA	Much lower	Lower	Lower
	Did NOT report a crime	NA	79%	79%	82%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Was NOT the victim of a crime	89%	92%	90%	89%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Carpooled instead of driving alone	NA	42%	50%	53%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	79%	80%	75%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Much higher	Higher
Natural Environment	Conserved water	NA	80%	79%	75%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Made home more energy efficient	NA	76%	73%	81%	Higher	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recycled at home	NA	95%	96%	97%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Higher
Built Environment	Did NOT observe a code violation	NA	59%	64%	67%	Similar	NA	Similar	Higher	Higher
	NOT under housing cost stress	73%	70%	77%	77%	Similar	Much	Similar	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)				2019 rating compared to 2017	Comparison to benchmark			
		2013	2015	2017	2019		2013	2015	2017	2019
							higher			
Economy	Purchased goods or services in River Falls	NA	99%	95%	98%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Economy will have positive impact on income	26%	24%	24%	29%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Work in River Falls	NA	45%	40%	42%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Visited a City park	95%	92%	93%	93%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Higher
	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	NA	81%	80%	80%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	NA	89%	86%	87%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	In very good to excellent health	NA	57%	62%	58%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Used River Falls public libraries	81%	73%	77%	66%	Lower	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Similar
	Participated in religious or spiritual activities	NA	49%	51%	43%	Lower	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Attended a City-sponsored event	NA	NA	NA	73%	NA	NA	NA	NA	Higher
Community Engagement	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	21%	28%	24%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Contacted River Falls elected officials	NA	17%	15%	14%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Volunteered	53%	55%	52%	44%	Lower	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Similar
	Participated in a club	41%	36%	36%	34%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Talked to or visited with neighbors	NA	92%	93%	93%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Done a favor for a neighbor	NA	73%	79%	81%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Attended a local public meeting	27%	16%	17%	15%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Watched a local public meeting	27%	21%	18%	14%	Similar	Much lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Read or watched local news	NA	74%	73%	75%	Similar	NA	Lower	Lower	Similar
	Voted in local elections	85%	76%	80%	84%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar