



# THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY SURVEY

**2019**

**Elk Grove, CA**

**Executive Summary**

## ABOUT

The National Community Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). It was developed as a low-cost, comprehensive, statistically valid survey solution for local governments eager to find out what their residents think about their communities. The NCS assesses aspects of community life, local government service quality and resident participation in community activities. The results, based on resident perceptions, describe the areas where community members themselves believe things are going well and shed light on the areas that could benefit from improvement.

The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality research methods and directly comparable results across The NCS communities. The NCS has been administered hundreds of times in numerous U.S. cities, counties, towns, villages and boroughs. Communities conducting The NCS can choose from several optional services to customize the reporting of survey results. The 2019 NCS for the City of Elk Grove includes a number of these optional services, as detailed below.

### *Eight Facets of Livable Communities*

Broadly, The NCS measures a community's "livability." A great many definitions have been made for community livability<sup>1</sup>, including one from the Partners for Livable Communities, calling it "the sum of the factors that add up to a community's quality of life."<sup>2</sup> Staff at NRC examined the extensive research that has been done about community livability and many of the models that have been developed to describe the components of livable communities<sup>3</sup>. Eight facets of community livability were distilled from the synthesis of this research:

1. Safety
2. Mobility
3. the Natural Environment
4. the Built Environment
5. the Economy
6. Recreation and Wellness
7. Education and Enrichment
8. Community Engagement

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<sup>1</sup> Many examples are shown at [http://www.camsys.com/kb\\_experts\\_livability.htm](http://www.camsys.com/kb_experts_livability.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Source: Partners for Livable Communities, <http://www.livable.org/about-us/what-is-livability>

<sup>3</sup> See, for example:

[http://livable.nonprofitsoapbox.com/storage/documents/board\\_resources/BOT\\_Meetings/2010/4ExecCommNov5/Grand\\_Alliance\\_doc\\_for\\_EC.pdf](http://livable.nonprofitsoapbox.com/storage/documents/board_resources/BOT_Meetings/2010/4ExecCommNov5/Grand_Alliance_doc_for_EC.pdf); [http://www.sustainable.org/images/stories/pdf/Placemaking\\_v1.pdf](http://www.sustainable.org/images/stories/pdf/Placemaking_v1.pdf); [http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)

The NCS questionnaire includes individual items that act as indicators of community quality within each of the eight facets – and, split in a different way, they form three “pillars” of community quality: Community Characteristics, Governance, and Participation.

### *Documentation and Methodology*

The NCS uses a random sample survey to ensure validity of the results. In addition, the standardization of common questions and survey methods provide the rigor to assure valid results, and each community has flexibility to construct a customized version of The NCS. Results offer insight into residents’ perspectives about the community as a whole, including local amenities, services, public trust, resident participation and other aspects of the community in order to support budgeting, land use and strategic planning and communication with residents. Resident demographic characteristics permit comparison to the Census as well as comparison of results for different subgroups of residents.

The full description of survey methodology is included in the Technical Appendices, starting on page 35.

## USING THE REPORT

Instead of a single, heavy document that can be difficult to navigate and share, The NCS results are reported in multiple formats and lengths, each with varying levels of detail to ensure different stakeholder groups get the right information to meet their needs. The 2019 National Community Survey for Elk Grove includes each of the following documents:

**Community Livability Report:** This report is the most universal and summarizes all the results and key findings. Most of the charts in your Community Livability report have been color-coded to indicate how results compare to national benchmarks, with individual survey items grouped within the eight facets of Community Livability.

**Dashboard Summary of Findings:** This report offers a simplified quantitative view of the data, as well as comparison details for each question, including the relationship to the benchmark and over time. The City of Elk Grove chose to have comparisons made to the national database of over 600 communities who have completed The NCS over the past two years and a subset of similar jurisdictions (California jurisdictions with populations 60,000 or greater).

**Trends over Time:** This report reveals how resident perspectives and behaviors have changed across the ten years that The NCS has been administered in Elk Grove. The report offers a high-level view of how rankings have changed as well as relative position to the benchmark including all administrations of The NCS.

**Demographic Crosstabs:** In this report each survey question is cross-classified by responses from different demographic groups in the community. This includes five demographic groupings (length of

residency, housing tenure, gender and households with children or seniors) in order to identify if results differ depending on the demographic category of respondent.

**Geographic Crosstabs:** This report compares survey responses by subgroups, in this case, based on respondents' location. The geographic areas used for the comparisons are the three zip codes within Elk Grove, which correspond to the area of Elk Grove east of highway 99 (zip code 95624), the area south of Elk Grove Blvd and west of highway 99 (zip code 95757), and the area north of Elk Grove Blvd and west of highway 99 (zip code 95758).

**Open-ended Questions:** Elk Grove included one open-ended question in the 2019 NCS. Respondents were able to write in their response to the question "What do you think is the most critical challenge facing the City of Elk Grove in the next 5 years?". This report provides information on the frequency of responses that were grouped into categories as well as providing the verbatim responses for all respondents.

**Supplemental Online Results:** This report provides a summary of the opt-in online survey. Following the completion of the official data collection period, the City made available a web-based survey to its residents through a link on the City's website. The results from this survey are included separately in order to ensure the validity of The NCS survey.

**Technical Appendices:** The appendices include the details about survey methods, individual response options selected for each question – with and without the "don't know" option – and detailed benchmark results. This document speaks to the credibility of data and the most granular detail of results.

## KEY FINDINGS

### **Elk Grove residents report a positive quality of life.**

About 8 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of life in Elk Grove and to the City as a place to live. Roughly 8 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to their neighborhood as a place to live, Elk Grove as a place to raise children and the overall appearance of the city, while 7 in 10 were pleased with Elk Grove's overall image. About 6 in 10 residents gave positive scores to the sense of community in Elk Grove, while nearly 9 in 10 planned to remain in the community for the next five years and would recommend living in Elk Grove to someone who asked. These ratings were all similar to those given in other jurisdictions across the country.

### **Safety and economy continue to be resident priorities**

As in 2017, residents identified Safety and Economy as two important areas of focus for the next two years. Ratings for Safety tended to be strong and similar to the national benchmarks. Roughly 9 in 10 respondents reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods and in Elk Grove's downtown/commercial area, while three-quarters gave positive marks to the overall feeling of safety in the city; this latter rating improved from 2017 to 2019. Scores for police, crime prevention, animal control and emergency preparedness were all on par with those observed in other communities. Nine in ten

residents had not been the victim of a crime and three-quarters had not reported a crime in the 12 months prior to the survey. Ratings for several Safety-related aspects improved from 2017 to 2019.

Ratings for Economy were similarly positive and similar to those given in other communities. About 7 in 10 residents gave positive reviews to the overall economic health of the city, while 6 in 10 were pleased with the quality of Elk Grove's business and service establishments. Half of residents gave high scores to shopping opportunities, Elk Grove as a place to work, and economic development. Most Economy ratings were similar to the national benchmarks except for vibrant downtown/commercial area and the city as a place to visit, which were lower. Ratings within the facet of Economy remained stable since 2017.

### **Mobility is also important to residents, with possibilities to further promote bicycling in the City.**

Residents also identified Mobility as an important focus area for the coming years. About 6 in 10 residents gave favorable marks to the overall ease of travel in the City, paths and walking trails, ease of walking, ease of travel by car, public parking, traffic enforcement, street cleaning, street lighting, and sidewalk maintenance. Ratings for overall ease of travel in the City and ease of travel by bicycle improved from 2017 to 2019. Further, Elk Grove residents were more likely than those who lived elsewhere to have carpooled instead of driving alone.

In a series of custom questions, residents were asked to provide their feedback about bicycling, walking, and bikeways and trails in the City. Of the residents who had used City trails and bikeways in the 12 months prior to the survey (about three-quarters of respondents), most residents indicated that they used the trails for walking, while about half used them for biking. One-third used the trails and bikeways to walk their pet and one-quarter used them for jogging or running. However, thinking specifically about using the bikeways and trails for bicycling, about half of residents had not used the trails at all in the past 12 months to ride a bicycle, while 2 in 10 had used them for this purpose once a month or less and 15% had used them a few times a month. Fewer used the trails for biking more frequently.

When asked whether they would like to ride a bicycle more often, about two-thirds of residents indicated that they would, 2 in 10 indicated that they would not, and about 1 in 10 responded that this question did not apply to them or that they were not physically able to ride a bicycle. Considering a list of various reasons why they did not bike more frequently, about one-quarter indicated that there were not enough paved, off-street bike and multi-use trails, while 2 in 10 mentioned that improvements were needed to bike path and trail connectivity, that bike lanes were not physically separated from car traffic or that there were not enough bike lanes on streets. Another 2 in 10 residents noted that they did not think changes were needed or that they did not want to bicycle. Finally, about 8 in 10 residents strongly or somewhat agreed that they worried about being hit by a motor vehicle when riding a bicycle, that bicycling is a convenient way to get from one place to another, and that they were familiar with the bicycle lanes, paths, and trails in their area. About 7 in 10 respondents agreed that they would be more likely to ride a bicycle if motor vehicles and bicycles were physically separated by a barrier.

**Notable trends over time included the following:**

- In Community Characteristics, ratings for six aspects increased since the previous survey iteration (overall feeling of safety, ease of travel by bicycle, overall ease of travel, air quality, affordable quality mental health care and Elk Grove as a place to retire). Only one aspect within Community Characteristics, the availability of affordable quality housing, decreased from 2017 to 2019.
- In Governance, residents' scores for crime prevention and emergency preparedness improved over time, while ratings for open space and land use, planning and zoning declined. Residents were also more likely in 2019 than in 2017 to give positive ratings to the job Elk Grove government does at welcoming resident involvement as well as being honest.
- Residents were less likely in 2019 to have participated in several aspects of Community Engagement (including campaigning for an issue, cause or candidate or doing a favor for a neighbor); most other rates of participation in Elk Grove remained stable since 2017.
- Looking at longer-term trends, many ratings in Elk Grove have showed an upward trend in the past ten years. Items for which positive ratings increased by at least ten percentage points included Elk Grove as a place to retire, cultural/arts/music activities, quality of overall natural environment, employment opportunities, recreational opportunities, the job Elk Grove does at welcoming resident involvement, the overall direction of the City, and economic development, among others.