

WASHINGTON COUNTY, MN 2008

Benchmark Report



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UNDERSTANDING THE BENCHMARK COMPARISONS

COMPARISON DATA

NRC’s database of comparative resident opinion is comprised of resident perspectives gathered in citizen surveys from approximately 500 jurisdictions whose residents evaluated local government services and gave their opinion about the quality of community life. Washington County chose to have comparisons made to other counties across the nation. A benchmark comparison (the average rating from all the comparison jurisdictions where a similar question was asked) has been provided when a similar question on the Washington County Residential Survey was included in NRC’s database and there were at least five counties in which the question was asked. See *Jurisdictions Included in National County Benchmark Comparisons* (page 6) for the complete list of counties included in the benchmarks.

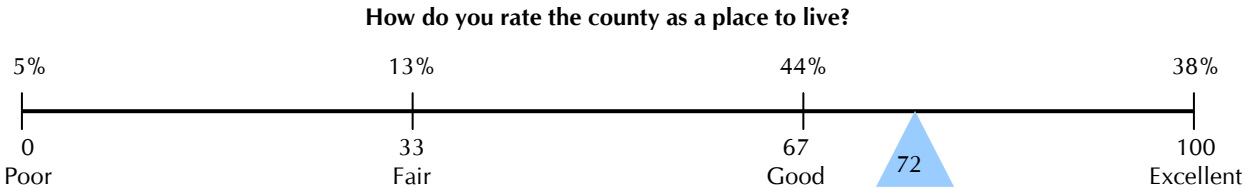
PUTTING EVALUATIONS ONTO THE 100-POINT SCALE

Although responses to many of the evaluative questions were made on a 4 point scale with 1 representing the best rating and 4 the worst, the benchmarks are reported on a common scale where 0 is the worst possible rating and 100 is the best possible rating. The 95 percent confidence interval around an average score on the 100-point scale is no greater than plus or minus 2.6 points based on all respondents.

The 100-point scale is not a percent. It is a conversion of responses to an average rating. Each response option is assigned a value that is used in calculating the average score. For example, “excellent” = 100, “good” = 67, “fair” = 33 and “poor” = 0. If everyone reported “excellent,” then the average rating would be 100 on the 100-point scale. Likewise, if all respondents gave a “poor”, the result would be 0 on the 100-point scale. If half the respondents gave a score of “excellent” and half gave a score of “poor,” the average would be in the middle of the scale (like the center post of a teeter totter) between “fair” and “good.” An example of how to convert survey frequencies into an average rating appears below.

Example of Converting Responses to the 100-point Scale

How do you rate the county as a place to live?						
Response option	Total with “don’t know”	Step 1: Remove the percent of “don’t know” responses	Total without “don’t know”	Step 2: Assign scale values	Step 3: Multiply the percent by the scale value	Step 4: Sum to calculate the average rating
Excellent	36%	$= 36 \div (100-5) =$	38%	100	$= 38\% \times 100 =$	38
Good	42%	$= 42 \div (100-5) =$	44%	67	$= 44\% \times 67 =$	30
Fair	12%	$= 12 \div (100-5) =$	13%	33	$= 13\% \times 33 =$	4
Poor	5%	$= 5 \div (100-5) =$	5%	0	$= 5\% \times 0 =$	0
Don’t know	5%		–			
Total	100%		100%			72



INTERPRETING THE RESULTS

Average ratings are compared when similar questions are included in NRC's database, and there are at least five counties in which the question was asked. Where comparisons are available, three numbers are provided in the table. The first column is your county's rating on the 100-point scale. The second column is the rank assigned to your county's rating among counties where a similar question was asked. The third column is the number of counties that asked a similar question. The final column shows the comparison of your county's average rating (column one) to the benchmark.

The comparison: "above," "below" or "similar" comes from a statistical comparison of your county's rating to the benchmark (the average rating from all the comparison counties where a similar question was asked). Differences of more than 2.6 points on the 100-point scale between your county's ratings and the average based on the appropriate comparisons from the database are considered "statistically significant," and thus are marked as "above" or "below" the benchmark. When differences between your county's ratings and the benchmarks are 2.6 points or fewer, they are marked as "similar to" the benchmark.

NATIONAL COUNTY BENCHMARK COMPARISONS

	Washington County average rating (0 = most negative, 100 = most positive)	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	Comparison to benchmark
How would you rate your overall quality of life in Washington County? Would you say it is excellent, good, fair, or poor	78	1	34	Above the norm

	Washington County average rating (0 = most negative, 100 = most positive)	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Availability of affordable housing	43	7	33	Above the norm
Availability of affordable health care	49	7	27	Above the norm
Availability of affordable quality childcare	51	2	23	Above the norm
Availability of parks	77	2	5	Above the norm
Availability of trails	73	1	5	Above the norm

	Washington County average rating (0 = most negative, 100 = most positive)	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	Comparison to benchmark
from property crimes, such as burglary and theft	74	6	25	Above the norm
from violent crimes, such as rape, assault, robbery	81	9	25	Above the norm

	Washington County average rating (0 = most negative, 100 = most positive)	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Population growth	26	Not available	Not available	Not available
Retail growth, including stores and restaurants	37	Not available	Not available	Not available

	Washington County average rating (0 = most negative, 100 = most positive)	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	Comparison to benchmark
From what you know, do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job the Washington County Board is doing?	67	Not available	Not available	Not available

	Washington County average rating (0 = most negative, 100 = most positive)	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	Comparison to benchmark
How would you rate the job the County does of informing its citizens? Would you say it is excellent, good, fair, or poor	56	2	10	Above the norm
I feel Washington County government listens to citizens.	61	1	28	Above the norm
I feel I receive good value for the Washington County taxes I pay.	62	2	33	Above the norm
Overall, I feel that Washington County does a good job of managing tax dollars.	61	Not available	Not available	Not available

	Washington County average rating (0 = most negative, 100 = most positive)	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	Comparison to benchmark
County libraries	79	1	5	Above the norm
County parks and recreation	77	1	9	Above the norm
Trail and bikeway system	76	1	7	Above the norm
Condition of County roads	49	5	10	Above the norm
Sheriff services	70	3	9	Above the norm
Social services to seniors	61	5	34	Above the norm
Services to youth	56	3	13	Above the norm
Services to low income residents	52	3	29	Above the norm
Child protection services	62	2	6	Above the norm
Snow and ice removal on County roads	68	2	24	Above the norm
What about the overall quality of services provided by Washington County?	67	3	37	Above the norm

	Washington County average rating (0 = most negative, 100 = most positive)	Rank	Number of Jurisdictions for Comparison	Comparison to benchmark
Their courteousness	80	1	7	Above the norm
Their knowledge	76	1	28	Above the norm
Their responsiveness	75	1	26	Above the norm

JURISDICTIONS INCLUDED IN NATIONAL COUNTY BENCHMARK COMPARISONS

Cococino County, AZ.....	116,320	Jefferson Parish, LA	455,466
San Bernardino County, CA.....	1,709,434	Orleans Parish, LA	484,674
San Francisco, CA	776,733	Montgomery County, MD	873,341
Santa Barbara County, CA	399,347	Ottawa County, MI	238,314
Archuleta County, CO.....	9,898	Carver County, MN.....	70,205
Boulder County, CO.....	291,288	Dakota County, MN.....	355,904
Broomfield, CO.....	38,272	Olmsted County, MN.....	137,521
Denver (City and County), CO	554,636	Scott County, MN	89,498
Douglas County, CO	175,766	St. Louis County, MN.....	200,528
Eagle County, CO.....	41,659	Washington County, MN	201,130
Grand County, CO	12,442	Washoe County, NV	339,486
Jefferson County, CO.....	527,056	Jackson County, OR	181,269
Larimer County, CO	251,494	Cumberland County, PA	213,674
Mesa County, CO.....	116,255	Pickens County, SC.....	110,757
Pitkin County, CO	14,872	Albemarle County, VA	79,236
Summit County, CO	23,548	Arlington County, VA.....	189,453
Brevard County, FL.....	476,230	Botetourt County, VA.....	30,496
Charlotte County, FL	141,627	Chesterfield County, VA.....	259,903
Collier County, FL	251,377	Hanover County, VA.....	86,320
Duval County, FL	778,879	James City County, VA.....	48,102
Hillsborough County, FL	998,948	Northampton County, VA	13,093
Pinellas County, FL.....	921,482	Prince William County, VA	280,813
Volusia County, FL	443,343	Stafford County, VA	92,446
Walton County, FL	40,601	Chittenden County, VT	146,571
Honolulu, HI.....	876,156	Clark County, WA.....	345,238
Maui, HI.....	128,094	King County, WA.....	1,737,034
Iowa County, IA	15,671	Kitsap County, WA.....	231,969
Marion, IA.....	7,144	Ashland County, WI.....	16,866
Polk County, IA	374,601	Ozaukee County, WI	82,317
Peoria County, IL.....	183,433	Teton County, WY	18,251
Daviess County, KY.....	91,545		