



County of Hanover • 7516 County Complex Road • Hanover, VA 23069 • T: (804) 365-6005

# Hanover County, Virginia

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## Summary Report 2005



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# SURVEY BACKGROUND

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## About The National Citizen Survey™

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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

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### 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, 8 were undeliverable due to vacant or “not found” addresses. Completed surveys were received from 540 residents, for a response rate of 45%. Typically, the response rates obtained on citizen surveys range from 25% to 40%.

It is customary to describe the precision of estimates made from surveys by a “level of confidence” (or margin of error). The 95 percent confidence level for this survey of 1,200 residents is generally no greater than plus or minus 5 percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample.

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

## PROFILE OF HANOVER COUNTY

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About 33% of Hanover County residents have lived in the community for more than 20 years and 74% are over age 34. Another 14% are over age 64. Eighty-one percent are currently employed; 13% rent; 87% own and 87% live in detached single family homes. Over 80% of Hanover County residents have at least some college and 27% have household incomes above \$100,000 per year. Three percent of Hanover County residents reported that they are Spanish, Hispanic or Latino and 90% said they are White or Caucasian.

## COMMUNITY LIFE

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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 Hanover County. They also evaluated characteristics of the community, and gave their perceptions of safety in Hanover County. The questionnaire assessed use of the amenities of the community and involvement by respondents in the civic and economic life of Hanover County.

### Quality of Life

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When asked to rate the overall quality of life in Hanover County, 28% of respondents thought it was “excellent.” Only 1% rated overall quality of life as “poor.”

### Ratings of Community Characteristics

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The highest rated characteristics of Hanover County were overall image/reputation of Hanover County, air quality, sense of community, and educational opportunities. When asked about potential problems in Hanover County, the three concerns rated by the highest proportion of respondents as a “major problem” were too much growth, traffic congestion, and taxes. The rate of population growth in Hanover County was viewed as “too fast” by 71% of respondents, while 1% thought it was “too slow.”

### Perceptions of Safety

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When evaluating safety in the community, 84% of respondents felt “somewhat” or “very safe” from violent crimes in Hanover County. In their neighborhood after dark, 91% of survey participants felt “somewhat” or “very safe.”

As assessed by the survey, 6% 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, 72% had reported it to police.

### Community Participation

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Participation in the civic, social and economic life of Hanover County during the past year was assessed on the survey. Among those completing the questionnaire, 78% reported visiting a park in Hanover County in the past year and 27% had attended a meeting of elected officials or other local public meeting.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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Several aspects of the government of Hanover 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 Hanover County. Those who had any contact with a Hanover County employee in the past year gave their impressions of the most recent encounter.

### Public Trust

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When asked to evaluate whether they felt they received good value for taxes they pay, residents gave an average rating of 61 on a 100-point scale.

### Service Provided by Hanover County

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The overall quality of services provided by Hanover County was rated as 62 on a 100-point scale. On average, residents of Hanover County gave the highest evaluations to their own local government and the lowest average rating to the federal government.

### Hanover County Employees

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Impressions of Hanover County employees were assessed on the questionnaire. Those who had been in contact with a Hanover County employee in the past year (69%) rated their overall impression as 69 on a 100-point scale.

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

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

