

Survey Highlights

Survey background

The purposes of the Adams County Quality of Life survey were to establish a baseline for residents' levels of satisfaction with services provided by the County, to give residents an opportunity to provide input to the County on areas of strength and opportunities for improvement and to communicate priorities for planning purposes and resource allocation. The County anticipates using the results of the survey in a variety of ways including performance based budgeting, the County Report Card project for performance management, the formulation of department goals, the County Comprehensive Plan and other County plans, initiatives and programs. The Quality of Life survey was developed through an iterative process with members of the Board of County Commissioners, other elected officials, appointed officials and department directors and National Research Center, Inc (NRC) staff.

Three thousand households in Adams County were randomly selected to receive the survey. Each of the survey recipients were contacted by mail a total of three times in May 2012. The first mailing was a prenotification postcard, followed by the initial survey packet and a reminder survey packet, each about one week apart. A total of 503 completed surveys were returned, for a response rate of 17%. The 95 percent confidence interval for this survey is generally no greater than plus or minus four percentage points around any given percent reported for all survey respondents. Survey results were weighted so that the age, gender, race/ethnicity, housing tenure (rent versus own) and area of the County (unincorporated versus incorporated) were represented in the proportions reflective of the entire county. National benchmark comparisons were provided when similar questions on the Adams County Quality of Life Survey were included in NRC's database and there were at least five jurisdictions in which the question was asked.

Highlights and Opportunities

Convenience, variety and recreation characterize the county

- Of the 20% of respondents who wrote in their own words what they liked best about living in Adams County, nearly one-third cited the location of the county, especially access to work, shopping or Denver, or proximity to the mountains; respondents also enjoyed the mix of urban and rural as well as the lower cost of living.
- About 6 in 10 respondents rated the opportunities to participate in outdoor recreation or enjoy nature, recreational opportunities and the variety of housing options as excellent or good.
- Almost 8 in 10 respondents felt Adams County provided an excellent or good open space, parks and trails system; just over one-third of respondents felt this service was one of the most important services provided by the county.
- The availability of paths and walking trails and the ease of car travel were deemed excellent or good by at least 6 in 10 respondents.

Open Adams remains a mystery to residents

- Two-thirds of respondents were not at all familiar with the Open Adams reform measures being undertaken by the County; an additional 20% were only a little bit familiar.
- The vast majority of respondents (71%) could not provide an opinion on how well the County was doing on implementing Open Adams; of those who could provide an opinion, only 41% felt the County was doing an excellent or good job.

Rebuilding trust in the community will take time

- About half of respondents thought that Adams County government generally acts in the best interest of the community and is responsive to residents.
- Only 3 in 10 respondents felt the County did a good or excellent job of being open and transparent with the public.
- Ratings of the overall image or reputation of the county were lower in Adams County than in other communities across the nation and in Colorado.
- Less than half of respondents (44%) believed they could trust Adams County government to do what is right always or most of the time.

Additional highlights of survey results

Quality of life

Adams County as a place to live was considered excellent or good by nearly three-quarters of respondents.

Between 64% and 67% of respondents rated their overall quality of life, the openness and acceptance of people of diverse backgrounds, Adams County as a place to live and as a place to raise children as excellent or good.

Overall, however, quality of life ratings were lower in Adams County compared to ratings given by residents of other jurisdictions across the nation and in Colorado.

Community characteristics

Twenty-five community characteristics were rated by survey participants; 21 were able to be compared to national benchmarks. One characteristic was given ratings above the benchmark: availability of affordable quality housing. Thirteen characteristics were rated similar to the benchmark, and 7 were below the benchmark.

The highest rated community characteristics were: emergency response times (fire, ambulance, sheriff, etc.); availability of paths and walking trails; sense of personal safety; and drinking water quality. The lowest rated community characteristics were: employment opportunities; opportunities to attend cultural activities; availability of affordable quality child care and educational opportunities.

Quality of services

The overall quality of services provided by Adams County was rated as excellent or good by nearly 60% of respondents. Over 40% of respondents considered the value of the services provided for the taxes paid as excellent or good, while an additional 41% considered the value of services provided for taxes paid as fair. Respondents in Adams County rated both the overall quality of services and the value of services for the taxes paid lower than the benchmark.

Twenty-five specific county government services were rated by survey participants; 12 were able to be compared to national benchmarks. Four of these services were rated similar to the benchmark, and 8 were below the benchmark.

The highest rated services were: Adams County open space; parks and trails system; animal shelter/adoption center; elections and voter registrations; and Sheriff services. The lowest rated services were economic development; roadway maintenance of paved and graveled roads in

unincorporated Adams County; community development; and enforcement of county codes, ordinances and regulations.