



DAKOTA COUNTY, MN 2025 RESIDENT SURVEY

Report of Results

May 2025



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Executive Summary

Survey Background

Understanding the needs of residents is important to Dakota County Commissioners and senior leaders, so Dakota County has conducted a regular, periodic survey of residents' opinions. This report includes Dakota County survey results dating back to 2001. In 2025, Dakota County was joined again by four other Minnesota counties (Washington, St. Louis, Olmsted, and Scott), who worked together with Polco to develop a survey instrument with a set of shared questions, as well as questions unique to each county.

The Dakota County Resident Survey was administered by mail to 7,000 randomly selected households distributed among the seven County Commissioner Districts, between January and March of 2025. Of the approximately 6,804 households that received a survey in the mail (the other surveys were returned to sender for various reasons), 786 surveys were completed, providing a response rate of 12%.

Because Dakota County has administered a resident survey before, comparisons could be made between 2025 responses and those from prior years. Generally, comparisons between surveys are made through the conversion of ratings to a 100-point scale. Dakota County also opted to compare its results with those of 45 counties nationwide, using Polco's national benchmark database to enable the comparisons. This database contains resident perspectives gathered in statistically valid surveys from more than 500 jurisdictions, including cities and counties.

Survey Highlights

Quality of life ratings for Dakota County residents remain high.

- ◆ Dakota County residents rated their overall quality of life in the county at 78 points on the 100-point scale, an identical rating to the one received in 2022. Since 2001, the rating of overall quality of life stands between “excellent” (100 pts) and “good” (67 pts). As in previous iterations, the rating continues to be much higher in Dakota County than in other counties across the nation.
- ◆ Residents also rated most general characteristics of the county positively, including the county as a place to live (78 points, or a rating between “good” and “excellent”) and the county as a place to raise a family (77). Each of these aspects received ratings that were higher than the national county average.
- ◆ When identifying what residents liked most about living in Dakota County, about 3 in 10 residents selected its location, while 2 in 10 mentioned the quality of life in general. Other top-rated Dakota County attributes were parks and greenways, neighborhoods, and the rural character.

Evaluations of County services and the County government remain positive.

- ◆ Residents rated a number of individual county-provided services, as well as the overall quality of services provided by Dakota County. The rating for the overall quality of County services (69 on the 100-point scale) remains much higher than the national county average, and stable when compared to previous survey iterations.
- ◆ As in the past four surveys, county parks and recreation (average rating of 86), county libraries (86), trail and greenway systems (81), snow and ice removal on county roads (70), and Sheriff deputies patrol services (69) received scores that were above 67 points (or “good”).
- ◆ Overall, ratings of County services were stable from 2022 to 2025 with a small upward trend in addressing important health issues in communities (from 57 points in 2022 to the current rating of 62 points).
- ◆ Most residents in 2025 approved of the job the Dakota County Board is doing, providing an average rating of 68, or just above “somewhat approve.” This rating was similar to the 2022 score and on par with most other survey years.
- ◆ Ratings for other aspects of the County government performance were between “good” and “fair” on the 100-point scale, with the highest ratings going to the job the county does supporting the quality of life in the county (65) and providing information to residents (65). County government generally acting in the best interest of the community was also rated positively (63). Residents gave somewhat lower ratings to the job Dakota County government does at listening to residents (54) and managing tax dollars (53).
- ◆ When compared to ratings given to other counties across the U.S., Dakota County government performance ratings tended to be higher or much higher for three of the four aspects that could be compared, including the value of services for the taxes paid to Dakota County, the job Dakota County government does managing tax dollars, and the ability for the County to generally act in the best interest of the community.

Residents are increasingly concerned about affordable housing and taxes, which have replaced crime and safety issues as the most serious concerns in Dakota County.

- ◆ Survey respondents evaluated a list of potential problems as being a “major problem,” a “moderate problem,” a “minor problem,” or “not a problem” in Dakota County. In 2025, the three issues that emerged as most problematic were the affordability of housing (59 points on the 100-point scale), taxes (54), and the availability of living wage jobs (52). Notably, responses related to taxes increased by 11 points since the 2022 survey.
- ◆ On another part of the survey, respondents were asked to identify, in their own words, the most serious issue facing Dakota County. Affordable housing topped the list followed by growth issues, and taxes. Crime and safety, which topped the list in 2022, fell to fourth place, with 8% of the mentions.
- ◆ When asked what type of housing residents felt was most needed in their community, affordable family housing topped the list, gathering 49% of the respondents’ selections, a 5-point increase since 2022 and an 11-point increase since 2019. Market-rate stand-alone single-family housing, and affordable housing for older adults were the next most frequently selected housing types.

Concerns about the quality of drinking water have increased since 2022.

- ◆ Survey respondents were asked to rate how much of a concern, if any, a number of aspects related to the environment were in Dakota County. Residents were most likely to indicate concern about climate change (56 points on the 100-point scale), the quality of drinking water (51), and the quality of water in rivers, lakes, and streams (50). Survey participants were least likely to be concerned with the quality of outdoor air.
- ◆ When compared to the 2022 results, all ratings remained mostly stable, except for concerns about the quality of drinking water, which experienced an increase of 12 points (from 39 in 2022 to the current rating of 51 points).
- ◆ Respondents were asked how important they felt it was for Dakota County to use county funds for various public purposes. About 9 in 10 felt that protecting and improving water quality was essential or important, while at least 8 in 10 thought the same about protecting and improving natural areas and wildlife habitat.