

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

La Plata, MD

Trends over Time

2016



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Summary

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality research methods and directly comparable results across The NCS communities. The NCS captures residents' opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central facets of community (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement). This report discusses trends over time, comparing the 2016 ratings for the Town of La Plata to its previous survey results in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2014. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for La Plata represent important comparison data and should be examined for improvements or declines. Deviations from stable trends over time, especially, represent opportunities for understanding how local policies, programs or public information may have affected residents' opinions.

Meaningful differences between survey years have been noted within the following tables as being “higher” or “lower” if the differences are greater than seven percentage points between the 2014 and 2016 surveys, otherwise the comparison between 2014 and 2016 are noted as being “similar.” Additionally, benchmark comparisons for all survey years are presented for reference. Changes in the benchmark comparison over time can be impacted by various trends, including varying survey cycles for the individual communities that comprise the benchmarks, regional and national economic or other events, as well as emerging survey methodologies.

Overall, ratings in La Plata for 2016 generally remained stable. Of the 122 items for which comparisons were available, 86 items were rated similarly in 2014 and 2016, 8 items showed a decrease in ratings and 28 showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Ratings for several aspects within the pillar of Community Characteristics improved from 2014 to 2016. This year, more residents gave a favorable rating to the overall image of La Plata. Within the facet of Economy, the overall economic health of La Plata, employment opportunities, the cost of living and La Plata as a place to work were all rated more positively in 2016 than in 2014. Ratings also improved for the air quality in City, the openness and acceptance of the community towards people of diverse backgrounds, as well as for several aspects of Mobility, Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment. No aspects of Community Characteristics trended downward from 2014 to 2016.
- Within the pillar of Governance, ratings for several aspects of La Plata's leadership and governance increased from 2014 to 2016. In 2016, residents gave higher ratings to the value of services for taxes paid, confidence in the Town government, being honest, treating all residents fairly and the job the Town does at acting in the best interest of the community. However, ratings declined over time for five La Plata services: street cleaning, traffic signal timing, garbage collection, recycling services and Town parks.
- Levels of Participation in La Plata were generally stable over time; however, there were a few noteworthy exceptions. In 2016, fewer respondents reported voting in local elections, campaigning for an issue, cause or candidate and contacting a Town of La Plata employee. However, this year more respondents reported that they work in La Plata and more indicated that they are in very good or excellent health. Ratings also increased from 2014 to 2016 for the sense of community in La Plata.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)							2016 rating compared to 2014	Comparison to benchmark						
	January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016
Overall quality of life	75%	81%	81%	82%	81%	76%	76%	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Overall image	70%	79%	76%	77%	76%	65%	77%	Higher	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Place to live	85%	87%	88%	89%	86%	85%	86%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Neighborhood	75%	84%	79%	80%	77%	83%	82%	Similar	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Place to raise children	74%	82%	79%	82%	80%	82%	79%	Similar	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Place to retire	42%	53%	55%	50%	50%	44%	44%	Similar	Much lower	Lower	Lower	Much lower	Much lower	Lower	Lower
Overall appearance	73%	80%	80%	80%	78%	79%	80%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)							2016 rating compared to 2014	Comparison to benchmark						
		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016
Safety	Overall feeling of safety	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	75%	82%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Safe in neighborhood	93%	92%	95%	93%	94%	91%	92%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Safe downtown/commercial area	92%	90%	93%	94%	93%	88%	94%	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Overall ease of travel	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	72%	68%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Paths and walking trails	NA	35%	32%	32%	32%	39%	46%	Higher	NA	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Lower	Lower
	Ease of walking	42%	47%	41%	44%	40%	47%	54%	Higher	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Lower	Similar
	Travel by bicycle	30%	39%	29%	30%	34%	23%	42%	Higher	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Similar
	Travel by car	41%	52%	52%	49%	54%	57%	59%	Similar	Much lower	Similar	Lower	Lower	Lower	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Public parking	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	57%	61%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Traffic flow	26%	29%	28%	27%	30%	38%	40%	Similar	NA	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Similar	Similar
Natural Environment	Overall natural environment	NA	64%	68%	69%	71%	72%	76%	Similar	NA	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Cleanliness	NA	84%	82%	86%	83%	79%	81%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)							2016 rating compared to 2014	Comparison to benchmark						
		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016
	Air quality	70%	75%	75%	72%	75%	73%	80%	Higher	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Overall built environment	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	59%	65%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	New development in La Plata	58%	68%	68%	64%	64%	37%	45%	Higher	Similar	Higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Lower	Similar
	Affordable quality housing	26%	34%	33%	36%	44%	36%	44%	Higher	Much lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Housing options	NA	56%	61%	59%	63%	53%	54%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Public places	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	50%	58%	Higher	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Economy	Overall economic health	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	55%	62%	Higher	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Vibrant downtown/commercial area	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	34%	39%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Business and services	NA	72%	69%	63%	75%	54%	60%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Cost of living	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	28%	35%	Higher	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Lower	Similar
	Shopping opportunities	56%	62%	56%	58%	59%	44%	50%	Similar	Higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Employment opportunities	26%	29%	25%	26%	27%	18%	37%	Higher	Lower	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Place to visit	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	46%	50%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Lower	Lower
	Place to work	51%	57%	50%	52%	59%	51%	60%	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Health and wellness	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	62%	76%	Higher	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Mental health care	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	42%	46%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Preventive health services	NA	59%	50%	55%	61%	55%	67%	Higher	NA	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Health care	50%	50%	50%	49%	51%	56%	67%	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Food	63%	65%	63%	65%	68%	60%	65%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recreational opportunities	40%	51%	50%	47%	49%	50%	50%	Similar	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Much lower	Lower	Similar
	Fitness opportunities	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	53%	61%	Higher	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Lower	Similar
	Religious or spiritual events and activities	NA	72%	78%	74%	73%	69%	80%	Higher	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Lower	Similar
	Cultural/arts/music activities	42%	46%	44%	47%	53%	51%	53%	Similar	Much lower	Lower	Lower	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Adult education	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	61%	63%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	K-12 education	NA	NA	82%	NA	85%	79%	75%	Similar	NA	NA	Much higher	NA	Much higher	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)							2016 rating compared to 2014	Comparison to benchmark						
		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016
Community Engagement	Child care/preschool	34%	34%	40%	43%	45%	48%	57%	Higher	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Social events and activities	NA	62%	62%	61%	61%	50%	57%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Neighborhoodliness	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	56%	62%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Openness and acceptance	61%	62%	65%	68%	NA	45%	62%	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Higher	NA	Lower	Similar
	Opportunities to participate in community matters	NA	70%	65%	59%	62%	59%	63%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Opportunities to volunteer	NA	81%	74%	70%	75%	62%	66%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar

Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)							2016 rating compared to 2014	Comparison to benchmark						
	January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016
Services provided by La Plata	73%	77%	79%	81%	79%	71%	75%	Similar	Higher	Higher	Higher	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
Customer service	81%	80%	88%	87%	79%	78%	74%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
Value of services for taxes paid	50%	50%	47%	48%	49%	36%	46%	Higher	Similar	Lower	Lower	Similar	Similar	Lower	Similar
Overall direction	51%	51%	57%	52%	53%	48%	53%	Similar	Similar	Much lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Welcoming citizen involvement	64%	56%	58%	57%	60%	46%	51%	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
Confidence in Town government	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	43%	53%	Higher	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Acting in the best interest of La Plata	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	48%	58%	Higher	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Being honest	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	43%	61%	Higher	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	45%	58%	Higher	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Services provided by the Federal Government	49%	50%	44%	56%	49%	33%	52%	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar

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Table 4: Governance by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)							2016 rating compared to 2014	Comparison to benchmark						
		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016
Safety	Police	78%	76%	82%	82%	87%	79%	79%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Higher	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Ambulance/EMS	NA	84%	NA	NA	NA	87%	92%	Similar	NA	Similar	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Crime prevention	70%	75%	74%	81%	79%	68%	69%	Similar	Higher	Much higher	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Fire prevention	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	78%	80%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Emergency preparedness	NA	81%	81%	NA	84%	66%	72%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Much higher	NA	Much higher	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Traffic enforcement	63%	66%	68%	64%	72%	59%	65%	Similar	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street repair	49%	50%	55%	49%	55%	40%	41%	Similar	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Street cleaning	56%	68%	66%	67%	70%	62%	53%	Lower	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Street lighting	55%	64%	63%	63%	64%	55%	52%	Similar	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Snow removal	71%	81%	74%	65%	76%	66%	66%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Sidewalk maintenance	51%	62%	58%	49%	53%	52%	51%	Similar	Similar	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Traffic signal timing	NA	60%	58%	66%	64%	NA	56%	Lower	NA	Much higher	Higher	Much higher	Much higher	NA	Similar
Natural Environment	Garbage collection	86%	87%	82%	86%	85%	88%	77%	Lower	Much higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Recycling	79%	85%	86%	84%	88%	85%	69%	Lower	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar
	Yard waste pick-up	73%	77%	79%	80%	76%	80%	77%	Similar	Higher	Similar	Higher	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Drinking water	57%	65%	59%	64%	70%	72%	75%	Similar	Lower	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Natural areas preservation	NA	52%	63%	NA	NA	52%	56%	Similar	NA	Lower	Similar	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Open space	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	48%	53%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Storm drainage	55%	70%	65%	71%	69%	64%	66%	Similar	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Sewer services	63%	76%	72%	70%	73%	72%	72%	Similar	Lower	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Utility billing	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	56%	61%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Land use, planning and zoning	36%	43%	40%	43%	35%	45%	44%	Similar	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Much lower	Similar
	Code enforcement	54%	57%	57%	56%	51%	48%	49%	Similar	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)							2016 rating compared to 2014	Comparison to benchmark						
		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016
Recreation and Wellness	Town parks	65%	72%	80%	78%	83%	79%	70%	Lower	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Special events	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	73%	75%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Public information	NA	NA	74%	NA	75%	69%	68%	Similar	NA	NA	Higher	NA	Higher	Similar	Similar

Table 5: Participation General

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)							2016 rating compared to 2014	Comparison to benchmark						
		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016
Sense of community		67%	68%	75%	70%	73%	55%	65%	Higher	Higher	Higher	Much higher	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar
Recommend La Plata		NA	85%	88%	92%	89%	82%	84%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Remain in La Plata		NA	81%	80%	80%	83%	76%	73%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar	Lower	Similar	Lower
Contacted La Plata employees		NA	61%	55%	46%	52%	59%	48%	Lower	NA	Similar	Similar	Much lower	Similar	Higher	Similar

Table 6: Participation by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)							2016 rating compared to 2014	Comparison to benchmark						
		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016
Safety	Stocked supplies for an emergency	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	39%	45%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Did NOT report a crime	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	81%	79%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Was NOT the victim of a crime	NA	92%	88%	91%	89%	91%	91%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar
Mobility	Carpooled instead of driving alone	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	39%	37%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	43%	48%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Lower	Lower

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)							2016 rating compared to 2014	Comparison to benchmark						
		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016
Natural Environment	Conserved water	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	84%	82%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Made home more energy efficient	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	84%	81%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Recycled at home	NA	72%	78%	74%	81%	91%	90%	Similar	NA	Lower	Similar	Much lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
Built Environment	Did NOT observe a code violation	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	63%	64%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Higher
	NOT under housing cost stress	NA	60%	59%	58%	64%	64%	66%	Similar	NA	Similar	Lower	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar
Economy	Purchased goods or services in La Plata	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	97%	93%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Economy will have positive impact on income	NA	13%	16%	16%	24%	20%	19%	Similar	NA	Much lower	Similar	Similar	Higher	Similar	Similar
	Work in La Plata	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	23%	30%	Higher	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Much lower	Lower
Recreation and Wellness	Used La Plata recreation centers	NA	50%	49%	51%	50%	55%	59%	Similar	NA	Much lower	Much lower	Lower	Lower	Similar	Similar
	Visited a Town park	NA	73%	81%	76%	77%	71%	76%	Similar	NA	Much lower	Lower	Much lower	Much lower	Lower	Similar
	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	80%	83%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	84%	85%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	In very good to excellent health	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	59%	71%	Higher	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)							2016 rating compared to 2014	Comparison to benchmark						
		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016		January 2008	December 2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016
Education and Enrichment	Used La Plata public libraries	NA	78%	69%	72%	70%	61%	58%	Similar	NA	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Participated in religious or spiritual activities	NA	57%	48%	52%	50%	48%	48%	Similar	NA	Much higher	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Attended a Town-sponsored event	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	60%	58%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
Community Engagement	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	30%	19%	Lower	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Contacted La Plata elected officials	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	21%	14%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Volunteered	NA	48%	49%	43%	41%	38%	37%	Similar	NA	Higher	Higher	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Participated in a club	NA	29%	29%	28%	30%	29%	28%	Similar	NA	Lower	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Talked to or visited with neighbors	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	93%	90%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Done a favor for a neighbor	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	80%	83%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Attended a local public meeting	NA	29%	26%	27%	26%	23%	27%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Watched a local public meeting	NA	47%	43%	41%	38%	28%	25%	Similar	NA	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar
	Read or watched local news	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	86%	88%	Similar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Similar	Similar
	Voted in local elections	NA	85%	82%	75%	81%	90%	83%	Lower	NA	Much higher	Much higher	Similar	Much higher	Higher	Similar