USC Dornsife
Center for Economic and Social Research

LABarometer

Top 5 Takeaways
from the
Livability & Affordability Survey

WAVE 3
Release Date: November 3, 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As we enter the third year of disruptions in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, life in Los Angeles County has indisputably changed, and so has the way the USC Dornsife LABarometer captures it. This year, we have condensed our four quarterly surveys into two biannual surveys: one on Livability & Affordability and a second on Mobility & Sustainability. Going forward, this new design reduces the frequency of our surveys while maintaining the same content.

In this first biannual survey report, and third wave of data collection, we pair results from our Livability and Affordability surveys, bringing together topics such as life satisfaction, neighborhood change, and future housing plans as well as access to and affordability of critical resources like housing, health care, food, and child care. The survey provides important insights into neighborhood quality of life and affordability in Los Angeles County.

The Livability & Affordability survey was fielded to our Internet panel of ~1,600 LA County residents from June 22, 2022 to September 4, 2022. A review of the results highlights sobering trends in life satisfaction, racial discrimination, and health care. Relative to our second wave of livability survey data (collected from November 9, 2020, to January 7, 2021), Angelenos report significantly lower satisfaction with their health, finances, family life, and neighborhoods. Overall life satisfaction is also now lower than it was before the pandemic.

Many wondered if the pandemic would cause a mass exodus from cities. Indeed, results from our Wave 2 (2020) Livability survey revealed an uptick in the proportion of residents planning to leave L.A. and demographic reports suggest many followed through on these plans, as L.A. lost approximately 160,000 residents from July 2020 to July 2021. According to our latest survey, however, the pandemic exodus may be slowing – fewer than 3% report plans to leave L.A. in the next year and only 6% report plans to move even within L.A. – a 50% decrease from Wave 2.

With the upcoming midterm elections, we were curious about how residents' neighborhood experiences mapped on to their voting preferences, so we asked City of L.A. residents how they voted in the mayoral primary election and examined the relationship between their candidate preferences and their neighborhood conditions. Our results reveal strong support for frontrunner Rep. Karen Bass over Rick Caruso among residents living in neighborhoods with high levels of perceived crime and social problems (i.e. crime, vandalism, loitering). Conversely, in neighborhoods with low levels of perceived crime and social problems, we see stronger support for Caruso over Bass.

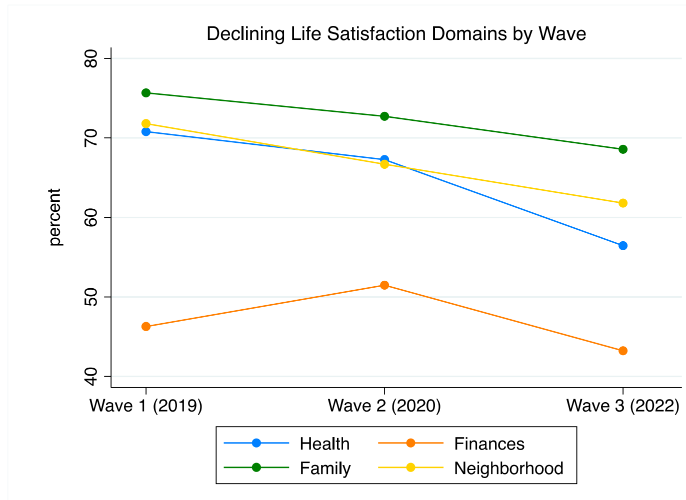
Additional noteworthy findings lay in the domains of discrimination and health care. Against the backdrop of a national surge in anti-Asian sentiment and hate crimes over the course of the pandemic, nearly half of Asian respondents in our sample experienced racial discrimination in the past year, as did over one-third of Black respondents. We also find that nearly 3 in 4 L.A. residents did not receive the medical care they needed in the last year, with cost and appointment availability most commonly cited as barriers to care.

On the following pages, you will find the top five takeaways from our Livability & Affordability survey. For the full set of our results, please find our final report online at https://cesr.usc.edu/labarometer/reports_releases.

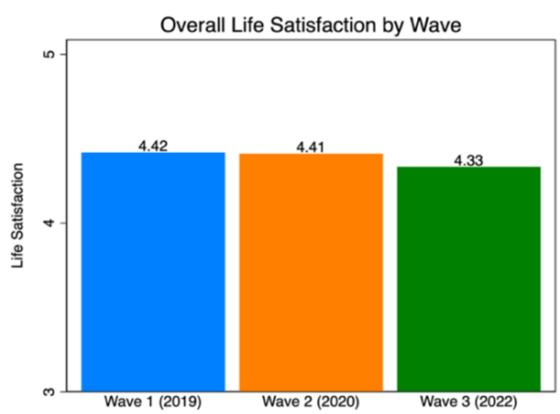
TOP 5 TAKEAWAYS

1. Life satisfaction has declined since 2020, particularly in the domains of health, finances, neighborhood, and family.

In each Livability survey wave, we ask L.A. County residents to rate their level of satisfaction with life in general and with specific dimensions of life, including health, housing, neighborhood, finances, family life, social life, job or other daily activities, and leisure time.



On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 denotes the lowest and 7 the highest level of satisfaction, the average life satisfaction score in L.A. County is now 4.3, a small but statistically significant decrease from the average score (4.4) observed in Wave 2, towards the end of 2020.



This decline in overall life satisfaction may be tied to declines in specific domains of life. In prior analyses, we found that the strongest predictor of life satisfaction in L.A. was satisfaction with finances, followed by satisfaction with family life. We see significant declines in both of these domains along with declines in health and neighborhood satisfaction.

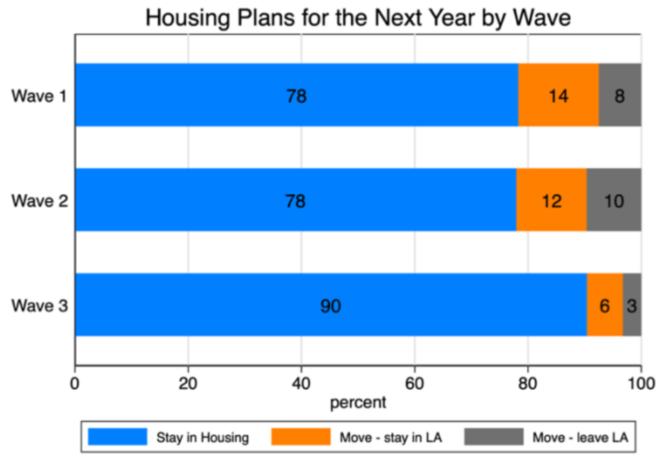
We do not observe significant changes between Waves 2 and 3 in how satisfied people are with their housing, social life, job or other daily activities, or leisure time.

About the analysis: To generate a life satisfaction score, we calculated the average response to a set of five life satisfaction questions included in each survey wave. To measure satisfaction with specific life domains, we calculated the percent of respondents who indicated strongly agree, agree, or somewhat agree in response to the life domain questions, which are described in greater detail on page 9. Note that Wave 1 and 2 scores reported here differ from those reported in Wave 1 and 2 data releases, as our weighting procedure and analytic sample selection criteria have changed.

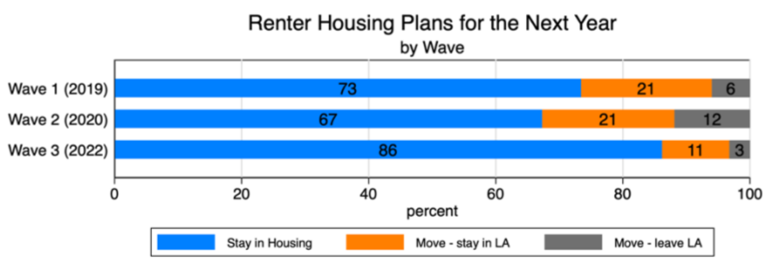
2. Just 3% of Angelenos report plans to leave Los Angeles in the next year – down from 10% in 2020.

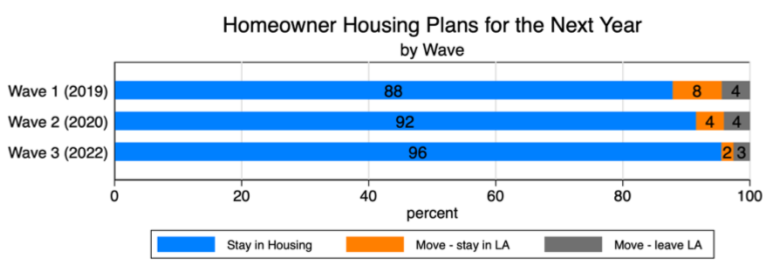
Many wondered if the rise of remote work, coupled with the pandemic's outsized impact on health and financial well-being in cities, would drive people out of urban areas and into cheaper, less densely populated areas. Results from Wave 2 of our Livability survey revealed that 10% of Angelenos planned to leave L.A. in the next year – an increase of 25% since Wave 1.

By Wave 3, however, our results suggest that the pandemic exodus may be slowing down. Fewer than 3% of Angelenos report plans to leave L.A. in the next year – a 70% decrease from Wave 2.



The explanation for this sudden change in public sentiment is twofold. First, many of those who indicated plans to leave L.A. in Wave 2 have since left our study (and in all likelihood L.A.). Second, results show that the intention to move anywhere – even within L.A. – has declined in prevalence since Wave 2. Just 6% of residents report plans to move to a different home or neighborhood in L.A. in the next year, a 50% decrease from Wave 2. This may reflect recent economic changes, including spikes in rental costs, mortgage rates, and returns to in-person work, which make it logistically and financially more challenging for people to move out of their homes, let alone across counties.





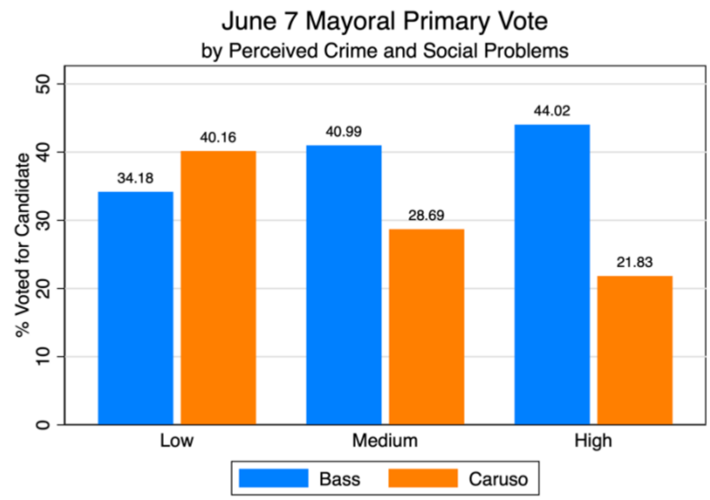
When we look at the breakdown of housing plans by homeownership status, our results show clearly that renters are driving most of the change we see across waves. In Wave 2, 12% of renters reported plans to leave L.A. while just 4% of homeowners reported such plans. By Wave 3, the percent of renters planning to leave L.A. fell to the same level as homeowners: 3%.

A closer look: To confirm that this change in planned out-migration is not just attributable to population change or differences in the types of people who responded to Wave 3 versus Wave 2 of the survey, we performed a second, individual-level analysis in which we restricted our sample to only respondents who participated in both waves of the survey. We then compared responses in Wave 3 to responses in Wave 2. This analysis confirmed our initial finding that public sentiment changed.

3. Voters living in neighborhoods with more crime and social problems were more likely to vote for Bass than Caruso in the mayoral primary election.

With the mayoral general election fast approaching, we wanted to understand the relationship between neighborhood quality of life and voting behavior, so we asked City of L.A. residents how they voted in the mayoral primary election and we analyzed the relationship of their candidate preferences to their self-reported neighborhood conditions. In pre-election polls, homelessness, crime, and public safety were cited as the top concerns of likely voters in the Los Angeles Mayoral Primary Race. Both

Rep. Karen Bass and developer Rick Caruso – the two candidates who have since advanced to the general election – have spoken urgently about the recent rise in crime and homelessness in the city. In a recent debate, Caruso said that he would "have zero-tolerance," when it came to crime and called for 30,000 new shelter and tiny home beds. Bass said that she would call for a federal state of emergency on homelessness to "get people off the streets immediately" and that Los Angeles needs "to get officers on the street as fast as possible."



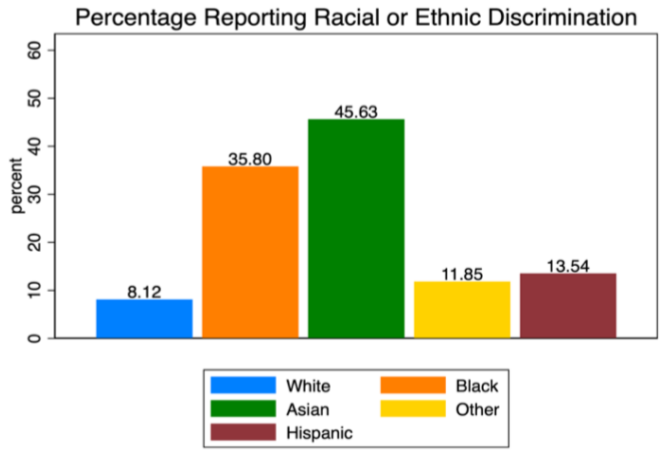
Likewise, in our survey, we find that experiences of neighborhood social problems like crime and loitering are strongly associated with voting behavior. Respondents who report living in neighborhoods with higher levels of crime and social problems – meaning, more vandalism, more people hanging around the streets, more crime, and more alcohol and drug use – were more likely to vote for Rep. Karen Bass in the primary election whereas those who reside in neighborhoods with lower levels of crime and social problems were more likely to vote for Rick Caruso. Results hold even when we control for demographic characteristics such as race, income, age, and gender.

To summarize, there appears to be a political divide between those who might be concerned about social problems in L.A. and those who are actually experiencing them. Issues of social disorder, like rising crime, have traditionally resulted in greater support for more conservative candidates, but their effects may be confined to voters who do *not* live in close proximity to crime and social problems. . It remains to be seen if this pattern will persist in the general election.

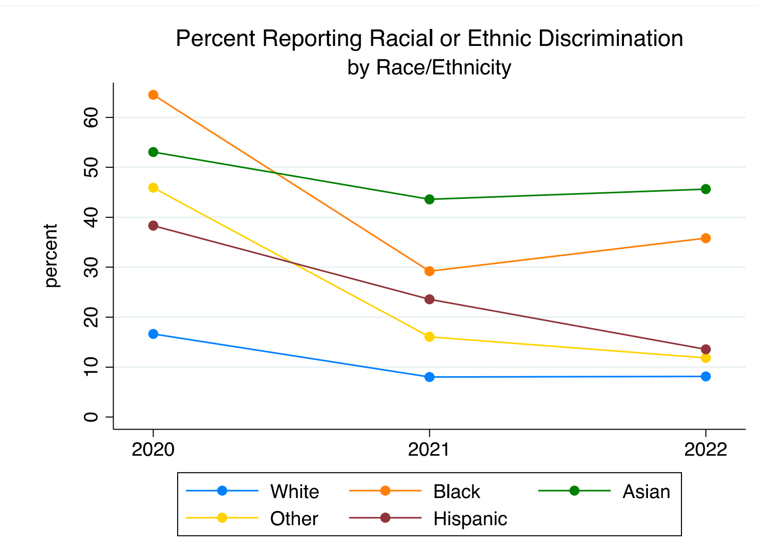
About the analysis: To measure perceptions of neighborhood crime and social problems, we used responses to the following four statements: "Vandalism is common in my neighborhood"; "There are too many people hanging around on the streets near my home"; "There is a lot of crime in my neighborhood"; "There is a lot of drug and alcohol use in my neighborhood." Response options were a seven-category Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). To generate a neighborhood crime and social problems score, we averaged responses across the four statements. Based on the distribution of scores, we classified a respondent's perceived level of crime and social problems as "low" if their score fell into the lowest quartile of scores; we classified a respondent's perceived level as "medium" if their score fell into the middle two quartiles of scores; we classified a respondent's perceived level as "high" if their score fell into the highest quartile of scores.

4. Nearly half of Asian Angelenos, and a third of Black Angelenos, experienced racial discrimination in the last year.

Consistent with the national uptick in anti-Asian sentiment and hate crimes reported by organizations such as Stop AAPI Hate since the beginning of the pandemic – when racially charged language was commonly used by media to describe COVID-19 – nearly half of Asian respondents in our sample (45.6%) reported experiencing racial or ethnic discrimination in the past year. Similarly, amidst the ongoing reckoning sparked by police brutality, 35.8% of Black Angelenos recalled experiences of unfair treatment or discrimination on the basis of race in the previous 12 months. These "everyday" experiences of discrimination include being treated with less courtesy or respect than other people, receiving poorer service than other people at stores or restaurants, being treated as threatening or not smart, and/or being threatened or harassed.



To put these figures in perspective, we examined the percentage of each racial/ethnic group that reported experiencing racial- or ethnic-based discrimination in previous years of our COVID survey, which measured bi-weekly experiences of everyday discrimination from June 10, 2020 to July 21, 2021.

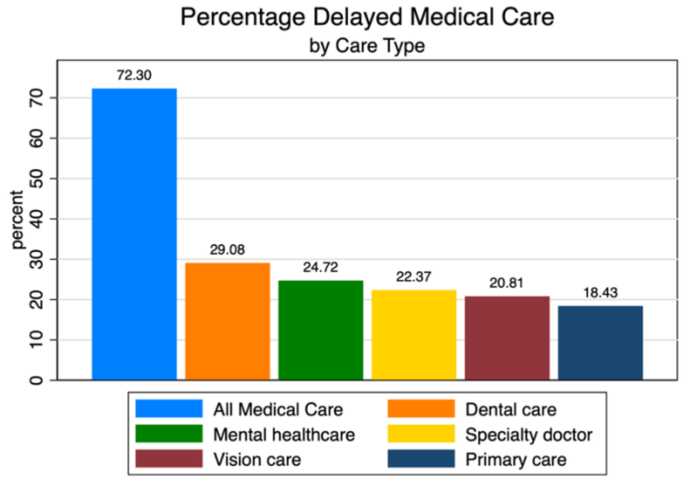


Whereas each of the racial/ethnic groups experienced declines in discrimination between 2020 and 2021, the slope of change varied by race/ethnicity, with experiences of discrimination among Black respondents declining more sharply than other racial/ethnic groups. Additionally, compared to 2021, Black Angelenos reported a 7-percentage-point increase in discrimination in 2022, while experiences of discrimination declined among Hispanics and the trendlines among White and Other respondents remained relatively flat. As pandemic conditions improve, it is unclear whether the high levels of racial discrimination experienced by Asian respondents will persist.

About the analysis: Experiences of racial or ethnic discrimination were measured using the everyday discrimination scale. First, respondents were asked to rate the frequency with which they experienced poor treatment in the prior 12 months due to a personal characteristic like race, gender, etc. Experiences of poor treatment included being treated with less courtesy or respect than other people, receiving poorer service than other people at stores or restaurants, being treated as threatening or not smart, and being threatened or harassed. Those who reported at least one or more of these experiences were asked to indicate the main reason for their experience(s). We classified as "racial or ethnic discrimination" any experience of poor treatment that respondents attributed to their race, ethnicity, ancestry, or skin color. Note that discrimination rates for 2021 and 2020 are based on biweekly everyday discrimination questions included in the Understanding Coronavirus in America Survey. Cumulative annual rates were calculated for all COVID survey respondents who are L.A. residents and participated in at least one LABarometer survey wave.

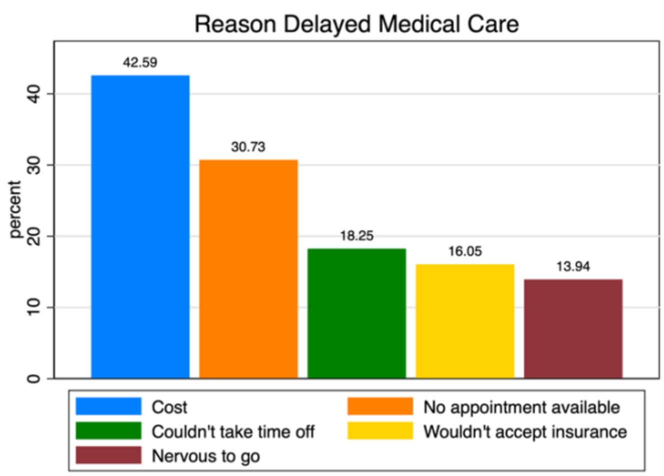
5. Nearly 3 in 4 Angelenos delayed or went without the medical care they needed over the last twelve months – primarily due to cost and availability challenges.

In this latest survey, we asked respondents about the healthcare they needed and received over the prior 12 months, including whether or not they delayed or went without care that they needed.



Among those who participated in our survey, 90% reported needing some type of medical care in the prior 12 months and 72% reported delaying or forgoing at least one type of care that they needed.

The most frequently cited delayed/forgone medical care was dental care (29%), followed by mental healthcare (25%), specialty care (22%), vision care (21%), and primary care (18%). Other types of care, including follow-up care, urgent/emergency care, COVID testing/treatment, and prescription medication were less frequently delayed by those who needed them.



If a respondent indicated delaying or forgoing at least one type of medical care, they were asked to select from a list of potential reasons. The most frequently cited reason was cost (43%), followed by lack of appointment availability (31%), inability to take time off (18%), insurance not accepted (16%), and nervous to see a doctor (14%). Less frequently cited reasons included transportation access, travel distance, fear of catching a disease, and inability to get a referral.

A closer look: Rates of delaying or forgoing any type of medical care decrease to 62% among respondents with a household income of $100k or more. However, the biggest difference between low- and high-income respondents is in their likelihood of delaying multiple forms of care. For respondents making less than $50k, the average number of forgone care types is greater than 2 whereas for respondents making $100k it is less than 1.

For scorecard explanation, see pages 9-10.

LIVABILITY SCORECARD			Population-level analysis[A] (all respondents)			
Measures	Scale	Wave 1*	Wave 2*	Wave 3	Significant Change since Wave 2[B]
LIFE SATISFACTION SCORES					
Life overall	Min: 1 (not at all satisfied) Max: 7 (very satisfied)	4.4	4.4	4.3	∅
Financial situation	Min: 1 (not at all satisfied) Max: 7 (very satisfied)	4.0	4.2	4.0	–
Social life	Min: 1 (not at all satisfied) Max: 7 (very satisfied)	4.8	4.5	4.4	∅
Health	Min: 1 (not at all satisfied) Max: 7 (very satisfied)	4.9	4.9	4.5	–
Amount of free time	Min: 1 (not at all satisfied) Max: 7 (very satisfied)	4.7	4.8	4.7	∅
Job or other daily activities	Min: 1 (not at all satisfied) Max: 7 (very satisfied)	4.7	4.6	4.6	∅
Family life	Min: 1 (not at all satisfied) Max: 7 (very satisfied)	5.3	5.3	5.0	–
NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY SCORES					
Neighborhood overall	Min: 1 (low satisfaction) Max: 7 (high satisfaction)	5.0	4.9	4.7	–
Built / natural environment	Min: 1 (low quality) Max: 7 (high quality)	4.4	4.3	4.3	∅
Social order / safety	Min: 1 (low order/safety) Max: 7 (high order/safety)	3.4	3.6	3.6	∅
Affordability	Min: 1 (low affordability) Max: 7 (high affordability)	4.5	4.8	4.8	∅
Social cohesion	Min: 1 (low cohesion) Max: 7 (high cohesion)	4.5	4.3	4.3	–
ECONOMIC SENTIMENT SCORES					
Consumer sentiment overall	Min: 0 (low confidence) Max: 100 (high confidence)	53.3	50.7	49.3	∅
County business conditions	Min: 0 (low confidence) Max: 100 (high confidence)	51.8	45.5	45.1	∅
US business conditions	Min: 0 (low confidence) Max: 100 (high confidence)	49.7	46.4	43.7	–
Individual financial situation	Min: 0 (low confidence) Max: 100 (high confidence)	58.4	60.3	59.2	∅

[A] Under "Population-level analysis," we report weighted results from our cross-sectional samples for Waves 1, 2, and 3. Each weighted sample may be considered representative of the L.A. County population. The goal of this analysis is to assess change over time at the population level.
[B] Wave 1 and Wave 2 scores may differ from those reported in previous reports due to changes in our weighting procedure and analytic sample criteria. To ensure consistent weighting, we now restrict our sample to only respondents who participated in at least one core LABarometer survey.
[C] This column notes any change from Wave 2 to Wave 3 that is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. + denotes a significant increase in the results from our cross-sectional samples: the full sample of respondents who participated in Wave 1, Wave 2, and Wave 3. Each weighted sample may be considered representative of the L.A. County population. The outcome; – denotes a significant decrease; ∅ denotes the absence of a statistically significant change.

Livability Scorecard Explained

Our Livability Scorecard includes select results from the first, second, and third waves of the LABarometer Livability survey module. For Waves 1 and 2, this was a stand-alone survey. For Wave 3, it was combined with our Affordability survey to form the Livability & Affordability survey.

Under **Population-level analysis**, we report results from each cross-sectional sample (i.e. ”all respondents”), which refers to the full sample of respondents who participated in a given wave of the Livability survey module. The goal of this analysis is to assess change over time at the population level for our outcomes of interest. Any change between survey waves that is statistically significant at the 0.05 level is noted in the column “Significant Change.” Each weighted survey sample from may be considered representative of the L.A. County population.

All three waves of the Livability survey were fielded to members of the LABarometer panel. Respondents were free to opt in or out of each survey. Thus, respondents who participated in Wave 1 may differ from respondents who participated in Wave 2 or 3. 1,052 out of 2,313 unique respondents participated in all three waves of the survey module.

Livability Scorecard Measures

Life Satisfaction - We use the following validated measures to assess overall life satisfaction and domain-specific satisfaction:

- **Overall life**: Mean response to five general statements about life: “In most ways my life is close to ideal”; “The conditions of my life are excellent”; “I am satisfied with my life”; “So far I have the important things I want in life”; “If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.” Seven-category likert scale (strongly disagree…strongly agree).
- **Financial situation**: Response to the statement “I am satisfied with my financial situation.” Seven-category likert scale (strongly disagree…strongly agree).
- **Social life**: Response to the statement “I am satisfied with my social life.” Seven-category likert scale (strongly disagree…strongly agree).
- **Health**: Response to the statement “My health is excellent.” Seven-category likert scale (strongly disagree…strongly agree).
- **Amount of free time**: Response to the statement “I am satisfied with the amount of free time I have.” Seven-category likert scale (strongly disagree…strongly agree).
- **Job or other daily activities**: Response to the statement “I am satisfied with my job or other daily activities.” Seven-category likert scale (strongly disagree…strongly agree).
- **Family life**: Response to the statement “I am satisfied with my family life.” Seven-category likert scale (strongly disagree…strongly agree).

Neighborhood Quality - We use the following validated measures to assess neighborhood quality:

- **Overall neighborhood**: Response to the question “How satisfied are you with your neighborhood?” Seven-category likert scale (strongly disagree…strongly agree).
- **Built / natural environment**: Mean response to the following statements about the built and natural environment of the neighborhood: “There are safe and convenient public transit options”; “I am satisfied with the number and quality of businesses and services (grocery stores, health care services, restaurants, etc.) in my neighborhood”; “I am satisfied with the number and quality of parks and green spaces in my neighborhood”; “My neighborhood is clean and the roads and sidewalks are in good condition”; “There is a lot of traffic in or around my neighborhood” (reverse-coded); “My neighborhood is noisy” (reverse-coded). Seven-category likert scale (strongly disagree…strongly agree).

- **Social order / safety**: Mean (reverse-coded) response to the following statements about social problems in the neighborhood: "Vandalism is common in my neighborhood"; "There are too many people hanging around on the streets near my home"; "There is a lot of crime in my neighborhood"; "There is a lot of drug and alcohol use in my neighborhood." Seven-category likert scale (strongly disagree…strongly agree).
- **Affordability**: Response to the statement "My neighborhood is affordable for me." Seven-category likert scale (strongly disagree…strongly agree).
- **Social cohesion**: Mean response to the following statements about social ties in the neighborhood: "In my neighborhood, people watch out for each other"; "I can trust most people in my neighborhood." Seven-category likert scale (strongly disagree…strongly agree).

Economic Sentiment - We use the following validated measures to assess economic sentiment:

- **Consumer sentiment index**: Mean response to the following statements about the economy and individual financial situation: "I feel that my current financial situation is..."; "I think that my financial situation a year from now will be…"; "I think that current business conditions in the US are…"; "I think that current business conditions in my county are…"; "I think that business conditions in the US a year from now will be…"; "I think that business conditions in my county a year from now will be…" Sliding scale: 0 (poor)…100 (excellent).
- **County business conditions**: Mean response to the following statements about county business conditions: "I think that current business conditions in my county are…"; "I think that business conditions in my county a year from now will be…" Sliding scale: 0 (poor)…100 (excellent).
- **US business conditions**: Mean response to the following statements about US business conditions: "I think that current business conditions in the US are…"; "I think that business conditions in the US a year from now will be…" Sliding scale: 0 (poor)…100 (excellent).
- **Individual financial situation:** Mean response to the following statements about individual financial situation: "I feel that my current financial situation is…"; "I think that my financial situation a year from now will be…" Sliding scale: 0 (poor)…100 (excellent)

ABOUT US

USC Dornsife LABarometer

LABarometer is a biannual, internet-based survey of approximately ~1,600 randomly selected Los Angeles County residents, designed and administered by the *Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research* at the University of Southern California. The survey monitors social conditions in Los Angeles, with a focus on four key issues: livability, affordability, mobility, and sustainability. By following the same residents over time, LABarometer aims to capture trends and shifts in residents' attitudes and circumstances, allowing decisionmakers in the public and private sectors to better understand the evolving lives and needs of L.A. residents.

About the Livability Survey

The LABarometer Livability & Affordability Survey assesses neighborhood quality of life and affordability in Los Angeles, guided by the principle that a livable neighborhood is one in which residents feel happy, healthy, safe, socially connected, and with access to important a goods, services and amenities. The survey covers the following topics: life satisfaction, stress, housing circumstances and plans, housing costs, neighborhood satisfaction, crime and safety, social engagement, as well as the accessibility and affordability of four key resources in L.A. County – housing, healthcare, food, and education. The survey also includes LABarometer's consumer sentiment index, a set of six questions designed to monitor individual finances and the economy.

Data and Methods

A total of 1,178 Los Angeles County residents participated in the Livability & Affordability Survey from June 22, 2022 through September 4, 2022. Participants were recruited from LABarometer's survey panel of 1,561 adults living in randomly selected households throughout Los Angeles County. The participation rate for the survey was 73%. The margin of sampling error[†] is 2.9 percentage points.

The survey was conducted in respondents' choice of English or Spanish. To participate in a survey, respondents could use any computer, cell phone, or tablet with Internet access. Internet-connected tablets were provided to respondents without internet access.

[†]Sampling error is calculated at the 95% confidence level, using a sample proportion of 0.5 to generate an upper bound of uncertainty. Please note that factors other than sampling error, including question wording, question order, sample type, survey method, and population coverage, may affect the results of any survey.

For More Information

For a complete description of our data, methods, and findings, please visit our website at https://cesr.usc.edu/labarometer/overview. For more information, contact us at labarometer-l@usc.edu