

Allegheny County Quality of Life Survey 2023 Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of Pittsburgh Center for Social and Urban Research (UCSUR), with the [UrbanKind Institute](#), conducted its 2023 Allegheny County Quality of Life survey in Fall 2023. The project is funded by the [Pittsburgh Foundation](#), [The Heinz Endowments](#), and UCSUR.

The survey asks a large diverse community sample for their personal perceptions of quality of life and livability in Allegheny County, how it is changing, and rating quality of life in their own neighborhood/community. The project combines primary survey data collection with secondary data to address quality of life topics across multiple domains.

The 2023 survey combines a set of questions from previous surveys to compare changes over time, particularly with the COVID19 pandemic, and new questions reflective of more current issues in quality of life in Allegheny County. UCSUR conducted previous QOL surveys in 2011 and 2018 that showed significant differences by race in quality of life across multiple dimensions in Allegheny County, particularly in housing, health, neighborhood, environment, public safety and overall well-being. The results exposed many racial disparities that stand as a baseline against current perceptions and changes.

The 2023 results show indicators with higher negative ratings in 2023 compared to 2018, suggesting multiple impacts of the pandemic contributing to declines in quality of life for some Allegheny County residents. The survey also adds new dimensions from previous surveys in the areas of food access, policing and community impacts, and additional areas of environmental concerns.

Impacts of COVID19 pandemic

- 41.7% of 2023 survey respondents felt the overall quality of life in Allegheny County has declined since before the start of the COVID19 pandemic. The figure was the same for Black and all other respondents.
- Far fewer respondents – only 12% - felt that quality of life in the county had improved since the start of the COVID19 pandemic in March 2020.
- There were significant differences between women and men on the issue – 47% of women felt that quality of life in the county declined in the period compared to 34% of men. There were slight differences by race with 14.4% of Black respondents reporting that overall quality of life improved since before the start of the pandemic, slightly higher than 11.6% for Nonblack respondents.
- Respondents were less likely to rate the region highly as a place to live in 2023 compared to before the COVID19 pandemic in 2018. In 2023, 51% of respondents rated the region as an excellent or very good place to live, compared to 67% of survey respondents in 2018. For 2023, 16% of respondents rated the region as a fair or poor place to live, much higher than those ratings (7%) in 2018.

- There were significant differences by race on rating the region as a place to live. 33.9% of Black respondents rated the region as a fair or poor place to live, compared to 13.1% of white/other respondents. Comparing age groups, older 65+ Allegheny county residents most highly rated the county as a place to live, with 60% reporting excellent or very good ratings. 16% of all respondents rated the region as a fair or poor place to live, a much higher rating than 7% in 2018.
- Respondents' ratings of their neighborhood as a place to live also dropped between 2018 and 2023. In 2023, 57% of survey respondents rated their neighborhood as an excellent or very good place to live, down from 62% in 2018. 18% rated their neighborhood as a fair or poor place to live in 2023, higher than 12% in 2018.
- There has been a decline in residents' view of their personal health in Allegheny County. Across Allegheny County, 43.1% of all respondents reported their health as excellent or very good and 21% of respondents reported their health as fair or poor. These results show a decline since before the pandemic. In 2018, 46% of respondents rated their health as excellent or very good, while only 16% in 2018 rated their health as fair or poor.
- When asked about changes in one's stress level from the COVID19 pandemic, 64% of respondents reported their stress level increased from the pandemic. The ratings were higher for women (70%), younger residents – those aged 18-29 (80.7%) and aged 30 – 44 (72.4%) – and city of Pittsburgh residents (70.5%).
- The pandemic also affected people's access to health care. When asked if, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, was there a time when you put off getting care from your health care provider, 44% responded yes, with slightly higher rates of putting off health care for women, residents younger than age 45, and city of Pittsburgh residents.
- The COVID pandemic increased the need for household food assistance. Nearly one-quarter (23.9%) of all respondents across the county reported receiving food from an organization, such as a food bank, food pantry, church or food rescue service, to help feed them and their family since the beginning of the COVID pandemic. Rates were higher for residents with lower incomes (<\$50,000), residents with less than a college education, and City of Pittsburgh residents compared residents in the rest of the county. In the City of Pittsburgh, 57.4% of Black respondents received food from an organization since the start of the COVID pandemic, and 27.0% of Hispanic respondents received food from an organization since the start of the pandemic, slightly higher than 23.8% of Non-Hispanic respondents.
- Receiving food assistance has been critical for many residents over time. One quarter of survey respondents reported receiving food assistance at some point before the pandemic. "Yes" responses to the question were higher for female respondents (26.0%) than male respondents (21.9%), Black (56.6%) residents than white/other (19.8%) residents, and for those with lower levels of educational attainment and lower income levels.
- While the pandemic brought more attention to issues of food insecurity that many

residents face, the widespread incidence of food insecurity in Allegheny County was also revealed in a question focused on respondents getting enough food for themselves/their household in the month before taking the survey. While 7.9% of all respondents across Allegheny County reported that they and their household *sometimes* or *often* did not have enough to eat, particular subgroups reported much higher levels of food insecurity: 15.9% of young respondents (age 18-29) reported sometimes or often not having enough to eat. The figures were also higher for those with a high school education or less (15.3%) and those making less than \$25,000 per year (23.0%) or \$25 – \$50,000 per year (13.0%). One fifth of Black respondents also reported sometimes or often not having enough to eat for their household.

- Respondents 18-29 years old had a significantly more positive response (41%) than all other age groups when asked if they believed in the next 3 or 4 years, the living conditions in Allegheny County will be better. For all survey respondents, 26.8% felt conditions would be better.
- The pandemic changed transit use for many. When asked if use of public transit has changed since the start of the pandemic, March 2020, 30.5% of respondents said yes. The figures were higher for city of Pittsburgh residents, residents earning < \$25,000, and younger residents age 18-29 (47.2%). While 27.4% of respondents reported their use has increased, 62.2% of respondents reported their use has decreased. The decrease was even higher for those with higher levels of educational attainment (masters degree or higher), with 79% reporting decreasing use of public transit since the pandemic, and for those with higher incomes.
- Respondents reported significant differences by race in how safe they feel about resuming normal activities as their community recovers from the COVID 19 pandemic. Overall, 90.8% of respondents felt very safe or somewhat safe resuming normal activities, with a much lower figure, 61.4% for Black respondents. Across the county, 13% of Black respondents reported feeling not safe at all resuming activities, compared to only 2.8% of all respondents.
- 27.3% of respondents reported that their household's financial situation had gotten somewhat worse or significantly worse since the beginning of the COVID pandemic. The figure was higher for Black respondents (32.4%); younger respondents age 18-29 (31.8%); respondents age 30-44 (30.6%); those with some college education (35.4%); those making < \$25,000 per year (43.1%), and those making between \$25,000 - \$50,000 (33.4%).
- Inflation's impact on respondents was strong, with 80% of respondents reporting inflation having either a large impact or some impact on them and their spending habits. The figures were higher for Black respondents (86.1%); those age 30 – 44 (86%), aged 45 – 64 (86.6%), some college by educational attainment (85.1%); and those earning between \$25,000 - \$50,000 (84.9%).
- The pandemic also affected respondents' attendance at arts events, as is well known. When asked if during the past year, they've attended fewer arts and culture events than they did before the COVID pandemic, 39.2% strongly agreed or agreed with that. Figures

for attending fewer arts and culture events were higher for Black respondents (54%); those aged 45-64 (43.9%); and those earning < \$25,000 (46.4%).

- Nearly half (49.2%) of respondents reported that the COVID pandemic had not impacted them at all in terms of accessibility to religious services, meetings, and activities. The figures were similar across groups, except somewhat lower for Black respondents (42.7%), younger age 18-29 respondents (43.3%); and those making between \$25,000-\$50,000 per year (39.3%).

Neighborhood, recreation/environmental issues

- 57.3% of all respondents rated their neighborhood as an excellent or very good place to live in 2023 and 17.8% rated gave fair or poor ratings on the question. There were significant differences across groups. 37.9% of African American residents rated their neighborhood as fair or poor place to live, much higher than white/other respondents' rating of their neighborhood as fair or poor at 14.8%. The 2023 fair or poor rating of their neighborhood as a place to live is also higher than the 2018 figure for Black residents of 29.8%.
- City of Pittsburgh residents were also less likely to rate their neighborhood as a place to live compared to residents in the rest of the county. 46.2% of city residents rated their neighborhood as an excellent or very good place to live, compared to 64.1% of residents in the rest of Allegheny County. 23.8% of city residents gave fair or poor ratings to their neighborhood, compared to 14% of respondents in the rest of the county.
- In terms of access to a grocery store that sells fresh produce and healthy food, 33% of city of Pittsburgh residents reported fair or poor access compared to 14.1% of residents in the rest of the county. There were also differences by race: 42.8% of African American respondents stated access was excellent or very good compared to 64.6% for non-African American. Additionally, 24% of Black respondents rated their neighborhood's access to a grocery store as poor compared to 7% of non-African Americans.
- When discussing accessibility to outdoor recreation areas, 82% of survey respondents reported outdoor recreation areas are either somewhat or very accessible. Black respondents were more likely to respond that they were very or somewhat inaccessible, 21.2%, compared to 10.7% for white/other respondents. Linked to accessibility in recreation is also the walkability of a neighborhood. 47.7% of respondents felt their neighborhood rated excellent or very good for walkability, compared to 30.2% who rate walkability as fair or poor. Additionally, 38% of both high school graduates or less and respondents with incomes below \$25,000 rated their neighborhood as fair or poor for walkability.
- While 28% of survey respondents reported rarely using public recreation facilities (0-4 times per year), over one-third of respondents used facilities more than 20 times per year. The rate was slightly higher for men (39.7%), and much higher (40% and higher) for younger age residents (under age 45), those with a bachelor's degree or higher, and those with higher earnings (>\$75,000).
- Respondents across socio-demographic-economic groups reported fewer differences to the question asking to what extent do you think your local government is taking

initiatives to reduce climate change. Overall, 7.4% felt that local government’s efforts were to a great or large extent, while 43% felt to little or no extent. 39.3% felt local government was to some extent on climate change initiatives.

- There were significant differences across groups, however, when asked how worried are you about climate change. Overall, 74.4% of respondents reported being very worried or somewhat worried, with higher numbers for those age 18-29 (88.5%), educational attainment of a masters degree or higher (89.1%), and city of Pittsburgh residents (81.1%).
- When asked to what extent do you think the US Steel Clairton Coke Works represents a threat to the environment and health of Allegheny County, though a quarter of respondents had no opinion or hadn’t thought about it, 53.5% felt the coke works is a significant or moderate threat to the environment and health.

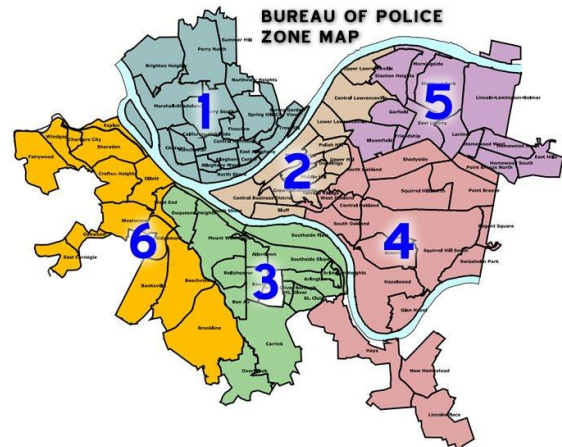
New areas for the QOL Survey

The 2023 Allegheny County Quality of Life Survey provided new analysis of survey results that were not part of the previous surveys. These include:

- City of Pittsburgh by Pittsburgh Police Districts. The City of Pittsburgh has 6 police districts and there were enough responses to the survey statistically to present sub-city responses.
- Hispanic/Latino population. There were enough respondents to present, for the first time, results by those who identified as Hispanic/Latino. The survey also included a Spanish language version. We include them below.

City of Pittsburgh Police Districts

- The pandemic has had comparable effects on residents across the city of Pittsburgh, regardless of race or geographic location in the city. On average, 43.5% of city of Pittsburgh respondents felt that quality of life in the county has declined since the start of the pandemic in March 2020.
- Residents who rated their neighborhood as an excellent or very good place to live varied by race and geography. 38% of Black city residents and 50% of white city residents rated their neighborhood as an excellent or very good place to live. By Police District, Zones 4 and 5 residents were the most positive about their neighborhood, with 62% and 58% respectively rating their neighborhood as an excellent or very good place to live, while residents in Zones 1 and 3 gave the lowest ratings of their neighborhood as a place to live.
- Overall, in the city of Pittsburgh, 25% of city residents felt there was more crime in their



neighborhood compared to a year before, with only a slight difference between Black residents (25%) and Nonblack respondents (22%). But residents' perceptions of crime in their neighborhood varied widely across parts of the city. While 11% of residents in Zone 5 and 13% in Zone 6 felt there was more crime in their neighborhood than a year ago, 38% of Zone 3 and 30% of Zone 1 respondents felt there was more crime in their neighborhood compared to a year ago.

- When asked to compare crime in their own neighborhood with other neighborhoods, respondents in Zone 4 (59%), Zone 5 (45%), and Zone 6 (48%) felt there was less crime in their own neighborhood compared to other areas. Respondents in Zones 1, 2 and 3 were more likely to report more crime in their neighborhood compared to other areas.
- 27% of Zone 1 respondents rated community law enforcement giving protection to people in their neighborhood as poor. Zone 6 reported the highest ratings of police giving protection to people in their neighborhood, with 17% reporting excellent protection and only 1% reporting poor protection.
- Trust in residents' law enforcement agency was lowest in Zones 1 and 3, where 28% of respondents reported not trusting their law enforcement agency at all.
- Over 80% of respondents in Zones 3, 4, 5 and 6 had the lowest ratings of their law enforcement agency practicing community policing, with well over 80% of respondents in these zones reporting community policing was practiced either not at all or just to a little extent.
- Police communicating with community members received low ratings across Zones, with over 80% of respondents in all zones reporting little or no regular communications. Similarly, respondents across zones reported that law enforcement rarely developed relationships with community members. The exception was Zone 2, where nearly 40% of respondents reported that law enforcement developed relationships with community members to a great extent or a lot.
- When asked if their law enforcement agency worked with community members to solve local problems, respondents in Zone 2 reported the highest levels of working together, with 40% of respondents reporting that their law enforcement agency works with community partners to solve local problems to a great extent or a lot. Zones 3 and 5 reported much lower positive views at 16% and 14% respectively.

Hispanic/Latino Respondents

- The survey results show Allegheny County Hispanic/Latino residents expressing more positive ratings of quality of life. While nearly half of both Hispanic (46%) and Non-Hispanic (46.4%) residents felt that overall quality of life in Allegheny County stayed about the same since before the start of the COVID19 pandemic in March 2020, 30.2 percent of Hispanic residents felt it had improved, well above 11.4% for all survey respondents.
- When asked if living conditions in Allegheny County will be better, worse, or about the same in 2-4 years, 47.6% of Hispanic respondents reported that living conditions will be better, compared to 26.1% of Non-Hispanic residents. Nonetheless, there was little

difference between Hispanic respondents and Non-Hispanic respondents who felt that living conditions will be worse in the next 2-4 years, 27.0% and 28.6% respectively.

- 46% of Hispanic residents were very likely to recommend living in Allegheny County to someone who asks, compared to 29.9% of Non-Hispanic residents.
- Both Hispanic residents (52.4%) and Non-Hispanic residents (51.2%) felt that southwestern Pennsylvania as a place to live was either excellent or very good, with 27.0% of Hispanic/Latino residents rating the region as an excellent place to live, much higher than Non-Hispanic residents (9.3%).
- 31.7% of Hispanic residents felt that their household's financial situation had gotten somewhat worse since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, compared to 18.3% of Non-Hispanic residents. Nonetheless, Hispanic respondents were more optimistic about their own economic situation over the next year, with 67.2% of Hispanic residents feeling their economic situation will get much better or somewhat better over the next year, compared to 29.7% of Non-Hispanic residents.
- Hispanic respondents were much more likely to use public transit, with 26.6% using public transit 5 or more days per week compared to 10.3% of Non-Hispanic respondents. Even so, 62% of Hispanic respondents reported that their use of public transit has changed since the start of the COVID19 pandemic in March 2020, with 44.7% reporting that their use of public transit had decreased a lot.
- Perceptions of the neighborhood where Hispanic respondents live were generally favorable. 61.9% of Hispanic respondents rated their neighborhood as an excellent or very good place to live, compared to 57.2% of Non-Hispanic respondents, though Hispanic respondents more often reported an excellent rating.
- Hispanic respondents reported that their neighborhoods had improved in safety over the previous year, with 23.8% of Hispanic respondents reporting that their neighborhood had less crime than a year ago, compared to 9.3% of Non-Hispanic respondents. Nearly 90% of Hispanic residents reported feeling very safe or somewhat safe in their neighborhood, the same as the total survey. While 71% of Hispanic residents felt very safe or somewhat safe walking alone in their neighborhood at night, 19.4% reported feeling very unsafe.
- Food access is a problem for many in Allegheny County, but for the Hispanic respondents, 42.9% reported that their neighborhood's access to a grocery store that sells fresh produce and healthy food was excellent and 19.0% reported such access was very good. A quarter of Hispanic respondents reported that in the month before taking the survey, sometimes their household did not have enough to eat, a much higher proportion than the survey average.

Methodology

The 2023 Allegheny County Quality of Life survey was conducted Summer - Fall 2023 by UCSUR. The survey contained 137 questions and was distributed in multiple ways:

1. A web-based survey was sent to members of Pitt UCSUR Regional Research Registry (PURR) who are residents of Allegheny County. This is a non-probability sampling

method, with follow up email requests sent to targeted demographic groups in the registry (minority and younger members).

2. A second phase of recruitment involved telephone surveys to targeted populations.
3. A third phase was conducted with partner organizations and direct outreach to contacts. This phase also included a Spanish language version of the survey for Spanish-speaking respondents of community partner organizations and contacts.
4. To reduce potential bias, the data were adjusted using statistical “raking”: methods for age, sex, race, and education to make the sample more representative of the Allegheny County population eighteen and older.
5. Total survey respondents = 2,038.
6. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) were then used to geo-code survey respondents (through the platform ArcGIS Pro 3.2). Of the 2,038 responses for the survey analysis, geocoding was successful for 2,011 respondents, or 98.6%.

For additional information, please view the 2023 Allegheny County Quality of Life Survey at: https://ucsur.pitt.edu/allegheny_county_qol_2023.php