THE LIVABILITY POLL

Generating a deeper understanding around the quality of life for residents in California’s Capital Region

November 2018
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A program of Valley Vision and Sacramento State’s Institute for Social Research

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Valley Vision

For 25 years Valley Vision has helped governments, businesses, foundations and community groups better understand our region and its people through high quality research. By uncovering common ground facts using scientific opinion polls, focus groups, community needs assessments, best practice reports and other research tools, Valley Vision is a trusted interpreter, commentator, forecaster, and work partner for community inspired solutions.

Sacramento State’s Institute for Social Research

Founded in 1989, the Institute for Social Research is an interdisciplinary center of CSUS, which works to improve programs and policies within the Sacramento region and throughout the state. Located at the Sacramento State downtown location, the Institute offers a broad range of expertise conducting survey research, performing program/policy evaluations, and conducting applied social science research. The hundreds of projects we have completed for government agencies, nonprofit organizations and the academic community have provided actionable information that has enhanced public accountability, program fidelity, and the overall quality of public policies.

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Regional Attitudes
A polling series of Valley Vision and Sacramento State Institute for Social Research

Making informed choices based on solid data and evidence is difficult in this day and age. That is why Valley Vision has partnered with the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at Sacramento State. Teaming together, we are using a proven, scientific method scaled to California’s Capital Region to uncover the perspectives of local residents on critical issues and share them with local policy makers. We are the first in the state – perhaps even the country – to apply this approach to a metropolitan area, creating a stronger connection between the people and those governing.

Valley Vision and ISR have released two polls to date — the first exploring civic amenities and the second focused on transportation and mobility in the region. We learned from the civic amenities poll that residents of this region truly value our trail systems, parks, museums, art galleries, and sports and entertainment venues. Detailed findings about priorities have helped public and private decision-makers understand and invest in these important community assets. We learned from the transportation poll that respondents said, universally, that transportation is critically important for business and job growth. This has supported the rationale for our region to embark upon advancing a shared vision for a regional Prosperity Plan – aligning transportation infrastructure investments to support an advanced economy.

This poll is our most important one to date. For Valley Vision, ensuring a high quality of life by supporting economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental sustainability is our core mission. That is why this quality of life survey will serve as our benchmark survey – with questions that we will come back to annually and use to track our regional success.

2018 will serve as our baseline year, and we’ve already learned some important facts about our communities. We have learned that we are at a crossroads. The Capital Region is thriving in many ways – new economic development investments are improving some of our core areas. Our educational institutions are strengthening their resolve to support talent development and innovation here. Community organizations are collaborating to improve our infrastructure and make our communities better places. But, as our survey shows – there are tensions. Our communities are divided, lacking a common vision for the future. Some residents feel left behind and many are worried about rising housing costs, increasing poverty, and fast-changing neighborhoods. Differences in where we live, how we live, and our make-up create differing experiences and therefore also differing viewpoints on basic quality of life issues.

We see an opportunity to commit ourselves to taking action on these difficult issues. Unlike past decisions, we now have real data to help us make informed decisions we all can be proud of, decades, even centuries later. What future will we choose?

Bill Mueller
CEO, Valley Vision

Shannon Williams
Executive Director, Institute for Social Research, CSUS
Executive Summary: A Benchmark Report on Quality of Life

Do you sit in traffic every day? Do you live near someplace you can buy healthy food? Do you know your neighbors and have people to call on when in need? These everyday experiences have serious implications for our health, well-being, and success in life. That is why Valley Vision and Sacramento State’s Institute for Social Research (ISR) fielded a scientific survey to better understand people’s perceptions and experiences that shape their everyday quality of life.

The purpose of this survey is to generate a deeper understanding about the quality of life for residents in the 8-county region, (Sacramento, El Dorado, Placer, Yolo, Yuba, Sutter, Solano, San Joaquin counties), including land use and development, education, housing, food security, civic engagement and diversity, mobility, and other priority issues.

The survey was in the field in June 2018 and had a total of 960 respondents. The overall margin of error was +/- 3%.

78% of respondents report satisfaction with their quality of life and 62% feel a sense of pride and attachment to the community. Respondents

In general, respondents in the Sacramento region enjoy a high quality of life overall, take pride in the community, engage with their neighbors, value diversity, and enjoy what the community has to offer.

report being involved in their communities, with about 60% participating in community service and about the same percentage agreeing that people in their community help each other in times of need.

Additionally, respondents value diversity. 67% agree that their community is “welcoming to people like me” and about 59% regularly interact with people of a different race and ethnicity and feel that their community is inclusive. Finally, respondents use community amenities with 55% of respondents reporting that they regularly go to a farmers’ market.
But, there are also tensions. Poverty and growing economic disparities are eroding the quality of life and becoming more visible, as shown in responses to the survey. Respondents are concerned about a lack of affordable housing, homelessness, issues of safety, and food insecurity. Disagreement among respondents about how we should grow and develop illustrates divisions in our communities.

20% of respondents said they ate less than they should in the last year because they didn’t have enough money, and about the same amount regularly get food from food pantries. Affordable housing is strongly identified as a high priority. 75% of respondents say quality housing for people with moderate to low-income is needed in their communities and difficulty with affording rent was often cited as a hardship.

Additionally, homelessness is a major concern. 26% of respondents said that it is the most pressing regional concern in an unaided, open-ended question, and 52% see high-visibility homelessness as a problem. Safety was also cited as a problem. 16% of respondents don’t feel safe in their homes and 36% do not feel safe walking around at night.

Respondents do not have one vision for how we should grow.

49% of respondents want to slow down on building new housing and 51% want to speed up on building more housing. Renters are more interested in speeding up while homeowners are more likely to want to slow down.

Are we at a crossroads?

While respondents rate our quality of life highly and indicate that it is of great importance to them and their families, survey results show that issues like poverty, inequality, high housing costs, homelessness, and concerns about how we will grow are making the path forward unclear. What steps must we take to protect and improve quality of life for everyone?
Quality of life was rated high for most respondents. 78% of respondents in the Capital Region report that they are satisfied with their quality of life and 63% of respondents have pride and attachment to the region. The majority of respondents tend to see community characteristics, like safety and access to amenities, as staying the same, as opposed to having gotten better or worse, as they have in the past.

**Income levels matter to how quality of life is rated.**
However, level of satisfaction with quality of life rises with income. 68% of those making less than $30,000 are satisfied compared to 93% of those making more than $150,000. People who live in small town/rural or suburban areas report a higher degree of satisfaction with quality of life (82-83% satisfied) compared to city respondents (74% satisfied).

What do you love about this region? “Trees, parks, community activities, volunteering opportunities, services for poor and homeless, city leadership, great police department to name a few.”

Overall, 63% of respondents report that they feel a sense of pride and attachment to the region.

### Satisfaction with Quality of Life Overall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat satisfied</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat dissatisfied</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very dissatisfied</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents’ pride and attachment tends to rise with age and income, with the oldest demographic segment of 55+ and those making more than $150,000+ feeling the most pride and attachment to their community. Finally, those who own their homes (67%) were more likely to feel pride and attachment compared to those who rent (54%).

“It’s really the sweet spot in urban California in terms of affordability and livability.”

“I am a Sacramento native; I love everything about Sacramento, it’s my hometown.”

When looking overall at whether community factors have gotten worse, stayed the same, or gotten better, respondents are most likely to say they have stayed the same in almost all cases, with only “jobs and overall business climate” noted as having gotten better and stayed the same in equal measure.
People 34 and under are more likely to say diversity, safety, and educational opportunities have gotten better than those 35 and over.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Gotten better</th>
<th>Stayed the same</th>
<th>Gotten worse</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobs and overall business climate</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic amenities such as parks</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity in your community</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to health and wellness facilities</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to engage in your community</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall neighborhood</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational opportunities</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety in your community</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Blacks consistently note that the factors above are getting better compared to other racial/ethnic groups, with the exception of “jobs and overall business climate”. The oldest and wealthiest demographics are most likely to rate “jobs and overall business climate” as having gotten better. Younger people aged 18-34 note that educational opportunities, safety in your community, and diversity in your community have gotten better to a greater degree than those older.

“We are engaged and care. The community is walkable and my neighbors are nice.”

The Sacramento region’s overall satisfaction with quality of life is on par with other national surveys, including the National Realtor Survey in which 82% of respondents reported feeling satisfaction with their quality of life across the nation in their 2017 survey. In the Sacramento region, reports of attachment and pride in community were also positive. When asked in a focus group convened by Valley Vision regarding this survey why this was, a group of millennials noted increasingly vibrant nightlife, art and food scene, and high quality of regional educational opportunities.

“I appreciate the variety of activities and resources available to residents including libraries, colleges, performing arts and continually improving restaurant scene.”

Inclusion, Diversity, and Engagement

In general, respondents feel that their communities are inclusive towards others and benefit from diversity. Most respondents are engaged in some aspect of their communities through attending events or community service. For the majority, those not already engaged would like to be.

The majority of respondents feel that their communities are inclusive, however, there are disparities related to who feels included and where.

People of color feel less welcome than white people in our communities.

In general, respondents’ agreement with these statements rose with income and with age. Agreement that “people help each other in times of need” was greater among homeowners than renters. Whites (73%) are most likely to agree that “the community is welcoming to people like me” compared to Blacks (54%), Latino of any race (63%), or Asians (63%). While the majority of
people report feeling welcome across race and ethnicity, these responses could suggest that there are some disparities in feelings of inclusion depending on racial or socio-economic factors.

Respondents were asked to name what they love about the region in an unaided, open-ended question. The survey response below was typical.

“What I love most is the people. The different cultures, races and religions.”

When reporting on the degree to which they interact with different types of people, respondents most frequently cited interacting with people of different ages, and were least likely to interact with people of different incomes.

**Overall, respondents are the most likely to interact with people of different ages, races, and/or ethnicities.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences with diversity</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residents regularly interact with people of different ages</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents regularly interact with people of different race and ethnicity</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents regularly interact with people of different religions</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents regularly interact with people of different income levels</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents aged 18-34 are the most likely to interact with people of different race and ethnicity, different religions, and different income levels compared to other ages. Those who live in rural or small town areas are the least likely to interact with people of different race and ethnicity (52%) compared to the city (61%) or suburban areas (62%). Respondents of all incomes, ages, or geographies are equally as likely or unlikely to interact with people of different incomes.

“I love that people in my community genuinely care about other people.”

What activities do respondents engage in and what are the activities in which they are interested in engaging more? The survey shows that respondents are most likely to have attended a local school arts event, like a play, musical performance, art or dance show (38%) or to have spent time participating in community service or volunteer activity (38%). Fewer respondents have spent time working informally with others to solve a community problem, however, 41% reported that they are interested in doing so. Respondents were least likely to have participated in a political campaign at the state or local level, with 44% reporting they have not done so and are not interested.
Respondents were less politically active compared to other activities like volunteering or going to sporting events.

### Participation in Community Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Yes, within last 12 months</th>
<th>Yes, but not within last 12 months</th>
<th>No, haven’t done it but would be interested</th>
<th>No and not interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended a local school arts event</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spent time participating in a volunteer activity</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a local charity fundraiser</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a local sporting event</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked informally to solve a community problem</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a local political rally or march</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a community meeting</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked on a political campaign at the state or local level</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across the board, respondents who own their homes are more likely to participate in each of the community activities mentioned. In many cases, those aged 55 and older are the most engaged, with a couple exceptions, especially related to school-type activities like sports and arts. In almost all cases, the youngest segment of 18-34 are least likely to have participated in the community activities listed. Those who live in a city are more likely to have attended a political rally or event than those who live in a rural or suburban area.
Access to Opportunity and Services

Access to high quality education and neighborhood amenities are important factors in a high quality of life. Overall, respondents were more positive about community college and four-year institutions than they were about K-12 schools. For the most part, respondents report a high degree of access to health services and neighborhood amenities.

Respondents most frequently reported community colleges as above average in quality, and were more familiar with the community college system than other school systems.

**Community colleges come out on top when compared to other educational providers.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate the quality of the following educational systems.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year colleges/universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public elementary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public high schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public middle schools/junior highs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing education (adult learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private K-12 schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Young people, aged 18-34, were the most positive about the K-12 school system, rating it above average more frequently than older respondents. Those making $50,000 or less rated K-12 schools particularly poorly overall, with no more than about 30% rating schools above average in any category. Women and renters were less positive about K-12 schools than men and homeowners, rating the K-12 system as above average less frequently.

“The region’s most pressing problem is…”SCHOOLS!! We need better options for middle and high school, especially high school.”

When looking at community colleges and four-year universities, respondents were more likely to rate the qualities as above average.

In general, respondents’ attitudes towards educational systems improved as income increased. Those living in rural areas were less likely to rate community colleges, four-year universities, and vocational training programs as above average compared to those living in cities or suburban areas.

A minority of respondents rated K-12 schools as “above average” in delivering skills for kids.
Community colleges do an above average job, with the highest marks in contributing to creativity and innovation in the region.

As income rose, so did respondents’ rating of community colleges as above average. Women rated community colleges and four-year universities lower than men, as they did for K-12 schools. 18-34 year olds consistently rated community colleges and four-year universities better than other age groups. For example, 50% of 18-34 year olds cited “contribute to creativity and innovation in the region” as above average, compared to 37-38% of those 35 years and older.

The majority of respondents report that their community has recreation facilities and parks, and fitness facilities, and fewer report that their community has preschool, childcare, and low income health services. (However, fewer are aware of these services in their community as well).

Availability of high quality childcare is cited as low.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My community has...</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recreation facilities, ie. parks and fields</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible fitness facilities</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist medical practitioners</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General medical practitioners</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency medical care</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled nursing facilities</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available high quality preschool</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income community health services</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available high quality childcare</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all cases except “low-income community health services”, those in higher income categories are more likely to report that their community has the services above. Those making less than $30,000 are the least likely, of any group across all categories, to report that their community has high quality pre-school (22%) or high quality childcare (17%).

What do you love most about this region?

Respondents were asked in an open-response, unaided question, “What do you love most about the region?” This question enabled respondents to write in whatever was on their minds. There were some themes that were often repeated. Across the region, respondents were most likely to say that they love the diversity and neighborliness of this region (32%) “Generally I feel the community has a ‘friendly’ feeling to it. Most people are willing to help if necessary.”

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Respondents also indicated that they love the safety of the region (14%). “Low crime, little traffic, many local events, strong community.” Other region-wide factors that respondents love are small town feel (10%), and health and wellness, such as walkable neighborhoods and access to parks (9%). While the percentages are low in these categories, they are worth noting because they reflect a repeated pattern of response in an open, write-in question.

What sets this region apart?

Respondents were asked in an open-response unaided question, “What sets this region apart?” This question enabled respondents to write in whatever was on their minds. There were some themes that were often repeated. Respondents were most likely to write about proximity to nature and other city conveniences (18%). “Urban tree canopy. Great local food. Rivers are awesome. Was affordable but is now changing thanks to gentrification from the bay.” The next most frequent answers were related to ethnic and socio-economic diversity (17%). “The region offers enough diversity and quality of life opportunities as any mega region without the gridlock of LA or Bay Area.” Other frequent responses were about community pride, culture, community engagement and family-oriented communities (11%). “The way people come together and stand up for what they believe in”, and “Always seem to be trying to improve community awareness and participation.”
Tensions: Housing, Safety, Homelessness, Disparities

There are many ways that the Sacramento region shines. Inclusion, engagement, diversity, and high access are given high marks by poll respondents. However, there are also tensions. Poverty and growing economic disparities are eroding the quality of life and becoming more visible, respondents say. The data show that respondents’ concerns about lack of affordable housing, growing homelessness, issues of safety, food insecurity, and disagreement about how we should grow are dividing our communities.

Safety

Many respondents say they encounter unsafe or undesirable conditions across multiple safety and blight categories, as shown in the chart below.

City dwellers are more likely to observe crime and blight.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you agree that in your community...</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People can safely walk alone during the day</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People feel safe in their homes</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is good level of lighting</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are safe, well-lit streets and intersections</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law enforcement responds quickly</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is free from eyesores like visible trash</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People can safely walk alone at night</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is free from property crime, like car break ins</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is low visibility of homeless activity</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those living in the city, compared to rural or suburban areas, are much more likely to agree that the factors above are present in their community. Further, Sacramento County respondents typically report a higher incidence of the factors noted above. Likewise, women, renters, and those with incomes less than $50,000 throughout the region are more likely to report the presence of the safety and blight issues noted above. Blacks, compared to Whites, Asians, or Latinos of any race, report at a lower rate the presence of the safety and blight characteristics listed above.

The most pressing challenge in the region is...

“The safety—there is a distinct difference in new neighborhoods compared to older neighborhoods (where we live)”

Homelessness and Poverty

Homelessness has been identified as a significant and increasing issue in the region. In an open question asking, “What is the region’s most pressing problem?” 26% wrote in homelessness unprompted. Additionally, 52% of respondents noted that they observe homelessness in their community. Sacramento County respondents, as well as women, those making under $50,000, those living in cities, and renters are most likely to report the presence of visible homelessness in their communities.

“The homeless situation has gotten worse. Every day there are more and more homeless on the streets—whether from loss of jobs or loss of home because of increase of rent or mortgage. I hate seeing all the homeless in our streets, I don't feel comfortable walking alone in that part of town—day or night.”

Food insecurity was noted as an issue for 20% of regional respondents. This is about 8% higher than the overall U.S. rate of food insecurity, calculated in 2017 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as 11.8%.
Women are twice as likely as men to report that they are food insecure.

In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn’t enough money for food?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women report food insecurity at a higher rate than men by 12% (24% of women vs. 12% of men); renters (39%) and those making less than $30,000 (44%) report the highest degree of food insecurity across any other groups.

The cost of food is the most significant reason contributing to food insecurity. Physical ability and availability of preferred stores are the two other reasons noted (15% each). For those making $30,000 or less, availability of preferred stores was the next most significant reason (20%).

Cost, access and availability were cited most as issues when shopping for food.

In the last 12 months, were any of the following issues you faced when shopping for food?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Often or always</th>
<th>Sometime</th>
<th>Never or rarely</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost of food</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical ability</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of preferred store</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to the store</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time for shopping</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19% of survey respondents, or 193 out of 960 respondents, reported they always, often, or sometimes get food from a food bank or pantry.

“Rent has gone up through the roof, a lot of people are struggling especially single income families, a few have had to go on food stamps because the money for their food has had to go to the rent now.”

Regional Challenges

Respondents were given the opportunity to write about what they see as the region’s most pressing challenges in an open, unaided, write-in question. There were some themes that were written about again and again. 26% of respondents wrote in homelessness as the most pressing regional problem. “Rampant homelessness and insufficient resources for them. Waiting lists are long for housing. Crime seems to be on the rise.” 17% of respondents named safety, crime, drugs, and violence as a pressing problem, which, in some cases, was also related to homelessness. “People coming in from other places and causing crime.”, and “Drug addicts, crime and homelessness.” 12% of respondents wrote about housing and rent prices and availability. The most pressing regional challenge is... “High cost of living, especially housing, with low wages.”
Shaping our Communities

California’s Capital Region is undergoing change and growth. Economic development provides new points of pride and prosperity, but at the same time, neighborhoods are changing and people face economic hardship. Affording rent has become more difficult for some, and many communities are locked in conflict over differing visions of the future. The findings raise an important question for regional leadership about how we grow. Should the region embrace our small town vibe, slowing down and restricting growth or embrace transformation into a denser and more urbanized environment? How can the region best accommodate our diverse housing needs across cities, suburbs, and rural areas?

Growth and Development

Affordable housing and growth are important and often divisive topics as our region faces increased housing demand amid affordable housing shortages. When it comes to reacting to different visions of growth and development, respondents are split down the middle between wanting to remove obstacles in order to “speed up on building more housing” and “slow down on building new housing” because neighborhoods are rapidly changing.

Respondents were split on whether to slow down or speed up development.

Which of these statements come closer to your views?

- 49%  
  I think we need to slow down on building new housing, as neighborhoods are changing way too fast

- 51%  
  I think we need to speed up on building more housing, and not let so many obstacles get in the way

More than 51% of those 35 years and older, those who live in rural areas, and homeowners preferred slowing down on housing development. 18-34 year olds and renters prefer speeding up on building more housing to a higher degree than any other groups.

What sets the region apart... “Nothing. Sacramento is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a family economically. The demographics have changed and Sacramento is becoming a “big city” but some of the things that come along with being a “big city” are not helpful to current residents. Things such as ungodly rent amounts, lack of efficient/sufficient economic assistance for families, increased visible homeless population.”

What sets the region apart... “The Downtown Arena. I think it signals the emergence of Sacramento as a city on par with San Francisco and Los Angeles.”
Housing and Mobility

A significant amount of respondents say they have moved in the last three years (28%) or plan to move in the next three years (33%).

18-34 year olds, renters, and those living in the city are the most mobile in the region.

Have you moved or will you move?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Have you moved in the last 3 years</th>
<th>Are you planning to move in the next three years?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td></td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most mobile in the regional population are 18-34 year olds, renters, and those living in cities. 59% of renters and 41% of 18-34 year olds plan to move in the next three years. Those making less than $50,000 plan to move at a higher rate than those in other income categories. Finally, Asians are both more likely to report having moved in the last three years and planning to move in the next three years compared to other races/ethnicities.

People move for a multitude of reasons. The top cohesive category for why people moved in the last three years is to buy a house, however, fewer people are planning to buy in the next three years compared to how many bought in the last three years. People are most likely to move in the next three years to find a better location.

First-time home ownership was a top reason for moving, respondents say.

![Bar chart showing reasons for moving]

What are your main reasons for planning to move?

- Other reasons, not listed: 24% (25%)
- Bought/will buy a house: 18% (25%)
- Better location: 8% (15%)
- Need more room: 13% (22%)
- Cheaper rent: 10% (9%)
- Expanded/will expand family: 8% (7%)
- Better quality home: 3% (7%)
- Retired: 4% (0%)
- Foreclosed/evicted: 3% (0%)

What was your main reason for moving?

What are your main reasons for planning to move?

When looking at reasons that people have moved in the last three years, cheaper rent was an issue for those making under $30,000 (20%), those living in Yolo/Solano counties (20%), and renters (16%). Blacks (10%) and those making less than $30,000 (8%) were most likely to report being evicted or foreclosed upon. Looking into the next three years, people are most likely to plan on moving in order to get a better location.

Affordability and the presence of well-maintained properties are key characteristics that respondents look for when moving.
Housing affordability and well-maintained homes and properties were the most important factors when moving.

For those aged 18-34, the most important attributes they seek in a new place are well-maintained properties, affordability, and high-quality job opportunities. 18-34 year olds value accessible public transportation, access to higher education, and access to a variety of employment opportunities to a higher degree than those aged 35+.

The region’s most pressing challenge is...

“Balancing housing/development needs with resources (like water), open space, traffic effects, quality of life.”

48% of respondents currently live in suburban areas and 37% want to live in suburban areas. Respondents prefer suburban areas with a mix of houses and businesses compared to houses only. 19% of respondents reported wanting to live in rural areas, however only 5% of those surveyed actually live in rural areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is an affordable place to live</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-maintained homes and properties</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low amount of traffic</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to public spaces, including parks</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable housing</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy walkability</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High quality job opportunities</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-maintained streets</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A variety of housing choices</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High quality public schools</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to a variety of employment opps</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local govt invests in economic development</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to higher education</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to public transportation</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available spaces for parking</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good bikeability</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for job training</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy access to the airport</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
City dwellers with a mix of offices and apartments seem most content with where they live.

In what type of area do you live and where would you like to live?

- Suburban - mix of houses and businesses
- City - mostly residential neighborhood
- City - near a mix of offices, apartments
- Suburban - houses only
- Small town
- Rural area

81% of Sacramento County respondents chose housing for people with moderate and low income compared to 74% or less from other counties as a top priority. The prioritization of housing for people with moderate and low income fell as incomes rose. Women and renters were more likely to prioritize it compared to men and homeowners, however it remains a high priority across the board.

“I feel like affordable housing is getting worse. High income and low income people are increasingly isolated from each other.”
Local Government Investment Preferences

The majority of respondents prefer that local government develop and revitalize older, outdated buildings in order to create job growth.

**Revitalized communities should be government’s top job.**

If local governments choose to spend public resources to address job growth, how much priority would you prefer they place on the following types of solutions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solution</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redevelop and revitalize older, outdated buildings</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build affordable housing for workers</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build public transportation to and from economic centers</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide employee training opportunities</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide financial incentives to attract new employment</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide financial incentives to existing businesses</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide employee recruitment services to businesses</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide assistance to businesses in financial difficulty</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The top local government investment preference for job growth is to build affordable housing for workers say 18-34 year olds (46%), those making less than $30,000 (52%), and renters (54%).

“Keeping growth small, and cost of living reasonable. The prices of homes and rentals is causing local, long term residents to have to leave their homes and this lovely area for something affordable in another state or northern California.”

Maintaining a low crime rate was of the greatest interest when thinking about how local government should invest to improve public services.
Fighting crime is the top priority for government investment in services.

If local governments choose to spend public resources to address improving public services, how much priority would you prefer they place on the following types of solutions?

- Maintain a low crime rate: 54%
- Provide funding for local public schools: 39%
- Maintain public buildings and parks: 38%
- Provide adequate public transportation: 33%
- Expand and improve local health care services: 25%
- Provide park and recreation facilities: 23%
- Improve the services that are provided to seniors: 20%
- Improve the availability of high-speed Internet: 17%
- Provide special events like community festivals: 12%
- Government should not fund these resources: 5%

This finding is consistent across all ages, income categories, and geographies. Blacks, when compared to other races/ethnicities, are more interested in investments in public transportation (43%).

The region... “still has a chance to deal correctly with massive issues with housing needs, homelessness, traffic, and overall growth before its get too big.”

Concluding Analysis: Addressing the findings

Within our region, there is not just one experience when it comes to quality of life. Our individual communities, in addition to our income, race or ethnicity, age, homeownership status, and other factors significantly shape our experiences and our preferences.

The data reported here raises important questions for our region: What are the quality of life priorities for our communities and how will we make meaningful change to improve livability and wellbeing for all?

The results here also illustrate the extent to which the region is divided in our vision for how to grow, with 49% overall saying that new housing developments should slow down while the other 51% say it should speed up. The split opinions seem closely tied to factors such as age, where respondents live, and whether or not they are homeowners. With such different visions of growth for our region, leaders should consider how we chart a path for the future to meet the needs of growing and changing communities. Our response will determine the future.

Will we rise up and make difficult and bold choices? The status quo or simply meeting in the middle risks our region’s long-term future when people are divided in this way. These poll results give elected, policy and civic leaders new insight to understand community experiences and conditions. Valley Vision conducted this benchmark quality of life survey to help guide the path forward.

How will we better meet the needs of our communities? Are residents adequately engaged in their neighborhoods and institutions? Do they have needed social supports? Do they have access to opportunities? Are our systems supportive of well-being and health? Tracking and understanding these quality of life indicators allows for in-depth conversations that can help guide decisions related to community investments and priorities that can make a difference in peoples’ lives.
Call to Action...
for Valley Vision

1. Valley Vision’s board and staff are taking this research to heart. We have developed a new business plan that is using the livability results as a call to action. As we set priorities and make decisions, these data will be at the core. And we will gauge next year’s quality of life survey results to see if conditions are improving or not.

2. Valley Vision will keep this conversation going. We will produce more in-depth analysis of these data in addition to conducting additional conversations on the findings. We commit to future dialogue on the different visions that we have on the growth of the Capital Region and the disparities that are reflected in survey responses.

3. We will bring this research into the room for other planning and decision-making processes. For example, the Sacramento Area Council of Governments is currently producing the 2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, which is the regional long-term plan to actively link land use, air quality, and transportation needs as well as to align those investments with economic prosperity goals. Valley Vision will be at the table representing quality of life issues for the residents of the region.

4. Valley Vision is committed to an inclusive economy. We are partnering with SACOG, the Greater Sacramento Economic Council, the Sacramento Metro Chamber and others to advance an inclusive and prosperous economy in California’s Capital Region. Valley Vision will keep the principles of inclusivity and the values of quality of life issues at the forefront of this process.
For other influencers....

1. Elected officials, policy leaders and other decision-makers can rely on this research to guide investment, infrastructure, and programmatic decisions. Having a reliable dataset that reflects the needs and priorities of community members is a critical tool for making smart and informed choices.

2. Individually, we must take responsibility for ourselves and our communities. We all have the ability to impact our own and others’ quality of life and wellbeing. Let’s get to know and support our neighbors, learn about and get engaged in our local governments, seek relationships with people different than us, and build community where we are. We all must embody the values that we want for our communities.

3. Nonprofits and community-based organizations are on the ground helping improve quality of life throughout the region. Learn about and support organizations doing work on important quality of life issues, such as public health, affordable housing, social services, food security, education, job training, and others. The Sacramento Region Community Foundation supports the Giving Edge, an online directory of nonprofits in the Capital Region. Use this directory or others to find out how to donate time or resources to these critical community organizations.

For our region as a whole...

1. Focus on the future. Survey responses showing such a wide division in a vision for the future is a warning. We must plan for what we want our communities to look like 10, 20, 50 years from now. Many issues require attention now to achieve good outcomes later. Addressing educational disparities is critical to addressing long-term social disparities as well as long-term quality of life issues. Data showing that low income respondents rate K-12 education poorly is a red flag indicator that conditions must improve to enable access to opportunity for tomorrow’s population. Making land use decisions to enable transportation, adequate housing, and preservation of open space in the future will require data-based, collaborative, and aligned decision-making today. Without leadership and a collective vision, we risk fostering deeper divisions and poorer inclusivity in our region.

2. Seek human-to-human problem-solving and interaction. Our world is increasingly polarized and our methods of modern communication intensify disagreements and further polarization. Survey results showing disparities across income and race reflect different conditions and perceptions of our communities. Face-to-face dialogue won’t solve all of our societal ills, but it can help unify perceptions of the conditions we face together and generate deeper understanding across diverse communities.

Here we have reported the numbers. **Now we must act.**

Survey Methodology

In June 2018, 960 area respondents (out of a panel of about 1,600 individuals) completed an online survey about livability of California’s Capital Region. Questions covered overall quality of life and satisfaction and asked respondents their opinions about issues related to community characteristics, development, education, food security, housing, mobility, and priority issues.

Respondents were also asked about what they loved most about the region, its challenges, and what sets it apart from other areas in California. Respondents represent eight counties: El Dorado; Placer; Sacramento; San Joaquin; Solano; Yolo; Sutter; Yuba. The responses and the panel were weighted based upon income, race, and rent/own home status in order to reflect the census demographic profile for the region. The margin of error for this survey is +/-3%.

Survey Demographics

Geography
- 57% Sacramento County
- 16% Solano/Yolo
- 10% Placer County
- 8% San Joaquin County
- 4% El Dorado County
- 4% Yuba County

Gender
- Male 33%
- Female 67%

Income
- <$30K 24%
- $30-50K 17%
- $50-75K 19%
- $75-150K 29%
- >$150K 12%

Own v. Rent
- Own 56%
- Rent 32%
- Missing 11%

Urbanicity
- 51% City
- 22% Rural/small town
- 27% Suburb

Age
- 18-36 36%
- 37-52 26%
- 53+ 38%

Racial Make up

White 64%
Pacific Islander 1%
Asian 11%
Black 10%
Other 13%

Hispanic
- Yes 23%
- No 77%