



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Nov. 4, 2022

Contact:

Phil Pitchford
Public Information Officer
951-826-5975
ppitchford@riversideca.gov

Concerns About Pandemic, Homelessness Mirrored in Quality of Life Survey

Survey designed to gauge residents' feelings and concerns about California's 12th largest city

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and the localized effect of the statewide increase in homelessness are affecting how Riverside residents see their city.

Both issues are reflected in the results of the 2022 Quality of Life survey conducted by the Institute of Applied Research and Policy Analysis (IAR) at California State University, San Bernardino. This is the latest version of the survey, which was previously completed in 2019, 2015 and 2013.

Many of the ratings have slipped since the last survey in 2019. There also is some good news about how residents feel about their government's ability to provide quality services and how City government responded during the pandemic.

Some ratings improved. For example, the percentage of respondents who said that public libraries met their needs increased to 90.8 percent from 85.6 percent in 2019, which corresponds with the construction and opening of a new Main Library. The percentage of respondents who felt Riverside is "a good place to be active and healthy" jumped to 92.1 percent, up from 90.6 percent in 2019.

However, many results reflect concerns about serious issues facing the city, state, and nation. Those concerns also are reflected in actions being taken by the Mayor and City Council. For example, last month, the City approved its [Homeless Action Plan](#) to address the most pressing issue in the state.

Respondents, who were most concerned about traffic in 2019, are now most concerned about homelessness. Perception of Riverside as "a good place to find an affordable place to live" continued a nine-year decline to 53.3 percent from a high of 85.1 percent in 2013.

Respondents answering with an unqualified "yes" in terms of feeling safe walking their neighborhood dropped to 61.4 percent, down from 70 percent in 2019. Respondents who are "somewhat fearful" or "very fearful" of being a victim of a serious crime jumped to 39.3 percent from 31.8 percent in 2019.

Respondents who reported feeling unsafe cited homelessness the most at 39 percent, followed by crime at 31.9 percent and drugs/gangs at 11.7 percent. Homelessness is the thing respondents liked least about living in Riverside, at 29.4 percent, and only 25.2 percent of people were satisfied with the progress being made on homelessness. Respondents saying that homeless people in the parks is a problem doubled to 41.9 percent, compared to 20.4 percent in 2019.

“Riverside is perceived as a good place to be active and healthy, to enjoy art and culture, to bring visitors, to find an affordable place to live, and to raise children. Riverside residents feel a tremendous sense of pride in their city, and a sense of belonging,” IAR said in its conclusion. “But it is important to note one particular challenge that was mentioned throughout the surveys in a variety of contexts (and with great passion): homelessness.”

Other survey results reflect the impact of past pandemic-related closures. For example, respondents gave lower marks than in 2019 in terms of Riverside being a good place to enjoy art and culture; and of their needs being met in terms of music, dance, live theater, festivals, and special events.

On the positive side, 84.1 percent of respondents said Riverside provides quality services to its residents. More than 80 percent of respondents were aware that the City provided extra services during the COVID-19 pandemic, and more than 91 percent of respondents thought the City did either “very well” (43.5 percent) or “somewhat well” (47.7 percent) in providing those services.

A vast majority – 86.7 percent – of respondents said diversity is supported and valued in Riverside, and nearly three-quarters of residents feel Riverside is a good place to find a job. Almost two-thirds of respondents had a great deal or a fair amount of trust and confidence in Riverside city government when it comes to handling local problems. A similar number of respondents -- 67.3 percent -- believe leaders make decisions based on community involvement and engagement.

Riverside is a highly engaged community. More than 85 percent of respondents said they had participated in at least one of the following: attended a meeting in-person (10.2 percent); attended a meeting online (14.8 percent); visited the City website or other online service (68.9 percent); or participated in a local election (67.2 percent).

The survey included several components: a phone survey of residents, which is the most statistically valid; an online survey of residents; and an online survey of non-residents who work or attend college/university in Riverside. The margin of error is 4.4 percent.

Survey results can be viewed [here](#).