

Community Fact Sheet

Opinions Matter:

What NWA Residents Are Saying About Quality of Life

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Figure 1.1
Residents' Ratings: Quality of Life Northwest Arkansas, 2008



Source: 2008 Omnibus Survey; Survey Research Center & Community and Family Institute.

In June 2008, the University of Arkansas' Survey Research Center completed the most recent version of the Northwest Arkansas Omnibus Survey. In all, 600 randomly sampled Northwest Arkansas adults completed interviews. The sample was predominantly female (62%), white (86%), between 40 and 65 years of age (42%), with at least some college education or college degree (61%).

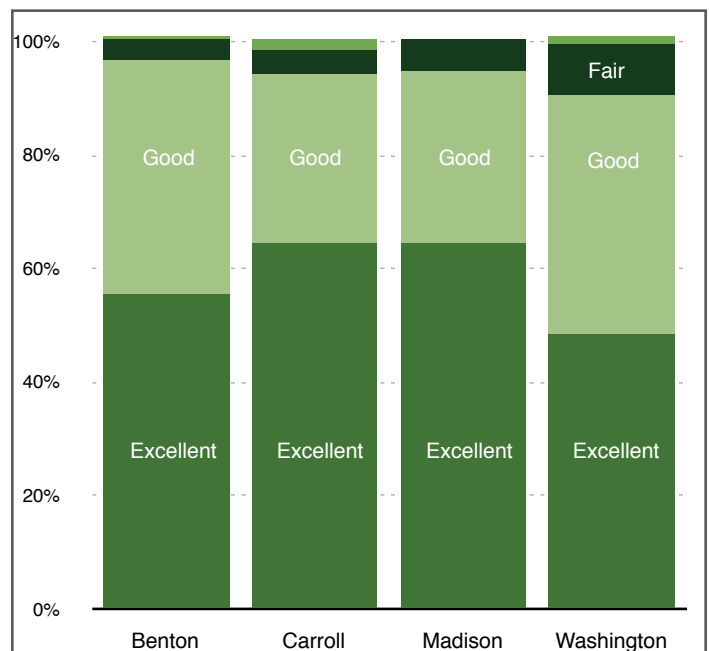
In order to gauge the overall quality of life in the region respondents were asked, "How would you rate Northwest Arkansas as a place to live?" The results to this question are presented in Figure 1.1.

A majority of residents feel Northwest Arkansas is an "excellent" place to live, and another 40 percent provide a "good" rating. In contrast, fewer than 10 percent of residents think the quality of life in

Northwest Arkansas is only "fair" or "poor". These responses have changed very little since 2000 when an earlier version of these same questions were asked of Northwest Arkansas residents.

The overwhelmingly positive perceptions of Northwest Arkansas residents are particularly noteworthy because of significant variation in a number of objective quality of life indicators across the region's four counties: Benton, Carroll, Madison, and Washington County (see a recent study by the Community and Family Institute: <http://sociology.uark.edu/2571.htm>).

Figure 1.2
Residents' Ratings: Quality of Life in Northwest Arkansas by County, 2008



Source: 2008 Omnibus Survey; Survey Research Center & Community and Family Institute.

Results presented in Figure 1.2 reveal that residents in the less populated counties (Carroll and Madison) provide higher quality of life ratings than those living in Benton and Washington Counties. Washington County residents expressed significantly less satisfaction; nearly 10 percent of county residents said they thought that Northwest Arkansas was only a fair place to live.

These findings are telling. It is clear that **place matters** and for residents living in less densely populated areas, despite limited services and access to these services, satisfaction may be more about lifestyle and choice than specific benefits that come with living in more urbanized, developed areas.

Sociodemographic Differences

In an effort to probe the variation in opinion a little deeper, we examined differences in quality-of-life attitudes across gender, racial/ethnic, and income groups. While we found no gender differences in attitudes, a different story emerged as we examined race/ethnicity, and social class differences in quality-of-life opinions.

In Figures 1.3 and 1.4 we explored the ethnic and racial differences in quality-of-life opinions among Northwest Arkansas residents. Clearly, there was a significant race and ethnic “effect”; non-White and non-Hispanic residents were more likely to see Northwest Arkansas as less than an “excellent” place to live. In fact, the same was true with non-White residents generally; nearly 15 percent of non-Whites thought Northwest Arkansas was a fair or poor place to live.

In Figure 1.5, the differences in quality-of-life opinions across income groups are marked. Those persons earning less than \$25,000 per year were most likely to see Northwest Arkansas as a fair place to live; almost 50 percent of those residents responded as such with fewer than one-fifth of the low earning residents thinking that this region was a good place to live. As expected, those earning more than \$75,000 dollars per year were the most positive about life in Northwest Arkansas. The percentage of residents who saw the region as a fair place to live were twice as likely to be earning less than \$25,000 compared to those earning more than \$75,000.

Clearly, opinions in the region were as diverse as the Northwest Arkansas population--place matters but there appears to be more to the story.

Figure 1.3
Residents' Ratings: Quality of Life in Northwest Arkansas by Hispanic Status, 2008

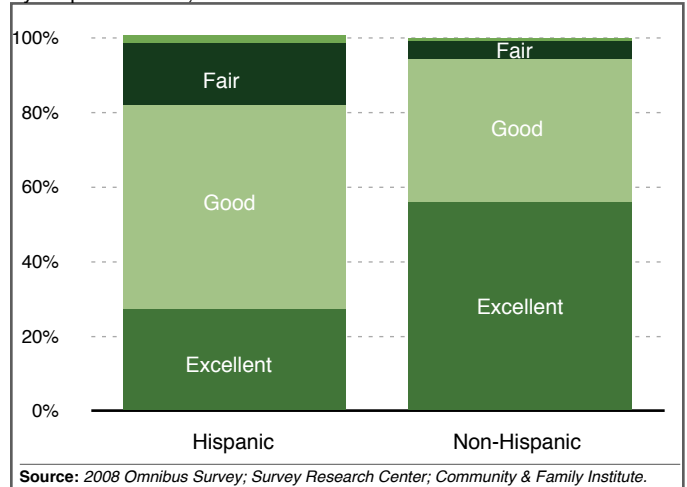


Figure 1.4
Residents' Ratings: Quality of Life in Northwest Arkansas by Racial Status, 2008



Figure 1.5
Residents' Ratings: Quality of Life in Northwest Arkansas by Earnings Status, 2008

