

Measures of Quality of Life

A Project of The Baugh Center

2015

Variables in the U.S. Quality of Life
Measures

Variables in the U.S. Quality of Life Measures

Component	Subcomponent	Variable	Source
1. Opportunity			
A. Poverty	i. Poverty rate	Number of persons whose pre-tax, pre-benefit household income falls below the established poverty threshold for a household of that size as a percent of total population. Goalposts are set at 0 and 20.70.	Census Historical Poverty Tables
	ii. Income of bottom 20%	Mean household income of the bottom income quintile. Goalposts are set at \$3,501.34 and \$7,527.24.	American Community Survey
B. Employment	i. Unemployment rate	Number of persons not employed who are actively available for work and seeking employment. Goalposts are set at 1.86 and 25.00.	Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
	ii. Long-term unemployment rate	Number of persons who report themselves as having been out of work for more than 16 weeks as a percent of the total workforce. Goalposts are set at -1.12 and 5.42.	Current Population Survey
	iii. Labor participation rate	Number of persons available for work and actively seeking employment as a percent of total civilian non-institutional population. Goalposts are set at 58.10 and 74.52.	BLS
C. Community basics	i. Perceived community improvement	Percent of survey respondents answering "yes" to the question, "Is the city or area where you live getting better or getting worse as a place to live?" Goalposts are set at 0 and 100.	Gallup
	ii. Employment growth	Three-year compound annual growth rate of number of persons employed. Goalposts are set at -1.84 and 4.45.	BLS
	iii. Percent increase in businesses	One-year percent increase in number of firms. Goalposts are set at -2.74 and 4.31.	Census Statistics of U.S. Businesses
D. Education	i. 8th grade test scores	Average of subscores for 8th-grade test scores on reading, math, and science. Data for subscores are average scores on the 8th-grade National Assessment of Educational Progress subject test. Goalposts are set at 0 and 275.66 for reading, 0 and 296.92 for math, and 0 and 166.72 for science.	National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)
	ii. High school dropout rate	Rate of students dropping out of school in grades 9–12. Goalposts are set at 0.82 and 7.27.	NCES
	iii. Choice	Average of subscores for number of charter schools as a percent of total schools and educational freedom. Goalposts are set at 0 and 11.5. Data for educational freedom are an aggregate index of educational policies. Goalposts are set at -0.0489 and 0.0489 to reflect a 0.0191 weight of a range of -2.5 to 2.5 for a standard deviation-based score.	NCES and Mercatus Center
2. Health & Environment			
A. Physical health	i. Male life expectancy	Age to which a newborn male child would be expected to live if current mortality patterns do not change throughout the child's life. Goalposts are set at 0 and 77.96.	Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME)
	ii. Female life expectancy	Age to which a newborn female child would be expected to live if current mortality patterns do not change throughout the child's life. Goalposts are set at 0 and 82.53.	IHME

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2. Health & Environment			
A. Physical health	iii. Obesity rate	Number of persons with a body mass index greater than 30 as a percent of total population. Goalposts are set at 0 and 32.68.	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
B. Mental health	i. Suicide rate	Age-adjusted number of deaths caused by intentional self-harm per 100,000 population. Goalposts are set at 0 and 19.56.	CDC
	ii. Prevalence of worrying	Percent of survey respondents answering “yes” to the question, “Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about worry?” Goalposts are set at 0 and 100.	Gallup
	iii. Prevalence of anger	Percent of survey respondents answering “yes” to the question, “Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about anger?” Goalposts are set at 0 and 100.	Gallup
C. Environmental health	i. Satisfaction with location	Percent of survey respondents answering “satisfied” to the question, “Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the city or area where you live?” Goalposts are set at 0 and 100.	Gallup
	ii. Access to safe water	Percent of survey respondents answering “easy” to the question, “In the city or area where you live, is it easy or not easy to get clean and safe water?” Goalposts are set at 0 and 100.	Gallup
	iii. Access to fruits and vegetables	Percent of survey respondents answering “easy” to the question, “In the city or area where you live, is it easy or not easy to get affordable fresh fruits and vegetables?” Goalposts are set at 0 and 100.	Gallup
	iv. Access to Medicine	Percent of survey respondents answering “easy” to the question, “In the city or area where you live, is it easy or not easy to get medicine?” Goalposts are set at 0 and 100.	Gallup
	v. Access to a safe place to exercise	Percent of survey respondents answering “easy” to the question, “In the city or area where you live, is it easy or not easy to get a safe place to exercise?” Goalposts are set at 0 and 100.	Gallup
3. Freedom			
A. Personal freedom		Aggregate index of personal freedom, taking into account a range of laws regarding victimless crimes, social policy, and other policies. Goalposts are set at –81.7 and 81.7 to reflect a 0.327 weight of a range of –250 to 250 for a standard deviation-based score.	Mercatus Center
B. Economic Freedom		Aggregate index of economic freedom, taking into account fiscal and regulatory freedom. Goalposts are set at –168.3 and 168.3 to reflect a 0.663 weight of a range of –250 to 250 for a standard deviation-based score.	Mercatus Center

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4. Community & Relationships			
A. Community life	i. Volunteerism	Number of persons participating in any voluntary activity in the previous year as a percent of population. Goalposts are set at 0 and 39.71.	Corporation for National and Community Service
	ii. Religious engagement	Average of subscores for importance of religion and religious attendance. Data for importance of religion are the percent of survey respondents answering “yes” to the question, “Is religion an important part of your life?” Goalposts are set at 0 and 100. Data for religious attendance are the percent of survey respondents answering “at least once a week” to the question, “How often do you attend church, synagogue, or mosque—at least once a week, almost every week, about once a month, seldom, or never?” Goalposts are set at 0 and 47.34.	Gallup
B. Family life	i. Prevalence of marriage	Number of persons whose current marital status is “married” as a percent of total population. Goalposts are set at 0 and 47.73.	Current Population Survey
	ii. Prevalence of divorce	Number of persons whose current marital status is “divorced” as a percent of total population. Goalposts are set at 0 and 10.51.	Current Population Survey
	iii. Children in single-parent families	Number of children under age 18 who live with their own single parent in a family or subfamily, as a percent of total children under age 18. Goalposts are set at 0 and 41.94.	Annie E. Casey Foundation
	iv. Time spent with friends and family	Percent of survey respondents answering “6+ hours” to the question, “Approximately, how many hours did you spend, socially, with friends or family yesterday? Please include telephone or e-mail or other online communication.” Goalposts are set at 0 and 49.94.	Gallup
5. Living Standard			
A. Current living standard	i. Personal income per capita	Natural log of all income received by persons from all sources, adjusted using Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) estimates of Regional Price Parity and the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). Goalposts are set at 8.46 and 9.97.	BEA and BLS
	ii. Perceived current living standard	Percent of survey respondents answering “satisfied” to the question, “Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your standard of living, all the things you can buy and do?” Goalposts are set at 0 and 100.	Gallup
B. Improvement in living standard	i. Personal income per capita growth	Three-year compound annual growth rate of personal income per person, adjusted using BEA estimates of Regional Price Parity and the CPI-U. Goalposts are set at –1.72 and 5.48.	BEA and BLS

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5. Living Standard			
B. Improvement in living standard	ii. Perceived improvement in living standard	<p>Average of subscores for perceived improvement in personal living standard and perceived improvement in personal financial situation.</p> <p>Data for perceived improvement in personal living standard are percent of survey respondents answering “getting better” to the question, “Right now, do you feel your standard of living is getting better or getting worse?” Goalposts are set at 0 and 100.</p> <p>Data for perceived improvement in personal financial situation are percent of survey respondents answering “yes” to the question, “Are you feeling better about your financial situation these days, or not?” Goalposts are set at 0 and 100.</p>	Gallup
6. Peace & Security			
A. Violent crime rate		Number of violent crimes per 100,000 population. The bottom goalpost is set at 0. Goalposts are set at 0 and 836.66.	Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
B. Property crime rate		Number of property crimes per 100,000 population. The bottom goalpost is set at 0. Goalposts are set at 0 and 6,385.75.	FBI
C. Perceived local safety		Percent of survey respondents answering “yes” to the question, “Do you feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where you live?” Goalposts are set at 0 and 100.	Gallup
D. Trust		Three-observation average of percent of survey respondents in Census division answering “can trust” to the question, “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?” Goalposts are set at 0 and 55.56.	General Social Survey