

# UTAH FOUNDATION QUALITY OF LIFE INDEX 2013 EDITION SHOWS CONCERNS ABOUT JOBS, K-12 EDUCATION AND AIR QUALITY

## HIGHLIGHTS

- To better understand the quality of life in Utah, and the factors that contribute to or detract from it, Utah Foundation has collaborated with Intermountain Healthcare to create the Utah Foundation Quality of Life Index.
- Utah Foundation's second biennial Utah Quality of Life Index stands at 78.2 out of a possible 100 points, which is a 1.0 point increase from 2011.
- The factors Utahns feel are most important to their community quality of life are safety and security from crime, public schools, air quality, quality healthcare, and opportunities for good jobs.
- Six factors should be considered action items because their importance was rated above average but their quality was rated below average. These factors are: availability of good jobs, public education, acceptance of one another's differences, air and water quality, affordable housing, and other living costs. Availability of good jobs had the largest discrepancy between importance (88.4) and quality (68.6), a reflection of the concern Utahns have about the economy.
- Five factors were rated above average in both importance and quality, making them stand out as Utah successes: higher education, availability of quality healthcare, level of support and help people provide one another, good parks and recreation areas, and safety and security from crime.

The mission of Utah Foundation is to promote a thriving economy, a well-prepared workforce, and a high quality of life for Utahns by performing thorough, well-supported research that helps policymakers, business and community leaders, and citizens better understand complex issues and providing practical, well-reasoned recommendations for policy change.

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Produced in collaboration with Intermountain Healthcare, the Utah Foundation Quality of Life Index is updated every two years to track how Utahns perceive changes in quality of life and the reasons for those changes. The second biennial Utah Quality of Life Index stands at 78.2 out of a possible 100 points, up one point from 77.2 in the 2011 index. Although Utah's quality of life rating improved, several of the issues most important to Utahns – public schools, job availability, air and water quality – were viewed as having below average performance. For example, while the rating of the availability of good jobs increased by 9%, it still falls well below average. The rating of air quality was the only issue to significantly decrease (down 5%).

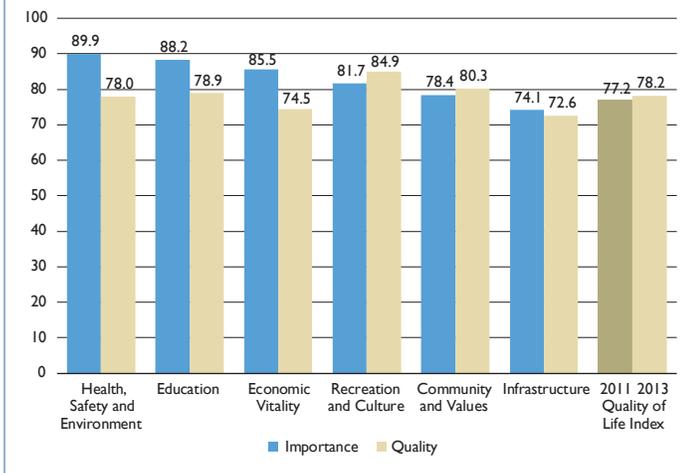
Factors related to health, safety, and the environment averaged the highest importance with the largest gap between importance and quality. Likewise, factors linked to education and economic vitality suffered similar quality shortfalls. Both the recreation and culture-related factors and the community and values-related factors had slightly higher quality ratings versus importance ratings. Factors related to infrastructure had the lowest quality ratings, which were slightly lower than their importance ratings.

## DEFINING QUALITY OF LIFE

What does the phrase “quality of life” mean? While it is an expression of the general well-being of an individual, a community, or society, a concrete definition can be elusive. Some people might feel that quality of life has to do with the weather. Others might believe it fully rests on access to outdoor activities. Some might think that quality of life has to do with being close to family and friends. Since the concept is so subjective it can be difficult to quantify or measure, though people have been attempting to do so for decades.

Quality of life studies began in the 1930s and started to gain scientific legitimacy in the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> Such studies have emerged from simplistic ideas regarding quality of life as a

**Figure 1: Utah Foundation Quality of Life Index, 2013**



construct of single measures into more complicated studies with many factors.<sup>2</sup> These measures are then used to provide rankings of different geographic locations or to find a baseline and then look at change over time.

One possible single measure of quality of life is a city, state, or nation's popularity. Utah is growing quickly (approximately 28% since 2000) placing it as the second fastest growing state in the nation after Nevada.<sup>3</sup> However, analysis shows that Utah's recent growth is due more to births exceeding deaths than it is to people moving here from other states. In fact, Utah has experienced a net loss – though small – in domestic migration since 2010, with nearly half of the United States' intra-country moves to Texas and Florida.<sup>4</sup> Using popularity as a measure, the quality of life in Texas and Florida far exceeds every other state.

The State Quality of Life Index from Ballotpedia looks at state-level rankings over time. This index is derived from 19 common indexes and indicators, such as Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index to Forbes' Best States for Business, which were compiled between 1992 and 2012.<sup>5</sup> Overall, Utah's ranking was 18th in the nation, with New Hampshire at the top and Mississippi at the bottom. The analysis also divided the 19 indices into two periods, from 1992 to 2001 and from 2002 to 2012. Utah showed the third greatest quality of life improvement between the two periods (after Texas and Idaho), moving from a ranking of 24th to 14th. Utah had one number-one ranking and seven top-five placements, and only ranked last once.<sup>6</sup> Utah's positive trending in Ballotpedia's State Quality of Life Index corresponds with Gallup's measure of "Future Livability," which ranks Utah as number one using 13 metrics related to economic, workplace, community, and personal choices.<sup>7</sup> Utah ranked first in three of the 13 metrics: "easy to find clean, safe water," "[number of] smokers," and "supervisor treats you like a partner, not a boss."

Utah Foundation and Intermountain Healthcare developed the Quality of Life Index to better understand Utah's perceived quality of life and the factors that contribute to or detract from it.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

To develop the Utah Foundation Quality of Life Index, the research team conducted an extensive review of academic articles on the topic. From this review it was clear that getting direct poll data from Utah residents was key, rather than simply relying on secondary source

indicators such as data collected on crime, traffic, schools, and other factors. For example, although analysis of crime data does provide insight into safety in Utah, it is also important to understand how safe people feel in their communities.

The Quality of Life Index was created by asking Utahns to rate the importance of twenty aspects of their lives and each aspect's quality. These aspects or factors ranged from "the availability of quality healthcare services" to "how much people support and help each other." To gauge importance, respondents were asked to rate each factor on a five-point scale ranging from "not at all important" to "extremely important." To gauge quality, respondents were asked to rate each factor on a five-point scale ranging from "poor" to "excellent." The quality scores were then averaged and transposed into a 100-point scale, with 100 being the best possible quality rating. The Quality of Life Index was then created by averaging the scores from the twenty factors.<sup>8</sup> In addition, respondents were asked what they consider to be the single most important thing that could improve the quality of life in their area.

Lighthouse Research in Salt Lake City conducted telephone surveys of randomly selected samples of 608 adult Utah residents (18 years and older) in 2013 and 621 residents in 2011. The survey reached respondents from 27 of the state's 29 counties; no respondents indicated that they were from Wayne and Grand counties.

In addition to the questions used to create the index, the survey also included several demographic questions such as gender, age, length of time in the current area, marital status, race, income, highest level of education completed, religion, zip code, and whether there were children living in the home. Although the sample was intended to represent all of Utah's residents, samples never align perfectly over every measure. Respondents had somewhat higher incomes than the Utah population as a whole, women answered at a higher rate than men (54% compared to 46%), and the average age of the respondents (45 years old) was somewhat higher than the average age of people over 18 in Utah. When more accurate representation is needed, policy analysts provided weights to survey response data to achieve a better alignment between the sample and the population. Accordingly, the Quality of Life results were statistically weighted by income, gender and age.<sup>9</sup>

## RESULTS

As stated previously, Utah Foundation's second biennial Utah Quality of Life Index stands at 78.2 out of a possible 100 points. This score represents the state's overall quality of life as perceived by a sampling of Utahns. Of the twenty factors, spiritual and religious activities and groups had the highest quality (90.8), while the availability of good jobs had the lowest quality (68.6). Of the twenty factors, safety and security was the most important item (92.4), and a desire for people to have shared views and values was the least important (67.8). While the availability of good jobs had the lowest quality, and having shared views was the least important of the twenty factors, both still ranked above a "3" on their five-point scales. Accordingly, the availability of good jobs is perceived as being nearer to "excellent" than to "poor," and having shared views and values is nearer to "extremely important" than to "not at all important." Ultimately all twenty factors were rated quite highly for both quality and importance. This report analyzes the factors to provide further insights into their relative importance. This report also shows the difference in the factors' importance and

**Figure 2: Utah Foundation Quality of Life Index Factors, 2013, and Difference between Quality and Importance**

	Quality	Importance	Difference
<b>Health, Safety and Environment</b>	<b>78.0</b>	<b>89.9</b>	<b>-11.9</b>
Safety and security	80.8	92.4	-11.6
Access to quality healthcare	81.2	89.2	-8.0
Air and water quality	72.0	88.2	-16.2
<b>Economic Vitality</b>	<b>74.5</b>	<b>85.5</b>	<b>-11.0</b>
Availability of good jobs	68.6	88.4	-19.8
Affordable, good housing	70.4	86.0	-15.6
Cost of living/affordability	72.6	85.0	-12.4
Retail and food options	86.2	82.4	3.8
<b>Education</b>	<b>78.9</b>	<b>88.2</b>	<b>-9.3</b>
Quality of public schools	73.8	89.8	-16.0
Availability of quality higher education	84.0	86.6	-2.6
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>72.6</b>	<b>74.1</b>	<b>-1.5</b>
Traffic Conditions	71.4	76.8	-5.4
Attractiveness of buildings and streets	77.6	76.0	1.6
Public Transportation	68.8	69.6	-0.8
<b>Recreation and Culture</b>	<b>84.9</b>	<b>81.7</b>	<b>3.1</b>
Availability of parks/recreation areas	85.8	83.8	2.0
Attractiveness of natural surroundings	88.2	82.2	6.0
Availability of recreational, social and cultural events	80.6	79.2	1.4
<b>Community and Values</b>	<b>80.3</b>	<b>78.4</b>	<b>1.9</b>
Acceptance and respectfulness of individual and group differences	71.2	86.8	-15.6
Level of support and help people provide one another	80.8	86.2	-5.4
Spiritual and religious activities and groups	90.8	80.6	10.2
Family nearby	82.8	70.6	12.2
Shared views and values	75.8	67.8	8.0
<b>Utah Foundation Quality of Life Index</b>	<b>78.2</b>		

quality, with negative differences possibly indicating that public policy solutions need to be found which address shortcomings.

Based on factor analysis and independent judgment on how the factors relate to each other, the 20 factors were organized into six groups: 1) Health, Safety, and Environment, 2) Economic Vitality, 3) Education, 4) Infrastructure, 5) Recreation and Culture, and 6) Community and Values. Figure 2 shows that Health, Safety, and Environment, Economic Vitality, and Education all have relatively large negative differences between quality and importance. The other three groups compare well in matching quality and importance.

When comparing 2011 responses with 2013 (see Figure 3), the importance rating for all of the groups decreased. Infrastructure decreased the most in importance (2.1 points) while conversely increasing second most in terms of quality (2.2 points). All of the groups increased in quality except for Health, Safety, and Environment. The largest increase in quality (2.6 points) was seen in the Economic Vitality group which increased primarily due to the availability of good jobs factor (although all of the four factors did increase). The decrease in the Health, Safety and Environment group (1.3 points) was due primarily to a decrease in the “air and water quality” and “quality healthcare” factors.

The three factors in the Health, Safety and Environment group were three of the five most important factors in the Quality of Life Index.

**Figure 3: Utah Foundation Quality of Life Index Groups, 2011 and Change**

	Importance			Quality		
	2011	2013	Change	2011	2013	Change
Health, Safety and Environment	90.4	89.9	-0.5	79.3	78.0	-1.3
Education	88.6	88.2	-0.4	78.4	78.9	0.5
Economic Vitality	86.0	85.5	-0.5	71.9	74.5	2.6
Recreation and Culture	83.2	81.7	-1.5	84.3	84.9	0.6
Community and Values	79.2	78.4	-0.8	79.5	80.3	0.8
Infrastructure	76.2	74.1	-2.1	70.4	72.6	2.2
Utah Foundation Quality of Life Index			-1.0	77.2	78.2	1.0

Although this group experienced the largest discrepancies between quality scores and importance scores of all the groups, it does not have the lowest quality (see Figure 3). Conversely, the three factors within the Infrastructure group made up three of the five least important factors. The other two were in the Community and Values group. In terms of quality, the Recreation and Culture group had two of the top five factors, and the Economic Vitality group had two of the five lowest quality factors.

Statistical analysis shows that none of the factor groups significantly increased or decreased from 2011 in quality or importance. However, four individual factors were significantly different in terms of quality, and five factors were significantly different in terms of importance.

**Statistically Significant Changes in Quality**

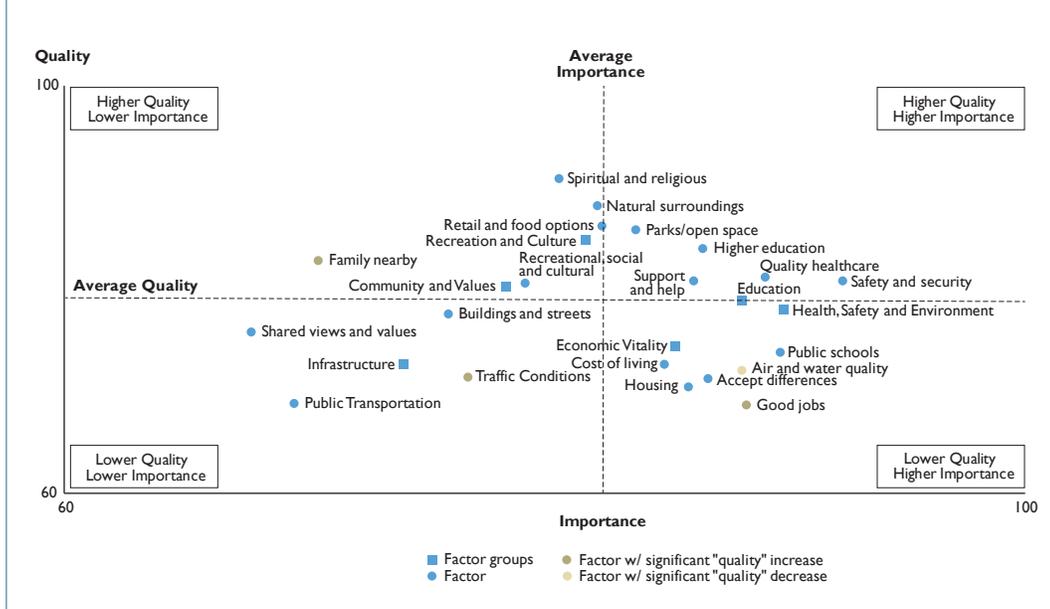
- *Availability of Good Jobs:* Utah’s unemployment rate has decreased by approximately 2% since 2011. Accordingly, the 9% increase in quality for this factor (the largest change for any factor) is not a surprise. All demographic groups, with the exception of those older than 65, rated the availability of jobs as being of higher quality in 2013. However, the factor still has relatively low quality ranking.

- *Traffic Conditions:* This factor’s increase in quality (up 7%) may be due in part to the Utah County I-15 Corridor Expansion. All demographic groups rated this factor higher in quality for 2013, with the exception of lower-income respondents and respondents who do not live on the Wasatch Front.
- *Air and Water Quality:* According to the 2012 Utah Priorities Project, air quality seems to be a more important issue to Utah’s voters than other environmental issues.<sup>10</sup> The winter of 2010-2011 (before the first Quality of Life Index) had particularly bad inversions along the Wasatch Front and Cache County. However, the winter of 2012-2013 was worse, possibly downwardly affecting this factor’s quality (down 5%). All demographic categories and sub-categories deemed this factor of poorer quality with the exception of those respondents earning more than \$100,000 per year, living outside of the Wasatch Front, or with no religious preference. Younger respondents, males, those earning under \$30,000 per year, those living along the Wasatch Front, and LDS respondents were particularly likely to indicate that air quality was worse.
- *Family Nearby:* The factor’s increase in quality (3%) is difficult to explain.

**Statistically Significant Changes in Importance:**

- *Acceptance of Differences:* This was the only factor that had a significant increase in importance (3%).
- *Family Nearby:* This was the only factor that showed a significant difference in both quality and importance. Quality increased (3%) while importance decreased (-4.5%).
- *People with Shared Values:* This factor showed the largest decrease in importance (-5%).

**Figure 4: Utah Foundation Quality of Life Matrix of Factors and Groups**



- *Attractiveness of Buildings and Streets:* This factor saw a small decrease (-3%).
- *Attractiveness of Natural Surroundings:* This factor saw a small decrease (-3%).

**The Quality and Importance Matrix**

One way to examine the Quality of Life Index data is by analyzing the quality and importance factors simultaneously. Figure 4 displays each of the quality of life factors, mapping their importance rating with their quality rating on a matrix.

The quadrants created in the matrix are useful for understanding which areas need attention and which are already strong. For example, the upper right quadrant shows that the availability of quality higher education has both higher importance and higher quality for Utahns – placing it among Utah’s successes. This could mean that care should be taken with respect to policy changes to not interfere with those items that are already perceived as successful. The lower right quadrant displays factors that were given higher importance but lower quality compared to other factors. These could be considered higher-priority action items for public policy change or other efforts to improve, particularly given that these six factors also show the greatest negative difference between importance and quality. The left two quadrants show those factors which are not as important. While none of the factors that are relatively lower in importance had a statistically significant increase in importance between 2011 and 2013, they are still factors which could eventually become more important, especially if perceived quality decreases over time.

**SUCCESSES: HIGHER QUALITY AND HIGHER IMPORTANCE**

The six factors which could be considered relative successes are the following: safety and security, access to quality healthcare, the availability of quality higher education, the level of support and help that people provide one another, and the availability of parks and recreation areas. These

are all above average in terms of quality and importance. This section examines each of these issues in terms of their successes and potential weaknesses.

**Safety and Security**

The most important of the 20 factors in the Quality of Life Index was “the level of safety in [the] area and security from crime.” On a 100-point scale, with 100 indicating highest possible importance, the average rating of safety and security was 92.4. As for the quality in this factor, Utahns ranked it above the Index average.

United States Peace Index, produced by Institute for Economics and Peace, ranked Utah 5th in the nation based upon each state’s

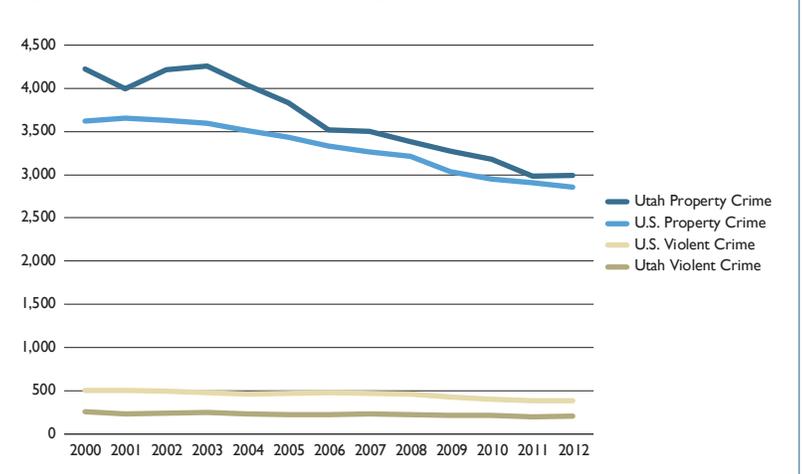
number of homicides, number of violent crimes, the incarceration rate, number of police employees, and the availability of small arms. As shown in Figure 5, Utah has some of the lowest rates of violent crime in the country, including murder, robbery, and aggravated assault, making Utah’s Violent Crime Index about half of the national average. However, both the forcible rape rate and the property crime rate are higher in Utah than the U.S. Larceny-theft is high in Utah, but both the vehicle theft rate and burglary rate are below the national average. Crime in Utah has been on the decline since the mid-1990s, except for a small spike in the early 2000s due to increased rates in property crime and a slight increase in 2012 due to violent crime.

**Access to Quality Healthcare**

The third most important factor with respect to quality of life for Utahns was “the availability of quality healthcare services.” Utahns felt the quality of this factor was better than the Index average.

Health can be summarized as health inputs and health outcomes. Inputs are what we do to our bodies and minds, such as body weight,

**Figure 5: Utah and U.S. Crime Rates (per 100,000 inhabitants)**



Source: FBI, compiled by The Disaster Center.

**Figure 6: Scorecard on Health System Performance, 2009**

Category	Rank
<b>Overall</b>	<b>19</b>
Access	31
Prevention and Treatment	35
Avoidable Hospital Use and Costs	1
Equity	45
Healthy Lives	4

Source: The Commonwealth Fund.

healthy food consumption, exercise habits, and drug & alcohol usage. All these can lead to healthy or unhealthy outcomes. Negative outcomes are what keep us home from school or work, are what put us in the hospital, and are what kill us. America’s Health Rankings by United Health Foundation rates Utah on its inputs and outcomes as 7th in the nation in 2012, though this is a decrease from 5th in 2011.<sup>11</sup> The organization’s 2013 Senior Report ranks Utah at 9th in the nation for senior health.

Healthcare involves the prevention and mitigation of certain outcomes and is typically measured by access, cost, and quality. According to the Commonwealth Fund, Utah’s overall healthcare system ranked 19th among the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.<sup>12</sup> In the access category – which measures whether Utahns are insured and able to afford healthcare – Utah ranked 31st. The prevention and treatment category measures whether children, the elderly, and at-risk patients receive preventive or required treatment; Utah ranked 35th in this area. The avoidable hospital use and costs category studied numerous types of hospital admissions and whether they could have been avoided. Utah ranked first in this category, meaning it had the lowest rate of avoidable hospital admissions in the country. Utah ranked 45th in the equity dimension, which assesses whether people with different incomes, insurance coverage, or are of a different race or ethnicity have access to health care. However, Utah ranked second in the nation in the healthy lives section, which measures several types of mortality rates and other important factors such as rate of suicide, smoking, and childhood obesity. This helps confirm the long-held belief that Utahns lead healthy lifestyles.

While the Commonwealth Fund has not updated its ranking since 2009, it did produce a child health ranking in 2011 in which Utah ranked 23rd nationally, and a low-income population health ranking in 2013 in which Utah ranked 11th.<sup>13</sup> In both cases, Utah rates very well in metrics related to healthy lifestyles, which in turn leads to lower healthcare costs. Utah’s health care costs are increasing like the rest of the nation, but it still has the lowest health spending per capita at \$5,031 per year due in part to Utah’s comparatively young population<sup>14</sup>

Utah is tied for 21st in the number of uninsured people, with 14% compared to the U.S. average of 16%.<sup>15</sup> The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act – commonly known as Obamacare – is designed to decrease the number of uninsured people.

### Availability of Quality Higher Education

Respondents ranked “the availability of quality education beyond high school, such as good trade schools, colleges, and universities” above average in importance and fifth highest in quality.

The Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) is made up of eight public universities, including the University of Utah, Utah State University, Weber State University, Southern Utah University, Utah

Valley University, Snow College, Dixie State College, and Salt Lake Community College. Utah also has several private universities and colleges – most notably Brigham Young University and Westminster College. Utah College of Applied Technology (UCAT) provides technical training, vocational certificates and associate degrees at eight campuses around the state. Overall, post-secondary enrollment has been on the rise since the beginning of the Great Recession in 2007, although such increases seem to have slowed since 2010.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, UCAT intends to more than double its certificate awards between 2013 and 2020.<sup>17</sup> The Utah Governor’s Education Excellence Commission is looking to raise the number of post-secondary degrees or certificates among Utah’s workforce to 66% by 2020.<sup>18</sup> Based upon calculations by Utah’s business-led Prosperity 2020, the state is currently at 43%. This gap will prove a challenge for USHE and UCAT.<sup>19</sup>

Since 2000, post-secondary tuition for Utah students increased 147% while increasing 17% nationwide. These increases are due in part to a decline in state-supported higher educational funding over the past decades.<sup>20</sup> Utah has decreased higher educational appropriations to \$5,116 in 2012 from \$7,490 in 2000 (in 2012 dollars); this is a decrease to covering only 53% of enrollment costs from 71% of costs just 12 years before, thereby resulting in higher tuition.<sup>21</sup>

Increasing tuitions have had an effect on student debt. In 2010, student loan debt in Utah surpassed auto and credit card debt for the first time, rising to a total of \$986 billion in March 31, 2013.<sup>22</sup> Since the household debt peaked in 2008, Utah’s student loan debt has increased by over \$300 billion while other forms of debt have fallen by over \$1.6 trillion.<sup>23</sup> Further, over 11% of student loans are more than 90 days delinquent, the percentage of which is higher than all other household loans including credit cards.<sup>24</sup> Unlike other household debt, student loan debt is not dischargeable under bankruptcy proceedings.

### Level of Support and Help that People Provide One Another

Utahns ranked “how much people support and help each other” high in importance and quality. Validating this importance is the fact that Utah has had the highest volunteer rate in the country since 2002, peaking at 50% in 2003 and decreasing to 41% in 2011. The

**Figure 7: Cost of Full-Time Tuition at USHE institutions**

Institutions	2000-2001	2011-2012	% Change
University of Utah (1)	\$2,370	\$5,850	147%
Utah State University (2)	1,945	4,737	144%
Weber State University	1,670	3,773	126%
Southern Utah University	1,613	4,658	189%
Snow College	1,084	2,520	132%
Dixie State College (1)	1,189	3,288	177%
College of Eastern Utah	1,138	2,472	117%
Utah Valley State College	1,362	3,944	190%
Salt Lake Community College	1,362	2,640	94%
USHE Four-Year Institutions Average	\$ 1,899	\$4,592	142%
USHE Two-Year Institutions Average	1,227	2,730	122%
USHE Total Average	1,526	3,765	147%
U.S. Public Four-Year Institutions Average (3)	\$5,150	\$6,669	26%
U.S. Public Two-Year Institutions Average (3)	2,641	2,721	0%
U.S. Public Total Average (3)	3,896	4,695	17%

(1) Lower division (freshman & sophomore) rate only. Differential rates for upper division (junior and senior) may apply.  
 (2) Rate for undergraduate returning students. Higher differential rate for new students, and students enrolling in Business and Engineering courses.  
 (3) National Data includes tuition and fees and for academic year 2010-2011. USHE data does not include fees.

Note: All values are in nominal, non-inflation adjusted dollars.

Sources: Utah System of Higher Education Research and Data, U.S. Department of Education.

national rate in 2011 was a mere 27%. Utah residents also served the largest number of volunteer hours per resident at 70.3, and had the greatest proportion of volunteers who performed volunteer service at least two years in a row, with 77%.<sup>25</sup>

Sixty-six percent of Utah’s service hours are connected to a religious location. The prominence of volunteering through church “callings,” church-organized service activities, and mentoring through youth programs by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints gives a significant boost to Utah’s volunteer hours; nationally, the average proportion of volunteer hours connected to a religious location was only 34%.<sup>26</sup>

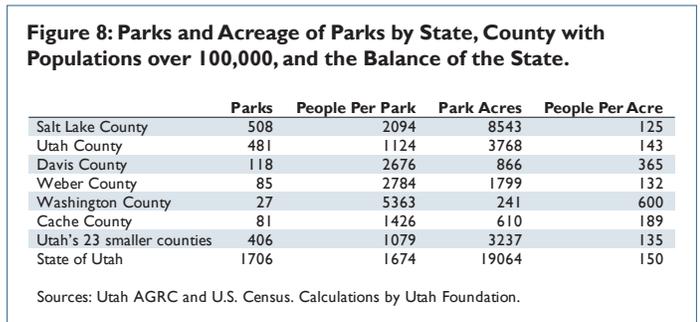
In Utah, 77% of people do favors for their neighbors, compared to 65% nationally. Of these “friendly” neighbors, 63% of Utahns perform favors more than once per month, compared to 50% nationally.<sup>27</sup>

**Availability of Parks and Recreation Areas**

Another above average factor in terms of importance – though just barely – was “the availability of good parks, green spaces, or places for recreation.” It was ranked fourth of the twenty factors in terms of quality. The factor refers to small neighborhood parks as well as the state’s National Parks and other places that Utahns enjoy themselves.

The Trust for Public Land publishes an index and rating for U.S. cities. While no Utah cities are large enough to be included in the index, it does provide an outline of important characteristics with respect to the quality and quantity of parks. The index is based upon park size and total acreage, number of playgrounds and investment per resident, and the percentage of people living within 10 minutes of city parks. Utah Foundation calculated residents per park and residents per acre of park (see Figure 8).<sup>28</sup> Utah’s smallest 23 counties rank well in Utah since they both have the smallest ratio of residents per park and the third smallest ratio of residents per acre of park. Salt Lake County had the best ratio of residents per acreage of park, due in part to its very large flagship parks: Liberty Park and Sugarhouse Park.

Utah cities, state and national parks, and resorts have consistently been top-ranked for outdoor and recreational activities. Publications such as Forbes, USA Today, Transworld Snowboarding, and Skiing Magazine have all recognized Utah for the quality and accessibility of outdoor recreation facilities. Utah has five National Parks, seven National Monuments, one National Historic Site, and two National Recreation Areas. The state is also home to 43 State Parks and 14 ski resorts. World-renowned for the quantity and quality of snowfall, Forbes listed Alta/Snowbird as the second best resort in the nation, Park City/Deer Valley/Canyons as the fifth best, and Brighton/Solitude as seventh best.<sup>29</sup> In 2013, Park City was named “Best



Town Ever” by Outside magazine due to the town’s accessibility to a multitude of outdoor recreation and proximity to ski lifts, and Ogden made the “Best Towns” list in 2008.<sup>30</sup>

Additionally, many cities have made efforts to improve their running and biking trails, such as the Murdock Canal Trail in Utah County and the Bonneville Shoreline Trail and Legacy Parkway Trail that both stretch through Salt Lake and Davis counties.

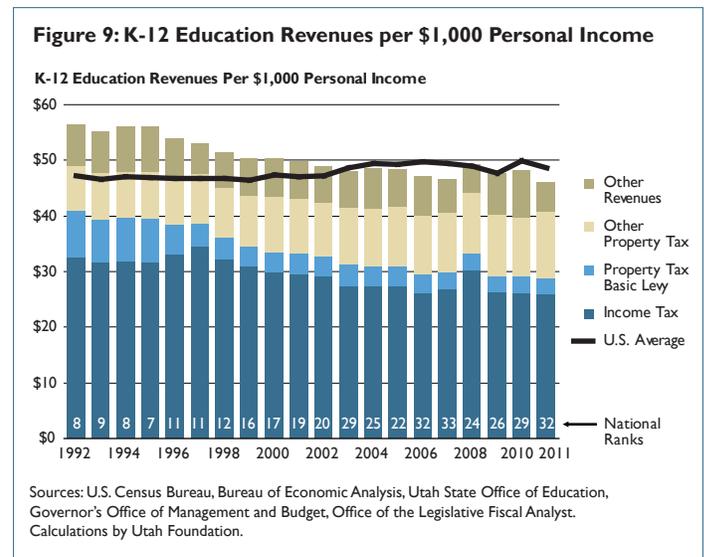
**ACTION ITEMS: LOWER QUALITY AND HIGHER IMPORTANCE**

The six factors which could be considered Utah’s relative weaknesses are the quality of public schools, the availability of good jobs, air (and water) quality, acceptance of personal differences, affordable and good housing, and the cost of living and affordability. These factors are all below average in terms of quality but above average in terms of importance. This section not only examines each of these factors in terms of weaknesses, but also points out strengths.

**Quality of Public Schools**

Utahns ranked the importance of “the quality of the public schools” as second among the 20 factors, but below the Index’s average in quality. Voters consistently rank K-12 education as one of the top three priorities in the Utah Priorities Survey that Utah Foundation performs each gubernatorial election.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, Utah has had the lowest per pupil expenditure in the nation since 1988, due in large part to Utah’s large family size and large proportion of children in public schools. Another useful measure is funding effort, which calculates education revenues per \$1,000 of statewide personal income. As shown in Figure 9, Utah ranked seventh nationally in 1995 for funding effort, but steadily declined over the next several years, and in 2011 stood at 32nd in the nation. In other words, the proportion of the state’s personal income that is now invested in Utah public education has diminished significantly while that proportion has risen in other states. This decline in funding effort resulted from a decline in property taxes and the diversion of income tax growth to other purposes. Utah no longer has low per-pupil funding paired with high funding effort; both measures now rank low against the national average.<sup>32</sup>

There is a common belief among Utahns that Utah students perform better than the national average on standardized tests even with the



**Figure 10: National Assessment of Educational Progress: Utah's Scores and National Rankings, 1992-2011**

	4th Grade		8th Grade	
	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
<b>Math</b>				
2011	243	19	283	26
2009	240	27	284	25
2007	239	28	281	30
2005	239	24	279	29
2003	235	28	281	18
2000	227	18	274	19
1996	227	12	277	12
1992	224	12	274	10
<b>Reading</b>				
2011	220	30	267	20
2009	219	30	266	20
2007	221	28	262	29
2005	221	20	262	28
2003	219	25	264	25
2002	222	12	263	24
1998	216	17	263	16
1994	217	15	--	--
1992	220	15	--	--
<b>Science</b>				
2011	--	--	161	6
2009	154	19	158	8
2005	155	15	154	18
2000	154	14	154	12
1996	--	--	156	11

Note: Rankings exclude DoDEA. If Utah is tied with other states, rank is for the highest state listed in the tied range.

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics.

funding challenges and large class sizes. In 1992, Utah ranked among the top 15 states in the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) math and reading exams for 4th and 8th grade students. Utah's scores generally improved in the 1990s and 2000s, but other states improved at greater rates, causing Utah's rankings to slip (see Figure 10). Utah now ranks near the middle of the pack, though a bright spot for Utah is on the eighth-grade science test.<sup>33</sup>

Comparisons to national averages can be useful, especially in reviewing trends over time. However, Utah has lower racial and ethnic diversity, lower poverty, and a moderately stronger proportion of college-educated parents than many U.S. states. In 2010, Utah Foundation analyzed Utah's performance on NAEP exams compared to economic and demographic peer states; Utah typically ranked last or near-last. Not only do many of Utah's demographic and economic peer states rank very highly on these exams, but they also have higher levels of funding that would be difficult for Utah to match with its high student population.

Utah's ranking has also slipped a bit on the Annie E. Casey Foundation's annual Kids Count. Education in Utah was ranked 30th in the nation in 2013, down from 27th in 2012.<sup>34</sup> The reasons for Utah's below-average rating is due to low pre-school attendance (40% in Utah compared to 46% nationally). However, Utah is around the national average for teens ages 16 to 19 not attending school and not working (both are 8%) and for the rate of high school students not graduating on time (21% in Utah compared to 22% nationally).

The importance of public education and the need for its improvement has become widely accepted in recent years; major commissions, task forces, and other efforts are underway by Governor Gary Herbert, the Utah State Legislature, and the business community.

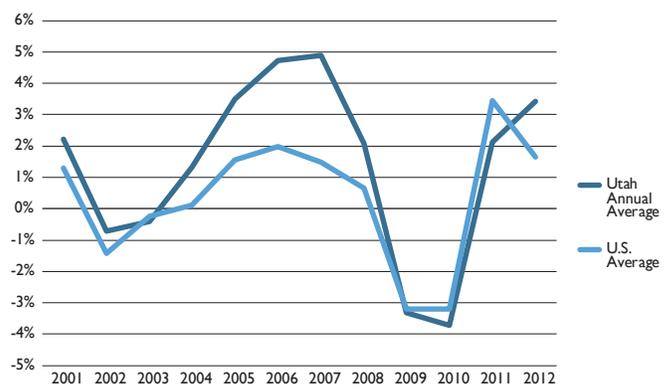
## Availability of Good Jobs

Utahns rated "the opportunities for good jobs" as the fourth most important factor to their quality of life, while on the quality scale it was ranked last. This factor has the largest negative quality/importance differential of any factor on the Quality of Life Index (68.6 to 88.4 for a negative 19.8), ostensibly indicating that it is the most important "action item" in the index. In both 2010 and 2012, voters ranked "jobs and the economy" as the top factor in the Utah Priorities Survey.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the availability of good jobs ranked second (after air quality) in terms of the Quality of Life Index survey's open-ended question about the most important thing that could be improved; 11% of respondents commented about the need for more jobs, higher-paying jobs, and jobs that are closer to home.

In 2007, Utah's job growth was the highest in the nation (at 4.8%). As shown in Figure 11, the state's job growth has fluctuated widely; following both of the recessions since 2000, Utah's growth ranking was below average. However, Utah has rebounded and in 2012 was second in the nation. Similarly, Utah's unemployment rate has been fluctuating but has been at or below the national rate since 2000 (see Figure 12).

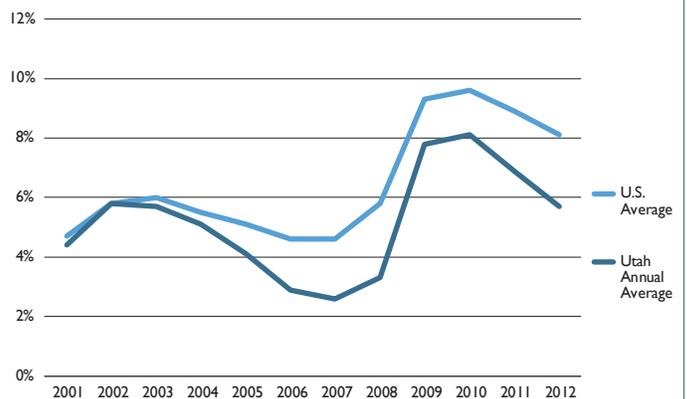
Utah's median income for persons who work full-time is slightly below the national average. Men in Utah who work full-time earned approximately 2% more than the national average for men in 2012,

**Figure 11: Utah and U.S. Employment Growth**



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**Figure 12: Utah and U.S. Unemployment Rate**



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**Figure 13: Median Income for Full-Time, Year-Round Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over**

	2000	2010	2012
<b>Utah</b>			
Total	32,219	40,750	41,501
Men	38,120	46,759	48,769
Women	25,285	32,255	34,175
<b>U.S.</b>			
Total	32,098	41,522	42,229
Men	37,057	46,740	47,887
Women	27,194	36,612	37,483
<b>Percent of National Average</b>			
Total	100%	98%	98%
Men	103%	100%	102%
Women	93%	88%	91%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

while Utah women earned 9% less than the national average for women. Utah women earned 70% of Utah men’s pay levels. Utah men are ranked 19th nationally while Utah women are ranked 37th.<sup>36</sup> Analysis has shown that while a portion of the income gap may disappear when the type of job, career experience, and education levels are taken into consideration, these factors do not completely explain away the gender income gap.<sup>37</sup>

Unemployment rates and median incomes do not necessarily paint a clear picture of the availability of good jobs. In terms of rankings, Utah – or more specifically the Wasatch Front – seems to be doing pretty well. Salt Lake was ranked as the third best big city for jobs in 2013, and Provo-Orem was rated the second-best mid-sized city.<sup>38</sup> Salt Lake City was also ranked second in the “Happiest Cities for Job-Seeking College Grads” and placed number one on the “Top 10 Cities for College Grads,” due in large part to the moderate cost of living, the low unemployment rate, and competitive median incomes.<sup>39</sup>

### Air (and Water) Quality

“The quality of the environment, such as air and water quality” ranked as the fifth most important among all 20 factors, but ranked fifteenth for quality. More importantly, air and water quality placed first in responses to the open-ended question about the most important thing that could be improved. Over 13% of respondents had comments about this factor and almost every one of them had to do with air quality. Accordingly, this report focuses on air quality more than water quality.

Air quality is a major environmental concern for Utah, particularly with regard to high ground-level ozone and periodic winter inversions. Studies show that ozone and short-term, high-level inversion-type particulate exposure can shorten life expectancy, exacerbate cardiovascular and respiratory issues, and increase infant mortality rates.<sup>40</sup> The Wasatch Front and Cache County are known to have some of the worst short-term fine particulate matter (PM2.5) pollution in the country.<sup>41</sup>

The federal government requires the Utah Division of Air Quality (DAQ) to comply with the EPA’s air quality standards by monitoring carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, lead, ozone, and particulate matter. Utah has been compliant with carbon monoxide levels since 1994. In addition, nitrogen and sulfur dioxide levels are well within compliance, the latter due in large part to technology upgrades at Kennecott Utah Copper and the state’s steel refineries in the early 1980s and mid-1990s. Lead – as an air pollutant – is no longer a grave

concern, due mainly to the complete phase-out of leaded gasoline in 1995.<sup>42</sup> Utah has had a much more difficult time complying with EPA standards for ozone and particulate matter. Ozone is generally formed from combustion exhaust, which is chemically altered by sunlight and high temperatures, though the Uintah Basin in eastern Utah has been experiencing high levels during winter months. During winter inversion periods, seven of Utah’s counties have failed to meet the EPA’s 24-hour standards for PM2.5 pollution levels. As a result, in 2009 the EPA categorized Box Elder, Cache, Davis, Salt Lake, Tooele, Utah and Weber counties as “nonattainment” areas.<sup>43</sup> The DAQ was then required to formulate and submit a State Implementation Plan that outlined what measures Utah will take to become compliant. In the development of this plan, the Division of Air Quality concluded that 57% of the particles in the air come from mobile sources (vehicles, airplanes, trains, lawnmowers, etc.), 32% from area sources (homes, small business, buildings, etc.), and 11% from industry – also known as point sources.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to the DAQ, state and local government officials are continually exploring options to keep pollution from harming the health of Utahns, while keeping in mind the state’s economic well-being. For example, the Utah State Legislature convened a task force during 2013 to look at air quality and its effects on economic development.

However, due to the Wasatch Front and Cache Valley’s geographic placements, the only solution to Utah’s particulate pollution problem – short of removing a mountain – is to emit fewer particles into the air. This can be done in a number of ways and through a variety of policies and regulations. For example, recent research has found that 38% of *direct* PM2.5 in Salt Lake City is attributable to wood burning.<sup>45</sup> Burning one wood stove for one hour is equal to the PM2.5 emissions that result from driving 525 to 1150 miles, and similarly – in terms of *direct* PM2.5 pollution – heating one home with a wood stove is equal to heating over 90,000 homes with natural gas.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, the increasing Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards, new federal Tier-III auto emission standards, Utahns’ changing transportation

**Figure 14: Religious Tradition, Utah and U.S.**

	Utah	U.S.
Mormon Tradition	58%	2%
Unaffiliated	16%	16%
Catholic Tradition	10%	24%
Evangelical Protestant Tradition	7%	26%
Mainline Protestant Tradition	6%	18%
Historically Black Protestant Tradition	1%	7%
Other Faiths	1%	3%
Don’t know/refused	1%	< 0.5%
Jewish Tradition	< 0.5%	2%
Orthodox Tradition	< 0.5%	1%
Buddhist Tradition	< 0.5%	1%

Source: PEW Research Center.

**Figure 15: Race and Ethnicity in Utah over Time**

	1990	2000	2010
<b>Race</b>			
White	93.8%	89.2%	86.1%
Black or African American	0.7%	0.8%	1.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	1.4%	1.3%	1.2%
Asian	1.5%	1.7%	2.0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.4%	0.7%	0.9%
Some other race	0.2%	4.2%	6.0%
Two or more races	n/a	2.1%	2.7%
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	4.9%	9.0%	13.0%
Not Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	95.1%	91.0%	87.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

**Figure 16: Housing Cost Burden (in which housing costs are more than 30% of income), Utah**

	2000	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Renters with Housing Cost Burden	35.3%	40.9%	43.1%	44.5%	46.9%	49.5%	49.6%
Homeowners with Mortgage with Housing Cost Burden	29.0%	24.5%	33.9%	34.7%	35.3%	35.0%	31.8%
Homeowners without Mortgage with Housing Cost Burden	6.2%	9.3%	9.7%	9.6%	9.1%	8.7%	9.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

**Figure 17: Homeownership and Rental Rates, Utah**

	2000	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Owners	68.3%	71.9%	72.1%	71.8%	70.5%	70.0%	69.6%
Renters	31.7%	28.1%	27.9%	28.2%	29.5%	30.0%	30.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

choices, and controls on very specific, higher-polluting industries pursuant to Utah’s State Implementation Plan may bode well for the future of Utah’s air quality.

### Acceptance of Personal Differences

Respondents ranked “how accepting and respectful people are of individual and group differences” above average in terms of importance, but seventeenth in quality. The low quality of this factor is an area of concern in a state like Utah where there are large religious and racial/ethnic majorities (see Figures 14 and 15). However, several racial and ethnic groups are increasing as a percentage of the population, resulting in greater diversity.

In recognition of the state’s changing social fabric, efforts have been made to boost tolerance and acceptance. The Alliance for Unity seeks “to foster a more unified community in which all Utahns are included and valued, regardless of affiliations or differences.”<sup>47</sup> Through Utah’s Martin Luther King Jr. Human Rights Commission, created in 1991 by executive order, governor-appointed members strive to promote human rights. The Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable, founded during the 2002 Winter Olympics, looks to “facilitate interfaith respect, understanding and appreciation,” and Ogden’s Interfaith Works is an association of religious, social action, and community organizations within the Greater Ogden area with a mission to support religious diversity.<sup>48</sup> The Utah Pride Center and other organizations focus on “building and celebrating the strength, equality, dignity and self-determination” of Utah’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community.<sup>49</sup> Some of their successes can be seen in the over 400 members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints marching in support of the LGBTQ community at the annual Utah Pride Festival parade in 2013.<sup>50</sup>

### Affordable, Good Housing

Utahns ranked “the availability of good housing that is affordable” as above average in importance but eighteenth in quality. Since a home is the most expensive possession that most Utahns will ever own, good affordable housing is, understandably, of high importance. The low quality ranking may be due to wildly fluctuating home prices, resulting from the recent national burst in the “housing bubble” that depleted home values and the recent trends that have had homes rebounding toward unaffordability. The National Association of Realtors’ housing affordability index, which is tied

to median incomes, shows when median income is higher than needed to qualify for a mortgage on a median-priced home. The index bottomed out in 2006 at nearly 100, the point at which median income is at the mortgage qualification point. The index climbed somewhat steadily since then until peaking in January 2013, at 210.7. It has

since fallen and in September 2013 was at 157.8, meaning that housing is becoming more expensive and leading some industry experts to wonder if another bubble is on the horizon.<sup>51</sup> In Utah, the median home sales price was \$205,000 between January and August 2013, compared with \$178,000 in 2012. The highest 2013 home price median by county was in Summit at \$529,525 and the lowest was in Beaver at \$75,000. Davis, Salt Lake, and Utah counties fell near the state’s median home price.<sup>52</sup>

Despite trending downward in recent years, homeownership rates in Utah are still higher than in 2000. In terms of income people need to afford housing, Utah ranked 28th at \$14.94 per hour. Hawaii was the highest at \$32.14 and North Dakota was the lowest at \$12.06.<sup>53</sup>

According to the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) housing programs, a household should not spend more than 30% of household income on housing costs; households spending over 30% are considered “burdened.” For example, if a household has a HUD housing voucher, the household is expected to pay 30% of its income toward its rent amount with HUD making up the difference. The rationale is that if a household pays only 30% of its income toward housing, enough income will be left over for other mandatory spending such as groceries, transportation, and health care. Since 2000, the percentage of people with a housing cost burden over 30% has risen sharply. In 2012, nearly 50% of Utah’s renters were burdened by housing costs.

### Cost of Living and Affordability

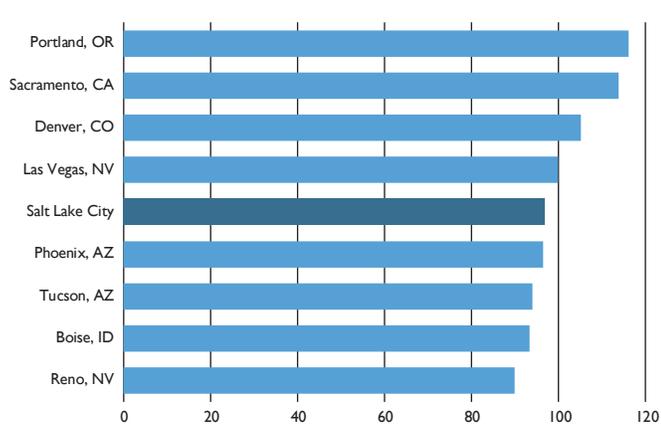
Utahns ranked “the affordability of living costs other than housing, such as food, utilities, and services” above average in importance, though its quality was below average. Interestingly, the ranking of quality may run counter to the fact that living costs in Utah are less than the average affordability nationwide. According to the Council for Community and Economic Research, which compiles cost of living data for cities across the United States, the cost of certain items can be more expensive in some Utah cities than the national average, including transportation, health care, and miscellaneous goods and services. However, overall living costs in Utah are lower than national averages. Also, grocery items, housing, and cost of utilities in Utah are well below the national average. Cedar City and St. George have the lowest cost of living, and Salt Lake City is the highest in the state.<sup>54</sup> When comparing the cost of living

**Figure 18: Cost of Living in Utah**

	Composite Index (100%)	Grocery Items (13.6%)	Housing (27.0%)	Utilities (10.3%)	Transportation (12.4%)	Health Care (4.6%)	Misc. Goods and Services (32.2%)
Cedar City	87.2	89.3	72.3	82.5	96.7	90.2	96.3
Provo-Orem	95.5	88.5	87.1	90.4	111.5	94.4	101.2
Salt Lake City	97	89.5	91.5	82.5	107.2	101.3	105
St. George	92.1	89.5	85.4	89.7	100.4	92.5	96.4
<b>National Average</b>	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: The Council for Community and Economic Research.

**Figure 19: Cost of Living Index in Neighboring Large Cities**



Source: Council for Community and Economic Research.

in Salt Lake City with neighboring Western cities, Utah’s capitol city is in the middle of the pack.<sup>55</sup>

### THE UNDERVALUED: HIGHER QUALITY AND LOWER IMPORTANCE

Five factors were ranked as having relatively higher quality but lower importance. These may be factors that Utahns are taking for granted. The items in this section are not discussed in as much detail as those factors with higher importance.

#### Retail and Food Options

While Utahns ranked the importance of the “availability of good stores or other places to get the food and other things people want and need” as just below average, this factor ranked third in terms of quality. With respect to availability of good stores, Utah is home to numerous quality shopping malls from Logan to St. George. City Creek Center, which opened in March of 2012 in Salt Lake City, has already been named as the best mall in the Americas because of factors ranging from “sustainable design and community collaboration to breathtaking features and amenities.”<sup>56</sup> Utah’s largest shopping mall is the South Towne Center in Sandy with 150 stores.<sup>57</sup>

In terms of food availability, there are 45 state-sponsored farmer’s markets across the state, and most local and national grocery stores offer at least 20 to 25 local products like milk, eggs, and ice cream.<sup>58</sup> Nonetheless, there are numerous “food deserts” across Utah with limited access to a variety of healthy and affordable food. Food deserts are low-income census tracts where a substantial number or share of residents resides more than one mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket or large grocery store. In a study looking at access to supermarkets, supercenters, and large grocery stores (which tend to carry a wider variety of food products at lower prices than many other food retailers), food deserts are correlated with areas with higher rates of poverty and minority populations.<sup>59</sup> All of San Juan, Kane, and Piute counties are considered food deserts. Iron, Beaver, Washington, Sanpete, Salt Lake, Utah, Davis, and Cache counties contain food desert census tracts.<sup>60</sup>

About half of the open-ended retail and food-related responses were from respondents living off of the Wasatch Front. They typically expressed that closer, larger grocery stores were the top priority in

increasing quality of life. Interestingly, numerous Salt Lake County and Weber County residents had similar comments about the distance of grocery stores, as well as availability of high quality food in grocery stores. A common sentiment from Utah County respondents was their concern with their location’s “variety of shops” and shopping.

#### Spiritual and Religious Activities and Groups

In the 2013 Quality of Life Index, the top ranking for quality was awarded to “the availability of spiritual or religious activities or groups.” However, this factor was ranked below average in importance. Gallop polling has shown that Utah is the second-most religious state in the nation based upon the percentage of people who indicate they are very religious (56%), just behind Mississippi (58%).<sup>61</sup> Utah is well-known for its Mormon population, which accounts for over half of the state’s population. There are numerous opportunities for Mormons to participate in LDS activities and groups. The iconic Temple Square in Salt Lake City is one of the top 25 tourist destinations in the nation.<sup>62</sup> However, there is a rich variety of other spiritual and religious groups – from the congregation of the Cathedral of the Madeleine in Salt Lake City to the Sri Sri Radha Krishna Temple in Spanish Fork, which is known for its Holi festival or “Festival of Colors.”

#### Attractiveness of Natural Surroundings

The second spot for quality went to “the attractiveness of the natural surroundings,” though its importance was just below average. As noted above, Utah has more than its share of natural beauty. While a recent Business Insider poll placed Utah tenth for “the most beautiful scenery,” Utah’s neighbor in geography and geology – Colorado – placed first.

#### Cultural and Recreational Opportunities

Importance of “the availability of recreational, social, or cultural events and programs” was ranked fifteenth, while its quality was above average. There are countless events that bring people to Utah and in which Utahns participate. Utah is home to two major national sports teams (Real Salt Lake and Utah Jazz), and numerous smaller national league, developmental, and minor league teams. Additionally, the University of Utah is now part of the NCAA PAC-12 Conference, which has increased both the visibility and prestige of the university teams. Utah has hosted the Ironman Triathlon in St. George, has 30 marathons across the state throughout the year, and the annual 140-mile RAGNAR relay race.<sup>63</sup> Numerous Utah cities host the Tour of Utah for professional cyclists, and the Miller Motorsports park hosts 10 to 15 events annually for various types of auto and motorcycle racing, including American Le Mans and Lucas Oil Pro Motocross.

Additionally, Utah has many arenas and large venues, including the Maverik Center, Energy Solutions Arena, Usana Amphitheater, Tuacahn Amphitheater, Rice-Eccles Stadium, and Rio Tinto Stadium, which host sporting events, concerts, and other special performances. The Twilight Concert Series provides nationally recognized performers in Salt Lake City for a very low cost.

In terms of fine arts and cultural events, Utah boasts the Utah Symphony, Utah Opera, Ballet West, Utah Shakespeare Festival, and Utah Festival Opera and Musical Theatre. The Broadway Across America tour stops in Salt Lake City as one of its 27 locations in the U.S.

**Figure 20: Percentage of People Born in their State of Residence**

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2012
Utah	66.3%	67.2%	62.9%	62.3%	61.8%
U.S.	63.9%	61.8%	60.0%	58.8%	58.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

### Family Nearby

The importance of “the extent to which people have family nearby” was nineteenth in 2013, and its quality ranking was above average. This factor has the largest positive quality-importance differential of the Quality of Life Index (82.8 to 70.6). There do not seem to be particularly good measures to evaluate proximity of family without surveying people directly. Further, there could be many different ways of interpreting this factor. The question itself is complicated because, while one person might think that living nearby is in the same town, another person might think that living in the same state is nearby. However, this report includes three proxy measures to get some ideas about respondents’ replies.

In Utah, 55% of people see or hear from friends and family every day, and 97% do so more than once per month. Nationally these rates are 43% and 92%, respectively.<sup>64</sup> This may measure either in person or telephone communications and suggests that Utahns tend to have more contact outside of their immediate family.

In terms of younger adults living in their parents’ homes, there has been an increase in the past 10 years. More younger men live with their parents than younger women. About half of all 18 to 24-year-olds still live at home compared to about a tenth of 25 to 34-year-olds.<sup>65</sup>

The last possible measure of family living nearby is by looking at the percentage of people born in their state of residence. Using this measure, one could hypothesize that unless the parents moved away, the residents born in Utah are somewhat near their parents. As shown in Figure 20 the percentages have been trending downward in Utah and in the U.S., although the percentage of Utahns both born and still living in the state of Utah remains a bit higher than the national average.

### ONGOING EFFORTS: LOWER QUALITY AND LOWER IMPORTANCE

The final four factors are traffic conditions, attractiveness of buildings and streets, public transportation, and shared views and values. The first three factors might be considered ongoing efforts toward a shared vision: people generally appreciate less traffic, more attractive towns, and quality transportation. However, there may not be agreement on what such attractiveness looks like or the importance of public transportation in a primarily car and driver economy. If these factors are perceived to have adequate quality, survey respondents might not consider them to be of relative importance. However, the importance may increase if quality were to decrease, creating attention-getting problems.

The shared views and values factor is more difficult to analyze. Some individuals may value shared views and values within their communities, while others may deem a diversity of views and values to be of greater importance.

### Traffic Conditions

“Traffic conditions on the roads and highways” was ranking sixteenth in terms of importance and quality in the 2013 survey. No one likes traffic. It is ranked with relatively low quality, but would likely increase in importance if quality really worsened. Traffic may not be important until it is noticeably bad. If it is not bad now, there is a chance that it could worsen in the future, particularly if the state population increases to more than five million people by 2040 and the highway system is not modified to accommodate the growth. According to the Unified Transportation Plan, Utah’s priority transportation needs by 2040 will total approximately \$54.7 billion, while current funding sources will amount to \$43.3 billion. Part of the problem is that the state’s gas tax, which is levied per gallon of gasoline, loses ground each year to inflation and increasing fuel efficiency. Since the gas tax has not been raised since 1997, Utahns are paying less of their personal income toward highway projects than at any time since the tax was imposed in the 1920s. Transportation infrastructure funds are increasing due to 2011 legislation (SB229), which is directing additional sales tax to roads. However, if the state wants to fully fund its needs over the next 25 or 30 years it will need to look for additional revenue sources.

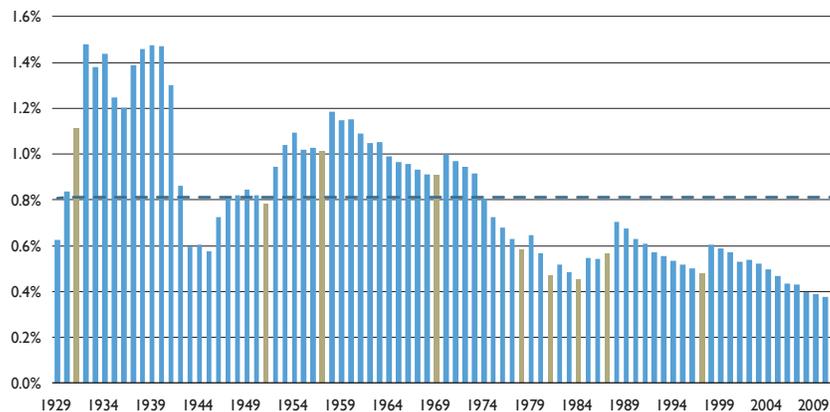
### Attractiveness of Buildings and Streets

The importance of “the attractiveness of the streets, homes, and other buildings” was ranked seventeenth while quality was also below average. The National Register of Historic Places has been deemed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a division of the National Park Service, as one of the “Nation’s historic places worthy of preservation.” The register includes Listings and Historic Districts, of which Utah has 1,522 and 74, respectively. In 2012, the American Planning Association named the Fairmont/Sugarhouse area as one of the great neighborhoods in the U.S.<sup>66</sup> Salt Lake City was also listed as second only to Minneapolis as the cleanest city in the U.S.<sup>67</sup>

### Public Transportation

“The availability of quality public transportation such as buses or trains” was ranked nineteenth for both importance and quality, and had the smallest quality-importance differential of all twenty factors. U.S. News and World Report ranked Salt Lake City as the sixth best city for public transportation because of its heavy investment in

**Figure 21: Utah Motor and Special Fuel Tax as a Percentage of Personal Income**



Note: Tan bars signify years in which the fuel tax was increased; horizontal dotted line is the historical average.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, calculations by Utah Foundation.

FrontRunner and Trax, which serve a large suburban population.<sup>68</sup> In addition, the Brookings Institution found that 89% of Salt Lake City metro-area residents have access to public transportation, the eighth highest rate in the nation.<sup>69</sup> Approximately 4% of respondents noted that the transportation was the one thing that needed to be improved in the open-ended portion of the survey, almost all of whom were from the Wasatch Front.

### Shared Views and Values

The factor with the lowest ranking in terms of importance was “how much people share similar values or views of the world.” This factor was below average in terms of quality. Utah is the most religiously homogenous state in the nation (largest majority religion) with 58% identifying themselves as belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.<sup>70</sup> It was also the most politically homogenous state in the nation during the 2012 presidential election with 73% voting for the Republican candidate Mitt Romney.<sup>71</sup> Approximately 4% of respondents in the open-ended questions noted that increasing diversity is important – of people, politics, and religions.

### IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE

The Quality of Life Index survey asked of respondents “what is the single most important thing that could improve the quality of life in your area?” Air quality, as noted previously, topped the list with 13% of respondents. All of those respondents indicated that they live along the Wasatch Front except for seven respondents in Cache County. Both of these areas tend to have the worst inversion problems in the state and the nation.

About half of the comments about jobs were from people off of the Wasatch Front, though only about a quarter of the survey respondents lived there. Some of the most detailed comments were from those more rural areas. A common theme in rural areas was that it is most important to focus on “better jobs and better paying jobs so people don’t have to move away” emphasizing that “when my kids grow up they have to move away because there aren’t any jobs here,” and “there is low employment for the county and for the state; there should be more jobs here so the kids can work here and have a job to work at.”

Only about half of the respondents who felt that the public school system needed to be improved had children under the age of 18 living at home. It was expressed that education must be “improved so that our children have an excellent opportunity and a broad-based education” and that schools are “way too over-crowded and it affects their future.” “The better education and better schools that we have, the healthier our city will be.”

This last comment touched on the issue of crime. Most respondents who deemed crime as the most important issue did not give specific examples, but just stated “safety” or “reduce crime.” Several of the answers were more specific with respect to reducing violence and “locking up violent criminals” as well as getting rid of drugs and “all the methamphetamine on the streets.” There were also numerous responses about having more law enforcement, including for more minor crimes like cracking down on the “people who speed in my neighborhood.”

These responses line up very well with the “action items” in this report. The top three themes are in the action item quadrant of the matrix. Interestingly, safety from crime – which is seen to have

**Figure 22: Index Survey Response about the Most Important Thing to Improve Quality of Life**

Response	Percent of Respondents
Air quality / environment	13.4%
Job opportunities (more jobs, higher-paying jobs, closer jobs)	10.6%
Schools (primarily K-12)	9.6%
Safety from crime	8.5%
Affordability (housing, cost of living)	5.4%
Traffic	5.0%
People being accepting/less judgmental of individual differences	4.6%
More diversity (of people, of ideas)	4.3%
Roads/sidewalks	3.9%
Stores/restaurants (closer, better, more diverse products/services)	3.7%
Government (less intrusive, more accountable)	3.7%
Public transportation (more bus/train routes)	3.7%
Activities to do (recreational, cultural)	3.3%
People being nicer/friendlier with each other	2.6%
Care of homes & yards (& other buildings/spaces)	2.0%
Don't know / things are good already	12.2%

Note: “Percent of Respondents” does not equal 100% because categories of comments which totaled fewer than 2% are not included on this list; also note that some respondents’ comments were included in more than one category.

high quality and importance – is the fourth item on the open-ended question list. Policy makers who are looking to make the largest impact on improving the quality of life for Utahns perhaps do not need to look any further than the responses to the open-ended question in Utah Foundation’s 2013 Quality of Life Index.

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9 Utah Foundation and Intermountain Healthcare made the determination not to weight all of the demographic factors. While some races and ethnicities were not well represented, the samples were too small to weight appropriately. While the survey sample was somewhat more educated than the population as a whole and somewhat more likely to have indicated that they belonged to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, other metrics were weighted in lieu of these.

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