QUALITY OF LIFE
in Pensacola and Escambia County

2016 REPORT

Presented by:
PENSACOLA YOUNG PROFESSIONALS
Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc. located in Washington, D.C., conducted this survey from June 22-28, 2016. Eight hundred (800) registered Escambia County voters were interviewed by telephone.

Those interviewed were selected randomly from a commercially available Florida State voter registration file. The resulting sample fairly reflects the demographic profile of voters in Escambia County. Please see the statistical report for demographic details by visiting www.PensacolaYP.com.

The margin for error, according to standards customarily used by statisticians, is no more than plus or minus 3.5-percentage points. This means there is a 95 percent probability that the “true” figure would fall within that range if the entire population were sampled. The margin for error is higher for any subgroup, such as a gender, income or race.

Quint and Rishy Studer generously provide funding for this annual survey and Pensacola Young Professionals coordinate and execute its presentation.

The mission of Pensacola Young Professionals is to share our passion for and belief in the Pensacola Bay Area, and to act as a catalyst for positive change in our community. Our hope is that the annual results of this Quality of Life Survey will be a useful measurement tool that allows Escambia County residents to have a voice and offers data to local leaders and policy makers seeking to affect change for the benefit of the entire community. By measuring public opinion in an annual survey and collecting data for comparison, we are able to provide material that generates informed debate and inspires necessary action.

Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, an independent polling firm that conducts public policy and political polling research nationwide, carried out the 2016 Annual Quality of Life Survey of Escambia County on behalf of Pensacola Young Professionals (PYP). Since 2008, Escambia County voters have been asked their opinions on a number of key issues, with the results presented in the Quality of Life Report.

As of June 2016, the overall quality of life rating in Escambia County remains mostly positive, with 66% of voters rating it “excellent” or “good,” although this number is down from 71% in 2015. The top concern of voters in our area continues to be the economy and jobs. Education remains the number two issue among county voters again this year, while crime and drugs take the second spot among city voters.

In line with an overall decline in many numbers compared to last year, the question “Do you think Escambia County is heading in the right direction, or are things on the wrong track?” revealed that 51% of Escambia County voters said right direction in 2016 compared to 61% in 2015. The top concern of voters in our area continues to be the economy and jobs. Education remains the number two issue among county voters again this year, while crime and drugs take the second spot among city voters.

Based on the results, 2016 seems to be a time of renewed concern for county and especially city residents. For our community to continue to move forward and break through obstacles, it is crucial that we explore this survey data and identify areas for improvement. PYP is confident that our community can courageously face the challenges before us and make our area an even better place to live, work, and play.
“Everything is in position to make Pensacola a great place to attract young professionals, but community involvement, particularly by young people, is key.”

Pensacola has always had my heart, ever since my family immigrated here in the early 1990s. But even into the early 2000s, Pensacola was not very attractive to young adults, mainly due to a limited amount of social life geared toward that demographic. Much has changed recently; Pensacola is now a vibrant town with an incredible blend of old and new. Everything is in position to make Pensacola a great place to attract young professionals, but community involvement, particularly by young people, is key. I’ve been home for a year now and, realizing that nothing is gained without participation, I found a passion for charity work and co-founded Light Up The Night to promote mental health counseling and suicide awareness.
For the 2016 Quality of Life Report, county residents rated only several categories as being better than in any previous years: jobs, economic development, public safety, transit, parks & beaches, and culture, with parks & beaches and culture making only a very small improvement from any previous year.

**Definition of Terms:**

For this metric, participants were read descriptions of qualities and characteristics that contribute to the quality of life in Escambia County.

- **Natural Beauty:** Natural beauty and physical setting.
- **Parks & Beaches:** The availability of outdoor parks, playgrounds and beaches.
- **Inclusiveness:** Welcoming and inviting to people of diverse backgrounds, ethnicity and culture.
- **Healthcare:** Availability of quality healthcare.
- **Nightlife:** Having a vibrant nightlife with clubs, bars, restaurants, etc.
- **Culture:** The availability of cultural opportunities such as theatre, museums and music.
- **Schools:** Quality of public schools.
- **Public Safety:** Public safety and low crime.
- **Housing:** Availability of affordable housing.
- **Transit:** Availability and reliability of public transportation.
- **Mobility:** Being able to get from place to place with little traffic.
- **Leadership:** Effective leadership from elected officials.
- **Jobs:** Job opportunities in your field.
- **Economic Development:** A shared vision for economic development and job growth.
General satisfaction with the direction of Pensacola

In 2016, Pensacola sees a dip in the confidence in the city’s direction. Less than 50% of city residents are satisfied, a drop of 25% from last year.

Satisfaction with the job performance of Pensacola leadership

Both Mayor Ashton Hayward and the Pensacola City Council see declines in the level of satisfaction with their job performance. Although the mayor did see a steeper decline than did city council, Mayor Hayward still maintains a higher positive performance rating than does the Pensacola City Council.

Confidence in the vision for the revitalization of Pensacola

While the level of confidence in Pensacola’s revitalization vision has fallen from last year, the decline is less steep than measurements for the direction in which the city is headed.

45% of respondents think that Pensacola is heading in the right direction (▼-25%)

As a long-time resident of Pensacola, I am pleased overall with the direction of Escambia County and the City of Pensacola. Downtown revitalization is progressing nicely, and we seem to be laying the foundation for better economic development. But I continue to be troubled by the level of poverty in our community and the slow progress in preparing our young people for school. I am convinced that resolving our early learning issue is key to our long-term prosperity, and I am encouraged by our recent efforts in that regard.

Ted Kircharr
51% of respondents think that Escambia County is heading in the right direction (▼ -10%)

56% of respondents are confident in the vision for economic development in Escambia County (▲ +5%)

General satisfaction with the direction of Escambia County

Escambia County residents expressed a decline in their satisfaction with the direction of the county. Last year, 61% were satisfied, while this year shows only a 51% satisfaction level for the county.

Confidence in the vision for economic development in Escambia County

Although satisfaction in the direction the county is headed is down, 56% of survey respondents are confident in the vision for economic development in Escambia County, up 5% from last year.

Satisfaction with the job performance of County Commissioners

2016 showed a slight increase in the satisfaction of residents when considering the job performance of county commissioners. District 2 saw the highest level of satisfaction with county commissioners, and District 3 saw the lowest level.

Positive ratings for County Commissioners
The greater Pensacola area is making real strides in workforce development. Whether by working directly with businesses to build educational career pathways, or by bringing cross-sector leadership together through Achieve Escambia to improve cradle-to-career educational and workforce outcomes, we must continue to bring all voices to the table and align our resources so we can leverage the entire talent pool and ensure prosperity for all.”

“Talent is quickly becoming the most critical consideration in a community’s ability to grow and attract jobs and investment...”

One of the most important issues for residents is the community’s ability to attract jobs. Most years, Pensacola has been rated as better at attracting jobs than Escambia County overall. This year, both the city and the county saw a decline in their perceived ability to attract economic opportunity and job growth.

Success of County vs. City to attract economic opportunity and job growth

Jennifer Grove
Major Issues: Education

City residents are most confident in the public schools’ ability to provide quality education in the future while county residents are less optimistic.

"For education in Escambia to truly improve and progress, it takes a village…

...schools, homes, neighbors, elected officials, business owners, everyone. We can no longer just say it is the responsibility of the schools, the parents and guardians, or the students. It is the responsibility of all of us, and our responsibility should not be limited to special speeches, campaigns, media ads, back-to-school events, surveys and reports, and so forth. Our responsibilities should have a deeper impact and proactively engage the community, and hold us all accountable for the educational achievement of our citizens."

Denis Jamison, EdD

Showing similar results, city residents were most confident in the future progress of public schools’ ability to provide a quality education, with county residents and suburbanites showing less confidence in the future progress of public schools.

City residents are most confident in the public schools’ ability to provide quality education in the future while county residents are less optimistic.

Satisfaction with public schools’ assistance with economic development and job readiness

Satisfaction with the job performance of public school leadership
**Importance of Pensacola’s waterfront**

![Graph showing importance of Pensacola’s waterfront over years 2012 to 2016]

**Future of the Port of Pensacola**

The city should seek funding to renovate the port to increase its use. vs. The city should sell/lease the port property and allow for mixed-use development. Would you support or oppose moving the marine terminal ops of the port to Naval Air Station Pensacola?

- **Support**: 59%
- **Oppose**: 39%
- **Undecided**: 31%

---

**“Our environment plays a powerful role in our health—and our businesses, restaurants and public spaces should all be parts of our wellness culture.”**

Individuals, families, and businesses cannot thrive without health, and Pensacola provides excellent health care services to its residents. But health is not created in the doctor’s office or a hospital—it is created where we live, work, and play. Our environment plays a powerful role in our health—and our businesses, restaurants, and public spaces should all be parts of our wellness culture. They should gently push us towards drinking water, moving, and breathing. I hope the generous spirit of Pensacola can extend to giving back to ourselves the self-care that will make us better at everything we do.

Meghan Blueberry McCarthy
Improving Quality of Life

Perception of economic conditions in Escambia County

The condition of Escambia County’s economy in 5 years

Confidence in the security of jobs in Escambia County

Confidence in Escambia County residents' job security increased 16% in the past 5 years.