

The Metro Outlook Survey

To better understand how people feel about their quality of life in the Kansas City region, and how those perceptions compare to peer metros, MARC contracted with the ETC Institute to survey more than 1500 residents in the Kansas City, Denver, Minneapolis-St. Paul and St. Louis metropolitan areas.

The results, weighted to get representative samples by race, have a margin of error of 3.4 percent for the Kansas City region, where more than 800 surveys were conducted; and margins of error of about 6 percent for each of the peer metros, where only 200-300 surveys were done.

The survey questions and raw data are available online at www.metrooutlook.org. This section illustrates some of the more important results pulled from the data.

Question 1: Which five factors are most important to your quality of life?

The top ten factors for each metro are shown below.

Not surprisingly, there was a lot of commonality between the peer metros on this question. Family and Friends was rated most important by respondents in all four metros. Safety and Security was a greater concern for Kansas Citians than any other metro, ranking second at 41 percent. This is likely a

reflection of concern about the region's higher violent crime rate.

Clean Air and Water ranked fairly high in all metros, but lowest in Kansas City. Only 38 percent of Kansas City residents selected Clean Air and Water as one of the factors most important to their quality of life — at least 10 percent lower than the other metros. Interestingly, both Denver and Minneapolis had fewer average days with unhealthy air than Kansas City from 1995-2005. Only St. Louis had more.

Question 2. To Increase your quality of life, which three factors would you most like to improve?

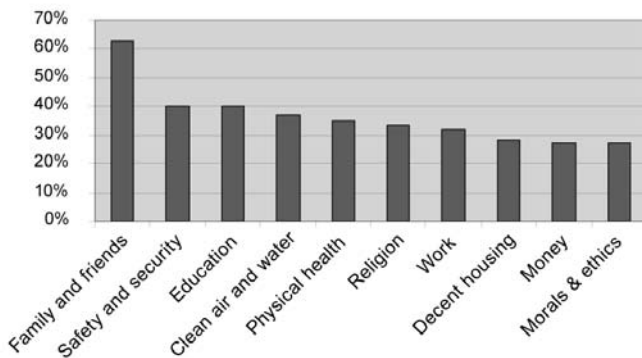
The charts on the following page show the top ten responses from each peer metro.

Kansas City area residents most wanted to address Safety and Security — the factor they ranked second-most important to quality of life in Question 1 — while the other metros ranked Clean Air and Water first.

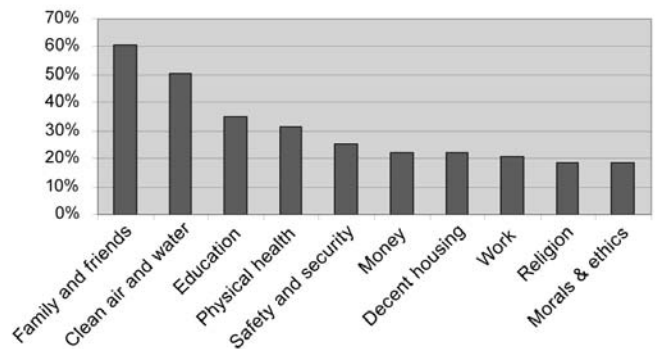
It should be noted that compared to the other metros, Kansas City residents' selections were more evenly distributed. While Safety and Security ranked number one in Kansas City, it was chosen by only 28 percent. In the other metros, the top-ranked issue was selected by at least 33 percent of respondents.

Question 1: Factors most important to your quality of life

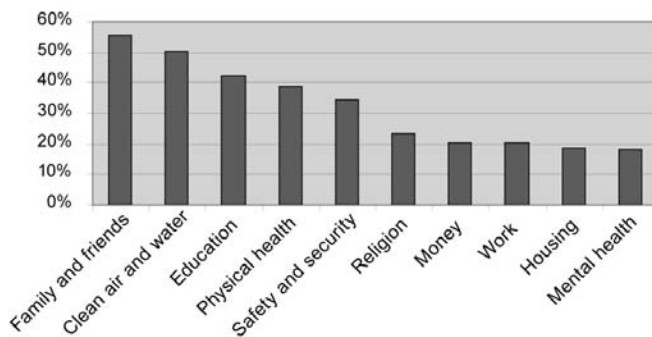
Kansas City



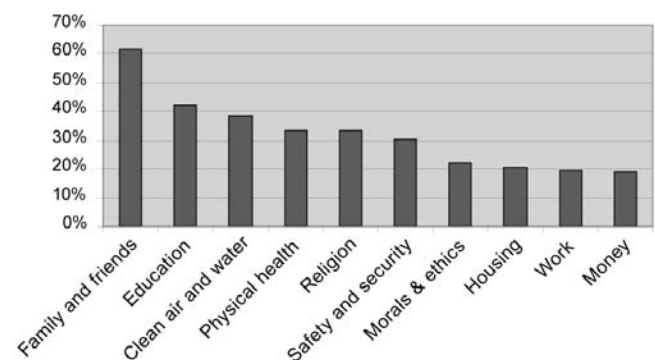
Denver



Minneapolis/St. Paul

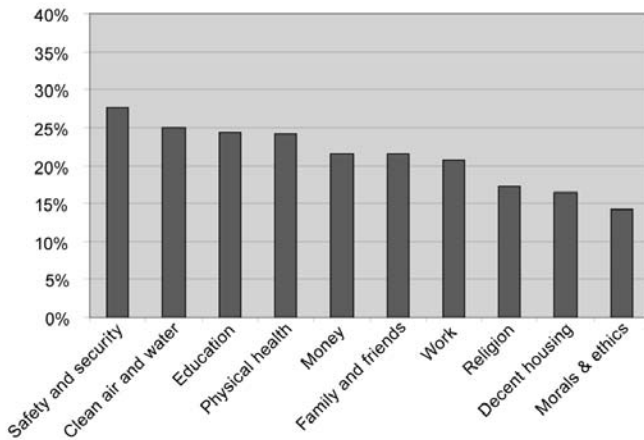


St. Louis

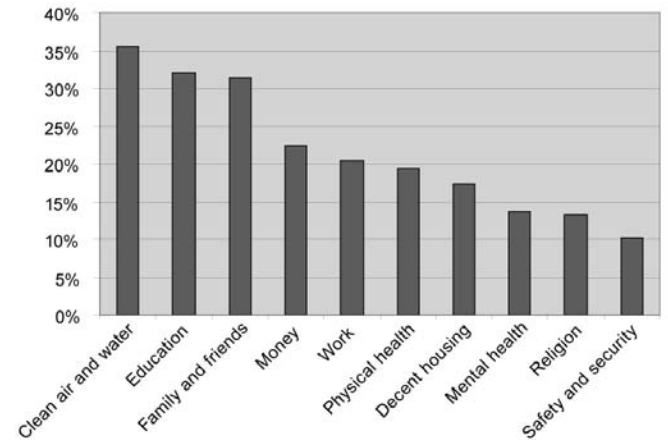


Question 2. Factors you would most like to improve

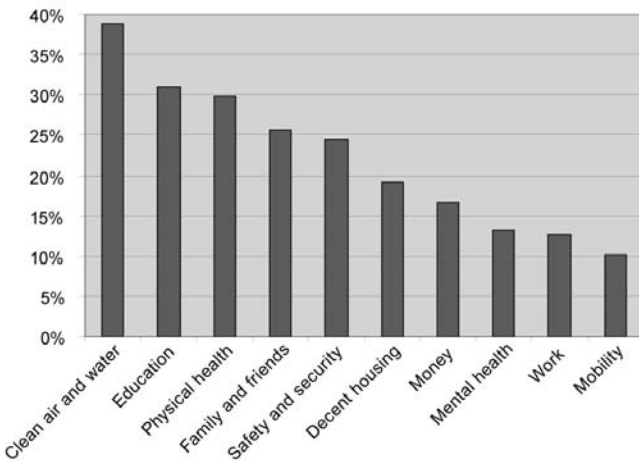
Kansas City



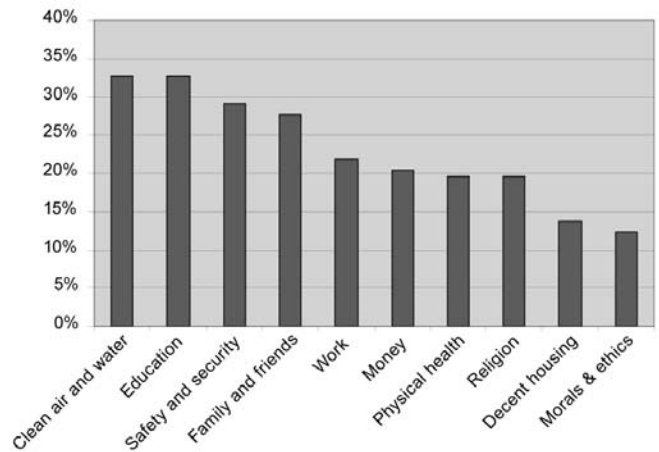
Denver



Minneapolis/St. Paul



St. Louis



For example, safety and security was selected more often by St. Louis residents (29 percent) than Kansas City area residents (28 percent) even though that issue was ranked third in St. Louis and first in Kansas City.

Question 3. So far as you and your family are concerned, how satisfied are you with the following?

- **Your present overall quality of life**
- **Your present financial condition**

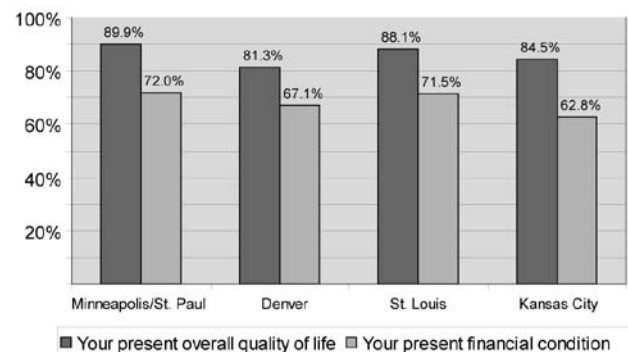
The vast majority of respondents in all peer metros were satisfied with their quality of life, selecting either “very” or “somewhat” satisfied.

Minneapolis and St. Louis top the list with nearly 90 percent of residents saying they are satisfied.

As might be expected, the percentage satisfied with their financial condition, while still a majority, is substantially less. The Kansas City area appears to have the lowest rate of satisfaction with regard to personal finances. This may be related to its lagging economic competitiveness.

Question 3. Satisfaction with your present quality of life and financial condition

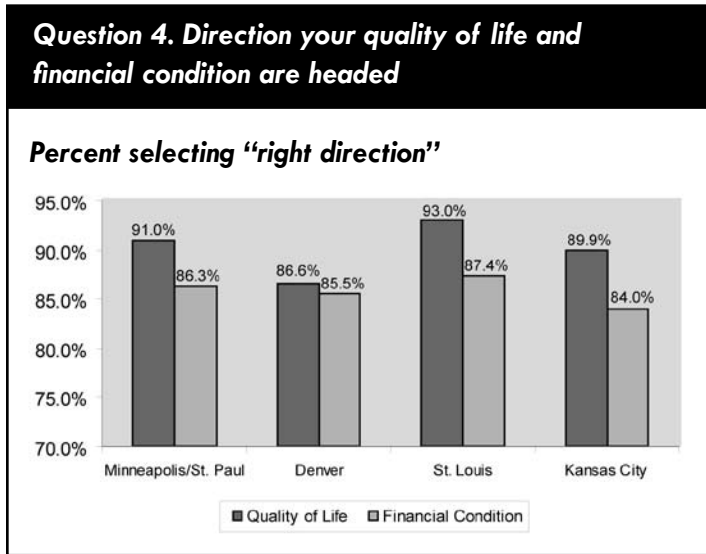
Percent selecting “very” or “somewhat” satisfied



Question 4: Overall, would you say these are headed in the right or wrong direction?

- Your present overall quality of life
- Your present financial condition

Similar to Question 3, respondents were largely positive about the future, with most indicating that both their quality of life and financial condition are heading in the right direction.



Question 5: Using a scale of one to five, where five means "excellent" and one means "poor," please rate the region with respect to the following:

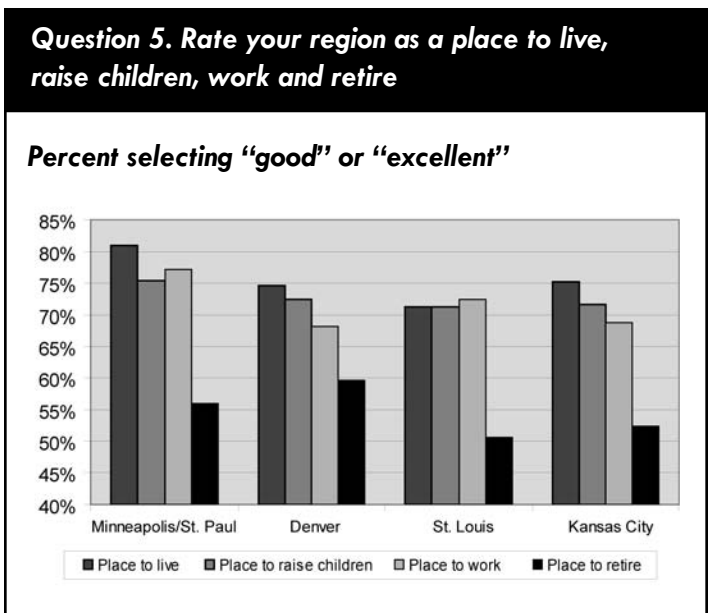
- As a place to live
- As a place to raise children
- As a place to work
- As a place to retire

Considering the high satisfaction ratings in Question 4, it comes as no surprise that the majority of respondents say their metro area is a good place to live. Minneapolis-St. Paul was highest in this category, at 81 percent, while St. Louis was lowest at 71.3 percent.

Similarly, the majority said their metro is a good place to raise children, with Minneapolis-St. Paul leading the group at 75.5 percent and St. Louis trailing at 71.3 percent.

There are some significant differences in valuing the metros as good places to work. Minneapolis-St. Paul again ranked highest at 77.3 percent, with St. Louis second at 72.4 percent. Interestingly, St. Louis is the only metro whose respondents think it is a better place to work than to live.

Perhaps reflecting the colder weather climates of the peer metros, the number of those who think their metro is a good place to retire is quite a bit lower. Denver had the highest percent at just under 60 percent.



Question 6: Next, we'd like you to think about what makes a great place to live. How would you rate the performance of both your community and the whole metropolitan area in dealing with each of these issues?

Respondents were asked to rate both their immediate community and their metro as a whole on the following issues:

- Job and income growth
- Life science-based economic development
- Energy efficiency — electricity and gasoline
- Protecting the natural environment
- Public school funding/quality (K-12)
- Cost/quality of early learning programs (pre-K)
- Crime
- Terrorism
- Dealing with natural disasters, like floods, tornadoes, winter storms and wild fires
- Race relations, racial inequality
- Housing affordability
- Choice of housing styles and prices
- Traffic congestion
- Road maintenance
- Traffic safety
- Ability of individuals to influence public decisions
- Health care quality and access
- Downtown redevelopment
- Quality and availability of public transportation — buses or rail
- Poverty
- Availability of housing for low-income residents
- Higher education quality/research capacity
- Sprawl
- Quality of arts and cultural amenities
- Quality of sports facilities

To analyze the results of this data, the percent of respondents selecting “Good” or “Excellent” for each category were added together for the community and for the metro.

Kansas City	Community			Metro		
	Good	Excellent	Good + Excellent	Good	Excellent	Good + Excellent
Job & income growth	47.0%	16.8%	0.638	54.9%	10.7%	0.656
Economic development	49.3%	11.1%	0.604	51.8%	9.5%	0.613
Energy efficiency	39.7%	7.2%	0.469	35.9%	6.2%	0.421

The difference between the “Good plus Excellent” total for the Community and the “Good plus Excellent” total for the Metro was taken to get a “disconnection value” for each category.

Kansas City	Community	Metro	Disconnection Value
	Good + Excellent	Good + Excellent	Community minus Metro
Job & income growth	0.638	0.656	-0.018
Economic development	0.604	0.613	-0.009
Energy efficiency	0.469	0.421	0.048
Protecting natural environment	0.553	0.406	0.147

The sum of these “disconnection values” equals the metro disconnection index — used to measure the difference in the respondents’ perceptions of their communities and their metros.

Kansas City	Disconnection Value
Job & income growth	-0.018
Economic development	-0.009
Energy efficiency	0.048
Protecting natural environment	0.147
Quality of sports facilities	-0.021
Disconnection Index	2.212

A score of “0” would indicate no perceived differences between the two, while a higher number indicates that people feel better about their own communities than they do the region.

Denver’s low score indicates a stronger sense of regional connection than is found in the Kansas City area. Kansas City’s score of 2.2 was the highest of the peer metros, indicating there is a higher level of disconnection between the communities and the metro.

Question 7: In order to improve the overall quality of life in both your community and the whole metropolitan area, which THREE issues do you think should receive the most attention from local and regional leaders over the next five years?

There were some significant differences among the metros when asked to identify key issues for community leaders to address in the next five years. (See previous page for list of issues.)

• **Top Issues in Your Community:**

Kansas City’s concern for crime remains evident, as it was ranked the number one issue for leaders to address. Minneapolis-St. Paul also ranked crime as its top issue.

Both St. Louis and Denver had public schools ranked highest, while Minneapolis ranked them second and Kansas City third in priority.

Housing affordability, traffic congestion and energy efficiency were issues that were in each metro’s top 10.

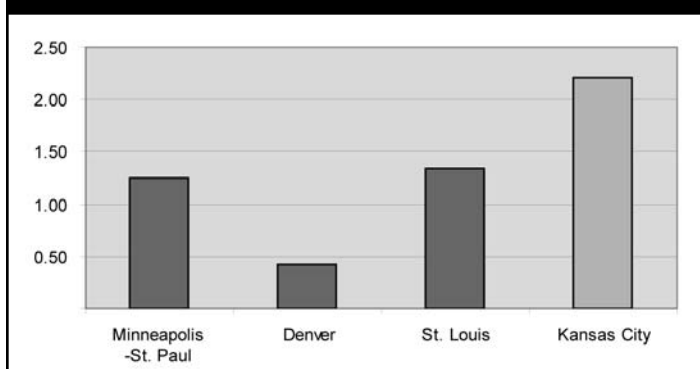
• **Top Issues in the Metropolitan Area:**

Crime and public schools are region-wide concerns in metro areas across the nation, and those concerns are certainly reflected in the responses to this question.

Crime is the biggest metro-wide concern in all peer metros except Denver. Kansas City respondents chose crime as one of the region’s top concerns nearly 50 percent of the time, the highest of all metros. Public schools was second in all except Denver, where they were first. Again, housing affordability, traffic congestion and energy efficiency were issues that were in each metro’s top 10.

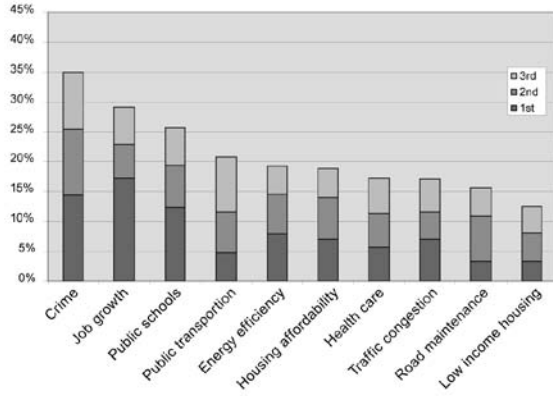
(See charts on next page.)

Question 6. Community-Metro Disconnection Index

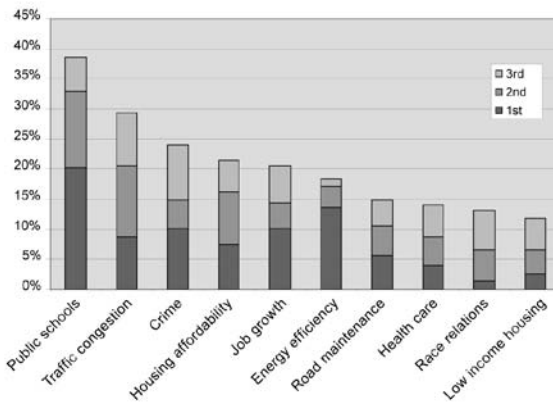


Question 7. Top Three Issues — Your Community

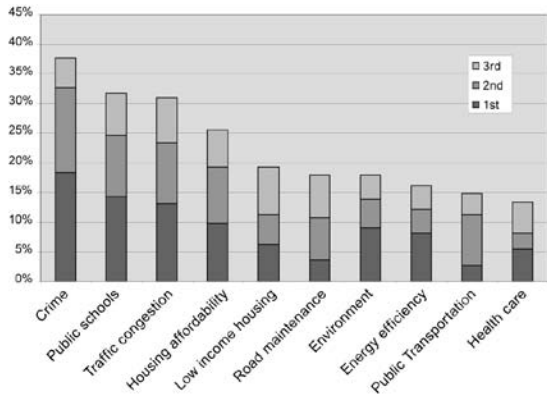
Kansas City



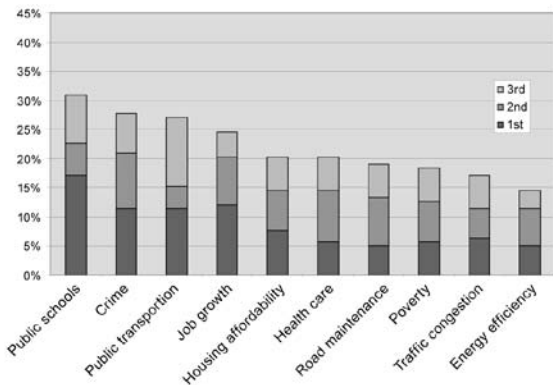
Denver



Minneapolis/St. Paul

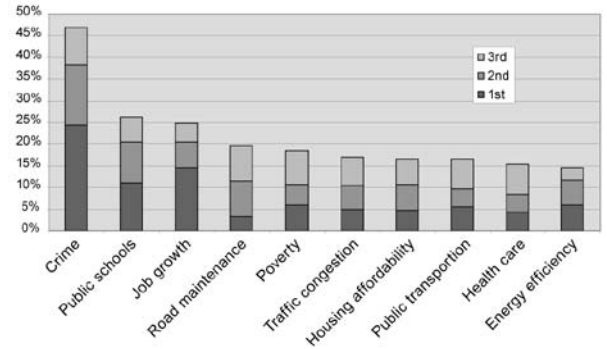


St. Louis

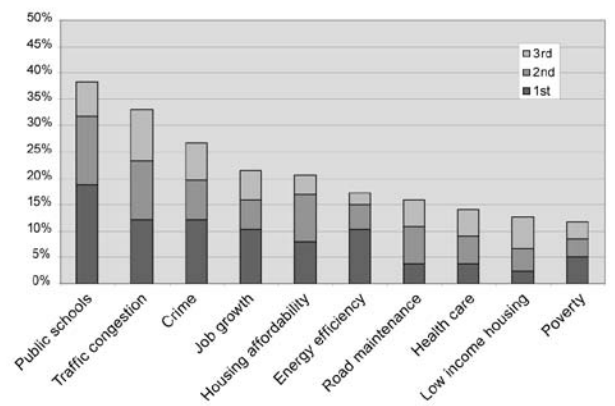


Question 7. Top Three Issues — Your Metro

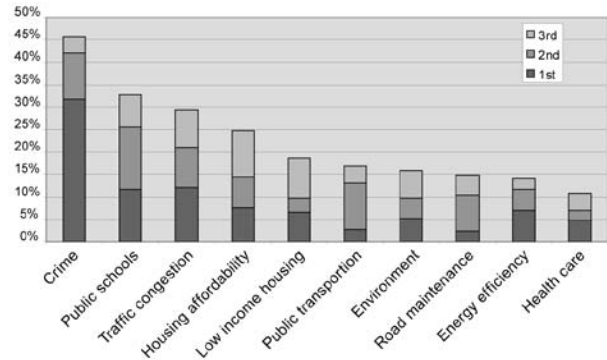
Kansas City



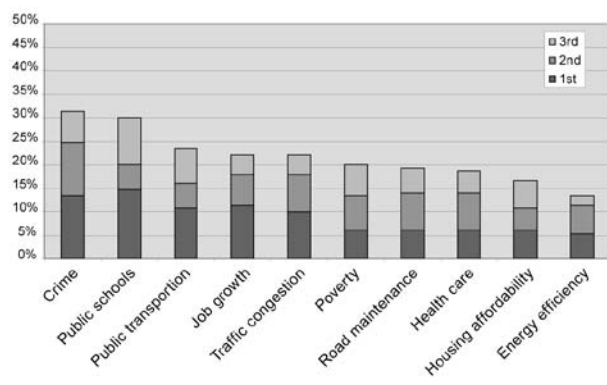
Denver



Minneapolis/St. Paul



St. Louis



Question 8: Thinking only about your first priority for the REGION selected in Question 7, how supportive would you be of having local governments in the metro area work together to address it?

Question 9: How willing would you be to have a portion of your local taxes pooled with other communities in the region to address your first regional priority?

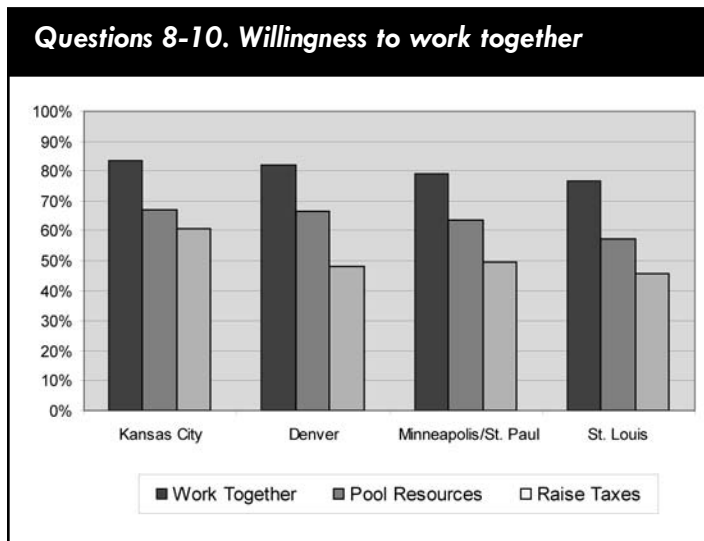
Question 10: How willing would you be to raise taxes (such as a 1/2 cent sales tax) to address your first regional priority?

Despite the fact that Kansas City respondents felt the most disconnect between their community and the metro as a whole, they were the most willing to pull together as a region to address key regional issues.

Respondents were asked to identify how willing they would be to:

- work together as a region,
- pool local taxes, and
- raise taxes to address their number one regional priority.

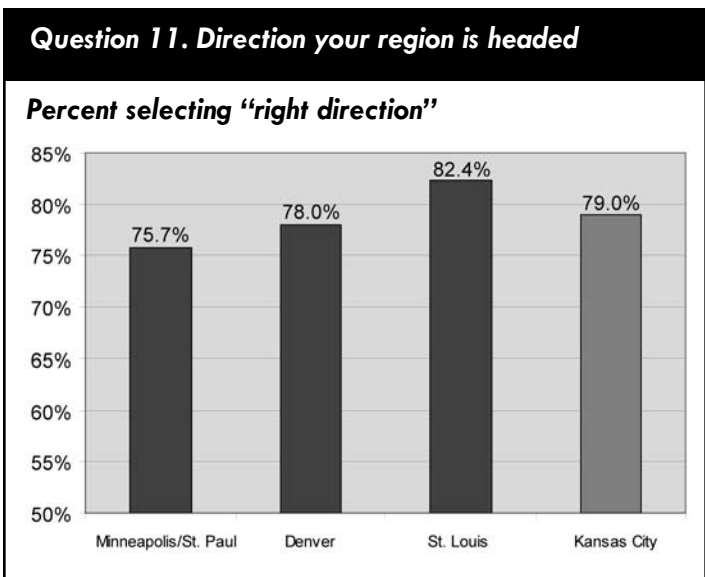
Kansas City showed the most support for all three questions. Denver was a close second for working together and pooling local taxes, but 60.5 percent of Kansas City respondents supported raising taxes to address problems. No other metro was over 50 percent for this question.



Question 11: Overall, would you say the region is headed in the right or wrong direction?

Most respondents were optimistic about the futures of their metro areas. (See Question 11 data)

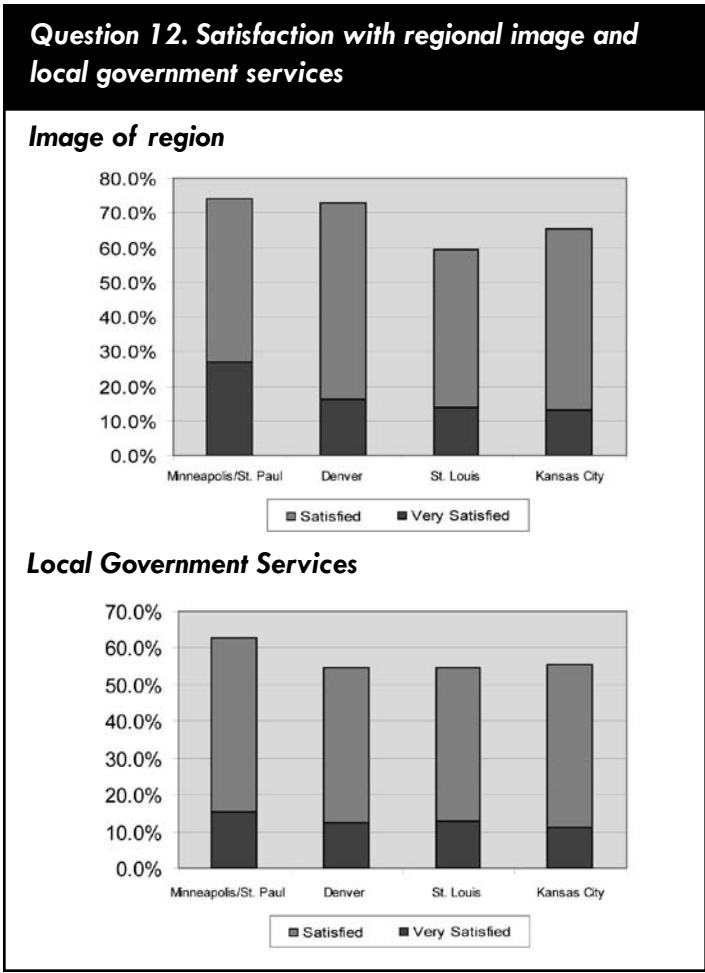
St. Louis residents had the highest confidence that their region was headed in the right direction, followed by Kansas City, Denver and Minneapolis/St. Paul.



Question 12: Please indicate how satisfied you are with the following:

- Overall image of the region
- Overall quality of local government services in the community where you live

Respondents from Minneapolis-St. Paul and Denver expressed greater satisfaction with their metro areas' images than those from Kansas City and St. Louis.



Question 13: Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?

There was a fairly wide disparity in the level of trust respondents had across metros.

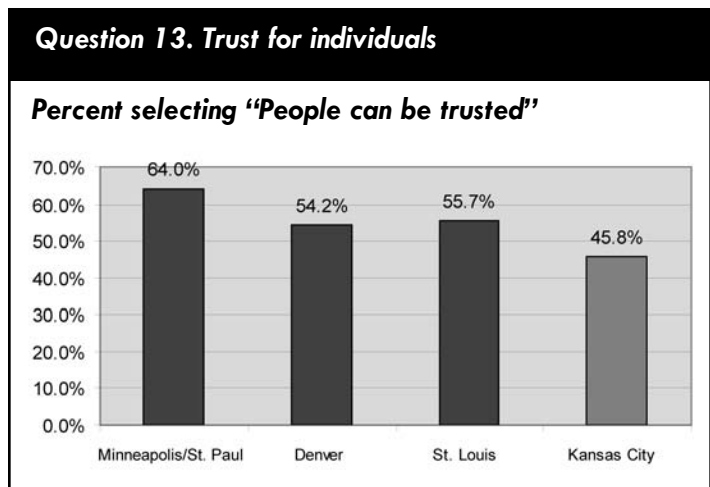
Minneapolis-St. Paul was the most trusting, with 64 percent saying that people could be trusted. While less trusting, the majority of Denver and St. Louis respondents said people could be trusted.

Kansas City was the only metro with less than half of the respondents saying people could be trusted (45.8 percent).

Question 14: For each of the following groups, how much of the time do you think you can trust them to do what is right?

For the most part, the trust level people have for certain institutions is consistent among the metros.

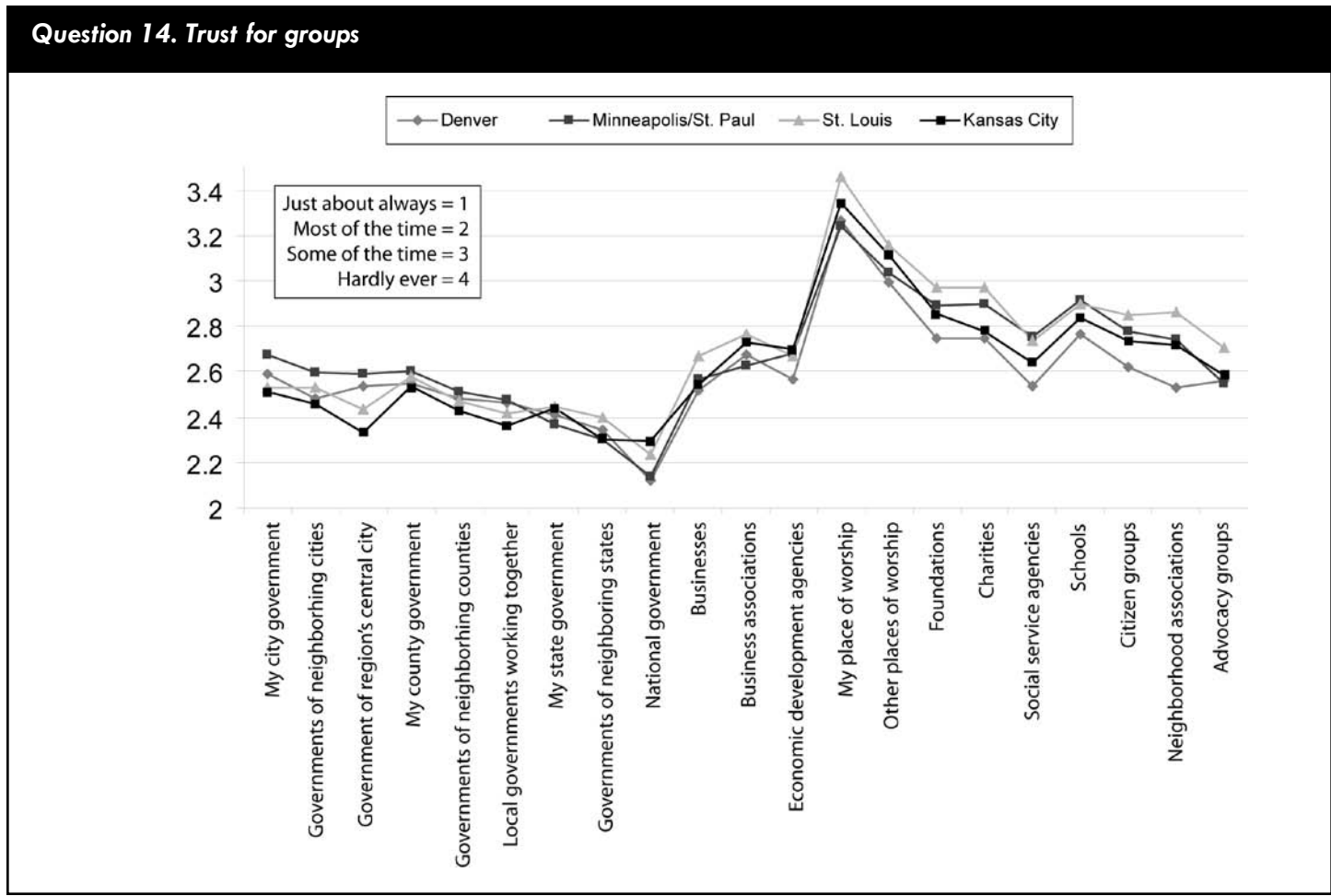
The left part of the chart deals with government. Overall, the trust levels are lowest here. For all metros, trust in national government earned the lowest score. There is a higher level of trust for local governments, although the Kansas City region does rank significantly lower on the trust level residents have for the region's central city. This score is higher in



Minneapolis-St. Paul and Denver where, as we have seen, there is a stronger sense of regionalism.

The middle section deals with business and associations. The trust level for all peer metros increases here. The peak trust level for all metros is "my place of worship" followed by "other places of worship."

The right portion of the chart deals mostly with other social organizations. Scores here are more variable, but still moderate overall. Denver consistently had the lowest scores in these areas.

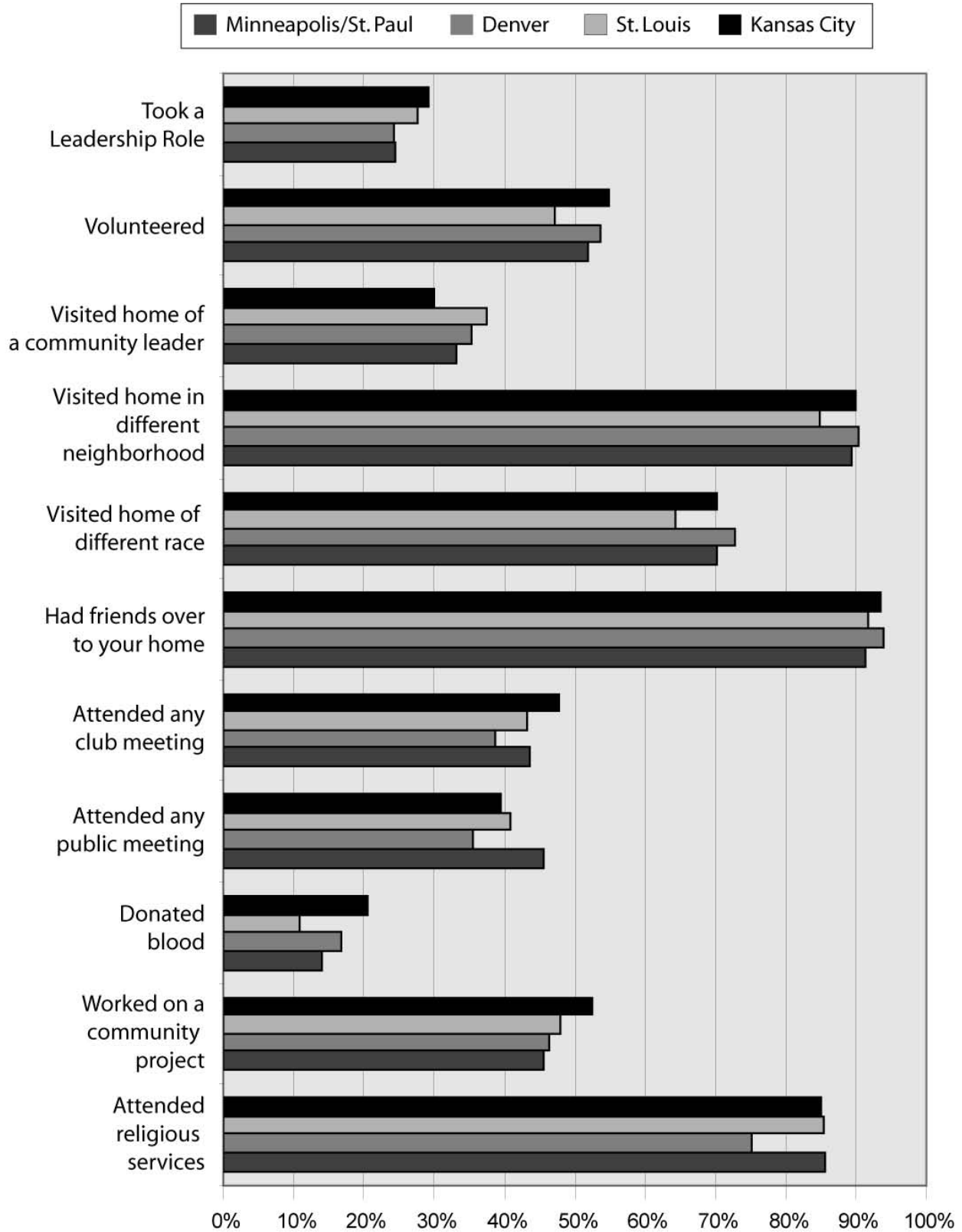


Question 15: Approximately how many times in the past 12 months have you participated in these activities.

For the most part, the percent of respondents doing selected activities in the past year is consistent across metros.

Kansas City area residents indicated that they were more likely to take a leadership role, volunteer, attend a club meeting, donate blood or work on a community project than residents of peer metros.

Question 15. Participation in community activities



Question 16: What do you think is unique or special about the region that makes it a good place to live? List THREE things that you are proud of and would give as reasons for someone to move to the area.

Respondents were asked to list three things that made their region a good place to live. These open-ended responses were then placed into categories.

The natural environment in Denver stands out as the most noted amenity in any of the metros. Minneapolis residents were second in choosing the natural environment, and selected schools and safety more than any other metro. St. Louis residents put their region at the top in culture and recreation and built environment.

Kansas City residents were highest in choosing its people as a reason to move to the area, and also rated economic issues, especially affordability, higher than other metros.

