

Western Region Household Survey Report



Findings from the WR-Stat: Baseline Survey 2024

Compiled by the Western Rural Development Center

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This regional report presents findings from the WR-Stat: Baseline Survey 2024, a comprehensive household survey conducted across the thirteen states in the Western United States. Developed by the Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) in collaboration with Regional Rural Development Center partners, this report provides essential data related to households, local businesses, and overall community vitality.

Featured in this report are the economic, social, health, and environmental conditions that influence the quality of life across rural and urban communities in the Western Region. All of the indices that characterize livability status are incorporated into a multidimensional Livability Framework, illustrated in the graphic to the right.

This graphic represents a synthesis of multiple validation studies into meaningful indicators of community and household livability. These indices enable comparisons between rural and urban communities across the Western Region while also providing benchmarks for determining livability status, subsequent strategic planning, and tracking changes in livability conditions over time in response to local efforts to improve livability status.

This initiative supports WRDC's mission to enhance research and educational outreach capacity across the region's land-grant institutions while directly supporting Extension programming through evidence-based insights for program development, stakeholder engagement, and grant applications.

WR-STAT: BASELINE SURVEY 2024

The WR-Stat: Baseline Survey 2024 was a 20-minute online survey that collected data from 4,502 households across the Western Region. The design of the Baseline Survey 2024 sample was based on quota sampling nested within states, focusing on the household types, gender, age, rural/urban location, and race/ethnicity. Findings should be interpreted as representative of the survey sample rather than the entire population of Western households.

Survey topics include household demographics and income, workforce participation, entrepreneurship, broadband access, caregiving, housing, migration patterns, civic engagement, community belonging, health status and care, food security, substance misuse, quality of life and well-being, recreation economy, and environmental concerns.

LIVABILITY FRAMEWORK



Source: Diagram developed by the Western Rural Development Center



EXPLORE THE DATA

Access the publicly available data on PURR Publications:

[Western Region Household Data. WR-Stat: Baseline Survey 2024](#)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and Respondent Demographics

The sample is 20% from rural communities and 80% from urban areas. Clear socio-economic disparities emerge between rural and urban households. Rural respondents report a lower average household income (\$70,867) compared to urban respondents (\$89,840), alongside lower levels of post-secondary educational attainment (62.9% vs. 79.2%). These structural differences provide important context for interpreting variation across economic, social, and well-being indicators.

WR-Stat: Baseline Survey 2024 Respondent Demographics (N = 4,502)

Residence* (% of respondents)	
Rural	19.96%
Urban	80.04%

Gender (% of respondents)	
Male	48.66%
Female	51.34%

Mean Age (years)	
Region	50
Rural	49
Urban	50

Mean Income (\$)	
Region	\$85,841
Rural	\$70,867
Urban	\$89,840

Higher Education* (% of respondents)	
Region	75.67%
Rural	62.88%
Urban	79.20%

*Notes: Rural areas were defined as areas that include open and/or sparsely populated countryside and towns of less than 5,000 inhabitants. Urban areas consist of suburban areas, towns, and cities with 5,000 inhabitants and more.

Higher education encompasses a wide range of educational opportunities beyond high school.

Regional Takeaways:

Across the Western Region, survey results highlight important patterns across four interrelated domains of Livability: the economic environment, engagement and socio-cultural environment, health and wellness, and the natural environment.

Economic environment indicators reflect moderate financial pressures across the region, with the Financial Stress Index (2.71) indicating ongoing economic strain among households. Recovery-friendly environments are moderately present (0.66), suggesting some level of workplace and community support for substance misuse prevention, access to treatment, and recovery services.

Institutional trust (3.51) remains mixed, pointing to varying levels of confidence in local institutions and governance structures.

Health and wellness outcomes reveal moderate levels of psychological and social challenges. Mental health scores (3.15 out of 4) indicate generally favorable outcomes, with higher scores indicating fewer issues, while loneliness (2.40) reflects moderate social isolation. Food security (0.33) remains a concern for a notable share of households. At the same time, high social balance scores (4.17) indicate relatively low reported levels of discrimination, suggesting that most respondents perceive their communities as socially tolerant.

Natural environment indicators point to moderate levels of concern regarding environmental conditions. Respondents report concerns related to pollution (2.52) and extreme weather events (2.42).

Overall, the community satisfaction index (3.75) reflects generally positive but uneven perceptions of local living conditions.

Rural-Urban Difference:

Economic Environment exhibits the largest rural–urban differences.

- Rural households experience higher financial stress (rural 2.85, urban 2.68), revealing underlying income and economic constraints.
- Institutional trust is also lower in rural areas (rural 3.35, urban 3.55), indicating differences in confidence in local institutions and governance.
- Recovery-friendly conditions are similar across groups (rural 0.67, urban 0.65), implying comparable availability of workplace support systems related to substance misuse prevention, treatment, and recovery, which indirectly support financial well-being.

Engagement and Socio-Cultural Environment demonstrate relatively small differences.

- Civic engagement is identical across rural and urban communities (2.19), suggesting consistent participation in community activities.
- Urban respondents report slightly higher levels of community trust (rural 3.78, urban 3.93), community equity (rural 3.64, urban 3.78), and perceptions of welcoming communities (rural 3.54, urban 3.71), though differences remain modest overall.

Health and Wellness show moderate variation.

- Rural respondents report slightly lower mental health scores (rural 3.04, urban 3.17), showing somewhat greater challenges.
- Loneliness levels are similar across groups (rural 2.35, urban 2.41), and social balance remains high in both contexts (rural 4.12, urban 4.18).
- Food insecurity is more prevalent among rural households (rural 0.40, urban 0.32), highlighting disparities in well-being outcomes.

Natural Environment shows limited differences.

- Urban residents report slightly greater concern about pollution (rural 2.40, urban 2.54), while concern about extreme weather is similar (rural 2.38, urban 2.43).

Overall community satisfaction is lower in rural areas (rural 3.55, urban 3.81), signaling differences in perceived quality of local environmental and living conditions.

Conclusion:

The findings underscore the persistence of rural–urban disparities in economic conditions, while also highlighting areas of shared strength across the Western region. Economic vulnerability remains a defining challenge in rural communities, particularly marked by higher financial stress and lower institutional trust. At the same time, relatively small differences in civic engagement and broader socio-cultural indicators suggest that community cohesion remains relatively strong across both rural and urban contexts.

Health and wellness outcomes reveal moderate but important challenges, with rural households experiencing slightly poorer mental health and higher food insecurity, while maintaining similar levels of social connectedness. Differences in natural and community conditions are also evident, with rural respondents reporting lower overall community satisfaction, indicating disparities in perceived quality of life and local amenities.

These findings emphasize the need for targeted policy responses that address structural economic disparities while leveraging existing strengths in community engagement and social capital.

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Financial Stress Index

The Financial Stress Index measures how financial difficulties impact emotional, physical, and social well-being through nine comprehensive survey questions covering symptoms from sadness and worry to job performance interference and relationship disruption.

WR 2.71
Rural: 2.85 Urban: 2.68

1 = Minimum Stress
Maximum Stress = 5

Least frequently reported symptoms were feeling sad because of financial conditions, followed by sensitivity to noise because of financial situation.

Respondents most frequently reported feeling frustrated and experiencing disruptions to daily performance.

Recovery-Friendly Index

The Recovery-Friendly Index assesses workplace support for substance misuse prevention, treatment, and recovery through employer policies on awareness programs, confidential treatment access, and recovery support services.

WR 0.66
Rural: 0.67 Urban: 0.65

1 = Support Provided
Support Not Provided = 0

More reported that employer supports treatment for and recovery from substance use disorders.

Respondents appeared to place similar importance on the various workplace supports, with no single support emerging as substantially more important than the others.

Institutional Trust Index

The Institutional Trust Index evaluates trust in three key local institutions: government, news media, and police services.

WR 3.51
Rural: 3.35 Urban: 3.55

5 = Maximum Trust
Minimum Trust = 1

Respondents rated their trust highest for the police in their local community.

Respondents rated their trust lowest for local news media and local government.

ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Community Trust Index

The Community Trust Index measures interpersonal trust across six community contexts, including neighbors, coworkers, religious communities, local businesses, educators, and healthcare providers.

WR 3.89
Rural: 3.78 Urban: 3.93

5 = Maximum Trust
Minimum Trust = 1

Respondents indicated the people they trusted most were people in their religious community and the people who provide health care.

Respondents indicated the people they trusted least were people in their neighborhood, those who work in the stores where they shop.

Civic Engagement Index

The Civic Engagement Index measures community participation through five activities: collaborative problem-solving, voluntary service, group membership, fundraising, and religious involvement.

WR 2.19
Rural: 2.19 Urban: 2.19

1 = Maximum Engagement
Minimum Engagement = 3

Respondents indicated higher participation in voluntary community service.

Respondents indicated lowest participation in working together with an individual or a group to solve a community problem.

Welcoming Community Index

The Welcoming Community Index assesses community inclusivity through six dimensions: welcoming all residents, supporting integration, valuing diversity, cultural respect, fair treatment, and overall acceptance.

WR 3.68
Rural: 3.54 Urban: 3.71

5 = Maximum Welcoming

Minimum Welcoming = 1

Respondents rated their community highest in "making all residents feel welcomed."

Respondents rated their community lowest in "helping new residents feel connected and integrated."

Community Equity Index

The Community Equity Index measures equal access across six areas: safety, employment, housing, education, healthcare, and civic participation for residents of all backgrounds.

WR 3.75
Rural: 3.64 Urban: 3.78

5 = Maximum Equity

Minimum Equity = 1

Respondents agreed most with the statements that their "community provides equal access to healthcare for residents of all backgrounds."

Respondents agreed least with statements "provides equal access to housing" and "provides equal access to employment."

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Mental Health Index

The Mental Health Index measures three common psychological symptoms: lack of interest in activities, depression, and anxiety over a three-month period.

WR 3.15
Rural: 3.04 Urban: 3.17

4 = Minimum Symptoms

Maximum Symptoms = 1

Respondents reported having little interest in doing things less frequently.

Respondents reported feeling anxious, nervous, or on edge with greater frequency.

Loneliness Index

The Loneliness Index assesses social isolation through three dimensions: lack of companionship, feeling excluded, and feeling isolated from others.

WR 2.40
Rural: 2.35 Urban: 2.41

3 = Minimum Loneliness

Maximum Loneliness = 1

Respondents reported feeling left out less frequently.

Respondents reported lacking companionship with greater frequency.

Food Security Index

The Food Security Index uses USDA methodology to measure household food access from worry about food supplies to severe hunger and food deprivation experiences.

WR 0.33
Rural: 0.40 Urban: 0.32

0 = Maximum Food Security

Minimum Food Security = 1

Respondents less frequently reported "lose weight because there was not enough money for food" and more frequently reported "eating less than they felt they should" and "cutting the size of their meals or skipping meals" because there was not enough money in the last twelve months.

Social Balance Index

The Social Balance Index measures personal discrimination experiences across eight identity dimensions, including age, gender, race, religion, politics, ability, national origin (birth country), and sexual orientation.

WR 4.17
Rural: 4.12 Urban: 4.18

5 = Minimum Discrimination

Respondents reported the least discrimination based on sexual orientation and national origin.

Maximum Discrimination = 1

Respondents reported experiencing discrimination based on "age" and "political affiliation" more.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Pollution Index

The Pollution Index measures personal concern about four pollution types: air quality, water body contamination, drinking water safety, and litter/waste issues.

WR 2.52
Rural: 2.40 Urban: 2.54

1 = Minimum Concern

Respondents worried least about air pollution.

Maximum Concern = 4

Respondents worried most about litter and waste dumping.

Extreme Weather Events Index

The Extreme Weather Events Index measures concern about five climate hazards: soil erosion, extreme temperatures, drought, and flooding conditions.

WR 2.42
Rural: 2.38 Urban: 2.43

1 = Minimum Concern

Respondents worried least about flooding.

Maximum Concern = 4

Respondents worried most about extreme heat and drought.

COMMUNITY SATISFACTION

Community Satisfaction Index

The Community Satisfaction Index measures resident satisfaction across fifteen community dimensions, including healthcare, education, housing, employment, recreation, and environmental quality.

WR 3.75
Rural: 3.55 Urban: 3.81

5 = Maximum Satisfaction

Most favorable community characteristics: Availability of internet, cellphone service, easy access to medical care.

Minimum Satisfaction = 1

Least favorable community characteristics: Supply and affordability of housing, and employment opportunities.

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

INDICES: REGION & STATE

 = Regional index score

 = Regional leader

 = Area of concern

	WR	Alaska	Arizona	California	Colorado	Hawaii	Idaho	Montana	Nevada	New Mexico	Oregon	Utah	Washington	Wyoming
Financial Stress Index	2.71	2.61	2.59	2.58	2.69	2.23	2.89	2.83	2.69	2.94	2.71	2.76	2.84	2.66
Recovery-Friendly Index	0.66	0.72	0.73	0.59	0.65	0.59	0.62	0.61	0.71	0.61	0.72	0.63	0.78	0.53
Community Satisfaction Index	3.75	3.84	3.68	3.89	3.70	3.76	3.86	3.73	3.73	3.67	3.66	3.75	3.83	3.65
Pollution Index	2.52	2.24	2.55	2.55	2.50	2.29	2.48	2.38	2.52	2.69	2.50	2.56	2.62	2.37
Extreme Weather Events Index	2.42	2.06	2.49	2.42	2.38	2.11	2.44	2.34	2.50	2.64	2.32	2.49	2.48	2.42
Civic Engagement Index	2.19	2.03	2.26	2.24	2.22	2.33	2.14	2.18	2.30	2.19	2.11	2.15	2.10	2.23
Community Trust Index	3.89	3.94	3.80	3.99	3.82	3.98	4.02	3.89	3.81	3.79	3.88	3.97	3.89	3.98
Community Equity Index	3.75	3.88	3.66	3.86	3.61	3.82	3.86	3.71	3.80	3.70	3.64	3.77	3.82	3.63
Welcoming Community Index	3.68	3.84	3.55	3.87	3.54	3.76	3.73	3.58	3.73	3.66	3.58	3.69	3.71	3.53
Institutional Trust Index	3.51	3.58	3.36	3.77	3.30	3.61	3.68	3.56	3.44	3.42	3.36	3.50	3.57	3.56
Mental Health Index	3.15	3.20	3.19	3.29	3.12	3.38	3.14	3.06	3.20	3.02	3.03	3.08	3.07	3.22
Loneliness Index	2.40	2.44	2.39	2.49	2.38	2.54	2.36	2.32	2.49	2.32	2.30	2.39	2.39	2.42
Food Security Index	0.33	0.39	0.29	0.33	0.30	0.22	0.34	0.37	0.31	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.37	0.33
Social Balance Index	4.17	4.22	4.21	4.13	4.26	4.33	4.18	4.25	4.29	3.91	4.23	4.22	4.00	4.13
No. of Respondents	4,502	131	445	489	419	251	431	204	396	432	411	384	398	111

Rural-Urban Overview-State-wise

INDICES: REGION & STATE

= Regional index score
 = Regional leader
 = Area of concern

		WR	Alaska	Arizona	California	Colorado	Hawaii	Idaho	Montana	Nevada	New Mexico	Oregon	Utah	Washington	Wyoming
Financial Stress Index	Urban	2.68	2.38	2.52	2.55	2.68	2.19	2.96	2.66	2.69	2.93	2.73	2.76	2.82	2.62
	Rural	2.85	3.14	3.05	2.98	2.80	2.42	2.69	3.07	2.68	2.98	2.71	2.74	2.92	2.76
Recovery-Friendly Index	Urban	0.65	0.76	0.73	0.58	0.66	0.60	0.59	0.69	0.71	0.61	0.73	0.62	0.77	0.54
	Rural	0.67	0.50	0.78	0.71	0.60	0.58	0.76	0.44	0.74	0.65	0.66	0.70	0.81	0.44
Community Satisfaction Index	Urban	3.81	3.91	3.72	3.94	3.74	3.82	3.94	3.82	3.74	3.73	3.69	3.81	3.92	3.66
	Rural	3.54	3.69	3.43	3.41	3.56	3.56	3.52	3.59	3.61	3.50	3.57	3.46	3.57	3.63
Pollution Index	Urban	2.54	2.22	2.55	2.55	2.54	2.30	2.55	2.34	2.54	2.70	2.54	2.57	2.65	2.57
	Rural	2.40	2.24	2.57	2.56	2.34	2.21	2.21	2.43	2.43	2.61	2.34	2.40	2.55	1.94
Extreme Weather Events Index	Urban	2.43	2.03	2.49	2.40	2.40	2.08	2.52	2.32	2.51	2.62	2.34	2.47	2.50	2.58
	Rural	2.38	2.24	2.52	2.59	2.34	2.17	2.15	2.36	2.44	2.69	2.22	2.57	2.44	2.06
Civic Engagement Index	Urban	2.19	2.02	2.29	2.24	2.21	2.34	2.13	2.17	2.34	2.12	2.11	2.13	2.08	2.19
	Rural	2.19	2.11	2.08	2.21	2.21	2.31	2.15	2.20	2.00	2.37	2.11	2.26	2.12	2.33
Community Trust Index	Urban	3.93	3.99	3.82	4.04	3.82	4.01	4.07	3.95	3.80	3.85	3.89	4.00	3.98	3.96
	Rural	3.77	3.82	3.72	3.44	3.85	3.87	3.80	3.79	3.90	3.61	3.84	3.82	3.69	4.01
Community Equity Index	Urban	3.78	3.80	3.67	3.91	3.62	3.84	3.90	3.82	3.81	3.70	3.64	3.81	3.90	3.64
	Rural	3.64	4.05	3.55	3.40	3.59	3.74	3.72	3.55	3.75	3.67	3.63	3.59	3.58	3.61
Welcoming Community Index	Urban	3.71	3.84	3.58	3.92	3.54	3.78	3.77	3.67	3.73	3.70	3.60	3.72	3.80	3.56
	Rural	3.53	3.85	3.38	3.44	3.52	3.73	3.59	3.45	3.73	3.52	3.51	3.53	3.46	3.45
Institutional Trust Index	Urban	3.55	3.67	3.34	3.81	3.30	3.70	3.78	3.64	3.41	3.52	3.37	3.56	3.65	3.61
	Rural	3.35	3.34	3.46	3.35	3.31	3.33	3.32	3.43	3.63	3.13	3.34	3.16	3.42	3.43
Mental Health Index	Urban	3.17	3.26	3.23	3.33	3.09	3.43	3.14	3.08	3.19	3.06	3.03	3.11	3.09	3.30
	Rural	3.03	3.09	2.97	2.82	3.17	3.21	3.13	3.03	3.27	2.88	3.00	2.92	2.98	3.05
Loneliness Index	Urban	2.41	2.53	2.43	2.50	2.37	2.55	2.36	2.31	2.48	2.33	2.28	2.39	2.40	2.48
	Rural	2.34	2.24	2.17	2.34	2.38	2.47	2.35	2.33	2.59	2.27	2.36	2.38	2.33	2.30
Food Security Index	Urban	0.32	0.35	0.25	0.31	0.30	0.19	0.34	0.36	0.31	0.36	0.34	0.34	0.35	0.31
	Rural	0.39	0.49	0.52	0.49	0.27	0.30	0.33	0.39	0.32	0.38	0.42	0.43	0.44	0.37
Social Balance Index	Urban	4.18	4.35	4.29	4.18	4.27	4.30	4.07	4.22	4.30	3.90	4.23	4.25	4.03	4.08
	Rural	4.12	3.91	3.78	3.55	4.19	4.48	4.57	4.30	4.21	3.95	4.20	4.03	3.87	4.23
No. of Respondents	Urban	3,564	93	371	442	333	191	337	121	345	327	312	322	296	76
	Rural	889	36	70	42	79	56	91	83	49	102	95	58	92	34

SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS (N=4,502)

	WR	Alaska	Arizona	California	Colorado	Hawaii	Idaho	Montana	Nevada	New Mexico	Oregon	Utah	Washington	Wyoming
<i>Gender - share of respondents (%)</i>														
Female	51.34%	50.38%	55.06%	48.16%	58.13%	48.79%	48.12%	50.00%	51.27%	51.86%	51.35%	49.87%	50.25%	53.64%
<i>Households location - share of respondents (%)</i>														
Rural	19.96%	27.91%	15.87%	8.68%	19.17%	22.67%	21.26%	40.69%	12.66%	23.78%	23.34%	15.26%	23.71%	31.53%
Urban	80.04%	72.09%	84.13%	91.32%	80.83%	77.33%	78.74%	59.31%	87.34%	76.22%	76.66%	84.74%	76.29%	68.47%
<i>Mean income (\$)</i>														
Region/State	\$85,841	\$97,363	\$74,366	\$98,039	\$84,230	\$95,133	\$92,718	\$77,336	\$83,610	\$80,687	\$77,830	\$81,119	\$95,006	\$79,861
Rural	\$70,867	\$98,529	\$47,645	\$59,688	\$77,404	\$78,409	\$78,194	\$72,596	\$92,000	\$56,505	\$74,597	\$63,362	\$66,440	\$78,030
Urban	\$89,840	\$97,962	\$79,903	\$101,782	\$86,810	\$99,395	\$96,809	\$80,417	\$82,588	\$88,396	\$78,653	\$84,805	\$104,871	\$80,667
<i>Higher education - share of respondents (%) *</i>														
Region/State	75.67%	77.86%	71.17%	81.15%	76.61%	84.46%	75.64%	73.04%	75.51%	70.14%	74.45%	76.24%	74.49%	77.48%
Rural	62.88%	75.00%	51.43%	50.00%	67.09%	67.86%	68.13%	72.29%	68.00%	50.00%	69.47%	53.45%	61.96%	65.71%
Urban	79.20%	78.49%	75.14%	84.58%	79.58%	89.01%	78.34%	73.55%	76.52%	76.76%	75.96%	81.00%	79.39%	82.89%
<i>Mean age (years)</i>														
Region/State	50	48	55	44	54	50	47	51	53	48	53	49	50	47
Rural	49	48	48	43	56	48	52	53	44	44	49	49	51	52
Urban	50	48	57	44	53	50	46	50	55	49	55	49	50	44

* Note: Higher education encompasses a wide range of educational opportunities beyond high school. Estimates are based on quota-sampled respondents and should not be interpreted as population estimates for each state.

References

Bednarik, Z.; Green, J. J.; Marshall, M. I.; Russell, K. J.; Wiatt, R. D.; Wilcox Jr, M. D.; Kibria, A.; Winckel, N. (2026). Western Region Household Data. WR-Stat: Baseline Survey 2024. Purdue University Research Repository. [doi:10.4231/X4SP-C423](https://doi.org/10.4231/X4SP-C423)

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