


# Omaha Conditions Survey: 1993



## Outlook on the Future, Quality of Life, and Local Leadership

by  
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### Key Findings

- Over 9 out of 10 (90.5 percent) respondents agreed that the Omaha area's future looks bright and 85.6 percent agreed the area is an ideal place to live.
- When asked to give more specific opinions, 22.8 percent agreed that the area is good enough as it is without change; 47.9 percent agreed that most residents are satisfied with things as they are; 75.7 percent agreed that the area has good governmental leaders; 88.7 percent agreed that the area has good corporate leadership.
- Respondents who are black, who have lower household incomes, and who have lower levels of education are generally less optimistic about the Omaha area.
- Respondents east of 72nd Street were less likely than residents of other areas to say the Omaha area's future is bright (84.4 percent). City of Omaha respondents were less likely to agree (88.8 percent) than those from the rest of the metropolitan area (93.2 percent).
- Most respondents disagreed (77.1 percent) that the area is good enough without any changes. Those living east of 72nd Street were the most likely to strongly disagree (11.9 percent) with the statement that no changes were needed.
- Although a large majority of the metropolitan sample agreed that the area's governmental leaders were good, support varied by geographic area. Those respondents living in the balance of Douglas County\* had the highest agreement (84.8 percent) that governmental leaders are good, with Sarpy County next (80.5 percent). Those least likely to agree that governmental leadership is good were respondents living east of 72nd Street. Almost one-third (31.3 percent) of these respondents disagreed that the area has good governmental leaders. Respondents from the City of Omaha were less likely to agree that Omaha has good governmental leaders (72.2 percent) than those from the remainder of the metropolitan area (81.7 percent).

\*Douglas County area outside of the city limits of Omaha.

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The Omaha Conditions Survey: 1993 Metro Sample asked respondents to indicate their levels of agreement with a series of statements about the Omaha area's outlook for the future, satisfaction level with the way things are or the need to change them, and governmental and corporate leadership. In addition, they were asked whether they agreed that the Omaha area is an ideal place to live and whether younger residents tend to stay here after completing high school.

This report profiles perceptions of these facets of life in the greater Omaha area. In addition to summary information for all 802 respondents contained in the metropolitan sample, differences in opinions across population subgroups and geographic areas within the four-county study area are reported. A comparison with results from the 1990 survey on the outlook on the future, quality of life, and local leadership questions are also presented.

The metropolitan sample represents adults in the Nebraska portion of the Omaha Metropolitan Statistical Area (Cass, Douglas, Sarpy, and Washington, counties). For complete details on the sample and respondent characteristics, see the separate report, *Survey Methodology* (the complete list of Omaha Conditions Survey: 1993 report topics is on the back cover).

## Outlook on the Future

To develop information about views of the Omaha area's quality of life, respondents were read several different statements. Each person was asked whether he or she strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with each statement.

As table 1 shows, 90.5 percent of the respondents said they either strongly agreed or agreed that the future looks bright for the Omaha area.

**Table 1. Responses to the Statement, "The Omaha area's future looks bright."**

	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	130	16.4
Agree	588	74.1
Disagree	67	8.4
Strongly disagree	8	1.0
Total	793	100.0*

\*Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

No significant differences in outlook for the Omaha area's future were found in gender, age, or marital status categories. Race<sup>1</sup> and education were, however, found to be related to outlook on the future. Among black respondents, 73.5 percent felt the Omaha area's future looks bright, while 91.6 percent of white respondents did.

The higher a person's education, the more likely he or she was to agree that the area's future looks bright. For example, 95.6 percent of respondents with college degrees or higher felt the area's future was bright, while 80.0 percent of those with less than a high school diploma felt so.

## Omaha as a Place to Live

Table 2 shows the number and percentage of respondents agreeing that the Omaha area is an ideal place to live. The proportion responding affirmatively is just slightly lower (85.6 percent) than was found for outlook for the future of the area (90.5 percent).

No statistically significant differences were found in various subgroups' responses to this statement. Most respondents thus feel that the Omaha area is a

**Table 2. Responses to the Statement, "The Omaha area is an ideal place to live."**

	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	123	15.5
Agree	558	70.1
Disagree	104	13.1
Strongly disagree	11	1.4
Total	796	100.0*

\*Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

high-quality place to live with a bright future.

## The Need for Change

To assess attitudes toward change and the need for change in the Omaha area, each person was asked to indicate his or her agreement or lack of agreement with two statements. One addressed the perceived satisfaction of Omaha area residents with their community. The second sought to find whether respondents felt the area is good enough as it is without change.

Table 3 provides information on the number and percentage of respondents agreeing or disagreeing that most residents are satisfied with things as they are in the Omaha area. As the table shows, 47.9 percent either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. To put it simply, fewer than one-half of those responding feel Omaha area residents are satisfied with things as they are.

Table 4 also reports on a more direct measure of Omaha area residents' attitudes toward change. When asked whether they agreed the Omaha area is good enough as it is without change, only 22.8 percent agreed or strongly agreed. This latter measure seems to indicate that

**Table 3. Responses to the Statement, "Most residents of the Omaha area are satisfied with things as they are."**

	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	17	2.3
Agree	342	45.6
Disagree	357	47.6
Strongly disagree	34	4.5
Total	750	100.0

**Table 4. Responses to the Statement, "The Omaha area is good enough as it is without trying to change it."**

	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	10	1.3
Agree	167	21.5
Disagree	524	67.6
Strongly disagree	74	9.5
Total	775	100.0*

\*Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

most area respondents feel that change is desirable.

It is interesting to note that while respondents say the Omaha area is an ideal place to live and that the future looks bright, majority support is not given to statements that the area is good enough as it is without trying to change it. While several possible explanations exist, it is very likely that residents know and expect that the area must change if the current quality of life is to be maintained. National studies of community attitudes have shown that, even when residents report overall satisfaction with their communities, they typically identify one or more areas for improvement and change. (See the 1993 report *Citizens Look at the Best and Worst of the Omaha Area*.)

Examination of differences across most population subgroups failed to indicate statistically significant variations in perception that the area is good enough as it is without change. The only exception was age. Among respondents aged 35 to 64, 78.8 percent disagreed with the statement and for those 65 and over, 67.9 percent disagreed.

Responses to the statement about residents' satisfaction with things as they are differed across race, income, gender, and education groups. Respondents who were black (74.0 percent), had a high school education or less (53.3 percent), had household incomes of less than \$30,000 a year (58.4 percent), or were female (56.5 percent) were more likely to disagree.

## Quality of Leadership

Two statements focused on the quality of governmental and corporate leaders. Summary information presented in table 5 indicates broad approval of the area's

leadership. However, almost one-fourth (24.2 percent) said they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that the Omaha area has good governmental leaders.

For the governmental leadership measure, no statistically significant differences were found across subgroups, with the exception of race and income. Those with household incomes of less than \$30,000 a year were less likely to agree with the statement. Black respondents were also less likely to agree that the area has good governmental leaders. Among Blacks, for example, 54.4 percent agreed or strongly agreed, while 77.4 percent of Whites agreed or strongly agreed.

Respondents were also asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with a statement that the Omaha area has good corporate leaders. Table 5 also summarizes information for this question and shows that almost nine out of ten respondents said they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. This is a somewhat better rating than for governmental leaders. As was the case for governmental leadership, black respondents were much less likely to agree that the Omaha area has good corporate leadership.

**Table 5. Responses to the Statement, "The Omaha area has good governmental leaders."**

	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	29	3.9
Agree	530	71.8
Disagree	159	21.5
Strongly disagree	20	2.7
Total	738	100.0*

\*Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

**Responses to the Statement, "The Omaha area has good corporate leaders."**

	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	81	11.1
Agree	568	77.6
Disagree	72	9.8
Strongly disagree	11	1.5
Total	732	100.0

## Retention of Younger Residents After High School

Respondents were asked if the Omaha area is a place where younger residents remain after high school. Table 6 shows that over 65 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. No statistically significant differences were found across subgroups, except for race. Two of five Blacks (40.4 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that younger residents remain after high school, while 66.8 percent of Whites agreed or strongly agreed.

**Table 6. Responses to the Statement, "Younger residents of the Omaha area tend to stay here after completing high school."**

	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	29	4.4
Agree	397	60.7
Disagree	216	33.0
Strongly disagree	12	1.8
Total	654	100.0*

\*Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

## Comparison with 1990 Results

Table 7 compares results of the 1990 and 1993 Omaha Conditions Survey. Three areas show significant change from 1990 to 1993: younger residents staying after high school, need for change in the Omaha area, and approval of corporate leadership.

Over seven percent more respondents in 1993 than in 1990 agreed that younger residents stay here after high school (7.4 percent). A higher percentage of respondents in 1993 agreed that the Omaha area is good enough without trying to change it (5.8 percent increase). Those who agreed that the Omaha area has good corporate leadership also increased (3.9 percent) in 1993. Although these changes may not be predictive of future trends, they do show increased optimism from 1990 to 1993.

### Endnote

1. This analysis reports differences in responses across various population sub-groups. Comparisons across racial/ethnic groups report differences between Whites and Blacks. Other racial/ethnic groups were included in the survey and are reported in metropolitan totals. However, the number of respondents in each of these groups was too small for separate analysis.

**Table 7. Comparison of 1990 and 1993 "Outlook on the Future" Data**

Statement About the Omaha Area	Percent agreeing or strongly agreeing with statement		Percent Difference 1990-1993
	1990	1993	
Future looks bright	89.3	90.5	1.2
An ideal place to live	84.9	85.6	0.7
Most residents are satisfied	45.1	47.9	2.8
It is good enough without trying to change it	17.0	22.8	5.8
Has good governmental leaders	77.5	75.7	-1.8
Has good corporate leaders	84.8	88.7	3.9
Younger residents stay here after high school	57.7	65.1	7.4

## About the Omaha Conditions Survey

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 1993 is the third in a series of studies conducted by the Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. This study is part of CPAR's initiative to monitor and improve the processes operating in Nebraska's urban areas by developing quality information for decision-makers.

This year's survey sampled adults in the Omaha metropolitan area and African-American adults in North Omaha. The metropolitan sample focused on regional development issues along with employment and labor force experiences. The North Omaha sample focused on neighborhood shopping patterns, employment experiences, and job training. In addition, both samples included questions to assess opinions on quality of life as well as demographic features.

A list of Omaha Conditions Survey: 1993 report topics appears on page 4.

## Key Findings

(Continued from page 1)

- Respondents from the balance of Douglas County (94.1 percent) and Washington and Cass counties (93.0 percent) were the most likely to agree that the area's corporate leaders were good. Although still high (85.2 percent), respondents east of 72nd Street were the least likely to agree that the area's corporate leadership is good.
- Respondents from the balance of Douglas County (57.2 percent) and from west of 72nd Street (53.5 percent) were the most likely to agree that they are satisfied with things as they are. These two areas also showed the highest agreement that the Omaha area is an ideal place to live (balance of Douglas County, 91.7 percent and west of 72nd Street, 90.4 percent).
- Respondents from the sector east of 72nd Street were far more likely to be dissatisfied with things as they are than other groups (61.6 percent). The next most dissatisfied group was from Washington and Cass counties (54.3 percent).
- Over ninety percent of respondents from the balance of Douglas County (91.7 percent) and west of 72nd Street (90.4 percent) agreed that the area was an ideal place to live. The sectors least likely to consider the area ideal were Sarpy County (83.1 percent) and Washington and Cass counties (71.4 percent).
- When asked whether younger residents of the Omaha area tend to stay here after high school, respondents from the balance of Douglas County (69.7 percent) were the most likely to agree or strongly agree while those from Washington and Cass counties were the least likely to agree (51.2 percent).

## Interested in Receiving Additional Reports from the Omaha Conditions Survey: 1993?

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#### North Omaha Sample

- Shopping and spending patterns
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