

Quality of Life

Southeast Alaskans Generally Enjoy Living Here

Quality of life is a subjective rating about satisfaction with the conditions under which one lives. Quality of life is used to evaluate the general well-being of individuals and societies. It should not be confused with the concept of standard of living, which is based primarily on income. Instead, when asked about their overall quality of life, people blend their general sense of not only wealth and employment, but also the surrounding environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time, safety, and social belonging.

The JEDC is not aware of any consolidated Quality of Life data for Southeast Alaska as a whole, however, from individual community plans done for Yakutat, Skagway, Wrangell, Klawock and Sitka,¹ common factors emerge for how residents define their quality of life and for what the community wishes to achieve to promote its community's vision. When thinking about their quality of life, Southeast Alaskans tend to emphasize their community's natural beauty, the small town atmosphere, access to fish and wildlife resources, and the ability have a good paying job.

Top factors listed in these Southeast Alaskan community plans can be reviewed in the table below.

Factors that Contribute to High Quality of Life from Individual Southeast Communities

	Sitka	Klawock	Wrangell	Skagway	Yakutat
Beauty of area		X	X	X	X
Personal safety			X	X	
Quality education for youth			X		
Clean air and water, healthy environment	X	X			
Small town close community atmosphere	X		X	X	X
People, family and friends				X	
Abundant recreational opportunities and activities			X	X	
Good jobs, healthy economy, ability to make a living	X		X	X	
Abundance of wild lands and natural resources that support local subsistence, fishing, hunting, and gathering. Access to subsistence foods	X	X			X
Affordable housing and cost of living for families	X				
Affordable quality health care	X				

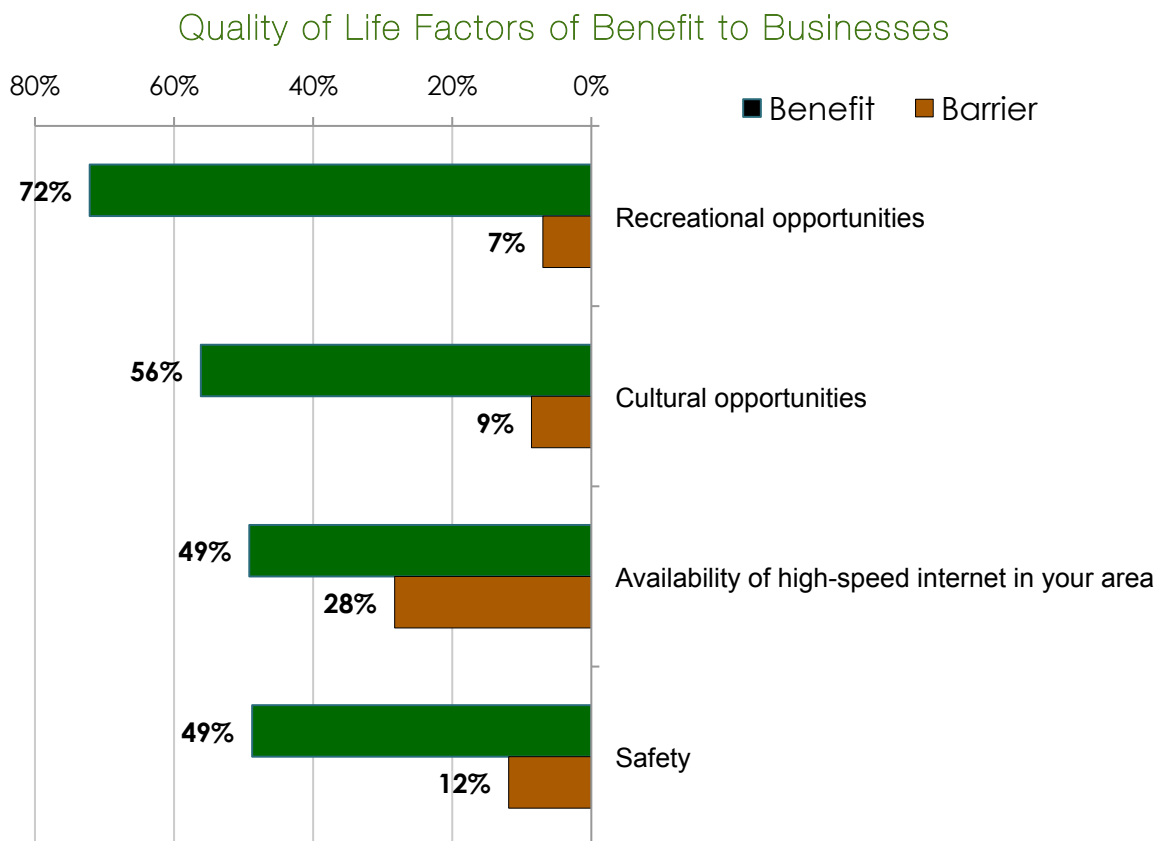
¹ Klawock Community Plan 2007, RAI Development Solutions; Skagway Comprehensive Plan 2009, Sheinberg Associates; Yakutat Comprehensive Plan 2010 Community Opinion Survey (2005), Sheinberg Associates; Sitka Comprehensive Plan 2007, City and Borough of Sitka; Wrangell Comprehensive Plan 2010, Sheinberg Associates

Given the links between quality of life, affordable housing and affordable health care, it is important to note that the lack of affordable housing for employees is cited by 56 percent of the online business survey responders and several of those interviewed as a significant or moderate obstacle to business. This is particularly an issue since it is young people, sometimes new to the region, who are often affected by lack of affordable housing; and they are often the source of innovation, new ideas and entrepreneurial energy.

Business Survey

The online business survey conducted for this Regional Asset Map report did not ask specific Quality of Life questions. However, it did ask businesses how significant 30 different factors were to operating their businesses in Southeast Alaska.

Only four factors were rated as providing a higher net benefit than net barrier; three of these were related to quality of life: the region's recreational opportunities, cultural opportunities, and safety. The fourth was access to high speed internet.



Source: JEDC Business Climate Survey

Quality of Life Strength/Constraints

Key strengths/opportunities

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Key constraints/obstacles

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