

## **Econ Brief!**

### **Measuring the Quality of Life in Kern County**

In the field of development economics, the quality of human life is measured by a composite index of economic and social indicators. The quality of life in Kern County is measured as a composite index of twenty economic, social, and environmental indicators:

**Per Capita Income:** Personal income per person in constant dollars

**Economic Growth:** Percentage growth rate of total personal income

**Housing Price:** Median sales price of all single-family homes in constant dollars

**Taxable Sales:** Total taxable transactions in constant dollars

**Labor Force Growth:** Percentage growth rate of the labor force

**Nonfarm Employment Growth:** Percentage growth rate of nonfarm employment

**Unemployment Rate:** Average annual rate of civilian unemployment

**Class Size:** The pupil-to-teacher ratio

**College Preparation:** Total score on the Scholastic Aptitude Test

**Family Environment:** Percentage of mothers with “some” college education

**Language Proficiency:** Enrollments with limited English proficiency per 10,000 students

**Medical Services:** Number of physicians per 10,000 persons

**Infant Survival:** Percentage of live births reaching first birthday

**Drug Use:** Number of admissions for drug and alcohol treatment per 10,000 persons

**Public Assistance:** Family assistance per capita in constant dollars

**Public Health:** Percentage of population eligible for Medi-Cal

**Crime Rate:** The FBI crime index

**Air quality:** Number of days that the ozone level exceeds the federal 8-hour standard

**Public Safety:** Expenditures on police and fire protection per capita in constant dollars

**Road conditions:** Average number of accidents per year divided by the segment length in miles

The year 2000 is selected as the *base-year*, when the index value equals 100. For the ensuing years, the base-year value is adjusted by the percentage *change* relative to 2000. Kern County’s Quality of Life Index rose from 107 in 2003 to 110 in 2005. It then ascended gradually to 106 in 2007. The index is expected to remain flat in 2008.

Better quality of life will require greater investment in air quality, public safety, workforce preparation, job creation, family environment, educational achievement, health-care services, and road conditions.

