

Ventura County Consumer Sentiment Survey – 2025 Report

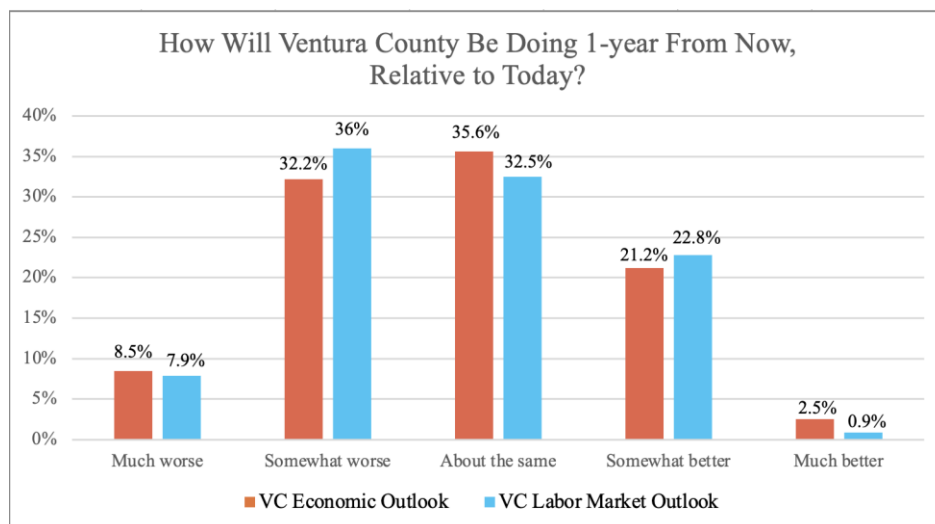
July 2025

Overview

As a service to our community, during the month of June 2025, students at CSU Channel Islands Martin V. Smith School of Business and Economics designed and administered a first-of-its-kind Consumer Sentiment Survey across Ventura County (VC): **The Ventura County Consumer Sentiment Survey**. This initiative aimed to gauge residents' perceptions about the current and future state of the local economy, labor market, housing conditions, and broader economic well-being in this area. The insights collected offer a view into the economic sentiment of our region and shed light on how various social, environmental, and technological factors are influencing community perspectives.

Overall Economic Outlook

Respondents' outlook on the fate of the Ventura County economy over the next year reflects moderate optimism tempered by significant caution. A higher percentage of respondents predicted a slight deterioration of economic conditions (32%) compared to those anticipating a slight improvement (21%). Only 11% held extreme opinions – 2.5% felt the economy would become "much better," while 8.5% thought it would get "much worse." A substantial portion (35.6%) expected conditions to remain the same. Views regarding the Ventura County labor market show a similar pattern.



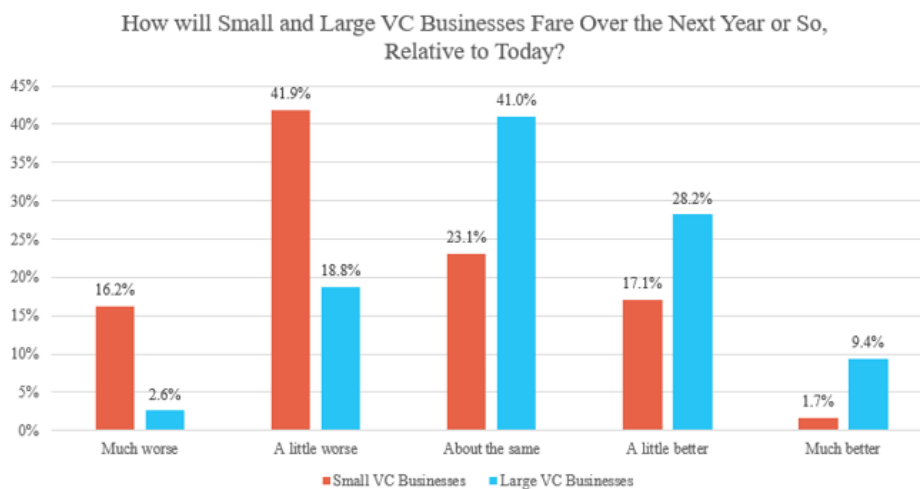
Personal vs. Regional Economic Assessment

An important finding from the survey was that personal financial hardships did not correlate strongly with respondents' assessments of the county's broader economic conditions. For example, there was no statistically significant relationship between the difficulty of affording a \$1,000 emergency expense and perceptions of the local economy. This suggests that Ventura

County residents are capable of distinguishing their financial circumstances from the general economic climate.

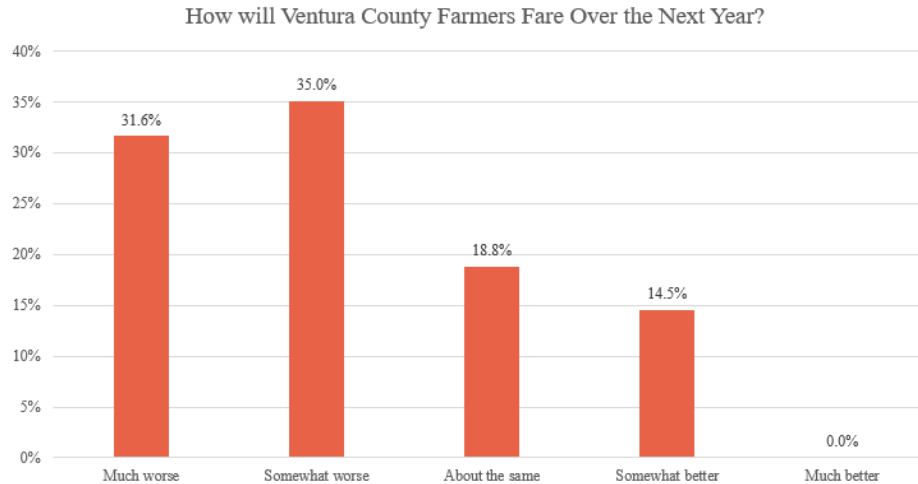
Business Sentiment

While respondents were moderately concerned about the general economy, their predictions about the fate of local businesses over the coming year varied significantly based on business size. Small businesses were seen as particularly vulnerable to the current economic environment, with many respondents expressing worry for smaller VC firms in the current environment. In contrast, there was less concern about large businesses, which were perceived as more resilient to economic conditions.



Agricultural Sector Outlook

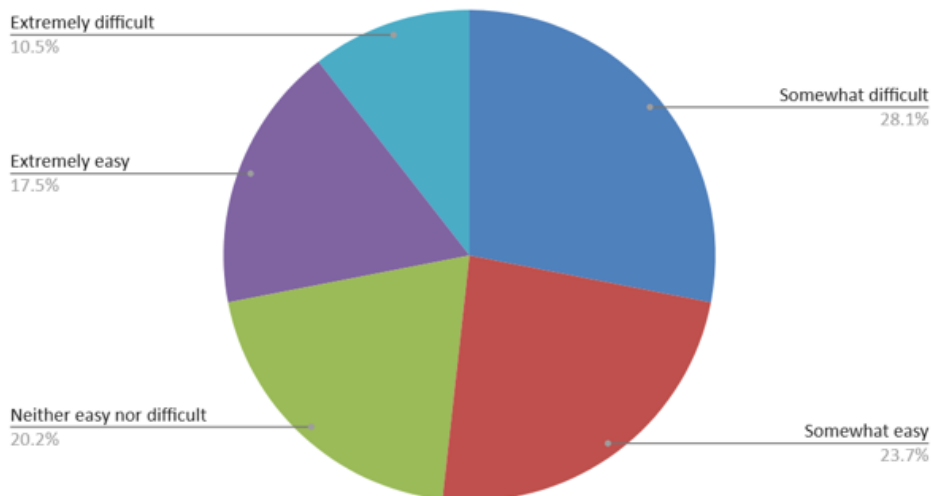
Sentiment regarding the local farming economy was notably pessimistic. No respondent believed that conditions for farmers would get "a lot better." Instead, 67% anticipated a decline, with 35% expecting conditions to get "a little worse" and a sizeable 32% predicting they would get "a lot worse." Only 14.5% foresaw any improvement at all. This finding underscores the challenges faced by VC's agricultural community, potentially influenced by regulatory pressures, federal government interventions on the supply of agricultural labor, retaliatory tariffs aimed at agriculture, environmental conditions, and market forces.

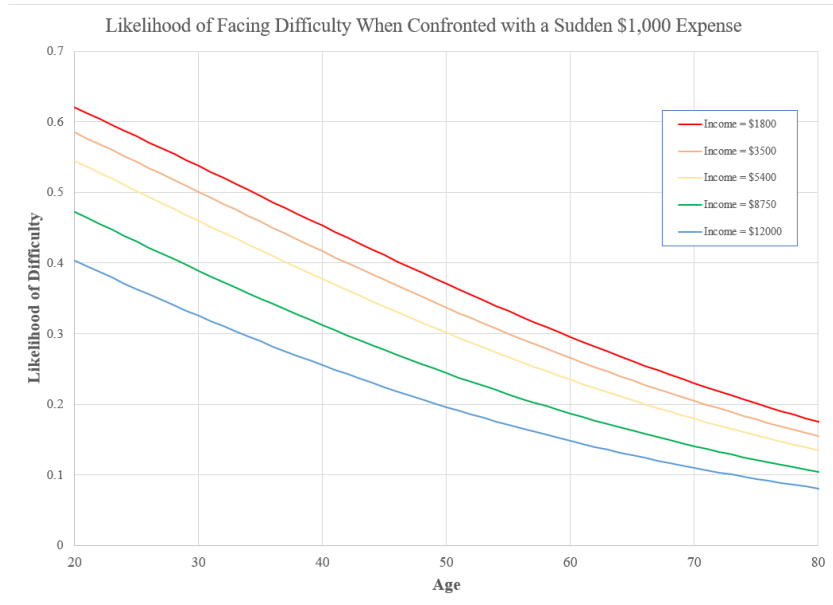


Financial Resilience

Over one-third (38.6%) of survey respondents reported that they would find it difficult or extremely difficult to cover a sudden \$1,000 expense. This statistic is a key indicator of financial fragility within the community. Notably, younger respondents were more likely to report difficulty with such an expense, even after controlling for income, indicating that age-specific financial insecurities (such as the housing being less affordable for younger people faced with higher home prices and higher interest rates) are important.

How difficult would it be to pay an unexpected \$1,000 expense?

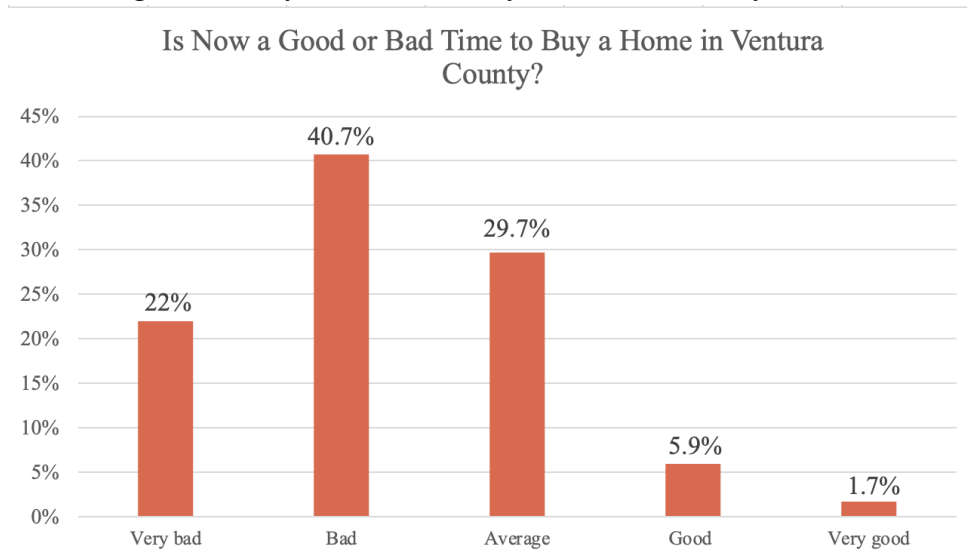




Income levels reflect the 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th percentiles of monthly incomes reported by respondents.

Housing Market Sentiment

There is significant concern about housing affordability. A substantial majority (62.71%) of respondents believe that now is a bad or very bad time to purchase a home. Only 7% of respondents felt it was a good or very good time to buy. These attitudes reflect the broader challenges of housing availability and affordability in Ventura County.

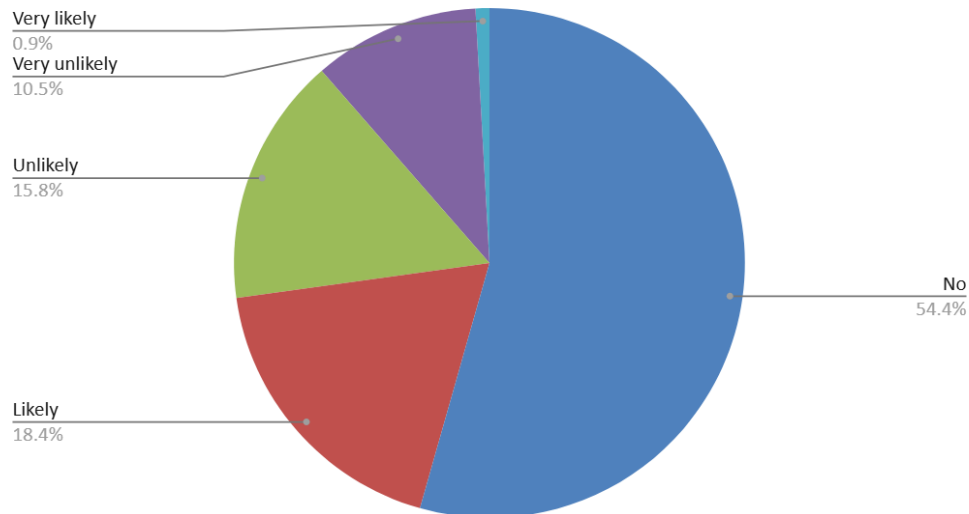


Intentions to Move

Economic pressures are prompting many to consider leaving the region. A significant 45.6% of respondents have contemplated moving out of VC for economic reasons. Startlingly, among this group, 42.3% stated they were likely or very likely to move within the next year. That means approximately 19.3% of total respondents are seriously considering relocating for economic

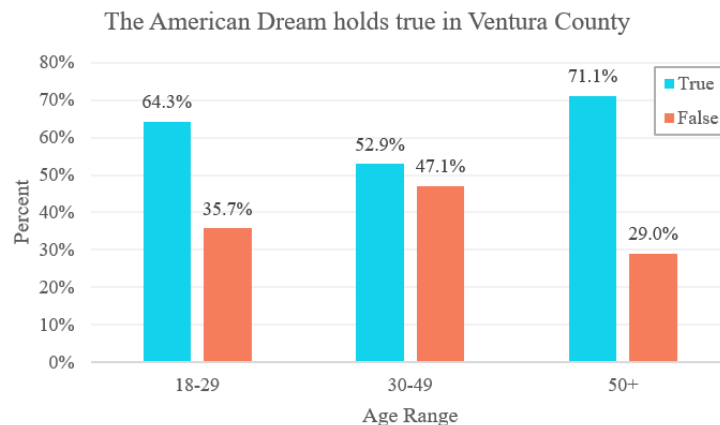
reasons, highlighting a potential out-migration trend that could have long-term implications for the region.

Have you considered moving out of VC, if so how likely?



Beliefs About Upward Mobility

The survey asked residents whether they believed that working hard would allow someone living in Ventura County to get ahead. Two-thirds agreed with this statement, while one-third disagreed. This split suggests a degree of skepticism about the accessibility of the American Dream in Ventura County. Notably, respondents at “peak-career” ages (30-49) were least likely to agree with this statement.

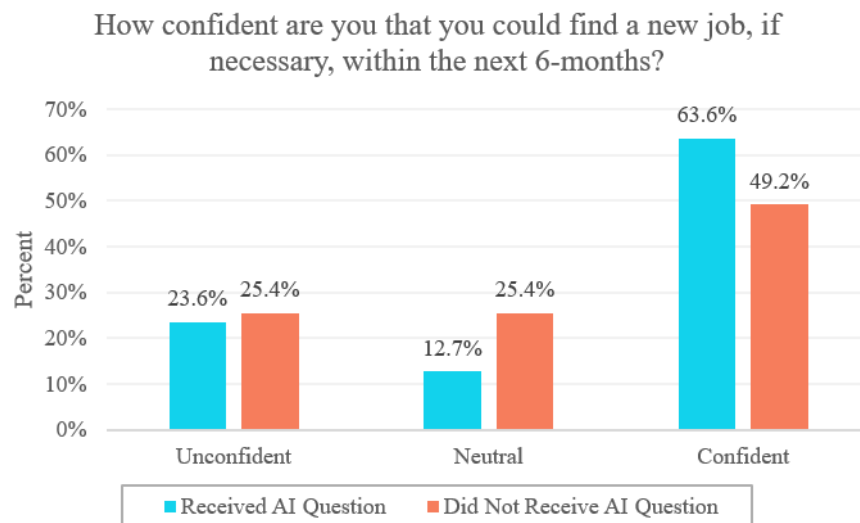


Impact of Wildfires

Environmental concerns remain top of mind for many residents. A significant 25.4% of respondents reported experiencing "significant anxiety" due to recent wildfires. Additionally, 19.2% made purchases (such as emergency supplies or air purifiers) in response to fire-related concerns. These responses demonstrate how natural disasters continue to affect both mental health and consumer behavior in the county.

Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Half of survey respondents were randomly asked to consider the likelihood that AI will displace workers before being asked how confident they are that they could find a new job within 6-months if necessary (the other half were simply asked how confident they are they could find a new job without being asked about AI). Interestingly, those who were first asked to contemplate the possible labor-market disruption of AI expressed greater confidence in their future employment prospects, suggesting that AI may not be seen as a threat to existing opportunities, but rather an opportunity for future opportunities.



Conclusion

The 2025 Ventura County Consumer Sentiment Survey presents a picture of a community facing significant economic, environmental, and social challenges. While many residents are experiencing financial strain and housing pressures, they still demonstrate informed and moderate views on the region's overall economic trajectory. There is particular concern for the future of small businesses and local agriculture, and a growing number of residents are contemplating relocation. At the same time, many continue to believe in the value of hard work, and there is cautious optimism about the potential of technology. We hope these insights can provide guidance for policymakers, business leaders, and community advocates aiming to support the well-being of Ventura County's residents.