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Community Life in Rural Nebraska: Trends and Comparisons

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THE CENTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT

A Working Paper*

Community Life in Rural Nebraska: Trends and Comparisons

1998 Nebraska Rural Poll Results

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary **i**

Introduction **1**

The Community and Its Attributes in 1998 **2**

Figure 1. My Community Has Changed For The.. 3

Figure 2. Perceptions of Community Change by Community Size 3

Figure 3. Regions of Nebraska 4

Figure 4. Respondents Ratings' of Community Supportiveness by Age 5

Figure 5. Ratings of Community Participation and Tolerance 6

Figure 6. Differences of Opinion Aren't Allowed in Community by Occupation 7

Figure 7. Ten Services and Amenities With Greatest Dissatisfaction 8

Figure 8. Satisfaction with Air Service by Region 9

Figure 9. Planning to Move from Community by Age 11

Preferred Community Size and Location in 1998 **11**

Figure 10. Preferred Community Size 12

Figure 11. Location Preference with Regards to a Larger City by Region 13

Table 1. Prediction of Preferred Community Size by Current Community Attributes .. 15

Trends in Community Ratings, 1996 - 1998 **16**

Figure 12. Community Change, 1996 - 1998 16

Table 2. Proportion of Respondents "Very Satisfied" with Each Service, 1997 - 1998 17

Conclusion **18**

List of Appendix Tables

Appendix Table 1. Demographic Profile of Rural Poll Respondents Compared to 1990
Census 20

Appendix Table 2. Perceptions of Community Change by Community Size, Region and
Individual Attributes, 1998 21

Appendix Table 3. Measures of Community Attributes in Relation to Community Size, Region
and Individual Attributes, 1998 23

Appendix Table 4. Community Characteristics by Community Size, Region and Individual
Attributes, 1998 25

Appendix Table 5. Level of Satisfaction with Community Services and Amenities, 1998 27

Appendix Table 6. Measures of Satisfaction with Ten Services and Amenities in Relation to
Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes, 1998 28

Appendix Table 7. Plans to Leave Community by Community Size, Region and Individual
Attributes, 1998 31

Appendix Table 8. Optimum Community Size and Location by Current Community Size,
Region and Individual Attributes, 1998 33

Executive Summary

Nebraska's rural communities have undergone many changes in recent years. The development of a global economy and pressures to consolidate services and government offices are some of the challenges that rural communities are currently facing. How have these changes affected rural Nebraskans' perceptions of their communities? Do their perceptions differ by the size of their community, the region in which they live, or by their occupation?

This report details results of 4,196 responses to the 1998 Nebraska Rural Poll, the third annual effort to take the pulse of rural Nebraskans. Respondents were asked a series of questions about their community and their preferred community size. Trends are examined by comparing data from the two previous polls to this year's results. In addition, comparisons are made among different subgroups of the respondents, e.g., comparisons by age, occupation, income, etc. Based on these analyses, some key findings emerged:

- ***Most rural Nebraskans believe their community has either stayed the same or changed for the better during the past year.*** Over one-half (53%) of the respondents felt their community had stayed the same during the past year and thirty-one percent believed it had changed for the better. Only seventeen percent felt their community had changed for the worse.
- ***The proportion of rural Nebraskans who said their community has changed for the worse has decreased since 1996; however, the proportion stating their community has changed for the better has also decreased.*** Thirty-eight percent of the 1996 respondents felt their community had stayed the same, while fifty-three percent of the 1998 respondents shared this opinion.
- ***Overall, rural communities are described as friendly, trusting, and supportive.*** Seventy-two percent of the respondents felt their community was friendly and sixty-three percent believed their community was both trusting and supportive.
- ***The majority of rural Nebraskans feel that everyone is allowed to contribute to governmental affairs in their community and disagree that differences of opinion on public issues are avoided.*** Seventy-five percent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that most everyone in their community is allowed to contribute to local governmental affairs if they want to. Sixty-two percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that differences of opinion on public issues are avoided at all costs in their community.
- ***Over one-third of rural Nebraskans are dissatisfied with the following services and amenities in their community: entertainment, retail shopping, restaurants, and streets.*** Services viewed most positively included library services, parks and recreation, education (K - 12), and basic medical care services.

- ***Respondents living in the Panhandle were much more likely than respondents in other regions to be dissatisfied with air service.*** Fifty-three percent of respondents in this region were very or somewhat dissatisfied with air service, compared to only fifteen percent of the respondents in the Southeast region.
- ***Only three percent of rural Nebraskans are planning to leave their community in the next year.*** Younger respondents, those living in the larger communities, and manual laborers were the respondents most likely to be planning to move. Of those planning to move, sixty-two percent planned to stay in Nebraska.
- ***Rural Nebraskans tend to prefer the following community sizes (ranked by proportion selecting each): living in the country, a smaller city (10,000 to 49,999 in population), and a town/village 1,000 to 4,999 in population.*** Within these general preferences there was a marked tendency for rural residents in smaller towns to prefer smaller rural towns, for those living in larger rural towns to prefer larger towns, etc. The least preferred community size was a large city. Only one percent of rural Nebraskans would prefer to live in a place with population in excess of 500,000.
- ***A majority of rural Nebraskans would prefer to live within 30 miles of a larger city.*** Sixty-six percent of the respondents that chose a preferred community size less than 50,000 would like that place to be within 30 miles of a large or medium-sized city.
- ***Current residence, satisfaction with health services, satisfaction with consumer services, community social attributes, satisfaction with transportation services and satisfaction with environmental services influence preferred community size.*** Respondents largely prefer their current community size. In addition, respondents satisfied with health and environmental services, those dissatisfied with transportation and consumer services, and respondents rating their communities as unfriendly, distrustful and hostile tend to prefer larger community sizes.

Introduction

Communities in rural Nebraska have undergone many changes in recent years. The development of a global economy, along with improvements in transportation and communication, have allowed for the separation of residence and place of employment. People no longer need to work in the same town in which they live. For example, one-third of Nebraskans living in non-metropolitan counties work in a different community than the one in which they live.¹

This means that people can live in smaller communities to experience certain quality of life benefits attributed to a rural lifestyle. However, residents can also more easily go outside the community for goods and services, recreation or employment. Thus, communities can be forced to provide services for residents whose employment does not contribute to its tax base.

In addition, rural communities are also facing pressures to consolidate many of their services and government offices to facilitate tax relief for the state's residents. All of these changes have the potential to impact communities and community life.

Given these changes, how do rural Nebraskans rate their community? Do they think their community has changed for the better or worse during the past year? Are rural Nebraskans satisfied with the services and amenities their community provides? What is the preferred size of community for

rural residents? And, how do all of these community ratings differ by community size, region, occupation or age?

This paper provides a detailed analysis of these questions. We also examine changes over time of rural Nebraskans' perceptions of their community. The 1998 Nebraska Rural Poll is the third annual effort to take the pulse of rural Nebraskans. Respondents were asked a series of questions about certain attributes of their community, their satisfaction with the services and amenities it provides, their preferred community size and plans to leave or stay in their community. Trends will be examined by comparing data from the two previous polls to this year's results.

Methodology and Respondent Profile

This scientific study is based on 4,196 responses from Nebraskans living in non-metropolitan counties in the state. A self-administered questionnaire was mailed to approximately 6,500 randomly selected households. Metropolitan counties not included in the sample were Cass, Dakota, Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy and Washington. All of the other 87 counties in the state were sampled. The 14 page questionnaire included questions pertaining to well-being, community, work, taxes and school financing, and pork production. This paper reports only results from the community portion of the survey. The poll's margin of error is plus or minus 3 percent.

A 65% response rate was achieved using the total design method (Dillman, 1978). The sequence of steps used were:

1. A pre-notification letter was sent requesting participation in the study.

¹ Source: 1990 Census, U.S. Bureau of the Census

2. The questionnaire was mailed with an informal letter (signed by the project director) seven days later.
3. A reminder postcard was sent to the entire sample approximately seven days after the questionnaire had been sent.
4. Those who had not yet responded within approximately 14 days of the original mailing were sent a replacement questionnaire.

The average respondent was 51 years of age. Ninety-five percent were married (Appendix Table 1²) and fifty percent lived in a town or village. On average, respondents had lived in their current town or village 29 years and had lived in Nebraska 44 years. Seventy-two percent were living in or near towns or villages with populations less than 5,000.

Fifty percent of the respondents reported their approximate household income from all sources, before taxes, for 1997 was below \$40,000. Thirty-two percent reported incomes of at least \$50,000. Ninety-five percent had attained at least a high school diploma.

Twenty-nine percent of the respondents report working in a professional/technical or administrative occupation. Sixteen percent indicated they were farmers or ranchers. Twenty-five percent reported their spouses or partners being in professional/technical or

administrative occupations, while nineteen percent of the spouses/partners were in farming or ranching.

Organization of Report

This particular report focuses on two aspects of community: ratings of the community and its attributes, as assessed by five questions (respondents' assessments of change in their community, assessments of the social dimension of their community, ratings of participation and tolerance of community residents, evaluations of public service and community amenities, and plans to leave the community); and respondents' preferred community size and location. The data were collected in a manner that allows for comparisons among different subgroups of the respondents, e.g., comparisons by age, occupation, region, etc. Finally, as was noted earlier, data for some of these questions are available for the past two or three years. Hence, this report is divided into three sections:

1. General rating of the community and its attributes in 1998 by subgroups of respondents.
2. Preferred community size and location in 1998 by subgroups of respondents.
3. Trends in community ratings during the past years.

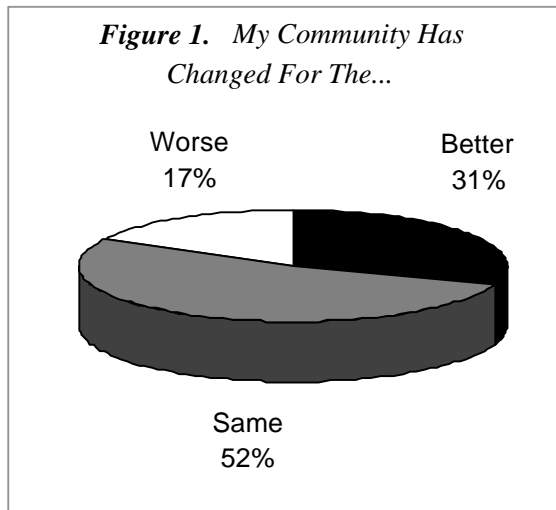
The Community and Its Attributes in 1998

In this section, 1998 data on respondents' evaluations of their communities and their attributes are first summarized and then examined in terms of any differences that may exist depending upon size of the respondent's community, region, income, age, gender, education and occupation.

² Appendix Table 1 also includes demographic data from previous rural polls, as well as similar data based on the entire non-metropolitan population of Nebraska (using 1990 U.S. Census data).

Community Change

To examine respondents' perceptions of how their community has changed, they were asked the following question, "Communities across the nation are undergoing change. When you think about this past year, would you say...My community has changed for the..." (Answer categories were better, same or worse.) Over one-half (53%) of the respondents felt their community had stayed the same during the past year, thirty-one percent felt it had changed for the better, and seventeen percent believed it had changed for the worse (Figure 1).



When examining various demographic subgroups, perceptions of the change in their community differed by community size, region, household income, education and occupation (Appendix Table 2).

Respondents living in relatively larger communities were more likely than those living in smaller communities to believe their community has changed for the better during the past year. Forty-two percent of the

respondents living in or near communities with populations ranging from 5,000 to 9,999 believed their community has changed for the better; only eleven percent of the respondents in or near communities with less than 100 people shared this opinion (Figure 2).

When examining regional differences, respondents in the Panhandle were the most likely of all the regional groups to feel their community had changed for the better (see Figure 3 for counties included in each region). Thirty-seven percent of the respondents in this region felt their community had changed for the better in the past year, compared to twenty-seven percent of the respondents in the Southeast region.

Other groups that were more likely to think

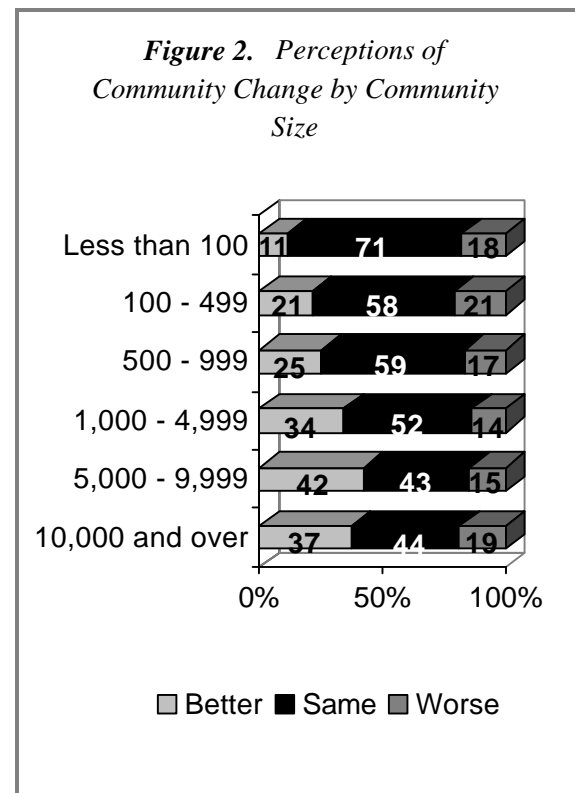
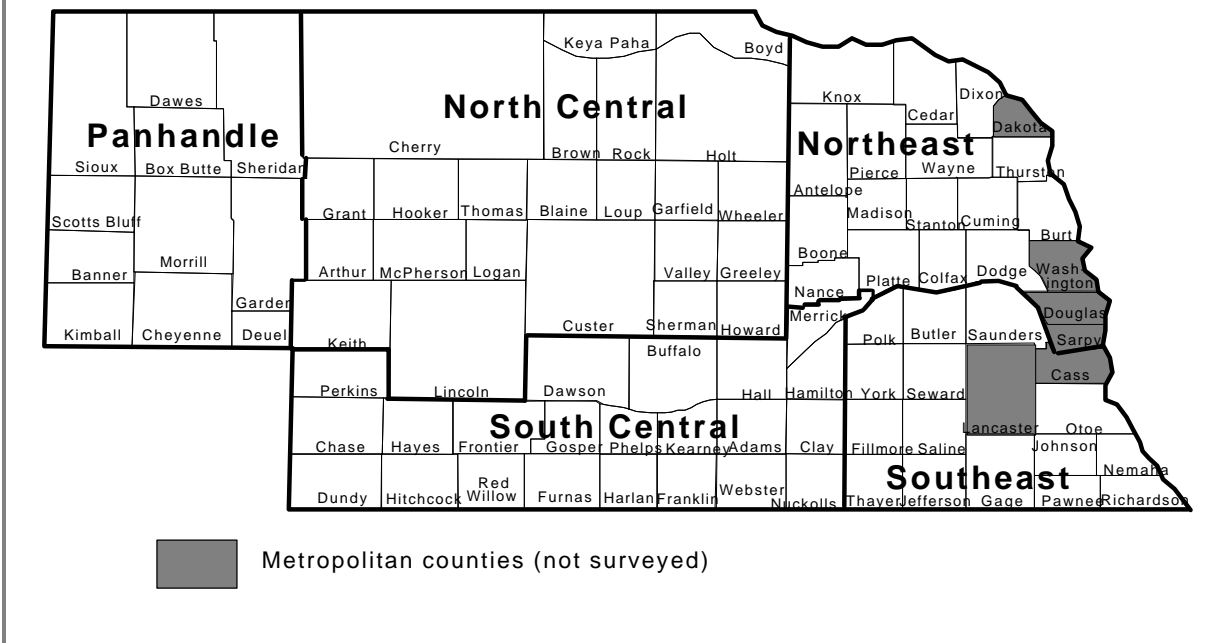


Figure 3. Regions of Nebraska



their community had changed for the better include: respondents with higher incomes, those with higher educational levels, and those with administrative support or service occupations.

Community Social Dimensions

Respondents were asked if they would describe their communities as friendly or unfriendly, trusting or distrusting, and supportive or hostile. For each of these three dimensions, respondents were asked to rate their community using a seven-point scale between each pair of contrasting views. Overall, respondents’ rated their community as friendly (72%), trusting

(63%) and supportive (63%).³

Respondents’ ratings of their community on these dimensions differed by community size, region, age, education and occupation (Appendix Table 3). Respondents living in communities with populations ranging from 100 to 999 were more likely than those living in other sized communities to view their community as trusting and supportive. As an example, approximately sixty-six percent of respondents living in communities of this size rated their communities as trusting, while

³ The responses on the 7-point scale were converted to percentages as follows: values of 1, 2, and 3 were categorized as friendly, trusting, and supportive; values of 5, 6, and 7 were categorized as unfriendly, distrusting, and hostile; and a value of 4 was categorized as no opinion.

only fifty-three percent of respondents living in communities with populations greater than 10,000 said their community was trusting.

When comparing age subgroups, respondents age 65 and older were more likely than younger respondents to say their community was friendly, trusting and supportive. For example, seventy-three percent of the respondents age 65 and older viewed their community as supportive; however, only fifty-seven percent of the respondents between the ages of 40 and 49 shared this belief (Figure 4).

Manual and skilled laborers were the occupation subgroups *less* likely to rate their community as friendly, trusting and supportive. For example, seventy-five percent of the respondents with sales occupations viewed their community as

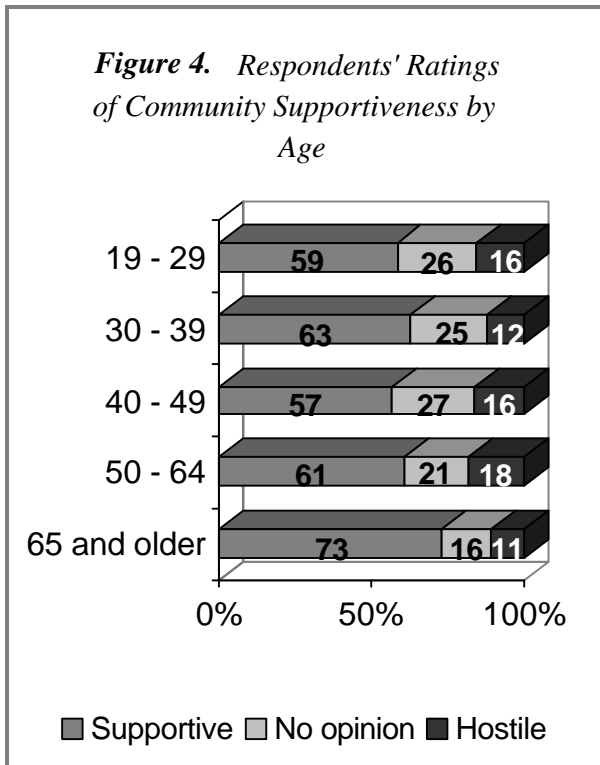
friendly; but, only fifty-six percent of the manual laborers viewed their community as friendly.

Respondents with less than a 9th grade education were more likely than the other education subgroups to view their community as friendly, trusting, and supportive. The respondents living in the North Central region were more likely than those living in other regions to view their community as trusting and supportive.

Community Participation and Tolerance

Respondents were also asked to rate their community on opportunities for civic participation, acceptance of new residents in leadership roles and tolerance of differences of opinion. The specific question asked respondents to, “Rate your community as a place to live by indicating whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.” The three statements were as follows: Most everyone in my community is allowed to contribute to local governmental affairs if they want to. Residents in my community are receptive to new residents taking leadership positions. Differences of opinion on public issues are avoided at all costs in my community. Respondents’ used a five-point scale to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statements, with 1 indicating “strongly agree” and 5 being “strongly disagree.”

Seventy-five percent either strongly agreed or agreed that most everyone is allowed to contribute to governmental affairs, forty-three percent believed that residents were receptive to new residents taking leadership roles, and sixty-two percent strongly disagreed or disagreed that differences of



opinion on public issues are avoided in the community (Figure 5). Differences in respondents' opinions of their community were detected when analyzing results by community size, region, household income, age, gender, education and occupation (Appendix Table 4).

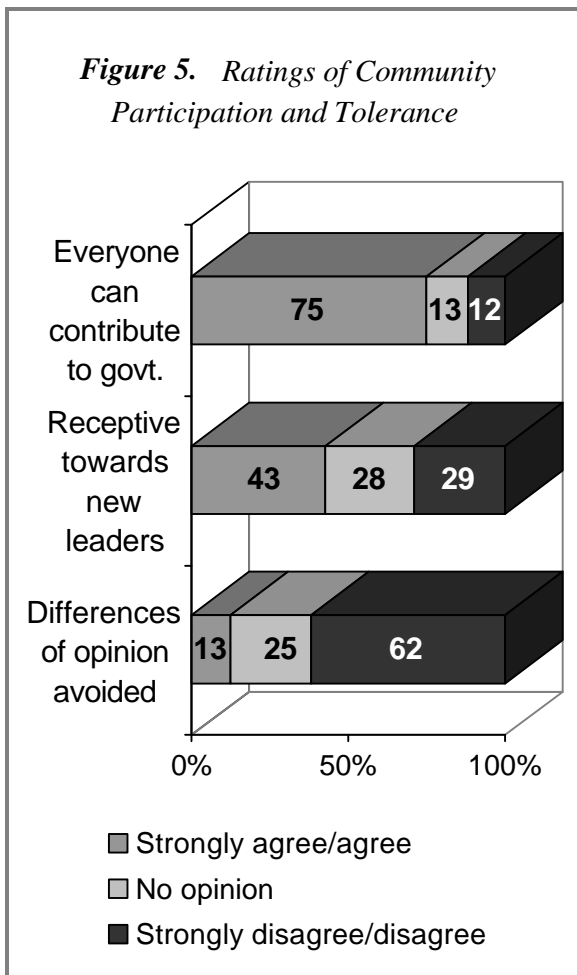
Respondents living in smaller communities were more likely than those living in larger communities to strongly agree or agree that most everyone can participate in local government. Approximately eighty-one percent of the respondents living in communities with less than 500 people strongly agreed or agreed with the statement,

compared to sixty-six percent of the respondents living in communities with populations greater than 10,000. However, respondents living in the smallest communities (less than 100 people) were more likely than those living in larger communities to agree that differences of opinion are avoided at all costs there. Twenty percent of the respondents in these smaller communities strongly agreed or agreed that "differences of opinion on public issues are avoided at all costs in my community," compared to nine percent of the respondents living in communities with populations ranging from 5,000 to 9,999.

Regional differences emerged in response to the same question (regarding tolerance of differences of opinion). Respondents living in the Panhandle were more likely than the other regional groups to strongly disagree or disagree that differences of opinion are avoided in their community.

No distinct pattern emerged when examining income differences for the first two statements. However, respondents with higher income levels were more likely than those with lower income levels to strongly disagree or disagree that differences of opinion on public issues are avoided at all costs in their community.

When examining age groups, older respondents were more likely than the other age groups to strongly agree or agree with all three statements. For example, fifty-five percent of the respondents age 65 and older strongly agreed or agreed that residents are receptive to new residents taking leadership positions. However, only thirty percent of the respondents age 19 to 29 agreed with the statement.



Males were more likely than females to strongly disagree or disagree that most everyone is allowed to contribute to governmental affairs. They were also more likely to strongly agree or agree that differences of opinion on public issues are avoided in their community.

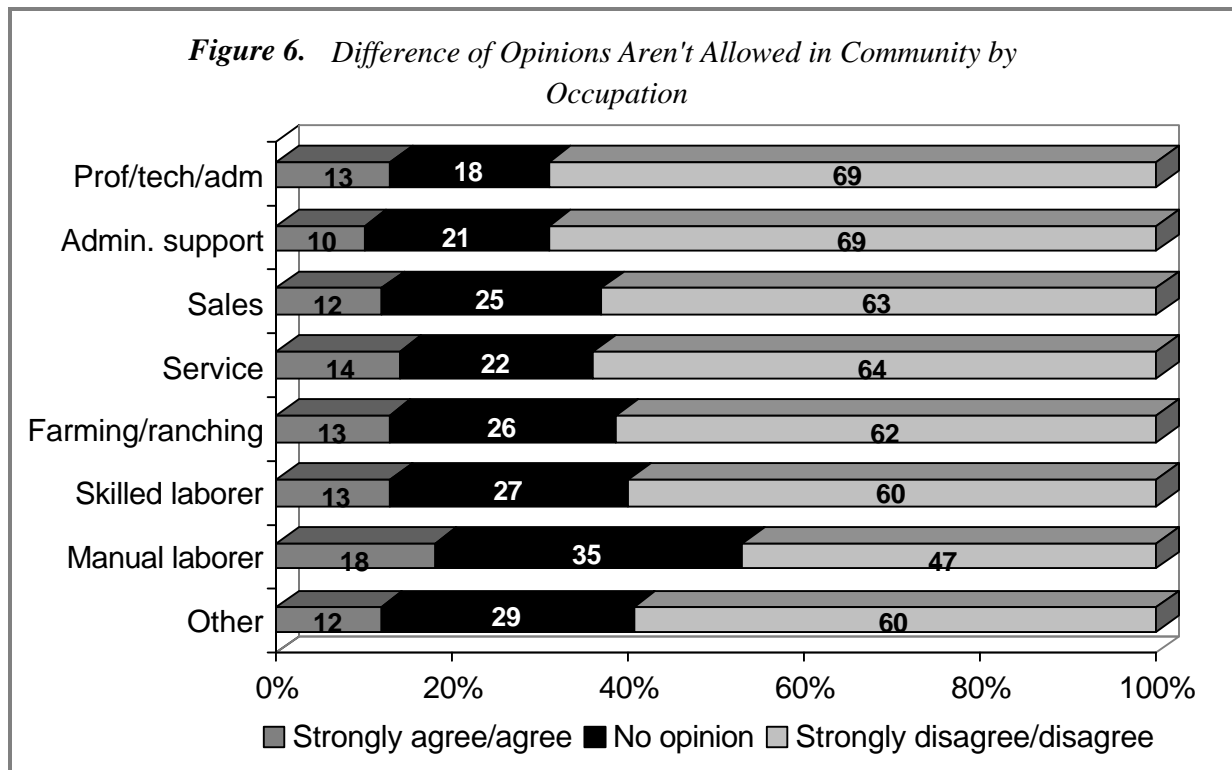
Farmers/ranchers and respondents with professional, technical or administrative occupations were more likely than the other occupation subgroups to strongly agree or agree that most everyone is allowed to contribute to government affairs in their community. Manual laborers were the least likely of the occupation groups to strongly disagree or disagree that differences of opinion on public issues are avoided in their community. Only forty-seven percent of the manual laborers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, compared to

sixty-nine percent of the respondents with professional or administrative support occupations (Figure 6).

Satisfaction with Community Services and Amenities

People in rural areas often feel they are disadvantaged relative to their urban counterparts when it comes to services and amenities. To gauge satisfaction levels with services and amenities, respondents were given a list of 25 services and amenities and were asked how satisfied they were with each, taking into consideration availability, cost and quality.

The ten services/amenities with the highest combined percentage of “very dissatisfied” or “somewhat dissatisfied” responses are shown in Figure 7. Respondents were most

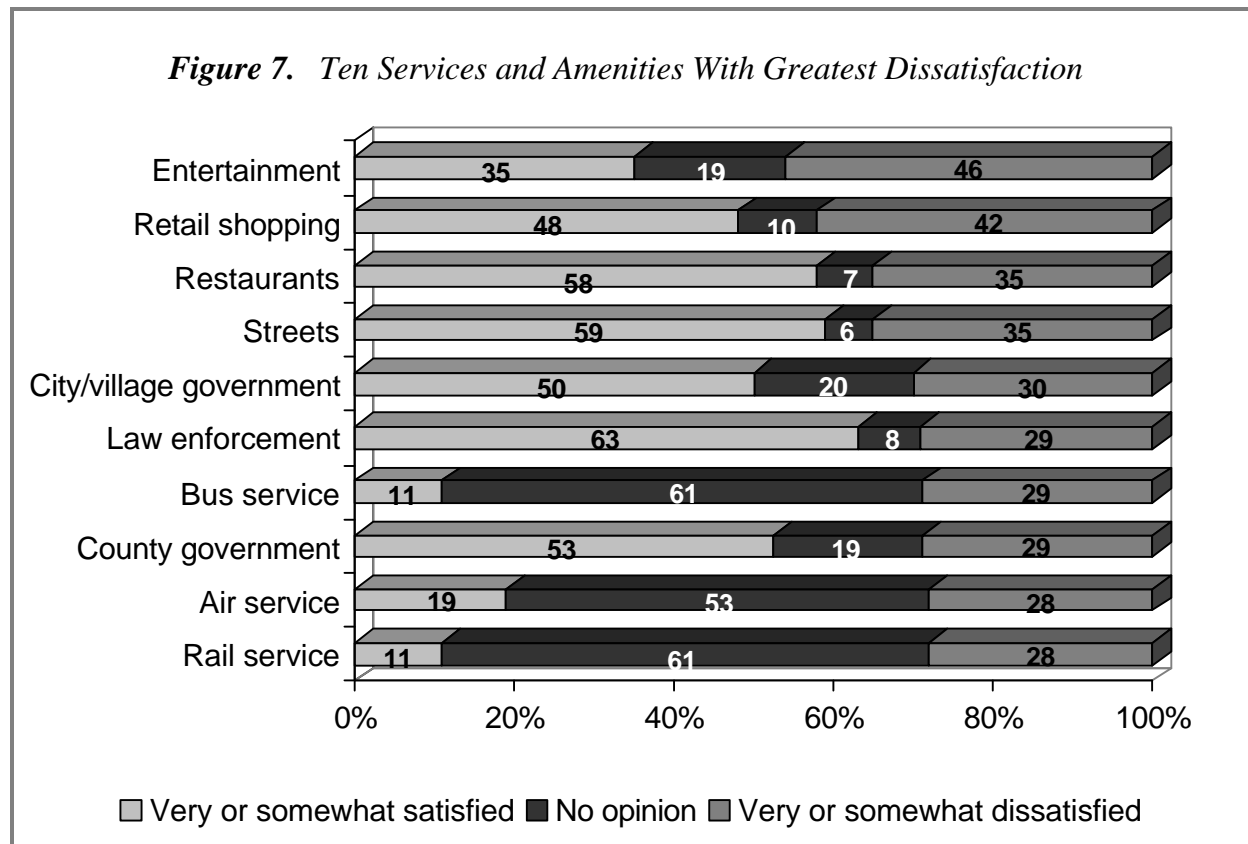


dissatisfied with entertainment (46%), retail shopping (42%), restaurants (35%) and streets (35%). The four services/amenities respondents were most satisfied with (determined by combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied” responses) were library services (78%), parks and recreation (77%), education (K-12) (74%), and basic medical care services (73%) (Appendix Table 5).

The ten services with the highest combined percentage of “very dissatisfied” or “somewhat dissatisfied” responses were then analyzed by community size, region and individual attributes (Appendix Table 6). Dissatisfaction with streets differed by community size, region, age, and occupation. Respondents living in communities with

populations greater than 5,000 were more likely than respondents living in smaller communities to be very or somewhat dissatisfied with streets. The regional group most likely to be dissatisfied were respondents living in the Northeast region of the state. Other groups more likely to be dissatisfied with streets include younger respondents (age 19 - 39) and laborers.

Dissatisfaction with law enforcement differed by community size, region, gender, education and occupation. Dissatisfaction with law enforcement decreased as community size increased. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents living in communities with less than 500 people expressed dissatisfaction with law enforcement, compared to twenty-one



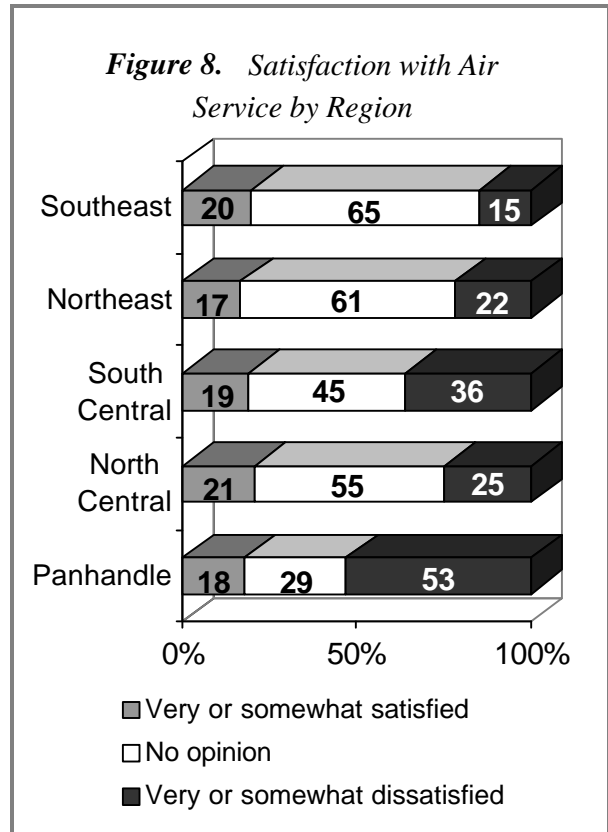
percent of respondents living in communities with populations greater than 5,000. Respondents in the North Central region were more likely than the other regional groups to be very or somewhat dissatisfied with law enforcement. Females, respondents with a high school education or less, and laborers were the other groups most dissatisfied with law enforcement.

Community size, region and all five individual attributes were related to respondents' dissatisfaction with air service. Respondents living in larger communities were more likely than those living in smaller communities to be dissatisfied with air service.

When examining regional differences, the respondents living in the Panhandle were much more likely than the other regional groups to be dissatisfied with air service. Fifty-three percent of the Panhandle residents were very or somewhat dissatisfied with air service, compared to only fifteen percent of the Southeast residents (Figure 8).

Other groups most dissatisfied with air service include: those with higher incomes, respondents age 40 to 64, males, those with higher educational levels and respondents with professional occupations.

Many of these same groups were also those most dissatisfied with bus service. Respondents living in larger communities, those living in the Panhandle, respondents age 65 and older, males and those with professional occupations were the groups most likely to be dissatisfied with bus service in their community. These same groups were more likely to be dissatisfied with rail service, with the exception of the occupation



groups. Farmers and ranchers were the occupation subgroup most likely to be dissatisfied with rail service.

Respondents living in communities with populations ranging from 500 to 4,999 were more likely than those living in other sized communities to be dissatisfied with retail shopping, restaurants and entertainment. Respondents living in smaller communities (with populations less than 500) were the least likely of the community size groups to be dissatisfied with restaurants and entertainment.

Also, those with higher income levels, the younger respondents, females, those with higher educational levels and respondents with professional occupations were the

groups most likely to be dissatisfied with these three services. When examining regional differences, respondents in the Northeast were more likely than the other regional groups to be dissatisfied with retail shopping and entertainment; however, respondents in the Southeast were the regional group most likely to be dissatisfied with restaurants.

Dissatisfaction with both county and city/village government was higher for respondents living in larger communities, those between the ages of 40 and 64, and males, compared to the other community size, age and gender subgroups. Respondents living in the Panhandle were more likely than the other regional groups to be dissatisfied with county government.

Dissatisfaction with city/village government also differed by education. The respondents with some college education were the group most likely to be dissatisfied with city/village government. For the occupation subgroups, farmers and ranchers were more likely than the other occupation groups to be dissatisfied with county government; however, the laborers were more likely to be dissatisfied with city/village government.

Plans to Leave the Community

Perhaps the best indicator of a resident's satisfaction with their community is their intention to stay there. Although many things ultimately contribute to the decision to leave one's place of residence (including job offers, opportunities to move closer to family and friends, etc.), a resident's satisfaction level with their community can play an important role in their decision to move or

stay. To determine rural Nebraskans' migration intentions, respondents were asked, "Do you plan to move from your community in the next year?" Response options included yes, no or uncertain. A follow-up question (asked of those who indicated they were planning to move) asked where the respondent planned to move. Answer categories were: Lincoln/Omaha metro areas, some place in Nebraska outside the Lincoln/Omaha metro areas, or some place other than Nebraska.

Only three percent of respondents indicated they were planning to move in the next year, eight percent were uncertain and eighty-nine percent had no intention to move during the next year. Of those planning to move, sixty-two percent were planning to remain in Nebraska, with thirteen percent planning to move to either Lincoln or Omaha and forty-nine percent planning to move to another part of the state. Thirty-eight percent planned to leave Nebraska.

Intentions to leave their community differed by community size, age, and occupation (Appendix Table 7). Respondents living in communities of 500 - 4,999 residents were the ones least likely to be planning a move from their community in the next year. Also, younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to be planning to leave their community. Seven percent of the respondents under the age of 30 were planning to move from their community in the next year, compared to only two percent

of the respondents age 65 and older (Figure 9). When examining the occupation subgroups, the manual laborers were the group most likely to be planning to move. On the other hand, farmers and ranchers were the group least likely to be planning to move.

Of those planning to move, their planned destinations differed by community size, region and education. Respondents living in the larger communities were more likely than those living in the smaller communities to plan to move out of Nebraska. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents living in communities with populations ranging from 5,000 to 9,999 (who were planning to move) planned to move some place other than Nebraska, compared to approximately nineteen percent of the respondents living in communities with populations ranging from 100 to 999. When examining regional differences, respondents in the Panhandle were the group most likely to be planning to

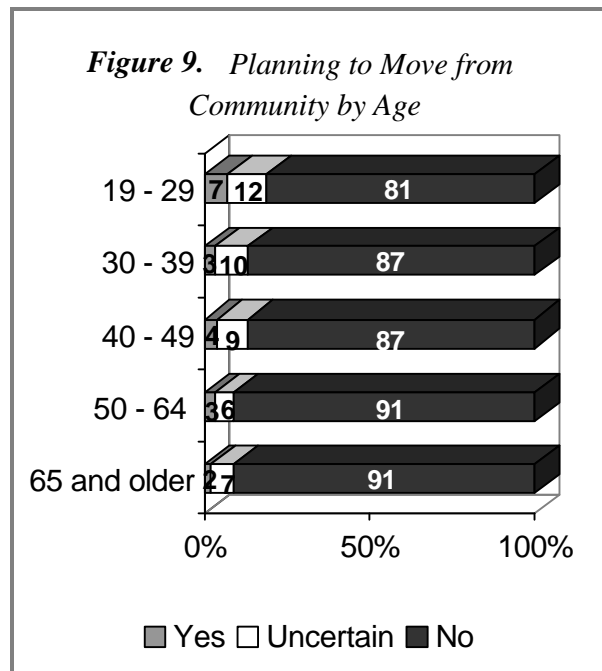
leave the state; however, they also had the smallest number of people planning to move from their community. The respondents with a bachelors degree were the educational subgroup most likely to be planning to leave the state.

Preferred Community Size and Location in 1998

Residential preferences can be used to determine the potential for changes in migration patterns. In other words, by knowing where people would prefer to live, one can see if those areas do indeed see an increase in people moving there. To find out what the residential preferences for rural Nebraskans are, respondents were asked the following question. "In terms of size, if you could live in any size community you wanted, which one of these would you like best?" The answer categories were: a large metropolitan city over 500,000 in population; a medium-sized city 50,000 to 500,000 in population; a smaller city 10,000 to 49,999 in population; a town or village 5,000 to 9,999 in population; a town or village 1,000 to 4,999 in population; a town or village less than 1,000 in population; or in the country outside of any city or village.

As a follow-up question, respondents who chose a community size less than 50,000 in population were asked: "In terms of location, would you like that place to be within 30 miles of a large- or medium-sized city, or would you rather be farther away from such a city?"

The most popular community size chosen was in the country (34%), followed by a smaller city (19%), a town/village 1,000 to 4,999 in population (18%), and a



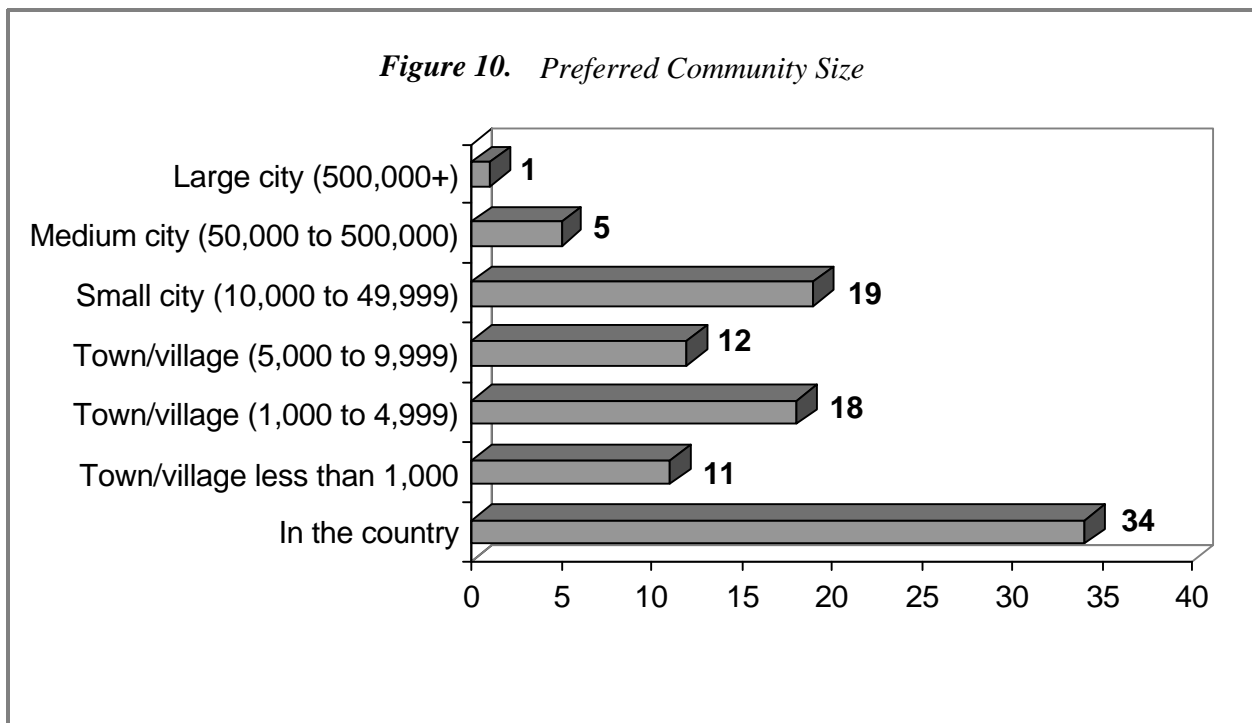
town/village 5,000 to 9,999 in population (12%) (Figure 10). Respondents also would largely prefer to have their residence located within 30 miles of a large or medium-sized city (66%). Thirty-five percent would rather be farther away.

Respondents' community size preference differed by community size, region, income, age, education and occupation (Appendix Table 8). The most preferred residence size for respondents was their current community size. For example, fifty-one percent of the respondents living in communities with populations greater than 10,000 preferred a place of 10,000 to 49,999 in population. These same respondents were also more likely than the respondents from smaller communities to prefer this sized community. The respondents most likely to prefer living in the country were those living in communities with less than 100 people (68%).

Respondents living in the Panhandle were more likely than those living in other regions of the state to prefer residences with populations greater than 5,000.

Respondents in the Southeast region were more likely to prefer towns or villages with less than 5,000 people. People living in the North Central part of the state were the most likely of the regional groups to prefer living in the country (45%).

Respondents with higher incomes were more likely than those with lower incomes to choose the larger community sizes. For example, thirty-two percent of the respondents with incomes greater than \$75,000 preferred to live in a city of 10,000-49,999 people, compared to only nine percent of the respondents with incomes less than \$10,000. The respondents with lower incomes were more likely to prefer the smaller community sizes or living in the country.



Younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to prefer a medium-sized city as well living in the country. Forty percent of the respondents under the age of 40 preferred to live in the country, compared to twenty-two percent of those age 65 and older.

When examining educational differences, one finds that respondents with higher educational levels were more likely than those with less education to prefer living in a place with at least 10,000 people. Respondents with less education were more likely to prefer living in smaller towns or villages. Respondents with an education level ranging from a high school diploma to having an associate's degree were the most likely to prefer to live in the country.

Respondents with professional, administrative support or sales occupations were the groups more likely to prefer living in a place with at least 10,000 people. Manual and skilled laborers were the occupation groups most likely to prefer living in the smallest towns or villages. Farmers and ranchers were more likely to prefer living in the country.

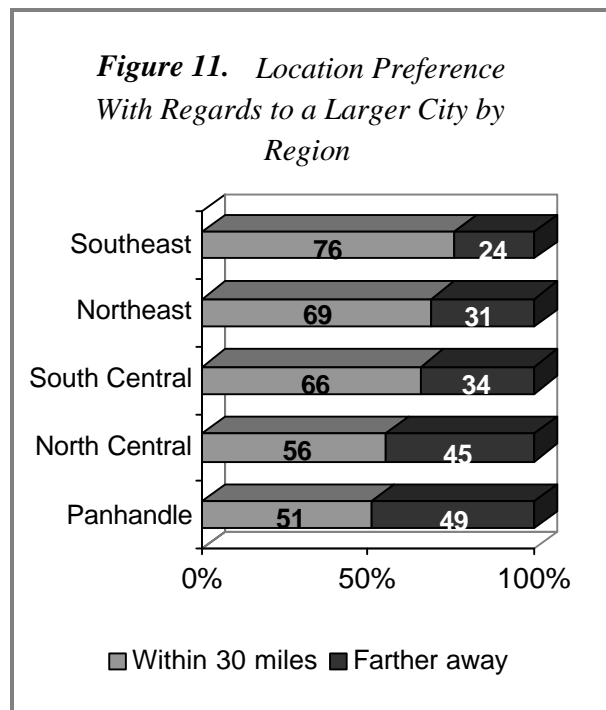
As noted earlier, those who preferred a place of less than 50,000 population were then asked if they would prefer that such a place be within 30 miles of a large or medium-sized city or farther away. These preferences differed by all of the characteristics shown in Appendix Table 8. Respondents currently living in communities with populations between 100 and 999 were more likely than those living in other sized communities to prefer to live within 30 miles of a larger city. The respondents living in towns of at least 10,000 population were more likely to prefer

living farther away from such a city.

Respondents living in the Southeast region of the state were more likely than respondents living in other regions to prefer to live within 30 miles of a larger city (Figure 11). Seventy-six percent of the respondents in this region preferred to live close to a city, compared to only fifty-one percent of the respondents in the Panhandle.

Respondents with household incomes of \$60,000 and over were more likely than those with lower incomes to prefer to live farther away from a city. For example, approximately forty-two percent of the respondents with this level of household income preferred to live farther away from a city, compared to twenty-seven percent of the respondents with incomes ranging from \$10,000 to \$19,999.

Older respondents (age 65 and older) were



more likely than younger respondents to prefer to live within 30 miles of a city. Seventy-four percent of these older respondents preferred to live near a city, compared to sixty-one percent of the respondents age 40 to 49. When examining gender differences, females were more likely than males to prefer to live closer to a city.

Respondents with lower educational levels and the manual laborers were the education and occupation subgroups most likely to prefer living closer to a larger city.

How do current community attributes influence preferred community size?

To determine how current community attributes influence preferred community size, a multiple regression analysis was performed. Multiple regression helps determine the effects of each variable on preferred community size while holding the effects of the other variables constant.

The current community attributes chosen for this analysis include four categories of variables. The first variable includes respondents' measures of their community's friendliness, supportiveness, and trusting behavior. These three variables were combined into one variable, referred to as community social attributes.

The second category of variables includes the three community participation and tolerance variables. These variables include ratings of opportunities for government participation and tolerance of new residents in leadership roles as well as of differences of opinion.

The third category of community attributes includes evaluations of local services and amenities. Factor analysis (principal factor

extraction with varimax rotation) was used to group together some of these services and amenities. Factor analysis allows one to group together variables that are highly correlated and reflect common characteristics. Seven groupings of services emerged. The first group includes four transportation services: air service, bus service, rail service, and taxi service. The second group comprises three environmental services: sewage disposal, water disposal, and solid waste disposal. Three health services make up the third grouping: nursing home care, basic medical care, and mental health services. The fourth group includes three consumer services: retail shopping, restaurants, and entertainment. Evaluations of two levels of local government, i.e., county and city/village government make up the fifth grouping. The sixth group includes three human services: head start programs, day care services, and senior centers. Finally, the seventh group is made up of two evaluations of local transportation infrastructure: streets as well as highways and bridges.

The final community attribute included in the analysis was the size of the respondent's current community. This variable includes a combination of two variables: current community population and whether or not they live within the city limits. The new variable, current residence, ranges from living in the country to living in a community with a population greater than 10,000. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 1. The "beta coefficients" represent the effect of each variable on the preferred community size variable. Because these coefficients are standardized units, this allows one to directly compare the effects of each variable.

The R^2 value indicates how much of the

variance in the preferred community size variable is explained by the variables chosen for this analysis. In this case, 20.3% of the variance in preferred community size is explained by the current community attribute variables.

Six of the variables were statistically significant: community social attributes, transportation services, environmental services, health services, consumer services, and current residence. When comparing the beta coefficients, the respondent's current residence influences preferred community size more than the other variables. The positive relationship between current and

preferred residence indicates that respondents tend to prefer their current community size. For example, respondents currently living in larger communities tend to prefer larger community sizes and those living in smaller communities prefer smaller sizes.

The variable next in importance in explaining preferred community size is satisfaction with health services. As satisfaction with health services increases, the respondent prefers larger community sizes. Satisfaction with environmental services has the same relationship with

Table 1. Prediction of Preferred Community Size by Current Community Attributes

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Beta coefficient</i>
Community social attributes	-.060**
Community participation and tolerance:	
Everyone can contribute to government	-.023
Receptive to new leaders	-.006
Allow differences of opinion	-.005
Satisfaction with community services:	
Transportation services	-.054**
Environmental services	.043*
Health services	.104***
Consumer services	-.061***
Local government services	-.004
Human services	.002
Local transportation infrastructure	-.007
Current community size	.407***
$R^2 = .203$	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

preferred community size; as satisfaction increases with these services, preferred community size increases.

The community social attributes variable has a negative relationship with preferred community size. When respondents view their communities as friendly, trusting, and supportive, the respondents prefer smaller community sizes. This same relationship holds for satisfaction with transportation and consumer services. As satisfaction with these services increases, preferred community size decreases. In other words, those dissatisfied with these types of services tend to prefer larger community sizes.

Trends in Community Ratings, 1996 - 1998

This is the third annual Nebraska Rural Poll and therefore comparisons are made between the data collected this year to the two previous studies. As data continue to be collected over time, a clearer picture emerges of the trends occurring in rural Nebraskans' ratings of their community. It is important to keep in mind when viewing these comparisons that these were independent samples (the same people were not surveyed each year).

Community Change

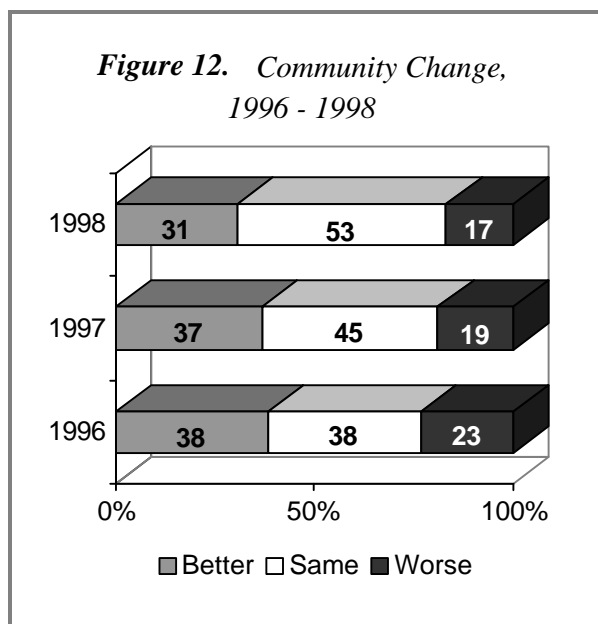
In all three studies, respondents were asked how they felt their community has changed, whether it has changed for the better, same or worse. One slight difference in question wording occurred in 1998, compared to the two previous studies. In 1998, the phrase "this past year" was added to the question; no time frame was given to the respondents in the two previous studies.

The proportion of respondents stating their

community has changed for the worse has steadily decreased since 1996. Twenty-three percent of the 1996 respondents thought their community had changed for the worse, compared to nineteen percent in 1997 and seventeen percent in 1998 (Figure 12). However, the proportion believing their community has changed for the better has also decreased (from thirty-eight percent in 1996 to thirty-one percent in 1998). The proportion believing their community has stayed the same has increased between 1996 and 1998, from thirty-eight percent to fifty-three percent.

Community Social Dimensions

The proportion of respondents viewing their community as friendly, trusting and supportive has remained stable during the past three years. Approximately seventy-two percent of respondents in all three studies thought their community was friendly and approximately sixty-two percent of the respondents in all the studies thought their community was both trusting and supportive.



Satisfaction with Community Services and Amenities

Respondents were asked about their satisfaction with various community services and amenities in all three studies. However, in 1996 respondents were also asked about the availability of these services. Therefore, comparisons will only be made between the 1997 and 1998 studies, when the question wording was identical.

Table 2 shows the proportions very satisfied with each service in 1997 and 1998. The rank ordering of these items remained fairly stable between the two years. However, there is a pattern of decreased satisfaction with these services. For the twenty-three services/amenities that were listed in both surveys, the proportion very satisfied with each decreased from 1997 to 1998.

Table 2. *Proportion of Respondents “Very Satisfied” with Each Service, 1997 - 1998*

<i>Service/Amenity</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1997</i>
Library services	41	44
Education (K - 12)	33	35
Parks and recreation	29	34
Basic medical care services	27	31
Senior centers	25	31
Nursing home care	24	27
Sewage disposal	23	31
Water disposal	21	29
Solid waste disposal	19	25
Law enforcement	17	22
Restaurants	16	19
Highways and bridges	15	NA
Day care services	15	17
Housing	14	17
Streets	12	NA
Head start programs	12	16
Retail shopping	10	14
Mental health services	8	11
City/village government	7	10
Entertainment	6	8
County government	6	9
Air service	5	6
Rail service	3	5
Bus service	2	4
Taxi service	2	3
Streets and highways	NA	1

Conclusion

Rural Nebraskans have very favorable opinions about their communities. The majority of respondents felt their community had either stayed the same or changed for the better during the past year. They also believed their communities were friendly, trusting and supportive.

However, rural towns have also been described by some as reluctant to include newcomers in local activities. This opinion was detected when almost one-third (29%) of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed that residents are receptive to new residents taking leadership roles. Yet, a large proportion of the respondents felt that most everyone is allowed to participate in governmental affairs in their community if they want to. They also disagreed that differences of opinion on public issues are avoided. Therefore, existing residents of the community may feel a part of the community's affairs, while new residents sometimes struggle to be accepted in leadership roles.

When asked about the services and amenities provided by their community, respondents were less enthusiastic about the entertainment, retail shopping, restaurants and streets. Services that received higher ratings include library services, parks and recreation, education (K - 12), and basic medical care services.

Most rural Nebraskans are planning to stay in their community. Those that were more likely to be planning to leave include younger residents, those living in larger communities and manual laborers. This can be a little disconcerting since a moderate proportion of the young and those living in larger

communities that planned to move were planning to leave the state.

If residents could live anywhere, what community size would they prefer? A third of rural Nebraskans would prefer to live in the country, but almost as many would prefer to live in communities with populations greater than 10,000.

Furthermore, two-thirds of those preferring community sizes of less than 50,000 would like that place to be within 30 miles of a larger city. This suggests that more remote rural towns may face greater population challenges than those in closer proximity to larger population centers.

Some current community attributes influence preferred community size. Current residence, satisfaction with health services, satisfaction with consumer services, community social attributes, satisfaction with transportation services, and satisfaction with environmental services all influence respondents' preferred community size. Respondents largely tend to prefer community sizes similar to their current community. Also, respondents satisfied with health and environmental services, those dissatisfied with transportation and consumer services, and respondents rating their current communities as unfriendly, distrusting and hostile were the ones preferring larger community sizes.

These findings suggest that past experience helps form judgements about different community types. If the respondent has been satisfied with life in their current community, they are more likely to prefer that community size. Therefore, rural communities may be able to maintain their populations by enhancing social attributes and designing services to meet the needs of its current

residents.

Appendix Table 1. Demographic Profile of Rural Poll Respondents Compared to 1990 Census

	1998 Poll	1997 Poll	1996 Poll	1990 Census
Age : ¹				
20 - 39	25%	24%	22%	38%
40 - 64	55%	48%	49%	36%
65 and over	20%	28%	29%	26%
Gender: ²				
Female	58%	28%	27%	49%
Male	42%	72%	73%	51%
Education: ³				
Less than 9 th grade	2%	5%	3%	10%
9 th to 12 th grade (no diploma)	3%	5%	5%	12%
High school diploma (or equivalent)	33%	34%	34%	38%
Some college, no degree	27%	25%	26%	21%
Associate degree	10%	8%	7%	7%
Bachelors degree	16%	14%	14%	9%
Graduate or professional degree	9%	9%	10%	3%
Household income: ⁴				
Less than \$10,000	3%	7%	8%	19%
\$10,000 - \$19,999	10%	16%	17%	25%
\$20,000 - \$29,999	17%	19%	19%	21%
\$30,000 - \$39,999	20%	18%	18%	15%
\$40,000 - \$49,999	18%	14%	15%	9%
\$50,000 - \$59,999	12%	10%	9%	5%
\$60,000 - \$74,999	10%	7%	7%	3%
\$75,000 or more	10%	8%	7%	3%
Marital Status: ⁵				
Married	95%	73%	75%	64%
Never married	0.4%	8%	7%	20%
Divorced/separated	1%	9%	8%	7%
Widowed/widower	3%	10%	10%	10%

¹ 1990 Census universe is non-metro population 20 years of age and over.

² 1990 Census universe is total non-metro population.

³ 1990 Census universe is non-metro population 18 years of age and over.

⁴ 1990 Census universe is all non-metro households.

⁵ 1990 Census universe is non-metro population 15 years of age and over.

Appendix Table 2. Perceptions of Community Change by Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes, 1998

Communities across the nation are undergoing change. When you think about this past year, would you say...				
My community has changed for the				
	<u>Better</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>Significance</u>
Community Size				
	<i>Percentages</i>			
	(n = 3959)			
Less than 100	11	71	18	
100 - 499	21	58	21	
500 - 999	25	59	17	
1,000 - 4,999	34	52	14	
5,000 - 9,999	42	43	15	$\chi^2 = 131.11$
10,000 and up	37	44	19	(.000)
Region				
	(n = 4007)			
Panhandle	37	51	12	
North Central	30	53	18	
South Central	34	49	17	
Northeast	28	54	18	$\chi^2 = 28.00$
Southeast	27	56	17	(.000)
Individual Attributes:				
<i>Income Level</i>				
	(n = 3709)			
Under \$10,000	24	46	31	
\$10,000 - \$19,999	24	58	18	
\$20,000 - \$29,999	27	54	18	
\$30,000 - \$39,999	29	52	19	
\$40,000 - \$49,999	31	55	14	
\$50,000 - \$59,999	34	52	14	
\$60,000 - \$74,999	40	43	18	$\chi^2 = 58.67$
\$75,000 and over	37	49	14	(.000)
<i>Age</i>				
	(n = 4004)			
19 - 29	33	56	11	
30 - 39	33	52	15	
40 - 49	30	52	18	
50 - 64	29	52	18	$\chi^2 = 11.63$
65 and older	29	53	18	(.169)
<i>Gender</i>				
	(n = 4009)			
Male	29	53	18	$\chi^2 = 3.96$
Female	32	52	16	(.138)

<i>Communities across the nation are undergoing change. When you think about this past year, would you say... My community has changed for the</i>				
	<i>Better</i>	<i>Same</i>	<i>Worse</i>	<i>Significance</i>
<i>Percentages</i>				
<i>(n = 3901)</i>				
<i>Education</i>				
Less than 9 th grade	26	62	12	
9 th to 12 th grade	28	59	13	
H.S. diploma	29	53	18	
Some college	29	51	20	
Associate degree	31	58	11	
Bachelors degree	37	46	17	$\chi^2 = 39.49$
Grad/prof degree	32	52	16	(.000)
<i>(n = 3301)</i>				
<i>Occupation</i>				
Professional/tech/admin.	34	49	17	
Admin. support	37	50	13	
Sales	29	54	17	
Service	37	49	14	
Farming/ranching	24	57	19	
Skilled laborer	27	55	17	
Manual laborer	20	57	23	$\chi^2 = 41.69$
Other	30	53	17	(.000)

Appendix Table 3. Measures of Community Attributes in Relation to Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes, 1998.

	My community is...				My community is...				My community is...			
	<i>Friendly</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Unfriendly</i>	<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	<i>Trusting</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Distrusting</i>	<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	<i>Supportive</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Hostile</i>	<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>
Community Size	(n = 3961)				<i>Percentages</i> (n = 3899)				(n = 3907)			
Less than 100	66	18	16		61	20	20		63	19	18	
100 - 499	74	16	10		67	19	13		67	20	13	
500 - 999	73	17	10		66	21	13		64	21	15	
1,000 - 4,999	73	17	11	$\chi^2 =$	65	19	16	$\chi^2 =$	63	22	14	$\chi^2 =$
5,000 - 9,999	70	18	12	10.20	62	21	17	45.67	62	23	15	26.42
10,000 and up	69	19	12	(.423)	53	26	21	(.000)	56	28	16	(.003)
Region	(n = 4003)				(n = 3942)				(n = 3947)			
Panhandle	72	16	12		60	21	19		62	24	15	
North Central	74	16	11		68	18	15		67	17	16	
South Central	73	17	11	$\chi^2 =$	62	23	15	$\chi^2 =$	63	24	13	$\chi^2 =$
Northeast	68	20	12	9.24	58	24	18	26.28	58	27	15	25.24
Southeast	73	17	11	(.323)	66	18	16	(.001)	64	21	15	(.001)
Individual Attributes:	(n = 3720)				(n = 3663)				(n = 3664)			
Income Level	(n = 3720)				(n = 3663)				(n = 3664)			
Under \$10,000	79	10	11		70	17	13		68	13	19	
\$10,000 - \$19,999	70	18	12		63	21	16		64	22	14	
\$20,000 - \$29,999	71	17	12		64	21	16		65	20	15	
\$30,000 - \$39,999	68	20	12		62	20	18		60	24	16	
\$40,000 - \$49,999	75	15	10		64	21	16		64	22	14	
\$50,000 - \$59,999	73	18	9	$\chi^2 =$	61	23	16	$\chi^2 =$	61	25	14	$\chi^2 =$
\$60,000 - \$74,999	76	13	11	18.97	69	18	14	12.55	64	24	12	16.75
\$75,000 and over	71	18	11	(.166)	59	24	17	(.562)	60	25	15	(.270)
Age	(n = 4002)				(n = 3941)				(n = 3946)			
19 - 29	72	16	13		60	25	15		59	26	16	
30 - 39	71	18	11		60	22	18		63	25	12	
40 - 49	68	20	12	$\chi^2 =$	58	23	19	$\chi^2 =$	57	27	16	$\chi^2 =$
50 - 64	70	18	12	33.41	62	21	17	53.68	61	21	18	64.67
65 and older	80	12	8	(.000)	74	15	11	(.000)	73	16	11	(.000)

Appendix Table 3 Continued.

	<i>My community is...</i>				<i>My community is...</i>				<i>My community is...</i>			
	<i>Friendly</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Unfriendly</i>	<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	<i>Trusting</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Distrusting</i>	<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	<i>Supportive</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Hostile</i>	<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>
<i>Gender</i>		(n = 4006)		$\chi^2 =$		(n = 3943)		$\chi^2 =$		(n = 3949)		$\chi^2 =$
Male	72	16	12	2.65	64	20	16	2.61	63	23	15	.004
Female	71	18	11	(.266)	62	22	17	(.271)	63	23	15	(.998)
<i>Education</i>		(n = 3899)				(n = 3838)				(n = 3844)		
Less than 9 th grade	90	4	6		84	11	5		85	6	9	
9 th to 12 th grade	70	20	11		59	23	18		59	25	16	
H.S. diploma	70	18	12		61	21	18		63	22	15	
Some college	70	19	11		62	21	17		59	24	17	
Associate degree	73	19	8	$\chi^2 =$	65	21	14	$\chi^2 =$	63	25	12	$\chi^2 =$
Bachelors degree	76	13	11	29.75	66	20	15	21.23	66	22	13	27.11
Grad/prof degree	73	16	11	(.003)	60	23	17	(.047)	64	22	15	(.007)
<i>Occupation</i>		(n = 3315)				(n = 3281)				(n = 3285)		
Prof/techl/admin.	73	17	10		62	22	16		62	24	15	
Admin. support	72	17	11		59	24	17		59	26	15	
Sales	75	15	10		66	19	15		62	23	15	
Service	70	17	12		62	20	18		63	22	16	
Farming/ranching	73	15	11		69	18	13		67	21	12	
Skilled laborer	65	22	14	$\chi^2 =$	55	24	21	$\chi^2 =$	52	29	19	$\chi^2 =$
Manual laborer	56	28	17	34.23	50	24	26	37.18	55	27	19	26.11
Other	72	17	11	(.002)	62	22	15	(.001)	65	21	15	(.025)

Appendix Table 4. Community Characteristics by Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes, 1998

	<i>Most everyone is allowed to contribute to local governmental affairs if they want to.</i>				<i>Residents in my community are receptive to new residents taking leadership positions.</i>				<i>Differences of opinion on public issues are avoided at all costs in my community.</i>			
	<i>Agree</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>
Community Size	(n = 4026)				<i>Percentages</i> (n = 4017)				(n = 3994)			
Less than 100	82	8	9		46	25	29		20	32	48	
100 - 499	81	11	7		42	28	30		13	26	61	
500 - 999	77	12	11		44	26	30		13	26	62	
1,000 - 4,999	76	12	12	$\chi^2 =$ 74.12	45	27	29	$\chi^2 =$ 14.37	14	25	61	$\chi^2 =$ 28.65
5,000 - 9,999	67	17	17	(.000)	38	30	32	(.157)	9	24	66	(.001)
10,000 and up	66	16	18		41	32	28		14	20	67	
Region	(n = 4070)				(n = 4064)				(n = 4039)			
Panhandle	76	12	12		43	27	31		11	20	68	
North Central	78	12	10		47	25	29		14	26	61	
South Central	72	14	15	$\chi^2 =$ 12.60	42	31	27	$\chi^2 =$ 14.38	14	21	65	$\chi^2 =$ 21.38
Northeast	75	13	12	(.127)	42	29	29	(.072)	14	26	60	(.006)
Southeast	76	13	12		42	27	31		13	28	59	
Individual Attributes:	(n = 3773)				(n = 3770)				(n = 3751)			
<i>Income Level</i>	(n = 3773)				(n = 3770)				(n = 3751)			
Under \$10,000	73	13	15		40	32	28		21	26	53	
\$10,000 - \$19,999	69	16	15		44	31	26		17	30	53	
\$20,000 - \$29,999	77	14	9		43	31	26		14	27	59	
\$30,000 - \$39,999	72	12	16		44	26	30		13	24	62	
\$40,000 - \$49,999	75	13	12		42	31	27		13	23	64	
\$50,000 - \$59,999	78	12	11	$\chi^2 =$ 24.16	42	26	33	$\chi^2 =$ 27.66	12	24	64	$\chi^2 =$ 44.74
\$60,000 - \$74,999	76	11	13	(.044)	44	23	33	(.016)	11	19	71	(.000)
\$75,000 and over	77	11	11		44	22	34		13	18	69	

Appendix Table 4 Continued.

	<i>Most everyone is allowed to contribute to local governmental affairs if they want to.</i>				<i>Residents in my community are receptive to new residents taking leadership positions.</i>				<i>Differences of opinion on public issues are avoided at all costs in my community.</i>				
	<i>Agree</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	
	(n = 4070)				<i>Percentages</i> (n = 4065)				(n = 4041)				
<i>Age</i>													
19 - 29	63	26	11		30	44	27		7	29	64		
30 - 39	73	16	11		39	30	31		10	28	62		
40 - 49	72	13	16	$\chi^2 =$	40	27	34	$\chi^2 =$	13	22	65	$\chi^2 =$	
50 - 64	76	11	13	64.07	43	25	32	115.64	14	21	65	41.54	
65 and older	81	11	9	(.000)	55	29	16	(.000)	17	28	56	(.000)	
<i>Gender</i>		(n = 4075)				(n = 4070)				(n = 4045)			
Male	74	12	14	$\chi^2 =$	43	28	29	$\chi^2 =$	16	22	63	$\chi^2 =$	
Female	75	14	11	(.005)	42	28	29	(.858)	12	27	62	(.000)	
<i>Education</i>		(n = 3965)				(n = 3959)				(n = 3936)			
Less than 9 th grade	75	19	7		54	29	17		21	52	28		
9 th to 12 th grade	63	19	19		48	30	22		17	30	53		
H.S. diploma	73	15	12		42	32	26		16	27	57		
Some college	75	13	13		42	27	31		11	25	64		
Associate degree	76	13	12	$\chi^2 =$	43	29	29	$\chi^2 =$	12	24	64	$\chi^2 =$	
Bachelors degree	78	10	12	32.52	41	27	32	47.94	11	18	72	93.24	
Grad/prof degree	75	8	17	(.001)	44	18	38	(.000)	13	18	69	(.000)	
<i>Occupation</i>		(n = 3362)				(n = 3361)				(n = 3346)			
Professional/technical/admin.	77	9	15		44	23	34		13	18	69		
Admin. support	74	15	12		44	25	31		10	21	69		
Sales	75	13	13		42	28	30		12	25	63		
Service	73	16	12		44	26	31		14	22	64		
Farming/ranching	78	12	10		41	33	26		13	26	62		
Skilled laborer	71	16	13	$\chi^2 =$	38	32	30	$\chi^2 =$	13	27	60	$\chi^2 =$	
Manual laborer	63	20	17	38.94	37	29	34	29.66	18	35	47	53.18	
Other	73	15	12	(.000)	42	29	29	(.009)	12	29	60	(.000)	

Appendix Table 5. Level of Satisfaction with Community Services and Amenities, 1998

<i>Service/Amenity</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>
		<i>Percentages</i>	
Entertainment	46	19	35
Retail shopping	42	10	48
Restaurants	35	7	58
Streets	35	6	59
City/village government	30	20	50
Law enforcement	29	8	63
Bus service	29	61	11
County government	29	19	53
Air service	28	53	19
Rail service	28	61	11
Housing	27	11	62
Highways and bridges	25	10	66
Taxi service	20	72	8
Education (K - 12)	17	9	74
Basic medical care services	17	10	73
Solid waste disposal	16	25	59
Parks and recreation	14	9	77
Mental health services	13	54	33
Day care services	13	37	50
Nursing home care	11	26	63
Library services	10	12	78
Sewage disposal	9	27	63
Water disposal	9	30	61
Head start programs	8	51	40
Senior centers	8	27	66

Appendix Table 6. Measures of Satisfaction with Ten Services and Amenities in Relation to Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes, 1998

	Streets			Law enforcement			Air service			Bus service		
	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>
	<i>Percentages</i>											
Community Size	(n = 4009)			(n = 3995)			(n = 3839)			(n = 3811)		
Less than 500	59	7	34	52	11	37	14	64	22	9	65	26
500 - 4,999	62	7	32	63	7	30	19	59	22	9	63	28
5,000 and over	55	4	41	73	6	21	23	35	42	15	53	32
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	$\chi^2 = 33.27 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 99.37 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 240.02 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 44.93 (.000)$		
Region	(n = 4054)			(n = 4044)			(n = 3885)			(n = 3856)		
Panhandle	64	8	28	69	8	23	18	29	53	11	46	43
North Central	59	7	35	57	8	35	21	55	25	8	59	33
South Central	60	5	35	64	6	29	19	45	36	12	58	30
Northeast	53	5	42	63	8	29	17	61	22	12	63	25
Southeast	64	7	30	64	9	27	20	65	15	9	69	22
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	$\chi^2 = 42.88 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 25.07 (.002)$			$\chi^2 = 277.91 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 86.21 (.000)$		
Income Level	(n = 3762)			(n = 3756)			(n = 3610)			(n = 3584)		
Under \$10,000	57	8	35	62	6	32	25	53	22	13	53	34
\$10,000 - \$39,999	59	7	35	61	7	32	17	58	25	11	60	29
\$40,000 - \$74,999	59	5	36	64	8	28	21	49	30	11	61	29
\$75,000 and over	63	5	33	69	7	24	20	41	39	9	61	30
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	$\chi^2 = 7.11 (.311)$			$\chi^2 = 12.06 (.061)$			$\chi^2 = 54.78 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 4.06 (.668)$		
Age	(n = 4054)			(n = 4048)			(n = 3886)			(n = 3857)		
19 - 39	56	6	38	63	8	29	18	56	26	11	70	20
40 - 64	59	5	36	62	8	30	18	52	30	10	60	30
65 and over	64	8	28	66	7	26	22	52	26	14	48	38
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	$\chi^2 = 26.09 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 5.24 (.263)$			$\chi^2 = 12.49 (.014)$			$\chi^2 = 93.94 (.000)$		
Gender	(n = 4057)			(n = 4050)			(n = 3886)			(n = 3860)		
Male	60	7	34	63	9	28	20	49	30	12	57	31
Female	59	6	36	63	7	30	18	55	26	10	63	27
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	$\chi^2 = 3.02 (.221)$			$\chi^2 = 7.03 (.030)$			$\chi^2 = 13.51 (.001)$			$\chi^2 = 16.97 (.000)$		
Education	(n = 3947)			(n = 3941)			(n = 3784)			(n = 3755)		
High school or less	59	7	35	60	9	31	18	59	23	11	62	27
Some college	58	6	36	63	7	30	20	51	29	10	61	30
College grad	63	4	33	67	7	26	19	46	36	10	58	32
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	$\chi^2 = 10.97 (.027)$			$\chi^2 = 15.21 (.004)$			$\chi^2 = 54.76 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 8.78 (.067)$		
Occupation	(n = 3349)			(n = 3336)			(n = 3240)			(n = 3216)		
Prof/tech/admin.	58	5	37	64	8	28	19	45	36	10	57	33
Farming/ranching	62	12	26	63	10	27	23	55	22	13	59	28
Laborer	53	5	42	54	9	37	15	59	26	11	63	26
Other	61	5	34	65	6	29	18	54	28	9	64	27
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	$\chi^2 = 61.27 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 27.99 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 45.36 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 22.19 (.001)$		

* Only the ten services with the highest combined percentage of very or somewhat dissatisfied are included in this table.

Appendix Table 6 Continued.

	<i>Rail service</i>			<i>Retail shopping</i>			<i>Restaurants</i>			<i>Entertainment</i>		
	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>
	<i>opinion</i>			<i>opinion</i>			<i>opinion</i>			<i>opinion</i>		
Community Size		(n = 3802)		(n = 3968)			(n = 4011)			(n = 3959)		
Less than 500	9	64	27	42	18	40	58	10	32	34	27	39
500 - 4,999	10	64	26	45	10	44	56	7	37	31	19	50
5,000 and over	14	56	31	58	3	39	62	3	35	42	12	47
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	$\chi^2 = 25.40 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 157.83 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 47.95 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 107.72 (.000)$		
Region		(n = 3846)		(n = 4019)			(n = 4060)			(n = 4007)		
Panhandle	9	50	42	57	8	35	55	7	38	36	18	46
North Central	8	61	31	43	12	45	63	7	31	36	17	47
South Central	16	52	32	57	8	35	61	7	32	42	17	41
Northeast	9	71	20	44	10	47	58	6	37	31	19	50
Southeast	10	68	22	43	13	44	53	9	39	29	24	47
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	$\chi^2 = 146.80 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 81.48 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 27.25 (.001)$			$\chi^2 = 58.03 (.000)$		
Income Level		(n = 3578)		(n = 3733)			(n = 3767)			(n = 3721)		
Under \$10,000	10	53	37	44	13	43	60	14	26	30	29	41
\$10,000 - \$39,999	11	60	29	48	12	40	60	7	33	35	21	44
\$40,000 - \$74,999	11	62	27	48	8	44	55	6	39	34	15	51
\$75,000 and over	11	60	29	48	6	46	52	5	43	35	13	52
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	$\chi^2 = 4.97 (.547)$			$\chi^2 = 28.51 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 31.15 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 39.82 (.000)$		
Age		(n = 3849)		(n = 4020)			(n = 4059)			(n = 4008)		
19 - 39	12	69	19	45	10	45	50	7	43	32	12	56
40 - 64	10	61	29	49	8	43	59	6	35	34	18	48
65 and over	13	51	36	51	15	35	66	8	26	42	29	29
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	$\chi^2 = 72.91 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 39.30 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 60.07 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 155.39 (.000)$		
Gender		(n = 3850)		(n = 4022)			(n = 4062)			(n = 4011)		
Male	14	55	31	52	11	38	60	6	34	35	20	44
Female	9	66	26	46	10	44	57	7	36	34	18	48
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	$\chi^2 = 54.91 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 17.47 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 4.84 (.089)$			$\chi^2 = 7.30 (.026)$		
Education		(n = 3747)		(n = 3916)			(n = 3955)			(n = 3902)		
High school or less	11	62	27	49	12	40	62	8	30	35	23	42
Some college	11	61	28	48	10	42	58	7	36	34	17	50
College grad	10	60	30	48	7	45	52	5	44	36	15	49
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	$\chi^2 = 2.10 (.718)$			$\chi^2 = 17.37 (.002)$			$\chi^2 = 49.86 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 34.51 (.000)$		
Occupation		(n = 3215)		(n = 3322)			(n = 3353)			(n = 3324)		
Prof/tech/admin.	10	59	30	45	8	47	50	5	45	34	13	53
Farming/ranching	10	54	35	48	15	37	66	9	25	40	23	37
Laborer	12	62	26	47	11	42	62	9	30	32	18	49
Other	10	65	24	50	9	42	57	6	38	33	19	48
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	$\chi^2 = 27.52 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 33.07 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 74.48 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 47.13 (.000)$		

Appendix Table 6 Continued.

	<i>County government</i>			<i>City/village government</i>		
	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>
<i>Community Size</i>		(n = 3994)			(n = 4013)	
Less than 500	53	19	28	54	21	25
500 - 4,999	55	17	28	50	20	30
5,000 and over	48	21	31	46	20	35
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		$\chi^2 = 17.30 (.002)$			$\chi^2 = 24.48 (.000)$	
<i>Region</i>		(n = 4045)			(n = 4062)	
Panhandle	48	18	34	46	20	34
North Central	54	14	32	50	19	31
South Central	53	18	29	50	19	31
Northeast	52	22	26	50	23	27
Southeast	54	21	25	52	20	28
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		$\chi^2 = 29.34 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 13.11 (.108)$	
<i>Income Level</i>		(n = 3748)			(n = 3768)	
Under \$10,000	55	21	25	49	20	32
\$10,000 - \$39,999	54	18	28	50	20	31
\$40,000 - \$74,999	52	20	28	52	19	29
\$75,000 and over	50	18	32	48	21	31
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		$\chi^2 = 4.22 (.647)$			$\chi^2 = 2.69 (.846)$	
<i>Age</i>		(n = 4042)			(n = 4060)	
19 - 39	48	26	26	49	24	27
40 - 64	51	17	32	48	19	33
65 and over	63	13	24	56	17	27
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		$\chi^2 = 88.99 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 31.38 (.000)$	
<i>Gender</i>		(n = 4046)			(n = 4064)	
Male	51	17	32	48	18	34
Female	54	20	26	51	22	27
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		$\chi^2 = 16.93 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 22.11 (.000)$	
<i>Education</i>		(n = 3938)			(n = 3954)	
High school or less	52	20	28	48	22	30
Some college	51	18	31	49	19	32
College grad	56	17	27	55	18	27
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		$\chi^2 = 9.08 (.059)$			$\chi^2 = 17.49 (.002)$	
<i>Occupation</i>		(n = 3353)			(n = 3359)	
Prof/tech/admin.	50	20	31	49	18	33
Farming/ranching	53	13	34	45	26	29
Laborer	46	23	32	45	21	34
Other	55	20	26	54	20	26
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		$\chi^2 = 31.82 (.000)$			$\chi^2 = 33.03 (.000)$	

Appendix Table 7. Plans to Leave Community by Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes, 1998

	Do you plan to leave your community in the next year?			Chi-square (sig.)	If yes, where do you plan to move?			Chi-square (sig.)
	Yes	No	Uncertain		Lincoln/Omaha metro areas	Some other place in NE	Some place other than Nebraska	
				<i>Percentages</i>				
Community Size	(n = 4064)				(n = 126)			
Less than 100	2	86	11		0	67	33	
100 - 499	4	88	8		6	75	19	
500 - 999	2	91	7		6	77	18	
1,000 - 4,999	2	90	8		21	32	46	
5,000 - 9,999	4	85	12	$\chi^2 = 22.59$	8	25	67	$\chi^2 = 27.49$
10,000 and up	5	86	9	(.012)	18	29	53	(.002)
Region	(n = 4084)				(n = 125)			
Panhandle	2	88	10		10	10	80	
North Central	3	89	7		0	64	36	
South Central	3	88	9		17	36	47	
Northeast	3	89	7	$\chi^2 = 5.71$	13	57	30	$\chi^2 = 17.90$
Southeast	3	88	9	(.680)	19	59	22	(.022)
Individual Attributes:								
Income Level	(n = 3781)				(n = 120)			
Under \$10,000	5	87	9		17	83	0	
\$10,000 - \$19,999	3	87	9		27	27	46	
\$20,000 - \$29,999	4	89	8		9	59	32	
\$30,000 - \$39,999	3	87	10		10	67	24	
\$40,000 - \$49,999	3	90	7		5	57	38	
\$50,000 - \$59,999	3	90	7		15	54	31	
\$60,000 - \$74,999	3	88	9	$\chi^2 = 9.66$	21	29	50	$\chi^2 = 17.05$
\$75,000 and over	3	91	6	(.787)	17	25	58	(.253)
Age	(n = 4080)				(n = 126)			
19 - 29	7	81	12		8	50	42	
30 - 39	3	87	10		4	52	44	
40 - 49	4	87	9		13	48	40	
50 - 64	3	91	6	$\chi^2 = 34.61$	18	50	32	$\chi^2 = 3.09$
65 and older	2	91	7	(.000)	13	47	40	(.928)
Gender	(n = 4085)				(n = 125)			
Male	3	89	8	$\chi^2 = 1.81$	11	36	52	$\chi^2 = 5.82$
Female	3	88	8	(.404)	12	57	31	(.054)

Appendix Table 7 Continued.

	<i>Do you plan to leave your community in the next year?</i>			<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	<i>If yes, where do you plan to move?</i>			<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>		<i>Lincoln/Omaha metro areas</i>	<i>Some other place in NE</i>	<i>Some place other than Nebraska</i>	
<i>Education</i>	(n = 3978)				(n = 125)			
Less than 9 th grade	1	96	3		0	100	0	
9 th to 12 th grade	2	91	7		67	0	33	
H.S. diploma	2	90	8		12	56	32	
Some college	4	88	8		19	54	28	
Associate degree	4	89	7		0	60	40	
Bachelors degree	5	87	9	$\chi^2 = 20.77$	3	33	63	$\chi^2 = 23.77$
Grad/prof degree	2	89	8	(.054)	13	50	38	(.022)
<i>Occupation</i>	(n = 3366)				(n = 109)			
Prof/tech/admin.	4	87	9		10	43	48	
Admin. support	3	86	11		18	36	46	
Sales	4	87	9		18	46	36	
Service	3	91	6		10	50	40	
Farming/ranching	1	92	6		0	67	33	
Skilled laborer	3	89	9		13	50	38	
Manual laborer	5	82	12	$\chi^2 = 26.28$	20	70	10	$\chi^2 = 8.09$
Other	3	89	7	(.024)	8	62	31	(.885)

Appendix Table 8. Optimum Community Size and Location by Current Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes, 1998

	<i>In terms of size, if you could live in any size community you wanted, which one of these would you like best?</i>							<i>Would you like that place to be within 30 miles of a large- or medium-sized city, or would you rather be farther away?*</i>			
	<i>Large metro city over 500,000</i>	<i>Medium-sized city (50,000 to 500,000)</i>	<i>Smaller city (10,000-49,999)</i>	<i>Town/village 5,000 - 9,999</i>	<i>Town/village 1,000 - 4,999</i>	<i>Town/village less than 1,000</i>	<i>In the country</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Within 30 miles</i>	<i>Farther away</i>	<i>Significance</i>
	<i>Percentages</i>										
Community Size	(n = 3813)								(n = 3509)		
Less than 100	0	0	4	5	7	15	68		63	37	
100 - 499	**	2	7	7	11	26	47		71	30	
500 - 999	**	2	7	9	19	24	39		70	30	
1,000 - 4,999	**	3	14	13	36	3	31		66	34	
5,000 - 9,999	1	4	28	38	5	1	23	$\chi^2 = 1898.3$	63	37	$\chi^2 = 41.18$
10,000 and up	1	14	51	8	3	1	22	(.000)	56	44	(.000)
Region	(n = 3832)								(n = 3528)		
Panhandle	0	7	29	17	10	6	32		51	49	
North Central	**	2	10	11	19	13	45		56	45	
South Central	1	6	24	10	15	10	34		66	34	
Northeast	**	5	25	12	19	10	28	$\chi^2 = 255.81$	69	31	$\chi^2 = 105.52$
Southeast	1	3	10	16	23	14	35	(.000)	76	24	(.000)
Individual Attributes:	(n = 3559)								(n = 3275)		
<i>Income Level</i>											
Under \$10,000	0	2	9	13	18	21	37		68	32	
\$10,000 - \$19,999	1	3	10	13	21	18	34		74	27	
\$20,000 - \$29,999	**	2	13	13	21	12	38		68	33	
\$30,000 - \$39,999	**	4	16	12	20	13	36		68	32	
\$40,000 - \$49,999	**	4	20	14	18	9	34		62	38	
\$50,000 - \$59,999	1	6	25	11	16	10	32		67	33	
\$60,000 - \$74,999	1	7	30	15	16	6	26	$\chi^2 = 236.17$	57	43	$\chi^2 = 31.67$
\$75,000 and over	1	11	32	10	12	5	29	(.000)	58	42	(.000)

Appendix Table 8 Continued.

	<i>In terms of size, if you could live in any size community you wanted, which one of these would you like best?</i>							<i>Would you like that place to be within 30 miles of a large- or medium-sized city, or would you rather be farther away?*</i>			
	<i>Large metro city over 500,000</i>	<i>Medium-sized city (50,000 to 500,000)</i>	<i>Smaller city (10,000-49,999)</i>	<i>Town/village 5,000 - 9,999</i>	<i>Town/village 1,000 - 4,999</i>	<i>Town/village less than 1,000</i>	<i>In the country</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Within 30 miles</i>	<i>Farther away</i>	<i>Significance</i>
<i>Age</i>	(n = 3834)							(n = 3537)			
19 - 29	1	11	20	10	12	7	40		63	37	
30 - 39	**	4	19	12	17	9	40		63	37	
40 - 49	1	7	22	11	15	8	38		61	39	
50 - 64	1	4	19	12	18	13	34	$\chi^2 = 182.18$	67	33	$\chi^2 = 35.50$
65 and older	**	2	16	17	27	16	22	(.000)	74	26	(.000)
<i>Gender</i>	(n = 3837)							(n = 3535)			
Male	1	4	19	12	18	12	35	$\chi^2 = 8.43$	60	40	$\chi^2 = 29.98$
Female	**	5	20	13	18	10	34	(.209)	69	31	(.000)
<i>Education</i>	(n = 3740)							(n = 3453)			
Less than 9 th grade	0	3	3	17	28	25	23		72	28	
9 th to 12 th grade	1	1	12	16	25	18	27		76	25	
H.S. diploma	**	3	16	13	19	14	36		71	30	
Some college	**	5	19	12	19	10	35		64	36	
Associate degree	0	6	18	11	18	6	42		63	37	
Bachelors degree	1	7	28	12	14	8	30	$\chi^2 = 179.32$	59	41	$\chi^2 = 32.64$
Grad/prof degree	**	7	26	14	15	8	29	(.000)	61	39	(.000)
<i>Occupation</i>	(n = 3198)							(n = 2945)			
Prof/tech/admin.	1	7	25	12	19	9	28		62	39	
Admin. support	0	7	27	12	17	9	28		62	39	
Sales	**	7	31	14	15	9	25		63	37	
Service	1	5	17	17	18	12	31		71	29	
Farming/ranching	0	2	7	10	13	7	60		61	40	
Skilled laborer	1	2	18	10	17	15	37		65	35	
Manual laborer	1	3	11	8	21	16	39	$\chi^2 = 286.02$	74	26	$\chi^2 = 23.74$
Other	1	3	18	13	15	13	37	(.000)	69	31	(.001)

* This question was only answered by respondents choosing a size preference less than 50,000.

** Less than 1 percent.

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