

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Publications from the Center for Applied Rural  
Innovation (CARI)

CARI: Center for Applied Rural Innovation

---

August 1997

# Quality of Life of Rural Nebraskans: How are they Doing and What is in the Future?

John C. Allen

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln, jallen1@unl.edu*

Sam Cordes

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln, scordes1@unl.edu*

Amy M. Smith

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Matt Spilker

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Amber Hamilton

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/caripubs>



Part of the [Rural Sociology Commons](#)

---

Allen, John C.; Cordes, Sam; Smith, Amy M.; Spilker, Matt; and Hamilton, Amber, "Quality of Life of Rural Nebraskans: How are they Doing and What is in the Future?" (1997). *Publications from the Center for Applied Rural Innovation (CARI)*. 64.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/caripubs/64>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the CARI: Center for Applied Rural Innovation at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications from the Center for Applied Rural Innovation (CARI) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.



# THE CENTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT

## A Working Paper\*

**Quality of Life of Rural Nebraskans:  
How are they Doing and What is in the Future?**

John C. Allen  
Sam Cordes  
Amy M. Smith  
Matt Spilker  
Amber Hamilton



*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*  
*Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources*



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	i
INTRODUCTION .....	1
METHODOLOGY AND RESPONDENT PROFILE.....	2
FINDINGS .....	4
Global Well-Being (Figure 1)	4
Change in the Modern World (Figure 2)	6
Personal Well-Being	6
Availability of Services and Amenities (Figure 3)	8
Dissatisfaction with Services and Amenities (Figure 4)	9
Dissatisfaction with Services/Amenities by Region (Figure 5)	10
Dissatisfaction with Services/Amenities by Community Size (Figure 6)	12
Dissatisfaction with Services/Amenities by Income Level (Figure 7)	13
CONCLUSIONS .....	14
Table 1 Measures of Well-Being in Relation to Community Structure, Community Attributes, and Individual Attributes .....	15
Table 2 People are Powerless to Control their own Lives.....	17
Table 3 Personal Well-Being .....	19
Table 4 Importance of Selected Factors Affecting Individual Well-Being.....	20
Table 5 Level of Satisfaction with Factors Affecting Individual Well-Being .....	21

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This working paper presents findings from the first Annual Nebraska Rural Poll. The study is based on 2,754 responses from households in the 87 non-metropolitan counties in the state. The objectives of this paper are to answer the following questions:

1. All things considered, do rural Nebraskans believe they are better off today than five years ago, and do they believe they are better off than their parents were at their age?
2. Do rural Nebraskans believe they will be better or worse off ten years in the future?
3. What is the current level of psychological well-being among rural Nebraskans?
4. What services and amenities are least likely to be available to rural Nebraskans?
5. With what services and amenities are residents most dissatisfied, and how does this dissatisfaction vary by region, community size, and income?

Key findings include the following:

- Nebraska's rural residents, on average, believe they are better off today than five years ago, and are also better off than their parents were.
- Many, but not most, rural Nebraskans believe they will be better off in the future than they are today.
- Overall, only about 15 percent of the rural population are likely to feel that people do not care what happens to them.
- Rural Nebraskans rank their family, the health of their family, and their own health as most important to their overall well-being.
- Public transportation, mental health services, Head Start programs, nursing home care,

and day care services were reported as the least available services to rural Nebraskans.

- With respect to services and amenities, rural Nebraskans reported that they are most dissatisfied with entertainment, retail shopping, public transportation, and local government — both city/village and county government.
- Regional differences in dissatisfaction with services and amenities do exist, but no overall regional pattern exists. For example, rural residents in the North Central region are most likely to be dissatisfied with public transportation and law enforcement, but residents in the Panhandle region are more likely to be dissatisfied with their local governments.

## INTRODUCTION

Nebraskans have been responding to change since the mid-to-late 1800's. The residents have proven to be resilient and this resiliency is embodied in the state's slogan, "Nebraska the Good Life." In recent years much has been written about the out migration of population from Nebraska's rural areas. Some have even suggested that the Great Plains should revert to "A Buffalo Commons." Yet, recent indicators such as the 1994 and 1995 U.S. Census estimates indicate that many of Nebraska's counties which had been declining in population have had a slight turnaround. As we face new challenges the question remains, "How are rural Nebraskans doing?" Do they perceive they have a high quality of life? When they look to their future, do they foresee a positive or negative one?

This study, the Nebraska Rural Poll, is the first of what is expected to be an annual effort to take the pulse of rural Nebraskans. As data are collected over time we will have much better indicators of the well-being of rural Nebraskans. However, this initial study is also very important in that it provides a "baseline" on the current well-being of rural Nebraskans, their perceptions of their future, and other aspects of their quality of life, e.g., how satisfied they are with local schools and other public and private services and amenities.

## METHODOLOGY AND RESPONDENT PROFILE

This study is based on 2,754 responses from Nebraskans living in non-metropolitan counties in Nebraska. A self-administered questionnaire was mailed to 6,200 randomly selected households. Metropolitan counties not included in the sample were the six Nebraska counties that are part of the Omaha, Lincoln and Sioux City metropolitan areas. All of the other 87 counties in the state were sampled. The 14 page questionnaire included questions pertaining to well-being, access to services, environment, public policy issues, and work. This study will report only on the well-being portion of the survey. A 45% response rate was achieved using the Total Design Method (Dillman, 1978). The sequence of steps in the survey process were:

1. A “pre-notification” letter was sent first. This letter requested participation in the study, and was signed by the Governor of Nebraska and the President of the University of Nebraska.
2. The survey was mailed with an informational letter about seven days subsequent to the “pre-notification” letter being sent. The letter was signed by the project director.
3. A reminder postcard was sent to the entire sample approximately seven days after the survey (step #2) had been sent.
4. Those who had not responded within approximately 14 days of the original mailing were then sent a replacement questionnaire.

### *Respondent Profile*

The profile of the respondents reflects an aging population. The average respondent was 53 years of age. Seventy-five percent were married, and seventy percent lived in a town or

village. On average, respondents had lived in their current town or village 32 years. Sixty percent of the respondents were living in towns or villages smaller than 5,000 people. Eighteen percent indicated they were farmers or ranchers. Thirty-three percent reported that they worked in a professional/technical or administrative job.

Sixty-two percent of the respondents reported an approximate household income from all sources, before taxes, for 1995 of below \$39,999. Twenty-three percent reported incomes over \$50,000. Ninety-one percent had attained at least a high school diploma.

Thirty-five percent reported that their spouse or partner worked full time, and an additional fifteen percent said their spouse or partner was working part time. Fifteen percent also reported that their spouse or partner was retired.



## FINDINGS

A large amount of data were generated from the rural poll and are reflected in the subsequent tables and figures. Only selected comments will be made on the data presented. The reader is encouraged to study the tables and figures to draw additional conclusions and insights.

### *Global Well-Being*

With respect to global measures of well-being, respondents were asked three questions.

1. *“All things considered, do you think you are better or worse off than you were five years ago?” (Answer categories were worse, better or the same.)*
2. *“All things considered, do you think you are better or worse off than your parents when they were your age?”*
3. *“All things considered, do you think you will be better or worse off ten years from now than you are today?”*

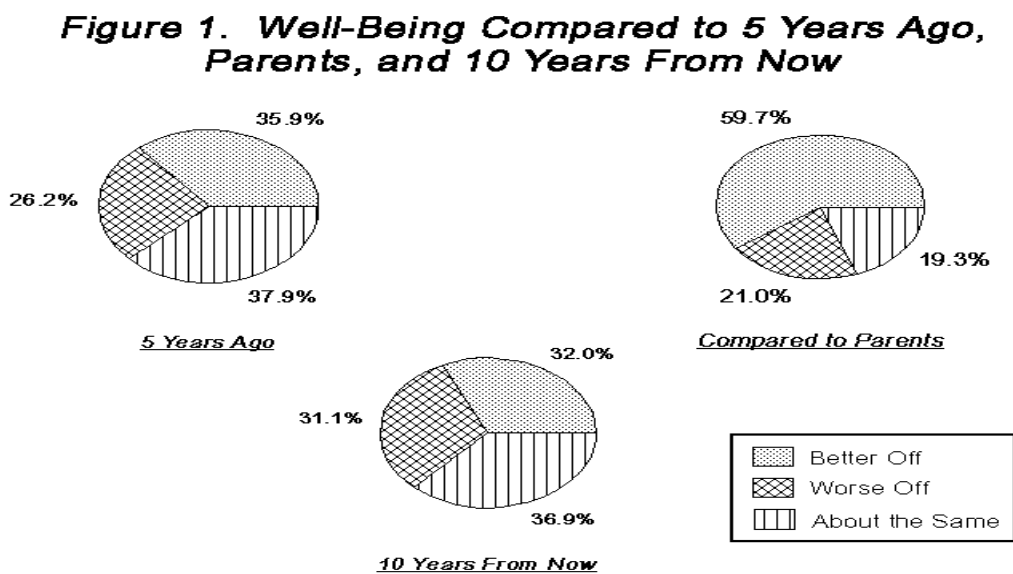


Figure 1 summarizes the responses to these three questions. Sixty percent of rural Nebraskans report they are better off than their parents when they were their age, twenty-one percent are worse off and about nineteen percent about the same. When compared to five years ago, thirty-six percent report they are better off, twenty-six percent worse off and thirty-eight percent about the same. When asked to look ten years into the future, thirty-two percent expect to be better off than today, thirty-seven percent about the same, and thirty-one percent believe they will be worse off than they are today.

Residents of smaller towns tended to be somewhat less positive about their situation than were residents of larger places (Table 1). For example, only 24 percent of those living in towns of fewer than 100 people said they were better off than they were five years ago, but 43 percent of those in towns greater than 10,000 population felt they were now better off. In looking to the future, only 16 percent in these same small-sized places expected to be better off in ten years, but 37 percent of those in towns with more than 10,000 population expected to be better off.

Community attributes such as the friendliness of the community, and whether or not a community is “trusting” or “supportive” were also addressed in the study. These dimensions were addressed using a seven-point scale or continuum. Overall, rural Nebraskans see their communities as friendly, trusting and supportive places to live. Seventy-three percent said their community was friendly; and 62 percent said their community was trusting and supportive (not shown in tabular form). These attributes were also associated with the global measure of well-being. Respondents who indicated their community was friendly, trusting and supportive were also more likely to say they were better off than five years ago, better off than their parents, and expected to be better off ten years from now (Table 1).

**Figure 2. "Life has changed so much in our modern world that most people are powerless to control their own lives."**

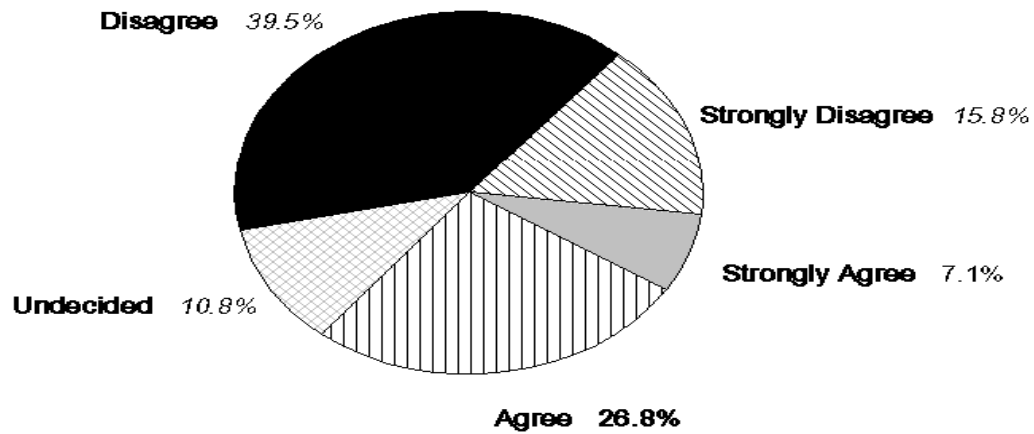


Figure 2 provides a breakdown of how the residents responded to the following statement.

*"Life has changed so much in our modern world that most people are powerless to control their own lives."*

Over fifty-five percent of the sample reported that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Thirty-four percent agreed or strongly agreed. Individuals living in smaller communities were somewhat less likely than those living in larger communities to disagree with the statement (Table 2).

### *Personal Well-Being*

Respondents were asked how often they experienced seven different negative feelings or

situations. These statements and selected results follow (see Table 3 for complete results).

*How often do you feel you don't enjoy doing things anymore?* (12 percent reported "often" or "all the time.")

*How often do you feel that people don't care what happens to you?* (15 percent reported "often" or "all the time.")

*How often do you feel life is hopeless?* (5 percent reported "often" or "all the time.")

*Have you ever had periods of days or weeks when you couldn't get going?* (7 percent reported "often" or "all the time.")

*How often do you have trouble sleeping?* (15 percent reported "often" or "all the time.")

*How often would you say things don't turn out the way you want them to?* (16 percent reported "often" or "all the time.")

*When things don't turn out, how often would you say you blame yourself?* (22 percent reported "often" or "all the time.")

Respondents were also given a list of items that might affect their well-being, and were asked to indicate the importance of each. The specific statement to which they were asked to respond was:

*"Rate each of the following items as to how important they are in determining your own well-being."*

Results are arrayed in Table 4 according to the proportion who said each factor was "very important."

The respondents ranked the health of their family (82%), their family (81%), and their own health (79%) as the three most important factors influencing their well-being. The ability to relocate had the least impact on their well-being (11%).

Table 5 provides a breakdown of how satisfied rural residents are with these same factors.

In this case, the factors are arrayed according to the proportion who said they were “very satisfied” with each factor. The respondents reported they are most satisfied with their family (50%), religion/spirituality (41%), and friends (37%). They were most dissatisfied with their financial security for or during retirement and their current level of income (with more than 35 percent reporting “somewhat dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied”).

*Availability of Services and Amenities (Top 10)*

Two common complaints often heard about rural areas are that they do not have the same set of services available to them as do their urban counterparts; and even if services are available, they are inadequate or inferior. Twenty-four different services were listed on the survey, and the respondent was asked about both the availability and level of satisfaction with those services.

**Figure 3. Unavailable Services and Amenities - Nebraska Non-Metro Total \***

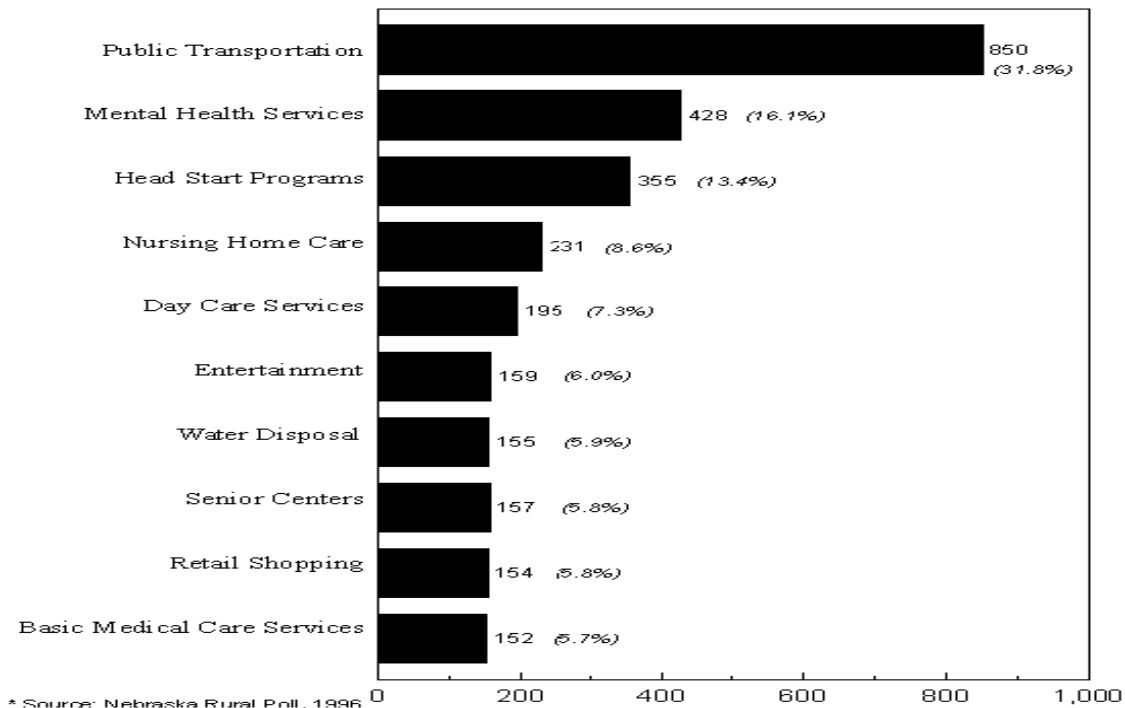
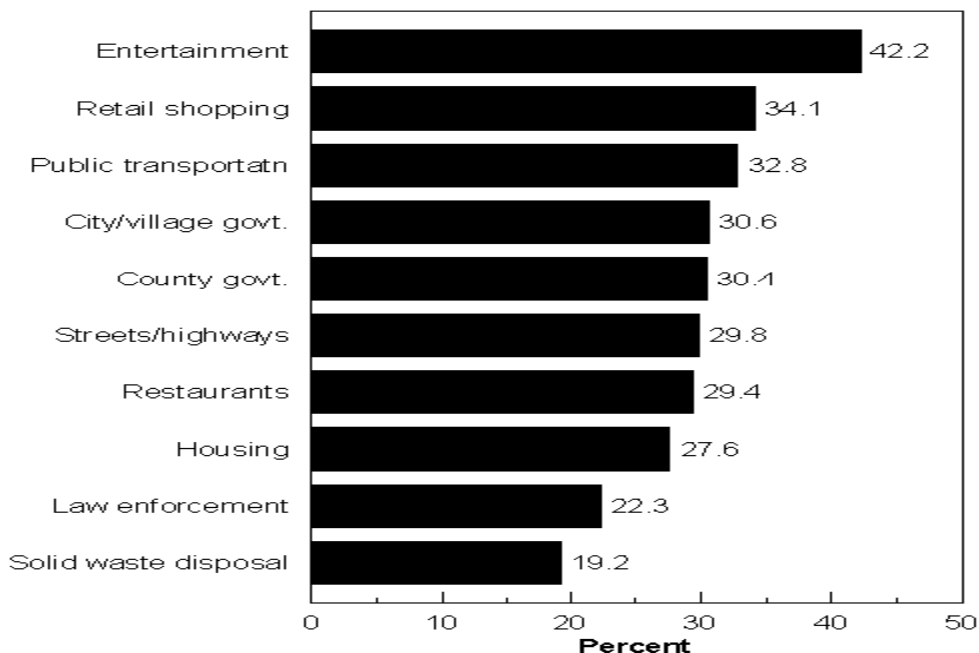


Figure 3 shows the 10 services or amenities that rural Nebraskans were most likely to report as being unavailable. Public transportation ranked highest in that 31.8 percent of the respondents said it is unavailable to them. Mental health services and the Head Start program ranked second and third, respectively, in terms of lack of availability with 16 percent citing the unavailability of mental health services, and 13 percent saying Head Start was not available.

*Dissatisfaction with Services and Amenities (Top 10)*

If the respondent indicated a service or amenity was available, they were then asked to indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with that service or amenity. The proportion of the respondents who indicated they were either “very dissatisfied” or “somewhat dissatisfied” was then calculated. The 10 services/amenities with the highest combined percentage (very satisfied plus

**Figure 4. Dissatisfaction with Services and Amenities - Nebraska Non-Metro Total (Top 10)**



Source: Nebraska Rural Poll, 1996  
 Percent very or somewhat dissatisfied with selected services and amenities when they are available.

somewhat dissatisfied) are shown in Figure 4. Entertainment was mentioned most frequently (42%) followed by retail shopping (34%) and public transportation (33%). Local government – both county and city/village – followed closely with 30 percent of the respondents indicating they were “very dissatisfied” or “somewhat dissatisfied” with each.

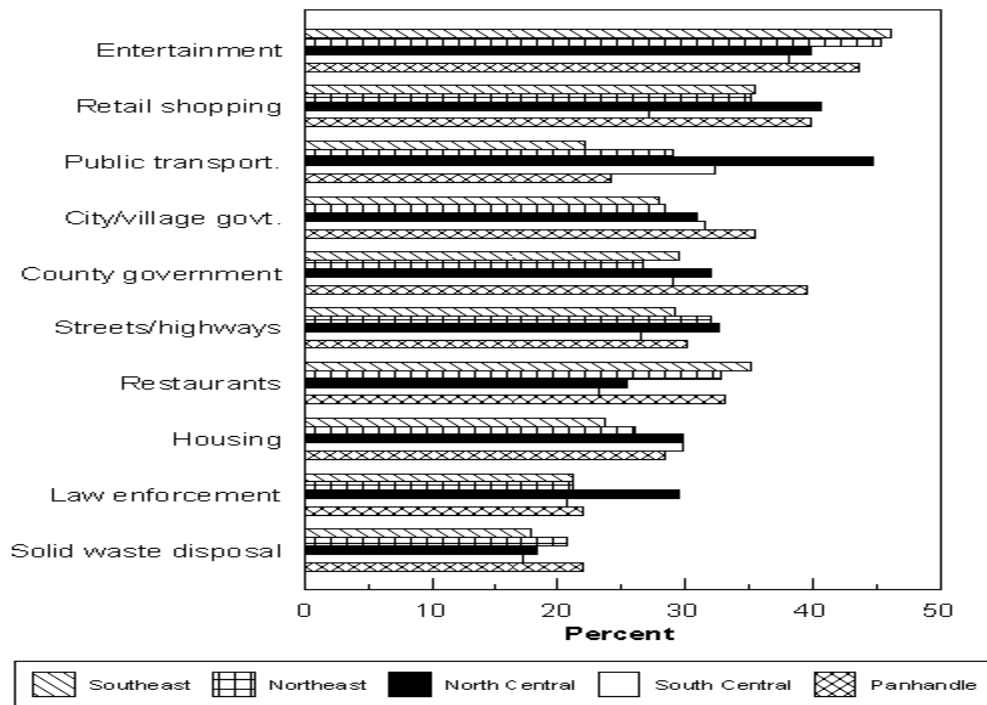
The 10 services that ranked highest with respect to dissatisfaction (Figure 4) were then analyzed to see what differences might exist:

- \* Among regions of the state (Figure 5)
- \* According to the population size of the respondent’s community (Figure 6)
- \* According to income level (Figure 7)

Selected findings are highlighted in the following sections.

*Dissatisfaction with Services/Amenities by Region*

**Figure 5. Dissatisfaction with Services/Amenities by Region**



Source: Nebraska Rural Poll, 1996  
 Percent very or somewhat dissatisfied with selected services and amenities when they are available.

The following counties are included in each region:

**Southeast** -- Butler, Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Polk, Richardson, Saline, Saunders, Seward, Thayer, York

**Northeast** -- Antelope, Boone, Burt, Cedar, Colfax, Cuming, Dixon, Dodge, Knox, Madison, Nance, Pierce, Platte, Stanton, Thurston, Wayne

**North Central** -- Arthur, Blaine, Boyd, Brown, Cherry, Custer, Garfield, Grant, Greeley, Holt, Hooker, Howard, Keith, Keya Paha, Lincoln, Logan, Loup, McPherson, Rock, Sherman, Thomas, Rock, Wheeler.

**South Central** -- Adams, Buffalo, Chase, Clay, Dawson, Dundy, Franklin, Frontier, Furnas, Gosper, Hall, Hamilton, Harlan, Hayes, Hitchcock, Kearney, Merrick, Nuckolls, Perkins, Phelps, Red Willow, Webster

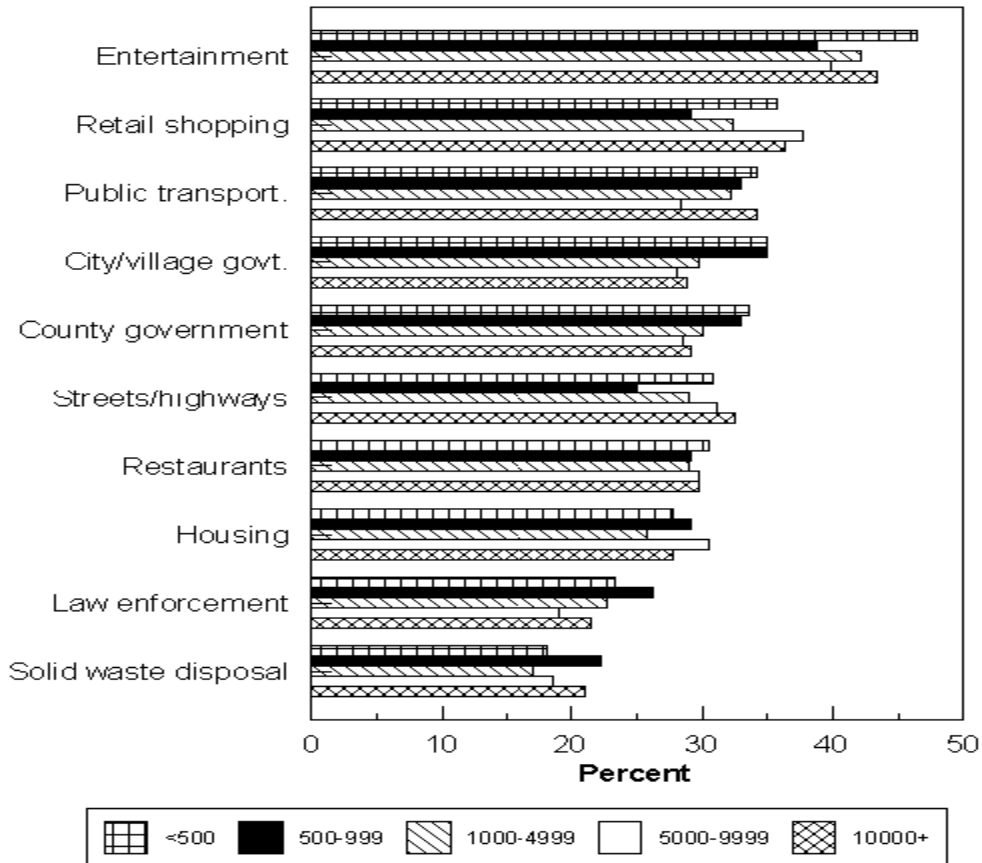
**Panhandle** -- Banner, Box Butte, Cheyenne, Dawes, Deuel, Garden, Kimball, Morrill, Scotts Bluff, Sheridan, Sioux

Although there is no systematic pattern, considerable differences in dissatisfaction with available services exist among regions for many of the services and amenities. For example, relatively few rural residents in Southeast Nebraska are dissatisfied with public transportation compared to the North Central region. As another example, rural Nebraskans in South Central Nebraska are much less dissatisfied with retail shopping compared to respondents in other regions of Nebraska. Finally, residents in North Central Nebraska are most likely to be dissatisfied with law enforcement. On the other hand, regional differences are much less pronounced with entertainment, as all regions report a high level of dissatisfaction.



*Dissatisfaction with Services and Amenities by Community Size*

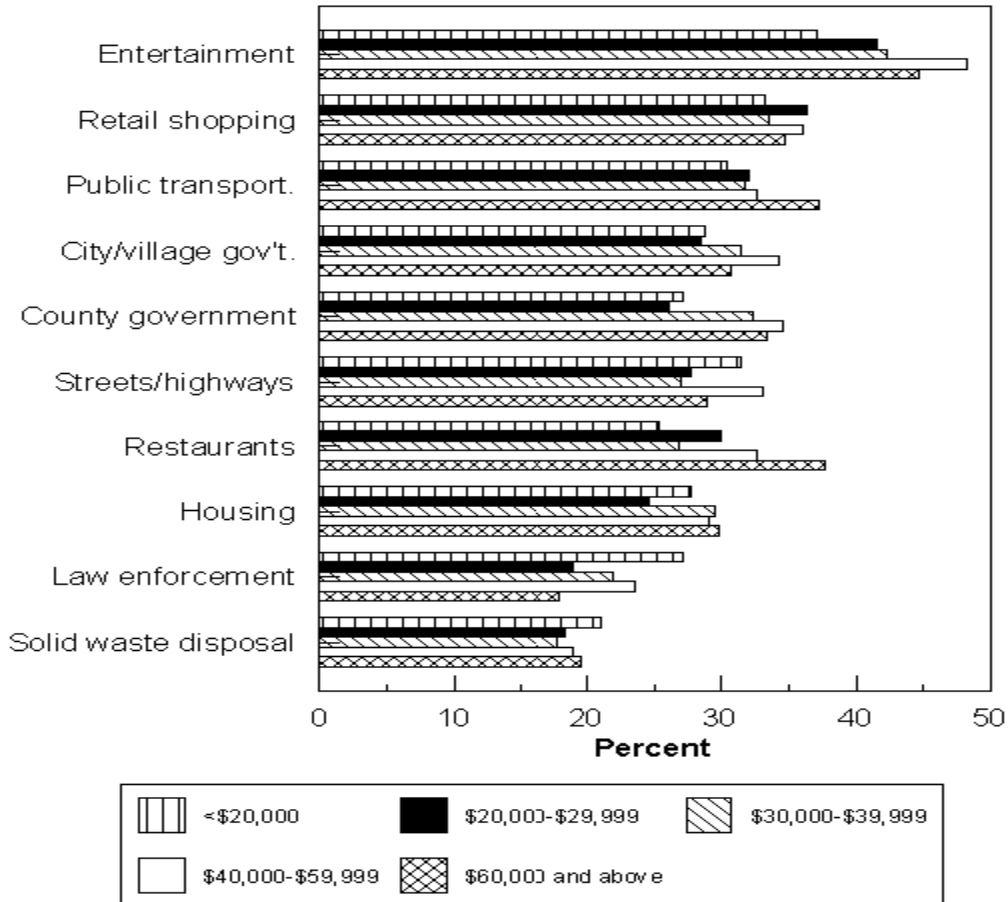
**Figure 6. Dissatisfaction with Services/Amenities by Community Size**



Source: Nebraska Rural Poll, 1996  
 Percent very or somewhat dissatisfied with selected services and amenities when they are available.

When dissatisfaction with available services or amenities was analyzed according to size of community, no major differences were noted. Contrary to expectations, community size was not necessarily correlated with the dissatisfaction of available services or amenities. Respondents living in communities with a population of 10,000 or more were not necessarily less likely to be dissatisfied with services and amenities than were respondents from smaller communities (Figure 6).

**Figure 7. Dissatisfaction with Services/Amenities by Income Level**



Source: Nebraska Rural Poll, 1996  
 Percent very or somewhat dissatisfied with selected services and amenities when they are available

When examining the level of dissatisfaction with those services that are available, there are no systematic differences in relation to income. In the case of several services (e.g., entertainment, public transportation, and restaurants), dissatisfaction tends to increase as income increases. However, with the remaining seven services, no such pattern is evident.

## CONCLUSIONS

As policy makers and local officials reflect on the findings of this statewide study it is important to understand that these findings are like a snapshot. The results are the beliefs, attitudes and opinions of rural Nebraska residents at a given point in time. Yet there are some basic policy questions and considerations this research may help illuminate.

While nearly 60 percent of rural Nebraskans see themselves as being better off than their parents, a much smaller proportion feel they are better off than they were five years ago (36%), and an even smaller proportion (32%) feel they will be better off ten years from now. Those living in larger rural communities generally assessed their future more positively than those living in smaller places. Similarly, those living in smaller places tended to feel they were somewhat more powerless or somehow had less control over their lives than those living in larger communities. While there was some general pessimism at work – especially among residents of the smallest places – a surprisingly small proportion of the respondents (typically 20 percent or less) had specific negative feelings or situations to report, e.g., only 5 percent said they felt life was hopeless and 15 percent said they felt people didn't care what happened to them.

The data also indicate that, on average, rural Nebraskans rank their family, the health of their family, and their own health as very important contributors to their overall well-being, while being asked to relocate was not reported as being important to their well-being. With respect to services and amenities, public transportation was the service or amenity most likely to be noted as being unavailable to rural Nebraskans. Even when certain services or amenities were available, Nebraska's rural residents were not necessarily satisfied with those services. For example, over 40 percent were dissatisfied with the entertainment available, and a considerable segment of the rural population was also dissatisfied with retail shopping and their local government (both county and city/village).

Table 1. Measures of Well-Being in Relation to Community Structure, Community Attributes, and Individual Attributes {in percentages}

	<b>Five Years Ago</b>				<b>Compared to Parents</b>				<b>Ten Years From Now</b>			
	<i>Worse Off</i>	<i>Same</i>	<i>Better Off</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Worse Off</i>	<i>Same</i>	<i>Better Off</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Worse Off</i>	<i>Same</i>	<i>Better Off</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b><u>Community Structure</u></b>												
<i>Population of Town</i>				*								*
<100	35 (17)	41 (20)	24 (12)	(49)	24 (12)	31 (15)	45 (22)	(49)	41 (20)	43 (21)	16 (8)	(49)
100-499	31 (123)	37 (147)	32 (127)	(397)	24 (94)	20 (78)	56 (225)	(397)	34 (135)	36 (141)	30 (116)	(392)
500-999	27 (90)	40 (135)	33 (110)	(335)	23 (75)	18 (61)	59 (197)	(333)	27 (90)	35 (113)	38 (124)	(327)
1000-4999	26 (201)	41 (326)	33 (263)	(790)	20 (158)	21 (164)	59 (468)	(790)	32 (245)	38 (290)	30 (236)	(771)
5000-9999	27 (91)	30 (99)	43 (142)	(332)	19 (62)	20 (67)	61 (202)	(331)	32 (102)	36 (116)	32 (104)	(322)
10,000+	23 (164)	34 (247)	43 (305)	(716)	21 (148)	17 (122)	62 (443)	(713)	28 (198)	35 (248)	37 (255)	(701)
<i>Total</i>				(2619)				(2613)				(2562)
<b><u>Community Attributes</u></b>												
<i>Friendly</i>				*				*				*
(1-3) Unfriendly	37 (95)	37 (97)	26 (68)	(260)	31 (82)	19 (49)	50 (129)	(260)	39 (99)	33 (84)	28 (72)	(255)
(4) No Opinion	28 (121)	43 (186)	29 (122)	(429)	24 (105)	23 (97)	53 (226)	(428)	35 (150)	38 (159)	27 (114)	(423)
(5-7) Friendly	24 (444)	36 (681)	40 (744)	(1869)	19 (351)	19 (360)	62 (1151)	(1862)	28 (506)	37 (687)	35 (633)	(1826)
<i>Total</i>				(2558)				(2550)				(2504)
<i>Trusting</i>				*				*				*
(1-3) Distrusting	33 (140)	37 (157)	30 (127)	(424)	29 (125)	20 (84)	51 (215)	(424)	39 (162)	32 (135)	29 (121)	(418)
(4) No Opinion	30 (157)	37 (195)	33 (174)	(526)	22 (115)	22 (114)	56 (294)	(523)	33 (171)	35 (182)	32 (165)	(518)
(5-7) Trusting	22 (347)	37 (577)	41 (626)	(1550)	19 (291)	18 (285)	63 (970)	(1546)	26 (402)	39 (590)	35 (524)	(1516)
<i>Total</i>				(2500)				(2493)				(2452)
<i>Supportive</i>				*				*				*
(1-3) Hostile	36 (135)	35 (132)	29 (111)	(378)	30 (115)	19 (71)	51 (192)	(378)	38 (141)	32 (122)	30 (112)	(375)
(4) No Opinion	28 (164)	40 (229)	32 (188)	(581)	22 (125)	22 (128)	56 (327)	(580)	31 (177)	35 (196)	34 (195)	(568)
(5-7) Supportive	22 (345)	37 (565)	41 (630)	(1540)	19 (287)	19 (286)	62 (960)	(1533)	27 (412)	39 (587)	34 (509)	(1508)
<i>Total</i>				(2499)				(2491)				(2451)
<i>Change in Community</i>				*				*				*
Worse	42 (250)	34 (202)	24 (148)	(600)	30 (181)	19 (112)	51 (305)	(598)	49 (286)	25 (148)	26 (155)	(589)
Same	45 (241)	44 (434)	31 (302)	(977)	21 (202)	25 (242)	54 (530)	(974)	28 (270)	43 (406)	29 (278)	(954)
Better	18 (177)	34 (337)	48 (473)	(987)	16 (157)	15 (151)	69 (676)	(984)	23 (219)	38 (371)	39 (377)	(967)
<i>Total</i>				(2564)				(2556)				(2510)

\* Statistically Significant at .05 Level.

Note: Numbers in parentheses are actual numbers of observations.

Table 1. Measures of Well-Being in Relation to Community Structure, Community Attributes, and Individual Attributes {in percentages}

	<b>Five Years Ago</b>				<b>Compared to Parents</b>				<b>Ten Years From Now</b>			
	<i>Worse Off</i>	<i>Same</i>	<i>Better Off</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Worse Off</i>	<i>Same</i>	<i>Better Off</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Worse Off</i>	<i>Same</i>	<i>Better Off</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>Individual Attributes</b>												
<i>Income Level</i>				*				*				*
<\$10,000	40 (77)	49 (96)	11 (22)	(195)	29 (56)	22 (43)	49 (95)	(194)	44 (83)	35 (66)	21 (40)	(189)
\$10,000-19,999	36 (156)	42 (182)	22 (94)	(432)	25 (107)	21 (91)	54 (231)	(429)	34 (143)	40 (166)	26 (106)	(415)
\$20,000-29,999	30 (138)	38 (179)	32 (151)	(468)	24 (111)	22 (105)	54 (251)	(467)	34 (157)	38 (177)	28 (127)	(461)
\$30,000-39,999	24 (107)	35 (157)	41 (185)	(449)	21 (96)	18 (82)	61 (271)	(449)	29 (128)	37 (165)	34 (148)	(441)
\$40,000-49,999	20 (71)	36 (131)	44 (162)	(364)	18 (66)	17 (62)	65 (235)	(363)	27 (97)	34 (124)	39 (141)	(362)
\$50,000-59,999	15 (35)	34 (79)	51 (116)	(230)	17 (38)	18 (42)	65 (150)	(230)	24 (54)	34 (79)	42 (95)	(228)
\$60,000-74,999	24 (43)	27 (48)	49 (87)	(178)	16 (28)	17 (30)	67 (120)	(178)	25 (44)	32 (58)	43 (76)	(178)
\$75,000+	11 (19)	25 (42)	64 (109)	(170)	11 (18)	10 (18)	79 (134)	(170)	19 (32)	34 (58)	47 (80)	(170)
<i>Total</i>				(2486)				(2480)				(2444)
<i>Age</i>				*				*				*
19-29	12 (17)	29 (40)	59 (83)	(140)	22 (31)	21 (30)	57 (79)	(140)	12 (17)	21 (29)	67 (92)	(138)
30-39	23 (108)	26 (118)	51 (237)	(463)	25 (117)	20 (93)	55 (252)	(462)	13 (61)	32 (148)	55 (251)	(460)
40-49	29 (185)	32 (204)	39 (244)	(633)	26 (167)	20 (125)	54 (340)	(632)	26 (166)	30 (190)	43 (273)	(629)
50-64	31 (210)	36 (243)	33 (225)	(678)	23 (158)	18 (124)	59 (396)	(678)	40 (268)	38 (257)	22 (148)	(673)
65+	23 (176)	54 (413)	23 (174)	(763)	11 (85)	19 (142)	70 (529)	(756)	42 (303)	47 (341)	11 (77)	(721)
<i>Total</i>				(2677)				(2668)				(2621)
<i>Occupation</i>				*				*				*
Other	27 (38)	40 (55)	33 (46)	(139)	20 (28)	28 (39)	52 (72)	(139)	37 (50)	31 (42)	32 (44)	(136)
Manual Laborer	28 (29)	41 (43)	31 (32)	(104)	25 (26)	19 (20)	56 (58)	(104)	30 (31)	38 (39)	32 (32)	(102)
Skilled Laborer	24 (57)	38 (93)	38 (91)	(241)	20 (48)	21 (50)	59 (143)	(241)	29 (69)	31 (75)	40 (95)	(239)
Farming/Ranching	37 (122)	32 (104)	31 (103)	(329)	32 (104)	20 (65)	48 (160)	(329)	29 (94)	34 (111)	37 (120)	(325)
Service	32 (48)	33 (50)	35 (52)	(150)	25 (37)	27 (40)	48 (73)	(150)	27 (40)	44 (65)	29 (42)	(147)
Sales	27 (48)	27 (48)	46 (82)	(178)	21 (38)	18 (32)	61 (108)	(178)	24 (42)	37 (65)	39 (69)	(176)
Administrative Support	16 (15)	39 (37)	45 (42)	(94)	20 (19)	16 (15)	64 (60)	(94)	25 (23)	41 (38)	34 (32)	(93)
Prof./Technical/Admin.	22 (140)	27 (175)	51 (327)	(642)	22 (138)	16 (103)	62 (401)	(642)	23 (150)	31 (197)	46 (291)	(638)
<i>Total</i>				(1877)				(1877)				(1856)

\* Statistically Significant at .05 Level.

Note: Numbers in parentheses are actual numbers of observations.

Table 2. People are powerless to control their own lives.... {in percentages}

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>Percentages</i>					
<b><u>Community Structure</u></b>						
<i>Population of Town</i>						
<100	13.0 (6)	30.4 (14)	17.4 (8)	28.3 (13)	10.9 (5)	(46)
100-499	15.6 (60)	34.8 (134)	11.4 (44)	29.6 (114)	8.6 (33)	(385)
500-999	17.5 (57)	40.2 (131)	10.1 (33)	25.2 (82)	7.1 (23)	(326)
1000-4999	14.2 (109)	38.8 (298)	10.8 (83)	28.9 (222)	7.3 (56)	(768)
5000-9999	13.8 (44)	43.7 (136)	10.4 (33)	24.8 (79)	8.2 (26)	(318)
10,000+	18.3 (125)	43.7 (298)	9.4 (64)	24.0 (164)	4.5 (31)	(682)
<i>Total</i>						(2525)
<b><u>Community Attributes</u></b>						
<i>Friendly</i>						
(1-3) Unfriendly	11.5 (29)	32.9 (83)	10.3 (26)	34.5 (87)	10.7 (27)	(252)
(4) No Opinion	12.1 (51)	40.0 (168)	12.1 (51)	27.6 (116)	8.1 (34)	(420)
(5-7) Friendly	17.2 (311)	41.8 (755)	10.0 (181)	25.0 (452)	6.0 (109)	(1808)
<i>Total</i>						(2480)
<i>Trusting</i>						
(1-3) Distrusting	14.5 (59)	34.8 (142)	9.8 (40)	32.4 (132)	8.6 (35)	(408)
(4) No Opinion	10.3 (53)	43.0 (221)	10.3 (53)	28.2 (145)	8.2 (42)	(514)
(5-7) Trusting	18.3 (275)	41.9 (629)	10.3 (154)	24.1 (361)	5.5 (82)	(1501)
<i>Total</i>						(2423)
<i>Supportive</i>						
(1-3) Hostile	14.9 (55)	35.4 (131)	8.9 (33)	30.3 (112)	10.5 (39)	(370)
(4) No Opinion	11.9 (67)	41.7 (235)	11.3 (64)	27.8 (157)	7.3 (41)	(564)
(5-7) Supportive	17.8 (265)	42.2 (627)	10.2 (151)	24.6 (366)	5.2 (78)	(1487)
<i>Total</i>						(2421)
<i>Change in Community</i>						
Worse	13.9 (80)	34.6 (199)	7.8 (45)	31.8 (183)	11.8 (68)	(575)
Same	12.3 (117)	37.9 (362)	13.6 (130)	28.8 (275)	7.3 (70)	(954)
Better	19.9 (189)	45.7 (434)	9.3 (88)	21.1 (200)	4.1 (39)	(950)
<i>Total</i>						(2479)
<b><u>Individual Attributes</u></b>						
<i>Income Level</i>						
<\$10,000	10.9 (20)	23.0 (42)	20.2 (37)	30.1 (55)	15.8 (29)	(183)
\$10,000-19,999	11.6 (48)	35.9 (149)	10.6 (44)	33.0 (137)	8.9 (37)	(415)
\$20,000-29,999	12.4 (56)	42.2 (191)	10.4 (47)	29.1 (132)	6.0 (27)	(453)
\$30,000-39,999	16.1 (71)	40.3 (178)	12.0 (53)	24.2 (107)	7.5 (33)	(442)
\$40,000-49,999	17.4 (62)	44.3 (158)	8.7 (31)	25.5 (91)	4.2 (15)	(357)
\$50,000-59,999	17.6 (39)	53.6 (119)	5.9 (13)	19.8 (44)	3.2 (7)	(222)
\$60,000-74,999	24.1 (40)	40.4 (67)	10.8 (18)	21.1 (35)	3.6 (6)	(166)
\$75,000+	27.6 (45)	44.2 (72)	5.5 (9)	19.0 (31)	3.7 (6)	(163)
<i>Total</i>						(2401)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are actual numbers of observations.

Table 2. People are powerless to control their own lives.... {in percentages}

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Age</i>						
19-29	23.9 (33)	38.4 (53)	8.7 (12)	23.2 (32)	5.8 (8)	(138)
30-39	20.2 (92)	41.9 (191)	7.9 (36)	24.3 (111)	5.7 (26)	(456)
40-49	18.3 (113)	43.2 (266)	9.9 (61)	23.5 (145)	5.0 (31)	(616)
50-64	13.2 (85)	40.6 (261)	9.3 (60)	29.1 (187)	7.8 (50)	(643)
65+	11.4 (83)	34.3 (250)	15.3 (111)	30.0 (218)	8.8 (64)	(726)
<i>Total</i>						(2579)
<i>Occupation</i>						
Other	11.5 (18)	39.1 (61)	13.5 (21)	25.0 (39)	10.9 (17)	(156)
Manual Laborer	8.5 (10)	30.5 (36)	16.1 (19)	33.1 (39)	11.9 (14)	(118)
Skilled Laborer	12.3 (32)	43.7 (114)	11.5 (30)	28.0 (73)	4.6 (12)	(261)
Farming/Ranching	16.2 (61)	33.7 (127)	9.8 (37)	32.4 (122)	8.0 (30)	(377)
Service	15.2 (26)	38.6 (66)	10.5 (18)	28.7 (49)	7.0 (12)	(171)
Sales	18.7 (35)	44.9 (84)	8.0 (15)	20.9 (39)	7.5 (14)	(187)
Administrative Support	14.4 (15)	54.8 (57)	1.9 (2)	24.0 (25)	4.8 (5)	(104)
Prof./Technical/Admin.	21.2 (143)	45.0 (303)	7.1 (48)	21.8 (147)	4.8 (32)	(673)
<i>Total</i>						(2047)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are actual numbers of observations.

Table 3. Personal Well-Being {in percentages}

	<i>Never</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>All the Time</i>	<i>Total</i>
How often do you feel you don't enjoy doing things anymore?	8.8 (238)	36.3 (980)	43.3 (1170)	10.5 (283)	1.2 (31)	(2702)
How often do you feel that people don't care what happens to you?	15.4 (414)	38.2 (1029)	31.3 (843)	13.0 (350)	2.2 (59)	(2695)
How often do you feel that life is hopeless?	45.4 (1216)	34.3 (920)	15.3 (410)	4.1 (110)	0.9 (25)	(2681)
Have you ever had periods of days or weeks when you couldn't get going?	21.3 (576)	39.2 (1058)	32.1 (867)	6.3 (171)	1.1 (29)	(2701)
How often do you have trouble sleeping?	17.4 (467)	39.8 (1069)	28.3 (760)	11.8 (317)	2.8 (75)	(2688)
How often would you say things don't turn out the way you want them to?	1.2 (31)	26.9 (724)	56.4 (1518)	14.1 (379)	1.5 (41)	(2693)
When things don't turn out, how often would you say you blame yourself?	4.1 (110)	22.5 (604)	51.9 (1395)	19.3 (519)	2.3 (62)	(2690)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are actual numbers of observations.



Table 4. Importance of Selected Factors Affecting Individual Well-Being (in percentages)

	<i>Does Not Apply</i>	<i>Not Important</i>		<i>Somewhat Important</i>		<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Total</i>
Health of Your Family	1.68 (45)	1.01 (27)	0.45 (12)	1.82 (49)	12.66 (340)	82.39 (2213)	2686
Your Family	1.89 (51)	1.15 (31)	0.81 (22)	3.04 (82)	12.07 (326)	81.04 (2188)	2700
Your Health	0.48 (13)	1.00 (27)	0.85 (23)	3.70 (100)	14.86 (402)	79.12 (2141)	2706
Education of Your Children	18.37 (491)	1.83 (49)	0.94 (25)	3.97 (106)	14.03 (375)	60.87 (1627)	2673
Your Financial Security During Retirement	1.89 (51)	1.30 (35)	2.34 (63)	10.95 (295)	26.17 (705)	57.35 (1545)	2694
Your Religion/Spirituality	1.74 (47)	3.29 (89)	3.48 (94)	14.51 (392)	21.50 (581)	55.48 (1499)	2702
Local Fire Protection	0.52 (14)	1.33 (36)	2.11 (57)	13.00 (352)	32.80 (888)	50.24 (1360)	2707
Your Current Income Level	2.12 (57)	1.30 (35)	2.05 (55)	16.98 (456)	28.29 (760)	49.26 (1323)	2686
Your Friends	0.89 (24)	1.56 (42)	2.53 (68)	16.32 (439)	30.89 (831)	47.81 (1286)	2690
Respect from Others	0.97 (26)	2.08 (56)	3.27 (88)	17.02 (458)	30.21 (813)	46.45 (1250)	2691
Your Job Security	18.85 (504)	3.22 (86)	1.98 (53)	9.05 (242)	22.14 (592)	44.76 (1197)	2674
Local Police Protection	1.11 (30)	1.96 (53)	3.14 (85)	17.23 (466)	34.49 (933)	42.07 (1138)	2705
Your Job Satisfaction	17.52 (469)	2.61 (70)	1.64 (44)	9.19 (246)	29.14 (780)	39.90 (1068)	2677
Certainty Concerning Your Future	6.56 (175)	3.26 (87)	4.61 (123)	20.21 (539)	27.03 (721)	38.32 (1022)	2667
Local Public Schools	7.74 (208)	3.38 (91)	3.94 (106)	18.56 (499)	29.75 (800)	36.63 (985)	2689
The Natural Environment	2.28 (61)	2.92 (78)	5.12 (137)	25.23 (675)	31.36 (839)	33.08 (885)	2675
Your Education	7.57 (203)	4.03 (108)	4.55 (122)	21.04 (564)	30.22 (810)	32.57 (873)	2680
Job Opportunities for You	20.94 (560)	5.39 (144)	4.00 (107)	15.37 (411)	23.15 (619)	31.15 (833)	2674
Time to Relax during the Week	7.75 (208)	3.84 (103)	4.92 (132)	25.83 (693)	27.99 (751)	29.67 (796)	2683
Your Community	0.86 (23)	2.23 (60)	4.73 (127)	29.61 (795)	34.79 (934)	27.78 (746)	2685
Vacation Time	9.82 (263)	5.49 (147)	6.91 (185)	26.33 (705)	25.84 (692)	25.62 (686)	2678
Local Parks	3.27 (88)	5.09 (137)	11.45 (308)	37.94 (1021)	26.16 (704)	16.09 (433)	2691
Ability to Relocate	20.08 (535)	17.98 (479)	11.37 (303)	26.01 (693)	13.48 (359)	11.07 (295)	2664

Note: Numbers in parentheses are actual numbers of observations.

Table 6. Level of Satisfaction with Factors Affecting Individual Well-Being {in percentages}

	<i>Does Not Apply</i>	<i>Very Satisfied</i>		<i>No Opinion</i>		<i>Very Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Total</i>
Your Family	1.86 (50)	49.89 (1341)	38.13 (1025)	4.72 (127)	3.16 (85)	2.23 (60)	2688
Your Religion/Spirituality	1.97 (53)	41.41 (1114)	37.14 (999)	14.05 (378)	3.94 (106)	1.49 (40)	2690
Your Friends	0.93 (25)	37.06 (997)	45.50 (1224)	11.64 (313)	3.49 (94)	1.38 (37)	2690
Health of Your Family	2.17 (58)	36.75 (980)	47.69 (1272)	5.10 (136)	5.85 (156)	2.44 (65)	2667
Education of Your Children	18.16 (485)	26.69 (713)	39.24 (1048)	7.34 (196)	6.59 (176)	1.98 (53)	2671
Your Health	0.41 (11)	25.45 (682)	50.52 (1354)	7.01 (188)	12.09 (324)	4.51 (121)	2680
Respect from Others	1.27 (34)	23.69 (634)	52.32 (1400)	14.13 (378)	6.09 (163)	2.50 (67)	2676
Your Education	7.40 (198)	22.27 (596)	45.10 (1207)	12.74 (341)	10.35 (277)	2.13 (57)	2676
Your Job Satisfaction	19.92 (531)	17.19 (458)	36.74 (979)	10.77 (287)	10.96 (292)	4.43 (118)	2665
Your Community	0.86 (23)	16.67 (448)	49.24 (1323)	16.26 (437)	13.44 (361)	3.54 (95)	2687
Your Job Security	21.44 (573)	14.71 (393)	33.57 (897)	12.16 (325)	12.43 (332)	5.69 (152)	2672
Vacation Time	10.53 (282)	13.62 (365)	35.83 (960)	17.88 (479)	16.35 (438)	5.79 (155)	2679
Time to Relax during the Week	7.43 (199)	13.45 (360)	38.44 (1029)	17.59 (471)	17.11 (458)	5.98 (160)	2677
Your Current Income Level	2.76 (74)	11.23 (301)	41.55 (1114)	9.10 (244)	23.01 (617)	12.35 (331)	2681
Certainty Concerning Your Future	7.27 (195)	9.31 (250)	33.20 (891)	20.90 (561)	20.64 (554)	8.68 (233)	2684
Your Financial Security During Retirement	6.44 (173)	9.19 (247)	32.51 (874)	10.97 (295)	26.38 (709)	14.51 (390)	2688
Job Opportunities for You	23.20 (620)	7.37 (197)	21.97 (587)	19.42 (519)	18.53 (495)	9.51 (254)	2672
Ability to Relocate	22.66 (607)	6.20 (166)	18.44 (494)	37.22 (997)	11.12 (298)	4.37 (117)	2679

Note: Numbers in parentheses are actual numbers of observations.

Center Working Paper 96-1.08

This project benefitted greatly from the in-kind support provided through the Partnership for Rural Nebraska and the individuals and organizations associated with the Partnership. A special note of appreciation is extended to the staff and student workers in the Center for Rural Community Revitalization and Development for data entry and administrative and staff support.

\* Center Working Papers are used to present preliminary policy and programmatic ideas and research findings to a limited audience in a timely manner. Working Papers have not necessarily been peer reviewed and the content is the sole responsibility of the author(s). Any questions, suggestions, or concerns should be sent directly to the author(s).

© graphic used with permission of the designer, Richard Hawkins, Design & Illustration, P.O. /Box 21181, Des Moines, IA 50321-0101

Phone: 515.288.4431, FAX: 515.243.1979

It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln not to discriminate on the basis of sex, age, disability, race, color, religion, marital status, veteran's status, national or ethnic origin, or sexual orientation.