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Attributes of a Successful Community: Responses from Rural Nebraskans

John C. Allen

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, jallen1@unl.edu

Rebecca J. Vogt

Center for Applied Rural Innovation, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, rvogt2@unl.edu

Sam Cordes

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, scordes1@unl.edu

Randolph L. Cantrell

Nebraska Rural Initiative, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, rcantrell1@unl.edu

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CENTER FOR APPLIED RURAL INNOVATION

A Research Report*

**Attributes of a Successful Community:
Responses from Rural Nebraskans**

2002 Nebraska Rural Poll Results

John C. Allen
Rebecca Vogt
Sam Cordes
Randolph L. Cantrell

Nebraska
INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE
& NATURAL RESOURCES

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Phone: 515.288.4431, FAX: 515.243.1979

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All of the Center's research reports detailing Nebraska Rural Poll results are located on the Center's World Wide Web page at <http://cari.unl.edu/ruralpoll.htm>.

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Executive Summary

Many rural communities have experienced population declines during the past several decades. However, rural communities have also been typically viewed as having many positive characteristics. So, what do rural Nebraskans look for in a community? What characteristics are present in their current community? How do they perceive rural Nebraska as a whole? Do their perceptions differ by the size of their community or their age?

This report details 2,841 responses to the 2002 Nebraska Rural Poll, the seventh annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about successful rural communities and their perceptions of rural Nebraska. Based on these analyses, some key findings emerged:

- ***Most rural Nebraskans believe the following characteristics are absolutely essential in a community: a quality school system, sense of personal safety, affordable medical services, quality jobs/economic opportunities, affordable housing, a clean and attractive natural environment, friendly people, well maintained infrastructure, and a sense of community among residents.*** Over one-half of the respondents say each of these characteristics are absolutely essential in a community in order for them to have a high quality of life.
- ***Over one-third say the following are present to a great extent in their current community: a quality school system, lack of urban congestion, a clean and attractive natural environment, sense of personal safety, and friendly people.***
- ***Older respondents are more likely than younger respondents to say that each characteristic is present in their community to a great extent.*** For example, 60 percent of the respondents age 65 and older state that a quality school system describes their community to a great extent. However, only 31 percent of the persons age 19 to 29 share this opinion.
- ***Residents of smaller communities are more likely than residents of larger communities to say they have many social dimensions present in their community to a great extent.*** Persons living in or near smaller communities are more likely than those living in or near larger communities to say their community has the following to a great extent: lack of urban congestion, a quality school system (K - 12), a clean and attractive natural environment, friendly people, a sense of community among residents, and low cost of living.
- ***Residents of larger communities are more likely than residents of smaller communities to say they have more specialized services.*** Persons living in or near the largest communities are more likely to say they have the following to a great extent: senior citizen programs, affordable medical services, availability of college classes, a local

newspaper willing to report controversial items, child care services, well maintained infrastructure, a willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally, recreational opportunities, leadership opportunities, adequate information technology, cultural opportunities, availability of public transportation, and quality jobs/economic opportunities.

- ***Many differences exist between what rural Nebraskans believe is essential and what is currently present in their community.*** For most of the characteristics listed, the proportion saying each is absolutely essential is larger than the proportion saying it describes their current community to a great extent. As an example, 63 percent of rural Nebraskans say having quality jobs/economic opportunities is absolutely essential. However, only six percent say their community has this to a great extent.
- ***Most rural Nebraskans would describe rural Nebraska as having commonly shared values, having strong religious beliefs, work-oriented, self-sufficient, having open spaces, friendly people, peaceful, tough/resilient, and having a strong sense of family.***
- ***Younger respondents are more likely than older respondents to believe that rural Nebraska has a commitment to community.*** Forty-nine percent of the persons age 19 to 39 say rural Nebraska has a commitment to community. However, only 35 percent of the persons age 65 and older share this opinion.

Introduction

Many rural communities have experienced population declines during the past several decades. However, rural communities have also been typically viewed as having many positive characteristics. So, what do rural Nebraskans look for in a community? What characteristics are present in their current community? How do they perceive rural Nebraska as a whole? Do their perceptions differ by the size of their community or their age? This paper provides a detailed analysis of these questions.

The 2002 Nebraska Rural Poll is the seventh annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about successful rural communities and their perceptions of rural Nebraska.

Methodology and Respondent Profile

This study is based on 2,841 responses from Nebraskans living in the 87 non-metropolitan counties in the state. A self-administered questionnaire was mailed in February and March to approximately 6,400 randomly selected households.

Metropolitan counties not included in the sample were Cass, Dakota, Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy and Washington. The 14-page questionnaire included questions pertaining to well-being, community, work, successful rural communities, and technology use. This paper reports only results from the successful rural communities portion of the survey.

A 44% response rate was achieved using the total design method (Dillman, 1978). The sequence of steps used follow:

1. A pre-notification letter was sent requesting participation in the study.
2. The questionnaire was mailed with an informal letter signed by the project director approximately 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 is 55 years of age. Seventy-three percent are married (Appendix Table 1¹) and sixty-eight percent live within the city limits of a town or village. On average, respondents have lived in Nebraska 48 years and have lived in their current community 42 years. Fifty-seven percent are living in or near towns or villages with populations less than 5,000.

Fifty-six percent of the respondents reported their approximate household income from all sources, before taxes, for 2001 was below \$40,000. Thirty percent reported incomes over \$50,000. Ninety-three percent have attained at least a high school diploma.

Seventy-two percent were employed in 2001 on a full-time, part-time, or seasonal basis. Twenty-four percent are retired. Thirty-four percent of those employed reported working in a professional, technical or administrative occupation. Seventeen percent indicated they were farmers or ranchers. The

¹ 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).

employed respondents reported having to drive an average of eight miles, one way, to their primary job.

Successful Rural Communities

To determine what characteristics rural Nebraskans are looking for in a community and what is present in their current community, they were asked two questions. The first asked, “How essential or necessary are the following characteristics of a community in order for you to have a high quality of life?” The answer responses included: not at all essential; nice, but not essential; important, but not essential; and absolutely essential.

Over one-half of the respondents feel the following characteristics are absolutely essential in a community: a quality school system (K - 12) (79%), sense of personal safety (77%), affordable medical services (73%), quality jobs/economic opportunities (63%), affordable housing (58%), a clean and attractive natural environment (58%), friendly people (56%), well maintained infrastructure (55%) and a sense of community among residents (51%) (Table 1).

Less than one-quarter believe the following are absolutely essential: being close to relatives/in-laws (24%), recreational opportunities (24%), cultural opportunities (23%), a willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally (22%), and availability of public transportation (21%).

The perceived necessity of these community characteristics are examined by community size and age (Appendix Table 2). Some differences do emerge by age. For persons

age 64 and younger, a quality school system was the top-ranked characteristic of a community (based on the proportion saying it is “absolutely essential”). However, persons age 65 and older rank affordable medical services as the community characteristic most essential for them.

Some other characteristics are also ranked differently by the various age groups. Quality jobs/economic opportunities, affordable housing, adequate information technology, and recreational opportunities are all ranked slightly higher by the younger respondents as compared to those who are older. The following items are ranked slightly higher by the older persons as compared to the younger respondents: well maintained infrastructure, a local newspaper willing to report controversial items, and availability of public transportation.

Not many differences occur by community size. All of the community size groups rank a quality school system as the characteristic most essential to them. However, residents living in or near the smaller communities of the state rank lack of urban congestion and being close to relatives/in-laws slightly higher than residents living in or near larger communities. Residents of the larger communities, though, rank the availability of college classes higher than do the residents of the smaller communities.

Rural Nebraskans were also asked the extent to which these same characteristics are present in their current community. The exact question wording was, “To what extent do the following characteristics describe your current community?” The answer categories were: not at all, very little, to some extent, and a great extent.

Table 1. Essential Characteristics of a Community

	Not at all essential	Nice, but not essential	Important, but not essential	Absolutely essential
A quality school system (K - 12)	2%	3%	16%	79%
Sense of personal safety	1	2	20	77
Affordable medical services	1	3	22	73
Quality jobs/economic opportunities	4	7	27	63
Affordable housing	2	8	32	58
A clean and attractive natural environment	1	7	33	58
Friendly people	1	6	37	56
Well maintained infrastructure	1	7	36	55
A sense of community among residents	1	9	39	51
Low cost of living	2	12	40	47
Acceptance of newcomers	2	10	43	46
Senior citizen programs	5	15	41	39
A local newspaper willing to report controversial items	6	15	41	39
Lack of urban congestion	7	17	39	37
Child care services	13	15	37	36
Availability of college classes	7	20	42	31
Leadership opportunities	5	19	48	28
Adequate information technology	5	21	47	27
Being close to relatives/in-laws	4	24	47	24
Recreational opportunities	3	22	51	24
Cultural opportunities	6	26	46	23
A willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally	12	20	46	22
Availability of public transportation	14	31	34	21

Over one-third of the respondents say the following are present to “a great extent” in their community: a quality school system (K - 12) (47%), lack of urban congestion (47%), a clean and attractive natural environment (43%), sense of personal safety (42%), and friendly people (38%) (Table 2).

The extent to which these characteristics are present in the community are examined by age and community size (Appendix Table 3). When comparing the responses by age, the older respondents are more likely than the younger respondents to say each characteristic is present in their current community to a great extent. For example, 60 percent of the respondents age 65 and older state that a quality school system describes their community to a great extent. However, only 31 percent of the persons age 19 to 29 share this opinion.

The only exception to this pattern occurs with the characteristic of being close to relatives/in-laws. In that case, the younger respondents are more likely than the older respondents to say that they have that to a great extent in their community.

Many differences exist by community size. For the following characteristics, the residents living in or near smaller communities are more likely than those living in or near larger communities to say they are present to a great extent: lack of urban congestion, a quality school system (K - 12), a clean and attractive natural environment, friendly people, a sense of community among residents, and low cost of living. As an example, 58 percent of the persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 500 to 999 say they have a lack of urban congestion to a

great extent. However, only 35 percent of the persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more say their community has a lack of urban congestion to a great extent.

However, with the following characteristics the residents in or near the larger communities are more likely to say they are present to a great extent: senior citizen programs, affordable medical services, availability of college classes, a local newspaper willing to report controversial items, child care services, well maintained infrastructure, a willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally, recreational opportunities, leadership opportunities, adequate information technology, cultural opportunities, availability of public transportation, and quality jobs/economic opportunities. As an example, 38 percent of the respondents living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more say availability of college classes is present to a great extent in their community. But, only 11 percent of the persons living in or near communities with less than 500 people agree.

The differences between the characteristics that people feel are essential for them to have a high quality of life and those that describe their current community are rather large. Comparing the numbers in Appendix Table 2 and Appendix Table 3 will reveal these differences. For almost all of the characteristics listed, the proportion that feel each is absolutely essential is larger than the proportion that feel each describes their current community to a great extent. The characteristic of quality jobs/economic opportunities represents an extreme example of the large differences. Sixty-three percent

Table 2. Characteristics Present in Current Community

	Not at all	Very little	To some extent	A great extent
A quality school system (K - 12)	3%	9%	41%	47%
Lack of urban congestion	9	13	31	47
A clean and attractive natural environment	2	7	48	43
Sense of personal safety	1	6	50	42
Friendly people	2	7	54	38
Being close to relatives/in-laws	10	14	47	30
A sense of community among residents	3	15	55	28
Senior citizen programs	4	13	56	28
Affordable medical services	6	17	51	27
Availability of college classes	13	22	43	23
A local newspaper willing to report controversial items	10	21	48	22
Child care services	5	18	57	21
Well maintained infrastructure	5	18	58	20
Acceptance of newcomers	4	19	59	18
A willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally	8	23	53	16
Affordable housing	5	23	58	15
Leadership opportunities	5	26	54	15
Recreational opportunities	6	26	53	15
Low cost of living	7	23	56	14
Adequate information technology	11	28	51	10
Cultural opportunities	10	42	40	9
Availability of public transportation	34	38	22	7
Quality jobs/economic opportunities	13	44	37	6

of rural Nebraskans say having quality jobs/economic opportunities is absolutely essential. However, only six percent say their community has these to a great extent. The two exceptions to this pattern are lack of urban congestion and being close to relatives/in-laws. For these two characteristics, the proportion saying each describes their community to a great extent is larger than the proportion saying each is absolutely essential for them to have a high quality of life.

When examining the differences between what people think is essential in their community and what they currently have by age, the differences tend to be larger for the younger respondents as compared to the older persons. For example, when asked about a quality school system, 80 percent of the 19 to 29 year olds think it is absolutely essential. But only 31 percent think it describes their current community to a great extent. For the persons age 65 and older, 77 percent think a quality school system is absolutely essential and 60 percent say it is present to a great extent. There are some instances where the differences between what they think is essential and what is currently in their community are larger for the older persons than the younger ones: a clean and attractive natural environment, a local newspaper willing to report controversial items, well maintained infrastructure, a willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally, and availability of public transportation.

When comparing the differences by community size, persons living in or near the larger communities tend to have larger differences between the proportion saying a characteristic is absolutely essential and

those saying it is present to a great extent. As an example, 67 percent of the persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more say affordable housing is absolutely essential to have a high quality of life. However, only 16 percent say affordable housing is present to a great extent in their community. For the persons living in or near communities with less than 500 people, 46 percent think affordable housing is absolutely essential. Thirteen percent say it is present to a great extent in their community.

A few cases occur where the differences between what is believed to be essential and what describes the current community are larger for persons living in or near smaller communities. The characteristics where this occurs are: senior citizen programs, affordable medical services, availability of college classes, and a willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally. Forty-one percent of the persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more think availability of college classes is absolutely essential and 38 percent think this describes their current community to a great extent. Twenty-five percent of the persons living in or near communities with less than 500 people think availability of college classes is absolutely essential. However, only 11 percent think this describes their current community to a great extent.

Perceptions of Rural Nebraska

In addition to asking about the characteristics they think successful rural communities possess, rural Nebraskans were also asked their perceptions of rural Nebraska as a whole. They were given

several pairs of contrasting views that could describe rural Nebraska. For each of these dimensions, respondents were asked to indicate which view they most agree with using a seven-point scale between each pair of contrasting views.

Most rural Nebraskans would describe rural Nebraska as: having commonly shared values, having strong religious beliefs, work-oriented, self-sufficient, open spaces, friendly people, peaceful, tough/resilient, and a strong sense of family (Table 3). Some areas where there was no strong consensus in either direction include: sophisticated or unsophisticated, commitment to community or no

commitment to community, open-minded or close-minded, and tolerant toward ethnic minorities or prejudiced toward ethnic minorities.

These perceptions are analyzed by community size, region and various individual attributes (Appendix Table 4). Some differences do emerge. Persons with higher educational levels are more likely than those with less education to think that rural Nebraska has commonly shared values. Eighty-six percent of the persons with a college degree believe rural Nebraska has commonly shared values, as compared to 67 percent of the persons with a high school diploma or less. Other groups most likely to

Table 3. Perceptions of Rural Nebraska

	Most like item on left	Neutral	Most like item on right	
No commonly shared values	6	20	74	Commonly shared values
Sophisticated	23	41	36	Unsophisticated
Lack of religious beliefs	6	13	81	Strong religious beliefs
Commitment to community	42	21	37	No commitment to community
Leisure-oriented	12	28	61	Work-oriented
Open-minded	31	30	38	Close-minded
Dependent on others	13	26	61	Self-sufficient
Open spaces	71	13	17	Congested
Unfriendly people	11	18	72	Friendly people
Tolerant toward ethnic minorities	32	33	36	Prejudiced toward ethnic minorities
Stressful	16	24	61	Peaceful
Tough/resilient	62	24	14	Weak
No sense of family	4	9	86	Strong sense of family

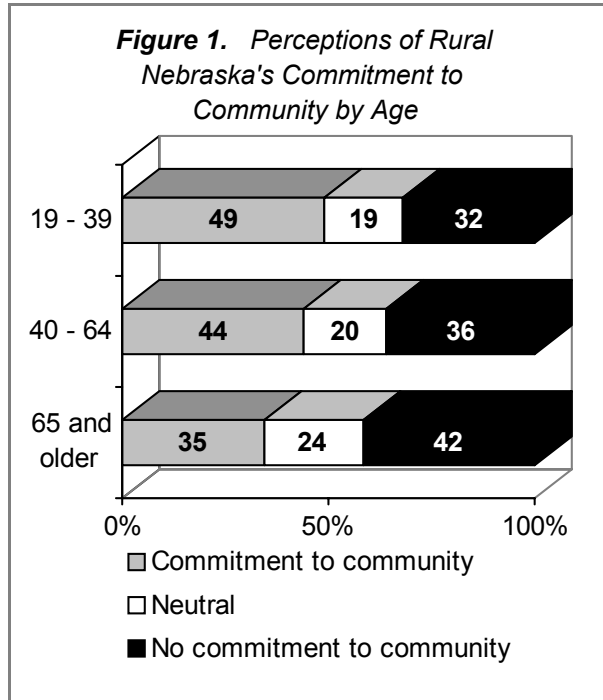
think rural Nebraska has commonly shared values include: persons with higher income levels, younger respondents, persons who are married, persons who have never married, and respondents with professional occupations.

Perceptions of whether rural Nebraska is sophisticated or unsophisticated differ only by education. Persons with higher educational levels are more likely than those with less education to think rural Nebraska is unsophisticated.

Persons with professional occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to believe that rural Nebraska has strong religious beliefs. Eighty-seven percent of the professionals think rural Nebraska has strong religious beliefs, in comparison to 73 percent of the laborers. Other groups most likely to believe rural Nebraska has strong religious beliefs include: persons living in the Northeast region, persons with higher household incomes, widowed respondents and persons with higher educational levels.

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to believe rural Nebraska has a commitment to community. Forty-nine percent of the persons age 19 to 39 say rural Nebraska has a commitment to community (Figure 1). However, only 35 percent of the persons age 65 and older share this opinion.

Other groups most likely to believe rural Nebraska has a commitment to community include: persons with higher household incomes, respondents with higher educational levels and persons with professional occupations.



Farmers and ranchers are more likely than persons with different occupations to think rural Nebraska is work-oriented. Seventy-two percent of the farmers and ranchers believe rural Nebraska is work-oriented, compared to only 54 percent of the laborers.

Other groups most likely to believe rural Nebraska is work-oriented include: persons with higher household incomes, the respondents who are divorced/separated and persons with higher educational levels.

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to say rural Nebraska is close-minded. Forty-six percent of the 19 to 39 year olds believe rural Nebraska is close-minded, compared to 32 percent of the persons age 65 and older. Of the educational groups, persons with a college degree are the group most likely to think rural Nebraska is close-minded.

Perceptions of whether or not rural Nebraska is dependent on others or self-sufficient differ by income and education. Persons with higher incomes and with college degrees are the groups most likely to say rural Nebraska is self-sufficient.

Groups most likely to say rural Nebraska has open spaces include: persons living in or near the smallest communities, persons with higher household incomes, younger respondents, persons with higher educational levels and farmers and ranchers.

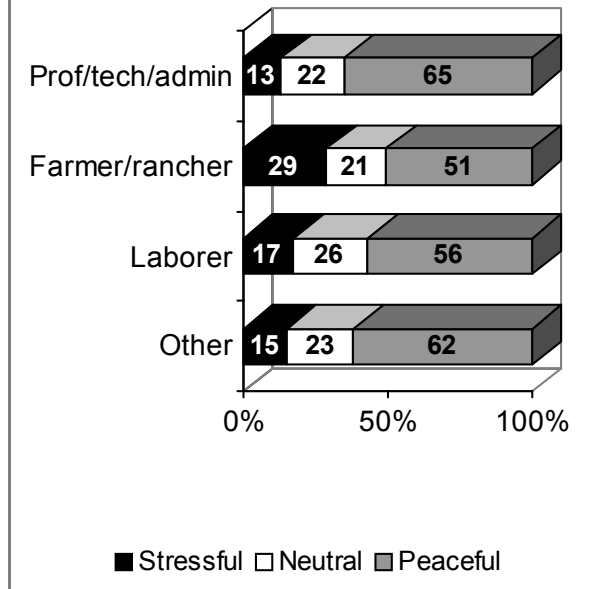
Persons living in the North Central region of the state, those with a college degree and farmers and ranchers are the groups most likely to believe rural Nebraska has friendly people.

Perceptions of rural Nebraska’s tolerance toward ethnic minorities differ by income, age, education and occupation. Persons with higher incomes, younger persons, respondents with higher educational levels and persons with professional occupations are the groups most likely to think rural Nebraska is prejudiced toward ethnic minorities.

Persons with professional occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to say rural Nebraska is peaceful. Sixty-five percent of the professionals believe rural Nebraska is peaceful, compared to 51 percent of the farmers or ranchers (Figure 2).

Other groups most likely to think rural Nebraska is peaceful include: persons with higher incomes, older respondents and persons with higher educational levels.

Figure 2. Perceptions of Whether Rural Nebraska is Stressful or Peaceful by Occupation



Younger persons are more likely than older persons to say rural Nebraska is tough or resilient. Sixty-eight percent of the persons age 19 to 39 believe rural Nebraska is tough/resilient, compared to 51 percent of the persons age 65 and older. Other groups most likely to state rural Nebraska is tough/resilient include: persons with higher household incomes, married respondents, persons with higher educational levels, and persons with professional/technical/administrative positions.

When asked if rural Nebraska has a strong sense of family or no sense of family, differences of opinion occur by income, education and occupation. Persons with higher household incomes, respondents with college degrees and persons with professional occupations are the groups most likely to say rural Nebraska has a strong sense of family.

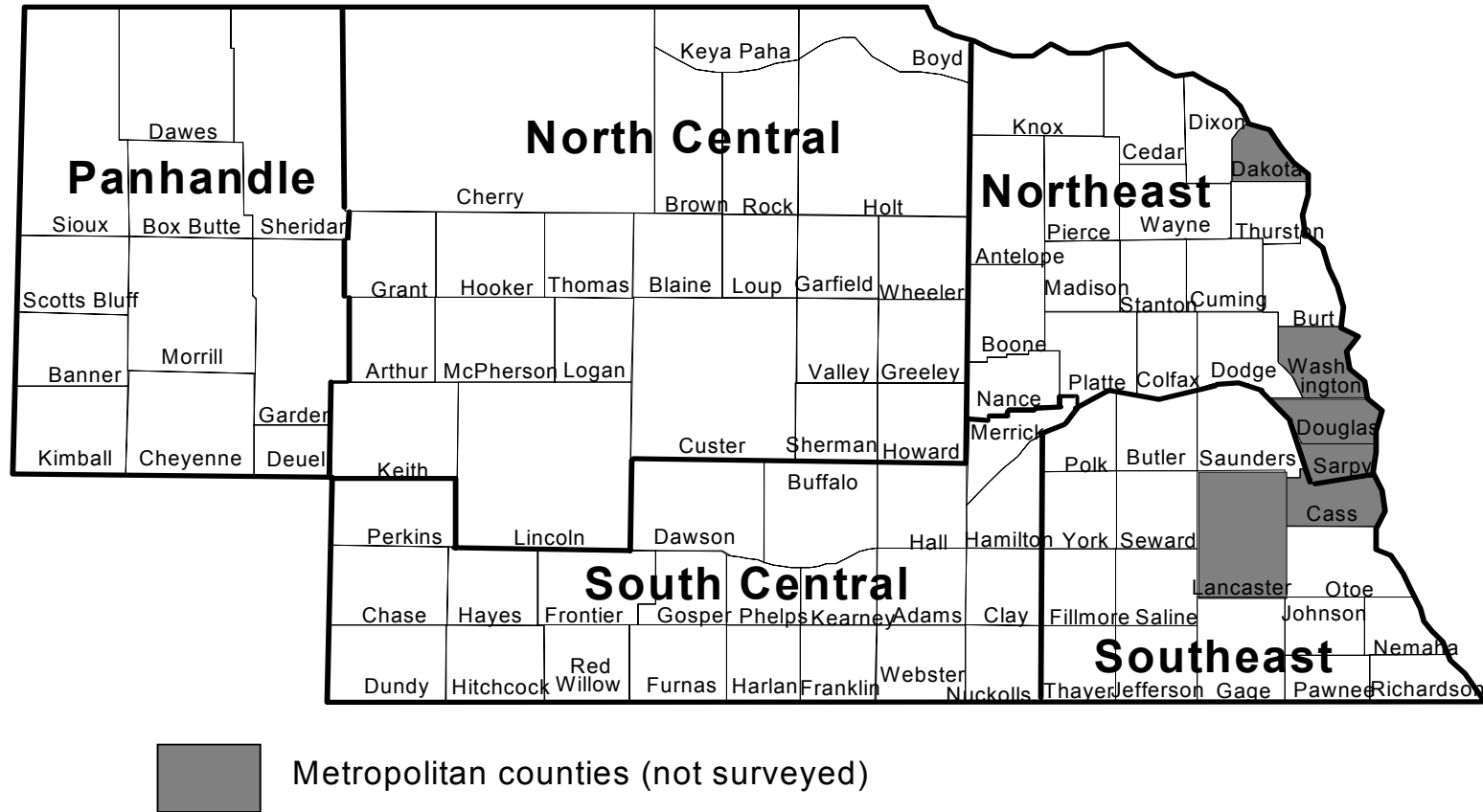
Conclusion

Rural Nebraskans are looking for many things in a community. The characteristics of a community that most believe are absolutely essential include social dimensions (sense of personal safety, friendly people, and a sense of community among residents), economic dimensions (quality jobs/economic opportunities), some basic services (a quality school system, affordable medical services, affordable housing and well maintained infrastructure) and environmental dimensions (a clean and attractive natural environment).

Unfortunately, when asked if these characteristics are present in their current community, some of these areas are lacking. One of the more extreme cases involves quality jobs/economic opportunities. Sixty-three percent of the respondents say these are absolutely essential in order for them to have a high quality of life. However, only six percent say these exist in their community to a great extent.

When asked their perceptions of rural Nebraska, most view it as having commonly shared values, strong religious beliefs, work-oriented, self-sufficient, open spaces, friendly people, peaceful, tough/resilient and a strong sense of family. Thus, most rural Nebraskans view themselves as having many traditional values.

Appendix Figure 1. Regions of Nebraska



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

	2000 Poll	1999 Poll	1998 Poll	1997 Poll	1990 Census
Age : ¹					
20 - 39	20%	21%	25%	24%	38%
40 - 64	54%	52%	55%	48%	36%
65 and over	26%	28%	20%	28%	26%
Gender: ²					
Female	57%	31%	58%	28%	49%
Male	43%	69%	42%	72%	51%
Education: ³					
Less than 9 th grade	2%	3%	2%	5%	10%
9 th to 12 th grade (no diploma)	4%	5%	3%	5%	12%
High school diploma (or equivalent)	34%	36%	33%	34%	38%
Some college, no degree	28%	25%	27%	25%	21%
Associate degree	9%	9%	10%	8%	7%
Bachelors degree	15%	15%	16%	14%	9%
Graduate or professional degree	9%	8%	9%	9%	3%
Household income: ⁴					
Less than \$10,000	3%	8%	3%	7%	19%
\$10,000 - \$19,999	10%	15%	10%	16%	25%
\$20,000 - \$29,999	15%	18%	17%	19%	21%
\$30,000 - \$39,999	19%	18%	20%	18%	15%
\$40,000 - \$49,999	17%	15%	18%	14%	9%
\$50,000 - \$59,999	15%	9%	12%	10%	5%
\$60,000 - \$74,999	11%	8%	10%	7%	3%
\$75,000 or more	11%	10%	10%	8%	3%
Marital Status: ⁵					
Married	95%	76%	95%	73%	64%
Never married	0.2%	7%	0.4%	8%	20%
Divorced/separated	2%	8%	1%	9%	7%
Widowed/widower	4%	10%	3%	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. Essential Characteristics of a Community in Relation to Age and Community Size

	<i>Age categories</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>19 - 29</i>	<i>30 - 39</i>	<i>40 - 49</i>	<i>50 - 64</i>	<i>65 and older</i>	
	<i>Percent Rating Each Characteristic as "Absolutely Essential"</i>					
A quality school system (K - 12)	80	82	82	77	77	79
Sense of personal safety	77	76	75	77	78	77
Affordable medical services	69	67	67	75	79	73
Quality jobs/economic opportunities	68	72	67	66	52	63
Affordable housing	70	63	57	58	56	58
A clean and attractive natural environment	52	54	54	59	64	58
Friendly people	51	50	52	56	63	56
Well maintained infrastructure	45	50	51	54	63	55
A sense of community among residents	44	43	48	51	58	51
Low cost of living	50	43	43	43	54	47
Acceptance of newcomers	47	40	40	45	52	46
Senior citizen programs	31	26	30	40	50	39
A local newspaper willing to report controversial items	26	24	33	40	50	39
Lack of urban congestion	38	30	35	41	38	37
Child care services	42	43	29	34	39	36
Availability of college classes	36	31	29	30	32	31
Leadership opportunities	22	20	23	27	35	28
Adequate information technology	25	24	26	31	26	27
Being close to relatives/in-laws	28	24	23	22	27	24
Recreational opportunities	30	27	23	23	23	24
Cultural opportunities	11	18	18	24	31	23
A willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally	14	19	17	22	28	22
Availability of public transportation	12	13	15	19	31	21

Appendix Table 2 continued.

	<i>Community size categories</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>Less than 500</i>	<i>500 - 999</i>	<i>1,000 - 4,999</i>	<i>5,000 - 9,999</i>	<i>10,000 and over</i>	
	<i>Percent Rating Each Characteristic as "Absolutely Essential"</i>					
A quality school system (K - 12)	76	75	82	77	79	79
Sense of personal safety	72	75	77	75	79	77
Affordable medical services	66	65	75	76	77	73
Quality jobs/economic opportunities	51	56	62	68	70	63
Affordable housing	46	52	58	60	67	58
A clean and attractive natural environment	60	61	60	59	55	58
Friendly people	56	58	57	58	54	56
Well maintained infrastructure	44	56	55	57	60	55
A sense of community among residents	53	57	51	50	48	51
Low cost of living	43	45	47	48	48	47
Acceptance of newcomers	42	47	46	48	45	46
Senior citizen programs	28	42	39	41	41	39
A local newspaper willing to report controversial items	26	35	39	43	46	39
Lack of urban congestion	40	43	38	38	33	37
Child care services	26	34	34	40	40	36
Availability of college classes	25	28	23	34	41	31
Leadership opportunities	21	28	26	30	29	28
Adequate information technology	20	26	24	28	34	27
Being close to relatives/in-laws	26	20	22	26	26	24
Recreational opportunities	17	18	22	29	30	24
Cultural opportunities	15	21	20	28	29	23
A willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally	16	22	22	20	24	22
Availability of public transportation	17	17	15	23	27	21

Appendix Table 3. Characteristics Present in Current Community by Age and Community Size

	<i>Age categories</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>19 - 29</i>	<i>30 - 39</i>	<i>40 - 49</i>	<i>50 - 64</i>	<i>65 and older</i>	
	<i>Percent Saying "A Great Extent"</i>					
A quality school system (K - 12)	31	41	42	44	60	47
Lack of urban congestion	46	45	50	52	41	47
A clean and attractive natural environment	42	32	42	44	47	43
Sense of personal safety	39	36	39	41	50	42
Friendly people	32	25	30	36	50	38
Being close to relatives/in-laws	49	37	33	27	23	30
A sense of community among residents	18	17	23	28	37	28
Senior citizen programs	24	15	20	26	41	28
Affordable medical services	18	13	17	23	44	27
Availability of college classes	21	18	18	22	30	23
A local newspaper willing to report controversial items	20	14	12	19	34	22
Child care services	22	14	14	19	30	21
Well maintained infrastructure	16	13	16	19	27	20
Acceptance of newcomers	14	10	12	17	27	18
A willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally	15	16	12	16	19	16
Recreational opportunities	10	10	12	17	20	15
Affordable housing	12	9	10	13	25	15
Leadership opportunities	12	7	12	16	21	15
Low cost of living	15	6	10	13	21	14
Adequate information technology	11	7	6	11	14	10
Cultural opportunities	7	3	5	9	14	9
Availability of public transportation	4	2	2	5	14	7
Quality jobs/economic opportunities	4	3	3	6	10	6

Appendix Table 3 continued.

	<i>Community size categories</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>Less than 500</i>	<i>500 - 999</i>	<i>1,000 - 4,999</i>	<i>5,000 - 9,999</i>	<i>10,000 and over</i>	
	<i>Percent Saying "A Great Extent"</i>					
Lack of urban congestion	52	58	52	47	35	47
A quality school system (K - 12)	48	54	49	48	42	47
A clean and attractive natural environment	49	50	45	42	35	43
Friendly people	45	45	39	34	32	38
Being close to relatives/in-laws	31	31	29	27	31	30
A sense of community among residents	32	37	29	25	22	28
Senior citizen programs	12	28	29	37	30	28
Affordable medical services	17	24	28	30	30	27
Availability of college classes	11	13	12	31	38	23
A local newspaper willing to report controversial items	11	25	22	23	24	22
Child care services	11	20	21	27	22	21
Well maintained infrastructure	15	20	22	21	20	20
Acceptance of newcomers	18	22	16	20	17	18
A willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally	7	13	15	20	19	16
Recreational opportunities	11	12	16	18	18	15
Affordable housing	13	17	16	14	16	15
Leadership opportunities	9	17	16	18	15	15
Low cost of living	19	23	13	9	11	14
Adequate information technology	5	10	9	11	13	10
Cultural opportunities	4	9	7	12	11	9
Availability of public transportation	3	5	4	7	11	7
Quality jobs/economic opportunities	3	3	4	9	10	6

Appendix Table 4. Perceptions of Rural Nebraska by Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes

	<i>Shared or no shared values</i>			<i>Sophisticated or unsophisticated</i>			<i>Lack of or strong religious beliefs</i>			<i>Commitment to community</i>						
	<i>No</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Commonly</i>	<i>Sophisticated</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Unsophisticated</i>	<i>Lack of</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Commitment</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>No</i>				
	<i>Percentages</i>															
Community Size		(n = 2487)				(n = 2472)				(n = 2541)				(n = 2504)		
Less than 500	7	19	74	22	41	37	9	13	78	44	19	38				
500 - 4,999	6	18	76	22	41	38	5	13	82	44	21	35				
5,000 and over	6	21	73	23	42	35	5	14	82	41	21	38				
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		P ² = 4.03 (.402)				P ² = 1.12 (.891)				P ² = 8.64 (.071)				P ² = 3.93 (.415)		
Region		(n = 2540)				(n = 2517)				(n = 2600)				(n = 2558)		
Panhandle	8	20	73	21	40	38	6	15	80	42	21	37				
North Central	5	21	74	20	44	37	5	18	77	44	21	35				
South Central	5	19	76	23	43	35	6	12	82	41	22	37				
Northeast	5	21	74	25	39	36	5	10	85	45	19	36				
Southeast	8	19	73	22	41	37	7	13	80	42	20	38				
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		P ² = 8.05 (.429)				P ² = 5.36 (.718)				P ² = 16.32 (.038)				P ² = 3.04 (.932)		
Income Level		(n = 2370)				(n = 2353)				(n = 2412)				(n = 2386)		
Under \$20,000	9	26	65	22	45	32	9	17	75	39	25	36				
\$20,000 - \$39,999	6	21	72	22	43	35	6	16	77	41	23	36				
\$40,000 - \$59,999	6	17	77	22	39	39	4	10	86	44	17	39				
\$60,000 and over	4	13	83	24	38	38	5	8	87	46	17	38				
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		P ² = 44.74 (.000)				P ² = 10.36 (.110)				P ² = 43.35 (.000)				P ² = 16.62 (.011)		
Age		(n = 2559)				(n = 2538)				(n = 2619)				(n = 2578)		
19 - 39	5	19	76	24	41	35	7	16	77	49	19	32				
40 - 64	7	18	76	24	40	36	6	13	82	44	20	36				
65 and over	6	24	70	19	43	39	6	12	82	35	24	42				
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		P ² = 15.51 (.004)				P ² = 8.35 (.080)				P ² = 5.31 (.257)				P ² = 27.59 (.000)		
Gender		(n = 2534)				(n = 2513)				(n = 2593)				(n = 2552)		
Male	6	20	74	22	42	36	6	13	81	41	21	37				
Female	7	19	74	23	40	37	5	13	82	44	20	36				
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		P ² = 0.68 (.713)				P ² = 1.22 (.543)				P ² = 1.15 (.564)				P ² = 2.13 (.345)		
Marital Status		(n = 2532)				(n = 2511)				(n = 2591)				(n = 2551)		
Married	6	18	76	23	42	36	6	12	82	43	20	37				
Never married	3	22	76	19	43	38	8	16	75	45	27	28				
Divorced/separated	10	23	67	26	41	33	6	19	75	39	23	38				
Widowed	8	24	68	21	37	43	4	12	84	37	22	41				
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		P ² = 17.70 (.007)				P ² = 7.60 (.269)				P ² = 15.71 (.015)				P ² = 11.74 (.068)		
Education		(n = 2535)				(n = 2512)				(n = 2593)				(n = 2553)		
High school or less	7	26	67	20	46	34	8	17	75	39	26	36				
Some college	7	20	73	25	39	37	5	13	82	43	20	37				
College grad	4	11	86	23	38	40	4	8	88	46	16	38				
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		P ² = 75.09 (.000)				P ² = 16.82 (.002)				P ² = 50.94 (.000)				P ² = 26.99 (.000)		
Occupation		(n = 1836)				(n = 1828)				(n = 1856)				(n = 1843)		
Prof/tech/admin.	3	13	83	26	37	37	3	10	87	50	17	33				
Farming/ranching	5	15	81	21	41	38	4	11	85	47	15	38				
Laborer	8	26	66	22	44	34	10	17	73	44	24	32				
Other	8	17	75	24	40	36	6	13	82	41	21	37				
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		P ² = 48.84 (.000)				P ² = 6.32 (.388)				P ² = 37.19 (.000)				P ² = 18.96 (.004)		

Appendix Table 4 continued.

	<i>Leisure or work oriented</i>			<i>Open or close minded</i>			<i>Dependent on others or self-sufficient</i>			<i>Open spaces or congested</i>		
	<i>Leisure</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Work</i>	<i>Open-minded</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Close-minded</i>	<i>Dependent</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Self-sufficient</i>	<i>Open spaces</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Congested</i>
				<i>Percentages</i>								
Community Size	(n = 2494)			(n = 2512)			(n = 2508)			(n = 2501)		
Less than 500	13	28	59	31	31	38	13	27	59	74	12	14
500 - 4,999	11	27	62	30	33	38	13	26	61	75	11	15
5,000 and over	12	28	61	33	27	40	13	25	62	66	15	19
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 2.05 (.727)			P ² = 7.45 (.114)			P ² = 1.18 (.881)			P ² = 21.81 (.000)		
Region	(n = 2543)			(n = 2565)			(n = 2559)			(n = 2556)		
Panhandle	11	30	58	29	31	41	13	25	62	70	12	18
North Central	12	26	62	34	28	38	10	27	63	74	11	15
South Central	12	27	61	31	30	40	13	27	61	71	13	16
Northeast	9	29	62	33	31	35	12	26	62	69	14	18
Southeast	14	25	61	30	31	39	16	25	59	72	12	17
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 9.91 (.272)			P ² = 5.72 (.679)			P ² = 10.12 (.257)			P ² = 4.68 (.792)		
Income Level	(n = 2368)			(n = 2390)			(n = 2385)			(n = 2386)		
Under \$20,000	14	29	57	29	36	36	16	31	53	68	15	18
\$20,000 - \$39,999	12	31	57	31	31	38	11	29	60	68	15	17
\$40,000 - \$59,999	10	24	66	31	28	41	11	23	66	72	10	18
\$60,000 and over	12	24	64	31	27	42	16	21	63	77	9	14
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 20.28 (.002)			P ² = 11.19 (.083)			P ² = 30.86 (.000)			P ² = 20.92 (.002)		
Age	(n = 2563)			(n = 2586)			(n = 2580)			(n = 2577)		
19 - 39	11	29	60	27	28	46	14	28	58	77	12	11
40 - 64	13	26	62	31	30	40	13	25	62	73	11	16
65 and over	10	29	61	35	33	32	13	26	62	64	16	21
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 4.48 (.346)			P ² = 24.68 (.000)			P ² = 3.02 (.555)			P ² = 32.81 (.000)		
Gender	(n = 2538)			(n = 2559)			(n = 2554)			(n = 2552)		
Male	11	27	62	31	30	39	13	25	62	71	12	17
Female	13	29	59	31	31	38	12	27	61	71	13	16
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 2.67 (.263)			P ² = 0.81 (.668)			P ² = 1.64 (.441)			P ² = 0.24 (.888)		
Marital Status	(n = 2536)			(n = 2557)			(n = 2552)			(n = 2551)		
Married	11	27	62	31	30	38	13	25	62	72	12	16
Never married	20	31	50	27	29	44	12	29	60	71	12	18
Divorced/separated	12	24	64	28	30	42	12	28	60	70	11	19
Widowed	11	33	56	35	32	34	13	27	60	65	15	20
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 17.55 (.007)			P ² = 6.22 (.399)			P ² = 1.58 (.954)			P ² = 5.53 (.478)		
Education	(n = 2539)			(n = 2560)			(n = 2556)			(n = 2553)		
High school or less	13	33	55	35	33	32	13	30	57	63	18	19
Some college	12	28	60	31	31	38	13	26	61	72	12	16
College grad	11	20	70	27	26	48	13	20	67	79	6	15
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 42.90 (.000)			P ² = 41.91 (.000)			P ² = 19.83 (.001)			P ² = 69.57 (.000)		
Occupation	(n = 1836)			(n = 1850)			(n = 1847)			(n = 1848)		
Prof/tech/admin.	11	25	64	30	26	45	13	23	64	79	8	14
Farming/ranching	11	18	72	36	27	37	10	22	69	81	7	12
Laborer	11	35	54	31	31	37	13	27	60	68	16	15
Other	13	24	63	30	29	41	12	29	60	72	12	16
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 30.42 (.000)			P ² = 10.77 (.096)			P ² = 12.22 (.057)			P ² = 29.64 (.000)		

Appendix Table 4 continued.

	<i>Unfriendly or friendly people</i>			<i>Tolerant or prejudiced to ethnic minorities</i>			<i>Stressful or peaceful</i>			<i>Tough or weak</i>		
	<i>Unfriendly</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Friendly</i>	<i>Tolerant</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Prejudiced</i>	<i>Stressful</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Peaceful</i>	<i>Tough/resilient</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Weak</i>
	<i>Percentages</i>											
Community Size	(n = 2529)			(n = 2489)			(n = 2510)			(n = 2497)		
Less than 500	13	16	71	28	37	35	18	23	60	62	24	14
500 - 4,999	11	16	73	31	33	36	15	22	63	65	23	12
5,000 and over	11	19	70	34	30	37	16	26	58	59	25	15
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 6.73 (.151)			P ² = 8.35 (.080)			P ² = 7.12 (.130)			P ² = 8.75 (.068)		
Region	(n = 2585)			(n = 2541)			(n = 2563)			(n = 2544)		
Panhandle	16	15	69	39	29	33	17	21	62	58	27	16
North Central	9	14	77	33	34	33	17	25	57	64	26	10
South Central	11	19	71	31	31	37	16	25	59	62	24	14
Northeast	8	19	72	32	32	37	14	24	62	63	23	14
Southeast	13	17	70	29	37	35	17	21	62	62	23	15
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 21.79 (.005)			P ² = 14.11 (.079)			P ² = 7.10 (.526)			P ² = 8.25 (.410)		
Income Level	(n = 2395)			(n = 2371)			(n = 2388)			(n = 2378)		
Under \$20,000	14	18	69	32	37	31	20	26	54	52	31	17
\$20,000 - \$39,999	12	19	69	31	34	35	16	26	58	58	27	15
\$40,000 - \$59,999	11	16	73	34	29	37	13	23	65	67	21	12
\$60,000 and over	9	15	76	29	30	41	16	19	65	71	17	12
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 9.48 (.148)			P ² = 14.05 (.029)			P ² = 24.79 (.000)			P ² = 49.17 (.000)		
Age	(n = 2605)			(n = 2562)			(n = 2583)			(n = 2565)		
19 - 39	12	19	69	33	29	39	17	26	57	68	24	8
40 - 64	11	17	73	30	32	38	17	24	59	66	22	12
65 and over	11	18	71	35	36	29	12	23	65	51	29	20
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 2.54 (.638)			P ² = 19.45 (.001)			P ² = 13.32 (.010)			P ² = 64.07 (.000)		
Gender	(n = 2578)			(n = 2536)			(n = 2558)			(n = 2540)		
Male	11	17	72	31	33	36	16	24	60	63	24	14
Female	11	18	71	34	32	35	15	23	61	60	26	14
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 0.25 (.883)			P ² = 2.32 (.313)			P ² = 0.65 (.724)			P ² = 1.80 (.408)		
Marital Status	(n = 2576)			(n = 2535)			(n = 2557)			(n = 2539)		
Married	11	18	71	32	32	36	16	24	60	64	23	13
Never married	11	15	74	33	33	34	16	25	59	60	27	13
Divorced/separated	15	17	68	30	35	35	16	24	60	59	26	15
Widowed	10	15	75	36	34	31	12	22	66	48	33	19
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 5.85 (.441)			P ² = 3.69 (.718)			P ² = 5.32 (.503)			P ² = 24.66 (.000)		
Education	(n = 2579)			(n = 2536)			(n = 2560)			(n = 2540)		
High school or less	13	18	69	33	37	30	18	26	56	52	31	17
Some college	11	19	71	33	31	36	15	25	60	63	25	13
College grad	9	15	77	28	29	43	15	19	67	74	15	12
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 14.63 (.006)			P ² = 34.53 (.000)			P ² = 21.35 (.000)			P ² = 83.78 (.000)		
Occupation	(n = 1845)			(n = 1838)			(n = 1845)			(n = 1848)		
Prof/tech/admin.	9	16	76	31	28	41	13	22	65	72	19	10
Farming/ranching	8	15	77	33	32	35	29	21	51	71	16	12
Laborer	14	20	66	30	37	32	17	26	56	60	28	13
Other	10	18	72	34	28	38	15	23	62	65	24	12
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>	P ² = 15.71 (.015)			P ² = 14.30 (.026)			P ² = 43.37 (.000)			P ² = 22.76 (.001)		

Appendix Table 4 continued.

<i>No sense or strong sense of family</i>			
	<i>No sense</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Strong sense</i>
<i>Percentages</i>			
Community Size		(n = 2535)	
Less than 500	4	9	87
500 - 4,999	4	8	88
5,000 and over	5	11	85
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		$P^2 = 4.24 (.375)$	
Region		(n = 2588)	
Panhandle	6	12	82
North Central	4	10	87
South Central	4	10	87
Northeast	4	8	89
Southeast	6	9	86
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		$P^2 = 10.36 (.240)$	
Income Level		(n = 2404)	
Under \$20,000	5	13	82
\$20,000 - \$39,999	6	12	83
\$40,000 - \$59,999	3	7	90
\$60,000 and over	3	5	92
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		$P^2 = 36.24 (.000)$	
Age		(n = 2609)	
19 - 39	3	10	87
40 - 64	4	9	87
65 and over	5	10	85
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		$P^2 = 3.84 (.429)$	
Gender		(n = 2582)	
Male	4	10	86
Female	4	9	87
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		$P^2 = 1.17 (.556)$	
Marital Status		(n = 2580)	
Married	4	9	87
Never married	3	13	84
Divorced/separated	6	13	81
Widowed	5	8	87
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		$P^2 = 12.25 (.057)$	
Education		(n = 2583)	
High school or less	6	13	82
Some college	4	9	87
College grad	2	5	92
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		$P^2 = 39.87 (.000)$	
Occupation		(n = 1855)	
Prof/tech/admin.	2	6	92
Farming/ranching	4	8	88
Laborer	5	12	83
Other	4	9	88
<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>		$P^2 = 17.23 (.008)$	

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