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# What People See as Absolutely Essential Rural Community Characteristics: Younger vs. Older Adults

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# Cornhusker Economics

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## What People See as Absolutely Essential Rural Community Characteristics: Younger vs. Older Adults

Market Report	Year Ago	4 Wks Ago	10/15/14
<b><u>Livestock and Products.</u></b>			
<b><u>Weekly Average</u></b>			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight. . . . .	*	162.95	165.00
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb. . . . .	*	267.78	291.40
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb. . . . .	*	238.17	246.29
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass. . . . .	*	247.62	245.26
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated. . . . .	*	96.70	106.41
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass 51-52% Lean. . . . .	*	101.43	122.85
Slaughter Lambs, Ch. & Pr., Heavy, Woolled, South Dakota, Direct. . . . .	*	161.25	166.00
National Carcass Lamb Cutout FOB. . . . .	*	366.37	374.34
<b><u>Crops.</u></b>			
<b><u>Daily Spot Prices</u></b>			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Imperial, bu. . . . .	*	5.43	5.00
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Nebraska City, bu. . . . .	*	3.39	2.86
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Nebraska City, bu. . . . .	*	12.52	8.53
Grain Sorghum, No.2, Yellow Dorchester, cwt. . . . .	*	5.75	5.34
Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, Mn, bu. . . . .	*	3.88	3.62
<b><u>Feed</u></b>			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton. . . . .	*	203.00	195.00
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton. . . . .	*	90.00	90.00
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Good Nebraska, ton. . . . .	*	87.50	97.50
Dried Distillers Grains, 10% Moisture Nebraska Average. . . . .	*	105.00	115.00
Wet Distillers Grains, 65-70% Moisture Nebraska Average. . . . .	*	36.00	39.5016
* No Market in 2013 -- USDA Website down due to Government shutdown			

When a 19-year-old looks at a rural community what characteristics are essential to this person? What are they looking for? Now think about someone who is 65 or older – what is essential to this person?

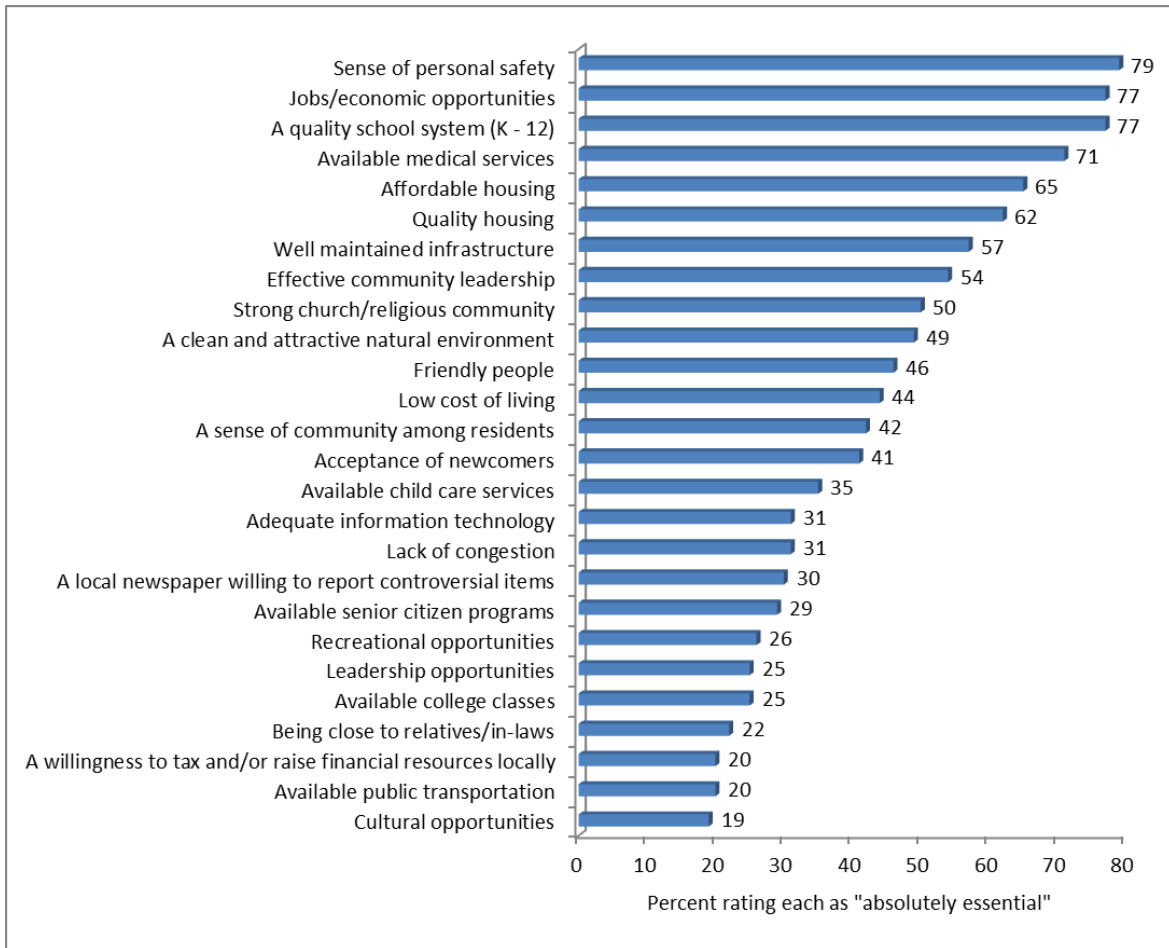
You might presume that these two groups, younger and older adults, would have very little in common. Granted, there are differences in what these age groups see as essential, but there are also characteristics that both age groups rate similarly.

The 2014 Nebraska Rural Poll report<sup>1</sup>, scheduled to be published in late October, asked the following question, “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.

The 1,943 responses of rural Nebraskans, *regardless of age*, indicated that the “absolutely essential” community characteristics included the following (see Figure 1).

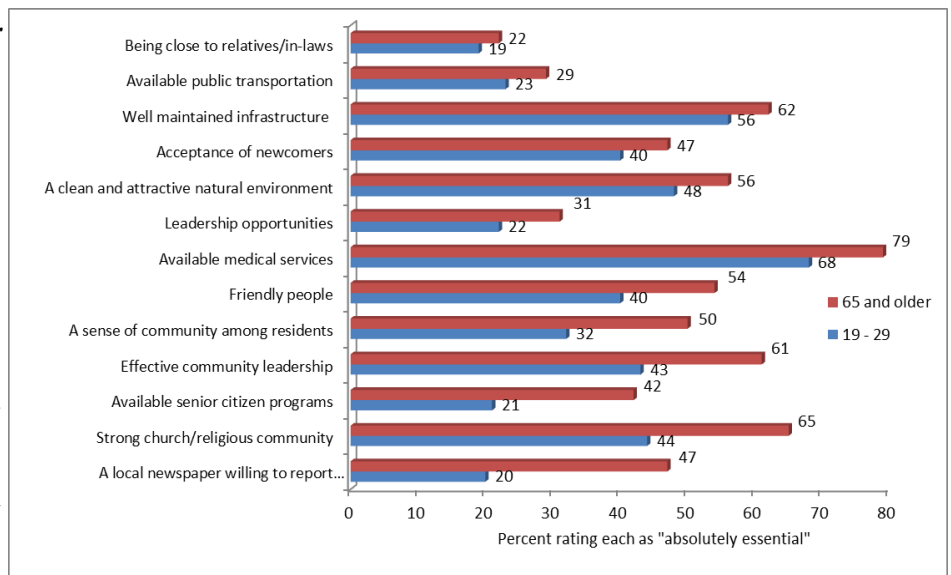
Overall, there should be few surprises at what characteristics bubble up to the top as well as those that flow toward the bottom of the list. Safety, jobs, quality schools, medical services, and the quality and quantity of housing all rate very high. In contrast, being close to relatives/in-laws, a willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally, available transportation and cultural opportunities were all rated at the bottom of the list or were not considered “absolutely essential” as compared to other community characteristics by those surveyed.

Figure 1.



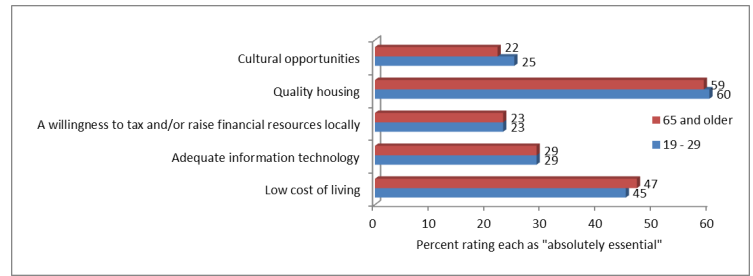
The interesting part comes when you compare the responses by age and contrast the *65 and older* group with the *19 to 29-year-olds*. The older adults see some of these characteristics as being a little more essential, like being close to relatives/in-laws, available public transportation, having a well maintained infrastructure, and even the acceptance of new comers, than the younger 19-29-year-olds. But as you look down the list, there is a significant difference between the two groups within such characteristics as a sense of community among residents, effective community leadership, available senior citizen programs, strong church/religious community and a local newspaper willing to report controversial items (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.



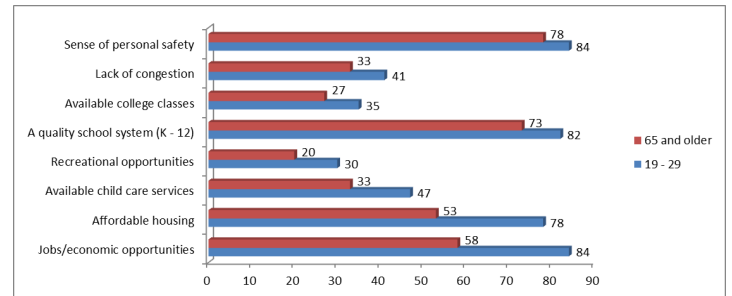
Commonality also exists between the age groups. Both groups feel that quality housing is pretty high on the list of “absolutely essential” community characteristics, both see low cost of living as a mid-range characteristic and adequate information technology, a willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally and cultural opportunities toward the bottom (see Figure 3).

Figure 3.



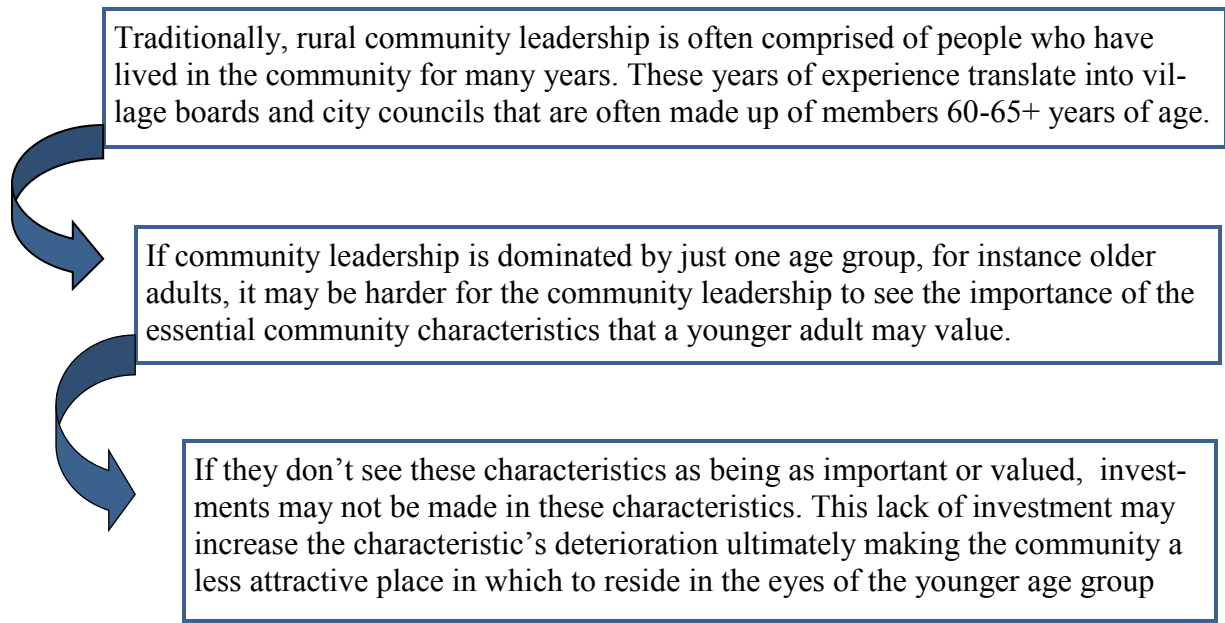
Finally, there are issues that young adults rate higher on the “absolutely essential” characteristics list (see Figure 4). A sense of personal safety and lack of congestion are characteristics that the younger age group does see as slightly more essential than those age 65 or older. Other characteristics like available college classes, quality school system, recreational opportunities, child care, affordable housing and jobs/economic opportunity are rated a bit higher by the younger adults than the older adults. Many of these mirror the presumed wants and needs of individuals beginning a career and family life.

Figure 4.



Some people might ask... so what? Differences between age groups are interesting but how does that impact the community?

So here is one possibility - first, we assume that a sustainable rural community needs a mix of age groups to keep the community viable into the future.



When it comes to understanding what people see as essential rural community characteristics, it is interesting to compare the insights of younger and older adults and to think about how this information can be used in tangible ways.

For instance, if younger adults don't see the community newspaper as an essential communication tool, how could community issues be communicated to reach the younger adults? Is it through a blog, Facebook, or Twitter? Options are out there.

The responses to this question gave a taste of how the two groups see the issue but there is much more to be learned. Knowing how age groups see essential community characteristics differently, as well as the same, can help to position our communities for the future.

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<sup>1</sup>The Nebraska Rural Poll is the nineteenth annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. The 2014 poll consisted of a self-administered questionnaire that was mailed in April to 6,813 randomly selected households. The results of the survey are based on 1,943 responses (29% response rate) from Nebraskans living in 86 counties in the state. For more information about the Poll go to <http://ruralpoll.unl.edu/report14>

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