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Relationships between Perceptions of Community Leadership and Other Perceptions of Community

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Cornhusker Economics

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Market Report	Year Ago	4 Wks Ago	1-6-17
Livestock and Products, Weekly Average			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight.	135.00	114.00	117.97
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb.	189.17	147.13	155.15
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb.	171.74	135.02	137.84
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass.	207.16	189.55	201.84
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated	49.59	47.83	57.97
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass 51-52% Lean.	69.11	73.11	79.12
Slaughter Lambs, woolled and shorn, 135-165 lb. National.	141.38	141.90	141.36
National Carcass Lamb Cutout FOB.	363.23	352.34	347.30
Crops, Daily Spot Prices			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Imperial, bu.	3.87	2.64	2.97
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Columbus, bu.	3.42	3.09	3.17
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Columbus, bu.	8.36	9.53	9.10
Grain Sorghum, No.2, Yellow Dorchester, cwt.	5.57	4.79	4.82
Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, Mn, bu.	2.65	2.85	2.88
Feed			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton.	173.75	NA	NA
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton.	83.75	67.50	70.00
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Good Nebraska, ton.	85.00	65.00	65.00
Dried Distillers Grains, 10% Moisture Nebraska Average.	135.00	107.50	110.00
Wet Distillers Grains, 65-70% Moisture Nebraska Average.	51.50	42.00	43.50
* No Market			

Leadership is an important component of rural community life. Effective leaders can help the community create a shared vision which is needed to address community needs. Given that, are rural residents' perceptions of their community leadership related to other assessments of their community?

The 2016 Nebraska Rural Poll asked respondents various questions about their community. Some of these questions measure their perceptions of their community leadership. First, respondents were asked how satisfied they are with various community services and amenities. Among the items listed was "local government." In addition, residents were asked to rate various items in their community for newcomers. The specific question wording was, "Imagine you've been approached by a person looking to move to your community and are giving them an honest assessment of your community. How would you rate the following items in your community for that person?" Two of the items rated by rural Nebraskans were "responsive government/community leadership" and "leadership opportunities."

In addition to these perceptions of their community leadership, respondents were asked other general measures of their community. One is their perception of how their community has changed during the past year and another asks them to predict the expected change in their community ten years from now. They were also asked a question to determine if they view their community as powerless. They were asked, "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? My community is powerless to control its own future." Finally, one other question determined how easy or difficult it would be to leave their com-

munity. The exact question wording was “Assume you were to have a discussion in your household about leaving your community for a reasonably good opportunity elsewhere. Some people might be happy to live in a new place and meet new people. Others might be very sorry to leave. How easy or difficult would it be for your household to leave your community?”

When asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with their local government (which could include both community and county government), rural Nebraskans have mixed opinions. Over one-third (37%) are very or somewhat satisfied, just over three in ten (31%) are very or somewhat dissatisfied and 32% have no opinion. However, most rural Nebraskans (54%) would rate their community’s responsive government/community leadership as good or excellent for newcomers and six in ten rate their community’s leadership opportunities as good or excellent. The relationships between these variables and the others identified earlier are now examined. All of the chi-square relationships listed below are statistically significant. However, it is important to note that these relationships do not indicate causality.

Community Change

Rural Nebraskans who rate their community leadership positively are more likely than persons who are negative about their community leadership to say their community has changed for the better during the past year and will be a better place to live ten years from now. As an example, 53% of persons satisfied with their local government believe their community has changed for the better during the past year, compared to 19% of persons who are dissatisfied with their local government. And, 40% of persons who would rate their community leadership as good or excellent to a newcomer say their community will be a better place to live ten years from now, compared to 13% of persons who rate their community leadership as fair or poor.

Conversely, those who have negative perceptions about their community leadership are more likely to say their community has changed for the worse during the past year and will be a worse place to live ten years from now. As an example, 30% of persons who rate their community leadership as fair or poor say their community will be a worse place to live ten years from now, compared to 11% of persons who rate their community leadership as good or excellent.

Community Powerlessness

The same pattern holds when examining perceptions of community powerlessness. Persons who rate their community leadership positively are more likely than persons who rate it negatively to disagree that their community is powerless to control its own future. More than three-quarters (76%) of persons who are satisfied with their local government disagree that their community is powerless, compared to 49% of persons who are dissatisfied with their local gov-

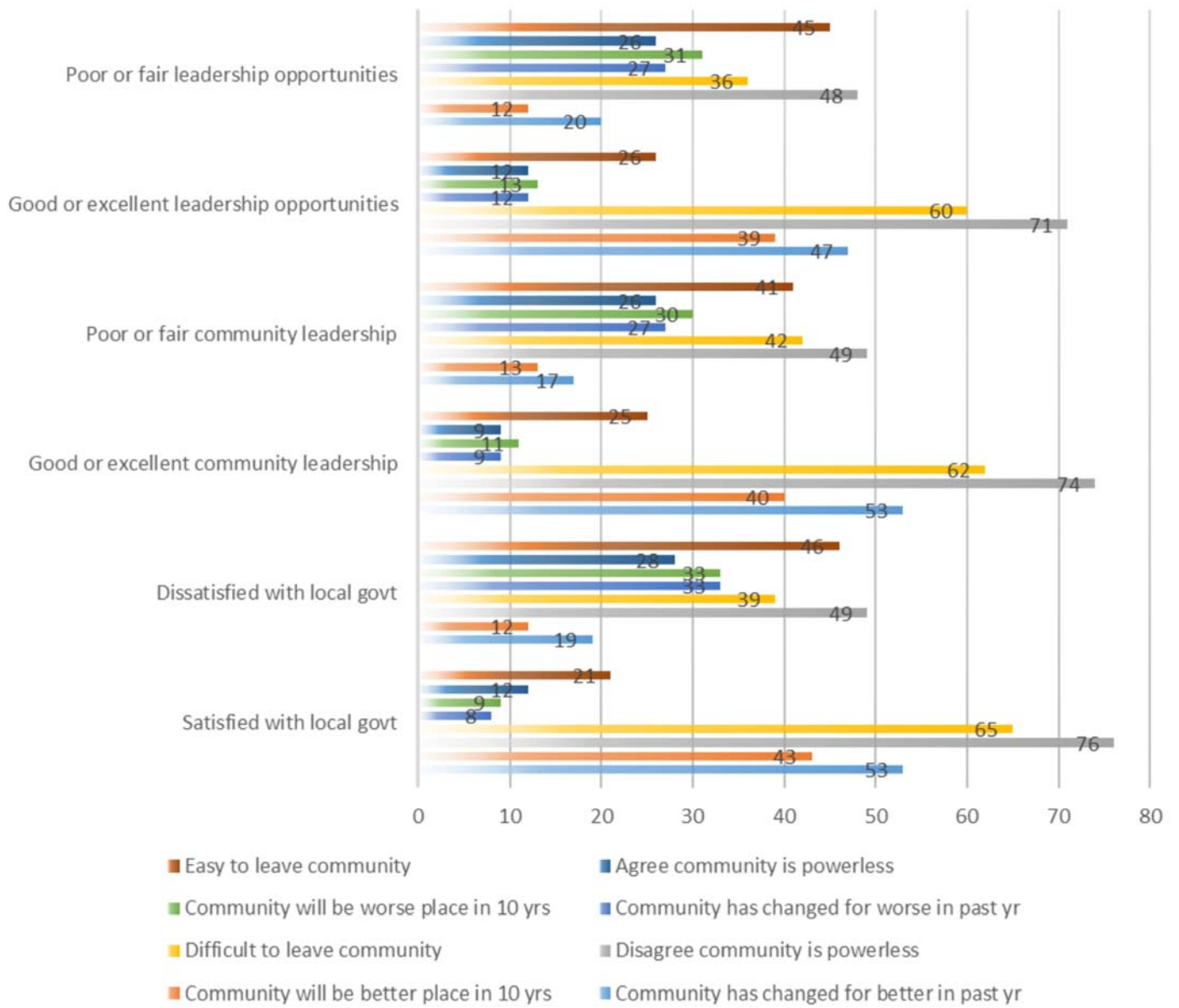
ernment. Conversely, persons who rate their leadership negatively are more likely than persons who rate it positively to view their community as powerless. Just over one-quarter (26%) of persons who rate their community leadership as poor or fair agree that their community is powerless to control its own future, compared to nine percent of persons who rate their leadership as good or excellent.

Ease or Difficulty of Leaving Community

The final community variable examined is the ease or difficulty the respondent would have leaving their community. This variable can serve as a measure of community attachment. Persons who rate their community leadership positively are more likely than persons who rate it negatively to say it would be difficult to leave their community. Over six in ten (62%) of persons who rate their community leadership as good or excellent say it would be difficult to leave their community, compared to 42% of persons who rate their leadership as fair or poor. Again the opposite is true, those who view their leadership negatively are more likely than those viewing it positively to say it would be easy to leave their community. Almost one-half (46%) of persons who are dissatisfied with their local government say it would be easy to leave their community, compared to 21% of persons who are satisfied with their local government.

To summarize, perceptions of community leadership are related to other perceptions of the community. Specifically, positive perceptions of community leadership are associated with positive assessments of the community. Rural Nebraskans who rate their community leadership positively are more likely than those viewing it negatively to view positive change in their community, to expect positive change in the future, to *disagree* that their community is powerless and to say it would be difficult to leave the community. So, one could argue that residents who are satisfied with their community leadership are in turn more satisfied with their community in general. However, this relationship could also be reversed to say that those who view their community positively are more likely to view its leadership positively. Nonetheless, this relationship has important implications for rural communities. Having strong leadership that local residents support and believe in can only serve to improve the outlook residents have on the community as a whole. This in turn can lead to retaining the community’s population and possibly even improve the recruitment of new residents to lead to population growth. Current community residents have been shown to be an important source of information for people looking to move there. When current residents are satisfied with their community, they will be much more likely to “sell” it to others.

PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY BY PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP



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