A Research Report*

The Dynamics of Community Life in Rural Nebraska

2001 Nebraska Rural Poll Results

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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 losses during the past decade. Coupled with the aging population, this has resulted in many communities struggling to remain viable. However, improvements in technology have presented many opportunities for the rural areas to grow and prosper. Given these changes, how do rural Nebraskans feel about their community? Are they planning to move from their community in the next year?

This report details 3,199 responses to the 2001 Nebraska Rural Poll, the sixth annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans’ perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their community and their plans to move or stay in their community. Trends for the community questions are examined by comparing data from the five previous polls to this year’s results. For all questions, comparisons are made among different respondent subgroups, i.e., comparisons by age, occupation, region, etc. Based on these analyses, some key findings emerged:

- **Rural Nebraskans have increasingly stated that their community has remained the same.** This year, 53 percent state their community has remained the same during the past year, compared to 38 percent in 1996. Conversely, the proportion saying their community has changed for the better has declined from 38 percent in 1996 to 28 percent this year. The proportion saying their community has changed for the worse has remained fairly steady across all six years.

- **Farmers and ranchers are less likely than persons with different occupations to believe their community has changed for the better during the past year.** Only 18 percent of the farmers and ranchers say their community has changed for the better, compared to 39 percent of the persons with administrative support positions.

- **Respondents living in larger communities are more likely than the persons living in smaller communities to state their community has changed for the better.** Thirty-four percent of the persons living in communities with populations of 5,000 or more say their community has changed for the better, compared to only 16 percent of the persons living in communities with less than 500 people.

- **The majority of rural Nebraskans rate their community as friendly, trusting, and supportive.** Seventy-two percent rate their community as friendly, 62 percent say their community is trusting, and 62 percent rate their community as supportive.

- **Over one-third of rural Nebraskans are dissatisfied with the following services and amenities in their community: entertainment, retail shopping, streets, and restaurants.** Service and amenities residents are most satisfied with include parks and recreation, basic medical care services, library services, and education (K - 12).
Younger respondents report being more dissatisfied with their city/village government as compared with older respondents. Thirty-eight percent of the persons between the ages of 19 and 39 are dissatisfied with their city/village government, compared to 24 percent of the persons age 65 and older.

Persons living in the Panhandle are more likely than those living elsewhere to be dissatisfied with their airline service. Thirty-one percent of the Panhandle residents are dissatisfied with their airline service, as compared to only 11 percent of the residents in the Southeast region of the state.

Only four percent of the respondents are planning to move from their community in the next year. This proportion has remained fairly steady during the past four years.

The proportion of younger rural Nebraskans planning to move from their community has increased from last year. In 2000, 10 percent of the persons age 19 to 29 were planning to move from their community and 10 percent were uncertain. This year, 18 percent are planning to move and 13 percent are uncertain.

The rural Nebraskans who are planning to move from their community are increasingly planning to move to the metropolitan areas of the state. The proportion of persons planning to move to either the Lincoln or Omaha metropolitan areas has steadily increased during the past three years. In 1999, 10 percent of the expected movers planned to move to the metropolitan areas, compared to 18 percent this year. The proportion of expected movers planning to leave the state has decreased since 1999 (from 52 percent to 44 percent).

The younger respondents are more likely than the older respondents to be planning to move from their community in the next year. Eighteen percent of the persons age 19 to 29 are planning to leave their community, compared to only three percent of the persons age 65 and older. Thirteen percent of the younger respondents are undecided about their plans to move.

The top three ranked factors influencing rural Nebraskans’ decisions to move from their community are: lack of economic opportunities in their current community, for lower taxes, and to find a better job. Seventy-two percent of those either planning to move or considering a move cite a lack of economic opportunities in their community as being “very important” or “somewhat important” in influencing their decision to move, 67 percent want to move to lower their taxes, and 66 percent are looking to find a better job.

Approximately one-third of rural Nebraskans say “to find a better job” is the most important factor influencing their decision to move from their community in the next year. Thirty-two percent identify this item as the most important factor influencing their
decision to move. Eleven percent cite the following factors as being the most important factors influencing their move: being closer to relatives, for lower taxes and a reason other than those listed.

- **Economic opportunities are more important considerations for the younger persons as compared to the considerations influencing older respondents’ migration decisions.** The top reasons influencing the decision to move for the persons under the age of 50 are: lack of economic opportunities, for lower taxes, and to find a better job. The persons age 65 and older who are considering a move cite the following reasons: for lower taxes, to lower cost of living, better access to health care, and for a more desirable climate.
**Introduction**

During the 1980s, much of rural Nebraska experienced out-migration, causing many difficulties in smaller communities. In that decade, only four of Nebraska’s 87 rural (i.e., non-metropolitan) counties gained population. However, during the 1990s 34 of these 87 counties experienced a population increase. While this is a notable increase, it still remains that over 60 percent of the non-metropolitan counties in the state experienced population declines during this past decade. The population declines, fueled by death rates exceeding birth rates and out-migration outstripping in-migration, leave behind an aging population and small towns that are struggling to remain viable. At the same time, improvements in technology present opportunities for rural communities to grow and prosper.

Given the above, how do rural Nebraskans feel about their community? Do they think their community has changed for the better or worse during the past year? Are rural Nebraskans satisfied with the services and amenities their community provides? Are they planning to move from their community in the next year? If so, what factors have led to their decision to move? Do these factors differ by the respondents’ age or the size of their community?

This paper provides a detailed analysis of these questions. It also examines changes over time in rural Nebraskans’ perceptions of their community.

The 2001 Nebraska Rural Poll is the sixth annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans’ perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about their community and their satisfaction with services and amenities in their community. Trends will be examined by comparing the data from the five previous polls to this year’s results. In addition to these items, respondents were asked whether they plan to stay or move from their community in the next year and what factors influenced their decision to move.

**Methodology and Respondent Profile**

This study is based on 3,199 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, federal farm policy, charitable giving, and cost of living. This paper reports only results from the community portion of the survey.

A 50% 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 56 years of age. Seventy percent are married (Appendix Table 1\(^1\) ) and sixty-nine 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 33 years. Fifty-nine percent are living in or near towns or villages with populations less than 5,000.

Sixty-one percent of the respondents report their approximate household income from all sources, before taxes, for 2000 is below $40,000. Twenty-five percent report incomes over $50,000. Ninety-one percent have attained at least a high school diploma.

Sixty-nine percent were employed in 2000 on a full-time, part-time, or seasonal basis. Twenty-six percent are retired. Thirty-one percent of those employed report working in a professional, technical or administrative occupation. Seventeen percent indicate they are farmers or ranchers. When jointly considering the occupation of the respondent and their spouse/partner, 19 percent of the employed are involved in farming or ranching. The employed respondents report having to drive an average of 11 miles, one way, to their primary job.

*Trends in Community Ratings, 1996 - 2001*

As mentioned earlier, this is the sixth annual Nebraska Rural Poll, and therefore comparisons are made between the data collected this year to the five previous studies. It is important to keep in mind when viewing these comparisons that these were independent samples (the same people were not surveyed each year).

*Community Change*

To examine respondents’ perceptions of how their community has changed, they were asked the question, “Communities across the nation are undergoing change. When you think about this past year, would you say...My community has changed for the...” Answer categories were “better,” “same” or “worse.”

One difference in the wording of this question has occurred over the past six years. Starting in 1998, the phrase “this past year” was added to the question; no time frame was given to the respondents in the first two studies.

During this six-year period, there has been a general upward trend in the proportion of respondents indicating their community has remained the same. Thirty-eight percent of the 1996 respondents stated their community had stayed the same (Figure 1). The proportion increased to 53 percent this year. Conversely, the proportion saying their community has changed for the better has declined over all the study periods (from 38 percent in 1996 to 28 percent this year). The proportion saying their community has changed for the worse has remained fairly steady across all six years.

*Community Social Dimensions*

Respondents were also asked each year if...

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\(^1\) 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).
they would describe their communities as friendly or unfriendly, trusting or distrusting, and supportive or hostile. For each of these three dimensions, respondents were asked to rate their community using a seven-point scale between each pair of contrasting views.

The proportion of respondents who view their community as friendly increased when compared to last year. This year, 72 percent declare their community is friendly, compared to 68 percent last year.\(^2\) In the first four studies, approximately 73 percent felt their community was friendly. Thus, last year appears to be a slight deviation from the general pattern.

The proportion of respondents who viewed their community as trusting increased from 62 percent in 1996 to 66 percent in 1999. It then decreased to 59 percent in 2000, but rose again to 62 percent this year. A similar pattern emerged when examining the proportion of respondents who rated their community as supportive. The proportion stating their community was supportive first increased from 62 percent in 1996 to 65 percent in 1999, then it dropped to 60 percent in 2000 but increased slightly to 62 percent this year.

**Plans to Leave the Community**

To determine whether or not respondents planned to leave their community, they were asked, “Do you plan to move from your community in the next year?” This question was only included in the studies starting in 1998. The proportion planning to leave their community has remained relatively stable during the past four years. Approximately three percent of the respondents each year indicated they were planning to leave their community in the next year. This year, that proportion was four percent.

However, the proportion of younger respondents who are planning to move from their community in the next year increased between 2000 and 2001. In 2000, 10 percent of the persons age 19 to 29 were planning to move and 10 percent were uncertain. This year, 18 percent are planning to move and 13 percent are uncertain.

The expected destination for the persons planning to move has changed over time (Figure 2). The proportion planning to move to either the Lincoln or Omaha

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\(^2\) The responses on the 7-point scale are converted to percentages as follows: values of 1, 2, and 3 are categorized as friendly, trusting, and supportive; values of 5, 6, and 7 are categorized as unfriendly, distrusting, and hostile; and a value of 4 is categorized as no opinion.
Figure 2. Expected Destination of Those Planning to Move: 1998 - 2001

metropolitan areas has steadily increased during the past three years. In 1999, 10 percent of the expected movers planned to move to the metropolitan areas. However, this year 18 percent of the respondents planning to move were expecting to move to one of these cities.

The proportion of expected movers planning to leave the state has decreased since 1999. That year, 52 percent planned to leave the state. However, only 44 percent of this year’s respondents that are planning to move expect to leave Nebraska.

Satisfaction with Community Services and Amenities

Respondents are also asked how satisfied they are with various community services and amenities each year. They were asked

this in all six studies; however, in 1996 they were also asked about the availability of these services. Therefore, comparisons will only be made between the last five studies, when the question wording was identical. The respondents were asked how satisfied they were with a list of 26 services and amenities, taking into consideration availability, cost, and quality.

Table 1 shows the proportions very satisfied with the service each year. The rank ordering of these items has remained relatively stable over the five years. In addition, many of the proportions remained fairly consistent between the years.

The Community and Its Attributes in 2001

In this section, the 2001 data on respondents’ evaluations of their communities and its attributes are first summarized and then examined in terms of any differences that may exist depending upon the size of the respondent’s community, the region in which they live, or various individual attributes such as household income or age.

Community Change

Over one-half (53%) of the respondents state their community has stayed the same during the past year, 28 percent say their community has changed for the better, and 19 percent believe it has changed for the worse (see Figure 1).

When examining the responses by various demographic subgroups, many differences are detected in respondents’ perceptions of the change occurring in their community (Appendix Table 2). Differences occur with each variable examined, with the exception
Table 1. Proportions of Respondents “Very Satisfied” with Each Service, 1997 - 2001

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Note: NA = Not asked that particular year

Respondents living in or near the largest communities are more likely than respondents living in or near the smallest communities to contend that their community has changed for the better. Thirty-four percent of the persons living in or near communities with populations of 5,000 or more declare their community has changed for the better; yet, only 16 percent of the persons living in or near communities with less than 500 people share this opinion.

Persons with administrative support occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to say their community has changed for the better during the past year (Figure 3). Thirty-nine percent of the persons with this type of occupation state their community has changed for the better, compared to only 18 percent of the farmers and ranchers.
The other groups most likely to say their community has changed for the better include: persons living in the Panhandle (see Appendix Figure 1 for the counties included in each region), respondents with the highest household incomes, the youngest respondents, females, and persons with higher educational levels.

Community Social Dimensions

In addition to asking respondents about their perceptions of the change occurring in their community, they were also asked to rate its social dimensions. They were asked if they would describe their communities as friendly or unfriendly, trusting or distrusting, and supportive or hostile. Overall, respondents rate their communities as friendly (72%), trusting (62%) and supportive (62%).

Respondents’ ratings of their community on these dimensions differ by some of the demographic and community characteristics (Appendix Table 3). Persons living in or near the smaller communities are more likely than those living in or near larger communities to rate their community as friendly, trusting, and supportive. For example, 67 percent of the persons living in or near communities with less than 1,000 people view their community as trusting, compared to 56 percent of the persons living in or near the communities with populations of 10,000 or more.

The older respondents are more likely than the younger respondents to state their community is both trusting and supportive. Sixty-seven percent of the persons age 65 and older view their community as trusting, yet only 55 percent of the persons between the ages of 19 and 29 feel the same way.

The widowed respondents are more likely than the other marital groups to rate their community as friendly, trusting, and supportive. Seventy percent of the widowed respondents rate their community as supportive, compared to only 53 percent of the divorced or separated respondents.
The persons with higher incomes and the respondents with higher educational levels are the other groups most likely to state their community is friendly.

**Satisfaction with Community Services and Amenities**

To gauge rural residents’ satisfaction with their communities’ services and amenities, they were asked to rate how satisfied they were with a list of 26 services and amenities, taking into consideration cost, availability, and quality. Residents report high levels of satisfaction with some services, but other services and amenities have higher levels of dissatisfaction.

At least one-third of the respondents are either “very dissatisfied” or “somewhat dissatisfied” with the following: entertainment (43%), retail shopping (40%), streets (40%), and restaurants (36%) (Appendix Table 4). The four services or amenities respondents are the most satisfied with (based on the combined percentage of “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” responses) include: parks and recreation (74%), basic medical care services (73%), library services (73%), and education (K-12) (70%).

The ten services and amenities with the greatest dissatisfaction ratings were analyzed by community size, region, and various individual attributes (Appendix Table 5). Many differences emerge.

Younger respondents are more likely than older respondents to be dissatisfied with the entertainment in their community. Fifty-eight percent of the persons between the ages of 19 and 39 are dissatisfied with entertainment, compared to only 26 percent of the persons age 65 and older.

The respondents with occupations classified as “other” are more likely than the respondents with different occupations to express dissatisfaction with entertainment. Fifty-four percent of the respondents with these occupations are dissatisfied with entertainment, compared to 34 percent of the farmers or ranchers.

Other groups more likely to express dissatisfaction with entertainment include: persons living in or near the larger communities, respondents living in the Panhandle, persons with higher household incomes, the divorced or separated respondents, and persons with higher educational levels.

Persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 500 to 4,999 are more likely than persons living in communities of different sizes to be dissatisfied with the retail shopping in their community. Forty-five percent of the persons living in or near communities of this size are dissatisfied with retail shopping, compared to 32 percent of the persons living in or near communities with less than 500 people.

Respondents with occupations classified as “other” are more likely than those with different occupations to express dissatisfaction with retail shopping. Forty-seven percent of these respondents are dissatisfied with retail shopping, compared to 31 percent of the farmers and ranchers.

Other groups most likely to be dissatisfied with retail shopping include: persons living in both the North Central and Northeast
regions of the state, the younger respondents, females, and the persons with higher educational levels.

Persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 500 to 4,999 are also more likely to express dissatisfaction with their community’s restaurants. Forty-three percent of the persons living in communities of this size are dissatisfied with its restaurants, compared to 27 percent of the persons living in or near communities with less than 500 people.

Other groups more likely to be dissatisfied with the restaurants in their community include: persons living in the Southeast region, respondents with higher income levels, younger respondents, persons who are divorced or separated, respondents with higher educational levels, and both persons with professional occupations and occupations classified as “other.”

Younger respondents are more likely than the older respondents to express dissatisfaction with their city/village government. Thirty-eight percent of the persons age 19 to 39 are dissatisfied with their city/village government, compared to 24 percent of the persons age 65 and older (Figure 4).

The other groups most likely to express dissatisfaction with their city/village government include: persons living in or near the largest communities, males, respondents with some college education, and the laborers. The widowed respondents are the marital group least likely to be dissatisfied with their city/village government.

Persons living in the Northeast region of the state are more likely than those living elsewhere to express dissatisfaction with the streets in their community. Forty-three percent of the persons living in this region are dissatisfied with their community’s streets, compared to 33 percent of the persons living in the Panhandle.

Other groups most likely to be dissatisfied with the streets include: persons living in or near the largest communities, persons with lower income levels, the younger respondents, females, the divorced/separated respondents, persons with lower educational levels, and the laborers.

The younger respondents are more likely than the older respondents to be dissatisfied with their county government. Approximately 32 percent of the persons under the age of 65 are dissatisfied with their county government, compared to 20 percent of the persons age 65 and older.

The other groups most likely to express
dissatisfaction with their county government include: males, the married respondents, persons with some college, and both the farmers and ranchers and laborers.

Persons living in or near the smallest communities are more likely than those living in or near larger communities to be dissatisfied with the law enforcement in their community (Figure 5). Thirty-three percent of the residents living in or near communities with less than 500 people express dissatisfaction with their community’s law enforcement. Only 21 percent of the persons living in or near communities with populations of 5,000 or more are dissatisfied with their law enforcement.

Other groups most likely to express dissatisfaction with law enforcement include: persons living in the North Central region of the state, persons with lower income levels, younger respondents, persons with lower educational levels, and the laborers.

The persons with professional occupations are more likely than the persons with different occupations to express dissatisfaction with the housing in their community. Thirty-three percent of the persons with professional occupations are dissatisfied with their community’s housing, compared to 23 percent of the laborers.

Other groups most likely to be dissatisfied with the housing in their community include: persons living in or near the smallest communities, persons living in the North Central and South Central regions of the state, persons with higher incomes, the younger respondents, females, the divorced/separated respondents, and the persons with higher educational levels.

The older respondents are more likely than the younger respondents to be dissatisfied with the bus service in their community. Twenty-six percent of the persons age 65 and older are dissatisfied with the bus service, compared to 15 percent of the persons age 19 to 39.

Other groups most likely to be dissatisfied with the bus service include: persons living in or near the largest communities, respondents living in the Panhandle, persons with lower income levels, the divorced/separated and widowed respondents, and persons with higher levels of education.

Persons living in the Panhandle are more likely than persons living elsewhere to be dissatisfied with their community’s airline service (Figure 6). Thirty-one percent of the
Panhandle residents are dissatisfied with the airline service in their community, compared to only 11 percent of the persons living in the Southeast region of the state.

Other groups most likely to express dissatisfaction with the airline service include: persons living in or near the largest communities, respondents with higher income levels, persons between the ages of 40 and 64, respondents with the highest educational levels, and the persons with professional occupations.

**Plans to Leave the Community**

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

Only four percent indicate they are planning to move from their community in the next year, eight percent are uncertain, and 88 percent have no plans to move. Of those who are planning to move, 56 percent plan to remain in the state, with 18 percent planning to move to either Lincoln or Omaha and 38 percent plan to move to another part of the state. Forty-four percent are planning to leave the state.

Intentions to move from their community differed only by age, marital status, and occupation (Appendix Table 6). Younger respondents are more likely than older respondents to be planning to move from their community in the next year (Figure 7). Eighteen percent of the persons between the ages of 19 and 29 are planning to move next year, compared to only three percent of the persons age 65 and older.

The respondents who have never married and the persons who are divorced or separated are more likely than the married or widowed persons to be planning to move. When comparing the responses by occupation, persons with professional, service, and manual labor occupations are the groups most likely to be planning to move in the next year.

The expected location where they plan to move differed by region, income, age, and marital status. The groups most likely to be planning to leave the state include: persons living in the Panhandle, respondents with
lower incomes, the oldest respondents, and the persons who are divorced or separated.

Factors Influencing Decision to Move

It is important to understand why people would choose to move away from their community. In order to obtain this information, the respondents who indicated they were planning to move from their community in the next year and the persons who were uncertain about their plans to move were asked to rate how important various considerations were when deciding to move from their current community.

Approximately two-thirds of the persons either planning to move or considering a move say the following are either “very important” or “somewhat important” considerations: lack of economic opportunities in their current community (72%), for lower taxes (67%), and to find a better job (66%).

Then, these respondents were asked to give the most important factor that influenced their decision to move from their community. Thirty-two percent of the potential movers state it was “to find a better job.” Eleven percent say the following factors are the most important influences on their decision to move: to be closer to relatives, for lower taxes, and a reason other than those listed on the survey.

Since the out-migration of youth from rural Nebraska has been a growing concern, the considerations were examined by age to see if any differences emerge (Appendix Table 7). For the respondents under the age of 50, the top three considerations are the same (although their rank order is slightly different). These are the same three considerations mentioned earlier.

The lack of economic opportunities in their current community is an important consideration for the persons under the age of 65, but is rated much lower by the respondents age 65 and over. Similarly, the consideration “to find a better job” is one of the top considerations for the respondents under the age of 50, but is rated lower by the older respondents.

Looking “for a more desirable climate” is rated fairly high by the persons age 65 and older, but is not a top consideration for the younger respondents. And, the persons between the ages of 30 and 39 rate “to find higher quality education for your children (K - 12)” fairly high, but this is not a highly rated consideration for persons of different ages.
The ratings of these considerations were also examined by the size of the respondent’s community. In a few instances, the rank ordering is different for the different size classes. For instance, “to lower the cost of living” is rated fairly high by respondents living in communities with populations of 500 or more. However, this consideration is not as highly rated by the persons living in the communities with less than 500 people.

Also, “better access to health care” is one of the top considerations for persons living in communities with populations ranging from 500 to 999. Yet, this reason ranks lower among persons living in communities of different sizes. Finally, the consideration “to reduce current commute” is rated higher by persons living in the smallest communities than it is by the persons living in larger communities.

**Conclusion**

Overall, rural Nebraskans have favorable views of their communities. The majority of the respondents either felt their community had stayed the same or changed for the better during the past year. In addition, most also characterize their communities as friendly, trusting, and supportive.

Respondents living in larger communities are more likely than the persons living in smaller communities to say their community has changed for the better during the past year. However, the persons living in the smaller communities are more likely to rate their communities as friendly, trusting, and supportive.

The services and amenities in the communities that residents are most dissatisfied with include: entertainment, retail shopping, streets, and restaurants. The services and amenities drawing the highest satisfaction ratings include: parks and recreation, basic medical care services, library services, and education (K - 12).

Most rural Nebraskans are planning to stay in their community next year. Only four percent report planning to move and eight percent are uncertain. Forty-four percent of the persons planning to move say they will move out of Nebraska.

When asked the factors that influenced their decision to move, the reasons are primarily economic. The factor that was most frequently cited as a very important or somewhat important reason for moving was the lack of economic opportunities in their current community. Other important factors include to lower taxes and to find a better job. When asked to identify the most important factor that influenced their decision to move, the top-rated reason was to find a better job.

These economic considerations are more important for the younger persons. The top reasons given by the persons age 65 and older who are considering a move include: for lower taxes, to lower cost of living, better access to health care, and for a more desirable climate.

The highest ranked factors influencing the potential movers’ decision to stay or leave their community indicate that more needs to be done to provide economic opportunities in rural areas. This is especially true if rural communities hope to retain their younger residents. More economic opportunities and
better jobs would appear to help make the decision to remain in rural Nebraska easier for the younger generation.
Appendix Figure 1. Regions of Nebraska

Panhandle
Sioux Box Butte Dawes
Scotts Bluff Banner Morrill
Kimball Cheyenne Deuel

North Central
Keya Paha Brown Rock Holt
Grant Hooker Thomas Blaine Loup Garfield Wheeler
Arthur McPherson Logan

South Central
Perkins Lincoln Dawson
Dundy Hitchcock Frontier Hayes
Gosper Phelps Kearney Adams Clay

Northeast
Boyd Knox Cedar Dixon
Pierce Wayne Thurston
Antelope Madison Stanton Cuming
Boone Colfax Dodge
Nance Platte

Southeast
Buffalo Hall Hamilton York Seward
Dakota Douglas Sarpy

Metropolitan counties (not surveyed)
### Appendix Table 1. Demographic Profile of Rural Poll Respondents Compared to 1990 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 39</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>40 - 64</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<td>49%</td>
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<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<td>9th to 12th grade (no diploma)</td>
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<td>3%</td>
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<td>12%</td>
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<td>34%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<td>38%</td>
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<td>25%</td>
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<td>Associate degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelors degree</td>
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<td>Graduate or professional degree</td>
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<td>Less than $10,000</td>
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<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<td>$10,000 - $19,999</td>
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<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>$20,000 - $29,999</td>
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<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>$30,000 - $39,999</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>$40,000 - $49,999</td>
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<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<td>$50,000 - $59,999</td>
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<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000 - $74,999</td>
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<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>3%</td>
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<td>$75,000 or more</td>
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<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<td>76%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
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<td>7%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
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<td>20%</td>
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<td>Divorced/separated</td>
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<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Widowed/widower</td>
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<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

1. 1990 Census universe is non-metro population 20 years of age and over.
2. 1990 Census universe is total non-metro population.
3. 1990 Census universe is non-metro population 18 years of age and over.
4. 1990 Census universe is all non-metro households.
5. 1990 Census universe is non-metro population 15 years of age and over.
Appendix Table 2. Perceptions of Community Change by Community Size, Region, and Individual Attributes

Communities across the nation are undergoing change. When you think about this past year, would you say...
My community has changed for the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Size</th>
<th>Better</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>Worse</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 500</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>500 - 999</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>1,000 - 4,999</td>
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<td>$P^2 = 71.50$</td>
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<td>5,000 - 9,999</td>
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<td>48</td>
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<td>10,000 and up</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Region</th>
<th>Better</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>Worse</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Panhandle</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
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<td>North Central</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>$P^2 = 28.35$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>21</td>
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<th>Individual Attributes:</th>
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<th>Worse</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<td>Income Level</td>
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<td>Under $20,000</td>
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<td>58</td>
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<td>$20,000 - $39,999</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000 - $59,999</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>$P^2 = 35.86$</td>
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<td>$60,000 and over</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Better</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>Worse</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<tr>
<td>19 - 29</td>
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<td>30 - 39</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>$P^2 = 27.93$</td>
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<td>50 - 64</td>
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<td>51</td>
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<td>(.000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>65 and older</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td>15</td>
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<table>
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<th>Same</th>
<th>Worse</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>31</td>
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<th>Same</th>
<th>Worse</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/separated</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>$P^2 = 5.40$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>(.494)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Education</th>
<th>Better</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>Worse</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<td>No H.S. diploma</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>H.S. diploma</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Some college, 2 year degree</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>$P^2 = 38.30$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelors or graduate degree</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
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Appendix Table 2 Continued.

Communities across the nation are undergoing change. When you think about this past year, would you say...

My community has changed for the

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<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Better</th>
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<th>Worse</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<td>Admin. support</td>
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<td>Sales</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming/ranching</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Skilled laborer</td>
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<td>Manual laborer</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>14</td>
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(n = 1995)
Appendix Table 3. Measures of Community Attributes in Relation to Community Size, Region, and Individual Attributes

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<tr>
<th>Community Size</th>
<th>Friendly</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Unfriendly</th>
<th>Chi-square (sig.)</th>
<th>Trusting</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Distrusting</th>
<th>Chi-square (sig.)</th>
<th>Supportive</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Hostile</th>
<th>Chi-square (sig.)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 - 999</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1,000 - 4,999</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>P² = 6.4</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>28.72</td>
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<td>10,000 and up</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Region</th>
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<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Unfriendly</th>
<th>Chi-square (sig.)</th>
<th>Trusting</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
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<td>P² = 6.8</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td></td>
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<td>15</td>
<td></td>
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Appendix Table 3 continued.

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<th>Distrusting</th>
<th>Chi-square (sig.)</th>
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<td>15</td>
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<th>Distrusting</th>
<th>Chi-square (sig.)</th>
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<th>No opinion</th>
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<th>Distrusting</th>
<th>Chi-square (sig.)</th>
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<th>No opinion</th>
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<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Distrusting</th>
<th>Chi-square (sig.)</th>
<th>Supportive</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>Farming/ranch</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
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<td>(.740)</td>
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### Appendix Table 4. Level of Satisfaction with Community Services and Amenities

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<th>Satisfied*</th>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Streets</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/village government</td>
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<td>County government</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>Rail service</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
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<td>Highways and bridges</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>66</td>
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<td>Basic medical care services</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>73</td>
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<td>Taxi service</td>
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<td>11</td>
</tr>
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<td>Airport</td>
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<td>31</td>
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<td>Mental health services</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
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<td>Solid waste disposal</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parks and recreation</td>
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<td>Day care services</td>
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<td>Nursing home care</td>
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<td>Water disposal</td>
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<td>73</td>
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<td>Senior centers</td>
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<td>62</td>
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<td>Head start programs</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>39</td>
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</table>

* Dissatisfied represents the combined percentage of “very dissatisfied” or “somewhat dissatisfied” responses. Similarly, satisfied is the combination of “very satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied” responses.
Appendix Table 5. Measures of Satisfaction with Ten Services and Amenities in Relation to Community Size, Region, and Individual Attributes

<table>
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<th>Restaurants</th>
<th>City/village government</th>
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<td>Satisfied</td>
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<td>Less than 500</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
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<td>500 - 4,999</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 and over</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square (sig.)</td>
<td>(P^2 = 73.10 (.000))</td>
<td>(P^2 = 132.18 (.000))</td>
<td>(P^2 = 70.07 (.000))</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>South Central</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<td>(P^2 = 70.5 (.316))</td>
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<td>$20,000 - $39,999</td>
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<td>47</td>
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<td>$40,000 - $59,999</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>$60,000 and over</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square (sig.)</td>
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<td>(P^2 = 7.05 (.316))</td>
<td>(P^2 = 59.27 (.000))</td>
<td>(P^2 = 58.06 (.000))</td>
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* Only the ten services with the highest combined percentage of “very” or “somewhat dissatisfied” are included in this table.
Appendix Table 5 continued.

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<th>Streets</th>
<th>County government</th>
<th>Law enforcement</th>
<th>Housing</th>
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<td>Prof/tech/admin.</td>
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<td>Farming/ranching</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Only the ten services with the highest combined percentage of “very” or “somewhat dissatisfied” are included in this table.
Appendix Table 5 continued.

| Community Size | **Bus service** | | Airline service | | 
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied | Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied |
| (n = 2770) | | | (n = 2782) | | |
| Less than 500 | 7 | 76 | 17 | 11 | 73 | 16 |
| 500 - 4,999 | 7 | 74 | 19 | 10 | 76 | 14 |
| 5,000 and over | 15 | 61 | 25 | 23 | 47 | 30 |
| **Chi-square (sig.)** | P² = 68.77 (.000) | | P² = 230.33 (.000) | | |

| Region | **Bus service** | | Airline service | | 
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied | Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied |
| (n = 2816) | | | (n = 2826) | | |
| Panhandle | 11 | 58 | 31 | 22 | 46 | 31 |
| North Central | 10 | 65 | 25 | 12 | 62 | 26 |
| South Central | 12 | 66 | 22 | 21 | 55 | 25 |
| Northeast | 11 | 71 | 18 | 12 | 69 | 19 |
| Southeast | 8 | 77 | 16 | 12 | 77 | 11 |
| **Chi-square (sig.)** | P² = 49.30 (.000) | | P² = 142.60 (.000) | | |

| Income Level | **Bus service** | | Airline service | | 
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied | Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied |
| (n = 2596) | | | (n = 2604) | | |
| Under $20,000 | 14 | 62 | 25 | 16 | 65 | 18 |
| $20,000 - $39,999 | 10 | 69 | 20 | 14 | 67 | 20 |
| $40,000 - $59,999 | 7 | 71 | 22 | 17 | 58 | 26 |
| $60,000 and over | 10 | 72 | 18 | 18 | 57 | 25 |
| **Chi-square (sig.)** | P² = 23.71 (.001) | | P² = 23.48 (.001) | | |

| Age | **Bus service** | | Airline service | | 
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied | Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied |
| (n = 2790) | | | (n = 2800) | | |
| 19 - 39 | 8 | 77 | 15 | 13 | 70 | 18 |
| 40 - 64 | 9 | 71 | 20 | 15 | 62 | 23 |
| 65 and over | 15 | 60 | 26 | 20 | 61 | 20 |
| **Chi-square (sig.)** | P² = 56.13 (.000) | | P² = 24.94 (.000) | | |

| Gender | **Bus service** | | Airline service | | 
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied | Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied |
| (n = 2804) | | | (n = 2815) | | |
| Male | 10 | 70 | 21 | 16 | 62 | 22 |
| Female | 12 | 67 | 21 | 16 | 65 | 19 |
| **Chi-square (sig.)** | P² = 5.28 (.071) | | P² = 4.93 (.085) | | |

| Marital Status | **Bus service** | | Airline service | | 
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied | Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied |
| (n = 2806) | | | (n = 2817) | | |
| Married | 9 | 72 | 20 | 15 | 64 | 22 |
| Never married | 12 | 68 | 20 | 16 | 62 | 22 |
| Divorced/separated | 12 | 63 | 26 | 20 | 59 | 21 |
| Widowed | 18 | 56 | 26 | 19 | 63 | 18 |
| **Chi-square (sig.)** | P² = 43.89 (.000) | | P² = 9.81 (.133) | | |

| Education | **Bus service** | | Airline service | | 
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied | Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied |
| (n = 2787) | | | (n = 2798) | | |
| High school or less | 12 | 70 | 18 | 16 | 67 | 17 |
| Some college | 10 | 68 | 22 | 15 | 63 | 22 |
| College grad | 8 | 68 | 25 | 16 | 56 | 28 |
| **Chi-square (sig.)** | P² = 16.33 (.003) | | P² = 30.13 (.000) | | |

| Occupation | **Bus service** | | Airline service | | 
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied | Satisfied | No opinion | Dissatisfied |
| (n = 1918) | | | (n = 1922) | | |
| Prof/tech/admin. | 9 | 70 | 21 | 17 | 58 | 25 |
| Farming/ranching | 9 | 73 | 18 | 13 | 70 | 18 |
| Laborer | 8 | 77 | 15 | 12 | 71 | 17 |
| Other | 9 | 70 | 21 | 15 | 61 | 24 |
| **Chi-square (sig.)** | P² = 8.61 (.197) | | P² = 27.52 (.000) | | |

* Only the ten services with the highest combined percentage of “very” or “somewhat dissatisfied” are included in this table.
### Appendix Table 6. Plans to Leave Community by Community Size, Region, and Individual Attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you plan to leave your community in the next year?</th>
<th>If yes, where do you plan to move?</th>
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<tr>
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<td>---</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community Size</strong></td>
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<td>(n = 3069)</td>
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<td>1,000 - 4,999</td>
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<td>Southeast</td>
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<td>$40,000 - $59,999</td>
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<td>$60,000 and over</td>
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<td>50 - 64</td>
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Page 24
Appendix Table 6 continued.

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<th>Do you plan to leave your community in the next year?</th>
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* = That row represents 10 or fewer respondents.
### Appendix Table 7. Factors Influencing Decision to Move from Community in Relation to Age and Community Size

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<th>30 - 39</th>
<th>40 - 49</th>
<th>50 - 64</th>
<th>65 and older</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>72</td>
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<td>To lower cost of living</td>
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<td>64</td>
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<td>Better access to health care</td>
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<td>57</td>
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<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>For more cultural opportunities</td>
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