NEBRASKA RURAL POLL

A Research Report

Perceptions of Well-Being and the Economy in Nonmetropolitan Nebraska

2023 Nebraska Rural Poll Results

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Table of Contents

List of Appendix Tables and Figures

Executive Summary

The past year continued to be challenging for rural Nebraskans. Inflation continues to impact household budgets. Low unemployment, in part due to labor shortages, helped raise wages for workers but businesses struggle to fill openings. Lower agricultural commodity prices and continuing drought concerns have pointed to a projected decline in farm income. Given these challenges and opportunities, how do rural Nebraskans believe they are doing and how do they view their future? How satisfied are they with various items that influence their well-being? Have these views changed over the past 28 years? What do rural Nebraskans expect will happen in the economy in the next 12 months? This paper provides a detailed analysis of these questions.

This report details 1,100 responses to the 2023 Nebraska Rural Poll, the 28ᵗʰ annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about their well-being. Trends for some of the questions are examined by comparing data from the 27 previous polls to this year's results. Respondents were also asked a series of questions about the economy. Comparisons are made among different respondent subgroups, that is, comparisons by age, occupation, region, etc. Based on these analyses, some key findings emerged:

- ***This year, rural Nebraskans are more pessimistic about their current situation than they've been in the past ten years.*** The proportion believing they are worse off than they were five years ago was 27 percent, up from the 21 percent last year and 11 percent in 2021. This is the highest level since both 2003 and 2009, when 28 percent believed they were worse off. This increase in pessimism was matched with a decrease in optimism. This year, less than one-half (45%) of rural Nebraskans believe they are better off compared to five years ago, down from 50 percent last year.

- ***Rural Nebraskans' optimism about the future has declined in the past four years.*** The proportion saying they will be better off ten years from now has always been greater than the proportion saying they will be worse off ten years from now. In fact, the gap between the two gradually widened between 2013 and 2019. However, that gap has narrowed considerably in the past four years. This year, rural Nebraskans' optimism about their future is lower than last year. Just under four in ten rural Nebraskans (39%) believe they will be better off ten years from now. This is a decrease from 44 percent last year. The past four years have shown a steady decline from 52 percent in 2019 (the highest proportion across all years of this study). The proportion of respondents stating they will be worse off ten years from now increased compared to last year (from 22 percent last year to 27 percent this year).

- ***The past four years have also seen an increase in feelings of powerlessness by rural Nebraskans.*** The past four years have been a period of steady decline in the proportions who either strongly disagree or disagree that people are powerless to control their own lives from 54 percent to 45 percent. The proportion of rural Nebraskans that either strongly agree or agree with the statement has steadily increased from 24 percent in 2019 to 34 percent this year.

- ***Younger persons are more likely than older persons to believe they are better off compared to five years ago and will be better off ten years from now.*** Just over three-quarters of persons age 19 to 29 (76%) believe they are much better off or better off than they were five years ago. However, just over one-quarter of persons age 65 and older (26%) share this opinion. Similarly, just over six in ten persons age 19 to 29 believe they will be much better off or better off ten years from now, compared to only 12 percent of persons age 65 and older.

- ***Persons with lower education levels are more likely than persons with more education to believe that people are powerless to control their own lives.*** Almost one-half of persons with a high school diploma or less education (48%) agree that people are powerless to control their own lives. However, just under one-quarter of persons with at least a four-year college degree (24%) share this opinion.

- ***Most rural Nebraskans describe their mental health or emotional well-being as good (55%) or excellent (28%).***
  - ✓ *Persons with higher household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to describe their mental health as excellent.* Just under one-third of persons with the highest household incomes ($100,000 or more) rate their mental health as excellent, compared to just under one-quarter of persons with incomes under $75,000.

- ***Most rural Nebraskans are confident that completing an apprenticeship program, having an associate degree or certification, and having a bachelor's degree can all lead to a good job.*** However, more agree that completing an apprenticeship program can lead to a good job (nine in ten compared to just under seven in ten agreeing with the other two statements).

- ***Rural Nebraskans are less pessimistic about the economy than they were last year.*** The proportions of rural Nebraskans saying that each item will get much worse in the next 12 months was less than it was in 2022. As an example, last year 44 percent of rural Nebraskans predicted inflation would become much worse in the next 12 months. That proportion dropped to 25 percent this year. Other significant declines occurred with grocery prices (43% to 24%), gasoline/diesel fuel prices (47% to 23%), and interest rates (36% to 22%).

Introduction

The past year continued to be challenging for rural Nebraskans. Inflation continues to impact household budgets. Low unemployment, in part due to labor shortages, helped raise wages for workers but businesses struggle to fill openings which hampers economic growth. Lower agricultural commodity prices and continuing drought concerns have pointed to a projected decline in farm income. Given these challenges and opportunities, how do rural Nebraskans believe they are doing and how do they view their future? How satisfied are they with various items that influence their well-being? Have these views changed over the past 28 years? What do rural Nebraskans expect will happen in the economy in the next 12 months? This paper provides a detailed analysis of these questions.

This report details 1,100 responses to the 2023 Nebraska Rural Poll, the 28th annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about their well-being and the economy.

Methodology and Respondent Profile

This study is based on 1,100 responses from Nebraskans living in 86 counties in the state.[1] A self-administered questionnaire was mailed in May and June to 6,030 randomly selected households. Metropolitan counties not included in the sample were Cass, Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, Saunders, Seward and Washington. The 14-page questionnaire included questions pertaining to well-being, community, civil discourse, the economy, federal agricultural policy, and childcare. This paper reports only

results from the well-being and the economy sections.

An 18% 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 manager approximately two weeks later.
3. A reminder postcard was sent to those who had not yet responded approximately two weeks after the questionnaire had been sent.
4. Those who had not yet responded within approximately 30 days of the original mailing were sent a replacement questionnaire.

Appendix Table 1 shows demographic data from this year's study and previous rural polls, as well as similar data based on the entire nonmetropolitan population of Nebraska (using the latest available data from the 2017 - 2021 American Community Survey). As can be seen from the table, there are some marked differences between some of the demographic variables in our sample compared to the Census data. Thus, we suggest the reader use caution in generalizing our data to all rural Nebraska. However, given the random sampling frame used for this survey, the acceptable percentage of responses, and the large number of respondents, we feel the data provide useful insights into opinions of rural Nebraskans on the various issues presented in this report. The margin of error for this study is plus or minus three percent.

Since younger residents have typically been

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1 In the spring of 2013, the Grand Island area (Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick Counties) was designated a metropolitan area. To facilitate comparisons from previous years, these four counties are still included in our sample. In addition, the Sioux City area metropolitan counties of Dixon and Dakota were added in 2014 because of a joint

Metro Poll being conducted by the University of Nebraska at Omaha to ensure all counties in the state were sampled. Although classified as metro, Dixon County is rural in nature. Dakota County is similar in many respects to other "micropolitan" counties the Rural Poll surveys.

under-represented by survey respondents and older residents have been over-represented, weights were used to adjust the sample to match the age distribution in the nonmetropolitan counties in Nebraska (using U.S. Census figures from 2020).

The average age of respondents is 50 years. Seventy-one percent are married (Appendix Table 1) and 71 percent live within the city limits of a town or village. On average, respondents have lived in Nebraska 41 years and have lived in their current community 25 years. Sixty-one percent are living in or near towns or villages with populations less than 5,000. Ninety-eight percent have attained at least a high school diploma.

Eighteen percent of the respondents report their 2022 approximate household income from all sources, before taxes, as below $40,000. Sixty-seven percent report incomes over $60,000. Seventy-five percent were employed in 2022 on a full-time, part-time, or seasonal basis. Nineteen percent are retired. Thirty-one percent of those employed reported working in a management, professional, or education occupation. Ten percent indicated they were employed in agriculture.

Trends in Well-Being (1996 - 2023)

Comparisons are made between the well-being data collected this year to the 27 previous studies. These comparisons show a clearer picture of the trends in the well-being of rural Nebraskans.

General Well-Being

To examine perceptions of general well-being, respondents were asked four questions.
1. "All things considered, do you think you are better or worse off than you were five years ago?" (Answer categories were worse off, about the same, or better off).

2. "All things considered, do you think you are better or worse off than your parents when they were your age?"
3. "All things considered, do you think you will be better or worse off ten years from now than you are today?"
4. "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Life has changed so much in our modern world that most people are powerless to control their own lives."

The responses to the first three questions were expanded in 2009 to a five-point scale, where responses included much worse off, worse off, about the same, better off, and much better off. To compare the data to prior years, the much worse off and worse off categories are combined as well as the better off and much better off categories.

When examining the trends over the past 28 years, rural Nebraskans have generally given positive reviews about their current situation. Each year the proportion of rural Nebraskans that say they are better off than they were five years ago has been greater than the proportion saying they are worse off than they were five years ago (Figure 1). The gap between these two had generally widened during the most recent eight studies but narrowed considerably in the past two years. The average proportion saying they are better off than they were five years ago has been approximately 46 percent. The average proportion believing they are worse off has been approximately 19 percent.

This year, rural Nebraskans are more pessimistic about their current situation than they've been in the past ten years. The proportion believing they are worse off than they were five years ago was 27 percent, up from the 21 percent last year and 11 percent in 2021. This is the highest level since both 2003 and 2009, when 28 percent believed they were worse off.

This increase in pessimism was matched with a decrease in optimism. This year, less than one-half (45%) of rural Nebraskans believe they

Figure 1. *Well-Being Compared to Five Years Ago: 1996 - 2023*
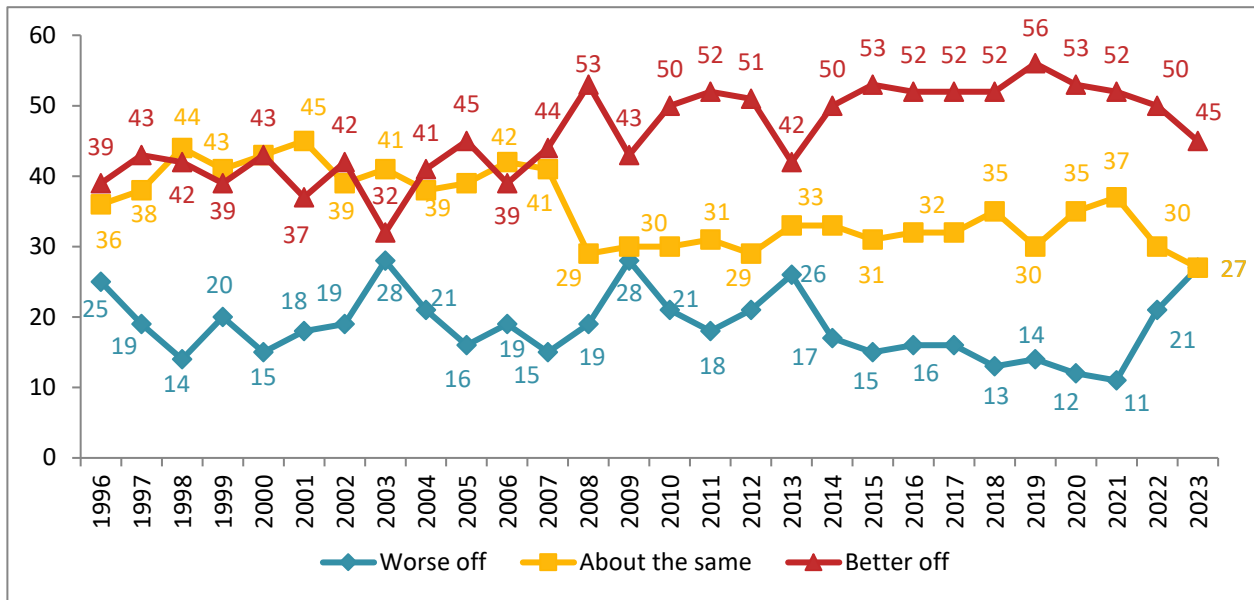
are better off compared to five years ago, down from 50 percent last year.

When asked to compare themselves to their parents when they were their age, the responses had generally been very stable over time (Figure 2). However, the past two years have seen declines in the proportion saying they are better off compared to their parents when they were their age, decreasing to 48 percent from 59 percent in 2021. The

proportion stating they are better off has averaged approximately 58 percent over the 28 year period. The proportion feeling they are worse off than their parents has averaged approximately 18 percent during this period.

When looking to the future, respondents' views have also been generally positive (Figure 3). The proportion saying they will be better off ten years from now has always been greater than the proportion saying they will be worse off ten

Figure 2. *Well-Being Compared to Parents: 1996 - 2023*
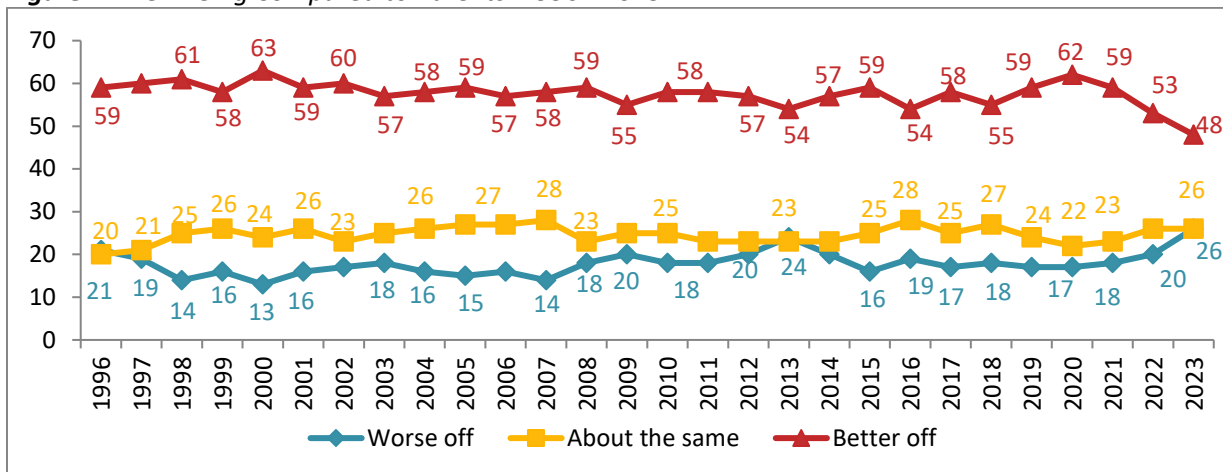
Figure 3. *Well-Being Ten Years from Now: 1996 - 2023*
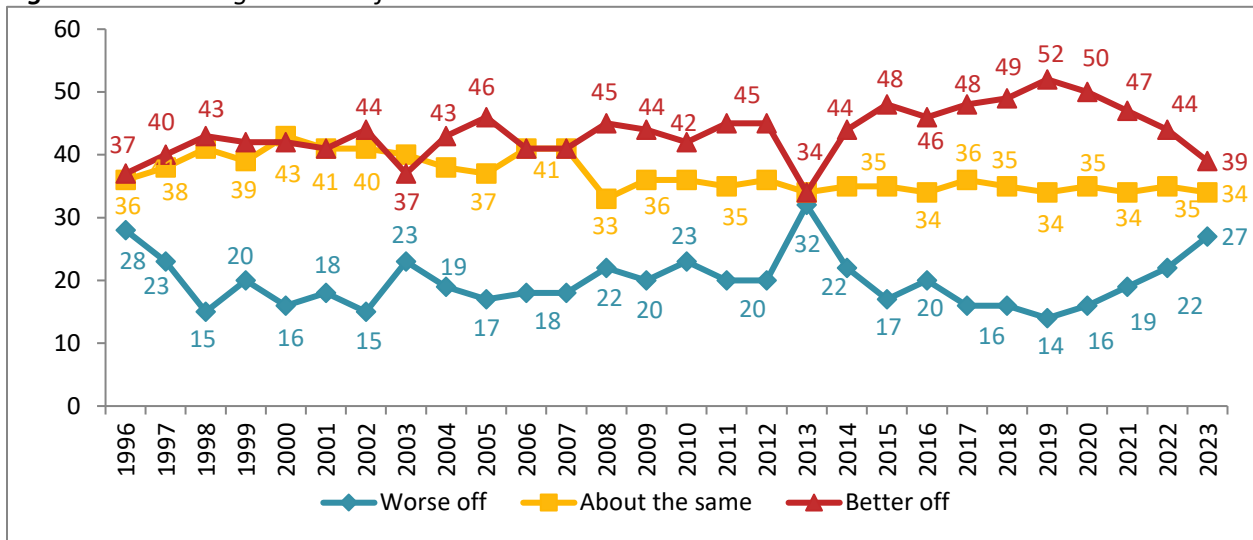
years from now. In fact, the gap between the two gradually widened between 2013 and 2019. However, that gap has narrowed considerably in the past four years.

This year, rural Nebraskans' optimism about their future declined from last year. Just under four in ten rural Nebraskans (39%) believe they will be better off ten years from now. This is a decrease from 44 percent last year. The past four years have shown a steady decline from 52 percent in 2019 (the highest proportion across all years of this study). The proportion believing they will be better off has averaged approximately 44 percent across all 28 years.

The proportion of respondents stating they will be worse off ten years from now increased compared to last year (from 22 percent last year to 27 percent this year). The past four years have reflected a gradual increase from 14 percent in 2019 (the lowest proportion across all years). This proportion has averaged around 20 percent each year.

The proportion stating they will be about the same ten years from now had remained fairly steady around 40 percent over the first 12 years of the study, declined to 33 percent in 2008, and has remained around 35 percent the past fifteen years.

In addition to asking about general well-being, rural Nebraskans were asked about the amount of control they feel they have over their lives. To measure this, respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:
*"Life has changed so much in our modern world that most people are powerless to control their own lives."*

Each year, more rural Nebraskans disagree that people are powerless to control their own lives than agree with that statement (Figure 4). The proportion that either strongly disagree or disagree with the statement generally declined between 2002 and 2010, from 58 percent to 43 percent (the lowest in the 28-year period). However, the proportion then increased to 56 percent in 2012 before generally declining to 45 percent this year. The average proportion across all 28 years is 51 percent. The past four years have been a period of steady decline from 54 percent to 45 percent.

Figure 4. *"…People are Powerless to Control Their Own Lives": 1996 - 2023*
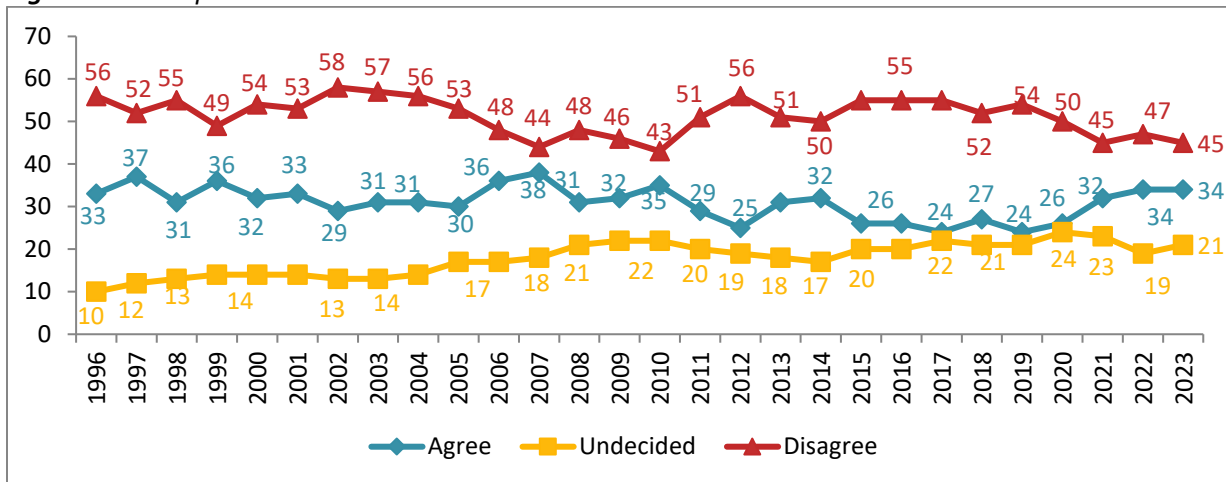
The proportion of rural Nebraskans that either strongly agree or agree with the statement has been somewhat stable across all 28 years of the study. The average proportion has been approximately 31 percent. The past four years have seen an increase from 24 percent in 2019 to 34 percent this year.

The proportion of those who were undecided each year first increased over time, from 10 percent in 1996 to 22 percent in 2010. It then declined to 17 percent in 2014 before increasing to 21 percent this year.

Satisfaction with Specific Aspects of Life

Each year, respondents were also given a list of items that can affect their well-being and were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with each using a five-point scale (1 = very dissatisfied, 5 = very satisfied). They were also given the option of checking a box to denote "does not apply."

The rank ordering of the items has remained relatively stable over the years (Table 1). In addition, the proportion of respondents stating they were very or somewhat satisfied with each item also has been fairly consistent over the years, with the exception of some financial items which have seen more fluctuation.

Items generally fall into three levels of satisfaction ratings. Family, friends, the outdoors, their safety, and their general quality of life continue to be items given high satisfaction ratings by respondents. Items in the middle category include job satisfaction, their education, spirituality, job security, their health, and their spare time. On the other hand, respondents continue to be less satisfied with their community, job opportunities, their current income level, their ability to build assets/wealth, and financial security during retirement.

Some items saw decreases in the level of satisfaction this year as compared to last year: clean air, clean water, religion/spirituality, and the ability to build assets/wealth. Satisfaction with their clean air decreased from 80 to 72 percent. Similarly, satisfaction with their religion/ spirituality declined from 71 percent to 64 percent.

Table 1. *Satisfaction with Aspects of Life, 1996 – 2023*

ITEM	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
MARRIAGE			91	92	93	92	93	92	94	92	94	90	92	92	90	90	90	91	91	93	91	91	91	93	92	92	89	92
Transportation																			82	85	87	84	83	88	87	86	86	86
Personal safety																			87	88	87	87	84	89	85	86	84	85
Family	90	93	92	89	93	89	90	90	90	89	91	88	91	85	89	89	87	86	87	87	89	87	87	87	84	86	86	88
Gen. quality of life														82	84	86	81	83	83	83	84	82	82	85	84	82	81	80
Gen. std. of living														77	79	83	79	79	80	80	80	80	78	83	82	81	77	79
Greenery/ open space			90	87	86	86	87	82	80	83	85	80	82	80	81	82	84	74	82	82	83	83	81	84	81	80	82	81
Clean air				80	81	82	79	78	79	80	74	80	75	79	82	79	76	85	80	81	80	80	83	76	80	80	80	72
Your friends	84	85	87	84	87	86	85	85	86	83	84	82	85	82	84	84	81	80	79	80	81	80	78	82	79	79	78	77
Clean water					73	75	76	75	73	73	74	68	76	72	77	78	76	77	80	76	75	76	76	80	75	77	75	70
Your housing		75	81	80	80	78	78	79	77	78	76	73	77	73	76	77	74	74	76	77	75	72	73	77	76	76	76	80
Your education	73	73	74	74	76	72	74	74	72	71	74	74	77	67	74	77	74	73	77	77	75	77	71	80	76	75	74	76
Job satisfaction	68	69	69	66	70	69	70	68	72	72	69	68	76	71	70	72	71	72	73	74	75	71	70	77	73	75	71	73
Job security	63	64	63	59	68	66	65	62	66	65	66	64	73	59	66	67	67	65	73	72	71	70	68	75	71	74	77	74
Ability to afford residence																			65	70	68	69	67	71	69	72	68	70
Religion/spirituality	79	79	81	78	83	79	79	78	78	75	75	78	79	75	77	76	78	76	75	77	74	72	73	76	76	71	71	64
Spare time			71	65	71	66	67	67	66	65	68	68	71	66	67	72	70	66	66	70	68	66	67	71	71	69	64	65
Health	78	81	78	75	77	74	74	75	73	71	73	74	77	66	73	75	70	71	72	73	72	69	71	75	67	67	63	66
Community	65	64	70	67	70	67	63	62	64	66	62	62	66	63	64	65	59	58	64	64	63	60	58	61	61	59	54	54
Current income level	54	58	53	46	51	48	48	47	49	48	50	50	53	47	50	55	53	53	55	56	54	53	52	57	56	59	53	57
Ability to build assts/wealth																			51	51	50	51	50	56	54	58	54	50
Financial security in retirement	43	47	43	38	43	37	38	30	34	38	39	39	38	24	32	38	35	35	39	41	40	42	42	48	41	49	41	43
Job opportunities	39	41	38	37	36	38	37	35	34	39	43	40	48	32	42	38	46	44	44	46	43	43	41	49	45	48	47	47

% very satisfied or somewhat satisfied. N/A responses are excluded.

General Well-Being by Subgroups

In this section, the 2023 data on the general measures of well-being are analyzed and reported for the region in which the respondent lives, by the size of their community, and for various individual characteristics (Appendix Table 2).

Residents of both the North Central and Northeast regions (see Appendix Figure 1 for the counties included in each region) are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to believe they are better off compared to five years ago. Approximately one-half of the residents of these two regions think they are better off than they were five years ago. In comparison, approximately four in ten residents of the other three regions believe they are better off than they were five years ago. Residents of the Panhandle are the regional group most likely to believe they are worse off than they were five years ago. Just over one-third (35%) of Panhandle residents think they are worse off than they were five years ago, compared to approximately one-quarter of the residents of the other regions of the state.

Persons with higher household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to think they are better off compared to five years ago, are better off compared to their parents when they were their age and will be better off ten years from now. Just over one-half of persons with the highest household incomes (54%) believe they will be better off ten years from now, compared to just under two in ten persons with the lowest household incomes (17%).

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to believe they are better off compared to five years ago, are better off compared to their parents when they were their age and will

be better off ten years from now. Just over three-quarters of persons age 19 to 29 (76%) believe they are much better off or better off than they were five years ago. However, just over one-quarter of persons age 65 and older (26%) share this opinion. Similarly, just over six in ten persons age 19 to 29 believe they will be much better off or better off ten years from now, compared to only 12 percent of persons age 65 and older (Figure 5).

Persons with higher education levels are more likely than persons with less education to believe they are better off compared to five years ago, are better off compared to their parents when they were their age and think they will be better off ten years from now.

When comparing the marital groups, married persons are the group most likely to believe they are better off than they were five years ago and think they will be better off ten years from now.

Respondents with management, professional, or education occupations as well as respondents with healthcare support or public

Figure 5. Expected Well-Being Ten Years from Now by Age
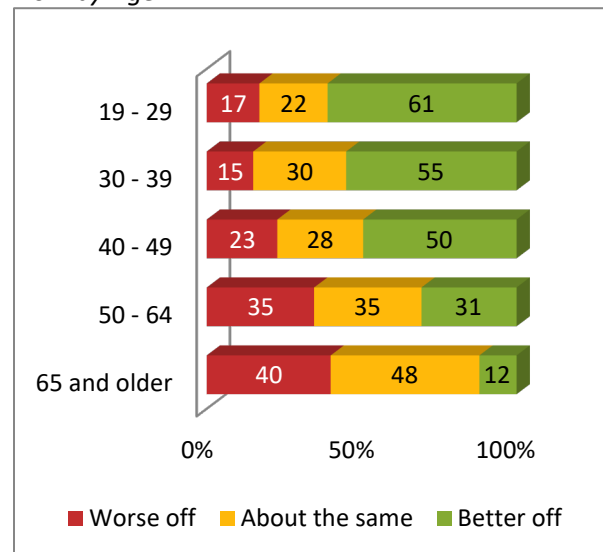
safety occupations are the occupation groups most likely to believe they are better off than they were five years ago. Persons with occupations in agriculture are the group most likely to think they will be better off ten years from now.

The respondents were also asked if they believe people are powerless to control their own lives. Less than one-half (45%) disagree with that statement, compared to approximately one-third (34%) who agree. When analyzing the responses by region, community size, and various individual attributes, many differences emerge (Appendix Table 3).

Persons with lower education levels are more likely than persons with more education to believe that people are powerless to control their own lives. Almost one-half of persons with a high school diploma or less education (48%) agree that people are powerless to control their own lives (Figure 6). However, just under one-quarter of persons with at least a four-year college degree (24%) share this opinion.

Persons with lower household incomes are more likely than persons with higher incomes to believe that people are powerless to control their own lives. At least four in ten persons with household incomes under $75,000 agree that people are powerless to control their own lives, compared to just under one-quarter of persons with household incomes of $100,000 or more.

The other groups most likely to agree that people are powerless to control their own lives include persons living in or near mid-sized communities (with populations ranging from 500 to 4,999), older persons, and males.

A new question added this year asked respondents how they would describe their mental health or emotional well-being at the

Figure 6. Belief that People are Powerless to Control Their Own Lives by Education Level
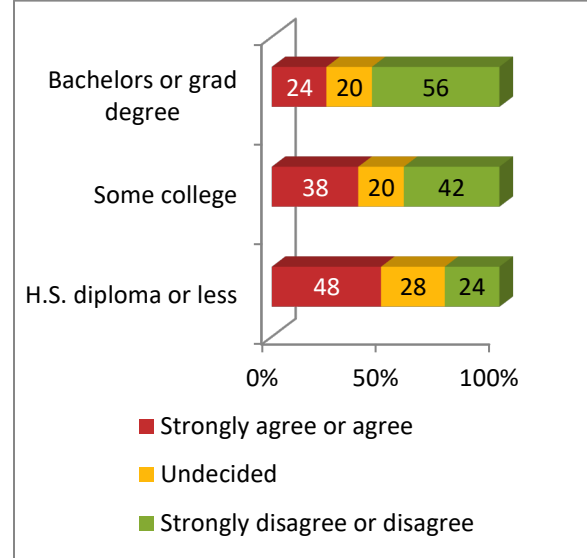
time. Most rural Nebraskans describe their mental health or emotional well-being as good (55%) or excellent (28%) (Figure 7).

The responses to this question are examined by community size, region, and various individual attributes (Appendix Table 4). Many differences are detected.

Residents of both the Northeast and Southeast regions are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to describe their mental health as excellent. Just over three in ten persons living in these two regions say their mental health is excellent, compared to approximately one-quarter of the residents living in the other regions of the state.

Persons with higher household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to describe their mental health as excellent. Just under one-third of persons with the highest household incomes ($100,000 or more) rate their mental health as excellent, compared to just under one-quarter of persons with incomes

Figure 7. *Self-Evaluation of Mental Health by Household Income*

	Poor	Only fair	Good	Excellent
Total	3	14	55	28
$100,000 and over	2	10	57	32
$75,000 - $99,999	1	10	62	27
$40,000 - $74,999	4	23	50	24
Under $40,000	8	12	55	24
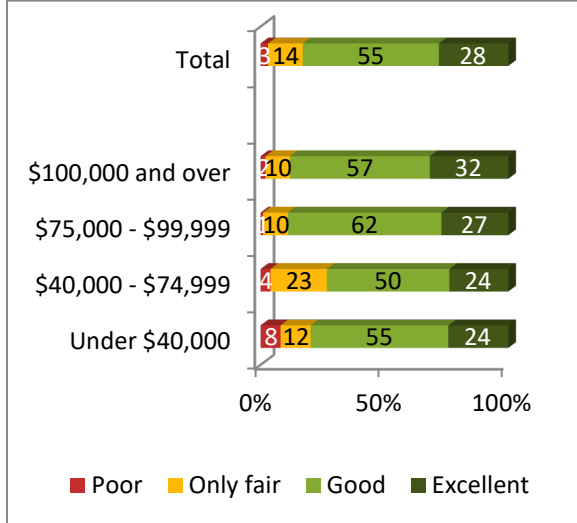
under $75,000 (Figure 7).

The other groups most likely to describe their mental health as excellent include persons age 40 and older, males, and widowed persons.

Specific Aspects of Well-Being by Subgroups

The respondents were given a list of items that may influence their well-being and were asked to rate their satisfaction with each. The complete ratings for each item are listed in Appendix Table 5. At least one-third of respondents are very satisfied with their family (47%), their marriage (45%), greenery and open space (40%), their day-to-day personal safety (37%), their transportation (37%), and their job security (34%). Items receiving the highest proportion of very dissatisfied responses include: financial security during retirement (19%), their ability to build assets/wealth (10%), and their current income level (7%).

The top five items people are dissatisfied with (determined by the largest proportions of "very dissatisfied" and "dissatisfied" responses) are

examined in more detail by looking at how the different demographic subgroups view each item. These comparisons are shown in Appendix Table 6.

Respondents' satisfaction level with their financial security during retirement differs by most of the characteristics examined.

Persons with lower household incomes are more likely than persons with higher incomes to be dissatisfied with their financial security during retirement. Just under six in ten persons with household incomes under $40,000 (58%) report being dissatisfied with their financial security during retirement, compared to 31 percent of persons with household incomes of $100,000 or more.

Other groups most likely to be dissatisfied with their financial security during retirement include: Panhandle residents, persons age 30 to 39, females, persons with some college education (but less than a four-year degree), persons who are divorced or separated, and persons with food service or personal care occupations.

Persons with lower household incomes are more likely than persons with higher household incomes to express dissatisfaction with their ability to build assets/wealth. Just under one-half of persons with household incomes under $40,000 (48%) are dissatisfied with their ability to build assets/wealth. In comparison, only 21 percent of persons with household incomes of $100,000 or more share this dissatisfaction (Figure 8).

Persons age 30 to 39 are more likely than persons of different ages to say they are dissatisfied with their ability to build assets/wealth. Just over one-half of persons age 30 to 39 (51%) are dissatisfied with their ability to build assets/wealth, compared to 21 percent

Figure 8. *Satisfaction with Ability to Build Assets/Wealth by Household Income*

Income	Dissatisfied	No opinion	Satisfied
Under $40,000	48	28	24
$40,000 - $74,999	37	24	40
$75,000 - $99,999	25	15	60
$100,000 or more	21	11	68
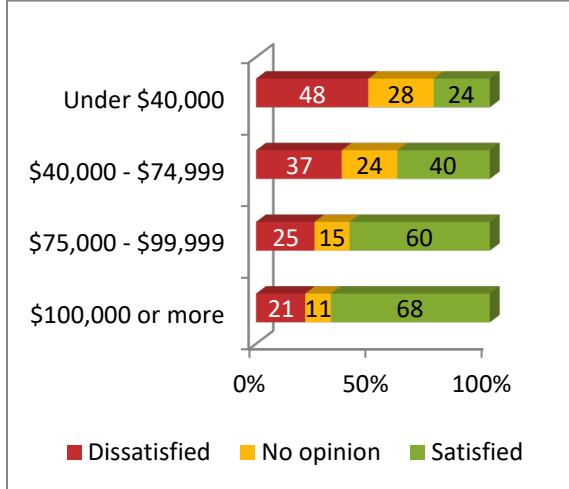
of persons age 65 and older.

Other groups most likely to express dissatisfaction with their ability to build assets/wealth include: persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 500 to 999, Panhandle residents, females, persons with lower education levels, persons who are divorced or separated, and persons with food service or personal care occupations.

Persons with lower household incomes are more likely than persons with higher household incomes to be dissatisfied with their current income level. Just under one-half of persons with household incomes under $40,000 (49%) report being dissatisfied with their current income level, compared to 17 percent of persons with household incomes of $100,000 or more.

Panhandle residents are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to express dissatisfaction with their current income level. Just over four in ten Panhandle residents (42%) are dissatisfied with their current income level, compared to just over two in ten residents of both the North Central and Northeast regions.

Other groups most likely to report being dissatisfied with their current income level include: persons living in or near larger communities, younger persons, females, persons with some college education (but less than a four-year degree), persons who are divorced or separated, and persons with food service or personal care occupations.

Residents of the Panhandle are more likely than persons living in other regions of the state to be dissatisfied with their job opportunities. Just over one-third of persons living in the Panhandle (35%) are dissatisfied with their job opportunities, compared to 23 percent of persons living in the Northeast region.

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to express dissatisfaction with their job opportunities. Almost four in ten persons age 30 to 39 are dissatisfied with their job opportunities, compared to 12 percent of persons age 65 and older.

Other groups most likely to say they are dissatisfied with their job opportunities include: persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 5,000 to 9,999; persons with the lowest household incomes; females; persons with at least some college education but less than a four-year degree; persons who have never married; persons with production, transportation or warehousing occupations; and persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations.

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to say they are dissatisfied with their community. One-third (33%) of persons age 19 to 29 are dissatisfied with their community, compared to 14 percent of persons age 65 and older.

Residents of both the Panhandle and North Central regions are more likely than residents of

other regions of the state to express dissatisfaction with their community. Approximately three in ten residents of these two regions are dissatisfied with their community, compared to 13 percent of residents of the Northeast region.

Other groups most likely to be dissatisfied with their community include: persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 500 to 999, persons with some college education but less than a four-year degree, persons who are never married, persons who are divorced or separated, and persons with production, transportation, or warehousing occupations.

The top five items people are satisfied with (determined by the largest proportions of "very satisfied" and "satisfied" responses) are also examined (Appendix Table 7).

Persons with higher household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to be satisfied with their marriage. Other groups most likely to be satisfied with their marriage include males and persons with higher education levels.

Persons with higher household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to express satisfaction with their family. Just over nine in ten persons with household incomes of $75,000 or more are satisfied with their family, compared to three-quarters of persons with household incomes under $40,000.

Other groups most likely to be satisfied with their family include younger persons, persons with the highest education levels, and married persons.

Persons with higher household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to report satisfaction with their transportation.

Over nine in ten persons with the highest household incomes (92%) are satisfied with their transportation, compared to 77 percent of persons with the lowest household incomes.

Other groups most likely to be satisfied with their transportation include persons with higher education levels, married persons, and persons with occupations in agriculture.

Persons with higher household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to report satisfaction with their day-to-day personal safety. Over nine in ten persons with household incomes of $75,000 or more are satisfied with their day-to-day personal safety, compared to 71 percent of persons with household incomes under $40,000 (Figure 9).

Other groups most likely to express satisfaction with their day-to-day personal safety include persons with at least a four-year college degree and married persons.

Persons living in or near smaller communities are more likely than persons living in or near larger communities to be satisfied with greenery and open space. Almost nine in ten persons living in or near the smallest

Figure 9. *Satisfaction with Day-to-Day Personal Safety by Household Income*

Household Income	Dissatisfied	No opinion	Satisfied
$100,000 or more	4	4	93
$75,000 - $99,999	4	6	91
$40,000 - $74,999	7	10	84
Under $40,000	13	17	71

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

■ Dissatisfied ■ No opinion ■ Satisfied
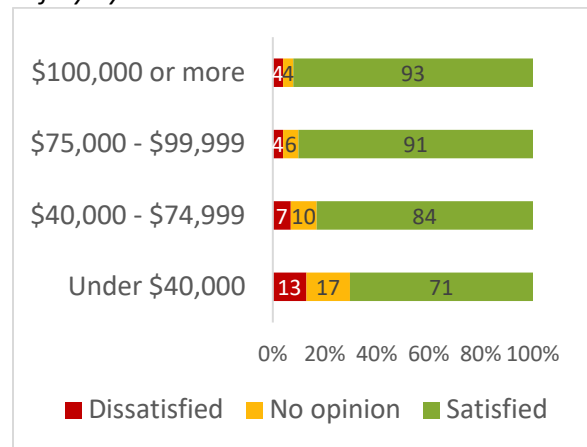
communities (populations under 500) (86%) are satisfied with greenery and open space, compared to approximately three-quarters of persons living in or near communities with populations of 5,000 or more.

Other groups most likely to report satisfaction with greenery and open space include: persons with mid-level incomes, the youngest persons, persons with at least a four-year college degree, and widowed persons.

Perceptions of Education and Work

Next, respondents were asked about their perceptions of what levels of education can lead to good jobs. They were given three statements about various education levels and were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each.

Most rural Nebraskans are confident that completing an apprenticeship program, having an associate degree or certification, and having a bachelor's degree can all lead to a good job. However, more agree that completing an apprenticeship program can lead to a good job (nine in ten compared to just under seven in ten agreeing with the other two statements) (Figure 10).

These perceptions are examined by community size, region, and various individual attributes (Appendix Table 8). Persons with higher household incomes, persons with higher education levels, and females are the groups most likely to agree that completing an apprenticeship program can lead to a good job.

Residents of the Northeast region are more likely than residents of other regions to agree that having an associate degree or certification

Figure 10. Perceptions of Education and Work
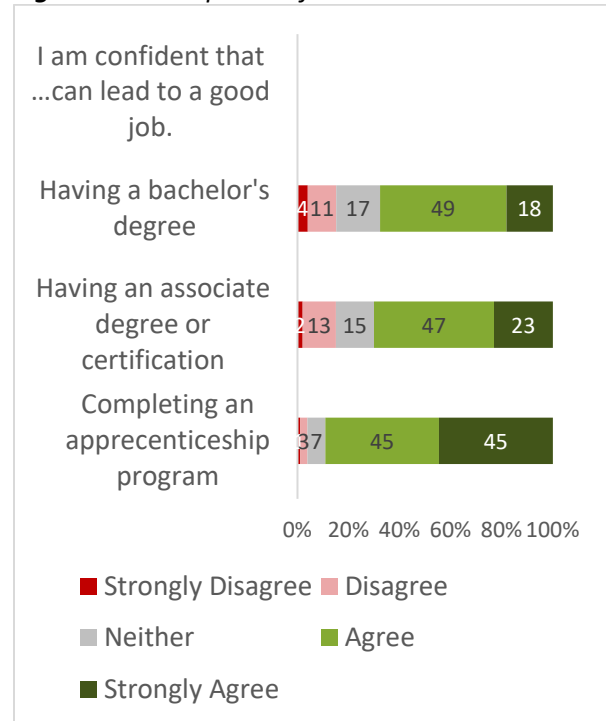
can lead to a good job. Three-quarters of the Northeast region residents agree with this statement, compared to just under two-thirds of residents of the South Central region.

Other groups most likely to agree that having an associate degree or certification can lead to a good job include: older persons, females, persons with higher education levels, and persons with occupations in agriculture.

Persons with higher education levels are more likely than persons with less education to agree that having a bachelor's degree can lead to a good job. Almost eight in ten persons with at least a bachelor's degree (79%) agree with that statement, compared to just under six in ten persons with less education (Figure 11).

The youngest respondents are more likely than

Figure 11. *Belief that a Bachelor's Degree Can Lead to a Good Job by Education Level*
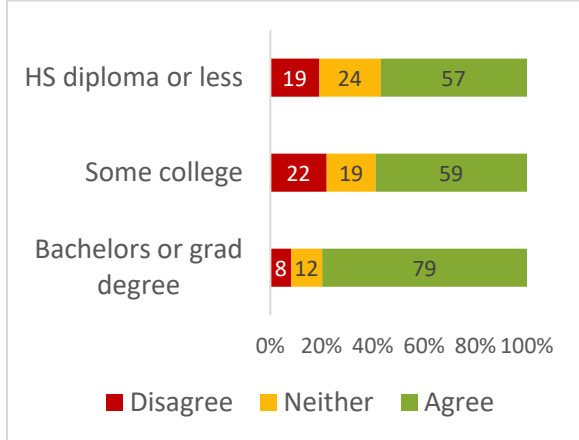
older respondents to agree that having a bachelor's degree can lead to a good job. Almost eight in ten persons age 19 to 29 (78%) agree with the statement, compared to just over six in ten persons age 50 to 64.

Other groups most likely to agree that having a bachelor's degree can lead to a good job include: persons with higher income levels, females, and persons with management, professional, or education occupations.

Economic Expectations

What expectations do rural Nebraskans have of the economy in the next year? They were asked, "Compared to the current situation, over the next 12 months, what do you think will happen with each of the following?" Given a list of 11 items, respondents indicated what they think will happen with each. The response options ranged from much worse to much better. They were also given the option of answering don't know. This question was also asked last year.

Rural Nebraskans are less pessimistic about the economy than they were last year. The proportions of rural Nebraskans saying that

each item will get much worse in the next 12 months was less than it was in 2022. As an example, last year 44 percent of rural Nebraskans predicted inflation would become much worse in the next 12 months (Figure 12). That proportion dropped to 25 percent this year. Other significant declines occurred with grocery prices (43% to 24%), gasoline/diesel fuel prices (47% to 23%), and interest rates (36% to 22%).

This year, most rural Nebraskans believe the majority of the listed economic items will become worse or much worse over the next 12 months when asked in April, May, and June. At

Figure 12. *Economic Expectations in Next 12 Months, 2023 and 2022*
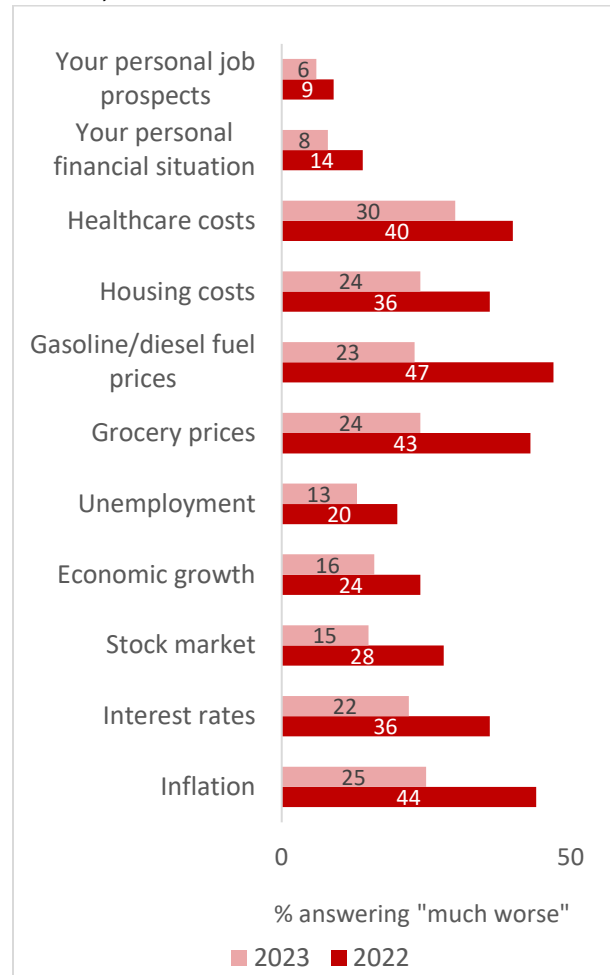
least seven in ten think the following will become worse: healthcare costs (79%), grocery prices (76%), inflation (72%), housing costs (72%), and interest rates (70%) (Figure 13). The three items that had less than one-half believing they would become worse or much worse during the next year include: unemployment (41%), your personal financial situation (29%) and your personal job prospects (18%).

These economic expectations are examined by community size, region and various individual attributes (Appendix Table 9). Many differences emerge.

Persons with mid-level household incomes are more likely than persons with both lower and higher incomes to believe inflation will be worse over the next year. Approximately eight in ten persons with household incomes

between $40,000 and $99,999 think inflation will become worse, compared to two-thirds of persons with both the highest and lowest incomes.

Other groups most likely to believe inflation will become worse over the next year include: persons living in or near smaller communities, residents of the North Central region, persons with lower education levels, and persons who are divorced or separated.

The groups most likely to believe interest rates will become worse include: persons living in or near smaller communities, residents of the North Central region, the youngest persons, persons with lower education levels, married persons, persons who are divorced or separated, persons with occupations in agriculture, and persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations.

Figure 13. *Economic Expectations in Next 12 Months*
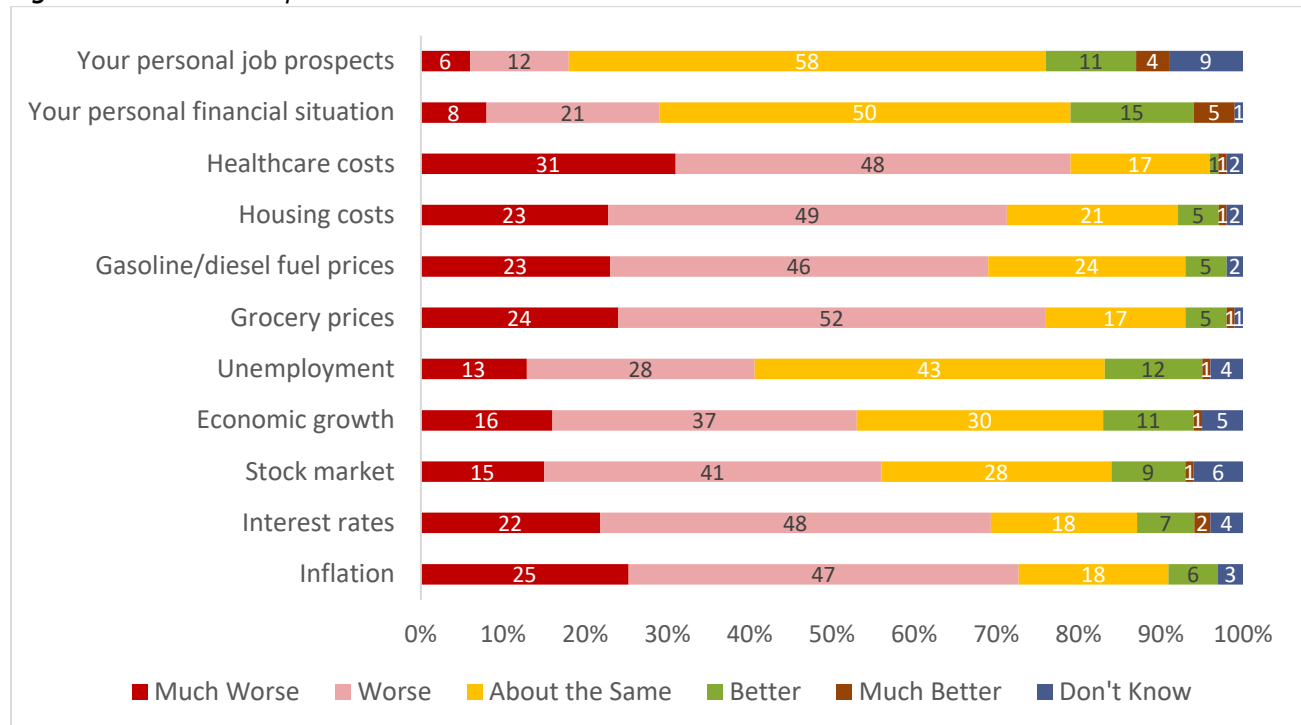
Females are more likely than males to believe the stock market will become worse during the next year. Six in ten females think the stock market will become worse, compared to just under one-half of males (49%).

Other groups most likely to believe that the stock market will become worse include: persons living in or near smaller communities, residents of the South Central region, persons with mid-level household incomes, persons under the age of 65, persons who are divorced or separated, and persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations.

Residents of both the North Central region and the Panhandle are more likely than persons living in other regions of the state to believe economic growth will become worse during the next year. Just over six in ten residents of these two regions think economic growth will become worse, compared to just over four in ten residents of the Northeast region (Figure 14).

Other groups most likely to believe economic growth will become worse include persons with household incomes between $75,000 and $99,999 and persons who are divorced or separated.

The groups most likely to believe unemployment will become worse in the next year include: persons with lower household incomes, persons age 50 to 64, persons with lower education levels, and persons who are divorced or separated.

The groups most likely to think grocery prices will become worse include persons with lower education levels and persons who are divorced or separated.

Persons living in or near the smallest communities are more likely than persons living

Figure 14. *Expectations about Economic Growth in the Next Year by Region*
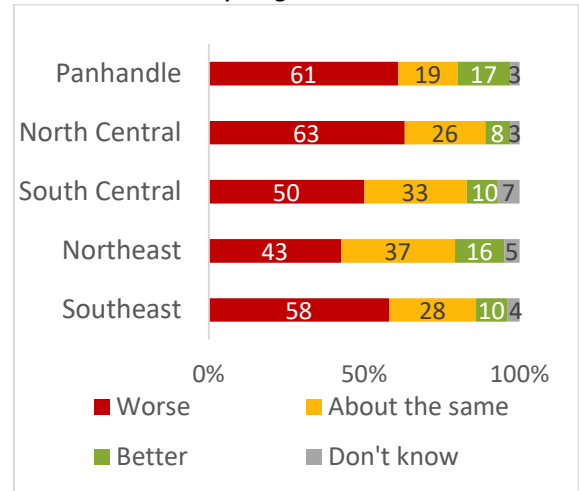
in or near larger communities to believe gasoline or diesel fuel prices will become worse during the next year. Approximately eight in ten persons living in or near communities with populations under 1,000 think gasoline or diesel fuel prices will become worse, compared to approximately two-thirds of persons living in or near communities with populations of 5,000 or more.

Persons with food service or personal care occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to say gasoline or diesel fuel prices will become worse during the next year. Just over nine in ten persons with these types of occupations think fuel prices will become worse, compared to just over one-half of persons with occupations in agriculture.

The other groups most likely to believe gasoline or diesel fuel prices will become worse during the next year include: Panhandle residents, females, persons with lower education levels, and persons who are divorced or separated.

Both Panhandle residents and residents of the South Central region are more likely than persons living in other regions of the state to

believe housing costs will become worse during the next year.

The other groups most likely to believe housing costs will become worse include: persons with the lowest household incomes, persons with lower education levels, persons who have never married, persons who are divorced or separated, persons with food service or personal care occupations, and persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations.

Persons living in or near smaller communities are more likely than persons living in or near the largest communities to believe healthcare costs will become worse in the next year. Approximately eight in ten persons living in or near communities with populations under 10,000 think healthcare costs will become worse, compared to approximately two-thirds of persons living in or near larger communities (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Expectations of Healthcare Costs by Community Size
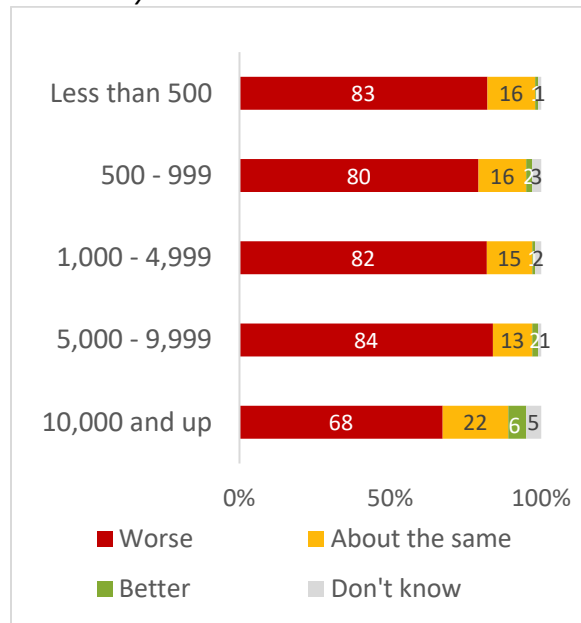
Other groups most likely to believe healthcare costs will become worse include: Panhandle residents, persons with lower household incomes, persons over the age of 40, persons with lower education levels, persons who are divorced or separated, widowed persons, and persons with construction, installation or maintenance occupations.

Persons with the lowest household incomes are more likely than persons with higher incomes to believe their personal financial situation will become worse during the next year. Over four in ten persons with household incomes under $40,000 think their personal financial situation will become worse, compared to just 15 percent of persons with the highest household incomes.

Persons with lower education levels are more likely than persons with more education to say their personal financial situation will become worse during the next year. Just over one-half of persons with a high school diploma or less education (51%) believe their personal financial situation will become worse, compared to two in ten persons with the highest education levels (Figure 16).

Other groups most likely to believe their personal financial situation will become worse include: residents of the South Central region, persons age 50 or older, persons who are divorced or separated, and persons with food service or personal care occupations.

Persons living in the Panhandle are more likely than persons living in other regions of the state to think their personal job prospects will worsen during the next year. Three in ten Panhandle residents think their job prospects will become worse, compared to 13 percent of persons living in the Northeast region.

Figure 16. *Expectations of Your Personal Financial Situation by Education Level*

Education Level	Worse	About the same	Better	Don't know
HS diploma or less	51	37	9	3
Some college	28	52	19	1
Bachelors degree or higher	20	54	26	1
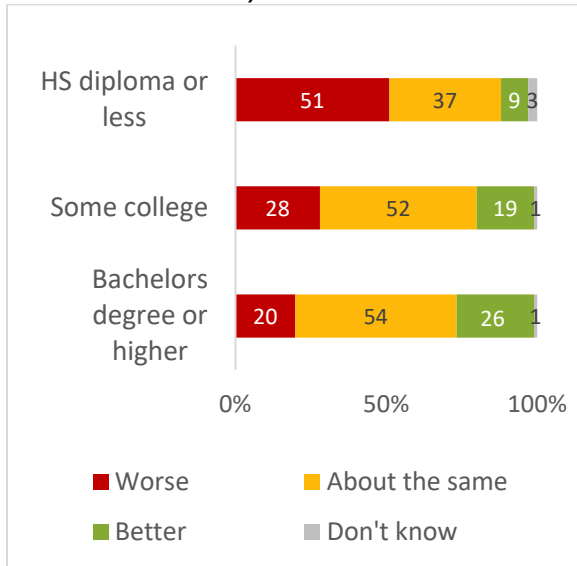
Other groups most likely to think their personal job prospects will become worse include: persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 500 to 999, persons with lower household incomes, persons age 50 to 64, persons with lower education levels, persons who are divorced or separated, and persons with production, transportation, and warehousing occupations.

Conclusion

This year, rural Nebraskans are more pessimistic about their current situation than they've been in the past ten years. The proportion believing they are worse off than they were five years ago was 27 percent, up from the 21 percent last year and 11 percent in 2021. This is the highest level since both 2003 and 2009, when 28 percent believed they were worse off. This increase in pessimism was matched with a decrease in optimism. This year, less than one-half (45%) of rural Nebraskans believe they are better off compared to five years ago, down from 50 percent last year.

This trend continued when looking to the future. Rural Nebraskans' optimism about the future has declined in the past four years. The proportion saying they will be better off ten years from now has always been greater than the proportion saying they will be worse off ten years from now. In fact, the gap between the two gradually widened between 2013 and 2019. However, that gap has narrowed considerably in the past four years. This year, rural Nebraskans' optimism about their future is lower than last year. Just under four in ten rural Nebraskans (39%) believe they will be better off ten years from now. This is a decrease from 44 percent last year. The past four years have shown a steady decline from 52 percent in 2019 (the highest proportion across all years of this study). The proportion of respondents stating they will be worse off ten years from now increased compared to last year (from 22 percent last year to 27 percent this year).

The past four years have also seen an increase in feelings of powerlessness by rural Nebraskans. The past four years have been a period of steady decline in the proportions who either strongly disagree or disagree that people are powerless to control their own lives from 54 percent to 45 percent. The proportion of rural Nebraskans that either strongly agree or agree with the statement has steadily increased from 24 percent in 2019 to 34 percent this year.

Despite these trends, certain groups are more likely to be optimistic about their current situation as well as the future. Younger persons are more likely than older persons to believe they are better off compared to five years ago and will be better off ten years from now. Persons with higher household incomes and education levels are also most likely to be optimistic.

Education also is related to feelings of

powerlessness. Persons with lower education levels are more likely than persons with more education to believe that people are powerless to control their own lives.

Most rural Nebraskans describe their mental health or emotional well-being as good (55%) or excellent (28%). Income was also related to positive reports of their mental health.

When looking at the workforce and economy, most rural Nebraskans are confident that completing an apprenticeship program, having an associate degree or certification, and having a bachelor's degree can all lead to a good job. However, more agree that completing an apprenticeship program can lead to a good job. And, as compared to last year, rural Nebraskans are less pessimistic about the economy. The proportions of rural Nebraskans saying that various economic items will get much worse in the next 12 months was less than it was in 2022. However, despite the decreased pessimism, most rural Nebraskans still expect the majority of these items to get worse during the next year.

Appendix Figure 1. Regions of Nebraska

Nebraska Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Counties (2013 Definitions)

Metropolitan/Nonmetropolitan and Survey Status

- Nonmetropolitan County Surveyed in Rural Poll
- County Classified as Metroplitan but Surveyed in Rural Poll
- Metropolitan County not Surveyed in Rural Poll

Note: There are 5 metro counties for Omaha (Cass, Douglas, Sarpy, Saunders, Washington), 2 for Lincoln (Lancaster, Seward), 2 for Sioux City, Iowa (Dakota, Dixon) and 4 in the newly established Grand Island metro (Hall, Hamilton, Howard, Merrick).

Source: 2013 Metropolitan and Micropolitan Definitions, Office of Management and Budget, released 2-28-13

Prepared by: David Drozd, Center for Public Affairs Research, University of Nebraska at Omaha - August 11, 2014

Appendix Table 1. *Demographic Profile of Rural Poll Respondents[1] Compared to 2017 – 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Average for Nebraska**

	2023 Poll	*2022 Poll*	*2021 Poll*	*2020 Poll*	*2019 Poll*	*2017 - 2021 ACS*
Age : [2]						
20 - 39	32%	32%	32%	32%	32%	32%
40 - 64	44%	44%	44%	44%	44%	42%
65 and over	24%	24%	24%	24%	24%	26%
Gender: [3]						
Female	60%	51%	55%	55%	55%	50%
Male	40%	49%	45%	46%	45%	50%
Education: [4]						
Less than high school graduate	2%	2%	3%	3%	1%	10%
High school diploma (or equiv.)	16%	16%	16%	16%	15%	32%
Some college, no degree	25%	26%	26%	18%	18%	24%
Associate degree	13%	16%	15%	24%	24%	12%
Bachelors degree	28%	25%	28%	26%	29%	16%
Graduate or professional degree	17%	16%	13%	14%	13%	7%
Household Income: [5]						
Less than $20,000	7%	6%	8%	7%	7%	14%
$20,000 - $39,999	12%	15%	17%	14%	15%	19%
$40,000 - $59,999	15%	17%	16%	19%	18%	18%
$60,000 - $74,999	18%	17%	14%	16%	16%	11%
$75,000 - $99,999	16%	16%	17%	21%	19%	15%
$100,000 - $149,999	22%	17%	19%	15%	16%	15%
$150,000 - $199,999	6%	6%	5%	5%	5%	5%
$200,000 or more	5%	6%	4%	4%	3%	4%
Marital Status: [6]						
Married	71%	66%	69%	69%	70%	61%
Never married	13%	17%	13%	12%	12%	20%
Divorced/separated	10%	10%	11%	10%	9%	12%
Widowed/widower	7%	7%	7%	8%	8%	8%

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[1]   Data from the Rural Polls have been weighted by age.

[2]   2017-2021 American Community Survey universe is non-metro population 20 years of age and over.

[3]   2017-2021 American Community Survey universe is non-metro population 20 years of age and over.

[4]   2017-2021 American Community Survey universe is non-metro population 25 years of age and over.

[5]   2017-2021 American Community Survey universe is all non-metro households.

[6]   2017-2021 American Community Survey universe is non-metro population 20 years of age and over.

*Comparison numbers are estimates taken from the American Community Survey five-year sample and may reflect significant margins of error for areas with relatively small populations.

Appendix Table 2. *Measures of Individual Well-Being in Relation to Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes*

			Compared to Five Years Ago			
	Much Worse Off	*Worse Off*	*About the Same*	*Better Off*	*Much Better Off*	*Chi-square (sig.)*
			Percentages			
Total	8	19	27	33	12	
Community Size			(n = 1073)			
Less than 500	6	13	29	33	19	
500 - 999	13	26	25	28	8	
1,000 - 4,999	7	21	28	34	10	
5,000 - 9,999	7	17	31	37	9	$\chi^2 = 28.61$*
10,000 and up	10	18	26	35	12	(.027)
Region			(n = 1092)			
Panhandle	11	24	25	31	9	
North Central	6	20	23	38	14	
South Central	12	16	30	35	7	
Northeast	7	17	26	34	16	$\chi^2 = 34.13$*
Southeast	6	22	31	26	15	(.005)
Income Level			(n = 1043)			
Under $40,000	13	22	35	25	5	
$40,000 - $74,999	8	20	35	26	12	
$75,000 - $99,999	7	18	22	42	12	$\chi^2 = 72.11$*
$100,000 and over	8	15	17	43	18	(.000)
Age			(n = 1092)			
19 - 29	6	0	18	47	29	
30 - 39	8	15	26	35	15	
40 - 49	10	23	24	32	12	
50 - 64	11	24	23	34	9	$\chi^2 = 162.24$*
65 and older	7	24	43	24	2	(.000)
Gender			(n = 1078)			
Male	10	18	25	31	15	$\chi^2 = 11.83$*
Female	7	19	29	35	10	(.019)
Marital Status			(n = 1063)			
Married	8	19	23	38	13	
Never married	7	12	40	35	5	
Divorced/separated	15	24	33	18	10	$\chi^2 = 66.06$*
Widowed	8	24	47	16	4	(.000)
Education			(n = 1081)			
H.S. diploma or less	9	17	47	24	3	
Some college	12	24	23	27	15	$\chi^2 = 96.50$*
Bachelors degree	5	15	23	43	13	(.000)
Occupation			(n = 789)			
Mgt, prof or education	4	18	19	43	17	
Sales or office support	11	13	23	45	8	
Constrn, inst or maint	32	19	13	11	26	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	11	14	32	30	14	
Agriculture	7	11	38	27	18	
Food serv/pers. care	6	19	35	40	0	
Hlthcare supp/safety	2	21	18	44	15	$\chi^2 = 129.94$*
Other	4	41	22	33	0	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.
0* = Less than 1 percent.

Appendix Table 2 continued.

	Much Worse Off	Worse Off	About the Same	Better Off	Much Better Off	Chi-square (sig.)
			Compared to Parents When They Were Your Age			
			Percentages			
Total	8	18	26	33	15	
Community Size			(n = 1082)			
Less than 500	3	21	26	32	18	
500 - 999	11	19	23	32	15	
1,000 - 4,999	11	15	27	31	16	
5,000 - 9,999	4	16	28	42	10	$\chi^2 = 26.92*$
10,000 and up	7	21	23	33	16	(.042)
Region			(n = 1098)			
Panhandle	14	16	18	31	22	
North Central	3	17	25	39	15	
South Central	12	16	24	34	13	
Northeast	5	22	30	27	15	$\chi^2 = 45.77*$
Southeast	4	18	28	35	15	(.000)
Income Level			(n = 1049)			
Under $40,000	11	20	37	30	3	
$40,000 - $74,999	11	21	22	32	14	
$75,000 - $99,999	6	16	34	31	14	$\chi^2 = 75.64*$
$100,000 and over	5	17	18	36	25	(.000)
Age			(n = 1098)			
19 - 29	11	6	22	28	33	
30 - 39	12	20	25	32	11	
40 - 49	5	24	28	29	14	
50 - 64	9	23	26	30	13	$\chi^2 = 100.91*$
65 and older	4	17	26	44	10	(.000)
Gender			(n = 1086)			
Male	11	18	21	35	15	$\chi^2 = 18.31*$
Female	6	18	29	31	16	(.001)
Marital Status			(n = 1070)			
Married	7	19	25	32	17	
Never married	12	8	31	40	9	
Divorced/separated	17	28	19	30	6	$\chi^2 = 52.30*$
Widowed	3	14	30	41	12	(.000)
Education			(n = 1087)			
H.S. diploma or less	11	14	32	30	14	
Some college	11	22	25	30	13	$\chi^2 = 33.70*$
Bachelors degree	4	18	24	36	19	(.000)
Occupation			(n = 801)			
Mgt, prof or education	6	16	23	37	18	
Sales or office support	8	23	17	22	30	
Constrn, inst or maint	28	43	11	9	9	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	2	11	41	39	7	
Agriculture	12	16	25	33	15	
Food serv/pers. care	6	20	39	12	24	
Hlthcare supp/safety	6	20	36	22	16	$\chi^2 = 114.93*$
Other	3	21	35	28	14	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Appendix Table 2 continued.

	Much Worse Off	Worse Off	About the Same	Better Off	Much Better Off	Chi-square (sig.)
			Ten Years From Now			
			Percentages			
Total	5	22	34	27	12	
Community Size			(n = 1075)			
Less than 500	3	20	32	27	18	
500 - 999	5	32	38	21	5	
1,000 - 4,999	6	25	29	29	13	
5,000 - 9,999	6	15	37	38	4	$\chi^2 = 46.19$*
10,000 and up	7	19	39	24	12	(.000)
Region			(n = 1093)			
Panhandle	8	25	33	24	11	
North Central	5	17	35	25	18	
South Central	4	24	35	28	9	
Northeast	6	20	31	30	13	$\chi^2 = 19.73$
Southeast	4	25	34	27	10	(.233)
Income Level			(n = 1046)			
Under $40,000	13	24	46	15	2	
$40,000 - $74,999	5	29	31	24	12	
$75,000 - $99,999	3	21	30	33	13	$\chi^2 = 101.80$*
$100,000 and over	2	15	30	36	18	(.000)
Age			(n = 1094)			
19 - 29	0	17	22	28	33	
30 - 39	3	12	30	40	15	
40 - 49	4	19	28	38	12	
50 - 64	10	25	35	25	6	$\chi^2 = 224.93$*
65 and older	7	33	48	11	1	(.000)
Gender			(n = 1080)			
Male	6	25	28	26	15	$\chi^2 = 19.14$*
Female	5	20	38	28	10	(.000)
Marital Status			(n = 1065)			
Married	4	22	31	30	13	
Never married	6	20	39	25	10	
Divorced/separated	12	24	39	24	2	$\chi^2 = 45.05$*
Widowed	6	34	44	13	3	(.000)
Education			(n = 1083)			
H.S. diploma or less	7	27	44	20	3	
Some college	7	27	32	19	15	$\chi^2 = 75.71$*
Bachelors degree	3	16	31	37	13	(.000)
Occupation			(n = 799)			
Mgt, prof or education	2	20	29	34	16	
Sales or office support	4	15	33	28	22	
Constrn, inst or maint	0	38	22	18	22	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	7	9	49	24	11	
Agriculture	3	22	22	33	21	
Food serv/pers. care	6	28	43	20	4	
Hlthcare supp/safety	6	11	34	35	14	$\chi^2 = 77.56$*
Other	18	11	39	32	0	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Appendix Table 3. *Life Has Changed So Much in Our Modern World that Most People Are Powerless to Control Their Own Lives.*

	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Significance
		Percentages		
Total	45	21	34	
Community Size		(n = 1082)		
Less than 500	49	20	31	
500 - 999	30	29	41	
1,000 - 4,999	42	21	37	
5,000 - 9,999	38	37	25	$\chi^2 = 44.46*$
10,000 and up	54	14	33	(.000)
Region		(n = 1099)		
Panhandle	43	17	40	
North Central	45	24	31	
South Central	44	19	37	
Northeast	46	21	34	$\chi^2 = 11.93$
Southeast	47	27	27	(.155)
Household Income		(n = 1052)		
Under $40,000	31	26	44	
$40,000 - $74,999	39	22	40	
$75,000 - $99,999	47	22	32	$\chi^2 = 51.41*$
$100,000 and over	59	18	23	(.000)
Age		(n = 1101)		
19 - 29	56	22	22	
30 - 39	45	22	33	
40 - 49	51	19	30	
50 - 64	42	21	37	$\chi^2 = 29.19*$
65 and older	35	23	42	(.000)
Gender		(n = 1088)		
Male	44	17	38	$\chi^2 = 10.49*$
Female	45	24	31	(.005)
Education		(n = 1090)		
H.S. diploma or less	24	28	48	
Some college	42	20	38	$\chi^2 = 64.60*$
Bachelors or grad degree	56	20	24	(.000)
Marital Status		(n = 1073)		
Married	47	21	32	
Never married	41	25	34	
Divorced/separated	39	17	45	$\chi^2 = 10.03$
Widowed	37	26	37	(.123)
Occupation		(n = 798)		
Mgt, prof or education	54	25	21	
Sales or office support	43	13	43	
Constrn, inst or maint	43	11	45	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	63	9	28	
Agriculture	38	15	48	
Food serv/pers. care	18	35	47	
Hlthcare supp/safety	55	16	29	$\chi^2 = 70.07*$
Other	39	25	36	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Appendix Table 4. *Mental Health or Emotional Well-being by Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes*

	How would you describe your own mental health or emotional wellbeing at this time?				
	Poor	*Only Fair*	*Good*	*Excellent*	*Chi-square (sig.)*
			Percentages		
Total	3	14	55	28	
Community Size		(n = 1082)			
Less than 500	5	10	60	26	
500 - 999	4	18	50	28	
1,000 - 4,999	5	11	60	25	
5,000 - 9,999	1	9	55	35	$\chi^2 = 36.44^*$
10,000 and up	1	20	49	30	(.000)
Region		(n = 1098)			
Panhandle	3	27	44	26	
North Central	2	11	63	24	
South Central	4	19	53	24	
Northeast	3	10	55	32	$\chi^2 = 46.16^*$
Southeast	4	6	59	31	(.000)
Income Level		(n = 1051)			
Under $40,000	8	12	55	24	
$40,000 - $74,999	4	23	50	24	
$75,000 - $99,999	1	10	62	27	$\chi^2 = 53.41^*$
$100,000 and over	2	10	57	32	(.000)
Age		(n = 1100)			
19 - 29	6	17	56	22	
30 - 39	6	22	59	14	
40 - 49	2	15	52	31	
50 - 64	3	12	52	32	$\chi^2 = 48.29^*$
65 and older	1	8	58	33	(.000)
Gender		(n = 1086)			
Male	4	11	53	33	$\chi^2 = 17.11^*$
Female	3	17	57	24	(.000)
Marital Status		(n = 1071)			
Married	2	12	58	28	
Never married	9	26	42	23	
Divorced/separated	4	20	54	21	$\chi^2 = 50.37^*$
Widowed	0	11	57	32	(.000)
Education		(n = 1089)			
H.S. diploma or less	7	17	49	27	
Some college	4	10	60	26	$\chi^2 = 30.24^*$
Bachelors degree	1	17	53	29	(.000)
Occupation		(n = 797)			
Mgt, prof or education	1	16	59	24	
Sales or office support	6	9	56	29	
Constrn, inst or maint	0	2	69	30	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	2	11	60	27	
Agriculture	10	8	56	26	
Food serv/pers. care	4	29	39	28	
Hlthcare supp/safety	2	21	46	31	$\chi^2 = 59.96^*$
Other	0	14	43	43	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Appendix Table 5. Satisfaction with Items Affecting Well-Being, 2023

Item	Does Not Apply	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	No Opinion	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Your family	3%	1%	4%	7%	38%	47%
Your marriage	31	1	2	2	19	45
Greenery and open space	0*	2	7	11	41	40
Your transportation	0*	2	5	7	48	37
Your day-to-day personal safety	0*	1	5	9	48	37
Your job security	23	2	6	13	23	34
Your friends	3	2	5	15	43	32
Your housing	3	2	7	11	45	32
Clean water	0*	7	12	12	38	31
Clean air	0*	3	10	15	41	31
Your education	3	1	5	18	42	31
Your religion/spirituality	7	3	7	24	30	30
Your general quality of life	0*	2	8	10	53	27
Your general standard of living	0*	2	6	13	55	24
Your spare time	2	4	15	15	40	24
Your job satisfaction	23	1	9	11	34	23
Your ability to afford your residence	3	5	10	14	46	22
Your health	0*	6	15	13	51	16
Your job opportunities	21	5	16	21	22	16
Your ability to build assets/wealth	4	10	19	18	37	11
Current income level	4	7	21	13	45	10
Financial security during retirement	4	19	23	13	31	10
Your community	1	6	16	24	44	9

0* = Less than 1 percent.

Appendix Table 6. *Dissatisfaction with Items by Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes.***

| | **Financial security during retirement** | | | | **Your ability to build assets/wealth** | | | |
	Dissatisfied	No opinion	Satisfied	Significance	Dissatisfied	No opinion	Satisfied	Significance
				Percentages				
Total	44	13	43		30	19	50	
Community Size		(n = 1029)				(n = 1035)		
Less than 500	42	13	45		25	17	59	
500 - 999	51	15	34		42	22	37	
1,000 - 4,999	44	13	43		30	18	52	
5,000 - 9,999	48	13	39	$\chi^2 = 5.75$	33	29	37	$\chi^2 = 24.76^*$
10,000 and up	40	14	46	(.676)	32	17	52	(.002)
Region		(n = 1043)				(n = 1050)		
Panhandle	53	9	38		43	16	41	
North Central	37	7	56		23	20	58	
South Central	48	13	39		35	18	48	
Northeast	41	15	45	$\chi^2 = 29.49^*$	25	22	53	$\chi^2 = 21.92^*$
Southeast	41	20	39	(.000)	29	19	51	(.005)
Individual Attributes:								
Household Income Level		(n = 1000)				(n = 1009)		
Under $40,000	58	19	23		48	28	24	
$40,000 - $74,999	52	17	31		37	24	40	
$75,000 - $99,999	40	12	47	$\chi^2 = 103.69^*$	25	15	60	$\chi^2 = 111.64^*$
$100,000 and over	31	7	63	(.000)	21	11	68	(.000)
Age		(n = 1044)				(n = 1052)		
19 - 29	50	6	44		24	12	65	
30 - 39	58	17	25		51	15	34	
40 - 49	47	12	41		26	20	54	
50 - 64	45	13	42	$\chi^2 = 64.49^*$	33	19	48	$\chi^2 = 65.17^*$
65 and older	26	16	58	(.000)	21	27	52	(.000)
Gender		(n = 1033)				(n = 1040)		
Male	33	16	52	$\chi^2 = 36.75^*$	23	21	56	$\chi^2 = 18.66^*$
Female	52	11	37	(.000)	36	18	47	(.000)
Education		(n = 1035)				(n = 1043)		
High school diploma or less	48	23	29		34	34	32	
Some college	52	13	35	$\chi^2 = 59.08^*$	36	17	47	$\chi^2 = 55.50^*$
Bachelors or grad degree	35	10	55	(.000)	25	15	60	(.000)
Marital Status		(n = 1016)				(n = 1027)		
Married	42	12	46		29	16	55	
Never married	48	21	31		30	33	37	
Divorced/separated	62	11	27	$\chi^2 = 36.19^*$	53	18	29	$\chi^2 = 54.02^*$
Widowed	24	18	58	(.000)	22	31	47	(.000)
Occupation		(n = 767)				(n = 795)		
Mgt, prof or education	40	9	51		28	11	61	
Sales or office support	55	8	36		28	13	59	
Constrn, inst or maint	52	9	39		42	13	45	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	30	16	55		11	27	62	
Agriculture	33	27	40		22	24	55	
Food serv/pers. care	88	5	8		49	31	20	
Hlthcare supp/safety	52	13	35	$\chi^2 = 79.03^*$	43	16	41	$\chi^2 = 66.30^*$
Other	67	21	13	(.000)	48	11	41	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.

** Only the five items with the highest combined proportion of very and somewhat dissatisfied responses are included.

	Your current income level				Your job opportunities			
	Dissatisfied	No opinion	Satisfied	Significance	Dissatisfied	No opinion	Satisfied	Significance
				Percentages				
Total	29	14	57		27	27	47	
Community Size		(n = 1031)				(n = 854)		
Less than 500	26	15	58		15	27	58	
500 - 999	27	20	53		30	21	49	
1,000 - 4,999	26	11	63		20	32	48	
5,000 - 9,999	34	6	60	$\chi^2 = 16.14*$	51	15	35	$\chi^2 = 55.46*$
10,000 and up	32	15	53	(.040)	34	26	41	(.000)
Region		(n = 1047)				(n = 863)		
Panhandle	42	8	51		35	18	47	
North Central	22	12	67		28	24	48	
South Central	31	15	54		25	36	39	
Northeast	22	16	62	$\chi^2 = 28.02*$	23	20	57	$\chi^2 = 28.71*$
Southeast	35	15	51	(.000)	27	30	43	(.000)
Individual Attributes:								
Household Income Level		(n = 1006)				(n = 838)		
Under $40,000	49	20	31		55	23	22	
$40,000 - $74,999	36	12	51		23	38	39	
$75,000 - $99,999	22	21	58	$\chi^2 = 112.23*$	25	28	46	$\chi^2 = 100.10*$
$100,000 and over	17	8	75	(.000)	22	16	63	(.000)
Age		(n = 1050)				(n = 865)		
19 - 29	38	6	56		28	17	56	
30 - 39	40	14	46		38	23	40	
40 - 49	27	12	61		27	25	48	
50 - 64	25	14	62	$\chi^2 = 40.38*$	23	30	46	$\chi^2 = 48.68*$
65 and older	21	21	58	(.000)	12	49	39	(.000)
Gender		(n = 1038)				(n = 857)		
Male	23	14	63	$\chi^2 = 13.57*$	23	25	52	$\chi^2 = 6.21*$
Female	33	14	53	(.001)	29	28	44	(.045)
Education		(n = 1041)				(n = 861)		
High school diploma or less	30	22	48		28	41	31	
Some college	37	12	52	$\chi^2 = 37.19*$	33	22	46	$\chi^2 = 29.20*$
Bachelors or grad degree	22	12	66	(.000)	22	26	52	(.000)
Marital Status		(n = 1026)				(n = 844)		
Married	24	14	62		23	25	52	
Never married	40	12	48		47	25	28	
Divorced/separated	44	16	39	$\chi^2 = 31.88*$	30	43	27	$\chi^2 = 49.52*$
Widowed	22	18	60	(.000)	15	35	50	(.000)
Occupation		(n = 782)				(n = 765)		
Mgt, prof or education	27	11	62		23	27	50	
Sales or office support	32	12	56		24	19	56	
Constrn, inst or maint	44	9	46		40	12	48	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	18	13	69		43	21	36	
Agriculture	20	16	64		16	34	51	
Food serv/pers. care	56	13	31		25	27	48	
Hlthcare supp/safety	28	7	65	$\chi^2 = 35.63*$	26	22	52	$\chi^2 = 27.87*$
Other	41	11	48	(.001)	38	29	33	(.015)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.

** Only the five items with the highest combined proportion of very and somewhat dissatisfied responses are included.

	Dissatisfied	*Your community* *No* *opinion*	Satisfied	*Significance*
		Percentages		
Total	22	24	54	
Community Size		(n = 1062)		
Less than 500	19	26	55	
500 - 999	30	22	48	
1,000 - 4,999	20	20	60	
5,000 - 9,999	22	31	47	$\chi^2 = 16.68$*
10,000 and up	25	26	49	(.034)
Region		(n = 1077)		
Panhandle	30	17	54	
North Central	31	24	45	
South Central	19	25	56	
Northeast	13	23	65	$\chi^2 = 45.37$*
Southeast	27	32	42	(.000)
Individual Attributes:				
Household Income Level		(n = 1034)		
Under $40,000	27	33	40	
$40,000 - $74,999	26	23	52	
$75,000 - $99,999	15	24	61	$\chi^2 = 25.75$*
$100,000 and over	20	21	59	(.000)
Age		(n = 1078)		
19 - 29	33	11	56	
30 - 39	27	21	52	
40 - 49	17	33	50	
50 - 64	24	26	50	$\chi^2 = 47.32$*
65 and older	14	26	60	(.000)
Gender		(n = 1067)		
Male	24	23	52	$\chi^2 = 2.12$
Female	21	25	54	(.346)
Education		(n = 1070)		
High school diploma or less	20	28	51	
Some college	27	25	48	$\chi^2 = 14.34$*
Bachelors or grad degree	19	23	59	(.006)
Marital Status		(n = 1054)		
Married	18	24	58	
Never married	33	29	39	
Divorced/separated	31	28	40	$\chi^2 = 33.86$*
Widowed	14	21	64	(.000)
Occupation		(n = 787)		
Mgt, prof or education	23	26	52	
Sales or office support	12	18	70	
Constrn, inst or maint	29	12	59	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	40	19	42	
Agriculture	14	26	60	
Food serv/pers. care	33	22	45	
Hlthcare supp/safety	20	19	61	$\chi^2 = 37.33$*
Other	40	32	28	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.
** Only the five items with the highest combined proportion of very and somewhat dissatisfied responses are included

Appendix Table 7. *Satisfaction with Items by Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes.***

	Your marriage				**Your family**			
		No				*No*		
	Dissatisfied	opinion	Satisfied	Significance	Dissatisfied	opinion	Satisfied	Significance
			Percentages					
Total	5	3	92		5	7	88	
Community Size		(n = 749)				(n = 1053)		
Less than 500	4	6	90		7	6	87	
500 - 999	8	7	86		10	11	79	
1,000 - 4,999	5	2	93		4	6	91	
5,000 - 9,999	2	3	95	$\chi^2 = 11.78$	3	8	90	$\chi^2 = 14.09$
10,000 and up	5	2	93	(.161)	5	8	86	(080)
Region		(n = 759)				(n = 1068)		
Panhandle	5	1	94		8	7	85	
North Central	2	3	95		2	5	94	
South Central	4	4	92		5	9	87	
Northeast	7	3	90	$\chi^2 = 6.99$	5	9	86	$\chi^2 = 11.76$
Southeast	7	4	90	(.538)	7	6	88	(.162)
Individual Attributes:								
Household Income Level		(n = 730)				(n = 1021)		
Under $40,000	12	7	81		12	13	75	
$40,000 - $74,999	5	6	90		7	10	84	
$75,000 - $99,999	5	2	93	$\chi^2 = 17.32*$	2	5	93	$\chi^2 = 58.54*$
$100,000 and over	5	1	94	(.008)	2	3	95	(.000)
Age		(n = 760)				(n = 1068)		
19 - 29	0	0	100		0	0	100	
30 - 39	5	0	96		6	1	93	
40 - 49	10	6	85		8	12	80	
50 - 64	6	5	90	$\chi^2 = 31.06*$	5	9	86	$\chi^2 = 49.65*$
65 and older	2	5	93	(.000)	5	11	84	(.000)
Gender		(n = 752)				(n = 1055)		
Male	1	3	96	$\chi^2 = 15.59*$	5	8	87	$\chi^2 = 0.93$
Female	8	3	89	(.000)	5	7	88	(.628)
Education		(n = 757)				(n = 1059)		
High school diploma or less	6	9	85		8	10	82	
Some college	6	4	90	$\chi^2 = 14.86*$	6	9	85	$\chi^2 = 14.44*$
Bachelors or grad degree	4	2	94	(.005)	4	5	92	(.006)
Marital Status		(n = 756)				(n = 1041)		
Married	5	3	92		3	5	93	
Never married	NA	NA	NA		14	6	80	
Divorced/separated	NA	NA	NA		11	25	64	$\chi^2 = 98.47*$
Widowed	NA	NA	NA		7	13	80	(.000)
Occupation		(n = 592)				(n = 776)		
Mgt, prof or education	4	2	93		2	4	95	
Sales or office support	13	2	85		6	10	84	
Constrn, inst or maint	0	0	100		2	8	91	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	8	4	88		15	7	78	
Agriculture	0	3	97		3	3	93	
Food serv/pers. care	22	0	78		7	2	90	
Hlthcare supp/safety	6	1	93	$\chi^2 = 29.23*$	9	6	85	$\chi^2 = 36.79*$
Other	0	5	96	(.010)	0	0	100	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.

** Only the five items with the highest combined proportion of very and somewhat satisfied responses are included.

| | *Your transportation* | | | | *Your day-to-day personal safety* | | | |
| | | *No* | | | | *No* | | |
	Dissatisfied	opinion	Satisfied	Significance	Dissatisfied	opinion	Satisfied	Significance
				Percentages				
Total	7	7	86		6	9	85	
Community Size		(n = 1063)				(n = 1074)		
Less than 500	5	7	88		7	9	85	
500 - 999	17	11	72		3	13	84	
1,000 - 4,999	8	6	87		8	6	87	
5,000 - 9,999	1	6	93	$\chi^2 = 28.89*$	12	11	77	$\chi^2 = 24.36*$
10,000 and up	8	7	85	(.000)	3	9	89	(.002)
Region		(n = 1076)				(n = 1090)		
Panhandle	14	5	82		4	11	86	
North Central	5	7	89		5	10	86	
South Central	4	8	88		9	7	84	
Northeast	8	7	85	$\chi^2 = 18.45*$	2	9	89	$\chi^2 = 22.72*$
Southeast	10	5	84	(.018)	11	8	81	(.004)
Individual Attributes:								
Household Income Level		(n = 1032)				(n = 1044)		
Under $40,000	12	11	77		13	17	71	
$40,000 - $74,999	11	8	81		7	10	84	
$75,000 - $99,999	5	4	92	$\chi^2 = 37.59*$	4	6	91	$\chi^2 = 51.08*$
$100,000 and over	3	5	92	(.000)	4	4	93	(.000)
Age		(n = 1078)				(n = 1091)		
19 - 29	12	0	88		11	0	89	
30 - 39	11	4	85		8	8	83	
40 - 49	5	10	85		2	11	87	
50 - 64	6	9	84	$\chi^2 = 31.84*$	6	12	83	$\chi^2 = 36.01*$
65 and older	5	10	86	(.000)	5	10	85	(.000)
Gender		(n = 1067)				(n = 1077)		
Male	5	8	87	$\chi^2 = 8.21*$	6	9	85	$\chi^2 = 0.21$
Female	9	6	85	(.017)	6	8	86	(.899)
Education		(n = 1069)				(n = 1081)		
High school diploma or less	12	11	77		12	12	76	
Some college	9	8	83	$\chi^2 = 27.56*$	7	12	81	$\chi^2 = 40.62*$
Bachelors or grad degree	4	4	91	(.000)	3	5	93	(.000)
Marital Status		(n = 1054)				(n = 1064)		
Married	5	6	89		4	8	88	
Never married	11	6	83		18	6	76	
Divorced/separated	12	13	76	$\chi^2 = 18.64*$	7	18	76	$\chi^2 = 55.56*$
Widowed	4	10	85	(.005)	3	14	83	(.000)
Occupation		(n = 785)				(n = 794)		
Mgt, prof or education	8	4	88		3	5	92	
Sales or office support	7	4	89		1	5	94	
Constrn, inst or maint	11	11	77		13	7	80	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	4	9	87		7	2	91	
Agriculture	2	3	95		10	12	78	
Food serv/pers. care	29	4	67		2	8	90	
Hlthcare supp/safety	3	7	91	$\chi^2 = 54.58*$	7	11	82	$\chi^2 = 35.92*$
Other	0	4	96	(.000)	7	18	75	(.001)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.
** Only the five items with the highest combined proportion of very and somewhat satisfied responses are included.

Greenery and open space

	Dissatisfied	No opinion	Satisfied	Significance
		Percentages		
Total	9	11	81	
Community Size		(n = 1068)		
Less than 500	5	9	86	
500 - 999	4	13	84	
1,000 - 4,999	9	10	81	
5,000 - 9,999	17	8	75	$\chi^2 = 21.42$*
10,000 and up	10	12	78	(.006)
Region		(n = 1083)		
Panhandle	8	11	82	
North Central	9	7	84	
South Central	5	10	86	
Northeast	12	14	75	$\chi^2 = 22.59$*
Southeast	14	12	75	(.004)
Individual Attributes:				
Household Income Level		(n = 1040)		
Under $40,000	12	13	74	
$40,000 - $74,999	8	10	83	
$75,000 - $99,999	4	8	88	$\chi^2 = 13.54$*
$100,000 and over	11	10	78	(.035)
Age		(n = 1085)		
19 - 29	11	0	89	
30 - 39	14	15	71	
40 - 49	10	10	80	
50 - 64	8	13	79	$\chi^2 = 39.07$*
65 and older	5	12	83	(.000)
Gender		(n = 1072)		
Male	8	13	80	$\chi^2 = 4.94$
Female	10	9	81	(.085)
Education		(n = 1077)		
High school diploma or less	4	16	80	
Some college	10	13	77	$\chi^2 = 23.66$*
Bachelors or grad degree	10	6	84	(.000)
Marital Status		(n = 1058)		
Married	8	10	82	
Never married	9	10	81	
Divorced/separated	17	18	65	$\chi^2 = 19.42$*
Widowed	3	12	85	(.004)
Occupation		(n = 795)		
Mgt, prof or education	10	8	82	
Sales or office support	4	9	88	
Constrn, inst or maint	4	9	87	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	2	16	82	
Agriculture	3	10	87	
Food serv/pers. care	6	10	84	
Hlthcare supp/safety	18	11	71	$\chi^2 = 35.01$*
Other	24	10	66	(.001)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.
** Only the five items with the highest combined proportion of very and somewhat satisfied responses are included

Appendix Table 8. *Perceptions of Education and Work by Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes.*

	I am confident that completing an apprenticeship program can lead to a good job.				I am confident that having an associate degree or certification can lead to a good job.			
	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Significance	Dissatisfied	No opinion	Satisfied	Significance
				Percentages				
Total	4	7	90		15	15	69	
Community Size		(n = 1070)				(n = 1071)		
Less than 500	4	8	88		12	15	74	
500 - 999	6	5	90		11	16	73	
1,000 - 4,999	3	4	93		20	12	68	
5,000 - 9,999	4	5	91	$\chi^2 = 10.97$	16	11	72	$\chi^2 = 20.91*$
10,000 and up	3	9	87	(.203)	13	21	67	(007)
Region		(n = 1085)				(n = 1084)		
Panhandle	5	3	92		20	14	67	
North Central	3	9	89		11	17	72	
South Central	4	6	90		15	19	65	
Northeast	3	7	90	$\chi^2 = 7.29*$	16	9	75	$\chi^2 = 15.98*$
Southeast	4	9	87	(.506)	15	17	68	(.043)
Individual Attributes:								
Household Income Level		(n = 1041)				(n = 1041)		
Under $40,000	6	14	80		17	18	64	
$40,000 - $74,999	3	5	93		16	15	69	
$75,000 - $99,999	3	4	94	$\chi^2 = 25.13*$	12	17	71	$\chi^2 = 6.04$
$100,000 and over	4	7	90	(.000)	16	13	71	(.419)
Age		(n = 1084)				(n = 1084)		
19 - 29	0	6	94		22	17	61	
30 - 39	7	4	89		23	13	65	
40 - 49	2	4	93		14	15	72	
50 - 64	6	10	84	$\chi^2 = 27.90*$	15	16	69	$\chi^2 = 27.20*$
65 and older	3	9	88	(.000)	8	16	76	(.000)
Gender		(n = 1074)				(n = 1074)		
Male	4	10	87	$\chi^2 = 10.69*$	16	19	65	$\chi^2 = 6.75*$
Female	4	5	92	(.005)	15	13	72	(.034)
Education		(n = 1079)				(n = 1078)		
High school diploma or less	7	14	80		16	23	61	
Some college	3	9	88	$\chi^2 = 39.42*$	19	15	67	$\chi^2 = 18.21*$
Bachelors or grad degree	3	2	94	(.000)	13	13	75	(.001)
Marital Status		(n =1060)				(n = 1061)		
Married	3	6	91		16	14	70	
Never married	3	14	83		7	24	69	
Divorced/separated	6	6	88	$\chi^2 = 16.10*$	19	11	70	$\chi^2 = 18.32*$
Widowed	4	7	89	(.013)	10	21	69	(.005)
Occupation		(n = 794)				(n = 792)		
Mgt, prof or education	3	4	93		13	14	73	
Sales or office support	3	5	93		22	12	65	
Constrn, inst or maint	2	2	96		32	15	54	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	0	29	71		7	36	58	
Agriculture	2	3	95		8	11	81	
Food serv/pers. care	2	6	92		12	18	70	
Hlthcare supp/safety	5	4	91	$\chi^2 = 58.28*$	31	8	62	$\chi^2 = 59.06*$
Other	4	11	85	(.000)	26	11	63	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Appendix Table 8 continued.

| | I am confident that having a bachelor's degree can lead to a good job. | | | |
	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Significance
		Percentages		
Total	15	17	68	
Community Size		(n = 1069)		
Less than 500	11	20	69	
500 - 999	11	21	68	
1,000 - 4,999	20	15	65	
5,000 - 9,999	17	12	70	$\chi^2 = 14.33$
10,000 and up	13	18	69	(.074)
Region		(n = 1084)		
Panhandle	13	20	67	
North Central	17	15	68	
South Central	17	16	67	
Northeast	14	20	67	$\chi^2 = 4.29$
Southeast	14	16	70	(.830)
Individual Attributes:				
Household Income Level		(n = 1041)		
Under $40,000	22	20	59	
$40,000 - $74,999	16	15	69	
$75,000 - $99,999	11	14	75	$\chi^2 = 16.73*$
$100,000 and over	13	20	67	(.010)
Age		(n = 1085)		
19 - 29	11	11	78	
30 - 39	18	18	64	
40 - 49	15	14	72	
50 - 64	18	21	61	$\chi^2 = 18.85*$
65 and older	14	20	66	(.016)
Gender		(n = 1076)		
Male	18	21	62	$\chi^2 = 13.06*$
Female	14	15	72	(.001)
Education		(n = 1077)		
High school diploma or less	19	24	57	
Some college	22	19	59	$\chi^2 = 58.71*$
Bachelors or grad degree	8	12	79	(.000)
Marital Status		(n = 1059)		
Married	14	18	68	
Never married	18	12	71	
Divorced/separated	17	17	67	$\chi^2 = 6.21$
Widowed	17	23	60	(.400)
Occupation		(n = 790)		
Mgt, prof or education	9	9	83	
Sales or office support	15	24	61	
Constrn, inst or maint	39	19	43	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	34	11	55	
Agriculture	10	12	78	
Food serv/pers. care	10	24	66	
Hlthcare supp/safety	14	26	60	$\chi^2 = 94.70*$
Other	33	11	56	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Appendix Table 9. *Economic Expectations in Next Year by Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes*

	Worse	Inflation About the same	Better	Don't know	Significance	Worse	Interest rates About the same	Better	Don't know	Significance
					Percentages					
Total	72	18	7	3		70	18	8	4	
Community Size		(n = 1076)					(n = 1071)			
Less than 500	75	19	5	1		78	17	4	1	
500 - 999	81	14	3	3		75	16	6	4	
1,000 - 4,999	75	15	8	3		73	16	7	4	
5,000 - 9,999	64	24	10	3	$\chi^2 = 28.37^*$	67	21	9	4	$\chi^2 = 31.56^*$
10,000 and up	66	19	8	7	(.005)	61	21	13	6	(.002)
Region		(n = 1094)					(n = 1092)			
Panhandle	66	20	9	5		74	11	12	4	
North Central	83	10	5	2		78	15	5	3	
South Central	70	19	5	5		71	16	8	5	
Northeast	74	16	8	2	$\chi^2 = 28.23^*$	69	21	8	2	$\chi^2 = 25.89^*$
Southeast	65	25	8	2	(.005)	61	24	11	4	(.011)
Individual Attributes:										
Household Income Level		(n = 1047)					(n = 1044)			
Under $40,000	67	18	5	10		64	20	5	11	
$40,000 - $74,999	77	17	5	2		70	19	9	2	
$75,000 - $99,999	80	11	8	1	$\chi^2 = 54.99^*$	78	15	6	1	$\chi^2 = 45.81^*$
$100,000 and over	66	24	9	1	(.000)	70	18	10	1	(.000)
Age		(n = 1091)					(n = 1091)			
19 - 29	78	17	0	6		78	11	6	6	
30 - 39	70	21	7	3		68	19	9	4	
40 - 49	70	20	7	3		70	20	8	2	
50 - 64	75	15	8	2	$\chi^2 = 26.23^*$	74	16	9	2	$\chi^2 = 23.21^*$
65 and older	68	18	10	4	(.010)	63	22	10	5	(.026)
Gender		(n = 1082)					(n = 1080)			
Male	73	18	8	1	$\chi^2 = 11.33^*$	71	22	6	1	$\chi^2 = 23.07^*$
Female	71	17	6	5	(.010)	70	15	10	5	(.000)
Education		(n = 1083)					(n = 1084)			
High school diploma or less	80	12	3	5		76	14	6	4	
Some college	73	19	4	4	$\chi^2 = 33.40^*$	71	16	7	5	$\chi^2 = 17.43^*$
Bachelors or grad degree	68	20	10	2	(.000)	67	21	10	2	(.008)
Marital Status		(n = 1068)					(n = 1066)			
Married	74	17	7	2		74	17	7	3	
Never married	56	29	6	9		58	27	6	9	
Divorced/separated	81	12	6	2	$\chi^2 = 38.07^*$	75	18	6	2	$\chi^2 = 29.47^*$
Widowed	65	18	10	7	(.000)	61	19	13	7	(.000)
Occupation		(n = 795)					(n = 797)			
Mgt, prof or education	66	21	8	5		63	22	11	4	
Sales or office support	65	24	7	4		74	13	6	7	
Constrn, inst or maint	89	11	0	0		83	15	2	0	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	71	18	7	5		71	13	11	4	
Agriculture	80	14	4	2		84	9	7	0	
Food serv/pers. care	86	12	0	2		78	14	2	6	
Hlthcare supp/safety	76	16	8	0	$\chi^2 = 42.70^*$	78	15	7	0	$\chi^2 = 56.03^*$
Other	86	4	0	11	(.003)	89	0	0	11	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Appendix Table 9 continued.

		Stock market					Economic growth			
	Worse	About the same	Better	Don't know	Significance	Worse	About the same	Better	Don't know	Significance
					Percentages					
Total	55	28	10	6		53	30	12	5	
Community Size		(n = 1071)					(n = 1069)			
Less than 500	58	31	8	3		53	33	13	1	
500 - 999	63	23	4	10		60	27	7	6	
1,000 - 4,999	60	25	9	6		52	34	9	5	
5,000 - 9,999	45	35	10	10	$\chi^2 = 30.21^*$	60	22	15	3	$\chi^2 = 27.59^*$
10,000 and up	50	30	14	6	(.003)	50	27	17	7	(.006)
Region		(n = 1088)					(n = 1089)			
Panhandle	55	33	8	5		61	19	17	3	
North Central	55	29	13	4		63	26	8	3	
South Central	61	21	12	7		50	33	10	7	
Northeast	51	34	9	7	$\chi^2 = 21.44^*$	43	37	16	5	$\chi^2 = 36.68^*$
Southeast	54	30	7	8	(.044)	58	28	10	4	(.000)
Individual Attributes:										
Household Income Level		(n = 1042)					(n = 1043)			
Under $40,000	49	32	5	14		53	28	8	11	
$40,000 - $74,999	60	22	12	6		51	31	13	6	
$75,000 - $99,999	64	19	12	5	$\chi^2 = 63.10^*$	60	29	9	2	$\chi^2 = 38.92^*$
$100,000 and over	49	38	10	2	(.000)	51	31	17	1	(.000)
Age		(n = 1091)					(n = 1087)			
19 - 29	56	33	6	6		50	28	17	6	
30 - 39	58	25	7	10		59	31	4	7	
40 - 49	60	23	12	5		52	32	14	3	
50 - 64	55	31	10	4	$\chi^2 = 25.38^*$	57	28	12	2	$\chi^2 = 25.46^*$
65 and older	49	30	13	8	(.013)	49	32	13	7	(.013)
Gender		(n = 1078)					(n = 1079)			
Male	49	34	13	4	$\chi^2 = 25.46^*$	54	32	13	2	$\chi^2 = 15.03^*$
Female	60	25	8	8	(.000)	53	29	11	7	(.002)
Education		(n = 1083)					(n = 1084)			
High school diploma or less	58	28	6	7		53	34	7	6	
Some college	56	30	6	8	$\chi^2 = 24.37^*$	55	26	13	6	$\chi^2 = 14.89^*$
Bachelors or grad degree	54	27	14	5	(.000)	51	32	13	3	(.021)
Marital Status		(n = 1064)					(n = 1064)			
Married	58	29	9	5		51	33	13	3	
Never married	39	37	13	11		56	22	13	9	
Divorced/separated	62	21	10	8	$\chi^2 = 27.85^*$	61	25	8	6	$\chi^2 = 23.72^*$
Widowed	47	28	14	11	(.001)	44	32	15	8	(.005)
Occupation		(n = 796)					(n = 793)			
Mgt, prof or education	52	31	12	5		48	35	12	5	
Sales or office support	54	32	7	7		47	27	22	5	
Constrn, inst or maint	74	17	6	4		41	32	28	0	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	27	49	13	11		58	31	7	4	
Agriculture	65	22	7	6		60	33	4	3	
Food serv/pers. care	55	33	2	10		53	39	2	6	
Hlthcare supp/safety	63	24	10	3	$\chi^2 = 50.80^*$	62	21	12	5	$\chi^2 = 59.43^*$
Other	79	11	0	11	(.000)	89	4	7	0	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Appendix Table 9 continued.

	Unemployment					Grocery prices				
	Worse	About the same	Better	Don't know	Significance	Worse	About the same	Better	Don't know	Significance
					Percentages					
Total	41	43	13	4		76	17	7	1	
Community Size		(n = 1072)					(n = 1074)			
Less than 500	50	32	17	1		79	18	3	1	
500 - 999	48	29	16	6		81	15	3	2	
1,000 - 4,999	33	56	7	4		75	15	8	2	
5,000 - 9,999	50	38	11	2	$\chi^2 = 59.96^*$	78	16	5	0	$\chi^2 = 22.00^*$
10,000 and up	37	43	14	6	(.000)	70	19	10	2	(.037)
Region		(n = 1087)					(n = 1091)			
Panhandle	46	37	15	3		71	21	5	3	
North Central	49	39	9	3		80	13	6	0	
South Central	38	47	11	4		75	17	7	0*	
Northeast	32	46	17	5	$\chi^2 = 24.89^*$	76	16	6	2	$\chi^2 = 15.81$
Southeast	48	38	11	4	(.015)	73	16	9	2	(.200)
Individual Attributes:										
Household Income Level		(n = 1041)					(n = 1045)			
Under $40,000	47	36	6	11		82	13	3	3	
$40,000 - $74,999	41	43	13	3		72	16	11	1	
$75,000 - $99,999	40	48	10	2	$\chi^2 = 64.74^*$	84	12	4	1	$\chi^2 = 36.91^*$
$100,000 and over	36	46	17	0*	(.000)	73	21	6	0	(.000)
Age		(n = 1088)					(n = 1091)			
19 - 29	22	56	17	6		78	11	11	0	
30 - 39	44	40	13	4		75	20	4	1	
40 - 49	41	43	15	2		73	23	3	1	
50 - 64	50	38	10	2	$\chi^2 = 44.27^*$	78	12	8	1	$\chi^2 = 31.58^*$
65 and older	43	41	10	6	(.000)	74	17	6	2	(.002)
Gender		(n = 1078)					(n = 1082)			
Male	42	44	14	1	$\chi^2 = 15.70^*$	78	17	5	0	$\chi^2 = 12.98^*$
Female	40	43	11	6	(.001)	74	16	8	2	(.005)
Education		(n = 1083)					(n = 1084)			
High school diploma or less	47	41	7	5		80	12	4	4	
Some college	46	35	13	6	$\chi^2 = 33.13^*$	79	15	5	1	$\chi^2 = 32.39^*$
Bachelors or grad degree	34	50	14	2	(.000)	71	20	9	0*	(.000)
Marital Status		(n = 1064)					(n = 1064)			
Married	39	44	14	3		76	17	6	1	
Never married	37	43	11	9		75	21	4	0	
Divorced/separated	51	42	5	2	$\chi^2 = 25.54^*$	86	9	4	1	$\chi^2 = 23.06^*$
Widowed	39	39	15	7	(.002)	73	13	9	6	(.006)
Occupation		(n = 796)					(n = 797)			
Mgt, prof or education	34	48	15	4		67	21	11	0*	
Sales or office support	42	32	21	5		65	29	4	2	
Constrn, inst or maint	32	38	30	0		89	9	2	0	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	30	52	14	5		78	13	4	4	
Agriculture	42	50	9	0		79	15	6	0	
Food serv/pers. care	46	48	4	2		90	6	2	2	
Hlthcare supp/safety	46	43	8	4	$\chi^2 = 59.00^*$	86	11	3	0	$\chi^2 = 86.33^*$
Other	68	21	0	11	(.000)	89	0	0	11	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.
0* = Less than 1 percent.

Appendix Table 9 continued.

		Gasoline or diesel fuel prices					Housing costs			
	Worse	About the same	Better	Don't know	Significance	Worse	About the same	Better	Don't know	Significance
					Percentages					
Total	69	24	5	2		72	21	6	2	
Community Size		(n = 1076)					(n = 1075)			
Less than 500	78	16	5	1		69	27	3	1	
500 - 999	81	14	3	3		76	18	3	3	
1,000 - 4,999	61	30	6	2		67	26	5	2	
5,000 - 9,999	66	30	4	0	$\chi^2 = 32.51^*$	76	13	10	1	$\chi^2 = 32.83^*$
10,000 and up	67	26	6	2	(.001)	76	15	7	2	(.001)
Region		(n = 1093)					(n = 1094)			
Panhandle	77	15	5	3		80	13	4	3	
North Central	73	21	6	1		67	26	7	1	
South Central	67	28	5	0*		79	16	4	1	
Northeast	65	26	7	3	$\chi^2 = 25.38^*$	66	27	5	2	$\chi^2 = 36.67^*$
Southeast	71	25	2	3	(.013)	67	20	11	2	(.000)
Individual Attributes:										
Household Income Level		(n = 1045)					(n = 1047)			
Under $40,000	76	20	2	3		79	14	3	3	
$40,000 - $74,999	64	27	8	1		73	18	8	2	
$75,000 - $99,999	79	15	6	1	$\chi^2 = 37.90^*$	72	22	5	1	$\chi^2 = 20.47^*$
$100,000 and over	67	30	3	0*	(.000)	68	25	6	1	(.015)
Age		(n = 1091)					(n = 1094)			
19 - 29	56	39	6	0		72	22	6	0	
30 - 39	71	24	4	1		67	25	7	1	
40 - 49	68	28	3	1		73	22	4	1	
50 - 64	76	17	6	2	$\chi^2 = 44.02^*$	74	17	7	2	$\chi^2 = 19.84$
65 and older	72	19	5	3	(.000)	72	19	5	4	(.070)
Gender		(n = 1083)					(n = 1082)			
Male	62	32	6	1	$\chi^2 = 32.10^*$	70	25	5	1	$\chi^2 = 11.59^*$
Female	75	19	4	2	(.000)	74	18	6	3	(.009)
Education		(n = 1085)					(n = 1085)			
High school diploma or less	77	16	4	4		78	15	3	4	
Some college	71	22	5	2	$\chi^2 = 29.66^*$	75	16	7	2	$\chi^2 = 32.63^*$
Bachelors or grad degree	64	30	6	0*	(.000)	67	27	5	1	(.000)
Marital Status		(n = 1065)					(n = 1069)			
Married	70	23	5	2		69	24	5	2	
Never married	54	44	2	0		84	11	4	1	
Divorced/separated	82	14	3	1	$\chi^2 = 51.53^*$	85	12	4	0	$\chi^2 = 31.58^*$
Widowed	70	16	9	6	(.000)	70	17	7	6	(.000)
Occupation		(n = 797)					(n = 796)			
Mgt, prof or education	65	31	3	1		66	26	8	1	
Sales or office support	72	21	5	2		70	22	7	1	
Constrn, inst or maint	70	28	2	0		91	6	4	0	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	58	33	4	4		78	16	2	4	
Agriculture	56	26	18	0		64	27	9	0	
Food serv/pers. care	92	4	2	2		92	4	2	2	
Hlthcare supp/safety	73	25	2	0	$\chi^2 = 96.05^*$	73	25	2	0	$\chi^2 = 67.04^*$
Other	71	18	0	11	(.000)	75	14	0	11	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.

0* = Less than 1 percent.

Appendix Table 9 continued.

| | Healthcare costs | | | | | Your personal financial situation | | | | |
	Worse	About the same	Better	Don't know	Significance	Worse	About the same	Better	Don't know	Significance
					Percentages					
Total	79	17	2	2		29	50	20	1	
Community Size		(n = 1074)					(n = 1073)			
Less than 500	83	16	1	1		30	46	23	1	
500 – 999	80	16	2	3		31	57	9	3	
1,000 – 4,999	82	15	1	2		28	50	21	1	
5,000 – 9,999	84	13	2	1	$\chi^2 = 41.43*$	28	46	27	0	$\chi^2 = 19.03$
10,000 and up	68	22	6	5	(.000)	27	53	19	1	(.088)
Region		(n = 1091)					(n = 1089)			
Panhandle	89	8	1	3		28	53	17	2	
North Central	73	26	1	1		27	44	29	0	
South Central	79	16	1	4		36	50	13	1	
Northeast	79	17	2	2	$\chi^2 = 47.75*$	26	49	24	1	$\chi^2 = 34.06*$
Southeast	75	16	7	2	(.000)	21	56	22	2	(.000)
Individual Attributes:										
Household Income Level		(n = 1049)					(n = 1046)			
Under $40,000	82	8	2	8		43	41	14	2	
$40,000 - $74,999	82	13	4	1		35	47	17	1	
$75,000 - $99,999	73	24	2	1	$\chi^2 = 70.54*$	25	49	25	1	$\chi^2 = 66.40*$
$100,000 and over	75	23	1	1	(.000)	15	58	26	1	(.000)
Age		(n = 1091)					(n = 1093)			
19 – 29	56	33	6	6		22	39	39	0	
30 – 39	75	22	1	1		29	42	29	0	
40 – 49	86	13	0	1		24	58	18	0	
50 – 64	86	11	2	1	$\chi^2 = 88.69*$	32	52	14	2	$\chi^2 = 90.29*$
65 and older	84	11	2	2	(.000)	33	55	9	3	(.000)
Gender		(n = 1081)					(n = 1078)			
Male	76	23	1	0*	$\chi^2 = 32.24*$	27	46	26	1	$\chi^2 = 15.29*$
Female	80	14	3	4	(.000)	29	53	16	1	(.002)
Education		(n = 1084)					(n = 1081)			
High school diploma or less	84	11	1	4		51	37	9	3	
Some college	83	10	4	3	$\chi^2 = 57.93*$	28	52	19	1	$\chi^2 = 82.07*$
Bachelors or grad degree	72	26	2	1	(.000)	20	54	26	1	(.000)
Marital Status		(n = 1064)					(n = 1065)			
Married	79	18	1	1		25	53	21	1	
Never married	71	22	1	7		35	40	24	1	
Divorced/separated	87	11	2	0	$\chi^2 = 34.33*$	44	48	9	0	$\chi^2 = 52.14*$
Widowed	84	9	3	4	(.000)	28	54	11	7	(.000)
Occupation		(n = 797)					(n = 797)			
Mgt, prof or education	65	28	3	4		16	55	29	1	
Sales or office support	89	6	4	1		28	58	13	1	
Constrn, inst or maint	98	2	0	0		41	32	28	0	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	62	31	2	4		24	58	18	0	
Agriculture	87	13	0	0		32	56	12	0	
Food serv/pers. Care	90	6	2	2		60	27	12	2	
Hlthcare supp/safety	80	20	0	0	$\chi^2 = 86.86*$	33	47	20	0	$\chi^2 = 86.93*$
Other	86	4	0	11	(.000)	43	32	21	4	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.
0* = Less than 1 percent.

Appendix Table 9 continued.

	Worse	About the same	Better	Don't know	Significance
		Your personal job prospects			
		Percentages			
Total	18	58	15	9	
Community Size		(n = 1036)			
Less than 500	16	62	16	6	
500 - 999	26	60	5	9	
1,000 - 4,999	16	56	19	9	
5,000 - 9,999	12	65	17	6	$\chi^2 = 25.85^*$
10,000 and up	20	55	14	11	(.011)
Region		(n = 1050)			
Panhandle	30	54	9	8	
North Central	21	49	21	9	
South Central	17	59	14	10	
Northeast	13	64	16	7	$\chi^2 = 32.04^*$
Southeast	14	59	16	12	(.001)
Individual Attributes:					
Household Income Level		(n = 1012)			
Under $40,000	20	52	13	15	
$40,000 - $74,999	23	53	15	8	
$75,000 - $99,999	14	63	16	6	$\chi^2 = 36.53^*$
$100,000 and over	12	66	17	5	(.000)
Age		(n = 1052)			
19 - 29	17	44	39	0	
30 - 39	16	67	17	1	
40 - 49	16	73	10	2	
50 - 64	22	57	14	8	$\chi^2 = 272.99^*$
65 and older	17	49	3	31	(.000)
Gender		(n = 1042)			
Male	19	53	19	9	$\chi^2 = 7.97^*$
Female	17	61	13	9	(.047)
Education		(n = 1046)			
High school diploma or less	33	49	6	12	
Some college	18	59	15	8	$\chi^2 = 59.14^*$
Bachelors or grad degree	11	62	20	8	(.000)
Marital Status		(n = 1027)			
Married	14	63	16	7	
Never married	29	50	18	3	
Divorced/separated	33	44	7	16	$\chi^2 = 92.02^*$
Widowed	20	45	5	30	(.000)
Occupation		(n = 791)			
Mgt, prof or education	12	61	22	4	
Sales or office support	15	68	8	10	
Constrn, inst or maint	13	59	24	4	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	39	50	9	2	
Agriculture	18	76	4	2	
Food serv/pers. care	33	51	14	2	
Hlthcare supp/safety	12	62	23	3	$\chi^2 = 76.69^*$
Other	39	43	11	7	(.000)

* Chi-square values are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Nebraska Rural Poll Research Report 23-1, September 2023