



# 2024 NEBRASKA RURAL POLL RESEARCH REPORT



**Well-being**

Nebraska Rural Poll Research Report 24-1, August 2024

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The past year continued to be challenging for rural Nebraskans. Inflation continues to impact household budgets, particularly housing costs. 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 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 29 years? How do they view their mental health and do they experience feelings of loneliness? This paper provides a detailed analysis of these questions.

This report details 1,010 responses to the 2024 Nebraska Rural Poll, the 29th 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 28 previous polls to this year's results. 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 since this study began.** The proportion believing they are worse off than they were five years ago was 33 percent, up from 27 percent last year and 21 percent in 2022. This is the highest level across all years of the study. This increase in pessimism was matched with a sharp decrease in optimism. This year, just over one-third (36%) of rural Nebraskans believe they are better off compared to five years ago, down from 45 percent last year.
- **Rural Nebraskans' optimism about the future has declined in the past five years.** This year, rural Nebraskans' optimism about their future declined from last year. Just over one-third (34%) of rural Nebraskans believe they will be better off ten years from now. This is a decrease from 39 percent last year. The past five 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 was about the same as it was last year (26 percent this year and 27 percent last year).
- **The past five years have also seen an increase in feelings of powerlessness by rural Nebraskans and were at their highest level since the study began.** The past five 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 42 percent (the lowest in the 29-year period). The proportion of rural Nebraskans that either strongly agree or agree with the statement has steadily increased from 24 percent in 2019 to 40 percent this year (the highest proportion in all years of the study).
- **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.** Almost six in ten persons between the ages of 30 and 39 (58%) think they are better off compared to five years ago, while less than one-quarter of persons age 65 and older (23%) share this opinion. Similarly, at least one-half of persons between the ages of 19 and 39 believe they will be better off ten years from now. However, just over one in ten persons age 65 and older (11%) share this opinion.

- **Younger persons are more likely than older persons to agree that people are powerless to control their own lives.** One-half of persons between the ages of 19 and 29 agree with that statement (50%), compared to just over three in ten persons between the ages of 40 and 49 (31%).
- **Most rural Nebraskans describe their mental health or emotional well-being as good (51%) or excellent (27%).**
  - The youngest persons are the age group least likely to rate their mental health as either excellent or good. One-half of persons between the ages of 19 and 29 rate their mental health as either excellent or good, compared to approximately eight in ten persons age 30 or older. Furthermore, almost one-half of the youngest persons (45%) rate their mental health as only fair.
- **Married persons are more likely than other marital groups to express satisfaction with their day-to-day personal safety.** Almost nine in ten married persons (89%) are satisfied with their personal safety, compared to almost two-thirds of persons who have never married (65%).
- **A slight majority of rural Nebraskans say they hardly ever or never experience feelings of loneliness.** Just over one-half responded that they hardly ever or never experience the following: feel isolated from others (56%), feel that they lack companionship (55%), and feel left out (51%).
  - Persons living in or near the largest communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to say they often feel left out. Just under two in ten persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more (17%) say they often feel left out, compared to five percent of persons living in or near communities with populations under 500.
  - Persons who have never married are the marital group most likely to say they often feel left out. Just over one-quarter of persons who have never married (26%) often feel left out, compared to less than one in ten married or widowed persons.



## INTRODUCTION

The past year continued to be challenging for rural Nebraskans. Inflation continues to impact household budgets, particularly housing costs. 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 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 29 years? How do they view their mental health and do they experience feelings of loneliness? This paper provides a detailed analysis of these questions.

This report details 1,010 responses to the 2024 Nebraska Rural Poll, the 29th annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about their well-being.

### **Methodology and Respondent Profile**

This study is based on 1,010 responses from Nebraskans living in 86 counties in the state. A self-administered questionnaire was mailed in May and June to 5,887 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, economic

and trade policy, housing, and artificial intelligence. This paper reports only results from the well-being section.

A 17% 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.

<sup>1</sup> In the spring of 2013, the Grand Island area (Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick Counties) was designated a metropolitan area, though Howard County was no longer considered a metropolitan county in 2023. 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.

Since younger residents have typically been 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 almost 51 years. Sixty-nine percent are married (Appendix Table 1) and 62 percent live within the city limits of a town or village. On average, respondents have lived in Nebraska 43 years and have lived in their current community over 27 years. Fifty-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.

Twenty-one percent of the respondents report their 2023 approximate household income from all sources, before taxes, as below \$40,000. Sixty-six percent report incomes over \$60,000. Seventy-five percent were employed in 2023 on a full-time, part-time, or seasonal basis. Twenty percent are retired. Twenty-eight percent of those employed reported working in a management, professional, or education occupation. Eleven percent indicated they were employed in agriculture.

## TRENDS IN WELL-BEING (1996-2024)

Comparisons are made between the well-being data collected this year to the 28 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 29 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 had generally widened since 2013 but narrowed considerably in the past three years. In fact, this year the difference between the two opposing perceptions is within the study’s margin of error. The average proportion across all years of the study 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.

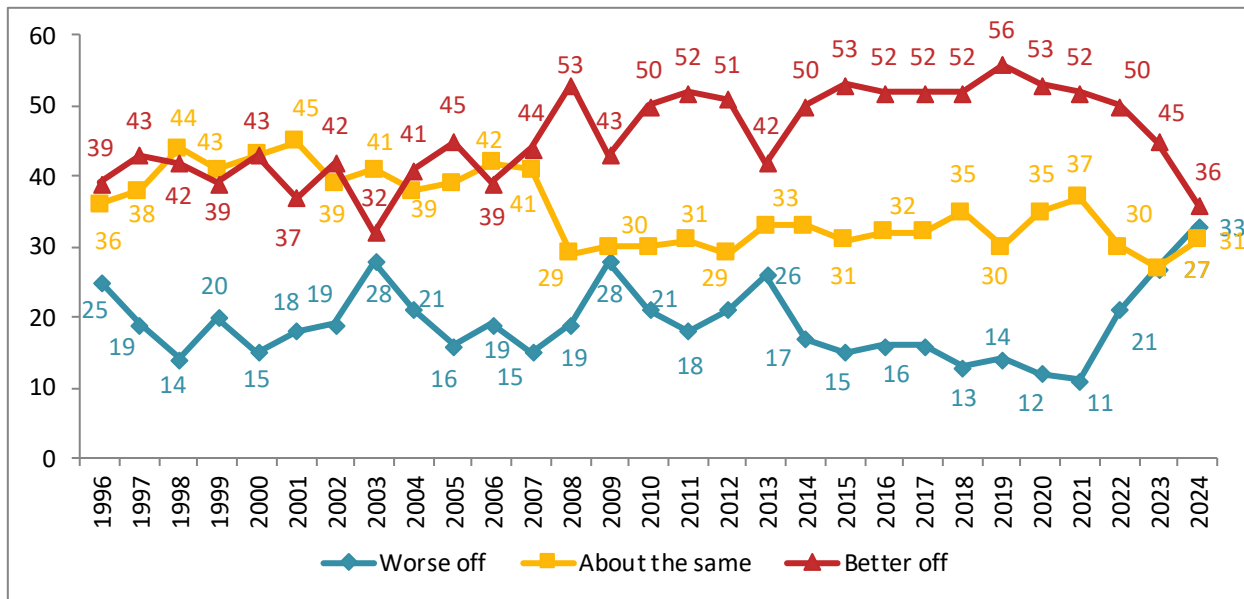
This year, rural Nebraskans are more pessimistic about their current situation than they’ve been since this study began. The proportion believing they are worse off than they were five years ago was 33 percent, up from 27 percent last year and 21 percent in 2022. This is the highest level across all years of the study.

This increase in pessimism was matched with a sharp decrease in optimism. This year, just over one-third (36%) of rural Nebraskans believe they are better off compared to five years ago, down from 45 percent last year.

When asked to compare themselves to their parents when they were their age, the responses had generally been very



**Figure 1.** Well-being compared to five years ago: 1996-2024



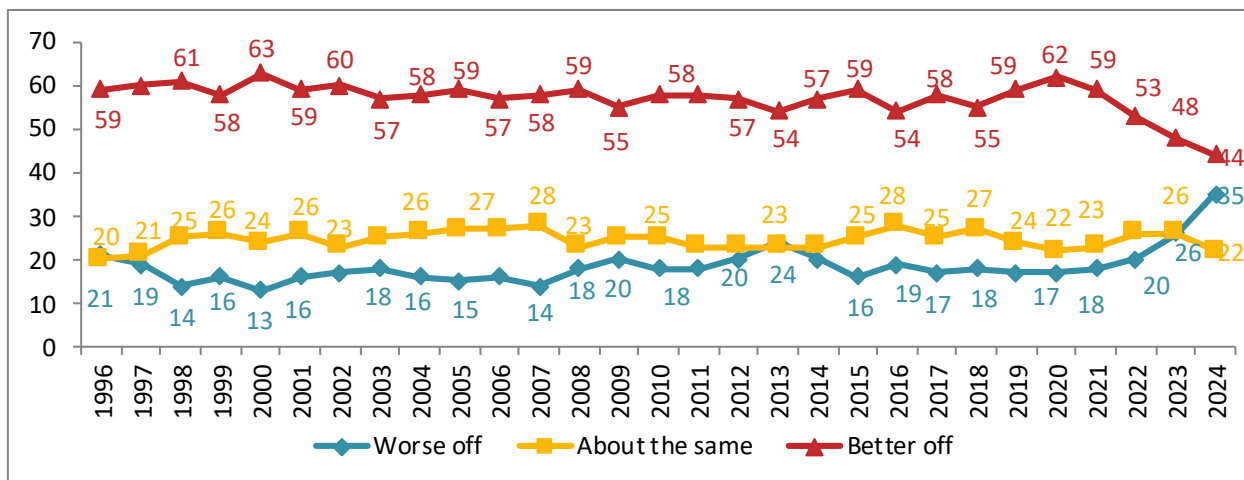
stable over time (Figure 2). However, the past three years have seen declines in the proportion saying they are better off compared to their parents when they were their age, decreasing to 44 percent from 59 percent in 2021. The proportion stating they are better off has averaged approximately 57 percent over the 29-year period. The proportion feeling they are worse off than their parents has averaged approximately 18 percent during this period. This proportion has increased during the past two years, from 20 percent in 2022 to 35 percent this year.

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

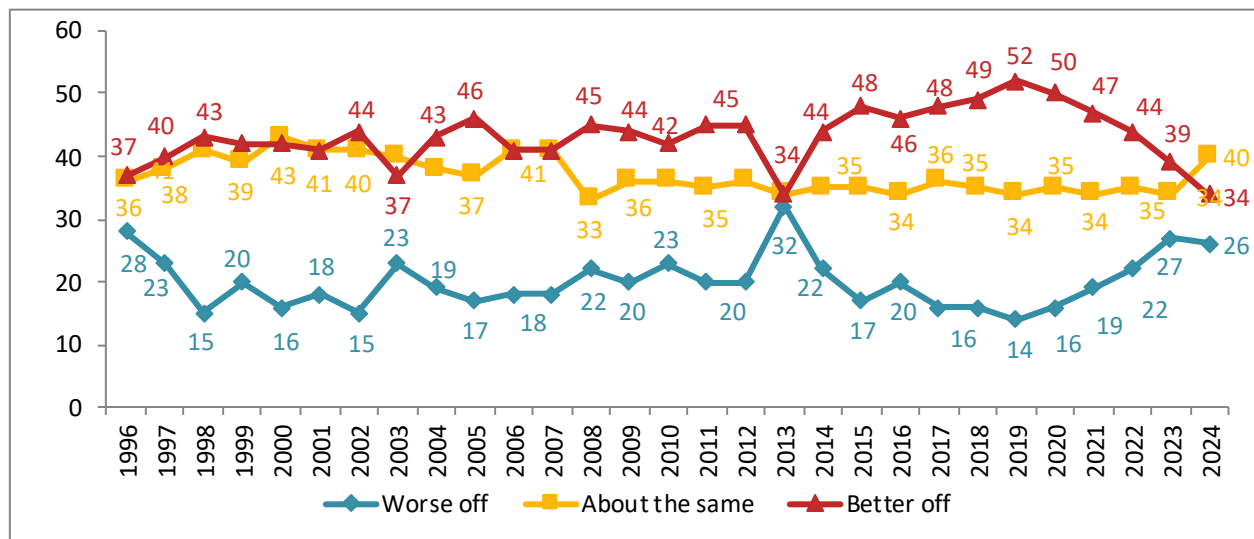
been greater than the proportion saying they will be worse off ten years from now. In fact, the gap between the two gradually widened between 2013 and 2019. However, that gap has narrowed considerably in the past five years.

This year, rural Nebraskans' optimism about their future declined from last year. Just over one-third (34%) of rural Nebraskans believe they will be better off ten years from now. This is a decrease from 39 percent last year. The past five 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 29 years.

**Figure 2.** Well-being compared to parents: 1996 - 2024



**Figure 3.** Well-being ten years from now: 1996-2024



The proportion of respondents stating they will be worse off ten years from now was about the same as it was last year (26 percent this year and 27 percent last year). The past five 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 steady around 40 percent over the first 12 years of the study, declined to 33 percent in 2008, has remained around 35 percent the past sixteen years, but increased to 40 percent this year.

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). However, the two proportions were within the margin of error this year. The proportion that either strongly disagree or disagree with the statement generally

declined between 2002 and 2010, from 58 percent to 43 percent. However, the proportion then increased to 56 percent in 2012 before generally declining to 42 percent this year (the lowest in the 29-year period). The average proportion across all 29 years is 51 percent. The past five years have been a period of steady decline from 54 percent to 42 percent.

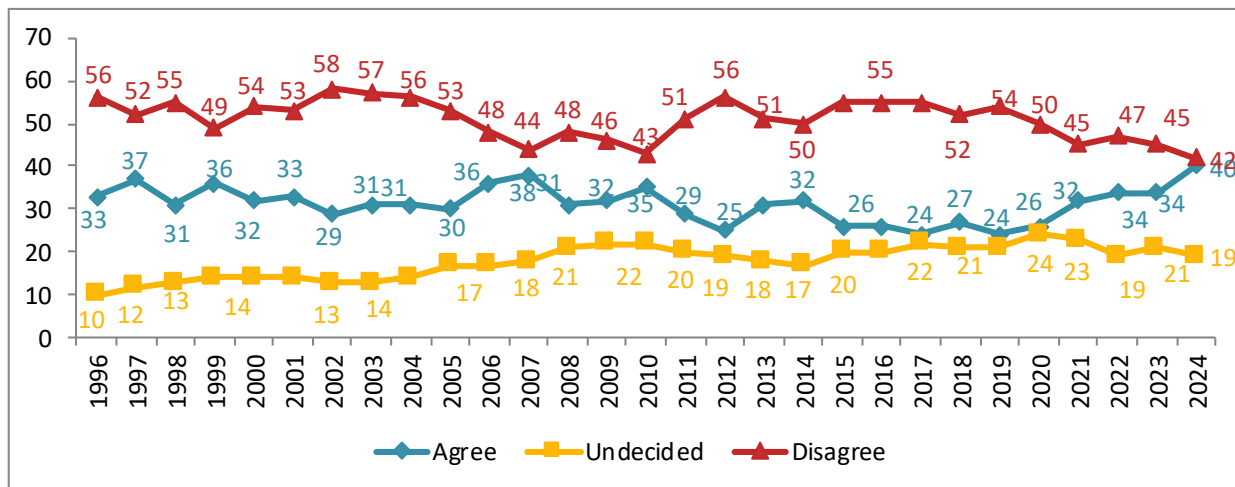
The proportion of rural Nebraskans that either strongly agree or agree with the statement has been somewhat stable across all 29 years of the study. The average proportion has been approximately 31 percent. The past five years have seen an increase from 24 percent in 2019 to 40 percent this year (the highest proportion in all years of the study).

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 19 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.”

**Figure 4.** "...people are powerless to control their own lives": 1996-2024



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: marriage, family, general standard of living, your housing, job security, ability to afford your residence, current income level, and the ability to build assets/wealth. Satisfaction with both religion/spirituality and clean air increased from last year.

## GENERAL WELL-BEING BY SUBGROUPS

In this section, the 2024 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).

Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to say they are better off than they were five years ago. At least four in ten persons living in or near communities with populations of 5,000 or more say they are better off compared to five years ago, while less than one-quarter (24%) of persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 500 to 999 share this opinion.

Residents of the Panhandle (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. Over four in ten Panhandle residents (44%) think they are better off than they were five years ago. In comparison, just over three in ten residents of the Northeast region (31%) believe they are better off than they were five years ago. Residents of the North Central region are the group most likely to believe they are worse off than they were five years ago. Over four in ten North Central region residents (45%) think they are worse off than they were five years ago.

Residents of both the Northeast and Southeast regions are the groups most likely to believe they will be better off ten years from now. At least four in ten residents of these two regions say they will be better off ten years from now, compared

**Table 1.** Satisfaction with aspects of life, 1996–2024

	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	24
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	82
Transportation																			82	85	87	84	83	88	87	86	86	86	86
Personal safety																			87	88	87	87	84	89	85	86	84	85	83
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	82
Gen. quality of life														82	84	86	81	83	83	83	84	82	82	85	84	82	81	80	76
Gen. std. of living														77	79	83	79	79	80	80	80	80	78	83	82	81	77	79	73
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	80
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	72	77
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	75
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	72
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	73
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	77
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	70
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	68
Ability to afford residence																			65	70	68	69	67	71	69	72	68	70	61
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	74
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	64
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	65
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	52
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	51
Ability to build assts/wealth																			51	51	50	51	50	56	54	58	54	50	45
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	46

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

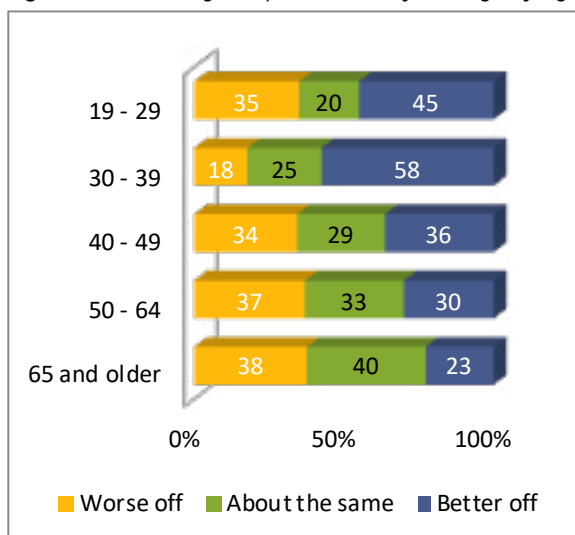
to one-quarter of the residents of the South Central region (25%).

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 are better off than they were five years ago, compared to just under one-quarter of persons with the lowest household incomes (24%).

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. Almost six in ten persons between the ages of 30 and 39 (58%) think they are better off compared to five years ago, while less than one-quarter of persons age 65 and older (23%) share this opinion (Figure 5). Similarly, at least one-half of persons between the ages of 19 and 39 believe they will be better off ten years from now. However, just over one in ten persons age 65 and older (11%) share this opinion.

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.

**Figure 5.** Well-being compared to five years ago by age



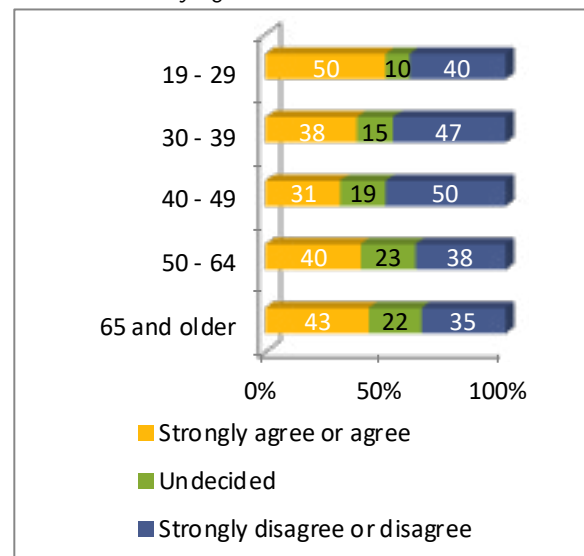
When comparing the marital groups, married persons are the group most likely to believe they are better off than they were five years ago and are better off compared to their parents when they were their age. However, the persons who have never married are the group most likely to think they will be better off ten years from now. Almost one-half of this group (49%) believe they will be better off ten years from now, compared to just over one in ten widowed persons (11%).

Respondents with food service or personal care occupations are the occupation group most likely to believe they are better off than they were five years ago and 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. Just over four in ten (42%) disagree with that statement, compared to four in ten (40%) who agree. When analyzing the responses by region, community size, and various individual attributes, many differences emerge (Appendix Table 3).

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to agree that people are powerless to control their own lives. One-half of persons between the ages of 19 and 29 agree with that statement (50%), compared to just over three in ten persons between the ages of 40 and 49 (31%) (Figure 6).

**Figure 6.** Belief that people are powerless to control their own lives by age



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 less than a four-year degree (46%) agree that people are powerless to control their own lives. However, one-third of persons with at least a four-year college degree (33%) share this opinion.

The other groups most likely to agree that people are powerless to control their own lives include: persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 500 to 999, persons with lower household incomes, persons who have never married, persons with sales or office support occupations, and persons with food service or personal care occupations.

Respondents were next asked how they would describe their mental health or emotional well-being at the time. Most rural Nebraskans describe their mental health or emotional well-being as good (51%) or excellent (27%) (Figure 7).

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

Persons with lower household incomes are less likely than persons with higher incomes to describe their mental health as either excellent or good. Just over six in ten (62%) persons with the lowest

household incomes (under \$40,000) rate their mental health as either excellent or good, compared to at least three-quarters of persons with higher household incomes.

The youngest persons are the age group least likely to rate their mental health as either excellent or good. One-half of persons between the ages of 19 and 29 rate their mental health as either excellent or good, compared to approximately eight in ten persons age 30 or older (Figure 7). Furthermore, almost one-half of the youngest persons (45%) rate their mental health as only fair.

The groups most likely to describe their mental health as either excellent or good include: males, widowed persons, and persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations.

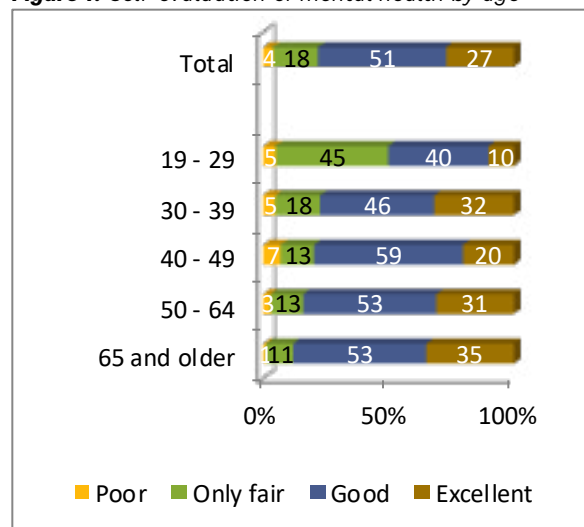
## SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF WELL-BEING BY SUBGROUPS

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 marriage (46%), their family (43%), their transportation (39%), their day-to-day personal safety (39%), greenery and open space (38%), their religion/spirituality (38%), clean air (37%), clean water (35%), their friends (35%), and their education (33%). Items receiving the highest proportion of very dissatisfied responses include: financial security during retirement (24%), their ability to build assets/wealth (17%), their current income level (14%), and their job opportunities (13%).

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

**Figure 7.** Self-evaluation of mental health by age



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 over six in ten persons with household incomes under \$40,000 (64%) report being dissatisfied with their financial security during retirement, compared to 34 percent of persons with household incomes of \$100,000 or more.

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to express dissatisfaction with their financial security during retirement. Almost three-quarters of persons between the ages of 19 and 29 (73%) are dissatisfied with their financial security during retirement, compared to just under three in ten persons age 65 and older (29%).

Other groups most likely to be dissatisfied with their financial security during retirement include: persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 500 to 999, females, persons with some college education (but less than a four-year degree), persons who have never married, and persons with sales or office support occupations.

Many of these same groups are those most dissatisfied with their ability to build assets or wealth. 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 over one-half of persons with household incomes under \$40,000 (54%) are dissatisfied with their ability to build assets/wealth. In comparison, only 28 percent of persons with household incomes of \$100,000 or more share this dissatisfaction (Figure 8).

The youngest persons are more likely than older persons to say they are dissatisfied with their ability to build assets/wealth. Almost two-thirds of persons between the ages of 19 and 29 (65%) are dissatisfied with their ability to build assets/wealth, compared to 22 percent of persons age 65 and older.

Other groups most likely to express dissatisfaction with their ability to build

**Figure 8.** Satisfaction with ability to build assets/wealth by household income

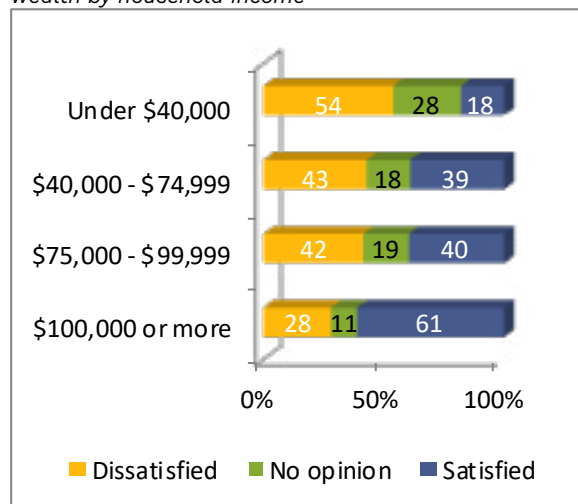


Figure 8. Satisfaction with Ability to Build Assets/Wealth by Household Income assets/wealth include: persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 500 to 999, persons with some college education (but less than a four-year degree), persons who have never married, and persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations.

Persons with lower household incomes are more likely than persons with higher household incomes to be dissatisfied with their current income level. Just over one-half of persons with household incomes under \$40,000 (54%) report being dissatisfied with their current income level, compared to 17 percent of persons with household incomes of \$100,000 or more.

Persons who have never married are the marital group most likely to express dissatisfaction with their current income level. Over one-half of persons who have never married (56%) are dissatisfied with their current income level, compared to 19 percent of widowed persons.

Other groups most likely to report being dissatisfied with their current income level include: persons living in or near communities with populations ranging between 500 and 999, the youngest persons, persons with less than a four-year degree, and persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations.

Younger persons are more likely than older

persons to express dissatisfaction with their job opportunities. Over four in ten persons age 19 to 29 (42%) are dissatisfied with their job opportunities, compared to 17 percent of persons age 65 and older.

Persons with sales or office support occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to be dissatisfied with their job opportunities. Over six in ten persons with sales or office support occupations (63%) express dissatisfaction with their job opportunities, compared to 14 percent of persons with food service or personal care occupations.

Other groups most likely to say they are dissatisfied with their job opportunities include: persons living in or near communities with populations of 500 or more; persons with the lowest household incomes; females; persons with some college (but less than a four-year degree); and persons who have never married.

Persons who have never married are more likely than different marital groups to say they are dissatisfied with their community. Just over one-half of persons who have never married (54%) are dissatisfied with their community, compared to 13 percent of widowed persons.

Other groups most likely to be dissatisfied with their community include: persons with lower household incomes, younger persons (under the age of 40), persons with the lowest education levels, and persons with sales or office support occupations.

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

Persons with higher household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to report satisfaction with their transportation. Nine in ten persons with the highest household incomes (90%) are satisfied with their transportation, compared to 74 percent of persons with the lowest household incomes.

Other groups most likely to be satisfied with their transportation include the

youngest persons, persons with higher education levels, and married persons.

Persons with higher household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to report satisfaction with their day-to-day personal safety. Nine in ten persons with household incomes of \$100,000 or more are satisfied with their day-to-day personal safety, compared to 71 percent of persons with household incomes under \$40,000.

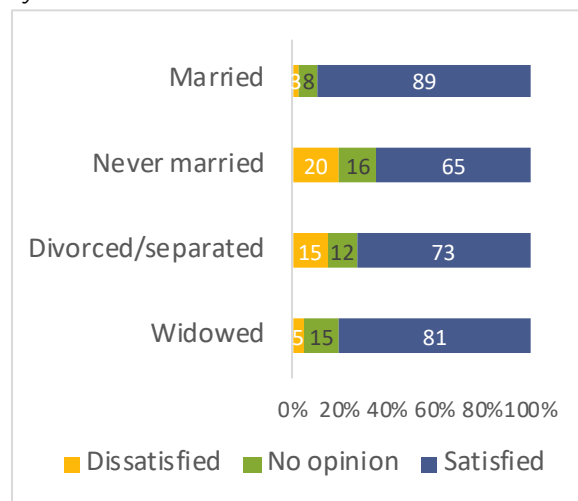
Married persons are more likely than other marital groups to express satisfaction with their day-to-day personal safety. Almost nine in ten married persons (89%) are satisfied with their personal safety, compared to almost two-thirds of persons who have never married (65%) (Figure 9).

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 persons with construction, installation, and maintenance occupations.

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 younger persons, females, and persons with higher education levels.

Persons with higher household incomes are more likely than persons with lower

**Figure 9.** Satisfaction with day-to-day personal safety by marital status





incomes to express satisfaction with their family. Almost nine in ten persons with household incomes of \$75,000 or more are satisfied with their family, compared to two-thirds of persons with household incomes under \$40,000.

Other groups most likely to be satisfied with their family include persons with the highest education levels 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. Approximately nine in ten persons living in or near smaller communities (populations under 5,000) are satisfied with greenery and open space, compared to just over seven in ten persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more.

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

## FEELINGS OF LONELINESS

Finally, respondents were asked how often they experience various feelings of loneliness. A slight majority of rural Nebraskans say they hardly ever or never experience feelings of loneliness. Just over one-half responded that they hardly ever or never experience the following: feel isolated from others (56%), feel that they lack companionship (55%), and feel left out (Figure 10).

The frequency of experiencing these feelings are examined by community size, region, and various individual attributes (Appendix Table 8). Some differences are detected.

Persons with the lowest household incomes are more likely than persons with higher household incomes to say they often experience feeling that they lack companionship. Almost two in ten persons with household incomes under \$40,000

(17%) often feel they lack companionship, compared to less than one in ten persons with household incomes of \$75,000 or more.

When comparing marital groups, married persons are the least likely to say they often feel they lack companionship.

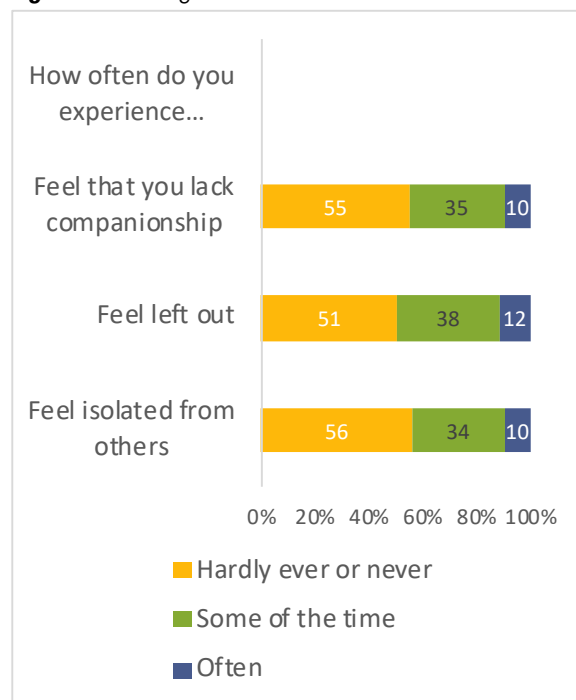
Persons living in or near the largest communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to say they often feel left out. Just under two in ten persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more (17%) say they often feel left out, compared to five percent of persons living in or near communities with populations under 500.

Persons who have never married are the marital group most likely to say they often feel left out. Just over one-quarter of persons who have never married (26%) often feel left out, compared to less than one in ten married or widowed persons (Figure 11).

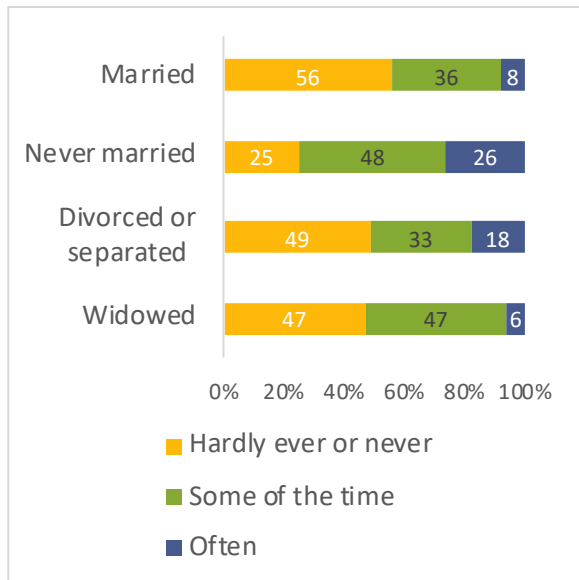
The other groups most likely to say they often feel left out include persons with the lowest household incomes and the youngest persons.

Persons with lower household incomes

**Figure 10.** Feelings of loneliness



**Figure 11.** Frequency of feeling left out by marital status



are more likely than persons with higher incomes to say they often feel isolated from others. Just over one in ten persons with household incomes under \$75,000 often feel isolated from others, compared to seven percent of persons with incomes of \$75,000 or more.

Other groups most likely to often feel isolated from others include: persons living in or near larger communities, persons who are divorced or separated, persons who have never married, and persons with production, transportation, or warehousing occupations.

## CONCLUSION

This year, rural Nebraskans are more pessimistic about their current situation than they've been since this study began. The proportion believing they are worse off than they were five years ago was 33 percent, up from 27 percent last year and 21 percent in 2022. This is the highest level across all years of the study. This increase in pessimism was matched with a sharp decrease in optimism. This year, just over one-third (36%) of rural Nebraskans believe they are better off compared to five years ago, down from 45 percent last year.

This trend continued when looking to the future. Rural Nebraskans' optimism about the future has declined in the past five years. This year, rural Nebraskans'

optimism about their future declined from last year. Just over one-third (34%) of rural Nebraskans believe they will be better off ten years from now. This is a decrease from 39 percent last year. The past five 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 was about the same as it was last year (26 percent this year and 27 percent last year).

The past five years have also seen an increase in feelings of powerlessness by rural Nebraskans and are at the highest level since the study began. The past five 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 42 percent (the lowest in the 29-year period). The proportion of rural Nebraskans that either strongly agree or agree with the statement has steadily increased from 24 percent in 2019 to 40 percent this year (the highest proportion in all years of the study).

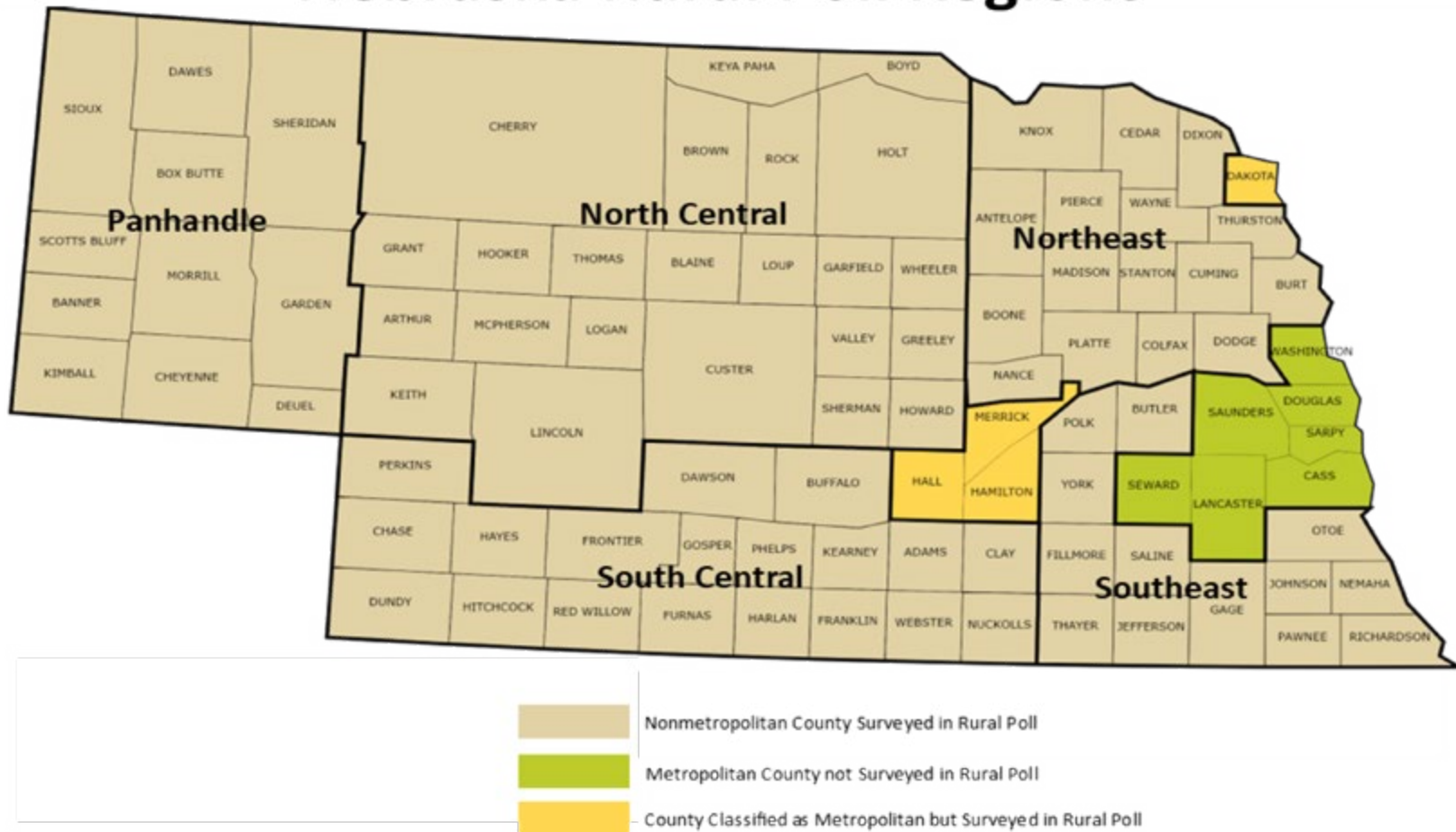
Despite these trends, certain groups are more likely to be optimistic about their current situation as well as the future. Younger persons are more likely than older persons to believe they are better off compared to five years ago and will be better off ten years from now. Persons with higher household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

Even though younger persons are more likely to be optimistic, they are also most likely to agree that people are powerless to control their own lives. And, even though most rural Nebraskans describe their mental health or emotional well-being as good or excellent, the youngest persons were less likely to do so.

A different measure of mental health showed that a slight majority of rural Nebraskans say they hardly ever or never experience feelings of loneliness. Just over one-half responded that they hardly ever or never experience the following: feel isolated from others (56%), feel that they lack companionship (55%), and feel left out (51%).

Appendix Figure 1. Regions of Nebraska

# Nebraska Rural Poll Regions



**Appendix Table 1. Demographic Profile of Rural Poll Respondents<sup>1</sup> Compared to 2017 – 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Average for Nebraska\***

	2024 Poll	2023 Poll	2022 Poll	2021 Poll	2020 Poll	2017 - 2021 ACS
<b>Age : <sup>2</sup></b>						
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%
<b>Gender: <sup>3</sup></b>						
Female	57%	60%	51%	55%	55%	50%
Male	43%	40%	49%	45%	46%	50%
<b>Education: <sup>4</sup></b>						
Less than high school graduate	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	10%
High school diploma (or equiv.)	13%	16%	16%	16%	16%	32%
Some college, no degree	25%	25%	26%	26%	18%	24%
Associate degree	10%	13%	16%	15%	24%	12%
Bachelors degree	33%	28%	25%	28%	26%	16%
Graduate or professional degree	17%	17%	16%	13%	14%	7%
<b>Household Income: <sup>5</sup></b>						
Less than \$20,000	10%	7%	6%	8%	7%	14%
\$20,000 - \$39,999	11%	12%	15%	17%	14%	19%
\$40,000 - \$59,999	14%	15%	17%	16%	19%	18%
\$60,000 - \$74,999	11%	18%	17%	14%	16%	11%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	17%	16%	16%	17%	21%	15%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	23%	22%	17%	19%	15%	15%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	9%	6%	6%	5%	5%	5%
\$200,000 or more	5%	5%	6%	4%	4%	4%
<b>Marital Status: <sup>6</sup></b>						
Married	69%	71%	66%	69%	69%	61%
Never married	13%	13%	17%	13%	12%	20%
Divorced/separated	11%	10%	10%	11%	10%	12%
Widowed/widower	7%	7%	7%	7%	8%	8%

<sup>1</sup> Data from the Rural Polls have been weighted by age.

<sup>2</sup> 2017-2021 American Community Survey universe is non-metro population 20 years of age and over.

<sup>3</sup> 2017-2021 American Community Survey universe is non-metro population 20 years of age and over.

<sup>4</sup> 2017-2021 American Community Survey universe is non-metro population 25 years of age and over.

<sup>5</sup> 2017-2021 American Community Survey universe is all non-metro households.

<sup>6</sup> 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*

	<i>Much Worse Off</i>	<i>Worse Off</i>	<i>About the Same</i>	<i>Better Off</i>	<i>Much Better Off</i>	<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>
<b>Total</b>	10	23	31	27	9	
<b>Community Size</b>			(n = 930)			
Less than 500	7	26	33	26	9	
500 - 999	26	19	31	16	8	
1,000 - 4,999	6	33	27	28	7	
5,000 - 9,999	5	18	36	33	7	$\chi^2 = 75.49^*$
10,000 and up	9	20	30	29	13	(.000)
<b>Region</b>			(n = 944)			
Panhandle	6	22	28	36	8	
North Central	15	30	18	26	12	
South Central	6	21	33	29	12	
Northeast	14	24	32	21	10	$\chi^2 = 40.33^*$
Southeast	6	23	36	30	6	(.000)
<b>Income Level</b>			(n = 897)			
Under \$40,000	14	27	36	20	4	
\$40,000 - \$74,999	14	31	32	19	4	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	10	26	32	22	10	$\chi^2 = 86.65^*$
\$100,000 and over	5	17	25	37	17	(.000)
<b>Age</b>			(n = 948)			
19 - 29	15	20	20	30	15	
30 - 39	3	15	25	38	20	
40 - 49	7	27	29	27	9	
50 - 64	16	21	33	24	6	$\chi^2 = 96.35^*$
65 and older	8	30	40	20	3	(.000)
<b>Gender</b>			(n = 936)			
Male	12	24	28	26	10	$\chi^2 = 6.11$
Female	8	22	33	28	9	(.191)
<b>Marital Status</b>			(n = 935)			
Married	7	24	27	29	13	
Never married	20	18	34	25	2	
Divorced/separated	15	25	34	23	4	$\chi^2 = 58.43^*$
Widowed	8	27	47	17	2	(.000)
<b>Education</b>			(n = 944)			
H.S. diploma or less	16	25	39	15	6	
Some college	12	28	34	21	5	$\chi^2 = 73.74^*$
Bachelors degree	6	20	25	35	14	(.000)
<b>Occupation</b>			(n = 656)			
Mgt, prof or education	6	22	29	33	11	
Sales or office support	14	27	24	31	4	
Constrn, inst or maint	29	22	27	22	0	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	18	22	26	18	16	
Agriculture	6	30	31	26	8	
Food serv/pers. care	5	18	23	41	14	
Hlthcare supp/safety	4	17	31	26	23	$\chi^2 = 73.53^*$
Other	8	12	19	50	12	(.000)

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

Appendix Table 2 continued.

## Compared to Parents When They Were Your Age

	<i>Much Worse Off</i>	<i>Worse Off</i>	<i>About the Same</i>	<i>Better Off</i>	<i>Much Better Off</i>	<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>
<b>Total</b>	12	23	22	35	9	
<b>Community Size</b>			(n = 930)			
Less than 500	6	21	22	40	12	
500 - 999	27	22	17	32	2	
1,000 - 4,999	13	22	27	30	9	
5,000 - 9,999	7	17	21	51	5	$\chi^2 = 64.86^*$
10,000 and up	10	27	21	32	11	(.000)
<b>Region</b>			(n = 942)			
Panhandle	9	14	24	44	9	
North Central	8	26	23	36	7	
South Central	12	24	20	36	9	
Northeast	17	22	21	29	11	$\chi^2 = 25.86$
Southeast	8	24	24	38	6	(.056)
<b>Income Level</b>			(n = 898)			
Under \$40,000	21	30	29	20	2	
\$40,000 - \$74,999	18	29	20	27	7	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	11	19	31	32	7	$\chi^2 = 132.21^*$
\$100,000 and over	5	17	13	50	15	(.000)
<b>Age</b>			(n = 944)			
19 - 29	25	20	20	30	5	
30 - 39	12	21	18	37	12	
40 - 49	12	26	21	34	8	
50 - 64	11	26	22	33	9	$\chi^2 = 45.73^*$
65 and older	5	19	27	39	10	(.000)
<b>Gender</b>			(n = 933)			
Male	11	21	23	36	9	$\chi^2 = 2.12$
Female	12	24	21	34	9	(.713)
<b>Marital Status</b>			(n = 933)			
Married	10	20	20	39	11	
Never married	21	29	30	18	2	
Divorced/separated	16	33	20	28	3	$\chi^2 = 59.49^*$
Widowed	11	17	28	37	8	(.000)
<b>Education</b>			(n = 941)			
H.S. diploma or less	9	23	32	30	6	
Some college	12	28	22	33	5	$\chi^2 = 34.42^*$
Bachelors degree	13	19	18	38	12	(.000)
<b>Occupation</b>			(n = 650)			
Mgt, prof or education	13	23	19	33	13	
Sales or office support	7	29	22	36	6	
Constrn, inst or maint	29	17	29	24	0	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	12	18	22	32	16	
Agriculture	11	26	18	42	3	
Food serv/pers. care	0	33	43	19	5	
Hlthcare supp/safety	9	30	14	34	13	$\chi^2 = 58.41^*$
Other	7	22	4	56	11	(.000)

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

Appendix Table 2 continued.

	<i>Ten Years From Now</i>					<i>Chi-square (sig.)</i>
	<i>Much Worse Off</i>	<i>Worse Off</i>	<i>About the Same</i>	<i>Better Off</i>	<i>Much Better Off</i>	
<b>Total</b>	6	20	40	28	6	
<b>Community Size</b>			(n = 929)			
Less than 500	7	23	40	24	5	
500 - 999	5	23	36	26	10	
1,000 - 4,999	6	20	36	29	8	
5,000 - 9,999	5	13	43	38	1	$\chi^2 = 22.44$
10,000 and up	6	21	42	25	6	(.130)
<b>Region</b>			(n = 940)			
Panhandle	6	23	42	25	5	
North Central	6	24	38	22	11	
South Central	4	27	43	20	5	
Northeast	6	17	36	34	7	$\chi^2 = 38.40^*$
Southeast	7	13	41	36	4	(.001)
<b>Income Level</b>			(n = 894)			
Under \$40,000	9	28	32	25	6	
\$40,000 - \$74,999	8	26	47	16	4	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	3	22	33	35	7	$\chi^2 = 65.82^*$
\$100,000 and over	3	13	39	36	9	(.000)
<b>Age</b>			(n = 941)			
19 - 29	0	5	45	35	15	
30 - 39	3	12	33	38	14	
40 - 49	5	18	35	39	4	
50 - 64	8	28	38	23	3	$\chi^2 = 162.18^*$
65 and older	10	31	47	10	1	(.000)
<b>Gender</b>			(n = 932)			
Male	7	25	36	27	5	$\chi^2 = 14.57^*$
Female	4	17	43	29	7	(.006)
<b>Marital Status</b>			(n = 930)			
Married	5	19	42	28	7	
Never married	3	18	30	41	8	
Divorced/separated	12	26	34	22	6	$\chi^2 = 45.44^*$
Widowed	11	27	51	11	0	(.000)
<b>Education</b>			(n = 940)			
H.S. diploma or less	10	31	42	17	1	
Some college	8	22	36	25	8	$\chi^2 = 48.56^*$
Bachelors degree	3	16	42	33	7	(.000)
<b>Occupation</b>			(n = 652)			
Mgt, prof or education	2	15	42	35	6	
Sales or office support	3	24	34	26	13	
Constrn, inst or maint	17	20	46	17	0	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	8	31	18	29	14	
Agriculture	1	32	37	20	10	
Food serv/pers. care	0	5	38	52	5	
Hlthcare supp/safety	4	12	41	35	8	$\chi^2 = 87.05^*$
Other	11	22	11	48	7	(.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.**

	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Significance</i>
<b>Total</b>	42	19	40	
<b>Community Size</b>		(n = 930)		
Less than 500	40	22	38	
500 - 999	30	19	51	
1,000 - 4,999	45	18	38	
5,000 - 9,999	35	25	41	$\chi^2 = 17.36^*$
10,000 and up	46	17	37	(.027)
<b>Region</b>		(n = 946)		
Panhandle	34	21	45	
North Central	40	19	40	
South Central	43	19	38	
Northeast	40	20	40	$\chi^2 = 5.77$
Southeast	47	15	39	(.673)
<b>Household Income</b>		(n = 899)		
Under \$40,000	30	25	45	
\$40,000 - \$74,999	33	18	49	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	38	15	46	$\chi^2 = 46.19^*$
\$100,000 and over	54	16	30	(.000)
<b>Age</b>		(n = 948)		
19 - 29	40	10	50	
30 - 39	47	15	38	
40 - 49	50	19	31	
50 - 64	38	23	40	$\chi^2 = 25.80^*$
65 and older	35	22	43	(.001)
<b>Gender</b>		(n = 936)		
Male	42	17	41	$\chi^2 = 1.41$
Female	41	20	39	(.495)
<b>Education</b>		(n = 945)		
H.S. diploma or less	25	29	46	
Some college	33	21	46	$\chi^2 = 53.41^*$
Bachelors or grad degree	53	14	33	(.000)
<b>Marital Status</b>		(n = 933)		
Married	47	17	36	
Never married	24	15	61	
Divorced/separated	41	21	38	$\chi^2 = 40.19^*$
Widowed	29	32	39	(.000)
<b>Occupation</b>		(n = 656)		
Mgt, prof or education	51	16	33	
Sales or office support	27	14	59	
Constrn, inst or maint	50	10	41	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	30	22	48	
Agriculture	44	16	40	
Food serv/pers. care	36	5	59	
Hlthcare supp/safety	57	17	26	$\chi^2 = 38.43^*$
Other	30	15	56	(.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**

	<i>How would you describe your own mental health or emotional wellbeing at this time?</i>				
	Poor	Only Fair	Good	Excellent	Chi-square (sig.)
<b>Total</b>	4	18	51	27	
<b>Community Size</b>		(n = 932)			
Less than 500	0	15	49	36	
500 - 999	5	26	56	13	
1,000 - 4,999	3	11	60	25	
5,000 - 9,999	5	20	52	23	$\chi^2 = 43.34^*$
10,000 and up	4	21	43	32	(.000)
<b>Region</b>		(n = 947)			
Panhandle	1	22	57	20	
North Central	0	12	63	25	
South Central	5	21	45	30	
Northeast	6	20	48	26	$\chi^2 = 27.81^*$
Southeast	3	14	56	27	(.006)
<b>Income Level</b>		(n = 899)			
Under \$40,000	8	31	42	20	
\$40,000 - \$74,999	3	11	59	27	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	3	18	54	24	$\chi^2 = 38.43^*$
\$100,000 and over	3	19	50	29	(.000)
<b>Age</b>		(n = 947)			
19 - 29	5	45	40	10	
30 - 39	5	18	46	32	
40 - 49	7	13	59	20	
50 - 64	3	13	53	31	$\chi^2 = 113.98^*$
65 and older	1	11	53	35	(.000)
<b>Gender</b>		(n = 935)			
Male	2	16	49	33	$\chi^2 = 20.35^*$
Female	5	20	53	22	(.000)
<b>Marital Status</b>		(n = 936)			
Married	2	15	54	29	
Never married	7	39	42	12	
Divorced/separated	10	18	41	31	$\chi^2 = 68.85^*$
Widowed	5	9	61	25	(.000)
<b>Education</b>		(n = 945)			
H.S. diploma or less	1	22	55	22	
Some college	3	17	53	26	$\chi^2 = 11.58$
Bachelors degree	6	18	49	28	(.072)
<b>Occupation</b>		(n = 657)			
Mgt, prof or education	7	15	55	24	
Sales or office support	3	30	47	21	
Constrn, inst or maint	5	5	56	34	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	0	20	46	34	
Agriculture	0	20	52	28	
Food serv/pers. care	0	36	41	23	
Hlthcare supp/safety	1	20	57	22	$\chi^2 = 56.51^*$
Other	4	54	32	11	(.000)

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

*Appendix Table 5. Satisfaction with Items Affecting Well-Being, 2024*

Item	<i>Does Not Apply</i>	<i>Very Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Somewhat Dissatisfied</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>	<i>Somewhat Satisfied</i>	<i>Very Satisfied</i>
Your marriage	21%	2%	2%	10%	19%	46%
Your family	2	3	4	11	38	43
Your transportation	1	2	4	8	46	39
Your day-to-day personal safety	1	2	6	10	44	39
Greenery and open space	1	3	4	13	41	38
Your religion/spirituality	7	1	5	18	30	38
Clean air	1	2	9	12	39	37
Clean water	1	6	11	11	36	35
Your friends	2	2	6	16	39	35
Your education	5	2	6	14	41	33
Your housing	3	4	11	10	40	31
Your job security	17	6	6	14	26	31
Your general quality of life	1	4	8	11	46	30
Your general standard of living	1	5	12	11	45	27
Your job satisfaction	17	5	7	14	34	24
Your spare time	4	9	13	13	38	23
Your ability to afford your residence	3	9	16	13	36	22
Your health	1	7	14	14	48	17
Your job opportunities	16	13	11	23	21	15
Your ability to build assets/wealth	4	17	19	17	28	15
Current income level	4	14	18	14	36	13
Your community	1	7	19	21	39	13
Financial security during retirement	4	24	21	13	29	10

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

	<i>Financial security during retirement</i>			<i>Significance</i>	<i>Your ability to build assets/wealth</i>			<i>Significance</i>
	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>		<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	
	<i>Percentages</i>							
<b>Total</b>	46	14	40		38	17	45	
<b>Community Size</b>	(n = 883)				(n = 886)			
Less than 500	34	20	47		27	21	52	
500 - 999	61	14	25		55	21	24	
1,000 - 4,999	43	14	43		36	11	53	
5,000 - 9,999	51	13	37	$\chi^2 = 23.12^*$	35	20	46	$\chi^2 = 39.63^*$
10,000 and up	45	12	43	(.003)	36	19	46	(.000)
<b>Region</b>	(n = 893)				(n = 896)			
Panhandle	43	10	47		32	18	50	
North Central	44	15	40		44	12	44	
South Central	47	15	38		38	19	44	
Northeast	42	15	44	$\chi^2 = 10.77$	35	19	46	$\chi^2 = 6.89$
Southeast	55	10	34	(.215)	41	16	44	(.549)
<b>Individual Attributes:</b>								
<b>Household Income Level</b>	(n = 855)				(n = 858)			
Under \$40,000	64	16	20		54	28	18	
\$40,000 - \$74,999	59	13	29		43	18	39	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	46	15	39	$\chi^2 = 74.64^*$	42	19	40	$\chi^2 = 89.33^*$
\$100,000 and over	34	11	55	(.000)	28	11	61	(.000)
<b>Age</b>	(n = 897)				(n = 900)			
19 - 29	73	11	16		65	10	25	
30 - 39	41	12	47		39	10	51	
40 - 49	47	11	42		35	16	49	
50 - 64	49	14	38	$\chi^2 = 73.32^*$	35	19	46	$\chi^2 = 81.18^*$
65 and older	29	19	51	(.000)	22	28	50	(.000)
<b>Gender</b>	(n = 889)				(n = 889)			
Male	40	14	46	$\chi^2 = 10.33^*$	36	15	49	$\chi^2 = 4.45$
Female	51	13	36	(.006)	39	19	42	(.108)
<b>Education</b>	(n = 894)				(n = 895)			
High school diploma or less	49	23	28		35	31	34	
Some college	53	14	34	$\chi^2 = 27.42^*$	47	16	37	$\chi^2 = 42.81^*$
Bachelors or grad degree	41	11	47	(.000)	32	14	54	(.000)
<b>Marital Status</b>	(n = 887)				(n = 887)			
Married	43	13	44		35	14	51	
Never married	69	9	22		58	23	20	
Divorced/separated	52	15	34	$\chi^2 = 39.03^*$	44	18	38	$\chi^2 = 63.69^*$
Widowed	30	23	47	(.000)	15	38	47	(.000)
<b>Occupation</b>	(n = 631)				(n = 644)			
Mgt, prof or education	46	11	44		32	14	54	
Sales or office support	68	9	23		60	12	28	
Constm, inst or maint	62	15	23		66	5	29	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	50	24	26		47	18	35	
Agriculture	48	18	34		50	13	37	
Food serv/pers. care	62	5	33		55	5	41	
Hlthcare supp/safety	47	3	50	$\chi^2 = 50.32^*$	39	13	49	$\chi^2 = 44.71^*$
Other	27	4	69	(.000)	22	7	70	(.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 6 continued.

	<i>Your current income level</i>			<i>Significance</i>	<i>Your job opportunities</i>			<i>Significance</i>
	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>		<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	
	<i>Percentages</i>							
<b>Total</b>	34	15	51		29	27	44	
<b>Community Size</b>	(n = 885)				(n = 777)			
Less than 500	21	29	50		13	39	48	
500 - 999	49	16	35		31	34	35	
1,000 - 4,999	36	9	55		29	23	47	
5,000 - 9,999	25	14	62	$\chi^2 = 40.48^*$	30	36	35	$\chi^2 = 23.23^*$
10,000 and up	33	16	52	(.000)	30	22	48	(.003)
<b>Region</b>	(n = 898)				(n = 787)			
Panhandle	26	20	55		29	31	40	
North Central	35	13	52		32	30	38	
South Central	36	16	48		32	25	43	
Northeast	36	14	51	$\chi^2 = 6.36$	26	25	49	$\chi^2 = 7.62$
Southeast	29	16	55	(.607)	27	32	40	(.472)
<b>Individual Attributes:</b>								
<b>Household Income Level</b>	(n = 860)				(n = 762)			
Under \$40,000	54	30	16		45	32	23	
\$40,000 - \$74,999	46	17	37		27	40	33	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	38	11	51	$\chi^2 = 198.99^*$	35	18	47	$\chi^2 = 72.09^*$
\$100,000 and over	17	6	77	(.000)	21	21	57	(.000)
<b>Age</b>	(n = 901)				(n = 788)			
19 - 29	50	10	40		42	26	32	
30 - 39	35	10	55		28	15	58	
40 - 49	28	13	59		25	21	54	
50 - 64	37	15	48	$\chi^2 = 44.62^*$	32	30	39	$\chi^2 = 74.06^*$
65 and older	24	25	52	(.000)	17	52	31	(.000)
<b>Gender</b>	(n = 891)				(n = 782)			
Male	31	15	54	$\chi^2 = 2.06$	20	35	45	$\chi^2 = 30.70^*$
Female	36	15	50	(.358)	36	22	43	(.000)
<b>Education</b>	(n = 897)				(n = 787)			
High school diploma or less	44	25	30		29	41	29	
Some college	43	16	41	$\chi^2 = 67.79^*$	37	30	34	$\chi^2 = 42.14^*$
Bachelors or grad degree	24	12	64	(.000)	24	22	54	(.000)
<b>Marital Status</b>	(n = 887)				(n = 781)			
Married	28	13	60		24	25	52	
Never married	56	18	26		46	42	12	
Divorced/separated	49	17	34	$\chi^2 = 79.81^*$	37	21	42	$\chi^2 = 69.82^*$
Widowed	19	33	48	(.000)	24	46	30	(.000)
<b>Occupation</b>	(n = 637)				(n = 620)			
Mgt, prof or education	25	10	65		26	20	54	
Sales or office support	52	9	39		63	12	25	
Constrn, inst or maint	58	10	33		18	45	38	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	35	16	49		33	30	37	
Agriculture	44	12	45		24	33	42	
Food serv/pers. care	50	9	41		14	62	24	
Hlthcare supp/safety	29	12	59	$\chi^2 = 42.86^*$	30	12	58	$\chi^2 = 90.59^*$
Other	27	0	73	(.000)	18	46	36	(.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 6 continued.

	<i>Your community</i>			<i>Significance</i>
	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	
	<i>Percentages</i>			
<b>Total</b>	27	22	52	
<b>Community Size</b>	(n = 910)			
Less than 500	14	38	48	
500 - 999	30	13	57	
1,000 - 4,999	24	18	58	
5,000 - 9,999	32	24	44	$\chi^2 = 27.72^*$
10,000 and up	29	23	48	(.000)
<b>Region</b>	(n = 925)			
Panhandle	33	21	46	
North Central	29	20	51	
South Central	27	26	47	
Northeast	27	19	54	$\chi^2 = 10.49$
Southeast	22	21	57	(.232)
<b>Individual Attributes:</b>				
<i>Household Income Level</i>	(n = 882)			
Under \$40,000	39	19	43	
\$40,000 - \$74,999	26	24	50	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	24	22	54	$\chi^2 = 16.22^*$
\$100,000 and over	24	21	56	(.013)
<i>Age</i>	(n = 925)			
19 - 29	35	5	60	
30 - 39	34	14	52	
40 - 49	26	26	48	
50 - 64	28	29	43	$\chi^2 = 56.41^*$
65 and older	16	26	58	(.000)
<i>Gender</i>	(n = 916)			
Male	24	24	52	$\chi^2 = 3.03$
Female	28	20	53	(.220)
<i>Education</i>	(n = 923)			
High school diploma or less	34	31	35	
Some college	28	22	50	$\chi^2 = 24.06^*$
Bachelors or grad degree	24	18	58	(.000)
<i>Marital Status</i>	(n = 914)			
Married	23	22	56	
Never married	54	13	33	
Divorced/separated	27	29	44	$\chi^2 = 61.63^*$
Widowed	13	23	65	(.000)
<i>Occupation</i>	(n = 651)			
Mgt, prof or education	23	16	62	
Sales or office support	37	23	40	
Constrn, inst or maint	22	24	54	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	28	32	40	
Agriculture	27	22	52	
Food serv/pers. care	5	32	64	
Hlthcare supp/safety	31	20	49	$\chi^2 = 29.91^*$
Other	44	19	37	(.008)

\* 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 transportation			Significance	Your day-to-day personal safety			Significance
	Dissatisfied	No opinion	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	No opinion	Satisfied	
	Percentages							
<b>Total</b>	6	9	86		7	10	83	
<b>Community Size</b>	(n = 910)				(n = 914)			
Less than 500	4	15	81		1	12	87	
500 - 999	2	10	87		12	14	74	
1,000 - 4,999	7	6	87		5	9	87	
5,000 - 9,999	3	4	94	$\chi^2 = 20.57^*$	5	7	88	$\chi^2 = 17.92^*$
10,000 and up	8	10	82	(.008)	9	9	82	(.022)
<b>Region</b>	(n = 922)				(n = 927)			
Panhandle	5	9	86		6	10	84	
North Central	6	8	86		11	8	82	
South Central	7	11	82		6	9	86	
Northeast	6	6	88	$\chi^2 = 7.27$	9	11	80	$\chi^2 = 7.04$
Southeast	4	8	88	(.508)	5	11	84	(.532)
<b>Individual Attributes:</b>								
<b>Household Income Level</b>	(n = 879)				(n = 885)			
Under \$40,000	15	11	74		15	14	71	
\$40,000 - \$74,999	4	10	87		3	13	84	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	2	9	89	$\chi^2 = 38.33^*$	8	11	81	$\chi^2 = 45.86^*$
\$100,000 and over	5	6	90	(.000)	6	4	90	(.000)
<b>Age</b>	(n = 923)				(n = 930)			
19 - 29	5	0	95		15	5	80	
30 - 39	10	7	82		5	7	87	
40 - 49	4	10	86		4	9	88	
50 - 64	7	11	82	$\chi^2 = 26.01^*$	8	14	78	$\chi^2 = 29.32^*$
65 and older	5	11	85	(.001)	6	11	83	(.000)
<b>Gender</b>	(n = 914)				(n = 919)			
Male	5	11	84	$\chi^2 = 4.85$	8	12	81	$\chi^2 = 2.77$
Female	6	7	87	(.088)	7	9	84	(.250)
<b>Education</b>	(n = 921)				(n = 927)			
High school diploma or less	9	19	72		9	19	72	
Some college	6	10	84	$\chi^2 = 33.79^*$	12	10	79	$\chi^2 = 39.65^*$
Bachelors or grad degree	5	5	91	(.000)	4	7	89	(.000)
<b>Marital Status</b>	(n = 912)				(n = 916)			
Married	4	7	89		3	8	89	
Never married	10	10	80		20	16	65	
Divorced/separated	7	13	80	$\chi^2 = 16.87^*$	15	12	73	$\chi^2 = 67.99^*$
Widowed	8	14	78	(.010)	5	15	81	(.000)
<b>Occupation</b>	(n = 646)				(n = 650)			
Mgt, prof or education	4	7	90		2	8	90	
Sales or office support	13	6	81		26	10	64	
Constrn, inst or maint	5	18	78		2	5	93	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	6	13	81		14	16	69	
Agriculture	1	9	90		9	9	82	
Food serv/pers. care	0	14	86		0	14	86	
Hlthcare supp/safety	7	3	90	$\chi^2 = 29.39^*$	6	8	87	$\chi^2 = 63.50^*$
Other	0	12	89	(.009)	0	8	92	(.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.

Appendix Table 7 continued.

	<i>Your marriage</i>			<i>Significance</i>	<i>Your family</i>			<i>Significance</i>
	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>		<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	
	<i>Percentages</i>							
<b>Total</b>	5	13	82		6	11	82	
<b>Community Size</b>	(n = 722)				(n = 898)			
Less than 500	2	13	85		5	12	83	
500 - 999	2	16	82		11	8	81	
1,000 - 4,999	5	11	84		8	6	85	
5,000 - 9,999	5	6	89	$\chi^2 = 12.90$	4	12	84	$\chi^2 = 23.22^*$
10,000 and up	7	15	78	(.115)	5	16	80	(.003)
<b>Region</b>	(n = 734)				(n = 913)			
Panhandle	1	11	87		3	6	91	
North Central	5	11	84		5	13	82	
South Central	6	14	80		8	11	82	
Northeast	4	13	83	$\chi^2 = 4.86$	6	14	80	$\chi^2 = 9.77$
Southeast	7	12	82	(.772)	8	9	83	(.282)
<b>Individual Attributes:</b>								
<b>Household Income Level</b>	(n = 700)				(n = 871)			
Under \$40,000	13	32	56		15	19	67	
\$40,000 - \$74,999	7	17	76		6	14	80	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	2	12	87	$\chi^2 = 65.90^*$	1	10	89	$\chi^2 = 49.79^*$
\$100,000 and over	4	6	91	(.000)	5	6	89	(.000)
<b>Age</b>	(n = 736)				(n = 914)			
19 - 29	0	15	85		10	10	80	
30 - 39	3	10	87		1	3	96	
40 - 49	5	9	86		7	12	81	
50 - 64	9	15	76	$\chi^2 = 18.61^*$	7	14	79	$\chi^2 = 27.64^*$
65 and older	5	17	79	(.017)	6	15	79	(.000)
<b>Gender</b>	(n = 730)				(n = 905)			
Male	4	16	80	$\chi^2 = 7.64^*$	6	11	83	$\chi^2 = 0.12$
Female	6	10	84	(.022)	7	11	82	(.940)
<b>Education</b>	(n = 733)				(n = 912)			
High school diploma or less	9	23	68		6	27	67	
Some college	6	20	74	$\chi^2 = 48.60^*$	8	11	81	$\chi^2 = 44.56^*$
Bachelors or grad degree	3	6	91	(.000)	5	7	88	(.000)
<b>Marital Status</b>	(n = 630)				(n = 903)			
Married	4	4	92		5	6	89	
Never married	NA	NA	NA		11	28	61	
Divorced/separated	NA	NA	NA		8	20	72	$\chi^2 = 72.08^*$
Widowed	NA	NA	NA		9	19	72	(.000)
<b>Occupation</b>	(n = 539)				(n = 647)			
Mgt, prof or education	6	4	90		5	5	90	
Sales or office support	2	21	77		16	9	76	
Constm, inst or maint	0	29	71		2	10	88	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	8	28	65		10	22	68	
Agriculture	1	10	89		13	8	79	
Food serv/pers. care	0	38	62		0	14	86	
Hlthcare supp/safety	3	12	84	$\chi^2 = 54.81^*$	2	9	89	$\chi^2 = 64.67^*$
Other	7	7	86	(.000)	0	37	63	(.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.

Appendix Table 7 continued.

	<i>Greenery and open space</i>			<i>Significance</i>
	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	
	<i>Percentages</i>			
<b>Total</b>	7	13	80	
<b>Community Size</b>	(n = 904)			
Less than 500	1	12	87	
500 - 999	5	10	85	
1,000 - 4,999	3	8	90	
5,000 - 9,999	12	12	76	$\chi^2 = 42.44^*$
10,000 and up	11	18	71	(.000)
<b>Region</b>	(n = 918)			
Panhandle	4	12	84	
North Central	6	11	84	
South Central	8	13	79	
Northeast	10	14	76	$\chi^2 = 10.38$
Southeast	4	14	83	(.239)
<b>Individual Attributes:</b>				
<b>Household Income Level</b>	(n = 875)			
Under \$40,000	13	15	72	
\$40,000 - \$74,999	10	11	79	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	1	18	81	$\chi^2 = 25.92^*$
\$100,000 and over	6	10	84	(.000)
<b>Age</b>	(n = 920)			
19 - 29	5	5	90	
30 - 39	12	12	77	
40 - 49	8	16	76	
50 - 64	7	13	80	$\chi^2 = 20.82^*$
65 and older	5	16	79	(.008)
<b>Gender</b>	(n = 911)			
Male	6	15	78	$\chi^2 = 3.72$
Female	7	11	82	(.156)
<b>Education</b>	(n = 917)			
High school diploma or less	16	18	66	
Some college	9	15	76	$\chi^2 = 37.56^*$
Bachelors or grad degree	4	10	87	(.000)
<b>Marital Status</b>	(n = 909)			
Married	5	10	85	
Never married	19	16	65	
Divorced/separated	9	24	67	$\chi^2 = 47.62^*$
Widowed	5	15	80	(.000)
<b>Occupation</b>	(n = 645)			
Mgt, prof or education	4	8	88	
Sales or office support	3	9	88	
Constrn, inst or maint	10	27	63	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	6	21	73	
Agriculture	4	8	88	
Food serv/pers. care	5	14	82	
Hlthcare supp/safety	11	5	85	$\chi^2 = 62.03^*$
Other	4	44	52	(.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



Appendix Table 8. Feelings of Loneliness by Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes.

	How often do you experience the following items?							
	Feel that you lack companionship				Feel left out			
	Hardly ever or never	Some of the time	Often	Significance	Hardly ever or never	Some of the time	Often	Significance
	Percentages							
<b>Total</b>	55	35	10		51	38	12	
<b>Community Size</b>	(n = 922)				(n = 922)			
Less than 500	57	35	9		60	35	5	
500 - 999	51	39	10		35	56	9	
1,000 - 4,999	51	39	10		49	42	8	
5,000 - 9,999	59	31	10	$\chi^2 = 3.95$	56	36	8	$\chi^2 = 47.92^*$
10,000 and up	56	34	11	(.862)	54	29	17	(.000)
<b>Region</b>	(n = 934)				(n = 936)			
Panhandle	59	34	7		57	34	10	
North Central	61	23	17		47	41	13	
South Central	53	37	10		52	38	10	
Northeast	53	38	9	$\chi^2 = 15.00$	49	36	15	$\chi^2 = 7.87$
Southeast	53	38	9	(.059)	52	40	9	(.446)
<b>Individual Attributes:</b>								
<b>Household Income Level</b>	(n = 889)				(n = 890)			
Under \$40,000	28	56	17		32	46	21	
\$40,000 - \$74,999	58	30	12		55	31	14	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	66	30	5	$\chi^2 = 66.14^*$	62	32	5	$\chi^2 = 48.26^*$
\$100,000 and over	60	31	9	(.000)	52	40	8	(.000)
<b>Age</b>	(n = 939)				(n = 936)			
19 - 29	35	55	10		25	55	20	
30 - 39	55	37	9		56	33	11	
40 - 49	59	31	10		50	39	11	
50 - 64	57	33	10	$\chi^2 = 33.37^*$	57	34	9	$\chi^2 = 52.62^*$
65 and older	60	29	11	(.000)	60	32	8	(.000)
<b>Gender</b>	(n = 927)				(n = 927)			
Male	60	30	10	$\chi^2 = 10.21^*$	55	35	10	$\chi^2 = 3.93$
Female	50	40	10	(.006)	48	40	12	(.140)
<b>Education</b>	(n = 935)				(n = 935)			
High school diploma or less	48	38	15		45	38	17	
Some college	53	39	9	$\chi^2 = 8.66$	50	40	10	$\chi^2 = 6.86$
Bachelors or grad degree	58	32	10	(.070)	54	36	11	(.143)
<b>Marital Status</b>	(n = 924)				(n = 926)			
Married	63	29	7		56	36	8	
Never married	30	56	15		25	48	26	
Divorced/separated	40	44	17	$\chi^2 = 70.62^*$	49	33	18	$\chi^2 = 62.04^*$
Widowed	37	46	17	(.000)	47	47	6	(.000)
<b>Occupation</b>	(n = 649)				(n = 649)			
Mgt, prof or education	61	28	12		56	34	10	
Sales or office support	49	46	6		49	49	3	
Constrn, inst or maint	63	32	5		49	44	7	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	54	32	14		53	29	18	
Agriculture	49	38	13		38	53	9	
Food serv/pers. care	29	67	5		29	67	5	
Hlthcare supp/safety	53	40	7	$\chi^2 = 34.31^*$	50	35	15	$\chi^2 = 62.27^*$
Other	30	63	7	(.002)	15	39	46	(.000)

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

Appendix Table 8 continued.

	<i>How often do you experience the following items?</i>			<i>Significance</i>
	<i>Hardly ever or never</i>	<i>Some of the time</i>	<i>Often</i>	
	<i>Percentages</i>			
<b>Total</b>	56	34	10	
<b>Community Size</b>	(n = 920)			
Less than 500	71	23	6	
500 - 999	45	46	9	
1,000 - 4,999	57	34	9	
5,000 - 9,999	56	39	5	$\chi^2 = 23.81^*$
10,000 and up	58	30	12	(.002)
<b>Region</b>	(n = 934)			
Panhandle	59	34	7	
North Central	53	33	13	
South Central	58	31	11	
Northeast	52	38	10	$\chi^2 = 11.36$
Southeast	63	32	5	(.182)
<b>Individual Attributes:</b>				
<i>Household Income Level</i>	(n = 891)			
Under \$40,000	34	51	15	
\$40,000 - \$74,999	62	24	13	
\$75,000 - \$99,999	64	29	7	$\chi^2 = 52.74^*$
\$100,000 and over	59	34	7	(.000)
<i>Age</i>	(n = 936)			
19 - 29	25	70	5	
30 - 39	58	28	14	
40 - 49	65	25	10	
50 - 64	60	30	11	$\chi^2 = 106.41^*$
65 and older	65	27	8	(.000)
<i>Gender</i>	(n = 926)			
Male	59	31	11	$\chi^2 = 5.16$
Female	54	37	8	(.076)
<i>Education</i>	(n = 934)			
High school diploma or less	50	37	13	
Some college	57	33	10	$\chi^2 = 4.05$
Bachelors or grad degree	58	34	8	(.399)
<i>Marital Status</i>	(n = 925)			
Married	64	29	7	
Never married	26	59	15	
Divorced/separated	51	31	18	$\chi^2 = 71.58^*$
Widowed	52	42	6	(.000)
<i>Occupation</i>	(n = 648)			
Mgt, prof or education	62	29	10	
Sales or office support	39	59	3	
Constrn, inst or maint	59	34	7	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	56	28	16	
Agriculture	45	43	11	
Food serv/pers. care	41	55	5	
Hlthcare supp/safety	66	26	8	$\chi^2 = 51.21^*$
Other	19	65	15	(.000)

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



# RURAL POLL

**Nebraska Rural Poll  
Research Report 24-1  
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