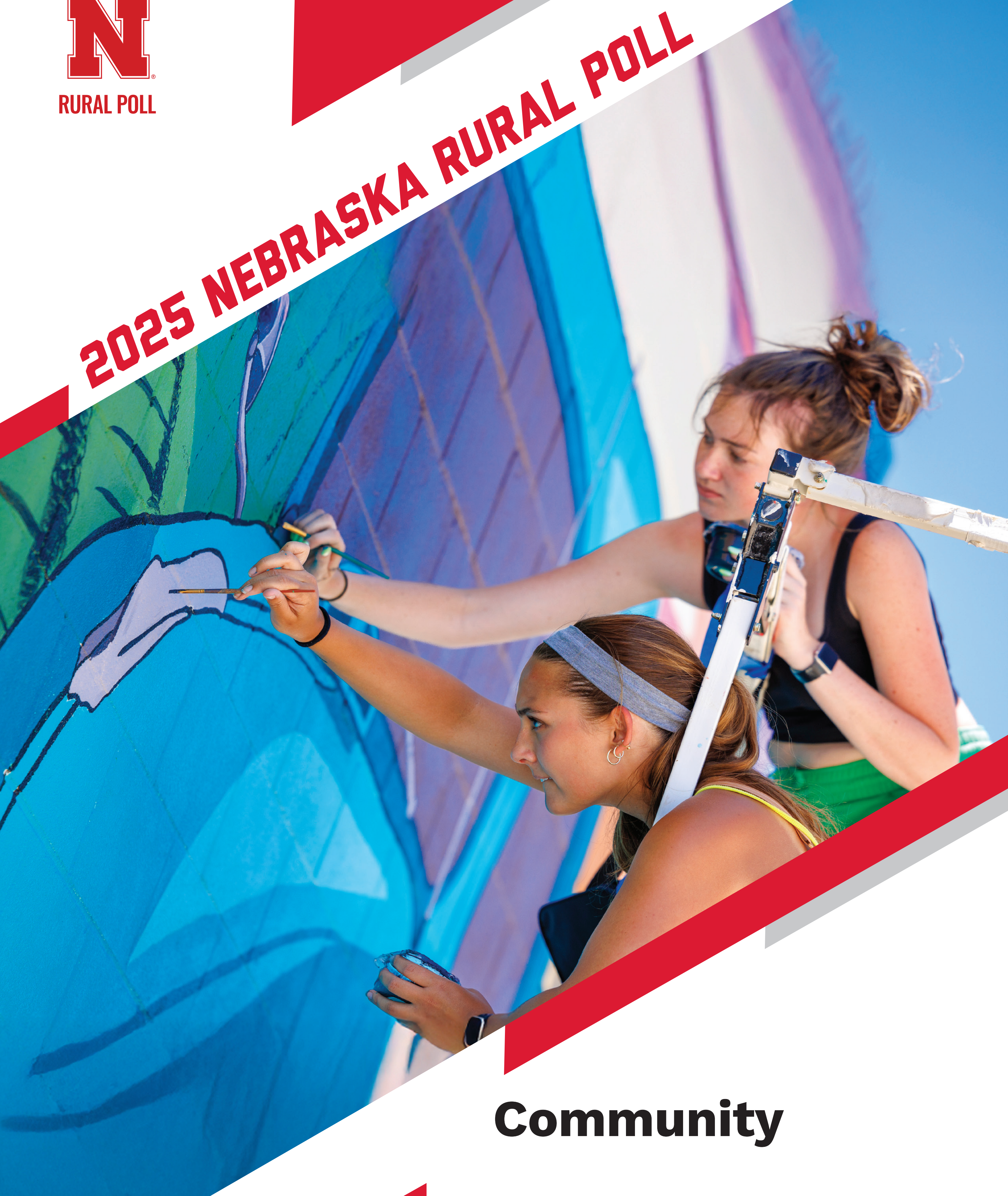
RURAL POLL

2025 NEBRASKA RURAL POLL



Community

The Rural Poll now offers a way for you to find the exact data you're looking for, for your research, policy decisions, or business proposals.
To purchase questions for the 2026 Poll, contact Survey Manager Becky Vogt at rvogt2@unl.edu.

Nebraska Rural Poll Research Report 25-6, January 2026.

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All of the research reports detailing Nebraska Rural Poll results are located on its webpage at:
http://ruralpoll.unl.edu

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The demographic profile of **Rural Poll Resondents** can be found at *allthingsnebraska.unl.edu*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The past year continued to be challenging for rural Nebraskans. Inflation continues to impact household budgets. Combined with lower agricultural commodity prices, these economic conditions can impact businesses in rural communities. Given these challenges, how do rural Nebraskans feel about their community? Are they satisfied with the services provided by their community? Have these views changed over the past 29 years? This paper provides a detailed analysis of these questions.

This report details 943 responses to the 2025 Nebraska Rural Poll, the 30th annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about their community. Trends for some of the questions are examined by comparing data from the 28 previous polls to this year's results. In addition, comparisons are made among different respondent subgroups, that is, comparisons by age, occupation, region, etc. Based on these analyses, some key findings emerged:

By many different measures, rural Nebraskans are positive about their community.

- More rural Nebraskans say their community has changed for the better during the past year than those who say it has changed for the worse. Just over one-third (34%) of rural Nebraskans say their community has changed for the better, while one-quarter (25%) say it has changed for the worse.
- Most rural Nebraskans rate their community favorably on its social dimensions. Overall, respondents rate their communities as friendly (78%), trusting (62%) and supportive (67%).
- Most rural Nebraskans say it would be difficult to leave their community. Almost six in ten rural Nebraskans (58%) say it would be difficult to leave their community. Just over one-quarter (26%) indicate it would be easy for their household to leave their community.
- Most rural Nebraskans have a positive attachment to their community. Most rural Nebraskans agree that they have a good bond with others in their community (63%), they belong in their community (60%), they can get what they need in their community (60%), they feel like a member of their community (59%), they feel connected to their community (58%), the community helps them fulfill their needs (53%), and people in the community are good at influencing each other (51%)
- Most rural Nebraskans disagree that their community is powerless to control its future. Just over six in ten rural Nebraskans (61%) strongly disagree or disagree that their community is powerless to control its own future.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rural Nebraskans are more positive about both the current change in their communities this year as well as its future. This year, more believe their community has changed for the better than has changed for the worse and the gap between the two grew slightly. When asked about what they expect ten years from now, the proportion believing their community will be a worse place to live declined from 27 percent last year (the highest proportion across all 15 years, also occurring in 2022) to 22 percent this year.

- Persons living in the South Central region are more likely than persons living in other regions of the state to say their community has changed for the better during the past year. Almost one-half of persons living in in the South Central region (45%) say their community changed for the better during the past year, compared to just over one in ten persons living in the Panhandle (12%). Furthermore, almost four in ten Panhandle residents (39%) say their community has changed for the worse during the past year.
- Persons living in the South Central region are more likely than persons living in other regions of the state to say their community will be a better place to live ten years from now. Almost one-third of the residents of this region (32%) believe their community will be a better place to live ten years from now, compared to 14 percent of residents of the Panhandle.

Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to get what they need in their community. However, persons living in or near smaller communities (populations between 500 and 999) are most likely to have an attachment to their community.

Except for some services that are largely unavailable in rural communities, rural Nebraskans are generally satisfied with basic community services and amenities. In addition, satisfaction with many services increased this year compared to last year. The services or amenities respondents are most satisfied with include fire protection (89%), library services (76%), parks and recreation (76%), cellular phone service (75%), Internet service (70%), law enforcement (69%), religious organizations (66%), sewage/waste disposal (65%), and medical care services (64%). At least four in ten respondents are either very dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with cost of housing (62%), retail shopping (50%), entertainment (47%), streets and roads (47%), restaurants (44%), quality of housing (41%), and local government (41%).

- Residents of the Panhandle are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to be dissatisfied with the mental health services in their community. Just under one-half (45%) of residents of the Panhandle are dissatisfied with their mental health services, compared to just over one-quarter of the residents of the Northeast region (26%).

REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The past year continued to be challenging for rural Nebraskans. Inflation continues to impact household budgets. Combined with lower agricultural commodity prices, these economic conditions can impact businesses in rural communities. Given these challenges, how do rural Nebraskans feel about their community? Are they satisfied with the services provided by their community? Have these views changed over the past 30 years? This paper provides a detailed analysis of these questions.

This report details 943 responses to the 2025 Nebraska Rural Poll, the 30th annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about their community.

Methodology and Respondent Profile

This study is based on 943[1] responses from Nebraskans living in 86 counties in the state. A self-administered questionnaire was mailed in June and July to 6,745 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, energy resources, agricultural security, trust in institutions, algorithms, and trade policy. This paper reports only results from the community section.

A 14% 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 2019 - 2023 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 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

1 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.

(using U.S. Census figures from 2020).

The average age of respondents is approximately 50 years. Sixty-seven percent are married (Appendix Table 1) and 64 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 26 years. Fifty percent are living in or near towns or villages with populations less than 5,000. Ninety-seven percent have attained at least a high school diploma.

Sixteen percent of the respondents report their 2024 approximate household income from all sources, before taxes, as below $40,000. Seventy percent report incomes over $60,000. Seventy-eight percent were employed in 2024 on a full-time, part-time, or seasonal basis. Seventeen percent are retired. Twenty-eight percent of those employed reported working in a management, professional, or education occupation. Ten percent indicated they were employed in agriculture.

TRENDS IN COMMUNITY RATINGS (1996-2025)

Comparisons between the community data collected this year and the 29 previous studies are made. These were independent samples (the same people were not surveyed each year).

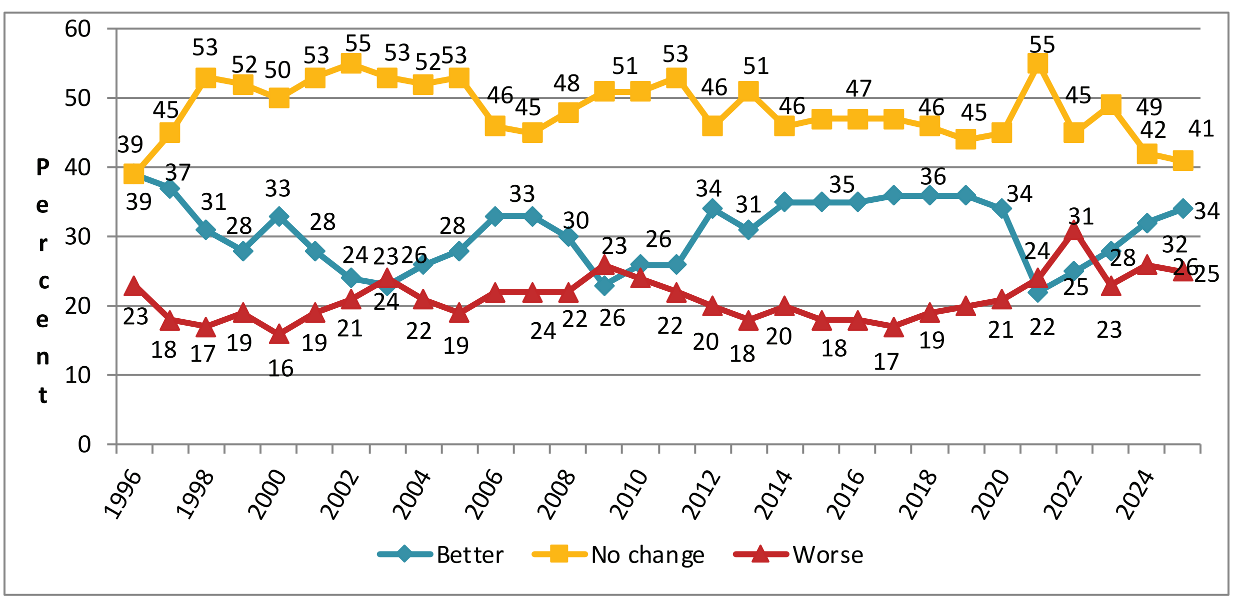
Community Change – 30-Year Trend

To examine respondents' perceptions of howtheir community has changed, they were asked the question, "Communities across the nation are undergoing change. When you think about this past year, would you say...My community has changed for the..." Answer categories were better, no change, or worse.

One difference in the wording of this question has occurred over the past 30 years. Starting in 1998, the phrase "this past year" was added to the question; no time frame was given to the respondents in the first two studies. Also, in 2007 the middle response "same" was replaced with "no change."

Rural Nebraskans' views about the change in their community have generally been positive. The proportion believing their community has changed for the better has typically been greater than the proportion believing it has changed for the worse, especially between 2012 and 2020 when the gap between the two widened (Figure 1). However, in both 2021 and 2022, the proportion believing their community had changed for the worse was more than the proportion believing it had changed for the better (similar to what occurred in 2003 and 2009). This trend reverted to its typical pattern during the last three years.

Figure 1. Community Change 1996 - 2025



Currently, more believe their community has changed for the better than has changed for the worse.

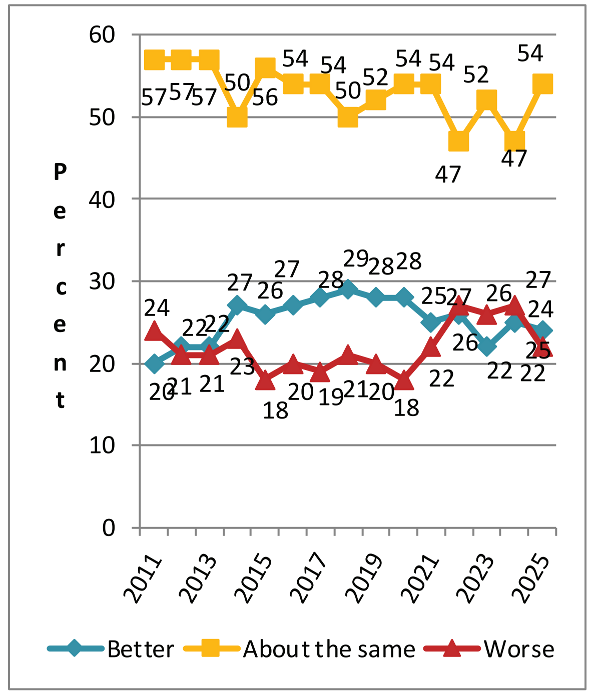
The proportion saying their community has changed for the better has averaged approximately 31 percent. Following a seven- year period of general decline, the proportion saying their community has changed for the better increased from 23 percent in 2003 to 33 percent in 2007. It then declined to 23 percent in 2009. However, the proportion viewing positive change in their community then generally increased to 34 percent in 2012 and stayed fairly stable before sharply declining to 25 percent in 2022. It has since steadily increased to 34 percent this year. The proportion of individuals saying their community has stayed the same first increased from 1996 to 1998. It then remained fairly steady during the following eight years but declined in both 2006 and 2007. Then it steadily increased to 53 percent in 2011. However, the proportion believing their community has stayed the same then generally declined to 45 percent in 2020. In 2021, it increased sharply to 55 percent before generally declining to 41 percent this year.

The proportion saying their community has changed for the worse had remained steady across all 30 years, averaging 21 percent. It increased from 22 percent in 2008 to 26 percent in 2009. Since then, it generally decreased to 17 percent in 2017 before steadily increasing to 31 percent in 2022 (the highest proportion across all 30 years of the study). It then generally declined to 25 percent this year.

Starting in 2011, respondents were also asked to predict the expected change in their community ten years from now. The exact question wording was, "Based on what you see of the situation today, do you think that, ten years from now, your community will be a worse place to live, a better place or about the same?"

The proportion believing their community will be a better place to live ten years from now had generally increased, from 20 percent in 2011 to 28 percent in 2020 (Figure 2). However, it generally declined to 22 percent in 2023 before increasing to 24 percent this year. The proportion believing their community will be a worse place to live generally declined from 24 percent in 2011 to 18 percent in 2020, before increasing to 27 percent last year (the highest proportion across all 15 years, also occurring in 2022). However, it declined to 22 percent this year. The proportion saying the community will remain about the same increased from last year (47% to 54%).

Figure 2. Expected Community Change Ten Years from Now: 2011 - 2025



Community Social Dimensions and Powerlessness – 30-Year Trend

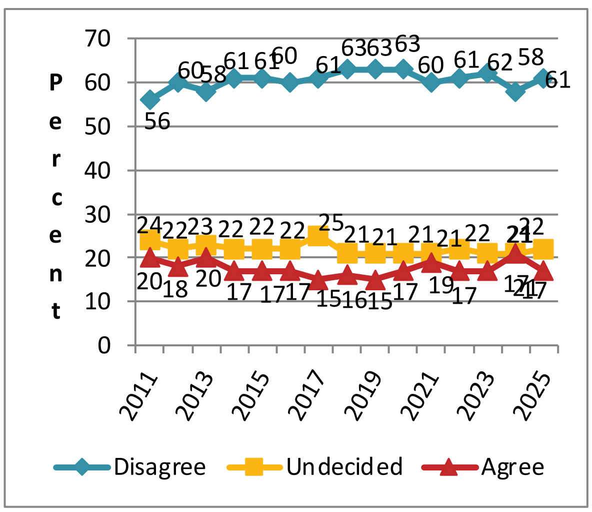
Respondents were also asked each year if they would describe their communities as friendly or unfriendly, trusting or distrusting, and supportive or hostile. For each of these three dimensions, respondents were asked to rate their community using a seven-point scale between each pair of contrasting views. The proportion of respondents who view their community as friendly has remained fairly steady over the 30-year period, ranging from 69 to 79 percent. The proportion of respondents who view their community as trusting has also remained fairly steady. Last year that proportion was 55 percent, the lowest across all years of the study, but increased to 62 percent this year.

A similar pattern emerged when examining the proportion of respondents who rated their community as supportive. The proportions rating their community as supportive have ranged from 60 percent to 71 percent.

Starting in 2001, respondents were also asked a question to determine if they view their community as powerless. They were asked, “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? My community is powerless to control its own future.” They were given a five-point scale that ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

In general, rural Nebraskans’ perceptions of the powerlessness of their community has remained fairly stable (Figure 3). The proportion disagreeing with the statement generally increased from 56 percent in 2011 to 61 percent this year.

Figure 3. Feelings of Community Powerlessness: 2011 - 2025



Community Services and Amenities

Respondents were also asked how satisfied they
are with various community services and amenities each year. They were asked about this in all 30 studies; however, in 1996 they were also asked about the availability of these services. Comparisons will only be made between the last 20 studies. The respondents were asked how satisfied they were with a list of 27 services and amenities, taking into consideration availability, cost, and quality.

Table 1 shows the proportions very or somewhat satisfied with the service each year. The rank ordering of these items has remained relatively stable over the 20 years. However, the proportion of rural Nebraskans satisfied with many social services has generally declined across all 20 years. As an example, the proportion of rural Nebraskans satisfied with nursing home care has dropped from 53 percent in 2006 to 37 percent this year. Similar declines occur with medical care services, senior centers, and child day care services. In addition, satisfaction with retail shopping has also generally declined over the past 20 years. Satisfaction with retail shopping declined from 45 percent in 2006 to 38 percent this year.

On the other hand, satisfaction with both Internet service and cellular phone service has generally increased over time. The proportion satisfied with cellular phone services has generally increased from 49 percent in 2006 (the first year it was included in the survey) to 75 percent this year.

Many services saw increases in satisfaction from last year: fire protection (from 84 to 89 percent), parks and recreation (from 71 to 76 percent), cellular phone services (from 65 to 75 percent), Internet services (from 61 to 70 percent), law enforcement (from 62 to 69 percent), medical care services (from 58 to 64 percent), access to higher education (from 56 to 64 percent), restaurants (from 38 to 46 percent), senior centers (from 38 to 44 percent), quality of housing (from 32 to 40 percent), retail shopping (from 31 to 38 percent), entertainment (from 26 to 34 percent), cost of housing (from 21 to 27 percent), child day care services (from 20 to 25 percent) and public transportation services (from 18 to 25 percent).

Table 1. Proportion of Respondents Very or Somewhat Satisfied with Each Service, 2006 - 2025

Service/Amenity	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Fire protection	86	85	86	87	85	86	85	86	86	87	87	85	89	89	87	86	84	85	84	89
Parks/recreation	75	74	75	74	74	75	76	76	71	76	78	75	74	79	77	73	70	74	71	76
Library services	73	74	75	74	73	73	72	73	72	73	71	73	74	73	72	68	68	70	73	76
Cell phone services	49	54	58	61	60	64	63	65	60	64	63	61	59	66	64	64	59	61	65	75
Internet service	50	51	57	58	56	60	59	59	56	58	56	54	53	57	54	53	54	59	61	70
Law enforcement	64	63	62	64	65	63	65	64	62	64	69	67	66	69	68	67	65	61	62	69
Religious org.	72	72	73	71	71	70	72	71	70	72	69	68	67	69	70	65	61	58	62	66
Sewage/waste disposal*	66	66	67	66	65	65	64	67	64	65	64	66	67	65	63	61	60	63	61	65
Sewage disposal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Water disposal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Solid waste disp.	64	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Medical care svcs	71	63	66	67	67	67	68	66	62	62	64	63	59	64	66	62	61	57	58	64
Access to higher ed	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	63	62	59	58	63	63	61	57	57	56	64
Education (K-12)	68	68	70	68	68	68	68	68	68	69	68	70	69	70	70	63	62	64	60	62
Streets and roads*	X	55	49	51	47	48	49	53	44	47	43	44	45	42	41	37	40	39	45	47
Streets	60	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Highway/bridges	69	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Civic/nonprofit organizations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	45	47	48	49	47	46	41	44	44	46
Restaurants	54	50	45	47	47	48	48	46	40	46	43	43	45	43	52	43	40	40	38	46
Senior centers	55	48	47	47	47	48	47	48	47	49	47	47	45	43	45	40	35	37	38	44
Quality of housing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	44	45	45	44	47	46	48	43	36	37	32	40
Comm recycling	X	50	48	52	54	54	54	58	53	55	52	50	51	46	44	39	38	40	42	39
Head start progms	37	29	26	28	29	27	27	27	39	39	39	40	37	44	42	34	37	35	35	38
Retail shopping	45	41	39	40	41	37	39	38	33	38	34	32	35	28	33	29	31	29	31	38
Nursing home care	53	46	47	45	46	46	45	43	47	47	43	44	38	40	42	36	30	34	34	37
Local government*	41	40	38	41	40	41	42	40	37	40	37	42	39	43	42	40	35	36	32	35
County govt.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
City/village govt.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Entertainment	34	30	26	29	32	30	30	31	26	29	26	28	29	29	31	23	25	24	26	34
Mental health svcs	27	23	23	24	23	24	25	23	21	23	22	21	19	23	25	24	24	24	25	28
Arts/cultural activities	X	26	25	24	27	27	27	26	24	26	22	24	26	27	24	20	23	25	25	28
Cost of housing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	50	45	45	45	46	43	43	38	33	36	21	27
Housing	61	59	59	61	59	59	57	52	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Child day care svcs	X	X	X	32	34	35	35	32	34	34	33	31	30	34	34	27	23	20	20	25
Day care services	42	31	28	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pub transp svcs*	X	17	17	19	18	19	19	20	17	19	18	17	21	20	21	17	20	20	18	25
Airline service	15	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Taxi service	11	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rail service	9	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bus service	7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

X = Not asked that particular year; * New items added in 2007 that combine previous items (indented below each).

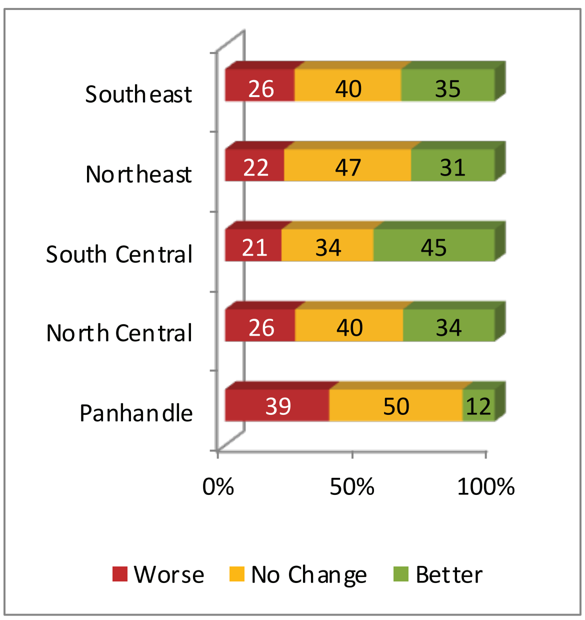
THE COMMUNITY AND ITS ATTRIBUTES IN 2025

In this section, the 2025 data on respondents' evaluations of their communities and its attributes are examined in terms of any significant differences that may exist depending upon the size of the respondent's community, the region in which they live, or various individual attributes such as household income or age.

Community Change – 2025 Data

The perceptions of the change occurring in their community by various demographic subgroups are examined (Appendix Table 2). Persons living in the South Central region are more likely than persons living in other regions of the state to say their community has changed for the better during the past year (see Appendix Figure 1 for the counties included in each region). Almost one-half of persons living in in the South Central region (45%) say their community changed for the better during the past year, compared to just over one in ten persons living in the Panhandle (12%) (Figure 4). Furthermore, almost four in ten Panhandle residents (39%) say their community has changed for the worse during the past year.

Figure 4. Perceptions of Community Change by Region



The demographic groups most likely to say their community has changed for the better during the past year include: persons having at least a four-year college degree, persons with healthcare support or public safety occupations, and persons with management, professional or education occupations.

In addition, respondents were asked to predict the expected change in their community ten years from now. Respondents' perceptions are analyzed by the size of their community, the region where they live, and some individual attributes (Appendix Table 3).

Persons living in the South Central region are more likely than persons living in other regions of the state to say their community will be a better place to live ten years from now. Almost one-third of the residents of this region (32%) believe their community will be a better place to live ten years from now, compared to 14 percent of residents of the Panhandle.

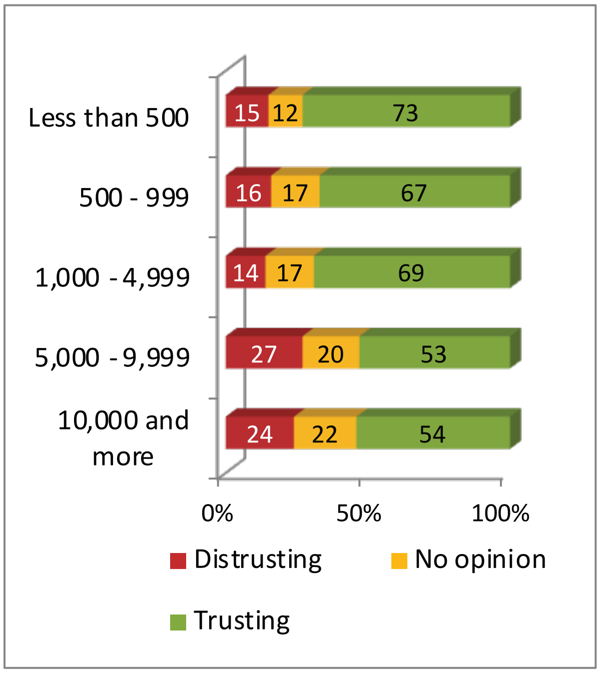
Persons with occupations in agriculture are more likely than persons with different occupations to say their community will be a better place to live ten years from now. Almost four in ten persons with occupations in agriculture (38%) say their community will be a better place ten years from now, compared to just over one in ten persons with sales or office support occupations (13%).

Community Social Attributes and Powerlessness – 2025 Data

In addition to asking respondents about their perceptions of the change occurring in their community, they were also asked to rate its social dimensions. They were asked if they would describe their communities as friendly or unfriendly, trusting or distrusting, and supportive or hostile. Overall, respondents rate their communities as friendly (78%), trusting (62%), and supportive (67%).

Respondents' ratings of their community on these dimensions differ by some of the characteristics examined (Appendix Table 4). Persons living in or near smaller communities are more likely than persons living in or near larger communities to rate their community as both trusting and supportive. Approximately three-quarters of persons living in or near communities with populations less than 500 rate their community as trusting, compared to just over one-half of persons living in or near communities with populations of 5,000 or more (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Ratings of the Trust in the Community by Community Size



Generally, persons with the highest household incomes are more likely than persons with lower household incomes to rate their communities as supportive.

When comparing responses by marital status, both married persons and widowed persons are the groups most likely to rate their community as friendly. Married persons are the group most likely to rate their community as supportive.

Persons with higher education levels are more likely than persons with less education to rate their communities as trusting and supportive.

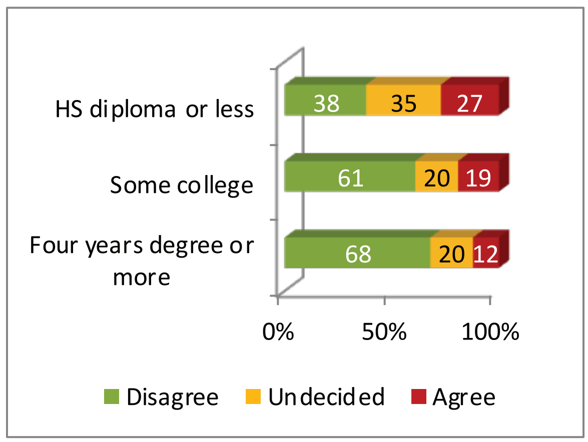
Persons with sales or office support occupations are the occupation group most likely to rate their community as supportive. Newcomers to a community (those who have lived there for five years or less) are more likely than long-term residents to rate their community as supportive.

Respondents were next asked if they view their community as powerless. They were asked, “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? My community is powerless to control its own future.” They were given a five-point scale that ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The feelings of community powerlessness are examined by community size, region and individual attributes (Appendix Table 5). Many differences emerge.

Persons with higher education levels are more likely than persons with less education to disagree that their community is powerless to control its own future. Over two-thirds of persons having at least a four-year degree (68%) disagree with that statement, compared to just under four in ten persons with a high school diploma or less education (Figure 6). Almost three in ten persons without any college education (27%) agree that their community is powerless to control its future.

Figure 6. Feelings of Community Powerlessness by Education Level



Other groups most likely to disagree that their community is powerless to control its future include: persons with higher household incomes; persons aged 40 to 49; persons with management, professional, or education occupations; persons with occupations in agriculture; and newcomers to the community.

Satisfaction with Community Services and Amenities – 2025 Data

Next, rural Nebraskans were asked to rate how satisfied they are with 27 different services and amenities, taking into consideration cost, availability, and quality. Residents report high levels of satisfaction with some services, but other services and amenities have higher levels of dissatisfaction. Nine services listed have a higher proportion of dissatisfied responses than satisfied responses and those services are largely unavailable in rural communities.

The services or amenities respondents are most satisfied with (based on the combined percentage of "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" responses) include fire protection (89%), library services (76%), parks and recreation (76%), cellular phone service (75%), Internet service (70%), law enforcement (69%), religious organizations (66%), sewage/waste disposal (65%), and medical care services (64%) (Appendix Table 6). At least four in ten respondents are either very dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with cost of housing (62%), retail shopping (50%), entertainment (47%), streets and roads (47%), restaurants (44%), quality of housing (41%), and local government (41%).

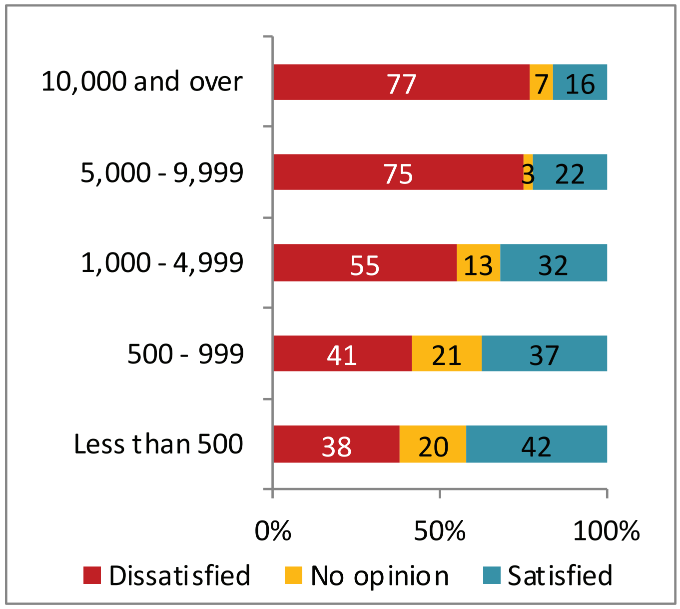
The ten services and amenities with the greatest dissatisfaction ratings were analyzed by community size, region, and various individual attributes (Appendix Table 7). Many differences emerge.

Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to express dissatisfaction with the cost of housing in their community. At least three-quarters of persons living in or near communities with populations of 5,000 or more are dissatisfied with the cost of housing in their community, compared to just under four in ten persons living in or near communities with populations less than 500 (38%) (Figure 7).

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to be dissatisfied with the cost of housing in their community. Approximately seven in ten persons aged 19 to 39 are dissatisfied with the cost of housing in their community, compared to just under one-half of persons aged 65 and older (46%).

Persons not having a four-year college degree are more likely than persons with at least a four-year degree to be dissatisfied with their community's

Figure 7. Satisfaction with Cost of Housing by Community Size



cost of housing. When comparing responses by region, residents of the Southeast region are the group least likely to express dissatisfaction with the cost of housing in their community. Just over four in ten Southeast region residents (42%) are dissatisfied with the cost of housing in their community compared to at least six in ten residents of the other four regions.

Residents of the Southeast region are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to express dissatisfaction with the retail shopping in their community. Almost six in ten Southeast region residents (56%) are dissatisfied with the retail shopping, compared to just over four in ten residents of the North Central region (41%).

Persons living in or near communities with populations between 5,000 and 9,999 are the community size group most likely to express dissatisfaction with the retail shopping in their community.

Persons living in or near larger communities and persons under the age of 40 are the groups most likely to be dissatisfied with the entertainment in their community. Persons with occupations in agriculture are the occupation group least likely to express dissatisfaction with their community's entertainment.

Residents of the Panhandle region are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to be dissatisfied with their streets and roads. Just over six in ten residents of the Panhandle (61%) express dissatisfaction with their streets and roads, compared to just under four in ten residents of the South Central Region (38%).

Other groups most likely to express dissatisfaction with their streets and roads include persons aged 19 to 29, persons with the lowest education levels, and persons with food service or personal care occupations.

Residents of the North Central region are less likely than residents of other regions of the state to be dissatisfied with the restaurants in their community. Just over one-quarter (26%) of North Central region residents are dissatisfied with restaurants, compared to just over one-half of residents of the Southeast region (51%).

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to be dissatisfied with the quality of housing in their community. At least one-half of persons aged 19 to 39 are dissatisfied with the quality of housing, compared to just under three in ten persons aged 65 and older.

The other groups most likely to be dissatisfied with the quality of housing in their community include persons living in or near the largest communities and person with some college education (but less than a four-year degree).

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to be dissatisfied with their local government. Almost six in ten persons aged 19 to 29 (57%) are dissatisfied with their local government, compared to just under three in ten persons aged 65 and older (29%).

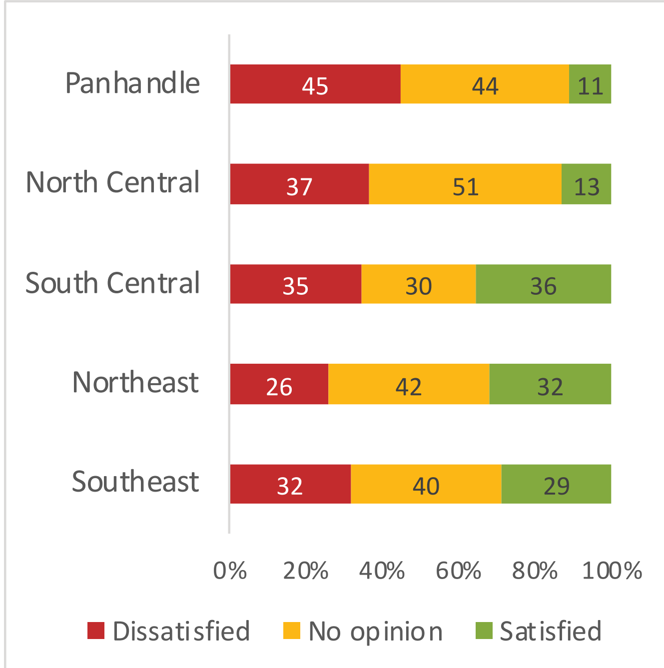
The other groups most likely to be dissatisfied with their local government include persons not having a four-year college degree and persons with production, transportation, or warehousing occupations.

Persons living in or near communities with populations between 500 and 999, the youngest persons, persons with at least some college education, and persons with healthcare support or public safety occupations are the groups most likely to express dissatisfaction with the arts/cultural activities in their community.

Persons with higher household incomes, the youngest persons, and persons with at least some college education are the groups most likely to express dissatisfaction with their community recycling.

Residents of the Panhandle are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to be dissatisfied with the mental health services in their community. Just under one-half (45%) of residents of the Panhandle are dissatisfied with their mental health services, compared to just over one-quarter of the residents of the Northeast region (26%) (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Dissatisfaction with Mental Health Services by Region



Younger persons are more likely than older persons to express dissatisfaction with the mental health services in their community. Just over four in ten persons between the ages of 19 and 29 (43%) are dissatisfied with the mental health services, compared to just over two in ten persons aged 65 and older (21%).

Other groups most likely to be dissatisfied with their community's mental health services include persons living in or near communities with populations between 5,000 and 9,999 and persons with production, transportation, or warehousing occupations.

Table 1. Opinions about Community

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
I can get what I need in this community.	6%	20%	15%	50%	10%
This community helps me fulfill my needs.	5	17	25	45	8
I feel like a member of this community.	4	14	23	46	13
I belong in this community.	4	12	25	47	13
I have a say about what goes on in my community.	12	27	33	24	5
People in this community are good at influencing each other.	3	13	34	42	9
I feel connected to this community.	6	14	23	48	10
I have a good bond with others in this community.	4	10	23	50	13

Opinions about the Community

Next, respondents were asked the extent to which they agree or disagree with various statements about their community. Most rural Nebraskans have a positive attachment to their community. Most rural Nebraskans agree that they have a good bond with others in their community (63%), they belong in their community (60%), they can get what they need in their community (60%), they feel like a member of their community (59%), they feel connected to their community (58%), the community helps them fulfill their needs (53%), and people in the community are good at influencing each other (51%) (Table 2). Feelings are mixed on whether they believe they have a say about what goes on in their community. Just under four in ten disagree with that statement, while just under three in ten agree.

Respondents' level of attachment to their community is examined by community size, region and various individual attributes (Appendix Table 8). Many differences emerge.

Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to agree that they can get what they need in their community. Almost two-thirds of persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more (65%) agree that they can get what they need in their community, compared to just under one-half of persons living in or near communities with populations under 500 (47%).

However, persons living in or near smaller communities are more likely than persons living in or near larger communities to have an attachment to their community. Persons living in or near communities with populations between 500 and 999 are more likely to agree that the community helps them fulfill their needs, that they feel like a member of their community, that they belong to this community, that they feel connected to the community, and they have a good bond with others in the community. Eight in ten persons living in or near communities with populations between 500 and 999 (80%) agree that they feel connected to their community, compared to approximately one-half of persons living in or near communities with populations of 5,000 or more.

Persons living in or near mid-sized communities (populations between 1,000 and 4,999) are the group most likely to agree that they have a say about what goes on in their community.

Residents of both the South Central and Northeast regions are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to agree that their community helps them fulfill their needs. Residents of the

Northeast region are the regional group most likely to agree that they have a good bond with others in their community.

Persons with higher household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to agree with many of the statements listed. Just under seven in ten persons with the highest household incomes (69%) agree that they can get what they need in their community, compared to just over one-half of persons with household incomes under $75,000 (approximately 55%).

Persons under the age of 50 are more likely than older persons to agree that they can get what they need in their community. Approximately two-thirds of persons under the age of 50 agree with this statement, compared to just over one-half of persons aged 65 and older. Persons aged 30 to 49 are the age group most likely to say that the community helps them fulfill their needs

Persons over the age of 30 are more likely than the youngest persons to agree that they feel like a member of this community, that they belong in the community, that they feel connected to the community, and they have a good bond with others in the community. As an example, approximately two-thirds of persons aged 30 and over agree that they have a good bond with others in the community, compared to just under one-half of persons aged 19 to 29.

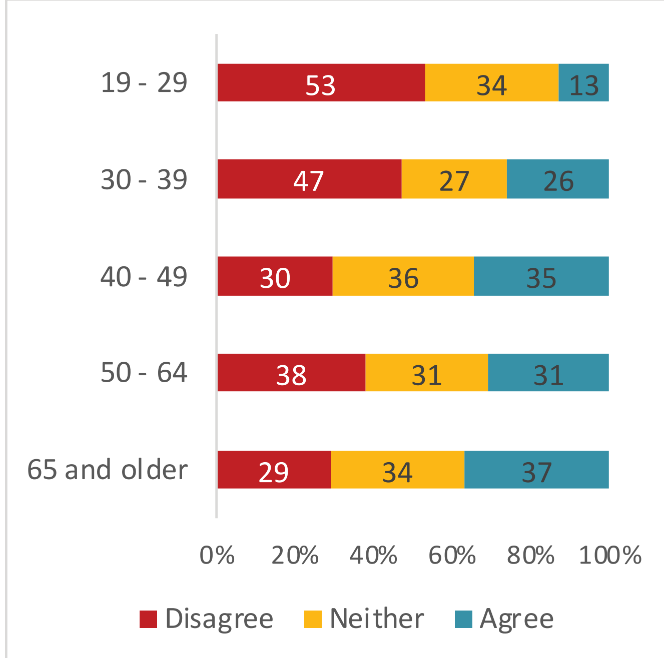
Persons over the age of 40 are more likely than younger persons to agree that they have a say about what goes on in their community. At least three in ten persons aged 40 and older agree with that statement, compared to just over one in ten persons aged 19 to 29 (13%). In fact, just over one-half (53%) of the youngest persons disagree with that statement (Figure 9).

Males are more likely than females to agree that they feel like a member of the community. Females are more likely to agree that people in the community are good at influencing each other.

Persons with higher education levels are more likely than persons with less education to agree that they can get what they need in the community, the community helps them fulfill their needs, and they have a say about what goes on in the community.

Both married and widowed persons are the marital groups most likely to agree that the community

Figure 9. I Have a Say about What Goes On in this Community by Age



helps them fulfill their needs. And, widowed persons are the group most likely to agree that they feel like a member of the community and that they belong in the community.

Persons with occupations in agriculture are the occupation group most likely to agree that they can get what they need in the community, that they feel like a member of the community, that they belong in the community, that they have a say about what goes on in the community, that they feel connected to the community, and that they have a good bond with others in the community.

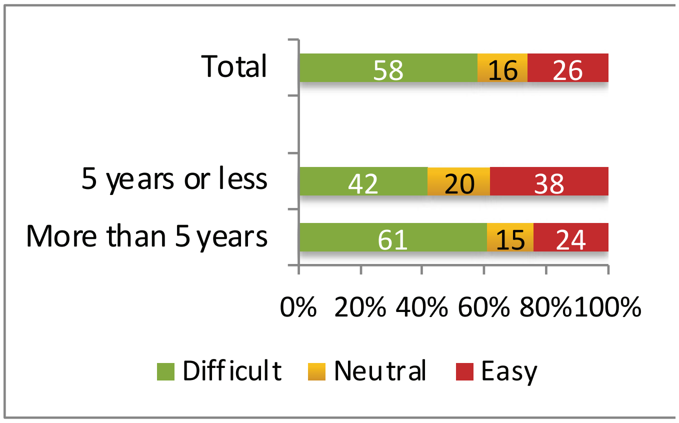
Persons with food service or personal care occupations join the persons with agricultural occupations as the groups most likely to agree that the community helps them fulfill their needs. Persons with food service or personal care occupations are the group most likely to agree that people in the community are good at influencing each other.

Long-term residents have more attachment to their community than newcomers. Long-term residents are more likely than newcomers to agree that the community helps them fulfill their needs, that they feel like a member of the community, that they belong in the community, that people in the community are good at influencing each other, and that they feel connected to the community. As an example, six in ten long-term residents agree that they feel connected to their community, compared to just under one-half of newcomers (45%).

Finally, respondents were asked a question about how easy or difficult it would be to leave their community. The exact question wording was "Assume you were to have a discussion in your household about leaving your community for a reasonably good opportunity elsewhere. Some people might be happy to live in a new place and meet new people. Others might be very sorry to leave. How easy or difficult would it be for your household to leave your community?" They were given a seven-point scale where 1 indicated very easy and 7 denoted very difficult. Almost six in ten rural Nebraskans (58%) say it would be difficult to leave their community (Figure 10). Just over one-quarter (26%) indicate it would be easy for their household to leave their community.
Responses to this question are examined by region, community size and various individual attributes (Appendix Table 9). Many differences appear.

Long-term residents of the community are more likely than newcomers to say it would be difficult to leave their community. Over six in ten long-term residents (61%) say it would be difficult to leave the community, compared to just over four in ten newcomers (42%) (Figure 10).

Figure 10. I Have a Say about What Goes On in this Community by Age



Other groups most likely to say it would be difficult to leave their community include persons aged 65 and older, females, widowed persons, and persons with occupations in agriculture.

CONCLUSION

Rural Nebraskans are more positive about both the current change in their communities this year as well as its future. This year, more believe their community has changed for the better than has changed for the worse and the gap between the two grew slightly. When asked about what they expect ten years from now, the proportion believing their community will be a worse place to live declined from 27 percent last year (the highest proportion across all 15 years, also occurring in 2022) to 22 percent this year.

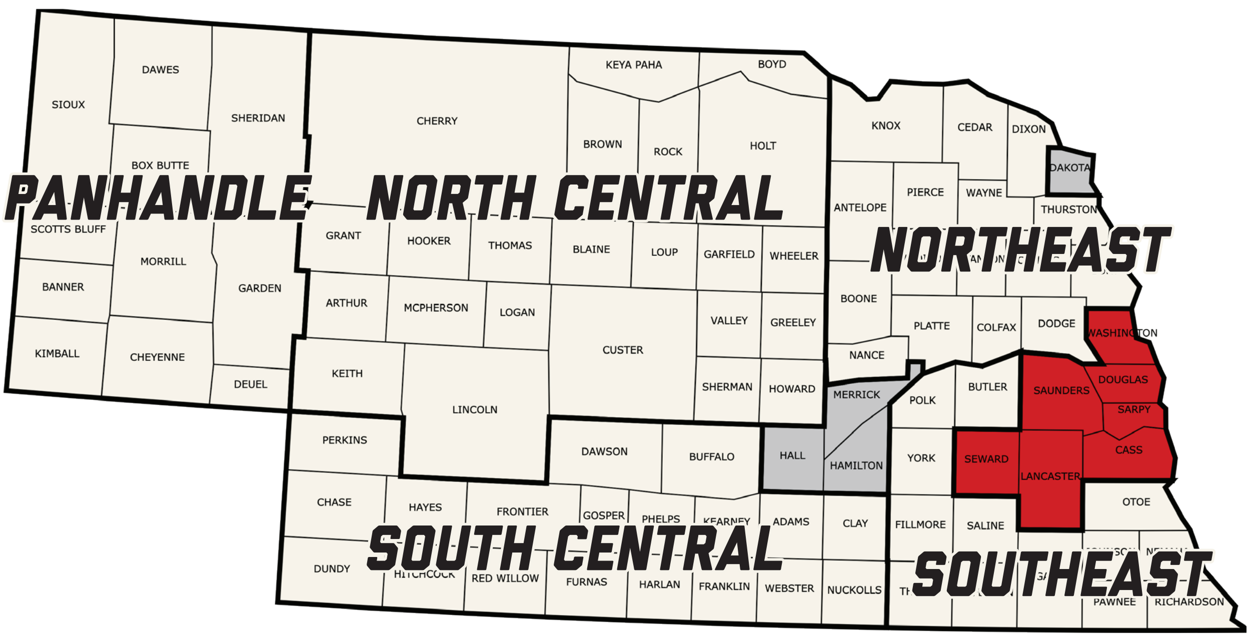
Furthermore, rural Nebraskans are positive about their community by many different measures. More rural Nebraskans say their community has changed for the better during the past year than those who say it has changed for the worse. Most rural Nebraskans rate their community favorably on its social dimensions, as friendly, trusting and supportive. Most rural Nebraskans also say it would be difficult to leave their community and have a positive attachment to their community. Finally, most rural Nebraskans disagree that their community is powerless to control its future.

Differences in perceptions of their community are evident by community size. Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to get what they need in their community. However, persons living in or near smaller communities (those with populations between 500 and 999) are most likely to have an attachment to their community.

Except for some services that are largely unavailable in rural communities, rural Nebraskans are generally satisfied with basic community services and amenities. In addition, satisfaction with many services increased this year compared to last year.

Appendix Figure 1. *Regions of Nebraska*

NEBRASKA RURAL POLL REGIONS



Nonmetropolitan county surveyed in Rural Poll

Metropolitan county not surveyed in Rural Poll

County classified as metropolitan but surveyed in Rural Poll

RURAL POLL

Nebraska Rural Poll
Research Report 25-6
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