



2025 NEBRASKA RURAL POLL RESEARCH REPORT



Energy Resources



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To purchase questions for the 2026 Poll, contact Survey Manager Becky Vogt at rvogt2@unl.edu.

Nebraska Rural Poll Research Report 25-6, December 2025.

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

Funding for this project was provided by Nebraska Extension's Rural Prosperity Nebraska of the Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Nebraska generates a significant share of its electricity—about 30%—from wind power, making it one of the state’s leading renewable sources. Solar energy currently provides less than 1% but is expanding through new utility-scale and rooftop projects. Given that, how do rural Nebraskans support various energy production scenarios in their local community? What experiences have they had with wind and solar energy? How important do they view various factors in purchasing and installing wind turbines and/or solar panels? What opinions do they have about wind turbines? 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 energy resources. Comparisons are made among different respondent subgroups, that is, comparisons by age, occupation, region, etc. Based on these analyses, some key findings emerged:

- **Most rural Nebraskans support home- or farm-scale solar energy and community-based solar energy production systems. However, most rural Nebraskans oppose both large-scale wind and solar energy production. Meanwhile, support for home- or farm-scale and community-based wind production systems is mixed.** Over one-half of rural Nebraskans indicate they would somewhat or strongly support solar panels on their land that power their home and/or farm with the opportunity to sell excess to the grid (56%) and solar energy production systems owned and run cooperatively by local farm families and community residents (51%). Almost six in ten strongly or somewhat oppose large-scale wind energy production owned by private companies (59%) and large-scale solar energy production owned by private companies (52%). Support for home- or farm-scale and community-based wind production systems is mixed, with roughly equal proportions supporting and opposing each.
 - Residents of the North Central region are the group least likely to support home- or farm level wind energy production. Just over one in ten North Central region residents (14%) support this type of energy production, compared to at least four in ten residents of the Panhandle, South Central, and Southeast regions. In fact, seven in ten residents of the North Central region oppose home- or farm-level wind energy production.
 - Residents of the Northeast and Panhandle regions are the groups most likely to support solar panels owned by the landowner that power the home and/or farm with the opportunity to sell excess to the grid. Just over six in ten residents of these two regions support this energy production scenario, compared to just under four in ten residents of the North Central region (39%).
 - Residents of both the Panhandle and South Central regions are the regional groups most likely to support community-level wind energy production as well a combination of energy production systems (e.g., wind and solar). And, Panhandle residents are the regional group most likely to support community-level solar energy production.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



- **Not many rural Nebraskans have direct experience with wind and solar energy production.** Just over one in ten rural Nebraskans can see wind turbines from their home or from any of the land they own or farm. Five percent own or lease solar panels. Three percent can hear wind turbines from their home or any of the land they own or farm.
 - Residents of the North Central region are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to own or lease solar panels. Just over two in ten residents of the North Central region (22%) own or lease any solar panels, compared to none of the residents of the Southeast region.
- **Most rural Nebraskans rate factors such as the reliability of turbines or panels, the cost to install them, having backup power during outages, energy savings, and fit in the landscape as very important when considering whether or not to purchase or install them.** Most rural Nebraskans rate the following factors as very important: the reliability of turbines and/or panels (80%), the availability of a trusted installation and maintenance company (77%), financial support to offset installation cost (72%), provide power during main grid outages (70%), amount of energy savings or income that turbines and/or panels would provide (63%), and turbine or panel fit in the local landscape (60%). One-third (33%) rate that turbines or panels would show their commitment to sustainability as very important.
 - Residents of the Panhandle are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to rate turbine or panel fit in the local landscape as an important factor. Just over nine in ten Panhandle residents (91%) say turbine or panel fit in the local landscape would be a moderately or very important factor, compared to approximately three-quarters of the residents of the other four regions.
- **Most rural Nebraskans believe wind turbines can produce visual or aesthetic problems. Many rural Nebraskans also agree that wind turbines cause other problems such as harming birds and creating noise pollution but many also agree they have the positive impacts of job creation and economic benefits for local communities. Opinions are divided on whether or not wind turbines can help keep land in agriculture. Just under six in ten strongly agree or agree that wind turbines can produce visual or aesthetic problems.** Just under one-half of rural Nebraskans agree that wind turbines can harm birds and bats (48%), they can create jobs (46%), they can create noise pollution (46%), and they can provide economic benefits for local communities (45%). Opinions are divided on whether or not wind turbines can help keep land in agriculture. Just over four in ten (42%) are uncertain about that statement, while one-third (33%) disagree and just under one-quarter (24%) agree.
 - Persons with occupations in agriculture are more likely than persons with different occupations to agree that wind turbines can produce visual or aesthetic problems. Just over eight in ten persons with occupations in agriculture (81%) agree with that statement, compared to less than two in ten persons with food service or personal care occupations (16%).
 - Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to agree that wind turbines can provide economic benefits for local communities. Six in ten persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 5,000 to 9,999 agree, compared to three in ten persons living in or near communities with populations under 500 (30%).



INTRODUCTION

Nebraska generates a significant share of its electricity—about 30%—from wind power, making it one of the state’s leading renewable sources. Solar energy currently provides less than 1% but is expanding through new utility-scale and rooftop projects. Given that, how do rural Nebraskans support various energy production scenarios in their local community? What experiences have they had with wind and solar energy? How important do they view various factors in purchasing and installing wind turbines and/or solar panels? What opinions do they have about wind turbines? 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 energy resources.

Methodology and Respondent Profile

This study is based on 943 responses from Nebraskans living in 86 counties in the state¹. 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 energy resources 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

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.

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 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. Just under three in ten (29%) have any ownership in a farm or ranch.

DISTRIBUTED ENERGY RESOURCES

The term “distributed energy resources” refers to systems that produce energy close to where it is used. In Nebraska, distributed energy production can come from sources like solar panels and wind turbines. These systems can be owned by and serve individual farms or homes and offset consumption of retail power. They can be developed to serve a group of farms, homes, and community buildings through local ownership and subscription models or be connected to the traditional utility grids run by utility companies, municipalities, and rural electric cooperatives.

Respondents were given a list of potential energy production and distribution scenarios and were asked if they would support or oppose each in their local

community. The responses ranged from strongly oppose to strongly support.

Most rural Nebraskans support home- or farm-scale solar energy and community-based solar energy production systems. However, most rural Nebraskans oppose both large-scale wind and solar energy production. Over one-half of rural Nebraskans indicate they would somewhat or strongly support solar panels on their land that power their home and/or farm with the opportunity to sell excess to the grid (56%) and solar energy production systems owned and run cooperatively by local farm families and community residents (51%) (Figure 1). Almost six in ten strongly or somewhat oppose large-scale wind energy production owned by private companies (59%) and large-scale solar energy production owned by private companies (52%). Support for home- or farm-scale and community-based wind production systems is mixed, with roughly equal proportions supporting and opposing each.

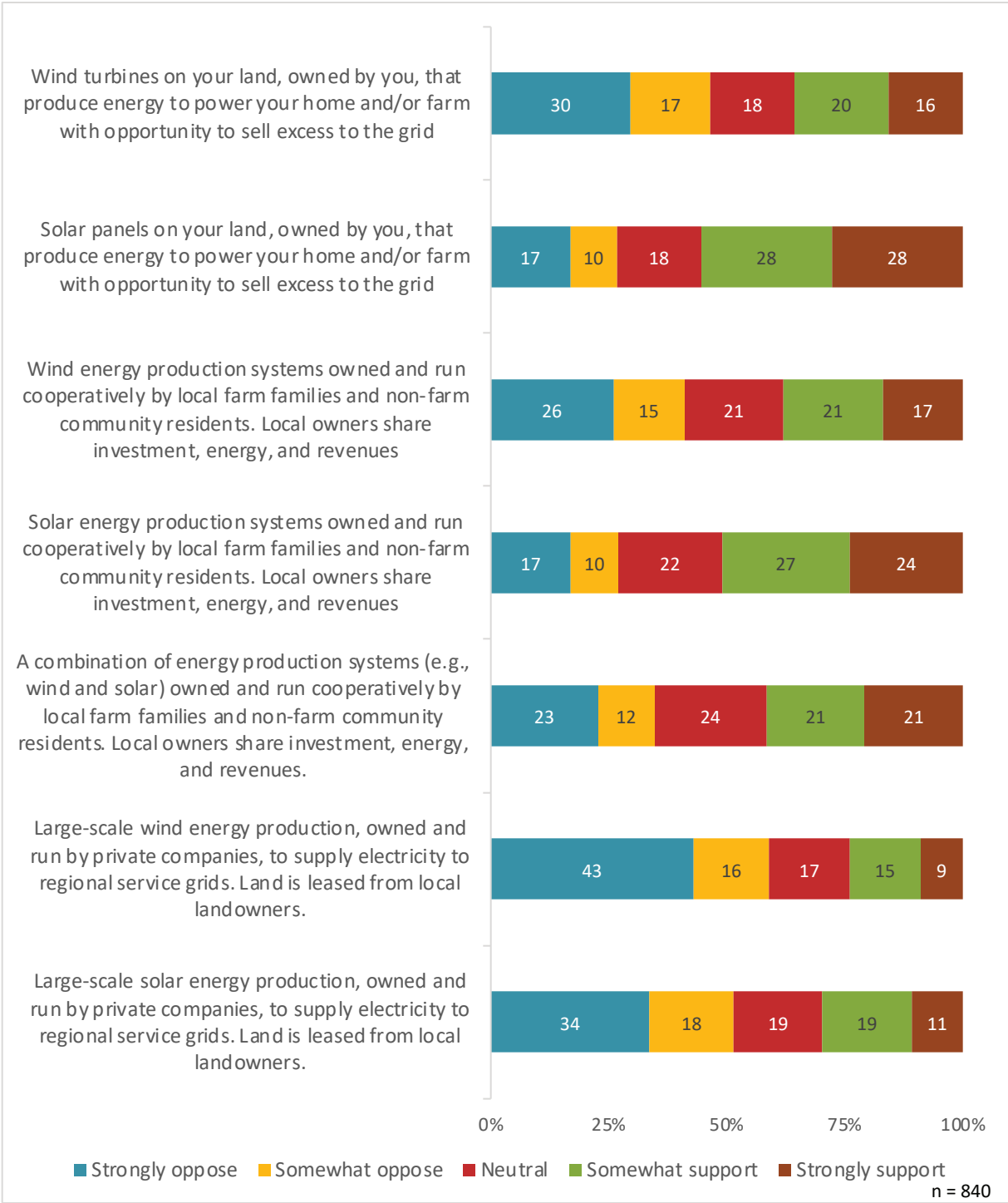
The levels of support for each energy production scenario are examined by community size, region, and various individual attributes (Appendix Table 2). Many differences are detected.

Home- or Farm-Scale Energy Production

Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to say they would support home- or farm-level wind energy production. Almost one-half of persons living in or near communities with populations between 5,000 and 9,999 (48%) somewhat or strongly support wind turbines owned by the landowner that power their home and/or farm with the opportunity to sell excess to the grid. In comparison, approximately one-quarter of persons living in or near communities with populations between 500 and 4,999 share this opinion.

When comparing responses by region, the residents of the North Central region are the group least likely to support home- or farm-level wind energy production. Just over one in ten North Central region residents (14%) (see Appendix Figure 1

Figure 1. Support for Energy Production Scenarios in Local Community

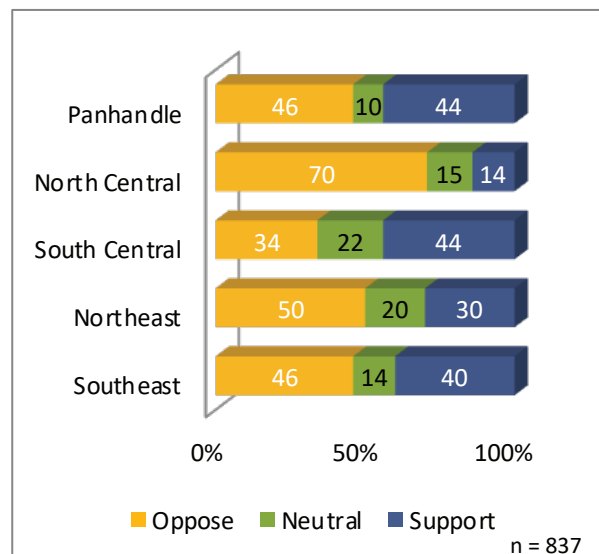


for the counties included in each region) support this type of energy production, compared to at least four in ten residents of the Panhandle, South Central, and Southeast regions (Figure 2). In fact, seven in ten residents of the North Central region oppose home- or farm-level wind energy production.

The demographic subgroups most likely to support home- or farm-level wind energy production include: persons with mid-level household incomes, younger persons, males, persons who have never married, persons with food service or personal care occupations, and persons with production, transportation, or warehousing occupations.

Many of these same groups are also most likely to support home- or farm-level solar energy production: persons living in or near larger communities, persons with mid-level incomes, younger persons, persons who never married, persons with food service or personal care occupations, and persons with production, transportation, or warehousing occupations.

Figure 2. Support for Home- or Farm-Level Wind Energy Production by Region



Residents of the Northeast and Panhandle regions are the groups most likely to support solar panels owned by the landowner that power the home and/or farm with the opportunity to sell excess to the grid. Just over six in ten residents of these two regions support this energy production scenario, compared to just under four in ten residents of the North Central region (39%).

Community-Based Energy Production

Support for community-level wind and solar energy production (including a combination of energy production systems) is highest among the following groups: persons living in or near larger communities (particularly persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 5,000 to 9,999), persons with mid-level household incomes, younger persons, and persons who have never married.

Residents of both the Panhandle and South Central regions are the regional groups most likely to support community-level wind energy production as well a combination of energy production systems (e.g., wind and solar). And, Panhandle residents are the regional group most likely to support community-level solar energy production.

Females are more likely than males to support community-level solar energy production and a combination of energy production systems. And, persons with production, transportation, and warehousing occupations are the occupation group most likely to support community-level solar energy production.

Utility Scale Energy Production

Support for large-scale wind and solar energy production owned and run by private companies is highest among the following groups: persons living in or near larger communities (particularly persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 5,000 to 9,999), younger persons, persons without any college education, persons who have never married, and persons with food service and personal care occupations. When comparing responses by region, residents of the North Central region are less likely than residents of other regions to support large-scale wind and solar energy production systems.

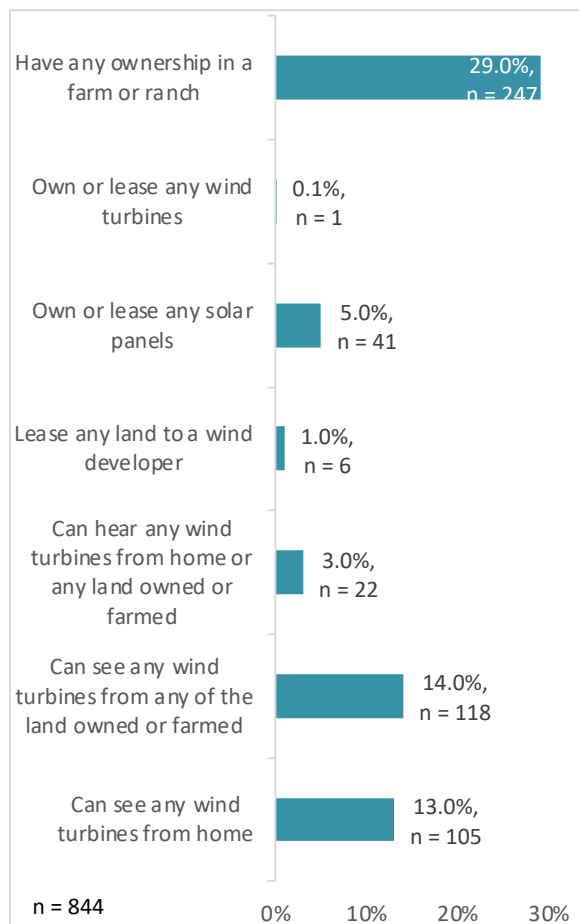
WIND AND SOLAR ENERGY

Experience with Wind and Solar Energy

Next, respondents were asked their experiences with wind and solar energy. They were given a list of items and were asked if any apply to them.

Just over one in ten rural Nebraskans can see wind turbines from their home or from any of the land they own or farm (Figure 3). Five percent own or lease solar panels. Three percent can hear wind turbines from their home or any of the land they own or farm. Almost three in ten rural Nebraskans (29%) have any ownership in a farm or ranch.

Figure 3. Importance of Using Trade Policies to Press Countries that Challenge US Economic and Political Priorities by Occupation



The responses to these questions are examined by community size, region, and various individual attributes (Appendix Table 3). Residents of the Northeast region are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to see any wind turbines from their home. Just over two in ten residents of the Northeast region (22%) see wind turbines from their home, compared to three percent of Panhandle residents.

Persons living in or near smaller communities are more likely than persons living in or near larger communities to see wind turbines from their home. Just over two in ten persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 500 to 999 (23%) see wind turbines from their home, compared to seven percent of persons living in or near the largest communities.

The other groups most likely to see wind turbines from their home include: persons

between the ages of 30 and 64, males, persons with some college education (but less than a four-year degree), and persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations.

Persons living in or near smaller communities, residents of the Southeast region, residents of the Northeast region, persons aged 40 to 49, males, and persons with agriculture are the groups most likely to see any wind turbines from any of the land they own or farm. Just under four in ten persons with occupations in agriculture (39%) can see wind turbines from any of the land they own or farm.

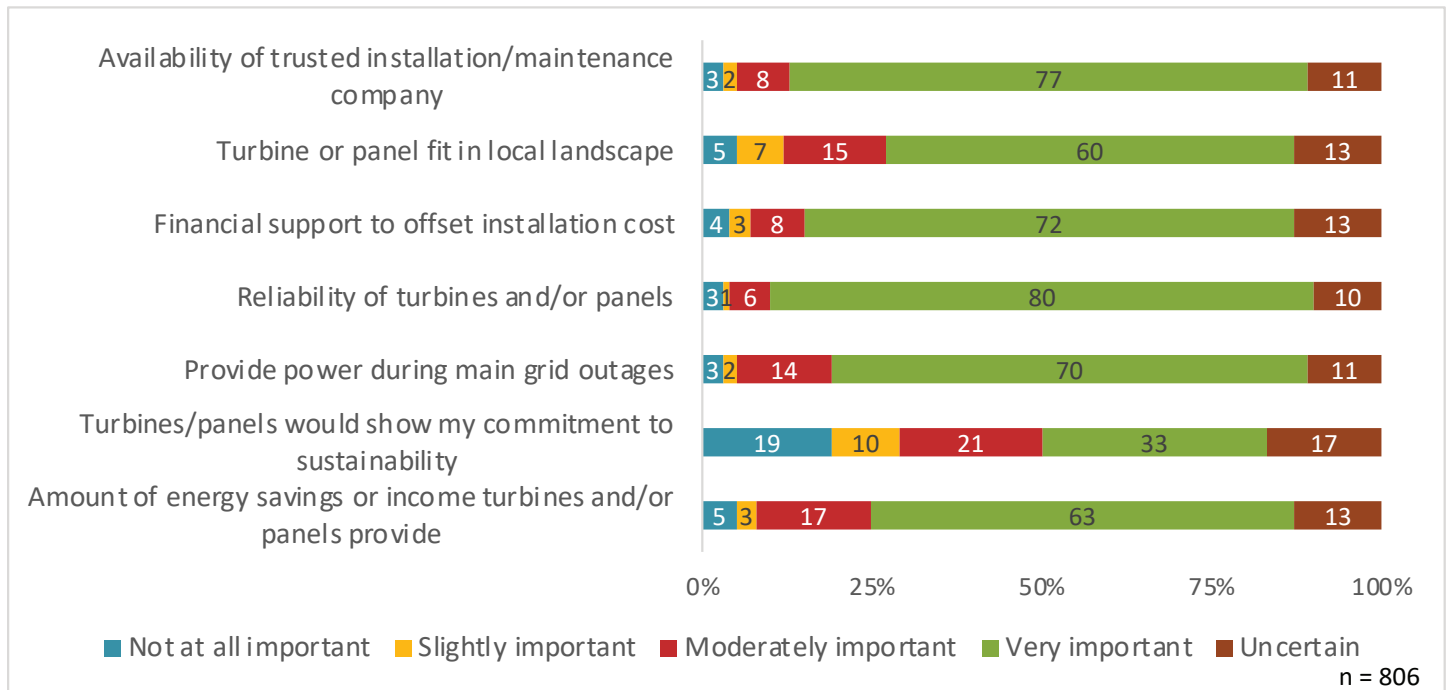
Residents of the North Central region are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to own or lease solar panels. Just over two in ten residents of the North Central region (22%) own or lease any solar panels, compared to none of the residents of the Southeast region. Persons with the highest household incomes, the youngest persons, and persons with the highest education levels are the other groups most likely to own or lease any solar panels.

The groups most likely to have any ownership in a farm or ranch include: persons living in or near smaller communities, persons with the highest household incomes, older persons, married persons, and persons with occupations in agriculture.

Importance of Factors for Purchasing and Installing Wind Turbines and/or Solar Panels

Next, respondents were asked if they were to consider purchasing and installing wind turbines and/or solar panels on their land (whether or not they currently own land), how important various factors would be for them. Most rural Nebraskans rate factors such as the reliability of turbines or panels, the cost to install them, having backup power during outages, energy savings, and fit in the landscape as very important. Most rural Nebraskans rate the following factors as very important: the reliability of turbines and/or panels (80%), the availability of a trusted installation and maintenance company (77%), financial support to offset

Figure 4. Importance of Factors in Purchasing and Installing Wind Turbines and/or Solar Panels



installation cost (72%), provide power during main grid outages (70%), amount of energy savings or income that turbines and/or panels would provide (63%), and turbine or panel fit in the local landscape (60%) (Figure 4). One-third (33%) rate that turbines or panels would show their commitment to sustainability as very important.

The importance of these factors by community size, region, and various individual attributes are shown in Appendix Table 4. Some differences are detected.

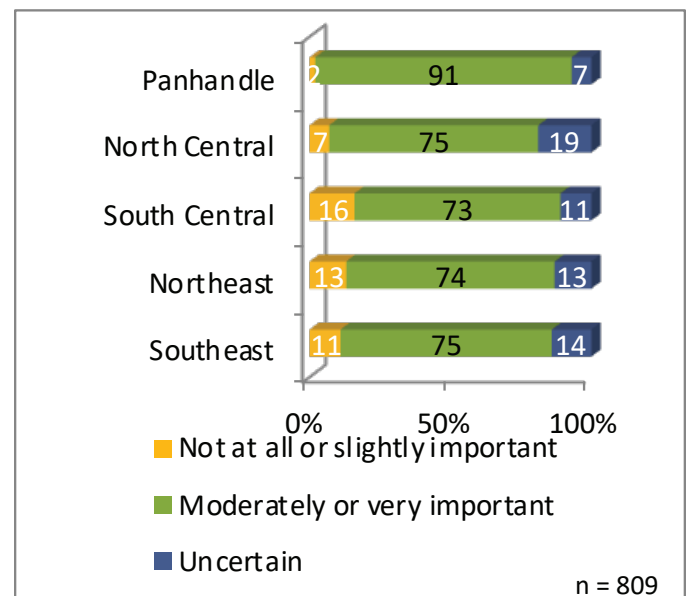
The groups most likely to rate the availability of a trusted installation and maintenance company as either moderately or very important include: persons with higher household incomes, persons aged 50 to 64, persons with higher education levels, married persons, and persons with food service or personal care occupations.

Residents of the Panhandle are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to rate turbine or panel fit in the local landscape as an important factor. Just over nine in ten Panhandle residents (91%) say turbine or panel fit in the local landscape would be a moderately or very important factor, compared to approximately three-quarters of the residents of the other four regions (Figure 5).

The other groups most likely to rate the fit of the

turbines or panels in the local landscape as an important factor include: persons living in near communities with populations ranging from 1,000 to 9,999; persons aged 50 to 64; males; married persons; persons who are divorced or separated; and persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations.

Figure 5. Importance of Turbine or Panel Fit in Local Landscape in Purchasing Decision by Region



Persons with higher household incomes, persons under the age of 65, married persons, persons who are divorced or separated, persons with food service or personal care occupations, and persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations are the groups most likely to rate reliability of turbines and/or panels as an important factor.

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to rate turbines/panels on their land would show their commitment to sustainability as an important factor when deciding to purchase or install. At least six in ten persons under the age of 40 rate this factor as moderately or very important, compared to just under one-half of persons over the age of 50.

The other groups most likely to rate the factor that turbines or panels would show their commitment to sustainability as important include persons living in or near larger communities and persons having a high school diploma or less education.

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to rate the amount of energy savings or income that turbines and/or panels would provide as an important factor. When comparing responses by marital status, widowed persons are the group least likely to rate this factor as moderately or very important.

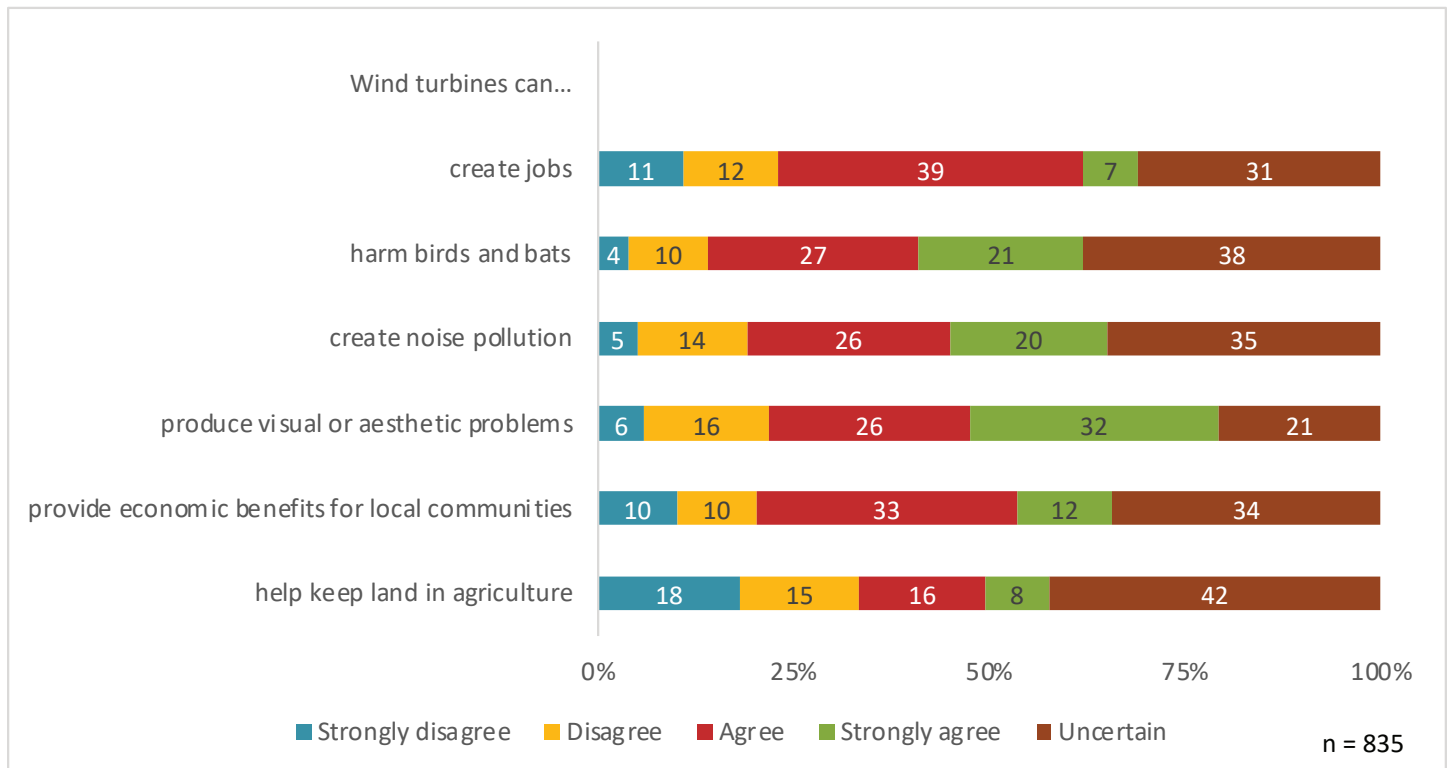
Opinions about Wind Turbines

Finally, respondents were given some statements about wind turbines and were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each.

Most rural Nebraskans believe wind turbines can produce visual or aesthetic problems. Just under six in ten strongly agree or agree with that statement (Figure 6). Many rural Nebraskans also agree that wind turbines cause other problems such as harming birds and creating noise pollution but many also agree they have the positive impacts of job creation and economic benefits for local communities. Just under one-half of rural Nebraskans agree that wind turbines can harm birds and bats (48%), they can create jobs (46%), they can create noise pollution (46%), and they can provide economic benefits for local communities (45%). Opinions are divided on whether or not wind turbines can help keep land in agriculture. Just over four in ten (42%) are uncertain about that statement, while one-third (33%) disagree and just under one-quarter (24%) agree.

The opinions about wind turbines are compared by community size, region, and various individual attributes (Appendix Table 5). Many differences exist.

Figure 6. Opinions About Wind Turbines



Younger persons are more likely than older persons to agree that wind turbines can create jobs. Approximately two-thirds (67%) of persons aged 19 to 29 agree that wind turbines can create jobs, compared to just under four in ten persons aged 50 to 64 (37%).

Other groups most likely to agree that wind turbines can create jobs include: persons living in or near larger communities (particularly those living in or near communities with populations ranging from 5,000 to 9,999), persons who have never married, persons with sales or office support occupations, and persons with healthcare support or public safety occupations.

Persons living in or near the smallest communities are more likely than persons living in or near larger communities to agree that wind turbines can harm birds and bats. Just over six in ten persons living in or near communities with populations under 500 agree with that statement, compared to four in ten persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 5,000 to 9,999.

Persons living in the North Central region are more likely than persons living in other regions of the state to agree that wind turbines can harm birds and bats. Approximately two-thirds of North Central region residents (65%) agree with that statement, compared to less than one-half of persons living in the South Central, Northeast, or Southeast regions.

The other groups most likely to agree that wind turbines can harm birds and bats include: males, widowed persons, and persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations.

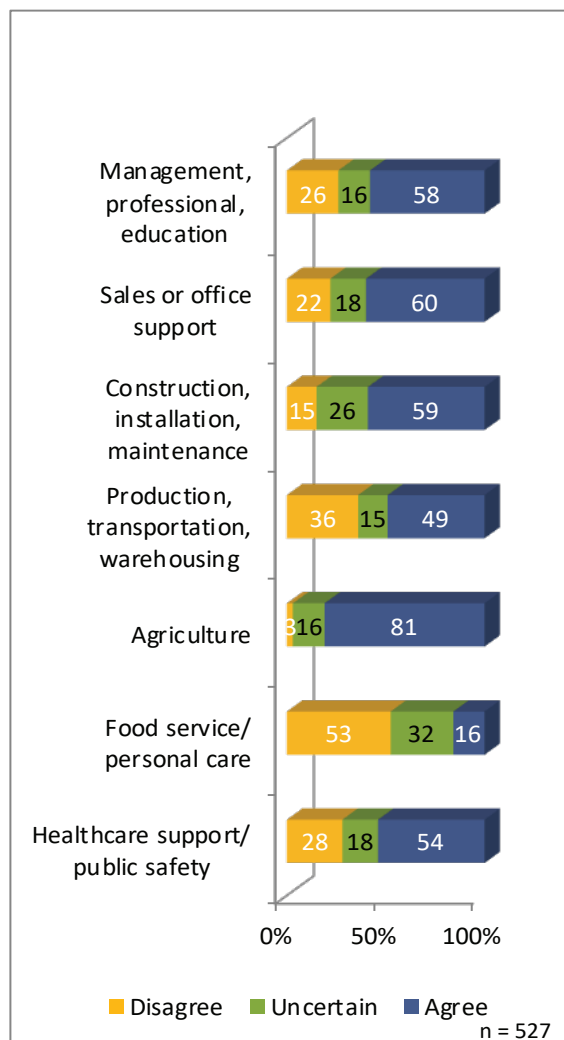
Residents of the North Central region are more likely than residents of other regions to agree that wind turbines can create noise pollution. Over six in ten residents of the North Central region (64%) agree with that statement, compared to just under four in ten persons living in the Panhandle or South Central regions.

The other groups most likely to agree that wind turbines can create noise pollution include: persons living in or near smaller communities, males, and persons with occupations in agriculture.

Persons with occupations in agriculture are more likely than persons with different occupations to agree that wind turbines can produce visual or aesthetic problems. Just over eight in ten persons

with occupations in agriculture (81%) agree with that statement, compared to less than two in ten persons with food service or personal care occupations (16%) (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Belief Wind Turbines Can Produce Visual or Aesthetic Problems by Occupation



Persons living in or near smaller communities are more likely than persons living in or near larger communities to agree that wind turbines can produce visual or aesthetic problems. Just over seven in ten persons living in or near communities with populations under 1,000 agree with the statement, compared to just under one-half of persons living in or near communities with population of 10,000 or more (49%).

The other groups most likely to agree that wind turbines can produce visual or aesthetic problems include: residents of the North Central region, persons with the highest household incomes, males, persons with the highest education levels, married persons, and widowed persons.

CONCLUSION

Most rural Nebraskans support home- or farm-scale solar energy and community-based solar energy production systems. However, most rural Nebraskans oppose both large-scale wind and solar energy production. Meanwhile, support for home- or farm-scale and community-based wind production systems is mixed.

Differences by region of the state occur when looking at the support for those energy production scenarios. Residents of the North Central region are the group least likely to support home- or farm level wind energy production. In fact, seven in ten residents of the North Central region oppose home- or farm-level wind energy production. Residents of the Northeast and Panhandle regions are the groups most likely to support solar panels owned by the landowner that power the home and/or farm with the opportunity to sell excess to the grid. Residents of both the Panhandle and South Central regions are the regional groups most likely to support community-level wind energy production as well a combination of energy production systems (e.g., wind and solar). And, Panhandle residents are the regional group most likely to support community-level solar energy production.

Not many rural Nebraskans have direct experience with solar and wind energy production. Just over one in ten rural Nebraskans can see wind turbines from their home or from any of the land they own or farm. Five percent own or lease solar panels. Three percent can hear wind turbines from their home or any of the land they own or farm. Residents of the North Central region are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to own or lease solar panels.

Most rural Nebraskans rate factors such as the reliability of turbines or panels, the cost to install them, having backup power during outages, energy savings, and fit in the landscape as very important when considering whether or not to purchase or install them. A less important factor is that turbines or panels would show their commitment to sustainability.

Most rural Nebraskans believe wind turbines can produce visual or aesthetic problems. Many rural Nebraskans also agree that wind turbines cause other problems such as harming birds and creating noise pollution but many also agree they have the positive impacts of job creation and economic benefits for local communities. Opinions are divided on whether or not wind turbines can help keep land in agriculture.

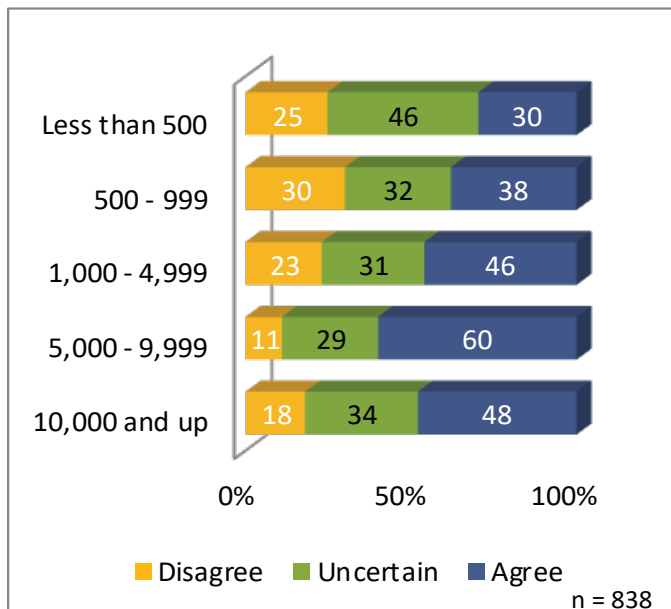
Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to agree that wind turbines can provide economic benefits for local communities. Six in ten persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 5,000 to 9,999 agree, compared to three in ten persons living in or near communities with populations under 500 (30%) (Figure 8).

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to agree that wind turbines can provide economic benefits for local communities. Just under six in ten persons aged 19 to 29 agree (57%), compared to four in ten persons aged 50 to 64 (40%).

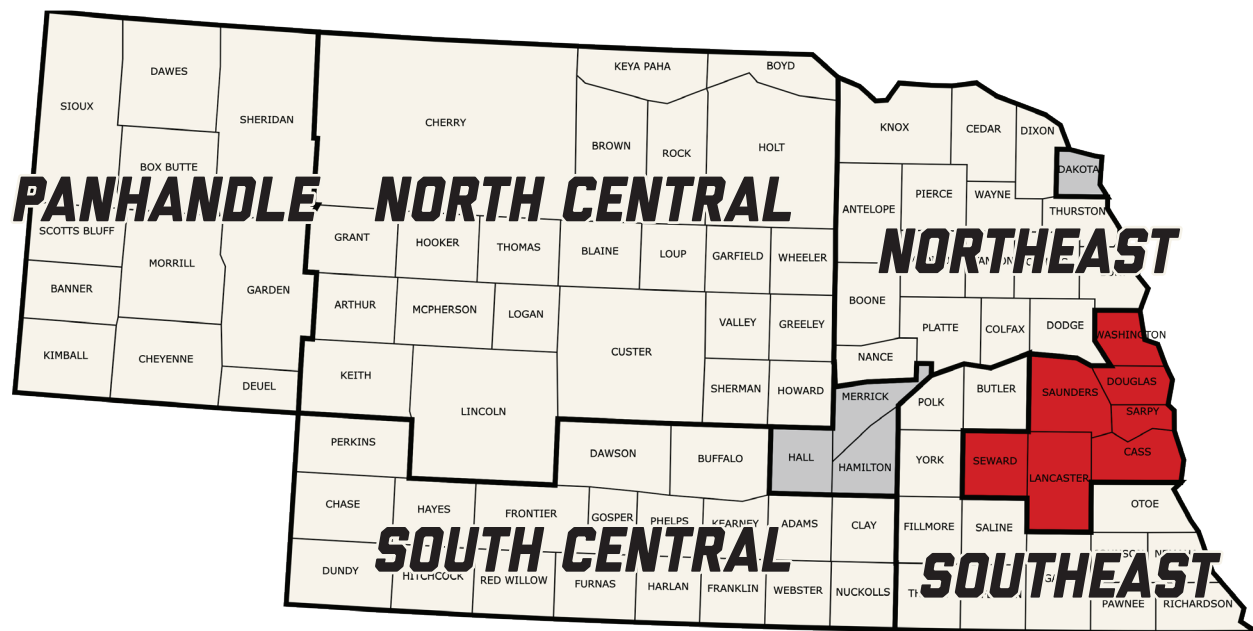
The other groups most likely to agree that wind turbines can provide economic benefits for local communities include: females, persons who have never married, and persons with food service or personal care occupations.

Persons living in or near larger communities, persons with lower education levels, persons who have never married, persons who have divorced or separated, and persons with food service or personal care occupations are the groups most likely to agree that wind turbines can help keep land in agriculture.

Figure 8. Belief Wind Turbines Can Provide Economic Benefits for Local Communities by Community Size



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
results compiled by:**

Heather Akin
Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel
Mary Emery
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