



2026 NEBRASKA RURAL POLL RESEARCH REPORT

Trails



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Nebraska Rural Poll Research Report 26-3, September 2026.

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Some organizations and researchers have purchased questions in the survey. The questions for this report were purchased by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Trails in rural Nebraska are used for recreation opportunities for both residents and visitors. Though the prevalence of trails has typically been concentrated in certain areas, many communities continue to develop trail systems in their area. Given this opportunity, how do rural Nebraskans use trails? In what types of trails do they support additional development or expansion in their area? How satisfied are they with the availability and quality of trails in the state? What limits their ability to use trails? This paper provides a detailed analysis of these questions.

This report details 881 responses to the 2026 Nebraska Rural Poll, the 31st annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about trails in the state. Comparisons are made among different respondent subgroups, that is, comparisons by age, occupation, region, etc. Based on these analyses, some key findings emerged:

- **Paved multi-use trails and natural surface multi-use trails are the most used trail types by rural Nebraska.** Many rural Nebraskans have used paved multi-use trails (50%) and natural surface multi-use trails (33%) in the past year. Just under four in ten rural Nebraskans (39%) have not used any of the listed trail types in the past 12 months.
 - *Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to have used paved multi-use trails.* Approximately six in ten persons living in or near communities with populations of 5,000 or more have used these trails in the past 12 months, compared to approximately three in ten persons living in or near communities with populations under 1,000.
- **Exercise or fitness is the most cited reason by rural Nebraskans for using trails.** Most rural Nebraskans say exercise or fitness (60%) is a primary reason for using trails. Many also use trails for enjoying nature or scenery (48%), recreation or leisure (47%), and spending time with family or friends (43%).
 - *The youngest persons are more likely than older persons to say enjoying nature or scenery is a primary reason they use trails.* Approximately two-thirds of persons age 19 to 29 say this is a primary reason (67%), compared to just over three in ten persons age 65 and older (32%).
- **Similarly, most rural Nebraskans say trails provide the following benefits to their household:** exercise or improve physical fitness (67%), improve mental health or stress reduction (54%), spend time with family, friends, or pets (54%), and connect with nature or observe wildlife (53%).
 - *Persons age 40 to 49 are the group most likely to say improve mental health or stress reduction and improved quality of life are benefits they get from trails.* Almost three-quarters of persons age 40 to 49 (73%) say improved mental health or stress reduction is a benefit they get from trails, compared to one-third of persons age 65 and older (33%).
- **Many rural Nebraskans support additional development or expansion of the following trail types in their area:** paved multi-use trails (42%), natural surface multi-use trails (38%), off-road vehicle trails (21%), and long-distance/rail trails (20%). Just under four in ten (37%) say no additional development is needed.

- **Many rural Nebraskans say:** restrooms (53%), shade or shelter structures (45%), drinking water stations (44%), trail signage and maps (34%) and lighting on trail (31%) would be beneficial trail amenities for their household. Three in ten (30%) say none of these amenities would be beneficial.
- **Most rural Nebraskans are:** very or somewhat satisfied with the availability of paved multi-use trails (60%) and natural surface multi-use trails (53%). However, most rural Nebraskans say they are not familiar with the other trail types listed.
- **Similarly, most rural Nebraskans are:** very or somewhat satisfied with the quality of paved multi-use trails (62%) and natural surface multi-use trails (56%). Most rural Nebraskans are unfamiliar with the other trail types listed.
- **Many rural Nebraskans say:** the following factors limit their household's use of trails in the state: distance or travel time (42%), lack of time (36%), and lack of information about available trails (28%). Just over one-quarter (26%) say there are no significant barriers.



INTRODUCTION

The past year continued to be challenging for rural Nebraskans. Inflation continues to impact household budgets. However, farm income was projected to increase due to government payments and a strong cattle market. 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 31 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 881 responses to the 2026 Nebraska Rural Poll, the 31st annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about their well-being.

Methodology & Respondent Profile

This study is based on 881 responses from Nebraskans living in 86 counties in the state. (See footnote.) A self-administered questionnaire was mailed in April and June to 6,894 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, community leadership, artificial intelligence, access to health care and social drivers of health, trails, sustainable products and practices, and the Nebraska Forest Service. This paper reports only

results from the well-being section.

A 13% 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.

There are some marked differences between some of the demographic variables in our sample compared to U.S. 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

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.

the nonmetropolitan counties in Nebraska (using U.S. Census figures from 2020).

The average age of respondents is approximately 51 years. Sixty-three percent are married and 66 percent live within the city limits of a town or village. On average, respondents have lived in Nebraska 42 years and have lived in their current community 27 years. Forty-eight 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.

Seventeen percent of the respondents report their 2025 approximate household income from all sources, before taxes, as below \$40,000. Sixty-nine percent report incomes over \$60,000. Seventy percent were employed in 2025 on a full-time, part-time, or seasonal basis. Twenty percent are retired. Thirty-two percent of those employed reported working in a management, professional, or education occupation. Nineteen percent indicated they were employed in agriculture.

TRAIL USE

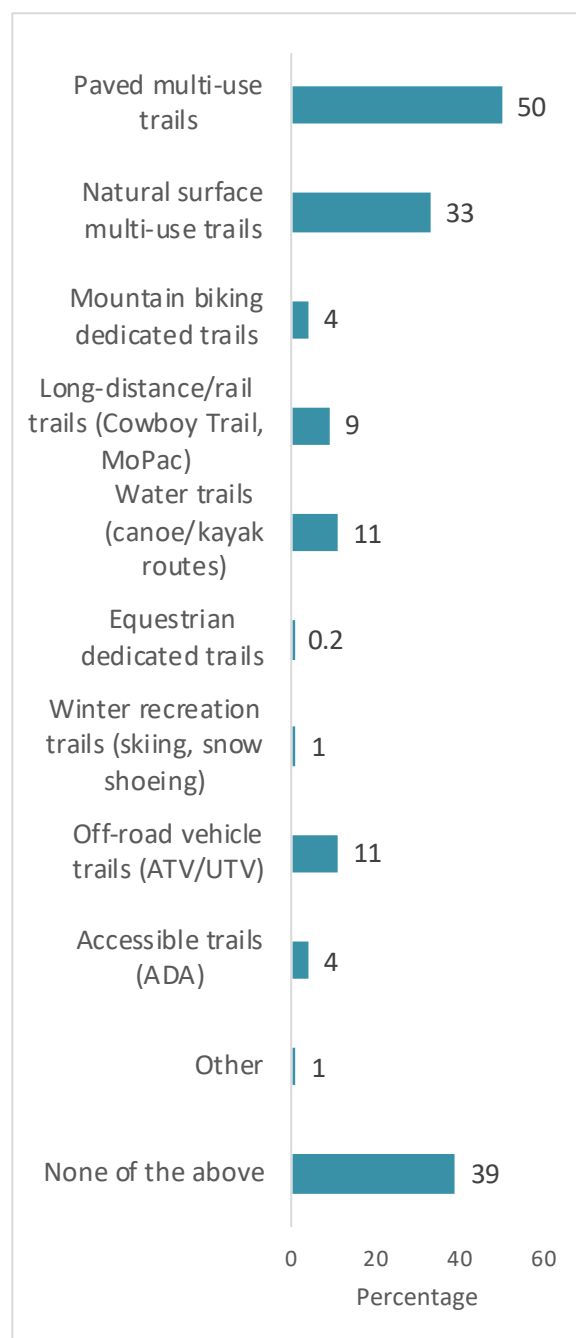
Types of Trails Used

Respondents were asked what types of trails they or members of their household have used in the past 12 months. Many rural Nebraskans have used paved multi-use trails (50%) and natural surface multi-use trails (33%) in the past year (Figure 1). Just under four in ten rural Nebraskans (39%) have not used any of the listed trail types in the past 12 months.

The types of trails used were examined by community size, region, and various individual attributes (age, income, occupation, etc.).

Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to have used paved multi-use trails. Approximately six in ten persons living in or near communities with populations of 5,000 or more have used these trails in the past 12 months, compared to approximately three in ten

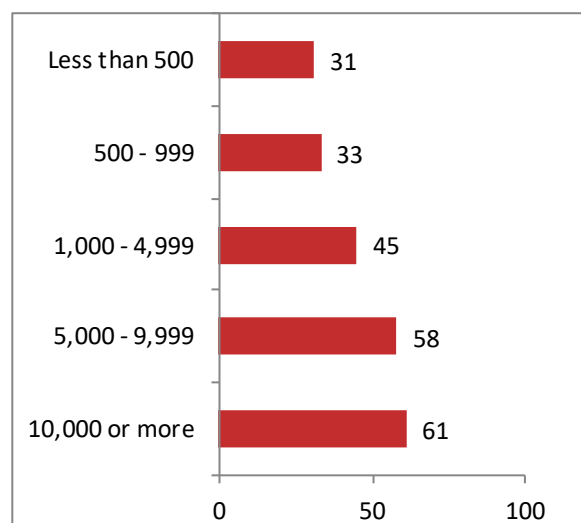
Figure 1. Types of Trails Used in Past 12 Months



persons living in or near communities with populations under 1,000 (Figure 2).

Conversely, persons living in or near smaller communities are more likely than persons living in or near larger communities to have used off-road vehicle trails. Just over one-quarter of persons living in or near communities with populations under 500 (26%) have used these types of trails, compared to approximately 10 percent of persons living in or near larger

Figure 2. Use of Paved Multi-Use Trails in Past 12 Months by Community Size



communities.

Some differences are also detected by region. Residents of the North Central region (see Appendix Figure 1 for the counties included in each region) are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to say they have used long-distance/rail trails in the past 12 months. Just under two in ten residents of the North Central region (17%) have used these trails, compared to two percent of the residents of the Panhandle. Residents of the North Central region are also the regional group most likely to have used off-road vehicle trails. Just over two in ten residents of the North Central region (21%) have used this type of trail, compared to five percent of the residents of the South Central region.

Persons with higher household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to have used the following trail types: paved multi-use trails, natural surface multi-use trails, and water trails. As an example, just under six in ten persons with household incomes of \$100,000 or more (58%) have used paved multi-use trails in the past 12 months, compared to just under four in ten persons with household incomes under \$40,000 (39%).

Persons age 30 to 49 are more likely than other age groups to have used paved multi-use trails in the past 12 months. Persons age 40 to 49 are the group most likely to have used natural surface multi-

use trails and water trails. Almost three in ten persons age 40 to 49 (28%) have used water trails in the past year, compared to two percent of persons age 65 and older.

The youngest persons (age 19 to 29) are the age group most likely to have used off-road vehicle trails. Just over two in ten persons age 19 to 29 (21%) have used these trails, compared to six percent of persons age 65 and older.

When comparing responses by marital status, married persons are the group most likely to have used paved multi-use trails (55% compared to 15% of widowed persons). In general, widowed persons are the group least likely to have used any of the trail types.

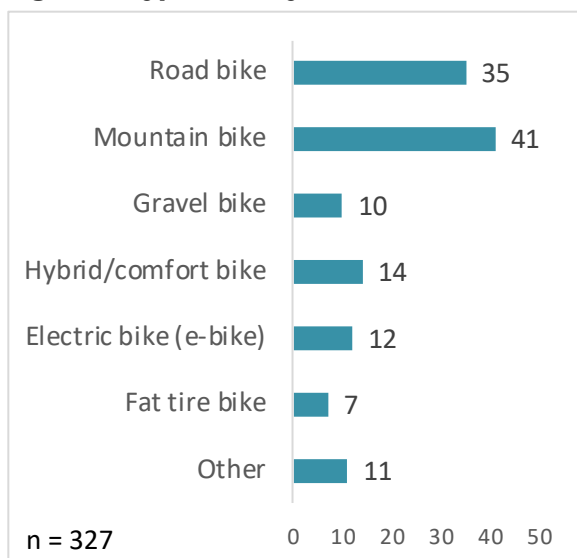
Persons with higher education levels are more likely than persons with less education to have used the following trail types: paved multi-use trails, natural surface multi-use trails, and water trails. Just over four in ten persons having at least a four-year degree (43%) have used natural surface multi-use trails, compared to approximately one-quarter of persons with less education.

However, persons with less education are more likely than persons with more education to have used off-road vehicle trails in the past 12 months. Just under two in ten persons with a high school diploma or less education (17%) have used these trails, compared to eight percent of persons having at least a four-year degree.

Persons with construction, installation or maintenance occupations are the occupation group most likely to have used natural surface multi-use trails and water trails during the past 12 months. Almost one-third of persons with these types of occupations (32%) have used water trails, compared to none of the persons with food service or personal care occupations.

If respondents use trails for bicycling, they were asked what type(s) they use. Many rural Nebraskans who use trails for bicycling use a mountain bike (41%) and a road bike (35%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Types of Bicycles Used on Trails

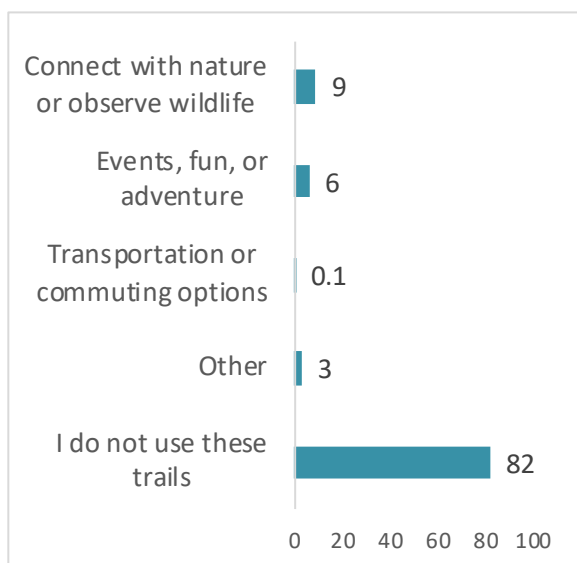


Reason for Using Trails

Respondents were next asked if they use long-distance rail-trails (i.e., Cowboy Trail, MoPac, Dark Island, etc.), what their primary reason is for using them. Most rural Nebraskans (82%) indicate they do not use these trails (Figure 4). Nine percent use them to connect with nature or observe wildlife and six percent use them for events, fun, or adventure.

When only looking at the respondents who have used the long-distance rail-trails, just under one-half (48%) use them to connect with nature or observe wildlife. Just over

Figure 4. Primary Reason for Using Long-Distance Rail-Trails



one-third (34%) use them for events, fun, or adventure.

The primary reasons for using this type of trail are examined by community size, region, and individual attributes. Residents of both the Panhandle and South Central regions are more likely than residents of other regions to say they haven't used long-distance rail-trails. Approximately nine in ten residents of these two regions say they do not use these trails, compared to approximately three-quarters of the residents of the other regions of the state.

When comparing age groups, persons age 30 to 49 are the group most likely to say they use these trails for events, fun, or adventure.

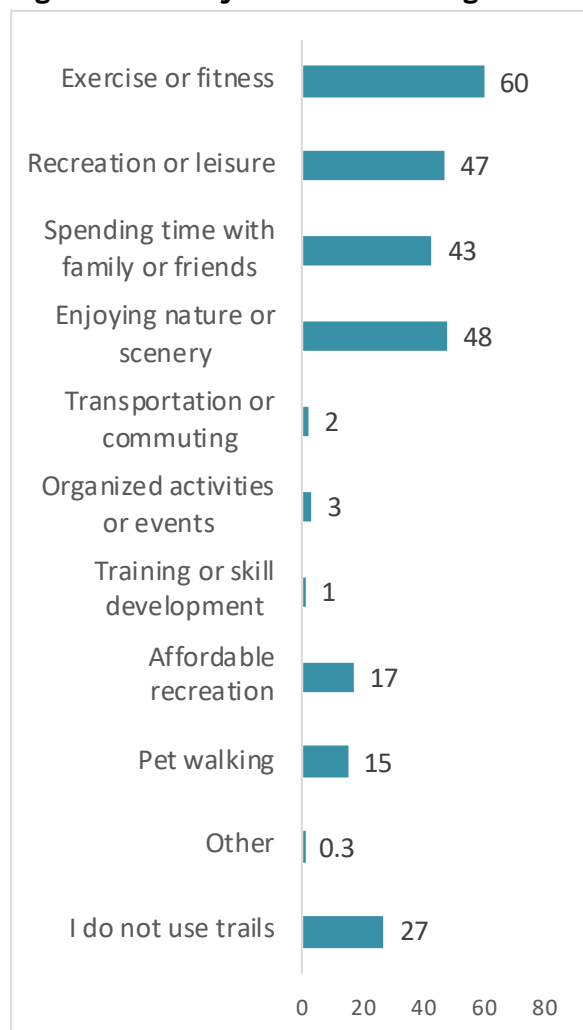
Persons with healthcare support or public safety occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to say they use these trails to connect with nature or observe wildlife. Persons with management, professional, or education occupations and persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations are the groups most likely to say they use these trails for events, fun, or adventure.

Most rural Nebraskans say exercise or fitness (60%) is a primary reason for using trails. Many also use trails for enjoying nature or scenery (48%), recreation or leisure (47%), and spending time with family or friends (43%) (Figure 5).

Persons living in or near the largest communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to say exercise or fitness and enjoying nature or scenery are primary reasons for using trails. Just over one-half of persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more (54%) say enjoying nature or scenery is a primary reason for using trails, compared to just over four in ten persons living in or near smaller communities.

Residents of the North Central region are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to say they use trails for recreation or leisure. Over one-half (55%) of residents of this region use trails for recreation or leisure, compared to just over four in ten residents of the South Central

Figure 5. Primary Reasons for Using Trails



region (44%). Residents of the Southeast region are the regional group least likely to say they use trails for enjoying nature or scenery. Just under four in ten residents of the Southeast region (39%) say they use trails for enjoying nature or scenery, compared to approximately one-half of the residents of the other regions of the state.

Persons with higher household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to say the following are primary reasons for using trails: exercise or fitness, recreation or leisure, spending time with family or friends, and enjoying nature or scenery. Approximately two-thirds of persons with household incomes of \$75,000 or more say exercise or fitness is a primary reason for using trails, compared to just under one-half of persons with household incomes under \$40,000 (47%).

Persons age 40 to 49 are the age group

most likely to say they use trails for exercise or fitness. Just over three-quarters of persons age 40 to 49 (76%) say this is a primary reason for using trails, compared to just over one-half of persons age 19 to 29 (54%).

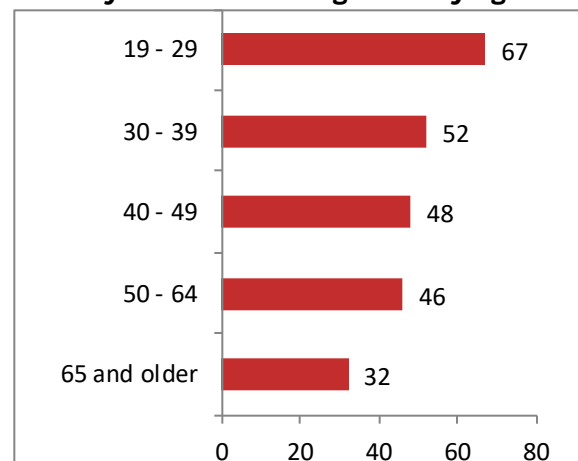
The youngest persons are more likely than older persons to say enjoying nature or scenery is a primary reason they use trails. Approximately two-thirds of persons age 19 to 29 say this is a primary reason (67%), compared to just over three in ten persons age 65 and older (32%) (Figure 6).

The youngest persons are also the age group most likely to say affordable recreation is a primary reason. Just under three in ten persons age 19 to 29 (29%) say this is a reason, compared to nine percent of persons age 65 and older. Persons age 30 to 49 are the age groups most likely to say recreation and leisure is a primary use for using trails.

Females are more likely than males to say spending time with family and friends and pet walking are primary reasons for using trails. Two in ten females (20%) say pet walking is a primary reason, compared to nine percent of males.

Persons with higher education levels are more likely than persons with less education to say the following are primary reasons for using trails: exercise or fitness, recreation or leisure, spending time with family or friends, and enjoying nature or scenery.

Figure 6. Enjoying Nature or Scenery is Primary Reason for Using Trails by Age



Persons with construction, installation or maintenance occupations are the occupation group most likely to say recreation or leisure is a primary reason for using trails. Persons with food service or personal care occupations are the group most likely to say spending time with family or friends and affordable recreation are primary reasons. Over seven in ten persons with these types of occupations (72%) say spending time with family or friends is a primary reason for using trails, compared to just under three in ten persons with occupations in agriculture (29%).

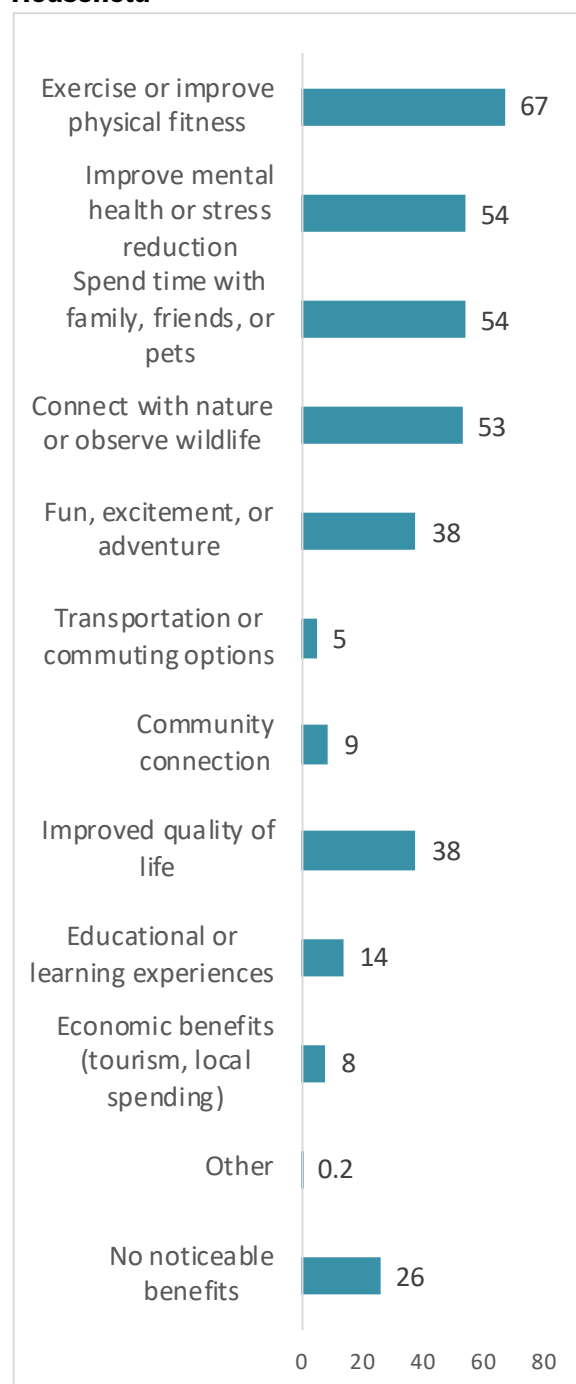
Persons with healthcare support or public safety occupations are the occupation group most likely to say enjoying nature or scenery is a primary reason. Just under seven in ten persons with these occupations (69%) use trails for this reason, compared to just over one-quarter of persons with occupations in agriculture (27%).

Most rural Nebraskans say trails provide the following benefits to their household: exercise or improve physical fitness (67%), improve mental health or stress reduction (54%), spend time with family, friends, or pets (54%), and connect with nature or observe wildlife (53%) (Figure 7).

Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to experience the following benefits from trails: exercise or improve physical fitness, improve mental health or stress reduction, and connect with nature or observe wildlife. Two-thirds of persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more (66%) say trails provide them with improved mental health or stress reduction, compared to approximately four in ten persons living in or near communities with populations under 1,000.

Residents of the North Central region are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to say spending time with family, friends or pets is a benefit they derive from trails. Two-thirds of North Central residents (66%) say this is a benefit of trails, compared to approximately one-half of residents of other regions of the state.

Figure 7. Benefits Trails Provide to Household



Residents of the Northeast region are the regional group most likely to say fun, excitement, or adventure is a benefit they get from trails. Just under one-half of residents of the Northeast region (45%) say this is a benefit, compared to three in ten residents from the Panhandle and Southeast regions.

Persons with higher household incomes

are more likely than persons with lower incomes to say they receive the following benefits from trails: exercise or improve physical fitness, improve mental health or stress reduction, spend time with family/friends/pets, connect with nature or observe wildlife, fun/ excitement/ adventure, and improved quality of life. Over seven in ten persons with household incomes of \$75,000 or more say exercise is a benefit they get from trails, compared to just over one-half of persons with household incomes under \$40,000 (51%).

Persons age 30 to 49 are the age groups most likely to say they get exercise/physical fitness and spending time with family, friends or pets as benefits from trails. Persons age 40 to 49 are the group most likely to say improve mental health or stress reduction and improved quality of life are benefits they get from trails. Almost three-quarters of persons age 40 to 49 (73%) say improved mental health or stress reduction is a benefit they get from trails, compared to one-third of persons age 65 and older (33%) (Figure 8).

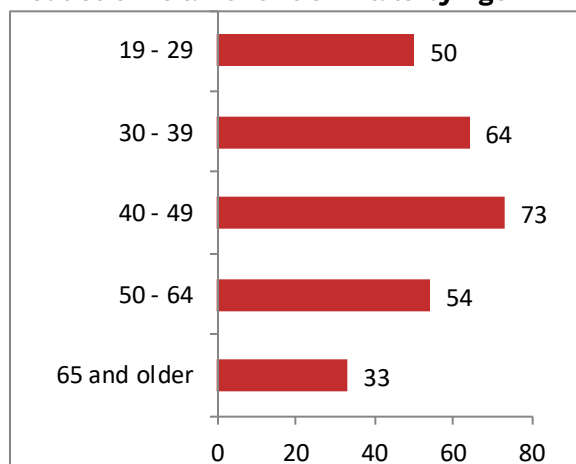
Persons age 30 to 39 are the age group most likely to say the following are benefits they get from trails: connect with nature or observe wildlife, fun/excitement/adventure, and educational or learning experiences.

Females are more likely than males to receive the following benefits from trails: improve mental health or stress reduction, spend time with family/friends/pets, and educational or learning experiences.

Both persons who have never married and persons who are divorced or separated are the marital groups most likely to say improved mental health/stress reduction and fun/ excitement/adventure are benefits they receive from trails. Persons who have never married are the group most likely to say they get community connection and educational or learning experiences as benefits from trails. Persons who are divorced or separated are the group most likely to say exercise or physical fitness and improved quality of life are benefits.

Persons with higher education levels are more likely than persons with less education to say most of the listed benefits

Figure 8. Improved Mental Health or Stress Reduction is a Benefit of Trails by Age



are ones they receive from trails. More than four in ten persons with at least a four-year degree (44%) say improved quality of life is a benefit they get from trails, compared to one-quarter of persons with a high school diploma or less education (25%).

Persons with food service or personal care occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to say spending time with family, friends or pets and improved quality of life are benefits from trails. Persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations are the group most likely to say transportation or commuting options are a personal benefit from trails. Persons with healthcare support or public safety occupations are the group most likely to say community connection and educational or learning experiences are benefits.

Support for Trail Development

When asked in which types of trails they would support additional development or expansion in their area, many rural Nebraskans would support development of the following: paved multi-use trails (42%), natural surface multi-use trails (38%), off-road vehicle trails (21%), and long-distance/ rail trails (20%) (Figure 9). Just under four in ten (37%) say no additional development is needed.

The types of trails in which additional development or expansion would be supported are examined by community size, region, and other individual attributes.

Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to say they would support additional development or expansion of the following trail types: paved multi-use trails, natural surface multi-use trails, mountain biking dedicated trails, long-distance/rail trails, water trails, winter recreation trails, and accessible trails. As an example, just over one-half of persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more (54%) support additional development of paved multi-use trails, compared to approximately one-quarter of persons living in or near communities with populations under 1,000.

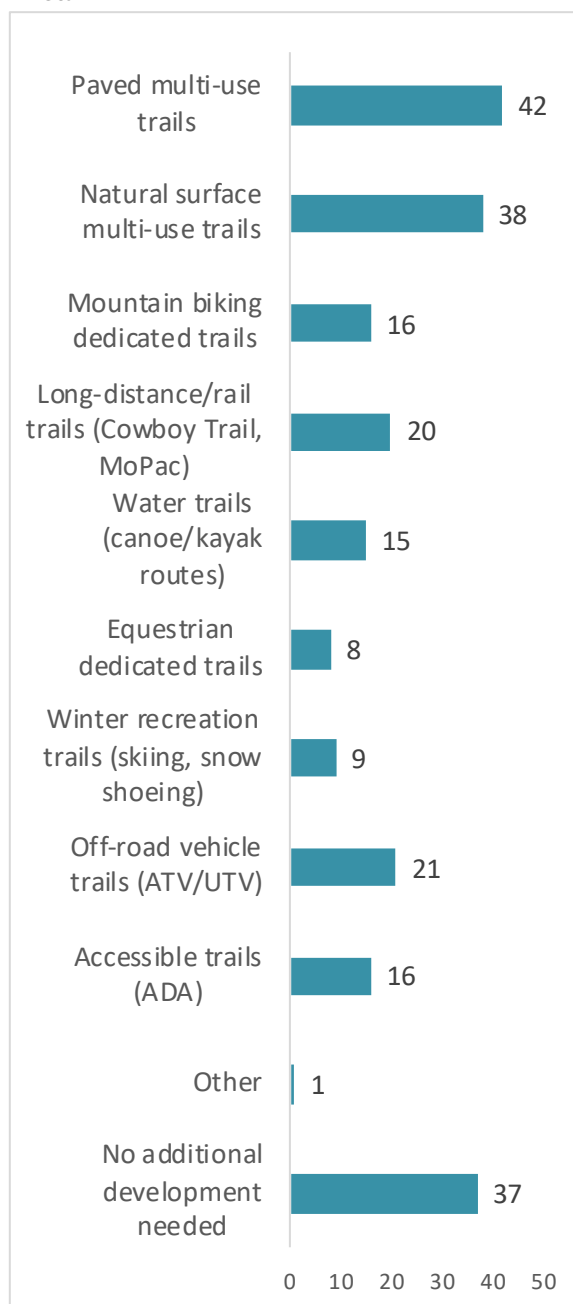
Residents of the Panhandle are the regional group most likely to support additional development of natural surface multi-use trails. Just under one-half of Panhandle residents (48%) support additional development of these trails, compared to under four in ten residents of the other regions.

Residents of the Southeast region are the group most likely to support development of long-distance/rail trails. Residents of both the Panhandle and North Central regions are the groups most likely to support development of off-road vehicle trails. Approximately three in ten residents of these two regions support development of off-road vehicle trails, compared to less than two in ten residents of the South Central region (15%).

Persons with higher income levels are more likely than persons with lower incomes to support the additional development of the following trail types: paved multi-use trails, natural surface multi-use trails, mountain biking dedicated trails, and water trails. Persons with household incomes between \$75,000 and \$99,999 are the income group most likely to support the additional development of off-road vehicle trails.

Persons age 30 to 49 are the age groups most likely to support the additional development of paved multi-use trails, natural surface multi-use trails, water trails, and winter recreation trails. Persons age 30 to 39 are the age group most likely to support the development of mountain

Figure 9. Type of Trails Would Support Additional Development or Expansion of in Area



biking dedicated trails (30% compared to 4% of persons age 65 and older).

Persons under the age of 50 are more likely than older persons to support the development of long-distance/rail trails, off-road vehicle trails, and accessible trails. As an example, approximately one-quarter of persons under the age of 50 support the additional development of off-road vehicle trails, compared to eight percent of persons age 65 and older.

Males are more likely than females to support the additional development of long-distance/rail trails. Just under one-quarter of males (24%) support the development of these trails, compared to 16 percent of females.

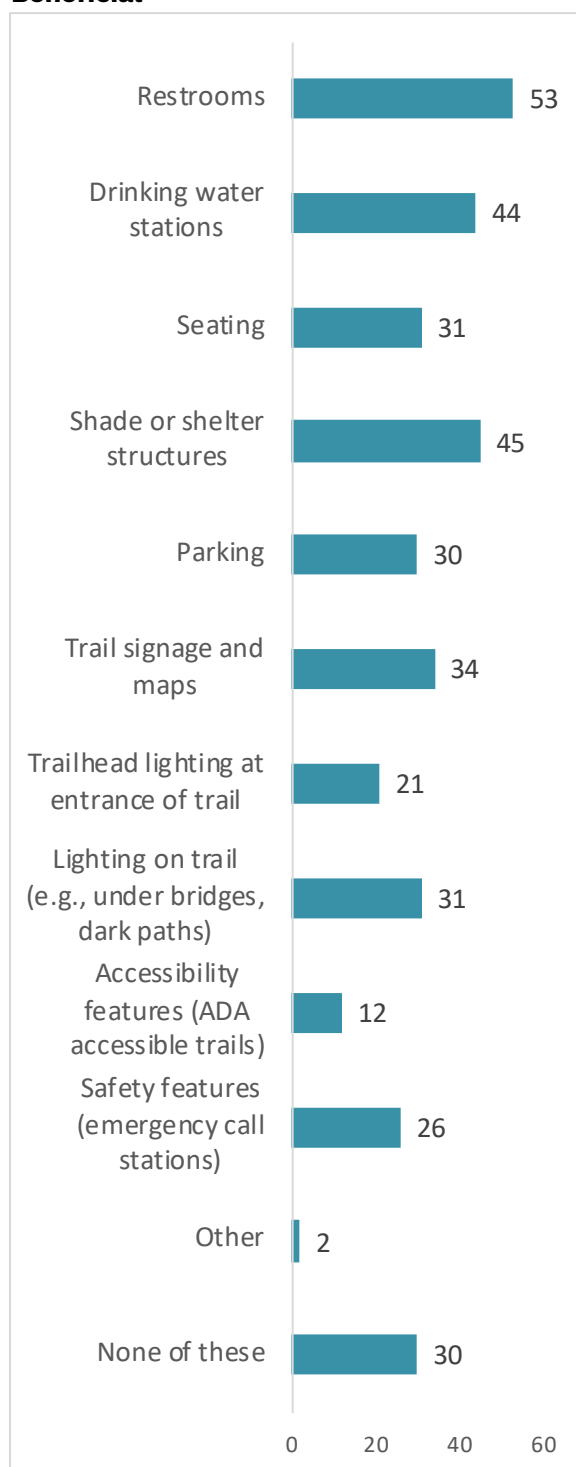
When comparing marital groups, widowed respondents are typically the least likely to support the development of various trail types. Persons who are divorced or separated are the group most likely to support additional development of water trails. Persons who have never married are the group most likely to support the development of off-road vehicle trails. Just over three in ten persons who have never married (31%) support development of off-road vehicle trails, compared to ten percent of persons age 65 and older.

Persons with higher education levels are more likely than persons with less education to support the development of the following trail types: paved multi-use trails, natural surface multi-use trails, long-distance/rail trails, and water trails. Persons with some college education but less than a four-year degree are the group most likely to support the development of mountain biking dedicated trails, off-road vehicle trails, and accessible trails.

When comparing responses by occupation, persons with healthcare support or public safety occupations are the group most likely to support the development of natural surface multi-use trails and off-road vehicles trails. Persons with management, professional, or education occupations join this group as those most likely to support long-distance/rail trails. Persons with management, professional, or education occupations are the group most likely to support the development of accessible trails.

Next, respondents were asked which trail amenities would be beneficial to them or their household. Many rural Nebraskans say restrooms (53%), shade or shelter structures (45%), drinking water stations (44%), trail signage and maps (34%) and lighting on trail (31%) would be beneficial trail amenities (Figure 10). Three in ten (30%) say none of these amenities would be beneficial.

Figure 10. Trail Amenities that Would be Beneficial



Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to say the following amenities would be beneficial: restrooms, drinking water stations, seating, parking, trail signage and maps, lighting on trail, accessibility features, and safety features. As an example, just

over one-half of persons living in or near communities with populations of 5,000 or more say drinking water stations would be a beneficial amenity, compared to just under three in ten persons living in or near communities with less than 500 people (28%).

Persons age 30 to 49 are more likely than persons of different ages to say the following amenities would be beneficial: drinking water stations, shade or shelter structures, and trail signage and maps. Persons age 30 to 39 are the age group most likely to say the following amenities would be beneficial: seating, trailhead lighting at trail entrance, lighting on trail, and safety features. Just under four in ten persons age 30 to 39 (37%) say safety features would be beneficial compared to approximately one-quarter of the other age groups.

Females are more likely than males to say most of the amenities would be beneficial. One-third of females (33%) say safety features would be beneficial, compared to just under two in ten males (17%).

Persons who have never married are the marital group most likely to say trail signage/maps, trailhead lighting, lighting

on trail, and safety features would be beneficial. Just over one-half of persons who have never married (51%) say lighting on trail would be beneficial, compared to 16 percent of widowed persons. Both persons who have never married and divorced or separated persons are the groups most likely to say seating would be beneficial.

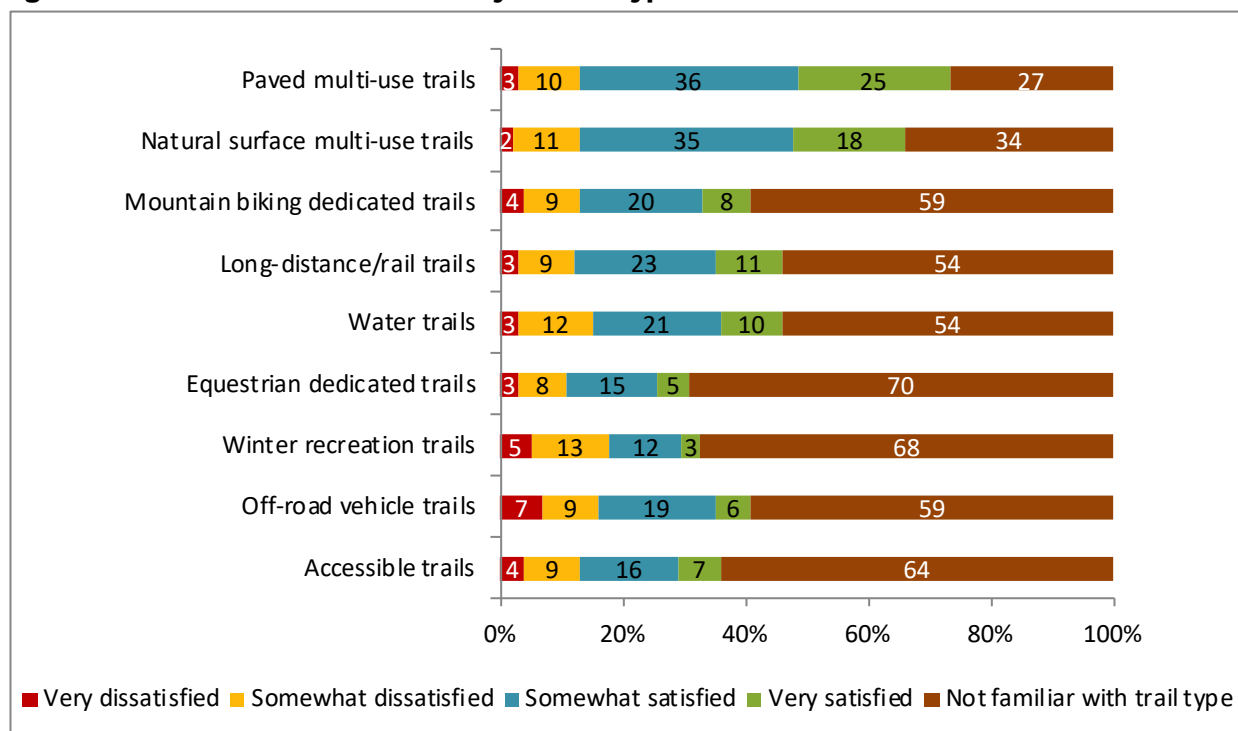
Persons with higher education levels are more likely than persons with less education to say that restrooms, drinking water stations, shade or shelter structures, parking, trail signage and maps, and lighting on trail would be beneficial.

Persons with healthcare support or public safety occupations are the occupation group most likely to say shade/shelter structures, trail signage/maps, and lighting on trail would be beneficial. Persons with management, professional, or education occupations are the group most likely to say parking would be beneficial.

Satisfaction with Trails

Respondents were also asked how satisfied they are with the availability of various trail types in Nebraska. They rated each on the following scale: very dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, somewhat satisfied, very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat satisfied,

Figure 11. Satisfaction with Availability of Trail Types in Nebraska



very satisfied, or not familiar with trail type. Most rural Nebraskans are very or somewhat satisfied with the availability of paved multi-use trails (60%) and natural surface multi-use trails (53%) (Figure 11). However, most rural Nebraskans say they are not familiar with the other trail types listed.

The satisfaction with the availability of trail types is examined by community size, region, and various individual attributes.

Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to be satisfied with the availability of paved multi-use trails. Almost seven in ten persons living in or near the largest communities are satisfied with the availability of paved multi-use trails, compared to approximately one-half of persons living in or near smaller communities.

However, persons living in or near the smallest communities are more likely than persons living in or near larger communities to be satisfied with the availability of mountain biking dedicated trails, water trails, equestrian trails, and off-road vehicle trails. Just over four in ten persons living in or near the smallest communities (populations under 500) (44%) are satisfied with the availability of off-road vehicle trails, compared to approximately two in ten persons living in or near larger communities.

Residents of both the North Central and South Central regions are more likely than residents of other regions to be satisfied with the availability of natural surface multi-use trails.

Approximately six in ten residents of these two regions are satisfied with the availability of these trails, compared to approximately one-half of the residents of the other regions of the state.

Residents of both the Panhandle and South Central regions are less likely than residents of the other regions to be satisfied with the availability of long-distance/rail trails in the state. And, residents of the Panhandle are the regional group least likely to be satisfied with the

availability of water trails in the state. Just under two in ten Panhandle residents (17%) are satisfied with the availability of water trails, compared to approximately three in ten residents of the other regions of the state.

Persons with higher household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to be satisfied with the availability of paved multi-use trails, natural surface multi-use trails, water trails, and winter recreation trails.

Persons age 40 to 49 are the age group most likely to be satisfied with the availability of natural surface multi-use trails and water trails. The youngest persons are the group most likely to be satisfied with the availability of mountain biking dedicated trails, long-distance/rail trails, equestrian trails, off-road vehicle trails, and accessible trails in the state. As an example, just under four in ten persons age 19 to 29 (38%) are satisfied with the availability of mountain biking dedicated trails, compared to just under two in ten persons age 65 and older (17%).

Males are more likely than females to be satisfied with the availability of long-distance/rail trails in the state. Four in ten males (40%) are satisfied with the availability of these trails, compared to just under three in ten females (28%).

Persons with higher education levels are more likely than persons with less education to be satisfied with the availability of paved multi-use trails, natural resource multi-use trails, long-distance/rail trails, and water trails.

Persons with healthcare support or public safety occupations and person with food service or personal care occupations are the occupation groups most likely to be satisfied with the availability of paved multi-use trails. Persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations are the group most likely to be satisfied with the availability of natural surface multi-use trails, long-distance/rail trails, water trails, and equestrian dedicated trails. Both persons with healthcare support and public safety occupations as well as persons with production,

transportation, or warehousing occupations are the groups most likely to be satisfied with the availability of mountain biking trails.

The respondents were next asked to rate their satisfaction with quality of the various trail types in Nebraska. Again, most rural Nebraskans are very or somewhat satisfied with the quality of paved multi-use trails (62%) and natural surface multi-use trails (56%) (Figure 12). Most rural Nebraskans are unfamiliar with the other trail types listed.

Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to be satisfied with the quality of paved multi-use trails. However, persons living in or near smaller communities are more likely than persons living in or near larger communities to be satisfied with the quality of water trails, equestrian dedicated trails, and off-road vehicle trails. As an example, just under four in ten persons living in or near the smallest communities (36%) are satisfied with the quality of equestrian dedicated trails, compared to under two in ten persons living in or near communities with populations over 1,000.

Residents of the South Central region are

more likely than residents of other regions of the state to be satisfied with the quality of paved multi-use trails in the state. Approximately two-thirds of South Central residents (67%) are satisfied, compared to just over one-half of residents of the Southeast region (53%).

Residents of the North Central region are the regional group most likely to express satisfaction with the quality of long-distance/rail trails. Just under one-half of the residents of the North Central region (49%) are satisfied, compared to approximately one-quarter of residents of both the Panhandle and South Central regions (Figure 13).

Residents of the North Central region are also most likely to say they are satisfied with the quality of water trails and off-road vehicle trails in the state. Four in ten residents of this region (40%) are satisfied with the quality of water trails, compared to under two in ten residents of the Panhandle (17%).

Persons with higher household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to be satisfied with the quality of paved multi-use trails, natural surface multi-use trails, mountain biking trails,

Figure 12. Satisfaction with Quality of Trail Types in Nebraska

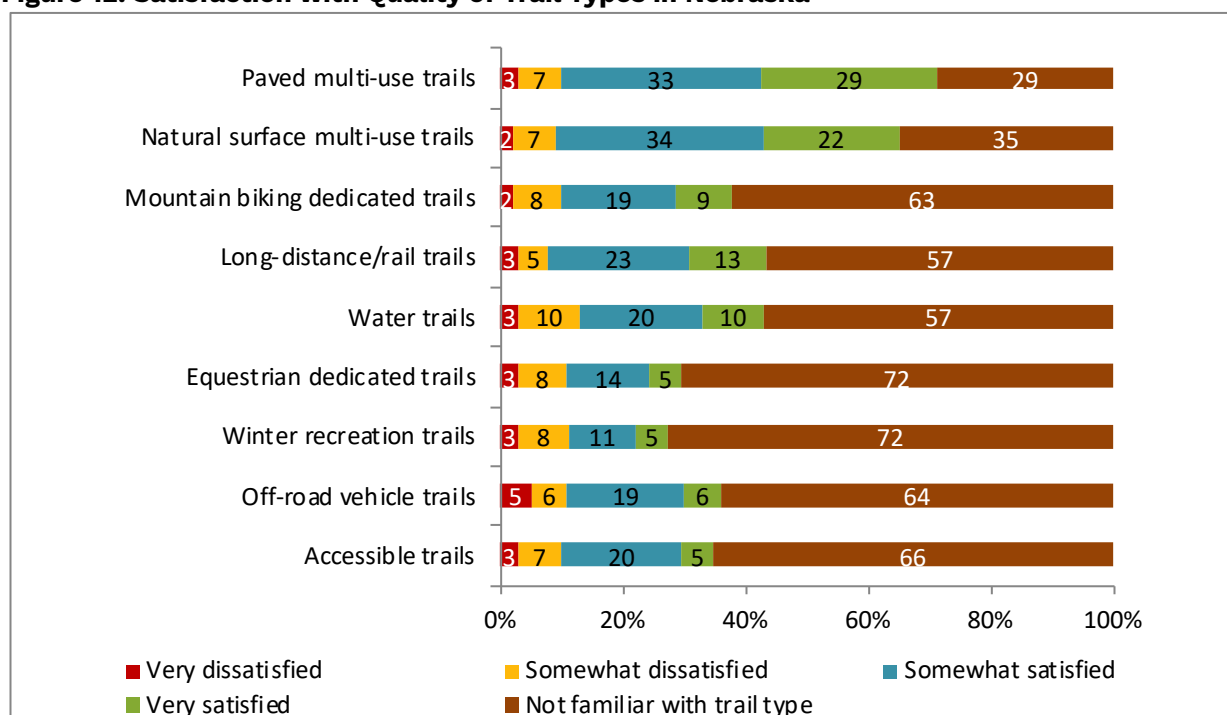
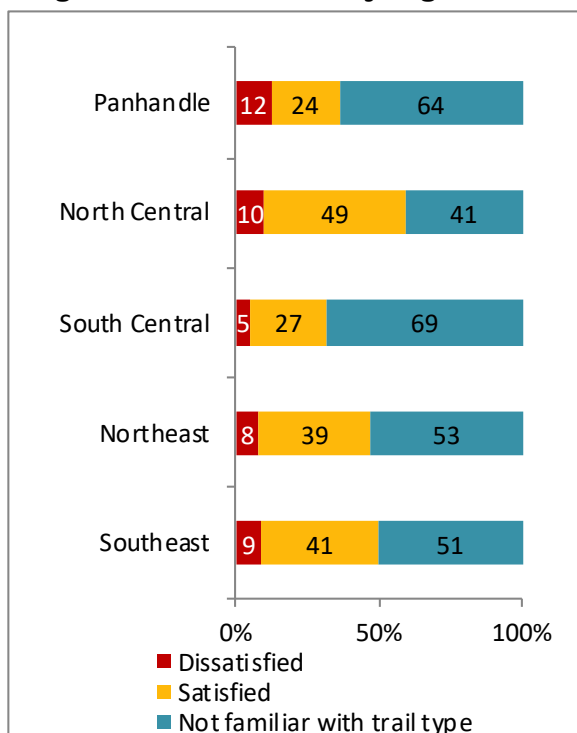


Figure 13. Satisfaction with Quality of Long-Distance/Rail Trails by Region



water trails, and winter recreation trails. However, persons with the lowest household incomes are more likely than persons with higher incomes to be satisfied with the quality of off-road vehicle trails in the state.

Persons age 40 to 49 are the age group most likely to be satisfied with the quality of the following trails in the state: paved multi-use trails, natural surface multi-use trails, mountain biking trails, and water trails.

The youngest persons are more likely than older persons to be satisfied with the quality of long-distance/rail trails, off-road vehicle trails, and accessible trails in the state. Just over one-half of persons age 19 to 29 (54%) are satisfied with the long-distance/rail trails, compared to just over two in ten persons age 65 and older (23%).

Males are more likely than females to be satisfied with the quality of long-distance/rail trails in the state.

Persons with higher education levels are more likely than persons with less education to be satisfied with the quality of the following trail types in Nebraska: paved

multi-use trails, natural surface multi-use trails, and water trails. Just over one-third of persons with at least a four-year degree (35%) are satisfied with the quality of water trails, compared to just under one-quarter of persons with a high school diploma or less (24%).

When comparing responses by occupation, persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations are the group most likely to be satisfied with the quality of the following trail types: paved multi-use trails, natural surface multi-use trails, and long-distance/rail trails.

Persons with healthcare support or public safety occupations as well as persons with production, transportation or warehousing occupations are the groups most likely to be satisfied with the quality of mountain biking trails in the state. Persons with healthcare support or public safety occupations are most likely to be satisfied with the quality of water trails and accessible trails. Persons with food service or personal care occupations are the group most likely to be satisfied with the quality of off-road vehicle trails.

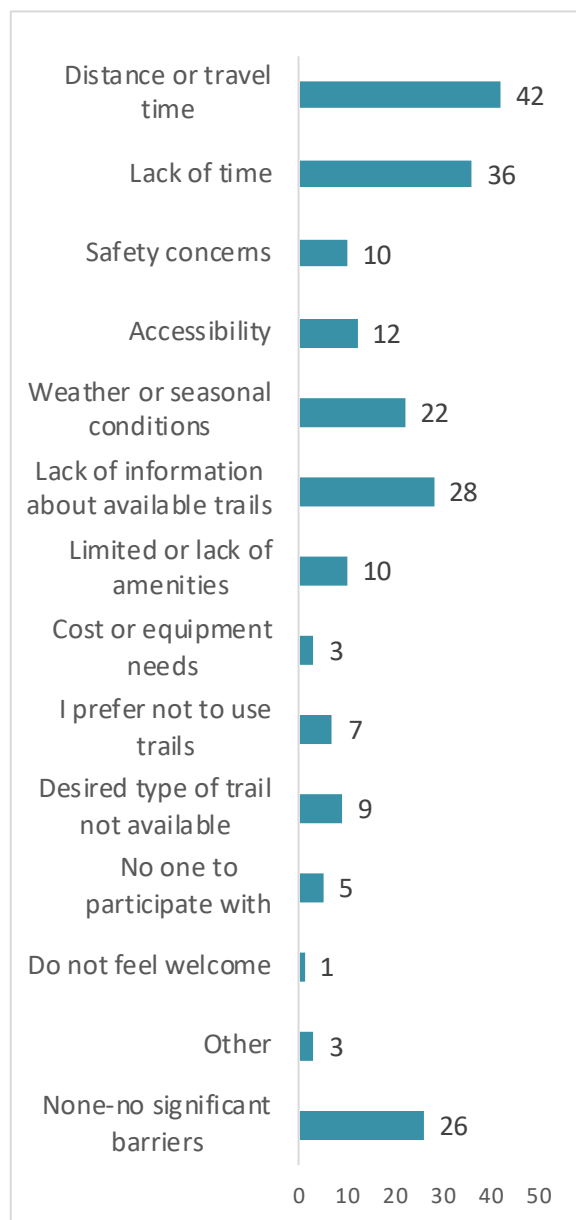
Factors Limiting Use of Trails

Finally, respondents were asked what factors, if any, limit their household's use of trails in Nebraska. Many rural Nebraskans say the following factors limit their household's use of trails in the state: distance or travel time (42%), lack of time (36%), and lack of information about available trails (28%) (Figure 14). Just over one-quarter (26%) say there are no significant barriers.

These limiting factors are examined by community size, region, and individual attributes.

Persons living in or near the smallest communities are more likely than persons living in or near larger communities to say accessibility is a limiting factor for their use of trails. Almost two in ten persons living in or near communities with populations under 500 (19%) say accessibility is a limiting factor, compared to four percent of persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 500 to 999.

Figure 14. Factors Limiting Household's Use of Trails



Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to say lack of information about available trails limits their household's use of trails. Approximately one-third of persons living in or near communities with populations of 5,000 or more say this is a factor, compared to approximately two in ten persons living in or near smaller communities.

Residents of the North Central region are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to say lack of time limits their household's use of trails in the state. Almost one-half (47%) of the residents of

this region say this is a factor, compared to just over one-quarter of the residents of the Panhandle and Southeast regions of the state. Residents of both the Panhandle and North Central regions are the groups most likely to say weather or seasonal conditions is a limiting factor.

Persons with the highest household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to say that distance or travel time and lack of time are factors that limit their use of trails. Persons with the lowest household incomes are more likely than persons with higher incomes to say the following are limiting factors: accessibility, cost or equipment needs, desired type of trail not available, and no one to participate with.

Persons between the ages of 30 and 49 are the groups most likely to say distance or travel time is a limiting factor for their use of trails. Persons under the age of 50 are the groups most likely to say that lack of time and weather or seasonal conditions are limiting factors. The youngest persons are more likely than older persons to say lack of information about available trails limits their use of trails. Just under one-half of persons age 19 to 29 (46%) say lack of information is a factor, compared to just over one in ten persons age 65 and older (11%). The youngest persons are also most likely to say desired type of trail is not available is a limiting factor (21% compared to 2 percent of persons age 65 and older).

Females are more likely than males to say safety concerns, weather or seasonal conditions, lack of information about available trails, and limited or lack of amenities limit their use of trails. Fourteen percent of females cite safety concerns as a factor, compared to five percent of males.

Persons who have never married are the marital group most likely to say safety concerns limit their use of trails. Just over two in ten persons who have never married (22%) say this is a limiting factor, compared to six percent of married persons. Both persons who have never married and persons who have divorced or separated are the groups most likely to say lack of information about available trails and limited or lack of amenities are factors.

Persons with at least some college education are more likely than persons with less education to say distance or travel time, lack of time, weather or seasonal conditions, and lack of information about available trails are limiting factors.

Persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to say lack of time limits their use of trails. Persons with food service or personal care occupations are the group most likely to cite lack of information about available trails as a limiting factor. Limited or lack of amenities was most often cited by persons with healthcare support or public safety occupations. Persons with occupations in agriculture are the group most likely to say they prefer not to use trails.

CONCLUSION

Paved multi-use trails and natural surface multi-use trails are the most used trail types by rural Nebraska. Many rural Nebraskans have used paved multi-use trails and natural surface multi-use trails in the past year. However, many rural Nebraskans have not used any of the listed trail types in the past 12 months.

Use of the trails varies by many characteristics examined. For example, persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to have used paved multi-use trails.

Exercise or fitness is the most cited reason by rural Nebraskans for using trails. Many also use trails for enjoying nature or scenery, recreation or leisure, and spending time with family or friends. Similarly, most rural Nebraskans say trails provide the following benefits to their household: exercise or improve physical fitness, improve mental health or stress reduction, spend time with family, friends, or pets, and connect with nature or observe wildlife.

Many rural Nebraskans support additional development or expansion of the following trail types in their area: paved multi-use trails, natural surface multi-use trails,

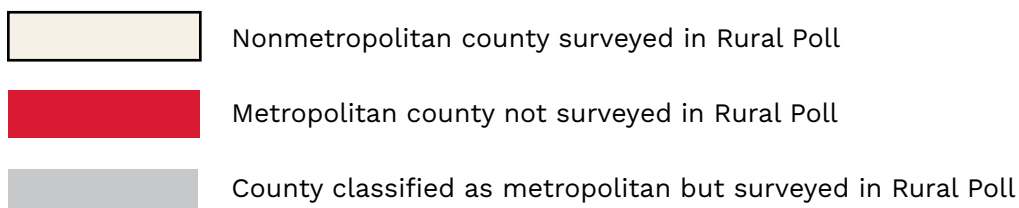
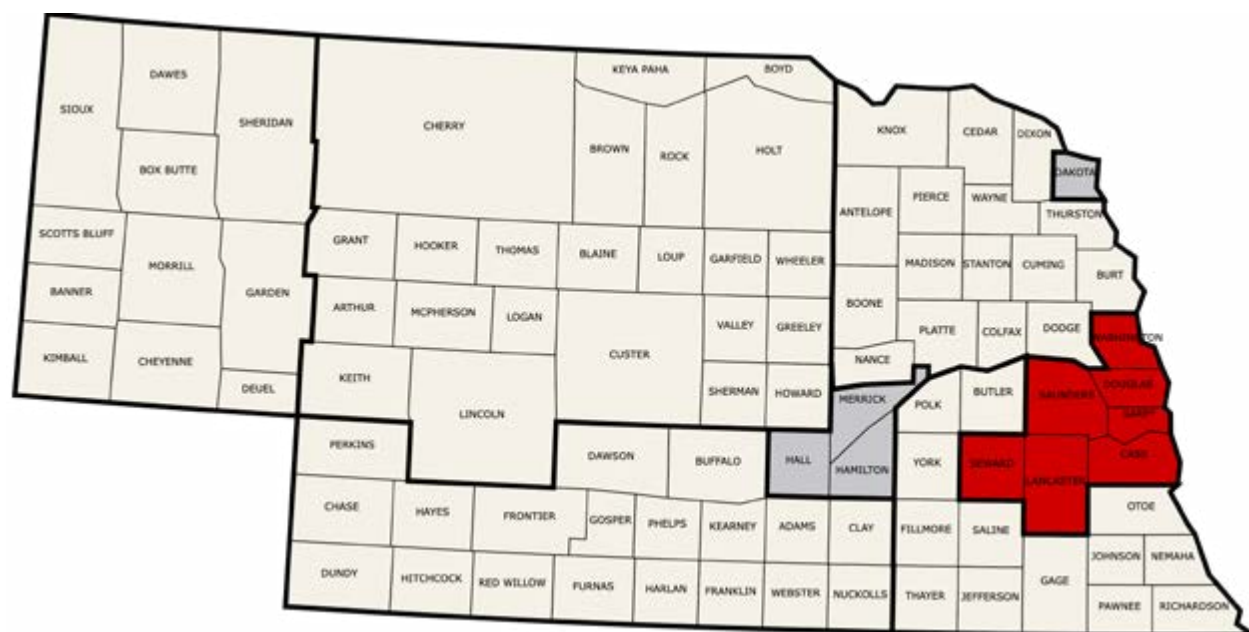
off-road vehicle trails, and long-distance/rail trails. Just under four in ten say no additional development is needed.

Many rural Nebraskans say restrooms, shade or shelter structures, drinking water stations, trail signage and maps and lighting on trail would be beneficial trail amenities for their household.

Most rural Nebraskans are very or somewhat satisfied with the availability of paved multi-use trails and natural surface multi-use trails. However, most rural Nebraskans say they are not familiar with the other trail types listed. Similarly, most rural Nebraskans are very or somewhat satisfied with the quality of paved multi-use trails and natural surface multi-use trails. Again, most rural Nebraskans are unfamiliar with the other trail types listed.

Many rural Nebraskans say the following factors limit their household's use of trails in the state: distance or travel time, lack of time, and lack of information about available trails. Just over one-quarter say there are no significant barriers.

Appendix Figure 1. Nebraska Rural Poll Regions
Top left to Bottom Right: Panhandle, North Central, Northeast, South Central, Southeast





RURAL POLL

**Nebraska Rural Poll
Research Report 26-3
results compiled by:**

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