NEBRASKA RURAL POLL

A Research Report

Optimism in Nonmetropolitan Nebraska: Perceptions of Well-Being

2015 Nebraska Rural Poll Results

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Executive Summary

Nebraska farm income decreased nearly 35 percent from 2014 to 2013. This resulted in Nebraska being the only state in the country to experience a drop in per capita personal income last year. However, hourly earnings in manufacturing have increased in 2015 compared to last year. Given the challenges and uncertainties of recent years, 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 twenty years? This paper provides a detailed analysis of these questions.

This report details 1,991 responses to the 2015 Nebraska Rural Poll, the twentieth annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about their wellbeing. Trends for some of the questions are examined by comparing data from the nineteen 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:

- ***This year, rural Nebraskans are the most positive about their current situation as they've been in all 20 years of this study.*** Just over one-half (53%) of rural Nebraskans believe they are better off than they were five years ago (the highest proportion in all 20 years of this study, tied in 2008). This is up slightly from 50 percent last year. The proportion of rural Nebraskans who believe they are worse off than they were five years ago decreased from 17 percent last year to 15 percent this year.

- ***Rural Nebraskans' outlook on their future is the most optimistic in all 20 years of this study.*** Almost one-half of rural Nebraskans (48%) believe they will be better off ten years from now (the highest of all 20 years). This is up slightly from 44 percent last year. The proportion of respondents stating they will be worse off ten years from now declined from 22 percent last year to 17 percent this year.

- ***This year, rural Nebraskans are less likely to agree that people are powerless to control their own lives than they were last year.*** The proportion of rural Nebraskans that either strongly agree or agree with the statement has remained fairly consistent each year, averaging around 32 percent. That proportion increased from 25 percent in 2012 to 32 percent last year, before declining to 26 percent this year.

- ***Following trends in previous years, rural Nebraskans are most satisfied with their marriage, family, friends, religion/spirituality and the outdoors. They continue to be less satisfied with job opportunities, current income level and financial security during retirement.*** Three items had increases in the level of satisfaction this year as compared to last year: your transportation, your spare time and your ability to afford your residence. As an example, 70 percent of rural Nebraskans are satisfied with their ability to afford their residence this year, compared to 65 percent last year. Two items saw declines in satisfaction compared to last year, clean air and clean water. The percent satisfied with clean air declined from 85 percent last year, to 80 percent this year. And, those satisfied with clean water declined from 80 percent last year to 76 percent this year.

- ***Younger persons are more likely than older persons to believe they are better off compared to five years ago, are better off compared to their parents when they were their age and will be better off ten years from now.*** Just over three-quarters (76%) of persons age 19 to 29 believe they are much better off or better off than they were five years ago. However, just over three in ten persons age 65 and older (32%) share this opinion. Similarly, over eight in ten persons age 19 to 29 (82%) believe they will be much better off or better off ten years from now, compared to only 16 percent of persons age 65 and older.

- ***Persons living in or near the largest communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to be optimistic about the future.*** Over one-half (53%) of persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more believe they will be better off or much better off ten years from now, compared to approximately 42 percent of persons living in or near communities with less than 1,000 people.

- ***Persons with the highest household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to feel they are better off compared to five years ago, are better off compared to their parents when they were their age, and will be better off ten years from now.*** For example, 68 percent of respondents with household incomes of $60,000 or more think they are much better off or better off than they were five years ago. However, only 26 percent of persons with household incomes under $20,000 share this optimism. And, 60 percent of persons with household incomes over $60,000 think they will be much better off or better off ten years from now, compared to 25 percent of persons with household incomes under $20,000.

- ***Persons with lower education levels are more likely than persons with more education to believe that people are powerless to control their own lives.*** Thirty-seven percent of persons with a high school diploma or less education agree that people are powerless to control their own lives. However, only 19 percent of persons with at least a four-year college degree share this opinion.

- ***Persons with lower household incomes are more likely than persons with higher household incomes to report being dissatisfied with their job opportunities.*** Over one-half (52%) of persons with household incomes under $20,000 are dissatisfied with their job opportunities, compared to 28 percent of persons with household incomes of $60,000 or more.

Introduction

Nebraska farm income decreased nearly 35 percent from 2014 to 2013. This resulted in Nebraska being the only state in the country to experience a drop in per capita personal income last year. However, hourly earnings in manufacturing have increased in 2015 compared to last year. Given the challenges and uncertainties of recent years, 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 twenty years? This paper provides a detailed analysis of these questions.

This report details 1,991 responses to the 2015 Nebraska Rural Poll, the twentieth annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about their well-being.

Methodology and Respondent Profile

This study is based on 1,991 responses from Nebraskans living in 86 counties in the state.[1] A self-administered questionnaire was mailed in April to 6,228 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, climate and energy, community involvement, and education. This paper reports only results from the wellbeing section.

A 32% 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 director approximately seven days later.
3. A reminder postcard was sent to the entire sample approximately seven days after the questionnaire had been sent.
4. Those who had not yet responded within approximately 14 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 2010 U.S. Census and the 2009 - 2013 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 two 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 (using U.S. Census figures from 2010).

1 In the spring of 2013, the Grand Island area (Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick Counties) was designated a metropolitan area. To facilitate comparisons from previous years, these four counties are still included in our sample. In addition, the Sioux City area metropolitan counties of Dixon and Dakota were added this year because of a joint Metro Poll being conducted by the University of Nebraska at Omaha that ensures 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 average age of respondents is 51 years. Sixty-eight percent are married (Appendix Table 1) and 72 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 27 years. Fifty-five 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.

Thirty percent of the respondents report their 2014 approximate household income from all sources, before taxes, as below $40,000. Fifty-eight percent report incomes over $50,000.

Seventy-six percent were employed in 2014 on a full-time, part-time, or seasonal basis. Seventeen percent are retired. Thirty-five percent of those employed reported working in a management, professional, or education occupation. Fourteen percent indicated they were employed in agriculture.

Trends in Well-Being (1996 - 2015)

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

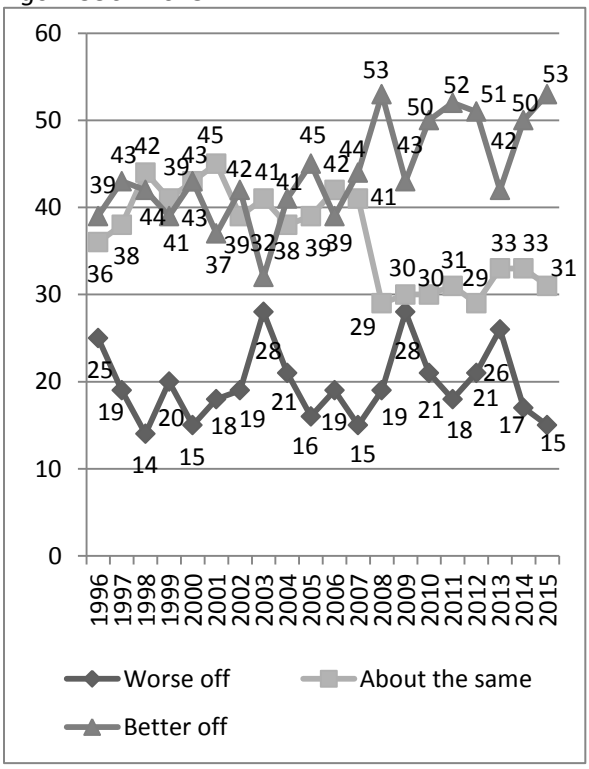
General Well-Being

To examine perceptions of general well-being, respondents were asked four questions.
1. "All things considered, do you think you are better or worse off than you were five years ago?" (Answer categories were worse off, about the same, or better off).
2. "All things considered, do you think you are better or worse off than your parents when they were your age?"
3. "All things considered, do you think you will be better or worse off ten years from now than you are today?"
4. "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Life has changed so much in our modern world that most people are powerless to control their own lives."

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

When examining the trends over the past twenty years, rural Nebraskans have generally given positive reviews about their current situation (Figure 1). Each year the proportion of rural Nebraskans that say they are better off than they were five years ago has been greater than the proportion saying they are worse off

Figure 1. *Well-Being Compared to Five Years Ago: 1996 - 2015*

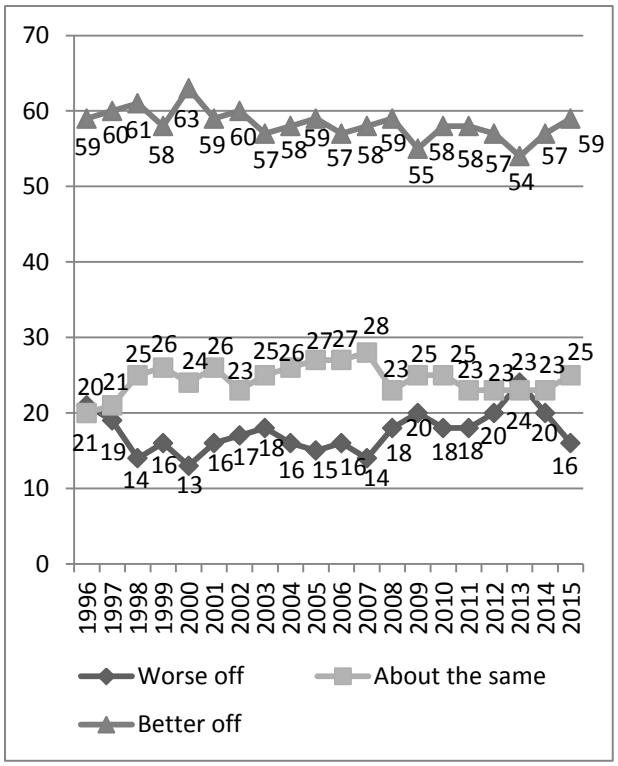


than they were five years ago.

This year, rural Nebraskans are the most positive about their current situation as they've been in all 20 years of this study. Just over one-half (53%) of rural Nebraskans believe they are better off than they were five years ago (the highest proportion in all 20 years of this study, tied in 2008). This is up slightly from 50 percent last year. The proportion of rural Nebraskans who believe they are worse off than they were five years ago decreased from 17 percent last year to 15 percent this year.

When asked to compare themselves to their parents when they were their age, the responses have been very stable over time (Figure 2). The proportion stating they are better off has averaged approximately 58 percent over the twenty year period. Similarly, the proportion feeling they are worse off than their parents has remained steady at approximately 17 percent during this period.

Figure 2. *Well-Being Compared to Parents: 1996 - 2015*

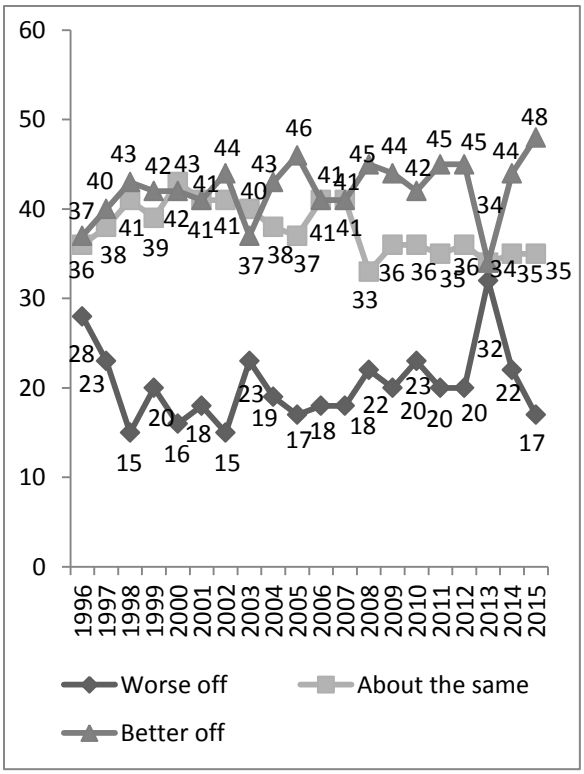


When looking to the future, respondents' views have also been generally positive (Figure 3). The proportion saying they will be better off ten years from now has always been greater than the proportion saying they will be worse off ten years from now.

Rural Nebraskans' outlook on their future is the most optimistic in all 20 years of this study. Almost one-half of rural Nebraskans (48%) believe they will be better off ten years from now (the highest of all 20 years). This is up from 44 percent last year. The proportion of respondents stating they will be worse off ten years from now declined from 22 percent last year to 17 percent this year.

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

Figure 3. *Well-Being Ten Years from Now: 1996 - 2015*

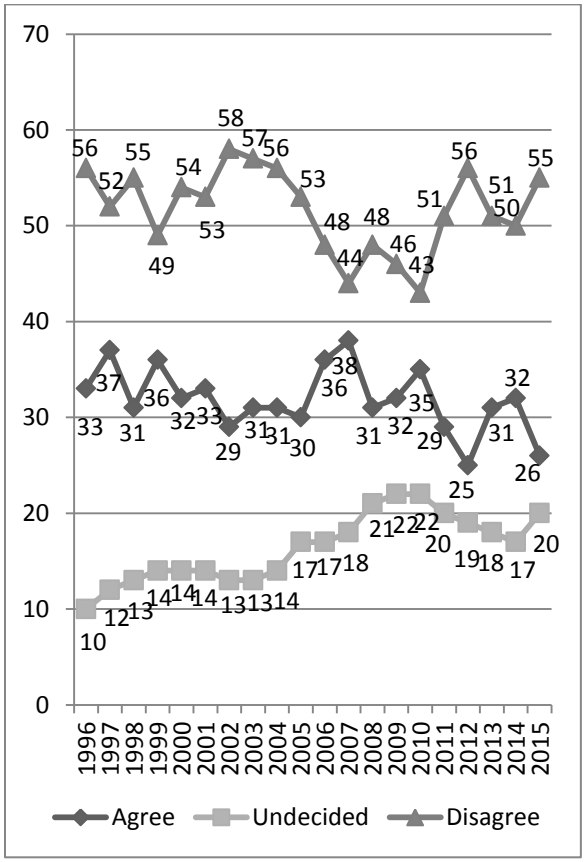


In addition to asking about general well-being, rural Nebraskans were asked about the amount of control they feel they have over their lives. To measure this, respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:

"Life has changed so much in our modern world that most people are powerless to control their own lives."

Each year, more rural Nebraskans disagree that people are powerless to control their own lives than agree with that statement (Figure 4). This year, rural Nebraskans are less likely to agree with that statement than they were last year. The proportion of rural Nebraskans that either strongly agree or agree with the statement has remained fairly consistent each year, averaging around 32 percent. That proportion increased from 25 percent in 2012 to 32 percent last year, before declining to 26 percent this year. The proportion that either strongly disagree or disagree with the statement generally declined between 2002 and 2010, from 58 percent to 43 percent (the lowest in the 20 year period). However, the proportion then increased to 56 percent in 2012 before declining to 50 percent last year. But, it increased to 55 percent this year. The proportion of those who were undecided each year first increased over time, from 10 percent in 1996 to 22 percent in 2010. It then declined to 17 percent last year before increasing slightly to 20 percent this year.

Figure 4. *"…People are Powerless to Control Their Own Lives": 1996 - 2015*



Satisfaction with Specific Aspects of Life

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

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

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

Three items had increases in the level of satisfaction this year as compared to last year: your transportation, your spare time and your ability to afford your residence. As an example, 70 percent of rural Nebraskans are satisfied

Table 1. *Proportions of Respondents Very or Somewhat Satisfied with Each Factor, 1996 - 2015.**

Item	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Your marriage	NA	NA	91	92	93	92	93	92	94	92	94	90	92	92	90	90	90	91	91	93
Your day to day personal safety	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	87	88
Your family	90	93	92	89	93	89	90	90	90	89	91	88	91	85	89	89	87	86	87	87
Your transportation	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	82	85
Your general quality of life	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	82	84	86	81	83	83	83
Greenery and open space	NA	NA	90	87	86	86	87	82	80	83	85	80	82	80	81	82	84	74	82	82
Clean air	NA	NA	NA	NA	80	81	82	79	78	79	80	74	80	75	79	82	79	76	85	80
Your general standard of living	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	77	79	83	79	79	80	80
Your friends	84	85	87	84	87	86	85	85	86	83	84	82	85	82	84	84	81	80	79	80
Your education	73	73	74	74	76	72	74	74	72	71	74	74	77	67	74	77	74	73	77	77
Your housing	NA	75	81	80	80	78	78	79	77	78	76	73	77	73	76	77	74	74	76	77
Your religion/ spirituality	79	79	81	78	83	79	79	78	78	75	75	78	79	75	77	76	78	76	75	77
Clean water	NA	NA	NA	NA	73	75	76	75	73	73	74	68	76	72	77	78	76	77	80	76
Your job satisfaction	68	69	69	66	70	69	70	68	72	72	69	68	76	71	70	72	71	72	73	74
Your health	78	81	78	75	77	74	74	75	73	71	73	74	77	66	73	75	70	71	72	73
Your job security	63	64	63	59	68	66	65	62	66	65	66	64	73	59	66	67	67	65	73	72
Your spare time**	54	NA	71	65	71	66	67	67	66	65	68	68	71	66	67	72	70	66	66	70
Your ability to afford your residence	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	65	70
Your community	65	64	70	68	70	67	63	62	64	66	62	62	66	63	64	65	59	58	64	64
Your current income level	54	58	53	46	51	48	48	47	49	48	50	50	53	47	50	55	53	53	55	56
Your ability to build assets/ wealth	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	51	51
Job opportunities	39	41	38	37	36	38	37	35	34	39	43	40	48	32	42	38	46	44	44	46
Financial security during retirement	43	47	43	38	43	37	38	30	34	38	39	39	38	24	32	38	35	35	39	41

Note: The list of items was not identical in each study. "NA" means that item was not asked that particular year.
* The proportions were calculated out of those answering the question. The respondents checking "does not apply" were not included in the calculations.
** Worded as "time to relax during the week" in 1996 study.

with their ability to afford their residence this year, compared to 65 percent last year. Two items saw declines in satisfaction compared to last year, clean air and clean water. The percent satisfied with clean air declined from 85 percent last year, to 80 percent this year. And, those satisfied with clean water declined from 80 percent last year to 76 percent this year.

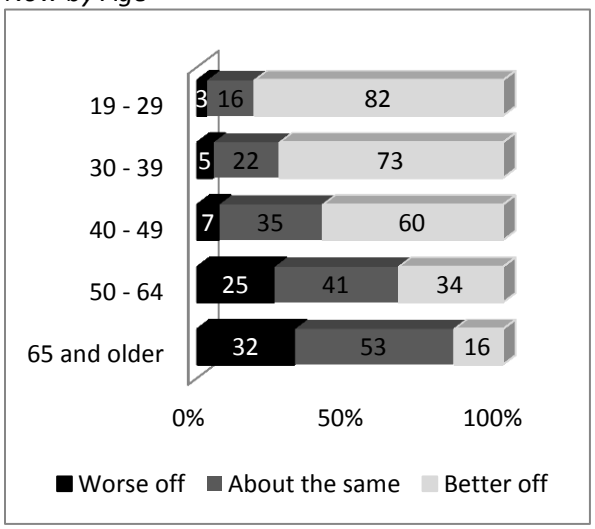
General Well-Being by Subgroups

In this section, the 2015 data on the four general measures of well-being are analyzed and reported for the region in which the respondent lives, by the size of their community, and for various individual characteristics (Appendix Table 2).

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to believe they are better off compared to five years ago, are better off compared to their parents when they were their age and will be better off ten years from now. Just over three-quarters (76%) of persons age 19 to 29 believe they are much better off or better off than they were five years ago. However, just over three in ten persons age 65 and older (32%) share this opinion. Similarly, over eight in ten persons age 19 to 29 (82%) believe they will be much better off or better off ten years from now, compared to only 16 percent of persons age 65 and older (Figure 5).

Persons with the highest household incomes are more likely than persons with lower incomes to feel they are better off compared to five years ago, are better off compared to their parents when they were their age, and will be better off ten years from now. For example, 68 percent of respondents with household incomes of $60,000 or more think they are much better off or better off than they were five years ago. However, only 26 percent of persons with household incomes under $20,000 share this optimism. And, 60 percent of persons with household incomes over $60,000 think they will be much better off or better off ten years from now, compared to 25 percent of persons with household incomes under $20,000.

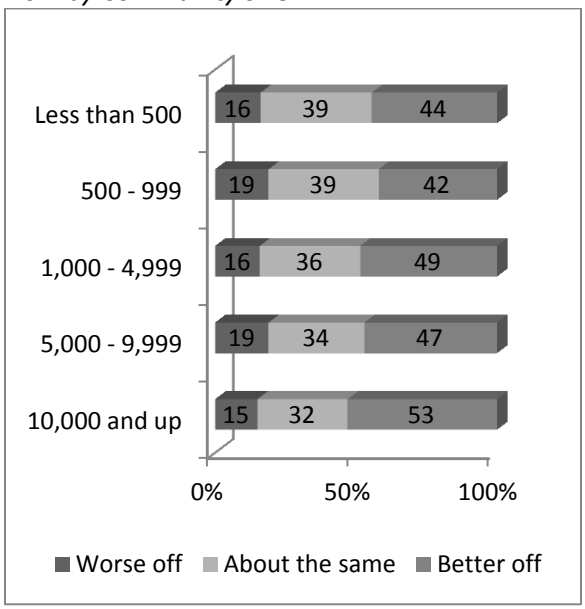
Figure 5. *Expected Well-Being Ten Years from Now by Age*



Persons with higher educational levels are more likely than persons with less education to think they are better off compared to five years ago, are better off compared to their parents when they were their age and will be better off ten years from now. Approximately two-thirds of persons with at least a four-year college degree (67%) believe they are much better off or better off than they were five years ago. Only 36 percent of persons with a high school diploma or less education think they are better off than they were five years ago. And, almost six in ten persons with the highest education levels (59%) believe they will be much better off or better off ten years from now. Only 35 percent of persons with a high school diploma or less education share this optimism.

Persons living in or near the largest communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to be optimistic about the future. Over one-half (53%) of persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more believe they will be better off or much better off ten years from now, compared to approximately 42 percent of persons living in or near communities with less than 1,000 people (Figure 6).

Figure 6. *Expected Well-Being Ten Years from Now by Community Size*



Respondents living in the Northeast region are more likely than persons living in other regions of the state to believe they are better off compared to their parents when they were their age. Sixty-four percent of Northeast region residents believe they are better off than their parents when they were their age, compared to 54 percent of Panhandle residents.

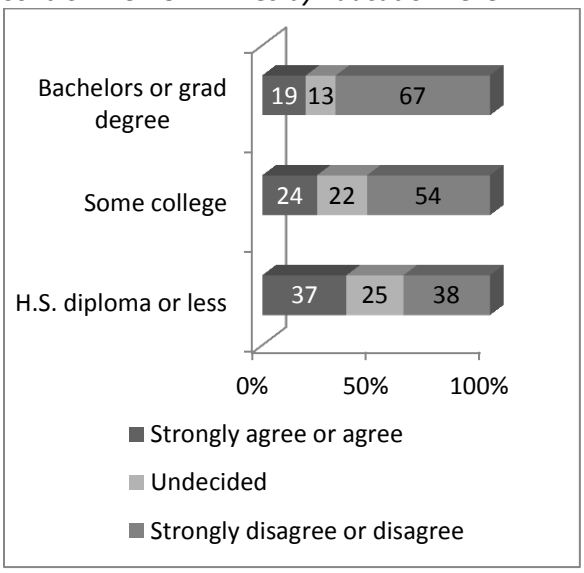
When comparing the marital groups, married persons are the group most likely to believe they are better off than they were five years ago and are better off compared to their parents when they were their age. Sixty percent of married persons believe they are better off than they were five years ago. Only 26 percent of widowed persons share this opinion. However, the persons who have never married are the group most likely to believe they will be better off ten years from now. Over one-half (58%) of persons who have never married think they will be better off ten years from now, compared to only 17 percent of widowed persons.

Persons with healthcare support or public safety occupations are the occupation group most likely to believe they are better off compared to five years ago. Seventy percent of persons with these types of occupations believe they are better off compared to five years ago. In comparison, only 33 percent of persons with food service or personal care occupations share the same opinion. Persons with management, professional or education occupations are the group most likely to believe they are better off compared to their parents when they were their age and will be better off ten years from now. Approximately two-thirds (67%) of persons with these types of occupations believe they will be better off ten years from now. Only 25 percent of persons with occupations classified as other share this optimism.

The respondents were also asked if they believe people are powerless to control their own lives. When analyzing the responses by region, community size, and various individual attributes, many differences emerge (Appendix Table 3). Persons with lower educational levels are more likely than persons with more education to believe that people are powerless to control their own lives. Thirty-seven percent of persons with a high school diploma or less education agree that people are powerless to control their own lives (Figure 7). However, only 19 percent of persons with at least a four-year college degree share this opinion.

Persons with food service or personal care occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to agree that people are powerless to control their own lives. Almost one-half (45%) of persons with these types of occupations agree with that statement, compared to 15 percent of persons with healthcare support or public safety occupations.

Figure 7. *Belief that People are Powerless to Control Their Own Lives by Education Level*



Older persons are more likely than younger persons to agree that people are powerless to control their own lives. Thirty-four percent of persons age 65 and older agree with the statement, compared to 16 percent of persons under the age of 30.

The other groups most likely to believe people are powerless to control their own lives include persons with lower household incomes and widowed persons.

Specific Aspects of Well-Being by Subgroups

The respondents were given a list of items that may influence their well-being and were asked to rate their satisfaction with each. The complete ratings for each item are listed in Appendix Table 4. At least four in ten respondents are very satisfied with their family (54%), their marriage (53%), greenery and open space (43%), their religion/spirituality (42%), their day to day personal safety (41%), their friends (41%), and their transportation (40%).

Items receiving the highest proportion of very dissatisfied responses include: financial security during retirement (17%), current income level (10%), and their job opportunities (10%).

The top five items people are dissatisfied with (determined by the largest proportions of "very dissatisfied" and "dissatisfied" responses) will now be examined in more detail by looking at how the different demographic subgroups view each item. These comparisons are shown in Appendix Table 5.

Respondents' satisfaction level with their financial security during retirement differs by all of the individual characteristics examined. Persons with lower household incomes are more likely than persons with higher incomes to be dissatisfied with their financial security during retirement. Sixty-seven percent of persons with household incomes under $20,000 report being dissatisfied with their financial security during retirement, compared to 34 percent of persons with household incomes of $60,000 or more.

Persons between the ages of 40 and 49 are the age group most likely to be dissatisfied with their financial security during retirement. Just over one-half (51%) of persons age 40 to 49 are dissatisfied with their financial security during retirement, compared to 30 percent of persons age 65 and older.

Other groups most likely to be dissatisfied with their financial security during retirement include: females, persons with lower education levels, divorced or separated respondents, and persons with food service or personal care occupations.

Persons with lower household incomes are more likely than persons with higher household incomes to be dissatisfied with their current

income level. Almost six in ten persons with household incomes under $20,000 (59%) report being dissatisfied with their current income level, compared to 19 percent of persons with household incomes of $60,000 or more.

Persons with food service or personal care occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to express dissatisfaction with their current income level. Fifty-eight percent of persons with these types of occupations are dissatisfied with their current income level, compared to 20 percent of persons with agriculture occupations.

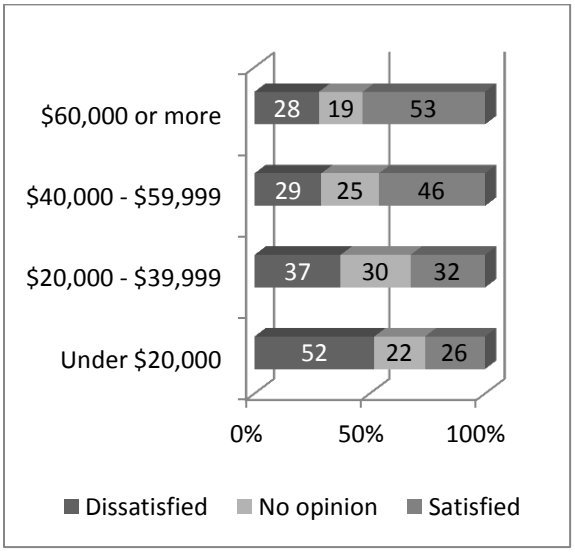
Other groups most likely to report being dissatisfied with their current income level include: persons living in or near the largest communities, persons age 40 to 64, females, persons with lower education levels, and persons who are divorced or separated.

Persons with lower household incomes are more likely than persons with higher household incomes to report being dissatisfied with their job opportunities (Figure 8). Over one-half (52%) of persons with household incomes under $20,000 are dissatisfied with their job opportunities, compared to 28 percent of persons with household incomes of $60,000 or more.

Persons with food service or personal care occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to express dissatisfaction with their job opportunities. Sixty percent of persons with these types of occupations are dissatisfied with their job opportunities, compared to 17 percent of persons with occupations in agriculture.

Other groups most likely to say they are dissatisfied with their job opportunities include:

Figure 8. *Satisfaction with Job Opportunities by Household Income*



persons between the ages of 30 and 64, females, persons with the lowest education levels, persons who have never married and persons who are divorced or separated.

Persons with lower household incomes are more likely than persons with higher household incomes to express dissatisfaction with their ability to build assets/wealth. Over one-half (54%) of persons with household incomes under $20,000 are dissatisfied with their ability to build assets/wealth. In comparison, only 20 percent of persons with household incomes of $60,000 or more share this dissatisfaction.

Other groups most likely to express dissatisfaction with their ability to build assets/wealth include: persons age 40 to 64, persons with the lowest education levels, divorced or separated respondents, and persons with food service or personal care occupations.

Persons with lower household incomes are more likely than persons with higher incomes to express dissatisfaction with their community.

Just over three in ten persons with household incomes under $20,000 (31%) are dissatisfied with their community, compared to approximately 14 percent of persons with household incomes of $40,000 or more.

Other groups most likely to be dissatisfied with their community include: persons age 40 to 49, persons with the lowest education levels, persons who are divorced or separated and persons with food service or personal care occupations.

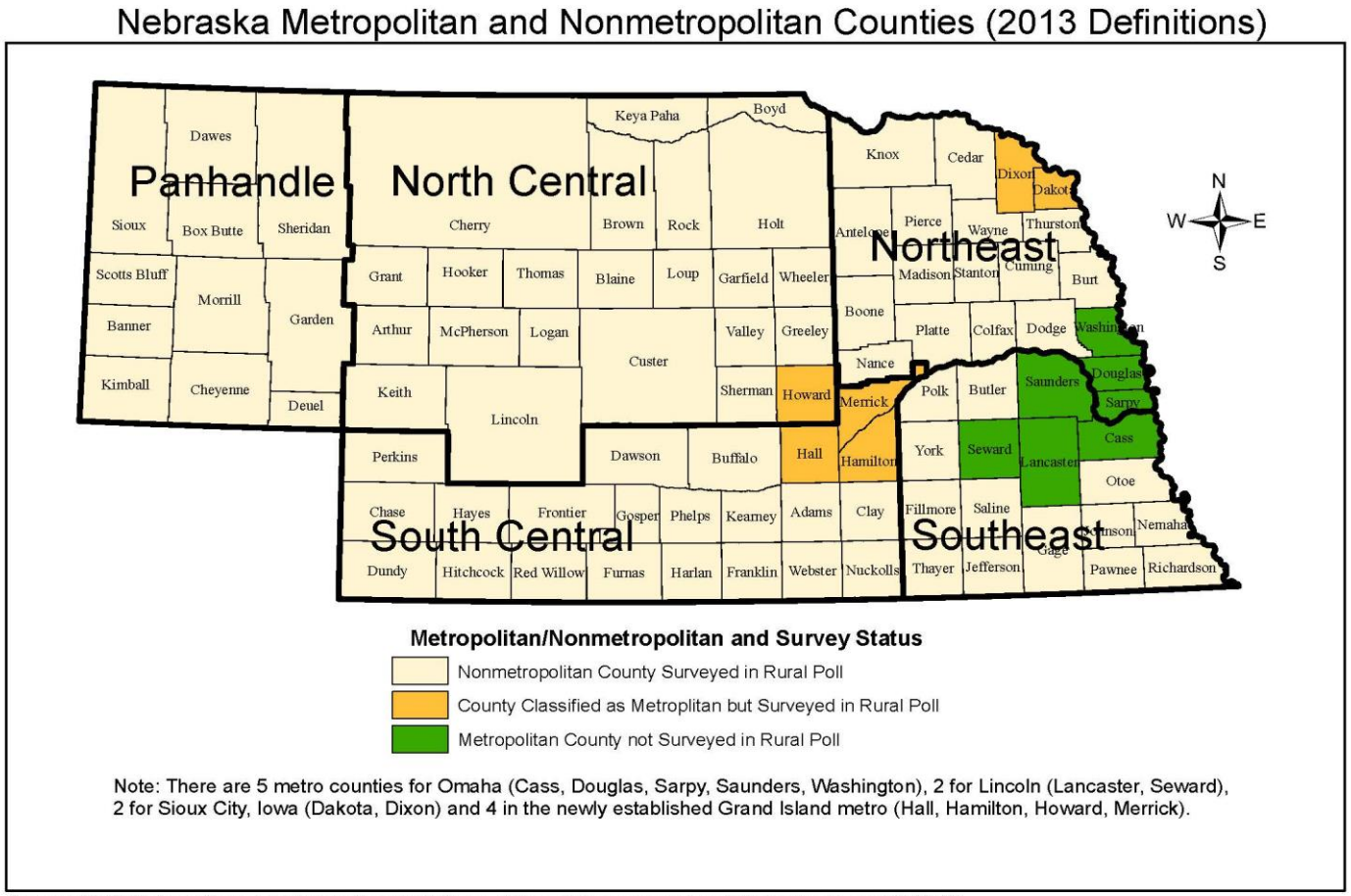
Conclusion

This year, rural Nebraskans are the most positive about their current situation as they've been in all 20 years of this study. Just over one-half (53%) of rural Nebraskans believe they are better off than they were five years ago (the highest proportion in all 20 years of this study, tied in 2008). This is up slightly from 50 percent last year. And, rural Nebraskans' outlook on their future is the most optimistic in all 20 years of this study. Almost one-half of rural Nebraskans (48%) believe they will be better off ten years from now (the highest of all 20 years). This is up slightly from 44 percent last year. In addition, rural Nebraskans are less likely to agree that people are powerless to control their own lives than they were last year.

Certain groups remain pessimistic about their situation. Persons with lower household incomes, older persons, and persons with lower educational levels are the groups most likely to be pessimistic about the present and the future. Persons living in or near the largest communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to be optimistic about the future.

Following trends in previous years, rural Nebraskans are most satisfied with their marriage, family, friends, religion/spirituality and the outdoors. They continue to be less satisfied with job opportunities, current income level and financial security during retirement. Three items had increases in the level of satisfaction this year as compared to last year: your transportation, your spare time and your ability to afford your residence. Two items saw declines in satisfaction compared to last year, clean air and clean water.

Appendix Figure 1. Regions of Nebraska



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

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

Appendix Table 1. *Demographic Profile of Rural Poll Respondents*[1] *Compared to 2009 – 2013 American Community Survey 5 Year Average for Nebraska**

	2015 Poll	***2014 Poll***	***2013 Poll***	***2012 Poll***	***2011 Poll***	***2010 Poll***	***2009 - 2013 ACS***
Age : [2]							
20 - 39	31%	32%	31%	31%	31%	32%	31%
40 - 64	45%	46%	44%	44%	44%	44%	45%
65 and over	24%	23%	24%	24%	24%	24%	24%
Gender: [3]							
Female	58%	57%	51%	61%	60%	59%	51%
Male	42%	43%	49%	39%	40%	41%	49%
Education: [4]							
Less than 9th grade	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	5%
9th to 12th grade (no diploma)	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	7%
High school diploma (or equiv.)	22%	18%	23%	22%	26%	25%	34%
Some college, no degree	23%	23%	25%	25%	23%	25%	26%
Associate degree	15%	16%	15%	15%	16%	14%	10%
Bachelors degree	24%	24%	22%	24%	19%	20%	13%
Graduate or professional degree	13%	16%	12%	11%	12%	11%	5%
Household Income: [5]							
Less than $10,000	5%	5%	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%
$10,000 - $19,999	7%	7%	7%	10%	10%	10%	12%
$20,000 - $29,999	9%	8%	13%	11%	13%	13%	12%
$30,000 - $39,999	9%	14%	10%	10%	14%	12%	12%
$40,000 - $49,999	12%	12%	15%	12%	11%	13%	11%
$50,000 - $59,999	11%	13%	10%	13%	12%	11%	10%
$60,000 - $74,999	15%	13%	11%	14%	12%	13%	11%
$75,000 or more	32%	29%	29%	25%	22%	23%	26%
Marital Status: [6]							
Married	68%	68%	70%	70%	66%	71%	62%
Never married	13%	12%	12%	10%	14%	9%	17%
Divorced/separated	10%	12%	9%	11%	11%	11%	12%
Widowed/widower	8%	8%	9%	10%	10%	9%	8%

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

[2] 2009-2013 American Community Survey universe is non-metro population 20 years of age and over.

[3] 2009-2013 American Community Survey universe is non-metro population 20 years of age and over.

[4] 2009-2013 American Community Survey universe is non-metro population 18 years of age and over.

[5] 2009-2013 American Community Survey universe is all non-metro households.

[6] 2009-2013 American Community Survey universe is non-metro population 20 years of age and over.

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

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

	Compared to Five Years Ago					
	Much Worse Off	*Worse Off*	*About the Same*	*Better Off*	*Much Better Off*	*Chi-square (sig.)*
			Percentages			
Total	3	12	31	42	12	
Community Size			(n = 1857)			
Less than 500	4	10	31	43	12	
500 - 999	3	11	39	42	6	
1,000 - 4,999	2	11	31	45	11	
5,000 - 9,999	2	14	32	38	14	χ^2 = 24.83
10,000 and up	4	12	29	42	14	(.073)
Region			(n = 1894)			
Panhandle	3	17	27	42	11	
North Central	3	11	34	40	12	
South Central	3	11	30	43	13	
Northeast	4	9	34	43	10	χ^2 = 23.51
Southeast	2	16	32	39	11	(.101)
Income Level			(n = 1735)			
Under $20,000	10	25	39	22	4	
$20,000 - $39,999	3	16	43	31	7	
$40,000 - $59,999	3	11	33	44	10	χ^2 =196.86*
$60,000 and over	2	8	23	51	17	(.000)
Age			(n = 1902)			
19 - 29	1	4	19	58	18	
30 - 39	4	4	22	47	23	
40 - 49	3	13	24	50	11	
50 - 64	4	16	35	36	9	χ^2 = 233.19*
65 and older	4	17	47	28	4	(.000)
Gender			(n = 1867)			
Male	3	13	31	43	11	χ^2 = 2.80
Female	4	11	32	42	12	(.592)
Marital Status			(n = 1854)			
Married	3	10	28	47	13	
Never married	5	11	33	40	11	
Divorced/separated	3	21	39	31	7	χ^2 = 98.76*
Widowed	7	19	49	21	5	(.000)
Education			(n = 1867)			
H.S. diploma or less	4	17	42	28	8	
Some college	4	11	33	44	9	χ^2 = 118.66*
Bachelors degree	2	8	23	50	17	(.000)
Occupation			(n = 1368)			
Mgt, prof or education	2	5	25	47	20	
Sales or office support	4	11	29	47	10	
Constrn, inst or maint	2	12	36	43	7	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	3	15	34	36	12	
Agriculture	3	12	23	51	11	
Food serv/pers. care	6	34	28	27	6	
Hlthcare supp/safety	4	4	23	58	12	χ^2 = 131.36*
Other	9	21	25	34	11	(.000)

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

Appendix Table 2 continued

	Compared to Parents When They Were Your Age					
	Much Worse Off	*Worse Off*	*About the Same*	*Better Off*	*Much Better Off*	*Chi-square (sig.)*
			Percentages			
Total	3	13	25	43	16	
Community Size			(n = 1860)			
Less than 500	2	12	28	45	13	
500 - 999	3	10	25	50	12	
1,000 - 4,999	3	15	27	40	15	
5,000 - 9,999	2	11	22	51	15	χ^2 = 33.37*
10,000 and up	4	13	24	39	21	(.007)
Region			(n = 1902)			
Panhandle	1	16	29	43	11	
North Central	1	11	30	45	13	
South Central	3	13	27	38	19	
Northeast	4	13	20	45	19	χ^2 = 38.51*
Southeast	3	13	25	48	11	(.001)
Income Level			(n = 1740)			
Under $20,000	5	25	31	35	5	
$20,000 - $39,999	4	17	31	40	9	
$40,000 - $59,999	3	14	26	44	13	χ^2 = 118.52*
$60,000 and over	2	9	21	45	23	(.000)
Age			(n = 1907)			
19 - 29	1	4	26	51	18	
30 - 39	4	10	19	43	24	
40 - 49	2	18	28	40	13	
50 - 64	4	20	29	35	13	χ^2 = 103.29*
65 and older	1	11	24	49	15	(.000)
Gender			(n = 1871)			
Male	3	13	23	44	17	χ^2 = 3.06
Female	3	13	27	42	16	(.548)
Marital Status			(n = 1861)			
Married	2	11	24	46	18	
Never married	4	16	32	37	12	
Divorced/separated	6	25	29	33	8	χ^2 = 64.72*
Widowed	2	14	26	44	15	(.000)
Education			(n = 1872)			
H.S. diploma or less	3	18	29	37	13	
Some college	4	14	27	43	13	χ^2 = 51.43*
Bachelors degree	2	9	22	47	21	(.000)
Occupation			(n = 1374)			
Mgt, prof or education	3	9	23	42	23	
Sales or office support	4	11	32	39	14	
Constrn, inst or maint	2	18	23	46	11	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	4	13	26	42	16	
Agriculture	3	12	23	45	18	
Food serv/pers. care	5	33	29	31	2	
Hlthcare supp/safety	3	11	22	50	14	χ^2 = 88.11*
Other	9	20	29	27	16	(.000)

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

Appendix Table 2 continued

	Ten Years From Now					
	Much Worse Off	*Worse Off*	*About the Same*	*Better Off*	*Much Better Off*	*Chi-square (sig.)*
			Percentages			
Total	3	14	35	37	11	
Community Size			(n = 1842)			
Less than 500	2	14	39	40	4	
500 - 999	2	17	39	28	14	
1,000 - 4,999	2	14	36	39	10	
5,000 - 9,999	4	15	34	40	7	χ^2 = 47.42*
10,000 and up	2	13	32	38	15	(.000)
Region			(n = 1882)			
Panhandle	5	13	37	37	8	
North Central	2	15	35	37	11	
South Central	2	13	32	39	14	
Northeast	2	13	38	35	12	χ^2 = 23.87
Southeast	2	17	38	37	7	(.092)
Income Level			(n = 1729)			
Under $20,000	8	18	50	20	5	
$20,000 - $39,999	5	23	36	29	7	
$40,000 - $59,999	2	14	36	42	7	χ^2 = 153.52*
$60,000 and over	1	9	30	44	16	(.000)
Age			(n = 1887)			
19 - 29	0	3	16	54	28	
30 - 39	1	4	22	53	20	
40 - 49	2	5	35	49	11	
50 - 64	3	22	41	30	4	χ^2 = 531.53*
65 and older	5	27	53	14	2	(.000)
Gender			(n = 1852)			
Male	3	16	37	36	9	χ^2 = 8.98
Female	2	13	35	38	12	(.062)
Marital Status			(n = 1842)			
Married	2	13	34	40	12	
Never married	2	10	31	46	12	
Divorced/separated	2	17	43	29	9	χ^2 = 85.45*
Widowed	6	27	49	15	2	(.000)
Education			(n = 1855)			
H.S. diploma or less	4	20	41	29	6	
Some college	3	14	37	36	10	χ^2 = 77.95*
Bachelors degree	1	10	29	45	14	(.000)
Occupation			(n = 1367)			
Mgt, prof or education	1	7	25	51	16	
Sales or office support	1	18	32	39	10	
Constrn, inst or maint	4	22	34	32	8	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	1	14	37	38	10	
Agriculture	2	14	37	40	7	
Food serv/pers. care	4	19	35	39	4	
Hlthcare supp/safety	1	8	33	38	21	χ^2 = 118.16*
Other	9	21	46	14	11	(.000)

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

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

	Disagree	*Undecided*	*Agree*	*Significance*
		Percentages		
Total	55	20	26	
Community Size		(n = 1857)		
Less than 500	53	22	25	
500 - 999	48	24	28	
1,000 - 4,999	57	20	24	
5,000 - 9,999	53	20	27	χ^2 = 13.15
10,000 and up	59	16	25	(.107)
Region		(n = 1896)		
Panhandle	55	23	22	
North Central	49	21	30	
South Central	55	19	26	
Northeast	58	17	25	χ^2 = 11.42
Southeast	53	22	26	(.179)
Household Income		(n = 1738)		
Under $20,000	35	30	35	
$20,000 - $39,999	47	22	32	
$40,000 - $59,999	57	18	25	χ^2 = 72.35*
$60,000 and over	65	15	20	(.000)
Age		(n = 1901)		
19 - 29	56	28	16	
30 - 39	63	13	24	
40 - 49	64	15	21	
50 - 64	54	17	29	χ^2 = 81.62*
65 and older	41	25	34	(.000)
Gender		(n = 1867)		
Male	56	18	26	χ^2 = 2.51
Female	54	21	25	(.284)
Education		(n = 1867)		
H.S. diploma or less	38	25	37	
Some college	54	22	24	χ^2 = 104.50*
Bachelors or grad degree	67	13	19	(.000)
Marital Status		(n = 1856)		
Married	58	18	25	
Never married	53	24	23	
Divorced/separated	52	18	29	χ^2 = 29.97*
Widowed	37	31	33	(.000)
Occupation		(n = 1368)		
Mgt, prof or education	70	11	19	
Sales or office support	53	24	24	
Constrn, inst or maint	51	27	23	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	46	20	33	
Agriculture	56	18	26	
Food serv/pers. care	37	18	45	
Hlthcare supp/safety	64	21	15	χ^2 = 86.22*
Other	41	30	30	(.000)

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

Appendix Table 4. *Satisfaction with Items Affecting Well-Being, 2015*

Item	*Does Not Apply*	*Very Dissatisfied*	*Somewhat Dissatisfied*	*No Opinion*	*Somewhat Satisfied*	*Very Satisfied*
Your family	1%	1%	3%	9%	33%	54%
Your marriage	23	0*	1	4	19	53
Greenery and open space	1	2	5	12	39	43
Your religion/spirituality	1	1	3	18	34	42
Your day to day personal safety	0*	1	3	8	47	41
Your friends	0*	2	4	14	38	41
Your transportation	0*	2	5	8	44	40
Clean air	1	3	6	11	41	39
Clean water	1	5	10	10	37	38
Your general quality of life	0*	1	6	10	49	34
Your education	1	2	7	15	43	33
Your housing	1	3	9	11	45	32
Your general standard of living	1	2	7	11	48	32
Your ability to afford your residence	1	5	11	14	40	29
Your spare time	2	3	13	15	41	28
Your job security	15	4	7	13	35	27
Your health	0*	4	11	12	48	25
Your job satisfaction	14	3	8	12	39	24
Your community	0*	4	13	20	46	17
Your ability to build assets/wealth	2	8	21	19	34	16
Your job opportunities	12	10	18	21	24	15
Current income level	2	10	20	13	43	12
Financial security during retirement	3	17	25	17	30	9

0* = Less than 1 percent.

Appendix Table 5. *Satisfaction with Items By Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes.***

	Financial security during retirement				***Your current income level***			
	Dissatisfied	*No opinion*	*Satisfied*	*Significance*	*Dissatisfied*	*No opinion*	*Satisfied*	*Significance*
				Percentages				
Total	43	17	41		31	13	56	
Community Size		(n = 1756)				(n = 1793)		
Less than 500	42	21	36		25	17	59	
500 - 999	46	15	39		32	12	56	
1,000 - 4,999	42	18	41		29	15	56	
5,000 - 9,999	45	14	42	χ^2 = 11.05	27	13	60	χ^2 = 18.08*
10,000 and up	40	16	44	(.199)	34	10	55	(.021)
Region		(n = 1791)				(n = 1826)		
Panhandle	45	21	34		29	17	55	
North Central	44	14	43		23	15	62	
South Central	40	16	43		33	12	56	
Northeast	44	16	41	χ^2 = 12.99	33	13	55	χ^2 = 12.96
Southeast	42	21	37	(.112)	31	15	54	(.113)
Individual Attributes:								
Household Income Level		(n = 1643)				(n = 1686)		
Under $20,000	67	16	18		59	25	16	
$20,000 - $39,999	54	20	26		44	19	37	
$40,000 - $59,999	45	18	37	χ^2 = 126.97*	35	13	52	χ^2 = 273.66*
$60,000 and over	34	13	54	(.000)	19	7	75	(.000)
Age		(n = 1796)				(n = 1832)		
19 - 29	43	24	33		30	13	57	
30 - 39	45	16	39		31	6	63	
40 - 49	51	14	36		33	10	58	
50 - 64	46	17	37	χ^2 = 58.39*	34	15	51	χ^2 = 46.17*
65 and older	30	16	54	(.000)	24	21	56	(.000)
Gender		(n = 1764)				(n = 1799)		
Male	38	17	44	χ^2 = 8.78*	27	16	57	χ^2 = 13.19*
Female	45	17	38	(.012)	33	11	56	(.001)
Education		(n = 1764)				(n = 1799)		
High school diploma or less	48	21	31		37	20	44	
Some college	47	17	36	χ^2 = 60.25*	34	16	51	χ^2 = 97.26*
Bachelors or grad degree	34	14	52	(.000)	23	7	70	(.000)
Marital Status		(n = 1755)				(n = 1789)		
Married	39	16	45		25	11	64	
Never married	54	19	27		43	17	39	
Divorced/separated	58	20	23	χ^2 = 55.15*	48	17	36	χ^2 = 99.29*
Widowed	37	16	47	(.000)	33	23	44	(.000)
Occupation		(n = 1300)				(n = 1359)		
Mgt, prof or education	35	15	50		24	5	71	
Sales or office support	62	9	29		42	8	50	
Constrn, inst or maint	56	20	25		39	20	41	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	53	15	32		26	17	57	
Agriculture	35	22	43		20	19	61	
Food serv/pers. care	68	20	12		58	19	23	
Hlthcare supp/safety	43	23	35	χ^2 = 96.40*	30	8	62	χ^2 = 129.28*
Other	37	14	49	(.000)	29	17	55	(.000)

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

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

Appendix Table 5 continued

	Your job opportunities				***Your ability to build assets/wealth***			
	Dissatisfied	*No opinion*	*Satisfied*	*Significance*	*Dissatisfied*	*No opinion*	*Satisfied*	*Significance*
				Percentages				
Total	31	24	46		30	20	51	
Community Size		(n = 1495)				(n = 1757)		
Less than 500	25	26	49		27	26	47	
500 - 999	34	23	43		27	20	53	
1,000 - 4,999	33	25	42		30	19	51	
5,000 - 9,999	30	19	50	χ^2 = 8.95	28	19	53	χ^2 = 12.64
10,000 and up	32	22	46	(.346)	30	17	53	(.125)
Region		(n = 1519)				(n = 1795)		
Panhandle	33	24	43		25	25	50	
North Central	38	21	41		32	16	52	
South Central	28	24	48		31	18	50	
Northeast	29	22	49	χ^2 = 12.00	29	20	51	χ^2 = 8.62
Southeast	33	27	40	(.151)	29	20	52	(.376)
Individual Attributes:								
Household Income Level		(n = 1412)				(n = 1654)		
Under $20,000	52	22	26		54	28	18	
$20,000 - $39,999	37	30	32		47	26	28	
$40,000 - $59,999	29	25	46	χ^2 = 60.99*	28	23	49	χ^2 = 226.09*
$60,000 and over	28	19	53	(.000)	20	13	67	(.000)
Age		(n = 1523)				(n = 1800)		
19 - 29	25	18	57		21	22	57	
30 - 39	35	13	52		30	12	58	
40 - 49	33	20	46		34	13	54	
50 - 64	34	28	38	χ^2 = 90.43*	35	21	44	χ^2 = 63.32*
65 and older	20	47	34	(.000)	25	29	47	(.000)
Gender		(n = 1498)				(n = 1767)		
Male	27	25	48	χ^2 = 9.22*	28	21	51	χ^2 = 2.64
Female	34	22	43	(.010)	30	19	51	(.268)
Education		(n = 1500)				(n = 1768)		
High school diploma or less	33	30	38		36	27	36	
Some college	32	24	44	χ^2 = 19.55*	32	20	48	χ^2 = 81.55*
Bachelors or grad degree	29	20	52	(.001)	22	14	63	(.000)
Marital Status		(n = 1488)				(n = 1758)		
Married	29	23	48		24	18	59	
Never married	37	22	41		38	22	40	
Divorced/separated	37	28	35	χ^2 = 19.64*	53	23	24	χ^2 = 114.89*
Widowed	35	35	29	(.003)	33	32	35	(.000)
Occupation		(n = 1293)				(n = 1348)		
Mgt, prof or education	28	20	52		22	14	64	
Sales or office support	29	26	45		35	17	48	
Constrn, inst or maint	25	19	57		33	22	44	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	37	30	33		38	22	40	
Agriculture	17	31	51		28	20	52	
Food serv/pers. care	60	23	17		53	14	33	
Hlthcare supp/safety	33	16	51	χ^2 = 82.64*	24	21	56	χ^2 = 70.23*
Other	35	38	28	(.000)	41	26	33	(.000)

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

Appendix Table 5 continued

	Your community			
	Dissatisfied	*No opinion*	*Satisfied*	*Significance*
		Percentages		
Total	17	20	64	
Community Size		(n = 1826)		
Less than 500	13	22	65	
500 - 999	16	17	67	
1,000 - 4,999	16	22	62	
5,000 - 9,999	21	21	58	χ^2 = 13.24
10,000 and up	18	17	65	(.104)
Region		(n = 1864)		
Panhandle	24	23	53	
North Central	17	18	65	
South Central	15	19	67	
Northeast	16	21	63	χ^2 = 14.67
Southeast	16	20	64	(.066)
Individual Attributes:				
Household Income Level		(n = 1714)		
Under $20,000	31	23	47	
$20,000 - $39,999	18	24	59	
$40,000 - $59,999	14	17	68	χ^2 = 44.82*
$60,000 and over	15	18	68	(.000)
Age		(n = 1871)		
19 - 29	12	19	69	
30 - 39	15	16	69	
40 - 49	22	16	62	
50 - 64	19	25	56	χ^2 = 36.72*
65 and older	13	20	67	(.000)
Gender		(n = 1836)		
Male	17	22	61	χ^2 = 4.62
Female	17	18	65	(.099)
Education		(n = 1836)		
High school diploma or less	20	27	53	
Some college	18	20	62	χ^2 = 44.86*
Bachelors or grad degree	13	15	72	(.000)
Marital Status		(n = 1827)		
Married	15	18	67	
Never married	22	23	56	
Divorced/separated	25	25	50	χ^2 = 32.63*
Widowed	13	23	64	(.000)
Occupation		(n = 1358)		
Mgt, prof or education	16	15	70	
Sales or office support	21	13	66	
Constrn, inst or maint	17	20	62	
Prodn/trans/warehsing	26	36	39	
Agriculture	10	22	68	
Food serv/pers. care	28	22	50	
Hlthcare supp/safety	11	20	69	χ^2 = 64.24*
Other	23	21	57	(.000)

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

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