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Effects of Recent Television Signal Changes on Rural Nebraskans

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Nebraska Rural Poll Research Brief

cari.unl.edu/ruralpoll/

RB 09-001

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Effects of Recent Television Signal Changes on Rural Nebraskans

Key Findings

- One in seven rural Nebraska households currently receive their television signal over the air, using an antenna or rabbit ears. Ten percent of the households only receive their signal over the air, while four percent receive a television signal over the air but also receive a signal from another source (cable, satellite or wireless TV provider).
- Many rural Nebraskans made changes to prepare for the change to digital television. Just under one-quarter (21%) had purchased a digital converter box. Eighteen percent purchased a digital-ready television set and 15 percent converted to a cable, satellite or wireless TV provider.
- Most of the households that needed to make changes in order to continue to receive a television signal did so. Eighty percent of the households only receiving their signal over the air have purchased a digital converter box. Twenty percent of these households also purchased a digital-ready television set.
- Many of the households that were directly affected by the change are dissatisfied. Just under one-half (46%) of households that only receive their signal over the air are very or somewhat dissatisfied with the change.

Introduction

In mid-February 2009, some television stations in the country started broadcasting only in digital signal. All were required to switch to digital only signal this past June. This change did not affect households that currently receive their television signal from a cable or satellite TV provider, only those that receive their signal over-the-air through an antenna or rabbit ears. The 2009 Nebraska Rural Poll included questions related to television viewing, providing a picture of how rural Nebraskans prepared for this change and the effect this change has had on 2,852 randomly selected non-metropolitan Nebraskans. Not all television stations had made the digital conversion when this survey was in the field. Thus, the effects of the change in some areas of the state are not reflected in these results.

The Nebraska Rural Poll

The Nebraska Rural Poll is an annual survey of rural Nebraskans started in 1996 to give local and state leaders a better understanding of the issues, challenges and concerns of Nebraska's rural citizens. The Poll focuses on such issues as community, government policy, well-being and work. For more information, visit <http://cari.unl.edu/ruralpoll/>

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Sources of Television Signal

Ten percent of rural Nebraskans currently receive their television signal only over the air, using an antenna or rabbit ears (Figure 1). These households are the ones that were affected by the change to digital television signal. Another four percent receive their signal over the air, but also receive a signal through another source, such as from a cable or satellite provider. These households would have had to make changes to continue to receive their signal over the air. Forty-four percent receive their signal only through a cable TV provider, 40 percent receive it only from a satellite TV provider, and one percent receive their signal only through a wireless TV provider. Another one percent of rural Nebraskans receive their television signal through a combination of cable, satellite or wireless providers. The remaining one percent indicated they don't own a television.

Preparations for Digital Television

Many rural Nebraskans made changes to prepare for the change to digital television. Just under one-quarter (21%) had purchased a digital converter box. Eighteen percent

purchased a digital-ready television set and 15 percent converted to a cable, satellite or wireless TV provider.

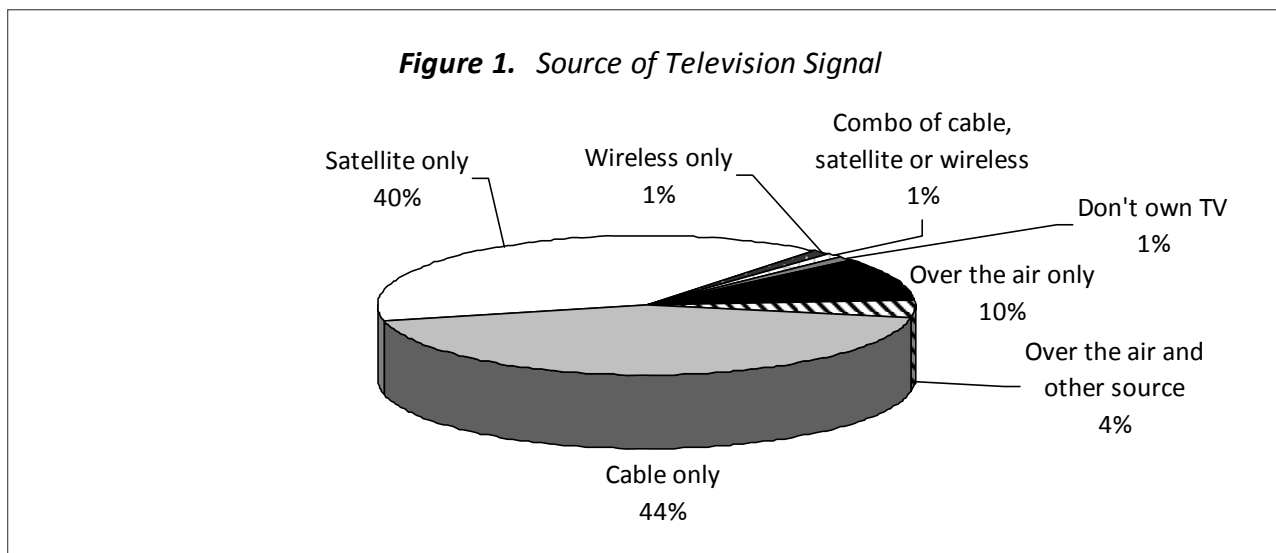
Most of the households that needed to make changes in order to continue to receive a television signal did so. Eighty percent of the households only receiving their signal over the air have purchased a digital converter box. Twenty percent of these households also purchased a digital-ready television set.

Seventy-eight percent of the households that receive their signal over the air but also from another source have purchased a converter box. Over one-quarter (27%) of these households have converted to a cable, satellite or wireless TV provider.

Of those residents that purchased a digital converter box, most (87%) had applied for a voucher or coupon for the box. Most (95%) of those that applied for the voucher or coupon received one.

Satisfaction with Digital Television Change

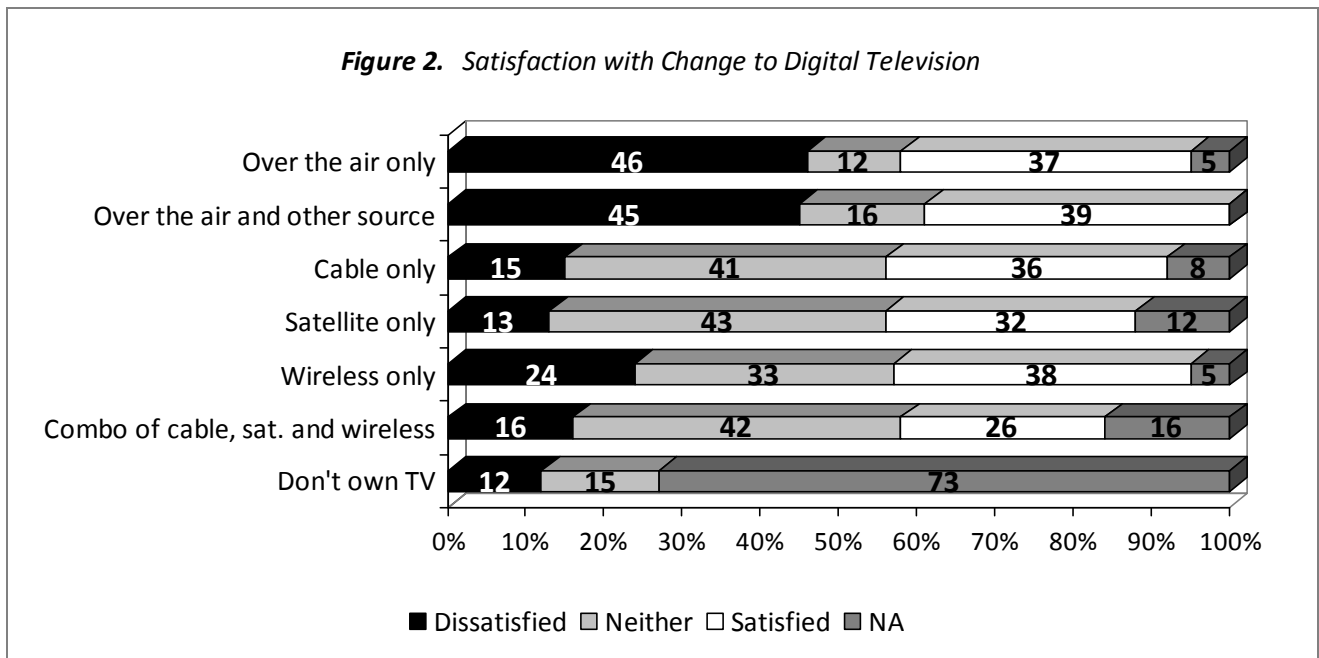
Over one-third (35%) of rural Nebraskans



are very or somewhat satisfied with the recent change to digital television. Many (37%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the change. Eighteen percent are very or somewhat dissatisfied with the change and ten percent answered “not applicable.”

dissatisfied. Just under one-half (46%) of households that only receive their signal over the air are very or somewhat dissatisfied with the change. And, 45 percent of the households that receive their signal over the air but also from another source are dissatisfied with the change.

However, many of the households that were directly affected by the change are



Methodology

A self-administered questionnaire was mailed in February and March to approximately 6,400 randomly selected households. Responses were received from 2,852 Nebraskans living in the 84 non-metropolitan counties in the state - a response rate of 45 percent. Metropolitan counties not included in the sample were Cass, Dakota, Dixon, Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, Saunders, Seward and Washington. The margin of sampling error for this study is plus or minus two percent based on the total sample at the 95% confidence level. The margin of sampling error is higher for results based on subgroups of respondents. The 14-page questionnaire included questions pertaining to well-being, community, current economic climate, television viewing and self employment. For more detailed information about the survey methodology and the respondent profile, see Research Report 09-1 available online at <http://cari.unl.edu/ruralpoll/report09.shtml>.

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