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Successful Communities: What is Desired and What is Present in Nonmetropolitan Nebraska

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NEBRASKA RURAL POLL

A Research Report

Successful Communities: What is Desired and What is Present in Nonmetropolitan Nebraska

2014 Nebraska Rural Poll Results

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Executive Summary

Many rural communities have experienced population declines during the past several decades. However, recent research has shown that rural counties are experiencing in-migration of persons age 30 to 49 years. Rural communities have also been typically viewed as having many positive characteristics. So, what do rural Nebraskans look for in a community? What characteristics are present in their current community? Do their perceptions differ by the size of their community or their age?

This report details 1,943 responses to the 2014 Nebraska Rural Poll, the nineteenth annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about successful rural communities. Trends for some of the questions are examined by comparing data from the 2002 Rural Poll to this year's results. In addition, comparisons are made among different respondent subgroups, that is, comparisons by age and size of community. Based on these analyses, some key findings emerged:

- **Most rural Nebraskans believe the following characteristics are absolutely essential in a community: sense of personal safety, a quality school system, jobs/economic opportunities, available medical services, affordable housing, quality housing, well maintained infrastructure, effective community leadership, and a strong church/religious community.** At least one-half of the respondents say each of these characteristics are absolutely essential in a community in order for them to have a high quality of life.
- **Over one-third say the following are present to a great extent in their current community: lack of congestion, sense of personal safety, a quality school system, strong church/religious community, available medical services, friendly people, and being close to relatives/in-laws.**
- **Some community characteristics have increased in importance over time: jobs/economic opportunities, affordable housing and adequate information technology.** The proportion rating jobs/economic opportunities as absolutely essential increased from 65 percent in 2002 to 77 percent in 2014. Similarly, the proportion rating affordable housing as absolutely essential increased from 60 percent in 2002 to 65 percent in 2014 and those rating adequate information technology as absolutely essential increased from 27 percent to 31 percent.
- **Many items experienced declines in the proportions rating them as absolutely essential between 2002 and 2014.** These include: a clean and attractive natural environment (from 57% to 49%), friendly people (from 55% to 46%), a sense of community among residents (from 49% to 42%), lack of congestion (from 36% to 31%), a local newspaper willing to report controversial items (from 36% to 30%), available senior citizen programs (36% to 29%), and available college classes (31% to 25%).
- **Jobs/economic opportunities, affordable housing, available child care services, recreational opportunities, a quality school system (K – 12), available college classes, lack of congestion, and sense of personal safety are all more likely to be rated as absolutely essential by the**

younger respondents as compared to those who are older.

- ***Older respondents are more likely than younger respondents to say that each characteristic is present in their community to a great extent.*** For example, 56 percent of the respondents age 65 and older state that a strong church/religious community describes their community to a great extent. However, only 39 percent of the persons age 19 to 29 share this opinion.
- ***Residents of smaller communities are more likely than residents of larger communities to say they have many social dimensions present in their community to a great extent.*** Persons living in or near smaller communities are more likely than those living in or near larger communities to say their community has the following to a great extent: lack of congestion, sense of personal safety, a quality school system (K - 12), friendly people, a clean and attractive natural environment, a sense of community among residents, acceptance of newcomers, low cost of living, and available affordable housing.
- ***Residents of larger communities are more likely than residents of smaller communities to say they have more specialized services.*** The residents living in or near the larger communities are more likely than residents living in or near smaller communities to say the following items are present to a great extent: available medical services, available college classes, available senior citizen programs, adequate information technology, jobs/economic opportunities, cultural opportunities, and available public transportation.
- ***Many differences exist between what rural Nebraskans believe is essential and what is currently present in their community.*** For most of the characteristics listed, the proportion saying each is absolutely essential is larger than the proportion saying it describes their current community to a great extent. As an example, 77 percent of rural Nebraskans say having quality jobs/economic opportunities is absolutely essential. However, only 11 percent say their community has this to a great extent.

Introduction

Many rural communities have experienced population declines during the past several decades. However, recent research has shown that rural counties are experiencing in-migration of persons age 30 to 49 years. Rural communities have also been typically viewed as having many positive characteristics. So, what do rural Nebraskans look for in a community? What characteristics are present in their current community? Do their perceptions differ by the size of their community or their age? This paper provides a detailed analysis of these questions.

This report details 1,943 responses to the 2014 Nebraska Rural Poll, the nineteenth annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about successful communities.

Methodology and Respondent Profile

This study is based on 1,943 responses from Nebraskans living in 86 counties in the state.¹ A self-administered questionnaire was mailed in April to 6,813 randomly selected households, including an oversample of 500 Hispanic households. Metropolitan counties not included in the sample were Cass, Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, Saunders, Seward and Washington. The

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.

14-page questionnaire included questions pertaining to well-being, community, successful communities, personal safety and employment. This paper reports only results from the successful communities section.

A 29% 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 2008 - 2012 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).

The average age of respondents is 51 years. Sixty-eight percent are married (Appendix Table 1) and 69 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. Fifty-five percent are living in or near towns or villages with populations less than 5,000. Ninety-six percent have attained at least a high school diploma.

Thirty-four percent of the respondents report their 2013 approximate household income from all sources, before taxes, as below \$40,000. Fifty-four percent report incomes over \$50,000.

Sixty-nine percent were employed in 2013 on a full-time, part-time, or seasonal basis. Twenty-one percent are retired. Thirty-nine percent of those employed reported working in a management, professional, or education occupation. Twelve percent indicated they were employed in agriculture.

Successful Rural Communities

To determine what characteristics rural Nebraskans are looking for in a community and what is present in their current community, they were asked two questions. The first asked, “How essential or necessary are the following characteristics of a community in order for you to have a high quality of life?” The answer responses included: not at all essential; nice, but not essential; important, but not essential; and absolutely essential.

At least one-half of rural Nebraskans feel the following characteristics are absolutely essential in a community: sense of personal safety (79%), a quality school system (K - 12) (77%), jobs/economic opportunities (77%), available medical services (71%), affordable housing (65%), quality housing (62%), well maintained infrastructure (57%), effective community leadership (54%), and strong church/religious community (50%) (Table 1).

Less than one-quarter believe the following are absolutely essential: being close to relatives/in-laws (22%), a willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally (20%), available public transportation (20%), and cultural opportunities (19%).

This question was also asked in 2002. The proportions rating many characteristics as absolutely essential remain about the same in 2014 as compared to 2002. However, a few items have changed over time (Figure 1). Items that have increased in importance over time include: jobs/economic opportunities, affordable housing and adequate information technology. The proportion rating jobs/economic opportunities as absolutely essential increased from 65 percent in 2002 to 77 percent in 2014. Similarly, the proportion rating affordable housing as absolutely essential increased from 60 percent in 2002 to 65 percent in 2014 and those rating adequate information technology as absolutely essential increased from 27 percent to 31 percent.

Many items experienced declines in the proportions rating them as absolutely essential between 2002 and 2014: a clean and attractive natural environment (from 57% to 49%), friendly people (from 55% to 46%), a sense of community among residents (from 49% to 42%), lack of congestion (from 36% to 31%), a local newspaper willing to report controversial

Table 1. Essential Characteristics of a Community

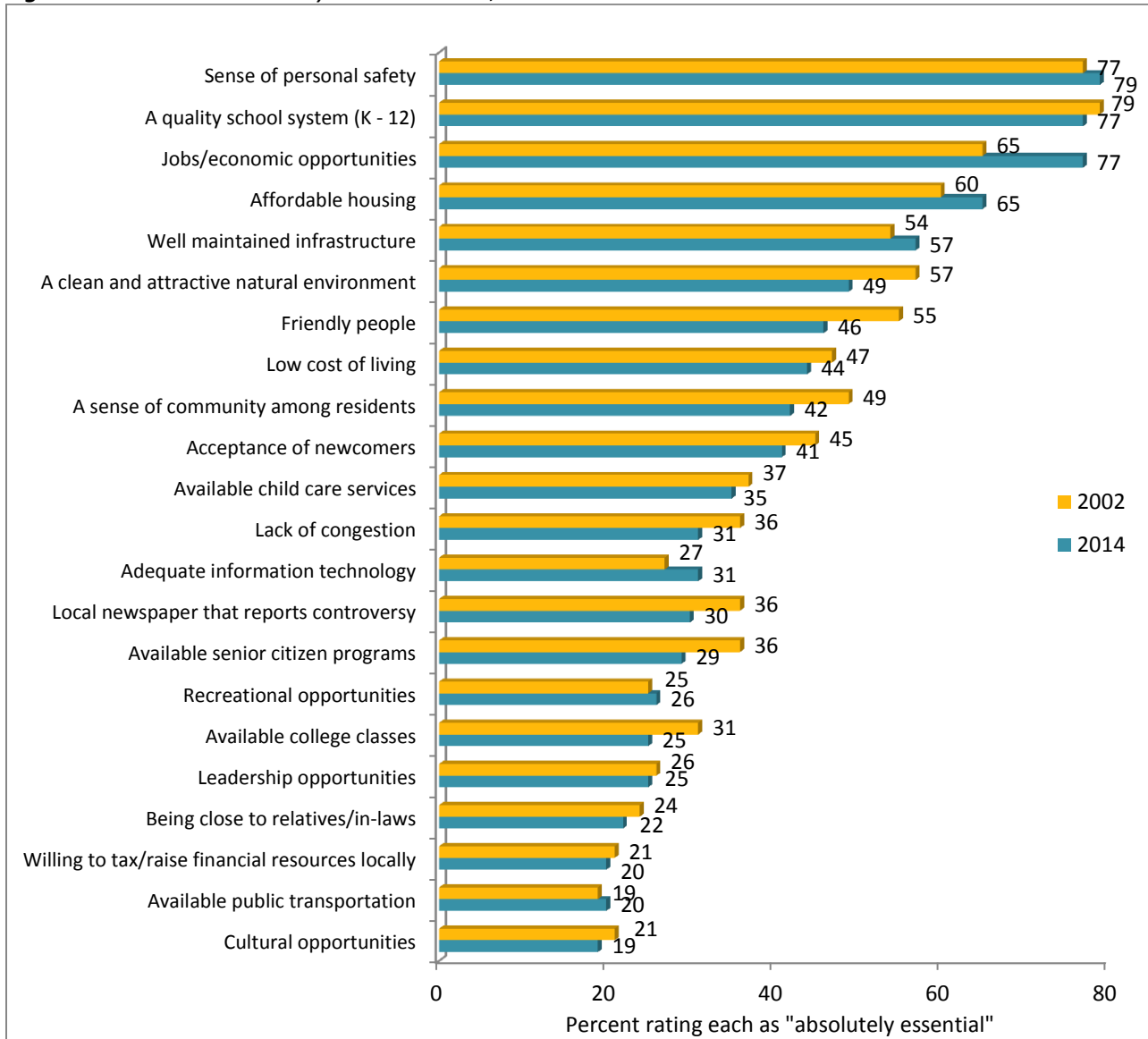
	Not at all essential	Nice, but not essential	Important, but not essential	Absolutely essential
Sense of personal safety	0*%	2%	19%	79%
A quality school system (K - 12)	2	3	17	77
Jobs/economic opportunities	2	5	16	77
Available medical services	1	5	24	71
Affordable housing	1	7	27	65
Quality housing	1	4	33	62
Well maintained infrastructure	1	6	36	57
Effective community leadership	1	9	36	54
Strong church/religious community	5	14	31	50
A clean and attractive natural environment	1	11	39	49
Friendly people	0*	9	45	46
Low cost of living	1	13	42	44
A sense of community among residents	1	11	47	42
Acceptance of newcomers	1	12	46	41
Available child care services	14	17	34	35
Lack of congestion	5	23	41	31
Adequate information technology	4	18	47	31
A local newspaper willing to report controversial items	10	24	36	30
Available senior citizen programs	10	23	38	29
Recreational opportunities	2	21	51	26
Available college classes	10	27	38	25
Leadership opportunities	6	26	43	25
Being close to relatives/in-laws	6	26	47	22
A willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally	11	27	43	20
Available public transportation	17	34	29	20
Cultural opportunities	6	31	43	19

0* = Less than 1 percent.

items (from 36% to 30%), available senior citizen programs (36% to 29%), and available college classes (31% to 25%).

The perceived necessity of these community characteristics are examined by community size and age (Appendix Table 2). Many differences emerge by age. For persons under the age of

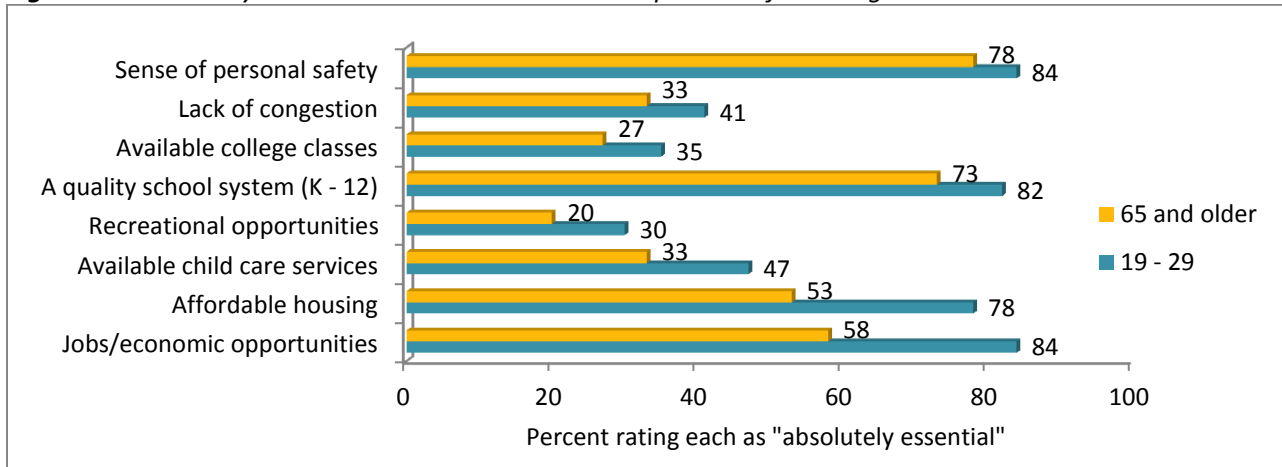
Figure 1. Essential Community Characteristics, 2014 and 2002



50, jobs/economic opportunities were the top-ranked characteristic of a community (based on the proportion saying it is “absolutely essential”). However, persons age 50 to 64 rank sense of personal safety and persons age 65 and older rank affordable medical services as the community characteristic most essential for them.

Other characteristics are also rated differently by the various age groups. Jobs/economic opportunities, affordable housing, available child care services, recreational opportunities, a quality school system (K – 12), available college classes, lack of congestion, and sense of personal safety are all more likely to be rated as absolutely essential by the younger respondents as compared to those who are older (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Community Characteristics with Increased Importance for Younger Persons

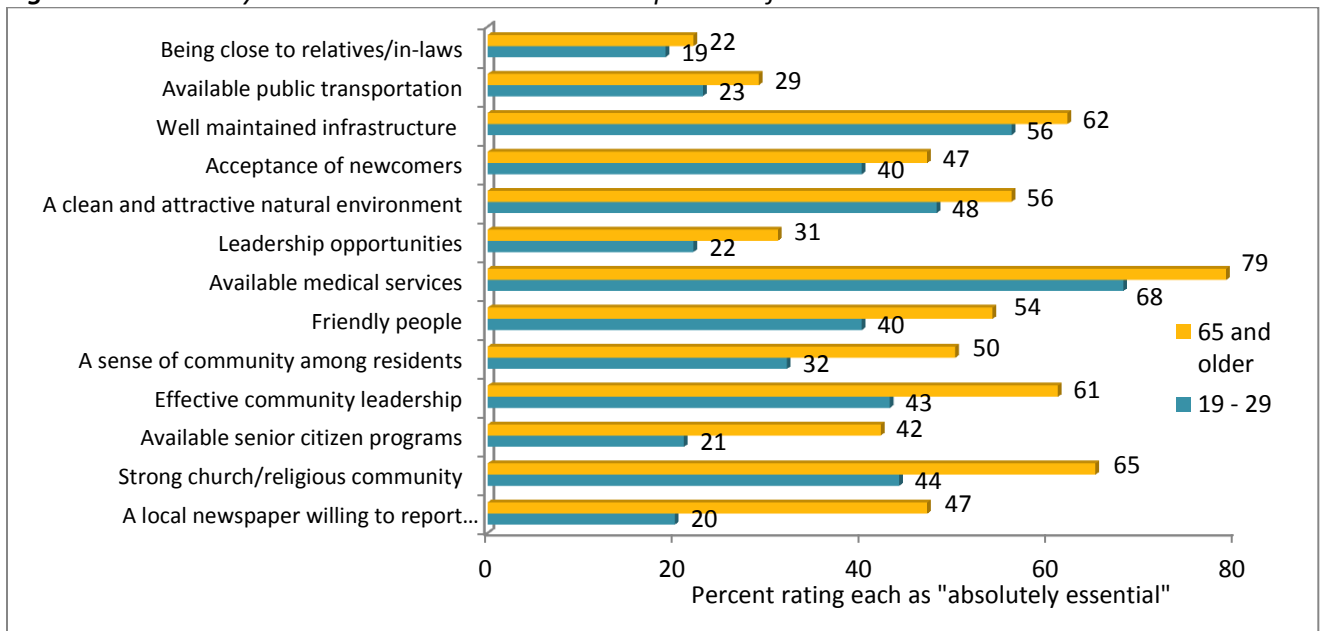


The following items are more likely to be rated as absolutely essential by the older persons as compared to the younger respondents: a local newspaper willing to report controversial items, strong church/religious community, available senior citizen programs, effective community leadership, a sense of community among residents, friendly people, available medical services, leadership opportunities, a clean and attractive natural environment, acceptance of

newcomers, well-maintained infrastructure, available public transportation and being close to relatives/in-laws (Figure 3).

Some differences also occur by community size. Residents living in or near the smallest communities rank sense of personal safety as the characteristic most essential to them. A quality school system was the top ranked

Figure 3. Community Characteristics with Increased Importance for Older Persons



characteristic for residents living in or near communities with populations ranging from 500 to 4,999. Residents living in or near communities with populations of 5,000 or more rank jobs/economic opportunities as the characteristic most essential to them.

Residents of larger communities are more likely than residents of smaller communities to rate the following community characteristics as absolutely essential: jobs/economic opportunities, available medical services, affordable housing, well maintained infrastructure, effective community leadership, low cost of living, available child care services, adequate information technology, a local newspaper willing to report controversial items, available senior citizen programs, recreational opportunities, available college classes, available public transportation, a willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally and cultural opportunities.

Rural Nebraskans were also asked the extent to which these same characteristics are present in their current community. The exact question wording was, "To what extent do the following characteristics describe your current community?" The answer categories were: not at all, very little, to some extent, and a great extent.

Over one-third of the respondents say the following are present to "a great extent" in their community: lack of congestion (49%), sense of personal safety (46%), a quality school system (K - 12) (44%), strong church/religious community (44%), available medical services (38%), friendly people (37%), and being close to relatives/in-laws (35%) (Table 2).

Some changes in rural Nebraskans' perceptions of what is present in their communities has occurred since 2002 (Figure 4). However, many

of the ratings remain relatively identical between the two time periods. For four items, rural Nebraskans are more likely to say they are present to a great extent this year as compared to 2002: a sense of personal safety (46% compared to 41%), a sense of community among residents (30% compared to 25%), adequate information technology (14% compared to 10%), and jobs/economic opportunities (11% compared to 6%). Two items experienced a decline in the proportion of rural Nebraskans who said they were present to a great extent in their community compared to 2002: a clean and attractive natural environment (33% compared to 41%) and available senior citizen programs (21% compared to 25%).

The extent to which these characteristics are present in the community are examined by age and community size (Appendix Table 3). When comparing the responses by age, the older respondents are more likely than the younger respondents to say most of the characteristics are present in their current community to a great extent. For example, 56 percent of the respondents age 65 and older state that a strong church/religious community describes their community to a great extent. However, only 39 percent of the persons age 19 to 29 share this opinion.

Some exceptions to this pattern occur with the following characteristics: lack of congestion, being close to relatives/in-laws, available child care services, and low cost of living. In these cases, the younger respondents are more likely than the older respondents to say that they have them to a great extent in their community. As an example, 26 percent of persons age 19 to 29 say low cost of living is present to a great extent in their community, compared to 14 percent of persons age 65 and older.

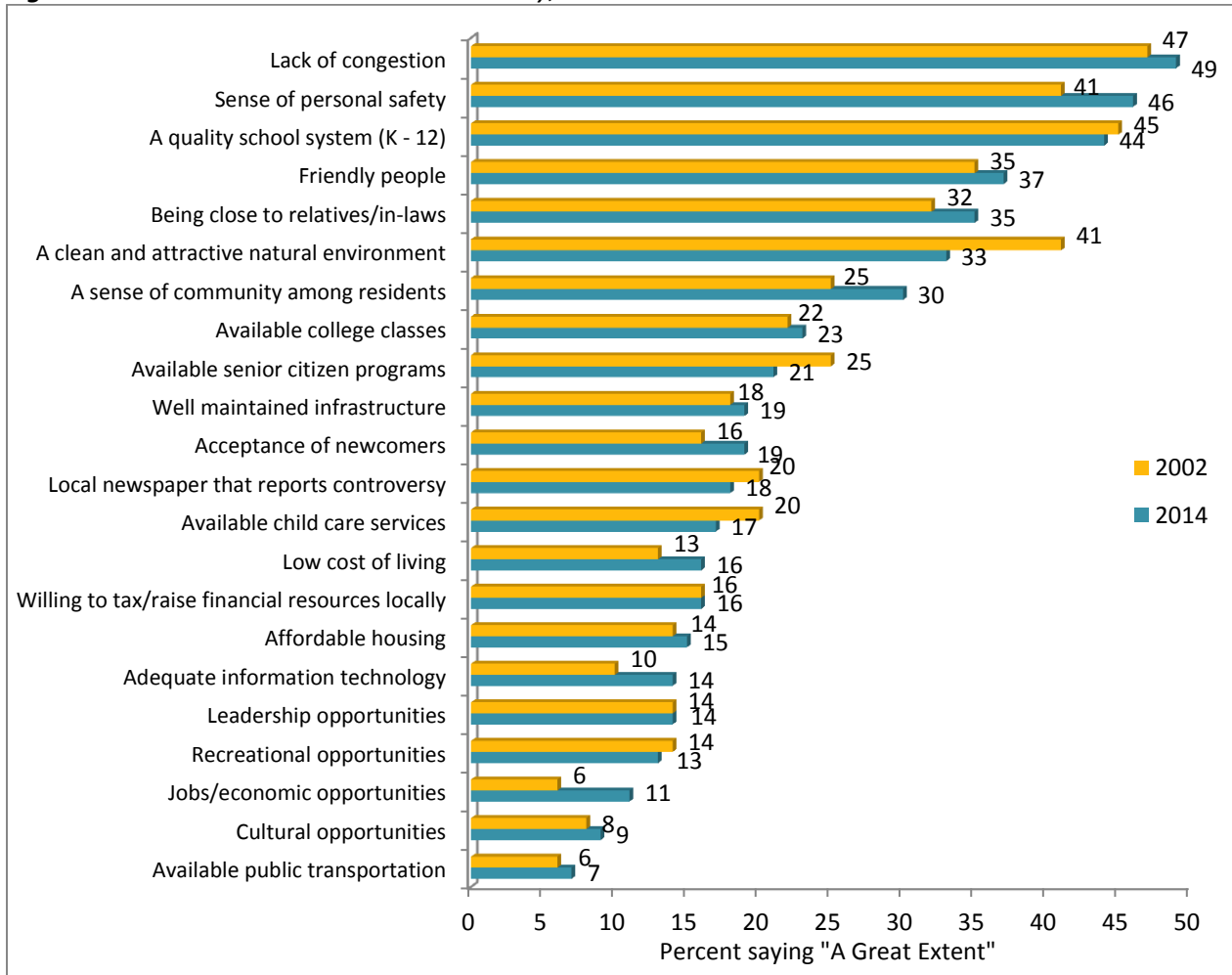
Table 2. Characteristics Present in Current Community

	Not at all	Very little	To some extent	A great extent
Lack of congestion	6%	11%	35%	49%
Sense of personal safety	1	6	47	46
A quality school system (K - 12)	4	8	44	44
Strong church/religious community	1	9	46	44
Available medical services	4	16	43	38
Friendly people	2	7	54	37
Being close to relatives/in-laws	13	13	39	35
A clean and attractive natural environment	2	12	53	33
A sense of community among residents	2	14	54	30
Available college classes	15	22	40	23
Available senior citizen programs	6	21	53	21
Well maintained infrastructure	7	23	51	19
Acceptance of newcomers	4	19	57	19
A local newspaper that reports controversial items	12	25	46	18
Available child care services	6	21	56	17
Effective community leadership	7	24	53	16
A willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally	5	25	54	16
Low cost of living	7	25	52	16
Available affordable housing	6	27	52	15
Available leadership opportunities	6	27	53	14
Adequate information technology	7	26	53	14
Available quality housing	7	29	51	13
Available recreational opportunities	5	32	50	13
Available jobs/economic opportunities	6	41	42	11
Available cultural opportunities	12	42	37	9
Available public transportation	32	36	26	7

Many differences exist by community size. For the following characteristics, the residents living in or near smaller communities are more likely than those living in or near larger communities to say they are present to a great extent: lack of congestion, sense of personal safety, a quality school system (K - 12), friendly people, a clean

and attractive natural environment, a sense of community among residents, acceptance of newcomers, low cost of living, and available affordable housing. As an example, 40 percent of the persons living in or near communities with populations less than 500 say they have a sense of community among residents to a great

Figure 4. Characteristics Present in Community, 2014 and 2002



extent. However, only 22 percent of the persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more share this opinion.

However, for the following characteristics, the residents living in or near the larger communities are more likely than residents living in or near smaller communities to say they are present to a great extent: available medical services, available college classes, available senior citizen programs, adequate information technology, jobs/economic opportunities, cultural opportunities, and available public transportation. As an example,

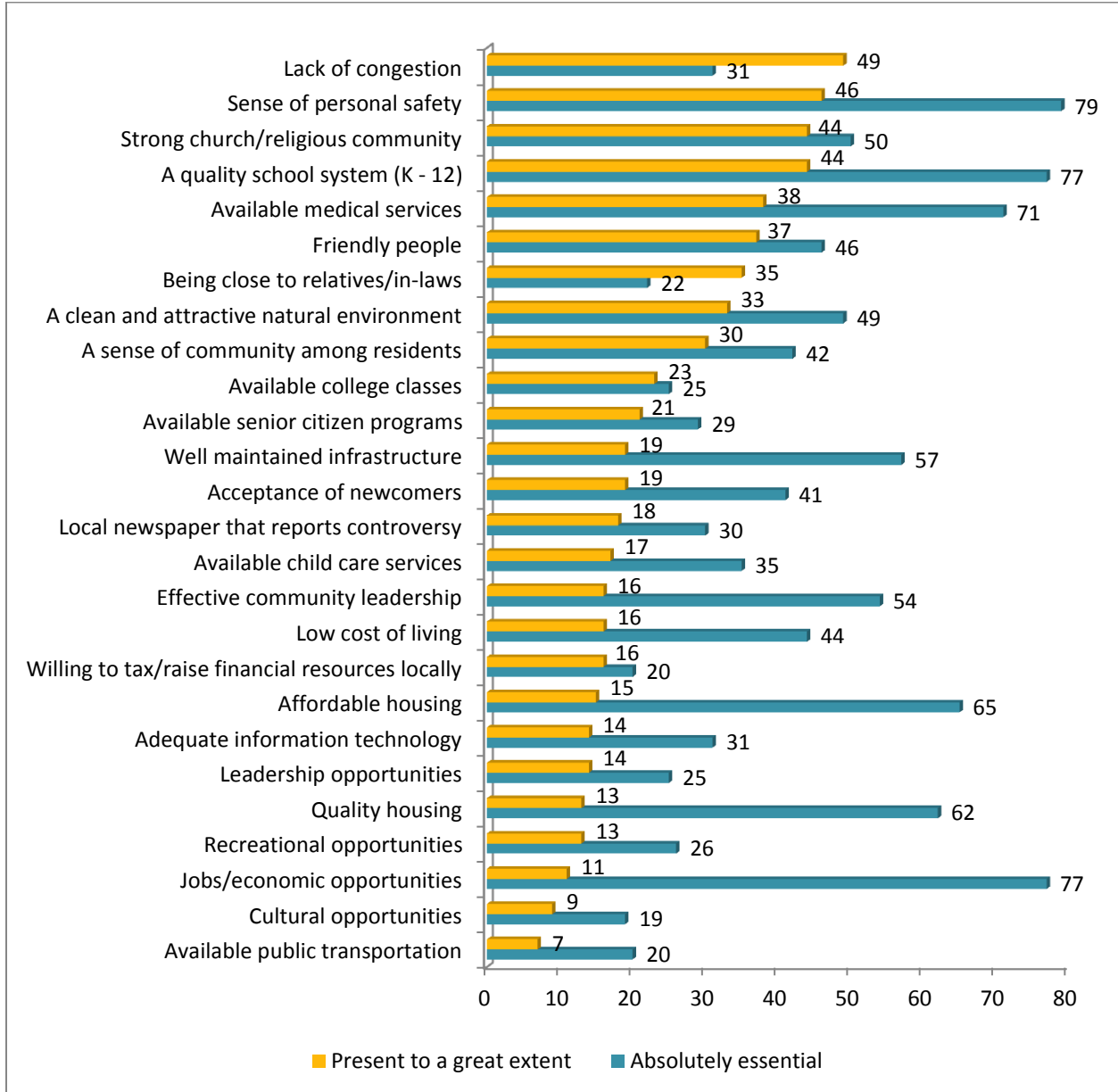
47 percent of the respondents living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more say available medical services are present to a great extent in their community. But, only 17 percent of the persons living in or near communities with less than 500 people agree.

The differences between the characteristics that people feel are essential for them to have a high quality of life and those that describe their current community are rather large. Comparing the numbers in Appendix Table 2 and Appendix Table 3 reveals these differences. For almost all of the characteristics listed, the proportions that feel each is absolutely essential are larger

than the proportions that feel each describes their current community to a great extent (Figure 5). The characteristic of jobs/economic opportunities represents an extreme example of the large differences. Seventy-seven percent

of rural Nebraskans say having jobs/economic opportunities is absolutely essential. However, only 11 percent say their community has these to a great extent.

Figure 5. Gap between What is Desired and What is Present in Community



The two exceptions to this pattern are lack of congestion and being close to relatives/in-laws. For these two characteristics, the proportion saying each describes their community to a great extent is larger than the proportion saying each is absolutely essential for them to have a high quality of life.

When examining the differences between what people think is essential in their community and what they currently have by age, the differences for some items are larger for the younger respondents as compared to the older persons. For example, when asked about affordable housing, 78 percent of the 19 to 29 year olds think it is absolutely essential. But only 19 percent think it describes their current community to a great extent. For the persons age 65 and older, 53 percent think affordable housing is absolutely essential and 20 percent say it is present to a great extent. Other characteristics where the differences between what they think is essential and what is present in the community are larger for younger persons include: a sense of personal safety, quality school system (K – 12), available medical services, available college classes, available child care services, adequate information technology, quality housing, recreational opportunities, jobs/economic opportunities, cultural opportunities and available public transportation.

There are also many instances where the differences between what they think is essential and what is currently in their community are larger for the older persons than the younger ones: leadership opportunities, low cost of living, effective community leadership, a local newspaper willing to report controversial items, acceptance of newcomers, available senior citizen programs, a sense of community among

residents, friendly people, and strong church/religious community.

When comparing the differences by community size, persons living in or near the larger communities tend to have larger differences between the proportion saying a characteristic is absolutely essential and those saying it is present to a great extent. As an example, 45 percent of the persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more say friendly people are absolutely essential to have a high quality of life. However, only 27 percent say friendly people are present to a great extent in their community. For the persons living in or near communities with less than 500 people, 48 percent think friendly people are absolutely essential. Fifty-one percent say they are present to a great extent in their community. Other characteristics where a bigger difference between what they think is essential and what is present in their community occurs for persons living in or near larger communities include: available public transportation, jobs/economic opportunities, recreational opportunities, leadership opportunities, adequate information technology, affordable housing, low cost of living, effective community leadership, a local newspaper willing to report controversial items, acceptance of newcomers, well maintained infrastructure, a sense of community among residents, a clean and attractive natural environment, a quality school system (K – 12), and a sense of personal safety.

A few cases occur where the differences between what is believed to be essential and what describes the current community are larger for persons living in or near smaller communities. The characteristics where this pattern occurs include: senior citizen programs, available college classes, available medical

services and a strong church/religious community. Seventy-five percent of the persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more think available medical services are absolutely essential and 47 percent think this describes their current community to a great extent. In comparison, 61 percent of the persons living in or near communities with less than 500 people think available medical services are absolutely essential. However, only 17 percent think this describes their current community to a great extent.

Conclusion

Rural Nebraskans are looking for many things in a community. The characteristics of a community that most believe are absolutely essential include social dimensions (sense of personal safety), economic dimensions (jobs/economic opportunities), some basic services (a quality school system, available medical services, affordable housing, quality housing and well maintained infrastructure) and environmental dimensions (a clean and attractive natural environment).

Unfortunately, when asked if these characteristics are present in their current community, some of these areas are lacking. One of the more extreme cases involves jobs/economic opportunities. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents say these are absolutely essential in order for them to have a high quality of life. However, only 11 percent say these exist in their community to a great extent.

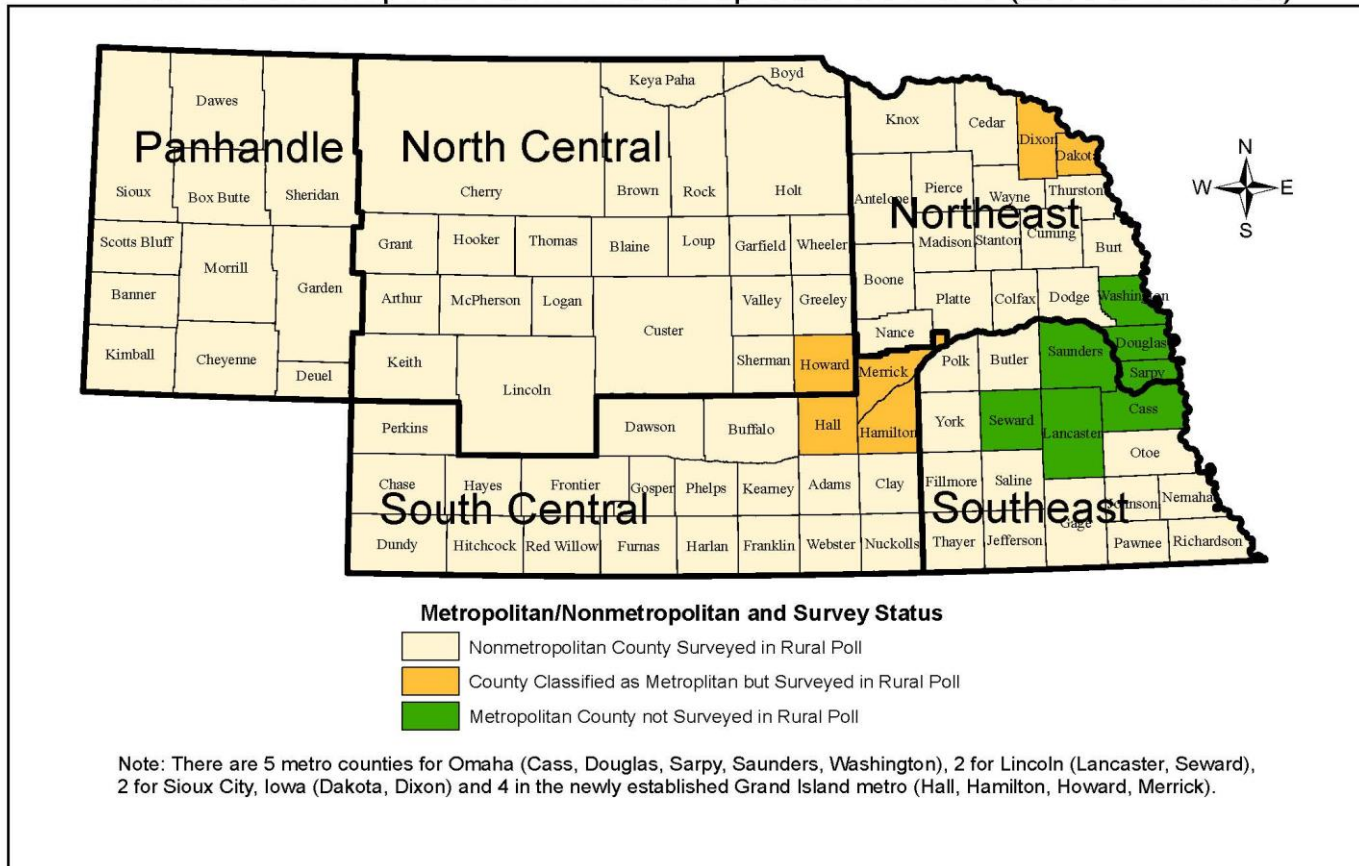
Examining these opinions by age can highlight areas communities can highlight to attract new residents of specific age ranges. It can also point out areas that communities can work to

improve in order to better attract and retain these same groups. Areas that could be marketed to young people include: jobs/economic opportunities, lack of congestion, sense of personal safety, affordable housing, available child care services, recreational opportunities, a quality school system, and available college classes. These are all areas of increased importance to younger residents as compared to older residents. However, many of these areas have large gaps between what is preferred and what is currently present in the community. Improvement in these areas can not only help attract younger persons to the community, but can help retain this population as well.

Areas that can be marketed to attract older persons include: available medical services, strong church/religious community, available senior citizen programs, effective community leadership, a sense of community among residents, friendly people, a clean and attractive natural environment, acceptance of newcomers, and a well-maintained infrastructure.

Appendix Figure 1. Regions of Nebraska

Nebraska Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Counties (2013 Definitions)



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 Respondents¹ Compared to 2010 Census and 2008 – 2012 American Community Survey 5 Year Average for Nebraska*

	2014 Poll	2013 Poll	2012 Poll	2011 Poll	2010 Poll	2009 Poll	2008 - 2012 ACS
Age : ²							
20 - 39	32%	31%	31%	31%	32%	32%	30.7%
40 - 64	46%	44%	44%	44%	44%	44%	45.6%
65 and over	23%	24%	24%	24%	24%	24%	23.7%
Gender: ³							
Female	57%	51%	61%	60%	59%	57%	50.9%
Male	43%	49%	39%	40%	41%	43%	49.1%
Education: ⁴							
Less than 9 th grade	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	4.7%
9 th to 12 th grade (no diploma)	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	7.3%
High school diploma (or equiv.)	18%	23%	22%	26%	25%	26%	34.3%
Some college, no degree	23%	25%	25%	23%	25%	25%	26.2%
Associate degree	16%	15%	15%	16%	14%	15%	10.0%
Bachelors degree	24%	22%	24%	19%	20%	20%	12.6%
Graduate or professional degree	16%	12%	11%	12%	11%	10%	5.0%
Household Income: ⁵							
Less than \$10,000	5%	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6.0%
\$10,000 - \$19,999	7%	7%	10%	10%	10%	9%	12.6%
\$20,000 - \$29,999	8%	13%	11%	13%	13%	13%	12.6%
\$30,000 - \$39,999	14%	10%	10%	14%	12%	13%	11.9%
\$40,000 - \$49,999	12%	15%	12%	11%	13%	12%	10.5%
\$50,000 - \$59,999	13%	10%	13%	12%	11%	13%	9.8%
\$60,000 - \$74,999	13%	11%	14%	12%	13%	14%	11.3%
\$75,000 or more	29%	29%	25%	22%	23%	21%	25.2%
Marital Status: ⁶							
Married	68%	70%	70%	66%	71%	68%	62.4%
Never married	12%	12%	10%	14%	9%	10%	16.9%
Divorced/separated	12%	9%	11%	11%	11%	11%	12.4%
Widowed/widower	8%	9%	10%	10%	9%	11%	8.3%

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

² 2010 Census universe is non-metro population 20 years of age and over.

³ 2010 Census universe is non-metro population 20 years of age and over.

⁴ 2008-2012 American Community Survey universe is non-metro population 18 years of age and over.

⁵ 2008-2012 American Community Survey universe is all non-metro households.

⁶ 2008-2012 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. Essential Characteristics of a Community in Relation to Age and Community Size

	<i>Age categories</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>19 - 29</i>	<i>30 - 39</i>	<i>40 - 49</i>	<i>50 - 64</i>	<i>65 and older</i>	
	<i>Percent Rating Each Characteristic as "Absolutely Essential"</i>					
Sense of personal safety	84	73	77	81	78	79
A quality school system (K - 12)	82	78	80	76	73	77
Jobs/economic opportunities	84	86	82	79	58	77
Available medical services	68	62	64	74	79	71
Affordable housing	78	68	67	62	53	65
Quality housing	60	66	68	58	59	62
Well maintained infrastructure (streets, sidewalks, water systems)	56	45	54	61	62	57
Effective community leadership	43	48	53	61	61	54
Strong church/religious community	44	36	43	54	65	50
A clean and attractive natural environment	48	38	47	53	56	49
Friendly people	40	35	51	47	54	46
Low cost of living	45	34	47	46	47	44
A sense of community among residents	32	36	45	43	50	42
Acceptance of newcomers	40	33	46	40	47	41
Available child care services	47	40	33	29	33	35
Lack of congestion	41	22	29	30	33	31
Adequate information technology	29	26	33	35	29	31
A local newspaper willing to report controversial items	20	21	24	33	47	30
Available senior citizen programs	21	20	26	31	42	29
Recreational opportunities	30	31	28	23	20	26
Available college classes	35	17	24	21	27	25
Leadership opportunities	22	18	25	24	31	25
Being close to relatives/in-laws	19	30	17	21	22	22
Available public transportation	23	12	14	20	29	20
A willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally	23	15	19	18	23	20
Cultural opportunities	25	15	20	17	22	19

	<i>Community size categories</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>Less than 500</i>	<i>500 - 999</i>	<i>1,000 - 4,999</i>	<i>5,000 - 9,999</i>	<i>10,000 and over</i>	
	<i>Percent Rating Each Characteristic as "Absolutely Essential"</i>					
Sense of personal safety	80	77	78	70	81	79
A quality school system (K - 12)	78	82	80	76	75	77
Jobs/economic opportunities	66	69	79	84	82	77
Available medical services	61	67	71	75	75	71
Affordable housing	58	57	66	68	68	65
Quality housing	62	58	60	60	65	62
Well maintained infrastructure (streets, sidewalks, water systems)	49	54	57	61	60	57
Effective community leadership	47	52	54	58	58	54
Strong church/religious community	49	49	55	52	47	50
A clean and attractive natural environment	47	51	51	52	48	49
Friendly people	48	44	46	46	45	46
Low cost of living	40	46	42	43	46	44
A sense of community among residents	42	49	41	43	40	42
Acceptance of newcomers	39	43	44	42	40	41
Available child care services	29	38	38	35	34	35
Lack of congestion	31	34	30	28	31	31
Adequate information technology	25	30	31	27	34	31
A local newspaper willing to report controversial items	21	25	31	35	32	30
Available senior citizen programs	24	31	26	32	30	29
Recreational opportunities	23	16	26	26	31	26
Available college classes	19	21	19	21	33	25
Leadership opportunities	21	26	23	33	24	25
Being close to relatives/in-laws	26	22	20	21	21	22
Available public transportation	14	21	16	17	27	20
A willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally	14	23	17	27	21	20
Cultural opportunities	13	16	20	24	21	19

Appendix Table 3. Characteristics Present in Current Community by Age and Community Size

	<i>Age categories</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>19 - 29</i>	<i>30 - 39</i>	<i>40 - 49</i>	<i>50 - 64</i>	<i>65 and older</i>	
	<i>Percent Saying "A Great Extent"</i>					
Lack of congestion	54	52	58	46	39	49
Sense of personal safety	43	50	51	42	47	46
A quality school system (K - 12)	41	44	46	42	50	44
Strong church/religious community	39	33	43	44	56	44
Available medical services	30	32	36	37	51	38
Friendly people	38	37	33	34	43	37
Being close to relatives/in-laws	45	45	37	28	27	35
A clean and attractive natural environment	30	27	36	32	39	33
A sense of community among residents	31	33	33	27	31	30
Available college classes	18	24	26	23	26	23
Available senior citizen programs	16	17	20	19	30	21
Well maintained infrastructure (streets, sidewalks, water systems)	21	12	18	18	26	19
Acceptance of newcomers	22	17	17	16	24	19
A local newspaper that reports controversial items	23	16	13	15	24	18
Available child care services	22	17	16	14	19	17
Effective community leadership	15	13	13	14	23	16
Low cost of living	26	17	16	13	14	16
A willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally	16	16	12	19	17	16
Available affordable housing	19	13	13	12	20	15
Available leadership opportunities	14	8	18	11	16	14
Adequate information technology	9	11	16	15	15	14
Available recreational opportunities	13	11	14	13	17	13
Available quality housing	13	11	13	11	20	13
Available jobs/economic opportunities	16	9	10	9	14	11
Available cultural opportunities	8	5	10	8	14	9
Available public transportation	2	6	6	8	13	7

Appendix Table 3 continued.

	<i>Community size categories</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>Less than 500</i>	<i>500 - 999</i>	<i>1,000 - 4,999</i>	<i>5,000 - 9,999</i>	<i>10,000 and over</i>	
	<i>Percent Saying "A Great Extent"</i>					
Lack of congestion	62	57	58	50	34	49
Sense of personal safety	53	60	46	39	41	46
A quality school system (K - 12)	48	52	46	42	39	44
Strong church/religious community	36	43	49	42	44	44
Available medical services	17	29	42	41	47	38
Friendly people	51	46	38	36	27	37
Being close to relatives/in-laws	38	35	33	37	35	35
A clean and attractive natural environment	40	37	36	30	26	33
A sense of community among residents	40	39	32	33	22	30
Available college classes	9	12	13	34	38	23
Available senior citizen programs	11	24	24	21	21	21
Well maintained infrastructure (streets, sidewalks, water systems)	16	24	19	18	19	19
Acceptance of newcomers	23	21	20	18	16	19
A local newspaper that reports controversial items	12	22	20	15	19	18
Available child care services	16	22	15	15	19	17
Effective community leadership	14	20	15	14	16	16
Low cost of living	24	21	17	13	12	16
A willingness to tax and/or raise financial resources locally	10	20	15	25	17	16
Available affordable housing	21	16	15	12	14	15
Available leadership opportunities	12	20	13	12	12	14
Adequate information technology	10	10	13	17	16	14
Available recreational opportunities	12	18	12	19	12	13
Available quality housing	13	13	12	13	15	13
Available jobs/economic opportunities	7	7	8	15	16	11
Available cultural opportunities	4	7	9	13	10	9
Available public transportation	3	6	5	11	9	7

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