RURAL PULSE™ SNAPSHOT: NORTHEAST MINNESOTA

Rural Pulse™ is a research study commissioned by the Grand Rapids-based Blandin Foundation to gain a real-time snapshot of the concerns, perceptions and priorities of rural Minnesota residents. This initiative was last conducted in 2016 and has served to identify trends within significant, complex subject areas including the economy, education, employment and quality of life.

In completing this comprehensive research study, 1,068 telephone interviews were conducted with rural Minnesotans. The full report can be found at www.RuralPulse.org. To provide a localized perspective, study findings for Northeast Minnesota are included in the following pages and contrasted with overall rural Minnesota responses. Intended to serve as a regional snapshot against full study observations, data reflects a statistical reliability of +/- 7.8 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. Also, please note that results within regional reports do not include communities of 35,000+; these cities are grouped within metro Minnesota findings – see full report for more information.
Collaboration and Contribution
More than four in five residents in Northeast Minnesota feel that they can make a positive impact within their local community, and believe their community works together effectively.

Community Performance
Northeast residents were most likely to agree that their community performed well in caring for the elderly, crime control, offering lifelong learning opportunities, making sure that every student succeeds and environmental stewardship. They were less likely to agree that their local area did well at providing childcare availability, cultural/arts opportunities, affordable housing, and addressing opioids and drug abuse.

Able to Make a Positive Community Impact
- Somewhat or strongly agree

Residents are Able to Work Together Effectively
- Somewhat or strongly agree

Agree Community is Performing Well
- Somewhat or strongly agree

- Adequate elder care: 85%
- Controlling crime: 81%
- Lifelong learning opportunities: 79%
- Making sure that every student succeeds: 77%
- Environmental stewardship: 77%
- Adequate healthcare services: 71%
- Addressing barriers for inclusion: 69%
- Good roads and other infrastructure: 66%
- Accessible public transportation for all: 66%
- Improving access to the internet: 66%
- Mental health issues: 65%
- Availability of childcare: 61%
- Diverse cultural opportunities and the arts: 60%
- Affordable housing for all residents: 57%
- Addressing opioids and drug abuse: 47%
Northeast residents felt their community has improved since 2016 in providing accessible public transportation for all, including the disabled. An area that decreased in satisfaction since the 2016 study was offering adequate healthcare services.

When comparing issue significance and satisfaction, Northeast Minnesotans felt their communities are underperforming in several key areas, most specifically, providing adequate healthcare, addressing opioids and drug abuse, economic development, mental health issues, and job opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Importance Mean</th>
<th>Performance Mean</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adequate healthcare services</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing opioids and drug abuse</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health issues</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job opportunities</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affordable housing for all</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good roads and infrastructure</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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When asked if they believe the needs of rural communities are as important to policymakers as metropolitan areas, 58% in 2016 and 57% in 2019 agreed, while 57% and 58% respectively thought that rural voice was not being heard.

**Rural Voice**

Fifty-seven percent of residents in Northeast Minnesota believed the needs of rural communities are important to policymakers. A significant percentage did not agree rural voice is being heard, however.
Critical Issues
The most critical issues to address in the Northeast region were said to be jobs, healthcare, opioids and drug abuse, mental health, economic development, affordable housing and availability of childcare.

Most Critical Issues

Northeast
1. Jobs
2. (tie) Healthcare, Opioids and drug abuse
3. Mental health
4. Economic development
5. (tie) Affordable housing, Availability of childcare

Overall Rural
1. Jobs
2. Healthcare
3. Opioids and drug abuse
4. Economic development
5. Mental health issues

Economic Concerns Linger, But Show Improvement
Twenty-eight percent of residents felt the local economy has improved within the past year, reflecting a continued increase since 2013.

While rural Minnesotans continue to experience a rebound in the economy, there was only 49 percent who felt there are sufficient living-wage jobs. Sixty-seven percent believed Northeast region communities maintain/grow job opportunities.

59% felt that economic development is being promoted well, up from just 41 percent in 2016. Sixty-seven percent felt there is an adequate workforce available for local businesses.
Impact of the Economy
A third said their household income had increased over the past year. Job losses have declined since 2016 study findings.

Migration
One in five said that they do not expect to live in their same community five years from now. Twenty percent have considered moving to a metropolitan area – a slight increase from 2016 study findings. Many say the search for job opportunities is the motivating factor for considering relocation.

Leadership Composition
Just over half of Northeast residents said they have served in a leadership capacity, an increase from 2016 study findings. Of those who have not, more than a third say that they would definitely consider serving in leadership if asked – also an increase in interest from 2016 findings for Northeast respondents.
Just over half believed that people from diverse backgrounds fill local leadership roles.

![Bar chart showing people from diverse backgrounds filling leadership roles within the community.](chart)

Diversity and Inclusion
Slightly less than half of residents in Northeast Minnesota said that they have at least some close friends of a different race or culture.

Northeast residents were most likely to feel that the groups that experience bias, discrimination or harassment within their community include those with drug or mental health issues, Native Americans, gays and lesbians, transgender individuals, and the homeless population.

### Groups Most Believed to Experience Bias, Discrimination or Harassment Within Their Community

Multiple Responses Allowed

1. Those with drug or mental health issues
2. Native Americans / American Indians
3. Gays and lesbians
4. Transgender people
5. Homeless

![Bar chart showing groups most believed to experience bias, discrimination or harassment.](chart)
More than four in five residents of Northeast Minnesota believed people in their community are able to stand up to hatred and discrimination.

**Optimism Exists**
Overall, seven in 10 Northeast region residents are optimistic about their community’s future.