RURAL PULSE™ SNAPSHOT: NORTHWEST 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 2013 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, 1,144 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 Northwest Minnesota are included in the following pages and contrasted with overall rural Minnesota responses.
While many residents in rural Minnesota feel positive about their community, that sentiment has declined compared to 2013.

Two-thirds of Northwest Minnesota feel their community is vibrant; however, there was a significant decline in the belief that regional communities are resilient and able to recover from difficult situations compared to 2013 findings. The Northwest also had the largest decline in belief that they are able to contribute to their community’s future, though many still feel they can make a positive impact.

Three in four feel their community works together cohesively.
The Northwest region is the least likely to believe that access to basic community services is equal for all residents, showing an eight-point decline from 2013. The service areas of greatest concern are housing, improving internet and public transportation.

Equal Access to Essential and Basic Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Area</th>
<th>Northwest 2013</th>
<th>Overall 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Improvement</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Transportation</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Community is Doing a Good Job

- **Caring for the elderly**: Northwest 84%, Overall 83%
- **Being good stewards of the environment**: Northwest 83%, Overall 80%
- **Providing quality educational opportunities**: Northwest 79%, Overall 72%
- **Ensuring good roads and other infrastructure**: Northwest 78%, Overall 78%
- **Controlling crime**: Northwest 75%, Overall 75%
- **Providing adequate healthcare services**: Northwest 71%, Overall 71%
- **Teaching life skills**: Northwest 70%, Overall 72%
- **Considering diverse cultural opportunities and the arts**: Northwest 66%, Overall 63%
- **Having adequate housing for all residents**: Northwest 63%, Overall 63%
- **Improving access to the Internet**: Northwest 61%, Overall 64%
- **Providing sufficient public transportation**: Northwest 53%, Overall 55%
Most feel parents are responsible for educational opportunities, though many believe the government should hold obligation for such.

Seven in 10 feel quality of life will improve and are optimistic about their community's future.

**Northwest Region:**
Community is Doing a Good Job

- Providing quality educational opportunities: 79% (2016), 87% (2013)
- Controlling crime: 75% (2016), 84% (2013)
- Considering diverse cultural opportunities and the arts: 56% (2016), 66% (2013)
- Improving access to the internet/technology: 61% (2016), 81% (2013)
- Having adequate housing for all residents: 63% (2016), 74% (2013)
- Providing sufficient public transportation: 53% (2016), 66% (2013)

*Agree or strongly agree*

**Who Is Responsible for Ensuring Adequate, Quality Educational Opportunities**

- Parents: 63% (2016), 62% (2013)
- Government: 58% (2016), 63% (2013)
- Local residents without school-age children: 28% (2016), 34% (2013)
- Businesses: 26% (2016), 26% (2013)
- Unsure: 6% (2016), 6% (2013)

*Multiple responses allowed*

**Quality of Life Will Improve Over Next Five Years**

- Northwest: 70%
- Overall: 72%

**Optimistic About Future of Their Community**

- Northwest: 72%
- Overall: 74%

*Somewhat or very optimistic*
Three in five residents in Northwest Minnesota believe the needs of rural communities are important to lawmakers, a 10-point decline from 2013 findings. It is the least likely region to feel supporting political candidates who address rural issues is of high importance.

Needs of Rural Communities are as Important to Legislators, Policymakers as Metropolitan Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Northwest</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three in 10 feel the local economy has improved within the past year, more than double the results of 2013 findings.

Condition of Community’s Economy Has Improved, Compared to a Year Ago

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Northwest</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While there is some sentiment that the condition of the economy has improved in Northwest Minnesota, concerns about jobs still top the priority list. The most critical issues to address in the Northwest region are said to be crime, growing local job opportunities, attracting new business and educational opportunities.

Most Critical to Your Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Northwest</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Crime</td>
<td>1. Growing local job opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Growing local job opportunities</td>
<td>2. New business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Education</td>
<td>4. Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is concern that there are insufficient living-wage jobs (53%) and that regional communities do not maintain/grow job opportunities (40%). There is also concern that there are not enough new businesses being started locally (51%).

Seven in 10 believe improved internet could assist local economy. While many are aware of local resources to help find employment, there is belief that resources to help start new businesses are lacking.
Three in 10 say their household income has increased over past year; however, more than one in 10 have experienced a job loss within their household.

Sixteen percent do not expect to live in their same community five years from now, and 17 percent have considered moving to a larger city. Many say quality of life is the motivating factor for considering migration, followed by job opportunities.
While half of regional residents feel the population has become more diverse in recent years, the Northwest is the least likely to believe their community is welcoming – a significant 17-point decrease from 2013 findings. Two-thirds feel there is acceptance of differences within their community, such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion and nationality.

There is a perception that community leadership is not inclusive. Two in five say they have served in a leadership capacity, a decrease from 2013 findings; however, many who have not say that they would definitely consider serving in leadership if asked.
For more information on Rural Pulse™ and to review the comprehensive, statewide report, visit www.RuralPulse.org. Additional questions on the community enrichment efforts of the Blandin Foundation can be directed to www.BlandinFoundation.org or 877-882-2257.