RURAL PULSE™ SNAPSHOT: SOUTHEAST 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 Southeast Minnesota are included in the following pages and contrasted with overall rural Minnesota responses.
Many Southeast Minnesota residents feel positive about their community. Three in four believe that their community is vibrant and resilient. They also feel the most strongly about being able to contribute to its future, although that sentiment has declined since 2013. Four in five feel they can make a positive impact.

**Community is a Vibrant Place to Live and Work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Southeast</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat or strongly agree</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Feel Ownership of Community and Ability to Contribute to Its Future**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat or strongly agree</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Community is Strong, Resilient and Able to Recover from Difficult Situations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Southeast</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat or strongly agree</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Able to Make a Positive Community Impact**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Southeast</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat or strongly agree</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than three in four feel their community works together cohesively.

**Community Works Together Effectively to Address Local Issues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Southeast</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat or strongly agree</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Southeast residents hold the greatest belief of all regions that access to basic community services is equal for everyone in their community. The service areas of largest concern are improving the internet and public transportation.

**Equal Access to Essential and Basic Services**

- Southeast: 83%
- Overall: 79%

**Community is Doing a Good Job**

- Caring for the elderly: 86% (Southeast), 83% (Overall)
- Providing quality educational opportunities: 83% (Southeast), 84% (Overall)
- Providing adequate healthcare services: 83% (Southeast), 83% (Overall)
- Being good stewards of the environment: 82% (Southeast), 81% (Overall)
- Controlling crime: 81% (Southeast), 80% (Overall)
- Having adequate housing for all residents: 78% (Southeast)
- Teaching life skills: 74% (Southeast)
- Ensuring good roads and other infrastructure: 75% (Southeast)
- Considering diverse cultural opportunities and the arts: 72% (Southeast), 72% (Overall)
- Improving access to the Internet: 60% (Southeast), 65% (Overall)
- Providing sufficient public transportation: 55% (Southeast)

*Agree or strongly agree*
Two-thirds of those in the Southeast feel the government is responsible for educational opportunities, though many believe parents also hold obligation for such.

Nearly four in five feel quality of life will improve and are optimistic about their community’s future.

Who Is Responsible for Ensuring Adequate, Quality Educational Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Southeast</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>66% 63%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>58% 62%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local residents</td>
<td>34% 34%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses</td>
<td>23% 26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>6% 6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multiple responses allowed

Quality of Life Will Improve Over Next Five Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Southeast</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat or strongly agree</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optimistic About Future of Their Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Southeast</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat or very optimistic</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three in five in the Southeast region believe the needs of rural communities are important to lawmakers – a decline from 2013 findings. Just over half feel it is very important to support political candidates who address rural issues.

A third feel the local economy has improved within the past year – an increase from 2013.

There is some sentiment that the condition of the economy has improved in Southeast Minnesota and that living-wage jobs have increased; however, the most critical issues to address in the Southeast are still said to be growing local job opportunities and attracting new business, followed by healthcare and crime.

**Most Critical to Your Community**

**Southeast**
1. Growing local job opportunities
   - New business
2. Healthcare
3. Crime

**Overall**
1. Growing local job opportunities
2. New business
3. Crime
4. Education
While an improvement from 2013, there is still concern that there are insufficient living-wage jobs (45%). And while close to three in four believe that regional communities do a good job maintaining and growing job opportunities (24% disagree), even more are concerned that there are not enough new businesses being started locally (37%).

Three in four 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.
Thirty-five percent in the Southeast region say that their household income has increased over the past year; however, more than one in 10 have experienced a job loss within their household.

Thirteen percent do not expect to live in their same community five years from now, and more than one in five have considered moving to a larger city. Quality of life and job opportunities are both primary motivating factors for considering migration. Other reasons listed include being closer to family, among others.
Nearly three in five feel the local population has become more diverse in recent years, and the Southeast is the most likely region to believe their communities are welcoming – a slight decline from 2013 findings. Three in four feel there is acceptance of differences, such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion and nationality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Has Become More Diverse Over Past Five Years</th>
<th>Community is a Welcoming Place for People of All Backgrounds and Perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58% Southeast, 53% Overall</td>
<td>83% Southeast 82% Overall 76% 71% Overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat or much more diverse</td>
<td>2013 2016 Southeast Overall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Community Accepts and Embraces Differences (e.g., Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation, Religion, Nationality)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Accepts and Embraces Differences</th>
<th>75% 69%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat or strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a perception that community leadership is not inclusive. While more than two in five say they have served in a leadership capacity, this represents a 13-point decrease from 2013 findings. A third say that they would definitely consider serving in leadership if asked.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People From Diverse Backgrounds Fill Leadership Roles Within the Community</th>
<th>Served In a Community Leadership Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53% Southeast, 50% Overall</td>
<td>55% 53% Southeast 42% 41% Overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat or strongly agree</td>
<td>Somewhat or strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 2013 2016 Southeast Overall                                                |
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.

**Why Haven't Served In a Leadership Role**

- Not enough time: 45%
- No interest: 44%
- Wasn't invited/asked: 28%

*Those who have not served in leadership in the past*

**Would Definitely Consider Serving If Asked**

- Southeast: 34%
- Overall: 32%

*Those who have not served in leadership in the past*