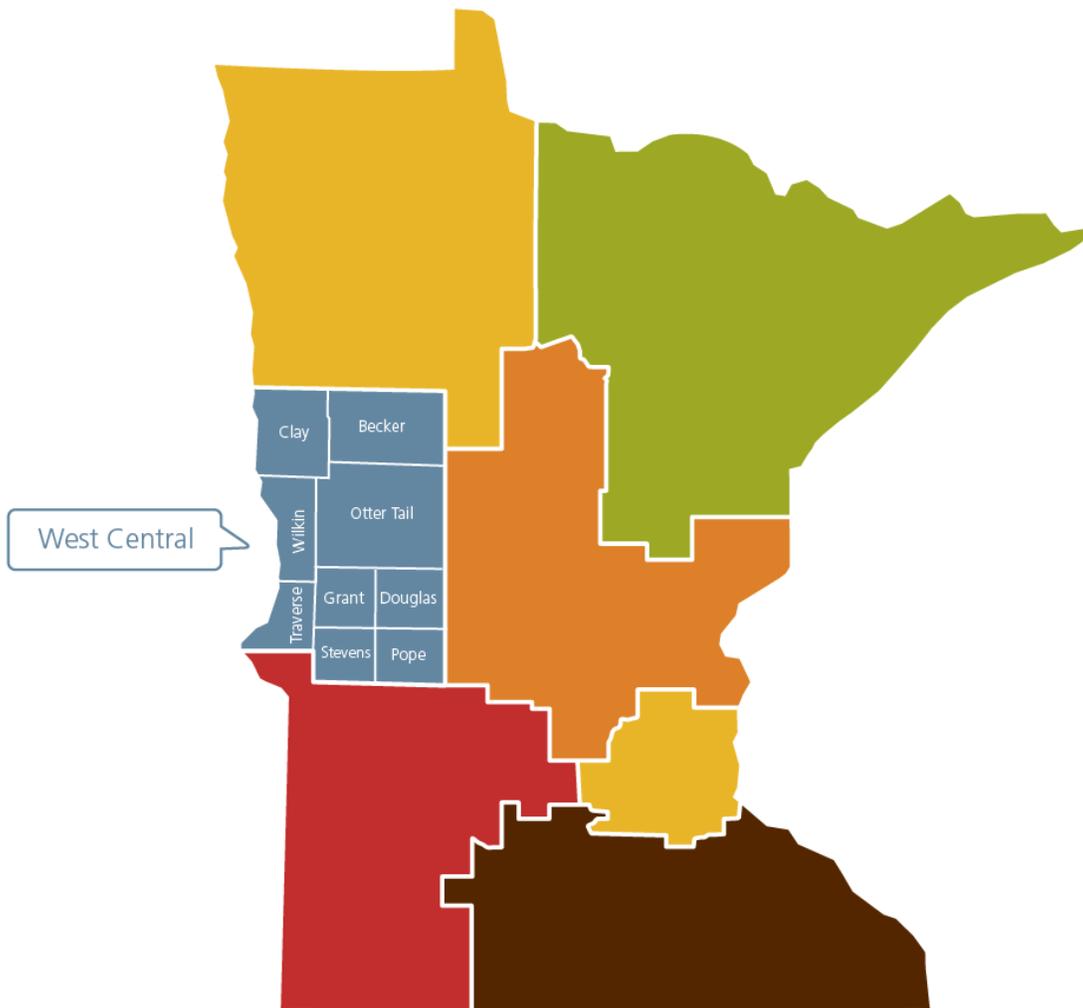




RURAL PULSE™ SNAPSHOT: WESTCENTRAL MINNESOTA

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.

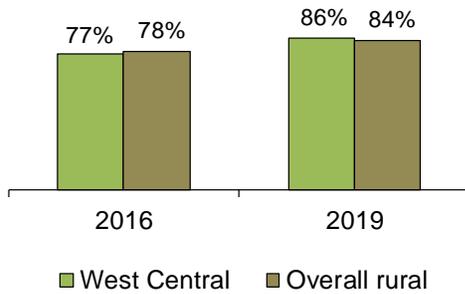
*In completing this comprehensive research study, 1,068 telephone interviews were conducted with rural Minnesotans. The full report can be found at www.RuralPulse.org. To provide a localized perspective, study findings for West Central Minnesota are included in the following pages and contrasted with overall rural Minnesota responses. Intended to serve as a regional snapshot against full study observations, data reflects a statistical reliability of +/- 9.6 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.*



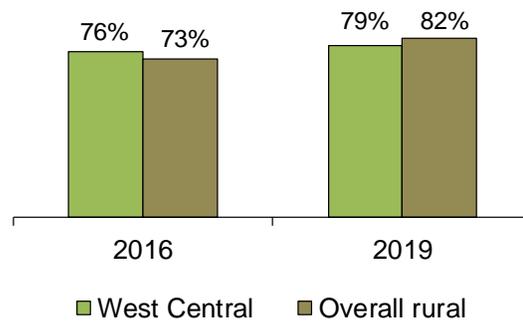
Collaboration and Contribution

More than four in five residents in West Central Minnesota felt that they can make a positive impact on their local community, an upswing from 2016 study findings. Four in five also believed their community works together effectively.

Able to Make a Positive Community Impact
Somewhat or strongly agree



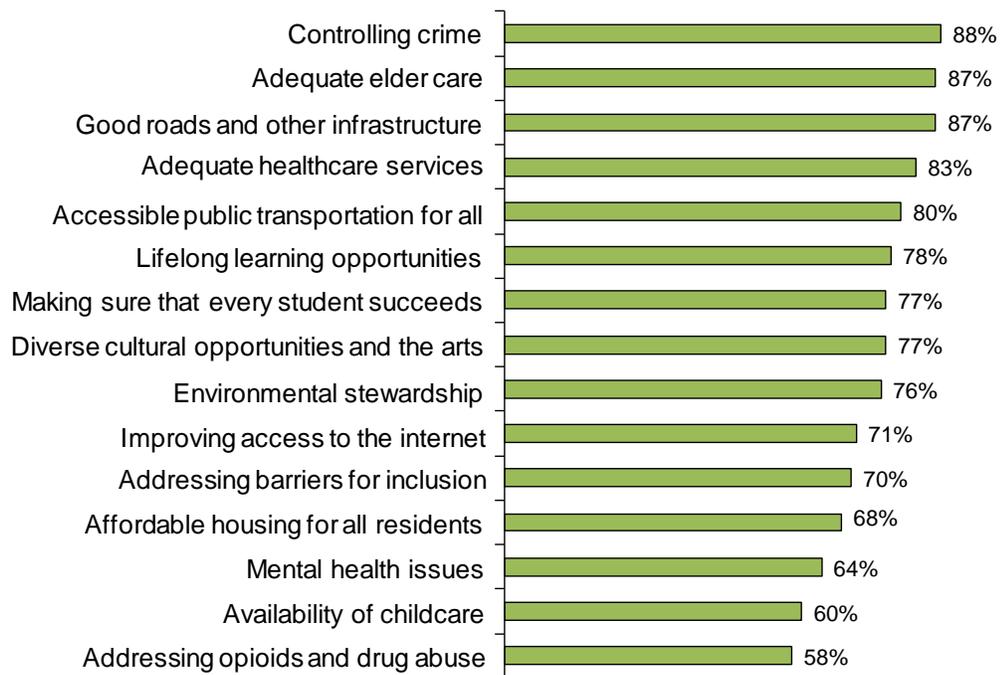
Residents are Able to Work Together Effectively
Somewhat or strongly agree



Community Performance

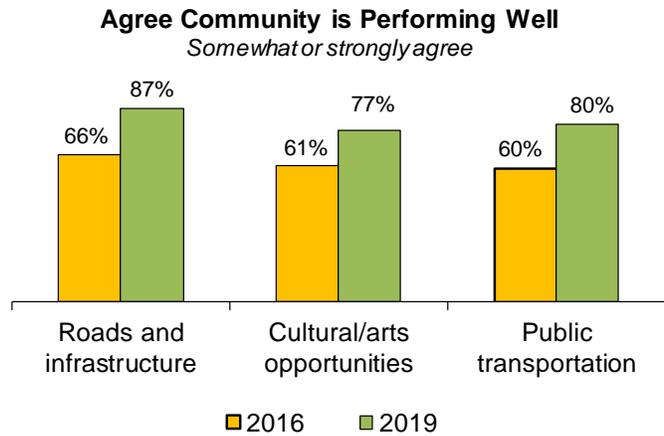
West Central residents were most likely to agree that their community performed well in crime control, caring for the elderly, providing good infrastructure, adequate healthcare and accessible transportation for all. They were less likely to agree that their community did well at addressing mental health, availability of childcare, and opioids and drug abuse.

Agree Community is Performing Well
Somewhat or strongly agree



West Central residents' felt their community has significantly improved since 2016 in providing good roads and infrastructure; offering public transportation for all, including the disabled; and cultural/arts opportunities.

When comparing issue significance and satisfaction, West Central Minnesotans believed that their communities are underperforming in certain areas, including addressing drug abuse, jobs and economic development, among others.



Issue Importance vs. Community Performance

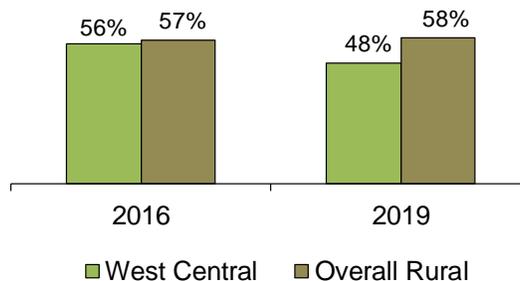
	Importance Mean	Performance Mean
Addressing opioids and drug abuse	3.4	2.8
Job opportunities	3.4	2.9
Economic development	3.3	2.8
Mental health issues	3.4	3.0
Availability of childcare	3.3	2.9

■ Significantly Below Expectations
■ Below Expectations
4 = High, 1 = Low

Rural Voice

About half of residents in West Central Minnesota said that the needs of rural communities are important to policymakers, a downturn from 2016 study findings. A significant percentage still did not feel rural voice is being heard.

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



Critical Issues

The most critical issues to address in the West Central region were said to be jobs, healthcare, drug abuse and workforce availability.

Most Critical Issues

West Central

1. Jobs
2. (tie) Opioids and drug abuse, Healthcare
3. Workforce availability
4. (tie) Economic development, Elder care, Affordable housing
5. Closing student achievement gaps

Overall Rural

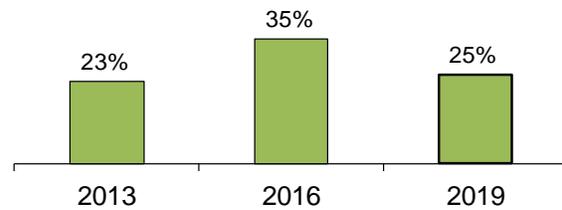
1. Jobs
2. Healthcare
3. Opioids and drug abuse
4. Economic development
5. Mental health issues

Economic Concerns Linger, But Show Improvement

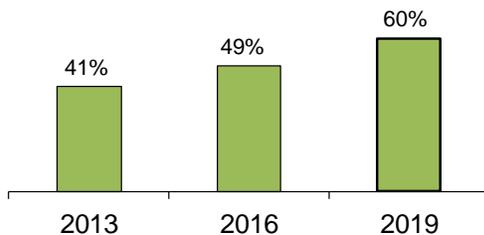
Rural Minnesotans continue to experience an evolving economy. One-quarter within the region felt that the local economy has improved within the past year, a decrease in sentiment since 2013.

Sixty percent said that there are sufficient living-wage jobs. Seventy-three percent of West Central region residents believed that communities maintain/grow job opportunities. Sixty-four percent felt economic development is active, but more could be done. A similar percent (63%) believed there is adequate workforce available for local businesses.

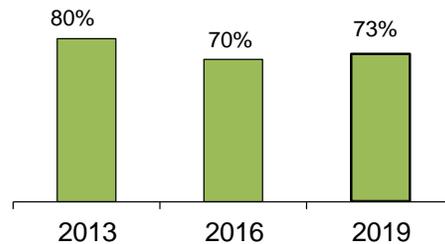
Condition of Community's Economy Has Improved, Compared to a Year Ago *Somewhat or much better now*



Adequate Number of Jobs that Pay Household-Supporting Wages *Somewhat or strongly agree*

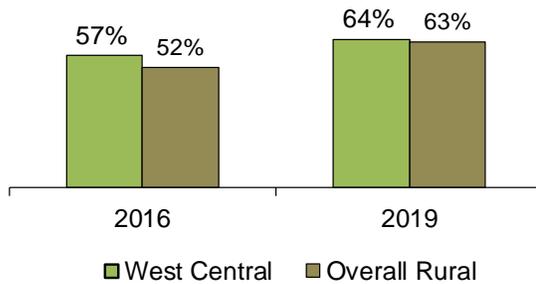


Community Successfully Maintains and Grows Job Opportunities *Somewhat or strongly agree*



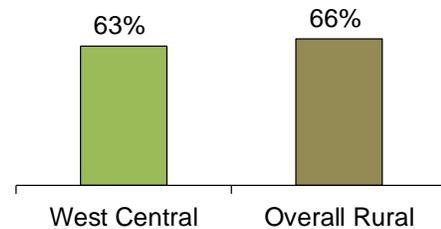
Community Sufficiently Promotes Economic Development

Somewhat or strongly agree



Adequate Workforce for Businesses

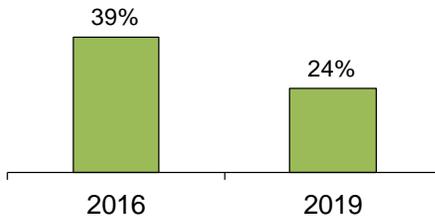
Somewhat or strongly agree



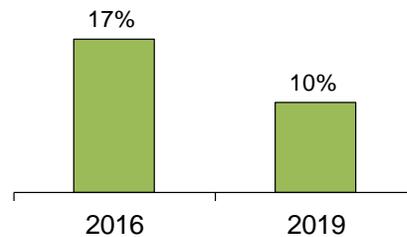
Impact of the Economy

One in four within the region said that their household income increased over the past year, a decline from 2016 study findings; job losses in the West Central region have declined since 2016 as well.

Household Income Has Increased Over Past Year



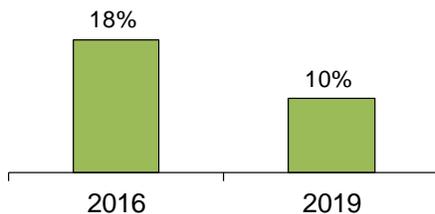
Lost a Job in Past Year



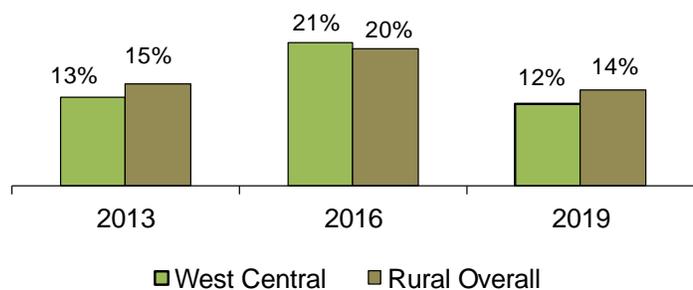
Migration

Ten percent of West Central residents said that they do not expect to live in their same community five years from now; 12 percent have considered moving to a metropolitan area – a significant decrease from 2016 study findings. Many who had considered relocation said that the search for job opportunities and quality of life were motivating factors.

Do Not Expect to Live in Their Community Five Years From Now



Considered Moving to Metro Area Within Past Two Years

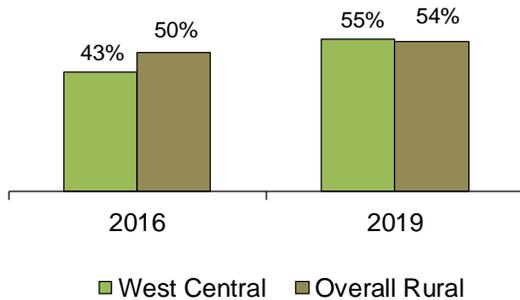


Leadership

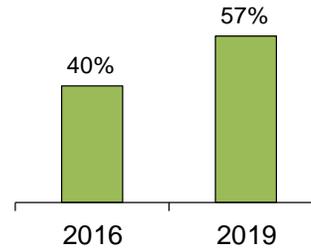
Nearly three in five West Central residents said that they have served in a leadership capacity, a significant increase from 2016 study findings. Of those who had not, more than half said that they would consider serving, if asked – a significant increase from 2016 findings.

People From Diverse Backgrounds Fill Leadership Roles Within Community

Somewhat or strongly agree

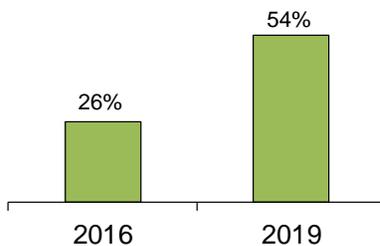


Have Served in a Leadership Role



Would Definitely Consider Serving If Asked

(Of those who have not served in leadership)



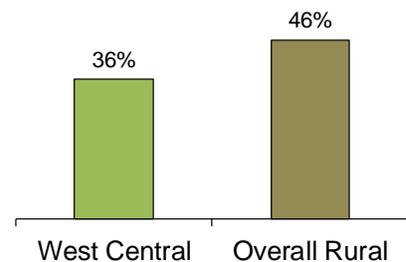
Inclusion

While more than a third of residents in West Central Minnesota said that they have at least some close friends of a different race or culture, the percentage is less than for rural Minnesotans at large.

West Central residents most feel the groups that experience bias, discrimination or harassment within their community include transgender individuals, those with drug or mental health issues, gays and lesbians, recent immigrants and Native Americans.

Have At Least Some Close Friends of Different Race or Culture

Some, most or all



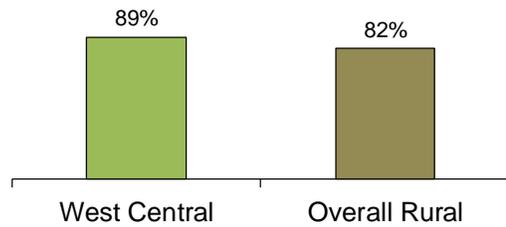
Groups Most Believed to Experience Bias, Discrimination or Harassment Within Their Community

Multiple Responses Allowed

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

Nine in 10 residents of West Central Minnesota believed people in their community are able to stand up to hatred and discrimination.

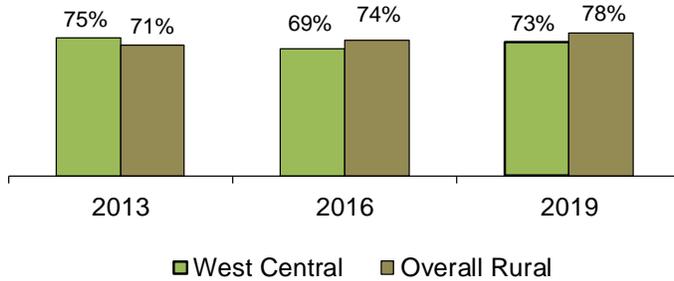
Believe People in Community are Able to Stand Up to Hatred and Discrimination



Optimism Exists

Overall, some seven in 10 West Central region residents were optimistic about their community's future.

Optimistic About Future of Their Community
Somewhat or very optimistic



For more information on Rural Pulse™ and to review the comprehensive, statewide report, visit www.RuralPulse.org. For more on Blandin Foundation visit www.BlandinFoundation.org.