

Nebraska Rural Poll

RURAL POLL



Gathering Scientific Data at an Affordable Price

The Nebraska Rural Poll is the longest-running state rural survey in the nation, beginning in 1996. The goal of the poll is to give local and state leaders a better understanding of the needs, priorities, and opinions of Nebraska's rural citizens.

Each year, core questions focus on community and well-being. Interested researchers, community, and organizations can purchase additional survey questions.

1



2

Survey topics have included agricultural policy, energy, the environment, government, crime, education, health care, housing, taxes, technology, and employment.

3

Surveys are mailed out each year in March and April to 7,000 households in 86 counties across the state.



4

In a series of reports, survey results are distributed to state lawmakers, news media, local economic and community development groups, as well as rural citizens.



5

Poll data has been used by policymakers, state agencies, university faculty, development organizations, and economic developers to aid in planning for the future of rural Nebraska.



2024 Rural Poll Team



From Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication:

- L.J. McElravy
- Heather Akin
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From Agricultural Economics:

- Brad Lubben
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- Katie Larson
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Rural Poll Topics



Core Topics

Community

- Perceptions of community change
- Satisfaction with community services
- Attachment to community

Well-being

- Better or worse off compared to 5 years ago
- Will be better or worse off 10 years from now
- Feelings of powerlessness
- Satisfaction with job, religion, family, community, clean water, etc.

Work

- Employment status
- Spouse/Partner employment status

Rotating Topics

2021

- Trust and confidence in institutions
- Impacts of the pandemic

2022

- Natural resource management (e.g., water)
- Leadership and volunteering in communities
- Workplace and economy

2023

- Civil discourse
- Childcare
- Farm Bill

2024

- Civil discourse
- Economy and trade
- Artificial intelligence
- Housing

2025

- Energy resources and agriculture
- Biosecurity and bioeconomy
- Trust in institutions
- Algorithms

Overview of Reports

- Multiple topics or single topic
- Items and response scale in appendices
- Comparisons in reports: Community Size, Region, Household Income, Age, Gender, Education, Marital Status, Occupation

Appendix Table 3. Support for Federal Funding on Farm Bill Programs by Community Size, Region and Individual Attributes

	Farm income safety net (commodity, disaster, and insurance programs)				Conservation programs			
	Oppose	Neither	Support	Significance	Oppose	Neither	Support	Significance
	Percentages							
Total	8	19	73		6	16	79	
Community Size	(n = 1058)				(n = 1058)			
Less than 500	5	17	78		5	13	82	
500 - 999	12	20	68		4	31	65	
1,000 - 4,999	11	15	74		9	11	81	
5,000 - 9,999	8	30	62	$\chi^2 = 20.94^*$	4	26	70	$\chi^2 = 44.37^*$
10,000 and up	7	18	75	(.007)	5	13	82	(.000)
Region	(n = 1072)				(n = 1071)			
Panhandle	4	14	82		2	17	82	
North Central	9	17	73		9	13	79	
South Central	8	16	76		4	17	79	
Northeast	10	22	69	$\chi^2 = 14.21$	9	17	75	$\chi^2 = 17.36^*$
Southeast	9	24	68	(.077)	3	13	83	(.027)

say they drive over 20 miles outside of their normal commute to get to their childcare.

Opinions about Childcare in Community

Finally, all respondents were given a series of statements about childcare in their community and were asked the extent to which they agree or disagree with each. Most rural Nebraskans recognize the importance of childcare for the growth of their community and think it should be a high priority. At least three-quarters of rural Nebraskans agree or strongly agree that increasing access to both high quality and affordable childcare should be a high priority for their community (Figure 6). Just over eight in ten (81%) agree or strongly agree that high

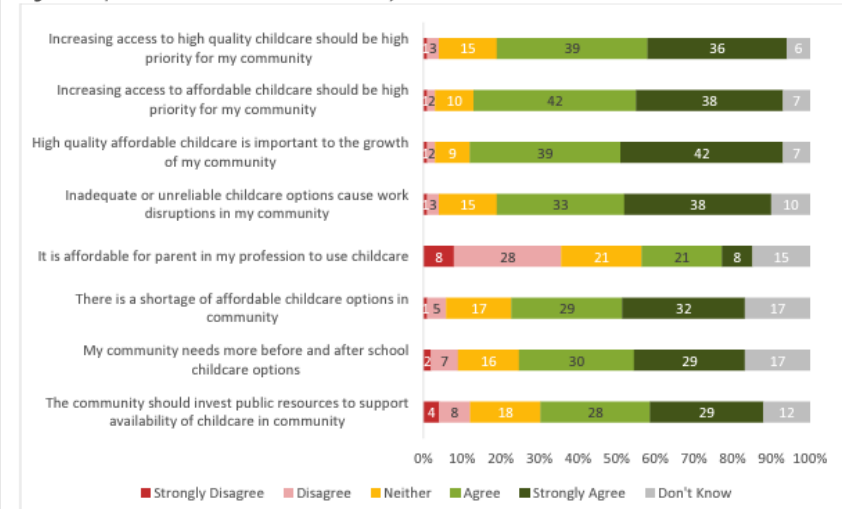
quality affordable childcare is important to the growth of their community.

Most rural Nebraskans agree that inadequate or unreliable childcare options cause work disruptions in their community. Just over seven in ten agree or strongly agree with that statement.

Opinions are mixed on whether it is affordable for a parent in their profession to use childcare. Just over one-third (36%) disagree with that statement, while just under three in ten agree.

Most rural Nebraskans agree there is a shortage of affordable childcare options in their community. Just over six in ten (61%) agree with that statement.

Figure 6. Opinions about Childcare in Community



Survey Methodology



Mailed self-administered questionnaires in spring (March - June)

Sample includes 7,000 randomly selected rural households in 86 counties

17% Response rate in 2024 (1,010 responses, just over 5,800 deliverable addresses)

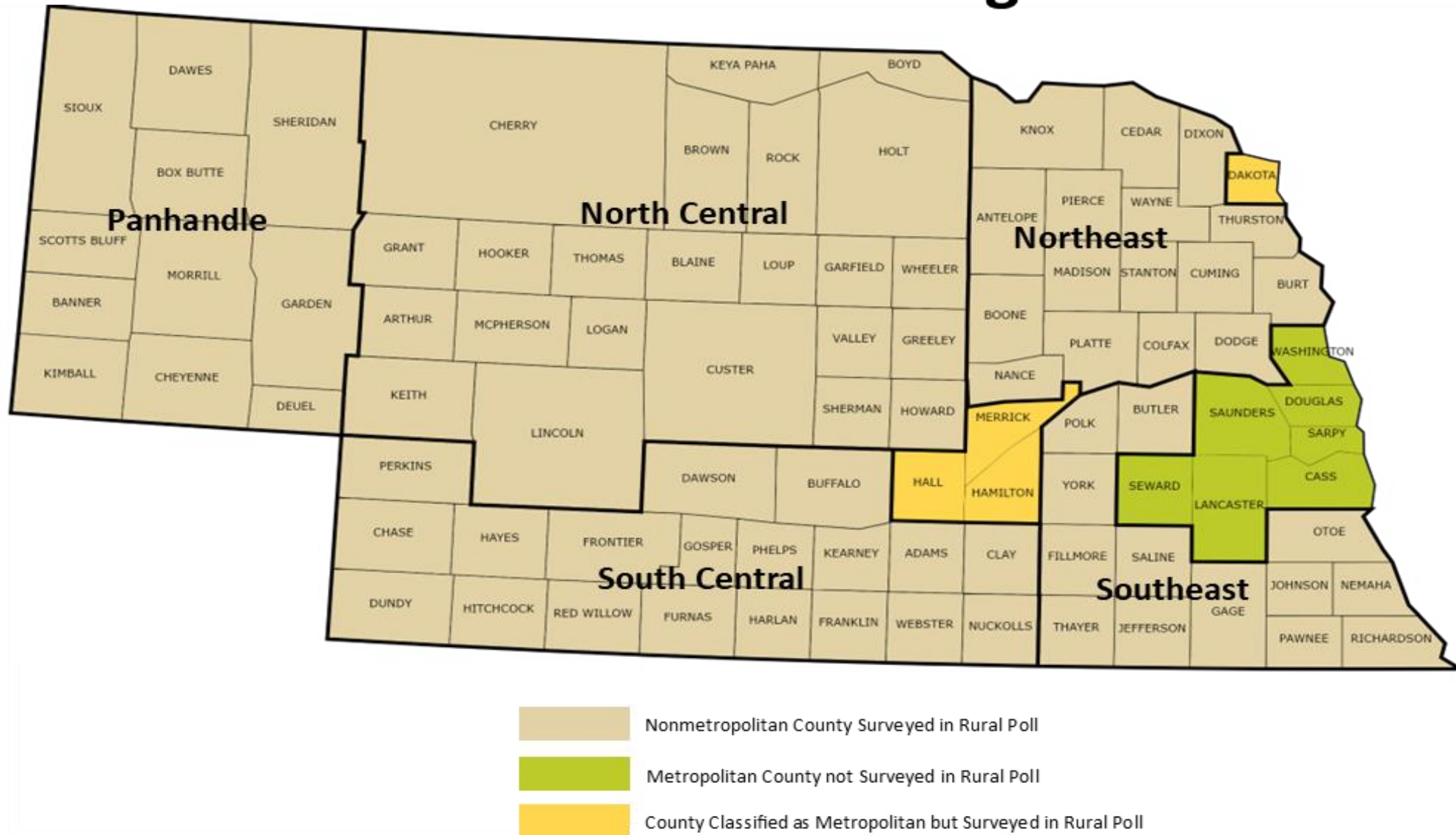
Margin of error $\pm 3\%$

Procedure (Total Design Method)

1. A pre-notification letter was sent requesting participation in the study and gives link to online survey.
2. The questionnaire was mailed with an informal letter signed by the project manager approximately ten days later.
3. A reminder postcard was sent to those who had not yet responded approximately ten days after the questionnaire had been sent.
4. Those who had not yet responded within approximately 20 days of the original mailing were sent a replacement questionnaire.

A photograph of a street scene in San Francisco. On the left, a building features a large mural of a mountain, likely Mount Fuji. Above the mural, a sign reads 'MARKET'. To the right, a storefront has a sign that says 'TAILOR SHOP'. The street is paved with cobblestones, and a person is visible walking in the distance. The overall atmosphere is historic and urban.

Nebraska Rural Poll Regions



2024

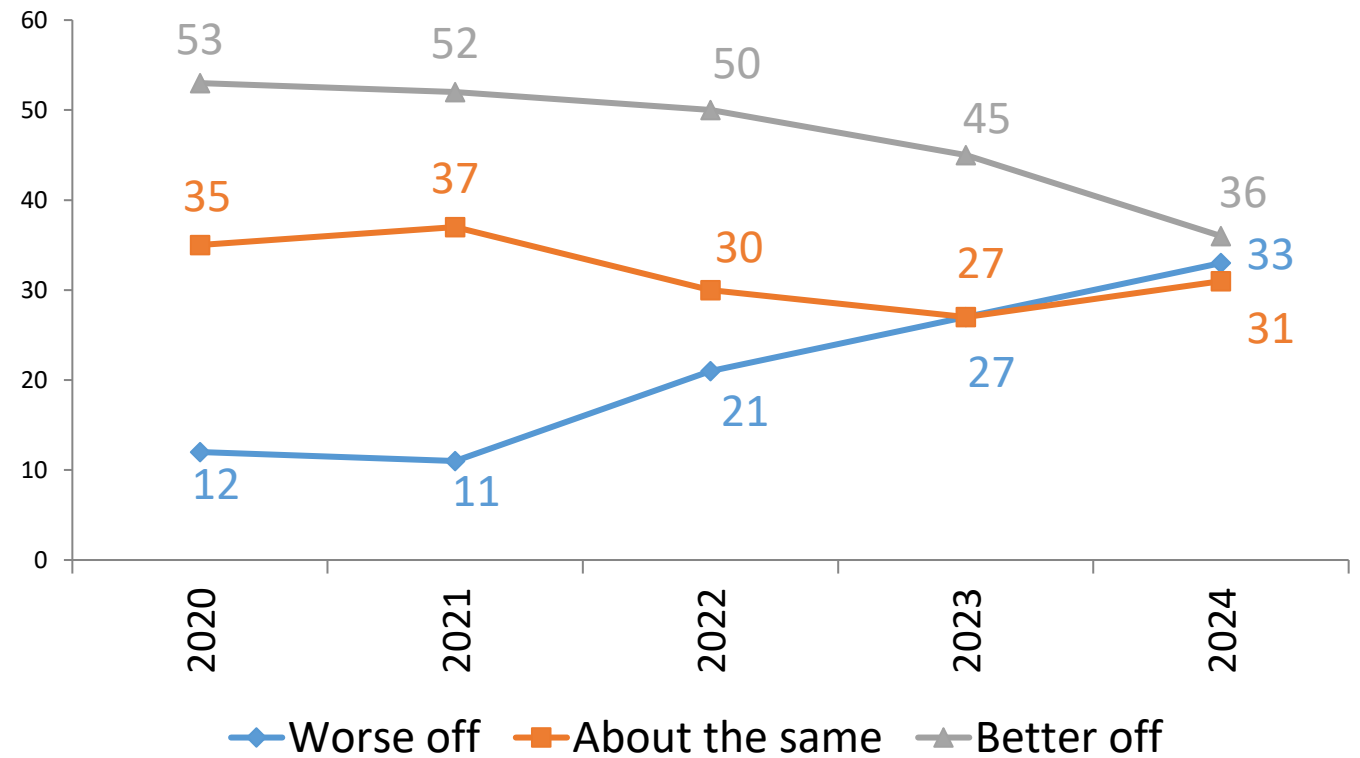
Rural Poll

The Well-Being of Rural Nebraskans

Trends in Well-Being

All things considered, do you think you are better or worse off than you were five years ago?

This year, rural Nebraskans are more pessimistic about their current situation than they've been since this study began.

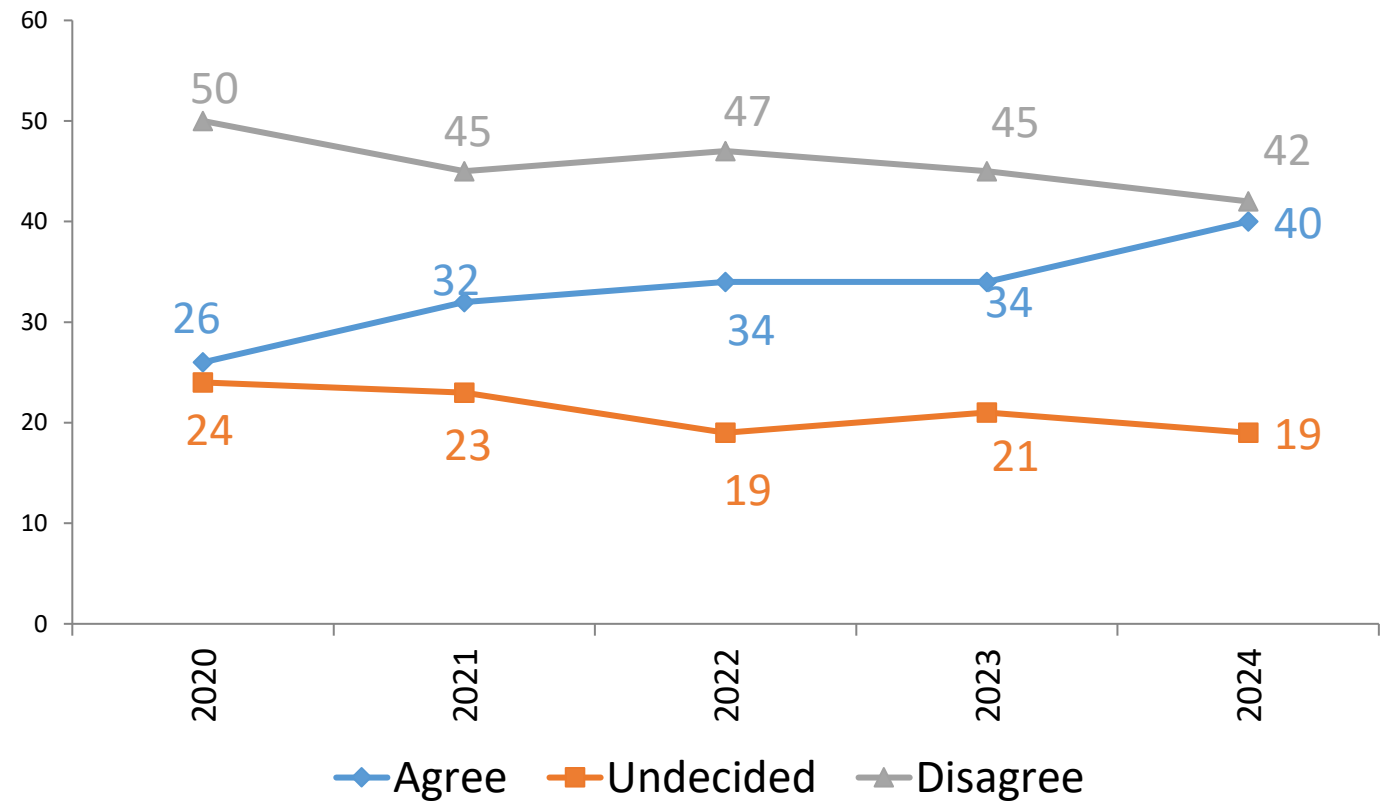


Feelings of Powerlessness



Life has changed so much in our modern world that most people are powerless to control their own lives.

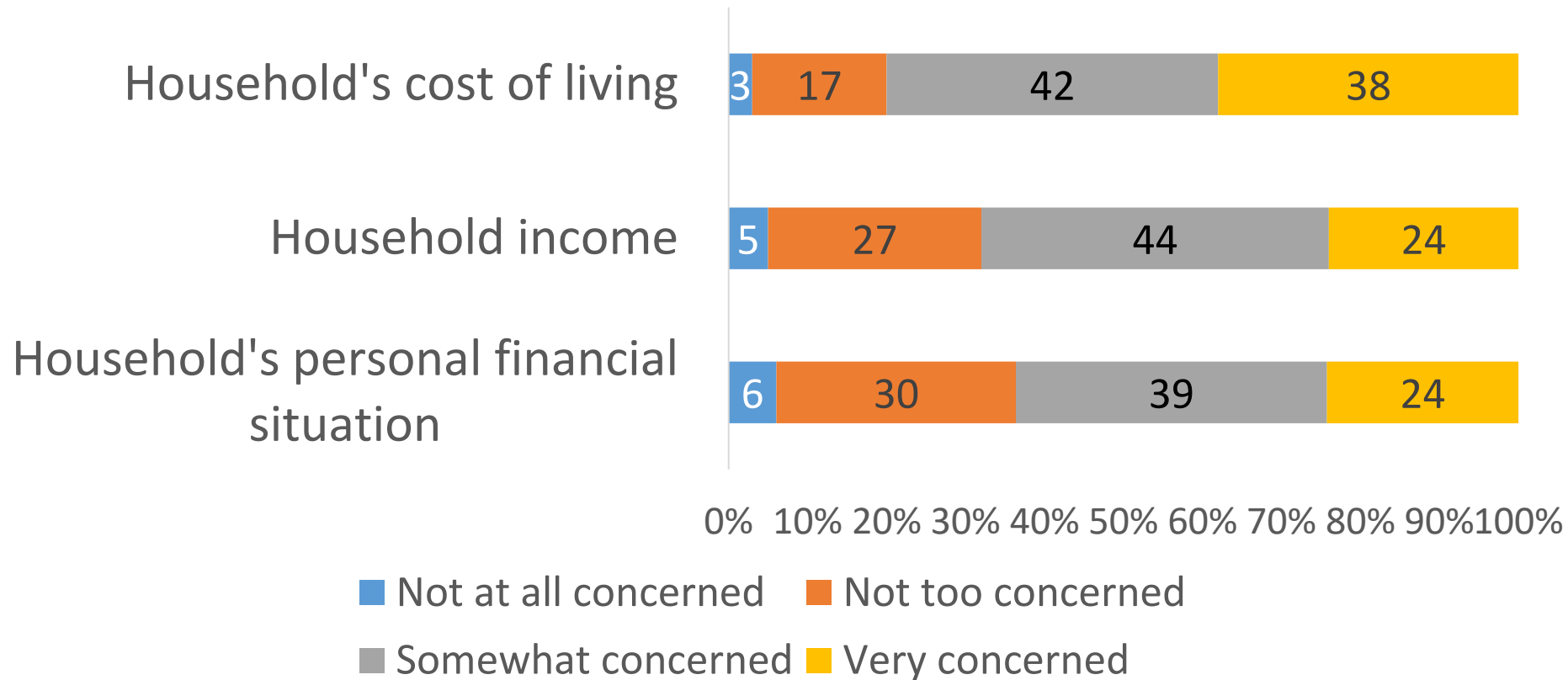
The past five years have also seen an increase in feelings of powerlessness by rural Nebraskans, which were at their highest level since the study began.



Concerns about Economic Issues



How concerned, if at all, are you personally about each of the following economic issues today?



2024

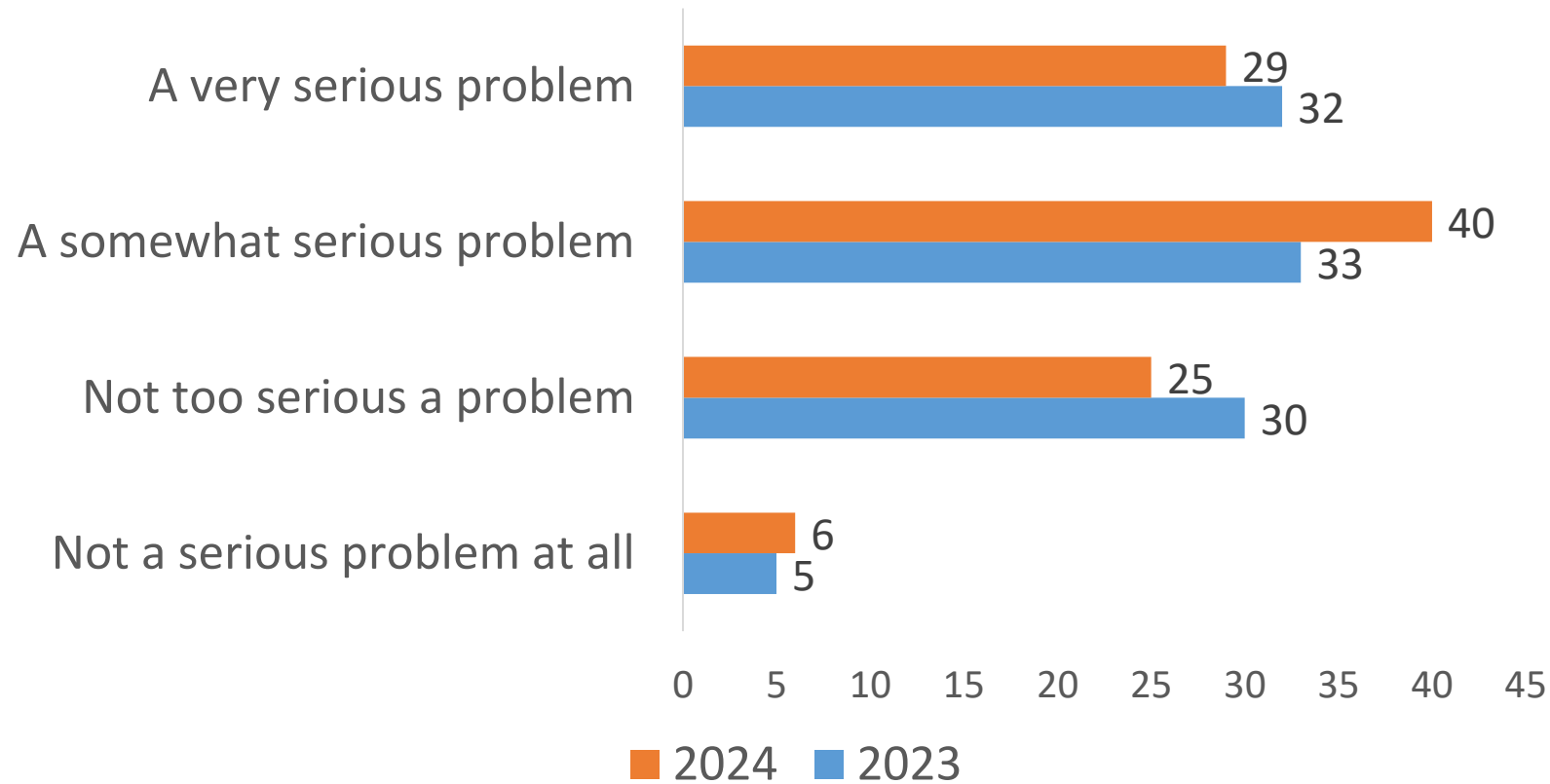
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Civil Discourse in Rural Nebraska

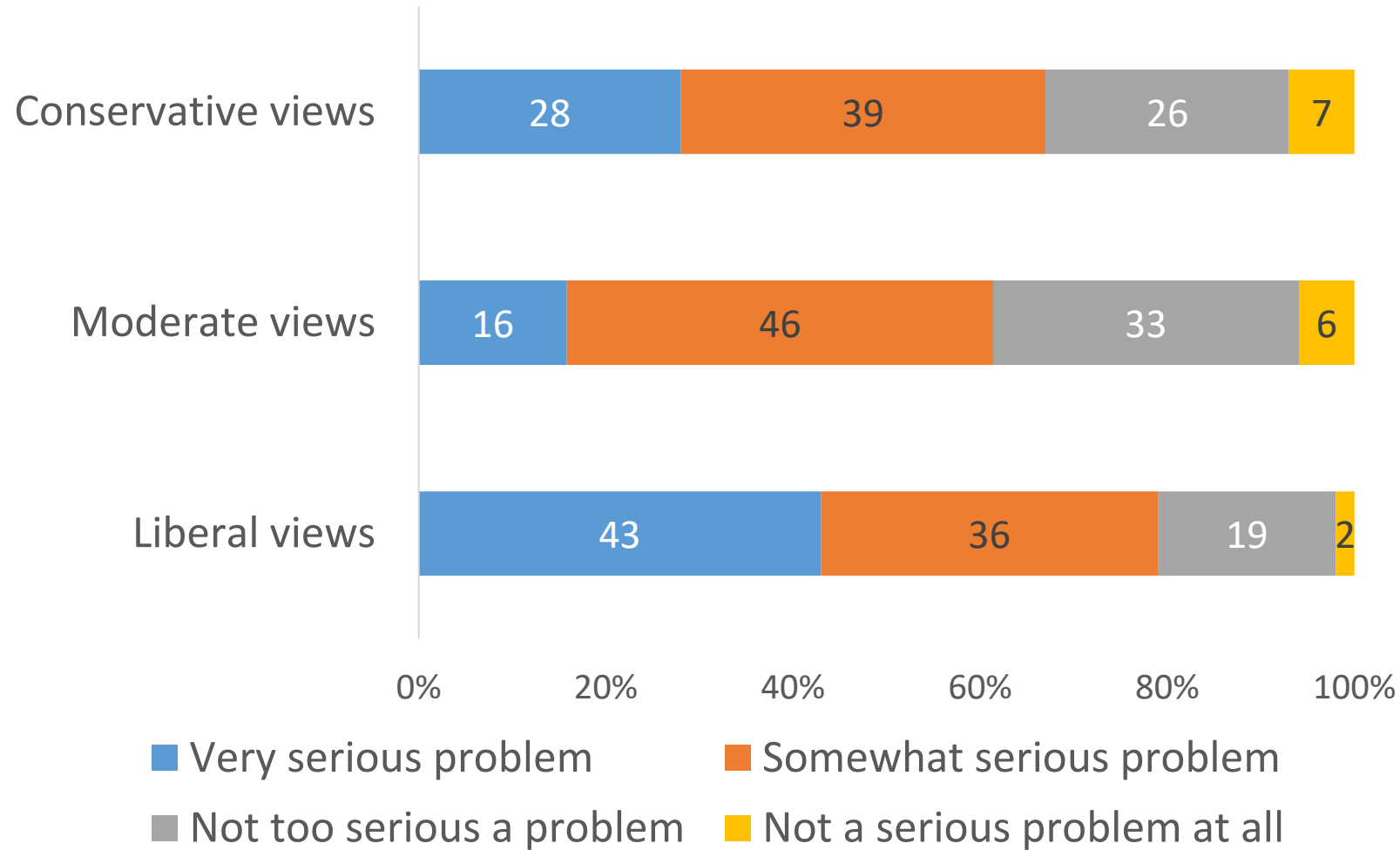
Trends in Civil Discourse



How serious a problem is the lack of civil or respectful discourse in our political system?



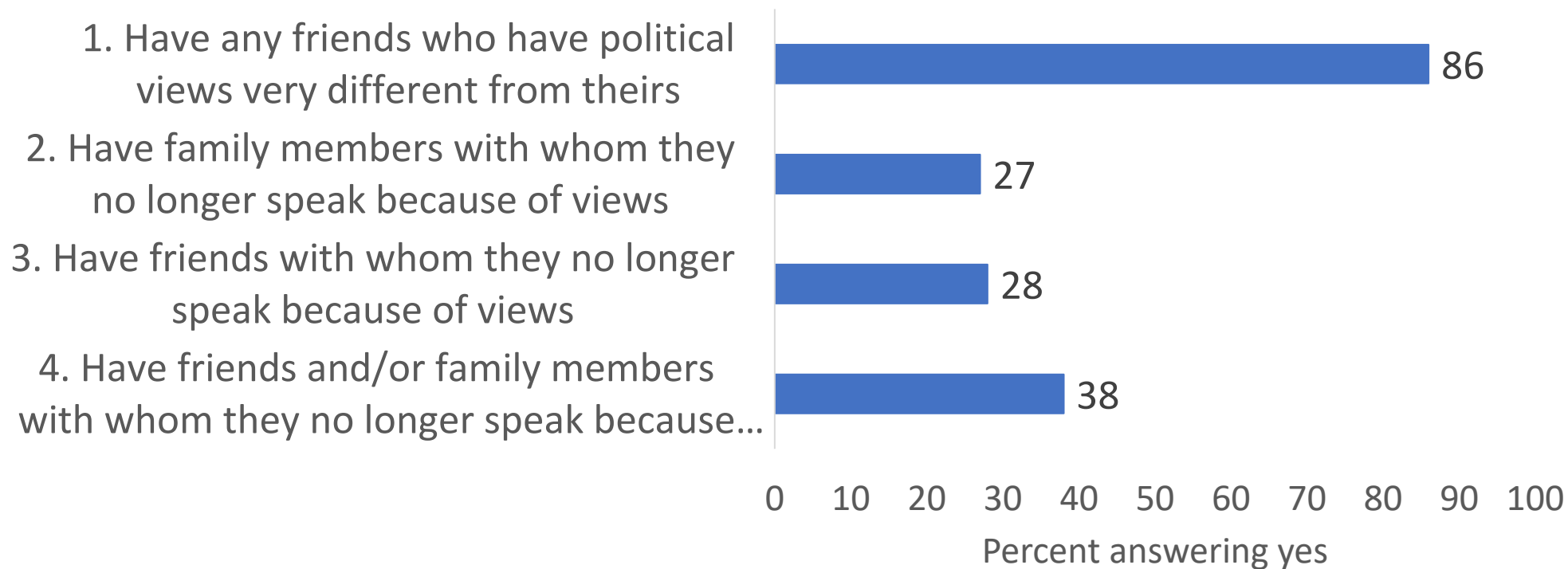
Perceptions of Civil Discourse by Political Views



Experiences with Political Conflicts



Have you experienced the following items?



2024

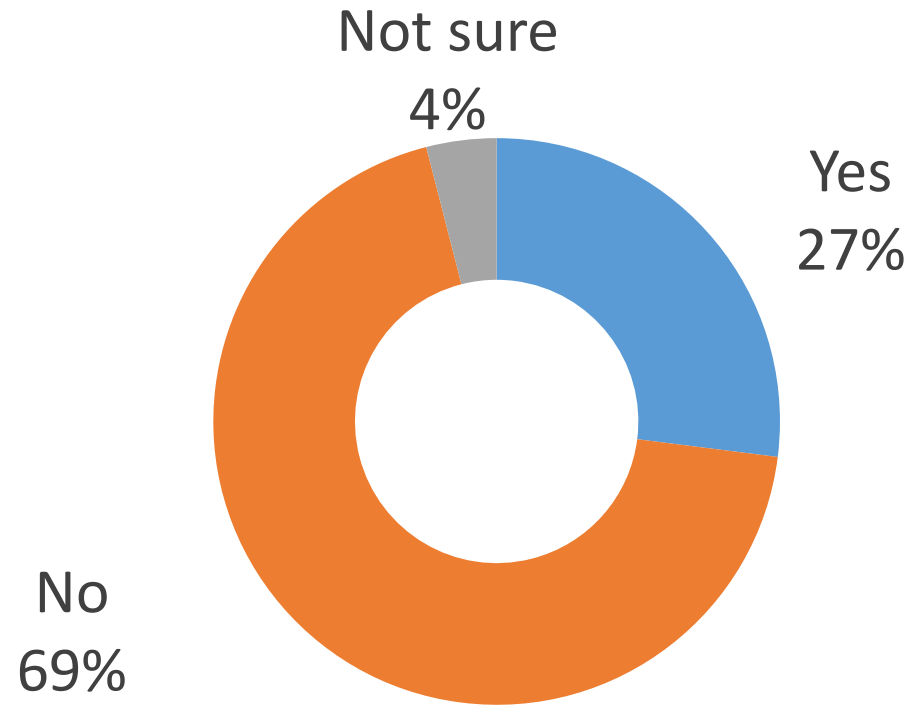
Rural Poll

**Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence
in Rural Nebraska**

Use of Artificial Intelligence



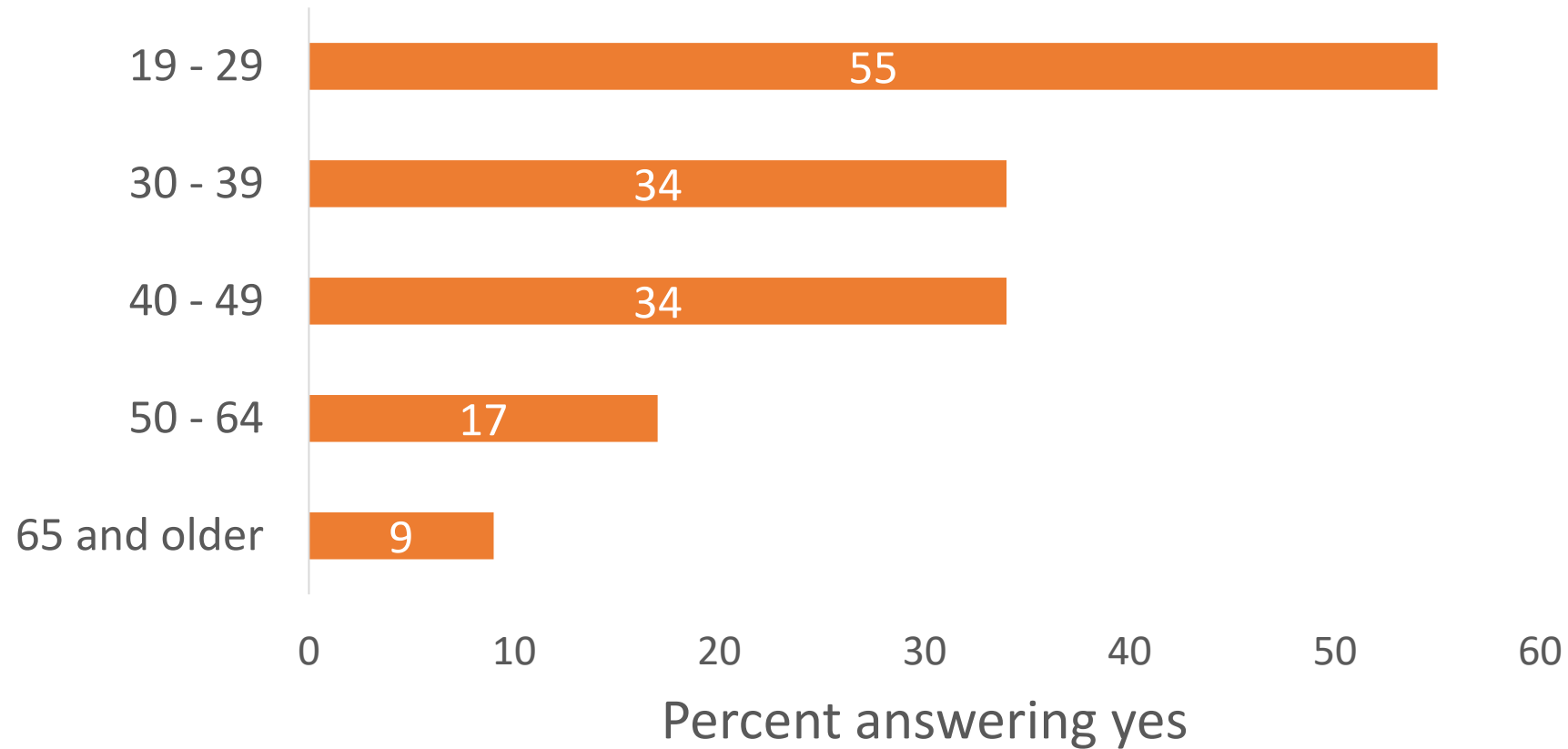
Artificial Intelligence, or AI, is designed to perform tasks that usually require human intelligence. Have you ever used any AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Google Bard, or Microsoft Copilot, or not?



Ever Used A.I. Tools by Age



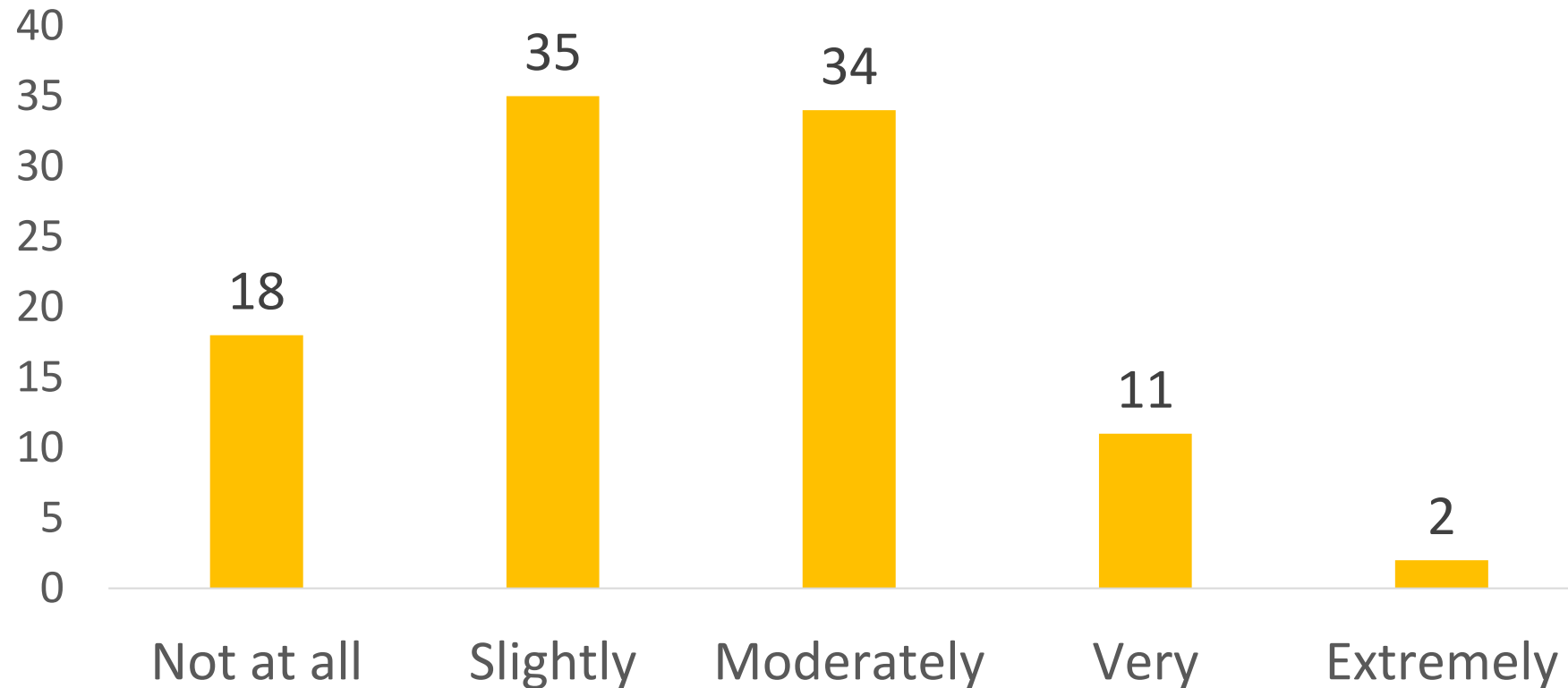
Use of A.I. Tools by Age



How Informed about A.I.

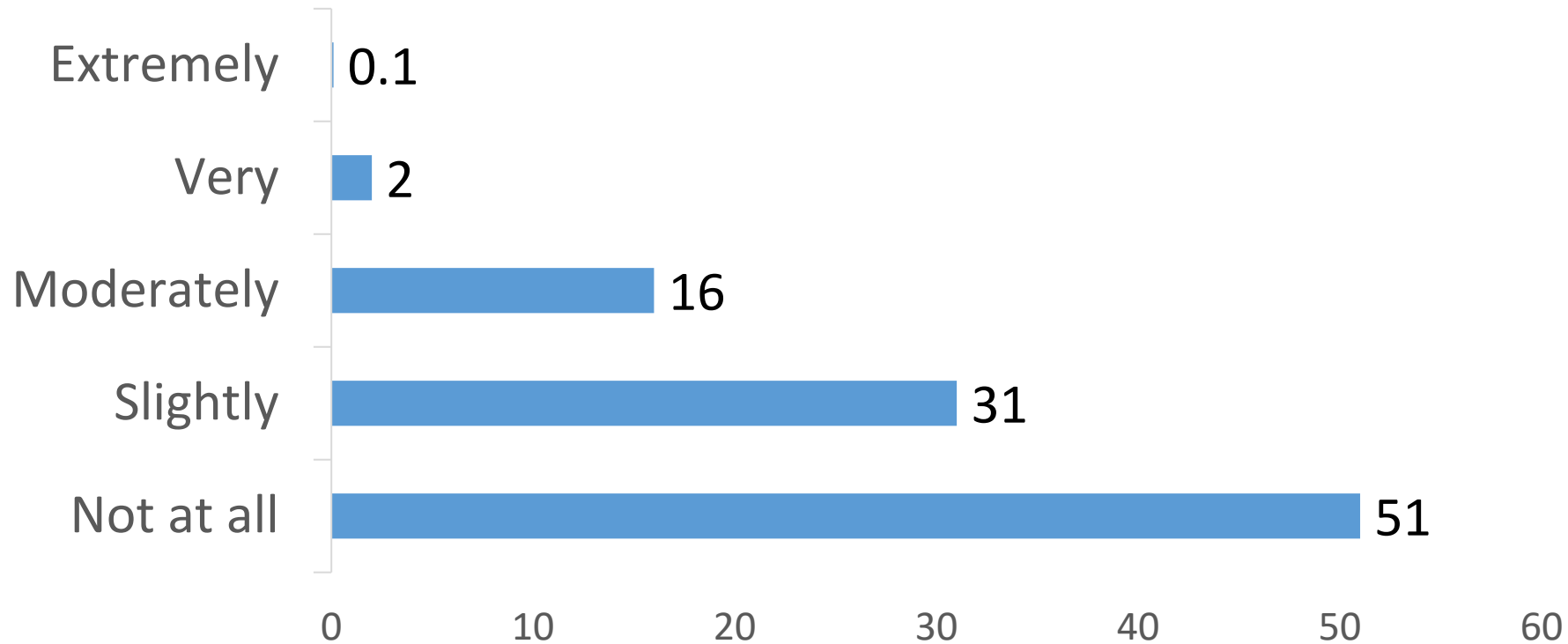


How informed would you say you are about artificial intelligence (AI)?



Confidence that A.I. is Used in Best Interest of the Public

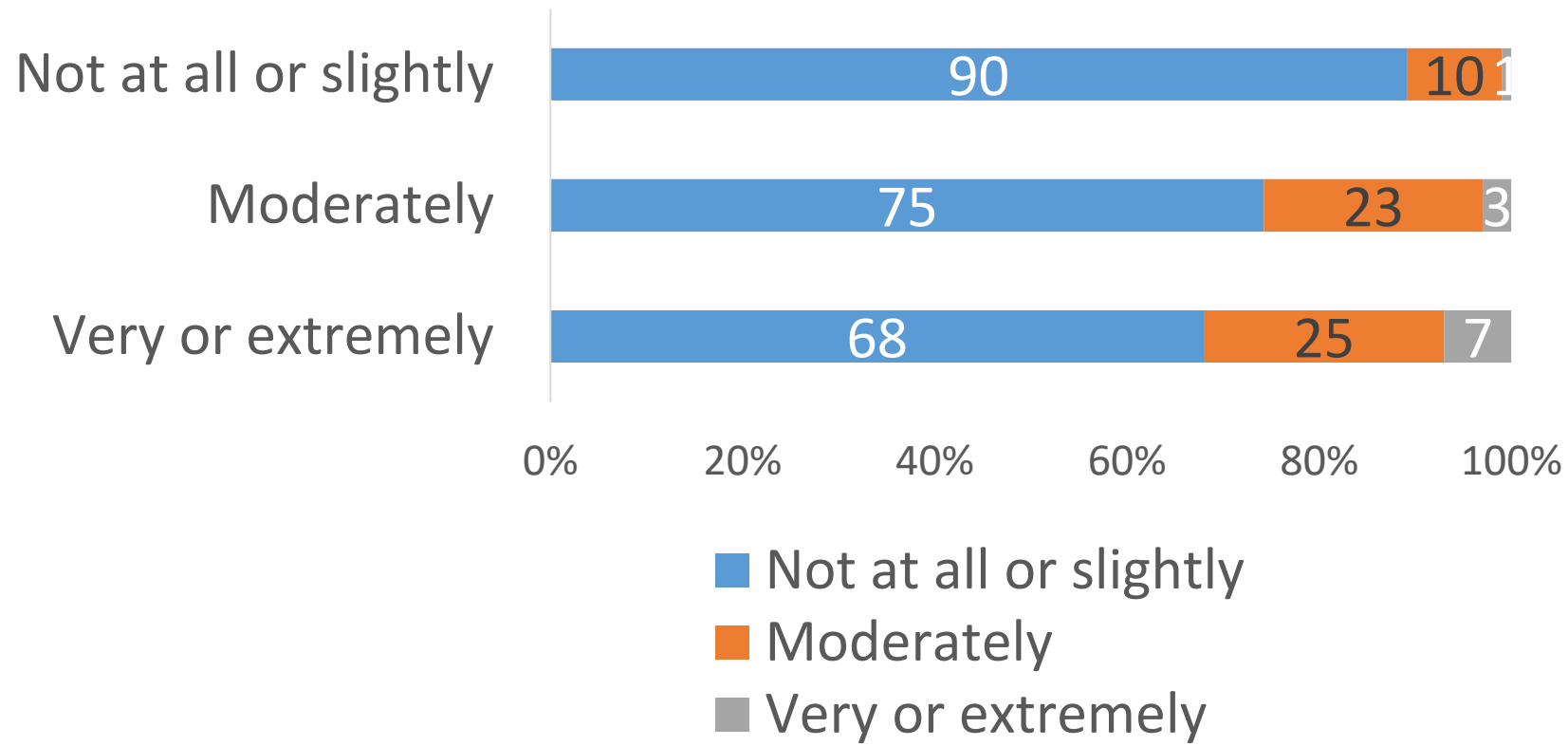
How much trust/confidence do you have, if any, that AI is used in the best interest of the public?



Trust/Confidence in A.I. by How Informed about A.I.



Confidence A.I. is Being Used in Best Interest of the Public by How Informed about A.I.



Case Study using Rural Poll Data



Problem: Filling out county permits is **difficult for residents and businesses.**

Staff time is devoted to explaining the permits and correcting permits not filled out correctly. This has resulted in dissatisfaction and wasted staff time.

Solution: An LLM-powered AI Chatbot

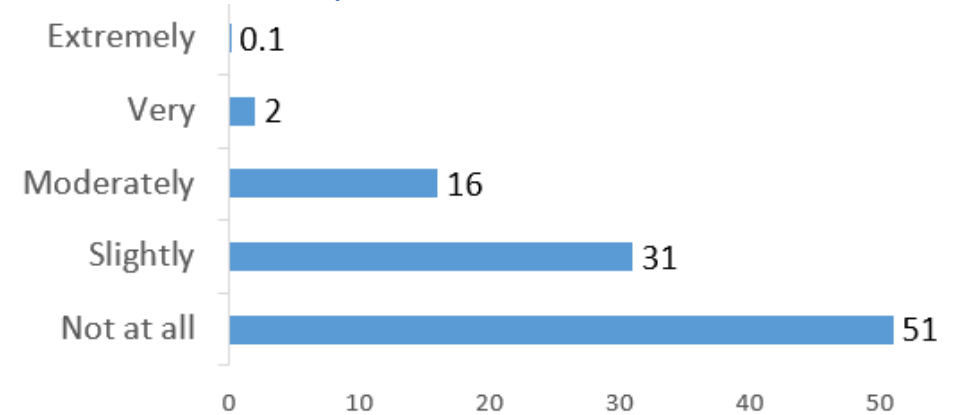
The county staff has proposed implementing an AI chatbot (powered by GPT-4o) to support filling out permits for **\$1,000 per year.**

What the AI Chatbot Can Do:

- Instant Q&A:** Provide immediate answers to various inquiries.
- 24/7 Availability:** Offer support outside of normal business hours.
- Bilingual Communication:** Converse in both English and Spanish.
- Data-Driven Insights:** Tracks common questions, allowing the community to understand what information users seek most and potentially refine website content or services.

Question: Given the results on the Rural Poll data about rural Nebraskans' perceptions about AI, what considerations would you want to make before approving the AI Chatbot?

How much trust/confidence do you have, if any, that AI is used in the best interest of the public?



2024

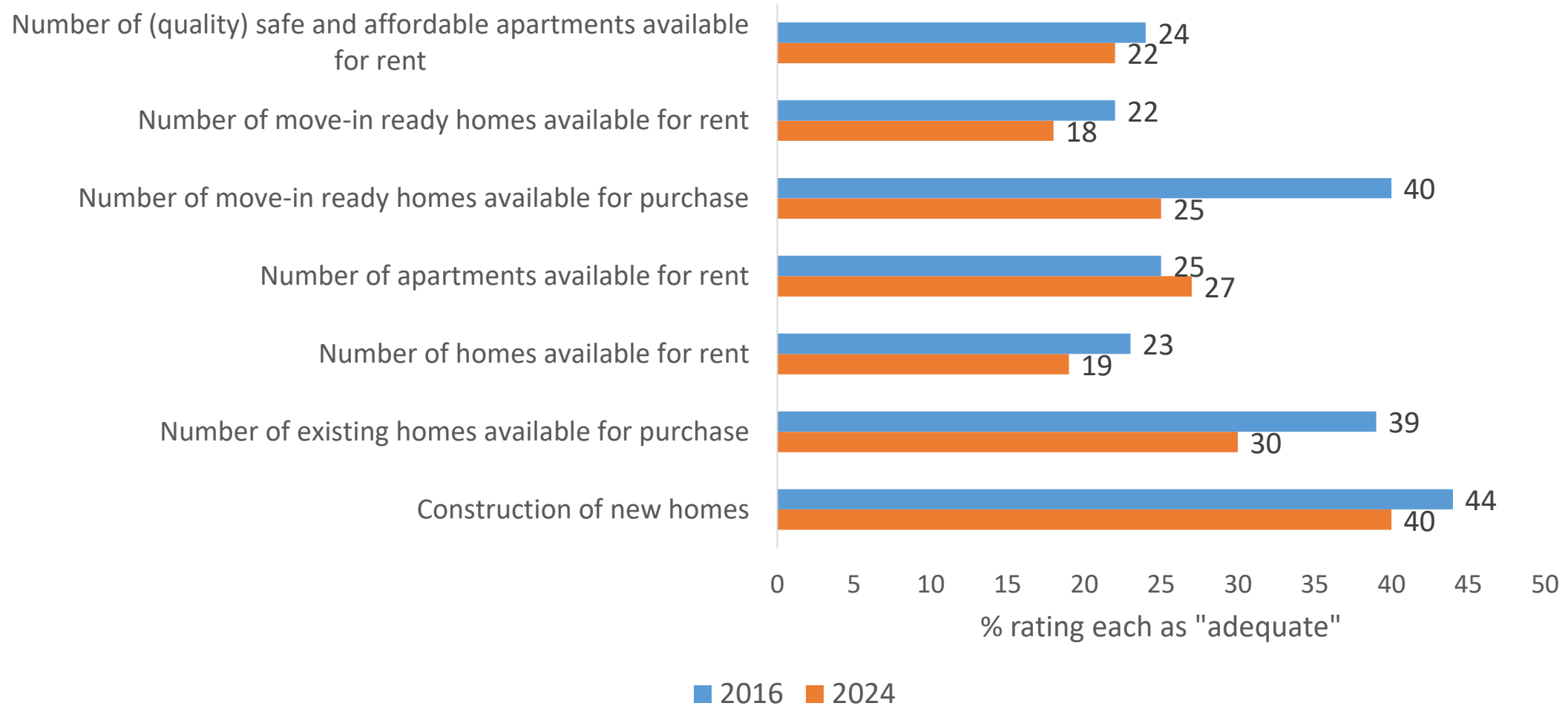
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**Perceptions of Housing
in Rural Nebraska**

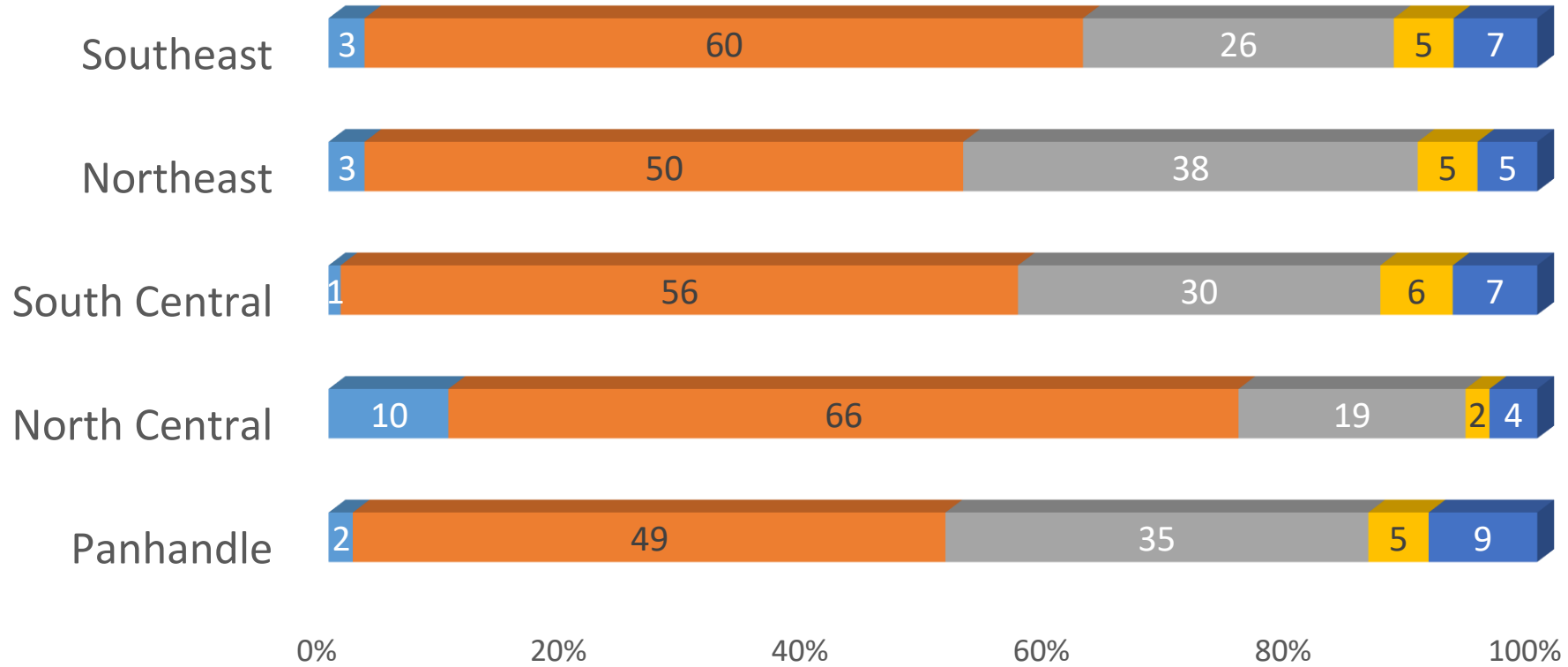
Ratings of Adequacy of Housing in Communities, 2016 and 2024



How would you rate the following housing characteristics in your local community?



Adequacy of Existing Homes Available for Purchase by Region

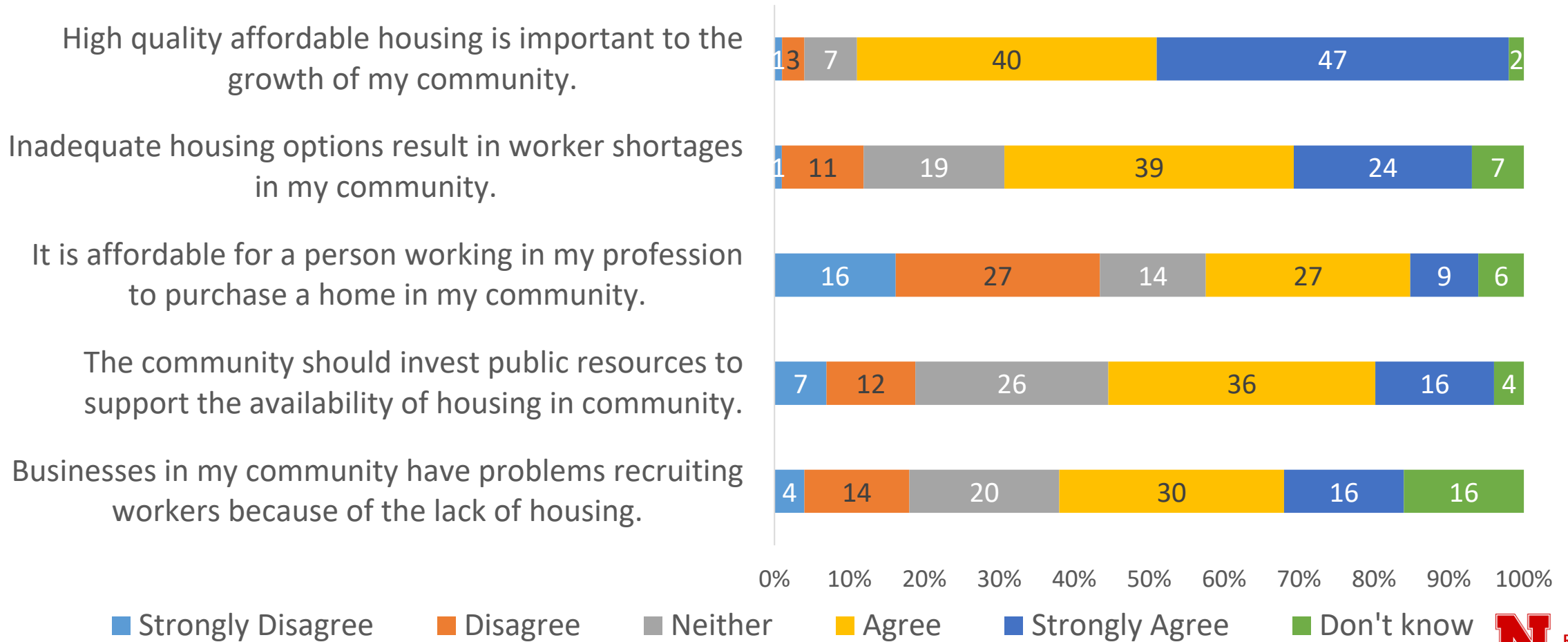


■ None available ■ Not enough ■ Adequate ■ More than enough ■ Don't know

Perceptions of Housing in Communities



Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding housing in your community.

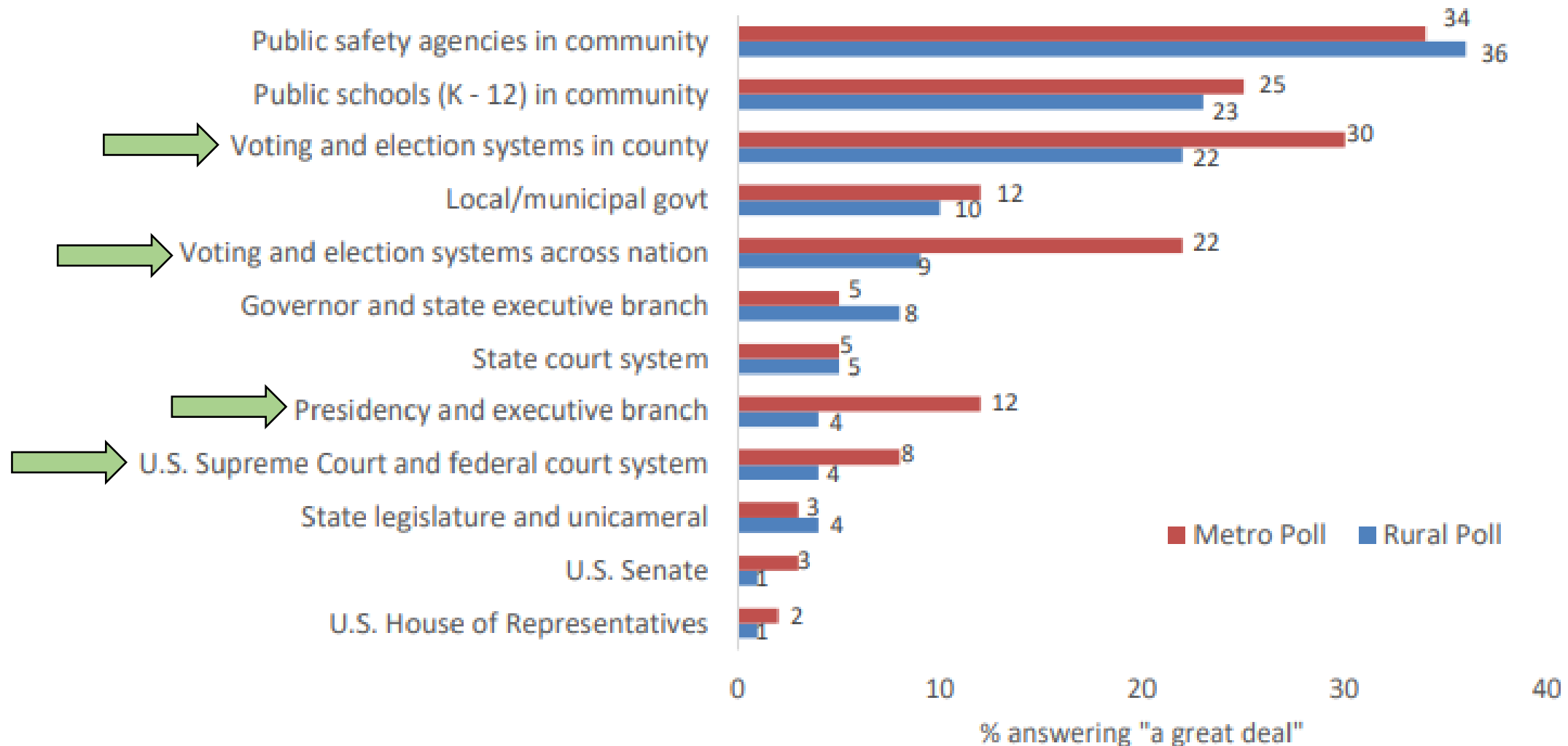


2024

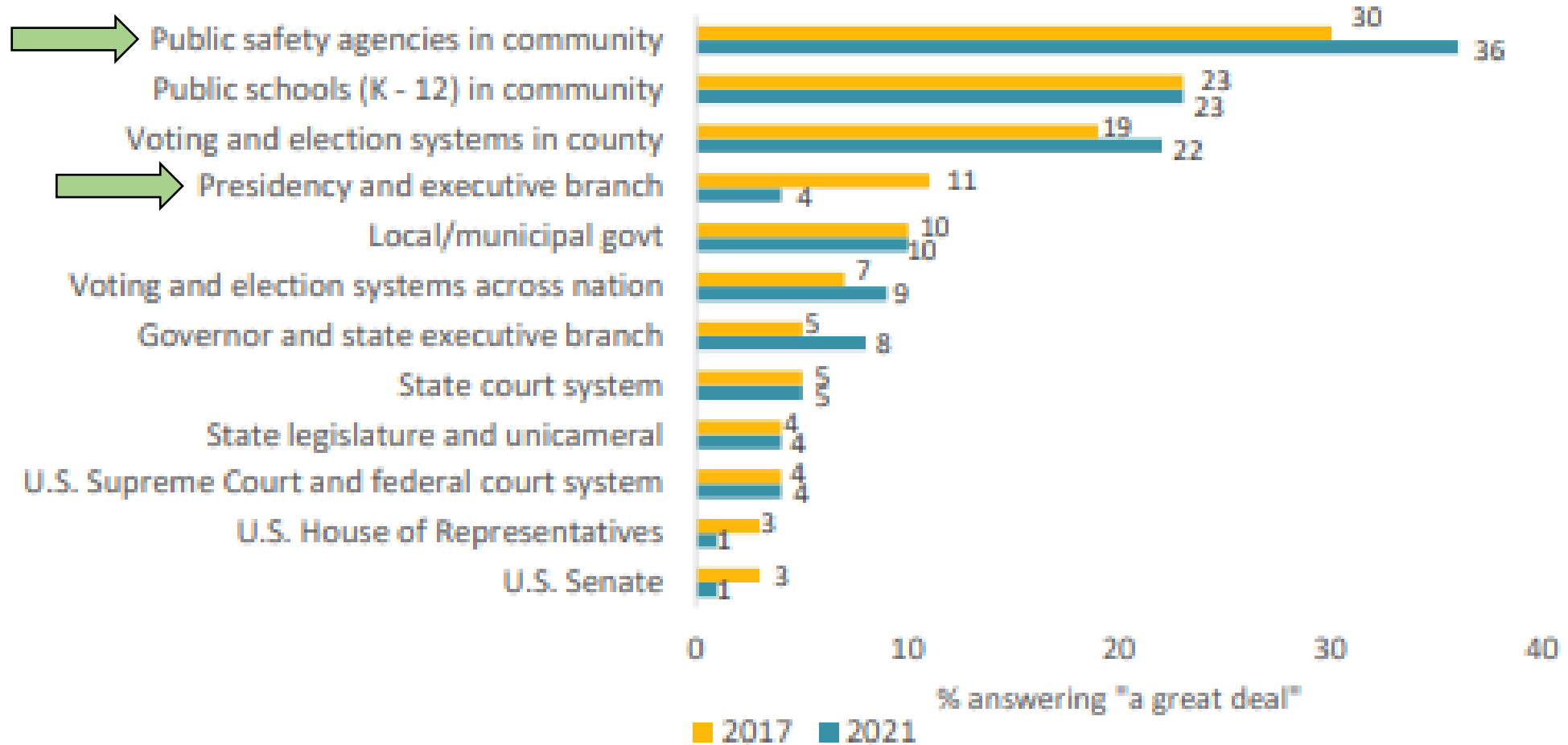
Rural Poll

**Insights into Community Prosperity,
Well-being, and Future Direction**

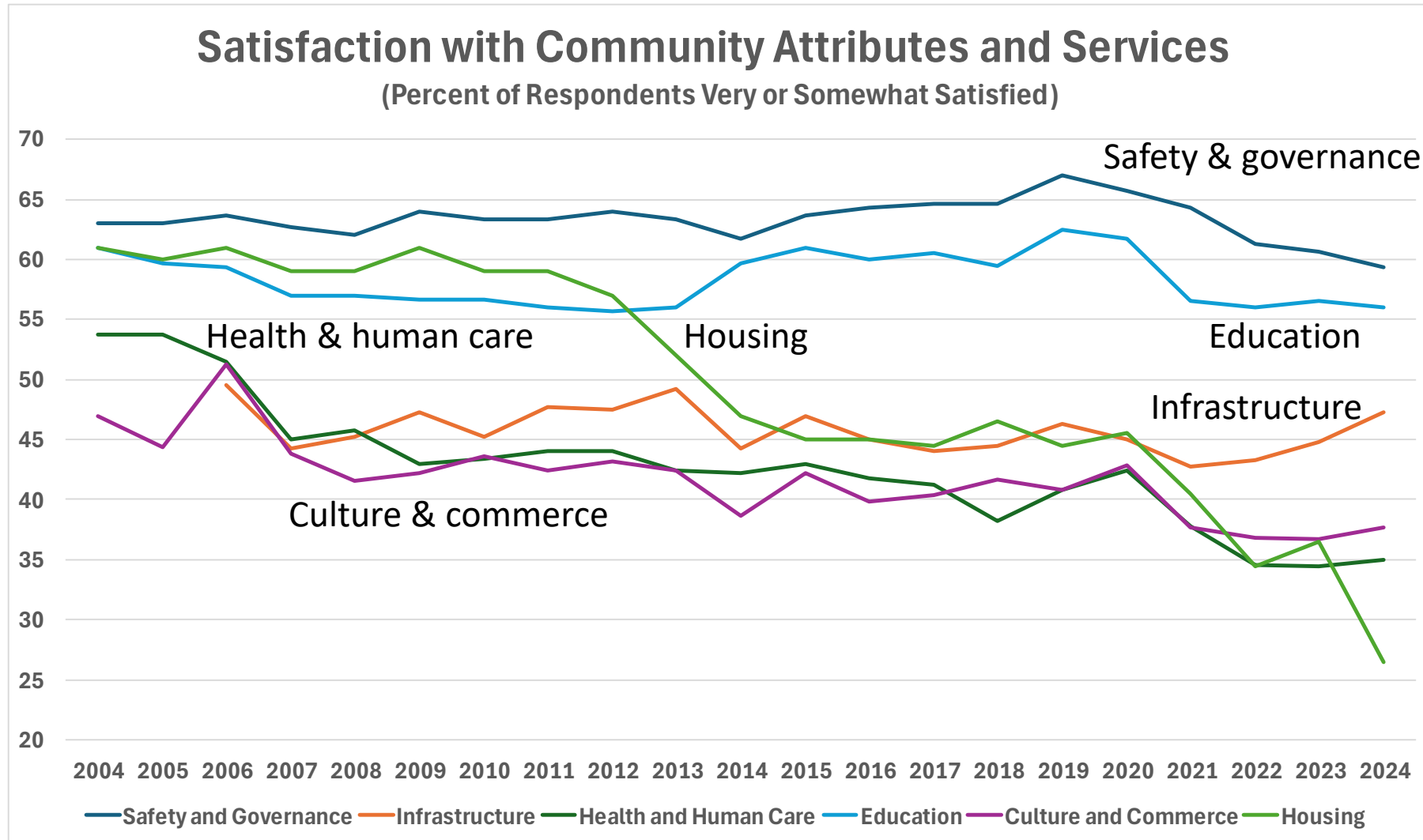
2021 Metro and Rural Confidence in Institutions



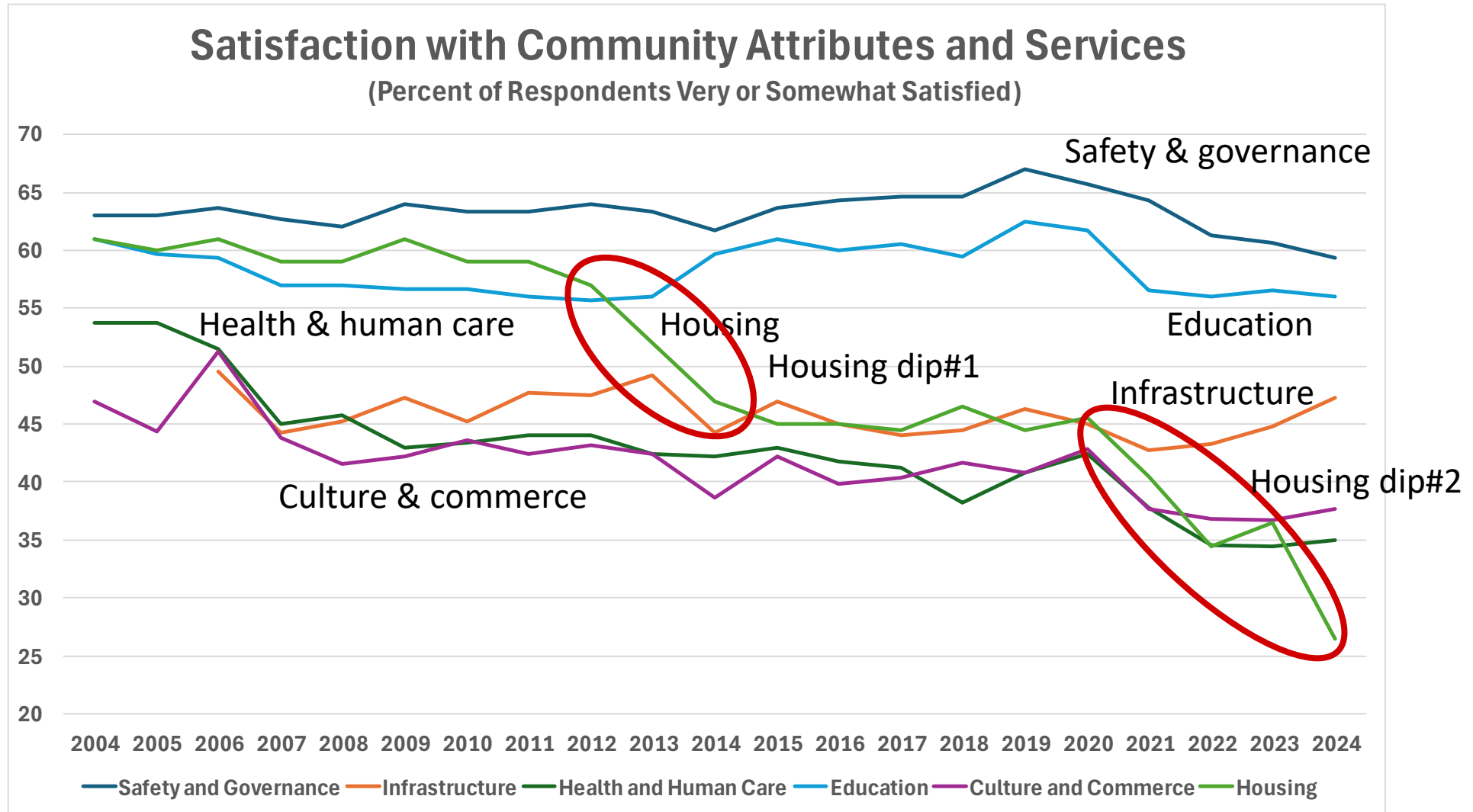
Rural Confidence in Institutions 2017 & 2021



Satisfaction with Community Services



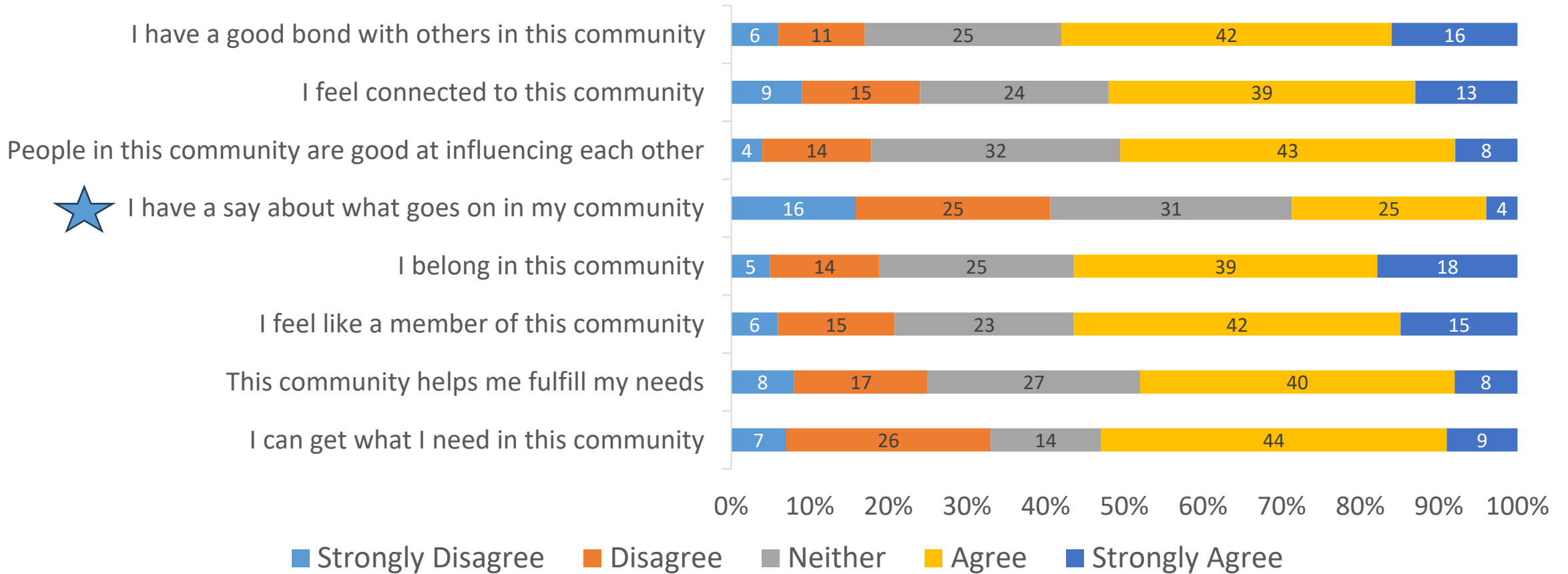
Satisfaction with Community Services



Opinions about Community



Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your community.



Nebraska Rural Poll and All Things Nebraska



All Things Nebraska

- Link in Tools Section of Menu Bar or on Tool Gallery Page
- <https://go.unl.edu/ruralpolltoolatn>



N Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources | Nebraska Extension
ALL THINGS NEBRASKA

☰ All Things Nebraska Maps Tools Reports Program Areas Colleges

[IANR](#) · [Nebraska Extension](#) · [All Things Nebraska](#) · Nebraska Rural Poll Interactive Report

Nebraska Rural Poll Interactive Report

1. Location 2. Data Indicators 3. Reports

☰ Rural Nebraska Total ☰ Rural Poll Region ☰ Rural Prosperity Region ☰ Community College Region
☰ Economic Development Region ☰ Engagement Zone ☰ County

Rural Nebraska Total List

Rural Nebraska
Rural Nebraska

Assessment Location

Report Location

Question and reflections

Are there any data trends you finding intriguing or interesting?

What topics should be asked in 2026 and beyond?

Further Information

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