

LIFE IN RURAL AMERICA

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HARVARD
T.H. CHAN
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

REPORT SUMMARY

Survey Background

This “Life in Rural America” report is based on a survey conducted for National Public Radio, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. The survey was conducted June 6 – August 4, 2018, among a nationally representative, probability-based telephone (cell and landline) sample of 1,300 adults ages 18 or older living in the rural United States. The purpose of this survey was to understand the current views and experiences of rural Americans on economic and health issues.

Summary

During a period where there is a great deal of national focus on the economic problems of rural America, this survey finds that rural Americans identify drug addiction or abuse (including opioids) and economic concerns as the two biggest problems facing their local communities. In particular, opioid addiction/abuse have had major impacts on the lives of rural Americans, as a majority of them say opioid addiction is a serious problem in their community, and about half of rural Americans say they personally know someone who has struggled with opioid addiction.

Many rural Americans hold negative views on the state of their local economy. When asked to rate the economy of the region where they live and work, a majority of rural Americans rate their local economy as only fair or poor.

Rural Americans are divided in their views about future job opportunities. When it comes to improving their local economy, rural Americans believe providing opportunities through long-term job growth and better public schooling would be the most beneficial. Although they report high job satisfaction, a significant share of rural Americans believe it will be important for them to get new training or skills to keep their job or find a better job in the future. In addition, a significant number of young people have left rural America, and parents say their children have moved away mostly for job opportunities elsewhere. However, many rural Americans are optimistic about the future, as about four in ten say the number of good jobs in their local community will increase in the next five years.

A great deal of national attention has been paid to challenges facing rural communities, yet rural Americans themselves are optimistic about their lives. About four in ten rural adults say their lives have turned out better than they expected. A majority of rural Americans also say they are better off financially compared to their parents at the same age, and a majority think their children will be better off financially compared to themselves.

In addition, rural Americans value a number of aspects of life in their communities. Most say they feel attached to their local community, and they identify the closeness of their local community, life in a small town, and being around good people as their community’s biggest strengths. When asked about the most important reason why they choose to live in their local community, about one-third of rural adults say it is because of their family.

Rural Americans are divided over whether they expect the problems facing their communities to be solved within the next five years. Half of rural adults are confident that major problems facing their community will be solved in the next five years, but they largely see a need for outside help to solve them. Among those who say they need outside help, a majority of rural Americans think the government will play a major role in solving these problems, including three in ten who say their state government will play the greatest role.

Although discrimination has recently become a prominent part of the national conversation, most rural Americans say that minority groups do not face discrimination in their local community. Two exceptions are transgender people and recent immigrants to the U.S. Despite low recognition of discrimination among all rural Americans, rural adults belonging to minority groups (including Latinos and African Americans) see much higher rates of discrimination against members of their group. This suggests a sizable gap between how minorities and non-minorities believe people are treated in rural communities.

In addition, the perspectives of rural Americans vary by region of the country, age, racial/ethnic background, and education level. In particular, more adults living in rural Appalachia say that drug addiction/abuse (including opioids) is the biggest problem facing their local community compared to adults living in other rural areas. Younger rural Americans under age 50 are more likely than older rural Americans ages 50+ to say they are active in efforts to solve community problems, and they also see significantly more discrimination against several minority groups than their older counterparts. In addition to different views on discrimination and major health issues facing their communities, Latinos and African Americans living in rural America are more likely than Whites to say they need additional training and skills to keep or find new jobs in the future. This survey finds few differences in the views of rural adults with and without college degrees, but those with college degrees are less optimistic than rural adults without college degrees about solving major community problems, and they are more likely to see a need for outside help.

Overall, these findings illustrate that rural Americans have strong ties to their local communities and value life, family, and jobs in rural America. However, rural Americans also cite significant challenges for their local communities. The top problems rural Americans will face in the future are drug addiction/abuse and improving troubled local economies. While rural Americans are confident that major problems facing their local communities can be solved within the next five years, a majority say they need outside help to solve these problems.

INTRODUCTION

This report is part of a series titled “Life in Rural in America.” The series is based on a survey conducted for National Public Radio, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

This report presents rural Americans’ personal experiences, as well as their perceptions of economic and health issues in their local community.

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The sample of Rural Americans is defined in this survey as adults living in areas that are not part of a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). This is the definition used in the 2016 National Exit Poll.

This survey was conducted June 6 – August 4, 2018, among a nationally representative, probability-based telephone (cell and landline) sample of 1,300 adults age 18 or older living in the rural United States. The margin of error at the 95% confidence interval is ± 3.6 percentage points. Further methodological information is included at the end of the report.

I. Strengths and Challenges for Rural Communities

During a period where there is a great deal of national focus on the economic problems of rural America, this survey finds that rural Americans identify two major issues as the biggest problems facing their local community: drug addiction/abuse (including opioids) and economic concerns.

Drug addiction/abuse and economic concerns are the major challenges facing rural communities

Overall, rural Americans say that drug addiction/abuse (including opioids) is the biggest problem facing their local community (25%), followed by economic concerns, including the availability of jobs, poverty, and the economy (21%) (Table 1). No other issues were mentioned by more than 10% of rural Americans.

Table 1. Rural Americans' Views of the Biggest Problems Facing Rural Communities

Q2. What would you say is the biggest problem facing your local community? [Open-ended]

1. Drug addiction or abuse (including opioids)	25%
2. Economic concerns*	21%

* Economic concerns include the availability of jobs, poverty, and the economy. No other issues were mentioned by more than 10% of rural Americans. NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q2. Total N=1,300 rural adults ages 18+.

Financial and health problems are the major challenges facing rural families

When asked about the biggest problem facing themselves and their families, more than one-quarter of rural Americans say financial problems (27%), while 16% cite concerns related to health or health care (Table 2). No other issues were mentioned by more than 10% of rural Americans.

Table 2. Biggest Problems Facing Rural Families

Q6. What is the biggest problem facing you and your family? [Open-ended]	
1. Financial problems	27%
2. Health or health care concerns	16%

NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q6. No other issues were mentioned by more than 10% of rural Americans. Total N=1,300 rural adults ages 18+.

A significant share of rural Americans are optimistic about their lives

Although they identify major challenges facing their communities, a significant share of rural Americans are optimistic about their lives. In terms of overall expectations, about four in ten rural Americans say their lives have turned out better than they expected (41%), while 42% say their lives have turned out about like they expected, and only 15% say their lives have turned out worse than they expected. In terms of their own finances, a majority of rural Americans (54%) say they are better off financially than their parents were at their age, while 17% say they are worse off.

Rural Americans also share a sense of optimism for their children financially. When asked to think about their children, a majority of rural parents (55%) think their children will be better off financially than they are when their children become their age, compared to only 14% who think their children will be worse off financially.

Rural Americans identify close-knit communities and social connections as major strengths

Rural Americans value a number of aspects of rural life. When asked about the biggest strength of their local community, about one in five rural adults (21%) say it is the closeness of their community, while 11% say it is living a small town, and 11% say it is being around good people (Table 3).

Table 3. Major Strengths of Rural Communities

Q1. We're interested in knowing your views about living in your community and changes that are affecting the way of life there. Thinking about that, what would you say is the biggest strength of your local community? [Open-ended]

1. Closeness of the community	21%
2. Living in a small town	11%
3. Being around good people	11%

NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q1. No other issues were mentioned by more than 10% of rural Americans. Total N=1,300 rural adults ages 18+.

II. Major Health Problems in Rural America

Both drug addiction or abuse (including opioids, such as strong painkillers like Percocet, OxyContin, Vicodin, and fentanyl) and suicide are major health issues facing rural America, and a sizable proportion of rural Americans say these problems have gotten worse over the past five years. In addition, half of rural Americans also say that health care costs are a serious problem for their family's financial situation.

Drug addiction/abuse, cancer, and health care are the most urgent health problems in rural America

Drug addiction or abuse, including opioid addiction/abuse, have had major impacts on the lives of rural Americans. Almost one-quarter of rural Americans (23%) say that drug addiction or abuse is the most urgent health problem currently facing their community, followed by cancer (12%) and access to health care (11%) (Table 4).

Table 4. Most Urgent Health Problems Currently Facing Rural Communities

Q32. What is the most urgent health problem currently facing your local community? [Open-Ended]

1. Drug addiction or abuse (including opioids)	23%
2. Cancer	12%
3. Access to health care	11%

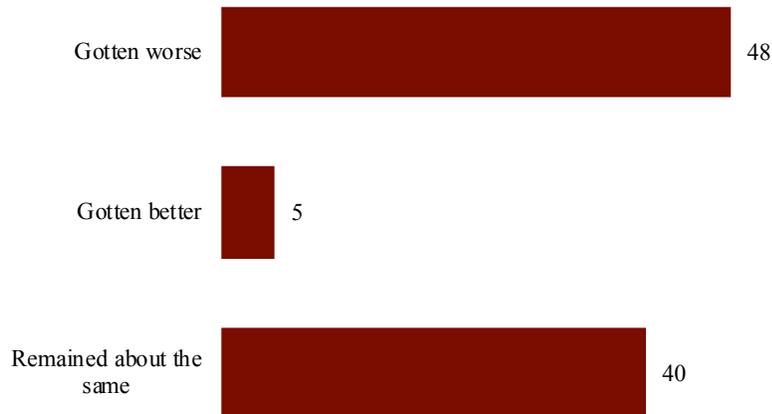
NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q32. No other issues were mentioned by more than 10% of rural Americans. N=1,300 rural adults ages 18+.

Opioid addiction/abuse in rural America

About half of rural Americans (49%) say they personally know someone, such as a friend or family member, who has struggled with opioid addiction. In addition, a majority of rural Americans (57%) say the problem of people being addicted to opioids in their local community is a serious problem, including one-third (33%) who say it is a *very* serious problem. Many rural Americans view this problem as getting worse (Figure 1). Almost half of rural Americans (48%) say the problem of people being addicted to opioids in the local community has gotten worse in the past 5 years, while only 5% say it has gotten better.

Figure 1:
Views on the Opioid Problem in Rural America

Q35. In the past 5 years, do you think this problem of people being addicted to opioids in your local community has gotten better, gotten worse, or remained about the same?



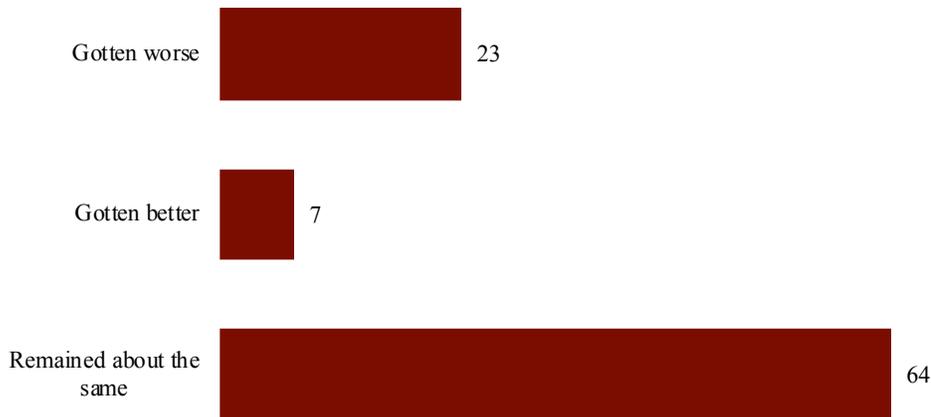
NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q35. N=1,300 rural adults ages 18+.

Suicide in rural America

About three in ten rural Americans (31%) say suicide is a serious problem in their local community, including more than one in ten (12%) who say it is a *very* serious problem. While a majority of rural Americans (64%) think the problem of suicide in their local community has stayed the same over the past 5 years, more than one in five (23%) think it has gotten worse, and only 7% think it has gotten better (Figure 2). A majority of rural Americans (56%) say they personally know someone, such as a friend or family member, who has struggled with suicidal thoughts or tried to commit suicide.

Figure 2:
Views on Suicide in Rural America

Q38. In the past 5 years, do you think the problem of suicide in your local community has gotten better, gotten worse, or remained about the same?



NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q38. N=1,300 rural adults ages 18+.

Rural Americans struggle with health care costs

Half of all rural Americans (50%) say the cost of their family's health care in recent years has caused a serious problem for their family's overall financial situation, including 21% who say it has caused a very serious problem.

III. Rural Americans' Views on Economic Issues

Many Rural Americans hold negative views on the state of their local economy, though the vast majority of those who are employed report high job satisfaction. In addition, rural Americans are divided in their optimism about the future. When it comes to improving their local economy, rural Americans believe providing opportunities through job growth and education would be the most beneficial.

A majority of rural Americans have negative ratings of their local economy, but nearly one-third see positive economic and job progress in the past five years

When asked to rate the economy of the region where they live and work, a majority of rural Americans (55%) rate their local economy as only fair or poor. Over the past five years, 31% of rural Americans say that the economy in the region where they live and work has gotten better, compared to 21% who say it has gotten worse. Rural Americans are similarly split about good jobs in their areas: 30% say the overall number of good jobs in their local community has increased over the last five years, while 25% say the number of good jobs has decreased.

Rural Americans have slightly better perceptions of their personal financial situation compared to that of their local community. More than four in ten rural Americans (45%) say their personal financial situation has gotten better over the last five years, while 39% say it has stayed the same, and only 16% say it has gotten worse.

Many rural Americans are optimistic about future job opportunities

A majority of rural Americans believe there will be an increase or steady supply of future job opportunities in their community. Looking ahead five years, 39% of rural Americans believe the number of good jobs in their local economy will increase, while 47% believe they will stay about the same, and only 12% believe they will decrease.

**Rural Americans are largely satisfied with their jobs,
but many believe future skills and training will be important**

Rural Americans who are employed report high job satisfaction. More than nine in ten (93%) say they are satisfied with their jobs, including 59% who say they are very satisfied.

Many rural Americans recognize that they may need new skills to work in the future (Table 5). About one-third of rural Americans (34%) say it will be important for them to get training or develop new skills in order to keep their job or find a better job in their local community in the next five years. This includes 25% of all adults living in rural America who say they will need computer and technical skills and 24% who say they will need a first or more advanced educational degree or certificate. In addition, rural adults also say they will need advanced vocational training to keep or find a better job in their local community (18%), medical or health-related technical training (17%), writing and research skills (17%), presentation and public speaking skills (17%), skills for starting their own business (17%), to learn other languages (16%), and accounting or advanced financial management skills (15%).

Table 5. Rural Americans’ Views on Future Job Training and Skills

Q31. Which of the following skills or training do you think you will need to keep or find a better job in your local community? [List]

Computer and technical skills	25%
A first or more advanced educational degree or certificate	24%
Advanced vocational training	18%
Medical or health-related technical training	17%
Writing and research skills	17%
Presentation and public speaking skills	17%
Skills for starting your own business	17%
To learn other languages	16%
Accounting or advanced financial management skills	15%

NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q30/31. N=1,300 rural adults ages 18+.

IV. Solving Local Problems and Relationship to Government

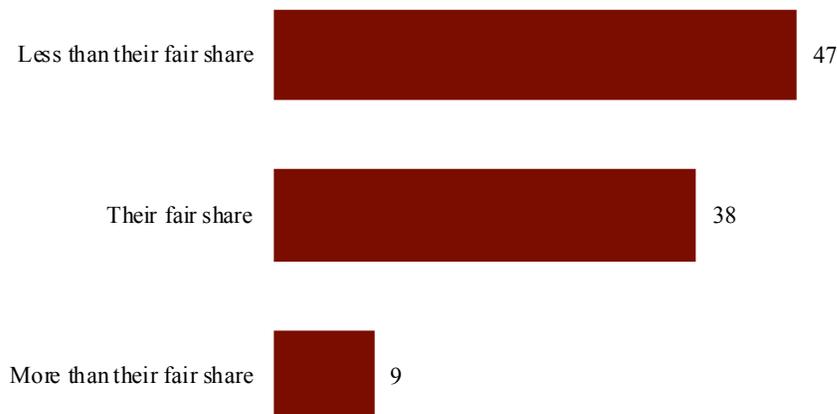
Rural Americans are divided over whether they expect the major problems facing their communities to be solved within the next five years, and they largely think outside help will be necessary to solve these problems. They also believe that providing opportunities through education and job growth are the most beneficial to improving their local economy.

Rural Americans are divided over solving problems in their communities; a majority see a need for outside help

Rural Americans are split on how they see state resources being allocated. Almost half of rural Americans (47%) say they think people living in their local community get less than their fair share of the state government's resources, while 38% say they get their fair share, and only 9% say they get more than their fair share (Figure 3).

**Figure 3:
Rural Americans' Views on Getting Their Fair Share from State Government's Resources**

Q45. Thinking about your state, do you think people living in your local community get their fair share of the state government's resources, people in your local community get less than their fair share, or people in your local community get more than their fair share?



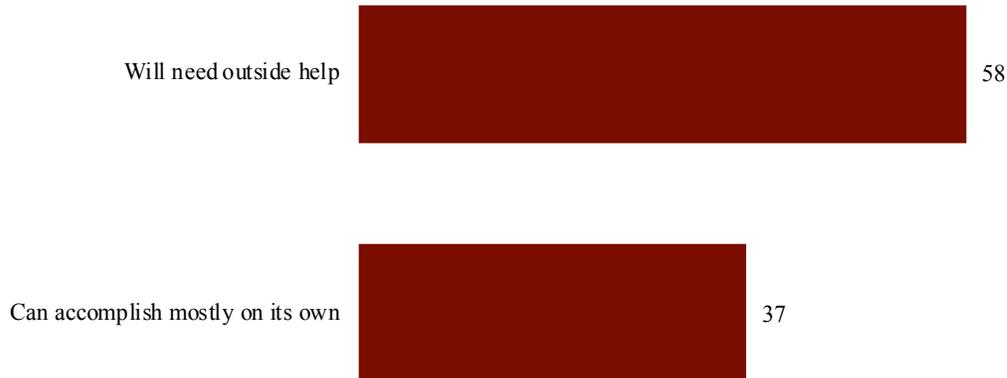
NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q45. N=1,300 rural adults ages 18+.

A majority of rural Americans see a need for outside help in solving local problems

When asked about the major problems facing their local community, more than half of rural adults (51%) say they are confident that major problems facing their local community will be solved in the next five years, including 12% who say they are very confident and 39% who say they are somewhat confident. A majority of rural Americans (58%) believe they need outside help to solve major community problems (Figure 4).

Figure 4:
Rural Americans' Views on Solving Local Problems

Q41. When it comes to solving these major problems [facing your local community], is this something you think your local community can accomplish mostly on its own, or do you think it will need outside help?



NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q41. N=1,300 rural adults ages 18+.

Among rural Americans who say they need outside help, 61% think the government will play the greatest role in solving major problems facing their local community. This includes 30% who think the state government will play the greatest role, 18% who say the federal government will play the greatest role, and 13% who say the county or regional government will play the greatest role. More than one in ten (13%) say big businesses will play the greatest role in solving major problems facing their local community (Table 6).

TABLE 6. Rural Americans Believe Outside Groups Will Play a Role in Solving Local Problems

Q42. [Among rural adults who say their community will need outside help to solve major problems facing their local community] Which one of the following groups do you think will play the greatest role in solving these problems? [List]

1. Your state government	30%
2. The federal government	18%
3. Your county or regional government	13%
4. Big businesses	13%
5. Nonprofit organizations, including charities	6%
6. Religious organizations	5%
7. Something else	7%

NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q42. N=755 rural adults ages 18+. DK/Ref=8%.

Rural Americans also report actively improving their communities. When asked about how active they are in efforts to solve problems in their local community, a majority of rural Americans say they are active (52%), including 12% who say they are very active and 40% who say they are somewhat active.

Rural Americans’ views on improving their local economy

When it comes to improving their local economy, rural Americans believe providing opportunities through education and job growth would be the most beneficial. The top two approaches that rural Americans believe would be very helpful to improve their local economy are creating better long-term job opportunities (64%) and improving the quality of local public schools (61%) (Table 7). A majority also believe improving access to health care (55%) and improving access to advanced job training or skills development (51%) would be very helpful to improve the economy in rural communities.

Table 7. Rural Americans’ Views on Approaches to Improving the Local Rural Economy

Q44. Recently, a number of leadership groups have recommended different approaches for improving the economy of communities like yours. For each of the following, please tell me how helpful you think this approach would be for improving the economy of your local community...[insert item]. Do you think this would be very helpful, somewhat helpful, not too helpful, or not at all helpful?

	<i>Percent saying “very helpful”</i>
1. Creating better long-term job opportunities	64%
2. Improving the quality of local public schools	61%
3. Improving access to health care	55%
4. Improving access to advanced job training or skills development	51%
5. Improving local infrastructure like roads, bridges, and public buildings	48%
6. Improving the use of advanced technology in local industry and farming	44%
7. Improving access to small business loans and investments	44%
8. Improving access to high-speed internet	43%

NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q44. Questions asked among a half-sample of respondents: Half Sample A N=669, Half Sample B N=631 rural adults ages 18+.

V. Population Change and Relationship with the Local Community

Rural Americans report population increases in their communities, they say they live in their communities primarily for reasons related to family and jobs, and a significant share of rural parents say their children moved away for job opportunities elsewhere.

Rural Americans report population increases

Over the last 5 years, 82% of rural Americans say the population size of their local community has either increased or stayed the same, including 41% who say it has increased.

Rural parents say their children moved away primarily for job opportunities

We also asked rural parents about their children who have moved away. About four in ten rural parents of children over age 18 (43%) say their children have moved out of their local community (not including time spent away at trade school, college, or the military), while 16% say some of their children have moved and some have stayed. Among rural parents whose adult children have moved away, a majority say their children moved to a city (61%), while 17% say their children moved to a suburb, and 21% say their children moved to another rural area.

In thinking about the reasons why their children moved away, about two-thirds of rural parents whose adult children have moved away from their community (65%) say the most important reason why their children left are for job-related reasons (Table 8). This includes about half (52%) who say their children left for a job somewhere else and 13% who say their children had a hard time finding a good long-term job in their local community.

Table 8. Major Reasons Why Rural Parents Say Their Adult Children Move Away

Q12. [Among parents with children >18 years that moved out of their local community] What would you say is the most important reason why your child left your local community? [Open-ended]

1. Left for a job somewhere else	52%
2. Had a hard time finding a good long-term job	13%

NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q12. No other reasons were mentioned by more than 10% of rural Americans. Total N=542 rural parents of children >18 years old whose children moved out of their local community.

A majority of rural Americans have lived in other places

A majority of rural Americans (59%) say they have lived in other places, while 41% say they have lived in or near their local community for their entire lives.¹ One-quarter of all rural adults (25%) have lived in their local community for at least 20 years, while 23% have lived there 5-19 years, and 11% have lived there less than 5 years.

Reasons why rural Americans choose their local communities

When asked about the most important reason why they choose to live in their local community, about one-third (31%) of rural adults say it is because of their family, 12% say it is because of job opportunities, and 10% say it is because they were born or grew up here (Table 9).

Table 9. Major Reasons Why Rural Adults Say They Live in Their Local Community

Q15. What is the most important reason why you choose to live in your local community? [Open-ended]

1. My family is here	31%
2. Job opportunities	12%
3. I was born or grew up here	10%

NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q15. No other reasons were mentioned by more than 10% of rural Americans. Total N=1,300 rural adults ages 18+ years.

Most rural Americans say they are attached to their local community

Most rural Americans (81%) say they feel attached to their local community, including 42% who say they are very attached and 39% who say they are somewhat attached. Relationships are also important to rural Americans, as half of rural Americans (50%) say their relationships with neighbors are extremely or very important to them.

A majority of rural Americans also say they have received help from community members. About two-thirds of rural adults (67%) say they have ever received help from a neighbor or people in their local community, including help handling an emergency situation, finding a temporary place to live, or getting important work done.

¹ Not including time they may have spent away at trade school, college, or in the military.

VI. Discrimination in Rural America

Discrimination against minorities in the U.S. has recently become a prominent part of the national conversation. However, most rural Americans say that minority groups do not face discrimination in their local community. The dominant views of a majority of rural adults lie in contrast to rural adults belonging to minority groups, who see much higher rates of discrimination against members of their group.

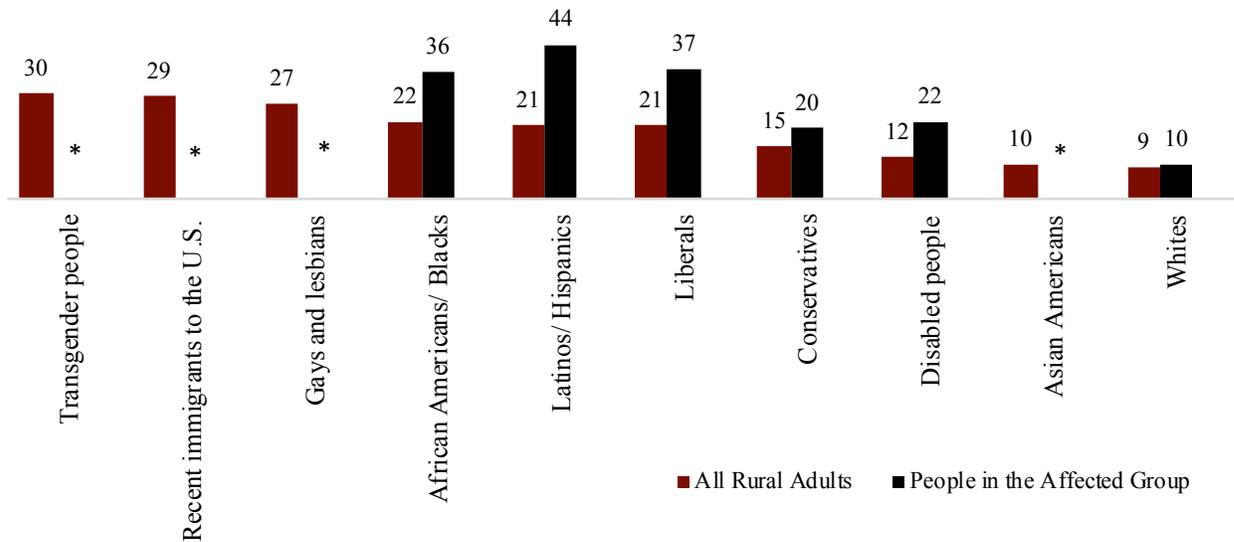
There are sizable gaps between how minorities and non-minorities believe people are treated in rural communities

Most rural Americans say that minority groups do not face discrimination in their local community, with the exception of three key groups: gays and lesbians, transgender people, and recent immigrants to the United States. Three in ten rural adults (30%) say that generally speaking, they think transgender people are discriminated against in their local community, while 29% of rural adults say they generally think recent immigrants to the U.S. are discriminated against. More than one-quarter (27%) of rural adults say that generally speaking, they think gays and lesbians are discriminated against in their local community. Significantly fewer rural Americans say that Whites (9%), Asian Americans (10%), or disabled people (12%) are discriminated against in their local community.

Despite low recognition of discrimination among all rural Americans, rural adults belonging to minority groups see much higher rates of discrimination against members of their group (Figure 5). For example, only 21% of all rural Americans say that generally speaking, they think Latinos are discriminated against in their local community, yet 44% of Latinos living in rural areas say they think Latinos are discriminated against in their local community. A majority of Latinos (56%) also say they think recent immigrants are discriminated against in their local community.

**Figure 5:
Rural Americans' Views of Discrimination Against
Groups in their Local Community**

Q19. Generally speaking, do you think individuals in each of the following groups are discriminated against in your local community, or not? How about [INSERT ITEM]?



* Not enough cases for analysis. NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q19. Total N=1,300 rural adults ages 18+.

Only 22% of all rural Americans say that African Americans are discriminated against in their local community, yet more than one-third (36%) of African Americans living in rural areas hold this view. In addition, while 12% of all rural Americans say that disabled people face discrimination in their local community, 22% of disabled people say this is the case. These results suggest a sizable gap between how minorities and non-minorities believe people are treated in rural communities.

In addition, there is a gap between perceptions of discrimination when it comes to the political beliefs of some rural Americans, as 21% of all rural Americans say that generally speaking, liberals are discriminated against in their local community, while 37% of adults who identify as liberals say liberals face discrimination in their local community.

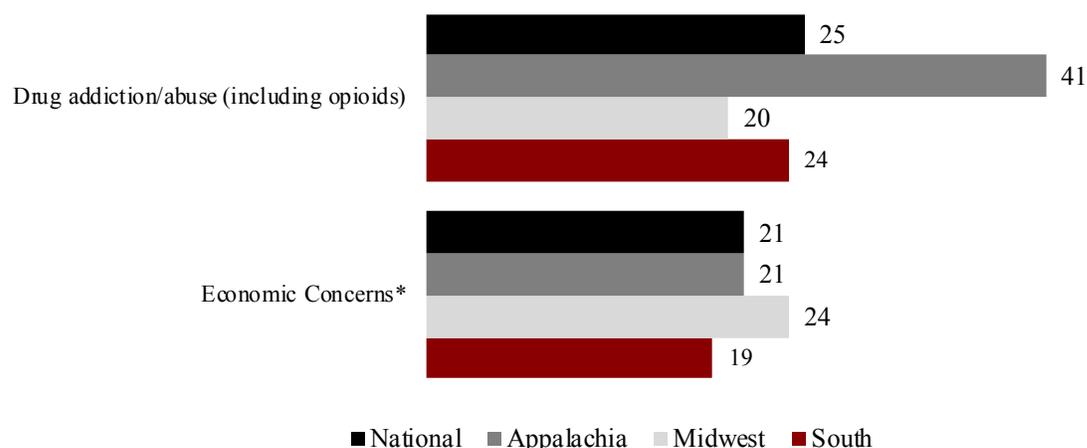
VII. Drug Addiction/Abuse (including Opioids) in Rural Appalachia

Compared to rural adults nationally, there are some distinct regional views and experiences for adults living in the rural Appalachian region of the U.S.²

- **Drug addiction or abuse, including opioids, is a major problem for rural Appalachian communities (Figure 6).** Adults living in rural Appalachian communities name drug addiction/abuse as both the biggest overall problem and the biggest health problem facing their communities. Four in ten rural Appalachians (41%) say that drug addiction/abuse is the biggest problem facing their local community.
- In addition, more than half of rural Americans living in Appalachia (58%) say they personally know someone who has struggled with opioid addiction, and about three in four rural Appalachians (74%) say the problem of people being addicted to opioids in their local community is a serious problem.
- Almost two-thirds of rural Appalachians (64%) say the problem of people being addicted to opioids in the local community has gotten worse in the past 5 years.

**Figure 6:
Biggest Problems Facing Rural Communities, by Region**

Q2. What would you say is the biggest problem facing your local community? [Open-ended]



* Economic concerns include the availability of jobs, poverty, and the economy. No other issues were mentioned by more than 10% of rural Americans. NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q2. N= 1300 rural adults ages 18+ (national sample). Parts of the rural South and rural Midwest are also included in rural Appalachia, so these regions are not mutually exclusive in this survey.

² This survey follows the Appalachian Regional Commission definition of the Appalachian region (available at https://www.arc.gov/appalachian_region/CountiesinAppalachia.asp). It is a 205,000 square-mile region following the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern Mississippi. It includes rural areas in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

VIII. Major Differences between White and Racial/Ethnic Minority Rural Americans

This survey major finds differences between the views and experiences of Whites living in rural America, compared to Latinos and African Americans, particularly when it comes to opioid addiction, views on the major problems facing their communities, discrimination, and the skills and training they need for jobs in the future.

- Rural Americans’ views on the biggest problems facing their community varies by race and ethnicity.** While drug addiction or abuse is the biggest overall community problem cited by Whites living in rural America (27%), economic concerns are the most cited problem by African Americans (24%) and Latinos (22%). In addition, African Americans living in rural areas are significantly more likely than Whites and Latinos to say both crime (African Americans: 13%, Whites: 3%, Latinos: 5%) and infrastructure issues (African Americans: 9%, Whites 4%, Latinos: 2%) are the biggest problems facing their local community.
- Drug addiction/abuse is White rural Americans’ biggest community health concern, while cancer tops the list for rural African Americans and Latinos.** While rural Whites say drug addiction or abuse (including opioids) is their community’s most urgent health problem (27%), African Americans (19%) and Latinos (13%) cite cancer as the most urgent health problem currently facing their community (Table 10).

TABLE 10. Rural Americans’ Views of the Most Urgent Health Problem Currently Facing Their Communities, by Race/Ethnicity

Q32. What is the most urgent health problem currently facing your local community? [Open-Ended]

	Whites	African Americans	Latinos
1. Drug addiction/abuse*	27	1. Cancer	19
2. Cancer	12	2. Health care access	15
3. Health care access	10	3. Diabetes	9
			1. Cancer
			2. (tied) Drug addiction/abuse*
			2. (tied) Health care access
			13
			10
			10

*Drug addiction or abuse includes opioid addiction/abuse. NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q32. No other issues were mentioned by more than 10% of rural Americans. N= 1300 rural adults ages 18+ (full sample).

- White rural Americans are significantly more likely than African American and Latino rural Americans to know someone who has struggled with opioid addiction.** While a majority of White adults living in rural America (52%) say they personally know someone, such as a friend or family member, who has struggled with opioid addiction, 37% of Latino and 31% of African American adults living in rural America share this experience.

- **White rural Americans are also more likely than African Americans and Latinos to say the opioid problem has gotten worse over the past 5 years.** More than half of White adults living in rural America (52%) say opioid addiction in their local community has gotten worse in the past 5 years, compared to 32% of African Americans and 30% of Latinos.
- **White rural Americans are more likely than African Americans and Latinos to say they personally know someone who has struggled with suicide.** A majority of White adults living in rural America (59%) say they personally know someone, such as a friend or family member, who has struggled with suicidal thoughts or tried to commit suicide, compared to 32% of African Americans and 43% of Latinos.
- **African American and Latino rural parents are more optimistic about their children's financial future than White rural parents.** When we asked parents in rural America to think about their children, 67% of African American parents and 66% of Latino parents say they believe their children will be better off financially than they are when their children become their age, compared to 52% of Whites.
- **Latinos and African Americans living in rural America are more likely than Whites to say they need additional training and skills to keep or find new jobs in the future.** More than half of Latinos (59%) say it will be important for them to get training or develop new skills in order to keep or find jobs in the next five years, compared to 41% of African Americans and 31% of Whites living in rural America.
- **In rural America, African Americans and Latinos are more likely than Whites to believe their community does not receive its fair share of resources.** Almost three-quarters of African Americans (73%) and more than half of Latinos (54%) living in rural America say they think people living in their local community get less than their fair share of the state government's resources, compared to 42% of Whites.
- **Rural adults belonging to minority groups see much higher rates of discrimination against members of their group than others.** For example, 44% of Latinos living in rural areas say that generally speaking, they think Latinos are discriminated against in their local community, compared to 18% of Whites and 23% of African Americans. Similarly, significantly more African Americans (36%) than Whites (20%) say they think African Americans are discriminated against in their local community. In addition, more than half of Latinos (56%) say they think recent immigrants to the U.S. are discriminated against in their local community, compared to only 27% of Whites and 26% of African Americans.

IX. Major Differences Between Younger and Older Rural Americans

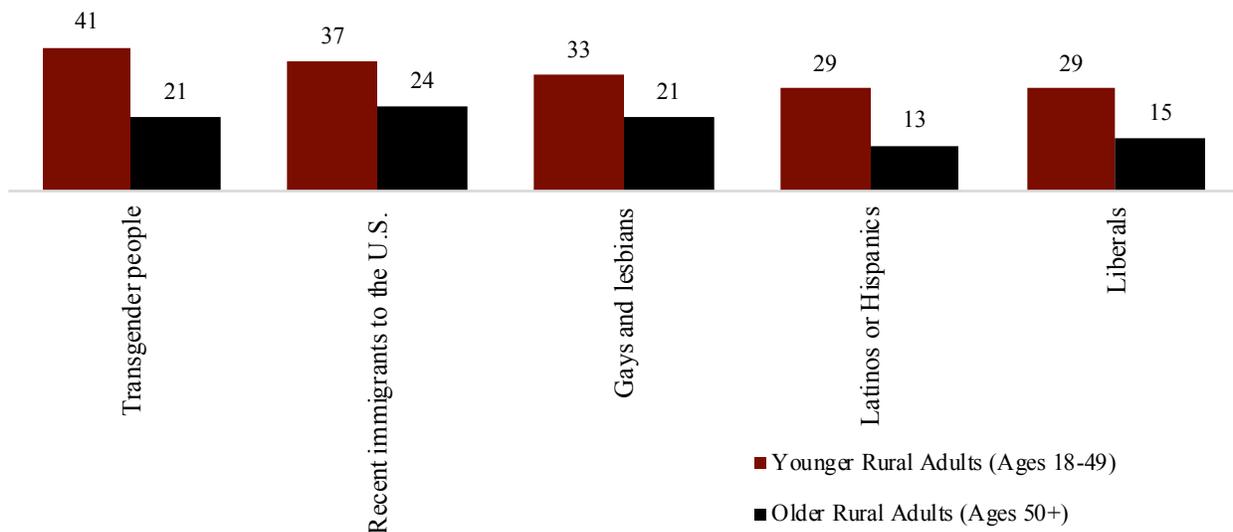
This survey finds major differences between the views and experiences of younger rural adults (ages 18-49) and older rural adults (ages 50+) with opioid addiction/abuse, suicide, discrimination, jobs, and finances.

- **Younger rural Americans are significantly more likely than older rural Americans to know someone who has struggled with opioid addiction.** Almost six in ten younger rural Americans (59%) say they personally know someone, such as a friend or family member, who has struggled with opioid addiction, compared to about four in ten older rural Americans (42%).
- **The vast majority of younger rural Americans know someone who has struggled with suicide.** Seven in ten younger rural Americans (70%) say they personally know someone, such as a friend or family member, who has struggled with suicidal thoughts or tried to commit suicide, compared to 45% of older rural Americans. In addition, 38% of younger rural Americans say suicide is a serious problem in their local community, compared to 25% of older rural Americans.
- **Younger rural Americans are more likely than older rural Americans to say the number of good jobs in their community has increased in the past 5 years.** More than one-third of younger rural Americans (36%) say the overall number of good jobs in their local community has increased over the last five years, compared to 25% of older rural Americans. Older rural Americans are more likely than younger rural Americans to say the overall number of good jobs in their community has stayed about the same (47 v. 40%).
- **Younger rural Americans are almost twice as likely as older rural Americans to say their personal financial situation has improved in the past 5 years.** A majority of younger rural Americans (61%) say their personal financial situation has gotten better over the last five years, compared to 33% of older rural Americans, while older Americans are more likely to say their financial situation has stayed about the same (49% v. 26%).
- **A majority of younger rural adults say they will need additional training or new skills to keep or find new jobs in the future.** More than half of younger rural adults (59%) say it will be important for them to get training or develop new skills in order to keep or find jobs in their local community in the next five years, compared to only 15% of older rural adults.
- **Younger rural Americans are more likely than older rural Americans to say they are active in the community.** When asked about how active they are in efforts to solve problems in their local community, 59% of younger rural Americans say they are active, compared to 45% of older rural Americans.

- **Younger rural adults see more discrimination against several minority groups in their community more than older rural adults (Figure 7).** Younger rural adults are about twice as likely as older rural adults to say that generally speaking, they think the following groups are discriminated against in their local community: transgender people (41% v. 21%), Latinos (29% v. 13%), and liberals (29% v. 15%). Younger rural adults are also more likely than older rural adults to say that generally speaking, they think both gays and lesbians (33% v. 21%) and recent immigrants to the U.S. (37% v. 24%) are discriminated against in their local community.

**Figure 7:
Differences between Younger and Older Rural Americans' Views of
Discrimination Against Groups in the Local Community**

Q19. Generally speaking, do you think individuals in each of the following groups are discriminated against in your local community, or not? How about [INSERT ITEM]?



NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q19. Total N=1,300 rural adults ages 18+.

X. Major Differences Between Rural Americans With College Degrees and Those Without College Degrees

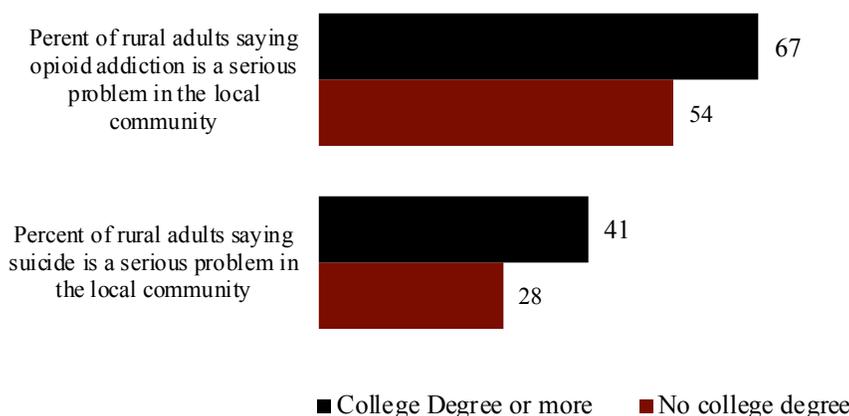
This survey finds many similarities in the views and experiences of rural adults who have completed college and those who have not. The major differences between these two groups emerge on the issues of opioid addiction/abuse, suicide, discrimination, and optimism about solving major community problems.

- **Though there has been considerable national discussion about the substantial differences in life experiences and expectations of rural college graduates versus those who did not graduate from college, we find that for many aspects of life in rural America, these groups hold similar views.**
 - Almost half of rural adults with college degrees (48%) and four in ten rural adults without college degrees (40%) say overall, their life has turned out better than they expected.
 - Majorities of both rural adults with college degrees (55%) and those without college degrees (54%) say they are better off financially compared to their parents at the same age.
 - In addition, significant proportions of rural parents both with college degrees (50%) and without college degrees (57%) are optimistic over their children's financial future and say their children will be better off financially compared to themselves at the same age.
 - Many rural adults are optimistic about future jobs in their community, regardless of educational attainment. More than one-third of adults both with college degrees (36%) and without college degrees (39%) say the number of good jobs in their local community will increase in the next five years, while half of those with college degrees (50%) and 46% of those without college degrees say the number of good jobs will stay the same.
- **Rural adults with college degrees are significantly more likely than those without college degrees to say opioid addiction is a serious problem in their community (Figure 8).** More than two-thirds of rural adults with college degrees (67%) say that opioid addiction is a serious problem in their local community, compared to 54% of rural adults without college degrees.
- **Rural adults with college degrees are significantly more likely than those without college degrees to say suicide is a serious problem in their community (Figure 7).** About four in ten rural adults with college degrees (41%) say that suicide is a serious problem in their local community, compared to 28% of rural adults without college degrees.

**Figure 8:
Differences in Rural Adults' Views on Opioids and Suicide in their
Local Communities, By Education**

Q34/34a. Is people being addicted to opioids a problem in your local community, or not? [If Yes] How serious a problem for your local community is people being addicted to opioids? Is it a very serious problem, somewhat serious, or not too serious?

Q37/37a. Is suicide a problem in your local community, or not? [If Yes] How serious a problem is suicide for your local community? A very serious problem, somewhat serious, or not too serious?



NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Life in Rural America, 6/6/18 – 8/4/18. Q34, Q34a, Q37, Q37a. N=1,300 rural adults ages 18+.

- Rural adults without college degrees are more optimistic about solving major community problems than those with college degrees.** When asked about the major problems facing their local community, 53% of rural adults without college degrees say they are confident that major problems facing their local community will be solved in the next five years, compared to 42% of adults with college degrees. However, in order to solve community problems, rural adults with college degrees are more likely to say they need outside help (67%) compared to those without college degrees (56%).
- Rural adults with college degrees see more discrimination against several minority groups in their community more than rural adults without college degrees.** Rural adults with college degrees are significantly more likely than those without college degrees to say that generally speaking, they think the following groups are discriminated against in their local community: gays and lesbians (35% v. 24%), transgender people (39% v. 27%), Latinos (33% v. 18%), African Americans (33% v. 19%), and liberals (32% v. 18%).

Methodology

The poll in this study is part of an on-going series of surveys developed by researchers at the Harvard Opinion Research Program (HORP) at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and National Public Radio. The research team consists of the following members at each institution.

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health: Robert J. Blendon, Professor of Health Policy and Political Analysis and Executive Director of HORP; John M. Benson, Senior Research Scientist and Managing Director of HORP; Mary T. Gorski Findling, Research Associate; Logan S. Casey, Research Associate in Public Opinion; Justin M. Sayde, Administrative and Research Manager.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Carolyn Miller, Senior Program Officer, Research and Evaluation; and Jordan Reese, Director of Media Relations.

NPR: Andrea Kissack, Senior Supervising Editor, Science Desk; Joe Neel, Deputy Senior Supervising Editor, Science Desk; Vickie Walton-James, Senior Supervising Editor, National Desk; Laura Smitherman, Deputy Senior Supervising Editor, National Desk; Luis Clemens, Supervising Editor, National Desk; Ken Barcus, Midwest Bureau Chief.

Interviews were conducted by SSRS of Glen Mills (PA) via telephone (including both landline and cell phone) using random-digit dialing, June 6 – August 4, 2018, among a nationally representative probability-based sample of 1,300 adults age 18 or older living in the rural United States. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error for total respondents is ± 3.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The sample of Rural Americans is defined in this survey as adults living in areas that are not part of a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). This is the definition used in the 2016 National Exit Poll.

Possible sources of non-sampling error include non-response bias, as well as question wording and ordering effects. Non-response in telephone surveys produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population. To compensate for these known biases and for variations in probability of selection within and across households, sample data are weighted by cell phone/landline use and demographics (sex, age, education, and Census region) to reflect the true population. Other techniques, including random-digit dialing, replicate subsamples, and systematic respondent selection within households, are used to ensure that the sample is representative.

Characteristics of Population Subgroups in This Report

	Number of Interviews (unweighted)	Margin of Error at the 95% confidence level (percentage points)	Weighted % of total sample
Total rural adults	1300	+/-3.6	100
By region*			
Appalachia	212	+/-8.5	19
Midwest	371	+/-6.4	32
South	590	+/-5.6	42
By Race/ethnicity			
White (non-Latino)	776	+/-4.3	78
Black (non-Latino)	232	+/-8.5	8
Latino	233	+/-8.9	8
By age			
18-49	383	+/-6.1	44
50+	915	+/-4.3	55
By education			
College graduate	407	+/-7.0	19
Not college graduate	888	+/- 4.2	80

* Parts of the rural South and rural Midwest are also included in rural Appalachia, so these regions are not mutually exclusive in this survey.

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HARVARD T.H. CHAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Life in Rural America

This survey was conducted for National Public Radio, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, via telephone (landline and cell phone) by SSRS, an independent research company. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish using random-digit dialing, **June 6 – August 4, 2018**, among a nationally representative probability-based sample of 1,300 adults age 18 or older living in the rural U.S. The margin of error for the total respondents is +/-3.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

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The sample of Rural Americans is defined in this survey as adults living in areas that are not part of a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). This is the definition used in the 2016 National Exit Poll.

Responses shown in the tables that follow are percentages.

We are conducting a survey on people’s lives. In this survey, we’ll be using the phrase “in your local community” to refer to the geographic area where you live, such as your town or county.

I. Major Strengths and Challenges

We’re interested in knowing your views about living in your community and changes that are affecting the way of life there.

Q1. Thinking about that, what would you say is the **biggest strength** of your local community?
(open-ended)

Close-knit community/unity/togetherness/helping each other/good community	21
Small town/community	11
The people/good/nice/friendly people	11
Church/good churches/faith/religious people	6
Recreational opportunities/tourism	5
Good economy (a lot of/good businesses/jobs/employment opportunities)	4
Safe/low crime rate/have good police/law enforcement	4
General geographic attributes (location/climate/size/etc.)	3
Education/good schools/universities	3
It's a rural area/open spaces/not many people live here	3
Agriculture/farming	3
Family oriented/nice place to raise children/retire	2
It's peaceful/quiet/tranquil	2
The community/it's a good community	1
Political affiliation/party lean	1
Clean environment/air/water	1
None/no strength	2
Other	8
Don't know/Refused	10

Q2. What would you say is the **biggest problem** facing your local community? (open-ended)

Drug and opioid addiction/abuse (NET)	25
Drug addiction/abuse (general, drug type unspecified, or did not specifically mention opioid)	18
Opioid addiction/abuse (painkillers, Rx painkillers, OxyContin, Vicodin, Percocet, or fentanyl)	7
Economy/jobs (NET)	21
Availability of jobs	12
Poverty	6
The economy (businesses closing/high cost of living/low wages/etc.)	3
The people (not friendly/lazy/etc.)	5
Government (politics/politicians/taxes/lack of funding/etc.)	5
Condition of roads, bridges, other infrastructure	4
Crime	4
Lack of shopping/recreation/etc.	3
Environmental issues (weather/wildfires/lack of rain/quality of water/etc.)	3
Availability of affordable housing	2
Quality of education in public schools	2
Racism	2
Access to good doctors and hospitals	1
Access to public transportation	1
Population	1
Law enforcement	1
Access to grocery stores	1
Access to high-speed internet	*
None/no problems	2
Other	7
Don't know/Refused	10

Q3. Do you have children?

(Asked of those who have children)

Q4. Are any of your children over the age of 18?

Q3/Q4 Combo Table

Based on total respondents

Yes, have children (NET)	73
Yes, over the age of 18	53
No, not over the age of 18	20
No children	27
Don't know/Refused	-

Q5. How do you feel about the way things have turned out in your life? Overall, have they turned out (better) than you expected, (worse) than you expected, or about like you expected?

Better than expected	Worse than expected	About like you expected	Don't know/Refused
41	15	42	2

Q6. What is the **biggest problem** facing you and your family? (open-ended)

Money/financial problems	27
Health and health care (NET)	16
Health/physical/medical concerns	12
Health care (access/insurance/cost)	4
Lack of togetherness/communicating (seeing each other/getting along/living too far from each other/etc.)	4
Lack of job opportunities	4
Taking care of family (raising kids/grandkids/caring for elderly or sick family members/etc.)	4
Getting older/getting old/family getting old	3
Government related (politics/politicians/taxes/lack of social services/etc.)	3
Societal issues (racism/crime/etc.)	2
Loss of spouse/family member (death/divorce)	1
Drug addiction	1
None/no problems	14
Other	12
Don't know/Refused	9

Q7. Think of your parents when they were your age. Would you say you are (better) off financially than they were, (worse) off than they were, or about the same?

Better off	Worse off	About the same	Don't know/Refused
54	17	28	1

(Asked of those who have children; n=1,020)

Q8. Now think about when your children will be your age, do you think they will be (better) off financially than you are, (worse) off than you are, or about the same?

Better off	Worse off	About the same	Don't know/Refused
55	14	27	4

II. Population Change

Q9. Over the last 5 years, has the population size of your local community (increased), (decreased), or stayed about the same?

(Asked of those who say increased or decreased)

Q9a. Has the population size of your local community (increased/decreased) a lot or a little?

Q9/Q9a Combo Table Based on total respondents

Over the past 5 years, population size of local community has increased (NET)	41
Population increased a lot	19
Population increased a little	22
Over the past 5 years, population size of local community has decreased (NET)	15
Population decreased a lot	6
Population decreased a little	9
Over the past 5 years, population size of local community has stayed the same	41
Don't know/Refused	3

(Asked of those who have children over the age of 18; n=840)

Q10. Thinking about your children who are over the age of 18, not including time they may have spent away at trade school, college, or in the military, have they moved out of your local community and to a new town or community, or have they stayed in your local community?

Moved out of your local community	Stayed in your local community	Some of my children moved and some stayed	My children never lived in my local community (vol)	Don't know/Refused
43	37	16	3	1

(Asked of those who have children over age 18 that moved out of local community and to a new town or community; n=542)

Q11. (Thinking about your child or children who moved from your local community,) what kind of community did they move to? Would you say it is a city, a suburb, or a rural community?

City	Suburb	Rural	Other (vol)	Don't know/Refused
61	17	21	1	*

(Asked of those who have children over age 18 that moved out of local community and to a new town or community; n=542)

Q12. What would you say is the **most important** reason why your child left your local community?
(open-ended)

Left for a job/Got a job somewhere else	52
Had a hard time finding a good long-term job	13
Left for college	8
Wanted to live in a place with more cultural opportunities or events	3
Had a hard time finding a romantic relationship	3
Had a hard time finding good affordable housing	2
Wanted to raise their children in a different type of environment	2
Joined the military	1
Wanted to live in a place with more people like them	*
Wanted to live in a place with more people from different cultures and backgrounds	*
Other	13
Don't know/Refused	3

III. Local Community

Q13. Not including time you may have spent away at trade school, college, or in the military, have you lived in or near your local community your entire life, or have you lived in other places?

Lived in or near your local community your entire life	Lived in other places	Don't know/Refused
41	59	*

(Asked of those who have lived in other places; n=795)

Q14. How long have you lived in the local community where you live now?

Q13/Q14 Combo Table Based on total respondents

Less than 1 year	3
1 to 4 years	8
5 to 9 years	10
10 to 19 years	13
20 or more years	25
Lived in or near your local community your entire life	41
Don't know/Refused	*

Q15. What is the **most important** reason why you choose to live in your local community? (open-ended)

My family is here	31
Job opportunities	12
Born or grew up here	10
Closeness to nature	5
Safe place to live	5
Rural/country/small town/community	4
Cost of living	3
Pace of life	3
People here share my moral and social values	2
Like it/it's good/better place to live (general)	2
Good place to raise children	2
Can't afford to leave or move to another community	2
My home/house is here	2
The schools	2
The people (friendly/close-knit, etc.)	2
Peaceful/quiet/tranquil	1
Good for my health	1
People here share my political beliefs	*
Other	10
Don't know/Refused	1

Q16. In general, how attached do you feel to your local community? Would you say very attached, somewhat attached, not too attached, or not at all attached?

Very attached	Somewhat attached	Not too attached	Not at all attached	Don't know/Refused
42	39	11	7	1

Q17. How important to you, if at all, are your relationships with your neighbors? Would you say extremely important, very, somewhat, only a little, or not at all important?

Extremely important	Very important	Somewhat important	Only a little important	Not at all important	Don't know/Refused
14	36	27	13	10	*

Q18. Have you **ever** received help from a neighbor or people in your local community, such as handling an emergency situation, finding a temporary place to live, or getting important work done?

Yes	No	Don't know/Refused
67	32	1

IV. Discrimination

Q19. Generally speaking, do you think individuals in each of the following groups are discriminated against in your local community, or not? How about (INSERT ITEM)?

- a. Gays and lesbians

Discriminated against	Not discriminated against	Don't know/Refused
27	66	7

- b. Transgender people

Discriminated against	Not discriminated against	Don't know/Refused
30	56	14

(Asked of half-sample A; n=631)

- c. Whites

Discriminated against	Not discriminated against	Don't know/Refused
9	89	2

(Asked of half-sample A; n=631)

- d. Latinos or Hispanics

Discriminated against	Not discriminated against	Don't know/Refused
21	74	5

(Asked of half-sample A; n=631)

- e. African Americans or blacks

Discriminated against	Not discriminated against	Don't know/Refused
22	76	2

(Asked of half-sample A; n=631)

- f. Asian Americans

Discriminated against	Not discriminated against	Don't know/Refused
10	85	5

(Asked of half-sample B; n=669)

- g. Liberals

Discriminated against	Not discriminated against	Don't know/Refused
21	71	8

(Asked of half-sample B; n=669)

h. Conservatives

Discriminated against	Not discriminated against	Don't know/Refused
15	80	5

(Asked of half-sample B; n=669)

i. Recent immigrants to the U.S.

Discriminated against	Not discriminated against	Don't know/Refused
29	64	7

(Asked of half-sample B; n=669)

j. Disabled people

Discriminated against	Not discriminated against	Don't know/Refused
12	86	2

V. Economy and Jobs

Q20. Overall, how would you rate the economy in the region where you live and work? Would you say it is excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

Excellent	Good	Only fair	Poor	Don't know/Refused
8	36	34	21	1

Q21. Over the last 5 years, would you say that the economy in the region where you live and work has gotten (better), gotten (worse), or stayed about the same?

(Asked of those who say gotten better or gotten worse)

Q21a. Would you say that the economy in the region where you live and work has gotten a lot or a little (better/worse)?

Q21/Q21a Combo Table Based on total respondents

The economy in the region where you live and work has gotten better (NET)	31
Has gotten a lot better	10
Has gotten a little better	21
The economy in the region where you live and work has gotten worse (NET)	21
Has gotten a lot worse	9
Has gotten a little worse	12
The economy in the region where you live and work has stayed about the same	47
Don't know/Refused	1

Q22. Over the last 5 years, would you say that the overall number of good jobs in your local community has (increased), (decreased), or stayed about the same?

(Asked of those who say increased or decreased)

Q22a. Has the overall number of good jobs in your local community (increased/decreased) a lot or a little?

Q22/Q22a. Combo Table Based on total respondents

Overall number of good jobs in their local community has increased (NET)	30
Increased a lot	12
Increased a little	18
Overall number of good jobs in their local community has decreased (NET)	25
Decreased a lot	13
Decreased a little	12
Overall number of good jobs in their local community has stayed about the same	44
Don't know/Refused	1

Q23. Looking ahead 5 years, do you think the number of good jobs in your local community will (increase), (decrease), or stay about the same?

Increase	Decrease	Stay about the same	Don't know/Refused
39	12	47	2

Q24. Over the last 5 years, would you say that your personal financial situation has gotten (better), gotten (worse), or stayed about the same?

(Asked of those who say gotten better or gotten worse)

24a. Has your personal financial situation gotten a lot or a little (better/worse)?

**Q24/Q24a Combo Table
Based on total respondents**

Personal financial situation has gotten better (NET)	45
Has gotten a lot better	22
Has gotten a little better	23
Personal financial situation has gotten worse (NET)	16
Has gotten a lot worse	8
Has gotten a little worse	8
Personal financial situation stayed the same	39
Don't know/Refused	*

Q25. Are you currently employed full-time, part-time, or not currently employed?
(Asked of those who are not employed)

Q26. Are you: retired, a homemaker, a student, or temporarily unemployed?

Q25/Q26 Combo Table
Based on total respondents

Employed (NET)	52
Employed Full-time	41
Employed Part-time	11
Not employed (NET)	48
Retired	26
A homemaker	7
A student	2
Temporarily unemployed	5
Disabled/Handicapped (vol)	7
Other (vol)	1
Don't know/Refused	*

Q25. Are you currently employed full-time, part-time, or not currently employed?
(Asked of those who are employed)

Q27. Are you currently self-employed?

Q25/Q27 Combo Table
Based on total respondents

Employed (NET)	52
Self-employed	12
Not self-employed	40
Not employed	48
Don't know/Refused	*

Q25. Are you currently employed full-time, part-time, or not currently employed?
(Asked of those who are employed)

Q28. How many jobs do you currently have?

Q25/Q28 Combo Table
Based on total respondents

Employed (NET)	52
1 job	41
2 jobs	8
3 or more jobs	3
Not employed	48
Don't know/Refused	*

(Asked of those who are employed; n=586)

Q29. (Thinking about your main job,) how satisfied are you with your job?

Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know/Refused
59	34	5	2	*

Q30. In the next 5 years, do you think it will be important for you to get training or develop new skills in order to keep your job or find a better job in your local community, or is that not important for you?

Important	Not important	Don't know/Refused
34	65	1

(Asked of those who think it will be important to get training or develop new skills in order to keep their job or find a better job in their local community; n=393)

Q31. Which of the following skills or training do you think you will need to keep or find a better job in your local community? Do you think you will need (INSERT ITEM), or not? How about (INSERT ITEM)?

	Yes	No	Don't know/Refused
a. Computer and technical skills	73	27	*
i. A first or more advanced educational degree or certificate	69	31	-
b. Advanced vocational training	52	47	1
d. Writing and research skills	50	49	1
e. Presentation and public speaking skills	50	49	1
c. Medical or health-related technical training	50	50	*
h. Skills for starting your own business	48	51	1
f. To learn other languages	48	52	*
g. Accounting or advanced financial management skills	45	55	-
j. Something else not mentioned here	14	82	4

**Q30/Q31 Combo Table
Based on total respondents**

Important to get training or develop new skills and will need...	34
Computer and technical skills	25
A first or more advanced educational degree or certificate	24
Advanced vocational training	18
Writing and research skills	17
Presentation and public speaking skills	17
Medical or health-related technical training	17
Skills for starting your own business	17
To learn other languages	16
Accounting or advanced financial management skills	15
Something else not mentioned here	4
Not important to get training or develop new skills	65
Don't know/Refused	1

VI. Solving Local Problems in Rural America

Q40. In terms of the major problems facing your local community, how confident are you, if at all, that these problems will be solved in the next five years? Very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not too confident	Not at all confident	No major problems in community (vol)	Don't know/Refused
12	39	28	18	1	2

Q41. When it comes to solving these major problems, is this something you think your local community can accomplish mostly on its own, or do you think it will need outside help?

Can accomplish mostly on its own	37
Will need outside help	58
Don't know/Refused	4
No major problems in community (vol)	1

(Asked of those who say their community will need outside help; n=755)

Q42. Which ONE of the following groups do you think will play the greatest role in solving these problems?

Your state government	30
The federal government	18
Your county or regional government	13
Big businesses	13
Nonprofit organizations, including charities	6
Religious organizations	5
Something else	7
Don't know/Refused	8

Q40/Q41/Q42 Combo Table Based on total respondents

Can accomplish mostly on its own	37
Will need outside help (NET)	58
and the following group will play the greatest role	
Your state government	17
The federal government	10
Big businesses	8
Your county or regional government	8
Nonprofit organizations, including charities	3
Religious organizations	3
Something else	4
Don't know/Refused which group	5
Don't know/Refused if need outside help	4
No major problems in community (vol)	1

Q43. How active are you in efforts to solve problems in your local community? Are you very active, somewhat active, not too active, or not at all active?

Very active	Somewhat active	Not too active	Not at all active	Don't know/Refused
12	40	25	23	*

Q44. Recently, a number of leadership groups have recommended different approaches for improving the economy in communities like yours. For each of the following, please tell me how helpful you think this approach would be for improving the economy of your local community. First (INSERT ITEM). Do you think this would be very helpful, somewhat helpful, not too helpful, or not at all helpful?

(Asked of half-sample A; n=631)

a. Improving local infrastructure like roads, bridges, and public buildings

Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not too helpful	Not at all helpful	Don't know/Refused
48	36	9	6	1

(Asked of half-sample B; n=669)

b. Improving the quality of local public schools

Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not too helpful	Not at all helpful	Don't know/Refused
61	28	5	5	1

(Asked of half-sample A; n=631)

c. Improving access to health care

Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not too helpful	Not at all helpful	Don't know/Refused
55	31	6	6	2

(Asked of half-sample B; n=669)

d. Improving access to high-speed internet

Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not too helpful	Not at all helpful	Don't know/Refused
43	32	11	10	4

(Asked of half-sample A; n=631)

e. Improving access to advanced job training or skills development

Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not too helpful	Not at all helpful	Don't know/Refused
51	36	7	4	2

(Asked of half-sample B; n=669)

f. Creating better long-term job opportunities

Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not too helpful	Not at all helpful	Don't know/Refused
64	28	2	5	1

(Asked of half-sample A; n=631)

g. Improving the use of advanced technology in local industry and farming

Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not too helpful	Not at all helpful	Don't know/Refused
44	42	7	6	1

(Asked of half-sample B; n=669)

h. Improving access to small business loans and investments

Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not too helpful	Not at all helpful	Don't know/Refused
44	40	7	6	3

Q45. Thinking about your state, do you think people living in your local community get their fair share of the state government's resources, people in your local community get (less than their fair share), or people in your local community get (more than their fair share)?

Fair share	Less than their fair share	More than their fair share	Don't know/Refused
38	47	9	6

VII. Health

Q32. What is the **most** urgent health problem currently facing your local community? (open-ended)

Drug abuse/addiction (NET)	23
Opioid abuse/addiction	9
Drug addiction/abuse (general, drug type unspecified, or drug other than opioid specifically mentioned)	14
Cancer	12
Access to care	11
Diabetes	5
Aging population/the elderly (care/services)	5
Environmental factors	4
Cost	3
Obesity	3
Heart disease/heart attack/heart failure	2
Alcohol abuse/addiction	2
Mental illness	2
Flu/influenza	1
Finding cures for diseases	*
Government interference	*
High blood pressure	1
HIV/AIDS	1
Quality of care	1
Stroke	*
None	2
Other	4
Don't know/Refused	18

Q33. Thinking about the cost of your health care in recent years, how would you describe its overall impact on your or your family's financial situation? Would you say your family's health care costs caused a very serious problem, somewhat serious problem, not too serious a problem, or did not cause a problem at all for your family's overall financial situation?

Very serious problem	Somewhat serious problem	Not too serious a problem	Did not cause a problem at all	Don't know/Refused
21	29	22	27	1

Q34. Now I'd like to ask you some questions about opioid addiction. When we ask about opioids, we mean strong painkillers, such as Percocet, OxyContin, Vicodin, or fentanyl.

Is people being addicted to opioids a problem in your local community, or not?

(Asked of those who say opioid addiction is a problem in their local community)

Q34a. How serious a problem for your local community is people being addicted to opioids? Is it a very serious problem, somewhat serious, or not too serious?

**Q34/Q34a Combo Table
Based on total respondents**

Very serious problem	33
Somewhat serious problem	24
Not too serious problem	4
Not a problem	31
Don't know/Refused	8

Q35. In the past 5 years, do you think this problem of people being addicted to opioids in your local community has gotten (better), gotten (worse), or remained about the same?

(Asked of those who say gotten better or gotten worse)

Q35a. Has this problem of people being addicted to opioids in your local community gotten a lot or a little (better/worse)?

**Q35/Q35a Combo Table
Based on total respondents**

Problem of people being addicted to opioids in local community has gotten better (NET)	5
Has gotten a lot better	2
Has gotten a little better	3
Problem of people being addicted to opioids in local community has gotten worse (NET)	48
Has gotten a lot worse	31
Has gotten a little worse	17
Problem of people being addicted to opioids in local community has remained about the same	40
Don't know/Refused	7

Q36. Do you personally know someone, such as a friend or family member, who has struggled with opioid addiction, or not?

Yes	No	Don't know/ Refused
49	50	1

Q37. Now I'd like to ask you some questions about mental health. Is suicide a problem in your local community, or not?

(Asked of those who think suicide is a problem in local community; n=440)

Q37a. How serious a problem is suicide for your local community? A very serious problem, somewhat serious, or not too serious?

**Q37/Q37a Combo Table
Based on total respondents**

Very serious problem	12
Somewhat serious problem	19
Not too serious problem	4
Not a problem	60
Don't know/Refused	5

Q38. In the past 5 years, do you think the problem of suicide in your local community has gotten (better), gotten (worse), or remained about the same?

(Asked of those who say gotten better or gotten worse)

Q38a. Do you think the problem of suicide in your local community has gotten a lot or a little (better/worse)?

**Q38/Q38a Combo Table
Based on total respondents**

Problem of suicide in local community has gotten better (NET)	7
Gotten a lot better	4
Gotten a little better	3
Problem of suicide in local community has gotten worse (NET)	23
Gotten a lot worse	12
Gotten a little worse	11
Problem of suicide in local community has remained about the same	64
Don't know/Refused	6

Q39. Do you personally know someone, such as a friend or family member, who has struggled with suicidal thoughts or tried to commit suicide, or not?

Yes	No	Don't know/ Refused
56	44	*

VIII. Health Demographics

Q46. In general, how would you describe your own physical health – excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

Excellent	13
Very good	29
Good	28
Fair	20
Poor	9
Don't know/Refused	1

Q47. In general, how would you describe your own mental health – excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

Excellent	26
Very good	31
Good	27
Fair	12
Poor	3
Don't know/Refused	1

Q48. Does any disability keep you from participating fully in work, school, housework, or other activities?

Yes	No	Don't know/ Refused
31	68	1

Q49. Are you, yourself, currently covered by any form of health insurance or health plan or do you not have health insurance at this time?

Yes	No	Don't know/ Refused
86	14	*

(Asked of those who are covered by any form of health insurance or health plan)

Q50. Which of the following is your MAIN source of health insurance coverage? Is it...

A plan through your or your spouse's employer or union, a plan you purchased yourself, Medicare, the government health program for people 65 and older and certain people with long-term disabilities, Medicaid (or [STATE-SPECIFIC NAME]), the government program that provides health insurance to certain low-income adults and children and long-term care for some people, The VA or Tricare, or some other form of insurance? **(Asked of those who are covered by either Medicaid or Medicare)** Q50aa. Do you also have coverage from (Medicare/Medicaid (or [INSERT STATE SPECIFIC NAME])), or not?³

(Asked of those who are covered by health insurance and main coverage is a plan they purchased themselves)

Q51. Did you purchase it from a government exchange or agency, or not?

Q49/Q50/Q50aa/Q51 Combo Table I
Based on total respondents

Yes, covered by health insurance (NET)	86
A plan through your or your spouse's employer or union	35
A plan you purchased yourself	9
Purchased it from a government exchange or agency	4
Did not purchase it from a government exchange or agency	4
Don't know/Refused if purchased from a government exchange or agency	1
Medicare and Medicaid	9
Medicare only	16
Medicaid only	8
The VA or Tricare	3
Some other form of insurance	3
Plan through your parent/mother/father	2
Don't know/Refused which type	1
No, not covered by health insurance	14
Don't know/Refused if covered	*

³ The list of health insurance sources was read this way for 719 interviews. In 432 other interviews, the list was read as: A plan through your or your spouse's employer or union, a plan you purchased yourself, Medicare and Medicaid, Medicare only, Medicaid only, the VA or Tricare, or some other form of insurance. The responses for the two wordings were nearly identical. Results are shown for the two wording forms combined.

IX. Demographics

Q52. Just to confirm: What is your current age?

Q53. Could you please tell me if you are...?

18 to 29	30 to 49	50 to 64	65 or older	Refused
18	26	30	25	1

Q54. What is the last grade or class that you completed in school?

High school or less (NET)	50
Less than high school (grades 1-11, grade 12 but no diploma)	12
High school graduate or equivalent (e.g. GED)	38
Some college but no degree (incl. 2 year occupational or vocational programs)	30
College or post-graduate (NET)	19
College graduate (e.g. BA, AB, BS)	13
Postgraduate (e.g. MA, MS, MEng, Med, MSW, MBA, MD, DDs, PhD, JD, LLB, DVM)	6
Don't know/Refused	1

D3. Are you, yourself, of Latino or Hispanic origin or descent, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or some other Latin American background?

D4. (And besides being Latino,) What is your race? Are you white, black or African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander?

Race/Ethnicity Table Based on total respondents

Hispanic	8
White, Non-Hispanic	78
Black, Non-Hispanic	8
Asian, Non-Hispanic	1
Other Non-Hispanic	1
Native American (American Indian/Alaska Native)	2
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	*
Other/Don't know/Refused	2

Q58. Were you born in the United States, on the island of Puerto Rico, or in another country?

U.S.	Puerto Rico	Another country	Don't know/Refused
94	*	5	1

(Asked of those born in another country; n=96)

Q59. Did you come to live in the U.S. in the past 10 years, or earlier than that?

**Q58/Q59 Combo Table
Based on total respondents**

Born in U.S.	94
Born in Puerto Rico	*
Born in another country	5
Came to live in U.S. earlier than 10 years ago	4
Came to live in U.S. less than 10 years ago	1
Don't know/Refused	1

Q60. Are you currently married, living with a partner, divorced, separated, widowed or have you never been married?

Married	48
Living with a partner	8
Divorced	11
Separated	3
Widowed	10
Never been married	20
Don't know/Refused	*

Q62. Are you now, or have you ever been a member of the U.S. military?

Yes	No	Don't know/Refused
13	87	-

Q61. How important is religion or spirituality in your life-the most important thing, very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

Most important thing	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not at all important	Don't know/Refused
18	40	23	11	8	*

RELIG. What is your present religion, if any? Are you Protestant, Roman Catholic, Mormon, Orthodox such as Greek or Russian Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist, agnostic, something else, or nothing in particular?

(Asked of those who have another religion, no religion, don't know or refused to say; n=231)
CHR. Do you think of yourself as Christian, or not?

(Asked of those who are Christian; n=889)

BORN. Do you happen to be a born-again or Evangelical Christian, or not?

**Religion Combo Table
Based on total respondents**

Evangelical Protestant	26
Mainline Protestant	33
Catholic	15
Other Christian	2
Jewish	*
Muslim	*
Buddhist	*
Hindu	*
Atheist/Agnostic	5
None/Nothing in particular	15
Other/Don't know/Refused	4

**Race/Religion Combo Table
Based on total respondents**

White Evangelical Protestant	20
White Mainline Protestant	28
Black Protestant	7
White Non-Hispanic Catholic	11
Hispanic Catholic	4
Other	30

RSEX. Are you male or female?

Male	Female	Refused
50	50	*

Q63. Do you consider yourself to be heterosexual or straight, gay or lesbian, bisexual, or a different identity I haven't mentioned? **(Asked of those interviewed on June 20th or later; n=1,058)**

Heterosexual or Straight	93
LGBQ (NET)	4
Gay or Lesbian	1
Bisexual	3
Different identity	*
Don't know/Refused	3

(Asked of those interviewed on June 20th or later; n=1,058)

Q63a. Some people describe themselves as transgender when they experience a different gender identity from their sex at birth. For example, a person who was raised male, but who identifies as female. Some people who do not identify as either male or female might also call themselves transgender. Do you consider yourself to be transgender?

Transgender	*
Genderqueer or gender non-conforming	1
No	98
Don't know/Refused	1

**LGBTQ Variable
Based on total respondents**

LGBTQ	5
Cis and Straight	92
Don't know/Refused	3

PARTY. In politics today, do you consider yourself a (Republican), (Democrat), an Independent, or what?

Republican	Democrat	Independent	Other/None	Don't know/Refused
31	25	32	8	4

(Asked of those who consider themselves independent, other party, don't know or refused to say; n=507)

PARTYLEAN. Do you LEAN more towards the (Republican) Party or the (Democratic) Party?

**Party/Party lean Combo Table
Based on total respondents**

Republican/Republican leaners	44
Democratic/Democratic leaners	37
Independent	13
Other party (vol)	1
Don't know/Refused	5

Q64. Generally speaking, would you describe your political views as...?

Very conservative	Somewhat conservative	Moderate	Somewhat liberal	Very liberal	Don't know/Refused
17	24	28	15	9	7

Q64a. Did you vote in the 2016 presidential election, did something prevent you from voting, or did you choose not to vote?

Yes, voted	No, did not vote	Don't know/Refused
70	29	1

(Asked of those who voted in the 2016 Presidential election; n=952)

Q64b. In the November 2016 presidential election, did you happen to vote for (Hillary Clinton, the Democrat), (Donald Trump, the Republican), or some other candidate?

Clinton	Trump	Other	Don't know	Refused
31	48	12	1	8

Q65. Thinking about your personal financial situation, would you describe yourself as (upper-class), middle-class, (working-class), or something else?

Upper-class	Middle-class	Working-class	Lower-class/poor (vol)	Something else	Don't know/Refused
3	48	39	5	3	2

Q66. Last year, that is in 2017, what was your total annual household income from all sources, BEFORE taxes? Just stop me when I get to the right category.

Q66a. Could you tell me if your total annual household income is less than \$50,000, \$50,000 but less than \$100,000, or over \$100,000?

Q66b. Is that \$100,000 to under \$150,000, \$150,000 to under \$200,000, \$200,000 to under \$250,000, or \$250,000 or more?

**Q66/Q66a/Q66b Combo Table
Based on Total Respondents**

Less than \$50,000 (NET)	56
Under \$15,000	15
\$15,000 to under \$20,000	9
\$20,000 to under \$25,000	8
\$25,000 to under \$35,000	10
\$35,000 to under \$50,000	13
Less than \$50,000 unspecified	2
\$50,000 to under \$100,000 (NET)	28
\$50,000 to under \$75,000	16
\$75,000 to under \$100,000	11
\$50,000 to under \$100,000 unspecified	1
\$100 thousand or more (NET)	10
\$100,000 to under \$150,000	6
\$150,000 to under \$200,000	1
\$200,000 to under \$250,000	1
\$250,000 or more	2
Don't know/Refused	6