

# Scarlet

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Nebraska rural poll examines newcomers, work, ties to agriculture

BY VICKI MILLER, IANR NEWS SERVICE

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Rural residents' ties to agriculture, how they make their living and their views on newcomers are among the issues being explored in this year's Nebraska Rural Poll.

This is the 11th year UNL researchers have surveyed rural views. Questionnaires were mailed March 30 to about 7,000 randomly selected households in Nebraska's 84 rural counties. Researchers will analyze and report results this summer.

Each year, the poll asks core questions about community, quality of life and personal well-being to track rural trends and changes over time, said Becky Vogt, the poll's manager.

Each poll also asks policy-related questions that change annually. The poll's advisory committee - composed of representatives from rural communities, rural and agricultural organizations, policymakers and state development agencies - helps identify these rotating hot topics.

Census and tax data show Nebraska is among the leading states in percentage of workers who work more than one job, either simultaneously or throughout the year.

"We want to get a better sense of how people are piecing together their incomes, how many hold more than one job and why," explained Randy Cantrell, a rural sociologist with the University of Nebraska Rural Initiative who works on the poll.

The poll includes several questions about new rural residents to help better understand how rural people view newcomers. Contrary to popular belief, new people commonly move into rural communities, Cantrell said. Researchers hope poll results provide information to help policymakers and communities welcome newcomers and integrate them into communities.

The poll also asks about rural residents' ties to agriculture and their sense of agriculture's importance to their family, community and the state.

Poll results provide a rural perspective on policy and quality-of-life issues. Researchers share findings with policymakers and community groups statewide. It is the largest annual survey of rural Nebraskans' views.

The university's Center for Applied Rural Innovation conducts the poll in cooperation with the Rural Initiative and Public Policy Center with funding from the Partnership for

Rural Nebraska and UNL Extension and the Agricultural Research Division in the  
Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.