

The 21ST Century Town Meeting on Rural Michigan



The Michigan Rural Network
with **AMERICASPEAKS**

April 22, 2010

Session Objectives

- Gauge the opinions and attitudes of leaders from smaller communities on rural Michigan.**
- Present a menu of rural issues for consideration.**
- Seek other issues important to participants.**
- Prioritize issues and seek opinions on challenges and possible solutions.**
- Develop a summary of what rural leaders identify as the most important issues to be considered by the Michigan Rural Caucus.**

The **AMERICA***SPEAKS* Process

- **America***Speaks* combines interactive opinion polling with facilitated table discussions to direct the collective wisdom and passions of participants toward:
 - ▣ identifying mutual concerns and opportunities, and
 - ▣ setting priorities for small town and rural Michigan.



Agenda

Open-ended Inquiries

- What Do You Like About Rural Michigan?

- Main Challenges to a Good Quality of Life in Rural Michigan

Demographic Polling

Opinions on Life in Rural Michigan

Policy Issues

Challenges and Solutions

Open-ended Inquiries

Open-ended Inquiries

- What Do You Like About Rural Michigan?
- What are the Main Challenges to a Good Quality of Life in Rural Michigan?

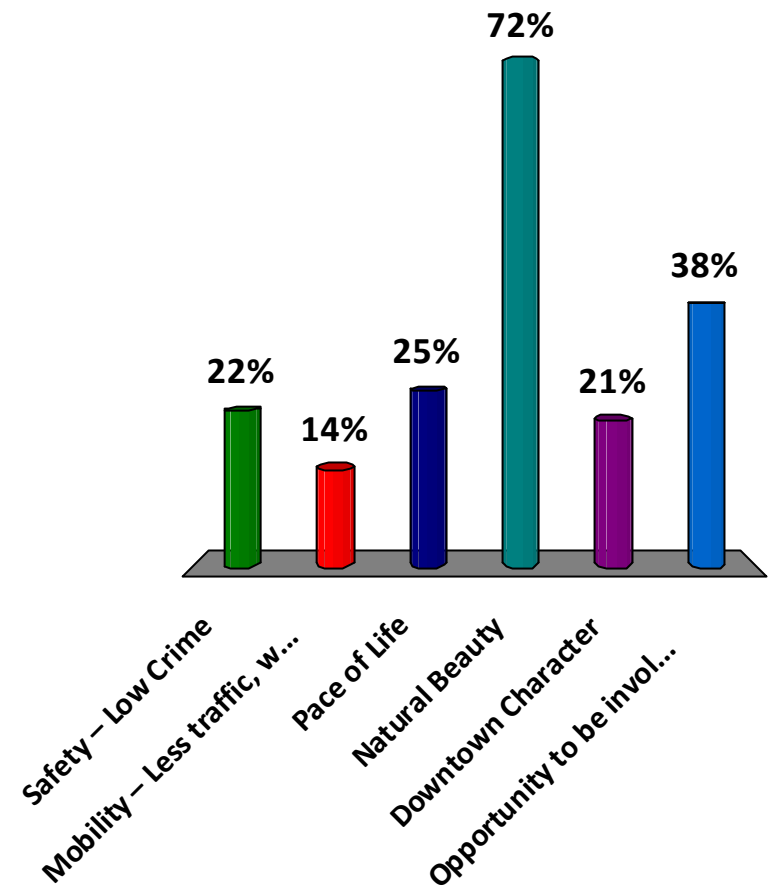


What we like about Rural Michigan

- **Safety** – Low crime “a safe place to raise children”
- **Mobility** – Less traffic, “ease of getting around”
- **Pace of Life** – Less frantic “peaceful, laid-back atmosphere”
- **Natural Beauty** “being close to nature, lakes and woods”
- **Downtown Character** – “Sense of Place”
- **Opportunity to be involved in making a difference**

What do you like most about life in rural Michigan? (Choose 2)

1. Safety – Low Crime
2. Mobility – Less traffic, “ease of getting around”
3. Pace of Life
4. Natural Beauty
5. Downtown Character
6. Opportunity to be involved to make a difference

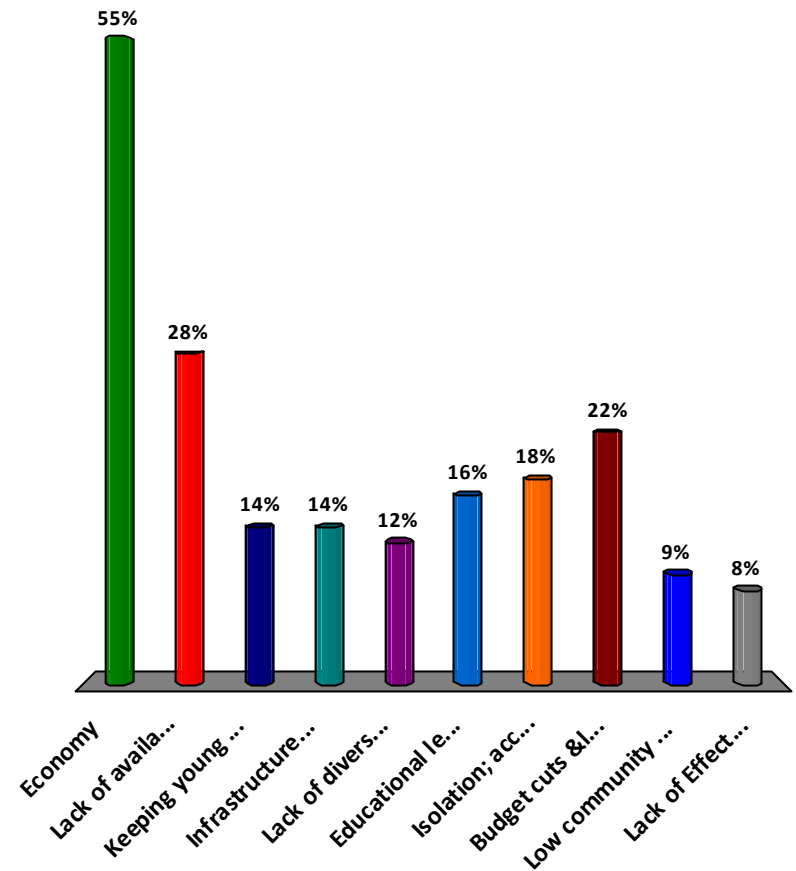


What are the main challenges to a good quality of life in rural Michigan?

- **Economy** – lack of employment opportunities
- **Broadband** - lack of availability of /high speed internet.
- **Keeping Young People** and having them return.
- **Infrastructure** (transportation).
- **Lack of Diversity** and fear of change.
- **Education** level of residents.
- **Isolation**; access to goods and services/cultural amenities.
- **Budget Cuts** and legislative restrictions.
- **Low Community Self-esteem** with lower expectations.
- **Planning and Zoning** that may not be effective.

What are the main challenges to life in rural Michigan? (Choose 2)

1. **Economy**
2. **Lack of Broadband.**
3. **Retaining young people.**
4. **Infrastructure** (transportation).
5. **Lack of diversity/ fear of change.**
6. **Educational level** of residents.
7. **Isolation**; access to goods and services/cultural amenities.
8. **Budget cuts & legislative restrictions**
9. **Low community self-esteem** with lower expectations.
10. **Lack of effective Planning & Zoning.**

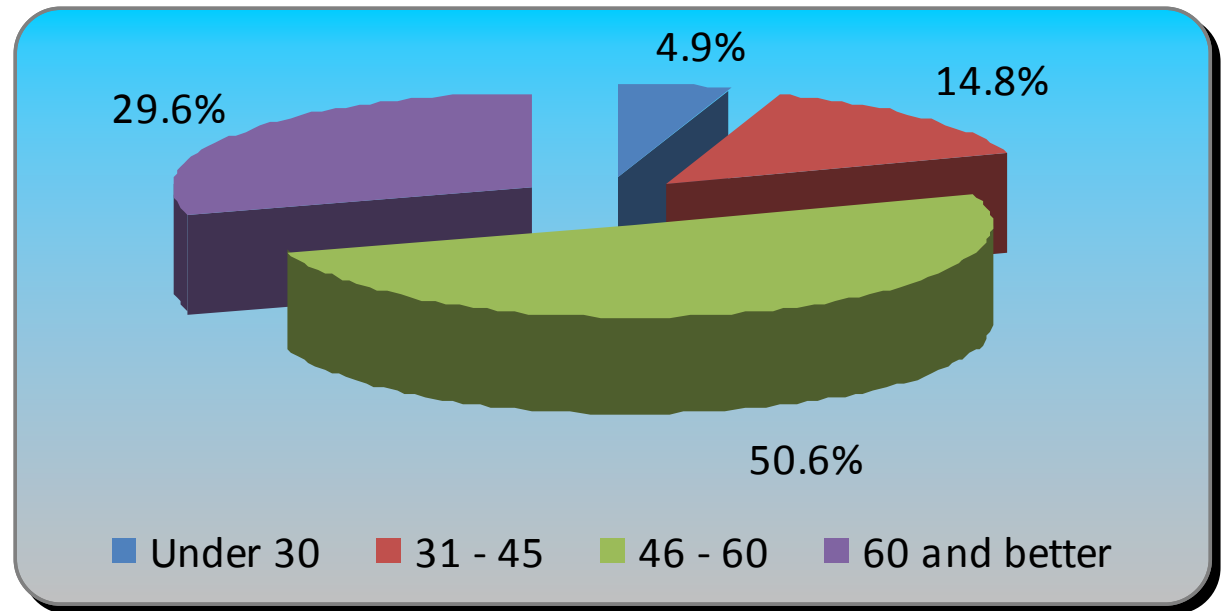


Group Demographics

Group Demographics

What is your age?

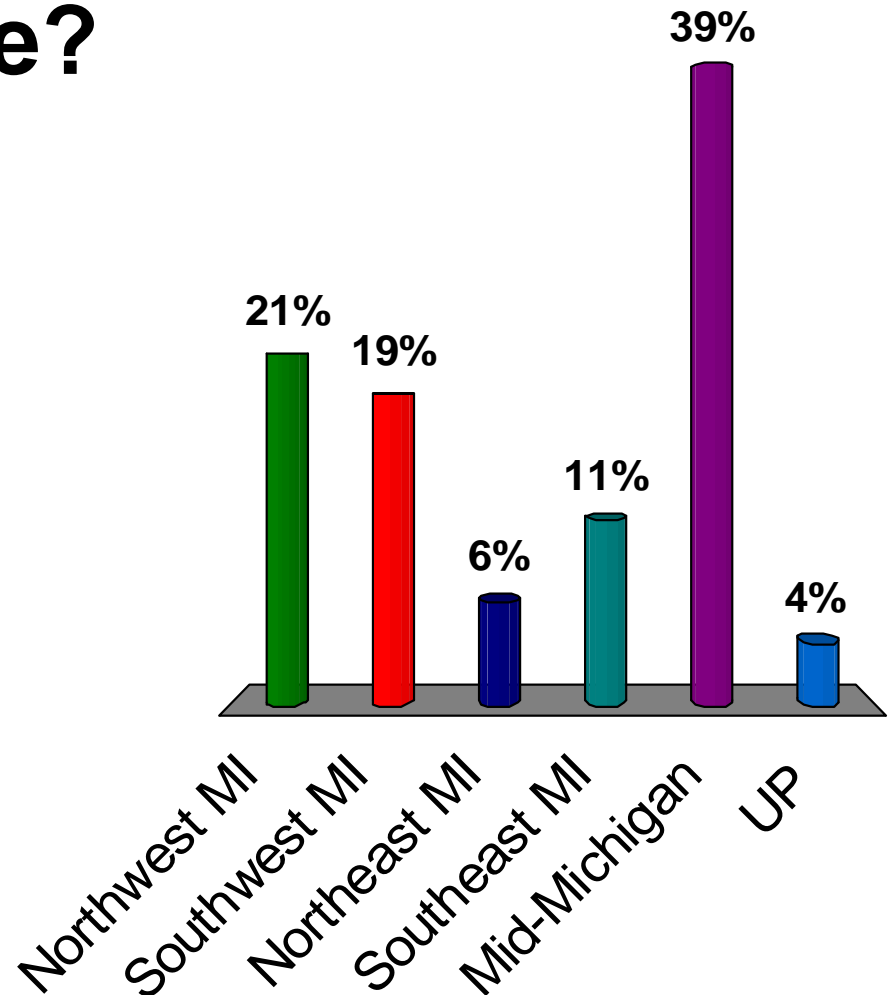
1. Under 30
2. 31 - 45
3. 46 - 60
4. 60+



Group Demographics

Where do you live?

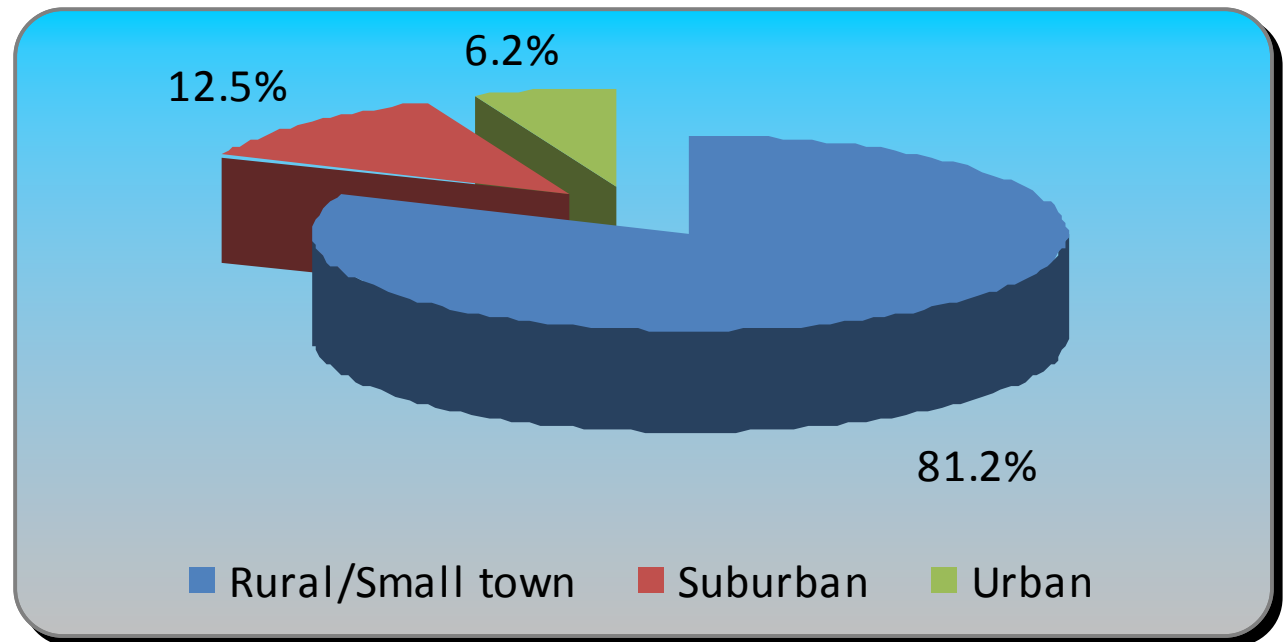
1. Northwest MI
2. Southwest MI
3. Northeast MI
4. Southeast MI
5. Mid-Michigan
6. UP



Group Demographics

Where do you live?

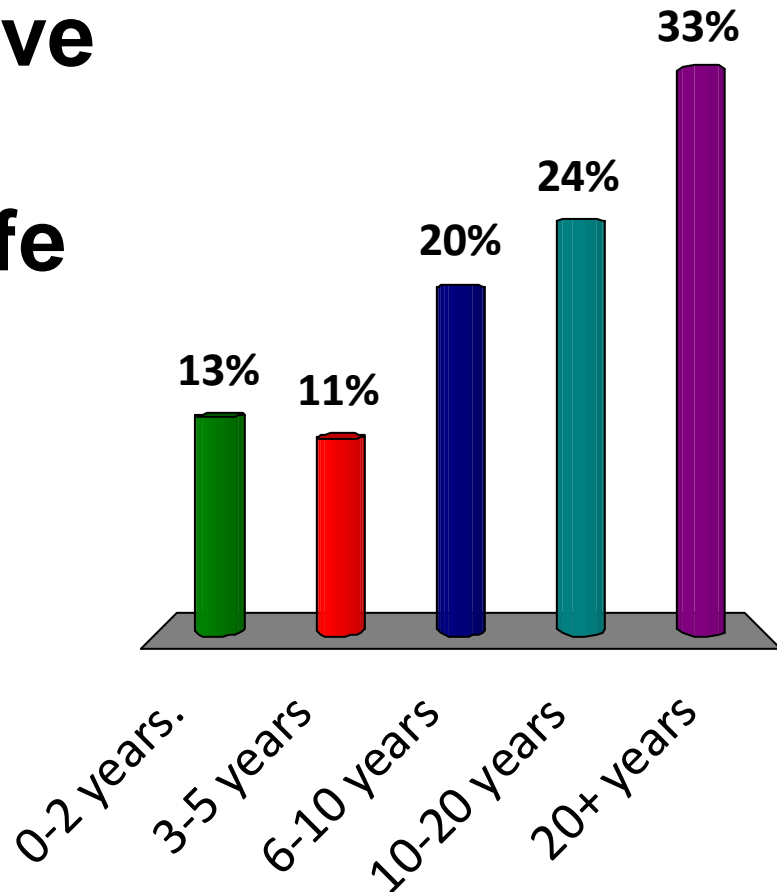
1. Rural/Small Town
2. Suburban
3. Urban



Group Demographics

How many years have you been working toward improving life in rural Michigan?

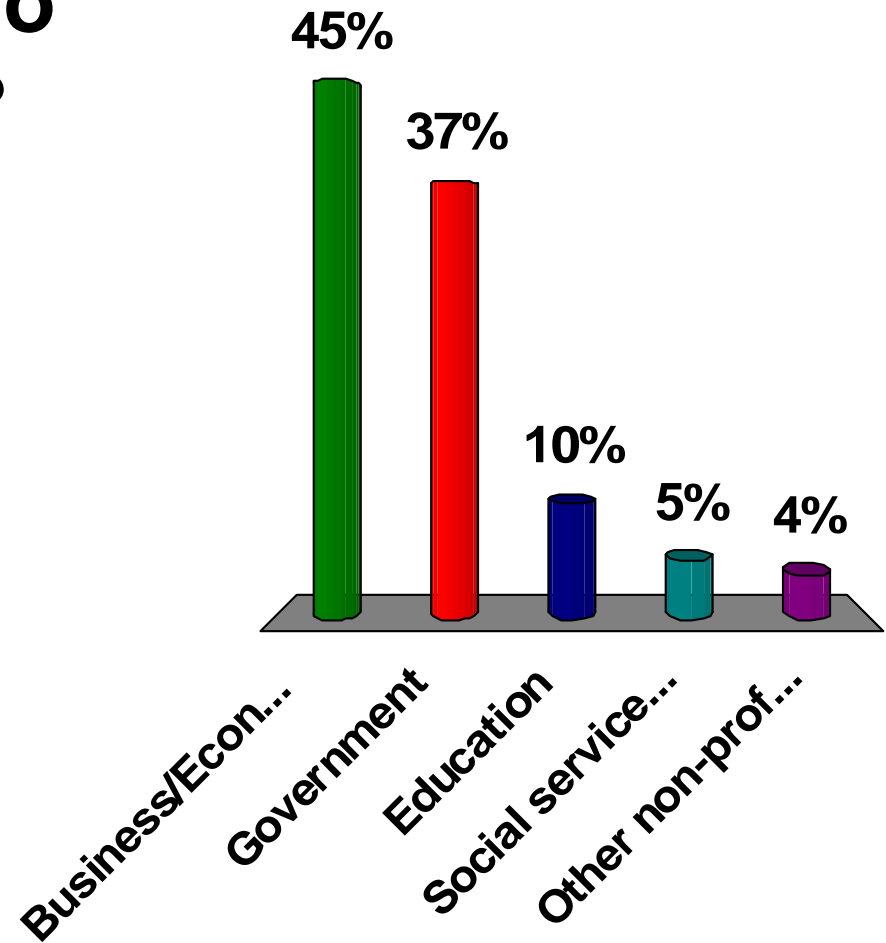
1. 0-2 years.
2. 3-5 years
3. 6-10 years
4. 10-20 years
5. 20+ years



Group Demographics

With which sector do you primarily work?

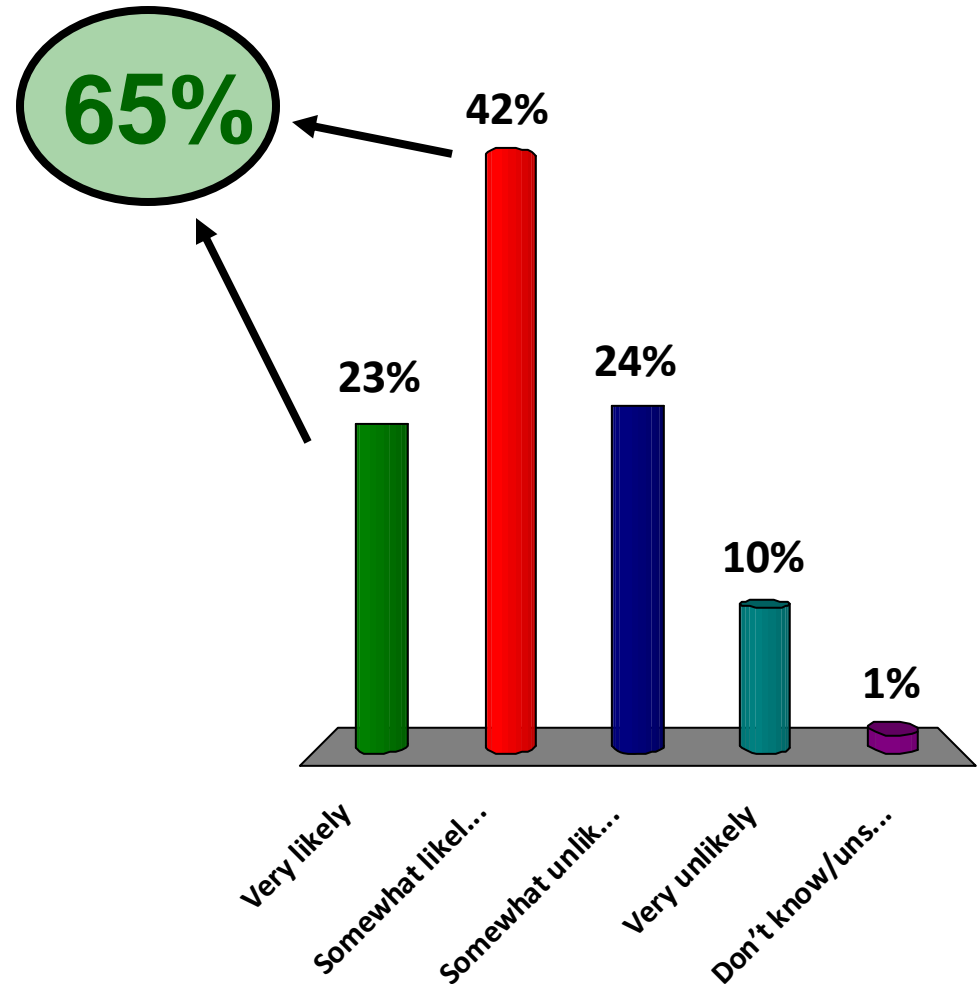
1. Business/Economic Development
2. Government
3. Education
4. Social Services
5. Other Non-profit



Opinions on Life in Rural Michigan

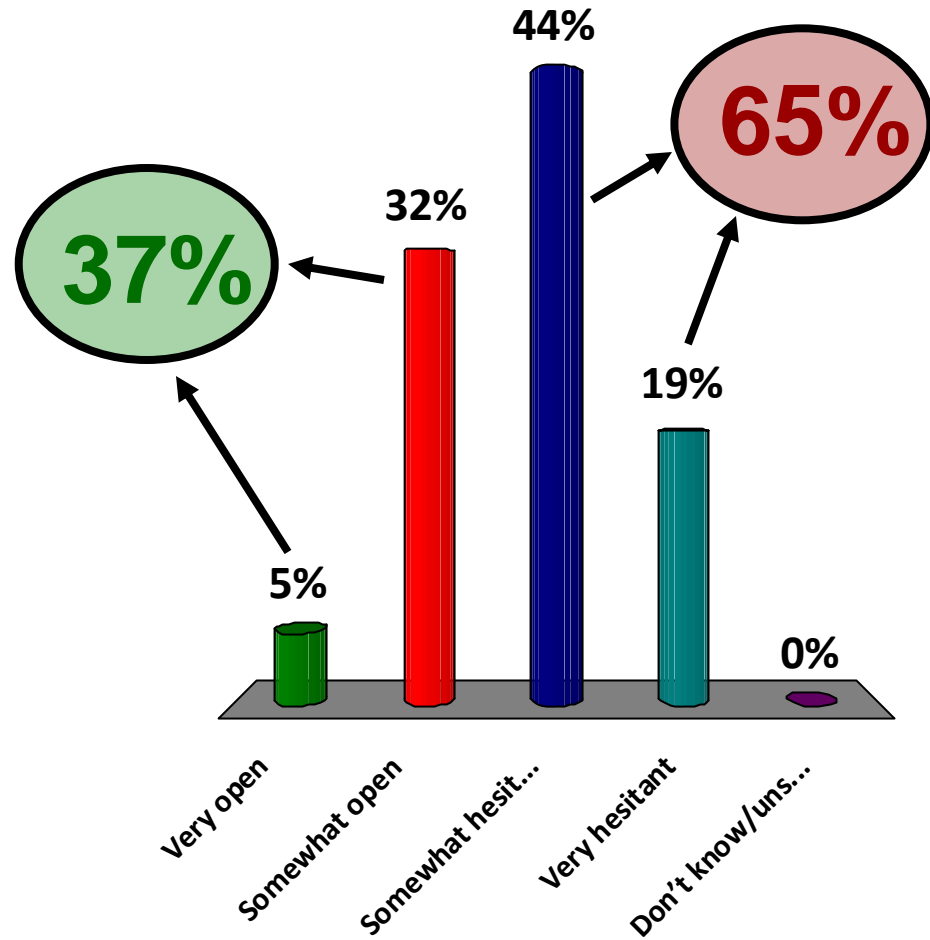
For rural Michigan, how likely is an economic recovery in the next 5 years?

1. Very likely
2. Somewhat likely
3. Somewhat unlikely
4. Very unlikely
5. Don't know/unsure



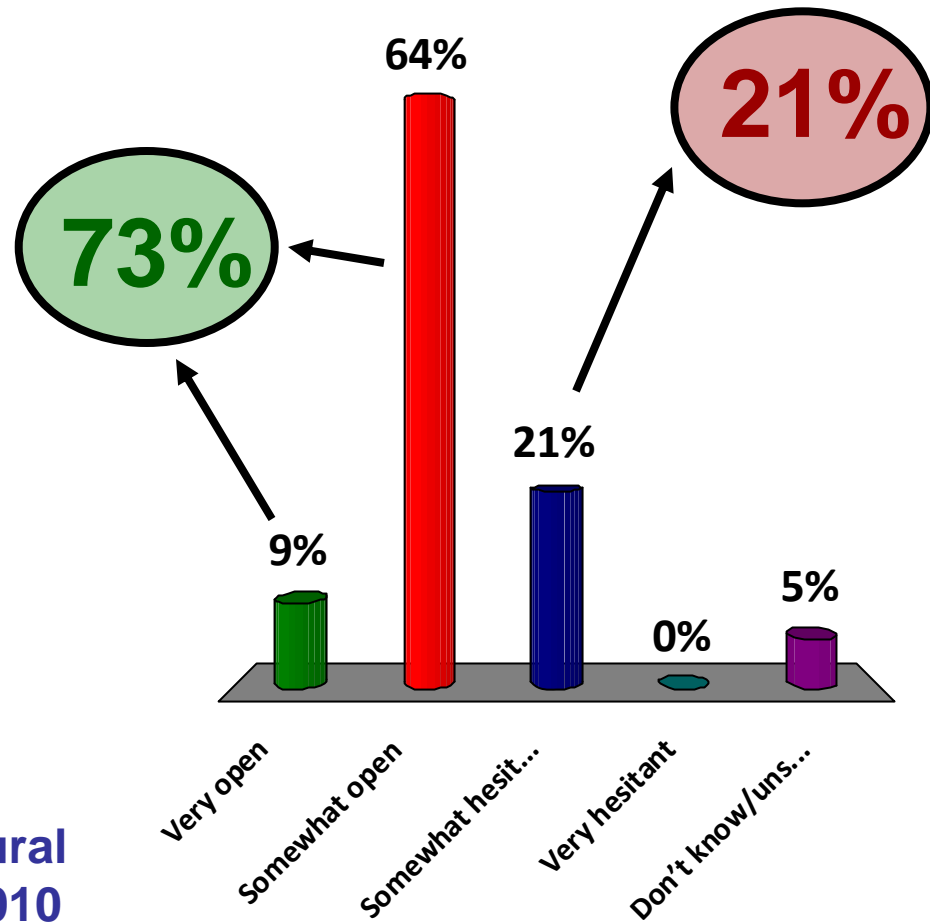
Generally, how open are rural citizens to pursuing new strategies for a better future?

1. Very open
2. Somewhat open
3. Somewhat hesitant
4. Very hesitant
5. Don't know/unsure

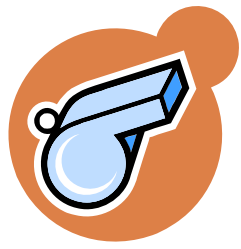


Do you think rural citizens would be open to the strategies shared at this Conference*?

1. Very open
2. Somewhat open
3. Somewhat hesitant
4. Very hesitant
5. Don't know/unsure



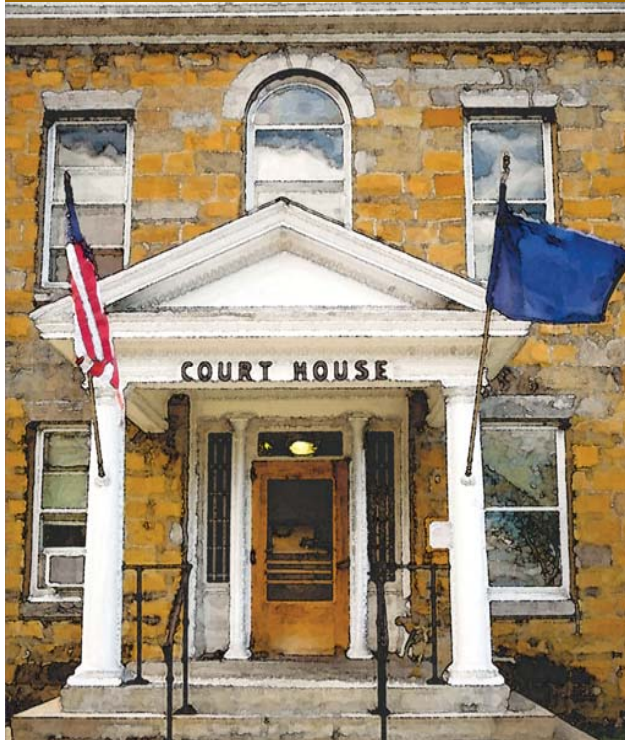
* Refers to Michigan Small Town and Rural Development Conference April 20-22, 2010



Contextual Time-Out

Rural Partners of Michigan Presents the

Small Town and Rural
Development Conference



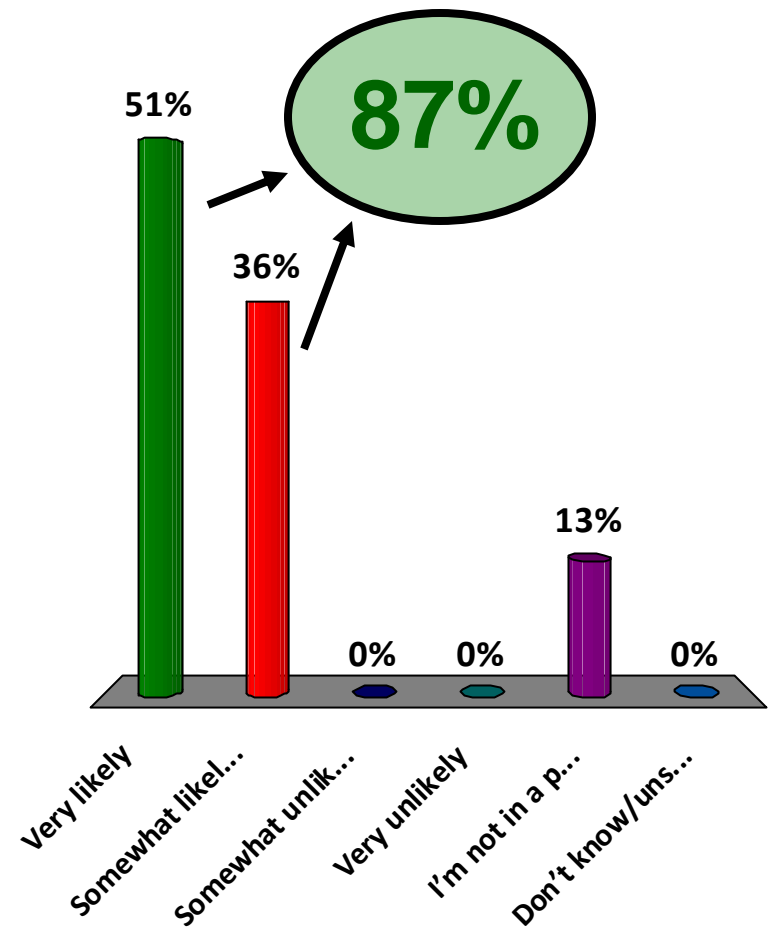
www.ruralmich.org

Strategies Shared...

- ▣ **Asset-Based Community Development**
- ▣ **Economic Gardening**
- ▣ **Youth Entrepreneurship**
- ▣ **Leadership**
- ▣ **Citizen Engagement**
- ▣ **HomeTown Competitiveness**
- ▣ **Rural Knowledge Economy Concepts**
- ▣ **Buy Local Initiatives**
- ▣ **Rural Cultural Tourism**
- ▣ **Engaging Alumni**

How likely are YOU to implement a strategy or idea presented at this Conference*?

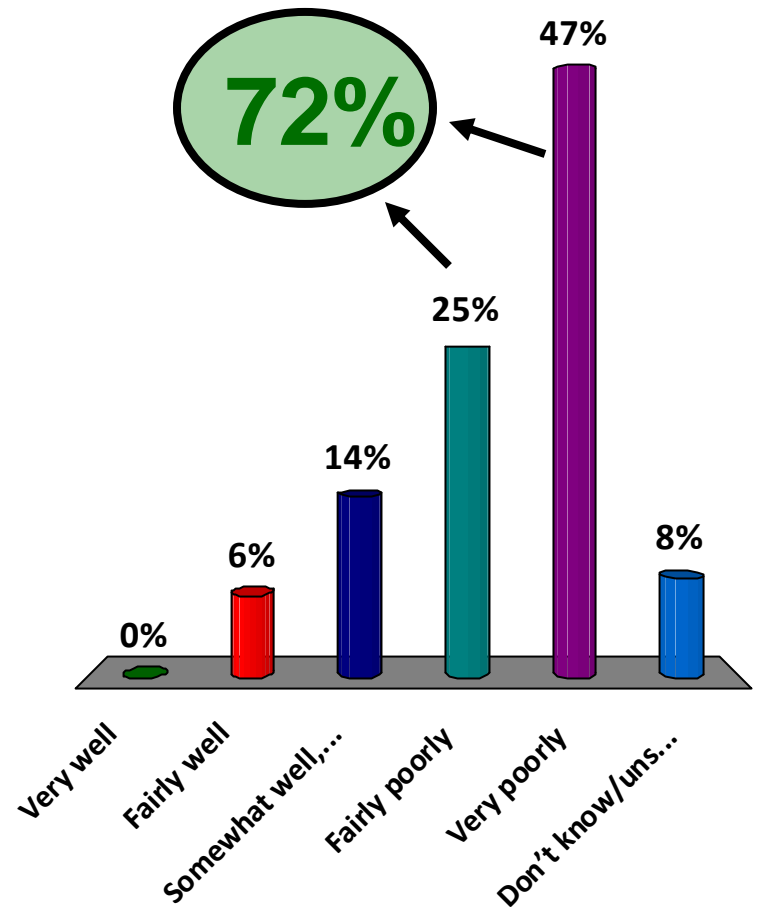
1. Very likely
2. Somewhat likely
3. Somewhat unlikely
4. Very unlikely
5. I'm not in a position to implement new ideas/strategies
6. Don't know/unsure



* Refers to Michigan Small Town and Rural Development Conference April 20-22, 2010

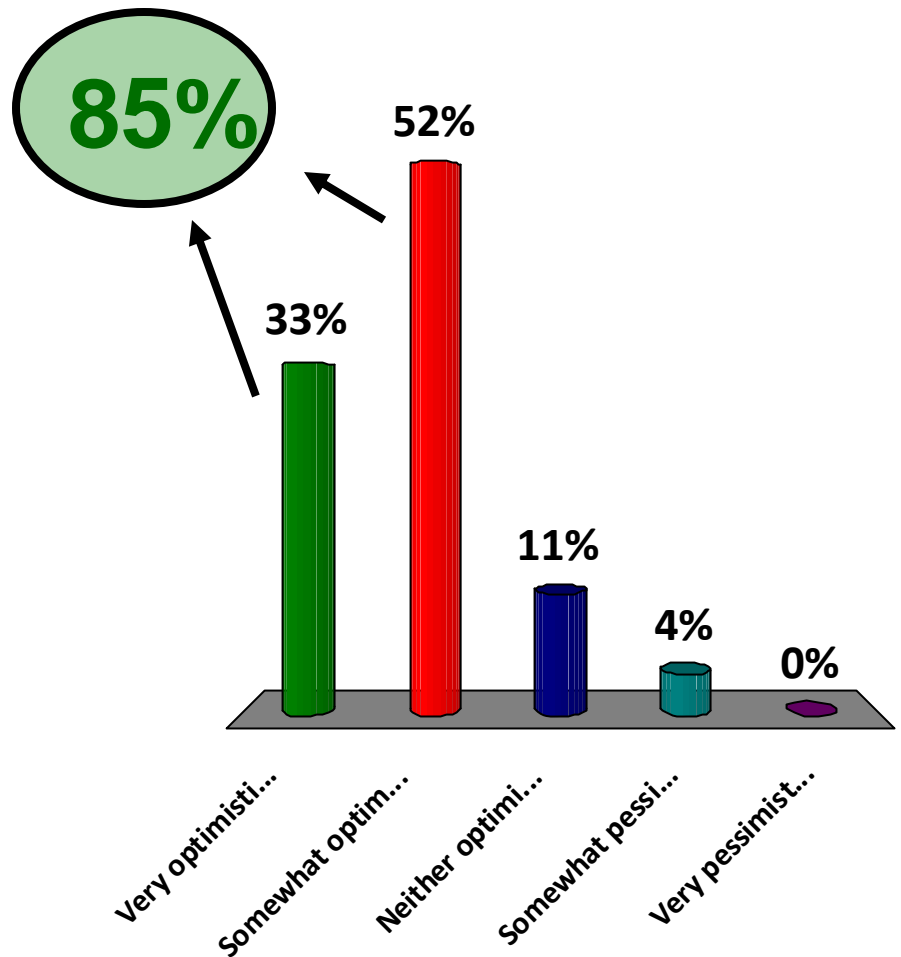
In your opinion, how well does the Michigan Legislature deal with rural issues?

1. Very well
2. Fairly well
3. Somewhat well, somewhat poorly
4. Fairly poorly
5. Very poorly
6. Don't know/unsure



How optimistic are you about the future of life in Michigan's small towns & rural areas?

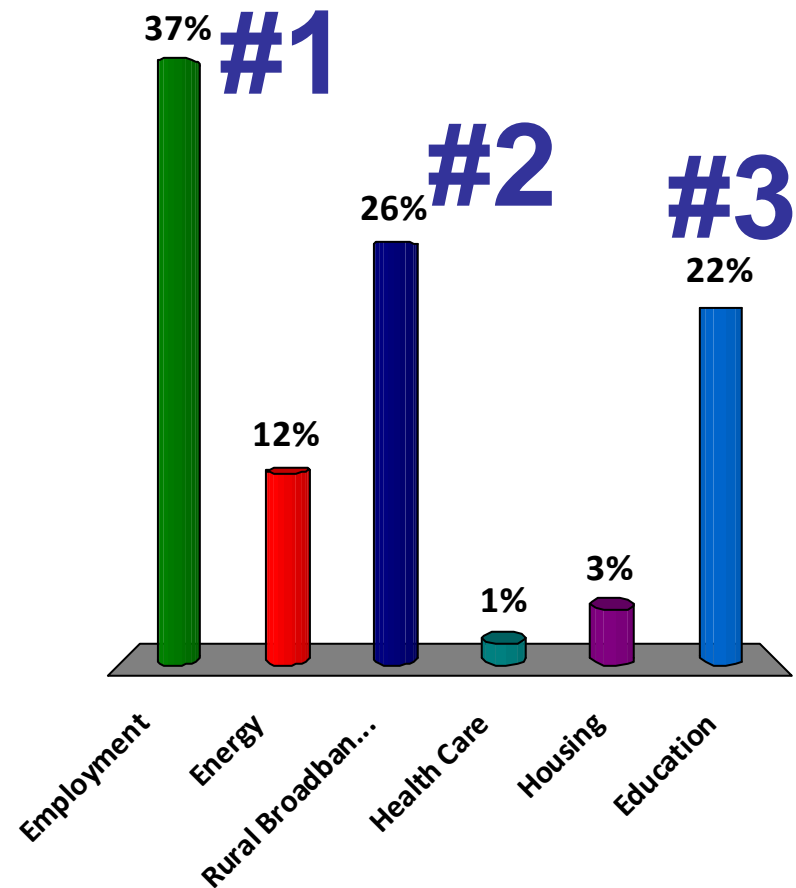
1. Very optimistic
2. Somewhat optimistic
3. Neither optimistic nor pessimistic
4. Somewhat pessimistic
5. Very pessimistic



Policy Issues

Which of these rural issues should be priorities to address at the state level?

1. Employment
2. Energy
3. Rural Broadband
4. Health Care
5. Housing
6. Education

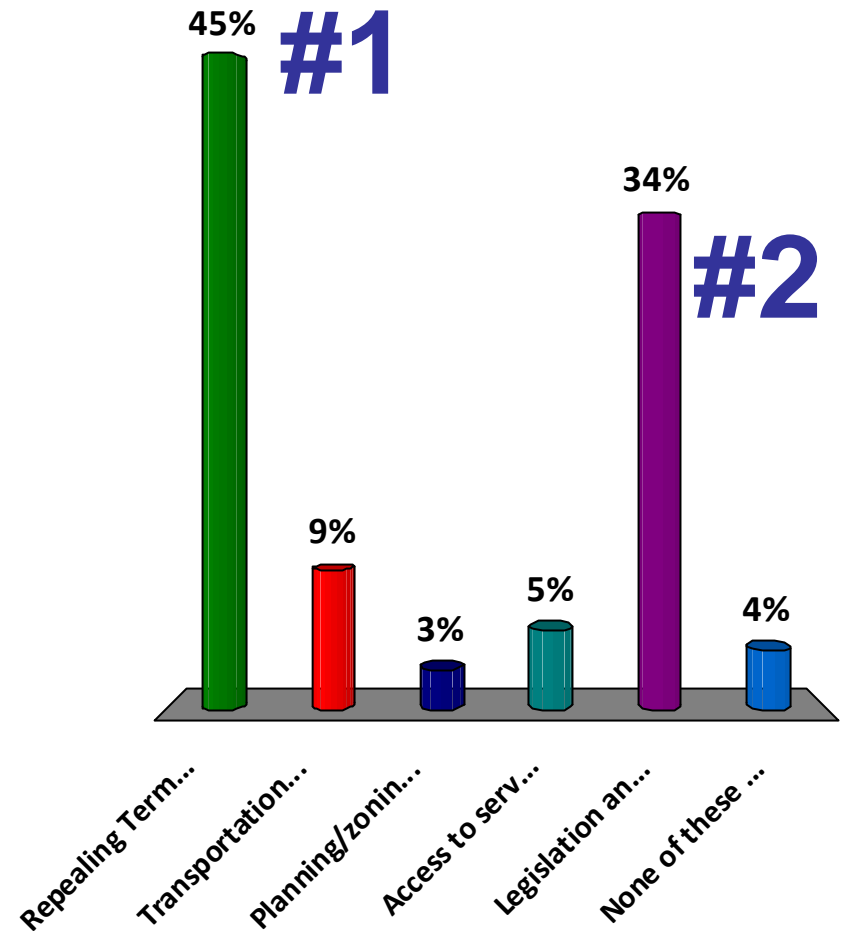


Additional Issues

- Repealing Term Limits
- Transportation
- Planning/zoning
- Access to services
- Legislation and policy to promote economic recovery – i.e., global economy, Michigan Business Tax

Which of these, if any, should be considered as additions to the policy agenda for rural Michigan?

1. Repealing Term Limits
2. Transportation
3. Planning/zoning
4. Access to services
5. Legislation and policy to promote economic recovery
6. None of these should be considered a priority



Challenges and Solutions

Issue: Broadband

Challenges:

- Lack of capital and funding
- Affordability/economies of scale

Solutions:

- Grants to companies
- Negotiations with companies
- Tax credits from Michigan
- Subsidies for low income

Issue: Economy

Challenges:

- Too much emphasis on business attraction
- Lack of Job Creation
- Access to Capital
- Not competitive in global marketplace

Solutions:

- Implement incentives for “Stage Two” entrepreneurs
- Economic gardening and young entrepreneurs
- Create incubators and tech shops
- Micro loans and credit unions
- Streamline and reduce regulatory burdens