

## Resilient Communities and Well-being

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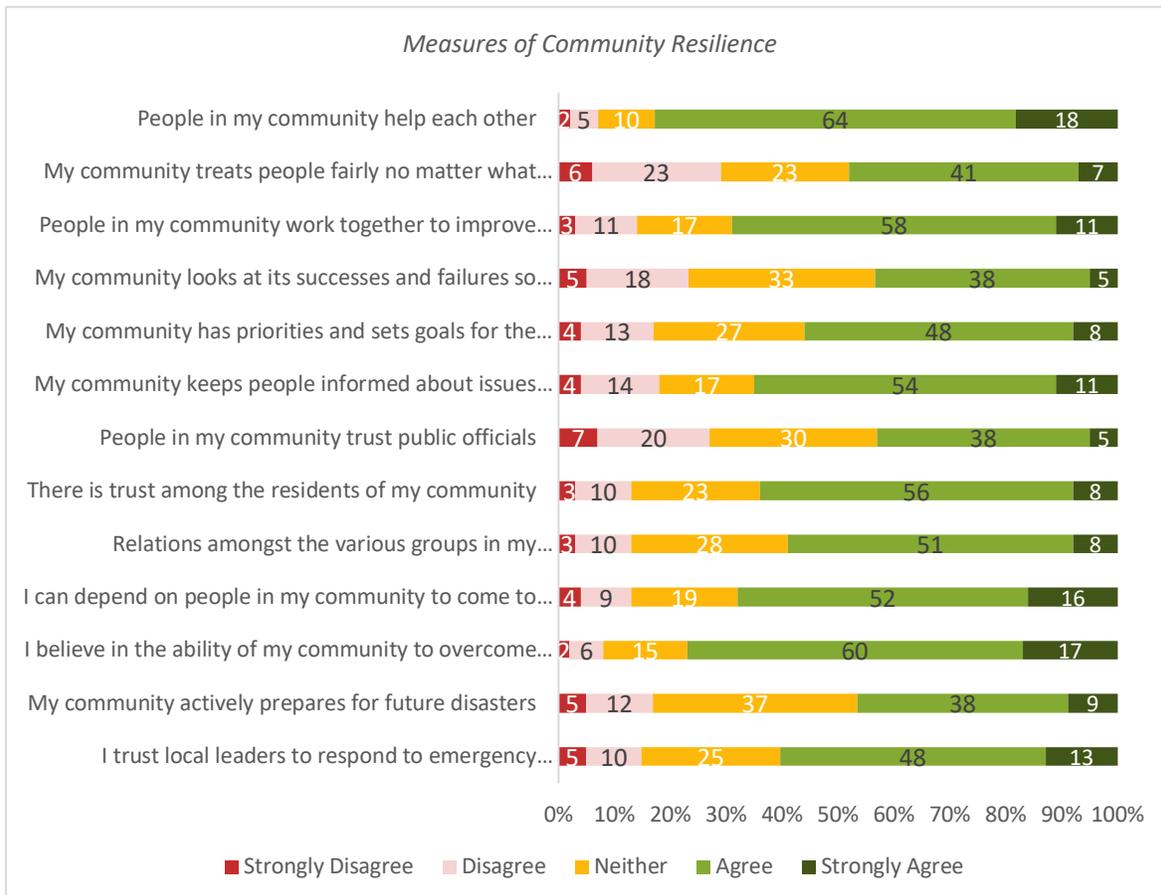
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One definition of community resilience is the sustained ability of a community to use available resources to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations. The severe weather events of the spring of 2019 and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic are testing the resilience of rural Nebraskan communities.

The [2020 Nebraska Rural Poll](#) examined how rural Nebraskans rate the resiliency of their communities. Respondents were given a list of statements that measure the resilience of a community based on the following areas: information, communication, cooperation, trust and disaster management. Most rural Nebraskans agree that their community contains most elements of resilience: trust among residents, ability to overcome an emergency situation, residents working together to improve the community, people that help each other, community information sharing and community priority and goal setting (see chart below). Rural Nebraskans are less likely to say their community treats everyone fairly, actively plans for future disasters, trusts public officials, and look at its successes and failures to learn from the past.



While it is important to assess how resilient rural Nebraskans believe their communities are, it is also good to understand how these perceptions relate to other variables. A previous [paper](#) examined the relationship between community resilience and community outcomes. This article examines the relationship between community resilience and individual well-being. A community resilience scale was created to examine these relationships. To simplify the comparisons, the scale was collapsed into three categories that are roughly even in size: low (31%), medium (37%) and high (32%).

To examine perceptions of current and future well-being, respondents were asked the following questions: “All things considered, do you think you are better or worse off than you were five years ago?” and “All things considered, do you think you will be better or worse off ten years from now than you are today?” There is a relationship between community resilience and individual well-being. Persons who rate their communities as having high resilience are more likely than persons who rate their community as having low resilience to believe they are better off than they were five years ago (61% compared to 41%) and will be better off ten years from now (57% compared to 42%).

Community resilience is also related to whether the individual experienced increased levels of anxiety and stress from the extreme weather events in 2019. Persons who rate their communities as having high levels of resilience are *less* likely than persons who rate their communities as having low resilience to say they experienced increased levels of anxiety and stress from extreme weather events in 2019 in a major way, 8% compared to 14%.

So, higher levels of perceived community resilience are related to individual well-being and lower levels of stress and anxiety from extreme weather events. While these relationships do not imply causation, it is important to consider some implications. Communities can develop stronger levels of perceived resilience by improving communications to community members, building trust, increasing cooperation in the community and actively planning for emergencies. This may then also enhance the well-being of the people who live there. Community resilience may also help individuals feel better equipped to handle the psychological impacts from extreme weather (stress and anxiety) - perhaps from knowing their neighbors will be ready to assist in their time of need.

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