

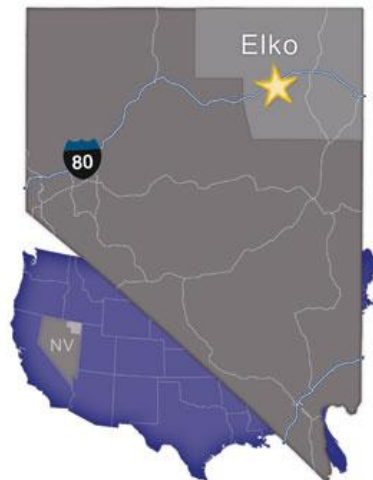


University of Nevada
Cooperative Extension

Special Publication 13-01

RESULTS OF A MAILED SURVEY: PRIORITIES FOR THE CITY OF ELKO AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

Jill Tingey, Interim Extension Educator
Marilyn Smith, Area Youth Development Specialist
Loretta Singletary, Area Director



The purpose of *Priorities for the City of Elko and Surrounding Communities*, a comprehensive needs assessment, was to identify issues and local needs that the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension might address through educational programs. This publication provides information about Elko area citizens' opinions on local issues.

Introduction and Overview of the City of Elko and Surrounding Communities

This publication focuses on the City of Elko and surrounding communities, not to be confused with the county of Elko. Osino, Ryndon and Elburz, surrounding communities approximately 10 to 20 miles from Elko were also included in this study. The City of Elko, population 18,297, is the largest community in the county and serves as the county seat. The population for the communities in the City of Elko's outlying areas is 709, bringing the total population for the City of Elko and surrounding communities to 19,006 (Nevada State Demographer, 2010). The total population for the county is 48,818 (Figure 1).

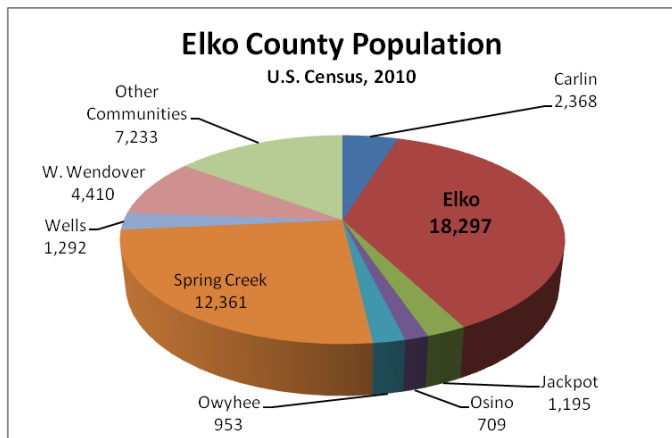


Figure 1. Elko County Population

The City of Elko has 28 percent or 5,087 young people under 18 years of age. Thirty-seven percent of the county's senior citizens live in the City of Elko (Figure 2).

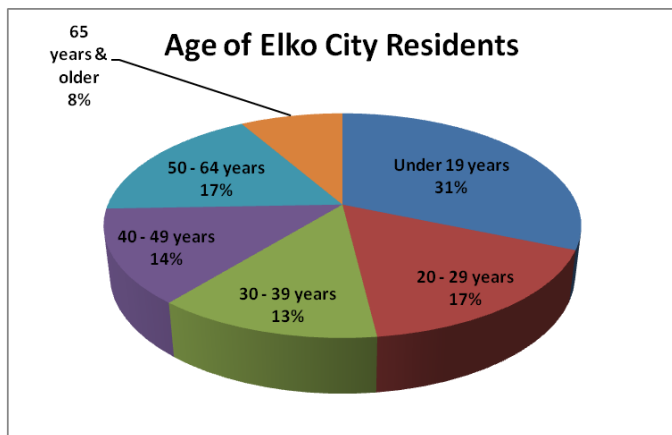


Figure 2. Age of Elko City Residents

Elko's population includes 79 percent White, 26 percent Hispanic or Latino, 3.5 percent two or more races, 3 percent American Indian, 1.4 percent Asian, 1 percent African American and 0.1 percent Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (Figure 3).

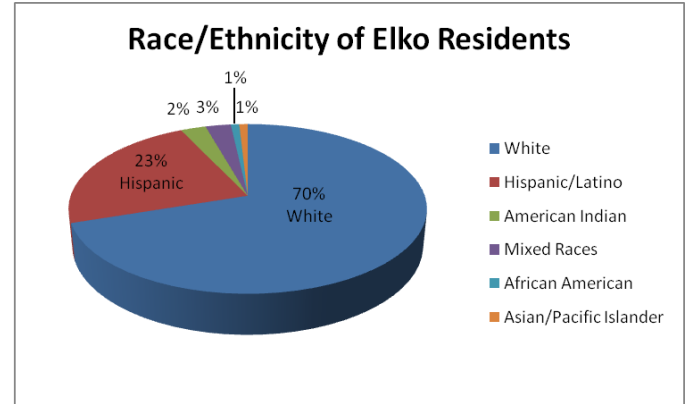
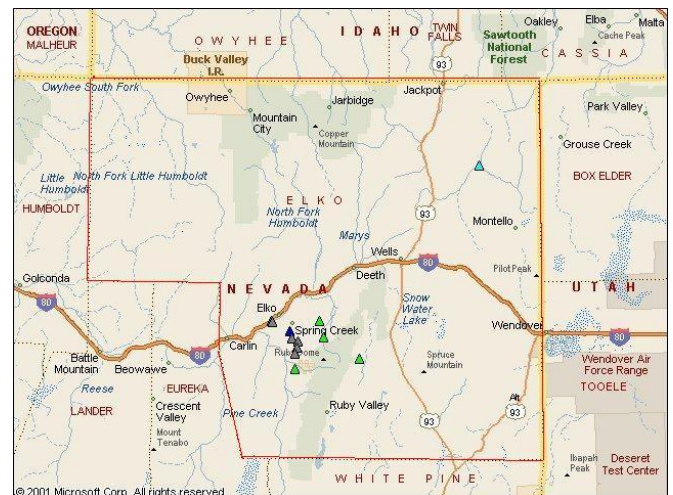


Figure 3. Race/Ethnic Origin of Elko Residents

Elko County and Eureka, Humboldt and Lander County, surrounding gold-mining counties, have a 6.3 percent unemployment rate compared to the overall Nevada unemployment rate of 11.6 percent (Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation, 2012). Median household income for Elko is \$67,097, with a per capita income of \$28,818. The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) reports that 87 percent of adults 25 years and older living in the City of Elko are high school graduates, and 18 percent attained a bachelor's degree or higher.



Map of Elko County, Nevada

Methods

In 2010, the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension conducted a local comprehensive needs assessment: *Results of a Mailed Survey: Priorities for Elko County*. The purpose of the assessment was to identify high-priority issues that Extension could address through targeted educational programs. Information obtained through interviews, published reports and public meetings helped determine the questions used in the mailed survey. Specific survey topics related to agriculture; child and family development; community development; health and nutrition; horticulture; and natural resources. These six topic areas are outlined in the Nevada Revised Statute 549.010 and guide Extension's educational programming.



Elko County Courthouse, Elko, Nevada

The University of Nevada, Reno Office of Human Research Protection approved the survey instrument and documents. Multiple mailings were used to encourage survey completion (Dillman, Smyth and Christian, 2009; Salant and Dillman, 1994). A letter mailed to randomly selected Elko County voters, 2,020 total, explained that they had been chosen to participate in the mail-out survey. Two weeks later, recipients were mailed the three-page questionnaire, along with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope. Participants were asked to rate the 83 topics from low (1) to high (5) priority. A reminder postcard was mailed 1½ weeks later. In order to increase response rate, a complete survey packet was again mailed to all 2,020 individuals 10 days following the postcard.

Survey participation was voluntary, and individuals remained anonymous and their responses confidential. Eight hundred forty-two surveys were returned for a 42 percent response rate. Each completed questionnaire was assigned a unique identification number. Data was entered into statistical analysis software. A limitation to the study was that the questionnaires and return envelopes were not precoded; thereby prohibiting the author from determining if survey participants responded twice, and thus potentially conflating the response rate.



Elko Regional Airport

Results

Certain statistical methods can indicate how well the survey questions measure what they are supposed to measure. These statistics are called internal consistency or reliability statistics. Cronbach's alpha coefficient is the most appropriate statistical method to measure Likert-type scale reliability, a 1 to 5 scale, showing the average correlation between the items in a scale. Correlations range from 0.0 (nonexistent correlation) to 1.0 (perfect correlation). A score of 0.7 or higher is considered reliable (Nunnally, 1978). For this survey, an estimate of reliability of the 83 items was calculated and found to be high ($r = .955$). Further analysis ranked issues that are of concern for Elko County residents. A score of 0.7 or higher is considered reliable (Nunnally, 1978). For this survey, an estimate of reliability of the 83 items was calculated and found to be high ($r = .955$). Further analysis ranked issues that are of concern for Elko County residents. In the tables 1 - 7, "N" refers to the number of respondents for that particular question. Ranked mean, "Ranked M" scores, indicate the average response on the Likert-type scale and are shown in Tables 1 to 7.

Demographics of Respondents Living in City of Elko and Surrounding Communities

Sixty-four percent of the Elko respondents have lived in the community for more than 16 years, 15 percent have lived in Elko for 11 - 15 years, 11 percent for 6 – 10 years and 10 percent have lived in Elko for five years or less (Figure 4).

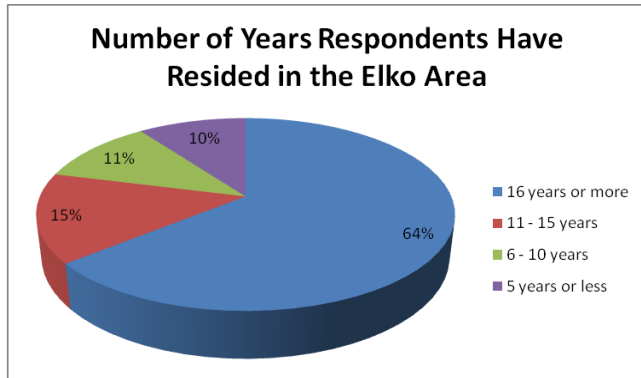


Figure 4. Number of Years Respondents Have Resided in the City of Elko and Surrounding Communities

As referenced in Figure 5 below, 47 percent of the respondents indicated that they were 56 years or older. Three percent of the respondents were under the age of 25. The study sample (people randomly selected to participate) may have been skewed toward an older demographic since only 30 percent of the respondents were 35 years old or younger, which could account for some of the results. Approximately 60 percent of City of Elko residents are 35 years old or younger (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

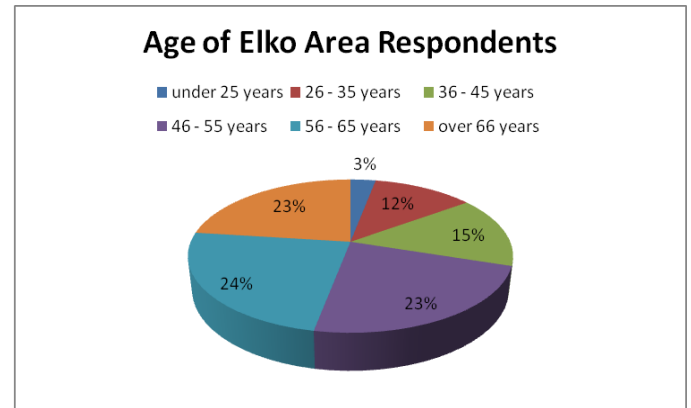


Figure 5. Age of the City of Elko and Surrounding Communities Respondents

Sixty-four percent of the respondents were female and 34 percent were male. Ethnicity of respondents was 87 percent White, 7 percent Hispanic/Latino, 3 percent Native American, 3 percent multi-ethnic/other and 0.7 percent African American. Employment status indicated that 54 percent of Elko respondents were employed, 30 percent were retired, and 17 percent were unemployed. As referenced in Figure 6 below, annual income indicated a dispersed range (Figure 6).

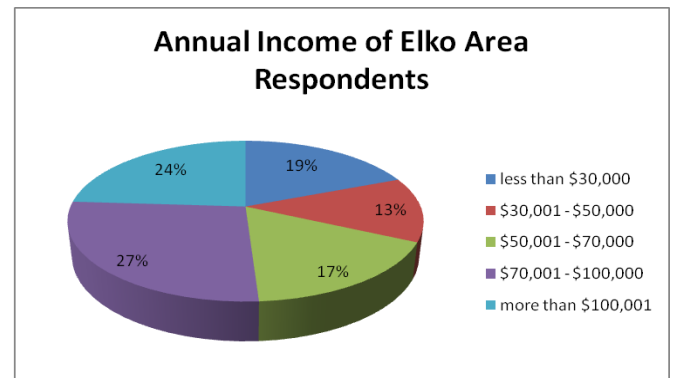


Figure 6. Annual Income of the City of Elko and Surrounding Communities Respondents



Sherman Station and Elko Chamber of Commerce, Elko, Nevada

Table 1. Ranked Mean Scores* for Elko Respondents' Opinions About Elko County

Elko County Residents:	Elko		Elko County	
	N	Ranked M	N	Ranked M
1. Enjoy a growing economy that provides good jobs	165	4.19	808	3.94
2. Work together to get things done for the community	167	4.03	812	4.02
3. Have opportunities for jobs that fit their skills	167	3.89	809	3.70
4. Have access to affordable food	166	3.87	806	3.77
5. Have a commute to work that is not a problem for workers	166	3.86	806	3.73
6. Want to maintain a small town/rural feeling	167	3.83	809	4.04
7. Have effective community leadership	166	3.77	806	3.76
7. Want taxes to remain the same/not increase or decrease	163	3.77	801	3.84
8. Can get plenty of fresh foods in their community	165	3.72	804	3.63
9. Have adequate cell phone coverage	163	3.71	803	3.63
10. Have adequate Internet service coverage	166	3.70	807	3.67
11. Have affordable Internet service	164	3.66	799	3.58
12. Have the opportunity to participate in decisions that influence their future	167	3.65	805	3.65
13. Enjoy a variety of good restaurants	166	3.36	803	3.32
14. Have affordable housing available	164	3.28	803	3.27
15. Have clothing and shoe stores to meet their needs	165	3.16	806	3.15
16. Trust local government to do what is right	165	3.15	801	3.04
17. Have access to public transportation	162	2.99	802	2.84

*Ranked Mean Scores indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale.



Elko, Nevada

The rankings shown in Table 1 indicate respondents' opinions about living in Elko County. The table further compares the results of residents who live in the City of Elko and surrounding communities and all Elko County respondents. While "Elko County residents enjoy a growing economy that provides good jobs" was the most important issue for City of Elko and surrounding communities' respondents, it was ranked as the third-highest priority for county residents. "Elko County residents work together to get things done for

the community" was the second most important issue for both City of Elko and Elko County respondents. The third priority for the City of Elko respondents was "Elko County residents have opportunities for jobs that fit their skills." However, countywide, respondents ranked job opportunities eighth. The lowest ranked opinion for both City of Elko and County respondents was "Elko County residents have access to public transportation."

Table 2. Ranked Mean Scores for Elko Respondents' Opinions About Elko County Leaders

Elko County Leaders Should:	Elko		Elko County	
	N	Ranked M	N	Ranked M
1. Protect drinking water quality as a priority	166	4.46	806	4.41
2. Provide improvements to roads and traffic related issues	166	4.33	805	4.20
3. Adequately prepare to respond to disasters/emergencies	166	4.22	808	4.23
4. Bring new industries and businesses to our community	166	4.16	808	4.06
4. Maintain quality parks	165	4.16	807	4.06
5. Help the mining industry continue to grow	166	4.11	807	3.99
6. Provide recreational facilities	165	4.07	805	3.96
7. Encourage job growth to help create new tax resources	164	4.04	808	4.00
8. Beautify the community	164	4.02	807	3.88
9. Work with tourism to help develop new jobs	165	3.97	805	3.93
10. Have adequate resources to develop new jobs	162	3.88	800	3.89
11. Provide tax incentives to encourage businesses to move here	164	3.86	799	3.88

**Ranked Mean Scores indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale.*

Table 2 illustrates the ranked mean scores for City of Elko and Elko County respondents' opinions about actions Elko County leaders should take. "N" refers to the number of respondents for that particular question. Ranked mean, "Ranked M" scores, indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale.



Great Basin College, Elko, Nevada

Both the City of Elko and County survey respondents identified "protecting drinking water quality" as the number one priority for Elko County leaders. "Elko County leaders should provide improvements to roads and traffic-related issues" was the second-highest priority for City of Elko and surrounding communities' respondents and third-highest countywide. City of Elko respondents rated "adequately prepare to respond to disasters/emergencies" as the third-highest

priority for Elko County leaders, and countywide it was rated second-highest. "Bring new industries and businesses to our community" and "maintain quality parks" tied for the fourth-highest priorities for Elko County leaders. The fifth-highest priority City of Elko and surrounding communities' respondents identified for Elko County leaders was "help the mining industry continue to grow." Countywide, this item ranked sixth. Lower on Elko respondents' list of actions for Elko County leaders were "encourage job growth to help create new tax resources," "beautify the community," "work with tourism to help develop new jobs," "have adequate resources to develop new jobs" and "provide tax incentives to encourage businesses to move here." "Beautify the community" was a higher priority for City of Elko and surrounding communities' respondents than for countywide respondents.



Elko City Pool, Elko, Nevada

Table 3. Ranked Mean Scores for Community Assets in Elko County

	Elko		Elko County	
	N	Ranked M	N	Ranked M
1. Many scenic views	165	4.05	805	3.99
2. The proximity to my family is important	167	3.86	804	3.78
3. I feel safe in my community	167	3.82	810	3.96
4. I am proud to tell others where I live	166	3.78	809	3.82
4 Lots of parks and open space	166	3.78	807	3.56
5. There are good jobs here	165	3.73	806	3.45
6. I think this is an ideal place to live	167	3.69	809	3.67
7. I feel emotionally attached to my community	167	3.65	809	3.56
8. People come together to help one another	166	3.58	800	3.58
8 Many recreational opportunities	166	3.58	802	3.43
8 Colleges and vocational schools are excellent	163	3.58	801	3.22
9. I feel respect from ALL cultures	166	3.27	803	3.18
10. This is a good place for senior citizens to live	164	3.26	803	3.19
11. Organized activities for youth are available	166	3.21	805	2.99
12. There are lots of clubs/organizations to join	165	3.18	801	2.85
13. The quality of K-12 schools is excellent	164	3.11	799	3.00
14. Many opportunities to enjoy music and the arts	164	3.07	801	2.79
15. There are many activities for families	165	3.04	798	2.83
16. The cost of living is reasonable	163	3.02	801	2.99

**Ranked Mean Scores indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale.*



Northeastern Nevada Regional Hospital, Elko, Nevada

Table 3 lists the ranked mean scores for community assets or reasons people like living in Elko County and its quality of life. “N” refers to the number of respondents for that particular question. Ranked mean, “Ranked M” scores, indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale. Elko County and City of Elko and surrounding communities’ respondents ranked “many scenic views” as their top community asset. The second-highest asset for City of

Elko and surrounding communities respondents was “the proximity to my family is important,” while countywide respondents ranked family proximity fourth. “I feel safe in my community” was ranked third by City of Elko respondents and second countywide. The fourth-highest quality of life indicators for City of Elko respondents was “I am proud to tell others where I live” and “lots of parks and open space.” Elko County respondents ranked “proud to tell others where I live” as third and “parks and open space” as seventh. The fifth-highest community asset for City of Elko respondents was “there are good jobs here.” Countywide, it ranked eighth. The lowest community asset determined by City of Elko and surrounding communities’ respondents was “the cost of living is reasonable.” Countywide respondents ranked “the cost of living is reasonable” slightly higher, placing it 14th.

Table 4. Ranked Mean Scores for Agriculture and Natural Resource Needs in Elko County

	Elko		Elko County	
	N	Ranked M	N	Ranked M
1. Maintaining adequate water supply	163	4.50	789	4.52
2. Protecting water quality	165	4.38	802	4.44
3. Controlling wildfires	160	4.16	797	4.29
4. Generating electricity from solar, wind, geothermal and other renewable energy sources	164	4.14	804	4.08
5. Protecting air quality	165	4.10	807	4.22
6. Maintaining multiple uses of public lands	160	4.04	796	4.15
7. Rehabilitating land damaged by wildfire	164	3.88	799	4.02
8. Improving wildlife habitat	162	3.75	802	3.95
9. Controlling weeds on public lands	163	3.69	794	3.86
10. Maintaining Elko County's ranching heritage	165	3.64	807	3.91
11. Controlling weeds on ranches and private property	164	3.49	799	3.67

**Ranked Mean Scores indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale.*

Table 4 describes the survey respondents' priorities for agriculture and natural resources in Elko County. "N" refers to the number of respondents for that particular question. Ranked mean, "Ranked M" scores, indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale. "Maintaining adequate water supply" was the number one priority for City of Elko and countywide respondents to agriculture and natural resource questions. "Protecting water quality" was the second-highest priority for both City of Elko and countywide respondents. The third issue, "controlling wildfires," was also a

high priority for City of Elko and countywide respondents. City of Elko and surrounding communities' respondents ranked "generating electricity from solar, wind, geothermal and other renewable energy sources" as the fourth-highest priority; while countywide it ranked sixth. "Protecting air quality" was the fifth-highest priority for City of Elko respondents, and countywide it was ranked fourth. "Controlling weeds on ranches and private property" was the lowest ranked item on this portion of the survey for both City of Elko and countywide respondents.

Table 5. Ranked Mean Scores for Horticulture and Gardening Needs in Elko County

	Elko		Elko County	
	N	Ranked M	N	Ranked M
1. Maintaining water-efficient lawns, trees and home landscapes	163	3.41	798	3.57
2. Growing plants in a short growing season	163	3.30	803	3.49
3. Accessing information to diagnose and address plant problems	160	3.10	798	3.30

**Ranked Mean Scores indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale.*

Table 5 illustrates the ranked responses for horticulture and gardening needs. "N" refers to the number of respondents for that particular question. Ranked mean, "Ranked M" scores, indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale. The highest gardening need for City of Elko, its surrounding communities and

countywide respondents was "maintaining water-efficient lawns, trees and home landscapes." "Growing plants in a short growing season" and "accessing information to diagnose and address plant problems" ranked second and third.

Table 6. Ranked Mean Scores for Children, Youth and Families Needs in Elko County

	Elko		Elko County	
	N	Ranked M	N	Ranked M
1. Preventing child abuse and neglect	166	4.48	798	4.46
2. Preventing domestic violence and abuse	166	4.34	800	4.34
3. Preventing juvenile crime	162	4.31	800	4.30
4. Preventing drug and alcohol abuse	164	4.27	795	4.26
5. Services for senior citizens	162	4.20	779	4.17
6. Preparing youth for work or further education after high school	165	4.19	807	4.24
7. Organized activities for youth	166	4.03	804	4.00
8. Preventing suicide	165	3.92	801	3.93
9. Before- and after-school programs	165	3.81	806	3.81
10. Child care for working families	164	3.80	798	3.76
11. Preschool education programs	164	3.73	803	3.71
12. Guidance for families managing a tight budget	163	3.62	802	3.60

*Ranked Mean Scores indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale.

Table 6 ranks the responses in priority order for the 12 children, youth and family issues asked in the survey. “N” refers to the number of respondents for that particular question. Ranked mean, “Ranked M” scores, indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale. City of Elko and Elko County respondents identified “preventing child abuse and neglect” as the top need for children and families. “Preventing domestic violence and abuse” was the second-highest priority for both City of Elko and countywide respondents, followed by “preventing juvenile crime”. The fourth-highest

children and family priority for City of Elko and countywide respondents was “preventing drug and alcohol abuse.” Ranking fifth for City of Elko and surrounding communities respondents was “services for senior citizens,” while countywide this item was ranked sixth. City of Elko and countywide respondents’ lowest children, youth and families issues were “preventing suicide” – 8th, “before and after-school programs” – 9th, “child care for working families” – 10th, “preschool education programs” – 11th, and “guidance for families managing a tight budget” – 12th.

Table 7. Ranked Mean Scores for Health and Nutrition Needs in Elko County

	Elko		Elko County	
	N	Ranked M	N	Ranked M
1. Access to doctors	164	4.41	806	4.37
2. Access to hospitals	164	4.37	800	4.34
3. Ability to pay for prescription drugs	164	4.18	805	4.18
4. Ability to pay for medical care	164	4.17	803	4.19
5. Access to mental health services	164	3.90	801	3.86
6. Preventing childhood obesity	165	3.65	807	3.61
7. Access to exercise facilities	161	3.46	798	3.39
8. Controlling adult obesity	164	3.33	803	3.31

*Ranked Mean Scores indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale.

In table 7, respondents ranked priorities for health and nutrition needs. “N” refers to the number of respondents for that particular question. Ranked mean, “Ranked M” scores, indicate the average response on a 1 to 5

scale. “Access to doctors,” “access to hospitals,” “ability to pay for prescription drugs,” “ability to pay for medical care” and “access to mental health services” were the City of Elko and surrounding communities

respondents' top five priorities for health and nutrition. Among all age groups and income levels, "access to doctors and hospitals" and the "ability to pay for medical care and prescription drugs" were high or very high

priorities. "Preventing childhood obesity," "access to exercise facilities" and "controlling adult obesity" were ranked lowest by City of Elko and countywide respondents.

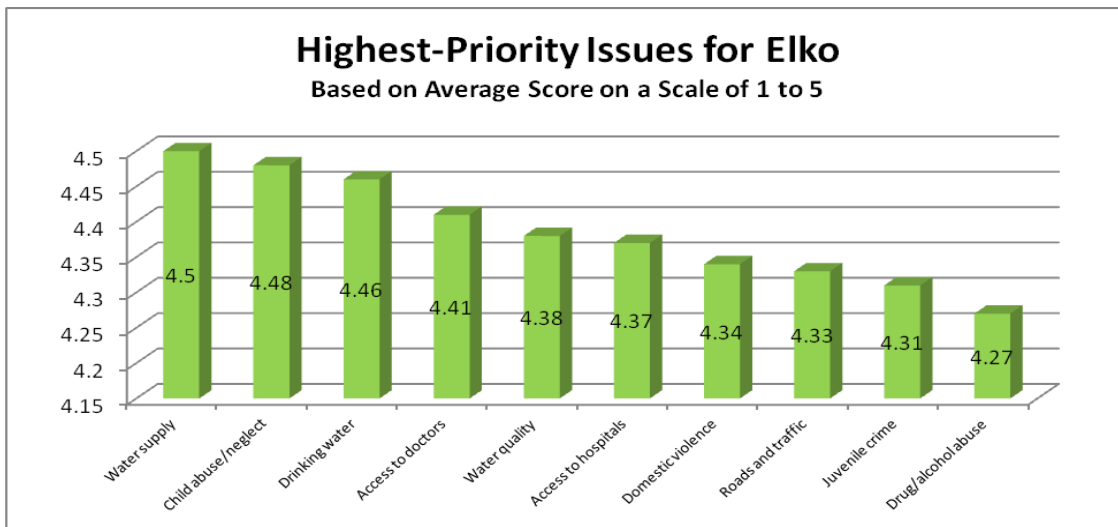


Figure 7. Highest-Priority Needs for City of Elko and Surrounding Communities Respondents

Summary

Through analysis of each question on the survey instrument, comparing ranked mean scores and standard deviation statistics, water, the health and well-being of Elko County citizens and natural resources were the most important needs identified in the survey (Figure 5). "Maintaining adequate water supply" was the highest-ranking item and "preventing child abuse and neglect" was ranked as the second-highest priority in the survey for both the City of Elko and countywide respondents. City of Elko

and surrounding communities respondents ranked "protecting drinking water quality" as the third-highest priority. "Access to doctors," "protecting water quality" and "access to hospitals" ranked fourth, fifth and sixth. The seventh-highest priority for Elko residents was "preventing domestic violence." "Elko County leaders should provide improvements to roads and traffic related issues," "preventing juvenile crime" and "preventing drug and alcohol abuse" ranked as the eighth-, ninth- and tenth-highest priorities for Elko respondents.

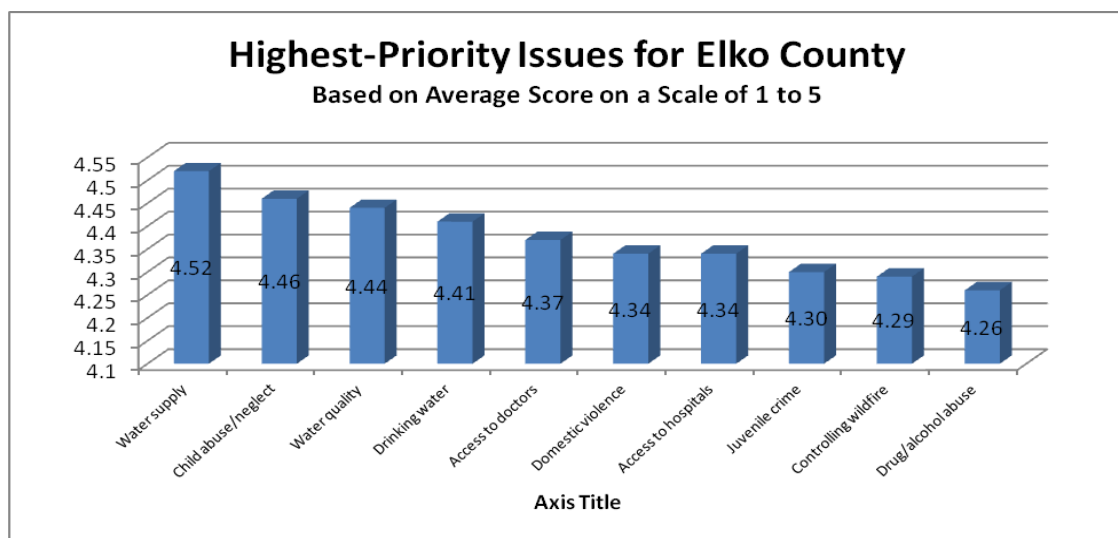


Figure 8. Highest-Priority Needs for Elko County Respondents

Some of the highest-priority issues for City of Elko and surrounding communities respondents were different than the highest-priority issues for Elko County overall (Figure 7). City of Elko and surrounding communities respondents ranked “Elko County leaders should provide improvements to roads and traffic-related issues” as their eighth-highest priority. Overall survey results found that roads and traffic were high priorities, with a mean score of 4.20. “Controlling wildfires” was not ranked in the City of Elko and surrounding communities respondents’ top-10 highest priorities, but was ranked as a high priority, with a mean score of 4.16.



Johnny Appleseed Park, Elko, Nevada

City of Elko and surrounding communities respondents ranked other survey questions as a high priority, with a mean score of 4.0 or higher. “Elko County leaders should adequately prepare to respond to disasters/emergencies,” “bring new industries and businesses to our community,” “maintain quality parks,” “help the mining industry continue to grow,” “provide recreational facilities” and “encourage job growth to help create new tax resources” ranked as high priorities for Elko County leaders. “Services for senior citizens,” “preparing youth for work or further education after high school” and “organized activities for youth” were high-priority children, youth and family issues. City of Elko and surrounding communities respondents indicated that residents “enjoy a growing economy that provides good jobs” and “work together to get things done for the

community.” “Ability to pay for prescription drugs” and “ability to pay for medical care” were high-priority issues for health and nutrition. High-priority agriculture and natural resource issues for Elko respondents were “controlling wildfires,” “generating electricity from solar, wind, geothermal and other renewable energy sources,” “protecting air quality” and “maintaining multiple uses of public lands.”

Conclusion

The *Results of a Mailed Survey: Priorities for Elko County* survey was conducted to identify high-priority issues and local needs measure quality of life issues and community assets that Extension might address through further research and educational programs. Further research is needed to determine how Extension might provide educational programming on water supply and quality. This analysis, along with existing data, community strengths and challenges, and staff expertise and organizational capacity, provides clear direction for the Elko County Extension Educator to focus research and educational programming on preventing domestic violence and child abuse and neglect as a way to address primary county issues. The Committee Against Domestic Violence reported that Elko County had five domestic violence-related deaths in 2011 (Y. Waters, personal communication, May 30, 2012). The impacts on children and youth exposed to domestic violence may include increased emotional and behavioral difficulties, traumatic stress reactions (i.e., sleep disturbances, intensified startle reactions, constant worry about possible danger), increased risk of physical injury or emotional or physical child abuse, imitation and learning the attitudes and behaviors of domestic abuse, and desensitization to aggressive behavior (Baker, Jaffe, Ashbourne, & Carter, 2002). Ongoing needs assessments will be conducted to inform programs and determine if the issues continue to be high-priority needs.

References

- Baker, L., Jaffe, P., Ashbourne, L., & Carter, J. (2002). *Children Exposed to Domestic Violence: An early childhood educator's handbook to increase understanding and improve community responses*. London, Ontario, Canada: Center for Children and Families in the Justice System.
- Dillman, D., Smyth, J., & Christian, L. (2009). *Internet, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The tailored design method, 3rd Edition*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation. (June, 2012). *Unemployment Rates: Elko Micro Area*. Retrieved August 10, 2012 from Website: <http://www.nevadaworkforce.com/>.
- Nunnally, J. (1978). *Psychometric Theory*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Salant, P. & Dillman, D. (1994). *How to Conduct Your Own Survey*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- State of Nevada Demographer, Nevada Small Business Development Center, (2010). *Nevada's Census Population By Incorporated City and Census Designated Place For 2000 and 2010*.
- United States Census Bureau. (2012). *State and County Quick Facts: Elko County, Nevada*. Retrieved March 23, 2012 from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/32/32007.html>