Views from the North Country

Surveying residents of Northern New England

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Introduction

• With support from the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Carsey School researchers conducted a broad telephone survey in summer of 2017. UNH Survey Center interviewers spoke with 1,650 randomly-selected residents of:
  • Coös and Grafton Counties, New Hampshire
  • Oxford County, Maine
  • Essex County, Vermont

• A Carsey research brief compares key responses across these counties, and also compares Coös responses in 2017 with previous surveys (2007, 2010):

• This report provides a more complete summary of the 2017 survey results.
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Graphs from “Challenge and Hope in the North Country”

http://scholars.unh.edu/carsey/326/
“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today.”
“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today.”
“I’m going to read you a list of different types of economic development. For each, please tell me how important you think this form of development is for your community’s future... very important... somewhat important... or not important...”
Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your community…

- People willing to help their neighbors.
- People generally trust one another and get along.
- People can be counted on to work together.
- State and local government has the ability to deal effectively with important problems


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>People willing to help neighbors</th>
<th>People generally trust &amp; get along</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People willing to help neighbors</td>
<td><img src="chart1.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="chart2.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People generally trust &amp; get along</td>
<td><img src="chart4.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
<td><img src="chart5.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **People willing to help neighbors**
  - 2007: 92
  - 2010: 93
  - 2017: 90

- **People generally trust & get along**
  - 2007: 89
  - 2010: 84
  - 2017: 84

- **People work together to address issues**
  - 2007: 81
  - 2010: 77
  - 2017: 83

- **State/local government can deal effectively**
  - 2007: 48
  - 2010: 33
  - 2017: 47

*Hamilton, Fogg & Grimm (2017) ‘Challenge and Hope in the North Country’ Carsey School of Public Policy*
Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your community?

- People willing to help their neighbors.
- People generally trust one another and get along.
- People can be counted on to work together.
- State and local government has the ability to deal effectively with important problems

Civic culture & community in 4 types of rural counties

- People willing to help neighbors
  - Amenity rich: 95%
  - Amenity/decline: 94%
  - Economic decline: 97%
  - Chronic poverty: 81%

- People generally trust & get along
  - Amenity rich: 89%
  - Amenity/decline: 89%
  - Economic decline: 96%
  - Chronic poverty: 74%

- People work together to address issues
  - Amenity rich: 90%
  - Amenity/decline: 84%
  - Economic decline: 89%
  - Chronic poverty: 70%

- State/local government can deal effectively
  - Amenity rich: 58%
  - Amenity/decline: 47%
  - Economic decline: 59%
  - Chronic poverty: 61%

Hamilton, Fogg & Grimm (2017) 'Challenge and hope in the North Country' Carney School of Public Policy
Do you believe

- You will continue living in this area for the next 5 years or move?
- Your community will be a better, worse, or about the same place to live 10 years from now?
- You and your family are better off, worse off, or about the same as 5 years ago?
- Young people who move away should return to work and raise a family in this community?

Hamilton, Fogg & Grimm (2017) ‘Challenge and Hope in the North Country’ Carsey School of Public Policy
Do you believe

- You will continue living in this area for the next 5 years or move?
- Your community will be a better, worse, or about the same place to live 10 years from now?
- You and your family are better off, worse off, or about the same as 5 years ago?
- Young people who move away should return to work and raise a family in this community?
Survey Question Responses—total and by county

Problems
“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Lack of job opportunities.”
By county:

“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Lack of job opportunities.”
“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Substance abuse and overdoses."
By county:

“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Substance abuse and overdoses.”

Problem: Substance abuse & overdose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coos NH</th>
<th>Grafton NH</th>
<th>Oxford ME</th>
<th>Essex VT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK/NA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weighted Percent
“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Manufacturing or sales of illegal drugs.”
By county:

“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Manufacturing or sales of illegal drugs.”
“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Population declining as people move away."
By county:

“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Population declining as people move away.”
“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Poverty or homelessness.”
By county:

“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Poverty or homelessness.”
“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Declining property values.”
By county:

“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…”

Declining property values.”
“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Not enough health and social services."
By county:

“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Not enough health and social services.”
For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Schools not as good as they should be.
"For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Schools not as good as they should be."
“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Lack of affordable housing."
By county:

“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Lack of affordable housing.”
“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Violent or property crime"
By county:

“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Violent or property crime"
“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Lack of recreational opportunities.”
By county:

“For each of the following, please indicate if you think it is – or is not – an important problem facing your community today…

Lack of recreational opportunities.”
Survey Question Responses—total and by county

Economic Development
Please tell me how important you think this form of development is for your community’s future… very important… somewhat important… or not important…

Tourism and recreation?”
By county:

“For each, please tell me how important you think this form of development is for your community’s future... very important... somewhat important... or not important...

Tourism and recreation?”
Please tell me how important you think this form of development is for your community's future... very important... somewhat important... or not important...

Light manufacturing and a variety of new independent small business.”
By county:

“For each, please tell me how important you think this form of development is for your community’s future… very important… somewhat important… or not important…

Light manufacturing and a variety of new independent small businesses?”
Please tell me how important you think this form of development is for your community's future… very important… somewhat important… or not important…

Forest-based injuries such as logging, pulp and paper, and lumber production?”

**Important to future: Forest based industries**

- **Very** important: 51%
- **Somewhat** important: 30%
- **Not** important: 18%
- **DK/NA**: 1%

Weighted Percent, \( n = 1,650 \)
“For each, please tell me how important you think this form of development is for your community’s future… very important… somewhat important… or not important…

**Forest-based industries such as logging, pulp and paper, and lumber production?**
Please tell me how important you think this form of development is for your community’s future... very important... somewhat important... or not important...

Wind-powered electricity generation?”
By county:

“For each, please tell me how important you think this form of development is for your community’s future… very important… somewhat important… or not important… Wind-powered electricity generation?”

**Important to future: Wind-powered electricity generation**

**Coos NH**
- Very: 42%
- Somewhat: 39%
- Not: 16%
- DK/NA: 3%

**Grafton NH**
- Very: 46%
- Somewhat: 28%
- Not: 23%
- DK/NA: 3%

**Oxford ME**
- Very: 40%
- Somewhat: 34%
- Not: 25%
- DK/NA: 1%

**Essex VT**
- Very: 30%
- Somewhat: 36%
- Not: 29%
- DK/NA: 5%
Please tell me how important you think this form of development is for your community’s future… very important… somewhat important… or not important…

Wood-fired biomass electricity generation?”
By county:

“For each, please tell me how important you think this form of development is for your community’s future… very important… somewhat important… or not important…

Wood-fired biomass electricity generation?”
Survey Question Responses—total and by county

Civic Culture and Community
"Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your community…

People around here are willing to help their neighbors."
By county:

"Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your community…

People around here are willing to help their neighbors."
"Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your community…

People in this community generally trust one another and get along."
By county:

"Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your community…

People in this community generally trust one another and get along."
"Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your community…

If this community were faced with a local issue such as the pollution of a river or the possible closure of a school, people here could be counted on to work together to address it."
By county:

"Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your community…

If this community were faced with a local issue such as the pollution of a river or the possible closure of a school, people here could be counted on to work together to address it."
“Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your community…

State and local government has the ability to deal effectively with important problems.”
By county:

“Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your community…

State and local government has the ability to deal effectively with important problems.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Disagreement</th>
<th>DK/NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coos NH</td>
<td>Yes: 47%</td>
<td>No: 45%</td>
<td>DK/NA: 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grafton NH</td>
<td>Yes: 53%</td>
<td>No: 40%</td>
<td>DK/NA: 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford ME</td>
<td>Yes: 45%</td>
<td>No: 49%</td>
<td>DK/NA: 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essex VT</td>
<td>Yes: 34%</td>
<td>No: 55%</td>
<td>DK/NA: 12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your community…

Children in this community are mostly well prepared to start school."
By county:

“Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your community…

**Children in this community are mostly well prepared to start school.**”
Survey Question Responses—total and by county

Views of Present and Future Well-Being
"Looking ahead, do you expect to continue living in this area for the next 5 years, or move somewhere else?"
"Looking ahead, do you expect to continue living in this area for the next 5 years, or move somewhere else?"
“Based on what you see of the situation today, do you think that ten years from now, your community will be a better place to live, a worse place, or about the same?”

![Bar chart showing community outlook in 10 years]

- Better: 28%
- Same: 55%
- Worse: 12%
- DK/NA: 4%

Weighted Percent, $n = 1,650$
By county:

“Based on what you see of the situation today, do you think that ten years from now, your community will be a better place to live, a worse place, or about the same?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Better</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>Worse</th>
<th>DK/NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coos NH</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grafton NH</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford ME</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essex VT</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Would you say that you and your family are better off financially, worse off, or about the same as you were 5 years ago?"
"If your own teenage child, or the child of a close friend, asked you for advice, would you recommend that they should plan to stay in this town as an adult, or move away for opportunities somewhere else?"
If your own teenage child, or the child of a close friend, asked you for advice, would you recommend that they should plan to stay in this town as an adult, or move away for opportunities somewhere else?
“After a young person moves away for opportunities elsewhere, would you hope that they return to work and raise a family in this community, or not?”

![Bar chart showing responses to the question.]

- **No**: 19
- **Yes**: 73
- **DK/NA**: 8

*Weighted Percent, n = 1,650*
By county:

“After a young person moves away for opportunities elsewhere, would you hope that they return to work and raise a family in this community, or not?”

![Bar charts showing responses to the question by county.](chart.png)
Survey Question Responses—total and by county

Environment and Climate
“Which of the following statements do you think is more accurate? Northern New England winter temperatures over the past 20 years ...”
• Have been cooler, on average, than winters 30 or 40 years ago
• Have been about the same, on average, as winters 30 or 40 years ago
• Have been warmer, on average, than winters 30 or 40 years ago
By county:

“Which of the following statements do you think is more accurate? Northern New England winter temperatures over the past 20 years ...”

- Have been cooler, on average, than winters 30 or 40 years ago
- Have been about the same, on average, as winters 30 or 40 years ago
- Have been warmer, on average, than winters 30 or 40 years ago
“How much do you feel you understand about global warming or climate change — would you say a great deal, a moderate amount, only a little, or nothing at all?”
By county:

“How much do you feel you understand about global warming or climate change — would you say a great deal, a moderate amount, only a little, or nothing at all?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Nothing</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Great deal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coos NH</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grafton NH</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oxford ME</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essex VT</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which of the following three statements do you think is more accurate?

- Climate change is happening now, caused mainly by human activities.
- Climate change is happening now, but caused mainly by natural forces.
- Climate change is not happening now.

![Bar chart showing personal belief about climate change]

Personal belief about climate change

- Now/human (66%)
- Now/natural (25%)
- Not now (3%)
- DK/NA (6%)

$n = 1,650$
“Which of the following three statements do you think is more accurate?”

- Climate change is happening now, caused mainly by human activities.
- Climate change is happening now, but caused mainly by natural forces.
- Climate change is not happening now.
"Have conservation or environmental rules that restrict development generally been a good thing for your community, a bad thing, or have they had no effect?"
"Have conservation or environmental rules that restrict development generally been a good thing for your community, a bad thing, or have they had no effect?"
“Which do you think should be a higher priority for the future of this country, increased exploration and drilling for oil or gas, or increased use of renewable energy such as wind or solar?”
By county:

“Which do you think should be a higher priority for the future of this country, increased exploration and drilling for oil or gas, or increased use of renewable energy such as wind or solar?”
Respondent Characteristics
Number of interviews by county, in North Country surveys of 2007, 2010 and 2017


- Coos NH: 967
- Grafton NH: 755
- Oxford ME: 752
- Essex VT: 345 + 458 = 793

source: Hamilton, Fogg & Grimm (2017) North Country Survey, Carsey School of Public Policy
Gender

Coos NH

- Male: 54
- Female: 46

Grafton NH

- Male: 49
- Female: 51

Oxford ME

- Male: 49
- Female: 51

Essex VT

- Male: 37
- Female: 63

Weighted Percent
“What is your exact age?”

Separated into age groups during analysis.
By county:

“What is your exact age?”

 Separated into age groups during analysis.
By county:

"How many years have you lived in this area?"
"Is this community now your year-round place of residence, or do you usually live part of the year somewhere else?"
By county:

"Is this community now your year-round place of residence, or do you usually live part of the year somewhere else?"
"What is the highest grade in school, or level of education that you've completed and received credit for?"
What was your total household income (including all wages, public assistance and child support) for 2016, before taxes? Counting all members living in your household, would you say that it was less than $40,000, between $40,000 and $100,000, or more than $100,000?
"Which of the following best describes your employment status during the past year?"

- Full: 44
- Part: 10
- Self: 11
- Retired: 21
- Unemp/look: 1
- Unemp/not: 1
- Homemaker: 3
- Disabled: 5
- Student: 3
- DK/NA: 1

Weighted Percent, n = 1,650
By county:

"Which of the following best describes your employment status during the past year?"
"Are you currently married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?"
By county:

"Are you currently married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?"
"Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent or what?"
By county:

"Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent or what?"

---

**Coos NH**

- Democrat: 34
- Independent: 21
- Republican: 23
- Tea Party: 13
- DK/NA: 9

--

**Grafton NH**

- Democrat: 43
- Independent: 17
- Republican: 19
- Tea Party: 11
- DK/NA: 11

--

**Oxford ME**

- Democrat: 33
- Independent: 15
- Republican: 25
- Tea Party: 13
- DK/NA: 13

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**Essex VT**

- Democrat: 31
- Independent: 16
- Republican: 26
- Tea Party: 12
- DK/NA: 14
Would you say that most of your friends prefer the same political party that you do? Or do most prefer different parties? Or are they about evenly divided?
By county:

"Would you say that most of your friends prefer the same political party that you do? Or do most prefer different parties? Or are they about evenly divided?"
About the Authors

• Linda M. Fogg is a graduate student in Sociology at the University of New Hampshire.

• Lawrence C. Hamilton is professor of Sociology and a senior fellow of the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire. ([https://carsey.unh.edu/person/lawrence-hamilton](https://carsey.unh.edu/person/lawrence-hamilton)).

• Curt Grimm is the Carsey School of Public Policy’s deputy director and a research associate professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of New Hampshire. ([https://carsey.unh.edu/person/curt-grimm](https://carsey.unh.edu/person/curt-grimm)).
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