



Results of a Mailed Survey: Priorities for Wells, Nevada

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Angel Lake near Wells, Nev.

The purpose of *Results of a Mailed Survey: Priorities for the City of Wells*, a comprehensive needs assessment, was to identify issues and local needs that University of Nevada Cooperative Extension might address through educational programs. This publication provides information about the opinions of Wells residents on local issues.

Introduction and Overview of the City of Wells

Results of a Mailed Survey: Priorities for Elko County, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Special Publication 12-02 contains combined needs assessment results for all communities in Elko County. The purpose of this study is to guide Cooperative Extension in prioritizing community needs to develop, implement and evaluate research-based educational programs that address high-priority community concerns. This publication focuses on the City of Wells, Nev., population 1,292 (Nevada State Demographer, 2010).

Wells is located 50 miles east of the City of Elko at the junction of Interstate 80 and U.S. 93. The total population for the county is 48,818 (Figure 1).

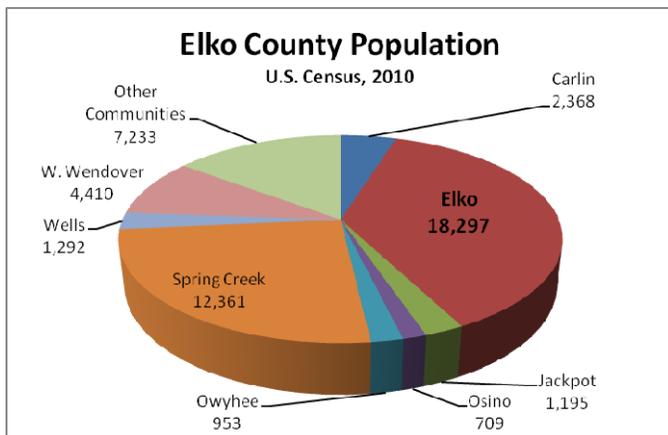


Figure 1. Elko County Population

Wells has 28 percent or 359 young people less than 19 years of age. Twenty-three percent of the residents living in Wells are 50 - 64 years old (Figure 2). Median age is 39 years old.

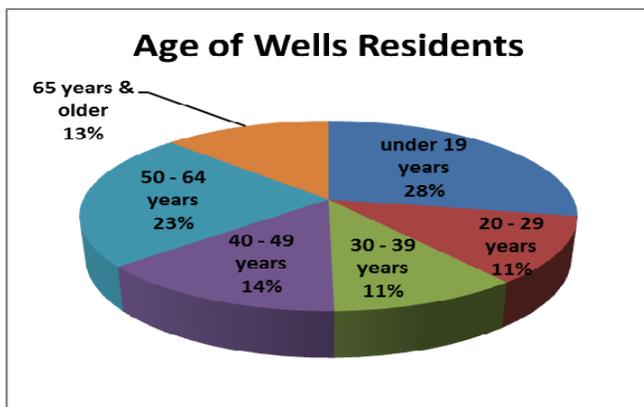


Figure 2. Age of Wells Residents

Wells' population includes 78 percent White, 20 percent Hispanic or Latino, 6 percent American Indian, 4 percent two or more races, less than 1 percent Asian and less than 1 percent African American (Figure 3).

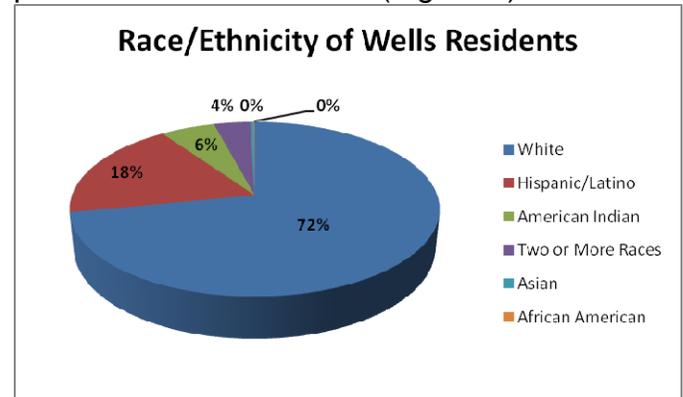
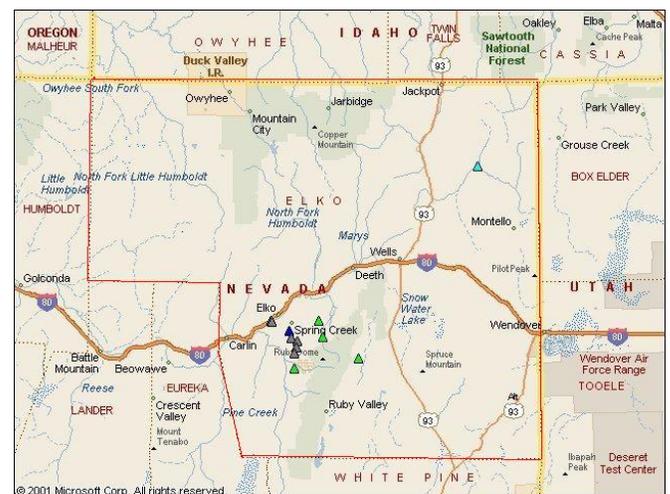


Figure 3. Race/Ethnic Origin of Wells Residents

Wells has a 7.3 percent unemployment rate, compared to the overall Nevada unemployment rate of 9.5 percent (Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation, 2013). Median household income for Wells is \$53,068, with a per capita income of \$25,915. The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) reports that 84 percent of adults 25 years and older living in Wells are high school graduates, and 15 percent attained a bachelor's degree or higher.



Methods

In 2010, 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 Cooperative 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 pertained to agriculture, child and family development, community development, health and nutrition, horticulture, and natural resources. These six topic areas are outlined in Nevada Revised Statute 549.010 and guide Cooperative Extension’s educational programming.

Multiple mailings were used to encourage survey completion (Dillman, Smyth and Christian, 2009; Salant and Dillman, 1994). A letter mailed to 2,020 Elko County voters explained that they had been randomly selected 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 10 days 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. Of the 842 respondents, 104 indicated they lived in Wells. 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 pre-coded; thereby prohibiting the author from determining if survey participants responded twice, and thus potentially conflating the response rate. Additionally, the survey sample only included registered voters, excluding

Wells residents who were not registered to vote at the time survey sampling occurred.

Results

Certain statistical methods can indicate how well the survey questions measure what they are intended 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 Likert scale is 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. In the tables on Pages 5 - 9, “N” refers to the number of respondents for that particular question, and “Ranked Mean” scores indicate the average response on the Likert-type scale.

Demographics of Respondents Living in Wells

Sixty-six percent of the Wells respondents have lived in the community for more than 16 years, 11 percent have lived in Wells for 11 - 15 years, 12 percent for 6-10 years and 11 percent for five years or less (Figure 4).

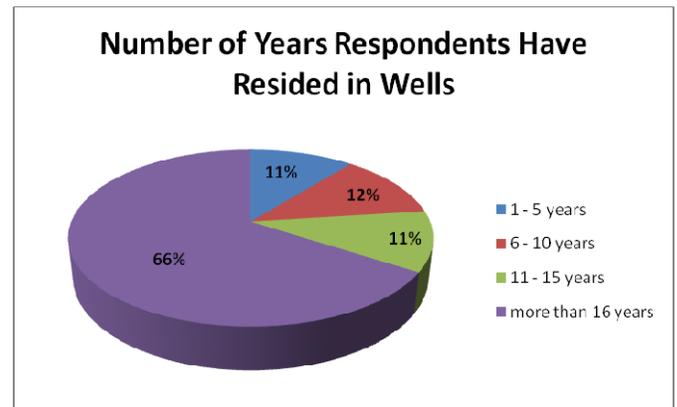


Figure 4. Number of Years Respondents Have Resided in Wells

Age of Wells Respondents

■ under 25 years
 ■ 26 - 35 years
 ■ 36 - 45 years
■ 46 - 55 years
 ■ 56 - 65 years
 ■ over 66 years

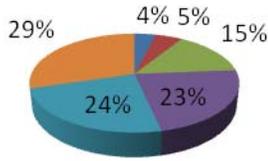


Figure 5. Age of Wells Respondents

As referenced in Figure 5 above, 53 percent of the respondents indicated that they were 56 years or older. Four 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 9 percent of the respondents were 35 years old or younger. The study sample was obtained from the Elko County voter registration list which has a higher percentage of people 46 years old and older. The older demographic may account for some of the demographic and issue prioritization results (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Fifty-five percent of the respondents were female; 45 percent were male. Ethnicity of respondents was 87 percent White, 3 percent Hispanic/Latino, 7 percent American Indian, 1 percent Asian or Pacific Islander and 2 percent indicated two or more races. Employment status indicated that 50 percent of Wells respondents were employed, 32 percent were retired, and 18 percent were unemployed. As referenced in Figure 6 below, annual income indicated a dispersed range (Figure 6).

Annual Income of Wells Respondents

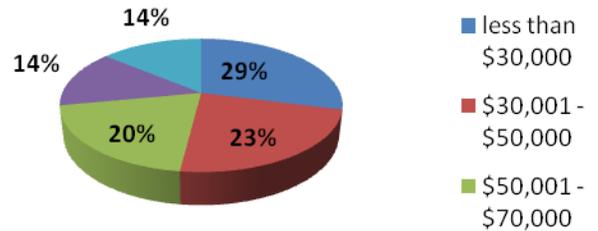


Figure 6. Annual Income of Wells Respondents



Top: Wells Family Medicine Clinic and Wells Municipal Swimming Pool
 Bottom: Wells Family Resource Center, Wells High School sign, Wells Municipal Swimming Pool and Wells City Park Playground

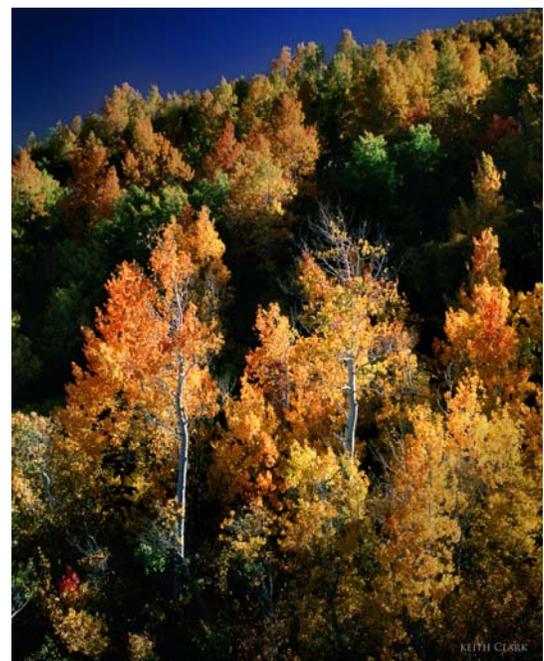
Table 1. Ranked Mean Scores* for Wells Respondents' Opinions About Elko County

Elko County Residents:	Wells		Elko County	
	N	Ranked Mean	N	Ranked Mean
1. Want to maintain a small town/rural feeling	104	4.12	809	4.04
2. Work together to get things done for the community	105	4.04	812	4.02
3. Want taxes to remain the same/not increase or decrease	104	4.00	801	3.84
4. Enjoy a growing economy that provides good jobs	103	3.99	808	3.94
5. Have adequate cell phone coverage	103	3.91	803	3.63
6. Have effective community leadership	105	3.88	806	3.76
7. Have adequate Internet service coverage	104	3.86	807	3.67
8. Have the opportunity to participate in decisions that influence their future	104	3.77	805	3.65
9. Have opportunities for jobs that fit their skills	104	3.76	809	3.70
10. Have a commute to work that is not a problem for workers	104	3.75	806	3.73
11. Have affordable Internet service	103	3.71	799	3.58
12. Have access to affordable food	104	3.65	806	3.77
13. Enjoy a variety of good restaurants	104	3.46	803	3.32
14. Have clothing and shoe stores to meet their needs	105	3.39	806	3.15
15. Have affordable housing available	104	3.38	803	3.27
16. Can get plenty of fresh foods in their community	103	3.30	804	3.63
17. Trust local government to do what is right	104	2.89	801	3.04
18. Have access to public transportation	102	2.72	802	2.84

*Ranked Mean Scores indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale. "N" refers to the number of respondents for that particular question.

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 Wells with all Elko County respondents. Both Wells and Elko County respondents ranked "Want to maintain a small town/rural feeling" as their top opinion about Elko County. Wells and County respondents agreed that "Work together to get things done for the community" was the second-highest priority. While "Want taxes to remain the same/not increase or decrease" was the third most important issue for Wells respondents, it was ranked as the fourth-highest priority for county residents. "Enjoy a growing economy that provides good jobs" was ranked as the fourth-highest priority for Wells and third highest for the County respondents. The fifth-highest priority for Wells was "Have adequate cell phone coverage." Elko County respondents rated the item much lower (11th) than Wells respondents.

The lowest-ranking priority for both Wells and County respondents was "Have access to public transportation."



Angel Lake Mountains, photo courtesy of Keith Clark

Table 2. Ranked Mean Scores* for Wells Respondents’ Opinions About Elko County Leaders

Elko County Leaders Should:	Wells		Elko County	
	N	Ranked Mean	N	Ranked Mean
1. Protect drinking water quality as a priority	101	4.49	806	4.41
2. Adequately prepare to respond to disasters/emergencies	102	4.22	808	4.23
3. Provide improvements to roads and traffic-related issues	103	4.11	805	4.20
3. Encourage job growth to help create new tax resources	105	4.11	808	4.00
4. Maintain quality parks	102	4.08	807	4.06
5. Have adequate resources to develop new jobs	103	4.07	800	3.89
6. Bring new industries and businesses to our community	105	4.00	808	4.06
7. Provide recreational facilities	103	3.92	805	3.96
7. Work with tourism to help develop new jobs	104	3.92	805	3.93
8. Help the mining industry continue to grow	104	3.89	807	3.99
9. Beautify the community	103	3.86	807	3.88
10. Provide tax incentives to encourage businesses to move here	103	3.78	799	3.88

*Ranked Mean Scores indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale. “N” refers to the number of respondents for that particular question.

Table 2 illustrates the ranked mean scores for Wells and Elko County respondents’ opinions about actions Elko County leaders should take.



Angel Lake, near Wells, Nev.

Both Wells and County survey respondents identified “Protect drinking water quality as a priority” as the number-one priority for Elko County leaders. Wells and County respondents rated “Adequately prepare to respond to disasters/emergencies” as the second-highest priority for Elko County leaders. Wells respondents rated “Provide improvements to roads and traffic-related issues” and “Encourage job growth to help create new tax

resources” as the third-highest priorities for Elko County leaders. County respondents also indicated that road and traffic improvements was the third-highest priority. Wells and County respondents indicated that “Maintain quality parks” was the fourth-highest priority for Elko County leaders. The fifth-highest priority Wells respondents identified for Elko County leaders was “Have adequate resources to develop new jobs.” Countywide, this item ranked ninth. The lowest on Wells respondents’ list of actions for Elko County leaders was “Provide tax incentives to encourage businesses to move here.” “Beautify the community” was the lowest ranked item for countywide respondents.



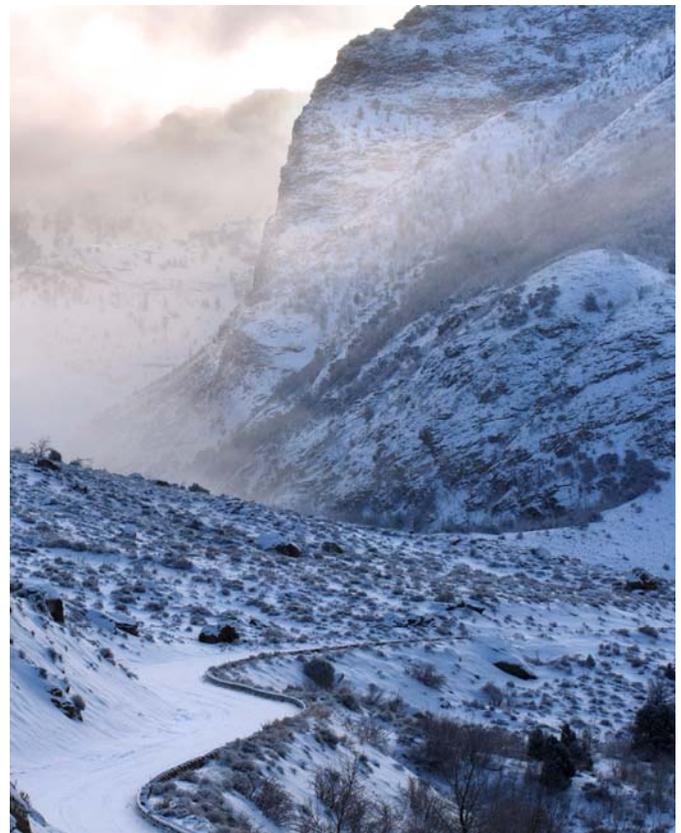
Ewe bighorn sheep near Angel Lake and Wells, Nev.

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

	Wells		Elko County	
	N	Ranked Mean	N	Ranked Mean
1. I feel safe in my community	105	4.10	810	3.96
2. Many scenic views	104	3.99	805	3.99
3. I am proud to tell others where I live	104	3.86	809	3.82
4. I think this is an ideal place to live	104	3.80	809	3.67
5. People come together to help one another	103	3.71	800	3.58
6. I feel emotionally attached to my community	104	3.63	809	3.56
7. The proximity to my family is important	103	3.60	804	3.78
8. Lots of parks and open space	104	3.51	807	3.56
9. This is a good place for senior citizens to live	103	3.40	803	3.19
10. Many recreational opportunities	102	3.38	802	3.43
11. I feel respect from ALL cultures	103	3.20	803	3.18
12. Colleges and vocational schools are excellent	104	3.16	801	3.22
13. The quality of K-12 schools is excellent	103	3.04	799	3.00
13. The cost of living is reasonable	103	3.04	801	2.99
14. There are good jobs here	104	2.86	806	3.45
15. Organized activities for youth are available	105	2.83	805	2.99
16. There are many activities for families	101	2.61	798	2.83
16. There are lots of clubs/organizations to join	102	2.61	801	2.85
17. Many opportunities to enjoy music and the arts	102	2.54	801	2.79

*Ranked Mean Scores indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale. "N" refers to the number of respondents for that particular question.

Table 3 lists the ranked mean scores for community assets or reasons people like living in Elko County. Wells respondents ranked "I feel safe in my community" as their top community asset. Countywide, the same item ranked second. The second-highest asset for Wells respondents was "Many scenic views," while countywide, respondents ranked it first. "I am proud to tell others where I live" was ranked third by both Wells and County respondents. The fourth-highest quality of life indicators for Wells respondents was "I think this is an ideal place to live." Elko County respondents ranked "The proximity to my family is important" as fourth. The fifth-highest community asset for Wells respondents was "People come together to help one another." Countywide, it ranked sixth. The lowest ranked community asset by Wells and County respondents was "Many opportunities to enjoy music and the arts."



Road to Angel Lake, photo courtesy of Keith Clark

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

	Wells		Elko County	
	N	Ranked Mean	N	Ranked Mean
1. Maintaining adequate water supply	99	4.55	789	4.52
2. Protecting water quality	102	4.44	802	4.44
3. Protecting air quality	103	4.32	807	4.22
4. Controlling wildfires	103	4.26	797	4.29
5. Maintaining multiple uses of public lands	102	4.25	796	4.15
6. Generating electricity from solar, wind, geothermal and other renewable energy sources	103	4.14	804	4.08
7. Rehabilitating land damaged by wildfire	103	4.03	799	4.02
8. Improving wildlife habitat	102	3.99	802	3.95
8. Controlling weeds on public lands	100	3.99	794	3.86
9. Maintaining Elko County's ranching heritage	104	3.95	807	3.91
10. Controlling weeds on ranches and private property	100	3.60	799	3.67

*Ranked Mean Scores indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale. "N" refers to the number of respondents for that particular question.

Table 4 describes the survey respondents' priorities for agriculture and natural resources in Elko County. "Maintaining adequate water supply" was the number-one priority for Wells and County respondents to agriculture and natural resource questions. "Protecting water quality" was the second-highest priority for both Wells and County respondents. "Protecting air quality," was the third-highest priority for Wells

respondents; however, countywide it ranked fourth. Wells respondents ranked "Controlling wildfires" as the fourth-highest priority; while countywide it ranked third. "Maintaining multiple uses of public lands" was the fifth-highest priority for both groups. "Controlling weeds on ranches and private property" was the lowest ranked item on this portion of the survey for both Wells and County respondents.

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

	Wells		Elko County	
	N	Ranked Mean	N	Ranked Mean
1. Maintaining water-efficient lawns, trees and home landscapes	103	3.73	798	3.57
2. Growing plants in a short growing season	103	3.59	803	3.49
3. Accessing information to diagnose and address plant problems	103	3.38	798	3.30

*Ranked Mean Scores indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale. "N" refers to the number of respondents for that particular question.

Table 5 illustrates the ranked responses for horticulture and gardening needs. The highest-ranking gardening need for Wells and County 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, respectively for both groups.

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

	Wells		Elko County	
	N	Ranked Mean	N	Ranked Mean
1. Preventing child abuse and neglect	103	4.39	798	4.46
2. Preventing juvenile crime	104	4.31	800	4.30
2. Preparing youth for work or further education after high school	105	4.31	807	4.24
3. Preventing domestic violence and abuse	104	4.30	800	4.34
4. Preventing drug and alcohol abuse	100	4.26	795	4.26
4 Services for senior citizens	102	4.26	779	4.17
5. Organized activities for youth	104	4.04	804	4.00
6. Preschool education programs	103	3.91	803	3.71
7. Before- and after-school programs	105	3.89	806	3.81
8. Child care for working families	103	3.88	798	3.76
9. Preventing suicide	103	3.83	801	3.93
10. Guidance for families managing a tight budget	103	3.75	802	3.60

*Ranked Mean Scores indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale. "N" refers to the number of respondents for that particular question.

Table 6 ranks the responses in priority order for the 12 children, youth and family issues asked in the survey. Wells and Elko County respondents identified "Preventing child abuse and neglect" as the top need for children and families. "Preventing juvenile crime" and "Preparing youth for work or further education after high school" tied as the second-highest priority for Wells respondents. Countywide, respondents ranked "Preventing juvenile crime" as third and "Preparing youth for the work or further education" fifth. The third-highest children and family priority for Wells

respondents was "Preventing domestic violence and abuse, while County respondents ranked it second." Tying for the fourth-highest priorities for Wells respondents was "Preventing drug and alcohol abuse" and "Services for senior citizens." Countywide, "Services for senior citizens" was ranked sixth. The fifth-highest priority for Wells respondents was "Organized activities for youth, while countywide it ranked seventh. The lowest-ranking children, youth and families need for Wells and County respondents was "Guidance for families managing a tight budget."

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

	Wells		Elko County	
	N	Ranked Mean	N	Ranked Mean
1. Access to doctors	105	4.45	806	4.37
2. Access to hospitals	104	4.38	800	4.34
3. Ability to pay for prescription drugs	103	4.35	805	4.18
4. Ability to pay for medical care	105	4.33	803	4.19
5. Access to mental health services	103	4.01	801	3.86
6. Preventing childhood obesity	105	3.65	807	3.61
7. Access to exercise facilities	102	3.43	798	3.39
8. Controlling adult obesity	103	3.36	803	3.31

*Ranked Mean Scores indicate the average response on a 1 to 5 scale. "N" refers to the number of respondents for that particular question.

In Table 7, respondents ranked priorities for health and nutrition needs. "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 Wells and County respondents' top five

priorities for health and nutrition, respectively. Among all age groups and income levels, “Access to doctors and hospitals” and “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 the lowest ranked health and nutrition needs.

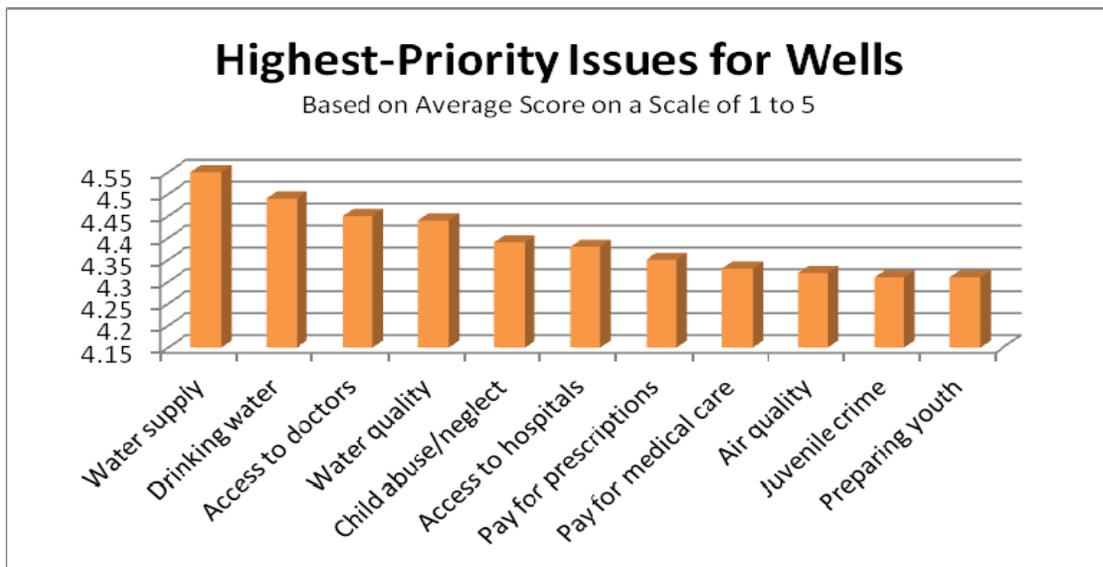


Figure 7. Highest-Priority Needs for Wells Respondents

Summary

Through analysis of each question on the survey instrument, and by comparing ranked mean scores and standard deviation statistics, the most important needs identified in the survey were water, the health and well-being of Elko County citizens and natural resources (Figure 7). “Maintaining adequate water supply” was the highest-ranking item in the survey for Wells and County respondents. Wells respondents ranked “Protecting drinking

water quality” as the second-highest priority. “Access to doctors,” “Protecting water quality,” “Preventing child abuse and neglect” and “Access to hospitals” ranked third-, fourth-, fifth- and sixth-highest, respectively. The “Ability to pay for prescription drugs” and the “Ability to pay for medical care” ranked seventh and eighth. Finishing out the top high-priority issues were “Protecting air quality,” “Preventing juvenile crime” and “Preventing drug and alcohol abuse.”

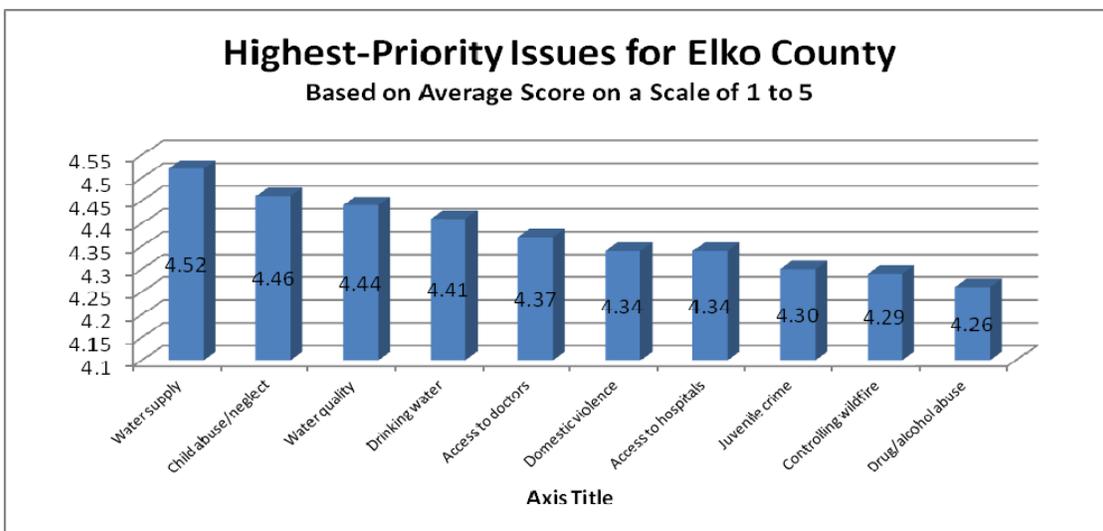


Figure 8. Highest-Priority Needs for Elko County Respondents



Welcome Sign, Wells, Nev.

The Wells data show some similarities and some differences when compared to the highest-priority issues for Elko County overall (Figure 8). Wells respondents ranked “Ability to pay for prescription drugs and medical care” as their seventh- and eighth-highest priorities. County survey results found that the ability to pay for prescriptions and medical care were high priorities a well, with a mean score of 4.18 and 4.19, respectively. “Preparing youth for work or further education after high school” was ranked by Wells respondents as the 10th-highest priority, and countywide it was highly ranked with a mean score of 4.24. “Preventing domestic violence and abuse” and “Preventing drug and alcohol abuse” were not included in Wells respondents’ 10 highest priorities, but were ranked as important issues by County respondents, with mean scores of 4.30 and 4.26, respectively. “Controlling wildfires” was not ranked in the Wells respondents’ top-10 highest priorities, but was ranked as a high priority by County respondents, with a mean score of 4.26.

Wells respondents ranked other survey topics as a high priority, with a mean score of 4.0 or higher. “Preventing domestic violence and abuse,” Preventing drug and alcohol abuse,” “Services for senior citizens” and “Organized activities for youth” were high-priority children, youth and family issues. High-priority

agriculture and natural resource issues for Elko respondents were “Controlling wildfires,” “Maintaining multiple uses of public lands,” “Generating electricity from solar, wind, geothermal and other renewable energy sources,” and “Rehabilitating land damaged by wildfire.” Among County respondents, “Adequately prepare to respond to disasters/emergencies,” “Provide improvements to roads and traffic related issues,” “Encourage job growth to help create new tax resources,” “Maintain quality parks,” “Have adequate resources to develop new jobs” and “Bring new industries and businesses to our community” were high priorities for Elko County leaders. Wells respondents indicated that residents “Want to maintain a small town/rural feeling,” “Work together to get things done for the community” and “Want taxes to remain the same/not increase or decrease.” The most important community asset for Wells respondents was “I feel safe in my community.” “Access to mental health services” was also a high-priority health and nutrition issue for Wells respondents.



Wells, Nev.

Conclusion

The *Results of a Mailed Survey: Priorities for Elko County* survey was conducted to identify high-priority issues and local needs and to measure quality of life issues and community assets that Cooperative Extension might address through further research and educational programs. Further research is needed to determine how Cooperative Extension might provide educational programming on water supply and quality issues. This analysis, along with existing data, community strengths and challenges, staff

expertise and organizational capacity, provides direction for the Elko County Extension Educator to focus research and educational programming on preventing child abuse and neglect and domestic violence 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 (sleep disturbances, intensified startle reactions and 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 and Carter, 2002). Ongoing needs assessments will be conducted to inform programs and determine if the issues continue to be high-priority needs.

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Wells City Hall, Wells, Nevada

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