

Survey of Rural CHALLENGES

What small town people see
as their biggest challenges
and assets in 2023

Community Challenges

Lack of housing, inactive downtowns and not enough volunteers and losing young people ranked the highest.

Need for childcare also ranked in the top 5.

Rural people ranked poverty, crime and drug abuse near the bottom.

Negative attitudes, poor leadership, infrastructure and economic opportunity were often mentioned in open-ended responses.

Small Business Challenges

Rural businesses are challenged by **lack of workers, support services, usable buildings, along with online competition & marketing.**

Rural businesses said **usable buildings are harder to find than loans.**

Rural small business owners showed little interest in business plans or pitch competitions.

Rural businesses **prefer help with marketing, starting a business, or receiving economic development incentives** like those offered to recruit out-of-town firms.

Community and Business Assets

Twice as many said they were optimistic about their communities' future as negative.

Natural resources, outdoor recreation and tourism were the most-mentioned assets, followed by **good people, volunteers, workforce and effective leaders.**

Events, arts, education and culture also were frequently mentioned as assets.

Good people, innovative ideas and up-to-date marketing were the most-mentioned business assets.

Available jobs or good jobs were mentioned as often as lack of jobs or low paying jobs.

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