The findings reported in this bulletin are part of research project NC-128, "Quality of Life as Influenced by Area of Residence," sponsored by the agricultural experiment stations of Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, Ohio, and Texas in cooperation with Science and Education Administration Cooperative Research, the United States Department of Agriculture.

Credits: Photographs provided by the Minnesota Department of Economic Development; Knowlton-Parnow Studios, Minneapolis; and Leo H. Perry, St. Paul. The authors acknowledge permission to use an excerpt from the poem, "Movements," by Gerhard Neubeck.

The University of Minnesota, including the Agricultural Experiment Station, is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, creed, color, sex, national origin, or handicap.
Dear Fellow Minnesotan:

One of the important goals in the Agricultural Experiment Station is to encourage and support research which seeks to bring about a better understanding of family life. This report comes as a result of our efforts to accomplish that goal.

Today, more than ever before, family living patterns are in a state of flux. The attitudes of wives and husbands are changing. Women are raising significant questions about themselves and where they are in relation to their families and their communities.

The information presented in this report is useful in identifying some of the issues that women view as being critical today. It will be helpful to those who want to gain a perspective on problems that impinge on the daily lives of us all.

Sincerely,
Richard J. Sauer

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Life Satisfaction

This study reports the answers wives give to questions about the quality of their lives, that is, the extent to which their interests and needs are met.

For the study, a sample of Minnesota families in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas were asked about the quality of their lives in general as well as in specific areas of concern such as family, work, community, and environment.

The views these wives expressed about their well-being are shown in the tables that follow as percentages of wives who are extremely satisfied, satisfied, and dissatisfied. The findings shown here comprise only part of the total information collected. Additional reports of findings are listed in the references.

Overall, about two-thirds of the wives report that they are satisfied with the quality of their lives. Place of residence, metro or non-metro, does seem to be a factor in how wives feel. Compared to wives living in the metro area, more non-metro wives report dissatisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro</th>
<th>Non-Metro</th>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extremely Satisfied</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Figures shown are percentages.)
Eight of 10 wives, metro as well as non-metro, rate family life and family relationships as extremely important to them. No one rated these aspects of their lives unimportant.

The number of metro wives and husbands who rated relationships with spouses satisfactory is almost the same. On the other hand, non-metro wives more frequently reported relationships with spouses extremely satisfactory than did non-metro husbands.

Overwhelmingly, wives report satisfaction with family life in general and with their relationships with their husbands and children. More than half of all husbands rate family life satisfactory, that is, they were neither extremely satisfied or dissatisfied.

Relationships with children are reported as a source of dissatisfaction somewhat more often than relationships with husbands. Typically, relationships with husbands are regarded as equally important as those with children.

Three-fourths of these Minnesota wives are satisfied with the size of their families. A larger share of husbands than wives express satisfaction with family size. Both husbands and wives who are dissatisfied prefer larger families.
Data from the wife and the husband in the same family show that most non-metro husband-wife pairs agree about their feelings of satisfaction with quality of life, family life, spouse relationship, and current employment. Among most metro pairs, there was agreement on all of these life concerns with the exception of satisfaction with quality of life. Almost twice as many husbands express some degree of dissatisfaction with the quality of their lives.
A sense of autonomy, of having some control over the direction of one's life, contributes to feelings of self-worth and mental health. It is significant, then, that more than half of the wives in the study report they are dissatisfied with the extent of control they have in their lives.

WORK

Although they may not always be thought of in this way, working wives—those doing useful things for others—include wives working at home and away from home, whether paid or not.

There is little difference in the importance attached to employment by metro and non-metro wives. Although a third of each group feels that employment is important to them, two-thirds are dissatisfied with the opportunities for work available.

When the hours of household work were added to the hours of paid employment for each wife, the total daily workload varied from 6 to 15 hours. Three-fourths of the wives worked more than 8 hours a day. Ninety percent of the wives with workdays of 10 or more hours were employed outside their homes. (Data on household work time were taken from the study by K. Walker; see references, page 22.)

For these wives, satisfaction with the quality of their lives is apparently not affected by the number of hours worked.
In contrast to family life and relationships that are rated as extremely important by 8 of 10 wives, economic matters—family income and standard of living—are judged extremely important to quality of life by fewer than 3 of 10 wives. About 15 percent of the wives say neither income nor standard of living are at all important to the quality of their lives.

On the whole, management of income is more important to these wives than the amount of income itself. Seven of 10 wives feel family income is adequate to provide only part of their needs, a view that may reflect the failure of the family to attain economic goals such as savings.

Slightly more than half of the wives report they are satisfied with the way family money is managed.
Day Care for Children

About half of the wives, employed and not employed, are satisfied with day-care services. Half of the mothers of preschool children feel day care is important; fewer than half of the other mothers do.

Community Resources

Extremely Satisfied
Metro: 8 Non-Metro: 8
Satisfied
Metro: 35 Non-Metro: 48
Dissatisfied
Metro: 57 Non-Metro: 44

(Figures shown are percentages.)

Metro and non-metro mothers also differ in their views on the importance of recreational resources for both children and adults. Almost a quarter of non-metro mothers feel recreational facilities and activities for children are not important. In contrast, only 7 percent of metro mothers expressed that view. Adult recreational facilities were rated as important by twice as many metro as non-metro women.
Intangibles

These metro and non-metro wives also shared their viewpoints about the social climate in their communities.

(Figures shown are percentages.)

Dissatisfaction with some of the intangible social aspects of their lives is expressed by a large share of the wives, both metro and non-metro. In particular, these women are dissatisfied with moral standards and lack of cooperation among people in working to promote community improvement.

(Figures shown are percentages.)

Safety of person and property is judged as extremely important by 6 of every 10 wives.
More than three-fourths of the wives think family residence, neighborhood, and community are important. In fact, a quarter of all wives feel these are extremely important.

In response to a question about where they would prefer to live if they could live anywhere they chose, a medium-size city with a population of less than 50,000 is preferred by three-fourths of metro wives. Non-metro wives for the most part prefer small towns of 10,000 or less.

A large proportion of both metro and non-metro wives express dissatisfaction with the appearance of the man-made environment—buildings and streets. More metro than non-metro wives attach importance to the appearance of the natural environment.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Metro</th>
<th>Non-Metro</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man-Made Environment</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Dissatisfied</td>
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<td>47</td>
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<td>Natural Environment</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extremely Satisfied</td>
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<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Figures shown are percentages.)
APPENDIX

Methodology

These survey data were collected during June 1977. The 100 metropolitan and 100 non-metropolitan families with at least one child under the age of 18 who comprise the sample were randomly selected according to cluster sampling procedures. The population base for the sample was the local telephone directory. For the metropolitan sample, the Minneapolis directory was used. The non-metropolitan site, Montevideo, was selected from a list of towns with populations between 5,000 and 10,000 located more than 30 miles from a metropolitan area. On the basis of distribution of responses, the seven-step scale of satisfaction was collapsed to a three-step scale for this report. “Dissatisfied” includes “somewhat satisfied,” “mixed,” “somewhat dissatisfied,” “dissatisfied,” and “extremely dissatisfied” ratings. For a more complete description of the sample, see Quality of Life, Agricultural Experiment Station Miscellaneous Report 154.

References


