

QUALITY OF LIFE STUDY SERIES

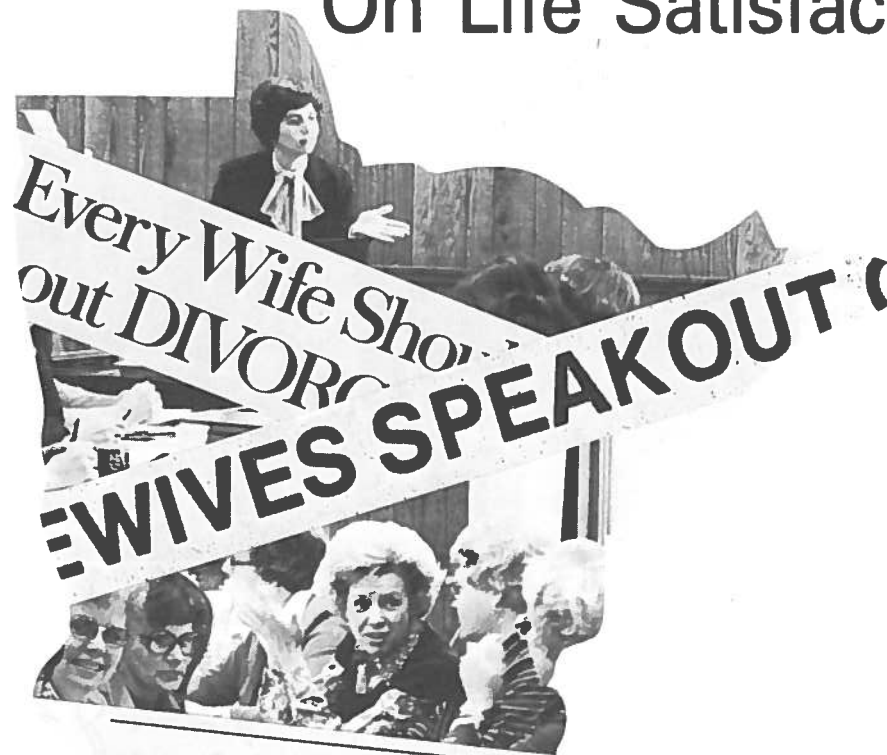


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Minnesota Wives Speak Out On Life Satisfaction



**HOUSEWIVES! STOP
FEELING GUILTY!**

continued

HOMEMAKER MINNESOTA

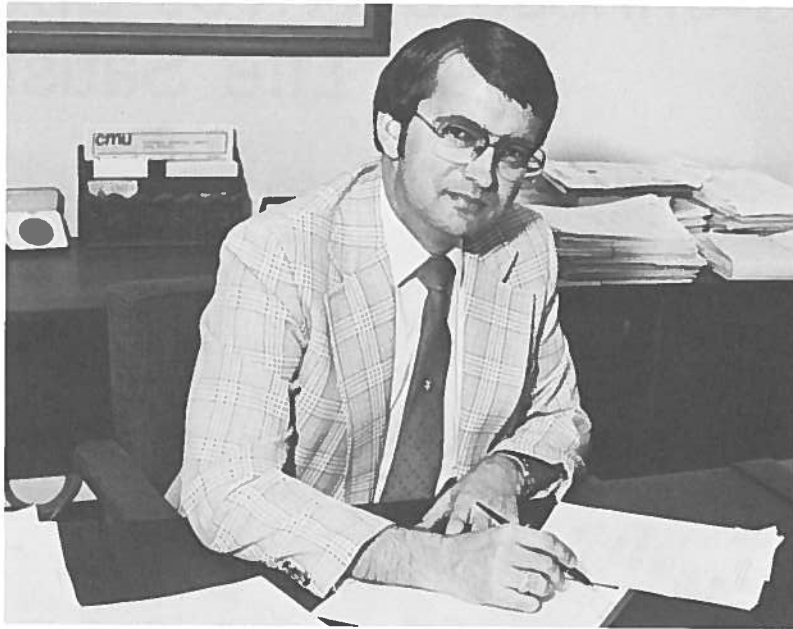
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**Richard J. Sauer, Director,
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Dear Fellow Minnesotan:

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.

Metro Non-Metro
Quality of Life

Extremely Satisfied

8	11
63	54
29	35

Satisfied

Dissatisfied

(Figures shown are percentages.)

FAMILY

	Family Life		Family Relationships Spouse		Family Relationships Children	
	Metro	Non-Metro	Metro	Non-Metro	Metro	Non-Metro
Extremely Satisfied	41	32	47	46	41	39
Satisfied	44	51	42	47	46	48
Dissatisfied	15	17	11	7	13	13

(Figures shown are percentages.)

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.



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.

	Number of Children	
Extremely Satisfied	36	37
Satisfied	38	38
Dissatisfied	26	25

(Figures shown are percentages.)

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.



Metro Non-Metro

Quality of Life

	W*	H*	W	H
Extremely Satisfied	6	6	12	18
Satisfied	67	45	54	51
Dissatisfied	27	49	34	31

(Figures shown are percentages.)

Family Life

	W	H	W	H
Extremely Satisfied	42	35	32	37
Satisfied	42	55	54	53
Dissatisfied	16	10	14	10

(Figures shown are percentages.)

*W = Wife, H = Husband

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.

Spouse Relationship

	W	H	W	H
Extremely Satisfied	48	45	41	42
Satisfied	37	43	54	49
Dissatisfied	15	12	5	9

(Figures shown are percentages.)

Current Employment

	W	H	W	H
Extremely Satisfied	20	10	12	17
Satisfied	44	51	41	47
Dissatisfied	36	39	47	36

(Figures shown are percentages.)



Metro Non-Metro

Extent of Control

Extremely Satisfied	9	5
Satisfied	31	44
Dissatisfied	60	51

(Figures shown are percentages.)

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.

	Current Employment		Employment Opportunities	
Extremely Satisfied	20	12	9	3
Satisfied	42	41	22	31
Dissatisfied	38	47	69	66

(Figures shown are percentages.)

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.



RESOURCES

Family Finances

Financial security was outranked only by family in the degree of importance to wives. Half of the wives in this study ranked it as very important.

	Metro <input type="checkbox"/>		Non-Metro <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Family Income		Standard of Living	
Extremely Satisfied	4	6	8	8
Satisfied	36	38	46	58
Dissatisfied	60	56	46	34

(Figures shown are percentages.)

Metro and non-metro wives are alike in the satisfaction and importance they associate with the level of their income. Relatively more metro than non-metro wives feel dissatisfied with their standard of living.

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.

	Money Management		Savings	
Extremely Satisfied	9	7	1	5
Satisfied	42	51	18	9
Dissatisfied	49	42	81	86

(Figures shown are percentages.)

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.

Community Resources

Metro Non-Metro

Day Care for Children

Extremely Satisfied	8	8	Extremely Important	16	12
Satisfied	35	48	Important	19	22
Dissatisfied	57	44	Unimportant	65	66

(Figures shown are percentages.)

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.



Schools Children's Recreation

Extremely Satisfied	21	32	22	17
Satisfied	34	53	39	43
Dissatisfied	45	15	39	40

(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.



Metro Non-Metro

	Health Care		Shopping		Transportation	
Extremely Satisfied	21	6	27	3	16	12
Satisfied	44	34	40	38	39	44
Dissatisfied	35	60	33	59	45	44

(Figures shown are percentages.)

Health care and shopping facilities are less satisfactory and more important to more non-metro than metro wives. Wives vary greatly in the importance they attach to public transportation; about a quarter of the non-metro wives and half of the metro wives think it is important.

	Police/Fire Services		Religious Activities	
Extremely Satisfied	24	15	34	22
Satisfied	49	62	44	62
Dissatisfied	27	23	22	16

(Figures shown are percentages.)

About half of the wives in the study rank religion as a very important concern. A very large share of all the wives are satisfied with the religious activities available in their communities. Half the wives regard protective services, fire and police, as extremely important.

Intangibles

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

	Friendliness of People		Moral Standards		Cooperativeness	
Extremely Satisfied	20	11	16	4	8	3
Satisfied	49	50	33	41	32	43
Dissatisfied	31	39	51	55	60	54

(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.

	Traffic Safety		Personal Safety	
Extremely Satisfied	7	3	10	7
Satisfied	25	37	33	58
Dissatisfied	68	60	57	35

(Figures shown are percentages.)

Safety of person and property is judged as extremely important by 6 of every 10 wives.

ENVIRONMENT

Metro Non-Metro

	Man-Made Environment		Natural Environment	
Extremely Satisfied	13	9	14	19
Satisfied	45	44	41	53
Dissatisfied	42	47	45	28

	Residence		Neighborhood		Community	
Extremely Satisfied	12	16	14	14	19	15
Satisfied	56	56	51	55	53	57
Dissatisfied	32	28	35	31	28	28

(Figures shown are percentages.)

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.

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.



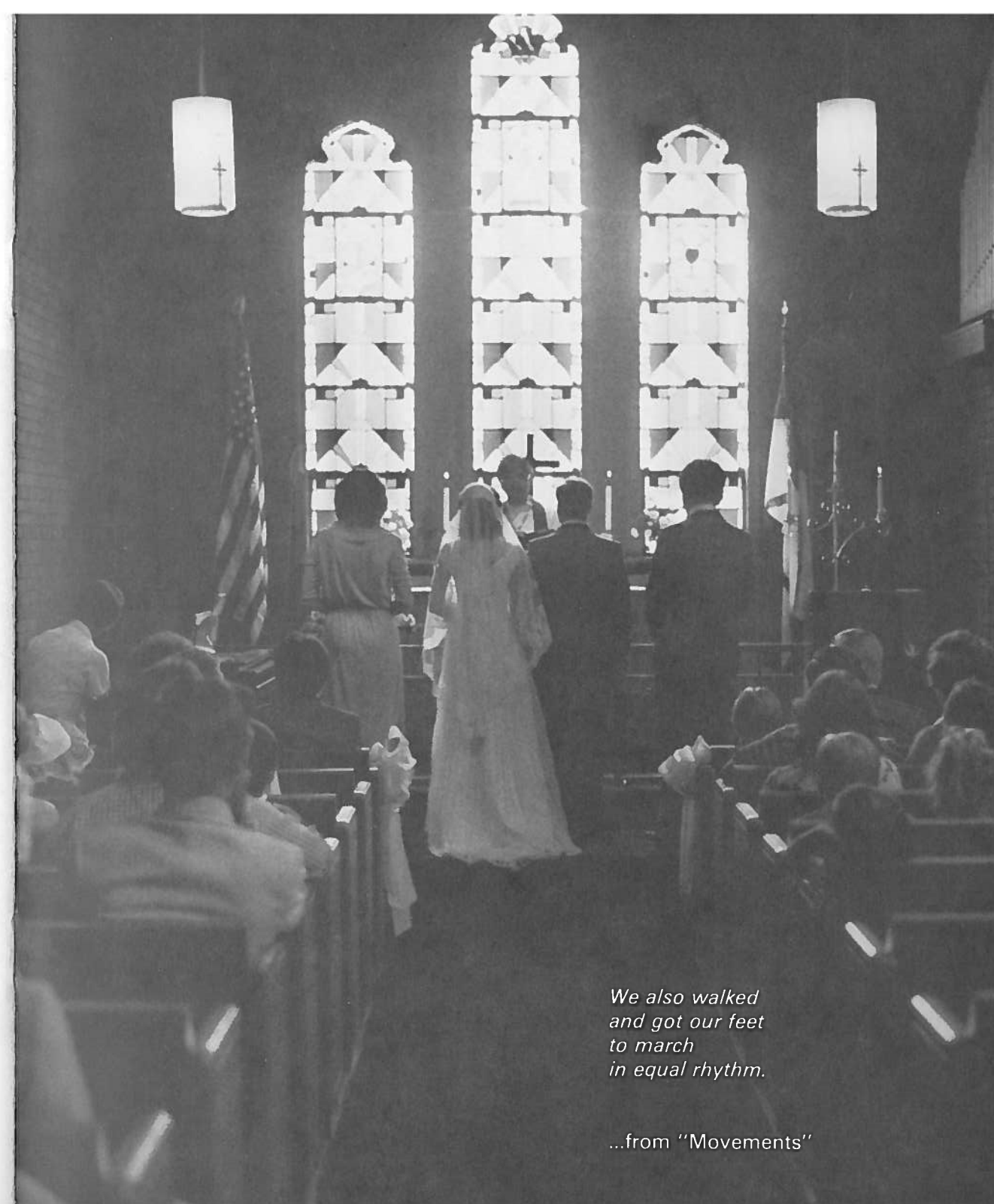
APPENDIX

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.

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*We also walked
and got our feet
to march
in equal rhythm.*

...from "Movements"