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## Some Findings of the Human Needs Assessment Survey

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# Economics Newsletter

Economics Department

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## SOME FINDINGS OF THE HUMAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Editor's Note: The conduct of studies such as the Human NEEDS Assessment Survey is one of several types of activities of the Institute of Social Sciences for Rural-Urban Research and Planning at S.D.S.U. The First Planning and Development District of South Dakota received a grant from the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare and then sub-contracted with the Institute to conduct the study. The Institute interviewed 1,845 households and 61 institutionalized elderly in the First District during the last quarter of 1972. The First District consists of Brookings, Clark, Codington, Deuel, Grant, Hamlin, Kingsbury, Lake, Miner, and Moody counties.

The NEEDS Assessment data will be used as a basis for determining the needs of residents of the First Planning and Development District of South Dakota. These data can be used by local units of government and various state agencies to identify common problems, plan programs to solve them, and coordinate these programs on a district-wide basis in order to provide better and more efficient services to the taxpayers of the ten counties in the First District.

These preliminary findings are partial and show only the frequency of responses to questions. The frequencies are in the process of being analyzed by county, location, age, sex and other variables for more detailed study.

### Preliminary Findings

Households in the First Planning District averaged just under 3.1 members each. Nearly 35 percent of the households were located on farms, 26 percent were in small towns, and 39 percent were in municipalities of 2,500 or more.

Seventy-four percent of the households had at least one gainfully employed member. Among the principal wage-earners in the sample, 37 percent classified themselves as farmers, 12 percent were self-employed businessmen, and 51 percent said they were salaried. One out of five principal wage-earners showed some dissatisfaction with his job, saying he would prefer another occupation if he had a choice.

Almost a third of those interviewed said they were concerned about not having enough education either to get a good job or to advance in their present employment situation.

When asked about community services, at least one out of five respondents was dissatisfied with dog control, traffic control, jails and correctional facilities, and recreation for children. Two out of five were dissatisfied with teen-age recreation and street or road conditions.

Respondents were asked to name what they felt were the most serious

problems in their community. Personal financial problems were the most common, problems caused by chemical dependencies were next, youth-related problems were third, followed by problems relating to law and order and finally, environmental problems.

A general absence of youth centers seemed to pose a problem. A majority thought there was a lack of things for teen-agers to do in their communities. Only eight percent of the teen-agers in the sample were said to attend youth centers, but 75 percent of the respondents said teen-agers in their households would attend if there were a youth center available to them. About 85 percent said there were no such centers available.

A quarter of the respondents did not know there was a county health nurse available for their use (there is at least one in each of the ten counties).

Nearly six percent of the households said a telephone was not readily available to them in case of emergency and a large share of these blamed party lines or poor service.

Inquiry into population mobility showed

18 percent of the households had at least one member move out in the past two years. The average age of those who moved was 20. Reasons for moving were as follows: Employment, 21 percent; school, 33 percent; marriage, 29 percent; armed forces, 7 percent; and other reasons, 10 percent. About half of those who moved went out of the state. This was seen as a problem because when young adults move away, a larger share of the tax burden falls to those who remain.

The elderly make up a rather large portion of the population: those 60 years of age and older comprise 19 percent of the population here, compared with a national average of 14 percent. Transportation was a problem for two out of five elderly persons interviewed. The average number of contacts with a doctor for institutionalized elderly was ten per year, compared with three per year for the general First District population.

This brief report touches only a very small portion of the data provided through the NEEDS Survey. Anyone interested in taking a closer look may contact Model Rural Development, Watertown, or the Institute of Social Science, Wenona Hall, SDSU, Brookings.

Dale E. Roth, NEEDS Project Leader

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