## FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION

# Survey of Rural Challenges Results Are In

# Your answers help many rural organizations

**June 1, 2021, Hopeton, Oklahoma, and Webster City, Iowa**

The Survey of Rural Challenges results are ready. Visit [www.saveyour.town/survey](http://www.saveyour.town/survey) The survey was conducted by SaveYour.Town and SmallBizSurvival.com and was open to rural people globally. More than 1400 people have answered the survey since 2015.

“*COVID-19 has changed almost everything in 2020, and we wanted to ask rural people how much it has changed their priorities. Has COVID displaced other challenges like housing and internet access? That’s what we wanted to find out*,” Becky McCray, publisher of SmallBizSurvival.com said. “*While Covid-19 did affect rural communities, rural people were more concerned about the long term priorities in their small towns,*” McCray shared.

Organizers Becky McCray and Deb Brown have been asking for and listening to rural challenges since 2015. Organizations like government agencies, university educators and community utilities have used the results to better serve rural people. Results from 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2021 are available at <https://smallbizsurvival.com/survey-of-rural-challenges.html>

“*The previous surveys have told us that housing, losing young people, and dead downtowns were in the top five challenges. They still are*,” Deb Brown, co-founder of SaveYour.Town said. “*The biggest challenge is the lack of good employees.”*

“*A lot of groups claim to speak for rural people and the challenges they face. We wanted to hear from the rural people themselves, to get a more realistic look at the challenges,*” Becky McCray, publisher of SmallBizSurvival.com said. “*Common services offered to rural people, like business planning, boot camps for entrepreneurs and business training classes, don’t match what rural people said they wanted help with.”*

“*Rural people have told us that the rural stories that get the most media attention aren’t really the same as their challenges. In 2017 and 2019, rural businesses said that marketing and lack of good people to hire were bigger challenges than finding a loan,*” Deb Brown, co-founder of SaveYour.Town said. “*People are more concerned with finding a usable building than finding a loan.”*

Results from this year’s survey are at [www.saveyour.town/survey](http://www.saveyour.town/survey)

**Contact for more information and to schedule an interview:**

* Deb Brown deb@saveyour.town
* Becky McCray becky@smallbizsurvival.com

**About the survey methodology**

The survey will collect voluntary responses online in the fourth quarter of 2020. Respondents are expected to come from subscribers and visitors to SaveYour.Town and SmallBizSurvival.com, media coverage and publicity from cooperating groups. Respondents will identify themselves as rural by participating, and a portion will identify themselves as business owners by responding to the business question. Participants are expected to include people from the USA, Canada, Australia and other international locations.

**About SaveYour.Town**

[SaveYour.Town](https://saveyour.town) believes small towns can be saved by their own people using their existing assets. Deb Brown and Becky McCray joined forces in May 2015 to help small towns and rural communities thrive. They deliver speeches and presentations internationally, lead site visits and community brainstorming sessions, and create online videos and short courses of practical steps that can be put into action right away.

**About Small Biz Survival**

[SmallBizSurvival.com](https://smallbizsurvival.com) publishes practical articles for rural small businesses. It was founded in January 2006 by Becky McCray from Oklahoma. Over the years, it has achieved top ranking among small business blogs on sites like Technorati, Invesp BlogRank and BizHumm, and it continues to appear on lists of top small business blogs. For her work as publisher, McCray has been named one of the Power Players in Technology Business Media and a Small Business Influencer Journalist four times.

**About Becky McCray**

Becky McCray is a lifelong small-town entrepreneur. As co-founder of Save Your.Town, she shares insights from her real-world experience as a business owner and cattle rancher. Throughout her career, rural has been the focus. She managed a retail store, served as city administrator and nonprofit executive, bought and sold antiques and taught classes in business and technology. Her practical perspective is featured at her highly-ranked website, Small Biz Survival, and in her award-winning book, Small Town Rules. She’s been featured and quoted in books, newspapers, magazines, blogs, podcasts and university publications. She makes her home base in Hopeton, Oklahoma, a community of 30 people.

**About Deb Brown**

Deb Brown is a small town enthusiast and expert for small towns. Her practical approach for getting communities into action right away has been shared at national conferences, local visits, service organizations and everything in between. Her wealth of experience includes foreign casualty insurance underwriting, bartending, retail management, selling knives around the US, leading a chamber and working with small towns. Deb has lived in tiny towns, small towns, small cities and a major metro city. Yet, she’s come home to a small town and travels to many other rural communities to help. She collaborates with Becky McCray at SaveYour.Town and has her own business www.BuildingPossibility.com.

# **Talking Points:**

*The talking points are in red, everything else supports those points.*

The broader sample on this Survey of Rural Challenges gives **the big picture of what rural people are thinking.**

**Common themes in media coverage of small towns don’t match what rural people said.**

* Countless media stories have focused on rural people’s national political views.
* **Local politics mattered more than national politics to rural people.**
* Poverty, drugs and crime dominated small town media stories, but rural people ranked them among the **lowest** of all challenges.
* **Rural media coverage affects:**
	+ Rural services and support
	+ Rural policy discussions

**Common services offered to rural people don’t match what rural people said they wanted help with.**

* Rural people are **more focused on their downtown** than recruiting outside businesses.
* No one called for an outside savior business to swoop in and save their town.
* Rural people say **usable buildings** are as hard or harder to find than loans.
* Popular with organizations, **not with rural people**:
	+ Business training classes
	+ Entrepreneur boot camps
	+ Venture capital or angel investors
	+ Business plan assistance

**What rural people say their real challenges are**

**Attitudes**

* Attitudes that lead to conflict, apathy and resistance to new ideas are the most-mentioned rural challenge
* Resistance to new ideas is the biggest attitude challenge.
* **There is almost no help offered to be more open to new ideas.**

**Population**

* Losing young people, needing new residents were always in the top 5
* People are more of a limiting factor than money, in these results

**The real challenges for rural small businesses**

* The biggest rural small business challenge is **lack of good employees**
* **Marketing challenges rural small businesses.**
	+ Competing locally, nationally and online all at the same time
	+ Rural small businesses need broader marketing support to remain competitive.

**Rural communities need customized support.**

* Over 30 different challenges were mentioned
* Most communities mentioned multiple challenges

**Discussion questions**

What will you change to better match what rural people said?

Who do you most want to share this video with?

* Local or statewide media?
* Organizations you belong to or people you know who provide rural services?
* Legislators or policy advocates?

# Website and social media links

* Survey Results and News Room: <https://saveyour.town/surveynews>
* LinkedIn: [Becky McCray](https://www.linkedin.com/in/beckymccray/), [Deb Brown](https://www.linkedin.com/in/saveyourtown/)
* Twitter: @[BeckyMcCray](https://twitter.com/beckymccray), @[DebWorks,](https://twitter.com/debworks) @[SBSurvival](https://twitter.com/sbsurvival), [@SaveYourTown](https://twitter.com/saveyourtown)
* Instagram: @[BeckyMcCray](https://instagram.com/beckymccray), @[DebraInIowa](https://instagram.com/debrainiowa), @[SaveYourTown](https://instagram.com/saveyourtown)
* Facebook: [Small Biz Survival](https://www.facebook.com/SmallBizSurvival), [SaveYour.Town](https://www.facebook.com/SaveYourTown)

# Sample wording for social media posts:

* Internet? Housing? Good workers? COVID? What are the real priorities in your town? Share on the Survey of Rural Challenges [https://SaveYour.town/survey2020](https://saveyour.town/survey2020)
* What are the real challenges in your town? Speak your mind on the Survey of Rural Challenges [https://SaveYour.town/survey2020](https://saveyour.town/survey2020)
* How has 2020 changed priorities in your small town? Share on the Survey of Rural Challenges [https://SaveYour.town/survey2020](https://saveyour.town/survey2020)
* Speak up, rural America! Share your situation on the Survey of Rural Challenges [https://SaveYour.town/survey2020](https://saveyour.town/survey2020)

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# Logos

**Downloadable at** [**https://saveyour.town/surveynews**](https://saveyour.town/surveynews)

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