

# Exploring Ways to Engage Communities in Efforts to Retain Youth in Rural Areas

Jason Hedrick, Ohio State University, [hedrick.10@osu.edu](mailto:hedrick.10@osu.edu)

Mark Light, Ohio State University, [light.42@osu.edu](mailto:light.42@osu.edu)

## OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

**Abstract:** The out-migration of youth from rural areas is an issue predominantly driven by economic factors. But are there factors that outweigh urban economic opportunity that keep young workers in rural areas of Northwest Ohio? This study analyzes the trends and issues related to the retention of young adults in Northwest Ohio. Researchers sampled over 340 young adults (25-34 years of age) from eight counties in Northwest Ohio. Results highlight rural community perceptions of young adults as well as those factors that impact the decision to remain in Rural Northwest Ohio. Sampled adults report those with stronger Northwest Ohio roots, i.e., who were raised in Northwest Ohio along with their parents or spouses, were more likely to settle in the area themselves. The research shows there are some significant correlations between certain demographic factors and the way respondents perceive their community or area.

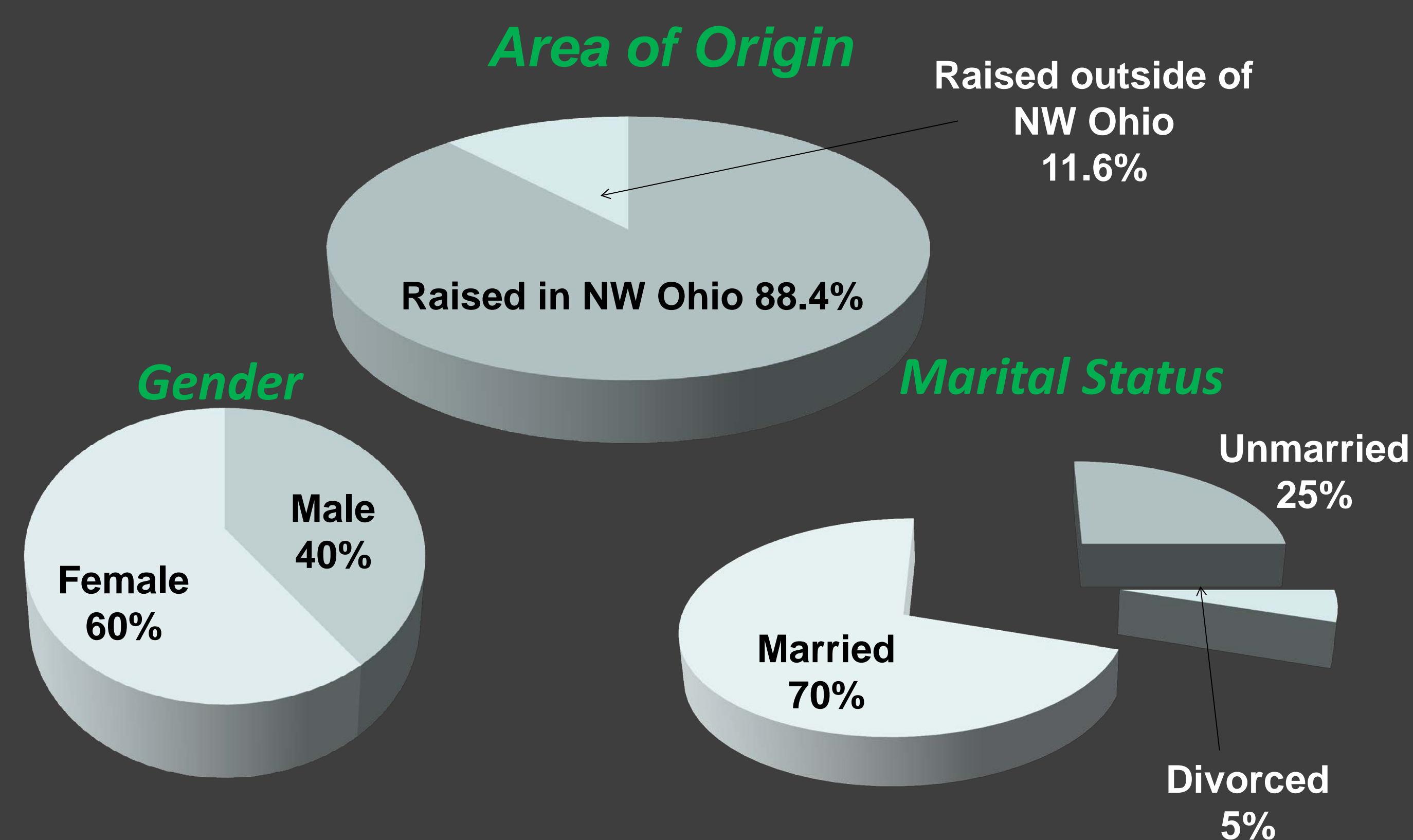


## Rating Various Aspects of Living in NW Ohio

	Mean
Safe Place to Live	5.09
Good place to raise a family	4.94
Affordable cost of living	4.68
Quality schools	4.59
People share my beliefs and values	4.50
A good place to further my education	3.46
There is positive growth in the area	3.25
Enough recreational activities	3.23
Good income potential	2.95
Interesting and fun activities	2.92
Enough employment opportunities	2.88
Enough cultural activities	2.86

## Methodology and Sample

The retention survey is meant to target residents of an eight-county area (Auglaize, Hardin, Henry, Mercer, Paulding, Putnam, Van Wert, and Williams) who are 25-34 years old. A random sample of participants were selected by mail invitation and directed to a web based survey. If respondents did not indicate they lived within this area, or were older than the targeted age group, they were removed from the data set. Consequently the number of respondents dropped from 382 to 342.



## Findings

### Job Satisfaction

More than half (61.4 percent) of respondents are very or extremely satisfied with their jobs. Nearly another third (32.4 percent) are in the middle tier of satisfaction, and only 6.1 percent are not satisfied with their jobs.

### Spousal Influence

When asked who has the greatest influence over the respondents decision to remain in or return to the area, more than 60% reported that their spouse has the strongest influence.

### Parental Influence

When asked who has the greatest influence over the respondents decision to remain in or return to the area, more than 40% reported that their parents had the strongest influence and the number for in-laws dropped to a third.

### Married with Children

Respondents with children were more likely to say that their parents are highly influential in their decision to live in NW Ohio. In fact, they are significantly more likely to cite parents as the strongest influencer.

## Discussion

Community stakeholders and post secondary institutions should aim to build partnerships between local youth and adult community members whereby youth are given tools, knowledge, and support to actively engage in public service, leadership, and entrepreneurial ventures in their community. The overarching goal should be to promote rural socio-economic revitalization and rural youth retention, by educating and engaging rural youth in leadership and entrepreneurial roles that capitalize both on local youths' interests and abilities as well as on the community's specific socioeconomic needs and assets. Community leaders need to be deliberate about developing strategies which: a. place youth in leadership roles to systematically analyze and design improvements in the economic, social, and recreational opportunities in their communities; b. build mutual engagement between community leaders and youth focused on improving opportunities for youth that have also a positive socio-economic impact on the community.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

## For More Information

<http://go.osu.edu/ruraladults>

or scan QR Code with your smart phone

