



The public's perception of extension in Montana  
by Charlene Rich Garoutte

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Home Economics  
Montana State University  
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**Abstract:**

This study determined the perceptions of Montana citizens of the Montana Extension Service. The study focused on the specific services utilized, the quality of the service provided, usage by program area, willingness to pay a fee for services and preference for educational information.

One thousand Montanans were selected to participate through a random sample. Information from the returned questionnaires was statistically analyzed with the use of SupqrCalc 4.

Based on the results of the research, it was concluded that over half of the people are familiar with Extension and those that are give Extension an excellent or good rating. Most persons familiar with Extension form their perceptions based on only one to four contacts per year. Contacts are made most frequently in the areas of agriculture and home economics. Montanans prefer to receive educational information at in-depth short courses and "learn-at-home" materials. A user fee would most willingly be paid for workshops, publications, computer programs and video programs.

Recommendations for marketing Extension in Montana include: a statewide organizational marketing effort which would include a high visibility emphasis for the entire organization, target marketing for specific programs, program offerings to be designed around preferred methods of receiving educational information and a closer examination of user fees for services provided.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Science

in

Home Economics

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June 1988

APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Charlene Rich Garoutte

This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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Date

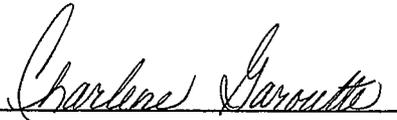
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## ABSTRACT

This study determined the perceptions of Montana citizens of the Montana Extension Service. The study focused on the specific services utilized, the quality of the service provided, usage by program area, willingness to pay a fee for services and preference for educational information.

One thousand Montanans were selected to participate through a random sample. Information from the returned questionnaires was statistically analyzed with the use of SuperCalc 4.

Based on the results of the research, it was concluded that over half of the people are familiar with Extension and those that are give Extension an excellent or good rating. Most persons familiar with Extension form their perceptions based on only one to four contacts per year. Contacts are made most frequently in the areas of agriculture and home economics. Montanans prefer to receive educational information at in-depth short courses and "learn-at-home" materials. A user fee would most willingly be paid for workshops, publications, computer programs and video programs.

Recommendations for marketing Extension in Montana include: a statewide organizational marketing effort which would include a high visibility emphasis for the entire organization, target marketing for specific programs, program offerings to be designed around preferred methods of receiving educational information and a closer examination of user fees for services provided.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

What will the role of the Montana Extension Service be in the information society of the 21st century? Will most counties have one or two Extension Agents? Will these agents advertise and conduct public workshops for clientele as they have in the past? Will they travel around the county making farm or home visits? Will Extension offices be warehouses for "free" brochures for the public?

The Extension Service as a publicly supported educational agency is struggling for its identity in a changing society. Issues of defining appropriate target audiences, delivering quality programs, projecting a positive image, and maintaining an adequate support base are being widely discussed (Warner and Christenson, 1984).

All organizations and agencies whether private or public have a public image. In the private sector firms engage in elaborate public relations campaigns in order to create a certain public image. Although Extension may not advertise per se, Extension does have an image. Its image has evolved over time and Extension's vitality in the future will rest with its ability to develop, maintain, and enhance a positive, viable public image.

Knowledge about Extension occurs as people contact the organization as direct users of the services or indirectly through others. The image people have of the organization is developed through the direct

or indirect experiences they have had with the organization or its programs. Warner and Christenson (1984:44) maintain that "images are not grounded in fixed events but rather in information and interpretative processes that are constantly changing."

The Montana Extension Service realized a need for an improved public image during the 1987 legislative session. Dr. LeRoy Luft selected a committee of administrators, county agents, state specialists and media staff to formulate a marketing plan for the Montana Extension Service. The purpose of the committee was

. . . to prepare a plan to increase the visibility of the Montana Extension Service, its programs, and the Extension professionals, which will result in (1) greater participation by the people of Montana in Extension Education programs, and (2) greater understanding and support from key groups and individuals (Luft, 1987:1).

As a part of this charge, data was needed to assess how the public perceived the Extension Service in 1987 and thus to gather data to formulate a marketing plan.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine Montana citizens' perception of programs offered by the Montana State University Extension Service.

#### Need for the Study

As society grows more complex, the need for a public agency to communicate educational information to its public becomes even greater. One cannot assume that the world will beat a path to your door just

because you build a better mouse trap. Although an agency delivers high quality programs, it still is necessary to create and maintain a public awareness of those programs. The public could be identified as the consumer, the client, the non-user or the cost-bearer.

Clientele who benefit from an organization's programs are its most obvious public. They are the consumers of the assistance provided. However, there are individuals that are not directly served by the organization. These include persons who are aware of the organization and its programs but do not use them, as well as persons who may be totally unaware of the organization.

The Extension Service network traditionally has effectively served the needs of rural America. Eventually rural concerns have been balanced with similar programs in urban areas.

The demand for information and education allowed the Extension Service to be driven by program, much as business was driven by production. In other words, whatever programs were produced, clients bought. Consequently, there was little need to focus or set priorities for these programs, or to promote them.

Then, much like in the business world, competitors in adult education began to appear on the scene. "Extension found too many programs chasing too few clients." Thus, marketing of Extension has become the password to success, a lesson learned from business (O'Brien, 1987).

As a result of the effort by the Marketing Extension Committee to determine the public's perception of the Montana State University Extension Service, the Marketing Committee obtained objective data on

Montana Extension's current image. The committee can utilize the data as a basis for marketing decisions and activities and to identify target audiences for future Extension marketing efforts.

### Objectives

The study was conducted under the guidance of the Marketing Extension Committee. The objectives were:

1. To determine the public's perceived effectiveness of the Montana State University Extension Service by measuring:
  - a. The specific services utilized: office visits, publications, educational programs, specialists' assistance, county agent.
  - b. How the consumer rates the quality of the service provided.
2. To determine usage of the following program areas:
  - a. Family Financial Management
  - b. Housing and Energy
  - c. Foods and Nutrition
  - d. Human Development/Family Life
  - e. Livestock
  - f. Farm Management/Finance
  - g. Crops/Soils/Pest Management
  - h. Natural Resources/Soil/Water/Forestry
  - i. Horticulture/Gardening
  - j. Community Development
  - k. Youth Education Programs

3. To determine if the public is willing to pay a fee for the following services:
  - a. Office Consultations
  - b. Farm/Home Visits
  - c. Publications
  - d. Workshops/Educational Programs
  - e. Newsletters
  - f. Computer Programs
  - g. Video Programs
4. To determine if the public is aware of how the Extension Service is funded and how they perceive the current funding level.
5. To identify sources other than Extension where educational information is obtained.

#### Definitions

Terms used throughout the study are defined here in order to provide for an understanding of the terms for consistent interpretation.

Montana Extension Service: The branch of Montana State University established by the Smith-Lever Act in 1914 with the purpose of taking research based information to the off-campus clientele in Montana.

Marketing Extension Committee: A committee unique to Montana Extension Service with the purpose of identifying target audiences and establishing a market plan to increase Extension's visibility.

Consumer: Any person in Montana who may have utilized the Extension Service.

Non-user: Any person in Montana who has not utilized the Extension Service.

Cost-bearer: Any person in Montana who supports the Extension Service financially. Included would be taxpayers and legislators.

#### Limitations

1. The time period of the study was from September 4, 1987 to October 16, 1987.
2. The survey was limited to a sample of 1,000 persons from the population of those Montanans 18 years and older holding current driver's licenses as of August 1, 1987.

#### Assumptions

1. All persons in Montana have the opportunity to participate in Montana Extension Service programs.
2. Information is provided by sources other than Montana Extension Service and not all persons have utilized the services available through Extension.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

What is the extent of public awareness of Extension? Who really uses its services? Are they primarily rural or urban, rich or poor, young or old? How do they rate the quality of the services? Is the public willing to pay for services they may have previously received at no cost? All of these questions will be explored in the following review of literature.

#### Awareness of Extension

Warner and Christenson (1984) maintain that it has generally been assumed that Extension has a high level of visibility, especially with traditional audiences. This might be expected in rural areas as Extension has a long history of working with rural people. But, does the urban public know that Extension even exists? Or is Extension's identity lost among the maze of the many other government agencies?

It has been suggested, due to the diversity of Extension programs, that instead of a single identify, Extension actually has many identities. For some clientele, Extension may be known only as 4-H, homemakers clubs or agriculture related.

Extension's historical base has evolved over the past 75 years. This longevity is unique among similarly situated adult educational programs.

In business many advertisements can be found with the words, "We've been serving you for the past 25 years . . ." Establishing a historical base in business is akin to establishing credibility for success (O'Brien, 1987).

Warner and Christenson (1984) also suggest it is possible that there is more name recognition for programs of Extension than for the organization itself. For example, when Extension staff identify themselves as 4-H agents or Extension Home Economists, it is not always clear that they work for the same agency.

A recent definition of marketing is "the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives" (O'Brien, 1987). All major companies have a research and development unit to conduct market surveys and field research so they can develop and diversify their products.

Extension has not felt it necessary to promote its product as an organization. Instead, it has operated on the philosophy that a job well done is the only advertisement needed. According to a recent survey administered by a member of the Marketing Extension Committee, this philosophy is currently held by a certain portion of Montana Extension's staff. However, in the present era of competition for limited federal, state and local resources, the current administration recognizes the need for more attention to be given to Extension's identity.

Awareness of an organization precedes use of an agency's services and support for its existence, according to Warner and

Christenson (1984). Awareness is seen as the wide mouth of a funnel, with use the next lower ring in the funnel, followed by satisfaction and support. This explains why private businesses commit large sums of money to marketing a positive image or awareness of their products. Pending the results of this study, Montana Extension may want to seriously consider allocation of resources for enhancing awareness of their products and services.

### Program Usage

Extension clientele are predominately middle class. They are middle to upper income, high school and college educated, white, married, employed, and homeowners. The study of use patterns indicate a lack of representation of clientele that are poor, single, divorced, and widowed (Warner and Christenson, 1981).

Warner and Christenson examined use patterns of Extension services for the year 1981 for each of four program areas. Agricultural programs enjoyed the highest level (62%) of use of the four programs. Home Economics programs were second with just over 40%. Community development and 4-H programs had between 20 and 30% usage.

Social, economic, and demographic characteristics of the users of the four program areas were also studied by Warner. It was found that women, as expected, were the largest user group for home economics programs, but 25% of the home economics information was used by men. It was found that women also made extensive use of agricultural programs. Blacks and minority groups were the largest

users of community development programs. Agriculture served the smallest percentage of minorities.

In a Kentucky study (Christenson, 1980), over half of Extension users (58%) considered themselves to be occasional or frequent users. Forty-two of those surveyed reported using the service only rarely. The most frequent users of Extension programs were farm residents.

In the same study, almost all of the users had received some printed material from Extension. Over 90% of those surveyed had contact through a radio or television program, while 39% had attended an Extension workshop in the past year.

#### Financial Support for Services

Like all organizations, Extension must have resources in order to survive and grow. Without adequate support, it will wither and die. Public service organizations often have a separation between recipients of the services and policy makers who control the resources (Etzioni, 1964).

Positive public opinion about an organization results in a perception of greater organizational effectiveness and support. The more the organizational efforts are viewed as consistent with public need, the more willing people are to support the organization (Meier and Browne, 1983). Therefore, it is necessary for Montana Extension to possess a favorable public image to insure adequate funding for the future.

In the Kentucky study (Christenson, 1980), once people used the services of Extension, they were more favorable toward increased spending and opposed to spending reductions. They found the large

majority wanted the funding level to remain unchanged. The more frequently people used the services of Extension, the more willing they were to lend support. Twice as many frequent users, compared with occasional users, wanted more money spent on Extension.

In a study conducted in Colorado (Newlin, 1986), more than half of those respondents who indicated familiarity with Extension said they would be willing to pay for workshops, video tapes, and computer software programs. Less than half said they would be willing to pay for publications. A third to less than one-fourth expressed a willingness to pay for home/farm visits, office visits, newsletters, and telephone information services.

Although this current study will focus on whether users or potential users are willing to pay a fee for services, there may be some correlations that can be made between quality of service and willingness to pay. Overall satisfaction is positively related to support but may not be as strong as one might expect. The Warner and Christenson study (1984) found that satisfied people are more supportive, but the Kentucky study showed only that satisfied persons are less likely to want funds reduced. This would suggest that positive experiences with Extension result in positive opinions about support.

## CHAPTER 3

## METHODOLOGY

To address the objectives of the study and to solicit the desired information, the research design utilized was descriptive research. A closed form survey instrument was used to collect data. Specific activities are outlined in the following sections: population and sample, instrumentation, and data analysis.

Population and Sample

The sample population chosen for this study was a list of all Montana residents who held driver's licenses. Permission was obtained from the Department of Justice to secure this list of drivers holding a Montana license. A driver's license list has advantages over other sampling frames in that it contains the names and addresses of individuals and is not subject to many of the socio-economic biases of other sampling sources (Warner, Burdge, Hoffman, and Hammonds, 1975).

One thousand (1000) Montana residents were drawn in a random sample of driver's license holders. The Department of Justice chose the random sampling technique. This sample size drawn represented an effort to obtain a return of 400 responses to achieve a confidence level of  $\pm 4.9\%$  or 95.1% reliability.

### Instrumentation

A postal survey (Appendix A) was used to obtain responses. Weiers (1984) indicated the low cost of the mail questionnaire has a distinct advantage when compared to either personal or telephone interviews. Weiers also maintained the cost advantage of the mail survey would be especially great if respondents are geographically dispersed:

The questionnaire was developed using Dillman's Total Design Method (TDM). The questionnaire was printed as a booklet. An attractive cover was designed to stimulate interest in the questionnaire. The title was designed to convey the topic of the study and to make it sound interesting. The graphic illustration was designed to contain the new logo-type of the Extension Service and to represent rural and urban populations. The question pages were printed in a photographically reduced form to fit the booklet format. The questionnaire booklet was reproduced on white paper by a printing method that provided a quality close to the original typed copy. The questionnaire was designed to fit a standard 7½" x 10½" mail-out envelope and, when folded, a standard business envelope.

Questions were ordered with "easy" to answer questions coming first to build respondents' confidence. Questions of similar content were grouped together. Questions that were considered most likely to be objectionable were positioned after less objectionable ones. Demographic questions were placed at the end of the questionnaire.

A first draft of the questionnaire was pre-tested by a panel consisting of members of the Marketing Extension Committee for content validity.

A second pre-test was conducted was conducted by an Extension administrator. Dillman (1978) recommends this pre-test of potential "users" of the data.

A third pre-test was conducted with people drawn from the population to be surveyed. This group was given a questionnaire accompanied by a cover letter and asked to fill it out in the presence of the researcher. Revisions to the questionnaire were made in accordance with information gathered from the three pre-tests.

A final questionnaire (Appendix A) and a cover letter (Appendix B) were mailed to Montana residents on Friday, September 4, 1987. A stamped, self-addressed envelope was enclosed for the return. A reminder post card (Appendix B) was sent to all non-respondents on Friday, September 18, 1987. A second mailing of the questionnaire and a second cover letter (Appendix B) were sent two weeks later to those who did not respond to the first mailing.

#### Data Analysis

Results of the survey were compiled by entering the data from the surveys into a SuperCalc 4 computer program. This computer program was designed to correspond with specific survey items. SuperCalc 4 has the capability of calculating mean, frequency, rank, and standard deviation. Tables were then developed to portray the statistical analysis in a descriptive form.

## CHAPTER 4

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the public's perception of the Montana State University Extension Service. To measure the perceptions, a survey was developed to obtain the opinions of Montana citizens. The information obtained from the surveys was used to generate data to fulfill the objectives of this study. Frequency distribution, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were used to report the data.

The findings are presented under the following major headings:

- 1) Demographics
- 2) Usage of Extension Services
- 3) Preferred Sources of Information and Services
- 4) Support and Awareness of Funding

Demographics

Table 1 displays data showing that a total of 1000 postal surveys were sent to individuals in 55 counties, with 312 being returned for a response rate of 31.2%. The 31.2% return rate from respondents resulted in a confidence level of  $\pm 5.6\%$ . Not all respondents chose to answer each question, which resulted in a variation of the (N=) and will be represented as such in the following tables.

Table 1. Summary of Responses.

Respondents	Number Sent	Number Returned	Percent Return
Montana Citizens	1000	312	31.2%

The questionnaire secured information regarding the sex of the respondents. Of the Montana citizens who responded, 37.4% were male, while 62.6% were female.

Data in Table 2 reveal the place of residence of the respondents. Eleven percent indicated they lived on a farm or ranch, 23.6% lived in a rural but not farm setting, 27.4% lived in towns under 10,000, and 38.1% lived in a city with a population of 10,000 and over. According to the Montana census (1980), 53% of the total population of Montana live in urban areas and 47% live in rural (under 2,500) areas.

Table 2. Residency of Montana Citizens (N=310).

Location	N	%
Farm or Ranch	34	11.0
Rural but not Farm	73	23.6
Town (under 10,000)	85	27.4
City (10,000 and over)	118	38.1

Information in Table 3 reveals the age of the respondents. Those 18-25 years of age comprise 10.3% of the sample, 26-35 years report 22.4%, 36-45 years report 17.6%, 46-55 years report 17.6%, 56-65 years report 13.5%, and those 66 years and older were 18.6% of the

responses. According to the Montana census (1980), the total percent of the population of Montana is as follows: 18-25 years = 9%; 26-35 years = 17%; 36-45 years = 11%; 46-55 years = 9%; 56-65 years = 9%; 66 years and older = 10%.

Table 3. Age of Respondents (N=312).

Age	N	%
18-25	32	10.3
26-35	70	22.4
36-45	55	17.6
46-55	55	17.6
56-65	42	13.5
66 and older	58	18.6

Previous profiles of users of Extension programs have indicated an underrepresentation among Extension clientele of single, divorced, and widowed persons. Table 4 indicates that married persons (69.5%) represented a large portion of those responding. Never married or single people comprised 13.5% of the sample and divorced and widowed totaled 17.1% (8.7 + 8.4).

Table 4. Marital Status of Respondents (N=311).

Marital Status	N	%
Never Married	42	13.5
Married	216	69.5
Divorced	27	8.7
Widowed	26	8.4

The profile of educational level of Montana citizens suggests that almost half (49.2%) have a high school diploma and another one-fourth (24.1%) have a college degree. A grade school education was reported by 6.1% of the sample, a trade school educational level by 16.1%, and a graduate degree was reported by 4.5% of those responding. According to the Montana census (1980), the median years of school completed for persons 25 years and older is 12.6. Seventy-four percent (74%) of males and females 25 years old and over are high school graduates.

Table 5. Level of Education (N=311).

Education	N	%
Grade School	19	6.1
High School	153	49.2
Trade School	50	16.1
College Graduate (BS/BA degree)	75	24.1
Graduate Degree (MS/PhD degree)	14	4.5

Awareness of the Extension Service based on the level of family income has been examined in other studies. As can be seen in Table 6, 27.1% of the respondents in this study were persons with incomes in the \$10,000-\$20,000 range, with another one-fourth (23.6%) in the \$20,000-\$30,000 range. Almost equal percentages were under \$10,000 (16.1%) as were over \$30,000 (17.5%). The lowest representation was for those persons making \$40,000 and above (6.9% + 8.9%). According to the Montana census (1980), the mean family income for Montana is \$20,659.

Table 6. Family Income Level (N=292).

Income Level	N	%
Less than \$9,999	47	16.1
\$10,000 to \$19,999	79	27.1
\$20,000 to \$29,999	69	23.6
\$30,000 to \$39,999	51	17.5
\$40,000 to \$49,999	20	6.9
\$50,000 and above	26	8.9

### Usage of Extension Service

A review of data in Table 7 indicates that 60.8% of the Montana citizens responding said they had used the services of the Montana State University Extension Service and 39.2% said they had not used the services.

Table 7. Usage of the Extension Service (N=311).

Answer	N	%
Yes	189	60.8
No	122	39.2

Contact by program area is represented in Table 8. Agriculture accounts for 33.3% of the contacts. Home Economics accounts for 28.3% of the contacts. 4-H/Youth Programs represent 19.3% of the contacts, with Community Development representing 8.0% of the contacts.

Table 8. Contact by Program Area (N=300).

Program Area	N	%
Agriculture	100	33.3
Home Economics	85	28.3
4-H/Youth Programs	58	19.3
Community Development	24	8.0
Other	33	11.0

The type of services utilized by respondents is depicted in Table 9. The County Extension Office was the most frequently utilized with 33.4%; Extension publications was next with 23.9%; followed by the County Agent with 22.5%. Extension specialists from Montana State University, Extension sponsored programs or workshops and "other" together accounted for 20% (7.5 + 10.9 + 1.7) of the responses.

Table 9. Services Utilized.

Service	N	%
County Extension Office	156	33.4
Extension Publications	112	23.9
County Agent	105	22.5
Extension Specialist from MSU	35	7.5
Extension Sponsored Program/Workshop	51	10.9
Other	8	1.7

Data in Table 10 give evidence of the frequency of contact of the citizens with the Extension Service. Of the 60.8% who initially said that they had used the services of the Montana State University Extension Service, only 5.4% (1.6 + 3.8) indicated they used the

service once a week or once a month. Three to four contacts per year were reported by 17.8% of the respondents. Another 67% reported they use the Extension Service 1-2 times per year or less.

Table 10. Frequency of Use (N=185).

Frequency of Contact	N	%
Once a week	3	1.6
Once a month	7	3.8
3-4 times per year	33	17.8
1-2 times per year	57	30.8
Less than once a year	67	36.2
Other	18	9.7

The information in Table 11 illustrates how Montana citizens rated the services of the Extension Service. The majority of respondents rated the services as either excellent (43.2%) or good (41.5%). A total of 15.3% rated the services provided by the Extension Service as fair, poor or don't know.

Table 11. Quality of Services Provided (N=185).

Rating	N	%
Excellent	79	43.2
Good	76	41.5
Fair	12	6.6
Poor	5	2.7
Don't know	11	6.0

### Preferred Sources of Information

Recognizing that there are many sources of information available, the Extension Service was interested in identifying where Montana citizens prefer to go for information in the subject matter areas of Home Economics, Agriculture, Community Development and Youth Education.

#### Home Economics

Table 12 indicates that the respondents chose magazines (26.3%) and the Extension Service (23.5%) as their most preferred sources of information in the area of Foods and Nutrition. The table further indicates that the power company (33.4%) and the Extension Service (15.2%) would be their choices for information in the subject matter of Housing and Energy. For Family Financial Management, respondents overwhelmingly indicated professionals (bankers, lawyers, insurance) (41.9%) as their preferred source of information, followed by magazines (13.1%). Physicians and nurses (17.2%), closely followed by magazines (15.4%), were the top choices for information on Human Development and Family Life. By program areas within Home Economics, the Extension Service in general was not found to be the preferred source of information.

When the totals were examined, magazines (68.4%) ranked first as a preferred source of information for Home Economics, followed by the Extension Service (59.5%) and professionals (47.9%).

Table 12. Preferred Sources of Information in Home Economics.

HOME ECONOMICS	Magazines	Television	Newspaper	Extension Service	Counselors	Clergy	Power Company	Dept. of Natural Resources	Physicians and Nurses	Family and Friends	Professionals (Bankers, Lawyers, Insurance)
Foods/Nutrition	26.3	8.9	15.0	23.5	1.8	.18	1.3	1.3	13.3	8.4	1.08
Housing/Energy	13.6	8.5	12.3	15.2	1.2	.19	33.4	8.6	--	4.4	2.7
Family Financial Management	13.1	7.1	9.0	10.3	7.7	1.5	--	.21	.21	9.0	41.9
Human Development/ Family Life	15.4	8.9	8.5	10.5	11.6	12.1	.36	.18	17.2	13.2	2.2
TOTALS	68.4	33.4	44.8	59.5	22.3	14.0	34.0	10.3	30.7	35.0	47.9

## Agriculture

Table 13 contains information on how Montana citizens prefer to obtain information in the subject matter area of Agriculture. Farm magazines (17.6%) followed by the Extension Service (15.3%) were the preferred sources of information on Livestock. In the area of Farm Management/Finance respondents chose agribusiness (19.8%) followed by the Extension Service (16.7%) as the top two choices. The Extension Service (28.1%) was chosen as the preferred source of information for Crops/Soils and Pest Management, followed by the State Department of Agriculture (15.8%). The State Department of Agriculture (24.1%) and the Extension Service (22.6%) rated closely as information sources for Natural Resources/Soil, Water and Forestry. Over 31% of those responding chose the Extension Service as the primary choice of information for Horticulture and Gardening. Family and neighbors (19.6%) followed the Extension Service as a source of information for Horticulture and Gardening. By program areas within Agriculture, the Extension Service in general was found to be the preferred source of information.

When the totals were examined, the Extension Service (113.9%) ranks first as a preferred source of information for Agriculture information, followed by the State Department of Agriculture (76.5%) and farm magazines (62.5%).

Table 13. Preferred Sources of Information in Agriculture.

AGRICULTURE	<i>Family and Neighbors</i>	<i>Agribusiness</i>	<i>Farm Magazines</i>	<i>Farmer Stockman/ Prairie Star</i>	<i>Extension Newsletter</i>	<i>Association Newsletter</i>	<i>Extension Service</i>	<i>SCS Office</i>	<i>ASCS Office</i>	<i>State Dept. of Agriculture</i>
Livestock	11.5	12.0	17.6	12.2	10.7	3.4	15.3	2.10	2.7	12.6
Farm Management/ Finance	8.1	19.8	13.9	5.0	9.5	3.3	16.7	3.1	6.4	14.2
Crops/Soils/Pest Management	7.4	8.9	8.9	4.5	9.1	2.5	28.1	8.2	6.7	15.8
Natural Resources/ Soil/Water/Forestry	6.5	5.7	7.9	3.9	8.4	3.0	22.6	10.7	7.2	24.1
Horticulture/Gardening	19.6	4.4	14.2	3.3	12.6	2.0	31.2	1.5	1.5	9.8
TOTALS	53.1	50.8	62.5	28.9	50.3	14.2	113.9	25.6	24.5	76.5

### Community Development

Ratings of preference on topics of Community Development are shown in Table 14. Of the citizens responding, 28.9% indicated a preference for obtaining educational information on Group Leadership from the Extension Service. The Local Chamber of Commerce followed closely (26.1%) as a source of information. The City/County Planning Office was the preferred choice for information on Community Facility Improvement (36.6%) with the Local Chamber of Commerce (30.4%) being a close second. The City/County Planning Office (30.6%) and Media (26.7%) were the top two choices selected for information on local government. The City/County Planning Office (48.5%) followed by the Local Chamber of Commerce (21.9%) were the preferred sources of information for Local Community Planning. The Local Chamber of Commerce (22.3%) was closely followed by the State Department of Commerce (21.5%) as the preferred choices for information on Economic Development. By program areas within Community Development, the Extension Service in general was not found to be the preferred source of information.

When the totals were examined, City/County Planning Offices (147.9%) ranked high as a preferred source of information on Community Development, followed by the Local Chamber of Commerce (125.6%) and the Media (98.0%).

Table 14. Preferred Sources of Information in Community Development.

	State Dept. of Commerce	Extension Service	Local Chamber of Commerce	City/County Planning Office	Media (Television, radio)
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT					
Group Leadership	7.1	28.9	26.1	15.2	22.7
Community Facility Improvement	6.8	12.1	30.4	36.6	14.1
Local Government	9.0	8.7	24.9	30.6	26.7
Local Community Planning	3.4	12.0	21.9	48.5	14.3
Economic Development	21.5	18.9	22.3	17.0	20.1
TOTALS	47.8	80.6	125.6	147.9	98.0

### Youth Education Programs

Youth Education programs are often intended to develop communication, leadership and decision making skills, as well as a positive self-concept. When asked to rank the Youth Education programs listed in Table 15, respondents indicated very little difference in preference. While not distinctly different, the youth education program activities were ranked in the following descending order: 4-H/Extension Youth Programs ( $\bar{x}=2.44$ ), Extra-curricular School Activities ( $\bar{x}=2.73$ ), Other Youth Groups ( $\bar{x}=2.88$ ), Church Activities ( $\bar{x}=2.97$ ), Local Recreation Programs ( $\bar{x}=3.98$ ).

Because this question sought rank ordered data, statistical analysis is presented using frequency, mean and standard deviation.

Table 15. Preference of Youth Education Programs (N=260).

Program	Rank	f	$\bar{x}$	SD
4-H/Extension Youth Programs	1	271	2.44	1.37
Extra-curricular School Activities	2	272	2.73	1.31
Other Youth Groups (Boy Scouts, etc.)	3	267	2.88	1.18
Church Activities	4	270	2.97	1.46
Local Recreation Programs	5	262	3.98	1.22



















































