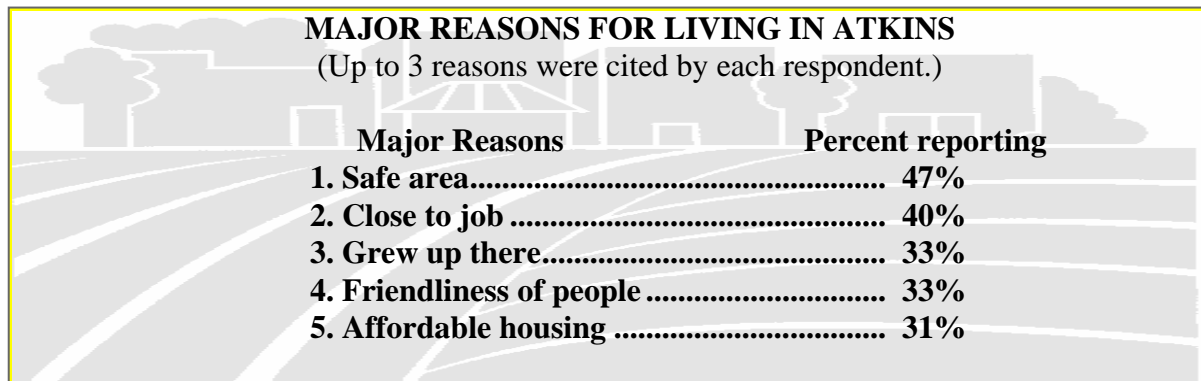


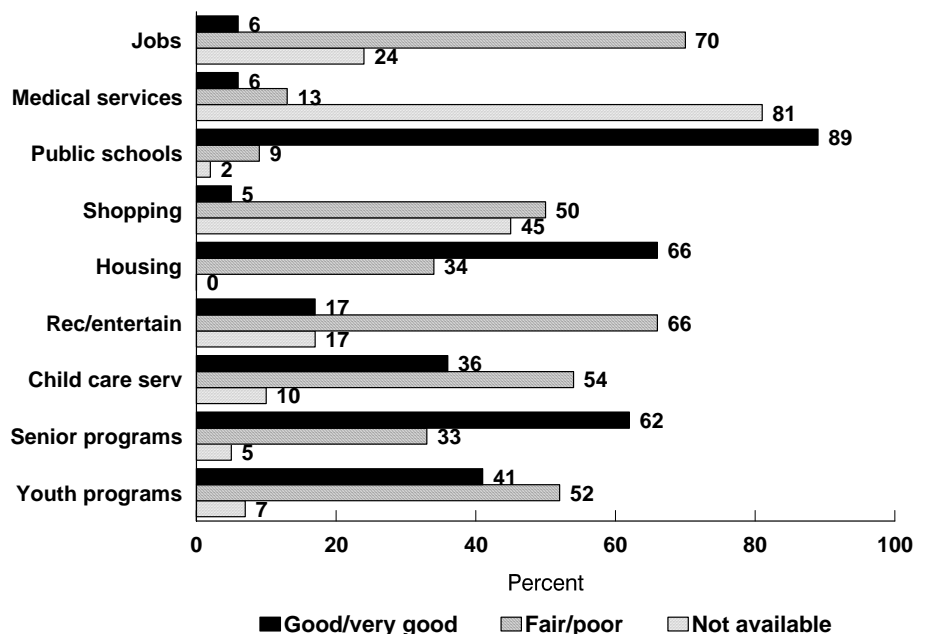
RESIDENTS OF ATKINS SPEAK OUT

During July 1994, you were one of 15,000 households asked to participate in a statewide survey. The purpose of this survey was to identify the problems and opportunities facing Iowa's rural communities. The households asked to take part in the study were randomly selected from telephone directories of 100 Iowa communities (150 households per directory). Selection of communities was also random where one community with 500-10,000 residents was selected from each of Iowa's 99 counties. (Because of its geographic size, two communities were included for Pottawattamie County, one from West and another from East Pottawattamie.) Of the 15,000 questionnaires mailed out, 10,798 (or 72%) were completed and returned. Below are highlights of the results as reported by Atkins' 114 survey participants.



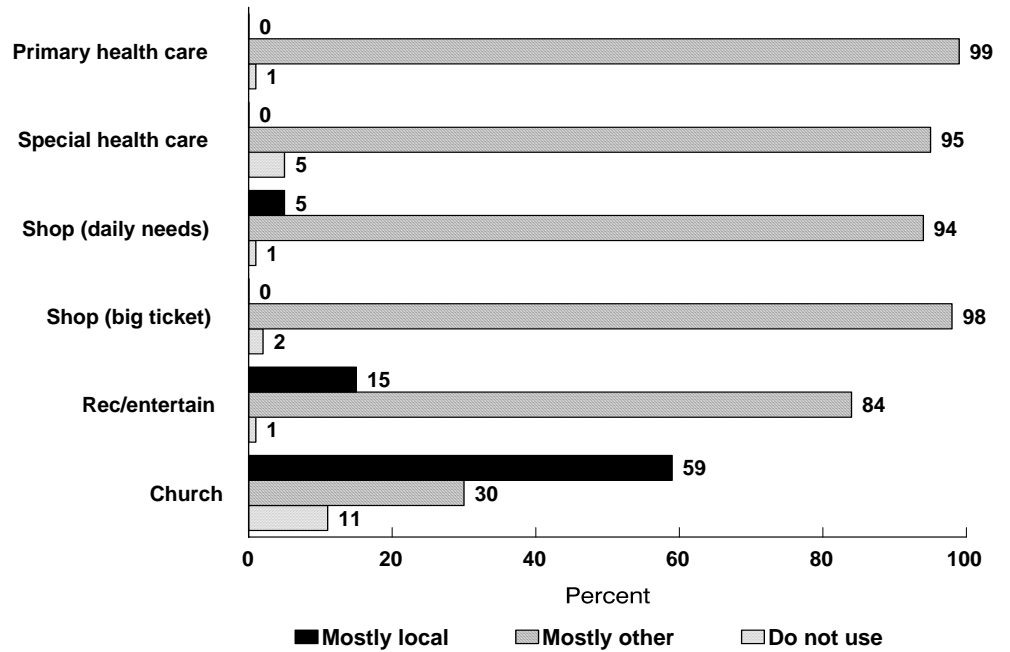
RATING SERVICES AND FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN ATKINS

Nine local services and facilities were listed on the questionnaire along with the instructions to rate each as "very good," "good," "fair," "poor," or "not available." Of the 114 respondents from Atkins, half or more gave public schools, housing and senior citizens a rating of either good or very good. But jobs, shopping facilities, recreation/entertainment, child care, and youth programs were rated no better than fair by at least half of the people. For medical services, at least half of the respondents indicated the service was not available in Atkins.



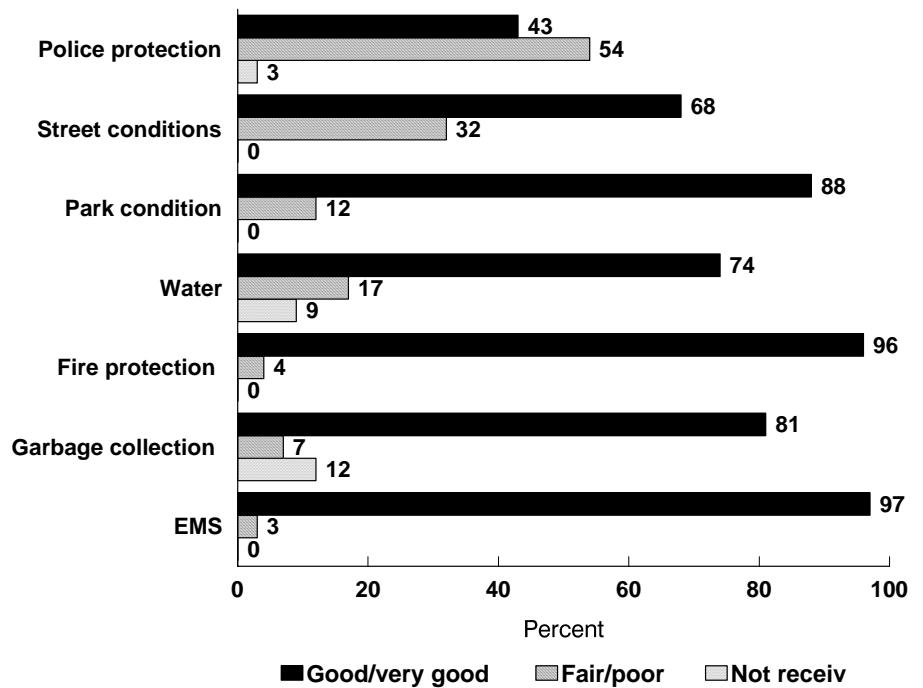
LOCAL PURCHASING PATTERNS

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Based on returned questionnaires, Atkins' residents follow this pattern. At least three-fourths of the people reported leaving Atkins for primary and specialized health care, shopping for daily needs and "big ticket" items, and recreation/entertainment. In fact, church was the only service where at least half of the people reported remaining in Atkins.



RATING GOVERNMENT SERVICES

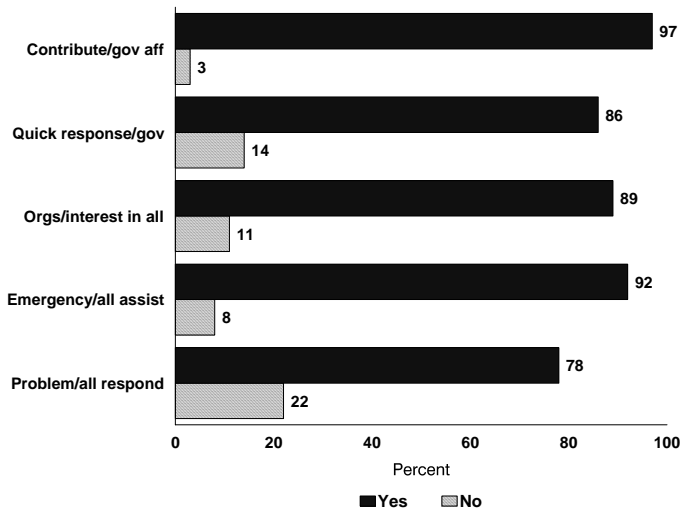
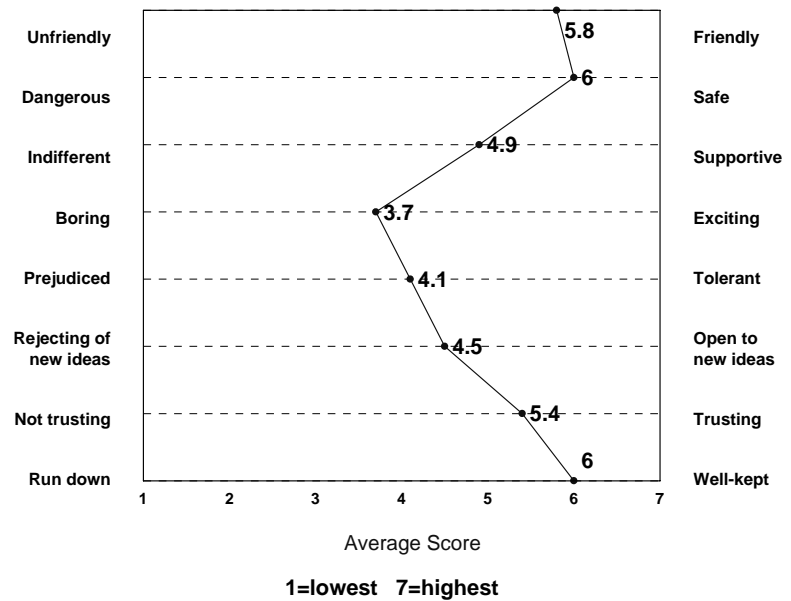
Seven services normally provided through local governments were included with the instructions to rate each as "very good," "good," "fair," or "poor." Emergency response service (EMS) was rated highest with 97 percent giving it a positive (very good or good) rating. Over half of the individuals also rated street and park conditions, water, fire protection, and garbage collection positively, while police protection received a lower rating (fair or poor) by a majority of the respondents.



FRIENDLINESS AND EVIDENCE OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

In spite of the frequently publicized economic problems recently experienced by many of Iowa's smaller communities, reference often is made of their favorable social climates. However, no information to date has been available to determine the extent to which Iowa's rural communities do in fact possess favorable social environments. Accordingly, questions were included in the survey asking residents to evaluate various social attributes of their communities.

Of the eight attributes evaluated on a 7-point scale, Atkins residents assigned the highest rating to the safety of Atkins and to how well-kept the community is, followed closely by the friendliness of its residents. The lowest rating was given to the amount of excitement offered.



According to survey respondents, Atkins' responsiveness to personal and community problems is generally quite favorable. Most everyone agreed that everyone is allowed to contribute to local governmental affairs. At least three-fourths also felt that a city office would give a quick response in regards to a complaint, that organizations are interested in what is best for all residents, that in the case of an emergency all residents would help and that when something needs to get done the whole community gets behind it.

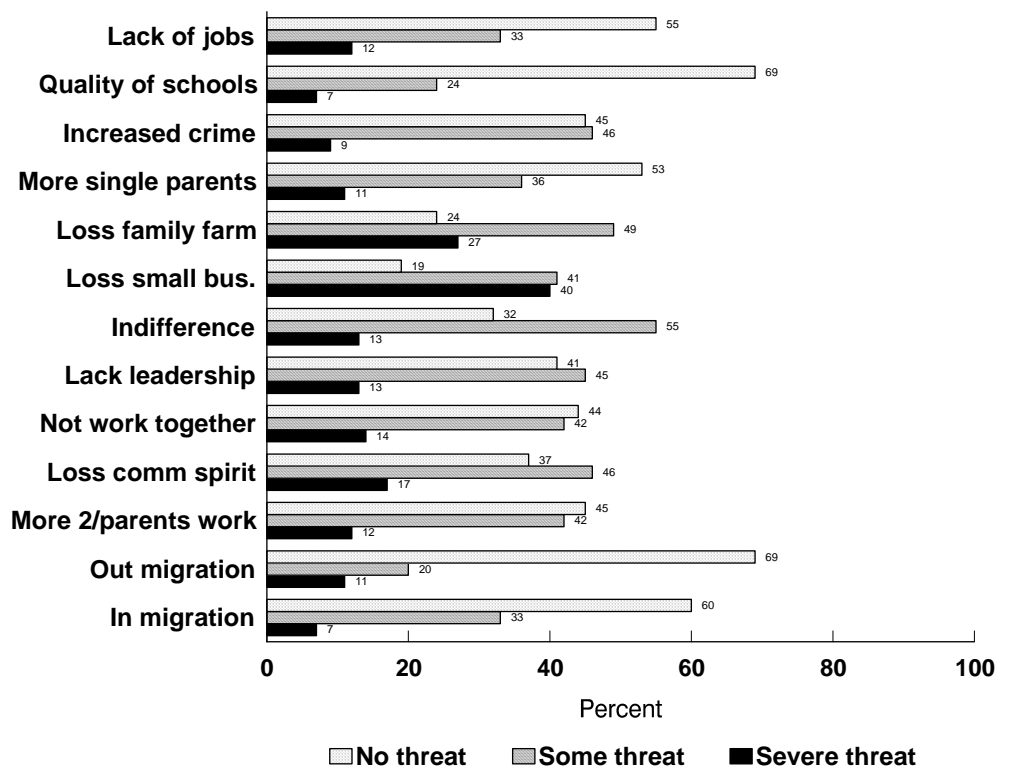
INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION IN ATKINS ACTIVITIES

Over three-fourths of Atkins residents are interested in being informed of community activities. Yet only about 55 percent reported having participated over the past year in any community improvement project. When asked to describe their level of involvement in local community improvement activities and events, 52 percent indicated being very or somewhat active.

Ties with other local residents often are an indication of their commitment to the community. In Atkins' case, 46 percent of the respondents indicated knowing the name of half or more of the adult residents. Also, 40 percent indicated that half or more of their close personal friends live in Atkins. As for their adult relatives and in-laws, 15 percent indicated that half or more of them live in Atkins.

PERCEIVED COMMUNITY THREATS

The future of Iowa's rural communities will probably depend on whether or not important trends will continue over the course of the next few years. The loss of small businesses was considered a serious threat by at least one-third of Atkins residents. Minimal concern was expressed with the lack of jobs, the quality of schools, the increase in the number of single parent families, people moving out of the community, and people moving into the community.



OVERALL COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

How important is it for Atkins residents to feel a part of this community? When asked this question, 88 percent responded that it was important for them to feel a part of the community. When asked whether they feel "at home" in Atkins, 95 percent said that they did. Furthermore 81 percent indicated they would be sorry to move away from Atkins. In spite of the community concerns as indicated in the previous charts, the majority of residents see Atkins as their home and are reluctant to move away from the community.

Prepared by Vern Ryan, Terry Besser, Jan Flora, and Paul Lasley, Department of Sociology, Iowa State University. For further information about this report, contact Jeff Zacharakis-Jutz, Linn County Extension Office, 655 12th Street, Marion, IA 52302; Tele (319) 377-9839; Fax (319) 377-0475; x1zach@exnet.iastate.edu. For information on other reports in the RDI series, contact Vern Ryan, 317 East Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011; Tele (515) 294-5011; Fax (515) 294-2303; x1vryan@exnet.iastate.edu.