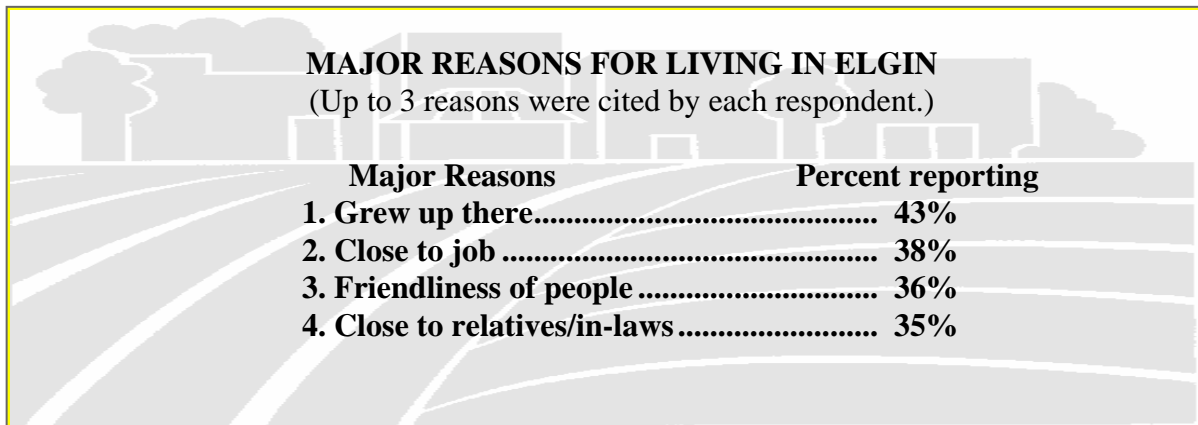


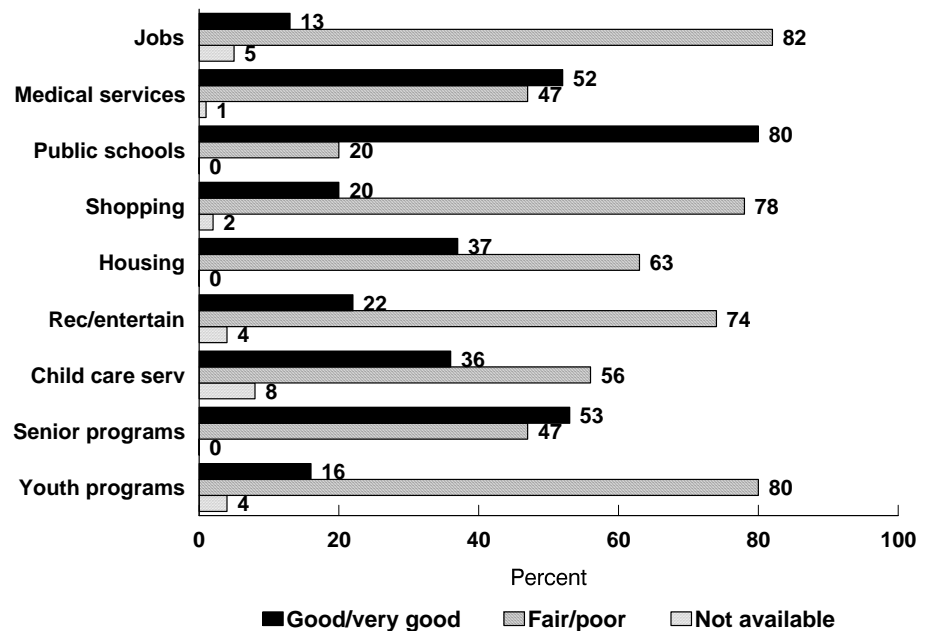
RESIDENTS OF ELGIN SPEAK OUT

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 Elgin's 121 survey participants.



RATING SERVICES AND FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN ELGIN

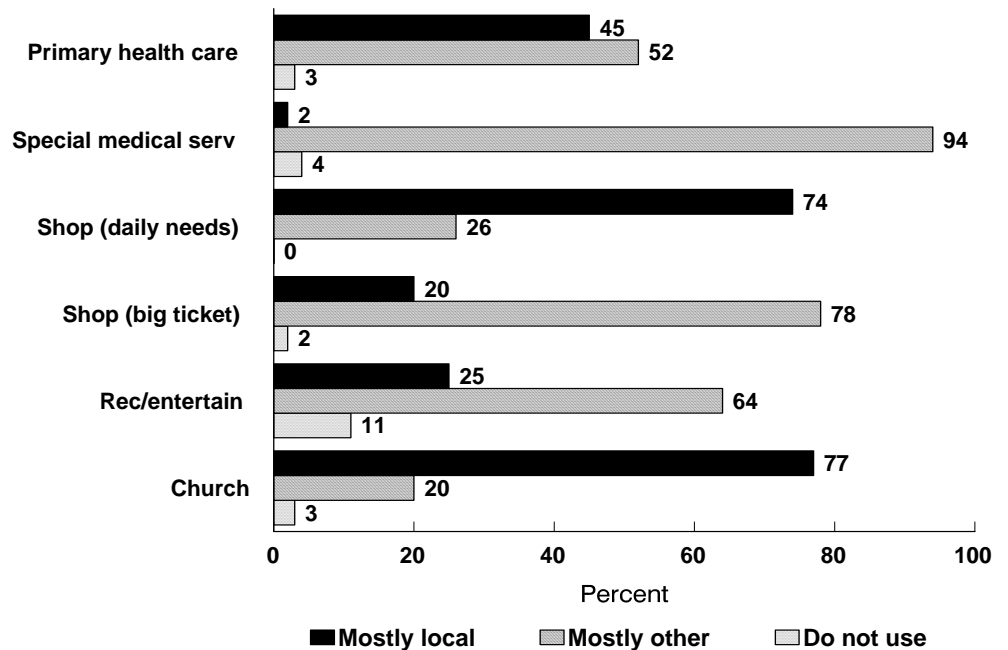
Nine local services and facilities were listed on the questionnaire along with the instructions to rate each as "very good," "good," "fair," "poor," or "not available." Of the 121 respondents from Elgin, half or more gave medical services, public schools, and senior citizen programs a rating of either good or very good. But jobs, shopping, housing, recreation/entertainment, child



care services, and programs for youth were rated no better than fair by at least half of the people. All services were indicated as being available by at least half of the respondents in Elgin.

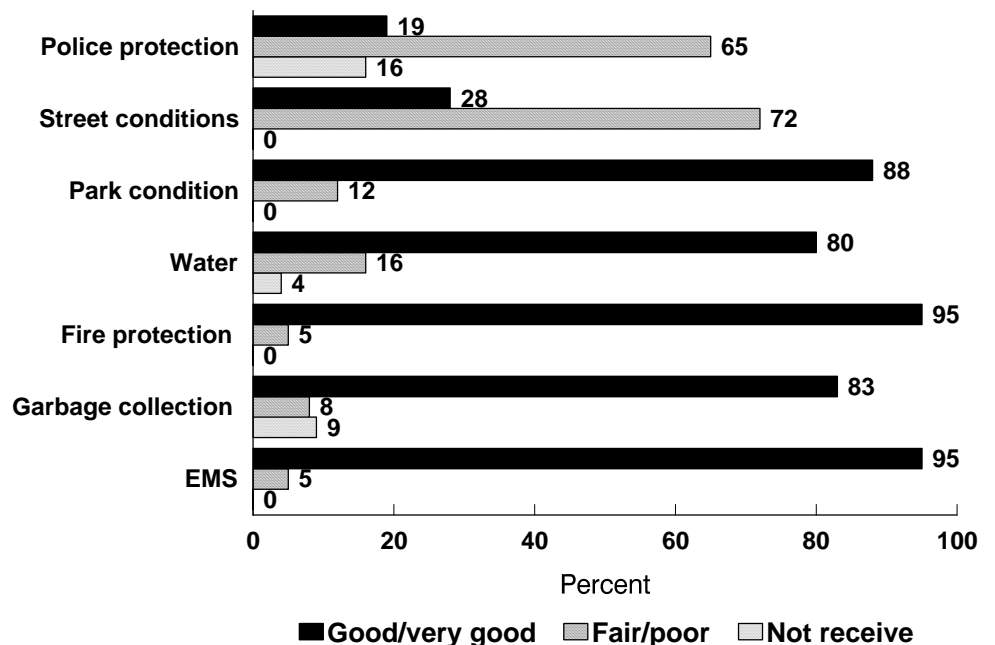
LOCAL PURCHASING PATTERNS

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



RATING GOVERNMENT SERVICES

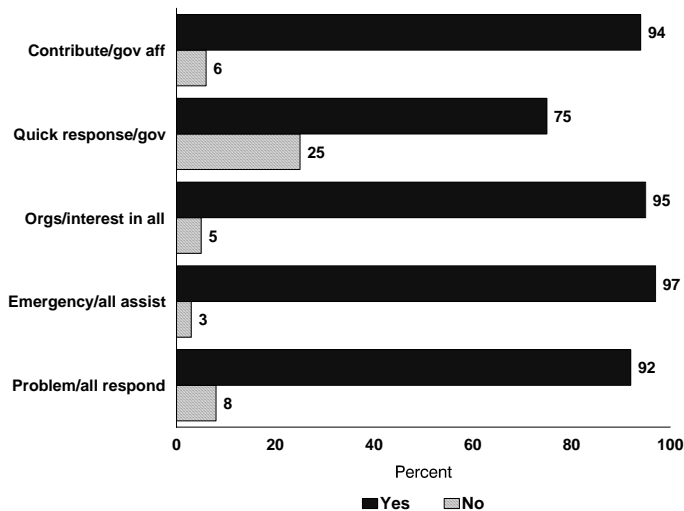
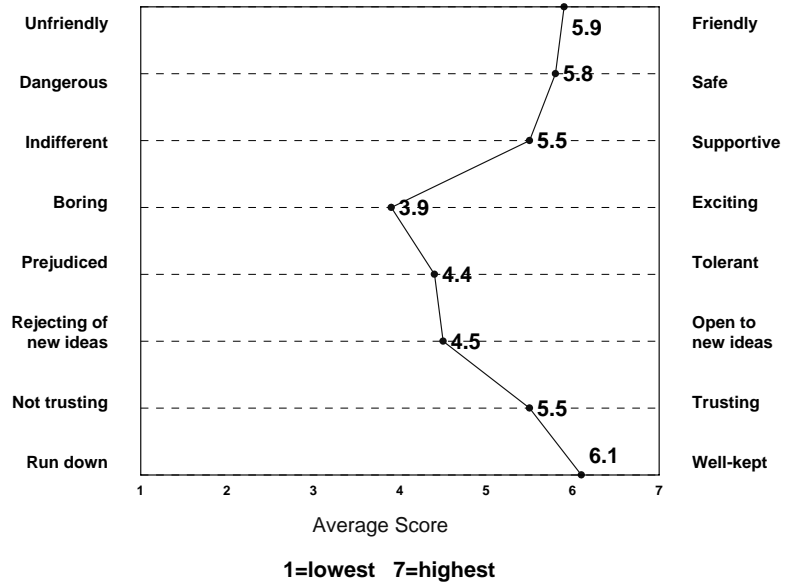
Seven services normally provided through local governments were included with the instructions to rate each as "very good," "good," "fair," or "poor." Fire protection and emergency response service (EMS) were rated highest with 95 percent each giving them a positive (very good or good) rating. Over half of the individuals also rated park conditions, water, and garbage collection positively, while police protection and street conditions received lower ratings (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, Elgin residents assigned the highest rating 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, Elgin's responsiveness to personal and community problems is generally quite favorable. Most everyone agreed that organizations are interested in what is best for all residents and that in the case of an emergency all residents would help. At least three-fourths also felt that all are allowed to contribute to local governmental affairs, that a city office would give a quick response in regards to a complaint, and that when something needs to get done the whole community gets behind it.

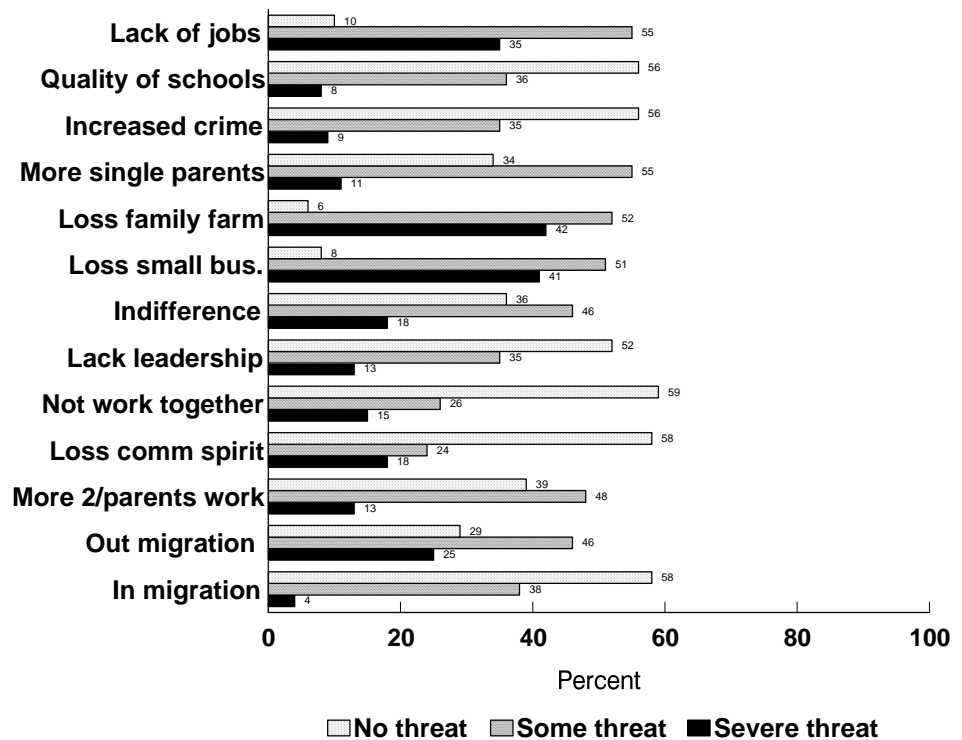
INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION IN ELGIN ACTIVITIES

Over three-fourths of Elgin residents are interested in being informed of community activities. Yet only about 53 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, 48 percent indicated being very or somewhat active.

Ties with other local residents often are an indication of their commitment to the community. In Elgin’s case, 70 percent of the respondents indicated knowing the name of half or more of the adult residents. Also, 58 percent indicated that half or more of their close personal friends live in Elgin. As for their adult relatives and in-laws, 26 percent indicated that half or more of them live in Elgin.

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. In the case of Elgin, at least half of the residents see people moving out of the community as a condition that poses a serious threat to the future of Elgin. Lack of jobs, loss of family farms, and loss of small businesses, were considered serious threats by at least one-third of Elgin residents. Minimal concern was expressed with quality of schools, increase in crime, lack of leadership, failure of people to work together, loss of community spirit, and people moving into the community.



OVERALL COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

How important is it for Elgin residents to feel a part of this community? When asked this question, 94 percent responded that it was important for them to feel a part of the community. When asked whether they feel “at home” in Elgin, 92 percent said that they did. Furthermore 84 percent indicated they would be sorry to move away from Elgin. In spite of the community concerns as indicated in the previous charts, the majority of residents see Elgin as their home and are reluctant to move away from the community.

Prepared by Terry Besser, Jan Flora, Paul Lasley, and Vern Ryan, Department of Sociology, Iowa State University. For further information about this report, contact Clair Hein, Black Hawk County Extension Office, 3420 University Avenue, Suite B, Waterloo, IA 50701; Tele (319) 234-6811; Fax (319) 234-5581; x1hein@exnet.iastate.edu. For information on other reports in the RDI series, contact Terry Besser, 303 East Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011; Tele (515) 294-6508; Fax (515) 294-2303; x1tbesse@exnet.iastate.edu.