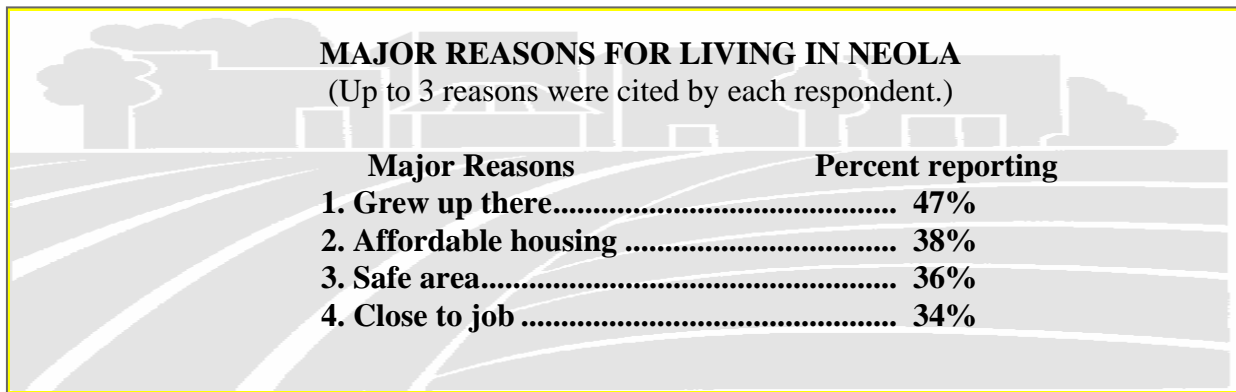


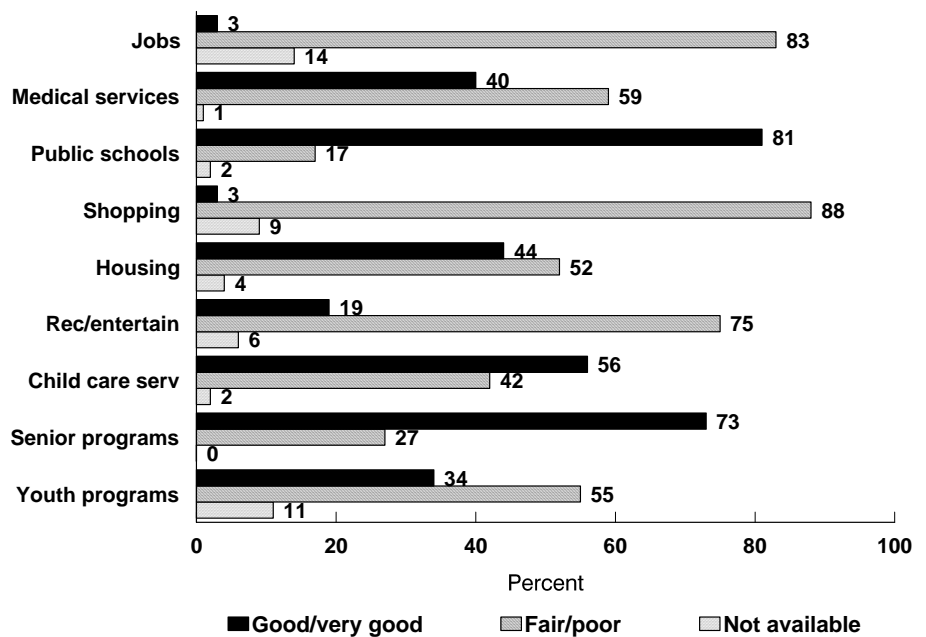
RESIDENTS OF NEOLA SPEAK OUT

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 Neola's 104 survey participants.



RATING SERVICES AND FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN NEOLA

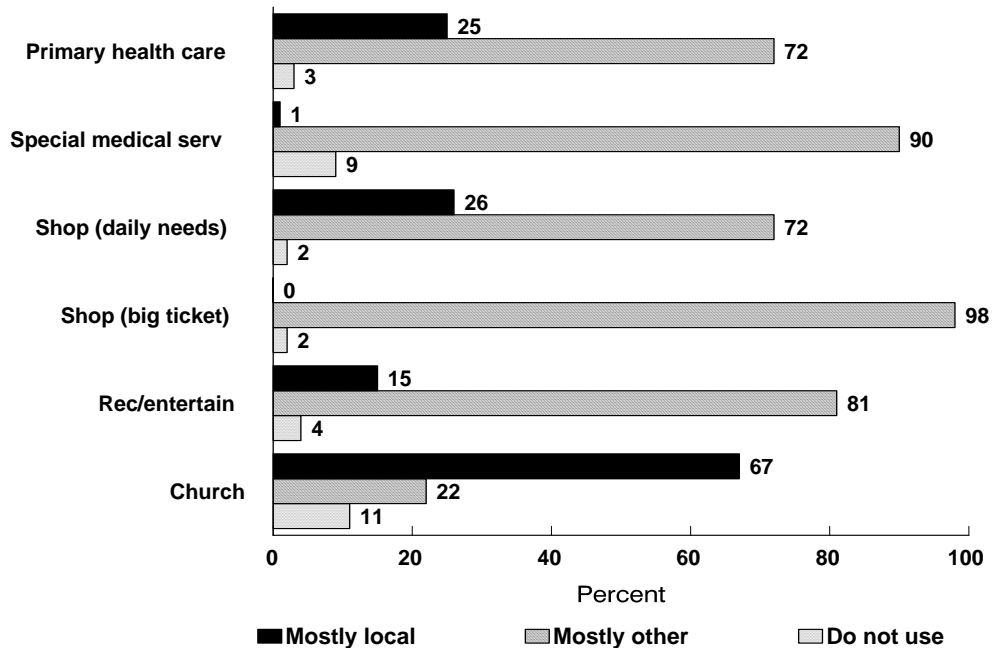
Nine local services and facilities were listed on the questionnaire along with the instructions to rate each as "very good," "good," "fair," "poor," or "not available." Of the 104 respondents from Neola, half or more gave public schools, child care services, and senior citizen programs a rating of either good or very good. But jobs, medical services, shopping, housing, recreation/



entertainment, and youth programs 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 Neola.

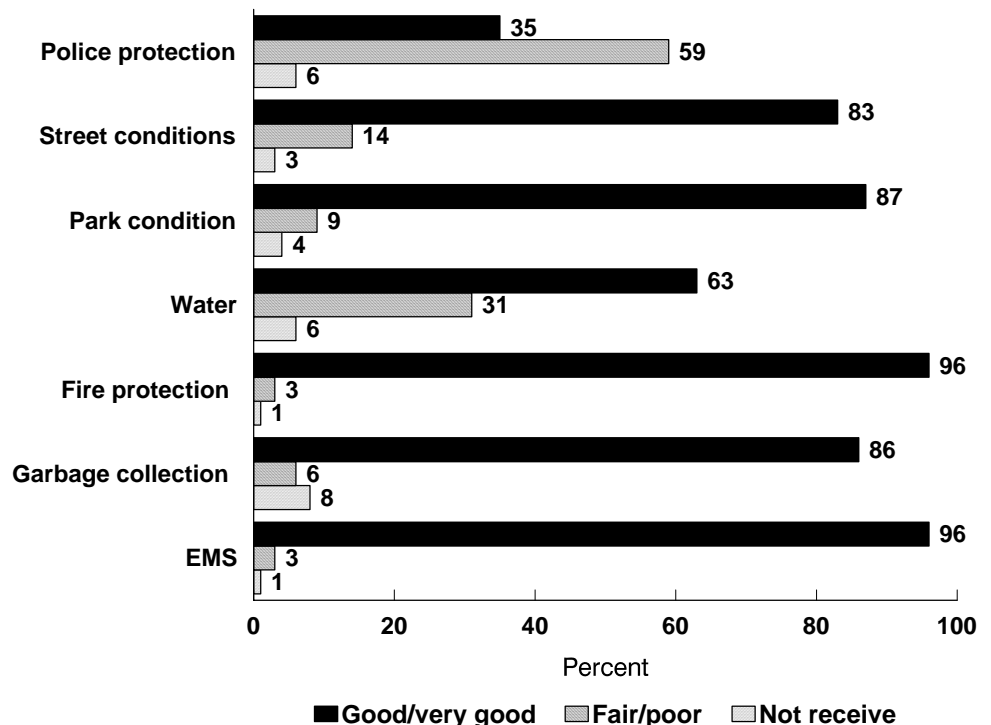
LOCAL PURCHASING PATTERNS

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



RATING GOVERNMENT SERVICES

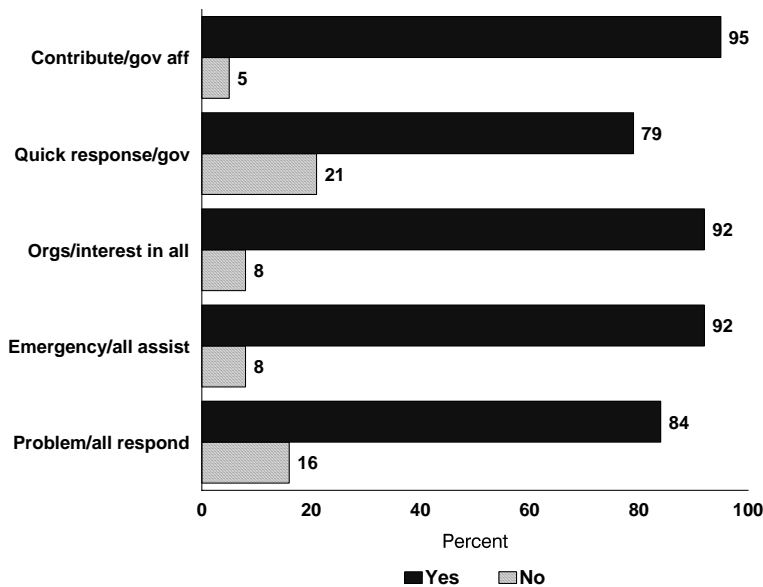
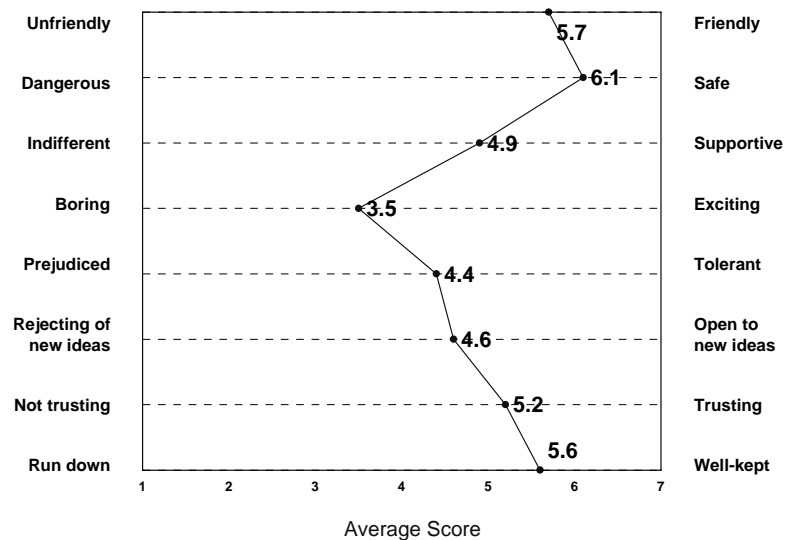
Seven services normally provided through local governments were included with the instructions to rate each as "very good," "good," "fair," or "poor." Fire protection and emergency response service (EMS) was rated highest with 96 percent each giving them a positive (very good or good) rating. Over half of the individuals also rated street and park conditions, water, 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, Neola residents assigned the highest rating to the safety of Neola, followed closely by the friendliness of its residents. The lowest rating was given to the amount of excitement offered.



1=lowest 7=highest

According to survey respondents, Neola's responsiveness to personal and community problems is generally quite favorable. Most everyone agreed that all are 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.

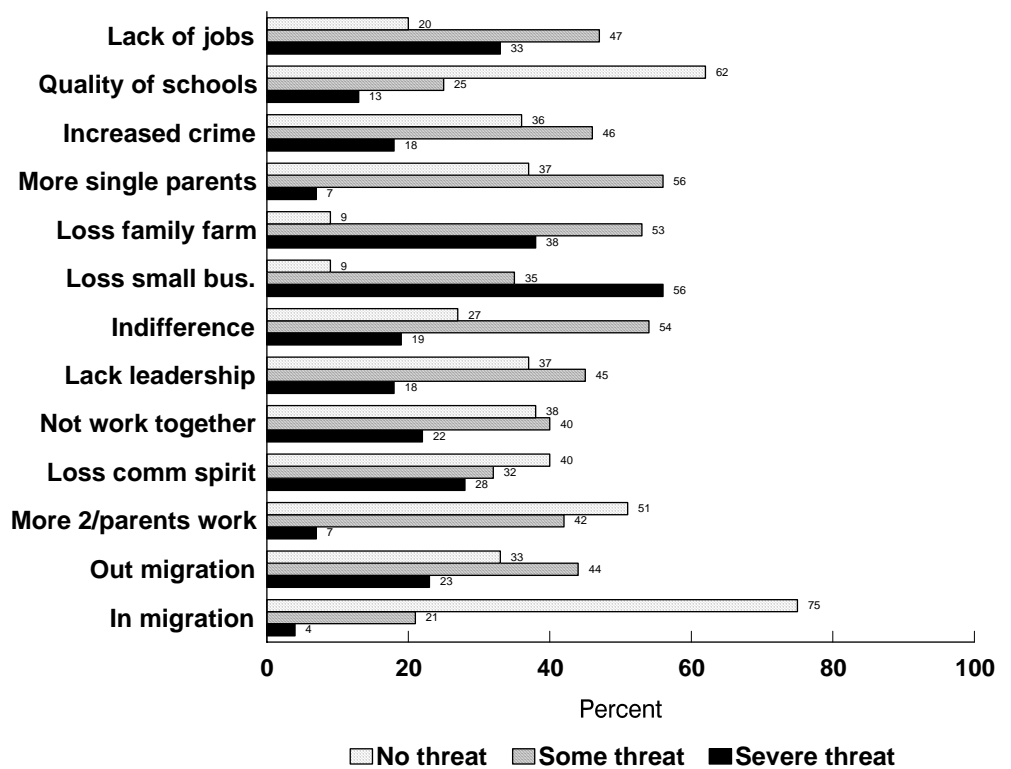
INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION IN NEOLA ACTIVITIES

Over three-fourths of Neola's residents are interested in being informed of community activities. Yet only about 56 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, 45 percent indicated being very or somewhat active.

Ties with other local residents often are an indication of their commitment to the community. In Neola's case, 50 percent of the respondents indicated knowing the name of half or more of the adult residents. Also, 48 percent indicated that half or more of their close personal friends live in Neola. As for their adult relatives and in-laws, 20 percent indicated that half or more of them live in Neola.

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 Neola, at least half of the residents see loss of small businesses as a condition that poses a serious threat to the future of the community. Lack of jobs and loss of family farms were considered serious



threats by at least one-third of Neola residents. Minimal concern was expressed with quality of schools, increase in homes where both parents work, and people moving into the community.

OVERALL COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

How important is it for Neola residents to feel a part of this community? When asked this question, 95 percent responded that it was important for them to feel a part of the community. When asked whether they feel "at home" in Neola, 89 percent said that they did. Furthermore 80 percent indicated they would be sorry to move away from Neola. In spite of the community concerns as indicated in the previous charts, the majority of residents see Neola as their home and are reluctant to move away from the community.

Prepared by Paul Lasley, Terry Besser, Jan Flora, and Vern Ryan, Department of Sociology, Iowa State University. For further information about this report, contact Wayne Kobberdahl, Mills County Extension Office, 103 E. 5th Street, Box 430, Malvern, IA 51551; Tele (712) 624-8616; Fax (712) 624-8228; x1kobber@exnet.iastate.edu. For information on other reports in the RDI series, contact Paul Lasley, 304 East Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011; Tele (515) 294-0937; Fax (515) 294-2303; x1lasley@exnet.iastate.edu.