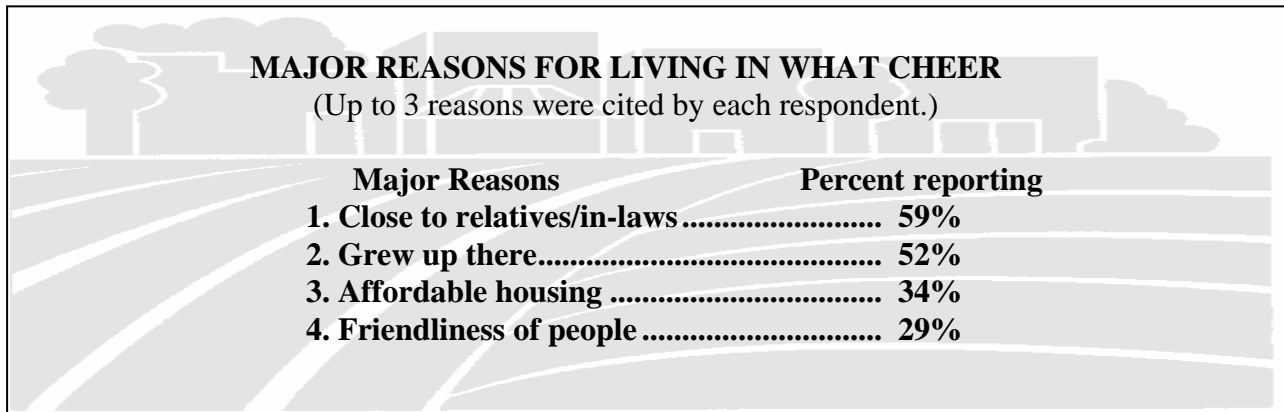


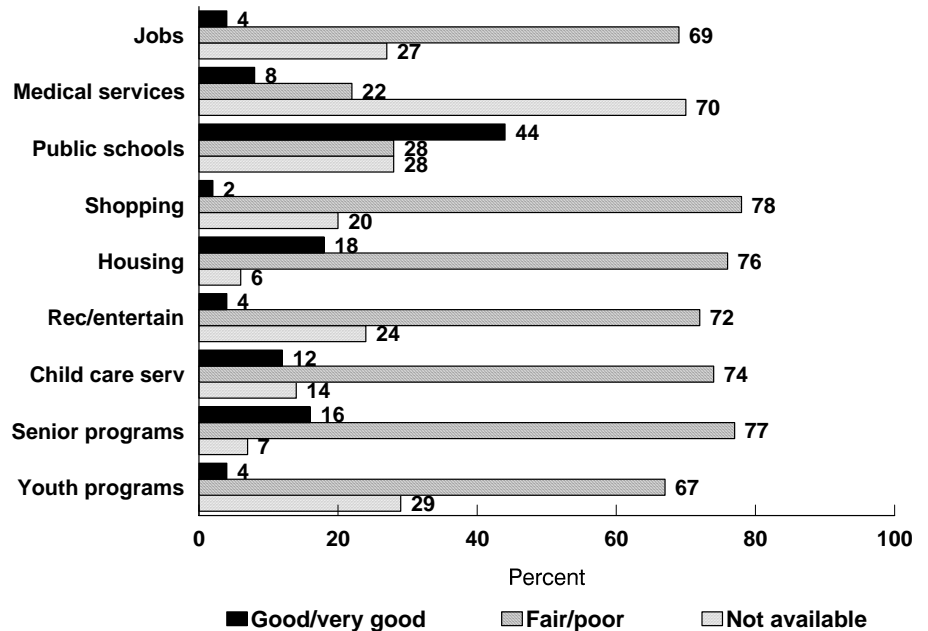
## RESIDENTS OF WHAT CHEER SPEAK OUT

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 What Cheer's 103 survey participants.



### RATING SERVICES AND FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN WHAT CHEER

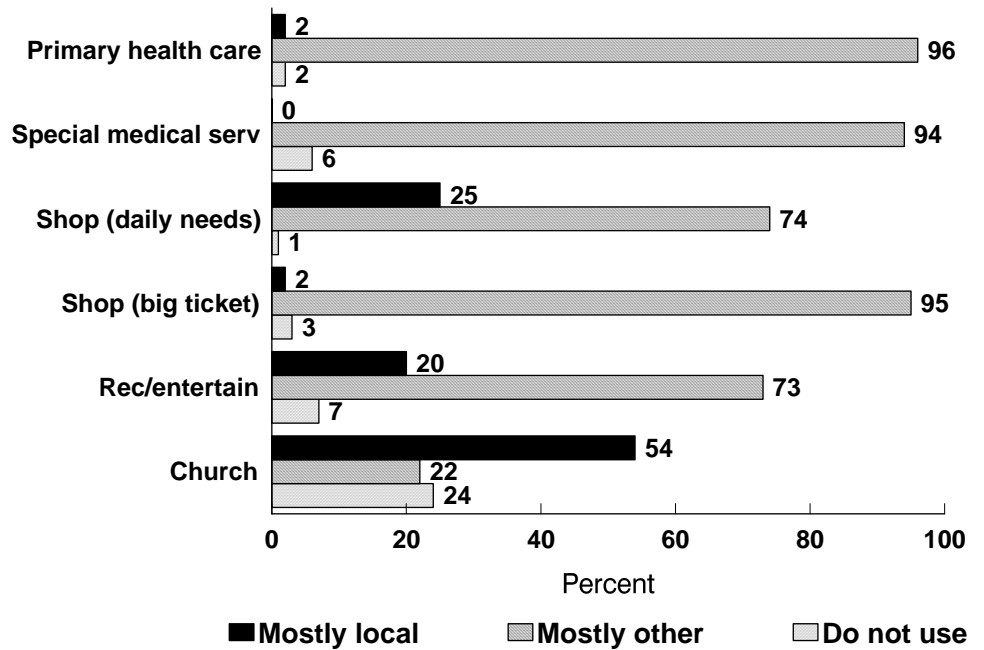
Nine local services and facilities were listed on the questionnaire along with the instructions to rate each as "very good," "good," "fair," "poor," or "not available." Of the 103 respondents from What Cheer, none of the services received a rating of either good or very good from a majority of the residents. Jobs, shopping, housing, recreation/entertainment, child care, and senior citizen 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 What Cheer.

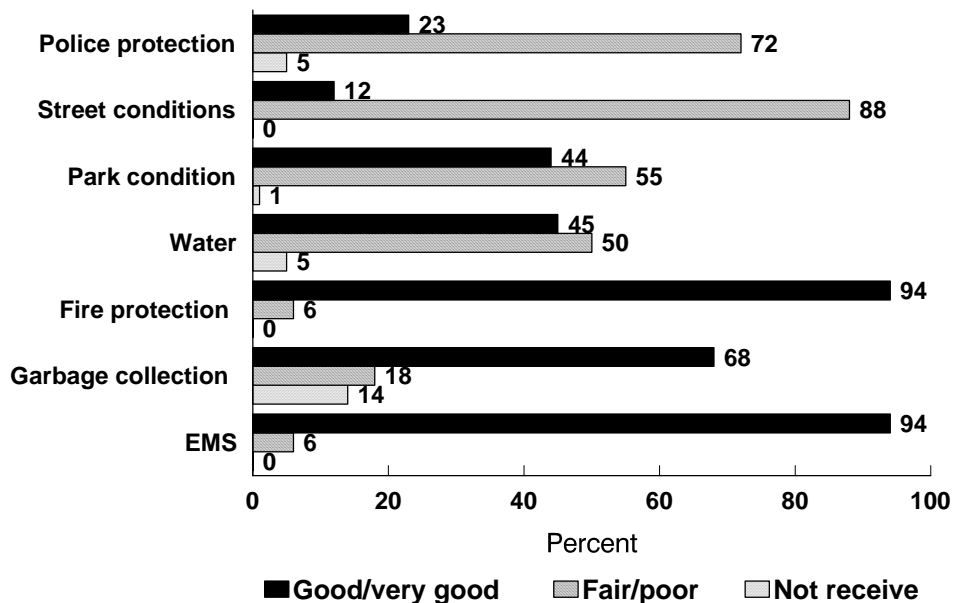
## LOCAL PURCHASING PATTERNS

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



## RATING GOVERNMENT SERVICES

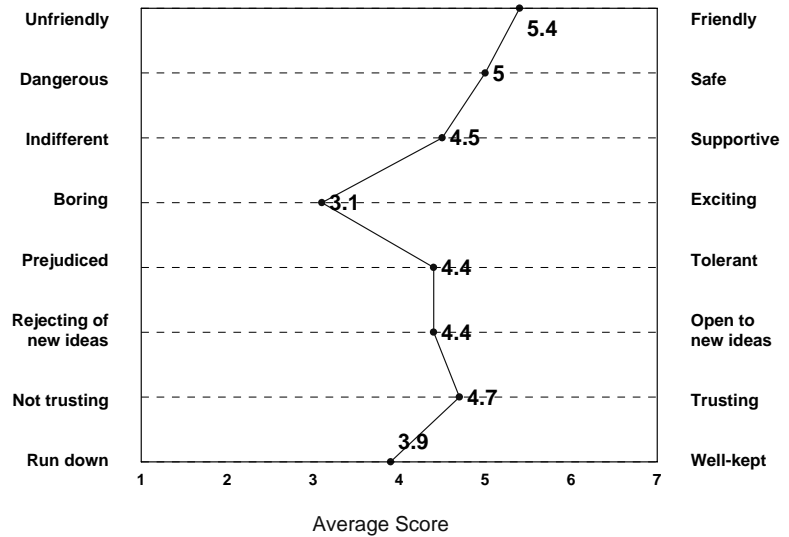
Seven services normally provided through local governments were included with the instructions to rate each as "very good," "good," "fair," or "poor." Fire protection and emergency response service (EMS) were rated highest with 94 percent giving them a positive (very good or good) rating. Over half of the individuals also rated garbage collection positively, while police protection, street and park conditions, and water received lower ratings (fair or poor) by a majority of the respondents.



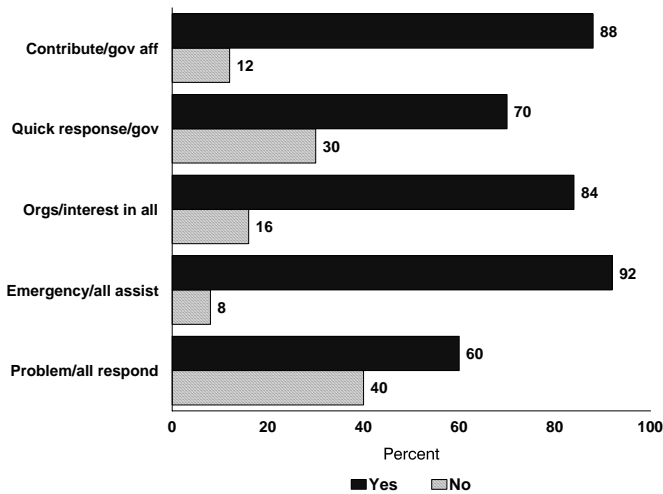
## FRIENDLINESS AND EVIDENCE OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

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 evaluated on a 7-point scale, What Cheer residents assigned the highest rating to the friendliness of its residents, followed closely by the safety of What Cheer. The lowest rating was given to the amount of excitement offered.



1=lowest 7=highest



According to survey respondents, What Cheer's responsiveness to personal and community problems is generally quite favorable. At least three-fourths felt that all are allowed to contribute to local governmental affairs, that organizations are interested in what is best for all residents, and that in the case of an emergency all residents would help out. If any concern was noted about how What Cheer responds to problems, it pertained to when something needs

to get done the whole community gets behind it where 40 percent of the respondents also reported dissatisfaction in this area.

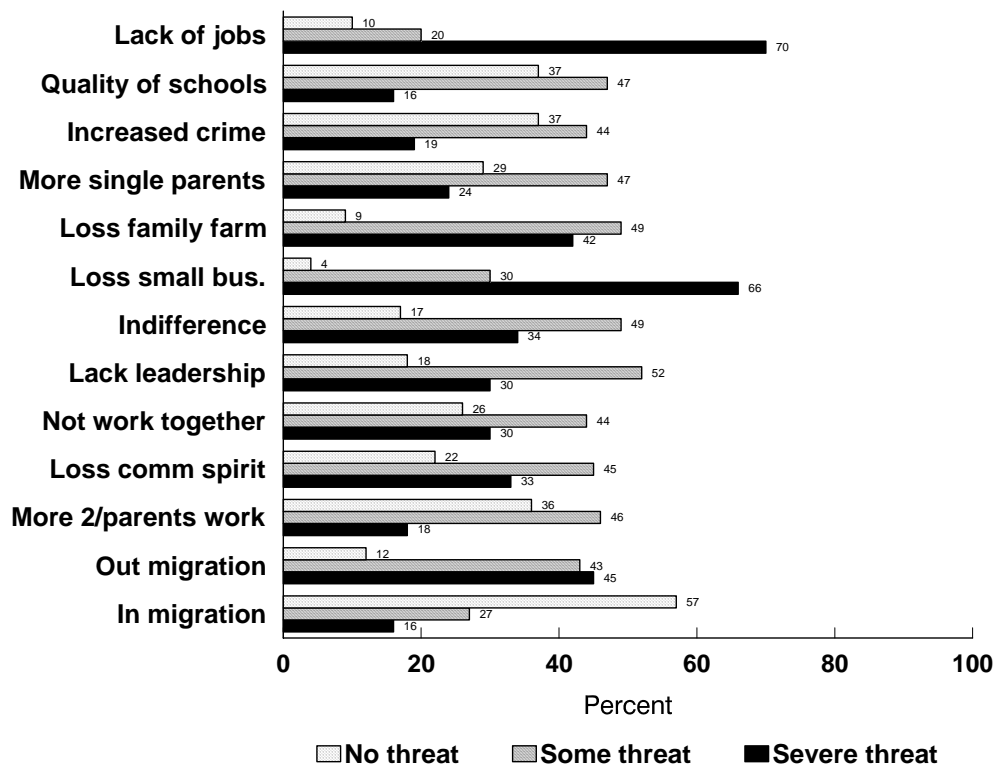
## INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION IN WHAT CHEER ACTIVITIES

Over three-fourths of What Cheer residents are interested in being informed of community activities. Yet only about 48 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, 38 percent indicated being very or somewhat active.

Ties with other local residents often are an indication of their commitment to the community. In What Cheer's case, 57 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 What Cheer. As for their adult relatives and in-laws, 28 percent indicated that half or more of them live in What Cheer.

### 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 What Cheer, at least half of the residents see lack of jobs and loss of small businesses as conditions that pose serious threats to the future of the community. Loss of family farms, indifference about the community, loss of community spirit, and people moving out of the community were considered serious threats by at least one-third of What Cheer residents. Minimal concern was expressed with people moving into the community.



### OVERALL COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

How important is it for What Cheer residents to feel a part of this community? When asked this question, 85 percent responded that it was important for them to feel a part of the community. When asked whether they feel "at home" in What Cheer, 91 percent said that they did. Furthermore 74 percent indicated they would be sorry to move away from What Cheer. In spite of the community concerns as indicated in the previous charts, the majority of residents see What Cheer 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 Gayle Olson, Henry County Extension Office, 101 S. Jefferson, Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641; Tele (319) 385-8126; Fax (319) 385-2617; x1olsong@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.