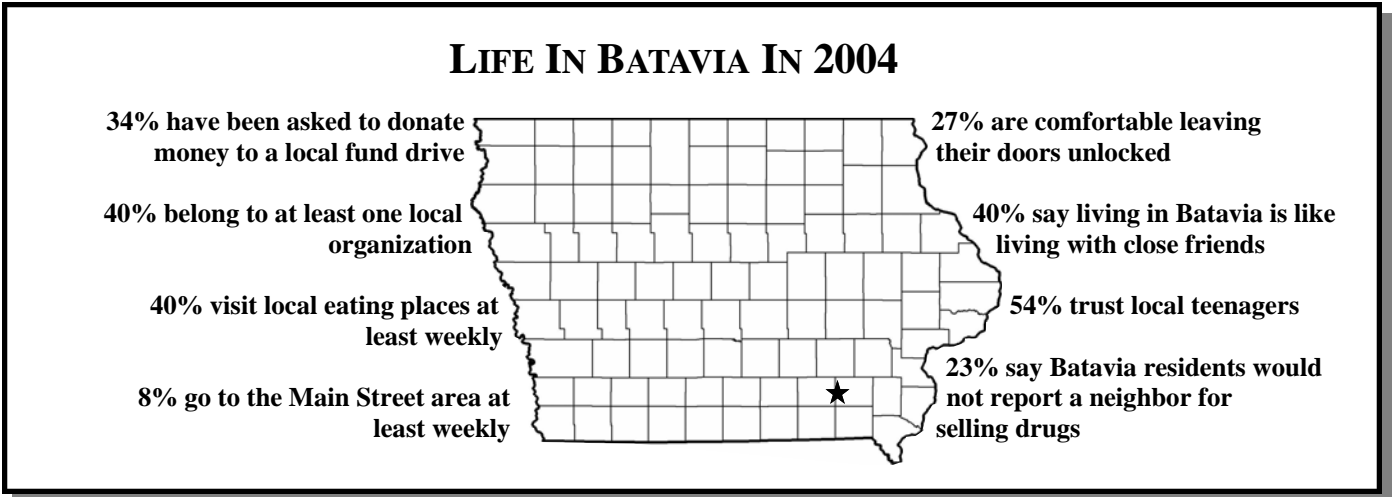
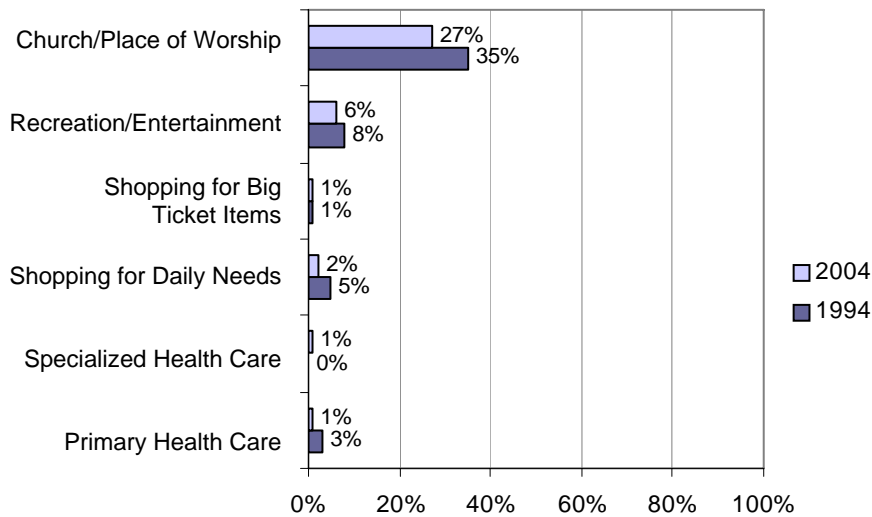


# A DECADE OF CHANGE IN BATAVIA

In February 2004, the Rural Development Initiative Project at Iowa State University conducted a survey designed to look at changes in the social conditions in Iowa's rural towns. The survey was mailed to nearly 15,000 households in 99 towns, one of which was Batavia. Ten years ago, residents of these same 99 communities were asked to complete a similar survey. The households for both surveys were selected randomly from local telephone directories (150 households per community). In 1994, 91 Batavia residents responded to the survey, and 91 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Batavia residents have changed over the past decade.



## LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS



**Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"**

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that Batavia residents followed this pattern in 1994 and 2004. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing services of various types in Batavia. Almost everyone went out of town for all services except attending church or place of worship. About one third of

residents remained in Batavia for church or place of worship related services in 1994. This declined to slightly more than a quarter of residents in 2004. However, none of the changes from 1994 to 2004 is greater than the margin of error.

\*A Note on Interpretation: For Batavia, differences in percentages between 2004 and 1994 of less than 12 percent should be considered a statistical "dead-heat." That is, they fall within the margin of error range, which occurs whenever samples are used to draw conclusions about a larger group. With the modest sample sizes used in this study, the differences must be relatively large before we can be confident that they are real. Throughout the report, differences that are equal to or exceed 12 percent are statistically significant and are indicated with an asterisk (\*).

## RATINGS OF LOCAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES

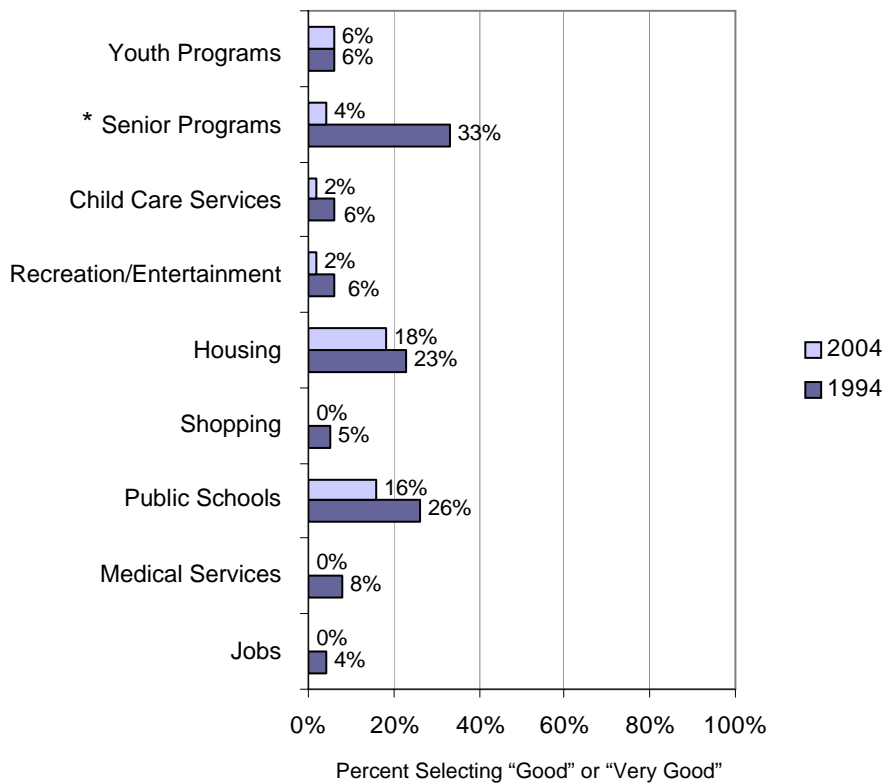


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

Nine local services were listed on the questionnaire along with instructions to rate each as “very good,” “good,” “fair,” “poor,” or “not available.” Figure 2 shows the percentage of residents who rated each service as “good” or “very good” in 1994 and 2004. None of the services received a favorable evaluation from more than a third of Batavia residents in either time period. Ratings for senior programs, which was rated the highest in 1994, declined significantly to 4 percent approval in 2004. The evaluations for public schools, housing, and medical services in Batavia also declined over the decade, but not enough to exceed the margin of error. Changes in the ratings for other services were within the margin of error for this study.

## RATINGS OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Respondents were asked to provide ratings for seven services normally provided by local governments. Figure 3 shows the percentage of residents rating each service as “good” or “very good” for 2004 and 1994. Batavia residents were satisfied with several local government services in both periods. In 1994, more than half rated emergency response, fire protection, and water positively. In 2004, evaluations for fire protection remained high and garbage collection improved significantly. Police protection received the lowest ratings in both time periods, followed by the condition of the streets and the condition of the parks.

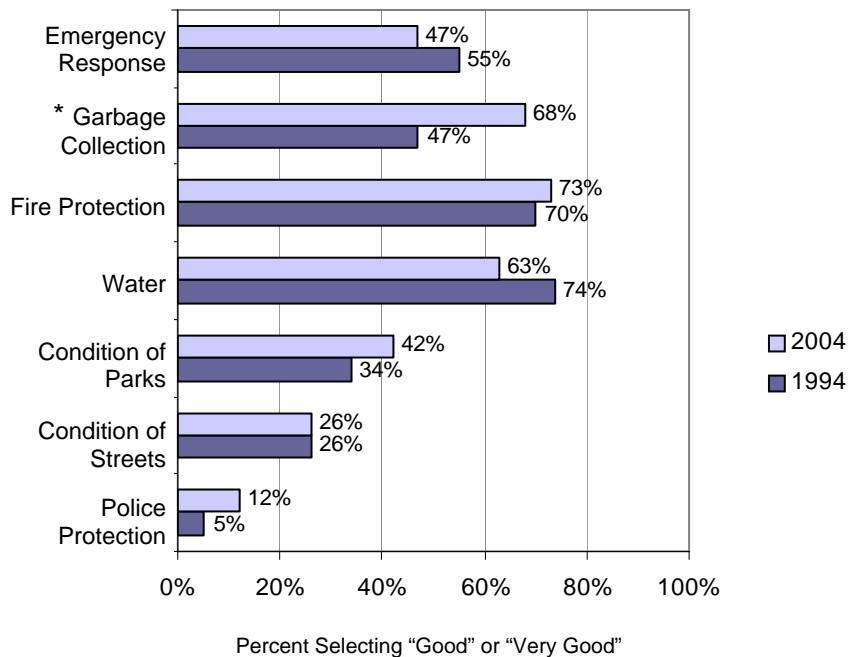
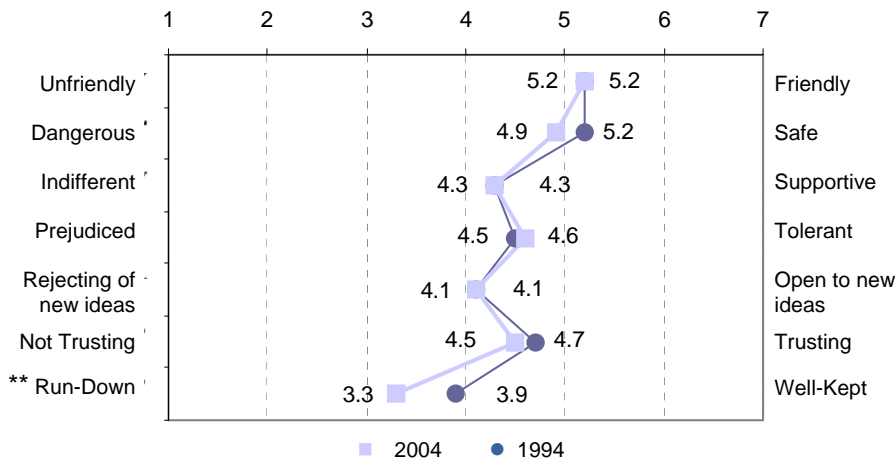


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

## BATAVIA'S SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

In spite of the frequently publicized economic challenges faced by many of Iowa's small towns, they are regularly praised for having favorable social climates. A main goal of this project has been to determine the extent to which Iowa's rural towns possess favorable social environments. Accordingly, a variety of questions were included on the survey asking residents to evaluate various social attributes of their communities.



**Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale**

\*\* The margin of error is calculated differently for averages, and will sometimes vary from question to question within the survey depending on how many people answered each question. Thus, changes of the same size may exceed the margin of error for some items in Figure 4, but not for others. Only those items designated by double asterisks (\*\*) have differences large enough to fall outside of the statistical margin of error and can thus be considered to have changed since 1994.

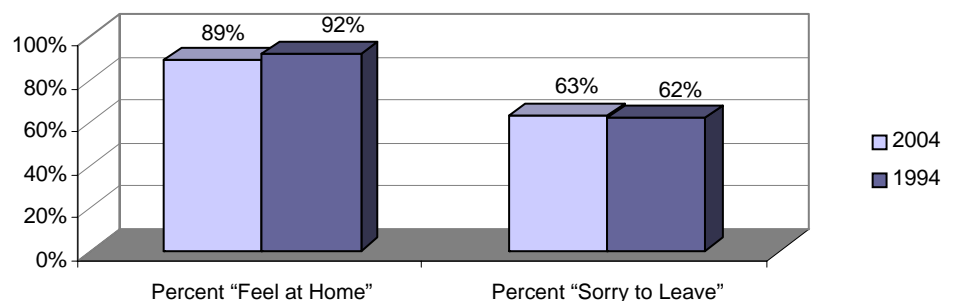
Residents were presented with a list of qualities and asked to evaluate their town on each quality using a 7-point scale. The average ratings shown in Figure 4 reveal that in 1994, safety and friendliness had the highest evaluations. In 2004, friendliness and safety were again rated the highest. Batavia's appearance and openness to new ideas received the lowest ratings in both 1994 and 2004. However, in 2004 attitudes toward Batavia's appearance (well-kept) decreased significantly from 1994. The assessment of other qualities remained the same over the decade.

## SOCIAL TIES

"Everybody knows everybody" is often cited as a feature of small towns. The extent to which people know and interact with each other influences commitment to the community and interest in its well-being. Therefore, questions were included about local social ties. In 2004, 45 percent of residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Batavia, compared to 48 percent in 1994. Similarly, 21 percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in Batavia, compared to 29 percent in 1994. Seventeen percent of residents in 2004 and 15 percent in 1994 said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in Batavia. (Note: These differences are not greater than the margin of error.)

## COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

How attached are Batavia residents to their community? The vast majority of residents reported that they feel at home in Batavia in both 1994 and 2004 (see Figure 5). Furthermore, about two thirds in both 1994 and 2004 indicated that they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away from Batavia. Feelings of attachment to Batavia have not changed in the last decade.



**Figure 5: Community Attachment**

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Batavia, 40 percent of residents indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is

“good” or “very good.” At the same time, less than one third reported participating in a local community improvement project during the year prior to the survey and about one in four described themselves as “somewhat or “very” active in local community activities and events (see Figure 6). The differences between 2004 and 1994 participation levels and activeness levels are not statistically significant. When asked to consider a variety of factors that limit their involvement in community improvement projects, the top three factors mentioned by Batavia residents were lack of time (58%), not asked to volunteer (38%), and not knowing how to become involved (33%).

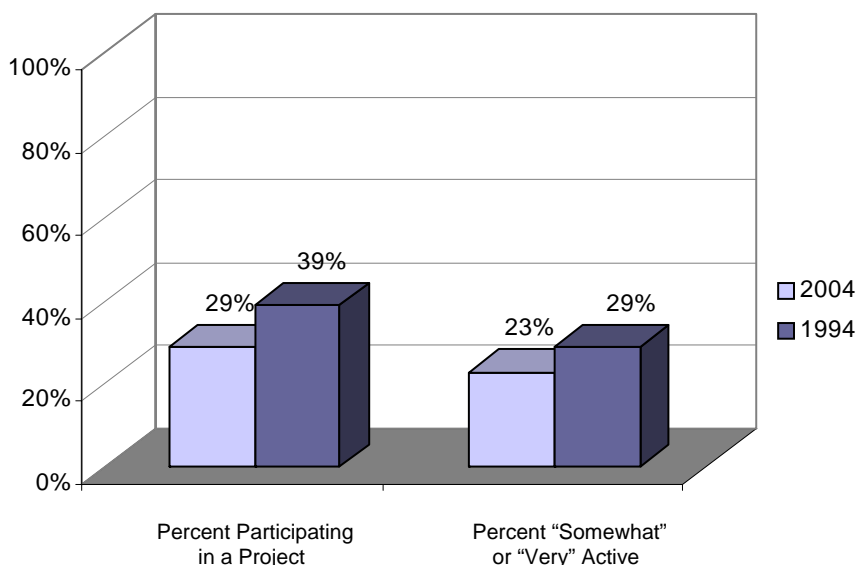


Figure 6: Community Involvement

## SUMMARY

A major goal of this project is to examine changes in the social conditions in rural Iowa over the past decade. As previously discussed, the differences between 2004 and 1994 shown in this report must be interpreted to account for the margin of error—that is, we cannot say with confidence that a change has occurred unless the difference is equal to or greater than 12 percentage points. Using this standard, what has changed in Batavia over the past decade? Findings revealed that fewer residents rated the quality of senior programs favorably, but more residents rated garbage collection as good or very good in 2004 compared to 1994. Ratings for other services and patronage patterns have not changed appreciably over the past decade.

The social environment has changed somewhat. Residents still described Batavia as a safe and friendly community, but viewed it as less well-kept compared to 1994. Residents remained strongly attached to Batavia—that is, a vast majority feel at home and would be sorry if they had to leave. Levels of community participation and assessments of personal activeness in the community were unchanged over the last ten years. It is interesting to note that two of the top three reasons people gave for not being involved in community projects were that no one asked them and they didn’t know how to get involved. These responses suggest potential strategies for increasing community participation.

The past decade has been challenging for Iowa’s small towns. We hope this information will prove useful in planning for Batavia’s future. **We wish to thank the Batavia residents who participated in the 1994 and 2004 studies for providing the information that made this report possible.**

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