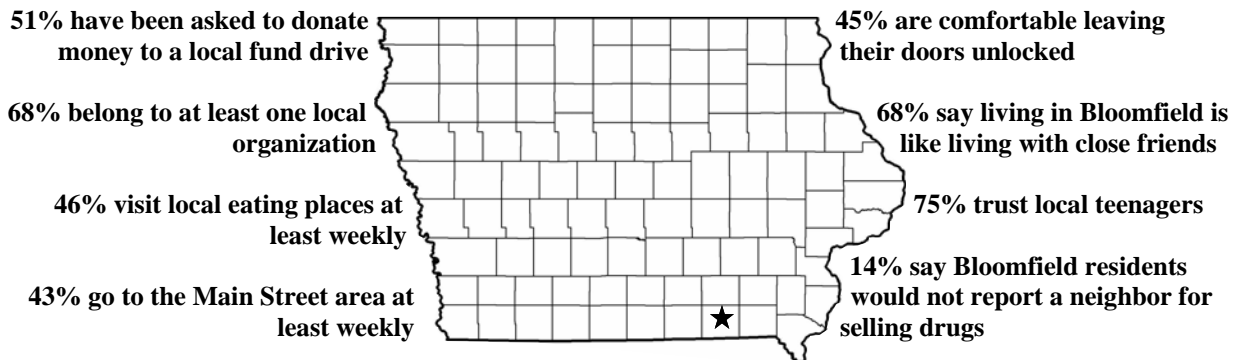


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN BLOOMFIELD

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 Bloomfield. 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, 102 Bloomfield residents responded to the survey, and 86 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Bloomfield residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN BLOOMFIELD IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

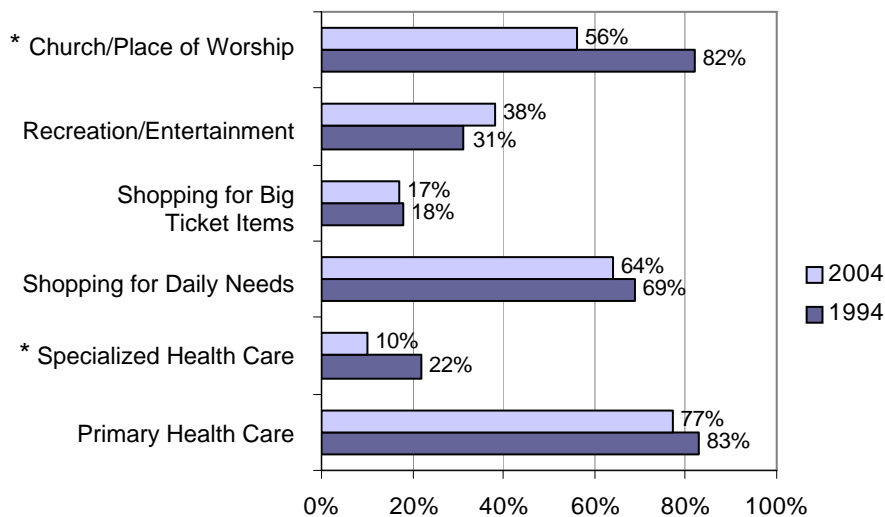


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that Bloomfield residents defied the trend for some services. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing various services in Bloomfield for both 1994 and 2004. In 2004, two-thirds or more remained in Bloomfield for shopping for daily needs and for primary

health care. Over half frequented local churches/places of worship. Fewer than 40 percent stayed in town for recreation, shopping for big ticket items, and specialized health care. There was a significant drop in the percent of residents who utilized local churches/places of worship and specialized health care in 2004. The patronage patterns for other services over the decade were essentially unchanged.

A Note on Interpretation: For Bloomfield, 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

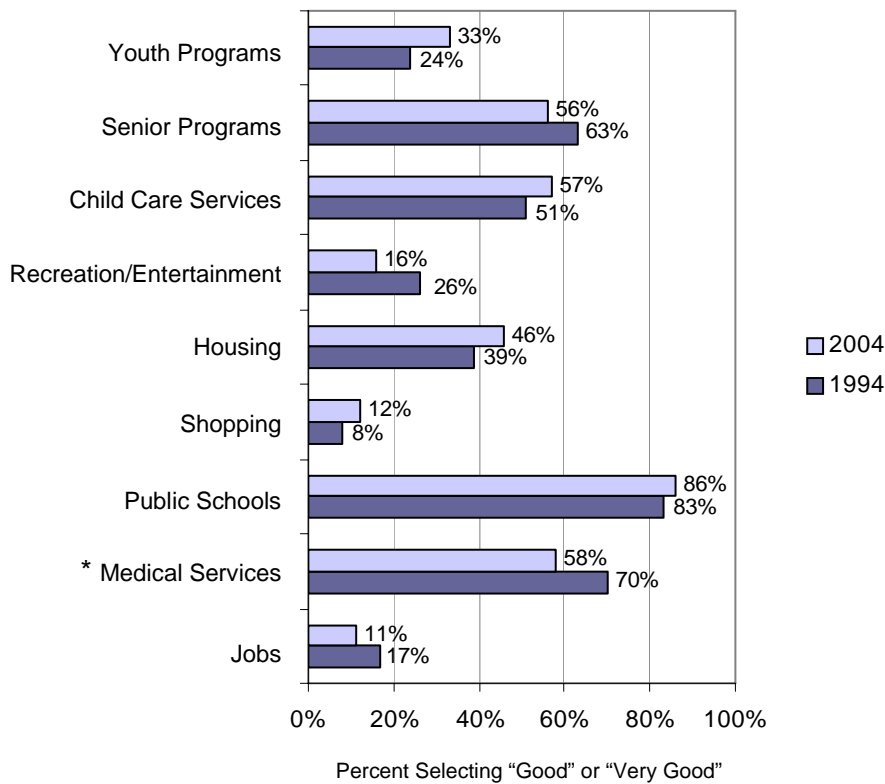


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. More than three-fourths of residents rated the public schools positively and more than half rated medical services and senior programs favorably in 2004. Public schools and medical services received the highest ratings in 1994. Jobs, shopping, and recreation had the lowest ratings in both periods with fewer than one in four residents indicating the services were good or very good. Medical services in Bloomfield declined in approval over the ten years. However, ratings for other services were not significantly different.

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. Generally, Bloomfield residents were satisfied with local government services. About 70 percent or more rated emergency response, garbage collection, fire protection, water, condition of the parks, and police protection favorably in both times. Even so, there was a significant decrease in approval of the quality of water services from 1994 to 2004. Fewer than one in four Bloomfield residents rated the condition of the streets positively in 1994 and 2004.

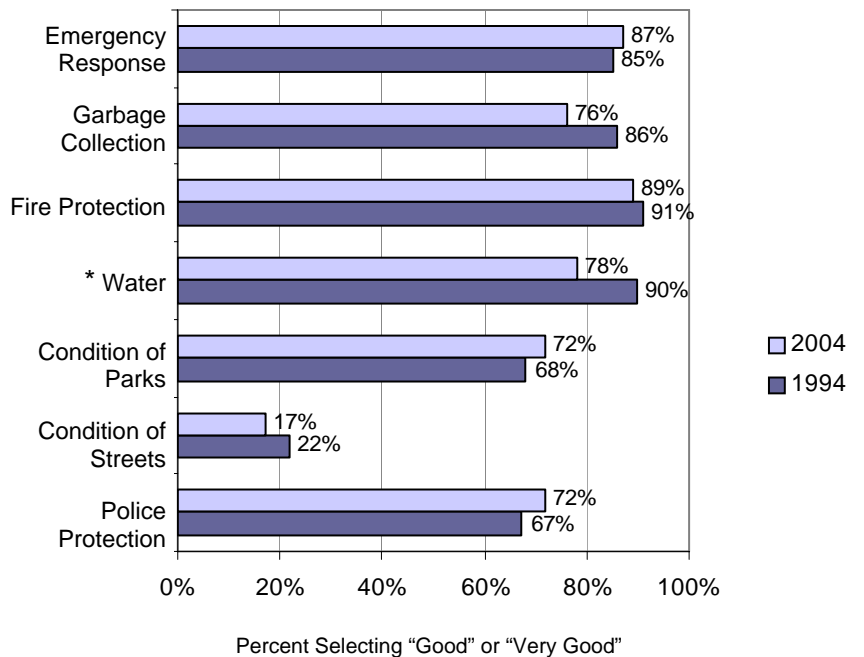


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

BLOOMFIELD'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.

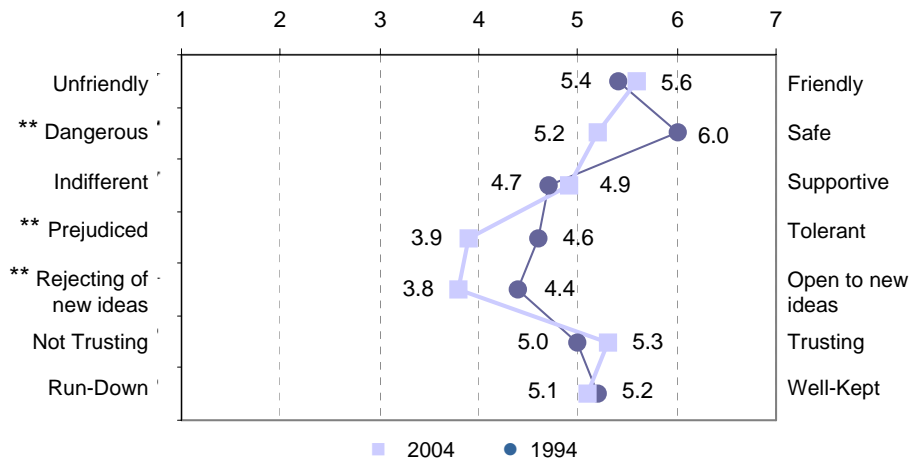


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

** 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, there was a significant decline in residents' assessment of safety in Bloomfield. Friendliness still received the highest ratings, but in 2004 trusting was the second highest quality. Tolerance and openness to new ideas received the lowest ratings in both 1994 and 2004, both of which dropped substantially during the ten years. The evaluation of other qualities remained essentially the same.

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 1994, 44 percent of residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Bloomfield which increased to 56 percent in 1994. In the area of friendships, 61 percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in Bloomfield, very similar to the 64 percent level in 2004. Thirty percent of residents in 1994 and 32 percent in 2004 said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in Bloomfield.

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

How attached are Bloomfield residents to their community? Almost everyone reported that they feel at home in Bloomfield in both 1994 and 2004 (see Figure 5). Furthermore, about eight of ten in both 1994 and 2004 indicated that they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away. Feelings of attachment have not changed significantly in the last decade.

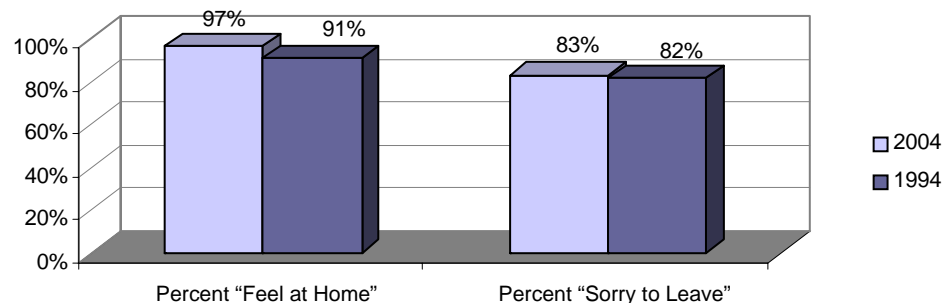


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Bloomfield, 76 percent indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is “good” or “very good.” Fifty-seven percent of residents reported participating in a community improvement project in the year prior to the survey and about one in three described themselves as “somewhat” or “very” active in local community activities and events (see Figure 6). This level of involvement is essentially unchanged from 1994

when 53 percent reported participating in a project and 33 percent rated themselves as active in the community. When asked to consider a variety of factors that limit their involvement in community improvement projects, the top three factors selected by residents were lack of time (57%), not being asked to volunteer (24%), and not having the skills to contribute (22%).

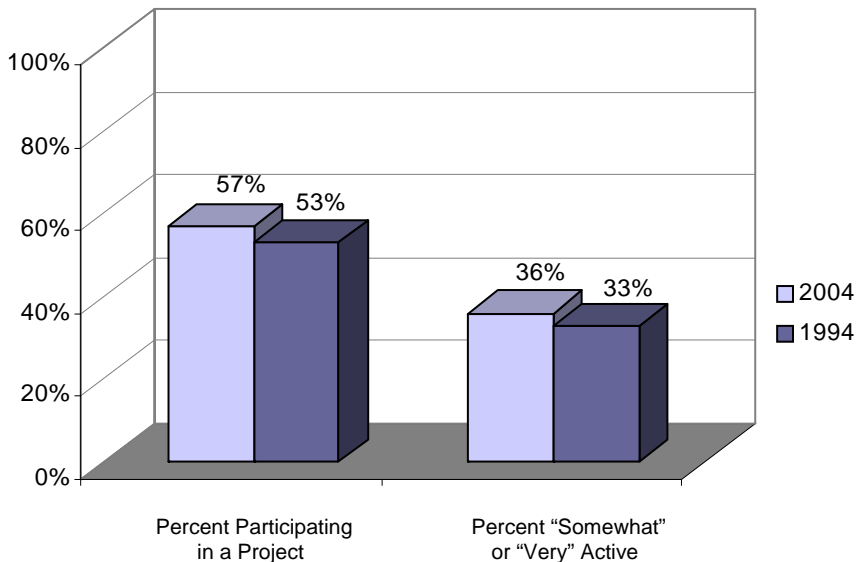


Figure 6: Community Involvement

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 Bloomfield over the past decade? Bloomfield residents were more likely to go out of town for church/place of worship and for specialized health care in 2004 than in 1994. They reported a substantial decrease in the quality of medical services and water. Even so, most government services and the public schools continue to be evaluated positively.

The social environment has changed somewhat. Residents still describe Bloomfield as a safe and friendly community, but view it as less safe, less tolerant, and less open to new ideas compared to 1994. Residents remain strongly attached to Bloomfield. More than seven in ten reported that the spirit of community participation is good or very good and levels of community involvement remained unchanged from 1994 to 2004. 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 that they did not have the skills to contribute. This suggests possible strategies to increase community participation in the future.

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

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	RDI-142 — This report was prepared through the Rural Development Initiative Project, Iowa State University and funded by the National Research Initiative, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Agreement No. 2003-35401-13828.