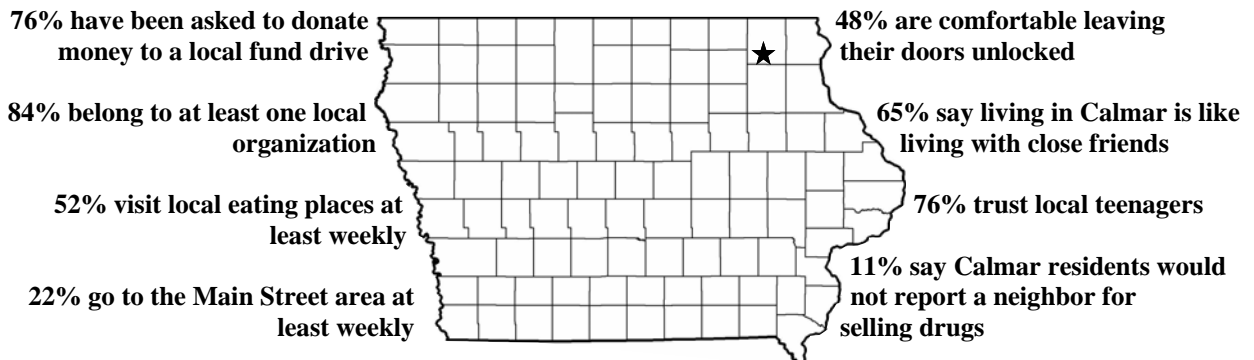


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN CALMAR

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 Calmar. 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, 106 Calmar residents responded to the survey, and 104 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Calmar residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN CALMAR IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

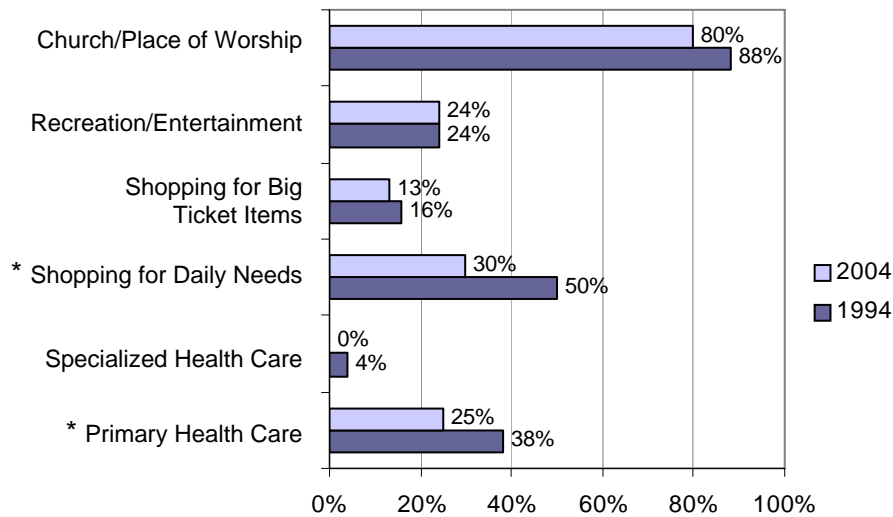


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that Calmar residents followed this pattern in 1994 and 2004. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing services of various types in Calmar. In 2004, the majority of residents went out of town for all services except attending church/place of worship. Eighty percent in 2004 and 88 percent in

1994 remained in Calmar for church/place of worship related services. One in four utilized local primary health care services and about one in three shopped for their daily needs in Calmar in 2004. These figures were down significantly from 1994 levels. Differences in patronage levels in other areas were within the margin of error and thus essentially unchanged.

A Note on Interpretation: For Calmar, differences in percentages between 2004 and 1994 of less than 11 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 11 percent are statistically significant and are indicated with an asterisk ().

RATINGS OF LOCAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES

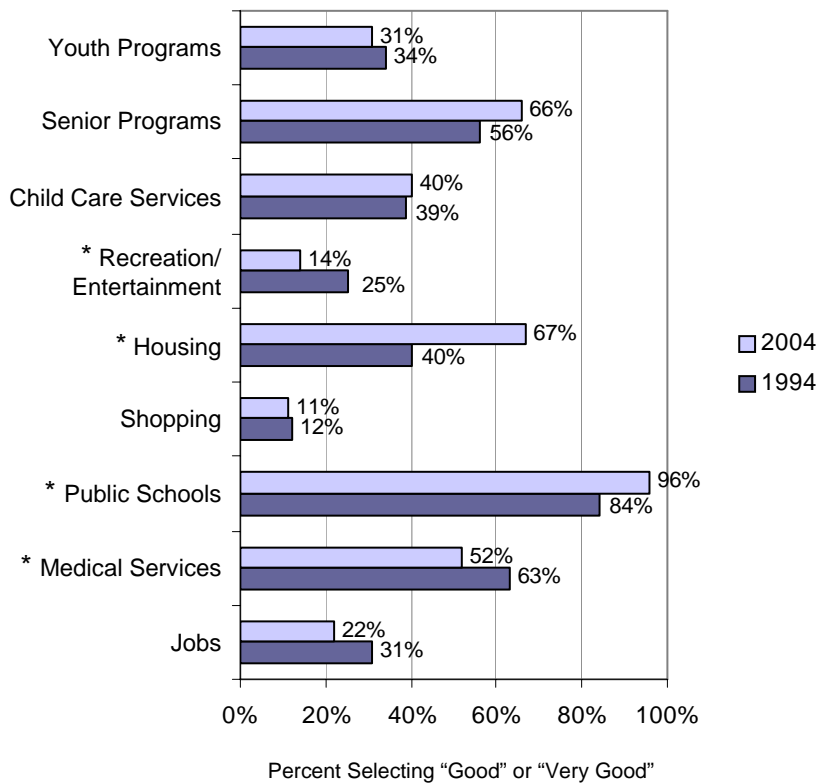


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. Almost all residents rated the public schools positively and half or more rated medical services, housing, and senior programs favorably in 2004. These services also received the highest ratings in 1994. Jobs, shopping, and recreation received the lowest ratings in both periods, with fewer than one in three residents indicating the services were good or very good. Assessments for housing and public schools improved while those for recreation and medical services declined over the decade. Ratings for other services were unchanged over the past decade.

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, Calmar residents reported being satisfied with local government services. More than seven in ten rated emergency response, garbage collection, fire protection, water, and parks favorably in both years. About two thirds of Calmar residents indicated that police protection was good or very good in 1994 and 2004. There were no significant changes in the assessments of Calmar government services in the ten years between surveys.

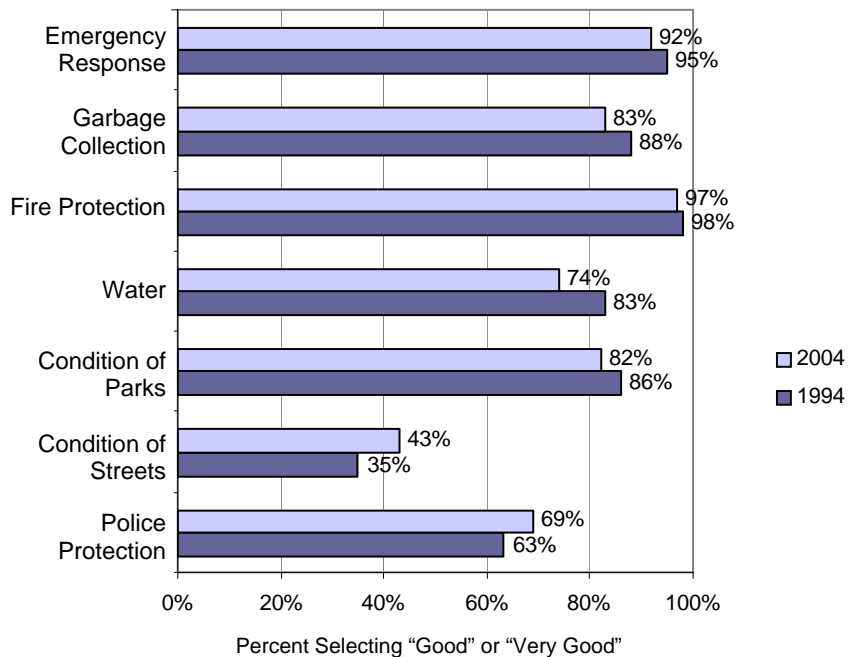


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

CALMAR'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.

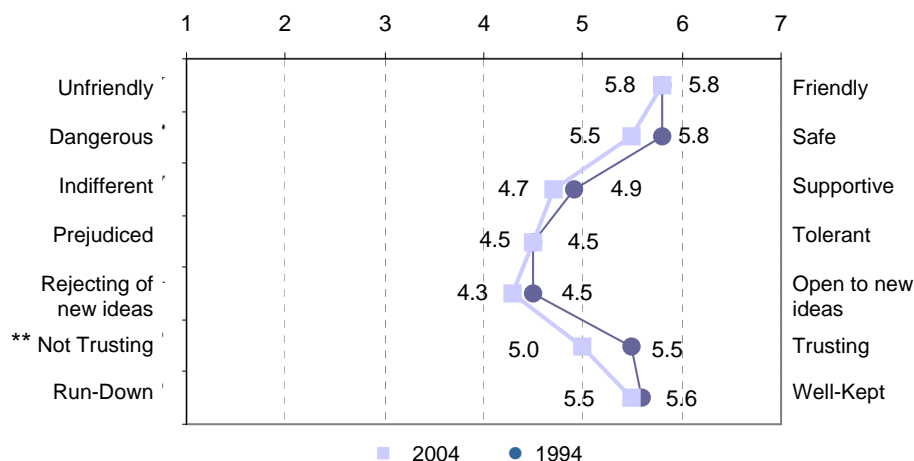


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

** 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 safety and friendliness had the highest evaluations in both 1994 and 2004. Similarly, there was no change in the two qualities, tolerance and openness to new ideas, that received the lowest ratings in 1994 and 2004. Only one significant change is noted. Residents were less likely in 2004 to describe Calmar as a trusting community. The differences in the evaluation of other qualities were within the margin of error.

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, 62 percent of residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Calmar, compared to 67 percent in 1994. Similarly, 50 percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in Calmar, compared to 49 percent in 1994. Fifteen percent of residents in 2004 and 17 percent in 1994 said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in Calmar. (Note: These differences are not greater than the margin of error.)

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

How attached are Calmar residents to their community? Almost everyone reported that they feel at home in Calmar 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 from Calmar. Feelings of attachment to Calmar have not changed over the last decade.

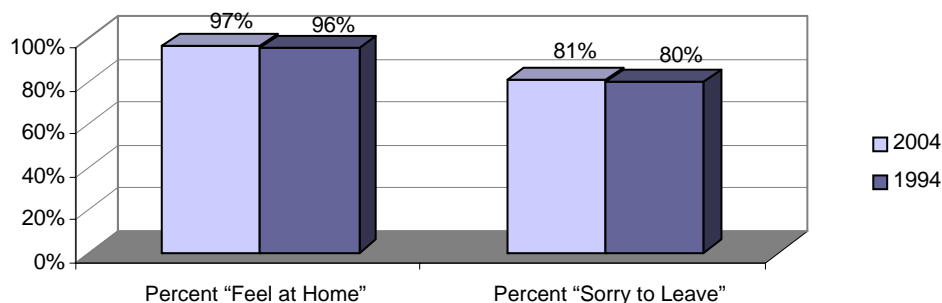


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Calmar, 77 percent indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is “good” or “very good.” Fifty eight percent of residents reported participating in a local improvement project during the last year and 39 percent described themselves as “somewhat or “very” active in local community activities and events (see Figure 6). This level of involvement is essentially the same as in 1994 when 59 percent reported participating in a project and 49 percent rated themselves as active in the community.

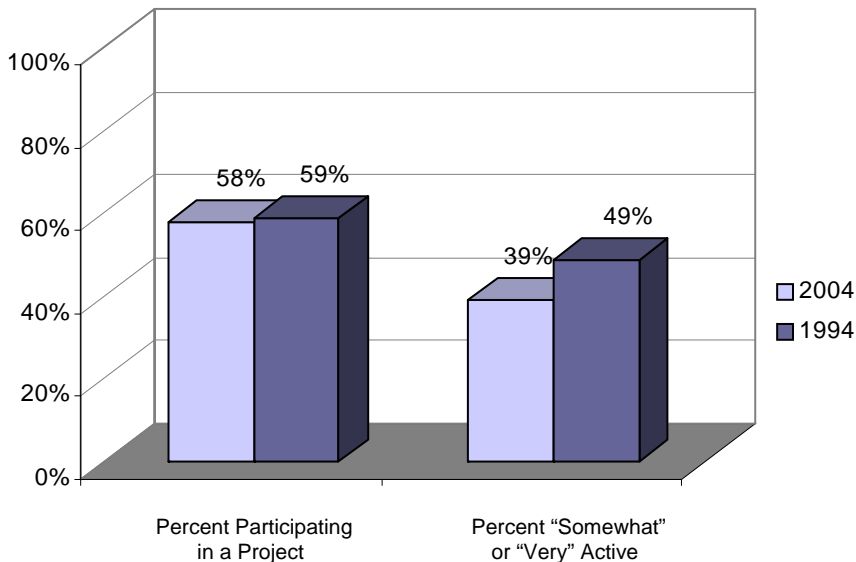


Figure 6: Community Involvement

When asked to consider a variety of factors that limit their involvement in community improvement projects, the top three factors mentioned by Calmar residents were lack of time (61%), not being asked to volunteer (40%), and not knowing how to become involved (26%).

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 11 percentage points. Using this standard, what has changed in Calmar over the past decade? Residents were less likely to shop for their daily needs or utilize primary health care in Calmar while attendance at local churches/places of worship was stable over the decade. More evaluated the quality of housing and the public schools favorably, but fewer approved of the quality of recreation and medical services compared to 1994. Government services continued to be rated positively.

The social environment has changed somewhat. Calmar residents still described their town as a safe and friendly community, but viewed it as less trusting than ten years ago. Residents remained strongly attached to Calmar. Almost eight in ten reported that the spirit of community participation is good or very good overall, and reported 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 not being asked and not knowing how to become involved. These suggest 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 Calmar’s future. **We wish to thank the Calmar residents who participated in the 1994 and 2004 studies for providing the information that made this report possible.**

RDI

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