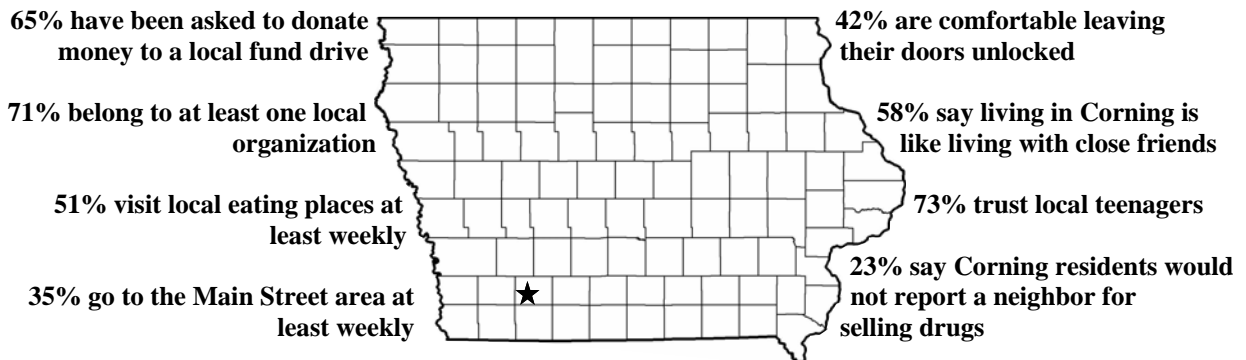


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN CORNING

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 Corning. 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, 103 Corning residents responded to the survey, and 91 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Corning residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN CORNING IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

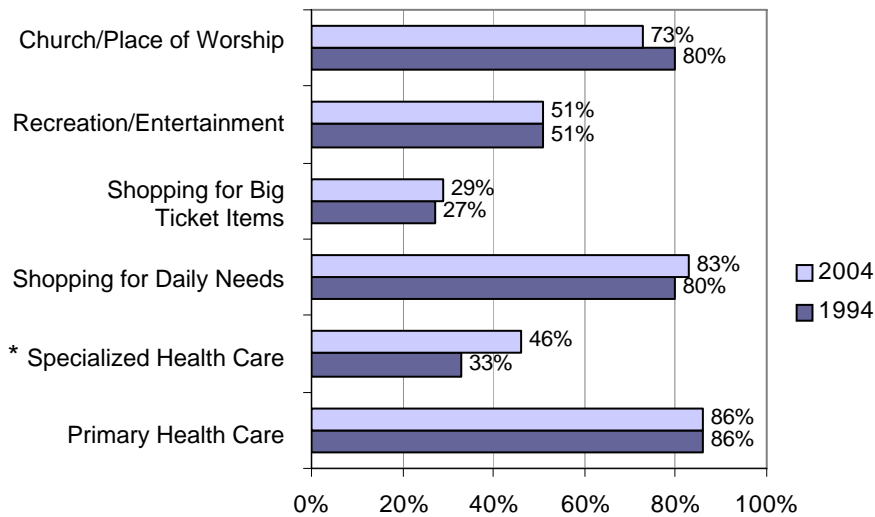


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that Corning residents defied the trend for some services. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing various services in Corning for both 1994 and 2004. In 2004, more than 70 percent of residents remained in Corning for church/place of worship,

shopping for daily needs, and for primary health care. About half stayed in Corning for recreation and specialized health care. Significantly more residents patronized local specialized health care in 2004 than in 1994. Changes in the patronage of other services over the decade are within the margin of error and essentially unchanged.

A Note on Interpretation: For Corning, 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

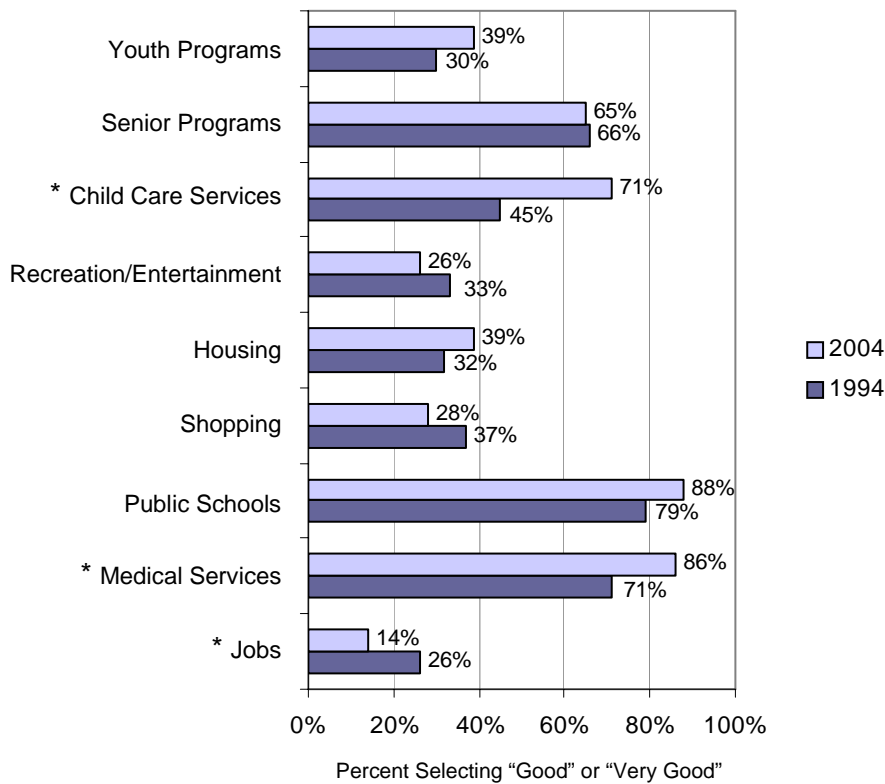


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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 80 percent of residents rated the public schools and medical services positively in 2004. These services also received the highest ratings in 1994, but significantly more residents approved of medical services in 2004. Senior programs and child care services were rated positively by two thirds or more of residents in 2004. The quality of jobs received the lowest rating in both years. Approval of child care services improved over the decade while there was a decline in residents’ approval of the quality of jobs.

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, Corning 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 2004. This represented a significant improvement in ratings for emergency response, garbage collection, and water. About two thirds of residents rated police protection positively in 2004, up from 54 percent in 1994. The condition of the streets received the lowest approval rating in 2004.

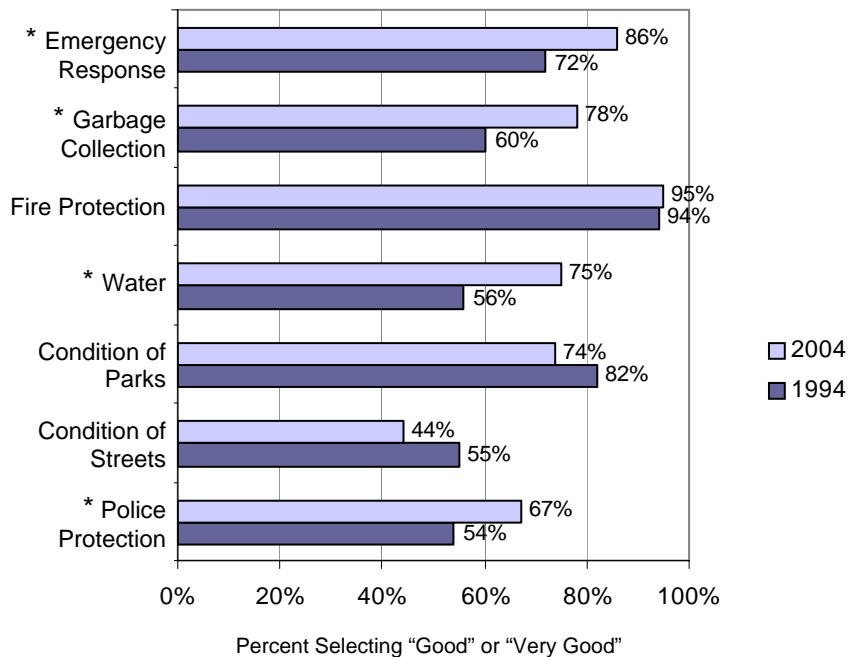


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

CORNING'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.

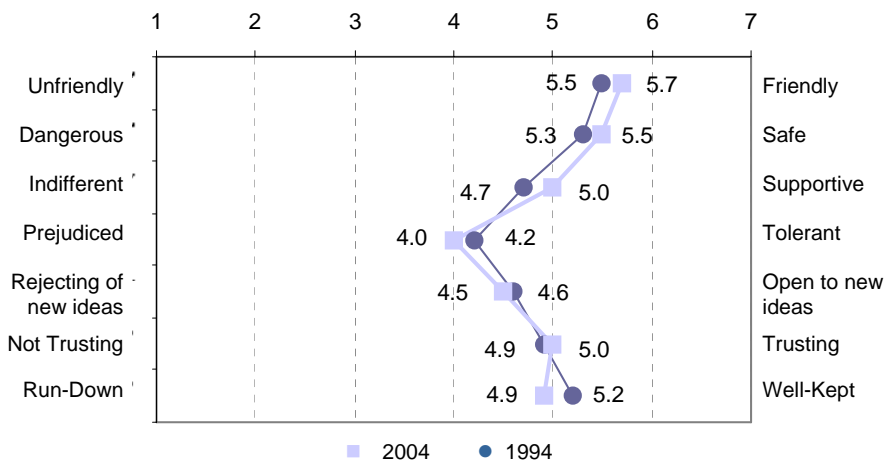


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

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 for Corning in Figure 4 reveal that in 1994 and 2004 friendliness, safety, and appearance had the highest evaluations. Tolerance and openness to ideas received the lowest ratings in both survey years. Residents' assessments of these qualities were essentially unchanged for Corning from 1994 to 2004.

** 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.

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, 55 percent of residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Corning compared to 61 percent in 1994. Similarly, 65 percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in Corning compared to 70 percent in 1994. Twenty-six percent of residents in 2004 said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in Corning. This is a significant drop from 38 percent in 1994.

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

How attached are Corning residents to their community? Almost everyone reported that they feel at home in Corning 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. Residents' feelings of attachment to Corning were about the same in 2004 as in 1994.

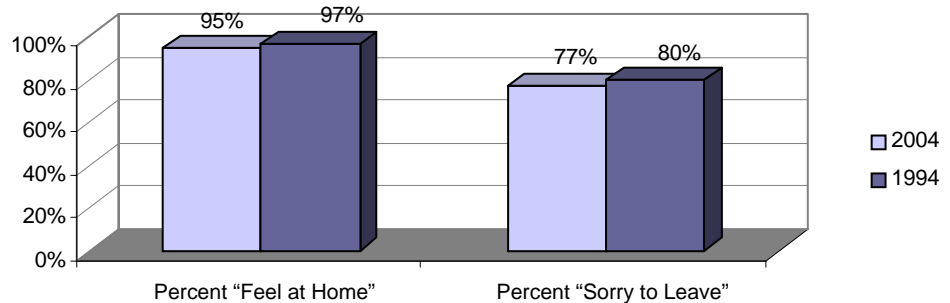


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Corning, 77 percent of residents indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is “good” or “very good.”

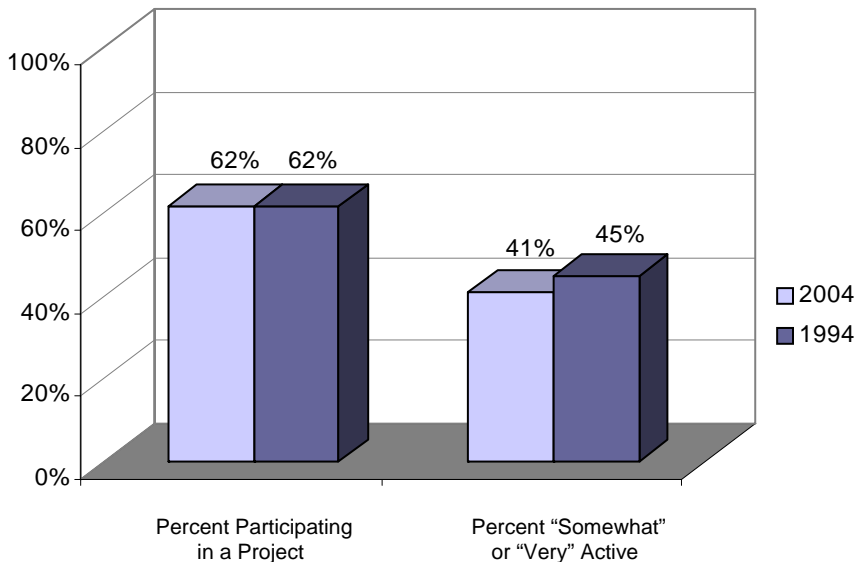


Figure 6: Community Involvement

About two thirds reported participating in a local community improvement project during the last year and about four in ten described themselves as “somewhat” or “very” active in local community activities and events (see Figure 6). The level of community participation and reported activeness among Corning residents were the same in 1994. When asked to consider a variety of factors that limit their involvement in community improvement projects, the top three factors mentioned by Corning residents were lack of time (63%), not being asked to volunteer (43%), and having no interest in participating (33%).

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 Corning over the past decade? Corning residents were more likely to utilize local specialized health care in 2004 than in 1994 and still remained in town for church/worship and shopping for daily needs. There was a substantial increase in the approval of the quality of local child care services, medical services, emergency response, water, police protection, and garbage collection in 2004 compared to 1994. However, ratings for jobs declined. Except for condition of the streets, government services, medical services, and the public schools continued to be rated very positively.

The social environment has changed somewhat. The level of family ties within Corning was lower in 2004 than in 1994. Even so, residents remained strongly attached to the community—that is, they feel at home and would be sorry if they had to leave. They still described Corning as a friendly, safe and well-kept community. More than eight in ten reported that the spirit of participation is good or very good overall and community involvement remained unchanged from 1994 to 2004. It is interesting to note that one of the top reasons people gave for not being involved in community projects was that no one asked them.

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

RDI

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