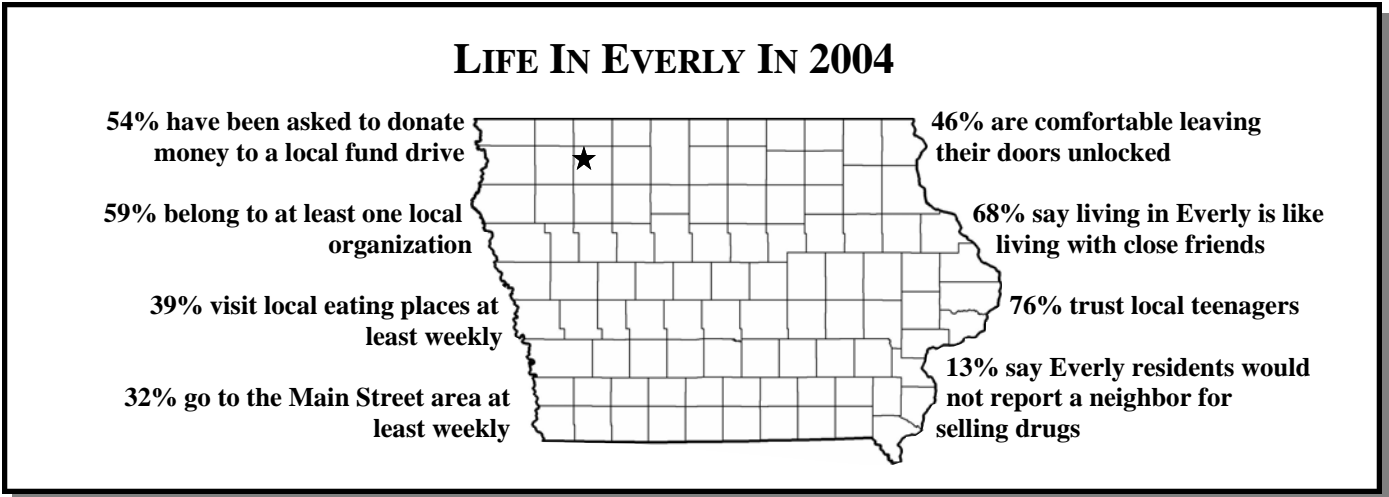


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN EVERLY

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 Everly. 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, 113 Everly residents responded to the survey, and 109 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Everly residents have changed over the past decade.



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

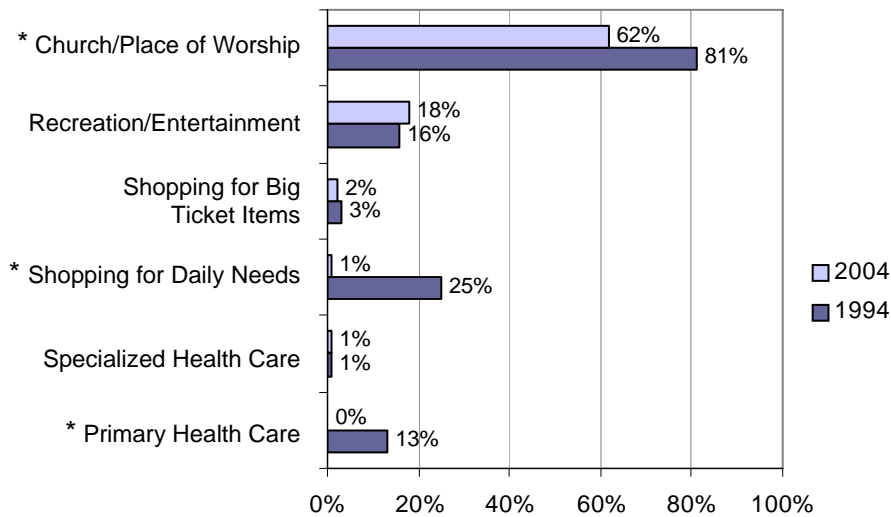


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that Everly residents follow this pattern. Figure 1 shows that most residents stay in town to attend church or their place of worship, but that they tend to leave for all other services. The percentage of residents who shop for their daily needs in town decreased significantly from

1994 to 2004, as did the percentage who receive their primary health care in town. The percentage of residents who attend church or their place of worship in Everly dropped significantly over the ten year period, from 81 percent in 1994 to 62 percent in 2004. Patronage patterns for the other services remained unchanged.

A Note on Interpretation: For Everly, 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

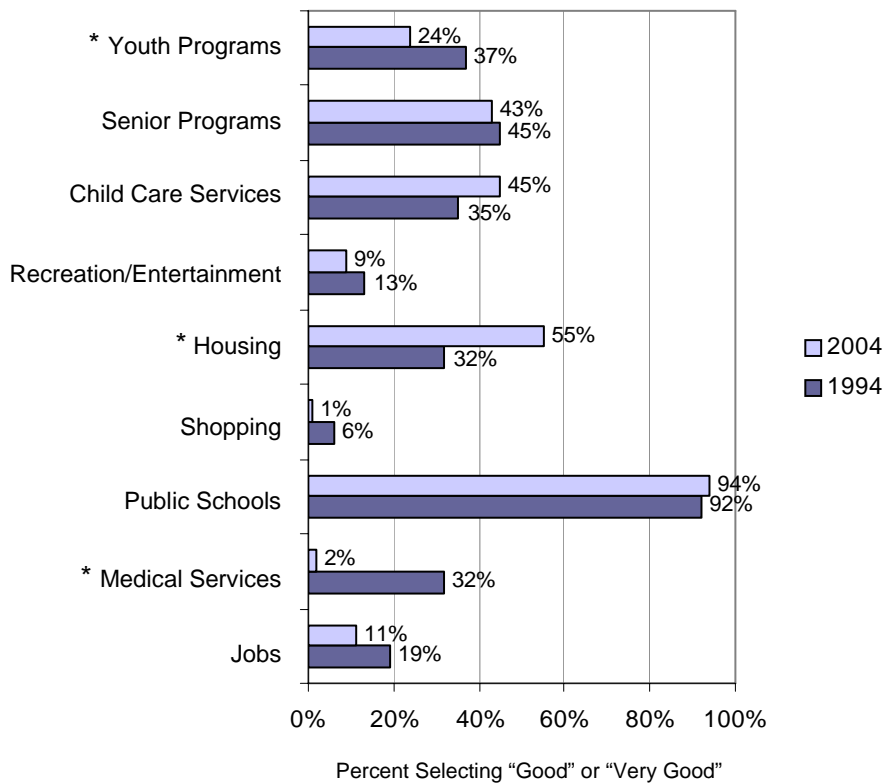


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. Public schools received the highest ratings in both years with over 90 percent of Everly residents rating their schools positively. The ratings for housing improved significantly, moving up from 32 percent in 1994 to 55 percent in 2004. However, the percentage of residents who rated youth programs and medical services as “good” or “very good” dropped significantly over the last 10 years. The ratings for the other services and facilities in Everly did not change significantly from 1994 to 2004.

RATINGS OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Respondents were asked to provide ratings for seven services normally provided by local governments. Figure 3 shows the percentage of Everly residents rating each service as “good” or “very good” for 2004 and 1994. Most residents rated emergency response and fire protection services favorably, and a majority also gave positive ratings to garbage collection in both years. Compared to 1994, there was a significant decrease in the percentage of favorable ratings for the condition of parks, the condition of streets, and police protection services in Everly. However, local water services were rated positively by a greater percentage of residents in 2004 than in 1994.

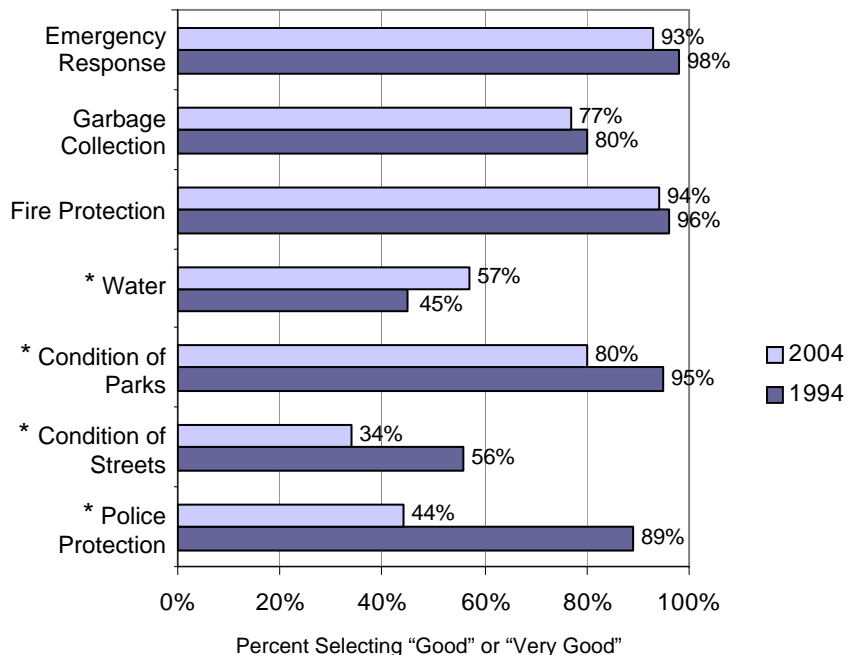


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

EVERLY'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.

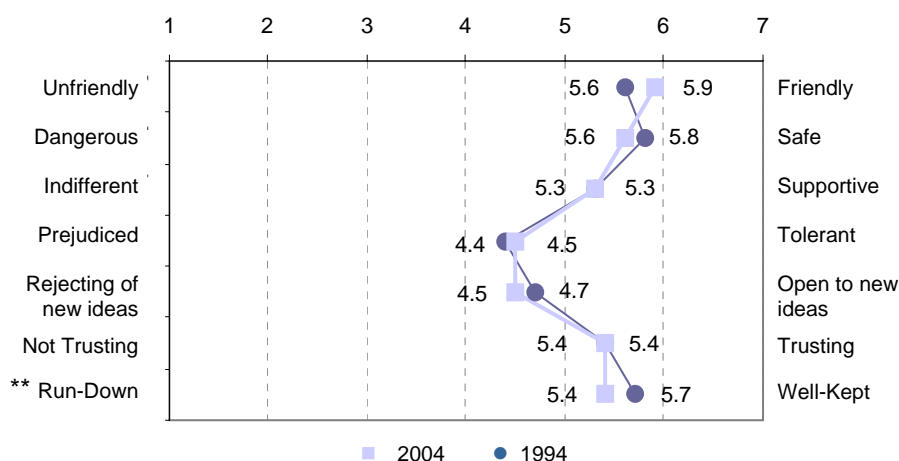


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

** 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. Figure 4 shows how Everly residents evaluated their town on these qualities in 1994 and 2004. In 1994, residents assigned the highest ratings to safety, and in 2004 the top rating was for friendliness. Trust and appearance were also highly rated in both years. The lowest ratings for both years were for tolerance and openness to new ideas. Between 1994 and 2004, the ratings for appearance decreased significantly. The ratings for all of the other areas stayed about 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. As such, questions were included to assess local social ties. In 2004, 53 percent of the residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Everly, a significant decrease compared to 71 percent in 1994. Similarly, the percentage of residents that indicated that half or more of their friends live in town, decreased significantly from 45 percent in 2004 to 65 percent in 1994. Thirteen percent of the residents in 2004 and 20 percent in 1994 said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in town.

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Everly residents feel at home in their community? Figure 5 shows that almost all of the residents in both 1994 and 2004 felt at home in Everly. Approximately 80 percent of the residents also said that they would be sorry to leave the community. These high levels of community attachment in Everly have not changed significantly over the last ten years.

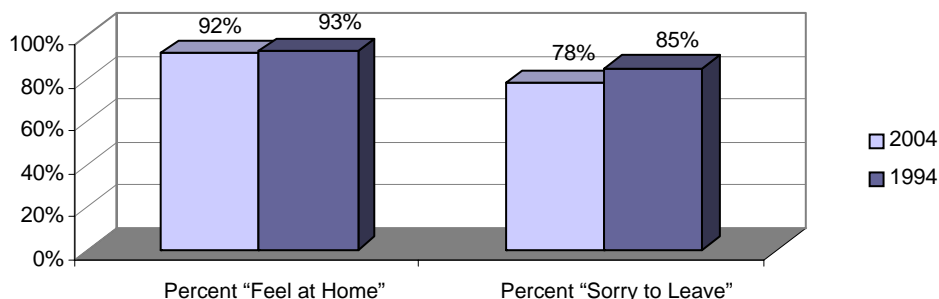


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Everly, 86 percent of the residents indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is “good” or “very good.” In both 1994 and 2004, slightly more than half of the residents reported participating in a community improvement project in the years prior to the surveys (Figure 6). Forty-six percent of residents in both surveys described themselves as “somewhat” or “very” active in community activities. When residents were asked to consider the factors that limit their involvement in community improvement projects, the top response in 2004 was that they lacked the time to participate (59%). Other common responses were that they had not been asked to volunteer (40%) and that they did not know how to become involved (34%).

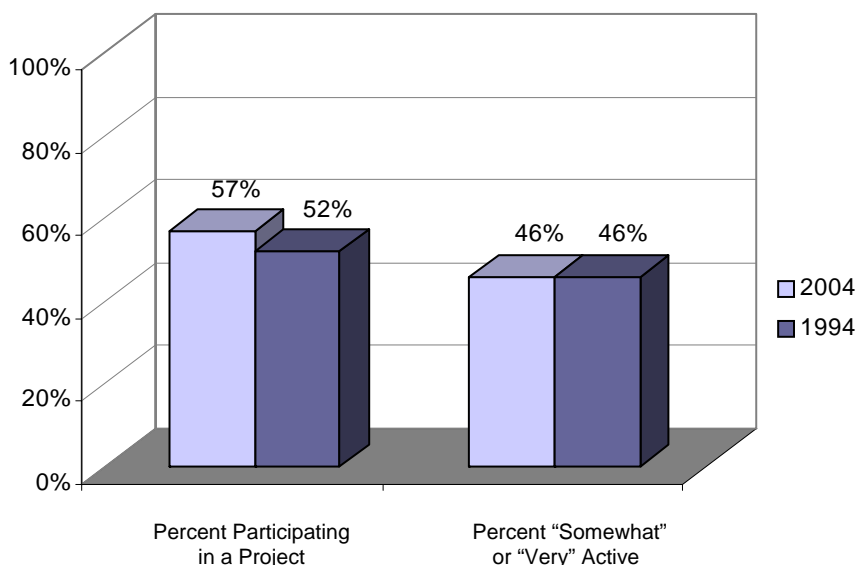


Figure 6: Community Involvement

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 11 percentage points. Using this standard, what has changed in Everly over the past decade? The percentage of people who stayed in Everly to attend church or a place of worship declined. Also declining was the percentage of residents who shopped for their daily needs in town and the percentage who receive their primary health care in town. Residents’ evaluation of housing improved, but their evaluations of youth programs and medical services declined. As for the quality of government services, residents rated the condition of parks and streets and police protection services lower in 2004 than in 1994, but rated water more favorably.

The social environment in Everly has changed very little over the past decade. One significant change is that residents rated their town as less well-kept in 2004 than in 1994. Ratings for all of the other community qualities remained about the same, as did feelings of community attachment and levels of community involvement. It is interesting to note that one of the top reasons people gave for not being involved in community projects was that they had not been asked to volunteer. This suggests one way for increasing community involvement.

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

RDI

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