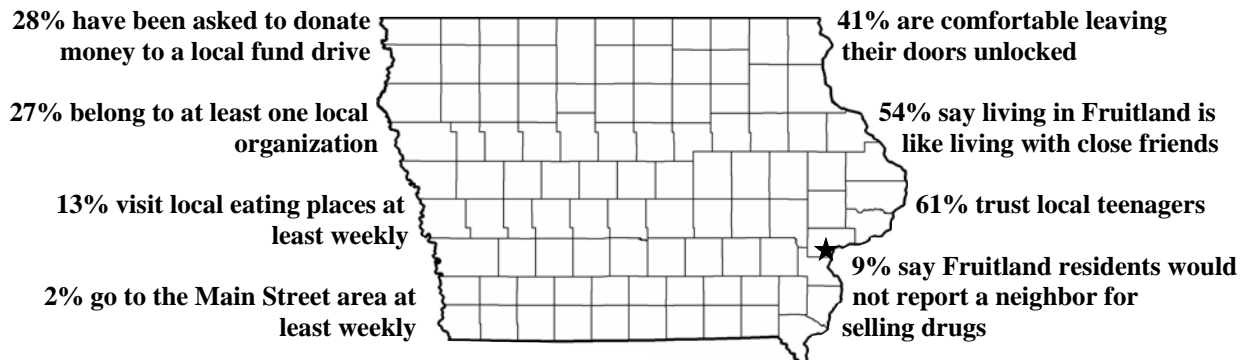


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN FRUITLAND

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 Fruitland. 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, 99 Fruitland residents responded to the survey, and 93 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Fruitland residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN FRUITLAND IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

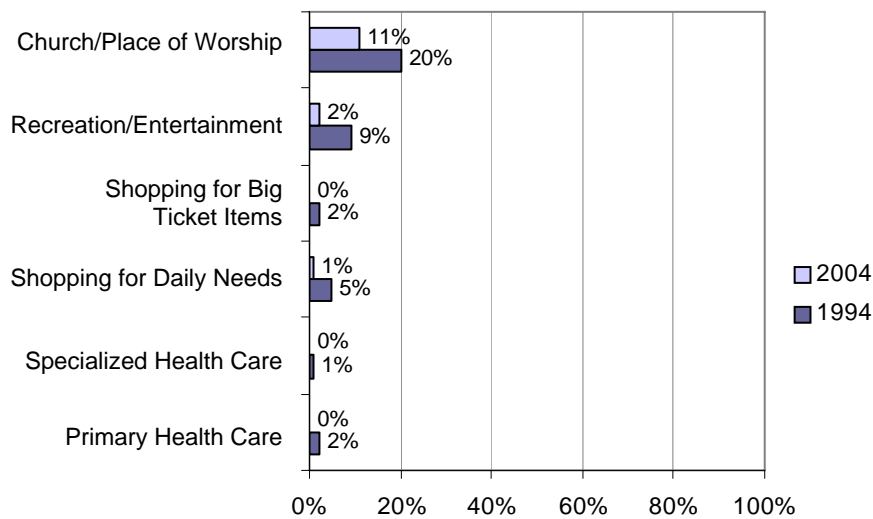


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that Fruitland residents follow this pattern. Figure 1 shows that 20 percent of the residents stayed in town to attend church or their place of worship in 1994 and 11 percent stayed in town in 2004. Less than 10 percent of the residents stayed in Fruitland for any of the other services. In

2004, none of the residents surveyed received their health care in town or stayed in town when shopping for big ticket items, and almost no one stayed in town for recreation/entertainment or when shopping for daily needs. Clearly, the residents of Fruitland depend on nearby towns for many of their services. There were no significant changes in the patronage patterns from 1994 to 2004.

A Note on Interpretation: For Fruitland, 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

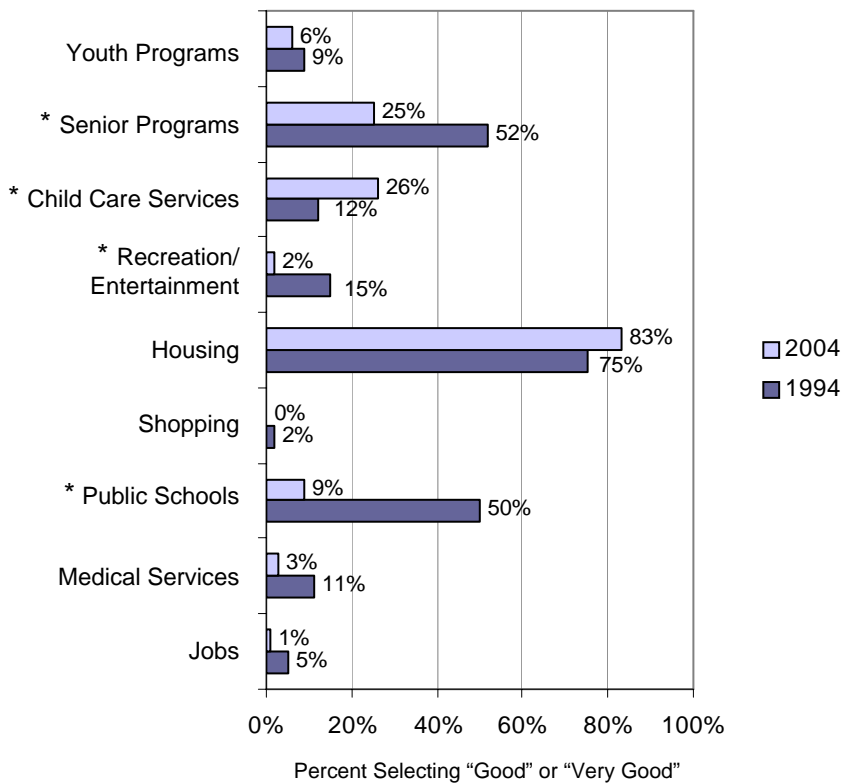


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. Housing received the highest ratings in both years. Nearly 80 percent of Fruitland residents rated housing as either “good” or “very good.” The percentage of positive ratings for public schools decreased significantly from 50 percent in 1994 to only 9 percent in 2004. Positive ratings for senior programs and recreation and entertainment also decreased significantly over the ten-year period. However, the percentage of favorable ratings for child care services increased significantly since 1994.

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. In both years, Fruitland residents were pleased with the quality of many of their government services. Over 70 percent of the residents were satisfied with emergency response, garbage collection, fire protection, and parks. Approximately half of the residents were satisfied with water and the condition of their streets. About half were also pleased with police protection in 1994, but this fell significantly to 33 percent in 2004. The ratings of parks also declined significantly over the past decade.

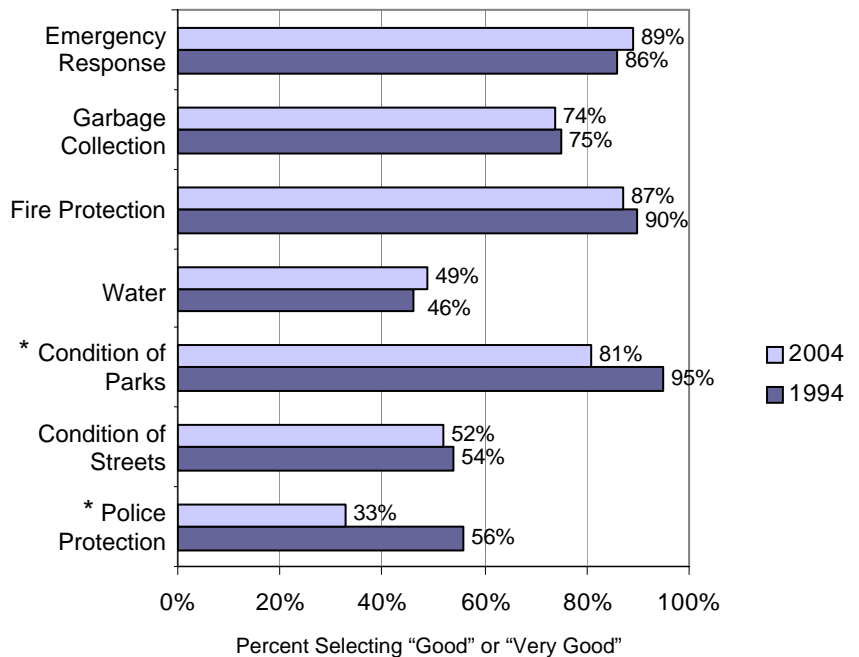


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

FRUITLAND'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.

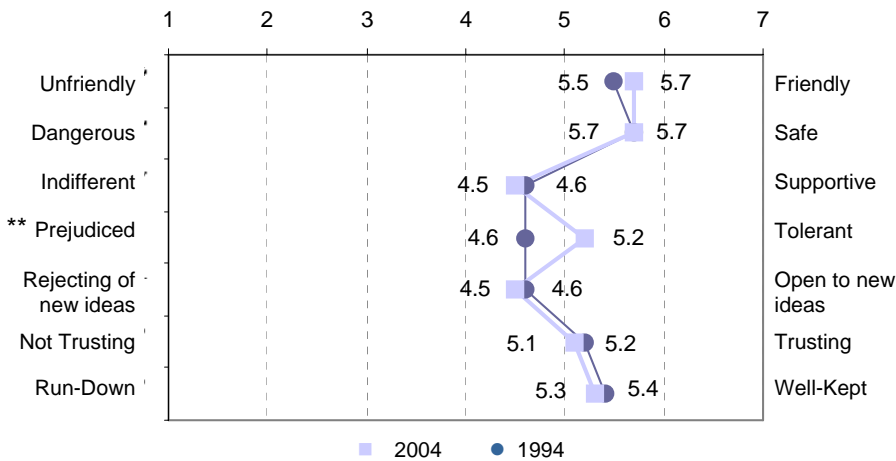


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

Residents were presented with a list of qualities and asked to evaluate their town on each quality using a 7-point scale. Figure 4 shows how Fruitland residents evaluated their town on these qualities in 1994 and 2004. In 1994, residents assigned the highest ratings to friendliness and safety, and these two areas also received the highest ratings in 2004. Supportiveness and openness to new ideas received the lowest ratings in both years. Tolerance also received a low rating in 1994, but this quality was rated significantly higher in 2004. The ratings for all of the other areas remained unchanged.

** 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. As such, questions were included to assess local social ties. In 2004, 25 percent of the residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Fruitland, compared to 35 percent in 1994. Eighteen percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in town, compared to 19 percent in 1994. Three percent of the residents in 2004 and 10 percent in 1994 said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in town. (Note: These differences are not greater than the margin of error.)

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Fruitland 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 Fruitland. Approximately 75 percent also said that they would be sorry to leave the community. These high levels of community attachment in Fruitland did not change significantly over the period from 1994 to 2004.

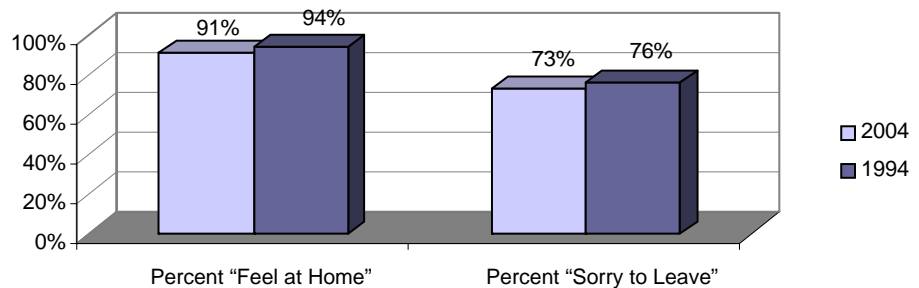


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Fruitland, 56 percent of the residents indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is “good” or “very good.”

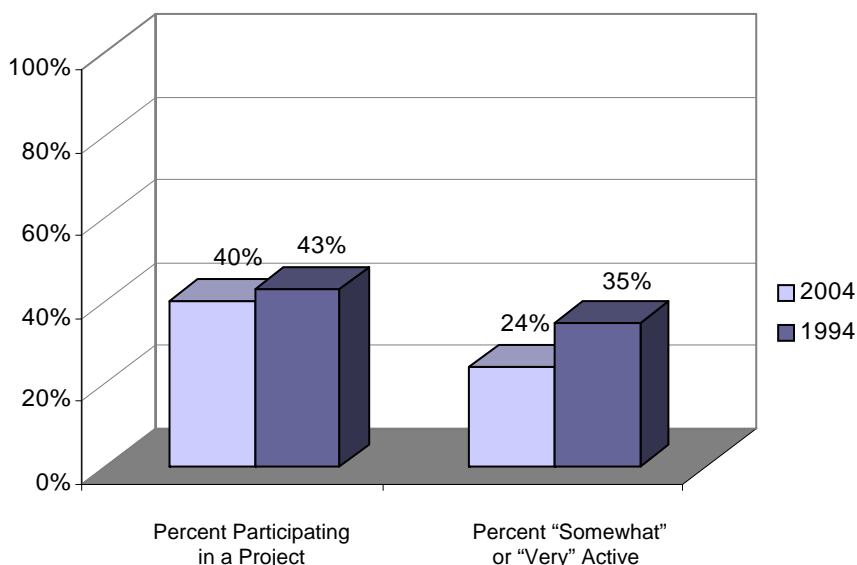


Figure 6: Community Involvement

In both 1994 and 2004, approximately 40 percent of the residents reported participating in a community improvement project in the years prior to the surveys (Figure 6). Thirty-five percent of the residents in 1994 and 24 percent in 2004 said they were “somewhat” or “very” active in community activities. When Fruitland residents were asked to consider the factors that limit their involvement in community improvement projects, the top response in 2004 was that they lacked time to get involved (70%). Other common responses were that they had not been asked to volunteer (48%) and that they had no interest in participating (32%).

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 Fruitland over the past decade? There were no significant changes in the patronage patterns of area services—most Fruitland residents still leave the community for most services. Residents rated the quality of senior programs, recreation/entertainment opportunities, and public schools lower in 2004 than in 1994. However, positive ratings increased significantly for local child care services. As for local government services, there was a significant decrease in ratings for the condition of community parks and police protection services.

The social environment in Fruitland changed very little over the past decade. Residents still describe their town as friendly and safe, and also perceive the community to be more tolerant in 2004 than in 1994. Levels of community attachment remained high, and there were no significant changes in the percentage of residents involved in community activities. It is interesting to note that one of the top reasons people gave for not being involved in community activities was that they had not been asked to volunteer. This suggests one possible strategy 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 Fruitland’s future. **We wish to thank the Fruitland residents who participated in the 1994 and 2004 studies for providing the information that made this report possible.**

RDI

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