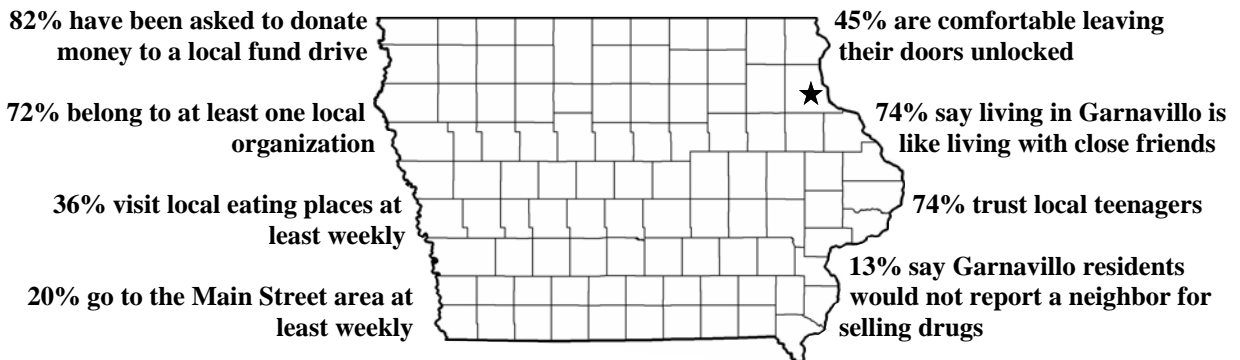


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN GARNAVILLO

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 Garnavillo. 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, 118 Garnavillo residents responded to the survey, and 101 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Garnavillo residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN GARNAVILLO IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

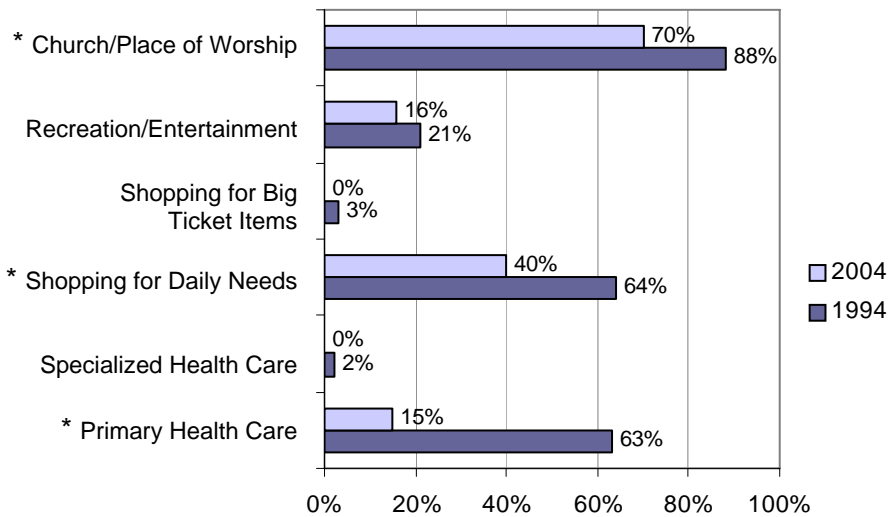


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. The survey results, which are displayed in Figure 1, show that Garnavillo residents follow this pattern. In 1994, 88 percent of residents attended church or place of worship in town, and over 60 percent shopped for their daily needs and received their primary health care in town. By 2004, however, these percentages

had dropped significantly. Only 70 percent attended church in town, only 40 percent shopped for daily needs locally, and only 15 percent stayed in town for their primary health care. In both 1994 and 2004, very few residents stayed in Garnavillo for their recreation and entertainment, and almost no residents stayed in town when shopping for big ticket items or to receive specialized health care.

A Note on Interpretation: For Garnavillo, 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

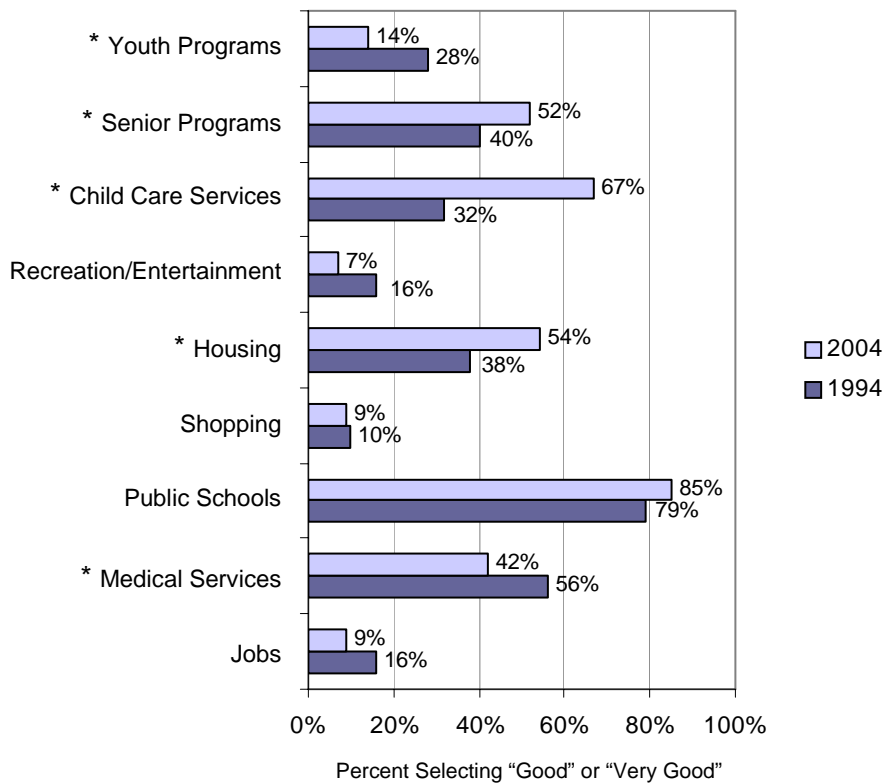


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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 approximately 80 percent of Garnavillo residents rating their schools positively. The ratings for housing improved significantly, moving up from 38 percent in 1994 to 54 percent in 2004. Residents also rated child care services and senior programs significantly more favorably. However, the percentage of respondents who rated youth programs and medical services in Garnavillo as “good” or “very good” decreased 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, Garnavillo residents were pleased with the quality of their government services. Over 80 percent were satisfied with emergency response, garbage collection, fire protection, parks, and police protection, and about three-fourths of residents assigned positive ratings to water. The lowest rating in both years was for the condition of the streets. However, 73 percent of the residents gave streets a favorable rating in 2004, a significant increase compared to 59 percent in 1994.

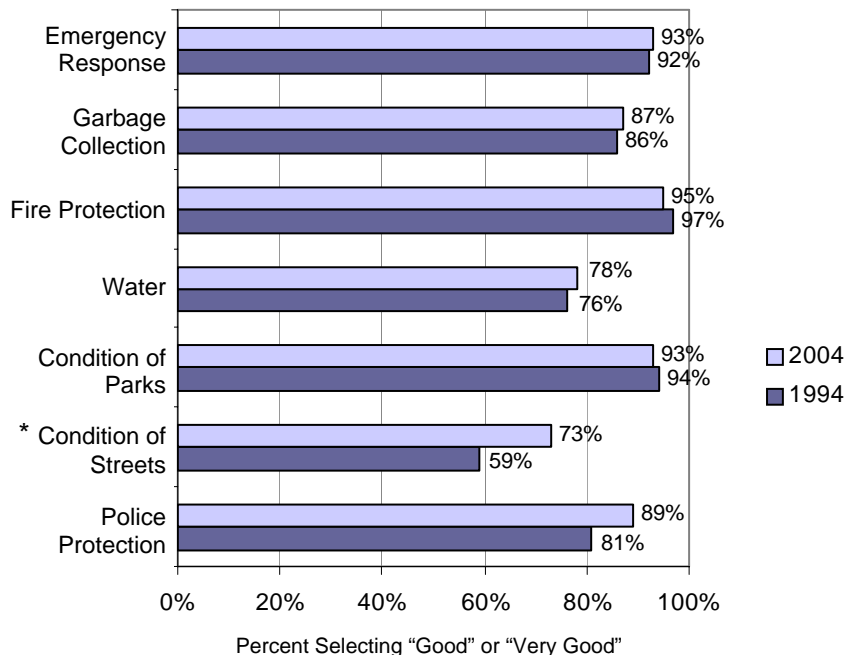


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

GARNAVILLO'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.

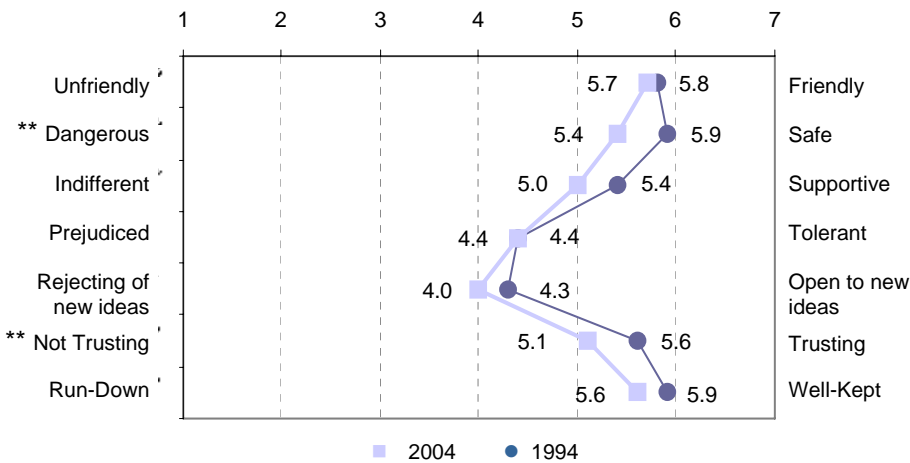


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

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 Garnavillo residents evaluated their town on these qualities in 1994 and 2004. In both years, respondents assigned the highest ratings to friendliness, safety, and appearance. The lowest ratings for both years were for tolerance and openness to new ideas. Between 1994 and 2004, the ratings for safety declined substantially, as did the ratings for trust. Garnavillo residents rated all of the other areas about the same in both 1994 and 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. As such, questions were included to assess local social ties. In 2004, 67 percent of the residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Garnavillo, compared to 72 percent in 1994. Similarly, 51 percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in town, compared to 61 percent in 1994. Ten percent of the residents in 2004, a significant decrease from 23 percent in 1994, said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in town.

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

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

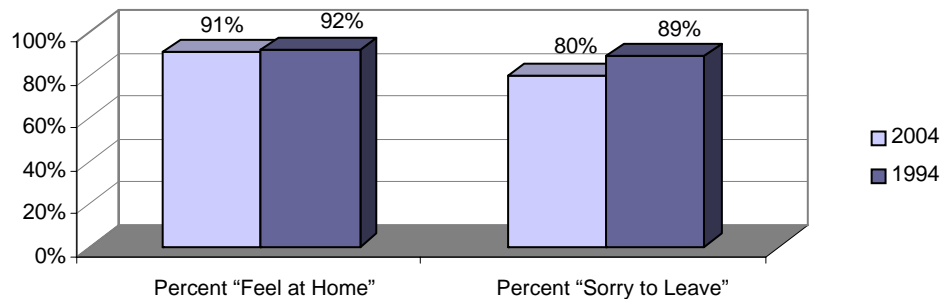


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Garnavillo, 80 percent of the residents indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is “good” or “very good.” In both

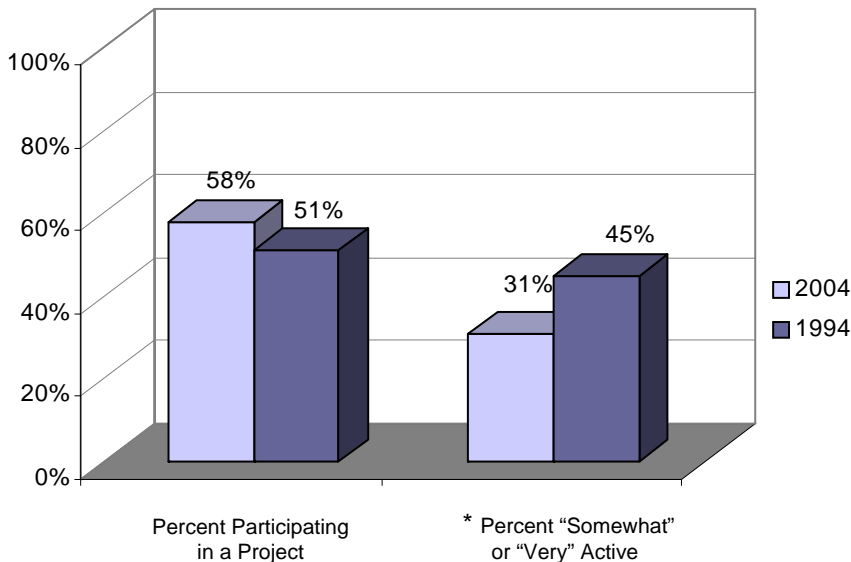


Figure 6: Community Involvement

1994 and 2004, over 50 percent of the residents reported participating in a community improvement project in the years prior to the surveys (Figure 6). The percentage of residents who said they were “somewhat” or “very” active in local community activities declined significantly from 1994 to 2004. When residents were asked to consider the factors that limit their involvement in community improvement projects, the top response given in 2004 was that they lacked time to get involved (55%). Other common responses were that they had not been asked to volunteer (32%) and that they did not know how to become involved (30%).

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 Garnavillo over the past decade? The percentage of people who stay in Garnavillo to attend church or a place of worship declined, as did the percentage who shop for daily needs in town and the percentage who receive their primary health care in town. Residents’ evaluations of housing, child care services, and senior programs improved, but their evaluations of youth programs and medical services declined. As for government services, residents rated the condition of streets more positively in 2004 than in 1994.

The social environment in Garnavillo has changed somewhat over the past decade. The ratings that residents gave their community on many qualities remained unchanged, but significantly fewer residents describe their town as safe and trustworthy compared to 1994. Fewer residents also reported being active in community activities in 2004 than in 1994. It is interesting to note that one of the top three reasons people gave for not being involved in community projects was that nobody had asked them. This suggests a 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 Garnavillo’s future. **We wish to thank the Garnavillo residents who participated in the 1994 and 2004 studies for providing the information that made this report possible.**

RDI

Prepared by: Tom Rice, Terry Besser, Kerry Agnitsch, Laura Forster, Jean Friestad, Vern Ryan, and Nick Recker, Department of Sociology, Iowa State University. For further information, contact Terry Besser, 515-294-6508, tbesser@iastate.edu or Kerry Agnitsch, 515-294-4095, kagnitsc@iastate.edu.

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