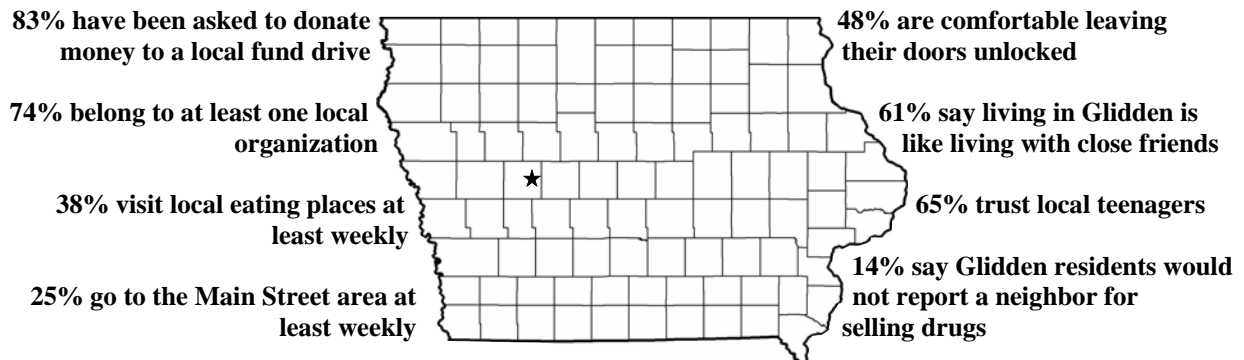


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN GLIDDEN

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 Glidden. 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, 111 Glidden residents responded to the survey, and 108 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Glidden residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN GLIDDEN IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

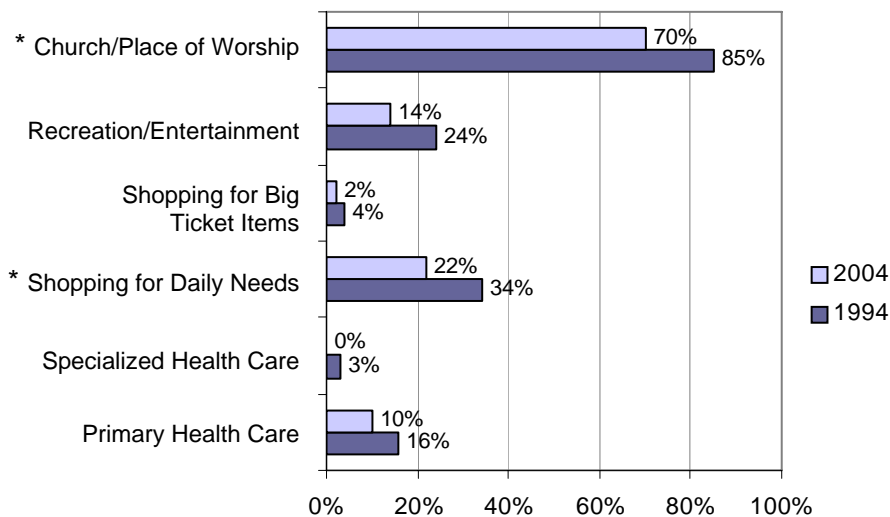


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Figure 1 shows that Glidden residents follow this pattern. Most of the residents stay in town to attend church or their place of worship, but they tend to leave for all of the other services. From 1994 to 2004, the percentage who attend church or their place of worship in town decreased significantly from 85 percent to 70 percent. Likewise, the percentage of

Glidden residents who shop for their daily needs in town declined from 34 percent to 22 percent. The patronage patterns for the other services did not change significantly over the ten-year period. Less than 25 percent of the residents stay in town for recreation/entertainment and primary health care, and almost no one stays in town for specialized health care or to shop for "big ticket" items.

A Note on Interpretation: For Glidden, 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

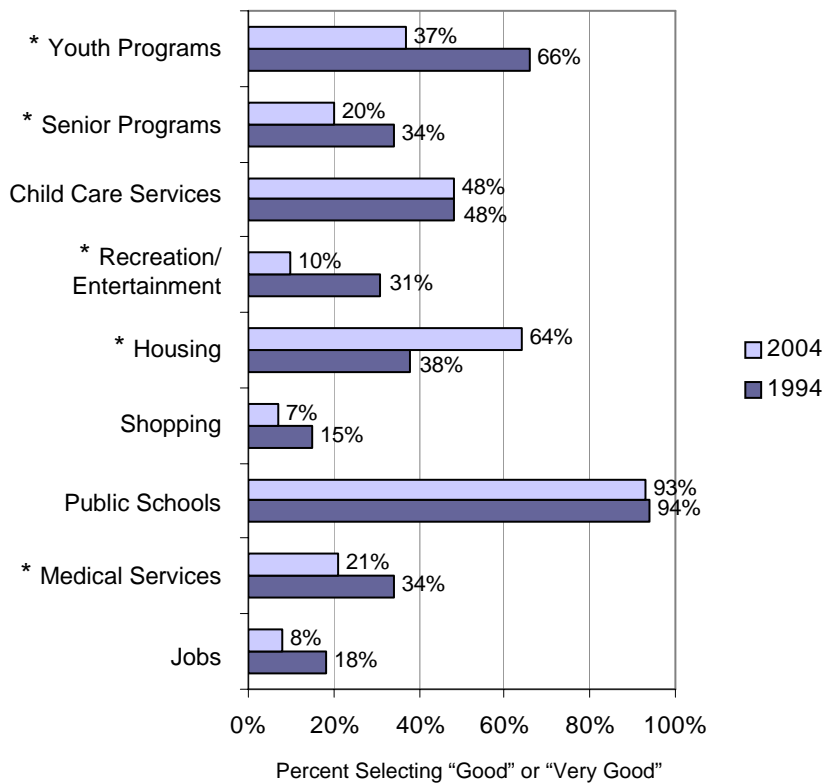


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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 Glidden residents were pleased with their public schools. In both years, over 90 percent of the residents rated the schools as either “good” or “very good.” Child care services received positive ratings from 48 percent in both years, and less than one in ten residents rated shopping and jobs favorably in 2004. The positive ratings for housing increased significantly over the period, rising from 38 percent to 64 percent. However, the ratings for youth programs, senior programs, recreation/entertainment, and medical services declined.

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. As the figure shows, Glidden residents were pleased with the quality of most of their government services. In both years, at least 70 percent of the residents were satisfied with emergency response, garbage collection, fire protection, water, and parks. The ratings of water fell significantly over the period, from 83 percent rating water positively in 1994 to 72 percent doing so in 2004. Police protection had the lowest ratings in the survey, with slightly more than one third of residents giving favorable ratings in both years.

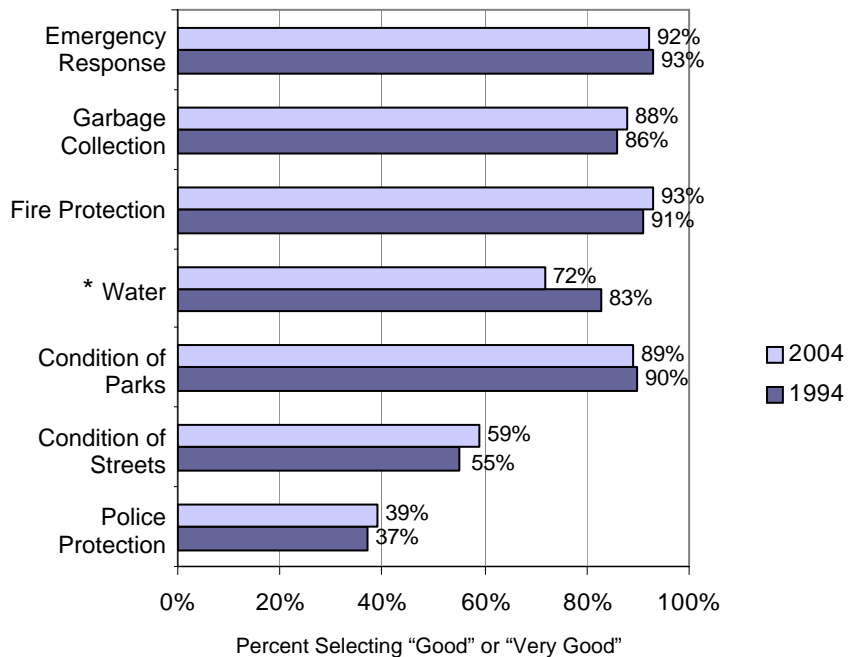


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

GLIDDEN'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.

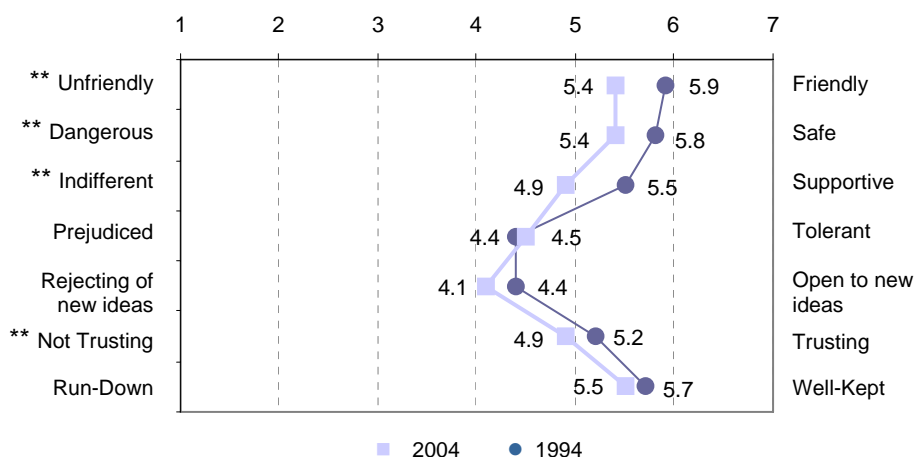


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

** 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 Glidden residents evaluated their town on these qualities in 1994 and 2004. In 1994, residents assigned the highest ratings to friendliness, safety, and appearance, and these areas also received the highest ratings in 2004. The lowest ratings for both years were for tolerance and openness to new ideas. From 1994 to 2004, the ratings for friendliness, safety, supportiveness, and trust fell significantly. The ratings for the other qualities did not change significantly.

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, 48 percent of the residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Gilbertville, a significant decrease compared to 64 percent in 1994. Similarly, 42 percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in town, down significantly from 62 percent in 1994. Nine percent of the residents in 2004, a significant decrease from 25 percent in 1994, said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in town.

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Glidden 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 Glidden. Almost as many residents also said that they would be sorry to leave the community. These high levels of community attachment in Glidden have not changed significantly over the period from 1994 to 2004.

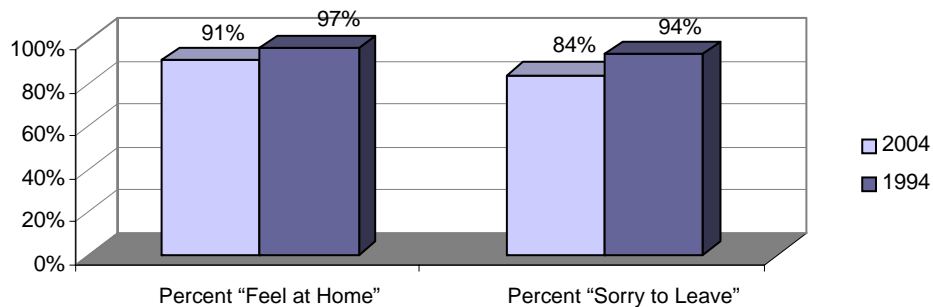


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Glidden, 82 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 50 percent of the residents reported participating in a local community improvement project during the years prior to the surveys (see Figure 6). The percentage of residents who said they were “somewhat active” or “very active” in community activities was slightly less than 50 percent in both years. When Glidden 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 (60%). Other common responses were that they had not been asked to volunteer (31%), and that they lacked the necessary skills to contribute (29%).

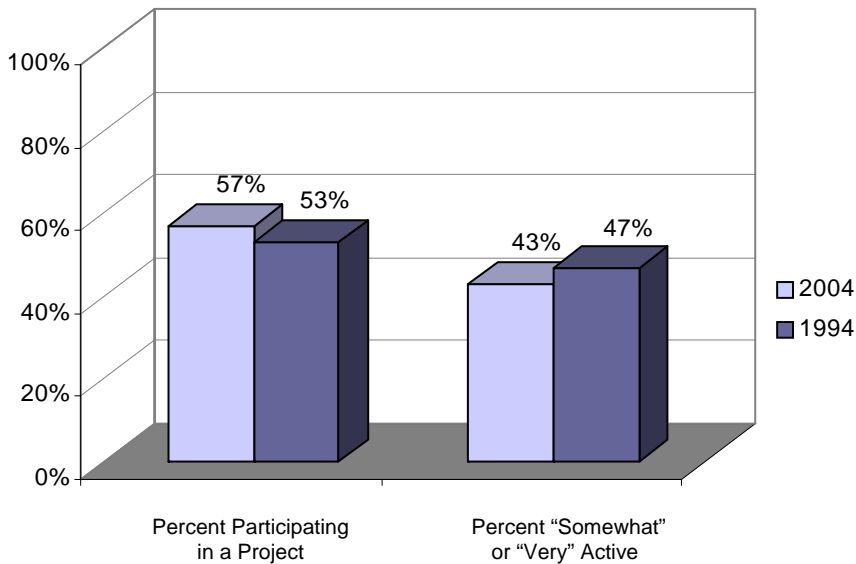


Figure 6: Community Involvement

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 Glidden over the past decade? The percentage of people who stay in Glidden to attend church or their place of worship and to shop for their daily needs decreased. Residents’ evaluation of housing improved, but their evaluations of youth programs, senior programs, recreation/entertainment, and medical services declined. As for government services, residents rated the quality of their water lower in 2004 than in 1994. Assessments of all of the other facilities and services remained unchanged over the 10 year period.

The social environment in Glidden has changed somewhat over the past decade. Residents rated their town as less friendly, less safe, less supportive, and less trusting in 2004 than in 1994. Levels of community involvement remained similar over the period. 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 that community involvement might increase in Glidden if more residents were approached about participating.

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

RDI

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