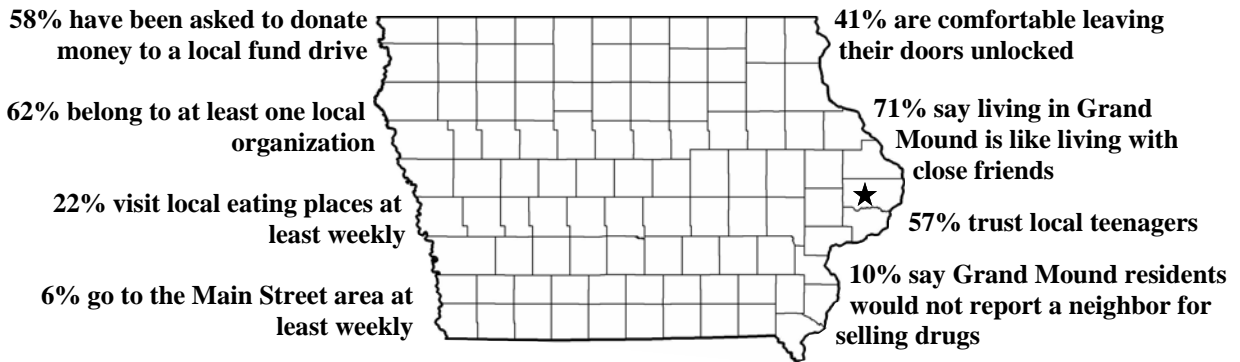


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN GRAND MOUND

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 Grand Mound. 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, 114 Grand Mound residents responded to the survey, and 114 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Grand Mound residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN GRAND MOUND IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

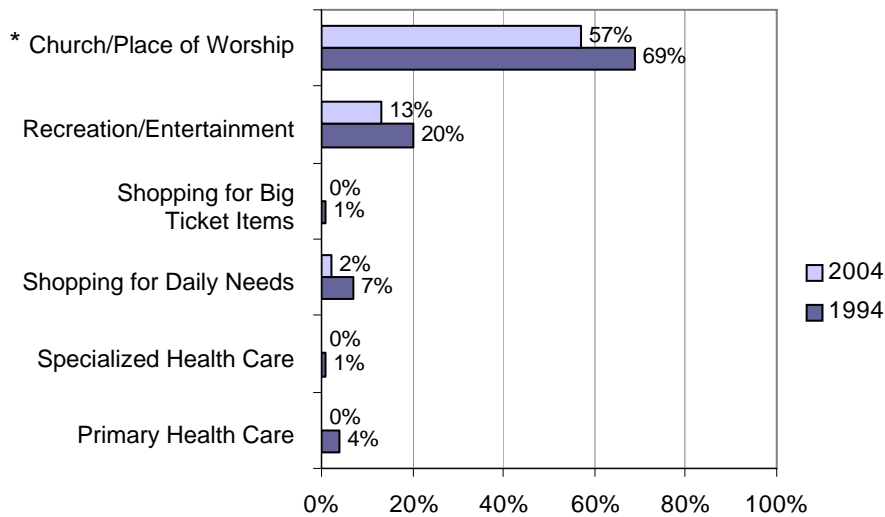


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that Grand Mound residents follow this pattern. Figure 1 shows that most residents stayed in town to attend church or place of worship, but that they tended to leave for all other services. Less than 10 percent remained in town for shopping and health care. Slightly more patronized

local services for recreation/entertainment. From 1994 to 2004, the percentage of residents who attend church or place of worship in Grand Mound decreased significantly, from 69 percent to 57 percent. There were no other significant changes in patronage patterns over the last 10 years.

A Note on Interpretation: For Grand Mound, 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

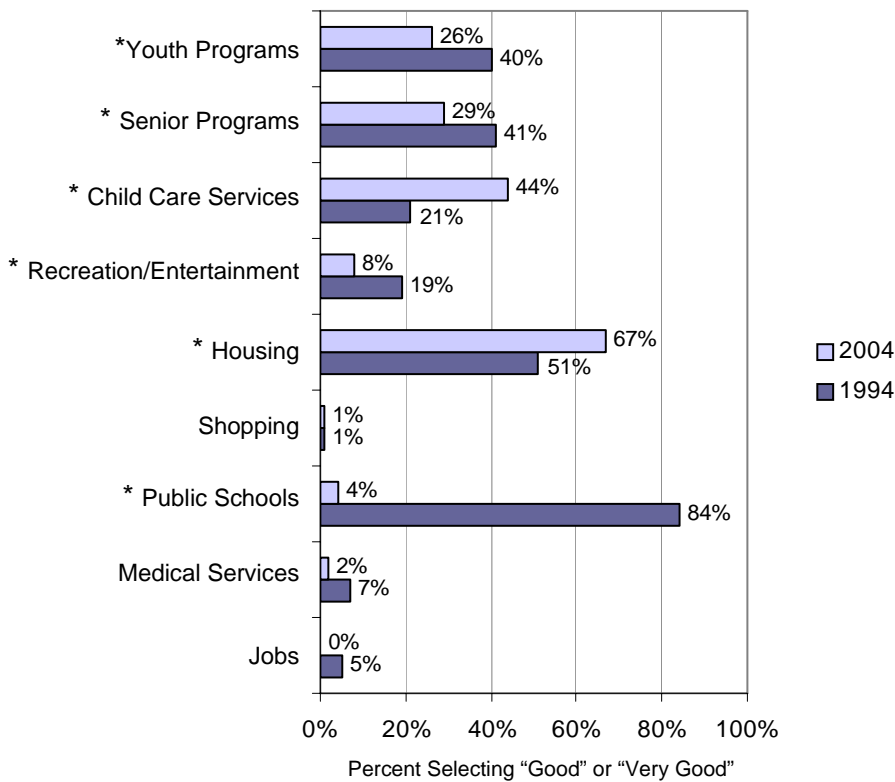


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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 Grand Mound residents who rated each service as “good” or “very good” in 1994 and 2004. Over 50 percent of the residents rated housing “good” and “very good” in both years. Shopping, medical services, and jobs received approval from less than 10 percent in both years. Public schools received the highest rating in 1994, with 84 percent positive scores, but this declined to only 4 percent in 2004. Ratings for youth programs, senior programs, and recreation/entertainment also fell significantly. However, the percentage of residents assigning positive ratings to child care services and housing increased over the decade.

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. Grand Mound residents were pleased with the quality of many services. Over 80 percent of the residents were satisfied with emergency response, garbage collection, fire protection, and the condition of the parks in both years. Police protection received the fewest positive ratings in both years. From 1994 to 2004, the percentage of residents giving “good” or “very good” ratings to the condition of the parks and police protection in Grand Mound increased significantly.

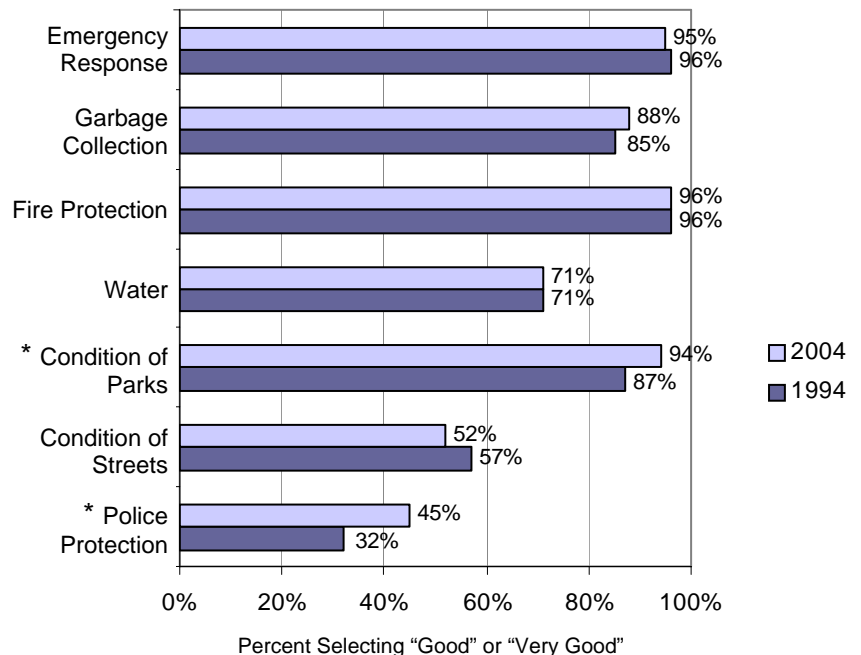


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

GRAND MOUND'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.

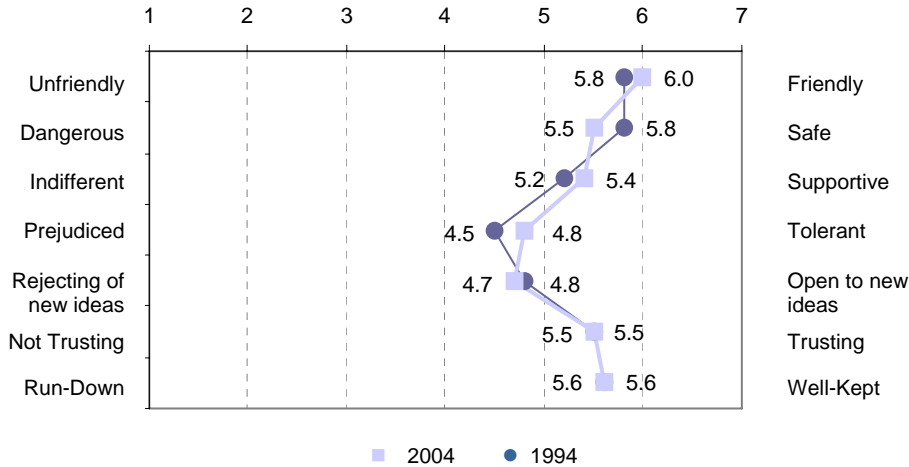


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

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 Grand Mound residents evaluated their town on these qualities in 1994 and 2004. In both years, residents assigned the highest ratings to friendliness, safety, trust, and appearance. The lowest ratings for both years were for tolerance and openness to new ideas. From 1994 to 2004 there were no statistically significant changes in residents' ratings for any of the qualities listed.

** 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, 50 percent of the residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Grand Mound, a significant decrease compared to 77 percent in 1994. Forty percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in town, compared to 43 percent in 1994. Fifteen percent of the residents in both 1994 and 2004 said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in town.

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Grand Mound 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 Grand Mound. Approximately 80 percent of the residents also said that they would be sorry to leave their community. These high levels of community attachment have not changed significantly over the last ten years.

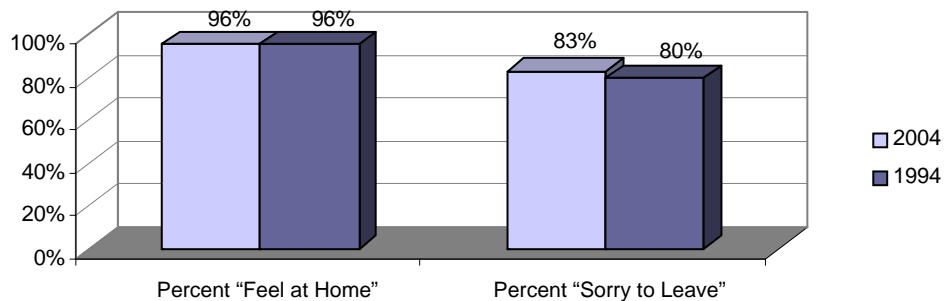


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Grand Mound, 76 percent of the residents indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is “good” or “very good.” In both 1994 and 2004, approximately 45 percent of the residents reported participating in a local community improvement project during the year prior to the survey (Figure 6). The percentage of residents who reported that they were “somewhat” active or “very” active in community activities was 43 percent in 1994 and 35 percent in 2004. 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 time to get involved (58%). Other common responses were that they had not been asked to volunteer (35%) and that they did not know how to get involved (30%).

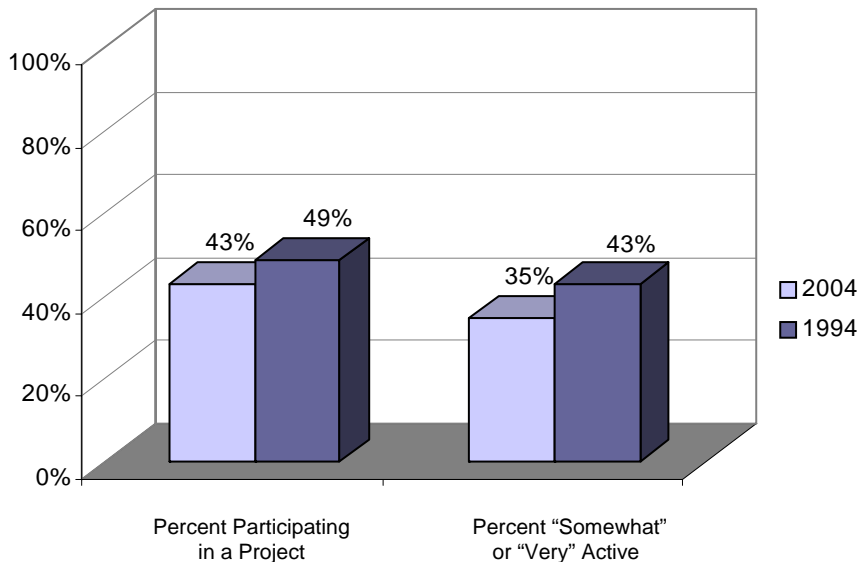


Figure 6: Community Involvement

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 Grand Mound over the past decade? The percentage of people who stay in Grand Mound to attend church or a place of worship declined. Residents’ evaluations of youth and senior programs, recreation/entertainment, and public schools declined, but positive ratings for child care services and housing increased. As for government services, residents rated the condition of the parks and police protection services more favorably in 2004 than in 1994.

The social environment in Grand Mound has changed very little over the decade. Residents’ ratings of the qualities of the town remained about the same, and their levels of community attachment remained high. The level of community engagement also remained about the same, with less than half of residents reporting participating in a community project. It is interesting to note that two of the top reasons people gave for not being involved in community activities were that they had not been asked to volunteer and that they did not know how to become involved. This suggests ways 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 Grand Mound’s future. **We wish to thank the Grand Mound residents who participated in the 1994 and 2004 studies for providing the information that made this report possi-**

RDI

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