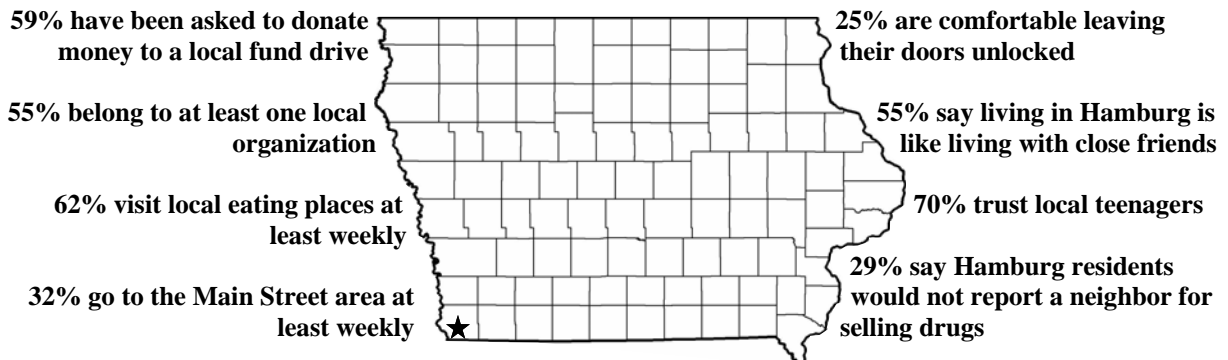


# A DECADE OF CHANGE IN HAMBURG

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 Hamburg. 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 Hamburg residents responded to the survey, and 88 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Hamburg residents have changed over the past decade.

## LIFE IN HAMBURG IN 2004



## LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

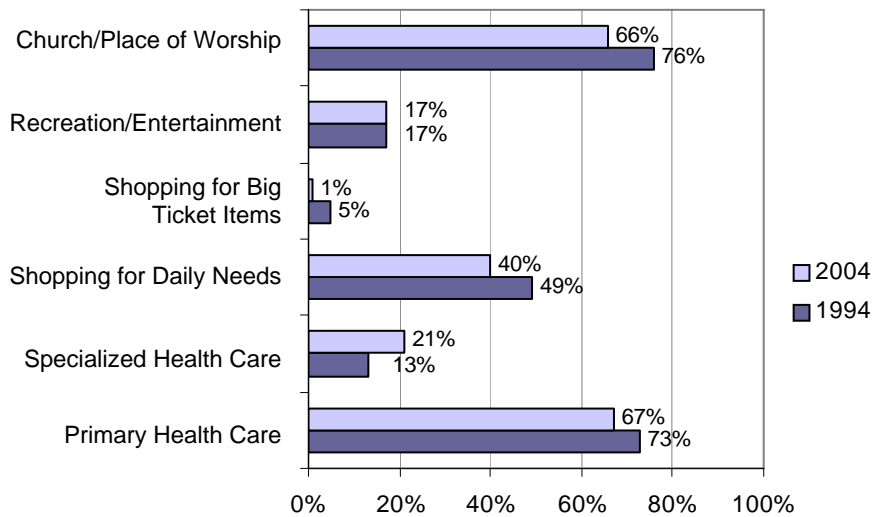


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. The survey results for Hamburg, which are displayed in Figure 1, show that residents stay in town for a some services, but travel for others. In both 1994 and 2004, the majority of residents stayed in town to attend church or their place of worship and to receive primary health care. Slightly less than half also

stayed in town for their daily shopping needs. Approximately 20 percent stayed in town for the recreation/entertainment and specialized health care. Almost no one stayed in town when shopping for big ticket items. There were no statistically significant changes in the patronage patterns of Hamburg residents from 1994 to 2004.

\*A Note on Interpretation: For Hamburg, 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

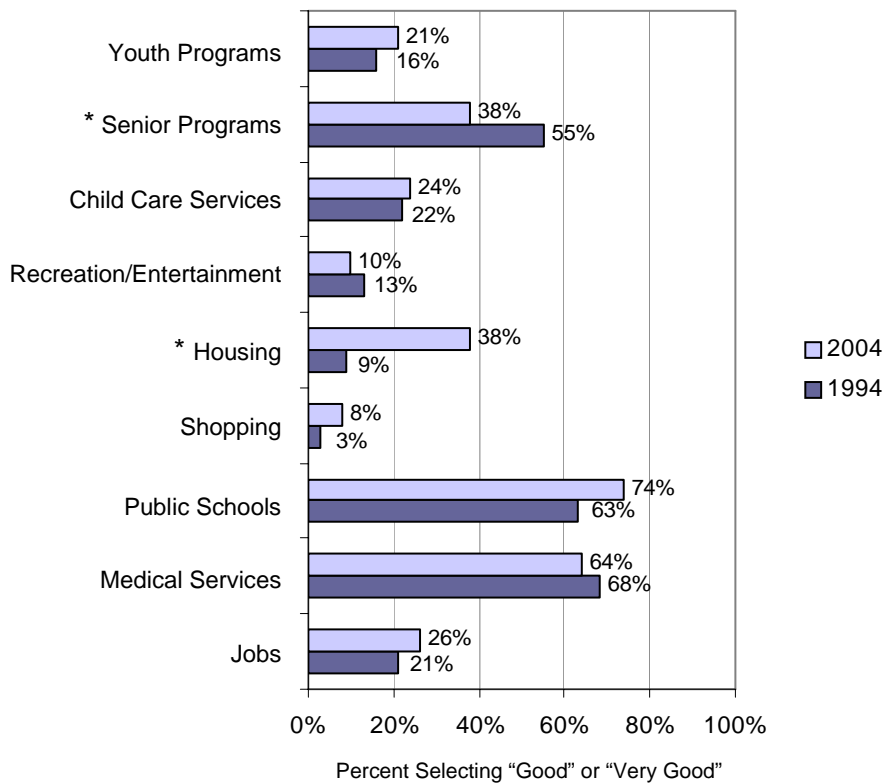


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. Public schools and medical services received the highest scores in both years, with positive ratings from over 60 percent. The lowest ratings in both years were for shopping. The percentage of residents assigning positive ratings to housing increased significantly from nine percent in 1994 to 38 percent in 2004. However, senior programs were rated significantly less favorably in 2004, with 55 percent giving “good” or “very good” ratings in 1994 and 38 percent in 2004. The evaluations of other services were unchanged.

## 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. Hamburg residents are very pleased with some, but not all, government services. Over 80 percent of the residents gave positive ratings to emergency response, garbage collection, and fire protection in both years. Substantially fewer gave positive marks to water, parks, street conditions, and police protection. However, residents rated all four of these services significantly more positively in 2004 than in 1994. Opinions of water, parks, and streets jumped the most, with increases of over 20 percentage points.

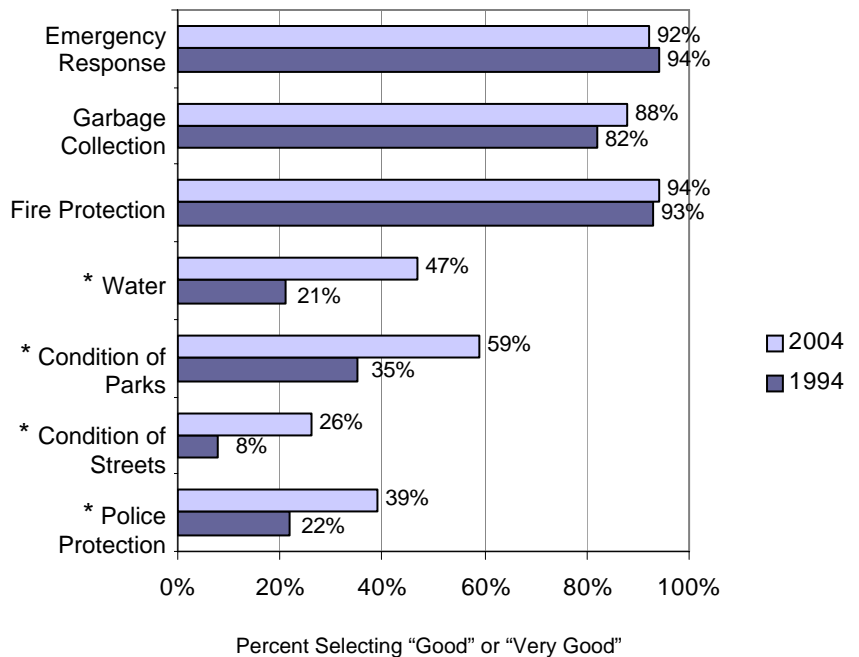
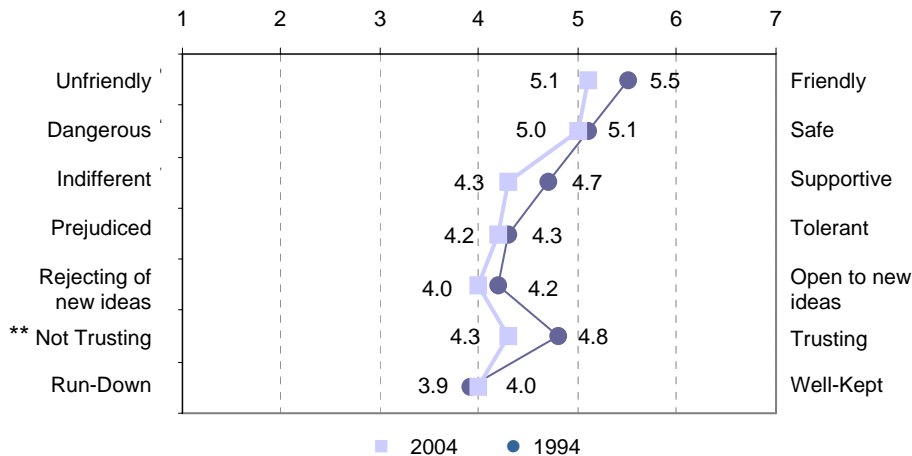


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

## HAMBURG'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 Hamburg residents evaluated their town on these qualities in 1994 and 2004. In both years, the highest ratings were for friendliness and safety, and the lowest ratings were for openness to new ideas and appearance. The rating for trust dropped significantly, from 4.8 in 1994 to 4.3 in 2004. Hamburg residents' assessments of the other qualities did not change significantly over the ten year period.

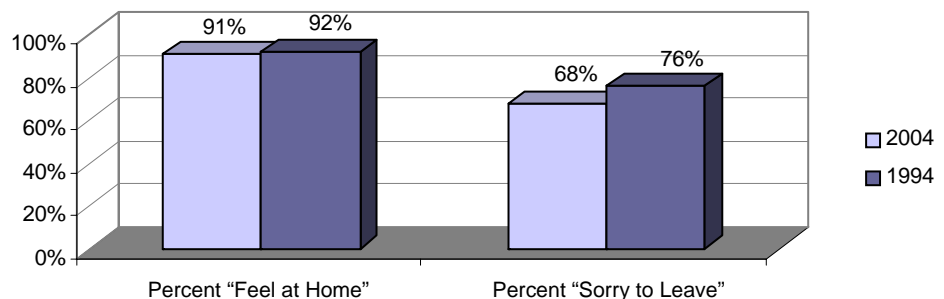
\*\* The margin of error is calculated differently for averages, and will sometimes vary from question to question within the survey depending on how many people answered each question. Thus, changes of the same size may exceed the margin of error for some items in Figure 4, but not for others. Only 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 1994, 68 percent of the residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Hamburg, compared to 63 percent in 2004. Similarly, in 1994, 63 percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in town, compared to 52 percent in 2004. Thirty-eight percent of the residents in both years 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 Hamburg residents feel at home in their community? Figure 5 shows that over 90 percent of the residents in both 1994 and 2004 felt at home in Hamburg. Seventy-six percent in 1994 and 68 percent in 2004 also said that they would be sorry to leave the community. These 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 Hamburg, 57 percent of the residents indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is “good” or “very good.” In 1994, approximately two-thirds of the residents reported participating in a local community improvement project during the year prior to the survey, but this fell significantly to only 45 percent in 2004 (Figure 6). The percentage of residents who said they were “somewhat active” or “very active” in community activities also dropped significantly over the decade, from 45 percent to 25 percent.

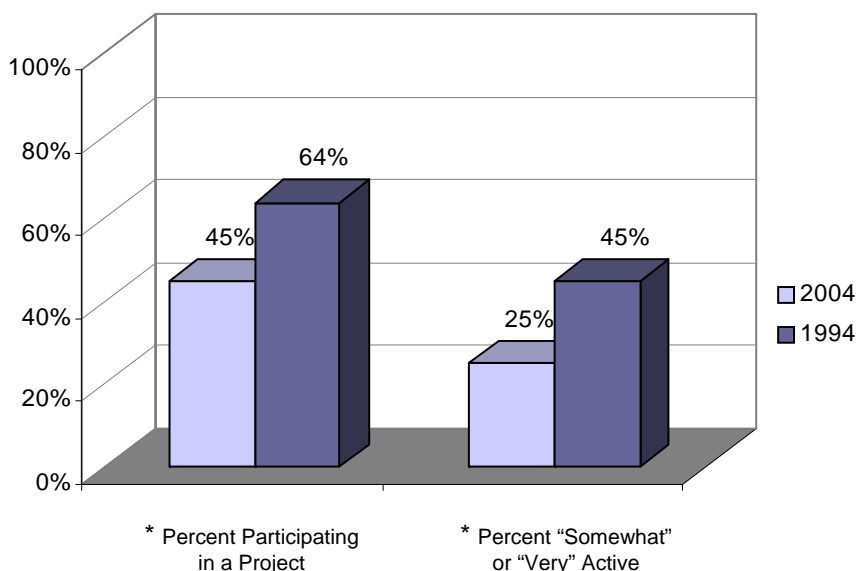


Figure 6: Community Involvement

When asked to consider a variety of factors that limit their involvement in community improvement projects, the top three factors selected by Hamburg residents were lack of time (65%), not being asked to volunteer (45%), and having no interest in participating (37%).

## 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 Hamburg over the past decade? There were no significant changes in the patronage patterns of residents. Housing was rated significantly higher in 2004 than in 1994, but fewer residents gave the quality of senior programs positive assessments. As for government services, Hamburg residents rated water, parks, streets, and police higher in 2004 than in 1994. Assessments of all of the other facilities and services did not change significantly from 1994 to 2004.

The social environment in Hamburg has changed somewhat over the decade. The ratings that residents gave their community on most qualities remained unchanged, but significantly fewer residents felt that Hamburg was a trusting community. Still, levels of community attachment remained unchanged over the decade. Significantly fewer residents reported being active in the community or participating in community improvement projects in 1994 than in 2004. 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 Hamburg’s future. **We wish to thank the Hamburg residents who participated in the 1994 and 2004 studies for providing the information that made this report possible.**

**RDI**

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