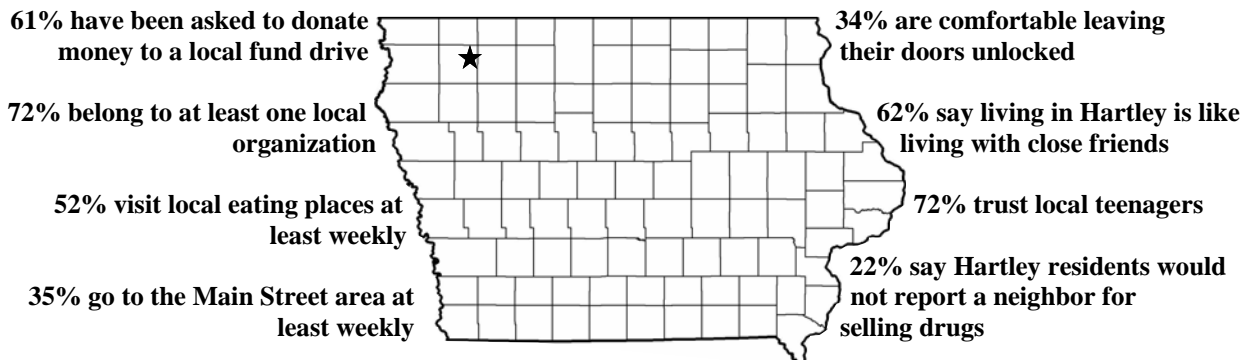


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN HARTLEY

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 Hartley. 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, 122 Hartley residents responded to the survey, and 106 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Hartley residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN HARTLEY IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

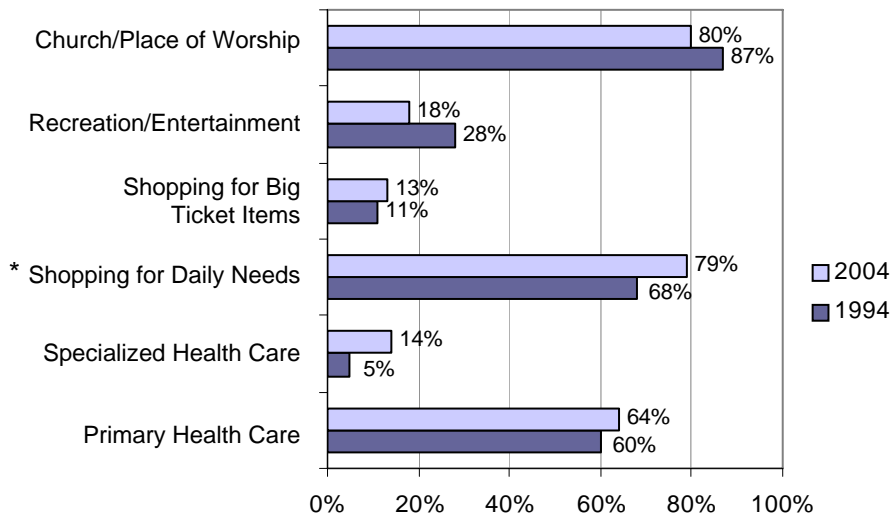


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that Hartley residents remain in Hartley for some services and travel for others. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing services of various types in Hartley for both 1994 and 2004. Most residents reported staying in Hartley to attend church or a place of

worship. Over three-fourths remained to shop for daily needs, a significant increase from ten years ago, but only 13 percent stayed to shop for "big ticket" items. Sixty-four percent of residents reported staying in Hartley to obtain primary health care, while only 14 percent stayed for specialized health care. Finally, approximately one-fifth of residents remained in town for recreation and entertainment.

A Note on Interpretation: For Hartley, 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

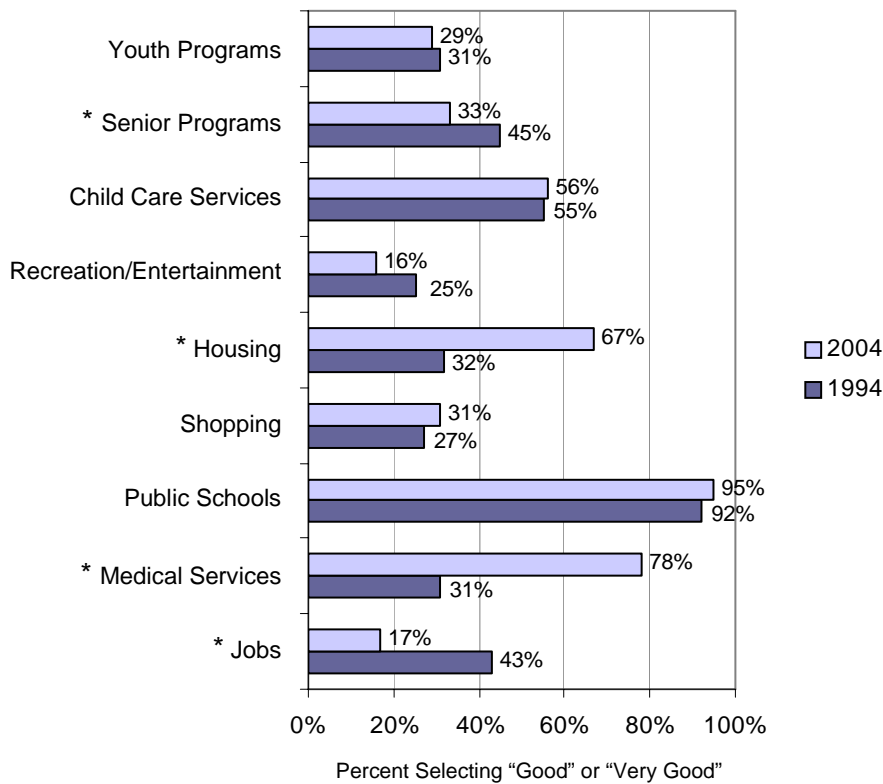


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. In 2004, the majority of residents rated public schools as good or very good, and over half gave positive ratings to child care services, housing, and medical services. Around one-third of residents gave favorable ratings to shopping, and senior and youth programs. Jobs and recreation and entertainment received the lowest percentage of positive ratings. Compared to 1994, the percentage of residents giving positive ratings to medical services and housing increased significantly, while favorable ratings decreased for senior programs and jobs.

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. Overall, Hartley residents reported being satisfied with their government services for both years. Almost all rated emergency response, fire protection, and the condition of the parks as good or very good, while over three-fourths gave favorable ratings to garbage collection, the condition of the streets, and police protection. Nearly half gave positive ratings to water services. Ratings did not change significantly for any of these services since 1994.

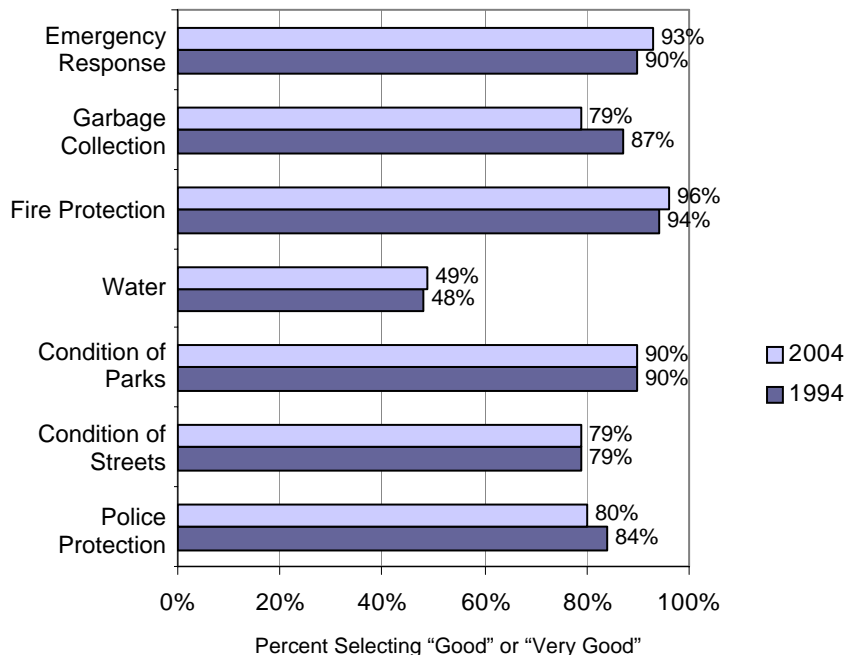


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

HARTLEY'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.

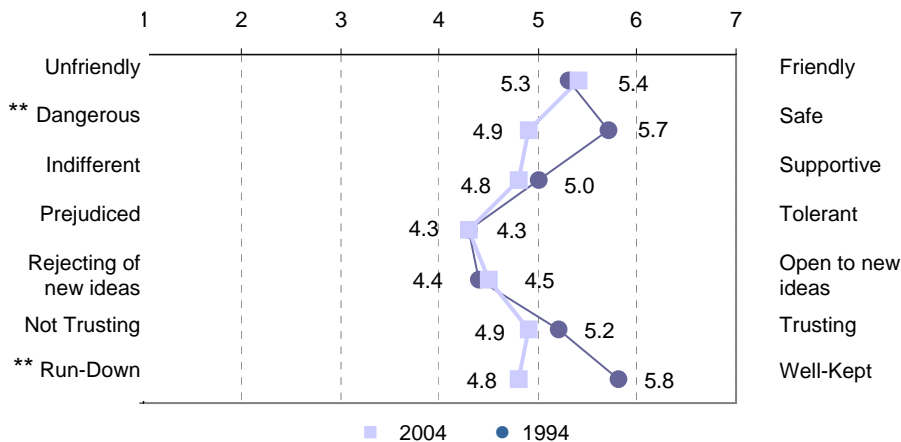


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

** 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. The average ratings shown in Figure 4 reveal that in 1994, residents assigned the highest rating to the appearance of Hartley, followed closely by the safety and friendliness of the town. In 2004, friendliness received the highest rating. In both years, the lowest ratings were assigned to the extent to which Hartley is tolerant and open to new ideas. Significant changes over the past decade are that residents view Hartley as less safe and less well-kept in 2004 than it was in 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, 51 percent of Hartley residents reported knowing the names of at least half of the people in Hartley, compared to 61 percent in 1994. Regarding close friends, 63 percent indicated that half or more of their close friends live in Hartley, compared to 61 percent in 1994. Twenty-two percent said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in Hartley, compared to 21 percent in 1994. (Note: These differences are not larger than the margin of error).

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Hartley residents feel at home in their community? When asked this question in 2004, 95 percent said that they do (see Figure 5). Furthermore, 80 percent reported that they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away from Hartley. These responses are similar to those reported in 1994, indicating that most Hartley residents feel attached to their community.

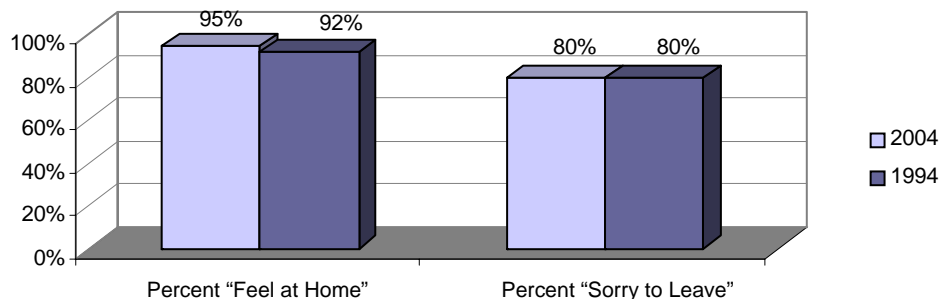


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Hartley, 85 percent of residents indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is

“good” or “very good.” Over half of Hartley’s residents reported participating in a local improvement project in the year prior to the survey, while over one-third considered themselves to be “somewhat” or “very” active in local community activities and events (see Figure 6). This compares to 51 percent of residents participating in a local project in 1994, and 51 percent rating themselves as “somewhat” or “very” active. When asked to consider a variety of factors that limit their involvement, the top three selected by Hartley residents were lack of time (55%), not being asked by others to volunteer (49%), and a lack of interest in participating (34%).

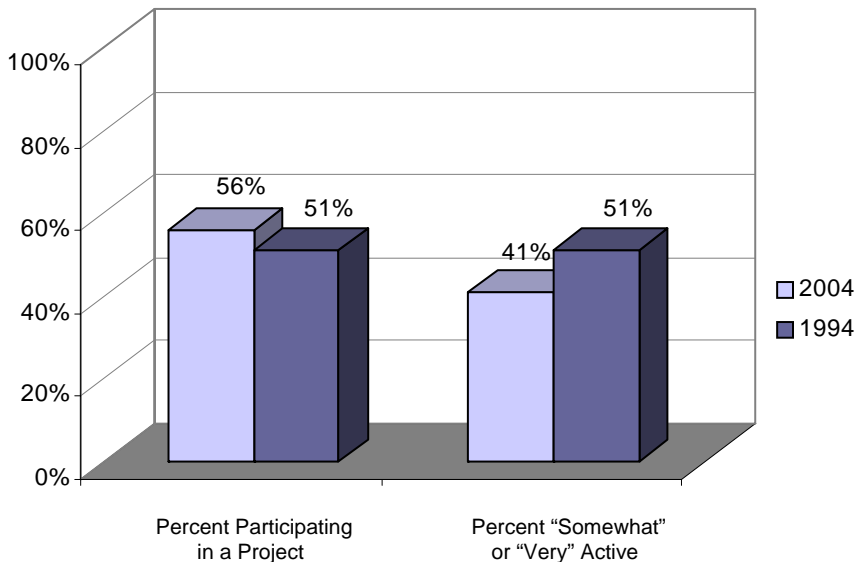


Figure 6: Community Involvement

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 Hartley over the past decade? Hartley residents are shopping for their daily needs in Hartley more now than ten years ago. The evaluations of the quality of local medical services and housing increased, while ratings of the quality of local jobs and senior programs decreased. The evaluations of other local services remain essentially unchanged. The evaluations of the quality of local government services remain high, and ratings did not change for any of these services over the past decade.

The social environment has changed very little. Hartley residents view their town as less safe and less well-kept when compared to 1994. Ratings for the friendliness, supportiveness, tolerance, openness to new ideas, and trusting nature of Hartley did not change significantly. Additionally, the extent to which people know each other in Hartley is about the same as it was ten years ago. Hartley’s residents remain “attached” to their community—that is, a large majority feel at home in the community and would be sorry to leave if they had to move away. Finally, levels of community involvement did not change significantly over the past decade.

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

RDI

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RDI-176 — This report was prepared through the **Rural Development Initiative** Project, Iowa State University and funded by the National Research Initiative, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Agreement No. 2003-35401-13828.