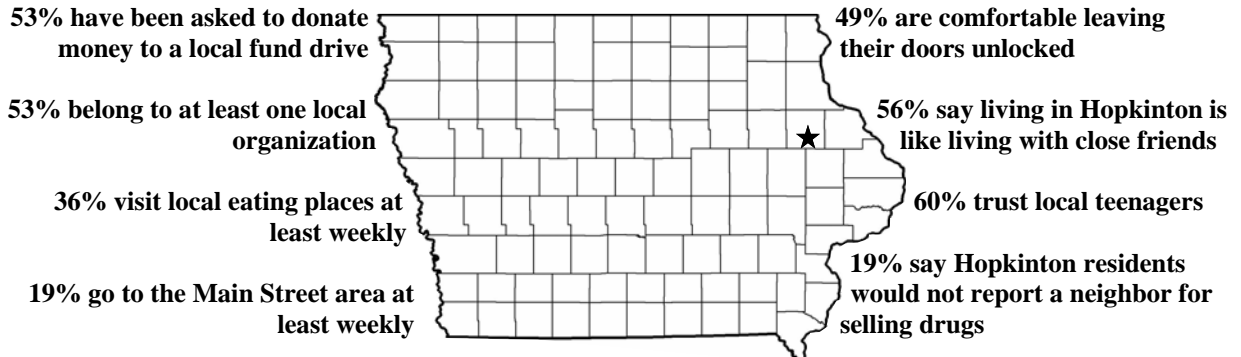


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN HOPKINTON

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 Hopkinton. 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, 106 Hopkinton residents responded to the survey, and 100 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Hopkinton residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN HOPKINTON IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

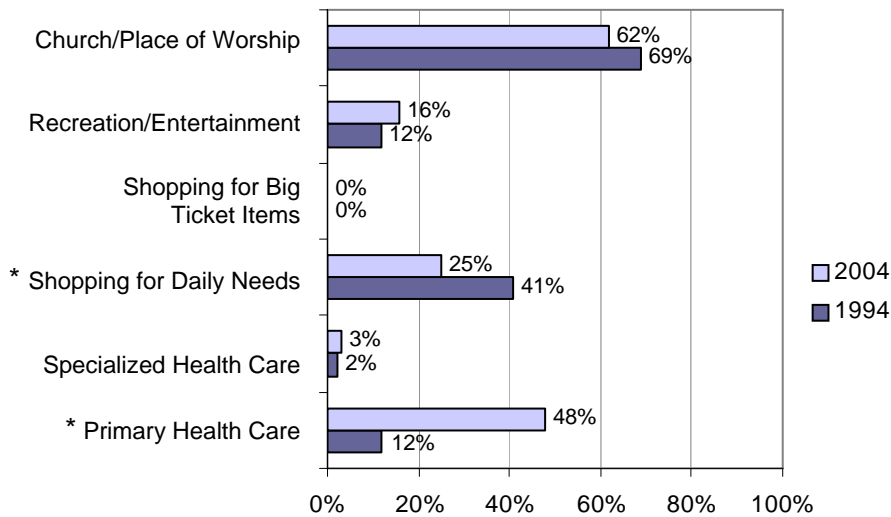


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that residents remain in Hopkinton for some services and travel for others. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing services of various types in Hopkinton. In 2004, 62 percent of residents reported staying in Hopkinton to attend church or a place of worship. One-fourth remained in town

to shop for their daily needs, down from 41 percent ten years ago, but no one stayed to shop for "big ticket" items in either year. For health care, almost half of residents reported obtaining primary health care in Hopkinton, a significant increase since 1994, while only three percent stayed in town to obtain specialized health care. Finally, 16 percent of residents in 2004 indicated that they remain in Hopkinton for recreation and entertainment.

A Note on Interpretation: For Hopkinton, 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

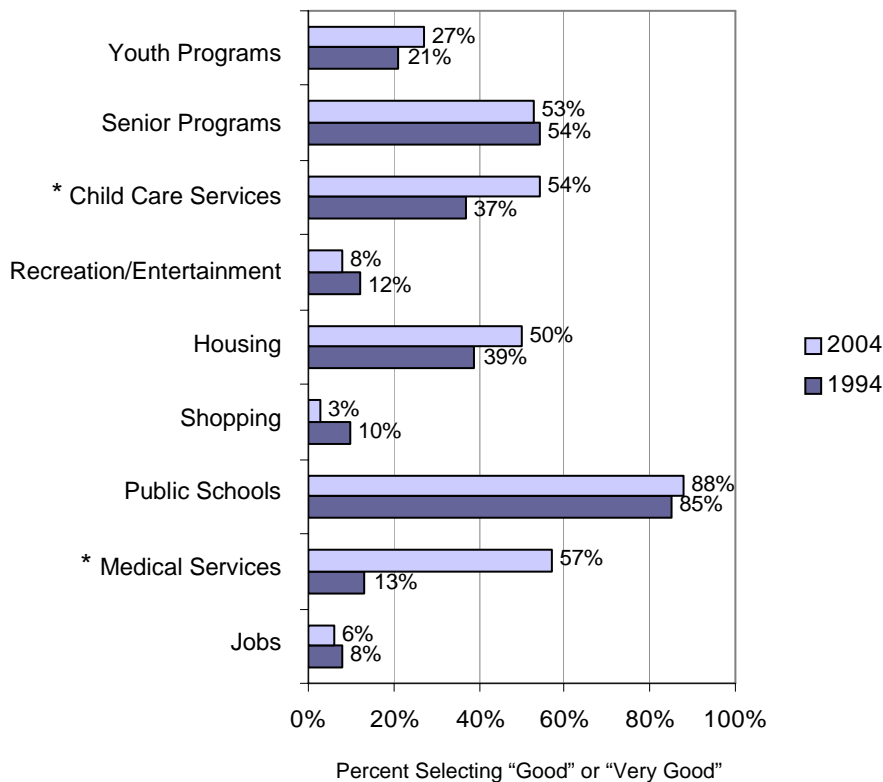


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. In both years, the vast majority of residents rated public schools as good or very good, while very few assigned favorable ratings to recreation and entertainment, shopping, or jobs. Senior programs and housing received positive ratings by roughly half of Hopkinton residents. The percentage of positive ratings for child care services and medical services increased significantly over the past decade, while ratings for other local services and facilities did not change significantly.

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, Hopkinton residents reported being satisfied with their government services. A large majority of residents rated emergency response, fire protection, and the condition of the parks as good or very good. Garbage collection, water, and the condition of the streets received favorable ratings by over half of residents. Police protection was rated as good or very good by 25 percent of residents in 2004 and 19 percent in 1994. No significant changes in these ratings occurred over the past ten years.

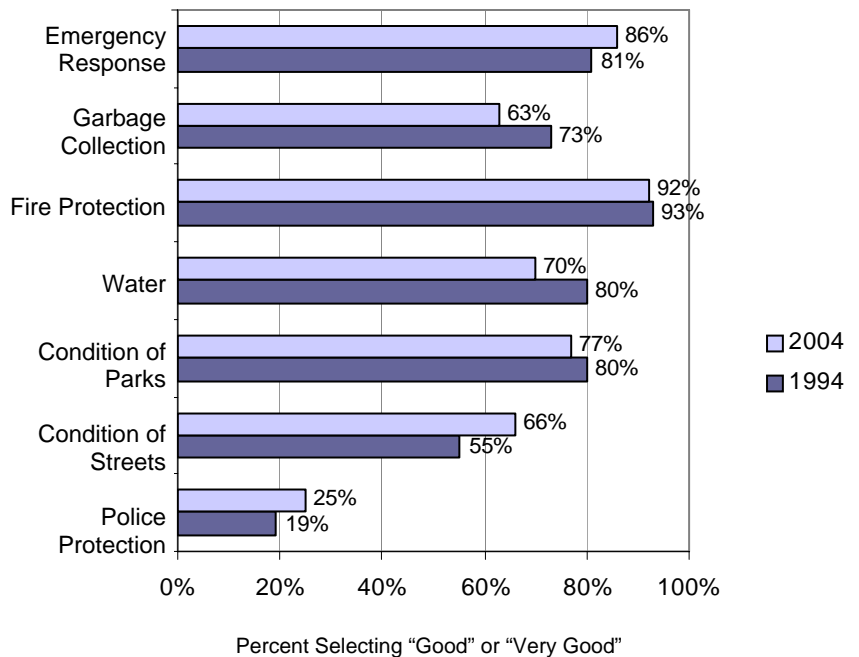


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

HOPKINTON'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.

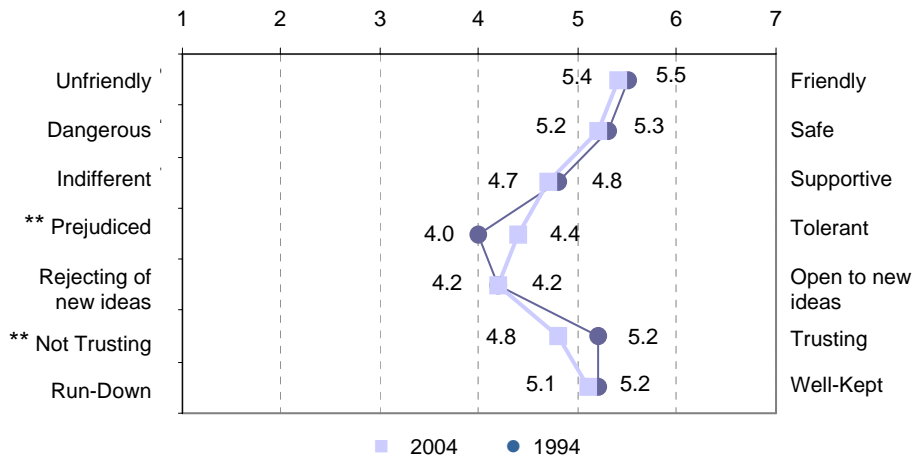


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

** 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 friendliness of the town, followed by the safety, trusting nature, and appearance. In 2004, friendliness, safety, and appearance received the highest ratings, while the lowest rating was assigned to the extent Hopkinton is accepting of new ideas. In 1994, the lowest rating was given to the tolerant nature of the town. Significant changes over the past decade are that residents in 2004 viewed Hopkinton as more tolerant and less trusting when compared to 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, 48 percent of Hopkinton residents reported knowing other community members by name, compared to 54 percent in 1994. Regarding close friends, 41 percent said that half or more of their close friends live in Hopkinton, compared to 38 percent in 1994. When it comes to their adult relatives and in-laws, 21 percent said that half or more live in Hopkinton in 2004, compared to 26 percent in 1994. (Note: These differences are not larger than the margin of error.)

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Hopkinton residents feel at home in their community? When asked this question in 2004, 84 percent said that they do (see Figure 5). Furthermore, 61 percent reported that they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away from Hopkinton. These responses are similar to those reported in 1994, indicating that most Hopkinton residents feel attached to their community.

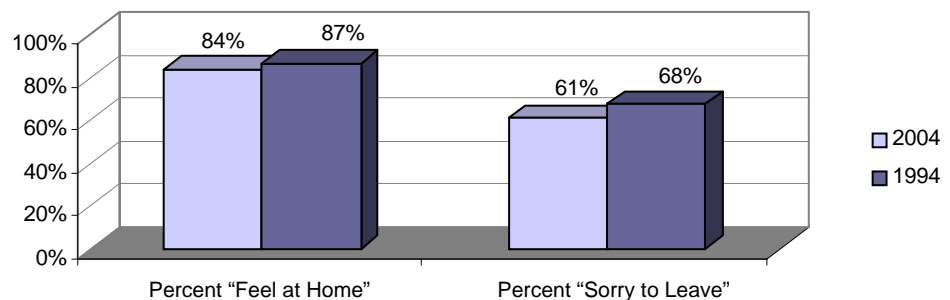


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Hopkinton, 68 percent of residents indicated that the spirit of community participation is “good” or “very good.” Just over half (51%) of Hopkinton’s residents reported participating in a community improvement project during the year prior to the survey, while one-third (33%) considered themselves to be “somewhat” or “very” active in local community activities and events (see Figure 6).

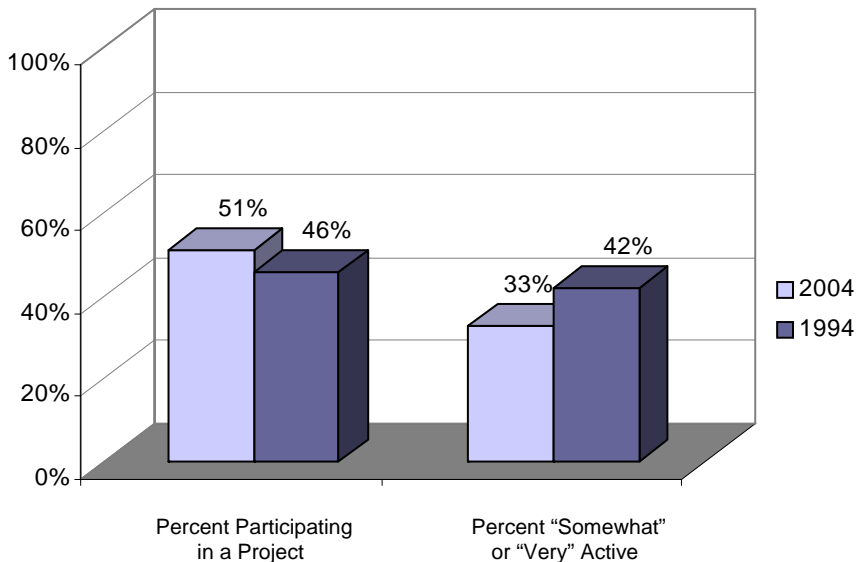


Figure 6: Community Involvement

This compares to 46 percent of residents participating in a local project in 1994 and 42 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 residents of Hopkinton were lack of time (68%), not being asked to volunteer by others (40%), and a lack of interest in participating (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 12 percentage points. Using this standard, what has changed in Hopkinton over the past decade? Residents are shopping for daily needs outside of Hopkinton and obtaining primary health care in Hopkinton more today than ten years ago. The evaluation of the quality of child care and medical services increased, while ratings of the quality of other local services remain essentially unchanged. The evaluations of the quality of most local government services remain relatively high and no significant changes occurred.

The social environment has changed very little. Hopkinton residents view their town as more tolerant but less trusting when compared to 1994. Ratings for the friendliness, safety, supportiveness, openness to new ideas, and appearance remained essentially unchanged. The extent to which people know each other in town also did not change. Hopkinton residents remain “attached” to their community—that is, a large majority feel at home in the community and most would be sorry to leave if they had to move away. Finally, levels of community involvement did not change significantly. It is interesting to note that one of the top reasons given by residents for not participating was not being asked by others.

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

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