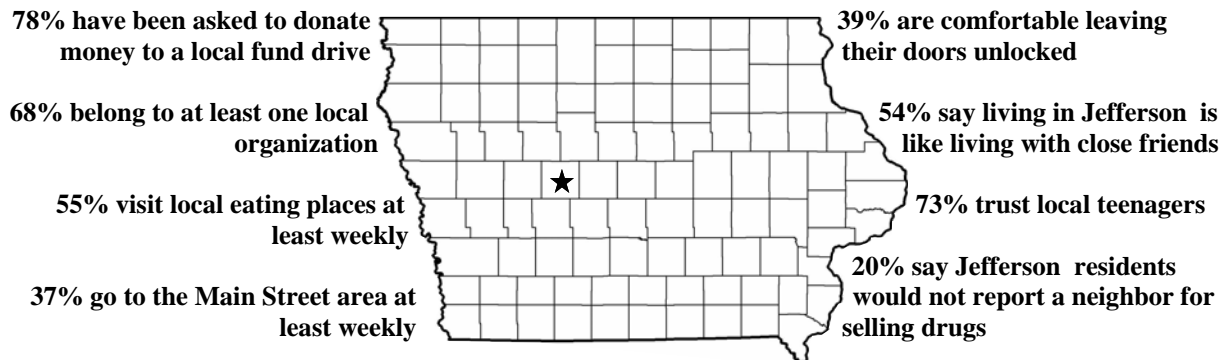


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN JEFFERSON

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 Jefferson. 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, 109 Jefferson residents responded to the survey, and 99 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Jefferson residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN JEFFERSON IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

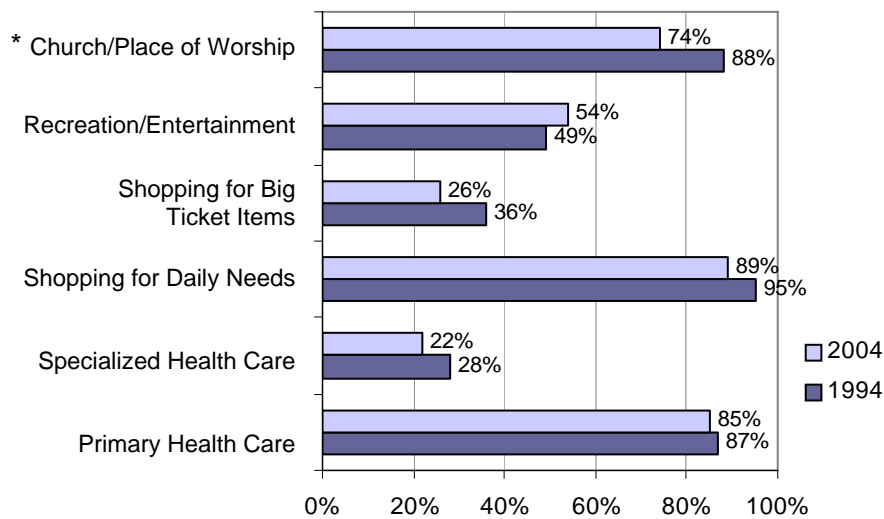


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that Jefferson residents remain in Jefferson for many services. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing services of various types in Jefferson for both 1994 and 2004. Nearly all residents reported shopping for their daily needs in Jefferson, but only about one-

fourth stayed to shop for "big ticket" items. Similarly, most residents indicated that they remain in Jefferson to obtain primary health care, while only one-fourth stay for specialized health care. Approximately three-fourths said in 2004 that they attend church in town, down from 88 percent in 1994, and over half of residents reported that they stay in Jefferson for recreation or entertainment.

A Note on Interpretation: For Jefferson, 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

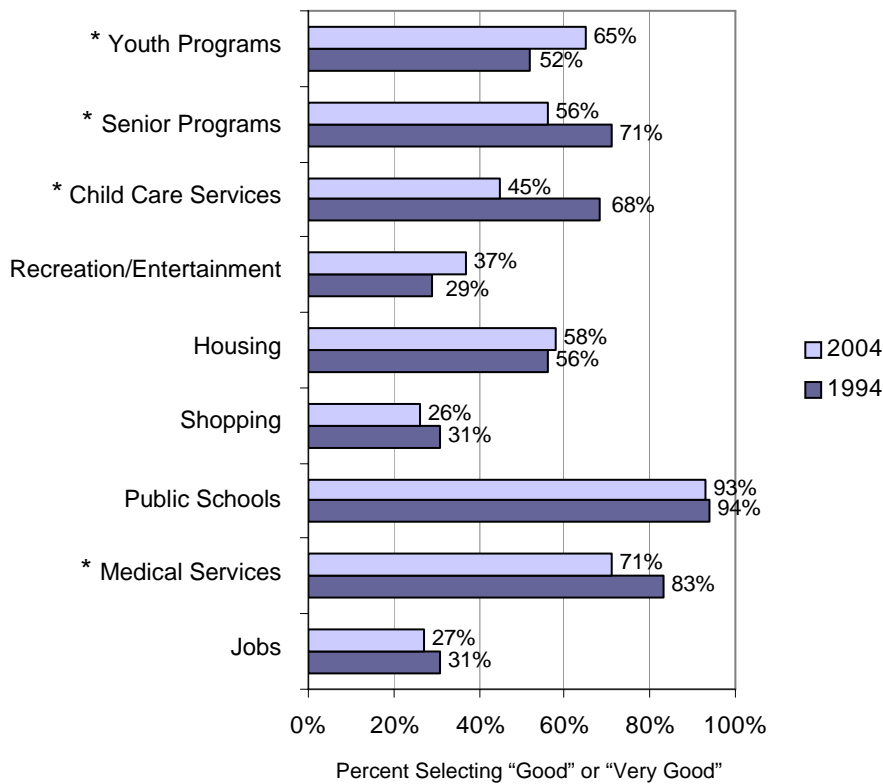


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. Nearly all Jefferson residents rated public schools as good or very good in both years, and over half gave favorable ratings to youth programs, senior programs, housing, and medical services. The lowest percentage of positive ratings was given to shopping and jobs. Residents’ evaluations increased significantly over the past decade for youth programs, and decreased for senior programs, child care services, and medical services.

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, Jefferson residents reported being satisfied with most of their government services. In both years, over three-fourths rated emergency response, garbage collection, fire protection, and the condition of parks as good or very good, while over half gave positive ratings to police protection. Fewer than half rated water services or the condition of the streets favorably in 2004, with positive ratings for the condition of the streets decreasing from 52 percent in 1994 to 34 percent in 2004.

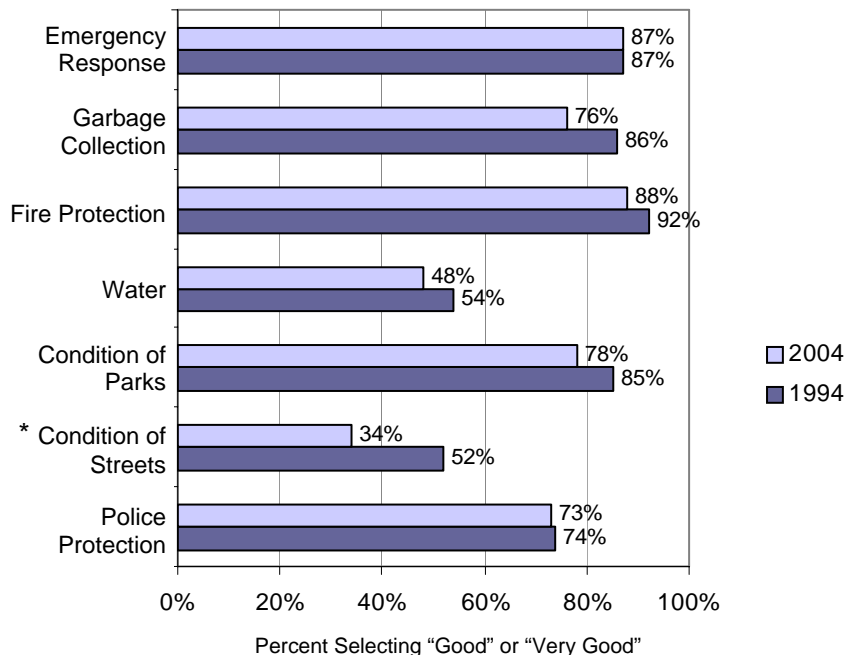


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

JEFFERSON'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.

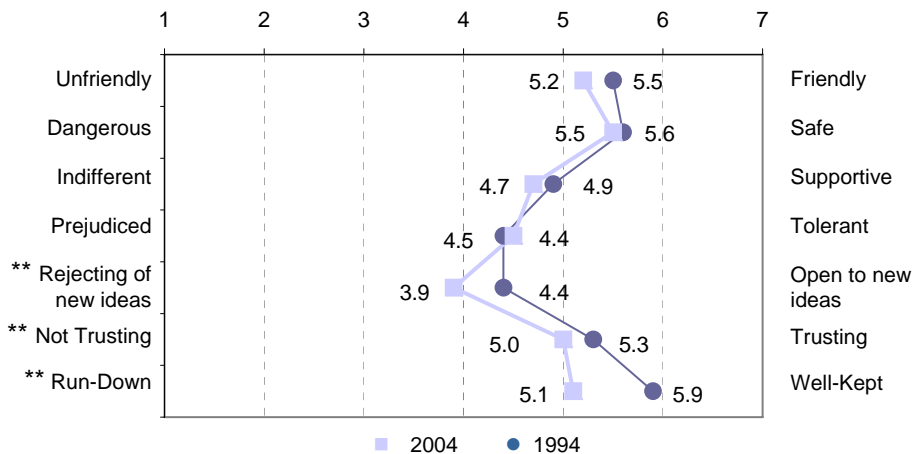


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

** 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 Jefferson, followed closely by the safety and friendliness of the town. In 2004, safety and friendliness received the highest ratings, while the extent Jefferson is tolerant and accepting of new ideas received the lowest ratings in both years. Significant changes over the decade are that residents in 2004 viewed Jefferson as less accepting of new ideas, less trusting, and less well-kept 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, 34 percent of residents reported knowing the name of half or more of the people in Jefferson, similar to 35 percent in 1994. Over half of residents (59%) indicated that half or more of their friends live in Jefferson, compared to 68 percent in 1994. Fewer residents had relatives and in-laws living locally—23 percent said half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in Jefferson in 2004, compared to 32 percent in 1994. (Note: These differences are not greater than the margin of error.)

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Jefferson residents feel at home in their community? When asked this question in 2004, 93 percent said that they do (see Figure 5). Furthermore, 75 percent indicated that they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away from Jefferson. These responses are similar to those reported in 1994, and indicate that most residents of Jefferson feel attached to their community.

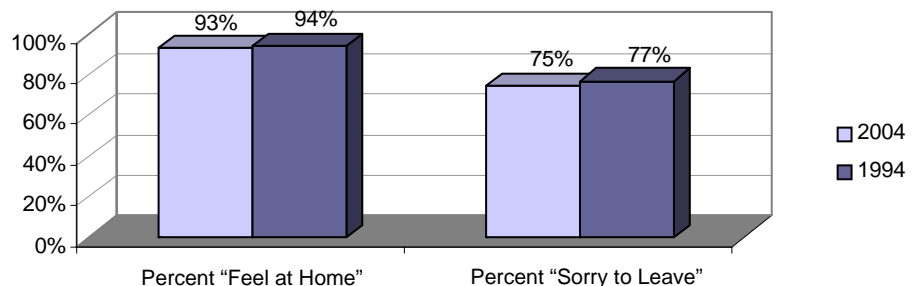


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Jefferson, 75 percent of residents indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is “good” or “very good.” In both years, over half of residents (55%) reported participating in a local community improvement project.

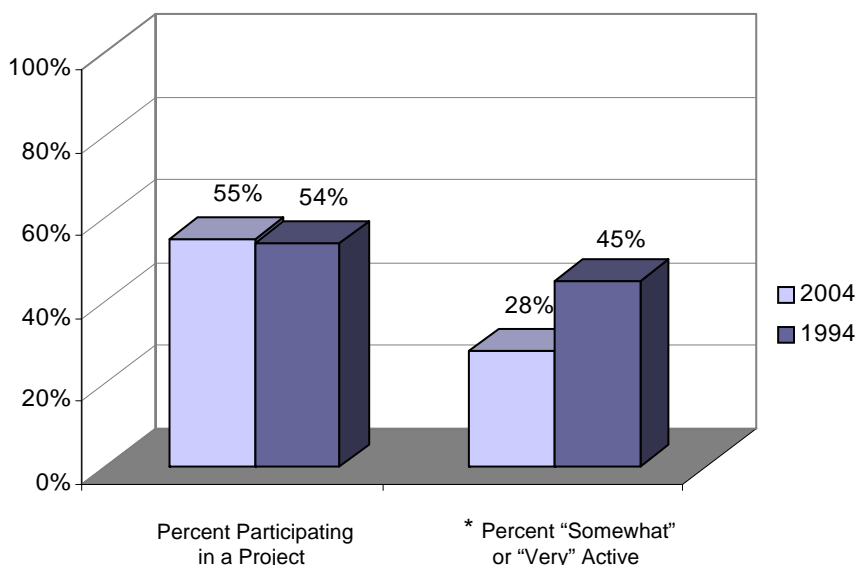


Figure 6: Community Involvement

However, the percentage of residents who described themselves as “somewhat” or “very” active in local activities and events declined from 45 percent in 1994 to 28 percent in 2004. When asked to consider a variety of factors that limit their involvement in community improvement projects, the top three factors were lack of time to participate (63%), not being asked to volunteer by others (36%), and not knowing how to become involved (26%).

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 Jefferson over the past decade? Fewer residents are attending church in Jefferson compared to ten years ago. The evaluations of the quality of local youth programs increased, while ratings decreased for senior programs, child care services, and medical services. Ratings for other local services and facilities did not change significantly. The evaluations of the quality of local government services remain high—the only change was a decrease in favorable ratings for the condition of the streets.

The social environment has changed somewhat. Jefferson residents view their town as less accepting of new ideas, less trusting, and less well-kept when compared to 1994. Ratings for the friendliness, safety, supportiveness, and tolerance of the town did not change significantly. The extent to which Jefferson residents know each other also remains unchanged. Jefferson residents remain attached to their community—that is, a large majority feel at home in Jefferson and would be sorry to leave. Finally, levels of community involvement changed somewhat in that the percentage of residents who describe themselves as active in the community decreased significantly.

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

RDI

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RDI-181 — 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.