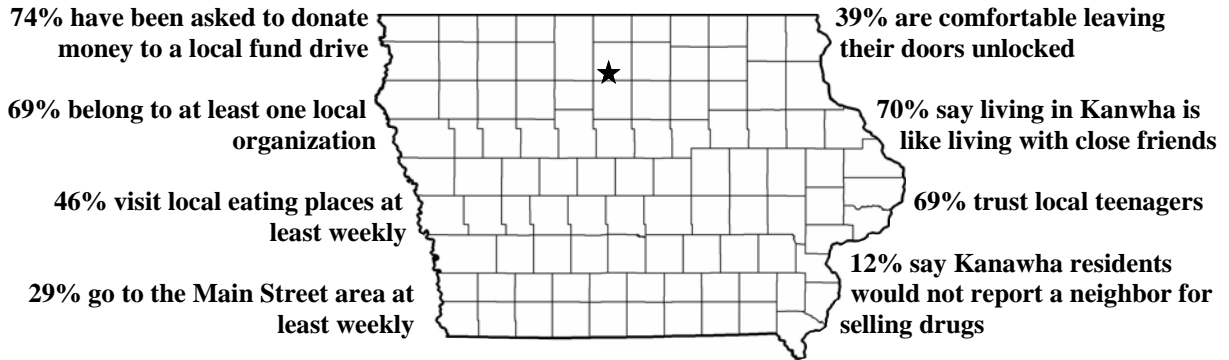


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN KANAWHA

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 Kanawha. 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 Kanawha residents responded to the survey, and 103 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Kanawha residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN KANAWHA IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

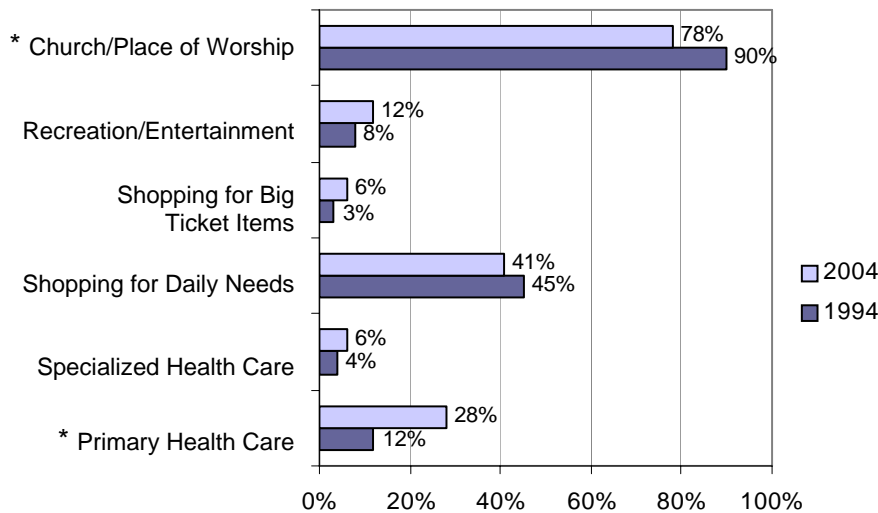


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that Kanawha residents follow this pattern. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing services of various types in Kanawha. Most residents remained in Kanawha to attend church or a place of worship, although significantly fewer reported doing so in 2004 than in 1994. Twelve percent said that they stayed in town for

recreation and entertainment in 2004. Forty-one percent stayed in Kanawha to shop for their daily needs, but only six percent shopped for "big ticket" items locally. For health care, 28 percent remained in town to obtain primary health care, a significant increase from the 12 percent of residents who did so in 1994. Six percent of residents reported obtaining specialized health care in Kanawha.

A Note on Interpretation: For Kanawha, 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

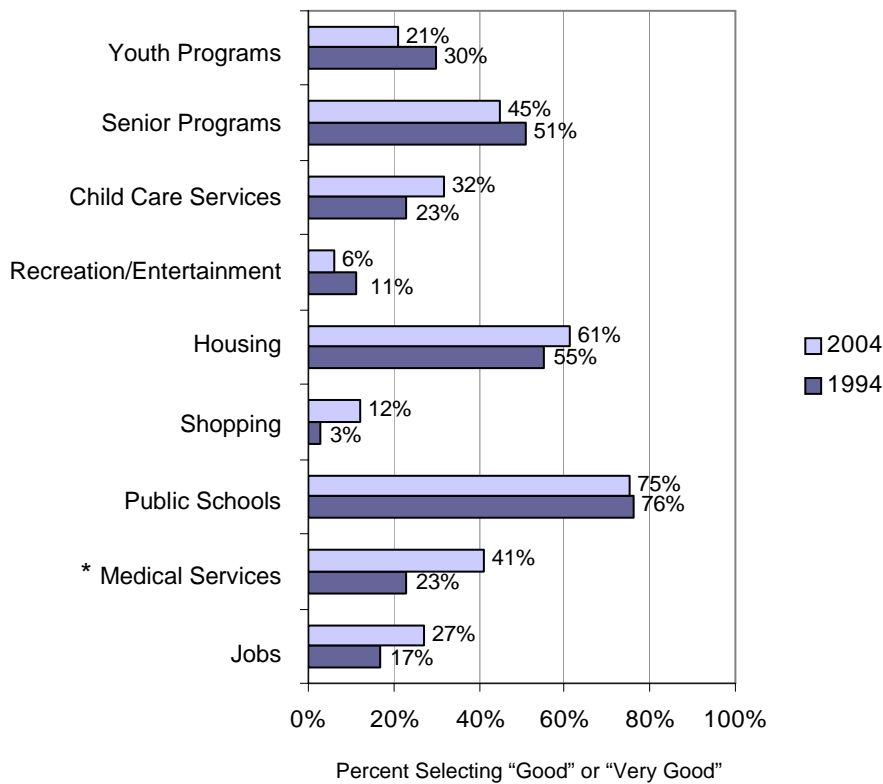


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. Three-fourths of Kanawha residents rated the public schools as good or very good, while over half gave favorable ratings to housing. About four in ten rated senior programs and medical services favorably in 2004, while fewer than one-third assigned positive ratings to youth programs, child care services, and jobs. Recreation/entertainment and shopping received positive ratings from the fewest number of residents in both years. The ratings for youth programs, senior programs, child care services, recreation, housing, shopping, public schools, and jobs did not change significantly since 1994, but the percentage of favorable ratings increased for 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, Kanawha residents reported being satisfied with most of their government services. Almost everyone rated emergency response and fire protection as good or very good, and over three-fourths gave favorable ratings to garbage collection and the condition of the parks and streets. Police protection and water received positive ratings from 67 percent of residents in 2004. No significant changes in these ratings occurred during the past decade.

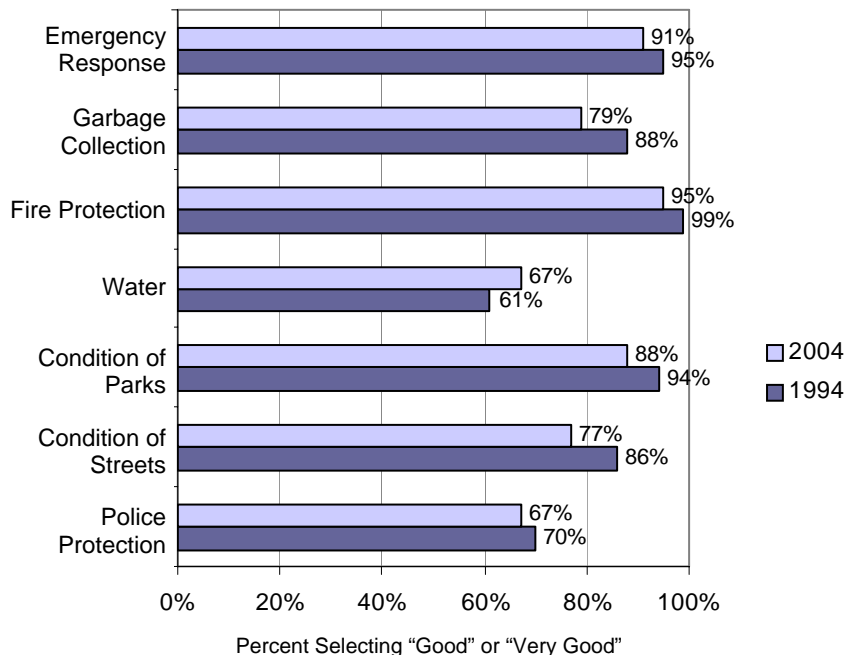


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

KANAWHA'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.

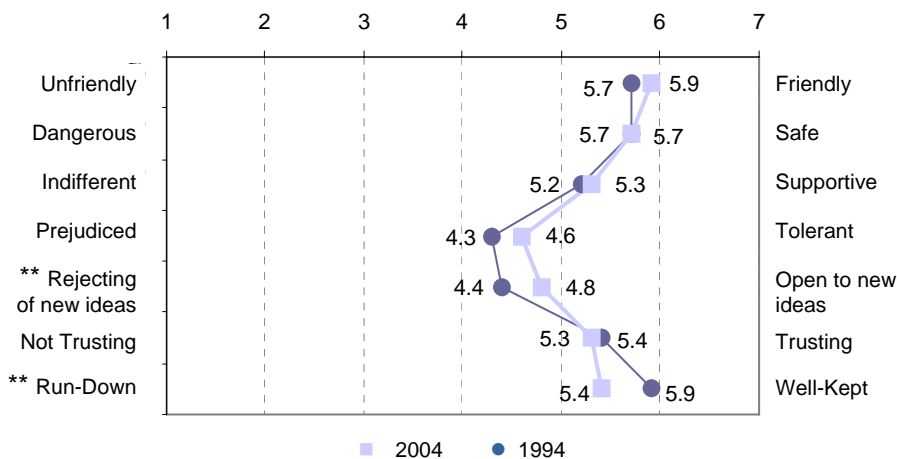


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

Residents were presented with a list of qualities and asked to evaluate their town on each quality using a 7-point scale. The average ratings shown in Figure 4 reveal that in 1994, residents assigned the highest rating to the appearance of Kanawha, followed closely by the friendliness and safety of the town. In 2004, the highest ratings were assigned to the friendliness and safety of Kanawha. Tolerance and openness to new ideas received the lowest ratings in both years. Significant changes over the decade are that Kanawha residents view Kanawha as more open to new ideas and less well-kept now when compared to 1994.

** 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, 79 percent of residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Kanawha, compared to 80 percent in 1994. Fifty-seven percent reported that half or more of their friends live in Kanawha, a significant decrease from 68 percent in 1994. As for relatives, 21 percent said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in town, compared to 22 percent in 1994.

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Kanawha residents feel at home in their community? When asked this question in 2004, 92 percent said that they do (see Figure 5). Furthermore, 83 percent reported that they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away from Kanawha. These responses are similar to those reported in 1994, indicating that most Kanawha residents remain attached to their community.

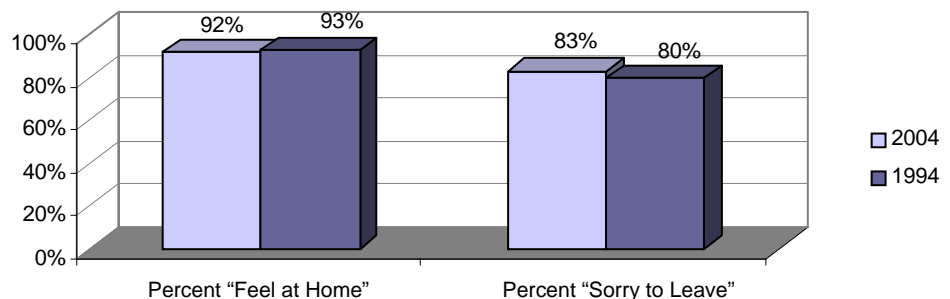


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Kanawha, 85 percent of residents indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is “good” or “very good.” Sixty-six percent of residents reported participating in a community improvement project during the year prior to the survey, a significant increase over the 49 percent of residents who reported involvement in a project in 1994 (see Figure 6). Nearly half (48%) described themselves as “somewhat” or “very” active in community activities and events, compared to 52 percent in 1994. When asked to consider a variety of factors that limit their involvement in Kanawha improvement projects, the top three factors selected by residents were lack of time (51%), not being asked by others to volunteer (37%), and lack of interest in participating (32%).

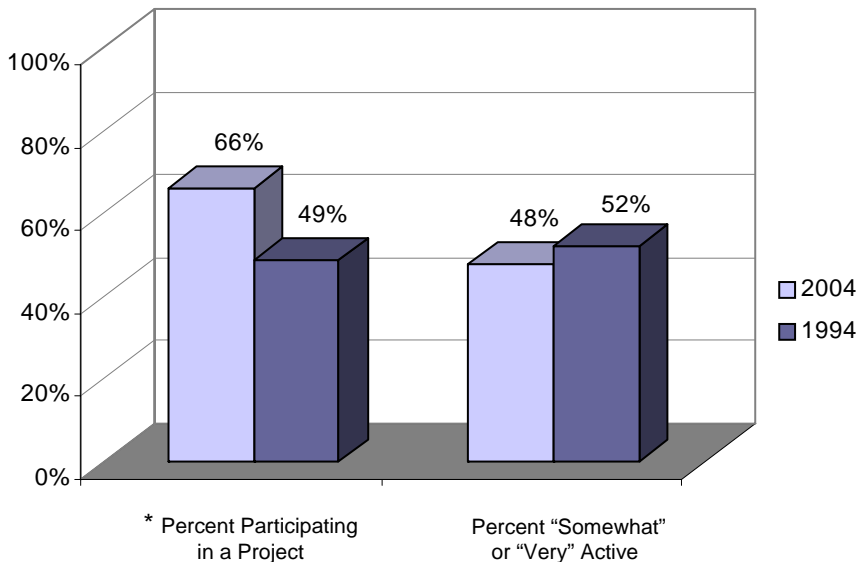


Figure 6: Community Involvement

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 Kanawha over the past decade? A larger percentage of residents are staying in Kanawha to obtain primary health care services, but fewer residents remain in town to attend church. The evaluations of the quality of local medical services increased, while ratings for other local services did not change significantly. The evaluations of the quality of local government services remain high and unchanged.

The social environment has changed somewhat. Kanawha residents view Kanawha as more open to new ideas and less well-kept when compared to 1994. Ratings for the friendliness, safety, supportiveness, tolerance, and trusting nature of the town have not changed. Fewer people have a majority of their friends living in Kanawha. Kanawha residents remain attached to their community—that is, a large majority feel at home and would be sorry to leave. Finally, levels of community involvement have increased—more people reported participating in a community improvement project during 2004 than in 1994, however the percentage of those who describe themselves as active in the community did not change significantly.

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

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