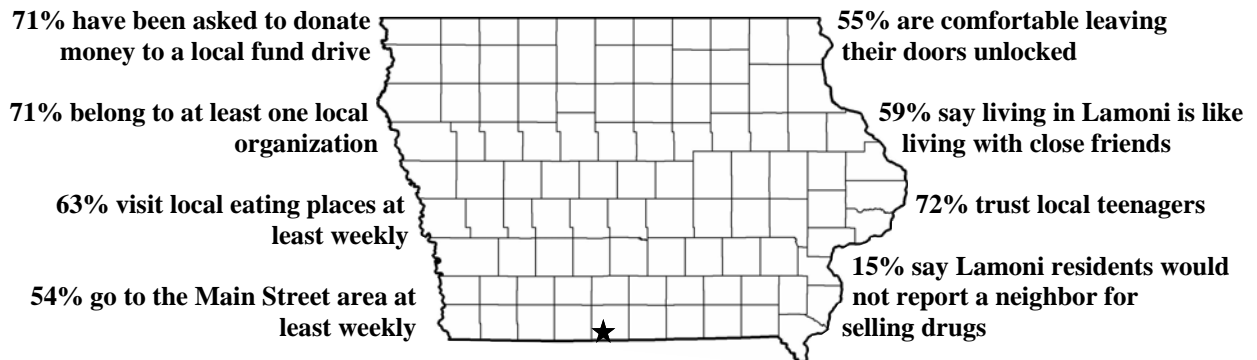


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN LAMONI

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 Lamoni. 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 Lamoni residents responded to the survey, and 81 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Lamoni residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN LAMONI IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

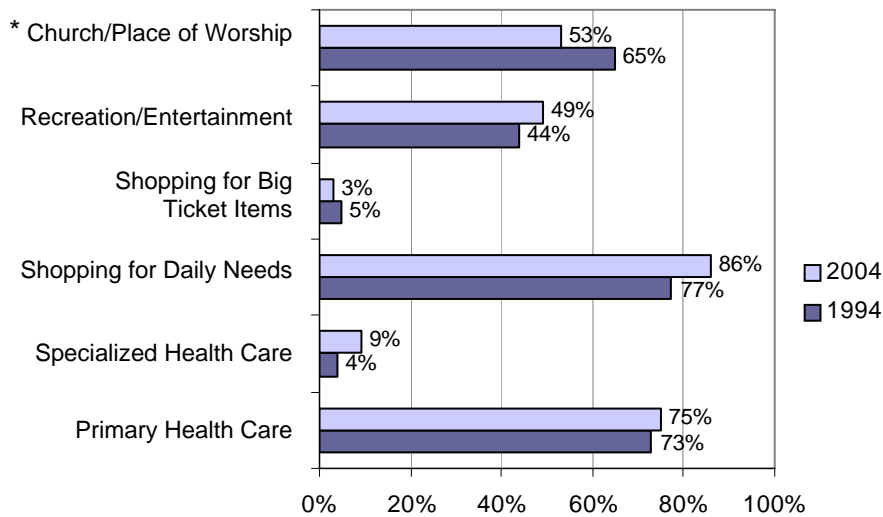


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that Lamoni residents stay in town for some services, but travel for others. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing various services in Lamoni. Fifty-three percent stayed in Lamoni to attend church/place of worship, down from 65 percent in 1994. Forty-

nine percent of residents reported that they remain in town for recreation and entertainment. Most residents reported shopping for their daily needs in Lamoni, although only three percent stayed to shop for "big ticket" items. Similarly, three-fourths of residents obtained primary health care in town, while only nine percent remained for specialized health care.

A Note on Interpretation: For Lamoni, 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

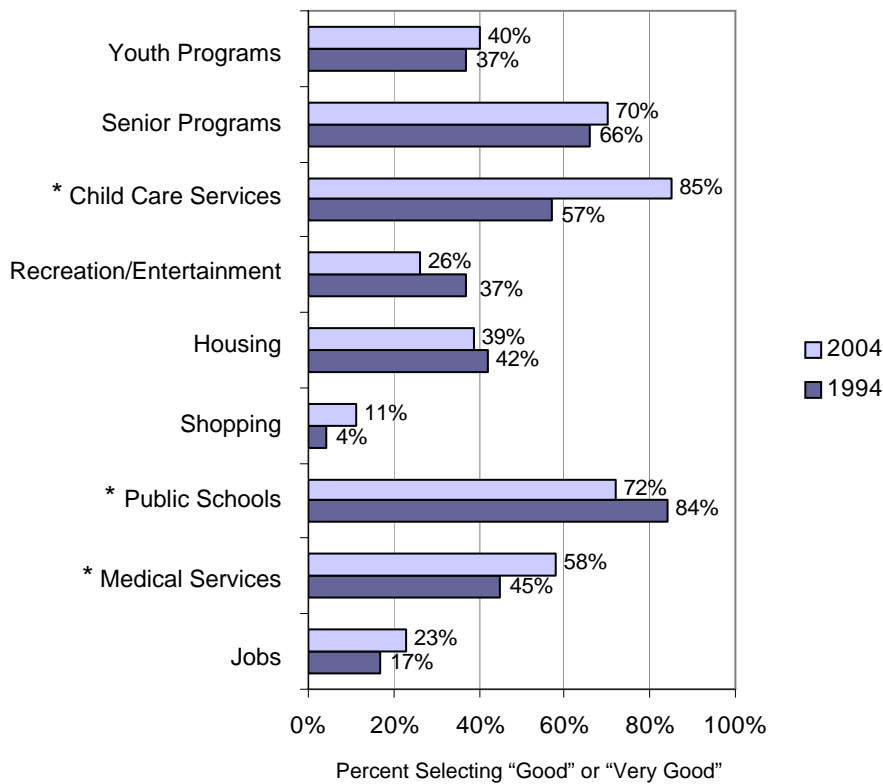


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. While a large majority of residents rated public schools as good or very good, the percentage of positive ratings for schools decreased over the past decade from 84 percent to 72 percent. However, positive ratings increased significantly for child care services, from 57 percent in 1994 to 85 percent in 2004, and medical services, from 45 percent in 1994 to 58 percent in 2004. Ratings for youth programs, senior programs, recreation and entertainment, housing, shopping, and jobs did not change significantly over the past decade.

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, Lamoni residents were satisfied with their government services. At least three-fourths of residents rated emergency response, garbage collection, fire protection, water, and police protection as good or very good. The condition of the parks and the condition of the streets received positive ratings from more than half of Lamoni residents. Compared to 1994, evaluations of the quality of garbage collection increased, while ratings for other services did not change significantly.

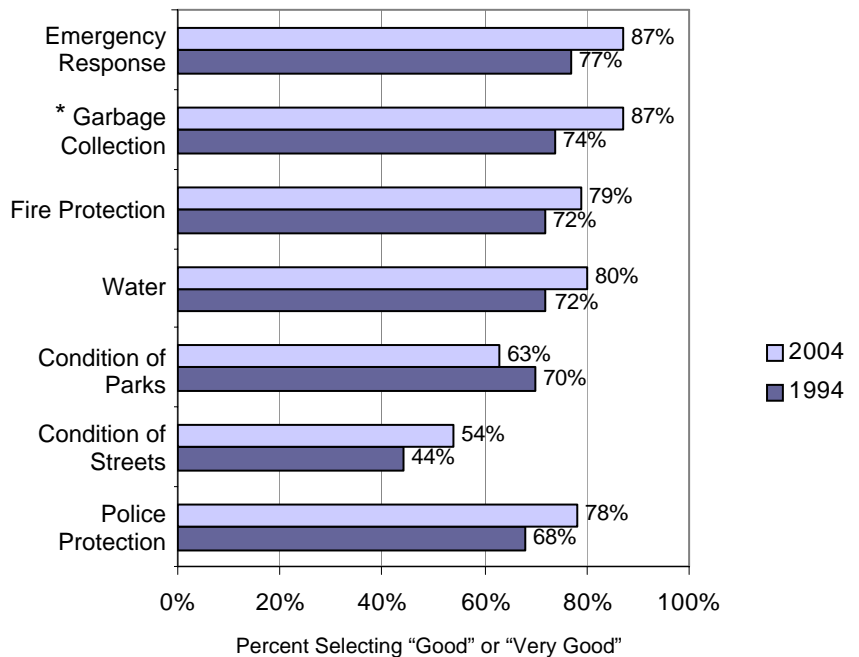


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

LAMONI'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.

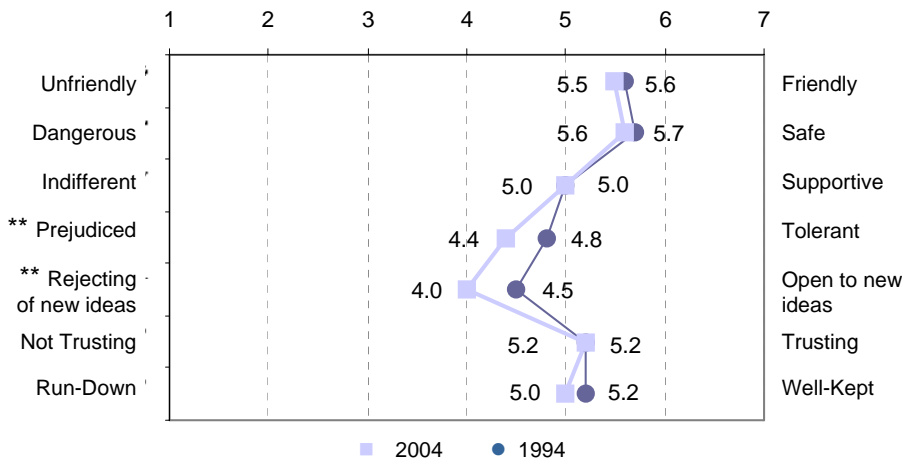


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

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 both years, residents assigned the highest rating to the safety of Lamoni, followed closely by the friendliness of the town. The lowest ratings in both years were assigned to the extent Lamoni is tolerant and open to new ideas. Most of these qualities changed very little over the past decade, although residents viewed Lamoni as less tolerant and less open to new ideas in 2004 when compared to ratings for 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, 57 percent of the residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Lamoni, compared to 52 percent in 1994. Similarly, 54 percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in town, compared to 62 percent in 1994. As for relatives, 17 percent of the residents in 2004 and 11 percent in 1994 reported that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in Lamoni. (Note: These differences are not greater than the margin of error.)

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Lamoni residents feel at home in their community? When asked this question in 2004, 86 percent said that they do (see Figure 5). Furthermore, 77 percent indicated that they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away from Lamoni. These responses are similar to those reported in 1994, and indicate that most Lamoni residents remain attached to their community.

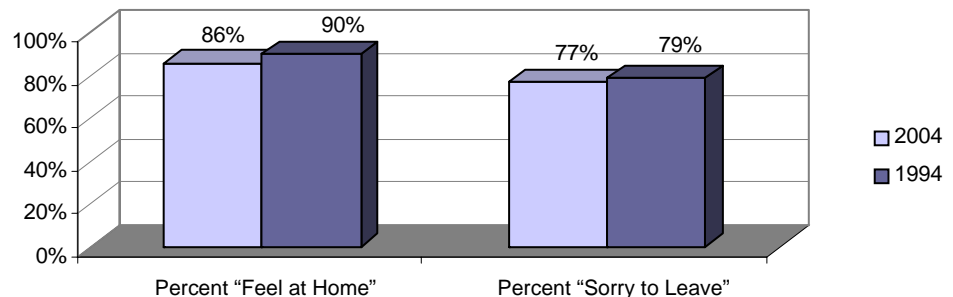


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Lamoni, 80 percent of residents indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is

“good” or “very good.” In 2004, 67 percent of Lamoni residents reported participating in a community improvement project during the year prior to the survey, and 48 percent considered themselves to be “somewhat” or “very” active in community activities and events (see Figure 6). This compares to 59 percent participating in a project and 43 percent describing themselves as somewhat or very active in the community in 1994. When asked to consider a variety of factors that limit their involvement in the community, the top three selected by Lamoni residents were lack of time (66%), not being asked by others to volunteer (33%), and lack of interest in participating (25%).

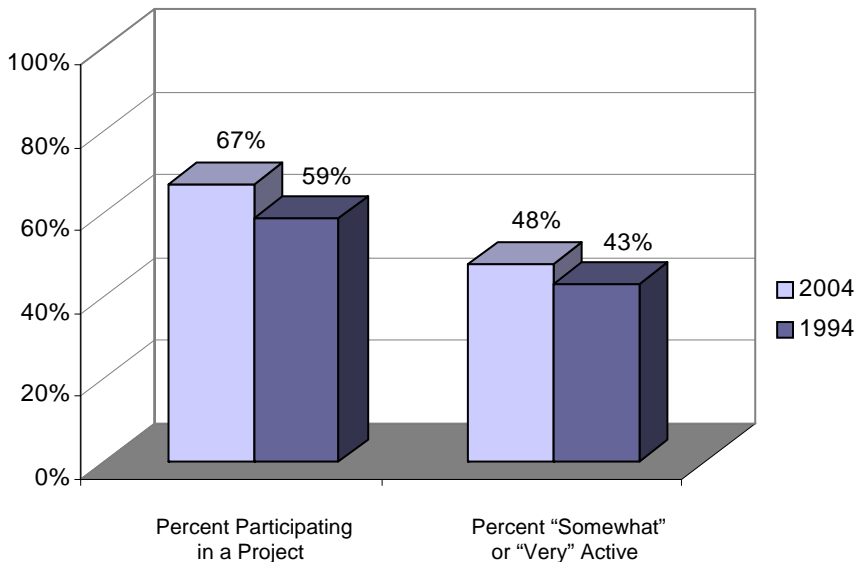


Figure 6: Community Involvement

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 12 percentage points. Using this standard, what has changed in Lamoni over the past decade? Fewer Lamoni residents attend church/place of worship inside the community. The evaluations of the quality of public schools declined, while ratings increased for local child care and medical services. The evaluations of the quality of local government services remain high and favorable ratings for garbage collection increased.

The social environment has changed very little. While Lamoni residents view their community as less tolerant and less open to new ideas than a decade ago, ratings for friendliness, safety, supportiveness, levels of trust, and the town’s appearance did not change. Lamoni residents remain attached to their community—that is, a large majority feel at home in Lamoni and would be sorry to leave if they had to move away from the town. Levels of community involvement did not change significantly over the decade—most residents reported participating in a local project and nearly half consider themselves to be active in the community.

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

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