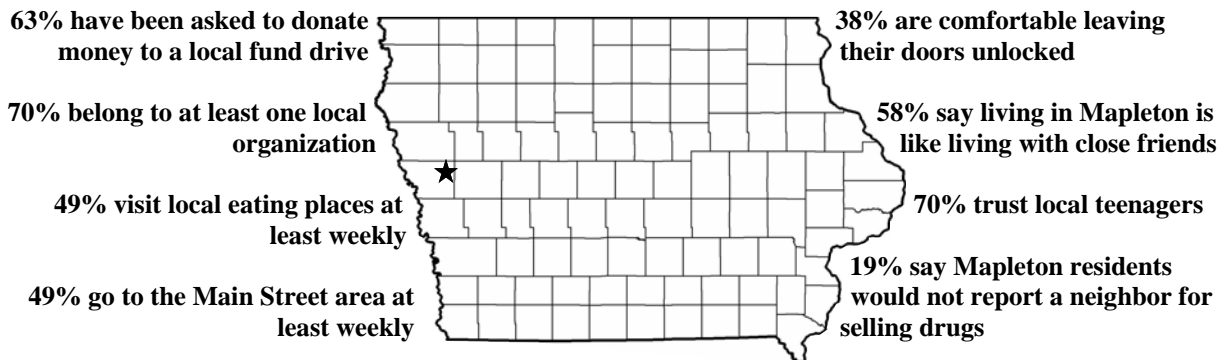


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN MAPLETON

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 Mapleton. 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 Mapleton residents responded to the survey, and 95 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Mapleton residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN MAPLETON IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

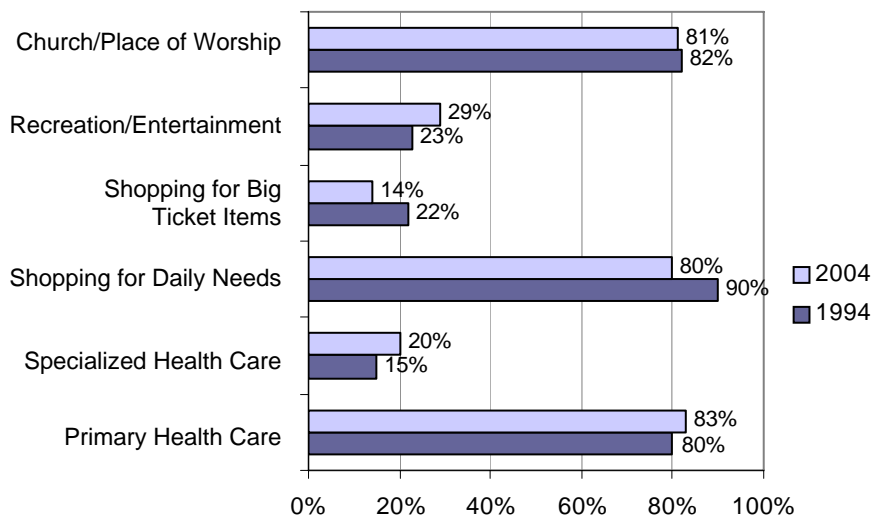


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey show that Mapleton residents remain in town for some services, but travel for others. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing various services in Mapleton. Most residents stayed in Mapleton to attend church or a place of worship, while only 29 percent remained for recreation and entertainment.

A majority reported that they shop for their daily needs in Mapleton, but only 14 percent stayed to shop for "big ticket" items. For health care, most stayed in Mapleton to obtain primary health care, whereas only one-fifth obtained specialized health care in town. These patronage patterns did not change significantly over the past ten years.

A Note on Interpretation: For Mapleton, 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

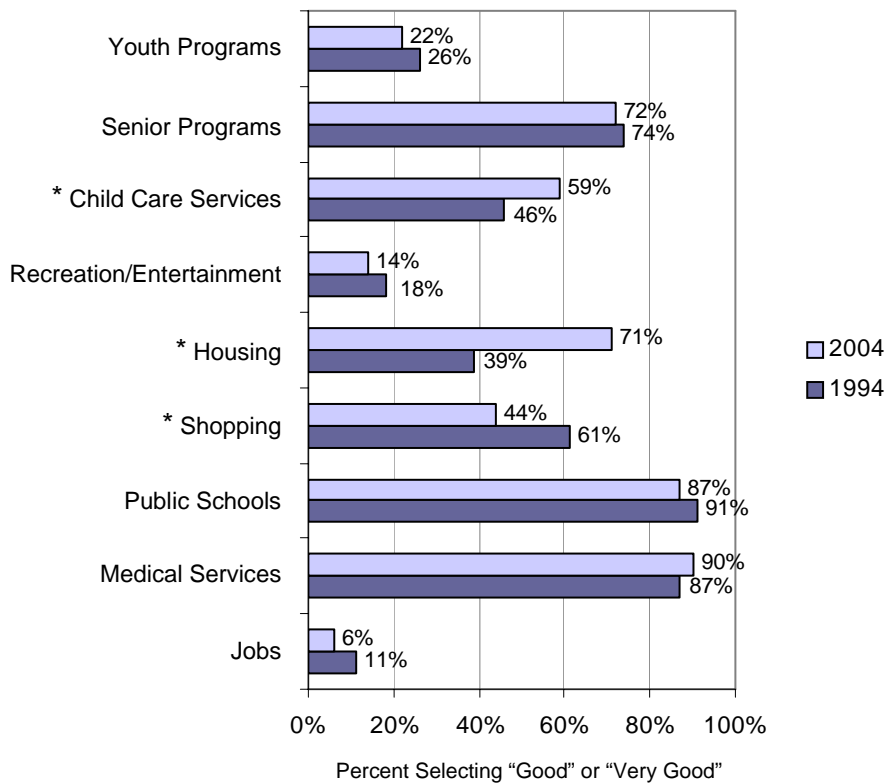


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. A large majority of residents rated senior programs, schools, and medical services as good or very good in both years, while relatively few assigned positive ratings to youth programs, recreation, or jobs. Ratings for most services did not change significantly over the past decade. The percentage of favorable ratings declined for shopping when compared to 1994, while the percentage of positive ratings for child care services and housing increased.

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, Mapleton residents were satisfied with their government services. In both years, a large majority rated emergency response, garbage collection, fire protection, and the condition of the parks as good or very good. Water, the condition of the streets, and police protection received positive ratings from over half of Mapleton residents. No significant changes in ratings of the quality of government services occurred over the past decade.

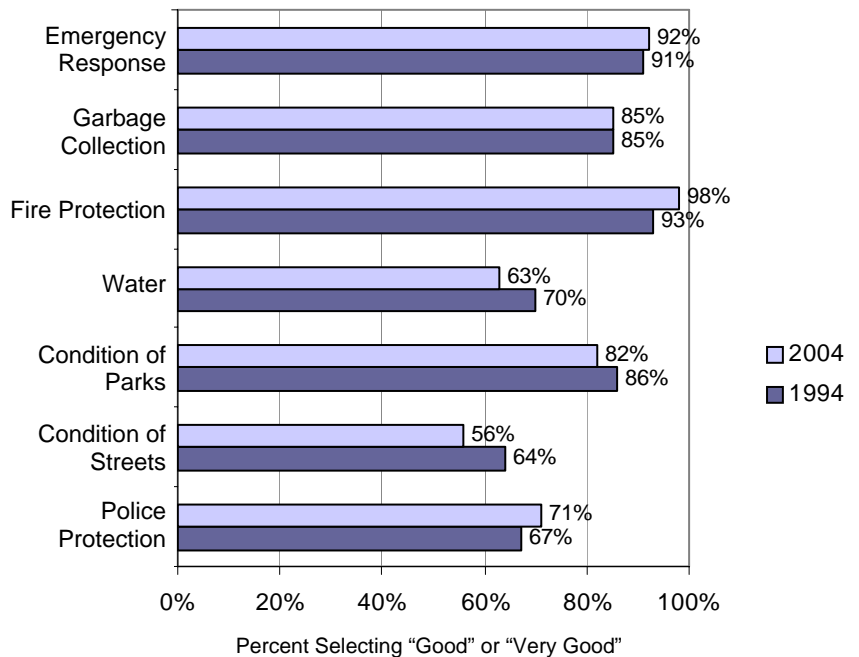


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

MAPLETON'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.

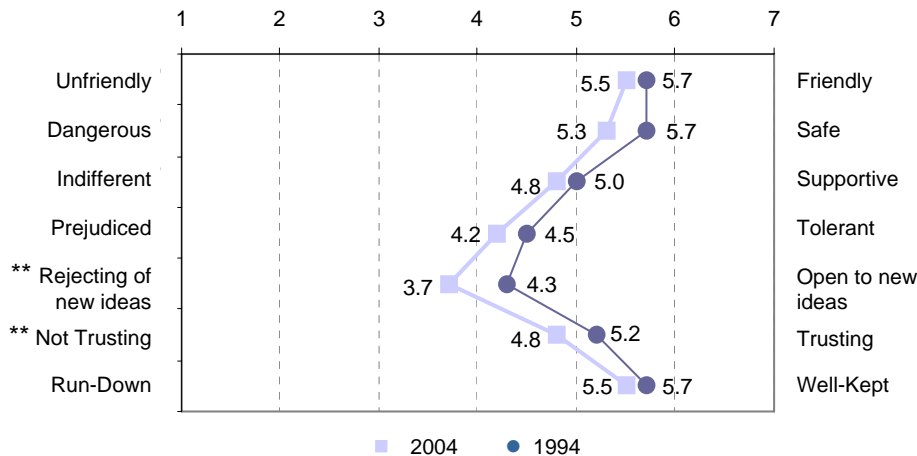


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

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 ratings to the safety, friendliness, and appearance of Mapleton. The lowest ratings were given to the extent to which residents view Mapleton as tolerant and open to new ideas. Significant changes over the past decade are that residents see Mapleton as less open to new ideas and less trusting than it was ten years ago.

** 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, 60 percent of residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Mapleton, compared to 66 percent in 1994. The percentage of residents who said that half or more of their friends live in town declined significantly over the past decade, from 64 percent in 1994 to 53 percent in 2004. As for relatives, 17 percent in 2004 and 19 percent in 1994 said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws lived in Mapleton.

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Mapleton residents feel at home in their community? When asked this question in both years almost all residents said that they did feel at home in their community (see Figure 5). However, 69 percent indicated that they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away from Mapleton, a significant decrease from the 89 percent who expressed this sentiment in 1994.

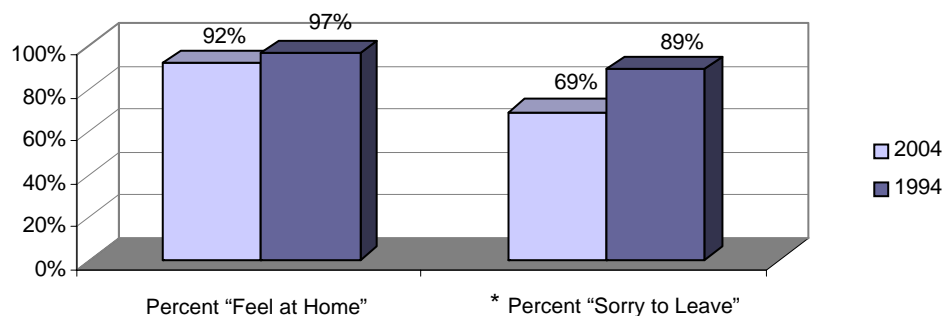


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Mapleton, 66 percent of residents reported in 2004 that the spirit of community participation in

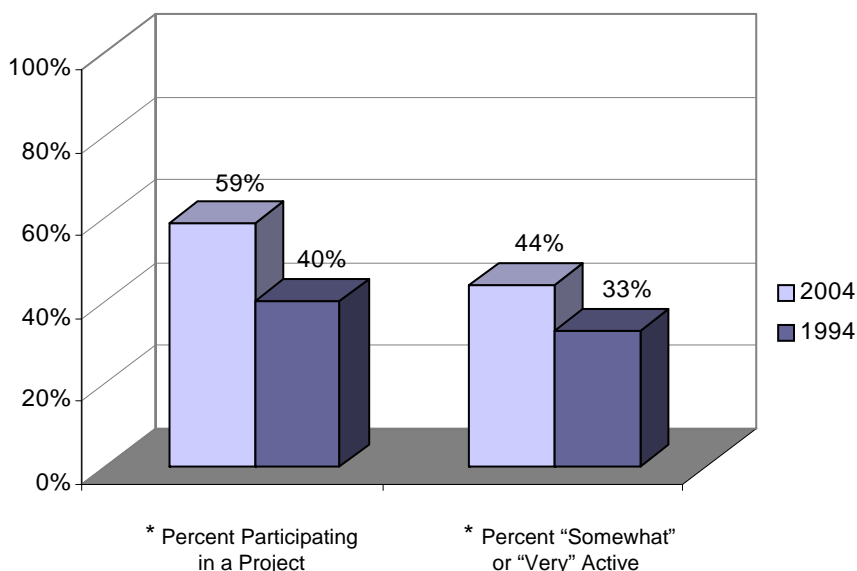


Figure 6: Community Involvement

Mapleton is “good” or “very good.” Indeed, participation levels have increased significantly over the past decade. In 2004, 59 percent of residents reported that they had participated in a local community project during the past year, up from 40 percent in 1994 (see Figure 6). Similarly, 44 percent considered themselves to be “somewhat” or “very” active in community activities and events in 2004, up significantly from 33 percent ten years ago. When asked to consider a variety of factors that limit their involvement in community activities, the top three factors selected were lack of time (48%), not knowing how to get involved (35%), and not being asked by others to volunteer (34%).

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 Mapleton over the past decade? Patronage patterns did not change significantly—residents still stay in Mapleton to attend church, shop for daily needs, and to obtain primary health care, but they leave for recreation, to shop for “big ticket” items, and to obtain specialized health care. Evaluations of the quality of local shopping decreased, while evaluations increased for child care services and housing. Ratings of the quality of local government services remain high, and no significant changes occurred over the past ten years.

The social environment has changed somewhat. Residents view Mapleton as less trusting and less open to new ideas than it was ten years ago. Also, residents report that fewer of their friends live in the community. Mapleton residents remain attached to their community—that is most feel at home in Mapleton and would be sorry to leave. However, the percentage of those who would be sorry to leave decreased significantly. Finally, levels of community involvement have increased—a greater number of residents are participating in community events and 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 Mapleton’s future. **We wish to thank the Mapleton residents who participated in the 1994 and 2004 studies for providing the information that made this report possible.**

RDI

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