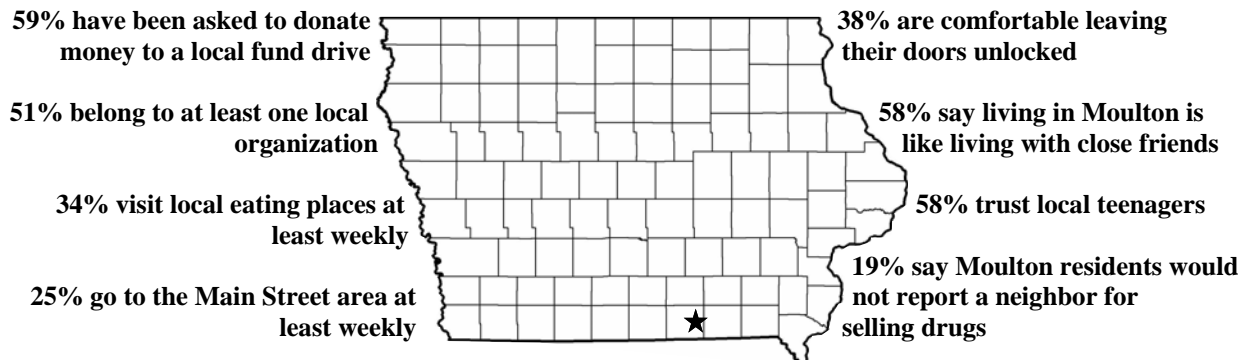


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN MOULTON

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 Moulton. 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, 99 Moulton residents responded to the survey, and 97 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Moulton residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN MOULTON IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

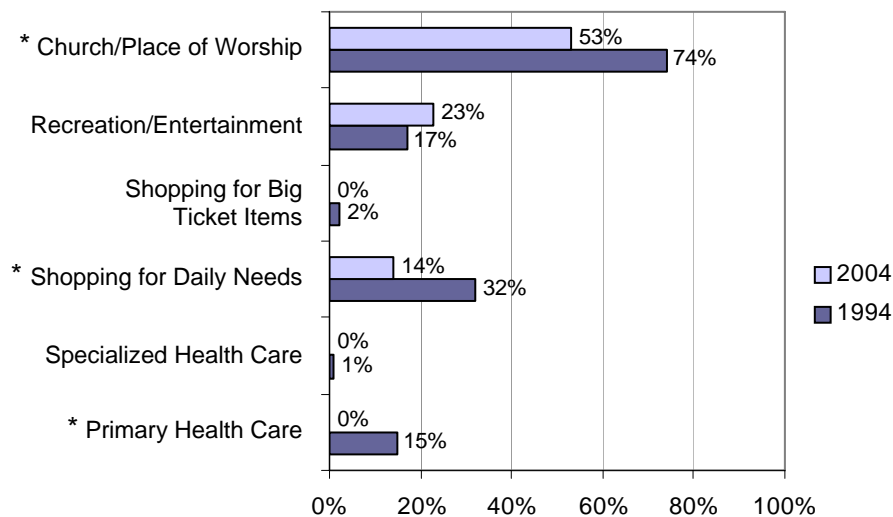


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that Moulton residents follow this pattern for most services. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing various services in Moulton. In 2004, 53 percent of residents stayed in town to attend church, down significantly from 74 percent in 1994. Twenty-three

percent remained for recreation. The percentage of residents staying in town to shop for daily needs decreased significantly from 32 percent in 1994 to 14 percent in 2004, and hardly any residents shopped for "big ticket" items in Moulton. In 2004, no residents said they stayed in town for either primary or specialized health care. The percentage of those obtaining primary health care in Moulton decreased significantly since 1994.

A Note on Interpretation: For Moulton, 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

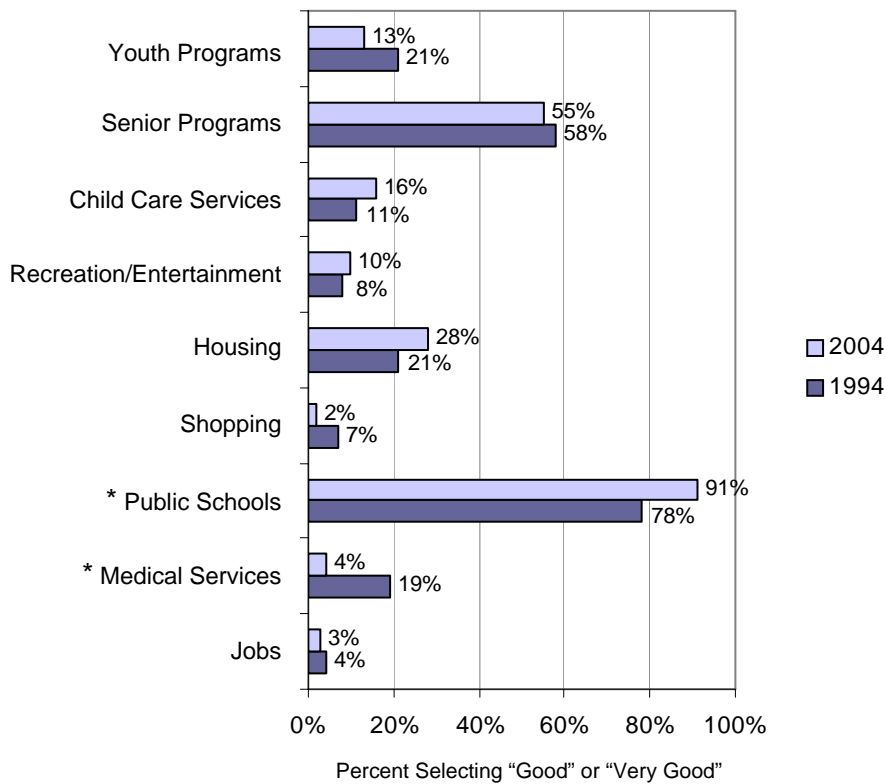


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. Ninety-one percent rated the public schools as good or very good, up significantly from 78 percent in 1994, and over half gave favorable ratings to senior programs. Housing received positive ratings from about one-fourth of residents in both years, while far fewer assigned favorable ratings to youth programs, child care services, recreation, shopping, or jobs. Positive evaluations of medical services declined significantly, from 19 percent in 1994 to 4 percent in 2004.

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, Moulton residents were satisfied with their government services. At least three-fourths rated emergency response, garbage collection, and fire protection as good or very good, while water and police protection received positive ratings from over half of Moulton residents. The condition of the parks and streets received the lowest percentage of positive ratings. Compared to 1994, the percentage of favorable ratings declined significantly for water and increased for police protection.

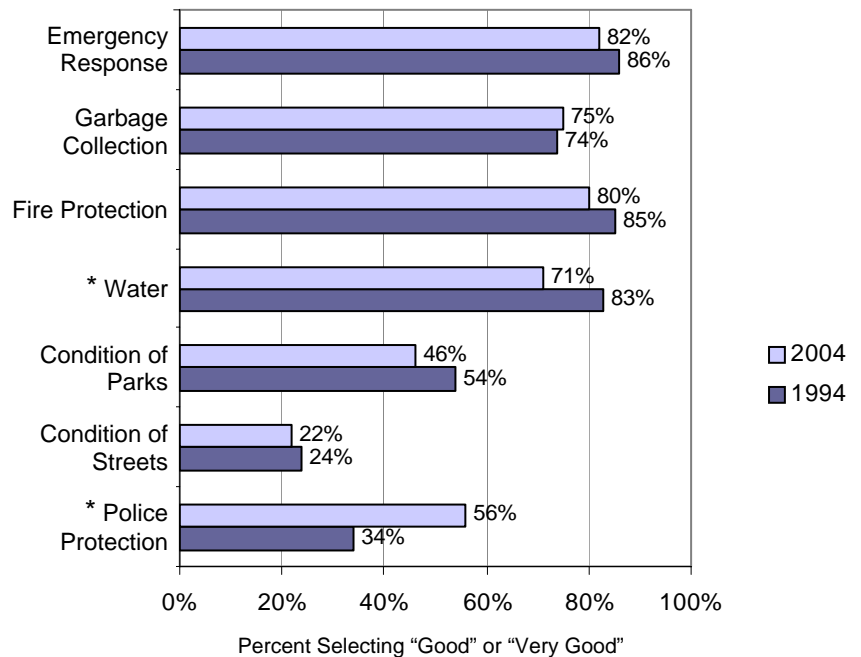


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

MOULTON'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.

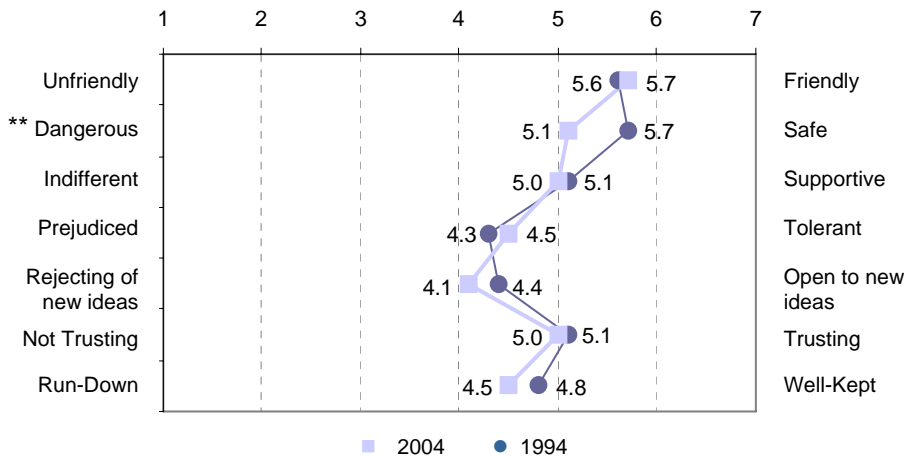


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

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 safety of Moulton. In 2004, the highest rating went to friendliness. The lowest ratings in both years were assigned to the extent to which Moulton is tolerant and open to new ideas. Ratings for most of these qualities did not change over the past decade, although residents did report that Moulton is less safe 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, 71 percent of residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Moulton, compared to 63 percent in 1994. Fifty-five percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in town, compared to 61 percent in 1994. As for relatives, 25 percent of residents in 2004 and 33 percent in 1994 said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in Moulton. (Note: These differences are not larger than the margin of error.)

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Moulton residents feel at home in their community? When asked this question, most residents said that they did (see Figure 5). Furthermore, 79 percent indicated that they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away.

These responses are similar to those reported in 1994, indicating that most Moulton residents still feel attached to their community.

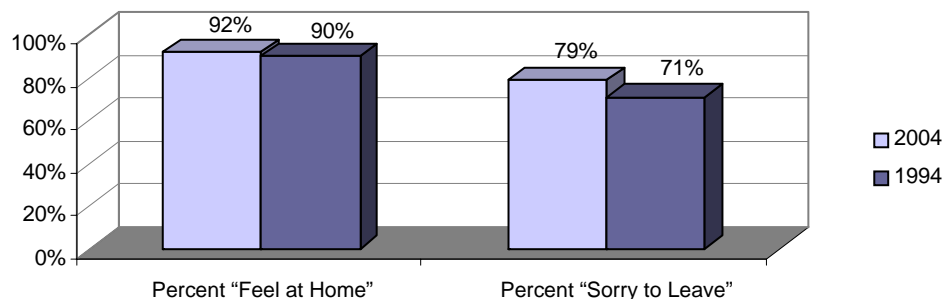


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Moulton, 71 percent of residents reported that the spirit of community participation in Moulton

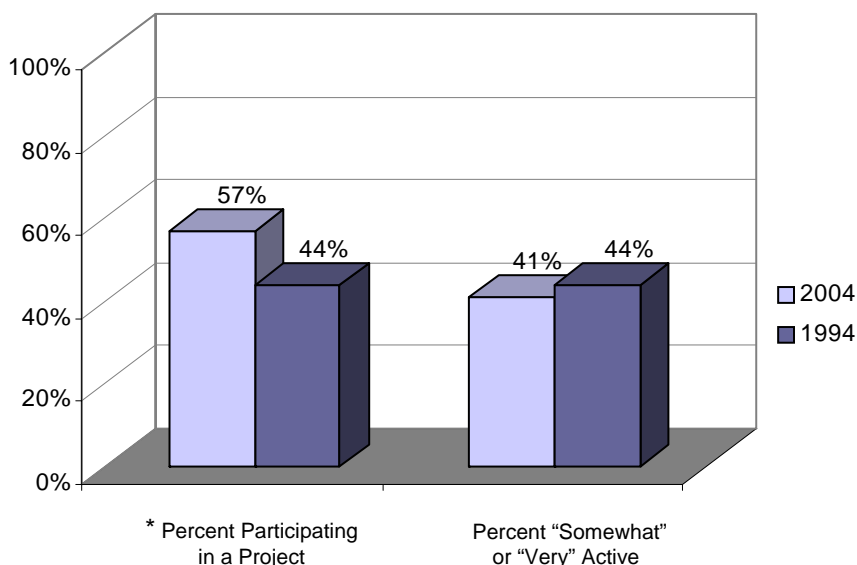


Figure 6: Community Involvement

is “good” or “very good.” Additionally, the percentage of those who reported participating in a community improvement project during the year prior to the survey increased significantly from 44 percent in 1994 to 57 percent in 2004 (see Figure 6). Forty-one percent in 2004 and 44 percent in 1994 described themselves as “somewhat” or “very” active in community activities and events. When asked to consider a variety of factors that limit their involvement in the community, the top three selected by Moulton residents were lack of time (59%), not being asked by others to volunteer (29%), and lack of interest in getting involved (20%).

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 Moulton over the past decade? Residents are attending church, shopping for daily needs, and obtaining primary health care Moulton less now than ten years ago. Evaluations of the quality of most local services and facilities did not change significantly, although ratings for schools increased and ratings for medical services declined. Evaluations of the quality of local government services remain high—ratings for police protection increased, although evaluations of water services decreased.

The social environment has changed very little. While residents do view Moulton as less safe, ratings for the friendliness, supportiveness, tolerance, openness to new ideas, trusting nature, and appearance are the same as they were in 1994. The extent to which people know each other in Moulton remains unchanged as well. Moulton residents remain attached to their community—that is, most feel at home in Moulton and would be sorry to leave. Finally, the extent to which residents are participating in community projects has increased, although the percentage of those who describe themselves as active in the community stayed the same.

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

RDI

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