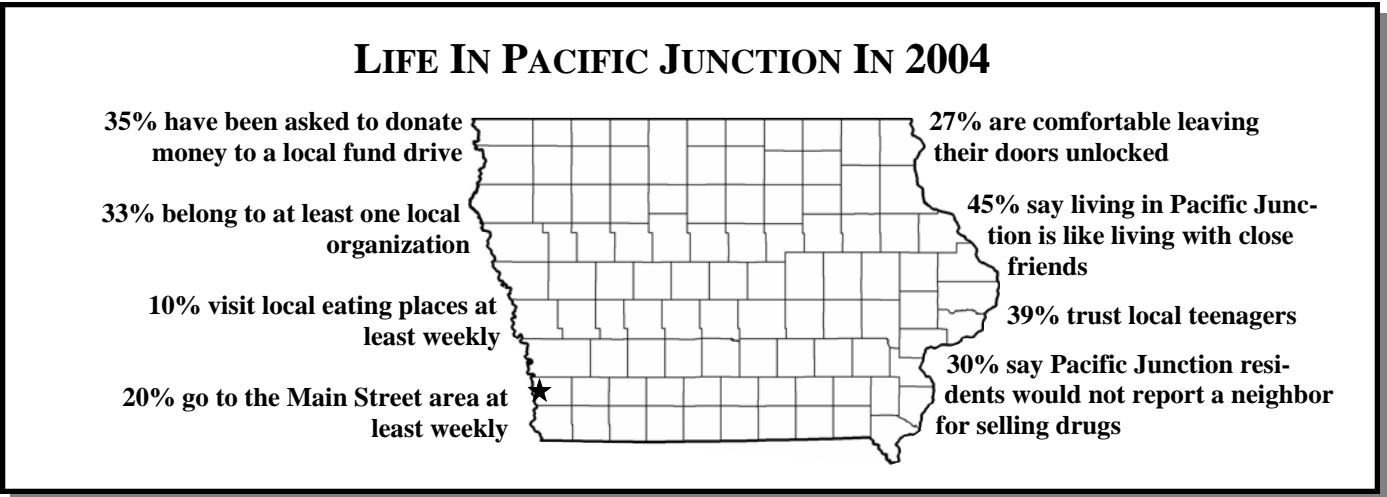


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN PACIFIC JUNCTION

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 Pacific Junction. 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, 103 Pacific Junction residents responded to the survey, and 104 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Pacific Junction residents have changed over the past decade.



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

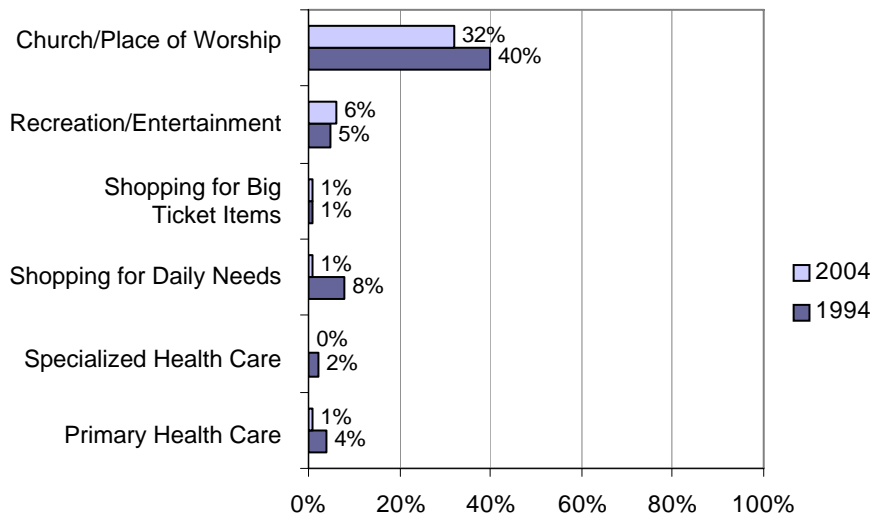


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey reveal that Pacific Junction residents leave town for most services. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents reporting patronizing various services in Pacific Junction. While approximately one-third of residents in 2004 said they stay in town to attend church or a place of worship, only 6

percent reported that they remain for recreation or entertainment. Very few residents reported shopping for their daily needs or for "big ticket" items in Pacific Junction. Similarly, almost no residents of Pacific Junction obtained either primary or specialized health care in town.

A Note on Interpretation: For Pacific Junction, 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

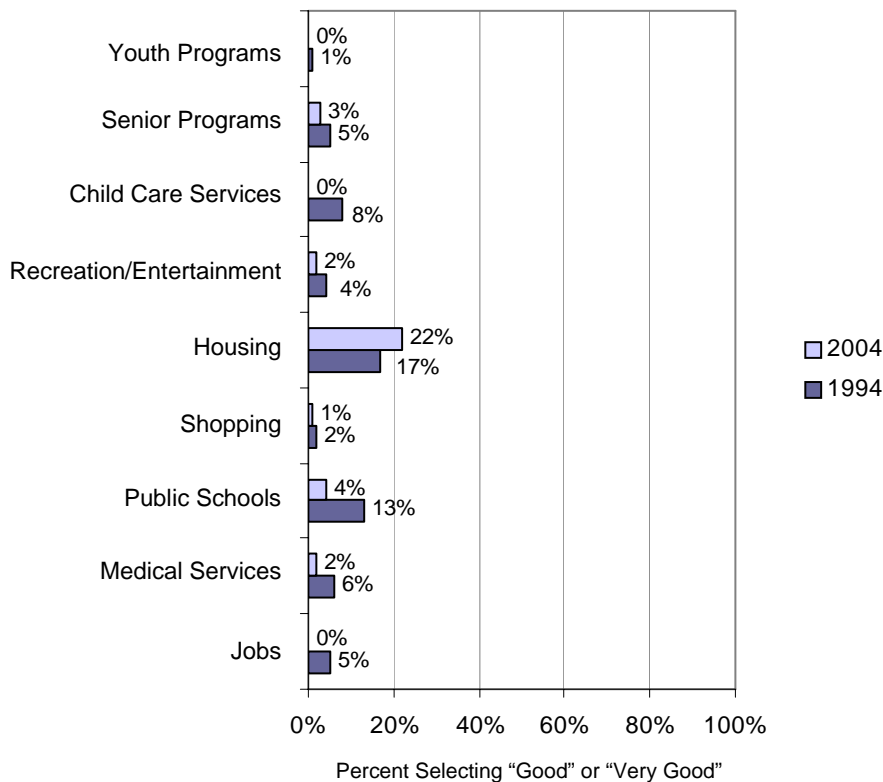


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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 percent of residents who rated each service as “good” or “very good” in 1994 and 2004. Housing received the highest percentage of positive ratings in both years (22 percent in 2004 and 17 percent in 1994), followed by public schools which were rated as good or very good by 4 percent of residents in 2004 and 13 percent in 1994. Very few residents assigned favorable ratings to youth programs, senior programs, child care services, recreation, shopping, medical services, or jobs. There were no significant changes in the ratings for local services and facilities over the past ten years.

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. Ratings of the quality of local government services are relatively high. Three-fourths of residents in 2004 rated emergency response and fire protection as good or very good, and over half gave positive ratings to garbage collection, water, and the condition of the parks. Police protection and the condition of the streets received the lowest percentage of positive ratings in both years. Compared to a decade ago, the percentage of favorable ratings increased for emergency response, garbage collection, fire protection, and the condition of the parks.

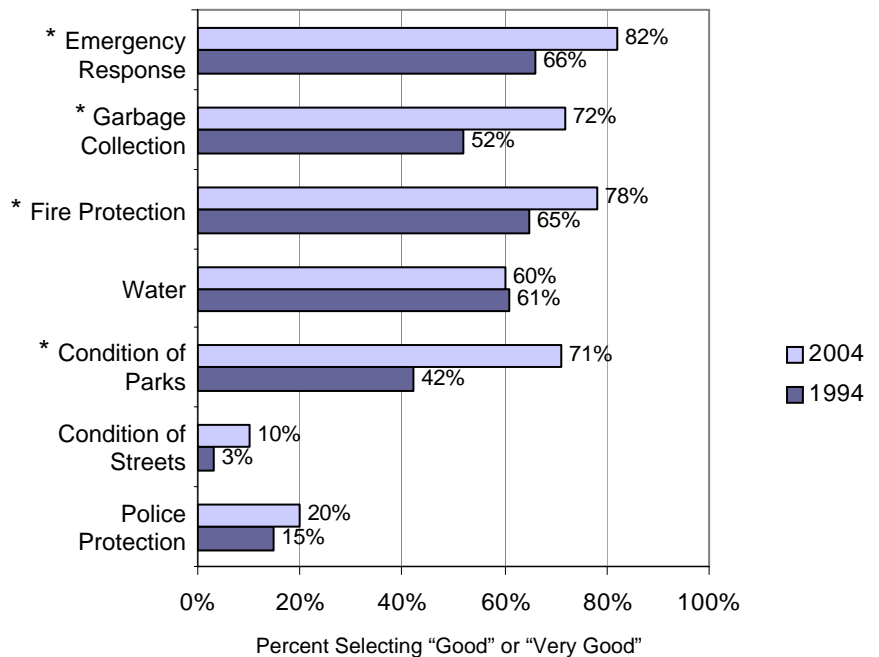


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

PACIFIC JUNCTION'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.

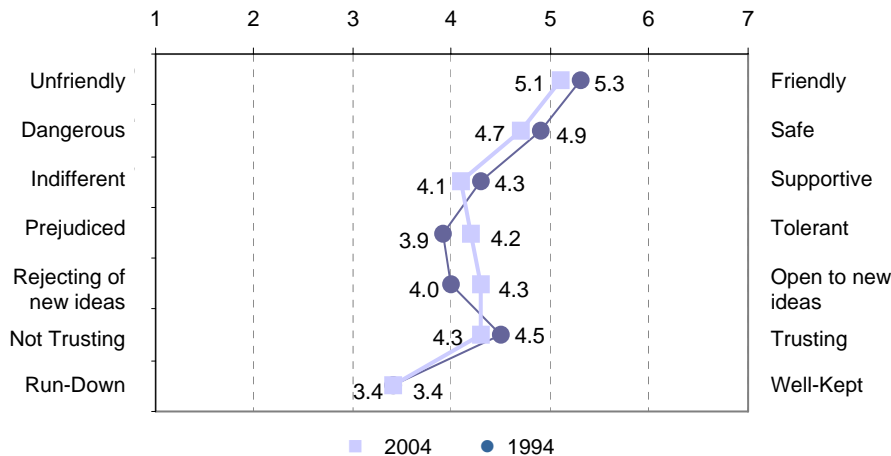


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

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 friendliness and safety of Pacific Junction. The lowest ratings in both years were given to the appearance of Pacific Junction and the tolerant nature of the town. None of the ratings for these social qualities changed significantly over the past ten years.

** 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, 36 percent of residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Pacific Junction, compared to 43 percent in 1994. Similarly, 21 percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in town, compared to 25 percent in 1994. As for relatives, 24 percent of residents in 2004 and 23 percent in 1994 said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in Pacific Junction. (Note: These differences are not greater than the margin of error.)

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Pacific Junction residents feel at home in their community? When asked this question in 2004, most said that they did (see Figure 5). Furthermore, 61 percent of residents said that they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away from Pacific Junction. These responses are similar to those reported in 1994, indicating that most residents still feel attached to their community.

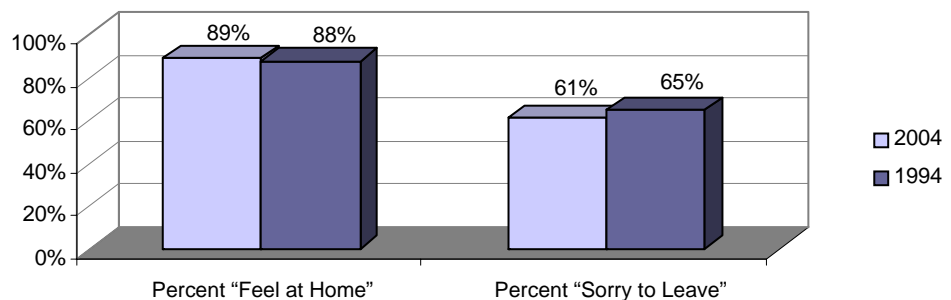


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Pacific Junction, 33 percent of residents in 2004 reported that the spirit of community participation is “good” or “very good.”

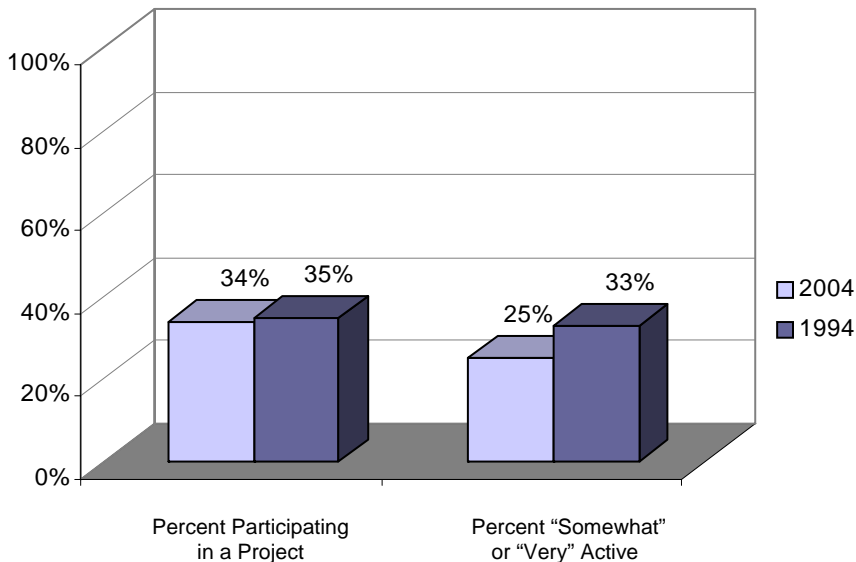


Figure 6: Community Involvement

Approximately one-third of residents in both years indicated that they had participated in a community improvement project (see Figure 6). In 2004, 25 percent of residents considered themselves to be “somewhat” or “very” active in community activities and events, compared to 33 percent in 1994. When asked to consider a variety of factors that limit their involvement in the community, the top three factors selected by residents of Pacific Junction were lack of time (54%), not being asked by others to participate (50%), and lack of interest (40%).

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 Pacific Junction over the past decade? Very little—results of this survey show a great deal of stability. Patronage patterns for church, recreation, shopping, and health care did not change—most resident leave Pacific Junction for those services—nor did evaluations of the quality of local services and facilities. Evaluations of the quality of government services remain fairly high, and in fact, ratings increased for emergency response, garbage collection, fire protection and the condition of the parks.

The social environment also changed very little. There were no changes to residents views of the friendliness, safety, supportiveness, tolerance, openness to new ideas, trusting nature, or appearance of Pacific Junction. Similarly, the extent to which people know each other in Pacific Junction is essentially the same as it was ten years ago. Pacific Junction residents remain attached to their community—most feel at home and would be sorry to leave. Finally, levels of community involvement did not change significantly over the past decade.

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

RDI

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