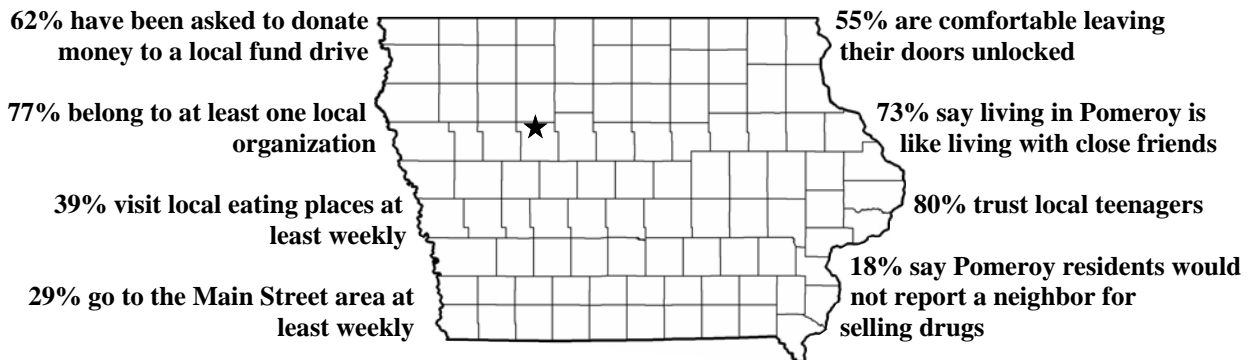


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN POMEROY

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 Pomeroy. 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, 111 Pomeroy residents responded to the survey, and 115 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Pomeroy residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN POMEROY IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

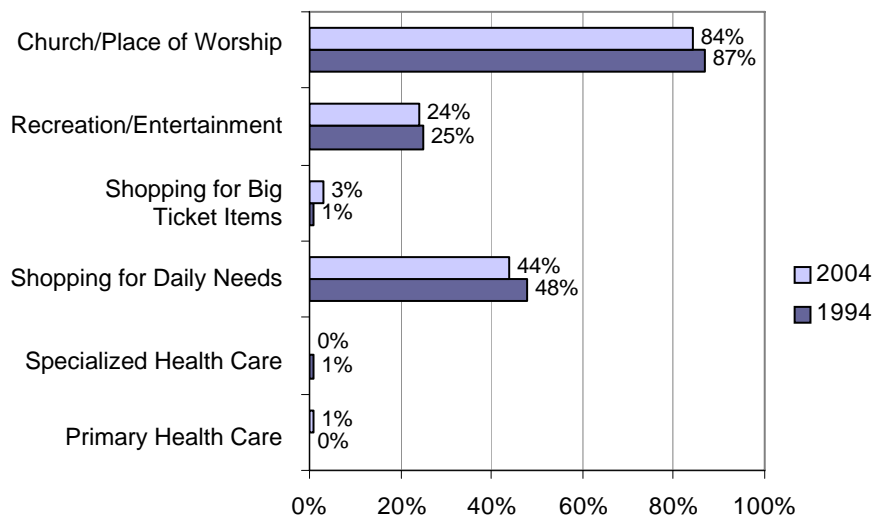


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey reveal that residents stay in town for some services and travel for others. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing various services in Pomeroy. Most residents reported that they stay in Pomeroy to attend church or a place of worship, while about one-

fourth stay for recreation and entertainment. Nearly half said that they shop for their daily needs in Pomeroy, while only 3 percent stayed to shop for "big ticket" items. Hardly any residents reported staying in Pomeroy to obtain either primary or specialized health care.

A Note on Interpretation: For Pomeroy, 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

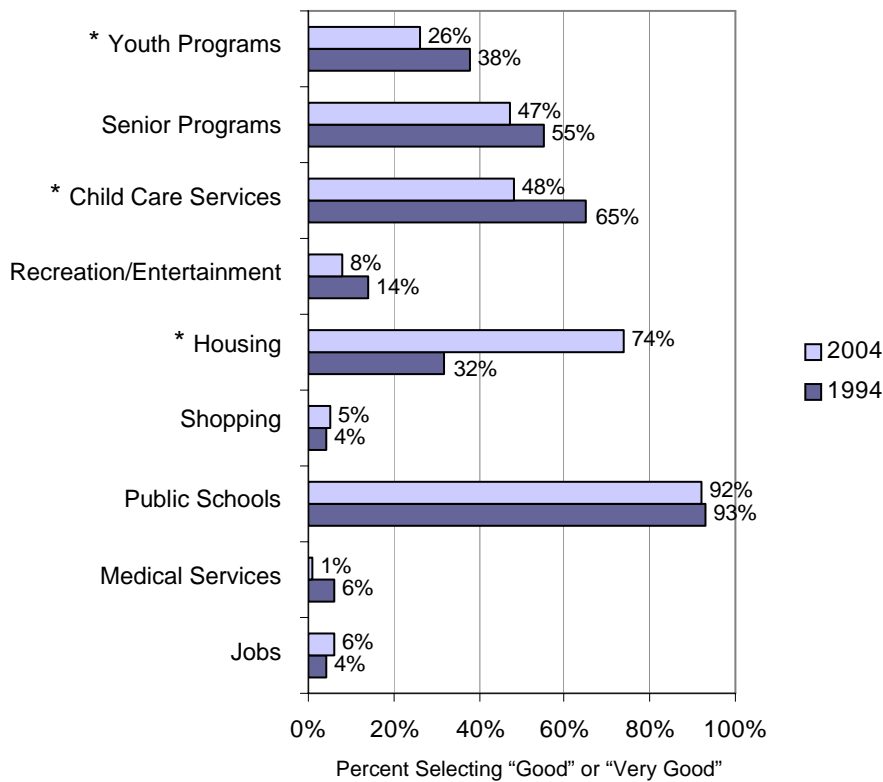


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. Nearly all residents rated the public schools as good or very good, while very few gave positive ratings to local recreation, shopping, medical services, and jobs. The percentage of positive ratings decreased significantly over the past decade for youth programs (from 38% to 26%) and child care services (from 65% to 48%). However, the percentage of favorable ratings increased significantly for housing, from 32 percent in 1994 to 74 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, Pomeroy residents were satisfied with their government services. Almost all residents rated emergency response and fire protection as good or very good, and over three-fourths gave favorable ratings to garbage collection in both years. The condition of the parks and streets and police protection received favorable ratings from over half of residents, while water was rated favorably by 46 percent in 2004. The percentage of positive ratings for the condition of the streets increased over the past ten years, but decreased for water and the condition of the parks.

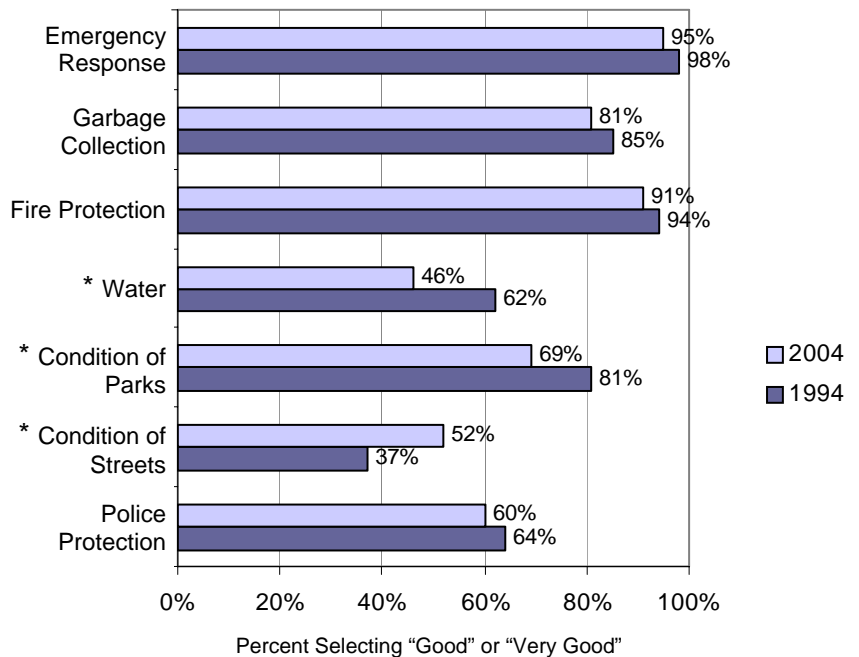


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

POMEROY'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.

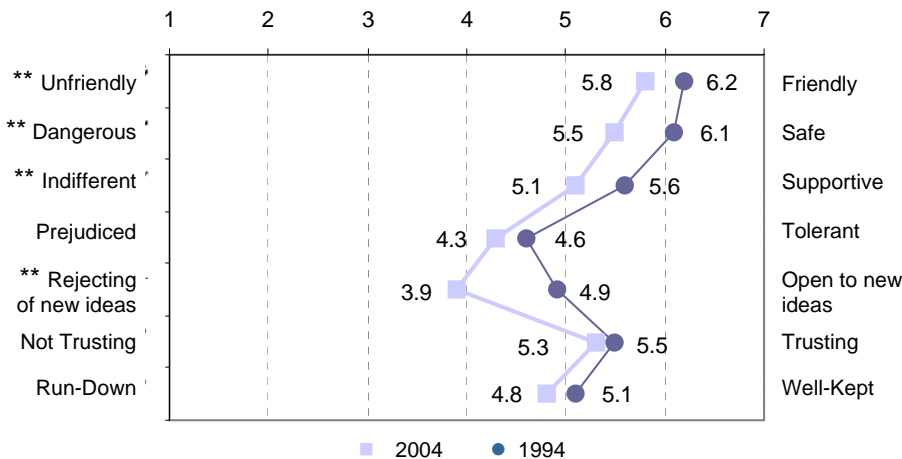


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

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 Pomeroy. The lowest ratings in both years were given to the extent to which Pomeroy is tolerant and open to new ideas. Significant changes over the past decade are that residents view Pomeroy as less friendly, less safe, less supportive, and less open to new ideas than it was in 1994. Ratings for tolerance, trust, and the appearance of Pomeroy did not change significantly.

** 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, 77 percent of residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Pomeroy, compared to 83 percent in 1994. Similarly, 65 percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in town, compared to 68 percent in 1994. As for relatives, 18 percent of residents in 2004 said that half or more of their adult relatives live in Pomeroy, down significantly from 35 percent in 1994.

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Pomeroy residents feel at home in their community? When asked this question in 2004, most said that they did (see Figure 5). Furthermore, 80 percent of residents said that they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away from Pomeroy. These responses are similar to those reported in 1994, indicating that most Pomeroy residents still feel attached to their community.

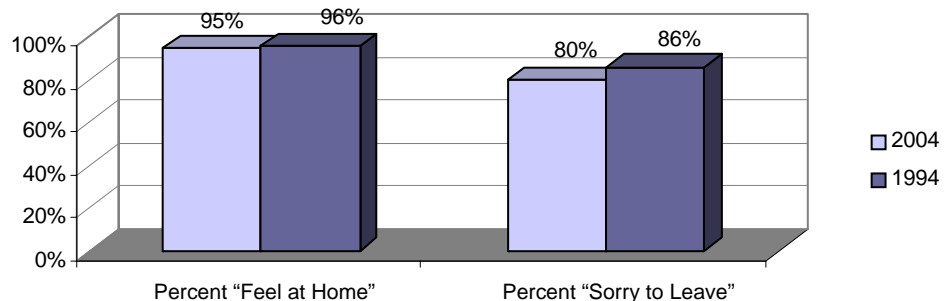


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Pomeroy, 74 percent of residents reported in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is “good” or “very good.” Over half of residents in both years indicated that they had participated in a community improvement project in the years prior to each survey (see Figure 6). In 2004, 47 percent of residents considered themselves to be “somewhat” or “very” active in community activities and events, compared to 55 percent in 1994.

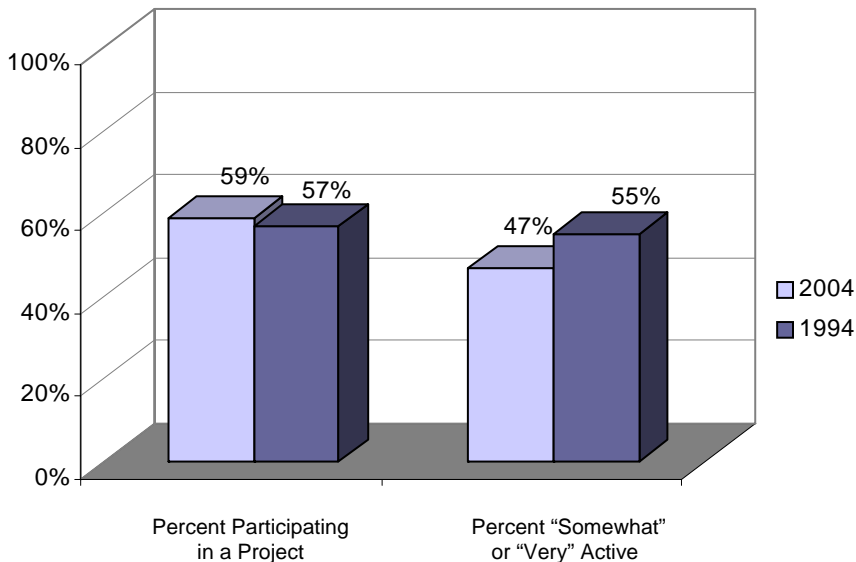


Figure 6: Community Involvement

When asked to consider a variety of factors that limit their involvement in the community, the top three factors selected by Pomeroy residents were lack of time (51%), not being asked by others to participate (33%), and not knowing how to become involved (27%).

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 Pomeroy over the past decade? Evaluations of the quality of youth programs and child care services decreased significantly, while ratings for housing increased. Evaluations of the quality of local government services remain high—in fact, ratings increased significantly for the quality of the condition of the streets. However, evaluations of quality decreased for water services and the condition of the parks.

The social environment has changed somewhat. Residents view Pomeroy as less friendly, less safe, less supportive, and less open to new ideas than it was ten years ago. Residents also said that fewer of their relatives and in-laws live in Pomeroy. Pomeroy residents remain attached to their community—that is, most feel at home and would be sorry to leave. Finally, levels of community involvement did not change significantly over the past decade. Community involvement is still important to Pomeroy residents as over half report participating in local projects, 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 Pomeroy’s future. **We wish to thank the Pomeroy residents who participated in the 1994 and 2004 studies for providing the information that made this report possible.**

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	RDI-204 — This report was prepared through the Rural Development Initiative Project, Iowa State University and funded by the National Research Initiative, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Agreement No. 2003-35401-13828.