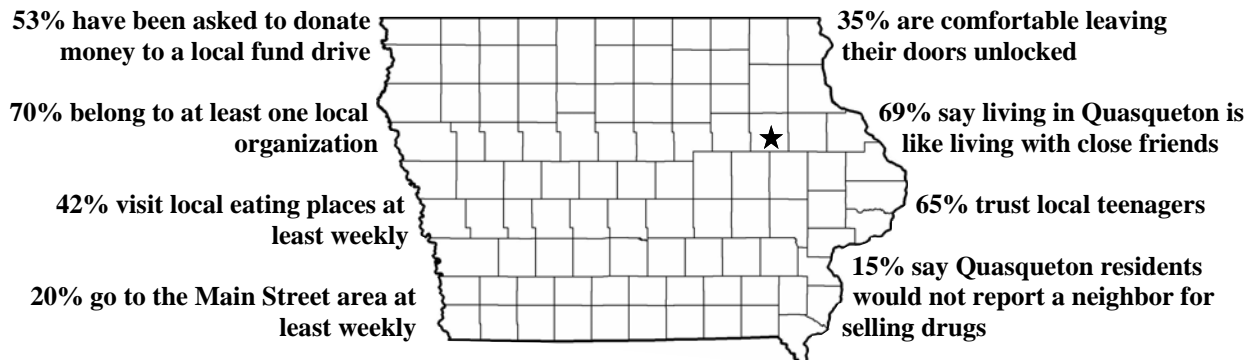


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN QUASQUETON

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 Quasqueton. 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 Quasqueton residents responded to the survey, and 112 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Quasqueton residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN QUASQUETON IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

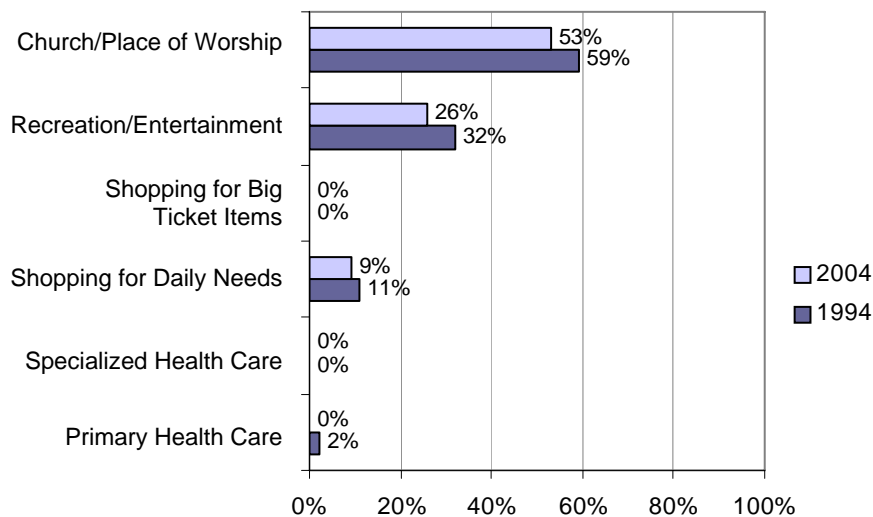


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that residents of Quasqueton followed this pattern for many services. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing various services in Quasqueton. Very few residents reported utilizing local health care or shopping at local merchants in 1994 and 2004. About

one-fourth reported remaining in Quasqueton for recreation and entertainment in 2004, essentially unchanged from 1994. Slightly more than half of residents stayed to attend church or place of worship in both survey years. No significant changes were noted in patronage patterns in Quasqueton between 1994 and 2004.

A Note on Interpretation: For Quasqueton, 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

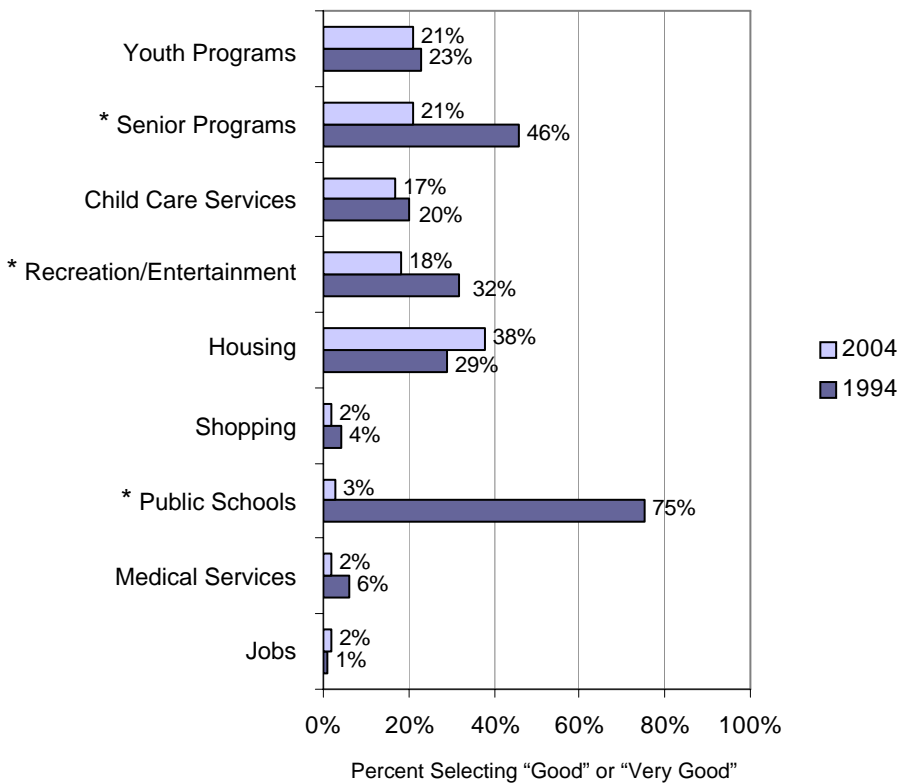


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. Shopping, medical services, and jobs received the lowest ratings in both survey years, with just 2 percent giving them favorable ratings in 2004. About one-fifth of Quasqueton residents rated senior programs and recreation/entertainment favorably in 2004, down significantly from 46 percent and 32 percent respectively. The most notable change in ratings was for the public schools. While in 1994, three-fourths of residents gave positive ratings to the public schools, just three percent gave similar positive ratings 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. In general, Quasqueton residents reported being satisfied with most local government services. A large majority of residents rated emergency response, garbage collection, fire protection, and condition of parks favorably in 1994 and 2004. Water received positive ratings from 17 percent of residents and police protection was rated as good or very good by less than one-third in both years. Compared to 1994, there was a significant increase in the positive ratings for the condition of streets.

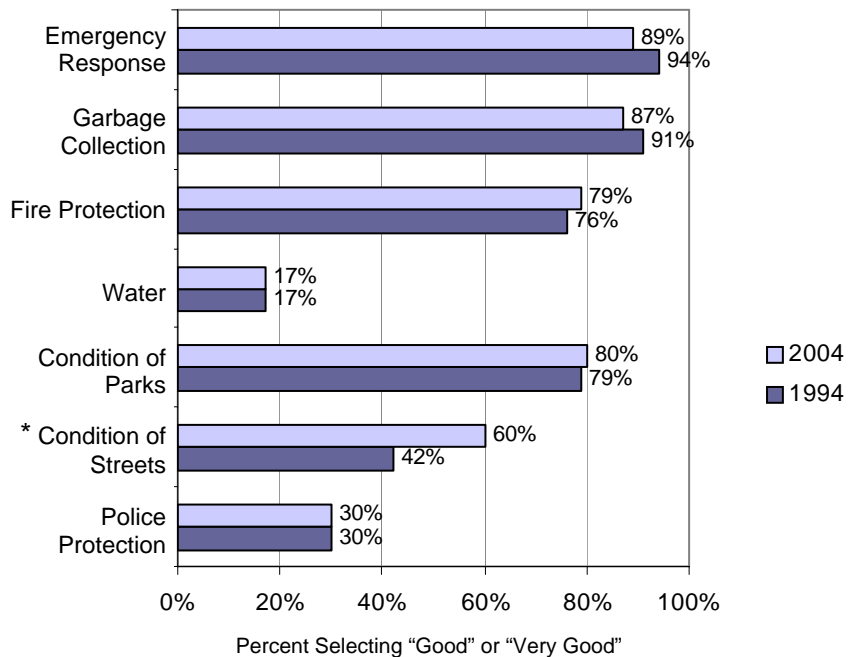


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

QUASQUETON'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.

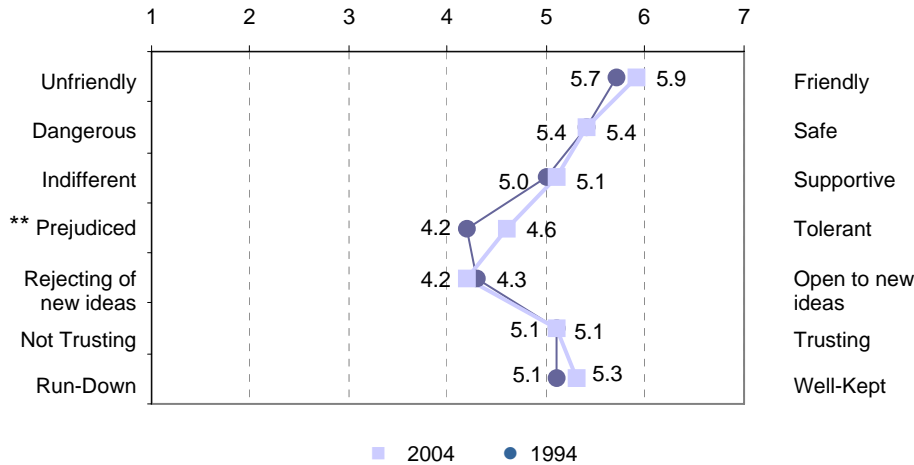


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

** 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.

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 and again in 2004, residents assigned the highest ratings to the friendliness and safety of Quasqueton. The lowest ratings in both years were assigned to the extent to which the town is tolerant and open to new ideas. The findings indicate residents viewed Quasqueton as more tolerant in 2004 compared to 1994. No other significant changes in the assessments of these qualities were noted over the past decade.

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, 66 percent of residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Quasqueton, compared to 71 percent in 1994. Similarly, 56 percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in Quasqueton, compared to 58 percent in 1994. Twenty-six percent of residents in 2004 and 30 percent in 1994 said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in Quasqueton. (Note: These differences are not greater than the margin of error.)

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Quasqueton residents feel at home in their community? When asked this question in 2004, 96 percent said that they do (see Figure 5). Furthermore, 83 percent said they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away from Quasqueton.

These responses are similar to those reported in 1994, and indicate that most residents feel attached to their community.

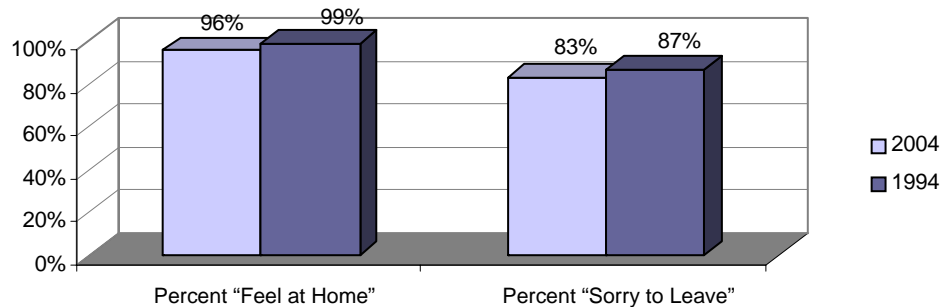


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Quasqueton, 64 percent of residents indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation is “good” or “very good.” At the same time, just about half of residents reported participating in a local improvement project in the years prior to the surveys (see Figure 6). Forty-five percent described themselves as somewhat or very active in community activities and events. This is down significantly from 57 percent who considered themselves to be active in 1994.

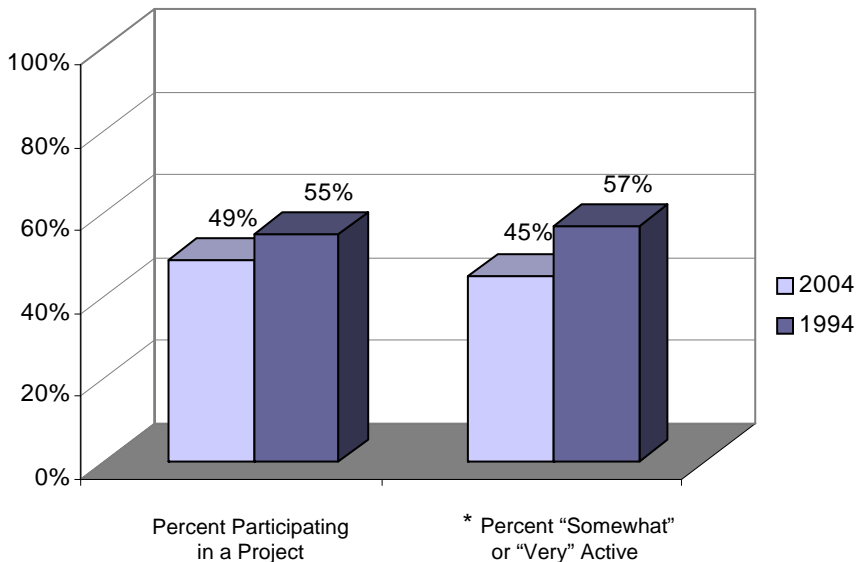


Figure 6: Community Involvement

When asked to consider a variety of factors that served to limit their involvement in the community, the top three factors mentioned by Quasqueton residents were lack of time (55%), not being asked by others to volunteer (36%), and that there were no projects that needed volunteers (23%).

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 Quasqueton over the past decade? Residents’ ratings of senior programs, recreation and entertainment, and public schools all decreased significantly since 1994. However, the evaluations of the condition of streets in Quasqueton increased, and residents continue to approve of most local government services.

The social environment has changed somewhat. Residents still describe Quasqueton as a safe and friendly community, and view it as more tolerant than it was ten years ago. Quasqueton residents remain attached to their community—that is, a majority feel at home in their community and would be sorry to leave. While participation rates have not changed since 1994, the majority of residents in 2004 rated the spirit of community participation as good or very good. Still, the percentage of residents who consider themselves to be active in the community decreased significantly. Also, it is interesting to note that one of the top reasons people gave for not participating in community projects was not being asked by others to volunteer.

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

RDI

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