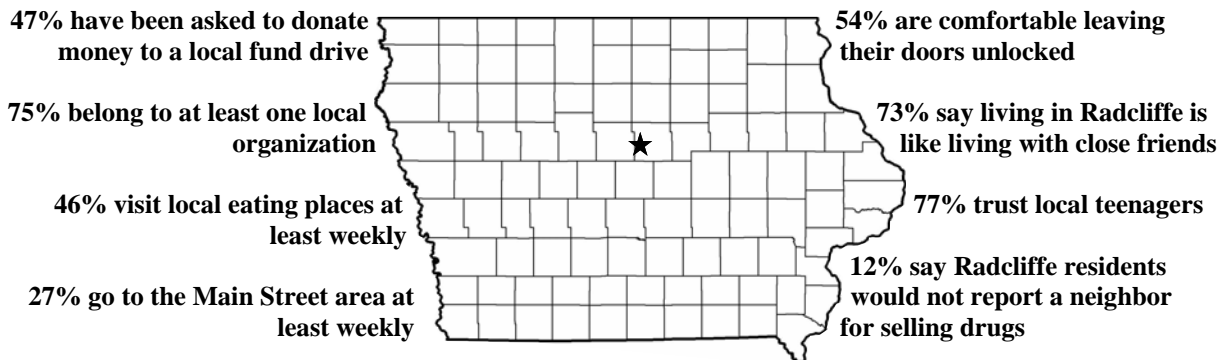


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN RADCLIFFE

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 Radcliffe. 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, 118 Radcliffe residents responded to the survey, and 100 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Radcliffe residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN RADCLIFFE IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

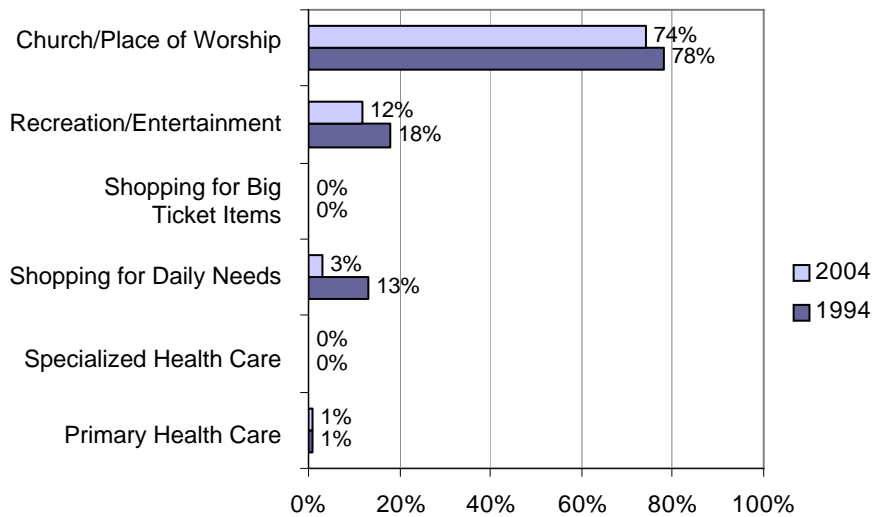


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that Radcliffe residents followed this pattern in 1994 and 2004. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing services of various types in Radcliffe. No significant changes were noted to have occurred between 1994 and 2004. For most shopping, healthcare,

and recreation needs, residents went out of town. However, about three-fourths of residents in both survey years reported remaining in Radcliffe to attend their church or place of worship. Overall though, nearly everyone went out of town for all services except attending church or place of worship.

A Note on Interpretation: For Radcliffe, 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

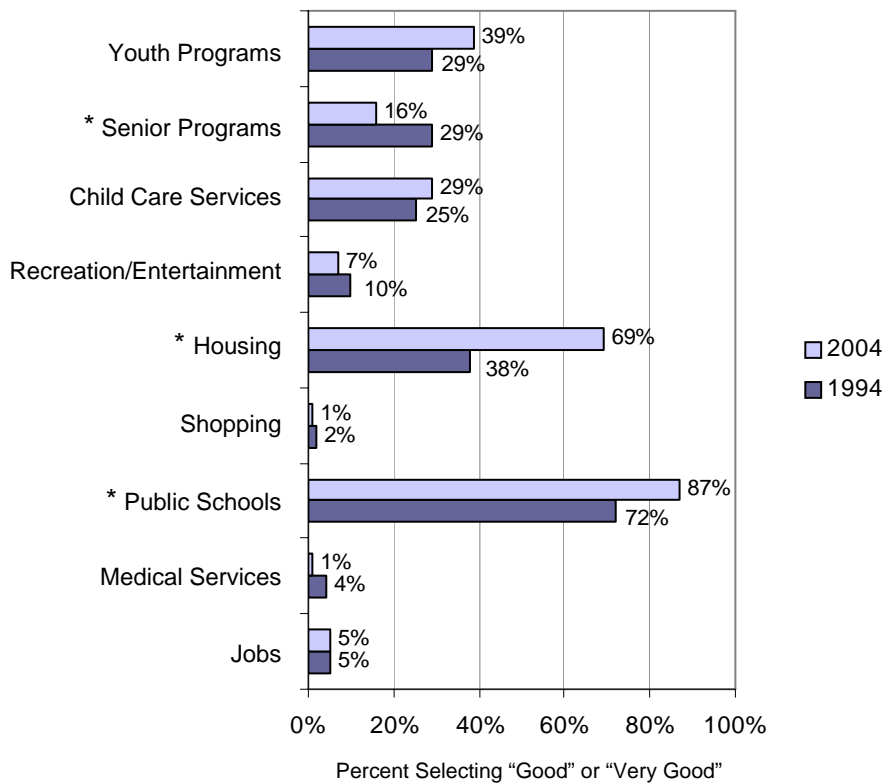


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. In both years, recreation and entertainment, shopping, medical services, and jobs each received positive ratings from a small proportion of residents. In 2004, youth programs were given favorable ratings from 39 percent of residents and child care services were rated as good or very good by 29 percent. Positive ratings for senior programs decreased significantly since 1994. However, public schools in Radcliffe were rated favorably by 87 percent of residents, a significant increase from 72 percent in 1994. Positive ratings for housing also increased over the decade.

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, Radcliffe residents reported being satisfied with local government services. Almost all residents rated emergency response, garbage collection, and fire protection favorably in both periods. Water and the condition of parks also received positive ratings from the majority of residents. Police protection was given the least amount of positive ratings, with less than one-third of residents selecting good or very good. Condition of streets was rated significantly higher in 2004 with 57 percent of residents rating it favorably, up from 34 percent.

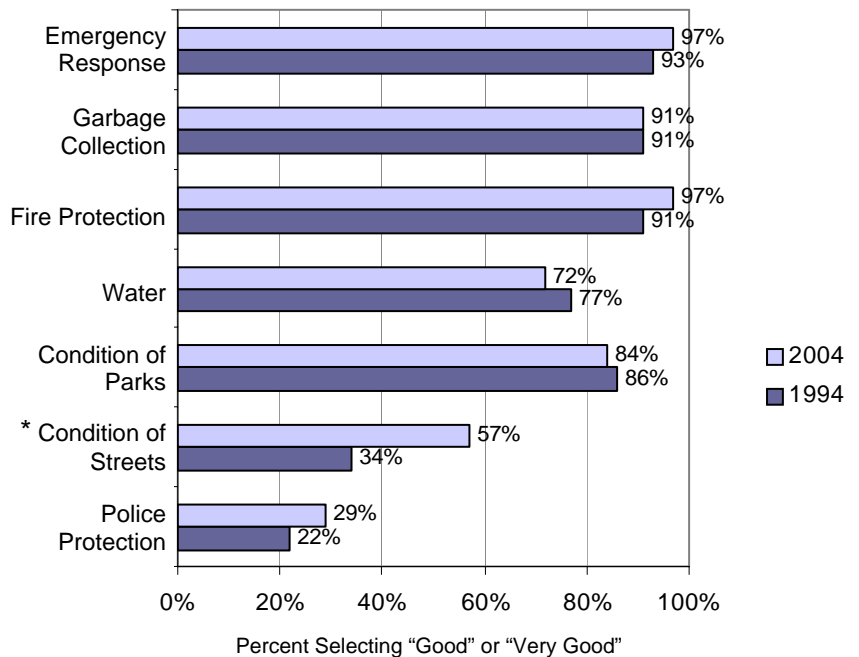


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

RADCLIFFE'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.

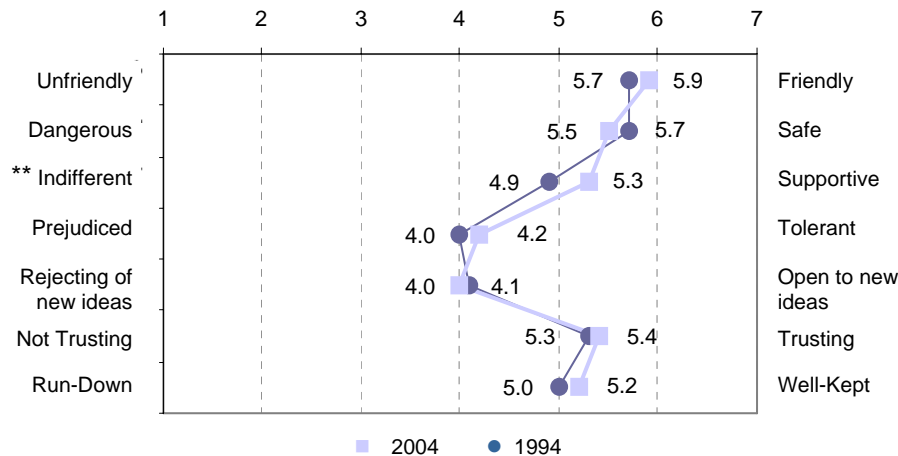


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

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 and again in 2004, residents assigned the highest ratings to the friendliness and safety of Radcliffe. The lowest ratings in both survey years were assigned to the extent to which the town is tolerant and open to new ideas. The findings indicate that Radcliffe was rated as more supportive in 2004 than in 1994. The ratings for all other qualities stayed nearly the same over the past decade.

** 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, 69 percent of residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Radcliffe, compared to 72 percent in 1994. Similarly, 56 percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in Radcliffe, compared to 65 percent in 1994. Nineteen percent of residents in 2004 and 24 percent in 1994 said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in Radcliffe. (Note: These differences are not greater than the margin of error.)

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Radcliffe residents feel at home in their community? The vast majority of residents reported that they feel at home in Radcliffe in both 1994 and 2004 (see Figure 5). Furthermore, about eight in ten residents indicated that they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away from Radcliffe. Feelings of attachment to Radcliffe have not changed in the last decade.

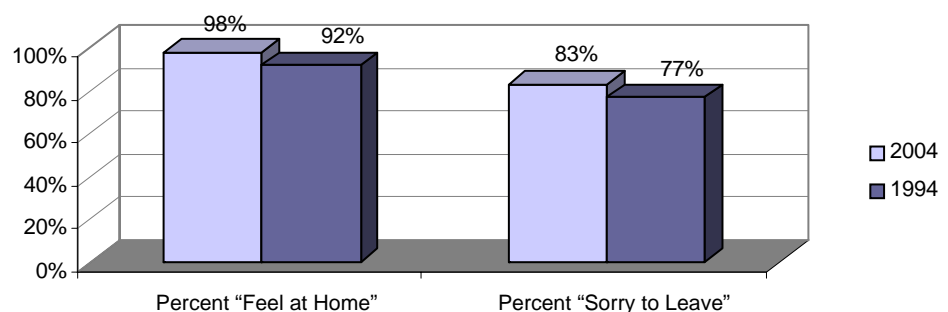


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Radcliffe, 83 percent of the 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 community improvement project in the year prior to the survey and slightly less than half described themselves as “somewhat” or “very” active in local community activities and events (see Figure 6). This is essentially unchanged from 1994

when 48 percent reported participating in a project and 47 percent rated themselves active in the community. When asked to consider a variety of factors that limit their involvement in the community, the top three factors mentioned by Radcliffe residents were lack of time (57%), not being asked to volunteer (36%), and not knowing how to get involved (29%).

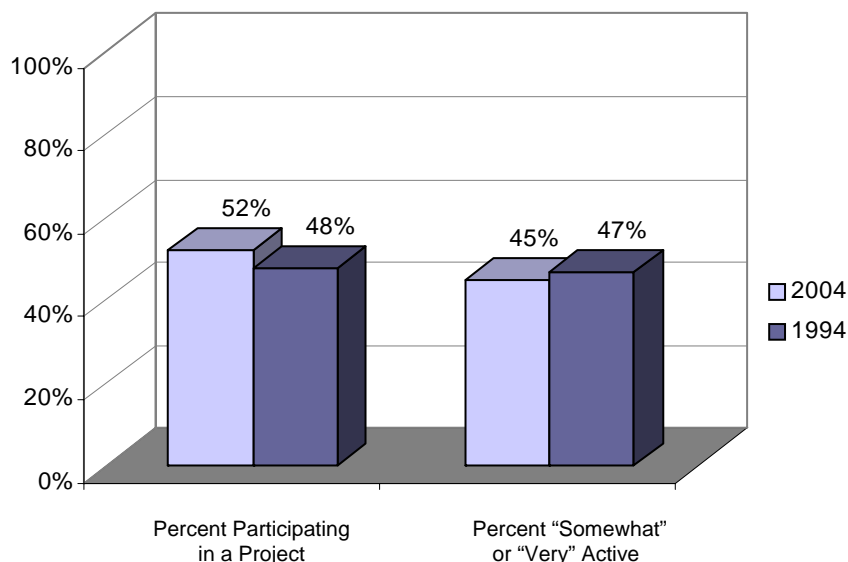


Figure 6: Community Involvement

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 Radcliffe over the past decade? Findings revealed no changes among local patronage patterns. The evaluations of the quality of senior programs have declined over the past decade, while favorable evaluations of housing and public schools have increased. Ratings for condition of the streets also improved significantly and residents continue to approve of most local governmental services.

The social environment has changed very little. Residents still describe Radcliffe as a safe, friendly, trusting, and well-kept community, and view it as more supportive than it was ten years ago. Radcliffe 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 vast majority of residents in 2004 rated the spirit of community participation as good or very good. Also, it is interesting to note that two of the top reasons for not participating in community projects was not being asked and not knowing how to become involved.

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

RDI

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