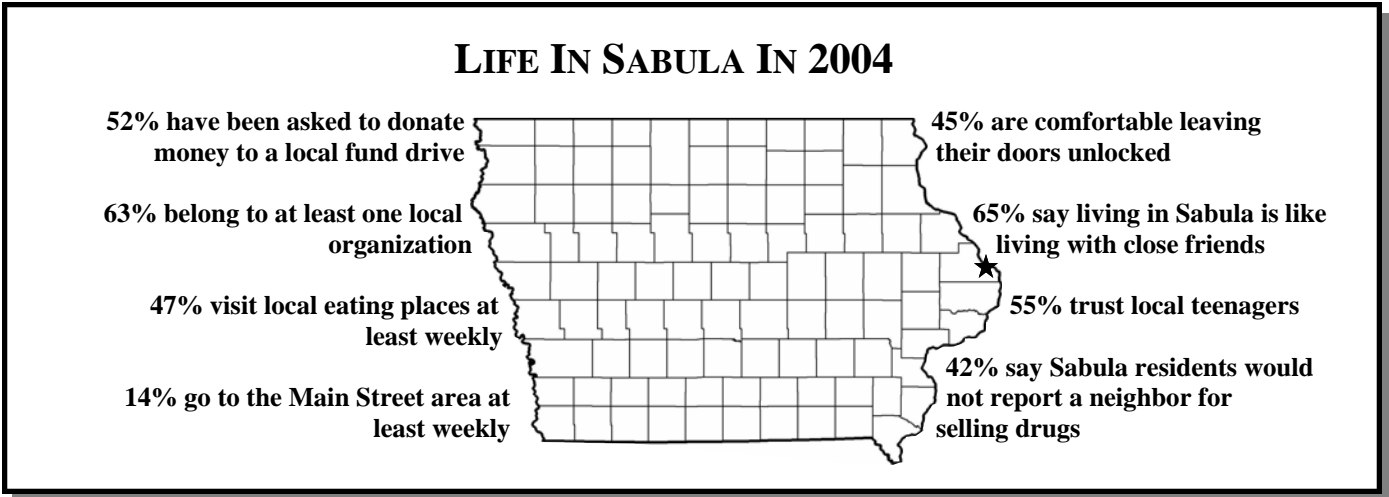


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN SABULA

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



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

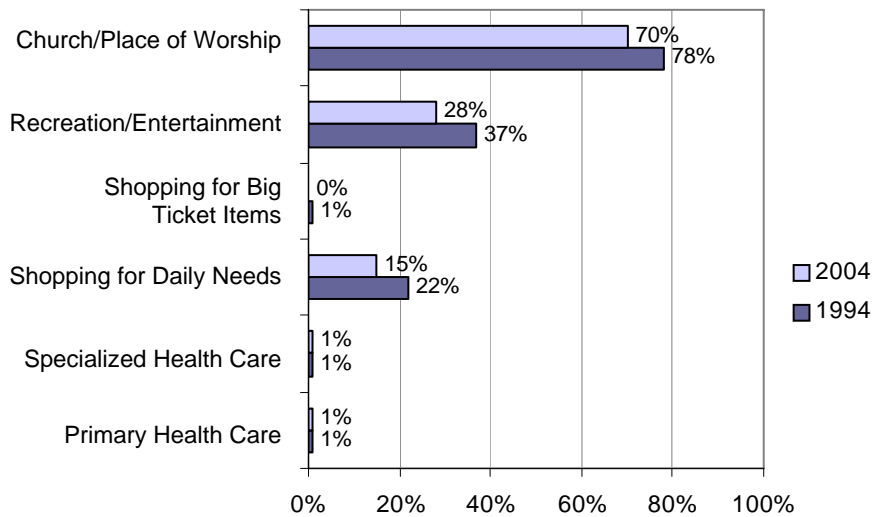


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that Sabula residents followed this pattern in 1994 and 2004. Figure 1 shows the percent of residents who reported patronizing services of various types in Sabula. Almost everyone went out of town for all healthcare services in both years. While no residents reported shopping in Sabula

for big ticket items in 2004, 15 percent shopped locally for their daily needs and about one-third of residents remained in Sabula for their recreation and entertainment. Also, a majority of residents in both 1994 and 2004 reported attending their church or place of worship in Sabula.

A Note on Interpretation: For Sabula, 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

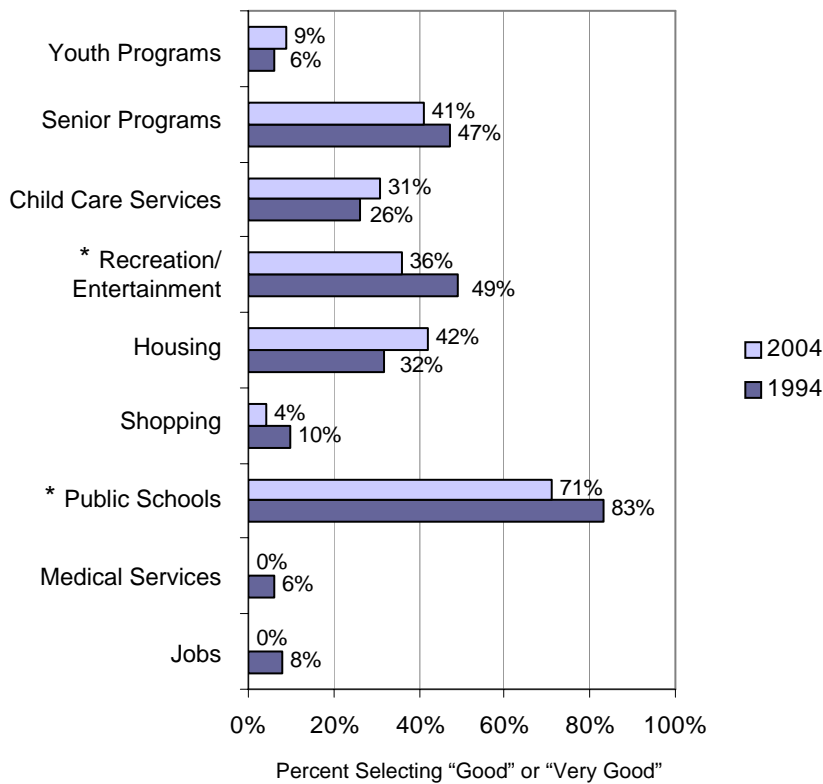


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. Medical services and jobs received the lowest ratings from residents, and shopping and youth programs closely followed with less than one of ten residents rating them as good or very good. Housing and senior programs each received positive ratings from less than half of residents in both survey years. About half of residents assigned positive ratings to recreation and entertainment in 1994, which decreased to about one-third in 2004. The percentage of residents assigning positive ratings to public schools also decreased since 1994.

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, Sabula residents reported being satisfied with many of their government services. A large majority of residents were pleased with emergency response, garbage collection, and fire protection, and well over half were also pleased with water and condition of parks. Nearly half of residents gave positive ratings to condition of streets and police protection in both years. There were significant decreases in the percentages of positive ratings given to the condition of parks and police protection services over the decade.

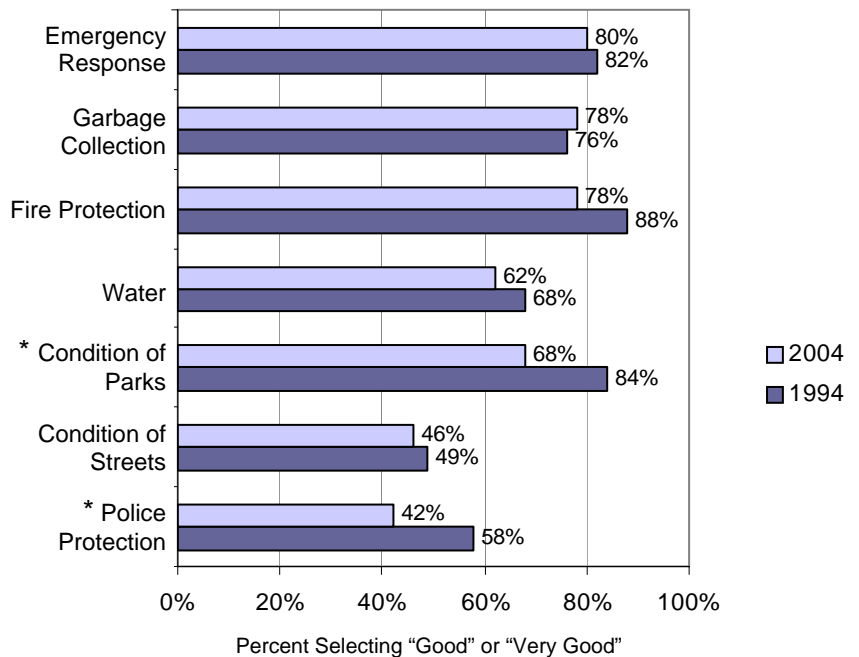


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

SABULA'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.

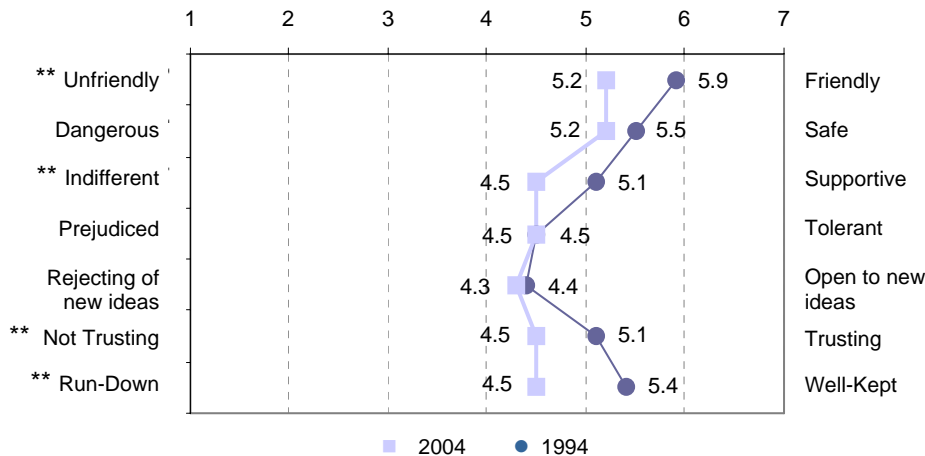


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

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 Sabula. The lowest ratings in both years were given to the extent to which Sabula is open to new ideas. Significant changes over the decade are noted in four of the qualities. Residents' ratings show that they view Sabula as less friendly, less supportive, less trusting, and less well-kept when compared to 1994 ratings.

** 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, 70 percent of residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Sabula, compared to 73 percent in 1994. Similarly, 50 percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in Sabula, compared to 60 percent in 1994. Twenty-five percent of residents in 2004 and 39 percent in 1994 said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in Sabula. (Note: These differences are not greater than the margin of error.)

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Sabula residents feel at home in their community? When asked this question, almost all residents reported that they feel at home in Sabula in both 1994 and 2004 (see Figure 5). However, 71 percent indicated that they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away from Sabula, a significant decrease from the 89 percent who expressed this sentiment in 1994.

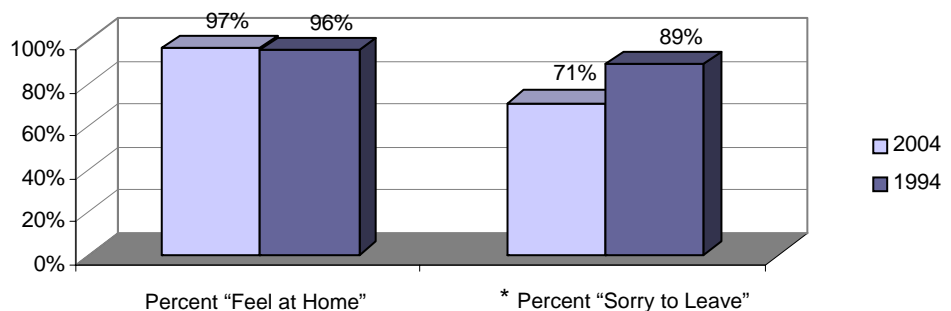


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Sabula, 52 percent of residents indicated in 2004 that the spirit of participation is “good” or “very good.” At the same time, less than half of residents in 2004, or 47 percent, reported participating in a community improvement project in the year prior to the survey (see Figure 6). Still, this percentage increased significantly from the 35 percent reporting involvement in 1994. The percentage of respondents who described themselves as active in local community activities remained about the same with 35 percent in 1994 and 39 percent in 2004. When respondents were asked to consider the factors that limit their involvement in community improvement projects, the top three factors mentioned were lack of time (48%), not being asked by others to volunteer (41%), and lack of interest in participating (30%).

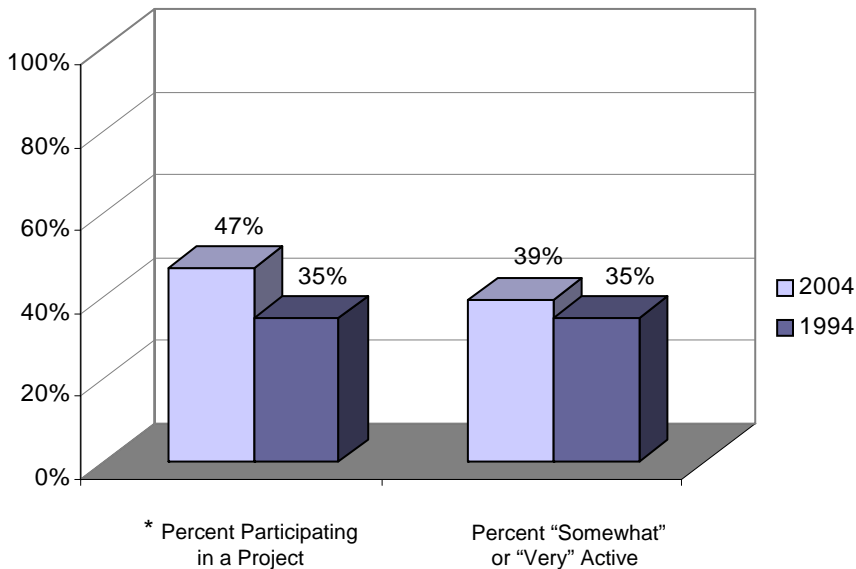


Figure 6: Community Involvement

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 Sabula over the past decade? Findings revealed no changes among local patronage patterns. The evaluations of the quality of public schools and recreation and entertainment decreased since 1994. In 2004, less favorable ratings were also given to police protection services and the condition of parks. Ratings for other services in Sabula remain unchanged.

The social environment has changed somewhat. Sabula residents view their town as less friendly, less supportive, less trusting, and less well-kept than it was ten years ago. Sabula residents remain attached to their community—that is, most feel at home in the community and would be sorry to leave if they had to move away. However, the percentage of those who would be sorry to leave decreased since 1994. Finally, levels of participation in community projects have increased significantly, while the percentage of residents describing themselves as active remained unchanged. Also, it is interesting to note that one of the top reasons people gave for not participating in community projects was not being asked. This response suggests a potential strategy for further increasing community participation in the future.

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

RDI

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