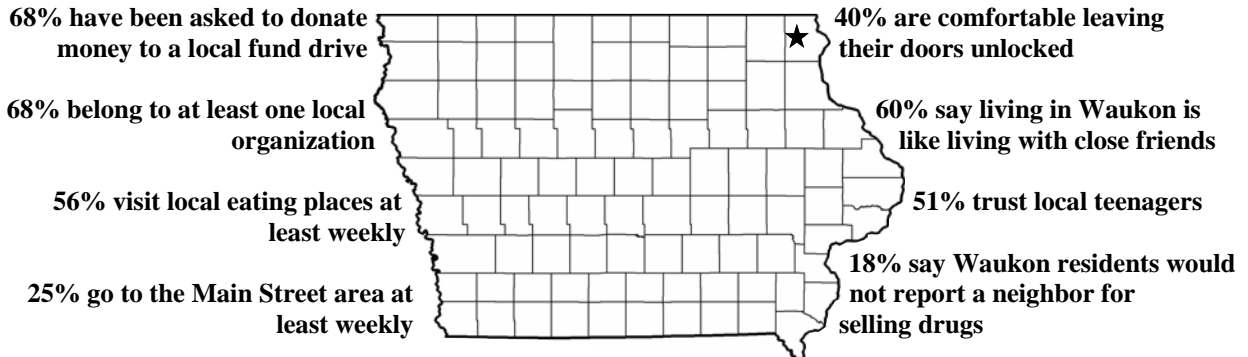


A DECADE OF CHANGE IN WAUKON

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 Waukon. 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, 109 Waukon residents responded to the survey, and 101 responded in 2004. This report is a summary of the results, including how the opinions of Waukon residents have changed over the past decade.

LIFE IN WAUKON IN 2004



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

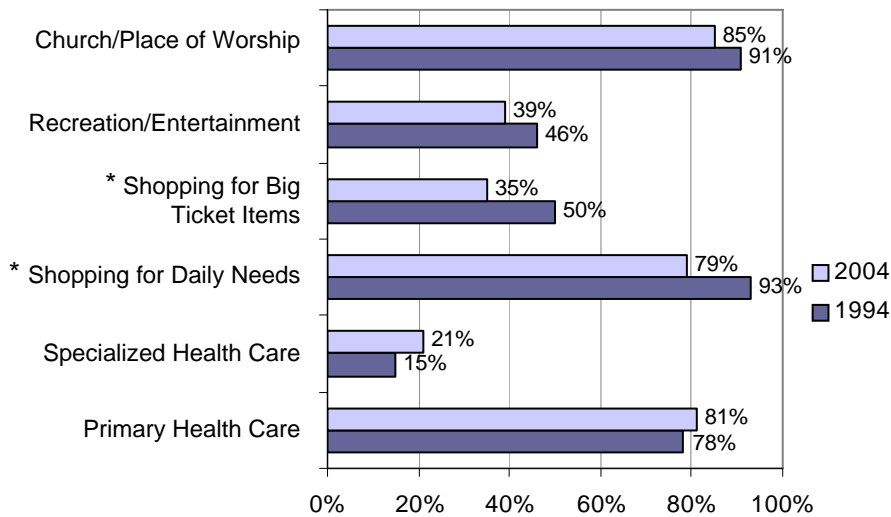


Figure 1: Percent Selecting "Local"

For a variety of reasons, many residents of Iowa's smaller towns rely on neighboring cities for services. Results from this survey suggest that Waukon residents stay in town for some services, but travel for others. Figure 1 shows the percentage of residents who reported patronizing various services in Waukon. While almost nine of ten residents remained in town to attend church or place of worship, less than half stayed in Waukon for recreation and

entertainment. Similarly, while four-fifths received primary health care services locally, less than about one-fifth remained in town for specialized health care. The percentage of residents shopping for daily needs in Waukon decreased significantly from 93 percent in 1994 to 79 percent in 2004. The percentage of residents shopping locally for big ticket items also decreased significantly.

A Note on Interpretation: For Waukon, 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

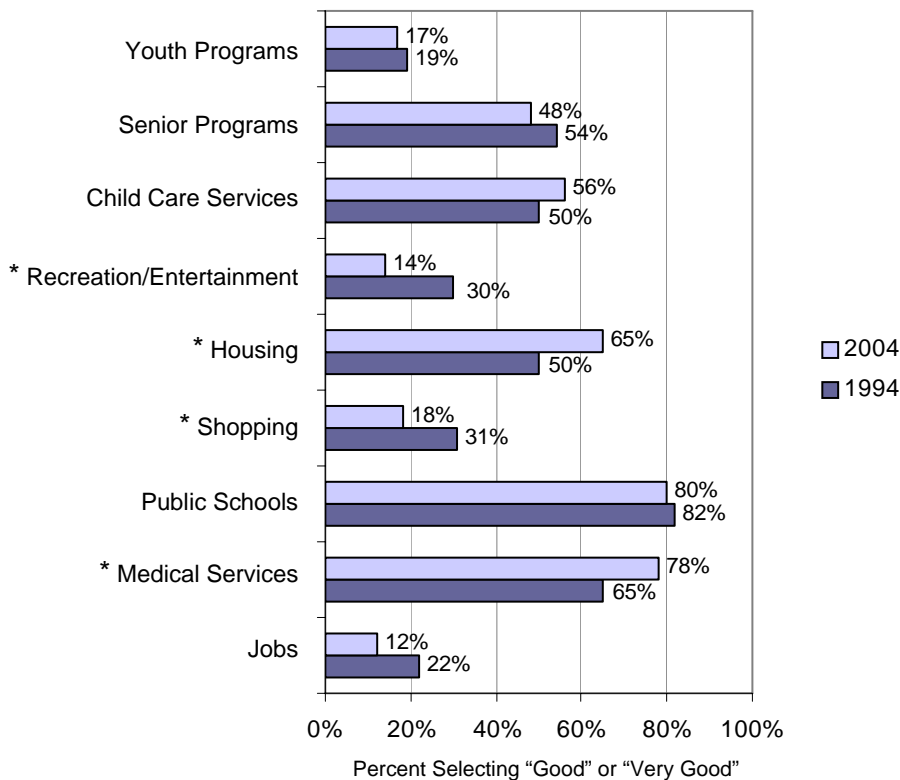


Figure 2: Ratings of Local Services and Facilities

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. Public schools, medical services, and housing were given the most favorable ratings in 2004. About half of residents rated senior programs and child care services favorably in 2004, and less than one in five gave positive ratings to youth programs, recreation/entertainment, shopping, and jobs. The percentage of residents assigning positive ratings to medical services and housing increased significantly from 1994 to 2004. However, recreation/entertainment and shopping in Waukon were given a lesser percentage of favorable ratings by residents in 2004 compared to 1994 ratings.

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, Waukon residents were satisfied with their government services. Almost all residents rated fire protection favorably, and a large majority also gave positive ratings to emergency response, condition of parks, and garbage collection in both years. Police protection services received favorable ratings from over half of residents. Compared to 1994, the percentage of favorable ratings given by residents in 2004 increased significantly for water and the condition of streets in Waukon.

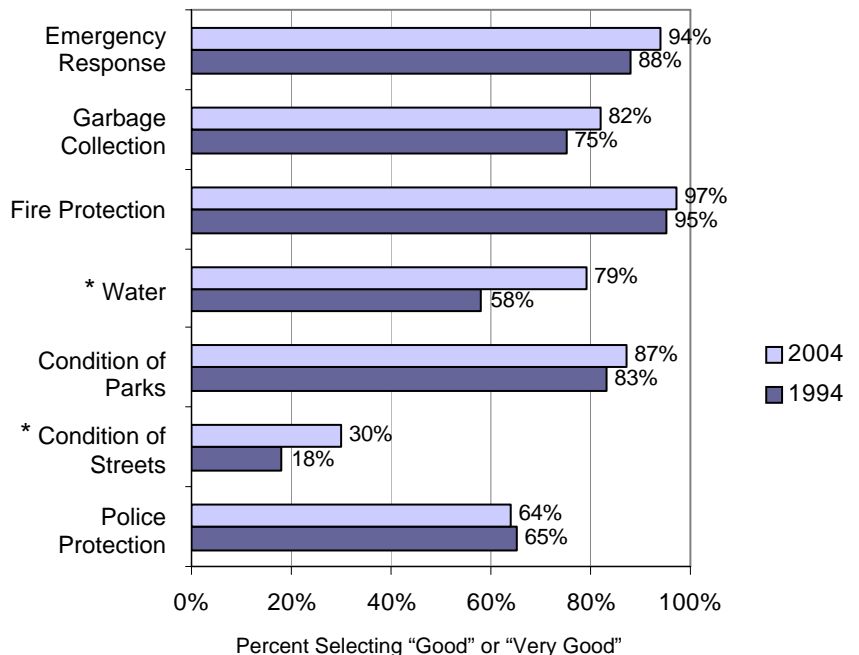


Figure 3: Ratings of Local Government Services

WAUKON'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.

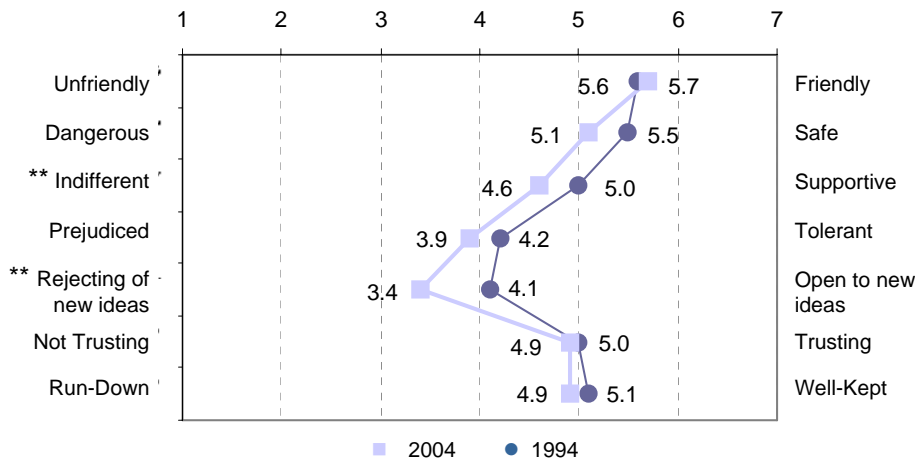


Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities on a 1 to 7 Scale

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 of Waukon. The lowest ratings in both years were assigned to the extent to which Waukon is tolerant and open to new ideas. Significant changes over the past decade are that residents view the community as less supportive and less open to new ideas.

** 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 1994 and 2004, 51 percent of residents reported knowing the names of half or more of the people in Waukon. Additionally, 64 percent indicated that half or more of their friends live in Waukon, compared to 72 percent in 1994. Thirty-nine percent of residents in both years said that half or more of their adult relatives and in-laws live in Waukon. (Note: These differences are not greater than the margin of error.)

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Do Waukon residents feel at home in their community? When asked this question, almost all residents in both years reported that they do feel at home in Waukon (see Figure 5). Furthermore, a majority indicated that they would be sorry to leave if they had to move away from the community. These responses indicate that most Waukon residents feel attached to their community.

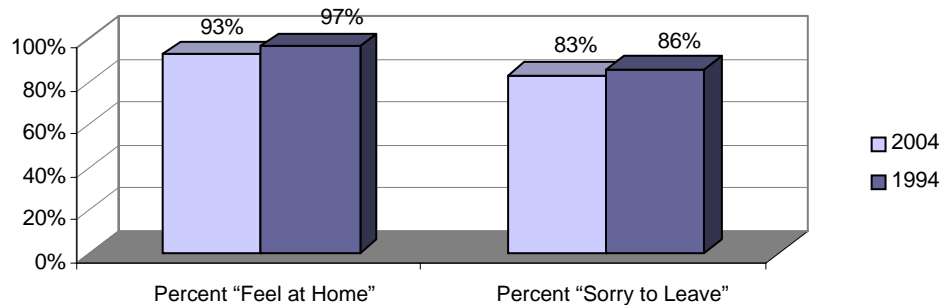


Figure 5: Community Attachment

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Citizens working together to accomplish local goals is an important feature of small towns. For Waukon, 63 percent of the residents indicated in 2004 that the spirit of community participation in

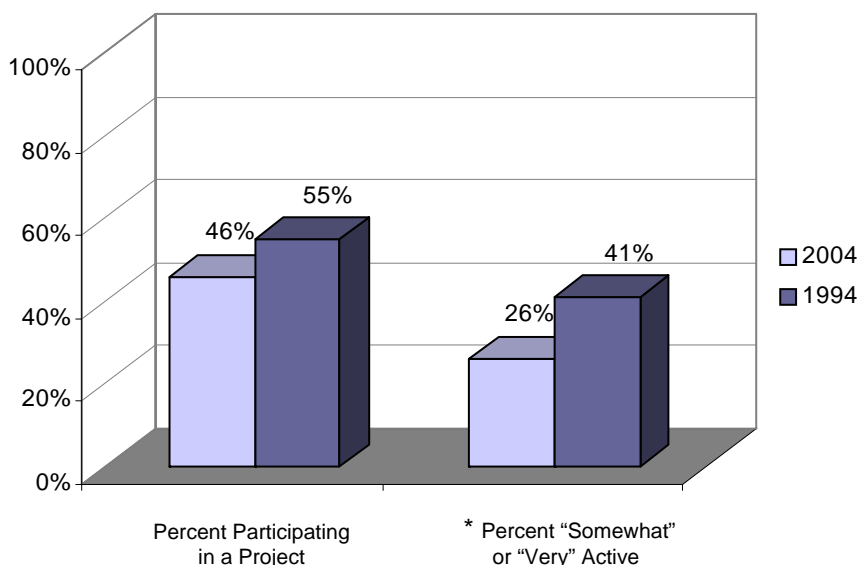


Figure 6: Community Involvement

Waukon is “good” or “very good.” At the same time, in 2004, 46 percent reported participating in a local community improvement project in the year prior to the survey, compared to 55 percent in 1994. About one-fourth of residents considered themselves to be “somewhat” or “very” active in community activities and events, down significantly from 41 percent describing themselves as active in 1994. When asked to consider a variety of factors that served to limit their involvement in the community, the top three factors mentioned by residents were lack of time (68%), not being asked by others to volunteer (47%), and not knowing how to become involved (34%).

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 Waukon over the past decade? Residents are shopping for daily needs and big ticket items outside of Waukon more now than ten years ago. The evaluations of the quality of recreation and entertainment and shopping decreased, while ratings increased for local housing and medical services. The evaluations of local government services remain high, and there was an increase in positive ratings for water and the condition of streets in Waukon.

The social environment has changed somewhat. Waukon residents still describe their town as friendly, but view it as less supportive and less open to new ideas than it was ten years ago. Waukon 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. Finally, while levels of participation in the community have not changed, the percentage of residents who consider themselves to be active in the community decreased significantly. It is interesting to note that two of the top three reasons people gave for not being involved in local projects were that no one had asked them and that they didn’t know how to get involved.

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

RDI

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