

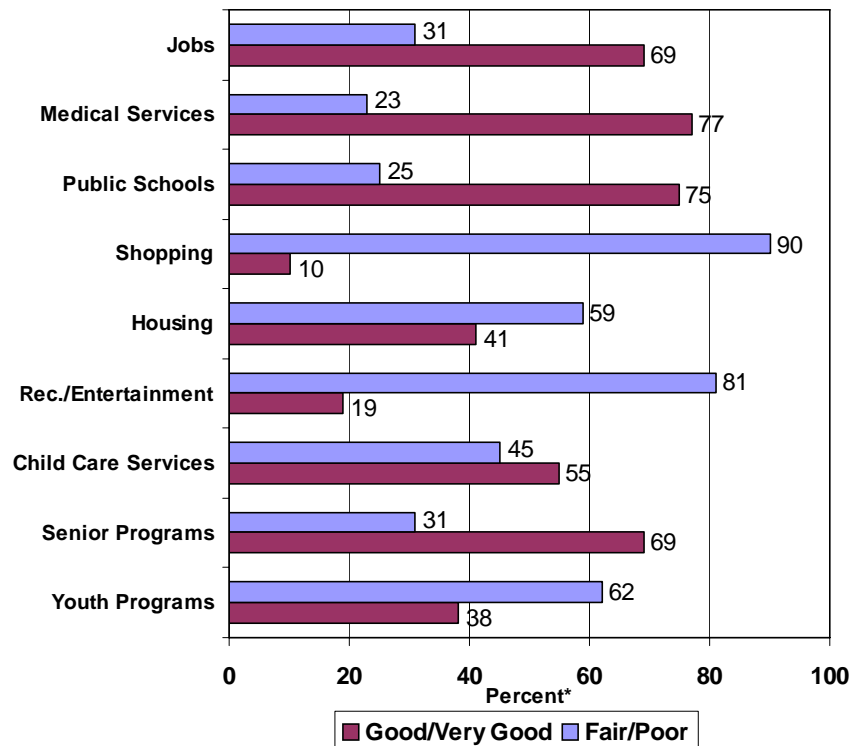
RESIDENTS OF NEWTON SPEAK OUT

During June 1997, you were one of 4,750 households asked to participate in a statewide survey of Iowa urban residents. The purpose of this survey was to identify the problems and opportunities facing the state's urban communities. The households that were asked to take part in the study were randomly selected from telephone directories of 15 cities in Iowa. Selection of cities was also random where 15 cities were selected from Iowa's 30 cities having at least 10,000 residents. Of the 4,750 questionnaires mailed out, 2,901 (or 61%) were completed and returned. Below are highlights of the results as reported by Newton's 166 survey participants.



RATING SERVICES AND FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN NEWTON

Nine local services and facilities were listed on the questionnaire, along with the instructions to rate each as "very good," "good," "fair," or "poor." Of the 166 respondents from Newton, over half gave public schools, child care services, jobs, senior programs, and medical services a rating of either "good" or "very good." On the contrary, shopping, housing, youth programs, and recreation and entertainment were rated either "fair" or "poor" by a majority of the Newton respondents.

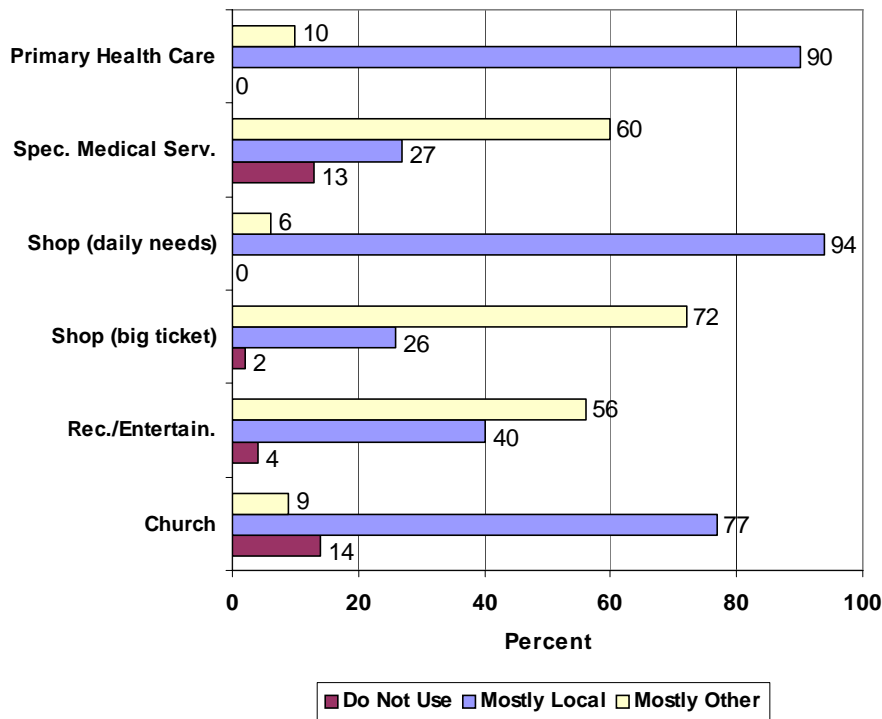


**"Don't know" and "undecided" responses not included.

RDI

This report was prepared through the **Rural Development Initiative** Project, funded by the College of Agriculture, Iowa State University, Ames, IA.

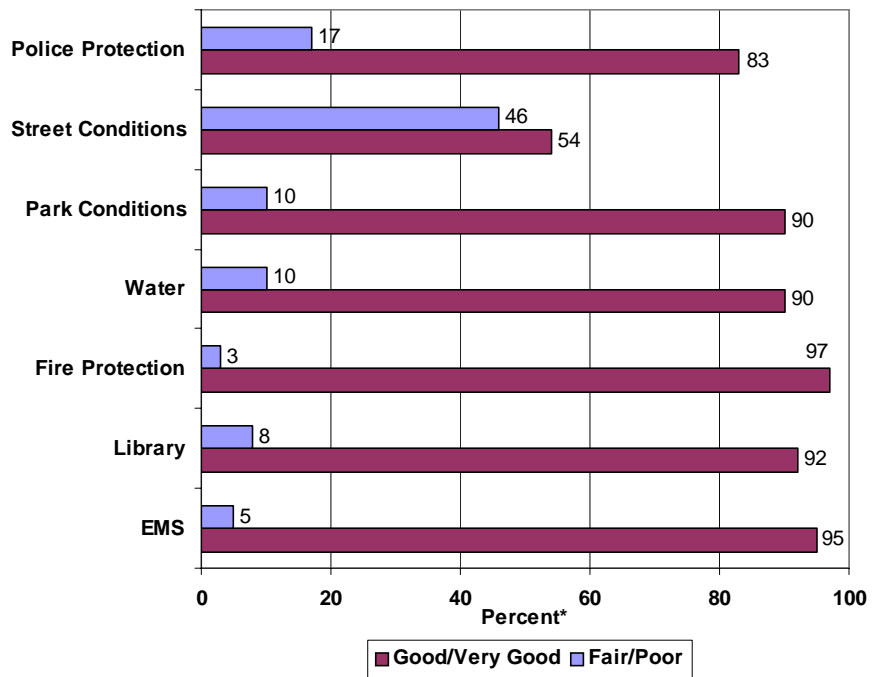
LOCAL PURCHASING PATTERNS



For a variety of reasons, many Iowa residents rely on neighboring cities for services. Based on returned questionnaires, Newton respondents sometimes follow this pattern. A large majority reported remaining in Newton for primary health care, church, and shopping for daily needs items. Half or more of the people reported leaving Newton for specialized medical services, recreation and entertainment, and shopping for big ticket items.

RATING GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Seven services normally provided through local governments were included with the instructions to rate each as “very good,” “good,” “fair,” or “poor.” Fire protection was rated highest with 97% of the respondents giving it a “very good” or “good” rating. Emergency response services (EMS), park conditions, water, and library services followed closely behind. Street conditions ranked the lowest while still maintaining a majority rating of “very good” or

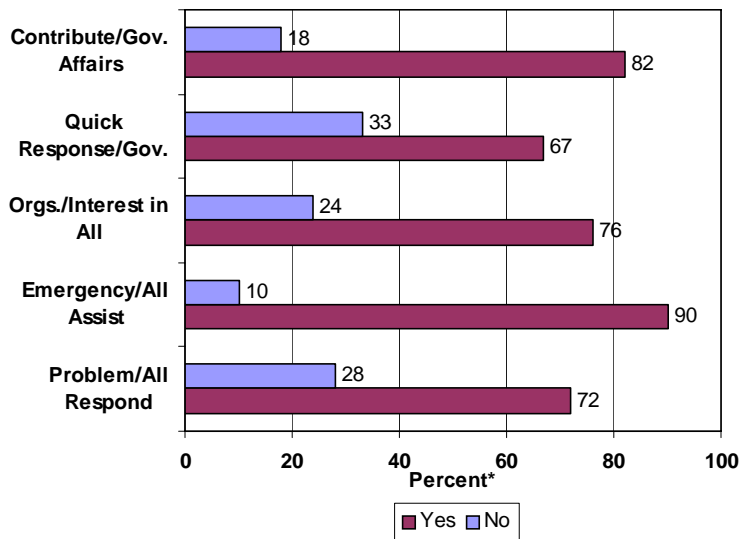
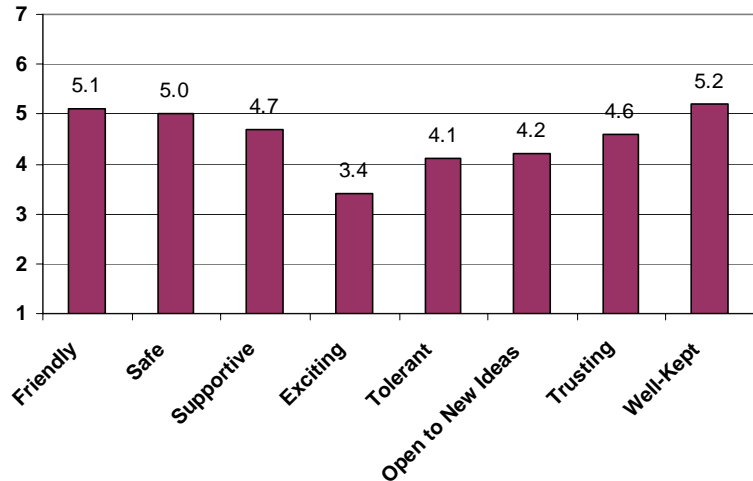


*“Don’t know” and “undecided” responses not included.

FRIENDLINESS AND EVIDENCE OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

In addition to describing cities by their physical traits, important social features are also significant when evaluating local conditions. Accordingly, questions were included in the survey asking residents to assess various social characteristics of their communities.

Of the eight attributes evaluated on a 7-point scale, Newton respondents assigned the highest rating to the well-kept appearance of the city, followed closely by the friendliness of its residents. The lowest rating was given to the amount of excitement offered to the residents.



*"Don't know" and "undecided" responses not included.

According to survey respondents, Newton's responsiveness to personal and community problems is generally quite favorable. A large majority of respondents agreed that all were allowed to contribute to local governmental affairs and that everyone would help in case of an emergency. Approximately three-fourths also felt that a city office would give a quick response in regard to a complaint, that organizations are interested in what is best for all residents, and that when something needs to be done, everyone gets behind it.

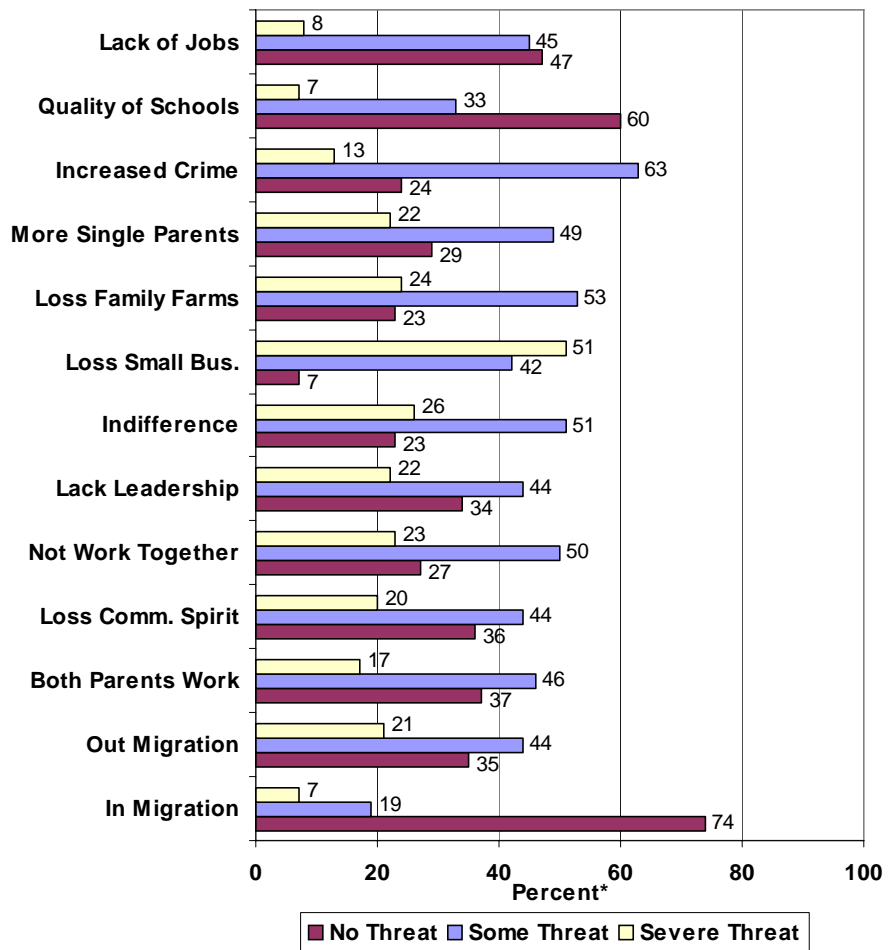
INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION IN NEWTON ACTIVITIES

Over three-fourths of Newton respondents are interested in being informed of community activities. Yet, only 48% reported having participated over the past year in any community improvement project. When asked to describe their level of involvement in local community improvement activities and events, 37% indicated being "very active" or "somewhat active."

Ties between local residents often are related to commitment to the community. In Newton’s case, 64% of the respondents indicated knowing the name of more than 100 adult residents. In addition, 72% indicated that half or more of their close personal friends live in Newton. As for the respondents’ adult relatives and in-laws, 34% indicated that half or more of them also live in Newton.

PERCEIVED COMMUNITY THREATS

The future of Iowa’s urban communities will probably depend on whether important trends continue over the course of the next few years. In Newton’s case, at least three-fourths of the respondents see loss of family farms, increased crime, resident indifference, and loss of small businesses as threats (“some” or “severe”) to the future of the community. Out migration, lack of leadership, both parents working, and loss of community spirit were not considered threats by approximately one-third of Newton respondents. Even less concern was expressed with quality of schools, lack of jobs, and people moving into the



**“Don’t know” and “undecided” responses not included.

OVERALL COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

How important is it for Newton residents to feel a part of their city? When asked this question, 89% of the survey respondents reported that it was important for them to feel a part of the city. When asked whether they feel “at home” in Newton, 93% said that they did. Furthermore, 69% indicated they would be sorry if forced to move away from Newton. In spite of the community concerns as indicated in the previous charts, the majority of respondents see Newton as their home and are reluctant to move away from the area.

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