

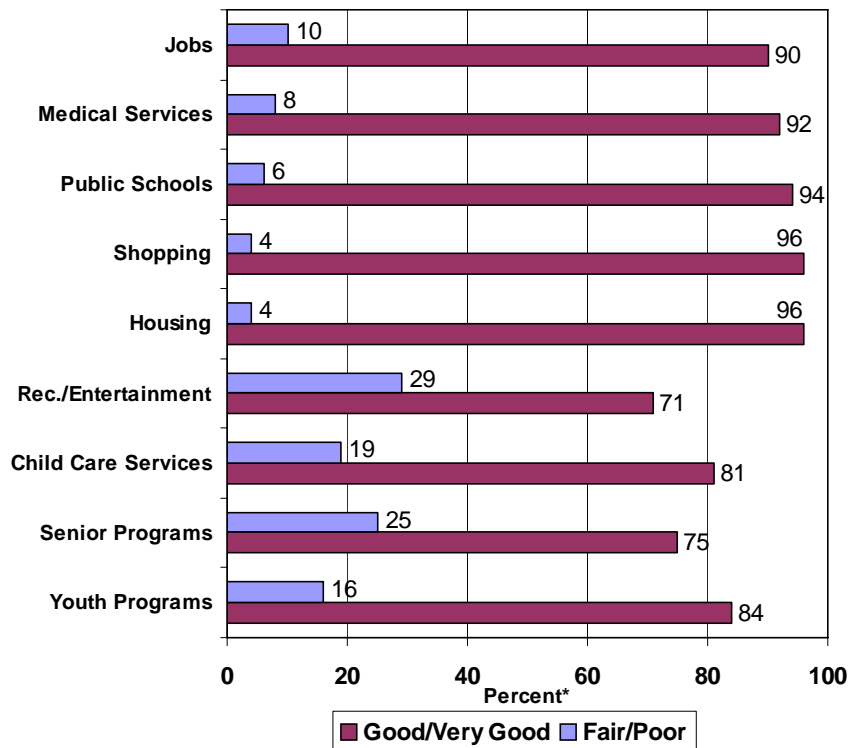
RESIDENTS OF WEST DES MOINES SPEAK OUT

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 West Des Moines' 144 survey participants.



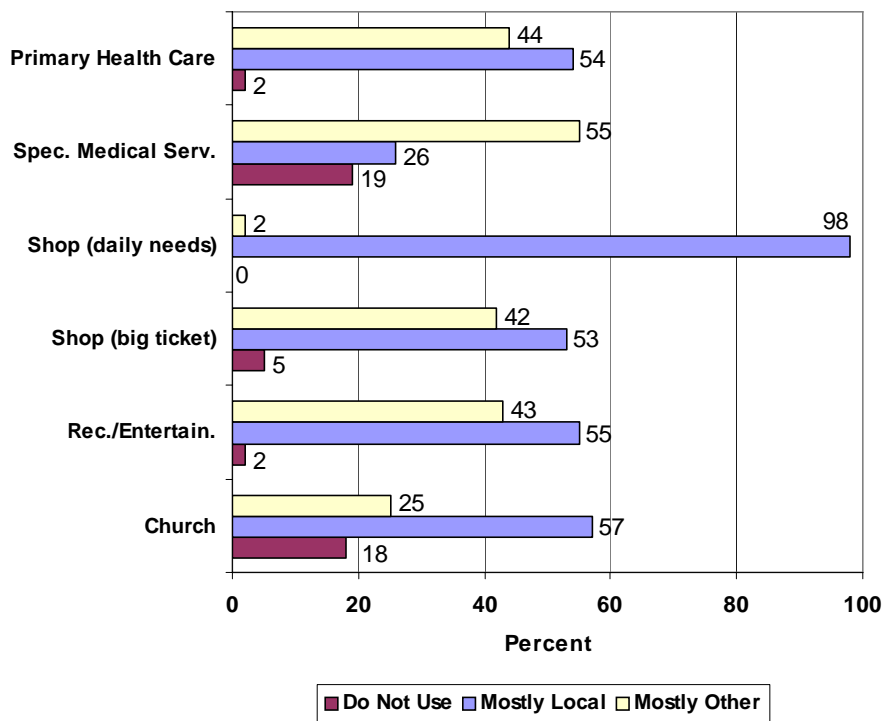
RATING SERVICES AND FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN WEST DES MOINES

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 144 respondents from West Des Moines, most everyone gave public schools, housing, shopping, jobs, and medical services a rating of either "good" or "very good." Following behind, senior programs, child care services, and youth programs were also rated either "good" or "very good" by at least three-fourths of the West Des Moines respondents.



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

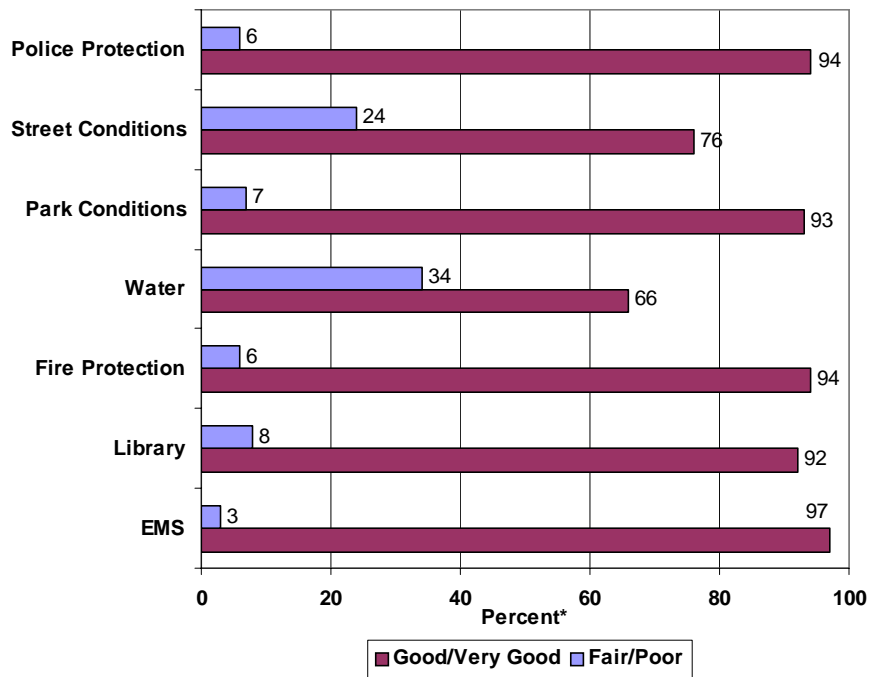
LOCAL PURCHASING PATTERNS



For a variety of reasons, many Iowa residents rely on neighboring cities for services. West Des Moines respondents do not follow this pattern. Over half of the respondents reported remaining in West Des Moines for primary health care, recreation and entertainment, church, and shopping for big ticket and daily needs items. Specialized medical services was the only service for which about half of the people reported leaving West Des Moines.

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.” Emergency response services (EMS) was rated highest with 97% of the respondents giving it a “very good” or “good” rating. Police protection, park conditions, library services, and fire protection followed closely behind. In addition, water service ranked the lowest while still maintaining a majority rating of “very good” or

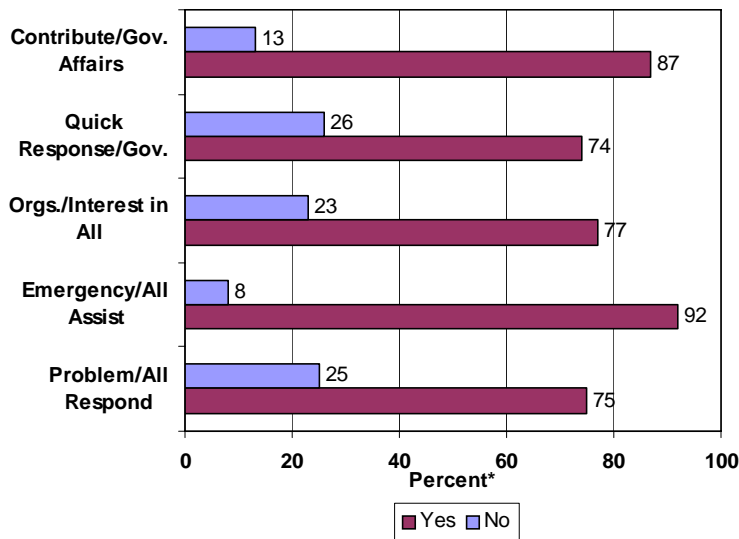
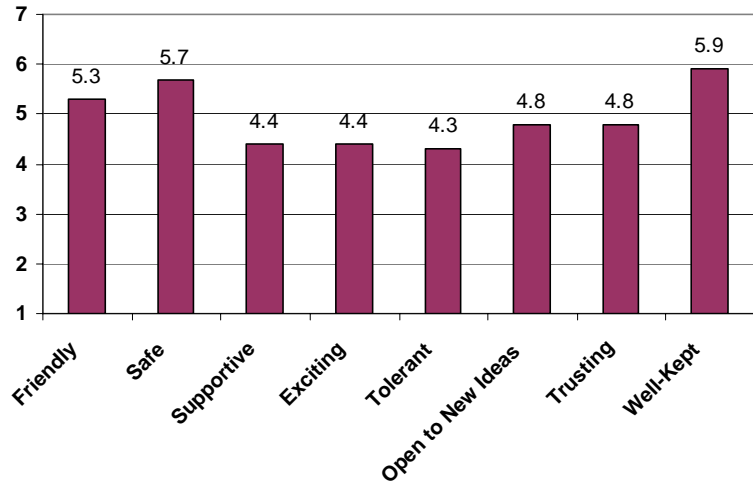


*“Don’t know” and “undecided” responses not included.

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, West Des Moines respondents assigned the highest rating to the well-kept appearance of the city, followed closely by the safety of West Des Moines. The lowest rating was given to the tolerance of the residents.



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

According to survey respondents, West Des Moines' responsiveness to personal and community problems is generally quite favorable. Most everyone 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.

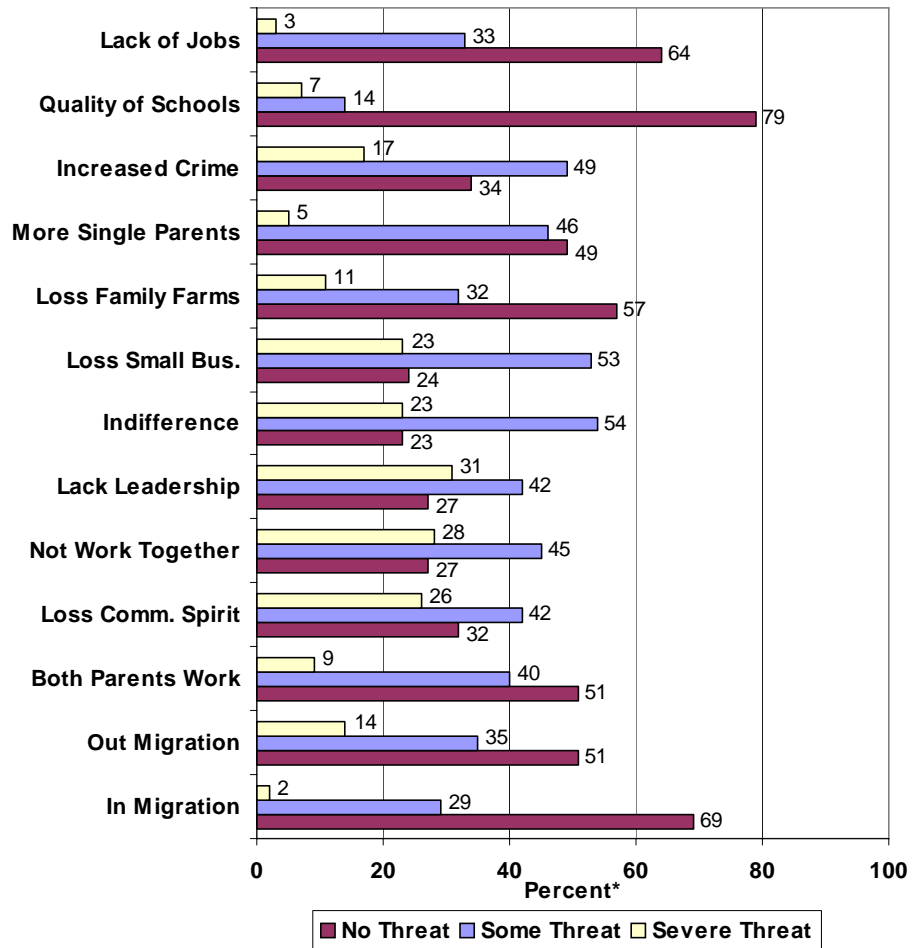
INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION IN WEST DES MOINES ACTIVITIES

Over three-fourths of West Des Moines respondents are interested in being informed of community activities. Yet, only 35% 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, 29% indicated being “very active” or “somewhat active.”

Ties between local residents often are related to commitment to the community. In West Des Moines' case, 34% of the respondents indicated knowing the name of more than 100 adult residents. In addition, 49% indicated that half or more of their close personal friends live in West Des Moines. As for the respondents' adult relatives and in-laws, 10% indicated that half or more of them also live in West Des Moines.

PERCEIVED COMMUNITY THREATS

The future of Iowa's urban communities will probably depend on whether or not important trends will continue over the course of the next few years. In the case of West Des Moines, at least half of the respondents see increased crime, more single parents, resident indifference, lack of leadership, residents not working together, loss of community spirit, and loss of small businesses as conditions that pose threats ("some" or "severe") to the future of the community. Less concern was expressed with quality of schools, lack of jobs, loss of family farms, and people moving into and out of the community.



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

OVERALL COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

How important is it for West Des Moines 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 West Des Moines, 95% said that they did. Furthermore, 83% indicated they would be sorry if forced to move away from West Des Moines. In spite of the community concerns as indicated in the previous charts, the majority of respondents see West Des Moines as their home and are reluctant to move away from the area.

Prepared by Vern Ryan, Lori Merritt, Nicole Grewe, Chris Colvin, Department of Sociology, Iowa State University. For further information about this report, contact Norm Riggs, Polk County Extension Office, 5201 N.E. 14th St., Suite A, Des Moines, IA 50313-2005; Telephone (515) 263-2660; Fax (515) 263-2704; x1riggs@exnet.iastate.edu. For information on other reports in the RDI series, contact Vern Ryan, 317C East Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011; Telephone (515) 294-5011; Fax (515) 294-2303; vryan@iastate.edu.