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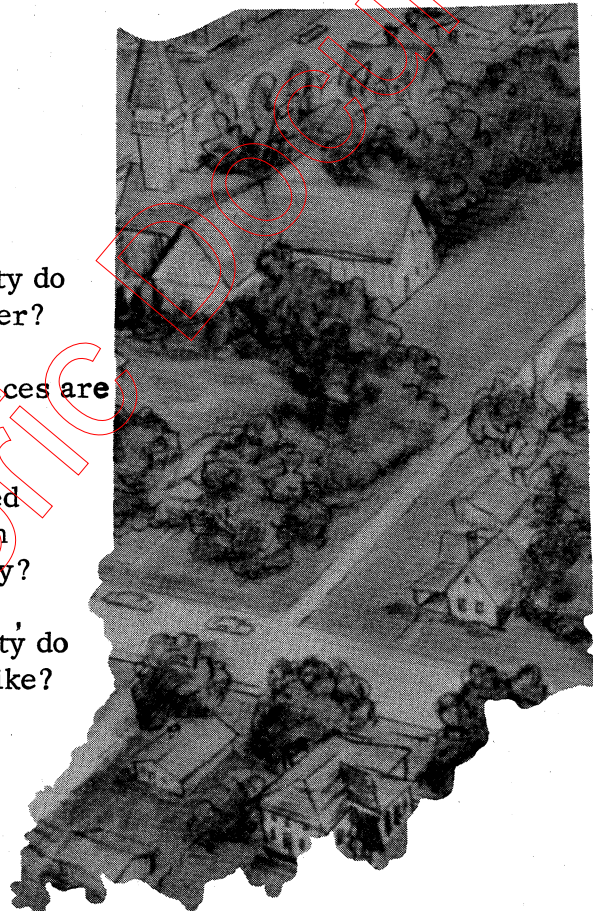
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preferences for community living

A 1973 STATEWIDE OPINION OF INDIANA RESIDENTS

- What size of community do Indiana residents prefer?
- What community services are considered essential?
- How does the preferred community differ from the existing community?
- What type of community do Indiana residents dislike?



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PREFERENCES FOR COMMUNITY LIVING: a statewide opinion of Indiana residents

SUMMARY

In the spring of 1973, more than 8,000 Indiana residents were asked to participate in a community preference survey. The sample was selected so that the responses to the questionnaire would be representative of all persons in Indiana. More than 5,300 questionnaires were returned, and this report summarizes those responses. The data are being analyzed and further significant findings will be reported.

Initial tabulations contain few unexpected results but, nevertheless, they are interesting. In general, Indiana residents like their existing communities although this feeling was not unanimous. Some additional comments about the responses are summarized below.

1. Indiana residents prefer small and medium sized communities. Many prefer their existing community size or one slightly smaller.

2. Within a community the most preferred residence location is outside the city limits but within a 15-minute drive. This preference has obvious implications for land and energy use.

3. Indiana residents are willing to rely on a neighboring community for many services, but they have a strong preference for their own public schools, doctors, and emergency health services. High quality schools and medical care are considered very desirable for a community.

4. Small or medium size communities are viewed as offering a high quality of life. However, large communities were perceived to be best for availability of jobs, equality of opportunity for all racial groups, and entertainment.

5. Hoosiers are about equally divided on the question of whether a population redistribution policy of some sort is desirable.

INTRODUCTION

Many groups and individuals, both public and private, are making decisions and taking actions to improve Indiana communities. Bills are passed in our federal and state legislatures; local government officials and agencies make many decisions; industrial development groups seek new industries; real estate developers build new homes, stores, factories, and roads; environmentalists strive to improve the quality of our physical surroundings; and many meetings are held for the stated purpose of making our communities better places in which to live.

However, no one really knows in what kind of communities Indiana residents want to live. Each individual has his own ideas and opinions about what makes a good community, but very little factual information is known with regard to what characteristics and services are preferred by Indiana residents or how they feel about their existing communities. In what type of community

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would Indiana residents choose to live? What size would it be? What services would be considered essential? What community attributes or characteristics are considered essential? Are there services on which people are willing to depend on neighboring communities? How does the preferred community differ from the community in which residents presently live? What type of community do Hoosiers dislike? How do Indiana residents feel about population redistribution policies?

These are some of the questions asked of a sample of people in Indiana during a survey conducted in April, May and June of 1973. The sample included more than 8,000 Indiana residents selected by a procedure so that their opinions would be representative of the entire state. More than 5,300 households returned a completed questionnaire. This report presents a brief overview of the responses to the questions asked in the survey. A detailed explanation of the questionnaire and procedures used to conduct the survey is contained in a previous report ("Community Preference of Indiana Residents: Methods and Responses to Statewide Survey," Purdue University, October 1973). No analysis is included in this report. Additional information will be published as analysis of the data proceeds.

SIZE OF COMMUNITY

In order to gain some understanding of the size of community that Indiana residents prefer, respondents were asked two questions. First, they were asked for an indication of the size of community in which they would most like to live and, then, the size in which they would least like to live. Community was defined as a city or town in or near which the respondent might live.

The responses, shown in Table 1, indicate that Indiana residents prefer small and medium sized communities. A community of less than 150,000 people was preferred by nine out of ten of the participants in our sample. Only one out of ten indicated a preference to live in a community with a population of more than 150,000. More specifically,

the most preferred size of community was 2,500 to 10,000, followed closely by the 10,000 to 50,000 size. When asked to select a preferred community size more than half of the respondents chose one of these two community sizes.

Respondents were asked also to indicate the size of community in which they were living. More Hoosiers prefer to live in communities of 2,500 to 10,000 and 10,000 to 50,000 than actually reside in communities of those sizes. Twenty-eight percent indicated a desire to live in a community of 2,500 to 10,000 persons compared with 23 percent actually living in that size of community. Similarly, 27 percent prefer a community of 10,000 to 50,000 compared with 25 percent actually living in that size of community. Further analysis shows a strong preference for the respondent's present size of community or the size just smaller than his existing community.

Fewer people prefer to live in either the 150,000 to 500,000 or 500,000 or more sizes than actually live in these larger communities. In total, almost 15 percent of our respondents were actually living in these larger size communities while only 9 percent indicated a preference to do so.

When asked to select a community size they least liked, there was a strong tendency for respondents to indicate the very large community. The largest size class, more than 500,000 people, was selected as least

Table 1. Suppose you could live wherever you wanted. In what size community would you most like and least like to live?

Community size (population)	Percent of responses		
	Like most	Like least	Present
More than 500,000	3.9	70.8	6.8
150,000-500,000	5.4	3.2	8.7
50,000-150,000	13.3	1.6	13.9
10,000- 50,000	26.7	1.5	24.8
2,500- 10,000	27.9	1.7	22.9
Less than 2,500	20.3	14.8	20.0
No reply	2.4	6.4	3.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

preferred by approximately 70 percent. On the other hand, 15 percent indicated they least preferred a community with a population of less than 2,500. This is consistent with the preference indicated for small and medium size communities.

LOCATION OF RESIDENCE

Another question was asked to determine residence location preference given that the respondent could live in the size of community of his choice. Four responses were possible: (1) near downtown area, (2) away from downtown, but within city limits, (3) outside city limits, within 15-minute drive, and (4) outside city limits, more than 15-minute drive.

These responses are summarized in Table 2. The most preferred location was outside the city limits, but within a 15-minute drive. Almost one-half chose this location. Another one-third selected the location away from downtown but within the city limits.

An overwhelming 73 percent chose the near downtown area as the least preferred location. Another 18 percent least liked the location outside the city limits and more than a 15-minute drive to the city.

WILLINGNESS TO DEPEND ON NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES

Respondents were asked also whether they would be willing to rely on neighboring communities for each of eight community services, given that the respondents could live in a community of his preferred size. The responses are summarized in Table 3. In general, respondents (more than 60 percent) indicated they were willing to depend on a neighboring community for good jobs and entertainment. About half were willing to rely on a neighboring community for outdoor recreation, shopping, and hospitals. But responses to our question indicated that Indiana residents have a strong preference not to depend on a neighboring community for public schools, doctors, and emergency health ser-

Table 2. Considering the size of community you prefer where would you most like and least like to have your home located?

Location	Percent of responses		
	Like most	Like least	Present
Near downtown area	4.6	73.2	13.3
Away from downtown, but in city limits	32.1	1.7	45.5
Outside city limits, with 15-minute drive	48.8	1.4	34.4
Outside city limits, more than 15-minute drive	12.3	17.8	4.7
No response	2.2	5.8	2.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3. Considering your preferred size community, would you be willing to depend on neighboring communities for the following services?

Service	Percent of responses			Total
	Yes	No	reply	
Entertainment	63.5	30.0	6.5	100
Good jobs	62.3	33.9	3.7	100
Shopping facilities	53.8	42.9	3.3	100
Outdoor recreation	52.8	40.7	6.9	100
Hospitals	44.0	52.5	3.2	100
Doctors	33.8	63.6	2.6	100
Health emergency services	31.2	65.0	3.8	100
Public schools	23.0	72.0	5.0	100

vices. More than 60 percent indicated they did not want to depend on a neighboring community for these three services.

ATTRIBUTES OF PREFERRED COMMUNITY

In an effort to identify the specific characteristics and services people want for their preferred community, respondents were asked to evaluate eleven characteristics as to whether they considered them essential, desirable (but not essential), don't care, or undesirable. The responses are indicated in Table 4.

High quality medical care and schools of high quality were considered essential by a large majority of the respondents. Over 60

percent considered these two services essential and well over 90 percent rated them either desirable or essential. The availability of good jobs was also considered desirable or essential by over 90 percent, but only about 50 percent of the respondents rated it essential.

In addition to these three, several characteristics were considered desirable by more than 50 percent. A wide variety of stores, voice in community affairs, wide variety of outdoor recreation, nearness to friends, wide variety of entertainment, and

nearness to relatives were all considered desirable characteristics. Many people indicated they did not have a preference one way or the other about a wide variety of clubs or if minority races were present in the community.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Another question was asked to determine which size of community is judged by Indiana residents to provide the best overall quality of life (Table 5). For nine of the twelve

Table 4. How desirable are these for the community in which you would like to live?

Characteristics	Percent of responses					Total
	Not desirable	Don't care	Desirable	Essential	No reply	
High quality medical care	0.3	1.5	35.0	61.3	1.9	100
High quality of schools	0.6	4.1	31.7	60.7	2.9	100
Availability of good jobs	0.8	6.3	42.6	48.8	1.5	100
Wide variety of stores	1.7	8.6	66.7	19.1	3.8	100
Voice in community affairs	1.4	16.6	61.5	18.7	1.8	100
Wide variety of outdoor recreation	1.7	20.2	64.1	11.4	2.5	100
Wide variety of entertainment	4.6	34.2	49.7	8.0	3.4	100
Near to present friends	1.4	30.2	63.2	3.5	1.8	100
Wide variety of clubs	6.9	49.6	36.4	3.0	4.1	100
Near to relatives	9.0	34.4	52.0	2.8	1.7	100
Presence of minority races	21.8	57.4	13.4	2.3	5.0	100

Table 5. Which of these city sizes* do you think is best for each of the characteristics listed?

Characteristics	Percent of responses					Total
	Small	Medium	Large	Very large	No reply	
Adequacy of medical care	12.2	39.4	27.7	16.4	4.2	100
Adequacy of public education	24.3	44.4	19.2	5.4	6.7	100
Lowest cost for food and services	28.5	34.0	18.9	9.9	8.7	100
Availability of good jobs	5.4	24.2	35.0	28.3	6.0	100
Lowest cost for public services	30.6	31.0	17.8	11.7	8.8	100
Place for raising children	53.6	32.5	7.8	1.5	4.6	100
Allowing residents a voice in deciding community affairs	63.3	23.9	4.9	2.0	5.7	100
Allowing individual freedom	51.4	21.8	8.2	11.4	7.3	100
Equality of opportunity to all racial groups	15.1	22.4	23.8	30.5	8.2	100
Outdoor recreation	30.2	35.4	18.7	10.2	5.6	100
General satisfaction	40.3	36.9	11.6	4.4	6.9	100
Entertainment	8.3	22.1	26.9	36.6	6.0	100

* Small means below 10,000 people.

Medium means 10,000 to 50,000 people.

Large means 50,000 to 150,000 people.

Very large means 150,000 or more people.

characteristics, either the small or medium size community was felt to offer the highest quality of life. A small community was defined as having a population of 10,000 or less and a medium size community was specified as having a population of 10,000 to 50,000. The very large and large size cities were considered best for availability of good jobs, equality of opportunity for all racial groups, and entertainment.

The twelve quality of life indicators in Table 5 can be grouped into two categories. One category includes the public services and economic opportunities normally provided by a community. Examples of this group include medical care and good jobs. The other group of indicators has been labeled orientations toward community social life and includes those indicators which convey a feeling about the quality of the community. A place for raising children and having a voice in community affairs are examples of this group.

Interestingly, the size of community which people believe provides the best quality of life for public services and economic opportunity tended to be larger than the size which is considered best for orientation toward community life. In general, medium size communities are felt to offer the best quality of public services while even larger communities are considered best for providing good jobs and entertainment. On the other

hand, small size communities are considered best for orientation toward community life with the exception of providing equality of opportunity for all racial groups.

SATISFACTION WITH EXISTING COMMUNITY

When asked to evaluate twelve characteristics of their present community in terms of whether they were satisfied, the respondents indicated that they were generally satisfied with each characteristic and their community in general, Table 6. More than 80 percent were satisfied with the friendliness of the residents, environment for raising children, quality of schools, and the number of residents belonging to minority groups in their communities. About 60 percent indicated they were satisfied with the entertainment facilities, cost of public services, availability of good jobs, and outdoor recreation facilities.

Another question was asked to determine the respondent's willingness to move away from his existing community, Table 7. More than 63 percent prefer not to leave their existing community, about 18 percent indicated they did not care if they moved or not or did not reply, and approximately 19 percent indicated a preference to leave their existing community.

Table 6. How satisfied are you with your present community in terms of each of the following?

Characteristics	Percent of responses			Total
	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	No reply	
Friendliness of residents	87.5	10.4	2.1	100
Your community in general	87.0	10.3	2.7	100
Environment for raising children	82.5	14.7	2.8	100
Quality of schools	81.7	15.7	2.6	100
Minority group residents	80.0	12.6	7.4	100
Emergency vehicle service	77.0	19.3	3.0	100
Variety of shopping facilities	71.8	25.9	2.3	100
Voice in community affairs	71.3	24.2	4.6	100
Quality of medical care	69.2	28.7	2.1	100
Outdoor recreation facilities	66.1	30.6	3.3	100
Availability of good jobs	62.5	34.0	3.6	100
Cost of public services	61.2	36.0	2.8	100
Entertainment facilities	56.9	39.6	3.5	100

Table 7. Which one of the following statements best describes how you feel about moving away from your present community, if presented with the opportunity?

Statement	Percent of responses
I would never consider leaving here.	8.4
I would move to another community if I had to but would be reluctant to leave here.	55.2
It makes no difference to me whether I live here or in another community	15.7
I would probably be more satisfied in another community.	8.7
I would really like to leave this community if I had the opportunity.	10.1
No reply	2.4
Total	100.0

POPULATION REDISTRIBUTION POLICIES

Despite a clear preference for communities of less than 50,000 and a dislike for cities over 150,000, Hoosiers are not in agreement on the desirability of a population redistribution policy, Table 8. As many people are in favor of population redistribution as opposed -- four out of ten -- with two out of ten not caring one way or the other. Two persons out of three feel that our large cities would be better off with less population, Table 9. Two persons out of three also are of the opinion that small towns would not be better off if they had more population, Table 10.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This report highlights the responses to some of the questions asked on the community preference survey. These results are interesting and informative yet they raise a number of questions. Are the responses to the questions associated with the size of community in which the respondent presently lives? Do rural people have different preferences than urban dwellers? What effect, if any, do variables like income, education, age, and type of employment have on

Table 8. It has been proposed that a major effort be made to slow down the population growth of our large cities. The goal would be to distribute the population more evenly between large cities and small towns. How do you feel about this effort?

Responses	Distribution of responses
Strongly oppose	18.4
Mildly oppose	21.2
Don't care	17.0
Mildly favor	27.4
Strongly favor	14.8
No reply	1.2

Table 9. Do you think our large cities would be better off if they had less population?

Responses	Distribution of responses
Yes	64.7
No	33.7
No reply	1.6

Table 10. Do you think our small towns would be better off if they had more population?

Responses	Distribution of responses
Yes	36.4
No	61.8
No reply	1.7

community preference? What are the characteristics of the people who are dissatisfied and want to move to another community?

In addition to the questions discussed earlier in this report, the questionnaire requested socioeconomic information about the respondent so that the questions like those in the above paragraph can be answered. Hopefully, these analyses will provide useful information for decision makers as they strive to make Indiana communities a better place in which to live.