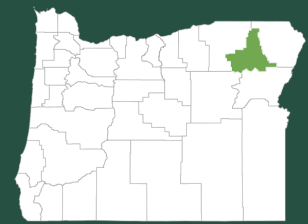




# UNION COUNTY

## Oregon Voices Data Summary



County Total Population

**26,502**

### About the Summary

Oregon Voices began in summer of 2021 when The Ford Family Foundation invited 18,000 randomly selected households — 500 in each Oregon county — to complete a survey online or by mailing back a paper response. We then reached out to Ford Family friends and partners, encouraging them to participate and invite others to do the same. In total more than 4,300 Oregonians from all walks of life responded to the survey, generously sharing their honest reflections on the question we posed: *What is it like to live in your corner of the state?*

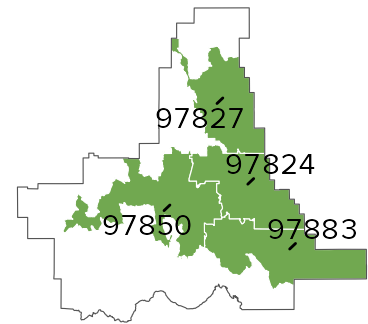
The following report provides a high-level summary of the survey data received from those who responded in Union County. Here the number of random household respondents outnumbered the Ford Family respondents. For clarity, the two data sets have been combined in the visualizations below, even though the two samples show differences in demographics and response patterns. Please interpret the findings with this in mind. Data have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

**Total number of Union County respondents: 107**  
Random household sample: 56, Ford Family sample: 51

### Key Highlights

- Union County is home to Eastern Oregon University and contains portions of the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests.
- Nearly 75% of respondents report that they were having trouble making ends meet.
- Respondents feel this is a great place to live, especially for raising a family.

### All reporting zip codes

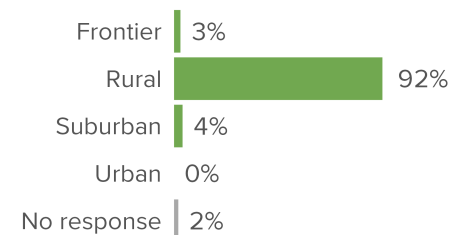


### Top 3 reporting zip codes

- 1 97850
- 2 97883
- 3 97824


### Rural/Urban

How respondents described their community, the immediate area where they live



Two of the early survey questions asked people to name something they appreciate or that concerns them about where they live. Their open-ended responses were coded into categories. These are the top two results for Union County.

What respondents **APPRECIATE** most about where they live

-  **Community, People**  
Culture, relationships conflict, size, leadership, change
-  **Natural Environment**  
Beauty, recreation, public land, parks, water, disasters, climate

What **CONCERNS** respondents most about where they live

-  **Community, People**  
Culture, relationships conflict, size, leadership, change
-  **Services/Economy**  
Housing, infrastructure, healthcare, education, jobs, industry, businesses, shopping, cultural events

*“We are independent, relying on ourselves, family, friends, neighbors and community members. We live surrounded by extraordinary beauty and wildlife. We drive slower and spend more time outdoors than urban and suburban residents.”*

*“It’s beautiful here and we love it. I worry about the future, though — the economy, energy, global warming, education, medicine and our lack of resources.”*

*“It is possible to connect with people here. Additionally, I can climb, bike and hike within 15 minutes of my door.”*

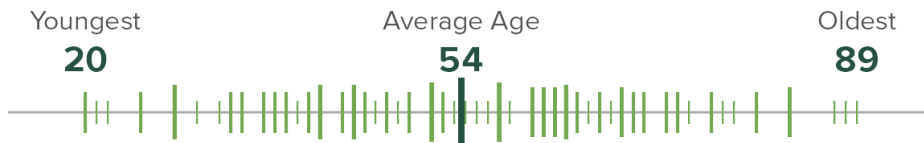
*“I think at times we feel left out of politics. It’s all about the west side of the state.”*

*“I’m concerned by the inability for some to differentiate between public responsibility and political rhetoric.”*

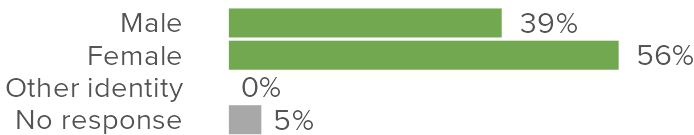
*“Our way of life, culture, and opinions are constantly denigrated and dismissed. We do not have the voting power to protect our rural culture and way of life.”*

**Respondent Demographics**

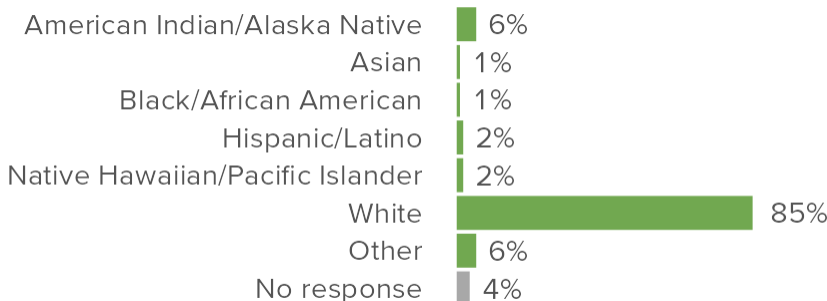
**Age of respondents**



**Gender**



**Race/Ethnicity**



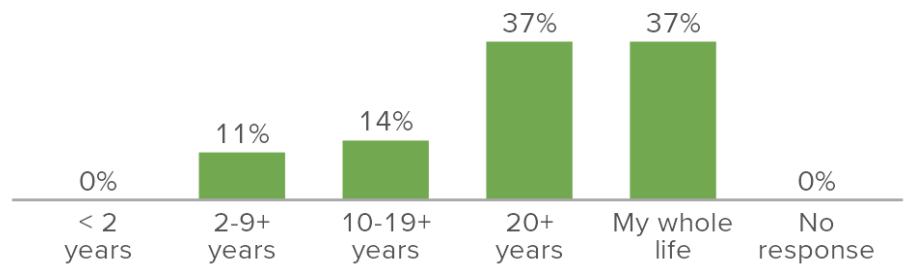
Percentages may sum to more than 100 if respondents selected multiple options.



**Years living in Oregon**

**75%**

of all respondents report living in Oregon for their whole life or 20 years or more



**Homeownership**

**7 out of 10**

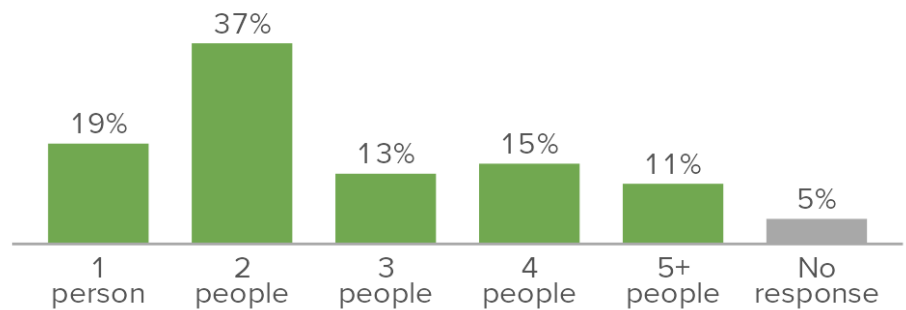
respondents own their home



**Household size**

**2.8**

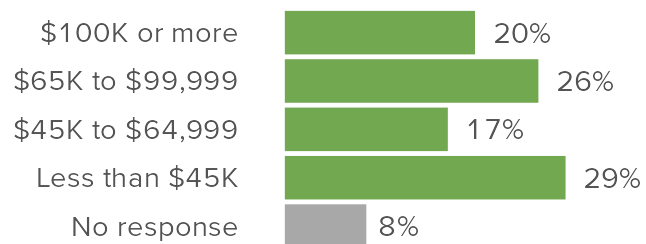
average number of people who live in the respondent's household



**Household annual income**

**29%**

of respondents reported household incomes falling under \$65K



**Emergency funds**

**26%**

of respondents would find it "difficult" or "very difficult" to get \$1,000 to pay for an emergency

**Trouble making ends meet**

**66%**

of respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" that "families are having trouble making ends meet"

**Homelessness**

**48%**

of respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" that "homelessness is a problem" in their community



# 6 out of 10

respondents  
LOVE where they live



## Community participation

*"It's a small community where people know and care for each other."*

*"I think the majority of the people are good people who would be willing to help me if I needed it."*

*I have seen this community step up and help a fellow citizen out when needed."*

*"It's a nice community. We have our problems, but we work to overcome them."*

*"Frontier communities would like to have their voices heard and their way of life given the same consideration as urban and suburban communities. 'One-size-fits-all' does not work... We are proud of our history (warts and all) but are not averse to change (just not necessarily the change that 'others' might think is needed)."*

*"We pull together in times of trouble and help our neighbors."*

Respondents indicated the extent to which they perceive that people where they live participate in their community in the following ways:

Results below 5% are not labeled due to space constraints.

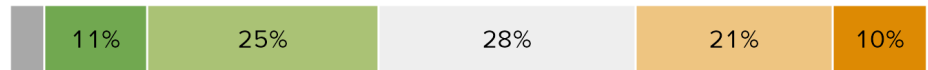
**STRONGLY AGREE**

**STRONGLY DISAGREE**

**Take care of each other during hard times**



**Come together to solve community problems**



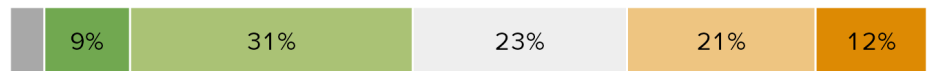
**Attend community events**



**Go to church**



**Welcome newcomers**



## Community traditions

**62%**

of respondents participate in community traditions or annual events

## Pride in community

**69%**

of respondents are "often" or "always" proud to tell others where they live

## Voting

**83%**

of respondents report that they "always" vote

## Community service

**53%**

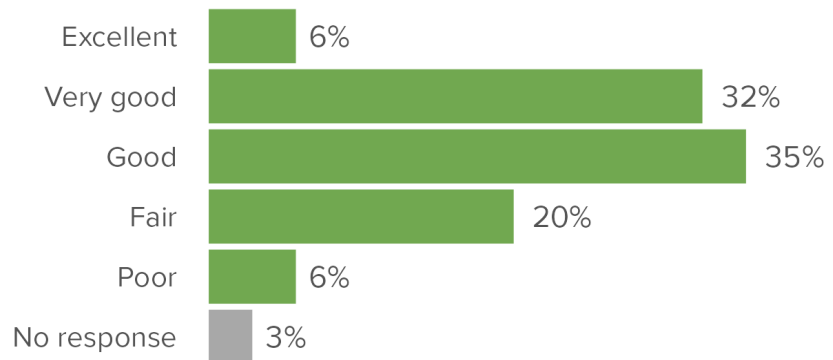
of respondents report that they volunteer at least once a month



**Physical health**

**72%**

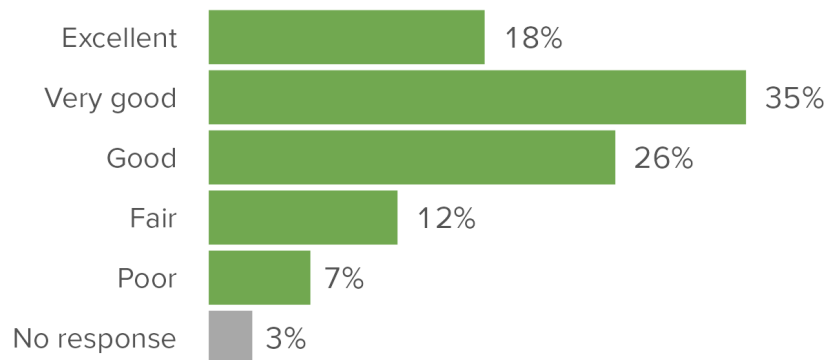
of respondents rated their physical health as “good” or better



**Mental health**

**79%**

of respondents rated their mental health as “good” or better



**Medical and dental care**

**46%**

of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that they have “enough medical and dental providers” in their community

**STRONGLY AGREE**

**STRONGLY DISAGREE**



Results below 5% are not labeled due to space constraints.

**Child abuse and neglect**

**40%**

of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that “child abuse and neglect is a significant problem” in their community”

**Substance abuse**

**67%**

of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that their community has “many residents struggling with substance abuse”

**Mental illness**

**52%**

of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that their community has “many residents struggling with mental illness”



**Education**

**72%**

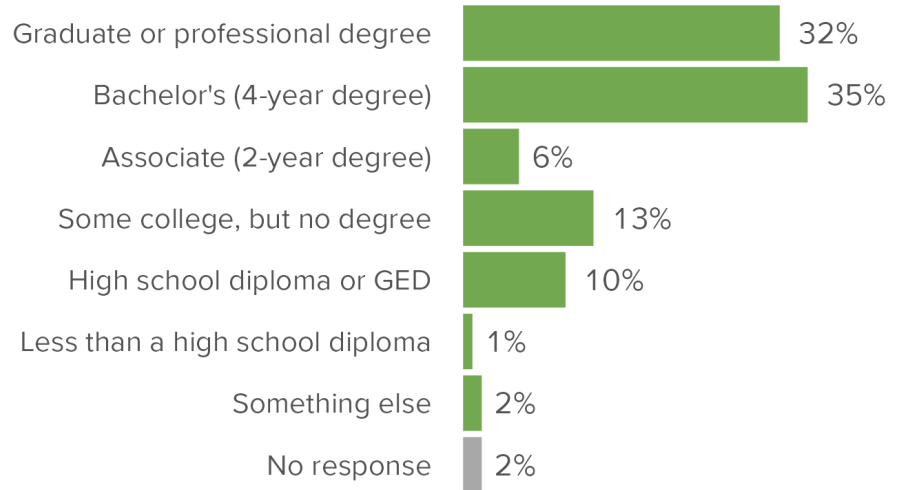
of respondents report having completed an associate degree or above

**Students**

**5%**

of respondents identified as a current student

**Respondents' highest level of education completed**



**Employment**

**Wages**

**60%**

of respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" that "jobs do not pay enough" in their community

**Perception of unemployment**

**43%**

of respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" that "a lot of people are unemployed" in their community

**Self-employment**

**19%**

of respondents identified as self-employed

**Employment status of respondents**

<b>Employed</b>	<b>63%</b>
Full-time	54%
Part-time	8%
<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>7%</b>
Looking for work	3%
Not looking for work	1%
Unable to work due to disability	3%
<b>Other</b>	<b>26%</b>
Homemaker/manage your home	4%
Retired	21%
Something else	1%
<b>No response</b>	<b>5%</b>

Due to rounding, percentages in grouped rows may differ from the sum of the individual rows below it.



**Services**

*“Most amenities urban and suburban residents consider ‘normal’ are not available to frontier residents. We drive long distances just to get to school, shopping, work and community events. We get mail 3 days a week. There’s very little public transportation outside of the small cities.”*

*“I’m disabled, and the cost of living is getting so high. My power and water bills, taxes and everything else has gone up, yet my income did not.”*

*“Resources are scarce, and providers of social services are spread thin trying to help.”*

*“There are not enough jobs for our young people. They graduate and leave for work.”*

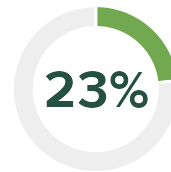
*“I’m concerned about the substance abuse crisis and housing struggles.”*

**Respondents who reported they “agree” or “strongly agree” the following services are available where they live:**

Good schools



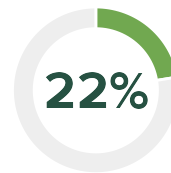
Enough places to shop



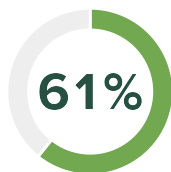
Affordable housing



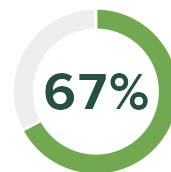
Good streets and roads



Reliable internet



Community-wide cell service



**Healthy food**

**69%**

of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that they have easy access to healthy foods

**Top 3 places respondents get food for weekly meals**

- 1 Grocery stores
- 2 Superstores
- 3 Farmers markets

**Lack of child care**

**64%**

of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that “child care is hard to find”

**Lack of places for youth to hang out**

**61%**

of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that “youth do not have places to hang out”



For data summaries for each county in Oregon,  
more research and to explore the data on your own, visit

**orvoices.org.**



Research conducted in partnership with ECONorthwest and  
the Regional Research Institute for Human Services at Portland State University



---

April 2023

Preferred citation:

The Ford Family Foundation. (2023). Oregon Voices Data Summary: Union County.  
*Oregon Voices*. [www.orvoices.org](http://www.orvoices.org).

Contact: [orvoices@tfff.org](mailto:orvoices@tfff.org)



@FordFamilyFound  
[www.tfff.org](http://www.tfff.org)