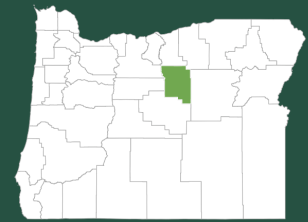




WHEELER COUNTY

Oregon Voices Data Summary



County Total Population

1,417

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?*

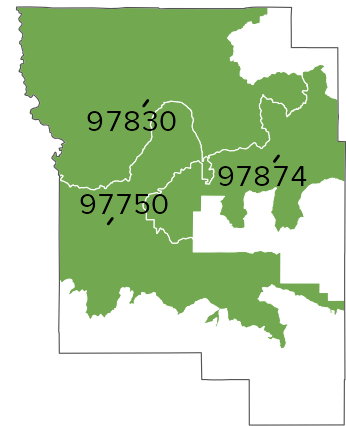
The following report provides a high-level summary of the survey data received from those who responded in Wheeler County. Here the number of random household respondents outnumbered the Ford Family respondents. For clarity, the two data sets have been combined in the visualizations below, even though 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 Wheeler County respondents: 88
Random household sample: 85, Ford Family sample: 3

Key Highlights

- Wheeler County is home Oregon’s largest fossil bed and is classified as “frontier” by the USDA due to its low population density.
- Respondents report there is a lack of reliable, high-speed internet in the area.
- Respondents find their neighbors to be nice, dependable and hard-working.

All reporting zip codes

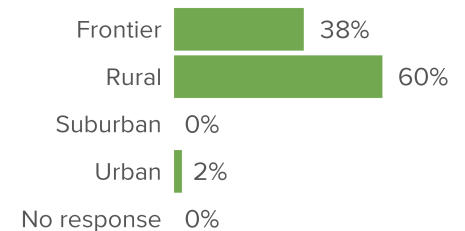


Top 3 reporting zip codes

- 1 97830
- 2 97874
- 3 97750

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 Wheeler 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



Services/Economy

Housing, infrastructure, healthcare, education, jobs, industry, businesses, shopping, cultural events



Community, People

Culture, relationships conflict, size, leadership, change

“I appreciate our sunrises and sunsets — and having no neighbor closer than a mile.”

“I love this community — its location, the people, the scenery. I’d love to see more housing, more pride taken in the ‘look and feel’ of the community.”

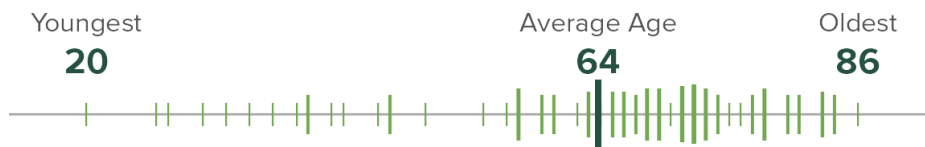
“It’s quiet, safe and full of wildlife — turkey, deer and owls. One can own horses.”

“It is awesome but remote. Great sense of community, but it is a lower socio-economic area. We need family-wage jobs and adequate housing. People want to move here, but there is no place to live.”

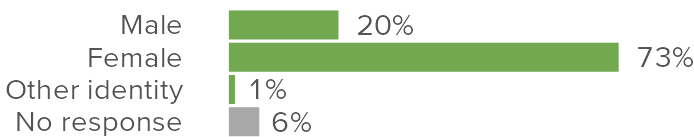
“I’m concerned that with global climate change, this place will suffer desertification. There’s so little rainfall and such hot temps, the summer fires are bad.”

Respondent Demographics

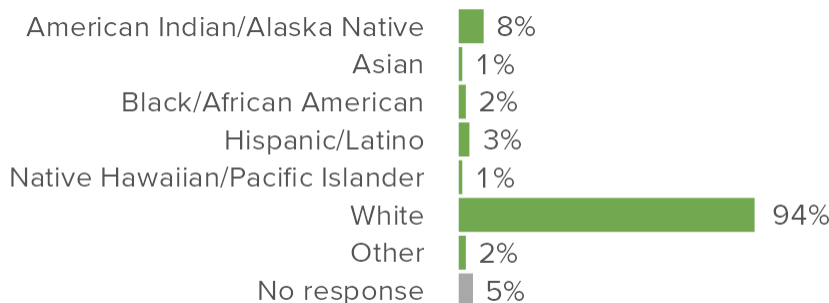
Age of respondents



Gender



Race/Ethnicity



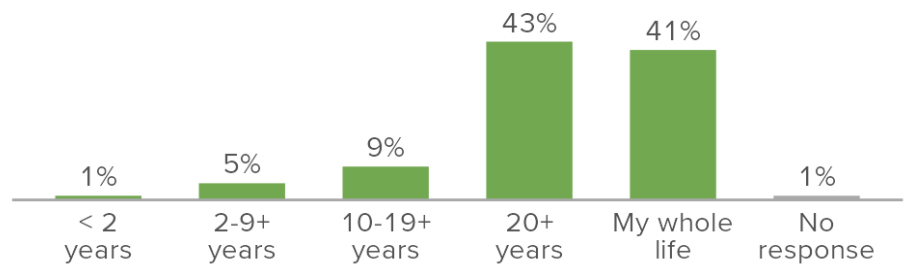
Percentages may sum to more than 100 if respondents selected multiple options.



Years living in Oregon

84%

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



Homeownership

7 out of 10

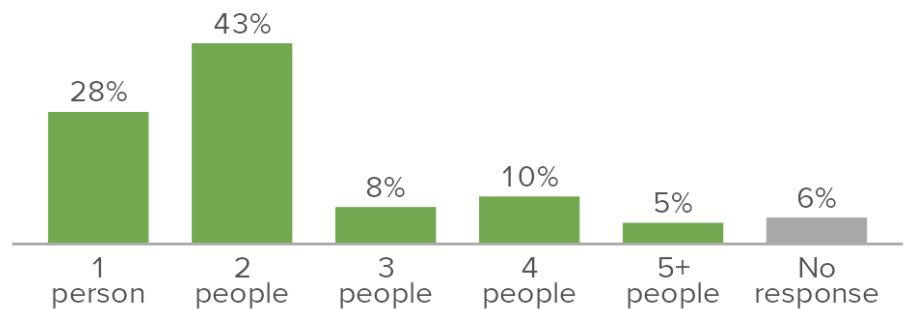
respondents own their home



Household size

2.1

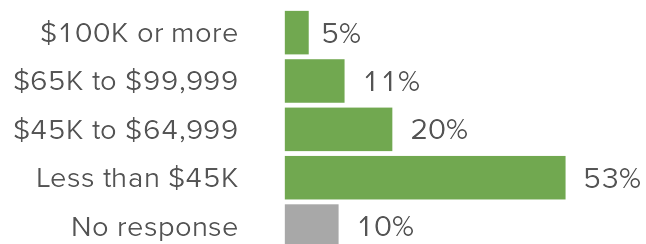
average number of people who live in the respondent's household



Household annual income

53%

of respondents reported household incomes falling under \$65K



Emergency funds

20%

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

Trouble making ends meet

50%

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

Homelessness

7%

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

“During natural disasters, floods and wildfires, community members show up with shovels and backhoes to help.”

“Our community of 150 people are like family and we all work together.”

“Our schools are fantastic and are an integral part of our community. Much of our services such as ambulance, fire, and search and rescue are all volunteer. We are always in need of more volunteers and better equipment.”

“There are very honest, hard-working people here. They know the community and are aware of those that need assistance. The church provides wood for those in need during winter. Meals are taken. Community vans take people to doctor appointments, to go shopping and for social outings.”

“Neighbors are supportive of one another.”

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



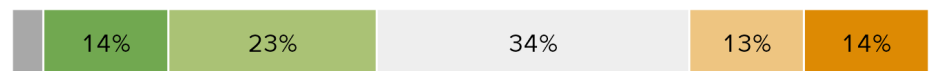
Attend community events



Go to church



Welcome newcomers



Community traditions

60%

of respondents participate in community traditions or annual events

Pride in community

72%

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

Voting

84%

of respondents report that they “always” vote

Community service

52%

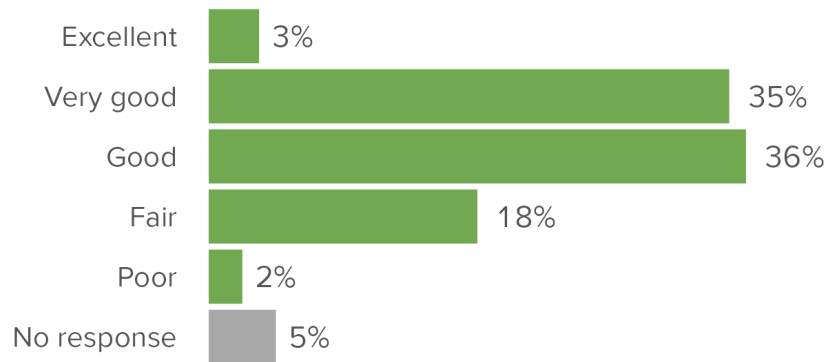
of respondents report that they volunteer at least once a month



Physical health

75%

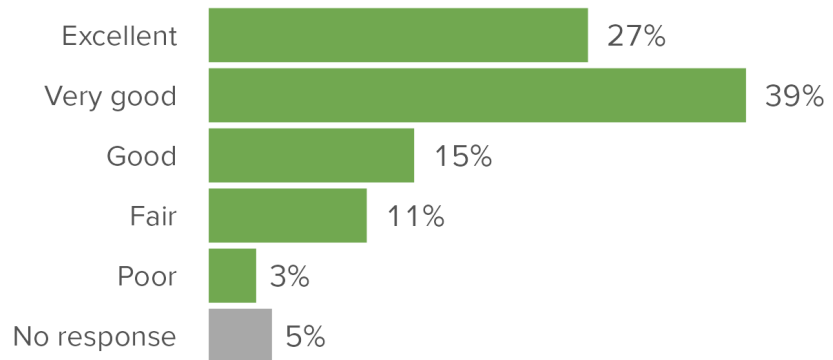
of respondents rated their physical health as “good” or better



Mental health

81%

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



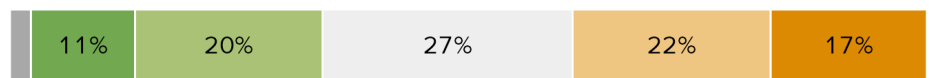
Medical and dental care

32%

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

9%

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

Substance abuse

34%

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

Mental illness

18%

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



Education

44%

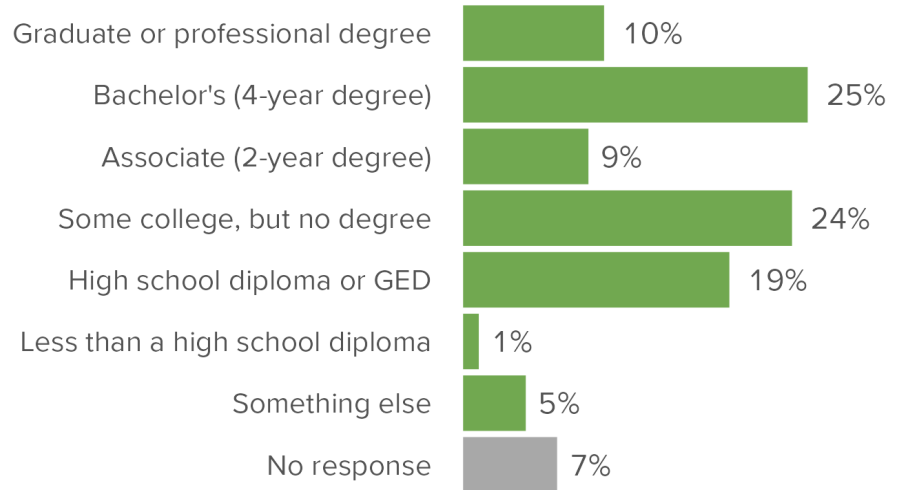
of respondents report having completed an associate degree or above

Students

6%

of respondents identified as a current student

Respondents' highest level of education completed



Employment

Wages

45%

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

Perception of unemployment

50%

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

Self-employment

27%

of respondents identified as self-employed

Employment status of respondents

Employed	39%
Full-time	25%
Part-time	14%
Unemployed	3%
Looking for work	1%
Not looking for work	0%
Unable to work due to disability	2%
Other	49%
Homemaker/manage your home	6%
Retired	38%
Something else	6%
No response	9%

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



Services

“Living in a frontier community is more expensive than living in a town. Plumbers, electricians, mechanics, veterinarians and many other service providers don’t exist here. Grocery shopping is a 225-mile roundtrip. Taxes are high. Internet and phone reception are unreliable.”

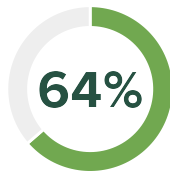
“The availability of housing — both for rental and purchase — is challenging. We have more jobs than places for workers to live.”

“We are a retirement community and it is hard for young couples to find work and housing.”

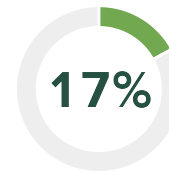
“We don’t have good health care and have to travel 100 miles for a hospital.”

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

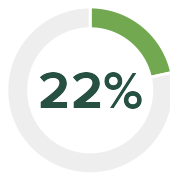
Good schools



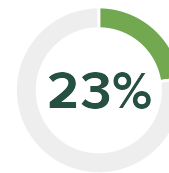
Enough places to shop



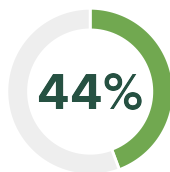
Affordable housing



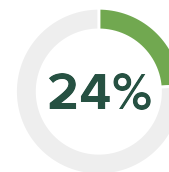
Good streets and roads



Reliable internet



Community-wide cell service



Healthy food

40%

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 Backyard or local garden
- 3 Superstores

Lack of child care

48%

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

Lack of places for youth to hang out

49%

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

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Oregon Voices. www.orvoices.org.

Contact: orvoices@tfff.org



@FordFamilyFound
www.tfff.org