

VALE CITY SURVEY
OREGON ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

JUNE 2003
SURVEY METHODS AND RESULTS



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I. INTRODUCTION

This document reports the results of the “Vale City Survey,” a random-digit-dial sample telephone survey of 251 adults in Vale, Oregon, conducted by the University of Oregon Survey Research Laboratory (OSRL) June 2003. The survey’s purpose was to assess low-moderate income thresholds in Vale for the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department (OECD) and to provide the community with public opinion data about how citizens believe it could improve. Our final analysis demonstrates that 57% of persons in this community live in families with 2002 incomes below the low-moderate income thresholds.

Working closely with David Kavanaugh of OECD, OSRL planned, pretested and implemented the survey. This report summarizes the survey methods and results.

II. SURVEY METHODS

A. SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The survey’s goals were to obtain valid and reliable information from adults in Vale on the following topics:

1. **Household and family size**, including the presence of multiple families within households;
2. **Family income threshold**, with family income from all sources falling above or below specified levels contingent on family size, as provided by OECD, and separately analyzing multiple families within households;
3. Opinion on the **one best thing** about living in Vale, and
4. Opinion on **how the community could be improved** to make it a better place to live.

The key survey questions on household/family size and family income thresholds replicate those used in several previous community income surveys that OSRL has completed with OECD (although the exact income thresholds vary over time and from community to community). OSRL developed, tested, and implemented the community improvement question especially for this project.

Project Director Juyeon Son programmed the survey instrument into OSRL's computer-aided telephone interviewing system (WinCATI) and research assistants pretested it. A facsimile of the survey instrument is provided in Section 2 of the final report binder. All interviews were completely *anonymous*, and Human Subject's approval was obtained as required by federal law.

B. SAMPLE

Census 2000 reports show that Vale's population comprised 1,976 persons in 658 households. The survey sample size needed for standard 95% confidence intervals for this population of households is 240 (see <http://osrl.uoregon.edu/papers/sampler/>). OSRL recommended 243 completed interviews with valid answers to the key income question.

OSRL employed random digit dialing (RDD) to select this survey's sample. The Project Director randomly generated 2,409 telephone numbers for Vale and loaded into them WinCATI. However, interviewers only needed to use 810 of those random telephone numbers to complete the required 243 interviews. A summary of interviewers' dial attempts and their outcomes may be found in the sample report in Section 4 of the report binder.

To ensure that all survey respondents resided in Vale, OSRL interviewers screened to determine their homes' geographical location using the following question, which directly followed the survey introduction:

"Do you live in Vale [in Malheur County]?"

PROBE: Can you vote in city elections for mayor or city council?

One potential bias to the Vale study sample is that a certain percentage of homes lack telephones. Since this study is based on a telephone survey, it necessarily excluded households lacking telephones from the study sample. Needless to say, poor persons most often lack home telephones. However, Census 2000 reports show that 95% of Vale households have telephones and 5% lack them – exactly the same figures found for Oregon state as a whole. This percentage of households without telephones is too small to affect this study's final outcome. Thus, we conclude that telephone subscribership rates do not affect this study's ultimate results.

C. DATA COLLECTION

Only experienced OSRL interviewers conducted this survey. Section 3 of the report binder provides example Interviewer Instructions used in project-specific training. Interviewing was conducted between 9 AM and 9 PM June 5-21, 2003 until the target sample size was achieved. Up to 20 calls were made to each valid telephone number. Altogether, OSRL interviewers made 2,273 telephone calls to complete 251 interviews with adults age 18 and over. Of those, five were conducted in Spanish. Interviews averaged 3 minutes; interviews in Spanish averaged slightly longer. Overall, OSRL achieved a 78% response rate and 1.5% refusal rate.

Although interviewers completed 251 interviews, 8 respondents did not know their family income or refused to answer. (Specifically, 2 refused and 6 did not know.) Thus, the sample size for the key income question is effectively n=243 – exactly the number needed to meet the minimum sample requirements for 95% confidence intervals. In presenting results for income thresholds, we use data for n=243. For all other results, we use n=251.

III. SURVEY RESULTS

A. OPINIONS ON COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

As a service to the Vale area, OSRL began each survey interview with two open-ended questions related to the community. The exact questions and probe were:

COMMUN1

In your experience, what is the one best thing about living in Vale?

COMMUN2

If there were one thing about living in Vale that you could change or improve, what would that be?

PROBE: Please think of something that could make the community a better place to live for everyone.

Interviewers recorded respondents' open-ended answers verbatim. Section 6 of the report binder provides these answers. While OECD D did not ask OSRL to categorize or code these narratives, clear patterns emerged.

In answer to COMMUN1, respondents said that the best thing about living in Vale is its small-town atmosphere, the close-knit community, and people's willingness to help each other. Answers to COMMUN2 clearly indicated the city's need for economic development, new businesses, more jobs, better-paying jobs, youth-oriented activities, and an upgrade of the downtown area. Careful reading of respondents' thoughtful answers should provide very useful guidance to the community's representatives.

The survey instrument then turned to the key part of the study – family income keyed to household and family size.

B. HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY SIZE

OECD requires income information on *persons within families*. Getting there requires an intricate set of survey skip logic around household and family questions, as well as careful interviewer training. It results in interviews that flow quickly and smoothly for respondents.

In order to ascertain household and family sizes, interviewers first asked:

“How many people live in your household at this point in time, including yourself?”

Interviewers typed in the exact number. The survey instrument defined household membership using standard U.S. Census conventions, that is:

Definition:

Include everyone who usually lives there half time or more, including: family, boarders, roommates, foster children, live-in employees, newborn babies still in the hospital, children at boarding school, persons with no other home who stay there, persons temporarily away (business, vacation, military service, or in a general hospital).

Exclude everyone who usually lives somewhere else, persons in institutions [prison, nursing home, mental hospital], military personnel who live elsewhere, people who stay somewhere else most of the week while working, and college students who live at college during the school year.

Definition:

A family is defined as people who are related by blood or marriage.

In the Vale survey, the number of persons in households ranged from one to nine, as shown in answers to the question labeled HHNUM (see Section 2 “Toplines,” page 2). Respondents’ answers to this question represented 743 persons, including themselves. All persons distributed across household sizes as follows: 5% in one-person households, 22% in two-person households, 18% in three-person households, 26% in four-person households, 13% in five-person households, 7% in six-person households, 6% in seven-person households, zero in eight-person households, and 2% in nine-person households.

Only respondents with more than one person in the household were asked the next question (84% of respondents). It asked:

“Are all of these people in your household members of your family?”

Or, if only one other person was in the household,

“Is the other person in your household a member of your family?”

As needed, interviewers probed using the same family definition as in the prior question.

Ninety-two percent of those in multi-person households answered this question “yes,” indicating that their household contained just one family. Eight percent answered this question “no,” meaning that their household contained more than one family. The survey instrument instructed respondents in multi-family households to answer the following income question for their family only. For example, an unrelated boarder living with a family answered the income question for himself or herself only.

Respondents’ answers to the key income threshold questions represented 711 family members, including themselves. All persons distributed across family sizes as follows: 19% in one-person families, 33% in two-person families, 16% in three-person families, 18% in four-person families, 8% in five-person families, 3% in six-person families, 2% in seven-person families, zero in eight-person families, and 1% in nine-person families.

The survey showed the average number of persons per family as 3.3 and the number of average persons per household as 2.8. These sample survey estimates for Vale closely match Census 2000 family and household reports for Vale, which were 3.2 and 2.8, respectively. The survey showed Latino families in Vale averaging 4.2 persons per family.

C. FAMILY INCOME THRESHOLD

To establish low-to-moderate family incomes, the telephone survey asked respondents:

“Was your total family income from all sources in 2002 above or below _____?”

A specified amount contingent upon family size automatically appeared on each interviewer’s computer screen. The survey instrument defined family income as:

Definition:

Money from jobs (wages, salary, tips, bonuses, commissions), interest, dividends, child support, alimony, welfare, social security, disability, unemployment, and retirement payments, net income from a business, farm or rent, rent, royalties, trust, or estate; and any other money income regularly received by members of your family. Do not include lump-sum payments, such as money from an inheritance or sale of a home.

For Malheur County, Oregon, OECD defined the 2002 low-to-moderate family income thresholds by family size as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Low-Moderate Income Thresholds, by Family Size

<u>Family Size</u>	<u>Family Income</u>
1	\$25,600
2	\$29,250
3	\$32,900
4	\$36,550
5	\$39,500
6	\$42,400
7	\$45,350
<u>>8</u>	\$48,250

OECD requires income information on *persons within families*. OSRL extracted the needed data from specially constructed cross-tabulations using SPSS (see Appendix). The information also can be gleaned from the banner tables in Section 5 of the report binder. Table 2 summarizes the results.

The data in Table 2 are presented in panels for each family/household type, as Column 1 defines one-person families, one family with multiple persons, and respondents' families in multi-family households. The bottom panel provides pertinent column totals. Column 2 shows the low-to-moderate income thresholds for families of specified sizes. Column 3 shows the number of persons in families.

Table 2: Persons in Families below Low-Moderate Income Thresholds, Vale City, Oregon, June 2003

1. Family / Household type	2. Low-moderate income thresholds	3. Number of persons in families	4. Number of survey respondents	5. Respondents above income threshold*	6. Respondents below income threshold*	7. Persons in families above income threshold*	8. Persons in families below income threshold*	9. Total persons in families*	10. Percent of persons in families below income	11. Respondents who don't know or refuse income	12. Persons in families who dk/ref income	13. Total persons in families (including dk/ref)
<i>Formulas, by column number</i>												
						(3*5)	(3*6)	(7+8)	(8/9*100)		(3*11)	(9+12)
One person families	\$25,600	1	39	7	30	7	30	37	81.1%	2	2	39
One family, with multiple persons	\$29,250	2	80	45	34	90	68	158	43.0%	1	2	160
	\$32,900	3	38	17	20	51	60	111	54.1%	1	3	114
	\$36,550	4	45	21	22	84	88	172	51.2%	2	8	180
	\$39,500	5	19	8	11	40	55	95	57.9%	0	0	95
	\$42,400	6	7	0	7	0	42	42	100.0%	0	0	42
	\$45,350	7	5	1	3	7	21	28	75.0%	1	7	35
	\$48,250	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0
\$48,250	9	2	0	2	0	18	18	100.0%	0	0	18	
Respondent's family in multiple-family households	\$25,600	1	9	3	5	3	5	8	62.5%	1	1	9
	\$29,250	2	3	1	2	2	4	6	66.7%	0	0	6
	\$32,900	3	3	3	0	9	0	9	0.0%	0	0	9
	\$36,550	4	1	0	1	0	4	4	100.0%	0	0	4
Totals			251	106	137	293	395	688	57.4%	8	23	711

Percent of persons in families in Vale below the income threshold: 57.4%

* Numbers exclude respondents who did not know (dk) or who refused (ref) the income question.

Column 4 shows the number of respondents who answered each combination of family/household type and number of persons in families. Columns 5 and 6 provide the number of respondents who answered their family income above the low-to-moderate income threshold (n=106) and below it (n=137). Their sum shows that the income data represent 243 families in Vale.

Columns 7-10 show this study's key statistics. Columns 7 and 8 provide the number of *persons in respondents' families* above and below the low-to-moderate income thresholds specific to family size. Column 9 sums Columns 7 and 8 by row. Column 9's total shows that respondents who answered the income questions represent 688 persons in families in Vale, for 35% of the entire population. Column 10 shows the percent of families below the low-to-moderate income threshold by family size, which tended to increase with family size.

Note that these key columns exclude respondents who “did not know” or “refused” to answer the family income question. Columns 11 and 12 show that eight families, representing 23 persons, failed to answer the income question. They represent just 1% of Vale’s population.

In all, the 2002 family incomes of 57.4% of persons in families in the Vale had incomes below the low-to-moderate thresholds (395 out of 688). All Latino families reported incomes below the threshold. The confidence interval for this percentage based on persons is $\pm 3.0\%$ percentage points (see <http://osrl.uoregon.edu/papers/sampler/>). This means analysts can be 95% sure that the true population result (if OSRL had interviewed the entire population of families in Vale) is between 54.4% and 60.4%. The 57.4% result is well within these confidence intervals.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This representative, scientific survey indicates shows that 57.4% of persons in families in the Vale, Oregon, had 2002 family incomes below the low-to-moderate thresholds. This result is statistically robust, within standard statistical confidence intervals, and not subject to any known biases. OECDD needs this data to determine whether Vale City qualifies for certain OECDD-administered grants.

While OSRL intended mainly to assess low-to-moderate family income levels in Vale for OECDD, as a courtesy to the community, we also included two open-ended questions concerning what citizens like most about their community and what improvements they would like to see. We hope that Vale’s governing bodies find good use for the detailed and careful answers citizens provided.

APPENDIX

TABLE 1

Crosstab

			2002 income above/below \$21,550 (single person households)			Total
			ABOVE	BELOW	DON'T KNOW	
Number of people in household	1	Count	7	30	2	39
		% within Number of people in household	17.9%	76.9%	5.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	7	30	2	39
		% within Number of people in household	17.9%	76.9%	5.1%	100.0%

TABLE 2

Crosstab

			2002, family income above/below threshold (multi-person households)				Total
			ABOVE	BELOW	REFUSED	DON'T KNOW	
Number of people in household	2	Count	45	34	1		80
		% within Number of people in household	56.3%	42.5%	1.3%		100.0%
	3	Count	17	20		1	38
		% within Number of people in household	44.7%	52.6%		2.6%	100.0%
	4	Count	21	22	1	1	45
		% within Number of people in household	46.7%	48.9%	2.2%	2.2%	100.0%
	5	Count	8	11			19
		% within Number of people in household	42.1%	57.9%			100.0%
	6	Count		7			7
		% within Number of people in household		100.0%			100.0%
	7	Count	1	3		1	5
		% within Number of people in household	20.0%	60.0%		20.0%	100.0%
	9	Count		2			2
		% within Number of people in household		100.0%			100.0%
Total		Count	92	99	2	3	196
		% within Number of people in household	46.9%	50.5%	1.0%	1.5%	100.0%

TABLE 3

**Number of people in your family in the household * 2002 family income above/below threshold
(multi-family households) Crosstabulation**

			2002 family income above/below threshold (multi-family households)			Total
			ABOVE	BELOW	DON'T KNOW	
Number of people in your family in the household	1	Count % within Number of people in your family in the household	3 33.3%	5 55.6%	1 11.1%	9 100.0%
	2	Count % within Number of people in your family in the household	1 33.3%	2 66.7%		3 100.0%
	3	Count % within Number of people in your family in the household	3 100.0%			3 100.0%
	4	Count % within Number of people in your family in the household		1 100.0%		1 100.0%
Total		Count % within Number of people in your family in the household	7 43.8%	8 50.0%	1 6.3%	16 100.0%