

## Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary .....	2
2. Valley County Social Assessment: Introduction .....	4
3. Population Characteristics .....	4
4. Social Networks and Community Attitudes .....	14
4.1. Social Networks .....	15
4.2. Community Social Attitudes.....	17
4.2.1. Cohesion and Attachment.....	18
4.2.2. Economic Issues and Quality of Life Concerns.....	20
4.2.3. Public Land Preservation and Access Attitudes .....	22
5. References.....	25
6. Appendix: Survey Method and Demographics for Valley County Social Survey ...	26

## 1. Executive Summary

Valley County experiences numerous social and economic changes that are common for rural Idaho counties. Social and economic changes are deeply connected and how communities in Valley County respond to them are determined to a great extent by the social situation. The general conclusions of the social assessment are:

- On one hand, the local labor market is characterized by numerous seasonal service sector jobs, for which pay is low. Most people employed in this context hold multiple jobs throughout the year. However, though people can be almost fully employed across a calendar year, their total income is usually insufficient to support a family. This leads to both natives and in-migrants leaving the county. Over time, this lack of full-time, permanent jobs with adequate pay causes both local natives and some in-migrants to leave in search of better economic circumstances.
- On the other hand, the local economy is heavily dependent on tourism and seasonal services. This economy requires large numbers of service employees during the peak seasons. The skiing industry and summer tourism season could not be sustained without this seasonal labor force.
- A considerable number of local residents are retirees and claim Valley County as their permanent residence. About 35% of survey respondents were retired and almost 88% were residents of the county. Large retired populations provide many benefits to the county, including transfer payment income, and to some extent, a pool of seasonal employees. They are also detached from local economic conditions and are viewed, sometimes correctly, as not



supporting economic development efforts in the county.

- The communities in the county differ with respect to household incomes. McCall is clearly a wealthier community than either Donnelly or Cascade. Though each community has a significant retired population, the household incomes of people in McCall remain higher than the other communities. Nonetheless, all three communities are equally concerned about local economic issues.
- These communities often see their worlds very differently. All see themselves as being socially cohesive and having high attachment to their community, though Cascade is statistically higher on both counts than McCall. Quality of life concerns are significantly higher in McCall than either Cascade or Donnelly. McCall is significantly more concerned with increased preservation of public lands and the limitation of access and commodity uses on those lands than either Cascade or Donnelly.
- The above issues create stratification problems for the county. Valley County is an example of “resort syndrome” whereby the very people needed to support a tourism-based economy are not able to live in the community that derives its livelihood from their labor. The independently employed, those employed by local, state or federal governments, the wealthy and/or retired can afford to live in Valley County. Non-professionals employed in the private sector will continue to struggle in the labor market. The recent decline in populations is at least partially due to this situation. The communities agree that the local economic situation is an important challenge, but they disagree significantly on how to use local resources to address that challenge. Careful,



long-term collaboration and support of locally appropriate economic development will be necessary to insure the social and economic future of the county.

## **2. Introduction**

Valley County, Idaho exemplifies the social changes facing rural Idaho counties. Rapid population change over the last decade has slowed, the local economic structure makes good jobs hard to find and young people find it difficult to stay in the area. This social assessment is part of a larger project to examine the how social life and the local economy channel these changes.

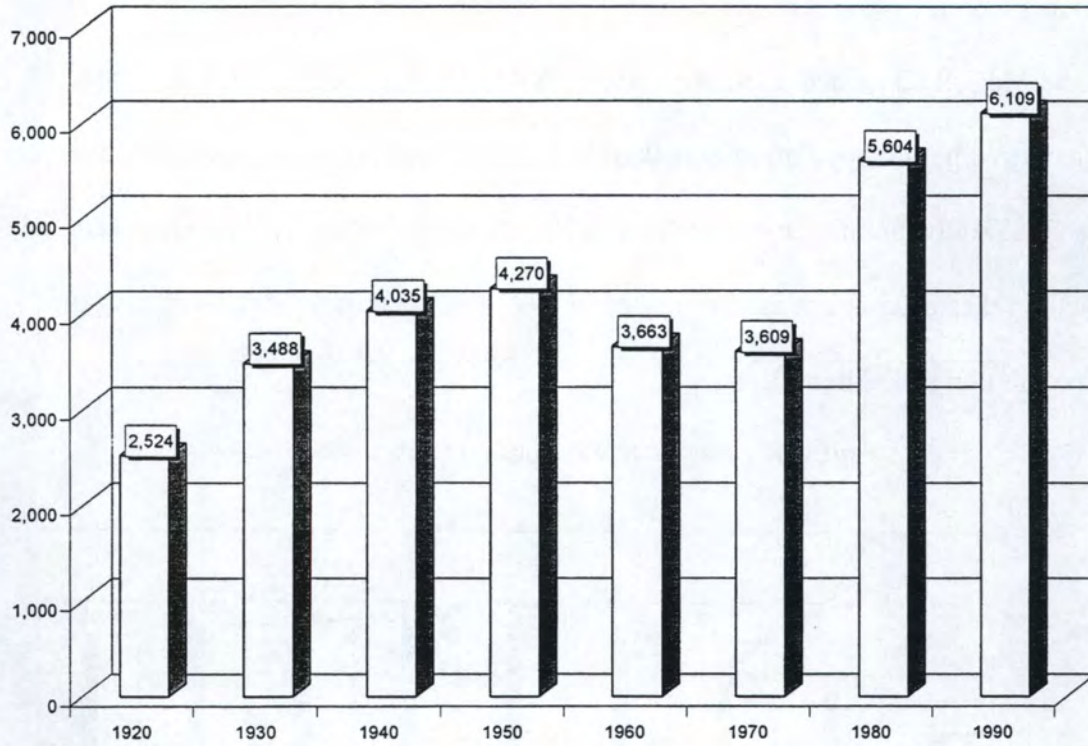
Two approaches were used to accomplish this task. First, extensive interviews were conducted with local people about how the local economy works and what they saw as the important social changes taking place in the county. Second, a telephone survey was conducted to examine respondent attitudes toward their community, the issues that concern local people and attitudes toward the management of the local resources that form the major portion of the economic base.

## **3. Population Characteristics**

The population of Valley County has fluctuated since 1920. Population grew during the 1920's and 1930's, peaked about 1950, then declined until the 1970's [Figure 1]. In terms of the rate of population change, the 1920's saw growth of over 38% [Figure 2]. However, the 1970's brought explosive growth of well over 55%. This rate decreased considerably in the 1980's.



**Figure 1: Valley County Population Trends in Census Years Since 1920.**



**Figure 2: Valley County Rates of Annual Population Change Since 1920.**

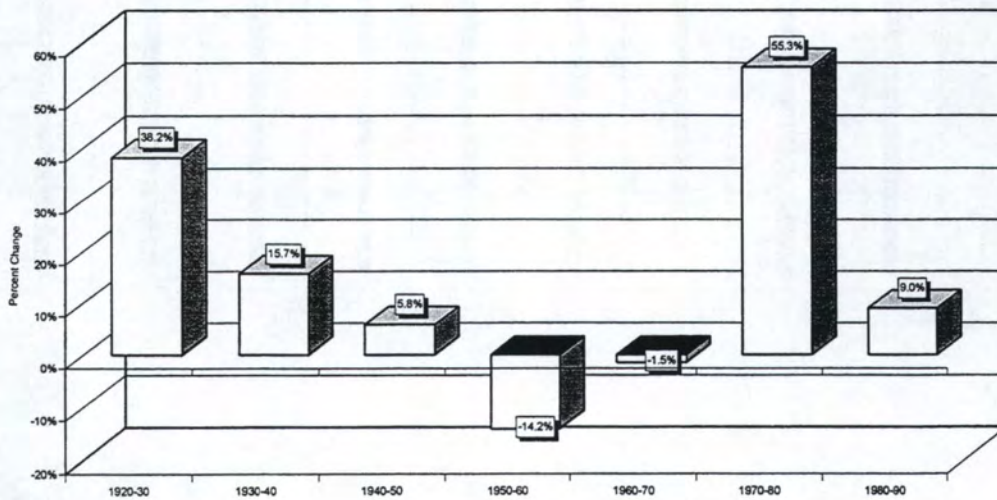
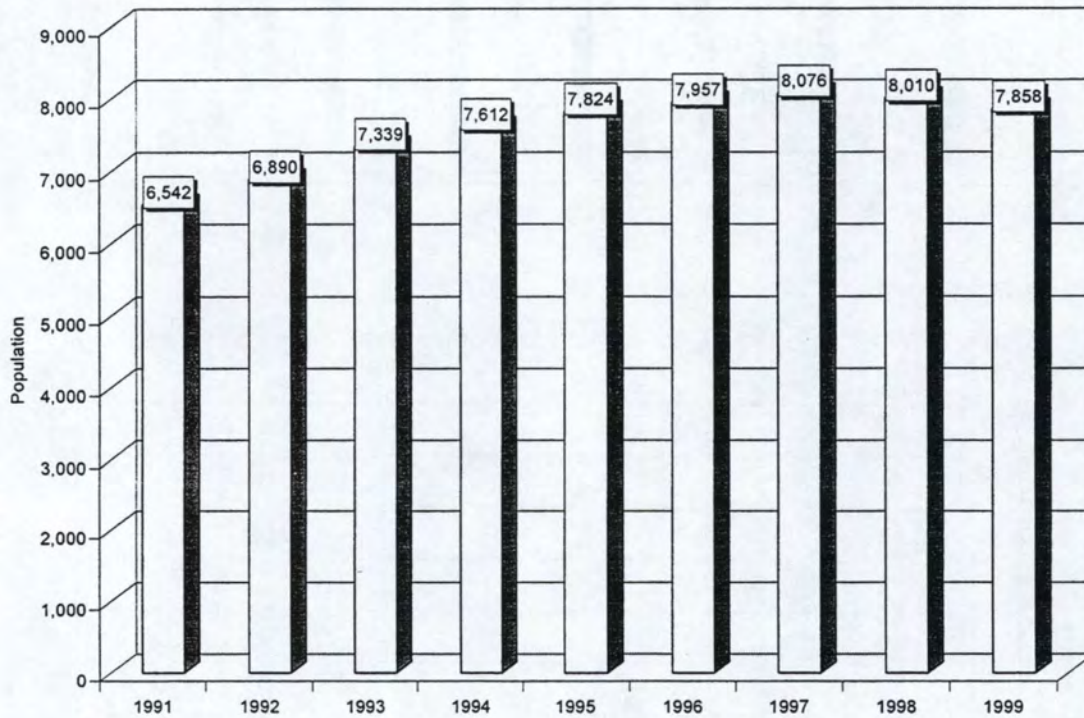


Figure 3 shows that Valley County population grew over 16% from 1991 until 1999. The annual rate of population change across the last decade is presented in Figure 4. On an annual



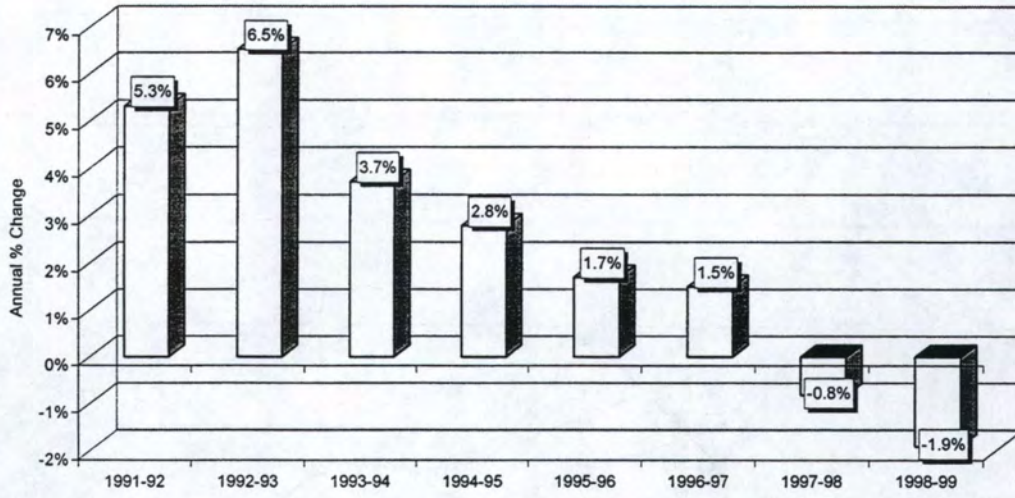
basis, growth in Valley County peaked in 1993 then slowed down by 1997. The county lost population in 1998 and 1999. The same trends hold for the cities within the county. Cascade, Donnelly and McCall all gained population from 1990 to 1999, as seen in Figure 5. McCall grew the fastest with total population growth of 23%. The unincorporated areas of the county grew more (13.5%) than either Donnelly city (11.2%) or Cascade city (7.8%). On an annual basis, growth in these communities also peaked in 1993 and is currently declining. Again, McCall's population is declining least.

**Figure 3: Valley County Population 1991 to 1999.**

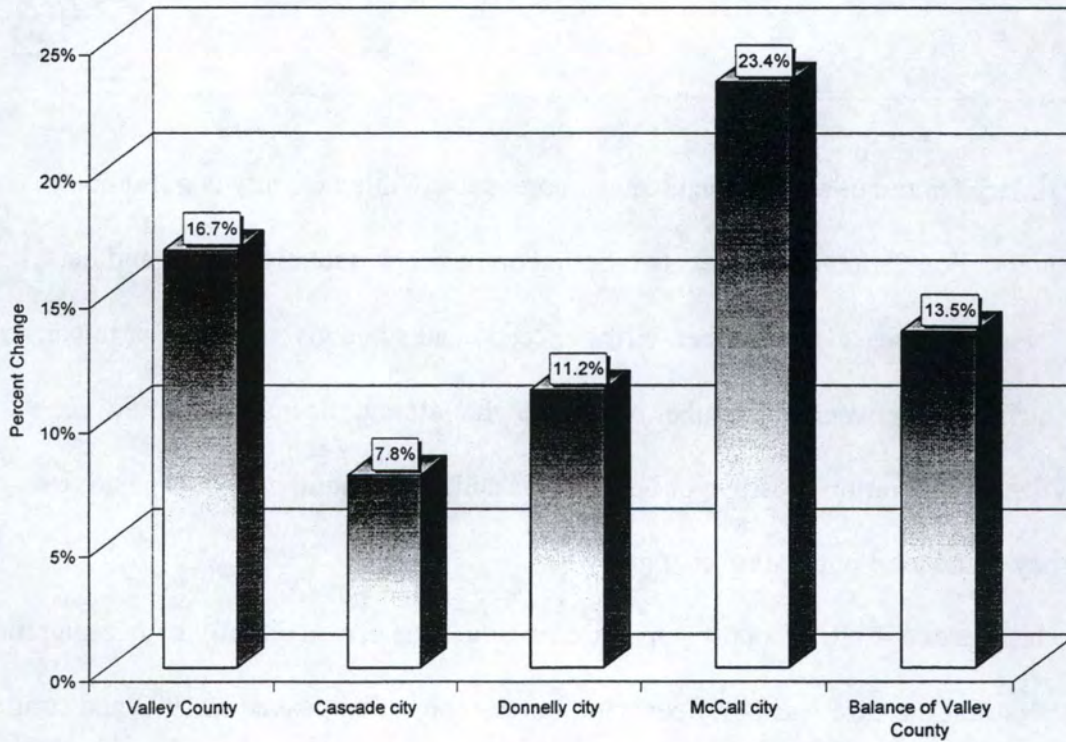




**Figure 4: Valley County Rates of Annual Population Change Since 1991.**

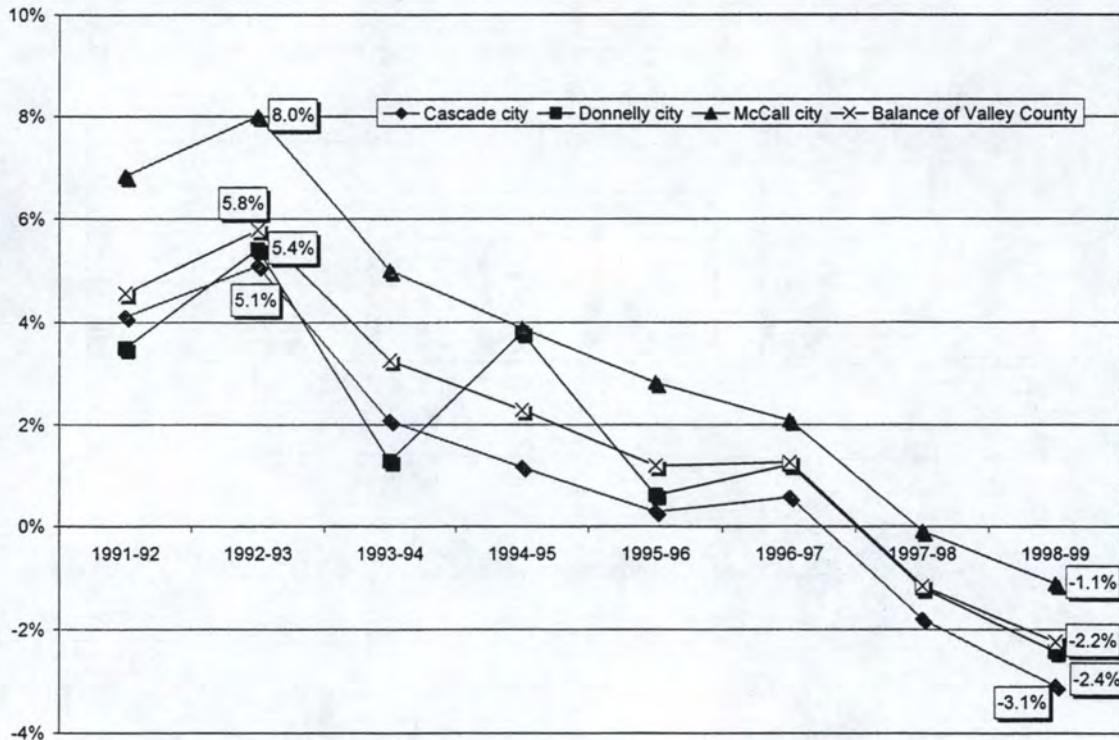


**Figure 5: Valley County Communities - Population 1990 to 1999.**





**Figure 6: Valley County Communities: Rates of Annual Population Change 1991 to 1999.**

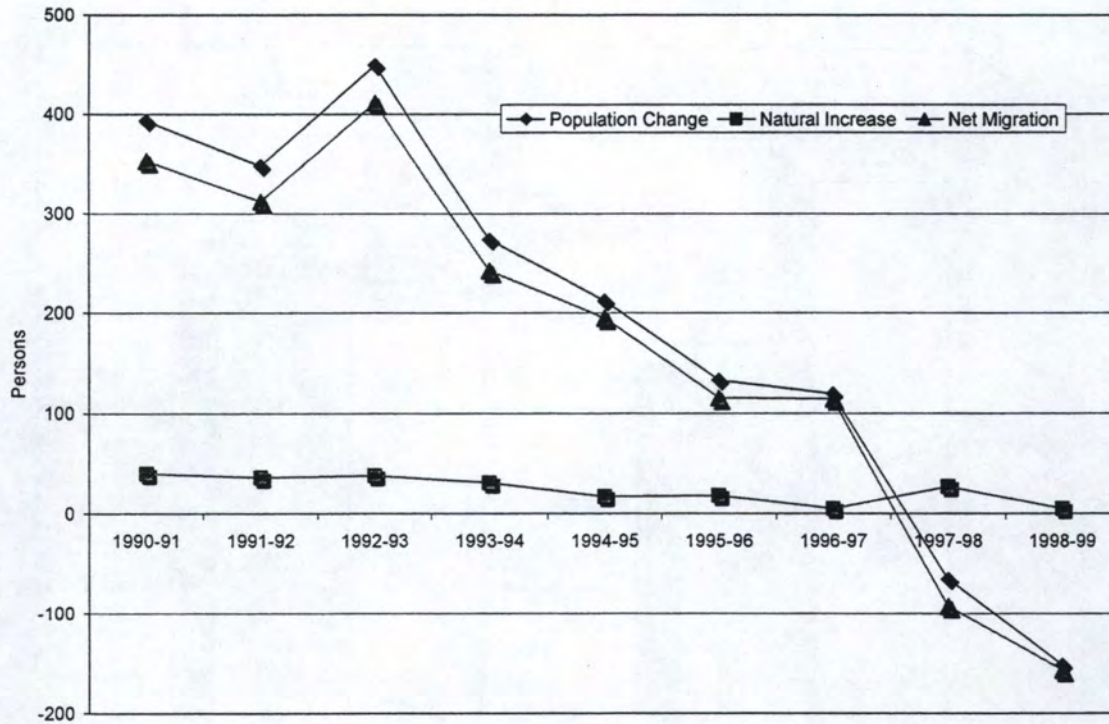


The primary feature of population change in areas like Valley County is migration to and from the county. Population change has two basic components: natural increase and net migration. Natural increase occurs when births exceed deaths in a given year. Net migration is simply the difference between the number of people who left and the number of new people who arrived. When net migration (positive or negative) is added to natural increase (positive or negative) they equal total population change.

In the last decade, Valley County population change was driven directly by net migration [Figure 7]. Natural increase was fairly constant, but net migration peaked in 1993 and continued to be positive until 1996. Net migration was negative by 1997 – more people left than moved into the county. At the same time, the natural increase had slowed to almost zero. This trend makes characteristics of both in-migrants and out-migrants of great interest.



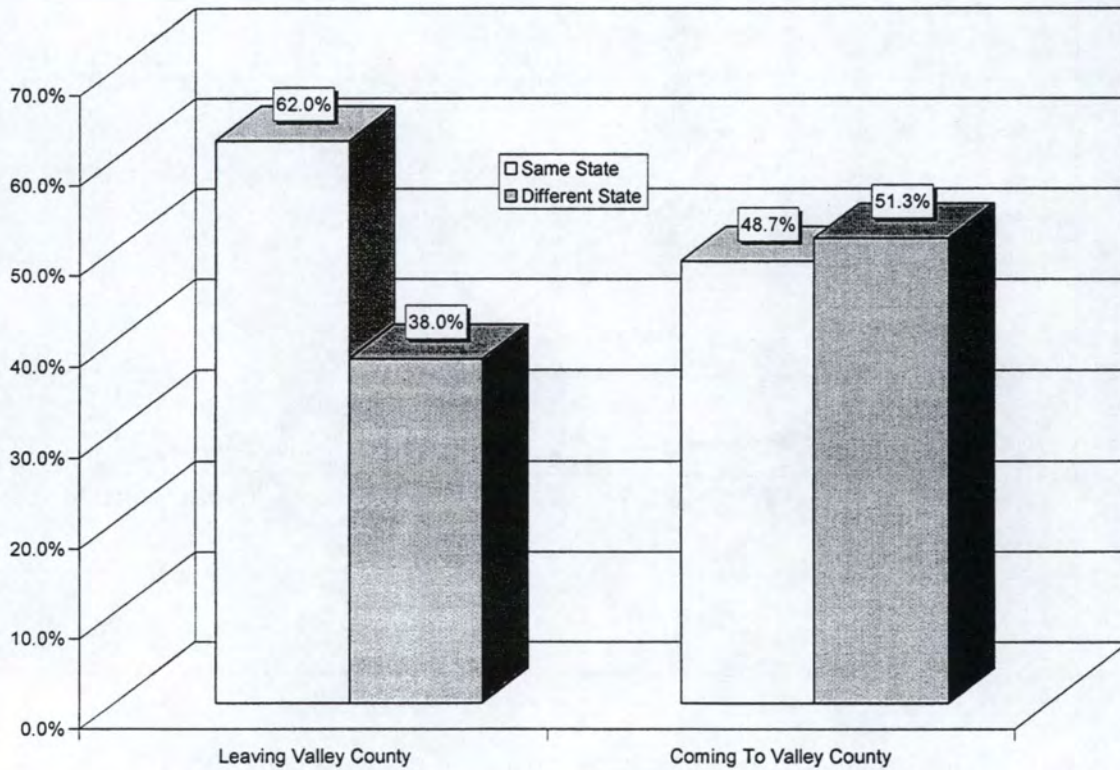
**Figure 7: Valley County Components of Population Change 1990 to 1999.**



The only available data concerning the characteristics of migrants comes from the Internal Revenue Service State-to-State Migration files. These files account for migration by following the location from which tax returns were filed in adjacent years. If someone moved, their tax records will show from where and to where their address changed. According to the IRS, about 62% of those leaving Valley County went to another county within Idaho while only 49% came from counties within Idaho [Figure 8]. Over half of the in-migrants in 1997 came from other states.



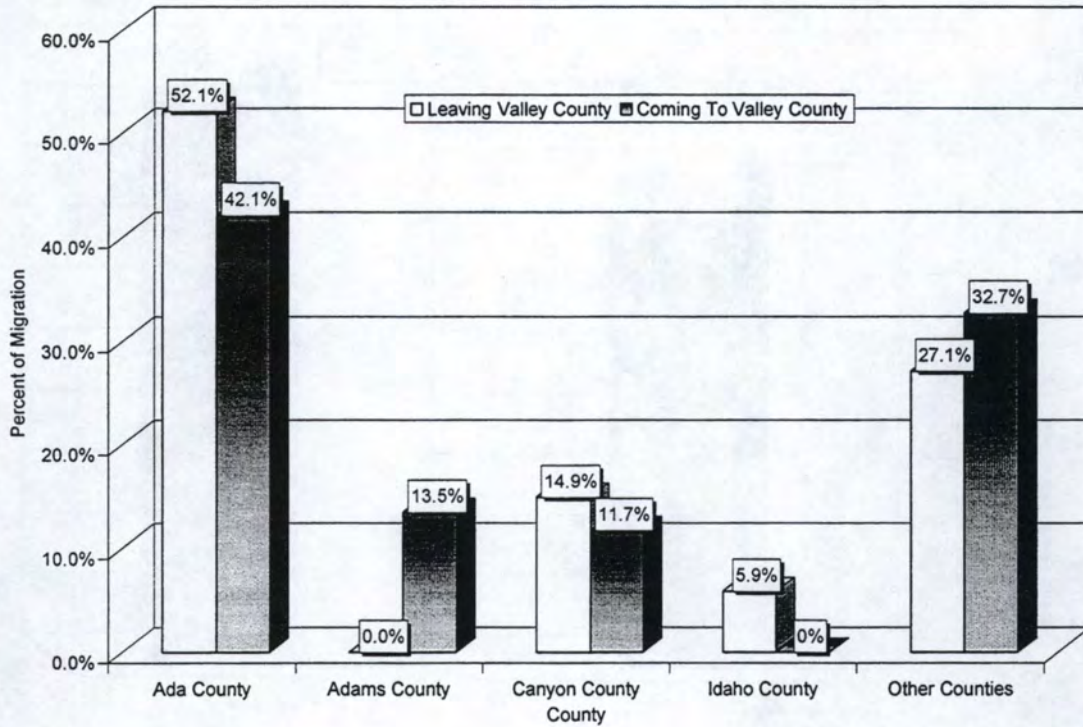
**Figure 8: Valley County Migration by Source and Destination 1997.**



Ada County provided over 42% of the in-migrants and absorbed more than half of the out-migrants from Valley County in 1997 [Figure 9]. Canyon County absorbed almost 15% of those leaving and provided almost 12% of those coming into the Valley County. Interestingly, no one left Valley County for Adams County, but Adams County provided over 13% of in-migrants in 1997. An opposite relationship held for Idaho County.



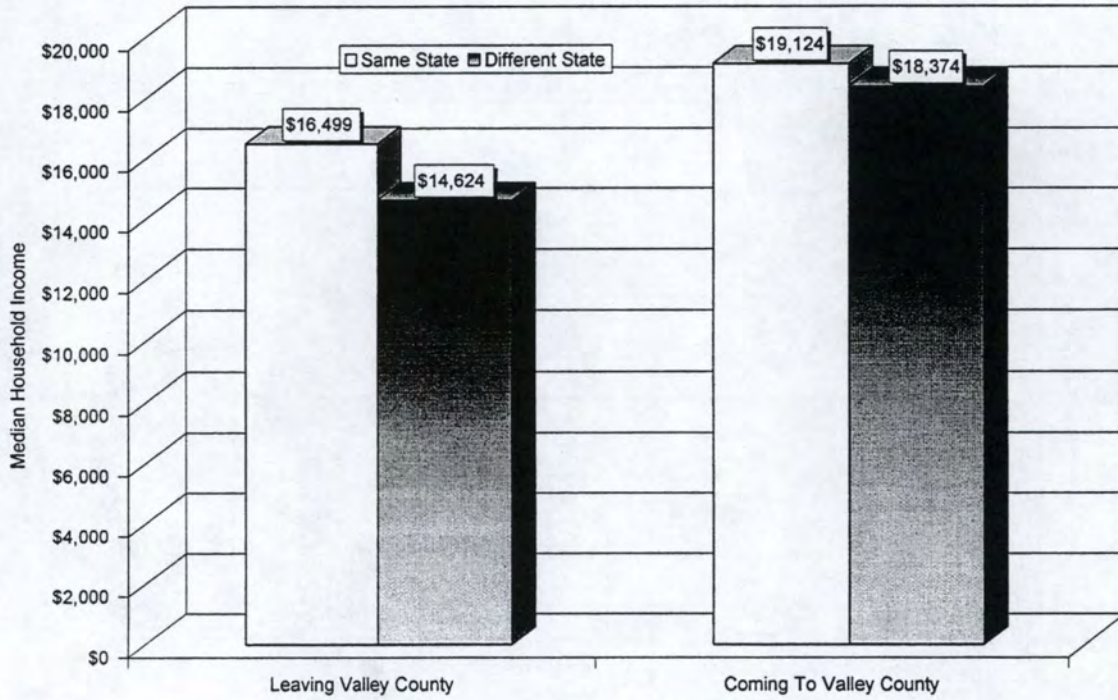
**Figure 9: Sources and Destinations Within Idaho of Valley County Migrants 1997.**



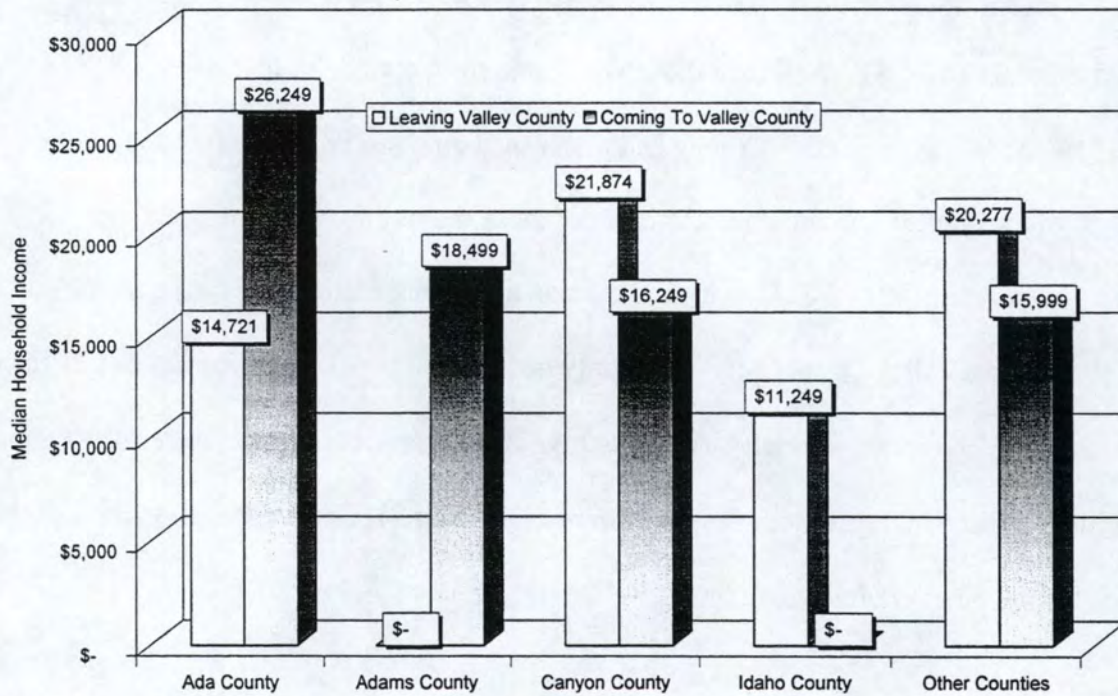
In general, people moving into Valley County from within Idaho had higher median household incomes (over \$19,000) than those who came from outside of Idaho (over \$18,000) [Figure 10]. Those leaving Valley County had lower median household incomes than those migrating into the county. Again, characteristics of those moving from within Idaho are important. In-migrants from Ada County had median household incomes of well over \$26,000 while those leaving Valley County for Ada County had median household incomes of less than \$15,000 [Figure 11]. Those who left Valley County for Canyon County were better off (almost \$22,000) than those who came from Canyon County (just over \$16,000). The same relationship holds true for the other counties in Idaho as well.



**Figure 10: Median Household Income of Valley County Migrants 1997.**



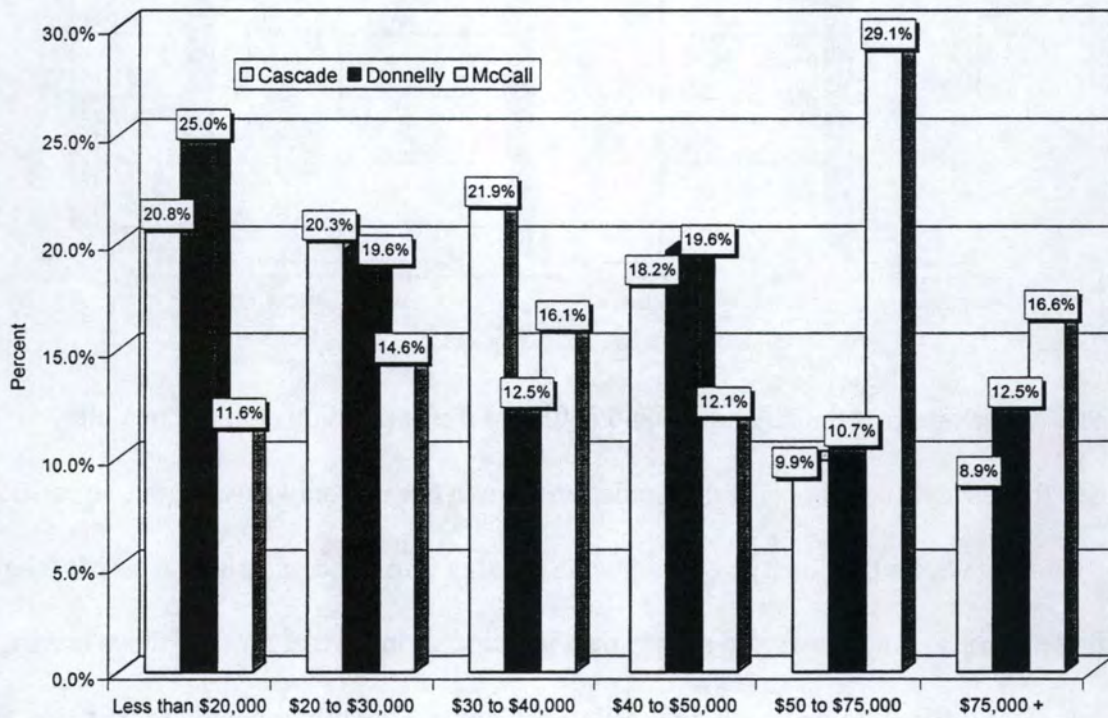
**Figure 11: Median Household Income of Valley County Migrants Within Idaho 1997.**





The Valley County social survey provides information about income distributions within the county. The distribution of household income is not equivalent across communities. Figure 12 displays the distribution of household incomes among survey respondents. Over 40% of households in Cascade and over 45% in Donnelly reported incomes of less than \$30,000 per year. Over 46% of households in McCall reported incomes of more than \$50,000 per year.

**Figure 12: Valley County Household Income by Community.**

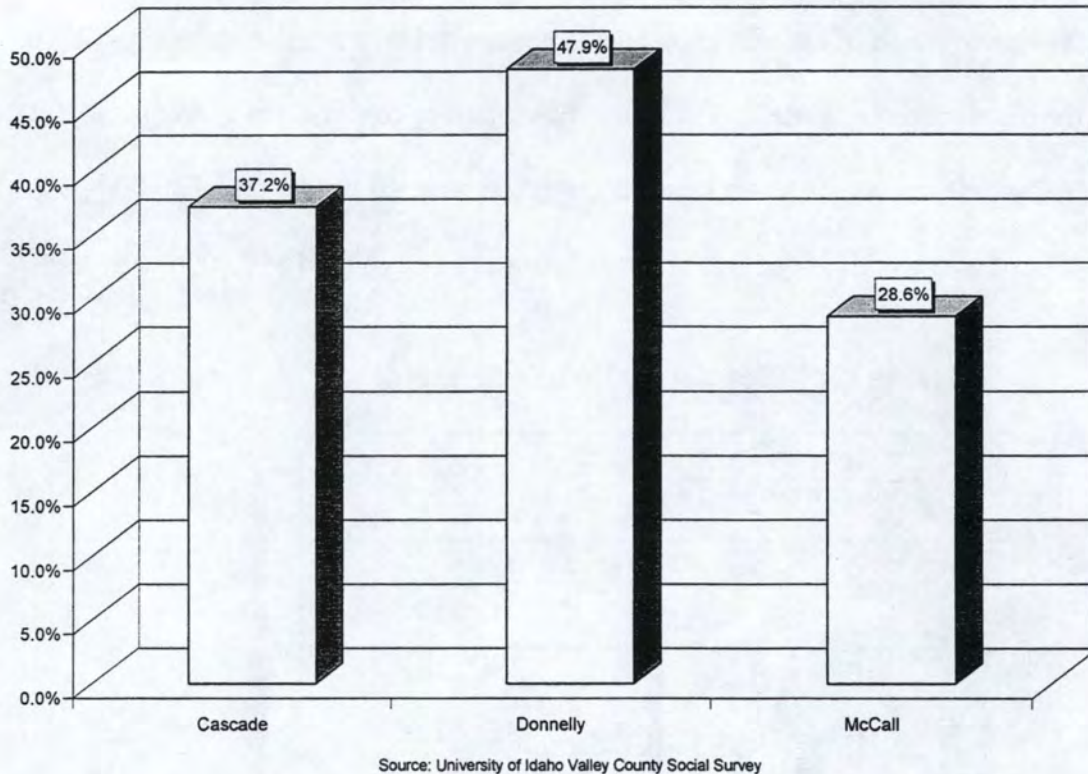


Source: University of Idaho Valley County Social Survey

There are a considerable number of retired persons living in Valley County as well. Figure 13 shows the distribution of retired respondents in the social survey. Almost half of all respondents in Donnelly, over one third of those in Cascade and a quarter in McCall classified themselves as retired.



**Figure 13: Valley County Percent of Retired Respondents.**



So how do we interpret the magnitude and nature of the population changes in Valley County over the last decade? In general, population growth has not only slowed, but populations are actually falling within the county. Many people moving into the county are better off than many of those leaving. Interviews and survey data indicate strongly that most of those leaving do so because it is difficult to make a living in Valley County. Wealthier people retire to the area from Ada County, and younger people try to get a job in Canyon or Ada Counties. Household income in McCall is significantly greater than other communities. This dynamic is the primary social force affecting Valley County. If younger people cannot afford to stay, and those moving in must be almost independently wealthy to stay for any period of time, everything from school finance to local labor markets are directly affected.

#### **4. Social Networks and Community Attitudes**

How social and economic change affects communities depends to a great extent on how



those communities are organized socially. To examine this we use two social indicators from survey responses: social networks and attitudes toward a community. Differences in these indicators often help explain how social change is channeled within a community. For example, people with many friends in their community and a set of attitudes similar to their neighbors are likely to feel affected when their neighbor's economic or social circumstances change. The data for these indicators come from a telephone survey of Valley County households conducted by the University of Idaho Social Science Research Unit in the Spring of 1999. The sample yielded 540 completed responses with a response rate of 64%. The Appendix contains a brief explanation of the survey results and a demographic profile of the respondents.

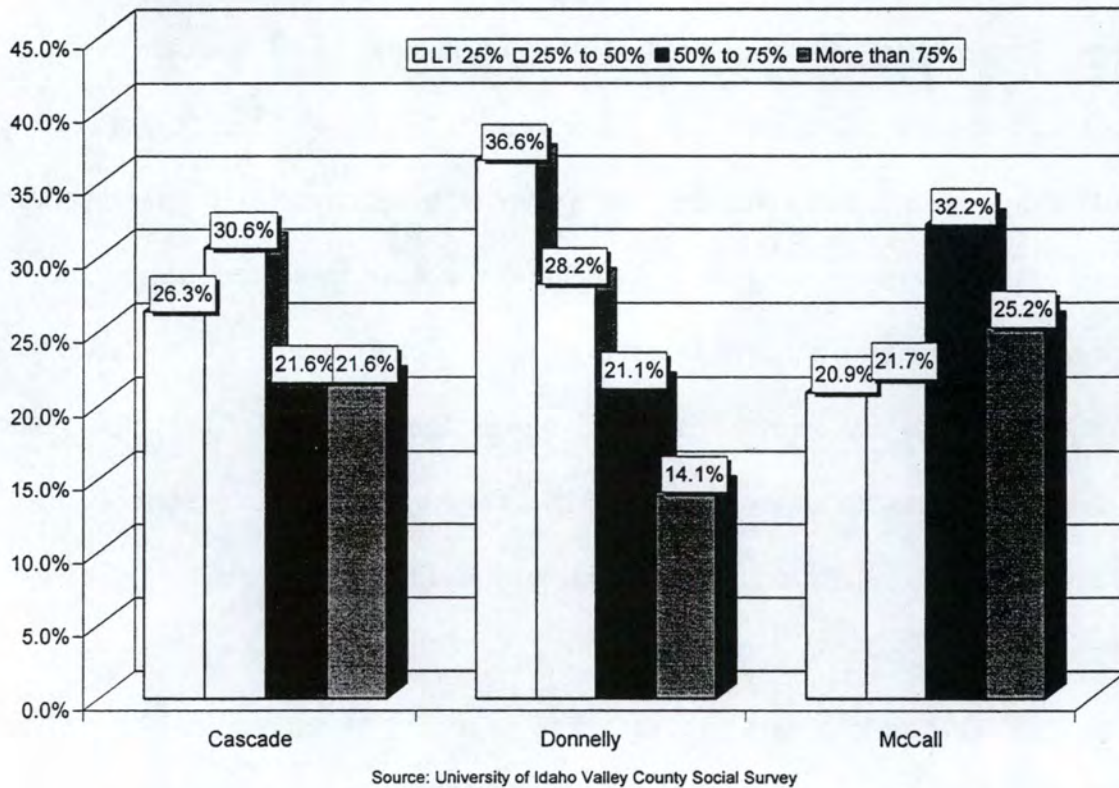
#### *4.1. Social Networks*

Social networks are important because they are relations between people. These relations help determine the social attitudes, beliefs and ultimately the actions of people living in a community. Social relations conducted through social interaction are based on the number and strength of social ties to family and friends, and produce feelings toward the community that can be measured.

The most important single network measure used in community research is "density of acquaintanship." This is measured by the proportion of close friends a respondent has living in their community. In theory, the higher the proportion of close friends in your community, the more likely you are to be involved and attached to that community. Figure 14 displays the density of acquaintanship for each of the three communities in Valley County. McCall displays the highest density of acquaintanship with 25% of respondents having more than 75% of their close friends living in the same community.



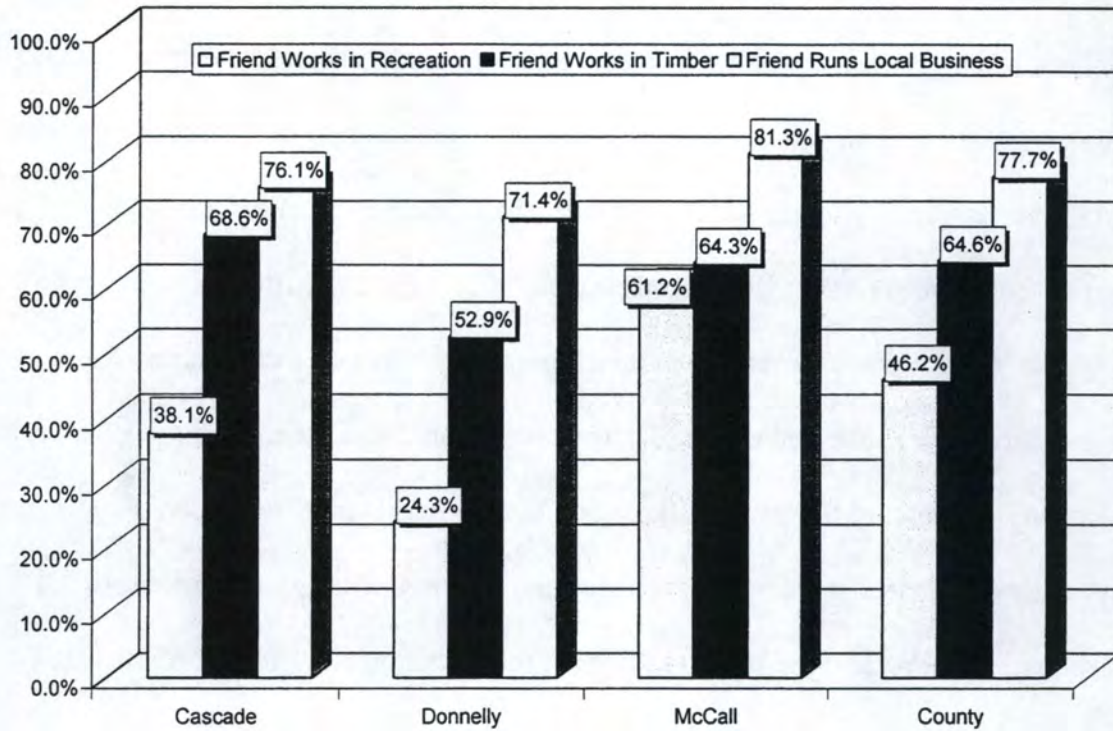
**Figure 14: Density of Acquaintanship in Valley County Communities.**



Additional measures of social networks were also employed. Respondents were asked if at least one close friend worked in the recreation and timber industries, or ran a local business. These connections indicate how people are socially integrated into the local economic structure. Figure 15 indicates that a significant portion of respondents in each community had friends running a local business. People in McCall clearly had greater connection to the recreation industry. Over 68% of respondents in Cascade had a friend in the timber industry. Given the decline in timber in Valley County, it is curious that 64% of the respondents in McCall claimed at least one close friend in that industry.



**Figure 15: Valley County Social Networks in the Local Economy by Community.**



Source: University of Idaho Valley County Social Survey

These network measures indicate the degree to which local people have local ties, and how prevalent two types of economic activities are in those networks. They provide a foundation for examining other important social indicators because they offer a glimpse at the structure of the communities, or what is at stake socially if changes occur in the local economy.

#### **4.2. Community Social Attitudes**

The communities in Valley County are very different in terms of their economies and social structures. We used a social survey of Valley County residents to examine a variety of attitudes and beliefs about their community and how it works. In the following sections we focus on three pairs of attitudes: cohesion and attachment; economic and quality of life issues; and public land preservation and access attitudes.



#### **4.2.1. Cohesion and Attachment**

Cohesion is high when social bonds between people produce shared beliefs about the group and common behavioral assumptions about others in that group. In essence, people come to see themselves as part of a larger social group that shares their own beliefs and actions. Thus, people do not feel isolated or anonymous in their community, and can participate actively in community life. When people participate in their community based on a community feeling, cohesion is ordering the nature and extent of that participation. Attachment is high when people feel good about being part of the larger social group in their particular community. People with high community attachment are less likely to leave and are more willing to contribute to the community because they value the social relations in that community. These attributes of communities are closely correlated.

We created a general social scale to measure cohesion and attachment using survey items from the general rural community literature (See references). Respondents were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed with each statement. Table 1 presents the frequencies for Valley County on these survey items.



**Table 1:** Community Cohesion and Attachment Attitudes in Valley County.

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
<b>Community Cohesion</b>					
You regularly stop and talk with people in your community.	46.8%	48.3%	2.4%	2.6%	0.0%
You feel like you belong to this community.	43.7%	47.4%	4.1%	4.3%	0.4%
You feel you can borrow things and exchange favors with your neighbors.	42.0%	49.1%	4.9%	3.1%	0.8%
You feel you can visit with your neighbors in their homes.	38.6%	54.7%	3.7%	2.2%	0.8%
You feel loyal to the people in your community.	37.8%	53.5%	5.7%	2.8%	0.2%
You like to think of yourself as similar to the people who live in your community.	23.0%	54.6%	11.1%	9.9%	1.4%
You rarely have neighbors over to your house to visit.	6.1%	32.1%	8.3%	35.7%	17.8%
<b>Community Attachment</b>					
Overall, you are very attracted to life in your community	44.2%	47.3%	4.9%	2.9%	0.6%
You plan to remain a resident of this community for a number of years.	42.1%	43.7%	4.0%	7.0%	3.2%
Given the opportunity, you would like to move out of this community.	5.0%	12.7%	10.7%	41.4%	30.2%

We break the attitudes into two different categories. First, community cohesion attitudes examine factors such as how respondents related to their neighbors and their general feelings about the community. The second group address attachment respondents felt toward their community. Most people in Valley County expressed attitudes indicating that they can “neighbor” well in their communities: over 80% at least agreed that they regularly stop and talk with and exchange favors with their neighbors. Over 90% of the respondents feel like they belong in their community. Similarly, over 90% of the respondents agreed that they were attracted to life in their community. Fully 85% planned to remain a resident of the community.

These survey items are summed into additive scales to measure cohesion and attachment for each community. The numerical scales are the sum of the response into a single score. The range and interpretation of each scale used in this analysis are presented in the Appendix. Mean cohesion and attachment scale scores for Cascade, Donnelly and McCall are presented in Table 2. Respondents in Cascade and Donnelly displayed a slightly stronger belief that their



community is cohesive than did respondents in McCall. This difference was statistically significant for Cascade at the  $\alpha = 0.05$  level. Similarly, respondents in Cascade and Donnelly displayed a slightly stronger attachment to their community than did respondents in McCall. This difference was also statistically significant for Cascade at the  $\alpha = 0.05$  level.

**Table 2:** Community Cohesion and Attachment Scales by Community.

	<i>Cohesion</i>	<i>Attachment</i>
Cascade	20.8 <sup>m**</sup>	12.6 <sup>m**</sup>
Donnelly	20.7	12.2
McCall	20.2	12.0
County	20.5	12.3

m = differs from McCall; c = differs from Cascade; d = differs from Donnelly  
 \*\* = L.S.D. at  $\alpha = 0.05$ ; \* = L.S.D. at  $\alpha = 0.10$

For the most part, community interviews supported these conclusions. Every informant in McCall indicated that they loved the place and the people there. However, informants also pointed consistently to the difficulties McCall has in coming together as a community to make decisions. One person referred to the town as “splinter-group central.” Thus individuals feel good about their neighbors and are very attached to McCall, but there is an undercurrent that, at times, these attitudes fail to produce actual social cohesion. Informants in Donnelly and Cascade uniformly stated that when things need to be accomplished, people could put their differences aside.

#### 4.2.2. Economic Issues and Quality of Life Concerns

A wide variety of issues confront communities in Idaho. Survey work over the last ten years has produced a set of concerns that accurately correlate with community social indicators. Respondents were asked if a particular issue was a serious concern, moderate concern, slight concern or not a concern. The frequencies for Valley County are presented in Table 3.



**Table 3: Concern for Economic and Quality of Life Issues in Valley County.**

	<i> Serious Concern</i>	<i> Moderate Concern</i>	<i> Slight Concern</i>	<i> Not a Concern</i>
<b>Economic Issues</b>				
Availability of good jobs for young people	70.7%	21.7%	4.4%	3.2%
Maintenance of current economic base	52.7%	32.4%	7.1%	7.9%
Maintenance of family and individual income levels	51.9%	33.7%	6.5%	7.9%
Development of local businesses with diverse products	40.4%	37.4%	9.8%	12.5%
<b>Quality of Life Issues</b>				
Protecting the quality of local streams and rivers	55.7%	28.6%	7.5%	8.1%
Quality of local drinking water	41.3%	17.4%	10.7%	30.6%
Development of local outdoor recreation facilities	25.5%	37.6%	13.2%	23.6%
The general appearance of our community	25.2%	40.6%	16.7%	17.4%
Development of local utilities such as power or phone lines, cable access	13.0%	30.6%	18.2%	38.2%

The community concerns are separated into two categories: economic issues and quality of life concerns. Economic issues were a serious concern for most respondents. Over 70% felt that good jobs for young people is a serious concern facing their community. Over 50% of the respondents were seriously concerned about maintaining the current economic base and family income levels. Quality of life concerns were led by the protecting the quality of local streams and rivers – over 55% of the respondents thought this was a serious concern. The other serious quality of life concern was the quality of local drinking water.

As with the cohesion and attachment attitudes, we created general attitudinal scales to measure concern for economic and quality of life issues. Mean scores on these scales for Cascade, Donnelly and McCall are presented in Table 4. All the communities felt strongly that economic issues were a serious concern. There is no significant difference between communities on this scale. Respondents in Cascade and Donnelly displayed less concern for the quality of life issues than did respondents in McCall. This difference was statistically significant at the  $\alpha = 0.05$  level.



**Table 4:** Economic and Quality of Life Scales by Community.

	<i>Economic Issues</i>	<i>Quality of Life</i>
Cascade	10.4	9.4 <sup>m**</sup>
Donnelly	10.1	8.9 <sup>m**</sup>
McCall	10.4	10.1
County	10.4	9.7

m = differs from McCall; c = differs from Cascade; d = differs from Donnelly  
\*\* = L.S.D. at  $\alpha = 0.05$ ; \* = L.S.D. at  $\alpha = 0.10$

The communities differed mostly with respect to water quality and community appearance issues. These were a serious concern for a larger proportion of McCall respondents. Again, interview data backs this up. McCall sees itself as a tourism destination community. Much of its attraction is the quality of its water resources such as Payette Lake, and the community's general appearance. The concerns of people in Cascade and Donnelly about Cascade Reservoir were no less serious, but they did not combine their concerns with other issues in the scale.

#### **4.2.3. Public Land Preservation and Access Attitudes**

The most significant differences between communities arose over public land preservation and access. The social and economic foundations of Valley County communities are tied directly to public land resources. Current and historic use of these lands for recreation, timber, grazing, mining and other uses continues to shape these communities. The last jobs at the timber mill in Cascade are an economic and cultural touchstone for many people in the county. Many economic development options open to the county include using these lands for one purpose or another. Thus, attitudes toward these resources are often key to support for or conflict over the future of the county.

Respondents were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed with a set of statements concerning public land resources. The order in which the questions were asked and the question form ['enough' / 'more'] were randomized to insure a



mixed sequence. The attitude items were separated into two categories: preservation attitudes and access attitudes. The frequencies for Valley County are presented in Table 5. Over 80% of the respondents felt that enough land is legally designated wilderness in Idaho and that we had sufficient roadless areas. They felt less strongly about wildlife protection, state parks and wild and scenic rivers. Almost 60% of the respondents felt we needed more timber harvest on public lands. They were not supportive of additional non-motorized recreation opportunities on public lands. However, over 48% felt that we did not need additional roads to natural areas.

**Table 5: Public Land Preservation and Access Attitudes in Valley County.**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>Preservation Attitudes</b>					
We have enough legally designated wilderness areas in Idaho.	31.9%	49.1%	6.2%	10.2%	2.5%
We have enough roadless areas in Idaho	26.3%	54.0%	7.2%	9.1%	3.4%
We have enough wildlife protection in Idaho.	16.6%	52.6%	8.8%	17.3%	4.8%
We have enough state parks in Idaho.	11.5%	52.2%	14.2%	19.8%	2.3%
We need more legally designated wild and scenic rivers in Idaho.	8.8%	22.8%	18.0%	37.5%	13.0%
<b>Access Attitudes</b>					
We need more timber harvest on public lands.	23.6%	35.4%	14.1%	19.7%	7.2%
We need more roads to access natural areas in Idaho.	12.4%	26.4%	12.4%	38.2%	10.5%
We need more non-motorized recreation opportunities on public lands.	10.4%	21.7%	15.4%	34.0%	18.6%
We need less livestock grazing on public lands.	9.7%	18.5%	22.6%	36.8%	12.5%
We need less mining on public lands.	6.6%	22.8%	29.2%	31.5%	9.9%

The differences between communities with respect to these attitudes are striking. Again, we created general attitudinal scales to measure how strongly people feel about preservation and access. Mean scale scores for Cascade, Donnelly and McCall are presented in Table 6. Attitudes of respondents in Cascade and Donnelly about preservation differ significantly from those in McCall. The pattern of responses in McCall indicates stronger support for additional preservation of public lands. The pattern of responses in Cascade and Donnelly indicates much



weaker support for additional preservation.

The opposite of preservation is not necessarily access since almost any form of preservation on public land includes various types of access. Nonetheless, there is reason to believe that attitudes toward one are negatively correlated with the other. This holds true in Valley County. Cascade and Donnelly displayed significantly stronger attitudes toward maintaining or expanding various types of access to public lands than did McCall.

Interview results support a conclusion that this is a very complex, thorny issue. On one hand, informants clearly understood that the economy of Valley County depends to a very great extent on maintaining unspoiled experiences such as backcountry and whitewater recreation. On the other hand, they also understood that this relationship, while vital, was not producing the kind of jobs and futures that they wished for themselves and their children. To some, more preservation could produce a better economic future and to others only more access offers a better life for the community.

Simple dichotomies like this do not capture the nuance sufficiently. For example, many informants saw the two-way nature of preservation in economic terms. People who made their living from helping tourists gain access to the wilderness were also worried about management changes such as airstrip closures eroding their livelihoods. In addition, rivers such as the Payette were portrayed as almost saturated with boaters, capping, if not reducing, growth potential for recreation dollars to flow into Valley County. People, even those supporting additional preservation, saw that public land management policies necessarily have economic and social impacts on places like Valley County, but they disagree on who wins and who loses.



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6. Appendix: Survey Method and Demographics for Valley County Social Survey

1. Survey Statistics

Total Sample	1600
Ineligible	759
Eligible	841
Completed	540
Response Rate	64.2%

2. Scale Attributes for All Scales in Valley County Social Assessment.

Scale	Interpretation	Scale Range
<i>Cohesion</i>	Higher = See community as more cohesive	5 to 25
<i>Attachment</i>	Higher = Express stronger attachment to community	3 to 15
<i>Preservation</i>	Higher = Wants more preservation of public lands	5 to 25
<i>Access</i>	Higher = Wants more access and uses of public lands	5 to 25
<i>Economic Issues</i>	Higher = Greater concern with local economic issues	1 to 13
<i>Quality of Life</i>	Higher = Greater concern with local factors affecting quality of life	1 to 16

3. Respondents by Community

Community	Percent of Respondents
Cascade	43.5%
Donnelly	13.6%
McCall	42.9%

4. Gender

Gender	Percent
Male	45.7%
Female	54.3%

5. Age

Average Age
54.5 years



6. Ethnicity

Ethnic Group	Percent
White	97.2%
Hispanic	0.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.6%
American Indian	0.2%
Other	1.5%

7. Marital Status

Status	Percent
Single (never married)	11.7%
Married	73.4%
Partner	0.9%
Separated	0.7%
Divorced	7.4%
Widowed	5.8%

8. Number of Dependents (including elderly)

Dependents	Percent
0	64.1%
1	12.8%
2	13.0%
3	5.7%
4	2.8%
5	1.3%
6	0.4%

9. Education

Level	Percent
Less than high school	4.8%
High school graduate	31.9%
Some college voc. training	30.2%
College graduate	23.1%
Some graduate work	3.3%
Advanced degree	6.7%



10. Size of Community Until Age 18

Community Size	Percent
Rural on farm	15.2%
Rural not on a farm	6.2%
Small town 2,500	21.2%
2,500 to 10,000	13.7%
10,000 to 50,000	15.7%
50,000 to 100,000	9.2%
100,000 or more	18.9%

11. "Do you claim Valley County as your permanent residence?"

Residence	Percent
Yes	90.2%
No, but at least own property	9.8%