

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **Methodology**

## **Background and Objectives**

A group of about 40 Snohomish County community partners collaborated on a multifaceted approach to assess the needs and assets of Snohomish County. Community partners included Snohomish County Human Services, Snohomish Health District, United Way of Snohomish County, Healthy Communities for Snohomish County, City of Everett and other organizations representing various sectors of our county. (For complete listing of Community Partners, see the Appendix.)

The objectives of the *Snohomish County Counts* project included an assessment of the county's growth and changes since the last assessment done in 1995 and a current assessment of community strengths and concerns. Another aim of this project was to assist community members in the transition of the information and findings into action plans that result in beneficial county change.

## **Data Collection**

To make comparisons and identify changes in Snohomish County since the 1995 assessment, a variety of existing data sources were identified. Relevant data from these sources were compiled and summarized to identify changes and trends in Snohomish County over time. These data are summarized in the *Snohomish County Counts* Data Collection Work Group Report.

To gather current information about the strengths and assets of Snohomish County, various surveys were conducted of Snohomish County residents, key leaders and informants. Four survey methods were used: 1) a population-based random telephone survey of Snohomish County residents, 2) a non-random survey of non-English speaking residents, 3) focus groups of special populations, and 4) a mailed survey to key informants and community leaders. All surveys were conducted between September 20 and November 7, 2001.

## **Comparability of 1995 and 2001 Survey Data**

Results from this 2001 *Snohomish County Counts* surveys cannot be directly compared to the 1995 assessment survey. Even though the topics included in the 2001 survey were similar to those in the 1995 assessment survey, the 2001 survey was re-designed in the way questions were asked, what questions were asked, and the response scale.

## **Random Telephone Survey of Snohomish County Residents**

### **Sampling**

A population-based telephone survey of county residents 18 years and older was designed to collect representative information regarding the perceptions and opinions of Snohomish County residents. A total sample size of 1200 total households with zip codes in Snohomish County was identified, and phone numbers were randomly selected.

The county was divided, or stratified, into three regions using zip codes. These three areas were: Everett, Marysville, and the Highway 99 corridor; the North and East area; and View and South Central area. (See map in Appendix, p. 240). These areas reflect different geographies, population densities, urbanization, and poverty levels. Four hundred (400) households from each of the three regions were contacted.

### **Probability of Error**

The sample size of 1200 provides results that have a  $\pm 2.8\%$  margin of error based on an estimate of 50% prevalence. Thus, if the estimate of a specific community response was 50% agreement, there is a 95% probability that the expected true value would be between 47.2% and 52.8%. From each of the three regions a sample of 400 households allows for a  $\pm 5\%$  margin of error.

### **Weighting**

Weighting is a procedure that adjusts for unequal selection probabilities and differences in the age and sex distribution of the sample and the population. All results in this report were adjusted using 2000 census data for age and gender at the regional level defined by zip codes. In addition, because multiple phones and the number of adults 18 and older in the household can affect the probability of a person answering the survey, the number of adults and multiple telephones in a household were also taken into account. Thus, the data for each respondent were weighted to reflect the population of each region so that the results will represent the county wide adult population.

## Questionnaire

The telephone survey consisted of questions or statements designed to capture residents' opinions about the assets, strengths and issues of Snohomish County. Question topics included: the environment, transportation, leisure, safety, health, housing, economy, and education. (For complete questionnaire, see Appendix, p. 242.) Because the needs of youth are important in the community, multiple questions were asked within these various topics. However, in order to summarize the information on youth not only were results presented under the related topic they are also summarized in a special section within in the executive summary.

Survey participants were asked to respond to questions from two perspectives. The first part of the survey asked them to provide their opinions with respect to the community in which they lived. The second part of the survey asked participants to respond from their household point of view. Special questions were asked to learn how residents preferred to receive information and how they would define their community. A final section of the survey collected demographic information about the household and the respondents. Because the survey began one week after the tragic September 11 terrorism events, a question was added to determine how much their responses might have been affected by these events.

The majority of questions asked the respondent to reply on a 7-point scale, with '7' indicating "strongly agree" to '1' indicating "strongly disagree." Respondents were also given the option to indicate they did not know the answer, that it was not applicable, or they could refuse to answer the question.

A weighted (as described above) average or mean score was calculated to summarize the data with a single value. The average score was the sum of all scores divided by the total number of respondents answering the question. Respondents who did not answer were excluded from the average. In addition to the average score, the percentages of respondents that strongly agreed or disagreed was calculated to identify variations in the distribution of individual score points of the 1 to 7 scale. The total adds up to 100% and includes "don't know" responses and refusals. The 7-point scale was categorized into "strong agreement" (scores of 6 or 7), "no strong feeling" (scores of 3 to 5), and "strong disagreement" (scores of 1 and 2). In this report all results include the questions and score responses as asked during the interview. Most questions were designed to collect information with a positive statement. However, a few questions did include a negative statement. For example, the question "sewage or septic system failure is not a problem in my community" is stated with a negative. **Before comparing responses across questions or creating a composite score for topic areas, it is first necessary to reverse the scores of the negative questions.**

The survey also included three open-ended questions. Respondents were asked to identify two things they liked best about their community, the two biggest concerns they had about their community, and the two things they were most concerned about in their household. The responses to these questions were summarized and recoded into categories.

**Administration of Survey**

Gilmore Research Group (Seattle, WA) administered the survey using computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI). To avoid biased responses due to previous questions, the order of the questions using scales was randomized. All demographic questions remained at the end of the interview. The average length of the interview was 21.7 minutes. The overall response rate was 34% and varied by region. (See table below.) Overall in the county, household respondents who participated in the survey were 51% female, 32% were under 34 years old, 25% were 35-44, 19% were 55-64 and 12% were over 65 years of age, 65% married, 67% had more than a high school education and had a median income of \$57,655. (See Table A, page 157.) As described above any age and gender differences in sample survey respondents compared to the county population were adjusted for by weighting. However, with the low response rate of 34%, the results may not be representative of the county population if respondents differ in their responses compared to non-respondents. Also, the results represent only those households with a telephone and those who were comfortable answering the survey in English. The 1990 Census found that 97.7% of Snohomish County households had a telephone. Having a phone did vary by race with Native Americans the least likely to have a phone. Also, renters were less likely to have a phone (94.8%) compared to homeowners (99.2%).

Telephone Survey Response Rates		
	CASRO Response *	Cooperation Rate **
Total, Countywide	34%	47%
Everett / Highway 99	31%	45%
North / East	38%	53%
View / S. Central	34%	48%
* The CASRO response rate is completed interviews divided by all numbers dialed, including an estimate of what proportion of unknown cases are actually eligible. It is one of the more conservative calculations and is named for the Council of American Survey Research Organizations. ** The cooperation rate is all completed interviews divided by only those numbers that were determined to be eligible for the survey (completed + refusals + terminates). This is one of the more liberal response rate calculations and is sometimes referred to as "Upper Bound."		

**Statistical Testing**

To identify statistical differences at a p-value of 0.05 among the three regions, an independent sample t-test for means was used. For statistical comparisons of

percents a Z test was used. Testing of percentages and means was done across living areas, age groups, gender, household income grouping, homeowners and renters, marital status and other subgroups, as appropriate.

## Non-random Surveys

### Community Leaders and Key Informant Survey

To obtain similar information from community leaders and key informants about community strengths and concerns, 2000 recipients received a mailed survey with one postcard reminder. Because the response rate of mailed surveys is usually only about 25%, 2000 was chosen with a goal of 400 returned surveys. Key informants included government employees, elected officials, community organizations, faith groups, schools, and businesses. (See Table 15, page 223 for a complete listing.)

The mailed survey asked the same community level questions asked in the telephone survey of Snohomish County residents. In addition, respondents were asked about their perceptions of the effectiveness of collaborative efforts across organizations and groups. Demographic questions about the characteristics of the respondent and characteristics of their organization were also asked.

The response rate was 17%, with a postcard reminder. This low response was not unexpected as mailed surveys generally have lower response rates than telephone surveys. Because of the low response rate and the pre-selected lists used, **the results from this survey should not be interpreted to represent all key leaders in the community.**

### Special Populations of Snohomish County

Different methodologies were required to gather information about individuals who do not have a telephone, do not speak English well, or who collectively have small population relative to the county population, e.g., Native American, older adults, low income families and individuals. Focus groups and volunteer translators were used to reach these populations.

### Non-English Survey

For the non-English speaking communities, volunteer translators were trained to conduct a survey using the same questionnaire designed for the random telephone survey of residential households. Interpreters spoke Spanish, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Russian, and Arabic. Lists of up to 20 contacts per group were provided by the translators and included members of faith communities, social groups, and neighborhoods. A total of 72 surveys were completed. On average, 15 respondents were reached per language. Overall, non-English speaking respondents were 49% female, 20% were under 35 years of age, 24% aged 35-44, 29% aged 55-64 and 18% were 65 years or older, 60% were married, 50% had a high school education or less, and the group had a median income of \$24,938. (See Table 16, page 235.) **Results should not be interpreted as representative of entire non-English speaking communities or populations.**

## **Focus Group Survey**

Twenty-seven (27) focus groups, containing a total of 219 individuals, were conducted to collect information from populations that were under-represented in a random telephone survey, such as older adults, low-income individuals and families, drug program participants, homeless individuals, youth, and neighborhood groups. The purpose of the focus group was to identify participants' key areas of interests and concerns about their community.

Focus group leaders were trained to collect information in a systematic, non-judgmental process. Two team members, a moderator and a recorder, conducted each focus group. Each focus group lasted about one and one-half hours and usually involved about 8 participants.

The three open-ended questions in the telephone survey were asked of the focus groups. They were asked to identify what they liked best about their community, what concerns they had in their community, and what concerns they had for their family or household. For those areas that seemed to be the most important the group was asked to describe why they had this opinion and how they might solve the issue. In addition, if not specifically mentioned in the discussion, questions were asked about adequate jobs, job training, affordable legal services and affordable housing. They were also polled to learn how they would define their community. At the end of the session, participants were asked to fill out an anonymous one-page demographic questionnaire.

Results for the focus group surveys are presented in a separate report.