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Their Level of Living

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OREGON FARMERS -- THEIR LEVEL OF LIVING

by

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Introduction

Farm-operator families in Oregon have a higher level of living than those in many other parts of the Nation. This is indicated by the level-of-living index prepared in the U. S. Agricultural Marketing Service from data collected in the census of agriculture./2

The level of living which the indexes are intended to reflect is the average level of current consumption or utilization of goods and services in an area. Use of indexes permits and simplifies comparisons between areas and makes it possible to follow changes over time in one area.

Income is one of the chief factors affecting the level of living of farm families. In the absence of information as to net income, the value of farm products sold or traded was used to indicate income levels. The other items used in preparing the indexes were chosen to meet these requirements:

1. The item should indicate the possession or use of goods and services, especially those which give the family a commonly associated status value.
2. The item should represent a larger class of similar items that indicate the use of goods and services.
3. The item should indicate possession or consumption of goods and services sought by all groups of people.

The choice of non-income items to meet these requirements for use in the computation of level-of-living indexes for small areas, such as counties, is limited. Three items available in the census -- the percentages of farms with electricity, telephones, and automobiles -- fulfill the requirements. For example, only those

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/2 M. J. Hagood, G. K. Bowles, and R. R. Mount, Farm-Operator Family Level-of-Living Indexes for Counties of the United States, 1945, 1950 and 1954, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Statis. Bul. 204, March 1957. Formulas to compute county indexes were as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} 1945 &= .538x_1 + .603x_2 + .617x_3 + .460x_4 \\ 1954 &= .538x_1 + .603x_2 + .617x_3 + .275x_4 \end{aligned}$$

x_1 , x_2 , x_3 , and x_4 represent the items electricity, telephone, automobile, and value of farm products sold or traded, respectively.

farm families with electricity in their homes can enjoy such things as television, refrigerators, and other electrical appliances. A farm family with an automobile is more likely to have access to recreational facilities, libraries, and health services than is a family without an automobile. Telephones are not only an important means of communication between families -- they are almost a necessity in emergencies.

Measuring levels of living by these few characteristics has serious limitations and the results may be open to questions of adequacy and representativeness. However, because of the lack of more suitable data available for all farms and areas and the absence of more refined analytical techniques, exhaustive study of the subject was not feasible.

In the development of the indexes, greater weight was given to percentages of farms with automobiles and telephones than to the other two factors. The percentage of farms with electricity in dwellings received a greater weight than the average value of farm products sold or traded per farm reporting. For this reason, a county with a relatively high average value of farm products sold, but with a low percentage of telephones and automobiles, might still have a fairly low overall index.

Throughout the United States, there are many counties that have very few farms. In order to reduce the likelihood of misrepresentation, most of these counties were arranged in combinations of two or more so that one index could be given for a larger number of farms. Only those counties with similar indexes, in the same economic area, and with the same type of farming, were combined. In Oregon, 13 of the counties were combined to form 5 combinations.

During recent decades the number of farms in the United States has been reduced substantially. This decrease has been important in raising the average level of living in many areas. Farmers who have taken over the lands of other operators have more resources with which to produce higher incomes. Also, efficiencies of size of many of these larger units help to increase the average income of farm operators. But the decrease in number of farms affected profoundly the computation of percentages of farms with electricity, telephones, and automobiles. Farmers who decide to seek other employment on a part-time or full-time basis are often those who have the poorest living conditions and the lowest incomes from farming. Therefore, it is possible for average conditions in an area to be improved greatly by a mere reduction in the number of farmers with low incomes. In Coos County, for example, the number of farms with electricity did not increase from 1945 to 1954, but the percentage of farms with electricity increased greatly because of a sizable reduction in number of farms that did not have this service.

The Agricultural Marketing Service indexes reflect the level of living of farmers in 1945, 1950, and 1954. Those for 1945 and 1954 are used here to indicate the general level and progress made during the 10 years.

Wherever the dollar value of sales of farm products is used in this discussion, 1954 census data have been adjusted by the index of prices paid by farmers to make them comparable with data for 1944 so far as purchasing power is concerned.

A comparison of average levels of living on Oregon farms with those of major geographic regions and of the country as a whole is followed by comparisons between type-of-farming areas and counties within the state.

Level of Living on Oregon Farms Compared with the United States

The level-of-living index for the United States as a whole was adjusted so that the average of all county indexes for 1945 equaled 100. This index then is a starting point for all comparisons. As indicated in Table 1, compared with the major regions and the country as a whole Oregon had a relatively high level-of-living index in 1945. It was exceeded only by the average of the Northeastern states. By 1954, the index for Oregon exceeded that of any region in the United States. Generally speaking, the regional indexes increased most during the 10-year period in areas in which they were relatively low in 1945.

Table 1. Average County Index of Farm-Operator Family Level of Living for the United States and Geographic Subdivisions, 1945 and 1954./1

Area	1945	1954
United States	100	140
Regions:		
Northeast	138	167
North Central	128	161
South	65	113
West	127	163
Oregon	137	169

/1 Arithmetic averages of county indexes as computed in the original source, see footnote 2, page 1.

Data from the 1954 census of agriculture indicate the main reasons for Oregon's relatively favorable index (Table 2). The high percentage of farms with telephones was equaled only by the percentages for states in the northern region. The percentage of farms with electricity was uniformly high in all regions of the country, while automobiles were reported on a large percentage of farms in all regions except the South. The value of farm products sold was relatively high in Oregon, but it was considerably below that for the western region as a whole, which is influenced primarily by the high value of products sold on California farms.

Basic data on the four items used in the construction of level-of-living indexes, as shown in Table 2, indicate the reasons for a low index for the United States. The low percentage of southern farms with telephones and automobiles, together with the very low average value of farm products sold in this region, is largely responsible for the low national average for these items. But the

Table 2. Percentages of Farms with Telephones, Electricity, and Automobiles, and Average Value of Farm Products Sold or Traded in the United States, by Geographic Subdivisions, 1954.

Area	Percentage of Farms with:			Value of Farm Products Sold or Traded <u>/1</u>
	Telephones	Electricity	Automobiles	
	percent	percent	percent	dollars
United States	49	93	71	3,338
Regions:				
North	71	96	86	4,024
South	26	90	55	1,964
West	67	94	83	7,543
Oregon	71	97	85	4,120

/1 Value per farm adjusted for purchasing power of farmer's dollar, 1944 basis.

South's percentage of farms with electricity compares favorably with percentages in the other regions. The North and West have nearly equal percentages of farms with telephones, electricity, and automobiles. Most of the data for the North and West correspond roughly to those for Oregon.

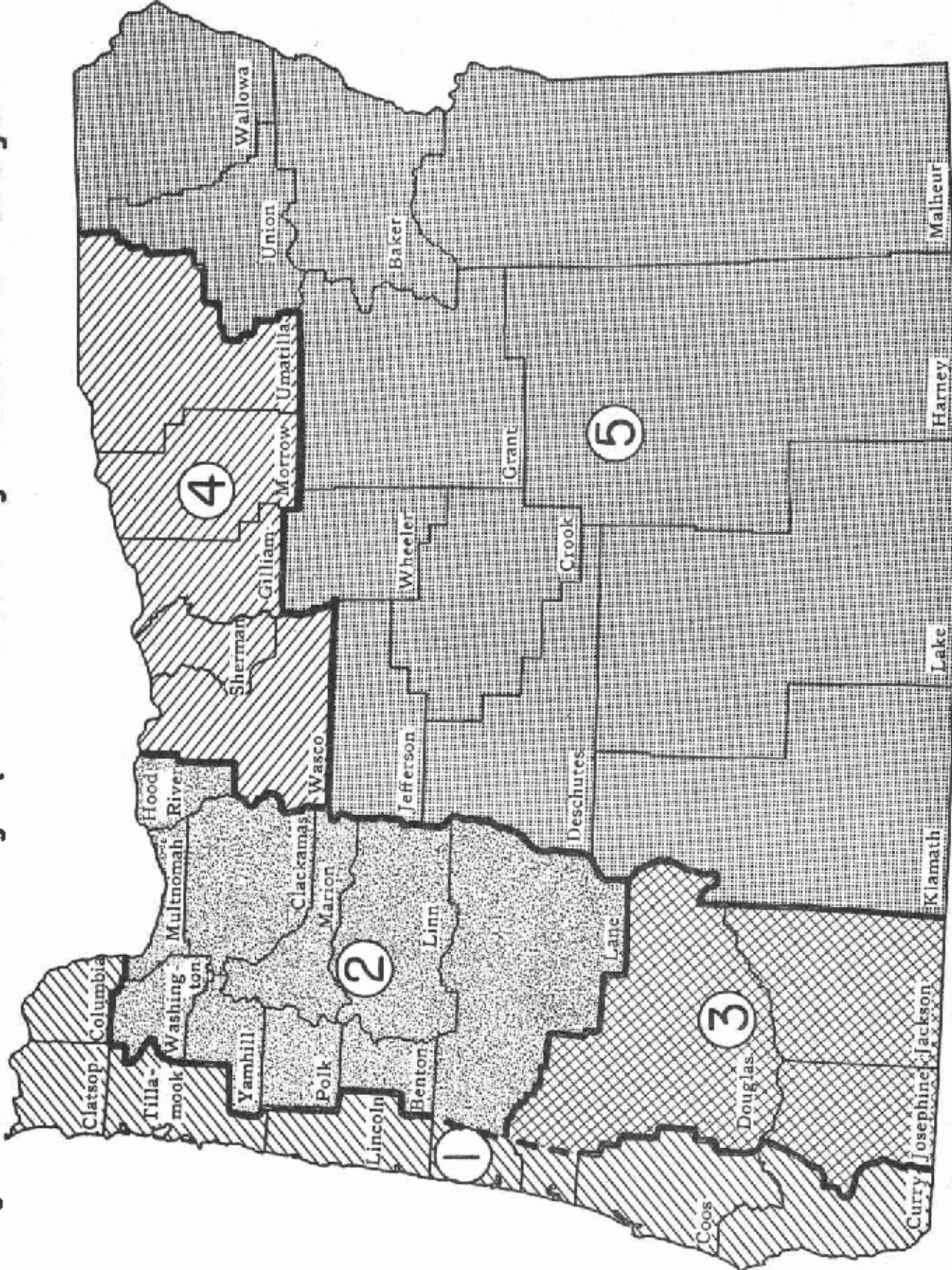
Farmers Level of Living in Oregon by Areas and Counties

The following discussion of the level-of-living indexes of Oregon farmers is arranged by major geographic or type-of-farming areas. (See Figure 1.) Type of farm is related to income, average size, and density of farms, which in turn influence the availability of such services as electricity and telephones, as well as the volume of farm products sold per farm. However, even within individual type-of-farming areas there are important differences in natural and economic conditions between counties. These differences cause large variations in farm income, availability of goods and services and consequently, in level-of-living indexes.

Furthermore, the change in number of farms, which, as pointed out earlier, influences greatly the level-of-living index, has been greater in some areas than in others. The number of farms may increase substantially because of irrigation developments, as in Jefferson and Deschutes Counties, or it may decrease because of consolidation of farms, urbanization, and other factors. From 1945 to 1954, the period under consideration, the number of farms in Oregon decreased by 14 percent. This large decline over such a short period must be kept in mind when considering changes in the level-of-living indexes.

The type-of-farming areas chosen for this discussion of level of living in Oregon are: (1) The Coast and Lower Columbia Area, (2) The Willamette Valley, (3) Southern Oregon, (4) The Columbia Basin, and (5) Central and Eastern Oregon.

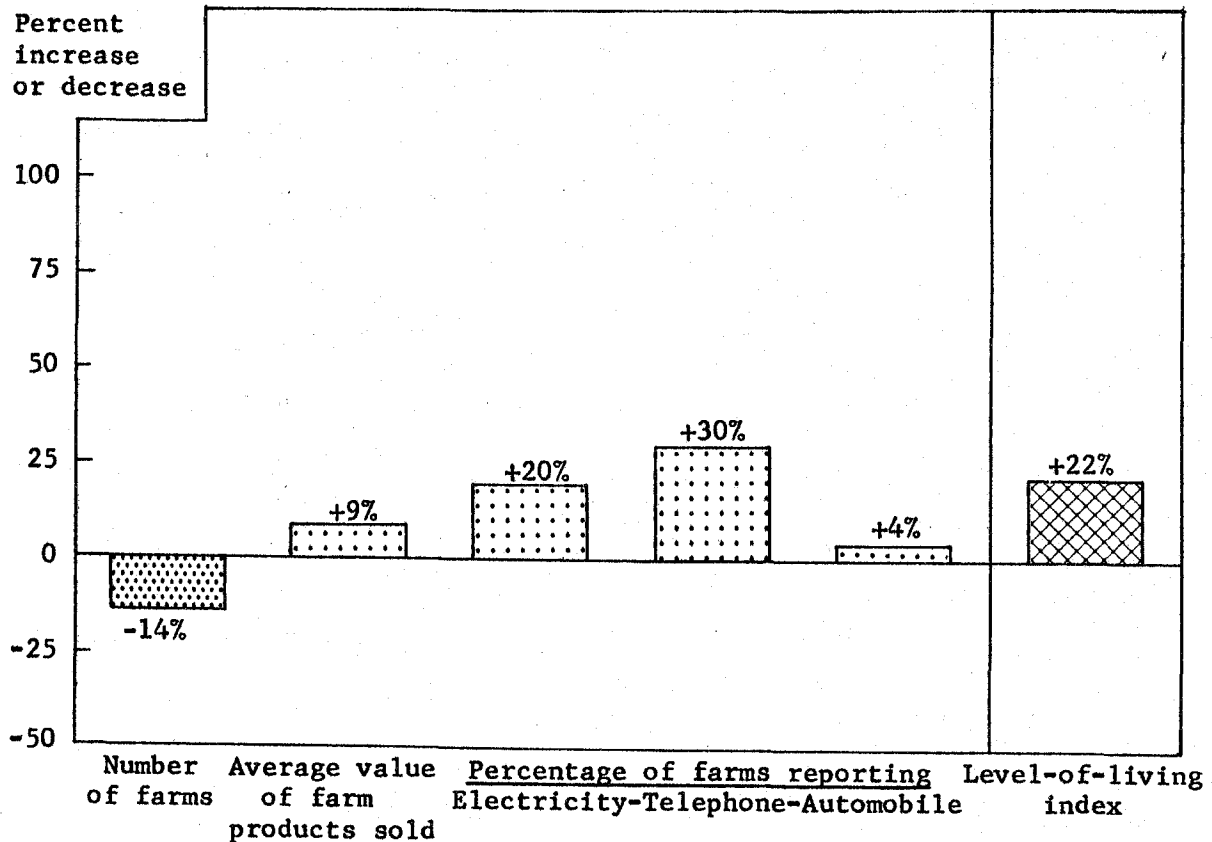
Figure 1. Geographic Farming Areas in Oregon



- 1. Coast and Lower Columbia
- 2. Willamette Valley
- 3. Southern Oregon
- 4. Columbia Basin
- 5. Central and Eastern Oregon

Figure 2 illustrates the changes that have occurred in the state as a whole, in individual factors which enter the level-of-living index, and the composite change in the index itself from 1945 to 1954. Significant in these changes is the increase in percentage of farms with telephones and electricity, an increase that is largely responsible for the rise in the level-of-living index during the 10 years.

Figure 2. Changes in Factors Affecting Farm-Operator Family Level-of-Living Index, 1945 to 1954, Oregon.



Data for 1954 are given in Table 3 by major type-of-farming areas. The areas that fall below the state level-of-living index are the Coast and Lower Columbia area and Southern Oregon, which include nearly one-fourth (22 percent) of all farms in the state. The below-average indexes of these areas result from the low value of sales and the relatively low percentage of farms with telephones. The percentage of farmers reporting automobiles is also below that for the state.

Coast and Lower Columbia Area

Columbia, Clatsop, Tillamook, Lincoln, Coos, and Curry Counties make up the Coast and Lower Columbia Area. The topography is generally rough with limited acreages of arable cropland scattered over great distances. The mild climate and high rainfall are favorable to production of forage which supports dairy farming

Table 3. Level-of-Living Indexes, Average Value of Farm Products Sold, and Percentages of Farms Reporting Electricity, Telephones, and Automobiles in 1954.

Major Type-of-Farming Areas, Oregon							
Area	: Number of Farms	: Level-of-Living Index 1954 /1	: Av. Value of Farm Products Sold /2	: Percentage of Farms Reporting			
				: Elec- tricity	: Tele- phone	: Auto- mobile	
	: No.	: Index	: Dol.	: Percent	: Percent	: Percent	
Coast and Lower Columbia	: 5,802	: 148	: \$ 2,333	: 97	: 59	: 81	
Willamette Valley	: 28,977	: 165	: 3,263	: 98	: 74	: 87	
Southern Oregon	: 6,245	: 153	: 2,102	: 96	: 68	: 83	
Columbia Basin	: 3,630	: 197	: 11,021	: 94	: 76	: 87	
Central and Eastern Oregon	: 9,787	: 171	: 6,446	: 93	: 70	: 84	
Oregon	: 54,441	: 165	: 4,120	: 97	: 71	: 85	

/1 Area and state indexes were calculated from original Census data by use of the same formula applied in computing county figures.

/2 Adjusted value -- 1944 basis.

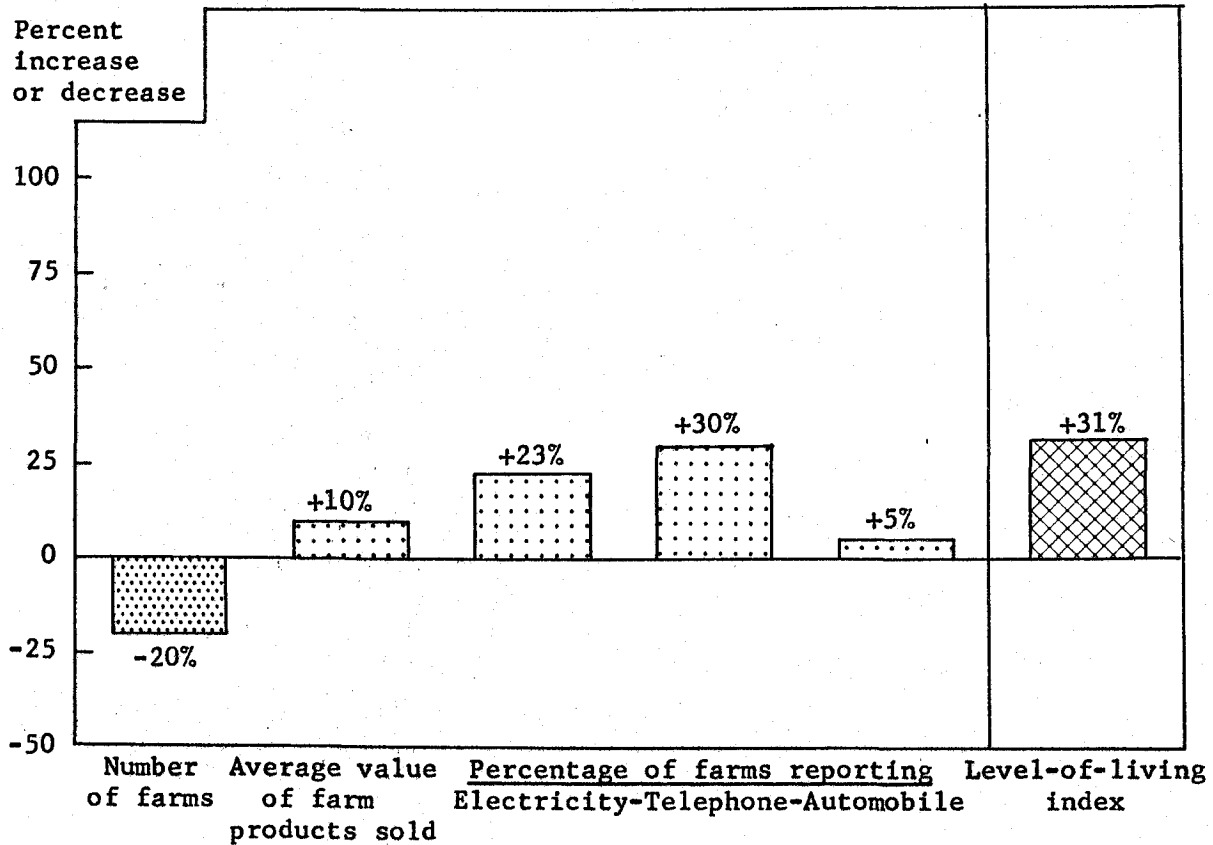
along the north coast and sheep in the south. Some beef cattle are found throughout the area, and a few farmers concentrate on production of specialty crops which thrive under existing climatic conditions. Sales of forest products are an important source of farm income in much of the area. In Lincoln, Tillamook, and Coos Counties, total value of forest products sold in 1954 exceeded that of field crops.

In general, farms are small and often widely scattered and this isolation has tended to retard the connection of many of the farms to public service facilities. Number of farms decreased 20 percent between 1945 and 1954. Except for Tillamook County, which had a decrease of only 8 percent, the percentage of decrease in the area equaled or exceeded that for the state as a whole.

In 1954, more than a third of the farms did not have telephones. The percentage of farms with electricity was about average, but the area was slightly below average in number of automobiles. The value of farm products sold or traded per farm was low because of the relatively large number of small farms. The volume of sales was only half as large as that in the rest of the state. These factors combined to give the area a 1954 index that was 17 points below the average for the state as a whole.

As the Coast and Lower Columbia area includes about one-tenth of all farms in the state, the relatively low level of living affects a significant number of people. There was, however, substantial progress from 1945 to 1954. Greater availability of public service facilities, coupled with an increase in the value of farm products sold, resulted in a 31-percent increase in the index for the area as a whole. Changes during this period are illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Changes in Factors Affecting Farm-Operator Family Level-of-Living Index, Coast and Lower Columbia Area, 1945 to 1954.



The situation in 1954 in individual counties is shown in Table 4. Greater concentration of farms, plus a fairly high and relatively stable income from dairy farming, gave Tillamook an index rating that placed it among the upper third of Oregon's counties. This county also made a greater-than-average advance from 1945 to 1954.

In 1945, Clatsop, Columbia, and Lincoln Counties in the north coast area had ratings considerably below the average for the state. Only Clatsop approached the average. The three counties contained many small and scattered farms and the low level of living on part-time and subsistence farms overshadowed the generally high level attained on the few larger commercial farms in these counties. As a result, the 1954 rating for the three-county area was low, although there had been substantial progress during the 10 years. Much of this progress was due to a major decrease in number of farms. Lincoln County showed a larger point increase in the index than any other county in Oregon, but progress was less noticeable in Columbia and Clatsop Counties. A low average value of farm products sold and a low percentage of farms with telephones resulted in relatively low indexes for these counties.

Because of similarity of conditions in the two counties and the small number of farms in Curry County, Coos and Curry Counties were treated as an index combination. In 1945 Coos County had a considerably higher level-of-living index than

Table 4. Level-of-Living Indexes, Average Value of Farm Products Sold and Percentages of Farms Reporting Electricity, Telephones, and Automobiles, Coast and Lower Columbia Area, 1954.

County	Number of Farms	Level-of-Living Index		Av. Value of Farm Products Sold /1	Percentage of Farms Reporting		
		Index 1954	Ranking in Oregon		Electricity	Telephone	Auto-mobile
		No.	No.		Percent	Percent	Percent
Clatsop	697	144	33	1,650	97	61	78
Columbia	1,773	147	31	1,529	99	62	81
Coos)/2	1,408	140	35	2,249	96	55	77
Curry)	390	140	36	3,225	92	36	78
Lincoln	677	143	34	2,484	98	53	77
Tillamook	857	172	11	4,163	100	72	92
Total	5,802	148	--	2,333	97	59	81

/1 Adjusted value, 1944 basis.

/2 Index combinations. Individual indexes are: Coos, 142; Curry, 133.

Source: Census of Agriculture, 1954.

Curry County with its few farms, but progress during the 10 years was greater in the latter. This was partly because the number of farms has decreased considerably as farmers in the two counties have found seasonal or steady employment in the lumber and fishing industries. Because of location and difficult terrain, public service has not been as satisfactory here as in other areas. The 1954 level-of-living index for this combination of counties remains well below the state average. It is the lowest of any combination of counties in the state.

Willamette Valley

In many respects, the Willamette Valley is one of the most important farming areas in the state. Although it covers only 13 percent of the land area, it includes 27 percent of the cropland and 53 percent of the farms of the state. The 10 counties included in this area are Benton, Clackamas, Hood River, Lane, Linn, Marion, Multnomah, Polk, Washington, and Yamhill. Geographically, Hood River County is not in the Willamette Valley proper. It was included in this area because the type of farm products grown compare more nearly with those in the valley than with crops grown in counties to the east.

The wide variety of soil types and the generally favorable climate makes it possible to produce many different crops and kinds of livestock. Crops grown include most of the cereal grains and grass seeds, many fresh and processing vegetables, and a large selection of horticultural specialties and fruits. The large forage production supports several important livestock industries, including dairy, beef cattle, and sheep. The poultry industry also is an important source of income. Several large population centers provide a market for most farm products sold fresh or for processing and shipment to distant consuming centers. These cities are also the chief source of consumer goods and

services for farm families, and they offer employment opportunities for part-time farmers.

The level-of-living index for the Willamette Valley as a whole is slightly below that for the state. The reason for this appears to be the relatively large number of small, part-time, or subsistence farms, some of which are operated as retirement units. The value of farm products sold or traded from small farms is relatively low and this has affected significantly the overall level-of-living index for the area. The adjusted value of sales of farm products per farm is about \$900 lower than the average for the state. But the percentages of farms reporting certain facilities are above those for the state. This reflects the ease with which most farmers can obtain consumer goods and services because of their concentration and nearness to population centers, and the opportunity which many operators of small farms have to supplement their farm incomes by off-farm employment.

From 1945 to 1954, the number of farms in the area declined substantially, although somewhat less than for the state as a whole. This change is more noticeable in counties including or lying near large cities than in the more remote areas. Thus, Multnomah, Washington, and Lane Counties showed the greatest reductions in number of farms. During the 10 years, the value of farm products sold increased substantially in absolute dollars, but when adjusted for purchasing power, average sales per farm showed only a 3-percent increase by 1954. Most noticeable of the changes in factors affecting the level of living has been the increase in percentage of farms reporting telephones. This, together with an increase in farms with electricity, is largely responsible for a 20-percent increase in the index for the area. Changes in individual items during the 10 years are illustrated in Figure 4.

As indicated in Table 5, the ranking of individual counties varied as to individual factors used in the computation of level-of-living indexes. Variation was less pronounced in the Willamette Valley than in other areas of the state. Hood River County stands out as the county with the highest index in the area -- an index of 190 in 1954. A high value of farm products sold per farm, together with a high percentage of farms reporting electricity, telephones, and automobiles make this one of the top counties in the state. In Multnomah County, the number of farms was decreased greatly from 1945 to 1954. This contributed to a considerable rise in the level-of-living index over the same period. The percentage of farms with telephones increased, and there was a rise in the average value of farm products sold. Farm living conditions in Clackamas and Washington Counties are similar to those of farm families in the more densely populated areas in which small farms predominate. Indexes are comparatively low because of low value of sales per farm and low percentage of farms with telephones. Substantial progress was made between 1945 and 1954, particularly in Washington County, but the index remains the lowest for the Willamette Valley.

The 1954 level-of-living indexes for the remaining six counties in the valley ranged from 160 to 171. Polk County, at the lower end of this scale, shows a high value of farm products sold per farm but a comparatively low percentage of farms with various facilities. Benton County attained a relatively high rating because of the large number of farms with electricity, telephones, and automobiles despite a relatively low value of sales per farm. Below-average

Figure 4. Changes in Factors Affecting Farm-Operator Family Level-of-Living Index, Willamette Valley Area, 1945 to 1954.

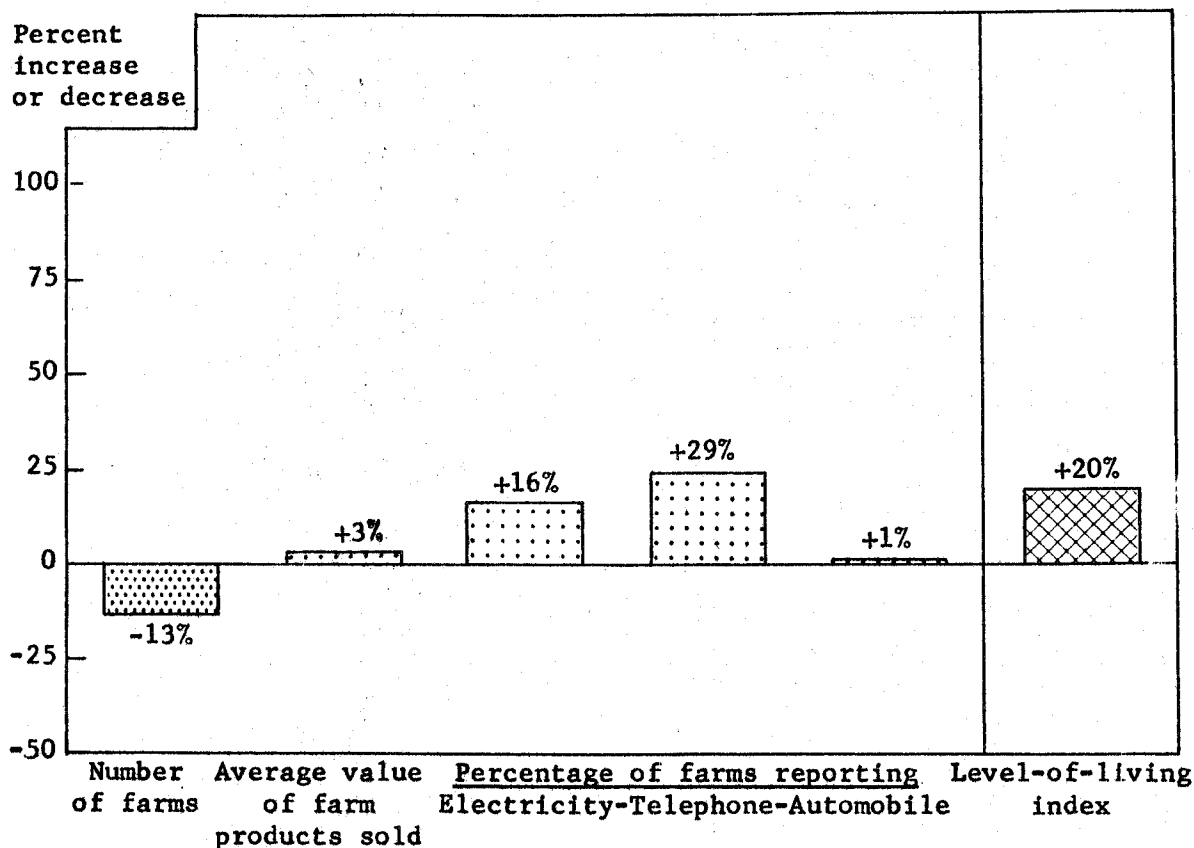


Table 5. Level-of-Living Indexes, Average Value of Farm Products Sold and Percentages of Farms Reporting Electricity, Telephones, and Automobiles, Willamette Valley Area, 1954.

County	Number of Farms	Level-of-Living Index		Av. Value of Farm Products Sold /1	Percentage of Farms Reporting		
		Index 1954	Ranking in Oregon		Electricity	Telephone	Auto-mobile
	No.	Index	No.	Dol.	Percent	Percent	Percent
Benton	1,153	171	12	2,955	100	82	90
Clackamas	5,607	158	26	2,023	99	69	88
Hood River	1,002	190	6	7,547	100	80	91
Lane	4,042	167	14	2,190	100	82	89
Linn	3,196	165	16	3,810	96	73	86
Marion	4,543	167	15	3,788	98	74	87
Multnomah	1,680	169	13	3,900	98	82	82
Polk	1,605	160	20	4,427	90	70	82
Washington	3,676	158	27	2,870	99	66	86
Yamhill	2,473	165	17	3,961	98	72	84
Total	28,977	165	--	3,263	98	74	87

/1 Value per farm adjusted for purchasing power of farmer's dollar, 1945 basis.

Source: Census of Agriculture, 1954.

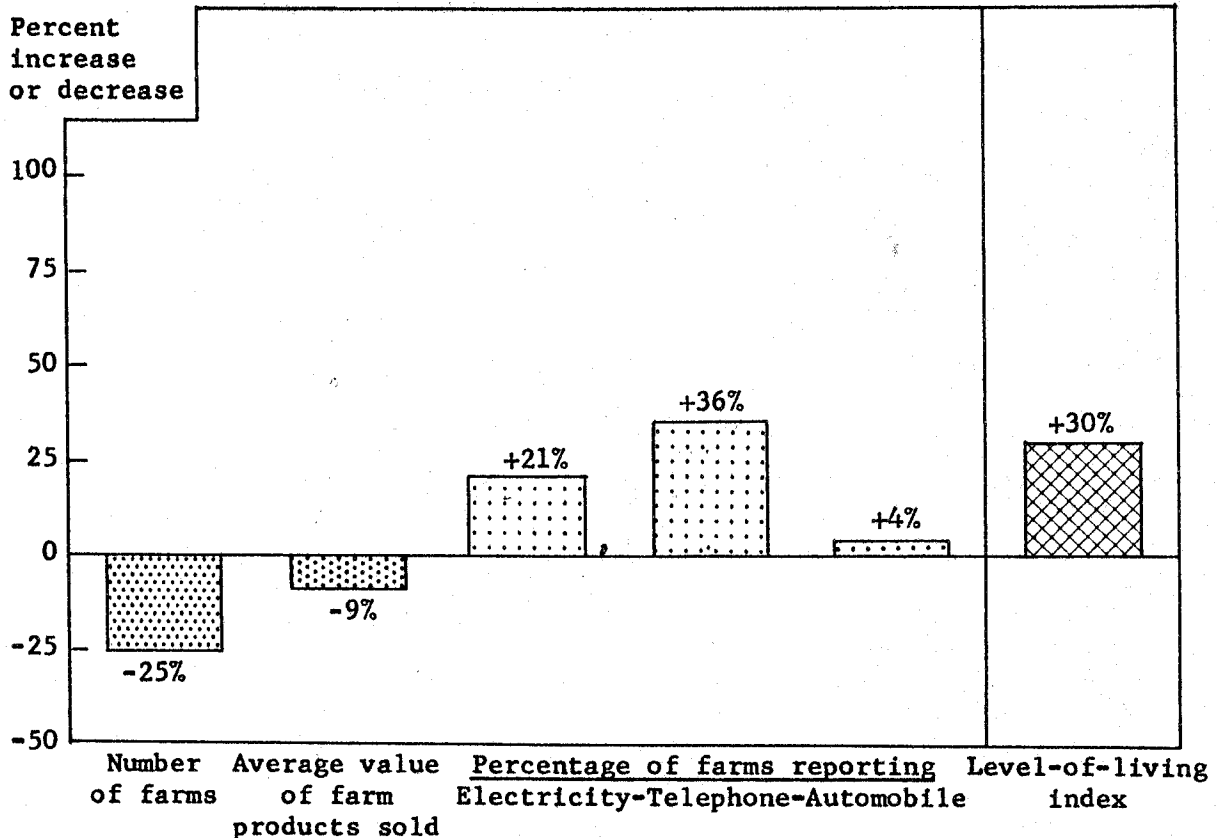
indexes were reported for Yamhill, Marion, Linn, and Lane Counties. A very low value of farm products sold per farm was responsible for the low index in Lane County, while the index ratings of the other three counties were held down by lack of various facilities on farms.

Southern Oregon

This predominantly timber region has several important agricultural areas in valleys and foothills where a variety of crops can be grown. In some of these areas, fruits and vegetables are produced successfully. In others, various seeds, in addition to the usual field crops, are significant. Of the live-stock enterprises, poultry, sheep, and dairying provide the largest share of farm income. Sales of forest products constituted approximately 10 percent of the total value of farm products sold or traded in 1954.

Farms are predominantly small and have a relatively low volume of sales. A low farm income is often supplemented by income from off-farm work, chiefly in the lumber industry. As illustrated in Figure 5, the number of farms decreased greatly during the 10 years ending in 1954. The decrease amounted to 25 percent, the highest for any area in the state. This is also the only area in the state in which a reduction occurred in the adjusted average value of farm products sold per farm.

Figure 5. Changes in Factors Affecting the Farm-Operator Family Level-of-Living Index, Southern Oregon Area, 1945 to 1954.



The increase in the level-of-living index for southern Oregon is due mainly to the reduction in number of farms, a high proportion of which had no electricity, telephones, or automobiles in 1945. Only farms with telephones increased in numbers, while the actual number of farms reporting electricity and automobiles showed a decline during the 10 years. The level-of-living index as computed for the area as a whole is 12 points below the state average.

The status of individual counties in southern Oregon in 1954 is given in Table 6. Douglas County is the largest of the three counties in overall size. In 1945, it had the largest number of farms. By 1954, the number of farms had declined by 33 percent with no appreciable increase in the adjusted value of farm products. Farm sales of forest products in that year exceeded the value of crop sales. They amounted to 21 percent of total sales. The percentage of farms reporting major facilities was considerably below state averages. Josephine County, with a slightly higher index rating in 1954, also had a one-third reduction in number of farms in the 10-year period. Value of farm products sold per farm declined by 6 percent. Although the percentage of farms reporting telephones increased by nearly half during the 10 years, the lack of telephones remained the greatest deficiency in this county. Jackson County had only a 10-percent reduction in number of farms, but the value of farm products sold per farm dropped 21 percent during the 10 years. Although the percentage of farms reporting electricity increased in this county, this factor is still below the level attained in the other two counties.

Table 6. Level-of-Living Indexes, Average Value of Farm Products Sold and Percentages of Farms Reporting Electricity, Telephones, and Automobiles, Southern Oregon Area, 1954.

County	Level-of-Living		Av. Value		Percentage of Farms Reporting		
	Number	Index	Ranking	Products	Elec-	Telephone	Auto-
	of Farms	Index 1954	in Oregon	Sold /1	tricity	Percent	mobile
	No.	Index	No.	Dol.	Percent	Percent	Percent
Douglas	2,155	147	32	1,780	95	66	79
Jackson	2,647	156	29	2,591	94	70	84
Josephine	1,443	153	30	1,685	99	66	86
Total	6,245	153	--	2,102	96	68	83

/1 Adjusted value, 1945 basis.

Source: Census of Agriculture, 1954.

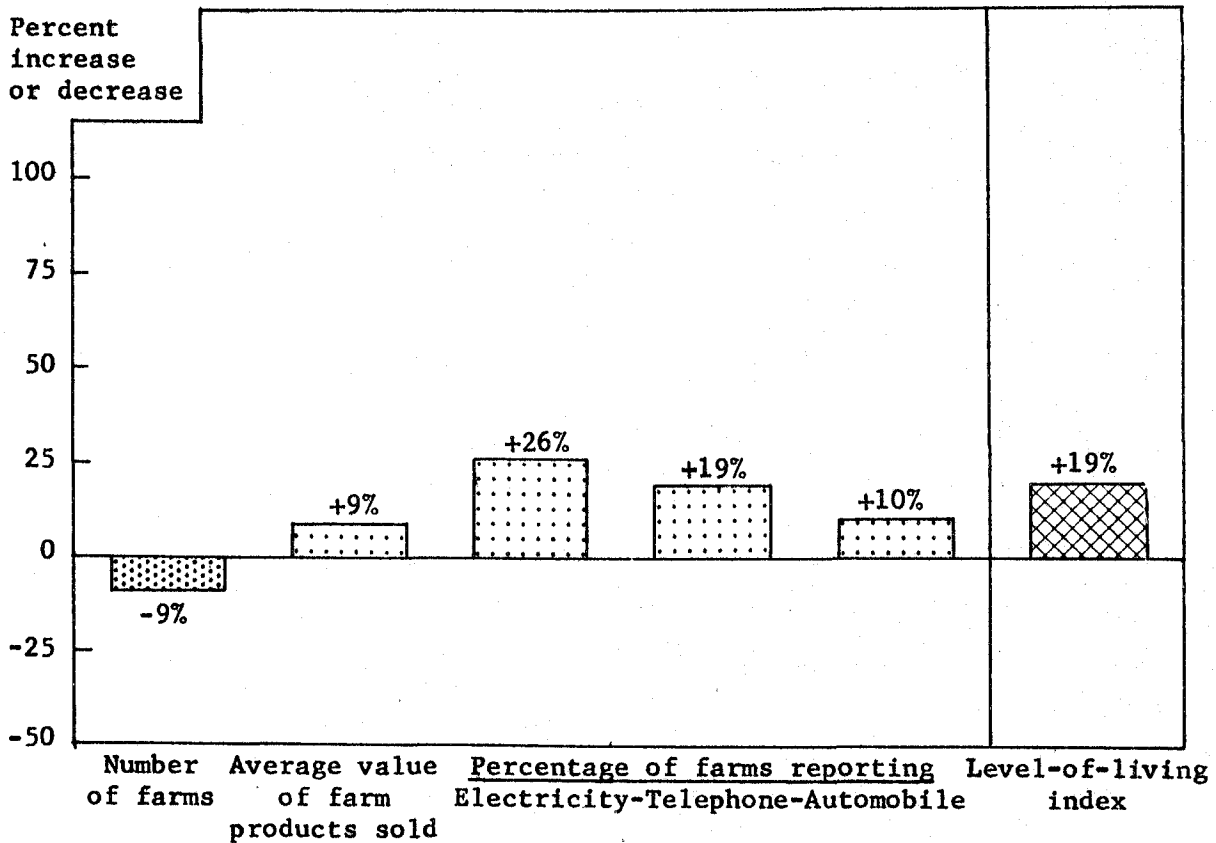
Columbia Basin

The counties included in the Columbia Basin Area are often referred to as the Oregon wheat area because of the predominance of dryland wheat production. Only 7 percent of the state's farms are located in the area, but it receives 18 percent of the state's income from agriculture. Climate and soil favor production of wheat almost to the exclusion of other field crops. A few irrigated sections, mainly in the western and eastern parts of the area, produce diversified crops and fruits. Although production of beef cattle and sheep constitutes

an important source of income, the value of sales of livestock in 1954 was only 19 percent of the total value of all sales of farm products.

Large operating units predominate but a few small specialized or part-time farms are found near population centers. The number of farms in the Columbia Basin declined by only 9 percent from 1945 to 1954 (Figure 6). This compares with an average reduction of 14 percent for the state. The average value of farm products sold per farm was the highest in the state in 1954 but showed only a slight increase (9 percent) over 1945. The percentage of farms reporting electricity, telephones, and automobiles increased further above a relatively high level attained in 1945. The combined effect of these improvements gave this area an increase of 19 percent in the level-of-living index, which was somewhat below the percentage increase for the state but maintained the position of the Columbia Basin as the highest ranking area in the state.

Figure 6. Changes in Factors Affecting Farm-Operator Family Level-of-Living Index, Columbia Basin Area, 1945 to 1954.



As shown in Table 7, major differences exist between counties, particularly in value of farm products sold. Counties far from population centers whose farmers specialize in production of wheat show a higher index than counties in which there are some small farms, irrigated land, and where there is off-farm employment in nearby towns. Gilliam, Morrow, and Sherman Counties represent the

heart of the Columbia Basin wheat area. They formed one of Oregon's five index combinations because the number of farms in each was relatively small and the type of farming was fairly uniform. A value of farm products sold per farm, nearly three times the average for the state, together with a relatively high percentage of farms with various facilities, gave these counties the top index rating in the state.

Table 7. Level-of-Living Indexes, Average Value of Farm Products Sold and Percentages of Farms Reporting Electricity, Telephones, and Automobiles, Columbia Basin Area, 1954.

County	Level-of-Living		Av. Value of Farm Products Sold ^{/1} Dol.	Percentage of Farms Reporting			
	Number of Farms No.	Index 1954 Index		Ranking in Oregon No.	Elec- tricity Percent	Telephone Percent	Auto- mobile Percent
Gilliam)	212	231	1	22,448	92	79	93
Morrow)/2:	463	231	2	13,201	100	76	92
Sherman)	265	231	3	22,019	91	82	89
Umatilla	1,885	193	5	9,266	98	80	86
Wasco	805	163	18	7,247	82	63	82
Total	3,630	197	--	11,021	94	76	87

^{/1} Adjusted value, 1944 basis.

^{/2} Index combination, individual indexes are: Gilliam, 250; Morrow, 212; Sherman, 247.

Source: Census of Agriculture, 1954.

In fifth place in rank is Umatilla County with a considerably larger number of farms. The percentage of farms with electricity, telephones, and automobiles is high, but the value of farm products sold per farm is about half the average for the top three counties. The index for Wasco County is slightly below the average for the state. The value of farm products sold per farm exceeds that of the state, but the percentage of farms reporting various facilities is substantially lower. The relatively large number of small diversified farms, some of which are in an Indian Reservation, is chiefly responsible for a lower index than is found in the other counties of the wheat area.

Central and Eastern Oregon

This area contains nearly 60 percent of the land but has only 18 percent of the farms in the state. The average farm is about three times as large as the average Oregon farm, but only 14 percent of the land in farms is classified as cropland. Noncropland in farms consists of range and woodland and amounts to a little more than 10 million acres. In addition to private land in farms, there is a large area of publicly owned land, most of which is available for grazing by beef cattle and sheep.

Soils and climate limit crop production unless water for irrigation is available. Many smaller irrigation developments are scattered throughout the

area, and concentrations of irrigated land are found in the Klamath Basin of south-central Oregon, in Deschutes, Jefferson, and Crook Counties of central Oregon, and in the northeastern part of Malheur County. Where the water supply is adequate throughout the growing season, a large variety of forage, row crops, and specialty crops can be grown. Where the water supply is limited, the cropland is used for forage and grain. Livestock enterprises on irrigated farms consist of dairy, poultry, and some hog or cattle-feeding enterprises.

On nonirrigated land, farms are larger and more scattered than in irrigated areas. Farmers concentrate on production of beef cattle and sheep, and use available cropland to grow winter feed supplies for livestock. During the summer, public range is an important additional source of feed.

The number of farms in the area as a whole, as illustrated in Figure 7, decreased only slightly from 1945 to 1954. Decreases in many counties were nearly offset by increases in counties with new irrigation, particularly Jefferson and Deschutes Counties. Because of the large size of operations in some parts of this area and the production of high-value crops in others, the average value of farm products sold per farm is considerably higher than for the state as a whole. Next to the Columbia Basin, it was the highest in the state -- from 1945 to 1954 it increased by 14 percent. The ownership or use of electricity, telephones, and automobiles varies greatly in different localities owing to the scattering of farms in some parts and concentration in others. For the area as a whole, the percentage of farms reporting these facilities is slightly below the average for the state but more than average progress was made during the 10 years. The lack of electric service is the most noticeable deficiency despite an increase of 28 points in percentage of farms reporting this service.

In Table 8, data for individual counties are shown for the year 1954. Generally speaking, the major irrigated areas within this region have attained higher level-of-living indexes than have the predominantly range areas. A greater concentration of farms in these areas has facilitated their connection to public services. Changes in the value of farm products sold per farm does not appear to be important here.

Crook, Jefferson, and Wheeler Counties were combined in the level-of-living indexes because of the small number of farms each contained in 1945. However, the number of farms in Jefferson County doubled from 1945 to 1954 because of irrigation developments, but similar changes were not reported for Crook and Wheeler Counties. The percentage of farms with various facilities in 1954 was comparatively high, except in Wheeler County where the small number of widely scattered farms would have meant a low index had the county not been combined with the other two counties. Compared with the average for the state, the value of farm products sold per farm is high in all three counties.

Deschutes and Klamath Counties in south-central Oregon are the only two counties in the area in which the adjusted value of farm products sold per farm declined during the 10 years. The decline amounted to 28 percent for Deschutes County but was much smaller -- 5 percent -- for Klamath County. There has been some consolidation of farms in Klamath County, while in Deschutes County the number of farms increased by 6 percent. By 1954, some deficiencies in availability of various facilities to farms outside irrigated areas in Klamath County are more than offset by the high value of farm products sold per farm. The low average value of farm products sold in Deschutes County was not overcome by a

Figure 7. Changes in Factors Affecting Farm-Operator Family Level-of-Living Index, Central and Eastern Oregon Area, 1945 to 1954.

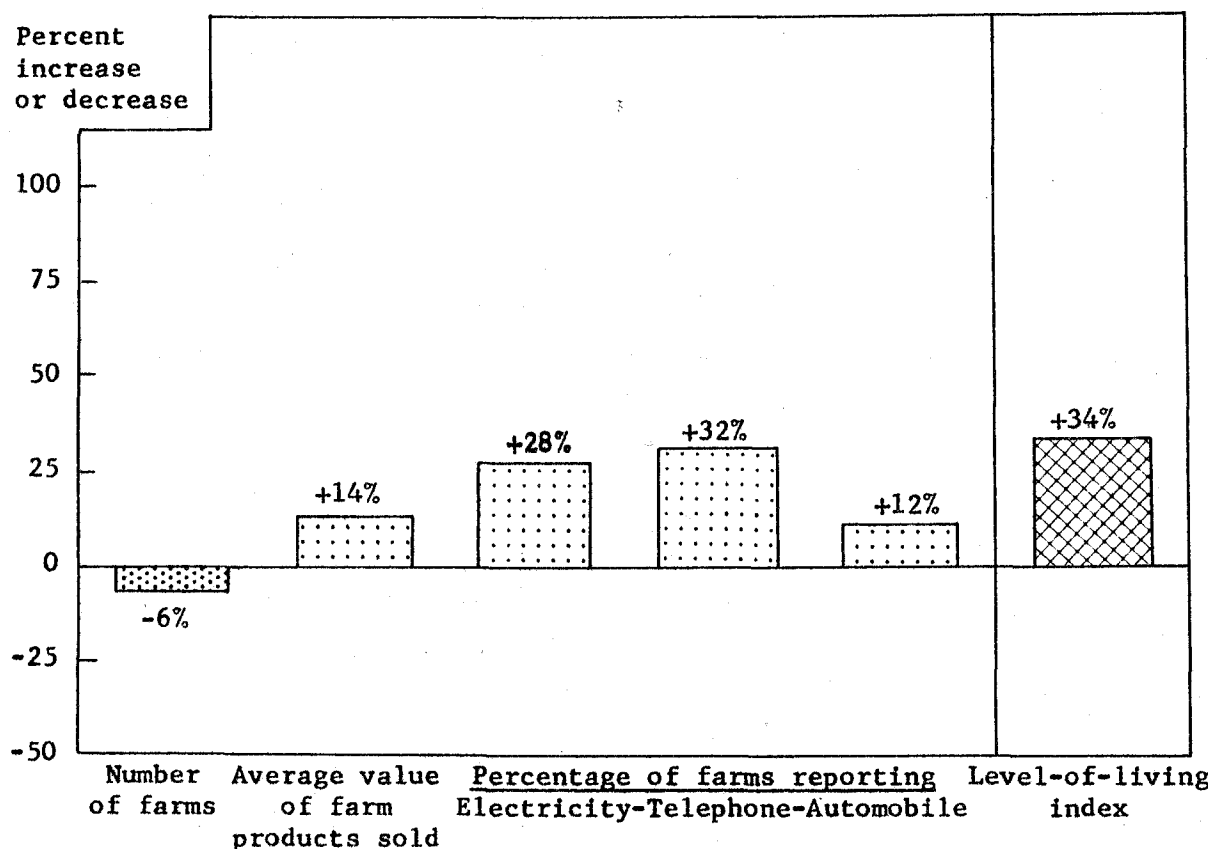


Table 8. Level-of-Living Indexes, Average Value of Farm Products Sold and Percentages of Farms Reporting Electricity, Telephones, and Automobiles, Central and Eastern Oregon Area, 1954.

County	Number of Farms	Level-of-Living Index		Av. Value of Farm Products Sold /1	Percentage of Farms Reporting		
		Index 1954	Ranking in Oregon		Electricity	Telephone	Auto-mobile
	No.	Index	No.	Dol.	Percent	Percent	Percent
Baker	998	157	28	5,071	93	65	75
Crook)	393	175	8	8,111	90	78	85
Jefferson) /2	590	175	9	9,970	84	65	82
Wheeler)	173	175	10	7,608	77	62	68
Grant)	403	159	21	4,844	96	78	76
Harney) /3	322	159	22	8,767	72	42	77
Lake)	426	159	23	7,010	93	50	82
Deschutes	1,067	161	19	2,199	99	79	82
Klamath	1,297	202	4	8,954	100	87	94
Malheur	2,446	177	7	6,860	97	71	86
Union) /4	986	159	24	5,402	92	71	88
Wallowa)	686	159	25	5,563	80	48	81
Total	9,787	171	--	6,446	93	70	84

/1 Adjusted value, 1944 basis.

/2 Index combination, individual indexes are: Crook, 182; Jefferson, 177; Wheeler, 153.

/3 Index combination, individual indexes are: Grant, 166; Harney, 149; Lake, 161.

/4 Index combination, individual indexes are: Union, 170; Wallowa, 146.

Source: Census of Agriculture, 1954.

relatively high percentage of farms with electric and telephone service. Progress in these two counties during the 10 years was most noticeable in improved telephone service.

The small number of farms in the large range area included in Grant, Harney, and Lake Counties suggested that these counties be treated as an index combination. The number of farms in Lake County remained about the same from 1945 to 1954, but the other two counties showed a decrease of 20 percent. In 1945, electric service was available to about 40 percent of the farms in these three counties. Telephones were reported by a little more than half the farms. By 1954, 88 percent of all farms had electric service but very little progress had been made in acquiring telephones. Although a relatively high percentage of farms in Grant County reported electricity, telephones, and automobiles, the average value of farm products sold in this county was below that for Harney and Lake Counties.

Agricultural production in Malheur County is concentrated in the northeastern part of the county. Availability of irrigation water, coupled with a high concentration of farms and highly specialized crop production, has facilitated the connection of farms to public service and has resulted in a comparatively high value of farm products sold per farm. This county has achieved the seventh highest index rating in the state.

Baker, Union, and Wallowa Counties in the northeast corner of the state are frequently referred to as the Blue Mountain region. A few specialty crops are grown on irrigated land, but, for the most part, crop production supports livestock, which is the major source of income except in Union County. Union and Wallowa Counties form an index combination. The number of farms in the two counties decreased during the 10 years by about 16 percent, while Baker County recorded a decline of only half that amount. The index for Wallowa County is considerably higher by reason of the combination with Union County. The percentages of farms reporting electric service in Wallowa County and telephone service in Baker County in 1954 was comparatively low. The average value of farm products sold per farm was fairly uniform, but comparatively low for the area as a whole.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, farm families in Oregon have attained a relatively high level of living. There is still room for improvement, but compared with farm families in other states, Oregonians can be proud of their accomplishments.

Levels of living vary significantly by type-of-farming areas and by counties, as illustrated in Figure 8. This illustration permits ready comparison between levels attained in individual counties in 1954.

Changes in the index and in the factors affecting the index for individual counties are given in Table 9, which ranks the counties by the level attained in 1954. For the state as a whole, non-availability of telephone service is the major deficiency affecting level of living. Although the percentage of farms reporting telephones increased by 30 points during the 10 years, less than three-fourths (71 percent) of all farms reported this service in 1954. Electricity was

available on 97 percent of all farms, an increase of 20 percentage points during the 10 years. Automobiles are available on most farms, although on many of them a pickup truck serves the farm business and as a family car as well. The number of automobiles declined during the 10 years.

In striving for a higher level of living, an improvement in farm income is of paramount importance, particularly when the incomes of small, part-time, or subsistence farmers are considered. An enlargement of the operating unit or the finding of off-farm employment to supplement the meager living that can be made in small scale farming are the main problems. The small-farm problem is greatly aggravated when employment in cities and towns is at a low level or not available. Next to income, the problem of improving the index of the level of living on farms lies in the difficulty of reaching farm homes in isolated locations with the necessary public services. Improvements in roads and construction of transmission and telephone lines is costly and can be accomplished only gradually.

Table 9. Changes in Level-of-Living Indexes and Percentages of Farms Reporting Items Used in Their Computation Between 1945 and 1954, by Counties, Ranked According to the Index in 1954.

Rank	State and County	Level-of-Living Index		Number of Farms		Percentage of All Farms Reporting				Av. Value of All Farm Products Sold per Farm			
		1954	1945	1954	1945	Electricity	Telephone	Automobile	Change since 1954	Change since 1945	Dol.	Percent	
12/2	State	165	22	54,441	-14	97	20	71	30	85	4	4,120	9
1	Gilliam)	231	24	212	-12	92	53	79	7	93	14	22,448	18
2	Morrow)	231	24	463	-8	100	45	76	20	92	14	13,201	16
3	Sherman)	231	24	265	-9	91	35	82	4	89	2	22,019	42
4	Klamath	202	28	1,297	-9	100	24	87	54	94	15	8,954	5
5	Umatilla	193	16	1,885	-10	98	21	80	30	86	8	9,266	1
6	Hood River	190	0	1,002	-3	100	12	80	14	91	2	7,547	19
7	Malheur	177	36	2,446	-4	97	14	71	55	86	11	6,860	14
8	Crook)	175	36	393	-17	90	30	78	18	85	5	8,111	21
9	Jefferson)	175	36	590	+109	84	69	65	28	82	20	9,970	97
10	Wheeler)	175	36	173	-30	77	38	62	-9	68	7	7,608	73
11	Tillamook	172	26	857	-8	100	21	72	33	92	12	4,163	2
12	Benton	171	20	1,153	-10	100	17	82	37	90	4	2,955	13
13	Multnomah	169	18	1,680	-27	98	8	82	38	82	-2	3,900	41
14	Lane	167	31	4,042	-23	100	29	82	43	89	4	2,190	1
15	Marion	167	12	4,543	-13	98	11	74	29	87	-2	3,788	5
16	Linn	165	19	3,196	-2	96	27	73	20	86	1	3,810	11
17	Yamhill	165	15	2,473	-12	98	14	72	24	84	2	3,961	5
18	Wasco	163	12	805	-5	82	18	63	4	82	13	7,247	6
19	Deschutes	161	20	1,067	+6	99	15	79	40	82	2	2,199	28
20	Polk	160	10	1,605	-7	90	9	70	26	82	-3	4,427	1
21	Grant)	159	32	403	-23	96	56	78	11	76	9	4,844	5
22	Harney)	159	32	322	-18	72	44	42	-2	77	13	8,767	54
23	Lake)	159	32	426	-2	93	41	50	14	82	18	7,010	19
24	Union)	159	30	986	-17	92	34	71	20	88	13	5,402	22
25	Wallowa)	159	30	686	-16	80	28	48	16	81	17	5,563	14

Continued

Continuation

Table 9. Changes in Level-of-Living Indexes and Percentages of Farms Reporting Items Used in Their Computation Between 1945 and 1954, by Counties, Ranked According to the Index in 1954.

Rank	State and County	Level-of-Living Index	Number of Farms	Percentage of All Farms Reporting		Av. Value of All Farm Products Sold per Farm				
				Electricity	Telephone					
		: Increase since 1945	: Change since 1945	: Change since 1945	: Change since 1945	: Change since 1945				
		1954: 1945	1954: 1945	1954: 1945	1954: 1945	1954: 1945				
		Index Percent	No. Percent	Percent /4	Percent /4	Dol. Percent				
26	Clackamas	158	5,607	12	69	23	88	4	2,023	- 1
27	Washington	158	3,676	11	66	31	86	2	2,870	15
28	Baker	157	998	8	93	65	75	9	5,071	13
29	Jackson	156	2,647	10	94	70	84	3	2,591	-21
30	Josephine	153	1,443	33	99	66	86	9	1,685	- 6
31	Columbia	147	1,773	15	99	62	81	3	1,529	- 7
32	Douglas	147	2,155	33	95	29	79	3	1,780	2
33	Clatsop	144	697	23	97	61	78	-1	1,650	- 7
34	Lincoln	143	677	30	98	53	77	1	2,484	151
35	Coos)	140	1,408	20	96	55	77	2	2,249	1
36	Curry)	140	390	37	92	36	78	13	3,225	33

/1 Adjusted to 1945 basis by the index of prices paid by farmers.
 /2 Ranking among all states.
 /3 The five index combinations are indicated by use of brackets.
 /4 Percentage point increase (+) or decrease (-).

Source: Data and Computations from 1945 and 1954 Census of Agriculture.

Figure 8. Level-of-Living Indexes of Farm-Family Operators in Oregon, 1954

