

# CASCADIA SCORECARD 2006

## Sightline Institute

### IDAHO'S 2006 SCORE

*Cascadia Scorecard 2006* reports the region's progress on seven key trends, with a focus on the connections between sprawl and health. Here's how Idaho "scored" in this year's report.

#### Health and Sprawl: Highest rate of car-crash fatalities; most sprawling cities

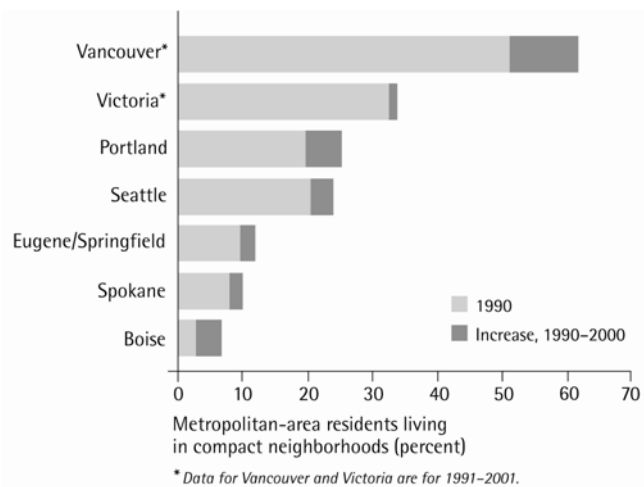
- Idaho residents drive about 10,500 miles annually, on average, a habit that claims roughly 280 lives a year in the state. Idaho has the highest rate of fatalities from car crashes in the Northwest—21.6 deaths per 100,000 residents, compared to 12.7 in Washington and 9.8 in British Columbia. (See map of traffic-fatality risk, page 44.)

- Car crashes are the leading cause of death under age 50 in Idaho. Idaho's average life expectancy—79 years—would lengthen by more than 6 months if car crashes could be completely eliminated. Ada County, Idaho's most urban county, has the state's lowest risk of dying in a car crash largely because residents of compact communities drive less.

- Roughly 21 percent of Idaho residents are obese, a rate that has nearly doubled since 1990 and is almost twice British Columbia's rate (12 percent).

BC's better record in obesity and crash deaths can be attributed in part to smart planning favoring walkable neighborhoods that encourage more physical activity and less driving. British Columbians also live an average of 2 years longer than Idahoans.

- Of the seven largest Northwest cities, Boise has the smallest percentage of residents living at compact densities.
- Keys to improving health include policy innovations to encourage compact, walkable communities such as: fostering a blend of stores and services in residential areas, creating better street connections, easing parking requirements, allowing infill development, and putting a boundary on sprawl.



#### Energy: Highest per-person energy use in Northwest

- 2005 ushered in a glimmer of promise for conservation: on a per capita basis, Idaho's consumption of highway fuels and electricity for homes and businesses declined slightly. But per person, Idaho still consumes the most energy in the Northwest (the equivalent of 16.9 gallons of gasoline per person per week).
- Idahoans also use the most gas, an average of 8.5 gallons per week per person, compared to 8.1 gallons in Washington, and 5.3 in BC. The state's relatively high consumption reflects its vast road network (with three times more road miles per resident than BC's) and sprawling cities and suburbs.

- Steps to make Idaho's energy system more secure and efficient include adopting market incentives for energy efficiency, such as pay-by-the-mile car insurance and feebates.
- Clean, efficient energy could also be a powerful job generator in the state. The Canadian firm Iogen plans to build a cellulose ethanol facility in Idaho in 2007, which would spin barley straw into 60 million gallons of motor fuels annually.

### **Economy: Poverty and unemployment declining**

- From 1990 to 2004, Idaho's economic security index improved faster than the US average and faster than Oregon and Washington. Idaho now has a higher economic security score than Oregon.
- Idaho's rates of poverty, child poverty, and unemployment have also declined substantially since 1990, with lower rates of poverty (9.9 percent) and unemployment (3.9 percent in 2005) than either Oregon or Washington.
- In 2004, Idaho's median income, roughly \$44,400, still lagged behind Washington's, but it was tied with Oregon after increasing by about \$6,600 since 1990, after adjusting for inflation. The Scorecard's economic security index, a gauge of how working families are faring, tracks typical household incomes, the unemployment rate, the poverty rate, and the child poverty rate.

### **Population: Largest family size in the Northwest**

- Idaho's family size is the largest in the Northwest (2.3 children on average) and remained unchanged in 2004. Family size, or total fertility rate, is a sensitive indicator of educational and economic opportunities for women, especially young or poor women.
- While declining, Idaho's teen birth rate is highest in Cascadia. at 38.8 births per 1,000 teenage girls, more than three times the rate in British Columbia.
- Idaho can improve its population record by reducing its high rate of unintended births—some 38 percent of all births. A key step is to universalize non-prescription access to emergency contraception at pharmacies, as Washington and British Columbia have already done.

### **Wildlife: Wolves rebounding, caribou struggling**

- *Cascadia Scorecard 2006* introduces a new measure of ecosystem health: population trends for five emblematic wildlife species found throughout the bioregion. Wildlife tracked in Idaho includes the Selkirk herd of mountain caribou and gray wolves.
- Once ranging across nearly every landscape in North America, wolves were extirpated from the US West until the 1990s, when small populations were re-introduced into the northern Rocky Mountains. Since then, wolf numbers have boomed to an estimated 512 in Idaho (and 256 more in Montana).
- The future of mountain caribou—considered the most endangered animal in the continental United States—is precarious, primarily because of loss of wilderness-quality lands with old forests that support their principal food sources. Over the last six years, the population has hovered around 35, roughly one-tenth of their historical numbers, despite population infusions of new caribou from BC.

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[http://www.sightline.org/research/cascadia\\_scorecard/res\\_pubs/cs2006](http://www.sightline.org/research/cascadia_scorecard/res_pubs/cs2006).