

CASCADIA SCORECARD 2006

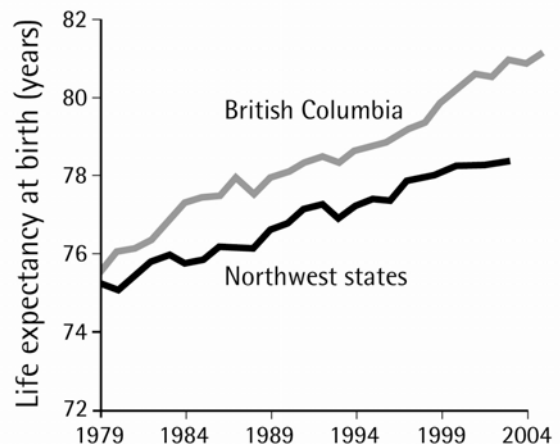
Sightline Institute

OREGON'S 2006 SCORECARD

Cascadia Scorecard 2006 reports the Northwest's progress on seven key trends, with a focus on the connections between sprawl and health. Here's how Oregon "scores."

Health and Sprawl: Community design linked to high obesity rate, traffic fatalities

- Oregon residents drive about 9,900 miles per resident annually, a habit that claims roughly 500 lives a year in the state.
- Oregon's fatality rate from car crashes is 13.9 deaths per 100,000 residents, higher than Washington's (12.7) and British Columbia's (9.8). Oregon's most urban counties—Washington and Multnomah—have the lowest risk of fatal crashes, largely because residents of compact communities drive less. (See traffic-fatality map, page 44.)
- Oregon's obesity rate, 21 percent of the population, has nearly doubled since 1990 and is almost twice the rate of British Columbia's (12 percent).
- BC's better record in obesity and vehicle deaths can be attributed in part to smart city planning favoring walkable neighborhoods. In Oregon's metropolitan areas, a smaller percentage of people live at compact densities than in BC—28 percent in greater Portland compared to 62 percent in greater Vancouver.
- BC also leads the Northwest in longevity. Oregonians live an average of 78 years, 1.6 years longer than in 1990, but almost three years shorter than British Columbians (81.1 years in 2005).
- Steps toward improving health in Oregon include policy innovations to encourage communities to be more compact and walkable. 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 all improve conditions that favor health.



Energy: Slight decline in energy use, but still high

- 2005 ushered in a glimmer of promise for conservation. On average, Oregon residents still consume high levels of highway fuels and electricity for homes and businesses, but it declined slightly, to the equivalent of 15.9 gallons of gasoline per person per week.
- Oregonians also consumed slightly less gas per person in 2005 than in recent years (8 gallons a week), probably due to higher prices. Oregonians consume less gas than residents of Idaho (8.5 gallons), but significantly more than British Columbians (5.3 gallons). The state's consumption of diesel rose in 2005.
- Key steps to make Oregon's energy system more secure and efficient include market incentives to reward consumers to use less energy, such as pay-by-the-mile car insurance and feebates.

Pollution: PCBs and PBDEs found in every Oregon woman tested

- In 2005, Sightline released new results from its 2004 study of contaminants in breastmilk samples donated by 40 Cascadian mothers, including 10 from Oregon.
- Laboratory tests found PCBs, chemical contaminants that were banned in the 1970s because of their harmful health effects, in each of the samples. In Oregon, the average level of PCBs was 187 parts per billion, a typical level in the study.
- PBDEs, toxic flame retardants that may have health effects similar to those of PCBs, were also found in all the samples at high levels.

Economy: Oregon struggles to maintain economic security

- Oregon has the highest rates of poverty (11.7 percent) and child poverty (17.4 percent) in the Northwest states; and the state's household median income has declined every year since 2000. But Oregon's unemployment rate has declined significantly from nation-leading highs in 2003, perhaps a sign of a brighter economic future for the state.
- From 1990 to 2004, Oregon's economic security index improved more slowly than all but two US states. Oregon ranks 34th among all states, while Idaho is ranked 30th and Washington is ranked 27th. 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: Trend toward small family size continues

- At 31.9 births per 1,000 teenage girls, Oregon's teen birthrate is slightly higher than Washington's and more than three times as high as British Columbia's.
- Oregonians have an average of 1.9 children. Family size, or total fertility rate, is a sensitive indicator of educational and economic opportunities for women, especially young or poor women.
- Oregon can improve its population record by reducing its high rate of unintended births—some 39 percent. A key step is to universalize non-prescription access to emergency contraception at pharmacies.

Wildlife: Salmon struggle, sage-grouse stable

- *Cascadia Scorecard 2006* introduces a new measure of ecosystem health: population trends for five emblematic wildlife species found throughout the bioregion. Wildlife tracked in Oregon includes Chinook salmon that return annually to the Columbia River and the greater sage-grouse of eastern Oregon.
- The Chinook report card is mixed. In 2005, roughly 150,000 Chinook returned to the Bonneville Dam—less than 6 percent of their historic abundance. Restoring salmon requires actions such as removing the dams on the lower Snake River and reducing pollution runoff.
- Greater sage-grouse are an excellent indicator of the health of the sagebrush country of the inland Northwest, an ecosystem rich in native biological integrity. In Oregon, the sage-grouse population of roughly 40,000 birds appears roughly stable, but is probably less than 25 percent of historic numbers.
- Restoring sage-grouse populations will require coordinated ecological restoration, as well as preservation of core habitat. Oregon is home to at least one important success story: banning of cattle from the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge helped boost grouse numbers there.

Contact Leigh Sims, 206-447-1880, ext. 109, leigh@sightline.org. An online press room with the report, sources, maps, and press materials is available at http://www.sightline.org/research/cascadia_scorecard/res_pubs/cs2006