

CASCADIA SCORECARD 2006

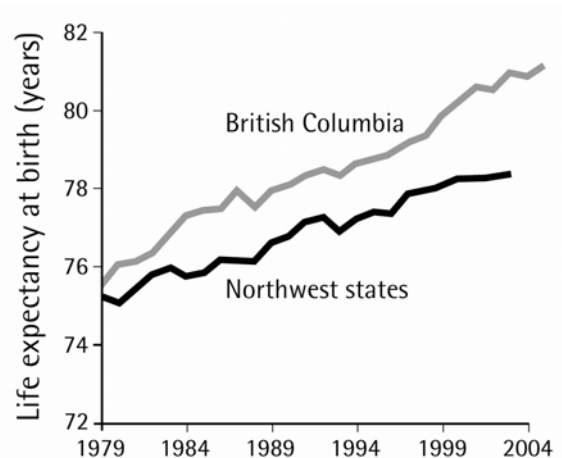
Sightline Institute

WASHINGTON'S 2006 SCORE

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

Health and Sprawl: Sprawl may contribute to lifespan gap

- Washington residents drive a total of 55.6 billion miles a year—nearly 9,000 miles per resident—a habit that claims roughly 700 lives a year in the state.
- Car crashes are the leading cause of death under age 45 in Washington. The state's fatality rate from car crashes is 12.7 deaths per 100,000 residents, a lower rate than Oregon's (13.9), but higher than British Columbia's (9.8).
- Because residents of compact communities drive less, they die less often. King County is the most urban county in Washington state, and has the lowest overall risk of fatal car crashes.
- Washington's transportation department estimated that comprehensive crash costs in the state totaled \$5.5 billion in 2002, more than 3 times the department's yearly budget. This suggests that car crashes may be more costly than the roads on which they occur.
- Washington's obesity rate, 22 percent of the population, has doubled since 1990 and is almost twice British Columbia's rate (12 percent). A study in King County found that pedestrian-friendly neighborhood design is associated with a reduction in body mass. For a person who is 5'9", that translates into a difference of between 3.5 and 7 pounds. The most walkable neighborhoods in King County were in and around dense areas—places with connected streets and a mix of homes and shops. (See King County maps, pages 45-47.)
- Washington's average lifespan was 79.3 years in 2004—an increase of 2.4 years since 1990 but less than British Columbia's (81.1 years in 2005), which boasts the region's longest lifespan.
- Keys to improving health in the state include policy innovations that encourage compact, walkable design, including: fostering a blend of stores and services in residential areas, creating better street connections, easing parking requirements, allowing infill development, and curbing sprawl.



Energy: Washington's per-person energy use declining

- Washington residents still consume highway fuels and electricity for homes and businesses at a high rate (the equivalent of 15.3 gallons of gasoline per person every week), but their energy use declined slightly in 2005, offering a glimmer of promise for conservation.
- Washington's per-person gasoline consumption has also declined—for the third year in a row—perhaps due to higher prices. A typical Washington resident consumes 8.1 gallons of gasoline each week (compared to 5.3 for BC). But the state's consumption of diesel has been rising slightly.

- Key steps to make Washington'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 in every mother tested

- In 2005, Sightline released new results from its 2004 study of contaminants in breastmilk samples donated by 40 Cascadian mothers, including 10 from Washington.
- Laboratory tests found PCBs, chemical contaminants that were banned in the 1970s because of harmful health effects, in each of the samples. In Washington, the average level of PCBs was 300 parts per billion, a higher-than-average level found in the study.
- PBDEs, toxic flame retardants used in many products, were also found in all the mothers at high levels.

Economy: Washington shows poor record of improvement

- In 2004, the most recent year for which data were available, Washington had the lowest rate of child poverty (15.3 percent) and the highest median income (\$49,820) in the Northwest states. Washington's economic security ranks 27th among the 50 states, a higher score than Idaho (30th) and Oregon (34th).
- But from 1990 to 2004, Washington's economic security index did not improve at all—a worse record than all but one other state in the US. The Scorecard's economic security index, a gauge of how working families are faring, tracks household incomes, the unemployment rate, the poverty rate, and the child poverty rate.

Population: Small family size, but high rate of unintended births

- Washington's family size, 2 children on average, increased slightly in 2004. Family size, or total fertility rate, is a sensitive indicator of educational and economic opportunities for women.
- At 31.2 births per 1,000 teenage girls, Washington's teen birthrate is nearly three times as high as British Columbia's. Washington can improve its record by reducing its high rate of unintended births—around 39 percent. Washington has already universalized access to emergency contraception at pharmacies.

Wildlife: Salmon variable, caribou struggle, orcas may rebound

- *Cascadia Scorecard 2006* introduces a new measure of ecosystem health: population trends for five emblematic wildlife species. Wildlife tracked in Washington includes the Selkirk herd of mountain caribou; southern resident orcas living primarily in Puget Sound and the Georgia Basin; and Chinook salmon that return to the Columbia River.
- The Chinook salmon 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.
- Protection measures starting in the 1970s helped restore the southern resident orca population to about 90 today. And in November 2005, orcas were placed under the protective umbrella of the Endangered Species Act. But the southern resident orca population is still only about one-third of 19th century levels.
- Over the last six years, the mountain caribou population has hovered around 35, despite population additions—roughly one-tenth of their historical numbers. The caribou need strict protection and restoration of old-growth forests in the Selkirks.

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