

Chapter 4. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Civic engagement benchmarks—along with those in social support and public safety—track progress in achieving Oregon’s second strategic goal: “safe, caring and engaged communities” (see Figure 1, page 4). Oregon’s overall grade in civic engagement remains a D.

Civic engagement benchmarks performed as follows:

- *Volunteerism (D- to F)*. The percentage of Oregonians who regularly volunteer (not including episodic volunteers) peaked in 1996 and has since fallen to a decade low of 23%.
- *Voting (F to C)*. In 1992 and 1996, Oregon ranked nationally in the top ten for voter turnout. However in the 2000 presidential election, Oregon’s voter turnout was below the 1992 level and the 2000 target
- *Feeling of Community (D)*. The percentage of Oregonians who feel connected to their communities has remained relatively steady at or just under 40% since the Oregon Population Survey began collecting data on this issue in 1994.
- *Understanding the Tax System (B- to D+)*. Only about 18% of Oregonians understand the tax system well enough to know the largest source of state revenues and the largest category of state expenditures.
- *Taxes per \$1000 Income*. In 1990 Oregonians paid, on average, \$120 per \$1000 of personal income. For 2000, that figure is estimated to be \$106.
- *Public Management Quality*. Oregon’s 2000 performance was assessed lower than in 1998.
- *S&P Bond Rating (C)*. Oregon’s rating has not improved since 1996, despite a strong economy.
- *State Funding for the Arts (F to C)*. Although Oregon is ranked last in the nation for this measure between 1995 and 1999, it’s ranking improved in 2000 to 46th .
- *Public Library Service (A- to F)*. In 1997, 89% of Oregon’s population was served by libraries that met minimum standards. In 1999, that number was 84%.

| | 1998 | 2000 | Page |
|------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| KEY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BENCHMARKS | | | |
| Volunteerism | D- | F | 31 |
| OTHER CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BENCHMARKS | | | |
| Voting | F | C | 32 |
| Feeling of Community | D | D | 32 |
| Understanding Tax System | B- | D+ | 32 |
| Taxes per \$1000 Income | N/A | N/A | 33 |
| Public Management Quality | N/A | N/A | 33 |
| S&P Bond Rating | N/A | C | 33 |
| State Arts Funding | F | C | 34 |
| Public Library Service | A- | F | 34 |
| AVERAGE OTHER GRADE | C- | D+ | |
| OVERALL GRADE* | D | D | |

*The overall grade is a weighted average. Each key benchmark is given a weight of one. All other benchmarks are averaged, and that average is also given a weight of one.

NEW OR MODIFIED BENCHMARKS FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

| New or Modified Benchmark | Rationale |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 31. Oregon's national rank in voter turnout for presidential elections. | This benchmark now reports only presidential election years. This will make the trend line more easily discernable and more comparable to national trends. |
| 34. General state & local revenue per \$1,000 or personal income: a. national rank for all revenue, b. national rank for taxes, c. all revenue as a percentage of 1990. | This replaces previous benchmarks 37 and 38. It examines the total cost of government, both tax and non-tax collections. The old benchmarks focused strictly on tax collections. |

Benchmark
30

Key Benchmark

VOLUNTEERISM

Percentage of Oregonians who volunteer at least 50 hours of their time per year to civic, community, or non-profit activities.

Grade
F

Consistent Volunteering is Down

Contributes to Goal 2, Safe, Caring and Engaged communities.

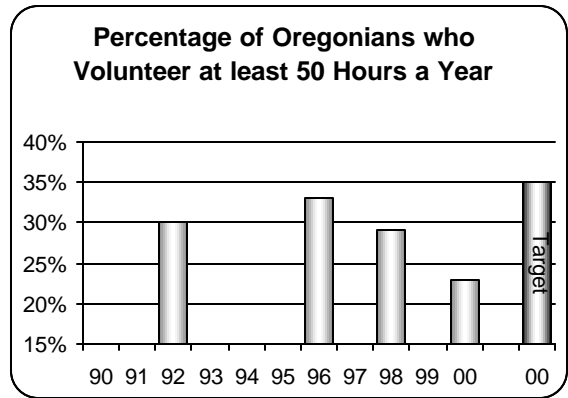
Volunteerism is at the heart of countless nonprofit, civic, charitable and religious organizations. Society as a whole benefits from the enthusiasm, skills and commitment of volunteers. Not only does their time equate to billions of dollars, volunteers are the building blocks of a more vibrant, civil society.

2000 Target Aimed for 35%

This benchmark is based on a biennial population survey of a random sample of Oregon’s households. Respondents are asked how many hours per year they volunteer. The 2000 target aimed to increase the 30% volunteering at least 50 hours per year in 1992 to 35% in 2000.

Percentage Does Not Include Episodic Volunteers

This chart shows that self-reported volunteerism of at least 50 hours annually rose from 30% in 1992 to 33% in 1996. It has since fallen to a decade low of 23%. However, this measure does not include episodic or one-time volunteers who typically volunteer less than 50 hours per year.



Source: Oregon Population Survey

How Oregon Compares

PERCENT OF POPULATION THAT VOLUNTEERS

| | 1993 | 1995 | 1998 |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| U.S. | 47.7% | 48.8% | 55.5% |

Source: Independent Sector - 1999 National Survey

Data show that between 1993 and 1998, the percentage of the U.S. population that volunteered increased steadily. However, the number of hours volunteered weekly has declined. This may be due to an increasing number of episodic or one-time volunteers.* These national comparator figures are not comparable to the Oregon Population Survey because they include “episodic” volunteers. About half of all who volunteer nationwide do so on an episodic or one-time basis.

What Needs to be Done

The Independent Sector study provides some clues on how to encourage volunteerism in Oregon. In addition to documenting the shift away from traditional “candy striper” regularity, it found out why people volunteer, how many get involved, and who volunteers are. Respondents listed three main reasons for volunteering 1) personal interest in the activity, 2) the beneficiary, and 3) feeling needed. Getting involved is much more likely with the personal touch of a relationship—an amazing 90% of all who were asked to volunteer actually did volunteer, compared with 22% who were not asked. And who were the volunteers? Mostly those of advanced age and income.

These findings imply that volunteerism may be encouraged by developing good relationships with potential volunteers and matching volunteer opportunities to their interests and lifestyle. Those in the baby boomer cohort, for example, represent an increasingly significant resource for volunteerism. Research shows that boomers will need to be asked and actively recruited into local organizations that do not necessarily tie them down to a regular volunteer schedule. An Oregon example of this is SOLV, a nonprofit organization “working to preserve the treasure that is Oregon.” SOLV takes advantage of this tendency by successfully recruiting for one-time projects that clean up and beautify Oregon’s beaches, rivers, parks and communities.

Relevant State Agencies: Oregon Progress Board, www.econ.state.or.us/opb; Adult & Family Services Division, www.afs.hr.state.or.us; Commission on Children & Families, www.ccf.state.or.us; Community Partnership Team, <http://cpt.hr.state.or.us>; Long Term Care Ombudsman. (See the Oregon Progress Board website for other key players and stakeholders.)

See Also: www.solv.org, www.independentsector.org/GandV, www.pointsoflight.org, www.servenet.org

*Saxon-Harrold, Susan K.E. *Giving and Volunteering in the United States, Findings from a National Survey, 1999 Edition*. Conducted by the Gallup Organization for Independent Sector, Washington D.C., page 3.

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Voting

Percentage of eligible Oregonians who vote.

For Benchmark 30, see page 31.

Grade

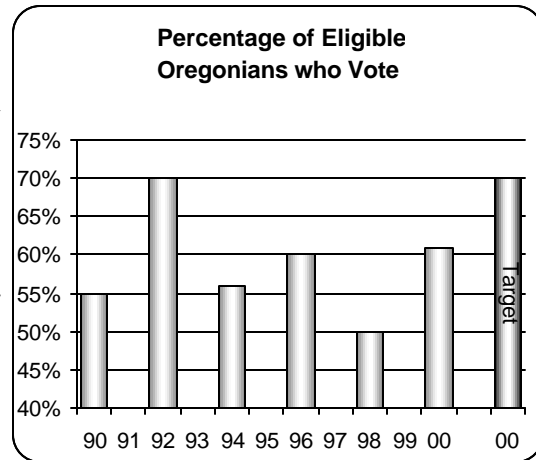
C

Oregon's 2000 Voter Turnout Less than 1992, Target

This benchmark compares the percentage of eligible (including those not registered) citizens who vote. Please note that the data include both presidential and non-presidential election years, and as expected, turnout is higher for presidential election years.

In 1992 and 1996, Oregon ranked nationally in the top ten for voter turnout. However in the 2000 presidential election, Oregon's voters turned out at a rate well below the 1992 presidential election as well as the 2000 target (see chart). Oregon used vote-by-mail exclusively for the first time that year. Its effect on voter turnout is unclear.

In the future, this benchmark will be re-worded to compare Oregon's turnout for presidential elections to other states nationwide (for exact wording see Appendix A).



Source: Oregon Secretary of State

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Community Connectedness

Percentage of Oregonians who feel they are part of their community.

Grade

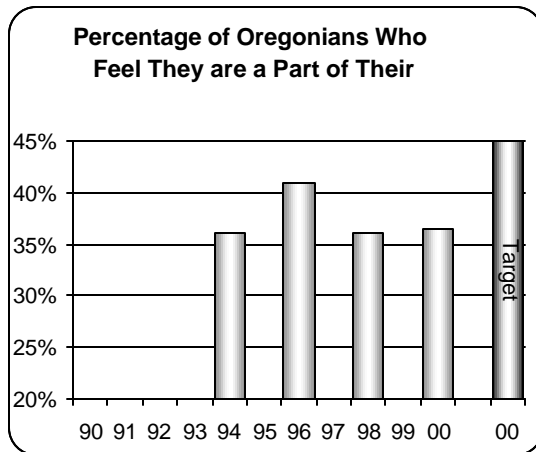
D

Less than Half Feel Connected to their Communities

This measures Oregonians' sense of community, which has been linked with improved child welfare, housing and neighborhood quality, the effectiveness of our democratic government, and personal health and happiness. Oregon Population Surveys show that the percentage of Oregonians who feel this connection remains relatively steady near 40% (see chart).

Nationwide, connectedness has been decreasing. After years of research using archives on nearly 500,000 detailed interviews, Harvard professor Robert Putnam concludes that the sense of community has declined in politics, civic engagement, and informal social ties. He argues that tolerance and trust have also declined, as evidenced by a higher number of lawyers and police per capita than in the 1970s*.

* Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster, 2000.



Source: Oregon Population Survey

33

Understanding of Tax System

Percentage of Oregonians who understand the state tax system and where tax money is spent.

Grade

D+

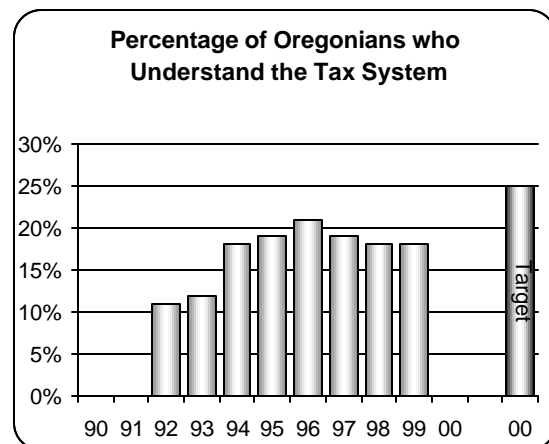
Four out of Five Do Not Understand Tax System

The percentage of Oregonians who understand their tax system is an important indicator of citizen involvement. A well-informed public allows the system to work better.

This benchmark measures the percentage of those who know both the main source of state general fund revenues and the main categories of general fund expenditures.

Between 1992 and 1996, the percentage of Oregonians who understood the tax system rose from 11% to 21%. Since then, however, it has receded to 18% and seems to be holding steady at that level.

A question has been added to the Oregon Population Survey (OPS) that addresses this issue. In the future, OPS will be used as a new data source for this benchmark.



Source: Oregon State University

Civic Engagement

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Taxes per \$1000 Personal Income

State and local taxes per \$1000 of personal income a. as a percentage of 1990, b. Oregon's rank.

Grade

N/A

Fewer State & Local Taxes Per Dollar Earned than 1990

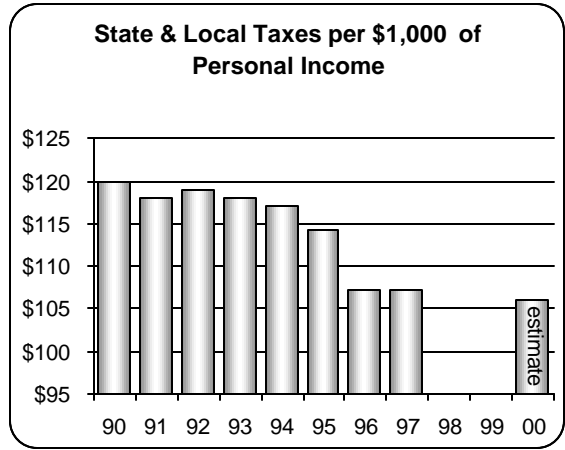
Oregon's goal is to provide high quality services at lower costs. By examining tax burdens per dollar earned over time and comparing it to other states, this benchmark aims to balance Oregon's tax structure at a level that is efficient, effective and equitable.

In 1990 Oregonians paid, on average, \$120 per \$1000 income. For 2000, that figure is estimated to be only \$106. In 1995, Oregon had lower taxes per \$1000 personal income than 27 other states; in 1996 Oregon's taxes were lower than 36 other states, including Washington.

| State Ranking for Taxes per \$1000 Personal Income | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| | 1995 | 1996 |
| OR | 28th | 37th |
| WA | 12th | 13th |

1st = Worst (Highest Taxes)

In the future, this benchmark will track both tax and non-tax collections (see Appendix A).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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Public Management Quality

Governing magazine's grading of public management quality.

Grade

N/A

Oregon's Management Quality Ranking Suffers

Governing Magazine produces a 50-state report card based on each state's management of finance, capital, human resources, results and information technology (see table below). Although most states stayed the same or improved between 1998 and 2000, Oregon slipped half a grade overall and in all categories except capital management. Washington scored higher in all categories, including managing for results, an area in which Oregon is considered a national leader. The report states that Oregon's grade fell in this area in part because of poor performance measurement implementation.

| | Overall | FM | CM | HR | Results | IT |
|---------|---------|----|----|----|---------|----|
| OR (00) | C+ | B- | B- | C | B | C |
| WA (00) | A- | B+ | A- | A- | A- | A |



Source: Governing Magazine

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S&P Bond Rating

State general obligation bond rating (Standard and Poor's).

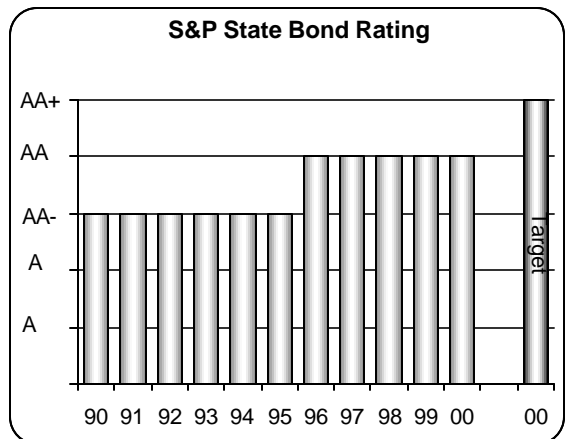
Grade

C

Bond Rating Plateaued in Mid-Decade

This benchmark reflects the opinion of a national, independent rating agency on the State's ability to repay principle and interest on general obligation debt. It is a measurement of how well-managed state government is and how willing Oregonians are to support it. Higher ratings signify lower risk, better "general fiscal health" as well as improved policies and administrative performance.

Oregon's rating improved in 1996 and has not improved since despite a strong economy. This is due in part to the fact that Oregonians place numerous initiatives on election ballots that could negatively affect the long term ability to repay state bonds. Also, Oregon is only one of four states that does not have a "rainy day" or reserve fund.



Source: Standard & Poor's

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State Arts Funding

Oregon's national rank in per capita State arts funding.

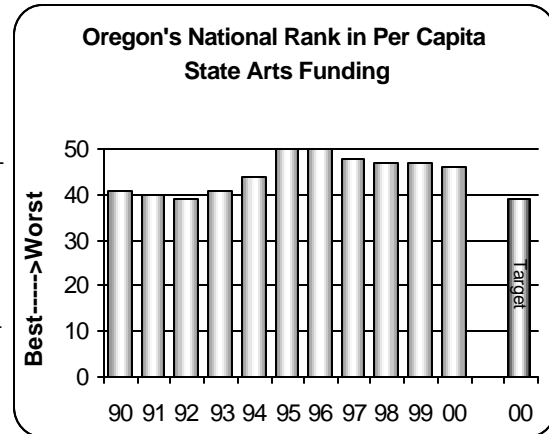
Grade

C

Oregon Sees Improvement in State Arts Funding

This benchmark measures Oregon's national rank in state funding for non-profit arts agencies. In 1995 and 1996, Oregon ranked last. In 2000, that improved to a ranking of 46th. (Reliable, comparable data on total arts funding is currently not available in Oregon. Research is underway to acquire this information.)

In 1999, the legislature created a Task Force on Cultural Development, charged with developing a statewide strategy that can guide and increase public and private investment in Oregon's culture. This includes arts, humanities, community development, education, heritage, historic preservation and tourism. The task force is also responsible for developing measurable benchmarks. The Oregon Progress Board will consider these for future evaluation and reporting.



Source: Oregon Arts Commission

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Public Library Service

Percentage of Oregonians served by a public library which meets minimum service criteria.

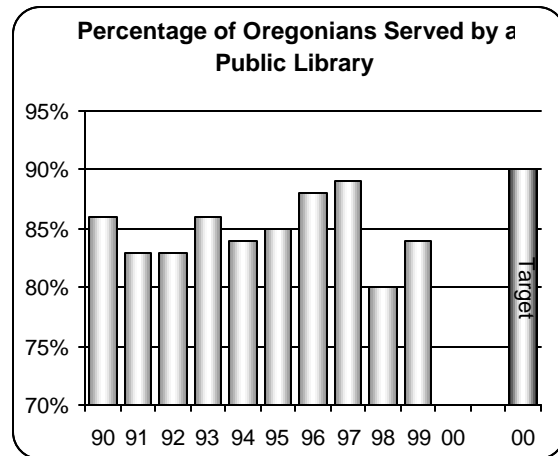
Grade

F

16% without Minimum Library Services in 1999

Although today's online information sources are changing the way Oregonians obtain information, public libraries remain an essential community resource. About 16% of Oregonians are not served by a public library meeting minimum standards. One third of this 16% do not live in a county or municipality with library service. The remaining two thirds do, but the library service provided does not meet minimum standards (which specify requirements like minimum hours of operation, staff, and number of volumes).

The Oregon State Library projects that coverage will improve to 88% by 2001 for two reasons. One, in 2000 the State Library initiated an 19 month, federally funded "benchmark grant program" to help libraries meet minimum criteria. And two, libraries affected by Measures 47 (1996) and 50 (1997) have begun to regain funding and make improvements.



Source: Oregon State Library