

coos & curry counties cultural landscape 2021

Researcher Resource: A description about this region of interest meant to help guide design choices for proposed cancer prevention and control projects and/or clinical trial research implementation.



Photo by Sylvia Miller

cancer*

(*mortality rates are deaths per 100,000 residents; citations on page 2.)

→ lung & bronchus cancer

2nd highest cancer diagnosis at Bay Area Hospital. Women in Coos and Curry have the 3rd & 2nd highest lung and bronchus cancer incidence rates. Bay Area Hospital has an annual low-dose CT scan program available to screen and detect this cancer early.

→ colorectal cancer (crc)

Coos & Curry have much higher mortality of CRC than incidence rates. 34 Douglas County residents are diagnosed with CRC per year. Women in Coos have the highest mortality rate in Oregon. At home stool collection kits can detect this cancer early.

→ oropharyngeal cancer (back of throat, base of tongue/tonsils)

- Coos has the 2nd highest mortality rate of oropharyngeal cancer in Oregon. In 2018, 58% of these cancers diagnosed at Bay Area Hospital were stage III or IV (late stage).
- Tobacco and/or use has, historically, been the primary cause of oropharyngeal cancers.
- Human Papillomavirus infection is thought to be responsible for ~70% of all oropharyngeal cancer diagnoses. (<https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hpv/statistics/index.htm>)

Residents of the South Coast die of cancer at a higher rate than the rest of the state (Coos: 197.6 - Curry: 182.7 - Douglas: 187.7 - Oregon: 162.8). Rural communities with low incidence rates and high mortality rates often reflect gaps in early detection, effective screening programs and/or fear that a cancer diagnosis is a death sentence.

→ cancer prevention and modifiable risk factors

- Coos County has a lower percentage of the population participating in preventative screenings than Oregon, which is an indicator of access to care, quality and timeliness of care (from Coos' Community Health Assessment).
- South Coast residents are about 4-10% more obese than rest of state (Coos: 38.3% - Curry: 33.4% - Douglas: 32.7% - Oregon: 28.6%).
- Coos, Curry & Douglas Counties all rank in the state's top 10 for percentage of residents with Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases and Cardiovascular Disease.
- Risk factors for pancreatic cancer:
 - Tobacco usage: Coos County smoking rates are 2nd highest in state, Curry smoking rates are 4th highest.
 - Diabetes: Coos rates 7th highest, Douglas rates 6th highest.

economic

- **Homelessness: 1,299 homeless individuals (2019), a 36% increase from 2018.**
- In the 2016-2017 school year, 559 children were homeless, 52 of those students were pre-kindergarten ages.
- 1% housing availability in Coos; 72% of vacant housing used for vacation rentals in Curry.
- **37% of households in Coos County & 35% of households in Curry County are cost burdened, meaning their rent or mortgage exceeds 30% of their household income, this is higher than state levels.**
- High unemployment rate: 6.9% (2017) - Poverty rate: 21.7% (2019).
- Low Socio-Economic Status, median & average incomes are lower than state average. Difference in income by race/ethnicity is lower than state average.
- 100% Coos & Curry County students receive free/reduced-price lunches due to the COVID-19 pandemic (50% pre-pandemic).
- **Major Employers: Correctional Institutes in Coos & Curry. Coos County Shutter Creek to close in 2022.**

social

- Lack of childcare, resources, and education.
- Teen pregnancy rates, Coos: 13.1 per 1,000 (2011-2017 Oregon Health Authority)
- High school graduation rates, 2016: Coos-58% | Curry-72.6%
- Broadband access is limited - library parking lots were used to access free Wi-Fi during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Census 2020 Rates:**
 - **Coos County: 82.5% White/NHL, 6.6% Hispanic or Latino, 2% American Indian**
 - **Curry County: 82.9% White/NHL, 7.1% Hispanic or Latino, 2% American Indian**
 - **Douglas County: 84.1% White/NHL, 6% Hispanic or Latino, 1.5% American Indian**
- Those <65 with disabilities: Coos-16.4% | Curry-13.6% | Douglas-13.5% | state-16.8%
- Veterans in the Region: Coos-6,899 | Curry-2,714 | Douglas-12,354
- Seniors >65: Coos-26.5% | Curry-35% | Douglas-26.3%
 - Number of senior centers and clubs in North Bend/Coos Bay, including Veterans of Foreign Wars, Elks, Rotary, Lions Club.

healthy options and health care access

- Lack of health consciousness/lifestyle, which impacts health, leading to high incidence of health problems.
- Consumption of unhealthy foods, including soda, is higher in Coos County.
- **A third of the population in Coos & Curry Counties live in a food desert (both have a food environment index score of 6.9). Access to fresh produce is limited (both financially and geographically).**
- Lack of larger community gathering space(s), no accessible community center.
- Prescribing patterns for Medicare enrollees in Coos County in 2013-2014 show higher rates of opioid prescriptions than state and national trends (Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services).
- **100% of people in Coos County are considered to be in a health service shortage area (CHA and Office of Rural Health designation; also a recruitment and retention issue).**
- Physical fitness and recreation facilities are at a lower rate than the state, although there are Senior Centers in Coos Bay and North Bend. There are few sidewalks and bike lanes available for recreation along roads.
- Local physicians have a great deal of autonomy, so it can be challenging to coordinate care across offices.
- "...apparently, the thing you do after you get a doctor here is find another because your doctor's going to be leaving soon." -Research Interview Participant

political

- Community members and healthcare providers are fiercely independent.
- **Mistrust of Government organizations as well as mistrust or tension regarding "outsiders" (even from Portland area); resistance to outside involvement.**
- People who move in from other communities can create a divide.
- External impacts on the region: Lack of those who value rural communities, impacting recruitment & retention.

environmental

- **Limited access to transportation (distance, driving ability, car ownership) as well as limited public transit.**
- Fire season can drastically affect air quality (has been true for Curry, potential for Coos), although air quality is great when there are no fires.
- Year-round recreation due to climate; mountain bike trails recently built (youth involved) and grant funding to expand; beaches/ocean may be leveraged-connected to nature, moving, hiking, physical activity.

Thank you, researcher, for taking the time to orient yourself to Coos and Curry Counties via this locally-developed Cultural Landscape. Data collected in response to the development of this document was offered by community leaders in the region; specifically those who volunteered to participate on a research project to develop a community-involved research review process. This regionally-specific Cultural Landscape is the first step of the *Research in Oregon Communities' Review System* supported by OHSU's Community Outreach, Research and Engagement team.

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