



equityatlas.org

clfuture.org

Regional Equity Atlas

The Portland Metro Region's Geography of Opportunity



PHOTO:
HOME FORWARD

The Regional Equity Atlas is a research and education project to promote widespread opportunity for a stronger, healthier, and more sustainable Portland-Vancouver metropolitan region.

Our region's exceptional quality of life should be accessible to all who live here, but disparities in the distribution of resources and opportunities mean that not all communities benefit from the opportunities the region provides. The goal of the Equity Atlas project is to create a better region for all by promoting changes in public policy, planning, and strategic investments to eliminate disparities.

Equity Atlas 2.0 updates and expands on the original Equity Atlas (2007), which received national attention for its analysis of regional disparities; Equity Atlas 2.0 provides regional stakeholders with a powerful tool for understanding how well different neighborhoods and populations are able to access essential resources to meet their basic needs and advance their well-being. It includes three main parts, available at www.equityatlas.org:



- **Web-based mapping tool:** To enable people to create customized maps on key issues affecting the region.



- **Explanation and interpretation of the findings:** A website with sample maps, preliminary analysis, user manuals, and additional data.



- **Outreach and education initiative:** To engage partners across the region in using the Atlas to create concrete changes in regional policies and priorities.

WHAT WE ARE MAPPING

Equity Atlas 2.0 includes data on a wide range of issue areas that were identified as priorities by stakeholders from across the region:

- **Demographics:** Race / ethnicity, income, age, and household composition.
- **Access Measures:** How close residents of a particular area are to clean air, food, housing, transportation, parks and nature, education, economic opportunity, services, and other community resources.
- **Health Outcome Measures:** Key diseases that are affected by the conditions in which we live, such as the rates of asthma, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, as well as other health outcomes such as obesity and birth outcomes. Most of the data can be mapped by neighborhood or census tract for the four-county region including Multnomah, Clark, Clackamas, and Washington counties.

KEY FINDINGS

Population Trends

The Equity Atlas 2.0 demonstrates that some pivotal trends in the region's demographic patterns that began in the 1980s and 1990s continued during the 2000s. Populations of color are an increasingly significant percentage of the region's population, and they live in communities throughout the metro area. The areas with the highest percentages of populations of color tend to be located in a ring outside of the region's urban core and extending into its periphery – areas that have historically been predominately white. Similarly, the parts of the region with the highest poverty rates extend eastward beyond Portland's central city and include areas in all four of the region's counties.



New Findings about Regional Health Disparities

Some of the most provocative new Atlas data are about chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease. Again and again, the same patterns emerge: neighborhoods with built environments that encourage healthy eating and active living tend to also be where residents have lower rates of chronic disease. The maps also show strong relationships between where populations in poverty and populations of color live and the areas with higher rates of chronic disease.

PHOTO:
BY FINETOOTH, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Regional Disparities in Access to Opportunity

The Equity Atlas 2.0 demonstrates that disparities in access to essential resources and opportunities exist across a wide range of issue areas. A few examples:

- **Housing:** Racial disparities in home ownership rates are prevalent throughout the region. The areas with the greatest gaps in home ownership between communities of color and whites tend to be areas with high rates of poverty and higher percentages of populations of color. In addition, housing continued to become less affordable in Portland's central city over the last decade, leading to displacement of low income populations and communities of color from close-in Portland neighborhoods to outlying neighborhoods and suburbs.
- **Transit Access to Jobs:** Many low income neighborhoods have limited transit access to family wage jobs, particularly in parts of Washington, Clackamas, and Clark counties. The maps also suggest poor transit access to jobs for many people of color.
- **Air Quality:** Exposure to air toxics from various sources is a significant problem in the region. Air quality tends to be worse in the more populated parts of the region, and many high poverty schools are located in areas with elevated air toxics levels.
- **Parks and Nature:** Atlas 2.0 shows a clear mismatch between areas with the highest percentages of youth and the locations of park-rich neighborhoods. Many neighborhoods with low income populations and people of color also have poor access to parks, nature, and other forms of greenspace.



Promising Examples of Equitable Access to Opportunity

Examples of resources that are more equitably distributed offer models that can help guide future planning.

For example, many high poverty areas have good access to transit and walkable neighborhoods. The Equity Atlas 2.0 also highlights some noteworthy exceptions to predominant patterns. For example, there are striking examples of schools with high percentages of students in poverty and/or students of color that have high achievement levels and graduation rates. Understanding what's working in examples like these can help us identify potential strategies to address disparities.



PHOTO:
ANOMALILY, FLICKR, CREATIVE COMMONS



PHOTO:
BY CALLIOPE, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

“Building an equitable region will benefit us all by creating a stronger, healthier, and more sustainable community.”

A CALL TO ACTION: MOVING TOWARD EQUITY

The Equity Atlas exposes significant disparities affecting people of color, low income populations, and youth across a wide range of issue areas, leading to stark differences in health outcomes. These inequities are the result of past and current decisions, and they can be changed. Working toward equity requires the prioritization of policies, infrastructure, and investments to ensure that all people and communities can thrive. Building an equitable region will benefit us all by creating a stronger, healthier, and more sustainable community.



Thank you to our primary partners: Metro – the Portland metro area’s regional government, Portland State University, and Oregon Health Care Quality Corporation.

Major funding provided by: Bullitt Foundation, Kaiser Permanente Community Fund, Meyer Memorial Trust, Northwest Health Foundation, and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Coalition for a Livable Future
107 SE Washington St, Suite 239
Portland, OR 97214
PH: 503-294-2889
www.clfuture.org