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Oregon moves up in health ranking

Survey | Declines in vehicle deaths and infant mortality help the state attain 18th place, up from 21st

By **PATRICK O'NEILL**
THE OREGONIAN

Oregon improved its national ranking in some health-related issues this year, according to a survey by three national health advocacy organizations.

The 16th annual survey, "America's Health Rankings," released Monday, shows that Oregon went from the 21st healthiest state to the 18th, helped by a decline in the vehicular death rate, the infant mortality rate and the rate of infectious disease.

The survey was prepared by the United Health Foundation, the American Public Health Association and Partnership for Prevention. It shows a dramatic improvement in Americans' health since the first survey in 1990, though authors are worried that the rate of improvement is slowing. The results are based on data from several federal agencies.

The document cited a fourth improvement for Oregon — a reduction in the percentage of children in poverty. According to the report, poverty among Oregonians younger than 18 declined from 20.1 percent in 2004 to 15.6 percent this year.

But those figures are disputed by an Oregon group that tracks children's welfare.

Cathy Kaufmann, research and policy associate with Children First for Oregon, says the percentage of impoverished children went up — not down — during the past year.

Kaufmann said the latest U.S. Census Bureau data show that childhood poverty increased to 19.1 percent in 2005 from 17.5 percent in 2004.