

# PUGET SOUND VITAL SIGNS

## INDICATOR SOUND BEHAVIOR INDEX

Many of our day-to-day behaviors seem benign on their own, but when multiplied by 4.7 million residents, their cumulative effects can harm Puget Sound. The Sound Behavior Index (SBI) tracks 28 specific practices that can affect water quality and aquatic habitat such as yard and garden care, vehicle and home maintenance, and pet waste disposal. The SBI is based on a survey that asks residents about specific, measurable, repetitive behaviors within households to analyze aggregate change over time.

**Indicator Progress**



**Target Status**



**Target**

No targets are currently set for this indicator.

**Data Source**

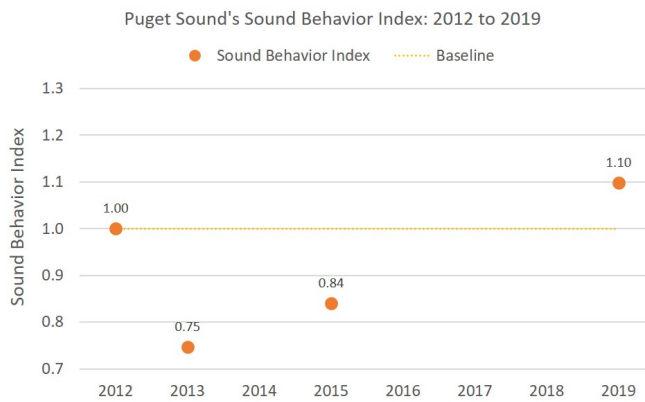
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**Last Updated**

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Sound Behavior Index for Puget Sound residents randomly surveyed using mailers in 2012 (baseline), 2013, 2015, and 2019 via the Sound Behavior Survey, commissioned by the Puget Sound Partnership. Sample size for each survey was as follows: 3,621 respondents in 2012, 3,131 respondents in 2013, 3,000 respondents in 2015, and 1,732 respondents in 2019.

## Key Vital Sign Indicator Results

- Results for both individual behaviors and the regional SBI suggest that this indicator is getting better, meaning that individuals have engaged in more environmentally-friendly practices over time.
- In the 2019 survey, the SBI reached its highest measured value: 1.1. This was the first measured value above the 2012 baseline survey. This high value reflects the fact that Puget Sound residents engaged less frequently in behaviors that are harmful to water quality and aquatic habitats, and engaged more frequently in positive behaviors compared to past survey years.
- Survey results from 2019 show that residents significantly improved in over half of the behaviors measured (16 out of 28) compared to past survey years. In 2019, residents engaged more frequently in 73 percent of positive behaviors (such as planting native plants on their property and checking vehicles for fluid leaks) and less frequently in 38 percent of harmful behaviors (such as using chemical products to control or kill insects and weeds in their yard).
- The majority of harmful behaviors did not significantly improve in 2019, but many of these behaviors are already quite good and future progress is expected to be slow. For example, residents did not show a significant decline in the practice of pouring chemicals such as paint thinners down the drain or flushing prescription drugs down the toilet or drain; however, over 90 percent of residents have consistently reported across survey years that they never engage in this behavior.
- SBI values for 2019 indicate that individuals' behaviors vary across Puget Sound counties. However, differences in index values between different counties should be interpreted with caution because not all types of behavior are relevant to every county and some locations present a greater opportunity for environmentally harmful behaviors than other locations regardless of the motivations of their residents.
- In 2019, SBI values for one-third of the 12 Puget Sound counties reached their highest values since surveying began (Kitsap, Mason, Pierce and Snohomish counties). On the other hand, two counties reported their lowest SBI values (Eastern Jefferson and San Juan counties).
- Meaningful, directional change in behavior is best detected over the long-term.

## CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS



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