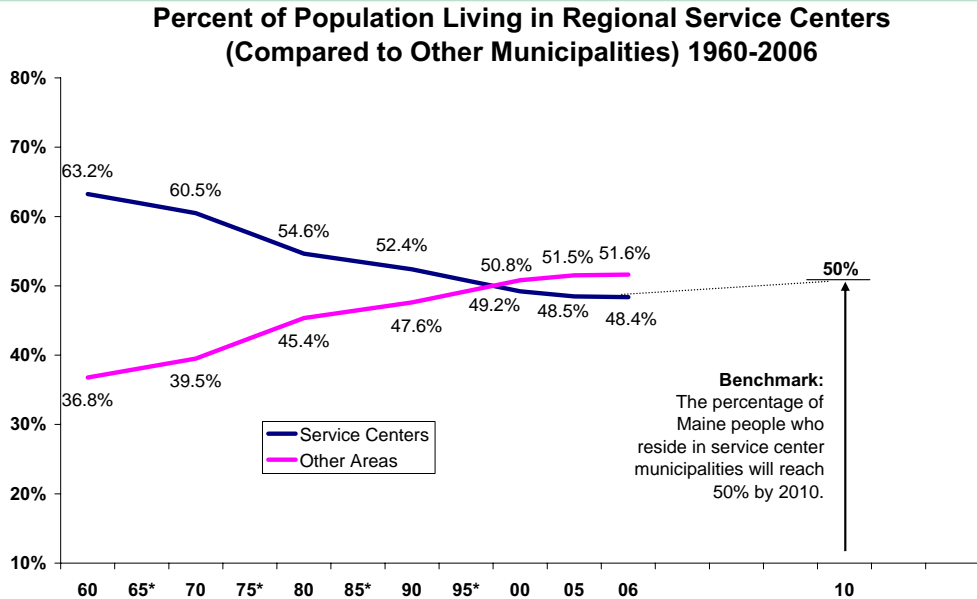


24. Population of Service Center Communities

⊖ **Benchmark:** The percentage of Maine people who reside in service center municipalities will reach 50 percent by 2010.



Data Source: Maine State Planning Office

Sprawl Continues to be an Issue for Maine

In 2006, 48.4% of Maine people lived in regional Service Center Communities, whereas in 1960, 63.2% lived in these communities. The continuing trend of people moving out of urban centers into the more rural parts of the state increases public costs and weakens Maine's central communities.

With increasing sprawl comes the build-out of redundant infrastructure such as roads, schools, and waste systems. Upkeep of this infrastructure costs local and state governments millions annually. The state has invested nearly a billion dollars in schools even as enrollment has declined. Meanwhile, Service Center Communities are struggling to pay for their own under-utilized infrastructure. This has prompted the state to raise the call for regionalization and consolidation of municipal services.

Sprawl causes other negative impacts. With more people commuting from rural areas to jobs in service centers, there is more household income spent on transportation and less time for civic participation. The increased consumption of Maine's land base also erodes the state's natural environment, a central part of the state's notable quality of life.

Within the boundaries of 63 specifically identified regional service center municipalities are almost three-quarters of all Maine jobs, services (hospitals, social services, educational institutions, cultural activities, and government services), and the state's consumer retail sales. For the most part, these are the places in which Maine people work, shop, and visit for a wide variety of services.

Economic growth is enhanced to the extent that people live close to or actually within these service centers. More people living in service centers means that services are delivered more efficiently and energy costs are reduced because people are not traveling as far to work and to shop. Greater populations in urban areas also lessen environmental impacts such as fuel emissions and residential development in rural areas.

*The U.S. Census Bureau revises population figures from time to time to adjust for undercounts in the decennial census or to incorporate updated or revised data in the estimated procedures.